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Julian Blunk, Regine Heß, Henry Kaap, Kathrin Rottmann

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Kathrin Rottmann, Friederike Sigler

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Produktion und Produktionsverhältnisse / Production and Production Relations

Kathrin Rottmann / Friederike Sigler

Kunst *in* Produktionsverhältnissen. Editorial

Seit den 1960/70er Jahren rücken in der Kunst des globalen Nordens erweiterte Werk- und Produktionsbegriffe in den Blick.[1] Entgegen dem in der Kunstgeschichte tradierten Fokus auf das fertige Werk, der die Produktion als ahistorischen, individuellen Prozess versteht oder kunstphilosophisch als ontologische, stets vorzeitige Genese konzipiert, sind die künstlerischen Produktionsweisen seitdem nicht länger unsichtbar.[2] Die Kunstgeschichte hat auf diese künstlerische Verschiebung reagiert und die Analyse der künstlerischen Praxis, die seit diesem Paradigmenwechsel notwendigerweise einen breiteren Blick erfordert als die klassische Werkanalyse, um Materialien und Materialität, Techniken, Praktiken, Werkzeuge, Infrastrukturen und künstlerische Arbeit als Akteur:innen der künstlerischen Prozesse erweitert und dazu neue, oft interdisziplinäre Methoden entwickelt.[3] Als konkrete Analysekategorien wurden Produktion und Produktionsverhältnisse aber nur selten herangezogen, obwohl sie all diese Ansätze bündeln und so die Perspektive einer marxistisch-materialistischen Kunstgeschichte aufnehmen könnten. Diese Ausgabe der *kritischen berichte* möchten wir deshalb der Produktion und den Produktionsverhältnissen widmen. Ziel ist es zu fragen, wie eine materialistische Kunstgeschichte der 1970er Jahre mit aktualisierten Produktionsbegriffen weiterentwickelt werden, wie eine linke kritische Kunstgeschichte der Gegenwart sie in ihre Untersuchung einbeziehen und was eine solche Analyse für die Kunstgeschichte und die konkrete Werkanalyse leisten kann.

Die zentrale Annahme der materialistischen Kunstgeschichte der 1970er Jahre, wie sie im Umkreis des Ulmer Vereins und der *kritischen berichte* formuliert wurde, war, dass Kunst stets abhängig von gesellschaftlichen Produktionsweisen entsteht und wirkt. Die meisten Studien, die heute als dieser Kunstgeschichte verpflichtet gelten können, beschäftigten sich mit historischen Kunstwerken und arbeiteten heraus, wie Kunst zu den Produktionsverhältnissen stand und welche Funktionen sie dabei einnahm. Berthold Hinz hat zum Beispiel in seiner Auseinandersetzung mit der Malerei des Nationalsozialismus die Diskrepanz zwischen den bäuerlichen Motiven von händischer Feldarbeit in der Kunst und der hochtechnologisierten industrialisierten Kriegsmaschinerie herausgestellt.[4] Die Produktion als künstlerische Technik oder Technologie stand dabei seltener im Fokus, wie Kunsthistoriker:innen und Literaturwissenschaftler:innen bemängelten. Die marxistische Ästhetik habe, so der Kunsthistoriker O. K. Werckmeister, den «materialen Arbeitsprozeß» vernachlässigt.[5] Es mangele an «Qualitätskriterien, die aus den konkreten Techniken der Kunstproduktion und den aus ihnen resultierenden spezifischen ästhetischen Wirkungen abgeleitet wären».[6] In ihrem Entwurf einer «anderen materialistischen

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Ästhetik», deren Fokus auf die Produktionsmittel an die marxistische Kapitalismuskritik angelehnt ist, folgerte die Literaturwissenschaftlerin Gisela Dischner 1974 deshalb: «Materialistische Ästhetik kann nicht von der Kunst als Fertigware und ihrer Wirkung (Konsumtion) ausgehen, sondern von der künstlerischen Produktionsweise, von den künstlerischen Produktionsmitteln und der Form des Produkts.»[7]

Die materialistische Kunstgeschichte war sich daher einig, dass die künstlerische Produktion, gerade weil sie stets in Produktionsverhältnissen situiert ist, nie neutral sein kann – und das gilt, möchten wir für dieses Heft argumentieren, ebenso für die Produktionsweisen und deshalb auch für die Techniken und Technologien, die in der zeitgenössischen Kunst seit den 1960er Jahren in den Fokus rücken. Künstler:innen bedienen sich explizit zum Beispiel (post-)industrieller Produktionsverfahren und Arbeitsweisen, um sie in ihrer Kunst zu reflektieren und somit die Verflechtungen und Abhängigkeiten innerhalb ihrer Produktionsverhältnisse selbst zur Debatte zu stellen. Deshalb ist es umso erstaunlicher, wenn Forschungen zum *making*, wie sie in den letzten Jahren häufiger aufkommen, künstlerische Techniken als ahistorisch und abstrakt verstehen und im Sinne handlungsorientierter Systematisierungen untersuchen, ohne die Verflechtungen mit sozialen, politischen und ökonomischen Produktionsverhältnissen zu berücksichtigen wie andere Perspektiven unseres Fachs.[8] Die (queer)feministische Kunstgeschichte bezieht beispielsweise seit den späten 1960er Jahren die Techniken und Arbeitsbedingungen von weiblich gelesenen Künstler:innen als Care-Arbeiter:innen in ihre Analyse ein. Sie habe damit – ebenso wie die Künstler:innen, wie sich hinzufügen lässt – die «Ökonomie des Reproduktionsbereichs» entdeckt, wie Jutta Held argumentiert, und die «traditionelle marxistische Kapitalismusanalyse, die ausschließlich von der Produktion ausgeht, in der sie jegliche Wertbildung fundiert sieht», erweitern und korrigieren können.[9]

Eine solche kritische Produktionsanalyse ist unseres Erachtens auch in weiteren kritischen Theorien angelegt, etwa in einer postkolonialen und antirassistischen Kunstgeschichtsschreibung, die die künstlerische Produktion, deren Bedingungen und die eigenen (post-)kolonialen und rassifizierten Produktionsverhältnisse reflektiert. Mit dem Fokus auf Produktionsweisen als Techniken und Technologien hat der Schriftsteller und Literaturwissenschaftler Louis Chude-Sokei dargelegt, dass es «inzwischen so etwas wie eine Tradition von Schwarzen Theoretiker:innen und Kritiker:innen» gebe, «die Schlüsseltechnologien der Moderne als rassifiziert [zu] beschreiben und als abhängig davon, was der Négritude-Dichter Aimé Césaire koloniale ‹Verdinglichung› nannte»:[10]

> «Da wäre zunächst das Sklavenschiff, das versklavte Schwarze entmenschlichte, während es die materiellen Grenzen und Bedürfnisse der Moderne sowie deren konzeptuelle und gesellschaftliche Möglichkeiten erweiterte. Zweitens wäre da die Plantage, die karibische Theoretiker:innen von C.L.R. James bis Antonio Benítez-Rojo und auch Sylvia Wynter als entscheidend für die Konstruktion von reglementierten, modernen Subjektivitäten im Vorfeld von industriellen Prozessen bezeichnete. Und schließlich wäre da noch die Entkörnungsmaschine (*cotton gin*), die in Amerika nicht nur die industrielle Revolution einleitete, sondern durch die damit einhergehenden industriellen Prozesse auch die Sklaverei etablierte.»[11]

Das «Denken über Technologie», schließt Chude-Sokei, «[bleibt] unvollständig […], wenn es nicht an die lange Tradition der Auseinandersetzung mit Rassismus, Kolonialismus und dem Problemfeld um Körper und Macht gekoppelt wird.»[12] Wichtig sei

es dennoch, «Race und Technologie [nicht] auf den Zusammenhang von *Rassismus* und Technologie zu reduzieren», sondern alle Verschränkungen zu erforschen und deshalb allgemeiner zu fragen, inwiefern neben Klasse und Geschlecht die Differenz- und Ungleichheitskategorie «Race […] zum Verständnis von Technologie beitragen» kann.[13] An eine solche politische Perspektive auf die Produktionsweisen möchten wir anknüpfen, um in Anlehnung an Walter Benjamins Vorhaben, das «Instrument der politischen Literaturkritik» zu schärfen, «Instrument[e] der politischen [Kunstgeschichte]» zu gewinnen.[14]

> «Anstatt nämlich zu fragen: wie steht ein Werk zu den Produktionsverhältnissen der Epoche? ist es mit ihnen einverstanden, ist es reaktionär oder strebt es ihre Umwälzung an, ist es revolutionär? – anstelle dieser Frage oder jedenfalls vor dieser Frage möchte ich eine andere Ihnen vorschlagen. Also ehe ich frage: wie steht eine Dichtung *zu* den Produktionsverhältnissen der Epoche? möchte ich fragen: wie steht sie *in* ihnen? Diese Frage zielt unmittelbar auf die Funktion, die das Werk innerhalb der schriftstellerischen Produktionsverhältnisse einer Zeit hat. Sie zielt mit anderen Worten unmittelbar auf die schriftstellerische *Technik* der Werke. Mit dem Begriff der Technik habe ich denjenigen Begriff genannt, der die literarischen Produkte einer unmittelbaren gesellschaftlichen, damit einer materialistischen Analyse zugänglich macht.»[15]

Unser Interesse gilt daher Fragestellungen, die die Kunstwerke in und im Spannungsfeld zu ihren Produktionsverhältnissen verorten und analysieren – also inmitten des Verdampfens «[a]lles Ständische[n] und Stehende[n]», inmitten einer globalisierten Produktion, die globale und postkoloniale Ungleichheiten bestärkt und in der Künstler:innen als Produzent:innen agieren, inmitten eines neoliberal strukturierten Kapitalismus, der längst Kunst und Universitäten eingenommen hat, sowie eines zwischen Spekulationswerten und prekären Arbeitsbeziehungen changierenden Kunstfelds.[16] Wir interessieren uns für Ansätze, die die heterogenen Konstellationen herausstellen, anstatt sie zu übergehen. Wie genau die künstlerischen Praktiken *in* diesen Produktionsverhältnissen stehen, lässt sich erst untersuchen, wenn letztere sichtbar gemacht werden, seien sie sozial, ökonomisch, politisch, persönlich, häuslich, privat, kuratorisch oder künstlerisch. Diesen Differenzierungen entsprechend unterscheiden sich auch die Herangehensweisen und Perspektiven der Beiträge in diesem Heft, die die Produktion in historischer, sozialer, geschlechtlicher und politischer Hinsicht unterschiedlich bestimmen. Sie befragen die verschiedenen Arbeitsweisen, Praktiken, Theorien, Materialien, Infrastrukturen, die industriellen oder postindustriellen Techniken, die Medienindustrie, Geschlechterpolitiken und das Selbstverständnis von Künstler:innen als Produzent:innen, ohne dass damit sämtliche Perspektiven und Analysekriterien der Produktion versammelt wären.

Anmerkungen

1 Vgl. Lucy Lippard: Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1997 (1973); Peter Bürger: Theorie der Avantgarde, Göttingen 2017 (1974), S. 77; Sabeth Buchmann: Denken gegen das Denken. Produktion, Technologie, Subjektivität bei Sol LeWitt, Yvonne Rainer und Hélio Oiticica, Berlin 2007.

2 Vgl. Wolfgang Thierse: «Das Ganze aber ist das, was Anfang, Mitte und Ende hat.» Problemgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Geschichte des Werkbegriffs, in: Ders./Karlheinz Barck/Martin Fontius (Hg.): Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Studien zu einem historischen Wörterbuch, Berlin 1990, S. 378–414, hier S. 383; Sebastian Egenhofer: Produktionsästhetik, Zürich 2010.

3 Vgl. Caroline A. Jones: Machine in the Studio. Constructing the Postwar American Artist, Chicago/London 1996; Monika Wagner: Das Material der Kunst. Eine andere Geschichte der Moderne, München 2001; Work Ethic, hg. v. Helen Molesworth, Ausst.-Kat., The Baltimore Museum of Art, University Park 2003; Christina Kiaer: Imagine No Possessions. The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism, Cambridge 2005; Julia Bryan-Wilson: Art Workers. Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2009; Petra Lange-Berndt (Hg.): Materiality. Documents of Contemporary Art, London/Cambridge 2015; Glenn Adamson/Julia Bryan-Wilson: Art in the Making. Artist and Their Materials from the Studio to Crowdsourcing, London 2016; Friederike Sigler (Hg.): Work. Documents of Contemporary Art, London/Cambridge 2017; Marina Vishmidt: Beneath the Atelier, the Desert. Critique, Institutional and Infrastructural, in: Marion von Osten. Once We Were Artists (A BAK Critical Reader in Artists' Practice, hg. v. Maria Hlavajova/Tom Holert, Utrecht 2017, S. 218–235; Danielle Child: Working Aesthetics. Labour, Art and Capitalism, London u. a. 2019; Magdalena Bushardt/Henrike Haug (Hg.): Geteilte Arbeit. Praktiken künstlerischer Kooperation, Wien u. a. 2020; Friederike Sigler: Arbeit sichtbar machen. Strategien und Ziele in der Kunst seit 1970, München 2021; Dominic Rahtz: Metaphorical Materialism. Art in New York in the Late 1960s, Leiden/Boston 2021.

4 Vgl. Berthold Hinz: Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus. Kunst und Konterrevolution (= Kunstwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen des Ulmer Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft), München 1974.

5 O. K. Werckmeister: Ideologie und Kunst bei Marx u. a. Essays, Frankfurt am Main 1974, S. 32.

6 Ebd., S. 30.

7 Gisela Dischner: Sozialisationstheorie und materialistische Ästhetik, in: chris bezzel u. a. (Hg.): Das Unvermögen der Realität. Beiträge zu einer anderen materialistischen Ästhetik, Berlin 1974, S. 69–128, hier S. 69.

8 Vgl. Adamson/Bryan-Wilson 2016 (wie Anm. 3); The Everywhere Studio, Ausst.-Kat., Miami, The Institute of Contemporary Art, München u. a. 2017; Michael Petry: The Art of Not Making. The New Artist/Artisan Relationship, London 2011.

9 Vgl. Jutta Held: Paradigmen einer feministischen Kunstgeschichte, in: Wolfgang Kersten (Hg.): Radical Art History. Internationale Anthologie. Subject: O. K. Werckmeister, Zürich 1997, S. 178–192, hier S. 181; Kochen Putzen Sorgen. Care-Arbeit in der Kunst seit 1960, hg. v. Friederike Sigler/Linda Walther, Ausst.-Kat. Bottrop, Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Ostfildern-Ruit 2024.

10 Louis Chude-Sokei: Technologie und Race. Essays der Migration, Berlin 2023, S. 89–90.

11 Ebd., S. 90.

12 Ebd.

13 Ebd., S. 8–9.

14 Walter Benjamin: Der Autor als Produzent. Ansprache im Institut zum Studium des Fascismus in Paris am 27. April 1934, in: Ders.: Gesammelte Schriften, hg. v. Rolf Tiedemann/Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt am Main 1980, Bd. 2.2, S. 683–701, hier S. 684.

15 Ebd., S. 685–686.

16 Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei, in: Dies.: Werke, Berlin (Ost), Bd. 4, 1972, S. 459–493, hier S. 465.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, art in the Global North has increasingly focused on expanded conceptualisations of the artwork and its production process.[1] Artistic modes of production have been made visible since then, in contrast to the traditional focus in art history on the finished work, which understands production as an ahistorical, individual process or conceives of it in terms of art philosophy as an ontological, invariably premature genesis.[2] In response to this shift, art history has undergone a significant expansion to focus on production. This has led to the development of new, often interdisciplinary methods for studying artistic processes, requiring of necessity a broader view beyond the classical analysis of artworks.[3] The analysis of artistic practice now encompasses materials and materiality, techniques, practices, tools, infrastructures and artistic labour as active participants in artistic processes. However, production and production relations were only rarely employed as concrete categories of analysis, although they could bundle all these approaches and thus take up the perspective of a Marxist-materialist art history. In this latest issue of *kritische berichte*, we aim to demonstrate the continued relevance of production and the relations of production in the present day.

The objective is therefore to examine how a materialist art history of the 1970s can be further developed with updated concepts of production, how a left critical art history of the present can incorporate these developments into its investigation, and consequently, what such an analysis can achieve for a left critical art history and for the concrete analysis of art works.

The central tenet of the materialist art history that emerged in the 1970s, as espoused by scholars associated with the Ulmer Verein and the journal *kritische berichte*, was that the character and impact of art are contingent upon the prevailing social modes of production. The majority of studies that can be considered as being aligned with this approach to art history were initially focused on historical works of art, with the aim of elucidating the interdependencies between art and the relations of production, as well as the functions that art assumed within its context. In his examination of National Socialist painting, for instance, Berthold Hinz drew attention to the discrepancy between the peasant motifs of manual fieldwork in art and the high-tech industrialised machinery of war.[4] In general, the emphasis was not on production as a technical or technological process, as evidenced by the critiques offered by art historians and literary scholars. According to O. K. Werckmeister, Marxist aesthetics failed to take sufficient account of the «material labour process».[5] He emphasised the absence of «quality criteria derived from the concrete techniques of art production and the specific aesthetic effects resulting from them».[6] The literary

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scholar Gisela Dischner finally concluded in 1974 in her draft of an «alternative materialist aesthetics», whose focus on the means of production is based on the Marxist critique of capitalism, that «materialist aesthetics cannot start from art as a finished product and its effect (consumption), but from the artistic mode of production, the artistic means of production and the form of the product.»[7]

Materialist art history thus posits that artistic production, given its inherent situatedness within production relations, cannot be conceived of as neutral. We contend that this assertion extends to the modes of production, and consequently, to the techniques and technologies that have come to the fore in contemporary art since the 1960s. Artists for example employ (post-)industrial production engineering and working methods in order to reflect on them in their art, thereby raising questions about the entanglements and dependencies within their own production conditions. It is therefore particularly surprising when research on the making of art, as it has emerged more frequently in recent years, conceptualises artistic techniques as ahistorical and abstract, and examines them in terms of action-oriented systematisations without considering the interdependencies with social, political and economic production conditions as other perspectives in our discipline have demonstrated.[8] For instance, since the late 1960s, (queer) feminist art history has incorporated the techniques and working conditions of female artists as care workers into its analytical framework. As Jutta Held posits, it has identified the «economy of the reproductive sector» – just like artists, as we would add – and has thus been able to expand and refine the «traditional Marxist analysis of capitalism, which is based exclusively on production, in which it sees all value formation».[9]

From our perspective, a similar critical approach to production is evident in other critical theories, including postcolonial and anti-racist art historiography. These disciplines engage in a critical reflection on artistic production, its conditions, and their own (post-)colonial and racialised relations of production. In his analysis of modes of production, specifically in terms of techniques and technologies, the writer and literary scholar Louis Chude-Sokei posits that there is «now somewhat of a tradition of black theorists and critics for whom the primary technologies of modernity are in fact racialized ones that depend on what Negritude poet Aimé Cesaire once referred to as colonial ‹thingification›».[10]

> «First, the slave ship, which on the one hand denatured black slaves while expanding the material bounds and needs of modernity, as well as its conceptual and social possibilities; second, the plantation, what Caribbean thinkers from C.L.R. James to Antonio Benitez Rojo and Sylvia Wynter have proclaimed central to the construction of regimented, modern subjectivities in advance of industrial processes; and, thirdly in America, the cotton gin, which helped engineer the industrial revolution while entrenching slavery via those very industrial processes.»[11]

«[T]hinking about technology is indeed incomplete without appending the long tradition of thinking about racism, colonialism and the common problems of bodies and power», asserts Chude-Sokei.[12] Nevertheless, he argues that it is crucial not to «reduce» the concept of «race and technology to a correlation between *racism* and technology».[13] Instead, he suggests that it is pivotal to explore the multifaceted entanglements between these concepts and to consider the extent to which «race», as a category of difference and inequality, «can contribute to our understanding of technology» – alongside other social categories such as class and gender.[14] We aim to build on this political perspective on modes of production in order to gain

«instrument[s] of political [art history]» in line with Walter Benjamin's endeavour to sharpen the «instrument of political literary criticism».[15]

> «Instead of asking, ‹What is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time? Does it accept them, is it reactionary? Or does it aim at overthrowing them, is it revolutionary?› – instead of this question, or at any rate before it, I would like to propose another. Rather than asking, ‹What is the attitude of a work *to* the relations of production of its time?› I would like to ask, ‹What is its position *in* them?› This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time. It is concerned, in other words, directly with the literary *technique* of works. In bringing up technique, I have named the concept that makes literary products accessible to an immediately social, and therefore materialist, analysis.»[16]

Our interest therefore lies in questions that locate and analyse artworks in and within the field of tension with their relations of production – that is, in the very process of evaporation, when «[a]ll that is solid melts into air».[17] This involves examining modes of production in the midst of a globalised production that reinforces global and post-colonial inequalities and in which artists act as producers, in the face of a neoliberal capitalism that has long since taken over art and universities, and in an art field that oscillates between speculative values and precarious labour relations. We are interested in approaches that emphasise the heterogeneous interdependencies, rather than ignoring them. The precise position of artistic practices within these production relations can only be elucidated when the latter are rendered visible, be they social, economic, political, personal, domestic, private, curatorial or artistic. The approaches and perspectives of the contributions in this issue diverge according to these differentiations, which define production in varying ways across historical, social, gendered and political contexts. They explore the diverse working methods, practices, theories, materials, infrastructures, industrial or post-industrial techniques, the media industry, gender coding and the self-image of artists as producers. However, this does not encompass a synthesis of all perspectives and criteria for analysing production.

Notes

1 See Lucy Lippard: Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1997 (1973); Peter Bürger: Theorie der Avantgarde, Göttingen 2017 (1974), p. 77; Sabeth Buchmann: Denken gegen das Denken. Produktion, Technologie, Subjektivität bei Sol LeWitt, Yvonne Rainer und Hélio Oiticica, Berlin 2007.

2 See Wolfgang Thierse: «Das Ganze aber ist das, was Anfang, Mitte und Ende hat.» Problemgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Geschichte des Werkbegriffs, in: idem./Karlheinz Barck/Martin Fontius (eds.): Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Studien zu einem historischen Wörterbuch, Berlin 1990, pp. 378–414, here p. 383; Sebastian Egenhofer: Produktionsästhetik, Zürich 2010.

3 See Caroline A. Jones: Machine in the Studio. Constructing the Postwar American Artist, Chicago/London 1996; Monika Wagner: Das Material der Kunst. Eine andere Geschichte der Moderne, München 2001; Work Ethic, ed. by Helen Molesworth, exhib. cat., Baltimore, The Baltimore Museum of Art, University Park 2003; Christina Kiaer: Imagine No Possessions. The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism, Cambridge 2005; Julia Bryan-Wilson: Art Workers. Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2009; Petra Lange-Berndt (ed.): Materiality. Documents of Contemporary Art, London/Cambridge 2015; Glenn Adamson/Julia Bryan-Wilson: Art in the Making. Artist and Their Materials from the Studio to Crowdsourcing, London 2016; Friederike Sigler (ed.): Work. Documents of Contemporary Art, London/Cambridge 2017; Marina Vishmidt: Beneath the Atelier, the Desert. Critique, Institutional and Infrastructural, in: Marion von Osten. Once We Were Artists (A BAK Critical Reader in Artists' Practice, ed. by Maria

Hlavajova/Tom Holert, Utrecht 2017, pp. 218–235; Danielle Child: Working Aesthetics. Labour, Art and Capitalism, London 2019; Magdalena Bushardt/Henrike Haug (eds.): Geteilte Arbeit. Praktiken künstlerischer Kooperation, Wien 2020; Friederike Sigler: Arbeit sichtbar machen. Strategien und Ziele in der Kunst seit 1970, München 2021; Dominic Rahtz: Metaphorical Materialism. Art in New York in the Late 1960s, Leiden/Boston 2021.

4 See Berthold Hinz: Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus. Kunst und Konterrevolution (= Kunstwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen des Ulmer Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft), Munich 1974.

5 O. K. Werckmeister: Ideologie und Kunst bei Marx u. a. Essays, Frankfurt am Main 1974, p. 32.

6 Ibid., p. 30

7 Gisela Dischner: Sozialisationstheorie und materialistische Ästhetik, in: chris bezzel et al. (eds.): Das Unvermögen der Realität. Beiträge zu einer anderen materialistischen Ästhetik, Berlin 1974, pp. 69–128, here p. 69.

8 See Adamson/Bryan-Wilson (as note 3); The Everywhere Studio, exhib. cat., Miami, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Munich 2017; Michael Petry: The Art of Not Making. The New Artist/Artisan Relationship, London 2011.

9 See Jutta Held: Paradigmen einer feministischen Kunstgeschichte, in: Wolfgang Kersten (ed.): Radical Art History. Internationale Anthologie. Subject: O. K. Werckmeister, Zürich 1997, pp. 178–192, here p. 181; Cooking Cleaning Caring. Care Work in the Arts since 1960, ed. by Friederike Sigler/Linda Walther, exhib. cat., Bottrop, Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Ostfildern-Ruit 2024.

10 Louis Chude-Sokei: Race and Robotics, in: Teresa Heffernan et al. (eds.): Cyborg Futures. Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, London 2019, pp. 159–171, here p. 166.

11 Ibid., pp. 166–167.

12 Ibid., p. 167.

13 Louis Chude-Sokei: Technologie und Race. Essays der Migration, Berlin 2023, p. 8 (our translation).

14 Ibid., p. 9 (our translation).

15 Walter Benjamin: The Author as Producer. Address at the Institute for the Study of Fascism, Paris, April 27, 1934, in: idem: Selected Writings, ed. by Michael W. Jennings/Howard Eiland/Gary Smith, translated by Rodney Livingston et al., Cambridge/London 1999, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 768–782, here p. 769.

16 Ibid., p. 770.

17 Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: The Communist Manifesto (1848), ed. by Joseph Katz, translated by Samuel Moore, New York 1967, p. 63.

