

**Cybernetic Impulses and Serial Systems: The Art of Peter Roehr in Frankfurt am Main,
1963-1968**

by

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Peter Roehr's artistic career lasted only 5 years, but in that short time he produced hundreds of works, which all followed a program that consisted of identical elements placed in serial, repetitious forms. The bulk of these works were termed "Montages," and were produced between 1963 and 1967. When Roehr and Paul Maenz debuted the exhibition *Serielle Formationen* at the Frankfurt University's Studio Galerie in the early summer of 1967, artistic concepts were rapidly changing and the show sought to examine a prevailing tendency in art that was directly connected to the present moment: the serial, repeated element in art. Seriality ran as a leitmotif through the exhibition, but most importantly, displayed Roehr's move into a conceptual basis for his works. My own contribution in this dissertation recognizes Roehr's project of seriality within a cybernetic and systems orientation emerging during his time. His own acknowledgement of parallels to cybernetics came as early as 1963; yet as I argue, this under-examined aspect of Roehr's artistic project can be found throughout his ideas and work. While I more fully develop a discussion of cybernetics in his process and methods of production, my attention highlights the critical recognition Roehr's art paid to society and culture of the 1960s. As I have outlined throughout this dissertation, these networked concepts adapted to larger movements, styles, and ideas such as Concrete Art, Pop art, Minimalism, and Concept Art, but were advanced by Roehr's own developing artistic position.

I had the opportunity to co-curate a groundbreaking re-examination of the 1967 *Serielle Formationen* exhibition at the Daimler Art Collection in Berlin while completing a year-long internship in 2017. Under the direction of Dr. Renate Wiehager, the numerous dialogs that emerged from this experience shaped my discussions on Roehr and his work. I have integrated these discussions and ideas within my dissertation, particularly in my attention to the role that public display and exhibitions played in Roehr's conception of his work. The societal aspect of Roehr's work –a similarly crucial idea for cybernetics– could only have been revealed through the experience of discussing Roehr's work in an exhibition space.

In the explosion of late 1960s social activism on the University of Frankfurt campus and around the city only one year after *Serielle Formationen*, the show proved to be the calm before many political upheavals. 1968, a year of so many shifts in the world of art, politics, and ideas, was also the year Peter Roehr passed away at the young age of 23. Although he never lived to see the relevance of his positions, my dissertation contributes to the literature on Roehr by bringing to bear cybernetic thinking into a discussion of serial systems, and grants a revelatory understanding of Roehr's process, ideas, and work both for his time and for the present moment.

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Preface

I owe a great deal of gratitude to those people in my life and over the years who have supported me in this endeavor. I wish to thank my parents, William C. North, Lt. Col, USAF (Ret.) and Fran S. North, my sister Alexandra, and my dear friend Jody Bufkin, for supporting me throughout this journey. I also could not have come this far without the unwavering mentorship from my advisors throughout the years: Dr. Tina Yarborough at Georgia College & State University; Dr. Jonathan Katz at the University at Buffalo, SUNY; and Dr. Barbara McCloskey at the University of Pittsburgh. I of course must also express my thanks to my department committee members Dr. Joshua Ellenbogen, Dr. Terry Smith, and Dr. Randall Halle for their enlightening conversations over the years and who have guided my thoughts and ideas in innumerable ways. To my friends and colleagues over the years at the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh –Annika, Ben, Colleen, Golnar, Kylie, Madeline, Lily, Nicole, Rae, Sarah, and so many others– thank you for the conversations and friendship and support.

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laugh with me after a day of work. I also cannot forget to mention: Frederick Schikowski, whose work on gruppe x and other previously unknown Frankfurt based artists has been stimulating for my project; Nadine Hahn, who digitized the Archive Peter Roehr at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, and Antje Gegenmantel in the MMK Bibliothek, were an essential help in my research on Roehr.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Paul Maenz, an unofficial mentor, guide and the closest living person to Peter Roehr, and whose innumerable discussions helped develop this project from its infancy. Above all, this is dedicated to Peter Roehr himself, an artist fully deserving of the following considerations and whose insight continues to illuminate my view of art to this day.

1.0 Introduction

Isn't life a series of images that change as they repeat themselves?

– Andy Warhol¹

In an environment where the existence and quality of products necessary for life depend upon whether they are produced in large batches – in series – and the fact that artists with very different ways of thinking should suddenly and often quite independently make use of serial formations is surely not something that can only be explained in aesthetic terms.

– Peter Roehr and Paul Maenz²

The exhibition *Serielle Formationen* (Figure 1) opened at the Frankfurt University's Studio Galerie in the early summer of 1967. Co-curated by artist Peter Roehr and the gallerist Paul Maenz, the show sought to examine a prevailing tendency in art that was directly connected to the present moment: the serial, repeated element in art. Seriality ran as a leitmotif through the exhibition, but the curatorial intention was not to present an exhaustive examination of serial works. Rather it aspired to offer viewers a glimpse of the multiplicity of recent artistic efforts that utilized the serial form by showing the most current German, European and international artists together in an exhibition of theoretically and visually diverse ideas. The serial form presented in the works on

¹ This quote appears on a mass-produced pencil, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA USA.

² Peter Roehr and Paul Maenz, "On the Exhibition," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 122. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, organized and presented at the Daimler Art Contemporary, Berlin, 3 June – 5 November 2017. Originally printed in *Serielle Formationen*, catalog published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at the Studiogalerie, University of Frankfurt, unpaginated, 22 May – 30 June, 1967.

view extended across a number of tendencies in form, material, process, and presentation. Yet the show also epitomized Peter Roehr's own artistic production of "Montages," a project of identical objects, images, or texts arranged in systemic, serial arrangements.

