

Art | Theory | Criticism | Politics

# OCTOBER

# 30

Hans Haacke

*Breadth and Diversity of  
the Ludwig Brigade*

Walter Grasskamp

*An Unpublished Text for  
an Unpainted Picture*

Yve-Alain Bois,  
Douglas Crimp, and  
Rosalind Krauss

*A Conversation with  
Hans Haacke*

Douglas Crimp  
Benjamin H. D. Buchloh  
Yve-Alain Bois

*The Art of Exhibition  
From Faktura to Factography  
Francis Picabia:  
From Dada to Pétain*

\$6.00/Fall 1984

*Published by the MIT Press  
for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies*

# OCTOBER

*editors*

Rosalind Krauss  
Annette Michelson

*executive editor*

Douglas Crimp

*associate editor*

Joan Copjec

OCTOBER (ISSN 0162-2870) (ISBN 0-262-75180-1) is published quarterly by the MIT Press for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. Subscriptions: individuals \$20.00; institutions \$49.00; students and retired \$18.00. Foreign subscriptions outside USA and Canada add \$4.00 for surface mail or \$18.00 for air mail. Prices subject to change without notice.

Address subscriptions to OCTOBER, MIT Press Journals, 28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, MA 02142. Manuscripts, accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope, should be sent to OCTOBER, 19 Union Square West, New York, NY. 10003. No responsibility is assumed for loss or injury.

Second class postage paid at Boston, MA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to OCTOBER, MIT Press Journals, 28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, MA 02142.

OCTOBER is distributed in the USA by B. DeBoer, Inc., 113 East Centre Street, Nutley, NJ 07110.

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*Cover photograph: Entrance foyer to the Architecture and Design  
Galleries, Museum of Modern Art. (Photo: Louise Lawler.)*

YVE-ALAIN BOIS, a founding editor of *Macula*, is Associate Professor of Art History at Johns Hopkins University. His book *Francis Picabia* (Flammarion, 1975) was withdrawn from publication immediately after its release.

BENJAMIN H. D. BUCHLOH teaches art history at SUNY, Old Westbury, and is the author of *Postmoderne/Neoavantgarde*, to be published by Verlag DuMont in 1985. He is the editor of the Nova Scotia Series, which has most recently published *Photography against the Grain* by Allan Sekula.

WALTER GRASSKAMP, formerly editor of *Kunstforum International*, is guest lecturer in art history at the Gesamthochschule in Kassel. He is the author of *Museumsgründer und Museumsstürmer: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Kunstmuseums* (Verlag C. B. Beck, 1981).

HANS HAACKE, Professor of Art at Cooper Union, is the author of *Framing and Being Framed* (The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975). His most recent one-man exhibition was *Nach allen Regeln der Kunst*, organized by the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst for the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, September-October 1984.

In the winter of 1880-81, Edward J. Lowell wrote a series of letters to the *New York Times* regarding what he thought was an insufficiently documented aspect of the American Revolution. He began his account with the following paragraph:

The little city of Cassel is one of the most attractive in North Germany to a passing stranger. Its galleries, its parks and gardens, and its great palaces are calculated to excite admiration and surprise. Here Napoleon III. spent the months of his captivity amid scenes which might remind him of the magnificence of Versailles, which, indeed, those who planned the beautiful gardens had wished to imitate. For the grounds were mostly laid out in the last century, when the court of France was the point towards which most princely eyes on the Continent were directed; and no court, perhaps, followed more assiduously or more closely, in outward show at least, in the path of the French court than that of the Landgraves of Hesse-Cassel. The expense of all these buildings and gardens was enormous, but there was generally money in the treasury. Yet the land was a poor land. The three or four hundred thousand inhabitants lived chiefly by the plough, but the Landgraves were in business. It was a profitable trade that they carried on, selling or letting out wares which were much in demand in that century, as in all centuries, for the Landgraves of Hesse-Cassel were dealers in men; thus it came to pass that Landgrave Frederick II. and his subjects played a part in American history, and that "Hessian" became a household word, though not a title of honor, in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

When, one century after this was written, the largest and most prestigious international art exhibition advertises itself with a postcard photograph of the sculptural monument to this same Frederick II, it is perhaps worth our while to reflect once again upon these historical facts. For erected upon the dead and mutilated bodies of thousands of those Hessian mercenaries and of the men they fought against, as well as upon the backbreaking labors of those who lived by the plough, is the Museum Fridericianum, always proudly proclaimed as the first museum building in Europe. We therefore do well to recall yet again the words of Walter Benjamin, in this case those written just a few months before Benjamin's suicide on the French border during the grimmest days of the Occupation:

A historical materialist views [cultural treasures] with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys

1. Edward J. Lowell, *The Hessians*, Port Washington, Kennikat Press, 1965, pp.1-2.

have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.<sup>2</sup>

The work of Hans Haacke, prominently represented in this issue of *October*, implements just such a task. For over a decade, Haacke has demonstrated that barbarism is indeed the other side of the coin of art, and that the circulation of art works is compromised by that barbarism as well. When invited to participate in an exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, Haacke conceived a work that would focus attention on details of the provenance of Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus* of 1880. The small still life had recently been acquired by the museum through the initiative of the chairman of the Friends of the Museum, Hermann J. Abs. Among the particulars of Abs's history cited in Haacke's installation are the following:

1939, appointed member of advisory council of the Deutsche Bank by Walther Funk, Minister of Economics of the Reich. Member of committees of the Reichsbank, Reichsgruppe Industrie, Reichsgruppe Banken, Reichswirtschaftskammer and Arbeitskreis of the Ministry of Economics. 1944, represented on over 50 Boards of Directors. Membership in association for the advancement of German economic interest abroad.<sup>3</sup>

These high-level positions within the economic structure of the Nazi regime did not, of course, prevent Abs from playing an equally prominent role in Germany's postwar "economic miracle." Haacke's *Manet-PROJECT '74* goes on to list Abs's nineteen current positions on boards of directors of German banks and corporations. *Manet-PROJECT '74* was found unacceptable by the museum that had requested Haacke's participation. Its director, Dr. Horst Keller, explained the museum's position:

It would mean giving an absolutely inadequate evaluation of the spiritual initiative of a man if one were to relate in any way the host of offices he holds in totally different walks of life with such an ideal-

2. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, New York, Schocken Books, pp. 256-257.

3. See Hans Haacke, *Framing and Being Framed*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975, p. 90.

istic engagement. . . . A grateful museum . . . and a grateful city or one ready to be moved to gratefulness must protect initiatives of such an extraordinary character from any other interpretation which might later throw even the slightest shadow on it. . . .<sup>4</sup>

This rationale — and the acts of outright censorship or deliberate falsification of history which follow from it — has come almost entirely to dominate contemporary discussions of art, as those willing to brush history against the grain grow ever fewer. Once again Haacke's attempt to make visible the barbarism at work within our culture has been stifled. This time the object of suppression is Walter Grasskamp's text on Haacke's *Breadth and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade*, a work which probes Peter Ludwig's art and business dealings in the German Democratic Republic. The German art world quite evidently feels that it cannot afford to offend so powerful a figure as Ludwig through further analysis of the reasons behind a Western capitalist's role as cultural mediator for the East German communist state.

Direct censorship is not, however, the sole means of suppressing historical truth. On the contrary, the West is usually content with citing "spiritual initiative" and "idealistic engagement" while ignoring information about the other, barbaric side of the equation. Or, what amounts to the same thing, the West is content with the simplistic ideological view of barbarism which locates it only in the East. Thus, when a dissident Eastern European art historian, writing in a neoconservative American art journal, condemns Ludwig for collecting official Soviet socialist realist art,<sup>5</sup> she does not think to ask the question that engages Haacke: where in such a venture might the interests of *capital* lie? For it is capital that stands behind the cultural enterprises of the West and renders them deeply contradictory.

Peter Ludwig is in this respect not an exceptional case, and it is therefore instructive to consider the diptych format of Haacke's earlier work about Ludwig — *The Chocolate Master* — as a model for cultural analysis. In this work, Haacke juxtaposes panels in seven pairs; these document, on the one hand, Ludwig's dealings in art and, on the other, his multinational corporation's business and labor policies. Thus we see precisely what Ludwig's cultural largesse owes the anonymous toil of his contemporaries.<sup>6</sup>

We in the United States are now faced with the accelerating pace of corporate control of culture, fostered by the Reagan administration and its apologists. Although the resulting forms of censorship, manipulation, and distortion are not always so obviously sinister as in the case of Ludwig, it is nevertheless essential that we subject them to rigorous analysis. When museums now orga-

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

5. Elaine Elizer [pseudonym], "Mr. Ludwig Goes to Moscow," *New Criterion*, vol. 1, no. 9 (May 1983), pp. 50-54.

6. See Hans Haacke, *The Chocolate Master*, Toronto, Art Metropole, 1982.

nize exhibitions, their plans must generally take into account whether or not they will be attractive to the boards of Philip Morris or Exxon, United Technologies or Chase Manhattan. Needless to say, this affects the kinds of exhibitions undertaken and the kinds of art shown, for it is unthinkable that a corporation would be willing to fund a show that does not enhance its image, even if indirectly. This enhancement may be conceived by corporate executives in ways not always obvious to us, but a single example of the businessman's reflections on art will serve to give us some indication of the possibilities. Last year the Pierpont Morgan Library, that staid and scholarly institution, staged an exhibition of the drawings of Hans Holbein from the collection of the Royal Library, Windsor. The only publication produced for the occasion was a hand-out brochure containing a checklist, together with a preface by self-styled art historian Rawleigh Warner, Jr., Chairman of the Board of the Mobil Corporation. Here is the opening of that text:

I find something particularly congenial in the selection, for Mobil's first collaboration with the Morgan Library, of this truly multinational artist—born in Augsburg, married and settled down in Switzerland, a journey in search of opportunity to England, and even that final, expatriate stage of his work in London with wife and children left behind in Basel. Holbein's might have been an oil career.<sup>7</sup>

One can only imagine the chagrin of the Library's director upon reading this absurd and self-serving analogy, but he nevertheless allowed it to be printed beneath his own brief statement. And if a museum director is willing to accede to such a repulsive, if comic travesty of history, where will he then draw the line?

The corporate agents are not alone in their manipulations of history for the sake of commerce, however. Scholars of eminence lend their prestige to market enterprises, too, contributing ad copy for commercial galleries. Thus, the Mary Boone/Michael Werner Gallery exhibition of late works by Francis Picabia last season came complete with a lavishly produced catalogue, which carried an introductory essay by Robert Rosenblum, professor at NYU's Institute of Fine Arts. Rosenblum's text pretended to offer a radical revision of modernist orthodoxy by taking a "fresh" look at the postdada, antimodernist paintings of Picabia. In so doing, he not only plugged the particular products for sale, but also put in a good word for Eric Fischl and David Salle—two present-day artists in the Boone/Werner stable—suggesting that it is their bold works that have forced our reconsiderations of the master's neglected paintings. Picabia, Rosenblum claims, "would surely have been amazed, but tickled to discover the aftermath of what appeared to be a one-shot, crazy episode in his

7. Rawleigh Warner, Jr., "Preface," in Hans Holbein exhibition brochure, New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1983, np.

work—the espousing, at the time of the grimmest days of the Occupation, c. 1940–43, of the trashiest vocabulary culled from pulp fiction illustrations, close-up fragments of erotic or exotic reveries executed in an outrageously anti-modern style.”<sup>8</sup> The eminent historian omits from his brief history, however, the fact that these “grimmest days of the Occupation” constituted for Picabia another kind of “crazy episode,” in which he espoused positions with respect to the Vichy government and the “Jewish question” that were ambiguous enough to entail charges of collaboration and imprisonment after the Liberation. One might, then, propose a more apposite stylistic reference for Picabia’s “outrageously antimodern style”: the trashy vocabulary being served up by other compliant artists to the Nazi and Fascist dictators.

Reviewing this show for *New York Magazine*, the critic Kay Larson noted the inadequacy of textbook histories of modern art with regard to Picabia. “Those of us who grew up reading those histories,” she writes, “are not always aware of the acts of surgery committed in writing them. Picabia’s work was subjected to a particularly drastic excision.”<sup>9</sup> One is astonished to learn, however, that the “drastic excision” refers not to the political context of the later paintings, but rather to a failure to appreciate them. Larson then goes on to parrot the “radical” revisionism of Rosenblum, calling him “one of our most brilliant and sensitive academic critics.”

I do not mean to imply that Picabia’s late works, odious as they may be, should be left in obscurity. Rather they deserve the harshest light of historical scrutiny, for only then can we fully understand the varieties of aesthetic response to political crisis. In the present moment, when young painters are indeed forcing our reappraisal of reactionary work of the past, it is essential that we examine the precise relationships between art and politics. This is the context in which we wish to consider Yve-Alain Bois’s “Francis Picabia: From Dada to Pétain,” his short defense of his own book on Picabia, which, because it did not dissemble that “crazy episode” during the Occupation, was withdrawn from circulation at the time of the major Picabia retrospective in Paris.

The current treatment of style as transhistorical and value-free has resulted in a drastically impoverished understanding of history, and of the present. Within the history of modernism, studies of Soviet culture have been particularly vulnerable to this reductive approach. The art historians’ desire to limit the Soviet avant-garde’s production to its constructivist phase, to “rescue” this art from what is perceived as its naive or misguided sociopolitical program, must therefore be examined for its ideological underpinnings. A naked statement of this ideology appeared recently in an essay written in praise of New York’s market domination over cultural production: “The inauguration of a

8. Robert Rosenblum, “Francis Picabia: the Later Work,” in *Francis Picabia*, New York, Mary Boone/Michael Werner Gallery, 1983, np.

9. Kay Larson, “Beyond Decadence,” *New York Magazine*, October 3, 1983, p. 80.

Socialist state — whatever else it may achieve — is annunciatory of a withering of art, and if its production is rediscovered as art, this rediscovery occurs as a function of an aesthetic revisionism possible only to the bourgeois connoisseurship apparatus."<sup>10</sup> It is against just such a revisionism of the Right that Benjamin Buchloh has studied, in "From Faktura to Factography," cultural/political developments in Russia. By paying careful attention to statements by artists and theoreticians, as well as to the developing stages of their work, Buchloh shows the precise extent to which the Soviet avant-garde broke with the modernist aesthetics that were at the origin of their project. In the wake of his argument, any recuperation of the work of the Russian avant-garde into the reified historical continuity of modernism will have to be seen as a fetishistic "disintegration of culture into commodities."<sup>11</sup> The final section of Buchloh's essay, entitled "Modernism's Aftermath," opens a long overdue discussion of the appropriation and transformation of avant-garde culture for the purposes of propaganda. The similarities of this transformation under Stalinism, under European fascism, and under consumer capitalism should make once and for all impossible the posture of smug superiority assumed by Western writers on the subject of culture, which is tainted to this day with barbarism. The historical materialist's task — to brush history against the grain — remains as urgent now as it was when Walter Benjamin defined it.

DOUGLAS CRIMP

10. Robert Pincus-Witten, "New York — Open City," in Roland Hagenberg, *Untitled '84: the Artworld in the Eighties*, New York, Pelham Press, 1984, np. It should be mentioned that this vile piece of writing is perfectly suited to the publication in which it appears, a book of fawning snapshot photographs of current art-world scene makers. The glib but dangerous tone of the essay may be judged from the following paragraph: "Bureaucratized Socialism in Eastern Europe, nationalist fundamentalist radicalism in the Middle East, not to say radical Socialist behavior [sic] in Central and South America has intensified the sense of easy privilege for New York City as a world harbor of refuge values and discretionary income — two important factors functioning in so bourgeois a conception of art, one, by the way, I accept as a positive condition despite the Marxist [sic] cast of my argument."

11. Walter Benjamin, "Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian," trans. Kingsley Shorter, in *One-Way Street*, London, New Left Books, 1979, p. 360. This essay contains an extended version of the remarks on historical materialism quoted above.

## Broadness and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade

HANS HAACKE

*Broadness and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade* was produced for a specific historical, political, and art-world context in Germany. It was first exhibited at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, an arts center located in the Kreuzberg section of West Berlin, about 100 yards from the Wall. From the third floor of the building one has a good view over the meandering fortifications, erected in 1961 by the German Democratic Republic, which physically divide the city and encircle West Berlin with two unscalable concrete walls. In between is a "deathstrip" complete with watchtowers, tank barriers, and all-night illumination. The GDR does not permit its citizens to leave its territory to go to West Berlin or countries outside the Eastern bloc. Exceptions are made for old people who want to visit relatives in the West and for a small number of politically trustworthy individuals. Those who try to leave without authorization risk their lives in mine fields and under the guns of border guards. West German citizens and Berliners are admitted to East Berlin, the capital of the GDR, on one-day visas issued at the border checkpoints to anyone who does not appear on a political blacklist. For West Germans, entry into the territory of the GDR beyond Berlin is possible only after a lengthy visa application and on invitation from agencies or individuals that are officially recognized by the East German authorities as sponsors. Political considerations play an important role. Border guards thoroughly scrutinize every visitor from the West and usually intercept all printed materials, newspapers, periodicals, books, and so forth, unless they have the imprimatur of the state. The GDR calls its Western border "the border of peace" and has proclaimed that "actually existing socialism" has been established on its territory.\*

After World War II the tenets of socialist realist art, as they were practiced

\* "Actually existing socialism" is a translation of *real existierender Sozialismus*, the ambiguous term used by the government of East Germany to characterize its political system. It implies that socialism actually exists there, but might be understood from another perspective to be fatalistic — socialism that is real, realistic, resigned. In *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, written while still a citizen of the GDR, Rudolf Bahro accepts this term, calling his text *A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Socialism* after Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. — ed.

*Willi Sitte. Mein Atelier—Courbet gewidmet. 1976-77. (As shown in Durchblick, catalogue of the Ludwig-Institut für Kunst der DDR, photo: Louise Lawler.)*



in the Soviet Union, were imposed on the Germans under its rule. Since the early '70s these prescriptions are interpreted more liberally and are enforced with greater latitude. Officially an era of "broadness and diversity" was proclaimed. This relative opening coincided with the political ascendance of Erich Honecker and the chairmanship of the painter Willi Sitte of the Verband bildender Künstler der DDR (Artists Association of the GDR). Willi Sitte is a member of the Volkskammer (East German parliament). Membership in the Artists Association is strictly controlled. It is virtually a precondition for public exhibitions. All art institutions are state-owned. Sales of art works must be handled by the Staatlicher Kunsthandel der DDR (State Art Trading Agency of the GDR). The number of artists whose application for membership has been rejected by the Artists Association is not known; however, several artists who have gained a reputation in the West are not members and cannot exhibit. The best known of these is A. R. Penck, who now lives in the West. Many East German artists are surprisingly well informed about the Western art scene through West German television and publications they receive through underground channels.

It is only since the mid-'70s that the West German public has had an opportunity to see works by officially sanctioned artists of the GDR. This is in part due to the lack of interest in what was viewed as old-fashioned and alien to the concerns of Western art. It was also fueled by the contempt for the political control of this art by a state from which many West German residents had fled.

A further stumbling block was the condition that exhibitions of East German art could be organized only in collaboration with and under de facto control of the authorities of the GDR and its political ally in West Germany, the German Communist Party. The selection of East German art at Documenta in 1977, for example, was totally in the hands of the East German government. Willi Sitte and the painter Bernhard Heisig, his deputy in the Artists Association, have been represented in all of these exhibitions. While they are being credited with a relative liberalization, they also perform the role of watchdogs. When the East German singer Wolf Biermann was expatriated during a concert tour in West Germany in 1976 and a storm of public indignation broke out among East German writers and intellectuals, it was at the insistence of Willi Sitte that no visual artist signed any of the protest letters. Willi Sitte has declared that the tasks and functions of art can be reduced to basically two: "They have to foster harmony of men with themselves, their country, and their history, and they must give them strength, courage, and hope. And, where it is necessary, they have to disturb, to caution, and to admonish."

Currently, Amnesty International is working for the release of more than fifty East German prisoners of conscience jailed for pressing their right of free expression. Many of them are members of church-affiliated peace groups. Neither in Willi Sitte's nor in Bernhard Heisig's work, nor in the work of other members of the Artists Association has there ever been any open criticism of the policies of the government of the GDR or its allies, whereas attacks on the "class enemy" in the West are a standard part of the repertory of subjects. For an outsider, it is difficult to discern whether or not implicit criticism occurs through allusion and metaphor. Bernhard Heisig deplored, in his report as chairman of the jury for the ninth national art exhibition of Dresden in 1983, the retreat to the "noncommittal and politically imprecise" and a "turn to intellectually overemphasized subject matter."

The art collector and industrialist Peter Ludwig, like other West German businessmen, has had profitable contacts with the GDR for many years. The Leonard Monheim AG, of which he is chairman and, together with his wife, in control of the majority of shares, produces chocolate, chocolate candy, cocoa, and semifinished chocolate products in Germany, Belgium, Canada, and the United States. By way of licensing and other agreements with the East German authorities, Monheim products are also made in the GDR. The company provides know-how, modern production facilities, and semifinished products to East Germany. Finished products from this low-wage country are assumed to be imported to West Germany. A key role in these transactions is played by the Trumpf Schokolade- und Kakaofabrik Berlin GmbH in West Berlin. The plant has been established with the generous infusion of public money and, like other companies in West Berlin, enjoys preferential taxes as compared to those levied on enterprises elsewhere in West Germany. Legally, the Berlin plant is independent and can therefore take advantage of the lower taxation even in its deal-

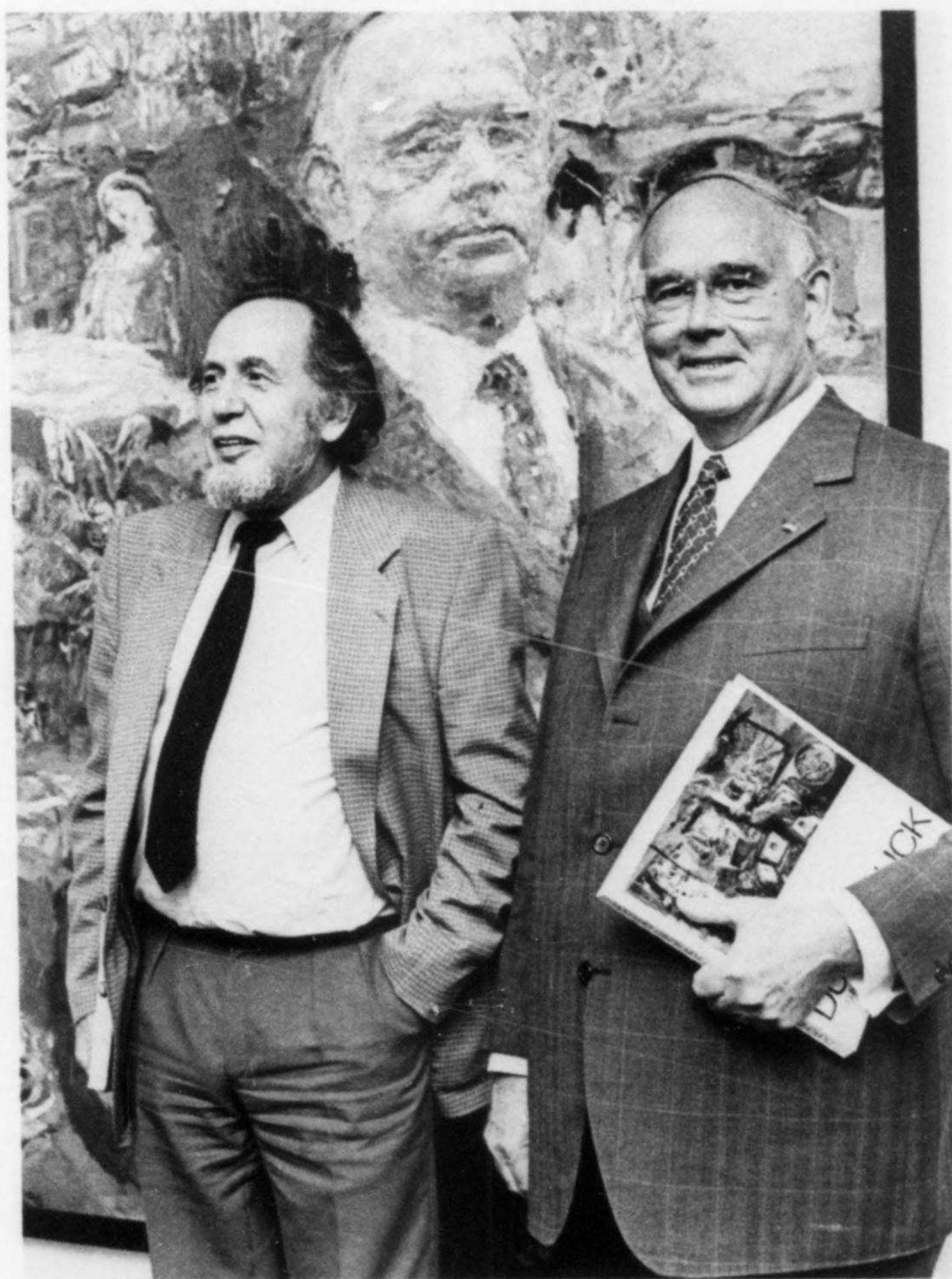
ings with the parent company. The majority of the Trumpf employees are unskilled or semiskilled, low-wage workers. Over sixty percent are foreigners, mostly Turks, and a large proportion are women. Many Monheim production centers have received public subsidies for the modernization of their plants, often out of fear of or in response to an implied threat that the company would otherwise move to a region with a better business climate. After the introduction of new machinery the work force was reduced in several instances. A streamlining program at the Trumpf plant in Berlin recently led to the reduction of the number of employees from 1,000 to 920. Cooperation with East German chocolate production facilities is close. Wolfgang Schreiner, the managing director of the Berlin Trumpf company, is in charge of contacts for the Monheim group with East Germany and other countries in the Eastern bloc.

Wolfgang Schreiner also serves as managing director of the Ludwig Foundation for Art and International Understanding. This foundation was established by Peter Ludwig in 1983 with the income from the sale of 144 illuminated manuscripts from his collection to the J. Paul Getty Museum in California for an estimated price of \$40 to \$60 million. These manuscripts had been researched for many years and a lavish catalogue prepared by two curators of the municipal Schnütgen Museum in Cologne. The city had been given the impression by Peter Ludwig that he would eventually donate the manuscripts to the museum. The sale was greeted by a public outcry in West Germany. The foundation, under the chairmanship of Peter Ludwig, invested the money in the Leonard Monheim AG. The dividends are tax-exempt. One of the major activities of the foundation has been the promotion of art from the GDR, the Soviet Union, and recently Bulgaria, all countries where Peter Ludwig has or is suspected of trying to establish a favorable climate for his chocolate business.

In 1983 the city of Oberhausen, in the Ruhr district, agreed to set up a Ludwig Institute for Art of the GDR to house, administer, and promote the Ludwig collection of East German art that had been assembled since the latter part of the '70s. As the catalogue of the collection in Oberhausen demonstrates, the institute does not fulfill the promise of scholarship that its name might imply. It is widely assumed that the institute is obliged to present the collection in accordance with official East German views, so as not to impair the business interests of Peter Ludwig in the GDR. While the collector/industrialist demands decision-making powers in museums of the West that have received loans or donations from him, he is so attentive to the interests of his partners in the East that he makes no such demands upon them. The selection of a loan to the Nationalgalerie in East Berlin, touted as representative of Western art, was left to the discretion of the director of the museum. He chose examples by Antes, Baily, Canogar, Colville, Erni, Estes, Genovés, Guttuso, Hausner, Johns, Klapheck, Lichtenstein, Picasso, Rauschenberg, and Tinguely. Peter Ludwig negotiates his acquisitions of Eastern art with the state art trading agencies. Prices are not fixed by the artists. By contrast, the municipal Ludwig Museum

in Cologne, for example, is contractually obliged to consult with Peter Ludwig whenever the position of director or curator is to be filled. It also has to give him a full accounting of its activities twice a year. Karl Ruhrberg, until recently the director of the museum, is said to have resigned because he was not willing to accept the establishment of a Ludwig Institute of Soviet Art as part of the museum. Two days before the presentation of *Broadness and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade* on September 2, 1984, in Berlin, the Kunsthalle Berlin opened an exhibition of the Ludwig collection of art from the GDR that was organized in Oberhausen. Willi Sitte gave an opening speech and Wolfgang Schreiner was in attendance. The exhibition included several flattering portraits of Peter Ludwig by Bernhard Heisig.

*Bernhard Heisig (left) and Peter Ludwig in front of Heisig's portrait of Ludwig. Ludwig holds a copy of his Durchblick catalogue. (Photo: Ulrich von Born.)*







...so viel  
Zeit muß  
sein.

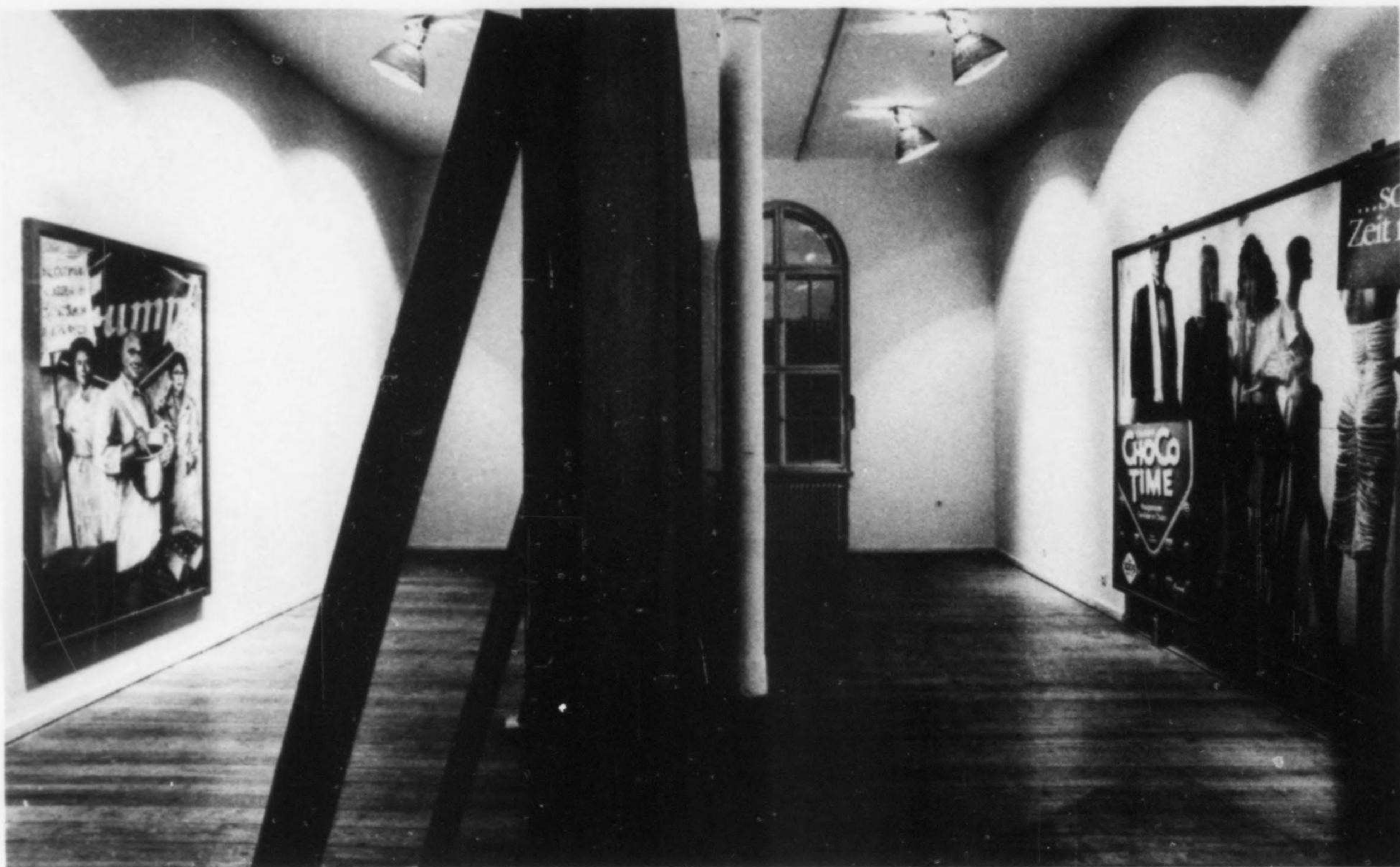
TRUMPF  
**ChoCo  
TIME**

Nougat-zarte  
Genüsse in Choco

frisch  
versiegelt

Der  
**2009**  
Genuß

TrumPF



*Hans Haacke. Broadness and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade. 1984. Installation in one-man exhibition, Hans Haacke: Nach allen Regeln der Kunst (According to/after the Rules of the Game/Art), organized by the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, September-October 1984.*

*Inscriptions on oil painting:*

*Background:* Trumpf (logo of Trumpf chocolate and chocolate candy, one of seven brands of chocolate products of Leonard Monheim AG, Chairman Peter Ludwig. Trumpf = trump).

*Left placard:* DARITÄT MIT/N KOLLEGEN IM/PITALISTISCHEN/EIL VON BERLIN (Solidarity with our fellow workers in the capitalist part of Berlin).

*Right placard:* 9 DM/STD. IS/ZU WENIG/STOPPT ARBEITS/PLATZKÜRZUNGEN/BEI TRUMPF (9 DM/hour is not enough. Stop the job cuts at Trumpf).

*On the bowl:* VEB Dresdner Süßwarenfabriken

“Elbforenz” (People’s Owned Enterprise, Candy Factory of Dresden, “Florence on the Elbe”).

*On the crate, left:* STAATLICHER KUNSTHANDEL DER DDR (State Art Trading Agency of the GDR). LUDWIG STIFTUNG FÜR KUNST UND INTERNATIONALE VERSTÄNDIGUNG (Ludwig Foundation for Art and International Understanding). c/o TRUMPF-SCHOKOLADE-U. KAKAOFABRIK GMBH/1 BERLIN 44/ GRENZALLEE 4 (c/o Trumpf Chocolate and Cocoa Factory, Inc., 1 Berlin 44, Grenzallee 4).

*On the carton, right:* SCHOCARRÉS/VEB (People’s Owned Enterprise).

*Inscriptions on Trumpf billboard:*

*Top right:* . . . so viel Zeit muss sein (. . . there must be time for this).

*Bottom left:* Trumpf/Choco/Time/Nougat-zarte/Genüsse in Choco/frisch versiegelt/Der 200 g Genuss/Trumpf (Trumpf, Choko, Time, nougat-delicate pleasures in Choko, freshly sealed. The 200 gram pleasure, Trumpf).

## An Unpublished Text for an Unpainted Picture

WALTER GRASSKAMP

*This text was commissioned and written for the catalogue of von hier aus, a major exhibition of contemporary West German art organized by Kasper König, which opened in Düsseldorf on September 28, 1984. DuMont Buchverlag in Cologne, the publisher of the catalogue, did not permit the inclusion of the essay, claiming that it might constitute grounds for Peter Ludwig to get a temporary injunction against the distribution of the catalogue. The publisher's reasoning is open to question, however, since it is unlikely that Ludwig — already a figure of controversy in Germany — would choose to appear publicly in the role of censor. Moreover, respected legal authorities who reviewed the text found no potential for legal action. It is perhaps not irrelevant to this case that DuMont Buchverlag is one of the major West German art book publishers and that Peter Ludwig's influence extends to numerous museums which might have their catalogues published by DuMont. After strenuous protest from Walter Grasskamp and Kasper König, however, and after lawyers further advised that there were no legal grounds for the text's exclusion, the publisher has agreed to print it in the second edition of the catalogue. Because of the special circumstances of the situation, we have printed a translation of the text exactly as it was written for the von hier aus catalogue. — ed.*

Hans Haacke was among the first artists who, in January of 1984, was invited to participate in this exhibition. That he produced no work for *von hier aus* is a function of his working procedure. Haacke requires a great deal of time for his exhibitions, since the *place* and the *point in time* of the exhibition are essential premises according to which he determines each project and to which he completely subjects himself. This requires thorough on-location research with results that are not always predictable. Furthermore, until the last minute, unforeseeable events can put Haacke's concept and even the opening date in question.

These working procedures result in *installations* that relate not only aesthetically to the space in which they are shown, but also, and above all, to the cultural and political context within which the exhibition takes place. Haacke's installations are *specific*: the work he does on location just before an exhibition assures the work's effect, particularly in terms of the geographic and historical setting that determines the subject and form of the installation. The Western

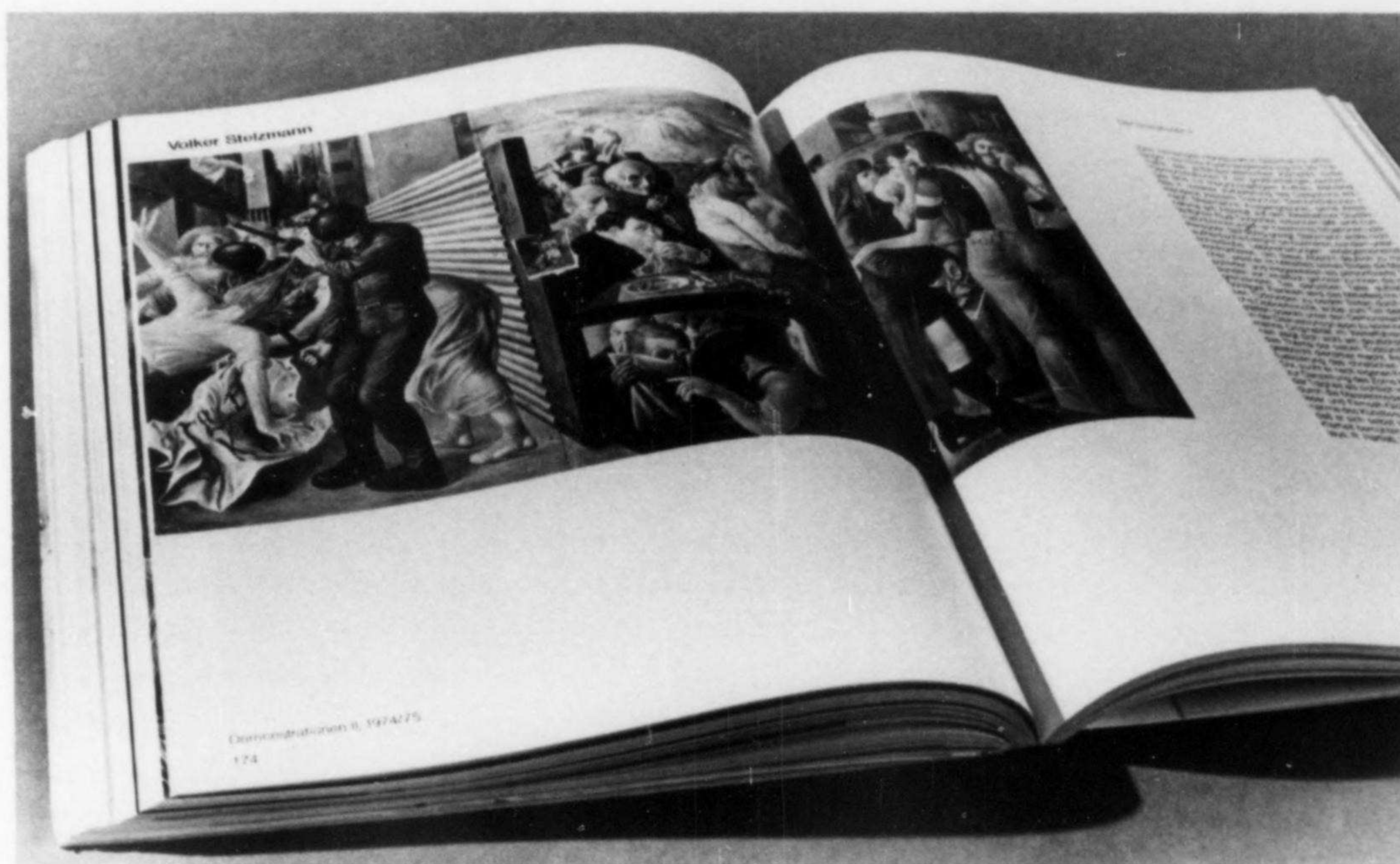
world where Haacke lives and works, however, is so standardized through multinationals and a globalized culture industry that his installations, though conceived for a specific time and place, also have a *general* meaning. When a show ends, they do not lose their significance; on the contrary, each work retains the quality of an example, and in two ways. They offer instances of the real workings of the international network of economic, political, and cultural relations, and at the same time they demonstrate the artistic strategies Haacke has devised over the years; therefore, it is legitimate to show Haacke's works, even in retrospective exhibitions, in places for which they were not originally designed. But Haacke is not content simply to show earlier works that he can pull out of his studio or borrow from collections, because for him every exhibition is first and foremost a challenge to apply his specific working method to the context of the particular exhibition. Haacke especially did not wish to make an earlier work available to an exhibition which in its very title — *von hier aus* (*from here on*) — makes reference to its location, a reference that could apply to Haacke's working procedures as well. Furthermore, he was committed to preparing a one-man show for West Berlin's Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst that was also scheduled to open in September 1984, with works from as far back as 1969, but predominantly consisting of works of the past five years.

