Times of the Event
On the Aesthetico-Political in West Germany and Austria *circa* 1968

By

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Committee in charge:

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Abstract

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In what ways do the cultural fields of aesthetics and politics transform each other, and how does this relation change under specific historical circumstances? How is it possible to evaluate the history of activities that occur at the intersection of aesthetics and politics? How can we account for the ways in which such practices can alter the very criteria by which they might be recognized or judged?

This dissertation responds to such questions by tracing the emergence of a distinct field of cultural production in West Germany and Austria in the years leading up to and through 1968, designating this field as "aesthetico-political." It seeks to determine the various conditions of possibility for these emergent forms of activity, and to examine the different models of political agency, aesthetic experience, and subjectivation they proposed. The analysis focusses on four distinct transformations: politicizations of the aesthetic (a term including but not limited to the arts); aestheticizations of politics, especially through the mediatization of the public sphere; the reorientation of artistic practices away from modernist models; and the ascendance of New Left movements. The dissertation's test cases primarily concern activities that I term "events": durational occurrences taking place in the space between aesthetics and politics. These events varied considerably in their rhetoric, but all existed somewhere in this emergent discursive space.

Chapter One outlines the general problematic of the dissertation. It introduces the concepts of the aesthetico-political and the event by examining two books that were published in 1970: Wolf Vostell's *Actions: Happenings and Demonstrations since 1965*, and Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT's *Vienna: An Image-Compendium of Viennese Actionism and Film*. The chapter then goes on to explain the historical, theoretical, and methodological approach of the dissertation, explaining its key concepts by reference to the philosophy of Jacques Rancière, Jacques Derrida, and Bernard Stiegler.

Chapter Two examines the cultural politics of West Germany during the period of its reconstruction, a period often mythologized as the *Wirtschaftswunder* or "economic miracle." The chapter contrasts two exhibitions from this era: the initial installments of the international art fair *documenta*, held in 1954 and 1959, and *Living with Pop — A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism* (1963), a satirical performance in which the artists Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg

designated the contents of a furniture store as art. Despite their considerable discrepancies, these events each invoked Germany's recent past in numerous ways. The chapter traces the political and aesthetic effects of these divergent rhetorics of memory, arguing against longstanding diagnoses of cultural amnesia in postwar West Germany. In doing so, it develops an account of historically shifting relationships between memory and event.

Chapter Three turns to Austria, providing an account of the markedly different cultural conditions that prevailed there. These circumstances formed the preconditions for Actionism, a strain of production that was at once among the most radical and most regressive of the neo-avant-gardes. The chapter charts the emergence of the Action between 1960 and 1965, examining the development of singular event forms centered around engagements with duration, representation, and publicity. The analysis highlights conflicts between autonomy and heteronomy, relating these to the overall transformation of the aesthetico-political during that moment. The chapter schematizes three salient aspects of the Action as a type of event-structure, then proceeds to analyze several of the numerous contradictions that plagued this field, focussing on the status of temporality, the effects of technical mediation, and the relation between publicity and the mass media. In doing so, it aims to dislodge the misconceptions that often surround accounts of Actionism as a unified movement.

Chapter Four extends this analysis by profiling a subsequent body of Austrian work that resituated the precedent of Actionism within a very different model of practice. Examining events that drew more extensively on emerging technologies — a field I categorize as "mediated actions" — this chapter argues that such event-forms enabled a more responsive engagement with the rapidly shifting relations between aesthetics and politics in the later 1960s. It demonstrates how the mediated actions of Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT hybridized Actionism with models developed by the Vienna Group and by the experimental filmmakers Peter Kubelka and Kurt Kren. Examining individual and collaborative works by Weibel and EXPORT, the chapter argues that mediated actions can be characterized as a distinct type of event, one that I define as the *disagreement*: a manifestation of dissensus that exhibits the properties of recombination and contradiction.

Chapter Five returns to West Germany to examine the period 1966-70, when aesthetico-political activity increased markedly. During this moment experimental art both became more and more reliant on new event forms, while a similar shift occurred in left politics, concomitant with the emergence and crisis of the extra-parliamentary opposition, a coalition of New Left movements. The chapter argues that these transformations were intimately interrelated, while at the same time not being reducible to each other. It positions the "events of 1968" relative to the increasing centrality of the aesthetico-political, mapping out two distinct tendencies that responded to this conjuncture. The first of these is the advocacy of direct action as a strategy for the transformation of everyday life. I examine several events that operated in accordance with such a logic, reading them back through the contemporary critique of Ulrike Meinhof's pre-RAF writings. The second tendency, while also aesthetico-political, exhibited distinct characteristics, chief among which was an insistence on the importance of aesthetic education. Analyzing events staged by Joseph Beuys and by the LIDL collective — a group of artists and students including a young Jörg Immendorff — I seek to show how such forms modelled an aesthetico-political practice premised on the act of learning differently.

The conclusion reassesses the aesthetico-political field that emerged *circa* 1968 in light of subsequent historical developments, considering cases from a range of cultural contexts as they anticipate more recent problems in contemporary art and politics.

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List of Abbreviations

APO	Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (*Außerparlamentarische Opposition*)
CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union*)
DIAS	Destruction in Art Symposium
DSP	German Student Party (*Deutsche Studentenpartei*)
EEC	European Economic Community
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
FU	Berlin Free University (*Freie Universität Berlin*)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
KfA	Campaign for Disarmament (*Kampf für Abrüstung*)
KPÖ	Austrian Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*)
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party) (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*)
ÖVP	Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*)
RAF	Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*)
SDS	German Socialist Student Federation (*Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund*)
SÖS	Austrian Socialist Students' Union (*Sozialistische Österreichische Studentenbund*)
SPD	German Social-Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*)
SPÖ	Austrian Social-Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*)
VSStÖ	Organization of Austrian Socialist Students (*Verband Sozialistischer Studenten Österreichs*)

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Over time this project has increasingly come to resemble the events it examines: transformative, but also open-ended; of variable rhythms and durations; and with a significance that remains to be determined. As a sort of event itself, it is one to which a great many people have contributed, and I hope they realize that my gratitude far exceeds my ability to express it.

In many ways this dissertation grew out of a formative intellectual experience during my first semester at Berkeley, when I enrolled in a seminar with Kaja Silverman on the topic of appropriation in the work Gerhard Richter. I had come to Berkeley with a keen interest in post-war German art, and, due to a fortuitous coincidence, a retrospective of Richter's paintings travelled to San Francisco that fall. Our class spent many hours at the exhibit, during which time I began to learn just how much there was to learn about this history. In time Kaja became my dissertation director, and she has never failed to provide thoughtful advice or to ask the right questions. In fact, much of this project has been an attempt to answer a deceptively simple question that she asked at the close of my qualifying exams: How might we think the politics of time-based art? While I feel that I haven't even begun to resolve this problem, it nevertheless has yet to stop compelling my attention.

I owe an equally large debt to Anne Wagner, who has also played an invaluable role in the development of this project. Some of the earliest research for the dissertation was begun as a student in one of her seminars, and directly benefited from her advice, suggestions, and encouragement. Such debts are easy enough to acknowledge; what is harder is to give some measure of the way that one's thinking, writing, and perception can evolve in response to the example of others. Anne and Kaja have both served me as such models, as I know they have for many other students, and for this I am extremely grateful.

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The development of the dissertation has been greatly aided by discussions with a number of other senior scholars and critics. In Vienna, an exchange with Tom Holert helped me grasp the relation of Viennese production to that of other Austrian contexts; his recent work on pedagogy and artistic research has been formative in my understanding of some the practices discussed in Chapter 5. I wish to reiterate my thanks to Matthias Michalka, who helped me shape my account of an extra-canonical Actionism; his prior research on Cinema Actions and the XSCREEN show werre both valuable precedents in this regard. In the Netherlands, Sven Lütticken generously made time to discuss the relation between the events profiled in the dissertation and several contemporary practices, including those of Thomas Hirschhorn and Harun Farocki. At Berkeley, Tom McDonough volunteered advice that proved to be quite helpful in defining the scope of the project at an early stage.

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This project would not have been possible without a number of close relationships, which have been both intellectual and personal. In this regard I wish to sincerely thank Jeremiah Dittmar, Yves Winter, Josh Dubler, Ben Young, and Erica Levin. (I also count among this group Diana Anders, although she has her own unique status). I hope they recognize something of themselves in this text, since their thoughts, questions, suggestions — and above all, friendship — have both informed the project and in a very real sense made it possible.

Friends living abroad have helped a great deal, especially during those research trips that involved the presence of an infant. In Berlin, thanks to Rutvica Andrijasevic; in Vienna, thanks to Natascha Unkart, Kellie Rife, and Niko Zeiner; in Amsterdam, thanks to Lotte Van Zandwijk, Esther Vonk, Jos Verbrugge, and Eefje Bosch; thanks lastly to Rob Kieboom in Utrecht.

In the past year I have had the good fortune of teaching in the Curatorial Practice MA program at the California College of the Arts, which has proven to be an ideal environment for thinking through the contemporary implications of this historical project. Thanks to my students there, as well as to my colleagues Leigh Markopoulos and Julian Myers.

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My most earnest and deeply felt thanks are reserved for my family. My parents Robert and Helen have given me unflagging support and encouragement since before I can remember, and the same has been true over the course of these last intense, unpredictable, and demanding years. Some of the earliest thinking behind this project began as an attempt to sort out some of the more complicated aspects of our family history, and they have patiently facilitated these efforts. Thanks also to my brother Kristopher, who has provided welcome distractions in the form of jokes and sports scores.

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A note on formatting: a number of the German sources cited here made use of unconventional orthography and grammar, typically as a gesture of opposition to what were perceived as hegemonic modes of signification. I have sought to preserve these idiosyncrasies in English translation and format when possible and to the best of my ability.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the German are my own, as is responsibility for any errors therewith. Directly translated text is reproduced in brackets in the relevant citation.

Chapter One

"*AND... AND... AND...*"
Articulations of the Aesthetico-Political

Events are weapons for the politicization of art. – Wolf Vostell[1]

The event, if there is one, consists in doing the impossible. – Jacques Derrida[2]

1. Stationary Traffic: Actions in Print

In October 1968, the French artist, activist, and impresario Jean-Jacques Lebel wrote two letters to his colleague Wolf Vostell, a West German artist with a similarly broad range of commitments. Vostell had asked Lebel to contribute to an anthology he was editing, devoted to the topic of actions. The book was to be a sequel to a successful collection that had first appeared in 1965, and had been the first publication in German-speaking Europe to address the new performance-based art forms that began to emerge in the later 1950s.[3] Lebel had contributed two short pieces to this earlier volume, based on his involvement with Happenings through the *Festival de la Libre Expression*, a workshop that he had organized in Paris.[4] Though Lebel responded warmly to Vostell's request, his letter explained that he could not participate in the same way as before since, as he wrote, "I have ceased to be an 'artist.'" Lebel continued:

> I still create as much as I can and as often as I can, specially [*sic*] collective spontaneous dangerous mindblowing experiential events (sometimes you could call them happenings, sometimes, more often, it's just life)...[5]

For Lebel, the paradigmatic examples of such "events" had occurred earlier that year in France, in the broad-based protest movement that began with student uprisings and culminated in the strikes and occupations of May. Like Happenings and other modes of experimental performance, such events freely mixed types of experience characteristic of art with those found in ostensibly discrete social spheres, including everyday life and political agitation. However, Lebel maintained that these distinctive modes of activity represented something more significant than "art," describing them alternately as forms of "simply doing" and as something that "really happens historically."[6] Ultimately, they were to be seen as part of a world-historical movement of revolutionary emancipation. It was in this sense that Lebel could proclaim the burning of the Paris Bourse as "the greatest work of collective creation/destruction in the world."[7] This unapologetically utopian view of historical transformation informed the sweeping conclusion of

[1] Wolf Vostell, *Berlin. 100 Ereignisse – 100 Minuten – 100 Stellen*., exhibition catalog, unpaginated (Neuwied and Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1970). ["Ereignisse sind Waffen zur Politisierung der Kunst."]
[2] Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," trans. Gila Walker, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 33 No. 2 (Winter 2007), 449.
[3] This earlier collection, *Happenings: Fluxus. Pop Art. Nouveau Réalisme. Eine Dokumentation* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1965), was co-edited by Vostell and Jürgen Becker, and enjoyed multiple printings.
[4] See Jean-Jacques Lebel, "Umsonst (Bemerkungen zu den Happenings)" and "Grundsätzliches zum Thema Happening," trans. Manon Maren-Grisebach, in *Happenings*, ed. Vostell and Becker, 355-59.
[5] Lebel, "2 Briefe von Jean Jacques Lebel, Paris, an Wolf Vostell, Köln, 1968," in *Aktionen. Happenings und Demonstrationen Seit 1965*, ed. Wolf Vostell (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1970), unpaginated. From the first letter, written and published in English.
[6] Lebel, "2 Briefe."
[7] Ibid.

Lebel's second letter, where he exhorted Vostell to remember that "we all (consciously or not) are part of this colossal, permanent Event."[8]

Vostell responded by including photocopies of Lebel's letters in his compilation, which was published in 1970 under the title *Actions: Happenings and Demonstrations since 1965*. **[Image 1.1]** The book also included entries from Lebel's diary of the night of May 10, when he joined in the occupation of Paris' Latin Quarter, together with an essay he wrote on "political street-theater." Rather than minimize Lebel's criticisms of his book project, sympathetic though they may have been, Vostell instead amplified them conspicuously. In a sort of editorial statement printed in large, all-caps type up the outer margins of selected pages, Vostell wrote the following:

> SINCE THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL HAPPENINGS-FLUXUS ROWOHLT ANTHOLOGY APPEARED IN 1965, PUBLISHED BY BECKER AND MYSELF, HAPPENINGS HAVE ALTERED. IN THE DEMONSTRATION FORMS OF THE BERLIN STUDENT MOVEMENT, IN BERKELEY, AND IN PARIS MAY, THERE IS FOR THE FIRST TIME NO MORE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ART AND LIFE.[9]

Much like Lebel, Vostell maintained that the status of art had undergone a profound redefinition some time after 1965, due in large part to the increased influence of radical political movements in Europe and North America. The unusual typographical form of Vostell's statement exuded a strident attitude, as if conveying a message so urgent that it could not be communicated through standard conventions, and could hardly be contained by the page. **[1.2]** Indeed, by forcing readers to rotate the book and read at an altered speed, the statement sought to realize the ideal of an aesthetic that would bridge the distance between art and its supposed antitheses by directly stimulating new forms of action.

In this sense, Vostell's statement encapsulated the objectives of the collection as a whole, which surveyed a field in which the relation between art and politics was highly contested, multiply determined, and undergoing rapid transformation. Following Vostell, one might gauge the extent of these changes by comparing the two anthologies he edited. In 1965 he and Jürgen Becker sought to interpret Happenings by grouping them together with Fluxus, Pop Art, and Nouveau Réalisme — all recognizable art movements. However, in 1970 Vostell grouped Happenings under the heading of Actions, which, like Demonstrations, was a term that could variably connote artistic performance, political activity, or some mixture of the two.

This more expansive attitude also characterized the contents of the latter book. *Happenings* had included representative contributions from major figures associated with the movements it

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[8] Lebel, "2 Briefe." From the second letter, written and published in German. ["Wir nehmen alle teil (bewusst oder nicht) an diesem riesigen permanenten Ereignis."]

[9] Vostell, statement in *Aktionen*, untitled and unpaginated. ["SEIT 1965 BEI ROWOHLT DIE ERSTE INTERNATIONALE ANTHOLOGIE HAPPENING-FLUXUS VON BECKER UND MIR ERSCHIEN – VERÄNDERTEN AUCH SICH DIE HAPPENINGS. IN DEN DEMONSTRATIONSFORMEN DER BERLINER STUDENTENBEWEGUNG – IN BERKELEY – IM PARISER MAI GAB ES ZUM ERSTEN MAL KEINEN UNTERSCHIED MEHR ZWISCHEN LEBEN UND KUNST."]

surveyed, and a symposium featuring leading American critics of Pop.[10] In contrast, *Actions* placed artists' texts among contributions from a range of radical activists.[11] The book also included a range of documentary materials with little or no apparent connection to the familiar terms governing the reception of art: writings by the philosopher Herbert Marcuse; photographs of student protests in Paris and Berlin; translated transcripts from the trial of the "Chicago Eight"; and reprinted articles from mainstream West German magazines including *Der Spiegel* and *Stern*, as well as from American publications as disparate as *Life* and the *East Village Other*.

In this marked range of contributors, content, and sources, *Actions* might quickly be dismissed as eclectic, utopian, and dated. Nevertheless, such heterogeneity merits close consideration insofar as it suggests just how extensively the terrain of the aesthetic was reconfigured at that moment, though with different consequences than Lebel and Vostell might have prophesied. Rather than endorse their claim that the boundaries between art and life — or, to adopt the slightly different terminology I will use below, between aesthetics and politics — had somehow been transcended, we might instead critically historicize this rhetoric, asking under what conditions it could have seemed plausible or persuasive. Instead of simply reinstating such boundaries, we might view them as membranes that became increasingly porous within a specific conjuncture, bringing aesthetics and politics into an intense and in many ways unprecedented relationship of proximity and exchange. In tracking the circulation of forms, tactics, and affects between these domains, we might resist the latent essentialism that posited a unitary "art" to be abandoned in favor of an equally singular "life," and instead register the extent to which in which aesthetics and politics were in fact internally differentiated fields that underwent a contingent process of reciprocal transformation during this period.

So while Vostell might well have agreed with Lebel that the actions depicted in his collection were all part of one "colossal, permanent Event," the book itself presented a more complex picture. Certain actions employed relatively abstract, poetic modes of performance that eschewed any explicitly political content, as when Günter Saree walked five kilometers through the center of Cologne carrying a container of paint connected to stamps affixed to his shoes, so that he printed the word "*AND*" on the sidewalk with each step he took.[12] **[1.3]** Describing himself not as an artist but rather as an "initiator," Saree followed a route that began to trace a large circle through the city, but then intentionally stopped before closing the circle. What sort of temporality did such a gesture inhabit or generate, and how would this have affected the passersby who accidentally encountered it? What kind of writing did it produce by linking conjunctions without other verbal referents, producing an open chain reading "AND AND AND..."? And what sort of image did the event aspire to create by inscribing an open circle in urban space? Saree's action left such questions pointedly unresolved, having aspired only to "initiate" a line of inquiry.

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[10] Among the artists included in *Happenings* were George Brecht, John Cage, George Maciunas, and Nam June Paik (Fluxus); Christo and Pierre Restany (Nouveau Réalisme); and Lebel, Allan Kaprow, and Michael Kirby (Happenings).

[11] Some of these figures, like Guerrilla Art Action Group or Agentzia, primarily agitated for change within art institutions. Others employed theatrical tactics as a means of countercultural mobilization, as in the case of Fritz Teufel and Rainer Langhans, members of Berlin's notoriously provocative Kommune I. Still others, like Rudi Dutschke and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, worked as organizers, theorists, and/or leaders for radical groups on the New Left.

[12] *Aktionen* provides no title or date for Saree's event. However, given the book's publication date and the artist's stated age, the action can be dated to 1969.

In contrast, other actions in Vostell's collection rejected this sort of oblique approach in favor of clear demands. They incorporated artistic techniques, if at all, solely as instrumental means towards their ends. When the activist Beate Klarsfeld publicly slapped Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger in November 1968 — she meant to denounce his past involvement with the National Socialist Party — she chose a form of direct action that would convey its message unambiguously. **[1.4]** Similarly, when artists including Vostell, Joseph Beuys, and Jörg Immendorff staged a theatrical demonstration at the press conference announcing the fourth edition of the international art fair *documenta* in 1968, their chief objective was to protest the conservatism of the curatorial committee, which had excluded the Fluxus-derived work of neo-avant-garde artists like themselves.[13] **[1.5]**

Still other events in *Actions* combined forms of aesthetic and political communication. Sometimes these turned on activists' use of familiar artistic techniques, as when the Berlin-based German Socialist Student Federation protested the heavy police presence at the 1968 Venice Biennale, which was intended to prevent occupations like those that had disrupted the Milan Triennale earlier that year. Repurposing the Duchampian readymade, the students issued a statement declaring the 6,000 Italian police officers in Venice to be artworks and inviting members of the public to view and interact with them accordingly. **[1.6]** In other cases, artists subordinated the formal characteristics of their own work to more pressing imperatives, as with the "Autograph Hours" proposed by Klaus Staeck in 1970 in several department stores in Karlsruhe. Staeck invited visitors to the stores' art departments for personal appearances by a range of infamous characters. A representative from the US government would sign color photos of the My Lai massacre; a representative of the Greek military junta would sign pictures of the prison camps in which dissidents were held; and the Nazi industrialist and war profiteer Friedrich Flick would sign blank checks. **[1.7]** Such an event hardly drew on Staeck's considerable capacities as a graphic designer, and was conceived such that it could have been executed by most anyone.

Among these diverse hybrid forms of action, Vostell's book granted special priority to the events of 1968 in Paris, despite the fact that they had happened abroad. This might well have been due to the fact that the French insurrection was more conspicuously successful than its West German counterpart, paralyzing and almost overthrowing the ruling government with millions joining a general strike. Perhaps it also owed something to the longstanding, still influential perception of Paris as the cultural center of Europe. Regardless, Vostell followed Lebel's lead in treating May 1968 as a sort of Happening that disabled received oppositions between art and life, such that everyday activities assumed a new urgency. The barricades of the Latin Quarter were the primary trope for this convergence. Framed by the text as as a sort of post-Pop assemblage, they

[13] Instead of performing in their own personal styles, Vostell and his colleagues adopted ironic tropes that were closer to the caricatures of street theater than the anarchic absurdism typical of neo-Dada. Having entered dressed as blind men, holding a sign thanking the chief curator "for a beautiful exhibition," the artists then scattered small coins on the conference table, covered them with honey, and let a black cat loose. For a first-person account of the protest, see Friedrich Heubach, "*Interfunktionen* 1968-1975," in *Behind the Facts: Interfunktionen 1968-1975*, ed. Gloria Moure (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2004), 59n3. The protest was documented in the magazine's first issue.

simultaneously served as material for works like Vostell's "Happening-sculpture" *Stationary Traffic* (1969).[14] **[1.8]**

Images of the barricades appeared throughout *Actions*, along snapshots of propagandistic graffiti and the occupation of the Odeon Theater. But while some of these photographs were credited to photojournalists, others came from the catalog to *Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World*, an exhibition that had been staged in 1969 at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm.[15] This indicates that the convergence of aesthetics and politics was not only taking place on the street, but within established art institutions. Such a hypothesis is further supported by the fact that a similarly themed exhibition, *Art and Politics*, travelled between different West German *Kunstverein* spaces in 1970.[16] However, this then begs the questions of what type of audience was viewing these images, under what conditions, and toward what ends. In this context, one wonders about the near-total absence of French workers from Vostell's version of May 1968, especially given the role that labor unions, anarcho-syndicalists, and the French Communist Party all played in the general strike. Was the topic of class conflict somehow deemed counter-revolutionary? Or was the convergence of art and life the sort of privilege that could only be appreciated by those with sufficient leisure or cultural capital to declare themselves beyond art?

With such questions in mind, one might re-evaluate the rhetoric and ultimate effectiveness of *Actions*. The collection clearly meant to convey a unified message, aspiring to the bold, all-caps certainty of Vostell's editorial statement. However, such intentions were nevertheless thwarted by repeated, substantive discrepancies over the very question of what might count as an action, an uncertainty that came across in the book's somewhat ungainly title. In this respect, the text reads as a much more ambivalent, conflicted attempt to work through the contradictory implications of this far-reaching and unpredictable transformation in the status of the aesthetic sphere. If there was in fact no longer any difference between art and life, could there still be any reason to continue to produce art or to identify oneself as an artist? Would traditional forms of artistic training retain any relevance, or would artists have to reskill as organizers, journalists, or documentary producers? What if actions designed as political interventions were instead received as art, or even as entertainment? Finally, the book's many images of police crackdowns on demonstrations made clear that even more ominous questions could not be avoided: What would happen if the revolutionary emancipation that these actions meant to bring about was violently foreclosed? And what if such actions had somehow enabled this repression?

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[14] Vostell made this relationship explicit in a two-page layout in *Actions*, in which an installation shot of his sculpture, which consisted of an automobile cast in concrete, is juxtaposed with a photograph of Paris barricades made from overturned cars.

[15] This exhibition, curated by Ron Hunt and Pontus Hultén, was mostly comprised of photographs, focussing on the historical avant-gardes, revolutionary activities in the USSR and China, and the events of 1968. It also included a community organizing space, which was used by a number of US exiles, including members of the Black Panther Party. For a detailed account see Ron Hunt, "*Icteric* and *Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World*: A Note on a Lost and Suppressed Avant-Garde and Exhibition," archived online at http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/icteric-and-poetry-must-be-made-by-all-transform-the-world-a-note-on-a-lost-and-suppressed-avant-garde-and-exhibition/, last accessed on May 6, 2011.

[16] The exhibition was curated by Georg Bussmann and first showed in 1970 at the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, before travelling to the Frankfurter Kunstverein and the Kunsthalle Basel. See Georg Bussmann, *Kunst und Politik*, exhibition catalog (Karlsruhe: Badischer Kunstverein, 1970).

In 1970, the same year that *Actions* was published in the Federal Republic of Germany (henceforth FRG or West Germany), a similar collection was released in Austria. The book, entitled *Vienna: An Image-Compendium of Viennese Actionism and Film*, was edited by the artist Peter Weibel together with his frequent collaborator VALIE EXPORT, both of whom had been involved in many of the activities described therein.[17] Despite what one might expect, the two books differ in several respects, the most obvious being their appearance. The cover of *Actions* bore a photograph of an event at Kommune I, which pictured three nude men facing a wall, together with a young boy turning toward the camera. Though the contents of *Vienna* were on the whole far more indecent, its cover was a solid field of matte black, broken only with jet black lower-case lettering for its title. **[1.9]** Whereas *Actions* was a trade paperback produced by the esteemed literary press Rowohlt, *Vienna* was a folio-sized edition distributed in a much smaller run by a small West German publisher of art books.

The fact that *Vienna* was printed outside Austria begins to indicate the considerable differences between prevailing cultural conditions in these two nations, which had been united under National Socialist rule only twenty-five years before. Successive scandals involving the artists known as the Vienna Actionists had culminated in serious charges against several of them, who ultimately fled to West Germany to escape legal prosecution. It bears mention that in 1970 Weibel and EXPORT continued to freely travel across the Austrian border, and their decision to publish in West Germany was at least partly motivated by the fact that their audience was increasingly located there, rather than at home. With this said, the artists were doubtless also aware of the risk in publishing materials that could be construed as obscene, and this situation surely would have influenced their decision to package their book relatively inconspicuously and print it abroad. As it turns out, whatever fears they may have had turned out to be well-founded, since their involvement with the *Vienna* book ultimately resulted in their standing trial under pornography charges, for which they each received prison sentences.[18]

Whereas in 1970 Vostell could assume that his audience would already be familiar with the basic history and categories of neo-avant-garde performance, Weibel and EXPORT were producing the first comprehensive publication on these activities in Austria, which in fact dated back to the 1950s.[19] On a substantive level, *Actions* and *Vienna* exhibited significant differences in their basic definitions of the action, whether in regards to its planning, its relation to its audience, its formal characteristics, or its effects. These divergences extended to the historical references invoked by the books' editors. While Vostell and Becker positioned Fluxus, Nouveau Réalisme,

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[17] *Wien: Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film*, ed. Peter Weibel with VALIE EXPORT (Frankfurt a.M.: Kohlkunstverlag, 1970).

[18] For a contemporary account of this trial, see Peter Hajek, "Die Wiener Avantgarde vor Gericht," *Kurier*, 4.21.71. Reprinted in Hans Scheugl, *Erweitertes Kino. Die Wiener Filme der 60er Jahre* (Vienna: Triton Verlag, 2002), 168.

[19] In the introduction to their 1965 book on Happenings, Vostell's co-editor Jürgen Becker could complain that the overuse of the term had led to its devaluation. According to Becker, the West German press was liable to describe anything as a Happening in order to seem up-to-date, with the result that "the word almost means nothing anymore." In contrast, when a reporter from *Kurier*, a large Viennese daily newspaper, had to describe a 1967 skirmish between police and several Actionists, he felt compelled to explain to his readers exactly what a Happening was. For the former, see Jürgen Becker, in *Happenings*, ed. Becker and Vostell, 7. ["... das Phänomen, das dieses Wort schon nicht mehr bezeichnet..."]; for the latter, see Heinz Lichtblau, "Gestern Abend: Rauferei nach 'Happening,'" *Kurier*, 4.22.67. Reprinted in Weibel and EXPORT, *Wien*, 162.

and Happenings as the immediate precedents of contemporary actions — no surprise, given Vostell's involvement with each of these movements — Weibel and EXPORT sketched a markedly different genealogy for their practices, one more indebted to the experimental poetry and theater of the Vienna Group and to the structural film of Peter Kubelka and Kurt Kren.

Yet despite these differences, Weibel and EXPORT's volume bore a fundamental resemblance to Vostell's. There was in fact some overlap between the two collections: the Actionists Otto Mühl and Hermann Nitsch had been included in Vostell's earlier *Happenings* book; and Weibel and EXPORT had performed and screened films at *X-Screen*, a short-lived underground cinematheque in Cologne that was profiled in *Actions*. More importantly, *Vienna* described a dramatic expansion of the sphere of art, a development quite similar to the trajectory charted by Vostell. Though the book did not make an explicitly historical argument, it nevertheless showed how thoroughly the relationship between aesthetics and politics had changed in the years preceding its publication. By 1970, the criteria governing the integrity of these categories had decisively altered, enabling the development of forms and practices that simply would not have been conceivable, practicable, or even legible a decade earlier.

In some cases, artists re-engineered the operation of their work or positioned it within emergent circuits of reception, allowing it to assume a new political salience. To use a key term of the dissertation, one that I will define shortly, this movement constituted a particular *politicization of aesthetics*. In other cases, activists employed tactics that problematized or altered the sensory coordinates by which power relations are mapped onto everyday experience. Such efforts represented a complementary process, one I will term the *aestheticization of politics*. In both cases, cultural production and political activism both depended on and to a large degree facilitated an extensive reorganization of the very categories on which their efficacy depended.

Some sense of this shift can be obtained by considering three examples from Weibel and EXPORT's compilation. The earliest instance of political protest that it documents dates from May 1955, when the writer H.C. Artmann authored a manifesto opposing the rearmament of Austria. Some two dozen writers, artists, and intellectuals co-signed the statement, six of whom then joined Artmann in a public march, including Oswald Wiener and Konrad Bayer, who together with Artmann were also members of the Vienna Group.[20] The small band marched along Kärntnerstraße, one of the prime shopping boulevards in central Vienna, arriving at Stephansplatz, the site of the city's cathedral, where the marchers were rebuked by a church official before being dispersed by police. **[1.10]** The protest was certainly unusual for its time, marking one of the earliest cases of organized leftist dissent in postwar Austria, and it provoked a strong negative response from passersby. Yet its methods were nonetheless conventional, with the protesters holding placards with relatively matter-of-fact slogans and marching through Vienna in an orderly fashion. In this case, cultural producers behaved like any other members of society, by and large respecting the norms governing public appearance.

Weibel and EXPORT took a much different approach in February 1968 when they staged *From the Dog File*, a public "communication action."[21] **[1.11]** The pair also chose Kärntnerstraße for

[20] The following account is drawn from Weibel and EXPORT, "protestmarsch," *Wien*, 270.
[21] This description relies on Weibel and EXPORT, "aus der mappe der hundigkeit," *Wien*, 260. Note that the term *Hundigkeit* literally translates as "dog-ness" and not "doggedness," as it is sometimes rendered. The title was meant

its high visibility, but used it toward quite distinct ends. Weibel crawled around on all fours with a dog collar around his neck, while EXPORT strolled alongside, walking him with a leash. Here, political action was not directed toward specific tactical objectives. Instead, the artists meant to carry out "a case study in the sociology of human behavior" by enacting a trope familiar from Disney cartoons, "signifying the objectification and alienation of human beings in animal form."[22] Despite the obviously farcical tone of this scenario, the Viennese public seems not to have been amused. According to the artists, the event's implications of "sadomasochism" and "matriarchy" provoked only "discomfort and irritation" in the majority of onlookers.[23]

Then in November 1968 in Vienna, as part of the *First Meeting of European Independent Filmmakers*, Weibel premiered another "communication action," called *Exit*.[24] **[1.12]** The audience sat before a "prepared screen," which had been covered in aluminum foil and punctured in several places. Weibel began speaking from a script while a film was projected onto the screen. Then, without any warning, fireworks began shooting from the screen directly into the audience. A small crew of filmmakers, including EXPORT and Kurt Kren, continued this assault by setting off smoke bombs and lobbing firecrackers over the screen. Audience members sought cover under overturned seats before fleeing the smoke-filled cinema. Against prevailing conceptions of participatory art as emancipatory, *Exit* sought to directly engage its public by making it the target of unmediated aggression, as if arguing that any means were justified in driving the audience out of the cinema and into the street, where it could truly participate.

Like the manifold event forms profiled in Vostell's two collections, the contents of *Vienna* were as far-ranging as the preceding examples suggest. In this light, Actions and their many cognate activities might be viewed as unstable compounds of heterogeneous and sometimes incompatible elements. They were scabrous, thoughtful, hyperbolic, retrograde, polysemic, innovative, self-contradictory, and subtle — often many of these at once. While disparate in many respects, these events nonetheless tended to occupy a field in which aesthetic and political determinations intersected. In large part because of the uniquely repressive cultural climate of post-fascist Austria, concern with this dynamic often prompted questions regarding the regulation of the public sphere. What normative mechanisms governed the appearance of individual or collective subjects? In what ways were social hierarchies reproduced in intersubjective communication? How did the prohibition of obscenity in fact perpetuate the behaviors it aimed to police? And how did techniques of power operate in such ostensibly apolitical spheres of common life as commerce, entertainment, and bodily comportment?

The extent to which such concerns structured the events profiled in *Vienna* is evident in the book's pervasive engagement with these dimensions of publicity. The most obvious example of this tendency is the frequency with which it reproduced articles from Austrian newspapers, often

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as a parody of *aus der mappe der menschlichkeit*, or *From the File of Humanity*, a free weekly humanitarian publication that was distributed throughout Vienna.

[22] Ibid. It seems likely that Weibel and EXPORT could have been informed in this approach by Horkheimer and Adorno's contemporary critique of mass-produced cartoons as teaching "the old lesson that continuous attrition, the breaking of all individual resistance, is the condition of life in this society." See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, tr. Edmund Jephcott (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 110.

[23] Ibid.

[24] This description relies on the account given in Weibel and EXPORT, "exit," *Wien*, 259.

as full-page facsimiles. Rather than cite reviews or other forms of art writing, *Vienna* featured actual reportage on the heated responses that often surrounded Actions, drawn not from the papers' cultural pages, but from the metropolitan news section.[25] **[1.13]** In reprinting these reports alongside other forms of performance documentation — such as flyers, programs, excerpts from prepared speeches, and photographs of police squads — Weibel and EXPORT effectively proposed that the responses to an Action were in fact part of the event itself, bringing the aesthetic sphere into temporary conjunction with the mass media and the juridical apparatus of the state.

A similar concern with publicity had characterized earlier work that examined the diagnosis and management of transgression, such as Kurt Kren's *2/60 48 Heads from the Szondi Test* (1960), a found-footage film assembled from portrait photographs used in psychological evaluations. **[1.14]** However, as Actionist production increasingly adopted the unmediated approach often described as "direct art," artists no longer sought to represent social deviants, but rather to impersonate them. In a complex dynamic that the dissertation will later analyze, the Actionists' penchant for provocation brought them considerable notoriety even as it ultimately led many of them into desperate legal circumstances. In fact, at the end of *Vienna* Weibel and EXPORT included a section entitled "Police Punishments," which detailed nearly thirty cases brought against artists represented in the book. **[1.15]** The charges filed against them ranged from public disturbance to obscenity, pornography, and even suspicion of murder, resulting in sentences of up to six months' imprisonment. If, as the editors ironically noted, in such cases "the state attorney and the psychiatrist take the place of the art critic," they nonetheless claimed that such an outcome would inevitably occur "when the borders of public reality and the terrain of official communication are allowed to lapse," noting that they and their colleagues had "intensive" experience of such effects.[26]

In this respect, Weibel and EXPORT's catalog of Actions exhibited a further degree of resemblance to Vostell's. In both instances, the interpenetration of aesthetics and politics was welcomed as a potentially revolutionary development, despite evidence that this transformation was already yielding consequences that were in fact distinctly less emancipatory than intended. Like *Actions*, *Vienna* struggled to impose order on an unruly, heterogeneous field of practices. Viewed from a narrowly artistic perspective, this proliferation can be understood as a period of productive intermedia experimentation in which emergent time-based models were hybridized with traditional media to overturn a modernist aesthetics of medium-specificity.[27] However, such

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[25] In one such instance, the 1967 *ZOCK Festival*, some 200 police officers were called in to break up a particularly chaotic event at a beer-hall, which had devolved into something like a food fight between the performers and the audience. Journalistic opinion on the so-called "Happening-affair" was varied, ranging from somewhat officious disapproval ("a true scandal"; "an all-too-realistic demolition action") to wry bemusement ("a dumpling battle"). These citations are from articles reprinted in Weibel and EXPORT's collection, drawn from the Viennese newspapers *Kurier* and *Die Presse*. *Wien*, 162-65

[26] Weibel and EXPORT, "polizeistrafen," *Wien*, 294. ["der staatsanwalt und der psychiater treten an die stelle des kunstkritikers, wenn die grenzen der staatlichen wirklichkeit und das terrain der offiziellen kommunikation verlassen werden, die protagonisten des wiener aktionismus und films haben dies besonders intensiv erfahren."]

[27] While such a narrative does have a certain explanatory power, one objective of this study is to problematize existing theorizations of the "post-medium condition" on the basis of the history examined here.The primary exponent of this theory has of course been Rosalind Krauss. See Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000); and "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," *October* 116 (Spring 2006), 55-62.

an approach begs an obvious objection in that it relies on what is still essentially an autonomous model of the aesthetic sphere, despite the fact that forms like Actions were dedicated to suspending the prevailing differences between art and its antitheses.[28]

No matter how it is interpreted, there is clearly no way to avoid the consistently other-directed tendency of aesthetic production during this period: the desire for art to recreate itself as action, resistance, social transformation, education, or even as part of the "colossal, permanent Event" that Lebel portentously hailed. In what follows I propose that we understand this tendency as analogous, if not identical, to the contemporary demand, often associated with the Situationist International but also voiced throughout German-speaking Europe, that art should negate its own status as art.[29] Such an understanding necessitates a nuanced historiography capable of attending to this period's intense antagonisms between autonomous and heteronomous concepts of art. These logics were in a very real sense incompatible, though not totally incommensurable, and their relationship manifested a dialectical complexity even as it unfolded outside a teleological horizon of resolution.

Such considerations help to clarify the tensions traversing both *Actions* and *Vienna*, inasmuch as such problems might productively be related to these conflicting logics of art.[30] As should hopefully by now be clear, each book described the transformation of art into a more provisional, contingent, and externally determined field of activities (in the next section, I describe such practices as *aesthetico-political*). Both books depended on such a field for their very legibility, much like the aesthetico-political practices they depicted, which had to appear as something more than or other than art in order to be effective. At the same time, the books sought to define their subjects as cohesive, self-defining entities in terms that would furnish them with cultural legitimation, whether this meant recognition from mainstream institutions or the acquisition of a subversive, countercultural cachet. In other words, they functioned in accordance with something like a logic of medium-specificity, even if this language did not circulate in German-speaking Europe at that time.[31]

In the case of *Actions*, the same proliferation of event-forms that was celebrated as emancipatory simultaneously betrayed anxieties regarding the dissolution of art, the recuperation of dissent, and the possible failure of utopian aspirations. Much the same was true of the events surveyed in *Vienna*, especially when one considers the rapid rate at which new types of Action were conceived and promoted. This zeal for innovation surely owed something to the hothouse atmosphere of a small self-identified vanguard in a repressive, provincial context, even as it also

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[28] To stress this point does not in any way mean that Actions and related events jettisoned a commitment to self-reflexivity. If anything, it raises the possibility of forms that could use artistic means to evaluate their own heteronomy, a prospect I seek to explore throughout this study.

[29] The chief point of contact between German-speaking Europe and the SI was the SPUR Group [*Gruppe SPUR*]. For an overview of this connection, see Wolfgang Dreß, Dieter Kunzelmann, and Eckhard Siepmann, eds., *Nilpferd des höllischen Urwalds – Spuren in eine unbekannte Stadt – Situationisten, Gruppe SPUR, Kommune 1* (Giessen: Anabas Verlag, 1991).

[30] My point is not that this conceptual conflict between autonomy and heteronomy somehow produced the contradictions in these collections and the practices they depicted. Rather, I mean to suggest that it forms a useful ground against which to figure and interpret them.

[31] The criticism of Clement Greenberg, the most prominent exponent of this concept, was not translated into German until 1997. However, a theory quite similar to medium-specificity was advanced from the 1950s onward in the influential writings of Werner Haftmann. For more on Haftmann, see Chapter Two.

suggested a certain entrepreneurialism, a commercial attitude more befitting the petit-bourgeois inventor than the critical artist. One might speculate that this restless impulse to continually redefine Actions meant to negate the possibility that Actions might lack positive content in themselves, being merely a reactive mirror image of the hegemonic order. (As is clear from the history traced by the "Police Punishments" section of *Vienna*, putatively emancipatory acts of transgression often led to repressive reactions.)

Yet it could also be that this perpetual motion sought to evade more subtle dangers. The more Actionism presented itself as a recognizable aesthetic, the more it risked becoming the sort of institutionalized art movement that it so fervently opposed. This risk was compounded by the extent to which Actions relied on various forms of photo-documentation for their distribution and archivization. The opposition between the live event and its mediated representation structured *Vienna*, which was after all a book consisting mostly of photographs. If Weibel and EXPORT seemed to acknowledge this tension in describing the text as an "image-compendium," they did not go on to identify a more dangerous possibility: namely, that their collection might ultimately reduce the events it represented to mere images of action, empty signifiers of nothing more than a stylized attitude of rebelliousness.

While *Vienna* was not the first attempt to convert Actionist practices into saleable form, it exceeded previous efforts by organizing Actions as a collective unity, literally packaging them between one set of covers and giving them a specific look, even something like what would today be called a brand identity. With its small print run, conspicuously discreet cover design, and grainy reproductions of unmentionable deeds, the book appealed to a particular sort of sensibility, something like that of a connoisseur of rare pornography. In other words, it made Actions into objects for consumption, however much of a niche market this may have been. Whether or not this made them luxury goods, it meant they were commodities all the same.

2. On the Aesthetico-Political *circa* 1968

I have begun with these two publications because they mark a crucial shift in the genealogy that this dissertation traces. No matter how their contents and contradictions are evaluated, they clearly incline toward a complex, variegated account of the historical conjuncture that this dissertation will analyze. Such an understanding is necessary in part because the intensity and intricacy of the transformations often periodized as "the 1960s" have inspired numerous impassioned but reductive responses.[32] (These effects can condition historical inquiries like this one before they begin, insofar as they have influenced the development and oversight of archives.[33]) Such excesses have prompted cynical dismissals of the supposed naivete of the 60s

[32] 60s nostalgia has been so widely documented, dramatized, and debated — whether in the academy, the press, or pop culture — that it would seem to merit little comment. Less often mentioned, though arguably more significant, is the related phenomenon of left melancholia, first diagnosed by Walter Benjamin in the 1920s and recently revived by critics of neoliberalism. For more on this subject see Walter Benjamin, "Left-Wing Melancholy," in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 305; and Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy," *boundary 2*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Autumn 1999, 19-27.

[33] For more on this problem in the context of post-1968 France, see Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3-12.

generation, an attitude that often combines a presentist condescension with a latent defeatism. In response, some have called for a militant fidelity to the legacy of the events of 1968, a stance that is not without its own problematic implications.[34]

Regardless of how one judges the vicissitudes of "the 60s" as a discursive formation, it is plain that very much still depends on how this object is defined. There have been and still are numerous, conflicting versions of the 60s, and they are liable to substitute for one another without warning. What's more, as Fredric Jameson has persuasively demonstrated, the very notion of the 1960s is itself suspect, since many of the developments most salient to this conjuncture extend beyond the arbitrary, chronologistic frame of a decade.[35] Indeed, the tensions animating both *Actions* and *Vienna* would seem to indicate that Vostell, Weibel, and EXPORT sensed that matters greater than artistic reputations were at stake in how recent events were documented and interpreted. With these issues in mind, in the following sections I would like to introduce the general problematic of the dissertation, explaining its key terms and its philosophical infrastructure. As I do so, I will consider certain of the theoretical and methodological implications of my approach. The chapter will end with an overview of the dissertation's individual chapters.

Although *Actions* and *Vienna* each had its own distinct agenda, both texts profiled events occurring within an emergent discursive space between aesthetics and politics: a field that I will henceforth describe with the term *aesthetico-political*. Not only did the books depend on the existence of such a field for their content; on a more elemental level, they required it for their own intelligibility. Simply put, neither publication would have been conceivable in 1960, or even in 1965, as the differences between Vostell's *Happenings* and *Actions* books make clear. It is not just that the practices the books surveyed did not yet exist — neither did the very criteria needed to recognize and evaluate these new compound forms. My dissertation might be understood as an attempt to grasp how such a pronounced discrepancy came to exist. What were the local, global, and structural conditions of possibility for these emergent forms of aesthetico-political activity? What different models of political agency, aesthetic experience, subjectivation, and critique did such practices instantiate?

The concept of the aesthetico-political will be developed in more detail shortly, but for our present purposes it might be thought to designate a field roughly coterminous with the range of activities represented in these two collections. I will define an aesthetico-political activity — whether an Action, a Happening, a Demonstration, or, to use another key term of the dissertation, an *event* — as one that occurs at the intersection of aesthetics and politics, or in fact reconfigures

[34] This view is most often associated with Alain Badiou; for a representative formulation see Badiou, *Being and Event*, tr. Oliver Feltham (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 232-54. By summarizing these debates in a cursory fashion, I do not mean to imply that this dissertation can somehow overcome their shortcomings by dint of good intentions, as if it could be located beyond ideology in some sort of neutral zone of objective indifference. Though I think these dangers are worth marking, this inquiry is of course informed by its own critical investments, theoretical commitments, and aesthetic predispositions, not to mention other, less conscious biases, blind spots, and errors. Neither do I wish to suggest that such questions have lost their relevance. In fact, in what follows I look to show that the events of this period matter today in ways that would have been simply impossible to foresee forty or fifty years ago.

[35] Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," in Sohnya Sayres, Anders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz, and Fredric Jameson, eds., *The 60s Without Apology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

our notion of these categories such that the very designations "aesthetic" or "political" enter into question.[36] As a historical categorization, the notion of an aesthetico-political field that emerged *circa* 1968 is meant to frame four distinct but interrelated developments. Though these had their own independent histories — ones that were traversed by important regional and local differences — they collectively contributed to the formation of a distinct discursive field, and it is for this reason that I seek to trace their respective evolutions, crossings, and divergences.[37]

The first and second developments I have already mentioned above: a politicization of aesthetics and an aestheticization of politics. The term "politicization of aesthetics" denotes the process by which sensate forms including but not limited to art came to serve a different set of contingent tactical ends. (It is not that aesthetics was previously somehow apolitical, but rather that its political vocation was substantively reconceptualized.) By "aestheticization of politics" I mean the processes through which the perceptual mediations determining the contestation of prevailing social conditions were altered, whether through increased technicization or the adoption of new modes of public performance, to cite two relevant examples.

The third development in play here is specifically limited to art, and pertains to the question of artistic medium. As is generally recognized, modernist conceptions of medium were fundamentally challenged during this period by several shifts: the uptake of durational models from time-based mediums including dance and experimental music; the adoption of technical formats including photography, film, and video; and the rise of multimedia and intermedia models of production. However, accounts of these transformations often assume that they took place within a relatively autonomous sphere of art. How might it change our understanding to consider such shifts using an aesthetico-political analytic?

The fourth consideration is more narrowly political, and concerns the fate of the New Left in German-speaking Europe. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the terrain of West German politics was decisively altered by the rise of the APO or "extra-parliamentary opposition," a loose ensemble of groups opposed to the bipartisan coalition that took power in 1966. Analogous developments took place in Austria, though to a lesser extent and with varying consequences. Not only did these ascendant oppositional forces diverge from pre-existing socialist theory and practice; they also relied to an unprecedented extent on new forms of technology, publicity, and protest.

As I hope to make clear, these four macro-level developments acted in different combinations to provide the necessary preconditions for the emergence of an aesthetico-political field in the years around 1968. In dating this conjuncture with the open descriptor "circa 1968," I have left the precise historical terms of this study somewhat fluid, in large part because each of the four developments in question has its own history, enabling a number of different possible

[36] In claiming that a specific aesthetico-political field emerged during the 1960s in West Germany and Austria, I am not suggesting that similar formations had not occurred previously in these countries, or did not exist elsewhere. In fact, such a self-transcending propensity of the aesthetic is part of the history of this domain, as I will consider below. Neither do I wish to imply that the aesthetico-political *circa* 1968 was a uniform, stable condition. However, I do mean for my research to demonstrate that this particular field possessed singular traits allowing it to attain something like a critical mass, a qualitatively distinct intensity that differentiates it from analogous examples.

[37] I hope it is clear that my treatment of these complex histories can only be partial, and that the benefits of this necessarily selective approach will become evident.

periodizations.[38] Instead of imposing a uniform, one-size-fits-all frame on these histories, I have tried to proceed from a more plastic, even somewhat provisional basis. To claim that the events analyzed here happened "around 1968" is to maintain that they shared a common determination that transcended their apparent differences.[39]

Bearing these concerns in mind, the general chronology of the dissertation is as follows: It begins by considering events that took place in the FRG and Austria during the mid-1950s. This is meant in part to provide some sense of the conditions that prevailed before the shift I mean to trace. For example, in Chapter Two I examine the first two installments of *documenta*, which took place in 1954 and 1959, taking these exhibitions to be emblematic of official cultural politics at that time, and also of broader national efforts to negotiate the legacy of National Socialism. Elsewhere I seek to account for the decisive impact of early post-war neo-avant-garde movements, especially the Vienna Group in Austria, whose work remains relatively underexamined within Anglophone scholarship.

The dissertation's focus then shifts to the early and mid-1960s, when the borders between aesthetics and politics became decidedly more porous, creating the conditions for the aesthetico-political events of the later 1960s. In the FRG, this period coincided with the apex of Fluxus activities in the Rhineland, the ascendance of Capitalist Realism, and the increased visibility of the SPUR Group. In Austria, this period witnessed the initial wave of Actionist production, as well as the first extensive contact between neo-avant-gardes in Austria and elsewhere. Next, the dissertation examines activities in closer temporal proximity to 1968, mostly grouped between 1967-69. My analysis concludes in 1970, but not because the transformations of 1968 had in any way been concluded by that point, or because this is when the 1960s ended chronologically. Rather, I would argue that the aesthetico-political field I mean to trace had by that point fully emerged and undergone a definitive consolidation.[40]

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[38] For instance, the politicization of aesthetics in West Germany that I map here can be said to have begun in the late 1950s with the activities of Fluxus artists and the SPUR Group, even though the New Left didn't become a cultural force until the mid-1960s.

[39] On this view, events that occurred in 1972 and 1959 might demand to be thought together, no matter how anachronistic this might seem, inasmuch as they each have determined our retrospective view of 1968. Furthermore, the term "around" suggests that the shape of historical time is not linear but is less easily modelled, whether it be spiraling, striated, crystalline, or even patterned on another, non-spatial logic. With this said, I do not use the date 1968 without certain reservations. Although in the U.S. 1968 retains a political specificity that is frequently attenuated in accounts of "the 60s," the same is by no means true in Europe, where excessive veneration or condemnation of '68 or the so-called *achtundsechziger Generation* still often holds sway. There is also the fact that 1968 is itself an imperfect marker in this context, since certain key developments happened in 1967 in West Germany, but not until 1969 in Austria. This being the case, I will try to indicate such conflicts whenever relevant, hoping that the benefits of this somewhat unorthodox periodization outweigh its potential shortcomings.

[40] For example, not only was 1970 the year that both *Actions* and *Vienna* were published; it was also when three important exhibitions on aesthetico-political subjects took place (*Kunst und Politik*, *Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World*, and Harald Szeemann's *Happenings and Fluxus* in Cologne). I examine the politics of this moment in more detail in Chapter Five.

3. Entanglements of Aesthetics and Politics

With this general framework in place, I now wish to explain the usage of a number of key terms. This section will begin with aesthetics and politics and then consider several of their variants and compounds; the following sections will then further elaborate the two central concepts of the dissertation: the *aesthetico-political* and the *event*. As may already be evident, my account of the relation between aesthetics and politics has been decisively informed by the work of Jacques Rancière, even if my specific analyses will suggest certain qualifications of his positions. While I hope to demonstrate ways that Rancière's thinking might be operationalized in the service of a critical art history, such aims are not possible without an understanding of his idiosyncratic, occasionally heterodox approach to seemingly familiar concepts.

The first of these is *aesthetics*, a term usually thought to denote either a general theory of artistic experience or a specific field of philosophy. For Rancière, aesthetics (*l'esthétique*) instead refers to "a specific regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts: a mode of articulation between ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their relationships."[41] By describing aesthetics as a "regime," Rancière extracts it from a narrowly philosophical or academic vocation, relocating it in a much broader context that is simultaneously implicated in prevailing conditions of power. Aesthetics is thus not a question of what art *is*, but rather of the circumstances under which art can be recognized or described as such. On this view, the aesthetic is a site of "articulation" at which specific modes of production are joined with the discursive, material, and institutional agencies that endow them with meaning, allowing us to interrogate their implications: Through what operations is art distinguished from non-art? How are such determinations policed? And what specific forms of articulation become available within the space of art?

In addressing such questions, aesthetics concerns itself with what Rancière calls *the partition of the sensible* (*le partage du sensible*): "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it."[42] Here, the ostensibly neutral and "self-evident" character of sensate experience (or *aesthesis*) undergoes a radical revaluation. Perception is in no way transparent, but instead acts almost as a sort of law, inscribing social determinations at what might appear to be the most elemental level of our experience. Underlying our seemingly primordial sensations of phenomena are any number of mechanisms regulating our notions of what is sensible or intelligible; of equalities and hierarchies; of what can be seen, made, or done; of who can participate and how. Even more radically, our conception of a "world" is already a frame that establishes a common space only through a constitutive exclusion.[43]

In this light, aesthetics emerges as a concern that is irreducibly grounded in art and philosophy without being reducible to either; the same will also prove to be true of politics. The location of

[41] Jacques Rancière, "The Distribution of the Sensible," in Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, tr. Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 10.
[42] Ibid., 12.
[43] This does not mean that perception is itself somehow malign, serving the interests of ideology by distorting our sense of a truth that might somehow otherwise be available to us. Rather, it preconditions the very means by which such a truth might be conceptualized, evaluated, or contested, with consequences that are potentially more far-reaching, if less easily forecast.

the aesthetic is not the space of art, as one might think. Instead, it is the space of thought, or, as one of Rancière's interlocutors puts it, "an idea of thought that is imbricated within a field of the sensible."[44] By maintaining that we can only think from within a specific partition of the sensible, a Rancièrean aesthetics insists that thought is sensate and that sensation is in a crucial sense conceptual, in that it is invariably preconditioned by certain notions of collectivity and equality. Several important consequences result from this formulation. The first of these is that aesthetics does not strictly speaking concern itself with art, even though art, whether as a concept or a practice, is inevitably a question of aesthetics. Rather, aesthetics attends to the processes by which perception and cognition articulate seemingly heterogeneous types of experience, including but not limited to contact with art.

However, this innately extrinsic, other-directed orientation leads to a conceptual impasse that Rancière terms the "paradox of aesthetics," and associates with the "aesthetic regime of art," a specific partition of the sensible that has prevailed since the era of the French Revolution, when traditional hierarchies of genre and medium began to erode.[45] In this schema, which extends through the twentieth century and into the present, such hierarchies are progressively displaced by a generalized concept of art that is indifferent to subject matter or technique. By destroying the boundaries separating art from other forms of production or recognition, the aesthetic regime can ultimately define art only by equating it with non-art or "life," an autonomy that is paradoxically heteronomous.[46] As I have sought to show above, such heteronomy has been conspicuously evident in forms of art that align or identify themselves with politics, like those profiled in *Actions* and *Vienna*.[47]

Similarly to his account of aesthetics, Rancière's definition of politics (*la politique*) is calibrated to question or resist the reified assumptions that often subtend thinking on this topic. For Rancière, politics is precisely *not* that which citizens of representative democracies often understand to be politics-as-usual, namely the highly conventionalized procedures of election, parliamentary deliberation, executive action, and law enforcement. (These are instead typically associated with the prevailing order that Rancière terms "the police" [*la police*].) Neither is

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[44] Raji Vallury, "Politicizing Art in Rancière and Deleuze: The Case of Postcolonial Literature," in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts eds., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 229.

[45] For an overview of Rancière's epochal schematization, see Rancière, "The Distribution of the Sensible," 20-24.

[46] A note on the usage of the term "aesthetic" in the dissertation: while I seek to problematize aspects of Rancière's epochal schematization, I nevertheless rely on his conception of the aesthetic regime in what follows. Unless noted otherwise, as in references to philosophical aesthetics, the terms "aesthetic" and "aesthetics" are used to denote a field of sensate experience that includes but is not limited to art (a concept whose identity is itself subject to contestation. Note that a certain slippage exists in Rancière's usage of the term "aesthetics," which refers to numerous fields, and functions both descriptively and normatively.

[47] It might well be asked whether the aesthetico-political field under consideration here is itself only a localized instance of the more general paradox of aesthetics in the aesthetic regime. While a less sympathetic audience might claim that this contradictory status of art is proof of its failure — essentially, the old argument that if anything can be art, nothing is art — this is not at all my intention. Rather, I mean to explore how this contradiction has formed a sort of enabling limitation, a source of promises that, while perhaps incapable of being concretely fulfilled, have nevertheless managed to make powerful claims on the attention of a given public. This approach is consistent with Rancière's claim that "aesthetics promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy and it thrives on that ambiguity." Rancière, "Aesthetics and Politics: Rethinking the Link," Lecture given at University of California–Berkeley, September 2002; unpaginated. Archived online at http://www.16beavergroup.org/monday/archives/001881.php, last accessed May 6, 2011.

politics to be equated with the practices usually associated with New Left movements and their affiliated descendants, including those that have recently been theorized as constituting emergent forms of "nongovernmental politics."[48]

Instead, politics has two key meanings. The first of these refers to the process by which a certain configuration of possible experience is designated as political. Like aesthetics, politics forms an articulation of what can be sensed, thought, said, and done — a singular crossing that Rancière refers to with the telling metaphor of a "knot."[49] It is this entanglement, operating as its own partition of the sensible, that identifies certain types of experience as "political." At the same time, politics takes on a more normative meaning as the name for the oppositional practices by which hegemonic partitions of the sensible are contested through the appearance of related forces that Rancière designates variably as "dissensus" (*le dissensus*), "dispute" (*le litige*), and "disagreement" (*la mésentente*).[50]

Although aesthetics and politics thus each have their own specificity, it is nevertheless evident that Rancière posits an unusually high degree of reciprocity between these spheres. Just as the fundamental questions of aesthetics invariably turn on such issues as participation, equality, and exclusion, so politics is always concerned with problems of appearance and the sensate character of power relations. This mutual implication is perhaps greatest in Rancière's concept of the partition of the sensible, in which aesthetics and politics are articulated to such an extent that they appear chiasmatic or even consubstantial.[51] At times, this mutuality even assumes a sort of *a priori* status as a constitutive condition of possibility, as in Rancière's claim that "the 'aesthetical knot' is always tied before you can identify art or politics."[52]

Given this high degree of interconnection, debates about art and politics will inevitably founder if they assume that these fields can be definitively isolated, as in the case with the longstanding opposition, familiar since the Left debates of the 1930s, between a heteronomous art that serves politics and an autonomous art that answers only to itself.[53] The desire to move beyond such misconceived categorizations informs Rancière's formulation of two key subsidiary concepts: *the aesthetics of politics* and *the politics of aesthetics*. Against simplified notions of a critical art that seeks to emancipate its public by making it aware of its own domination, such an understanding asks that we acknowledge the ways in which politics always has its own aesthetics and vice versa.

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[48] See Michel Feher, "The Governed in Politics," in Feher, ed., *Nongovermental Politics* (New York: Zone Books, 2007).
[49] Rancière, "Aesthetics and Politics: Rethinking the Link."
[50] For a gloss of the differences between these terms, see Gabriel Rockhill, *Appendix 1*, in Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 84-85. As with differing meanings of the term aesthetics, Rancière often transitions between these two senses of politics, the latter of which has a more clearly normative dimension. In the dissertation, I use the term "politics" in the first sense, denoting the partition of the sensible by which ostensibly "political" experience is identified, whether in mainstream or oppositional forms of activity.
[51] For an account of aesthetics and politics as consubstantial for Rancière, see Gabriel Rockhill, "The Politics of Aesthetics: Political History and the Hermeneutics of Art," in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*.
[52] Rancière, "Aesthetics and Politics: Rethinking the Link." For discussion of the consequence for arguments that call for "politicizing art," see Rancière, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics," in *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics*, eds. Beth Hinderliter et al., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 40-41.
[53] The key texts in these debates are reprinted in Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2007).

Rancière's account of the aesthetics of politics follows from his definitions of these terms. It begins with the insistence that any given political arrangement, whether repressive or emancipatory, is always already aesthetic, because such an arrangement necessarily maps a specific space of politics onto the coordinates of individual sensory experience. The implicit assumptions in such a political configuration — for example, whose voices are heard and counted, or who can appear in public and under what conditions — relate to corresponding aesthetic determinations. For the hegemonic forms of government that Rancière associates with "police" order, these relations are most often associated with the false self-evidence of consensus.[54] The task of a radically democratic politics is therefore to puncture this deceptive universality by initiating what Rancière theorizes as dissensus: forms of speech, action, and experience that contest a prevailing, hegemonic partition of the sensible. The aesthetics of such a politics might thus be glossed as the practice of appearing differently.

In what follows, I seek to track some of the many possible meanings that "appearance" might assume in such an aesthetics of politics. At some points this will entail considering the aesthetic dimensions of street theater, organized protest, and other modes of oppositional performance, while at others it will involve questioning how specific art practices can model, test, or otherwise instantiate forms of dissensus. Throughout, I ask readers to bear in mind that appearance is not a strictly visual category, but one that is also phenomenological, which is to say temporal, as well as cognitive, insofar as it presupposes specific matrices of recognition.

In a similar fashion, Rancière's notion of the politics of aesthetics has a more specific meaning than this phrase often bears in debates about political art. Here, it refers to the political vocation that has been accorded to art within a given partition of the sensible, which for our purposes is functionally equivalent with the historical epoch that Rancière terms "the aesthetic regime of art." Under this regime, aesthetics has become increasingly determined by two different ideas of equality.[55] These divergent ideas have in turn given rise to two conflicting politics of aesthetics, each specifying its own criteria for identifying emancipatory art.[56] The first of these logics seeks to connect the two equalities such that art seeks to transcend itself, with its characteristic forms

[54] While this term typically denotes a desirable norm governing the democratic process, Rancière reinterprets consensus as "a regime of the perceptible [...] in which the parties are presupposed as already given, their community established." In modern liberal democracies, the preeminent example of this monolithic consensus is the public opinion poll, which assumes that the views of a putatively singular public can be quantified and evaluated without remainder or dispute. Under such conditions, the people such a poll claims to represent are both "totally present and totally absent at once [...] caught in a structure of the visible where everything is on show and where there is thus no longer any place for appearance." See Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, tr. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 102-03.

[55] The first of these, already discussed above, originates in the collapse of longstanding hierarchies of genre, medium, and subject matter, and is characterized by a progressive levelling of the distinctions between art and other forms of collective life. Often this view was consonant with emerging notions of political equality and popular sovereignty, as in the argument that a single Homer never existed, and that the works attributed to him were instead the product of an anonymous collectivity. In contrast, the second type of equality is chiefly concerned with the relation between the different faculties of subjective perception, positing a viewer who exists independent of any social or political determinations. The paradigm of this relationship is Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, in which the free play of aesthetic judgment, with its nonhierarchical relations between cognition and sense, is only possible under conditions of disinterested autonomy. See Rancière, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics," 37.

[56] The following exposition paraphrases Rancière's argument in "Aesthetics as Politics," in Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, tr. Steven Corcoran (Malden: Polity Press, 2009), 38-41.

of experience becoming the principles of collective life. Tracing this "politics of the becoming-life of art" back to German Romanticism, Rancière identifies its more recent manifestations in a range of examples from the twentieth century avant-gardes, including the Bauhaus, Soviet Constructivism, the Situationist International, and the practice of Joseph Beuys.

In contrast, the second politics of aesthetics maintains a strict separation between the equality of autonomous art and the alienation of the world it holds at a distance. Rancière first associates this approach with the aestheticism of Gustave Flaubert, arguing that his fiction drew an egalitarian charge from its controversial indifference to subject matter. In the aesthetic theory of Theodor Adorno, especially his writings on Arnold Schoenberg, this self-sufficiency assumes further force as the mirror image of social alienation, enabling what Rancière calls a "politics of resistant form."[57]

These categorizations might initially seem merely to recapitulate the longstanding opposition between autonomy and commitment that was famously codified in the 1930s debates between Adorno and Walter Benjamin. Moreover, they might seem to bear a suspicious resemblance to the terms by which art historians and critics have sought to theorize postmodernism as a radical break with modernist autonomy.[58] However, Rancière radically displaces these received certainties by subjecting them to a double operation. His first move is to demonstrate that the two politics of aesthetics are not mutually exclusive. For instance, Adorno's aesthetics of autonomy in fact presumes the radical heteronomy of the artwork, such that the power of Schoenberg's serialist compositions actually derives from their implicit references to capitalist modes of production and divisions of labor.[59] On this view, it is not that autonomous practices can somehow negate or sublate heteronomous ones, but rather that these two orientations necessarily remain linked in productive conflict. Having disabled this opposition, Rancière then claims that the two politics of aesthetics are in fact equiprimordial, forming "antagonistic elements whose tension infuses and animates the aesthetic regime of art in its entirety."[60]

The implications of this position are manifold and far-reaching, especially for the discipline of art history, insofar is it still relies upon distinctions — for example, between modernism and postmodernism — that largely assume the opposition that Rancière undoes. For the purposes of this study, what matters most is the idea that autonomy and heteronomy are not incommensurable, but are in some elemental sense jointly articulated, a relation that Rancière figures once again as a "knot."[61] Such a position asks us to reexamine influential beliefs regarding the politics of art, with obvious ramifications for attempts to practice a critical art history.[62] Over and against the longstanding notion of an impasse between heteronomy and

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[57] Ibid., 40.
[58] For a representative and influential formulation, see Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism" (Parts One and Two), in Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson et al. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 52-79.
[59] Rancière, "Aesthetics as Politics," 41.
[60] Ibid., 42.
[61] Jacques Rancière, "The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes," in Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, tr. and ed. Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum Books, 2010), 116.
[62] Among the most conspicuous consequences is the fact that the meaning of the term "critical art" can no longer be taken for granted. If such critique typically presumes that art can reveal conditions of domination and thereby educate and empower its audience, this accords greater priority to instrumental rationality than to other forms of

autonomy, Rancière allows us to grasp such oppositions as false dichotomies. The criticality of art can not be reduced to either of these logics, but instead must be seen as a product of their articulation, an operation that Rancière compares to collage, a format premised on the heterogeneity of its components.[63] In the same way that collage initiates encounters between discrete visual languages, genuinely effective critical art is that which negotiates the boundaries between art and non-art, or between sense and non-sense. By doing so, it yokes together disparate elements into forms that are "capable of speaking twice over: on the basis of their legibility and on the basis of their illegibility."[64]

Though this peculiarly double speech might at first be dismissed as a form of equivocation, it might instead be thought along more productive lines: as an echo that overlays the impression of sense with the obstinate materiality of sound, or a knot in which the same thread is passed back over and around itself so as to transform its function. We might also recall the strange form of writing that Günter Saree produced in his Cologne action of 1969. In repeatedly inscribing the word "AND" upon the city pavement, Saree occasioned a clash between everyday common sense and non-sense. Although the action would have been legible in some way to most if not all of its viewers, and despite the fact that it literally consisted of producing legible forms, its product was also highly indeterminate, a hypothetical language consisting solely of conjunctions without any positive content. Viewing the action as a collage in Rancière's sense, we might claim that it articulated legibility and illegibility in a form of sensible experience, obliquely questioning the possibilities for the expression of collective dissensus. Saree's action could thus be said to be emblematic of the field of practices that I designate as "aesthetico-political," insofar as it initiated an encounter between heterogeneous logics of art in a sensible, contingent event.

4. Specific Heteronomies: Implications of the Aesthetico-Political

I would now like to develop the concept of the aesthetico-political in more detail, working both with and against Rancière's theory of aesthetics. Given the extent to which aesthetics and politics determine each other within the aesthetic regime of art, we might reprise the objection raised above: namely, that the emergence of an aesthetico-political field *circa* 1968 did not mark a specific historical threshold, but was rather consistent with the larger logic of the aesthetic regime. From this perspective, the aesthetico-political would simply be another way of describing the "knot" by which the conditions of possibility for both aesthetics and politics have long been intertwined. If figures like Vostell, Weibel, EXPORT, and their colleagues sought to revalue their activities as something other than art, this would essentially be consistent with the self-transcending impulse that Rancière identifies in Friedrich Schiller's 1795 reading of the Juno Ludovisi sculpture, which itself dates to the 1st century CE.[65]

By indicating these considerable historical discrepancies, I do not mean to suggest that Rancière's argument is anachronistic so much as historically underdetermined. Rancière's

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affect and communication, violating the equality of aesthetic experience. Furthermore, it assumes a transparent aesthetic, privileging the "politics of the becoming-life of art" at the cost of the "politics of resistant form."

[63] Jacques Rancière, "Problems and Transformations of Critical Art," in *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, 47.

[64] Ibid., 46.

[65] Rancière, "The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes," 117ff.

polemical goals notwithstanding, it is hard if not impossible to overlook the massive transformations of political economy that separate the 1960s from the Romantic period, or for that matter from the present moment. In his understandable desire to challenge increasingly reified periodizations of modernism, Rancière has developed an epochal model that manifests a certain ahistoricism. In positioning my account of the aesthetico-political at a critical angle to Rancière's theory of the aesthetic regime, I hope to call attention to this problem and explore ways in which it might be remedied.[66]

So while the concept of the aesthetico-political as I elaborate it here is intensively informed by Rancière's thinking, I have nevertheless sought to define it relative to a historically specific moment in which the immanent potential of aesthetics and politics was realized in a singular manner. This is why I have linked the emergence of the aesthetico-political to the four developments glossed above: politicizations of aesthetics; aestheticizations of politics; the crisis of medium-specificity; and the emergence of New Left movements.[67] It is only through this altered frame, I would argue, that we can ultimately view this history with the sort of sensitivity, balance, and vigilance that it calls for. As I hope to show, the years around 1968 in West Germany and Austria witnessed an intense, unpredictable, and in many ways unprecedented set of exchanges between aesthetics and politics, encompassing sensible forms, embodied affects, modes of performance, models of publicity, rhetorics of address, and event structures. How might we understand this increased traffic?

Despite the optimism of Lebel and many others, it did not herald art's revolutionary sublation into life. Neither did it conform to the terms of Walter Benjamin's influential call for a radical "politicizing of aesthetics" that could oppose the Fascist tendency toward the "aestheticizing of politics."[68] Still less did it respect Adorno's prescriptions for an aesthetic of refusal, remove, and opacity.[69] Part of the problem in schematizing these exchanges derives from their considerable heterogeneity. If aesthetico-political activities sometimes insisted on reframing political demands as art, at other times they placed much more emphasis on their effectiveness than on their categorization. In certain cases, they so attenuated the opposition between aesthetics and politics that their own ultimate status was unclear, or even undecidable. Adding to these problems is the fact that such activities often sought to transform the very criteria for their own recognizability. At any rate, in responding to this question I have tried to preserve a sense of this heterogeneity by locating these exchanges within an expansive, dynamic, and internally differentiated field of

[66] Although Rancière analyzes the mutual entanglement of aesthetics and politics, he does not explicitly discuss the aesthetico-political, whether as a concept or a historical field; the term "aesthetico-political" is found only rarely in his writings.

[67] While the first two elements might seem like a faithful adaptation of Rancière's terminology, I would like for them to retain a distinct connotation in two respects. First, while I generally follow Rancière's idiosyncratic usage of the terms "aesthetics" and "politics," here I mean for the terms to carry a less restrictive or implicitly normative meaning. In other words, in what follows "politics" can also refer to parliamentary activities, and "aesthetics" to mainstream or state-sanctioned culture. Second, I will highlight cases in which these aesthetico-political interactions were subject to new forms of technical mediation, lending them a further degree of historical specificity.

[68] Benjamin draws this opposition in the epilogue to the 1939 version of his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility," see Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 270. I trust it is clear that my terms "aestheticization of politics" and "politicization of aesthetics" do not correspond to Benjamin's.

[69] For discussion of the conflict between Adorno and the German New Left, see Chapter Five.

articulations. Although the term aesthetico-political is admittedly unwieldy, its hyphenated, compound status literally marks this centrality of articulation.

One final note: although I maintain that the events surveyed here retain considerable interest for contemporary artists, activists, and critics, this should not imply that the term "aesthetico-political" is a normative designation. In other words, I have not selected works solely on the basis of their presumed effectiveness. In part, this means to counter a problematic tendency in critical art history: namely, a bias favoring ideologically sympathetic artists over those whose work is deemed too fraught with contradictions. But it is also meant to draw attention to the importance of heteronomy — the condition in which an action, whether aesthetic or political, is subject to determinations outside its agent's control. Sanctioned works of critical art are too often those that best limit the potential for misreading, privileging legibility over illegibility instead of building new connections between these modes of signification. My point is not that works with a greater degree of heteronomy are necessarily more deserving — this would only invert the opposition in question. Rather, it is that a more rigorous engagement with heteronomy can demonstrate just how tightly entwined it is with that of autonomy, and that the interaction between these two logics is highly contingent. By attending more closely to this articulation, we stand to gain a more versatile understanding of aesthetic and political criticality.[70]

The case studies that comprise this dissertation pursue such ends by examining the various heteronomies that determined the field of the aesthetico-political, relating them to contingent shifts in political economy. This first entails situating art and activism in the context of the extensive transformations that occurred in both West Germany and Austria in the years around 1968: the negotiations of the National Socialist legacy; the transition to social democracy; adjustments to a new international balance of power; and the reconstruction of industry, accompanied by a high degree of corporatist cooperation between labor unions, trade cartels, and the state. It also requires accounting for the increasing, multifaceted impact of globalization, including such developments as the Americanization of both popular and elite culture, and the gradual consolidation of a more integrated trans-Atlantic art market.