In the explosion of late 1960s social activism on the Frankfurt University campus and around the city of Frankfurt am Main only one year after *Serielle Formationen*, the show proved to be the calm before many political storms. As this dissertation explores, the probing exploration of the exhibition themes also reverberated with the hum of current conversations on everything from the Vietnam War to the latest Beatles record and the role of the individual in society.³ It further contributes to current scholarship by delving more deeply into the largely overlooked relationship among Roehr's own serial art practice, prevailing tendencies in the larger art world, and the works of other artists associated with *Serielle Formationen*. Yet as I will examine throughout this dissertation, emergent theories of media systems, theoretical discourses of postwar cybernetics, and the subsequent impact of networked artistic practices created the possibilities for Roehr's ideas to come into being.

In conceptualizing *Serielle Formationen*, Maenz and Roehr curatorially framed the works only in terms of their use of the serial form, while foregrounding the artists' disparate and often contradictory statements about their individual concepts of seriality in the catalogue that accompanied the show. A commonality among the works that Roehr and Maenz did put forth in their introduction was the idea that the serial form evident in art of the last ten years was connected to an overarching shift in the world of consumption, not simply as a way to escape the forces of

³ One can glean an idea of some of the potential topics from the University's student newspaper *Diskus*. In the April/May issue, the first of two parts of Herbert Marcuse's "Das Individuum in der Great Society" (The Individual in the Great Society) was published. Translated by D.H. Wittenberg and Angela Davis (A.Y. Davis), who was studying with Marcuse in Frankfurt at this time, the second part of Marcuse's essay was published in the following June issue; the same issue that published the review of the exhibition *Serielle Formationen*.

production, but rather toward profound changes in human subjectivity: “Possibly more than anything else, art is a question of consciousness and contemporary art is a question of contemporary consciousness.”⁴ For Roehr and Maenz, this consciousness was linked to systemic changes in the fundamental attitude of artists existing in a world of changing phenomena, aesthetic and otherwise.

Roehr, for whom *Serielle Formationen* represented his first foray into exhibition curation, had an inside view on the current art scene in Frankfurt, and had spent the several previous years of his young life forming relationships with his fellow artists Thomas Bayrle, Charlotte Posenenske, the members of gruppe x, as well as artists of a previous generation including Klaus Staudt, Adolf Luther, and Hermann Goepfert among others. What arguably differentiated Roehr and his compatriots from others at the time was not only their consistent artistic engagement with the energies of an industrial and consuming society, but also a stunningly synchronic coalescence around the use of seriality in their works. However Roehr himself upheld seriality as the basis of his entire program, from his earliest “Montage” from 1963 (Figure 2) to the concept of his last event in 1967 (Figure 3). With few variances, his system of using monotonous, serial forms was maintained during the years of his production, and as *Serielle Formationen* relayed, he even began to direct his ideas into more conceptual approaches.

As it might be clear from the echoes of this dissertation title, this project builds on scholarship that takes *Serielle Formationen* as a significant point of departure for the art field in West Germany. The 1967 Frankfurt University exhibition represented more than just a provincial curatorial experiment of the latest fashions; rather, it provided a critical, if often overlooked,

⁴ Roehr and Maenz, “On the Exhibition,” 122.

presage of the momentous shift to the “Concept” in art.⁵ In tracking this line of opinion, I focus on Roehr’s method of production from 1963 to 1967, and advance his works in key phases through a network of serial forms and conceptual art. In doing so, I explore how the microscopic scene of a single artist supports a corresponding opportunity to analyze the macroscopic social and theoretical backgrounds of European and international art trends of the 1960s, one of many based in a local artistic milieu but attuned to the broader spectrum of general developments.

Roehr has been highlighted as an important figure in the Frankfurt art scene over the course of the last fifty years. My examination of his life and art focuses on the particular artistic vernacular of seriality that Roehr addressed, both as an artist and a curator. This vernacular emerges most pointedly in his notions of display, socialized methods of construing visual presentation, and modes of exchange and circulation of his art and ideas. While Roehr stifled his personal proclivities due to Frankfurt’s conservative, banking and real estate community, he pursued artistic intents which brought him into closer contact with internationally recognized artists across the region and country.

These forays were not always met with acclaim, and even for its groundbreaking offering, *Serielle Formationen* went relatively unnoticed at the time. A few notable people stand out in this regard. As a German art correspondent for *Art International*, Ed Sommer also reviewed Roehr’s work for the internationally distributed magazine. Klaus Honnef, while working as a critic for the *Aachener Zeitung* in the 1960s, reviewed several of Roehr’s exhibitions in the region. Later,

⁵ The link between seriality and Concept art has been highlighted in several German surveys of 1960s artistic practices. See also: Katharina Sykora, *Das Phänomen des Seriellen in der Kunst: Aspekte einer künstlerischen Methode von Monet bis zur amerikanischen Pop Art* (PhD Diss, Heidelberg Universität 1982); Elke Bippus, *Serielle Verfahren: Pop Art, Minimal Art, Conceptual Art und Postminimalism* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag GmbH, 2003); and Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line: Re-Making Art After Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

Honnef was among the first to position *Serielle Formationen* as a contributor to the development of Concept Art in Germany, although he only noted the exhibition in the appendix to his 1971 book *Concept Art*.⁶ Yet, Honnef was not well known outside of German art circles, despite his considerable influence within the country. Lucy Lippard's significant 1973 book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, placed the exhibition into a larger Anglo-American development of Conceptual ideas. In the same exploration, Lippard chronologically highlighted Roehr and Maenz's second event *19:45–21:55*—also known as *Alles dies Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören*—a happening evening that took place at Galerie Dorothea Loehr. Without mentioning any German artist in detail, Lippard highlighted Jan Dibbets and Richard Long—a Dutch and English artist respectively—who would become two of the most preeminent conceptual artists of the Postmodern era, arguably due to their accessibility for the English language dominated art world.⁷ More recently, Sophie Richard's *Unconcealed: The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967–77, Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collections* from 2009 posited that “the key event that first presented Conceptual artworks to a general audience was the exhibition *Serielle Formationen*.”⁸ Maenz and Roehr's *19:45–21:55* event transpired only days before the opening of the first Cologne Art Fair, and a month before the opening of gallerist Konrad Fischer's Düsseldorf gallery. While I echo the sentiments of the above scholars that place Roehr and Maenz's exhibitions among the first generative and disseminating sources of Conceptual Art in Europe, as I explore throughout this dissertation Roehr's own concepts and ideas already apprehended the significant markers of transformation in his prolific, if short, career in the 1960s.