The work that Haacke conceived and produced for the Berlin exhibition is pertinent not only for the specific West Berlin context. For, even though its subject — the collection of the Ludwig Institute for Art of the GDR — can also be seen only in West Berlin during September, it is normally housed in Oberhausen, just a few miles from Düsseldorf.

The collection of the Ludwig Institute for Art of the GDR has been assembled in collaboration with the State Art Trading Agency of the GDR. It was presented with the title *Durchblick* (*Seeing Through*), and, after decades of cultural, as well as political, separation, it makes the claim to compensate for our lack of information about the development of art in the GDR. This it purports to do through a permanent exhibition in Oberhausen and art-historical research conducted by members of the institute, as well as through traveling exhibitions.

To see an industrialist like Peter Ludwig, of all people, in the role of cultural mediator between the two German states must seem paradoxical indeed to all parties concerned. After all, he is the textbook illustration of a capitalist entrepreneur as it might be employed in the East German propaganda machine's arsenal of images of the enemy — to contrast the achievements of "actually existing socialism" with the Western system of exploitation and ruthless market strategies. This confrontation, however, does not occur. Neither a Werner Tübke, who has produced grandiose paintings of the enemies of the workers and peasants, nor a Volker Stelzmann, who can depict horrors of Western decadence in vivid color, has taken up the pictorial challenge offered by a Western capitalist like Peter Ludwig. This striking willingness on the part of the socialist

Volker Stelzmann. Demonstrationen II. 1974-75.  
(As shown in *Durchblick*, catalogue of the Ludwig  
Institut für Kunst der DDR, photo: Louise Lawler.)



realist artists to oblige by supplying the West German industrialist with paintings instead of painting his picture could perhaps be seen as an indication that the East German painters have grown weary of their obsolete scenarios for portraying the enemy. Perhaps they have turned instead to a more sophisticated kind of political art, one that would take as its subject conditions in their own state rather than the omnipresent and indefatigable class enemy in the West. If this were the case, we in the West would have to revise our picture of socialist realism so as not to let *it* become a petrified image of the enemy.

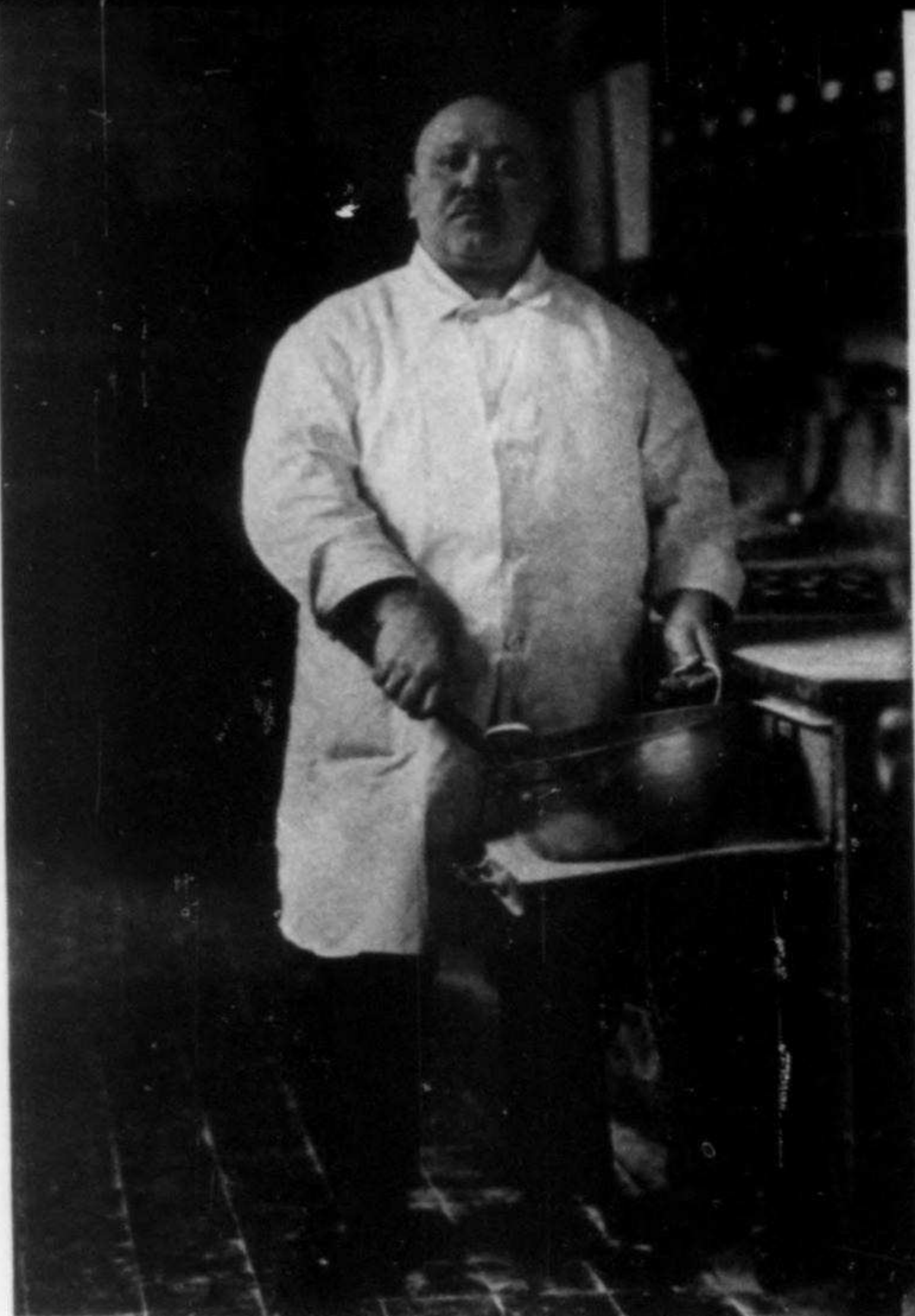
But there is another motive behind the East German painters' exclusion of their powerful collector from the repertory of enemy portraits with which they supply him, and this is the subject of Haacke's installation in West Berlin. It probes with emblematic precision the cultural, political, and economic import of the Ludwig Institute for Art of the GDR. Haacke regards the avoidance of the East German painters as symptomatic of the dependency of socialist realism upon politico-economic calculations at higher levels, for Ludwig operates in the GDR not only as a collector but also as a business partner. Thus Ludwig has moved into a privileged position which socialist realism excludes, as if it were a blind spot in its field of vision. The picture of Peter Ludwig the trading partner remains unpainted. Haacke, acting as proxy, rectifies this distortion in the image of the enemy by finally delivering the unpainted picture in his installation. The unpainted portrait Haacke belatedly offers decidedly does *not* draw upon

the grotesque and manneristic arsenal of stock figures which had to be developed by a school of painting seeking to exorcise the class enemy. After all, as a conceptual artist, Haacke still retains a critical attitude towards painting, as he has demonstrated in his work, maintaining that conceptual art commands the more powerful means to portray and contest political power—not the least through his 1981 work, *The Chocolate Master*, which is about the *Westkunst*<sup>1</sup> collector and Trumpf manufacturer Peter Ludwig. Even though Haacke has recently again made painting part of this strategy, he has done so above all—ironically—to make painting's manifest political functions transparent. In the portraits of Ronald Reagan (1982) and Margaret Thatcher (1984), the images of the rulers are set against the imagery of the modern media, but also against that of self-absorbed neoexpressionist painting; in the painting of the Alcan factory in Quebec (1983), the art of the boardroom is contrasted with the conditions of the work place.

In the fourth painting he has done since he stopped painting in 1960, Haacke gives us an ironic imitation of socialist realism, not in the form of its usual dogmatic exorcism, but rather as an agitprop picture. Peter Ludwig appears as the leader of the workers' brigade of the VEB Dresdner Süßwarenfabrik Elbflorenz (where Schocarrés, the GDR version of Trumpf Schogetten, are produced),<sup>2</sup> not in this case stirring up enthusiasm for culture, but rather stirring chocolate in his pot. Meanwhile, his wife Irene and the East German labor heroine Erika Steinführer declare their solidarity with their colleagues in Ludwig's West Berlin branch. This picture is a composite of painting and photography: August Sander's celebrated *Confectioner* of 1928 is the model for the brigade leader; Irene Ludwig is derived from the curious double portrait of the Ludwigs painted by the French photorealist Jean-Olivier Hucleux in 1976; while Erika Steinführer comes from a painting by Walter Womacka, who teaches in East Berlin. Haacke's collage does not, of course, mingle German-German pictorial styles for the sake of the pictures themselves, nor because they happen to belong to Ludwig the collector. Rather it is because the German-German business of Peter Ludwig is Haacke's subject that his painting becomes a spoof of socialist realism.

1. *Westkunst* is the title of an exhibition of Western art since 1939, organized in Cologne by Kasper König in the spring of 1981. Haacke's work *Der Pralinenmeister* (*The Chocolate Master*) was shown at the time of the exhibition in the Galerie Paul Maenz, also in Cologne. *Westkunst* means "Western art," and is used in the present context to allude to Ludwig's position as a powerful collector of the art of the West, as opposed to his role as collector of the art of the East, the subject of Haacke's new work about Ludwig. —ed.

2. The VEB Dresdner Süßwarenfabrik Elbflorenz is the [East German] People's Owned Enterprise, Candy Factory of Dresden, Florence on the Elbe. One of their products is a type of chocolate candy called Schocarrés, sold in flat rectangular packages similar to Hershey bars, but inside the stiffened wrapper are individual bite-sized chocolate squares. This very distinctive form of packaging is virtually identical to that of Schogetten, a well-known product of the Trumpf Company of West Berlin. —ed.



*August Sander. Confectioner, Cologne. 1928.*

This was no easy undertaking. The scale and substance of this economic border-crossing are difficult to ascertain. For, when Haacke pursued questions that arose in the context of this new collaboration, he met with flat refusal to provide information in both East and West Berlin. Does Monheim's West Berlin branch ship raw materials across the German-German border to be processed in the GDR — thereby profiting from its lower wage scale — and then ship the products back into West Berlin for their finishing touches — thus also taking advantage of the preferential tax laws on the Western side? Were the jobs created by Monheim in West Berlin subsidized? and what would happen to these subsidies if the jobs were cut because of cheaper production opportunities in the GDR? Are the art collections part of an exchange of goods? or do they simply facilitate the diplomatic entrée with which the Western company secures access to cheap labor and an undeveloped consumer market? Other companies have sought these latter in Third World countries, at the price of heavy transport costs, underdeveloped infrastructures, and unstable political conditions. Has Ludwig now, without incurring any of these risks, discovered these advantages right at his doorstep? During his research for *The Chocolate Master*, Haacke already discovered that Ludwig the *businessman* was far less eager to provide information than Ludwig the publicity-hungry *art collector*. The border-crossing activities of the West-East multinational occur under a peculiar German-German agreement that is virtually beyond public scrutiny. They remain shrouded in the secrecy of a "German-German alliance." Its basic tenets seem to be in part that attention be directed from economic to cultural matters, that is, to the art collection. This provides a cultural facade for a backroom version of German unity, another paradoxical state of affairs for the art of socialist realism from which Haacke's own socialist realism manages to escape. At any rate, Haacke

has no doubt that *Durchblick*, the title of the exhibition of the Ludwig Institute collection, was well chosen, since he readily gives Ludwig credit for his penetration.<sup>3</sup> But this is not the subject of his Berlin installation. Rather the installation raises questions about the responsibilities of the businessman towards the job market while having himself celebrated as a great patron. Only recently, due to streamlining of operations, jobs in Ludwig's West Berlin branch were cut—jobs that were not in any case highly paid. And it is these events that are referred to in the solidarity campaign that Haacke has invented for his agitprop picture in the manner of socialist realism.

Concerning the art itself, the title *Durchblick* is rather less appropriate, since as a showplace for East German art the Ludwig Institute can claim to provide a representative picture only insofar as the East German State Art Trading Agency can claim to represent East German art. After all, the Agency handles all acquisitions of paintings for the institute. As long as the Ludwig Institute does not critically correct and counter the well-known selection process that decides which East German artists will succeed in the arena of officially sanctioned distribution, it leaves itself open to suspicion that its art-historical scholarship is mired in imported falsifications of history. One might also check the work of the institute to determine whether or not here again art-historical research must bow to business calculations at a higher level, in this case those of the donor—whether or not it can, in fact, insure genuine art-historical scholarship on the collection without entanglement in the interests of the Ludwig enterprise and independent of the collection's origins.

In any case, Haacke's installation has incomparably greater significance for the theory of socialist realism than anything the institute has thus far accomplished. In confronting his agitprop picture with an advertising poster of the Monheim Corporation, Haacke also introduces the question: should we regard socialist realism as comparable to our own advertising photography—that is, as nothing but an utterly artificial world of images whose historical and political power of expression has been drained, leaving only come-ons? Perhaps this embarrassing situation would account for the exhibition *Gegenwart der Mythen* (*Myth Today*), with which East German painting took this year's Venice Biennale audience by surprise. Instead of continuing the myth of socialist realism—which has demonstrated its inability to confront reality, and not only in the case of Ludwig—Haacke, half ironically but perhaps also half in earnest, extends this pictorial tradition with his agitprop painting. It is a painting that promotes a different kind of German unity than that which we see at work: a trade-union solidarity rather than a union of misalliances.

3. *Durchblick* literally means "a look through" as, for example, through a wall. But figuratively it means "seeing through," as through a deception, or simply "shrewdness."—ed.

## A Conversation with Hans Haacke

YVE-ALAIN BOIS, DOUGLAS CRIMP,  
and ROSALIND KRAUSS

*Krauss:* Since your work has, from the beginning, resisted painting, implicitly criticizing painting as incapable of supporting any serious critique of its own assumptions, what made you decide that your work for your Tate Gallery exhibition last spring would be a painting?

*Haacke:* That wasn't the first time I did a painting.

*Crimp:* Right. There's the portrait of Reagan that formed part of *Oelgemaelde, Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers*, the work for Documenta 7. But it is true, isn't it, that the portrait of Margaret Thatcher is the first instance in which you've used a painting by itself?

*Haacke:* No, there's another precedent, aside from the paintings I did before I turned to three-dimensional work in the early '60s. For a show in Montreal in 1983, I made what I called a *Painting for the Boardroom*, an industrial landscape. It is a somewhat impressionistic aerial view of the Alcan aluminum smelter in Arvida, Quebec. I painted it after a photograph that I found in an Alcan P.R. pamphlet. It is a cheerful, sunny picture. Into the bright sky I painted a short caption which announces, in a tone of pride, that the workers at Arvida have an opportunity to contract bone fibrosis, respiratory diseases, and cancer. The painting is framed in aluminum siding. Obviously, in all three cases, I chose to paint because the medium as such has a particular meaning. It is almost synonymous with what is popularly viewed as Art — art with a capital A — with all the glory, the piety, and the authority that it commands. Since politicians and businesses alike present themselves to the folks as if they were surrounded by halos, there are similarities between the medium and my subjects. When I planned the Reagan painting, I was also inspired by the thinking of Marcel Broodthaers. In the catalogue preface to his *Musée d'art moderne, Département des aigles, Section des figures* (1972), he pointed to the parallelism between the mythic powers of the eagle, the symbol of empire, and the mythic powers of art. Contrary to popular belief, eagles are really not courageous birds; they are

even afraid of bicycles, as Broodthaers wrote. Their power is due to projection. The same is true for art — and political power. They need the red carpet, the gold frame, the aura of the office/museum — the paraphernalia of a seeming immortality and divine origin.

*Krauss:* But in the case of the Broodthaers work, the medium, we could say, is a standard iconographical emblem, rather than oil paint's being the medium.

*Haacke:* It is important that the Thatcher portrait is an oil painting. Acrylic paint doesn't have an aura. I was also deliberate in the choice of the Victorian frame. I had it built especially. For the design, I followed the example of frames around paintings by Frederick Leighton and Burne-Jones at the Tate. In effect, these frames elevate their contents to the status of altarpieces, endow the paintings with religious connotations. I don't have to tell you what gold represents. As with the frame, I tried to mimic, as best I could, the love for genre detail and the paint style of the Victorian era. And so all the details are Victorian, the interior with its furniture, the curtain with its tassles, the Tate Gallery's own sculpture of Pandora by Harry Bates, the typeface on the bookspines, and so on. I thought I should place Margaret Thatcher into the world that she represents. As you know, she expressly promotes Victorian values, nineteenth-century conservative policies at the end of the twentieth century.

*Krauss:* Most of the information in the painting, as well as its title, *Taking Stock (unfinished)*, refers to the Saatchis. Do you mean for the Saatchis to be understood as Victorian figures as well?

*Haacke:* Of course, in their own way, the Saatchis are also Victorians. They match the young bourgeois entrepreneurs of the nineteenth century, relatively unfettered by tradition, without roots in the aristocracy, and out to prove themselves to the world. Their conquests are the brash takeovers of advertising companies around the world. After successful forays in the U.K., a few years ago they gobbled up Compton, a big Madison Avenue agency with an international network. And last year it was the turn of McCaffrey & McCall, another New York agency. By now the Saatchi empire has grown to be the eighth largest peddler of brands and attitudes in the world. Naturally, they align themselves with the powers that promise to be most sympathetic to their own fortunes. So they ran the election campaign for Margaret Thatcher in 1979, and again last year. They also had the Tory account for the European Parliamentary elections this year. Heseltine, the Tory minister, who has an interest in *Campaign*, the British advertising trade journal, has been a good friend of the Saatchis since the days when Maurice Saatchi worked for the journal. Everyone in London assumes that, as a reward for their services during Margaret Thatcher's first election campaign, the Saatchis got the account of British Airways. Not to be

outdone, the Saatchis' South African subsidiary took it upon itself to run the promotion of the constitutional change that was presented in a referendum to the white voters by the South African government's National Party. Foes of apartheid think that this change, in effect, cemented the system which reserves political power in South Africa *exclusively* for the white minority, which constitutes sixteen percent of the population.

*Crimp:* Both the Reagan and Thatcher paintings were also presumably intended to comment on the relationship between these people's reactionary politics and the current revival of painting in a reactionary art-world situation. The Reagan portrait appeared in a Documenta exhibition that everyone knew would lend its authority to the painting revival, while the Thatcher portrait contains information about the power of the Saatchis, who are active promoters of the new painting. Why then did you choose a hyper-realist, or perhaps a late nineteenth-century academic style for these paintings, rather than a style that might more directly comment upon the neoexpressionism which is the dominant mode of the return to painting?

*Bois:* The iconological mode you've used is indeed quite remote from what is going on in contemporary painting.

*Crimp:* It's true, of course, that what is going on now involves historical references, and I can see that you would want to make the connection between these political personalities and Victorian values, but that choice also reduces the work's pungency with regard to current painting.

*Haacke:* But if I had concentrated on the style of current painting, the political content would have been left out. I would have been dealing exclusively with an art-world affair. The art world is not *that* important. Moreover, the attitudes associated with much of the retro type of painting favored by the Saatchis amounts to a gold-frame celebration of a romantic individualism of a bygone era, which clearly predates and differs essentially from the attitudes of the original expressionists. Much of the current painting is coy naughtiness.

*Krauss:* I'd like to explore further what you said about the kind of image politicians like Reagan and Thatcher wish to elaborate for themselves. It's true that the oil portrait, because of its aura, its air of nobility, is important for this image, yet connecting the Saatchis and Thatcher also brings into play something which involves the opposite of this aura, something which is very much of the twentieth century—the public relations selling of politicians through the media. I'm interested to think about an act which restores a traditional aura to Thatcher and Reagan, who have been sold by television, who most often have their images conveyed through the medium of video.



Hans Haacke. Taking Stock (unfinished). 1983-84. First shown in the exhibition Hans Haacke, Tate Gallery, London, January 25-March 4, 1984.

*Inscriptions:*

*On the foot of the column, left:* ES SAATCHI TRUS/ITECHAPEL GAL/TRONS OF NEW/ART COMMITTEE/HE TATE/GALLER.

*On the top shelf of the bookcase:* MS, CS.

*On the spines of the books in the bookcase:* Allied Lyons, Avis, BL, Black & Decker, Blue Nun, British Airways, British Arts Council, British Crafts Council, British Museum, British Rail, Campbell Soup, Central Office of Information, Conservatives British Elections, Conservatives European Elections, Cunard, Daily Mail, Dunlop (acc. lost), DuPont, Gillette, Great Universal Stores, Johnson & Johnson, IBM, Massey-Ferguson, Max Factor, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Nestle, Playtex, Proctor & Gamble, Rank Organization, Rowntree Mackintosh, Royal Academy, South Africa Nationalist Party, Serpentine Gallery, Tottenham Hotspurs, TV-am, United Biscuits, Victoria & Albert Museum, Wales Gas, Walt Disney, Wimpey, Wrangler.

*On the paper hanging over the edge of the table:* In the year ended March 31st 1978 Brogan Developers Ltd. (Saatchi Investment Ltd.) sold art works valued at £380,319.

*On the paper lying at Thatcher's foot:* Saatchi & Saatchi Company PLC/The year ended September 1982/Furniture, equipment, works of art and motor vehicles/Gross current £15,095,000/replacement cost/Depreciation £7,036,000/Net current £8,059,000/replacement cost. Tangible net assets are stated at historical cost or valuation less accumulated depreciation. The cost and valuation of tangible fixed assets is written off by equal annual installments over the expected useful lives of the assets: for furniture and equipment between 6 and 10 years. No depreciation provided for works of art.

The initials MS and CS on the rims of the broken plates on the top shelf of the bookcase refer to the brothers Maurice and Charles Saatchi, whose portraits appear in the center of the plates. In 1982 Julian Schnabel, known for his paintings with broken plates, had an exhibition in the same space at the Tate Gallery where the Haacke show was later installed. Nine of the eleven paintings by Schnabel were owned by Doris and Charles Saatchi. At the time, Charles Saatchi was a member of the Patrons of New Art Committee of the Tate. The museum is a public institution operated by the British government. While the Patrons are a private association with the goal of acquiring and donating contemporary works to the Tate, they also appear to have influence on the

museum's exhibition policies. Among its members are collectors and nearly all London art dealers, as well as the New York dealer Leo Castelli. There have been complaints that the Saatchis have never donated a work to the Tate Gallery.

Charles Saatchi was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Whitechapel Gallery, another public institution in London. It is suspected that he profited from inside information about exhibition plans of the Gallery, which allowed him to buy works, notably by Francesco Clemente and Malcolm Morley, at a favorable moment.

Doris Saatchi, a Smith College graduate and ex-copywriter for Ogilvy & Mather, and her husband Charles began collecting art in the early '70s. Initially interested in photorealism, they shifted their attention to minimalism and neoexpressionism. When the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles opened in 1983, it invited eight collectors to present selections from their holdings. The Saatchis chose works by Baselitz, Chia, Clemente, Guston, Kiefer, Morley, Schnabel, and Stella. In a further attempt to exert control over the art world, Saatchi & Saatchi made a bid to buy *Art in America* when Whitney Communications offered it for sale.

The financial base for such ventures is the income from the advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi Company PLC, which has been built by the Saatchi brothers, through mergers, into the largest British advertising agency and the eighth largest worldwide. In 1982 they acquired Compton Communications, a large New York agency with a worldwide network, and in 1983, McCaffrey & McCall, also of New York. Shares of Saatchi & Saatchi are traded on the stock exchanges in New York and London.

Doris and Charles Saatchi are soon to open a private museum in the north of London, to be designed by Max Gordon, a friend and former colleague at the Tate. A catalogue of the Saatchi collection with contributions from well-known art critics and historians is being prepared by Doris Saatchi, who also writes for the *World of Interiors*, *Artscribe*, and *Architectural Review*.

In February 1984, one month after the opening of the Haacke exhibition at the Tate Gallery, Charles Saatchi resigned his position on the Patrons of New Art Committee of the museum. He also resigned his trusteeship of the Whitechapel Gallery.

*Haacke:* Margaret Thatcher's public relations advisors evidently told her that she should style herself after the Queen, including her taste in clothing. She also took voice training lessons to get rid of her shrillness. Her entire image has been transformed over the past few years to fit the media better. It pays politically to look like the Queen rather than like the nation's headmistress. I therefore thought I should paint her in a haughty, regal pose. In order to accentuate her rivalry with Queen Elizabeth and also to strengthen the period look, I seated her on a chair with the image of Queen Victoria on its back. It is a chair that I found in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Thatcher would like to rule an Imperial Britain. The Falklands War was typical of this mentality.

*Bois:* So that is why you used the emblematic tradition, the iconographic symbols?

*Haacke:* Yes. I hope everybody understood that this was done tongue-in-cheek.

*Crimp:* It also seems that there is a strategic aspect to this, insofar as you are using a painting style that even the most naive museum goer can read. It's possible in this way to capture a broader audience, and interestingly enough there was a very large media response to the Tate Gallery work. By resorting to this auratic art form, you get press coverage that you probably wouldn't get if you were to use a more avant-garde kind of object. I'd like to ask you something related to the question of strategies, because I was struck by the fact that two of your most recent works are, on the one hand, a portrait painting, which makes all kinds of concessions to being a traditional work of art, and, on the other hand, the *Isolation Box, Grenada*, which makes no pretense to being a work of art.

*Bois:* Except that, in a way, it becomes a bad piece of minimal sculpture.

*Haacke:* Indeed, there, too, there is a subtext. When I read about the isolation boxes in the *New York Times*, I immediately recognized their striking similarity to the standard minimal cube. As you see, one can recycle "minimalism" and put it to a contemporary use. I admit that I have always been sympathetic to so-called minimal art. That does not keep me from criticizing its determined aloofness, which, of course, was also one of its greatest strengths. As to the implied incompatibility between a political statement/information and a work of art, I don't think there are generally accepted criteria for what constitutes a work of art. At least since Duchamp and the constructivists, this has been a moving target. On a more popular level, of course, there are strong feelings about what does or does not look like a work of art. Minimal cubes obviously don't qualify, whereas anything painted on canvas is unquestionably accepted. The argument rages only about whether or not it is a good work.

Hans Haacke. U.S. Isolation Box, Grenada, 1983. 1984.

First shown in conjunction with Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America in the public mall of the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, January 1984.



David Shribman reported in the *New York Times*, November 17, 1983, that the U.S. troops that had invaded Grenada detained prisoners in boxlike isolation chambers at the Point Salines airport. The wooden boxes measured approximately eight by eight feet, had four small windows so high that one could see neither in nor out, and had a number of ventilation holes with a radius of half an inch. Inside one box a prisoner had written, "It's hot in here." The prisoners were forced to enter these boxes by crawling through a hatch that extended from the floor to about knee level.

Shortly after the exhibition opened, the administration of the Graduate School moved the sculpture into a dark corner of the mall and turned it in such a way that the inscription was hardly visible. Only after strenuous protests was the work restored to its original position.

An editorial in the *Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 1984, attacked this work and a gravelike mound of earth in memory of Maurice Bishop, the slain prime minister of Grenada, by the New York artist Thomas Woodruff. The *Journal* found these two

works to be "in proper company" with "America's greatest collection of obscenity and pornography" a few blocks down 42nd Street. The writer of the editorial also called the Isolation Box "the most remarkable work of imagination in the show."

*Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America*, an ad hoc coalition of artists in the U.S. and Canada, staged numerous exhibitions, performances, and other events in over twenty cities from January to March 1984. They were organized in protest against U.S. policy in Central America and in solidarity with the victims of that policy. Claes Oldenburg designed the poster. In New York, more than 700 artists of all ages and styles participated, among them both internationally renowned and totally unknown artists. Established commercial galleries such as Leo Castelli, Paula Cooper, and Barbara Gladstone, as well as alternative galleries, made their spaces available. *Artists Call* took out a three-quarter-page advertisement in the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*. Most art journals reported the events extensively. *Arts Magazine* carried the Oldenburg poster on its cover.



De voorkeuren van de kinderen. Zij kunnen geen onderscheid maken tussen een man van het kapitaal en een man van het loon. Het is niet de rijkdom die zij waarderen, maar de manier waarop de mensen hun werk doen.

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Toch denk ik, dat u mij niet de juiste motieven toeschrijft. U ziet in mij voor alles de man van het kapitaal. In werkelijkheid wil ik echter in de allerbeste plaats dat de mensen de vrijheid hebben om zichzelf zoveel mogelijk te ontwikkelen, zelf kansen te scheppen, initiatieven te nemen en zelf daarvoor de verantwoordelijkheid te dragen.



Foto Philips te zijn uitgegeven "10 Jaar met Philips"



Wij zijn niet alleen een bedrijf dat producten maakt, maar ook een bedrijf dat de mensen die deze producten maken de beste vooruitgang mogelijk maakt. Philips investeert in de ontwikkeling van de mens.

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*Krauss:* One of the things that struck me when I saw the Philips piece [*But I think you question my motives, 1978-79*] was that the blown-up, rather dramatic, high chiaroscuro photographs of black youths seemed to make reference to the works of Gilbert and George from the same period. So it seems to me that there is always a component of your work that reveals certain formal moves made within the art world and the contents to which those forms can be exceedingly porous.

*Haacke:* I didn't think of Gilbert and George. Those are photos from a South African business magazine. They were probably supplied by the Philips P.R. department. But it is true that I often play on the modes of the contemporary art world; and I try to make something that is accessible to a larger public, which does not care for the histrionics of the art world. As Douglas pointed out, it helps that these pieces do not have the look of hermetic "avant-garde" art.

*Hans Haacke.* But I think you question my motives. 1978-79.

*First shown in a one-man exhibition at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, January 1979.*

*Translations:*

*Left Panel:* We are businessmen and we look for business opportunities, which is the only factor governing our decisions. Political considerations don't come into it. Nobody is going to help South Africa unless he is paid for it, and obviously you need know-how from abroad. We are here to stay. —Jan Timmer, Managing Director of Philips in South Africa.

*Center Panel:* But I think you question my motives. You see me just as a man of capital. However, above all I really would like to help people to have the freedom to develop themselves as much as possible, to create opportunities for themselves, to take initiatives and carry the responsibility for them. —Frits Philips, in his autobiography, *45 Years with Philips*.

*Right Panel:* The Employee Councils are advisory bodies. They are precluded from negotiating minimum wages or conditions of employment; and in fact wages are rarely discussed. The average black worker earns 229 rand a month. Blacks are excluded from apprentice training for radio and TV technicians by the *Job Reservations Act*. —*Financial Mail*, Johannesburg, July 22, 1977, supplement on Philips.

more than 1900, blacks, coloreds, and Indians predominantly occupy jobs for untrained or low-skilled workers. Responding to the wishes of the South African government, Philips established lamp manufacturing facilities in Rosslyn, at the border of a Bantustan ("homeland"). Philips dominates the South African market for lightbulbs, radios, hi-fi equipment, tape recorders, and electrical appliances, and has a sizeable share of the market for television sets. Moreover, Philips is active in telecommunications and sophisticated electronics. Because of the low personal income of the black majority population and the widespread lack of electricity in black residential areas, the possibility for an expansion of the market in consumer electronics is limited.

The Mirage fighter planes of the South African airforce as well as its Alouette, Gazelle, Puma, and Super Frelon helicopters are guided by radio-altimeters and/or radar equipment from Philips. Such fighter planes and helicopters were loaned or sold to Ian Smith's white government of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) by South Africa. Philips also supplies the South African police with radio equipment in spite of a U.N. military embargo, and Philips radio-altimeters guide the Exocet missiles which have been supplied to South Africa.

Philips investments in South Africa amount to approximately \$83 million. In a work force of

درود بی پایان بر پادشاه  
 شاهنشاه آریامهر  
 که با اعلام حزب سوسیالیست وحدت و عدالت ایران استقلال  
 شرکت فیلیپس ایران را برقرار کرد

De Iraanse vestiging van Philips getuigt van haar oneindige dankbaarheid jegens zijne Keizerlijke Majesteit, de sjah van Iran, die met de proclamatie van de Iraanse Herrijzenispartij de nationale eenheid veilig heeft gesteld.  
 Advertentie in het Iraanse dagblad Kayhan, 5 maart 1975

*Hans Haacke. Everlasting Gratitude. 1978.  
 First shown in a one-man exhibition at the Stedelijk van  
 Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1979 (The exhibition opened  
 one week after the Shah's final departure from Iran).*

*Translation: Philips of Iran expresses its everlasting gratitude to His Imperial Majesty, the Shah of Iran, who secured national unity by founding the Iranian Resurgence Party. — Advertisement in the Iranian newspaper, Kayhan, March 5, 1975.*

In terms of sales, Philips is the fifth largest non-American multinational industrial corporation. With 383,900 employees (as of 1977) it ranks with companies such as General Motors, Ford, and ITT. Corporate headquarters are located in Eindhoven, Holland. In spite of the decline in the number of employees from 99,000 (1971) to 85,700 (1977), the company remains the largest private employer in Holland (during the same period the number of Philips employees in low-wage countries, notably in the Third World, rose significantly).

In Iran, Philips maintains facilities and a sales organization. During the Shah's regime, the Iranian military received, among other material, 210 Tiger and Phantom fighter planes, sixteen Super Frelon helicopters, and 1500 Chieftain heavy tanks, all equipped with radio-altimeters, UHF radios, and/or night vision equipment from Philips. When the Shah left the country in January 1979, twelve vessels of the *Kaman* class, with guided missile firepower, were under construction for the Iranian navy. Their missile guidance systems were produced by a Dutch subsidiary of Philips, Hollandse Signaalapparaten BV, in Hengelo.

*Bois:* But there is an important difference between this kind of work and the Thatcher and Reagan paintings. Until now, your work has involved a minimal transformation of the material. There was not an elaborate coding through art. I'm thinking of another Philips piece [*Everlasting Gratitude*, 1978], in which the transformation involved only the addition of the Philips logo.

*Haacke:* Actually, I didn't add anything. It is a facsimile of a Philips ad that appeared in a Teheran newspaper in 1975.

*Bois:* That's exactly my point. Before, the context was the signifier. Only a change of context was required for a change of meaning to take place. But now there seems to be a much greater mediation through art-historical codes.

*Haacke:* Only in part. Obviously, had I only made a photocopy of the newspaper ad, it would have remained at the level of documentation. The shift to another material and its inherited connotations changes it radically. Tapestry is something we know from art history. And the panel underneath the Philips tapestry — that's the way things are displayed in museums.

*Crimp:* If I understand what Yve-Alain is getting at, it is more that in the Thatcher work, for example, you are *creating* an image as opposed to taking an advertisement and making a facsimile of it and adding information.

*Haacke:* Some of the ads I invented myself, emulating contemporary corporate style. The quotations about what's good about art for business [*On Social Grease*, 1975] I took from books and newspapers. I made commemorative plaques of them so that they look as if they would be at home in the lobby of corporate headquarters or in the boardroom. Transplanting them from that imagined context into an art gallery can be devastating. That's where the context Yve-Alain is referring to plays an important role.

*Bois:* In a way, the Thatcher piece refers to a history of satirical portraiture, whereas when you transform a quotation from a business into an advertisement format, there is no mediation through art history. The context or the medium is immediate for the viewer because of this abrupt transformation. But in the Thatcher painting, the transformation is far more complicated.

*Haacke:* Maybe there are more layers. Indeed, I use context as a material.

*Bois:* Your earlier work reminds me of the strategies of the situationists, which involved the simple robbery of codes. For example, they released films whose soundtracks had been removed and replaced with others. They made a film that was simply a porno-Kung-Fu film from Hong Kong to which they added a

soundtrack that was a shouting-match between Maoists and Trotskyists. The reason they were called situationists is because they changed strategies for each new situation, and because they invented situations, disruptive events within the apparently smooth flow of "reality." I have felt that your work was very much connected with that of the situationists, because they too wanted to show the connections between investment, advertising, and the culture industry. But with your paintings, there is no longer the same brilliant economy of means. What I found extraordinarily provocative in your works was their efficiency in revealing so much meaning through such slight transformation. But with a painting, you have to start from scratch and make the object.

*Krauss:* You're talking about the economy of means in the readymade principle; but if the readymade in this case is Victorian painting, then in a way it's the same economy. Was it difficult to do?

*Haacke:* Yes. I did a lot of painting in art school and for a while afterwards. But I never learned this kind of painting, with figures, perspective, and so forth. So I listened around, looked into painting manuals, and went to museums to study how such paintings are done. I have no delusions about having produced a masterwork in the traditional sense of the craft. I hope it is good enough for a passing grade. For my purpose, this is all it needs. But it was fascinating, and I had fun doing it. Another reason for making a painting was that I had been stamped a conceptualist, a photomontagist, that sort of thing. This was a way to mess up the labels. There were, in fact, a good number of people who thought that my portrait of Reagan was a photograph, or that I'd paid somebody to paint it for me. It was therefore very important that I painted it myself. Normally, I have no qualms about paying someone to execute something I can't do, as long as I can afford it.

*Crimp:* Again, it seems to me that it is a question of strategies, of devising a work which is appropriate to the problem at hand. That's why I was interested to ask about the differences between the Thatcher portrait and the *Isolation Box, Grenada*. It seems to me that one of the problems of making politically engaged art today is to devise something that won't simply be assimilated because it has accepted the conventional aesthetic codes. For example, if at this moment there is a great deal of attention paid to Leon Golub's work, attention that certainly was not given to him in the past, it's because he makes figurative paintings, and figurative painting has returned as a sanctioned style.

*Haacke:* Not exclusively.

*Crimp:* Perhaps not exclusively. But the generalization of Golub's imagery makes it possible for the Saatchis to collect his work, or for his paintings to be

seen in the context of the Whitney Biennial, for example, and not to disturb the situation, because they fit into the predominant painting mode. So it seems that the problem one faces is to invent a style for each work which allows one to enter the art context but which is not lacking in specificity in such a way that the political thrust vanishes into the dominant aesthetic of the present.

*Haacke:* Concerning the Grenada piece, aside from the minimal art reference, I used dada strategies—the readymade, challenge to cultural norms, and so on. While it looks like a dumb box and nothing else, it is, I believe, perfectly within the range of twentieth-century art theory as we know it. But you are right, it was the political specificity that caused the amazing hoopla around the piece. I thought it would take more to get the *Wall Street Journal* to foam at the mouth and commit three factual errors in one editorial.

*Crimp:* Do you feel that you must always make a specific aesthetic choice, that you have to invent a form that can be understood in aesthetic as well as political terms?

*Haacke:* It seems to work that way.

*Crimp:* What I mean is, do you think this is necessary in a strategic sense, something that will continue to make it possible for you to function within the art context? I'm curious about this because it seems to me that artists of your generation were able to achieve a certain degree of success in the more liberal climate of the late '60s and early '70s, and having achieved that success, you can, to some extent, continue to function. But for an artist beginning right now, it would be much more difficult to enter the art scene as a politicized artist. Therefore the problem for such an artist would be to devise a strategy that would result in some visibility for his or her work.

*Haacke:* Yes, I already had a foot in the door when I moved towards politically engaged work. It got stepped on, but I didn't lose the foot. For young artists today it may be more difficult. They will have to invent their own tricks for survival. I can't tell them what to do.

*Bois:* I was interested to read in your recent interview [*Arts Magazine*, April 1984] that you thought that if your Guggenheim piece had been censored in 1975, rather than in 1971, it would not have had the same impact.

*Haacke:* I think I wouldn't have received as much support. As soon as the Vietnam War was over and the draft abolished, everyone relaxed and thought, "Well, now we can go home, the fight is over." People withdrew into their private worlds. This is the political vacuum which was then filled by the Right. We have to live with it today.

*Bois:* The way you define context as part of your material is also taking such political shifts into consideration. If you change strategies, it's presumably because the larger context has changed as well. Knowing your past work, I would never have expected the painting of Thatcher, but apparently you thought of it as a way of adapting to a different situation.

*Haacke:* I remember saying, some time in the '70s, that I might do a painting when the right context presented itself.

*Krauss:* You could feel painting coming on. . . . Speaking of painting, I was tremendously moved by the two works about painting, the Manet [*Manet-PROJECT '74*, 1974] and the Seurat [*Seurat's "Les Poseuses" (small version)*, 1888-1975, 1975]. I find that the history of ownership of the Manet is very touching: the experience of the European avant-garde supported by well-to-do Jewish intellectual fellow-travelers, which then runs into the stone wall of Hermann Abs and the postwar German industrial machine. But what about the Seurat? Its history of ownership took place mainly in the U.S., after it was bought by De Zayas and then John Quinn. Did you intend that to be revealing of the formation of a taste for the avant-garde in this country?

*Haacke:* No. What triggered the Manet piece was the context of its exhibition. I was invited to participate in a show in Cologne which was to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum. For this occasion, the museum published a golden brochure with reproductions of paintings that had recently been acquired. Particular attention was given to Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus*. Aside from a reproduction of the painting, there was a photograph of Abs delivering a speech celebrating the painting, which was sitting on a studio easel behind him during the ceremonies of its donation. Of course, I knew who Abs was; any newspaper reader in postwar Germany is more or less aware of the role he played and still plays today.

