The inexperienced may wonder at the fact that so many various things can be retained in the memory, but as soon as they observe that all branches of learning have a real connection with, and reciprocal action upon each other, the matter will seem very simple.

Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, **De Architectura libri decem**, 1st bce

VORBILDER

Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.

Walter Benjamin

Riddles of the Model

Francesco Pellizzi

It has always appeared—it is in fact also a tenet upon which all the disciplines of art and natural history are based—that nothing is created ex nihilo: a precedent always exists to which any form, and any image, is bound in some way to refer. It remains of course an open and infinitely debatable question if there is (are) (an) ultimate model(s) or if the chain goes back (and forward) to infinity: in Genesis, man was made in the image of God, but what were all the other natural forms made in the image of—and what can be fathomed as being the image of God? However, in art, I am talking here of any art, the artifex, the maker of models is the usurper of godliness and the maker of models (one reason, among others, for Plato's diffidence towards the arts), he is god: always replicating an image of, yet never replicating exactly what was done before—which, of course, would have been impossible before mechanical means of reproduction were developed, the hand and the mind always interfering with the intention of exact replication. Denial then intervened—the denial of difference (today, what is prevalent rather, is a denial of sameness, or of similarity). The affirmation of identity was then equivalent to actual conformity, while leaving room for considerable variation and creativeness.

On occasion, new forms do arise which are recognized as such. Traditionally, their origin would invariably be attributed to two realms of the extranormal: dreaming and visions, i.e. respectively, onirical visions and waking dreams (reveries and hallucinations). But the materials of these epiphanies, the original forms elaborated and combined in and by them, are always those of the experienced world, *naturae naturantis.* It is with writing that the canon was born, and also that mediated relation to the model which shaped, for millennia, all the development of Western and Oriental high art, as well as, by reflection, that of much of popular art. The question today is, however—perhaps has always been—how somebody can appropriate (in fact steal) somebody else's doing and yet make something of it that is uniquely his own. In other words, the question is not what are the models to be followed or that are being followed, but what are the doings that by the fact of being reappropriated are turned into models: in this process—when true reappropriation is involved—the models generated become something that is at once identical and different from their source, like an old being that is the offspring of a younger one, issued from itself, and who only in this relation could come to realize what it was (and is: 'figlia del tuo figlio'—daughter of thy son—says Dante of the Virgin Mary). Thus a new form (of seeing, of hearing, of living, etc.) gives life to an old one. When this occurs—it occurs constantly, or we would be all dead—some form of art is at

play, something that turns out to be absolutely necessary, but only after the fact. This necessity, a posteriori, is akin to that which governs magical thought: that form of thought which refuses to accept that; anything may be without a recognizable cause and that behind this cause there may not lie a definite intention. Under certain conditions, however, more easily in our modern world than in traditional ones (I shall briefly get into the reasons for this in a moment), the simple repetition of a dead model prevails, and we have what it has become customary to call Kitsch. Kitsch means the triumph of the unnecessary, of the superfluous.

For the purpose of my argument—an introduction to the examination of the current status of the model in art—let me proceed by referring to some observations on kitsch made fifty years ago (1939) by one of the great writers of the century, Robert Musil. You may remember a text of his called 'Black Magic.' It appeared in his 'Posthumous Papers of a Living Author,' a collection of short, penetrating pieces, wittily, sometimes whimsically, exploring the paradoxes associated with the forms of modern aesthetic life, high and low. While not at all inclined to a sentimental appreciation of folksy ways, Musil shared his time's awareness of the complex relations between popular and learned art forms. In this particular text, he addressed the interpretation of expression in secondary popular images—the question raised by stereotyped aesthetic models, the emotions attached to the rituals of their recurrent play throughout language and living. He saw the working of these models as magic, I think, because he recognized that they exert a sort of automatic hold on us, no matter how much we strive to free ourselves from their conditioned responses, in a word, because they are powerful, if involuntary transmitters of emotional energy and expressive form. The blackness of the magic he refers to, on the other hand, may come from the recognition of hidden intentions: as if the workings of Form on Passion were manipulated in a way that is not all—and not always—in the light of the sun. It is a question of unconscious doings, of course, of doings that are unavowable for what they are even when they appear innocent: like the compulsive re-mapping of a familiar territory, the comforting elimination of any possible (emotional) discovery through the mechanic stimulation of (emotional) triggers. Musil starts from an examination of kitsch and the effects of its accumulation: of the way more and more stereotyped kinds of expression can pile up on one another in common artistic manifestations.

Here kitsch is the dead model. (…)

Musil, through all the clever and diverting paradoxes, is in the end equating kitsch to "tableau vivant," the image added to life by the sentimentality of secondary, vicarious emotions, to a negation of living. He is essentially a modernist, and the images of life that he sees as being the task of art to peel off the phoniness of reality, in what we might call a movement from one to another reality, can be equated to a sort of analytical action paintings, a cerebral form of good expressionism. I think that this is what reveals the hidden link, within Modernism, between, for instance, what was produced by De Kooning and Pollock in the late forties and fifties and what Duchamp was, almost secretly, preparing in those same years: a *tableau mort* to end all *tableaux vivants*, a post-modern image of such kitschines a as to preempt any possible further shadow of kitsch and an enigma of such transparency, fifty years after the 'Large Glass,' to end all pretention of mystery in expression.

To the question of the general nature and origin of kitsch, and of its relation to art and life, another one is connected: what is it about kitsch that has made it so relevant, and so prevalent—as a category (as an idea), and as a thing—in the last 200 years? The 19th century generated both the anti-establishment high art of the connoisseurs, and the academic and *pompier* styles. The high culture of the first half of the 20th century struggled with the problems posed by the multiplication, one could say the inflation, of vulgar images (and of the image of the vulgar, the spreading of the middle brow)—photographic ones and others—seen not only as a constricted and constrictive petit–and middle–bourgeois corruption of the tradition of classical beauty, but also, often, as an edulcorated and sentimental, hence mystifying, representation of the popular. As it is widely recognized now, it was again Duchamp who saw, perhaps before and more clearly than anybody else, that it had become once and for all impossible to ignore, in this stage of Modernity, the primary, natural presence—the dominance and ubiquity—of the infinitely reproducible artificial object, of the industrial artifact as well as of its twin sister, the mechanical image (of photography). The new and vast areas of society that had first produced—and were still consuming—a plethora of junk art, were doing so in fact by blinding themselves to this inescapable truth: that in the era of easily

made things and images, art could not keep on the edge of creativeness, could not in fact even keep up with the precipitous course of things, without acknowledging things and images ready made as basic material for art. (…)

The question of the model in art is of course linked to that of representation. The model is, in Western art, the privileged subject of representation, a fact that has been recognized by so many painters (and even photographers) insistence on the theme of the artist and his model. But this is not the aspect of the model that I wish to evoke here. I am thinking, rather, of a fluctuation, in modernity, between the representation of the model and that of its subject (what is the model about): the model after the subject and the subject after the model.

(…) there are at least two distinct and major senses in which we can talk of art's models. I would label them here, for the sake of brevity, the model in art and the model of art. The first, the model in art, refers to the question of representation as a mimesis of the world, of creation; the second the model of art addresses the imitation of artistic precedent, through which expression is conveyed—it is mimesis as the reflection of a way of doing. The varied and complex relationship between these two models, the constant shifts from one to the other, constitutes that chemistry of mimesis that makes up each form of art and each individual work of art: it is equally significant for expressive and conceptual forms, as for ancient crafts, idols and fetishes. (…)

A related aspect of the question of the model concerns the distance, in the rapport between the model and its subject, that often appears in the work of modern art as an element of narration: narration as the story of a distance, and of a difference. (...)

The archaic disinterest to create, through representation, a mirror of nature, is in some way analogous to the programs of modernism. In both cases there is a dominance of function over form (that is, over the model) even where this function gets so abstract that it becomes first amorous of itself and finally completely self-reflecting. What I am calling attention to is the fact that the radical opacity of the archaic (supposedly pre-rational) cult object, the fact that it represents that which we do not see, corresponds to a curiously similar opacity of the modernist one, its not-representing that which is visible. The photographic medium, in all its myriad forms, dominates the representation of the visible for us, and non-photography (including the non-photography used by artists who include photographs in their work), is left with only a negative specification: that of being non-representational even where it has recourse to the natural image. I consider this relationship significant in a world that has brought together, with physical as well as aesthetic violence, the forms of the archaic with those of the modern. We do not see Warhol's many 'Jacqueline Kennedy's' as portraits of Jacqueline Bouvier-Kennedy Onassis, just as the scheletal wooden images from New Guinea's Karavari caves are not portraits of the departed great-great-grandfathers: both representations refer to actual people in an oblique way, symbolically, yet not as simple signs, but while the second evoke them epiphanically, as significant residual presences, without actually depicting them, the first inflationarily reproduce their flat images in all their imaginal vacuity (to borrow a term from the vocabulary of entomology). (…)

But the link between model, objectivity and consumption, with its disquieting connotations of destruction and sacrifice, also has important implications in an anthropological view of art.

The conditioning of imitation, of the mimetic mode, has always been inescapable; true repetition, however, has become possible only with the printing press and the industrial mode of production. Before that, it was in fact the distance between the model and its copy that perpetuated the life of the model, which is to say that the model survived through difference. In archaic societies, which have an ideology of stillness, change is in fact constant, because the models themselves are perishable. We could call these the cultures of undetected history. For us, who have an ideology of constant change, the power of the model—we could call it the mechanical model—is overwhelming, because everything works to impose comparison with the past. In this sense, we could call ours the time of stillness undetected. For us, distance in time and distance in space (in place) have been lumped together and voided of their ancient threat (just think of how cinema and television constantly exploit these two parameters of remoteness), but they have also made accessible a new flow of models and forms, from all over the world and from all times. It is in the tension between the transparence and opacity in the absorption of these exogenous contents that lies much of what is interesting in western art today, as the present exhibition testifies. (…)

In art history and criticism there is often a tendency to apply linear (evolutive) models of interpretation to artistic phenomena which have in fact shaped themselves in opposition to history

(and to these models). A rejection of history cannot obliterate the memory of the chain of events of which it is itself an issue, but does suffice to call into question the genealogical, i.e. hierarchical structures within which their relevance is apprehended. Not by accident, ours is also a time when discourses rooted in very different terrains not only intersect and clash, but also blur those supposed lines of continuous development that until recently had seemed to guide the course of western art. The widespread suppression of history, on the other hand, is a necessary pendant of the present and general inclination to attribute historical importance to all sort of trivia: anything, today, can make history (just as Warhol said that anybody should be famous for 15 minutes in their lives). So what we see is that history itself, having been universalized and generalized, has become a vast reservoir of kitsch. This means that the trappings of kitsch have been multiplied and that for the new artists of the world, our guardians against the dead weight of the mechanical and the superfluous, the challenge is so much greater and more insidious than before. (…)

D.H. Lawrence, once more, and I shall close with this, touched on this aspect of the survival of an archaic ethical/aesthetic representation of time, when describing what he saw, in Mexican Indian culture, as the persistence of a single-minded involvement with things at hand, and an indifference to all sense of responsibility for conditions preceding or ensuing the immediacy of the present: he thought this attitude characteristic of a non-historical mode of being, but it is perhaps also, for better or worse, how we are even now facing our Brave new world.

But here is Lawrence:

> "Strip, strip, strip away the past and the future, leave the naked moment of the present disentangled. Strip away memory, strip away forethought and care; leave the moment, stark and sharp and without consciousness, like the obsidian knife. The before and the after are the stuff of consciousness. The instant moment is forever keen with a razor-edge of oblivion, like the knife of sacrifice."

Francesco Pellizzi, **Riddles of the Model**, in **1990 Witte de With/The Lectures**, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam & Imschoot, Uitgevers, Gent, 1991.

Looking at a black and white photograph of Rodchenko's
Reading Room of the USSR Workers' Club,
I find myself constructing images and narratives from memory,
some remembered and some invented

1925

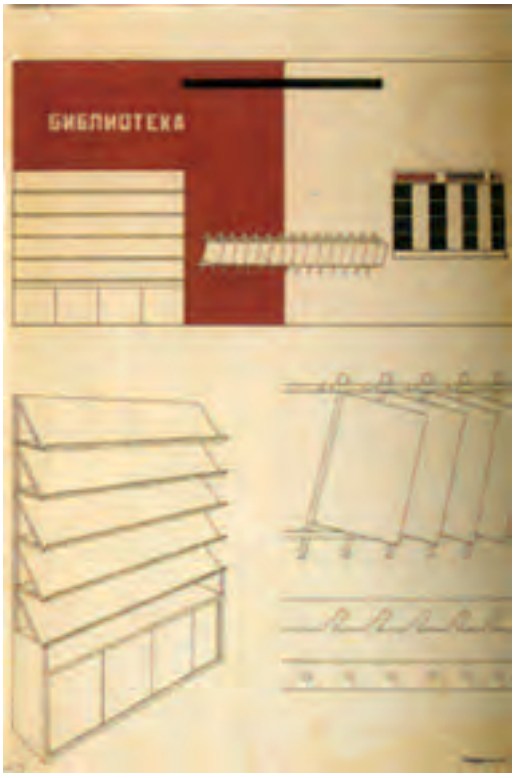
A.M. Rodchenko
Reading Room of the USSR Workers' Club

conceived for
L'Exposition internationale
des Arts décoratifs
et industriels modernes
in Paris, 1925.

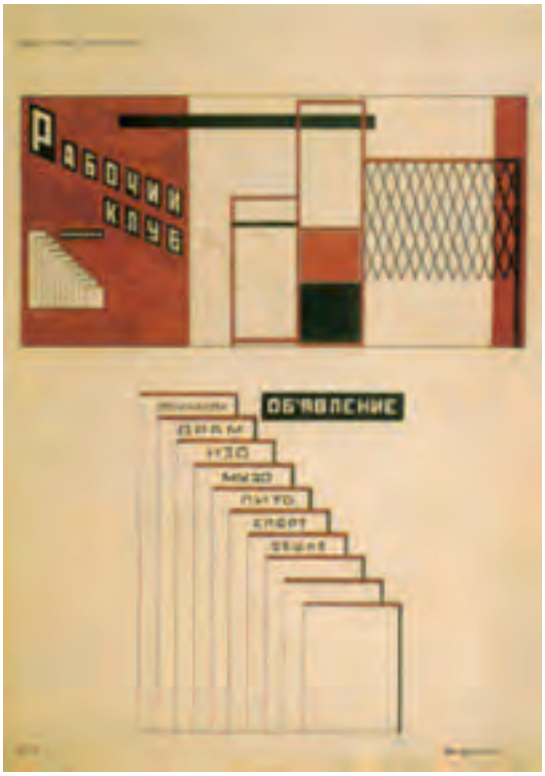
Photograph made by Rodchenko to document the USSR Workers' Club, 1925.

Photograph of the model of the USSR Workers' Club, 1925.

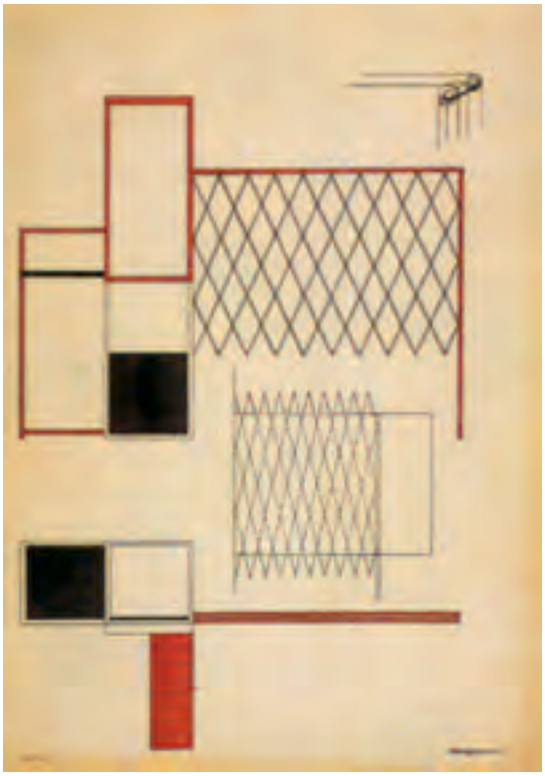
Entry Signs



Library



Club Entry and Announcement Panels

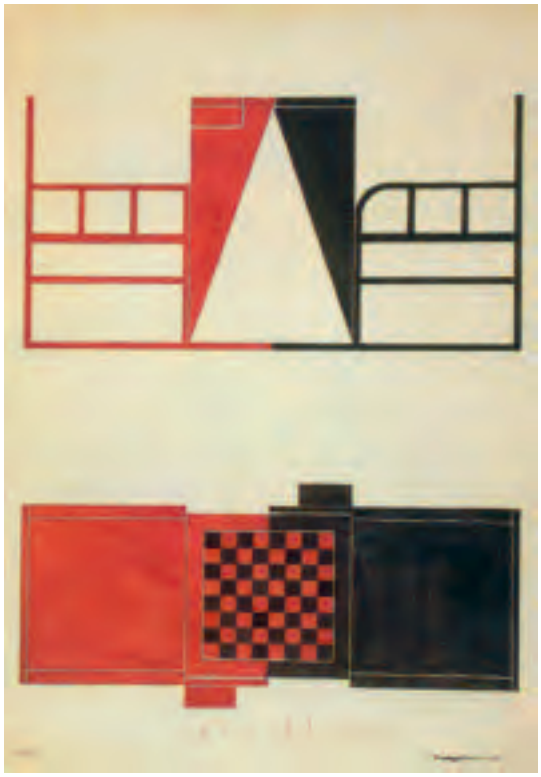


Collapsible Rostrum

Collapsible Rostrum, Stage and Projection Screen

Reading table and Chair

Design for the Lenin Corner in the **USSR Worker's Club** at the *Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*, Paris, 1925.



Chess Table

Chess Table

Photograph made by Rodchenko to document the **USSR Workers' Club**, 1925.

The USSR Workers' Club

In 1925, Rodchenko moved beyond two-dimensional work to design a three-dimensional structure, a model workers' club, as one of the Soviet contributions to the *Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*, in Paris. The workers' club was a new, post-Revolutionary entity, a communal site intended to offer both political enlightenment and rest and renewal at the end of the working day. Slogans in the many campaigns for the creation of such clubs proclaimed the virtues of the "healthy relaxation" they offered, and Soviet journals ran endless debates about their role in the creation of a *novyi byt*, a new everyday life. In the Paris club, Rodchenko conceived an ideologically infused public space for proletarian relaxation, which would stand in opposition to the private, hidden realm of bourgeois leisure. The club, however was aimed at a Western audience as much as a Soviet one, and at the close of the exhibition, the Soviet delegation presented it to the French Communist Party. (…)

By their very understatement, both Rodchenko's club and Mel'nikov's pavilion (housing the Soviet contribution) stood as anti-monumental critiques of the rest of the exposition. The reading table, expanding media center, bulletin boards, and photographs of Lenin in the workers' club also made it a space for collective relaxation quite unlike the ornate parlors of the department-store displays. Next to it, in fact, even Le Corbusier's Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau, a famous pavilion at the exposition, seems less a radical reconceptualization of living space than a technologized revamping of a traditional upper-crust living room, full of paintings (though paintings by Fernand Léger and Amédée Ozenfant) and overstuffed armchairs (though made of leather and steel).

The Paris workers' club implied that Soviet workers, unlike those in capitalist countries, belonged to a leisure class. At the same time, it differentiated their relaxation from contemplative, private bourgeois leisure: rather than an individual occupation, proletarian leisure was imagined as communal, a complement to collective labor. On the other hand, with its focus on reading, chess, and shared social space, the workers' club in some ways related closely to the Parisian café, if a café rationalized and redone for the socialist worker (with alcohol noticeably absent). (…)

Not only was the workers' club functional, in the ideologically loaded context of the *Exposition internationale* it served as an exemplar of functionality to the outside world. A description of it by Stepanova, in an article based closely on Rodchenko's own notes, insists on the economy, standardization, and multifunctionalism of Rodchenko's club equipment:

> THE FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS to be met in each object for the WORKERS' CLUB:
>
> 1) Economy in the use of the floor-area of the clubroom and of the space occupied by an object with maximum utility.
>
> 2) Simplicity of use and standardization of the object; it must be possible to increase the size or the number of its component parts.

Within the club, standardization was expressed in geometric regularity and in repetition of form—in the dozen identical chairs, for example, that lined both sides of the reading table. Emphatically mobile, the club's objects were to be adjustable by the user, both for convenience and for different functional requirements. The reading table had leaves that could be moved from an inclined position, for supporting reading matter, to a flat one, creating an expanded work surface; cylinders holding

photographs allowed for a rotating display of many images in a small space; and the gaming surface of the chess table spun to the vertical to allow the players access to the built-in seats. Color too, Stepanova asserted, underlined the objects' functions and structures: the four-color scheme of gray, red, black, and white had "organizational significance—it distinguishes and underlines the methods of use, the parts and the nature of the object." Red also tied together functional components of the club's equipment—the rotating cylinders, the tabletop and bookshelves, and the chair backs—and the "Lenin Corner," a section of the space devoted to the recently deceased leader.

Insistently reiterating the grid, and compartmentalizing the activities it staged, this rationalized space pointed to an industrial model, one "based on total efficiency in every respect." The functionalism of the club's furniture can be seen as a way of reinvesting the object with use-value, inscribing it with its relation to human needs and activities. The applications of Rodchenko's objects, in fact, had an almost hyperbolic quality—as in the complex of struts and planes against one wall that unfolded into the rostrum-cum-movie-screen (also with built-in bench). This particular object managed to be not only impressively multifunctional but obscurely so; it is hard to read the structure's purpose in its collapsed state, and only in its full extension does the logic of the system become visible. (…)

The function of most of the(se) elements makes it clear that the club was intended above all as a media space, employing multiple and simultaneous information technologies. Its patron was conceived as a consumer of information; the idea was implicit that the working class had a right to political knowledge. The sheer quantity of elements also suggests a kind of media saturation, an excess of information coming from all sides. The workers who used the club, however, were not to be passive spectators and consumers. An active engagement with information was at least as important as information itself, and the games and activities within the club were to promote consciousness, putting ideology into practice.

Not only did Rodchenko's design function as a critique of passive bourgeois structures, it could also be seen as a response to certain trends within the Soviet Union in the wake of Lenin's death, in 1924. In a period of political transition during which various factions attempted to claim the nation's leadership, Lenin's image—in the form of countless busts, paintings, photo albums, postcards, etc.—served a legitimating purpose. Kitschy as these objects might seem in hindsight, their proliferation reveals a profound anxiety, a kind of political *horror vacui*. One of the most common manifestations of the phenomenon was the spread of the Lenin Corner—most typically a painted portrait or a bust in a niche in a public site. The very name is significant, as it echoes that of the "Red Corner," the place in the peasant home where, in Russian tradition, icons and religious objects were displayed. Further reinforcing this religious undertone, the government placed a great deal of importance on the preservation of Lenin's physical body, as an original conferring authenticity on all its iconic copies (over which, significantly, the authorities tried to impose controls).

Not surprisingly, Rodchenko and Lef attacked this kind of passive veneration in all its manifestations, positing an alternate representation of the leader. The workers' club in Paris was one such alternative: it was saturated with references to Lenin, but the design privileged constructive activity over veneration. Within the club, electricity (in the geometrical lamp construction), reading (in the slanted table and bookshelves), and chess (in the chess table with swiveling gameboard) all appeared under the aegis of the word LENIN, and of the leader's photograph. Neither electricity, nor chess, nor reading was politically neutral in early Soviet culture: literacy and electrification had been

among Lenin's first major policy initiatives, and chess had emerged as a political concern slightly later, in 1924-25, when a Soviet victory over France in the game's first ever state-sponsored international tournament catalyzed a drive to convert chess from bourgeois pastime to mass activity. Although this campaign was launched after Lenin's death, chess, like reading and electricity, was rhetorically associated with him—his own playing was frequently invoked—and all were promoted as ways to produce a conscious worker capable of participating actively in the new society. The Paris workers' club, then, in its entirety, can be seen as a kind of extended portrait of the leader, but one dedicated to putting aspects of his political legacy to work. In contrast to the site of contemplative veneration offered by most Lenin Corners, Rodchenko's club was constructed as a site of practice. One might even say that it gave Lenin himself use-value, relating his political legacy to activities of work and play, and transforming the Lenin Corner into usable space. (…)

In this division into two groups, Rodchenko refuses the established hierarchy of mediums that would privilege the traditional art object as the most appropriate form for memorializing a leader. But there is something more. Implicit in this distinction lies a temporal difference: the first group (Art bronze, Oil portraits, Etchings, Watercolors) could be called objects of retrospection, of imaginative reconstruction, while those of the second (A file of photographs taken of him at work and rest, archives of his books, writing pads, notebooks, shorthand reports, films etc.) are relatively immediate or synchronic in nature. Primary documents, they belong to files and archives rather than to collections and museums. With his carefully weighted question, Rodchenko is proposing an archival mode of representation. (…)

For Rodchenko, the mass of photographs (and other documents) representing Lenin in all of his contradictory manifestations did important political as well as aesthetic work by challenging the false wholeness of any synthetic representation. He wrote, "There is a file of photographs and this file of snapshots allows no one to idealize or falsify Lenin." The existence of photography in all its multiplicity, then, undermined the concept of the true copy or icon. And the photographic archive worked against the presentation of any one image as an exemplar of the universal, constructing instead a discontinuous collection of artifacts, of which the individual could construct his or her own active interpretation. Rodchenko's publication and display of photographs of Lenin might be seen as an effort to force open this "file of photographs," and thus to challenge essentializing images of the leader.

Leah Dickerman, **The Propagandizing of Things**, in **Alexandr Rodchenko** (exhibition catalogue), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1998.

The inexperienced may wonder at the fact that
so many various things can be retained in the memory,
but as soon as they observe that all branches
of learning have a real connection with,
and reciprocal action upon each other, the matter
will seem very simple.

Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, **De Architectura libri decem**, 1st BCE

Poster for the film *Cine-Eye (Kino glaz)* by Dziga Vertov, 1924. Used for Interview cover.

ГОСКИНО ПРОИЗВОДСТВО ГОСКИНО

Interview

JULY $2.50

КИНО ГЛАЗ

РОДЧЕНКО

6 СЕРИЙ

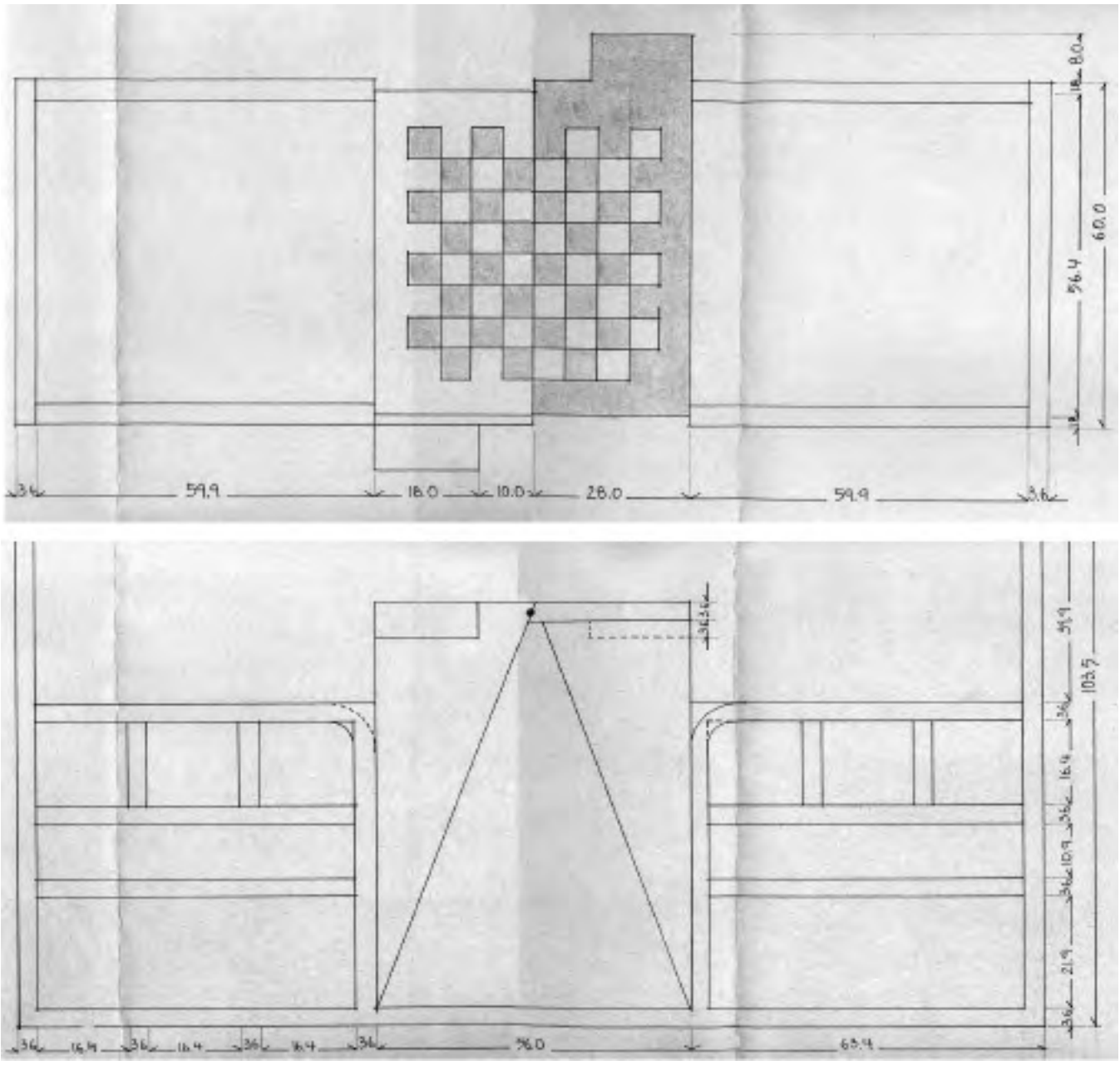
РАБОТА
ДЗИГИ ВЕРТОВА
ОПЕРАТОР
КАУФМАН

Reconstruction of the **USSR Worker's Club** for the 1998 retrospective of Alexandr Rodchenko's work at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. (photographs: François Morrelli)

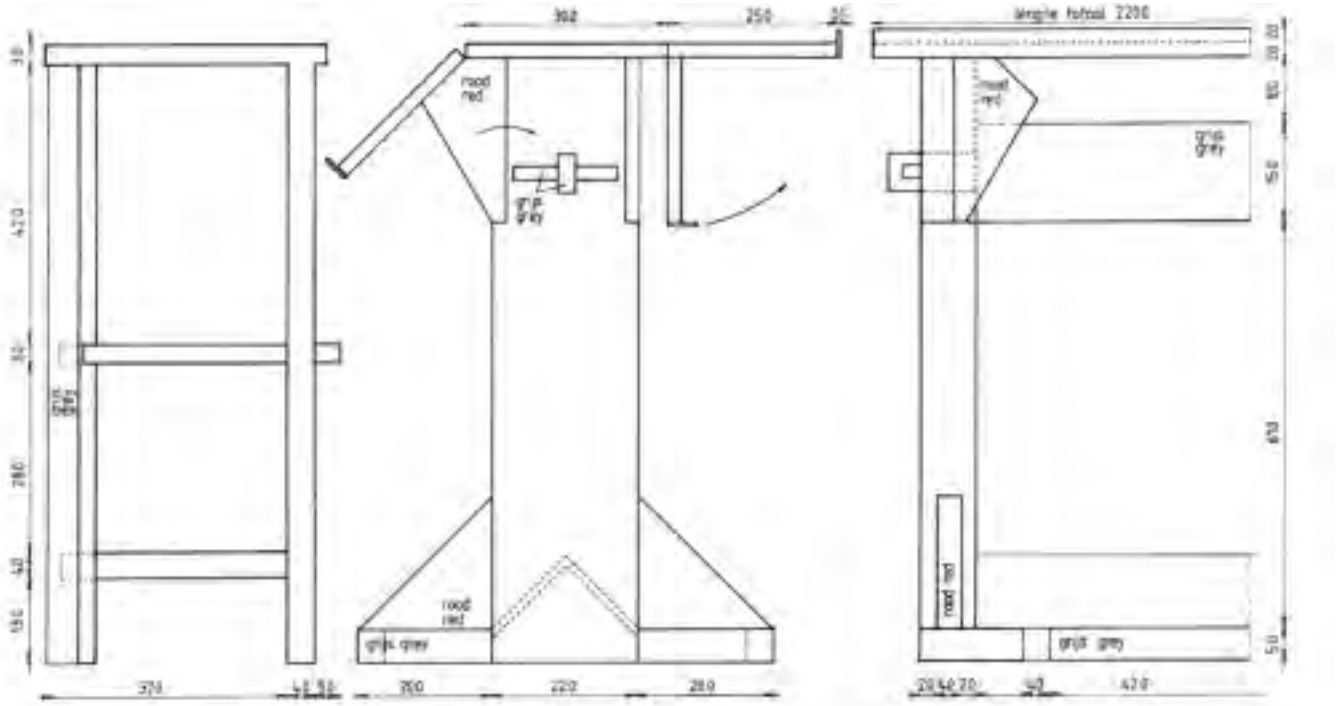
Next page
Michel Aubry, **mise en musique de la salle de lecture du Club ouvrier**, 1925-2000.