Petra Lange-Berndt

«Steal me»: KP Brehmer's Post-Production

«Superficial touch-ups won't improve our situation!»
Note by KP Brehmer, around 10 February 1971, estate[1]

From the early 1960s, during the Economic Miracle, artists in the fledgling Federal Republic of Germany were pondering how to respond to commercial pressures and pop culture.[2] The Capitalist Realists, a group to which KP Brehmer belonged, were known for their critique of mass media imagery. Artists in darkened studios projected material from magazines and books onto walls and transferred the motifs manually to canvases, or assembled their own archives in order to analyse those inter-media flows of the *Kulturindustrie* so lambasted by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. They worked with popular images of the everyday: photographs, prints, television footage, films. As the Cold War raged and propaganda oozed from both the Eastern and Western blocs, they addressed the relations of production that generated these images and experimented with artistic strategies for appropriating, dissecting, remixing and synthesising them, in short, for critical post-production.[3]

It is from this post-pop-polit perspective that I shall consider the work of KP Brehmer. Born in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin in 1938, the artist investigated the social conditions in which images had been produced. A materialist view was key to his approach. To make this point, in 1960 he had referenced the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), banned in West Germany from 1956 until 1968, by replacing his forenames Klaus Peter with the simple acronym KP – although he never became a party member.[4] So how, in a divided Germany, did Brehmer use his means of production, and how, to echo Walter Benjamin, does his work stand *within* them, what functions are exercised by his artworks?[5]

Means of (Post-)Production: The Printing Press

Brehmer had close ties with the field of commercial prints that he was investigating. Before beginning his studies at the art academy in Düsseldorf, he had completed an apprenticeship as cliché etcher and reproduction technician in Berlin and had then taken a course in graphic design in Krefeld at the *Werkkunstschule*. This vocational college was founded in 1949 as part of the post-war reconstruction effort in West Germany, where there was a strong focus on boosting industrial production.[6] In his artistic practice, however, Brehmer did not choose to work in a factory, although there was considerable interest in such options at the time. In East Germany, this path was followed by proponents of the Bitterfelder Weg and in West Germany

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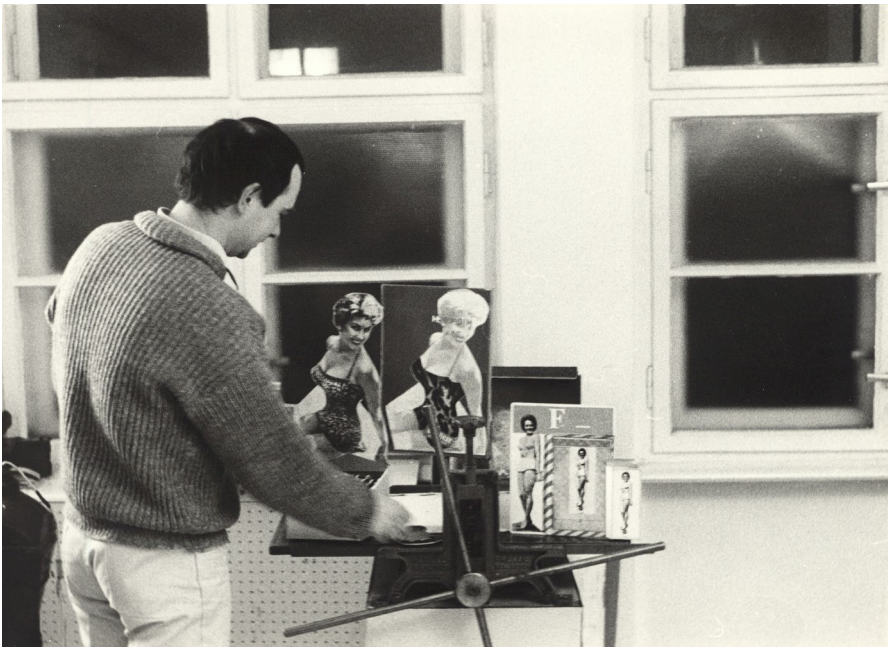


1 KP Brehmer in his studio, Weserstrasse, Berlin 1967, photo by Manfred Leve

it was for instance explored by Richard Serra and Clara Weyergraf in their film *Steelmill / Stahlwerk* (1979).[7] Instead Brehmer, who returned in 1964 to his native city, recently divided by the Wall, set up his own workshop and devoted himself to a version of hand-painted pop.[8] His favourite instrument of production was, as in so many counterculture projects, a hand press, which he had installed in his flat in Berlin in 1963 (fig. 1).[9] Only for longer runs, art editions and silkscreen prints did he collaborate with commercial printshops, although the decisive component, the cliché or cast form, was always provided by the artist himself.[10]

At that time, the West German art scene saw revolutionary potential in printed matter. Many hoped that paper-based works, being cheap to make, would achieve mass circulation and that this low-threshold access to information would provide a democratic alternative both to state media in East and West as well as to the exclusive status symbols traded in the high-priced art market.[11] Moreover, adverts, posters and leaflets enjoyed an everyday life on the streets; wall newspapers and the silkscreen images reproduced by the Atelier Populaire had played a key role in mobilising the Paris protests in May 1968.[12] In this spirit, Brehmer applied himself between 1966 and 1972 not only to «light graphics» (*Trivialgrafik)* and «cliché prints» (*Klischeedrucke*) but also to «symbolic values» (*Symbolwerte)*, particularly postage stamps.[13] This series of about fifty works, mostly editions, builds on one of the smallest printed formats of all.[14] Postage stamps are, at first sight, unassuming objects, but they are also products of officialdom, and until 1975 they were regarded in both Germanys as authorised documents commissioned by a government ministry, or in other words a state-owned postal monopoly, and issued as «substitute money», their forgery a criminal offence.[15] There is plenty of dynamite to be found here, because postage stamps symbolise how a state likes to define itself.[16] Brehmer launched his campaign in 1966, in response to the rise of the far-right National Democratic Party (NPD) and

2 KP Brehmer, *Hommage à Dürer*, 1966, cliché print, 50 × 32 cm, edition: 20

an incipient wave of Nazi nostalgia, with a bright red *Hitler*.[17] The 12-pfennig stamp issued in 1941 bearing the face of the dictator has been greatly enlarged;[18] the motif itself was prohibited by law. The artist followed this up with more postage stamps to chart the politics of his own day. In addition to specimens from West Germany, the United States, China and Vietnam, he included countries of the Eastern bloc. The artist describes his printing activities in an undated typed script, at the same time alluding to the slogan «Steal me!», which had been adopted as a motto by the «extra-parliamentary opposition» *(Außerparlamentarische Opposition)*:[19]

> «We must intervene in bourgeois culture by resorting, as it were, to ideological kleptomania, diminishing the value of the personal property inherent in artistic creation. We can do this; by quoting we can refuse to ‹create›. / The corruption consists in boiling down the ‹artistic language› to the evident fact of theft and by taking over collective signs.»[20]

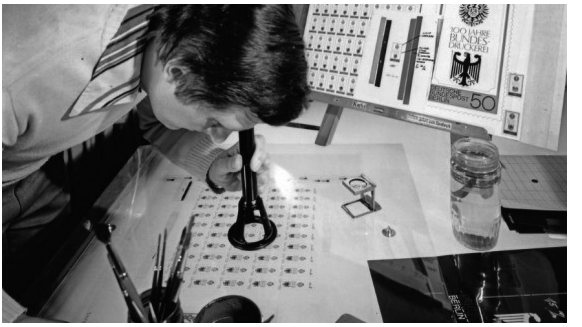
Brehmer turned to production rather than to the cult of creation, but the «conscious choice of motif was not restricted solely to taking over existing postage stamps. Some motifs were simplified, made clearer, others were substantially altered by montage».[21] This approach, which has forerunners in works by John Heartfield and Andy Warhol (that is politicised Dada and Pop) and in the epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator, can be observed in *Hommage à Dürer* of 1966.[22] This *cliché print* in an edition of twenty is linked by its title to the piece *Hommage à Berlin* (1965) and to *Hommage à Lidice* (1967–1968), works and an exhibition that explore German history, fascism and genocide as well as the reverberations of these events of this not so distant past in society at the time (fig. 2). We see an image measuring 50 by 32 cm that combines two different stamps: firstly, the *Portrait of a Young Man* based on Albrecht Dürer's portrait in oil of the merchant *Bernhard von Reesen* of Danzig (1521) designed by Erich Gruner on commission from the East German Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and Deutsche Post, which was printed on 15 December 1955 at the state-owned print combine VEB Graphische Werkstätten Leipzig in a run of 4 million.[23] This stamp was one of a series celebrating the return of art looted by the Soviet Union to the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden. Secondly, the text at the top alludes to another stamp, since Gruner's motif was quoted in 1964 to mark the National Exhibition of Postage Stamps in East Berlin in another specimen designed by Axel Bengs, of which 1,200,000 were printed (fig. 3).[24] So Brehmer's source material consists of two East German documents; the items onto which these stamps were stuck for dispatch were subjected to systematic surveillance.[25] At the peak of the Cold War, when an «East-West postal war» was waged around contentious motifs, and printers belonging to various anti-communist groups in West Berlin circulated fake East German stamps for propaganda purposes, Brehmer's multi-layered appropriation paid tribute to two colleagues in the workers' and farmers' state.[26]

In *Hommage à Dürer* Brehmer uses what he calls montage to comment on power relations in society. His owner-operated enterprise literally turns the spotlight on

the postage stamp and the production apparatus surrounding it and – in Benjamin's spirit – converts utility value into exhibition value.[27] Step by step, he transformed the red-brown motif of 1955, which had been mass-produced by industrial-scale halftone gravure. Instead of a tiny stamp, his starting-point was a large-scale template that only looks as though it has been printed with the aid of a screen. On closer scrutiny one realises that, rather like Sigmar Polke in his experiments, Brehmer made this initial stage of *Hommage à Dürer* by hand. The red dots were probably added with a felt pen, the principal motif in lilac grey with a brush. The scale of the matrix is not consistent as it would be in a market product but self-defined, like the perforations, with every dot individually placed. Here and there the irregular elements link into chains or merge into monochrome patches; the red dabs along the upper edge escape their zone and dribble onto the young man. This hand-made motif was then etched into a metal cliché pad using a photomechanical technique requiring a darkroom. This served the artist as a basis for his prints on fine art paper, produced on a hand press.[28] While the motif suggests a dot matrix of the kind used in commercial printing, no such device was involved here; the ink is blotchy, the intensity uneven. The making of *Hommage à Dürer* is itself a comment on the standard process for producing and distributing postage stamps: the structure of the artwork demonstrates that state printing operations and the items of symbolic value which they turn out are open to interventions. The carelessly applied dots are not functional. Rather, they fragment the image and the gaps between them expose the white paper underneath. As viewers we witness the «flicker of the instruments» and the materiality of communication.[29] What may seem to be stable official representation is revealed as process-driven and ephemeral. It starts to shimmer and blur, opening the image up to associations.[30]

3 Nationale Briefmarkenausstellung 1964, GDR-stamp designed by Axel Bengs, edition: 1.200.000

Postage stamp manufacture is subject to governmental quality controls performed, among other things, with magnifying glasses (fig. 4). Brehmer's artwork rebuffs such close scrutiny – the motif in *Hommage à Dürer* is at best discernible from a distance, the image is diffused into space, and viewers and their perceptions themselves come into focus. Unlike in Benjamin's text *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* there is no perceptible opposition between painting and technical equipment, between detachment and operational interference in the fabric of the means of production.[31] This art stems not from clear messaging, but from working on and with images. Like in a *détournement* by the Situationist Internationale, artworks are turned against themselves and can be experienced as bearing multiple meanings. Dürer, for example, is a fixed star in the history of prints, but there have been huge fluctuations in the way he has been interpreted in art history. The National Socialists claimed this son of Nuremberg for themselves as a «German» artist and «leader».[32] Around the quincentenary of his birth in 1971, this reading was redefined, when the West German Communist Party (DKP) presented



4 Governmental quality control of postage stamp production, Bundesdruckerei, 1975, photograph

the printmaker as a supporter of the early bourgeois revolution and the Peasant Wars, an interpretation that had been particularly widespread in the GDR.[33] Brehmer therefore refuses to situate Dürer in an unambiguous political context and insists that images in mass communication are always open to multiple meanings, as it is uncertain how an audience will distil the information provided into a message.[34]

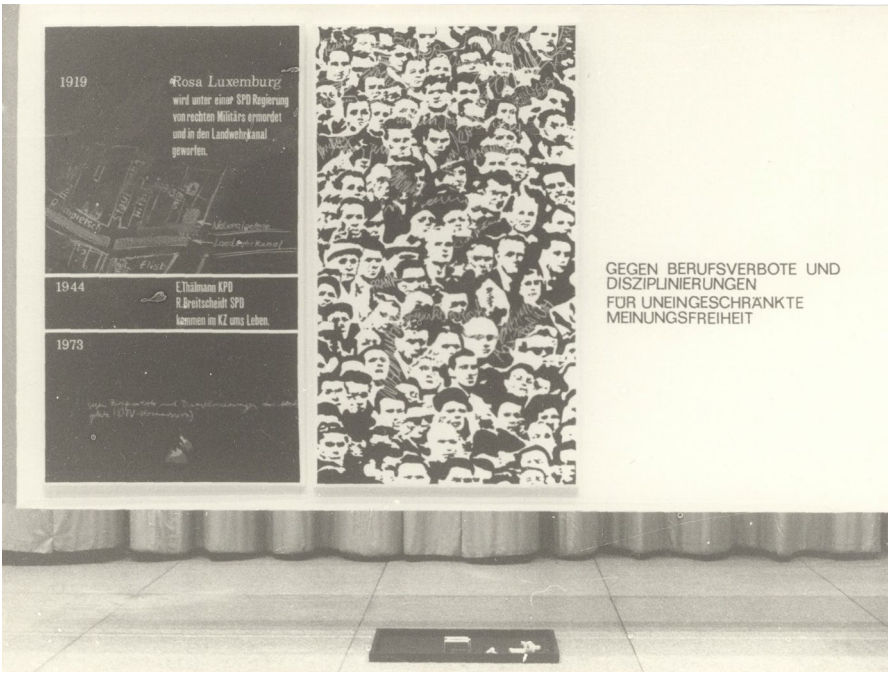
Post-Production: Multiple Interventions

By shifting the focus in this manner, Brehmer in the postmodern era came close to a position that the artist Hito Steyerl has described for our contemporary digital age:

> «Under these conditions, production morphs into post-production, meaning the world can be understood but also altered by its tools. The tools of postproduction: editing, color correction, filtering, cutting, and so on are not aimed at achieving representation. They have become means of creation, not only of images but also of the world in their wake.»[35]

The artist appropriated means of production from the printing trade in order to intervene by manual as well as mechanical means in the flow of «collective signs» generated by mass media and ideologies appearing in them.[36] This political practice is not sited within the phase of reproduction, however, but primarily within post-production. From today's perspective, Brehmer was a «semionaut», a processor who redefined creation as production and translated it into kleptomania.[37] His artworks function, to follow Nicholas Bourriaud, «as the temporary terminal of a network of interconnected elements, like a narrative that extends and reinterprets preceding narratives».[38] The aim is to trigger a process of critical reflection in the audience, an insight that can be extended to the visual strategies behind election posters or commercial advertisements.[39] This art, equally critical of ideologies in the FRG and the GDR, is by no means about agitprop or proletkult.[40] Although Brehmer had clearly read Benjamin's work, he was not an «operative author» in the sense of Sergei Mikhailovich Tretyakov.[41] He never worked for an East German Publicly Owned Enterprise (*Volkseigener Betrieb*), was never a member of an East German workers' brigade, never a participant in a Soviet kolkhoz, and never did he take a job incognito, like the investigative journalist Günter Wallraff, at a West German factory. Instead, his radius of action – from the perspective of the FRG and in the spirit of Marshall McLuhan's dictum «the medium is the message» – was confined to the paper realm of his art and to a bourgeois world of galleries and museums.[42]

Nevertheless, Brehmer wanted to engage in social processes with his art production.[43] Therefore, my last example is *Rosa Luxemburg*, dating from 1973; the only photograph from this installation available to date shows it in West Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie, probably in 1975 (fig. 5).[44] Numerous works by Brehmer in the 1960s



5 KP Brehmer, *Rosa Luxemburg*, 1973, acrylic, chalk on plastic sheeting, 200 × 116 cm each, installation shot probably Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin 1975

reproduce pin-ups as sexist commodities. This diptych is different. Again, printed matter was transferred by hand using paint, but this time the subject is a prominent female leader of the European labour movement known for her resolute energy and action.[45] And this historical figure, who is only alluded to by the artwork's title and the name written in the left panel, again permits a multiplicity of layers, because as Jewish co-founder of the Communist Party of Germany she had, for example, opposed Lenin's centralist Party Rules of 1904 and later objected to the Bolshevik dictatorship. Despite this, her name was weaponised by the GDR's ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) for the purpose of shoring up centralist state power, because East Berliners were required to join the annual marches commemorating her death. And yet the chemist and dissident Robert Havemann, who had been expelled from the SED in 1964 on account of his critical views, cited Rosa Luxemburg in 1968 when he made his call for democratic socialism in the GDR, and his stance was echoed by left-wingers in West Germany.[46] Indeed, the marxist socialist Luxemburg was so popular at the time that in 1974 20,000,000 million portraits of her were circulated on a West German postage stamp. In this political climate Brehmer's artwork turned the exhibition venue into a forum for public discussion about this complex melange. Over the frames the artist stretched sheets of industrial soft PVC, a chemically resistant material which does not develop a patina and therefore still looks as good as new today. Additionally, he replaced the traditional portrait found on postage stamps with text and the picture of a schematic, anonymous crowd. Three dated boxes commence the narrative in 1919, the year when right-wing paramilitaries assassinated Rosa Luxemburg and threw her body into the Landwehrkanal in Berlin, a place not far from the Neue Nationalgalerie, which had opened its doors in 1968.

1944 follows, the year when the Communist Ernst Thälmann and the Social Democrat Rudolf Breitscheidt were murdered in Buchenwald concentration camp. The work then asks about the situation in 1973, the year of its making. Visitors were invited to pick up the chalk and add their own comments to the panels, which resembled blackboards, and thus the work was tested and updated every time it was exhibited until it was retired on grounds of conservation.

Depictions of people as a crowd, mass or ornament are a political topos, the aesthetic constitution of many as a singular (and often political) whole: in this instance, West German spectators at a football stadium after the Second World War.[47] By the 1970s, artists had also taken the protest motto «Steal me!» to heart, and the motif chosen by Brehmer had already been applied to patterned fabric with enamel paint by Sigmar Polke in 1972 for his *Menschkin*. The same stencilled figures were reproduced that same year in Polke's *Mao* canvas and they cover the surface of the large-scale gouache *Human Snake* created in 1972–1976 for the cycle *We Petty Bourgeois! Comrades and Contemporaries*.[48] While psychedelic hues break up and transform the crowd in Polke's *Human Snake* in order to open up unknown realms, Brehmer's stolen image is interconnected with Rosa Luxemburg, a person who stands not only for revolution but also for a revised approach to education. Alongside her political activities, she had worked as a teacher at the Social Democrats' party school in Berlin, encouraging her students to take action and defining political struggle, like Brehmer, as a learning process. Her focus was on helping people to help themselves.[49] In this sense, Brehmer's diptych can also be seen in another context: the crisis of the museum, a much-debated topic at the time. As part of a second wave of re-education, the institution was to be defined anew as an «educational establishment» and a «place of learning».[50] For its installation at West Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie, the work acquired a third component, for the text on the wall says: «Against occupation bans and disciplining. For unrestricted freedom of opinion.» This slogan, added to the right on a level with the statement about the Nazi regime, relates to current politics at the time when the work was made. 1950 saw the adoption of the ‹Adenauer Decree›, which resulted in the banning of the Communist Party in West Germany (KPD). In 1968, after emergency legislation was enacted, the party re-formed and re-arranged its name to become the DKP. Then in 1972, under the Social Democratic government led by Willy Brandt, the West German parliament adopted its ‹Decree on Radicals› (*Radikalenerlass*). Anyone working in a public service who was declared «an enemy of the Constitution» was dismissed.[51] Although this measure, according to official claims, was designed to exclude both left- and right-wing extremists, most of those affected were actually on the left of the spectrum, while a number of former Nazis remained in public office. This *mise-en-scène* of *Rosa Luxemburg*, which can be seen as part of the protests against the decree that were taking place all over West Germany, was an act of solidarity by Brehmer with public servants who were losing their jobs and with the protesters.[52] Museum visitors, however, did not always agree. The anonymous comments on the panel could hardly be more varied. Among the examples we find «fight communist scaremongering», «here begins the next dictatorship», a bored «so what?» and a (today unprintable) racist call to kick foreigners out of Germany.

To sum up: Brehmer's artistic production, which combines manual and mechanical operations, cannot be isolated from its simultaneous post-production.[53] His practice reflects the process adopted by the official mass media. Here too, images

are cleaned up, retouched, adjusted for colour, corrected and revised prior to publication. Brehmer's practice, however, gives viewers the chance to reflect on the manufacture of images and to question their authority and effectiveness. There are instructions for them to intervene personally with the aid of simple means of production and to present their own alternatives for discussion. Brehmer's owner-operated enterprise called out fascism and right-wing tendencies and formulated a non-conformist ‹artful socialism› which, despite his sympathies and solidarity with left-wing movements, owed no allegiance to any party.[54] The artist did not organise in factories or on the streets, nor did he reflect at all on how his materials, such as paper, ink, metal or chemicals, had been produced. Instead, Brehmer chose the long march through the institutions, replacing the visual controls carried out in state-owned printing works, the *Sichtkontrolle*, with what he called «visual agitation» (*Sichtagitation*).[55] The idea was to facilitate emancipation from prevailing norms by seizing upon the art institution as a temporary forum for public counter-debate. As Umberto Eco aptly put it in 1978: «The threat that ‹the medium is the message› could then become, for both medium and message, the return to individual responsibility.»[56] However, Brehmer's attempt to activate his audience was of limited impact and it only functioned within a clearly defined institutional enclosure where the artist maintained aesthetic control. And so, from the late 1970s, Brehmer switched to a different institution and made his amended post-production apparatus available to others:[57] after accepting a teaching post at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg, he turned his attention to politicised education and ran the art college's print workshop.[58]

Notes

1 As quoted in Björn Egging: Von Pop zu Politik. Studien zur Entwicklung der politisch engagierten Kunst KP Brehmers, Dissertation Universität Hamburg 2003, https://nbn-resolving.org/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-22365, last accessed 3 May 2024, p. 116.

2 See Leben mit Pop. Eine Reproduktion des Kapitalistischen Realismus, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Cologne 2013; Dietmar Rübel: «Do anything that you want to do, but uh-uh...». German Pop und das Ende des Dingzeugs, in: German Pop, exh. cat., Frankfurt am Main, Schirn Kunsthalle, Cologne 2014, pp. 72–81; Sighard Neckel (ed.): Kapitalistischer Realismus. Von der Kunstaktion zur Gesellschaftskritik, Frankfurt am Main 2010.

3 See Singular/Plural. Collaborations in the Post-Pop-Polit-Arena, 1969–1980, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Cologne 2017.

4 See Hubertus Butin: «Werft Eure Paletten auf den Misthaufen.» KP Brehmers frühe Druckgrafik im Kontext ihrer Zeit, in: KP Brehmer. Alle Künstler lügen, exh. cat., Kassel, Museum Fridericianum 1998, pp. 10–23, here p. 10.

5 Walter Benjamin: The Author as Producer (1934), in: idem: Understanding Brecht, translated by Anna Bostock, introduction by Stanley Mitchell, London, New York 1983, pp. 85–103, here p. 87.

6 Egging 2003 (as note 1), pp. 24–25.

7 See generally Friederike Sigler: Arbeit sichtbar machen. Strategien und Ziele in der Kunst seit 1970, Munich 2021.

8 Hand-Painted Pop. American Art in Transition, 1955–62, exh. cat., Los Angeles, The Museum of Contemporary Art 1992–1993.

9 Egging 2003 (as note 1), p. 31.

10 Petra Roettig: Aktionsgrafik. Grafik als politischer Prozess bei KP Brehmer, in: KP Brehmer. Kunst ≠ Propaganda, exh. cat., Nuremberg, Neues Museum, London 2018, pp. 74–80, here p. 77; see also Doreen Mende/Alex Sainsbury: Conversation with René Block, in: KP Brehmer. Real Capital-Production, exh. cat., London, Raven Row, London 2017, pp. 9–18, here p. 9.

11 The artist tried to undermine commercial structures with unlimited or wrongly declared editions, proofs and special issues, Roettig 2018 (as note 10), p. 76.

12 Petra Lange-Berndt: Protestkulturen aus Papier. Atelier Populaire, Paris 1968, in: idem/Isabelle Lindermann (eds.): 13 Beiträge zu 1968. Von künstlerischen Praktiken und vertrackten Utopien, Bielefeld 2022, pp. 106–142.

13 Most prints date from 1966–1969, see René Block: KP Brehmer. Verzeichnis der Druckgrafik

1960–1971, in: idem: Grafik des Kapitalistischen Realismus [...], Berlin 1971, pp. 61–117.

14 KP Brehmer: Briefmarken, Arbeitsreihe (1966 bis 1968), in: Grafische Techniken, exh. cat., Berlin, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin 1973, p. 27; see generally Dirk Naguschewski/Detlev Schöttker (eds.): Philatelie als Kulturwissenschaft. Weltaneignung im Miniaturformat, Berlin 2019.

15 See Silke Weipert: Die Rechtsnatur der Briefmarke. Wandel, Diskussionsgeschichte, Praxisrelevanz, Kiel 1996, p. 40; Egging 2003 (as note 1), p. 65.

16 The West German Stationery Office (Bundesdruckerei), for example, offered art prints for sale, see Dürer für Jedermann. Hauptwerke des Meisters in Faksimile-Handkupferdrucken der Bundesdruckerei, exh. cat., Hamburg, Clubheim der BP Benzin und Petroleum Aktiengesellschaft, Hamburg 1971, pp. 7–11.

17 Tobias Becker: Er war nie weg. «Hitler-Welle» und «Nazi-Nostalgie» in der Bundesrepublik der 1970er Jahre, in: Zeithistorische Forschungen 18, 2021, pp. 44–72.

18 The number 12 is a reference to the true duration of the «Thousand-Year Reich», Egging 2003 (as note 1), pp. 64, 67; Block 1971 (as note 13), p. 90; see also Dirk Naguschewski: «Schönheit des Gewöhnlichen». Briefmarken und moderne Kunst, in: idem/Schöttker 2019 (as note 14), pp. 164–193, here pp. 174–178; Michael Glasmeier: Sichtagitation Briefmarke. KP Brehmer – Aby Warburg, Hamburg 2020, pp. 9–12.

19 Rainer Langhans/Fritz Teufel: Klau mich. StPO der Kommune I, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin 1968.

20 KP Brehmer as quoted in exh. cat. KP Brehmer 2018 (as note 10), p. 100.

21 KP Brehmer as quoted in Brehmer 1973 (as note 14), p. 27.

22 Egging 2003 (as note 1), pp. 76–77, 81; Glasmeier 2020 (as note 18), pp. 18–19.

23 Michel Briefmarken Katalog Deutschland 1971, Munich 1970, 218; Peter Fischer/Frithjof Skupin/Wolfgang Gudenschwager (eds.): DDR-Universalkatalog, Berlin 1986.

24 See Karl Heinz Schreyl/Helmut Thiel: Werke Dürers auf Briefmarken der Welt, Nuremberg 1978, pp. 74–75.

25 Roland Wiedmann: Zu jeder Zeit und an jedem Ort. Zur Geschichte der Abteilung M (Postkontrolle) des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der DDR, in: Ein offenes Geheimnis. Post- und Telefonkontrolle in der DDR, exh. cat., Berlin, Museum für Kommunikation, Heidelberg 2002, pp. 74–89.