6 Klaus Honnef, *Concept Art* (Cologne: Phaidon Verlag, 1971), 104.

7 Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 30.

8 Sophie Richard, *Unconcealed: The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967–77, Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collections* (London: Ridinghouse, 2009), 33.

1.1 Peter Roehr's Frankfurt Through a Brief Postwar History

While several previous discussions on Roehr have suggested a connection between his art and Frankfurt's role as the center of West Germany's postwar "economic miracle," I contend that Frankfurt was important for Roehr in other ways, including through its unique position among other cities as a theater for the ongoing dialectic between the global and local in the aspects under investigation here. Frankfurt was not only the epicenter for economic advances in West Germany but also the regional headquarters of the American military by the mandates of the North American Trade Organization (NATO), the site of the re-established home of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory in the 1950s, and, in the late 1960s, the hotbed of radical student movements. As I will examine throughout this dissertation, Roehr and other artists responded to this striking situation in terms of their methods of artistic production as well as the attitudes they formed towards the larger art world.

After the Second World War, the official cultural program of "re-civilizing Germans"⁹ meant dealing with a horrifying past coupled with the reality of a divided state,¹⁰ which once again refocused the split between West and East, Capitalism and Communism. As Konrad H. Jarausch claims "the policy of the occupation powers sought a 'reorientation' that would operate on the basis of its own model and support its own cultural products commercially."¹¹ In West Germany, this meant the dialog centered on re-configuring the denigrated forms of cultural expression, primarily those associated with Germany's pre-war movements such as Expressionism. However,

9 Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13.

10 Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). See also, John Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines: Art in Germany 1945-1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007) and Peter K. Breit, "Culture as Authority: American and German Transactions," in *The American Impact on Postwar Germany*, ed. Reiner Pommerin (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997).

11 Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 121.

as John Paul Stonard argued, “whereas those embarking on the task of cultural reconstruction believed that they were inaugurating a new epoch, now it appears instead a swan song for an older ideal, a detached, spiritual utopia of the early twentieth century that could not survive the new postwar world order.”¹² The immediate postwar years were not only dominated by renewed debates concerning earlier Expressionist art, but also their outgrowths and continuations in the then current Abstract tendencies. Abstraction, as Susanne Leeb has effectively shown, was both a new “world language” and an important hinge for reconfiguring a German national identity.¹³ Supported by art historians like Werner Haftmann, Arnold Bode, and Wilhelm Hausenstein, artists working in the Abstract tendencies loosely defined under Art Informel became the standard bearers for Modern Art in 1950s.¹⁴ Moreover, cultural motivations were clearly directed at impacting a majority of the German population, and thus exhibitions took place in highly visible and politically charged institutions.¹⁵ While this applied to art exhibitions in general, it also applied to significant social and educational institutions as well, such as universities and history museums.

At the invitation of the Frankfurt University, the Hessian Ministry of Culture and Education, and the city of Frankfurt, formerly exiled Frankfurt School theorists Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Friedrich Pollock returned to Frankfurt in 1951 to re-establish the Institute for Social Research.¹⁶ Housed at the Frankfurt University, the IfS (Institute für Sozialforschung)

¹² Stonard, *Fault Lines*, 13.

¹³ Susanne Leeb, “Abstraction as International Language,” in *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures* (New York: Abrams, 2009), 120. Printed in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, organized and presented at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 25 January – 19 April 2009.

¹⁴ “The talk of art as a world language was thus associated with the cause of creating understanding between nations to ensure peace. UNESCO charged the German section of the International Association of Art Critics with creating a list of artists to be supported. The commission in 1955 recommended Baumeister, Hans Hartung, Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Hans Uhlmann, Theodor Werner, and Fritz Winter, honoring them as outstanding supporters of culture in the postwar period.” Ibid., 121.

¹⁵ Stonard, *Fault Lines*, 13.

¹⁶ Fabian Link, “Cooperation and Competition: Re-establishing the Institute of Social Research and the Emergence of the ‘Frankfurt School,’” *NTM Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Wissenschaften, Technik und Medizin* 24, no. 2 (June 2016): 226, <https://doi-org.pitt.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s00048-016-0139-2>

was supported by both West German and American officials. Their shared goals were part of the larger postwar project of re-educating the German population in democratic values and further, the establishment of sociology as “democratization science.”¹⁷ Yet the most prominent theories of Adorno and Horkheimer were concerned with the very institutions that were invested in their success.

Perhaps this is most recognizable in the Frankfurt School of Critical theory and its critique of the “Culture Industry.” As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer theorized in their 1947 fragment “Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” cultural endeavors have increasingly become mass-produced products, passively consumed by an increasingly homogenous society. In industrial capitalist societies, purveyors of popular culture and government sanctioned prerogatives were part and parcel of a single industry, an order of control and dominance that guided dependence on market interests.¹⁸ The logic of this domination was the ultimate generation of profit, at the expense of the critical faculties of the individual. The sociological impact of Adorno and Horkheimer undoubtedly impacted the overall atmosphere at the Frankfurt University, but the ways that Roehr—who did not attend university—rejoined these theories in his art was not always as clear as it might first appear.

The global ramifications of these cultural factors affected the local scene in Frankfurt, and furthermore, structural transformation was linked to the new social market economy more deeply than in any other city in West Germany.¹⁹ In the early years of postwar reconstruction, the city

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 109.