Yet I would maintain that such analysis must also engage a related development that has so far received insufficient scrutiny, whether from historians of West German and Austrian art or from theorists including Rancière: the marked expansion of capitalist markets during this period, which increasingly exploited previously untapped sources of value. In his still-relevant 1984 essay "Periodizing the 60s," Fredric Jameson persuasively argued that the manifold social and cultural changes of that period have to be thought together with this broad-based movement of enclosure, which encompassed the industrialization of agriculture in the Third World and the consolidation of the culture industry in the First.[71] For Jameson, the standard, idealistic narrative of the 60s as an emancipatory moment had to be subjected to a sharp qualification. New social

[70] Again, such an objective requires that the Rancièrean model be invested with more historical specificity. If, as Rancière argues, the autonomy of aesthetic experience is always also the experience of heteronomy, it remains unclear how the balance between these properties is negotiated or how it changes over time. Neither is it evident how these properties themselves might vary historically — how, for instance, the heteronomy of the Dadaists' "artificial hells" would have differed from that of an Action performed in public before an accidental audience. For Rancière's claim, see Rancière, "Aesthetics and Politics: Rethinking the Link," 14; for more on Dada events, see T.J. Demos, "Dada's Event: Paris 1921," in *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics*, 135-52.
[71] Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s."

movements premised on political liberation simultaneously depended on a much more ambivalent liberation from traditional modes of production. Their characteristic sense of uncontainable dynamism reflected the failure of industrial capitalist institutions to control the energies they had "freed" from the last remaining precapitalist markets: indigenous modes of production in the Third World, and the realms of affect and the unconscious in the First. On this view, the 60s witnessed the dawning not of the Age of Aquarius, but of the era of late capitalism.

Without defending all aspects of Jameson's argument, I would nevertheless maintain that its dialectical account of liberation enables us to form a clearer picture of the larger terrain on which the specific heteronomies of the aesthetico-political field in question were determined.[72] This conjuncture might be outlined as follows: On the one hand, the years around 1968 were marked by an explosion of new aesthetic and political practices, and by new ways of defining or articulating these domains; Vostell's claim that art and life had finally merged may be taken as paradigmatic of this tendency. On the other, this period also gave rise to much less salutary processes of aestheticization, during which forms of experience that had previously been deemed worthless or even threatening were commodified as art and made subject to capitalist exchange.[73] At their most extreme, these circuits of recuperation suggested that Vostell's fantasy of an art-life synthesis was the denial, or perhaps even the ideological inversion, of a society of spectacle in which all aspects of everyday life could be experienced as an entertaining diversion.

Though my dissertation refrains from such conclusions, in what follows I hope to demonstrate how capitalist movements of colonization intensively conditioned the very forms that explicitly sought to challenge them. I argue that this pattern of recuperation indicates that the event itself was a site where such enclosure was both effected and opposed, and that the same was true of the aesthetico-political. The ultimate implication of this view is that the criticality of artists, activists, and scholars is constituted only by exposure through such forces of heteronomy, and that the normative force we might desire our judgments to have is always subject to the unforeseeable effects of this immanence.

5. When is an Event?

What do we mean when we refer to something that occurs as an event? At first, this question would seem to yield only frustrating answers, ones that are vague, obvious, or both. An event is something that happens. Sometimes this thing is important, but other times not. And so on. Yet the question of how events are defined and experienced also opens out onto any number of intricate problems. A partial list of the disciplines addressing this topic would include phenomenology, theoretical physics, cybernetics, philosophy of technology, historiography,

[72] If Jameson's totalizing, macro-historical argument and clear base-superstructure distinction meant unapologetically to convince his readers of the continuing relevance of Marxist analyses, those same factors might well educe skepticism from a more contemporary audience.

[73] This process thus reads as an extension or intensification of the dynamic that T.J. Clark has termed "the bad dream of modernism," within which modernism's desire to explore subjects "outside" or "opposite" the norms of bourgeois experience ultimately facilitated "a general policing of spaces in the culture which previously had been useless, and therefore uncharted, but which capital eventually saw it could profit from, and wanted brought into the realm of representation." Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 306.

deconstruction, probability mathematics, psychoanalysis, political theory, and media studies. This suggests that efforts to critically define the event are quite possibly doomed to failure, insofar as their subject remains simultaneously under- and overdetermined. Such risks notwithstanding, I would nonetheless like to venture that some advantage might be derived from this apparent liability — namely, the capacity for the term "event" to refer to seemingly incompatible extremes of everydayness and anomaly, transparency and profundity.

Though problematic, this duality is arguably in keeping with the way many of us actually understand and speak of events. At breakfast we might read a newspaper's account of a natural disaster or a momentous election, while at dinner we might recount the more mundane events of the day to our companions. Watching television we might join a comedy newscaster in scoffing at a politician's clumsily managed media appearance, skipping over commercials hyping movie premieres and "Annual Sales Events" at car dealerships. Yet while this overexposure might easily lead to cynicism or "event fatigue," most of us still refer without hesitation to the most formative experiences of our lives as events. To the extent that such a description accurately captures some aspect of a particular contemporary experience, I would claim that this duality of the event resembles the ambivalent phenomena outlined above: the "liberation" felt during the 60s, or the aestheticization/spectacularization of life and politics. In what follows, I would like for readers to hear in the term "event" something of this fraught dialectical relationship between opposed potentialities.

With this said, I do mean for the term "event" to bear a more specifically defined set of meanings, even as it necessarily retains a certain plasticity. In the most basic sense, I use the term to refer to durational activities taking place in the aesthetic and political fields analyzed by the dissertation.[74] As is clear from the collections discussed above, this period witnessed a marked proliferation of different event forms. Often these were located at the intersection of different artistic and/or technical media, and involved varying articulations of aesthetics and politics. These events were typically marked by a relatively high degree of abnormality, incident, and controversy: in other words, the qualities that comprise "eventfulness." Although there were often important differences between these event forms, I nevertheless maintain that this common set of determinations can ground a more expansive categorization that traverses local distinctions. So while this approach will remain consistent throughout the dissertation, the empirical features of the event can and will range considerably.

Some of the events discussed below belonged to the space of officially sanctioned or neo-avant-garde art, others to mainstream or oppositional politics, while still others bridged or hybridized these spheres. However, in spite of these variations such events all manifested the traits of an emergent aesthetico-political logic, whether implicitly or explicitly. Some events were performed in private dwellings before a small invited audience, whereas others took place in cinemas or galleries and were extensively advertised. In certain public events the significance of site was of paramount importance, while this was not so in others. If some events eschewed technical mediation, aspiring to affect only their immediate onlookers, others were performed for no

[74] To clarify this usage further: I use the term "event" in the general sense to refer to occurrences that took place in aesthetics and/or politics during this period. I will also use the term in a more specific sense to refer to occurrences in the emergent space between aesthetics and politics, ones that often challenged these categorizations; I will refer to these as aesthetico-political events.

audience except a camera. Although people with recording equipment were typically present at events, their role ranged markedly, from ostensibly neutral providers of documentation to active participants in the proceedings. Some events were highly planned in advance, with scripts or scores detailing individual movements, materials, and camera angles. Others intentionally admitted a high degree of contingency into their realization. While some events lasted only minutes or even moments, others extended over weeks or had an indeterminate, open-ended duration. In cases like Weibel and EXPORT's *From the Dog File*, it was essential that the event occur before an accidental non-art audience in the context of everyday commerce. While certain events were designed to take place only once, others were in fact reproduced on multiple occasions and in different settings. If this iterability challenged the common preconception that an event is unique and ephemeral, such a divergence was even more pronounced in cases where events were hypothetical, or were designated retroactively.

This heterogeneous definition could well prompt several objections. It might seem problematic to use a somewhat generic descriptor in order to aggregate practices with diverse features and objectives, especially when these practices often relied on specific terms in order to differentiate themselves from others. In what follows, I look to mitigate this risk by consistently pointing out how different events were conceived, defined, and described at the time. In doing so, I hope that the art-historical, theoretical, and critical merits of this categorization will become evident. Another objection might be that another term already exists to describe occurrences that took place at the intersection of aesthetics and politics: namely, performance. An adequate response to this question would involve lengthy detours into the history of such forms and their institutionalization, whether in the discursive space of the museum or the discipline of performance studies.

While such an undertaking is impossible here, I would nevertheless like to gesture toward a contemporary problem with real importance for analyses of this field. I refer here to the processes through which performance modes whose initial status was more or less aesthetico-political have been gradually but pervasively recuperated as art, whether through exhibitions, academic study, or the more recent phenomena of re-enactment and re-performance. In short, performance today is most commonly framed as an artistic medium, even if many of its practitioners, historians, and theorists opposed this very concept. While a change of terminology can do little to oppose such a development, I still think it worthwhile to ask how the disciplines of performance studies and art history might productively confront dissonance between their objects and the conceptual categories they use to map them. If nothing else, such questions at least begin to suggest one means by which the encroachment of institutional pressures on academic research might be identified and possibly resisted.

On a more historical note, it bears mention that the term "event" is in no way exogenous to this context. Many figures during the 1960s, including Vostell, designated their activities with the German word *Ereignis*, the closest equivalent to the English "event." However, whether or not this term was used is largely beside the point. What matters is instead the extent to which an interest in what we are here calling "events" extended to other seemingly disparate activities. Consider for example Jürgen Becker's Introduction to the *Happenings* collection, where he claims that the origin of the term Happenings was actually accidental. While critics picked up the term after Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959), Becker claimed that this was of

little importance, since "Happenings was for Kaprow merely the word for what he organized, namely, *events*."[75] While the sensibility exhibited by Becker's claim was doubtless out of place in a book that explicitly grouped together a range of such forms under the heading of Happenings, its relative indifference to typological concerns was in many ways characteristic of the events I analyze here. As often as not, such events placed less emphasis on their own legibility, whether as art or politics, than on the facts of the activity in question. The name given to what happened wasn't nearly as important as how it happened and why and for whom, as well as the simple fact that it happened at all.

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With this said, there is nothing simple in saying that an event happens. The everyday factuality of this observation opens almost imperceptibly onto any number of intricate questions: What are the different rhythms with which an event unfolds, and how do they interrelate? Do events happen in time, through time, across time... or do they somehow also constitute our very sense of time? In what ways is this production of time susceptible to outside influences, and with what consequences? How can we account for the fact that certain events continue to exert effects long after they might seem to have finished? And what impact might these properties have on our efforts to engage the histories of events, whether as scholars, artists, or activists? While it is clearly impossible to resolve such questions here, I nevertheless wish to begin to elaborate them so as to suggest how they inform the dissertation. Since my thinking on these distinct times of the event has been shaped by the philosophy of Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, I will briefly explain what I take to be their most pertinent contributions, touching on an important difference between them as it regards to the overall objectives of the dissertation.

Although Derrida's theorization of the event is typically associated with his later, supposedly more "political" work, many of its basic elements were already operative in his early critique of Husserlian phenomenology. As is well known, there Derrida sought to reconceive temporality and ontology outside the restrictions of what he termed the metaphysics of presence: a pervasive tendency to derive the meaning of discourse from the presence of a unifying, transcendent reference point (whether God, consciousness, truth, History, origin, voice, or any of the other avatars of logocentrism). Against phenomenology's fiction of a self-present subject — typically associated with Husserl's notion of the living present — Derrida articulated his theory of *différance*: the ceaseless differing/deferring by which meaning-effects are generated from a network of oppositions distributed across time. The intervals within this network divide from within any notion of presence, whether spatial or temporal. Temporalization — the operation by which our sense of time is synthesized from perceptions of memory, duration, and anticipation – – is thereby always-already a process of "temporization," dependent as it is on "a detour, a delay, a relay, a reserve, a representation."[76] This means that an event can never be punctual, strictly speaking, since the very time in which it occurs extends well beyond any one point. Neither can an event ever properly be said to be present, insofar as the past and future that constitute it are

[75] cf. Jürgen Becker, "Introduction," *Happenings*, 11-12. ["Daß die erste der Art, nämlich Allan Kaprows 18 Happenings in 6 Parts der neuen Kunstübung den Namen gab, war Zufall: *Happenings* war Kaprow lediglich das Wort für das, was er veranstaltete, nämlich *Ereignisse*..." (italics in original)]
[76] Derrida, "Différance," in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 8.

themselves subject to structures of difference and delay. To speak of a past event, then, is always to preserve in abeyance the possibilities of its future, which might yet redetermine it retroactively. As Derrida made clear in his contemporary critiques of structuralism, this irreducible heteronomy of the event is incompatible with the historicist temporality often assumed in the social sciences — a point that is still germane to the discipline of art history today, at least in its more positivistic forms.

Derrida developed a second crucial insight into the character of the event in his work on the performativity of the signifier. In his reading of J.L. Austin's theory of illocutionary speech-acts — utterances such as marriage vows, which function as actual actions — Derrida argues that such significations are as much transformative as performative, forces that effectively generate new objects or phenomena while simultaneously altering their conditions of recognizability.[77] Insofar as events themselves exhibit this property — whether on their own or through the forms of representation operative within them — they are liable to change the identities of the agents involved, or even to constitute the realities they otherwise purport to document. At their limit, these properties can deform the event such that it resists or even exceeds the logic of documentation, if not that of representation altogether.

These properties of dynamism and intransigence begin to explain our everyday sense of the mutability of the event, which sometimes seems to shift even as we try to capture or describe it. But they are also consistent with an even more radical aporia that resides at the core of the event as a philosophical concept. As Derrida carefully insists, the event presents us with two incompatible truths that must nevertheless be thought together. On the one hand, any event is absolutely singular and unrepeatable; birth and death are paradigmatic in this respect. On the other, an event can only be recognized as such through its iterability — its dependence on *différance*, and its attendant capacity to be cited without restriction — and is therefore plural and divided.[78] As Derrida puts it, "repetition must already be at work in the singularity of the event."[79] The event is thus ineluctably riven by the paradoxical fact that its very conditions of possibility are at once those of its impossibility. It is in this sense that we can speak of the event as possessing an intrinsic undecidability.[80]

Yet however interesting, such considerations would be academic were it not for the fact that Derrida proceeds to elaborate from them a compelling account of the political and ethical obligations inaugurated by the aporetic structure of the event. Because the undecidability of the event means that it "never quite takes place," it remains oriented toward the promise of that

[77] In Derrida's words, the performative "produces or transforms a situation, it effects." Derrida, "Signature Event Context," tr. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, in *Limited Inc*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988, 13. Without over-hastily equating the speech act with other forms like events or images, one might recall Derrida's insistence that all forms of representation *qua* writing can exist only through iterability, and thus remain open to the possibility of citation.

[78] For more on this aporia see Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 17-18.

[79] Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility," 453.

[80] At times Derrida will reverse this formulation such that undecidability is itself figured as a sort of event: as what he calls variously a "trial," a "passage," and an "experience and experiment"; Derrida, "Afterword," *Limited Inc*, 116.

which might happen, but has yet to.[81] In his later work, Derrida aligns this forward-leaning inclination of the event with a number of other motifs, including messianism, the *arrivant*, and a number of terms derived from *avenir*, the French term for "future." The possibilities of democracy and justice are linked with what Derrida variously calls "the event that most arrives," and "the event that remains an event."[82] The enigmatic character of such formulations prompts the seemingly circular questions by which the aporias of the event can begin to be approached: What sort of event is that which most arrives? What kind of event most remains an event? While such questions do not exactly have specific implications for the empirical procedures of critical art history, I nevertheless want them to resonate throughout the dissertation, insofar as they open up new perspectives on the sort of work that aesthetico-political events might be said to do.

In order to direct Derrida's account of the event toward more practicable ends, we must first attend to an important shortcoming in his analyses: their reliance on a more or less ahistorical frame. Without disputing Derrida's reasons for adopting this quasi-transcendental approach — a position deriving primarily from the critique of metaphysics — I would maintain that it fails to register the considerable influence that historically contingent transformations have exerted on the very conditions of eventhood. Although such changes might not alter the event in a philosophical sense, they nevertheless have decisive implications for the way that events are experienced on the phenomenological level, and for the way they operate aesthetically and politically. In order to remedy this oversight, I want to draw on one of Derrida's key interlocutors: the philosopher of technology Bernard Stiegler, who has elaborated an important critique of deconstruction in his multi-volume study *Technics and Time*.

For our purposes, Stiegler's most useful intervention is to displace the Derridean analysis of the event (*événement*) to what he calls event-ization (*événementialisation*): the conditions under which the processes of subjective time-synthesis (or temporalization) have become increasingly determined by technical mediation, especially in the form of recording devices and broadcasting networks. To telegraph Stiegler's intricate argument, these forms of mediation alter our very temporal experience by combining primary and mediated temporal fluxes.[83] When we watch television, for example, our experiences of recollection, duration, and anticipation — the elements from which our sense of time is produced — are interwoven with the distinct rhythms of whatever program we watch. This hybridized time-synthesis has seldom-remarked but decisive consequences, in that it reshapes the very horizons of individual and collective experience, altering the temporal conditions of possibility for memory, recognition, decision, expectation, and action. In other words, event-ization changes our very sense of how events feel and what can count as an event.

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[81] Derrida explores the significance of this phrase, which he cites from his antagonist John Searle, in "Limited Inc a b c...", *Limited Inc*, 35ff.

[82] Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993), 33; Derrida, "Artifactualities," in Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002), 20.

[83] The following summary draws primarily on Stiegler's account in the second volume of *Technics and Time*; see Stiegler, "The Industrialization of Memory," *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), 97-187, esp. 115-18.

This insight helps clarify an essential intersection between the otherwise divergent philosophies of Rancière, Derrida, and Stiegler. As I have sought to show above, both Rancière and Derrida tend toward a certain ahistoricism in their thinking, one that threatens to derail analyses like those I undertake here. By emphasizing the contingency of temporalization — a process integral to any notion of aesthetics, politics, or event — Stiegler reminds us of the need to correct for this tendency, and to always refer our concepts back to a specific determining conjuncture. Together with Derrida, he elaborates any number of important terms with which to think the temporality and ontology of the event, a dimension that Rancière typically overlooks, being generally indifferent to phenomenology.

Though I do not pretend to have somehow resolved the contradictions between these three theorists, I nevertheless seek to mobilize them collectively in this effort to elaborate a philosophically attuned, historically scrupulous account of the manifold imbrications of aesthetics, politics, and event in a particular moment. If, as Rancière shows, aesthetics and politics are entangled in a given partition of the sensible, how can an event transform their conditions of articulation? In what ways does this effectively propose new models of perception, action, or social organization? How might artists or activists seek to implement such changes on the temporal level? What are the consequences of doing so under conditions of technical mediation? And if, as Rancière stresses, the aesthetico-political inevitably entails the experience of heteronomy, what relation might this condition have to the constitutive aporia of the event as both singular and multiple, both more and less than present? In what ways might the intrinsic inscrutability of the event be able to resist the pressures of hegemonic logics, or to supplement critical interventions? Such questions inform the specific case studies that comprise the dissertation, to which I now turn.

6. Overview of the Dissertation

In its general structure, the dissertation seeks to trace the emergence and development of the aesthetico-political as a distinct field within West Germany and Austria in the years leading up to and through 1968. It does so primarily by analyzing changes in the status of the event, with this term understood in the polyvalent sense described above. Chapter Two examines the cultural politics of the FRG during the period of its reconstruction under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, a recovery often mythologized as the *Wirtschaftswunder* or "economic miracle." The chapter contrasts two exhibitions from the Adenauer era: the initial installments of the international art fair *documenta*, which were held in 1954 and 1959, and *Living with Pop — A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism* (1963), a satirical performance in which the artists Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg claimed the contents of a furniture store as art. Despite their considerable discrepancies, these events each invoked Germany's recent past in numerous ways — some explicit and univocal, others charged with unspoken ambivalence. I trace the political and aesthetic effects of these divergent rhetorics of memory, arguing against longstanding diagnoses of cultural amnesia in postwar West Germany. In doing so, I posit a reciprocal relation between anamnesis and event. On the one hand, this entails viewing historical memory as a type of event: a moment of recognition mediated by technical substrates, the properties of the image, and the power dynamics of specific institutions and discourses. On the other, this requires considering historical shifts in the function of the public event as a site of memory. In addition to its primary

test cases, the chapter examines other contemporary exhibitions and performances, political appearances, popular film, and televised broadcasts.

Chapter Three turns to Austria, providing an account of the markedly different cultural conditions that prevailed there. In contrast to West Germany, Austria was not occupied after World War II, from which it emerged at considerably less economic disadvantage, and it underwent a comparatively lenient process of denazification. These circumstances, combined with prevailing conservatism and cultural isolation, formed the preconditions for Actionism, a strain of production that was at once among the most radical and most regressive of the neo-avant-gardes. The chapter charts the emergence of the Action between 1960 and 1965, examining how outlying experiments with dominant trends in painting and sculpture developed into a singular event form centered around engagements with duration, representation, and publicity. In mapping this trajectory, I pay particular attention to conflicts between autonomy and heteronomy, relating these to the overall transformation of the aesthetico-political during that moment. The chapter schematizes three salient aspects of the Action as a type of event-structure: the Action as ritual, the Action as direct art, and the Action as social transgression. It then proceeds to analyze several of the numerous contradictions that plagued this field, focussing on the status of temporality, the effects of technical mediation, and the relation between publicity and the mass media. In doing so, it aims to dislodge some of the misconceptions that tend to surround accounts of Actionism as a unified movement, arguing instead for a more nuanced engagement that examines the critical potential of the Action as an event alongside its problems.

In Chapter Four I seek to extend this line of argument by profiling a body of work that emerged in mid-1960s Vienna, drawing on the precedent of Actionism but integrating it into a very different model of practice. As we have already seen in the case *Vienna*, the years between 1966 and 1970 witnessed many new types of action, ranging from "action lectures" to "film actions." Categorizing this field as "mediated actions," this chapter argues that such event-forms enabled a more responsive engagement with the rapidly shifting relations between aesthetics and politics in the later 1960s. Although mediated actions critically appropriated the example of Actions, they drew equally on two different, less widely known precedents: the activities of the Vienna Group, a small group of writers, performers, and artists that worked together in the latter half of the 1950s; and the experimental cinema of Peter Kubelka and Kurt Kren, who developed innovative montage techniques in the early 1960s. The chapter seeks to demonstrate how these distinct approaches to the event were hybridized in the mediated actions developed by Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT between 1966 and 1968. Examining individual and collaborative works by the two artists, the chapter argues that mediated actions can be characterized as a distinct type of event, one that I define as the *disagreement*. The term "disagreement" can signify both dispute and dissimilarity, and I draw on both senses in my theorization of the disagreement as a manifestation of dissensus that exhibits two properties: recombination and contradiction. Ultimately I seek to show how this model of the event allowed for productive, immanent experiments with the relations between aesthetics and politics, and between autonomy and heteronomy.

Chapter Five returns to West Germany in order to examine a particularly significant period in the development of the aesthetico-political: the years between 1966 and 1970, when this field expanded notably while at the same time becoming more prominent and complex. During this

moment experimental art both became more and more reliant on new event forms, while a similar shift occurred in left politics, concomitant with the emergence and crisis of the extra-parliamentary opposition, or APO, a coalition of New Left movements opposed to the perceived overreach of a bipartisan government. The chapter argues that these transformations were intimately interrelated, while at the same time not being reducible to each other. It positions the "events of 1968" relative to the increasing centrality of the aesthetico-political, elaborating a genealogical account of this shift that examines new aestheticizations of politics alongside new politicizations of the aesthetic. The chapter then proceeds to map out two distinct aesthetico-political tendencies, reading them each as responses to this conjuncture. The first of these is the advocacy of direct action as a strategy for the transformation of everyday life. Such a view proved increasingly attractive to wide sectors of the APO, ranging from commune-dwellers to student activists to the militant left cells that formed in the aftermath of 1968. I examine several events that operated in accordance with such a logic, reading them back through the contemporary critique of Ulrike Meinhof's pre-RAF writings. The second tendency, while also aesthetico-political, exhibited distinct characteristics, chief among which was an insistence on the importance of aesthetic education. This approach sought cultural revolution both through the reform of art education and the radical transformation of democratic institutions. Analyzing events staged by Joseph Beuys and by the LIDL collective — a group of artists and students including a young Jörg Immendorff — I seek to show how such forms modelled an aesthetico-political practice premised on the act of learning differently.

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As for the geographical scope of the dissertation, a few words are in order. I have chosen to focus on events in German-speaking Europe in part to remedy perceived oversights in the existing Anglophone art-historical literature on this area. While substantial, this scholarship still inclines heavily toward painting and sculpture and toward the best-known work of canonized artists, many of whom established their reputations during the first major wave of American investment in German art during the 1980s. In what follows, I hope it also becomes clear that West Germany and Austria are each compelling and productive test cases for my theses regarding the emergence of the aesthetico-political and the status of the event. Despite the substantial differences between these nations, cultural production in both places underwent an intense reconfiguration during this period, in part because of corresponding social, economic, and political transformations. This coincidence was was intimately connected with the powerful, deeply divisive legacy of National Socialist rule and the partial, uneven measures of redress that occurred after 1945. Cultural politics in these countries was equally determined by the redistribution of power in post-war Europe, during which time Germany was partitioned while Austria was not, remaining non-aligned. Accordingly, the aftermath of fascism and the impact of the Cold War are questions that I address here, particularly in Chapters Two and Three.

I have chosen not to extend this study to the German Democratic Republic (henceforth GDR or East Germany) for the reason that a comparable aesthetico-political field simply did not exist there, owing to the vastly different conditions of social organization and cultural production. While I make passing references to conditions in East Germany, especially considering artists who emigrated from the East, there was little to no reciprocal exchange between the FRG and GDR until the mid-1970s, a moment which falls outside the scope of this project. Something

similar is true of Austria, where artists entered into increased contact with their Eastern bloc counterparts only during the 1970s.

Lastly, although my focus largely remains limited to these two nations, I hope that the results will prove to be of more general interest. While such an approach might at first seem parochial or Eurocentric, the following chapters trace a network of affiliations between local collectives and cosmopolitan avant-gardes, between small-scale gallerists and new international commercial circuits, between political factions advocating regional university reform and others calling for worldwide revolution. Ultimately, as I seek to argue, the emergence of this particular aesthetico-political sphere can be linked to specific structural transformations in an incipiently global capitalist economy, shifts that have decisively informed cultural production and political action in recent decades and into the present. I will elaborate briefly on the contemporary implications of such developments where pertinent in the body of the dissertation, and in more detail in the conclusion.

Chapter Two

Memory Under Reconstruction
Anamnesis, Image, and Event in *Wirtschaftswunder* West Germany

1. Two Images, Two Histories, Two Events

What sort of an event is historical memory, and where does it happen? Dating back at least as far as the work of Pierre Nora, scholars of memory have focussed on the second of these questions, often neglecting the first. They have studied monuments, pilgrimage routes, ruins, battlefields, and countless other types of site in order to map the coordinates of the unique locations that Nora famously designated as *lieux de mémoire*: the places at which different sorts of collective identity become manifest. One wonders whether these efforts to locate memory mean on some level to contain traits that run counter to the interests of much academic research, insofar as mnemonic discourses often exhibit a high degree of dynamism, ubiquity, and transversality, cutting across the boundaries imposed by disciplines and institutions. By definition, memory is a means of engaging the past that is not limited to academics, let alone historians. Although memory has its own politics, it is one not determined by parties or elections. And while memory indeed has its sites, these vary wildly, ranging from the parliament to the museum, from the shopping mall to the living room — and from the familiar environs of embodied space to the radically distributed topography of the mediasphere.

However we understand the spatial dimensions of memory, they clearly have to be thought alongside its specific aesthetic characteristics. The past does not somehow lie dormant at a site of memory, waiting to be summoned; instead, it is actively constituted through various modes of representation, all of which inform the object they might otherwise be thought to transparently depict. Accounts of memory thus must reckon with the fact that the past *happens*, and it happens differently each time. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Jacques Rancière has developed several concepts that aid efforts to map an aesthetic domain that transcends the putative autonomy of art. Chief among these is his account of the partition of the sensible: a regime of perception constituted through determinate interrelations between aesthetics and politics. In this chapter I consider several specific discourses of memory along these lines, examining the ways in which they coordinated aesthetic forms and political impulses. However, as I have sought to show above, Rancière's account of the aesthetic is limited by its failure to attend to crucial phenomenological questions. For our current purposes, the most pressing questions pertain to the status of memory as an event: How exactly does collective memory happen? What are the political implications of its status as an event? What difference does it make for such an event to occur within the domain of art? And what relations obtained between mnemonic discourses and the emergence of the aesthetico-political in the years preceding 1968?

In what follows, I propose that we respond to such questions by considering memory as a partition of the sensible that enables a particular sort of event: the recognition of the past as an image. To further elaborate this notion, I appeal to a characteristically gnomic claim made by Walter Benjamin: "History decays into images, not into stories."[1] With this formulation, which itself displays a condensed, imagistic economy, Benjamin questioned what history is such that it decays. Does history decompose, or does it obsolesce? Is its deterioration like that of a buried body, an unstable isotope, a fading photograph, a neglected archive? No matter how this process might be figured, it clearly contravenes the various forms of historicism that Benjamin opposed

[1] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 476.

in developing a theory of historical materialism.[2] To view the image as the ruin of history is to ruin the image of history as teleological, progressive, and compatible with received narrative logics. As iterable citations, such images suspend the chronometric order with which history is often thought to unfold, counteracting historicism by redistributing the temporality that is thought to subtend it. By arresting the very time of thought, the memory-image interrupts the procedures that ground positivisms of left and right alike; it is dialectical insofar as it brings their dialectics-as-usual to a "standstill."[3]

In using this metaphorics of radical arrest, Benjamin made clear that the event of memory occupies a singular temporality. The break that it introduces should not be regarded as a mere hiatus in an otherwise ongoing sequence. On the contrary, the historical image marks a singular constellation that spans a determinate interval, aligns discrete temporalities, and exists only within a finite window of recognizability. In this sense, the image is not just to be thought as an object or a concept, but a momentary recognition that occurs only through exposure to a radical contingency. Such a conception suggests a provocative circularity to Benjamin's theory of historical knowledge, implying that history decays into images because it is first apprehended as an image. In other words, history decomposes into images because it is composed of them.[4]

This reciprocally constitutive relation between history and image underscores the importance of the representational medium through which past events are rendered sensible and intelligible. More specifically, it indicates that the politics of historical memory are always also a question of aesthetics, in that such memory presumes the recognition of a specific image under contingent conditions. For Benjamin, this politics consisted of a sort of rescue operation through which the decay of seemingly lost causes could be arrested or even reversed.[5] But one need not appeal to redemption to follow Benjamin in claiming that the stakes of memory are highest at the moment when an image is — or is not — recognized. Any attempt to theorize or intervene in the event of memory thus requires reckoning with the ways it mediates recognizability through its properties of condensation and displacement, its reliance on technical substrates, and its emplacement

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[2] The subsequent discussion draws from the texts in which Benjamin's theorization of historical materialism is most direct and sustained: the "Konvolut N: Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," from *The Arcades Project*, and "On the Concept of History" together with its "Paralipomena," in Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 4 1938-40*, trans. Harry Zohn, Edmund Jephcott, and Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). For an account of the development of Benjamin's earlier theory of natural history and his critique of Heideggerian historicism see Beatrice Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), esp. Chapters 1 and 3. For more detailed discussion of the relation between history, the technically reproduced image, and the citationality of thought see Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), esp. *xvii-xxi* and 59-66. An overview of the relation between the multiple temporalities in Benjamin's later theory of history can be found in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), Part II.

[3] In Benjamin's well-known formulation, "Image is dialectics at a standstill." Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 463.

[4] Elsewhere, Benjamin argues that the very temporal relation between the past and the moment of its recognizability is *bildlich*: not only "figural," as the term has been translated, but also "pictorial" or "imagistic." ["Denn während die Beziehung der Gegenwart zur Vergangenheit eine rein zeitliche ist, ist die des Gewesnen zum Jetzt eine dialektische: nicht zeitlicher sondern bildlicher Natur."] Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983), 578. Compare Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 463.

[5] Consider for example Benjamin's first thesis on historical materialism: "An object of history is that through which knowledge is constituted as the object's rescue." Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 476.

within specific institutional and discursive frames.[6]

Such questions have assumed particular salience in a contemporary conjuncture within which the ascendance of mnemonic art as a dominant mode of production would seem irreversible.[7] Yet while it is now commonplace to attribute a mnemonic function to the work of art, much remains to be said about the status and genealogy of this connection, how it came to be taken as axiomatic, and why this might matter. Against those who might argue that art has always had a memorial vocation, one could cite an array of factors that decisively altered this relation in the decades following World War II: the broad uptake of mnemotechnic media within the visual arts, the mass-mediatization of the public sphere, and the foundation of war crimes tribunals and related international human rights institutions.[8] Without a clearer sense of how these intermeshed determinants have conditioned the formation of a memory-aesthetic, the consequences of its emergence will remain obscure.

One of the goals of the following chapter is thus to clarify this problematic by reassessing a moment in its initial evolution. In what follows I trace the interrelation of historical memory, aesthetics, and politics in West Germany during the so-called *Wirtschaftswunder*, the "economic miracle" of the decades following World War II under Konrad Adenauer's chancellorship. To the extent that this period has figured in discussion of post-war West German art, it has usually been as a point of departure for the subsequent careers of internationally renowned artists like Joseph Beuys, Gerhard Richter, or Anselm Kiefer. The work of these figures and their peers was in fact pivotal in the development of mnemonic art, helping to establish memory as a recognizably artistic concern, as well as something like an individual and national brand identity.

However, its reception has tended to presume that the cultural history of West Germany is best understood through a narrative of progressive emancipation, or alternatively through a dialectic of repression and transgression. In both accounts the Adenauer period is typically characterized

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[6] Here I would note the over-determination that often marks Benjamin's usage of the term "image" (*Bild*), which refers variably to a number of specific objects, among them the photogram, the rhetorical figure, the archaic image, the fetish, the commodity, and the dialectical image. Though the following discussion does not aim to trace the relation between all of these senses, it does seek to activate the productive multivalence of Benjamin's conception, considering the image as an agent of publicity, a product of specific visual regimes, a technological artifact, and a medium for memory.

[7] Among the many indicators of this trend are the following: high-profile travelling exhibitions are now commonly devoted to artists like Doris Salcedo and William Kentridge, who are thought to depict, enact, or intervene in the processes through which history is remembered by individuals and collectives; group shows and surveys often use memory as a rubric to aggregate work in diverse formats; artist-designed memorials shape the itineraries of cultural tourists; and academic studies of the relation between memory and contemporary art have multiplied considerably. For recent attempts to define the field of mnemonic art, see Lisa Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and also Joan Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008). Noteworthy precedents for such work include James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), and *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Ingrid Schaffner, et al., ed., *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art* (Munich: Prestel, 1998); and Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, eds., *Remaking History* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989).

[8] More recent developments include the proliferation of contemporary art museums in the 1980s and 1990s, along with the growth of the biennial circuit, and the rise of cultural memory and trauma as objects of interdisciplinary academic study.

as a time of near-total, state-sanctioned amnesia regarding the crimes of the National Socialist regime, a condition that was contested first by select avant-gardes and by the New Left, and only more broadly within the political mainstream in the wake of 1968.[9] While such a view, which might itself owe something to the acutely polarized intergenerational politics of that historical moment, retains a degree of explanatory power, it also threatens to compromise further understanding of post-war West German cultural politics and their potential contemporary relevance.

What the charge of collective amnesia misses is that numerous forms of memory proliferated under Adenauer and were in fact important conduits of hegemonic power, helping ensure the stability of a NATO-aligned liberal democracy whose security was by no means guaranteed. The issue here is not the historical accuracy of the amnesia hypothesis so much as the broader implications of its tendency to rely on an unproblematized opposition between remembering and forgetting.[10] Not only does such an assumption overlook the constitutive link between these forces; it also positions memory outside the field of power relations, transforming it into a neutral instrument and disregarding the irreducible immanence that renders it vulnerable to co-optation. This abstracted, sanitized model of memory often fails to register its intrinsic ambivalence and mutability, its augmentation and transformation through technical mediation, and its complicity with dominant forms of subjectivation. Without a sense of this complex, multiply determined status, it is difficult if not impossible to track the evolving salience of memory and mnemonic art alongside historically contingent shifts in the relation between aesthetics and politics.

As above, this chapter aims to contribute to such efforts by positing a reciprocal link between anamnesis and event, and by charting this interconnection in a specific conjuncture. I have outlined certain of the implications of understanding historical memory as a type of event — not as a suppressed truth to be recovered, or a fixed content that art transmits, but rather as a radically contingent moment in which an image is recognized within a contested, mediated field of power relations. However, it also is necessary not only to consider memory as an event, but also the converse: the manifold ways in which public events have increasingly become an important site for recollection, whether in the form of art exhibitions and performances, political appearances, staged PR opportunities, or televised broadcasts.

This chapter thus traces circuits between these seemingly disparate types of memory-event, detailing their relation to broader collective temporalities. It examines two events where the mediation of memory assumed concrete political significance, both of them art exhibitions

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[9] Examples of this tendency include Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity: Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning," *October* 75 (Winter 1996), 60-82; Eckhart Gillen, "Wolf Vostell: German View" and Mario Kramer, "Joseph Beuys: Auschwitz Demonstration, 1956-1964," in Gillen, ed., *German Art from Beckmann to Richter: Images of a Divided Country* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1997); and Lisa Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). A recent critique of such arguments can be found in Paul B. Jaskot, "Gerhard Richter and Adolf Eichmann," *Oxford Art Journal* 28.3 (October 2005).

[10] For deconstructive analysis of this opposition, see Jacques Derrida, "Mnemosyne," in *MEMOIRES for Paul de Man*, trans. Cecile Lindsay (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). Peter Krapp details the problematic role that such oppositions continue to play in academic work on trauma in his study *Déjà Vu: Aberrations of Cultural Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), *ix-xiii*.

mounted in West Germany during the era of the *Wirtschaftswunder*. In doing so, it means to map emergent tendencies within West German cultural politics by viewing historical shifts in art distribution and performance aesthetics through the lens of the event-oriented account of memory outlined above. If, as Benjamin claimed, "history decays into images," then much of what follows can be encapsulated in the contrast between iconic images of the two events, images into which particular histories had already decayed. Each image depicts a site that was directly connected to the nation's reconstruction, making reference to various debates surrounding this process. Each represents a scene of memory, intended to model a specific relation to the recent past. And each reads as an image of ruin.

This is literally so in the first image, which pictures a display of modernist sculpture from the 1959 *documenta*, the second installment of the festival. **[2.1]** Part of the exhibition occupied the grounds of the Orangerie palace, the interior of which had been destroyed in the Allied bombing of Kassel in 1943, and had yet to be reconstructed. The *documenta* organizers had built temporary white walls on the terrace to replicate a gallery setting amid the Baroque ruins. By night, spotlights cast the sculptures' silhouettes onto these screens, creating a dramatic shadow-play before the palace's hollow facade. While this unmistakably recalled the bombings that had destroyed over 90% of the city, it did so to differentiate the Germany of the Third Reich from the reformed West Germany of the *Wirtschaftswunder*. Viewers encountered a potent image of national recovery and transformation in this stark juxtaposition of "before" and "after," finding material evidence of Germany's illustrious heritage and recent trauma, its progress in reconstruction, and its efforts to refound its culture on the model of its new Western European allies. This scenographic feat formed part of a comprehensive strategy through which the first two *documenta* exhibitions mobilized various forms of historical memory in the service of a hegemonic cultural politics that sought to facilitate the realignment of the FRG as a member of the NATO bloc.

The second image is equally concerned with progress and ruin, but in ways that are markedly divergent from the first. **[2.2]** It depicts the artists Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg, who had put themselves on display in a showroom of a Düsseldorf home furnishings store as part of their 1963 event *Living with Pop: A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism*. With its inexpensive contemporary furniture and television set, the room showcased the consumer goods that the resurgent economy had made available to the expanding middle classes. The reconstruction was even more explicitly thematized by the program that screened during the action: a historical retrospective commemorating the tenure of Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first Chancellor, who had recently announced his resignation. Opening with footage of razed cities and culminating in Adenauer's state visit to the White House, the broadcast remembered the post-war era in terms quite like those proposed at *documenta*.

But where the Orangerie display aspired to tragic *gravitas*, Richter and Lueg's demonstration came off as sardonic farce, exuding an irony that was flippant and mordant by turns. In virtually all respects, *Living with Pop* flatly rejected the aesthetics and the cultural politics of *documenta*. Instead of using the fine arts to rehabilitate West Germany's image, the Düsseldorf event grouped them with mass-produced commodities and popular kitsch as agents of hegemony. While the Kassel exhibitions staged a drama of national redemption, *Living with Pop* linked this sort of official memory to its popular variants, using parody to highlight the mnemonic

distortions shared by seemingly distinct discourses. Despite its tendency toward broad satire, however, the event also shaded into a more rueful confrontation with the uneasy compromises of *Wirtschaftswunder* politics, one that recast the glossy surfaces of the much-lauded "miracle" as the ruin of alternative opportunities.

The contrast between these two images is the axis on which this chapter turns as it evaluates the disparate means by which *documenta* and *Living with Pop* negotiated the charged, evolving field linking memory, aesthetics, and politics. In doing so, it seeks to highlight some of the circuits that both anticipated and enabled the subsequent emergence of the aesthetico-political closer to 1968. This entails comparing events that might appear incommensurable, given how substantially they differed in their scale, audience, resources, and intent. The common element nevertheless linking them is the fact that each made repeated, explicit references to recent German history and to its relevance in West Germany's ongoing reconstruction and realignment. Both events registered the power exerted by the image of the past, calibrating their rhetoric to account for the strategic importance of memory and its mediation. The sharp contrasts between them indicate that mnemonic practices were both forcefully contested and internally differentiated, traversing multiple discourses, media, and institutional spaces, including those thought proper to art.

Such a view complicates established characterizations of the *Wirtschaftswunder* as a period of generalized amnesia. But it also prompts questions with important implications for how we evaluate the emergence of the aesthetico-political, as well as the more contemporary imbrication of art with the politics of memory. If historical memory is understood after Benjamin as the recognition of an image, how is this event affected by the power of the image to reorganize the perception of resemblance? In what ways is mnemonic recognition conditioned by specific technical ensembles, regimes of publicity, artifactual temporalities, and fields of power relations? And if the event of memory is one in which the aesthetic and the political are entangled, what consequences issue from this compound determination?

2. Sculpture Amid Ruins: The Genesis of *documenta*

The initial impetus behind *documenta* is generally attributed to Dr. Arnold Bode, a curator and professor in Kassel. **[2.3]** Though two competing versions of the story exist, in each of them Bode was reportedly moved upon seeing a historic building ruined during the war, leading him to propose the reconstruction of Kassel's Fridericianum, the oldest public museum in Europe.[11] Whatever Bode's inspiration, this parallel indicates that from the outset *documenta* was positioned as an occasion for memory, capitalizing on the symbolic potential of its site. Similar priorities were evident in the 1954 proposal that Bode and his colleagues submitted to local government ministers. "It is intended," read the letter, "to represent all the significant Western

[11] One account has it that Bode conceived of the exhibition after beholding the sight of the Fridericianum itself, which remained unused and unrepaired some ten years after its near-destruction. Another traces Bode's idea back to his visit to a 1953 Picasso retrospective in Milan's Palazzo Reale, which had been reconstructed following severe damage from Allied air raids. See Harald Kimpel, *documenta: Die Überschau* (Cologne: Dumont, 2002), 7; see also Manfred Schneckenburger, in his introduction to *documenta: Idee und Institution*, ed. Schneckenburger (Munich: Bruckmann, 1983), 8.

artists of this century (painters, sculptors, and architects) with two or three masterworks characteristic of their development... We are sure that [this overview] will give rise to exceptional impressions, insights, and excitement, and that it is virtually a necessity that such experiences emanate from Germany."[12] This invocation of national interest — the letter just as easily could have read "from Kassel," given the lagging recovery of the local and regional economy — telegraphed a certain urgency concerning West Germany's reputation.

In arguing that a historically oriented exhibition could remedy this problem, Bode's team viewed memory not as a liability, but as a privileged medium for projecting an appropriate national image. In this respect, their proposal reflected the broader priorities informing the fledgling official culture of the FRG. Its equivocal phrasing indicated a twofold objective characteristic of *Wirtschaftswunder* cultural policy: to stoke domestic "excitement" for Western tastes, and to advertise this reorientation to the nation's new allies and its Communist adversary beyond the nearby border. Modernist art was ideal for this task because of its close identification with liberal-democratic values. As has been copiously documented, the ascendancy of modernism in the postwar period was the product of a particular politicization of aesthetics. On this view, the popularization of modernist forms tracked the realignment of the international system, tending to reflect the interests of emergent US hegemony.[13] West German cultural politics were dictated in line with this broader tendency, with the swift, concerted uptake of Tachist painting being paradigmatic.[14] The appeal of such practices also reflected the unique demands facing West German cultural institutions, which had to confront both the legacy of Nazism and the effects of partition. Modernism lent itself to both causes, given its status as the enemy of both National Socialists and socialist realists.

Despite the near-unanimous popularity of modernist art in official and elite circles, however, its mass appeal was tenuous. Only an estimated 3% of West Germans avowed an interest in modernism, and attendance at the initial *documentas* was miniscule compared to the mass exhibitions staged under Hitler in 1937.[15] As these discrepancies suggest, support for liberal

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[12] Arnold Bode, et al., "Brief der Gesellschaft 'Abendländische Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts e.V.' an den hessischen Ministerpräsidenten," 5.23.54; reprinted in Schneckenburger, 31. ["Zwar sind heute Kunstausstellungen nicht selten, ein derartiger Überblick aber von europäischem und außereuropäischem Ausmaß ist bisher weder im In- noch im Ausland konsequent gegeben worden. Wir sind sicher daß aus ihm außergewöhnliche Eindrücke, Erkenntnisse und Anregungen resultieren werden, und daß es geradezu eine Notwendigkeit ist, daß diese von Deutschland ausgehen."]

[13] For a recent analysis of the relationship between realignment and the reception of modernism see Nancy Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Much of the earlier research on this problem is collected in Francis Frascina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985); see also Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983).

[14] Jost Hermand analyzes this development, paying special attention to the activities of the *Kulturkreis*, a cultural lobby expressly established to promote modernist art in the interest of liberal democracy. The group, which funded competitions and helped to organize corporate collections of abstract art, had among its leaders several executives with extensive ties to the National Socialist military-industrial complex. See Hermand, *Kultur im Wiederaufbau: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945-1965* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1986), esp. 429-31.

[15] Figures drawn respectively from Hermand, Schneckenburger, and Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, "*Entartete Kunst, München 1937*," in *Stationen der Moderne. Die bedeutende Kunstausstellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, (Berlin: Nicolai, 1988). As Bruce Altshuler has noted, "Degenerate Art" was far and away the most popular art exhibition in the 20th century, drawing an estimated 3.2 million visitors in its various stops across

democracy was likewise questionable. Adenauer's fourteen-year tenure has generally been viewed as an era of political stability, given the longevity of his governing coalition. But the consensus that prevailed under Adenauer was considerably less secure than often thought. This was partly due to a number of underlying contradictions that threatened the legitimacy of the FRG from its foundation. Not only had West German independence been conditional on its occupiers' military strategy; its assumption of sovereignty entailed accepting partition, and its democratic institutions were widely seen as having been imposed from without. Moreover, the state itself was hardly hospitable to liberal democracy: estimates are that between 40% and 80% of FRG civil servants were formerly members of the NSDAP, and Adenauer's cabinet included a former SS member and a prominent Nazi jurist.[16] These liabilities were compounded by the activities of an oppositional movement that called for West Germany to socialize its economy, pursue reunification, and adopt a non-aligned foreign policy. Such demands to follow what was commonly called a "Third Path" were endorsed by leftist trade unions and even by certain members of the leading parties, but ultimately were denied after opposition from the former Allies.[17]

Facing these challenges to its legitimacy, Adenauer's coalition endeavored to neutralize the threat of the National Socialist legacy by securing a consensus on the past. Such accord was pursued partly through *Vergangenheitspolitik*, or "past-policy," which encompassed debates over amnesty for former Party members, reparations for victims of Nazi state violence, and compensation for Germans expelled from territory ceded after surrender.[18] But it was also negotiated in civil society through an array of extra-legal processes usually described by the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which connotes something between "coming to grips with the past" and "mastering the past."[19] Although these discourses confronted charged questions of ethical responsibility, they also lent themselves readily to the establishment of hegemonic consensus.[20] The pronounced historical orientation of the initial *documenta* reflected this political determination of memory, and exemplified a cultural politics that pursued consensus not by repressing the past but recurating it. This politicized aesthetics sought to present an image of German art and history that harmoniously joined the past with the present, the citizen with the nation, and the Federal Republic with the international community.

Such a public relations strategy was especially evident in the placement of Wilhelm Lehmbruck's sculpture *Kneeling Woman* (1911), conspicuously installed in the main stairwell of the Fridericianum. **[2.4]** The piece had been previously exhibited in 1937 as "degenerate," and its

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Germany and Austria; Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions That Made Art History, Vol. I 1863-1959* (London and New York: Phaidon, 2008).

[16] For further discussion see Keith Bullivant and C. Jane Rice, "West German Stabilization 1945-1968," in *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Rob Burns (Oxford: Oxford, 1995), 213. See also Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 16-18.

[17] Following this defeat, there would not be a viable large-scale independent left in West Germany until the formation of the APO in the mid-1960s. For more on this development, see Chapter Five.

[18] For a detailed analysis of this field see Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*, trans. Joel Golb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[19] Jeffrey Herf details the emergence of this discourse in *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8ff.

[20] For a contemporary critique of West German memory-politics see Theodor W. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

reclamation clearly was intended to announce a thorough denazification of the aesthetic.[21] Such a prominent gesture of rehabilitation was unsurprising, given that the last major exhibition of modernist art in Germany had been defamatory. It is less apparent, however, exactly what the curators might have meant by choosing a figure posed on one knee with head bowed contritely. To read this gesture as an apology only begs a series of questions: An apology to "degenerate" artists, and to art as such? Or an apology to all the other victims of the Nazi state? By what authority were these sentiments expressed, and on whose behalf? Without any public explanation of intent, such questions were left unanswerable.

If this omission meant to convey remorse without controversy, it also reflected a determination to avoid propagandizing, at least on National Socialist terms. The works displayed at the "Degenerate Art" exhibition had been framed by malicious slogans and citations polemically denouncing the allegedly foreign and/or Jewish influence of artists, critics, and dealers. **[2.5]**[22] In contrast, the walls of the Fridericianum lacked any supplementary text, maintaining that the artwork should speak for itself without interference. However, this apparent loyalty to artistic autonomy served an expressly political curatorial strategy that consistently sought to abjure the aesthetics of the Third Reich. Over half of the German artists shown in Kassel had been exhibited previously as "degenerate."[23] Whereas "Degenerate Art" had grouped a roomful of artists together under the label "Jewish, all too Jewish," the first *documenta* devoted a special gallery to Chagall. Neoclassicism was strictly abjured, as was anything resembling Nazi iconography. Such moves were undertaken with relative discretion, unaccompanied by any explicit statements of the curators' intentions. As with their placement of *The Kneeler*, Bode's team acknowledged historical precedent in a manner both insistent and tacit, as if certain things needed no explanation.

These attempts to break with the recent German past were reinforced by the format of the first two *documenta* exhibitions. Whereas the 1955 installment proposed a sort of history lesson, surveying the development of forms banned under Hitler, its successor addressed the theme "Art After 1945." This before-and-after periodization resembled the prevailing political ideologeme positing 1945 as *Stunde Null*, the "zero hour" when the history of an altogether new state began amid the ruins of the old. It thus enabled the exhibitions to renounce one legacy while substituting another of their own choosing. Not only did they seek to show that Germany was now safe for modernism; they also evoked an earlier moment when this had likewise been the case. Such aims were evident in the recuperation of German Expressionism, as represented by work from Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Beckmann, and Emil Nolde, among others. They also informed the decision to showcase early post-war paintings by Wols and Hans Hartung as milestones in the development of gestural abstraction. Taken together, these efforts suggested a variant of the *Sonderweg* thesis, advanced by historians to explain the "special path" taken by

[21] For a sustained consideration of the relation between the two exhibitions see Walter Grasskamp, "'Degenerate Art' and Documenta I: Modernism Ostracized and Disarmed," in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, eds. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 163-94.
[22] As Neil Levi has noted, "Degenerate Art" was "largely an exhibition of quotations." See Levi, "Judge for Yourselves!–The 'Degenerate Art' Exhibition as Political Spectacle,'" *October* 85 (Summer 1998), 48.
[23] Kimpel, *documenta: Die Überschau*, 21.

Germany in its belated transition to industrialized modernity.[24] They also claimed a particular cultural patrimony at a moment when German art history was undergoing its own partition.

Given this intensely polarized climate, it was almost a foregone conclusion that neither *documenta* would refer to Constructivism, Productivism, Dada, or anything resembling social realism.[25] In bypassing these precedents, the exhibitions eschewed any invocation of anti-capitalist internationalism, which was as unwelcome as explicit nationalist sentiment. Instead, it mapped a historical arc emphasizing relations between Germany and other members of the NATO coalition. This agenda was evident in the prominent juxtaposition of large canvases by Fritz Winter and Ernst Wilhelm Nay opposite paintings by Pablo Picasso and Jackson Pollock. It also informed the decision to curate the shows not by nation, as at the Venice Biennale, but by formal criteria. Artists were shown just as visitors were invited to imagine themselves — as members of a like-minded community whose history spanned borders.

This ideal of liberal-democratic cosmopolitanism suffused the exhibitions' historical model, which was largely developed by the influential critic and art historian Werner Haftmann. On this view, contemporary modernism was the product of a familiar, loosely Hegelian teleological evolution. Just as the gradual refinement of specific media had produced formalist abstraction as a "world language," so had the progress of science, technology, and liberal democracy enabled "world culture" to overcome regional differences.[26] Ultimately, this process would even allow art to somehow transcend history, as for example in Haftmann's contention that painting could "free itself from the crushing ideological weight of the past through a consistent non-objectivity."[27]

By casting modernism in a dramatic struggle against the lingering power of the past, such assertions indicated how the first two *documentas* aimed to alter the affective basis of memory along with its contents. The exhibitions proposed not just a reconstructed art history, but also a different set of coordinates for recognizing and responding to past events. This objective is clear in their mode of address, which positioned the audience as a collective subject unified by its memory of unspecified horrors and its determination never to forget. From their first sight of the Fridericianum, foreign and domestic visitors alike were asked to imagine themselves as an international community that, like the museum, was damaged but abiding. This appeal was extended through the use of display elements like freestanding paintings at the 1955 show, a gesture meant to increase contact between members of the public.[28] **[2.6]** At moments the effort

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[24] A critical summation of the *Sonderweg* debates can be found in Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 100-120.

[25] For analysis of the various circuits linking the interwar avant-gardes in Weimar Germany and the Soviet Union see the collection *The Avant-Garde Frontier: Russia Meets the West, 1910-1930*, ed. Gail Harrison Roman and Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992).

[26] Haftmann gave these concepts a prominent place in his speech introducing the second *documenta*. See Haftmann, "Vortrag anläßlich der Eröffnung der 2. documenta am 11. Juli 1959," reprinted in Schneckenburger, 55. The theory is developed in more detail in Haftmann's influential 1954 study *Painting in the 20th Century*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Lund Humphries, 1961), 313.

[27] As cited by Hermand, *Kultur im Wiederaufbau*, 409.

[28] Roger M. Buergel elaborates on this aspect of the exhibition's staging in his essay "The Origins," in *archive in motion: documenta Manual*, ed. Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 173-79. It bears note that Buergel, as co-curator of *documenta 12*, made explicit reference to the initial *documenta* by reconstructing a staircase that had been built for the 1955 exhibition, but later destroyed. For a critical response to the potentially dehistoricizing effects of this display, see Okwui Enwezor, "History Lessons," *Artforum*, September 2007, 385.

to secure community was even fraught with a sort of existential pathos, as in Haftmann's invocation of the "drama of a vulnerable human race in a damaged world."[29] Such universalizing interpellations aimed to transform the event of memory on a constitutive level by effectively generating the collective subject they addressed. If positing an international community of remembrance subtly dispersed responsibility, it also accommodated the demands of realignment, which intensified with West Germany's accession into NATO in 1955 and the EEC in 1957.

The *documentas* further pursued these objectives by conditioning the temporality within which the event of memory could occur. This was partly a task of synchronization, updating West German tastes and keeping them consistent with those of the nation's new allies. But it also involved using the rhetoric and institutional authority of the international exhibition to stage arguments about historical time, as with the two sets of photo-panels prominently displayed in the entry of the Fridericianum in 1955. **[2.6]** The first depicted a range of archaic, exotic, and medieval artifacts; the second showed selected artists from the exhibition, a number of them rehabilitated "degenerates," all wearing proper bourgeois attire. Using formal analogies to suggest a teleological evolution, the images embedded modernist art in a world-historical metanarrative.[30] If photography legitimated this view through its evidentiary status, it also served as another example of a universal humanist language, as it had in the landmark exhibition *The Family of Man*, which had opened earlier that year at MoMA in New York. The photograph assumed further meaning as an emblem for the type of historicity modeled by the initial *documentas*, where the past was rendered stable, readily apprehensible, continuous with the present, and distinctly non-traumatic.[31]

The same temporality subtended Haftmann's art history, which compared modernism's development to an "unbroken line" and a "general organic growth."[32] A similarly restorative tendency was visible in the decision to foreground the Fridericianum and the Orangerie, effectively exhibiting the buildings themselves. **[2.7]** In calling attention to their still-damaged exteriors and raw, unfinished interiors, the *documentas* mobilized the aesthetic to neutralize the volatile legacy of the war. On one level, this move demonstrated a mastery over the past, contrasting "before" and "after" to frame the reconstruction as a renewal, even a resurrection.[33] **[2.8]** It simultaneously drew on a longstanding tradition of viewing the ruin as the site where human history is reabsorbed into the landscape.[34] This aestheticization of the built environment depoliticized history by bringing it under the sign of nature. In doing so, it evoked a historical

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[29] As cited by Kimpel in *documenta: Die Überschau*, 38.

[30] For detailed analysis of the panels see Annette Tietenberg, "An Imaginary *Documenta*," in Glasmeier and Stengel, eds., *archive in motion*, 39.

[31] Further discussion of the relation between photography and historicism can be found in Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 49-50.

[32] Haftmann, *Painting in the 20th Century*, 313.

[33] Such tropes suggest a certain continuity between the *Wirtschaftswunder* ideology of reconstruction and the National Socialist myth of national redemption. Eric Michaud has detailed the relationship between aesthetic and nationalist discourses under Hitler, explaining how art, labor, and public performance converged in the category of *Leistung*, or "creative work." See Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004), 195-204.

[34] For an overview of the relationship between nature, culture, and ruin see Michael S. Roth, "Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed," in *Irresistible Decay*, Michael S. Roth with Claire Lyons and Charles Merewether (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1997), esp. 2-7.

sublime, rendering the past as a fixed image whose immensity could be contemplated from a safe distance, its threat contained.[35]

Yet however much this use of the site might have sought to decathect memories of the war, the damaged buildings still served as obstinate reminders of the losses sustained under Allied bombardment, soliciting recognition of the fact that Germans had also suffered. This tacit, ambivalent demand was symptomatic of a pervasive tendency in *Wirtschaftswunder* memory-politics: the propensity to interpret the recent past through a narrative of victimization. While explicit memorialization of the air war was largely taboo in West Germany for political reasons, many other mnemonic discourses centered around the figure of the German war victim, ranging from parliamentary debates over reparations for injured veterans to state-sponsored historical research on the expulsion of German settlers from territories occupied during the war.[36]

A similar tendency had surfaced earlier in popular culture with the *Trummerfilme*, a genre of films dealing with the aftermath of the war and often shot on location in ruined cities.[37] The proliferation of these modes of memory enabled different types of victimhood to overlap, such that the widespread hardship following the war was often cited as evidence that Germans had themselves been victims of Nazism, if not of the Allies. The initial *documenta* implicitly advanced a version of this argument with its use of the scarred Fridericianum and its references to "Degenerate Art." So did Werner Haftmann, in his claim that German modernists like Wols and Nay had suffered "National Socialist persecution."[38] At times, this remembered victimhood was even cast as something like partisan resistance, as in Haftmann's opening address at *documenta II*, which celebrated the return of modernist art after "persecution" and years spent "underground," thanks to the action of "free men, who remained fixed on their mission."[39] This persistent subtext of victimization indicates that as memory-events the initial *documentas* were fundamentally equivocal, presenting an image of the past designed to reconcile the divergent demands of international realignment and domestic consensus. The effectiveness of this strategy derived from its mobilization of condensed, multivalent signifiers, its exercise of restraint, and its willingness to convert liabilities into opportunities.

An analogous logic characterized the memory-politics pursued by the Adenauer coalition, which was forced to coordinate the conflicting agendas of the former occupying powers, its base, and its opposition. Its signal accomplishment was the 1953 ratification of a treaty ensuring financial

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[35] This use of the domesticated ruin as a exhibition venue anticipated the more recent tendency to use such spaces as cultural destinations. Andreas Huyssen discusses this trend in his essay "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room* 23 (Spring 2006), 10.

[36] For detailed analysis of these discourses see Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[37] Robert R. Shandley provides a historical overview of the genre in his study *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

[38] Haftmann, *Painting in the 20th Century*, 312. Philipp Gutbrod has documented Haftmann's preference for artists who had undergone "inner emigration," like Nolde and Winter, or who had suffered outright persecution, like Wols. See Gutbrod, "Werner Haftmann's Introduction to the *Documenta 2* Catalogue," in Glasmeier and Stengel, 193-94.

[39] Haftmann, "Vortrag", in Schneckenburger, 54. ["Im Nazi-Deutschland wurde die moderne Kunst 12 Jahre lang verfolgt... Als der Spuk verging, war sie in aller Breite und mit ganz neuen Entwicklungen, die sich im Untergrund vollzogen hatten, wieder da — über Abgründe hinweggerettet, durch freie Männer, die unbeirrt an ihrem Auftrag geblieben waren."] For discussion of resistance as a trope in *Wirtschaftswunder* memory-politics, see Herf, *Divided Memory*, 347-8.

reparations for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. As various historians have argued, this legislation enacted a double movement, whereby in exchange for cooperating on reparations Adenauer received greater latitude with respect to denazification.[40] Though the treaty was unpopular — scarcely one in ten voters supported it — Adenauer correctly gambled that other issues were more pressing. His administration then proceeded to roll back a number of measures originally implemented under occupation. It eschewed any sustained engagement with the political legacy of fascist dictatorship, narrowing the definition of responsibility by equating it with criminality. In practice, this meant that punishment was largely confined to the small group of high-ranking officials already tried at Nuremberg, with crimes against non-Jewish populations overlooked. Former party members reentered public life by the thousands, while Adenauer appointed a former SS member as his Minister for Refugees, retaining as his chief advisor Hans Globke, author of the official commentary on the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935.

Against this background, the suggestive but inconclusive placement of Lehmbruck's *Kneeling Woman* comes to seem emblematic of a larger tendency traversing the cultural politics of *Wirtschaftswunder* memory. Tactful to a fault, compromising to the point of being compromised, this gesture performed a noncommittal, passive-voiced apology much like that delivered by Adenauer in his bid for reparations, when he claimed that "unspeakable crimes have been committed in the name of the German people."[41] By fashioning an image of the past after the interests of the present, such acts derived their power from a specific partition of the sensible: namely, the constitutive exclusion that enables public memory to privilege certain accounts of the past over others by amplifying, attenuating, or transforming their recognizability. In the case of *documenta*, this power was multiplied by the institutional authority of the museum, which enacts a certain closure of history in representing it.[42] As an event whose initial objectives were museal and mnemonic, *documenta* was in a unique position to both neutralize and instrumentalize the past. In its efforts to align both modernism and memory with the interests of hegemony, it defined new ruptures and continuities, recuperating some precedents while proclaiming liberation from others. In doing so, it projected an image of history that artfully sutured together divergent interests into a cohesive, harmonious whole, much like the abstract forms silhouetted throughout the grounds of the ruined Orangerie. **[2.9]**

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[40] See for example Anson Rabinbach, "The Jewish Question in the German Question," *New German Critique* 44 (Spring-Summer 1988), 164-68.
[41] For discussion of the speech as part of a more extensive pattern of circumlocution see Herf, *Divided Memory*, 282-83.
[42] Didier Maleuvre has analyzed this capacity, claiming that the museum "believes in history, yet behaves as though history were over." See Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), 57.

3. Stags, Wurst, and "An Average Living Room": *Living with Pop*

The audience of *Living with Pop* could have guessed upon arrival that the event would differ from *documenta* in virtually all respects.[43] Instead of symbolically resonant landmarks, visitors to the event saw the facade of Berges Möbelhaus, a local furniture store. They were greeted not by sculpture displays or photo-panels but by uniformed Berges employees. Having received programs and been assigned numbers, they entered a windowless lobby decorated with buck horns and hand-lettered signs reading "Waiting Room," and freshened with pine-scented aerosol spray. **[2.10]** To help pass the time before their numbers were called, they were entertained by canned music and given copies of that day's newspaper, which carried news of Chancellor Adenauer's resignation.[44] **[2.11]**

At this point, viewers might well have wondered what sort of event they were attending, especially if they were Berges customers responding to a promotion in a local paper. The ad had touted the upcoming show with a photograph from the celebrated "New Realists" show at Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, likening Capitalist Realism to "[what] is hailed in America as the greatest breakthrough in art since Cubism."[45] As such publicity suggests, *Living with Pop* paid little heed to the autonomy of art. Instead, it foregrounded art's entanglement with commerce and politics, displaying a lifesize papier-mâché effigy of Alfred Schmela, a local gallerist, alongside one depicting US President John F. Kennedy, who four months previously had stood in West Berlin alongside Adenauer, famously proclaiming himself a free man and a Berliner.

The contrast with the *documenta* aesthetic would have been unmistakable once visitors were invited to view the main attraction: a showroom in which all the furniture had been redisplayed on white-curtained pedestals as an example of what the program called an "average living room."[46] Also on display were Richter, who reclined on a couch reading a detective novel, and Lueg, who sat in a chair crossing his legs. Neither of them seems to have paid much attention to the television in the corner, which screened a retrospective news program on Adenauer's tenure as Chancellor. Before them was a coffee table, which held a tea service and bottles of beer and schnapps in a plastic bag. In another corner stood an end table; on it were an issue of the popular homemaking magazine *Schöner Wohnen* and a newly published edition of Winston Churchill's writings. Eventually Richter and Lueg descended from their pedestals to lead a "grand tour" of the final exhibit: the rest of the Möbelhaus and its many other model living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens, unmodified except for the installation of four canvasses by each artist, cheeky parodies of the amateur paintings often displayed in the homes that Berges furnished.

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[43] The following account of *Living with Pop* is based on reproductions of the program distributed to visitors, published in the catalog *Grafik des Kapitalistischen Realismus* (Berlin: Edition René Block, 1971), and on the artists' report, published in Rolf-Gunter Dienst, *Pop Art* (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1965). These sources are available in English translation in Gerhard Richter, *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings and Interviews 1962-1993*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, trans. David Britt (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995), 18-21. It relies for certain specific details on Susanne Küper's essay "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter: 'Leben mit Pop—eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus,'" in *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 53 (Cologne, 1992), 289-306. Additional facts have been confirmed by Küper in correspondence via email.

[44] While Adenauer's resignation had been expected for some time, the artists have maintained that *Living with Pop* was not expressly planned to coincide with it. See Küper, "Gerhard Richter: Capitalist Realism and his Paintings from Photographs, 1962-66," in Gillen, ed., *German Art from Beckmann to Richter*, 234.

[45] The advertisement is reprinted in Küper, "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter," 298.

[46] Richter and Lueg, "Report," in Richter, *Daily Practice*, 19.

Judging from one representative response, viewers — at least those who were in on the joke — regarded the event as "amusing, albeit subtly and mildly provocative."[47] This more or less captures the tone of *Living with Pop*: a wry, topical irony, collecting parodies in "demonstration" of a notion that was itself meant as little more than a well-timed one-liner. In this respect, the event might read as a mere publicity stunt pulled off by a few attention-seeking artists. Such is essentially the account that Lueg himself would later give, and much about *Living with Pop* bespeaks opportunism, like the send-up of Schmela, whose prosperous gallery was located nearby. While this was the artists' second attempt to show outside the gallery system, little suggests that these efforts were meant as a sustained critique of the artwork as commodity, rather than as an unusual route to conventional representation. Given these facts, one might be tempted to conclude, after Lueg, that the event lacked any political salience, or, after Richter, that whatever critical purchase it attained was merely the result of "nice coincidences."[48]

On such grounds, *Living with Pop* has largely been treated as a one-off curiosity or as juvenilia, a footnote to the later careers of its participants, neither of whom went on to work extensively in performance. But such readings overlook the event's close attunement to contemporary exhibition practices, as evidenced by its numerous differences from the first two installments *documenta*. The pronounced character of this divergence indicates that *Living with Pop* was more than a mere parody of state-sanctioned modernism, and instead should be regarded as a complex engagement with the forces shaping contemporary cultural politics. Of particular interest is the way it deployed signifiers and media that consistently problematized the strategic centrality of memory. These citations brought the exhibitions in Düsseldorf and Kassel into a brief but telling alignment as memory-events sharing a concern with the capacity of the mnemonic image to mediate the political field. Despite their disparities, both events closely associated their rhetoric with the ideology of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, which coordinated assumptions about the nation's identity, its politics, and its recent history. While this image of miraculous recovery circulated across numerous discourses, its meaning was highly variable, enabling it to serve multiple interests. By scrutinizing this discursive circuit, *Living with Pop* questioned the developing relation between elite and popular cultural production, mass consumption, and the politics of memory.

Richter and Lueg's event foregrounded this problem by using an expansive mode of appropriation to designate its site. As evidenced by their stated intention to display "the whole furniture store... without modification," Berges was not simply the setting for their work; in a crucial sense, it *was* their work.[49] **[2.12]** By exhibiting the bulk of the store unmodified, the artists offered a deadpan definition of Capitalist Realism, depicting the mass market with total verisimilitude. But they also presented the store as a synecdoche that represented salient tendencies of West Germany's reconstruction. The Möbelhaus lent itself to this use by virtue of

[47] Relatively little is known about the composition of the audience. Given that Berges invited its customers, and that the show was advertised in newspapers, it seems likely that some of those present expected a conventional gallery event like "New Realists." The citation is drawn from the recollections of Hans Strelow, a member of the short-lived movement Gruppe 63, which included Lueg and Richter. See Strelow, "'Leben mit Pop—eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus' von Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter, Düsseldorf 1963," in *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*, eds. Bernd Klüser and Katharina Hegewisch (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag, 1991), 166.
[48] Küper, "*Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter*," 302.
[49] Richter and Lueg, "Report," in Richter, *Daily Practice*, 19.

its central location. Like other heavily bombarded cities, Düsseldorf had undergone substantial transformation after the war, reorienting its urban plan around consumerism by prioritizing retail shopping and automobile traffic.[50] If the appropriation of Berges gestured toward this transformation of public space, it also linked such developments to corresponding shifts in the private sphere. As an outlet for the goods made available by the surging economy, the Möbelhaus bore a direct connection to the reconstruction of domestic spaces. It therefore became a privileged site for examining the difference between the promises of progress — like its cinematic marquee, which read BETTER LIVING WITH BERGES — and the realities of social change.

This gap harbored considerable potential for irony, which Richter and Lueg realized in positioning the store as an archive of kitsch. Their tour encouraged viewers to be connoisseurs of artlessness, listening to unaltered announcements on the in-house PA system, like those touting cut-rate imitations of "valuable, genuine, classic furniture of the sort that we admire in palaces, museums, and old, well-kept homes."[51] As simulations of historic styles familiarized by the museum, such goods endowed the knock-off with a sort of para-mnemonic capacity. In appropriating them, Richter and Lueg revalued modernization as a way of buying tradition on the cheap, affiliating memory with organized consumption by figuring the commodity as a type of souvenir.[52] If this move positioned the department store as a museum, reactivating the historical connection between these spaces, it reciprocally recognized the art institution as a commercial site. This reversal suggested a heteronomous continuity that had existed since the inception of *documenta*, despite its pretense to autonomy. (Before overseeing the first *documenta*, which was itself part of a home and garden show, Arnold Bode had worked in the furniture industry as a trade-fair designer, applying this experience to the exhibition's decor.[53]) **[2.13]**

While the Berges event recalled other recent exhibitions that had effaced the distinction between fine art and commodity culture, it radicalized these precedents by effectively redefining its site in order to interrogate the political dimensions of the consumer economy.[54] In this respect, its object

[50] For discussion of these developments see Werner Durth, "Notes on the Cityscape," in *Politics-Poetics: documenta X*, eds. Catherine David and Jean-Francois Chevrier (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz Verlag, 1997).
[51] Küper, "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter," 294. ["... kostbare echte Stilmöbel, die wir in Schlössern, Museen und alten gepflegten Bürgerhäusern bewundern..."]
[52] Anne Friedberg explores this aspect of the commodity in her analysis of Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, focussing on his use of the term *Andenken*, which can refer to both memories and souvenirs. See Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 49.
[53] In 1951 Bode designed a trade-fair exhibit for Göppinger Plastics, whose plastic curtains later became an important part of the design of the first *documenta*. There is even speculation that the name *documenta* was derived in part from the lexicon of interior design: from the 1951 building expo Constructa, the German furniture manufacturer Korrekta, or the synthetic fabric line Abstracta. See Christoph Lange, "The Spirit of *Documenta*: Art-Philosophical Reflections," in Glasmeier and Stengel, *archive in motion*, 14-16.
[54] Whereas Andy Warhol's 1961 display of his own work in the windows of Bonwit Teller adopted the department store as a venue, Richter and Lueg declared Berges the very object of exhibition. And unlike Claes Oldenburg's *Store* (1962), which was supported by a commission arrangement with the Green Gallery, *Living with Pop* operated outside established circuits of artistic commerce, if only barely. However, these resemblances do suggest an attempt to remarket international trends by franchising them as German Pop, and in fact the artists had tried already to sell their work to Ileana Sonnabend under that brand name. An analogous argument might be made about the event's relation to Duchampian aesthetics. As Benjamin Buchloh has noted, *Living with Pop* was a key moment in the development of the West German neo-avant-garde, marking the first explicit experiment with the readymade in the FRG. If, as Buchloh claims, the event broke decisively with contemporary returns to Duchamp, particularly Piero Manzoni's *Magic Base* (1961), this is due in large part to its interrogation of its particular site. Benjamin H.D.

of appropriation was not just the Möbelhaus, but the "average living room" that formed the event's centerpiece. By designating the space as average, Richter and Lueg did more than emphasize its status as a signifier for conventional domesticity. In depicting a scene of idealized leisure, they presented the showroom as a collective dream-image, the fulfillment of a wish to be prosperous and respectable. However, as a fantasy staged with mass-manufactured components, the scene indicated the normalizing character of such desires, using the artists' inert "performance" to refigure leisure as fortified stasis.[55] If the banal thus connoted compromised modes of interiority, it assumed a more unsettling valence through the inclusion of Richter's detective novel. In a recent exchange concerning banality in his early work, Richter cited Hannah Arendt's analysis of the 1961 Eichmann trial, proceeding to claim: "There was nothing but crime and misery in those living rooms."[56] Hyperbole notwithstanding, Richter's statement underlines a trait that characterized both the Berges event and subsequent German Pop: a keen attentiveness to the psychopolitics of everyday life, especially the deflection and distortion of mnemonic processes.[57]

As a representative sampling of the bourgeois private sphere, this average living room foregrounded the marked social transformations that characterized the postwar period.[58] This shift was partly due to a general socioeconomic convergence that had eroded earlier class stratifications.[59] But it was also produced by an orchestrated effort to invest consumption with the values of the realigning state. This agenda was clear in the public statements of Ludwig Erhard, Adenauer's Minister of Economics, which advocated what he called the "basic democratic right of consumer freedom."[60] If such conflations reflected the pressure of international hegemony, they also aimed to consolidate Adenauer's political base, whose support depended on increased prosperity.[61] One means to this end was to recode consumption as a right or even as a duty, which economic policy makers did, soliciting advice from housewives'

Buchloh, "Readymade, Photography, and Painting in the Painting of Gerhard Richter," in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 370.