26 Hans-Jürgen Köppel: Politik auf Briefmarken. 130 Jahre Propaganda auf Postwertzeichen, Düsseldorf 1971, pp. 62, 99–100, 119–128.

27 Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility. Second Version, in: idem: The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media, ed. by Michael W. Jennings et al., Cambridge, Mass., London 2008, pp. 19–55, here pp. 25–26.

28 See Block 1971 (as note 13), p. 62. I am grateful to Thomas Bechinger for advice about the printing process.

29 Peter Geimer: Blow up, in: Wolfgang Schäffner/Sigrid Weigel/Thomas Macho (eds.): «Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail». Mikrostrukturen des Wissens, Munich 2003, pp. 187–202, here p. 201.

30 Glasmeier 2020 (as note 18), pp. 60–61.

31 Benjamin 2008 (as note 27), p. 35.

32 See Julius Langbehn: Dürer als Führer. Vom Rembrandtdeutschen und seinem Gehilfen, Munich 1928.

33 See Kunst als Waffe. Die «ASSO» und die revolutionäre bildende Kunst der 20er Jahre, exh. cat. Nuremberg, Am Kornmarkt 5, Nuremberg 1971; Realistische Graphik von Dürer bis zur sozialistischen Gegenwart, Dürer-Ehrung der DDR, exh. cat., Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig 1971.

34 See Umberto Eco: Towards a Semiological Guerilla Warfare (1967), in: idem: Travels in Hyperreality, San Diego/New York/London 1990, pp. 117–124, here p. 129 (quoted from the ProQuest Ebook version).

35 Hito Steyerl: Duty Free Art. Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War, London/New York 2017, p. 123 (quoted from the ebook version).

36 Nicolas Bourriaud: Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World (2002), New York 2010, p. 18.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., p. 19.

39 Egging 2003 (as note 1), p. 49.

40 See Kerstin Stakemeier: KP Brehmer's Kleptomania: A Productivism of Expropriation, in: exh. cat. KP Brehmer 2017 (as note 10), pp. 57–65; see also Mende/Sainsbury/Block 2017 (as note 10), p. 10.

41 Benjamin 1983 (as note 5), pp. 88–89.

42 Marshall McLuhan: Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, New York 1964, p. 23.

43 See exh. cat. KP Brehmer 2018 (as note 10), p. 100.

44 E-mail from Sebastian Brehmer, 16 May 2019.

45 See generally Lutz Brangsch/Miriam Pieschke (eds.): Sich nicht regieren lassen. Rosa Luxemburg zu Demokratie und linker Organisierung. Ein Lesebuch, Berlin 2023.

46 Robert Havemann: Sozialismus und Demokratie (1968), in: idem: Rückantworten an die Hauptverwaltung «Ewige Wahrheiten», ed. by Hartmut Jäckel, Munich 1971, pp. 89–93, here 91.

47 Ute Holl: *Human Snake* – Polke as Pop Processor, in: Petra Lange-Berndt/Dietmar Rübel (eds.): Sigmar Polke. We Petty Bourgeois! – Comrades and Contemporaries, Cologne 2009, pp. 110–119, here p. 111.

48 Ibid.

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Translation: Kate Vanovitch

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5 © KP Brehmer Sammlung und Nachlass, Berlin/VG Bild-Kunst

Dominic Rahtz

Industrial Materials, Industrial Forms

If one considers a work of art such as Carl Andre's *144 Steel Square* (fig. 1), first shown at the Dwan Gallery in New York in December 1967, and now in Frankfurt, one could say that it consists in a material – steel – that has been given a form – a square. This square is comprised of smaller squares, each twelve inches by twelve inches, arranged in a twelve-by-twelve pattern. In terms more general than art, the giving of form to a material may be seen as corresponding to a particular definition of labour if one remembers Andre's use, in various statements, of a formulation appropriated from Karl Marx's *Grundrisse*: «Labour is the living fire that shapes the pattern; it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, their transformation by living time.»[1] In this text, living labour exists as subjective potentiality, as «forming activity», a natural force that Marx compares to fire, or to fermentation.[2] When considered in terms of production, labour may be distinguished from nature by its intentional structure, involving a form that exists in the imagination prior to its realization, in the sense that the process is oriented according to a purpose, a use-value.[3] The material that labour works on is, from the side of labour, without form and indifferent to form. This material, which is always subject to natural processes, to disintegration, as when steel turns to rust, only loses its indifference when it is the material for living labour.

Despite his reference to the *Grundrisse*, it is difficult to see Andre's work as corresponding to living labour as a ‹forming activity› in this sense. According to Philip Leider, in a review of a second exhibition of Andre's work at the Dwan Gallery in 1969, the ‹forms› of the works shown, which were the same as the earlier *144 Steel Square* except that this time the materials were magnesium, lead and copper, consisted in «passive shapes, the only active elements being the properties of the materials of which they were made.»[4] The form was that of mere arrangement – the twelve by twelve square pattern. The size and shape of each square, specified by Andre according to standard measurements in general use, does not correspond to any particular use of the material. This exchange of attributes between active form and passive material was intended to reveal the differing ‹properties› of the materials themselves, such as the lightness of magnesium when compared with lead. The relative absence of form in Andre's works may be said to correspond, still in a Marxist register, to an absence of living labour, and so to a loss of particularity under the conditions of capital, where labour becomes generalized, and consists in, as Marx puts it, a «mechanical activity, hence indifferent to its particular form; a merely *formal* activity, or, what is the same, a merely *material* [*stoffliche*] activity».[5]

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1 Carl Andre, *144 Steel Square*, 1967, steel, 365,8 × 365,8 × 1 cm, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main

When labour is generalized as the material for capital, the form and the material that are the terms of the process become separated, each indifferent to the other.

The material used for *144 Steel Square* was, furthermore, an industrial material. Despite the mere arrangement that constituted its exterior shape, it nevertheless has a form as a material. As a raw material, steel would have already been subject to several constitutive processes involving labour – mined, purified and materially altered, rolled, cut, and so on. Some of these processes produce a form that is interior to the material, producing its ‹properties›, not only in a phenomenal sense but also in an industrial sense, relating to use. This interior form is crystalline, which in the natural form of iron contains different possibilities that are realized according to what is taken away or added to it, such as carbon. The natural crystalline form is changed according to a further interior forming. Many of these processes, which determine the existence of a material such as steel, have a long history, but from the time that Marx was writing onwards were increasingly dependent on large-scale industrial processes, such as that effected by the blast furnace, and on machines.

Living labour, the material that is given form, and the technical objects used for that purpose, such as tools or machines, together constitute what Marx called, in the 1859 *Preface*, «material productive forces».[6] The «relations of production», on the other hand, constitute the social and economic form of the arrangement of labour in production, and the historicity of this form is defined according to the technical forms involved and the varying distribution of these forms, including according to property.[7] In a first historical shift, according to Marx, labour as it exists, and the technical objects and materials, are merely included in the process of capital, without themselves being altered. The form changes but the material remains the same. This shift is that of the merely formal subsumption of already existing forces of production under relations of production determined by capital as a process. Marx writes, in *The Results of the Immediate Production Process* (from a draft of *Capital* from 1861–63), that such formal subsumption is the «general form of every capitalist

process of production».[8] This form is determined by capital, and does not necessarily refer to any particular form that the forces of production might take. «[C]apital is in itself indifferent to the *particular* nature of every sphere of production.»[9]

In a second shift, however, the forces of production themselves undergo a change in form. This is not a change where form is imposed from outside, but one where the material productive forces, labour and technical means, take shape from within. Since capital is oriented to the appropriation of value, it entails a separation of living labour, the real origin of value, from the process of production. This shift is that of a real subsumption of forces under relations. On the side of the technical means, this separation of labour is achieved through the use of machines. The important statements by Marx concerning the relationship between technical reality and capital may be found in the so-called *Fragment on Machines* in the *Grundrisse* and in chapter fifteen of *Capital*. «The development of the means of labour into machinery is», Marx writes in the earlier text, «the historical reshaping of the traditional, inherited means of labour into a form adequate to capital».[10] This reshaping is actually an inversion of the inherited means of labour, where the tools and individual machines that hitherto constituted the means of individual and collective labour in manufacturing become, in large-scale industry, the subject of the process. Labour is positioned to the side of the process of production, and loses all of its particularity, since the process and technical means that define it have been mostly replaced by a mechanical process. «No longer does the worker insert a modified natural thing [*Naturgegenstand*] as the middle link between the object [*Objekt*] and himself; rather he inserts the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and organic nature, mastering it. He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor.»[11]

The result is that the form adequate to capital is, in the phrase appropriated by Marx in *Capital*, that of a «vast automaton», a system of machines, or moving organs, propelled by a self-moving force, such as that produced by a steam-engine.[12] «[T]he automaton itself», Marx writes, «is the subject, and the workers are merely conscious organs, co-ordinated with the unconscious organs of the automaton [that is, the machines], and together with the latter subordinated to the central moving force».[13] The prior «solid crystallization» of the means and arrangement of labour characteristic of manufacturing is «dissolved» into a cloud of undifferentiated labour that is completely subordinated to the changing technical basis characteristic of large-scale industry.[14] The effect of this change in the form of technical means on labour is, on one hand, to make the latter increasingly superfluous, and on the other, to increase its intensity. This intensity is in turn related by Marx to the actual forms and materials of machines themselves, where these involve, for example, improvements in the speed of movement or reduced friction.

We may seem to have moved a long way from the particular approach to form and material that we see in *144 Steel Square*, but the detour is necessary if one is to account for the mode of existence of an industrial material such as steel, in its interior form, which depends on large-scale processes and machines, as Andre was well aware. The industrial involves a change in a relation of production, and produces a new unity. Prior to industrial production, according to Étienne Balibar in his contribution to *Reading Capital*, «a ‹*technique*› was the *indissociable ensemble* of a means of labour or tool, *and a worker* [...] The technique is essentially individual [...]».[15] When, however, the subject of production shifts from the individual worker to a system of machines, a ‹vast automaton›, the technical process becomes

one that is enacted by a new ensemble, a new unity in Balibar's terms, comprising technical means and material.[16] The worker has ‹stepped aside›. There is a dissolution of the techniques that characterized manufacturing, but one could say that a new ‹crystallization› emerges on the side of this new unity, the ensemble of machines and material worked on. This new unity brings together the form of the machine and the forms of materials, and produces standards and types. The three-eighths of an inch thick steel plate that Andre worked with was a standard industrial material in this sense, rolled to a particular gauge, its interior and exterior form being determined by the historical development of large-scale processes and machines (and, later, by bureaucratic standardization, on the part of the American Bureau of Standards for example).

In industrial production, machines and other technical objects become themselves standards and types, and in this way take on form. A machine can be defined as a mechanism or an arrangement of mechanisms where, as Georges Canguilhem put it in his 1952 text, *Machine and Organism*, in the movement of their parts they do not «threaten the integrity» of the whole.[17] The machine or mechanism propagates movement (the energy comes from elsewhere, from a natural force), which is limited by degrees of freedom (where, for example, a threaded screw has two degrees of freedom), which can be measured and conforms to a mechanical schema. The purposiveness of machines, Canguilhem writes, is realized «within narrowly defined limits, and these limits become all the more rigid with the practice of standardization».[18] This is a ‹crystallization› (or perhaps an organic process, given the title of Canguilhem's essay) that is not only produced by an ensemble of machines and the material worked on, the unity identified by Balibar, but by an arrangement of form interior to the machine itself, as Marx already recognized in his remarks on how the solving of technical problems produced forms determined by mechanics rather than labour (one of his examples was the improved blowing apparatus of a blast furnace, which no longer resembled bellows).[19]

A question is thus raised concerning the determination of the form of the industrial object, given the interiorization of form (its separation from labour as form-giving) in the real subsumption of forces under relations. One means of approach, again from within the realm of art, is to consider the photographic work of Bernd and Hilla Becher (fig. 2), who typically photographed, using a large-format camera and in black and white, industrial buildings (a blast furnace in this case) as individual objects detached from their surroundings, which they usually arranged in series to bring out variations in form. Carl Andre's text, *A Note on Bernhard and Hilla Becher*, published in *Artforum* in 1972 and widely credited as bringing the Bechers to the attention of the anglophone art world, provides a simple description of their work.

> «The photographs of the Bechers record the transient existence of purely functional structures and reveal the degree to which form is determined by the invariant requirements of function.
>
> A partial catalogue of the typological subjects of Bernhard and Hilla Becher includes: structures with the same function (all water towers); structures with the same function but with different shapes (spherical, cylindrical, and conical water towers); structures with the same function and shape but built with different materials (steel, cement, wood, brick, or some combination such as wood and steel); structures with the same function, shape and materials; comparative frontal and perspectival views of pithead towers, high tension electrical pylons, blast furnaces, and factory buildings.»[20]

2 Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Hüttenwerk Hagen-Haspe, Ruhrgebiet*, 1968, gelatin silver print, 40,5 × 31,4 cm, Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur

The privileged term is function, which determines the forms and materials, which in turn may vary. The Bechers' first book, *Anonyme Skulpturen*, published in 1970, is organized according to different kinds of industrial buildings such as cooling-towers, blast-furnaces, gas-holders, and so on.[21] The ‹anonymity› of these buildings is attributed to mere function, and yet function also produces what they refer to, in their first presentation of *Anonyme Skulpturen* in *Kunst-Zeitung* in early 1969, as the «manifold forms» that provide the material for a classificatory mode of arrangement.[22] Industrial buildings performing the same function can be different shapes, or the same shapes can be built with different materials. In the same text, they write that what they want to do is «to produce a more or less perfect chain of different forms and shapes».[23] And in order to do this, they continue, «the objects must be freed from their environment, from associations – as it were, neutralised».[24]

One of the criticisms made of the Bechers' work is that their mode of presentation of the ‹manifold forms› of industrial objects, their formalism, conceals the historical content of industrial production, its material forces and relations. There is no sign of labour in their photographs. It is the automaton or its organs, or rather the buildings that provide certain of its material conditions, that are shown, often at the end of their life. And yet industrial objects cannot be anything other than the productions of labour, even when machines produce machines. «Nature», Marx writes in the *Grundrisse*, «builds no machines […] These are products of human

industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature.»[25] In both the *Fragment on Machines* and in *Capital*, a distinction is always maintained between technical objects per se and their exploitation as a means by capital.[26] Such objects may be reshaped, given form by capital, but this does not necessarily explain how the forms of the objects themselves come into being.

In order to approach this question from the other side, we can turn to Gilbert Simondon's book *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, first published in 1958. Simondon was critical of Marx's definition of labour as form-giving for its reliance on the form-matter distinction, a long-standing philosophical figure of thought which itself derives, according to Simondon (writing elsewhere), from the dependency of ancient Greek society on the labour of slaves, where form is imposed on material by those giving orders.[27] Labour is defined by a figure of thought that is derived from itself. Even in its simplest form, as Simondon argues, it is already alienated with respect to the interiority of its own process, prior to any alienation that one might associate with the exteriority of the social relations of production. In *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, Simondon was not only concerned with the nature of technical process, more general than labour, but also with technical objects such as machines. Technical objects may be seen as the materialization of technical process, but defined in terms of their ability to enact the interiority of the process, regardless of intentionality, and to take form accordingly, rather than according to the exteriority of labour as giving form, or of any historical category, such as the mode of production. For Simondon, the mode of existence of the technical object, whether it is a spring, an engine or a coal mine, is defined by a coming into being, an ontogenesis, of the technical, a process or tendency he refers to as ‹concretization›.[28] In a technical individual such as an engine, this process is one that involves relations between its elements, each of which has its own form depending on its function. These elements increasingly inform each other in the individuation of the engine, which becomes more concrete, like a natural object. In this process, the same form can begin to combine different functions, as in the example Simondon gives of the cooling fins on a cylinder head in an engine which, as well as cooling, take on the structural function of withstanding pressure. The structural form, where the fins contribute strength, allows for a thinner metal to be used, which in turn further improves cooling.[29] There is an interior resonating of forms that were previously separate. Industrial objects may also take form in a relation to their conditions, but these conditions are not exterior to them. Rather, the conditions of existence of a technical object, whether natural or technical, arises with it, and is in a sense produced by it, as its «associated milieu» in Simondon's phrase.[30] There are natural conditions, such as the existence of coal, which only becomes a condition once the machine has been invented. And there are technical conditions as when a blast furnace, for example, is part of a large ensemble such as a steelworks. (The Bechers usually photographed individual objects, but they also documented entire industrial ensembles, such as the Concordia coal mine in Oberhausen.) In these ways, the technical object takes form. The mode of existence of such entities is thus not reducible to the social. It is not natural either, although it is like nature.

At this point, we can consider the extent to which this description of technical individuation corresponds to the «manifold forms» presented by the Bechers as

Anonyme Skulpturen.[31] With their earlier work, the Bechers often included a short text describing the function of the industrial objects they show, as in their photographs of blast furnaces. «In blast-furnaces crude-iron is extracted from iron-ore by means of chemical reduction.»[32] They go on to describe the chemical process itself and its materials, and the natural forces involved, such as gravity and the heating of air. Finally, they specify the materials used for the building itself and give a sense of its form, «fire-proof stone», a «sheet-steel case or… a steel scaffold».[33] The form of the building corresponds to the processes taking place within it. Some historical changes, such as scale, may be attributed to economic considerations but there are variations in form that are more interiorized in their determination, and are much closer to the process of ‹concretization› that defines technical individuation in Simondon's sense. An example of this, referred to by the Bechers, is the use of the gasses produced in the extraction process to heat the air, the ‹blast› of which is the cause of the process, a recirculation of energy which accounts for the various arrangements of exterior pipes. The Bechers sometimes considered such forms as resembling natural forms, such as those technical ensembles «which had grown over the years into huge shapes not unlike crystals in their structure».[34]

The process effected by the blast furnace is the first stage in the production of steel. As such, we can consider the object shown by the Bechers as registering the form of the industrial process that produced the material used in *144 Steel Square*. At the same time, the mere arrangement of industrial material per se, prior to any use, which is characteristic of Andre's work, gives a sense of the mode of existence of the material used to construct an industrial building such as a blast furnace. Each can be seen to provide a cause of the production of the other. The work of Andre and the Bechers may be said to occupy different positions within the unified ensemble of material and technical object that defines industrial production (although the work is art, of course, and so has a different intentional structure, which positions it outside of this production). Labour becomes either «a merely *formal* activity, […] a merely *material* activity», mere arrangement that is indifferent to form, and separated from its process, or it is simply not shown, as in the Bechers' photographs.[35] Industrial form is interiorized in its determination. It no longer depends on the intentional structure that defines labour but on a cause of production that is interior to the industrial.

Notes

1 Karl Marx: Marx's Grundrisse, translated by David McLellan, London 1971, p. 89. Carl Andre's quotation is in: Sonsbeek 71. Sonsbeek buiten de perken, Part 2, exhib. cat., Arnhem, Park Sonsbeek et al., Deventer 1971, p. 5. A more extended discussion of Andre's work in these terms is in Dominic Rahtz: Metaphorical Materialism. Art in New York in the Late 1960s, Leiden 2021.

2 Karl Marx: Grundrisse, translated by Martin Nicolaus, Harmondsworth 1973, p. 298.

3 Karl Marx: Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume 1, translated by Ben Fowkes, Harmondsworth 1976, pp. 284, 287.

4 Philip Leider: To Introduce a New Kind of Truth, in: New York Times, 25 May 1969, sec. II, p. 41.

5 Marx 1973 (as note 2), p. 297.

6 Karl Marx: Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, in: idem.: Selected Writings, ed. by David McLellan, Oxford 2000, p. 425.

7 Louis Althusser/Étienne Balibar: Reading Capital, London 2009, pp. 185, 191.

8 Marx 1976 (as note 3), p. 1019.

9 Ibid., p. 1012.

10 Marx 1973 (as note 2), p. 694.

11 Ibid., p. 705.

12 Marx 1976 (as note 3), p. 502.

13 Ibid., pp. 544–545.

14 Ibid., pp. 590, 616–617.

15 Althusser/Balibar 2009 (as note 7), p. 267.

16 Ibid., p. 271.
17 Georges Canguilhem: Machine and Organism, in: Jonathan Crary/Sanford Kwinter (eds.): Incorporations, New York 1992, p. 46.
18 Ibid., p. 56.
19 Marx 1976 (as note 3), p. 505, n. 18.
20 Carl Andre: A Note on Bernhard and Hilla Becher in: Artforum 11, 1972, no. 4, p. 59.
21 Bernhard Becher/Hilla Becher: Anonyme Skulpturen. A Typology of Technical Constructions, New York 1970.
22 Bernhard Becher/Hilla Becher: Anonyme Skulpturen, in: Kunst-Zeitung, 1969, no. 2, n. p.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Marx 1973 (as note 2), p. 706.
26 See, for example, Marx 1976 (as note 3), p. 547.
27 Gilbert Simondon: On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects, trans. Cécile Malaspina/John Rogove, Minneapolis 2017, pp. 247–248; Gilbert Simondon: Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information, translated by Taylor Adkins, Minneapolis 2020, pp. 35–36.
28 Simondon 2017 (as note 27), pp. 25–27.
29 Ibid., pp. 27–28.
30 Ibid., p. 59.
31 Becher/Becher 1969 (as note 22).
32 Becher/Becher 1970 (as note 21), n. p.
33 Ibid.
34 Hilla Becher: Documenting Industrial History by Photography, in: Industrial Archeology. The Journal of the History of Industry and Technology 5, 1968, no. 4, p. 373.
35 Marx 1973 (as note 2), p. 297.

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1 © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024; MUSEUM^{MMK} FÜR MODERNE KUNST; photo: Axel Schneider, Frankfurt am Main
2 © Estate Bernd & Hilla Becher, represented by Max Becher; courtesy Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur – Bernd and Hilla Becher Archive, Cologne

Veronica Peselmann

Undermining Publishing Monopolies. On the Production and Distribution of Artists' Books since the 1970s

In 1975, the Mexican artist and publisher Ulises Carrión issued his celebrated manifesto, *The New Art of Making Books*, in the literary supplement of the magazine *Plural*.[1] The original Spanish version was translated into various languages shortly thereafter and spread rapidly. For Carrión, the novel approach to book production entailed a self-made creation of the works and the recognition of bookmaking as an artistic practice. To break away from the established production dynamics of the time, the manifesto calls for a fundamental re-evaluation of the structure and form of a book. According to Carrión, the ‹new› book production will replace the division of labour in publishing as well as artistic outsourcing with institutionally independent artists who take responsibility for all stages of production.

Carrión's concept of book production is regularly referenced in the idea of artists' books during the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, theoretical discussion of the artists' book was instrumental in establishing it as a distinct artistic genre.[2] However, the genre does not adhere to any singular set of formative norms, resulting in a broad range of variations with different objectives. Furthermore, the production methods of artists' books are similarly as diverse as the artists themselves. Some artists deliberately reflect the capitalist division of labour in a critical manner, while others are simply unable or unwilling to delegate any aspect of the production process. The conceptual texts, on the other hand, counter this diversity of forms with a clear concept of production, which grounds on non-institutional channels of creating, exhibiting and distributing.[3] Following a critical, anti-capitalist approach, artists' books repeatedly address commercial book production, which is characterised by highly standardised, serialised and industrialised mechanisms, as well as a production chain comprising authors, publishers, printers, commercially organised shipping, and readers. In the book trade industry, it is primarily the publishers who determine which works are printed; conversely, in the art world, the galleries and other institutions play a pivotal role in deciding which artists and which works are exhibited, marketed, or supported financially in their production. In his essay on artistic publications, the curator and scholar of artists' books Tony White demonstrates that numerous protagonists of the artists' book scene initially established their careers through connections to leading galleries.[4] Yet, the impulse to arrive at an art that was democratised and decentralised led to the emergence of new forms of production and distribution.[5] Self-production, self-publishing and distribution via the state postal system became ways of circumventing established structures of the art and book market.[6] According to Lucy Lippard, the use of scaled-down and non-institutional production methods fostered the reach of art that could «bypass the

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system».[7] In this respect, artists' books from the 1960s and 1970s onwards differed significantly from the early forms of artistic publications, such as the *livres d'artistes*. In their heyday at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the *livres d'artistes* were produced as lavish limited editions by traditional publishing houses and executed by artists as commissioned works.[8] In particular, this commissioned and market-driven production, whose costly manufacturing is reflected in the economic collector's value of these books, stands in contrast to the ‹new way› of producing books as an artistic medium.

Artists respond in a variety of ways to the monopolies in the book and publishing industry. In Western art centres, the deliberate incorporation of inexpensive materials and production methods were instrumental aspects of artistic production that conveyed a critical perspective on capitalism and the societal system.[9] These approaches included minimal production chains, lower-quality designs and the production of limited editions, all of which represented a deviation from conventional and historical book production practices. Utilising more rudimentary production techniques can be situated within artistic practices that could be described as targeted de- and reskilling. This concept is based on a critical reflection of a traditional understanding of art production that assumes craft skills and trained practices as a legitimate condition of art production.[10] In her analysis of politically motivated art in the 1960s, Lippard identifies the central concern of countering the legacy of traditional art contexts and confronting it with other conceptual frameworks and materials.[11] However, the decision to utilise relatively simple production methods was not solely an artistic choice; it also corresponded to economic constraints as well as societal and cultural considerations. The possibility of producing art and distributing it outside relevant and influential settings was not a matter of course, especially for those artists who resided outside major Western cultural centres. Additionally, artists lacking unrestricted access to materials due to politically influenced production conditions and limited travel freedom were dependent on alternative production and distribution channels.

The work of Regina Silveira and Martin Kippenberger demonstrates how different conditions of artistic production require distinct processes of creation. Silveira's work exemplifies the methods employed under the constraints of politically determined conditions, where infrastructural prerequisites such as access to materials, printing, publication and exhibition opportunities were either unavailable or vastly limited. Any criticism of these conditions could only be addressed in a subtle and subversive manner. In turn, Kippenberger's prominent presence in public appearances and international exhibitions stands in opposition to this balancing act of producing and distributing art. He published his artists' books in large editions with the intention of increasing their reach. Without concern of censorship controls and violation of copyrights, his artists' books repeatedly satirise market leaders among the publishers in terms of layout and thematic orientation. In both examples, the medium of serially produced artists' books serves to achieve the most effective distribution possible, under different conditions in each case. In the following, I will suggest that the production of artists' books does not aim solely at the production of an object, but also incorporates a programmatic part that discusses and tests what production can mean within the context of political, artistic and economic paradigms.