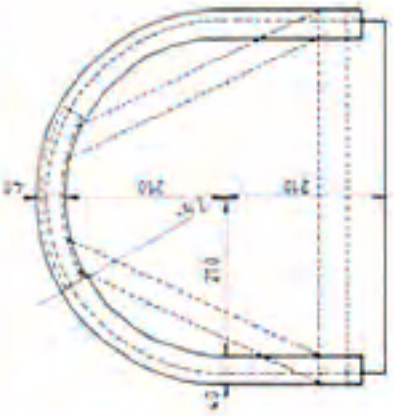

FOR THE VOICE

Angela Grauerholz, **Reading Room for the Working Artist**, after Alexandr Rodchenko's Reading Room for the **USSR Worker's Club**. First installation at the Blaffer Gallery, The Art Museum of the University of Houston, 2003.



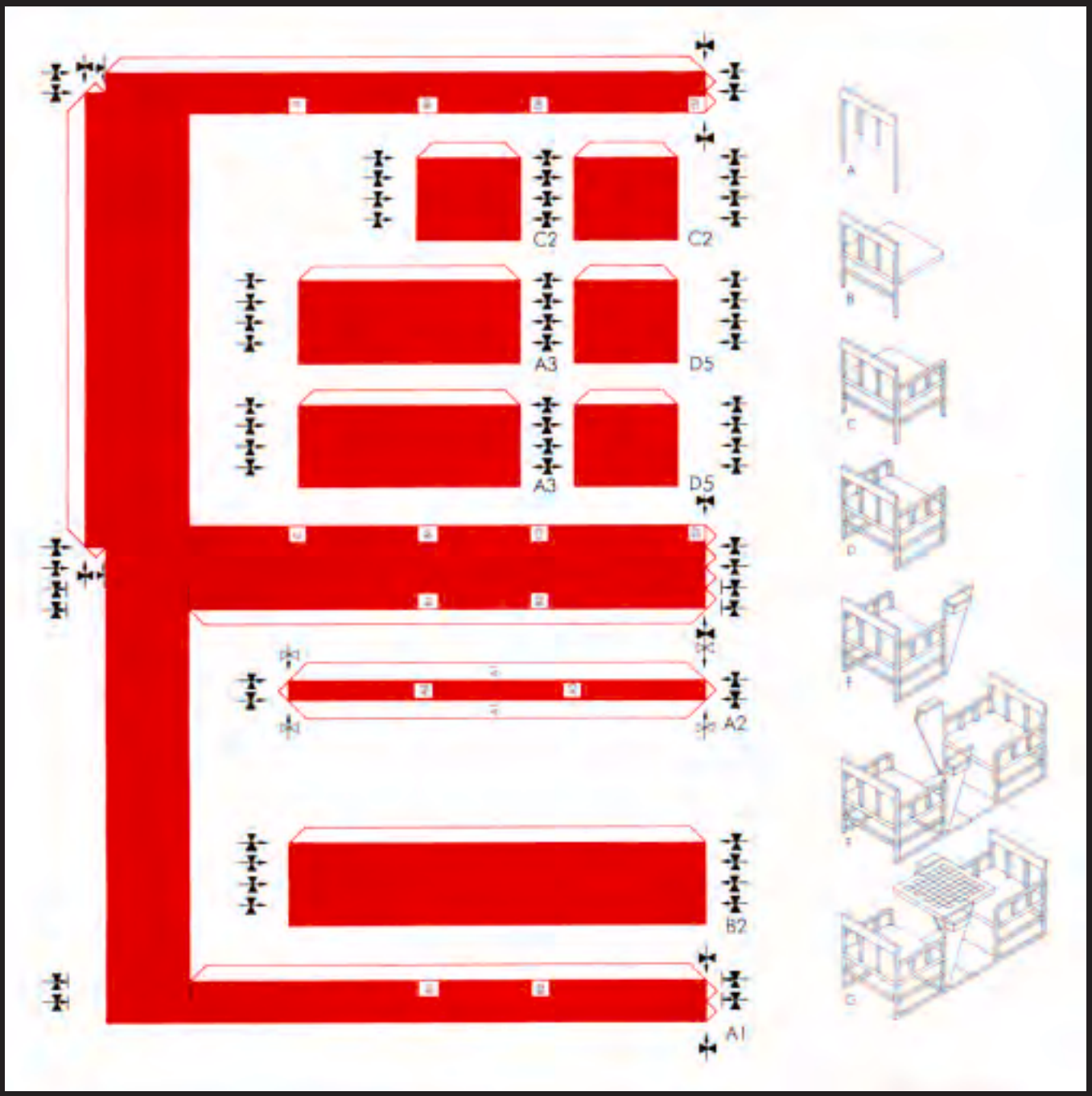
(Reconstruction) Plans for **Reading Room for the Working Artist**, 2003.

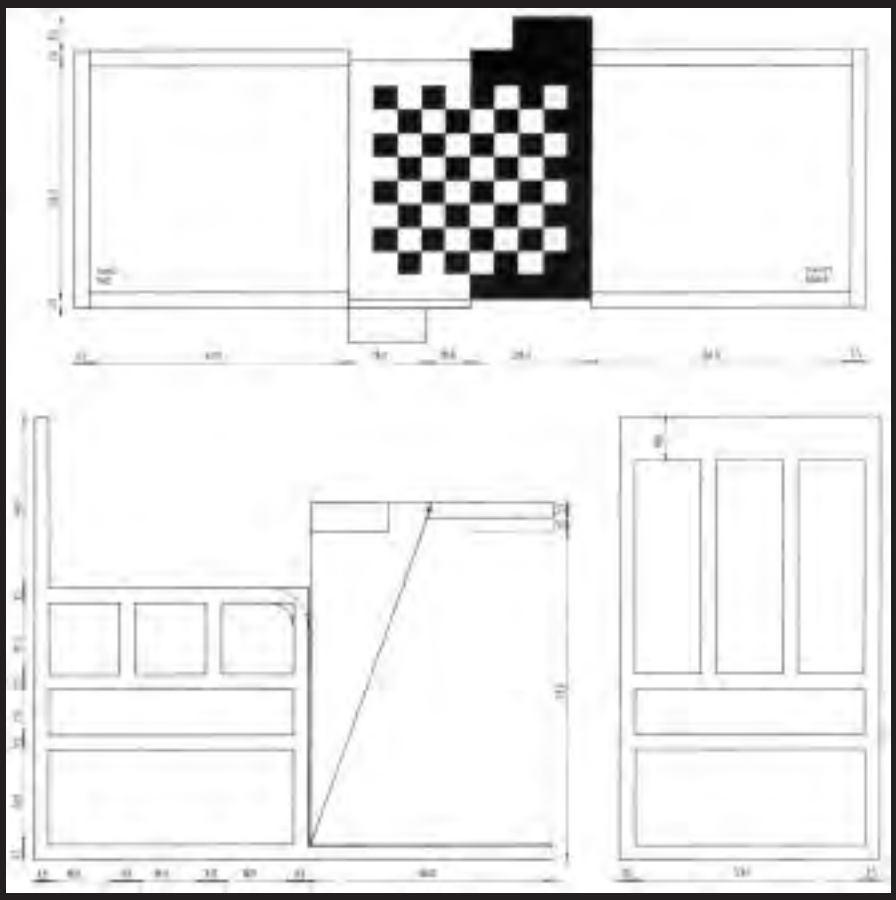




WORKING PLANS FOR CHAIR

Rodchenko: Chess Table/Schaaktafel (Paper Model, Scale 1:7), a box set edition with booklet compiled by J. Niemeijer and Chr. Overvoorde, Thoth Publishing House, Amsterdam, 1989.


C2
C2
A3
D5
A3
D5
A2
B2
A1



(Reconstruction) Plans for **Reading Room for the Working Artist**, 2003.

"I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard!" Alice said at last.

Lewis Carroll

sind…versöhnt

Einführung

Es hat uns gereizt, eine Frage zu erhellen, die seit 20 Jahren immer wieder in der Schachpresse Veranlassung zu hartnäckigen Artikeln gibt.

«Opposition oder Schwesterfelder».

Einfacher:

«Opposition und Schwesterfelder».

Denn nach der Lektüre einer Anzahl dieser terminologischen Auseinandersetzungen scheint es, daß die Unklarheit zum grofen Teil einer schlechten typographischen Anordnung entspringt.

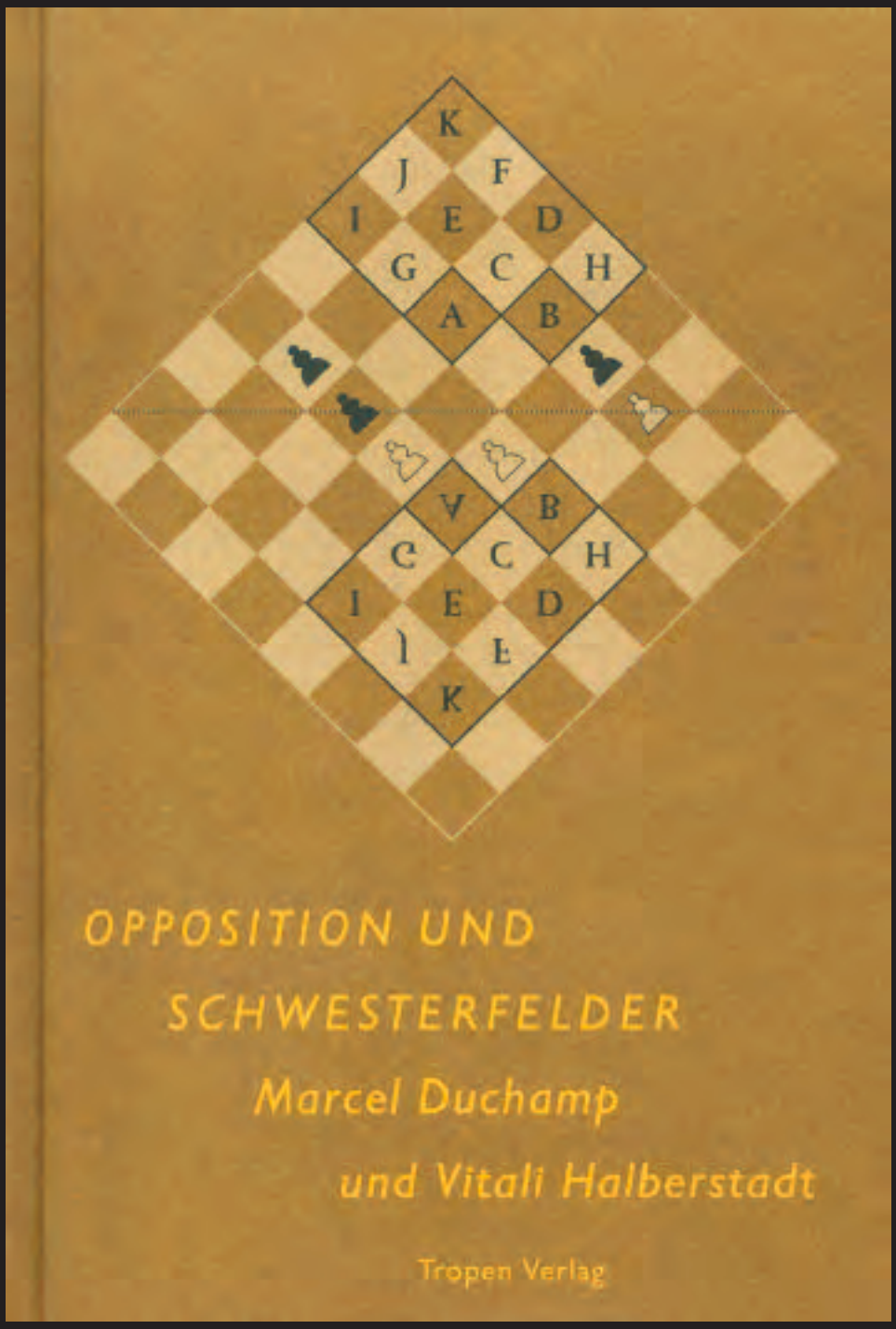
Wir haben es deshalb für unentbehrlich gehalten, eine das Übliche weit überschreitende Anzahl von Diagrammen zu zeigen, um das Verständnis für den Text zu erleichtern. Diese Darstellung wird dazu beitragen, dem Problem seinen pseudoesoterischen Charakter zu nehmen, der die Ursache aller Streitigkeiten ist.

Als bibliographische Quellen, die wir benutzten, erwähnen wir vor allem «La Nouvelle Régence», Paris, 1860-1861 etc. und «La Stratégie Raisonnée des Fins de Partie du Jeu d'Échecs», von Abbé Durand und Jean Préti, Paris, 1871.

Es ist bedauerlich, daß die Entdeckungen des Abbé Durand nur einer beschränkten Anzahl von Bewunderern bekannt sind; denn viele Punkte, die die Wissenschaft der Endspiele heute erobert hat, schulden ihre erste Formulierung diesem Pionier, der seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts die Basis zu einer *Geometrie der Opposition* gelegt hat. Seine «Cases efficacies» (wirksame Felder) und seine «Cases limites» (Grenzfelder) sind der Ausgangspunkt unserer Gesamtklassifizierung.

Trotz mangelnder Genauigkeit in den Umständen, die gegen 1900 das Erscheinen der Stellung Lasker-Reichhelm begleitet haben, sind wir zum mindesten J. Berger verpflichtet, seit 1901 die theoretische Wichtigkeit dieser Stellung betont zu haben; auch später hat er sowohl in seinem Buch («Theorie und Praxis der Endspiele») als auch in zahlreichen Zeitschriften bis in die letzte Zeit hinein eine Polemik verfolgt, die noch nicht abgeschlossen ist.

Juni 1908 hielt im Akademischen Schachklub in München D. Przopiorka einen Vortrag über die «Mathematische Methode in der Praxis des Schachspiels». Um deren Anwendung in Endspielen zu zeigen, analysierte er im einzelnen die Stellung Lasker-Reichhelm. Nachdem er einmal auf die Idee



Marcel Duchamp, **Opposition und Schwesterfelder/Marcel Duchamp und Vitali Halberstadt**, Tropen Verlag, Köln, 2001 (original trilingual publication by Édition L'Échiquier, Paris–Brussels, 1932).

der logischen Korrespondenz zwischen gewissen Feldern gekommen war, zog er die Schlußfolgerung, die Opposition als einen Sonderfall der Schwesterfelder anzusehen.

Etwa um die gleiche Zeit schließt sich Dr. S. Tarrasch den Ideen Przepiorkas an und behandelt die Frage in mehreren Vorträgen in Deutschland.

C. E. C. Tattersall in «A Thousand End Games» (Kollektion des «British Chess Magazine», 1910) druckt zum ersten Mal die Lösung der Stellungen Locock und Lasker-Reichhelm durch die Methode der gleichen Buchstabenbezeichnung.

Vergessen wir indessen nicht, daß das Manuskript des Civis Bononiae, 1454, das ein Amateur der ehemaligen U.A.A.R. in «l'Echiquier» vom Dezember 1928 erwähnt, das älteste uns bekannte Beispiel für eine Anwendung dieser Methode zu sein scheint: aufgewisse Felder sind Buchstaben gedruckt, und der lateinische Text bezeichnet unter Verwendung dieser Buchstaben die entscheidende Stellung der Könige.

J. Drtina (Casopis Ceskych Sach., 1907) und Fr. Dedrle gehen von den Prinzipien des Abbé Durand aus (wahrscheinlich ohne es zu wissen) und endecken neue geometrische Elemente im Problem der Opposition. Man wird z.B. die Wichtigkeit der «Hauptlinie» in unserem ersten Kapitel sehen. Schließlich haben uns die Arbeiten des Ing. Rinaldo Bianchetti: «Contributo alla Teoria dei Finali di Soli Pedoni», Firenze, 1925, besonders ermutigt. Zwei seiner Studien halfen uns dabei, die Existenz neuer Formen der heterodoxen Opposition zu entdecken.

Schlußfolgerung

Ist es nötig, immer noch auf einer schlecht begründeten Streitfrage zu bestehen: für die Opposition und gegen die «Schwesterfelder» oder gegen die Opposition und für die «Schwesterfelder»?

Die Methode der «Schwesterfelder» ist eine Rekognoszierung wesentlich empirischer Art: in jedem Lager fügen sich den bereits entdeckten «Schwesterfeldern» ihre angrenzenden an, eins ans andere, wie in einem Zusammensetzspiel.

Die Opposition (orthodoxer oder heterodoxer Art) basiert auf der konstanten Beziehung der durch die K besetzten Felder, und ihre generelle Formel läßt sich ohne Unterschied auf alle Felder eines Schachbretteils anwenden.

Eine «Chiffre» ist es, mit deren Hilfe man a priori das Gleichgewicht zwischen den K feststellen kann.

Im Ganzen also kann man den Begriff «Opposition» ebensowenig durch den Begriff «Schwesterfelder» ersetzen, wie man ein Verbum (hier «sich entgegenstellen») für ein Substantiv (hier «ähnliche Mosaiken») anwenden kann. .

Ebenso wichtig ist es, hinzuzufügen, daß man mit der Opposition (orthodoxer oder heterodoxer) oder durch Besetzung der «Schwesterfelder» nicht mehr als Remis erzielt.

Denn, um zu gewinnen, muß man sich gewisser «Oppositionsbruch-Manöver» bedienen, die nur schwer verallgemeinert werden können und die in das Gebiet «taktischer Handhabungen» eines Vorteils gehören, die in jeder Position verschieden sind.

Wir müssen also unterstreichen, daß die Opposition (orthodoxer oder heterodoxer Art), ganz wie die «Schwesterfelder» zwar fast immer eine notwendige Bedingung ist, niemals aber Zum Gewinn ausreicht.

Chess Game/Schachspiel 1920/1973

Typographic templates modeled on the lettering used by Rodchenko for the Lenin Corner of the Worker's Club. Design in collaboration with Raphaël Daudelin.

Rodchenko playing chess

Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp

The model of models

Italo Calvino

In Mr. Palomar's life there was a period when his rule was this: first, to construct in his mind a model, the most perfect, logical, geometrical model possible; second, to see if the model was suited to the practical situations observed in experience; third, to make the corrections necessary for model and reality to coincide. This procedure, developed by physicists and astronomers, who investigate the structure of matter and of the universe, seemed to Mr. Palomar the only way to tackle the most entangled human problems, such as those involving society and the art of government. He had to bear in mind the shapeless and senseless reality of human society, with all its monstrosities and disasters, and, at the same time, a model of the perfect social organism, designed with neatly drawn lines, straight or circular or elliptical, parallelograms of forms, diagrams with abscissas and ordinates.

To construct a model—as Mr. Palomar was aware—you have to start with something; that is, you have to have principles, from which, by deduction, you develop your own line of reasoning. These principles—also known as axioms or postulates—are not something you select; you have them already, because if you did not have them, you could not even begin thinking. So Mr. Palomar also had some, but, since he was neither a mathematician nor a logician, he did not bother to define them. Deduction, in any case, was one of his favorite activities, because he could devote himself to it in silence and alone, without special equipment, at any place and moment, seated in his armchair or strolling. Induction, on the contrary, was something he did not really trust, perhaps because he thought his experiences vague and incomplete. The construction of a model, therefore, was for him a miracle of equilibrium between principles (left in shadow) and experience (elusive), but the result should be more substantial than either. In a well-made model, in fact, every detail must be conditioned by the others, so that everything holds together in absolute coherence, as in a mechanism where if one gear jams, everything jams. A model is by definition that in which nothing has to be changed, that which works perfectly; whereas reality, as we see clearly, does not work and constantly falls to pieces; so we must force it, more or less roughly, to assume the form of the model.

For a long time Mr. Palomar made an effort to achieve such impassiveness and detachment that what counted was only the serene harmony of the lines of the pattern: all the lacerations and contortions and compressions that human reality has to undergo to conform to the model were to be considered transitory, irrelevant accidents. But if for a moment he stopped gazing at the harmonious

geometrical design drawn in the heaven of ideal models, a human landscape leaped to his eye where monstrosities and disasters had not vanished at all and the lines of the design seemed distorted and twisted.

A delicate job of adjustment was then required, making gradual corrections in the model so it would approach a possible reality, and in reality to make it approach the model. In fact, the degree of pliability in human nature is not unlimited, as he first believed; and at the same time, even the most rigid model can show some unexpected elasticity. In other words, if the model does not succeed in transforming reality, reality must succeed in transforming the model.

Mr. Palomar's rule had gradually been changing: now he needed a great variety of models, whose elements could be combined in order to arrive at the one that would best fit reality, a reality that, for its own part, was always made up of many different realities, in time and in space.

Throughout this period, Mr. Palomar did not develop models himself or try to apply those already developed: he confined himself to imagining a right use of the right models to bridge the gap that he saw yawning, ever wider, between reality and principles. In other words, the way in which models could be managed and manipulated was not his responsibility, nor was it in his power to intervene. People who concerned themselves with these things were usually quite different from him. They judged the models' functionality by other criteria: as instruments of power especially, rather than according to principles or to consequences. This attitude was fairly natural, since what the models seek to model is basically always a system of power; but if the efficacy of the system is measured by its invulnerability and capacity to last, the model becomes a kind of fortress whose thick walls conceal what is outside. Mr. Palomar, who from powers and counterpowers expects always the worst, was finally convinced that what really counts is what happens despite them: the form that society is assuming slowly, silently, anonymously, in people's habits, their way of thinking and acting, their scale of values. If this is how things stand, the model of models Mr. Palomar dreams of must serve to achieve transparent models, diaphanous, fine as cobwebs, or perhaps even to dissolve models, or indeed to dissolve itself.

At this point the only thing Mr. Palomar can do is erase from his mind all models and models of models. Having taken this step, he is face to face with reality—hard to master and impossible to make uniform—as he utters his "yes"es and his "no"s, his "but"s. To do this, it is better for the mind to remain cleared, furnished only by the memory of fragments of experience and of principles implied but not demonstrable. This is not a line of conduct from which he can derive special satisfactions, but it is the only one that proves practicable for him.

As long as it is a matter of demonstrating the ills of society and the abuses of those who abuse, he has no hesitations (except the fear that, if they are talked about too much, even the most just propositions can sound repetitive, obvious, tired). He finds it more difficult to say something about the remedies, because first he would like to make sure that they do not cause worse ills and abuses, and that wisely planned by enlightened reformers, they can be put into practice without harm by their successors: foolish perhaps, perhaps frauds, perhaps frauds and foolish at once.

He has only to expound these fine thoughts in a systematic form, but a scruple restrains him: what if all this becomes a model? And so he prefers to keep his convictions in the fluid state, check them instance by instance, and make them the implicit rule of his own everyday behavior, in doing or not doing, in choosing or rejecting, in speaking or in remaining silent.

Italo Calvino, **Mr. Palomar**, Lester & Orpen Dennys Publishers, Toronto, 1983.

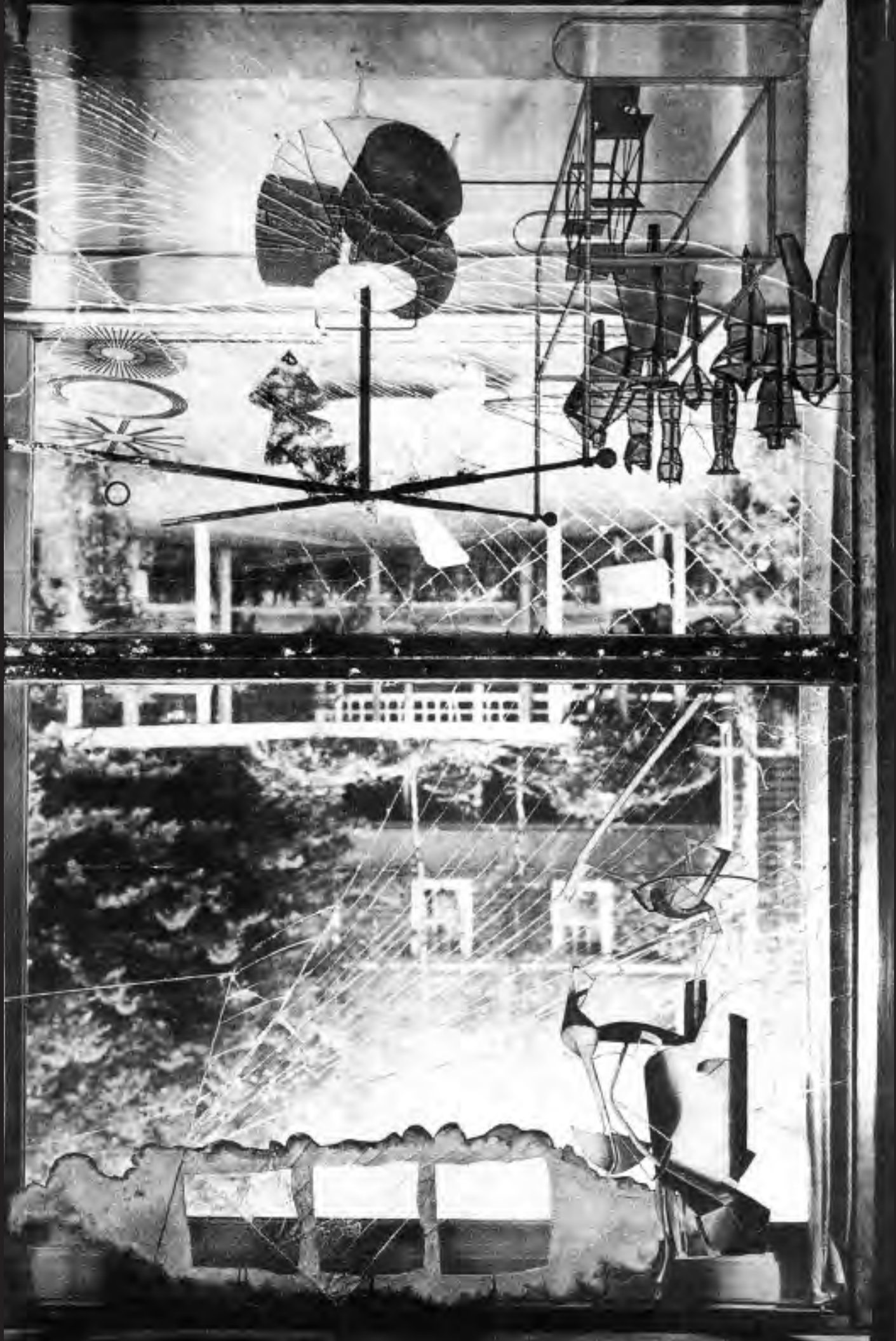
1912–1934

Marcel Duchamp

The Green Box, The Large Glass and The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even

typotranslation of the notes to the **Large Glass**

Photograph of **The Large Glass**, 1958.