¹⁹ Sigrid Meyer zu Knolle, *Die gebändigte Vertikale: Materialien zum frühen Hochhausbau in Frankfurt* (PhD, diss., University of Marburg, 1999), 168–69, <http://d-nb.info/972807284/34>.

leaders of Frankfurt am Main promoted rehabilitation efforts that not only depreciated the cultural heritage of the Altstadt (*old city*) but also developed a new, material rationality and order to the city itself.²⁰ It should be underscored that Frankfurt's designation as "most American of German cities"²¹ came not only from the architectural and urban planning changes of this period but also from the availability of American style goods, ideas, and forms of entertainment. Democracy, Modernization, and Americanization became contentious but key terms around which the city of Frankfurt operated. As one of the centers of developing, commercial visual culture in West Germany, Frankfurt reflected not only the influx of cultural prerogatives of the government but also the products of consumption.

While the political imperatives were mirrored in a more "official culture" of government sponsored exhibitions, another alliance between popular culture and capitalism simultaneously appeared.²² Although Frankfurt was located in the military American Occupation Zone, the rapid expansion of and connections between West Germany and American based companies also emanated from this sector in particular. As the stabilization effects of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (*Economic Miracle*) and the Marshall Plan began to wane, the model of social market economics fused the global expansions of the United States with the localized effects. For all of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's economic efforts during the 1950s, German companies were still relatively

20 A few of the architectural projects built or reconstructed after the destruction of the city in 1944: Jahrhunderthalle (1963), a concert and performing arts venue that is also referred to as the "Jahrhunderthalle Hoechst" because it was built to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hoechst AG chemical company; the Goethe Haus, rebuilt in 1947 in time for the Goethe year in 1949; Bayer Haus, built in 1952; Junior Haus, 1951. Henninger Turm, owned by the Henninger Brewery and built between 1959 and 1961, was the tallest structure in Frankfurt until 1974. Ibid.

21 "Die Vorboten waren in Deutschland schon lange zu spüren gewesen, auch in Frankfurt, einer Kommune, die im Krieg stark gelitten hatte und deren Behörden im Zuge eines Umbaus zur "amerikanischsten Stadt Deutschlands" die gänzliche Beseitigung des alten Stadtbildes gefördert hatten." "Studenten in Aufruhr: Als die Revolte Laufen lernte," *Der Spiegel*, 15 October 2007. <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/studenten-in-aufruhr-a-948401.html>.

22 Breit terms these as "transactional approaches" of the American "authority," with the idea of authority being "more than any conscious American cultural policy, the resilience of indigenous survivors and their readiness to transact in the process of rebuilding combined with the United States transactional approach to produce Germany's economic and social transformation. Cultural factors followed collaterally." Breit, "Culture as Authority," 130.

weak in comparison to American corporate giants, particularly those that dealt in commercial products. Competition not only allowed corporate entities like the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, the Bundesbank, and Bayer AG to participate in the increasingly global free market, but also opened the door for greater foreign competition. By 1961, this underlying concern was voiced in *Der Spiegel*, which asserted the “American invasion” was taking advantage of and exploiting a situation.²³

In Frankfurt, “the most American of German cities,” corporate advertising firms from New York also established offices. One of the largest of these New York based advertising firms was J. Walter Thompson, which had first come to Germany in 1928 when it opened an office in Berlin. Five years later, when the National Socialist party came to power, the company was purchased, renamed, and eventually closed, as all ad agencies were consolidated and coordinated [*gleichgeschaltet*] in the Werberat der deutschen Wirtschaft (Nazi Advertising Council of German Industry) under the National Socialist system of governance. In 1952 J. Walter Thompson returned to Germany, this time setting up the company’s headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. JWT Frankfurt, still a major advertising force today, held the accounts for international and German companies such as Lever, Kodak, Pan American Airlines, Pepsi-Cola, Kellogg’s, Kraft, and Warner-Lambert. By 1962, the Frankfurt office had 450 employees – ranging in expertise from public relations to graphic design and text writing – and represented fifty-two clients and more than seventy products.²⁴ Other firms followed suit, both German and international. The New York advertising firm Young & Rubicam opened their offices in Frankfurt during the early 1960s. Roehr

²³ “Studenten in Aufruhr.”

²⁴ Jonathan Wiesen, “Miracles for Sale: Consumer Displays and Advertising in Postwar West Germany,” in *Consuming Germany in the Cold War: Consumption and National Identity in East and West Germany, 1949-1989*, ed. David Crew (New York: Berg, 2003), 77.

worked in the firm's mailroom where he met Paul Maenz, then an assistant art director. As will be discussed, many of the images Roehr used in his set of Photo Montages were from Young & Rubicam's discarded advertisements (see for example, Figure 4).

Frankfurt was indeed ground zero for this corporate "American Invasion," but the term "Americanization" arose as an important term more generally for the increased presence in West Germany of popular culture and products of mass consumption from the United States. Although scholars have debated the extent to which the United States impacted West Germany, and as contentious and problematic as the term "Americanization" might be, the methods of production, distribution, and product advertising were radically and undeniably altered by American-style methods. Whether this was American companies opening branches in Germany and operating them under similar means of production abroad, or whether this meant German companies had to adopt production methods in order to keep up with supply and demand, the result was the same: the increased availability and desire for commodity goods and a newly charged visual system that moved away from former modes of product imaging.