*Krauss:* Played during the war?

*Haacke:* During the Nazi period and after.

*Crimp:* What is revealed about Hermann Abs in the piece is the perfectly smooth transition between his work for the Reich and his work for the reconstruction.

*Haacke:* So this was the hook on which I could, so to speak, hang the painting—a typical example of *l'art pour l'art*. Naturally, when I started I didn't know anything about the history of the painting's ownership. On the one hand, there is the telling role of Abs—as you say, the smooth transition from the Nazi period

to postwar Germany—but of equal interest is the history of culture, how culture is always part of social and political history. That is fascinating—and moving. And then there is also the art historian's custom to trace the provenance of a work, usually restricted to the authentication of the object, which, of course, also establishes its monetary value. I took it a step further in my "tombstones," with the C.V.s of the painting's owners. The documented increase in value and the circumstances under which the painting changed hands serve as headlines for the panels. As you know, the museum officials did not care to have their patron's past displayed on the walls of the museum; the piece was censored.

As for the Seurat piece, I was interested in the phenomenon of art investment. In the course of the research I discovered that this painting by Seurat had been acquired by a newly formed international art investment company with the beautiful name Artemis. I then followed its history in the same way as I had with the Manet, and I discovered a number of interesting things. The painting leads you to anarchist circles in Paris and their friends in established galleries, and to wealthy Parisian art groupies. Eventually it is sold across the Atlantic, where there is the Stieglitz circle, John Quinn, representing the legal establishment of New York, and again socialites dabbling in art. During the Depression, the painting was picked up as a bargain by someone whose family fortune apparently was immune to the financial chaos of the time. He eventually offered it up on the auction block, because he needed money to add a period ballroom to his house on Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia. Artemis is indirectly linked to the fortunes that were made in the Belgian colonies. By way of a company director, there is also a presence at the Museum of Modern Art. It is an incredible story. I have learned a lot about the underpinnings of high culture from it.

*Krauss:* Since part of your medium is research, it has a side aspect of calling attention to the support system for the art industry. One of the things that you point out about Peter Ludwig [*The Chocolate Master*, 1981], for example, is that he increases the value of his works by putting them in museums where research will be done on them, through which they gain a certain historical density, and thus their monetary value rises. So your research and the research typical of art history mirror each other. Of course, one of the things that happens with research is fortuitousness. Just as the history of the Jewish patrons of the avant-garde emerges from the Manet piece, another story, slightly more sinister, emerges from the Seurat work—the story of the very wealthy patrons of the American avant-garde, the Blisses, the Rockefellers. McIlhenny is an example, as was De Zayas, and John Quinn. In a way all these people were already proto-big-art-investment types. What I'm saying is that those seemed to me remarkably different cases.

*Haacke:* A footnote to your remark about Manet and the Jewish intellectual pa-



Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Peter Ludwig  
Vorsitzmann des Leonard Monheim AG

### Kunstbesitz in Dauerleihgaben. ist vermögensteuerfrei

Peter Ludwig wurde 1925 in Koblenz als Sohn des Industriellen Fritz Ludwig (Koblenzer Ludwig und Frau Helene Ludwig, geb. Klöckner) geboren.

Nach dem Wehrdienst (1943-45) studierte er Jura und Kunstgeschichte. 1949 übernahm er die Leitung der Kunstgalerie in Aachen, die er bis 1950 leitete. 1951 wurde er geschäftsführender Gesellschafter der Leonard Monheim KG, Aachen, deren Vorsitz er bis 1978 innehatte. 1978 wurde er geschäftsführender Gesellschafter der Leonard Monheim AG, Aachen.

Peter Ludwig ist seit 1951 verheiratet mit Helene Ludwig, geb. Klöckner, die er 1972 verstorben hat. Sie hat zwei Kinder, Peter und Irene Ludwig. Peter Ludwig ist seit 1972 Mitglied des Vorstandes der Leonard Monheim AG, Aachen.

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Die Leonard Monheim KG, Aachen, wurde 1951 gegründet und hat seitdem den Zweck, Kunstwerke in Dauerleihgaben an Museen zu stellen. Die Leonard Monheim KG, Aachen, hat seit 1951 den Zweck, Kunstwerke in Dauerleihgaben an Museen zu stellen.

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Hans Haacke. The Chocolate Master. 1981. (1 of 7 diptychs.) First shown in one-man exhibition, Paul Maenz Gallery, Cologne, during Westkunst, a major survey of art since 1939, May 1981.

#### Translations:

Left Panel: Art Objects on Permanent Loan Are Exempt from Property Taxes. Peter Ludwig was born in 1925 in Koblenz, the son of the industrialist Fritz Ludwig (Cement Factory Ludwig) and Mrs. Helene Ludwig (née Klöckner).

After his military service (1943-45), he studied law and art history. In 1950 he received a doctorate with a dissertation on "Picasso's Image of Man as an Expression of his Generation's Outlook on Life." The dissertation focuses on relations between contemporary literature and the work of Picasso. Historical events get little attention.

In 1951 Peter Ludwig married a fellow student, Irene Monheim, and joined Leonard Monheim KG, Aachen, his father-in-law's business. In 1952 he became managing partner, in 1969, president, and in 1978, chairman of the Leonard Monheim AG, Aachen.

Peter Ludwig is represented on the boards of directors of Agrippina Versicherungs-Gesellschaft and Waggonfabrik Uerdingen. He is the chairman of the regional council of the Deutsche Bank AG



Leonard Monheim AG



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for the district Cologne-Aachen-Siegen.

Since the beginning of the 1950s, Peter and Irene Ludwig have been collecting art. At first they collected old art. Since 1966 they have been concentrating on modern art: pop art, photorealism, pattern painting, art from East Germany, and neoexpressionism. Since 1972 Peter Ludwig has been an adjunct professor at the University of Cologne and holds seminars in art history at the Museum Ludwig.

Permanent loans of modern art are located at the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, the Neue Galerie-Sammlung Ludwig and the Suermondt-Ludwig Museum in Aachen, the national galleries in West and East Berlin, the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the state museums in Saarbrücken and Mainz. Medieval works are housed at the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne, the Couven Museum in Aachen, and the Bavarian National Gallery. The Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne has pre-Columbian and African objects, as well as works from Oceania.

In 1976 the Wallraf-Richartz Museum of Cologne (now Museum Ludwig) received a donation of pop art. The Suermondt Museum in Aachen (now Suermondt-Ludwig Museum) was given a collection of medieval art in 1977. A collection of Greek and Roman art, which includes permanent loans located in Kassel, Aachen, and

Würzburg, was donated to the Antikenmuseum Basel (now Antikenmuseum Basel and Museum Ludwig). In 1981 a collection of modern art was given to the "Austrian Ludwig Foundation for Art and Science."

Peter Ludwig is a member of the Acquisitions Committee of the State Gallery in Düsseldorf, of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and of the Advisory Council of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

*Right panel: Regent.* Under the Regent label the Monheim Group distributes milk chocolate and assorted chocolates, mainly through the low-priced Aldi chain stores and vending machines.

The production takes place in Aachen, where the company employs 2500 people in two factories. It also has its administrative headquarters there. About 1300 employees work in the Saarlouis plant, some 400 in Quickborn, and approximately 800 in West Berlin.

The labor union Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten negotiated wages ranging from DM 6.02 (scale E = assembly-line work, under eighteen years) per hour to DM 12.30 (scale S = highly skilled work). According to the union contract, the lowest salary amounts to DM 1097. — per month, and the highest salary scale stipulates a minimum of DM 3214. —.

The overwhelming majority of the 2500 foreign workers are women. They come predominantly from Turkey and Yugoslavia. However, foreign workers are also hired by agents in Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, and Greece (price "per head": DM 1000. — in 1973). Another contingent of foreign workers crosses the border daily from nearby Belgium and Holland.

The company maintains hostels for its female foreign workers on its fenced-in factory compound in Aachen, as well as at other locations. Three or four women share a room (the building of hostels for foreign workers is subsidized by the Federal Labor Agency). The rent is automatically withheld from the worker's wages.

The company keeps a check on visitors to these hostels and, in fact, turns some away. The press office of the Aachen Diocese and the Caritas Association judged the living conditions as follows: "Since most of the women and girls can have social contacts only at the workplace and in the hostel, they are practically living in a ghetto."

Female foreign workers who give birth reportedly have to leave the hostel or they must find a foster home for the child at a price they can hardly afford. Another option would be to offer their child for adoption. "It should be no problem for a big company which employs so many girls and women to set up a day care center."

The personnel department retorted that Monheim is "a chocolate factory and not a kindergarten." It would be impossible to hire kindergarten teachers. The company is not a welfare agency.

*Der Pralinenmeister* (The Chocolate Master) is the promotional catchword with which Trumpf chocolate products are marketed. Trumpf is one of seven brand names of the West German Leonard Monheim AG, which maintains production facilities in Germany, Belgium, Canada, and the United States. Sales in 1982 amounted to approximately \$660 million (46% outside Germany). Peter Ludwig is the chairman of the chocolate empire with headquarters in Aachen. Together with his wife Irene, he holds the majority of shares.

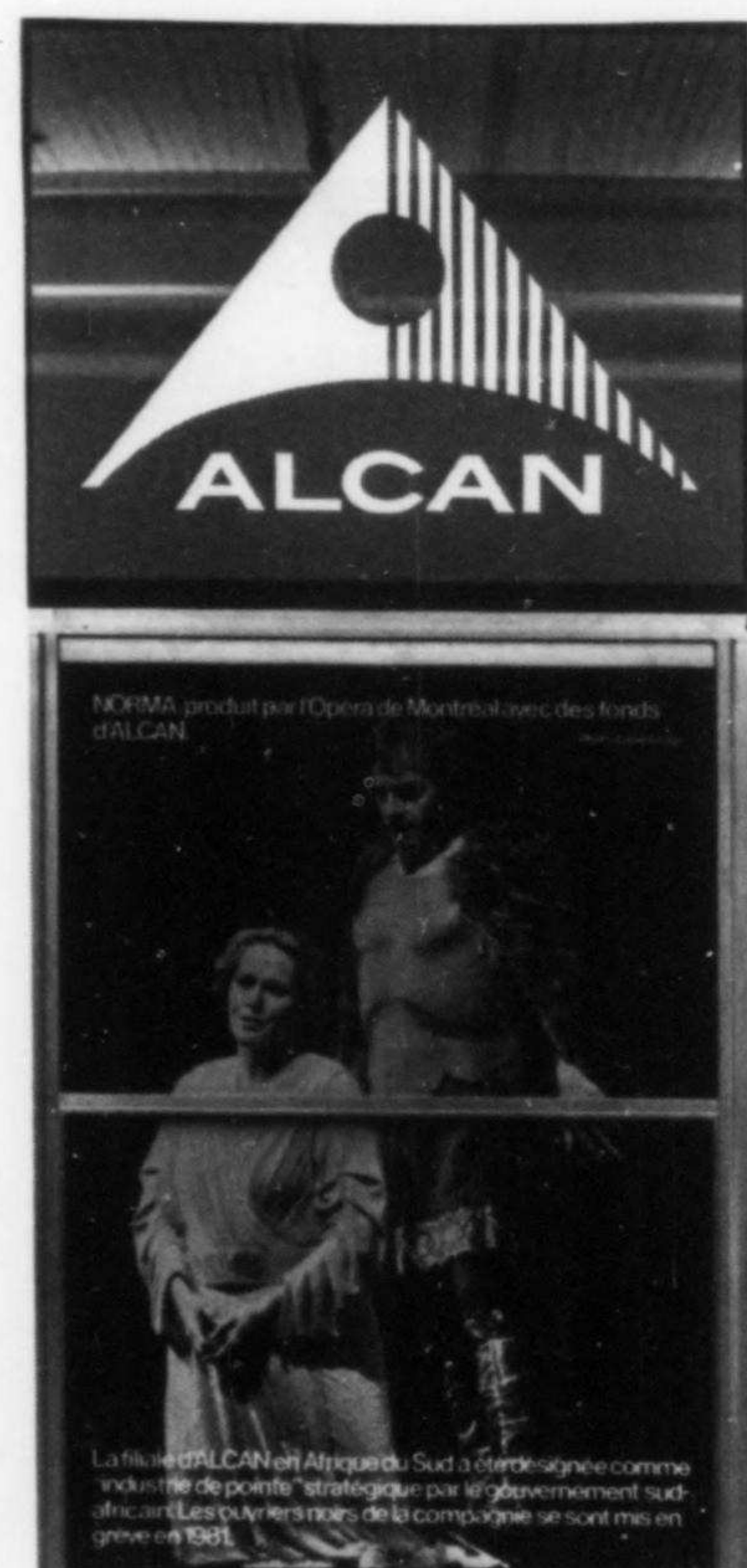
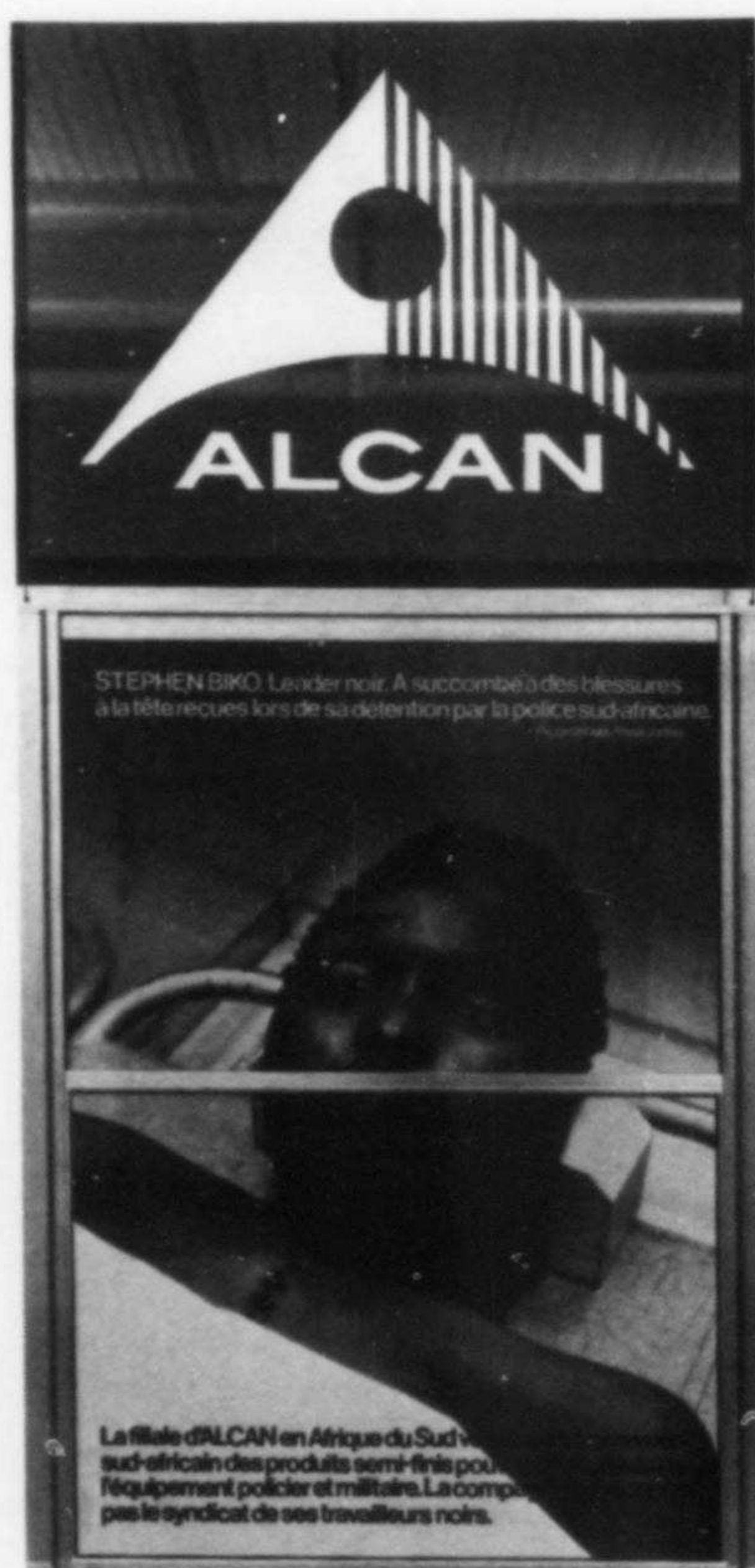
Through donations from their art collection, through hints about possible future donations, as well as through loans, they have gained considerable influence in a large number of European museums. When the city of Cologne accepted a donation of pop art in 1976, it agreed to build a museum for twentieth-century art, which was to be completed for the donor's sixtieth birthday and to be named after him. The construction thus far is estimated to have cost in excess of \$100 million. The contract also stipulates that the Ludwigs must be consulted when curators and the director of the museum (all city civil servants) are appointed and that the donor is to be given a detailed report on the museum's operations twice a year.

The Neue Galerie-Sammlung Ludwig, a municipal museum in Aachen, regularly serves as the first public showcase and promoter of Ludwig's new acquisitions. Among the shows in Aachen have been presentations of photorealism, pattern painting, neoexpressionism, art from East Germany and the Soviet Union, and recently art from New York's Lower East Side.

A plan promoted by Ludwig to establish a German Ludwig Foundation, to be financed by the city of Cologne, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, and the federal government and to hold unspecified works from the collector, was vigorously opposed by the entire museum profession. It was feared that the foundation, which was to organize exhibitions, purchase works, and administer a collection, would drain scarce funds from currently decentralized museum activities, and that, with Ludwig as chairman, it would exert an overpowering and dangerous influence on the entire art world. The plan collapsed when Ludwig angrily withdrew his proposal, although the public agencies were ready to finance the scheme.

trons. Some Jews thought my work was anti-Semitic. I had to insist that they read all the way through to the end of the story. Only then did they concede that I was not anti-Semitic. My insistent mention of the owners' religions reminded them of Nazi practices. Obviously, it was essential for my piece that Abs, who managed so well under the Nazis, appeared in the context of their victims.

*Crimp:* There is a specificity to all of your works in relation to where they are first shown, including even a language specificity — that is, if you make a work for a Dutch museum, the language will be Dutch. So I wonder about your reasons for showing works again in other places where they don't have that degree of specificity, or for selling them, which assumes they continue to have value according to the notion of the universal nature of the work of art. Take, for example, the Alcan work [*Voici Alcan*, 1983]. People living in Quebec know the public relations strategies of Alcan the way people living in the U.S. know the public relations strategies of, say, Mobil. But taken out of the context of Montreal, where your Alcan work was shown, the work's meaning is reduced to a kind of generality which compromises its value.



*Hans Haacke. Voici Alcan. 1983.*  
*First shown in one-man exhibition, Galerie France*  
*Morin, Montreal, February 1983.*

*Translations:*

*Left panel:* LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR, produced by the Montreal Opera Company with funding from Alcan. Alcan's South African affiliate is the most important producer of aluminum and the only fabricator of aluminum sheet in South Africa. From a nonwhite work force of 2300, the company has trained eight skilled workers.

*Center panel:* STEPHEN BIKO, black leader, died from head wounds received during his detention by the South African police. Alcan's South African affiliate sells to the South African government semifinished products which can be used in police and military equipment. The company does not recognize the trade union of its black workers.

*Right panel:* NORMA, produced by the Montreal Opera Company with funding from Alcan. Alcan's South African affiliate has been designated a "key point industry" by the South African government. The company's black workers went on strike in 1981.

Alcan Aluminum Ltd., through its subsidiaries and affiliates, is one of the largest producers of aluminum ingot in the world and operates large aluminum fabrication facilities in some thirty-five countries. Throughout the world it has approximately 66,000 employees. It is the largest manufacturing employer in Quebec. The head office of the totally integrated multinational company is in Montreal. On December 31, 1981, 48% of the common shares were held by residents of Canada, 45% by residents of the U.S. The Chairman of the Board, Nathaniel V. Davis, a U.S. citizen, is reputed to control a considerable block of shares. While the largest single shareholder is the Caisse de Dépôt et de Placement, which administers the pension funds of the province of Quebec, it is not represented on the Board of Directors.

Alcan has marketed aluminum in South Africa since 1930. In 1949 it started production at its plant in Pietermaritzburg near Durban. Major new investments occurred between 1969 and 1972. When Alcan sold a block of its shares in 1973 to the South African Hulett's Corporation it stressed that this was not a political move. Duncan Campbell, a vice-president of Alcan, explained, "The decision was made purely for commercial and financial reasons. It doesn't mean we're pulling out of South Africa." The increase in South African ownership in Alcan's South African affiliate allows the company to borrow locally and

thereby to circumvent restrictions imposed by the South African government. The chairman of Hulett's Aluminum was represented on the Defense Advisory Board of the prime minister of South Africa. In the early '70s Alcan was accused by church groups of having paid its black workers wages below the poverty datum line. In 1982 representatives of the United Church of Canada, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Redemptorist Fathers, and the Anglican Church of Canada filed a proxy resolution at Alcan's annual meeting requesting the board of directors to establish a South African review committee to "examine the company's activities in South Africa, including the sale of its products to the South African military, the status of Hulett's chairman on the Defense Advisory Board, and the storage of weapons on company premises, as well as the training of militia units of Hulett's employees." Speaking for the board, Nathaniel Davis, its chairman, opposed the resolution. He explained that all security regulations of South Africa are binding on Alcan's affiliate. "While it is entirely normal and indeed inevitable," he said, that Alcan products are used by the South African military, Alcan was not permitted, under South African law, to disclose the nature of sales for military use.

Stephen Biko was the cofounder and central figure in the Black People's Convention, the South African black consciousness movement. He was arrested without charges by the Special Branch of the South African Police on August 18, 1977, and detained in Port Elizabeth. The police admitted having forced Biko to spend nineteen days naked in a cell before he was interrogated around the clock for fifty hours while shackled in handcuffs and leg irons. During his detention he suffered severe head injuries. In a semiconscious state he was taken naked in a Land Rover to a hospital in Pretoria, about fourteen hours away from Port Elizabeth. He died from his injuries on September 12.

Alcan has been sponsoring cultural programs, ranging from the Théâtre Alcan and the production of the popular TV series *Les Ploufs* to architectural conferences and an art collection in the company's headquarters. Cosponsorship of two productions of the Opéra de Montréal with Hydro-Quebec linked Alcan in a highly visible way with the provincially owned utility company. Cheap hydro-electric power is the main asset of Alcan's aluminum production in Quebec. In the recent past Alcan has been threatened with nationalization of the electric power generating plants it owns in the province.

"Voici Alcan" is the title of a glossy brochure which was published by Alcan in 1979.

*Haacke*: Specificity does limit a work somewhat to the occasion for which it is produced. But there is more to it. Let's look at the practical side. If I'm invited for a show, which doesn't happen every day, I cannot make ten or fifteen works for it, because it always takes me a long time to complete just one piece. So I have to show earlier works, too. As long as there is one new work, I think an intelligent viewer understands that the other works once played an equally topical role. In fact, they provide a useful foil for the new piece. So the situation is not quite as restrictive as it sounds in your question. Many of the corporate strategies referred to in my pieces are not unique to the company I happen to focus on. As you say, Alcan, as much as Mobil, uses culture to further the fortunes of its shareholders. Both have recognized that, in order to succeed, they have to shape public opinion. Both are multinationals. No matter where you go in the capitalist world, you stumble across the Mobil logo. Alcan happens to be overshadowed in the U.S. by Reynolds and Alcoa, which used to be a sister company, but Alcan is well known in Europe, in Africa, India, Brazil, and Australia. Even though *Voici Alcan* was made for an exhibition in Quebec, the Tate Gallery audience in London could relate to it, particularly because, due to the historical and close trade relations between the U.K. and South Africa, apartheid is a hot topic in London. Naturally, I had to provide translations of the French captions, as I always translate texts into the language of the country where the works are exhibited, if they were not done in that country's language. Also, the Ludwig piece got a lot of attention in London. As I suspected, viewers drew parallels to the Saatchis' attempts to gain a controlling foothold in public museums. And the public learned, through the Ludwig example, what that could entail. The Saatchis, like Ludwig, run a multinational company. Both have ambitions to influence cultural policies outside their home countries. And both are household names in the inner circles of the international art world.

There are other works that are specific and still have general relevance, such as the confrontation between Reagan and antinuclear protests across my red carpet. People in Kassel, as much as in London and New York, thought that this concerned them directly. So, in a way, many of my pieces are "multinational." There is, maybe, still another reason to exhibit works that do not retain their bite when transplanted from their original contexts. I think it is important to build up and display a record of this kind of work in order to enrich the critical discourse. I am often told that an array of examples demonstrates that socially engaged work need not be one-dimensional and tied to a single medium or a single approach. So the exhibition of the methodology can serve a useful purpose, too. As to selling the works, let's not forget that we are not living in an ideal society. One has to make adjustments to the world as it is. In order to reach a public, in order to insert one's ideas into the public discourse, one has to enter the institutions where this discourse takes place. Under present circumstances, that is easier if an exchange value comes along with use value. As you know, more often than not it is by way of commercial galleries that one

eventually gets invited to shows that attract larger audiences. Documenta, museum exhibitions, and so forth rarely present works that have not been, at least marginally, sanctioned by the art trading posts. The same is true for the art press. I am sure we would not be discussing this here today if I had not shown in commercial galleries. You would probably not know my work, and it might be very different or totally nonexistent. One more practical point: my work, like that of many artists, is expensive to produce. We have an overhead. So an occasional sale helps to underwrite the production. But I am far from being able to live off the sale of my work, nor do I have the ambition to do so. That would make me dependent of the fortunes of the market. So, all in all, it is a messy situation, full of compromises. But I think one has to be pragmatic. Otherwise, one is completely paralyzed. If I had not made adjustments, by now I would be consumed by bitterness and nothing would have been achieved.

*Bois:* How did you present the Thatcher painting? just by itself? or with a long caption? Was there any information about the Saatchis, for example?

*Haacke:* No. That is unnecessary in London, because, since the Thatcher election campaign, Saatchi & Saatchi is a household name. Everybody knows them. What the general public doesn't know is their involvement with art. When I show the piece elsewhere, I will have to provide some background information.

*Crimp:* In addition to the information the painting contains, though, there is much more about the Saatchis' art manipulations that is not there—for example, the fact that Doris and Charles Saatchi bought works by Malcolm Morley after Charles Saatchi learned in a Whitechapel Gallery trustees meeting that the gallery planned to stage a Morley exhibition. Did you try to make such information available?

*Haacke:* It's not there for a simple reason. I just couldn't think of a good way to get this in without a breach of style and without overburdening the painting with text. However, the interviews generated by the Thatcher/Saatchi piece have allowed me to elaborate on such items. This fallout, at the secondary level is, in a way, part of the piece. By the way, I was told that not only in the case of the Morley purchases did Saatchi profit from inside information and positions within public institutions. And it was also the talk of the London art world that the Saatchis owned nine of the eleven paintings in the Schnabel show at the Tate Gallery. In any case, it might be worth stating precisely what is in the painting: that Charles Saatchi is a trustee of the Whitechapel Gallery is inscribed in the column behind Margaret Thatcher, as is the fact that he is on the Patrons of New Art Committee of the Tate Gallery. The Saatchi advertising accounts of venerable British art institutions, including the Tate, are listed together with other big accounts as book titles on the Victorian bookshelf. And

you can read about the company's art investment in the papers on the little table and at Maggie's foot. From all of this one can draw conclusions about the connections between the Saatchis, the current British government, and the conflicts of interest that arise out of their positions on public institution boards and their private interests in the art world. By the way, I just heard that Charles Saatchi has resigned from the Board of the Whitechapel and from the Patrons Committee of the Tate. I have no idea whether that had anything to do with my *Taking Stock*.

*Crimp:* Can we talk more generally about the tenor of the current situation? Now that it has become clear that a concerted effort is being made to suppress politicized art activity, an effort on the part of neoconservatives both directly and indirectly involved in policy making at the government level, what strategies do you see as possible for artists?

*Haacke:* It is necessary to make clear that someone like Hilton Kramer is not disinterested, as he claims to be. When he talks about high art and good writing, and so forth, he follows a hidden political agenda, for which these terms serve as a smokescreen. I recently reread Kramer's "Turning Back the Clock: Art and Politics in 1984" [*New Criterion*, April 1984]. It is quite amazing how he presents himself there as the impartial arbiter, beyond ideology. Strategically, this makes a lot of sense. The moment one knows that, for all practical purposes, he is in charge of the art section in the neoconservative shadow cabinet, his credibility is shot. His denial that high art is as much affected by and influences its sociopolitical environment as other products of the consciousness industry is, of course, as much an ideological position as its opposite.

*Krauss:* One of the most astonishing things Kramer says in that article is that the very idea that art has a political basis is totalitarian, that it is a Stalinist position.

*Haacke:* He suggests, in barely veiled form, that art works, and the accompanying critical writing, that question current U.S. policies and the tenets of capitalism are leading us down the road to the Gulag. According to this point of view, several of the current presidential candidates and senators and congressmen are suspect. As you know, this is the classic neoconservative doctrine as propounded by its godfather, Irving Kristol, who calls Kramer a friend and was probably instrumental in securing funds for launching the *New Criterion*. It is not surprising to find the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, who is Kristol's wife, among the regular contributors to Kramer's *Kampfblatt*. Kramer's publisher, Samuel Lipman, doubles as a music critic for Norman Podhoretz's *Commentary*, another neoconservative periodical. As a Reagan appointee, Lipman also pushes the "social agenda" on the National Council on the Arts, which gov-

erns the NEA. All of these nice people see one another regularly as members of the Committee for the Free World under the leadership of Midge Decter, Podhoretz's wife. And their activities are funded by the same group of conservative foundations.

Where the Left is sometimes unnecessarily vulnerable — and Kramer exploits this weakness wherever he can — is in its tendency to make mechanical attributions of ideology. In that respect, it mirrors the Right. We should recognize that things need to be evaluated within their respective historical contexts. Taken out of context, they are likely to be misread and can play the opposite role from that of their original settings. For instance, if my Grenada box were reproduced in *Soldier of Fortune*, it would have changed its meaning totally, even at this moment.

*Krauss:* That is also the best argument against idealist claims for art.

*Haacke:* Yes. Meaning and value are contingent. Threatening his readers with the specter of the "Stalinist ethos," Kramer is, in effect, out to undermine the First Amendment. This echoes arguments by Lawrence Silberman, his fellow member on the Committee for the Free World. Silberman urged his friends at a recent conference to shake off the fear of being charged with McCarthyism. Kramer's suggestion that arts activities which incorporate criticism of this administration's policies and question the sanctity of the capitalist system should not receive money from the NEA makes partisan politics a "new criterion" for government funding. Quite a remarkable position for someone who claims to fight for freedom! Under this formula, government agencies would be restructured to serve as censors and to perform the task of the reelection committee of whoever happens to occupy the White House. In Britain, like on the Continent, museums are public institutions, totally paid for by the taxpayers. There, even more than in the U.S., one can argue that they are constitutionally obliged to show art irrespective of its relative allegiance to a particular government's ideological coloration.

*Crimp:* But you can make the same argument for American museums, because in the end we as taxpayers support them. Museums are tax-exempt institutions; all donations to them are tax-deductible. The ordinary taxpayer has to make up for donations to museums, whether by private individuals or corporations.

*Haacke:* Absolutely. The same can be said of the *New Criterion*. The conservative foundations that fund Kramer's publication are tax-exempt. Consequently we taxpayers are chipping in to cover for their exemptions; and Kramer's sponsors were very generous. As start-up money, he got \$375,000 from the Smith Richardson Foundation, \$200,000 from the Carthage Foundation of Richard

Mellon Scaife, and \$100,000 from the John M. Olin Foundation.\* In the beginning, the editorial offices shared an address with the Olin Foundation on Park Avenue. According to the *New York Times*, the Scaife Family Charitable Trust also contributed, but because the Trust does not have to make its records public, we don't know how much came from there. Richard Mellon Scaife is known to be the bankroller of the New Right. Among numerous other organizations, he also helped the Heritage Foundation, which, by the way, advertises in the *New Criterion*. In the opinion of a writer in an article in the *Washington Post* on the Scaife funded groups, it is clear that their "collective effect has been to help shape the way Americans think about themselves and their nation's problems." This is also the goal of Hilton Kramer's publication. Any doubts about this are dispelled by his introduction to the first issue. A far cry from his claim to disinterestedness!

*Crimp*: One of the things that your work has revealed is the specific "interestedness" of corporate sponsorship of the arts. Not only do corporations use their support of culture to clean up their dirty images, but they are able to effect a self-censorship on the part of the institutions they fund. And within the contemporary art world, the force of the marketplace has become so total that one has the sense that the kind of interventionist work that you and a few other artists make can hardly make a dent in the monolithic monster that the art world has become.

*Bois*: In your text ["Museums, Managers of Consciousness," *Art in America*, February 1984], you make a distinction between the old-style dealer and the new, between the Castelli generation and the Mary Boone.

*Haacke*: In principle, I think, things were not all that different in the past. But now, with the arrival of multinational conglomerates, it has taken on a new dimension, both in terms of market and ideological control. Ten years ago, corporations did not have so much influence on the art world, nor could the gallery/museum/collector complex exert as much pressure internationally.

*Crimp*: Certainly one change took place after the recession of the early '70s, which precipitated a crisis for art institutions. That crisis was met by corporate support, so that now museums are virtually prisoners to corporations. Few museums can now do a major exhibition without corporate sponsorship, which drastically reduces the kind of exhibitions that can and will be organized.

\* These figures are a matter of public record, as all tax-exempt foundations must file financial reports, which are made available at the Foundation Center in New York.

*Haacke:* The younger people working in galleries and museums no longer know a different kind of art world. They assume that this is the natural state of affairs. And so they all become little entrepreneurs.

*Krauss:* What seems to me especially brilliant about your work is that you identified style as one of the enemies; you understood style as a category born of idealism, as a fundamentally nonhistorical way of thinking. And therefore your willingness to change depending upon the situation became a way of avoiding the situation that Douglas referred to before regarding Leon Golub, in which Golub's paintings can be recuperated and made chic once figuration has become fashionable. You seem to have been consistently aware of this problem.

*Haacke:* I'm not sure whether I was aware of it. Now, of course, I am. It helped that I was primarily what you might call job-oriented. Even in the '60s, I wanted things to function, in a very literal, physical sense. I carried this approach over to the more recent work. For example, in order to conduct a poll of the art public, one has to devise certain social situations, and for the presentation of the results, one has to use particular graphic means. Whether they happen to conform to the period style or not is irrelevant.

*Krauss:* But you have always had a certain parodic relationship to style and to formal aspects of the art of the time when you were working.

*Crimp:* It seems to have to do with utility, as you say. One of the problems with much recent political art is that artists seem to be trying to achieve a fixed style for political work. This is what I find somewhat problematic about Barbara Kruger's work, for example. There are various stylistic signifiers in her work—the black, white, red of Russian constructivism; the photomontage of Heartfield; the generic images of the '40s and '50s, a time when ideology seemed perhaps more naked in the photographic image. All of this tends to reduce the work to a generalized political statement, rather than one of real specificity. This may be one of the reasons that Barbara's work has been so well received, this and the fact that the work's graphic beauty is its most obvious characteristic.

*Bois:* There is a difference in your work, which is that you have always been wary of the possibility of recuperation, which was at the core of the thinking of the situationists also. So each time the possibility arose, you would just shift your position.

*Haacke:* Yes, one needs to be aware of the potential for recuperation. But this should not reach paranoid proportions. If I had been too concerned about co-optation, I would probably not have been able to do the things I've done. It can have a paralyzing effect. I saw this with some colleagues and students in the

'60s and '70s. They either stopped working altogether or went through tremendous personal crises, from which some eventually emerged as cynical entrepreneurs. In either case, that amounted to a capitulation to the powers that be. It takes stamina and shrewdness to survive in this mess.

*Bois:* One of the reasons I was always so impressed by what I've called your economy of means is that your work simply provides information, and information can't be obliterated. So even if the work is recuperated and transformed into a meaningless object in a museum, it still carries that information. This quality of immediacy, of simply adding information, is the way your work will always resist complete co-optation.

*Crimp:* Except insofar as one gets further away from what is referred to historically. After all, Heartfield can be recuperated now, even though his work includes real information.

*Bois:* But Heartfield is recuperated mainly on stylistic grounds, as a dadaist photomonteur; but I don't think Hans's work could be recuperated in this way.

*Haacke:* Nothing can escape eventual absorption. But you are right; the informational aspect probably makes it immune, at least for a while. We just have to reconcile ourselves to the historical contingency of things. Otherwise, we fall into the idealist trap of believing in universal meanings and values. But if the dissenting voices become the mainstream chorus, as it happened, for example, toward the end of the Vietnam War, what more can one hope for?

DOUGLAS CRIMP

. . . *documenta 7*. Not a bad name because it suggests an attractive tradition of taste and discrimination. It is no doubt an honorable name. Therefore it may be followed by a subtitle as in those novels of long ago: *In which our heroes after a long and strenuous voyage through sinister valleys and dark forests finally arrive in the English Garden, and at the gate of a splendid palace.*<sup>1</sup>

So writes Artistic Director Rudi Fuchs in his introduction to the catalogue for the Documenta exhibition of 1982. What one actually encountered, however, at the gate of the splendid palace, the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, were not heroes at all, but rather a junky-looking construction workers' trailer displaying various objects for sale. The status of these things—whether works of art or merely souvenirs—was not immediately apparent. Among the T-shirts, multiples, and other wares to be found here and at other stands throughout the English garden were sheets of stationery whose upper and lower margins were printed with statements set in small typeface. At the top of one sheet, for example, one could read the following:

If it is not met with respectful seriousness, the work of art will hardly or not at all be able to stand its ground in the environment: the world around it, customs and architecture, politics and cooking—they all have become hard and brutal. In constant noise one can easily miss hearing the soft sounds of Apollo's lyre. Art is gentle and discreet, she aims for depth and passion, clarity and warmth.

On the lower margin of the same sheet the source of this astonishing claim was given: "Excerpts from a letter to the participating artists by the Director of Documenta 7, R. H. Fuchs, edited and published by Louise Lawler."

\* An earlier version of this essay was presented as a lecture in a series entitled "Situation de l'art contemporain à travers les grandes manifestations internationales," at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, on May 7, 1984.

1. Rudi Fuchs, "Introduction," in *Documenta 7*, Kassel, 1982, vol. 1, p. xv.

Not officially invited to participate in Documenta, Lawler was not a recipient of the letter from which her stationery quotes. She was, however, represented in the show in this marginal way through a subterfuge. Jenny Holzer, who had been invited, presented as part of her contribution a collaborative venture with Fashion Moda, the alternative gallery situated in the South Bronx. That is to say, Fashion Moda is located in the very heart of an environment that is hard and brutal indeed, the most notorious black and Hispanic slum in the United States; and it is there, not to stand its ground against its environment, but rather to engage with it constructively.

Though Lawler had not received Fuchs's letter, she had been interested to read it, as many of us had, for it had become the focus of art-world gossip about the forthcoming major contemporary art event. With its absurd title — "Documenta 7: A Story" — and its equally absurd opening sentence — "How can I describe the exhibition to you: the exhibition which floats in my mind like a star?" — this letter revealed Fuchs's fundamentally contradictory perspective. On the one hand, he claimed that he would restore to art its precious autonomy, while on the other hand, he made no secret his desire to manipulate the individual works of art in conformity with his inflated self-image as the master artist of the exhibition. Whether the artists intended it or not, Fuchs would insure that their works would in no way reflect upon their environment: the world around them, customs and architecture, politics and cooking.

I, too, had read the letter, circulated in the spring of 1982, and it made me curious to attend the press conference Fuchs was to give at Goethe House in New York as part of the promotional campaign for this most costly of international art exhibitions. I fully expected Fuchs to confirm there the rumors that his exhibition would constitute a complete return to conventional modes of painting and sculpture, thereby breaking with the earlier Documentas' inclusion of experimental work in other mediums such as video and performance, as well as of practices that openly criticized institutionalized forms of both production and reception. This, of course, Fuchs did, as he showed slide after slide of paintings and sculptures, mostly in the neoexpressionist style that had already come to dominate the art market in New York and elsewhere in the Western world. What I had not expected from the press conference, though, was that at least half of the artistic director's presentation would be not about art works but about work in progress to ready the exhibition spaces for the installation. "I feel," he said, "that the time one can show contemporary art in makeshift spaces, converted factories and so on, is over. Art is a noble achievement and it should be handled with dignity and respect. Therefore we have finally built real walls."<sup>2</sup>

2. Quoted in Coosje van Bruggen, "In the Mist Things Appear Larger," in *Documenta 7*, vol. II, p. ix.

And it was these walls, together with the lighting design and other details of museological endeavor, that he took great pains to present to his listeners.<sup>3</sup>

In his preface to Documenta's catalogue Fuchs succinctly summarized his art of exhibition. "We practice this wonderful craft," he wrote, "we construct an exhibition after having made rooms for this exhibition. In the meantime artists attempt to do their best, as it should be."<sup>4</sup> Everything as it should be: the artistic director builds his walls—permanent now, since there will be no return to that time when temporary structures would suffice or even be necessary to meet the unconventional demands of unconventional art practices—and in the meantime the artists apply themselves to the creation of works of art appropriate to this hallowed setting.