[55] In this respect, it anticipated the later psychoanalytic critique advanced by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, who regarded the drive to rebuild Germany's economy as the sublimation of the loss of Hitler as a collective ego-ideal. See Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverley Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

[56] Richter, interviewed by Robert Storr in *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting* (New York: MoMA, 2002), 293-4.

[57] Christine Mehring provides an overview of German Pop in her essay "The Art of a Miracle: Toward a History of German Pop, 1955-1972," in *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, exhibition catalog, Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, eds. (New York: Abrams, 2009).

[58] For a review of recent historiography addressing this shift, see Robert G. Moeller, "Writing the History of West Germany," in *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 1-30.

[59] Volker Berghahn assesses these developments in his article "Recasting Bourgeois Germany," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[60] The phrase, from Erhard's book *Prosperity for All*, is cited by Erica Carter in her analysis of what she terms a "rhetoric of consumer democracy." See "Alice in the Consumer Wonderland: West German Case Studies in Gender and Consumer Culture," in Moeller, *West Germany under Construction*, 353-55.

[61] Polls conducted throughout Adenauer's tenure reveal that support for liberal democracy grew at much the same rate as the body weight of the average West German. See Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 183.

organizations in efforts to valorize household shopping as patriotic.[62] If national recovery thus began at home, to buy new living room furniture was to participate in the economic miracle, even to the point of literally inhabiting it. By placing such goods on pedestals Richter and Lueg ironically concretized this promise of prosperity, suggesting that modern design, like modernist art, owed much of its appeal to its power to signify a break with old values.[63]

So although the *Wirtschaftswunder* private sphere has long been identified with amnesic repression, such moves instead positioned the home as a place where memory was equally prominent, channeling emergent forms of productive power by reimagining the past. *Living with Pop* further scrutinized this tendency through references to the mnemonic topos of the *Heimat*, or homeland, a term connoting a sentimental attachment to local folk tradition and national heritage. This domain, part remembered and part imagined, was ubiquitous in the West German popular culture of the 1950s and early 1960s.[64] The genre of *Heimat* films typified this tendency, accounting for 20% of all film production during this period.[65] With titles like *All Roads Lead Home*, they tended to depict Germany as a timeless preserve of picturesque villages and pastoral landscapes. Such scenarios tendered a national identity safely distanced from recent history, uncomplicated by the aftereffects of fascist modes of collective identification. Home thus became a site where the past was effectively domesticated in the fantasy of restored community. With its deer horns, schnapps, and pine-scent air-freshener, *Living with Pop* mocked the household commodities in which this myth of homecoming was reified for consumption. The paintings on display also delivered deadpan parodies of national-popular memory, like Richter's *Neuschwanstein Castle* (1963), which depicted the monumental Romantic folly of Bavaria's Wagner-obsessed King Ludwig II, long an object of mass fascination.

By rendering an archetypally German symbol as kitsch decor, Richter's *Stag* (1963) suggested how popular memory was recuperating older nationalist traditions by updating and resignifying them. **[2.14]** From this perspective, memory allowed pre-existing forms of collective identity to be maintained even as they were repackaged for the mass market as consumable images. This conservative function was dramatically underscored by a detail few if any viewers would have known about: a playing-card depicting Hitler that Richter had hidden behind the canvas, thus transforming the painting into a material analogue of a screen memory.[66] In pulling off such a stunt, Richter alluded invisibly but undeniably to the specters commonly preserved beneath the surfaces of the domestic. The encryption of the card within the painting suggested that a melancholic attachment to the Hitlerian ego-ideal subtended more recent, seemingly benign

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[62] See Carter, in Moeller, *West Germany under Construction*, 355-56.

[63] In this respect, commodity aesthetics were subject to political determinations quite similar to those informing *documenta*. For analysis of the link between interior design, consumerism, and the politics of realignment, see Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Of particular interest is Betts' analysis of the model home exhibited in the West German pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Exposition, which was furnished with objects resembling those in the showroom at Berges; see pages 189-96.

[64] Celia Applegate contextualizes this development in her study *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea Of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[65] For further analysis see Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[66] As noted by Jaskot, "Gerhard Richter and Adolf Eichmann," 472n35. Richter is known to have worked on a Pop portrait of Hitler the previous year, but this effort ultimately proved unsuccessful. See Buchloh, "Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity: Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning," *October* 75 (Winter 1996), 62.

forms of nationalism, and that the mass-marketed sentiment of pop memory often camouflaged unresolved or impermissible feelings of loss.

The showroom further correlated popular consumption with traumatic memory through its placement of the homemaking magazines alongside Churchill's memoirs. While at first glance the display seemed to satirize petit-bourgeois pretensions, such a reading was complicated by the reference to the former British Prime Minister. Not only had Churchill helped effect Germany's partition; he had also approved the aerial bombardment campaigns that caused hundreds of thousands of non-combatant deaths. With this highly charged juxtaposition, Richter and Lueg examined how the widespread pursuit of home improvement harbored a memory of prior devastation, enabling sublimation while also preserving a sense of victimization. In doing so, they questioned to what extent the equivocal logic of Adenauer's memory-politics had suffused everyday domestic practices.

By stimulating these neuralgic points, *Living with Pop* produced the effect of a historical uncanny, breaching the integrity of home (*Heim*) and nation (*Heimat*) to readmit the traumatically uncanny (*unheimlich*) material these spaces had renounced in defining themselves.[67] Against the prevailing, ideologically informed narratives of progress and restoration, the event generated a different temporality within which an unmastered, latent past liable to return without warning. This threat of retrogression was manifest on the aesthetic level in the exhibited paintings, which staged a crass, cheaply executed return to figuration. Lueg's contributions were exemplary in their cheeky vulgarity, using seemingly interchangeable quasi-phallic forms to denote praying hands, sausages on a paper plate, swollen fingers, and a mass-produced clothes hanger. **[2.15, 2.16]** As with Richter's *Stag*, efforts to update and refurbish the national image were turned back on themselves. Mindless piety, base appetites, monstrous physicality, and cheap consumer goods were all viewed as equally German, with Germanness conversely figured as the sum of these traits.

A similarly regressive tendency animated Richter's painting *Mouth*, which transformed its referent — a magazine photo of Brigitte Bardot — into a seemingly bottomless cavity surrounded by a flattened, blurry field.[68] **[2.17]** If this spatial tension, heightened by the centripetal circling of a dry brush, generated a sense of compulsive, alienated desire, the tight cropping of the image eliminated any clues to its status or object. Mute and inchoate, this perverse drive contaminated the peppy, upbeat consumerism evoked by the title *Living with Pop*, suggesting a life inassimilable to polite lifestyle. This alien vitality paralleled the event's other imitations of life: the effigies in the waiting room, or the use of the artists as sculptures. Taken together, these motifs figured the normative sociality of consensus as a charade, even a sort of living death. By doing so, they destabilized the temporality grounding the image of the *Wirtschaftswunder* by exacerbating the contradictions it sought to mediate, consistently referring the myth of progress back to its repressed antitheses: regression and stasis. Such temporal displacement was directly extended to viewers in the presentation of an event that thematized uneventfulness, as in the dead time of the waiting room and the non-performance given by Richter and Lueg.

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[67] Anthony Vidler analyzes the uncanniness of domestic space in his study *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 17-44.
[68] Thanks to Tom McDonough for help with this reference.

This tendency marked a clear break with recent, local precedents for performance-based work. Düsseldorf was an important node of European Fluxus activity, having hosted the concerts *Neo-Dada in der Musik* (1962) and *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* (1963). While these events incorporated diverse modes of performance, they often gravitated toward transgression and confrontation, leaving stages strewn with destroyed instruments, discarded clothing, or, in the case of Joseph Beuys' *Sibirische Sinfonie*, a dead hare. An analogous aesthetic animated the Happenings staged by Wolf Vostell, most notably *9 Nein décoll/agen*, staged in nearby Wuppertal some three weeks before *Living with Pop*, in which two locomotives simultaneously collided with a Mercedes.[69] The Berges event diverged from this trend not only in its tone and mode of address, but also in its inclusion of live television programming, one of the earliest instances of such a tactic. Whereas recent exhibitions had presented manipulated broadcasts on "prepared televisions" in a performance context, *Living with Pop* appropriated the Adenauer retrospective unmodified, enabling citation of its specific content.[70]

In effectively permitting the contingency of the television schedule to influence the content of *Living with Pop*, Richter and Lueg introduced a crucial degree of heteronomy into the event, enabling it to more closely register the impact of the ongoing mass-mediatization of the West German public sphere, a process that marked a decisive transformation of the aesthetic basis of politics. As media scholars have noted, the latter part of Adenauer's tenure witnessed a rapid increase in television ownership, such that by 1963 TV sets were in the majority of all homes, regardless of income. The expansion sparked intense debate about the politics of television, with the medium's defenders praising its capacity to promote liberal democratic values and reconstruct national culture. The strategic importance of this shift was not lost on Adenauer's administration, which sought to impose centralized control on the development of a second national channel.[71] Though that bid failed, the channel (ZDF) quickly became an important site for memory-politics when in 1963 it began broadcasting the earliest instances of German-produced programming about National Socialism and the Holocaust.[72]

"The Adenauer Era," the retrospective that screened in the showroom, exemplified television's increasing ability to condition memory in its formative stages by propagating a hegemonic image of the past. The program recounted West Germany's history as the Chancellor might have wished it to be remembered, opening with footage of bombed-out cities and occupying soldiers,

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[69] For an overview of Fluxus in Germany, see the exhibition catalogue *Eine Geschichte mit vielen Knoten. Fluxus in Deutschland 1962-1994*, ed. René Block (Stuttgart: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 1994). Claudia Mesch documents the mnemonic function of Vostell's earlier production in her essay "Vostell's Ruins: Dé-collage and the Mnemotechnic Space of the Postwar City," *Art History* 23:1 (March 2000), 88-115.

[70] The most pertinent example is Nam June Paik's "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television," which had been staged in Wuppertal in March 1963. For discussion of this event see David Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 7-11; for an account of Paik's work that traces its relation to earlier work by the Zero Group and the Informel painter K.O. Götz, see Christine Mehring, "Television Art's Abstract Starts: Europe circa 1944-1969," *October* 125 (Summer 2008).

[71] For discussion of the debates over television, see Joe Perry, "Healthy for Family Life: Television, Masculinity, and Domestic Modernity during West Germany's Miracle Years," *German History* 25:4 (October 2007). For an account of the so-called "Adenauer TV" controversy, see Peter J. Humphreys, *Media and Media Policy in Germany: The Press and Broadcasting since 1945*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 157-61.

[72] For analysis of this programming, see Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 109-30 and 154-82.

then moving on to shots of rebuilt factories before culminating in Adenauer's state visit to the White House.[73] Though this message of progress closely resembled the version promoted at *documenta*, its mode of distribution represented a fundamental shift in the field of memory-politics: the increasing centrality of the mass-communications network. Television in West Germany differed from other mass media in its capacity to enable the simultaneous collective reception of images within domestic space, while at the same time retaining substantial state oversight. The Adenauer program showed how these properties granted television special access to a national historical imaginary, inasmuch as the very possibility of such a broadcast, unthinkable a decade before, seemed to certify the program's message of collective reintegration and progress. Such appeals drew additional power from the television network's apparent ability to unify disparate sites, linking center with periphery and region with nation.

This spatial articulation was simultaneously temporal in its reliance on the particular synchronization afforded by broadcasting, which aligns the rhythms of the recorded event, its reproduction, and its embodied reception.[74] In this case, such mediation was amplified as the program sutured viewers into the compound temporality of public memory, which conjoins lived, imagined, and technically reproduced relations to the past. By thus hybridizing the process of subjective time-synthesis, television could effectively transform a crucial aspect of the mnemonic partition of the sensible, in accordance with the phenomenon that Bernard Stiegler has theorized as "event-ization."[75] Even more radically, broadcasting could thus alter the phenomenological conditions of possibility for eventhood itself, changing the dynamics of recollection, expectation, and action.

By presenting "The Adenauer Era" unmodified, *Living with Pop* registered these transformations on a structural level, with the temporality of the Berges event partially determined by that of the broadcast. The artists' failure to respond to the program thus suggested television's power to affect recognition by reconfiguring the relationship between attention and distraction. This implied that an oppositional politics of memory could not revolve solely around securing the visibility of specific images, but would have to contest the technical mechanisms and temporal schemas on which such recognition depended. However, it must also be said that *Living with Pop* approached this problematic implicitly, somewhat accidentally, and not without ambivalence. As noted above, neither Richter nor Lueg publicly avowed a commitment to radical politics, and while Richter would soon undertake a rigorous engagement with mediated memory in his photo-paintings, neither artist proceeded to work extensively with broadcasting.

In this light, the artists' unresponsiveness communicated a certain provocative apathy, but also a more pervasive sense of resignation. Although *Living with Pop* underscored the need for effective forms of oppositional memory, it offered no substantive response to this demand. This is not to claim that the event should or even could have delivered some sort of emancipatory counter-memory, but to suggest that it problematized such conceptions without then reflexively

[73] Here I rely on Küper's transcription of the broadcast, "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter," 302.
[74] For a critique of these ideologically conditioned unities of time and place, see Samuel Weber, "Television: Set and Screen," in *Mass Mediauras: Form Technics Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996).
[75] Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), 115-118.

incorporating this critical dimension into its own execution. Rather than call for memory to reveal suppressed truths, *Living with Pop* critiqued the instrumental model of anamnesis such appeals assumed. The artists' inertia and their travesties of virtuosity rejected this voluntarism, figuring memory not as an autonomous, transitive act but as a sort of encounter: an event exceeding rational predetermination and occurring within a field of technically mediated power relations. Whatever promise memory might have as a practice of resistance was thus necessarily predicated on a certain exposure, leaving open the possibility that it might also enable the reproduction of hegemonic modalities of power. This sense of an inescapable, constitutive contingency was further amplified by the event's references to compromised or equivocal modes of remembering, dramatizing its susceptibility to the prevalence of ideology or the alterity of the unconscious. But if *Living with Pop* thus insisted on the radical immanence of memory, it nevertheless failed to address crucial implications of this view. While its inclusion of the Adenauer broadcast pointed to the ongoing transformation of the mediasphere, the event didn't consider how this change could constrain efforts to form a collective agent of oppositional memory. Similarly, while *Living with Pop* began to suggest the ways that intensified mass-mediation was altering the mnemonic event itself, it largely overlooked the potential consequences of this emergent aestheticization of politics.

Judged by these criteria, *Living with Pop* assumes aspects of a missed encounter. Despite its mordant criticisms of the hegemonic consensus supported by institutions like *documenta*, the event articulated no countervailing image of memory-politics. While it highlighted a crucial reconfiguration of the relation between the aesthetic and the political, it failed to consider the critical question of how resistance might be mobilized from this site. In retrospect, these shortcomings are comparable, although not reducible, to the somewhat marginal position of the West German Left at that time, which had been forced to abandon its pursuit of a "Third Path" but had yet to recompose itself as a new coalition with corresponding modes of publicity. This would not happen until the mid- to late-1960s, with the formation of a movement that came to be known as the extra-parliamentary opposition, which defined itself directly against the compromises made under Adenauer.[76]

Perhaps it was a perceived lack of possibility that lent Capitalist Realism its nihilistic humor, as in Richter's claim equating Marxist-Leninist materialism with consumerist materialism, ridiculing both as "mindless" and different only in degree.[77] But one might also say, after Nietzsche, that such jokes were epitaphs for the death of a feeling, namely the hope for a much different Germany than the one Berges represented.[78] In the notion of a Capitalist Realism every bit as banal as its socialist counterpart, one can perhaps detect the afterimage of this earlier attempt to transcend the differences between rival political models. If *Living with Pop* can itself

[76] For analysis of this development, see Chapter Five.

[77] In discussing his emigration to the FRG, Richter wrote: "I did not come here to get away from 'materialism': here its dominance is far more total and more mindless." In *Daily Practice*, 13.

[78] It bears note that Richter has spoken of supporting such transformation in the years before his emigration: "I lived my life with a group of people who laid claim to a moral aspiration, who wanted to bridge a gap, who were looking for a middle way between capitalism and Socialism, a so-called Third Path"; Richter, "Interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 1986," in *Daily Practice*, 132. In a recent interview, he described his visit to the second *documenta* as "a search for an acceptable form of representational painting that corresponded to the image of a 'Third Path.'" See "Gerhard Richter im Gespräch mit Jan Thorn-Prikker," in *Gerhard Richter im Albertinum Dresden* (Cologne: Walther König, 2004), 79.

be said, following Benjamin, to have decayed into such an image, it would be one that transposes the complements of Lueg's crass primaries onto the spectral grisaille of Richter's *Stag*, forming an ambivalent elegy for a lapsed promise, its mourning for a better life disguised as sardonic praise for better living.

Chapter Three

Out of the Cellar
Actions as Public Disturbances in 1960s Vienna

... make Actions within Actions... – Otto Mühl[1]

1. Parading Across Heldenplatz: *Vienna Walk* and the Vicissitudes of Actionism

In the summer of 1965 Günter Brus was offered a solo exhibition at the Galerie Junge Generation in Vienna, Austria. This invitation marked one of the first times that a gallery had tried to present work by any of the four artists who would later come to be known as the Viennese Actionists.[2] The proposal, which came from a space known for its relatively conventional programming, exuded a certain ambivalence. As Brus would later recall, it gave the impression of a "half-hearted attempt at bringing 'Vienna Actionism' out of the underground."[3] The gallery was interested in Brus not so much as an initiator of Actions but as a producer of paintings. While Brus wanted to show only photographs of his self-painting Actions, the gallery insisted on including paintings as well. Ultimately Brus and the gallerists reached some sort of agreement, and the gallery even invited Brus to execute an Action on its premises. However, they insisted, much to the artist's annoyance, on following the event with a discussion featuring a "panel of experts," one of whom would be a medical doctor and who was presumably invited to discuss the psychiatric implications of the artist's "self-mutilation" Actions.[4] The gallery's official invitations to the opening expressed the condescending equivocality that so piqued Brus: "We are well aware of the difficulties presented by these borderline cases of contemporary painting, but consider that it is wrong in principle simply to suppress such things."[5]

Brus responded by undertaking a distinctly different sort of action.[6] As he later wrote:

> I decided to prevent the venture from seeming like a compromise and to make my artistic intentions clearer. The Janus-faced nature of the gallery's activities drove me from the rats' cellars onto the street, as it were. I decided to walk as a living picture through the inner city of Vienna, past numerous historically significant buildings.[7]

He asked his friend Mühl to paint his body and clothing entirely white, save for a wide, jagged, black scar-like line, which ran from his scalp and across his face, down his jacket front and trouser leg, and through to his right shoe. **[3.2]** Brus then left the Perinet Cellar, the subterranean space that served as the Actionists' studio, and was driven into Vienna's historic center, hiding in the car's back seat to avoid police attention. He was let out at Heldenplatz, a Habsburg-era

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[1] Otto Mühl, "Material Actions — Total Actions," in *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler: Writings of the Vienna Actionists*, ed. and trans. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas Press, 1999), 96.
[2] Along with Brus, the group comprised Hermann Nitsch, Otto Mühl, and Rudolf Schwarzkogler. Below I discuss some of the problems in equating the work of these four artists with Actionism as a whole.
[3] Günter Brus, "Remarks on *Vienna Walk*," in Green, *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 33.
[4] Ibid.
[5] As cited by Dieter Schwarz in "Chronologie," in *Von der Aktionsmalerei zum Aktionismus. Wien 1960-1965*, eds. Dieter Schwarz and Veit Loers, trans. Keith Hartley et al. (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1988), 300.
[6] In this chapter I use the term "Action" to refer to events that were first produced under this title, or to closely related events that form part of the recognized *oeuvres* of the four artists typically described as Actionists (Brus, Nitsch, Mühl, Schwarzkogler). In places I refer to this body of work as "canonical" Actionism. In contrast, I use the term "action" to refer to the general concept or practice of action, and to describe a broader range of events, including some that were not publicly identified as Actions. Wherever possible I refer to events using the terms by which they were first promoted.
[7] Brus, "Remarks on *Vienna Walk*."

memorial to military heroism that adjoined the imperial palace and had served as a parade ground. The "living picture" then set out to walk through the palace to St. Stephan's Cathedral, which had long been the religious center of the city. Trailed by several colleagues with cameras, Brus made it less than a mile before being arrested and cited for public disturbance.

One might dismiss Brus' *Vienna Walk* as a publicity stunt, especially given that the artist anticipated a response from police. In his recollection of events, Brus drolly noted: "I correctly sensed that the watchful eye of a defender of the public peace would not be long in spotting the living painting and arresting it."[8] It was no surprise that these suspicions were confirmed, given the repressive cultural climate in Vienna; an earlier semi-private action, the *Festival of Psycho-Physical Naturalism*, had been shut down by police two years earlier.[9] Taking this together with the Actionists' reputation for pursuing publicity at any cost, it would be easy to conclude that the "living picture" was simply a walking advertisement.

However, such a judgment would overlook the ways in which *Vienna Walk* introduced several decisive changes to the Action on the level of its event-structure. First, *Vienna Walk* was one of the first Actions to occur in public before an uninvited audience.[10] Whether this tendency was due to public disinterest or to a perceived climate of repression — if not both — *Vienna Walk* constituted an especially visible reorientation of the Action toward an exogenous audience. This change of purpose was accompanied by a second key development: an increasing concern with questions regarding the regulation of collective space. This shift was evident in Brus' choice of venue, which mobilized a historically informed conception of site, one recalling the different memory-events examined in Chapter Two. Not only was Heldenplatz a potent symbol of the bygone Habsburg empire; it had also been a favored gathering point for Austrian National Socialists, most famously in the 1938 rally at which Adolf Hitler proclaimed Germany's annexation of Austria. **[3.3]** To appear there as Brus did was not to disturb an abstract universal public, but a historically fraught, overdetermined idea of what a public could or should be.

In these respects, *Vienna Walk* marked a crucial change in the development of the Action, one of the central forms around which Austria's small, embattled neo-avant-garde organized itself. By so intensively engaging the politics of publicity, Brus' event displaced the horizon of Actionist production from its initial concern with problems derived from the medium of painting. Historians of Actionism have noted the peculiarities of the belated process by which styles that were dominant elsewhere were absorbed by Austrian artists, such that in 1960, when Brus, Nitsch, and Alfons Schilling initiated action painting in Vienna, the practice was already outmoded in Paris or New York.[11] This was doubtless due in part to the relative weakness of the

[8] Ibid.
[9] For a description of this event see Schwarz, "Chronologie," 253-58.
[10] As Malcolm Green has noted, the majority of early Actionist production was decidedly private. In the years prior to *Vienna Walk* over half of Brus' Actions took place in sheltered locations like the Perinet Cellar. The proportions were even higher for Brus' colleagues: over three-quarters of Mühl's Actions before 1965 were private, as were 15 of Nitsch's 21 initial performances, and only one of Schwarzkogler's Actions ever had an audience aside from a photographer and a few friends. Green, "Introduction," *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 10.
[11] See for example Veit Loers, "Als die Bilder laufen lernten" ["When Pictures Learnt to Walk"], in *Von der Aktionsmalerei zum Aktionismus*, 11. According to one account, Nitsch was first exposed to gestural abstraction in 1959, when he saw an exhibition of work by Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and Willem de Kooning. See Günter

Austrian market for contemporary art, which had no equivalent to the newly reconstructed institutions that existed in West Germany, whether *documenta* or the galleries of the Rhineland. Instead, examples of Abstract Expressionism, Tachism, and Informel were often imported in a piecemeal or highly mediated fashion. "New American Painting," the landmark 1958 MoMA-curated travelling exhibition of Abstract Expressionism, visited eight European cities but not Vienna. Austrians who couldn't travel to see such work would have had to read about it in art magazines, or in texts like Jürgen Claus' *Theories of Contemporary Painting* (1963), which theorized the shift from pictorialism to action painting in much the same terms that Harold Rosenberg had done in the US a decade earlier. The Actionists' reception of Yves Klein seems to have been taken place primarily through two indirect channels: via the painter Adolf Frohner, who studied in France in 1961; and through Klein's depiction in the Italian film *mondo cane* (1962). Similarly, the influential practice of Georges Mathieu was publicized not through exhibitions, but through a single painting performance Mathieu gave in 1959 in Vienna's Theatre am Fleischmarkt. **[3.4]**

Some have claimed that these conditions of belatedness and isolation were actually to the Actionists' advantage, allowing for a unique transformation of such precedents.[12] Whether or not this was the case, *Vienna Walk* marked a clear break with the specifically Austrian approach of action painting that had been consolidated in the early 1960s. The canvas was completely absent, meaning that there was no longer any painted record to stand in for the event of painting. Moreover, Brus' appearance and comportment conspicuously failed to claim painterly action as virtuosic and authentic, after the examples of Pollock and Mathieu, or even an arena for self-assured showmanship, as with Yves Klein. These displacements underscored a more radical shift in the aesthetic orientation of the Action as an event, one that can be broadly understood as an increasing engagement with the contingent determinations of heteronomy.

With his identity unstably suspended between agent, image, and object, Brus claimed publicity as a precarious subject undergoing its own dehiscence, a condition underscored by the dark fissure traversing his semi-camouflaged person. Painting functioned here not as an end so much as a tactic, with the operation of marking transformed into mapping and Brus' body becoming a sort of stylus tracing a temporary axis of visibility. So while Brus surely acted as his own promoter, he simultaneously invoked other roles: a drifting specter haunting church, state, and polis; an anti-heroic dandy promenading through former parade grounds; or, most provocatively, a victim of Austrian military aggression, raising the highly sensitive question of Austria's complicity in the wars and genocides of 1939-45.

Vienna Walk thus reads as a public disturbance in a different sense: an immanent contestation of the means by which the rights to appear and demonstrate as an intelligible subject are policed, whether literally, as actually happened, or on the phenomenological level, through a specific partition of the sensible. In provoking such a response, it showed how the potential effects of an oppositional politics of aesthetics were constrained by a hegemonic aesthetics of politics. Radical in its formal economy and generative ambiguities, *Vienna Walk* anticipated the subsequent, more self-reflexive approaches to the event surveyed in Chapter Four. As such, it gestures towards the

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Berghaus, *Avant-Garde Performance: Live Events and Electronic Technologies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 153n49.

[12] See for example Loers, "Bilder," 23-24.

numerous ways in which Actions, while not themselves strictly aesthetico-political, nonetheless laid the groundwork for the emergence of an aesthetico-political sphere in Austria later in the 1960s. Furthermore, Brus' Action remains a crucial, under-recognized precedent for an array of more recent practices.[13] **[3.5-7]** Yet one might nevertheless argue that the Action deserves attention just as much for its unresolved conflicts, two of which are especially significant as symptoms of larger structural contradictions subtending the field within which the Actionists operated.

The first is encapsulated in an image of Brus and the arresting officer walking together peacefully, each seemingly satisfied at having done his job. **[3.8]** Although *Vienna Walk* successfully disrupted one aspect of police order, contesting the mechanisms governing public appearance, it did so only by soliciting and potentially legitimating a repressive response. The event thus failed to challenge the codependent relation between transgression and law, leaving open the possibility that it could be instrumentalized as an example of the phenomenon that the philosopher Herbert Marcuse analyzed as "repressive tolerance."[14] The second conflict concerns the technical mediation of the Action, which like many others was documented by Ludwig Hoffenreich, formerly a photographer for the mass-market photo-magazine *Stern*.[15] Insofar as they thus stood to reinforce the codes of spectacular publicity, such Actions ran the risk of producing mere images of dissent, while overlooking the extent to which mass-mediation was increasingly transforming the means through which power could be exercised — or resisted. As this chapter will show, Actions thus often manifested an ironic prescience, registering decisive developments inadvertently or symptomatically.

In these respects, *Vienna Walk* might be said to represent both the potential and the problems of Actionism more broadly. Perhaps it is this complicated legacy that has led to the intense ambivalence with which these practices have long been regarded. In Austria, where Brus and his contemporaries once faced concerted juridical repression, the Actionists have been a cultural institution for several decades, routinely appearing in state-funded travelling exhibitions. Hermann Nitsch, once routinely accused of blasphemy, has been celebrated as a modern religious artist by the Catholic Church.[16] After many years of neglect and infamy, the Actionists received a major retrospective that toured Europe in 1988-89. This breakthrough was followed by their inclusion in the 1998 performance-centered exhibition *Out of Actions*, at that time the most extensive exposure that Actionism had received in the US. This acceptance was welcomed as long overdue by partisans of their work, some of whom maintained that Actions were a sort of high-water mark for radical performance.[17] However, Actionism has also been subject to

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[13] For a survey of artworks that have engaged the built environment of Vienna since Brus, see *Wiener Linien. Kunst und Stadtbeobachtung seit 1960*, exhibition catalog (Vienna: Folio Verlag and Wien Museum, 2004). For contemporary art dealing with walking as a procedure, see *Walk Ways*, exhibition catalog (New York: Independent Curators International, 2004).

[14] See Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Marcuse, Robert Paul Wolff, and Barrington Moore, Jr. eds., *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).

[15] The images of *Vienna Walk* in the appendix have been scanned from prints of Hoffenreich's photographs held in the archives of the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Reference Number G725/0.

[16] Berghaus, *Avant-Garde Performance*, 158n65.

[17] See for example Hubert Klocker, "Gesture and the Object: Liberation as Aktion: A European Component of Performative Art," trans. Nita Tandon, in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979*, exhibition catalog, ed. Russell Ferguson (New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 1998.

sustained critique from the left practically from its inception both in Austria and abroad, on grounds ranging from misogyny to the presence of theologizing and even crypto-fascist tendencies.[18] These arguments returned to the fore in 1991 when Otto Mühl was tried and convicted on charges of sexual abuse of minors, stemming from his involvement with the Aktionsanalytische Kommune, an alternative community that Mühl founded in 1970 and oversaw for decades thereafter.

While the following two chapters intensively engage the history of Actionism, they intend neither to rehearse nor somehow arbitrate these long-running disputes, though their critical position towards the Actionists' many excesses should be clear. Rather, they mean to counter a problem that spans both sides of these debates: a tendency to reduce Actionism to a unified, monomorphic movement centered around Brus, Nitsch, Mühl, and Schwarzkogler.[19] Such a narrow focus privileges a limited body of work, and contributes to the fallacy that these events were first received under a consistent heading. In fact, the term "Vienna Actionism" was not used until 1970, and the two first attempts to define the category referred to a much broader range of practices, dating back to the activities of the Vienna Group in the mid-1950s.[20] To view Actionism as a cohesive movement projects a sort of retroactive unity onto a field that was in fact riven by numerous tensions, like those that led to a falling-out between Mühl and Nitsch in 1964, or those that later divided the philosophically informed work of Oswald Wiener from the more primal, scatological performance aesthetics of Brus and Mühl. Adding to these distinctions is the fact that though Brus, Mühl, Nitsch, and Schwarzkogler often collaborated with each other, they never performed their works as a joint ensemble; the one time they appeared together as the "Vienna Action Group" was in a magazine.[21]

However, perhaps the most problematic aspect of such an approach is that it promotes a misleading, restrictive conception of the Action as both a historical practice and an event-structure. By dividing my account of Actions into two discrete chapters, I mean to suggest one possible way in which this area of production can be divided and reconceived. While it is tempting to designate an "Actionist turn" or to separate Actionism into successive generations or competing camps, this would impose an artificial clarity onto a complex, problematic field. Instead, this chapter and the next will argue that the most generative critical aspects of Actions

[18] For an early example of such criticism, see Henryk M. Broder, "Kein Linker, sondern Analfaschist," in *Neues Forum*, December 1971, 54.

[19] The organization of the influential 1988 touring exhibition exemplified this tendency, focussing on the four best-known Actionists and giving little or no consideration to other figures aligned with the movement, whether early (Arnulf Rainer, Alfons Schilling, Adolf Frohner) or later (Weibel, EXPORT). This focus is even further pronounced in more recent exhibitions; for documentation of one such example, see *Wiener Aktionismus. Sammlung Hummel*, ed. Edizioni Mazzotta/Julius Hummel (Milan: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 2005), especially Hubert Klocker's essay "Tour De Force." A similar bias is evident in two of the most prominent art historical accounts of Actionism: Oliver Jahraus, *Die Aktion des Wiener Aktionismus. Subversion der Kultur und Dispositionierung des Bewußtseins* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001); and Kerstin Braun, *Der Wiener Aktionismus. Positionen und Prinzipien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999).

[20] Weibel and EXPORT's 1970 collection *Wien. Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film* marked the first published use of the term; the other came in an essay by Rüdiger Engerth, published in the art magazine *Protokolle*. For further discussion of this etymology, see Malcolm Green's introduction to *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 11.

[21] Green helpfully summarizes this history of partial collaborations; see Green, "Introduction," *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 11-12.

cannot be identified with canonical Actionism. In certain cases they were latent or unrealized in Actions by Brus, Mühl, Nitsch, and Schwarzkogler. In others, they were implemented by aligned but independent figures, including Weibel, EXPORT, and Kurt Kren, often relying on the earlier precedent of the Vienna Group. These divergent practices suggested a much more nuanced engagement with the event than those typical of canonical Actionism and much of its reception, in which the Action is often viewed as unmediated, transcendent, subversive, ephemeral, and singular.[22]

From such a perspective, Brus' *Vienna Walk* comes to appear as a a point of inflection in a larger historical arc, a site where the differences between Actions and subsequent event-forms begin to come into relief. (I will refer to this second group of events as "mediated actions," theorizing them as a form of "disagreement"). In following this transformation, Chapters Three and Four seek to chart an alternative genealogy of the action as an event form, one that traverses the history of Actionism at an oblique angle so as to underscore its contradictions and examine how related practices sought to critique, resolve, or escape them. The current chapter schematizes three dominant tendencies within canonical Actionist practice: the Action as ritual, a model typified by the work of Hermann Nitsch; the Action as direct art, exemplified by Otto Mühl's Material Actions and Total Actions; and the Action as social transgression, an approach present in the work of all the Actionists.[23] In doing so, it seeks to mark emergent shifts in the relation between aesthetics and politics, developments that would become a crucial precondition for the production of mediated actions. My analyses mean to suggest the intensely conflicted legacy that Actions bequeathed, indicating their contradictions alongside their often unrealized critical potential. In this last respect, I pay special attention to select features of certain Actionist events: their experimentation with aspects of publicity and site, their varying conceptions of direct action, their integration of public responses, and their increasing engagement with heteronomy.

As I have noted above, these developments were crucial for the formation of aesthetico-political practices *circa* 1968, even if they did not themselves fit this criterion. Chapter Four will assess the aesthetico-political field that first emerged in Austria in the mid-1960s, attaining a critical mass in the years 1966-70. During this period any number of new, dissident forms of action were developed, ranging from "action lectures," "translation actions," and "communication actions" to "film actions" and "media actions." In the next chapter I will map this dispersal of the Action into the numerous cognate forms that I term "mediated actions," examining some of the most pertinent causes for this displacement. These factors include an expanded range of international contacts and domestic collaborators, as well as the constrained development of the Austrian New Left and fallout from the increasing notoriety of Actionism.

As this chapter will argue, the first generation of Actions manifested any number of contradictions. They typically relied on extensive mediation to convey the impression of immediacy, and what seemed like wild spontaneity was often the product of meticulous

[22] Such reception is consistent with what Sven Lütticken has incisively criticized as "performance ideology"; see Lütticken, "Progressive Striptease: Performance Ideology Past and Present," in Lütticken, *Secret Publicity: Essays on Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2005).

[23] Here I would note that these are analytical distinctions, separating tendencies that often overlapped in practice. Even with this said, the following discussion will necessarily be synoptic and selective, and thus risks reproducing the overly unified accounts it means to dislodge. Although my choice of examples means to counter this risk, it still bears mention that there remains much more heterogeneity within individual practices than can be registered here.

planning. While the Actionists frequently found themselves the targets of juridical and social repression, they clearly meant to provoke such reactions, without which their work would have lost much of its charge, not to mention its audience. Though the problems with such an approach often appear obvious from a contemporary viewpoint, in cases like *Vienna Walk* it is difficult to cleanly separate the "critical" element of an event from its "symptomatic" tendencies, raising the question of how a work might manage to be at once radical and retrograde. Although my argument here clearly depends on drawing such distinctions, if only analytically, it tries to refrain from overly neat or hasty opposition. In taking a careful approach to what was often reckless art, I hope to suggest that Actions still deserve to be taken seriously, and not only as a type of "bad object." So although I will maintain that disagreements managed to subject the contradictions of Actions to productive scrutiny, I do not mean to suggest that they were themselves immune to their own paradoxes. And while I concede that many Actions well deserved the skepticism or opprobrium they have received, I nevertheless wish to single out those like *Vienna Walk*, which continue to merit our close attention.

2. Amnesty for "Lesser Crimes": The Cultural Politics of Postwar Austria

The centrality of contradiction to this chapter's argument might be explained as a reflection of the history it surveys. Perhaps even more so than in West Germany, the postwar period in Austria was marked by any number of profound, pervasive tensions in the social and political order. As in the FRG, independence was not declared from within, but was the result of a military occupation. However, the very idea of an autonomous Austrian nation was complicated from the start, given the relatively recent dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the subsequent merger with National Socialist Germany. As is well known today, Austria had been a willing collaborator with Nazi Germany, with strong public support in both countries for the annexation of Austrian territory in the so-called *Anschluss* of 1938. Not surprisingly, these sympathies did not just evaporate with the end of the war. A 1948 poll showed that more than one-third of Viennese still endorsed National Socialism, with even greater support in more conservative regions of Austria.[24]

These deep continuities between Austria and West Germany notwithstanding, the transition to post-fascism took markedly different forms in the two countries. This was in many ways the product of Allied wartime military policy, when it was decided for strategic reasons that Austria would be treated as a victim of Nazi aggression, rather than an accomplice. The end of the war was thus framed by the Allies as a liberation, rather than as a defeat and occupation. As a result, Allied policies of denazification were not pursued as aggressively in Austria as in the FRG, and the number of actions taken began to decline markedly soon after the war, in 1947. An initial amnesty law in 1948 covered infractions that were viewed euphemistically as "lesser crimes"; some 90% of former NS party members were covered under these provisions, and Austria's two major parties began competing for their votes.

When Austria was granted sovereignty in 1955, its occupiers were successfully convinced to drop a clause stipulating continued national responsibility for war crimes. By the time of a

[24] Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 257-58. I rely primarily on Beller's account in the following paragraphs.

second amnesty covering major crimes in 1957, denazification was effectively finished. As a result of this shift, the Austrian state was able to resist the re-emigration of Jewish former citizens, to secure acceptance of the material gains inherited from the Nazi occupation, and to deflect claims for compensation, including reparations suits brought from Yugoslavia, Poland, and Greece. In keeping with this general climate of evasion, there existed nothing like the sort of strident (if limited) discourse of dissident memory symbolized by such figures as Karl Jaspers or Theodor Adorno in West Germany.[25] It is not just that debates on such matters was relatively absent, but rather that there emerged in its place something like a collective fantasy of victimization, within whose terms everyday Austrians were seen not as having potentially been perpetrators, accomplices, or bystanders with regard to the Nazi genocides, but rather as having been victims in a double sense: first of Hitler, and then of the Allied occupation.

Given that the authority of the state was partly legitimated by this fiction, Austrian politics in the decades after 1945 inclined strongly toward stability and prosperity. In matters of foreign policy, the state officially maintained a stance of neutrality, though its sympathies were swayed by the massive amounts of US foreign aid it received. (The average Austrian received roughly seven times as much aid as her West German counterpart under the Marshall Plan.)[26] On the domestic front, Austria was ruled until 1966 by a national unity government comprised of the two leading parties: the conservative Austrian People's Party (hereafter ÖVP) and the left-liberal Austrian Social-Democratic Party (SPÖ). While there was a legally recognized Communist party (KPÖ), a power-sharing agreement between the ÖVP and SPÖ had foreclosed any chance of its success.

With a main source of competition sidelined, the two parties in this so-called "Grand Coalition" enacted a policy of what was called *Proporz*, or proportionality, with each party effectively being guaranteed a certain amount of representation for its constituents.[27] Such a practice was consistent with the interests of a corporatist political order, under which the interests of labor unions, industrial cartels, and political parties were coordinated to a large extent (especially when viewed from an American perspective). On account of this consolidation, but also because neutrality required little defense spending, the Austrian state was able to further guarantee its stability by providing workers with generous social benefits. Even though this national unity government held power for over ten years — considerably longer than its West German counterpart — it never provoked anything like the extra-parliamentary opposition that roiled the FRG from the mid-1960s onward.

For artists or activists on the left, these conditions would very likely have been grounds for discouragement, if not desperation. Surveying this situation, they would have perceived official institutions that were complicit in covering up war guilt, a very real threat of police repression, and a lack of viable political alternatives. This must have been especially galling in Vienna, a city that was known internationally before the war for its platform of socialist policies, which included ambitious experiments in fostering forms of working-class culture. This history was

[25] See Karl Jaspers, *Wohin treibt die Bundesrepublik?* (Münich: Piper, 1966); and Theodor W. Adorno, *Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (1959), in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 10:2, 555-572.
[26] Beller, *History of Austria*, 252.
[27] The historian Tony Judt has referred to this arrangement as a system that allowed the Grand Coalition to "purchase the consensus on which the country's equilibrium rested." Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 262.

foreclosed by the ascendance of Austro-fascism and Nazism, and its legacies were rendered largely unavailable during occupation and reconstruction. Much the same was true of the many strains of thought that emerged from the intensely productive intellectual climate that had existed before Hitler, including Freudian psychoanalysis, linguistic philosophy, logical positivism, Austro-Marxism, and the Vienna School of art history. It would take decades to rebuild these institutions, to the extent that this was even possible. In the meantime, the social climate in much of Austria ranged from conservative to outright repressive, with homosexuality, abortion, and adultery illegal into the 1970s. When the Austrian state did begin to finance cultural reconstruction, it chose to sponsor export-friendly forms that projected a sanitized image of national heritage, like the Vienna Philharmonic, the Vienna Opera, and the Mozart Festival in Salzburg.[28] Such an overt politicization of the aesthetic sought to capitalize on the increase in international attention and tourism that accompanied the 1964 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck. **[3.9]**

3. Hermann Nitsch and the Ritual Action

Given such conditions, many artists essentially regarded the Austrian state and the capitalist politico-economic order it represented as no better than, or in fact the direct descendant of, the fascist regimes it succeeded. If, as in West Germany, it seemed that many were willing to trade the rigors of a more honest reckoning with the legacies of fascism for the material comforts of a reconstructed consumer economy, one response was to negate this compromised modernity altogether. Such a logic subtended the Actions of Hermann Nitsch, which drew on numerous premodern and early modern precedents, including Greek mythology and tragedy, Christian liturgy, pagan ceremony, and the Germanic legend of the Nibelungen.

Beginning very early in his career, before the transition from what were called Painting Actions to Actions, Nitsch equated the temporality of artistic process with that of ritual. At that point, around 1960, he was experimenting with different Tachist approaches to the canvas. Drawing on the example of Arnulf Rainer, Nitsch produced paintings primarily through two operations: letting paint run down from the top of the canvas (*Rinnbilder*) and pouring it directly (*Schüttbilder*). **[3.10]** Reflecting on these works, he would later claim that "a process which occurred in time was really a dramatic process... pouring liquids over various surfaces became the basic ritual of my Actions."[29] In such a formulation, numerous temporalities were superimposed onto the empty secular time of modernity, including those of ritual, drama, and the event of artistic creation.[30] Nitsch would speak elsewhere of this time as being "vital," possessed of a unique energy.[31]

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[28] Beller, *History of Austria*, 266.

[29] As cited by Veit Loers, "Bilder," 15. [Translation modified; the original reads as follows: "ein vorgang der sich in der zeit ereignete, war eigentlich ein dramatischer vorgang... das beschütten von flächen wurde zu einem grundritual meiner aktionen."]

[30] It is significant in this respect that Nitsch uses the verb *ereignen*, which shares the same root as *Ereignis* (event).

[31] Malcolm Green quotes Nitsch as follows: "the action of painting, the productive event that took place in time, became vital. an event that took place in time was in fact a dramatic event." See Green, *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 130.

This sort of overdetermined signification would become increasingly characteristic of Nitsch's work. At times this tendency took forms familiar from Christian iconography, as with the artist's obsession with red paint, which he overtly equated with both blood and wine. By multiplying the meanings an Action could have, Nitsch hoped to stimulate new modes of perception by cross-activating viewers' senses. Such a synesthetic experience could trigger what he termed "a circle of associations [that] touches directly the mastering of man's collective outbursts of vitality constantly pushing towards the orgiastic."[32] Here the term "orgiastic" referred to a Dionysian renewal in which excess and sacrifice would bring about a collective catharsis. In one of his first manifestos, published in 1960 on an exhibition invitation, Nitsch gestured sweepingly to the effects that such practices might have, invoking "the sacralization of art," "the ritualization of the entire course of one's life," and art as "the sacramental manifestation of existence."[33] **[3.11]**

These hyperbolic, totalizing ambitions marked Nitsch's earliest thinking about the function of the artwork, which in part grew out of his earlier study of theater, an experience that had been formatively marked by his encounter with Richard Wagner. One of his first plays sought to synthesize the myths of the Nibelungen, the House of Atreus, and the crucifixion; another sought to dramatize the whole of human history. Seeking to outdo Wagner in the duration and scale of performance, Nitsch conceived a six-day-long play that would narrate the origin of human consciousness through reference to mythic archetypes and a thematics of resurrection. In the mid-1960s this project would become the template for his long-running *Orgies-Mysteries Theater*, a sort of Actionist *Gesamtkunstwerk* that synthesized Nitsch's three previous modes of performance: the Painting Actions, the Actions, and the Abreaction Plays.

In the Painting Actions Nitsch had drawn on his early experience as a church painter to develop a personal repertory of gesture, costume, and staging that borrowed extensively from traditional Christian iconography. Nitsch began to perform in a priest's vestments, with his paintings directly referencing roses, the Stations of the Cross, and the bread and wine of Communion. **[3.12]** In his Actions, Nitsch ceased using paint as a medium, and began to work directly with the human body and with the remains of animals. These events were similarly dependent on a Christian imaginary, often using makeshift altarpieces and subjecting lambs to mock-crucifixion; when canvasses were produced they were often referred to as *Aktionrelikte*, or "Action relics."

Although the Abreaction Plays involved a similar performance vocabulary, their conception was more explicitly theatrical in nature, and relied more intensively on a script. Their express objective was to produce the phenomenon of abreaction, a term that Nitsch had borrowed from the psychoanalytic writings of Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer. While in this initial formulation abreaction was closely linked with the treatment of trauma — designating a cathartic discharge of repressed affect — Nitsch defined the concept more broadly as "every exceptional form of gratification that allows blocked, pent-up energies to escape."[34] Seeing this sort of release at work in myth, ritual, and religion, Nitsch designed plays meant to enable what he called

[32] As cited by Hubert Klocker in "Hermann Nitsch — Biography," in *Wiener Aktionismus. Wien 1960-1971. Der zertrümmerte Spiegel*, ed. Klocker (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1989), 272.
[33] Hermann Nitsch, "Manifesto," 1960. Reprinted in *Hermann Nitsch*, ed. Wolfgang Denk (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2007), 43.
[34] As cited in Malcolm Green, *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 261n75. For explication of the concept of abreaction in Freud and Breuer's writings, see Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Abreaction," *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973), 1-2.

"abreaction-events" through the "creation of disinhibition-ecstasies."[35] When Nitsch finally began to realize his conception of the *Orgies-Mysteries Theater* in 1965, after five years of preparation, he envisioned a total artwork that would allow both "concrete objects" and "concrete events" to function as triggers for a transcendent, collective return to primordial, authentic being.[36]

Yet despite these anarchic, Dionysian aims, Nitsch, more than any other Actionist, has become his own cultural institution in Austria. For the catalog to a 2007 exhibition inaugurating a museum dedicated to Nitsch's work, a mayor and a provincial governor each contributed a foreword; these texts hailed him both as a "universal artist" and an ambassador for the redevelopment of Austria's Weinviertel region.[37] While this curious acceptance is surely the product of changing mores, it likely also owes much to the artist's all-inclusive, explicitly Jungian universalism, as well as his avowed aversion to political agitation. For many critics, Nitsch's overweening, grandiose aims, combined with his apparent lack of humor about them, have made his brand of Actionism the easiest to caricature or dismiss.

Exacerbating matters has been the fact that the most basic elements of the Nitschean Action stood diametrically opposed to the forms and practices that would later be codified as critical postmodernism. In contrast to this model, which drew heavily from Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Era of its Technical Reproducibility," ritual Actions were overtly expressionistic, aimed to re-auraticize the artwork, and promoted a form of cult sociability, with the artist positioned as the ego-ideal of a deindividuated collective. Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois typified such objections in their critique of Nitsch, which held that his practice neutralized the subversive power of an aesthetics of formlessness through its insistence on what they termed a "redemptive version of sacrificial self-mutilation."[38] Other critics have pointed out the inconsistencies in Nitsch's view of language: while his Actions typically shunned speech in order to project a greater sense of immediacy, they failed to account for the linguistic structure of non-verbal modes of signification.[39]

One could further question how such Actions could be understood by some as black Masses but later venerated by the Catholic Church; this peculiar discrepancy would suggest that Nitsch operated in some sort of implausible liminal space between anti-theology, crypto-theology, and theology outright. In addition, one might note the contradictions inherent in event-structures that sought to realize spontaneous transcendence through predetermined planning, as if abreaction could possibly be delivered on demand. Lastly, one wonders whether the remarkable consistency of Nitsch's aesthetic, which has remained largely unchanged over five decades, has disguised its

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[35] As cited in Schwarz, "Chronologie," 197-99. ["Im abreaktionsspiel werden durch erzeugung von enthemmungsekstasen abreaktionsereignisse konstruiert und erlebt."]
[36] Nitsch, "Manifesto for The Lamb," as cited in Malcolm Green, 140.
[37] See Wolfgang Denk, *Hermann Nitsch*, 15-17.
[38] Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 146.
[39] Hal Foster and Brigid Doherty discuss this tendency in Nitsch's work in their talk "On Body and Performance," presented at the Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, PA, March 3, 2005. Archived online at http://slought.org/content/11264/, last accessed May 12, 2011. For a description of the *Orgies-Mysteries Theater* as a "theater without words," see Wieland Schmied, "Not Only Paint but Blood As Well: On Hermann Nitsch, His Theater of Orgies and Mysteries, and his Painting," in Hermann Nitsch, *Orgien Mysterien Theater Retrospektive* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007), ed. Britta Schmitz, 35.

underlying eclecticism. Given that Nitsch has compared Actions to a multitude of historical forms — one list refers to cults, the theater, the Roman circus, the festival, the hunt, carnivals, Sade, the black Mass, alchemy, mysticism, and sporting contests[40] — the ritual Action might well appear to have been a merely reflexive negation of its moment, a sort of anti-modernism that lacked its own positive content.[41] From this perspective, the primary impulse behind the Nitschean Action begins to seem plainly reactionary.

4. "Speaking, Screaming, Noise, Movement, and Material": Direct Actions

In part because of Nitsch's persistent identification with religious forms, he and Mühl experienced something of a falling-out in 1964. Though the two artists would later resume working together, Mühl proceeded to develop the Action in a markedly different direction, one in which he was joined by Brus. These events also severed any attachments to representational painting and sculpture in favor of an unmediated engagement with the properties of bodies and everyday objects, aiming to alter viewers' consciousness by directly stimulating sensory associations. However, in contrast to the solemnities of the ritual Action this approach showed a distinct preference for the perverse and the profane, admitting a much wider range of objects and often recycling the detritus of commodity culture. Here I will refer to these event-forms as "direct Actions."[42]

Although this term *per se* was not used by Mühl or Brus, such a concept clearly informed the activities of the "Vienna Institute for Direct Art," an organization formed by the artists in 1966 to publicize their work in conjunction with their invitation to the *Destruction in Art Symposium* (hereafter DIAS) in London. In a press release from that year, the group defined a Material Action as a "spatio-temporal occurrence... painting executed with bodies (human and objects) and with materials."[43] **[3.13]** A Total Action was then explained as "a Material Action set into motion," addressing a public audience and incorporating elements of theater, music, and painting, as well as "speaking, screaming, noise, movement, and material." Total Actions could further involve the transition from an "art occurrence" into an "actual occurrence," with the text citing as an example the burning down of St. Stephan's Cathedral.[44]

While these definitions still relied on painting to make direct Actions recognizable, they nevertheless indicate the extent to which Tachist or Abstract Expressionist conceptions of painting had been transformed by that point. Not only had a focus on the productive process overcome the importance of the finished artwork, but artistic event forms were now thought to occur in conjunction with non-artistic or "actual" ones. For Mühl and Brus, it was clear that this represented a clear politicization of aesthetics, as in their assertion that "Direct Art is political

[40] See Oliver Jahraus, *Die Aktion des Wiener Aktionismus*, 149n23.
[41] For discussion of anti-modernism as a larger trait of Actionist production, see Philip Ursprung, "Catholic Tastes: Hurting and Healing the Body in Viennese Actionism in the 1960s," in Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, eds., *Performing the Body, Performing the Text* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
[42] While my use of this term will primarily refer to Mühl's Material Actions and Total Actions, it could also extend to Brus' Self-Painting and Self-Mutilation Actions.
[43] "Informationstext zu Direkte Kunst," Archives of the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Reference Number D49/0, unpaginated.
[44] Ibid.

art."[45] As we will see in Chapter Four, this shift from representation to action was one with crucial implications for the subsequent development of even more heteronomous event-forms.

If the event-character of a Direct Action was thus integral to its status, the same was true of its deployment of materials and objects. The sheer breadth and diversity of this field defies easy summation, and is perhaps best suggested by a partial list of the components in Mühl's 1964 Material Action *O Tannenbaum*: sparklers, eggs, milk cartons, cotton balls, condoms, particle board, smoked herring, copper vitriol, a balloon filled with feathers, custard, a suitcase, a christmas tree, detergent powder, a pitchfork, dentures, a light bulb, an alarm clock, reading glasses, lighter fluid, and sauerkraut.[46] As this heterogeneity would indicate, such an approach represented a radical expansion of the logic of the Duchampian readymade. In the *Material Action Manifesto* of 1965, Mühl laid stake to such a position in making the following claim: "everything can be used and worked as material. everything is employed as substance."[47] However, whereas Duchamp typically intended his appropriations to function as conceptual interventions — opposing the perceived vapidity of what he called "retinal" art — Mühl meant for his materials to operate as both signifiers and substances, calling forth associations "whether on account of their form, their customary usage, or their meaning." Furthermore, Mühl maintained that events could be appropriated, and not just objects. Such actual occurrences as "car accidents," "floods," and "conflagrations" could all be reproduced as part of an Action, then combined with "unreal, artificial occurrences" as well as with materials, with the ultimate result that "events of a deeper significance come into being."[48]

Between these neo-Duchampian tendencies and their concern with both events and eventfulness, direct Actions bore a resemblance to Nouveau Réalisme and to Happenings. While Mühl had had only indirect contact with these movements, their example nevertheless seems to have been formative. His decision to reject easel painting and conventional sculpture in favor of painting actions and junk assemblages occurred at the same time as his collaborations with Adolf Frohner, who had studied in Paris in 1961.[49] In a similar vein, Mühl and Nitsch briefly described their activities as Happenings in 1963 after learning of this format through their acquaintance Kiki Kogelnik, who lived in New York with the painter Sam Francis. However, apart from these contacts and whatever they might have gleaned from the international press, the Actionists had relatively little exposure to other neo-avant-garde experiments with durational forms. None of them witnessed or participated in the Fluxus concerts in the Rhineland; in fact the first of them to even visit West Germany was Nitsch, who worked briefly as an assistant to Wolf Vostell in 1964. As a result, whatever commonalities there may have been between direct Actions and these other forms were counterbalanced by the Actions' own distinctive traits.

Chief among these was a gravitation toward what might be called *demediation*: the process by which various intermediary forms of representation were removed from or minimized in a direct Action. While Mühl may have celebrated the "usage" and "meaning" of materials in his *Material Action Manifesto*, these functions were generally outweighed by their status as base substances

[45] Ibid.
[46] Mühl, "Material Action 17: *O Tannenbaum*", as cited in Green, *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 90-91.
[47] Mühl, "Material Action Manifesto" (1965), as cited in Green, *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 91.
[48] Ibid.
[49] For more on this history see Keith Hartley, "Vienna and Britain," in Schwarz and Loers, *Von der Aktionsmalerei*.

stripped of any signifying capacity. Mühl referred to this subtraction of meaning with the term *Entzweckung*, or "removal of purpose."[50] Such an approach amounted to an extreme objectification, as is evident in an earlier *Material Action Manifesto* of 1964:

> a person is not treated in the material action as a person but as a body. the body, things, are not viewed as objects for our purposes, but have all purpose radically removed from them. everything is understood as form. the human being is not seen as a human being, a person, but as a body with certain properties.[51]

In attempting to reduce people and objects to mere things, Mühl approached form in a way that ironically recalled various modernist arguments for autonomous, nonrepresentational art. Here, however, pure sensual form is not seen as a negation of hegemonic modes of signification, but rather as an attempt to escape representation altogether.[52] In Mühl's terms, this was a matter of creating a space where "realities exist for themselves."[53] Setting aside the exceedingly complex question of whether perception, thought, or action outside representation are possible — or even conceivable — one might note that this approach contravenes an established, influential reading of the Actionists' engagement with the body as a search for some sort of emancipatory intersubjectivity. In one characteristic formulation, the body is viewed as a site that enables a "return to real values of direct encounter and communication," as well as "shared experience."[54] Against such a view, direct Actions seemed rather to enact a wish to have done with communication and any concomitant humanist values. Instead, they modelled the fantasy of a temporality existing beyond history: an event occurring outside the agency of a recognizably human subject.[55]

Whatever critical force this particular anti-humanism may have exerted, there is no denying that it came at a heavy cost. In Mühl's case especially, the desubjectivation of the human subject bore an inarguably gendered dimension. Though the misogyny of his art has long been criticized, it nevertheless demands to be underscored. Mühl may have meant to attack the norms of bourgeois propriety as they were symbolized by, reproduced through, and literally instantiated in the body. However, he did so in terms that chronically coded the female body as passive, abject, commodified, and thus deserving of the act he termed *Versumpfung*, or degradation. **[3.14]** While this word, a neologism, was Mühl's own invention — it literally translates as something like "enswampment" — his identification of the female body with the evils of modernity was of course hardly original, taking its place in a dubious tradition of vanguardist misogyny.

The flagrant disjunction between this repressive tendency and the ostensibly "political" character of Direct Art should be clear. Somewhat less obvious is the fact that direct Actions, and here not only Mühl's, manifested further contradictions in their attempts to demediate the event. Although such Actions meant to create spaces where "realities exist for themselves," they nevertheless

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[50] Loers, "Bilder," 20.
[51] Otto Mühl, "Material Action Manifesto" (1964), as cited in Green, *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 87.
[52] For discussion of this interest in non-representationality in Actionism more broadly, including a theorization of the property of "autopresentation," see Oliver Jahraus, *Die Aktion des Wiener Aktionismus*, 19-22.
[53] As cited by Peter Gorsen, "Viennese Actionism and the Celebration of Psychophysical Naturalism," in Hummel, *Wiener Aktionismus. Sammlung Hummel*, 93.
[54] Hubert Klocker, "Tour De Force," *Wiener Aktionismus. Sammlung Hummel*, 21.
[55] For discussion of the "event without an anthropocentric perspective," see Gorsen, "Viennese Actionism," 97.

depended on numerous forms of representation, especially photography and film.[56] These recording technologies were largely seen as neutral supplements that would enable Actions to be documented and publicized. Hermann Nitsch, of the four the most mistrustful of technical media, expressed his reservations as follows: "The actual experience is the essence of my work... Media present difficulties because I am in fact interested in neutralizing the media and overcoming them to a certain extent."[57] While Otto Mühl was the most prolific in recording his Actions, he broke with two successive filmographers (Kurt Kren and Ernst Schmidt Jr.), upset with how their editing altered the intended meaning of his work. As he put it: "I'm not interested in what happens with the camera and the film but what is done in front of the camera."[58]

Yet while such statements expressed a clear desire to minimize the effects of technical mediation, they overlooked the fact that film and photography informed Actionism on any number of levels. Despite Nitsch's misgivings, his Actions were photographed from 1960 onwards. Starting with his first Material Action in 1963, Mühl entered into a close collaboration with the photographer Ludwig Hoffenreich, who had previously worked for the popular photo-magazine *Stern*. The next year, Mühl redesigned the basement studio where he staged his Material Actions, adding movable walls and mirrors to make the space more amenable to photography.[59] Although only a portion of Hoffenreich's photographs were originally made available, his private portfolios have since been archived. These documents indicate the considerable extent to which putatively "direct" Actions were conceived and executed with a mind to their future status as photographs.

One contact sheet shows Mühl working to pose a female model as he binds her with rope and cellophane, a cheeky riff on the traditional image of the sculptor at work in the studio. **[3.15]** The plain black background offers no distraction from the two subjects, a notable departure from earlier photos taken in the former studio, where Mühl's painted model blends into her surroundings. In a later contact sheet for the Material Action *Rumpsti Pumpsti* (1965), the effects of photographic mediation are even more evident. **[3.16]** Before the Action was even executed, Mühl's score had designated more than a dozen possible scenes to be photographed, sketching them out in a sort of storyboard. The contact sheet makes clear how Hoffenreich moved about during the Action to find the best possible angle for shooting his subject, now using a medium-format camera like those favored by fashion photographers. Afterwards, Mühl and Hoffenreich selected the most powerful shots, then determined how to reframe them so as to maximize their impact.

Günter Brus followed a similar path in Actions such as *Transfusion* (1965), which was planned as a series of poses in order to produce photographs.[60] (His sketches for other Actions make it

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[56] For more on the technical mediation of Actions, see Hanno Millesi, *Zur Fotografie im Wiener Aktionismus* (Wolkersdorf: Fluss, 1998); Hubert Klocker, *Aktion Photographie* (Eisenstadt: Burgenländische Landesgalerie, 1997); and Michaela Pöschl, *Kurt Kren. Die Aktionsfilme. Schnitt und Perversion*, MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 1999.

[57] As cited in Michaela Pöschl, "The Truth of the Bodies: Action and Representation in Vienna Actionism and Post-Actionism," in Hummel, *Wiener Aktionismus. Sammlung Hummel*, 250. Translation slightly modified.

[58] Ibid., 249.

[59] Loers, "Bilder," 21.

[60] In Brus' words: "I had only planned the action for still photographs, with no sequence of movements." Schwarz, "Chronologie," 304.

clear that Brus composed certain performances to be reproduced in both still and moving images.) **[3.17]** Brus' reliance in such cases on a limited range of tones and colors strongly suggests that he designed his Actions so as to achieve the maximum possible contrast when reproduced on black-and-white film. Such a logic was pushed even further in the practice of Rudolf Schwarzkogler, who only performed one live Action (*1st Action: Wedding* [1965]) before committing himself thereafter exclusively to private Actions performed for only a camera. Even Nitsch produced Actions that were designed around the dictates of the photographic product, seeking to avoid any unnecessary foreshortening through the camera's perspective.[61]

The contradictions in such practices were numerous and deep-seated. Despite the Actionists' avowed hostility to consumer modernity, Mühl, Brus, and Nitsch all collaborated with a photojournalist whose working methods were quite like those he had followed at *Stern*, differences in subject matter notwithstanding. Whatever opposition the Actionists may have had to such magazines as agents of spectacle, they ultimately subscribed to structures of publicity that were similar, if not functionally identical. Moreover, what became known as Actions often weren't durational events at all, so much as representations of them. In cases like *Rumpsti Pumpsti* or *Transfusion*, performers' actions occurred so as to produce images of an Action. These actions followed a predetermined sequence, with poses and gestures meant to conform to the camera, and they were of course subject to later manipulation in the darkroom. With the exception of the small audiences who witnessed Actions firsthand — and this is only in cases when Actions had an audience — the Actionists' public knows their work not as events, but through a graphic language depicting and inflecting them. In this sense, Actions ultimately became pictures, no matter how fervently the Actionists may have sought to escape representation.

Such conflicts were of course not unique to Actionism, and scholars of performance have recently shifted from an emphasis on the ephemerality of the performed event to an acknowledgement of the fact that performance has become, in Barbara Clausen's words, "object- and image-based," part of an "interdependent relationship between event, medialization, and reception."[62] While this shift promises to address a problematic valuation of the event in terms of its auratic presence, much depends on how precisely and radically this "interdependent relationship" is theorized. The example of Actionism suggests that, artists' intentions notwithstanding, representation works to constitute the event not only "after the act," to use Clausen's phrase, but also before and during it.

Such effects were evident not only in Actions that were staged to be photographed, but also in those that were filmed. According to Kurt Kren's account of filming Mühl's Material Action *Mama and Papa* (1964), the actual course of Mühl's Action was altered in accord with the requirements of filmmaking, stopping whenever Kren had to refocus or load fresh film.[63] **[3.18]** Such examples suggest a constitutive link between an action and its representation, recalling Philip Auslander's claim that "the act of documenting an event as a performance is what

[61] Klocker, "Hermann Nitsch — Biographie," 289.
[62] Barbara Clausen, "After the Act: The (Re)Presentation of Performance Art," in Barbara Clausen, ed., *After the Act: The (Re)Presentation of Performance Art* (Vienna: MUMOK, 2005), 7.
[63] See Peter Tscherkassky, "Gespräch mit Kurt Kren," *Avantgardefilm Österreich. 1950 bis Heute*, eds. Alexander Horwath, Lisl Ponger, Gottfried Schlemmer (Vienna: WESPENNEST, 1995), 128.

constitutes it as such."[64] In this respect, the unintentional legacy of direct Actions has been to underscore the numerous ways in which mediation shapes an event's initial conception, its actual execution, and even its structural conditions of possibility to be recognized and experienced.[65] Most crucially, their example implied that the effects of mediation extend to events produced far outside the purview of aesthetics or politics, and these effects continue long after the camera is turned off.

5. "Cesspool Aesthetics": Transgressive Actions

Finally, one can't discuss Actionism without noting its apparently insatiable appetite for transgression, a drive which would seem to have exhausted every available taboo. Günter Brus not only described this tendency but enacted it in citing the following credo: "Action is reaction. The Actionist shits on an empty palette."[66] Such a will to provocation — the impulse to outrage conventional or bourgeois sensibilities wherever possible — is perhaps the one trait that all four canonical Actionists consistently shared. (I will refer to this type of activity as the "transgressive Action.") Although this tendency intensified with time, it was already present in 1962 in *The Blood Organ*, the first public Action, in which Nitsch and Mühl announced that they would wall themselves into their basement studio, the Perinetkeller, for three days of continuous activity, at which point they would receive visitors.[67] In conjunction with this event the artists released a lengthy manifesto, also titled *The Blood Organ*. **[3.19]**

The contents of the manifesto activate a trope that was already at that point time-tested: the artist as deviant criminal. The front page of the text bore a facsimile of a bloody handprint, and subsequent pages had portions covered over with smears and blotches of paint. Mühl finger-painted his name above his contribution, "The M-Apparatus," whose title most likely referred to Fritz Lang's famous film about Weimar-era sex murders. In the text, Mühl vowed to fight "conformity" and "materialism" with what he called the "moral means" of "charlatans," namely "obscenity and cesspool aesthetics." This approach, he cheekily averred, was "the controlled synthesis of two asocial types: "saint and sexual murderer. Amen."[68]

In the leadup to the Action, a columnist for the Vienna *Kurier* reported that a live animal was due to be slaughtered as part of the event. (After protests from animal rights groups and inquiries from police, it came out that one of the artists' acquaintances had leaked the rumor, presumably as a means of generating publicity.) During the three days Mühl and Nitsch were in the cellar, they eavesdropped on the curious neighbors who had begun to gather around the entrance to the Perinetkeller, using a microphone they had concealed for this purpose. Among the rumors that had begun circulating was that the artists were eating human flesh and committing sex crimes. When the walled-in cellar was finally opened by a model in evening dress, photojournalists

[64] Philip Auslander, "On the Performativity of Performance Documentation," in Clausen, *After the Act*, 26.
[65] For further analysis of the problematic of performance mediation, see Anne M. Wagner, "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence," *October* 91 (Winter 2000), 59-80.
[66] As cited in Gorsen, "Viennese Actionism and the Celebration of Psychophysical Naturalism," 91.
[67] My discussion of this event draws on Schwarz, "Chronologie," 217-28.
[68] Mühl, "The M-Apparatus," in Green, 79.

barged through the entrance to photograph the scene for the local papers. **[3.20]** For their part, the artists did their best to capitalize on all the publicity by issuing a press release.

Nitsch and Mühl seem to have been quite pleased with this *succès de scandale* — as Mühl wrote to a friend, "the opening was an unqualified sensation."[69] But while the artists' antics earned them a certain notoriety, they also brought them to the attention of the local authorities. When a young girl was murdered the following year near the Vienna Opera House, Mühl and Nitsch were both arrested as suspects. The tabloids were quick to jump on the story; as one sample headline had it, "The Blood Organ Artists Needed an Alibi."[70] However, this experience did not stop Mühl and Nitsch from embarking on a similar course later that year in staging the *Festival of Psycho-Physical Naturalism* (1963). This event also took place at the Perinetkeller studio, and was to consist of one Action by each artist. Nitsch would perform before a small invited audience, while Mühl's intended contribution was to push a full kitchen sideboard from a fourth-story window onto a makeshift "canvas" on the street below as a farcical take on Tachism. As before, the event drew a large crowd of onlookers, only this time it was shut down by police, after Nitsch's Action but before Mühl's could occur. Judging from a photograph of Nitsch taken soon after the police intervention, the artists appear to have been none too intimidated, but rather quite pleased with themselves. **[3.21]**

As things turned out, their provocation took an unforeseeable turn shortly thereafter. Though not himself involved with the *Festival* — he had declined an invitation to participate — Günter Brus had been in the audience watching Nitsch's Action, which involved the evisceration of a lamb carcass. Afterwards, Brus absconded with the bloodstained sack containing the lamb's remains, proceeding to toss it into the Danube Canal. A concerned onlooker notified the police, who issued an alert for a possible murder. Though the misunderstanding was eventually cleared up, Nitsch was once again imprisoned on suspicion of murder, this time together with Brus, with Nitsch and Mühl later serving separate sentences for public disturbance during the *Festival*.

This early bond between transgressive Actions and repression, linking artists, police, and the mass media, would soon solidify into a feedback loop, with the threshold of scandal raised higher each time the Actionists could publicize their activities and incite further reaction. It was for this reason that Brus could have been reasonably sure that he would be arrested upon executing *Vienna Walk* in 1965. At that point Brus was no stranger to the law, having received enough fines and other court punishments to collage them into a wry self-portrait of the artist as enemy of society. **[3.22]** In keeping with Brus' equation of action with reaction, he and his colleagues made a point of engaging whatever negative responses they received. In the journal *Die Schastrommel* ("the fart drum"), founded while in exile in Berlin in 1969, Brus published hate mail that he and other Actionists had received, along with critical reviews, arrest warrants, records of court proceedings, and psychiatric evaluations. **[3.23]** A few years previously, Hermann Nitsch had claimed that his arrest and trial following an Action should be regarded as part of the artwork itself. Surveying these tendencies, Oliver Jahraus has recently argued that this reincorporation formed a distinctive aspect of the Actionist aesthetic, and that a critical experimentation with the relation between action and reaction formed part of Actionism's "auto-poetic" character, enabling Actions to produce the grounds by which they could be understood as

[69] Schwarz, "Chronologie," 226.
[70] Ibid., 253-58.

such.[71] Such a position suggests a peculiar conjunction between autonomy and heteronomy, almost as if transgressive Actions were able to undertake an immanent, self-reflexive analysis of social persecution.

However, the practical and political consequences of this strategy of perpetually escalating provocation can for the most part only be regarded as disastrous. Brus and Mühl eventually landed in enough legal trouble to force them into temporary exile, with Brus abandoning Actions in 1970. Though Mühl continued, his pursuit of ever-increasing deviation led to a stint outside Austria as a sort of travelling sideshow attraction for student groups and underground film festivals, in which his Actions seem to have been received drolly as a form of barbarous provincial spectacle. **[3.24]** Despite the Actionists' equation of transgression with liberation — a position still found in their critical reception — this history suggests the hazards of mistaking power as solely repressive.[72] Not only did Actions often break the law in ways that stood to reaffirm its legitimacy; they did so in a way that was easily recuperable as spectacle, failing to grasp the crucial relation between emergent modalities of productive power and newly hegemonic regimes of publicity. If this narrative can still function today as a sort of cautionary tale, the next chapter tries to show that such a trajectory was by no means a foregone conclusion, and is hardly the only way to understand the fate of the action.

[71] Jahraus, *Die Aktion des Wiener Aktionismus*, 27-29.