Counter to the official stance of the social democratic leaders of Frankfurt, which affirmed cultural stability and democratic principles through capitalist investment, subcultural and countercultural opinions percolated through the city's younger generation. The rapid and substantial political shifts at a national level resonated throughout the youth of the city. In 1961, the leftist German political party the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (*Social Democratic Party of Germany*, SPD), having rejected their longstanding Marxist platform, renounced and barred the student faction Sozialistischer-Deutscher Studentenbund (*Socialist German Student Union*, SDS) from participating under its political umbrella. Emboldened by the Marxist theoretical directives of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and betrayed by the SPD, the SDS

members across the country –and particularly in Frankfurt– took up an increasingly countercultural stance, including an explicit anti-war and anti-capitalist position. In Frankfurt, the student newspaper *Diskus* was a mouthpiece for students to voice their opinions on social, political, and cultural activities, both in the city and the whole of West Germany. The years between 1961 and 1968, in the pages of *Diskus*, signaled the identity crisis of the youth; the critical, reflexive and cheeky tone that peppered their pronouncements on issues on the global, local, university stage slowly transformed into an outlet for the countercultural movement. However despite this radicalism, the younger generation was also susceptible to the forms and actions of an accelerating Western aesthetics of consumerism and cosmopolitanism, which they came to see as reflective of their anti-authoritarian views.²⁵ Competing ideologies appealed to all levels of the cultural sphere through visual and media methods, which would have a decisive impact on the shifting tastes and desires in Frankfurt and West Germany in general. On the one hand, there was the institutional control of culture as a return to normalcy; on the other, access to the broader artistic world was obtained through specific channels of contact.

Roehr and others displayed this state of affairs indirectly through their work. As his artistic acquaintance and friend Thomas Bayrle stated: “Frankfurt could not be compared to other cities. It was more brutal, dilapidated and less German. [...] There was a certain anonymity in Frankfurt, [...] that the population renews itself every ten years, and so on. This not only has disadvantages, but also advantages. It was simply an American identity.”²⁶ Paul Maenz reflected on Frankfurt as

²⁵ Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 121. See also Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 141.

²⁶ “Frankfurt war nicht mit anderen Städten zu vergleichen. Es war brutaler, auffälliger und weniger deutsch. Es war ein internationales Sammelsurium. [...] Frankfurt war die am meisten amerikanische Stadt in Deutschland und ist es immer noch. Diese gewisse Anonymität in Frankfurt [...] dass sich die Bevölkerung alle zehn Jahre erneuert, und so weiter. So etwas hat nicht nur Nachteile, sondern auch Vorteile. Es war einfach eine amerikanische Identität.” Thomas Bayrle, “Martina Weinhart im Gespräch mit Thomas Bayrle,” in *German Pop*, edited by Martina Weinhart and Max Hollein (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2014), 146. Catalog in conjunction with the exhibition *German Pop* at Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, 6 November 2014 – 8 February 2015.

well: “The city was over in the sixties, the rather unromantic bread of the early years was seen, and in time Frankfurt quickly became a dry, yes, ‘bony’ memory.”²⁷ Adam Seide, an associate and supporter of Roehr wrote about Frankfurt:

You don't necessarily love a city, you are in it and criticize it. Is a city like the others, faceless, interchangeable, quick to change like a shirt; are the scanty remnants of a glorious or disgraceful past at best a backdrop, is there pure pragmatism, nothing of lived, transformed history?[...] Perhaps it's simply this: You need a city where you can work and live, where you can have friendships, where you don't get held back, and possibly also would be aided.²⁸

These respective reflections provide some personal experiences of living in the middle of this diffuse and contentious environment of Roehr's Frankfurt in the 1960s.

As an artist, Roehr sought to navigate the larger systems in place while also maintaining and unwavering aesthetic program of seriality, despite the radical social changes that occurred in his lifetime. In the following section and throughout my dissertation, I propose that Roehr's adherence to his aesthetic program, while also adapting to the radical changes around him, came down to his proclivity towards incorporating systems of visual communication, a model I argue that was based in various forms of cybernetics. His approach to seriality was systemic and

27 “Die Stadt waren die sechziger Jahre zu Ende, war eher unromantische Brot der frühen Jahre gesehen, und die Zeit in Frankfurt wurde auffallend schnell zu einer trockenen, ja, „knochigen“ Erinnerung... Die amerikanische Werbeagentur Young & Rubicam berat man durch seine elegantes Etagenfoyer mit einer strahlenden Empfangsdame; das pompöse Blumen-Arrangement zu ihrer Rechten wurde jeden Montagmorgen frisch geliefert. Hinter der nächsten Glastür allerdings war das Land des Lächelns auch schon zu sogar ein Waschpulver-Spot magische Dimensionen haben kann, wenn jemand dem banalen Produkt sein inneres „spezifisches“ Argument ablauscht, es sich zu Eigen macht und übersetzt, um dem Rest der Welt zu offenbaren.” Paul Maenz, “Vorspiel – Meine sechziger Jahre in Frankfurt (1991),” in *Art is to Change: Skizzen aus der Umlaufbahn* (Regensburg: Linderger + Schmid GdB, 2002), 13.

28 “Eine Stadt liebt man nicht unbedingt, man befindet sich ja in ihr und kritisiert sie. Ist nun eine Stadt wie die andere, gesichtslos, austauschbar, schnell zu wechseln wie ein Hemd, sind die spärlichen Reste einer ruhmreichen oder schmählichen Vergangenheit bestenfalls Kulisse, herrscht in ihnen purer Pragmatismus, nichts von gelebter, unverwundelter Geschichte zu spüren? [...] Vielleicht ist es einfach so: Man braucht eine Stadt, in der man arbeiten und leben kann, in der man Freundschaften haben kann, in der man nicht behindert, möglicherweise auch gefördert wird.” Adam Seide, “Frankfurt, wo bist du? Ein Ausflug, Spaziergang, Streifzug,” in *Ein halbes Jahrhundert Kunst und Literatur: Was da ist in Frankfurt anhand von Beispielen*, ed. Gerhard König and Adam Seide (Frankfurt: Eichborn Verlag, 1983), 228-29.

conceptual in nature but based around many of the key points found in cybernetic thinking in the 1960s, as well as his own experiences living in a city undergoing massive change in only a short few years.

1.2 Methodology: Peter Roehr and Cybernetics in Postwar Germany

In the following, I introduce to the discussion of Roehr's art his identifiable and often overlapping concerns with a local and transnational context, which among others, can be attributed to an emerging cybernetic attitude. As I explore, seriality and cybernetics merged in contemporary consciousness and was reflected through artistic products and manifested in particular thematic tendencies. I examine these themes through the aspects of works by Roehr, as well as within the coinciding artistic efforts of his fellow Frankfurt based relations that were fully on display in the 1967 *Serielle Formationen* exhibition.