Printed Interventions on Official Postcards

The early works of the Brazilian artist Regina Silveira, who is better known today for her installation and video works, demonstrate the political influence on her choice of artistic processes and materials. During the repressive regime of the Brazilian military dictatorship in the 1970s, she produced small-format printed works. Under the title *Brazil Today*, she created a series of four postcard booklets, each consisting of six postcards held together by a simple spiral binding. Each artists' book was published in an edition of forty.[12] For *Brazil Today*, Silveira drew upon tourist postcards that she was able to acquire from tourist stands at the local airport in Brazil. The postcards featured motifs that presented São Paulo in an idealised light, as a modern metropolis and in a merry excursion mood. Each booklet series is dedicated to a specific theme: *Birds*, *Indians from Brazil*, *The Cities* and *Natural Beauties*. During the process of making the booklets, Silveira edited the postcards by incorporating graphic elements, which she had printed on top of the cheerful motifs of Brazil. In the booklet *The Cities*, for instance, she has covered the luminous cityscapes of modern São Paulo with its bright blue sky and a view into the distance with a symbolically clear grid structure (fig. 1). The graphic additions in the *Birds* series are based on black and white silkscreen prints in which Silveira dealt with the flights of vultures and transferred the flight paths of these metaphorically threatening birds into diagrams. Some of these diagrams are the artist's own work, while others were appropriated from the magazine *Scientific American*.[13] In the series *Indians from Brazil*, she comments critically on the diminishing scope for indigenous living by incorporating industrial products such as small toy cars or by redrawing each woman in a group with individual circumferences to mark the spatial boundaries that remain as a free zone of movement. The booklets were produced with the use of limited materials and technical possibilities. In order to conserve the postcards she had purchased and not waste them on initial sketches, Silveira first made enlarged copies of the postcards. She then proceeded to experiment with her graphic interventions on these copies. The final graphic was scaled manually to the size of the postcard and either printed directly onto the front of the postcard in a stationery store using screen printing or applied by means of Letraset transfer sheets using their rub-down technique.[14] On the reverse of each postcard, Silveira stamped her name and the title and date of the work: BRAZIL TODAY REGINA SILVEIRA 77 (fig. 2). The imprinted stamp serves like a label that summarises concisely the central work data. In an unalterable and freely reproducible form, the stamp replaces both the handwritten and individually composed greetings usually sent with a postcard as well as the personal signature. With the stamp, Silveira declares the tourist postcards to be her own artistic works, whereby the impersonal medium negates any individuality and any reference to the artist's own handwriting. Although seemingly an inconspicuous-looking instrument, a stamp may have the power to determine the fates of applications, exhibitions and the parameters of what counts as art. In his text *Rubber Stamp Theory and Praxis*, Carrión reflected on how an artistic rubber stamp may reverse this connection: Despite their lack of power, they could take on glamorous forms and enhance the usual brittleness in their design.[15] Silveira, however, creates a wholly unpretentious stamp for *Brazil Today*, which imitates the official postmark to authenticate onward transport. She thereby effectively authorises herself with the capacity to validate her artistic creations as legitimate artworks and to grant them departure and artistic distribution.

1 Regina Silveira, *Brazil Today. The Cities*, self-published 1977, 10,5 × 15 cm, serigraphy on postcard, 6 pp., edition of 40

2 Regina Silveira, *Brazil Today. Natural Beauties*, self-published 1977, 10,5 × 15 cm, serigraphy on postcard, 6 pp., edition of 40, reverse side

In the 1960s, postcards and rubber stamps emerged as a significant artistic medium. This became particularly evident in the practice of «mail art», in which artists created mobile works and sent written correspondences or postcards internationally, using the postal system as a vehicle to transport their artworks.[16] From the 1960s to the 1980s, this movement played a pivotal role in the repressive art market in authoritarian countries, such as Central and South America, or the GDR.[17] It enabled artists, such as Silveira, to maintain an international artistic exchange via the post. She sent individual postcards of *Brazil Today* to other national and international artists, for example to *Other Books and So*, an alternative art bookshop, gallery and distributor of artists' publications run by Carrión in Amsterdam.[18] In the few exhibitions that Silveira was able to hold in São Paulo, she presented the postcards as thematically organised and bound booklets. A significant exhibition was the 1977 presentation *Poéticas Visuais* organised by Walter Zanini and Julio Plaza at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC-USP), a venue that occasionally permitted independent exhibitions.[19] Both temporary exhibitions and independent postal mailings were important methods of facilitating the accessibility of her work while maintaining control over its distribution. In view of the limited editions of the books and postcards, distribution was an inextricable aspect of the conceptual considerations underlying the production process.

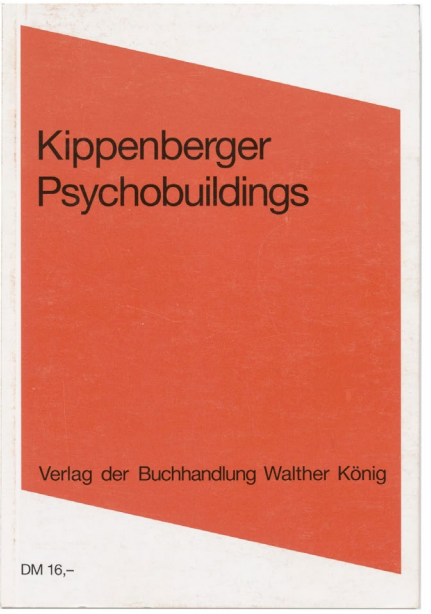
In *Brazil Today* and other early works, the artistic production exhibits a distinct hands-on approach, given that access to professional printers or publishers was limited. Nevertheless, the traces of this manual work recede when ensuring the subsequent distribution and consumption – the reception – of the postcards and artists' books. *Brazil Today* did not seek to emphasise Silveira's artistic signature or artistic skills by using either particularly simple or particularly extravagant practices or materials. The artistic decision to utilise simple materials and production methods is linked to the political and economic conditions of their creation. Silveira's work demonstrates that production is not a neutral, standalone phenomenon but is firmly embedded in political considerations pertaining to the distribution of the artwork. The format and working processes are closely related to the intended subsequent postal circulation and reception. Silveira's postcard books challenge the conventional understanding of distribution and consumption as mere afterthoughts to the production process. Rather, these aspects are conceptually embedded in the works from the outset, influencing Silveira's subsequent production decisions. The conceptual rubric of production, distribution and consumption are interlinked, prompting us to reconsider the processual temporality inherent in this conceptual sequence, which is often presented in a linear manner.

Adopting and Parodying the Publishing Industries

The serial making of artists' books and working in editions provided a mode of counteracting the traditional dynamics of production, exhibition and distribution within the art world, including the context of West German art. In contrast to prevailing political and social circumstances in Central and South America or the GDR, artists such as Martin Kippenberger were able to appropriate repeatedly elements of successful publishing businesses, such as layout or typography, and to invert them in their own works in a conspicuous and often humorous manner. Kippenberger made a strong case for establishing new conditions for exhibiting and distributing beyond conventional museum displays and accompanying catalogues, noting the

long lead times of established publishing and art institutions. In an interview with the artist Jutta Koether, he remarked: «It's just not okay for me to wait. It takes too long. After all, you do your work at your own pace. Everyone does this, including the artist. My satisfaction is that it's coming out.»[20] The impulse to exhibit his work and make it accessible as broadly as possible is an integral part and an inevitable consequence of artistic production. This aspect also formed a central focus of his role as a visiting professor at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. When Kippenberger was asked about how he taught his students the «structures of the business», he responded somewhat pompously that he would «show them how to make a catalogue from the work, an exhibition at Grässlin-Erhardt, from front to back, going through the whole system once».[21] In his own practice, however, he contrasted the previously described linear artistic process of work, catalogue and exhibition with a shorter production cycle. Publications like books, magazines, catalogues, posters and flyers which Kippenberger designed himself are not only a documentation of his artistic practices. He also exhibited the wide range of these ephemerals as art works in their own rights.[22] Such an approach enabled him to publish his works quickly, widely, and with minimal delay to completion.[23]

Kippenberger produced a comprehensive range of artists' books and magazines in a wide variety of formats, editions and materials. Some of these publications are kept in an emphatically simple style. For example, the work *sehr gut/very good* (1979) consists of loosely folded sheets and was published in an edition of 1,000 copies by the artist himself. In 1978, an inheritance left to him by his mother allowed Kippenberger economic, publishing and artistic independence for a period of time.[24] He founded his own publishing company, *Verlag Pikassos Erben* and cooperated with established editors, or satirised these established publishers in collaborations with smaller artist and gallery publishers. The range of cooperation and parody is particularly evident in his collaboration with the publishing house *Merve Verlag*, which was founded in 1970 in West Berlin and is known for its philosophical-theoretical content.[25] In 1980, Merve issued Kippenberger's picture series of portraits of women under the title *Frauen* in an edition of 1,500 books. The renowned publisher of theoretical works altered its standard book layout according to the artist's specifications, omitting the author's biography and the otherwise obligatory reference to the other editions in the series.[26] A few years later, in 1988, another collaboration with Merve for Kippenberger's book *Psychobuildings* fell through (fig. 3). Kippenberger responded to it by publishing a book in the same format as the Merve series, but with the title layout reversed. The publisher was *Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König*, which was still relatively new but had already gained a reputation within the art scene. König issued the series of uncommented black and white photographs of sculptures and architecture in an edition of 1,000 copies.[27] The cover indicates a price of DM 16 for *Psychobuildings*. The position of the printed price tag corresponds to the original layout but is equally reversed as the trademark trapezoid. Furthermore, it is approximately the same price as the Merve editions. In adapting and inverting the format and layout of well-known publishers with a proven market monopoly on certain genres, Kippenberger also draws upon the popularity of these monopolies, which are habitually associated with certain expectations of material quality and content. This adaptation often results in a discrepancy between visual anticipation and the actual content of his artists' books. He employs this appropriation as an eye-catching promotion strategy and as a way of highlighting the influence and



3 Martin Kippenberger, *Psychobuildings*, 1988, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne, 17 × 12 cm, edition of 1,000

4 Martin Kippenberger, *CALMA-Trio: 1986. Jazz zum Fixsen*, 1986, [Calma-Trio: Albert Oehlen, Rüdiger Carl & Martin Kippenberger], Galerie Grässlin-Ehrhardt, Frankfurt am Main, 15 × 9,4 cm, edition of 1,000

social status of publishers, which play a crucial role in forming what is considered as canonical knowledge, as well as shaping buying and reading behaviour through the book cover. He openly satirises the bourgeois distinction that often goes hand in hand with the purchase of certain recognised book series. For instance, in *Virtuosen vor dem Berg* (1991), he imitates Baedeker, a publishing house known for its detailed and richly illustrated travel guides printed on heavy glossy paper; with *Grond. Der Schoppenhauer* (1994) he mimics the monograph series from the publisher Rowohlt that presents an array of selected biographies of historical figures, predominantly male, thereby influencing the humanistic canon. For the work *1986. Jazz zum Fixsen,* he appropriated the distinctive format of *Reclam's Universal Library*, and used the characteristic orange colour that Reclam reserves for non-German books (fig. 4). The *Calma Trio* which signs as author comprises the artists Albert Oehlen, Rüdiger Carl and Martin Kippenberger, who appeared together as a band. The Galerie Grässlin-Erhardt issued the series of abstract drawings in an edition of 1,000 copies. Although this print run does not correspond to the number of the market-leading publisher imitated here, it is certainly comparable to editions produced for the book trade. Regarding the distribution, however, the *Calma Trio* did not rely on the conventional strategies of the book trade. Instead, they accelerated the process by distributing the book to every concert-goer with a valid ticket who attended one of their concerts in Cologne on 11 March 1987.[28] This strategy of self-administration and marketing testifies to a deliberate bypassing of traditional exhibition and sales formats. At the same time, it expands the realm of art and the circle of recipients into areas beyond

galleries and museums. By employing and subverting the production methods of the publishing industry, Kippenberger creates an artistic and economic strategy within his oeuvre of artists' books. His use of large editions inverts the long-held belief that art is a unique, original commodity, and instead demonstrates the adaptability of art as a commodity produced within the context of the book trade.

Kippenberger's and Silveira's works illustrate specific strategies of how artists' books challenge publishers' monopolies in different political and societal contexts. Regardless of the contrasting conditions of production, these case studies show how artists' books participate in redefining art by decisively realigning the relation between production, distribution and consumption. In appropriating and inverting the strategies of the publishing market, the medium of artists' books challenges an artistic production, wherein unique objects are created for a broader audience in distinct institutional settings. An exclusive, one-of-a-kind object is no longer the central concern; instead, the focus shifts toward multiples, a broad self-led distribution, and the individual reception of the objects. In the context of the artists' book, the concept of singularity is not limited to the production side, but rather, extends to the reception, with the individual act of holding and leafing through the artists' book. In this context, it is noteworthy how some curatorial practices respond to this concept. The way artists' books were exhibited at the two *documenta* exhibitions, *d5* and *d6*, for example, differs significantly. In 1972, the *d5* exhibited artists' books for the first time alongside other quotidian items such as magazines, postage stamps and gaming cards.[29] Art historian Anna Sigrídur Arnar demonstrates that, with a few exceptions, the majority of exhibited artists' books, including renowned editions such as Ed Ruscha's *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), were openly accessible and could be picked up and read by visitors.[30] Four years later, at *d6* in 1977, artists' books were conceptualised as an artistic medium in their own right and presented in a less accessible way. Most of them were now exhibited in protected display cases and could no longer be handled manually.[31] The curatorial reorientation and the presentation in showcases, protected from visitors' hands, reflected a change in the status of artists' books as an artistic medium.[32] Such institutional revaluation responds to the increased presence, visibility and value of the book as an artistic form. Although the shielded presentation contradicts the concept of the artists' book since the 1960s and 1970s, it is precisely the means of production and distribution that increased public presence within and beyond art discourse, which ultimately has allowed artists to comment on or undermine artistic market structures with the medium of the artists' book.

Notes

1 Ulises Carrión: El arte nuevo de hacer libros, in: Plural 4, 1975, no. 41, pp. 33–38.

2 Lucy Lippard: The Artist's Book Goes Public, in: Art in America 65, 1977, no. 1, pp. 40–41. Johanna Drucker: The Century of Artists' Books, New York 2004 (1994).

3 Lippard 1977 (as note 2). Tim Guest: An Introduction to Books by Artists', in: idem (ed.): Books by Artists, Toronto 1981, pp. 7–8.

4 Tony White: From Democratic Multiple to Artist Publishing: The (R)evolutionary Artist's Book, in: Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America 31, 2012, no. 1, pp. 45–56.

5 White 2012 (as note 4), pp. 47–49. Judith Hoffberg: Idea Poll, in: Art-Rite, artists' books special issue, 1976–77, no. 14, pp. 8–9.

6 Hoffberg 1976/77 (as note 5), p. 9. Carrión discusses the potential of mail art as a strategy for democratising art and disseminating it more

widely. Ulises Carrión: Mail Art and The Big Monster, in: idem: Second Thoughts, Amsterdam 1980, pp. 28–46, here p. 43.

7 Lucy Lippard: Conspicuous Consumption. The New Artists' Books, in: Joan Lyons (ed.): Artists' Books. A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook, pp. 49–57, here p. 50.

8 Monika Schmitz-Emans: Buchkunst als Definitionsproblem, in: idem (ed.): Literatur, Buchgestaltung und Buchkunst. Ein Kompendium, Berlin/Boston, 2019, pp. 14–18, here p. 16. Viola Hildebrand-Schat: Die Kunst schlägt zu Buche. Das Künstlerbuch als Grenzphänomen, Lindlar 2013, pp. 85–123.

9 Lucy Lippard: Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972, Berkeley 1997, pp. 8–9.

10 John Roberts: Art After Deskilling, in: Historical Materialism, 2010, no. 18, pp. 77–96. For a discussion of skilling and the extent to which re- and deskilling was a central component of art in the 1960s and 1970s, see Helen Molesworth: Work Ethic, University Park 2003.

11 Lippard 1997 (as note 9); Julia Bryan-Wilson: Art Workers. Radical Practices in the Vietnam War Era, Berkeley 2009, p. 146. Dominic Rahtz: Metaphorical Materialism. Art in New York in the Late 1960s, Leiden/Boston 2021, p. 18.

12 Daniela Maura Ribeiro: Regina Silveira e Julio Plaza. Agentes da arte conceitual brasileira, in: Intelligere. Revista de História Intelectual, 2021, no 11, pp. 111–156, here p. 148.

13 Johanna Hardt: The Power of Reproduction. An Interview with Regina Silveira, in: Berlin Art Link. Online Magazine for Contemporary Art, May 2019; https://www.berlinartlink.com/2019/05/02/the-power-of-reproduction-an-interview-with-regina-silveira/, last accessed on 20 March 2024.

14 Teixeira Coelho/Regina Silveira: The Art of Correcting Reality, in: ZUM Magazine. Revista de Fotografia, 2015, no. 8, https://revistazum.com.br/en/zum-magazine-8/the-art-of-correcting-reality/, last accessed on 16 April 2024.

15 Carrión 1980 (as note 6), p. 33. The text first appeared in 1978 in the monthly art bulletin *Rubber* (Amsterdam: Stempelplaats, June 1978, no. 6), and was later reprinted in Carrión's collected works *Second Thoughts*.

16 Ken Friedman: The Early Days of Mail Art. An Historical Overview, in: Chuck Welch (ed.): *Eternal Network. A Mail Art Anthology*, Calgary/Alberta 1995, pp. 3–16. Zanna Gilbert: Networking Regionalism. Long Distance Performativity in the International Mail Art Network, in: TAREA 2017, no. 4, pp. 84–96.

17 Zanna Gilbert: Art in Contact. The Mail Art Exchange of Paulo Bruscky and Robert Rehfeldt, in: Art in Print 5, 2015, no. 3, pp. 36–41, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26350655, last accessed on 20. April 2024.

18 Ribeiro 2021 (as note 12), p. 144.

19 Ibid., p. 143.

20 Martin Kippenberger: Gute Kunst, Intensität und gute Laune. Gespräch mit Jutta Koether, in: Martin Kippenberger. Kippenberger sans peine / Kippenberger leicht gemacht, ed. by Daniel Baumann, exhib. cat., Genève, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva 1997, pp. 39–86, here p. 54 (transl. VP).

21 Ibid., p. 56 (transl. VP).

22 Diedrich Diederichsen: The Bookworm, in: Uwe Koch (ed.): Annotated Catalogue Raisonné of the Books of Martin Kippenberger 1977–1997, Cologne 2002, pp. 5–10, here p. 7.

23 On Kippenberger's exhibition and marketing strategies cf. Fiona McGovern: Die Kunst zu zeigen. Künstlerische Ausstellungsdisplays bei Joseph Beuys, Martin Kippenberger, Mike Kelley und Manfred Pernice, Bielefeld 2016, pp. 107–127.

24 Koch 2002 (as note 23), p. 39.

25 Thomas Felsch: Der lange Sommer der Theorie. Geschichte einer Revolte 1960–1990, Munich 2015.

26 Ibid., p. 46.

27 Ibid., p. 166.

28 Ibid., p. 123.

29 Anna Sigrídur Arnar: Books at documenta: Medium, Art Object, Cultural Symbol, in: On Curating, 2017, no. 33: documenta. Curating the History of the Present, ed. by Nanne Buurman/Dorothee Richter, pp. 151–164, here p. 153.

30 Sigrídur Arnar 2017 (as note 29), p. 158.

31 Ibid.

32 On the history of touching art, cf. Constance Classen: 2017. The Museum of the Senses. Experiencing Art and Collections, London 2017.

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1–2 © Regina Silveira, Estúdio de Arte Regina Silveira

3–4 © Estate of Martin Kippenberger, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Monika Wagner

Andere Arbeit? El Anatsuis *Communal Works*

El Anatsui ist heute einer der wenigen afrikanischen Künstler, die international in der ersten Liga spielen.[1] Der in Ghana geborene, überwiegend in Nigeria lebende und arbeitende Künstler wurde 2007 durch sein monumentales, während der Biennale im venezianischen Stadtraum installiertes Werk *Fresh and Fading Memories* in Europa bekannt.[2] Seitdem waren seine Arbeiten auf der *documenta* in Kassel und an vielen anderen Orten – in Osaka, Toronto, New York, London – zu sehen. 2019 fand im Münchner Haus der Kunst die von den nigerianischen Kunsthistorikern Chika Okeke-Agulu und Okwui Enwezor kuratierte Retrospektive unter dem Titel *Monumental Scale* statt.[3]

Die für den Außenraum konzipierten Arbeiten, so etwa für die Royal Academy in London, die Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin oder die Fassade des Palazzo Fortuny in Venedig, sind von wahrhaft monumentalen Dimensionen (Abb. 1). Der gigantische Vorhang am Palazzo Fortuny, der in variantenreichen Lichtbrechungen metallisch schimmerte und dessen Eigenleben sich im leisen Rascheln und Wispern bemerkbar machte, bestand – wie die meisten von Anatsuis Arbeiten der letzten zwanzig Jahre – aus zahllosen Kronkorken sowie flach gewalzten und gefalteten Flaschenmanschetten, wie sie für Wein und andere alkoholische Getränke üblich sind. Die ungeheure Menge dieser in der Regel nur etwa 10 × 15 cm großen Metallfolien sowie Kronkorken von zirka 3 cm Durchmesser wurde mal von der farbigen Vorderseite, mal von der metallfarbenen Rückseite verwendet. Die vergleichsweise winzigen Aluminiumfolien, die den riesenhaften Metallvorhang bildeten, ließen in Venedig an Mosaike denken. Hier und da wies der Vorhang kleine Löcher und Risse auf, wodurch er analog zum Mauerwerk des

1 El Anatsui, *Fresh and Fading Memories*, 2007, Kronkorken, Aluminiumbanderolen, Kupferdraht, 12 × 18 m, Fassade des Palazzo Fortuny, Venedig

kritische berichte 52, 2024, Nr. 4. https://doi.org/10.11588/kb.2024.4.106266
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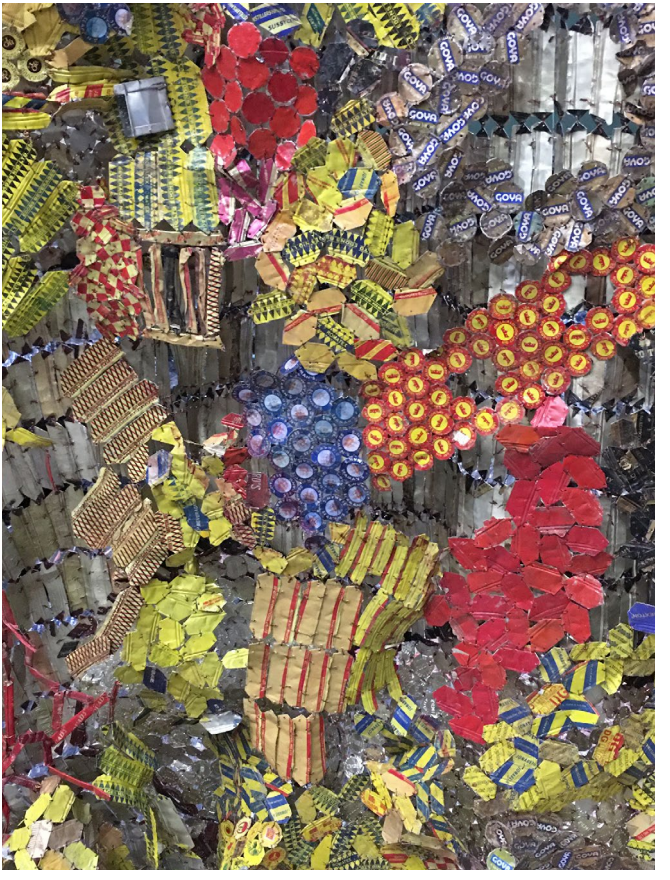


2 El Anatsui: *Behind the Red Moon*, 2023, Kronkorken, Aluminiumbandderolen, Kupferdraht, Turbinenhalle, London, Tate Modern, Detail

Palastes als zeitlicher Index erschien, ein Eindruck, den der Titel der Installation – *Fresh and Fading Memories* – unterstützt.

El Anatsuis Arbeiten im Innenraum, an die man naturgemäß näher herantreten kann, entfalten eine überwältigende farbige Pracht und lassen auf den Metallelementen unterschiedliche Firmenlabels erkennbar werden, die zusammen mit den Kronkorken und Manschetten in ihrer seriellen Ordnung Ornamente erzeugen. Auch treten die Drähte, die die einzelnen Elemente miteinander verbinden, deutlich in Erscheinung. Vor allem aber zeigt die Nahsicht, dass die Masse der seriellen Elemente manuell bearbeitet wurde (Abb. 2), was der Künstler unmöglich allein leisten kann.

Postkoloniale Verflechtungen

Das Material dieser Arbeiten gilt hierzulande als Abfall. Mit ausgeschiedenen Dingen und Materialien künstlerisch zu arbeiten, ist nicht neu, doch hat Abfall heute an Brisanz gewonnen.[4] In enormen Mengen wurden jahrzehntelang (und werden zum Teil noch heute) Abfall und ausgediente Dinge aus Europa vor allem nach Westafrika, nach Ghana und Nigeria, verschifft, Regionen, die zu Kolonialzeiten als Goldküste legendär waren. Diese Art der Abfallentsorgung reicher Länder ist inzwischen Thema zahlreicher afrikanischer Künstler:innen. So etwa von Njoki Ngumi, einer kenianischen Filmemacherin, Medizinerin und Aktivistin, die auf der *documenta 15* vor der Orangerie in der Kasseler Karlsaue aus Lumpenballen, wie sie für den Export

3 El Anatsui: *Yam Mound, Peak-Projekt*, ab 1999 realisiert, variable Größe, Dosendeckel aus Blech, Haus der Kunst München, 2019, Detail

nach Afrika vorgesehen sind, eine Kinohütte hatte aufbauen lassen. Zu der Installation mit dem programmatischen Titel *Return to Sender* gehörten auch Chargen von Elektroschrott, die meist denselben Weg über den Atlantik nach Süden nehmen.

Auch wenn Anatsui immer wieder darauf hinweist, dass er keine Recyclingkunst produziere, so ist doch offensichtlich, dass seine berühmtesten Arbeiten aus gebrauchten Elementen bestehen, die durch einmalige Nutzung unbrauchbar wurden.[5] Das heißt, die zum Material der Kunst mutierten Dinge haben eine Vorgeschichte. Dieser vorausgehende Gebrauch, die Berührungen durch andere Menschen, die diesen Materialien eingeschrieben sind, ist dem Künstler wichtig.[6]

Zudem betont Anatsui, dass nur Materialien Verwendung fänden, die auf lokalen Märkten gehandelt werden, *domestic goods* also. Soweit sich das anhand der Markenzeichen von Firmen und Produkten wie Pilot, Romatex oder Flying Horse und deren entsprechenden Farben überblicken lässt, stammen die Alkoholika aus nigerianischer Produktion. Doch liegen auch der afrikanischen Warenwirtschaft transkontinentale Beziehungen zugrunde. Im Hinblick auf die überwiegend von Rum-, Whiskey- oder Brandyflaschen stammenden Metallfolien weist Anatsui auf die Geschichte der asymmetrischen Verhältnisse des kolonialen Handels hin. Alkohol ist demnach eine Signatur des kolonialen Erbes:

> «To me, the bottle tops encapsulate the essence of the alcoholic drinks which were brought to Africa by Europeans as trade items at the time of the earliest contact between the two peoples.»[7]

Alkohol ist über den sogenannten Dreieckshandel zwischen Westafrika, Europa und den beiden Amerikas eng mit der Kolonialgeschichte verquickt. Europäische Händler:innen ließen – oft mit Hilfe lokaler Herrscher – Einwohner:innen auch im Landesinneren gefangen nehmen und verkauften sie als Sklav:innen auf die Zuckerrohrplantagen von Haiti, Brasilien und den Südstaaten Nordamerikas. Von den transatlantischen Gebieten segelten sie mit Zucker und Zuckerrohrmelasse nach Europa; daraus wurde Schnaps gebrannt und zusammen mit Gewehren für die gewaltsame Rekrutierung weiterer Sklav:innen nach Westafrika verschifft.[8] In

der Geschichte interkontinentaler Verstrickungen sind also der Handel und Konsum von Alkohol tief verankert.