No wonder, then, that the status of those objects in the Fashion Moda pavilions remains in question. Louise Lawler's stationery, Jenny Holzer's posters of streetwise provocations, the knickknacks produced by members of Colab, Christy Rupp's T-shirts silkscreened with the image of an attacking rat—whatever else these things may be, they are certainly not appropriate to the sacred precincts of art as reaffirmed by Rudi Fuchs. For these are deliberately marginal practices, works manufactured cheap and sold cheap, quite unlike the paintings and sculptures within the museum buildings, whose real but disguised condition is that of the international market for art, dominated increasingly by corporate speculation. Moreover, the Fashion Moda works intentionally confront, rather than deny, dissemble, or mystify the social bases of their production and circulation. Take, for example, Christy Rupp's rat image.

Rupp and I live in the same building in lower Manhattan, just a few blocks south of City Hall, where the most reactionary mayor in New York's recent history delivers the city over to powerful real estate developers while city services decline and our poorer citizens are further marginalized. The combination of the Reagan administration's cuts in federal programs to aid the poor and New York's cynically manipulated housing shortage has resulted in a reported 30,000 homeless people now living on the streets of the city.<sup>5</sup> The hard and

3. At one point, Fuchs showed a slide of a patch of white paint on a portion of a newly constructed wall. This, he said, was the color of whitewash he had chosen. The audience laughed, assuming that Fuchs was indulging in a moment of self-parody, but Fuchs became indignant at the laughter. For far too long, he argued, art has been subjected to the affront of walls carelessly covered with acrylic-base paints. A chemical concoction, acrylic paint evidently represented for Fuchs yet another aspect of that unnatural environment which in its hardness and brutality conspired to drown out the soft sound of Apollo's lyre.

4. Rudi Fuchs, "Forward," in *Documenta 7*, vol. II, p. vii.

5. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported on May 1, 1984, that there were an estimated 28,000–30,000 homeless people in New York City. A spokesman for the Community of Creative Nonviolence, a private nonprofit group that works with the homeless, said, however, that the official government statistics were "utterly ridiculous," that the Reagan administration was vastly underestimating the scope of the problem for political reasons. Estimates of the number of homeless nationwide by nongovernment antipoverty groups are often ten



*Christy Rupp. Rat Patrol. 1979.*

brutal conditions of these people's lives can be imagined by observing the few of them who spend every evening in the alleyway behind our building competing with rats for the garbage left there by McDonald's and Burger King. Mayor Koch was publicly embarrassed in the spring of 1979, when the media reported the story of a neighborhood office worker attacked by these rats as she left work. Such an event would certainly have been routine had it happened in one of the city's ghetto districts, but in this case the Health Department was called in, and their findings were rather sensational: the vacant lot adjoining the alleyway contained thirty-two tons of garbage and was home to an estimated 4,000 rodents.<sup>6</sup> But they also found something else, even more difficult to explain to the public. Pasted to the temporary wall barricading the vacant lot from the street were pictures of a huge, sinister attacking rat, reproductions of a photograph from

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times the government's figures of 250,000-350,000. Cf. Robert Pear, "Homeless in U.S. Put at 250,000, Far Less Than Previous Estimates," *New York Times*, May 2, 1984, p. A1.

6. See Andy Soltis and Chris Oliver, "Super Rats: They Never Say Die," *New York Post*, May 12, 1979, p. 6, in which an official of the Health Department's Pest Control Bureau is reported as saying, "You go into the South Bronx and this happens on an ongoing basis. It was highlighted here because of the woman who was bitten."

the Health Department's own files. And these pictures were not only there but everywhere else in the vicinity where the city's usual accumulations of rotting garbage might indeed attract rats. It was as if a Health Department guerrilla action had posted advance warnings of the incident that had now taken place. The coincidence of scandalous event and the pictures which seemed to foretell it was an aspect of the story the news media were eager to report, and so they tracked down the guerrilla herself, Christy Rupp. But who was this woman? Interviewed on TV, she clearly knew a considerable amount about the city's rat problems, more even than the bureaucrats from the Health Department. Why, then, did she call herself an artist? and why did she refer to those ugly pictures as her art? Surely a photograph of a rat borrowed from Health Department files and mechanically reproduced is not a creation of artistic imagination; it has no claim to universality; it would be unthinkable to see the picture on exhibition in a museum.

But that, of course, is part of its point. Rupp's *Rat Patrol*, as she called her activity, is one of those art practices, now fairly numerous, that makes no concessions to the institutions of exhibition, even deliberately confounds them. As a result, it cannot be understood by most people as art, for it is only the exhibition institutions that can, at this historical juncture, fully legitimate any practice as art. Our understanding of this fact has been intensified recently because, since the late '60s, it has been the subject of much of the most important work by artists themselves. And it is precisely this understanding that Rudi Fuchs sought to suppress through his exhibition strategies and rhetoric at Documenta 7. One can only assume that his attempts were fully calculated, since Fuchs, in his capacity as director of the van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, had been one of the foremost proponents of art which revealed or criticized the conditions imposed on art by its modes of exhibition, or of art which broke with the notion of aesthetic autonomy by directly confronting social reality.

Needless to say, Fuchs was not entirely successful at Documenta in imposing his new view of art as merely gentle and discreet, standing its ground against the environment. Because he worked with four other curators, he was forced to include a number of artists who took it as their responsibility to unmask his art of exhibition. Thus at the approach to the Fridericianum in Kassel one was confronted with various disruptions of the decorum that Fuchs had wanted to insure. I have already mentioned the Fashion Moda stand, which the curator in charge of the American selection, Coosje van Bruggen, had insisted on accepting. Even more provocative perhaps was the work of Daniel Buren. This consisted of pennants of Buren's familiar striped material strung from high poles, which also carried loud speakers. From these were broadcast fragments of musical compositions in chronological order by composers ranging from Lully through Mozart and Beethoven to Verdi and Scott Joplin. The music was periodically interrupted by recitations of color names in fourteen languages. Buren thereby created at the entrance to the exhibition an atmo-



Daniel Buren. *Les Guirlandes at Documenta 7, with Johann August Nahl's Monument to Frederick II in foreground.* (Photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren.)

sphere that the critic Benjamin Buchloh described as "appropriate to a fun fair or the grand opening of a gas station."<sup>7</sup> Such an atmosphere is considerably more suitable to the self-promotion of the state of Hesse and the festive gathering of the international art community than would have been Fuchs's wished-for air of reverence. Moreover, Buren simultaneously parodied the show's simplistic notions of history (one volume of the catalogue, for example, arranged the entrants according to their birth dates) and of nationalism, a category newly revived to foster stronger market competition.

Inside the three museum buildings, the Fridericianum, the Orangerie, and the Neue Galerie, Fuchs willfully distributed works by any one artist throughout the galleries so that they would appear in perversely unlikely juxtaposition with works by various other artists. The result was to deny difference, dissemble meaning, and reduce everything to a potpourri of random style, although Fuchs liked to speak of this strategy as effecting dialogues between artists. The genuine significance of these groupings, however, was more accurately captured in Lawrence Wiener's phrase printed on the Fridericianum's frieze: "Viele farbige Dinge nebeneinander angeordnet bilden eine Reihe vieler farbiger Dinge." Translated for the wrapper which bound together the two hefty volumes of the show's catalogue, the statement reads in English: "Many colored objects placed side by side to form a row of many colored objects."

Within the precincts of the museum buildings it was considerably more difficult for artists to force an awareness of Fuchs's tactics. One work, however, strongly countered Fuchs's program to override art's involvement with significant public issues. This was Hans Haacke's *Oelgemaelde, Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers*, relegated to the Neue Galerie rather than given pride of place in the Fridericianum. Haacke's work consisted of a confrontation: on one wall was a meticulously painted oil portrait of President Reagan; on the opposite wall was a gigantic photomural of a peace demonstration. The portrait was surrounded by the museological devices traditionally used to enhance the art work's aura, to designate the work of art as separate, apart, inhabiting a world unto itself, in conformity with Fuchs's doctrine. Contained within its gold frame, illuminated in its own special glow by a small picture lamp, provided with a discreet wall label, protected by a velvet rope strung between two stanchions, the painting was kept, like the *Mona Lisa*, a safe distance from the admiring viewer. With this parodying of museological paraphernalia Haacke paid tribute to Broodthaers's museum fictions of the early '70s while simultaneously mocking Fuchs's desire to elevate and safeguard his masterpieces. From this little shrine of high art a red carpet led underfoot to the facing wall, where Haacke installed an en-

7. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas," *October*, no. 22 (Fall 1982), p. 112. I am indebted to Buchloh's review for clarification of many of the issues of Documenta 7 discussed in this essay.



*Hans Haacke. Oelgemaelde, Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers. 1982.*

larged photograph taken in Bonn just one week before the official opening of Documenta. This photo was shot at a demonstration, the largest held thus far in postwar Germany, to protest Reagan's arrival to lobby support in the Bundestag for deployment of American cruise and Pershing 2 missiles on German soil.

In its high degree of specificity, Haacke's work was able to do what the vast majority of paintings and sculptures in the exhibition could not. Not only did Haacke insert into this context a reminder of the real historical conditions which we now face, but he also reflected upon the relevant terms of current aesthetic debate. If not for Haacke's work, one would hardly have known that photography has recently become an important medium for artists attempting to resist the hegemony of the traditional beaux arts, that Walter Benjamin's classic essay on mechanical reproduction has become central to critical theories of contemporary visual culture. Nor would one have understood that this debate also encompasses a critique of the museum institution in its function of preserving the auratic status of art that was Benjamin's main target. All we learn of



this from Fuchs is that “our culture suffers from an illusion of the media,” and that this is something to be overcome by the exhibition enterprise.<sup>8</sup>

But what is more important than these debates, Haacke’s *Oelgemaelde* suggested to the viewer that the relevant history of the town of Kassel was nearer to us than the one to which Documenta’s artistic director constantly made reference. Fuchs sought to locate his Documenta within the grand tradition of the eighteenth century, when the aristocrats of Hesse-Kassel built their splendid palace, one of the first museum buildings in Europe. The official postcard of Documenta 7 was a photograph of the neoclassical statue of the Landgrave Frederick II by Johann August Nahl, which stands in front of the Museum Fridericianum; in addition, each volume of the catalogue carries on its cover a photograph of one of the allegorical sculptures adorning the pediment of the museum, not surprisingly those representing the old beaux-arts categories of painting and sculpture.

8. Fuchs, “Forward,” p. vii.

Kassel has, however, as I have stated, a recent history that is far more relevant. If Fuchs had to build walls within the museum it was because the original ones had been destroyed by the Allied bombings of World War II. Kassel, once at the very center of Germany, was one of Hitler's strategic ammunition depots. But Kassel no longer lies at the center of Germany; it is now only a few miles from the border of that other Germany to the east. Haacke's work, then, might have evoked for Documenta's visitors not Kassel's glorious eighteenth-century past, but its precarious present, at a time when the tensions of the cold war have been dangerously escalated once again. Perhaps it is this hard and brutal fact above all that Fuchs would have us forget as we are lulled by the soft sounds of Apollo's lyre.

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Fuchs's desire to reaffirm the autonomy of art against the incursion of urgent historical facts was far more thoroughly realized in another international exhibition staged later in 1982, also in Germany. Appropriately titling their show *Zeitgeist*, the organizers, Norman Rosenthal and Christos Joachimides, were much bolder than Fuchs in their denial of the realities of the political climate and in their exclusion of any art that might unsettle the mystificatory tendencies which they presented as exemplary of the spirit of the times. Once again the exhibition was mounted in a historic museum building, the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, now known as the Martin-Gropius-Bau, after its architect. Joachimides made reference to this building's history in the closing paragraph of his catalogue introduction:

When Mario Merz came to Berlin a number of months ago and visited the Martin Gropius Building to discuss his contribution to the exhibition, he quite spontaneously remarked, "Che bell Palazzo!" [Here we are, again, in front of a splendid palace.] On another occasion, Norman Rosenthal spoke of the tension between the interior and the exterior, between the reality and the memory that the building evokes. Outside, an environment of horror, made up of the German past and present. Inside, the triumph of autonomy, the architectural "Gesamtkunstwerk" which in masterly and sovereign manner banishes reality from the building by creating its own. Even the wounds which reality has inflicted on it are part of its beauty. That is also—ZEITGEIST: the place, *this* place, *these* artists, at *this* moment. For us the question is how does an autonomous work of art relate to the equally autonomous architecture and to the sum of memories which are present today.<sup>9</sup>

9. Christos Joachimides, "Achilles and Hector before the Walls of Troy," in *Zeitgeist*, New York, Braziller, 1983, p. 10.



*Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin, c. 1946.*

How indeed? But first, we might be a bit more specific about what those memories are and what that present reality is. The Martin-Gropius-Bau lay virtually in complete ruin after the war, since it was in direct proximity to the Gestapo headquarters, the SS office building, Ernst Sagebiel's Ministry of Aviation, and Albert Speer's Reichs Chancellery. Defended to the last, this administrative center of Nazi power came under the heaviest bombing and shelling of any area of the city. Throughout the period of reconstruction, the Kunstgewerbemuseum remained a neglected pile of rubble; not until the late '70s was restoration undertaken. Even now, much of the ornamentation is irreparably damaged. But perhaps even more relevant than these traces of shelling is the fact that one must enter the building from the rear, since the former front stands only a few yards from the Berlin Wall. This presumably is the environment of horror to which Rosenthal referred as he mused on the triumph of autonomy of this building and the works of art to be contained within it.

Had Rosenthal and Joachimides invited artists such as Hans Haacke to participate in *Zeitgeist*, their rhetorical question might have received some answers of real importance.<sup>10</sup> For it is part of the stated program of Haacke's

10. This portion of the present essay was written prior to Haacke's work for the Neue Gesell-

enterprise, as well as that of other artists working with a similar approach, that the context of the exhibition dictates the nature of the intervention he will make. As Haacke put it, "The context in which a work is exhibited for the first time is a material for me like canvas and paint." This means, of course, that Haacke's work must relinquish its claim to autonomy and universality, as well as its status as an easily marketable commodity. And it is these latter aspects of art to which Rosenthal and Joachimides have shown themselves to be primarily devoted. Nevertheless, the idea of commissioning works specifically for the context of *Zeitgeist* did not entirely elude this pair. In order to give an impressive sense of uniformity to the grand atrium space of the museum, they asked eight of the participating artists each to paint especially for the exhibition four paintings with the dimensions of three by four meters. The artists dutifully complied, adjusting the size and format of their products to meet the demands of exhibition, just as a dress designer might alter the shape of one of his creations to suit the needs of an unusually portly client. The young American painter David Salle even took the daring step of foregoing his usual cryptic poetic titles and labeled his tailor-made creations *Zeitgeist Painting Nr. 1*, *Zeitgeist Painting Nr. 2*, *Zeitgeist Painting Nr. 3*, and *Zeitgeist Painting Nr. 4*. The prospective collectors would no doubt be very pleased to have acquired works thus stamped with the imprimatur of a prestigious international show.

For a description of the *zeitgeistig* art works, I will rely upon one of the American contributors to the catalogue, the eminent art historian Robert Rosenblum, whose agility in adapting to any new aesthetic fashion makes him especially qualified to speak for this one:

The ivory towers where artists of an earlier decade painstakingly calculated hairbreadth geometries, semiotic theories, and various visual and intellectual purities have been invaded by an international army of new artists who want to shake everything up with their self-consciously bad manners. Everywhere, a sense of liberating eruption can be felt, as if a turbulent world of myths, of memory, of molten, ragged shapes and hues had been released from beneath the repres-

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schaft für Bildende Kunst in West Berlin, a work which fully confirms my speculation. *Broadness and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade*, presented elsewhere in this issue of *October*, does indeed use as its starting point the proximity of the Berlin Wall to the place of exhibition, the Künstlerhaus Bethanien. And it therefore takes as its subject German-German relations, relations which have again been much in the news due to the proposed visit of Erich Honecker to Bonn this fall, and its postponement under Soviet pressure.

One more example of the way in which Rosenthal and Joachimides might have received real answers to their question: Last winter in the *Art & Ideology* exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, Allan Sekula showed *Sketch for a Geography Lesson*, a work consisting of photographs and accompanying text that, again, takes the effects of the renewal of cold war tensions in Germany as its subject, although in a manner quite different from Haacke's *Oelgemaelde*.

sive restraints of the intellect which reigned over the most potent art of the last decade. The objective territory of formal lucidity, of the impersonal, static surfaces of photographic imagery has been toppled by earthquakes which seem both personal and collective, outbursts of the artists' own fantasies culled, however, from the most public range of experience, whether from mythology, history, or the vast inventory of earlier works of art that constantly assail the contemporary eye and mind in every conceivable place, from magazines and postcards to subway stations and middle-class interiors.

From this Pandora's Box, a never-ending stream of legendary creatures is emerging, populating these new canvases in the most unexpected ways. This attack upon the traditional iconoclasm of abstract art and the empirical assumptions of photographic imagery has aggressively absorbed the wildest range of beings taken from the Bible, from comic strips, from historical legend, from literary pantheons, from classical lore. An anthology of works by the artists represented here might include images, for example, not only of Jesus (Fetting), Pegasus (LeBrun), Brunnhilde (Kiefer), Orion (Garouste), Prometheus (Lüpertz), Victor Hugo (Schnabel), and Picasso (Borofsky), but also of Bugs Bunny (Salle), and Lucky Luke (Polke). The result is a visual Tower of Babel that mixes its cultures — high and low, contemporary and prehistoric, classical and Christian, legendary and historical — with an exuberant irreverence that mirrors closely the confusing glut of encyclopedic data that fills our shared visual environment and provides us with the material of dreams and art.<sup>11</sup>

One could spend some time analyzing a text in which ivory towers are invaded by international armies, who then proceed to build, still within the ivory tower, a Tower of Babel; or again, a prose style whose vagaries of terminology can slide from "historical legend" to the binary opposition "legendary" versus "historical." It is, in any case, a peculiar view of history that sees one decade as ruled by an intellect that is called repressive and the next as liberated by an eruption of self-consciously bad manners. But this history is, after all, only *art* history, an institutionalized discipline of which Rosenblum is a reigning master. For him, the word *history* might well be replaced by *Zeitgeist*, for he can comprehend nothing more than changes in sensibility and style. Thus the art-historical shift that is chronicled by the exhibition *Zeitgeist* is merely another predictable swing of the pendulum of style from cool to hot, from abstract to figurative, from Apollonian to Dionysian. (We may note here that in this re-

11. Robert Rosenblum, "Thoughts on the Origins of 'Zeitgeist,'" in *Zeitgeist*, pp. 11-12.

gard Rudi Fuchs had confused his terms when he invoked the soft sounds of Apollo's lyre, for at Documenta, too, the dominant mode of painting was the shrill bombast of neoexpressionism.)

Rosenblum's history as *Zeitgeist* was corroborated in the exhibition catalogue by his colleague Hilton Kramer, who reduced it finally to a simple matter of changing tastes. Kramer had hit upon this novel idea that new art could be explained as a change in taste in trying to come to grips in his *New York Times* column with the work of Julian Schnabel and Malcolm Morley. Clearly pleased that he had found the solution to the dilemma, he decided to quote himself in his *Zeitgeist* essay:

Nothing is more incalculable in art—or more inevitable—than a genuine change in taste. . . . Although taste seems to operate by a sort of law of compensation, so that the denial of certain qualities in one period almost automatically prepares the ground for their triumphal return later, its timetable can never be accurately predicted. Its roots lie in something deeper and more mysterious than mere fashion. At the heart of every genuine change in taste there is, I suppose, a keen feeling of loss, an existential ache—a sense that something absolutely essential to the life of art has been allowed to fall into a state of unendurable atrophy. It is to the immediate repair of this perceived void that taste at its profoundest level addresses itself.<sup>12</sup>

Kramer goes on to explain that what had been lost from art during the '60s and '70s was poetry and fantasy, the drama of the self, the visionary and the irrational; these had been denied by the orthodoxies of pure, cerebral abstraction. Again, it is a question only of style and sensibility and the subject matter they can generate.

But what is left out of these descriptions of contemporary art? What is, in fact, repressed, denied? The hidden agenda of this version of recent history is the calculated exclusion of the truly significant developments of the art of the past two decades. By characterizing the art of this period as abstract, geometric, intellectual, the real terms of art practice are elided. Where do we read in these texts of the critique of the institutions of power which seek to limit the meaning and function of art to the purely aesthetic? Where is a discussion of the attempted

12. Hilton Kramer, "Signs of Passion," in *Zeitgeist*, p. 17. It is interesting that Kramer here speaks of changes in art as *compensatory* for a sense of loss inherent in a previous style, for it is precisely that sense of loss and its periodic *intensification* that Leo Steinberg proposed, in his "Contemporary Art and the Plight of Its Public" (in *Other Criteria*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1972), as the very condition of innovation within modernism. It was with this contrast between, on the one hand, Steinberg's understanding of modernism and, on the other hand, Kramer's resentment of it that Annette Michelson began her review of Hilton Kramer's *The Age of the Avant-Garde*; see Michelson, "Contemporary Art and the Plight of the Public: a View from the New York Hilton," *Artforum*, vol. XIII, no. 1 (September 1974), pp. 68-70.

dissolution of the beaux-arts mediums and their replacement with modes of production which could better resist those institutions? Where do we find an analysis of work by feminists and minorities whose marginalization by the art institutions became a significant point of departure for the creation of alternative practices? Where do we find mention of those direct interventions by artists in their local social environments? Where, in short, in these essays can we learn of the political critique which has been the real thrust of our recent art?

The answer is, of course: nowhere. For Rosenblum and Kramer, for Rosenthal and Joachimides, and for Fuchs, politics is what art must deny. For them art is gentle and discreet, it is autonomous, and it exists in an ivory tower. Art is, after all, only a matter of taste. To this endeavor politics is a threat. But what of *their* politics? Is there only an *art* of exhibition? Is there not also a politics of exhibition? Is it not a politics that chooses as the symbol of an exhibition the statue of an eighteenth-century imperial ruler? that invites only one woman to participate in an exhibition of forty-three artists?<sup>13</sup> Can we not recognize a politics that would limit a discussion of repression and liberation to matters of style? Is it not, assuredly, a politics that wants to confine art to a pure realm of the aesthetic?

Interestingly enough, Hilton Kramer's conversion to the aesthetic of neo-expressionism took place at about the same time that he underwent another, somewhat more concrete conversion. After sixteen years as art critic for the *New York Times*, arguably the most influential newspaper in America, Kramer resigned to found his own magazine. Generously financed by major conservative foundations, Kramer's *New Criterion* is now recognized, after two years of publication, as the principal intellectual organ of the Reagan administration's cultural policies. Under the guise of a return to established moral values and critical standards, these policies in fact include a defunding and further marginalization of all cultural activities seen as critical of the right-wing political agenda, and a gradual dismantling of government support for the arts and humanities, to be replaced by monies from the private sector. This latter term, a favorite of the present United States government, is best translated as corporate self-interest, which has already begun to tighten its grip on all aspects of American cultural activity, from television programming to art exhibitions. Kramer's efforts in this regard are well served by his publisher, Samuel Lipman, who sits on President Reagan's National Council on the Arts, the body that oversees the activities of the National Endowment for the Arts. The effectiveness of Kramer's new magazine may be discerned from the fact that within several months of his writing an article in the *New Criterion* condemning the Na-

13. These are the figures for the *Zeitgeist* exhibition. *A New Spirit in Painting*, an earlier show organized in London by Rosenthal and Joachimides, together with Nicolas Serota, contained work by thirty-eight artists, not one of whom was a woman.

tional Endowment's art critics fellowships, the Chairman of the Endowment announced their cancellation.<sup>14</sup>

It is within this context that we must see Kramer's claims of a high-minded neutrality on aesthetic issues, his abhorrence of the politicization of art. In an article in the *New Criterion* entitled "Turning Back the Clock: Art and Politics in 1984," Kramer violently attacked a number of recent exhibitions which attempted to deal with the issue of art and politics. His central argument was that any attempt to see the workings of ideology within the aesthetic is a totalitarian, even Stalinist position, which leads inevitably to an acquiescence in tyranny. But what is tyranny if not that form of government that seeks to silence all criticism of or opposition to its policies? And what is the aesthetic production most acceptable to tyranny if not that which either directly affirms the status quo or contents itself with solipsistic exercises in so-called self-expression? Kramer's own acquiescence in the tyrannical suppression of opposition is most evident in his essay's implicit call for the defunding of those exhibition venues showing political art, which he reminds his readers time and time again are recipients of public financial support; or in his questioning the suitability for academic positions of those politically committed art critics who acted as curators for the shows. But these McCarthyite insinuations are hidden behind a veil of supposedly disinterested concern for the maintenance of aesthetic standards. In Kramer's estimation, not only is it virtually inconceivable that political art could be of high aesthetic quality, but what is worse, this art appears intentionally to negate aesthetic discourse altogether. To prove his point, Kramer singled out Hans Haacke's contribution to one of the exhibitions organized under the auspices of Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America. Here is his discussion of Haacke's work:

In the show at the City University mall we were shown, among much else, a huge, square, unpainted box constructed of wood and

14. See Hilton Kramer, "Criticism Endowed: Reflections on a Debacle," *New Criterion*, vol. 2, no. 3 (November 1983), pp. 1-5. Kramer's argument consisted of an accusation of conflict of interest, wherein "at the core of the program there was certainly a nucleus of friends and professional colleagues who were assiduous in looking after each other's interests" (p. 3). This is Kramer's characterization of what is otherwise known as the peer-panel system of judging, in which members of the profession are asked to judge the work of their fellow critics. Needless to say, the result will be a certain degree of overlap among grantees and jurors over a period of years. It seems highly likely, however, that Kramer's real opposition to the critics fellowships stems from his perception that "a great many of them went as a matter of course to people who were opposed to just about every policy of the United States government except one that put money in their own pockets or the pockets of their friends and political associates" (p. 4).

Frank Hodsell, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, disavowed the influence of Kramer's article on the decision to cancel the fellowships. He did admit, though, that "doubts expressed by the National Council on the Arts" were a deciding factor, and it is said that Samuel Lipman personally provided each member of the Council with a copy of Kramer's article. See Grace Glueck, "Endowment Suspends Grants for Art Critics," *New York Times*, April 5, 1984, p. C16.

standing approximately eight feet high. On its upper side there were some small openings and further down some words stencilled in large letters. A parody of the Minimalist sculpture of Donald Judd, perhaps? Not at all. This was a solemn statement, and the words told us why: "Isolation Box As Used by U.S. Troops at Point Salines Prison Camp in Grenada." The creator of this inspired work was Hans Haacke, who was also represented in the "Art and Social Conscience" exhibition [this exhibition, also a target of Kramer's attack, was held at the Edith C. Blum Art Institute at Bard College] by a photographic lightbox poster attacking President Reagan. Such works are not only devoid of any discernible artistic quality, they are pretty much devoid of any discernible artistic existence. They cannot be experienced as art, and they are not intended to be. Yet where else but in an art exhibition would they be shown? Their purpose in being entered into the art context, however, is not only to score propaganda points but to undermine the very idea of art as a realm of aesthetic discourse. President Reagan and his policies may be the immediate object of attack, but the more fundamental one is the idea of art itself.<sup>15</sup>

But whose idea of art? Whose realm of aesthetic discourse? Whose artistic quality? Kramer speaks as if these were all decided matters, and that everyone would therefore agree that Haacke's work can be nothing other than propaganda, or, as was suggested in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, pornography.<sup>16</sup> It seems to have escaped Kramer's attention that Haacke used the by now fully historical aesthetic strategy of appropriation in order to create a work of rigorous factual specificity. Haacke's *Isolation Box, Grenada* is a precise reconstruction of those used by the U.S. army only a few months before in blatant disregard of the Geneva Convention. As he read the description in the *New York Times* of the prison cells built expressly for the brutal humiliation of Grenadian and Cuban hostages,<sup>17</sup> Haacke did not fail to note their resemblance to the "minimalist

15. Hilton Kramer, "Turning Back the Clock: Art and Politics in 1984," *New Criterion*, April 1984, p. 71.

16. "Artists for Old Grenada," *Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 1984, p. 32. The passage in question reads: "To our knowledge the CCNY [sic] exhibition has not been reviewed yet by a prominent New York art critic. Perhaps critics have noticed that a few blocks down 42nd Street one can see what's maybe America's greatest collection of obscenity and pornography, and that in this respect, the CCNY artists' interpretation of what the U.S. did in Grenada is in proper company." For a reply to the editorial by Hans Haacke and Thomas Woodruff, see "Letters," *Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 1984.

17. See David Shribman, "U.S. Conducts Grenada Camp for Questioning," *New York Times*, November 14, 1983, pp. A1, A7. The passages describing the isolation boxes read as follows: "Beyond the control gate and barbed wire, and between two clusters of tents, are the most prominent features of the camp, two rows of newly constructed wooden chambers, each measuring about eight feet by eight feet." "Beside [the interrogation booths], however, were 10 isolation booths, each with four small windows and a number of ventilation holes with a radius of half an

sculpture of Donald Judd," and thus to recognize the possibility of appropriating that sculptural aesthetic for a work of contemporary political relevance. But presumably for Kramer it is an acquiescence in tyranny to reclaim an aesthetic position for the purpose of questioning a government that disregards international law to invade a tiny sovereign state, that mistakenly bombs a mental asylum and kills scores of innocent people, and that exercises total press censorship throughout the invasion.

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Hilton Kramer's failure to recognize the historical avant-garde strategy in Haacke's *Isolation Box, Grenada* is not simply governed by his desire to forestall the hard political questions that Haacke's work raises. Kramer's purpose is more sweeping: to suppress any discussion of the links between the artistic avant-garde and radical politics, and thus to claim for modern art a continuous, unproblematic aesthetic history that is entirely severed from episodes of political engagement. The lengths to which Kramer will go to fulfill this purpose can be determined by reading, in the same "Art and Politics" essay, his attack on one of the curators of the New Museum's *Art & Ideology* exhibition, the main target of Kramer's rage:

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, . . . who teaches art history at the State University of New York at Westbury, defends the propaganda materials he has selected for this exhibition by, among other things, attacking the late Alfred H. Barr, Jr., for his alleged failure to comprehend "the radical change that [modern] artists and theoreticians introduced into the history of aesthetic theory and production in the twentieth century." What this means, apparently, is that Alfred Barr would never have accepted Professor Buchloh's Marxist analysis of the history of modern art, which appears to be based on Louis Althusser's *Lenin and Philosophy*. (Is this really what is taught as modern art history at SUNY Westbury? Alas, one can believe it.)<sup>18</sup>

I will not dwell upon, but simply call attention to these parenthetical remarks, should anyone doubt that Kramer's tactics now include red-baiting. More important in our context is the deliberate falsification achieved by the word *modern*, which Kramer has placed in brackets. To accuse Alfred Barr of failing to comprehend *modern* artists and theoreticians is something that even the most ex-

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inch. Prisoners must enter these booths by crawling through a hatch that extends from the floor of the booths to about knee level."

18. Kramer, "Turning Back the Clock," p. 71.

tremist enemies of Barr's positions would be hesitant to do, and it is not at all what Buchloh did. Here is a fuller portion of the passage from which Kramer quoted:

When one of the founding fathers of American Modernism and the first director of the institution that taught the American Neo-avant-garde arrived in the Soviet Union in 1927 on a survey journey to take stock of international avant-garde activities for their possible import into the United States, he saw himself confronted with a situation of seemingly unmanageable conflicts. On the one hand, there was the extraordinary productivity of the modernist avant-garde in the Soviet Union (extraordinary by the numbers of its constituency, men and women, its modes of production, ranging from Malevich's late Suprematist work through the laboratory period of the Constructivists to the Lef Group and the Productivist Program, from Agit Prop-theater productions to avant-garde film production for mass audiences). On the other hand, there was the obvious general awareness among artists and cultural producers, critics and theorists that they were participating in a final transformation of the modernist aesthetic, which would irretrievably and irrevocably alter the conditions of production and reception as they had been inherited from bourgeois society and its institutions (from Kant's aesthetics and the modernist practices that had originated in them). Moreover, there was the growing fear that the process of that successful transformation might be aborted by the emergence of totalitarian repression from within the very system that had generated the foundations for a new socialist collective culture. Last of all and crucial, there was Alfred Barr's own disposition of interests and motivations of action within that situation: searching for the most advanced modernist avant-garde in a moment and place where that social group was just about to dismantle itself and its specialized activities in order to assume a new role and function in the newly-defined collective process of a social production of culture.

The reasons why Alfred Barr, one of the first "modern" art historians, then just about to discover and establish the modern avant-garde in the United States, was determined (in the literal sense) to fail in comprehending the radical change that those artists and theoreticians introduced into the history of aesthetic theory and production in the twentieth century, are obviously too complex to be dealt with in this context. . . .<sup>19</sup>

19. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Since Realism There Was . . . (On the Current Conditions of Factographic Art)," in *Art & Ideology*, New York, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984,

In spite of the fact that Buchloh devoted a lengthy paragraph to detailing the special historical circumstances of *those* artists and theoreticians that Barr failed fully to comprehend (again, as Buchloh says, for historically specific, or determined reasons), Kramer substituted the general term *modern* for Buchloh's *those* — those productivists who were at that moment in the late '20s on the brink of dissolving the autonomous modernist mediums in favor of a collective social production.

I have quoted Buchloh's essay at length not only to demonstrate the insidious, falsifying tactics of Hilton Kramer's neoconservative criticism, but also because it is of particular pertinence to the contemporary art of exhibition. For it is precisely the desire to disassemble the history of disruptions of the modernist aesthetic development that constitutes the present program of the museum that Alfred Barr helped to found. It was Buchloh's point that the Museum of Modern Art had presented the history of modern art to the American public, and more particularly to the artists within that public, that never fully articulated the true avant-garde position. For that position included the development of cultural practices that would critically reveal the constricting institutionalization of art within modern bourgeois society. At the same time, those practices were intended to function socially outside that institutionalized system. At MOMA, however, both in its earlier period and still more today, the works of the Soviet avant-garde, of Duchamp, and of the German dada artists have been tamed. They are presented, insofar as it is possible, as if they were conventional masterpieces of fine art. The radical implications of this work have been distorted by the institution so as not to allow interference with its portrayal of modern art as a steady development of abstract and abstracting styles.

Although it is perfectly clear that the current installation of the MOMA collections is intended to present not merely individual objects of modern art but rather a *history* of those objects — "These collections tell the story of modern art," proclaims a recent MOMA press release — it is also clear that the justification for the false construction of that history is connoisseurship; MOMA's primary responsibility, as they apparently see it, is to provide the public with a direct experience of great works of art unburdened by the weight of history.<sup>20</sup> This rationale is, in fact, spelled out in the new museum installation at the entrance to the Alfred H. Barr Jr. Galleries. On the dedicatory plaque, Barr is quoted as once having defined his task as "the conscientious, continuous, resolute distinction of quality from mediocrity."<sup>21</sup> To determine just how this con-

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pp. 5-6. A slightly different version of this same discussion appears in Buchloh's essay "From Faktura to Factography," published in this issue of *October*. There Buchloh develops much further the precise circumstances to which Barr was witness on his journey to the Soviet Union, as well as later developments.

20. This contradiction is, of course, deeply embedded in the history of modern museology and is therefore far from unique to the Museum of Modern Art.

21. Hilton Kramer quotes Barr's connoisseurship goals approvingly in his "MOMA Reopened:



*Installation of Soviet avant-garde works at the Museum of Modern Art, 1984. (Photo: Louise Lawler.)*

noisseurship principle is exercised in the interests of a biased history would require a detailed analysis of, among other things, the relative weight and density given to particular artists and movements — of the prominence accorded Picasso and Matisse, for example, as opposed to, say, Duchamp and Malevich; of the special care taken with the installation of cubism as against that of the Soviet avant-garde, now relegated to a cluttered stair hall; of the decisions to exhibit certain works owned by the museum while others are banished to storage.

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The Museum of Modern Art in the Postmodern Era," *New Criterion*, Summer 1984, p. 14. Indeed, his entire critique of the new MOMA installations and opening exhibition is based on what he sees as a failure of the current museum officials to exercise connoisseurship as fully and wisely as did Barr. For example, he condemns *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture* as "the most incredible mess the museum has ever given us," which is due to the fact that "of anything resembling connoisseurship or critical acumen there is not a trace" ("MOMA Reopened," p. 41).

There is, however, a less complex but far more effective means by which MOMA imposes a partisan view of the objects in its possession. This is the rigid division of modern art practices into separate departments within the institution. By distributing the work of the avant-garde to various departments — to Painting and Sculpture, Architecture and Design, Photography, Film, Prints and Illustrated Books — that is, by stringently enforcing what appears to be a natural parceling of objects according to medium, MOMA automatically constructs a formalist history of modernism. Because of this simple and seemingly neutral fact, the museum goer can have no sense of the significance of, to give just one example, Rodchenko's abandonment of painting in favor of photography. That Rodchenko saw painting as a vestige of an outmoded culture and photography as possibly instrumental in the creation of a new one — the very situation that Alfred Barr witnessed during the trip to the Soviet Union to which Buchloh referred — this history cannot be articulated through the consignment of Rodchenko's various works to different fiefdoms within the museum. As it is, one experiences Rodchenko merely as an artist who worked in more than one medium, which is to say, as versatile, like many "great" artists. Seen within the Department of Photography, Rodchenko might seem to be an artist who increased the formal possibilities of photography, but he cannot be understood as one who saw photography as having a far greater potential for social utility than painting, if for no other reason than that photography readily lent itself to a wider system of distribution. Mounted and framed as individual auratic works of art, Rodchenko's photographs cannot even convey this most simple historical fact. Such a misrepresentation of modernism, inherent in the very structure of MOMA, was to have particular consequences for postwar American art — the point of Buchloh's discussion of this issue in his essay for the *Art & Ideology* show — and it is those consequences in their fuller contradictions which we are now experiencing in the contemporary art of exhibition, a point to which I shall return.

Hilton Kramer's summary dismissal of Buchloh's analysis of Barr's encounter with the Soviet avant-garde, effected simply by labeling it Althusserian,<sup>22</sup> can be more fully understood when placed alongside his own characterization of this crucial episode, one which transpired just before the founding of the museum in 1929. In a special issue of the *New Criterion* devoted entirely to an

22. Buchloh's discussion of this very specific moment in the history of modern art does not, in fact, refer to Althusser's *Lenin and Philosophy*; rather his discussion of the contemporary politicized work of Allan Sekula and Fred Lonidier does. He notes, "If Althusser's argument is correct that the aesthetic constitutes itself only inside the ideological, what then is the nature of the practice of those artists who, as we are suggesting, are in fact trying to develop practice that is operative outside and inside the ideological apparatus? The first argument that will of course be leveled against this type of work is that it simply cannot be 'art' . . ." ("Since Realism There Was," p. 8). This "first argument" is precisely the one Kramer used against Hans Haacke and the other political artists he attacked.

essay on the reopened museum, Kramer is again careful to separate aesthetics from politics:

[Barr] had been to Germany and Russia in the Twenties, and had been deeply impressed with the art—and with the ideas governing the art—which he studied there. These ideas were radical in more than an aesthetic sense—although they were certainly that. They were radical, or at least were thought to be at the time, in their social implications as well. At the Bauhaus in Germany and in the councils of the Russian avant-garde in the early years of the Revolution, the very conception of what art was or should be was altered under the influence of a powerful utopian ideology. As a result, the boundary separating fine art from industrial art was, if not completely abandoned by everyone concerned, at least very much questioned and undermined. Henceforth, from this radical perspective, there were to be no aesthetic hierarchies. A poster might be equal to a painting, a factory or a housing project as much to be esteemed as a great work of sculpture.