Seriality, repetition, and accumulation have been a characteristic of industrialization since the nineteenth century, but the post-World War II period ushered in a particularly strong wave of technological rationality, which seeped into everyday life. As theorized by Frankfurt School thinkers Adorno and Horkheimer, rationality was paradoxically the ideal of the Enlightenment and the cause of its Totalitarian antithesis of the National Socialist Regime: its continuation in the industrialization of culture was a continuation of systems of domination and control.²⁹ As they formulated, there was little hope in using the system of rationality to progress beyond the horrors of its instrumentalization by Fascism, for the new standard bearer – monopolies of capitalism–

²⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry," 113.

declared freedom under the guise of consumption, a false flag of individuality that was always itself subjugated to the demands of the bottom line. Equally, the Frankfurt School viewed the Culture Industry as a new implementation of domination already seen. While a postwar “rebranding” of culture in the form of capitalist consumption offered an alternative to West Germany’s troubled past and secured its position in the geo-political present, a shift to greater American-style consumption also brought with it new costs.

As *Der Spiegel* pointed out in its March 1964 issue, industrial production was the backbone of Germany’s economic success, yet the consequences of this new era of technological rationality, particularly in the form of “automation,” posed a dangerous foil to the worker’s individuality.³⁰ On the issue’s cover (Figure 5), a humanoid, multiarmed robot hovers above a production line of Volkswagen Beetles. Seemingly connected to a larger networked system of the factory, each arm engages in every aspect of the production: assembly and painting of the cars, the instantly recognizable icon of Germany’s most profitable economic export. In a single panel cartoon within the pages of the magazine, human workers are themselves transformed into the serial, anonymous, automatic machine. Turning away from economic “prosperity for all,” the technocratic age of the 1960s heralded the drive for companies to produce more and more, at the price of individual autonomy and job security.

The justification by the federal government of West Germany of this mantra as the salve to the destroyed postwar economy signaled a threatening ideological change for contemporary theoreticians. Another former Frankfurt School theorist, Herbert Marcuse, focused specifically on the psychological and metaphysical implications of technological change, a theory developed from

30 “Industrie/Automation: Einzug als Robotiker,” *Der Spiegel*, March 31, 1964.
<https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46173388.html>

industrial materiality that infused ideology with a new social mentality. The “one-dimensional” character of society was Marcuse’s articulation of the loss of the critical rationality of thought – based in autonomy, dissent, and freedom of needs and desires– in a society under domination and administration. Marcuse emphasized that the new rationality of capitalism brought with it an ideological force that diminished the power of critical opposition, replaced individuality with conformity, and managed the thoughts and habits of society with absolute, and more specifically, technological power. “[T]he apparatus imposes its economic and political requirements for defense and expansion on labor time and free time, on the material and intellectual culture. By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian.”³¹ Extending these relationships of power from the Culture Industry as defined by Adorno, Marcuse extended his analysis more thoroughly into the industrial-military complexes of affluent societies.

However, Marcuse did in certain respects leave open the idea that the systems of technology held in themselves the possibility for the individual to break free of the repressive domination of administration:

The technological processes of mechanization and standardization might release individual energy into a yet uncharted realm of freedom beyond necessity [...] If the productive apparatus could be organized and directed toward the satisfaction of the vital needs, its control might well be centralized; such control would not prevent individual autonomy, but render it possible.³²

While Marcuse would go on to discuss art in terms of his formulation, during the 1960s his position was oriented to the political landscape. But arguably, co-attending discussions in the art world

31 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, ed. Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 2007 [1964]), 5.

32 Ibid.

were happening in line with his theories, specifically around the role of the artist and the contemporary elimination of the auratic character of works of art, which opened up new possibilities for artists and their interaction with their audience.³³ The very moment that Marcuse was expressing his doubtful optimism, artists were turning not to overtly gestural and personal modes of making, but rather works that de-centralized the object in favor of its placement within systems. Systems, as processes and methods in artworks, mimicked the industrialized character of society, but were fundamentally geared towards a possibility of democratization: by confining the work within its own solipsism, the viewer could become the participant of their own experience of the system, rather than an object. And rather than elevating a specific object of contemplation, the newly informed participant takes into account all aspects of their environment and its underlying systems, especially ones that exist outside of aesthetic experience. These associations were drawn out by artists such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Mel Bochner, but also contemporaneous theories of cybernetics and adjacent systems, particularly those found in the writings of theorists Jack Burnham and Roy Ascott, who provided alternative, philosophical assessments of the relationship between man and postwar technology-derived art systems. Roehr's seriality-based works mirrored these ideas in both process and concept, providing the entrée of his project into in these cybernetic discussions.

Norbert Wiener defined cybernetics for the first time in 1947 as "the whole field of control and communication, whether in the machine or in the animal," which relied on a "feedback" mechanism of nonlinear input and information regulation in an overall system of order.³⁴ Although

³³ See especially Barbara Rose's essay "ABC Art," where she highlights repetition in the section "A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose: Repetition as Rhythmic Structuring," in *Art in America* (October–November 1965).

³⁴ Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985 [1948]), 11.