[72] In this respect Actionism operated from a set of principles much like those that Michel Foucault identified with the fallacy he termed "the repressive hypothesis." For an exposition and critique of this fallacy, along with Foucault's theorization of power as a productive force, see Parts One and Two of Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

Chapter Four

"Event Field From Finite Rules"
Mediated Actions as Disagreements

There was a shift in production to a new sense of time... – VALIE EXPORT[1]

1. Toward Another Actionism

If the output of the most prominent Actionists is relatively well known today outside Austria, this is likely because the formal properties of their work — its penchant for direct, often non-verbal modes of communication, or its reliance on photographic documentation — ensure a relatively easy translation into different cultural contexts. This success also surely owes something to the sensational history behind Actions, which as we have seen is also a history of artists' complicity in their own sensationalization. In the US, the visibility of Actionism has been magnified by the degree to which their work informed the development of multiple strains of performance, especially those that highlighted the body, such that artists as diverse as Ana Mendieta, Paul McCarthy, and Suzanne Lacy all exhibit clear Actionist precedents. **[4.1]**

However, such prominence has largely pre-empted recognition of a wider range of activities associated with but not in any way identical or reducible to Actionism. The following chapter seeks to correct this imbalance by examining three fields of production that overlapped with Actionism but developed markedly different approaches to the event. The first of these is the Vienna Group (*die Wiener Gruppe*), a small group of writers, performers, and artists that was active predominantly in the latter half of the 1950s. Although their work was no less radical or influential than the Actionists, it nevertheless remains largely unknown in the US.[2] The second field is the experimental cinema of Peter Kubelka and Kurt Kren during the period 1959-1964, when the two filmmakers developed a number of innovative montage techniques. These bodies of work formed crucial reference points for the third and primary test case examined in the chapter: the numerous technically mediated action forms developed by Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT, both independently and in collaboration, between 1966 and 1968. I argue that these events manifest the characteristics of the aesthetico-political to an especially high degree, and thus constitute a privileged site at which to examine its contradictions.

This chapter will demonstrate that these new event forms, which I refer to as "mediated actions," engineered an intensive reinflection of the canonical Actions profiled in Chapter Three. On a material level, this entailed an increased engagement with a range of technical media, including typography, photography, slide projection, cinema, and improvised devices. Yet the mediation of Actions also occurred on a conceptual level, and encompassed a far-reaching reorientation of their attitudes towards politics, publicity, gender, technology, and artistic form. Whereas the first wave of Actions tended to view performance as a means to sidestep language and act directly upon reality, later actions insisted on the irreducibility of signification as a form of mediation, implying radically divergent conclusions for thinking the relation between aesthetics and politics.

In what follows, I argue that mediated actions constituted a distinct form of event, one that I will define as the *disagreement*. The term "disagreement" can signify both dispute and dissimilarity,

[1] VALIE EXPORT, "Expanded Cinema as Expanded Reality," *JAM*, Vol. 1 No. 4 (July 1991), 9.
[2] The one significant exception to this tendency was the 2001 publication of Oswald Wiener's retrospective reflections about the Vienna Group; see Wiener, "Remarks on Some Tendencies of the 'Vienna Group,'" trans. David Britt, *October* 97 (Summer 2001), along with the accompanying note by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh.

and each of these connotations will factor into the following analyses. Readers of Jacques Rancière will already be aware that Rancière has made the concept of disagreement (*mésentente*) central to his political philosophy, and this theorization clearly informs my account of disagreement as a condition of possibility for public dissensus. Briefly, disagreement for Rancière refers to "a determined kind of speech situation: one in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying."[3] This basic incommensurability results from the inequalities that structure given partitions of the sensible, such that one interlocutor is thought to be endowed with a superior power of understanding: she can understand problems, whereas the second interlocutor can only understand orders.[4] It is only by contesting the aesthetic basis of this situation that a democratic politics can emerge from disagreement.

However, as with Rancière's account of the aesthetic regime, this line of argument assumes a sort of quasi-transcendental optic, such that Aristotelian categories and contemporary public opinion polls are seen to exist in the same conceptual space. Against this dehistoricizing tendency, I mean for disagreement to carry a much more specific set of associations. In the following analyses, I examine two properties typically manifested by mediated actions: *recombination* and *contradiction*. Here recombination refers to techniques of production by which the existing components of a finite set were interchanged to generate new meanings. By recombining the elements of an event structure, mediated actions were able to uncover or catalyze disagreements between them. In contrast, contradiction has a somewhat larger range of meanings. In certain places I will use it to designate works that explicitly thematized contradiction, such as Peter Weibel's 1966 poem *contradiction – producer schema*. **[4.2]** In others it will refer to conflict between formal elements of a work, to a confrontational attitude, or to an approach that presented mutually exclusive views.[5]

As might be expected, these examples of disagreement don't necessarily agree with each other. Some of them operated by locating discrepancies within a given medium or inciting friction between different media — an approach at odds with the then-prevalent tendency to view intermedia as a sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[6] Others uncovered disjunctions between a medium and its message, or even between the elements of signification composing a message. While certain events resulted in chaos, often due to irreconcilable differences on the part of those involved, others explicitly staged confrontations between artists and audience, seeking to contest the reified inequalities of theatrical aesthetics. Some situations sought to occasion disagreements between direct and mediated forms of action, or between an action's intention and effect. Others concerned themselves with more formal disagreements, such as those between the elements of a durational artwork, including its score, realization, and documentation. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to show such transformations of the action enabled immanent experiments with the relation

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[3] Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), *x*.

[4] For an extended discussion of this conflict as it plays out in the phrase "Do you understand?", see Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, 44-47.

[5] At any rate, I hope it is clear that this usage of contradiction diverges from the word's typical usage at that time in New Left discourse, where it bore an explicitly Marxian connotation.

[6] For a historically relevant example, see Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," *the something else NEWSLETTER*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (February 1966). Higgins' essay was reprinted in the catalog for the exhibition *Intermedia '69*, curated by Klaus Staeck and Jochen Goetze for the Kunstverein Heidelberg.

between aesthetics and politics, ones that explored not only their analogies but also their misidentification, their polarities, and slippages between them. In doing so, it argues that if this process produced disagreements between the two prevailing logics of critical art — between autonomy and heteronomy — it did so in terms that were distinctly indigenous to the emergent aesthetico-political field of Austria circa 1968.

2. "What Is So Bad About Contradiction?": The Events of the Vienna Group

The Vienna Group was predominantly active in the latter half of the 1950s, and consisted of loosely organized collaborations between figures with a relatively wide range of interests. Though its members shared an interest in literature and theater, they drew on numerous other experiences: Friedrich Achleitner had worked as an architect; Oswald Wiener had studied law and mathematics; and Gerhard Rühm had studied twelve-tone composition. While certain figures, especially Konrad Bayer and Hans Carl Artmann, sought to reanimate the potential of Surrealism as a radicalization of psychoanalytic thought, others were more invested in the developing the linguistic philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein as a performance model.

The production of the Vienna Group was as heterogeneous as this overview would suggest. Much of its output was consistent with the aesthetics of concrete poetry, exhibiting a concern with visual form, the materiality of language, and the absurdity or banality of the everyday. Both Artmann and Achleitner wrote poems that travestied Viennese dialect, while Rühm composed "phonetic poems" and "absolute poetry" that explicitly recalled the example of the historical avant-gardes. While forms like Artmann's "expanded poetry" and "montages" more or less respected the typographical conventions of the printed poem, others — such as Rühm's "typo-collages," "typewriter ideograms," "text-images," "color-poems," and "word-sculptures" — aligned poetry with experimental design, newspaper layout, collage, sculpture, and photomontage. In addition to these individual works, members of the Vienna Group collaborated on several theatrical productions, most notably the *Literary Cabarets* of 1958 and 1959.

One might well hesitate to draw generalizations about this body of work, considering its diversity. Without disregarding such concerns, it is nevertheless worth noting that the Vienna Group manifested a considerably greater amount of cohesiveness than the Actionists, collaborating frequently and extensively. Though the aesthetic tendencies of its individual members of course varied, the group as a whole did exhibit a shared sensibility that put it strikingly at odds with its more notorious successors. Writing for a special 1964 edition of the *Times Literary Supplement* — the issue was dedicated to the European neo-avant-gardes, and also included materials on the Situationist International — Konrad Bayer claimed that the Vienna Group was "not so much an economic organization as a laboratory and a test bench," an approach he linked with its preference for the "self-effacement of the author in favor of collaboration."[7]

This commitment to collective experimentation was consistent with a general politics of aesthetics that resembled those of the more rationalist avant-gardes, and Bayer in fact noted that Wiener, Rühm, and Achleitner shared an interest in the Bauhaus and in "constructive, materially-

[7] Konrad Bayer, "The Vienna Group," *Times Literary Supplement*, September 3, 1964.

oriented" methods. However, Bayer then proceeded to describe how he and Artmann were looking instead to Surrealism, and that this difference of approach made for "fertile mutual influence." This unusual hybridization was evident in Bayer's description of the Vienna Group's general approach, which referenced Expressionism alongside Wittgenstein, as well as the use of "musical theses, rows, structures, [and] optical presentation." Characterizing the *Literary Cabarets* as experiments in grounding a "possible theater of the future," Bayer summarized their methods as follows: "demonstration of 'facts,' public acts of destruction, exercises in awareness, attempts at total theater."[8] Such a description speaks to the idiosyncratic nature of the Vienna Group's experimentalism, which sought to increase the awareness of its audience through theatrical destruction, and could only demonstrate "facts" from a position of pre-established skepticism.

A similar tension arose in the writings of Oswald Wiener, whose outlook might well have seemed the most positivistic of the Group's members, at least initially. In the poster text for a 1960 exhibition of Marc Adrian's work, Wiener called for the "liquidation, effected in ordinary language, of enigmatic art." Wiener claimed that art should be that which "reveals something" or "provokes discoveries," functioning as "science of exhibition, model, or document." On this view, the role of art was essentially to demystify itself, such that the artwork would be "divested of myth," and ultimately "reduced to a simple event."[9]

Yet however attractively straightforward this position may have appeared, it seems to have been only part of the picture. In a subsequent reflection on the *cool manifesto* — a joint statement drafted by Wiener in 1954, but destroyed shortly thereafter — Wiener has claimed that the *manifesto* "was in direct contradiction" to the explicit position of the Vienna Group at that time, as well as its "later writings officially aiming at objectivity." According to this account, the *manifesto* stated that serious discussion was impossible, and that when "faced with an event... one should always use a scale of sensations, as if using cutlery."[10] Such an attitude amounted to something like an extreme aestheticism, or, as Wiener put it, "an identity of style and reality," in which one's emotional responses can not serve "socio-political ends," but can only function like "jewelry."[11]

However puzzling this about-face might seem, its inconsistency is paradoxically consistent with other aspects of the Vienna Group's output. Wiener's reversal is most evident with respect to the event. If, in the more "official" or "objective" account, the event is a transparent, enlightening, and almost mechanical procedure, Wiener here characterizes the event as that which defies joint interpretation and can only be engaged from a remove. Although this opposition between divergent conceptions of eventhood might seem to be intractable, it was in fact aligned with with a more pervasive problematization of temporality in the work of the Vienna Group, as for example in the literary experiments of Gerhard Rühm.

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[8] Ibid.
[9] Oswald Wiener, "(short liquidation, effected in ordinary language, of enigmatic art." As cited in Peter Weibel et al., eds., *Beyond Art: A Third Culture: A Comparative Study in Cultures, Art, and Science in 20th Century Austria and Hungary* (Vienna: SpringerWienNewYork, 2005), 482.
[10] Oswald Wiener, "~~cool manifesto~~", in Peter Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe: a moment of modernity 1954-60* (Vienna: SpringerWienNewYork, 1997), 634, translation slightly modified.
[11] Ibid.

In an untitled "text-image" from 1954, Rühm explicitly subjected the present moment of the poem to a movement of deconstruction. **[4.3]** In the poem, the word *jetzt* ("now") is scattered across the page to form a fragmentary constellation of disparate moments. Whatever uncertainty the reader might have about actually reading the poem — with which "now" does one begin or end? — is redoubled by the dissonance between different typefaces and font sizes. It is further intensified by the way in which the repetition of the poem's sole word attenuates its meaning. By emphasizing the peculiar status of "now" as a temporal shifter — in which each successive "now" depends on but also undercuts the authority of the previous one — Rühm's text-image thus represented the seemingly paradoxical temporality within which events are experienced. Not only did the poem demonstrate the antagonistic succession of "nows"; it reproduced this effect in the process of being read, turning such a temporality into its literal condition of possibility.[12]

Tempering its complexity with levity, such a poetics recalls Wiener's later, aphoristic statement: "What is so bad about contradiction? 'The mathematicians' superstitious fear and awe of contradiction' (Wittgenstein)."[13] This attitude did not merely maintain that logical inconsistencies should be tolerated when necessary, but rather called for a more radical commitment by making contradiction into a guiding principle, an operation, and even a sort of shared ethos. Speaking retrospectively in the late 1990s, Wiener explained this condition as a "state of intellectual dichotomy that tantalized and stimulated us: on the one hand, a powerful and vocal reductionism [...]; on the other, the undeniable fact that experiences — and also some art works — exerted an enormous effect that appeared to be immune to analysis."[14]

With this lucid formulation, Wiener describes something very much like the "knot" that inseparably entangles the logics of autonomy and heteronomy in Rancière's account of the politics of aesthetics within the aesthetic regime of art. By allowing these two contradictory impulses to coexist — by honoring the seeming "immunity" of aesthetic experience, rather than forcing it to submit to analysis — such an attitude enabled the type of internally heterogeneous critical production that Rancière compares to collage. (It is telling in this respect that Wiener's description of "immune" experience includes art, but is not limited to it.) At its limit, this approach intended to harness the power of resistant experience to induce a profound transformation in its subjects, as in Wiener's claim that "art must generate effects comparable to those of bodily injuries or major life-changes."[15]

In Wiener's account, the members of the Vienna Group were motivated by an awareness of this contradiction between insight and aesthesis as simultaneously vital and irreconcilable, and as transcending the ostensible autonomy of art. To act from within such conditions entailed a willingness to risk unforeseeable consequences, for both artists and audiences alike. Writing about his former colleague "K" (most likely Konrad Bayer), Wiener praised his "tendency to demonstrate his ideas in public, in order to experience them and to test himself against the

[12] In this sense, Rühm's poem exemplified what Jacques Derrida has called the "temporizing" function of the trace: its capacity of "constituting what is called the present by means of [a] relation to what it is not"; see Derrida, "Différance," 13.
[13] Wiener, "Remarks," 128.
[14] Ibid., 124.
[15] Ibid.

unpredictable and against fear itself," and his commitment to forms of "'social action' in which symbols have concrete and irreversible consequences."[16]

An interest in such sorts of action is evident in a set of speculative, unrealized plans mapped out by Bayer and Rühm between the years 1957 and 1959, detailing events that meant to experiment with the process of production, the recognizability of art, and the conventions of reception. For the *flagello-mechanical manifesto*, members of the Vienna Group would have pulled an old typewriter mounted on a cart through the city, stopping and "writing" poems to sell to bystanders by whipping the machine with a cat o' nine tails. Another plan called for the Group to don overalls, enter the machine room at a large factory, and read a text cited from a textbook on assembling machinery; the result would have comprised a "montage of a montage."[17] Still others envisioned poems mounted as posters, or readings held on tram cars and in amusement parks.

Rühm developed these ideas further in his 1962 text "basics of the new theater," which elaborated the concept of the "theatrical readymade": a form of "spontaneous theater" in which everyday situations were redesignated as a form of aesthetic experience. Rühm proposed reselling tram tickets as theater tickets, maintaining that "events that occur during the time when the ticket is used are regarded as... 'artistic' performances." Other sites could also be subjected to a similar type of appropriation: "a factory, an office, a court trial... the state opera, parliament, etc." [18] Like Mühl's Material Actions (although several years earlier), such a scheme represented a thorough radicalization of the Duchampian readymade, transforming the object of appropriation from the commodity to a social situation and its attendant temporal structures and performative relations.

Though Rühm and Bayer's plans were never executed, the Vienna Group did realize similar objectives in its two *Literary Cabarets*. Though held in relatively standard theatrical venues, the *Cabarets* otherwise broke with nearly every typical convention of the theater. Bayer, Wiener, Rühm, and Achleitner began the first show by playing the Austrian national anthem on slide-whistles from behind the curtain (such renditions of the anthem were later banned).[19] The second performance began with the entry of the first audience member, when a tape recording of an oil-extraction plant started playing. Some forty-five minutes later the curtain opened to the performers (the Vienna Group, minus Artmann, and a dozen-odd others) seated onstage facing outward impersonating spectators at a play, with the actual audience thus recharacterized as "actors." **[4.4]** Though provocative, much of this was either in line with the established paradigms of transgressive cabaret — Rühm's absurdist jokes, Bayer's satirical *chansons* — or Dadaist performance — like the collective destruction of a piano, or the semi-nonsensical dialogue of a skit called "der trumbau zu babel," a misspelling that roughly translates as "the otwer of babel."[20] **[4.5]** These examples seem to have dictated the reception of the events;

[16] Ibid., 121. For Wiener, similar conditions were in play for the audience as well, as in his claim that "individuals must be exposed to art, and defenseless against it." Ibid., 124.
[17] Gerhard Rühm and Konrad Bayer, "some plans," in Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe*, 237.
[18] Rühm, "basics of the new theater," in Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe*, 624.
[19] The following account of the *Cabarets* is based on Oswald Wiener, "The 'Literary Cabaret' of the Vienna Group" (1967), in Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe*, 308-321. No recordings of the Cabarets were made.
[20] See Friedrich Achleitner, Konrad Bayer, Gerhard Rühm, "der trumbau zu babel," in Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe*, 409.

headlines of representative reviews read "Dada in Vienna" and "Dada plus Surrealism, with a Viennese accent."[21]

However, a less conspicuous but arguably more subversive aspect of the *Cabarets* was their commitment to abrogate the typical function of theatrical representation, as well as the conventions dictating proper subject matter. Of the preparation for the first *Cabaret*, Wiener recalled that "one of the basic ideas of the event we were planning was to exhibit 'reality' and thus, consequently, to abandon it."[22] This seemingly counterintuitive formulation aptly describes the strategy by which the *Cabarets* presented a wide range of events and materials with little or no modification, as if they were "life" and not "art." Besides the recording mentioned above, the performances included live radio programming (tuned to "a lecture on some boring subject, actually coming up to the average quality of Austrian broadcasts"[23]), right-wing propaganda, a film on provincial lumberjacks, and a philosophical text by Wiener, as well as a live chess game, Bayer sleeping on stage, and a number entitled "Market Research," in which the audience was asked to fill out questionnaires. Perhaps the most extreme example of this tendency was the piece "Friedrich Achleitner as Beer-Drinker," in which Achleitner sat onstage and drank a beer, taking his cues from Bayer, who read from offstage a script detailing the act of beer drinking in absurd detail, so as to demonstrate "the ridiculous character of any description in view of the actual event."[24] **[4.6]**

Such intentions might be taken as an expression of a desire to elevate the authenticity of actual experience over the superfluous or distorting function of language, but this would only be half right. While the *Cabarets* did indeed enact a critique of linguistic mediation, they also meant to re-present ostensibly "real" events in such a way that they would attain the sort of immunity to analysis that Wiener ambivalently celebrated. In a joint statement preceding the *Second Literary Cabaret*, the members of the Vienna Group stated that the event would be "a simple occurrence" [*schlichte begebenheit*]. **[4.7]** Opposing the Group's dramaturgy to Brechtian and Stanislavskian models, the statement maintained that performers would not engage in any sort of illusionistic portrayals, but "will remain themselves." However, they would do this so that "the audience will fall prey to the illusion of a representation which is false and fully intentional."[25] While such an approach might have seemed to revitalize the theater by reintroducing or somehow returning to reality, it did so only to present this reality as itself a mediated representation. It thus sought to locate a fundamental contradiction in the ontological status of all performance, uncovering a resistant kernel of strange opacity within the event itself, concealed by the residual effects of accumulated everydayness.

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[21] The first citation is from the *Illustrierte Kronen-Zeitung*, April 17, 1959; the second from the *Österreichische Neue Tageszeitung*, April 17, 1959. Both reprinted in Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe*, 422-24.
[22] Wiener, "'Literary Cabaret,'" 308-10.
[23] Ibid., 312.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Achleitner, Bayer, Rühm, Wiener, "literarisches cabaret," in Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe*, 357.

3. Recombinations: Serial Procedures in Poetry, Music, and Film

As these examples indicate, the Vienna Group engaged the event from a perspective that was markedly distinct from that of the Actionists, adopting methods that were much closer to the aesthetico-political practices of the later 1960s. Their approach didn't seek to minimize the mediation of language; neither did it manifest the pervasive, symptomatic contradictions that characterized the Actionist engagement with ritual, representation, publicity, and the state. Instead, it sought to produce events that catalyzed unpredictable responses, while accounting for the contradictory interaction of autonomy and heteronomy, and of analytic and sensory modes of experience. At times, this approach succeeded in uncovering generative contradictions within what might otherwise have seemed like the self-evidence of everyday events. As we will soon see, this orientation was an influential model for disagreements.

However, the contributions of the Vienna Group also extended to a specific compositional operation: namely, recombination. In what follows, this term denotes any process in which a set composed of a fixed number of elements is varied to produce a new result. (This differs from the related concept of permutation in being more open; whereas a permutation is one of a logically finite number of combinations, one recombination does not necessarily accompany others, even as it can also imply an infinite number of variations.) Friedrich Achleitner's "constellations" (1956-57) were among the earliest experiments with this form. One example, "red instead of" [*rot anstatt*] (1956), consisted only of the two words of the title, repeated in alternation across eleven lines. From this minimal scheme, the poem produced a destabilizing effect by shifting back and forth between possible meanings. Another constellation, "dew" [*tau*] (1957), added and subtracted single letters to alter the meaning of its title from "dew" or "rope" to "deaf" [*taub*], then "pigeon" [*taube*], then back again. **[4.8]** Konrad Bayer undertook a similar procedure in producing "topology of language" (c. 1957), a set of four typewritten poems that generate any number of shapes, sounds, associations, and words from a limited set of letters. In 1958, Bayer would collaborate with Gerhard Rühm on a piece entitled "bit of bread," which was composed according to what the authors called a "strict serial principle," whereby a simple sentence was analyzed into recombinable phonetic elements in accordance with repeated arithmetic procedures.[26] **[4.9]**

In developing such techniques, members of the Vienna Group followed a path quite similar to that taken by contemporary musicians, who were continuing to work through the implications of modernist modes of composition. Though in many ways artistically marginalized, Vienna was considerably more innovative with regard to music, owing in part to the legacy of the Second Viennese School. Active in the decades before World War II, this group, whose members included Arnold Schönberg and his pupils Anton Webern and Alban Berg, pioneered modernist music by first developing chromatic or atonal expressionism, then twelve-tone serialism. While the Vienna Group performances showed little interest in this sort of musicianship, preferring a more absurd sort of atonality, it nevertheless bears repeating that Rühm had in fact studied twelve-tone composition. Though evidence of this influence is scant and only permits speculation, it nevertheless seems likely that Rühm's background, combined with Wiener's

[26] For their explanation, see Weibel, ed., *die wiener gruppe*, 236n244.

studies of mathematics, played a role in the Vienna Group's adoption of recombinatory techniques.

An analogous process of hybridization was evident in the development of metrical film in the late 1950s, a type of cinema devised and theorized by Peter Kubelka. Whereas members of the Vienna Group applied recombinatory techniques to the letters, phonemes, words, and concepts that compose poems, Kubelka sought to analyze film form through an analogous process of reduction, focussing on the individual frame and its potential for articulation.[27] In doing so, he worked from the precedent set by Dziga Vertov's experiments with the montage interval, most famously in his 1929 film *Man With a Movie Camera*. In that film, Vertov composed certain passages out of very short sequences, some as short as two or three frames. Kubelka aimed to further radicalize this approach by limiting his edits to single frames, and also by progressively eliminating visual content.

Whereas Kubelka's earliest films maintained some degree of illusionistic reference, *Arnulf Rainer* (1960) was composed entirely from black and white frames, with corresponding sounds of white noise and silence. Though the concept is essentially identical to that of Tony Conrad's film *The Flicker* (1965-66), Kubelka's concerns had relatively little to do with the perceptual experience of spectators, and instead centered around what he took to be the essential properties of cinema: time, movement, and light.[28] With *Arnulf Rainer*, Kubelka sought to explore these properties and their interrelations under precisely controlled conditions. The film was edited according to a plan that cycled through all the black-white combinations available within groupings of 2, 4, 6, 8, and 12 frames).[29] Kubelka's meticulous studies for the film's editing scheme indicate the extent to which the final product depended on regularity for its effects. **[4.10]**

As visual forms, these studies bear a close resemblance to Achleitner's poem "dew," showing that the two were based on a similarly additive, recombinatory logic. On first view, one might well think something quite similar about the editing plan for Kurt Kren's film *6/64 Mama and Papa* (1964). **[4.11]** Like Achleitner's poem and Kubelka's plan, Kren's film was structured around basic forms that would progressively increase and decrease in length. However, Kren's plan differed in two important respects. First, the units it added and subtracted were not of a fixed quantity, but varied (the numbers in his diagram correspond to a series of shots, each of which is of a different length). And second, these units weren't effectively neutral, like Achleitner's letters or Kubelka's empty frames, but depicted actual events.

This marked a key distinction between the approaches of Kubelka and Kren, who are typically thought to be the most prominent members of the first generation of Austrian experimental cinema. The two filmmakers shared an early interest in recombinatory montage, often based around a single frame, and Kren often planned his cuts methodically using simple mathematical

[27] For a more detailed account of this approach, see Peter Kubelka, "The Theory of Metrical Film," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: NYU Press, 1978).
[28] Branden W. Joseph reviews the debates regarding the relative merits of the two films in *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 292-98.
[29] For a detailed description of Kubelka's editing plan, see Peter Tscherkassky, "Die Gefügte Zeit. Peter Kubelkas metrische Filme," in Alexander Horwath et al., eds., *Avantgardefilm. Österreich. 1950 bis heute* (Vienna: WESPENNEST, 1995), 113-24.

operations like the Fibonacci sequence, even for his early films, which were edited in-camera. However, Kren proceeded to combine this formalist mode of analysis with indexical reference to actual profilmic objects and events. The nature of this material was often socially or politically charged, as in the case of *2/60 48 Heads from the Szondi Test* (1960), assembled from images used to evaluate psychological deviance, or *5/62 Onlookers, Trash etc.* (1962), which intercut images of refuse with shots of petit-bourgeois Viennese apartment dwellers peering from their windows. **[4.12]**

In the case of *Mama and Papa*, Kren's film was assembled from footage of Otto Mühl's Material Action of that same name, forming part of a brief collaboration between the two men that lasted from 1964 to 1966. While Mühl had initially asked to Kren to straightforwardly document his Actions, he then reluctantly granted the filmmaker permission to use the footage as he liked, only to object to the highly experimental character of the finished films. According to Mühl, by changing the scripted order of movements within Actions, Kren's films "partly cancelled out [their] scandalous content."[30] Though Kren's rejoinder — that this content was in part the product of his own input — is of some interest, it is nevertheless hardly surprising that the two had a falling-out, given the considerable difference between their aesthetics. However, the tension between Kren's film and its subject is highly significant in suggesting how different forms of mediation could uncover the implicit potential that was often obstructed by the many contradictions in actual Actions. While *Mama and Papa* was not itself what I would call a disagreement, it nevertheless constituted an important shift in thinking about the relation between the event and its mediation.

The decisive intervention of Kren's film was to decouple Mühl's Action from its technical mediation and the event of its reception, encouraging a productive antagonism between these elements. The score for Mühl's piece stipulated a series of about 50 linked actions in order to stage a bawdy re-enactment of the primal scene. (Not surprisingly, these actions are almost all done to Mama by Papa and are consistent with Mühl's aesthetic of "enswampment" or degradation.) By contrast, Kren's editing scheme assembled a four-minute film from 81 separate takes, some as short as a single frame, recombined in 38 sequences, with select takes repeated dozens of times but in varying lengths. **[4.11]** The net effect is dense, rapid, and disjunctive, overpowering and deranging the viewer's capacities of self-orientation. In some ways this reinforces or even multiplies the frenzied excesses of the Action, saturating the perceptual field in much the same way Mühl doused his models' bodies. **[4.13]** The relentlessly shifting momentum of the edit could even be said to reproduce the temporality of the drives Mühl meant to desublimate. Though this in some ways obstructs or deflects a scopophilic gaze, it would thus seem to fall short of effectively contesting the Action's retrograde sexual politics.

Where Kren's action film succeeded, however, was in radically rearticulating the event and its sensate conditions of possibility. Much to Mühl's chagrin, the film counteracted his wishes for transparent documentation, instead foregrounding its own medial status. Such an approach was in line with Kren's desire to show that "there is no such thing as a non-manipulated film."[31] Yet despite Mühl's objections, the film didn't somehow cancel materiality so much as transpose it

[30] As cited by Michaela Pöschl in "Otto Mühl, Kurt Kren: Cum Shot Asses and Assholes" [*sic*], in Clausen, ed., *After the Act*, 82.
[31] As cited by Pöschl in "The Truth of the Bodies," in Hummel, *Wiener Aktionismus. Sammlung Hummel*, 246.

into the register of temporality. Constantly interrupting the process of subjective time-synthesis, Kren's recombinatoric montage altered the event at the level of its phenomenological substrate. Kren opposed this effect to the linear chronology of Hollywood cinema, claiming that in his films "you get the beginning and the end at the same time in the middle and it repeats itself."[32] By thus diffracting the temporal sequence that viewers expected, Kren's montage produced a juddery, physically palpable pulsation that reinflected the term "material action." Just as the film's repetitions counterintuitively produced a centrifugal chain of differences, its rationalized method synthesized percepts that neared and often exceeded the very threshold of intelligibility. While this overload ran the risk of merely narcotizing the viewer, it maintained critical traction in its parasitic stance toward its source material. Reanimating the Action into a series of fitful, compulsive repetitions, the action film found in its object a will to transgression so dominating and single-minded that it somehow managed to routinize impropriety, turning desublimation into a sort of work.

4. Expanded Arts, Expanding Actions: DIAS and *Film Culture* 43

This animosity between Mühl and Kren might be thought to represent a more pervasive impasse in the Austrian neo-avant-gardes of the early and mid-1960s. While Mühl's complaints exemplify the Actionists' general disdain for technical media, Kren for his part never sought to experiment with performance forms that would have allowed him to transfer montage into specific social situations. This was all the more so for Kubelka, whose ideal of isolated, objectively consistent viewing conditions was typified in the "Invisible Cinema" that he helped design for Anthology Film Archives in New York City. **[4.14]** However incompatible these aesthetic orientations may have been at that time, these conditions soon began to change, largely as the result of developments that occurred between the years 1966-68. This transitional period marked a crucial moment in the emergence of the aesthetico-political, during which the previously isolated sectors of the Viennese underground entered into increasing traffic with each other and with like-minded groups of artists and activists operating outside Austria.

The first and most influential of these contacts was the *Destruction in Art Symposium* (DIAS), held in London in September 1966, and attended by Mühl, Nitsch, Brus, Kren, and the 19-year-old Peter Weibel, who had only recently begun to collaborate with the Actionists. **[4.15]** The main force behind DIAS was the German-Jewish emigrant Gustav Metzger, who had first begun to develop his practice of Auto-Destructive Art in 1959. Metzger's model was deeply informed by his own personal experience of Nazism, and encompassed such activities as painting on canvas with acid, designing monuments built to rust and disintegrate, and holding *Lecture/Demonstrations* using newspapers detailing violent atrocities.[33]

Assisted by a team that included Wolf Vostell, Metzger invited a group of artists with similar interests to London for several days of performances, screenings, and talks. The roster of invitees

[32] As cited by Pöschl in "Otto Mühl, Kurt Kren," 82.

[33] This persistent reference to historical trauma lent his work a degree of gravity lacking from comparable but more spectacular work like the self-obliterating kinetic sculptures of Jean Tinguely. For an account of Metzger's activities in the key years 1959-63, see Justin Hoffmann, "The Invention of Auto-Destructive Art," in Gustav Metzger, *Gustav Metzger. History History* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2005), 19-39.

comprised many of the more prominent exponents of Fluxus, Happenings, and Nouveau Réalisme, including Vostell, Jean-Jacques Lebel, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, and Al Hansen; it also included lesser-known but still influential figures like John Latham and Enrico Baj. Contributions were also read from artists unable to attend, such as the Czechoslovakian artist Milan Knizák, the Argentine Marta Minujín, and her compatriot Kenneth Kemble, who had founded the group *Arte Destructivo* in Buenos Aires in 1961. It bears note that the planning committee had associations with radical groups operating at the intersection of aesthetics and politics, including the Amsterdam-based PROVOs, the London-based Sigma, and the Situationist International.

In interacting with this range of artists, none of whom had performed in Austria, the Viennese attendees would have been exposed to a much broader spectrum of event forms than had been available to them previously. DIAS presented any number of alternative approaches to scripting, staging, executing, and documenting events.[34] Performances were held in (or proposed for) the basement of a leftist bookstore (Robin Page), as well as a slaughterhouse and a bomb crater (Hansen), and utilized formats as diverse as shadow-tracings (Ono), ephemeral sand-sculptures (Barry Flanagan), and a self-consuming slide projection featuring photographs taken at the Symposium (Mark Boyle). For their part, Kren and the Actionists presented works that were largely consistent with their individual aesthetics.

The one exception was Weibel's *Action-Lecture "Proposals on Non-Affirmative Art"*, which constituted the first technically mediated action.[35] **[4.16]** The piece consisted of Weibel reading from a text he had written earlier that year, which responsed to Herbert Marcuse's influential 1937 essay "On the Affirmative Character of Culture." In this essay, Weibel attempted to align Marcuse's critique of bourgeois idealist art with a contemporary aesthetic that sought to synthesize Duchamp, Schwitters, and Artaud. Opposing the dominance of Pop, which for Weibel exemplified the sort of affirmative art that functioned as "the white glove on the executioner's hand," the text called for actions that could critique or arrest the process of reification.[36]

Yet while this seemingly didactic exercise formed the "lecture" component of the event, it was directly contravened by the "action" component. While Weibel spoke, he was partially obscured by a Super-8 film that was simultaneously projected on his body, and his voice had to compete with the sounds of records being played at high volume. Further disruption was provided by Otto Mühl, who snatched the pages of Weibel's text from his hand, undressed him, wrapped him in paper, and finally pushed him to the ground before bandaging his mouth. For Weibel, these preplanned actions weren't merely meant to counter theatrical conventions or to antagonize the audience, but rather to produce what he called a "montage effect," reproducing in real time the sort of disjunctive temporal experience characteristic of experimental film.[37] Without overstating Weibel's influence on the development of Actions (a temptation to which the artist himself has

[34] Kristine Stiles provides an overview of DIAS in her essay "The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the 'DIAS Effect,'" in *Gustav Metzger. History History*, 41-65.
[35] Weibel has in fact referred to the piece as the "first intermedial event"; see Weibel, "Action-Lecture "Proposals on Non-Affirmative Art," in Weibel, ed., *peter weibel. das offene werk. 1964-79* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 405.
[36] Weibel, "Von den Möglichkeiten nicht-Affirmativer Kunst" ("On the Possibilities of a Non-Affirmative Art") (1965-66), in Weibel, *Kritik der Kunst. Kunst der Kritik* (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1973), 37. ["Dies weist die affirmative Kunst aus als den weißen Handschuh der Henkershand."]
[37] Weibel, "Action-Lecture."

arguably succumbed on various occasions), it is nevertheless clear that his contribution to DIAS marked a decisive point of inflection in the trajectory mapped by this chapter. Given the different elements of the *Action-Lecture* — its tension between direct action and mediation, its thematization of multiple forms of contradiction, and the recombinatory technique by which it transposed montage to performance — there is ample evidence to regard the event as the first disagreement.

The reasons behind this shift might be explained as generational: whereas the four canonical Actionists were all born before World War II, with Mühl, the eldest, having served on the front in the German Wehrmacht, Weibel belonged to the so-called *nachgeborene Generation* that came of age after 1945.[38] However, while the differences in sensibility between Weibel's work and his elders' are undeniable — and for that matter closely track those between successive generations of West German artists — a more persuasive explanation can be traced back to his educational formation.[39] During a period of study in Paris, an opportunity unavailable to artists of the previous generation, Weibel had attended the seminar of Jacques Lacan, gaining first-hand exposure to Lacan's radical hybridization of structural linguistics with Freudian psychoanalysis. Though Austria had its own tradition of linguistic philosophy — both the positivism of the Vienna Circle and the more skeptical investigations of Wittgenstein, each of which Weibel had read — Lacan's seminar introduced Weibel to other theorists of language who were scarcely known in Austria at that time, including Ferdinand de Saussure, Benjamin Whorf, and Roland Barthes.

This experience provided the artist with the tools necessary to elaborate on an earlier interest in language as what he called "an organ mediating between thought and the world."[40] Weibel's development was further informed by time he spent in Cologne, where he connected with members of the nascent West German student movement; this contact continued through his involvement with the Frankfurt-based literary and political journal *Discus*. (It seems likely that his interest in Marcuse dates from this moment.) An additional factor from this time that contributed to Weibel's later production was his keen interest in experimental film. He shot his first film, *Welcome*, in 1965 in Sweden — this was the film projected in the *Action-Lecture* — after which he began to contribute to such journals as *Film* and *Action*, writing reviews of films by Kubelka and Kren, among others.

It was this interest that led Weibel to the US-based journal *Film Culture*, which published a special issue devoted to "Expanded Arts" in late 1966. **[4.17]** This publication marked the first extended exposure that European audiences had to the concept of Expanded Cinema, and its impact was considerable.[41] Although Hans-Carl Artmann had previously and independently experimented with the concept of "expanded poetry," its impact was relatively minimal.

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[38] For an analysis of the intergenerational dynamics of memory in the related context of post-fascist West Germany, see Eric Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 31-56.

[39] In the following passage I rely on two sources: an interview I conducted with Weibel in Vienna on June 4, 2009; and Matthias Michalka, "Vom Aktionismus und Expanded Cinema zur Arbeit mit TV und Video. Peter Weibels Kommunikationsanalytik in den 60er Jahren," MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 1995.

[40] Weibel, "Wozu Avantgarde?" ("Whither the Avant-Garde?") (1965), in Weibel, *Kritik der Kunst*, 9.

[41] According to Hans Scheugl, Weibel first encountered this issue in the summer of 1967. Scheugl, *Erweitertes Kino. Die Wiener Filme der 60er Jahre* (Vienna: Triton Verlag, 2002), 109ff.

However, the "Expanded Arts" issue offered numerous models for intermedia production. As Jonas Mekas noted in his introduction to the issue, this movement of expansion wasn't limited to cinema, but extended to music, dance, readymades, and even jokes.[42]

Certain contents of the issue would have been of particular interest to Weibel and other similar-minded artists, including VALIE EXPORT, whom he met in 1966 and with whom he began collaborating soon thereafter. As part of a 1966 symposium on Expanded Cinema, reprinted in *Film Culture* 43, Ken Dewey elaborated on his efforts to develop a cinema that could expand into the space of the city by working together with architects and sociologists, incorporating elements of street theater, and recognizing the value of what he termed an "accidental audience."[43] Analogous concerns informed the work of the Japanese collective Hi Red Center, which had three actions documented in the issue: *Hotel Event* (1964), *Street Car Event* (date unknown), and *Street Cleaning Event* (1966), in which members of the group donned white coats and meticulously cleaned a section of sidewalk near New York's Grand Army Plaza using toothbrushes and steel wool. Either Dewey's example or Hi Red Center's could easily have informed Weibel and EXPORT's *From the Dog File*, which made similar use of surprise, the street, and a resistance to easy interpretation. Similar formal connections can be drawn between Viennese events of the later 1960s and works that appeared in *Film Culture* 43, including Claes Oldenburg's *Moveyhouse* (1965), Robert Whitman's *Prune Flat* (1965), and a number of Fluxus-related events, which were described in a semi-satirical classified ad touting a "Fluxfest Sale."[44]

Weibel's subsequent experiments with mediated actions drew on this heterogenous range of sources, reconstituting Actionist aesthetics through rigorous intellectual engagments with language, publicity, power, and technology. They also benefited from a more direct, less belated engagement with related artistic developments, especially those concerned with technical media and event-structures. However, the emergence of disagreements owed just as much to Oswald Wiener, who collaborated with Mühl and Weibel in a series of aesthetico-political events between 1966 and 1968. Wiener's participation constituted a direct link to the Vienna Group, whose precedent increasingly countered that of the Actionists, even in cases where Mühl and others were themselves involved. Though this influence defies easy summarization, it encompassed at least the following elements: various techniques of recombination, a thorough awareness of the mediating capabilities of language, a nuanced account of contradiction as a problem and procedure, and a sensibility that combined rational analysis with respect for aesthetic "immunity."

The effect of these contacts was clear in the first performance that Mühl staged upon returning to Vienna from DIAS: the *Action Concert for Al Hansen* (1966), held at the Galerie Nächst St. Stephan. **[4.18]** Hansen and the Actionists had made an alliance in London, and Mühl's Action was intended as a sort of tribute.[45] Together with Nitsch, Schwarzkogler, Kren, Weibel, and

[42] Jonas Mekas, "Introduction," *Film Culture*, "Expanded Arts," No. 43, Winter 1966.
[43] Dewey, "Expanded Cinema: A Symposium, N.Y. Film Festival, 1966," *Film Culture* 43.
[44] Examples of such connections include Hans Scheugl's *Sugar Daddies* (1968), which relocated projection outside the cinema, like *Moveyhouse*; Weibel's *Nivea* (1967), which used the body as a screen, like *Prune Flat*; and a 1968 stunt in which Scheugl took out a classified ad portraying himself as a film available for rent.
[45] My description of the performance relies on two sources: Weibel, "kritik der kunst als sprache" (critique of art as language), *peter weibel*, 408-11; and Otto Mühl, "Letter to Al Hansen," in Green, *Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler*, 97-98.

Wiener, Mühl performed various actions directly before (and in some cases upon) an audience who was free to circulate throughout the gallery. Over 200 visitors showed up, and were rewarded with showers of wheat and feathers, an array of insults, both whispered and shouted through megaphones, and a barrage of tear gas that ultimately cleared the gallery.

While these aspects of the event displayed the characteristic absurdity and aggression of canonical Actionism, other elements diverged from this model. As in the Vienna Group's *Literary Cabarets* or Weibel's *Action-Lecture*, recorded media had a conspicuous role: short-wave radio and records played throughout the concert, and films about mountains, flowers, and bees were projected as well. Wiener's contribution consisted of a critical harangue improvised from that day's newspaper, delivered before the Austrian flag while wearing a Superman T-shirt. Weibel, seated at a typewriter with his eyes covered by pieces of newspaper, attempted to write a text about the potential of a critical art, loudly speaking out against classical aesthetics as he did so; at one point Mühl wrapped him with toilet paper. As with the *Action-Lecture*, the possibility of action, whether physical or symbolic, was constantly countered by the mediating capacities of language and technology. (In an effort to increase this tension Weibel had asked Mühl to physically assault him, but Mühl refused.) Given the content of Weibel's communication, this antagonism gained further significance as an obstacle that any oppositional art would inevitably have to negotiate.

5. Art and Revolution?

Drawing on the precedent of the *Action Concert for Al Hansen*, the 1967 *ZOCK Festival* would exhibit an even greater range and radicality. **[4.19]** ZOCK was a short-lived anarcho-nihilist organization that sprung from a brief collaboration between Mühl and Wiener. The group's ambitions sat squarely at the intersection of aesthetics and politics, with Mühl and Wiener hatching plans to run candidates for office and even mint money, even though they ultimately produced little besides manifestos and events.[46] The Festival, the group's public debut, was produced at the request of a Catholic student group, and held in the public rooms of a Viennese guesthouse before roughly 500 spectators. Its participants used stage names derived from commodities: Mühl's was Omo Super (the name of a detergent powder), and Weibel's was Ford Mustang 70.

The provocative, antagonistic tone of the event was clear from the outset, when Gerhard Rühm walked in front of the curtain, only to say and do nothing. After about fifteen minutes the audience began heckling him, at which point he said the word "this," then fell silent again. A few minutes later the heckling resumed, at which point Rühm said "sentence." This continued until he had Rühm had spoken the entire text of his piece: "This sentence will finish after the eighth cat-call." There followed a lengthy reading from a legal action brought against Hermann Nitsch, as well as other assorted provocations, which included Mühl faking a seizure and Wiener throwing dumplings into the audience. Ultimately the Festival devolved into a melee, with

[46] For a comprehensive account of ZOCK, see *Otto Mühl. Aspekte einer Totalrevolution*, eds. Eva Badura-Triska and Hubert Klocker (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2004). The following account is based on Weibel and EXPORT, "zock," *Wien*, 253-54.

fisticuffs onstage and throughout the hall. A large police force arrived on the scene soon after, at which point the performers sought to escape by merging with the audience.

This debacle basically ended the public life of ZOCK. While the impact of the group would ultimately be rather negligible, the *ZOCK Festival* nevertheless retains a certain degree of interest. In part this is because it exemplified an approach that departs from the way that performance aesthetics of that period have often been typified in recent debates around audience participation in art.[47] The *ZOCK* performers did not seek to "activate" their audience by encouraging their involvement, positioning them as members of an emancipated community. Instead they insistently provoked viewers, either by denigrating them as part of an unthinking "society of gnomes," or by acting so pathetically as to incite "feelings of superiority and power, strength and glory in the minds of the audience."[48] When the public finally reacted, the result was something like the negative image of the utopian community that participatory art has often been thought to model: a fiasco in which artists and audience freely traded insults and blows, and were equally subject to police action.[49]

Another unintended result of the *ZOCK Festival* was that it highlighted the tensions between members of a growing group of artists who were producing actions from divergent viewpoints. As Weibel and EXPORT portrayed it in 1970, the *Festival* was undone by this intensifying conflict, whose "main front was between Mühl and Wiener, between the Actionists and the literati."[50] This discrepancy would only become more glaring in the infamous June 1968 event *art and revolution*, staged at the University of Vienna and hosted by the leftist Austrian Socialist Students' Union (SÖS). Flyers for the event denounced art's instrumentalization by what it called an "assimilatory democracy" as a "safety valve for enemies of the state."[51] **[4.20]** Instead, they called for an art that they defined as "politics that has created new styles of communication." These intentions were borne out in an event that critically probed the limits of dissent, despite its promotion as uncompromising agit-prop.[52]

This isn't to deny that many of the performances equated resistant speech with by-then predictable forms of provocation: Mühl mocked the just-assassinated Robert Kennedy, and Brus combined the singing of the Austrian national anthem with the public display of select bodily functions. But other contributions were not so clearly legible either as revolutionary speech or revolutionary art: Wiener's lecture on cybernetic theory, or Weibel's *Inflammatory Speech*, in which he cited Lenin's famous question "What is to be done?" while wearing a burning asbestos

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[47] For one example of this approach, see Rudolf Frieling, "Toward Participation in Art," in Frieling, ed., *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, exhibition catalog (San Francisco: SFMOMA, 2008).
[48] Weibel and EXPORT, *Wien*, 253-54. Matthias Michalka analyzes related tendencies in his article "Shoot at the Audience! Projection and Participation in the Late 1960s," in Michalka, ed., *X-SCREEN: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2004).
[49] Recent commentators have interpreted this tendency as a criticism of liberal pieties. See Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century*, trans. Aileen Derieg (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 196; and also Christian Höller, "Popping Up and Zocking Off: The Relationship Between Agitprop and Pop in Otto Mühl's Works of the Late 1960s," in Badura-Triska and Klocker, *Otto Mühl. Aspekte einer Totalrevolution*.
[50] Weibel and EXPORT, *Wien*, 253-54.
[51] "kunst und revolution: einladung," Archives of the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Reference Number PSK-A 69/0.
[52] The following description relies on Herbert Stümpfl, "The Events at the University of Vienna on 7.6.68", in Green, 223; Weibel and EXPORT, "kunst und revolution," *Wien*, 262-64; and Raunig, 196-200.

glove. **[4.21]** If the necessarily brief duration of Weibel's performance summoned an intense urgency, instantiating a momentary window of radical possibility, it also suggested that acting within such a temporality can entail literally self-consuming consequences. This ambiguity was amplified by a divergence between the familiar formulations of the speech and the slapstick humor of its presentation, which conveyed an impatience with received left wisdom even as it self-mockingly questioned its own ability to offer alternatives.

Such slippages revealed the fault lines between the various factions represented at the event. **[4.22]** The differences between artists were, in a word, stark: Mühl's band of naked imps claimed to have freed themselves from repressive strictures, while Wiener and Weibel, who adopted professorial dress, stressed that art's dependence on representation inevitably consigned it to act from a position of immanence. Just as clear was the gap between the performers and the audience, especially after the SÖS disavowed responsibility for the artists' actions in the wake of the scandal that ensued, in which Mühl and Brus fled to avoid prison sentences, while the SÖS was disbanded under orders from the Ministry of the Interior.

In these respects, the event made clear despite itself that art and revolution could not simply be conjoined at that moment, as its title promised, but could only be subject to a more provisional articulation. But what sort of articulation did occur between aesthetics and politics, and why was a truly revolutionary art impossible in Austria during 1968? Much debate has centered around these questions in the intervening years, and one could likely deduce much of the subsequent history of the Austrian New Left by tracking the evolution of these discussions, which have been complex and often heated. Did *art and revolution* catalyze new affiliations between the neo-avant-gardes and the various sectors of the New Left, or did it exacerbate tensions between them? Did its outcome provocatively demonstrate the impossibility of meaningful reform in Austria at that time, or did it in fact strengthen resistance to such changes? A sense of irresolution is still evident in contemporary accounts of the event, as for example in a recent, seemingly contradictory claim that it represented the "high point, the turning point, and the decline" of Vienna Actionism.[53]

From our perspective, it would appear that *art and revolution* did indeed mark a key transition in the emergence of the aesthetico-political. One could well argue that the existence of such a field was the condition of possibility for the event itself, which proposed that art and revolution belonged together on a fundamental level. However, to simply voice this position did not in any way amount to effectively modelling ways in which aesthetics and politics might be articulated. Gerald Raunig has spoken to this problem in arguing that *art and revolution* exemplified a "negative form of concatenation" between the factions involved, each of which exhibited a high degree of internal disunity. For Raunig, the salient features of the event were its failures: the lack of accord between different performers on stage, and the disconnect between performers and audience, with the proceedings closed to audience participation. As a result, it could only result in a "static caricature of political action and communication," producing an "irrational clash of two... non-collectives."[54]

[53] Jahraus, *Die Aktion des Wiener Aktionismus*, 24. ["Gleichzeitig markiert... *kunst und revolution* Höhepunkt, Wende und Abstieg in der Entwicklungsgeschichte des Wiener Aktionismus."]
[54] Raunig, *Art and Revolution*, 199.

While this reading overlooks the critique of participation undertaken by Weibel's lecture, it nevertheless captures the ways in which *art and revolution* succeeded only in staging symptomatic forms of disagreement. Ultimately, the most fatal discrepancy thus revealed was between the event and its context, which was beset by pervasive contradictions that have become clear only in retrospect. As opposed to the movements that occurred in other parts of Western Europe in 1968, only a relatively small degree of social and political transformation occurred in Austria. The ÖVP retained a majority until 1970, and as several critics have argued, the changes typically associated with 1968 didn't really occur in Austria until the mid-1970s.[55] In contrast to West Germany, there was no broad-based extra-parliamentary opposition, even though the Grand Coalition in Austria maintained a much firmer grip on power.[56] Although the SÖS implemented several forward-thinking policies — including short terms for its steering commitee to ensure rotating leadership and thus prevent a problem that plagued the West German SDS — the group was belated in forming and quite short-lived, only existing between May and July of 1968. In this sense, the radicality of events like *art and revolution* was the exception that proved the rule. Under such conditions, attempts at comprehensive direct action, no matter how trenchant, were doomed by the absence of an effectively mobilized collective.

However, this should not be taken as some sort of totalizing, fatalistic assessment of the conjuncture in Austria circa 1968. In fact, the relatively small dimensions of the progressive artistic and political movements seem to have enabled a greater degree of contact between these groups than existed elsewhere. Beginning in 1967, a number of collectives formed with the intention of operating at the intersection between aesthetics and politics, perhaps the most prominent of which was the Vienna Commune (*Kommune Wien*).[57] Although two of its founding members had experience with the famous Berlin countercultural groups Kommune I and Kommune II, the goals of the Vienna Commune were more distinctly political, oriented around criticism of both the SPÖ and the KPÖ. Its tactics drew visibly on street theater, as in an impromptu action satirizing KPÖ policy at a parade commemorating the party's anniversary. (At one point Otto Mühl contacted the Commune about conducting some sort of group psychoanalytic experiment, but nothing came of this.)

Other collectives undertook similar activities, including the *Aktion* group (no relation to the Actionists), the Organization of Austrian Socialist Students (VSStÖ), and a range of small circles typically referred to as the "informal groups." Though these groups had their own diverging agendas, they often operated in ways that subjected politics to novel forms of aestheticization, or vice versa. The *Aktion* group acted primarily within the university, repeatedly interrupting lectures with parodic skits, and on one occasion staging a surprise exhibition of photographs of state police in a lecture hall. The VSStÖ was known for its opposition to the US war in Vietnam, staging protests outside the Amerika Haus. In the wake of the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke — an attack thought by many on the left to have been facilitated by a smear campaign run by Springer Verlag, a right-wing West German media conglomerate — the group stopped

[55] See for example Rolf Schwendter, "Das Jahr 1968. War es eine kulturelle Zäsur?" ("Was the Year 1968 a Cultural Caesura?"), in *die 68er. eine generation und ihr erbe*, eds. Bärbel Danneberg, Fritz Keller, et al. (Vienna: Döcker Verlag, 1998).
[56] For a review of exchanges between the West German and Austrian student movements, which mainly occurred in the social milieu surrounding the Cafe Hawelka, see Fritz Keller, "Mailüfterl über Krähwinkel," in *die 68er*, 36-37.
[57] For a description of the activities of the Vienna Commune, see Fritz Keller, *Wien, Mai '68: Eine heiße Viertelstunde* (Vienna: Junius, 1988), 52-57.

traffic throughout the city center while marching to Springer's Vienna offices. **[4.23]** In such protests, mobile bands of demonstrators stopped traffic, dispersing before police could respond, then rematerializing elsewhere. In another demonstration, activists snuck into the Opera Ball to scatter leaflets denouncing the Vietnam War all over the crowd, transforming one of the most exclusive social events in Vienna into a very different kind of event.

6. "Split Realities": The Aesthetico-Political Events of Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT

Such activities might appear to have little in common with the field of mediated actions, with which they were contemporaneous. This impression is corroborated by the fact that, aside from *art and revolution*, neither Weibel, EXPORT, or any of the other figures associated with disagreements had a substantive relationship with the organizations of the Austrian New Left. Yet it would be mistaken to follow Raunig's lead and view that one event as emblematic of a larger disjuncture between art and activism at that moment. While *art and revolution* did indeed represent a specific failure to articulate aesthetics and politics, the demonstration forms just mentioned indicate that a considerable amount of productive aesthetico-political experimentation took place at other sites at this time. I would maintain that the body of work produced by Weibel and EXPORT (both individually and collaboratively) in the period 1966-69 is most productively viewed in this context. Clearly they oriented their practices toward artistic and critical objectives that were distinct from the more tactical aims espoused by the Vienna Commune and related groups. With this said, their approach shared a similar commitment to initiating circuits between aesthetics and politics, such that many of their events effectively had more in common with groups like *Aktion* than with the Actionists.

As mentioned above, Weibel first began to experiment with mediated actions in 1966, before initiating his collaboration with EXPORT the following year. In the wake of the fallout from *art and revolution* in 1968, when the Viennese underground was forced to reevaluate its tactics, the mediated action would become increasingly important for two reasons. First, its comparatively inconspicuous profile allowed for a radical aesthetico-political practice that would not make itself as vulnerable to juridical repression. Second, it enabled further analysis of the mass-mediation of leftist activity. This was especially significant given the degree to which the spectacle of *art and revolution* had been exploited by the Austrian media: not only from the right-wing tabloids, including such Springer-owned affiliates as *Hör zu*, but also center-left papers like *Express* and *Neue Zeitung*, which had caricatured Actionism from a position sympathetic to the social-democratic SPÖ.[58]

Mediated actions incorporated video, audio, and reprographic technologies, but their main emphasis was film. Against the optimistic, McLuhanite zeal for innovation characteristic of much Expanded Cinema, media actions typically viewed their substrates with more reserve. They neither embraced technical media as liberatory extensions of human perception, nor denounced them from an orthodox Marxian standpoint as instruments of ideology that substituted mere appearance for an authentic reality. Instead, they engaged media from within as a force field of shifting power relations, one that could reflexively inform the very execution of actions. Cinema actions recalled Kurt Kren's recombinatory approach by dismantling the

[58] Keller, "Mailüfterl über Krähwinkel," 62.

cinematic apparatus, then reassembling it. However, rather than alter a sequence of frames, they sought to effect "the transformation and substitution of the constituents of the cinema machine," to use Weibel's terms.[59] This comprehensive understanding was not limited to the technical components of the "cinema machine": film material, the camera, the processing lab, the projector, the screen, and the site of projection. It also comprised its aesthetic elements, including light, sound, form, and time; the various interventions allowed by montage; the participation of viewers and producers; the specific socio-political situation in which a screening occurred; and the representational regimes that enabled the cinema to signify. Ultimately, this radical conception allowed for a practice that aimed not to expand film into other artistic media, but into the sites of collective contestation wherever they might be located, whether in the cinema, the street, or the act of signification.

Assessing this approach retrospectively, EXPORT summarized it as follows:

> The film phenomenon is initially split up into its formal components, and then put back together again in a new way. The operations of the collective union which is film, such as the screen, the cinema theater, the projector, light, and celluloid, are partially replaced by reality in order to install new signs of the real. The cinematic image is freed from its traditional image character through the exchangeability and simulation of its signs.[60]

Several implications follow from this formulation, the first of which is that cinema must be grasped as a compound form of communication that aggregates the mediation of the sign with other phenomena that we perceive as "real." It is not that cinema replaces reality with the simulation of the sign, but rather that it combines them in a sort of circuit where "real" objects and phenomena can function like signs and vice versa. By recombining the components of this ensemble — subjecting montage to montage, as it were — it becomes possible to call attention to and even alter its mediating function, such that the reality of representation is not only exposed, but reconfigured. This approach did not aim simply to uncover the contradictions within cinema; it took these contradictions as its materials, or, in a sense, its medium. In certain cases, it even encompassed the disjunctions between cinema and other formats, as in EXPORT's claim that effective images are located "[in] the fractures between media."[61] By recombining distinct media into new forms — EXPORT would later term them "medial anagrams" — such disagreements located a strategic value in the interstitial space of these fractures.

This idiosyncratic, somewhat heterodox "expansion" of cinema reads as an experimental articulation of the antagonistic logics of autonomy and heteronomy. As is clear from the rigor of EXPORT's formulations, disagreements exhibited a self-reflexive attentiveness to the numerous components of cinema as a complex technical ensemble or *dispositif*, even as they registered the impact of numerous extra-aesthetic determinations.[62] The germ of this conflicted commitment

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[59] As cited in Ernst Schmidt Jr., "Austrian Avant-Garde and Underground Film," trans. Aileen Derieg (unpublished manuscript, 1982), in *Ernst Schmidt Jr. Drehen Sie Filme Aber Keine Filme! Filme und Filmtheorie 1964-1987*, ed. Linda Bilda (Vienna: Secession with Triton Verlag, 2001), 218.
[60] EXPORT, "Expanded Cinema as Expanded Reality," 9.
[61] EXPORT, "Medial Anagrams," trans. Camilla R. Nielsen, in Sabine Breitwieser, ed., *White Cube/Black Box* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1996), 125.
[62] In this respect, they productively exploited the uncertain autonomy of Expanded Cinema, the same characteristic that has frustrated critical attempts to define this field as a "medium." On this problem, see Liz Kotz, "Disciplining Expanded Cinema," in Michalka, *X-SCREEN*.

was already evident in Weibel's *Action-Lecture* at DIAS, which literally enacted a clash between cinema, direct action, and critical reflection on art, culminating in the artist lying on the stage bound and gagged.

In *Nivea*, a similarly prescient event from later that year, Weibel used a more simplified strategy to further elaborate this line of critique. In a preparatory sketch for the piece, he specified its target: "the illusion-machine of film," which "combines image and sound [that] are recorded separately." The action aimed to dissolve this combination in order to reveal "split realities," and by doing so to "substitute image for sound" and "image for reality."[63] It consisted of a tape deck, which played back a recording of a rolling film camera, and an empty projector, which shone white light onto Weibel, who stood still before the screen holding an inflatable ball with the logo for Nivea skin creme. **[4.24]** At first the action might seem to have been little more than a demonstration of a rather academic point: that it is possible to subtract celluloid from cinema to produce what Weibel called "film without film."[64] It could also have read as a militant attempt to dispense with cinema as an agent of ideology, replacing the "illusion-machine" with the actual presence of the filmmaker as a political agent. Yet while the action's objectives were indeed consistent with such an agenda — as in Weibel's claim that it would enable "production and projection [to] become one" — this fails to explain the jarring, incongruous presence of the Nivea ball, or the fact that the piece was promoted as an "inflatable film" and a "direct promotional film," adopting a brand name as its title.[65]

This dissonance might be explained as an attempt to tweak the pieties of a more orthodox film avant-garde, and in fact Weibel has called it an "ironic commentary" on the idea that the sign could be an instrument of emancipation.[66] Yet it would also seem that this odd clash between utopian and commercial rhetorics betrayed a degree of ambivalence that can't be reduced to irony alone. Even though *Nivea* might have seemed to replace representation with reality, it ended up depicting, even enacting, their entanglement, such that it became unclear what Weibel himself was meant to signify: A body, a subject, or a sign? A vanguardist filmmaker, or a product pitchman? If the action truly meant to destroy the illusionism of commercial film, why would it turn itself into a kind of product placement? What would it mean for even the most radical efforts at representation critique to encounter the commodity form as intransigent? As in *Action-Lecture*, these contradictions coalesced around the figure of an artist who was immobilized, almost as if paralyzed by them: an Actionist reduced to inaction.

This ambivalence about the mediation of the event would progressively intensify. In a 1967 text entitled "The Myth of the 21st Century, Excursus on Marshall McLuhan, Event Field from Finite Rules," Weibel provided his most thorough description of the event as a component of what he termed "Media Actionism." (Though this term meant something quite similar to what I am calling "mediated actions" or "disagreements," it was not used with any frequency.) The text opens on a seemingly serious note, addressing itself to "the young intellectual" and noting that

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[63] Weibel, sketch for *Nivea* (1966), reproduced in *Buffalo Heads: Media Study, Media Practice, Media Pioneers, 1973-1990*, eds. Woody Vasulka and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM and MIT Press, 2008), 737.
[64] Ibid.
[65] See Weibel, *Nivea*, in Vasulka and Weibel, *Buffalo Heads*, 736.
[66] Ibid. Weibel writes that he associated such thinking with the American neo-pragmatist philosopher Charles W. Morris, who had worked closely with Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap, and other members of the Vienna Circle.

aesthetic systems inevitably reflect political systems.[67] It then swerves to adopt a sardonic condescension — the reader or listener is now a "playboy of democracy and language" who needs education in the ways of the world — before defining the "event field" in terms of probability theory and cybernetics. As Weibel has it, an event field is essentially the sum of all probable events, which vary in informational content, and can be articulated "through the addition of certain links between event pairs." Though the text offers few particulars on exactly which sort of events it is referring to — in some places it uses abstract mathematical notation, while in others it questions how certain occurrences become "news" — it would seem to be taking a generally optimistic position, reminding the audience that "the news and the course of the events field are up to you." Yet it then immediately switches course once more, asserting that "you will be conned in the process, also by us," and recharacterizing the event pair as "the institutionalized, reactionary relationship between author and public."[68]

Such conflicts informed the execution of events that might initially have seemed to exhibit a progressive or emancipatory attitude toward media. This was the case in *Cutting* (1967-68), the first collaboration between Weibel and EXPORT.[69] Like *Nivea*, *Cutting* approached Expanded Cinema against the grain, adopting procedures of subtraction and recombination. The action consisted of five parts, each of which parodically resembled a different genre: documentary, sound film, comedy, silent film, and pornographic film. In Part 1, footage of an apartment building was projected onto a screen. EXPORT then used the cinematic image as a guide to cut holes in the screen wherever windows were projected. Part 2 cited a phrase from Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964): "The content of writing is speech." These words were cut out of the screen, save for "speech," which was spoken by EXPORT. In Part 3 Weibel stood on stage wearing a T-shirt advertising Bazooka bubble gum, while EXPORT cut out the part of the shirt depicting a bubble blown by the gum's mascot, Bazooka Joe. Part 4 consisted of EXPORT shaving a path through the body hair of a naked Weibel, from his chest downward. The event concluded with EXPORT performing fellatio on Weibel, in what was alleged to be an example of "liberated human communication."[70] **[4.25]**

As its title indicates, *Cutting* was conceived as a recombinatory analysis of one of the fundamental elements of cinema: montage. Parts 1 and 2 reflexively turned this technique back on cinema itself, not only by literally cutting the screen, but also by severing the conventional link between film and illusionistic representation. In this context the window assumed added significance as a longstanding metaphor for transparent representation, one used both in painting and philosophy. Part 3 extended this trope, also referring to the technique of the blow-up, represented by Bazooka Joe's bubble. In Part 4, Weibel's body was meant to stand in for a flatbed editing station or "body cutter," with EXPORT wielding the same sort of razor used to cut negatives. As the only section that did not involve scissors or razor, Part 5 was presumably meant to gesture toward a horizon of unmediated bodily communication.

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[67] Weibel, "Der Mythos des 21. Jahrhunderts, Exkurse zu Marshall McLuhan, Ereignisfeld aus endlichen Regeln" (1967), in Vasulka and Weibel, *Buffalo Heads*, 739. While the text seems to have been intended to be recorded for use in a mediated action in late 1967, it is unclear whether or not it was ever performed.
[68] Ibid.
[69] This description is based on the account provided by EXPORT and Weibel in *Wien*, 260-61, which is also reproduced in translation in Vasulka and Weibel, *Buffalo Heads*, 746-47.
[70] Ibid.

Despite its explicit citation of *Understanding Media*, *Cutting* depicted film technology in ways that sharply diverged from McLuhan's widely influential account of mediation as a prosthetic "extension" of human capabilities. Although McLuhan conceded that such extension also presupposed a certain amputation, *Cutting* made the cut central to its conception of cinema, both depicting and enacting it. In this sense it recalled Weibel's early formulation of *Nivea* as an experiment with the power of film to create "split realities." Furthermore, *Cutting* made little use of the cinema's ability to extend temporal perception, whether through reference to an absent past or to a fictive present. Instead, the action generated a temporality that was divided between the presence of the acts on stage and the abstract conventions of the genres to which they referred. Yet whatever disruptive effects this may have had were neutralized by the questionable decision to conclude with the act of fellatio. It is not just that this unreciprocated sex act, regardless of Weibel and EXPORT's intentions, would have conjured a patriarchal fantasy of female submission to male desire, an implication blatantly at odds with the artists' ostensible message of liberation. By ending in this way, the event retroactively assumed a normative temporality of closure patterned on male arousal and climax, one that contravened its otherwise critical tendencies.

In these respects, *Cutting* reads as something like a trial run for the *Tap- and Touch-Cinema* (1968), a later mediated action that more effectively incorporated the politics of gender into its form. Yet while that work stands as perhaps the most trenchant example of a disagreement, its execution depended on a specific conception of audience participation. This approach only began to coalesce with two projects from earlier that year: Weibel and EXPORT's *Instant Film* and Weibel's *Action Lecture No. 3*. The first of these consisted of one simple element: a sheet of transparent plastic through which a viewer could look, producing their own "film" on any subject they chose. In its bare simplicity, the piece was consistent with Weibel's 1967 proposal for an *Armes Kino* or "poor cinema," comprised only of a projector, a screen, and tape to mark whatever shadows were cast on the screen.[71] (Though this clearly meant to reference *Arte Povera*, the piece had more in common with the large number of unrealized "project films" that Weibel and EXPORT conceived at this time.[72]) As the filmmakers noted, *Instant Film* effectively superimposed three distinct sites of mediation, serving as "screen, projector, and camera in one."[73] Although they promoted their invention with characteristic irony as the best thing since instant coffee and instant milk, this flippancy concealed a legitimate desire to exchange the role of the viewer with that of the cinematographer, director, and editor. However, this activation of the viewer was not without its own equivocal aspects. On the one hand, such participation stood to thoroughly decentralize the production of mediated actions. On the other, it amounted to what Robert Bilek has called "a sideswipe at engaged political agit-filmmaking."[74] In a context of earnest calls for democratizing cinema, *Instant Film* was at once a radical exploration of this possibility and, as Bilek notes, a satirical jape deriding the circularity of such ventures, in which the producers and audience invariably seemed to agree with each other.

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[71] See Weibel, *Armes Kino* (1967), in Vasulka and Weibel, *Buffalo Heads*, 738. This project sketch was realized in 1968 at Stift Melk, in Melk, Austria.

[72] Weibel published a list of these hypothetical films under the title "Projekte und Projektionen" ("Projects and Projections") in the Zurich-based journal *Super-visuell*, No. 2 (1968).

[73] As cited in Roswitha Mueller, *Valie Export: Fragments of the Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 8.

[74] Robert Bilek, *Der Wiener Undergroundfilm der 60er Jahre. Realitätsbezuge und kritische Funktion*, Dissertation, University of Vienna, 1983, 61.

This implicitly antagonistic conception of participation gained a greater edge in Weibel's *Action Lecture No. 3*, presented in Cologne in March of 1968 as part of the XSCREEN underground film festival. As with the first *Action Lecture*, Weibel delivered a prepared speech while a film was projected on his body. In this case, the film — Ernst Schmidt Jr.'s *Denkakt* ("Thought Act") — staged a sort of *mise en abyme*, since it also depicted Weibel reading a text ("Nimm eine Handvoll Zelluloid" ["Take a Handful of Film"].[75] However, this familiar scenario was then subjected to a further degree of mediation, directly incorporating feedback from the audience. The film projector and Weibel's microphone were both routed through a light-dependent resistor placed next to a lamp, which was in turn activated by sound from the audience. The action could thus only proceed if spectators made enough noise to enable the film and the microphone, inevitably threatening to interfere with or even drown out Weibel's lecture. Their participation therefore came at the cost of any sort of direct communication. This contradictory arrangement highlighted the difference between distinct notions of representation. As Weibel later noted in regard to his lecture at *art and revolution*, which used the same apparatus, such an approach demonstrated the "antinomies of parliamentarism and pluralistic democracy," introducing a discrepancy between those who speak and a representative who speaks on their behalf.[76] By making its own conditions of possibility also potentially those of its impossibility, *Action Lecture No. 3* productively instantiated a situation resembling Rancière's definition of a disagreement as "an interlocution that undermines the very situation of interlocution."[77]

This intensively immanent engagement with contradiction was further elaborated in the *Tap- and Touch-Cinema*, which was staged by EXPORT with Weibel's assistance, and was the event that best actualized the critical potential of the disagreement. The action was staged in various cities — first in Munich in November 1968 — before an audience of passersby who were invited to visit the "cinema," a box worn by EXPORT with openings through which visitors could "view the film" by handling her exposed breasts. **[4.27]** With its minimal production costs, the action not only opposed itself to mainstream cinema, but redefined it by positing gendered power relations as specific to that medium. It did so through an extensive series of recombinations: reversing the direction of gazes such that the voyeur became viewed; altering the relations of film production, with the viewer simultaneously becoming participant and object; recoding the female body from passive to active; materializing the visual image; opening the closed work; replacing distanced sight with proximate touch; and relocating projection to the street.

Provocatively merging the disparate traditions of street performance and Brechtian epic theater, EXPORT described the action as a *Lehrfilm* or "educational film," further claiming that it represented "the first women's film."[78] There is no doubt that the *Touch-Cinema* overturned Actionism's longstanding equation of the female body with passive or abject material, doing so just as decisively as it interrogated the Actionist ideal of the artist as omnipotent transgressor. In

[75] This text had appeared in the Viennese publication *werkstatt blatt*, No. 3, January 1968.
[76] Weibel and EXPORT, "kunst und revolution," *Wien*, 263.
[77] Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, 99.
[78] For discussion of EXPORT's conception of *Lehrfilm*, see Mueller, 13; for EXPORT on the piece as the "first women's film," see VALIE EXPORT, "Tapp und Tastfilm," unpublished text in the archives of the Generali Foundation, Vienna; see also EXPORT, "Busen als Leinwand," unpublished text in the archives of the Generali Foundation, Vienna.

EXPORT's recollection, it "succeded in checking the power of patriarchy through acts of self-chosen demonstration."[79]

Yet while this characterization of the event is consistent with its subsequent reception as a canonical work of feminist art, such views tend to obscure the performer's own explicit ambivalence about the history of its realization. Just after describing her own "acts of demonstration," EXPORT went on to note, somewhat ruefully, that these occurred "at the expense of the woman actionist."[80] What she presumably meant by this is that the event achieved criticality only by risking the perpetuation of the conditions it contested, whether through Export's potential objectification, or through inciting censure and harassment, as in fact occasionally happened. As this history suggests, the *Touch-Cinema* was staged in a cultural climate that was markedly unsympathetic to its objectives. EXPORT acted in the absence of any sort of viable broad-based feminist movement in Austria, and at a time when the apparent liberation of female sexuality was in many cases serving as an alibi for the expansion of the Western European pornography industry into an economy of scale.[81] Even as these conditions might well serve to enhance our sense of EXPORT's daring, they should also check any impulse to romanticize the event. The *Touch-Cinema* did not represent an untrammeled reappropriation of agency, but rather a delicate, provisional negotiation of multiple, unforeseeable contingencies. Crucially, these risks were not borne solely by EXPORT, but by her audience as well, and in differing proportions. The event thus positioned them neither as equals nor antagonists, but as subjects in disagreement, contradicting one another under conditions of reciprocal entanglement.

[79] VALIE EXPORT, "Feministicher Aktionismus. Aspekte" ("Aspects of Feminist Actionism"), in *Frauen in der Kunst*, eds. Helke Sander et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), 165. ["*Tapp- und Tastkino*, 1968, gelingt es, durch Akte der selbstgewählten Demonstration die Gewalt im Patriarchat einzuholen."]

[80] Ibid. ["... auf Kosten der weiblichen Aktionistin."]

[81] For the relative weakness of the Austrian feminist movement at that moment, see EXPORT's interview with Danièle Roussel in Roussel, *Die Wiener Aktionismus und die Österreicher. Gespräche*. (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1995); on the relationship between EXPORT's work and the growth of the pornography industry, see Bilek, 65.

Chapter Five

The West German New Left and the Events of 1968
"Permanent Conference" or "Propaganda of Deeds"?