It is my impression that at no time in his life was Barr very much interested in politics. It was not, in any case, the political implications of this development that drew him to it. What deeply interested him were its aesthetic implications, and therefore, under his influence, what governed the museum's outlook from its earliest days was a vision that attempted to effect a kind of grand synthesis of modernist aesthetics and the technology of industrialism.<sup>23</sup>

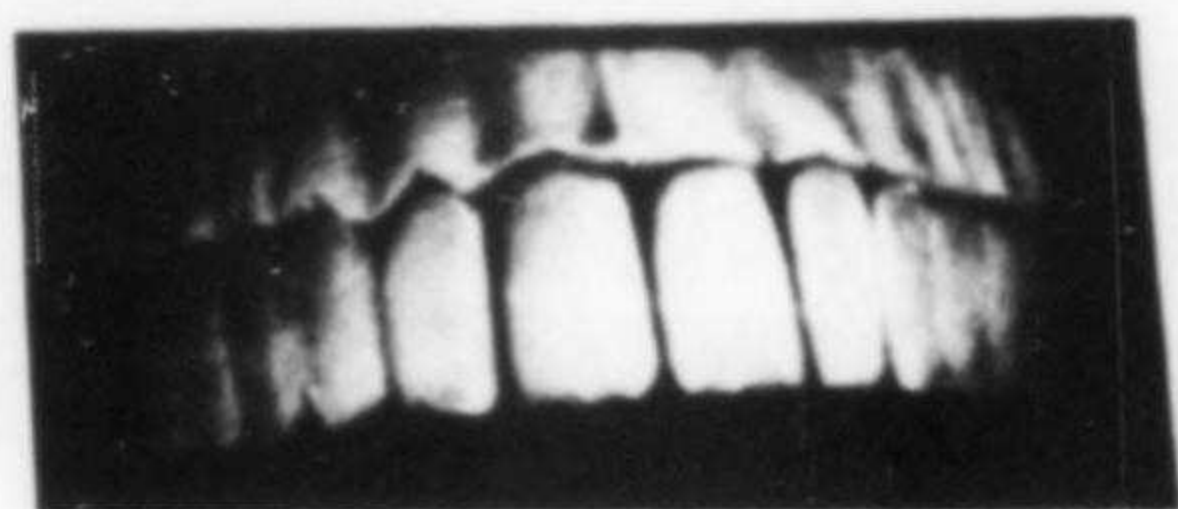
Whether or not Kramer fairly appraises Barr's political interest, he attributes to him an understanding of the aesthetics of the avant-garde that fully deradicalizes them, though Kramer persists in using the term *radical*.<sup>24</sup> It is by no means the case that the early avant-garde was simply interested in giving to "architecture, industrial design, photography, and film a kind of parity with painting, sculpture, and the graphic arts," to elevate work in other mediums "to the realm of fine art."<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, the true radicalism of the early avant-garde was its abandonment of the very notion of fine art in the interests of social production, which meant, for one thing, destroying easel painting as a form. The orig-

23. Kramer, "MOMA Reopened," p. 42.

24. Ironically, Kramer's version of Barr's encounter with the Soviet avant-garde is virtually identical to Buchloh's, even to the point of noting that Barr severed the art from the politics that motivated that art. The difference, of course, is that Buchloh shows that this separation resulted, precisely, in Barr's failure to comprehend "the radical change that those artists and theoreticians introduced," while Kramer simply repeats Barr's failure.

25. Kramer, "MOMA Reopened," p. 42.

Entrance foyer of Architecture and Design Galleries,  
Museum of Modern Art, 1984. (Photo: Louise Lawler.)



inal avant-garde program did not consist of an aesthetics with social implications; it consisted of a politicized aesthetic, a socialist art.<sup>26</sup>

Kramer is, however, quite correct in his discussion of the historical results of the deradicalization of the avant-garde: "The aesthetic that originated at the Bauhaus and other avant-garde groups has been stripped of its social ideology and turned into the reigning taste of the cultural marketplace."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the work of the avant-garde, severed from its political setting and presented as fine art, could serve as examples for product design and advertising. As if to illustrate this process of transforming agitprop into advertising,<sup>28</sup> the entrance to

26. For a detailed discussion of this question, see Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography."

27. Kramer, "MOMA Reopened," pp. 42-43.

28. This process is, in fact, one of *retransformation*, since agitprop had originally transformed advertising techniques for political purposes. See Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," pp. 96-104.

MOMA's design galleries displays posters by members of the Soviet avant-garde juxtaposed with advertisements directly or indirectly influenced by them. Underneath Rodchenko's poster for the Theater of the Revolution is an ad for Martini designed by Alexei Brodovich, a Russian emigré who had clearly absorbed his design lessons early and directly. On the opposite wall Gustav Klucis and Sergei Senkin's agitprop "Let Us Carry Out the Plan of the Great Work" and El Lissitzky's "USSR Russische Ausstellung" announcement are hung next to a recent advertisement for Campari. To this deliberate blurring of important distinctions in use-value Kramer, of course, nods his approval, noting that in this regard MOMA has fulfilled its mission. But now that modernism has been fully assimilated into consumer culture, when we enter the current design department, "well, we suddenly find ourselves in something that looks vaguely reminiscent of Bloomingdale's furniture department," and so "it becomes more and more difficult to believe such an installation is necessary."<sup>29</sup> Mission accomplished, then, MOMA has come full circle. It can now get back to the business of art as it had been prior to Barr's "radical notion" of a broadened definition of aesthetic endeavor. "Today," Kramer concludes, "it is only as an institution specializing in high art that the new MOMA can claim to have a great and necessary purpose."<sup>30</sup>

In this, the official neoconservative view of the current purposes of the museum, it is one of the consequences of the distortion of the historical avant-garde that the museum should abandon altogether its task of presenting any practices which do not conform to the traditional view of fine art, to return, that is, to the prerogatives of painting and sculpture. And indeed, the inaugural exhibition at the reopened Museum of Modern Art, entitled *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, did just that. Specifically citing *Documenta* and *Zeitgeist* as precedents for the show, Kynaston McShine, the curator responsible for the selection, claimed to have looked at "everything, everywhere" because "it was important to have work from a lot of different places and to introduce a large public to a great deal of current activity. I wanted it to be an international cross-section of what is going on."<sup>31</sup> To limit "what is going on" to painting and sculpture, however, is to dissemble willfully the actual facts of artistic practice at this historical juncture. To look at "everything everywhere" and to see only painting and sculpture is to be blind—blind to every significant aesthetic endeavor to continue the work of the avant-garde. The scandal of the international survey—quite apart from its promiscuous inclusion of just about any trivial product of today's market culture and its chaotic, bargain-basement installation—is its refusal to take account of the wide variety of practices that

29. Kramer, "MOMA Reopened," pp. 43-44.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

31. Quoted in Michael Brenson, "A Living Artists Show at the Modern Museum," *New York Times*, April 21, 1984, p. 11.

question and propose an alternative to the hegemony of painting and sculpture. And the scandal is made all the more complete when one remembers that it was also Kynaston McShine who organized MOMA's last major international exhibition of contemporary art, the *Information* show of 1970, a broad survey of conceptual art and related developments. Like Rudi Fuchs, then, McShine cannot claim ignorance of that work of the late '60s that makes a return to painting and sculpture so historically problematic. Even within the absurd terms of McShine's stated principle of selection — that only those artists whose reputations were established after 1975 would be considered<sup>32</sup> — we are given no reason whatsoever for the exclusion of all the artists whose work continues and deepens the tendencies shown in *Information*. The short introduction to the catalogue, unsigned but presumably written by McShine, slides around the problem with the following pathetic statement:

The exhibition does not encompass mediums other than painting and sculpture. However one cannot help but register the current tendency of painters and sculptors to cross the border into other disciplines such as photography, film, video, and even architecture. While these "crossovers" have become expected in recent years, less familiar to a general audience is the attraction to music and performance. Represented here are artists active not only in painting and sculpture but also in performance art. Inevitably, some of their theatrical concerns present themselves in their work, most often in a narrative or autobiographical form.<sup>33</sup>

32. *Ibid.* Even this stated criterion is entirely belied by the exhibition of some thirty artists whose reputations were well established by the mid-'70s; five of the artists in the show are listed in the catalogue documentation as having had one-person exhibitions at MOMA before 1977.

*An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, like *Zeitgeist*, failed to take note of the achievements of women artists. Of 165 artists only fourteen were women. A protest demonstration staged by the Women's Caucus for Art failed to elicit any public response from the officials of the museum. This must be seen in contrast to the various demonstrations of the early '70s against unfair museum policies, when, at the very least, MOMA was responsive enough to enter into public dialogue over the grievances. But, of course, if women were very poorly represented in MOMA's reopening show, it is largely because women are centrally involved in the vanguard of alternative practices. To have admitted them would have been to acknowledge that traditional painting and sculpture are not the most important, and certainly not the only forms of current art practice.

33. "Introduction," in *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, p. 12. That this introductory essay is both unsigned and only two pages long makes one wonder just how seriously contemporary art is being considered at MOMA. McShine was quoted in the *Times* as saying, "The show is a sign of hope. It is a sign that contemporary art is being taken as seriously as it should be, a sign that the museum will restore the balance between contemporary art and art history that is part of what makes the place unique" (quoted in Brenson, p. 11). But if this is the case, why does the curator of the show feel no obligation to provide a critical discussion of the artists chosen and the issues addressed in the contemporary art exhibition? By contrast, the first *historical* show to open at the museum, *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art*, is accompanied by a two-volume catalogue containing nineteen lengthy essays by fifteen scholars and critics. Perhaps the answer is to be found in the final paragraph of the intro-

Embedded in a two-page compilation of clichés and banalities—

- The concerns expressed in the work are basic, universal.
- The artist as creator, dreamer, storyteller, narcissist, as the instrument of divine inspiration, is represented in many works.
- Inspiration ranges from underwater life to the structure of flora and fauna to the effects of light.
- . . . there is a liveliness in the current international art scene that stems from the freedom and diversity enjoyed by artists today.
- The artists demonstrate an integrity, imagination, and ambition that affirm the health of their profession. —

such a paragraph, in its deliberate weakness and vagueness, is designed to tell us nothing at all about the vociferous opposition that persists among current avant-garde practitioners to conventional painting and sculpture. By his choice of the term *crossover*, McShine once again resorts to the myth of artistic versatility to demean the significance of genuinely alternative and socially engaged art production. That the reactionary tradition represented in the international survey might be placed in jeopardy, shown to be historically bankrupt, by such production is completely ignored by McShine.

It is interesting in this regard to recall an interview given to *Artforum* ten years ago by William Rubin, then and now director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture. There Rubin stated what was at the time a fairly common view of contemporary aesthetic developments:

Perhaps, looking back 10 [which is to say now], 15, 30 years from now, it will appear that this modernist tradition really did come to an end within the last few years, as some critics suggest. If so, historians a century from now—whatever name they will give to the period we now call modern—will see it beginning shortly after the middle of the 19th century and ending in the 1960s. I'm not ruling this out; it may be the case, but I don't think so. Perhaps the dividing line will be seen as between those works which essentially continue an easel painting concept that grew up associated with bourgeois democratic life and was involved with the development of private collections as well as the museum concept—between this and, let us say, Earthworks, Conceptual works and related endeavors, which want another environment (or should want it) and, perhaps, another public.<sup>34</sup>

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duction to the international survey: "Those who see this exhibition will, one trusts, understand that art is about looking and not about reading or listening."

34. William Rubin, in Lawrence Alloway and John Coplans, "Talking with William Rubin: 'The Museum Concept Is Not Infinitely Expandable,'" *Artforum*, vol. XIII, no. 2 (October 1974),

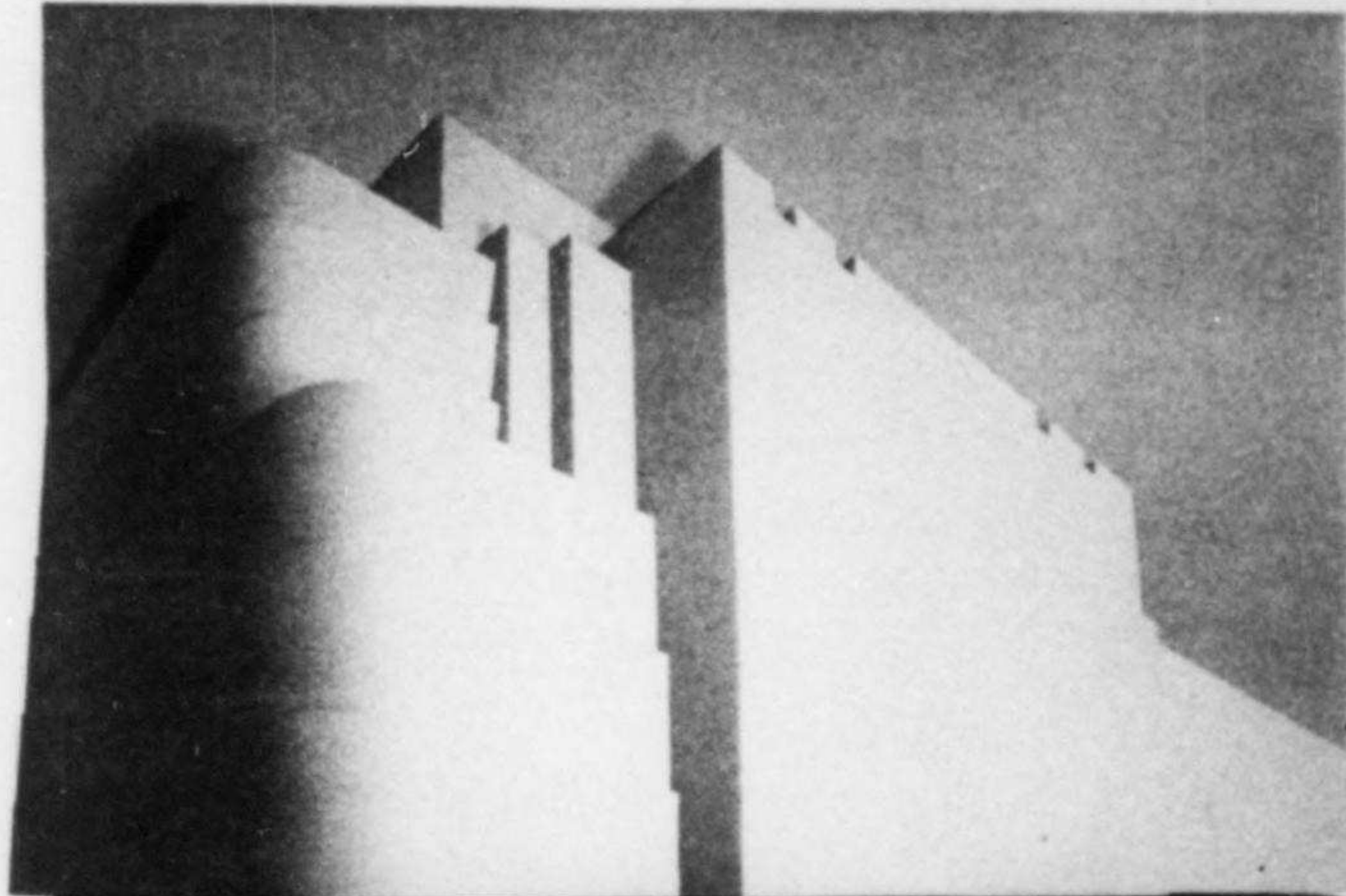
Though Rubin states his own hesitation regarding the view he presents, he seems to have had a remarkably clear understanding of the actual facts of art history of the '60s and early '70s. It is therefore all the more astonishing that the museum department headed by Rubin should now mount an exhibition that unquestionably attempts to negate that understanding. What do Rubin and McShine believe transpired in the intervening decade? Were the endeavors that Rubin saw as having possibly created a rupture with modernism only "passing phenomena," as he suggested the coming years might tell? Judging not only from McShine's survey, but also from the installation of that part of the permanent collection comprising the art of the '60s and '70s, the answer must be in the affirmative, for there is no evidence of the "postmodern" art of which Rubin speaks. With the exception of a few works of minimal sculpture, there is no trace of the art of that period that led even Rubin to wonder if modern art, traditionally defined, had come to an end.

Yet anyone who has witnessed the art events of the past decade carefully might come to a very different conclusion. On the one hand, there has been an intensification of the critique of art's institutionalization, a deepening of the rupture with modernism. On the other hand, there has been a concerted effort to marginalize and suppress these facts and to reestablish the traditional fine arts categories by all conservative forces of society, from cultural bureaucracies to museum institutions, from corporate boardrooms to the marketplace for art. And this has been accomplished with the complicity of a new breed of entrepreneurial artists, utterly cynical in their disregard of both recent art history and present political reality. These newly heralded "geniuses" work for a parvenu class of collectors who want art with an insured resale value, which will at the same time fulfill their desire for mildly pornographic titillation, romantic cliché, easy reference to past "masterpieces," and good decor. The objects on view to celebrate the reopening of MOMA were made, with very few exceptions, to cater to this taste, to rest easily over the sofa in a Trump Tower living room or to languish in a bank vault while prices escalate. No wonder then that McShine ended his catalogue introduction with the very special hope "to encourage everyone to be in favor of the art of our time." Given what he has presented as the art of our time, his currying of our favor could hardly be at odds with that of the sponsors of the exhibition, the AT&T Corporation, who mounted a new advertising campaign to coincide with the show. "Some of the masterpieces of tomorrow are on exhibit today," reads the ad's banner headline, under which appears a reproduction of one of Robert Longo's recent glorifications of

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p. 52. In this interview, Rubin attempts to defend the museum against the charge that it has become unresponsive to contemporary art. He insists that this art simply has no place in a museum, which he sees essentially as a temple of high art. This, of course, puts him in perfect accord with Kramer's position. What is never acknowledged, however, is that ignoring those forms of art that exceed the museum — whether the work of the historical avant-garde or that of the present — will necessarily give a distorted view of history.

# SOME OF THE MASTERPIECES OF TOMORROW ARE ON EXHIBIT TODAY.



© Robert Longo. Collection: The Museum of Modern Art.

"AN INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF RECENT PAINTING AND SCULPTURE"  
MAY 17-AUGUST 7

AT&T is sponsoring the exhibition that will open the newly expanded Museum of Modern Art.

The works on display for this modern art event, most produced within the last five years, have been selected from 16 countries around the world.

Among them may be some of tomorrow's classics. Come judge for yourself.

This exhibition is part of AT&T's continuing commitment to bring you great art and great artists.



THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE - JUNE 3, 1984 17

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AT&T advertisement, New York Times Magazine, June 3, 1984.

corporate style, now in MOMA's permanent collection. That corporate interests are in perfect accord with the art presented in MOMA's inaugural show is a point underscored in the catalogue preface written by the museum's director, whose long paragraph of praise and thanks to AT&T contains the following statement: "AT&T clearly recognizes that experiment and innovation, so highly prized in business and industry, must be equally valued and supported in the arts."<sup>35</sup>

Experiment and innovation are prized in business and industry, of course, because they result in ever-expanding consumer markets and higher profits. That this is also the motive of the works presented in *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture* is hardly less obvious. But if the thousands of visitors who flocked to the newly reopened museum failed to grasp this fact, MOMA confronted them with a still more persuasive demonstration of the corporate view of art, something which Hilton Kramer referred to as "the most audacious *coup de théâtre* anyone has ever attempted at MOMA." Our first glimpse of this was in a full-page photograph that appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* above the caption "While celebrating its permanent collection of masterworks from the modernist period, the museum will continue to exhibit the new." The "new" in question, the *coup de théâtre* was shown being installed in the dramatic two-story space over the escalator leading to the design galleries; the "new" is a helicopter. Here is how a museum press release described the new acquisition:

A ubiquitous contemporary artifact, the Bell 47D-1 helicopter was acquired several months ago by the [Architecture and Design] Department, and will be suspended above visitors as they enter the fourth floor galleries. Utilitarian in appearance—it is the helicopter equivalent of the jeep—the model 47 went into production in 1947 and set an industry record by remaining in production for the next three decades. As an example of industrial mass production, it is, according to Department Director Arthur Drexler, "a peculiarly memorable object."

Just how memorable a helicopter may be was well illustrated last year in an exhibition at the Museo del Barrio presented in conjunction with Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America. The exhibition contained some fifty drawings by Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugee children living across the borders in Honduras and Nicaragua, and virtually every one of the drawings depicted this "ubiquitous contemporary artifact," ubiquitous indeed, since it is and has been the most essential instrument of counter-insurgency warfare

35. Richard E. Oldenburg, "Preface," in *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, p. 9.



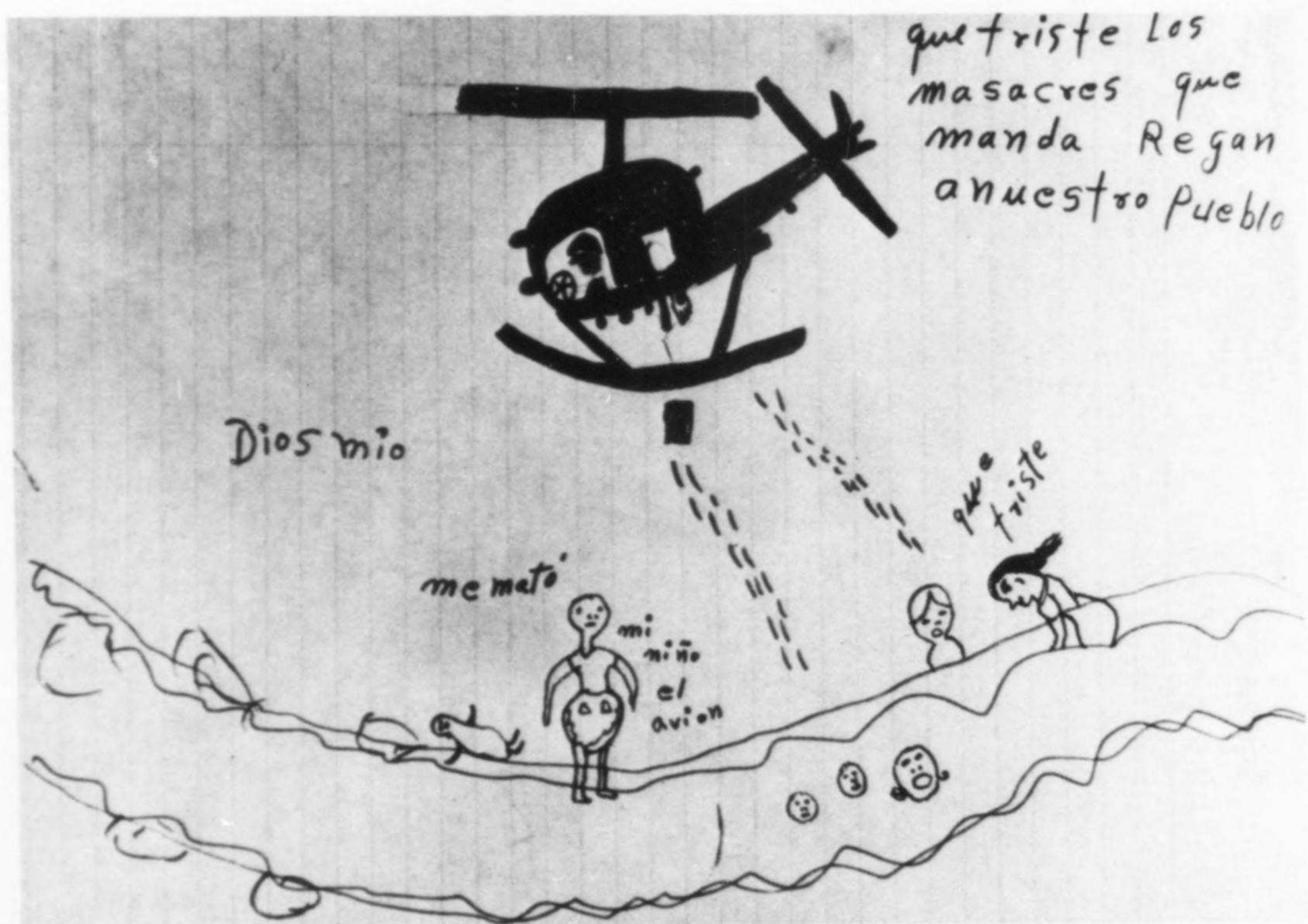
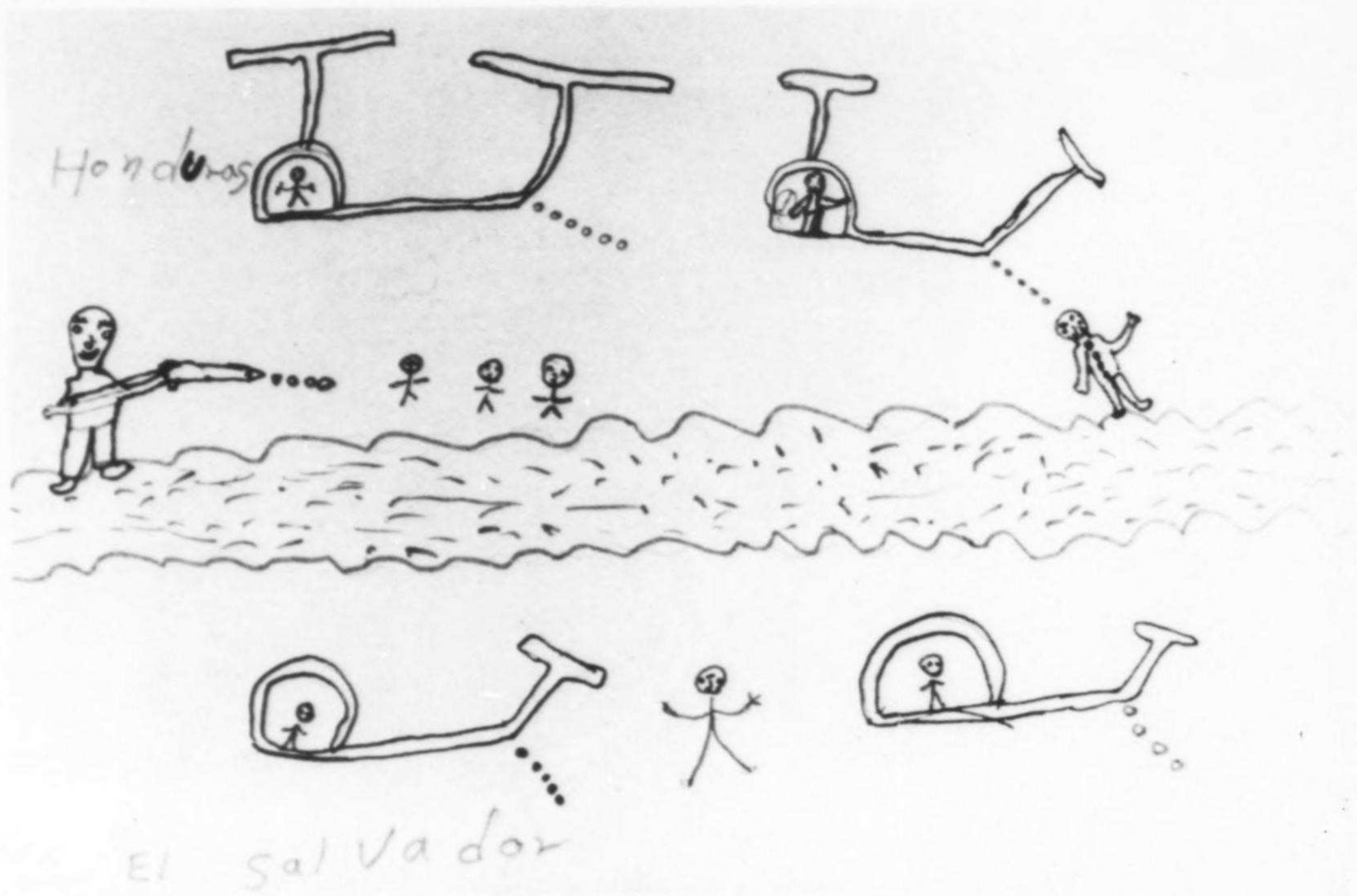
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While celebrating its permanent collection of masterworks from the modernist period, the museum will continue to exhibit the new.

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Drawings by Salvadoran children in the Mesa Grande refugee camp, Honduras, shown in *Children in Exile: Drawings by Refugee Children from Guatemala and El Salvador, El Museo del Barrio, January 10-31, 1984.*



since the Korean War. Even Francis Ford Coppola did not fail to understand the sinister symbolic value of this "memorable object" in his highly mythologized portrayal of Americans in Vietnam. But symbols aside, the hard facts are that Bell helicopters are manufactured by the Fort Worth corporation Textron, a major defense contractor, which supplies the Bell and Huey model helicopters that are right now in use in El Salvador, Honduras (which means, of course, against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua), and Guatemala.<sup>36</sup> But because the contemporary art of exhibition has taught us to distinguish between the political and the aesthetic, a *New York Times* editorial entitled "Marvelous MOMA" was able to say of MOMA's proud new art object:

A helicopter, suspended from the ceiling, hovers over an escalator in the Museum of Modern Art. . . . The chopper is bright green, bug-eyed and beautiful. We know that it is beautiful because MOMA showed us the way to look at the 20th century.<sup>37</sup>

36. In September, the *New York Times* reported that the U.S. government was planning to double the number of combat helicopters in the Salvadoran force by the end of this year: "In the last few weeks, 10 new Hueys have been sent to El Salvador and 10 to 15 more are expected by the end of the year. . . . Under that schedule, the Salvadoran fleet will have increased to 49 from 24 within six months" (James LeMoyné, "U.S. Is Bolstering Salvador Copters: Plans to Double Fleet by End of Year to Let Latins Use New Tactic on Rebels," *New York Times*, September 19, 1984, p. A1). The article went on to say that "such helicopter attacks were the mainstay of American operations in Vietnam. If the Salvadoran Army masters the tactic, it will have made a considerable advance from the often militarily inept force that has been unable to contain rebel offensives in the last two years."

Reporting for the *Nation* in October, Scott Wallace described the effects of American helicopters on the people of El Salvador: "Although U.S. officials deny that the helicopter-borne assault teams will be used to terrorize civilians who back the guerrillas, government forces are already rehearsing the tactic. On August 30, around the time the shipment of Hueys arrived, army units launched helicopter assaults on the townships of Las Vueltas and San José Las Flores in rebel-controlled zones of Chalatenango province.

"Journalists who arrived on the scene ten days later were told by local peasants that at least thirty-seven women, children and old people had been killed in the operation. According to the villagers, helicopters bearing Salvadoran troops, led by the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion, stalked a group of several hundred peasants who were escorted by a small force of armed guerrillas. The peasants described their bewilderment and terror as they saw the helicopters land troops on hilltops all around them, cutting them off. When the soldiers closed in, some people panicked and plunged into the rapidly flowing Gualsinga River, where several drowned. Others were cut down by machine-gun fire or taken prisoner" ("Hueys in El Salvador: Preparing for a Stepped-Up War?" *Nation*, October 20, 1984, p. 337).

37. "Marvelous MOMA," *New York Times*, May 13, 1984, Section 4, p. 22. I wish to thank Cara Ryan for pointing out this editorial and more generally for her advice and support during the writing of this essay.

El Lissitzky. Photomontage for catalogue accompanying Soviet Pavilion at Pressa Exhibition, Cologne. 1928.



## From Faktura to Factography

BENJAMIN H. D. BUCHLOH

As the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred Barr largely determined the goals and policy of the institution that was to define the framework of production and reception for the American neo-avant-garde. In 1927, just prior to the founding of the museum, Barr traveled to the Soviet Union. This was to have been a survey journey, like the one he had just completed in Weimar Germany, to explore current avant-garde production by artists working in the new revolutionary society. What he found there, however, was a situation of seemingly unmanageable conflict.

On the one hand, he witnessed the extraordinary productivity of the original modernist avant-garde (extraordinary in terms of the number of its participants, both men *and* women, and in terms of the variety of modes of production: ranging from Malevich's late suprematist work through the Laboratory Period of the constructivists, to the Lef Group and the emerging productivist program, as well as agitprop theater and avant-garde films screened for mass audiences). On the other hand, there was the general awareness among artists and cultural theoreticians that they were participating in a final transformation of the modernist vanguard aesthetic, as they irrevocably changed those conditions of art production and reception inherited from bourgeois society and its institutions. Then, too, there was the growing fear that the process of that successful transformation might be aborted by the emergence of totalitarian repression from within the very system that had generated the foundation for a new socialist collective culture. And last of all, there was Barr's own professional disposition to search for the most advanced, modernist avant-garde at precisely the moment when that social group was about to dismantle itself and its specialized activities in order to assume a different role in the newly defined process of the social production of culture.

These conflicting elements are clearly reflected in the diary that Barr kept during his visit to the Soviet Union:

. . . went to see Rodchenko and his talented wife. . . . Rodchenko showed us an appalling variety of things—suprematist paintings

(preceded by the earliest geometrical things I have seen, 1915, done with compass)—woodcuts, linoleum cuts, posters, book designs, photographs, kino set, etc. etc. He has done no painting since 1922, devoting himself to the photographic arts of which he is a master. . . . We left after 11 p.m. — an excellent evening, but I must find some painters if possible.<sup>1</sup>

But Barr was no more fortunate in his search for painting during his visit with El Lissitzky: "He showed also books and photographs, many of them quite ingenious. . . . I asked whether he painted. He replied that he painted only when he had nothing else to do, and as that was never, never."<sup>2</sup>

And, finally, in his encounter with Sergei Tretyakov, it became clear that there was a historical reason for the frustration of Barr's expectations. For Tretyakov enunciated the position these artists had adopted in the course of transforming their aesthetic thinking in relation to the emerging industrialization of the Soviet Union: the program of productivism and the new method of literary representation/production that accompanied it, *factography*. "Tretyakov," Barr's diary tells us, "seemed to have lost all interest in everything that did not conform to his objective, descriptive, self-styled journalistic ideal of art. He had no interest in painting since it had become abstract. He no longer writes poetry but confines himself to reporting."<sup>3</sup>

This paradigm-change within modernism, which Barr witnessed from the very first hour, did not make a strong enough impression on him to affect his future project. He continued in his plan to lay the foundations of an avant-garde art in the United States according to the model that had been developed in the first two decades of this century in western Europe (primarily in Paris). And it was this perseverance, as much as anything else, that prevented, until the late '60s, the program of productivism and the methods of factographic production from entering the general consciousness of American and European audiences.

In 1936, when Barr's experiences in the Soviet Union were incorporated in the extraordinary exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*, his encounter with productivism was all but undocumented. This is particularly astonishing since Barr seems to have undergone a conversion towards the end of his journey, one which is not recorded in his diary, but which he publicly expressed upon his return in "The Lef and Soviet Art," his essay for *Transition* published in the fall of 1928. Surprisingly, we read in this article, illustrated with two photographs of Lissitzky's exhibition design for the 1928 *Prensa* exhibition in Cologne, the following, rather perspicacious appraisal of the ideas and goals of the Lef Group:

1. Alfred Barr, "Russian Diary 1927-1928," *October*, no. 7 (Winter 1978), p. 21.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

The *Lef* is more than a symptom, more than an expression of a fresh culture or of post-revolutionary man; it is a courageous attempt to give to art an important social function in a world where from one point of view it has been prostituted for five centuries. The *Lef* is formed by men who are idealists of Materialism; who have a certain advantage over the Alexandrian cults of the West—the *surréaliste* wizards, the esoteric word jugglers and those nostalgics who practice necromancy over the bones variously of Montezuma, Louis Philippe or St. Thomas Aquinas. The *Lef* is strong in the illusion that man can live by bread alone.<sup>4</sup>

But western European and American interests in the modernist avant-garde refused to confront the implications seen so clearly by Barr. Instead, what happened at that moment, in the process of reception, was what had been described in 1926 by Boris Arvatov, who along with Alexei Gan, Sergei Tretyakov, and Nikolai Tarabukin made up the group of productivist theoreticians. Arvatov wrote about the painters who refused to join the productivists, "Those on the Right gave up their positions without resistance. . . . Either they stopped painting altogether or they emigrated to the Western countries, in order to astonish Europe with home-made Russian Cézannes or with patriotic-folkloristic paintings of little roosters."<sup>5</sup>

It is against this background that I want to pursue the following questions: Why did the Soviet avant-garde, after having evolved a modernist practice to its most radical stages in the postsynthetic cubist work of the suprematists, constructivists, and Laboratory Period artists, apparently abandon the paradigm of modernism upon which its practice had been based? What paradigmatic changes occurred at that time, and which paradigm formation replaced the previous one?

For the sake of detail and specificity I will limit myself in what follows to a discussion of only some aspects of the respective paradigms that generated the crucial concern for *faktura* in the first period, and that made *factography* the primary method in the second period of Russian avant-garde practice.

*Faktura* was first defined in the Russian context in David Burliuk's futurist manifesto, "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste," of 1912, and in Mikhail Larionov's "Rayonnist Manifesto" of the same year. In the works of Malevich from 1913–1919 *faktura* was a major pictorial concern, as it was at that time for painters such as Lissitzky, Popova, and Rozanova, who had their origins in synthetic cubism and who had been profoundly influenced by Malevich's suprematism. Further, it remained the central concept in the nonutilitarian ob-

4. Alfred Barr, "The Lef and Soviet Art," *Transition*, no. 14 (Fall 1928), pp. 267–270.

5. Boris Arvatov, *Kunst und Produktion*, Munich, Hanser Verlag, 1978, p. 43. All translations from the German, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

jects produced by Rodchenko, Tatlin, and the Stenberg brothers, sometimes referred to as the Laboratory constructivists. During an extremely hectic period of approximately seven years (from 1913–1920) the essential qualities of *faktura* were acquired step by step and developed further by the individual members of that avant-garde.

By 1920 it seemed to them that they had brought to their logical conclusion all the major issues that had been developed during the preceding fifty years of modernist painting. Therefore the central concern for a self-reflexive pictorial and sculptural production was abandoned after 1920—gradually at first, then abruptly—to be replaced by the new concern for factographic and productivist practices that are indicative of a more profound paradigmatic change.

### *Faktura*

Attempts are being made in the recent literature to construct a genealogy for the Russian vanguard's concern for *faktura*, claiming that it originates in Russian icon painting. Vladimir Markov's 1914 text "Icon Painting"—after Burliuk and Larionov the third to address *faktura* explicitly—had established this specifically Russian source, arguing that "through the resonance of the colors, the sound of the materials, the assemblage of textures (*faktura*) we call the people to beauty, to religion, to God. . . . The real world is introduced into the icon's creation only through the assemblage and incrustation of real tangible objects and this seems to produce a combat between two worlds, the inner and the outer. . . ."6

6. Yve-Alain Bois, in his essay "Malévich, le carré, le degré zéro" (*Macula*, no. 1 [1976], pp. 28–49), gives an excellent survey of the original discussion of the question of *faktura* among the various factions of the Russian avant-garde. More recently Margit Rowell has added references such as Markov's text, quoted here, that had not been mentioned by Bois. In any case, as Bois has argued, it is pointless to attempt a chronology since the many references to the phenomenon appear simultaneously and often independently of one another.