Wiener first conceived of this method in relation to biological or mechanical systems, cybernetics also opened new approaches to philosophical and aesthetic questions concerning the nature of subjectivity in structures of linguistics and philosophy, which Wiener later discussed in his book *The Human Use of Human Beings* (1950). Although at first Wiener rejected the application of cybernetics to humanist disciplines,³⁵ in *The Human Use of Human Beings* Wiener ultimately argued that the incorporation of technological systems of communication within humanity allows for society to progress to an order beyond the repressive structures of industrial society.³⁶

The impact of cybernetics in West Germany was experienced differently than Wiener's original treatment. As Philipp Aumann explained, a "separate public image of cybernetics arose that was hardly influenced by scientific knowledge. Rather, this image produced visions and expectations, hopes, and fears that influenced science."³⁷ The "utopian visions" of this "public image" of cybernetics in West Germany led to separate evolutions of the theory from its American origins, and "the challenge to create truly scientific concepts was not impacted by American cyberneticists."³⁸ This divergence led to greater experimentation and theorization outside of the confines of rigid scientific theory. However, Max Bense in particular sought to use the scientific basis of cybernetics as a bridge between technical communication theory on the one hand, and

³⁵ Ibid., 14.

³⁶ Wiener explicitly outlined the need for greater communication systems to grant access to information: "Information is a name for the content of what is exchanged with the outer world as we adjust to it, and make our adjustment felt upon it. The process of receiving and of using information is the process of our adjusting to the contingencies of the outer environment, and of our living effectively within that environment. The needs and the complexity of modern life make greater demands on this process of information than ever before, and our press, our museums, our scientific laboratories, our universities, our libraries and textbooks, are obliged to meet the needs of this process or fail in their purpose. To live effectively is to live with adequate information. Thus, communication and control belong to the essence of man's inner life, even as they belong to his life in society." Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*, (London: Free Association Books, 1989 [1950]), 17-18.

³⁷ Philipp Aumann, "The Distinctiveness of a Unifying Science: Cybernetics' Way to West Germany," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 33, no. 4 (April 2011): 18.

³⁸ Ibid., 19.

human communication on the other.³⁹ Bense's theory of "Information Aesthetics" posited that the aesthetic object is a "material carrier connected to 'co-materiality' (*Mitrealität*), thus understanding the object as a sign," and that cybernetics provided "a model for the process of art production, consumption and criticism."⁴⁰ Bense's Information Aesthetics was consequently the main theoretical support for the Stuttgart School of Concrete Poetry, a visual arrangement of typographic signs, which were the reality themselves, rather than simply the descriptive communication of an external reality.⁴¹ As Christoph Klütsch posits, Bense and others of the Stuttgart School saw the aspect of "negentropy" as a fundamental element of ordering in the communication of "Information" that resists entropy, a theory also examined in Wiener's *The Human Use of Human Beings*. As Klütsch explains: "Bense saw in art a process going in the direction opposite that of the physical process. While the physical world moves toward chaos, the world of art moves toward order. Both process and order are key terms in Bense's aesthetic, delivering the ontological basis for his scientific approach."⁴² Roehr himself would echo and grapple with these sentiments in several of his writings from the early 1960s.

That cybernetics allowed theorists to not only examine linguistic structures and systems of communication, but also the reality of the industrial world, was a crucial step shifting attitudes on the interaction of art and reality. In 1968, the American cultural critic and artist Jack Burnham expressly noted the connection between cybernetics and art as a tendency that moved beyond mere stylistic change: "But for our time the emerging major paradigm in art is neither an ism nor a

39 Christoph Klütsch, "Computer Graphic-Aesthetic Experiments between Two Cultures," *Leonardo* 40, no. 5 (2007): 421.

40 Ibid.

41 This differs slightly from previous assumptions made by Modernist poets and artists, such as the Dadaists or Surrealists, who focused on the connotations of sound and performance as carriers of meaning.

42 Klütsch, "Computer Graphic-Aesthetic Experiments," 421.

collection of styles. Rather than a novel way of rearranging surfaces and spaces, it is fundamentally concerned with the implementation of the art impulse in an advanced technological society.”⁴³ The art impulse for Burnham, was not the solipsistic formalism of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, but a deeply sociological endeavor.⁴⁴ More importantly, rather than viewing the technological world as something to be negated, he proposed that it was one to be worked within. “In an advanced technological culture the most important artist best succeeds by liquidating his position as artist vis-à-vis society. [...] Instead the significant artist strives to reduce the technical and psychical distance between his artistic output and the productive means of society.”⁴⁵ While Burnham identified Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, and Robert Morris as key figures in this transformation, his theories were extended to a number of other artists working at the time, most notably Hans Haacke and Sol Lewitt.

Cybernetic theorist and artist Roy Ascott's 1966 essay "Behaviorist Art and the Cybernetic Vision" also extended cybernetics to art: "The cybernetic vision in art, which will unify art with a cybernated society, is a 'matter of stance,' a fundamental attitude to events.”⁴⁶ Ascott identified the "creative participation" of the audience and the object as the agents in a "feedback loop," one in which the work of art is never defined purely by the intentions of the artist, but rather by interactions of a continuous series of associations that allow creative experiences of a "cybernated society," even if the works themselves may seem evacuated of their content.⁴⁷ As he continued:

43 Jack Burnham, “Systems Aesthetics” in *Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964–2004*, ed. Melissa Ragain. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015), 124. First published in *ArtForum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968).

44 See the essays of Clement Greenberg “American Type Painting” in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961) and Michael Fried “Three American Painters” and “Art and Objecthood” in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

45 Burnham, “Systems Aesthetics,” 117.

46 Roy Ascott, “Behaviourist Art and the Cybernetic Vision,” in *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 127. First published in *Cybernetica: Journal of the International Association for Cybernetics*, vol. 9 n.4 (1966) and vol. 10 n. 1 (1967).

47 Ascott, “Behaviourist Art and the Cybernetic Vision,” 125.

“Cybernation will mean the most radical change in more or less every aspect of human life and experience. Socially and politically, [...] the old rigid hierarchies of power are rendered obsolete and give way to more viable and adaptive procedures; to what might become, in short, a cybernetic-politic.”⁴⁸ Ascott viewed also adaptation to the technical world as a shift in the attitude of the artist. [T]he cybernated society will be emphatically producer oriented. Participation of a more direct kind in all aspects of social organisation and design, entertainment and learning, will replace mere acceptance and consumption.”⁴⁹ While Ascott formulated that the “cybernated attitude” of the artist was fundamentally a key human aspect, Burnham was invested in the potential of the artwork to reshape industrial society through a human relationship with rationalized systems.