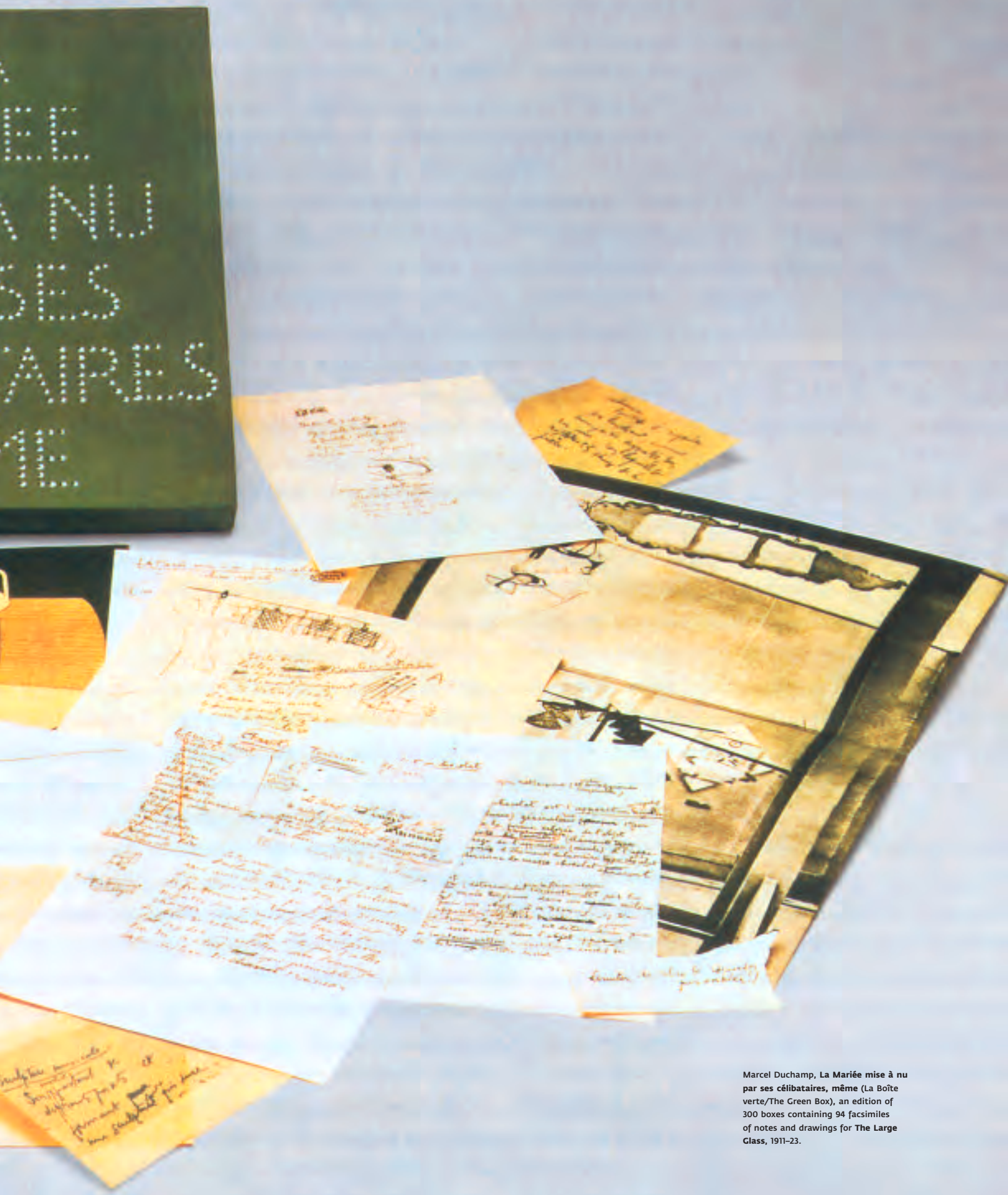
Marcel Duchamp (Stupid Painter)

In France there is an old saying, "stupid like a painter." The painter was considered stupid, but the poet and writer very intelligent. I wanted to be intelligent. I had to have the idea of inventing. It is nothing to do with what your father did. It is nothing to be another Cézanne. In my visual period there is a little of that stupidity of the painter. All my work in the period before the Nude was visual painting. Then I came to the idea. I thought the ideatic formulation B way to get away from influences.

It was my intention not to—a painting in which the tubes of colour were a means and not an end in themselves. The fact that this kind of painting is called literary doesn't bother me, the word literature has a very vague meaning and I don't think it is adequate . . . There is a great difference between a painting which is only directed towards the retina and a painting which goes beyond the retinal impression—a painting which uses the tubes of colour as a springboard to go further. This was the case with the religious painters of the Renaissance. The tubes of colour didn't interest them. What they were interested in was to express their idea of divinity, in one form or another. With a different intention and for other ends, I took the same concept: pure painting doesn't interest me either in itself or as a goal to pursue. My goal is different, is a combination or, at any rate, an expression which only grey matter can produce.

Marcel Duchamp descending a staircase


LA
MARI
MISE A
PAR
CELIBAT
MEN



Marcel Duchamp, **La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même** (La Boîte verte/The Green Box), an edition of 300 boxes containing 94 facsimiles of notes and drawings for **The Large Glass**, 1911–23.

Typotranslation

Duchamp published "The Green Box" in October 1934 in an edition limited to 300 copies. The box holds 94 items and 79 of these are accurately reproduced facsimiles of handwritten manuscripts, drawings and short notes on scraps of paper. The collection includes reproductions of the *Large Glass* (La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même), and details from and studies leading up to this masterpiece by Marcel Duchamp—which is at once a picture, a constructed object, and a metaphysical machine.

George Heard Hamilton deciphered and translated the contents of the box into English (from the French), encouraged by Marcel Duchamp, and this translation was used by Richard Hamilton to make a typographic version of the box as a book in 1960 (Lund Humphries, England and George Wittenborn, USA). This version was also supported by Marcel Duchamp, carrying the following note at the end of the book: *This version of the* Green Box *is as accurate a translation of the meaning and form of the original notes as supervision by the author can make it.* MD, New York 1960.

Richard Hamilton writes in an appendices

> "...he (Duchamp) contrived an art form without parallel, a unique marriage of visual and linguistic concepts. It was his intention that the *Large Glass* should embody the realization of a written text which had assisted the generation of plastic idea, and which also carried layers of meaning beyond the scope of pictorial expression. The text exists beside the glass as a commentary and within it as a literary component of its structure. Without the notes the painting loses some of its significance and without the monumental presence of the glass the notes have an air of random irrelevance."

"The Green Box" was published 11 years after completion of the *Large Glass* and this way almost lost its original intent which was to create a total work of art by making all the notes and drawings leading up to the work in the time period from 1912 to 1923 available with the work.

The decision (taken by publisher Rrose Sélavy, Duchamp' s invention of his alter ego), to print facsimiles of the original pages seems to make sense as one realizes that the actual meaning seems to suffer when calligraphy (hand written text) is converted into hard metal (printed text).

Le gaz d'éclairage. [I]

(Immédiate?)

~~Le Pesage des~~ stoppages étalon

Après les moules mâlics:

Du sommet de chaque moule mâlic le gaz passant par l'unité de longueur dans un tube de section élémentaire, et, par phénomène d'étirement dans l'unité de longueur le gaz se trouve [congelé] solidifié en forme de baguettes élémentaires.

Chacune de ces baguettes, sous la poussée du gaz des moules mâlics, sort du tube et se casse, par fragilité, en paillettes inégales plus légères que l'air (brouillard en détail)

(graphique: 8 tubes horizontaux — section élémentaire — à déterminer etc.)

développer ce rapport d'une longueur [illegible] l'état du [illegible] [illegible] sections dans le tube [illegible] dans l'unité de longueur [illegible] l'étirement [illegible]

Sortie des paillettes:

Le gaz coupé en morceaux, dits paillettes, ~~[illegible]~~ perdant ~~[illegible]~~ dans ses plus petites parties, la poussée mâlique, tirée à la sortie des tubes, tend à monter.

Les paillettes se font arrêter [Piège] dans leur ascension par la 1ère ombrelle (tamis)

Les tamis (6 probablement) sont des ombrelles demi-sphériques trouées. [Les trous des tamis ... devront donner en rapprochement la figure des 8 moules mâlics, donnée schématique par les 3 stoppages étalon par symétrie commandée].

Orientation des ombrelles:

La 1ère est horizontale et reçoit les paillettes à leur sortie des tubes.

Si l'on joint par une ligne toutes les centres des ombrelles on obtient une demi-circonférence de A à B.

Des dessous les paillettes traversent successivement les ombrelles A C D E F ... B.

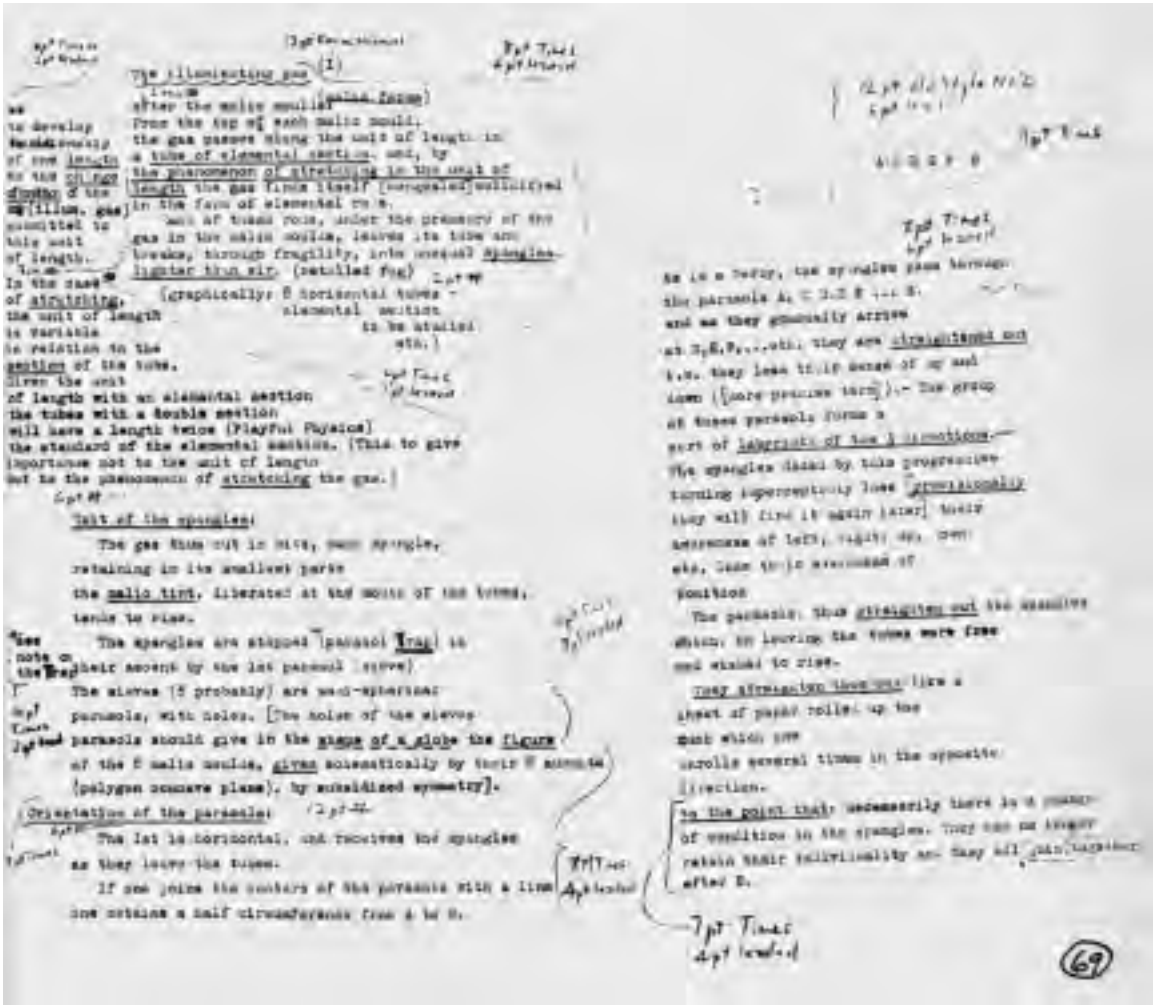
et à mesure qu'elles arrivent en D E F etc elles sont redressées c.à.d. perdent le sens de haut et de bas ([terme plus précis]) — l'ensemble de ces ombrelles est une sorte de labyrinthe des 3 directions.

Les paillettes étourdies par ce retour progressif insensible, perdent [peu à peu elles se retrouveront plus loin] leur désignation de gauche, droite, haut, bas etc. perdent la connaissance de situation.

Les ombrelles donc redressent les paillettes qui à leur sortie des tubes désiraient et voulaient monter.

Elles les redressent comme une feuille de papier trop roulée qu'on déroule plusieurs fois en sens contraire.

Au point que: réussi il y a changement d'état des paillettes. Elles ne peuvent plus garder d'individualité et se rejoignent toutes après B.



The illuminating gas (I)

after the malic moulds
From the top of each malic mould,
the gas passes along the unit of length in
a tube of elemental section, and, by
the phenomenon of stretching in the unit of
length the gas finds itself [elongated] cylindrical
in the form of elemental rods.

All of these rods, under the pressure of the
gas in the malic moulds, leaves its tube and
breaks, through fragility, into unequal spangles
lighter than air. (detailed fog)

(graphically: 8 horizontal tubes -
elemental section
to be studied
etc.)

Exit of the spangles:

The gas thus cut in bits, each spangle,
retaining in its smallest parts
the malic tint, liberated at the mouth of the tubes,
tends to rise.

The spangles are stopped (parasol trap) in
their ascent by the 1st parasol (sieve)

The sieves (5 probably) are semi-spherical
parasols, with holes. [The holes of the sieves
parasols should give in the shape of a globe the figure
of the 8 malic moulds, given schematically by their 8 sections
(polygon concave plane), by subsidised symmetry].

Orientation of the parasols:

The 1st is horizontal, and receives the spangles
as they leave the tubes.

If one joins the centers of the parasols with a line
one obtains a half circumference from A to B.

As in a relay, the spangles pass through
the parasols A_1 ... B.
and as they generally arrive
at 2,3,4,5,...,etc. they are straightened out
i.e. they lose their sense of up and
down (more precise term).- The group
of these parasols forms a
part of labyrinth of the 3 dimensions.
The spangles dazed by this progressive
turning superceptively lose provisionally
they will find it again later their
awareness of left, right, up, down
etc., lose their awareness of
position

The parasols thus straighten out the spangles
which, in leaving the tubes were free
and wished to rise.

They straighten them out like a
sheet of paper rolled up the
most which one
unrolls several times in the opposite
direction.

To the point that necessarily there is a moment
of equilibrium in the spangles. They can no longer
retain their individuality as they all pass together
after B.

(69)

Edward Wright, **Richard Hamilton's version of The Green Box**, in **The Liberated Page: A Typographica Anthology**, Herbert Spencer ed., Bedford Press, San Francisco, 1987 (originally published in Typographica 2, December 1960).

(1)

The illuminating gas

(malic forms)
after the malic moulds:

From the top of each malic mould, the gas passes along the unit of length in a tube of elemental section, and, by the phenomenon of stretching in the unit of length the gas finds itself [congealed] solidified in the form of elemental rods.

to develop the relationship of one length to the change of condition of the body (illum. gas) submitted to this unit of length

Each of these rods, under the pressure of the gas in the malic moulds, leaves its tube and breaks, through fragility, into unequal spangles lighter than air. (retarded fog)

(graphically: 8 horizontal tubes elemental section to be studied etc.)

In the case of stretching, the unit of length is variable in relation to the section of the tube. Given the unit of length with an elemental section the tubes with a double section will have a length twice (Playful Physics) the standard of the elemental section. (This to give importance not to the unit of length but to the phenomenon of stretching the gas.)

Exit of the spangles:

The gas cut in bits, thus: each spangle, retaining in its smallest parts the malic tint, liberated at the mouth of the tubes, tends to rise. (parasol Trap)

The spangles are stopped in their ascent by the 1st parasol (sieve)

see note on the Trap

The sieves (6 probably) are semi-spherical parasols, with holes. [The holes of the sieves parasols should give in the shape of a globe the figure of the 8 malic moulds, given schematic by the 8 summits (polygon concave plane), by subsidized symmetry].

Orientation of the parasols:

The 1st is horizontal, and receives the spangles as they leave the tubes.
If one joins the centers of the parasols with a line one obtains a half circumference from A to B.

As in a Derby, the spangles pass through the parasols A, C D,E F . . . B. and as they gradually arrive at D,E,F, . . . etc. they are straightened out i.e. they lose their sense of up and down ([more precise term]).—The group of these parasols forms a sort of labyrinth of the 3 directions. The spangles dazed by this progressive turning imperceptibly lose [provisionally they will find it again later] their awareness of left, right, up, down etc. lose their awareness of position

The parasols thus straighten out the spangles which, on leaving the tubes were free and wished to rise.

They straighten them out like a sheet of paper rolled up too much which one unrolls several times in the opposite direction.

to the point that: necessarily there is a change of condition in the spangles. They can no longer retain their individuality and they all [illegible] after B.

20½ cms

(I)

The illuminating gas

(malic forms)

after the malic moulds:

From the top of each malic mould.

the gas passes along the unit of length in

a tube of elemental section. and, by

the phenomenon of stretching in the unit of

length the gas finds itself [congealed] solidified

in the form of elemental rods.

Each of these rods, under the pressure of the

gas in the malic moulds, leaves its tube and

breaks, through fragility, into unequal spangles.

lighter than air. (retail fog)

(graphically: 8 horizontal tubes —

elemental section

to be studied

etc.)

to develop this relationship of one length to the change of condition of the body (illum. gas) submitted to this unit of length.

In the case of stretching, the unit of length is variable in relation to the section of the tube. Given the unit of length with an elemental section the tubes with a double section will have a length twice (Playful Physics) the standard of the elemental section. (This to give importance not to the unit of length but to the phenomenon of stretching the gas.)

Exit of the spangles:

thus each

The gas cut in bits, spangle,

retaining in its smallest parts

the malic tint. liberated at the mouth of the tubes,

tends to rise.

(parasol Trap)

The spangles are stopped in

their ascent by the 1st parasol (sieve.)

The sieves (6 probably) are semi-spherical

parasols, with holes. [The holes of the sieves

parasols should give in the shape of a globe the figure

of the 8 malic moulds, given schematic. by the 8 summits

(polygon concave plane). by subsidized symmetry].

See note on the Trap

Orientation of the parasols:

The 1st is horizontal, and receives the spangles

as they leave the tubes.

If one joins the centers of the parasols with a line

one obtains a half circumference from A to B.

the network of

Standard stops

(?)

As in a Derby, the spangles pass through

the parasols A, C D.E F . . . B.

and as they gradually arrive

at D,E,F, . . . etc. they are straightened out

i.e. they lose their sense of up and

down ([more precise term]).—The group

of these parasols forms a

sort of labyrinth of the 3 directions.—

The spangles dazed by this progressive

turning imperceptibly lose [provisionally

they will find it again later] their

designation of left, right, up, down

etc, lose their awareness of

Position

The parasols. thus straighten out the spangles

which, on leaving the tubes were free

and wished to rise.

They straighten them out like a

sheet of paper rolled up too much

which one unrolls several times in the

opposite direction.

to the point that: necessarily there is a change

of condition in the spangles. They can no longer

retain their individuality and they all join together

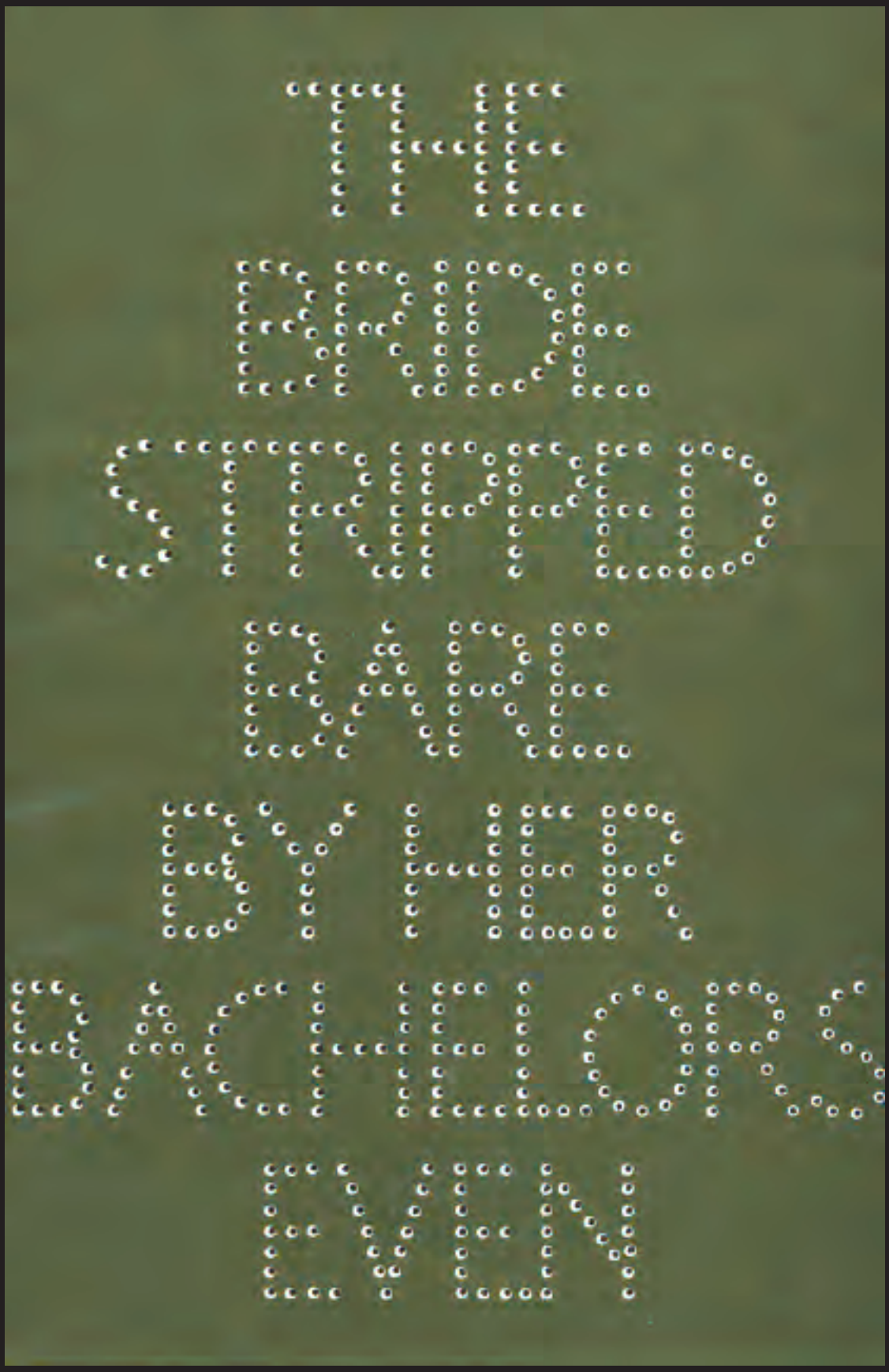
after B.

"What the facsimiles present is the evidence of a prolonged meditation on art—a conscious probing of the limits of aesthetic creation. They convey the doubts, the rethinks, and double takes, (...); the pauses and reaffirmations are there, the winces, private sniggers and nervous ticks."

Why make a typographic version of the facsimile? Why not just make it regular text, why a so called typographic version? Obviously we are talking about making something readable. Nobody will spend the time to decipher the original notes which are on display at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, just as the *Large Glass* is installed there as part of the Arensberg Collection.
In Hamilton's opinion, regular text would necessitate "a mass of footnotes to list the changes, insertions, stresses and other indications less susceptible to treatment in type," to stay true to the original text. "In the treatment of individual notes there was always a clear objective—the attainment of a direct equivalence between the facsimile and the typeset translation."

The idea of translation and *equivalence* is important here. The first translation is important for accessibility to larger audience, hence the translation into English, then the typographic translation which does not in the least feel like the original, as it has neither the ephemeral nor the mysterious quality an original manuscript has. The end product is, however, an excellent excercise in typography's ability to render something expressive and readable at the same time ... as if we were looking at the original. The Green Box facsimile is a collector's item, an item of high value, while the book has become a souvenir as much as a document of a particularly important art event/piece.

From a lecture given in 1998 on Typography and Modern Art.


THE
BRIDE
STRIPED
BARE
BY HER
BACHELORS
EVEN

"prime words"

One of the fundamental concepts through which Duchamp theorized the linguistic readymade is his notion of the "prime word," described in a note from *The Green Box*:

> The search for "*prime words*" ("divisible" only by themselves and by unity).
>
> Take a Larousse dict. and copy all the so-called "abstract" words.
> i.e., those which have no concrete reference.
>
> Compose a schematic sign designating each of these words (this sign can be composed with the standard stops).
>
> These signs must be thought of as the letters of the new alphabet.
>
> A grouping of several signs will determine
> (utilize colors—in order to differentiate what would correspond in this [literature] to the substantive, verb, adverb declensions, conjugations etc.)

In this note Duchamp suggested a two-part process: taking words from the dictionary that have no concrete referents and then transposing these words into the elements of a new alphabet. As in *Tu m'* where measurement is put *en abyme* the word here undergoes an infinite regress. An already arbitrary signifier—what Duchamp called an "'abstract' word"—is displaced from the differential semiotic economy of language (whose locus is the dictionary) to the equally arbitrary vocabulary of painting: "(utilize colors—in order to differentiate what would correspond in this [literature] to the substantive, verb, adverb declensions, conjugations etc.)." Duchamp thus established a bilateral relay of identification between the arbitrary signifiers of language and their equally differential counterparts in painting. The result is the "prime word," which, stripped of its function as a means of signification, regresses into pure materiality.

Two textual works of 1915 and early 1916 respectively, "*The*" and *Rendezvous of Sunday, February 6, 1916*, actualize Duchamp's search for "prime words." The purpose of both texts was to invent grammatically correct sentences that were nevertheless completely incoherent. "*The*" was written in English, soon after Duchamp's arrival in New York, while he was still mastering the language. Wherever the article *the* would have appeared in the handwritten manuscript, Duchamp inserted an asterisk. The text was lighthearted and completely incomprehensible; its first sentence is typical: "If you come into* linen, your time is thirsty because* ink saw some wood intelligent enough to get giddiness from a sister." *Rendezvous of Sunday, February 6, 1916* is a typewritten text in French on four postcards taped together to form a windowlike grid. Although they are linked in this way, the sentences are not continuous from one card to the next. Duchamp explained his concept for the work to Arturo Schwarz:

> There would be a verb, a subject, a complement, adverbs and everything perfectly correct, as such, as words, but meaning in these sentences was a thing that I had to avoid . . . the verb was meant to be an abstract word acting on a subject that is a material object; in this way the verb would make the sentence look abstract. The construction

Marcel Duchamp, **The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even**/a typographic version by Richard Hamilton of Marcel Duchamp's Green Box, translation: George Heard Hamilton, Edition Hansjörg Mayer, Stuttgart, London, Reykjavik, (1960, 1963) 1976.

> was very painful in a way, because the minute I *did* think of a verb to add to the subject, I would very often see a meaning and immediately I saw a meaning I would cross out the verb and change it, until, working it out for quite a number of hours, the text finally read without any echo of the physical world.... That was the main point in it.

Duchamp's project here is extraordinary and quite different from the puns he devised in the 1920s, which established two or more countervailing meanings within a single sentence. These later textual works operate along a linguistic fault line where a displaced or fragmentary parallelism in words provokes a convulsive contradiction. For instance, the English text "My niece is cold because my knees are cold" is tautological but grammatically incorrect on the level of pronunciation (either "my knees is cold because my knees are cold" or "my niece is cold because my niece are cold"), but within this bland repetition of congruent sounds a transgressive incestuous attachment explodes ("my niece is cold [frigid] because she won't sit on my lap"). In this short text, a linguistic doubling stands in for, as it represents, a forbidden libidinal "doubling": the incestuous encounter. The only trace of the disturbance, appropriately enough, is a change in tense from singular to plural—from "is" to "are."

If the puns of the twenties establish a bilateral relay in which one metaphor rebounds from another, "*The*" and *Rendezvous* sought to pulverize the logic of metaphor altogether. While the metonymic axis of language remains intact in these texts—grammatical structure is respected and rigorously correct—the metaphoric axis, that dimension of language in which one word may be substituted for another, is completely disrupted. (...)

According to the interview with Schwarz, Duchamp wanted to exorcise from his text "any echo of the physical world," which is consistent with his desire to invent "prime words" characterized by a second-order abstraction. Certainly "*The*" and *Rendezvous* accomplish this goal, but they also serve a more specific function. Duchamp hinted at his objective to Schwarz: "The verb was meant to be an abstract word acting on a subject that is a material object; in this way the verb would make the sentence look abstract." In these textual exercises, an abstract verb inscribes "a subject which is a material object" in order to make it, too, appear abstract—to displace it from its accustomed place, just as in 1915 the inscription "In Advance of the Broken Arm" made a snow shovel an *abstract(ed)* artwork. Setting free the axis of equivalent "material objects" in language is directly analogous to setting actual commodities free from their intended functions. "*The*" and *Rendezvous* are thus narrative performances of the same process of inscription that produces ready-mades: in these textual works a "material" noun allegorizes the commodity and the "abstract" verb, its inscription. In "*The*" the asterisk replacing the article then highlights the "material objects"— nouns—that inevitably follow, just as their lack of coherent sense in the context of the sentence throws each into relief. Such an analogy between text and readymade is made explicit in the title of *Rendezvous of Sunday, February 6, 1916*, which cites one of the latter's qualities as specified in Duchamp's definition: "It is a kind of rendezvous." In *Rendezvous* each of the four postcards—themselves commodities—unites to form a new object. The "inscription"—or text—is therefore carried by a commodity, just as, in the mass-produced readymade, the commodity is imprinted with an inscription. A text fragment from *The Green Box* confirms the analogy between the commodity and words set free from their conventional meanings:

> Identifying
> *To lose the possibility of recognizing 2 similar objects*—2 colors, 2 laces, 2 hats, 2 forms whatsoever to reach the impossibility of sufficient *visual* memory, to transfer from one like object to another the memory imprint.
>
> Same possibility with sounds; with brain facts.

David Joselit, **Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910-1941,** An October Book,
The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1998.

1929

Aby Warburg
Nachleben des Heidentums or **Mnemosyne Atlas**

Warnke, Martin+Claudia Brink,
Aby Warburg: Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne, Akademie Verlag,
Berlin, 2000.

Gesammelte Schriften

Aby Warburg

Der Bilderatlas MNEMOSYNE

Herausgegeben von
Martin Warnke
unter Mitarbeit von
Claudia Brink

Akademie Verlag

Planetarium im Stadtpark Hamburg, Germany.

Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science (excerpt)

Giorgio Agamben

Today, philological and historical disciplines consider it (Warburg's *Mnemosyne*) a methodological given that the epistemological process that is proper to them is necessarily caught in a circle. The discovery of this circle as the foundation of all hermeneutics goes back to Schleiermacher and his intuition that in philology "the part can be understood only by means of the whole and every explanation of the part presupposes the understanding of the whole."[1] But this circle is in no sense a vicious one. On the contrary, it is itself the foundation of the rigor and rationality of the social sciences and humanities. For a science that wants to remain faithful to its own law, what is essential is not to leave this "circle of understanding," which would be impossible, but to "stay within it in the right way."[2] By virtue of the knowledge acquired at every step, the passage from the part to the whole and back again never returns to the same point; at every step, it necessarily broadens its radius, discovering a higher perspective that opens a new circle. The curve representing the hermeneutic circle is not a circumference, as has often been repeated, but a spiral that continually broadens its turns.