1. A Survey of Events *circa* 1968

In June 1966, an unprecedented event took place on the campus of the Berlin Free University (*Freie Universität Berlin*, hereafter FU). Tensions had been building since early that year, due to the university administration's proposal to limit the number of semesters that students could register. This plan intended to counter overenrollment, which had become a chronic problem at German universities and especially at the FU, which was operating at over 150% of its capacity.[1] After early attempts at protest proved fruitless, the student Congress called for a general referendum on the issue, only to be told by the university Rector that they could not do so on campus. In response, the leftist German Socialist Student Federation (*Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund* [SDS]) organized a mass meeting that was attended by over 2,000 students, where it was resolved to occupy a campus building during a faculty Senate meeting.

More than 3,000 students turned out for the sit-in, which was the first such demonstration to occur at a German university. **[5.1]** One of the decisive moments of the protest was an address by Rudi Dutschke, a charismatic SDS leader who came from the more radical or "anti-authoritarian" wing of the organization. Citing Marx, Dutschke linked the FU movement to "the historical process of the democratization of society," calling for students to cooperate with other similarly minded activist groups outside the university.[2] If the goals of the sit-in were quickly met, with the Senate deciding that same night to reverse the Rector's position on the referendum, the protest also had more far-reaching effects, such as raising the profile of Dutschke, who soon became the public face of the student movement. **[5.2]**

Dutschke's rise would signal the increasing influence of the anti-authoritarian camp, which led the SDS to rely on a different model of political activity, one that placed a premium on direct participation and eventfulness. Whether in mass meetings and teach-ins, or in public protests and even riots, the SDS soon came to favor tactics that gave the impression of spontaneous manifestations of democracy. While the FU sit-in would appear to have been such an instance, the reality was more complicated. As one SDS member would later recall, many of the event's details had in fact been coordinated in advance, making use of what he called "well-planned dramatic techniques."[3] However impromptu such displays may have been in many respects, this account suggests the extent to which they were in fact often also stage-managed.

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The following June, Fritz Teufel and Rainer Langhans, both members of the West Berlin anarchist collective Kommune I, were arrested on charges of inciting arson. The commune had been founded earlier that year by the two men and five other SDS members, including Dieter Kunzelmann, who had previously been involved with the SPUR Group — a Munich-based group of radical West German artists that was affiliated with the Situationist International in the early 1960s — as well as with Subversive Aktion, another anarchist collective that was the most

[1] In the following description I draw on Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), 62ff.
[2] Ibid., 63.
[3] Siegward Lönnendonker, as cited in Ronald Fraser, ed., *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 126.

prominent face of the anti-authoritarian left, with Rudi Dutschke as a member. Though Kommune I had quickly become notorious for cheekily provocative actions, the group owed part of its fame to a botched investigation by the police, who had raided the commune in April 1967 to break up a plot to assassinate the visiting US Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. Only after leaking details to the press, spawning a media frenzy, did the police have to sheepishly admit that the "plot" was actually a plan to bombard Humphrey with pudding-filled pies in protest of the American war in Vietnam.

Smarting from this embarassment and eager to silence prominent critics of their authority, the West Berlin authorities soon moved against Teufel and Langhans, two of the commune's most prominent members. In late May the two men, along with eight other Kommune I members, had written a series of pamphlets inspired by a large fire in a Brussels department store, which had killed over 300 people. Claiming that the fire had been set by activists opposed to the Vietnam War, one pamphlet termed it "a big happening" that could serve as an example for other like-minded groups. Another pointedly asked, "When will the Berlin stores burn?"[4] **[5.3]**

The ensuing trial attracted intense interest from the news media, which highlighted the contrasts between the formality of the court and the unconventional appearance of the commune members, with their long hair, jeans, and sandals. **[5.4]** If centrist and left-leaning journalists cast the proceedings as social comedy, the conservative, populist right-wing press saw an opportunity to put the counterculture on trial. **[5.5]** As things turned out, the events themselves provided plenty of material for both viewpoints. Unaccustomed to its authority being challenged, the court initially suspended the trial so that the defendants could undergo psychiatric evaluation.[5] For their part, Teufel and Langhans did their best to leverage all the attention they received into a sort of self-promotional media event.[6] On various occasions they wore psychedelic robes to court, sat on the defendants' table, and taunted the judge and prosecution with wisecracks. Yet despite this farcical charade, the trial ultimately turned into a serious consideration of the limits of art as a form of protected speech.[7] The court convened a panel of academics who ultimately interpreted the flyers as literature, explicitly citing their similarity to the "Second Surrealist Manifesto," which contained André Breton's famous exhortation to blindly open fire into a crowd. This argument ultimately prevailed, and Teufel and Langhans were acquitted in March 1968, prompting carnivalesque celebratory "Happenings" on the streets on Berlin. **[5.6]**

Yet even though the intentions behind the Kommune's pamphlets were judged harmless, subsequent events led many to question whether that was also true of their effects. In April 1968, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and two accomplices proceeded to set fire to two department stores in Frankfurt, causing no fatalities but extensive damages. (In 1970, this group would go on to found the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion* [RAF]), the most notorious militant cell on

[4] As cited by Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 104.
[5] During this period Teufel was prosecuted for an alleged act of violence in conjunction with a protest in June 1967. The legally questionable circumstances of his confinement led to inquiries by several international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International. See Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 183ff.
[6] David Joselit analyzes the analogous media-driven politics of the Yippies in Chapter 3 of *Feedback: Television Against Democracy*. For more on the media event as a phenomenon, see Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
[7] For an account of this aspect of the trial, see Charity Scribner, "Buildings on Fire: The Situationist International and the Red Army Faction," *Grey Room* 26, Winter 2007.

the West German far left; the Frankfurt firebombings were their first joint violent action.) There was clearly a strong resemblance between the pamphlets and the Frankfurt arson, lending weight to the prosecution's case in the Teufel/Langhans trial.[8] Yet even though Baader and Ensslin had in fact been in contact with Kommune I, they sought to distance themselves from the commune's more playful, creative approach to actions. In a phone call reporting the firebombs to the press, a representative of the group insisted that the fires not be viewed as "a happening," but as "a political act of revenge."[9] In a psychiatric interview during her trial, Ensslin expressed this position in even stronger, more portentous terms: "We don't want to be just a page in the history of culture."[10]

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The same month that Teufel and Langhans were arrested, the artist Joseph Beuys announced a press conference at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, where he served as professor of monumental sculpture.[11] The Kunstakademie was two hundred years old and the preeminent art school in West Germany, but it was not immune to student unrest. By the later 1960s Beuys had a reputation as a radical, and his classroom had become a haven of experimentation in what was otherwise a conservative institution. The reporters who arrived for the conference might not have known quite what to anticipate, but they would presumably have expected something outlandish.

Instead, they witnessed proceedings that were relatively straightlaced, even humorless: together with a group of students, Beuys announced the founding of the German Student Party (*Deutsche Studentenpartei* [DSP]). **[5.7]** Using chalk to draw a series of diagrams on the floor, Beuys explained how the existing balance of powers under the West German Constitution was inadequate, and was exacerbated by the recent formation of the Grand Coalition, a power-sharing agreement between the left-liberal German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU). Under such conditions, he argued, the only viable choice available to students was to forgo the institutions of representative democracy and directly mobilize themselves.

In November of 1967, Beuys invited reporters to his classroom once more, this time for them to witness the signature of the party's charter. Standing behind a mock podium — actually a worn piece of classroom furniture emblazoned with the hand-painted letters "DSP" — Beuys signed the charter together with three other founding members of the party. However, only one of them (Johannes Stüttgen) was an actual Kunstakademie student, and he had previously worked for Beuys as an assistant in several performances. While it is tempting to claim that this indicates a contradiction between the rhetoric of the DSP and the reality of its practices, this assumes that we can explain exactly how the group's rhetoric worked, when in fact such conclusions are quite hard to draw. The founding of the DSP occurred only weeks after one of the watershed events in the politics of the West German New Left: the fatal shooting of an unarmed demonstrator named

[8] Scribner discusses this link in her article, 34-39. Note however that this article provides a mistaken chronology of the pamphlets and the Frankfurt bombings; the latter did not occur shortly after the pamphlets' distribution, but a full year after, and followed the exoneration of Teufel and Langhans.
[9] As cited in Scribner, 38.
[10] Ibid., 37.
[11] My account of the events at the Kunstakademie draws for certain details on Tom Holert, "Learning Curve," *Artforum* May 2008, 334-39.

Benno Ohnesorg by a West Berlin policeman during a protest against the Shah of Iran.[12] Ohnesorg's death prompted widespread outrage, driving many previously apolitical students and workers to join leftist organizations. Yet the shooting was also followed by extensive rioting, precipitating what would soon become an intractable conflict on the left about the legitimacy of violence.

In this context, did the DSP represent an attempt to further galvanize opposition among students? Or did it intend to advocate a turn away from the street and back to the political process? The staging of the events did little to resolve such questions; if anything, it added to them. The conspicuously makeshift conditions of the signing ceremony could well have been meant as a parody of what many of the left dismissively called "podium politics." But they could just as easily have been targeting the perceived self-seriousness of the more intellectual wing of SDS. Of course, these interpretations assume that the events were in fact meant ironically, when there is actually plenty to suggest otherwise. Although the DSP itself ultimately amounted to relatively little, Beuys would later be involved with other viable political organizations, and was in fact one of the founding members of the West German Green Party in 1979.

What's more, several aspects of the Kunstakademie events anticipate motifs that would become central in his later thinking and practice: the notion of society as a tripartite formation, or the use of the chalk diagram.[13] Shadowing these questions is the problem of Beuys' public persona, which has been the topic of considerable debate. For present purposes, it should be sufficient to note that at both events Beuys wore his standard costume, including his trademark hat: a fedora that was meant to refer to the hats worn by post-Jacobin European revolutionaries, but was actually an expensive Stetson purchased in London.[14] As this suggests, while Beuys' image was remarkably consistent, it was by no means free from contradictions. Later in the chapter it will become clear how such tensions led to problems for the political organizations with which Beuys worked.

Regardless of the effectiveness of the DSP, its very existence indicated that the radicalization of German students extended to the art academies. There, as in other universities, tension often stemmed from the problem of overenrollment, and the Kunstakademie was no exception. To stem this problem, the Kunstakademie had adopted a policy of *numerus clausus*, which capped the number of students that could study under a single professor. In 1968, Beuys came out decisively against this policy. He opened his classes to all students at the Kunstakademie, suspending the enrollment limit along with the typical process of admission via portfolio review. This action provoked considerable resistance, not only from the academy's administration but also from a number of Beuys' fellow professors, who began calling for his dismissal.

In response, a small group of Beuys' students founded their own breakaway school within the Kunstakademie. In December 1968, they proclaimed the opening of the "LIDL Academy,"

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[12] The Ohnesorg shooting is described in more detail below.

[13] For discussion of the importance of chalk drawings and blackboards in Beuys' work, see Barbara Lange, "'Questions? You Have Questions?' Joseph Beuys' Artistic Self-Presentation in *Fat Transformation Piece/Four Blackboards*, 1972", in *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, eds. Claudia Mesch and Viola Michely (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

[14] The information on Beuys' hat-buying comes from Arthur C. Danto, "Style and Salvation in the Art of Beuys," in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, *xv*.

literally raising their own flag atop the roof of the school. **[5.8]** LIDL — a nonsense word patterned on baby talk, recalling the obvious precedent of Dada — emerged from the practice of Jörg Immendorff, who began using the term earlier that year to designate a range of activities he had undertaken, often together with other students. At first, the LIDL Academy might well have seemed like a prank, or perhaps a piece of political theater. Its first official act was to depose the entire faculty of the Kunstakademie, and its "LIDL-classrooms" were hastily cobbled together from scrap wood, packing paper, cardboard, and tape. **[5.9]**

Yet while this construction conveyed an awkward range of connotations, falling somewhere between a street barricade and an elementary school class project, it nevertheless reflected a specific practical purpose. The classrooms were designed to be portable and modular, and in this respect they symbolized the type of intellectual and artistic communication that the LIDL Academy promoted: namely, an exchange of ideas that was mobile, non-hierarchical, and recombinable. Other aspects of the Academy manifested a similar heterogeneity, ranging from apparent naivete to oblique criticism and experimental innovation. Over the course of its short life, the LIDL Academy had a pet dog, led tours of its facilities, and ran a Christmas market; it also exhibited art, distributed literature, hosted visiting artists, and staged collective meetings about the future of arts education in West Germany. After the LIDL Academy was ordered to disband, its participants and their supporters occupied the Kunstakademie, leaving only after a provincial minister of culture ordered the police to evict them. **[5.10]**

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A sit-in, a mock assassination, a highly publicized trial, a firebombing, a "press conference," the establishment of a political party and a "school," an occupation — on first glance, the events mentioned above might appear to have little in common except happening at roughly the same time. While some of them sought to maximize their own symbolic power as public events, others meant to interrogate or reformulate such rhetoric. However, despite their considerable differences these events nevertheless somehow seem to insist on being thought together. I would submit that this stubborn sense of commonality derives from the fact that these events all occurred within the field of the aesthetico-political. Their number, heterogeneity, and importance indicates that this field was expanding, while simultaneously becoming more pervasive and complex.

This chapter argues that such changes became especially pronounced between the years 1966 and 1970, a period concurrent with the emergence and crisis of the extra-parliamentary opposition (*Außerparlamentarische Opposition*, hereafter APO), a coalition of New Left movements that opposed the policies of the bipartisan Grand Coalition that came to power in December 1966. While this simultaneity was no coincidence, neither can these developments be said to have simply caused each other. In what follows, I seek to explore their interrelationship by once again elaborating a genealogy of specific events. As the following analysis means to show, this period witnessed an especially intense entanglement of the aesthetic and the political under historically contingent circumstances.

Certain aspects of this crossing can be understood as aestheticizations of politics. The FU sit-in of June 1966 exemplified this tendency in proposing a new model for political action, one whose

temporal and performative coordinates differed decisively from "podium politics." This break was accentuated further by the subsequent activities of Subversive Aktion and Kommune I, in which left politics was pushed even further toward theatricality, whether in the form of direct action or farce. In the case of Kommune I, radical politics was often viewed as being consistent with or even identical to the underground lifestyle of the counterculture. Yet of course these attempts at resistance did not occur in isolation, but under the scrutiny of an increasingly intrusive and sensationalistic news media. Whether one considers the right-wing publications of the Springer consortium or the comparatively centrist programming of West Germany's state-run television channels, the mass-mediatization of politics decisively altered the aesthetic basis of the political, a development whose influence would become undeniable.

At the same time, the cultural sphere witnessed numerous emergent politicizations of the aesthetic. As the events at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie make clear, art academies were one site where such changes were especially pronounced. Not only did art students advocate for changes in curricula and enrollment; they viewed such reforms as an integral part of a broader social transformation. These positions were not merely theoretical, but were developed in conjunction with specific practices involving established figures like Beuys or emerging artists like Immendorff. Initiatives like the DSP and the LIDL Academy posed a radical challenge to the ostensibly unique status of aesthetic experience, often seeming to negate, mimic, or indifferently dispense with the ideal of autonomy. Related politicizations of the aesthetic occurred in many other locations: the 1968 protests surrounding the contents of *documenta 4*, including a demonstration in which Beuys and Immendorff both participated; the development of a distinctive agit-prop filmmaking aesthetic at the German Film and Television Academy (DFFB) in West Berlin; and a series of debates concerning the aesthetic theory of the Frankfurt School.

What were the specific historical conditions within which such transformations occurred? How did they affect critical art and oppositional activism? What sort of consequences did these changes have for later cultural production? And how did these transformations effect corollary alterations in the structure of the event? In engaging such questions, this chapter seeks to reframe the history of the APO in relation to the field of the aesthetico-political. It opens with an overview of this relationship during the period 1966-70, highlighting several important points of inflection. The chapter then proceeds to map out two divergent aesthetico-political tendencies, each of which can be understood as a response to the varying prospects of the West German New Left. The first of these is symbolized by the slogan "propaganda of deeds," which began to circulate within the APO in the wake of the Ohnesorg shooting. This view held that what was needed was not debate, theory, or art, but forms of direct action that would persuade a mass audience of the need for revolution. Many within the APO took such a position, ranging from Subversive Aktion and Kommune I to the Dutschke wing of SDS, and a very similar stance would characterize the activities of the RAF and other militant left sects of the 1970s. As my analysis seeks to show, the differences between such practices were belied by their shared reliance on emergent aesthetico-political formations.

The second tendency corresponds to the other term in this chapter's subtitle: "permanent conference." Joseph Beuys used this phrase to describe facets of his work and it aptly designates a range of related practices, like those affiliated with the LIDL collective. Much like members of groups like Subversive Aktion, these practices assumed that the aesthetic and the political

overlapped or were even identical. However, they differed in several crucial respects. They accorded a high value to the process of *aesthetic education*, in the manifold sense in which this term has been theorized after Friedrich Schiller. On this view, cultural revolution depended not only on the liberalization of art schools, but also on aesthetico-political practices modelled on the act of learning differently. This approach often occasioned rearticulations of autonomy and heteronomy, enabling new paradigms for critical production. Ultimately, such forms allow us to grasp the moment of 1968 in a different sense: not as a determinate event — whether in the sense of a revolutionary rupture or a defined chapter in the history of German social democracy — but as an array of occurrences whose meaning is still open to interpretation, contestation, and question.

2. Democracy Before Emergency: A Brief History of the APO

One difficulty in narrating the history of the APO is its basic lack of determinacy. Unlike the American civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1950s and 1960s, which had relatively stable objectives, leaders, and organizations, the APO was closer to what was then sometimes called "the movement." While it encompassed a range of specific political constituencies, it also designated a certain attitude or lifestyle. Even though certain public figures were associated with this movement, no one could definitively claim to speak for it. The APO could not be identified with a single organization, or even with a common set of demands. In these regards, it has been described as a "negative alliance": a loose ensemble of groups sharing common opponents on the right (the CDU/CSU) and on the left (organized labor, the SPD).[15] Such conditions defy some of the most basic requirements of chronological history; it is impossible, for example, to provide a date when the APO came into being.

Although certain of these obstacles are intractable, it is comparatively simple to describe the immediate preconditions for the formation of an extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany. The first of these was the broad-based opposition to nuclear weapons that first broke out in the late 1950s. This movement arose in response to plans to arm the Bundeswehr with so-called tactical nuclear devices, and to allow NATO to deploy nuclear missiles on West German soil. Its initial base was diverse, ranging from SPD members, participating in their party's campaign on the issue, to ethical pacifists, who were comparatively conservative and often outspoken anti-communists. This support grew exponentially between 1960 and 1964, when the number of participants in rallies shot from 1,000 to 130,000.

Such an increase was due in part to the involvement of a number of artists, writers, and intellectuals, but also to the movement's deployment of a novel means of public demonstration. Each year at Easter, protesters staged silent marches over the course of a four-day period.[16] **[5.11]** By 1962 over 50,000 people were participating in these demonstrations, generating such an impact that they quickly became synonymous with the cause itself, which was often referred to as the "Easter March movement." This growth precipitated several changes in the movement's

[15] Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green, and Beyond* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 47.
[16] As Andrei Markovits and Philip Gorski note, the silent Easter march was borrowed by West German activists from the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; see *The German Left*, 47n3.

orientation. Despite its initial political heterogeneity, the anti-nuclear movement increasingly positioned itself as an advocate of socialist democracy, opposing militarism in conjunction with capitalism more broadly.[17] It also rejected the silent march for more vocal, jubilant modes of demonstration. Lastly, and most decisively, it defined itself as a single-issue movement that not only transcended party politics but in fact rejected the parliamentary process outright.

A second contributing factor to the emergence of the APO was the expulsion of SDS from the SPD in 1961 (the group had previously been the party's chief student organization). According to Oskar Negt, who was active within the SDS at this time as a postgraduate student in Frankfurt, students had first become disenchanted with their social-democratic parent party in 1959 with the announcement of the Godesberg Program, when it decided to formally abandon its affiliation with Marxism. Although such ties had basically become vestigial, the SPD formally disavowed them in a bid to woo middle-class voters, in a moment not long after Communism was outlawed in the Federal Republic.[18] This antagonized leftists who were committed to working-class politics, including Negt, who spearheaded a revival of Marx's early writings by founding a study group that ultimately trained a number of the SDS' future leaders. The SDS was also expelled for advocating engagement with East Germany, whose government was not recognized at that time by the NATO bloc, around the contentious topic of nuclear disarmament. Initially, such a platform was markedly out of step with most West German students, who were as a rule disengaged from the political process.[19] However, the appeal of SDS soon increased as a result of rising student discontent with university overcrowding, an issue that became chronic over the course of the 1960s.

While there was some overlap between the anti-nuclear movement and SDS, these forces did not really begin to coalesce until a common enemy emerged. Such an opponent first surfaced with the outbreak of the American war in Vietnam. This was an issue around which pacifists, anti-capitalists, and anti-imperialists could coalesce, along with others who found cause to express their resentment of the US, which still maintained a sizable military presence in the FRG. Opposition to the war greatly increased in 1965, when the American bombing of North Vietnamese civilians became public knowledge. In Autumn 1965 SDS collaborated with the anti-nuclear group Campaign for Disarmament (*Kampf für Abrüstung* [KfA]) to conduct the "Vietnam Semester" at the FU in Berlin, a series of teach-ins, exhibitions, screenings, and demonstrations. **[5.12]** As student leaders have retrospectively acknowledged, the war was the leading factor in the political mobilization of students at that time.[20]

However, this was not the case outside the universities, where public opinion was either comparatively indifferent to the war or opposed to the students' cause, which was depicted in an overwhelmingly negative light by the press.[21] The more broad-based coalition that ultimately gave rise to the APO was instead galvanized by a domestic issue: a proposal to amend the West German constitution to extend the power of the federal government in case of emergency. To

[17] Ibid., 48.
[18] Fraser, *1968*, 57-58.
[19] A representative survey conducted at Frankfurt University showed that only 9% of West German university students viewed themselves as concerned with democracy; Fraser, *1968*, 58.
[20] Markovits and Gorski, *The German Left*, 53.
[21] Ibid.

many, and not only on the New Left, the proposed Emergency Laws were all too similar to the Weimar-era legislation by which Hitler had been able to seize and consolidate power. But to the centrist faction of the SPD, the laws, which were first proposed by the CDU/CSU in 1960, looked like a prime opportunity for compromise. As such politicians saw it, they could appease their center-left base by moderating the more extreme provisions of the amendment, while trading their approval to the ruling party in exchange for more power in Parliament.

This is more or less what ultimately happened, with the SPD and CDU/CSU forming the Grand Coalition in December 1966, and the Emergency Laws passing in May 1968. In the meantime, however, activists from across the left found a common cause around which to unite. In 1965 SDS and the KfA jointly organized "Democracy Before Emergency," a widely publicized conference in Frankfurt, at which Ernst Bloch and Jürgen Habermas spoke. **[5.13]** Opposition to the Laws also came from a more traditional leftist base, including labor unions and progressive churches. The mobilization of labor soon intensified as a result of a recession that hit West Germany in 1966-67, with especially hard consequences for heavy industry. For a brief period, SDS and the labor unions would enter into an extensive cooperation.[22]

During the period preceding the formation of the Grand Coalition, the development of the APO might be characterized as a process of crystallization, in which it became gradually more recognizable as a coherent, viable political alternative to party politics. However, this course suddenly shifted in June 1967 with the shooting of the student Benno Ohnesorg. From this point until the dissolution of the APO in 1970, the history of the extraparliamentary left is often narrated as a history of events, in the sense of exceptional, polarizing, and extensively publicized occurrences. The Ohnesorg murder was the first such moment. It took place during an official visit to West Berlin by the Shah of Iran, whose repressive policies were the target of a well-attended nonviolent protest. **[5.14]** After the Shah's security detail assaulted the protesters, a riot ensued, during which Ohnesorg was shot in the head by a plainclothes policeman. **[5.15]**

Not only was Ohnesorg unarmed, he was also unaffiliated with any left-wing organization, and the ensuing, widespread outrage amongst students galvanized the left. The singular impact of this event is clear in later remarks by Detlev Claussen, a Frankfurt SDS member and student of Adorno:

> You woke up the morning after his shooting... and people you'd never seen before were suddenly "there," on your side. It was an experience that had never happened before. It's from then on that you can really talk about a *movement* in West Germany as opposed to the history of SDS as an organization. It was euphoric.[23]

As Claussen's description makes plain, Ohnesorg's death radicalized a previously unmobilized population, mostly inside but also outside the sphere of student activism. **[5.16]** It was at this moment that the APO began to emerge as a full-fledged, recognizable, alternative popular movement not reducible to the interests of students. If this sense of ascendancy was intoxicating for many, it also served to conceal intensifying tensions within SDS, pitting the organization's intellectual wing against the anti-authoritarian camp, whose influence was growing.

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[22] Nick Thomas cites Karl Otto as saying that this period of collaboration marked "the historical culmination point" of the APO; Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 91.
[23] As cited by Fraser, *1968*, 144. Italics in the original.

Emblematic of this split was a clash between Rudi Dutschke and Jürgen Habermas. Responding to an improvised speech Dutschke had given after Ohnesorg's funeral — in which he called for radical actions without providing detail or justification — Habermas warned of the dangers in such an approach, which he famously denounced as "left fascism."[24] Whether or note Habermas' charge was legitimate, it proved prophetic as demonstrators' tactics grew increasingly confrontational over the next year, partly in response to the repressive measures enforced by West German police. These opposing tendencies exacerbated each other, resulting in steadily escalating tensions, and ultimately in crisis after Dutschke himself was shot and nearly killed in April 1968. **[5.17]** During a period of several days when Dutschke's status was in doubt — he did in fact recover, only to die years later from related injuries — some 300,000 West Germans took to the streets in protest.[25]

In Berlin demonstrations soon turned violent as the city witnessed its most extensive rioting since the Weimar Republic, with the chief target being the headquarters of the Springer newspaper consortium. Springer, which owned titles ranging from the photo-tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* to the conservative newspaper *Die Welt*, was strongly opposed to the student movement and had regularly demonized Dutschke, along with other easily caricatured leftists like Teufel and Langhans. Its more populist publications were prone to making statements that bordered on incitement, such as: "One should not let the police and their water cannons do all the dirty work."[26] When it emerged that Dutschke's assailant was not only a regular *Bild-Zeitung* reader, but had acted in accordance with what he thought the paper and its readers wanted, furor ensued across West Germany. Springer facilities were barricaded or burned by some 60,000 protesters in West Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Cologne, Hamburg, and elsewhere.[27] **[5.18]** Defying bans on public demonstrations, marchers met with an extensive, violent crackdown at the hands of the police, some 21,000 of whom were mobilized.[28]

As with the reaction to Ohnsesorg's shooting, these protests greatly expanded the base of the APO. This time, however, the movement extended further across class borders. In Detlev Claussen's recollection:

> Suddenly great numbers of young workers showed up. That was the big change... I think a lot of these youths were more interested in fighting the police than in the political content of the demonstrations, but they were there. You couldn't talk about a student movement now, it was the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition, the only real opposition in the country. And that's how we understood it at the time.[29]

This statement suggests the extent to which the period immediately following Dutschke's shooting constituted a decisive moment for the APO. On the one hand, the movement had reached what was arguably its peak in terms of support, breadth, and influence. On the other, the alliances it depended on risked failing due to differences over tactics, especially the use of

[24] As cited by Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 420.
[25] Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 171.
[26] Ibid., 170.
[27] Fraser, *1968*, 191.
[28] Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 176.
[29] Fraser, *1968*, 192.

violence. This opposition informed the course of events over the subsequent six months. In May, the APO achieved what many consider its most impressive show of power in a nationwide mobilization against the passage of the Emergency Laws, which were up for debate in the Bundestag. Some 75,000 protesters convened upon Bonn for the "Star March" of May 11, one of the largest and most peaceful demonstrations of the period. In the following weeks, protests erupted in nearly every city in the FRG, including university occupations, marches, sit-ins, and work stoppages, including a 20,000 person strike in Frankfurt.[30]

However, this opposition was not sufficient to deter the passage of the Emergency Laws later that month. Amidst extensive disappointment, an increasingly vocal faction of the APO began calling for armed resistance. Until then leftist violence had almost exclusively targeted property, and had largely been symbolic. Militants had overturned Springer trucks, thrown eggs at the Amerika Haus, set off stink bombs in cinemas screening right-wing films, and, in the case of Baader and Ensslin, torched department stores. This state of affairs changed decisively in November 1968 with the so-called Battle of Tegeler Weg. **[5.19]** Protesting the prosecution of Horst Mahler, a leftist attorney who had represented Ohnesorg's survivors and would later defend members of the RAF, demonstrators arrived armed with helmets, clubs, and stones and routed a squadron of riot police. Public perceptions of this battle far outweighed its material consequences. To left militants, it represented "a liberation from the trauma" of the Ohnesorg shooting and "an escape from powerlessness and isolation," while many nonviolent members of the APO viewed it as "counter-revolutionary."[31] Outside the APO, the attacks were often taken to represent a dangerous escalation of subversion that should be quelled at all costs.[32]

Under such straitening circumstances, the fault lines within the APO became increasingly evident. Internal divisions over the legitimacy of violence were among the most glaring conflicts.[33] While such friction originated in the longstanding division between the pacifist anti-nuclear movement and the revolutionary stance of the SDS' anti-authoritarian wing, it was plainly exacerbated by a number of factors: the shootings of Ohnesorg and Dutschke, as well as the repressive response to the ensuing demonstrations; the demographic shifts caused by the movement's expansion; and the sense that nonviolent protest had failed to stop the passage of the Emergency Laws. However, other forces were equally important in the deterioration of the extra-parliamentary coalition. Looking back on the crisis of the SDS, Oskar Negt has diagnosed failures of management as a key problem. In his view, the rapid expansion of 1967-68 was not countered by an appropriate reorganization. Not only did this lead to chronic disorganization and miscommunication; it also shifted an inordinate amount of power to charismatic figures like

[30] Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 195.
[31] These quotations come from the *RC-Bulletin*, a publication of the Berlin-based APo-aligned *Republikanischer Club*, and are cited in Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 152-53.
[32] In these respects, the Battle of Tegeler Weg bears a considerable resemblance to the "Days of Rage" riots instigated in October 1969 by the Weatherman faction of the American New Left group Students for a Democratic Society. For a comparative analysis of militant leftism in the US and the FRG, see Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).
[33] As Nick Thomas notes, the majority of the *RC-Bulletin* was often devoted to debates over violence; Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 152.

Dutschke, who gave the impression of speaking for an organization that had no means of checking his voice.[34]

Aside from these problems with leadership, SDS also faced increasing criticism from female members who denounced the organization's patriarchal tendencies. Beginning in May 1968, groups like the Berlin-based Action Committee for the Liberation of Women began to agitate against chauvinism within SDS, citing its failure to extend its criticisms of capitalist political economy to the private sphere. These efforts culminated in a disruption of a major SDS conference that autumn, which precipitated the first breakup of the organization shortly thereafter.[35] While these problems were specific to SDS, the APO also struggled with conflicts between the socioeconomically diverse groups it represented. Although the movement was occasionally able to secure vital alliances between students, pacifists, and workers, these bonds were often temporary and fragile. Despite the fact that many workers protested the Emergency Laws, labor unions never acceded to requests for a general strike, as happened in France, and whatever solidarity existed on that issue was absent on the question of Vietnam. After the passage of the Emergency Laws effectively severed the one tie unifying these increasingly disparate groups, the APO entered into a crisis from which it never recovered. When the Social Democrat Willy Brandt took office in 1969, the Grand Coalition dissolved, and along with it the *raison d'etre* for an extra-parliamentary oppositional movement. The next year, two events occurred that signalled the formation of a distinctly different political configuration: SDS officially dissolved itself; and Andreas Baader was freed from police custody in a raid that marked the first public act of the Red Army Faction.

3. The Crux of the Aesthetico-Political

For our purposes, it is worth emphasizing the extent to which the West German extra-parliamentary opposition was a movement of dissensus, to use Rancière's term for the force that contests hegemonic partitions of the sensible. As a collective ensemble, the APO was motivated by a dissensual impulse that meant to negate or transform existing structures of political representation. On a fundamental level, the movement defined itself that which could only remain outside or otherwise inassimilable to the space of parliamentary politics-as-usual. Despite the diverse interests of the various demographics represented by the APO — including students, feminists, pacifists, neo-Marxists, union members, and anti-imperialists — such groups shared a conviction that such representation could not simply reproduce the logic of existing power structures. Their very existence as a collective subject belied the fiction that the parliamentary system could adequately speak for all West Germans. In this capacity, the APO functioned as a radical supplement, testifying to the incompleteness of the reified consensus projected by members of the Grand Coalition.

As we have already seen, Rancière's account of dissensus (a term closely aligned with his notion of disagreement) is in many ways a meditation on how politics can be made to appear differently, in the range of senses that this phrase bears. Dissensus thus assumes a crucial proximity to the event, a relationship that operates on multiple levels. In an abstract sense,

[34] Fraser, *1968*, 149.
[35] See Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 228-31.

dissensus names the various processes by which a wronged party seeks to reclaim its right to appear as a collective, to have its voice heard, and to see its interests recognized. Concretely, such conflicts often take the form of disputes over the use of public space. In the case of the APO, this relation helps explain the premium placed on developing new forms of political mobilization — including mass meetings, councils, and sit-ins — as well as the considerable pressure that the West German state exerted in response, in the form of aggressive policing at rallies and substantial legal restrictions on public demonstrations. However, there is also a third sense in which dissensus is linked to the event: on the level of aesthesis. In this regard, effective opposition must alter the ways in which prevailing power relations structure the perceptual field, in its full phenomenological complexity. Dissensus thus not only has to assume different forms, signs, or codes, but also new event-structures and temporalities. Perhaps it was this sort of extensive transformation that led many participants in the events of 1968 to regard them as a revolutionary Event, often with the sort of euphoria that Detlev Claussen recalled above.

Yet while dissensus thus exemplifies the intensive imbrication of aesthetics and politics that is characteristic of Rancière's thinking, we must remember that the APO developed under contingent historical conditions: namely, those that I have sought to theorize as the aesthetico-political *circa* 1968. As we have seen, this field was defined not so much by abstract relations — the aesthetics of politics, the politics of aesthetics — as by particular exchanges — specific aestheticizations of politics and politicizations of the aesthetic. Whether in the form of street protests, media events, agit-prop cinema, grassroots political parties, or self-organizing schools, extra-parliamentary dissensus depended on the existence of emergent circuits between aesthetics and politics. In part this was a matter of necessity, given that the APO defined itself in opposition to existing modes of political action. But it was also a question of rhetoric, since these innovative types of manifestation also gained a certain legitimacy by situating themselves at a remove from received forms. In this sense, their message was reinforced by its medium, even as this relation may have undermined the sort of form-content oppositions that these categories typically assume.

However, given the utopian tendencies of much of this rhetoric it is important at this point to recall that the aesthetico-political was not in and of itself a means of emancipation, no matter how revolutionary it may have seemed at the time. As I have tried to show throughout the dissertation, the novelty of aesthetico-political forms often masked their relation to structural transformations whose consequences were often far from salutary. Among the most pivotal of such changes was the marked increase in the mass-mediatization of virtually all areas of social life, including both mainstream and oppositional politics. This shift constituted a crucial aestheticization of politics that operated independently of activists' or artists' intentions, even as it would impact their actions decisively.

Although the increasing centrality of mass-mediatization was clear to many of those who aligned themselves with the APO, there was considerable variation as to how to respond. In the political arena, discussion was dominated by the obviously malign influence of the right-wing boulevard press, and the large turnout for anti-Springer actions can be taken to indicate substantial agreement on this issue. However, matters were less clear when it came to dealings with the mainstream and center-left media. Much of this conflict centered around Rudi Dutschke, who became a sort of revolutionary celebrity in the years before his shooting. In an effort to offset his

demonization in the Springer press, Dutschke reached out to other media outlets to present a contrasting image of himself and of the APO. While certain of these efforts were plainly disastrous — like a December 1967 profile in *Der Spiegel*, portraying him as an erratic rebel — others had more mixed consequences. **[5.20]** Dutschke fared much better in a nationally televised interview he gave that same month, but this success came at the cost of a larger commitment to participatory democracy, inasmuch as Dutschke was positioned simultaneously as the leader of a movement and as a sort of pop star or phenomenon.[36] This latter tendency reached its nadir when Dutschke was offered a monthly payment to display a bottle of Coca-Cola by the microphone whenever he spoke. Though he refused the offer, it was clear that the distance between revolutionary leader and radical-chic shill was becoming increasingly negligible.[37]

When it came to the politicization of aesthetics, the prominence of mass culture occasioned a similarly complex and ambivalent range of responses. The ascendance of the APO occurred simultaneously with a series of intense debates over the core principles of left aesthetics, culminating in a general theoretical reorientation. An important catalyst for these transformations was the increasing prominence of Pop, a phenomenon with many facets, including the so-called "Pop *Documenta*" (*documenta 4*, held in 1968); large acquisitions of the work of US Pop artists by West German collectors; and the success of Capitalist Realism, the term for the "movement" satirically inaugurated by Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg, which was subsequently used to promote work by other artists including Sigmar Polke.[38] As Andreas Huyssen has noted, the reception of Pop art in the FRG tended to proceed along different lines than elsewhere.[39] Owing in large part to the increasing political mobilization of younger audiences, Pop was more likely to be interpreted as critical of consumer society, rather than as ambivalent towards or even affirmative of it. Furthermore, through its subject matter Pop seemed to harbor the potential to eliminate separations between art and non-art, and in so doing to reconcile the longstanding contradictions of autonomous art, which was increasingly dismissed as inherently bourgeois.

At the risk of oversimplifying an intricate series of developments, the ascendance of Pop precipitated a break with left aesthetic theories that valorized autonomy: that of Adorno, but also the work of Herbert Marcuse, which remained influential well into the 1960s but increasingly came under fire. These critiques were developed as Walter Benjamin's writings were being rediscovered — some through the official republication of these works, which began at about that time, others through the circulation of underground editions — and often turned on such Benjaminian questions as the use value of the work of art and its place within capitalist relations of production. Such conflicts peaked in 1968 with a series of exchanges concerning the commodity character of art. The most extensive debate took place in the left journal *Kursbuch*, edited by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, while another key contribution was an open letter to the

[36] For a review of Dutschke's media appearances, see Ingo Cornils, "'The Struggle Continues': Rudi Dutschke's Long March," in Gerard J. DeGroot, ed., *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* (London and New York: Longman, 1998).
[37] Fraser, *1968*, 150.
[38] This trend was of course not limited to fine art, but extended across nearly all aspects of commercial mass culture, which attained an unprecedented visibility and influence, as it did in many other North Atlantic countries at that time.
[39] In the following discussion I draw on Huyssen's article "The Cultural Politics of Pop: Reception and Critique of US Pop Art in the Federal Republic of Germany," *New German Critique* 4 (Winter 1975), 77-97.

liberal weekly *Die Zeit* authored by the "Culture and Revolution" working group within SDS.[40] **[5.21]**

Generally speaking, these exchanges indicated a decisive reorientation of left aesthetics: away from the perceived elitism and commodification of autonomous art, no matter how resistant, and toward what was thought to be the more democratic alternative of a new materialism. For many, such aesthetic shifts could only occur as part of a comprehensive societal transformation. The writer Peter Schneider spoke to this position in his claim that merely artistic changes would amount to nothing more than "revolt in the museum," a mere "aesthetic substitute for the revolution."[41] However, an important consequence of this viewpoint was a paradoxical deprivileging of the aesthetic more generally, in the form of an increasing disaffection for much neo-avant-garde art on the part of many on the New Left.[42] If we momentarily bracket out the contents of these debates, it becomes clear that this new politicization of the aesthetic was in many ways a response to the intensifying mass-mediatization of cultural production: an attempt to come to grips with the fact that Pop art was as likely to be encountered at a newsstand or in a cinema as at a gallery. As in the case of Dutschke's celebrity, the expansion of mediation to an increasingly industrial scale altered the relations between aesthetics and politics in manifold, radical, and unpredictable ways.

Taken together, such developments may be seen to represent what I will call the crux of the aesthetico-political: the contradictory implications of the larger conjuncture in which the APO operated. As should be clear, the aesthetico-political was something very close to a concrete condition of possibility for the West German New Left. Yet this field was itself subject to a paradoxical logic, leaving it ineluctably conditioned by a double bind. Even as the emergence of the aesthetico-political opened countless new spaces for dissensual contestation, it simultaneously rendered these spaces vulnerable to exploitation by the forces of hegemony. In the case studies that follow, I seek to elaborate the implications of specific practices by situating them in a complex, reciprocal relationship to this conjuncture. It is not enough to say that these practices simply meant to respond to their context; this could ascribe them too much or too little agency, while underestimating their immanence. Instead, it is a matter of trying to grasp how these practices sought to define and transfigure the conditions within which they were articulated, even as the very means by which they could do so were to a large extent predetermined.

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[40] For an overview of these debates see Chapter Two of Sabine von Dirke, *"All Power to the Imagination!" Art and Politics in the West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).
[41] Ibid., 44.
[42] For a first-hand recollection of this development, see Benjamin Buchloh's comments in Buchloh, Catherine David, and Jean-François Chevrier, "1960-1997: The Political Potential of Art," in David and Chevrier, eds., *Politics-Poetics: Documenta X, the Book* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1997).

4. "Napalm and Pudding"

One puzzling aspect of this history is that the APO managed to rapidly gain in prominence despite its lack of a consistent, coherent identity. As we have seen, this absence derived in part from the APO's composition: it was a movement, rather than an organization, and one that assembled diverse constituencies around a common opponent, rather than a positive program. When this position of resistance became no longer viable — whether through the passage of the Emergency Laws or the failure of the Grand Coalition — the movement's various components had no shared base from which to regroup. However, this identity crisis also stemmed from the fact that the APO existed at the border between left politics and an increasingly visible West German counterculture.

As in other North Atlantic countries, including the US, demands for institutional reforms often overlapped with calls for social liberalization. Young people protested the Vietnam War while playing acid rock, moving easily from sit-ins to be-ins, smoke-ins, and love-ins. Long hair and a beard could signify a hippie identity, or resistance to the draft, or, most likely, both. Even if some individuals might have tried to maintain a distinction between political and social commitments, these efforts were hardly respected by the prevailing culture, which tended to treat them as part of the same trend. This sort of blurring was evident in Rudi Dutschke's profile in *Der Spiegel*, which focussed as much on his unkempt appearance as it did on his views, picturing him as something of a wild man in accompanying photographs.

In such cases, the boundaries between aesthetics and politics were often effaced or eliminated altogether. The following section holds that this conflation was consistent with the logic of the aesthetico-political in West Germany *circa* 1968, in which these spheres entered into an unprecedented degree of reciprocal contact, often via new forms of mass-mediation. It examines two tendencies within this larger cultural formation. The first of these is the emergence of a politics of lifestyle, as emblematized in the commune movement; the second is the progressive militarization of certain sectors of the APO, highlighted by the public debut of the RAF in 1970. In considering these developments alongside one another, my point is not to equate them so much as to situate them each within the crux of the aesthetico-political. Each should read not only as a response to this conjuncture, but also as a contribution to it.[43]

As we saw above in the example of the trial of Fritz Teufel and Rainer Langhans, Kommune I enjoyed an outsize visibility in the FRG mediasphere during the late 1960s, one disproportionate to the actual numbers of the group, which claimed only a dozen or so members. **[5.22]** This popularity might be explained as a function of its members' ability to anticipate the pervasive social transformations that increasingly undermined the stability of the *Wirtschaftswunder* consensus. One of the commune's founding members, Dieter Kunzelmann, helped execute a 1966 postering action with the group Subversive Aktion; this event would later be seen as the beginning of the anti-authoritarian movement on the West German New Left. Drawing on his prior involvement with the SPUR Group, Kunzelmann advocated a radical politics that valorized personal fulfillment as part of collective struggle, a view he encapsulated in a onetime SPUR

[43] While I will proceed to argue in the chapter's final sections that there were crucial differences between these test cases and those that follow, I will nevertheless maintain that they all occurred within the same conjuncture: a point with important implications for how we might evaluate the immanence of critical art.

motto: "Marx based the revolution on science, we base it on fun and dance."[44] **[5.23]** This impulse to join the personal with the political was instrumental in the establishment of Kommune I. In the words of commune member Bommi Baumann: "K.I. was the right connection of politics and counterculture... It was political — people had a political idea, or knowledge; and they had a style of life... this collective living."[45]

Similar ideals motivated one of the group's more influential achievements: its republication of key texts by the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich. **[5.24]** Citing Reich's theory of the link between authoritarianism and repression, Kommune I became exemplars of a peculiarly West German cultural politics that yoked sexual liberation to anti-fascism. It was this position that enabled Teufel to hail the commune as the vanguard of an impending "revolution of everyday life."[46] The vision of an all-encompassing revolution was shared across the counterculture, as in the example of the underground magazine *popopo*. **[5.25]** If this title meant to refer to a broad agenda of transgression, citing pop, politics, and pornography, it did so in a cheeky, juvenile manner, punning on the term for a person's rear end.

No matter how appealing such views may have been to many, the visibility of Kommune I was also surely a product of the group's opportunistic embrace of a media-driven politics. As we saw above in the case of the Teufel/Langhans trial, the communards valued notoriety and exposure as tactical objectives. Actions like the attempted pudding attack on Vice-President Humphrey didn't actually have to succeed in order to be successful, since their primary goal was to propagate images of a cartoonish clarity, in which the jackbooted thugs of the state were outwitted by clever resistance fighters. This strategy, which came to be known as "enlightenment by provocation," depended on the assumption that the power of the mainstream news media could be used against itself to broadcast subversive messages. Toward this end, commune members undertook a collective daily routine in which newspapers were scoured for any relevant material. The stories thus collected were then compiled into a sort of archive, with sections devoted to politics, crime, drugs, music, sexuality, and the activities of commune members. As Bommi Baumann later recalled: "There was a great interest in the press. We figured out particularly how the press in Berlin would react to an action... and our strategy was planned with that in mind."[47]

However canny this strategy may have been in some ways — especially when compared to the indifference with which many on the New Left regarded the mass media — it was nevertheless subject to several glaring misconceptions. The first of these we have already seen in the context of canonical Actionism, when transgressions were often sensationalized in a way that only served to legitimate the same acts of state repression that they ostensibly opposed. A second problem becomes evident when we consider the media coverage of the Teufel/Langhans trial, which tended to focus more on the communards' provocations than on the substance of their defense. Whether these accounts were written from the right or the left, they often merely reduced the defendants to caricatures consistent with readers' preconceptions. In doing so, they

[44] Fraser, *1968*, 122.
[45] Bommi Baumann, *How it all Began*, tr. Helene Ellenbogen and Wayne Parker (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2000), 25.
[46] Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 99.
[47] Baumann, *How it all Began*, 28. The preceding account of the Kommune I archive is drawn from the same passage.

effectively reduced politics to a form of diversion or entertainment: a shift which, it should be said, was basically consistent with Teufel's description of himself as a "polit-clown."[48] For our purposes, it is finally worth noting that such a strategy failed to oppose, or arguably even exacerbated, the more extensive spectacularization of the counterculture. In other words, it failed to grasp the ways in which the image of transgression was enabling the progressive commodification of ostensibly revolutionary ideals. In presenting radical politics as a matter of lifestyle, the communards unknowingly acted in tandem with forces that were working to transform emergent forces of opposition into new modes of consumption.

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Not surprisingly, there was considerable contact between Kommune I and the nascent militant left. Both Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin spent time in the commune, and Bommi Baumann would go on to be part of the June 2 Movement, a guerrilla cell based in West Berlin. As was evident above, the future core of the RAF defined itself in many ways against the precedent of the Kommune, calling for actions that would transcend mere "happenings" of the sort that were destined to be recuperated as "pages in the history of culture." If this turn seems in many ways to have been reflexive, such was not the case with Ulrike Meinhof, who outlined a much more nuanced critique of Kommune I in one of her columns for *konkret*, a left-leaning magazine to which she regularly contributed through 1968. The piece, "Napalm and Pudding," targeted a key failure of the communards' actions following the Humphrey plot: having commanded vast amounts of publicity, they were ill prepared to talk about anything besides themselves. Meinhof argued that while this episode successfully transformed extra-parliamentary politics into a topic of national debate, it failed to contest the structural imbalances that profoundly distorted public opinion. In her polemical formulation: "It is thus not a criminal act to drop napalm on women, children, and old people; protesting against this act is a crime."[49]

The incisive precision of this case is at odds with what is commonly thought of Meinhof, who went underground with the RAF in 1970 and died by her own hand in prison six years later. However, it is largely consistent with the argumentative stance that Meinhof developed in her later writings for *konkret*, which show her to have been one of the more prescient critics of the increasingly vexed relationship between aesthetics, politics, and spectacle. In a piece entitled "Columnism" Meinhof turned this analysis back on her employer and herself, bluntly claiming: "Columns are luxury items; columnists are stars."[50] On her view, the "fenced-in freedom" that the columnist enjoyed became the exception that proves the rule, insofar as it served to legitimate other more subtle restrictions on dissent. These restrictions were not to be confused with censorship; rather, they stemmed from the position of journalism within a capitalist economy, in which the easiest way to effectively quell opposing voices is often to pay them to keep speaking. The transformation of columnist into star valorized talk over action, and the interests of the individual over those of the collective. The diverse interests of a mass oppositional movement were thus easily converted into a market demographic to become a selling point for advertisers.

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[48] Thomas, 99.
[49] Ulrike Meinhof, "Napalm and Pudding" (1967), reprinted in *Everybody Talks About the Weather... We Don't*, ed. and trans. Karin Bauer (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 230.
[50] Meinhof, "Columnism" (1968), reprinted in Bauer, *Everybody Talks About the Weather...*, 249.

For Meinhof, the *konkret* formula was to present the APO as another attraction among many: "Sex-Appeal, Horror-Appeal, Crime-Appeal, Opposition-Appeal, Human-Touch."[51] **[5.26]**

In this trenchant analysis, left-leaning journalism can easily become complicit with the forces it means to oppose. By indiscriminately aestheticizing the APO as just another attraction among many, magazines like *konkret* turned politics into a form of spectacle: an entertaining diversion to be consumed from a distance. Meinhof found another example of this tendency in the popular TV program "Aktenzeichen XY... ungelöst" ("File Number XY... Unsolved"), which debuted in 1967. **[5.27]** The show was the first example of a format that has since proved to be consistently popular with audiences worldwide: a host reports the details of unsolved crimes and broadcasts descriptions of suspects, encouraging viewers to phone in with tips.[52] As Meinhof noted, this simple true-crime premise appealed to the deep-seated fantasies of the show's audience, which can overcome the boredom and passivity of TV viewing with "the impression that something is actually happening, that there is more than just talk — there is action."[53] In contrast to viewers' feelings of disempowerment, or what Meinhof diagnosed as "the latent but omnipresent self-pity of the Germans," such shows allow them "to believe they have played an active role, because they were allowed to participate."[54] If this wish-fulfillment distracted viewers from any concerted inquiry into prison conditions or the causes of criminality, it also took the place of a reckoning with the legacy of Hitler, since Nazi fugitives were never profiled on the show. By enabling such displacements, the show ultimately fueled collective fantasies of cathartic, exculpatory punishment, with potentially disastrous consequences for those thus scapegoated, their criminal guilt or innocence notwithstanding. As Meinhof noted, "someone who has been tossed to millions of viewers as prey will never recover."[55]

The unavoidable, arguably tragic irony is that Meinhof would herself become exactly this sort of prey after going underground in 1970, when a massive manhunt initiated an escalating cycle of codependency between the militant violence of the RAF and the repressive tactics of the FRG security apparatus. **[fig]** As this conflict became increasingly spectacular, largely defining West German public life for the next decade, the mass media entered into a highly compromised position where it stood to profit from the very climate of fear that its coverage exacerbated. Among the cruelest ironies of this situation is that such a dynamic produced exactly the sort of malign aestheticization of politics that Meinhof so stridently denounced before her fateful choice to reject theory for action.

5. "A New Understanding of Art as Necessity": Beuys, Yet Again

In an iconic 1972 photograph of Joseph Beuys, the artist appears dressed in his characteristic uniform striding confidently toward the camera. **[5.28]** Although a caption inscribed on the bottom of the print reads "We are the Revolution," there is nothing clearly revolutionary about

[51] Ibid., 250.
[52] "File Number XY... Unsolved," which remains on the air today, was one of the inspirations for the long-running US program "America's Most Wanted."
[53] Meinhof, "File Number XY: Unsolved" (1968), reprinted in Bauer, *Everybody Talks About the Weather...*, 224.
[54] Ibid., 224, 227.
[55] Ibid., 228.

Beuys' appearance. He carries no weapon or placard, walks alone, and could be performing some everyday task. While this might seem paradoxical, such oppositions begin to relax when we relate the photograph to the militarization of the West German New Left. Viewed on these terms, Beuys' conspicuously unmasked and unarmed appearance draws a distinct contrast with the self-styled image of RAF members as fugitive vigilantes or urban guerrillas. Yet however accurate or persuasive this pose may have been, it is belied by a deeper continuity. Both Beuys and the militants of the ultra-left commanded considerable amounts of publicity, with personas that functioned largely in accordance with the logic of celebrity. Though they were clearly on opposite ends of the spectrum of public opinion, with Beuys a visionary utopian and the RAF a band of renegade antiheroes, such images were equally exaggerated, as if wearing extra layers of make-up for the TV camera.

This parallel begins to indicate the need to reassess the relation between Beuys' art and his ostensibly extra-artistic activities. Beuys' status as a public figure in the FRG has generally been underestimated in the US, even as scattered critics have convincingly argued that his mediagenic appeal was matched only by Andy Warhol's.[56] If there are signs that this oversight is gradually being corrected, such efforts will fail unless they grasp the singular, in all likelihood unrepeatable character of Beuys' public image, which staked out a tenuous middle ground somewhere between Warhol and Baader.[57] More importantly, they must account for the exceedingly wide range of Beuys' public activities, which included his work with the German Student Party and his controversial tenure as a professor at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, as mentioned above; his later involvement with the Organization for Direct Democracy, often in the form of impromptu debates within the context of art exhibitions like the 1972 *documenta*; his efforts to initiate alternative forms of higher education, which culminated in the formation of the Free International University in 1977; his 1980 candidacy for Parliament as a member of the Green Party, of which he was a founding member; his interactions with artists in the GDR, for example his participation in a 1981 exhibition in East Berlin; and his countless appearances on television, whether in the form of performances, interviews, or even politically-themed music videos.

Even in such a cursory overview, it is clear that Beuys' practice was inextricably caught up with the emergence of the aesthetico-political, and that it was highly determined by the legacies of 1968. Among West German artists of this period, only Wolf Vostell engaged this field to a related extent. However, the peculiar reception of Beuys' in the US has meant that these aspects of his practice have long been viewed as a sidelight to his more identifiably artistic works. In part this was dictated by the first major American exhibition dedicated to Beuys. The show, held in 1979 at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, focussed exclusively on Beuys' sculptural production; the same was true of its catalog, which for years was the most extensive source on the artist in English. This tendency was further exacerbated by the 1994 publication of a German-language *catalogue raisonné* of Beuys' performances, which neglected more ambiguously artistic events like *Sweeping Up* (1972), which consisted of Beuys and several others cleaning up discarded pamphlets after a political demonstration in Berlin.[58] **[5.29]** An

[56] See for example Thierry de Duve, "Joseph Beuys, or the Last of the Proletarians" (1988), reprinted in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 145.
[57] Here we might recall de Duve's apt insight that while Warhol was a "star," Beuys was a "hero." de Duve, ibid.
[58] Joseph Beuys, *Die Aktionen*, ed. Uwe M. Schneede (Ostfildern-Ruit: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1994).

arguably even greater distortion of Beuys' practice resulted from Benjamin Buchloh's famously caustic *Artforum* review of the Guggenheim show, which cast the artist as a Wagnerian reactionary and as a "crypto-fascist" dedicated to the facile aestheticizing of politics.[59]

This is not the place to assess the validity of such a critique, a good deal of which Buchloh has himself recently reevaluated, though we might note the irony in the fact that one of Buchloh's key charges — that Beuys had mythified German history — was itself based on a highly partial and ultimately dehistoricizing treatment of Beuys' career.[60] What matters instead is to reconsider the numerous ways in which Beuys' practice intersected the aesthetico-political *circa* 1968. This is not meant to somehow redeem Beuys' criticality; if anything, my reading seeks to deepen our understanding of the tensions in his work in light of the structural contradictions of its conjuncture. With that said, I do wish to show that Beuys merits our continuing attention as a figure engaged in the production of innovative event-structures and modes of public action. Ultimately these cases suggest that Beuys helped engineer a decisive reorientation of the Duchampian paradigm, in which the readymade was hybridized with forms of communication and social engagement.[61] Such an encounter reads as a contingent rearticulation of distinct logics of critical art, where the established operation of the readymade, which had long served as an emblem of heteronomy, was itself subjected to a sort of transgressive appropriation.

This heterodox approach to Duchamp — a committed iconoclast who has paradoxically spawned legions of exegetes and acolytes — was clear in Beuys' 1964 event *The Silence of Marcel Duchamp is Overrated*.[62] **[5.30]** For our purposes, the details of Beuys' performance are less important than its general objective, clearly telegraphed in the piece's title: to criticize Duchamp's prolonged period of artistic inactivity and public withdrawal. In discounting this "silence," Beuys meant first to hold Duchamp accountable for this apparent act of resignation, but then to take it as emblematic of a more pervasive aspect of his aesthetic. Some years later, Beuys would characterize Duchamp's oeuvre as a "hermetic, private enclosure... a sphere of silence rather than one of communication."[63] If Beuys took issue with Duchamp's apparent disregard for their formal accessibility, he also objected to what he perceived as Duchamp's failure to turn the readymade back onto the institution of modernism itself, and to the divisions of labor that it effectively reifies. For Beuys, Duchamp could not or did not grasp that the critique of autonomy led "to a new understanding of art as necessity," and in principle revalued art as "a discussion about existing ideology in society, about the capitalist system and the communist system."[64]

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[59] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol" (1980), reprinted in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 123-24.

[60] For Buchloh's reassessment of his early critique, see Buchloh, "Reconsidering Joseph Beuys: Once Again," in Gene Ray, ed., *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy* (New York: D.A.P., 2001).

[61] In adopting this position, I mean to question the extent to which early disapproval of Beuys among American critics associated with the journal *October*, which advocated a distinctly different reading of Duchamp, and found Beuys to be a convenient counterexample for the theorization of early neopictorial postmodernism. For an account of this reception, see Claudia Mesch and Viola Michely's introduction to *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 17.

[62] For an account of Beuys' performance, see Schneede, *Die Aktionen*, 80-83. Antje von Gravenitz situates the piece in the context of Beuys' relationship with Duchamp in her essay "Breaking the Silence: Joseph Beuys on his 'Challenger,' Marcel Duchamp," in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 31-34.

[63] As cited in Dorothea Zwirner, "Beuys and Broodthaers: Dialectics of Modernity Between 'Analytic Geometry and the Belief in an Unbelieving God,'" in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 74.

[64] As cited in von Gravenitz, "Breaking the Silence," 30, translation slightly modified.

Beuys viewed this sort of open discussion not as a component of or supplement to art, but as art, and beyond that as identical to art's very essence as an emancipated form of human activity. Such a view formed the core of what Beuys called "the expanded concept of art," an idiosyncratic aesthetic that drew not only on his revisionist reading of Duchamp, but also on the anthroposophical theory of Rudolf Steiner, Richard Wagner's theory of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and the thinking of the German Romantics, most notably Friedrich Schiller and Novalis.[65] Although Beuys' expanded concept of art evolved throughout his career — and was often equated or used interchangeably by the artist with the notions of "social sculpture" and "social architecture" — its fundamental elements remained relatively consistent. In order for art to achieve its emancipatory potential, Beuys argued, it must submit to a "radical widening of definition" that groups art together with "activities related to art."[66] This expansion, which the artist linked to Fluxus, Happenings, and Actions, would capitalize on increased audience participation to realize the ideal of "A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART" [*sic*]. Such a utopian view of total democracy grounded Beuys' well-known claim that "EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST." On this view, people could only realize this potential by grasping the identity of creative freedom and individual liberty — by understanding that "in the future all truly political intentions will have to be artistic ones."[67]

In order to realize this unabashedly utopian agenda, Beuys embarked on a long-running effort to establish new political institutions. The first salvo in this campaign was the founding of the German Student Party in 1967, discussed above. The "official" protocol of the initial meeting makes clear the extent to which Beuys' expanded concept of art informed the activities of the DSP, both as a matter of theory and practice. **[5.31]** If the core objective of such a party was conceived in aesthetic terms — equated with "a fundamental demand [for] the education of all people to spiritual maturity" — so was its *modus operandi*, which explicitly valued the "prolific participation of many of those present at the discussion."[68] The DSP would assume several subsequent intermediate incarnations, including the Organization of Non-Voters and the Office for Political Public Relations, each dedicated to building a coalition that went beyond student activists.

The next major effort to produce social sculpture would come with the founding of the Organization for Direct Democracy in 1971. The ODD maintained a storefront office in Düsseldorf with regular drop-in hours, where visitors were welcome to join in impromptu discussions of political, artistic, and philosophical questions. This loosely structured format

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[65] For an overview of Beuys' ties to German Romanticism, see Zwirner, "Beuys and Broodthaers," in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*; and also Theodora Vischer, "Beuys and Romanticism," in the same volume.

[66] These citations and the following are drawn from "I am searching for field character" (1973), one of Beuys' earliest statements on this topic, as well as one of his first texts translated into English; reprinted in Beuys, *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America*, ed. Carin Kuoni (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), 21-23.

[67] Beuys, as cited by Stefan Germer in "Beuys, Haacke, Broodthaers" (1988), reprinted in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 54.

[68] Deutsche Studentenpartei, *Protokoll der Gründungversammlung vom 22. Juni 1967*, prepared by Johannes Stüttgen. Reprinted in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf. 1962-1987*, exhibition catalog (Düsseldorf: Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, 1987). ["Die Notwendigkeit der neuen Partei, deren wesentliches Anliegen die Erziehung aller Menschen zur geistigen Mündigkeit ist..."; "die fruchtbare Beteiligung vieler Anwesenden an dem Gespräch"...]

became the template for one of Beuys' most ambitious experiments with aesthetico-political events: the installation of the "Organizational Office for Direct Democracy through People's Referendum" at Harald Szeemann's *documenta V* in 1972. The "Office" transplanted the furnishings of the Düsseldorf storefront into the *documenta*, where Beuys proceeded to make himself available each day from 9 until 5 for one-on-one discussions with visitors.[69] **[5.32]** Thousands of conversations transpired over the course of the 100-day exhibition, and while their contents clearly defy summation it is nevertheless worth citing one exchange to give a sense of how the event unfolded.[70]

Beuys' interlocutor, an editor, presses him on a number of questions: the mechanisms by which proposed reforms could actually be implemented, the institutional pressures against alternative schooling, the function of criticism, and the relations between class and education. Beuys, who avers that "explanation is also an art form," makes his case for an organically structured society, the decartelization of industry, the uselessness of doubt, and the need for universal access to aesthetic education. It becomes clear that Beuys conceives of these discussions as an example of such education in action, in which the museum begins to function as a sort of school, along "the model of an information-site."[71] Underscoring the need for such sites to proliferate, Beuys then summarizes the goal of his political program in the following terms: "We can only solve [the problem of inequality] as well as possible, reveal with it or produce something out of it that can function as a model, that is, something that other people will also do."[72]

This notion of social sculpture as a form of model-building suggests the need to revise one established reading of Beuys' alternative institutions as essentially a form of parody, or what Stefan Germer has called "more... a mimicry of politics than an actual attempt to politicize artistic practice."[73] One cannot properly say either that Beuys meant to sublate art entirely into political action, or that he solely meant to caricature politics-as-usual. Instead, we might more productively consider Beuys' aesthetico-political activities in terms of the encounters they staged between autonomous and heteronomous logics of critical art. Events like the *documenta* installation engaged in a recursive analysis of their own "form" — whether we conceive of this form in terms of audience participation, the critique of the museum, or an awareness of recent event-based practices — even as they sought to transcend autonomy by embracing contingency and modelling mechanisms of social change.

Similar imbrications of autonomy and heteronomy can be found in Beuys' related attempts to transform education: his actions to oppose *numerus clausus* at the Kunstakademie; his efforts to found the Free International University; or even his incorporation of the blackboard and the lecture format into performances. These activities further transformed the temporality of artistic production and reception by adopting event-structures drawn from pedagogy, activism, and

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[69] For discussion of the *documenta* event in the context of institution critique, see Claudia Mesch, "Institutionalizing Social Sculpture: Beuys' *Office for Direct Democracy through Referendum* Installation (1972)," in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*.
[70] The following citations are drawn from an edited transcript of the event, Clara Bodenmann-Ritter's "Every Man an Artist: Talks at Documenta V by Joseph Beuys," in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 189-97.
[71] Ibid., 190.
[72] Ibid., 191.
[73] Germer, "Beuys, Haacke, Broodthaers," 57.

debate. In so doing, they sought to effect a long-term mobilization across both art and politics: a formation that Beuys once referred to with the apt metaphor of a "permanent conference."

Yet although these properties endowed Beuys' aesthetico-political work with considerable critical force, this did not somehow neutralize the numerous contradictions within his practice. Foremost among these was the centrality of Beuys' larger-than-life persona, a magnet for criticism at least since the publication of Buchloh's *ad hominem*, which charged the artist with having falsified or mythified his own history to establish his own cult of personality. This case was later revisited by Thierry de Duve in a more nuanced analysis that linked the polarities united in Beuys' image — among them king/fool, redeemer/victim, priest/scapegoat, professor/student, and shaman/charlatan — with the structural contradictions of capitalist modernity.[74] Without returning once more to these questions, it is nevertheless worth noting the substantial tensions between the function of Beuys' persona and the aims of his practice. Despite his unquestionable commitment to radically egalitarian ideals, events like the "Office" installation often made Beuys into a sort of figurehead, an exceptional representative endowed with the ability to speak in the place of others. Even though that work's open invitation to the public initiated a form of collective authorship, it simultaneously positioned its audience in an implicitly unequal relation with Beuys, who set the terms of debate and ultimately retained artistic ownership of the piece. This awkward fact was unintentionally underscored by the use of Beuy's handwriting for the lettering of a neon sign advertising the ODD, which reintroduced the authority of the artist's signature just at the moment of its putative disappearance.

Similar effects appeared in the photo-documentation of the piece, where photographic depth of field and perspective isolated Beuys from his interlocutors; they also cropped up in the educational performance pieces, where the artist was sometimes criticized by audience members for being the only one allowed to use the microphone.[75] Such contradictions were even inadvertently inscribed within the structure of the photograph *We Are the Revolution*; as Barbara Lange has pointed out, the photo, which was based around a painting of an advancing group that had become an emblem of the European New Left, adopted a composition in which Beuys was pictured alone, in ironic counterpoint to the collectivism of the photo's title.[76]

I do not cite these examples to charge Beuys with hypocrisy, but rather because they indicate an important continuity between his practice and what I have above called the crux of the aesthetico-political. As we have seen, the efforts of the APO were hindered by the ascendance of stars like Rudi Dutschke, whose celebrity was often at cross-purposes with the goals of the movement. Such tensions were exacerbated as the APO's commitment to radical democracy was increasingly encroached upon by the more publicity-driven politics of countercultural groups like Kommune I or militant cells like the RAF. The rise of a politics of personality at that time was by no means limited to the left. In fact, the 1969 election of the charismatic, media-savvy SPD member Willy Brandt as Chancellor is often seen as the West German parallel to the US presidency of John F. Kennedy: the moment when federal politics came decisively under the sway of the mass-mediated public image. In this context, Beuys' most notable shortcoming was

[74] See de Duve, "Joseph Beuys, or the Last of the Proletarians," 135.
[75] For analysis of one such piece, see Barbara Lange, "Questions? You have Questions?"
[76] Ibid., 186n5.

not his egocentrism, but rather his failure to effectively contest the hegemonic logic of the macropolitical conjuncture that he elsewhere sought to transform.

6. *Action With the Only Respectable Weapon*: Jörg Immendorff and LIDL

For many today, whether in Germany or elsewhere, Joseph Beuys exists less as an artist, let alone an activist, than as an image, almost something like a product spokesperson. When asked about Beuys, people are less likely to think of the Green Party, the FIU, or the "7000 Oaks" project than they are to picture the artist himself in his trademark costume. **[5.33]** It is surely regrettable that the afterimage of Beuys' persona dominates his legacy, especially as he generated any number of models for aesthetico-political practice over the course of his career. On a formal level, this resulted from the artist's persistent experimentation with different event structures, on a spectrum that ranged from highly abstract, poetic performances to direct political action, often combining these apparent opposites.

However, Beuys' contribution also extended to his conception of how democratic art and politics might be articulated. If his notion of "permanent conference" effectively reframed the temporality of the aesthetico-political, orienting it away from revolutionary punctuality and towards a more open, processual mode, it also emphasized the need for collective debate. While these aspirations may have been utopian, Beuys was nevertheless capable of a hard-headed pragmatic engagement with the work of politics, as in his insistence on working to transform actual institutions from within. In response to a question from a *documenta V* visitor, he explained this procedure as follows: "One can do something in the institutions in that one attempts to infiltrate them, and do something on the level of a model outside of them."[77] Beuys described this two-pronged approach elsewhere as "parallel process," a term that underscores the necessity of pursuing distinct objectives simultaneously.

While it is clear enough today that the implications of Beuys' practice were intensely contradictory, this fact was also grasped at the time by many of his students at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. As perhaps the only professor openly committed to anti-aesthetic forms of avant-gardism, Beuys set an influential example that often overrode the reservations some had about his more self-promotional tendencies. This sort of ambivalence seems to have characterized the experience of Jörg Immendorff, who worked closely with him in the mid-1960s. In 1965, Immendorff produced a small series of comic paintings that took Beuys' public image as their subject. *Hat of Beuys with Hairstyle on Stand* comically pictured the artist's trademark Stetson together with a toupee on a nightstand, as if imagining that these props had a secret life independent of their owner. *Beuysland* highlighted the artist's vest and hat, framing them above a sloppily lettered caption that likely alluded to Disneyland.[78] **[5.34]** *Blue Dots/Green Dots* paired Beuys' profile atop an inverted profile of Schmela in the style of a playing card, as if suggesting that the renegade and the art dealer were cut from the same cloth. Immendorff would take these criticisms a step further with an action in 1967, when he applied to

[77] As cited by Claudia Mesch, "Institutionalizing Social Sculpture," 208.
[78] Around that time Immendorff also painted Beuys as a character from a Donald Duck cartoon.

Beuys' vest a red dot like the "sold" markers used in commercial galleries, implying that the artist was himself no different from a commodity.[79]

This turn towards a performative or event-based practice was already underway in 1966, as can be seen in a canvas across which Immendorff had painted the blatantly self-contradictory command "Stop Painting." **[5.35]** This reorientation clearly owed something to the influence of Beuys' expanded concept of art, but it also drew on Immendorff's previous studies at the Kunstakademie under the set designer Teo Otto, who had worked closely with Bertolt Brecht. However distinct Beuys and Brecht might seem from our perspective — the question of Marxism being only one among many — Immendorff proceeded to draw on both precedents in his subsequent events. *Gansäuer* (1967) was named after an electrician to whom Immendorff had given one of his paintings after learning that the man needed something to catch falling plaster beneath a fixture he was installing. When Gansäuer was done with the job, Immendorff then asked him to sign his name on the painting below his own. If this action operationalized the concept of "the reverse readymade," which Duchamp had famously explained with the scenario of using the *Mona Lisa* as an ironing board, it did so in a way that pointedly underscored class-based divisions of labor. For the performance *Action With the Only Respectable Weapon* (1967), Immendorff donned a baby mask and crouched behind a mock cannon, pelting the audience with paper balls that bore messages like "Don't make art," transcribed into baby talk. **[5.36]** In stark contrast to more openly aggressive events like Peter Weibel's *Exit*, the *Action* set itself the seemingly impossible task of simultaneously satirizing both militarism and pacifism, both modernist aestheticism and naively political agit-prop art.

This distinctly heterogeneous approach developed into an even more ambitious program in the years 1968-70, when Immendorff and a number of colleagues collaborated on a wide range of aesthetico-political activities under the heading of LIDL. While the LIDL Academy was among the most conspicuous of these, it comprised only one model among many. During this period Immendorff sculpted a LIDL Block, which was subsequently used in a mock parade; he and his associates also opened an event space called the LIDL Room, developed plans for a LIDL City, designated LIDL mascots, organized soccer matches and bicycle races as LIDL Sport, founded a LIDL art school for children, and executed LIDL protests at theaters in Eindhoven and Düsseldorf, as well as at the Städtisches Museum Trier, at the Cologne Kunsthalle, and *documenta 4*.

As this range would indicate, the LIDL aesthetic defies simple categorization, and merits more extensive analysis than is possible here. With this in mind, I nonetheless want to highlight two aspects of this field that distinguished it from related work, endowing it with a unique position relative to the crux of the aesthetico-political *circa* 1968. First, LIDL can be understood as something like a platform for events: a rubric serving to aggregate otherwise divergent forms of action. In this sense, the meaning of the term was immaterial; what mattered was its function.

[79] According to Immendorff, the idea for the piece dated back to his work as an assistant on Beuys' iconic 1965 performance *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, which took place in Schmela's gallery. Immendorff and other students were scandalized by Beuys' compliance with Schmela's request that he reposition the saleable objects in the performance to the front of the room, where they would be more visible. See Hans-Ulrich Obrist, "Interview with Jörg Immendorff," in Immendorff, *Male Lago*, exhibition catalog, Anette Hüsch and Peter-Klaus Schuster, eds., (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2005).

Second, LIDL events varied widely in their objectives, means, and tone, often combining abstract poeticism, didacticism, absurdist humor, and pragmatism. In doing so, they frequently articulated ostensibly distinct forms of criticality, seeking to stage their operations from a position that might otherwise have seemed untenable.

On the more oblique and comical end of the spectrum was an event that Immendorff executed in January 1968 in Bonn outside the Bundeshaus, or federal parliament building. Dressed nondescriptly and trailed by several colleagues, the artist slowly walked along the perimeter of the building while dragging behind him the "LIDL Block": a piece of wood slightly larger than a brick, with the word "LIDL" painted in white over the black, red, and gold of the West German flag. Immendorff had tied the block to his leg so it would scrape and bump along the pavement in a stop-and-start fashion, lending a somewhat slapstick air to the proceedings. **[5.37]** He was apprehended by policemen after about half an hour. Claiming that Immendorff had desecrated the flag — its colors had begun scraping off — the officers confiscated the LIDL Block. After their departure Immendorff retrieved a second LIDL Block from his bag, tied it around his neck, and continued his action unmolested. Compared even to relatively poetic actions like Günter Brus' *Vienna Walk*, this event retained a certain inscrutability. Despite its literal citation of the flag, the overall meaning of Immendorff's gesture remained opaque, even obscure. Did it mean to indicate the limits of more militant or unimaginative means of protest? To engage the forces of the state in a sort of absurdist pantomime? To induce aporetic resistance within the otherwise transparent significations of a hegemonic partition of the sensible?