As early as 1912 the question of *faktura* is discussed by Mikhail Larionov in his "Rayonist Manifesto," where he calls it "the essence of painting," arguing that the "combination of colors, their density, their interaction, their depth, and their *faktura* would interest the truly concerned to the highest degree." A year later, in his manifesto "Luchism" he argues that "every painting consists of a colored surface, its *faktura* (that is, the condition of that colored surface, its timbre) and the sensation that you receive from these two aspects." Also in 1912 we find David Burliuk differentiating between "a unified pictorial surface A and a differentiated pictorial surface B. The structure of a pictorial surface can be I. *Granular*, II. *Fibrous*, and III. *Lamellar*. I have carefully scrutinized Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* and I thought 'fibrous vertical structure.' . . . One can say that Cézanne is typically *lamellar*." Burliuk's text is entitled "Faktura." Bois also quotes numerous references to the phenomenon of *faktura* in the writings of Malevich, for example, where he calls Cézanne the inventor of a "new *faktura* of the pictorial surface," or when he juxtaposes the *linear* with the *textural* in painting. The concern for *faktura* seems still to have been central in 1919, as is evident from Popova's statement that "the content of pictorial surfaces is *faktura*." Even writers who were not predominantly concerned with visual and plastic phenomena were engaged in a discussion of *faktura*, as is the case of Roman Jakobson in his essay "Futurism," identifying it as

But the specifically Russian qualities of *faktura* are nonetheless challenged by other details of this production. For the religio-transcendental function assigned by Markov to the term *faktura* is just too close to the essential pursuit of collage aesthetics as defined in 1914 by, for example, Georges Braque. Braque argued, "That was the great adventure: color and shape operated simultaneously, but they were completely independent of each other." Similarly, Tatlin's request in 1913 that "the eye should be put under the control of touch" is too close to Duchamp's famous statement that he wanted to abolish the supremacy of the retinal principle in art. And, in the contemporaneous discussions of the term, any references to specifically Russian or religious functions are too rapidly jettisoned to maintain the credibility of Markov's argument. Already in 1916 Tarabukin wrote a definition of *faktura* that would essentially remain valid for the entire period of Laboratory constructivism to follow. "The form of a work of art," he declared, "derives from two fundamental premises: the *material* or medium (colors, sounds, words) and the *construction*, through which the material is organized in a coherent whole, acquiring its artistic logic and its profound meaning."<sup>7</sup>

What qualifies the concern for *faktura* as a paradigmatic feature (differentiating it at the same time from previous concerns for facture in the works of the cubists and futurists in western Europe) is the quasi-scientific, systematic manner in which the constructivists now pursued their investigation of pictorial and sculptural constructs, *as well as* the perceptual interaction with the viewer they generate. The equation between colors, sounds, and words established by Tarabukin was no longer the neoromantic call for *synaesthesia* that one could still hear at this time from Kandinsky and Kupka. Running parallel with the formation of structural linguistics in the Moscow Linguistic Circle and the Opoyaz Group in Petersburg in 1915 and 1916 respectively, the constructivists developed the first systematic phenomenological grammar of painting and

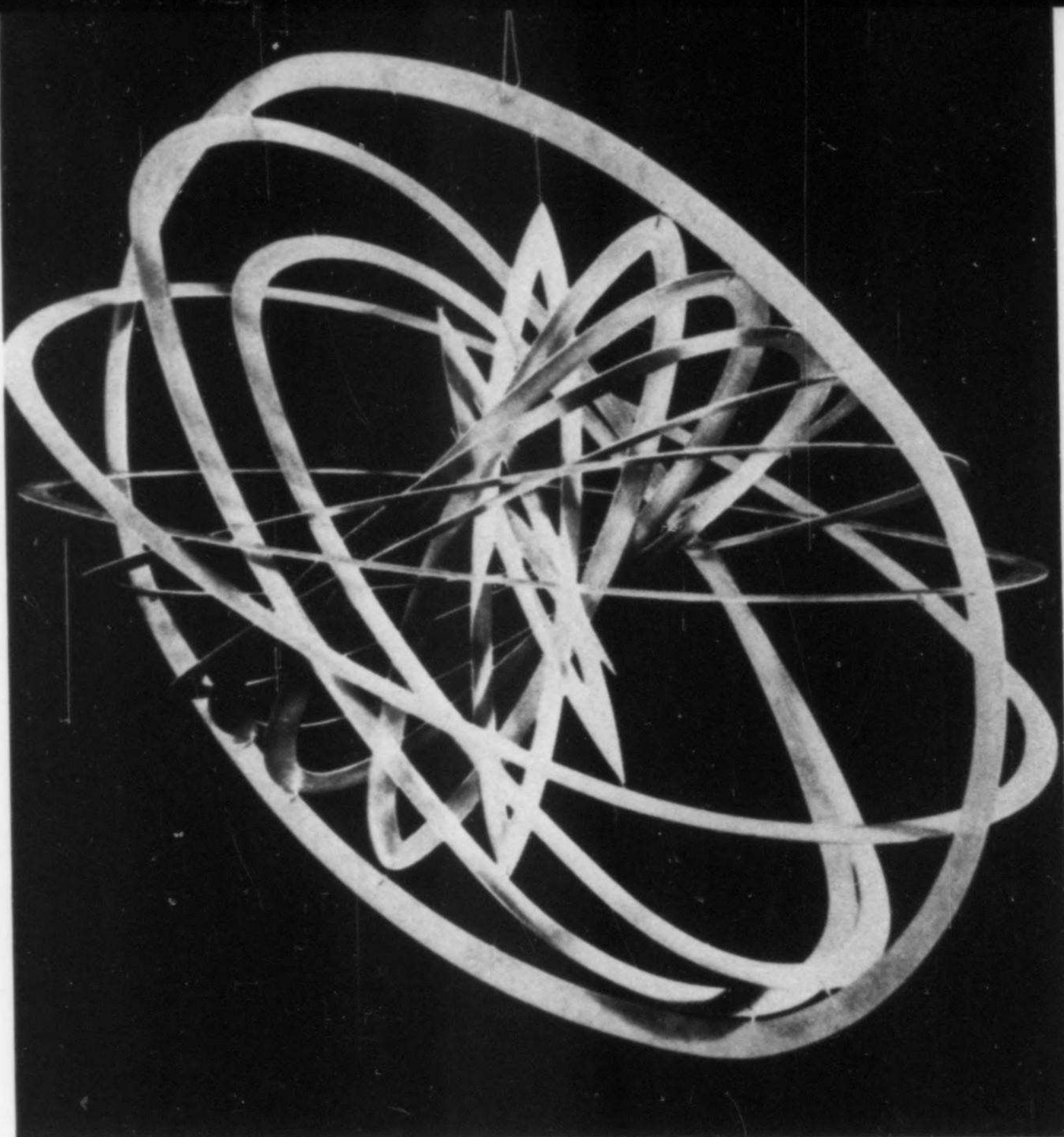
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one of the many strategies of the new poets and painters who were concerned with the "unveiling of the procedure: therefore the increased concern for *faktura*; it no longer needs any justification, it becomes autonomous, it requires new methods of formation and new materials."

Quite unlike the traditional idea of *fattura* or *facture* in painting, where the masterful facture of a painter's hand spiritualizes the *mere* materiality of the pictorial production, and where the hand becomes at the same time the substitute or the totalization of the identifying signature (as the guarantee of authenticity, it justifies the painting's exchange value and maintains its commodity existence), the new concern for *faktura* in the Soviet avant-garde emphasizes precisely the mechanical quality, the materiality, and the anonymity of the painterly procedure from a perspective of empirico-critical positivism. It demystifies and devalidates not only the claims for the authenticity of the spiritual and the transcendental in the painterly execution but, as well, the authenticity of the exchange value of the work of art that is bestowed on it by the first.

For the discussion of the Markov statement and a generally important essay on the phenomenon of *faktura*, see also Margit Rowell, "Vladimir Tatlin: Form/Faktura," *October*, no. 7 (Winter 1978), pp. 94ff.

7. Nikolai Tarabukin, *Le dernier tableau*, Paris, Editions Le Champ Libre, 1972, p. 102, cited in Rowell, p. 91.



*Alexander Rodchenko. Oval Hanging Construction (Surfaces Reflecting Light). 1921.*

sculpture. They attempted to define the separate material and procedural qualities by which such constructs are constituted with the same analytic accuracy used to analyze the *interrelationships* of their various functions — what Saussure would call the syntagmatic axis — which are equally relevant for the constitution of a perceptual phenomenon. Furthermore, they addressed the apparatus of visual sign production, that is, production procedures as well as the tools of these procedures. It was precisely the systematic nature of this investigation that led Barr in 1927 to see “an appalling variety of things” in Rodchenko’s work.

When, in 1920–21, Rodchenko arrived more or less simultaneously at his sculptural series *Hanging Construction* (a series subtitled *Surfaces Reflecting Light*) and at the triptych *Pure Colors: Red, Yellow, Blue*, he had developed to its logical conclusion that separation of color and line and that integration of shape and plane that the cubists had initiated with such excitement. With some justification he declared, “This is the end of painting. These are the primary colors. Every plane is a plane and there will be no more representation.”<sup>8</sup>

8. Alexander Rodchenko, “Working with Maiakovsky,” manuscript 1939, published in excerpts in *From Painting to Design*, exhibition catalogue, Cologne, Galerie Gmurzynska, 1981, pp. 190–191.

Even at this point in Rodchenko's development *faktura* already meant more than a rigorous and programmatic separation of line and drawing from painting and color, more than the congruence of planes with their actual support surface, more than emphasizing the necessary self-referentiality of pictorial signifiers and their contiguity with all other syntagmatic functions. It already meant, as well, more than just the object's shift from virtual pictorial/sculptural space into actual space. We should not take the reference to *Surfaces Reflecting Light* as anything less than an indication of the potential involvement of these artists with materials and objects in actual space and the social processes that occur within it.

*Faktura* also meant at this point, and not for Rodchenko alone, incorporating the technical means of construction into the work itself and linking them with existing standards of the development of the means of production in society at large. At first this happened on the seemingly banal level of the tools and materials that the painter employs — shifts that still caused considerable shock thirty years later with regard to Pollock's work. In 1917 Rodchenko explained his reasons for abandoning the traditional tools of painting and his sense of the need to mechanize its craft:

Thenceforth the picture ceased being a picture and became a painting or an object. The brush gave way to new instruments with which it was convenient and easy and more expedient to work the surface. The brush which had been so indispensable in painting which transmitted the object and its subtleties became an inadequate and imprecise instrument in the new non-objective painting and the press, the roller, the drawing pen, the compass replaced it.<sup>9</sup>

The very same conviction about laboratory technology is concretized in Rodchenko's systematic experimentation with pictorial surfaces as *traces* or immediate results of specific procedures and materials: metallic and reflective paint are juxtaposed with matte gouaches; varnishes and oil colors are combined with highly textured surfaces.

It is this techno-logic of Rodchenko's experimental approach that seems to have prevented aesthetic comprehension for even longer than did Duchamp's most advanced work of 1913, such as his *Three Standard Stoppages* or his readymades. With its emphasis on the material congruence of the sign with its signifying practice, on the causal relationship between the sign and its referent, and its focus on the *indexical* status of the sign, Rodchenko's work has defied a secondary level of meaning/reading.<sup>10</sup>

9. Alexander Rodchenko, exhibition pamphlet at the exhibition of the Leftist Federation in Moscow, 1917, cited in German Karginov, *Rodchenko*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1975, p. 64.

10. The terminological distinction is of course that of C. S. Peirce as Rosalind Krauss has first

Further, this emphasis on the *process qualities* of painting was linked to a serially organized configuration, a structure that resulted as much from the commitment to systematic investigation as from the aspiration toward science with which artists wanted to associate their production. It is this nexus of relationships that tied these essential features of the modernist paradigm eventually to the socially dominant modes of control and management of time and perceptual experience in the Soviet Union's rapidly accelerating process of industrialization.

*Faktura* is therefore the historically logical aesthetic correlative to the introduction of industrialization and social engineering that was imminent in the Soviet Union after the revolution of 1917. For that reason *faktura* also became the necessary intermediary step within the transformation of the modernist paradigm as we witness it around 1920. When in 1921 A. V. Babichev, the leader of the Working Group for Objective Analysis (of which Rodchenko and Stepanova were members), gives a definition of art production, his statement is strikingly close to ideas of Taylorism, social engineering, and organized consumption, as they became operative at that time in both western European and American society. "Art," he wrote, "is an informed analysis of the concrete tasks which social life poses. . . . If art becomes public property it will organize the consciousness and psyche of the masses by organizing objects and ideas."<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the notion of *faktura* already implied a reference to the *placement* of the constructivist object and its interaction with the spectator. To emphasize spatial and perceptual contiguity by mirror reflection — as hinted in Rodchenko's project for constructions whose reflective surfaces would mirror their surroundings — means, once again, to reduce the process of representation to purely *indexical* signs:<sup>12</sup> matter seemingly generates its own representation without mediation (the old positivist's dream, as it was, of course, that of the early photographers). Contiguity is also incorporated in the *kinetic* potential of Rodchenko's *Hanging Constructions*, since their movement by air currents or touch literally involves the viewer in an endless phenomenological loop made of his or her own movements in the time/space continuum.

In the discussions of the Group for Objective Analysis from 1921, *construction* was defined as the organization of the kinetic life of objects and materials which would create new movement. As such it had been juxtaposed with the traditional notion of *composition*, as Varvara Stepanova defines it:

Composition is the contemplative approach of the artist in his work.  
Technique and industry have confronted art with the problem of

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applied it to Duchamp's work in her essay "Notes on the Index," *October*, nos. 3 and 4 (Summer and Fall 1977).

11. A. V. Babichev, cited in Hubertus Gassner, "Analytical Sequences," in *Alexander Rodchenko*, ed. David Elliott, Oxford, Museum of Modern Art, 1979, p. 110.

12. Krauss, "Notes," *passim*.

construction as an active process, and not a contemplative reflection. The "sanctity" of a work as a single entity is destroyed. The museum which was a treasury of this entity is now transformed into an archive.<sup>13</sup>

If these lines sound familiar today it is not because Stepanova's text had considerable impact on the thinking and practice of her peers, but rather because, more than ten years later, precisely the same historical phenomenon is described and analyzed in a text that is by now rightfully considered one of the most important contributions to twentieth-century aesthetic theory. I am speaking, of course, of Walter Benjamin's 1935 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," and the following excerpt might be compared with Stepanova's 1921 statement:

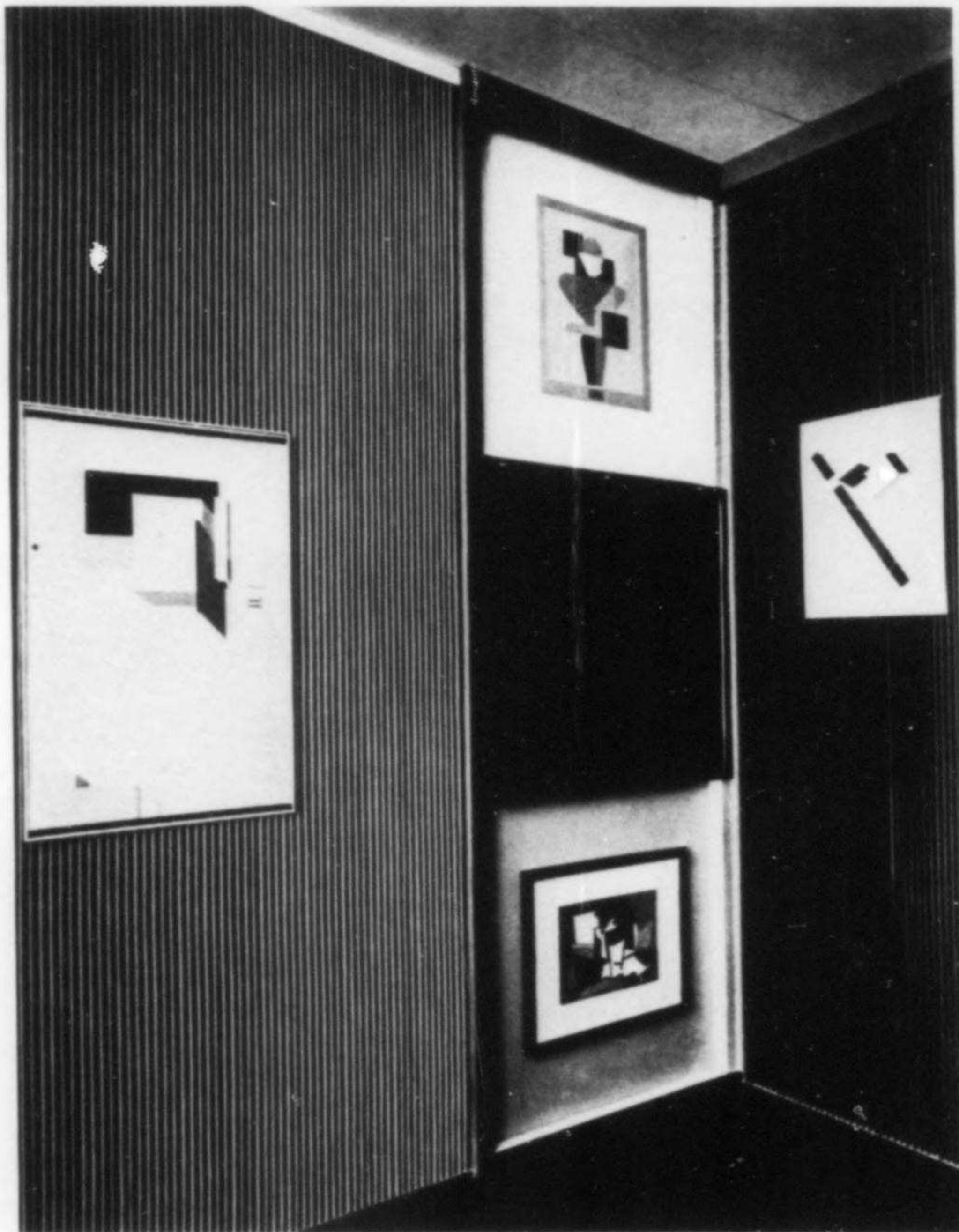
What they [the dadaists] intended and achieved was a relentless destruction of the aura of their creations, which they branded as reproductions with the very means of production. . . . In the decline of middle-class society, contemplation became a school for asocial behavior; it was countered by distraction as a variant of social conduct. . . . [Dada] hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. . . . (Thus the dada work restores the quality of tactility to the art of the present day, a quality which is important to the art of all periods in their stages of transformation.)<sup>14</sup>

The historical observations by Stepanova and their subsequent theorization by Benjamin have another correlative in the work of Lissitzky from the period 1925-27. Already in 1923 in his *Prounenraum* for the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung, Lissitzky had transformed tactility and perceptual movement—still latent in Rodchenko's *Hanging Construction*—into a full-scale architectural relief construction. For the first time, Lissitzky's earlier claim for his *Proun-Paintings*, to operate as transfer stations from art to architecture, had been fulfilled.

It was, however, not until 1926, when he designed and installed in Dresden and Hannover what he called his *Demonstration Rooms*—room-sized cabinets for the display and installation of the nonrepresentational art of his time—that one finds Stepanova's analysis fully confirmed in Lissitzky's practice. The vertical lattice relief-construction that covers the display surfaces of the cabinet and that changes value from white, through gray, to black according to the viewer's

13. Varvara Stepanova, quoted in Camilla Grey, *The Russian Experiment*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 1971, pp. 250-251.

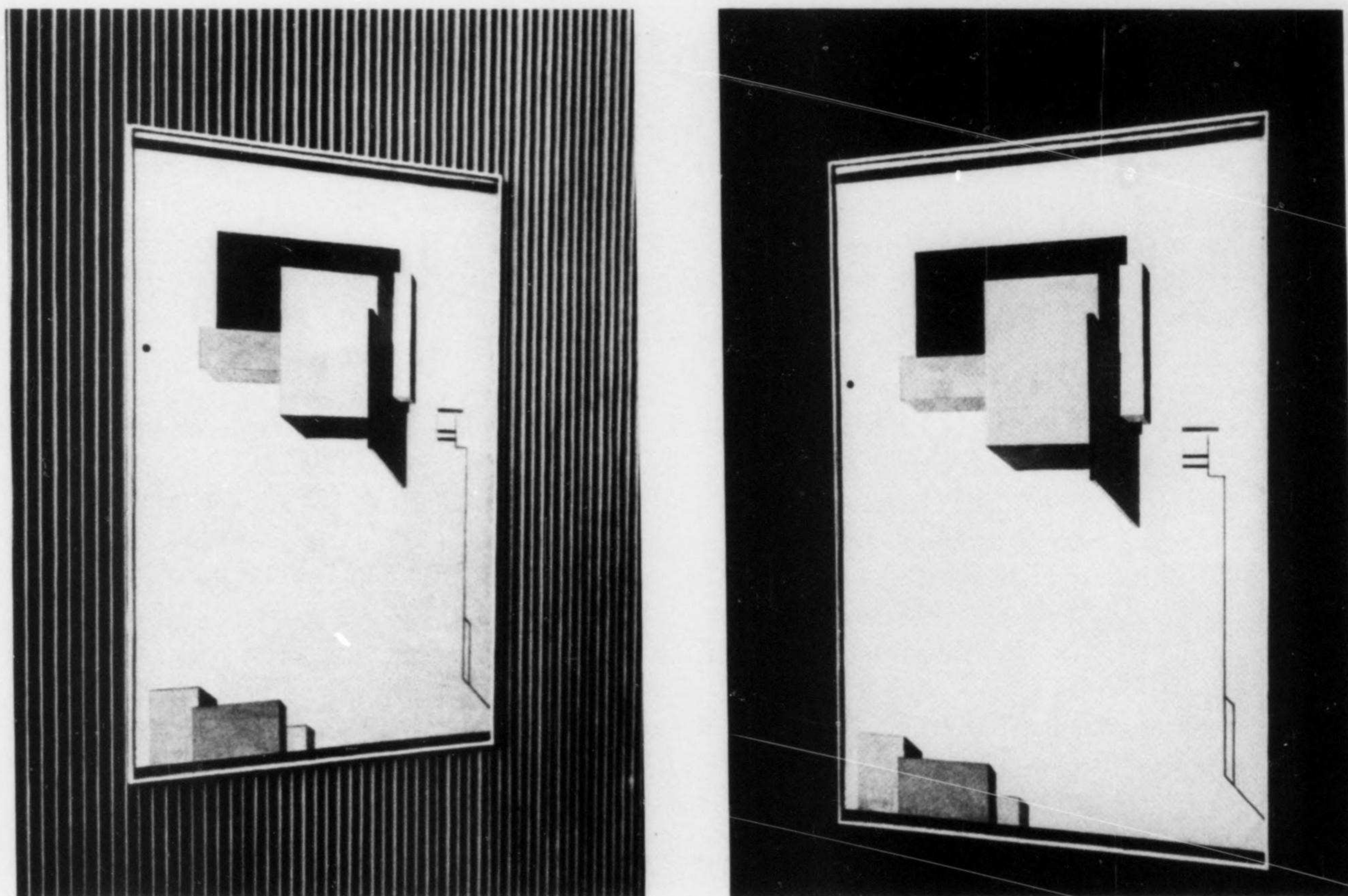
14. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, New York, Schocken Books, 1969, p. 238. The last sentence of this quotation, set into parenthesis, is taken from the second version of Benjamin's essay (my translation).



*El Lissitzky. Cabinet of Abstract Art. Hannoversches Landesmuseum, Hannover. 1926. Installation view shows aluminum relief walls and corner cabinet with movable panel. Works on display by Lissitzky, Schlemmer, and Marcoussis.*

position clearly engages the viewer in a phenomenological exercise that defies traditional contemplative behavior in front of the work of art. And the moveable wall panels, carrying or covering easel panels on display, to be shifted by the viewers themselves according to their momentary needs and interests, already incorporate into the display system of the museum the function of the archive that Stepanova predicted as its social destiny. In the late '20s Lissitzky wrote a retrospective analysis of his *Demonstration Rooms*, and once again it is crucial to compare his ideas with those of both Stepanova and Benjamin in order to realize how developed and current these concerns actually were in the various contexts:

. . . traditionally the viewer was lulled into passivity by the paintings on the walls. Our construction/design shall make the man active. This is the function of our room. . . . With each movement of the viewer in space the perception of the wall changes; what was white becomes



*El Lissitzky. Floating Volume. 1919. Installed in El Lissitzky's Cabinet of Abstract Art. The two views indicate change from white to black depending on viewer's position.*

black, and vice versa. Thus, as a result of human bodily motion, a perceptual dynamic is achieved. This play makes the viewer active. . . . The viewer is physically engaged in an interaction with the object on display.<sup>15</sup>

The paradox and historical irony of Lissitzky's work was, of course, that it had introduced a revolution of the perceptual apparatus into an otherwise totally unchanged social institution, one that constantly reaffirms both the contemplative behavior and the sanctity of historically rooted works of art.

This paradox complemented the contradiction that had become apparent several years earlier when Lissitzky had placed a suprematist painting, enlarged

15. El Lissitzky, "Demonstrationsräume," in *El Lissitzky*, ed. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, Dresden, VEB-Verlag der Kunst, 1967, p. 362.

to the size of an agitational billboard, in front of a factory entrance in Vitebsk. This utopian radicalism in the formal sphere—what the conservative Soviet critics later would pejoratively allude to as formalism—in its failure to communicate with and address the new audiences of industrialized urban society in the Soviet Union, became increasingly problematic in the eyes of the very groups that had developed constructivist strategies to expand the framework of modernism. It had become clear that the new society following the socialist revolution (in many respects a social organization that was comparable to the advanced industrial nations of western Europe and the United States at that time) required systems of representation/production/distribution which would recognize the collective participation in the actual processes of production of social wealth, systems which, like architecture in the past or cinema in the present, had established conditions of *simultaneous collective reception*. In order to make art “an informed analysis of the concrete tasks which social life poses,” as Babichev had requested, and in order to “fill the gulf between art and the masses that the bourgeois traditions had established,” as Meyerhold had called for, entirely new forms of audience address and distribution had to be considered. But around 1920 even the most advanced works among the nonutilitarian object-constructions—by Rodchenko, the Stenberg brothers, Tatlin, and Medunetsky—did not depart much further from the modernist framework of bourgeois aesthetics than the point of establishing models of epistemological and semiotic critique. No matter how radical, these were at best no more than a negation of the perceptual conventions by which art had previously been produced and received.

With sufficient historical distance it becomes clearer that this fundamental crisis within the modernist paradigm was not only a crisis of representation (one that had reached its penultimate status of self-reflexive verification and epistemological critique). It was also, importantly, a crisis of audience relationships, a moment in which the historical institutionalization of the avant-garde had reached its peak of credibility, from which legitimation was only to be obtained by a redefinition of its relationship with the new urban masses and their cultural demands. The Western avant-garde experienced the same crisis with the same intensity. It generally responded with entrenchment in traditional models—the “Rappel à l’ordre”—and the subsequent alignment of many of its artists with the aesthetic needs of the fascists in Italy and Germany. Or, other factions of the Paris avant-garde responded to the same crisis with an increased affirmation of the unique status of a high-art avant-garde, trying to resolve the contradictions of their practice by reaffirming blatantly obsolete conventions of pictorial representation. In the early '20s the Soviet avant-garde (as well as some members of the de Stijl group, the Bauhaus, and Berlin dada) developed different strategies to transcend the historical limitations of modernism. They recognized that the crisis of representation could not be resolved without at the same time addressing questions of distribution and audience. Architecture, utilitarian product design, and photographic factography were some of the

practices that the Soviet avant-garde considered capable of establishing these new modes of simultaneous collective reception.<sup>16</sup> Arvatov gives a vivid account of the gradual transition from the modernist position in the Russian avant-garde to the factographic and utilitarian aesthetic:

The first to retire were the expressionists, headed by Kandinsky, who could not endure extremist pressure. Then the suprematists, headed by Malevich, protested against the murder of the sanctity of art, since they were convinced of the complete self-sufficiency of art. They could not comprehend any other form of art production but that of the easel. . . . In 1921 the Institute for Artistic Culture, which had once united all the Left artists, broke up. Shortly thereafter the Institute started to work under the banner of productivism. After a long process of selection, after an obstinate fight, the group of non-representational constructivists crystallized within the group of the Left (Tatlin, Rodchenko, and the Obmochu-Group), who based their practice on the investigation and treatment of real materials as a transition to the constructive activity of the engineer. During one of the most important meetings of the Inchuk a resolution was passed unanimously to finish off with the self-sufficient constructions and to take all measures necessary in order to engage immediately with the industrial revolution.<sup>17</sup>

*Photomontage: Between Faktura and Factography*

The relatively late discovery of photocollage and montage techniques seems to have functioned as a transitional phase, operating between the fully developed modernist critique of the conventions of representation, which one sees in constructivism, and an emerging awareness of the new need to construct *iconic* representations for a new mass audience. Neither Lissitzky nor Rodchenko produced any photocollage work before 1922; and only as late as 1919—when these artists had already pushed other aspects of postcubist pictorial and sculptural problems further than anyone else in Europe (except, of course, for Duchamp)—did the collage technique proper enter their work at all. It seems credible that in fact Gustav Klucis, a disciple of Malevich and a collaborator with Lissitzky, was the first artist to transcend the purity of suprematist painting by introducing iconic photographic fragments into his suprematist

16. The problem of the creation of conditions of simultaneous collective reception is dealt with in an essay by Wolfgang Kemp, "Quantität und Qualität: Formbestimmtheit und Format der Fotografie," *Foto-Essays zur Geschichte und Theorie der Fotografie*, Munich, Schirmer/Mosel, 1978, pp. 10ff.

17. Arvatov, *Kunst*, p. 43.

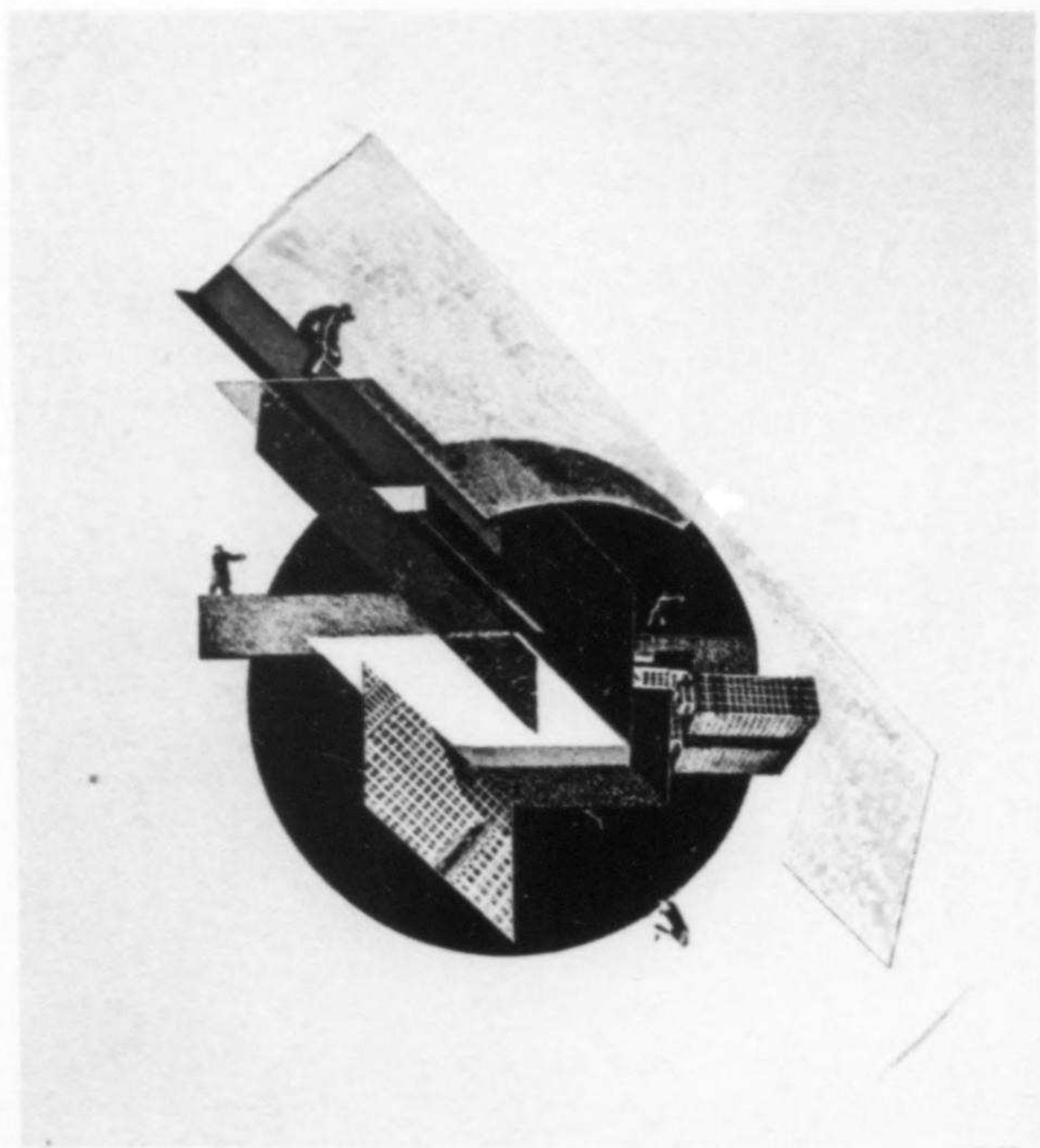
work in 1919, the very date that Heartfield and Grosz, Hausmann and Höch have claimed as the moment of their invention of photomontage.

Since by 1919 photomontage was widespread and commonly used in both advertising and commercial photography, the question of who actually introduced the technique into the transformation of the modernist paradigm is unimportant.<sup>18</sup> What is far more crucial is in what way the artists (who might very well have simultaneously "discovered" the technique for their own purposes quite independently of one another) related to the inherent potential and consequences of the reintroduction of (photographic) iconic imagery at precisely the moment when mimetic representation had seemingly been dismantled and definitively abandoned.

Announcing his claims to priority, Klucis also underlines the essential difference between the Soviet type of photomontage and that of the Berlin dadaists when he writes in 1931:

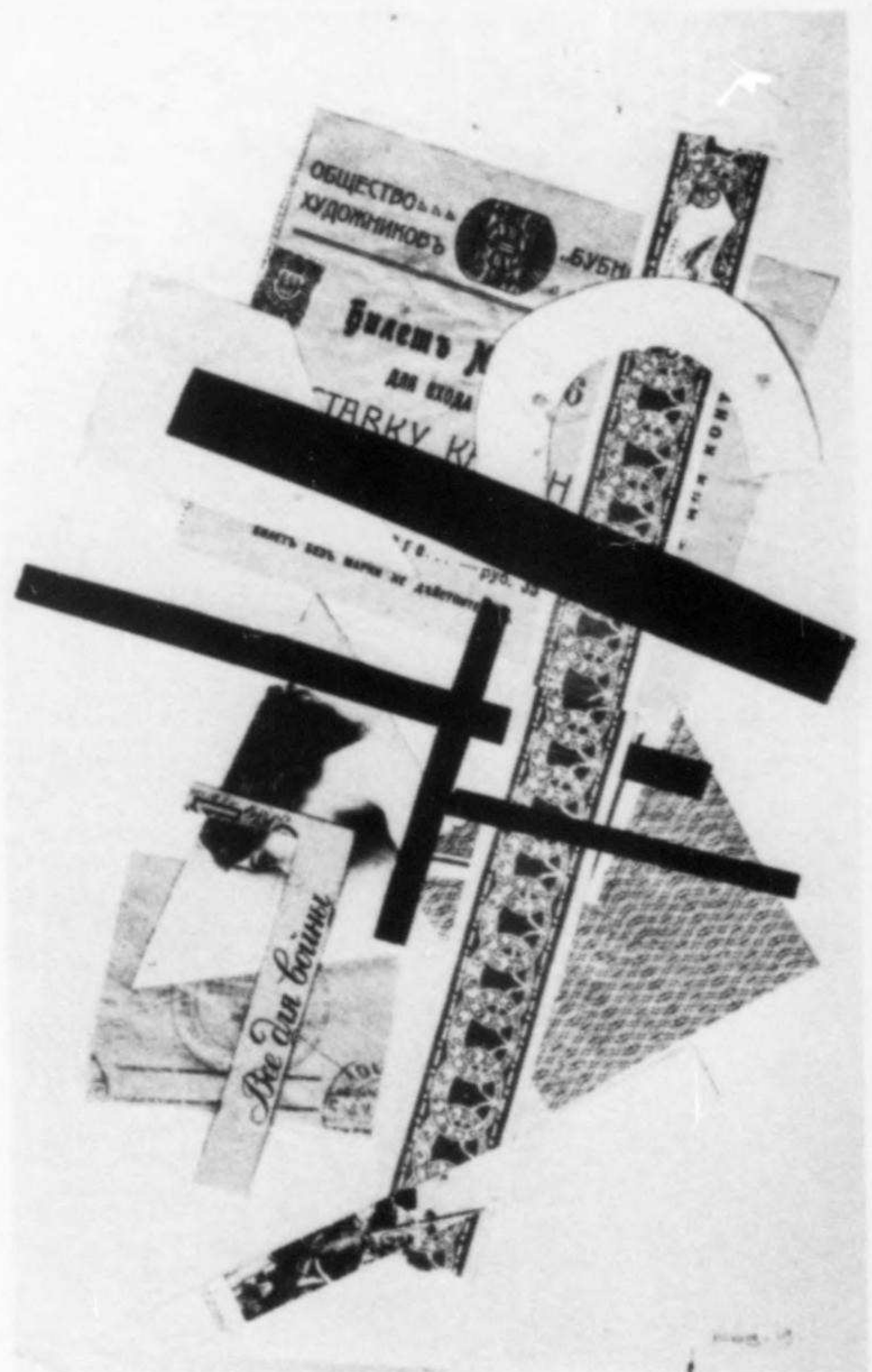
There are two general tendencies in the development of photomontage: one comes from American publicity and is exploited by the

18. The two essays that trace the history of photomontage in the context of the history of photography and the history of emerging advertising technology are Robert Sobieszek, "Composite Imagery and the Origins of Photomontage," Part I and II, *Artforum*, September/October 1978, pp. 58-65, and pp. 40-45. Much more specifically addressing the origins of photomontage in advertising techniques is Sally Stein's important essay, "The Composite Photographic Image and the Composition of Consumer Ideology," *Art Journal*, Spring 1981, pp. 39-45.



*Gustav Klucis. The Dynamic City. 1919.*

Alexander Rodchenko. Ticket No. 1. 1919.



Alexander Rodchenko. Photomontage for Pro Eto. 1923.



Dadaists and Expressionists—the so called photomontage of form; the second tendency, that of militant and political photomontage, was created on the soil of the Soviet Union. Photomontage appeared in the USSR under the banner of LEF when non-objective art was already finished. . . . Photomontage as a new method of art dates from 1919 to 1920.<sup>19</sup>

The hybrids that Klucis, Lissitzky, and Rodchenko created with their first attempts at collage and photomontage reveal the difficulty of the paradigmatic transformation that is inherent in that procedure, and the concomitant search, in the period 1919–23, for a solution to the crisis of representation. But beyond this, they suggest where the answer to these questions would have to be found, and they define the qualities and functions which the new procedures that legitimize iconic representation would have to offer. At the same time, it would seem that these artists did not want, on the one hand, to sacrifice any of the supreme modernist virtues they had achieved in their pictorial and sculptural

19. Gustav Klucis, Preface to the exhibition catalogue *Fotomontage*, Berlin, 1931, cited in Dawn Ades, *Photomontage*, London/New York, Pantheon, 1976, p. 15.

work: the transparency of construction procedures; the self-referentiality of the pictorial signifying devices; the reflexive spatial organization; and the general emphasis on the tactility, that is, the constructed nature of their representations. But, on the other hand, photocollage and photomontage reintroduced into the aesthetic construct—at a moment when its modernist self-reflexivity and purification had semiotically reduced all formal and material operations to purely indexical signs—unlimited sources for a new *iconicity* of representation, one that was mechanically produced and reproduced, and therefore—to a generation of media utopians—the most reliable. Looking at the photomontage work of 1923, such as Rodchenko's series *Pro Eto*, or Hausmann's work, one might well wonder whether the exuberance, willfulness, and quantity of the photographic quotations and their juxtapositions were not in part motivated by their authors' relief at having finally broken the modernist ban on iconic representation. This, in extreme contrast to the Parisian vanguard's collage work, in which iconic representation ultimately reappeared, but which never made use of photographic or mechanically reproduced iconic images.

But the rediscovery of a need to construct iconic representations did not, of course, result primarily from the need to overcome the strictures of modernism. Rather it was a necessary strategy to implement the transformation of audiences that the artists of the Soviet avant-garde wanted to achieve at that time. "Photomontage," an anonymous text (attributed by some scholars to Rodchenko) published in *Lef* in 1924, not only traces the historic affiliation of photomontage's conglomerate image with the strategies of advertising, juxtaposing photomontage's technique and its iconic dimension with the traditional techniques of modernist representation, but also introduces the necessity of *documentary* representation in order to reach the new mass audience:

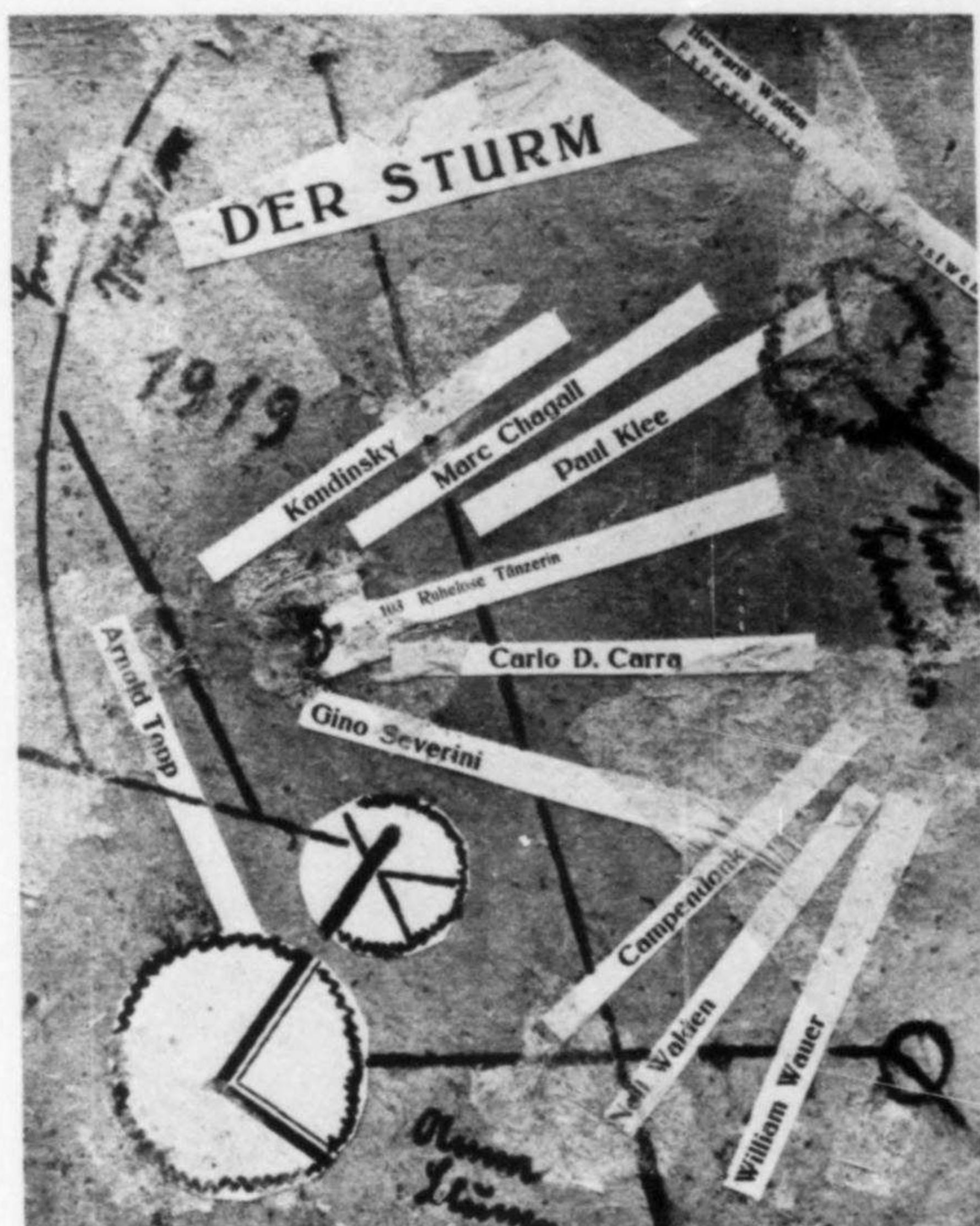
By photomontage we understand the usage of the photographic prints as tools of representation. The combination of photographs replaces the composition of graphic representations. The reason for this substitution resides in the fact that the photographic print is not the sketch of a visual fact, but its precise fixation. The precision and the documentary character give photography an impact on the spectator that the graphic representation can never claim to achieve. . . . An advertisement with a photograph of the object that is being advertised is more efficient than a drawing of the same subject.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike the Berlin dadaists who claimed to have invented photomontage, the author of this *Lef* text does not disavow the technique's intrinsic affiliation (and competitive engagement) with the dominant practices of advertising.