The science that recommended looking for "the good God" in the details perfectly illustrates the fecundity of a correct position in one's own hermeneutic circle. The spiraling movement toward an ever greater broadening of horizons can be followed in an exemplary fashion in the two central themes of Warburg's research: that of the "nymph" and that of the Renaissance revival of astrology.

In his dissertation on Botticelli's *Spring and Birth of Venus*, Warburg used literary sources to identify Botticelli's moving female figure as a "nymph." Warburg argued that this figure constituted a new iconographic type, one that makes it possible both to clarify the subject of Botticelli's paintings and to demonstrate "how Botticelli was settling accounts with the ideas that his epoch had of the ancients."[3] But in showing that the artists of the fifteenth century relied on a classical *Pathosformel* every time they sought to portray an intensified external movement, Warburg simultaneously revealed the Dionysian polarity of classical art. In the wake of Nietzsche, Warburg was the first to affirm this polarity in the domain of art history, which in his time was still dominated by Johann Joachim Winckelmann's model. In a still broader circle, the appearance of the nymph thus becomes the sign of a profound spiritual conflict in Renaissance culture, in which the rediscovery of the orgiastic charge of classical *Pathosformeln* had to be skillfully reconciled with Christianity in a delicate balance that is perfectly exemplified in the personality of the Florentine Francesco Sassetti, whom Warburg

1
On the hermeneutic circle, see Spitzer's magisterial observations in the first chapter of Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), pp. 1–29.

2
I take this observation from Martin Heidegger, who philosophically grounded the hermeneutic circle in *Sein und Zeit* (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1928), pp. 151–53; translated as Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 192–95.

3
Aby Warburg, *Sandro Botticellis "Gehurt der Venus"* und *"Frühling"* (Hamburg: Von Leopold Voss, 1893), p. 47; reprinted in Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, p. 61.

analyzes in a famous essay. And in the greatest circle of the hermeneutic spiral, the "nymph" becomes the cipher of a perennial polarity in Western culture, insofar as Warburg likens her to the dark, resting figure that Renaissance artists took from Greek representations of a river god. In one of his densest diary entries, Warburg considers this polarity, which afflicts the West with a kind of tragic schizophrenia: "Sometimes it looks to me as if, in my role as a psycho-historian, I tried to diagnose the schizophrenia of Western civilization from its images in an autobiographical reflex. The ecstatic 'Nympha' (manic) on the one side and the mourning river-god (depressive) on the other."[4]

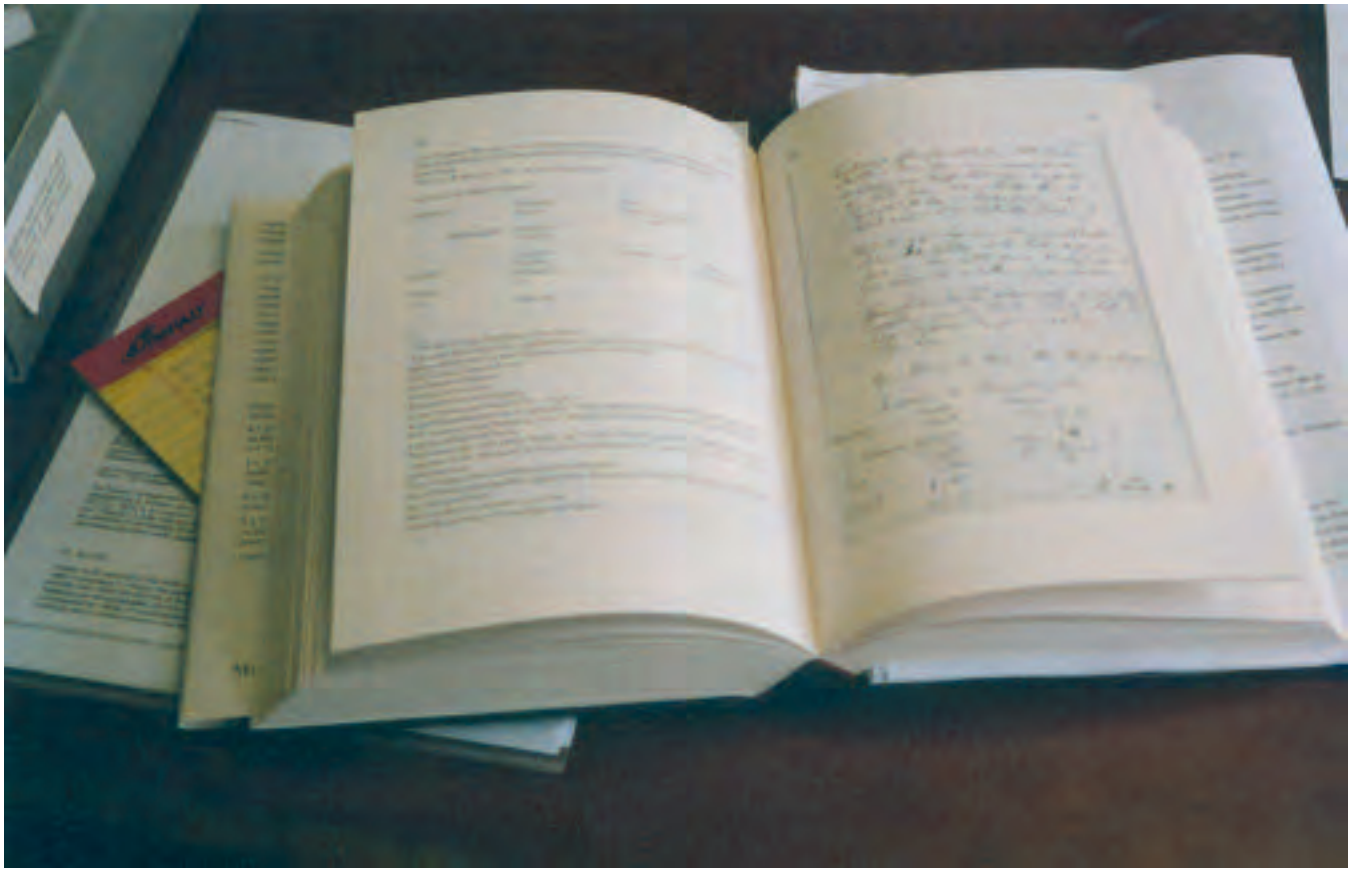
An analogous progressive broadening of the hermeneutic spiral can also be observed in Warburg's treatment of the theme of astrological images. The narrower, properly iconographic circle coincides with the analysis of the subject of the frescos in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, which Warburg, as we have noted, recognized as figures from Abu Ma'shar's *Introductorium maius*. In the history of culture, however, this becomes the discovery of the rebirth of astrology in humanistic culture from the fourteenth century onwards and therefore of the ambiguity of Renaissance culture, which Warburg was the first to perceive in an epoch in which the Renaissance still appeared as an age of enlightenment in contrast to the darkness of the Middle Ages. In the final lines traced by the spiral, the appearance of the images and rivers of demonic antiquity at the very start ol modernity becomes the symptom of a conflict at the origin of our civilization, which cannot master its own bipolar tension. As Warburg explained, introducing an exhibit of astrological images to the German Oriental Studies Conference in 1926, those images show "beyond all doubt that European culture is the result of conflicting tendencies, of a process in which—as far as these astrological attempts at orientation are concerned—we must seek neither friends nor enemies, but rather symptom of a movement of pendular oscillation between the two distinct poles of magico-religious practice and mathematical contemplation."[5]

Warburg's hermeneutic circle can thus be figured as a spiral that moves across three main levels: the first is that of iconography and the history art; the second is that of the history of culture; and the third and broadest level is that of the "nameless science" to which Warburg dedicated his life and that aims to diagnose Western man through a consideration of his phantasms. The circle that revealed the good God hidden in the details was not a vicious circle, even in the Nietzschean sense of a *circo vitiosus deus*.

4
Quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, p. 303.

5
Aby Warburg, "Orientalisierende Astrologie," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 6 (1927). Since it is always necessary to save reason from rationalists, it is worth noting that the categories that Warburg uses in his diagnosis are infinitely more subtle than the contemporary opposition between rationalism and irrationalism. Warburg interprets this conflict in terms of polarity and not dichotomy. One of Warburg's greatest contributions to the science of culture is his rediscovery of Goethe's notion of polarity for a global comprehension of culture. This is particularly important if one considers that the opposition of rationalism and irrationalism has often distorted interpretations of the cultural tradition of the West.

Giorgio Agamben, **Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy**, Daniel Heller-Roazen, ed.&trans.,
Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1999.



Aby Warburg's Notizkästen, postcard produced by The Warburg Institute, London, 1991.

Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive (excerpt)

Benjamin Buchloh

Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*

Thus we encounter the most important example of this tendency around 1927 in a monumental project which sets out to gather identifiable forms of collective memory: the *Mnemosyne Atlas* was first conceived by the art historian Aby Warburg in 1925 after his release from Ludwig Binswanger's psychiatric clinic in 1924; actively developed in 1928, it was continued until his death in 1929. Even though the scholar had to leave the project in an unfinished state, more than sixty panels with over one thousand photographs had been assembled by Warburg at the time of his death. According to his aspirations as recorded in the diaries, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* sought to construct a model of the mnemonic in which Western European humanist thought would once more, perhaps for the last time, recognize its origins and trace its latent continuities into the present, ranging spatially across the confines of European humanist culture and situating itself temporally within the parameters of European history from classical antiquity to the present.

While according to Warburg collective social memory could be traced through the various layers of cultural transmission (his primary focus being the transformation of "dynamograms" transferred from classical antiquity to Renaissance painting, the reoccurring motifs of gesture and bodily expression that he had identified in his notorious term as "pathos formulasž), Warburg more specifically argued that his attempt to construct collective historical memory would focus on the inextricable link between the mnemonic and the traumatic. Thus he wrote in the unpublished introduction to his *Mnemosyne Atlas* that it is in the area of orgiastic mass seizure that one should look for the mint that stamps the expression of extreme emotional seizure on the memory with such intensity that the engrams of that experience of suffering live on, an inheritence preserved in the memory.

While this introduction to the project reads retrospectively like an uncanny prognosis of the imminent future of social behaviour, Warburg evidently hoped to construct— even if for the last time—a model of historical memory and continuity of experience, before both were shattered by the catastrophic destruction of humanist civilization at the hands of German Fascism. But the *Atlas*, at least according to its author's intentions, would also accomplish a materialist project of constructing social memory by collecting photographic reproductions of a broad variety of practices of representation. Warburg's *Atlas* thus not only reiterated first of all his life-long challenge to the rigorous and hierarchical compartmentalization of the discipline of art history, by attempting to abolish its methods and categories of exclusively formal or stylistic description. Yet by eroding the disciplinary boundaries between the conventions and the studies of high art and mass culture, the *Atlas* also questioned whether mnemonic experience could even be constructed any longer under the universal reign of photographic reproduction, establishing the theoretical and the presentational framework to probe the competence of the mnemonic from which Hoch's scrapbook would emerge a few years later. Kurt Forster, the editor of the forthcoming English edition of Warburg's writings, describes the arrangement as follows:

> There, cheek by jowl, were lare antique reliefs, secular manuscripts, monumental frescoes, postage stamps, broadsides, pictures cut out of magazines, and old master drawings. It becomes apparent, if only at second glance, that this unorthodox selection is the product of an extraordinary command of a vast field.

It seems, at least at first reading, that we encounter in Warburg's project an almost Benjaminian trust in the universally emancipatory functions of technological reproduction and dissemination. Thus, the extreme temporal and spatial heterogeneity of the *Atlas*'s subjects is juxtaposed with the paradoxical homogeneity of their simultaneous presence in the space of the photographic, anticipating the subsequent abstraction from historical context and social function in the name of a universal aesthetic experience by André Malraux in his *Le Musée imaginaire*. This condition alone seems at first sight—at least—to situate the *Mnemosyne Atlas* also in a peculiar parallelism to artistic practices of the historic avant-garde of the 1920s. Not surprisingly, this argument has is in fact been made by numerous Warburg scholars, notably by Wolfgang Kemp, Werner Hofmann and most recently and most emphatically by Forster himself in his two essays on Warburg's methods. Forster states, for example, that in terms of technique Warburg's panels belong with the montage procedures of Schwitters and Lissitzky. Needless to say, this analogy implies no claim to artistic merit on the part of the Warburg panels; nor does it invalidate that of Schwitters' and Lissitzky's collages: it simply serves to redefine graphic montage as the construction of meanings rather than the arrangement of forms.

It is this remark (and many similar ones by the Warburg scholars mentioned), in particular its intriguing and surprisingly clear-cut opposition between a "construction of meanings" (supposedly Warburg's) and an "arrangement of forms" (supposedly that of Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky) which poses another question. First of all, whether any aspects of Warburg's *Atlas* can in fact be productively compared to the collage and photomontage techniques of the 1920s or whether we could understand more about either side of this problematic comparison by differentiating its two parts more rigorously and—most importantly for our project—by recognizing that the *Atlas* in fact established a cultural model of probing the possibilities of historical memory whose agenda was profoundly different from its activist precursors in the field of photomontage. Second there is the question, whether it could in fact be potentially productive to compare Warburg's *Atlas* with Richter's *Atlas*, as another example of such a mnemonic project. We would have to recognize first of all that while both projects obviously address the possibilities of mnemonic experience, they operate under dramatically different historical circumstances: the former at the onset of a traumatic destruction of historical memory, the moment of the most devastating cataclysm of human history brought about by German Fascism, the latter looking back at its aftermath from a position of repression and disavowal, attempting to reconstruct remembrance from within the social and geo-political space of the society that inflicted trauma.

Structures of an Atlas

Wolfgang Kemp was the first to point out that Warburg's project of an organization and presentation of vast quantities of historical information without any textual commentary should remind us of Surrealist montage procedures. Thereby, Warburg's *Atlas* inevitably enters also into a comparison with another extraordinary and unfinished montage-project of the late 1920s, a textual assemblage which had attempted to construct an analytical memory of collective experience in nineteenth century Paris. Benjamin had equally associated his *Passagenwerk* with the montage techniques of the Surrealists and had explicitly identified it in those terms when he wrote that the "method of this work is literary montage. I have nothing to say, only to show."

And Theodor W. Adorno's description of the *Passagenwerk* could just as well be applied to the essential features of Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*:

> ... (Benjamin) deliberately excluded all interpretation and wanted the actually existing conditions to be foregrounded through the shocks that the montage of the materials would inevirably generate in the reader... To bring his antisubjecrivism to the point of culmination, Benjamin envisaged that the work should only consist of accumulated quotations.

Again, several terms stand out in this discussion that deserve our attention, with regard to both the accuracy of the description of (and the potential differences between) Benjamin's and Warburg's model and to the accuracy of their definition of the epistemes of collage/photomontage and the question whether these are in fact the epistemes of the structural organization of the *Atlas*: first of

all, the exclusion of interpretation in favor of actually existing conditions in the discursive construction of the textual memory. Second: the anticipation of shocks as an inescapable and intended result of the montage technique, presumably occurring most vividly in the interstices of discursive fields (such as the pictorial versus the photographic, the mass-cultural clutter versus the structural distillation of the avant-garde strategy, the artisanal versus the technically reproduced, the textual versus the painterly: to name but a few of the classical *topoi* and tropes of collage and montage aesthetics).

Thirdly, and crucially, it is Adorno's observation of anti-subjectivism as the driving force of the collage/photomontage aesthetic that presumably articulates a systematic critique of what would later come to be called "the author function" of a text. And lastly, and directly connected with the preceding term, Adorno's emphasis on the accumulation of quotations as a newly emerging structuring device of montage aesthetics: first of all, in photomontage itself where it displaces the homogeneity of the conception and execution of painting. But soon thereafter, montage was also to transform literary or filmic aesthetics (those of the Soviet Union in particular) as for example in the factographic novel where it will displace authorial omniscience, narrative and fiction.

Thus one could argue that by the mid 1920s a variety of homologous new models of writing and imaging historical accounts emerged simultaneously, ranging from the montage techniques of artistic practices to Warburg's *Atlas* or those of the *Annales* historians. In all of these projects (literary, artistic, filmic, historical) a posthumanist and post-bourgeois subjectivity is constituted. The telling of history as a sequence of events and accounts of its individual agents is displaced by a focus on the simultaneity of separate but contingent social frameworks and an infinity of participating agents, while the process of history is reconceived as a structural system of perpetually changing interactions and permutations between economic and ecological givens, class formations and their ideologies, and the resulting types of social and cultural interactions specific to each particular moment.

Even if Warburg's *Atlas* was in fact part of a newly emerging cultural paradigm of montage as a new process of writing a decentered history and constructing mnemonic forms accordingly, any comparison between Warburg and the montage techniques of the artistic avant-gardes, let alone the neo-avant-garde, will remain highly problematic if it does not recognize first of all the actual discontinuities of the collage/photomontage model itself. These internal shifts and breaks in the paradigm emerge already in the late 1920s, and these changes were to become especially decisive in the paradigm's rediscovery in post-war practices. Furthermore, any attempt at a comparative reading of the structurally comparable projects will have to develop an equally differentiated understanding of the contradictions and changes which emerge already in the 1920s in the definitions of photographic functions themselves, as much in the theoretical approaches to photography in Weimar Germany and the Soviet Union as in the artistic practices deploying photography in both countries. More specifically, and particularly important for our discussion of Warburg's and Richter's mnemonic project, is the fact that at the very moment of its elaboration, opposite theorizations of photography had collided precisely on the question of the impact of the photographic image on the construction of historical memory.

This dialectic is evident in the positions articulated in 1927-1928: on the one hand we have to consider Siegfried Kracauer's epochal essay on photography arguing that photographic production devastates the memory image, a position which implies (most likely unbeknown to both) a severe criticial challenge of Warburg's project to conceive of the *Atlas* as a model of the construction of social memory. At the opposite end of the spectrum one would have to consider the famous "photography debate" of the Soviet Union as it emerges equally around 1927, primarily in the writings of the Soviet theorists and artists Ossip Brik, Boris Kushner and Alexander Rodchenko. And thirdly one would have to consider what remains probably the most important essay on photography of the first half of the twentieth century, written shortly after Warburg's project was interrupted: Walter Benjamin's *Short History of Photography* of 1931, which argues against the media pessimism of Kracauer's essay in favour of a new media culture of politically motivated montage.

To sketch out these oppositions only in the briefest terms we will would have to point first of all to the latent dichotomy operative in collage/montage aesthetics from their inception: the poles of opposition could be called the order of perceptual shock and the principle of estrange-ment on the one side, and the order of the statistical collection or the order of the archive on the other. The structural emphasis on discontinuity and fragmentation in the initial phase of Dada-derived photomontage introduced the subject's perceptual field to the "shock" experiences of daily existence in advanced industrial culture. While the metonymic procedures of photomontage and their continuous

emphasis on the fissure and the fragment—at least in their initial appearance—operated to dismantle the myths of unity and totality that advertising and ideology consistently inscribe on their consumers, photomontage paradoxically collaborated also in the social project of perceptual modernization and its affirmative agenda. But this revolutionary effect of the semiotic upheaval of poetic shock and estrangement was short-lived. Already in the second moment of Dada collage (at the time of Hannah Höch's *Meine Haussprüche*, 1922) for example, the heterogeneity of random order and the arbitrary juxtapositions of found objects and images, and the sense of a fundamental cognitive and perceptual anomie, were challenged as either apolitical and anti-communicative, or as esoteric and aestheticist. The very avant-garde artists who initiated photomontage (e.g. Heartfield and Höch, Klucis, Lissitzky, Rodchenko) now diagnosed this anomic character of the Dada-collage/montage technique as bourgeois avant-gardism, mounting a critique that called, paradoxically, for a reintroduction of the dimensions of narrative, communicative action and instrumentalized logic within the structural organization of montage aesthetics.

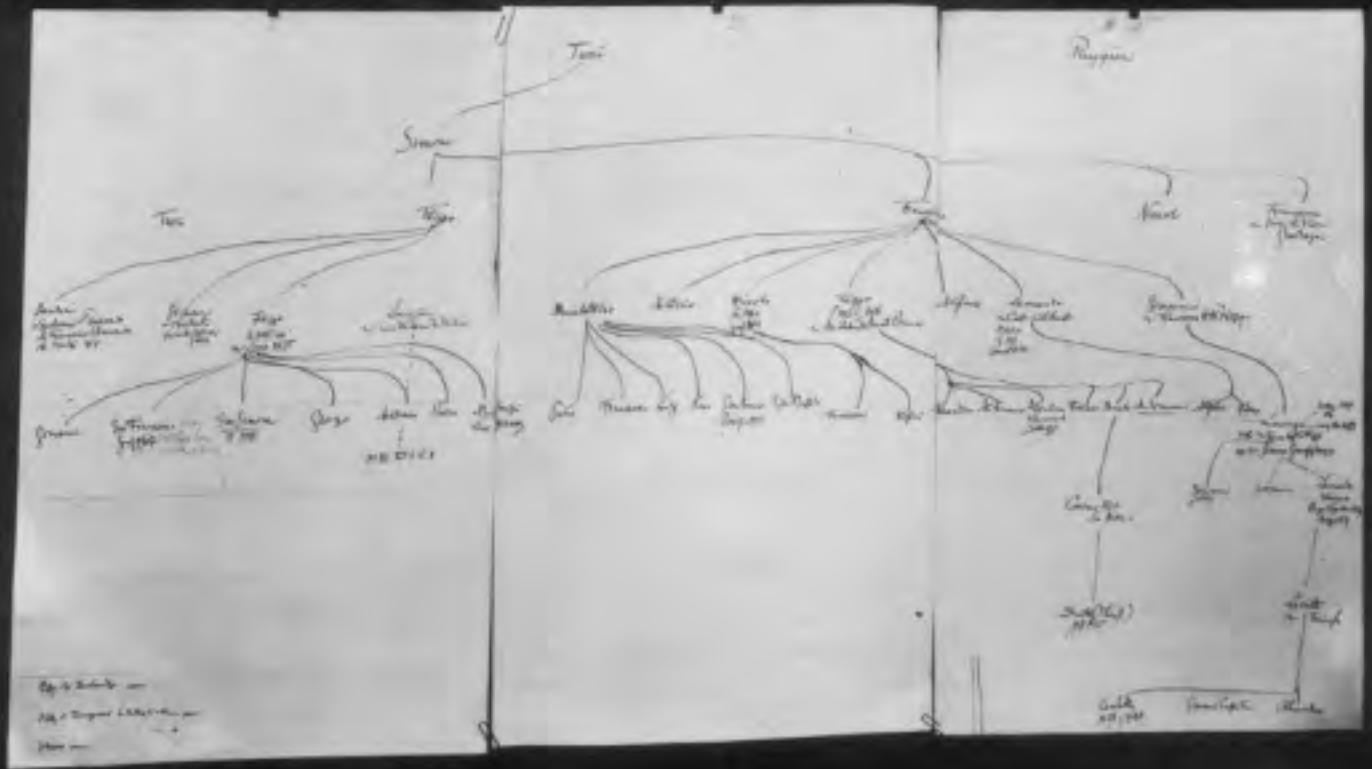
What we are witnessing in fact, first in the mid-1920s and, becoming more decisive in the later 1920s, is precisely a gradual shift towards the order of the archival and mnemonic functions of the photographic collection as the underlying episteme of a radically different aesthetics of photomontage. In terms of its conception of the photographic, it is a shift that originates in the same confidence in photography's versatility and reliability that was also to drive Warburg's archival project and his confidence in the photograph's authenticity as empirical document, and the radical emancipatory power of the egalitarian effects of photographic reproduction. The photographic image in general was now defined as dynamic, contextual and contingent, and the serial structuring of visual information emphasized open form and a potential infinity, not only of photographic subjects eligible in a new social collective but equally an infinity of contingent, photographically recordable details and facets that would constitute each individual subject within perpetually altered activities, social relations and object relationships. Once again it would be worthwhile to investigate the parallels of the Soviet model of the photographic with the radical reconception of the historical process emerging simultaneously in the work of the French *Annales* historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. These parallels between the conception of the historical process and the construction and ordering of the photographic representation become most obvious, then, when we read Ossip Brik's argument suggesting:

> ... to differentiate individual objects so as to make a pictorial record of them is not only a technical but also an ideological phenomenon. In the pre-Revolutionary (feudal and bourgeois) period, both painting and literature set themselves the aim of differentiating individual people and events from their general context and concentrating attention on them... To the contemporary consciousness, an individual person can be understood and assessed only in connection with all the other people—with those who used to be regarded by the pre-revolutionary consciousness as background.

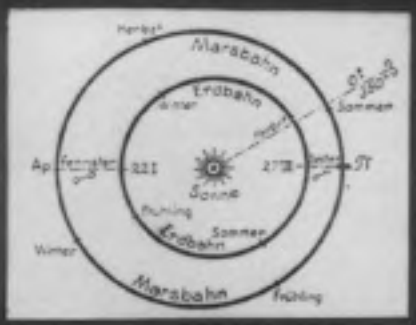
This argument implies a radical redefinition of the photographic object itself. It is no longer conceived as a single-image print, carefully crafted by the artist-photographer in the studio, framed and presented as a pictorial substitute. Rather, as was the case already for Rodchenko's definition, it is precisely the cheaply and rapidly produced snapshot that will displace the traditional synthetic portrait. The organizational and distributional form will now become the archive, or as Rodchenko called it, the photo-file, a loosely organized, more or less coherent accumulation of snapshots relating and documenting one particular subject.

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, **Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive**,
in **Photography and Painting in the Work of Gerhard Richter/Four Essays on *Atlas***,
Llibres de Recerca, Barcelona, 2000.

A




B


Marsbahn
Erdbahn
Sonne
Erdbahn
Marsbahn


Graf Zeppelin


Hamburger Illustrierte
Telegraphierte
Bilder


22


32


33


39


41

All mankind is eternally and at all times schizophrenic. Ontogenetically, however, we may perhaps describe one type of response to memory images as prior and primitive, though it continues on the sidelines. At the later stage the memory no longer arouses an immediate, purposeful reflex movement—be it one of a combative or a religious character—but the memory images are now consciously stored in pictures and signs. Between these two stages we find a treatment of the impression that may be described as the symbolic mode of thought.

Aby Warburg

Aby Warburg, **Atlastafeln/Atlas Panels** (originally installed in the reading room of Warburg's "Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek," Hamburg, and photographically documented).


48

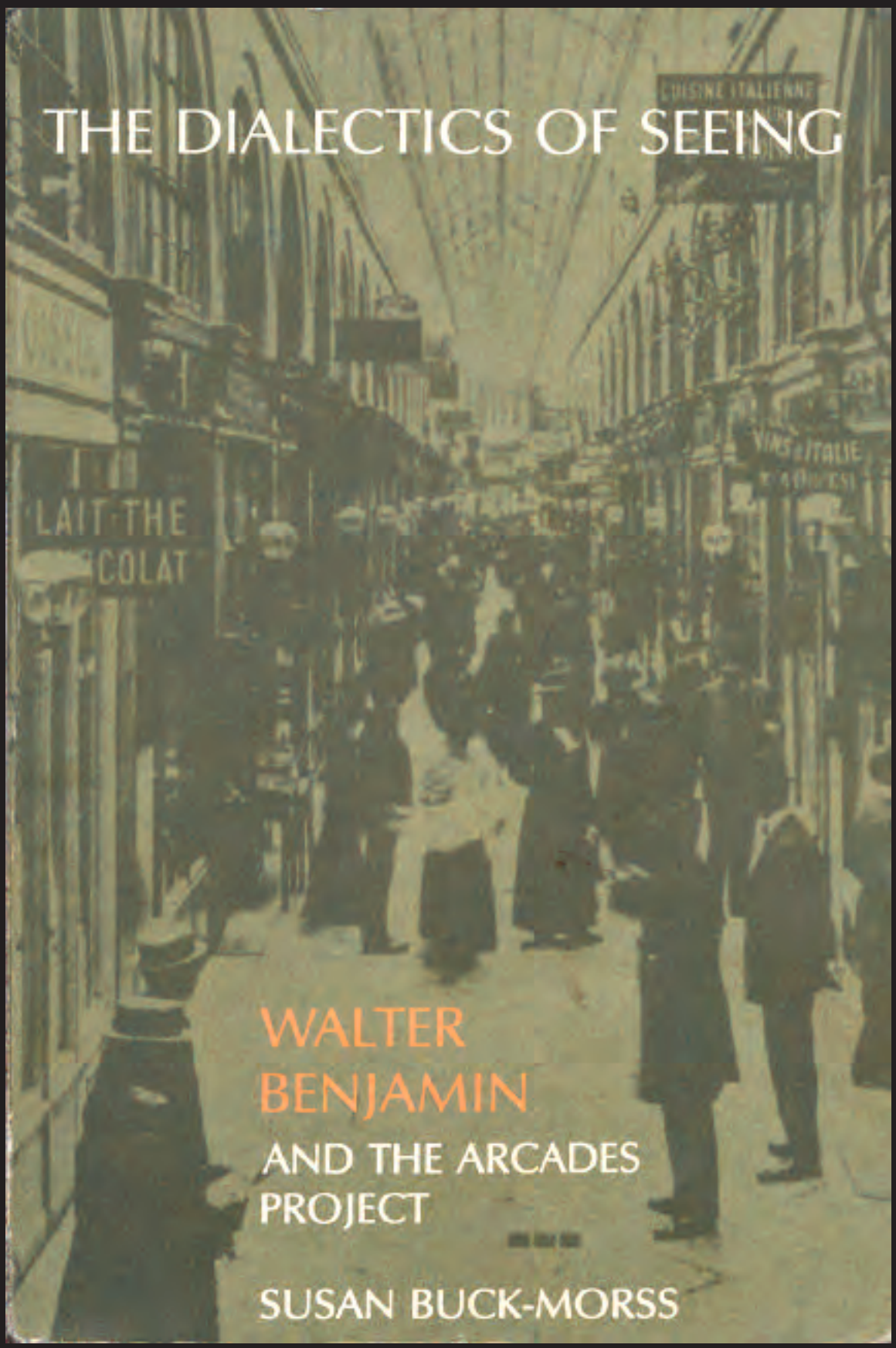

75

1927–1940

Walter Benjamin
Passagen Werk

Walter Benjamn, **The Arcades Project**, Rolf Tiedemann ed.
(translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin),
The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge,
Massachuetts, and London, England, 1999.

Susan Buck-Morss, **The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project,** The MIT Press, Massachuetts, and London, England, 1991.


THE DIALECTICS OF SEEING
LAIT THE
COLAT
WALTER
BENJAMIN
AND THE ARCADES
PROJECT
SUSAN BUCK-MORSS

I cannot enter without a chill coming over me, without the fear that
I might never find the exit... (a description of storefronts and goods follows)...
The whole center of the arcade is empty.