A similar combination of benign humor and enigmatic motives drove a series of impromptu interventions that Immendorff conducted that same year; while not formally named, these events are often described as "Showing the Polar Bear." **[5.38]** Carrying a small likeness of a polar bear mounted on a long stick, Immendorff paid unannounced visits to the homes of Düsseldorf residents, reportedly ringing every doorbell on a street. When these people would open their doors, most likely expecting a salesman of some sort, the artist would insert the polar bear across the threshold, then turn and exit without speaking. One can only speculate about the effects that such actions would have had for their unsuspecting audiences: Bafflement? Amusement? Annoyance? Fear? Immendorff's intentions were not necessarily so much clearer: while the polar bear belonged to a private system of symbols that the artist was developing, it bore the contradictory meanings of innocence, a return to the ice age, and the cold reception often accorded to art.[80]

Yet however elliptical such actions may have been, LIDL also encompassed numerous well-defined and practical initiatives. Many of these were pursued under the auspices of the LIDL Academy, which sponsored collective discussions and working groups dedicated to the reform of German art schools, the status of artistic labor, children's art education, and non-hierarchical pedagogies, among other topics. **[5.39]** Other activities were undertaken at the LIDL-Room, a Düsseldorf storefront space that opened in early 1968. Perhaps more than any other LIDL manifestation, the LIDL-Room exemplified an aesthetico-political paradigm in which widely divergent approaches could coexist and even intermingle. In the terms of a poster used to announce the opening of the Room, it offered "a platform for the work and the collaboration of

[80] See Harald Szeemann, "The Long March, or Incitements of the Times," in Jörg Immendorff, *Café Deutschland and Other Works*, exhibition catalog (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1984), 18.

the forces of truth in art and politics."[81] **[5.40]** Elsewhere, Immendorff described the function of the Room in similarly expansive terms: "The LIDL-Room is an object of art, the LIDL-Room is permanent artistic action, the LIDL-Room is architecture..."[82]

The diverse events that actually occurred on this "platform" went some way toward establishing that this credo was more than an ambitious promise. Over the year or so of the LIDL-Room's existence, it hosted a Vietnam teach-in; a concert by Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman, who had not been allowed to perform at the Kunstakademie; screenings of films documenting the protests during which Benno Ohnesorg had been killed; actions and talks featuring the Spanish Fluxus group ZAJ, who were unable to perform publicly in their home country; and various LIDL-themed performances by Immendorff and his partner Chris Reinecke. The LIDL-Room thus functioned as a sort of event space in which activities from across the aesthetico-political spectrum could be executed.

However, it also existed as a concept independent of the Room's actual physical location. In early 1969, Immendorff and several colleagues concocted plans to build a settlement of LIDL-Rooms around the Bundeshaus in Bonn. These would function as "political spaces" suggesting the need for greater public participation in the reform of West German society.[83] **[5.41]** Having built one such room out of wood and paper, Immendorff and company set out to place it alongside the Bundeshaus on January 31 — exactly one year after the LIDL-Block action, whose anniversary they meant to commemorate. This time, the action was promptly stopped by police, with the Room destroyed on the spot. **[5.42]**

Yet the LIDL-Room was designed to be easy and cheap to (re)construct, and thus ideal for activist applications like the action Immendorff carried out later that year at the Städtisches Museum in Trier. Sitting inside a LIDL-Room, which he used as a sort of blind, Immendorff used a hammer and chisel to punch a hole in the wall of the museum, enacting a form of institutional critique *avant la lettre*. Over the course of the next year, the LIDL program would further extend to collaborations with other artists including Marcel Broodthaers, Robert Filliou, and Henning Christiansen; it would also include events staged by LIDL members in Karlsruhe and Darmstadt, as well as in Belgium and Denmark. Though diverse in their particulars, these events all respected LIDL's professed credo, balancing commitments to "art," "architecture," and "action."

So while Immendorff and LIDL still allied themselves with Beuys — particularly in opposition to efforts to revoke Beuys' position at the Kunstakademie — the differences in their approaches should be evident. Compared to Beuys' aesthetico-political initiatives, LIDL exhibited a strongly less hierarchical mode of organization; while Immendorff was central to some of LIDL actions, others occurred independently of him. Moreover, Immendorff's public image conspicuously lacked the sort of charismatic appeal that Beuys so assiduously cultivated; in photos of key actions Immendorff is pictured from behind, or slumping, or (perhaps only half-ironically)

[81] "LIDL Founding Placard" (1968), reproduced in Jörg Immendorff, *LIDL 1966-1970*, exhibition catalog (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1981), 20. ["Der LIDLRAUM bietet die Plattform für die Arbeit und die Zusammenarbeit der wahren Kräfte in Kunst und Politik."]
[82] As cited in Szeemann, "The Long March," 17.
[83] "LIDL-Raum am Bundeshaus (Entwurf)", in Immendorff, *LIDL 1966-1970*, 36.

awkward before the camera. In a conjuncture where both politics and art were becoming increasingly driven by the demands of the mass media, LIDL tended to view such developments with indifference. Its events aimed neither to exploit the media nor to shun them, but rather to beguile them with gestures of indeterminate meaning.

In this sense, we might ultimately regard LIDL as a subtle redirection of Beuys' program for an "expanded art." If Beuys valorized "parallel process," seeking to work both within and outside of institutions, LIDL's aesthetico-political approach not only sought to work across such oppositions, but also to confound them. It aimed not to redeem politics through art, conflating the two as "social sculpture," but rather to quietly contest the operations through which the categorizations "art" and "politics" helped regulate the possibilities for collective appearance and action. If, like Beuys, LIDL went outside the space of art to build "models" of alternative sociability, it often wasn't clear just what these models meant to say, or even how they functioned as models.

The LIDL call for "permanent artistic action" thus begins to seem quite distinct from Beuys' notion of a "permanent conference," despite their apparent similarities. Both Beuys and LIDL envisioned aesthetico-political activity as an ongoing event, as opposed to the more revolutionary rhetoric espoused by many across the New Left. Both argued that social and political reforms could only follow from the transformation of aesthetic education on all levels. But LIDL developed a model of practice that was ultimately more radical, more versatile, and more responsive to the pressures facing the APO. This approach called for aesthetico-political movements to operate much like the LIDL-Room. They would function as open platforms, enabling movement across the spectrum linking art with politics. They would be mobile, non-hierarchical, and modular, enabling a supple, adaptive tactics. And they would be both wily and resilient, just as Immendorff had been when he hung his backup LIDL-Block around his neck.

Conclusion

Event, Insistence, Persistence

In the event, one sees what is intolerable about an era and the new possibilities that it contains for living at the same time. The mode of the event is the problematical. The event is not the solution to a problem, but rather opens up what is possible.

– Mauricio Lazzarato[1]

What allows events to maintain contact with both the repressive and emancipatory potentialities of their historical moment? And how are they nevertheless able to operate "problematically," as Mauricio Lazzarato puts it, opening onto as yet unrealized possibilities? In some ways our answer to these questions depends on how we imagine the event: Is it a threshold? An interval? A constellation? A trajectory? Or a question?

In these closing remarks, I wish to consider this last possibility as I survey select aesthetico-political developments in the years subsequent to the period examined in the dissertation. On one level, to frame the event as a question is to issue a precaution before engaging in necessarily brief conjectures that the preceding analysis might not be able to fully support. But I would also like to propose the hypothesis that there exists something like a rhetoric of events, in which occurrences function as shared figures endowed with different persuasive functions. While I will underscore the interrogative and/or speculative dimensions of this rhetoric, I would nevertheless like to suggest that the event can also serve as an articulation in any number of ways: as a hypothesis or part of an analogy; as an affirmation, refutation, or qualification; as a conjunction or as an interruption. In doing so, I want to suggest a link between the rhetorical power of the event — the way it insists — and its staying power — the way it persists.

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Speaking broadly, the period after 1968 in Austria and West Germany witnessed the intensification of several of the tendencies examined above. In both countries, the mass-mediatization of the public sphere continued largely unchecked, with television becoming an increasingly central conduit. At the same time, the events of 1968 would continue to exert consequences that long outlasted that brief, seemingly revolutionary moment. In Austria, these effects tended to be incremental, including long-overdue reforms of repressive state positions on abortion and homosexuality, as well as the formation of a more cohesive oppositional movement centered around the politics of urbanism. In West Germany, the aftermath of 1968 was considerably more intense and polarized. While much of the APO rededicated themselves to a model of non-violent activism from within — what Rudi Dutschke, in a Maoist turn of phrase, called "the long march through institutions" — militant cells like the Red Army Faction and the June 2 Movement ramped up their efforts, engaging in nothing less than a protracted guerrilla war against the FRG, culminating in 1977 in the well-known events of the "German Autumn."

While the aesthetico-political implications of this history clearly defy any sort of schematic summarization, I nonetheless want to gesture toward certain salient issues by reviewing a small selection of activities, all of which exhibit a marked concern with the increasing prominence of spectacle as a force mediating aesthetics and politics. Given this interest, it is no surprise that

[1] Mauricio Lazzarato, "Struggle, Event, Media", trans. Aileen Derieg, archived online at http://eipcp.net/transversal/1003/lazzarato/en/print, (last accessed on June 17, 2010).

many of these activities gravitated towards emergent video technologies as a platform for investigating the politics of the televisual network. In Austria, Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT extended the horizon of mediated actions to include both video and broadcast television. These interventions proceeded along two primary courses, the first of which was a rigorously self-reflexive analysis of the specific mechanisms by which video technologies mediate subjective perception. In works like EXPORT's "Split Reality" — first conceived in 1967, then executed as an action in 1970 and an installation in 1973 — such analysis is once again undertaken through processes of recombination. In the installation version, viewers are presented with the image of EXPORT singing along to a jazz standard while wearing headphones. The self-effacingly humorous sight of EXPORT warbling in and out of tune offsets a much more radical interrogation of video's capacity to re-present its own highly artificial or "split" representations as seamless, "live," and "direct."

This critique was further extended in a second, parallel strategy that Weibel and EXPORT adopted, producing programs for broadcast on the Austrian network ORF. In programs like Weibel's "TV News (TV Death 2)," shown in 1972, viewers would have tuned in to the then-commonplace sight of a newscaster reporting the day's news, smoking as he did so. However, as the piece continued it became increasingly clear that the "news" had no connection to the present — it was in fact weeks old — while the TV studio kept filling with smoke until the newscaster was completely obscured, uncontrollably coughing from his own smoke. While such works manifested an antagonistic sensibility consistent with earlier mediated actions, this was not always the case, as in EXPORT's "Facing a Family" (1971), a more neutral, documentaristic piece in which she mounted a camera atop the TV set in a working-class household, reversing the direction of televisual communication by broadcasting their viewing. Yet another different orientation characterized the proliferation of community-based experiments alternative broadcasting, which occurred not only in Vienna but in other cities like Graz, as well as in smaller provincial locations.[2]

In West Germany, video-based interventions had a rather more complex genealogy, owing in part to the fact that artists there had been experimenting with the format since the 1950s.[3] Any attempt to properly engage this history would have to begin with this precedent, which encompassed the Fluxus-related, often event-based work of Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell, as well as the more kinetically-oriented production of the Zero Group. It would then need to attend to the brief but influential existence of the Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, which marked one of the earliest and most radical attempts anywhere to explore video's potential as an alternative form of distribution, effectively using the format to sever the exhibition value of art from its status as a commodity.[4] However, I would like to highlight three lesser-known cases, indicating an alternative trajectory more in line with the aesthetico-political considerations of the dissertation.

[2] Discussion of these initiatives can be found in Sabine Breitwieser, ed., *Re-Play. Anfänge internationaler Medienkunst in Österreich*, exhibition catalog (Vienna. Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2000).
[3] For an overview of this field, see Rudolf Frieling and Wulf Herzogenrath eds., *40 Years Videoart.de: Digital Heritage: Video Art in Germany from 1963 to the Present* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006).
[4] Much of the scholarship on Schum's initiative is collected in Ulrike Groos et al., eds., *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, Videogalerie Schum* (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and Snoeck, 2004).

The first of these is the work of the video collective *telewissen*, which sought both to criticize mass broadcasting and to explore the documentary capacity of video. (This objective was apparent in the group's name, which in German is a pun overlaying the neologism "tele-knowledge" on the English "television.") The group's most visible action occurred at the 1972 *documenta*, when it coordinated a parallel event called "The People's Documenta," consisting of open-form interviews with visitors about the exhibition, which were recorded and then rebroadcast outside the venue. Taking advantage of video's capacity for simultaneous playback, the collective sought to implement communication structures that were more reciprocal than those typical of broadcast TV or mass exhibitions, doing so on a model quite distinct from the one used by Joseph Beuys in his "Office for Direct Democracy" installation, which ran simultaneously.

A second case worth considering is the practice of the famously polymathic Alexander Kluge, who produced essay films and documentaries in this period alongside numerous fictions and works of critical theory. Though Kluge did not begin working in video until 1988, his films of the 1970s often problematize the relation between moving image technologies and the formation of what he and Oskar Negt referred to as a "counterpublic sphere." One particularly generative example of this approach can be found the 1979 essay film *The Patriot*, in which the title character, a female history teacher named Gabi Teichert, attends a convention of the Social Democratic Party. In this sequence, the actress playing Teichert was filmed *vérité*-style while she engaged actual politicians in exchanges concerning school history curricula, doing so in character as the naively utopian Teichert. The perplexed responses of the politicians — unsure as to whether or not Teichert is for real, in multiple senses — mirror our own as viewers, as we question the truth-claims made by a film that combines archival, fictional, and pseudo-documentary footage.

The third example I want to point out is Klaus vom Bruch's video *The Schleyer Tape* (1977-78), which consists almost exclusively of footage recorded from West German television during the events of the German Autumn. In the years leading up to that moment the public life of the FRG had become dominated by escalating violence between the RAF and the state security apparatus, as the group employed increasingly desperate measures in a campaign to free its incarcerated leadership. While the state placed untold thousands under surveillance and enacted legislation penalizing so-called "former radicals," the RAF engaged in indiscriminate bombings alongside more targeted assassinations, kidnappings, and hijackings. As noted above, the news media was instrumental in these developments, even as it occupied a highly compromised position. Not only were print and broadcast media routinely used by both sides of the conflict; they were also to reap substantial profits from stoking the very climate of public fear that they ostensibly reported on. Vom Bruch's video, produced during this singular conjuncture, indelibly captures moments in which these dynamics are thrown into stark relief, such as broadcasts of the RAF's "Schleyer tape"; thought to be the first hostage video, the recording shows the pleas of a kidnapped industrialist who was later executed. By presenting these taped broadcasts with a minimum of interpolation — the video is only lightly edited, and lacks any voice-over or other narrative component — vom Bruch indicated the necessity of viewing and reviewing them, even as he questioned the very ability of critical art to respond under such circumstances.

Such a conflict anticipated the later predicament of Gerhard Richter, who depicted the events of the German Autumn in the much-heralded painting cycle *October 18, 1977*. Richter's engagement with these events came a full decade after they occurred, and not surprisingly foregrounded the role of the mass-mediated image in exacerbating the interdependence between state, terror, and spectacle.[5] It is worth noting here that even then, on the verge of Germany's reunification, the divisions that first emerged in 1968 were still raw. Even though the major accomplishment of the paintings was quickly acknowledged, no German museum was willing to risk purchasing them; ultimately the Museum of Modern Art did. The ironic result is that today, at a moment when former APO activists have occupied high-ranking government positions — like the Green Party member Joschka Fischer, who served as Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor between 1998 and 2005 — what are almost certainly the best German paintings of the twentieth century are in the permanent collection of an American museum.

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As the preceding examples indicate, aesthetico-political activity in both Austria and West Germany continued well past 1968, even as relations between aesthetics and politics continued to evolve in response to new determinations. While all the cases I have cited are durational in nature, a number of them approach the event in ways quite different from those surveyed in the body of the dissertation, most notably in their insistent problematization of video technologies. In the case of *The Schleyer Tape*, there is no access to the event outside its televisual mediation, ultimately questioning whether the one can even be distinguished from the other. This tendency might lead us to believe that such changes occurred at the expense of less clearly mediated forms of event production. Taken to an extreme, it might even suggest that engaged artists and activists were retreating to a sort of melancholic or paranoid position, in which the simulation of the event would come to seem all-encompassing.

Although it is beyond me here to substantiate the following claim, I nonetheless wish to maintain that the event has remained an integral concern for those working at the intersections of aesthetics and politics, both inside and outside West Germany and Austria. Interest in the event has continued to proliferate across a wide spectrum of forms — including but not limited to demonstrations, documentaries, pedagogies, performances, media hoaxes, broadcasts, and online actions. Such expansion has occurred even as the status of the event has shifted in any number of profound ways, whether due to transformations in global political economy or to the impact of technological changes that would seem to far outstrip those surveyed above. So while it would be relatively easy to show that the event is still a key consideration for contemporary critical artists, it is much less clear what the events of 1968 have in common with the events of 1998 or 2008.

Though mindful of such discrepancies, I want to briefly consider a recent development in contemporary art as it bears on these parallels and divergences. In doing so, I mean to underscore the continuing relevance of the event while marking the need to track its ongoing transformations. As was widely noted and discussed in the latter half of the last decade, an increasing amount of art production adopted durational forms while relying on audience participation. Much of this art took the form of events, much of it cited past events, and much of

[5] For analysis of the belated nature of this engagement, see Chapter Seven of Kaja Silverman's *Flesh of My Flesh* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009).

it concerned the status of the event. The most visible exemplar of this trend was the art promoted internationally under the rubric of Relational Aesthetics, but there are any number of other related instances: the rise of re-enactment as a theme or medium; the ubiquity of art drawing on social media; or the widespread re-performances of canonical works of performance art. Often such re-performances took place as part of major museum exhibitions dedicated to first-generation performance artists like Marina Abramovic (who restaged VALIE EXPORT's 1969 event *Action Pants: Genital Panic* in 2005 the rotunda of the Guggenheim Museum).

There have been plenty of reasons to welcome this turn of events. Despite its progressive aspirations, participatory art has never found the broad audience that it has long sought. Moreover, its tendencies toward community involvement and economical means have promised to serve as a timely corrective at a moment of widening income inequality in many liberal democracies, when the art market and electoral politics have both proven highly susceptible to the influence of capital. However, the discourse surrounding participation has largely failed to grasp the intense contradictions of its reception. The institutionalization of ephemeral events has only occasionally managed to negotiated the intrinsic risks of resituating anti-art practices within the museum: vitiating the hard-won critical edge of such models, losing a sense of their embeddness within a specific political conjuncture, or transforming one-off interventions into something like a repertoire or canon.

The need for particularized, internally differentiated genealogies of participatory events is all the more necessary given how extensively the very concept of participation has changed over the last decades. Those who took part in the events of 1968, whether as neo-avant-gardists, activists, or some mixture of the two, could not have anticipated how extensively the boundaries between art and life would blur in late modern capitalism. Even Guy Debord's celebrated critique of spectacle has now lost some of its bite, inasmuch as its equation of spectacular sociability with passivity can't address the proliferation of emergent modes of commodification where participation and consumption merge. It similarly fails to account for developments such as the now-prevalent jargon of interactivity, which often masks how forms of participatory consumption have restructured production, such that advertising and marketing agencies now routinely outsource part of their labor to Internet-based communities that voluntarily create content, beta-test products, and generate "viral" publicity.

Viewed together, these developments indicate the need to monitor the constantly shifting ground against which aesthetico-political practices figure themselves. Especially given the extent to which their apparent progressivism can mask an increasing susceptibility to instrumentalization, the demand for vigilance is urgent. Such attention might focus on the tendency to either mistakenly equate or separate the aesthetic and political, overlooking their conflation in spectacle. It could also interrogate the persistent false dichotomy between direct action and representation, which as we have seen was already operative in the 1960s. More radically, critics, artists, and activists could question the benign generalities that too often dignify participation as an end in itself. Instead, they might think and act in terms of intervention, contestation, and disagreement. If participation is worth preserving as a concept, perhaps it might be revalued as a form of encounter: a contingent, provisional, and heteronomous engagement with the forces regulating the sensible particularity of public appearance and action. While such events necessarily open themselves to the possibility of recuperation, they alone stand to realize the

ideal of a social field in which the relations between aesthetics and politics are not solely determined by professionals, but are open to common dispute.

It is tempting to conclude by simply asserting that future practices must continue to focus on the contemporary incarnations of the aesthetico-political, whether as a research problem or as a site of action. However, this would imply the mistaken assumption that this field is an object we can choose to study from outside, rather than a historical conjuncture whose coordinates can't be decisively charted, and from which it is impossible to extricate ourselves. At the risk of sounding portentous, critical intervention in this field is an event in its own right, one whose outcomes and risks are irreducibly undecidable.

As I have tried to show, it is within just such an aporetic relation between actuality, virtuality, and potentiality that events reside, destabilizing the foundationalist ontologies that often still subtend theories of aesthetics and politics.[6] If the event and its participants are unpredictably transformative of each other, how does this reciprocity alter our thinking about modes of collective manifestation, or the transitivity of the art object? How might it model the sorts of exchange and encounter that can occur between media and forms, between the hierarchical schemes that map the political onto the sensible, between discrete logics of critical resistance? We might say, again citing Lazzarato, that the event "insists," adamantly reiterating such questions over and against our sense of what is given, real, or obvious.[7] Faced with the ever-present possibilities of dispersal, indifference, and recuperation, the event stubbornly persists, questioning what is possible and what is common. It insists on what is manifest to all, even if the ultimate status of this equality is by no means self-evident. Without pretext, calculation, or condition, the event insists — and continues on insisting.

[6] Gilles Deleuze relates this ontological singularity of the event to what he terms its "double structure": its articulation of a present actualization with a neutral, indeterminate past and future; cf. *The Logic of Sense*, tr. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, 151-53.
[7] Lazzarato, "Struggle, Event, Media."

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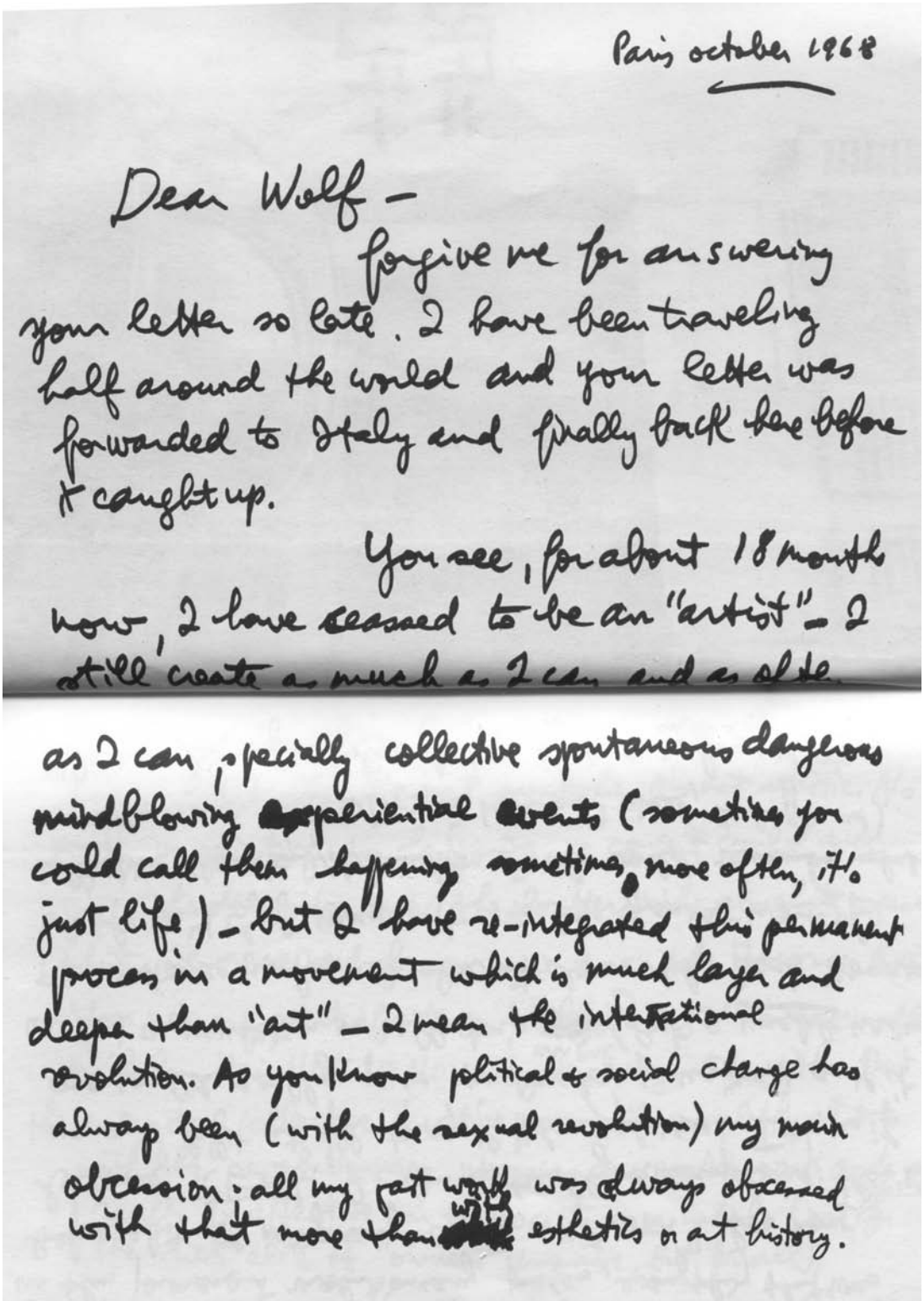
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Paris october 1968

Dear Wolf –

forgive me for answering your letter so late. I have been traveling half around the world and your letter was forwarded to Italy and finally back here before it caught up.

You see, for about 18 month now, I have ceased to be an "artist" – I still create as much as I can and as often as I can, specially collective spontaneous dangerous mindblowing experiential events (sometimes you could call them happening, sometimes, more often, it's just life) – but I have re-integrated this permanent process in a movement which is much larger and deeper than "art" – I mean the international revolution. As you know political & social change has always been (with the sexual revolution) my main obsession: all my past work was always obsessed with that more than [redacted] esthetics or art history.

Image 1.1 Letter from Jean-Jacques Lebel to Wolf Vostell, October 1968 (reprinted in Vostell, *Aktionen*)

the castration of the creative force by the ruling class is avoided in all the industrial/commercial nightmare – it's pure experience. No more pretending.

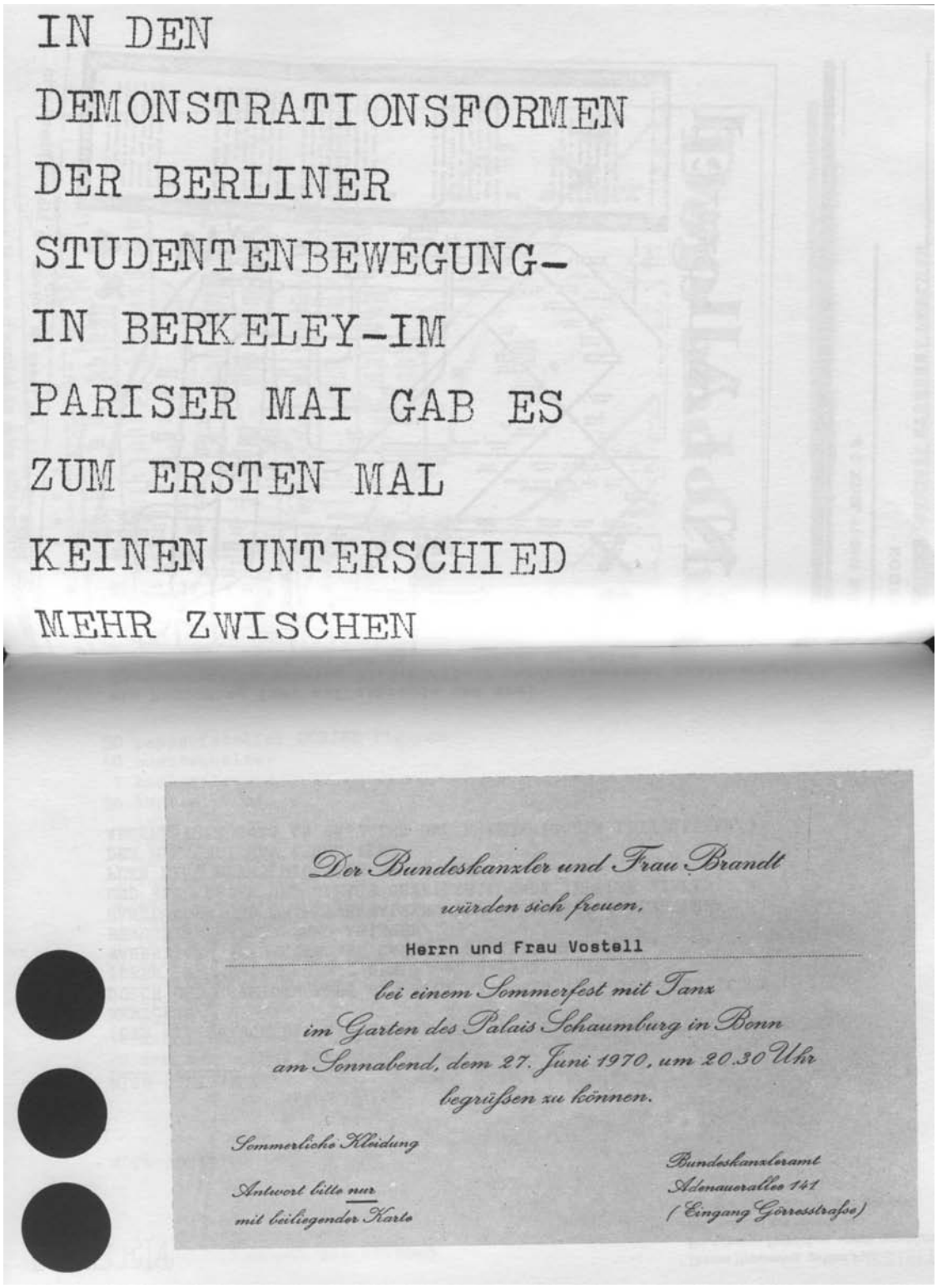
that's what I feel; that's why I have given up all "art" for simply doing. Besides it seems as if "art" has been slowly disappearing into life anyway. Cage's last pamphlet (How to Change the World...) was quite an aware signal.

to be able to go further, deeper I felt I had to stop playing the role of the "artist" and just be whoever I needed to be on the moment. In all my best "art" experience it was only a 20 or 30% participation orgasm or electric hallucination whereas in this permanent revolution it is incomparably higher, it's a more complete way of being.

I hope you understand my motive, dear Wolf, it's just that my life has changed and that I can no more go back to the "art" game than go back to painting abstract or surrealist pictures: once you've eaten the real stuff, you can't go back to canned food.

If you've announced my participation, you may make this letter public to explain my position.

Love to you –
VENCEREMOS! –
J. J.



1.2 Vostell, *Aktionen*, page view



Aus DER SPIEGEL

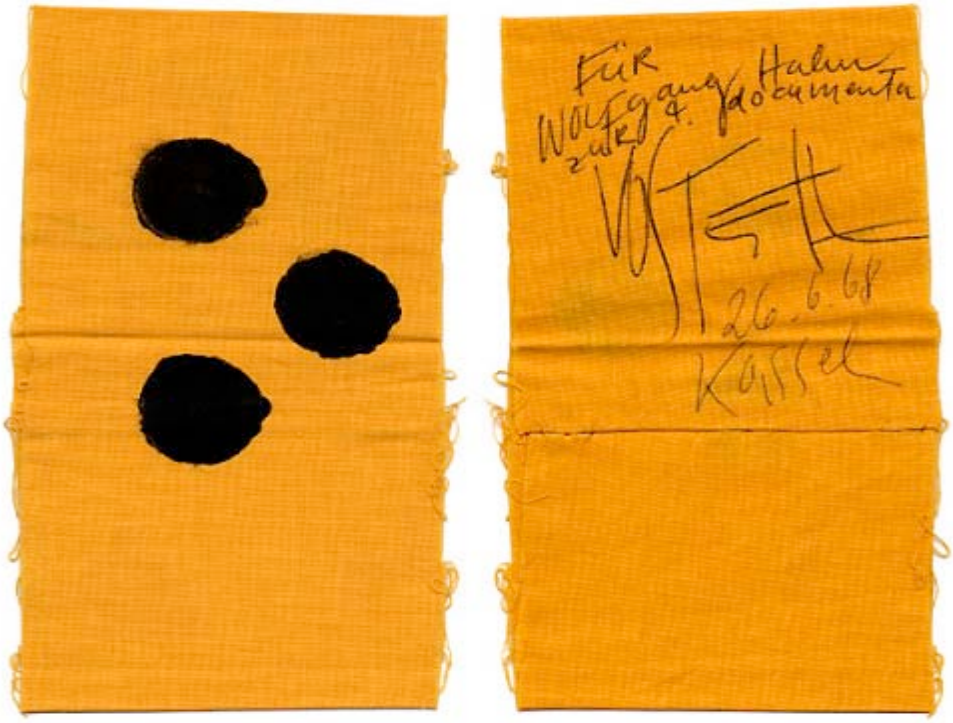
Günter Saree, 29, Münchner Maler, bescherte Kölner Bürgern „einen neuen gedanklichen Freiheitsraum“ (Saree). Am vorletzten Mittwoch spazierte der Künstler, der sich selbst einen „Veranlasser“ nennt, mit zwei aus Gummi-Badematten und Schaumstoff gefertigten Stempel-Schuhen zwischen 7 Uhr und 8.30 Uhr fünf Kilometer „in einem offengelassenen Kreis“ durch die Kölner Innenstadt, mit jedem Fußtritt das Bindewort „und“ hinterlassend. Saree hatte sich zwei zusammengekoppelte, von der Universitätsklinik München ausrangierte Behälter für Traubenzuckerinfusionen auf den Rücken geschnallt, sie mit elf Litern witterungsbeständiger Latex-Dispersionsfarbe (Preis pro Kilo: 3,65 Mark)

SAREE

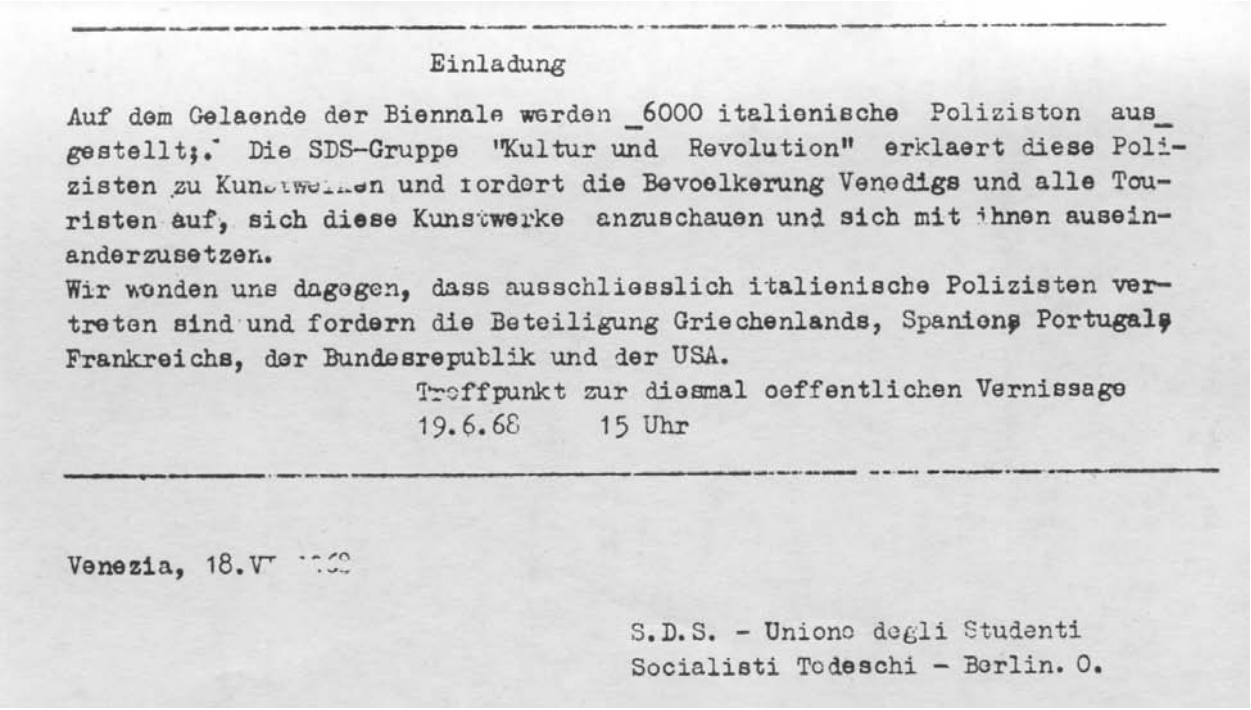
1.3 Günter Saree, Untitled Event, Cologne 1969
(as pictured in Vostell, *Aktionen*)



1.4 Activist Beate Klarsfeld Slaps FRG Chancellor Kiesinger, November 1968



1.5 Armband Worn by Wolf Vostell at *documenta 4* Protest Action, June 1968



Einladung

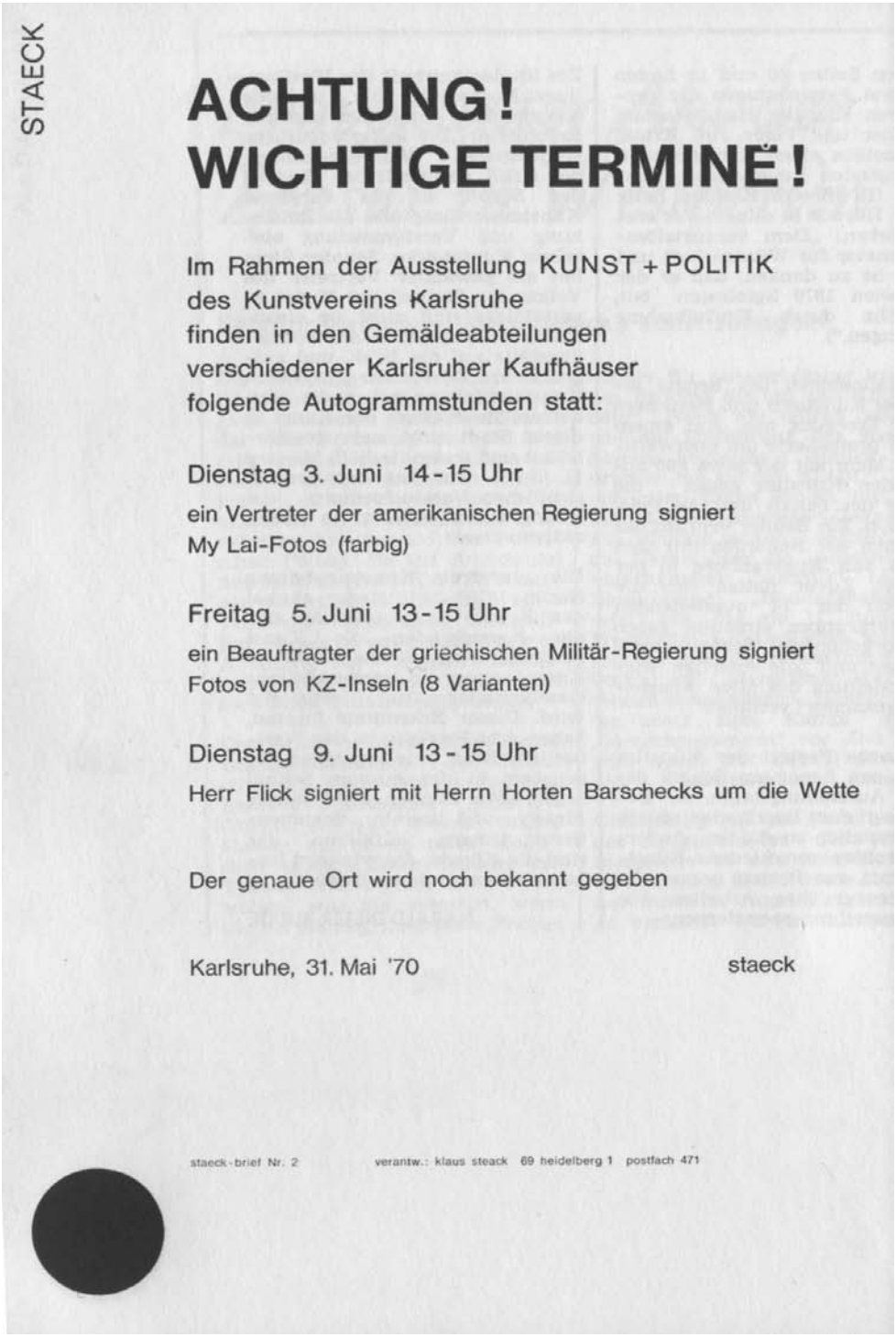
Auf dem Gelaende der Biennale werden _6000 italienische Poliziston aus_ gestellt;. Die SDS-Gruppe "Kultur und Revolution" erklaert diese Polizisten zu Kunstwerken und fordert die Bevoelkerung Venedigs und alle Touristen auf, sich diese Kunstwerke anzuschauen und sich mit ihnen auseinanderzusetzen.
Wir wenden uns dagegen, dass ausschliesslich italienische Polizisten vertreten sind und fordern die Beteiligung Griechenlands, Spaniens Portugals Frankreichs, der Bundesrepublik und der USA.

Treffpunkt zur diesmal oeffentlichen Vernissage
19.6.68 15 Uhr

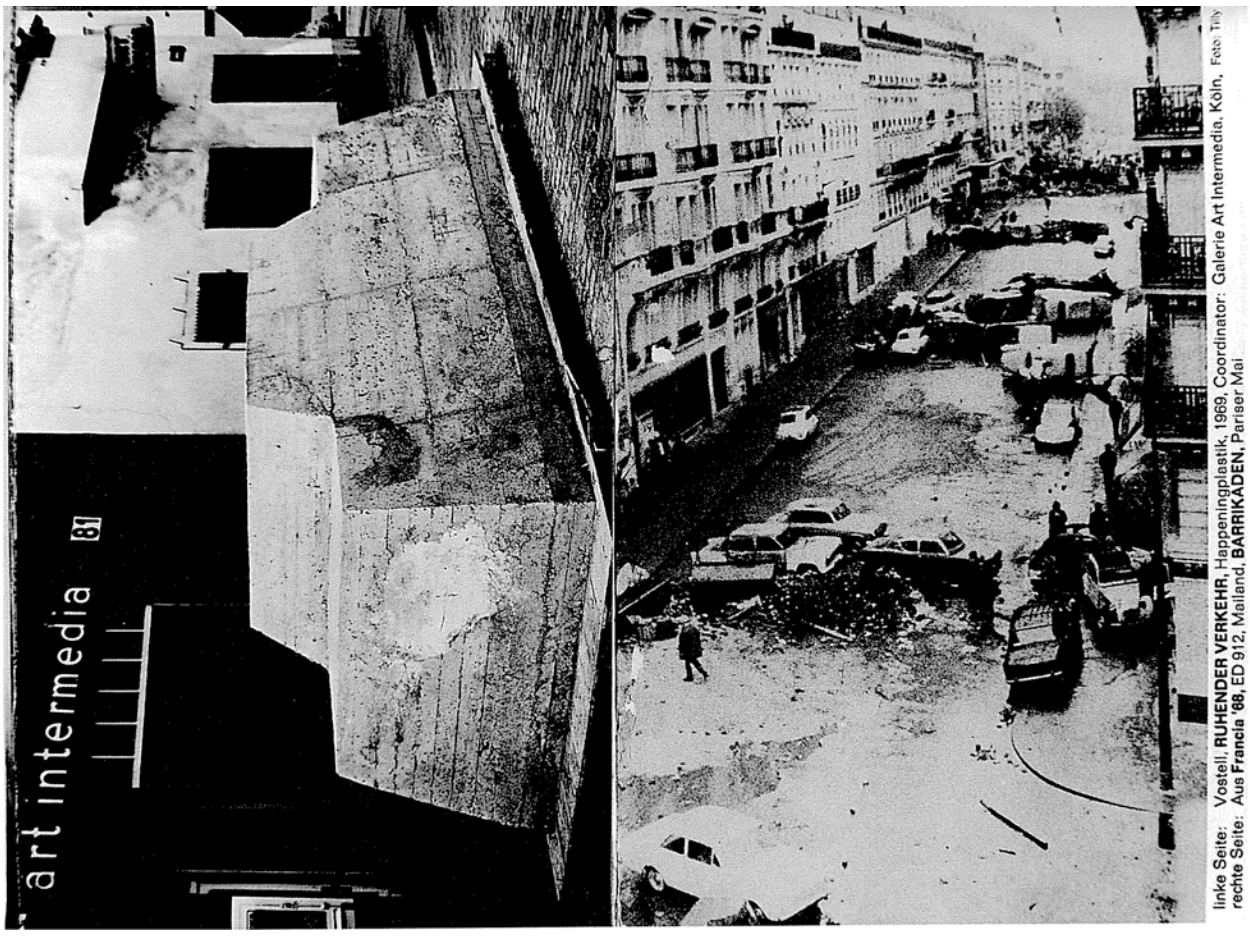
Venezia, 18.VI.68

S.D.S. - Unione degli Studenti
Socialisti Todeschi - Berlin. O.

1.6 Invitation from SDS Group "Culture and Revolution," June 1968 (as pictured in Vostell, *Aktionen*)

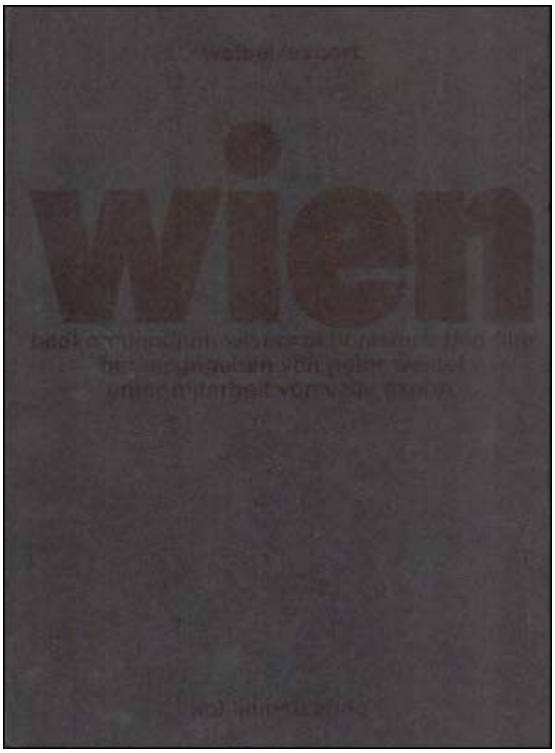


1.7 Klaus Staeck, "Autograph Hours" Event, Karlsruhe, May 1970 (as pictured in Vostell, *Aktionen*)



1.8 Page Layout, Vostell, *Aktionen*
Left: Vostell, *Stationary Traffic* (1969)
Right: Street Barricades, Latin Quarter, Paris, May 1968





1.9 Top: Wolf Vostell, *Aktionen*
Bottom: Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT, *Wien*



1.10 H.C. Artmann et al., Anti-Rearmament March, Vienna, May 1955 (Photograph from *Die Presse*, May 22, 1955)



1.11 Peter Weibel and VALIE EXPORT, *From the Dog File*
Vienna, February 1968



Der „Untergrund“ hat zugeschlagen

Mit einem „Knalleffekt“, der das an Überraschungen gewöhnte Publikum fluchtartig den Saal verlassen ließ, erreichte das Festival der „Europäischen Untergrundfilmer“ am frühen Freitagmorgen in München seinen Höhepunkt.

Eine Stunde nach Mitternacht brach im „Tagungslokal“, einem kleinen Schwabinger Kino, die Hölle los.

Von einer Aluminium-„Leinwand“ aus zischten prasselnde Raketen in die Zuschauer. Knallfrösche detonierten unter den Stuhlreihen, und Rauchbomben nebelten den Saal binnen kurzem völlig ein.

Die Untergrundfilmer nahmen angesichts von so viel „Action“ schleunigst Reißaus und gingen vor dem Brillantfeuerwerk hinter Säulen in Deckung.

Das „Exit“ betitelte Werk hatte den gewünschten Effekt erreicht: der Kinosaal leerte sich in wenigen Minuten.

[redacted] und Peter Weibel, hatten das Publikum „ausgeräuchert“. „Valie-Export“ hatte bereits einen Tag zuvor mit dem „Tast- und Tappfilm“ unter der Bezeichnung „Eine Fünftelminute“ von sich reden gemacht.

Mitten auf dem Stachus, dem größten Verkehrsknotenpunkt Münchens, entblößte sich das hübsche Mädchen bis zu den Hüften, umgab den Oberkörper mit einem „Vorhang“ und lud die Besucher ein, zu fühlen, was sich dahinter verbarg.

„Der erste Straßenfilm, der erste Film für zwei Hände, und der erste echte Frauenfilm dazu“, jubelten die Untergrundfilmer. 15 Münchner ließen sich die „Uraufführung“ nicht entgehen und griffen wacker hinein ins volle Menschenleben.

„Valie-Export“: „Das ist noch richtig ausbaufähig.“

Von der Leinwand kamen Raketen

n Stand des europäischen Experimentalfilms

Schießen Sie doch auf das Publikum!

Bewegung im Parkett

„Action“ wurde dem Publikum zuviel

Publikumsbeschießung

ach dem Münchner Treffen der unabhängigen Filmemacher

München, 22. November

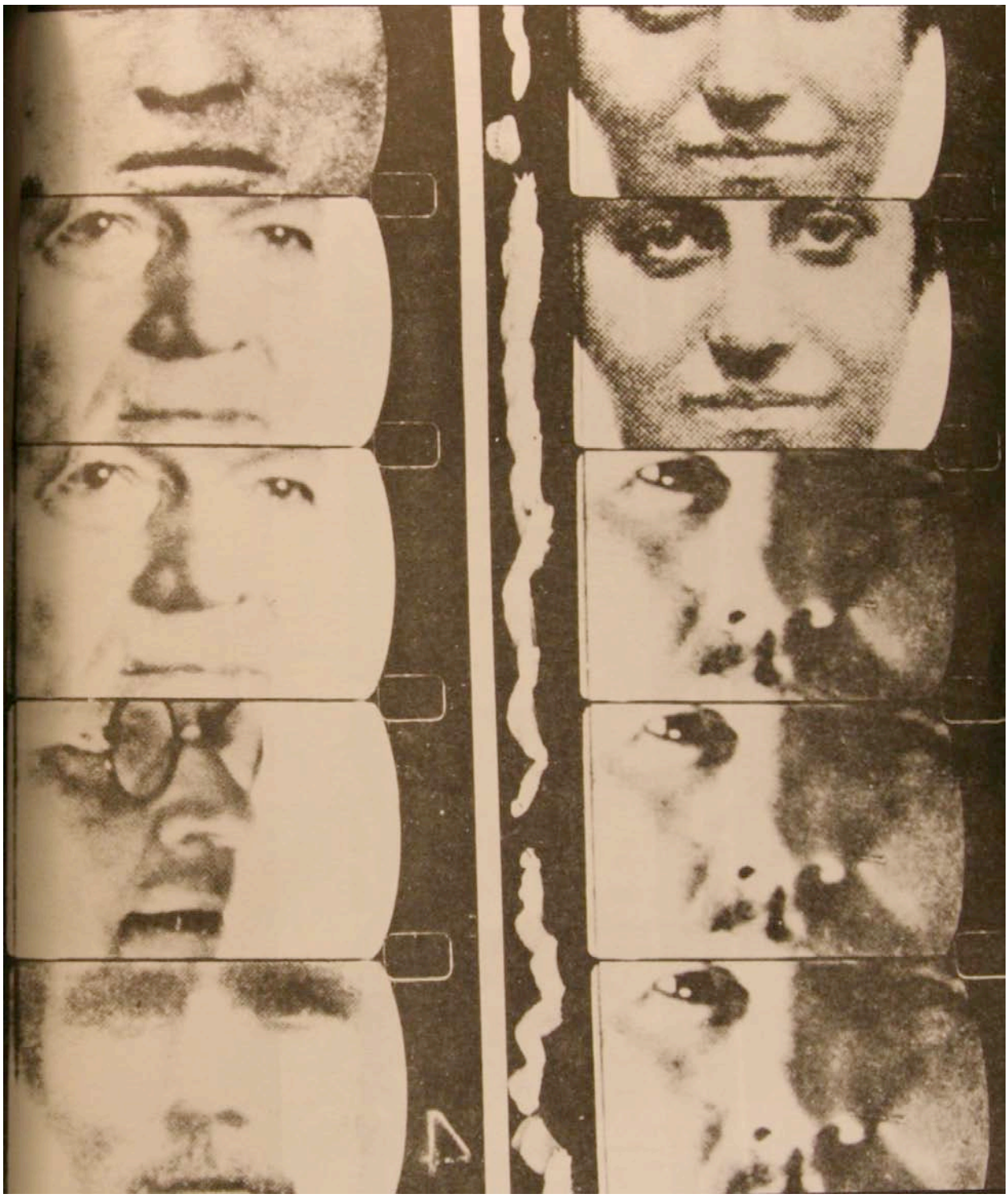
Hans Scheugl, Peter Weibel und VALIE EXPORT.

1.12 Peter Weibel, *Exit*, November 1968
(Event Photograph, Press Clippings)

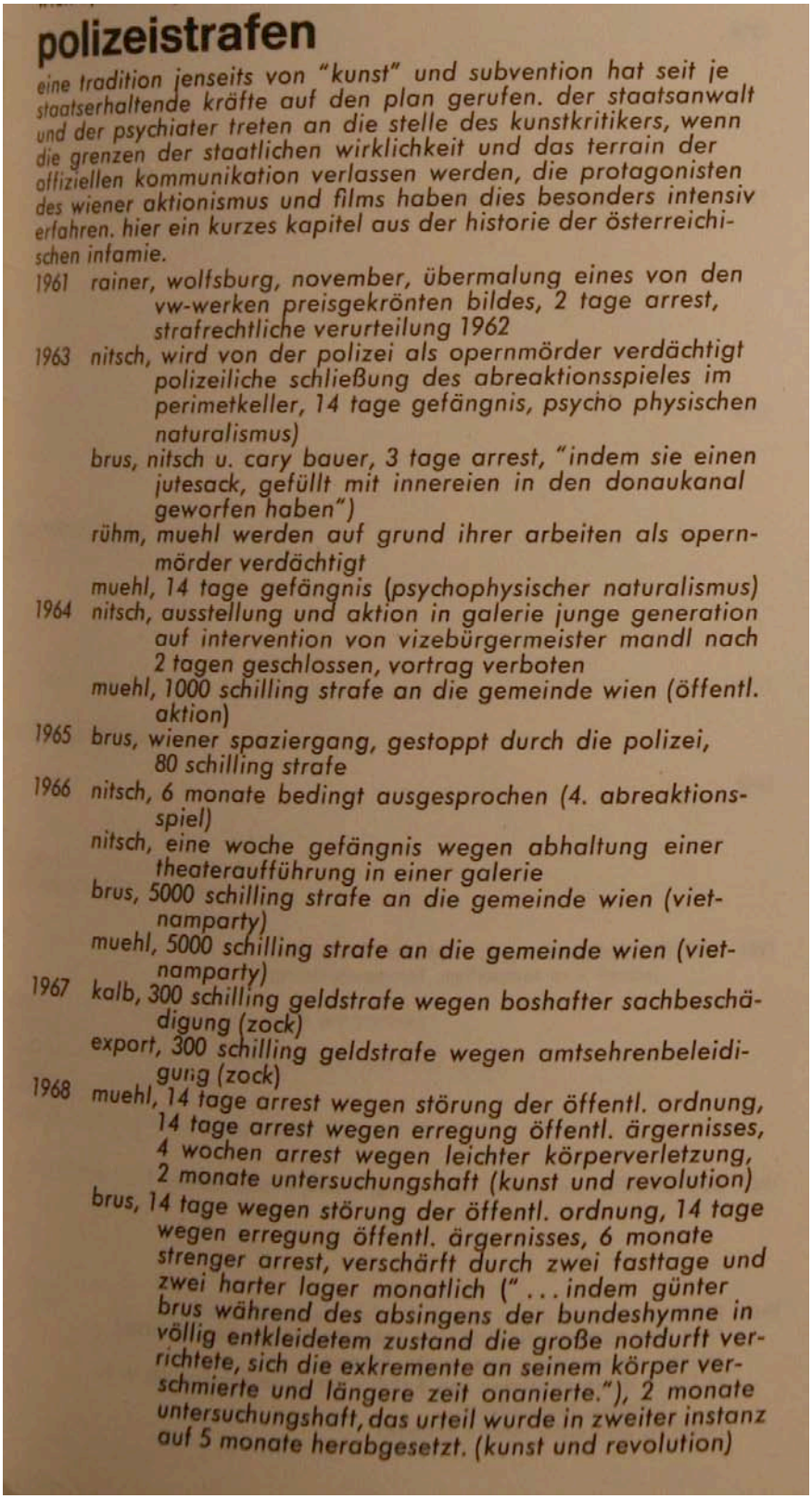




1.13 *ZOCK Festival*, Vienna 1967
(as pictured in Weibel and EXPORT, *Wien*)



1.14 Kurt Kren, *2/60 48 Heads from the Szondi Test*, 1960



polizeistrafen

eine tradition jenseits von "kunst" und subvention hat seit je staatserhaltende kräfte auf den plan gerufen. der staatsanwalt und der psychiater treten an die stelle des kunstkritikers, wenn die grenzen der staatlichen wirklichkeit und das terrain der offiziellen kommunikation verlassen werden, die protagonisten des wiener aktionismus und films haben dies besonders intensiv erfahren. hier ein kurzes kapitel aus der historie der österreichischen infamie.

1961 rainer, wolfsburg, november, übermalung eines von den vw-werken preisgekrönten bildes, 2 tage arrest, strafrechtliche verurteilung 1962

1963 nitsch, wird von der polizei als opernmörder verdächtigt polizeiliche schließung des abreaktionsspieles im perimetkeller, 14 tage gefängnis, psycho physischen naturalismus)

brus, nitsch u. cary bauer, 3 tage arrest, "indem sie einen jutesack, gefüllt mit innereien in den donaukanal geworfen haben")

rühm, muehl werden auf grund ihrer arbeiten als opernmörder verdächtigt

muehl, 14 tage gefängnis (psychophysischer naturalismus)

1964 nitsch, ausstellung und aktion in galerie junge generation auf intervention von vizebürgermeister mandl nach 2 tagen geschlossen, vortrag verboten

muehl, 1000 schilling strafe an die gemeinde wien (öffentl. aktion)

1965 brus, wiener spaziergang, gestoppt durch die polizei, 80 schilling strafe

1966 nitsch, 6 monate bedingt ausgesprochen (4. abreaktionsspiel)

nitsch, eine woche gefängnis wegen abhaltung einer theateraufführung in einer galerie

brus, 5000 schilling strafe an die gemeinde wien (vietnamparty)

muehl, 5000 schilling strafe an die gemeinde wien (vietnamparty)

1967 kalb, 300 schilling geldstrafe wegen boshafter sachbeschädigung (zock)

export, 300 schilling geldstrafe wegen amtsehrenbeleidigung (zock)

1968 muehl, 14 tage arrest wegen störung der öffentl. ordnung, 14 tage arrest wegen erregung öffentl. ärgernisses, 4 wochen arrest wegen leichter körperverletzung, 2 monate untersuchungshaft (kunst und revolution)

brus, 14 tage wegen störung der öffentl. ordnung, 14 tage wegen erregung öffentl. ärgernisses, 6 monate strenger arrest, verschärft durch zwei fasttage und zwei harter lager monatlich (" ... indem günter brus während des absingens der bundeshymne in völlig entkleidetem zustand die große notdurft verrichtete, sich die exkremente an seinem körper verschmierte und längere zeit onanierte."), 2 monate untersuchungshaft, das urteil wurde in zweiter instanz auf 5 monate herabgesetzt. (kunst und revolution)

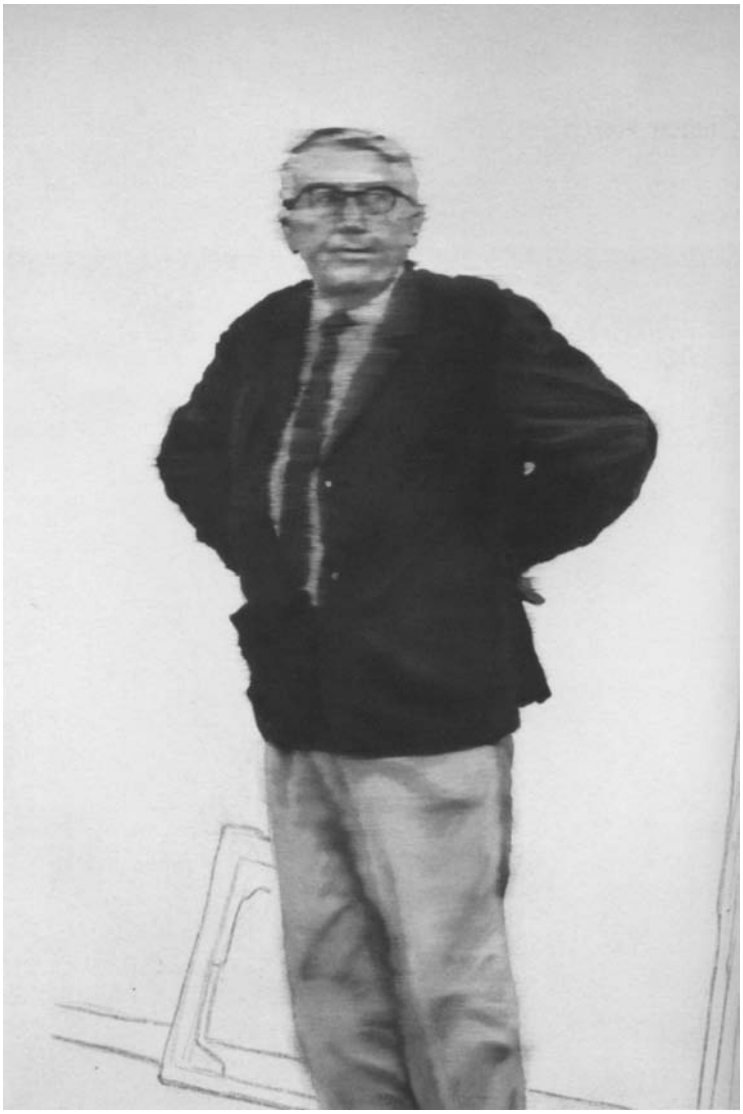
1.15 "police punishments," Weibel and EXPORT, *Wien*



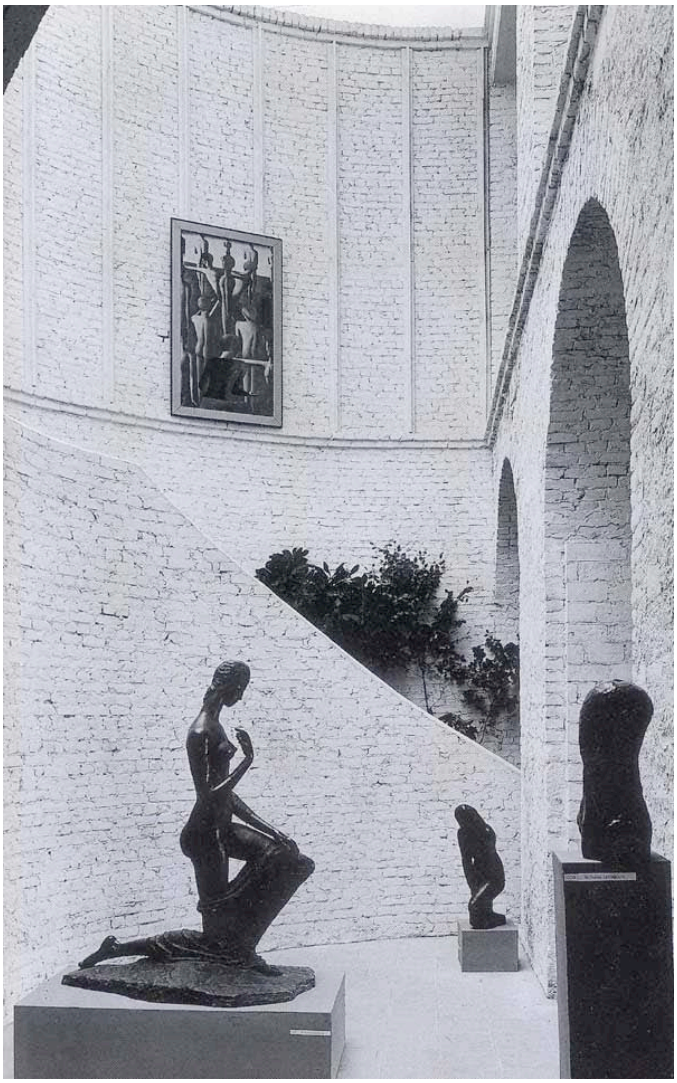
2.1 Orangerieschloss, *documenta II*, Kassel 1959



2.2 Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg
Living with Pop — A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism
Düsseldorf, October 1963



2.3 Gerhard Richter, *Arnold Bode*, 1964
Oil on Canvas, 170 cm x 110 cm



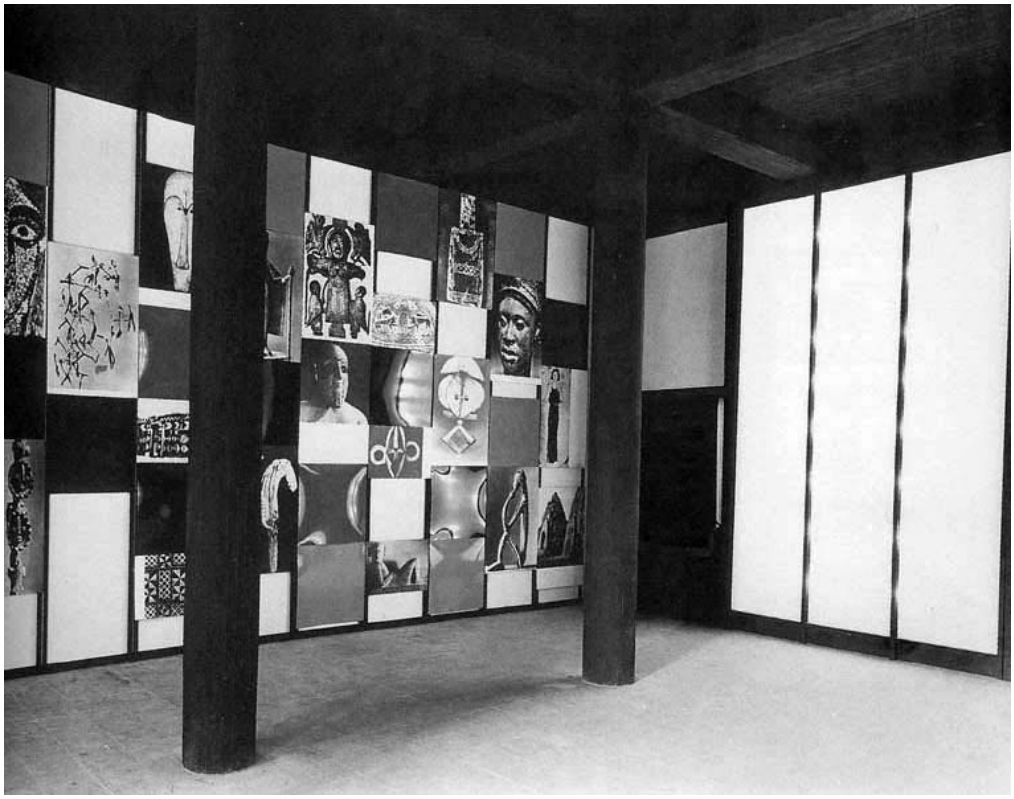
2.4 Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Die Kneiende* (*Kneeling Woman*), 1911
Museum Fridericianum, *documenta I*, Kassel 1955





2.5 "Degenerate Art," Installation Views, Munich 1937





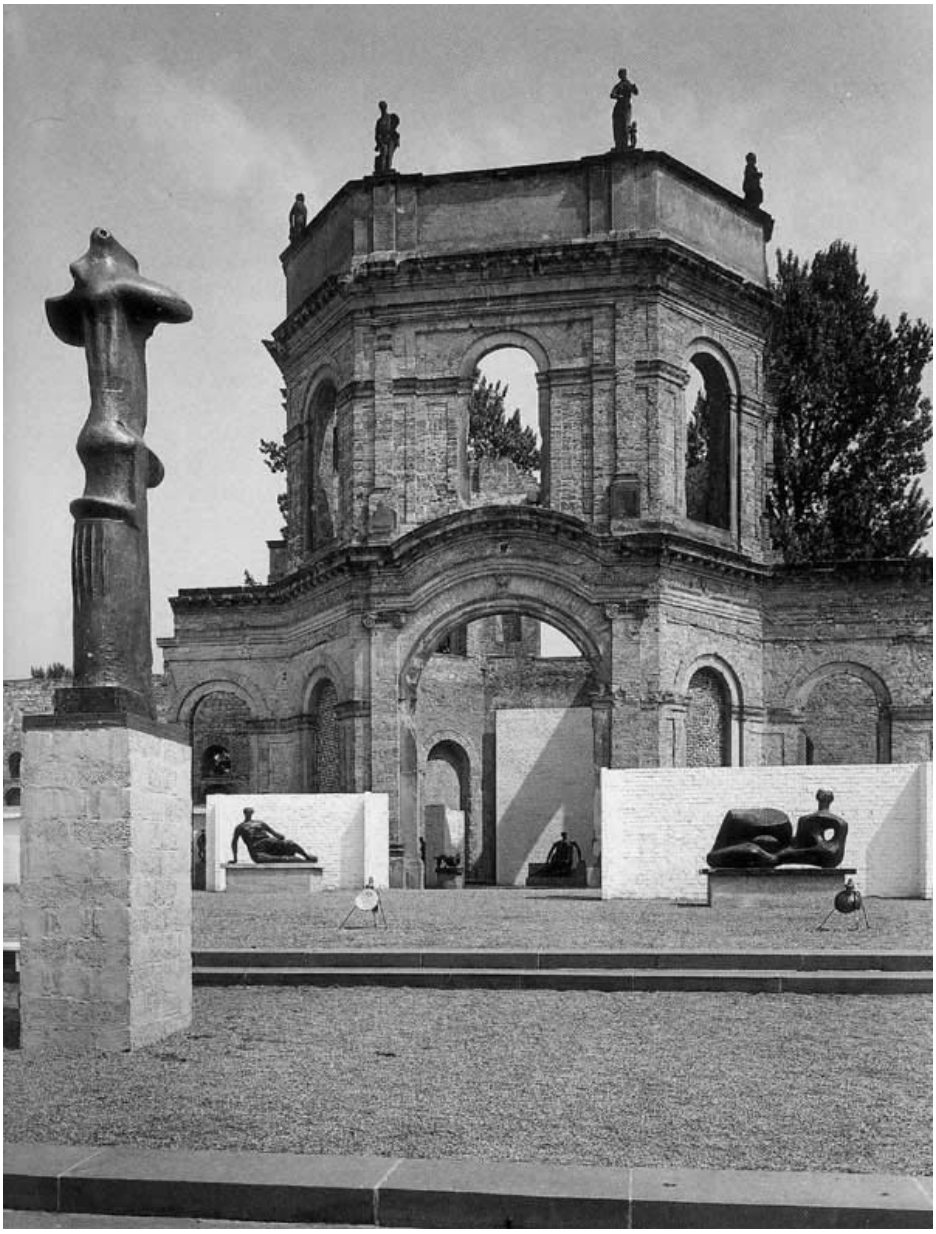
2.6 *documenta I*, Installation Views, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel 1955
Above: Gallery
Below: Entryway



2.7 Museum Fridericianum, *documenta I*, Kassel 1955



2.8 Reconstruction of Orangerieschloss, Kassel 1955



2.9 Sculpture Garden, Orangerieschloss, *documenta II*, Kassel 1959

Bitte merken Sie sich Ihre laufende Nummer 184

PROGRAMM (röm. Zahlen) KATALOG (Buchstaben)

zu einer Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus

L e b e n mit P o p

am Freitag, dem 11.10.1963 in Düsseldorf, Flingerstraße 11

I) Beginn 20 Uhr. - Begeben Sie sich in die III. Etage.

A. Warteraum, 3.Etage (Gestaltung: Lueg und Richter)

II) Nach Aufruf kann der Ausstellungsraum Nr. 1 im III.Stock besichtigt werden. - Die Ausstellungsleitung bittet um diszipliniertes Verhalten.

B. Ausstellungsraum Nr. 1 : Plastiken von Lueg u.Richter
(zusätzlich eine Leihgabe von Prof.Beuys)

(Couch mit Kissen und einem Künstler
Stehlampe mit Fußschalter
Schiebetisch
Sessel mit einem Künstler
Gasherd
Sessel
Tisch, verstellbar, mit Gedeck und Blumen
Teewagen, belegt
Großer Schrank mit Inhalt und Fernsehen
Garderobe mit Leihgabe von Prof. Beuys)

III) Nach Aufruf (voraussichtlich 20,45 Uhr) Besichtigung weiterer Ausstellungsräume in der II. und I. Etage und im Erdgeschoß. Die Ausstellungsleitung bittet, während dieses Rundganges (Polonaise) das Rauchen einzustellen.

C. Ausstellungsräume in den verschiedenen Etagen (ausgesucht von Lueg und Richter)

(52 Schlafzimmer, 78 Wohnzimmer, Küchen und Kinderzimmer, Bilder der beiden Maler, als Ehrengäste die Herren Schmela und Kennedy)

IV) Nach dem Rundgang ... siehe A. usw.

Änderungen vorbehalten.

Wir danken für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit.