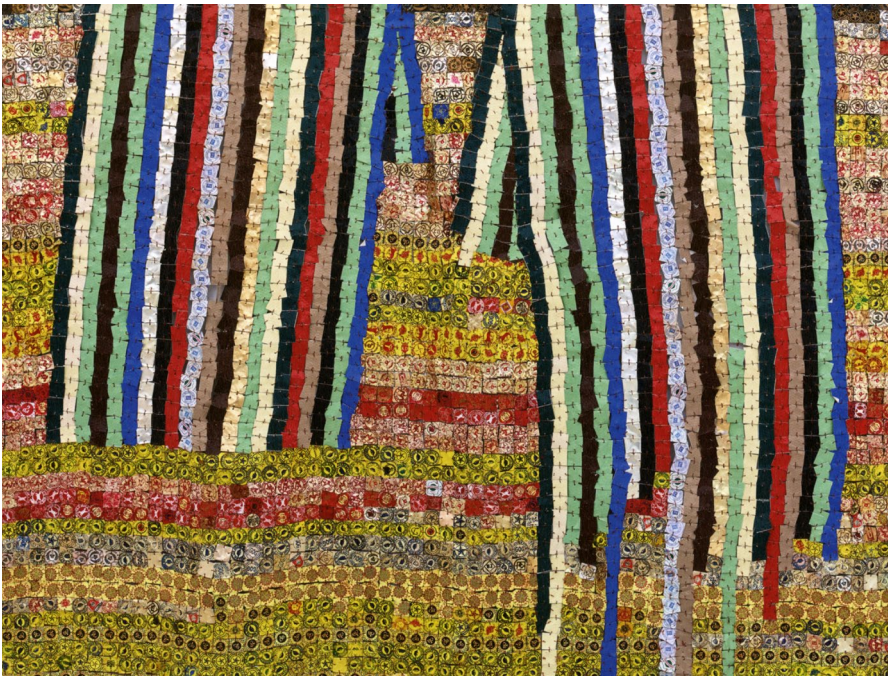
In der globalisierten Ökonomie bestehen derartige Verflechtungen auch weiterhin. Selbst die harmlos erscheinenden Deckel von Milchdosen, wie sie in dem *Peak* betitelten Projekt vom Ende der 1990er Jahre (Abb. 3) Verwendung fanden, sind Ausdruck solcher Beziehungen.[9] Sie stammen von Kondensmilch- und Milchpulverbüchsen, die von Nestlé für den afrikanischen Markt produziert werden.[10] Inzwischen transportiert der weltweit agierende Schweizer Konzern seine Waren zwar nicht mehr per Schiff nach Westafrika, sondern hat in Nigeria eine eigene Fabrik errichtet, die jedoch Milchpulver aus den Niederlanden verarbeitet. Ist der Inhalt der Produkte verbraucht, kursiert das Verpackungsmaterial als Abfall oder als Recyclingstoff. Anatsuis Ausgangsmaterialien sind also auf unterschiedliche Weise mit der globalen Warenzirkulation verschaltet.

Recycling beziehungsweise Umnutzungen (*recuperation*) gehören in Westafrika zum alltäglichen Leben. Auf den ebenso gigantischen wie berüchtigten Märkten von Lagos werden alle erdenklichen Teile ehemaliger Material- und Dingzustände umgeschlagen und – sofern nötig – auch umgeschmolzen, umgearbeitet und weiterverkauft. Auf diese Weise ist in Nigeria eine Abfallökonomie ungeheuren Ausmaßes entstanden. Während Blechdosen vielfach als Aufbewahrungselemente direkte Wiederverwendung finden, werden die Dosendeckel ebenso wie die Flaschenmanschetten und Kronkorken als Materialien gesammelt, eingeschmolzen, gegossen, gewalzt und zu neuen Dosen, zu Kochtöpfen und allen nur denkbaren nützlichen Dingen verarbeitet.[11] Aufgrund der verschiedenen Metalllegierungen und ihrer unterschiedlichen Schmelztemperaturen werden die Teile gewissermaßen sortenrein gesammelt und gehandelt.

Werkstattarbeit

In der Umgebung von Anatsuis Werkstatt in Nsukka, einer Universitätsstadt im Südosten Nigerias (dem Biafra der 1960er Jahre), haben die Altmetallhändler schnell gelernt, was dort gebraucht wird. Sie bieten die industriell produzierten und entnutzten Metallelemente vorsortiert an. Das weitere Sortieren etwa nach Größe, Farbe oder Verarbeitungsart übernehmen Mitarbeiter:innen nach Anweisung von Assistenten in Anatsuis Studio. Dort werden die Metallteile flachgeklopft, gestaucht, ausgestanzt, gefaltet, geknickt und an den Rändern auf Holztischen händisch durchbohrt und anschließend mit dünnen Kupferdrähten miteinander verknüpft. Dadurch lassen sie sich zu immer größeren Einheiten verbinden, die faszinierende Muster ergeben, die vielfach mit der Kente-Weberei verglichen wurden (Abb. 4).[12] Die Vergleichbarkeit liegt neben den farbigen Mustern vor allem in der textilen Flexibilität der Flächengebilde. Doch die Verbindung der einzelnen Metallelemente unterscheidet sich grundlegend vom Weben, bei dem horizontale und vertikale Fäden miteinander verkreuzt werden. Vielmehr basieren die Metallverbindungen in Anatsuis Werken auf dem Knoten, einer basalen Kulturtechnik, die Gottfried Semper in seiner kulturtheoretischen Untersuchung *Der Stil* von 1860 als «das allgemein gültige Symbol der Urverkettung der Dinge» beschrieb.[13] Der simple Knoten ist das entscheidende Scharnier all der Verbindungen, die aus den kleinteiligen Elementen durch Addition monumentale Werke entstehen lassen.

In einem arbeitsteilig organisierten Prozess werden in Anatsuis Werkstatt die normierten Elemente händisch bearbeitet und dadurch gewissermaßen individualisiert. Die ohne Zentimetermaß hergestellten Perforierungen der Kronkorken,



4 El Anatsui: *Continuity and Change*, 2017, Kronkorken, Aluminiumbanderolen, Kupferdraht, 320 × 314 cm, Detail

Aluminiummanschetten und Büchsendeckel variieren leicht, so dass die benachbarten Perforierungen oft nicht exakt gegenüber liegen. Je nachdem wie stramm der Kupferdraht dann verknotet wird, fällt auch die Flexibilität unterschiedlich aus, so dass sich die ‹Gewebe› dementsprechend stauchen oder knicken lassen und räumliche Dimensionen annehmen. Dieselbe Arbeit kann eine freistehende Skulptur ergeben, einen Vorhang oder einen Teppich. Die Form fällt nie gleich aus. Anatsui charakterisiert die Metallarbeiten als «living objects, like human beings», was weniger einer animistischen Dingmagie als vielmehr den enormen formalen Potenzialen der Metallverknotungen geschuldet ist.[14]

Communal Works

Die aus tausenden von Kronkorken und Flaschenbanderolen aufwändig hergestellten Metallverknüpfungen hat Anatsui als Ausdruck seiner kommunalen Verbundenheit bezeichnet. 2010 äußerte er in einem Interview mit Monica Blignaut: «My resources, materials and human labor are sourced from the community, and I believe that makes me a community artist.»[15] Das heißt, die Materialien wie die Arbeitskraft werden als gesellschaftliche Ressource verstanden. Diese kommunale Genese von Anatsuis Arbeiten wird auch in einer Reihe von Interviews, in Artikeln ebenso wie in Susan Mullin Vogels grundlegender Monografie von 2020 hervorgehoben. Dort heißt es, seine Arbeiten seien «communal and handmade by craft process, stitching» und zeigten «a close connection to community and solidarity».[16] «The solidarity of a community of makers is visible in every inch of Anatsui's hangings».[17] Vogel sucht mit der Solidarität kommunale Arbeit im Sinne einer spezifisch afrikanischen, vorindustriellen Gemeinschaftstätigkeit zu stärken.

5 Arbeitssituation in El Anatsuis Werkstatt in Nsukka, Screenshot

Mit der ‹community› als produktiver Kraft wird eine Instanz aufgerufen, die in ethnologischer und sozialhistorischer Perspektive als wichtige indigene Institution präkolonialer afrikanischer Gesellschaften gilt. Über Nigeria und insbesondere über das Gebiet der Igbo, der im Gebiet von Nsukka verbreiteten Bevölkerungsgruppe, finden sich mehrere Untersuchungen zum «communalism».[18] Wie der Kulturanthropologe Herbert M. Cole ausführt, habe dort in vorkolonialer Zeit der «communal spirit» eine wichtige Rolle gespielt und gelte auch für die traditionelle Kunstproduktion der Igbo.[19] In seinem Überblick über die Veränderungen in der Auffassung und Realisierung von kommunaler Arbeit im benachbarten Ghana argumentiert Samuel Asamoah ähnlich.[20] Demnach wurde mit dem Bedeutungsverlust lokaler Autoritäten und der Implementierung kolonialer Gesetze auch kommunale Arbeit geschwächt und sei heute nahezu verschwunden.[21] Dieser Rückgang des «communal spirit» gilt als Zeichen der Modernisierung, während sein partielles Fortbestehen für die ökonomische Unterentwicklung Afrikas verantwortlich gemacht wird.[22] Inzwischen kursieren im Netz jedoch wieder Apelle, um «the spirit of communal labor» wiederzubeleben – etwa um ganz praktisch Gesundheits- oder Verkehrsprobleme in Eigeninitiative einer lokalen Gemeinschaft anzupacken, anstatt sich auf die Regierung zu verlassen.[23]

Um zu verstehen, was das Kommunale für Anatsuis Kunstproduktion bedeuten könnte, soll die Arbeit in der Werkstatt genauer betrachtet werden. Für die Bearbeitung Abertausender einzelner Metallelemente werden viele Hände benötigt (Abb. 5). Der erste Schritt, die Beschaffung der Ausgangsmaterialien, also der Unmengen an Kronkorken, Flaschenbanderolen oder Büchsendeckel wird, wie erwähnt, inzwischen von Händler:innen übernommen. Die Metamorphose des angelieferten Materials in ein Kunstwerk erfolgt unter der Regie des Künstlers. Anatsui beschäftigt je nach Größe eines Auftrags oder der konzipierten Arbeit unterschiedlich viele Personen. Neben den zwanzig bis dreißig Assistenten gibt es bei größeren Aufträgen und Projekten, wie sie sich inzwischen häufen, zeitweise mehr als 150 Mitarbeiter:innen. Diese temporär gebrauchten Arbeitskräfte rekrutieren sich aus der lokalen «community»; da der Künstler fast vierzig Jahre lang an der Universität Bildhauerei unterrichtete, kommen durch Mundpropaganda alle möglichen Leute,

6 Zusammenstellen der «blocks» auf dem Werkstattboden in Nsukka

unter ihnen zahlreiche junge Männer, die auf einen Studienplatz warten, aber auch Straßenhändler:innen aller Art, Bauern, Hausfrauen und so weiter zusammen.[24] Sie alle müssen zeitlich flexibel und ad hoc verfügbar sein; Stéphanie Vergnaud spricht daher in den *Cahiers d'études africaines* mit der Begriffsschöpfung des Futurologen Alvin Toffler von einer *Adhocratie*.[25] Gleichzeitig charakterisiert sie die Arbeit in Anatsuis Werkstatt idealisierend als Gabentausch. Der für vor- und nichtkapitalistische Gesellschaften wichtige Gabentausch zeichnet sich jedoch gerade dadurch aus, dass zwar Äquivalente getauscht, diese aber nicht über Geld verrechnet werden. Genau das galt in vorkolonialer Zeit auch in der traditionellen Igbogemeinschaft als «communal work»:

> «No monetary cash needed to be paid, he need only to prepare food and provide the traditional palm-wine for the co-workers at the end of the day as a sign of gratitude. And when his friends need his help also in their work he does not hesitate instead returns this gesture.»[26]

Zwar soll hier keineswegs bezweifelt werden, dass in Anatsuis Werkstatt auch nichtmonetäre Werte zu wechselseitigem Nutzen transferiert werden, doch ist heute die Bezahlung der Mitarbeiter:innen nach einem ausgehandelten System auf der Basis von investierter Zeit, Produktivität und Kompetenz selbstverständlich zentraler Bestandteil der Werkstattpraxis. Neue Mitarbeiter:innen werden vom Werkstattmanager Uchechukwu Onyishi in die Arbeit eingewiesen und mit entsprechendem Material und Werkzeug ausgestattet.[27] Danach erarbeiten sie relativ selbständig kleine Teile für das spätere Kunstwerk. Im Hinblick auf künftige Projekte werden Depots sogenannter *blocks* auf Vorrat angelegt, ohne dass deren exakte Verwendung schon festgelegt wäre. Die Komposition der verschiedenen vorgefertigten *blocks* erprobt Anatsui dann zusammen mit einigen Mitarbeitern auf dem Boden der Werkstatt (Abb. 6); danach werden die einzelnen *blocks* zusammengeknüpft. Einige

Assistenten haben im Lauf der Zeit so viel Erfahrungswissen erworben, dass sie, wie Anatsui betont, auch an künstlerischen Entscheidungsprozessen beteiligt werden. Eine strikt tayloristische Teilung von kreativer Konzeption und mechanischer Ausführung wird also vermieden.

Durch die unterschiedlichen Erfahrungen im Umgang mit Metall (die in Westafrika praktisch jeder Mann besitzt), vor allem aber durch die jeweilige Experimentierfreude und Kreativität der Mitarbeitenden, entstehen durchaus gewollte Varianten bei der Bearbeitung der Metallelemente. Die Varianz erprobter Handarbeit nutzte zum Beispiel auch Antony Gormley für seine Werkgruppe *Field*, die aus 40.000 und mehr handgroßen Tonskulpturen besteht.[28] Die Arbeit wurde ab 1990 zunächst von rund hundert mexikanischen Arbeiter:innen einer Ziegelmanufaktur hergestellt. Die in den Industriestaaten weitgehend verdrängte, beziehungsweise ausgelagerte, im Kunstkontext aber gewürdigte Handarbeit ist in Gormleys Installation durch den Abdruck der Hand im weichen Ton gespeichert. Die händische Bearbeitung, die in industrialisierten Ländern unbezahlbar wäre und wohl auch deshalb dort so hochgeschätzt wird, überformt in Anatsuis Arbeiten das industriell produzierte Material, so dass die Kunstwerke Ausdruck von zwei sehr verschiedenen Arbeitsweisen und wirtschaftlichen Regimen sind. Aus der Überlagerung von industrieller Fertigung und händischer Arbeit beziehen die Werke einen Großteil ihres ästhetischen Potenzials.

El Anatsuis Mitarbeiter:innen müssen nicht im Atelier anwesend sein, sondern können auch zu Hause arbeiten, was vor allem für Frauen sowie Personen aus der Umgebung von Nsukka eine attraktive Arbeitsform ist. Doch unabhängig davon, wo sie arbeiten, niemand ist an feste Arbeitszeiten gebunden. In einem Interview mit Laura Leffler James antwortete Anatsui auf die Nachfrage, inwieweit damit arbeitsrechtliche Probleme verbunden seien, nein, es gebe keine «trade-union problems […] This is a studio and not a factory situation».[29] Gearbeitet wird nach individueller Verabredung und im eigenen Tempo beziehungsweise Rhythmus. Die dezentral und flexibel Arbeitenden erfüllen damit Kriterien, die Antonio Negri und Maurizio Lazzarato unter postfordistischen Arbeitsbedingungen in den westlichen Industrieländern als Charakteristika der «umherschweifenden Produzenten» nennen.[30] Allerdings werden Anatsuis Mitarbeiter:innen sehr gut bezahlt – mitunter wurden sogar Anschubfinanzierungen für Ausbildungen bereitgestellt. Der Künstler fungiert also als eine Art Umverteiler – doch bleibt er als Autor und Unternehmer alleiniger Eigentümer des Kunstwerks.[31] Alle anderen verfügen nur über ihre Arbeitskraft, nicht über das von ihnen mitgeschaffene Werk. Indem das Kunst-Werk außerhalb der Werkstatt als Ware auftritt, sprengt es den Rahmen des Kommunalen. Relevant wird der Unterschied mit der Einspeisung eines Werkes in den internationalen Kunstmarkt, wo inzwischen siebenstellige Beträge erzielt werden.

In den traditionellen europäischen Kunstwerkstätten standen Mitarbeiter ebenfalls unter der Signatur des Meisters; sie waren jedoch in der Regel langfristig beschäftigt und vertraglich eingebunden.[32] Letzteres gilt auch für gegenwärtige künstlerische Großlaboratorien mit Kreativimperativ wie das von Ólafur Elíasson, auch wenn die Laufzeiten der Verträge dort sehr kurz sind (meist ein Jahr).

Die Überwindung der fordistischen Disziplinarökonomie durch kreativwirtschaftliche Strukturen ist seit langem im Gang. Andreas Reckwitz spricht generell von der künstlerischen Produktion als einem «Experimentalraum, der mit prä- und antifordistischen Mitteln eine postfordistische Kreativökonomie denkbar macht».[33]

Anatsuis *adhoc-kratisches* ‹Gemeinschaftshandwerk› korreliert mit seinen geradezu archaischen Produktionsmitteln, seinen fluktuierenden, temporären Beschäftigungen und den ent-regelten Arbeitszeiten vormodernen Arbeitsweisen. Nicht die Produktionsmittel, aber die Arbeitsorganisation entspricht *strukturell* indessen dem, was in Manager:innenkreisen, wie zum Beispiel dem internationalen Regus Konzern, der weltweite Büronetzwerke entwickelt, als Unternehmensmodell der Zukunft gepriesen wird.

> «Die steigende Bedeutung, die der Kreativität und Improvisationsfähigkeit in flexiblen und projektbasiert ausgerichteten Organisationsformen von Arbeit zukommt, begründet die Konstituierung des Kulturfeldes als neue, normative Leitbranche.»[34]

Speziell Teile von Afrika scheinen – so Hannah Hudson, die für den Regus Konzern arbeitet, für postfordistische Kapitalinteressen interessant zu sein. Und zwar besonders deshalb, weil dort informelle Arbeit und höchste Flexibilität vorherrschen, bürokratische Schranken ebenso wenig existierten wie gewerkschaftlich organisierte Arbeitsstrukturen und keine sozialen Sicherungssysteme überwunden werden müssten. Solche Bedingungen erlauben, «das andernorts vorherrschende Beschäftigungsmodell zu überspringen und direkt zu einer freieren Zukunft mit mobilen und flexiblen Arbeitsmodellen überzugehen», um so größere Autonomie für den Einzelnen und höchste Produktivität für das Unternehmen zu erreichen.[35]

‹Andere Arbeit› droht – ohne patriarchale Protektion und soziale Verantwortung – unter den Bedingungen des internationalen Kapitals zum Normalfall kreativer Ausbeutung zu werden.

Anmerkungen

1 Grundlegend: Susan Mullin Vogel: El Anatsui. Art and Life, München/London/New York 2020.

2 Von 1975 bis zu seiner Emeritierung 2012 lehrte El Anatsui in Nsukka (Nigeria). Heute lebt er zeitweise wieder in Ghana. 2007 war er auf der Biennale vertreten, doch das monumentale Werk am Palazzo Fortuny gehörte zur Ausstellung *Artempo. When Time Becomes Art*. 2019 war El Anatsui im ersten eigenen Pavillon von Ghana auf der Biennale beteiligt. Dazu: Mae-ling Lokko: El Anatsui, in: Ghana Freedom. Ghana Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, hg. v. Nana Oforiatta Ayim, Ausst.-Kat., Venedig, London 2019, S. 69–77.

3 Okwui Enwezor/Chika Okeke-Agulu: El Anatsui. The Reinvention of Sculpture, Bologna 2022, S. 335–345. Das Buch sollte ursprünglich die Münchner Ausstellung begleiten, konnte aber wegen Enwezors prekärem Gesundheitszustand nicht rechtzeitig abgeschlossen werden.

4 Trash. From Junk to Art, hg. v. Lea Vergine, Ausst.-Kat., Museo d'arte moderna e contemporanea di Trentino e Rovereto, Mailand 1997; Dietmar Rübel: Abfall. Materialien einer Archäologie des Konsums, in: Ders./Monika Wagner (Hg.): Material in Kunst und Alltag (Hamburger Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 1), Berlin 2002, S. 119–138; Monika Wagner: Abfall im Museum oder Kunst als Transformator?, in: Annegret Hüsch (Hg.): From Trash to Treasure. Vom Wert des Wertlosen in der Kunst, Ausst.-Kat., Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Bielefeld 2011, S. 49–62.

5 Vogel 2020 (wie Anm. 1), S. 68.

6 El Anatsui/Laura Leffler James: Convergence. History, Materials and the Human Hand. An Interview with El Anatsui, in: Art Journal 67, 2008, Nr. 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2008.10791303, S. 36–53, hier S. 38; Vogel 2020 (wie Anm. 1), S. 158.

7 El Anatsui, zitiert nach Denver Art Museum anlässlich der Ausstellung *When I Last Wrote to You about Africa*, 2012, https://www.denverartmuseum.org, Zugriff am 02.04.2024.

8 Julian Lucas: How El Anatsui Broke the Seal on Contemporary Art, in: The New Yorker, 11.01.2021, o. S.

9 Enwezor/Okeke-Agulu 2022 (wie Anm. 3), S. 243–256.

10 https://www.frieslandcampina.com, Zugriff am 24.04.2024.

11 Die Metallverarbeitung generierte in Westafrika einen Schmiedegott, der im 19. Jahrhundert in Benin z. B. als Figur aus Metallabfällen gestaltet wurde. Vgl. Kerstin Schankweiler: Die Mobilisierung der Dinge. Ortsspezifik und Kulturtransfer in den Installationen von Georges Adéagbo, Bielefeld 2012, Abb. S. 160. Eine zeitgenössische Adaption von

Calixte Dakpogan findet sich bei Kerstin Pinther: Die Kunst Afrikas, München 2022, S. 65.

12 Vogel 2022 (wie Anm. 1), bes. S. 74–77 zeigt Detailaufnahmen exemplarischer Verbindungen. Enwezor/Okeke-Agulu 2022 (wie Anm. 3), S. 53–59.

13 Gottfried Semper: Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, Bd. 1, Frankfurt am Main 1860, S. 181.

14 Lucas 2021 (wie Anm. 8), o. S.

15 Monica Blignaut: El Anatsui, Interview vom Mai 2020, in: https://www.monicahaven.com/post/el-anatsui, Zugriff am 25.04.2024.

16 Vogel 2022 (wie Anm.1), S. 201.

17 Ebd.

18 Modestus Kelechi Ukwandu: A Critique of African-Igbo Communalism in the Light of Kant's Kingdom of Ends Formula, Diss. Tübingen 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.15496/publikation-29083, Zugriff am 27.03.2024.

19 Herbert Cole (1969), zit. bei Vogel (wie Anm. 1), S. 172.

20 Samuel Asamoah: Historical Overview of the Development of Communal Labor from Precolonial to Post Independent Ghana, in: International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications 8, 2018, Nr. 4, S. 10–16, http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.8.4.2018.p7603, Zugriff am 24.03.2024.

21 Ukwandu 2019 (wie Anm. 18), S. 163–164.

22 Ebd., S. 150; Emmanuel Efem Etta/Dimgba Dimgba Esowe/Offiong O. Asukwo: African Communalism and Globalisation, in: African Research Review 10, 2016, 3, Nr. 42, Juni 2016, S. 302–316, hier S. 309–310.

23 Denis Andaban: Resurgence of Communal Labour. A Prospect for Rapid Development in Daffiama, Bussie, Issa, 27.01.2022, in: https://www.modernghana.com/news/1134865/the-resurgence-of-communal-labour-a-prospect.html, Zugriff am 26.05.2024.

24 Vogel 2022 (wie Anm.1), S. 161, 172.

25 Stéphanie Vergnaud: L'atelier d'El Anatsui. La liberté, la matière et la sociabilité, in: Cahiers d'études africaines 3, 2016, Nr. 223, S. 713–724, hier S. 720.

26 Aloysius Cheta Chikezie: The Value of Work in Nigeria with Reference to Laborem Exercens, Diss. Würzburg 2015, S. 152, https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bvb:20-opus-147592, Zugriff am 24.04.2024.

27 Vogel 2022 (wie Anm. 1), S. 70–71.

28 Monika Wagner: Geliehene Hände. Antony Gormleys Field, in: Philippe Cordez/Matthias Krüger (Hg.): Werkzeuge und Instrumente, Berlin 2011 (Hamburger Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 8), S. 185–198.

29 Anatsui/Leffler James 2008 (wie Anm. 6), S. 44.

30 Toni Negri/Maurizio Lazzarato/Paolo Virno: Umherschweifende Produzenten. Immaterielle Arbeit und Subversion, Berlin 1998.

31 2019 wurde ihm – nicht zuletzt für seine sozialen Verdienste – der Ibo-Titel eines Ikedire verliehen.

32 Magdalena Bushart/Henrike Haug (Hg.): Geteilte Arbeit. Praktiken künstlerischer Kooperation, Wien 2020.

33 Andreas Reckwitz: Die Erfindung der Kreativität. Zum Prozess gesellschaftlicher Ästhetisierung, Berlin 2013, S. 149.

34 Bernadette Loacker: kreativ prekär. Künstlerische Arbeit und Subjektivität im Postfordismus, Bielefeld 2010, S. 18.

35 Hannah Hudson: Ist Afrika der neue Vorreiter im Bereich flexible Arbeit?, in: Magazine Germany, https://www.regus.com/work-germany/de-de/is-africa-the-new-champion-of-flexible-working/, Zugriff am 24.04.2024. Hudson hat auch am Institute of Development Studies der University of Sussex unterrichtet.