I rush quickly to the exit. I feel ghostly, hidden crowds of people from
days gone by, who hug the walls with lustful glances at the tawdry jewelry,
the clothing, the pictures... At the exit,...,

I breathe more easily; the street, freedom, the present.

Walter Benjamin

Passage de Choiseul, 2e arrondissement, Paris.

The Melancholy Angel (excerpts)

Giorgio Agamben

"The quotations in my works are like robbers lying in ambush on the highway to attack the passerby with weapons drawn and rob him of his conviction.'" Walter Benjamin, the author of this statement, was perhaps the first European intellectual to recognize the fundamental change that had taken place in the transmissibility of culture and in the new relation to the past that constituted the inevitable consequence of this change. The particular power of quotations arises, according to Benjamin, not from their ability to transmit that past and allow the reader to relive it but, on the contrary, from their capacity to "make a clean sweep, to expel from the context, to destroy."[1] Alienating by force a fragment of the past from its historical context, the quotation at once makes it lose its character of authentic testimony and invests it with an alienating power that constitutes its unmistakable aggressive force.[2] Benjamin, who for his entire life pursued the idea of writing a work made up exclusively of quotations, had understood that the authority invoked by the quotation is founded precisely on the destruction of the authority that is attributed to a certain text by its situation in the history of culture. Its truth content is a function of the uniqueness of its appearance, alienated from its living context in what Benjamin, in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," defines as "une citation à l'ordre du jour" ("a quotation on the order of the day") on the day of the Last Judgment. The past can only be fixed in the image that appears once and for all in the instant of its alienation, just as a memory appears suddenly, as in a flash, in a moment of danger.[3]

This particular way of entering into a relation with the past also constitutes the foundation of the activity of a figure with which Benjamin felt an instinctive affinity: that of the collector. The collector also "quotes" the object outside its context and in this way destroys the order inside which it finds its value and meaning. Whether it is a work of art or any simple commodity that he, with an arbitrary gesture, elevates to the object of his passion, the collector takes on the task of transfiguring things, suddenly depriving them both of their use value and of the ethical-social significance with which tradition had endowed them.

The collector frees things from the "slavery of usefulness" in the name of their authenticity, which alone legitimates their inclusion in the collection; yet this authenticity presupposes in turn the alienation through which this act of freeing was able to take place, by which the value for the connoisseur took the place of the use value. In other words, the authenticity of the object measures its alienation value, and this is in turn the only space in which the collection can sustain itself.[4] (…)

1
In this regard, see Hannah Arendt's remarks in **Men in Dark Times** (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p. 193.

2
It is not difficult to notice that the alienating function of citations corresponds exactly to the alienation produced in criticism by the "readymade" and pop art. Here, too, an object whose meaning was guaranteed by the "authority" of its daily use suddenly uses its traditional intelligibility to become charged with an uncanny power to traumatize. In his article "What Is Epic Theater (ii)," Walter Benjamin defines the characteristic procedure of quotation as "interruption": "To quote a text means to interrupt its context." Walter Benjamin, **Gesammelte Schriften**, vol. 2.2 (Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 536.

3
It is interesting that Debord, in his search for a "style of negation" as the language of revolutionary subversion, did not notice the implicit destructive potential of quotation. However, the use of "détournement" and plagiarism, which he recommended, plays the same role in his discourse as Benjamin assigned to citation, since "in the positive employment of existing concepts, it includes at the same time the intelligence of their rediscovered fluidity and of their necessary destruction.... [In this way] it expresses the domination of present criticism over its entire past.... [Détournement] appears in communication that knows that it cannot lay claim to any guarantee.... It is ... language that no reference to antiquity ... can confirm." Guy Debord, **La société du spectacle** (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1967), pp. 165, 167.

4
That the alienation value later reacquires economic value (and thus exchange value) means nothing other than that in our society alienation fulfills an economically appreciable function.

In a traditional system, culture exists only in the act of its transmission, that is, in the living act of its tradition. There is no discontinuity between past and present, between old and new, because every object transmits at every moment, without residue, the system of beliefs and notions that has found expression in it. To be more precise, in a system of this type it is not possible to speak of a culture independently of its transmission, because there is no accumulated treasure of ideas and precepts that constitute the separate object of transmission and whose reality is in itself a value. In a mythical-traditional system, an absolute identity exists between the act of transmission and the thing transmitted, in the sense that there is no other ethical, religious, or aesthetic value outside the act itself of transmission. (…)

The interruption of tradition, which is for us now a *fait accompli*, opens an era in which no link is possible between old and new, if not the infinite accumulation of the old in a sort of monstrous archive or the alienation effected by the very means that is supposed to help with the transmission of the old. Like the castle in Kafka's novel, which burdens the village with the obscurity of its decrees and the multiplicity of its offices, the accumulated culture has lost its living meaning and hangs over man like a threat in which he can in no way recognize himself. Suspended in the void between old and new, past and future, man is projected into time as into something alien that incessantly eludes him and still drags him forward, but without allowing him to find his ground in it.

If the work of art is the place in which the old and the new have to resolve their conflict in the present space of truth, the problem of the work of art and of its destiny in our time is not simply a problem among the others that trouble our culture: not because art occupies an elevated station in the (disintegrating) hierarchy of cultural values, but because what is at stake here is the very survival of culture, a culture split by a past and present conflict that has found its extreme and precarious settlement in our society in the form of aesthetic alienation. Only the work of art ensures a phantasmagoric survival for the accumulated culture (…)

If man could appropriate his historical condition, and if, seeing through the illusion of the storm that perennially pushes him along the infinite rail of linear time, he could exit his paradoxical situation, he would at the same time gain access to the total knowledge capable of giving life to a new cosmogony and to turn history into myth. But art alone cannot do this, since it is precisely in order to reconcile the historical conflict between past and future that it has emancipated itself from myth and linked itself to history.

By transforming the principle of man's delay before truth into a poetic process and renouncing the guarantees of truth for love of transmissibility, art succeeds once again in transforming man's inability to exit his historical status, perennially suspended in the inter-world between old and new, past and future, into the very space in which he can take the original measure of his dwelling in the present and recover each time the meaning of his action.

According to the principle by which it is only in the burning house that the fundamental architectural problem becomes visible for the first time, art, at the furthest point of its destiny, makes visible its original project.

Giorgio Agamben, **The Man Without Content**, translated by Georgia Albert, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1999.

Holland House Library, London, after a German raid in October 1940.

1861

Baudelaire
Les Fleurs du mal (Édition de 1861)

Charles Baudelaire, **Les Fleurs du Mal**,
Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1972.

BAUDELAIRE

Les Fleurs du Mal

Introduction de Claude Pichois

nrf

Poésie/Gallimard

LXXV

SPLEEN

Pluviôse, irrité contre la ville entière,
De son urne à grands flots verse un froid ténébreux
Aux pâles habitants du voisin cimetière
Et la mortalité sur les faubourgs brumeux.

Mon chat sur le carreau cherchant une litière
Agite sans repos son corps maigre et galeux;
L'âme d'un vieux poëte erre dans la gouttière
Avec la triste voix d'un fantôme frileux.

Le bourdon se lamente, et la bûche enfumée
Accompagne en fausset la pendule enrhumée,
Cependant qu'en un jeu plein de sales parfums,

Héritage fatal d'une vieille hydropique,
Le beau valet de cœur et la dame de pique
Causent sinistrement de leurs amours défunts.

LXXVI

SPLEEN

J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans.

Un gros meuble à tiroirs encombré de bilans,
De vers, de billets doux, de procès, de romances,
Avec de lourds cheveux roulés dans des quittances,
Cache moins de secrets que mon triste cerveau.
C'est une pyramide, un immense caveau,

Qui contient plus de morts que la fosse commune.
— Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune,
Où comme des remords se traînent de longs vers
Qui s'acharnent toujours sur mes morts les plus chers.
Je suis un vieux boudoir plein de roses fanées,
Où gît tout un fouillis de modes surannées,
Où les pastels plaintifs et les pâles Boucher,
Seuls, respirent l'odeur d'un flacon débouché.

Rien n'égale en longueur les boiteuses journées,
Quand sous les lourds flocons des neigeuses années
L'ennui, fruit de la morne incuriosité,
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité.
— Désormais tu n'es plus, ô matière vivante!
Qu'un granit entouré d'une vague épouvante,
Assoupi dans le fond d'un Saharah brumeux;
Un vieux sphinx ignoré du monde insoucieux,
Oublié sur la carte, et dont l'humeur farouche
Ne chante qu'aux rayons du soleil qui se couche.

LXXVII

SPLEEN

Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,
Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très-vieux,
Qui, de ses précepteurs méprisant les courbettes,
S'ennuie avec ses chiens comme avec d'autres bêtes.
Rien ne peut l'égayer, ni gibier, ni faucon,
Ni son peuple mourant en face du balcon.
Du bouffon favori la grotesque ballade
Ne distrait plus le front de ce cruel malade;
Son lit fleurdelisé se transforme en tombeau,
Et les dames d'atour, pour qui tout prince est beau,

CXXII

LA MORT DES PAUVRES

C'est la Mort qui console, hélas! et qui fait vivre;
C'est le but de la vie, et c'est le seul espoir
Qui, comme un élixir, nous monte et nous enivre,
Et nous donne le cœur de marcher jusqu'au soir;

A travers la tempête, et la neige, et le givre,
C'est la clarté vibrante à notre horizon noir;
C'est l'auberge fameuse inscrite sur le livre,
Où l'on pourra manger, et dormir, et s'asseoir;

C'est un Ange qui tient dans ses doigts magnétiques
Le sommeil et le don des rêves extatiques,
Et qui refait le lit des gens pauvres et nus;

C'est la gloire des Dieux, c'est le grenier mystique,
C'est la bourse du pauvre et sa patrie antique,
C'est le portique ouvert sur les Cieux inconnus!

CXXIII

LA MORT DES ARTISTES

Combien faut-il de fois secouer mes grelots
Et baiser ton front bas, morne caricature?
Pour piquer dans le but, de mystique nature,
Combien, ô mon carquois, perdre de javelots?

Nous userons notre âme en de subtils complots,
Et nous démolirons mainte lourde armature,
Avant de contempler la grande Créature
Dont l'infernal désir nous remplit de sanglots!

Il en est qui jamais n'ont connu leur Idole,
Et ces sculpteurs damnés et marqués d'un affront,
Qui vont se martelant la poitrine et le front,

N'ont qu'un espoir, étrange et sombre Capitole!
C'est que la Mort, planant comme un soleil nouveau,
Fera s'épanouir les fleurs de leur cerveau!

CXXIV

LA FIN DE LA JOURNÉE

Sous une lumière blafarde
Court, danse et se tord sans raison
La Vie, impudente et criarde.
Aussi, sitôt qu'à l'horizon

La nuit voluptueuse monte,
Apaisant tout, même la faim,
Effaçant tout, même la honte,
Le Poëte se dit : « Enfin!

Mon esprit, comme mes vertèbres,
Invoque ardemment le repos;
Le cœur plein de songes funèbres,

Je vais me coucher sur le dos
Et me rouler dans vos rideaux,
O rafraîchissantes ténèbres! »

Pour abreuver mon Saharah,
Jaillir les eaux de la souffrance.
Mon désir gonflé d'espérance
Sur tes pleurs salés nagera

Comme un vaisseau qui prend le large,
Et dans mon cœur qu'ils soûleront
Tes chers sanglots retentiront
Comme un tambour qui bat la charge!

Ne suis-je pas un faux accord
Dans la divine symphonie,
Grâce à la vorace Ironie
Qui me secoue et qui me mord?

Elle est dans ma voix, la criarde!
C'est tout mon sang, ce poison noir!
Je suis le sinistre miroir
Où la mégère se regarde!

Je suis la plaie et le couteau!
Je suis le soufflet et la joue!
Je suis les membres et la roue,
Et la victime et le bourreau!

Je suis de mon cœur le vampire,
— Un de ces grands abandonnés
Au rire éternel condamnés,
Et qui ne peuvent plus sourire!

LXXXIV

L'IRREMÉDIABLE

I

Une Idée, une Forme, un Être
Parti de l'azur et tombé
Dans un Styx bourbeux et plombé
Où nul œil du Ciel ne pénètre;

Un Ange, imprudent voyageur
Qu'a tenté l'amour du difforme,
Au fond d'un cauchemar énorme
Se débattant comme un nageur,

Et luttant, angoisses funèbres!
Contre un gigantesque remous
Qui va chantant comme les fous
Et pirouettant dans les ténèbres;

Un malheureux ensorcelé
Dans ses tâtonnements futiles,
Pour fuir d'un lieu plein de reptiles,
Cherchant la lumière et la clé;

Un damné descendant sans lampe,
Au bord d'un gouffre dont l'odeur
Trahit l'humide profondeur,
D'éternels escaliers sans rampe,

Où veillent des monstres visqueux
Dont les larges yeux de phosphore
Font une nuit plus noire encore
Et ne rendent visibles qu'eux;

ca. 1970

Arthur Munby (1828–1910)
Munby box

A creation of the Wren librarians to hold
Munby's collection of Trini typhotographs of working-class women.
(Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge).

On May 11, 1988, I had my first appointment to see the Munby Box at the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. I was led through the center of the magnificently beautiful space (a small wondrous castle lined with ancient books and crowned by promising windows) to an old lovely library table. I took a seat. A soft crimson cloth was laid before me. Two men then heaved the heavy box onto the velvety cloth. The box, an odd construction from the 1970s (manufactured of wood veneer and plexiglass), had an overall awkward effect. Even one of the brass handles at the box's side had been attached upside down. It was ugly. But it was also enigmatic. It gave the sense that something beautiful was inside. It invited inspection. I was captivated. They gave me a pair of white gloves.

Figure 11. Hurel, Hannah as a lady, 1872.
(Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge)

A Story in a Box

The Munby Box is a creation of the Wren Library to hold the photographs of working-class women that were obsessively collected by Arthur Munby (1828–1910): a Cambridge-educated man who was a second-rate poet, if an acquaintance of the Pre-Raphaelites, and a man about London with plenty of family money and an insignificant career with the Ecclesiastical Commission that did not interest him. What did interest him were working-class women, especially those involved in manual labor (despite the fact that he "had never worked with anything heavier than a pen in his life"), and especially those who "upset conventions of gender." For example, there were the mining women who wore pants, lifted heavy rocks, and nearly approached Munby in size. There were harnessed milkwomen with big red hands and broad shoulders. Besides the many manual workers, there were also performers, like the girl acrobats (small and skinny without flesh and without curves) who looked like boys in their skintight tights. He also wrote about these women in his diaries and made sketches of them. The Wren Library also holds these, but they are not in the Munby Box.

Hannah Cullwick (1833–1909), a lower servant for all of her life (beginning at age eight), met Munby in 1854. The two developed a strange, secret courtship that lasted for more than thirty-six years. Their relationship circulated around Munby's voyeuristic interest in her work and her pride in being obsessively hardworking. She began writing her own volumes of diaries, at his request; he found her accounts of her endless drudgery tantalizing. He also was very interested in having photographs of her taken "in her dirt" and often made arrangements for this. And he was very interested in Hannah Cullwick's special ability to masquerade as a lady, and there are photographs of this as well. There are also some very unusual photographs of her as other, rather shocking, characters: a chimney sweep, who looks more like a slave; a bare-chested Magdalene; a man with short hair. Interestingly enough, the character of Magdalene was decided upon cooperatively, between Hannah Cullwick and a photographer by the name of Mr. Stodart. It was Cullwick who first suggested that Munby cut her hair. It was Cullwick who once suggested that she go about with Munby, dressed as a man, so that no one would know her identity. The two were married in 1873 (almost all of the photographs of Hannah are of her as an unmarried woman.) Yet all through their long courtship and all through their marriage, Hannah Cullwick preferred to remain a lower servant, working mostly as a maid of all work. Hannah Cullwick's diaries end soon after the marriage. After the two were married, she refused the name "Hannah Munby," preferring to be called simply "Hannah." Hannah preferred to remain, in her own words, "his slave," which she saw as being a more honored position than a "wife nor equal to any vulgar man." Of course, even before her marriage (because of her class and her station), Hannah was rarely referred to by her surname. (…)

Despite the volumes of diaries that they both kept, and despite the forty-odd photographs of her in the Munby Box, it is hard to get a hold of Hannah. One wonders if her invisibility within this space of excess representation is not tied to her own desire to defy visibiliy. She made invisibility into an art.

Carol Mavor, **Touching Netherplaces: Invisibility in the Photographes of Hannah Cullwick**, in **Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs**, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1995.

1947

André Malraux
Le Musée imaginaire

Le Musée Imaginaire is the first part of a trilogy named **The Psychology of art.**

André Malraux selecting photographs for **Le Musée imaginaire** (The Museum Without Walls), Paris c. 1947. In **The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect**, Kynaston McShine, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999.

Le Musée imaginaire

C'est en 1947 que parut chez Skira le volume intitulé *Le Musée Imaginaire*, avec lequel Malraux commença la trilogie de la *Psychologie de l'art*. Ni la grande exposition du Crystal Palace de Londres, en 1851, ni le célèbre texte de Walter Benjamin sur l'« Œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée » n'atténuent la nouveauté de son entreprise. Certes l'exposition de 1851 présentait un ensemble d'objets indiens, africains et américains qui impressionnèrent ses visiteurs, mais dans *Le Musée Imaginaire* — et plus tard dans *L'Intemporel* —, les œuvres les plus inattendues (dessins d'enfants, de fous, fétiche des Nouvelles-Hébrides, masque eskimo) ne sont précisément pas regardées comme des bizarreries ou de plaisantes curiosités : elles dialoguent avec les œuvres les plus illustres et les plus « nobles » de la culture européenne. Certes, l'étude de Benjamin — que Malraux avait lue et dont il avait parlé avec son auteur, à Paris, en 1936 — met remarquablement en lumière les conséquences de la reproduction photographique des œuvres d'art : dépérissement de l'authenticité et de l'aura de l'œuvre, bouleversement de la tradition qu'entraîne ce processus. Mais Malraux, tout en reconnaissant que la reproduction modifie profondément notre relation avec l'art, retient surtout qu'elle donne à certaines œuvres, grâce au cadrage et à l'éclairage, une présence insoupçonnée, et qu'elle rend accessible à chacun tout l'art du monde depuis la préhistoire. Ainsi, quelque utile qu'ait pu lui être l'essai de Benjamin, le sien adopte une tout autre perspective. Comme l'écrivait il y a vingt ans André Chastel, on a du mal à faire saisir aujourd'hui l'extraordinaire effet produit par *Le Musée Imaginaire* et les ouvrages qui le suivirent : « toutes ces pages ont complètement transformé le discours sur l'art dans notre pays et peut-être dans le monde[1]. »

Il convient en outre de préciser que l'expression « Musée imaginaire » à laquelle Malraux ne cessa plus de se référer ne signifiait pas pour lui le musée des préférences de chacun, mais l'ensemble des œuvres qui s'imposent à la sensibilité d'une époque et qui sont les mêmes pour tout le monde à un tiers près. Ces œuvres sont celles que notre siècle a découvertes ou qu'il a appris à regarder enfin sans préjugés : quel Européen s'intéressait, au XIX^e siècle, à l'art inconnu des cavernes, à l'art sumérien, à la sculpture précolombienne, à la peinture japonaise du Moyen Âge, aux lavis zen ou aux fétiches de la Nouvelle-Irlande ? Ces œuvres que Malraux interrogeait passionnément n'étaient jugées par lui ni « inférieures » ni « maladroites » : « Le fétiche ne balbutie pas la langue des formes humaines, il parle la sienne[2]. » Avec une insatiable curiosité à l'égard des créations de l'homme et même du hasard, il accueillit encore dans *L'Intemporel* l'art des malades mentaux, les pierres précieuses, les bois flottés.

« Nous sommes voraces des nouvelles formes que découvrira le Musée imaginaire, de toutes les écoles de la peinture éthiopienne, des nouveaux accents d'une nouvelle démence, de tous les esprits et les sculpteurs vaudous[3]. »

Si toutes ces formes l'intriguaient et le passionnaient — et, entre toutes, celles des arts sacrés —, c'est parce qu'elles étaient à ses yeux la manifestation de l'invisible. « D'où un pouvoir fascinant de l'artiste — le pouvoir de suggérer, par ses créations, ce qui échappe invinciblement aux yeux des vivants[4]. » Mais Malraux n'ignorait pas que tant d'œuvres religieuses que nous admirons comme des œuvres d'art furent créées par des hommes pour lesquels « l'idée d'art n'existait pas ». Que ces œuvres soient néanmoins présentes pour nous et ne soient pas de simples vestiges archéologiques constituait selon lui « l'énigme majeure de l'art ». Si ces œuvres suscitées par une religion disparue sont pourtant présentes, c'est grâce à la métamorphose, car c'est elle et elle seule qui « transforme en art l'expression plastique du sacré[5] »; et c'est à travers elle que Malraux voyait dans notre civilisation l'héritière de toutes les autres.

Pour lui qui avait longuement étudié les arts religieux, il était clair que l'art n'imite pas la réalité mais lui en substitue une autre. Après le premier tome de *La Métamorphose des dieux*, consacré à l'art grec et à l'art chrétien, Malraux consacra *L'Irréel* à l'art de la Renaissance italienne et à Rembrandt. Dans ce livre d'une intense poésie, il montre qu'au monde de Dieu succéda le monde de la Fable, c'est-à-dire de la fiction, et que si « toute grande œuvre figurative se réfère à ce qu'elle figure », elle « devient œuvre d'art par ce qui l'en sépare[6] ». Ce qui l'en sépare, c'est-à-dire la transfiguration par laquelle l'artiste se réapproprie le visible en le recréant, et non en cherchant à le reproduire fidèlement. Chapitre après chapitre, le livre propose ses variations obstinées et magnifiques sur le thème de l'Irréel. L'auteur veut y convaincre son lecteur que l'art délivre les personnages « de la condition humaine en les annexant à l'univers dont il est le seul créateur[7] ». À ce monde de l'art qu'il explora sans relâche, Malraux consacra encore le dernier tome de *La Métamorphose des dieux*, L'Intemporel. Après les artistes qui manifestèrent le Surnaturel, après ceux de l'Irréel, voici ceux qui, à partir de Manet, vont découvrir ce que l'auteur appelle le fait pictural. Pour eux, la valeur suprême n'est plus ni la foi ni la fiction, mais la peinture elle-même. Les peintres prennent alors conscience que les faits picturaux sont « des phrases du langage indéchiffré qui apporte à la peinture une existence indépendante du réel, de l'imaginaire ou du sacré qu'elle exprime[8] ».

Il faut préciser enfin que dans sa réflexion sur l'art, Malraux fit sien et développa un thème qui est l'une des pierres de touche de la culture européenne, ce que Paul Eluard avait appelé le dur désir de durer. Pour Malraux en effet, « le Dieu du Musée imaginaire, c'est l'Inconnaissable; et d'abord la lutte contre la mort[9] ». En affrontant le monde dans lequel ils n'ont pas choisi de naître, en créant un univers distinct du nôtre, les artistes se mesurent aussi à la mort qui ne peut rien contre leurs œuvres. C'est ce qu'atteste tout l'art du monde depuis la préhistoire : la survie des bisons de Lascaux, des déesses sumériennes, des sculptures de Michel-Ange, des tableaux de Rembrandt et de Cézanne, c'était là pour Malraux une énigme et même un mystère, celui de « la présence, dans notre vie, de ce qui devrait appartenir à la mort[10] ».

1
A. Chastel, **L'Image dans le miroir**, coll. « Idées », Gallimard, 1980, p. 137.

2
L'Intemporel, p. 245.

3
Ibid., p. 301.

4
Préface à **Sumer** d'André Parrot, Gallimard, 1960, p. XII.

5
L'Homme précaire et la littérature, p. 235.

6
L'Irréel, p. 189.

7
Ibid., p. 251.

8
L'Intemporel, p. 110. *C'est Malraux qui souligne.*

9
Le Miroir des limbes, p. 938.

10
Le Surnaturel, p. 31

1940s–1987

Andy Warhol
Time Capsules

Temporary housing at the Carnegie
Museum of Art, Pittsburg


TIME CAPSULES

Saving Time: the Archives of The Andy Warhol Museum

The archives of The Andy Warhol Museum are the most extensive and significant documentation of any American artist's life and times. Accumulated and collected by Warhol throughout his life, the material in the archives ranges from photographs and memorabilia collected during his childhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the books he had beside his bed at New York Hospital when he died in February 1987 at the age of 59. The collection is available to researchers at the museum's Archive Study Center, and it allows for new and powerful insights into Warhol's art, and the important social and cultural changes that occurred during his lifetime.

Warhol was an avid and knowledgeable collector of fine art, furniture, jewelry and decorative objects. Buying expeditions to antique shops, auction houses, flea markets and junk shops were a daily ritual for many years. In his own words, Warhol was "always looking for that five-dollar object that's really worth millions."

Over time, his 27-room Manhattan townhouse was filled to overflowing with the fruits of his obsessions. Exquisite Art Deco furniture and American folk art vied for space with Navajo Indian blankets and Empire sofas. After Warhol's death, Sotheby's auction house was given the daunting task of inventorying the contents of the townhouse and selling them at what has become a series of legendary auctions, which *Time* magazine characterized as "the most extensive estate sale in history, and the glitziest." Fueled by the power of Warhol's celebrity, buyers at the sale paid record-high prices for a piece of the artist's legacy. The public frenzy generated by these sales was the ultimate confirmation that Andy Warhol had entered the pantheon of Pop culture icons.

Following the Sotheby's auction, as archivists and curators began to make their way through the remaining contents of his home and his studio on East 33rd Street, it became clear that his collecting extended far beyond art and antiques, cookie jars and costume jewelry. A staggering accumulation of boxes, shopping bags, trunks and filing cabinets showed that collecting had permeated every aspect of Warhol's life, and these materials now represent the core of the Warhol Museum's archives.

The archival collection currently consists of more than 8,000 cubic feet of material, including 42 scrapbooks of press clippings related to Warhol's work and his private and public lives; his art supplies and materials; posters publicizing his exhibitions and films; more than 3,000 audio tapes of interviews and conversations between Warhol and his friends and associates; thousands of documentary photographs; an entire run of *Interview* magazine, which Warhol founded in 1969; his extensive library of books and periodicals; and many personal items such as clothing and 30-plus silver-white wigs that became one of Warhol's defining features.

At the heart of this vast collection are the "Time Capsule" boxes. Their contents, like Warhol's artwork, are both illuminating and enigmatic. Originally, these boxes were used to simplify a move from Warhol's studio at 33 Union Square West to a new location at 860 Broadway. Afterward, Warhol began to use these moving boxes to store the bewildering quantity of material that routinely passed through his hands. Ironically, he referred to these boxes as "time capsules." Normally, time capsules commemorate events of special significance. By placing a few carefully selected objects into a container, sealing it, and specifying a date when it should be opened, a time capsule is meant to capture a sense of the current *Zeitgeist* for future generations. For Warhol, however, his Time Capsules functioned not only in the traditional way, but also as a *memento hominem*, a register of his everyday life. In documenting the most insignificant details of his existence, Warhol created a complete, though often cryptic, diary of his life and the world in which he moved.

Photographs, newspapers and magazines, fan letters, business and personal correspondence, source images for art work, books, exhibition catalogues and telephone messages, along with objects and countless examples of ephemera—such as announcements for poetry readings and dinner invitations—were placed on an almost daily basis into a box kept conveniently next to his desk. Time Capsule #3, for example, contains a 17th-century German book on wrestling. Letters received by Warhol while he was hospitalized following a 1968 assassination attempt are found in Time Capsule #4. Other unusual items include a mummified foot, silverware he kept from a flight on Air France, a large banner created for a Rolling Stones tour, and a pair of white leather cowboy boots. When he died, Warhol had created over 600 Time Capsules.

For scholars of Warhol and postwar American popular culture, the Time Capsules are a treasure trove of new and important information. Through invoices, bank statements and other financial information, researchers are beginning to unravel the complexities of Warhol's business practices. Scripts, cast lists and reels of previously undocumented motion picture film have provided historians studying Warhol's film work with a wealth of new detail. Rare exhibition catalogues and announcements, press releases, correspondence and installation photographs have allowed art historians to study more thoroughly the critical and public reactions to Warhol's art, and to sort out the difficult questions of exhibition history and provenance. Visitors to the Warhol Museum discover that the archival material is fully integrated with the art collections to provide a broad social and historical context for understanding Warhol's work.

Warhol's Time Capsules also occupy a significant place in his total artistic production. Warhol labored continuously to document everything he could. Like his films and audio tape recordings, the Time Capsules are a further attempt to capture time and human experience in an indiscriminate way. The films and audiotapes elevate the most mundane action or conversation to the level of art, and a similar status is conferred on the material in the Time Capsules. The Time Capsules are also linked to works by other artists. Both Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Cornell, artists whom Warhol knew and admired, created box-like objects that, like the Time Capsules, can be read as a form of autobiography. The Time Capsules share a kinship with the German *Wunderkammer*. Popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, these cabinets of curiosities were created by collectors to exhibit their treasures. They often contained a highly eclectic assortment of objects—architectural fragments, travel souvenirs, scientific instruments, engravings and oddities of nature. Though rarely of great value, they often revealed a great deal about the tastes and interests of their owners.

John W. Smith
Archivist and interim manager of The Andy Warhol Museum

1972

Gerhard Richter
Atlas

The work was first framed and shown in December 1972 in Utrecht.
The book was first published in 1989 in München,
Verlag Fred Jahn, with an introduction by Armin Zweite.

Armin Zweite, **Gerhard Richter: Atlas**,
Städtische Galerie am Lehnbachhaus,
Munich, Museum Ludwig, Cologne,
Verlag Fred Jahn, Munich, 1989.