Konrad Lueg und Gerd Richter

2.10 Program, *Living with Pop*



2.11 "Waiting Room," *Living with Pop*
(Sculpture of Alfred Schmela, Center Rear)



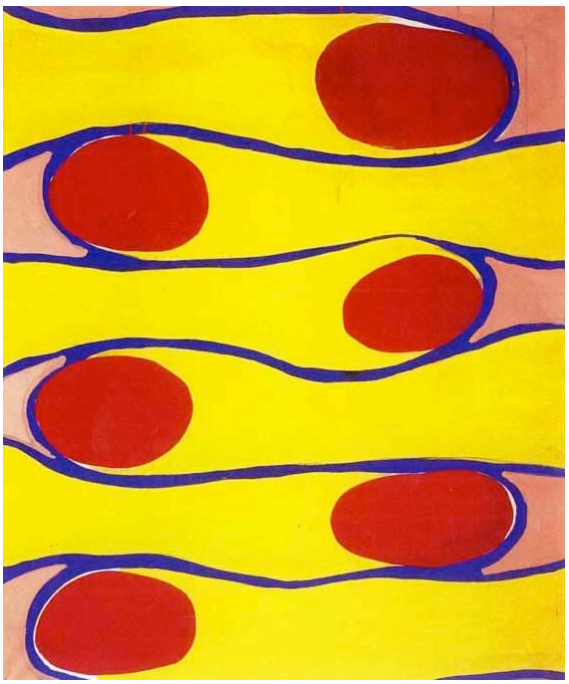
2.12 Berges Haus der Möbel, Exterior



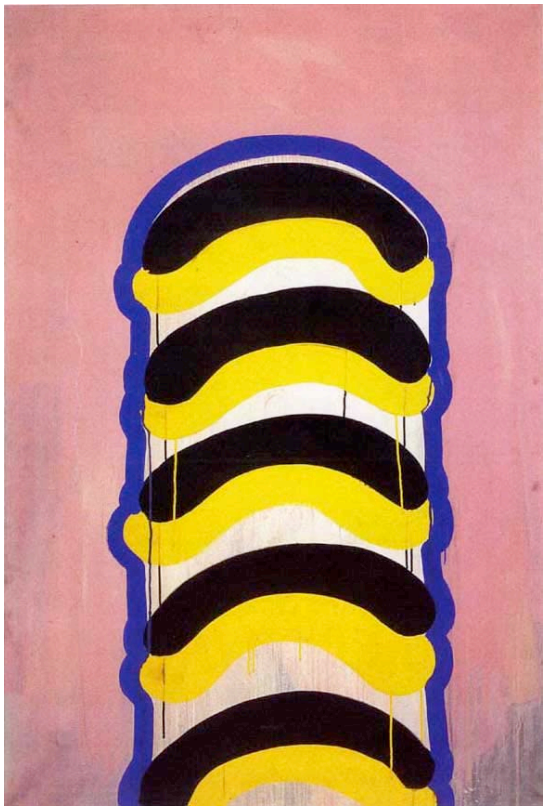
2.13 Arnold Bode, Göppinger Plastics Display
***Constructa* Building Exhibition, Hannover 1951**



2.14 Gerhard Richter, *Stag*, 1963
Oil on Canvas, 150 cm x 200 cm



2.15 Konrad Lueg, *Praying Hands*, 1963



2.16 Konrad Lueg, *Hanger*, 1963



2.17 Gerhard Richter, *Mouth*, 1963
Oil on Canvas, 67 cm x 74 cm



3.1 Invitation Card, Günter Brus at Galerie Junge Generation, Vienna July 1965



3.2 Günter Brus, *Vienna Walk*, Vienna 1965
Photographs: Ludwig Hoffenreich
(Courtesy of MUMOK Archives, Vienna)




ALFRED C. TEUMER
WIENER BAUKUNST



3.3 Adolf Hitler, Heldenplatz, Vienna, March 1938


Neuer Kurier
11. April 1959

LANGSTRECKENLÄUFER VOR DER LEINWAND

22.30: Maestro Mathieu krempelt die Ärmel hoch und macht stehend-freihändig die ersten „Striche": er peitscht die Farbe direkt aus der Tube auf die Riesenleinwand.

22.40: Kein Fleck darf weiß bleiben! Die Strichzeichnung wird mit Benzin und Aufreibfetzen verwischt. Mathieu geht in die Knie, und das Publikum denkt an die Putzereikosten für die schwarze Hose. Aber der Maestro verdient viel Geld.

22.50: Jetzt wurde die Leinwand aufgestellt, und der Künstler produziert sich als Leichtathlet. Hier sieht man ihn beim gekonnten Hochsprung.

23.00: Schon leicht erschöpft – die erste Halbzeit ist vo über – kauert Mathieu vor seinem Gemälde . . . „Da ob fehlt noch etwas", denkt er, dann greift er von neuem Tube und Pinsel. Photos: Kamera-Underbach (4), Harry Web

23.10: Hoppauf zum Endspurt! Mit wilden Sprüngen legt der Meister letzte Hand an seine „Widmung für den Plünderer von Rom". Er vollführt einen Kriegstanz zu der aufreizenden Geräuschmusik seines Landsmannes Pierre Henry. Die Farbe spritzt nicht nur aufs Bild.

23.20: Fertig! Georg Mathieu hat seinen „non-figurativen" Mammutschinken, wie versprochen, innerhalb von 50 Minuten vollendet . . . ein „Zeitgemälde". Ein kritischer Blick noch, dann geht er ab und zeigt sich dem Publikum nicht wieder. Das aber nimmt nun Stellung zu dem „Kunstwerk" und beginnt zu diskutieren.

23.25: In der Erschöpfung zeigt sich der Meister: Mathieu ist hinter der Bühne zusammengesunken und läßt sich, von oben bis unten mit Ölfarbe beschmiert, photographieren.

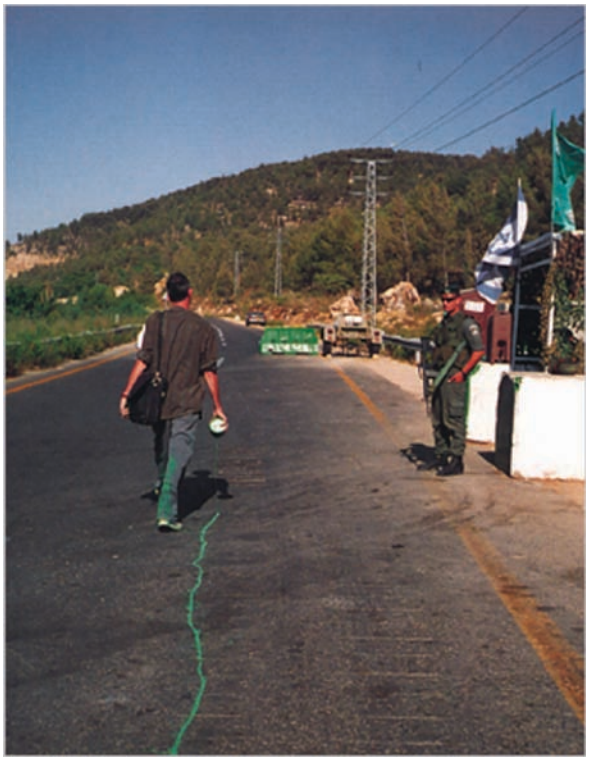
3.4 Georges Mathieu at Theatre am Fleischmarkt, Vienna (*Neuer Kurier*, 4.11.59)



3.5 Christian Philipp Müller, *Green Border*, 1993



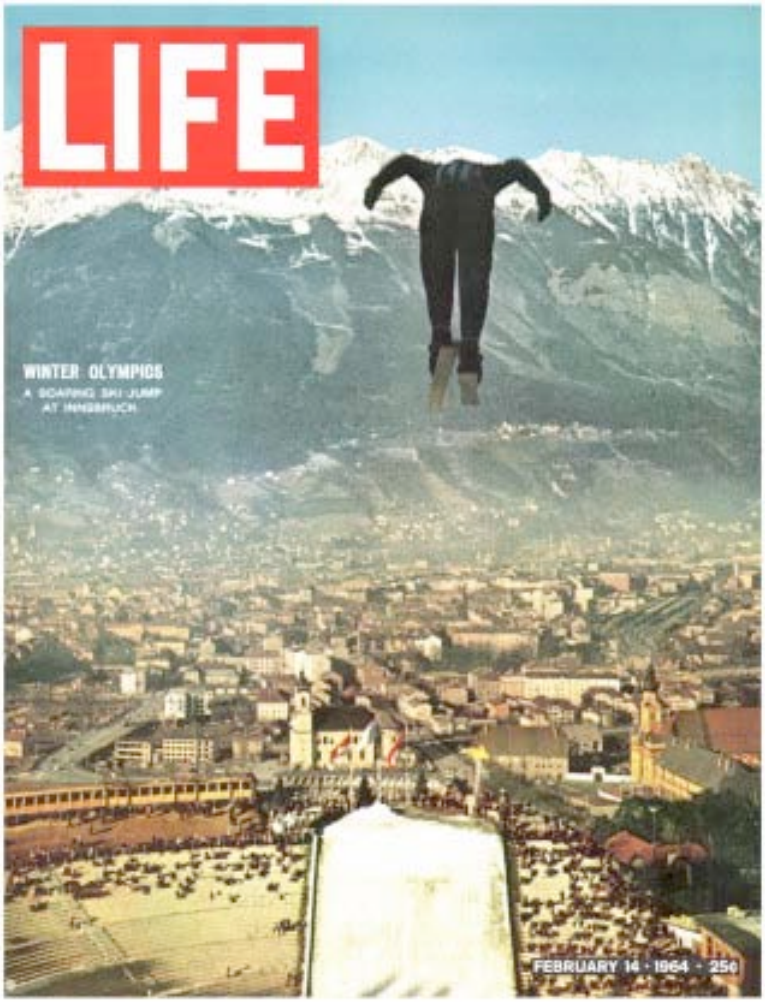
3.6 David Hammons, *Phat Free*, 1995



3.7 Francis Alÿs, *The Green Line*, 2005



3.8 Günter Brus, *Vienna Walk*, Vienna, 1965
Photo: Ludwig Hoffenreich
(Courtesy of MUMOK Archives)



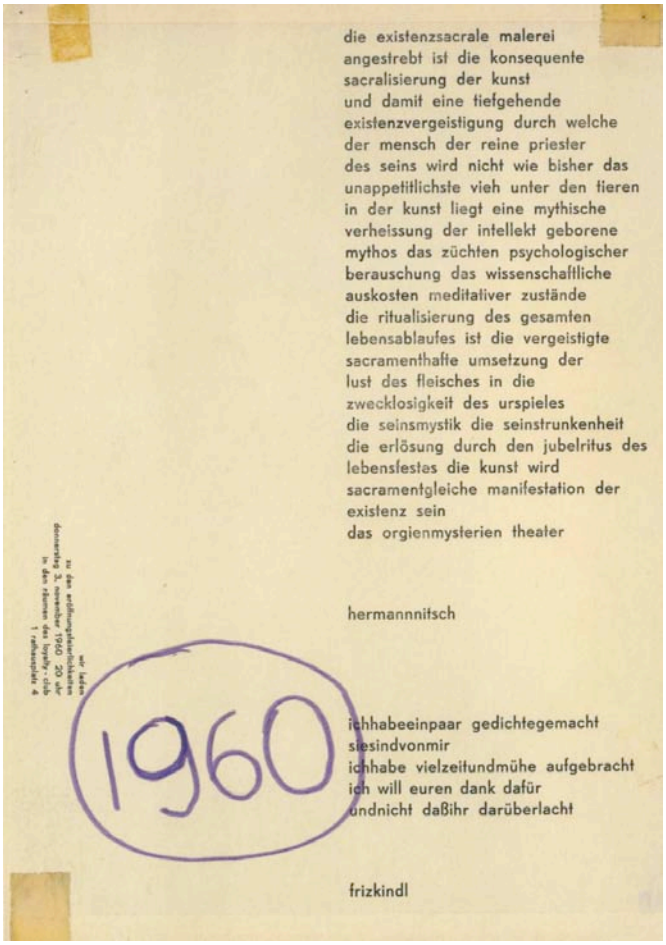
3.9 *LIFE* Magazine, February 1964





3.10 Top: Hermann Nitsch, *Station of the Cross*, 1962
Bottom: Hermann Nitsch, *Schüttbild* ("Pouring Picture"), 1963



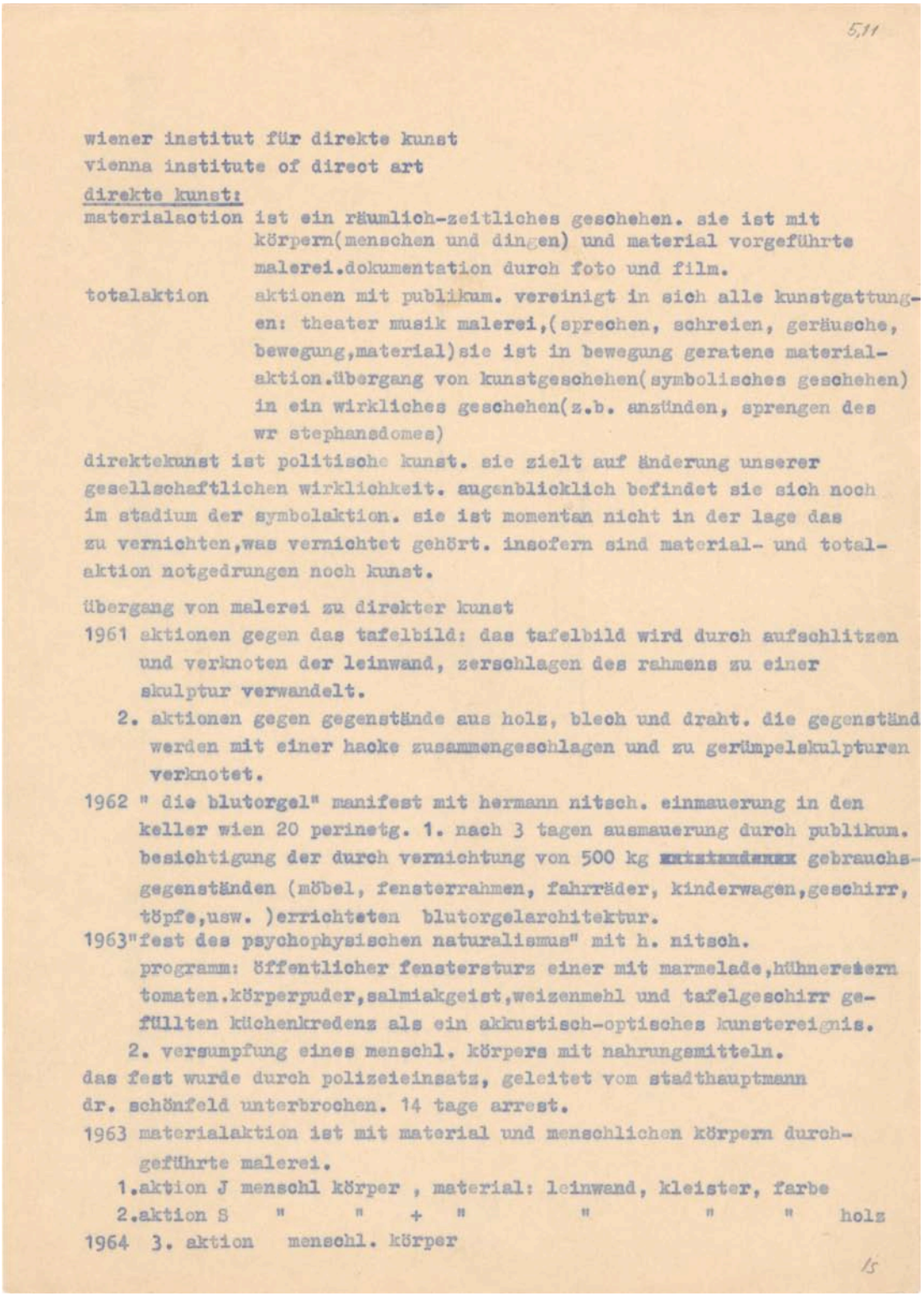


3.11 Top: Hermann Nitsch, *Bread and Wine*, 1960
Bottom: Hermann Nitsch, Manifesto, 1960





3.12 Top: Hermann Nitsch, *1st Action*, 1962
Bottom: Hermann Nitsch, *4th Action*, 1963



5,11

wiener institut für direkte kunst
vienna institute of direct art

direkte kunst:

materialaction ist ein räumlich-zeitliches geschehen. sie ist mit körpern(menschen und dingen) und material vorgeführte malerei.dokumentation durch foto und film.

totalaktion aktionen mit publikum. vereinigt in sich alle kunstgattungen: theater musik malerei,(sprechen, schreien, geräusche, bewegung,material)sie ist in bewegung geratene materialaktion.übergang von kunstgeschehen(symbolisches geschehen) in ein wirkliches geschehen(z.b. anzünden, sprengen des wr stephansdomes)

direktekunst ist politische kunst. sie zielt auf änderung unserer gesellschaftlichen wirklichkeit. augenblicklich befindet sie sich noch im stadium der symbolaktion. sie ist momentan nicht in der lage das zu vernichten,was vernichtet gehört. insofern sind material- und totalaktion notgedrungen noch kunst.

übergang von malerei zu direkter kunst

1961 aktionen gegen das tafelbild: das tafelbild wird durch aufschlitzen und verknoten der leinwand, zerschlagen des rahmens zu einer skulptur verwandelt.

2. aktionen gegen gegenstände aus holz, blech und draht. die gegenständ werden mit einer hacke zusammengeschlagen und zu gerümpelskulpturen verknotet.

1962 " die blutorgel" manifest mit hermann nitsch. einmauerung in den keller wien 20 perinetg. 1. nach 3 tagen ausmauerung durch publikum. besichtigung der durch vernichtung von 500 kg gebrauchsgegenständen (möbel, fensterrahmen, fahrräder, kinderwagen,geschirr, töpfe,usw.)errichteten blutorgelarchitektur.

1963"fest des psychophysischen naturalismus" mit h. nitsch. programm: öffentlicher fenstersturz einer mit marmelade,hühnereiern tomaten.körperpuder,salmiakgeist,weizenmehl und tafelgeschirr gefüllten küchenkredenz als ein akkustisch-optisches kunstereignis.

2. versumpfung eines menschl. körpers mit nahrungsmitteln.

das fest wurde durch polizeieinsatz, geleitet vom stadthauptmann dr. schönfeld unterbrochen. 14 tage arrest.

1963 materialaktion ist mit material und menschlichen körpern durchgeführte malerei.

1.aktion J menschl körper , material: leinwand, kleister, farbe
2.aktion S " " + " " " " holz

1964 3. aktion menschl. körper

15

3.13 Vienna Institute for Direct Art
"Information Text on Direct Art"
(Courtesy of MUMOK Archives)



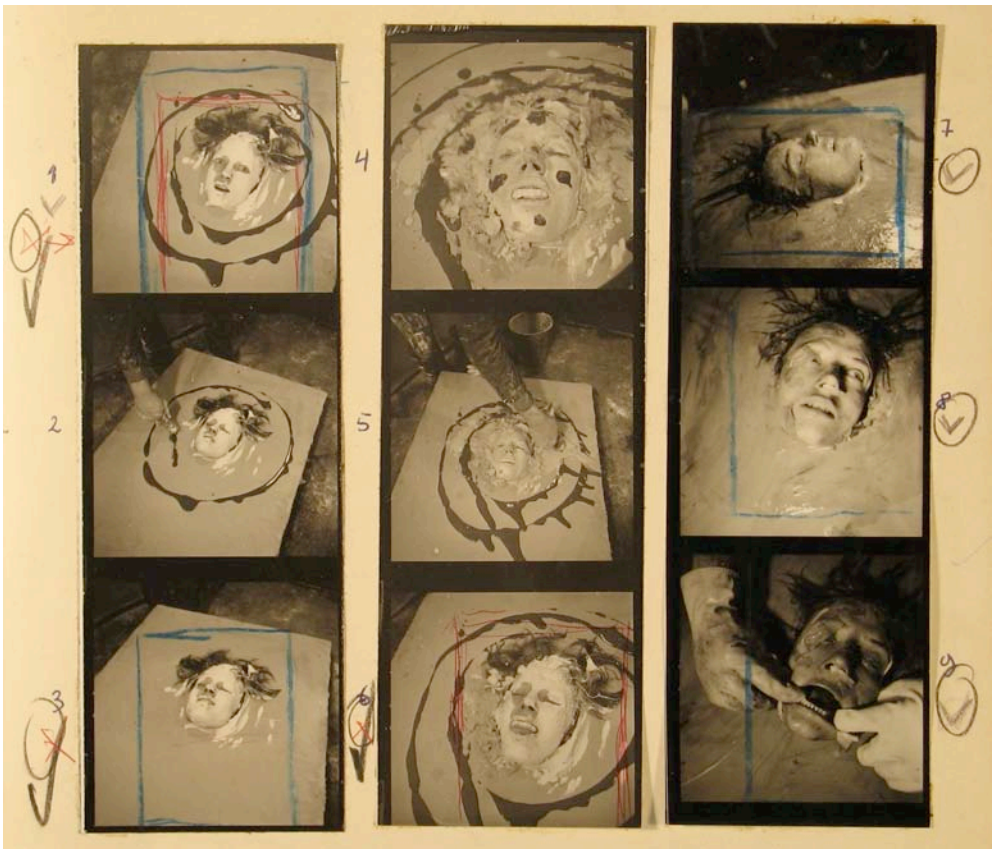


(detail)

3.14 Otto Mühl, *2nd Material Action*, 1963
Photos: Ludwig Hoffenreich
(Mühl's Photo Album, Courtesy of MUMOK Archives)



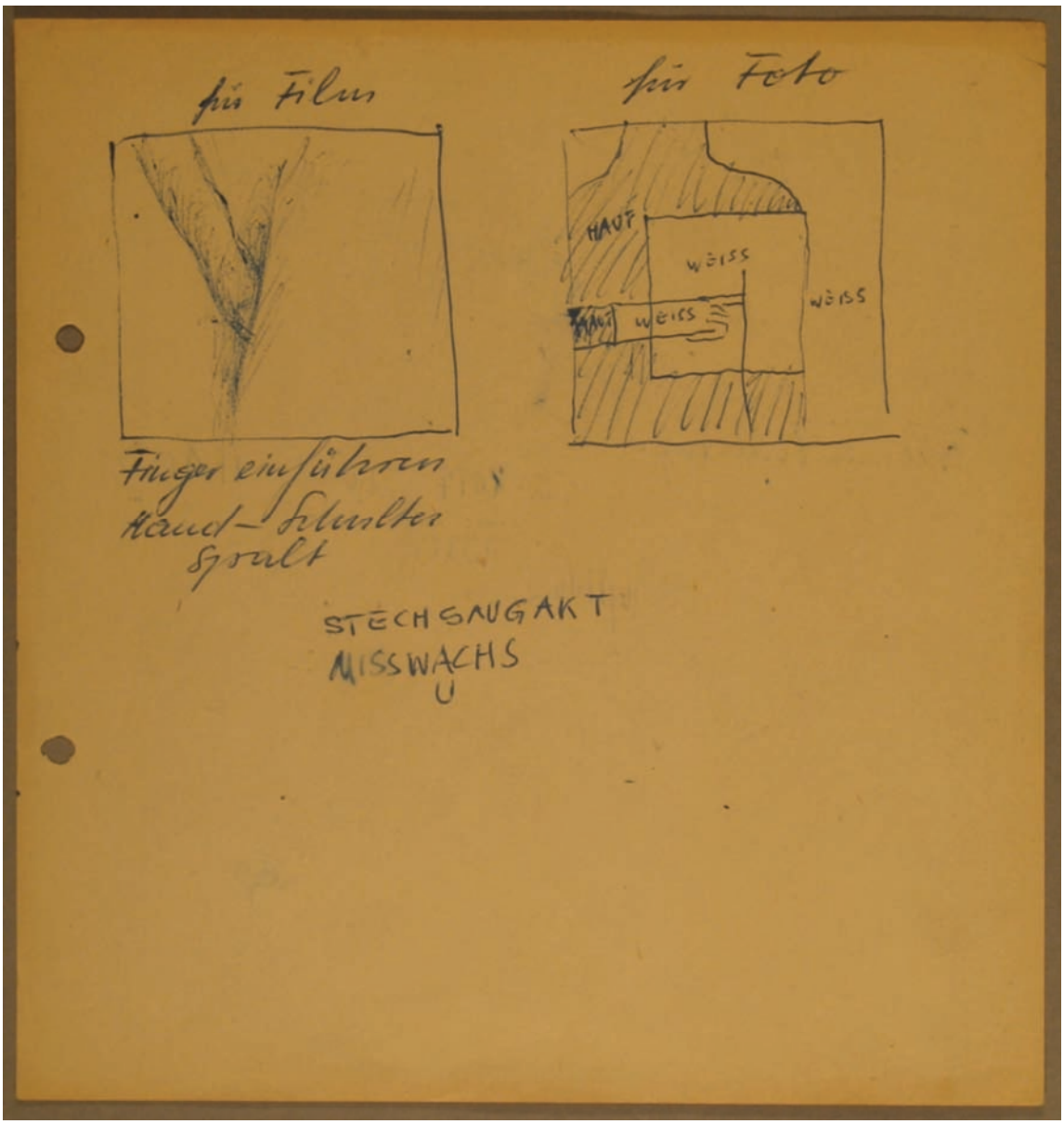
3.15 Otto Mühl in his Studio (Contact Sheet)
Photos: Ludwig Hoffenreich
(Courtesy of MUMOK Archives)





(detail)

3.16 Otto Mühl, *Rumpsti Pumpsti*, 1965 (Contact Prints)
Photos: Ludwig Hoffenreich
(Courtesy of MUMOK Archives)



3.17 Günter Brus, *Action Sketches*, 1966
(Courtesy of MUMOK Archives)



3.18 Kurt Kren filming Otto Mühl's Action *Mama and Papa*, 1964
Perinetkeller Studio



DIE BLUTORGEL

vier

*1) Wir haben uns zur Befriedung der Menschheit entschlossen, drei Tage in das Gewölbe niederzusteigen. (Woselbst wir uns einmauern lassen).

Drei Tage schrankenlose Enthemmung, Befreiung von aller Brunst, Transponierung derselben in Blech, Schrott, Verwesenden Abfällen, Fleisch, Blut, Gerümpel u.s.w., die ganze Materie des Kosmos wollen wir verwandeln.

WIRSELBST werden nach diesen dreitägigen Exerzitien, bei welchen wir weder essen noch schlafen noch unseren Körper pflegen– natürlich ohne Frauen – gereinigt der feierlichen Ausmauerung entgegensehen.

Die feierliche Ausmauerung findet am 4. Juni 1962 um 18 Uhr abends statt. Ort: Wien XX., Perinetgasse Nro.1 (Nähe Friedensbrücke, Augartenbrücke)

ADOLF FROHNER OTTO MUEHL ADOLF FROHNER ADOLF F
Mein Trick – Trick

Man muß vom Wau-Wau angewidert werden; Man Muß die Schleime aller Dinge erkennen. Man muß den Sprung ins Bodenlose (Sumpfige) wagen, um einmal am Rande sanft zu katzen.

Der Ringkampf mit den Dingen ist das eigentliche Tricktrack meiner Arbeit.

Man soll ein Ding nehmen, irgendeines in das man hineinkommt und darin und damit etwas machen. In die schöne, gespannte, weiße Leinwand stecke man den Finger. Meine Werke kann man riechen, betasten; man kann hineingreifen und hindurchgreifen – man kann sie aus-greifen.

*1) Die Herrn Adolf FROHNER, Otto MUEHL und Hermann NITSCH sind nach Vollzug der Ausmauerung als Herr Dr. Adolf Frohner, Herr Dr. Otto Muehl und Herr Dr. Hermann Nitsch anzusprechen.

Es fällt mir auf die Nerven wenn die Bäume grün werden, Herr Professor! Sie müßten gezwungen werden sich die Haare grün zu färben. So grün wie Maikäferdreck. Der Dreck der an den Dingen klebt soll nicht abgewaschen werden, selbst wenn es Eiterfluß ist.

Das Tricktrack muß immer unverständlich sein. Nur der Schöpfer selbst kann in die Geheimnisse eindringen. Das Gänseschnappen steht erst an zweiter Stelle und ist nicht so wichtig. Dazu genügt aber auch schon ein einziger Mensch.

Kunst ist nur ein Mittel zum perversieren Leben.
Man darf sich nicht selbst die Flügel stutzen!! Man darf nicht schmollen, sonst katz man grün in einen Krater.

Die Zeit der Lexika und Kunsttopografien. Die Rechenkunst, die Schreibkunst, das Kunfeislaufen, das Kunstzeichen, die Kunsterziehung, das Kugelscheiben bzw. Scheibenkugeln.

Meine Werke sind nicht das Produkt eines Buh-Buh oder einer Konzeption; sie wachsen selbständig mit jedem Vorschlag, sie werden anders unter dem Strich der Zacke und dem Strich der Hacke. Sie sind niemals fertig, aber unterbrochen an einem Punkt meiner momentanen Situation. Sie könnten immer weitergetreckt werden, sie fließen ständig und sind auch für mich niemals das, was sie gestern waren. Sie interessieren mich nur deshalb noch, weil sie mir zeigen wo einmal Gestank war.

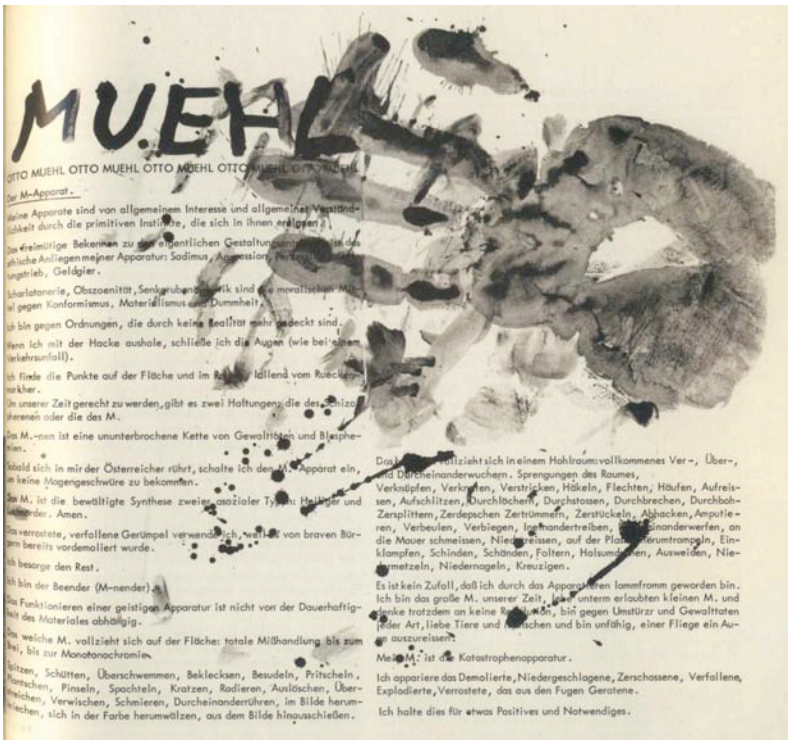
Die Kraft die man verwenden muß um aus einem unbrauchbaren, wertlosen Gegenstand etwas zu machen, was NICHTS mehr ist.

Man muß im Hinfallen noch ein Ding verbiegen und im Aufstehen eines. Man muß die Dinge mit Feuer aneinanderkleben, sie verbinden, vermengen, verknüpfen, vergewaltigen, schänden und schlagen bis daß sie im Chor Psalmen singen.

Der Schmerz des Scherzes der lustige Aufschrei. Der Schrei nicht als Zwischenschrei; der Dauerschrei – LE CRI PERMANENT.

Anschließend an unsere Befreiung aus dem Gewölbe wird, unter [illegible] Himmel, für österreichs akademische Maler und Bildhauer eine große [illegible] Segnung durchgeführt. Die akademischen Künstler werden daher gebeten, ihre Tricktracks in tadellos gereinigten Zustand mitzubringen.

Schuga fa anprat, le nara na blablo; ni ere sate! Da Wem, de Nun, duno ka Pun, Schonkas tra nimakunst. He plerem gle tein! Ille gach zu kätper, laure Sicherhaid nelleiw nam los etaum gnid. Snob ille tra ne schpon, igel, schtal, brinsal, schalsaal, glasal und händel. Finnis lashound nid man Sano. Minikititsch, Funumismus aide Sichillanus + Wa da mußnich.



Der M-Apparat.

Meine Apparate sind von allgemeinem Interesse und allgemeiner Verständlichkeit durch die primitiven Instinkte, die sich in ihnen ereignen.

Das freimütige Bekennen zu den eigentlichen Gestaltungs[illegible] ist das ethische Anliegen meiner Apparatur: Sadismus, Aggression, Perversion, Lustgetrieb, Geldgier.

Scharlatanerie, Obszoenität, Senkgrubenästhetik sind die moralischen Mittel gegen Konformismus, Materialismus und Dummheit.

Ich bin gegen Ordnungen, die durch keine Realität mehr gedeckt sind.

Wenn ich mit der Hacke aushole, schließe ich die Augen (wie bei einem Verkehrsunfall).

Ich finde die Punkte auf der Fläche und im Raum, indem ich vom Rücken her arbeite.

In unserer Zeit gerecht zu werden, gibt es zwei Haltungen: die des Schizophrenen oder die des M.

Das M.-nen ist eine ununterbrochene Kette von Gewalttaten und Blasphemien.

Sobald sich in mir der Österreicher rührt, schalte ich den M.-Apparat ein, um keine Magengeschwüre zu bekommen.

Der M. ist die bewältigte Synthese zweier asozialer Typen: Heiliger und Mörder. Amen.

Das verrostete, verfallene Gerümpel verwende ich, weil es von braven Bürgern bereits vordemoliert wurde.

Ich besorge den Rest.

Ich bin der Beender (M-nender).

Das Funktionieren einer geistigen Apparatur ist nicht von der Dauerhaftigkeit des Materiales abhängig.

Das, welche M. vollzieht sich auf der Fläche: totale Mißhandlung, bis zum Brei, bis zur Monotonochromie.

Spritzen, Schütten, Überschwemmen, Bekleckses, Besudeln, Pritscheln, Pantschen, Pinseln, Spachteln, Kratzen, Radieren, Auslöschen, Überstreichen, Verwischen, Schmieren, Durcheinanderrühren, im Bilde herumkriechen, sich in der Farbe herumwälzen, aus dem Bilde hinausschießen.

Das [illegible] vollzieht sich in einem Hohlraum: vollkommenes Ver-, Über-, und Durcheinanderwuchern. Sprengungen des Raumes, Verknüpfen, Verkrallen, Verstricken, Häkeln, Flechten, Häufen, Aufreissen, Aufschlitzen, Durchlöchern, Durchstossen, Durchbrechen, Durchbohren, Zersplittern, Zerdepschen Zertrümmern, Zerstückeln, Abhacken, Amputieren, Verbeulen, Verbiegen, Ineinandertreiben, [illegible] Einander werfen, an die Mauer schmeissen, Niederreissen, auf der Platz herumtrampeln, Einklampfen, Schinden, Schänden, Foltern, Halsumdrehen, Ausweiden, Niedermetzeln, Niedernageln, Kreuzigen.

Es ist kein Zufall, daß ich durch das Apparatieren lammfromm geworden bin. Ich bin das große M. unserer Zeit, [illegible] unterm erlaubten kleinen M. und stinke trotzdem an keine Rosen an, bin gegen Umsturz und Gewalttaten jeder Art, liebe Tiere und Kätzchen und bin unfähig, einer Fliege ein Auge auszureissen.

Mein M. ist die Katastrophenapparatur.

Ich apparriere das Demolierte, Niedergeschlagene, Zerschossene, Verfallene, Explodierte, Verrostete, das aus den Fugen Geratene.

Ich halte dies für etwas Positives und Notwendiges.

3.19 "The Blood Organ," 1962

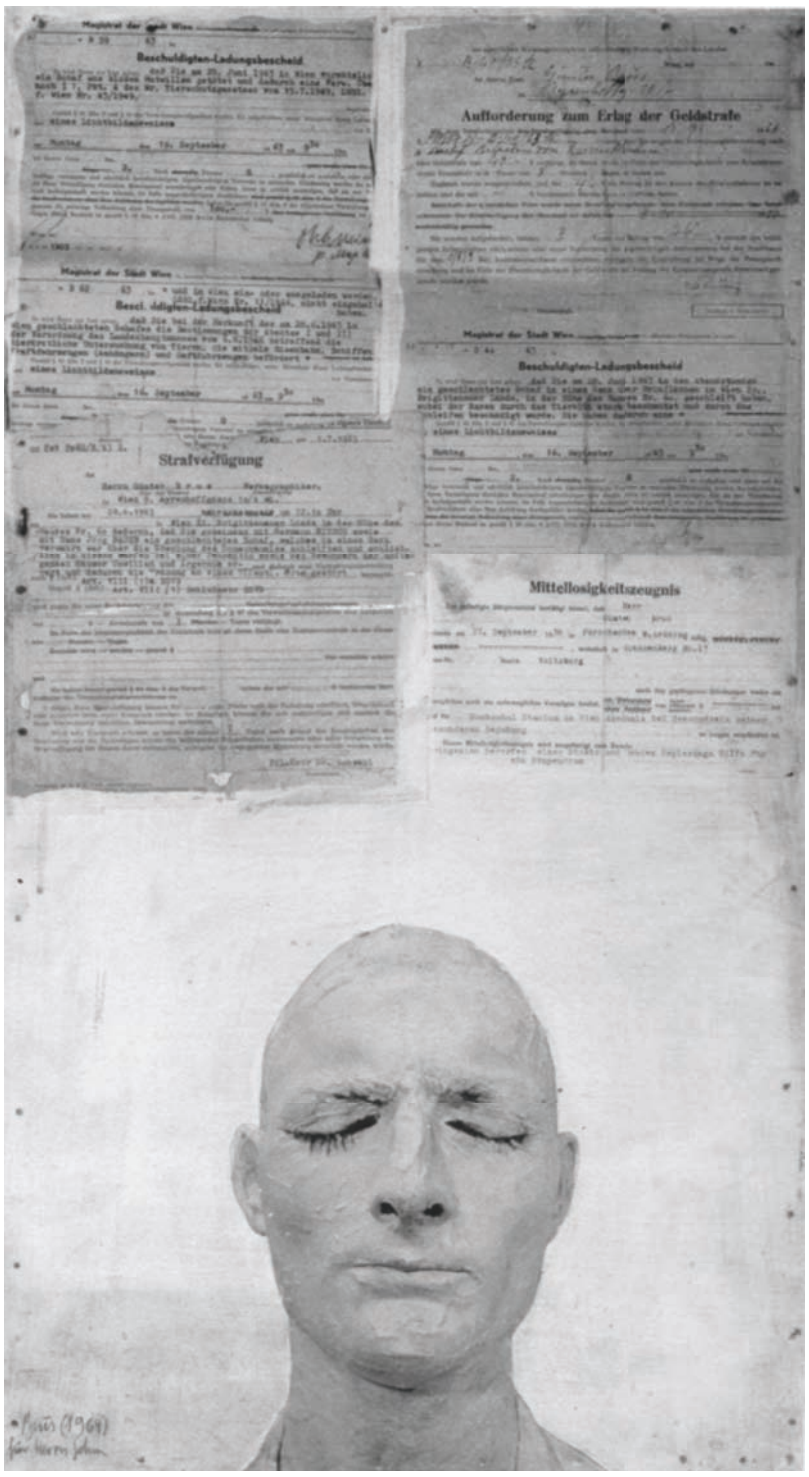




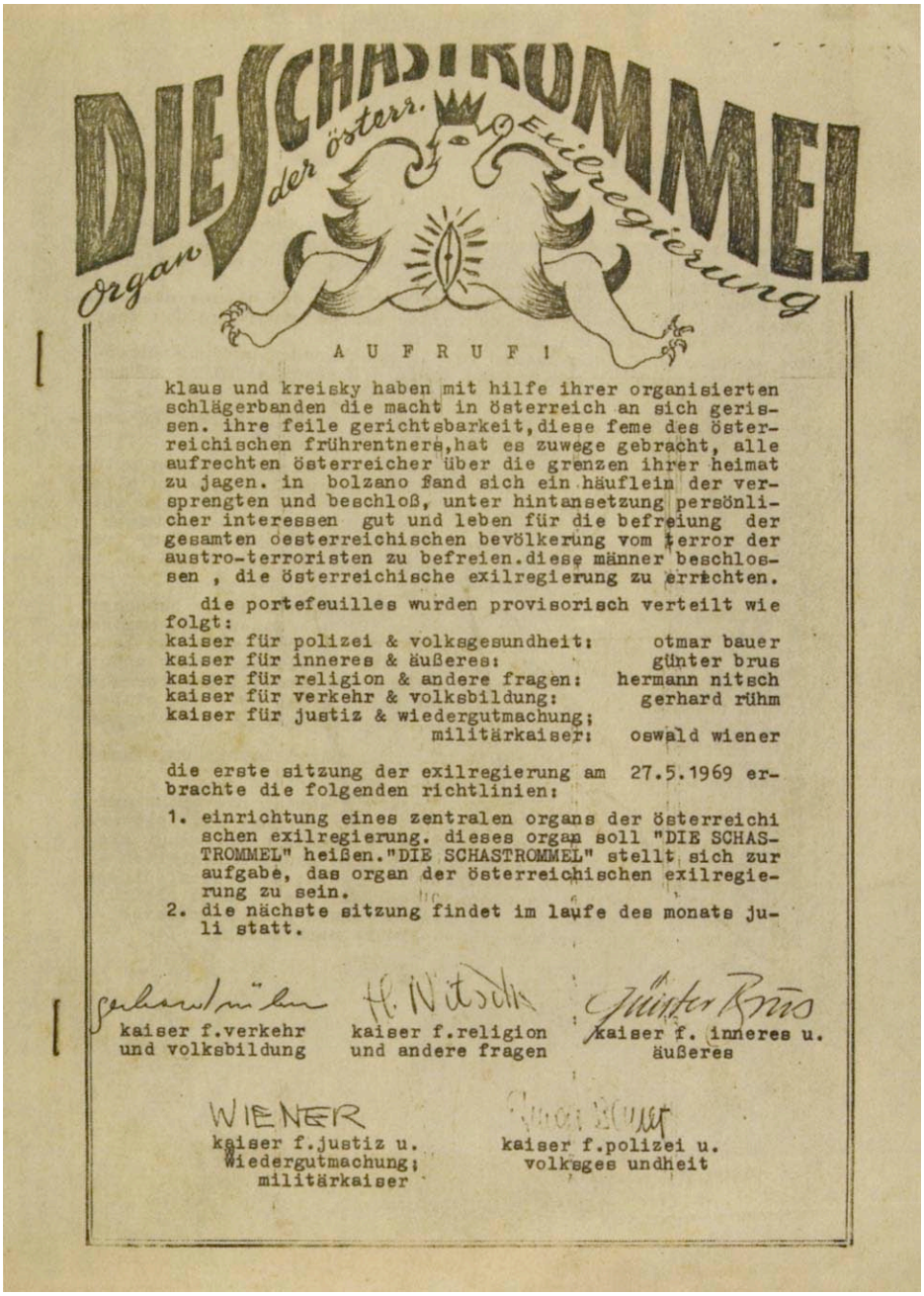
3.20 Hermann Nitsch and Otto Mühl, *The Blood Organ*, 1962
Top: Exterior of Perinetkeller
Bottom: Public Opening of the Perinetkeller



3.21 Hermann Nitsch after the *Festival of Psycho-Physical Naturalism* (1963)



3.22 Günter Brus, *Untitled*, 1965



DIE SCHASTROMMEL

Organ der österr. Exilregierung

A U F R U F !

klaus und kreisky haben mit hilfe ihrer organisierten schlägerbanden die macht in österreich an sich gerissen. ihre feile gerichtsbarkeit, diese feme des österreichischen frührentners, hat es zuwege gebracht, alle aufrechten österreicher über die grenzen ihrer heimat zu jagen. in bolzano fand sich ein häuflein der versprengten und beschloß, unter hintansetzung persönlicher interessen gut und leben für die befreiung der gesamten oesterreichischen bevölkerung vom terror der austro-terroristen zu befreien. diese männer beschlossen, die österreichische exilregierung zu errichten.

die portefeuilles wurden provisorisch verteilt wie folgt:

kaiser für polizei & volksgesundheit: otmar bauer
kaiser für inneres & äußeres: günter brus
kaiser für religion & andere fragen: hermann nitsch
kaiser für verkehr & volksbildung: gerhard rühm
kaiser für justiz & wiedergutmachung; militärkaiser: oswald wiener

die erste sitzung der exilregierung am 27.5.1969 erbrachte die folgenden richtlinien:

1. einrichtung eines zentralen organs der österreichischen exilregierung. dieses organ soll "DIE SCHASTROMMEL" heißen. "DIE SCHASTROMMEL" stellt sich zur aufgabe, das organ der österreichischen exilregierung zu sein.
2. die nächste sitzung findet im laufe des monats juli statt.

kaiser f.verkehr und volksbildung

H. Nitsch
kaiser f.religion und andere fragen

Günter Brus
kaiser f. inneres u. äußeres

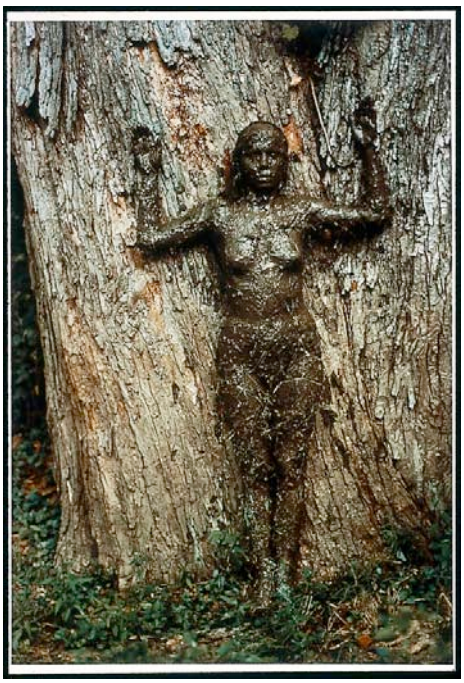
WIENER
kaiser f.justiz u. wiedergutmachung; militärkaiser

kaiser f.polizei u. volksgesundheit

3.23 "The Fart Drum," First Issue, 1969



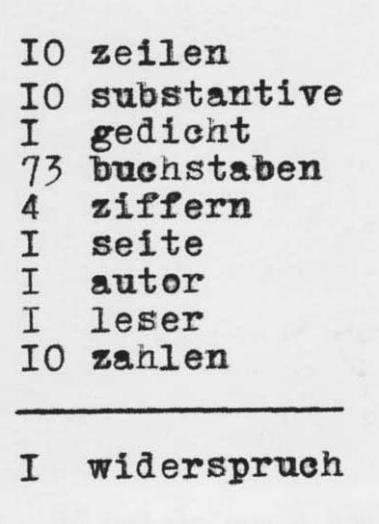
3.24 Otto Mühl, *Mutton*, 1970



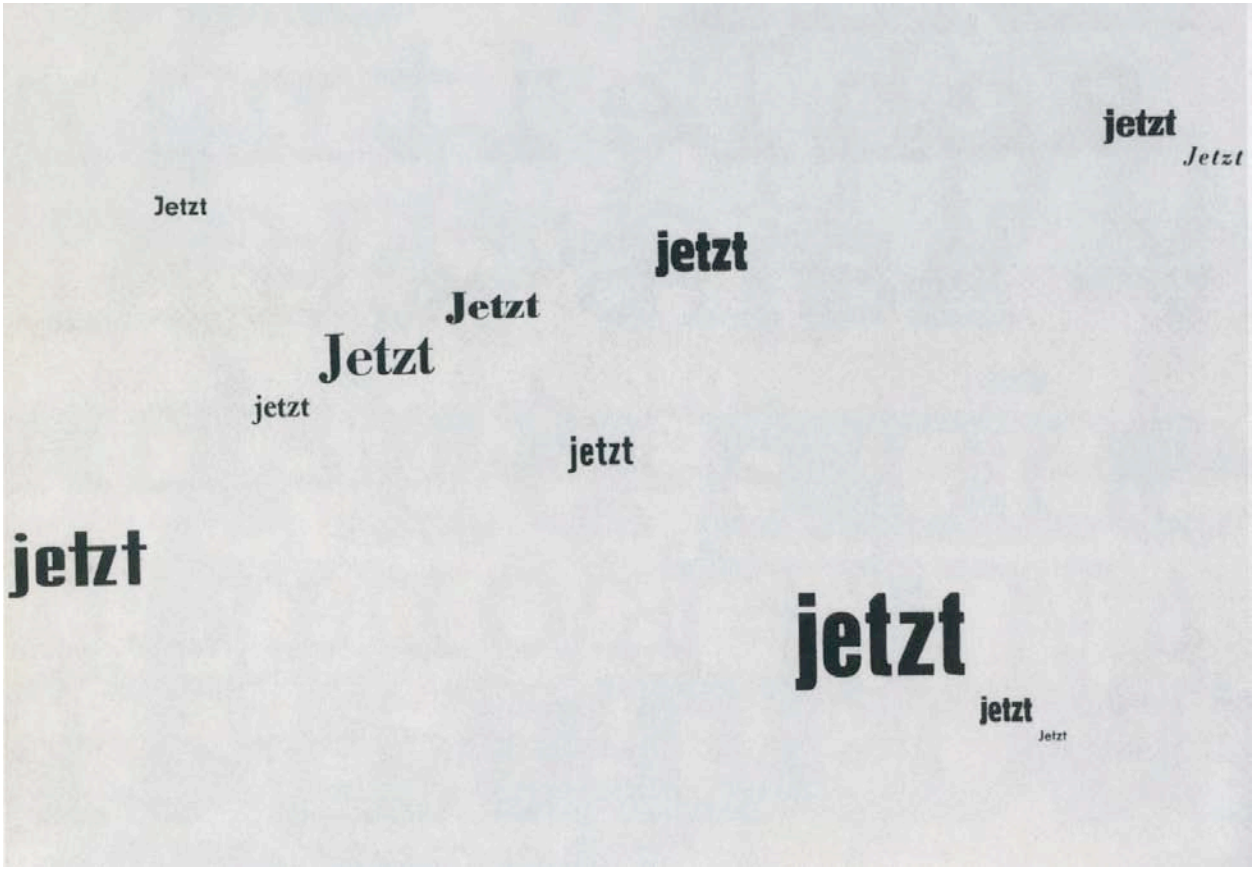




4.1 Top: Ana Mendieta, *Tree of Life Series (Iowa)*, 1976
Center Left: Paul McCarthy, *Grand Pop California*, Los Angeles, CA, 1977
Center Right: Suzanne Lacy, *She Who Could Fly*, Los Angeles, CA, 1977



4.2 Peter Weibel, *contradiction — producer schema* (1966)



4.3 Gerhard Rühm, Untitled "Text-Image," 1954

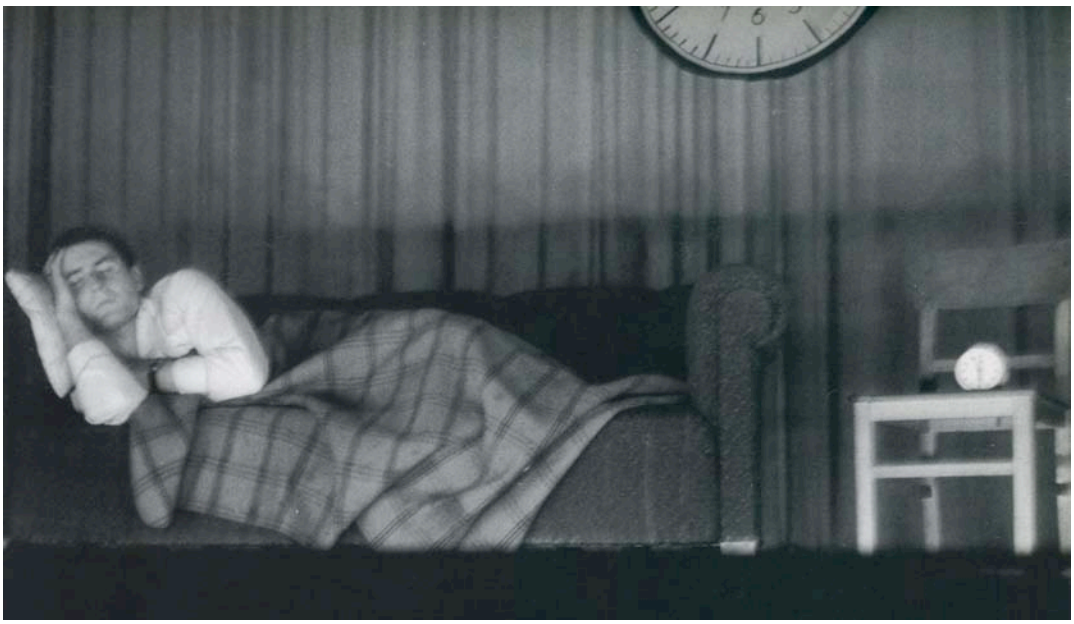


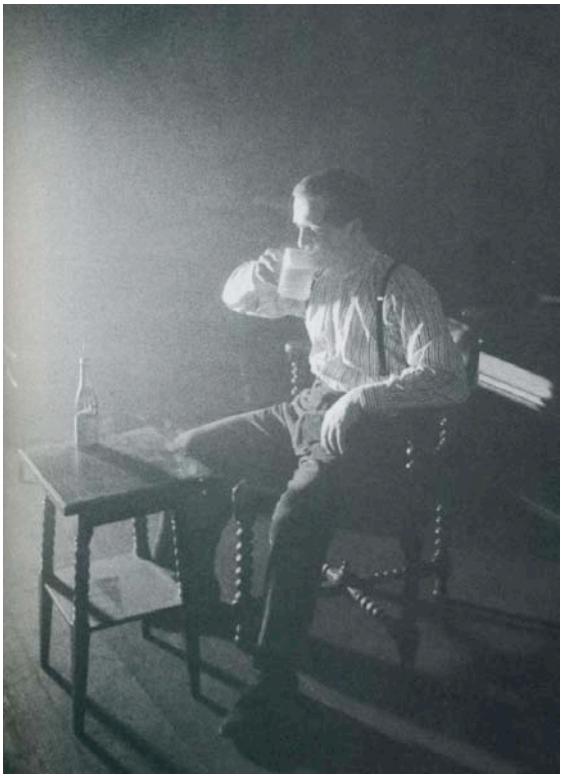
4.4 Vienna Group, *Second Literary Cabaret*, 1959





4.5 Vienna Group, *Second Literary Cabaret*, 1959



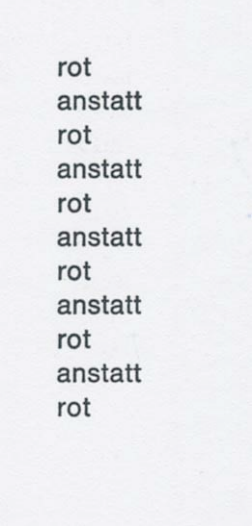


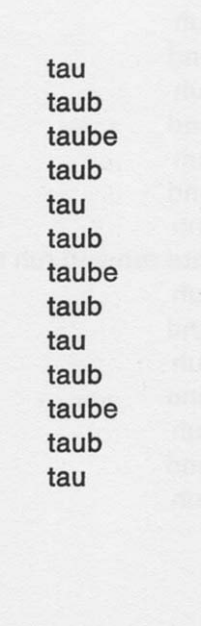
4.6 Vienna Group, *Second Literary Cabaret*, 1959
Top: Konrad Bayer
Bottom: "Friedrich Achleitner as Beer-Drinker"

literarisches cabaret 1 4 1959
friedrich achleitner
konrad bayer
gerhard rühm
oswald wiener
15 4 1959 im porrhaus

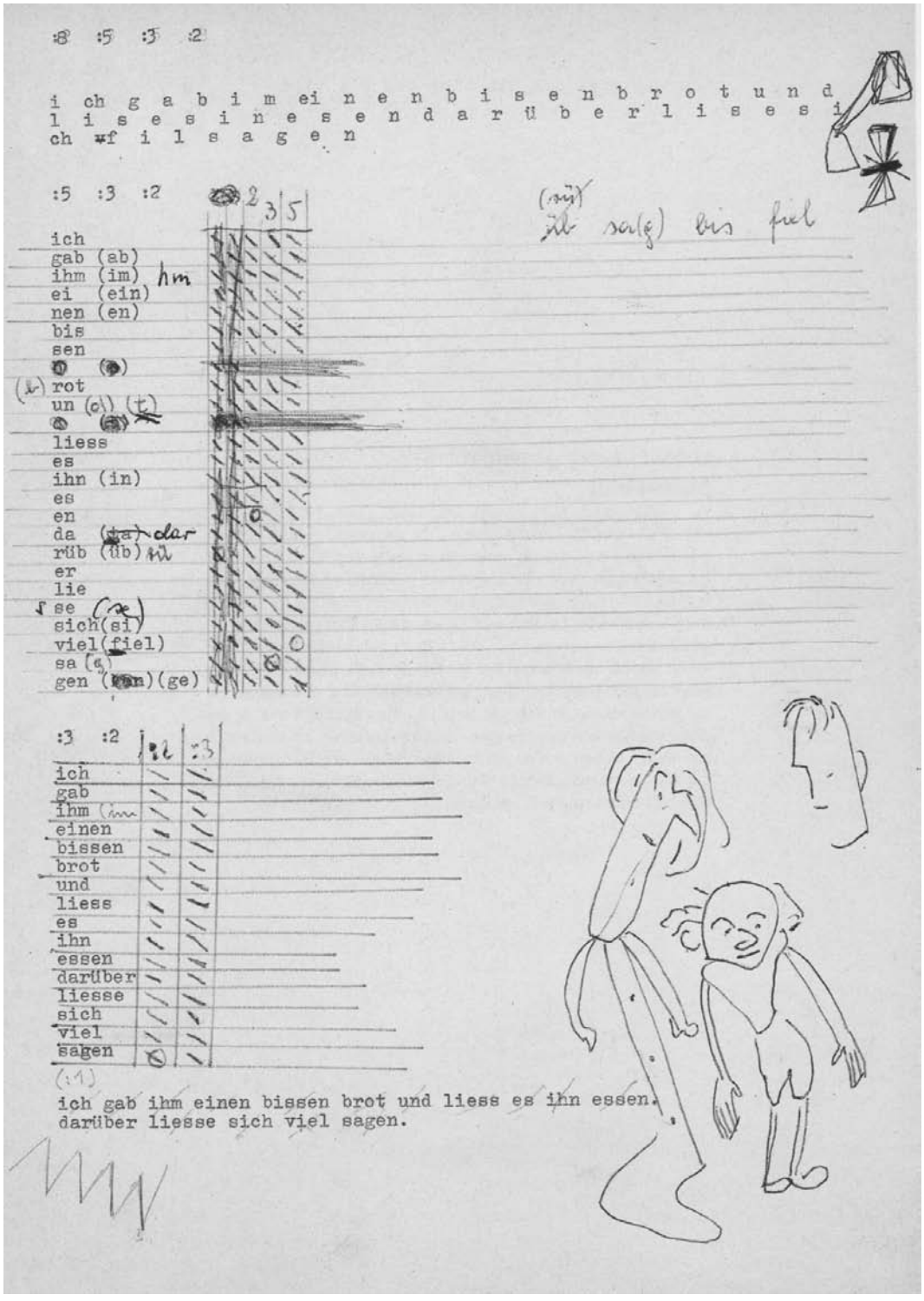
unser cabaret wird nicht - wie man es missverstehen wird können - keine einkleidung von massnahmen, das heisst unter anderem moralischen aufforderungen, sein, sondern schlichte begebenheit. wir werden keine kritik vorzubringen haben, keinen protest niederzulegen, es sei denn die verzweigte kritik an unserem spezifischen publikum, den protest gegen seine passive art, zuschauer zu sein, gegen seine so leicht zu kontrollierenden reaktionen, die wir - und das ist vertraulich - doch mit unseren mitteln provozieren werden.
unser cabaret wird aus der gesamtheit der eindrücke bestehen, die unseren gast an unserem ort ansprechen können. haben wir vor, unser publikum zu erziehen, dann dazu, seinen wahrnehmungskreis zu erweitern, dazu, die eindrücke zu integrieren, kompliziertere gedankenverbindungen zu bewältigen. unser cabaret wird für jeden einzelnen genau das sein, was er an eindrücken davon heimzutragen vermag. alles spielt mit: fussboden, sitznachbar, garderobefrau, wir werden bewirken, dass wesentliches verschleiert wird, dass umstände im gedächtnis unserer zuschauer gespeichert werden, die er sonst immer so leicht übersieht.
unsere akteure werden keine illusion anderer personen bringen (wie stanislawskis schauspieler), aber sie werden auch andere personen nicht markieren (wie brechts darsteller). sie bleiben sie selbst, dennoch wird das publikum der illusion einer darstellung verfallen: das ist falsch und beabsichtigt. (wir werden die maschen zur übermasche knüpfen.)
wir wählen unsere akteure auf grund ihrer persönlichkeit. sie sind nicht imstande, ihre fähigkeiten zu verbergen. so erklärt es sich, dass auch 1 ausgebildeter schauspieler in unserem programm verwendung finden kann.
ideen, text und musik sind von achleitner, bayer, rühm und wiener.
friedrich achleitner, geboren am 23.5.1930 in schalchen (oberösterreich).
staatsgewerbeschule salzburg, diplom der akademie der bildenden künste, klasse holzmeister, vier semester bühnenbildnerei, tätig als freischaffender archtiekt bis juni 1958. veröffentlichungen in deutschen und österreichischen anthologien.
konrad bayer, geboren am 17.12.1932 in wien. humanistisches gymnasium in wien. bauhilfsarbeiter, bankangestellter, werkstudent psychologie (universität wien), barmusiker, quittierung des bankdienstes am 31.1.1958. unveröffentlicht.
antonis bredakis, student.
eva harand-schreiber, ballett-tänzerin.
hermann hendrich, techniker.
ortwin kirchmaier, journalist.
kiki kogelnik, malerin.
ernst kölz, komponist und blockflötist.
karl miessler, fussballprofessional.
christl novak, schülerin.
aino prethaler, künstlerin.
gerhard rühm, geboren am 12.2.1930 in wien. staatsakademie für musik in wien, klavier und komposition. studium der orientalischen musik in beiruth. lebt als freischaffender komponist und dichter, zahlreiche aufführungen seiner kompositionen (wiener musikfeste, deutschland, schweiz, paris, holland, schweden, norwegen), verlegt in der universaledition. veröffentlichungen in zeitschriften in österreich, deutschland und in der schweiz. ausstellung optischer wort- und lautgestaltungen in der galerie würthle, wien.
herbert schmid, schauspieler.
ingrid schuppan, bürofräulein.
birgit schwabbauer, bürofräulein.
oswald wiener, geboren am 5.10.1935 in wien. realgymnasium in wien. landwirtschaftlicher hilfsarbeiter, tellerwäscher, geschäftsdiener, dolmetsch, bauhilfsarbeiter, papierarbeiter, messgehilfe, dazwischen einige semester jus. im augenblick student (primitive musik, afrikanische sprachen). jazztrompeter. unveröffentlicht.
die kostüme schuf fräulein hanni rühm, kunstschülerin.

4.7 Vienna Group, "Literary Cabaret," 1959



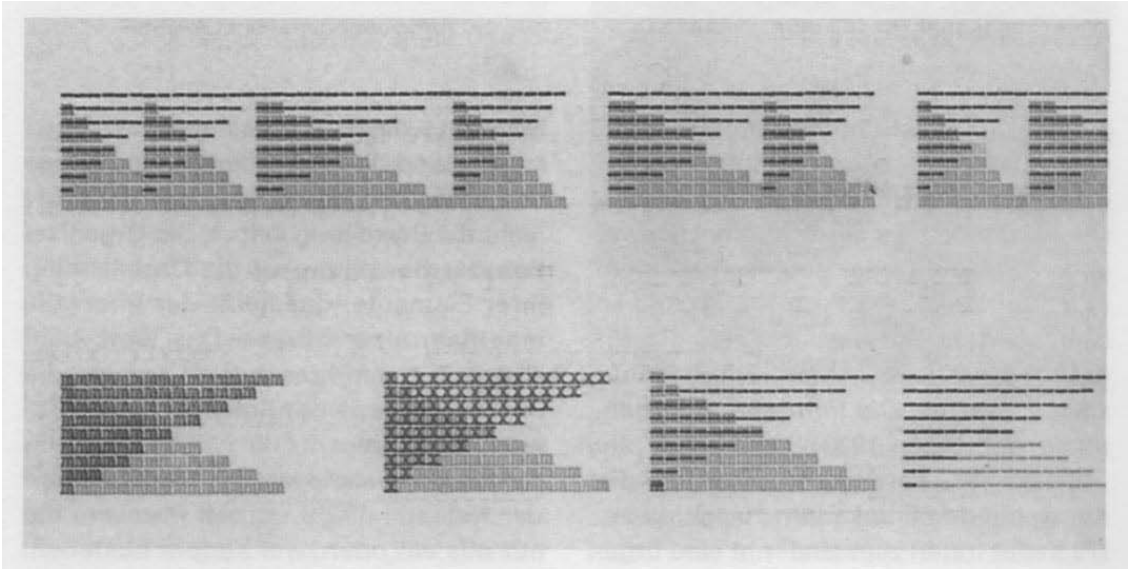


4.8 Friedrich Achleitner, “Constellations”
Top: “red instead of,” 1956
Bottom: “dew,” 1957

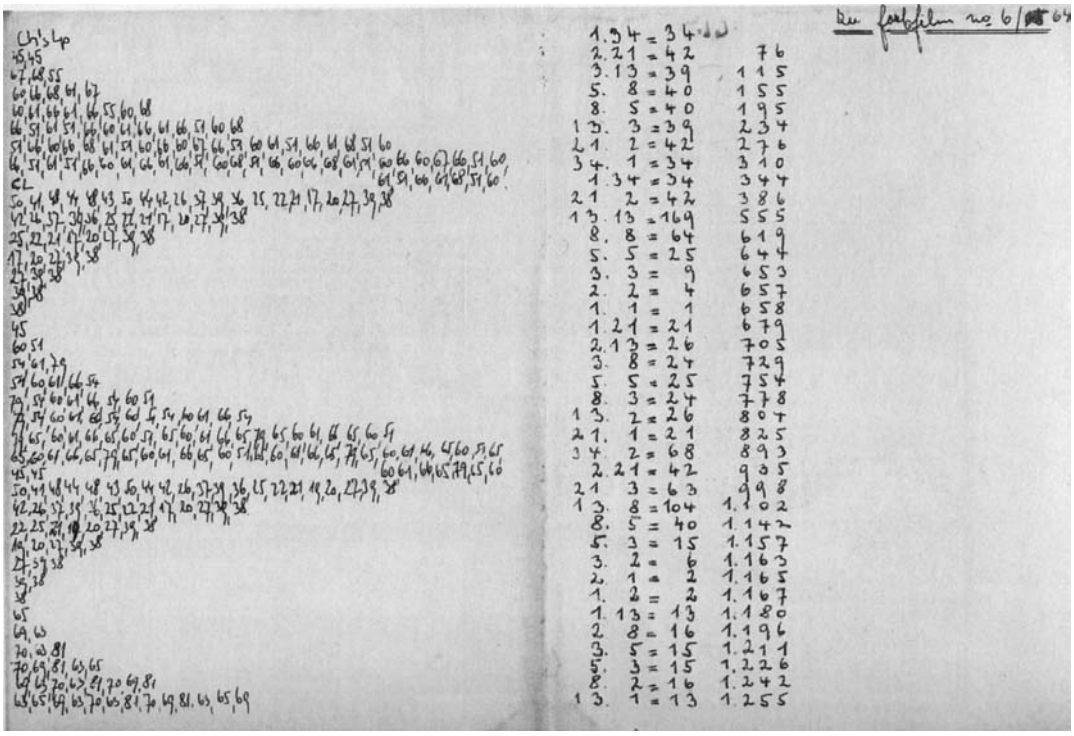


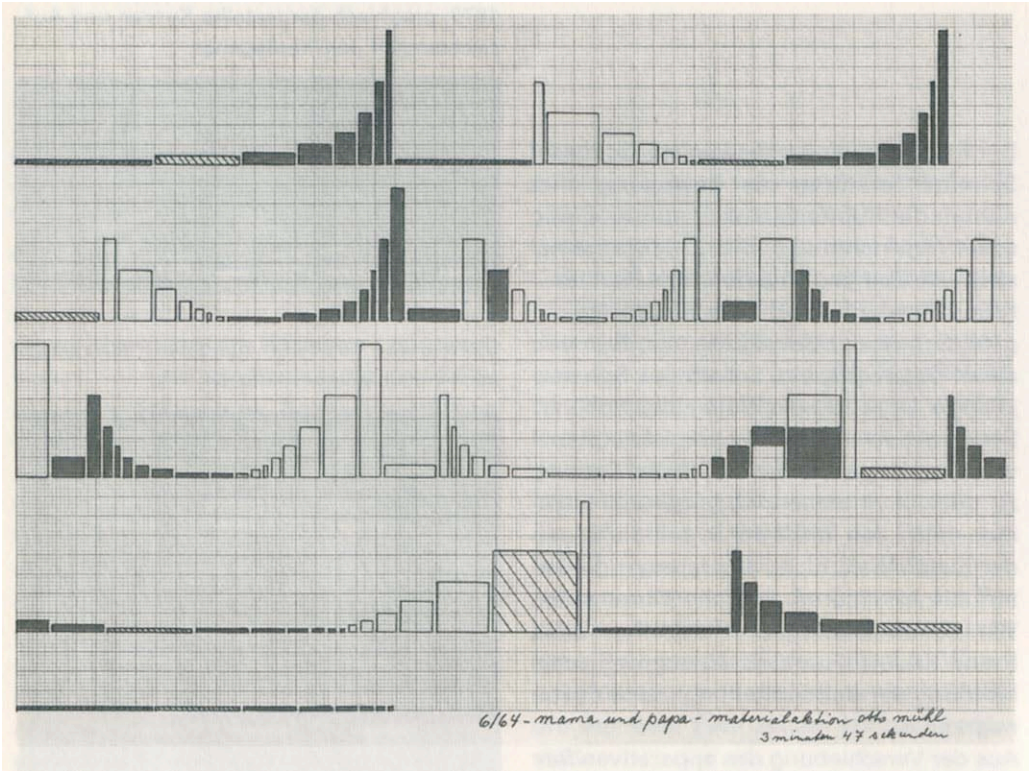
4.9 Konrad Bayer and Gerhard Rühm, diagram for "bit of bread," 1958



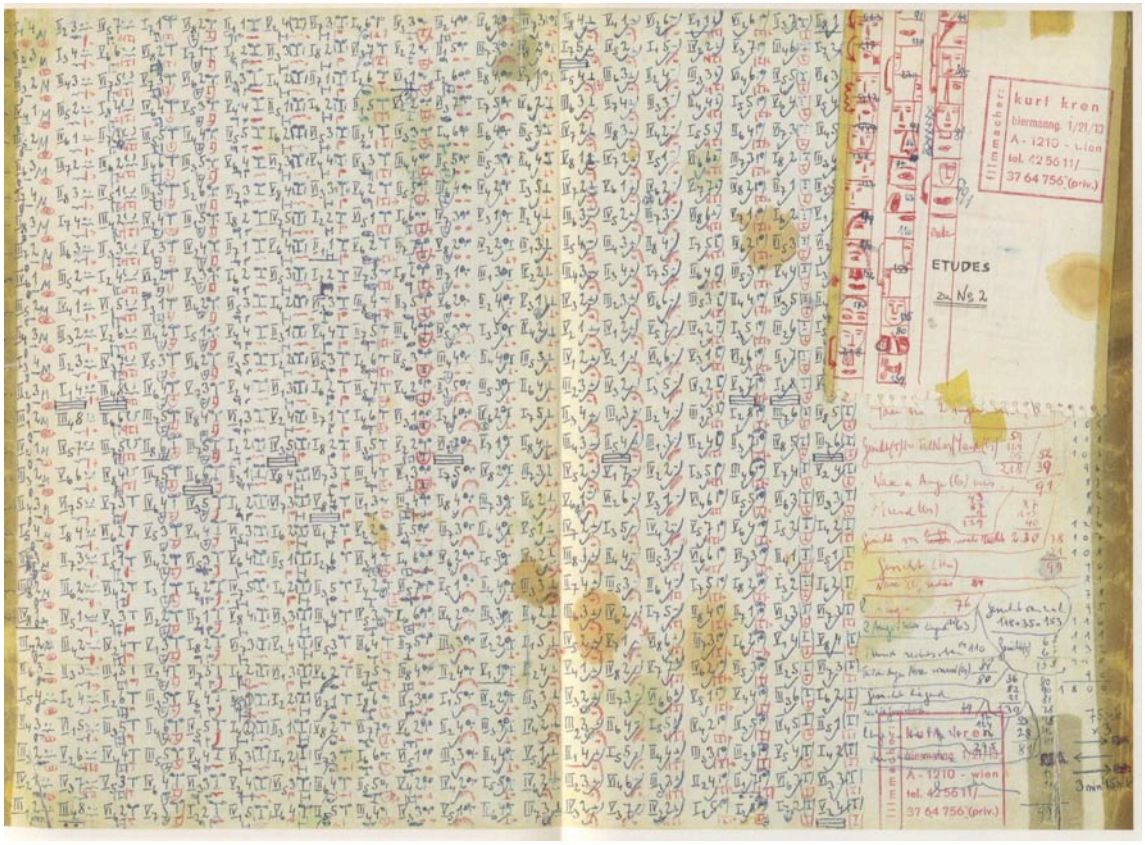


4.10 Peter Kubelka, *Arnulf Rainer*, 1960
Top: Frame View
Bottom: Editing Diagram



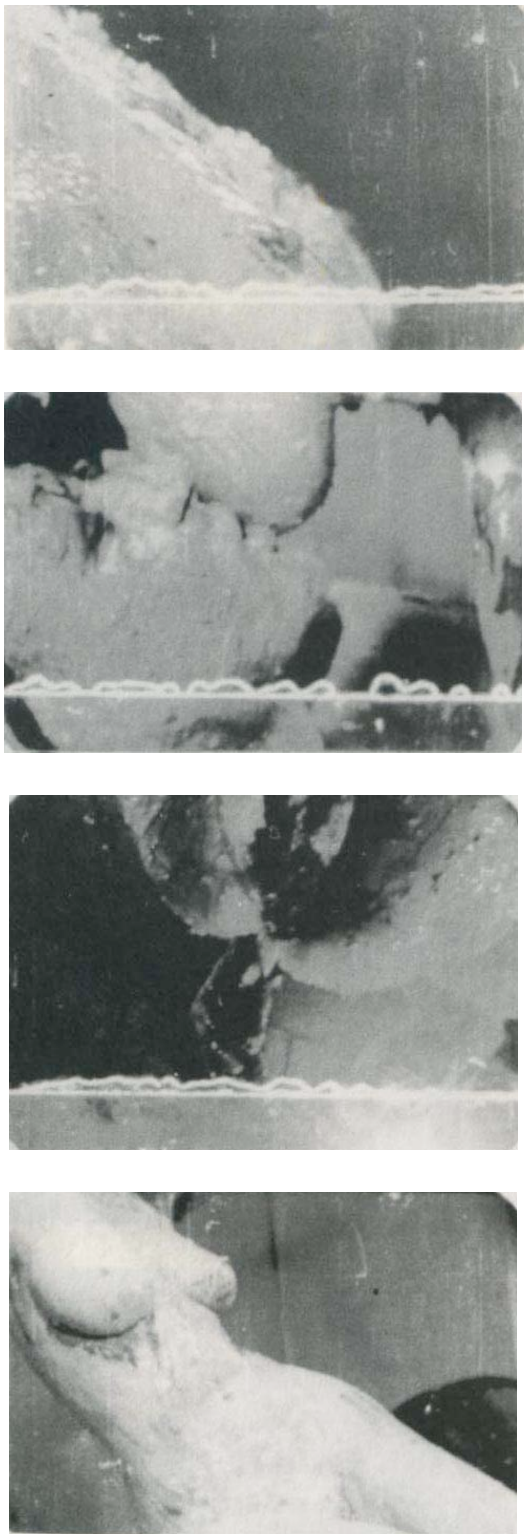


4.11 Kurt Kren, *6.64 Mama and Papa*, Editing Plans





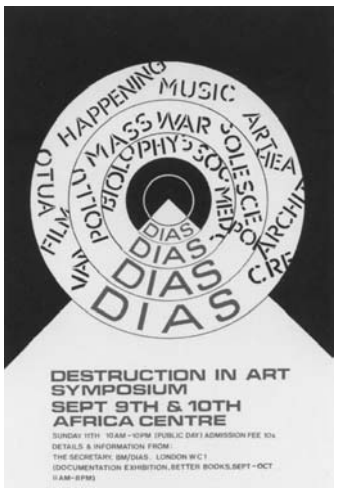
4.12 Top: Kurt Kren, *2/60 48 Heads from the Szondi Test*, 1960, Editing Plan
Bottom: Kurt Kren, *5/62 Onlookers, Trash etc.*, 1962, Still



4.13 Kurt Kren, *6.64 Mama and Papa*, Stills



4.14 Peter Kubelka et al., "Invisible Cinema"
Anthology Film Archives, New York City



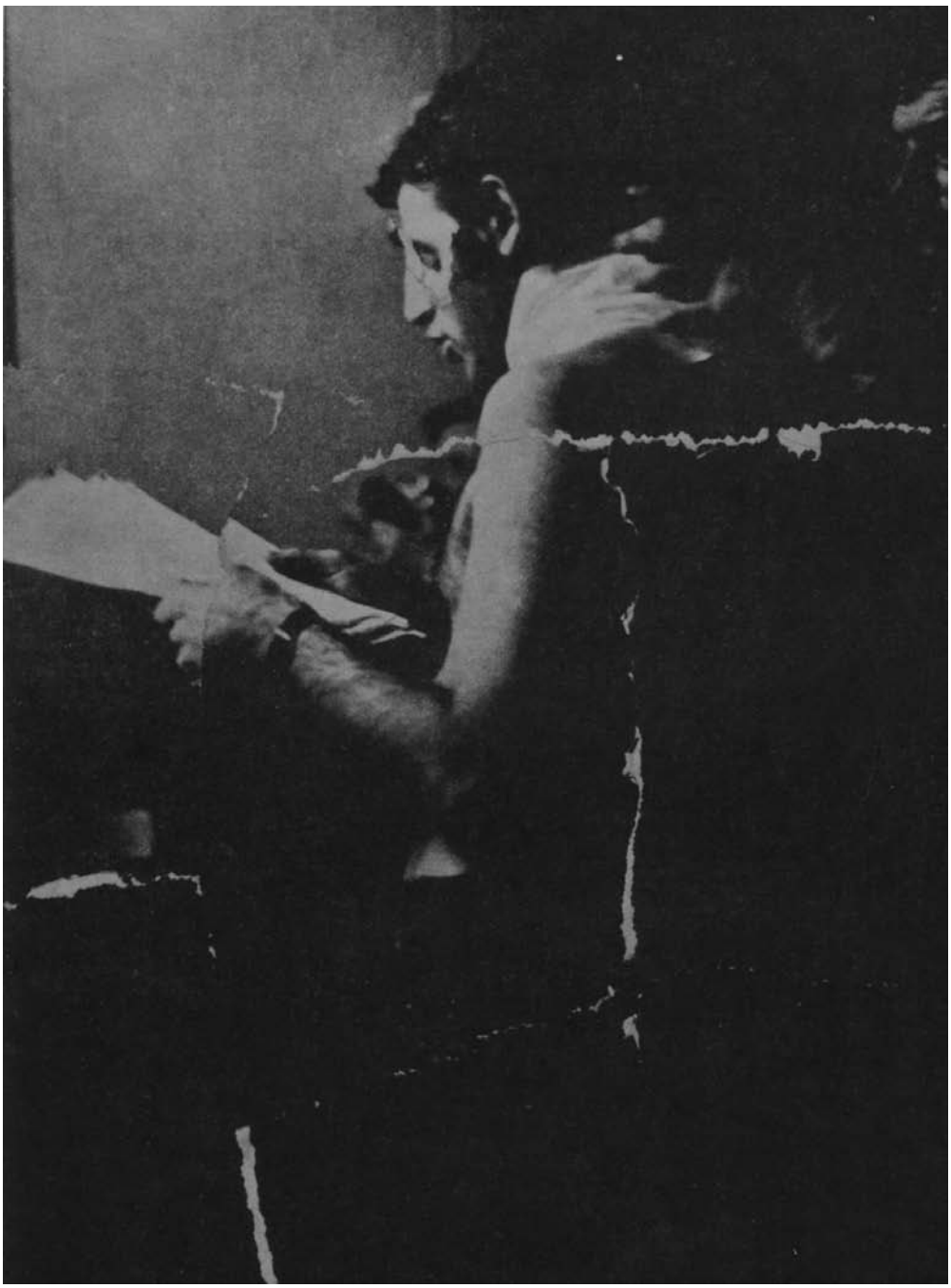
SYMPOSIUM

Africa Centre, 38 King Street, W C 2

	Chairman's Introduction
September 9th 3-5 pm	Ivor Davies: 'A Pattern of the Development of Destruction as Creation' . Jean Tinguely: 'Hommage to New York' - text of Museum of Modern Art, New York, statement - read by Fred Bazler. Reading of letters to the Symposium from Association Internationale pour L'Etude de Dada et du Surrealism; Internationale Situationniste, Paris; George Maciunas of Fluxus, New York. Text by George Maciunas: 'US Surpasses all Nazi Genocide Records! - read by Beverley Rowe. Dr Erling Eng: 'The Phenomology and Structure of the Obscenic'. Chair: Gustav Metzger
6-9 pm	Dom Sylvester Houedard: 'Apophatic Art' . Jean J Lebel: Speaks on Happenings . Aspects of Destruction in Art. A discussion with Francis Galton Chair: Ivor Davies
September 10th 11 am - 1.30 pm	Gustav Metzger: 'The Scientific Destruction of Science and Technology'. Bob Cobbing: 'The Destruction of the DIAS Exhibition'. John Latham: 'Event Structure and the English Dream'. Garry A Jones: 'Total Aesthetic' Anthony Scott: 'On Chopped Writing' Letters to the Symposium from: Felice Canonico and Simon Vinkenoog. Chair: Ivor Davies
2.30 - 5 pm	Henri Chopin: 'Tape Presentation' Werner Schreib: 'Pyrogravure' Peter Gorsen: 'Sexualitat im Spiegel der Modernen Kunst'- extracts read by Werner Schreib. Bernard Aubertin: Texts - read by Julien Blaine. Chair: Ivor Davies
5.30 - 7 pm	Peter Weibel: 'Film, Division of Labour and Direct Art'. Otto Muhl:'Translation - Action for Two Voices'. Gunter Brus: 'Head-Destruction'. Hermann Nitsch: 'Lecture on the O M Theatre'. Chair: Jean J Lebel
September 11th 10.30 am - 1 pm	Reading of Statements by Milan Knizak and other artists. Ralph Ortiz: Statements and Discussion Dr Joseph Berke: 'Man as Self-Destroying Art' . 'To Kill or not to Kill' - Discussion - Juan Hidalgo, Ralph Ortiz, Robin Page Chair: Ivor Davies
3-5 pm	Reading of Texts from their Publications Al Hansen: 'A Primer of Happenings & Time/Space Art' Juan Hidalgo: Group ZAJ Wolf Vostell: 'De/Collage Happenings'. Chair: Gustav Metzger
5.30-7.30 pm	Ivor Davies: 'The Realism of Self Contradiction' Pro-Diaz: On Art. Yoko Ono: Talk . Barbara Gladstone: 'Reflections of a Dancer' Biff Stevens: 'On Pneumatic Environments' Anthony Cox: 'Extracts from 'Lecture in the Dark' Dick Wilcocks: 'Destructive Poem' Chairman's concluding remarks. Chair: John Sharkey

Films and slides by Davies, Hansen, Kren, Latham, Nitsch, Ortiz, Page and Vostell were shown on the nights of September 10th and 11th.