Bildnachweise

1, 4, 6 © El Anatsui. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; Susan Mullin Vogel: El Anatsui. Art and Life, S. 72, 92, 139 (Foto: Susan Mullin Vogel)

2 © El Anatsui. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; Foto: Monika Wagner

3 © El Anatsui. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; Okwui Enwezor/Chika Okeke-Agulu: El Anatsui. The Reinvention of Sculpture, Bologna 2022, S. 263

5 http://atelierlog.blogspot.com/2020/09/el-anatsui-2.html, Screenshot aus: art21 exclusive. Studio Process. El Anatsui, USA

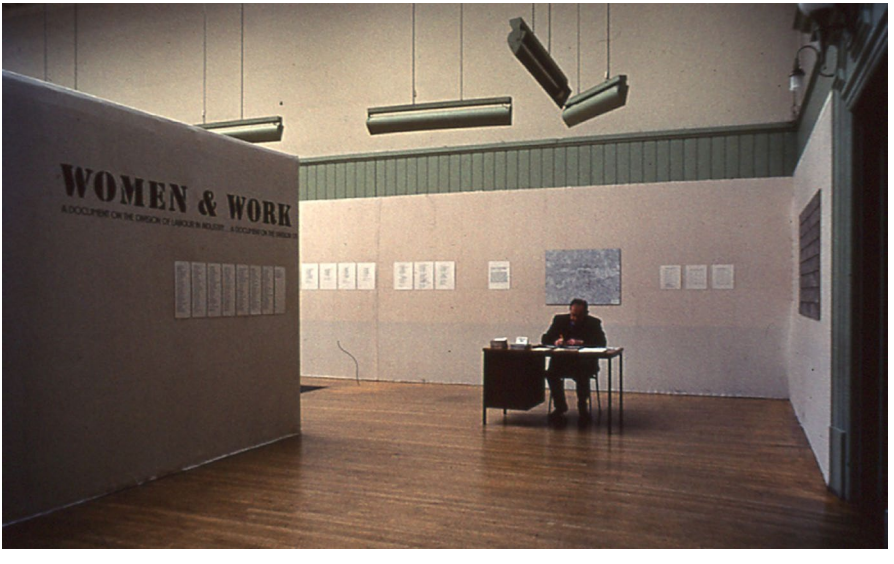
Friederike Sigler

Women and Work: Feminist Factory Interventions in 1970s London

The establishment of the Artists' Union in London in 1972 led to the formation of the internal Women's Workshop, an advocacy group for female members that campaigned for more studio space for mothers and greater visibility for women in exhibitions.[1] The objective was thus to strengthen the intersection between women artists as «a group of largely unemployed people (who make no money from their art)» and women «who are generally not paid for their work, i.e. housework and child-rearing».[2] The next step, therefore, would be to network with women in other trade unions:

> «The Women's Workshop maintains that women, whatever sector they are employed in, are largely unorganised and consequently receive the lowest wages and work in the worst conditions; it is our intention to support our sisters in their struggle for unionisation and also in their actions as organised workers.»[3]

The interest in working conditions also extended to artistic practice. Building on the agenda of the Women's Workshop, an affinity group consisting of Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt and Mary Kelly decided to work as a collective on women's working conditions in industrial contexts.[4]



1 Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt, Mary Kelly, *Women and Work: A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry*, 1975, South London Art Gallery, exhibition view

kritische berichte 52, 2024, Nr. 4. https://doi.org/10.11588/kb.2024.4.106267
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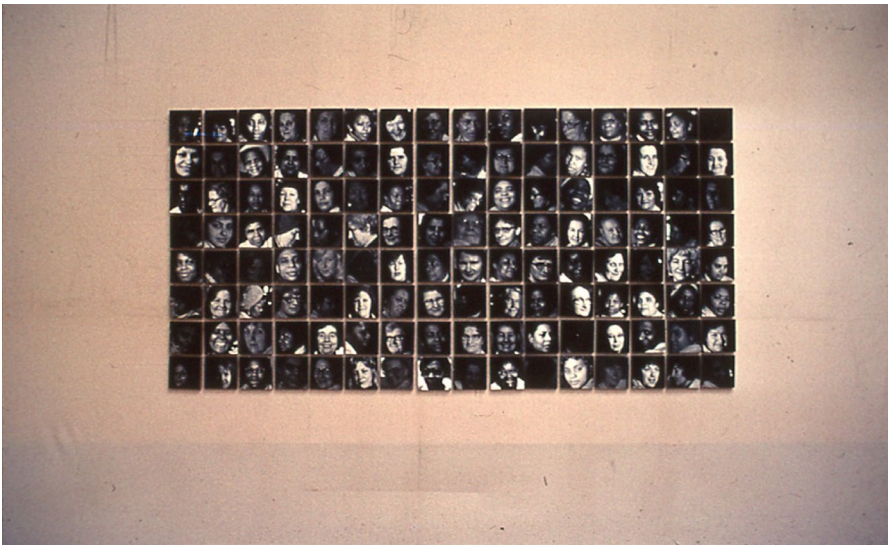
The result of over two years of research conducted in a canning factory in East London was their 1975 *Women and Work: A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry.* It can be described as a conceptual artistic work, a sociological investigation and an exhibition all in one. The focus was on the question of how the Equal Pay Act of 1970, a law that provided for the abolition of gender discrimination in factory wages by 1975, affected women's work. In 1975, the artists presented the findings of their artistic research at the South London Art Gallery, situated in close proximity to the factory. The exhibition, which employed a variety of media, including tables, diagrams, documents, photographs, sound recordings and two projected film loops, depicted the identical work processes of a female and a male factory worker (fig. 1). I propose to argue that by means of the research conducted in the factory, the translation of the findings into an exhibition format and the application of a scientific-conceptual artistic technique, Harrison, Hunt and Kelly exposed the unequal gender relations within industrial production and their causes. Furthermore, I will contend that they used their artistic practice to establish a connection to their own artistic production relations, which, like their industrial counterparts, they also made visible as a site of sexual differences by means of their curated factory intervention.

Exhibiting Exploitation

The setting and subject of Hunt, Harrison and Kelly's research was the canning factory of the South London Metal Box Co. in the Bermondsey neighbourhood of Southwark, which had employed women for over a century. In the exhibition catalogue, the artists described their approach as follows:

> «200 women participated in the documentation, 150 were individually photographed, more than 40 interviewed and every job (un-skilled, semi-skilled, skilled), for both men and women, was discussed, filmed or photographed. T & GWU [Transport and General Worlers' Union] shop stewards and covenors at the factory were consulted on every issue and the personnel managers and some section supervisors cooperated in providing relevant information on wages structures and job evaluation etc.»[5]

The research findings were presented in sections. The initial section comprised an inventory of over 150 geometrically arranged photographic portraits of female workers (fig. 2). It was followed by an overview of the history of the factory and the involvement of female workers in the production history of manual labour, mechanisation and automation as used in the cannery since the beginning of the twentieth century. The principal section, which addressed the evolution of labour relations between 1970 and 1975, commenced with an examination of working conditions. It presented the numbers, distribution and economic status of female employees, their income and the average salaries of women and men in the cannery and industrial sectors in England from 1948 to 1973. The second section, entitled «Hourly Paid Employees Only», comprised a series of photographs and the names of all female employees, along with tabulations of their marital status and salaries, photocopied time cards of female and male workers, as well as photocopied records of their turnover and 24 daily schedules transcribed from interviews with the artists (fig. 3). Parts of the Equal Pay Act negotiations between the trade unions and the factory were presented on a table, including photocopied original documents and photographs of all the jobs carried out by women and men, divided into levels of difficulty, including those that were performed exclusively by women. In addition, there were explanations of the evaluation of work, reports from nurses on injuries,



2, 3 Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt, Mary Kelly, *Women and Work: A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry*, 1975, South London Art Gallery, exhibition views

documents on working conditions in relation to sick pay and pensions, and reports on the resolutions of the TUC [Trades Union Congress] Women's Conference of 1975. Furthermore, a series of documents was displayed on the wall, accompanied by a reference system comprising reading material on tables, two films and audio recordings in which workers discussed their experiences of working in the factory.

The results of Harrison, Hunt and Kelly's quantitative and qualitative analysis indicated that, as a consequence of the Equal Pay Act, the factory had negotiated a pay system that would apply to workers of all genders.[6] However, the findings of the artistic research also demonstrated that, since the implementation of the Act, women had been predominantly engaged in work that required low levels of skill and responsibility and were paid less accordingly. For instance, in 1975, all female employees paid by the hour were engaged in «unskilled» roles, including «operatives, assemblers, packers, inspectors, cleaners and canteen assistants». Conversely, 77 % of female employees paid by the month were employed in grades two to three, which included «clerks, cashiers, secretaries, typists and office machine operators.»[7] In 1975, 44 % of employees were women, 95 % of whom earned less than £ 1,500 per year. In contrast, 42 % of men were paid more than £ 2,000 per year, with 10 % earning more than £ 3,000 per year. In 1974, the majority of hourly-paid women were between the ages of 51 and 60. Additionally, 45 % of hourly-paid women workers were employed on a part-time basis, and 95 % of women working part-time were married.[8]

Harrison, Hunt and Kelly's research revealed that the South London Metal Box Co. had implemented new labour and pay structures in compliance with the Equal Pay Act. However, female workers continued to face disadvantages. They were repeatedly promoted into roles and contracts that did not result in improved pay, perpetuating the existing gender-based pay inequality. Additionally, the cannery underwent a restructuring of its work and production processes during the final phase of artistic research.[9] The introduction of shift work and machinery was intended to compensate for the financial losses incurred during the recession.[10] Consequently, part-time working models and simple manual tasks were de facto banned, and a significant proportion of the work previously carried out by women was eliminated. This ultimately resulted in the loss of employment for a large proportion of female employees.[11]

However, *Women and Work* also made visible what the traditional recording of labour was unable to capture, namely that women were generally less qualified, more often engaged in manual and physically demanding work, and were paid under worse conditions. The reasons for this, as the exhibition demonstrated, extended beyond the factory gates. These included, first and foremost, gender-based disadvantages in terms of work, education, salary and health, as well as the women's dual role of industrial and care worker. The high number of part-time jobs among women and the daily routines on display indicated that a large number of female workers engaged in another job before and after the factory shift, that is reproductive work. According to the statistical data, this double burden had had a long-lasting effect on the way they worked in the factory, on their qualifications, their flexibility, their employment, their salary and therefore on all levels of their working and living environments. *Women and Work* thus revealed what the British Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s also made an issue, namely that the gender-based disadvantage of women extended to the industrial sector and was largely due to

the double burden of care work, which in turn was not recognised as work.[12] The female workers' production conditions were shared by the artists, as emphasised by the Women's Workshop, which was equally influenced by the women's movement. In other words, the production conditions were as gendered in industry as they were in the field of art.

Exhibiting Antagonisms

Although the artists in *Women and Work* did not explicitly address their own work in the factory, key information about the research phase could be derived from the exhibition. The photocopied documents made it evident that Harrison, Hunt and Kelly were in communication with the factory management, gained insight into internal processes and policies, and finally received permission to exhibit in the South London Gallery both the factory's own documents and the knowledge acquired on site, thus making it accessible to the public. Further documentation revealed that the artists held communication with the works councils, who provided them with both information and documents pertaining to their work and permitted them to gain insight into the negotiations with the factory management regarding the implementation of the Equal Pay Act. The total of 150 photographic portraits, the 24 written daily routines of individual employees and the sound recordings also demonstrated that the artists had engaged in conversations with the workers and had therefore spent time together. This focus brought *Women and Work* close to the political and artistic factory interventions that had become popular since the 1960s. They include the work of Chris Marker and Mario Marret, who filmed in an occupied factory in Besançon in 1967 and subsequently supported the formation of the Groupe Medvedkin film collective.[13] Another example is the Berwick Street Collective, which, along with Mary Kelly, accompanied cleaners who worked in large office buildings at night for their film *Nightcleaners Part I* (1975), as well as the efforts of a campaign to organise them into a union.[14] Furthermore, the Artist Placement Group (APG), founded in London, is worthy of note for its long-standing involvement in organising collaborations between artists and industrial companies since the mid-1960s.[15] It is reasonable to posit that the management of the factory in Bermondsey had anticipated a collaboration with the artists akin to that which the APG had facilitated, rather than the harsh criticism that was delivered in the exhibition. The final outcome of the research provoked such a strong reaction from those responsible that they banned the artists from the premises following the opening.[16]

For Harrison, Hunt and Kelly, this response was arguably foreseeable, if not inevitable. After all, it was precisely the kind of political reaction that the artists had sought to meet through their conceptual techniques. Namely, that their artistic investigations would be recognised as serious analyses and evidence for their research theses, so that their artistic work would have a political effect – on the factory, on the public and on the workers. In order to achieve this, they adopted the exhibition format that had been employed within conceptual practices since the 1960s. And with the South London Art Gallery, Hunt, Harrison and Kelly had selected an exhibition venue close to the factory with the intention of appealing to as many local workers as possible and encouraging them to visit the exhibition.[17] This decision to target a demographic that was both non-artistic and socially precarious was consistent with the conditions of the Greater London Arts Association Thames Television

Fund to benefit lower-income communities across Greater London, which provided the financial backing for the exhibition.[18] According to various reports, the artists' efforts were successful, and some of the women workers whom Harrison, Hunt and Kelly had interviewed for the exhibition attended the opening.[19] The exhibition programme also included a public event at which trade union representatives and activists from the women's movement were invited to discuss women's working conditions and strategies to improve them. Judith Hunt, the female representative of the trade union T.A.S.S. [Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section], took part in the discussion, as did Rosalind Delmar from the National Council for Civil Liberties (N.C.C.). Also in attendance were representatives of the civil liberties advocacy group Liberty (L.), a co-founder of the Night Cleaners Campaign, which sought to unionise night cleaners and the Metal Box Factory women's shop steward Jean Alexander, as well as workers from the factory.[20]

The structured scientific research and the integration of the addressees, that is the workers, into the artwork, brought the exhibition close to another political practice: the conricerca (‹co-research›). The so-called ‹militant investigation› was developed in the political environment of the *Quaderni Rossi*, the journal of the operaist movement in Italy in the early 1960s, based on Karl Marx's questionnaires for workers (1880) with the intention of reactivating the workers' «antagonistic class consciousness» and encouraging them to resist.[21] Sociological methods were to be used to examine working conditions on site in the factory, whereby, in contrast to a purely scientific approach, «the worker would not simply be the object of investigation, but would actively participate in the analysis of his integration into the production process» and «the analyst would not see himself as outside the relationship under investigation».[22] In *Women and Work* , the employees were both the subjects of the inquiry as well as the recipients of the exhibition, which served as a forum for discussing their insecure working and living conditions together. In this manner, the exhibition at the South London Art Gallery became the place that the philosopher Gerald Raunig actually ascribed to the industrial factory, that is the «place of its shared exploitation», that had consequently served to unite the workers.[23] However, Harrison, Hunt and Kelly did not bring the factory into the art institution; rather, they created a space with their exhibition that had a similar organising effect for women workers as the factory had for the male workers. The lower numbers of trade union memberships compared to their male colleagues and the lack of resistance from female workers in Bermondsey indicated that the factory did not serve the same function for women – and therefore could not provide the basis for a militant investigation and the resulting strike.[24] Consequently, *Women and Work* represented an attempt to provide the missing organising platform and to make the exhibition a more conducive environment for organising or even resisting.

Exhibiting the Means of Production

The artists presented the results of their research at the South London Art Gallery, utilising a range of media, including copied documents and film recordings. The graphics created using sociological notation methods constituted an integral component of the exhibition and aimed to facilitate the reading of the texts and the deciphering of the statistics, diagrams and other graphic models, in addition to viewing the film material and listening to the tape reports (fig. 4). The history and

4 Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt, Mary Kelly, *Women and Work: A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry*, 1975, South London Art Gallery, exhibition views

analysis of factory work were presented in a chronological and linear manner, in order to guide the viewer through the exhibition. The path was defined by fixtures combined with other materials that could be read in depth while seated at the tables or standing at a reading desk. Accordingly, the documents were not packaged behind glass or in other displays, but mounted directly on the wall with small nails at the same height next to each other. In this way, the research findings, exhibition architecture, hanging and other curatorial interventions together contributed to a highly accessible and straightforward presentation of the information, as well as a plain, scientific and objective aesthetic, in line with the established style of conceptual art from the mid-1960s onwards.[25] This aesthetic employed information and text-based media, as well as the «primacy of the linguistic sign» to supplant the conventional «credo of self-evident visuality and objecthood», as art historian Sabeth Buchmann observed.[26] The objective was to «relativise the central topoi of expression and subjectivity, of individual handwriting and craftsmanship in Western art from the 1940s to the 1960s – in other words, a work- and author-centred concept of production», ideally replacing phenomenological values of experience with cognitive processes of reception that also allowed very little subjective leeway.[27]

The utilisation of conceptual methodologies in *Women and Work* initially served to reinforce the integrity of the research outcomes and elevate artistic practice to the level of scientific research, as evidenced by the reaction of the factory. At the same time, the necessity of the artistic approach, which transcended scientific methods and made the ‹sexual difference› of the industrial mode of production visible, demonstrated that both scientific notation and conceptual art had their limitations. In fact, the conceptual commitment to language and information-based media entailed working with the same linguistic systems, thereby implying an acceptance of the gaps that primarily affected women. From a psychoanalytically influenced linguistic perspective, writing and language were regarded as media that categorically excluded women and their ‹female› concerns because they could not be represented.[28] In examining the work of Mary Kelly, who employed conceptual techniques in her *Post-Partum Document* (PPD; 1973–1979), curator Helen Molesworth has argued that the artist's engagement with ‹women's issues› compelled her to challenge the conventional procedures of conceptual art.[29] In the case of PPD, Kelly had transposed the work of a mother, which was considered ‹natural› and ‹essential›, and therefore outside of social relations and categorically not work, into a scientific language that was usually used to analyse industrial work. By employing this strategy, Kelly would have undermined conceptual art, which, despite its political aspirations, was constrained by the modernist paradigm and thus perpetuated the dichotomy between public and private domains.[30]

In this sense, *Women and Work* can be understood as both a feminist variation of conceptual art and a feminist deconstruction of conceptual art. As a feminist variation of conceptual art, it employs conceptual methods to reveal the sexual difference of the capitalist-industrial mode of production. As a feminist deconstruction of conceptual art, it makes the limits and gaps of its own artistic mode of production visible, demonstrating how deeply sexual differences are also anchored in the production of art. Consequently, *Women and Work* represents an investigation of both the field of industrial labour and the field of art, with the objective to demonstrate that women, as both workers and art workers, are subjected to the same working and production conditions.

Notes

1 This article is a revised version of the chapter ‹Arbeit ausstellen: Feministische Fabrikinterventionen & Streikpraktiken› from my book *Arbeit sichtbar machen. Strategien und Ziele in der Kunst seit 1970* (Edition Metzel, Munich, 2021). Mary Kelly: A Brief History of the Women's Workshop of the Artists' Union, 1972–1973 (1973), reprinted in: Hilary Robinson (ed.): Feminism-Art-Theory. An Anthology 1968–2000, Oxford 2001, p. 87.

2 Tate Britain Archive, Protocol of the Artists' Union Women's Workshop, 16 April 1972.

3 Kelly (1973) 2001 (as note 1), p. 87.

4 Tate Britain Archive, Protocol of the Artists Union Women's Workshop, 19 March 1972.

5 Women and Work. A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry. By Kay Hunt, Mary Kelly, Margaret Harrison, exhib. cat., London, South London Art Gallery, London 1975, p. 3.

6 The evaluation method was also disclosed in the exhibition, and the exhibited document is reprinted in the catalogue as «Description of the Direct Consensus Method of Job Evaluation which was used to establish the basis for a new wage structure at South London Metal Box Co. in 1971». See exhib. cat. Women and Work 1975 (as note 5), pp. 17–18.

7 Cf. Kay Hunt/Mary Kelly: Women & Work. A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry. A Brief Summary of Findings from the Exhibition, in: Social Process/Collaborative Action: Mary Kelly 1970–75, exhib. cat., Vancouver, Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver 1997, pp. 83–90, here p. 84.

In the course of the evaluation, the tasks were divided into three grades according to competence and salary, and there were no female employees in the third grade, which included managers and directors. See Women and Work 1975 (as note 5), pp. 5–8.

8 See exhib. cat. Social Process 1997 (as note 7), p. 83.

9 See ibid., pp. 87–89.

10 See ibid.

11 See ibid.

12 Four central themes were negotiated at the 1970 National Women's Liberation Movement Conference, which is regarded as the inaugural event of the English women's movement: «(1) Equal pay for equal work, (2) Equal education and equal opportunities, (3) Free contraception and abortion on demand, (4) Free 24 hour nurseries.» Siehe Florence Binard: The British Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s: Redefining the Personal and the Political, in: Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique 22, 2017, pp. 1–17, here p. 6. Many of the artists at the Women's Workshop were themselves active in the women's movement. See Roszika Parker/Griselda Pollock: Fifteen Years of Feminist Action: From Practical Strategies to Strategic Practices, in: idem. (eds.): Framing Feminism. Art and the Women's Movement 1970–1985, London 1987, pp. 3–78.

13 See Trevor Stark: ‹Cinema in the Hands of the People›: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film, in: October 2012, no. 139, pp. 117–150.

14 See Siona Wilson: From Women's Work to the Umbilical Lens: Mary Kelly's Early Films, in: Art History 31, 2008, no. 1, pp. 79–102.

15 See Antony Hudek/Alex Sainsbury: The APG Approach, in: The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966–79, exhib. cat. London, Raven Row, London 2012, pp. 3–6.

16 See Rosalind Delmar: Women & Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry, in: Spare Rib 1975, October, pp. 32–33, here p. 32.

17 See Janet Watts: Pandora's Tin Box, in: The Guardian, 19 May 1975.

18 See exhib. cat. Women and Work 1975 (as note 5), p. 4; see Press release to the exhibition Women & Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry, South London Art Gallery, May 1975, https://slgarchive.org/index.php/women-work-press-release-page-1, last accessed on 8 July 2024.

19 See John A. Walker: Left Shift. Radical Art in 1970s Britain, London, New York 2002, p. 147.

20 See Note on a Discussion Event in the Course of the Exhibition Women &. Work: On the Division of Labour in Industry, 24 May 1975, https://slgarchive.org/index.php/women-and-work-event-1, last accessed on 8 July 2024.

21 See Dominik Götz: Operaismus. Geschichte & Philosophie des autonomen Marxismus in Italien, Vienna, Berlin 2020, pp. 46–78. Marx's questionnaires, which he had conceived for the purpose of a larger survey, also aimed to raise workers' awareness of their exploitative working conditions through questions and answers. See Karl Marx: Fragebögen für Arbeiter [1880], in: Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW), Berlin 1962, vol. 19, pp. 230–237.

22 See Götz 2020 (as note 21), p. 69.

23 See Gerald Raunig: Fabriken des Wissens. Streifen und Glätten, Zurich 2012, vol. 1, p. 15.

24 See exhib. cat. Women and Work 1975 (as note 5), pp. 27–28.

25 This aesthetic applies mainly to the conceptual art of Europe and North America. Although the «linguistic techniques – which enquire into the structural conditions of what makes art art – were certainly influential», argues Sabeth Buchmann, they were «nonetheless of a locally specific character». See Sabeth Buchmann: Conceptual Art, in: Hubertus Butin (ed.): DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst, Cologne 2006, pp. 49–53, here p. 50.

26 See Sabeth Buchmann: Denken gegen das Denken. Produktion, Technologie, Subjektivität bei Sol LeWitt, Yvonne Rainer und Hélio Oiticica, Berlin 2007, p. 12.

27 Ibid., p. 11.

28 See Juli Carson: Excavating Discursivity. Post-Partum Document in the Conceptualist, Feminist, and Psychoanalytic Fields, PhD Thesis, Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2000, https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/9386, last accessed on 8 July 2024, pp. 287–312.

29 See Helen Molesworth: House Work and Art Work, October 2000, no. 92, pp. 71–97.

30 See ibid., p. 86.

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1–4 Margaret Harrison, Kay Fido Hunt, Mary Kelly, *Women and Work: A Document of the Division of Labour in Industry*, 1975, South London Art Gallery, exhibition views, courtesy of the South London Gallery, https://slgarchive.org/index.php/women-work-a-document-on-the-division-of-labour-in-industry

Camilla Paolino

Social Reproduction Struggles and Art Making in 1970s Italy: On the Work of Le Pezze and Gruppo Femminista Immagine di Varese

Introduction

While reflecting on the representation of labour in the visual arts, art historian T. J. Clark argued that in the 1960s and 1970s there were «very few images of work».[1] This statement seems to rest on an art-historical blind spot, for it does not consider the multitude of images of women giving birth, raising children, cooking, ironing, or washing the dishes that proliferated in Europe and the United States after the Second World War. That is to say, the multitude of representations of women at work within the household that punctuated postwar and contemporary Western art, together with the various art practices that may not depict labour as a motif but nonetheless engage with it. In this article, I aim to confront this blind spot, while unearthing its ideological, sociocultural and material roots. I intend to do so by looking at the entanglement of reproductive and creative work that shaped a specific strand of artistic production in 1970s Italy. I will notably address the practices of two women-only art collectives, namely Le Pezze and Gruppo Femminista Immagine di Varese, which tackled the mechanisms of social reproduction and the labour it entailed by means of art, alongside activists and intellectuals who gathered in the same years in the Wages for Housework network and fought against the way this form of labour was made invisible.[2] The two collectives were in fact composed of artists who were active in the contemporary art scene and at the same time constrained in the traditional roles of wives, mothers and housewives, that is, forced to deal on a daily basis with the naturalisation of unpaid reproductive work.[3] This very condition, together with the generalised climate of protest against it that was unfolding in Italy at the time within the horizon of the social reproduction struggle, impacted on the artistic work of those who were close to it, engendering a peculiar contamination of practices.