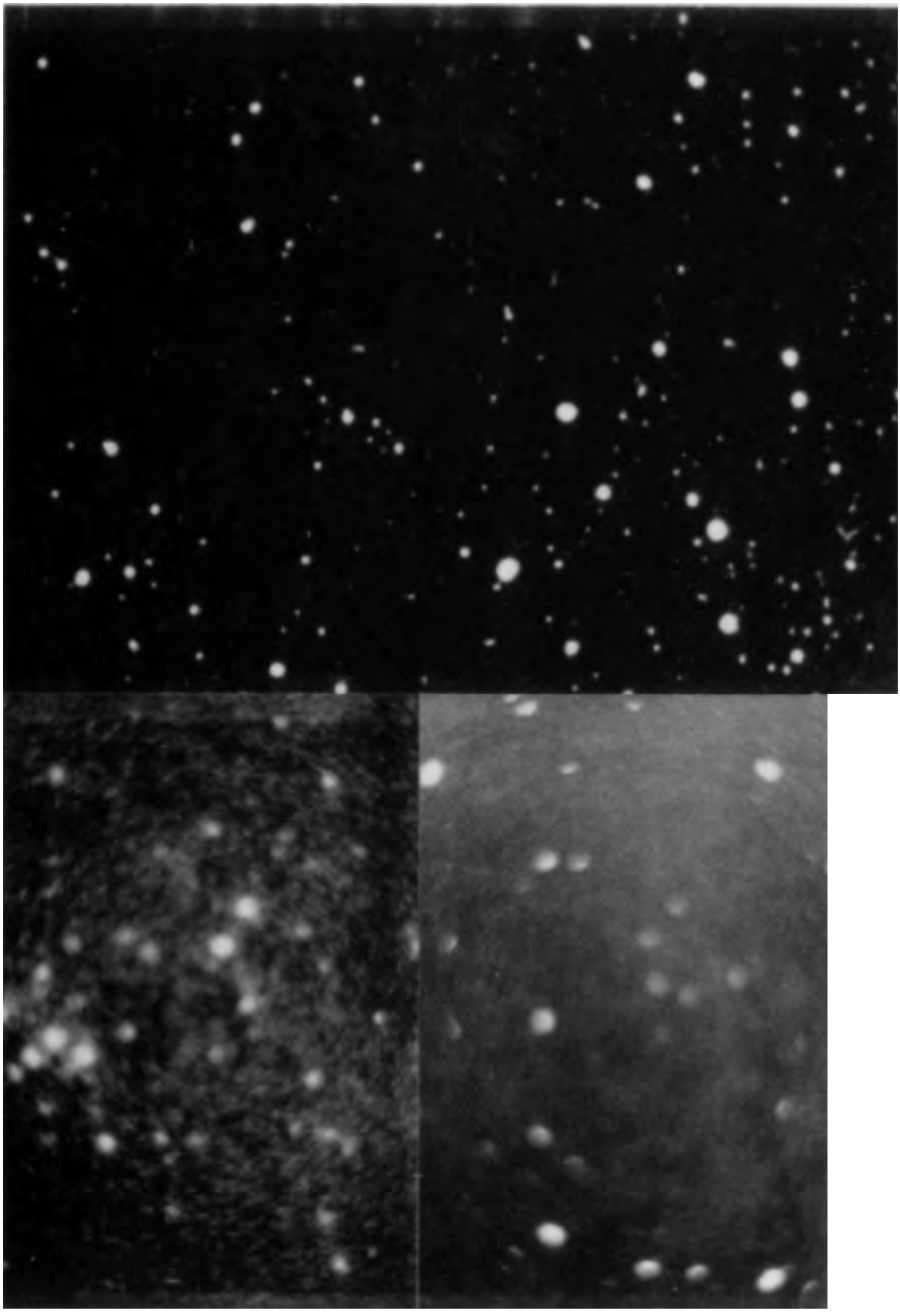
GERHARD RICHTER

ATLAS

Excursus the *Atlas*

The term "Atlas" rings perhaps more familiar in the German language than it does in English, being defined since the end of the sixteenth century as a book format that compiles and organizes geographical and astronomical knowledge. We are told that this format received its name from one of Mercator's map collections in 1585 which carried a frontispiece showing an image of Atlas, the titan of Greek mythology who holds up the universe at the threshold where day and night meet each other. But later, in the nineteenth century, the term had been increasingly deployed to identify any tabular display of systematized knowledge and one could have encountered an atlas in almost all fields of the empirical sciences: an atlas of astronomy, of anatomy, geography and ethnography, and later even schoolbooks charted plants and animals and bore that name like the titan who held up the heavens. When the confidence in empiricism and the aspiration towards comprehensive completeness of positivist systems of knowledge withered in the twentieth century, the term "Atlas" seems to have fallen into a more metaphorical usage.

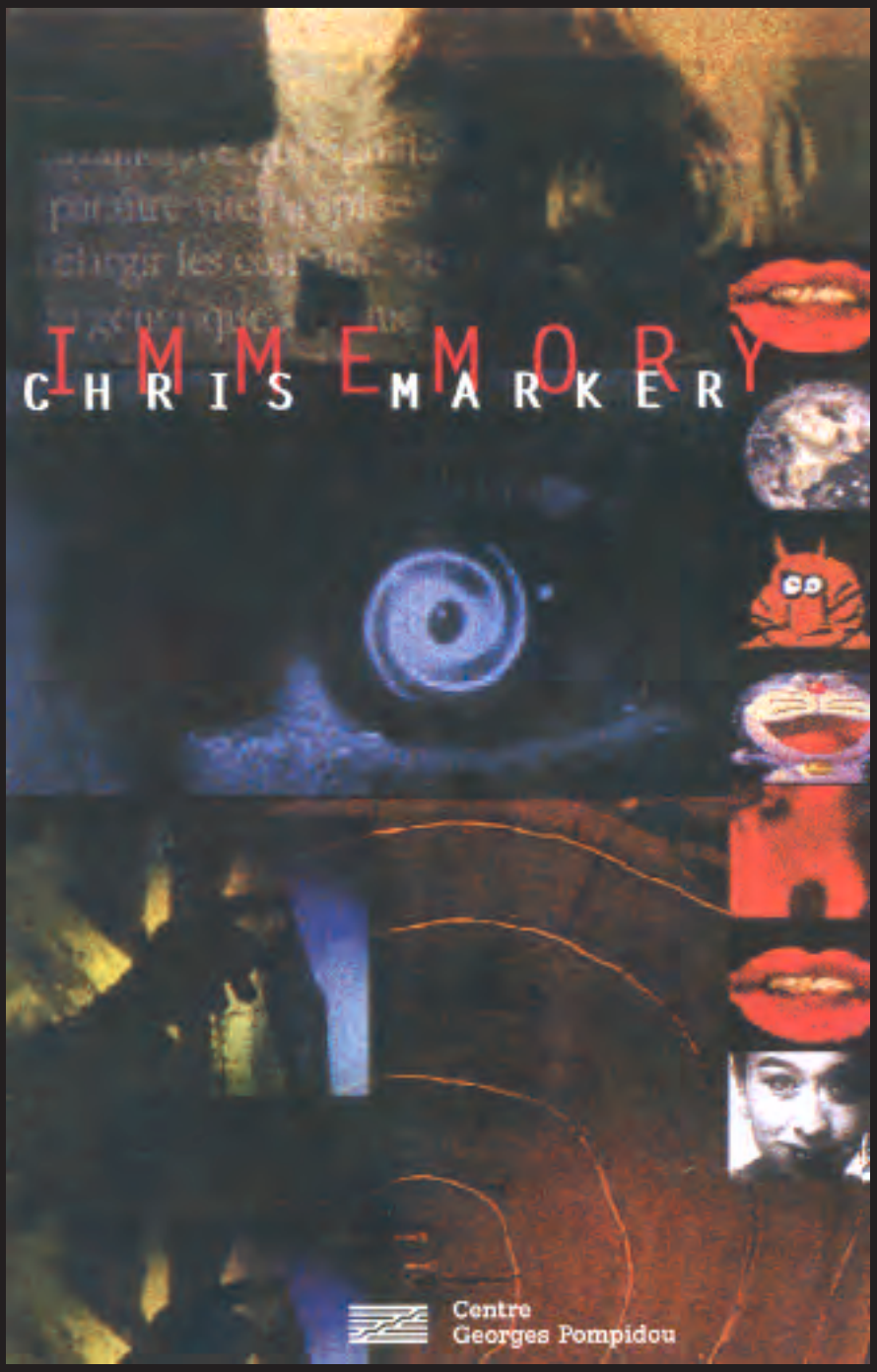
Benjamin Buchloh, **Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive**,
in **Photography and Painting in the Work of Gerhard Richter/Four Essays on *Atlas***,
J.F. Chevrier, A. Zwite, R. Rochlitz, Llibres de Recerca, Barcelona, 2000.



1995–1997

Chris Marker
Immemory

A computer work on CD-ROM carried out from 1995 to 1997.
Accompanying booklet:
Christine Van Assche & Yves Gevaert éds., Qu'est-ce qu'une Madeleine?
À propos du CD-Rom Immemory de Chris Marker, Essais de/Essays by
Laurent Roth, Raymond Bellour, Yves Gevaert Éditeur/Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris, 1997.



Chris Marker, **Immemory**, CD-Rom,
Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris, 1997.

Immemory

Mon hypothèse de travail était que toute mémoire un peu longue est plus structurée qu'il ne semble. Que des photos prises apparemment par hasard, des cartes postales choisies selon l'humeur du moment, à partir d'une certaine quantité commencent à dessiner un itinéraire, à cartographier le pays imaginaire qui s'étend au dedans de nous. En le parcourant systématiquement j'étais sûr de découvrir que l'apparent désordre de mon imagerie cachait un plan, comme dans les histoires de pirates. Et l'objet de ce disque serait de présenter la "visite guidée" d'une mémoire, en même temps que de proposer au visiteur sa propre navigation aléatoire. Bienvenue donc dans "Mémoire, terre de contrastes" – ou plutôt, comme j'ai choisi de l'appeler, *Immémoire: Immemory*.

Texte sur la couverture du CD de Chris Marker, **Immemory**, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1998.

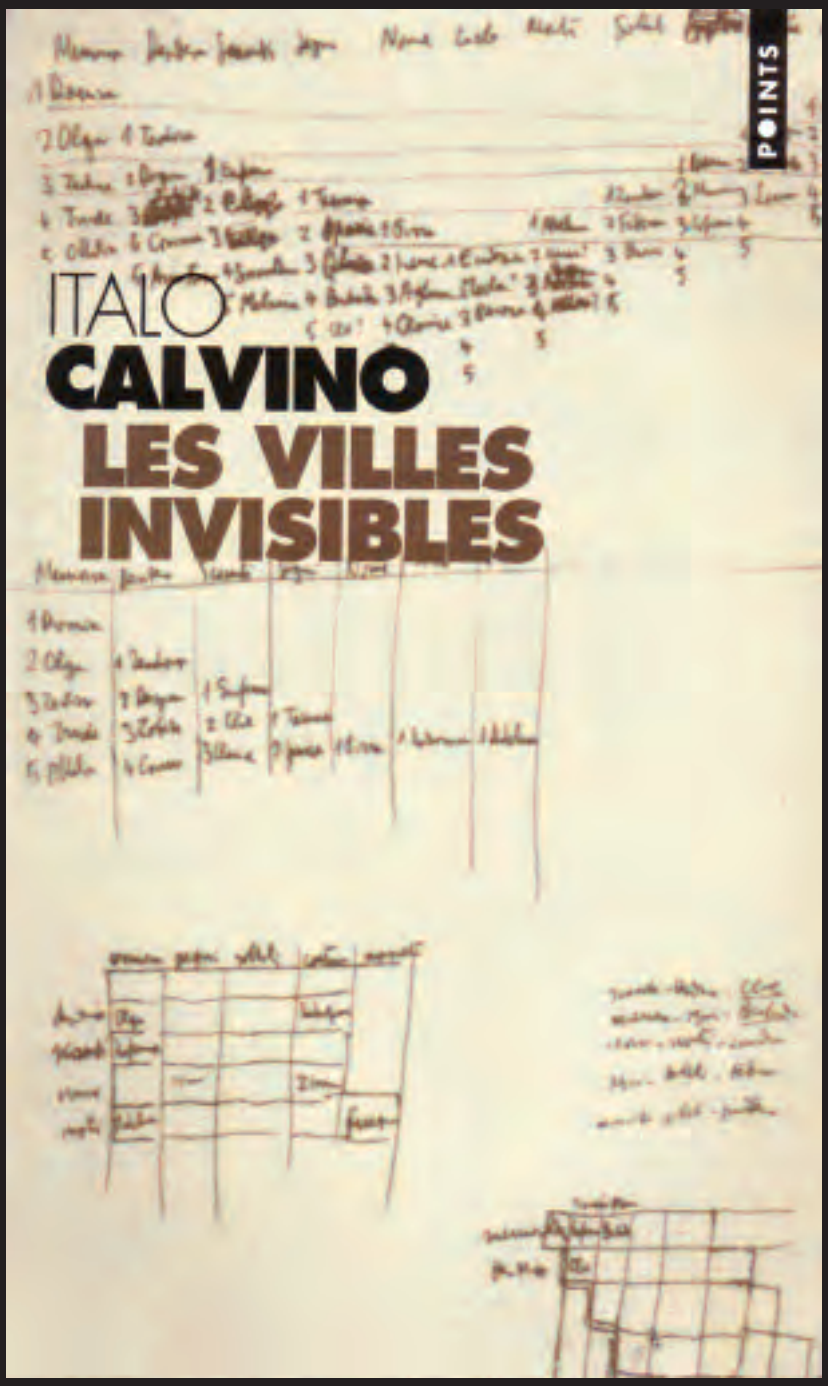
Pour qui sait mener à bien la barque photographique dans le remous presque incomprehensible des images, il y a la vie à rattraper comme on tournerait un film à l'envers . . .

Whoever can maneuver the photographic vessel in the nearly incomprehensible wake of images has life to catch up with, as you'd make a movie backwards . . .

André Breton, in **Le Surréalisme et la peinture**

1972

Italo Calvino
Les Villes invisibles



Italo Calvino, **Les Villes invisibles**,
Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1974.

Les Villes invisibles – Préface

Italo Calvino

Dans *Les Villes invisibles*, aucune ville n'est reconnaissable. Toutes ces cités sont inventées; je leur ai donné à chacune un nom de femme. Le livre se compose de courts chapitres, chacun étant prétexte à une réflexion qui vaut pour toute ville ou pour la ville en général.

Ce livre est né par fragments, à intervalles parfois longs, comme des poèmes que je couchais sur le papier, suivant les inspirations les plus variées. Quand j'écris, je travaille par séries : j'ai plusieurs chemises où je glisse les pages qu'il m'arrive d'écrire selon les idées qui me passent par la tête, ou même de simples notes pour des choses que je voudrais écrire. J'ai une chemise pour les objets, une chemise pour les animaux, une pour les hommes, une pour les personnages historiques et une autre encore pour les héros de la mythologie; j'ai une chemise sur les quatre saisons et une sur les cinq sens; dans une autre, je rassemble des pages sur les villes et les paysages de ma vie et dans une autre encore celles sur des villes imaginaires, hors de l'espace et du temps. Quand une chemise commence à se remplir, je me mets à penser au livre que je peux en tirer.

Ces dernières années, j'ai donc gardé près de moi ce livre des villes, écrivant de temps à autre, un fragment à la fois, en passant par plusieurs phases. Il y eut une période où je n'arrivais à imaginer que des villes tristes et une autre que des villes heureuses; à une époque je comparais les villes au ciel étoilé et, à une autre époque, j'étais sans cesse tenté de parler des immondices qui se répandent chaque jour hors des villes. C'était devenu une sorte de journal qui suivait mes humeurs et mes réflexions; tout finissait par se transformer en images de villes : les livres que je lisais, les expositions d'art que je visitais, les discussions avec mes amis.

Mais toutes ces pages mises ensemble ne formaient pas encore un livre : un livre (c'est mon opinion) doit avoir un début et une fin (même s'il ne s'agit pas d'un roman au sens strict), c'est un espace dans lequel le lecteur doit entrer, errer, voire se perdre; mais vient le moment où il lui faut trouver une issue, ou même plusieurs, la possibilité de se frayer un chemin pour en sortir. Certains d'entre vous me diront que cette définition peut valoir pour un roman à intrigue, pas pour un livre comme celui-ci, qui doit être lu comme on lit un recueil de poésies, ou d'essais, ou éventuellement de nouvelles. Eh bien, je veux justement dire que pour être un livre, même un recueil de ce genre doit avoir une construction; il faut qu'on puisse y découvrir une intrigue, un itinéraire, une solution.

Je n'ai jamais fait de recueil de poésie, mais j'ai écrit plusieurs livres de nouvelles et j'ai été confronté au problème de l'ordre à donner aux différents textes, problème qui peut devenir angoissant. Cette fois, j'avais inscrit dès le début le titre d'une série en tête de chaque page: *Les villes et la mémoire, Les villes et le désir, Les villes et les signes*; j'en avais intitulé une quatrième *Les villes et la forme*, mais ce titre s'est ensuite révélé trop général et la série finit par être répartie dans d'autres catégories. Pendant un certain temps, tout en continuant à écrire des villes, j'hésitais entre multiplier les séries, les restreindre à un très petit nombre (les deux premières étaient fondamentales), ou les faire disparaître totalement. Il y avait de nombreux textes que je n'arrivais pas à classer et je cherchais alors de nouvelles définitions. Je pouvais faire un groupe de villes un peu abstraites, aériennes, que j'ai fini par appeler *Les villes effilées*. Certaines pouvaient être qualifiés de *villes doubles*, mais j'ai ensuite préféré les répartir dans d'autres groupes. Il y avait aussi des séries que je n'avais pas prévues au départ : elles sont apparues au dernier moment, lorsque je redistribuai des textes que j'avais classés ailleurs, surtout sous les rubriques «žmémoirež» et «ždésirž», par exemple *Les villes et le regard* (caractérisées par leurs qualités visuelles) et *Les villes et les échanges*, caractérisées par les échanges : échanges de mémoires, de désirs, de parcours, de destins. Par contre, *Les villes continues* et *Les villes cachées* sont deux séries que j'ai écrite *expressément*, c'est-à-dire avec une intention bien précise, quand j'avais déjà compris la forme et le sens que je voulais donner à mon livre. C'est sur la base du matériel accumulé que j'ai recherché la meilleure structure possible, parce que je voulais que ces séries alternent, s'entrelacent et, en même temps, que le parcours du livre ne s'éloigne pas trop de l'ordre chronologique dans lequel les différents textes avaient été écrits. À la fin, j'ai décidé de m'arrêter à 11 séries de 5 textes; chaque chapitre rassemble des textes de ces différentes séries qui auraient en commun un certain climat. Le système selon lequel les séries alternent est le plus simple qui soit, même si certains ont beaucoup travaillé pour lui trouver une explication.

Je n'ai pas encore dit ce par quoi j'aurais dû commencer : *Les Villes invisibles* se présentent comme un ensemble de récits de voyages que Marco Polo propose à Kublai Khan, empereur des Tartares (Dans la réalité historique, c'était un descendant de Gengis Khan, empereur des Mongols; mais dans son livre, Marco Polo l'appelle Grand Khan des Tartares et c'est ainsi qu'il est entré dans la tradition littéraire.) Non que j'aie voulu suivre les traces de l'heureux marchand vénitien qui, après être arrivé jusqu'en Chine au XIII^{e} siècle, visita ensuite une bonne partie de l'Extrême-Orient comme ambassadeur du Grand Khan. Le thème de l'Orient doit désormais être réservé aux personnes compétentes, dont je ne suis pas. Mais à travers les siècles, il y a toujours eu des poètes et des écrivains qui se sont inspirés du *Milione*[1] comme d'un décor fantastique et exotique : Coleridge dans un poème célèbre, Kafka dans *Un Message impérial*, Buzzati dans *Le Désert des Tartares.* Seales dans *Les Mille et Une Nuits* peuvent se vanter d'un destin comparable : celui des livres qui deviennent comme des continents imaginaires dans lesquels d'autres œuvres trouveront leur place, continents de l'«žailleursž», en cette époque où l'on peut affirmer que l'«žailleursž» n'existe plus, et que le monde entier tend à s'uniformiser.

À cet empereur mélancolique, conscient que son immense pouvoir a bien peu de poids puisque le monde va de toute façon à sa perte, un voyageur visionnaire raconte des villes impossibles, par exemple une ville microscopique qui s'élargit, s'élargit et semble construite de nombreuses villes concentriques en expansion, une ville–toile d'araignée suspendue au-dessus d'un abîme, ou une ville bidimensionnelle comme Moriana.

Chaque chapitre du livre est précédé et suivi d'un texte en italique dans lequel Marco Polo et Kublai Khan réfléchissent et commentent. J'avais écrit le premier texte de Marco Polo et Kublai Khan

tout au début, et ce n'est que plus tard, après avoir composé plusieurs villes, que j'ai eu l'idée d'en écrire d'autres. Ou mieux, j'avais beaucoup travaillé sur le premier texte et il me restait pas mal de matériel, et à un moment donné j'ai développé plusieurs variantes de ces surplus (les langues des ambassadeurs, les gesticulations de Marco), d'où sont nés des textes différents. Au fur et à mesure que j'écrivais des villes, je développais des réflexions sur mon travail sous la forme de commentaires de Marco Polo et du Khan, et ces réflexions prenaient des directions variées; j'essayais de laisser chaque idée progresser d'elle-même. Je me suis retrouvé ainsi à la tête d'un autre ensemble de matériaux que j'ai tenté de faire avancer parallèlement au reste, puis j'ai fait une sorte de montage, au sens où certains dialogues s'interrompent puis reprennent; en somme, le livre se discute et s'interroge chemin faisant.

Je ne crois pas que le livre évoque seulement une idée atemporelle de ville, mais plutôt que s'y déroule, de façon tantôt implicite, tantôt explicite, une discussion sur la ville moderne. J'entends dire par quelques amis urbanistes que le livre touche différents aspects de leur problématique, et ce n'est pas un hasard puisque le *background* est le même. Et la métropolis des «big numbers» n'apparaît pas seulement vers la fin du livre : même ce qui ressemble à l'évocation d'une ville archaïque n'a de sens que si on la pense et l'écrit en gardant sous les yeux la ville d'aujourd'hui.

Que représente la ville pour nous, aujourd'hui ? Je pense avoir écrit une sorte de dernier poème d'amour aux villes, au moment où il devient de plus en plus difficile de les vivre comme des villes. Nous nous approchons peut-être d'un moment de crise de la vie urbaine, et *Les Villes invisibles* sont un rêve qui naît au cœur des villes invivables. On parle actuellement avec la même insistance de la destruction du milieu naturel et de la fragilité des grands systèmes technologiques qui peut entraîner des dégâts en série, paralysant des métropoles entières. La crise de la ville trop grande est le revers de la crise de la nature. L'image de la «mégalopolis», la ville continue, uniforme, qui recouvre le monde, domine aussi mon livre. Mais il y a déjà tellement de livres qui prophétisent des catastrophes et des apocalypses qu'il serait pléonastique d'en ecrire un autre, et surtout ce n'est pas dans mon tempérament. Ce qui importe à mon Marco Polo c'est de découvrir les raisons secrètes qui ont conduit les hommes à vivre dans les villes, raisons qui vaudront au-delà de toute crise. Les villes sont un ensemble de beaucoup de choses : de mémoire, de désirs, de signes d'un langage; les villes sont des lieux d'échange, comme l'expliquent tous les livres d'histoire économique, mais ce ne sont pas seulement des échanges de marchandises, ce sont des échanges de mots, de désirs, de souvenirs. Mon livre s'ouvre et se referme sur des images de villes heureuses qui prennent forme sans cesse et s'évanouissent, cachées par les villes malheureuses.

Presque tous les critiques se sont arrêtés sur la dernière phrase du livre : «Chercher et savoir reconnaîttre qui et quoi, au milieu de l'enfer, n'est pas l'enfer, et le faire durer, et lui faire de la place». S'agissant des dernières lignes, tous ont considéré qu'il s'agissait de la conclusion, de la «morale de la fable». Mais ce livre est construit comme un polyèdre, avec des conclusions inscrites un peu partout, le long de toutes ses arêtes; et certaines n'ont pas moins l'allure d'épigramme ou d'épigraphe que celle-là. Bien entendu, ce n'est pas par hasard que cette phrase a abouti à la fin du livre, mais commençons par dire que ce dernier petit chapitre a une double conclusion, dont les éléments sont tous deux nécessaires : la ville d'utopie (que nous ne pouvons cesser de chercher même si nous ne l'entrevoyons pas) et la ville infernale. Et encore : il ne s'agit que de la dernière partie du commentaire sur les atlas du Grand Khan, par ailleurs plutôt négligé par la critique, et qui ne cesse de proposer, du premier au dernier texte, diverses «conclusions» possibles à tout le livre. Mais il y a aussi l'autre voie, celle

1
Appellation donnée au *Livre des merveilles du monde* ou *Livre de Marco Polo* (*NdT*).

2
Calvino se refère ici, pour la critique psychanalytique, au compte rendu de G. Bonura, et, pour la critique semiologique, a une observation de Paolo Fabbri.

qui veut que l'on cherche le sens d'un livre symétrique en son milieu: certains critiques psychanalytiques ont trouvé les racines profondes du livre dans les évocations vénitiennes de Marco Polo, comme un retour aux premiers archétypes de la mémoire; alors que les spécialistes de sémiologie structurale ont affirmé que c'est dans le point exactement central du livre qu'il faut chercher: et ils ont trouvé une image d'absence, la ville appelée Bauci[2]. Il apparaît clairement ici que l'avis de l'auteur est superflu : ce livre, comme je l'ai expliqué, s'est fait un peu tout seul, et le texte tel qu'il est peut seul autoriser ou exclure telle ou telle lecture. En lecteur parmi d'autres, je peux dire que dans le cinquième chapitre, qui développe au cœur du livre un thème de légèreté bizarrement associé au thème de la ville, se trouvent certains textes que je considère comme les meilleurs de par leur évidence visionnaire, et ces figures filiformes («ŏvilles effiléesŏ» et autres) sont peut-être la zone la plus lumineuse du livre. Je ne saurais rien ajouter.

Traduit de l'italien par Martine Van Geertruyden.

Italo Calvino, **Les Villes invisibles**, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1974.

1969–

Gilbert+George
Private working archive

An interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist
that took place in March 2000.

Excerpt

Obrist: These publications are all about you?

George: Books where we appear, one or two pages or more. We keep every one. There are even more in the next room, This is our archive of children's books. [He continues showing more and more books.]

Obrist: You don't have an archivist? It's all done by yourselves?

Gilbert: We don't have anybody! Everything is in the right place, so that's why we don't need assistants. Life is simplified, we know where everything is, we never have to look for things.

George: So even if we lose something very unimportant, which is extremely rare, we are disturbed for days until we find it. Because we feel that that could be the beginning of the end.

Video stills from The Secret Files of Gilbert and George by Hans Ulrich Obrist and the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris for the exhibition «Voilà, le monde dans la tête», 2000.

Gilbert & George, **The crown of one who burns the world,** 1985 (photograph by Ian McKell).


Day
BERT & GEORGE
1972

Gilbert & George, **Morning Light on Art for All**, 1972.

Reliving a former art experience

Reliving a former art experience is also different from meeting the other ghosts of old arousals and infatuations: enemies, friends, wild nights, passions endured and surmounted. All this and the conditions that surrounded it sink into oblivion as soon as the fling is over: it has fulfilled some purpose and was absorbed by the fulfillment; it was a denial in one's life or a stage in the development of your personality. But bygone art served nothing; its former effect has disappeared unnoticed, lost itself along the way; it is a stage for no one. For do you really feel yourself to be standing on a higher plateau when looking down upon a once admired work? You stand no higher, just elsewhere! Indeed, to tell the truth, even if, while standing before an old painting, you realize with a comfortable, hardly suppressed yawn that you no longer need be enthusiastic about it, you are still far from being enthused by the fact that there are new paintings to be admired. You simply feel yourself to have slipped from one timely compulsion to another, which by no means excludes the fact that you went about it perfectly voluntarily and actively; voluntary and involuntary behavior are not after all direct opposites, they also blend in equal parts, so that ultimately, you involuntarily overindulge in voluntary behavior, or voluntarily the involuntary, as is often the case in life.

Still, in this elsewhere you will find a remarkable dose of transcendence. It is, we realize, if appearances do not deceive, related to fashion. Fashion, after all, is not only marked by the one characteristic, namely, that you find it ridiculous in retrospect, but also by the other, that as long as a fashion lasts, you can hardly imagine taking seriously the opinions of a man who is not dressed from head to toe just as ridiculously as you yourself are. I would not know what in our admiration of antiquity could shield a budding philosopher from suicide, if not the fact that Plato and Aristotle wore no pants; pants have contributed far more than you might think to the intellectual development of Europe, for without them, Europeans would most likely never have gotten over their classical-humanistic inferiority complex vis-a-vis the antique. Thus we hold our time's most profound feeling—that we would not barter with anyone who wasn't dressed in contemporary clothing. And even of art we only feel for that same reason a sense of progress with each new year; although it may simply be a coincidence that art exhibits, like the latest fashion, appear in the spring and fall. This sense of progress is not pleasant. It reminds you, in the most extreme way, of a dream in which you are seated on a horse and cannot get off, because the horse never stands still. You would gladly take pleasure in progress, if only it took a pause. If only we could stop for a moment on our high horse, look back, and say to the past: look where I am now! But already the uncanny process continues, and after experiencing it several times, you begin to feel queasy in the stomach with those four strange legs trotting beneath you, constantly carrying you forward.

From: Robert Musil, **Posthumous Papers of a Living Author**, Penguin Books, London, 1993.

Charles Wilson Peale, **The Artist in His Museum**, 1822
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. In
The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect, Kynaston
McShine, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999.

Order in art is not order.
Chaos in art is chaos.
Symmetry in art is not symmetry.
Asymmetry in art is asymmetry.
A square in art is not a square.
A circle in art is a circle.
A triangle in art is a triangle.
A trisection in art is not a trisection.