20. Anonymous, *Lef*, no. 4 (1924), reprinted in *Art et Poésie Russes*, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne, 1979, pp. 221ff (my translation).

Quite the contrary, the author seems to invite that competition by defining photomontage from the start as an agitational tool that addresses the Soviet Union's urban masses. It is with this aspect in mind that the practitioners of photomontage could not accept the confinement of the medium to the forms of distribution they had inherited from collage: forms limited by the single, rectangular sheet of paper, its format, scale, and size of edition entirely determined by the most traditional studio notions of unique, auratic works of art.

While (with the exception of the work of John Heartfield) most western European photomontage remains on the level of the unique, fabricated image — paradoxically folding into the singularity of this object fragments of a multitude of technically reproduced photographic images from mass-cultural sources — the strategies of the Soviet avant-garde seem rather rapidly to have shifted away from a reenactment of that historical paradox. The productivist artists realized that in order to address a new audience not only did the techniques of production have to be changed, but the forms of distribution and institutions of dissemination and reception had to be transformed as well. The photomontage technique, as an artistic procedure that supposedly carries transformative potential *qua* procedure, as the Berlin dadaists seem to have believed, therefore, in the work of Rodchenko and Lissitzky, becomes integrated as only *one* among several techniques — typography, advertising, propaganda — that attempted to redefine the representational systems of the new society.



Kurt Schwitters. Untitled (Der Sturm). 1919.



El Lissitzky. Photomontage for catalogue accompanying Soviet Pavilion at Pressa Exhibition, Cologne. 1928.

*From Modernism to Mass Culture*

In 1926 Lissitzky developed a theory of contemporary art production that not only associated aesthetic practice with the needs of audience and patron class as prime determinants of the forms that production would assume, but also linked standards of modernist practice to distribution developments occurring in other communications media: books, graphic design, film. Although his beliefs were buoyed by the same naive optimism towards the enlightening power of technology and the media that would ten years later limit the ultimate relevance of Walter Benjamin's essay, Lissitzky's is not a mere "machine aesthetic." Rather, it is an attempt to establish an operative aesthetic framework that could focus attention simultaneously on the existing needs of mass audiences and on the available techniques and standards of the means of artistic production. Like Benjamin in his later essay, Lissitzky considers aesthetic forms and their procedures of production in the light of history rather than in terms of universal categories. Yet unlike Benjamin, he perceives the ensuing transformations as a product of needs and functions rather than as a result of technological changes. The text is important for the clarification of Lissitzky's motivation in the following years, as he decided to abandon almost all traditional forms of graphic and photographic, let alone painterly or sculptural, production, and to concentrate exclusively on those practices that establish the new "monumentality" — the conditions of simultaneous collective reception:

It is shortsighted to suppose that machines, *i.e.*, the displacement of manual by mechanical processes, are basic to the development of the form and the figure of an artifact. In the first place it is the consumers' demand that determines the development, *i.e.*, the demand of the social strata that provide the "commissions." Today this is not a narrow circle anymore, a thin cream, but everybody, the masses. . . . What conclusions does this imply in our field? The most important thing here is that the mode of production of words and pictures is included in the same process: photography. . . . [In America] they began to modify the relation of word and illustration in exposition in the direct opposite of the European style. The highly developed technique of facsimile electrotone (half-tone blocks) was especially important for this development; thus photomontage was born. . . . With our work the Revolution has achieved a colossal labor of propaganda and enlightenment. We ripped up the traditional book into single pages, magnified these a hundred times, . . . and stuck them up as posters in the streets. . . . The innovation of easel painting made great works of art possible, but it has now lost its power. The cinema and the illustrated weekly have succeeded it. . . . The book is the most monumental art form today; no longer is it fondled by the delicate hands of a bibliophile, but seized by a hundred thousand hands.

. . . We shall be satisfied if we can conceptualize the epic and the lyric developments of our times in our form of the book.<sup>21</sup>

The degree to which Lissitzky focused at that time on the question of audience as a determinant of form, and on the perspective of creating conditions for simultaneous collective reception, becomes even more obvious in the essay's at-first surprising equation between the reading space of the printed page and the space of dramatic experience in the theater. According to Lissitzky the page (and its traditional layout and typography) shares conventions of confinement with the theater — the peep-show as he calls it — where the spectator is separated from the performers, and the spectator's gaze is contained — as in traditional easel painting — in the central perspective of the proscenium stage. The revolutionary transformation of book design ran parallel in Lissitzky's work to the revolution of the theatrical space, for example, as he would produce it in 1929 for Meyerhold's theater and its central, open-stage construction. Already in his 1922 book *Of Two Squares* (reading lessons for children, as he called it), he said that "the action unrolls like a film" and the method of typographical montage generates the tactility of experiencing the reader's movement through time and space.<sup>22</sup>

This integration of the dramatic experience of theatrical/cinematographic space and the perceptual experience of static signs of graphic/photographic montage and typography is successfully achieved in 1928 in Lissitzky's first major exhibition project for the International Press Exhibition, *Pressa*, in Cologne. Not surprisingly, we find on the first page of the catalogue that Lissitzky created to accompany the design of the USSR Pavilion the announcement, "Here you see in a typographic kino-show the passage of the contents of the Soviet Pavilion."<sup>23</sup>

Rather than thinking of Lissitzky's involvement with the design of exhibitions merely as a task-oriented activity that remains marginal to the central concerns of his work (as have most authors considering these projects), it seems more adequate to see them, along with Lissitzky's subsequent involvement with the propaganda journal *USSR in Construction*, as a logical next step in the development of his own work, as well as in the radical transformation of modernist aesthetics and art production as it had been occurring within the Soviet avant-garde since 1921 and the rise of productivism. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of one of the last texts Lissitzky wrote, shortly before his death in 1941, a table of autobiographical dates and activities, where the entry

21. El Lissitzky, "Unser Buch," in *El Lissitzky*, pp. 357-360.

22. Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Reading Lessons," *October*, no. 11 (Winter 1979), pp. 77-96.

23. Lissitzky, *Katalog des Sowjet Pavillons auf der Internationalen Presse-Ausstellung*, Cologne, Dumont Verlag, 1928, p. 16.

under the year 1926 reads, "In 1926 my most important work as an artist began: the design of exhibitions."<sup>24</sup>

In 1927 Lissitzky had been commissioned to install his first "commercial" exhibition design in the Soviet Union, the exhibition of the Polygraphic Union, a relatively modest project in Moscow's Gorky Park. Unlike the 1926 design for the *International Contemporary Art Exhibition* in Dresden, or the cabinet design for the Hannover Landesmuseum in 1927, this project was conceived and produced as a set for a trade show rather than an exhibition of contemporary art; furthermore, it was the result of the collaboration of a group of artists.

Klucis, the "inventor" of photomontage, Lissitzky's colleague and disciple from Vitebsk, where both had struggled to come to terms with the legacy of Malevich's suprematism in 1919–20, was one of the collaborators in the project, as was Salomon Telingater, later to emerge as one of the major figures in the revolution of Soviet typographic design. It is in the catalogue of this exhibition — a book design project that was jointly produced by Lissitzky and Telingater — that we find Lissitzky's essay "The Artist in Production."

This text is not only Lissitzky's own productivist manifesto (Rodchenko and Stepanova's text, officially entitled "Productivist Manifesto," had appeared already in 1921, and Ossip Brik's manifesto "Into Production" had appeared in *Lef* in 1923), but it is also the text in which Lissitzky develops most succinctly his ideas about the uses of photography in general and the functions of photomontage in particular:

As a result of the social needs of our epoch and the fact that artists acquainted themselves with new techniques, *photomontage* emerged in the years following the Revolution and flourished thereafter. Even though this technique had been used in America much earlier for advertising, and the dadaists in Europe had used it to shake up official bourgeois art, it only served political goals in Germany. But only here, with us, photomontage acquired a clearly socially determined and aesthetic form. Like all other great art, it created its own laws of formation. The power of its expression made the workers and the Komsomol circles enthusiastic for the visual arts and it had great influence on the billboards and newspapers. Photomontage at its present stage of development uses finished, entire photographs as elements from which it constructs a totality.<sup>25</sup>

Lissitzky's 1927 text not only traces an astonishingly clear history of the technique of photomontage and its origins in advertising technology, but it also gives us a clear view of his awareness that the functions of the technique within

24. Lissitzky, *Proun und Wolkenbügel*, Dresden, VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1977, p. 115.

25. Lissitzky, "Der Künstler in der Produktion," *Proun*, pp. 113ff.

the historical context of the Soviet avant-garde are entirely different from that of the Berlin dadaists, that the technique is only valid if it is bound into the particular needs of a social group. That is to say, he disavows photomontage as a new artistic strategy that has value *qua* artistic operation and innovational mode of representation/production. The nucleus of the inherent potential of photomontage, that is, the production of iconic, documentary information, already addressed in the anonymous text from *Lef* of 1924, is fully developed in Lissitzky's definition of the functions of the technique in 1927: the morphology of the products of that technique has changed substantially by comparison with its original manifestations in 1919–23. Those features that the technique of photomontage had inherited from its origins in collage and the cubist critique of representation were gradually abandoned. Also abandoned was the overlap of photomontage with the techniques of modern advertising. These techniques seemed to have generated, in the dada context, the extreme procedures of juxtaposition and fragmentation by which the origins in advertising were inverted and where the constructed artificiality of the artifact destroyed the mythical nature of the commodity. This shift became apparent in the gradual return to the *iconic* functions of the photograph, deleting altogether the *indexical* potential of the photograph (as still visible in Lissitzky's photograms of the '20s) as well as the actual indexical structure of the agglomerated fragments of the photomontage itself, where the network of cuts and lines of jutting edges and unmediated transitions from fragment to fragment was as important, if not more so, as the actual iconic representation contained within the fragment itself.

Thus *faktura*, an essential feature of the modernist paradigm that underlay the production of the Soviet avant-garde until 1923, was replaced by a new concern for the *factographic* capacity of the photograph, supposedly rendering aspects of reality visible without interference or mediation. It was at this moment — in 1924 — that Rodchenko decided to abandon photomontage altogether and to engage in single-frame still photography, which transforms montage through the explicit choice of camera angle, the framing of vision, the determinants of the filmic apparatus, and the camera's superiority over the conventions of human perception. In Lissitzky's essay this change is clearly indicated in the phrase arguing that "photomontage in its present stage of development uses finished entire photographs as elements from which it constructs a totality." From this we see that homogeneity in the single print is favored over fragmentation, iconic representation of an absent referent is favored over the indexical materiality of the trace of a verifiable process, tactility of the construction of incoherent surfaces and spatial references is exchanged for the monumentality of the camera-angle's awesome visions and the technological media optimism that it conveys. Yet while it is evident that at this moment the premises of the modernist paradigm were vacated, and that a programmatic commitment to new audiences entirely changed the nature of artistic production, it seems no more appropriate to neglect or condemn as *propaganda* Lissitzky's or Rodchenko's

work from this period (nor their subsequent involvement with Stalin's State Publishing House in the 1930s) than it would be to condemn certain surrealist artists (those in particular who developed what Max Ernst was to call the technique of the "painted collage") as being responsible for providing advertising's visual and textual strategies, operative to this very day.

*Between Photomontage and Propaganda: The Pressa*

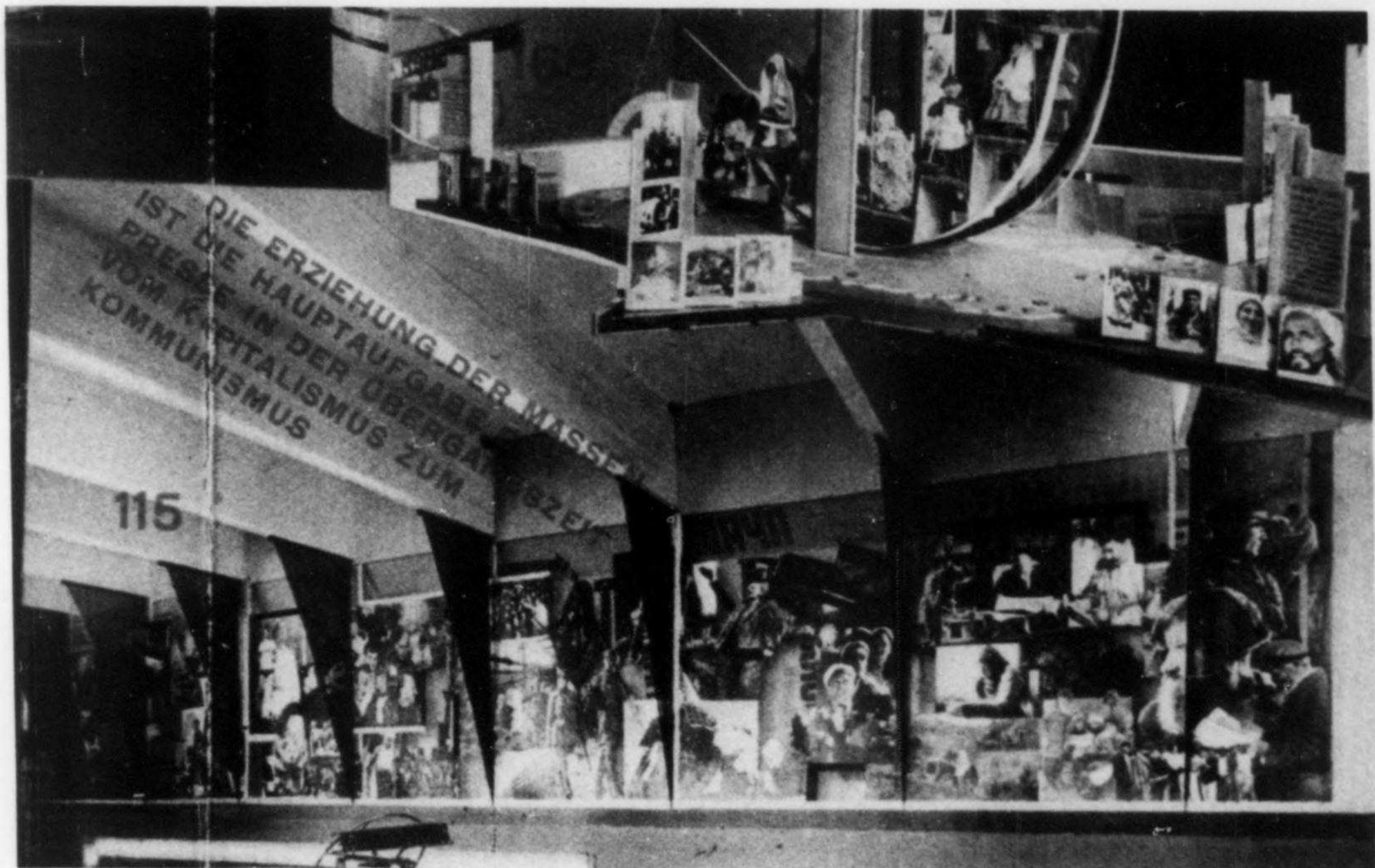
Partially as a response to his first successful exhibition design in Moscow in 1927, a committee chaired by Anatoly Lunacharsky decided to ask Lissitzky (together with Rabinowich, who later withdrew from participation) to design the Soviet Pavilion at the forthcoming *International Exhibition of Newspaper and Book Publishing* in Cologne, the first exhibition of its kind. Since the decision of the committee was made on December 23, 1927, and the exhibition was to begin in the first week of May 1928, Lissitzky and his collaborators had four months to plan and produce the design of the exhibition. Apparently just two days after the committee had appointed him, Lissitzky submitted a first general outline that foresaw the formation of a "collective of creators" with himself as the general coordinator of the design. Among the approximately thirty-eight members of the collective, only a few, among them the stage designer Naumova, had previously participated in exhibition design and the decoration of revolutionary pageants.<sup>26</sup> The largest group within the collective consisted of agitprop graphic designers, shortly thereafter to become some of the most important graphic designers of the Soviet avant-garde. The majority of the 227 exhibits were produced and assembled in the workshops for stage design in the Lenin Hills in Moscow. The other elements were designed in Moscow as well, but produced and assembled in Cologne under the supervision of Lissitzky and Sergei Senkin, who had traveled to the site of the exhibition to supervise and install the Soviet Pavilion.

The centerpiece of the exhibition was in fact the large-scale photomontage that Lissitzky had designed with Senkin's assistance. This *photofresco*, as Senkin called it, measured approximately seventy-two by eleven feet and depicted, in constant alternation of camera angles, of close-ups and long-shots, the history and importance of the publishing industry in the Soviet Union since the Revolution and its role in the education of the illiterate masses of the newly industrialized state. Thus the photofresco, *The Task of the Press Is the Education of the Masses* (its official title), functioned as the centerpiece of an exhibition that was devoted to documenting the achievements of the Revolution in the educational field for a skeptical, if not hostile western European public.

26. For a detailed description of the history and the procedures of the work for the *Pressa* exhibition design, see Igor W. Rjasanzew, "El Lissitzky und die *Pressa* in Köln 1928," in *El Lissitzky*, exhibition catalogue, Halle (GDR), Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg, 1982, pp. 72-81.



*El Lissitzky (in collaboration with Sergei Senkin).  
Photofresco in Pressa Exhibition. 1928.*



The actual structure of the photofresco followed the strategies that Lissitzky had laid out in the essay that accompanied the catalogue of his first exhibition design in 1927. Large-scale photographic prints were assembled in an irregular grid formation and the visual dynamic of the montage resulted from the juxtaposition of the various camera angles and positions, but no longer from a jagged linear network of seams and edges of heterogeneous photographic fragments.

While the scale and size of the photomontage — it was installed on the wall at a considerable height — aligned the work with a tradition of architectural decoration and mural painting, the sequencing of the images and their emphatic dependence on camera technology and movement related the work to the experience of cinematic viewing, such as that of the newsreel. In their mostly enthusiastic reviews, many visitors to the *Pressa* exhibition actually discussed the theatrical and cinematic aspects of the photofresco. One critic reminisces that one went through “a drama that unfolded in time and space. One went through expositions, climaxes, retardations, and finales.”<sup>27</sup> Reviewing both the Dresden *Hygiene Exhibition* design by Lissitzky and the Cologne *Pressa* design, a less well-disposed critic still had to admit the design’s affiliation with the most advanced forms of cinematic production:

The first impression is brilliant. Excellent the technique, the arrangement, the organization, the modern way it has been constructed. . . . Propaganda, propaganda, that is the keynote of Soviet Russian exhibitions, whether they be in Cologne or in Dresden. And how well the Russians know how to achieve the visual effects their films have been showing us for years!<sup>28</sup>

Even though Lissitzky did not meet Dziga Vertov until 1929 (inaugurating a friendship that lasted until Lissitzky’s death in 1941), it is very likely that in 1927–28 he was drawing not only upon the collage and montage sources of cubism, dadaism, and constructivism, but equally upon the cinematic montage techniques that Vertov had used in the first *Kino-Pravda* films, and used still more daringly and systematically in his work after 1923.

In his manifesto “We,” published in *kinofot* in 1922 and illustrated by a compass and ruler drawing by Rodchenko from 1915, Vertov had called film “an art of movement, its central aim being the organization of the movements of objects in space.” Hubertus Gassner speculates that this manifesto had considerable influence on Rodchenko, as well as the constructivists, and led him away from drawing and painting into the photographic montage production that Rodchenko published two issues later in the same journal.<sup>29</sup> It seems, however, that Vertov only voiced a concern that, as we saw above in several

27. Rjasanzew, p. 78.

28. Cited in Rjasanzew, p. 79.

29. Hubertus Gassner, *Rodchenko Fotografien*, Munich, Schirmer/Mosel, 1982, p. 121.

instances, was very much at the center of the constructivist debate itself, to make "construction" and "montage" the procedures that would transform the passive, contemplative modes of seeing. Sophie Küppers argues that it was Vertov who learned the montage technique from Lissitzky's earliest experiments with the photogram and the photomontage, and that it was primarily Lissitzky's transparency technique and the double exposure as photographic montage technique that left a particularly strong impression on Vertov's own work in the mid-1920s. Only in the later work produced by Lissitzky for the magazine *USSR in Construction* can we recognize, according to Küppers, the influence of Vertov's *Kino-Pravda*.

In spite of the obvious parallels between the cinematographic montage and the photomontage, and leaving aside the question of historical priority and influence, it is important to clarify in this context the specific differences that existed between the mural-sized photomontages and exhibition designs of Lissitzky and the montage of Vertov's *Kino-Pravda*. Clearly the still photograph and the new photomontage, as Lissitzky defined it, offered features that the moving imagery of the film lacked: aspects of the same subject could be compared and contrasted and could be offered for extensive reading and viewing; complicated processes of construction and social transformation could be analyzed in detailed accounts that ran parallel with statistics and other written information; and the same subject could, as Rodchenko argued, be represented "at different times and in different circumstances." This practice of "realistic constructivism" as the critic Gus called Lissitzky's exhibition design, had in fact wrought a substantial change within collage and photomontage aesthetics. What in collage had been the strategy of *contingency*, by which material had been juxtaposed, emphasizing the divergence of the fragments, had now become the *stringency* of a conscious construction of documentary factographic information.

In an excellent recent study of Russian constructivism, Christina Lodder has argued that it was the failure of the constructivists actually to implement their productivist program (due to shortage of materials, lack of access to industrial facilities, disinterest on the part of the engineers and administrators of the State manufacturing companies) that drove these artists into the field of typography, publication and poster design, agitational propaganda and exhibition design.<sup>30</sup> The emergence of a strong antimodernism, backed by the Party as a result of Lenin's New Economic Policy in 1921, required the return to traditional values in art and laid the foundations for the rise of socialist realism. Lodder argues that it was as a result of these changes and as an attempt at competition with these reactionary forces that Lissitzky's and Rodchenko's work at that time employed iconic, photographic representation and abandoned

30. Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1983.

the radical syntax of the montage aesthetic. The problem with this criticism, however—as with all previous rejections of the later work of Rodchenko and Lissitzky—is that criteria of judgment that were originally developed within the framework of modernism are now applied to a practice of representation that had deliberately and systematically disassociated itself from that framework in order to lay the foundations of an art production that would correspond to the needs of a newly industrialized collective society. Because, as we have seen, these conditions required radically different production procedures and modes of presentation and distribution, any historical critique or evaluation will have to develop its criteria from *within* the actual intentions and conditions at the origin of these practices.

Lissitzky's exhibition design does overcome the traditional limitations of the avant-garde practice of photomontage and reconstitutes it within the necessary conditions of simultaneous collective reception that were given in the cinema and in architecture. Further, in his new practice of montage, Lissitzky incorporated the method of "systematic analytical sequence," as Tretyakov was to define it shortly afterwards. Tretyakov wrote in 1931 that the photographer/artist should move from the single-image aesthetic to the systematic photographic sequence and the long-term observation:

If a more or less random snapshot is like an infinitely fine scale that has been scratched from the surface of reality with the tip of the finger, then in comparison the photoseries or the photomontage lets us experience the extended massiveness of reality, its authentic meaning. We build systematically. We must also photograph systematically. Sequence and long-term photographic observation—that is the method.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Modernism's Aftermath*

In spite of the fact that even the most conservative international newspapers reported enthusiastically on Lissitzky's *Pressa* design, and that he received a medal from the Soviet government in recognition of the success of this project as well as having been named an honorary member of the Moscow town Soviet, he seems to have been personally dissatisfied with the results. This is evident in a letter that he wrote on December 26, 1928, to his Dutch friend, the de Stijl architect J. J. P. Oud. "It was a big success for us," he mused, "but aesthetically there is something of a poisoned satisfaction. The extreme hurry

31. Sergei Tretyakov, "From the Photoseries to the Long-Term Photographic Observation," in *Proletarskoje Foto*, IV (1931), 20, reprinted in German translation in *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischem Realismus*, ed. Hubertus Gassner and Eckhart Gillen, Cologne, Dumont Verlag, 1979, pp. 222ff.

and the shortage of time violated my intentions and the necessary completion of the form — so it ended up being basically a theater decoration.”<sup>32</sup>

We will, however, find in neither Lissitzky's letters nor his diary entries any private or public disavowal of or signs of regret about having abandoned the role of the modernist artist for that of the producer of political propaganda in the service of the new Communist state. Quite the opposite: the letters we know Lissitzky to have written during the years of his subsequent involvement with both the design of exhibitions for the government and his employment by Stalin's State Publishing House on the magazine *USSR in Construction* clearly indicate that he was as enthusiastically at work in fashioning the propaganda for Stalin's regime as were Rodchenko and Stepanova, who were at that time involved in similar tasks. Clearly Lissitzky shared the naive utopianism that also characterizes Walter Benjamin's later essay, an optimism that Adorno criticized in his response to the text, saying,

Both the dialectic of the highest and the lowest [modernism and mass-culture] bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain elements of change. . . . Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up. It would be romantic to sacrifice one to the other, either as the bourgeois romanticism of the conservation of personality and all that stuff, or as the anarchistic romanticism of blind confidence in the spontaneous power of the proletariat in the historical process — a proletariat which is itself a product of bourgeois society.<sup>33</sup>

But it is also clear by now that both Lissitzky's and Benjamin's media optimism prevented them from recognizing that the attempt to create conditions of a simultaneous collective reception for the new audiences of the industrialized state would very soon issue into the preparation of an arsenal of totalitarian, Stalinist propaganda in the Soviet Union. What is worse, it would deliver the aesthetics and technology of propaganda to the Italian Fascist and German Nazi regimes. And only a little later we see the immediate consequences of Lissitzky's new montage techniques and photofrescoes in their successful adaptation for the ideological needs of American politics and the campaigns for the acceleration of capitalist development through consumption. Thus, what in Lissitzky's hands had been a tool of instruction, political education, and the raising of consciousness was rapidly transformed into an instrument for prescribing the silence of conformity and obedience. The “consequent inrush of barbarism” of which Adorno speaks in the letter to Benjamin as one possible result of the un-

32. Lissitzky, *Proun*, p. 135.

33. Theodor W. Adorno, Letter to Walter Benjamin, London, March 18, 1936, reprinted in *Aesthetics and Politics*, London, New Left Books, 1977, pp. 120ff.

Gustav Klucis. Photomontage poster (two versions).  
1930.



dialectical abandonment of modernism was soon to become a historical reality. As early as 1932 we see the immediate impact of the *Pressa* project in its adaptation for the propaganda needs of the Fascist government in Italy. Informed by the members of the Italian League of Rational Architecture, in particular Bardi and Paladini (who was an expert on the art of the Soviet avant-garde), the architect Giuseppe Terragni constructed an enormous mural-sized photomontage for the *Exposition of the Fascist Revolution*.<sup>34</sup> It would require a detailed formal and structural analysis to identify the transformations that took place within photomontage aesthetics once they were put to the service of Fascist politics. It may suffice here to bring only one detail to the attention of the reader, a detail in which that inversion of meaning under an apparent continuity of a formal principle becomes apparent, proving that it is by no means simply the case of an available formal strategy being refurbished with a new political and ideological content.

34. Herta Wescher wrote in 1968 in her history of collage that P. M. Bardi's work *Tavola degli orrori* had been modeled upon Lissitzky's montage work published in Western journals. For Paladini, Wescher argues, the relationship was even more direct since he had been born in Moscow of Italian parents and had developed a strong interest in the Soviet avant-garde. In response to the exhibition of the Soviet Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1924, he published a study *Art in the Soviet Union* (1925). See Wescher, *Collage*, Cologne, Dumont Verlag, 1968, pp. 76ff.

*John Heartfield. All fists have been clenched as one, photomontage cover for special issue against fascism of Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung, vol. XIII, no. 40, 1934.*



The detail in question is the representation of the masses in Terragni's photomural, where a crowd of people is contained in the outlines of a relief shaped like the propeller of a turbine or a ship. Clearly it was one of the most difficult tasks, in constructing representations for new mass audiences, not only to establish conditions of simultaneous collective viewing, but further, actually to construct representations of the masses themselves, to depict the collectivity. One of the most prominent examples of this necessity is an early photomontage poster by Klucis, which in fact seems to have been so successful that Klucis used the same visual configuration for two different purposes.<sup>35</sup> The subject of

35. Gustav Klucis's first version of the photomontage poster in 1930 reads, "Let us fulfill the plan of the great projects," and it was an encouragement to participate in the five-year plan of 1930. The second version of the poster is identical in its image of an outstretched hand which in itself contains a large number of outstretched hands and an even larger number of photographic portraits, but this time the inscription exhorts the women of the Soviet Union to participate in the election and decision-making process of their local soviets. This poster seems to have also had an influence on John Heartfield, who transformed Klucis's outstretched hand into an outstretched arm with a fist, giving the salute of the Communist International under the slogan, "All fists have been clenched as one," on the cover of the *AIZ*, no. 40 (1934). Here, as well as in Klucis's and Terragni's work, the image of the masses is contained in the synecdochic representation. In Klucis's and Heartfield's photomontages it is, however, the synecdoche of the human body as a sign of active participation, whereas in the Terragni montage it is the synecdoche of the machine that subjugates the mass of individuals. The inscription in Terragni's photomontage mural reads

the poster in both versions is the representation of political participation in the decision-making processes of the new Soviet State. In Klucis's poster participation is encouraged by an outstretched hand within which hundreds of faces are contained: thus the individuation resulting from the participation in political decisions and subordination under the political needs of the collectivity seem to be successfully integrated into one image. In Terragni's photomural the same structure has been deployed; this time, however, the overall form of the outstretched hand of the voting individual is replaced by the outlines of the machine (the propeller, the turbine) which contains the image of the masses of people. And it is clear that the Fascist image means what it unknowingly conveys: that the subordination of the masses under the state apparatus in the service of the continued dominance of the political and economic interests of the industrial ruling class has to be masked behind the image of technological progress and mastery. Abstracted as it is, however, from the interests of those who are being mastered, it appears as an image of anonymity and subjugation rather than one of individual participation in the construction of a new collective.

It is significant that the principles of photomontage are completely abandoned once the technique of the photomural is employed for the propaganda purposes of the German fascists. In the same manner that they had discovered Eisenstein's films as a model to be copied for their purposes (Leni Riefenstahl studied his work thoroughly for the preparation of her own propaganda movies), they had also recognized that the achievements of the Russian artists in the field of exhibition design could be employed to serve their needs to manipulate the urban and rural masses of Germany during the crisis of the post-Weimar period. When the German Werkbund, which had just been turned into a fascist organization, put together a popular photography show in 1933 called *The Camera*, the organizers explicitly compared their exhibition design with that of the Russians (without, of course, mentioning Lissitzky's name):

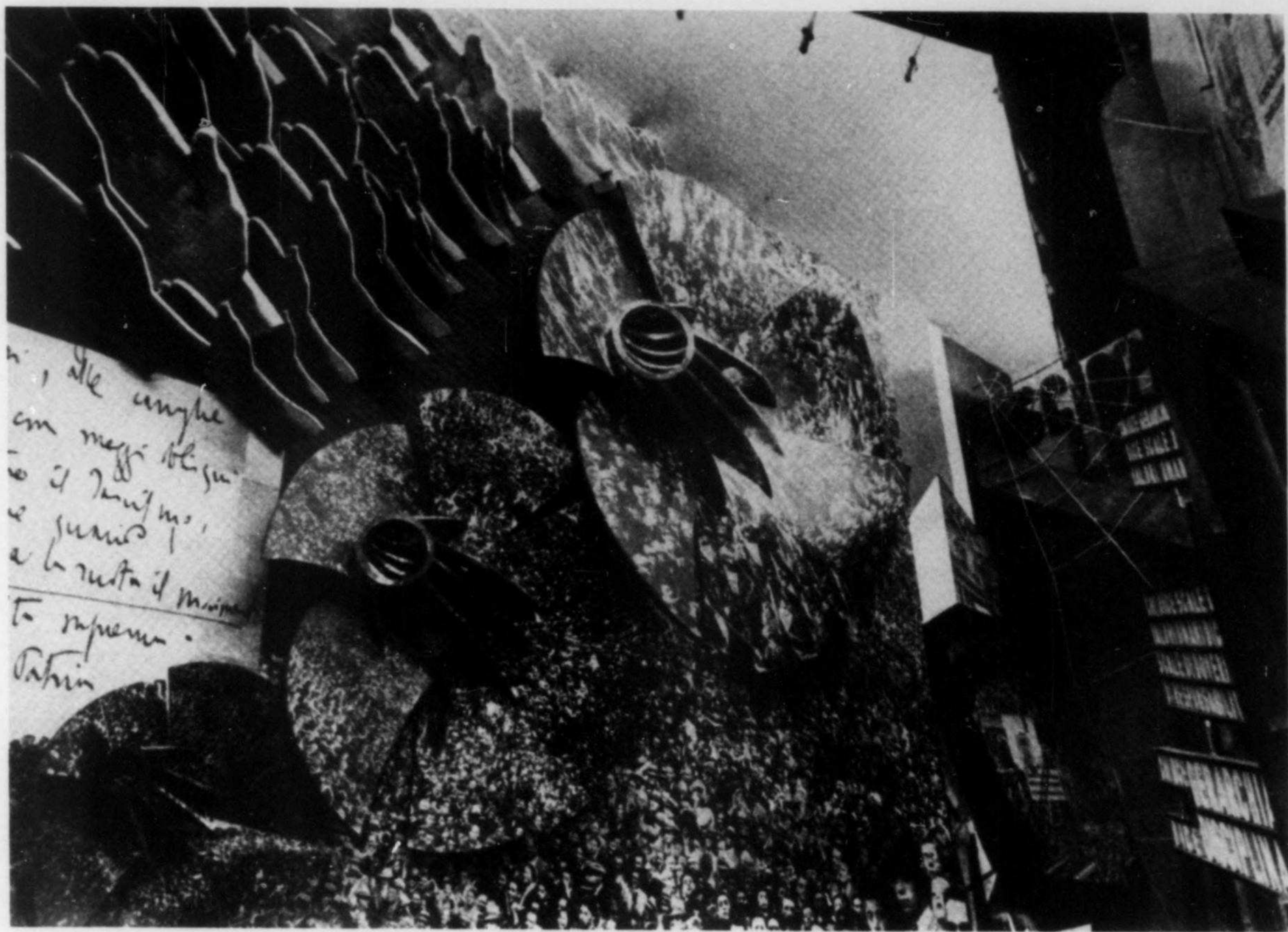
If you compare this exhibition with the propaganda rooms of the Russians that received so much attention during the last years, you will instantly become aware of the direct, unproblematic, and truly grandiose nature of the representation of reality in this room. These pictures address the spectator in a much more direct manner than the confusion of typography, photomontage, and drawings. . . . This hall of honor is so calm and grand that one is almost embarrassed to talk any longer about propaganda in this context.<sup>36</sup>

To erase even the last remnant of modernist practice in photomontage, the seams and the margins where the constructed nature of reality could become

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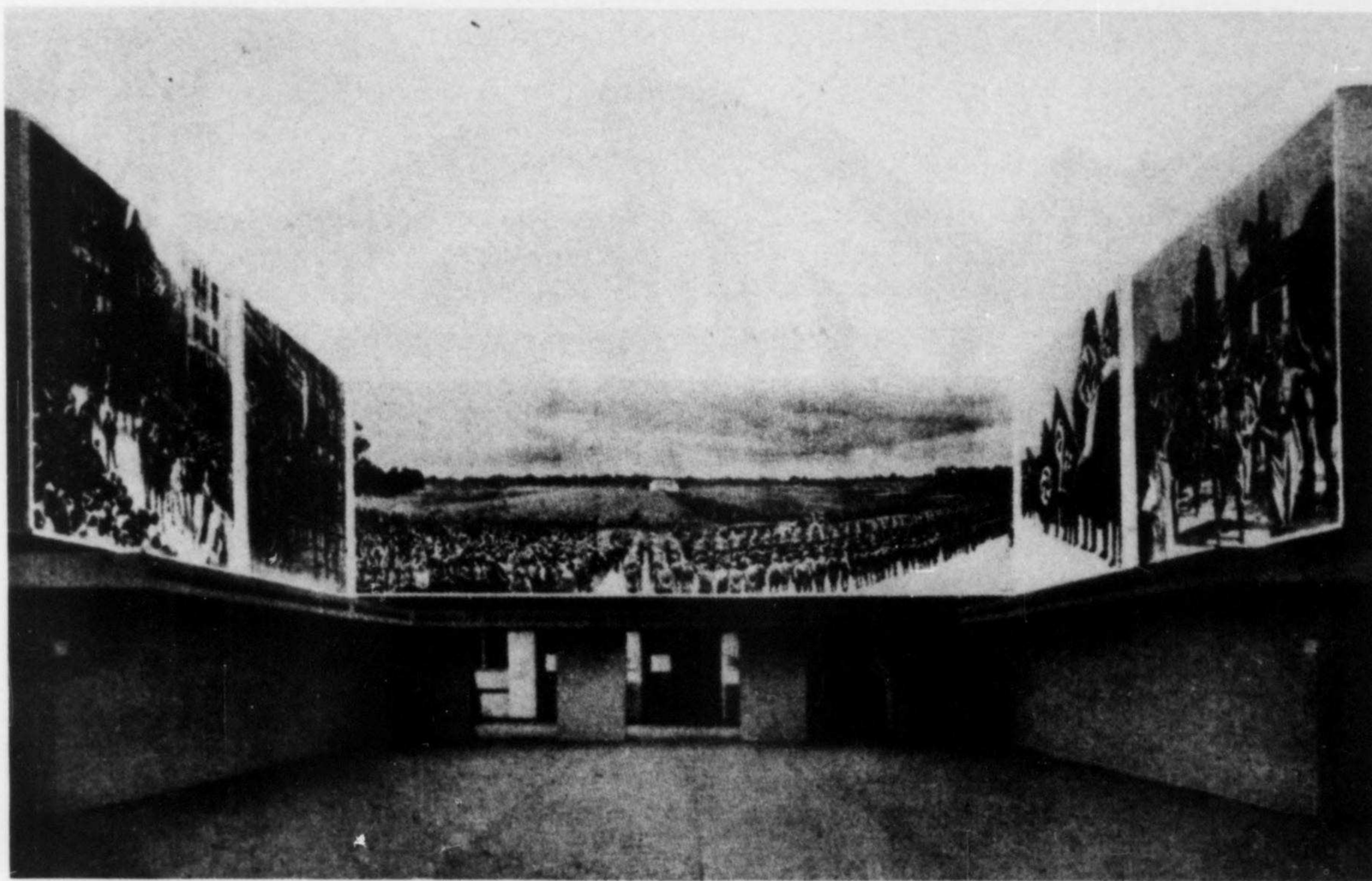
accordingly, "See how the inflammatory words of Mussolini attract the people of Italy with the violent power of turbines and convert them to Fascism."

36. Kemp, *Foto-Essays*, p. 14.



*Giuseppe Terragni. Photomontage mural for the  
Exposition of the Fascist Revolution. 1932.*

*Photomural at the German Werkbund Exhibition Die  
Kamera, Berlin. 1933.*



apparent — and therefore its potential for change obvious — had now become a standard practice in totalitarian propaganda, and construction was replaced by the awe-inspiring monumentality of the gigantic, single-image panorama. What had once been the visual and formal incorporation of dialectics in the structure of the montage — in its simultaneity of opposing views, its rapidly changing angles, its unmediated transitions from part to whole — and had as such embodied the relationship between individual and collectivity as one that is constantly to be redefined, we now find displaced by the unified spatial perspective (often the bird's-eye-view) that travels over uninterrupted expanses (land, fields, water, masses) and thus naturalizes the perspective of governance and control, of the surveillance of the rulers' omnipresent eye in the metaphor of nature as an image of a pacified social collective without history or conflict.