To analyse the production processes of both collectives, I will perform two operations. First, I will endeavour to reveal the material nexus between reproductive and artistic work articulated in the practices examined, in order to understand how the material conditions of a daily life spent within the household could affect artistic production at the level of materials, techniques and forms. Or, conversely, how these women resorted to art to make visible their living and working conditions as both artists and «household workers», given that the visual languages they mobilised led to the heart of specific conditions and modes of production tainted by the imperatives of social reproduction.[4] Secondly, I will attempt to shed light on the strategies these artists deployed to challenge the prevailing myths of modern art: a necessary operation so that they could emerge from the household as both political subjects

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and creative subjectivities. Notably, I venture the hypothesis that they contributed to dispel the myths of the autonomy of the art object and of the creative genius, by emphasising instead the contingency of the creative gesture. They did so, I argue, while repositioning themselves as «producers», of both meaning and art, rather than mere «reproducers» or «consumers».[5]

Metonymies of Reproductive Work in the Artistic Production of Le Pezze

The series of paintings *Le Pezze* was produced by Diane Bond and Mercedes Cuman, with contributions from Ester Marcovecchio. They then began operating together under the collective name Le Pezze (fig. 1).[6] The term *pezze*, meaning ‹rags›, literally designated the fabrics that the group collected and employed as their artistic medium in order to make the series. They included old clothes, lingerie, aprons, linens and bed sheets, which were assembled with lace, hair, hooks, garters, pins and ropes, and painted with acrylics and pastels. They were then hung up with clothes pegs like laundry on the line. The materials were sourced from a range of sites and chores associated with social reproduction, including items from the artists' own wardrobes and immediate surroundings – that is, the domestic environment in which they would both perform housework and make art. For instance, the classic red-and-white checked apron incorporated into the portrait *Housewife* was removed from Bond's kitchen and deprived of its original use-value as ‹work uniform› so that it could be invested with other functions and meanings. The apron was indeed incorporated in the portrait *Housewife*, metonymically evoking the gender role and labour

1 Le Pezze, *Le Pezze*, 1974, mixed media, variable dimensions, Milan, installed at La Cappella Underground in Trieste, March 1975

pertaining to such figure. This operation brings to mind a series of works produced in the same years, such as Mariuccia Secol's plastered aprons and Heidi Bucher's latex-soaked apron. Although the techniques and final forms of these artworks differ considerably, the medium remains the same, bearing witness to a commonality in the living and working conditions of their makers. Such commonality chronicled the structural and systemic nature of the sexual division of labour that organised both socio-economic and symbolic production under capitalism, which this kind of works exposed, echoing the coeval political action of the Wages for Housework groups. To this end, while the materials employed had long been stored in private closets, kitchens or laundry rooms, the final products of this artistic operation were destined for the streets. In fact, *Le Pezze* were preferably hung in the public space, such as parks and gardens, or used to infiltrate renowned institutions and galleries. In 1975, the series was shown as part of the collective exhibition *L'armadio*, meaning ‹the closet›, hosted at Galleria d'arte di Porta Ticinese in Milan. The display consisted of an empty closet placed in the gallery space, with the *Le Pezze* series hanging from the ceiling. The exhibition text recited:

> «*Le Pezze* were born to hit the streets. We no longer wanted to hang out the laundry in solitude, but together [...] with repeated gestures: ironing, folding and arranging our things back in our wardrobes. [...] We dismember the private wardrobe. [...] We want to connect with other women and collect other creative experiences to open a space of our own and work together.»[7]

It was a call to break the isolation of the home and come together to foster subjective and social change against the main form and means of women's exploitation, that is, countless hours of reproductive work, epitomised in this short text by the repetitive gestures of hanging out the laundry, ironing, folding and storing clothes in closets.

In 1976, the same call for women to bring the reproductive work they performed daily in the privacy of their households outside, into the public space, for all to see, was voiced again and put into practice. This occurred at the Centro di Attività Culturale SIMARYP in Valenza Po, within the framework of the exhibition *VVD Verso Versi Diversi* (fig. 2). For the occasion, *Le Pezze* were displayed at the Viale Oliva gardens, hung with laundry pegs and left fluttering on a rope tied around the trees. The installation calls to mind the performative piece *Laundry*, conceived by the radical architect Gianni Pettena in 1969 as part of the event *Campo Urbano* organised in Como by Luciano Caramel, Ugo Mulas and Bruno Munari. Pettena's performance consisted of the act of hanging stolen laundry in Como's main square, enacting a disobedient and intentionally inappropriate gesture against the discipline and norms that govern the use of public space. The displacement into the public sphere of a household chore traditionally meant to remain hidden within the home, establishes an analogy with Le Pezze's action. However, as Silvia Bottinelli remarked, Pettena was not interested in problematising the gender hierarchies and power relations structuring housework in the domestic context.[8] The everyday experience of housewives and household workers – devoting themselves to that «enormous amount of work that women were forced to provide each day to produce and reproduce the workforce, which was the invisible, because unwaged, base on which the entire pyramid of capitalist accumulation rested» – remained once again out of focus.[9] On the contrary, by hybridising their artistic practice with materials and procedures pertaining to the reproductive work they were doomed to daily

2 Le Pezze, *Le Pezze*, 1974, mixed media, variable dimensions, Milan, hung at Viale Oliva gardens within the framework of the exhibition *VVD Verso Versi Diversi*, at Centro di Attività Culturale SIMARYP in Valenza Po, 1976

perform *as women*, Le Pezze shone the spotlight on this very experience, shedding light on the situatedness and contingency of an artistic positionality marked by sexual difference.[10]

Because of this, Le Pezze's installation may be best compared to Ana Lupaş' *Humid Installation*. The Romanian artist's processual sculpture, first installed in 1966 in the Grigorescu neighborhood of Cluj, consisted of parallel rows of wet linen hung to dry by several women who had volunteered to reenact, collectively and publicly, a working activity customarily performed in private. Analogously, *Le Pezze* series was set up by several women, staging together the act of hanging the laundry in the gardens of Viale Oliva in Valenza Po. As expressed in Le Pezze's statement quoted above, such collective gestures aimed to socialise a working activity that was becoming increasingly segregated, albeit only to expose its dynamics and ultimately reject it. In fact, as Alisa Del Re noted, during the 1970s technological advances in household appliances were gradually reducing the opportunities for women to meet, thereby increasing their isolation and depriving them of the possibility to connect and organize their resistance.[11] Le Pezze countered this trend with a collective and situated artistic gesture that simultaneously unmasked the degrading working conditions of women's labour within the home and the preconceptions that relegated them to the margins of institutionalised art and culture. Resembling a guerrilla action, their artistic operation consisted in women pouring out onto the streets, taking up public space, and claiming visibility for their work. That is to say, for both their artistic and their reproductive work, considering that the former integrated materials (like aprons, bedsheets, clothes), techniques (like stitching), and procedures (like hanging the laundry) belonging to the latter. The «arcane of reproduction» described by Leopoldina Fortunati was therefore taken by assault on two fronts: the social and the symbolic, which were the two planes, intersecting in

a secret complicity, on which Le Pezze militated.[12] It was no coincidence that they performed their action while wearing masks, which were crafted by the artists in their own image to be exchanged and worn by one another and by the spectators as well. The use of masks, which hindered the possibility of singling out and recognising the individuals behind the collective gesture, reinforced the connection to the visual and material strategies of street militancy, engendering a further contamination of contexts that contributed to demystifying the myth of art as an autonomous sphere of activity. In fact, the use of mediums and processes derived from the artists' immediate surroundings, as well as the recourse to guerrilla strategies, dispelled the illusion that art could exist separately from the social reality of those making it. The women involved were engaged instead in the effort to craft a material vocabulary articulated along a militant syntax, in order to voice their dissent and open the field for the emergence of a new collective political subject in revolt on the common ground of social reproduction. No artistic position could have been further from the paradigm of the creative genius celebrated by modernism, individual and unique, and therefore removed from relations of production and social relations in general. On the contrary, *Le Pezze* led to the core of their own material conditions and modes of production, tainted by the imperatives of social reproduction. In other words, they functioned as metonymies, that is, material extensions of the contexts of their making: the household that was the living and working place of their producers.[13]

The Refusal of Work in the Artistic Practice of the Gruppo Femminista Immagine di Varese

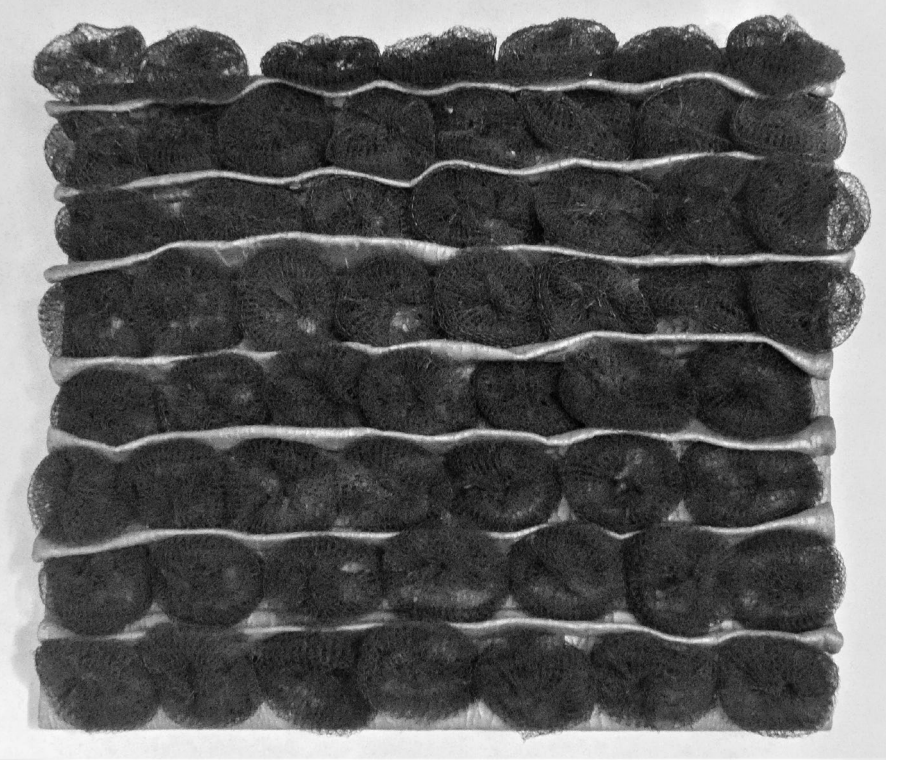
The analytical category of metonymy could be also mobilised to examine a set of works produced under similar circumstances in Varese, around 1975, by the Gruppo Femminista Immagine.[14] The main strategy of struggle conceived by its members in order to make visible and resist the imperatives of social reproduction consisted in a rejection of the traditional roles and functions assigned to women (notably those of wives, mothers, housewives, etcetera), expressed first and foremost in the refusal of domestic work.[15] This refusal first occurred in the kitchen. Milli Gandini took all the pans and pots she had, she painted them, and, after piercing their sides and lids, she ran lacquered barbed wire through the holes and closed the cookware for good, turning them into assisted ready-mades (fig. 3).[16] These objects gave shape to the guerrilla warfare that was brewing in the home and, more specifically, to Gandini's decision to stop cooking. She would rather send her son and daughter to the deli every day to buy ready-made meals, thus relinquishing her role as cook in the household. Meanwhile, veils of dust descended on the furniture, enveloping the interior of the home. On the blanket of dust covering shelves and tables, reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp's *Elevage de poussière* (1920), Gandini and her comrade Mirella Tognola would trace with their fingers the symbols and slogans of the feminist struggle and the word *SALARIO*, meaning ‹wage›: an act that was documented in a set of photographs later published in the 1976 winter issue of the journal *Le operaie della casa* (fig. 4).[17] While making art, Gandini was on strike: a strike against reproductive work. She named her refusal to continue performing those chores and thus contribute to the reproduction of a socioeconomic system deemed unacceptable *La mamma è uscita*, which means ‹mother walked out›, but also ‹mother came out›, in reference to the possibilities of becoming that awaited her after she deserted her ascribed functions and identities. It was indeed her way out of the house, as well

3 Milli Gandini, *Pentola inagibile (Condemned Pot)*, 1975, assisted ready-made, painted pot and barbed wire, dimensions unknown, Varese

4 Milli Gandini, *La mamma è uscita*, 1975, performance, Varese, two photographs from a series

as out of the roles to which she had been assigned: the mother, the care giver, the cook, the housekeeper. *La mamma è uscita* was an artistic performance, but also a political statement and a prophecy.[18]

In her house, Mariuccia Secol was doing the same. She would not cook or clean the floor any longer, and she would rather use the objects she had employed during her entire life as working tools (such as kitchen aprons, sponges, plates, and scourers) as artistic materials, producing large-scale assemblages that rendered these tools dysfunctional and ultimately inoperable. The suspension of activity is evoked for instance in an assemblage composed of fifty-eight scourers, which were removed from the kitchen to be arranged in eight horizontal rows on a canvas (fig. 5). The obsessive repetition of these quasi-identical units conjures the series of identical products carried by the assembly line in the factory or arranged on the shelves of a supermarket. The latter was in fact the place where the artist had purchased those very scourers before using them to clean the cookware in the kitchen and, eventually, depriving them of their use-value in order to make art out of them. If they are not perfectly identical to one another, it is precisely because they have been used before, and hence bear the traces of the effort and labour performed through them. The alteration in the form of each scourer suggests that the repetitive pattern they shape does not coincide precisely with the order organising serial production in the factory. Repetition, here, rather pertains to the work of reproduction carried out daily in the home, where chores and gestures need to be repeated over and over, to keep the bellies full and the house clean. More than repetition, we are faced with



5 Mariuccia Secol, *Untitled*, c. 1976, discarded scourers on canvas, approx. 50 × 60 cm, Daverio

repetitiveness, where the body of the housewife, trapped in a perpetual work routine, is reduced to a means, a function, a component of the wider mechanism of social reproduction by which the workforce keeps being produced and reproduced in the household – veritable extension of the factory. If the logic of the ready-made and the seriality of industrial production dear to minimalism and pop art are evoked by this work, they are also confronted and complexified.[19] In fact, if the ready-made or the minimalist work of art might suggest a refusal of the manual labour traditionally required of the artist to make art, in Secol's assemblage this very labour remains of the essence. What is rejected is work of a different kind, that is, housework, whose traces, however, remain present: meticulously registered in the work of art. A stance of refusal infused Gandini and Secol's artistic practices, giving them shape, matter and substance. And, conversely, artmaking was for them a way to provide a visual vocabulary to name the object of their struggle, that is, to render visible an invisible condition of exploitation while attempting to undo it.

Feminist Productions against Capitalist Productivity

When we look back at Le Pezze and Gruppo Femminista Immagine's artistic production, we are confronted with an ensemble of acts of guerrilla, sabotage and strike, performed against reproductive work and aimed at rendering its tools inoperable and its procedures dysfunctional. As such, it gives shape to a specific form of abstention from work, which, according to the workerist political category of the refusal of work, is be understood first and foremost as a life technique.[20] Indeed, although operating primarily on a symbolic level, the images of struggle and refusal the two collectives have brought into existence reveal that something was underway on the plane of subjectivity, because the rejection of ascribed roles and related functions, which goes hand in hand with the abstention from work, enables a radical transformation. It sets in motion a metamorphosis of the self that takes place within, at the level of one's identity, and unsettles entrenched habits, behaviours, affect and personal relationships.

What Le Pezze and Gruppo Femminista Immagine translated into art practice did not correspond to a regular strike, but something deeper. It did not correspond to a general strike either, but something vaster. It was closer to what Claire Fontaine would later name the «human strike», that is, a process of de-functionalisation of subjectivities, which in this case assumes a specific gender dimension.[21] Far from being effective or productive from the point of view of organised struggle, this kind of strike simply happens, against oneself and against the very logic of productivity dear to capitalism and its work ethic.[22] In this way, a subjectivity that used to operate to grant the smooth functioning of a given system ceases to be functional, to perform as it is supposed to, producing a short-circuit in that very system and its reproduction. As in the case of those women who suddenly refused to function as ‹good› mothers, wives and housekeepers, and invented a way to exist otherwise. By making visible their invisible work, calling attention to the related material conditions and modes of production, the women in question did transform their everyday lives. They did affirm their position as artists against a cultural construction that relegated women to the margins, while emerging as political subjects against a sociopolitical backdrop that had subjugated, objectified and exploited them until then. In this rests the potential of their practice.

Notes

1 T. J. Clark: Image of the People. Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution, 2. ed., Princeton 1982 (1973), p. 80. Also quoted in Julia Bryan-Wilson: Art Workers. Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2010, p. 30.

2 Those same years when Le Pezze and Gruppo Femminista Immagine were forming, that is, the beginning of the 1970s, saw in Italy the emergence of a specific strand of feminist struggle, informed by Marxist thought and concerned with questions of social reproduction. Its proponents gathered in the so-called Gruppi per il Salario al Lavoro Domestico (Wages for Housework groups), which were extra-parliamentary political groups rising on the initiative of activists and intellectuals who embraced Marxist-feminist theories in order to analyse and counter the specific forms of women's exploitation taking shape under capitalism. For a historical account of the formation of these groups, I refer the reader to Antonella Picchio/Giuliana Pincelli: Una lotta femminista globale. L'esperienza dei gruppi per il Salario al lavoro domestico di Ferrara e Modena, Milan 2019. To trace the itinerary of the political and theoretical thought underlying the formation of these groups and, more generally, the International Wages for Housework Campaign, see Mariarosa Dalla Costa/Selma James: The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community, Bristol 1972; Silvia Federici: Wages Against Housework, Bristol 1975; Nicole Cox/Silvia Federici: Counter-Planning from the Kitchen. Wages for Housework. A Perspective on Capital and the Left, New York/Bristol 1975; Lucia Chisté/Alisa Del Re/Edvige Forti (eds.): Oltre il lavoro domestico. Il lavoro delle donne tra produzione e riproduzione, 2. Ed., Verona 2020 (1979); Leopoldina Fortunati: L'arcano della riproduzione. Casalinghe, prostitute, operai e capitale, Venice 1981; Silvia Federici: Revolution at Point Zero. Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle, Oakland 2012.

3 For more on this position, cf. Helen Molesworth: House Work and Art Work, in: October, 2000, no. 92, pp. 71–97.

4 The definition «household workers» refers to the journal of the Wages for Housework movement, titled *Le operaie della casa. Rivista dell'autonomia femminista* and edited by the Gruppo redazionale del Comitato per il Salario al Lavoro Domestico di Padova, in the 1970s in Venice.

5 For more on the historical tendency to deny women the position of producers within the tradition of Western visual art, cf. Griselda Pollock: Vision and Difference. Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art, 2. ed., New York 2003 (1988), p. 13. For more on the role of spectators, and hence consumers, ascribed to women within patriarchal art history, cf. Rivolta Femminile: Assenza della donna dalle momenti celebrativi della manifestazione creativa maschile, in: Carla Lonzi/Rivolta Femminile (eds.): Sputiamo su Hegel. La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale e altri scritti, 3. ed., Milan 1977 (1971).

6 The women-only art collective Le Pezze was founded in 1974 in Milan, more precisely in the kitchen of activist Adele Faccio, and included artists Diane Bond, Mercedes Cuman and Ester Marcovecchio.

7 From the invitation card to the exhibition *L'armadio* at Galleria di Porta Ticinese, Milan, 1975. See Diane Bond's personal archives. My translation.

8 Silvia Bottinelli: Double-Edged Comforts. Domestic Life in Modern Italian Art and Visual Culture, Montreal/Kingston 2021, p. 195.

9 Giuliana Pompei (Pincelli): Salario per il lavoro domestico, in: L'Offensiva. Quaderni di Lotta Femminista 1972, no. 1. Now in Picchio/Pincelli 2019 (as note 2), p. 66. My translation.

10 To introduce the concept of sexual difference into this reflection, I notably refer to Griselda Pollock, for she provides a definition of it that, eluding all possible essentialist drifts, grounds the concept in contingency and material conditions. Indeed, she defines sexual difference as a historical asymmetry that is socially, economically, and subjectively constructed, stressing that the difference in the way men and women make art is «the product of the social structuration of sexual difference and not any imaginary biological distinction». Cf. Griselda Pollock: Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity, in: idem: Vision and Difference. Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art, London/New York 2003, p. 76.

11 For example, Del Re remarks that the vacuum cleaner had replaced the carpet beater, relocating the work of dusting from the balcony to the interior of the house. Similarly, the washing machine had replaced the communal wash house, where women used to go to work together and, in the meantime, socialize with each other. Therefore, any potential form of organisation and resistance to the mechanisms of social reproduction tended to be nipped in the bud. For more on the increasing segregation of reproductive work, cf. Alisa Del Re: Struttura capitalistica del lavoro legato alla riproduzione, in: Chisté/Re/Forti 2020 (as note 2), pp. 35–38; 45.

12 Fortunati 1981 (as note 2).

13 Lucia Re: The Mark on the Wall. Marisa Merz and a History of Women in Postwar Italy, in: Marisa Merz. The Sky Is a Great Space, ed. by Connie Butler, exh. cat., New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art et al., London 2017, pp. 37–75.

14 The women-only art collective Gruppo Femminista Immagine was founded in 1974 in Varese by artists Milli Gandini, Mariuccia Secol and Mirella Tognola.

15 The refusal of labour, or rejection of work, was a strategy and a political category deriving from the tradition of Italian workerism and, specifically,

from Autonomia, that also characterised the stance of important figures from the International Wages for Housework Campaign, such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Silvia Federici, as well as Selma James, who was also in touch with the Black radical tradition in the United States. For more on this, cf. Maud Anne Bracke: Between the Transnational and the Local. Mapping the Trajectories and Contexts of the Wages for Housework Campaign in 1970s Italian Feminism, in: Women's History Review 22, 2013, no. 4, pp. 625–642.

16 For a reflection on the link between the ready-made and the political category of the refusal of work, cf. Maurizio Lazzarato: Marcel Duchamp et le refus du travail. Suivi de misère de la sociologie, Paris 2014.

17 Gruppo redazionale del Comitato per il Salario al Lavoro Domestico di Padova, in: Le operaie della casa, 1976, no. 2–3 September–December, p. 21.

18 Manuela Gandini: Prefazione. Nel vortice degli anni Settanta!, in: Gandini/Secol 2021 (as note 15), pp. 10–11.

19 For an in-depth reflection on the link between minimalism and the politics of labour, cf. Bryan-Wilson 2010 (as note 1).

20 Lazzarato 2014 (as note 15), p. 15. Giovanna Zapperi: Carla Lonzi. Un'arte della vita, Rome 2017, pp. 256–257. For more on the intersections between Italian workerism and the practice of Gruppo Femminista Immagine, cf. Jacopo Galimberti: Images of Class. Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts (1962–1988), London/Brooklyn NY 2022.

21 Claire Fontaine: Human Strike and the Art of Creating Freedom, South Pasadena 2020, p. 47.

22 Ibid. p. 109.

Image Credits

1–2 Diane Bond's private archives, Milan, courtesy: Diane Bond

3–4 Milli Gandini's private archives. Courtesy: Manuela Gandini

5 Mariuccia Secol's private archives, Daverio. Courtesy: the author

Kathrin Rottmann

Cheese. Production and Gender Relations in Mika Rottenberg's Dairy

Mika Rottenberg's video installations outline production chains of «impossible products», such as cherries made from red-lacquered fingernails or towelettes flavoured with traces of lemonade in sweat.[1] Her «Bachelor(ette) Machines» parody (post-)Fordist modes of production, exposing the absurdity of global commodity production.[2] They are therefore discussed as «a critique of commodification that is also a surreal imitation of commodification».[3] Her video installation *Cheese* (2008), focusing on the relation between agricultural production and biological production (or procreation), however, is rarely considered within this context which instead emphasises factory-like production methods. The video depicts a pre-industrial dairy farm run by six sisters who keep farm animals like geese, chickens and horses as well as milk goats to produce cheese and butter. The farm is presented as a nineteenth-century setting, with plain wooden sheds and the women farmers all walking barefoot and wearing long white dresses with tailoring vaguely reminiscent of the period. Additionally, the women all have very long hair, which they tie into a bun for work – at first. Given that the farm is only barely profitable, the sisters redesign their business model to utilise the material products of their own bodies.

For the video production, Rottenberg herself constructed the farm on Robby William's Flying W Air Ranch Petting Zoo and Airport in Bushnell, Florida. In addition she introduced the animals to the area and engaged the film crew, as well as the extremely long-haired women.[4] During the 2000s, Rottenberg frequently collaborated with actresses who, as she explains, autonomously use their own bodies as a «means of production».[5] «Using female actors who in real life market their own physical peculiarities, she sets up complex production systems whose end products are commodities created through the manipulation of body processes and fluids.»[6] In this video installation, the artist directs attention to the divergence between the self-contained marketing of female farmers' bodies and their marketing of the bodily products of animals. In the context of agriculture, animals are not typically afforded the opportunity to consent to the marketing of their bodily products; these are appropriated, including the milk produced by female animals due to hormonal changes associated with their biological reproduction. The video installation frames the commodification of women's bodies as a consequence of the unsuccessful appropriation of the reproductive products of female animal bodies. This remains largely invisible in everyday life, or is assumed to be natural because of the animal bodily processes on which it is based. In what follows I propose to argue that Rottenberg's dairy highlights the physical, hormonal and biochemical processes such as hair growth and lactation, which, unlike labour, cannot be easily striked and stopped,

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together with their capitalist exploitation.[7] Although both approaches are similar, this particular focus differs from the topics currently discussed in feminist and Marxist studies. They critique «social reproduction» as gendered, racialised and unpaid care work that reproduces its own conditions.[8] In addition, these studies analyse the consequences of reproductive technologies, like the birth control pill or conceptive therapies, that have failed to fulfil the hopes for women's liberation as advocated in the 1970s.[9] In contrast, Rottenberg presents reproduction as a female physical process that is transformed into production. Considering gender as a cultural construction as opposed to the supposedly fixed category of sex, the question of female biological reproduction as an essentialising one might appear to be outdated.[10]

Rottenberg's feminist and Marxist approach, however, raises an issue that remains unresolved, even with a different organisation of care work, namely the link between production and biological reproduction. These two concepts cannot be separated as easily as Western political theory since the nineteenth century has led us to believe by distinguishing between the «production of the means of subsistence, of food» and the «production of human beings themselves».[11] This is all the more true today if we take as our starting point the post-humanist theories of the social proposed by Bruno Latour or Rosi Braidotti, which take into account all actors. In contemporary art, the relationship between production and biological reproduction has been addressed since the 1990s, for example, through the material of milk, whose production methods I would like to subject to a close reading, focusing on Rottenberg's video installation *Cheese*. My aim is twofold. Firstly, this paper analyses production relations from a materialist and feminist perspective in this anti-pastoral, which is in fact about milking and working. Secondly, it argues that the video installation makes production relations visible as gender relations, rather than critiquing capitalism in terms of alienated labour, property, class or commodity. The video demonstrates that production cannot be separated from reproduction by showcasing the biological re-production of raw materials by female animals and their transformation into commodities, in this case milk, butter and cheese, and the gendered division of labour that is practised during this process. The analysis thus ties in with the work of the feminist Marxist sociologist Frigga Haug, who defines the «relations of production» as «gender relations» and «vice versa», on the assumption that the relations of production cannot be shaped independently of the historically, socio-politically determined notions of gender.[12] Moreover, by focusing on a selection of actors and practices, this approach avoids the dichotomy of production and reproduction that is often assumed in political theory. Practices can perhaps also be used to overcome dualisms in art history as Ted Schatzki argues for the social sciences – regardless of the fact that neither milk nor feminism play a significant role in current practice theories.[13] Nevertheless, I use practices as an analytical criterion – and as a magic word, because they encompass «forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‹things› and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge», in other words virtually everything.[14] But I understand them as historical in order to differentiate which gender-political codings they can evoke.