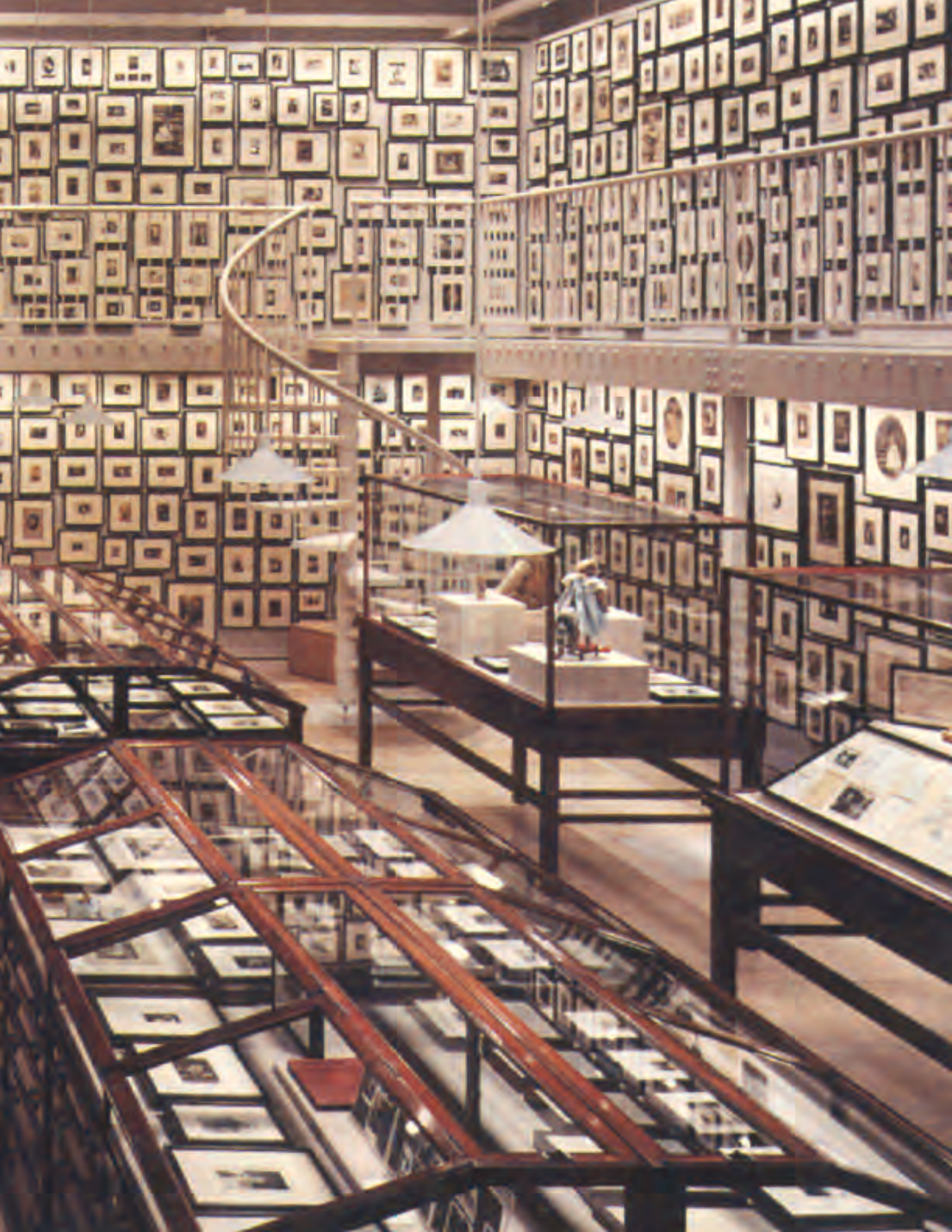
Simplicity in art is not simplicity.
Less in art is not less.
More in art is not more.
Too little in art is not too little.
Too large in art is too large.
Too much in art is too much.
Chance in art is not chance.

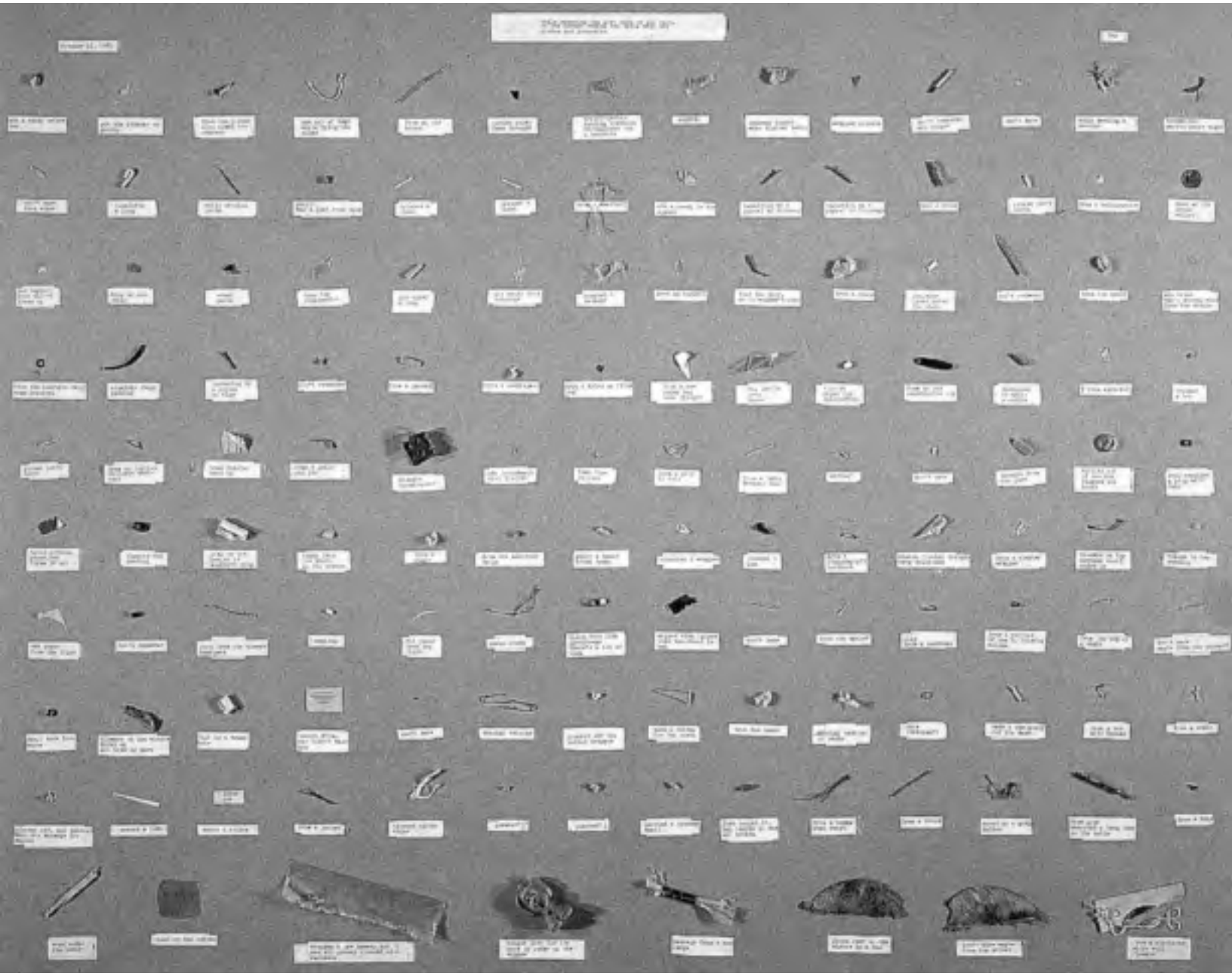
Ad Reinhardt, *Writings*

Bernhard und Hilla Becher

Anonyme Skulpturen

Eine Typologie technischer Bauten






hre Anwendung. Was die Zeichen verschleiern, das spricht ihre Anwendung aus.
6.421 Es ist klar
, denn es lag in
er Sprache und sie schien es uns nur unerbittlich zu wiederholen.
116. Wenn


en läßt. Die Ethik ist transzendental. (Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins.)
6.522 Es gibt allerdings
"Sein",
d", "Ich", "Satz", "Nam
das Wesen
metaphysischen.

Le Livre des Questions
Edmond Jabès

During the past few years, no French writer has received more serious critical attention and praise than Edmond Jabès. (…) Beginning with the first volume of *Le Livre des Questions*, which was published in 1963, and continuing on through the other volumes in the series, Jabès has created a new and mysterious kind of literary work—as dazzling as it is difficult to define. Neither novel nor poem, neither essay nor play, *The Book of Questions* is a combination of all these forms, a mosaic of fragments, aphorisms, dialogues, songs, and commentaries that endlessly move around the central question of the book: how to speak what cannot be spoken. The question is the Jewish Holocaust, but it is also the question of literature itself. By a startling leap of the imagination, Jabès treats them as one and the same:

I talked to you about the difficulty of being Jewish, which is the same as the difficulty of writing. For Judaism and writing are but the same waiting, the same hope, the same wearing out. (…)

What happens in *The Book of Questions*, then, is the writing of *The Book of Questions*—or rather, the attempt to write it, a process that the reader is allowed to witness in all its gropings and hesitations. Like the narrator in Beckett's *The Unnamable*, who is cursed by "the inability to speak [and] the inability to be silent," Jabès's narrative goes nowhere but around and around itself. As Maurice Blanchot has observed in his excellent essay on Jabès: "The writing . . . must be accomplished in the act of interrupting itself." A typical page in *The Book of Questions* mirrors this sense of difficulty: isolated statements and paragraphs are separated by white spaces, then broken by parenthetical remarks, by italicized passages and italics within parentheses, so that the reader's eye can never grow accustomed to a single, unbroken visual field. One reads the book by fits and starts—just as it was written.

At the same time, the book is highly structured, almost architectural in its design. Carefully divided into four parts, "At the Threshold of the Book,"And You Shall Be in the Book," "The Book of the Absent," and "The Book of the Living," it is treated by Jabès as if it were a physical place, and once we cross its threshold we pass into a kind of enchanted realm, an imaginary world that has been held in suspended animation. (…) Mythical in its dimensions, the book for Jabès is a place where the past and the present meet and dissolve into each other. There seems nothing strange about the fact that ancient rabbis can converse with a contemporary writer, that images of stunning

beauty can stand beside descriptions of the greatest devastation, or that the visionary and the commonplace can coexist on the same page. (…)

The book "begins with difficulty—the difficulty of being and writing—and ends with difficulty." It gives no answers. Nor can any answers ever be given—for the precise reason that the "Jew," as one of the imaginary rabbis states, "answers every question with another question." Jabès conveys these ideas with a wit and eloquence that often evoke the logical hairsplitting—*pilpul*— of the Talmud. But he never deludes himself into believing that his words are anything more than "grains of sand" thrown to the wind. At the heart of the book there is nothingness. (…)

Although Jabès's imagery and sources are for the most part derived from Judaism, *The Book of Questions* is not a Jewish work in the same way that one can speak of *Paradise Lost* as a Christian work. While Jabès is, to my knowledge, the first modern poet consciously to assimilate the forms and idiosyncrasies of Jewish thought, his relationship to Jewish teaching is emotional and metaphorical rather than one of strict adherence. The Book is his central image—but it is not only the Book of the Jews (the spirals of commentary around commentary in the Midrash), but an allusion to Mallarmé's ideal Book as well (the Book that contains the world, endlessly folding in upon itself). Finally, Jabès's work must be considered as part of the on-going French poetic tradition that began in the late nineteenth century. What Jabès has done is to fuse this tradition with a certain type of Jewish discourse, and he has done so with such conviction that the marriage between the two is almost imperceptible. *The Book of Questions* came into being because Jabès found himself as a writer in the act of discovering himself as a Jew. Similar in spirit to an idea expressed by Marina Tsvetaeva—"In this most Christian of worlds/all poets are Jews"—this equation is located at the exact center of Jabès's work, is the kernel from which everything else springs. To Jabès, nothing can be written about the Holocaust unless writing itself is first put into question. If language is to be pushed to the limit, then the writer must condemn himself to an exile of doubt, to a desert of uncertainty. What he must do, in effect, is create a poetics of absence. The dead cannot be brought back to life. But they can be heard, and their voices live in the Book.

Paul Auster, **The Book of the Dead**, in **The Art of Hunger**, Penguin Book, 1996

Edmond Jabès

Le Livre des Questions

L'IMAGINAIRE
GALLIMARD

It would be an A.B.C.D.E.F. . . of entertainment, an art of entertainment.

… G.H.I.J.K.L.M.N.O.P.Q.R.S.T.U.V.W.X.Y.Z….

To forget. To sleep, serene, rightminded. New horizons take shape.
I see new horizons coming toward me and thehope of another alphabet.

Marcel Broodthaers

Pamphlet published by Marcel Broodthaers on the occasion of the installation of the first version of his **Jardin d'hiver**, Brussels, Palais des beauxarts, 1973.

Broodthaers and Piracy

The reference to piracy (contrefaçon) is not new in the numerous books conceived by Marcel Broodthaers. As early as 1969, in Vingt ans apès, he salvages as they are the two volumes of Alexandre Dumas published in the popular Livre de Poche paperback edition, which he wraps with a fluorescent red band bearing his name and that of R. Lucas, director of the New Smith Gallery in Brussels, while taking care to hide the name of Alexandre Dumas. Also in 1969, he publishes Mallarme's Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard, under the author's name of Marcel Broodthaers, with the subtitle "Image" instead of "Poème," while following very closely the layout and typography of the cover of Mallarmé's original edition published in 1914 by the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. He carries perfection to such a point that he adheres exactly to the same pressrun as the original edition. In these two cases, one cannot speak of piracy in the proper sense of the word, but rather of quotation.

In the book we are concerned with [Pauvre Belgique], Broodthaers makes explicit reference to the notion of piracy in his note on page 151, …, while challenging it from a strictly material point of view. Indeed, he extends the notion of imitation "to present controversies that go beyond a precise geographical framework."

In examining his book more closely, especially the cover, which from the start played a primary role in the creation of the work, one notices that only the name of Charles Baudelaire appears on it, and not his own. Underneath is the title, Pauvre Belgique. Things become complicated with the name of the place of publication: first Paris, on the front, then New York, on the back; and with the year: 1974 for both.

An intrinsic part of the cover and inseparable from it is the jacket, on which Broodthaers prints four times the first three letters of the alphabet plus the letter A, completely covering the title *Pauvre Belgique* and thus making it unreadable. This move cancels the significance and all the connotations that one might attribute to Belgium as defined by Baudelaire.

Concealing the title with Broodthaers's ABC's not only performs the func-tion of a metaphorical signature, but also refers inevitably to the notions of Paris and New York placed back-to-back in competition. Would Baudelaire's Belgium in the year 1864 serve then as sublimation, by connoting Paris and New York in the year 1974 of the designation that forms an integral part of the cover (Poor Paris, Poor New York)?

The inside of the book—by reproducing only the jacket and titles of the Pléiade edition—would then serve only as a pretext for the historical compari-son of a problem connected by Baudelaire with Belgium and which, by the elimination of the text, would recover its relevance in terms of Paris and New York. In other words, through the resurrection of a cultural conquest achieved by Belgium solely through the mercantile practice of literary piracy whose intel-lectual source was in Paris, we are asked to compare the cultural radiation of New York, commercially forged on the basis of European borrowings.

The final phase of Broodthaers's thought might be said to be embodied in his Atlas, published in 1975 and bearing the suggestive title L*a conquête de l'espace: Atlas à l'usage des artistes et des militaires* (The Conquest of Space: Atlas for the Use of Artists and the Military). It is a tiny book containing the silhouetted maps of countries reproduced as though they were all the same size.

Ives Gevaert, **Pauvre Belgique: "An Asterisk in History"**, in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ed., **Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs**, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachussetts and London, England, 1988.


Shamrock Creamery
Butter
Beurre
McKenzie
Creamery Butter
Beurre
BUTCHER BOY
BUTTER
BEURRE
BRIGHT BRAND
CREAMERY
B
BUTTER
CANADA FIRST GRADE
Spruce Dale
WHEY BUTTER
creamery butter
1lb 454g
beurre de laiterie
Walkerton
1 LB 454 g
CREAMERY BUTTER
BRIARS
SWEET (UNSALTED)
CREAMERY BUTTER
CANADA FIRST GRADE
Glenville
BRAND

The inexperienced may wonder at the fact that so many various things can be retained in the memory, but as soon as they observe that all branches of learning have a real connection with, and reciprocal action upon each other, the matter will seem very simple.

Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *De Architectura libri decem*, 1st bce


an archive
2
MICHAEL SNOW
DIGITAL SNOW
DVD-ROM
Centre Pompidou
EPOXY

Gesamtkunst Merz

Kurt Schwitters, Merz, 1920

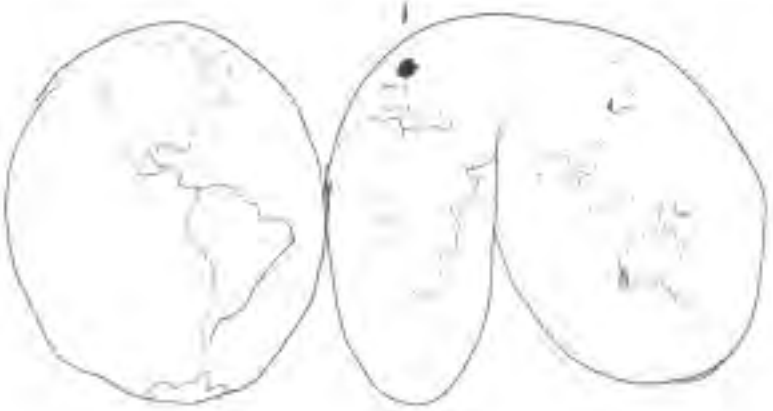
Merz House was my first piece of Merz Architecture. Spengemann writes in *Zweemann*, No. 8–12: "In Merz House I see the cathedral: *the* cathedral. Not as a church, no, this is art as a truly spiritual expression of the force that raises us up to the unthinkable."

Merz stands for freedom from all fetters, for the sake of artistic creation. Freedom is not lack of restraint, but the product of artistic discipline. Merz also means tolerance towards any artistically motivated limitation. Every artist must be allowed to mold a picture out of nothing but blotting paper for example, provided he is capable of molding a picture..

Christof Spengemann

1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960

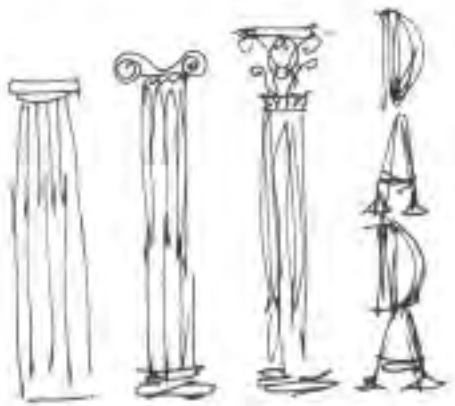
Kurt Schwitters on a time-chart
by Stefan Themerson



I met him in **1943**, in London,

at the PEN Club Conference called to celebrate the tercentenary of the publication of *Areopagitica*, at the French Institute, in Kensington. I was in the uniform of the Polish army, he in the grey, worn-out suit of a German refugee. That at least was how we looked in the eyes of some of our neighbours. The logic of the time was to infer from some 'public image' individuals to the aggregate, to mix the mess thoroughly, and then to infer down from the aggregate to other individuals. To some of the onlookers, therefore, he was just another German (and once a German always a German, almost a camouflaged nazi), and I, quite undeservedly, one on whose white eagle a bit of the glory earned by Polish soldiers reflected; to others, however, he was an heroic victim of nazidom, and I, again quite undeservedly, one to be blamed for some of my generals' nationalism or what not. The logic of it all was mad, and when in my first talk with Schwitters (whose 'mortal' and 'hereditary' enemy I should have been) the word **dada** (inevitably) slipped from his tongue, it sounded like a trumpet of sanity; it was almost visible, like a column belonging to a perfect order,

Doric, Ionic, Corinthian - and now **dada** - standing upright and watching the conference.



1943

There were writers from all over the world, there in the hall, and there were sounds of aeroplanes – above the roof. Two hours earlier a bomb had fallen on a nearby house, but it was all quiet again. Two hours had been enough to move away those who needed to be moved away, and the place looked peaceful, and the sky, now made visible by the 'removal' of the upper part of the building, looked bright. A picture exactly like that had been predicted years before by many surrealist painters.

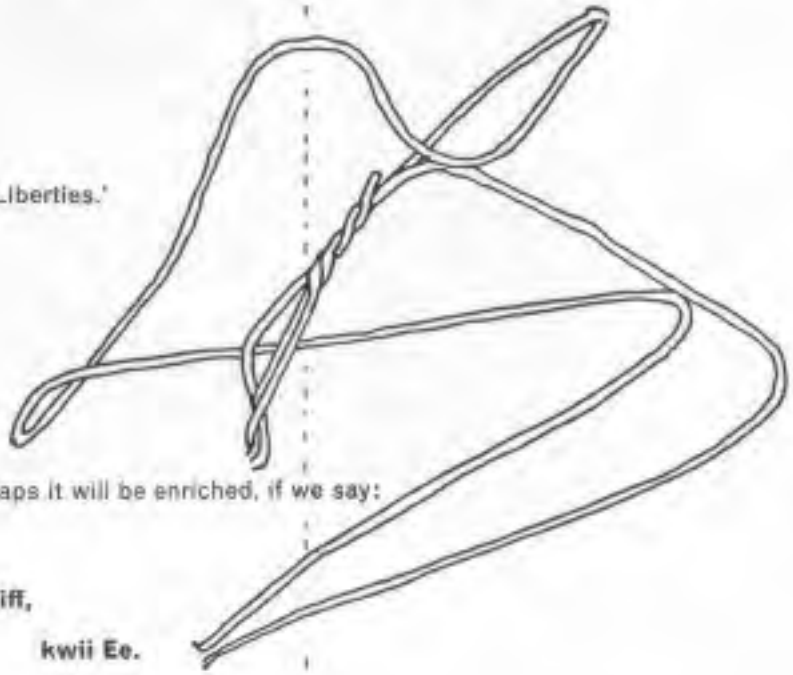
The same morning, while passing the bombed site on his way to the French Institute, he had picked up from the ruins a piece of convulsed iron wire, two or three-foot long (*'I always take everything I find interesting'*, he told me later), and now, sitting in the hall beside me, he was bending it into a space sculpture, while Mr E. M. Forster was delivering his speech. Seeing Schwitters bending the wire, some distinguished writers thought he was an electrician or a plumber who had got lost and strayed into their PEN by mistake. Nevertheless, there, at that meeting, it was he, Schwitters, who was practising what the speakers were preaching.

They quoted Milton: 'Give me the Liberty to know,

to utter,

& to argue freely, according to conscience,

above all Liberties.'



I want to draw your attention to this word: **utter.**

It means not only: to exercise the faculty of speech,

but also: to give vent to joy, etc., in sound,

to burst out with a cry,

to give out in an audible voice.

Consequently, the meaning of his oration to the court of Areopagus will not be distorted, perhaps it will be enriched, if we say:

'Give me the Liberty to give vent to joy, for instance thus: **Fümms bö wö tää zää Uu,**

pögiff,

Give me the Liberty to burst out with a cry: **Dedesnn nn rrrrrr,**

kwii Ee.

Ii Ee,

mpiff tilIff too,

tilIII,

Jüü Kaa?

Give me the Liberty to give out in an audible voice: **Rinnzekete bee bee nnz krr müü?**

ziiuu ennze, ziiuu rinnzkrrmüü, rakete bee bee.'

To which you may easily add: the Liberty to bend a piece of wire into a space sculpture.

Quotations above are from:
Ur-Sonata, or *Die Sonate in Urlauten*

1960

To us, today,

it may perhaps seem that the act of putting two innocent words together, the act of saying: **Blue is the colour of thy yellow hair,** is an innocent aesthetic affair,

that the act of making a picture by putting together two or three innocent objects, such as: A Railway Ticket, &

A Flower, &

A Bit of Wood, is an innocent aesthetic affair.

Well, it is not so at all: Tickets belong to Railway Companies (or to the State),

Flowers – to Gardeners,

Bits of Wood – to Timber Merchants.

If you mix these things together you are making havoc of the Classification System on which the Régime is established: you are carrying people's minds away from the Customary Modes of Thought, and people's Customary Modes of Thought are the very Foundation of Order (whether it is an Old Order or a (in his case: Nazi) Order), and, therefore, if you meddle with the Customary Modes of Thought, then,

whether you are Galileo, or Giordano Bruno, with their funny ideas about Motion,

or Newton with his funny ideas about Force,

or Einstein with his funny ideas about Space and Time,

or Russell with his funny ideas about Thinking,

or Schönberg with his funny ideas about a sort of Democratic Equality between the black and white keys of the piano keyboard,

or the Cubists with their funny ideas about Shapes,

or Dadaists, or Merzists, with their funny ideas about introducing 'Symmetries and Rhythms instead of Principles'– *

– you **are** (whether you want it or not) in the very bowels of Political Changes. Whether he wanted it or not, whether he knew it or not, Kurt Schwitters **was** in the very bowels of Political Changes. Adolf Hitler knew it. He knew that putting two innocent things together is **not** an innocent aesthetic affair. And that was why Kurt Schwitters was thrown out of Germany.

Nothing, nothing is resisted with such savagery as a New Form in Art, wrote Kandinsky, quoting an historian of the Russian Theatre, Nolldoff. †

P.S. 1967

THE TIMES
SATURDAY
REVIEW DE
CEMBER 16

that between fictitious men ...
Moral: if you campaign for a century, you *may* persuade the British to stop persecuting people, but they'll never give up persecuting art. It was also the year when protesting poets lit a bonfire outside the Arts Council. The P... (from the Trent Book ... tingham) which ... time a

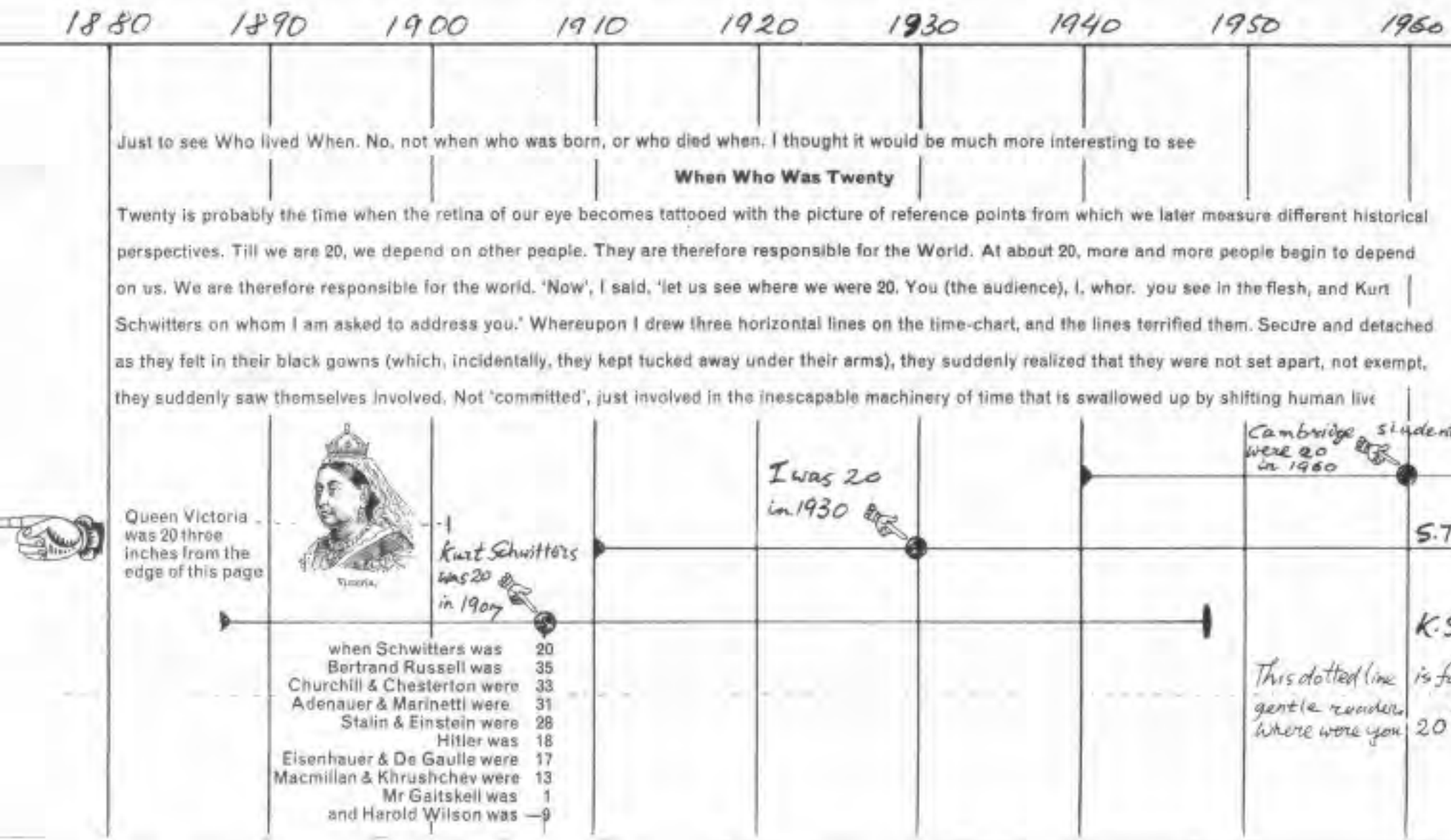
BRIGID BROPHY

*HUGO BALL. Fragments from a Dada Diary, 3 March, 1916; quoted from *Transition* N 25.

†W. KANDINSKY. Reflections on abstract art. *Cahiers d'Art*, 7–8, 1931, quoted from *Kandinsky*, Tate Gallery Catalogue, London, 1958.

I have just come back from Cambridge, where I was asked to address a Society of Arts on Kurt Schwitters in England. The average age of the audience was about 20. Consequently, I learnt more from them than they did from me. What I learnt I will tell you later. One of my tasks was to make those 20-year-old men and women see that the objects they liked or disliked (such objects as Schwitters' collages) were produced in a world quite larger than theirs, in a world in which clocks turn much more quickly than do those embedded in the old walls of the colleges. Their minds lived in the specially cultivated quiescent isolation of the university green lawns. The objects they wanted to know whether to like or dislike came to them from a different context. They were produced in a world which changes with each turn of its clocks.

I drew a time-chart on the blackboard:



Just to see Who lived When. No, not when who was born, or who died when. I thought it would be much more interesting to see

When Who Was Twenty

Twenty is probably the time when the retina of our eye becomes tattooed with the picture of reference points from which we later measure different historical perspectives. Till we are 20, we depend on other people. They are therefore responsible for the World. At about 20, more and more people begin to depend on us. We are therefore responsible for the world. 'Now', I said, 'let us see where we were 20. You (the audience), I, whor. you see in the flesh, and Kurt Schwitters on whom I am asked to address you.' Whereupon I drew three horizontal lines on the time-chart, and the lines terrified them. Secure and detached as they felt in their black gowns (which, incidentally, they kept tucked away under their arms), they suddenly realized that they were not set apart, not exempt, they suddenly saw themselves involved. Not 'committed', just involved in the inescapable machinery of time that is swallowed up by shifting human live

'Place in the hands of the King of Prussia
the strongest possible military power
and your policy will succeed not through
speeches and festivals and songs, but through Blood and Iron!'