4.15 *Destruction in Art Symposium*, London 1966



4.16 Peter Weibel, *Action-Lecture "Proposals on Non-Affirmative Art"*, 1966



SPECIAL ISSUE

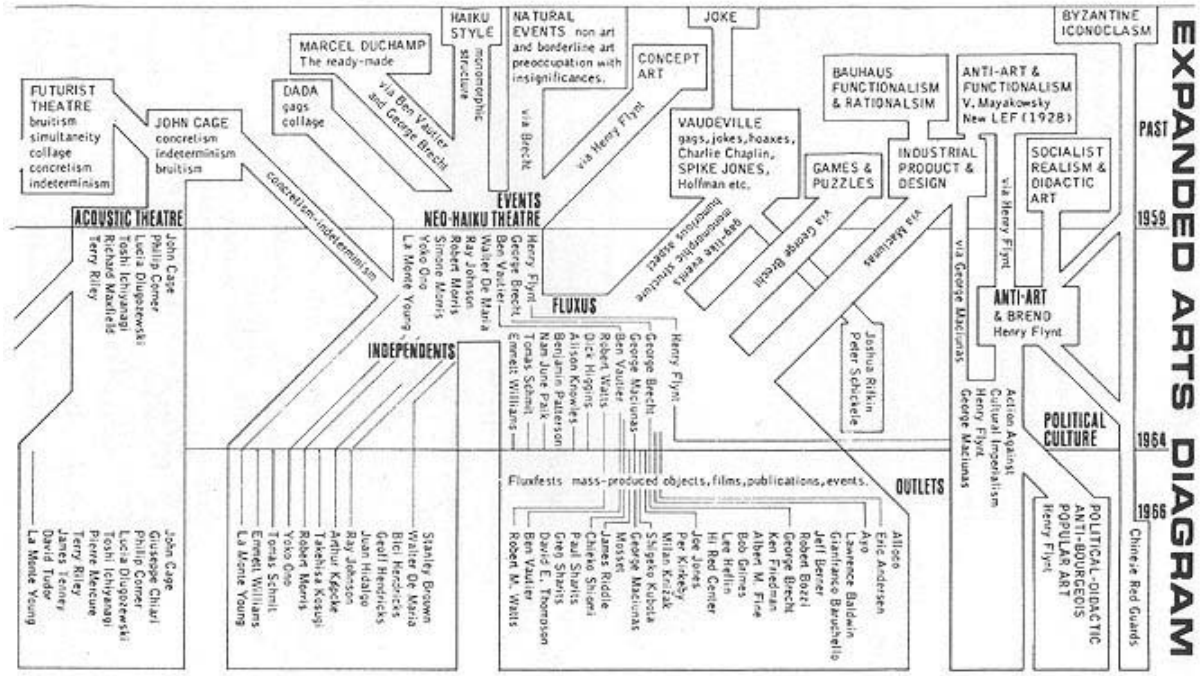
Film Culture -

HAPPENINGS, NEO-BAROQUE THEATRE, EXPANDED CINEMA, KINESTHETIC THEATRE, ACOUSTIC THEATRE

INTRODUCTION

EXPANDED CINEMA: A SYMPOSIUM AT THE XX FILM FESTIVAL 1966

PANEL MEMBERS: KEN DEWEY, HENRY GELDZAHLER, JOHN GRUEN, STAN VANDERBEEK & ROBERT WHITMAN.



4.17 *Film Culture* 43, Special Issue on "Expanded Arts," Winter 1966



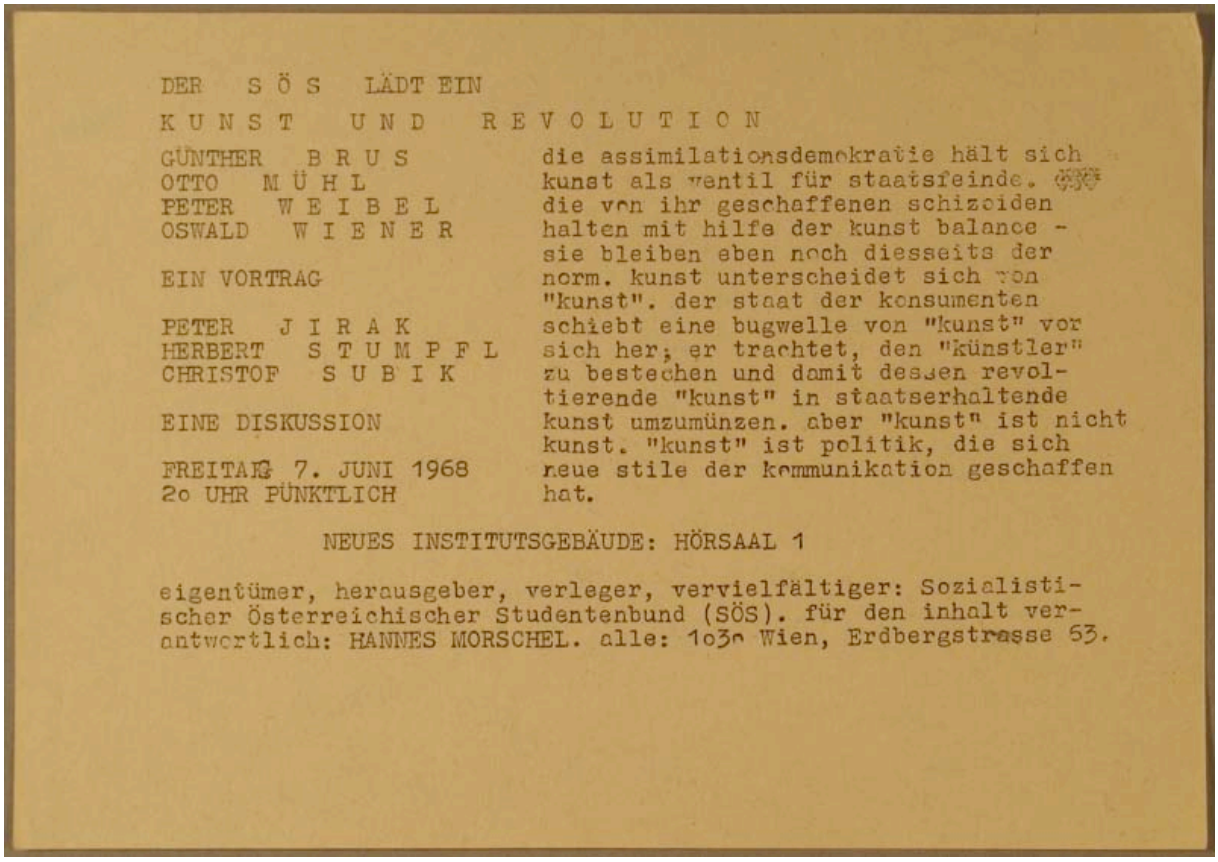


4.18 ***Action Concert for Al Hansen*****, 1966**
Top: Peter Weibel
Bottom: Oswald Wiener





4.19 *Zock Festival*, 1967



DER S Ö S LÄDT EIN

K U N S T U N D R E V O L U T I O N

GÜNTHER B R U S
OTTO M Ü H L
PETER W E I B E L
OSWALD W I E N E R

EIN VORTRAG

PETER J I R A K
HERBERT S T U M P F L
CHRISTOF S U B I K

EINE DISKUSSION

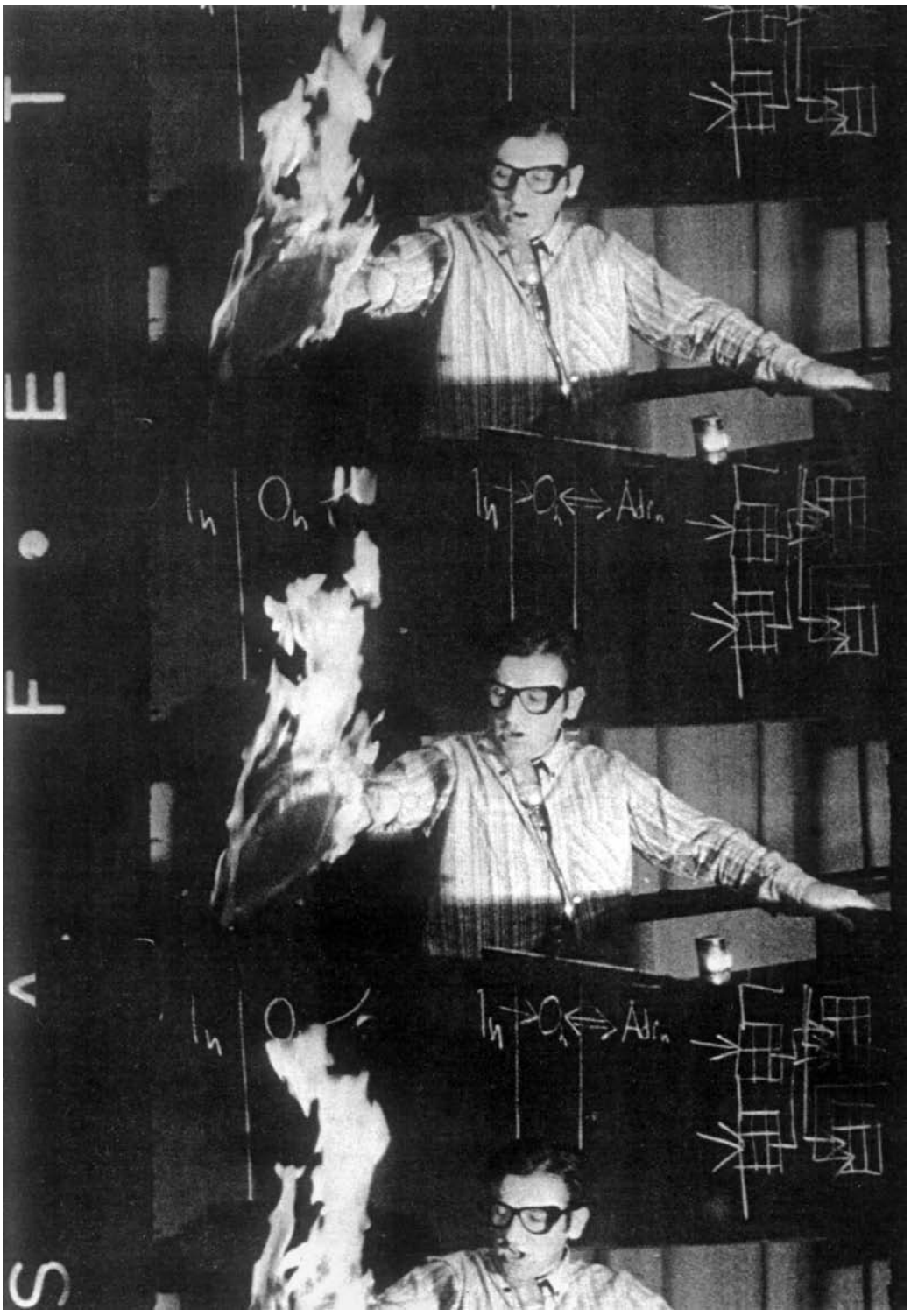
FREITAG 7. JUNI 1968
2o UHR PÜNKTLICH

die assimilationsdemokratie hält sich kunst als ventil für staatsfeinde. ☆☆☆ die von ihr geschaffenen schizoiden halten mit hilfe der kunst balance - sie bleiben eben noch diesseits der norm. kunst unterscheidet sich von "kunst". der staat der konsumenten schiebt eine bugwelle von "kunst" vor sich her; er trachtet, den "künstler" zu bestechen und damit dessen revoltierende "kunst" in staatserhaltende kunst umzumünzen. aber "kunst" ist nicht kunst. "kunst" ist politik, die sich neue stile der kommunikation geschaffen hat.

NEUES INSTITUTSGEBÄUDE: HÖRSAAL 1

eigentümer, herausgeber, verleger, vervielfältiger: Sozialistischer Österreichischer Studentenbund (SÖS). für den inhalt verantwortlich: HANNES MORSCHEL. alle: 1o3o Wien, Erdbergstrasse 53.

4.20 Flyer, *art and revolution*, 1968
(Courtesy of MUMOK Archives, Vienna)



4.21 Peter Weibel, *Inflammatory Speech*, 1968





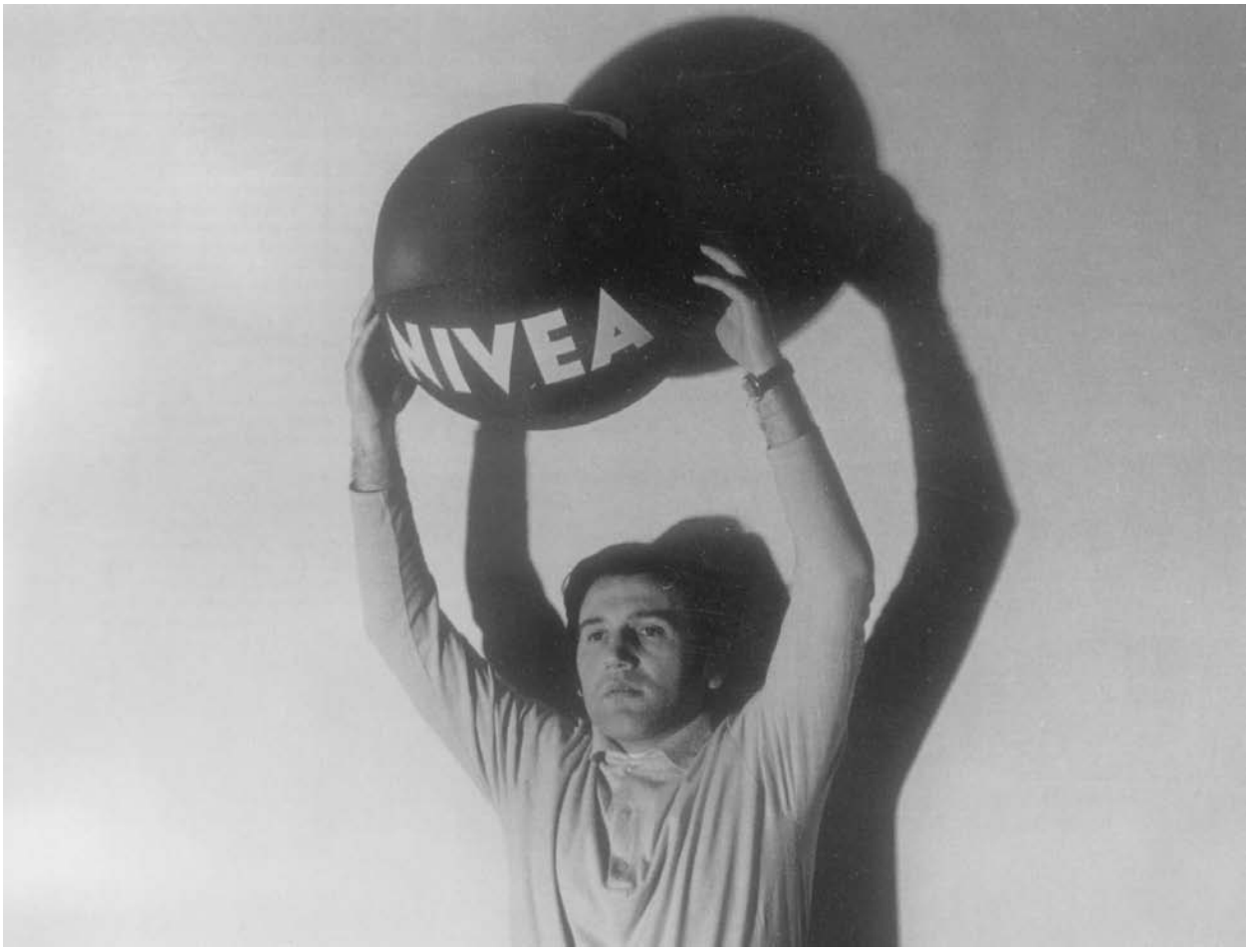
4.22 *art and revolution*, 1968
Top: Oswald Wiener (L), Günter Brus (on chair)
Bottom: Wiener (L), Brus (prone), Mühl et al. (standing)



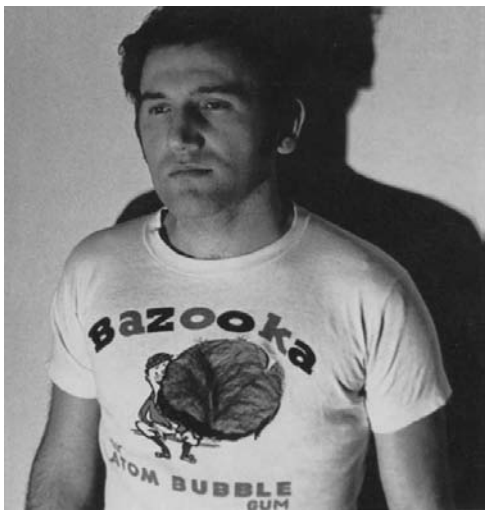




4.23 Top: Kommune Wien, Protest, October 1967
Center: Action by "The Comedians" (VSStÖ), 1968
Bottom: VSStÖ March to Springer Verlag Offices, April 1968



4.24 Peter Weibel, *Nivea*, 1966









4.25 VALIE EXPORT and Peter Weibel, *Cutting*, 1967-68



4.26 Top: VALIE EXPORT and Peter Weibel, *Instant Film*, 1968
Bottom: Peter Weibel, *Action Lecture No. 3*, 1968

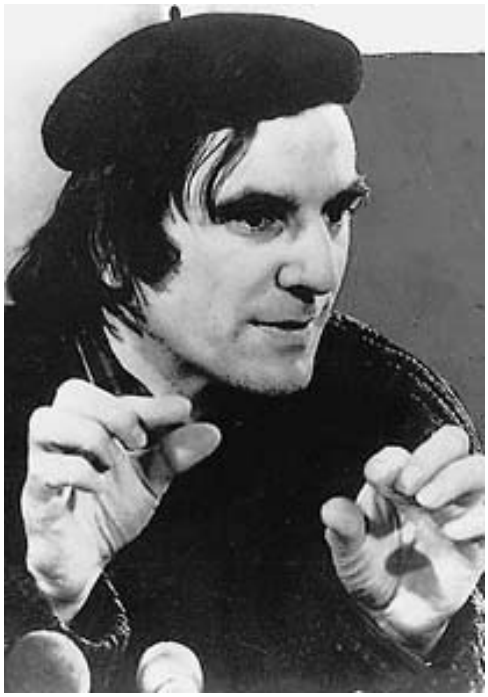


4.27 VALIE EXPORT, *Tap- and Touch-Cinema*, 1968

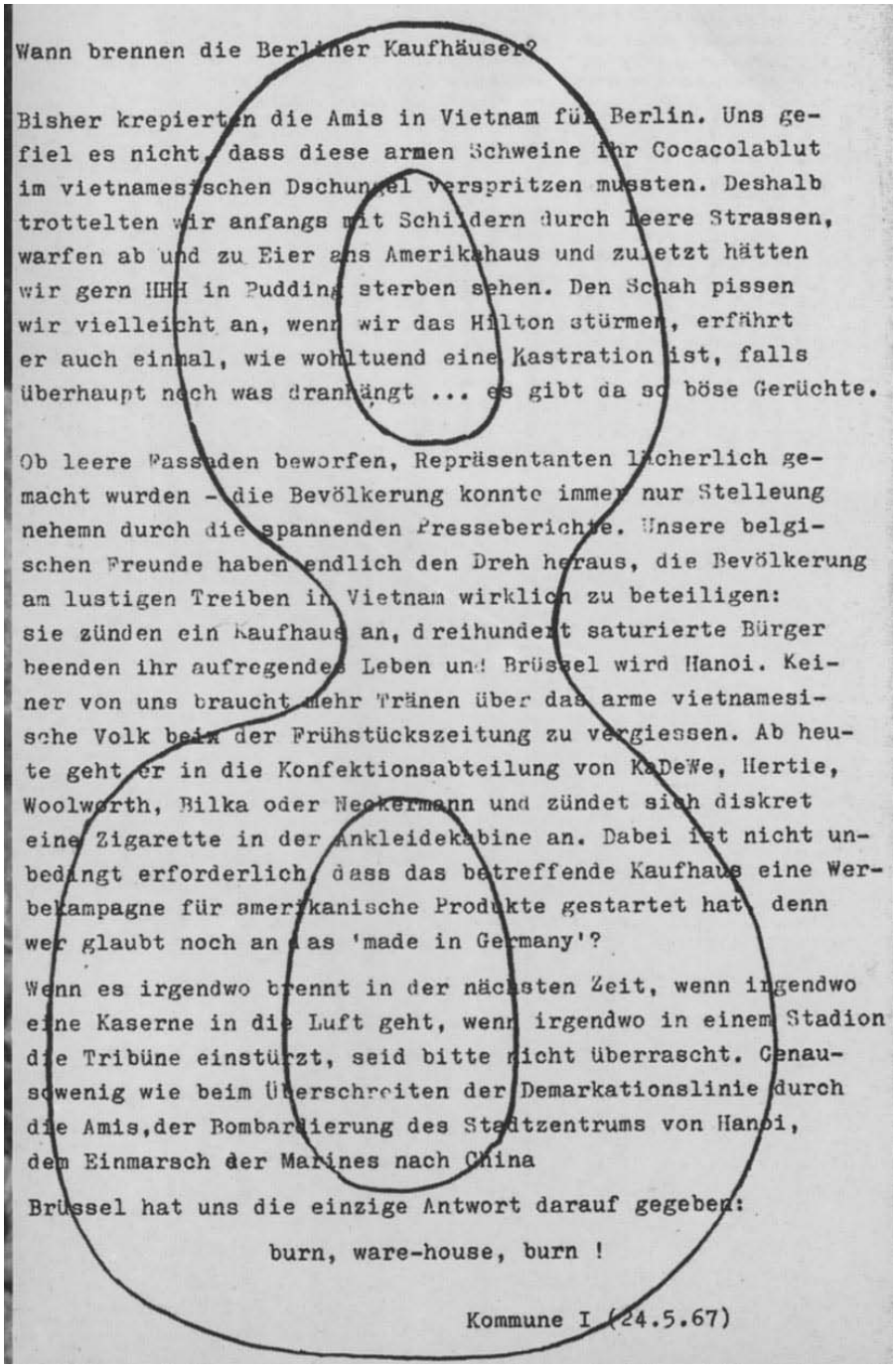




5.1 SDS Sit-in, Henry Ford Building, Freie Universität Berlin, June 1966



5.2 Rudi Dutschke



Wann brennen die Berliner Kaufhäuser?

Bisher krepierten die Amis in Vietnam für Berlin. Uns gefiel es nicht, dass diese armen Schweine ihr Cocacolablut im vietnamesischen Dschungel verspritzen mussten. Deshalb trottelten wir anfangs mit Schildern durch leere Strassen, warfen ab und zu Eier ans Amerikahaus und zuletzt hätten wir gern HHH in Pudding sterben sehen. Den Schah pissen wir vielleicht an, wenn wir das Hilton stürmen, erfährt er auch einmal, wie wohltuend eine Kastration ist, falls überhaupt noch was dranhängt ... es gibt da so böse Gerüchte.

Ob leere Fassaden beworfen, Repräsentanten lächerlich gemacht wurden - die Bevölkerung konnte immer nur Stellung nehemn durch die spannenden Presseberichte. Unsere belgischen Freunde haben endlich den Dreh heraus, die Bevölkerung am lustigen Treiben in Vietnam wirklich zu beteiligen: sie zünden ein Kaufhaus an, dreihundert saturierte Bürger beenden ihr aufregendes Leben und Brüssel wird Hanoi. Keiner von uns braucht mehr Tränen über das arme vietnamesische Volk beim der Frühstückszeitung zu vergiessen. Ab heute geht er in die Konfektionsabteilung von KaDeWe, Hertie, Woolworth, Bilka oder Neckermann und zündet sich diskret eine Zigarette in der Ankleidekabine an. Dabei ist nicht unbedingt erforderlich, dass das betreffende Kaufhaus eine Werbekampagne für amerikanische Produkte gestartet hat, denn wer glaubt noch an das 'made in Germany'?

Wenn es irgendwo brennt in der nächsten Zeit, wenn irgendwo eine Kaserne in die Luft geht, wenn irgendwo in einem Stadion die Tribüne einstürzt, seid bitte nicht überrascht. Genauso wenig wie beim Überschreiten der Demarkationslinie durch die Amis, der Bombardierung des Stadtzentrums von Hanoi, dem Einmarsch der Marines nach China

Brüssel hat uns die einzige Antwort darauf gegeben:

burn, ware-house, burn !

Kommune I (24.5.67)

5.3 Kommune I Flyer, May 1967



5.4 Fritz Teufel and Rainer Langhans, Berlin, May 1967



Großer Andrang vor dem Gerichtsgebäude.

Teufel-Freunde: Man vertreibt sich die Zeit mit Seifenblasen.

Langhans (rechts) kam zuerst nicht rein: Vorladung vergessen.

Teufel-prozeß

Weiße Mäuse blieben in der Handtasche

Von LUTZ HORST Berlin, 7. Juli

Schüsse fielen vor der FU. Professoren bestimmen gestern zwei „Kommune"-Studenten, Fritz Teufel (24) und Rainer Langhans (22), standen unter der Anklage vor Gericht, in Flugblättern zur Brandstiftung in Kaufhäusern aufgerufen zu haben — zum „Flächen-Bombardement". Ziel der Tenbit: Die öffentliche Meinung gegen den Vietnam-Krieg aufzuheizen.

Die Professoren aber sagten als Gutachter: „Diese Flugblätter sind klare Satire, Surrealismus, Op-Art."

Unter anderem Professor Wapnewski: „Vom literarischen Wert oder Stil will ich nicht reden. Aber der Inhalt ist wie absurdes Theater."

Vergleichend: „Das Götz-Zitat würde ja auch niemand als Aufforderung zur Bereitschaft und bekömmliche Speise." Taubes: „Niemand hat daraufhin Kinder gegessen."

Professor Eberhard: „Die Texte waren zum Teil geschmacklos und ärgerlich. Außerdem wurde die Tatsache falsch eingeschätzt, daß Verständnis für Satire in Deutschland nicht ausgeprägt ist."

Der Richter hatte ein: „Meinen Sie nicht, daß man die Flugblätter doch für bare Münze nehmen könnte?"

Eberhard: „Vielleicht Senatoren, Polizisten! Vielleicht auch andere Menschen?" Er bildet dabei auf den Elefantenwitz.

Die Angeklagten — sie haben ihre nicht und zwölf Semester Publizistik (Teufel) und Tiefenpsychologie (Langhans) hinter sich — entpuppen sich als Söhne bester Familien.

Nicht wegen dieses Falles, sondern weil er bei Demonstrationen mit Steinen geworfen haben soll.)

Auch Student Langhans stapft zurück. „Wir wollen keine bürgerkriegsähnlichen Zustände schaffen." Er entpuppt sich als Bundeswehr-Fähnrich der Reserve.

PHOENIX Elektro-Schweißgeräte

Bei beiden merkt man unverschwitzt, sie sind der Meinung, hier von vornherein „verloren" zu sein. Manche Antwort kommt unhöflig — patzig.

Richter: „Wie lebt man denn so in einer Kommune?" Antwort: „Besuchen Sie uns doch mal."

Richter: „Im medizinischen Gutachten steht etwas von sexuellen Störungen. Wie zeigen sich die?" Gegenfrage: „Haben Sie da keine?"

Aus dem Zuhörerraum prustete die Zwischenrufe. „Grüß dich, Fritz!" Teufel grüßt zurück: „Grüß dich."

„Denunziant!" So zu einem Studenten, der die Kommune angezeigt hat.

„Man hat Sie gerade falsch genannt." So eine Zuhörerin

Frottéehemd, Locken, Nickelbrille: Angeklagter Langhans.

Die Angeklagten im Zwiegespräch: Teufel (links), Langhans und Studenten-Anwalt Mahler. Er war gut vorbereitet.



Fliehen Sie im Folgenden auf den Stuhl!

Fritz Teufel wollte im Gericht frühstücken

Vorsitzender: Packen Sie das wieder ein ● Zeugen belasteten Polizisten schwer

Von HORST ZYLKA

Berlin, 12. Dezember

„Ich bin sehr daran interessiert, daß dieser Prozeß nicht zu langweilig wird."

Den Beweis für diese Behauptung lieferte Kommunarde Fritz Teufel (24) gestern in Moabit selbst. Aus einem geflochtenen Picknick-Korb begann er während einer Zeugenvernehmung auszupacken: ein weißes Deckchen, ein Frühstücksbrötchen ...

Vorsitzender: „Was ist das?"

Teufel: „Ich habe nämlich noch nicht gefrühstückt."

Verteidiger Horst Mahler: „Könnten wir eine Pause einlegen?"

Vorsitzender zu Teufel: „Das ist nicht meine Sache, wenn Sie noch nicht gefrühstückt haben. Packen Sie das ein."

In schwere Bedrängnis kam im ernsthaften Teil des Tages der Polizist, der an Teufels Festnahme beteiligt war — und der gesehen haben will, daß der Kommunarde mit Steinen geworfen hat.

Ein Demonstrant, der am 2. Juni ebenfalls von dem Oberwachtmeister festgenommen worden war:

Mit Füßen getreten

„Ich bin von dem Polizisten nicht gleich zum Gefangenenwagen gebracht worden, sondern in einem Winkel an der Oper mißhandelt worden. Mehrere Polizisten haben mich mit Füßen getreten und einer hat gedroht: Wenn du noch ein Wort sagst, schlage ich dich tot!"

Ein ausländischer Journalist, der die Szene durch eine Fensterscheibe beobachtet hatte, bestätigte die Tritte.

Oberwachtmeister H.: „Ich kann mich nicht erinnern. Ich war in einem Ausnahmezustand." Und später: „Ich habe von Mißhandlungen nichts gesehen."

Die Glaubwürdigkeit dieses Polizisten sah auch der Vorsitzende als erschüttert an: „Er weiß einfache Dinge nicht mehr, erinnert sich aber genau an die Vorgänge um den Angeklagten."

„Achtung, Achtung! Hier spricht die Polizei. Räumen Sie bitte die südliche Fahrbahn der Bismarckstraße!"

Diese Lautsprecher-Durchsage verblüffte gestern nachmittag die Passanten auf der Turmstraße vor dem Krimi-

Im Gericht gegen das

Auf Plakaten und Flugblättern stern die Studenten der FU a heutige Verhandlung im Krimina bit gegen die „Kommune"-Mitg und Langhans wegen fortgesetzter zur menschengefährdenden Brau besuchen. An der Mensa stand der Aufschrift: „Gebt den Teufel er los." Ein „go-in", die nächs suchsdemonstration, wurde ASTA und SDS riefen auf Flug blättern ebenfalls zu einem De richtsverhandlung und Urteilsver



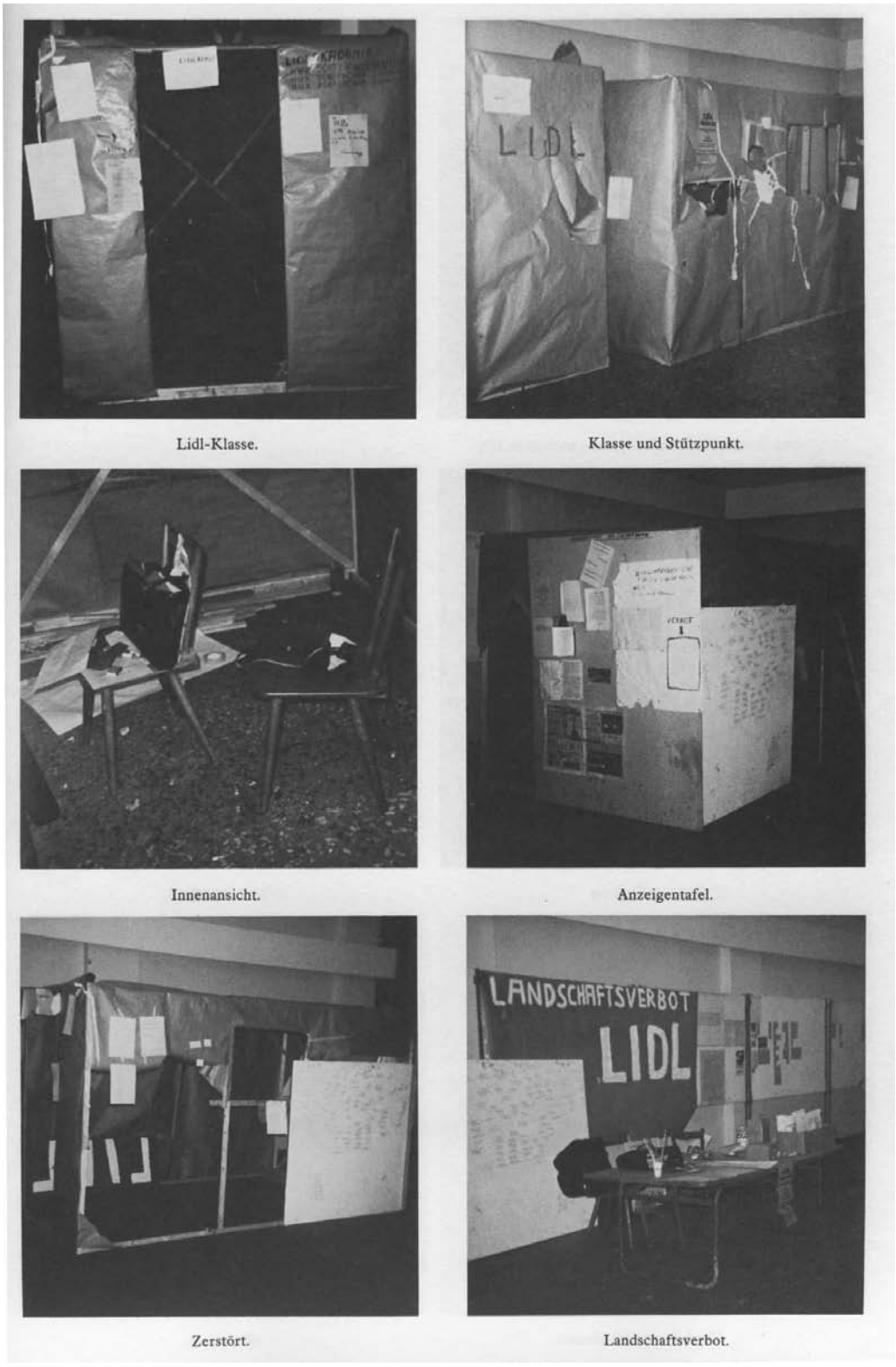
5.6 Celebratory "Happening" Following Teufel/Langhans Acquittal
Center: Andreas Baader Right: Rainer Langhans



5.7 Joseph Beuys and Students Announce Founding of German Student Party
Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, June 1967



5.8 LIDL Flag atop Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, December 1968



Lidl-Klasse. Klasse und Stützpunkt.

Innenansicht. Anzeigentafel.

Zerstört. Landschaftsverbot.

5.9 Views of LIDL Academy Classrooms
Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, December 1968



5.10 Eviction of LIDL Academy Supporters
Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, 1968



5.11 Kampf dem Atomtod March, West Berlin, Easter 1958



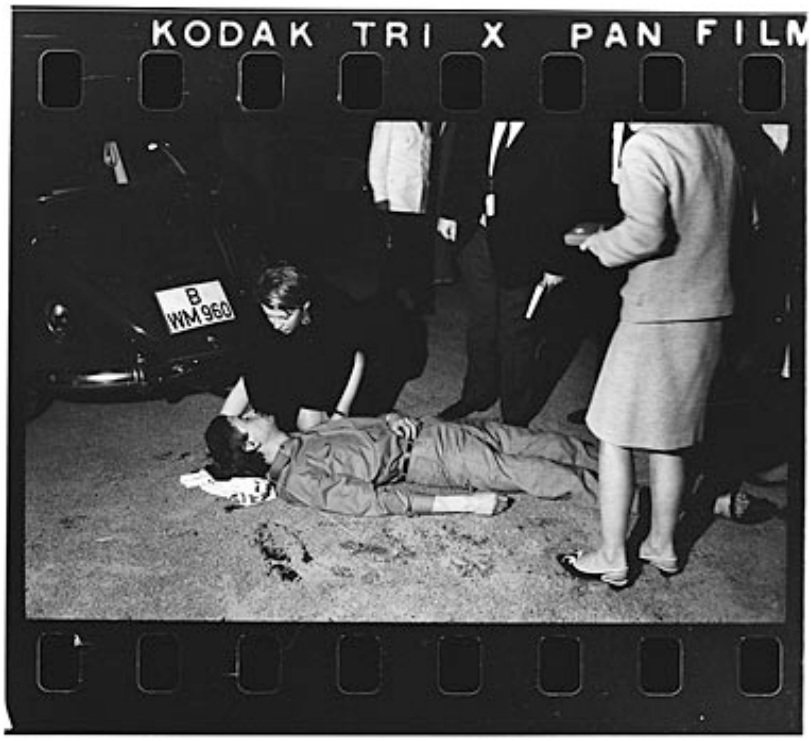
5.12 Rudi Dutschke Addresses International Vietnam Congress Berlin, February 1968



5.13 Ernst Bloch, "Democracy Before Emergency," Frankfurt, 1965



5.14 Poster Protesting State Visit by Shah Reza Pahlavi, 1967



5.15 Murder of Benno Ohnesorg, June 1967



5.16 Protest March Following Ohnesorg's Murder, June 1967



5.17 Aftermath of Dutschke Shooting, April 1968

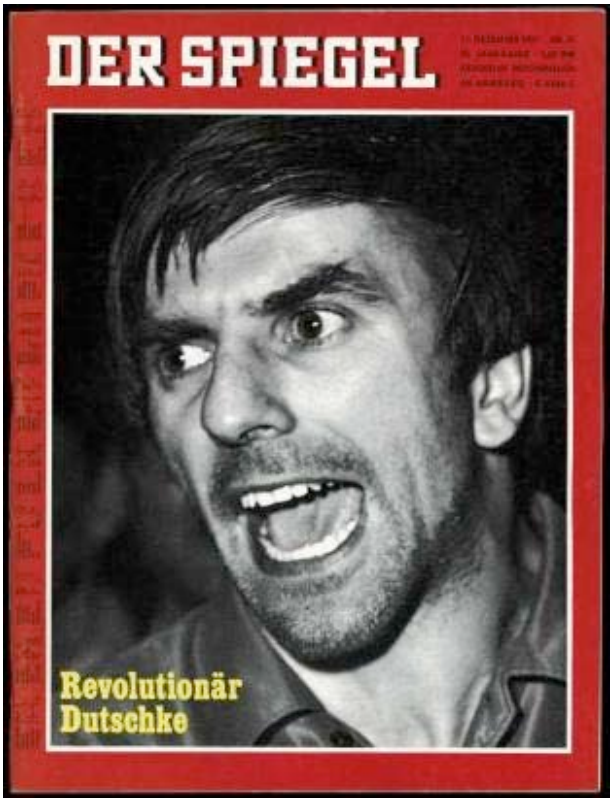




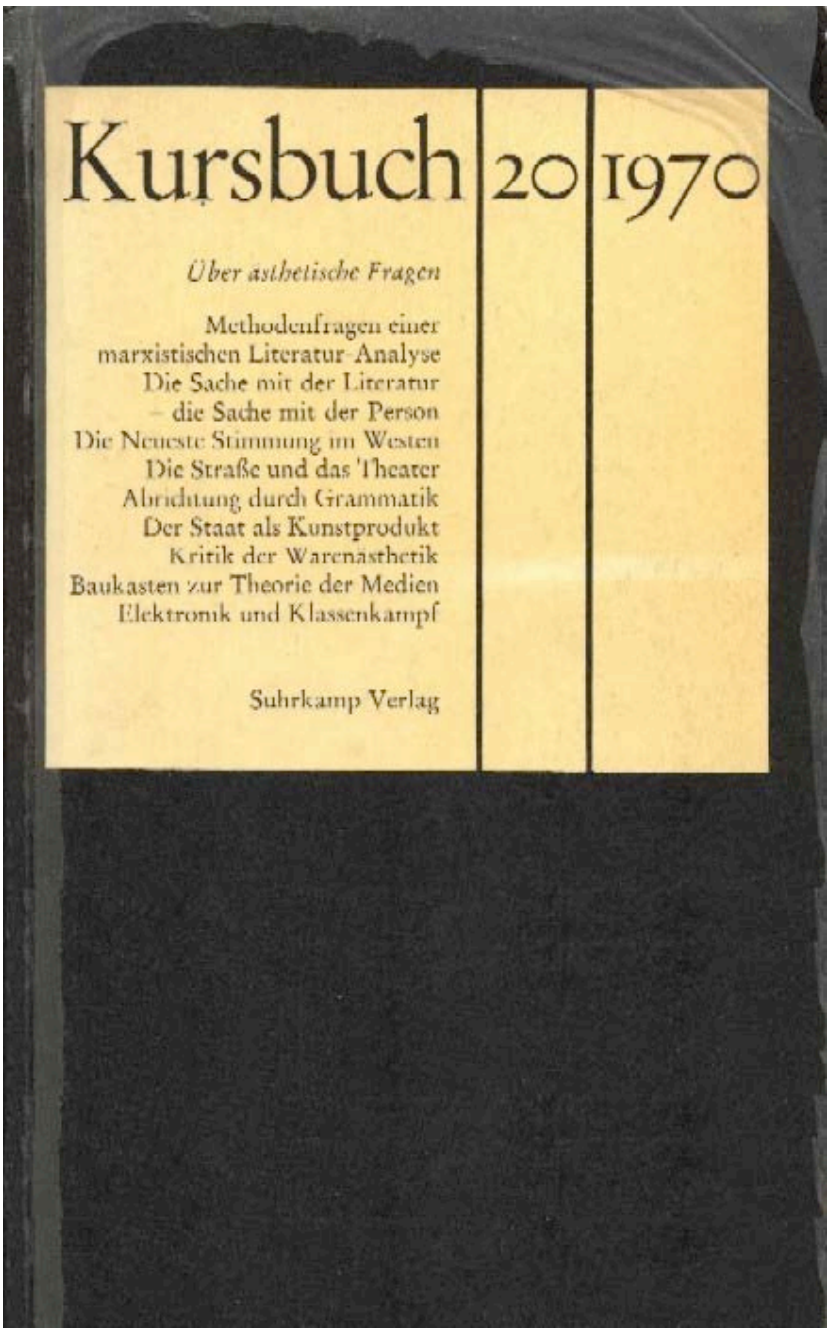
5.18 Anti-Springer Riots Following Dutschke Shooting, April 1968



5.19 "Battle of Tegeler Weg," Berlin, November 1968



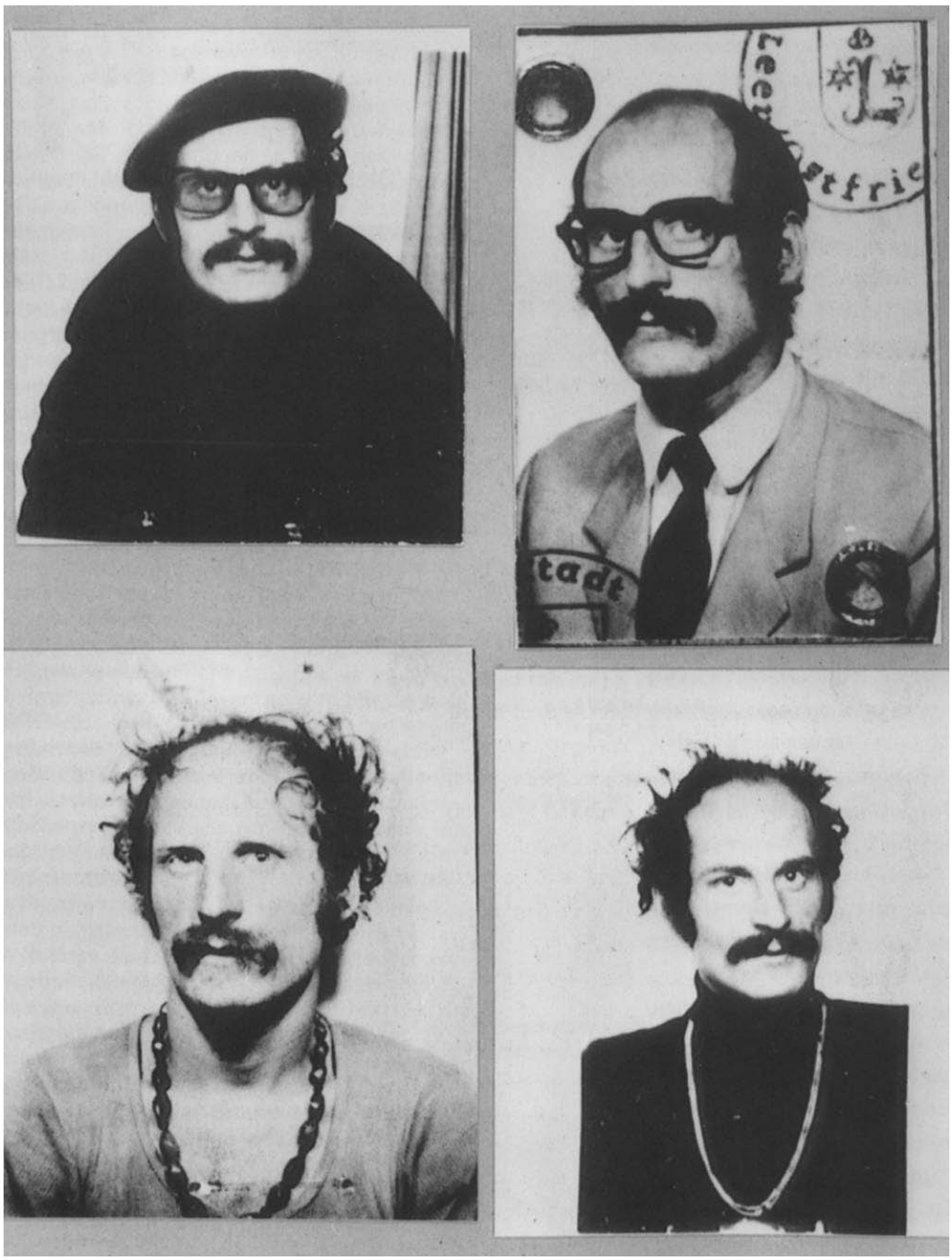
5.20 *Der Spiegel*, December 1967



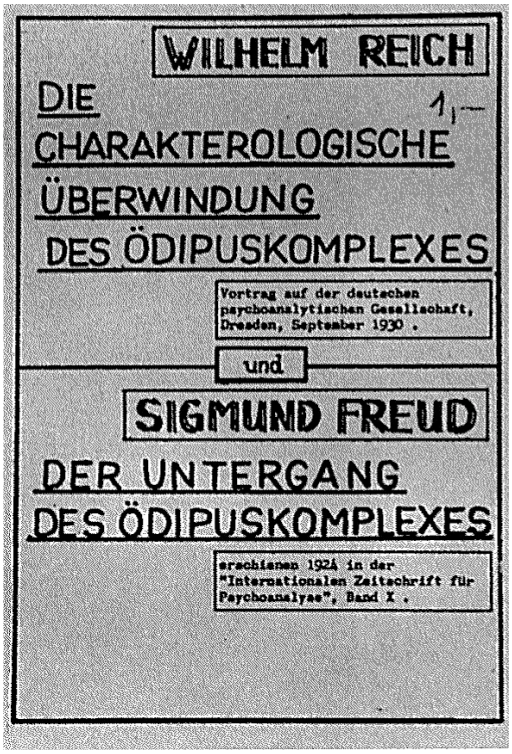
5.21 *Kursbuch*, Special Issue "On Aesthetic Questions," 1970



5.22 Fritz Teufel Inside Kommune I



5.23 Dieter Kunzelmann



5.24 Republished Edition of Wilhelm Reich



5.25 *popopo*



5.26 *konkret*, September 1968



5.27 "File Number XY... Unsolved"



5.28 Joseph Beuys, *We Are the Revolution* (1972)



5.29 Joseph Beuys, *Sweeping Up* (1972)



5.30 Joseph Beuys, Prop, *The Silence of Marcel Duchamp is Overrated* (1964)

DEUTSCHE STUDENTENPARTEI

PROTOKOLL DER GRÜNDUNGSVERSAMMLUNG VOM 22. JUNI 1967
(angefertigt von Johannes Stüttgen)

Am 22. Juni 1967, 16.oo Uhr, fand unter Vorsitz von Professor Joseph Beuys in Düsseldorf die Gründungsversammlung der DEUTSCHEN STUDENTENPARTEI statt. Außer den dieses Protokoll unterzeichnenden Mitgliedern nahmen viele Studenten und Journalisten an der Versammlung teil.

Die Notwendigkeit der neuen Partei, deren wesentliches Anliegen die Erziehung aller Menschen zur geistigen Mündigkeit ist, wurde vor allem angesichts der akuten Bedrohung durch die am Materialismus orientierte, ideenlose Politik und der damit verbundenen Stagnation ausdrücklich herausgestellt. Dementsprechend mussten Fragen nach einem sich innerhalb des üblichen politischen Rahmens befindlichen Programm zurückgewiesen werden. Die Partei, die sich zum Grundgesetz in seiner reinen Form bekennt und grundsätzlich für die Menschenrechte eintritt, deren Voraussetzung sie in der uneingeschränkten Bereitschaft der Menschen zu der Verwirklichung ihrer Pflichten sieht, arbeitet für die notwendige Erweiterung des Bewusstseins mit geistigen, vernünftigen Methoden, also fortschrittlich für den Fortschritt, also menschlich, und betonte deshalb die Radikalität ihrer Forderungen nach grundlegender Erneuerung aller herkömmlichen Formen im Leben und Denken der Menschen. Echte Auseinandersetzung sei - so Beuys - nötig, aber nur auf geistiger, künstlerischer Ebene möglich. Nur im Kampf der Ideen vollzöge sich Demokratie und ernstes, menschliches Tun. Utilitaristische, bloss wirtschaftlich bestimmte Ziele haben ebenso wie jeglicher Egoismus überhaupt hinter den künstlerischen Forderungen des Augenblicks, somit der Geschichte, prinzipiell zurückzustehen und müssten letztlich völlig abgebaut werden. Nur die Spitze sei der Maßstab für menschenwürdiges Handeln. Dies sei das Interesse aller Menschen im eigentlichen Sinne, deren Anwaltschaft deshalb auch die DEUTSCHE STUDENTENPARTEI übernehmen wolle. Sie vertritt die Menschen - so verstanden - überall, also auch in der Politik, die sich dahingehend verändern möchte, und kann von allen gewählt werden. Jeder ist zur Mitarbeit aufgefordert.
Auf Fragen nach konkreten Zielen nannte Beuys u.a. absolute Waffenlosigkeit, ein geeinigtes Europa, die Selbstverwaltung autonomer Glieder wie Recht - Kultur - Wirtschaft, die Erarbeitung neuer Gesichtspunkte zur Erziehung. Lehre, Forschung, die Auflösung der Abhängigkeit von Ost und West, wies jedoch ausdrücklich immer wieder auf den allesumfassenden Zusammenhang hin, der im Prinzip klar ist, im einzelnen aber konkret erarbeitet werden muss, und ohne den alle genannten Ziele lediglich weitere Missverständnisse wären. Folgerichtig sei das Programm selbst die unendliche, täglich getane und immer bevorstehende Arbeit der Partei. Diese Arbeit setze bei jedem an sich selbst und seinem engsten Kreis an. Die Partei fasse alle guten Kräfte wirksam zusammen.

Die fruchtbare Beteiligung vieler Anwesenden an dem Gespräch (mit allen sich daraus ergebenden positiven Konsequenzen) einerseits, die tiefe Verständnislosigkeit ebenso vieler gegenüber den Ausführungen der Parteivertreter anderseits während der Gründungsversammlung bestätigten nachdrücklich die Notwendigkeit dieser Versammlung und die der Gründung der Partei.

Düsseldorf, den 15. November 1967

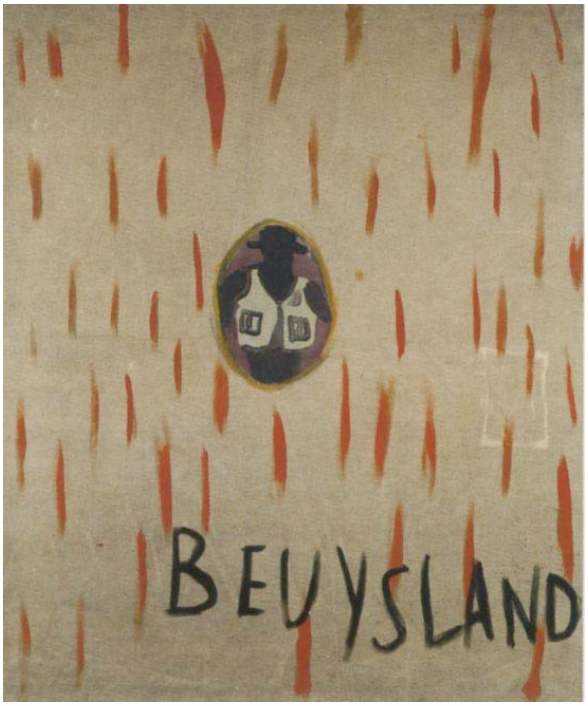
5.31 Protocol of Initial Meeting of German Student Party, June 1967



5.32 Joseph Beuys, "Office for Direct Democracy," *documenta V*, Kassel 1972



5.33 Joseph Beuys, 1972 (Photograph: Ute Klophaus)



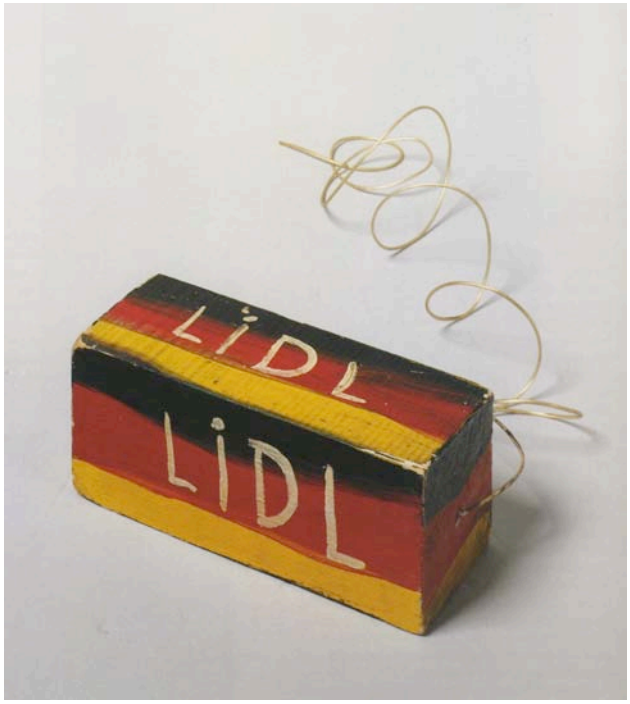
5.34 Jörg Immendorff, *Beuysland*, 1965



5.35 Jörg Immendorff, *Stop Painting*, 1966

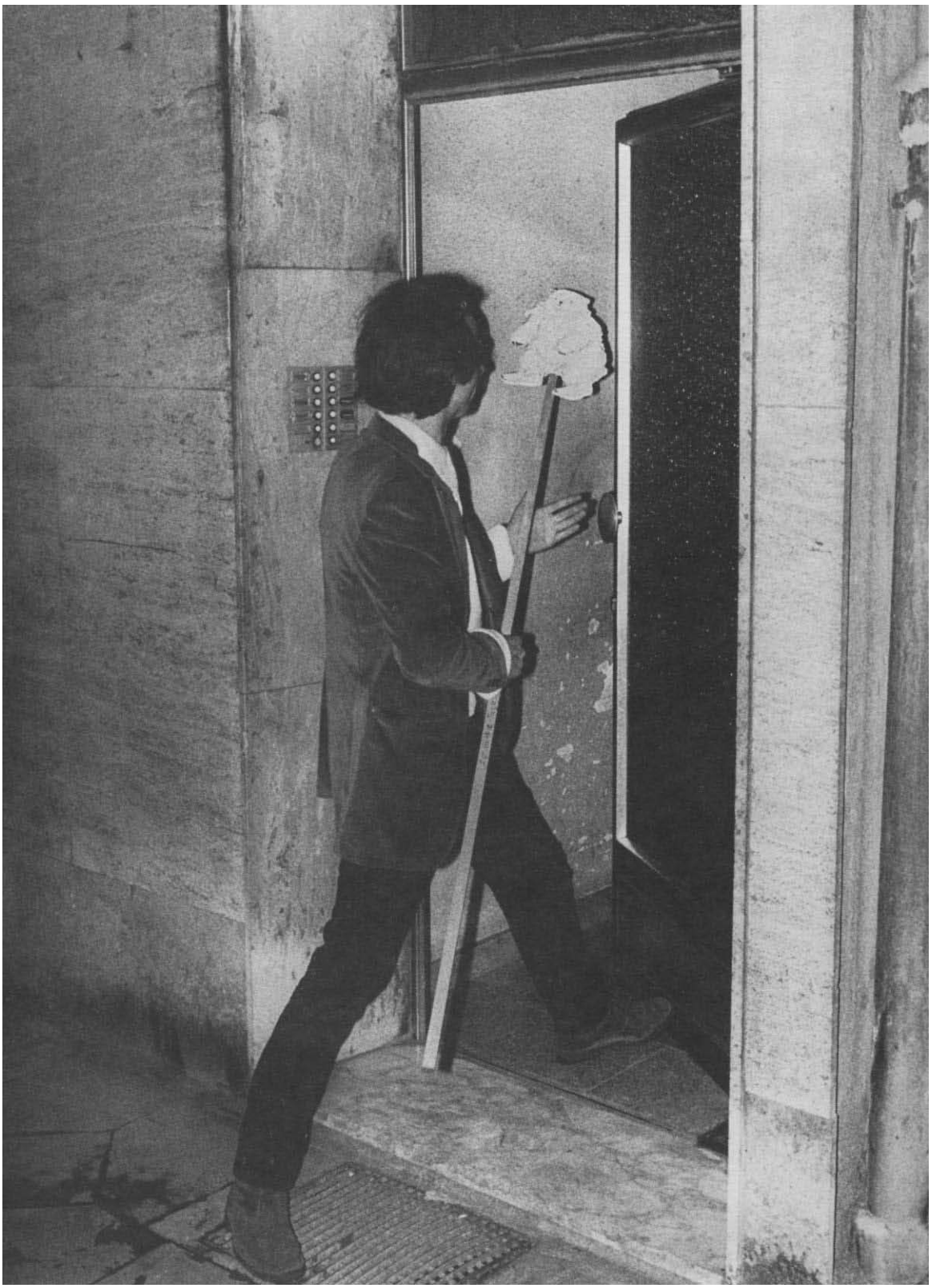


5.36 Jörg Immendorff, *Action With the Only Respectable Weapon*, 1967

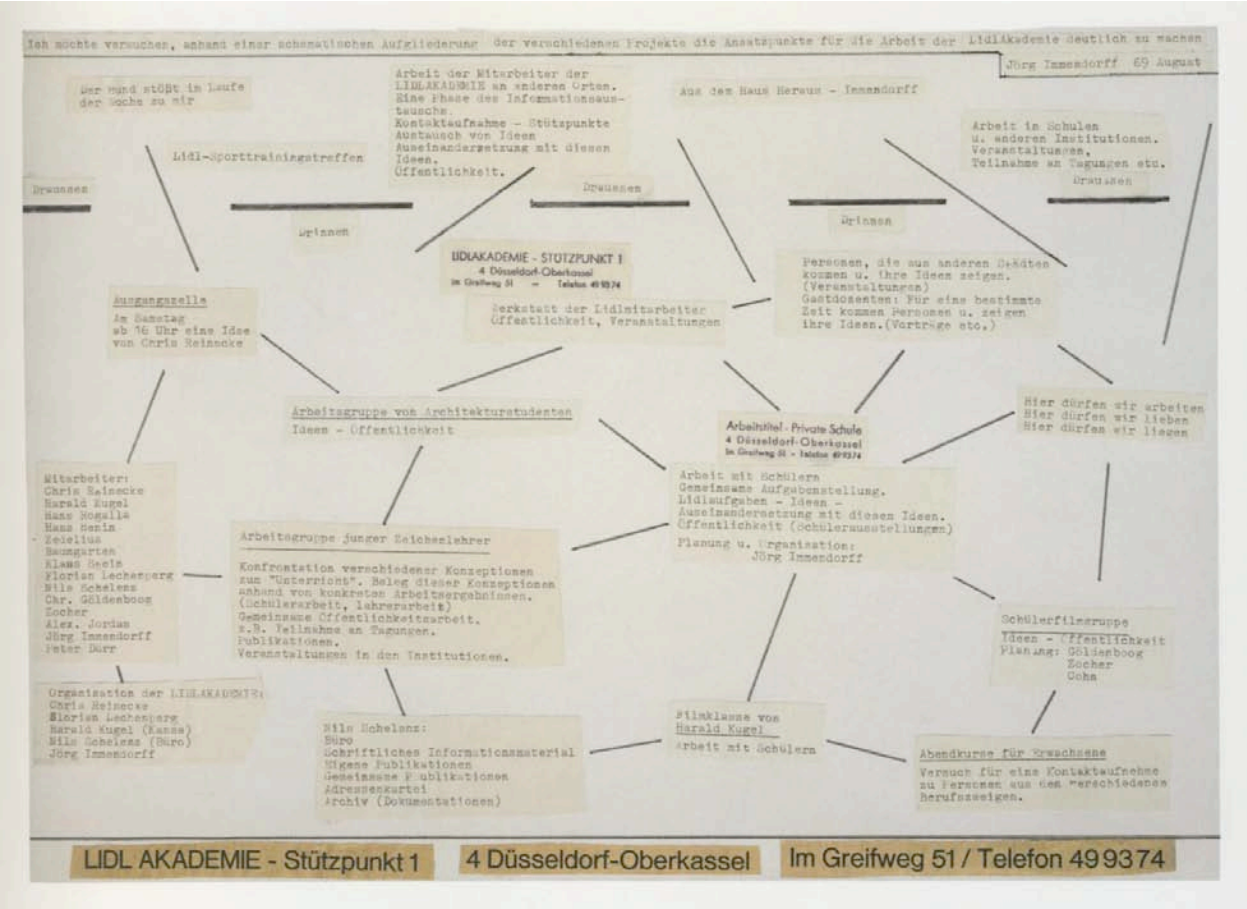




5.37 Jörg Immendorff, LIDL Block Event, Bonn 1968



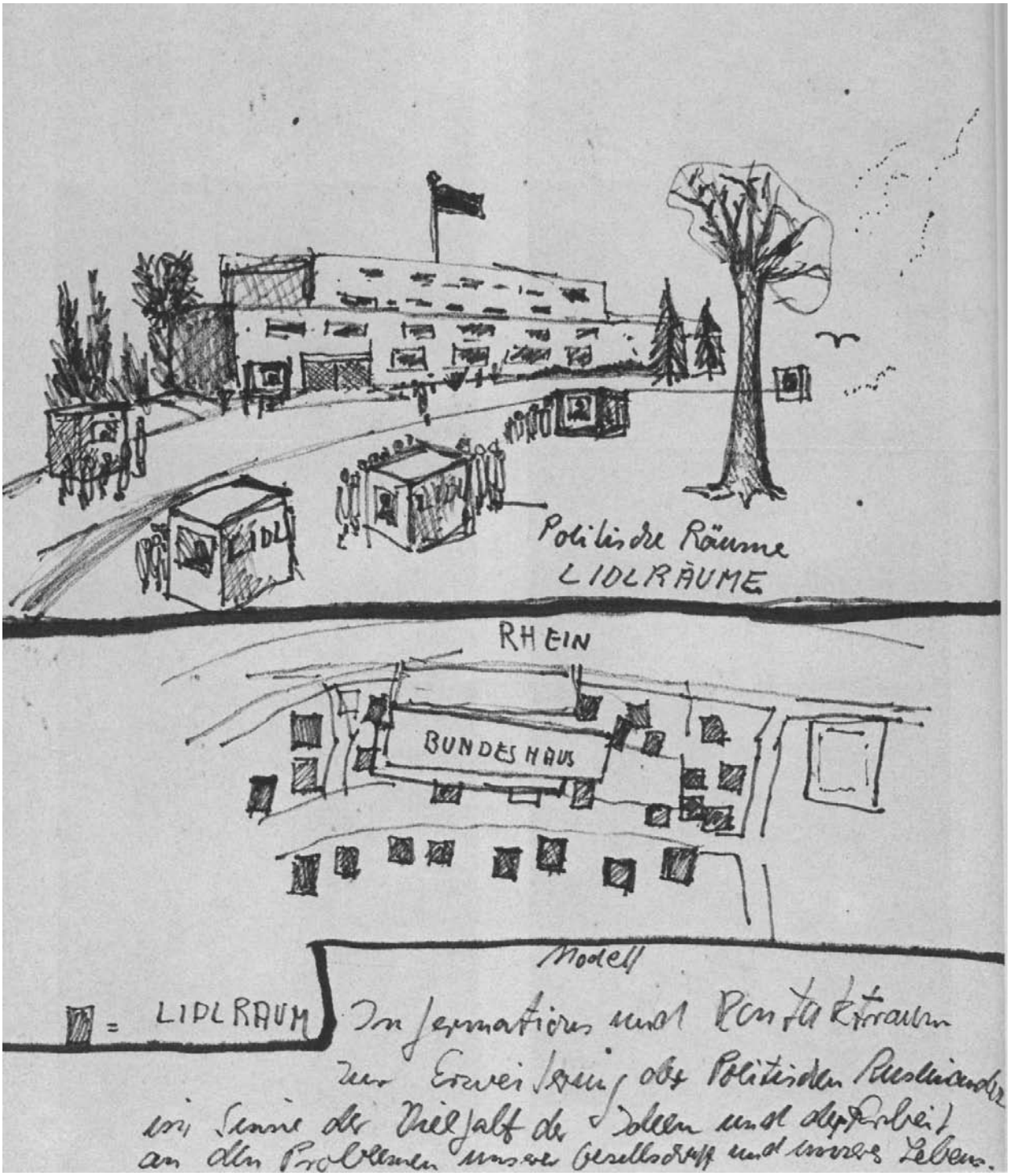
5.38 Jörg Immendorff, Polar Bear Event, Düsseldorf 1968



5.39 Organizational Chart for LIDL Academy



5.40 LIDL Poster, 1968



5.41 Plans for LIDL-Room Event, Bonn 1969



5.42 LIDL-Room Event, Bonn 1969