The Gendered Production of Milk

Milk is a central element in the multi-channel video installation *Cheese*, which is screened in the niches of a simple wooden shed built from the setting of the filmed dairy farm. It is presented as a bodily fluid, although a number of sequences

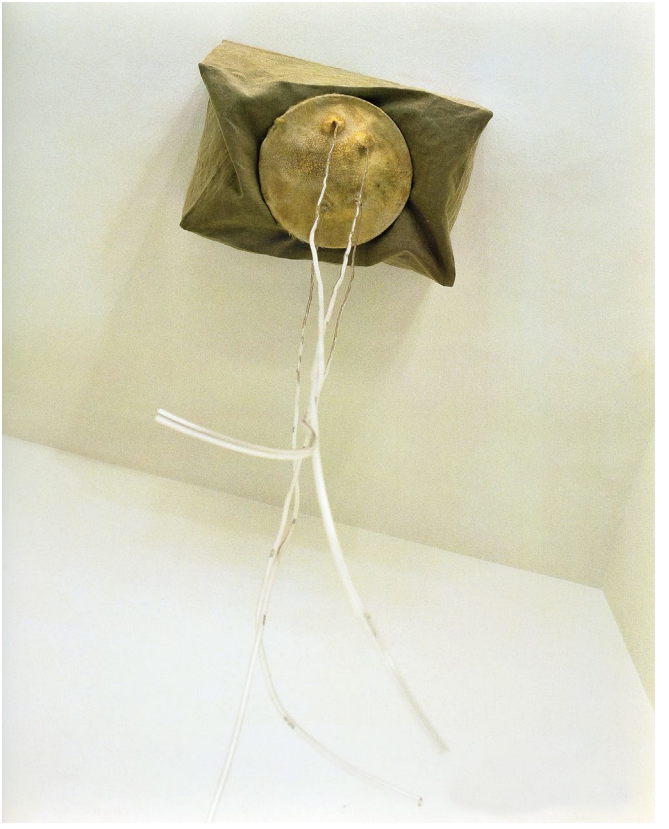
1 Mika Rottenberg, *Cheese*, 2008, still, multichannel video installation with sound, 16:07 min., dimensions variable

denaturalise its origin in udders. It also serves as a medium of reflection for the six long-haired sisters, whose milking practices are carefully staged. While the farm has various crops and animals, the focus of their work is on caring for their hair, which varies in texture and colour, and on the goats. The animals are supposed to walk along the wooden fence to the milking parlour every morning, but they resist, run wild and can only be whipped, shooed, tempted and rewarded with the help of the dairywomen's long hair, which shimmers so enchantingly in the light.[15] However, the milking process, which is a key activity on a dairy farm, is not immediately visible but can be heard. The video captures the sounds of jets of milk splashing into a metal bucket from various directions. Meanwhile, static shots show a milker from the back, the movements of a bicep, a knee, goat's horns, a face and an eye, as if one of these body parts were producing the milk we are hearing. Only at the end of the sequence, when the milking noises are superimposed, do we see a close-up of a hand on the teat, the bulging, hairy udders and the fine jets of milk collected in a funnel (fig. 1). The milking is presented in saturated colours and golden light, but it is not staged as a bucolic idyll. Instead, it is rendered as work that is hardly worthwhile on the «failing farm», even though the six sisters also tap an unknown source of milk in the ground as if it were oil.[16] Consequently, the long-haired farmers critically evaluate the results of their agricultural efforts, which include a pile of churned butter, a piece of cheese and the milk in the vat. This self-inspection is staged as a witty shot-counter-shot montage that puts the viewer in the place of the milk. Firstly, the sequence shows a full-frame view of the liquid, in which the women look at the result of their work and at their mirror images at the same time. Then the shot switches so that the sisters' scrutinising gaze now meets us, the viewers, whereupon the dairywomen start «milking their own appearance», the only thing that really thrives on this farm as the artist puts it: «And there is this maybe shift of power [...] from kind of milking the animals they milk themselves.»[17] Using mist from the nearby Niagara Falls and their own hair, they make an elixir by mixing the two, which is then bottled and sold at the fence – a tribute to the long-haired

Seven Sutherland Sisters, who gained fame in the nineteenth century by selling their hair-growing compound.

It is widely accepted as a biological fact that milk, unless it is a vegan substitute, is a secretion produced in the glands of the breasts which we consider as female.[18] However, this fact is obscured in everyday life, despite the grazing cows that usually adorn the milk packaging.[19] According to Esther Leslie and Melanie Jackson's lecture performance, the industrial process of separating milk from animals and pasteurising it is based on «extractions and abstractions» from all lactation.[20] Milk is commodified through the separation of the animal from the calf, the extraction of milk from the mammal's breast and the elimination of all associations with mother's milk. The material is clearly distinguished from its short-lived secretion, which is hormonally triggered by regular pregnancies at controlled intervals and births.[21] The bodily fluid should not be traced back to its concrete origin, which at the same time is the basis for the way it is ideologically charged. For instance, in his *Mythologies of Everyday Life* at the end of the 1950s, Roland Barthes acknowledged that wine could not be an «unalloyedly blissful substance» because «its production is deeply involved in French capitalism» and colonialism.[22] In contrast, he praised milk as an «anti-wine» and glorified it as an «exotic substance», disregarding its capitalist production conditions.[23] The «Ur-substance» is the first to be ingested outside the uterus and is believed to bestow mythological and economic superpowers.[24] In mythology, it creates worlds and galaxies – and in Western industrialised countries, it feeds the masses. The product of biological reproductive processes, it has been used to reproduce the workforce for economic and political reasons. Since then, both women's milk and cow's milk have been subject to the same strict hygiene controls, and their processing has been regulated and industrialised. As a result, both milk banks and dairies guarantee a germ-free, homogeneous emulsion of water, proteins and fats, which, at least in the West, also promises purity on a metaphorical level because of its colour.[25]

Rottenberg's video exposes what is typically hidden from consumers in their daily lives. Most people do not own cows or goats, nor do they have access to dairy farms or dairies. They only see the final product, packaged for mass consumption. Furthermore, images depicting milk production and processing are typically only found in technical literature or industrial and educational films such as *Die Sendung mit der Maus* (Mouse TV). Since the 1970s, this popular programme on West German public television has been showing the «workflows and working conditions in factories» and explaining how «materials are transformed into consumer goods».[26] Milk was chosen as one of its first subjects to visualise the hidden secrets of industrial production. Apart from lactation scenes, which are legitimised by the genre as history paintings or genre depictions, the production methods and milk extraction were also invisible in the arts for a long time. In the exhibition space milk is usually presented as white material without any reference to its origin, use or consumption, for example, «the milk splash as a cipher for Action Painting».[27] The «social uses» of milk and its material history were to be programmatically left behind with this transfer.[28] Thus, for his part, Wolfgang Laib describes how the milk on his *Milchsteine* (milkstones), the slightly concave, polished slabs of white marble, is no longer a quickly consumed nourishment for the body, as in a cup of coffee in the morning, but something almost the opposite, «so universal».[29] But whereas Laib himself collects the pollen he also uses for installations directly from the meadows



2 Rosemarie Trockel, *It's a Tough Job But Somebody Has to Do It*, 1990, cow's udder, canvas, plastic tube, 52 × 81 × 52 cm

by hand over months and keeps it for years, for the milk stones, whose installation is only rarely on public display, he chooses mass-produced goods, which are disposed of every evening and poured freshly onto the marble slabs every day, if not always contemplatively by the artist himself.[30]

In contrast, *Cheese* presents milk as a product of animal bodies and udders. The video installation avoids relying solely on milk's material properties or mythological associations. A similar approach can be observed in the case of feminist art of the 1990s in the Global North, which situates milk as a product of cows' and women's bodies. Dorothy Cross, for instance, uses tanned udders to create surreal objects that blur the lines between in- and outside, up and down, animal and female bodies.[31] Kiki Smith stages milk as one of many bodily fluids, regardless of its material appearance, biological reproduction or care work. Several silver-coated water bottles are placed side by side, without hierarchy or system, and the inscription in German Gothic lettering indicates that milk is presented at the front left alongside urine, mucus and diarrhoea.[32] Rosemarie Trockel, on the other hand, transfers the udder and its milk flow into the exhibition space (fig. 2). *It's a Tough Job But Somebody Has to Do It* is a flexible cube made of canvas, with a tanned cow's udder mounted on a round disc. Long plastic tubes extend from its four teats into the exhibition space, as if museum visitors could drink the milk directly from the udder with straws. The object links milk, which is not physically present but appears to be in the white light reflections in the tubes, with cow lactation. Yet, the cow's body is alienated by

its shape and the way it is mounted on the wall, as if it were a machine, while the title, reminiscent of Barbara Kruger's slogans, is so ironically exaggerated that it is immediately clear that the cows have no choice but to do their tough job.

The theoretical and historical context of these artworks encompasses diverse agrarian, media and feminist approaches, even if they are not explicitly stated. Since the 1970s, agricultural science has defined milk production as a form of «biotechnology» that involves «combining biological systems and physical-technical systems».[33] Around the same time, the media philosopher Vilém Flusser, who frequently wrote for *Artforum*, warned against misinterpreting cows, that is the biotechnical systems we have created, as natural:

> «Cows are efficient machines for the transformation of grass into milk, and if compared to other types of machines, they have an unquestionable advantage in this regard. For example: they are self-reproductive, and when they become obsolete, their ‹hardware› can be used in the form of meat, leather, and other consumable products. […] Their care and handling is not costly and does not require highly specialized manual labor. […], they could be considered as prototypes of future machines.»[34]

Flusser discussed these practices from a purely phenomenological perspective, while the activist Carol J. Adams focused on them in her 1990 feminist-vegetarian theory. Later, she developed this theory into a feminist-vegan critique of protein extraction, arguing that milk, dairy products and eggs are «feminized protein».[35] Adams considers these to be plant proteins, such as those found in grass, which we appropriate by „[ab]use of female animals' reproductive cycles to produce food», even though we could consume them directly from plants: «Their labor is both reproduction and production.»[36] Rottenberg's video highlights the false naturalness of this appropriation by idealising and finally abandoning it. The women are milking by hand, barefoot, bathed in golden light, in other words, in a supposedly completely natural and pre-industrial way.

Gendered Practices

In Rottenberg's video of the fictional dairy, milk production and processing are staged as gendered practices, with milking, butter churning and cheese making presented as women's manual labour. The female workers enjoy direct contact with the udders and the butter, with hardly any loss of tactility (fig. 1), even though Rottenberg could have used machines that were already employed for milking in the nineteenth century for this «period piece», as she characterises it.[37] Instead, we see traditional milking techniques that are still recommended in guides to small-scale goat husbandry today.[38] Rottenberg's gender coding of dairy practices may reflect her fundamental interest in women's labour. However, it also corresponds to the historical gender coding of non-industrial milk production in the Global North. Milking and the various ways in which milk is processed have historically been regarded as domestic work in both the United States and Western Europe. This domestic work has been understood as a «labor of love» rather than «work (for money)», and therefore as women's work.[39] It was devalued as a reproductive activity, in that Western political economies and theories distinguished it from productive work in factories and agriculture with the establishment of capitalism, even though milking can produce goods.[40] Even in settings beyond the household, such as in dairies and cheese factories, milk-related tasks were traditionally viewed as women's work, except for the churning of butter, which could be done by men, animals or machines.[41] In addition, the care of dairy

3 Lucie Stahl, *Surge*, 2019, mixed media, variable dimensions

cows was (and is still) thought to require love, as cows have been shown to produce more milk and remain healthier when they are cared for and given names.[42] According to the essentialist argument, cisgender women with mammary glands and breasts we call female seemed more suited to this work and to handling the material milk than cisgender men, although they also have mammary glands and nipples and could lactate.[43]

In contrast to Rottenberg's pre-industrial dairy farm run by women, Lucie Stahl stages milk production as masculine in a series of works, featuring industrialised and male-coded production techniques and an upside-down milking machine. Her monumental sculpture *Surge* from 2019 (fig. 3) shows the production methods of the dairy and oil industries, both of which extract liquids, as structurally similar. The sculpture's shape and material resemble milkers, but blown-up in scale and turned upside down. Its four teat cups appear to be legs, as if they could walk around and pump liquid directly from the ground instead of from udders.[44] Although this orientation may suggest oil extraction, the sculpture is actually branded *Surge*, after one of the largest American manufacturers of milking machines. It presents milk production as a technical process of raw material extraction, seemingly devoid of milk-producing animals, udders, manual and female labour, and coded as masculine through the use of machines and steel. This re-coding corresponds to that of milk production and processing, which was massively centralised, mechanised and

4 Mika Rottenberg, *Cheese Unlimited*, 2018, cheese from the Vorarlberg from Alma Bergsennerei Lutzenreute, sold at Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2018

industrialised in the Western capitalist countries in the twentieth century. Although women have been using various technologies to draw their own milk since ancient times, the use of machines has rendered dairy work masculine.[45]

Instead, *Cheese* presents the methods of milk production as explicitly feminine. However, the video does not merely function as a vegan, anti-speciesist or feminist didactic. On the one hand, the long-haired women in the video no longer appropriate the goats' milk but autonomously milk their own bodies, figuratively speaking. On the other hand, given the video installation's production modes, it is Rottenberg who is the only one seen in the video who is in fact milking, and who continuously profits from the women's extremely long hair.[46] The video loop shows poses and hair practices for which at least one of them would have been paid in «monthly fees» by her private clients on the internet.[47] In return, Rottenberg presents their hair as stunningly beautiful, praising it in every interview as «beautiful and mesmerizing», as Dyq, Heidi, Jeanette, Kelsey, Lady Grace and Leona negotiated during their strike at the start of filming.[48] Furthermore, the video subverts the gender coding of the dairy, which it stages with such precision. Rather than simply depicting the process of milk production in an objective manner, the video uses its very production methods to defamiliarise it. All but one of the milk-producing animals are male goats, who only appear to be dairy goats through what Rottenberg calls «movie magic editing».[49] The video showcases a method of milking that involves the use of eyes, biceps, a spring in the ground and hair, so that the milk can be extracted in a supernatural way, independent of reproductive cycles. The products are also manipulated: instead of milk, Rottenberg filmed an industrially produced cheese from the local Walmart, smeared with margarine, and a mixture of water, powdered milk and white paint.[50] Notably, in the exhibition Rottenberg literally confronts viewers with the cheeses of the failed dairy in whose ruins they stand. Having tried unsuccessfully to sell the

refreshing towels made from a bodybuilder's sweat on Ebay following the production of her video installation *Tropical Breeze*, she shifted the sale of the goods directly to the art institution.[51] After showing «the hidden abode of biological re-production» in the video installation – I am bending Marx a bit – the corresponding products were sold in the museum shop. [52] Rottenberg cooperated with a mountain dairy in the area, which sold its cheese at Kunsthaus Bregenz under the name *Cheese Unlimited* (fig. 4). The packaging did not feature a picture of the milk-producing animals or plump udders, as is often the case in supermarkets. Instead, it displayed a video still of *Cheese* showing the six long-haired sisters, as if the cheese were actually made from their hair. However, even this estranged production mode did not deter visitors from appropriating the feminised protein.

Notes

1 Jonathan Beller: Rottenberg Pearls, in: Parkett, 2016, no. 98, pp. 150–157, here p. 151.
2 Germano Celant: Mika Rottenberg's Bachelor(ette) Machines, in: Parkett, 2016, no. 98, pp. 180–183.
3 Linda Williams: On Squeeze, in: Mika Rottenberg. Dough Cheese Squeeze and Tropical Breeze. Video Works 2003–2010, exhib. cat., Amsterdam, de Appel Arts Centre, New York 2011, pp. 182–188, here p. 183. Cf. Marina Vishmidt: Situation Wanted. Something about Labour, in: Afterall. A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry, 2008, no. 19, pp. 20–34.
4 Production credits: Cast: Dyq, Heidi, Jeanette, Kelsey, Lady Grace, Leona, Cinematographer: Mahyad Tousi, Sound Design: Tina Hardin, Pomann Sound, Special Effects and Installation: Katrin Altekamp, Edo Born, Deville Cohen, Special thanks to Robby William's Flying W Air Ranch Petting Zoo and Airport.
5 Eleanor Heartney: Mika Rottenberg. Putting the Body to Work, in: Artpress, 2011, no. 377, pp. 49–52, here p. 49.
6 Ibid.
7 See Angela Dimitrakaki: Arbeiter/innen, die ihren Arbeitsplatz niemals verlassen: Das Abjekte nach der Postmoderne, in: Mika Rottenberg, exhib. cat., Bregenz, Kunsthaus, Köln 2018, pp. 120–138, here p. 124.
8 See Cooking Cleaning Caring. Care Work in the Arts since 1960, ed. by Friederike Sigler/Linda Walther, exhib. cat., Bottrop, Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Berlin 2024; Marina Vishmidt: The Two Reproductions in (Feminist) Art and Theory since the 1970s, in: Third Text 31, 2017, no. 1, pp. 49–66; and on biopolitical production instead Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri: Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire, New York 2004, p. 148.
9 See Martha E. Gimenez: Marx, Women, and Capitalist Social Reproduction. Marxist-Feminist Essays, Leiden 2019, pp. 188–209; Shulamith Firestone: The Dialectic of Sex. The Case for Feminist Revolution, London/New York 2015 (1970), p. 213.
10 See Judith Butler: Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, New York 1986, p. 6.
11 Frederick Engels: The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. Introduction by Evelyn Reed, 2. edition, New York 1973, p. 26.
12 Frigga Haug: Gender Relations, in: Historical Materialism 13, 2005, no. 2, pp. 279–302, here p. 299.
13 This paper is part of a larger project on industrial production methods and practices in art. See https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/508930320, last accessed on 29 February 2024. Theodore R. Schatzki: Introduction. Practice Theory, in: idem/Karin Knorr Cetina/Eike von Savigny (eds.): The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory, London 2001, pp. 1–14, here p. 1. On microbes in cheese, cf. Heather Paxson: Post-Pasteurian Cultures. The Microbiopolitics of Raw-Milk Cheese in the United States, in: Alejandro Alonso Díaz & INLAND/David Prieto Serrano/Fernando García-Dory (eds.): Microbiopolitics of Milk, London 2022, pp. 104–162.
14 Andreas Reckwitz: Toward a Theory of Social Practices. A Development in Culturalist Theorizing, in: European Journal of Social Theory 5, 2002, no. 2, pp. 243–263, here p. 249.
15 See Mika Rottenberg: Preparatory Drawing for Cheese, 2008, in: Mika Rottenberg. The Production of Luck, exhib. cat., Waltham, Rose Art Museum, New York 2014, p. 88.
16 Ibid.
17 Christian Lund: Mika Rottenberg. Girl Power from Another Century, in: Louisiana Channel, 2017, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/mika-rottenberg-girl-power-another-century, last accessed on 23 February 2024.
18 See Anja Zimmermann: Brust. Geschichte eines politischen Körperteils, Berlin 2023, p. 117.
19 On the queering of milk, see Mathilde Cohen/Yoriko Otomo (eds.): Making Milk. The Past, Present and Future of Our Primary Food, London et al. 2017.
20 Melanie Jackson/Esther Leslie: Deeper in the Pyramid, London 2018, p. 7.

21 For breast cups and Tetra Pak cf. ibid., pp. 43–45, 47.
22 Roland Barthes: Mythologies, transl. by Annette Lavers, New York 1972, p. 61.
23 Ibid., pp. 60–61.
24 Ibid., p. 3; Deborah Valenze: Milk. A Local and Global History, New Haven/London 2011, pp. 13–23, 253.
25 See Mathilde Cohen: Regulating Milk. Women and Cows in France and the United States, in: The American Journal of Comparative Law 65, 2017, no. 3, pp. 469–526.
26 Petra Lange-Berndt: Introduction. How to Be Complicit with Materials, in: idem. (ed.): Materiality. Documents of Contemporary Art, Cambridge/London 2015, pp. 12–23, here p. 12; Wie kommt die Milch in unseren Kühlschrank? Sachgeschichten mit Armin Maiwald, 1969, Bibliothek der Sachgeschichten, in: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHwpNxyRUaM, last accessed on 27 February 2024.
27 See Kenneth Hayes: Milk and Melancholy, Toronto/Cambridge/London 2008, p. 120.
28 Pierre Bourdieu: Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, transl. by Richard Nice, Cambridge 1984 (1979), p. 21.
29 Sarah Tanguy: Making the Ideal Real. A Conversation with Wolfgang Laib, in: Sculpture Magazine, 2001, https://sculpturemagazine.art/making-the-ideal-real-a-conversation-with-wolfgang-laib/, last accessed on 20 February 2024.
30 See Clare Farrow: Wolfgang Laib. More than Myself, in: Parkett, 1994, no. 39, pp. 77–81, here p. 81.
31 See the artist's website: https://www.dorothycross.com/1999-88/udders, last accessed on 21 February 2024.
32 See Kiki Smith: Untitled, 1990, in: The Broad, https://www.thebroad.org/art/kiki-smith/untitled, last accessed on 21 February 2024.
33 Karl Rabold: Biotechnik der Milchgewinnung. Gesunde Kühe, richtiges Melken, mehr Milch, Stuttgart 1974, preface, unpaginated (my translation).
34 Vilém Flusser: Natural:Mind, transl. by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes, ed. by Siegfried Zielinski/Norval Baitello Junior, Minneapolis 2013 (1979), pp. 43–44. See also Greta Gaard: Toward a Feminist Postcolonial Milk Studies, in: American Quarterly 65, 2013, no. 3, pp. 595–618, here p. 604.
35 Carol J. Adams: The Sexual Politics of Meat. A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory, New York 1990; idem.: Feminized Protein. Meaning, Representations and Implications, in: Cohen/Otomo 2017 (as note 19), pp. 19–40, here p. 22.
36 Adams 2017 (as note 35), p. 23.
37 Cf. Heartney 2011 (as note 5), p. 52.
38 Bertl Schindlmayr: Die Ziege. Nutzbringende Haltung im Kleinbetrieb, Minden n.d. [1960], p. 29.
39 Gisela Bock/Barbara Duden: Arbeit aus Liebe. Liebe als Arbeit. Zur Entstehung der Hausarbeit im Kapitalismus, in: Frauen und Wissenschaft. Beiträge zur Berliner Sommeruniversität für Frauen, Juli 1976, Berlin (West) 1977, pp. 118–199, here p. 121 (my translation).
40 Ibid., p. 120.
41 Valenze 2011 (as note 24), pp. 120–122, 145.
42 Ibid., p. 1.
43 See Mathilde Cohen: The Lactating Man, in: Cohen/Otomo 2017 (as note 19), pp.141–160, here p. 145.
44 See Jackson/Leslie 2018 (as note 20), p. 44.
45 See ibid., p. 59; Michael Obladen: Guttus, tiralatte and téterelle. A History of Breastpumps, in: Journal of Perinatal Medecine 40, 2012, no. 6, pp. 669–675.
46 Ibid.
47 Cf. Leona Interviewed by Mika Rottenberg, in: exhib. cat. Mika Rottenberg 2011 (as note 3), pp. 144–145, here p. 144.
48 Cf. Judith Hudson: Mika Rottenberg, in: Bomb Magazine, 2010, no. 113, pp. 26–33, here p. 33.
49 E-mail from Tiffany Wang, Hauser & Wirth, to the author, 26 October 2022.
50 Ibid.
51 See Heather Foster Interviewed by Mika Rottenberg, in: exhib. cat. Mika Rottenberg 2011 (as note 3), pp. 39–40, here p. 39.
52 Cf. Karl Marx: Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Vol. I, London 1976, p. 279.

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Autor:inneninfo

Petra Lange-Berndt is Professor for Modern and Contemporary Art at Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar, Universität Hamburg (permanent position), see http://petralangeberndt.de for more information.

Camilla Paolino is pursuing a PhD in contemporary art history at the University of Geneva, where she explores the material nexus between reproductive and creative work in 1970s Italian art practice. As the recipient of a fellowship, she is currently pursuing a ten-month research residency at the Swiss Institute in Rome (2023–2024). To date, her research has been presented at the Swiss Institute in Rome (2023), Ruhr-Universität in Bochum (2022), INHA in Paris (2022), Kunsthalle Bern (2022), University of Fribourg (2021), FRI ART Kunsthalle of Fribourg (2020), and IHA in Lisbon (2019).

Veronica Peselmann is Ass. Prof. of Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Groningen. Her research interests include the study of materiality and artistic production from a global perspective, with a particular focus on ecological and «post»colonial aspects. She works on artists' books, art and memory, as well as methodologies and the history of art history, with a specific emphasis on the role of multisensuality. Her research was supported by several institutions, including the Getty Research Institute and the Volkswagen Foundation.

Dominic Rahtz is Reader in History and Theory of Contemporary Art at the University for the Creative Arts. His book *Metaphorical Materialism: Art in New York in the Late 1960s* was recently published by Brill.

Kathrin Rottmann earned her PhD with a thesis on *Aesthetik von unten. Pflaster und Asphalt in der bildenden Kunst der Moderne* (Silke Schreiber Verlag, Munich 2016, Aesthetics from Below. Pavement and Asphalt in the Visual Arts), was awarded the Aby Warburg Prize for early career researchers of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in 2020, and heads the DFG-funded research project *Industrial Modes of Production in the Arts of the Global North in the 20th and 21st Centuries. Studies in Art and Factories* at the Ruhr University Bochum.

Friederike Sigler is a research assistant at the Institute of Art History at the Ruhr University Bochum. She was a fellow at the DFG Research Training Group «Materiality and Production» and a research assistant at the Dresden University of Fine Arts, where she received her PhD in 2019 on the topic of work in 1970s art (Edition Metzel 2021). Work continues to be among her research interests. She is the editor of *Work. Documents of Contemporary Art* (Whitechapel 2017) as well as the curator of the exhibition *Cooking Cleaning Caring. Care Work in the Arts since 1960* (Josef Albers Museum Quadrat, Bottrop 2023–2024) and the publisher of the exhibition catalogue (Hatje Cantz 2024).

Monika Wagner wurde zunächst als Künstlerin ausgebildet, bevor sie Kunstgeschichte in Hamburg und London studierte. Sie leitete das Funkkolleg Moderne Kunst und lehrte von 1987 bis 2009 Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Hamburg. Arbeitsschwerpunkte: Kunst des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts, Geschichte und Theorie der Wahrnehmung, insbesondere die Semantik künstlerischer Materialien. Fellowships führten sie u. a. an das Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, das Getty Research Center in LA und das IFK in Wien.

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In Anlehnung an die materialistische Kunstgeschichtsschreibung der 1970er Jahre analysieren die Beiträge dieses Hefts Produktion und Produktionsverhältnisse, um sie als Analysekategorien in Zeiten globalisierter sowie neoliberalisierter Kunst- und Wissensproduktion für eine kritische linke Kunstgeschichte der Gegenwart anschlussfähig zu machen.

Building upon the materialist art historiography of the 1970s, this issue examines production and the relations of production in order to render them suitable as analytical categories for a critical left art history of the present, marked by the globalisation and neoliberalisation of art and knowledge production.

Zur Reihe

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