It remains to be determined at what point, historically as well as structurally, this reversal takes place within the practices of photomontage during the 1930s. Unification of the image and its concomitant monumentalization were — as we saw — already operative in Lissitzky's work for the *Pressa* exhibition. These tendencies were of considerable importance for the success of his enterprise. And according to Stepanova's own text, Rodchenko abandoned photomontage principles as early as 1924, replacing them by single-frame images and/or series of single-frame images with highly informative documentary qualities. At what point these factographic dimensions turned into the sheer adulation of totalitarian power, however, is a question that requires future investigation. That this point occurs within Rodchenko's work, if not also in Lissitzky's, for the journal *USSR in Construction* is a problem that modernist art historians have tried to avoid by styling these artists as purist heroes and martyrs who had to sacrifice their commitment to the spiritual realm of abstract art by their enforced involvement with the state. A revision of this comforting distortion of history is long overdue. It is a distortion that deprives these artists — if nothing else — of their actual political identity (their commitment to the cause of Stalinist politics was enthusiastic and sincere and came unforced, as is evident from the fact that an artist such as Tatlin, who did not work for the state agencies, continued to live his private, if economically miserable existence without harassment), as it deprives us of the understanding of one of the most profound conflicts inherent in modernism itself: that of the historical dialectic between individual autonomy and the representation of a collectivity through visual constructs. Clearly the history of photomontage is one of the terrains in which this dialectic was raised to the highest degree of its contradictory forces. Thus it is not surprising that we find the first signs of a new authoritarian monumental aesthetic defined through the very rejection of the legacy of photomontage in favor of a new unified imagery. In 1928 Stepanova could still trace this terrain's development through an apparently neutral political terminology in characterizing the climax of the productivist factographic position:

Within its short life, photomontage has passed through many phases

of development. Its first stage was characterized by the integration of large numbers of photographs into a single composition, which helped bring into relief individual photo images. Contrasts in photographs of various sizes and, to a lesser extent, the graphic surface itself formed the connective medium. One might say that this kind of montage had the character of a planar montage superimposed on white paper ground. The subsequent development of photomontage has confirmed the possibility of using photographs as such . . . the individual snapshots are not fragmented and have all the characteristics of a real document. The artist himself must take up photography. . . . The value of the photograph itself came to assume primary importance; the photograph is no longer raw material for montage or for some kind of illustrated composition but has an independent and complete totality.<sup>37</sup>

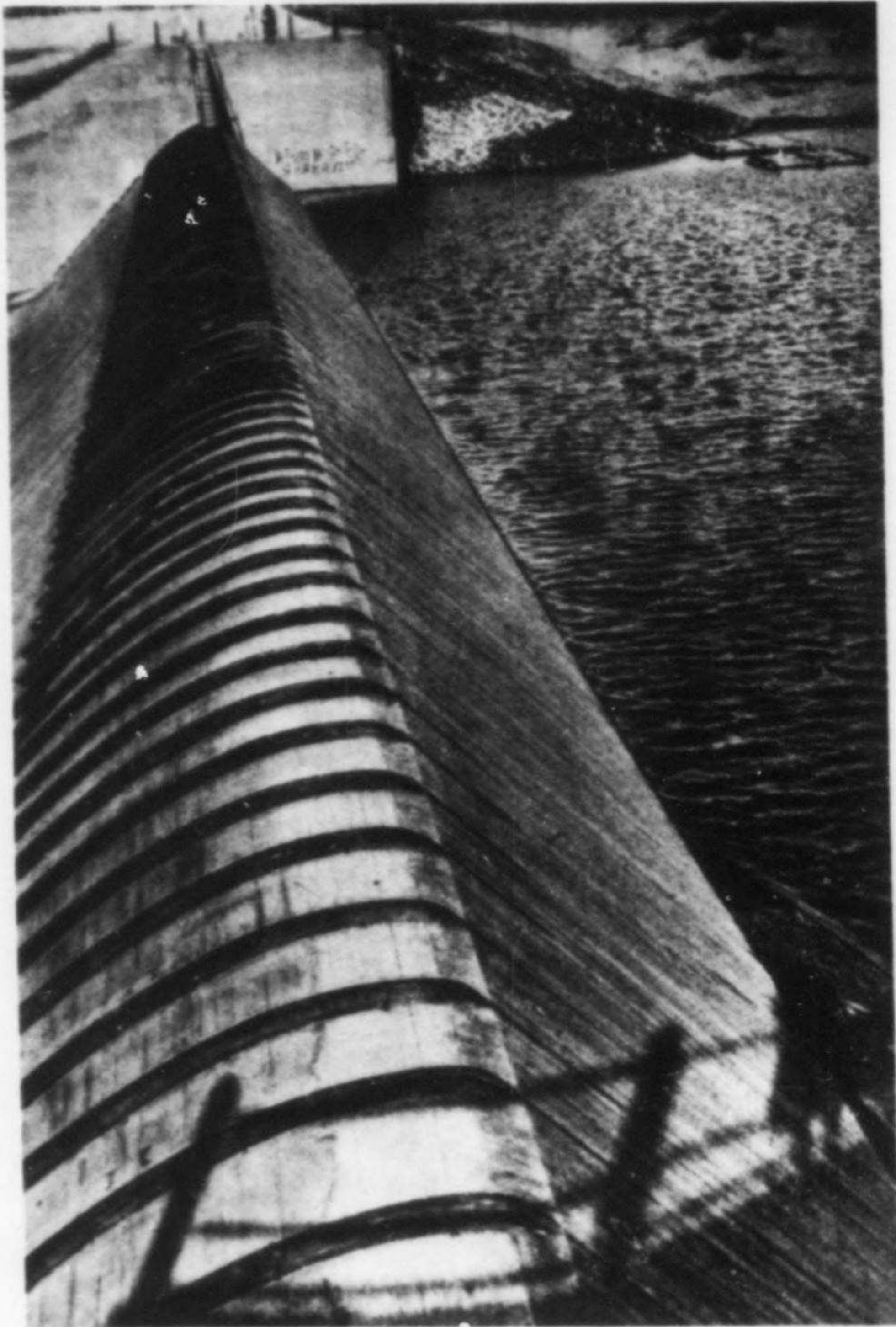
But two years later, from within the Soviet Russian reflection upon the purposes and functions of the technique of photomontage itself we witness the rise of that concern for the new monumentality and heroic pathos that was the prime feature of the German fascist attack on the legacy of photomontage quoted above. In 1930, in his text "The Social Meaning of Photomontage," the critic O. L. Kusakov writes,

. . . the solution to the problem of the proletarian, dynamic photomontage is inherently connected to the simultaneous solution of the question for a monumental style, since the monumentality of the tasks of the construction of socialism requires a heroic pathos for the organization of the consciousness of the spectators. Only in a successful synthesis of dynamics and monumentality — in conjunction with the constitution of a dialectical relationship between the levels of life — can photography fulfill the functions of an art that organizes and leads life.<sup>38</sup>

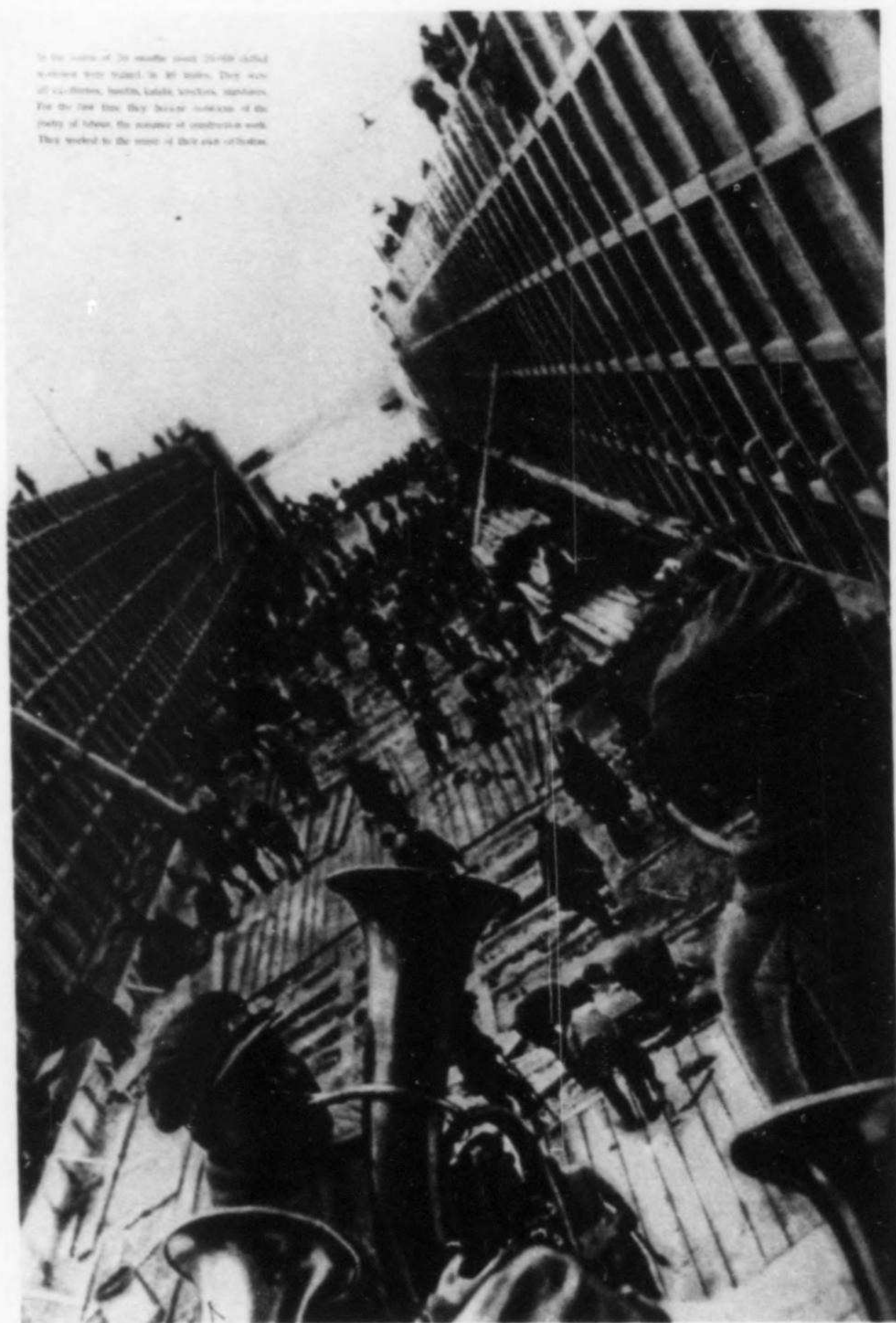
Thus it seems that Babichev's original, utopian quest and prognosis for the future functions of a postmodernist factographic art to become "an informed analysis of the concrete tasks which social life poses," one that will "organize the consciousness and psyche of the masses by organizing objects and ideas," had become true within ten years' time, although in a manner that was perhaps quite different from what he had actually hoped for. Or we could say that the latent

37. Stepanova, "Photomontage" (1928), English translation in *Alexander Rodenchenko*, ed. Elliott, pp. 91ff.

38. O. L. Kusakov, "Die soziale Bedeutung der Fotomontage," *Sovetskoe Foto*, Moscow, 1930, no. 5, p. 130. Quoted from the German translation in *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischem Realismus*, pp. 230ff.



Alexander Rodchenko. Two pages from the magazine USSR in Construction, no. 12, December 1933. (Special issue on the construction of the Stalin Canal.)



In the course of 20 months almost 20,000 skilled workmen were trained in 40 trades. They were all ex-thieves, bandits, kulaks, wreckers, murderers. For the first time they became conscious of the poetry of labor, the romance of construction work. They worked to the music of their own orchestras.

*Overprinted caption in photograph reads:* In the course of 20 months almost 20,000 skilled workmen were trained in 40 trades. They were all ex-thieves, bandits, kulaks, wreckers, murderers. For the first time they became conscious of the poetry of labor, the romance of construction work. They worked to the music of their own orchestras.

element of social engineering, inherent in the notion of social progress as a result of technological development which art could mediate, had finally caught up with modernism's orientation toward science and technology as its underlying paradigms for a cognitively and perceptually emancipatory practice.

This historical dialectic seems to have come full circle in Rodchenko's career. In 1931 he worked as artist-in-residence on the site of the construction of the White Sea Canal in order to document the heroic technological achievements of the Stalin government and to produce a volume of photographic records. But apparently in the first year alone of his stay more than 100,000 workers lost their lives due to inhuman working conditions. While it is unimaginable that Rodchenko would not have been aware of the conditions that he photographed for almost two years, his subsequent publications on the subject only project a grandiose vision of nature harnessed by technology and the criminal and hedonistic impulses of the prerevolutionary and counterrevolutionary personality mastered through the process of reeducation in the forced labor camps of the White Sea Canal.<sup>39</sup>

While it is undoubtedly clear that at this time Rodchenko did not have any other choice than to comply with the interest of the State Publishing House if he wanted to maintain his role as an artist who participated actively in the construction of the new Soviet society (and we have no reason to doubt this to be his primary motive), we have to say at least that by 1931 the goals of factography had clearly been abandoned.

However, the contempt meted out from a Western perspective at the fate of modernist photomontage and factographic practice in the Soviet Union during the 1930s or at its transformation into totalitarian propaganda in fascist Italy and Germany seems historically inappropriate. For the technique was adapted to the specifically American needs of ideological deployment at the very same moment. Once again, the tradition of photomontage itself had first to be attacked in order to clear the ground for the new needs of the monumental propaganda machines. Here is Edward Steichen's American variation on the theme of an antimodernist backlash in favor of his version of a "productivist" integration of art and commerce in 1931:

The modern European photographer has not liberated himself as definitely [as the American commercial photographer]. He still imitated his friend, the painter, with the so-called photomontage. He

39. Gassner makes a first attempt at assessing these facts with regard to Rodchenko's career at large in his doctoral thesis on the artist, *Rodchenko-Fotografien*, especially pp. 104ff, and n. 475. The problem is, however, that he seems to base his information on the working conditions at the White Sea Canal and the number of victims on the "testimony" of Alexander Solzhnytsyn's writings, clearly a source that would have to be quoted with extreme caution in a historical study. The main work on Lissitzky's, Rodchenko's, and Stepanova's collaboration with Stalin's State Publishing House remains to be done.

has merely chosen the *modern* painter as his prototype. We have gone well past the painful period of combining and tricking the banal commercial photograph. . . . It is logical therefore that we find many modern photographers lined up with architects and designers instead of with painters or photographic art salons.<sup>40</sup>

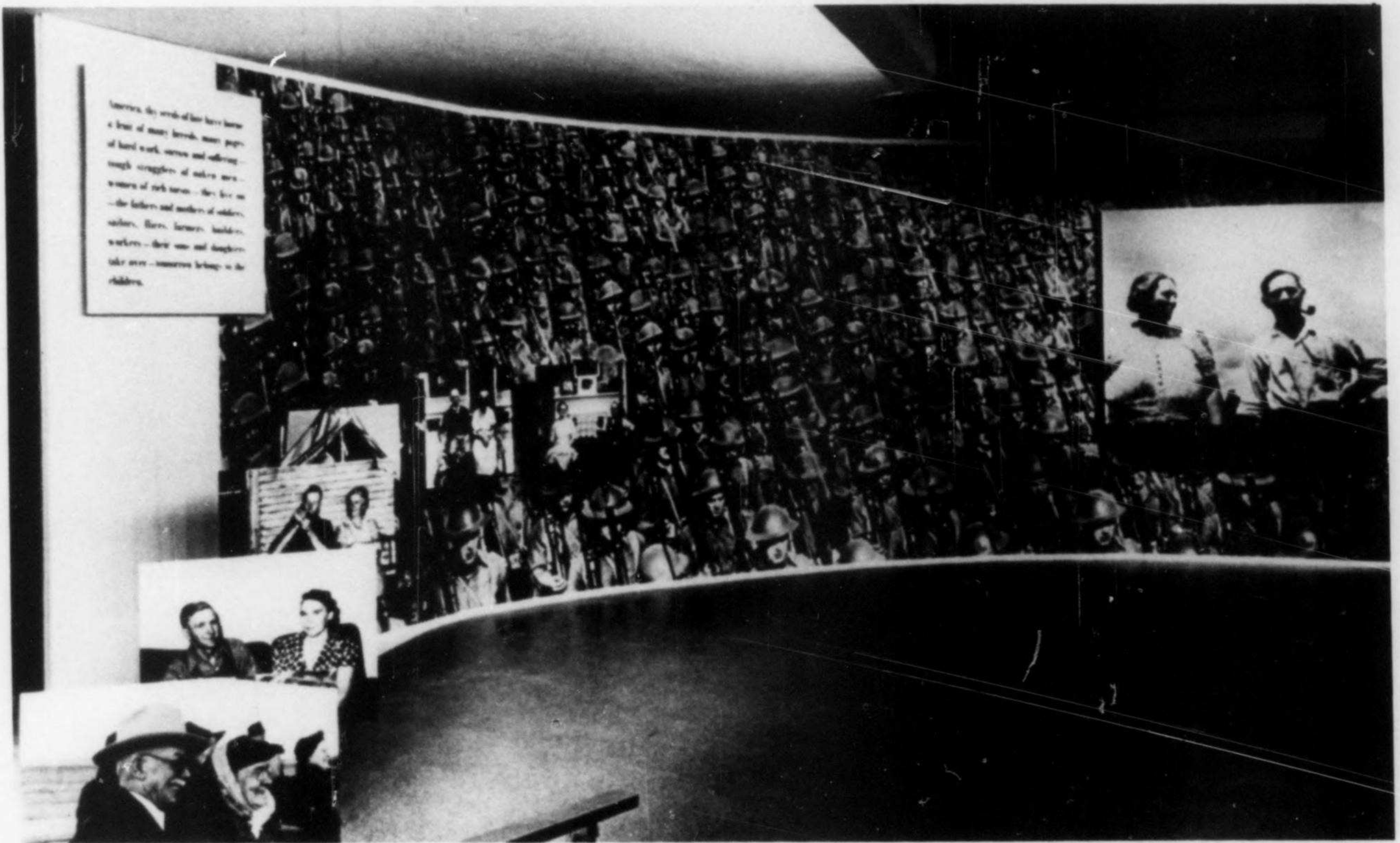
Ten years later Steichen staged his first project at the Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition *Road to Victory*. Once again its propagandistic success depended almost entirely, as Christopher Phillips has shown, on a debased and falsified version of Lissitzky's exhibition designs.<sup>41</sup> In this case it was Herbert Bayer who provided American industry and ideology with what *he* thought Lissitzky's ideas and practice had attempted to achieve. Bayer was well suited to this task, having already prepared an elaborate photomontage brochure for the National Socialists' *Deutschland Ausstellung* of 1936, staged to coincide with the Berlin Olympics. When asked by Christopher Phillips about his contribution to this project for the Nazis, Bayer's only comment was, "This is an interesting booklet insofar as it was done exclusively with photography and photomontage, and was printed in a duotone technique."<sup>42</sup> Thus, at the cross-section of politically emancipatory productivist aesthetics and the transformation of modernist montage aesthetics into an instrument of mass education and enlightenment, we find not only its imminent transformation into totalitarian propaganda, but also its successful adaptation for the needs of the ideological apparatus of the culture industry of Western capitalism.

40. Edward Steichen, "Commercial Photography," *Annual of American Design*, New York, 1931, p. 159.

41. Christopher Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," *October*, no. 22 (Fall 1982), pp. 27ff, provides detailed information on Steichen's history and practice of exhibition design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Allan Sekula's essay, "The Traffic in Photographs" (reprinted in *Modernism and Modernity*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), gives us the best discussion of the *Family of Man* exhibition by Steichen and also touches upon the issues of exhibition design in general.

42. I am grateful to Christopher Phillips for providing me with this information and for his permission to quote from his private correspondence with Herbert Bayer, as well as for his lending me the brochure itself. *Deutschland Ausstellung 1936* was also published as an insert in the design magazine *Gebrauchsgraphik*, April 1936.

Herbert Bayer. Photomural for Edward Steichen's exhibition *Road to Victory* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1942.



Herbert Bayer. Photomontage for brochure accompanying the exhibition *Deutschland Ausstellung*, Berlin. 1936.

*Francis Picabia exhibition, Mary Boone Gallery,  
September–October 1983.*



## Francis Picabia: From Dada to Pétain

YVE-ALAIN BOIS

translated by THOMAS REPENSEK

*Biographers are fixated on their heroes in a very peculiar manner. They frequently select the hero as the object of study because, for personal reasons of their own emotional life, they had a special affection for him from the very outset. They then devote themselves to a work of idealization, which strives to enroll the great man among their infantile models, and to revive through him, as it were, their infantile conception of the father. For the sake of this wish they wipe out the individual features in his physiognomy, they rub out the traces of his life's struggle with inner and outer resistances, and do not tolerate in him anything savoring of human weakness or imperfection. . . .*

— Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*

The quasi-identification of the biographer with the character he writes about is more than a convention: it is without doubt one of the most artless ways in which the institution of culture, taken as a whole (the mass media, the museum, the university), constructs an official memorial: one founded on a certain degree of oblivion; one destined, in the name of the grand pathos of the cult of the hero whom it is rescuing, not merely to substitute for other forms of historical investigation, but to prevent these from occurring at all.

When, on the other hand, the author of a monograph on an artist consciously takes a position of critical distance and chooses not to play the role of hagiographer, attempting instead to locate the life and work of the person he is

dealing with in relation to the sociopolitical events of his time, there will sometimes be a bit of a collision. Everything depends on *both* what occurs at the point where these two narratives intersect (that of the life of the particular individual, that of the social and political history) *and* on the attitude of those whom civil law sanctions as the "interested parties," increasing inherited wealth by means of a prodigious power of moral proprietorship that defends the "interests" of the deceased artist (*i.e.*, authentication).

Among the illusions that civilized man would like to maintain about death, Freud (again) was the one who remarked on the strange reverence that is commonly accorded the deceased:

We suspend criticism of him, overlook his possible misdoings, issue the command: *De mortuis nil nisi bene*, and regard it as justifiable to set forth in the funeral-oration and upon the tombstone only that which is most favourable to his memory. Consideration for the dead, who no longer need it, is dearer to us than the truth, and certainly, for most of us, is dearer also than consideration for the living.<sup>1</sup>

To be flippant about a departed one, even if his words and deeds often had the cheerful thrust of disrespect—that remains inadmissible.

Let's take an example.

In 1975 I wrote a short book on Picabia (published by Flammarion). Several days after the opening of the painter's retrospective at the Grand Palais, the book was removed from the museum bookstore's shelves at the request of some of the Picabia family members. Subsequently it was withdrawn from distribution altogether.

Why should a book that was recommended to its readers by publications as ideologically diverse as *Le Figaro*, *France-Soir*, and the *Nouvel Observateur*,<sup>2</sup> among others, be called anathema, be characterized publicly by those same members of the Picabia family as a "book filled with errors, vulgar in style, vengeful, blatantly political"?<sup>3</sup> There is something to be gained from attempting to answer this question, for in so doing we attack a form of censure which is itself politically motivated.

The tone of the book does not appear to have pleased the "interested parties" (though it would grieve the author to know that he had offended Gabrielle Buffet, Picabia's first wife; for anyone who knows how to read will understand that the entire book is a sort of homage to her), and this served as the pretext to

1. Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, London, The Hogarth Press, 1934, vol. IV, pp. 305-306.

2. *Le Figaro*, January 27, 1976; *France-Soir*, February 4, 1976; *Nouvel Observateur*, January 26, 1976.

3. Jeannine Picabia, in "Courrier des lecteurs," *Nouvel Observateur*, February 16, 1976, in reply to the article by Bernard Teyssèdre in the issue of January 26, 1976.

present the book as a collection of slanderous gossip and to brandish threats of legal action. *The pretext?* That it resurrected the difficulties Picabia experienced at the time of the Liberation because of the stands he had taken during the Occupation. The sources include, among others, the following:

September 1944: È in prigione a Cannes per quattro mesi per una genèrica accusa di "collaborazionismo" (Maurizio Fabiolo dell'Arco).<sup>4</sup>

He remained voluntarily unconscious of what was going on in the world and, throwing caution to the winds, defied by his words and actions, both the force of collaboration and the Resistance, effecting this tour de force of being sought after by one and pursued by the other. So it was that he made a display of being a *fierce racist* when personal animosities were at stake. Yet he didn't hesitate to set up a joint vest-pocket exhibition of paintings and sculpture with the Jewish sculptor Sima at Cannes in 1942 (Gabrielle Buffet).<sup>5</sup>

For his political or rather apolitical attitude, his shying away from any sort of engagement, because of the incredible remarks he let slip on political events—in and out of season, when the wisest course would have been to hold one's tongue—for this Picabia must have paid a very high price during the months following Liberation in August 1944. The artist, whose work Germanic censors had previously vilified as degenerate, found himself jailed in Cannes for "collaboration" for four months from September 1944 to January 1945. With no grounds for prosecution, however, he had the good luck to be released (Michel Sanouillet).<sup>6</sup>

All of this has been subsequently confirmed in the beautifully produced, recently published book *L'album d'Olga Mohler* (Picabia's second wife, who lived with him during that time and knows very well what she is talking about). Beneath a double page of manuscript in facsimile we find the following: "Here is a short account written by Francis after questioning by Magistrate Malenfant (of Cannes) during his four months of internment! from September 30, 1944 to

4. "He was imprisoned in Cannes for four months on a vague charge of 'collaboration.'" Catalogue of the Picabia exhibition, Turin, 1974, p. 96, in relation to the compilation of which the "gracious cooperation" of Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia and Olga Mohler-Picabia was publicly acknowledged.

5. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, *Aires abstraites*, Geneva, 1957, p. 42.

6. Michel Sanouillet, *Picabia*, Paris, Le Temps, 1964, p. 59. It goes without saying that those paintings of Picabia's that were referred to by the "Germanic censors" as "degenerate" have nothing in common with most of the paintings he did during the war. Not from a thematic point of view, but stylistically, these works are not very different from the paintings of the official artists of the Third Reich (see Jean-Louis Houdebine, "Le fascisme en représentation," in *Peinture, cahiers théoriques*, nos. 10-11).

January 30, 1945." And in a note appended at the end of the book: "In September 1944 Picabia was *in prison* at Cannes on a vague charge of collaboration: he remained there exactly four months. In these two autograph pages, he reports his ironic replies to the authorities."<sup>7</sup>

I am not interested in playing prosecutor. I am as ready to admit that Picabia was not a collaborator as I am that I never wrote that he was. What I do feel compelled to say is that *indifference*<sup>8</sup> is always, first and foremost, reactionary, whether one knows it or not, and can serve to justify the most reprehensible actions in addition to the worst kind of art. But the attempt to present Picabia today as an innocent martyr is really ludicrous, since it is not at all certain that he could have dismissed the following statements with one of his "little sallies." *Words, sometimes, have a primal sense once they've passed into history.* No, we can say, Picabia was neither an anti-Semite nor a rightist; but that did not prevent him from publishing a certain number of texts of which I give here a little anthology without commentary.

On Lenin:

The ideal of this unbeliever is probably to be found in an esoteric form of domination that is potential within democracy: the forcible impounding of all gold, either earned or inherited, belonging to individuals of a nation that it has corrupted; gold, precious metal that nowadays signifies religion, country, art, love, dissolving all feelings in the manner of nitric acid and in that way comparable to certain states of the Jewish mind. . . .

I wish he would tell us . . . whether the fact of being the leader of a Communist democracy makes him any different from the Czar, who also headed a democratic country, at least in terms of the number of its democrats. . . . Only the uniform has changed; your dirt is no better than the eau de cologne worn by the grand dukes, and when I stop to think of it, I would actually rather breathe the cologne. . . . You have forgotten that there is something stronger than you: Life, nature itself, which is not Communist. . . . Nature is unfair? So much the better; inequality alone being bearable, the monotony of equality can only lead to boredom. . . . You've been having a grand old time for several years now, and your jokes have taken on a grim aspect for your countrymen, the unfortunates who only get to see your facade and haven't realized that your way of thinking is a little bit like that of those individuals who lend money to young men from wealthy families, but who are themselves starved for experi-

7. *L'album d'Olga Mohler*, Turin, Notizie, 1975, p. 137 (the name of the magistrate may be Malenfant; the designation is handwritten); and p. 169 for the note.

8. See his "Indifference immobile," in *Comoedia*, March 31, 1922, p. 1.



*Francis Picabia. Adam and Eve. 1941-43. (Courtesy Mary Boone/Michael Werner.)*

ence. Sir, your role is a pitiable one, and without even the prestige of the Emperor of China . . . I am afraid of imbeciles capable of doing harm . . . and the man who will cut the throat of his neighbor on the right in order to save his neighbor on the left is, quite simply, a murderer.<sup>9</sup>

From an article written at the time of Einstein's arrival in Paris:

I have a friend who loves Einstein the way he loves the cinema, dada, or Lenin, the way he would fall in love with a new illness and be flattered to be its first victim, because the illness would be considered modern! . . . My friend also loves his wife's lovers; me, however, he doesn't love; he doesn't find me modern enough! It is true

9. In "Souvenirs sur Lénine, Le communisme jugé par un peintre cubiste," *Eclair*, August 23, 1922, p. 1.

that my French or Spanish origins spring from those ancient Latin races that will soon disappear to make room for Einstein's brats, Israelites with pretty faces. . . .

Some say, "The Germans are great thinkers and great artists. They proved it by being the first to buy cubist painting." But it isn't the Germans who have bought these paintings; it is the sons of Israel and they have bought them in Paris, New York, and all over the world, as well as in Berlin, thinking that this uncontrollable painting could well become the sensible expression of an age in which nitric acid replaces love. Yet these paintings were well suited to them, since they could easily be bought for a low price and resold without regret.

The state of mind I am referring to is part of what helped to make dada unbearable. Dada, which I introduced to you four years ago, but which we were forced to show the door, since it didn't know when to leave!

Léon Bloy, who is still shrouded in silence, is ten thousand times more appealing and intelligent, for example, than certain pasty-faced, greasy-haired "modernists."<sup>10</sup> . . . Of course if Bloy had been Jewish, he would be a god. . . . I get the impression in fact, as time goes on, that all the gods are Jews! "But," you will say, "they made a god of the Douanier Rousseau." Of course, but that fellow had "Jewish humor." I recall Apollinaire once telling me, "Rousseau, the more he's paid, the more he suffers!" That's dada humor too, wouldn't you say? . . . Certainly don't take any of this for anti-Semitism, yet. . . .<sup>11</sup>

From the catalogue preface of his exhibition at Cannes, when Mussolini's Fascist regime had already been in power for five years:

Everything may or may not be a joke, isn't that so? Things only have the value you assign them. Yet one must not confuse force and fashion; force rises up, fashion stays small and contemptible, contemptible like communism, *i.e.*, imbecility. Mussolini may be a disturbing, dangerous madman, but he will always be more likable than the figure of a Lenin carved from the sort of material that men divvy up among themselves like the lumps of sugar they toss to dogs!<sup>12</sup>

10. Germaine Everling, who lived with Picabia for fourteen years, at the height of the dada movement, sees here an allusion to Tristan Tzara, and identifies the "humor" in question with the "Semitic humor" in *L'anneau de Saturne*, Fayard, 1970, p. 135.

11. "Up to a point . . ." in *Comoedia*, April 16, 1922, p. 1.

12. "Lumière froide," *Journal des Hivernants*, Cannes, January 20-30, 1927; reproduced in facsimile in the exhibition catalogue, *Picabia au Cercle Nautique*, Cannes, January 28-February 7, 1927. The text is dated in Picabia's hand: "11 décembre 1926, à Mougins."

Finally, in March 1941, a few months after the anti-Semitic laws were put into effect by the Vichy Government (October 3 and 10, 1940) and several days before the creation of a General Commission on the Jewish Question (March 29, 1941), there is this hymn to youth:

To serve, to give, you see, that truly is youth: set materialism completely aside. France is the least materialist country in the world, the youngest in the world, if young people willingly understand that they can be happier standing up than sitting down, than wallowing! That there is greater joy in singing than in wasting one's saliva to season a new — or often an old — pipe so as to make oneself look good and resemble what we call a man. . . .

The country that will undoubtedly emerge from the horrible materialism that has been overrunning everything for years will be France, it seems to me, for in this country there is no longer any room except for the young, true youth, in fact, life, for those who believe, live, and think without having to stretch out on the couch of commercial and political ambition.

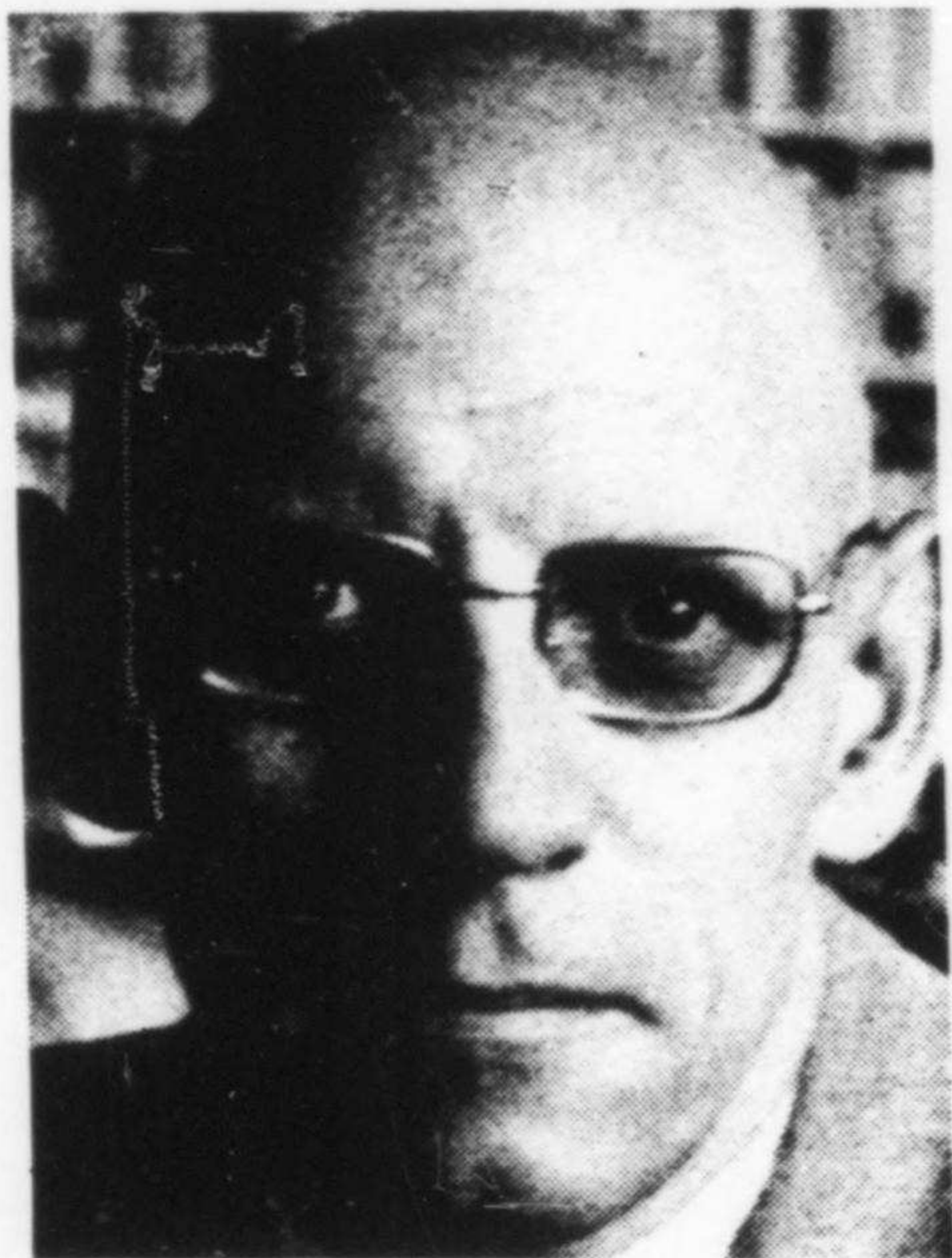
I could speak at still greater length on how to stay young, although I hope I have already made myself understood.

Marshal Pétain is a young man, younger than all our deputies or ministers, for those poor creatures, for the most part, were no more than ignoble egotists, malefactors, who have easily exploited a country like France, which only asks to believe, to love, and to live in freedom.<sup>13</sup>

These excerpts require no great amount of decoding. I refer those who would not believe in the tremendous power sometimes contained in the primal meaning of a word to the various studies published on the discourse of the Pétainist or fascist regimes.<sup>14</sup> Further comment seems unnecessary. I have assembled these examples only to show that even while official culture — the museum and art history — can rehabilitate practically anything, there still remains an extremely bad taste: a highly criminal *indifference* (conscious or unconscious) that sticks in its throat, like a fish bone.

13. "Jeunesse," *L'Opinion*, Cannes, March, 1941; reprinted in *L'album d'Olga Mohler*, p. 125.

14. For example, the recent book of Gerard Miller, *Les Pousse-au-jour du Maréchal Pétain*, Paris, Seuil, 1975.



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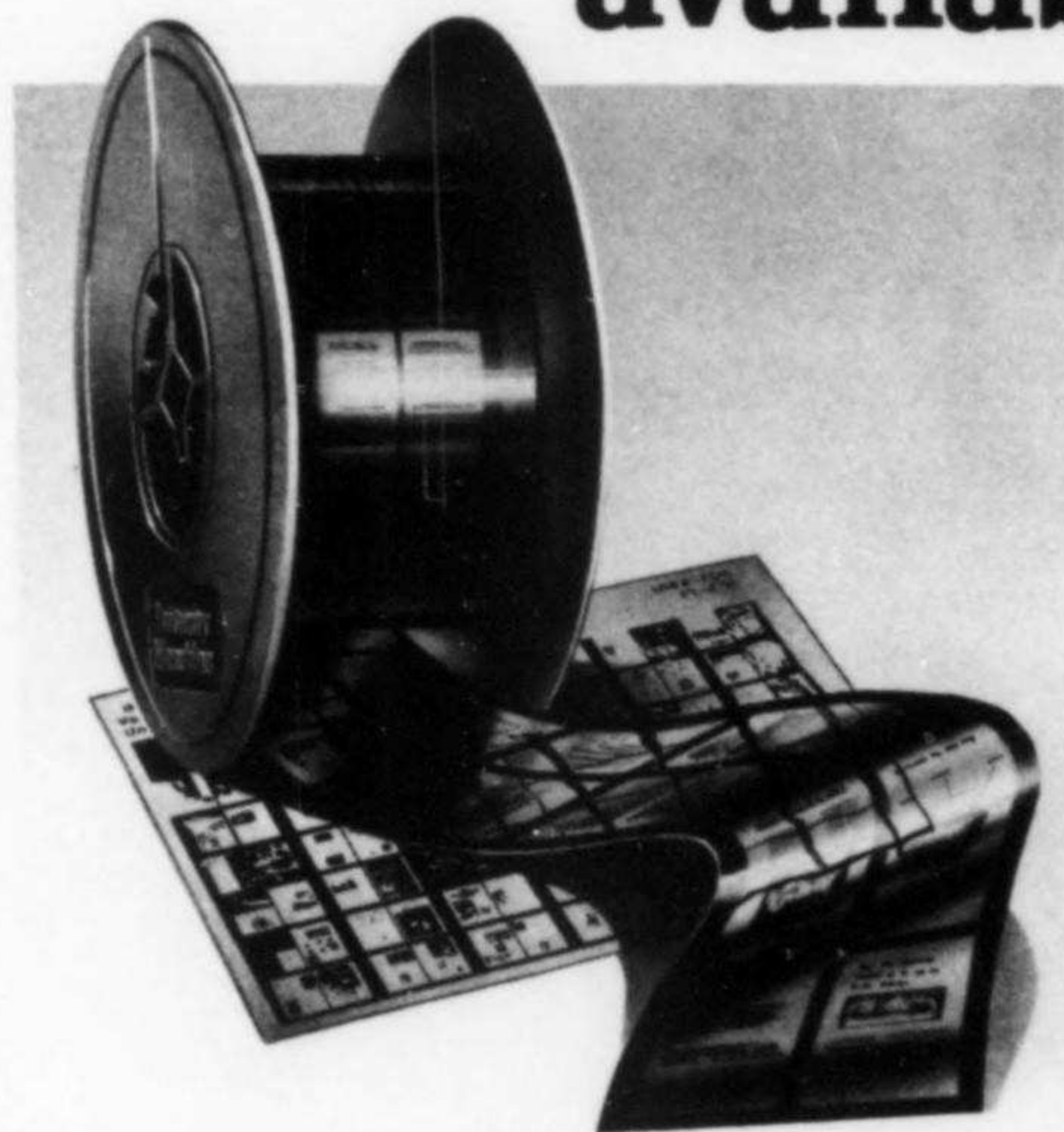
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