Somewhere here (1886) BISMARCK says: **'Blood and Iron!'**

Somewhere here JARRY says: **'Merdre!'**

and ZOLA: **'J'accuse!'**

Somewhere here (1912) APOLLINAIRE says: **'One cannot carry everywhere the corpse of one's father.'**

*1913

Here MARCEL DUCHAMP throws **3 needles** on to a canvas to make a picture;

& GERTRUDE STEIN: **'A rose is a rose is a rose.'**

Somewhere here REMARQUE writes: **'All quiet on the Western Front'.**

THE BAUHAUS **'courageously accepts the machine as an instrument worthy of an artist.'**

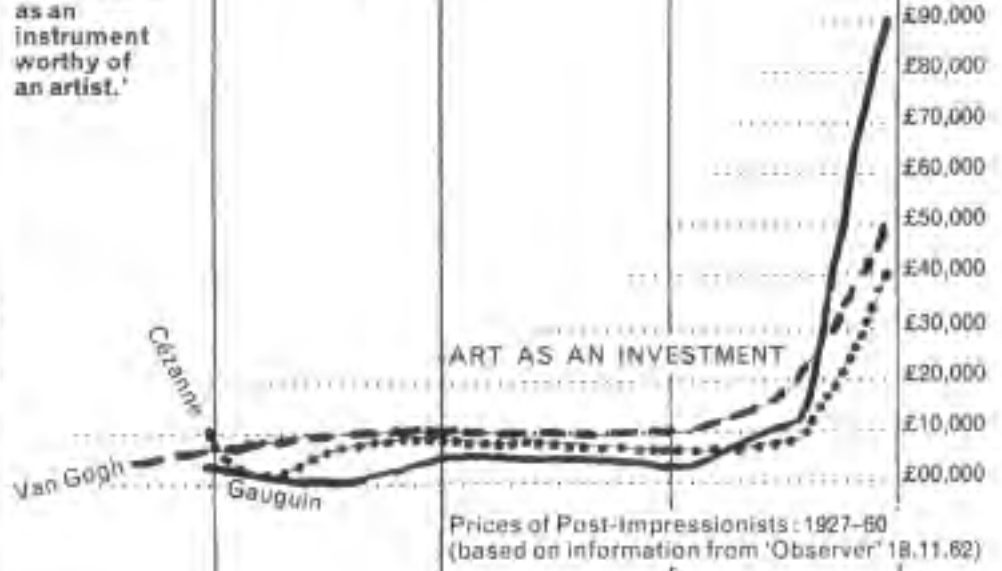
*1933

& GÖRING (1936) **'Guns will make us powerful, butter will only make us fat!.'**

and JUDGE WOOLSEY lifts the ban on **ULYSSES.**

Here CEZANNE paints his **CARD PLAYERS**

& PICASSO his **DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON**



Prices of Post-Impressionists: 1927–60
(based on information from 'Observer' 18.11.62)

This space, reader, for you to fill with whatever you consider relevant

1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960

BLERIOT flies over the Channel

Sarajevo

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

MUSSOLINI marches on Rome

REICHSTAG on fire

Hitler's NUREMBERG SPEECH menaces the dadaists with arrest.

MOSCOW TRIALS *FRANCO from Morocco to Madrid

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

* HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI *

1916: **dada** manifesto proclaimed in the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich,

1917: **dada** almanac published in Berlin,

1918: KURT SCHWITTERS invents the word: **merz** to name his writings, pictures, & constructions.

Schwitters was 20 in 1907*

1922: Lunacharski, Commissar of Education, organizes in Berlin THE FIRST RUSSIAN EXHIBITION of **cubism, suprematism, constructivism,** with PEVSNER, LISSITZKY, MALEVICH, KANDINSKY, STENBERG, GABO & OTHERS, whose crazy ideas, afterwards banned in Russia, cross the Atlantic, conquer the Modern Arts Musea of the States, to cross, after the 2nd war, the Atlantic again, in the opposite direction, & conquer London, Paris, Warsaw, & Moscow?

MEYERHOLD exiled

1923: the first number of **MERZ** appears in Hanover, & **MEIN KAMPF** in Munich.

Schwitters was over 30 in THE TWENTIES

THE TWENTIES!

The end of the first world war, and Europeans were not yet as blasé with universal wars as they appear to be now.

Do you remember George Grosz's drawings of the 1920's?

Post-war Berlin,
officials,
businessmen,
workers,
prostitutes,
male and female;
a war widow,
war hero:
unemployed.
A war orphan.

Your Freudian subconscious may cryptically enjoy the picture of the world

in which the price of a post-Versailles prostitute was a box of cigarettes when you went to bed with her, and a box

of matches when you left. That's to say, if you haven't chosen to identify yourself with the *underdog*, or bitch, itself,

in that inflationary, pre-sulpha,
pre-penicilin,
pre-welfare,
v.d.-era of spectacular profits and spectacular hunger.

No, however innocent the collage,
the photomontage,
the typography of the time may look now,* → 1960
the new surge did not start as an innocent aesthetic affair.

A bus-ticket,
a bank-note,
a bit of newspaper } were stuck to the collage-picture,
an ugly typeface – was printed upside down

not because of the formal, aesthetic values they possessed,
not because they were *pink*,
or soft,
or *square*,
or ~~oblong~~
or **extended**

they forced themselves into the picture boldly, in their own right: as perforated bus-tickets,
as devaluated bank-notes,
as outdated tatters of hopeless small ads.

JOBS WANTED!


MERZ
DIE BLUME A-N-N-A
Leipzig
Erfurt.
MERZ
REDACTEUR
Feldpost
ANNA BLUME
ANNA BLUME - AUGUSTE BOLTE
1.) ANNA BLUME
Gebr. Arnhold, Dresden
10
inschluß
65
oemilchverlag
bachemerstraße 243
Heft 50
Preis 2 M
DIE·WOCHE
Reise Cabaret Dada
für die
Insel Rügen
GU MÜLLER, K

And so, out of the turmoil of the early twenties, a new art was born. In those seemingly 'non-representational' pictures, the bits of reality literally stuck, nailed, glued into them, represented the outside world as much as a pink shape in Hogarth's represented English Beef, and a black line in Goya's – the gallows. A shockingly different world, and yet, was it not a sort of refurbished John Ruskin. His most beautiful things in the world, peacocks and lilies were the most useless. Here, the most useless things, taken out of dustbins, were meant to become beautiful. But it was not a reversal. It was a sort of transformation of his equations into a different historical space. 'There should not be a single ornament . . . without some intellectual intention.' The raw material, the elements of dada art, had some intellectual intention. Fine art was that in which 'the hand, the head, and the heart of man went together'. The dadaists belonged to the generation which, still, remembered and read John Ruskin. Ethics and aesthetics were intermingled.

'The blague and the bleeding pose' were at the beginning of the fight. The fight against ideas, values, mentality, (not necessarily and exclusively bourgeois) associated with the war, its causes, conduct, and consequences.

The fight produced discoveries, discoveries of new materials, new techniques, new ways of seeing the world. And not only in painting —— photographically —

cf. Moholy Nagy's eight ways of seeing the world – And not only in visual arts. Revaluations everywhere. Politics, philosophy, science. Economics, ethics. Mathematics. 'A kaiser is a kaiser', or 'an underdog is an underdog', was no longer a self-evident, indisputable truth, if 'a bus-ticket is a bus-ticket' was not true either. And it was just demonstrated that a bus-ticket was not a bus-ticket once and for all. It became a part of a picture. Punched by the conductor, it still possessed its full value in different category. We were asked to accept those new categories in which a punched bus-ticket was a valuable thing. Old *a priori* conceptions which mind used to apply as frames to what was coming from the outside world through our senses – were good no longer. Substance got mixed with quantity, quantity with quality, quality with relation, relation with place, place with time, time with posture, posture with possession, possession with action, action with passion. In the chorus shouting: 'Aristotle go home!' the voice of dada was as loud as the voice of symbolic logic. Thus new ways of seeing the world opened the gates to a domain of new sensitivities. Exploring the jungle of new forms became an art in itself. A purely aesthetic affair. The relics of the rebellion became art-dealer's items; the purpose of new works – to give pleasure to the eye rather than to open it more widely by force.

And then, parturition half-forgotten, new aesthetics once established, the new convention became what old conventions always were – yet another language of the same, eternal art. Thus the circle (or the spiral?) was closed. Kurt Schwitters was born a rebel. He died a lyrical poet.

This collage was made not in the twenties, in Germany,
but in the forties, in Ambleside, Lake District, England.

(photo: Ernst Schwitters)

It still contains a bit of a bus-ticket, but *this* bit of a
bus-ticket is no more a Protest against the world,
nor is it a discovery of new materials and new techniques.
This bit of a bus-ticket is a very personal affair.
It is his personal bus-ticket.

And so is '¼ lb' (of butter he ate (?)),

and the label 'opened by examiner 2861',

and the words 'like to print some of my poems'.

(Examiner 2861' by Kurt Schwitters;
Mr & Mrs Harry Lewis Winston Collection.)

1940

1960

It seems that those works of art, by many artists, in which the fact of their being an aesthetic achievement overpowered the fact of their being an event, survived the time-corrosion better. Most of Kurt Schwitters's work, and especially that produced between 1923 and 1928, belongs there. Shall I say that a collage by Schwitters is appreciated now not because it was hip, but because it has become square, as much square as Mona Lisa, both with and without her moustache. Or am I wrong?

'Do you think that this renewed interest in dada and Schwitters means that there is a similarity between the sixties and the twenties? They challenged the problems of their time, do you think their methods can serve you for challenging the problems of your time?, and what are those?, and do you want to challenge them?' – I asked the representative of those who are twenty today, Mr Rackstraw Downes, the President of the Cambridge University Society of Arts. He discussed the questions with his friends and assembled some replies from which, with his kind permission, I shall now quote as follows:

"Modern collage is not much interested in what its materials were before, nor where they came from. If it is photos of Brigitte Bardot etc., this is because BB has some mythical significance for 'sixties - no more. Most people would be able to read Schwitters as 'innocent aesthetic arrangements' because in the 60's, surely, ANTI-ART has finished: the personal protest has finished. The Royal Academy no one takes seriously enough (among young generation) to be worth bothering about. If we dislike bombs, there are organized marches to Aldermaston. Rebellion is de rigueur, anti-art is 3rd programme material. Thus the personal protest of Schwitters is dead (except in a historical sense) because personal protests are no longer startling. Schwitters appears much more personal writer than e.g. Ionesco (who is much admired, and not considered dangerous or frightening - he gets praised in The Times). My own feeling is that a man like Schwitters now is too well catered for to exist; he adopts a role within society and politics, as a socialist or communist, or Mosleyite if he wants to protest.

"His peculiar attraction, however, over other Dada collage makers etc. is his extremely personal choice of materials. Their juxtaposition is still startling, with more impact than collage by Sophie Tauber + Arp etc. Their components still assert their individuality - that is to say their individuality before they graduated to Schwitters' arranging hand. In the collages of Ernst or Arp the identity of the components is concealed, so that in Schwitters, tho' we do not regard the components nowadays as essentially NOT belonging together and therefore representing a protest, we do notice that he was doing something different from the others, and doing it as a master. Why he is preferred above other Dada artists is perhaps because he shows love and respect for materials where they show ONLY protest.

"(Yet, still with) reference to our generation, his impact softened by modernity of others; Braque, Picasso, Matisse used papier collé, and other Dada artists, and surrealists - Max Ernst, Marcel Janco, Picabia, H. Hausmann, also made collages. Their influence probably greater on recent collage-makers (and that of Braque etc.) Thus contemporary collages have not the great personal respect and (so it seems to me) love of his materials.

"Yes, I think we admit he is becoming an art-dealer's item, and certainly a pleasure to the eye.

"(His) relationship to the background of the twenties is certainly of tantamount importance; his relationship to sixties - in thought, social and political setting etc. - less valid. Without the socio-political background we 'read' Schwitters wrongly, only partially at least. (the time-chart) gives us a fuller understanding of Schwitters than can be had in a vacuum i.e. without a historical sense.

"A time-chart of the 60's could be composed that would perhaps be more frightening than one of the 20's, but not till 30 years hence. After all, how many people were disturbed by 'a rose is a rose is a rose' etc. at the time? A 'sixties time-chart could be more frightening, because, it is felt, changes are happening perhaps faster."

Now, before I go any farther, I wish to tell you two little stories, which I dedicate to Raoul Hausmann's 'Three Little Pine Trees' *

I call the first story:

'Three Little Dogs on a Time-chart',

and the second:

'Three Little Dustbins on a Time-chart.'

The three little dogs are: an ennobled dog,
a howling dog,
& a dead dog – and they are *under*dogs,
all three, in a sense.

The three little dust bins are: a pelt merchant's dustbin,
a wonderland dustbin,
& a capitalist dustbin.

THREE LITTLE DOGS ON A TIME-CHART

1880 | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1960

An Ennobled Dog

Somewhere upon the earth,
a few inches to the left from
← this line, there are noble
words and plebeian words. '*Le Chien*'
is a plebeian word there. Molière is not
afraid of using it: '*Qui veut noyer son chien*
l'accuse de la rage', he says in '*Les Femmes*
Savantes'. But when Racine wants to use
the word '*Le Chien*', he has to add '*une*
épithète noble' to it to let it pass in a Verse.
And I cannot decide: Is Moliere hip, &
Racine square, or is it the other way
round?

A Howling Dog

Somewhere there ** And somewhere there, i.e. on 5 Oct. 1923,
behind this line

K.S shows the audience a poem,
containing only one letter [W] on a sheet of
paper. He starts to 'recite', slowly raising
his voice. His consonant changes from a
whisper to a howling sound until he ends
with the shockingly loud bark of a dog.
'*This was his answer* (writes Moholy Nagy)
not only to the social situation but also to
degrading
'cherry-mouthed'' –
''raven-haired'' –
''babbling-brook'' –
poetry.' †

A Dead Dog

D. H. Lawrence writes from Navojoa,
Sonora, as follows: '*In the middle of the*
little covered market at Alamos, between
the meat and the vegetables, a dead dog lay
stretched as if asleep. The meat vendor said
to the vegetable man: 'You'd better throw
it out.'' The veg.-man looked at the dead
dog and saw no reason for throwing it out.
So no doubt it still lies there.' ‡

* see: Kurt Schwitters & Raoul Hausmann: 'PIN'
†quotation from Moholy Nagy is from his 'Vision in Motion'.
‡quotation from D. H. Lawrence is from his 'Selected Letters'.

THREE LITTLE DUSTBINS ON A TIME-CHART

A Pelt Merchant's Dustbin

There was somewhere there a little dustbin; it was filled to the brim with *aged harlots with grass-green hair lurking in wait for carrion lips and lascivious neighing, and leeches in helmets parading before bemedalled scarecrows.* It was *fenced round with bones,* and it stood at the entrance to the Cabaret Voltaire, Zürich. And one day a group of young men came out of the Cabaret Voltaire, heaved up the dustbin, and threw its content back on to the people who had filled it: on to the fat and utterly uncomprehending Zürich philistine pigs, and the Kaiser, the initiator of the war, and that *nation which was at best a cartel of pelt merchants and profiteers in leather, at worst a cultural association of psychopaths who, like the Germans, marched off with a volume of Goethe in their knapsacks, to skewer Frenchmen and Russians on their bayonnets.*

(Arp)

(R. Huelsenbeck)

A Wonderland Dustbin

There was another dustbin there. As the woods are filled with such little birds and bees and the cornfields with such weeds and flowers and fieldmice as Nature throws into them, the dustbin was filled with what bits of reality were ejected by a modern city. And one day a man called K.S. went to the dustbin, kicked off its lid, and intended to proceed as his contemporaries in Zürich did. But as he looked into the dustbin he stopped for a moment and saw that it was filled to the brim with the poor little underdogs of reality. Still in a rebellious and sardonic mood, he called the contents of the dustbin MERZ, and, as he did so, he fell in love with it, and I would have called him the St Francis of the-little-sisters-the-bits-of-newsprint, and of the-little-brothers-the-matchsticks, if it didn't sound so sentimental, and if it were true. It was not altogether true, because, unlike St Francis, he didn't stop being angry and sardonic. A few inches to the left from the edge of this time-chart, when kings were kings, little things (things, or colours, or sounds, or words) were either *noble* or *plebeian* (see the Story of the first Little Dog). A few inches later, when merchants became kings, the little things (things, or colours, or sounds, or words) became either *rich* or *poor*. He didn't like this arrangement. For him a golden signet-ring was worth less than a broken fishbone, if his eye liked the fishbone more. His son quotes him as saying: *'Nothing is too low to be used as elements of a composition; in fact the patina of age and signs of wear produce their own kind of beauty.'* Shakespeare's servants always speak prose. It has taken us several inches of this time-chart to accept the idea that none of their words or ejaculations is too low to be used in a poem.

A Capitalist Dustbin

The third dustbin stood there. To see it, a Russian poet, Mayakowski,

rushed

7000 versts

forward,

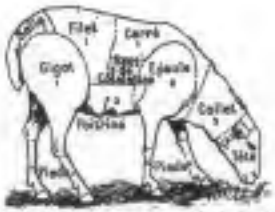
and found himself

seven years behind.

'A fifteen-minute walk', he says, 'or a five-five-minute ride from the magnificent Fifth Avenue & Broadway, – there are dustbins full of refuse, where poor wretches search for some bones with a scrap of meat left on them.' Then he waded through the stinking mud and drew out his own, rhythmical, conclusions:

We have our own ambition – the soviet ambition.
Upon the bourgeois we look down.

But... revenons à nos moutons !



1910 1920

SARAJEVO

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Five years before Sarajevo (Mussolini was then only 26), a bio-seismograph called MARINETTI felt the vibration going on in the walls of the simmering kettle, and burst out with his Angry-Young-Man's FUTURIST MANIFESTO:

('Figaro', Paris, 1909)

We are out to glorify war:

the only health-giver of the world!

Militarism! Patriotism!

The Destructive Arm of the Anarchist!

Ideas that kill!

Contempt for women!

Seven years later, in 1916– the same sensitivity of some other artists' nervous systems made them move in the opposite direction.

(Richard Huelsenbeck, 'Dada Lives', Transition 25)

Their art too **had to be young**

it had to be new,

it had to integrate all the experimental

tendencies of the Futurists and Cubists.

Above everything, however, their art had to be international.

For they believed in **an International of the Spirit**

and not in different national concepts.

No **Italian Pride** for them!

(I am quoting from Transition)

They **hated the senseless, systematic massacre of**

modern warfare.

The bankruptcy of ideas having destroyed the

concept of Humanity to its very innermost depth,

the instincts and hereditary backgrounds

are now emerging pathologically.

(I am quoting from Hugo Ball: Dada Diary, 12 June 1916)

Since no art, politics, or religious faith, seems adequate to dam this torrent,
there remains only the blague & the bleeding pose!

What we are celebrating is at once
a buffoonery
& a Requiem Mass.

(Idem:
3 March 1916)

Kurt Schwitters' sympathies were with them, not with Marinetti. At least not with Marinetti's conclusions. As to Marinetti's premises, emotional and theoretical, it would be unwise to dismiss them off-handedly. He inspired the editor of a socialist daily *Avanti* and the author of a flamboyant novel *Claudia Particella* (English title: *Cardinal's Mistress*) – Benito Mussolini, (**It is Marinetti who instilled in me the feeling of the ocean and the power of the machine**') and he equally inspired a number of poets (Mayakovsky in Russia; T. Peiper, B. Jasieński, A. Wat, A. Stern, in Poland) none of whom was 'fascist'. Some of those who knew him say that Marinetti was a jolly good fellow and the fact that he was admired by Il Duce, who was admired by Ezra Pound, should not be taken too seriously. Well . . . I don't know. Anyway some of his theorizing seem to be right up to date, something pretty near the province of what is today called 'linguistic philosophy': it is all about the functioning of words, about handling grammar, syntax and style.

(a number of inches to the left of this time-chart) It is rather amusing that what Milton – Marinetti, 250 years later, and in a not less boisterous mood, wrote about ADJECTIVES, and all forms of the verb OTHER THAN THE INFINITIVE:

Rhyme being no necessary adjunct
or true ornament
of poem
or good verse,
but the invention of a barbarous age,
to set off wretched matter
& lame metre.

'The Verse'
Preface to
'Paradise Lost'

by stripping it of all adjectives
& by isolating it,
the noun,
worn out by the multiple contrasts
& by the weight of classical
& decadent adjectives,
can be brought back to its absolute values.
Adjectives (isolated) in brackets will give the atmosphere of the story.
The different forms of the verb should be eliminated.
The infinitive is the very movement of the new lyricism.
Synoptic tables of lyrical values will permit us to follow simultaneously several currents.

2000 shrapnels exploding, dazzling white handkerchiefs full of gold srrrrrr TUMB TUMB 2000 grenades extended grabbing crashingly very black hair Zang———srrrrr TUMB ZANG TUMB TUUMB the orchestra of noises of war blotted out under a note of silence held in the high sky by gilded spheric balloons which watch the shooting.

("Les Mots en Liberté")

He seems to be treating language not as a means of communication,
not as an instrument for thinking,
not even as an expression of emotions,
but *as behaviour*.

This, to some extent, is perhaps true also with other writing-experiments of the time. And it is fascinating to notice that to study language as behaviour becomes the subject of what is going to be called neuro-linguistics, psycho-linguistics. One of their hypotheses suggests that:

The ideas, perceptions, and metaphysics of the whole culture is determined (or at least strongly influenced) by the language structure peculiar to it;

In other words: **our language does our thinking for us.**

Therefore: If you want to better us by changing our perceptions, attitudes, behaviour,
try to change our linguistic habits,
our syntax, vocabulary, & style.

(Anatol Rapaport, ETC, Autumn 1958)
(Sapir & Whorf, *idem*)

This is what the futurists and dadaists were trying to do in the twenties.

This is what the dictators and other politicans were trying to do in the thirties.

This is what in the forties writers decided is no business of literature,

And this is what the omnipresent admen (political, industrial, commercial) are trying to do today.

All this does not mean that Marinetti was the source and origin of the movement. He was a seismograph among other seismographs.

The same forces which made him praise **the power of the Machine,**
made the future *Bauhaus* **accept courageously the machine as an instrument worthy of Artists.**

The same forces which made him praise **A Racing Motor-car, its frame adorned with great pipes, like snakes with explosive breath . . .**

(for amusement's sake confer: S. I. Hayakawa: 'Sexual Symbolism of the American Automobile'; or, if you prefer: Freud's 'Interpretation of Dreams').

The Racing Motor-car, which seems to be running on shrapnel and is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace,

(Non, vous, Marinetti', wrote Apollinaire, 'vous fondez une religion nouvelle établie sur le développement des moyens de locomotion. Au lieu de Divinité vous dites Vélocité; sans le savoir les Allemands ont bien fondé la religion de la Férocité,' – Appollinaire: 'Anecdotiques': 'La nouvelle religion de la Velocité', 16 Oct. 1916).

made Meyerhold invent his biomechanical theatre, a synthesis of drama, gesture rhythm, sound, colour, and technical constructions on the stage;

and Tairov want both to acclaim the concept of spectacle (**the theatre must be theatrical**) and break the footlights dividing the stage from the audience (**a theatre which presented a room from which one had amputated the fourth wall**),

(it was not the marxist artists, it was the marxist philosophers who condemned soviet culture' to at least thirty years of **Bieder**man+ Bummel**meier** Aesthetics).

made Paul Klee fall in love with **a green leaf, a little star, a butterfly wing,**

made the dadaists contradict **the existing world order,**

made Kurt Schwitters invent **MERZ-art.**

19'40

'Do you know what **MERZ** means?' he asked me once, in London. In 1943, I think.

'Isn't it a German word for something you throw away, like rubbish?' I said.

'Well, not really', he said. And I noticed that all the time he was looking at the box of **555 STATE EXPRESS** cigarettes, which was there on the table in my wife's studio.

'Incidentally', he interrupted himself, 'may I take just this one side of this cigarette box? What a beautiful yellow colour it is! I shall stick it on one of my collage-pictures. I always take everything I find interesting.'

He didn't actually say that the whole world was his painter's palette, but that was what it meant. And then he returned to what MERZ is.

'Well, not really', he repeated. 'But I'll tell you. There was an advertisement in a newspaper, and advertisement of a bank that was called **KOMMERZ UND PRIVAT BANK.** I took the first word: **KOMMERZ,** I cut **KOM** off, and **MERZ** remained. I stuck it to my collage. It was the first **merz** picture' – and he smiled his innocent and mischievous smile, as if saying: 'Isn't it all wonderfully simple?'

'Dada?' he said. 'Dada was the same thing. Dada people were friends. But Merz was independent. Merz was mine. Dada was everybody's.'

Je vais vous expliquer: Dada c'est la grande racine de toutes les petites racines. Secret télésansfile miner ardeurs (Par derrière). – Dada c'est la petite racinette, le petit fil de la grâce sublime (cest en illuminé que j'écrist ceci). Dada c'est la grande vague sacrée qui va de Dada à Dada. A Dada Dada flotte en fleuve autour de Dada. Autour de Dada dadate dadadadater Dada (soit dit pour tous qui ne savent pas encore). A Dada Dada Dada Dada Dada Dada Dada Dada Dada Dada. A Dadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadad adadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadadada. 1922 'La Grande Ardeur de Dada', 'Anna Blume Dichtungen'

He used to come to us sometimes, in London, and so did *A* and his wife. One evening we invited them together; for a drink. *A* was a great Polish poet and a playwright. He was, and is, at the very top of the Polish Parnassus. His wife is a painter. It was nice and friendly till my faith in basic virtues (which at times makes me do things that end in disasters) prompted me to ask Schwitters to recite his *Ur Sonata*. He did. *A* listened quietly for some ten long minutes. But he couldn't possibly endure it any longer. His lips moved, and he started to imitate Schwitters; mockingly. Now, *A* has an uncanny gift of mimicking people. His imitation of H. G. Wells used to be superb. His imitation of *Ur Sonata* was not. 'Stop it! Stop it at once!' his wife said. 'If you don't stop it, I will divorce you!' We had another drink. 'It's all right', Schwitters said, 'I'm used to it.'

And there I was. Between two friends whom I liked, and respected, and understood. Because I did understand *A* as well as I did K.S. I liked them both, and they despised each other. Why?

They were the same age, nearly. Both were men of the world, by which I mean rational, experienced, and tolerant; the ways history had treated them were not dissimilar, both had great talent, enormous sense of humour, and stood by their convictions. Neither would tear to pieces a butterfly. But they would spit at each other's wings. Both their works were banned and, basically, for similar reasons. Why then? If *they* could not make peace, why should the rulers?

I scrutinized my own soul and found that I still liked them both – and their work – and there was not a trace of a split in me.

It was then that I wrote: 'The world is more complicated than our truths about it', knowing of course, that I was probably not the first person that made that discovery.

Hanne Darboven
Kulturgeschichte, 1980-83
Installation view at Dia Beacon, Beacon, New York
Photo: Florian Holzherr

August Sander
Men Without Masks (Menschen ohne Maske)/ Faces of Germany 1910-38
Published in 1971 by Verlag C.J. Bucher, Lucerne+Frankfurt/Main and in 1973 by Graphic Society LTD, Greenwich, Connecticut for the US and Canada

Bernd+Hilla Becher
Anonyme Sculpturen/Eine Typologie technischer Bauten
Art-Press Verlag 1970/Wittenborn and Co., New York

Karl Blossfeld
Urformen der Kunst, 1928 (Art Forms in Nature 1929)
Ann + Jürgen Wilde, *Karl Blossfeldt: Working Collages–A photographic Scetchbook*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachussetts and London, England, 2001

Arnaud Maggs
Repertoire 1997 (Installation at Susan Hobbs Gallery/photo: Toby Maggs)

Ydessa Hendeles
The Teddy Bear Project, Toronto, 2002
In *Partners*, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln, 2003
(published on the occasion of the exhibition *Partners*, curated by Ydessa Hendeles from her collection, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 7 November 2003–5 February 2004)

Christian Boltanski
Les Archives du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1992
Œuvre conçue pour l'exposition «*Pour la suite du monde*» au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1992

Ilya Kabakov
The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away, 1981-88
In *Parkett* No. 34, Zürich/Berlin/New York, 1992.

Thomas Ruff
Eberswalde Library 1994 / Herzog + de Meuron, Architects
For the design of the library's façade the architects collaborated with Thomas Ruff who selected images from his archive of newspaper clippings.

Joseph Kosuth
Ludwig Wittgenstein & l'art du XX^{e} siècle
An exhibition at the Vienna Secession to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Wittgenstein's birth, September 1989.
At issue was the relationship of art to reality, the elusive object of language—how does art integrate ideas, visualize thought and increase human understanding. In *Galeries* magazine, December 89/January 90.

Janet Cardiff
Walk Münster (Audio walk/18 minutes), 1997
Skulptur Projekte in Münster 97, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, Germany

Edmond Jabès
Le Livre des Questions I (Le Livre des Questions, Le Livre de Yukel, Le Retour au Livre), L'Imaginaire/Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1963, 1964, 1965

Marcel Broodthaers
Broodthaers and Piracy, in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh ed., *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachussetts and London, England, 1988.

Robert Fones
Butter Models, 1979, installation view and detail (photos: Don Hall)

Michael Snow
Anarchive, DVD-Rom/booklet, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2002.

Raymond Gervais
Théâtre du son, 1997
Installation at La Chapelle historique du Bon-Pasteur, Montréal
(Photo: Richard-Max Tremblay)

Rober Racine
Le Terrain du dictionnaire A/Z, 1980
(photo: François Desaulniers)

Kurt Schwitters, **MERZbau** (original, Hannover c. 1923–36), reconstruction by Peter Bissegger 1980–83. In *The Romantic Spirit in German Art 1790-1990*, Keith Hartley ed. et al., Oktagon Verlag, Stuttgart, 1994.

Stephan Themerson, **Kurt Schwitters on a Time Chart**, in *The Liberated Page: A Typographica Anthology*, Herbert Spencer ed., Bedford Press, San Francisco, 1987 (originally published in Typographica 16, December 1967).

This book contextualizes the Reading Room for the Working Artist (2002/2004) insofar as it provides a catalogue for the research that went into the production of this project. I am greatly indebted to Réjean Myette who through his thoughtfulness and great skill as a designer was able to give this book the dignity and respect I wanted it to have.

The "Reading Room" would not have been possible without the help and support of many friends, colleagues and collaborators. My heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone for their hard work and commitment.

Assistance, scanning and archiving
Susan Coolen

Reading Room Re-construction
Rin Ben Fredj (architectural plans)
Christian Ménard (carpentry)
Mario Baillargeon (chess game)

Design
Christine Mantzravakos (book of artists)
Réjean Myette (book of models)

Robert Eiser (book production/assistance)

Proofreading
Colette Tougas

Film collage
Réjean Myette

Printing
Atelier Photosynthèse

Book binding
Lise Dubois

Framing
The Gilder

My thanks also go to
The Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa
le Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec
l'Université du Québec à Montréal

…and to
Olga Korper (Gallery Olga Korper, Toronto)
Serge Vaisman (Art 45, Montreal)