Both Ascott and Burnham insisted that the object, environment, and audience experience were fundamentally transformed through a systemic, cybernetic feedback loop. Ascott and Burnham therefore offer the most telling frameworks to examine the serial processes employed by Roehr. Yet Burnham tellingly overlooked the star-quality of artists who cultivated a persona as their art. Especially with Duchamp and Warhol, the image played a game of subjectivity, as chess master or publicist, always associated with a brand, a “reality” of the artist’s creation. Seriality as an industrial motive was an overwhelming sight in every facet of the 1960s: work, thought, consumption, movement, and persona. But if the personality cult is a way to undermine social subjectivity, what happens when artists switch to a “productive medium” not as a persona but as a communication path? What if there was a possibility to interact differently with an overwhelming system in order to open up new perspectives of interaction within that system?

⁴⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

During the 1960s, Burnham and Ascott were still unknown in West Germany, while Bense and Marcuse existed as large cultural figures in the country. Yet as I examine, Roehr's engaged with the cybernetic ideas of Bense and Marcuse, but eventually echoed Burnham's idea that technological methods, when combined with productive means and art, emphasized a socially oriented communication system, rather than the shaping of distinct personae. Unlike the star cult of personality found in Duchamp and Warhol, Roehr and other artists discussed in this dissertation were not invested in the notion of "the artist" but rather in formulating their position in relation to contemporary transformations. Their efforts corresponded with the insights of Roy Ascott when he wrote "the cybernetic vision in art, which will unify art with a cybernated society, is a 'matter of stance,' a fundamental attitude to events and human relationships, before it is in sense a technical or procedural matter."⁵⁰ While Roehr's project of seriality was his tool of communication, his overarching program echoed the above ideas across a variety of mediums and media towards conceptual ends.

My positioning of Roehr as a node in this cybernetically-inflected artistic scene is promoted through a framework found in the overlaps between seriality and systems. As I will show, artists and writers – such as Mel Bochner and Sol LeWitt among others – ultimately assist in my examination of these questions within a network of ideas. I also draw from current theorists such as Charissa Terranova's discussion of the automobile as a cybernetic prothesis and Uta Holl's formulations of cybernetics and cinema in my analysis of Roehr's work. My conclusions thus summarize the place of Roehr within the histories of Concept Art and the theoretical complexities of its formations.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

1.3 An Overview of Literature: Peter Roehr's Legacy in Exhibitions

Much of the literature on the work of Roehr is in the form of posthumous receptions or re-examinations of his work in the context of larger artistic movements of his time. Roehr's first significant exhibitions came in 1965 and 1966, with shows of his photo and film Montages at Avant-Garde galleries in Frankfurt and Aachen. Due to their photographic content, these Montages found success at the moment Pop Art was making waves in the wider West German art scene. Yet, the German press found his Photo Montage and Film Montage works to be somewhat bland and limited in comparison. Honnef responded with criticism to a review of Roehr's 1966 Galerie Wallstraße show for the *Aachener Nachrichten* in saying, "[a]lbeit that they rewind short sequences of movements in constant repetition, they certainly deplete the possibilities of film montages, since they stand for nothing but themselves."⁵¹ However, this trait of the Montages was highlighted by the German art critic Ed Sommer in his review nearly one year later for a group exhibition at Galerie Thelen in Essen: "... unlike Warhol's, Roehr's best collages do not make evident the semantics of their constituents by repetition."⁵² The confusion of the West German critics was indicative of a wider problem underlining an art world in transition from a reliance on style and content to form and concept.⁵³ Roehr's early shows of his work were clearly met with a misperception of his emerging conceptual project in this milieu. The serial form was an integral

51 Klaus Honnef, "Bilder der Konsumwelt," *Aachener Nachrichten* (March 8, 1966), 4.

52 Ed Sommer, "Bericht aus Deutschland," *Art International*, Summer 1966.

53 Benjamin Buchloh points out this confusion: "Because the proposal inherent in Conceptual Art was to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition), it thus constituted the most consequential assault on the status of that object: its visibility, its commodity status, and its form of distribution. Confronting the full range of the implications of Duchamp's legacy for the first time, Conceptual practices, furthermore, reflected upon the construction and the role (or death of) the author just as much as they redefined the conditions of receivership and the role of the spectator." Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 107.

aspect of Roehr's program from the very beginning, of which *Serielle Formationen* came to represent its culmination during his lifetime.

After Roehr's death in 1968, Paul Maenz became the caretaker of his estate and the primary agent in shaping Roehr's legacy. When Maenz opened his gallery in Cologne in 1971, Roehr was one of the primary artists represented and in fact, the impetus behind his formation of the gallery was due to the influence of Roehr.⁵⁴ In 1971, Maenz organized Roehr's first posthumous exhibition at the Städtisches Museum Leverkusen from January 15 to February 28, and later the show traveled across town to the Schloß Morsbroich. With the exhibition's attending catalog texts from Maenz and Roehr, the presentation offered German audiences the chance to examine Roehr's works in line with the rapid developments that had transpired in only a few years after Roehr's passing. In 1972 Harald Szeemann included Roehr's works in his groundbreaking, if controversial, documenta 5. Of particular import was the fact that in 1965 Roehr had presented his portfolio to the documenta organization under director Arnold Bode's 24-member team, but his application was not answered until a year later in 1966. The archival records indicate that either Szeemann or Konrad Fischer drew upon this previous submission to include Roehr's works in 1972, and, for the first time, they were presented in the context of international conceptual art.⁵⁵

In 1977 Maenz organized the second major retrospective of Roehr's work for the Kunsthalle Tübingen, with later appearances at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven and the Frankfurter Kunstverein. Roehr's legacy was therefore becoming integrated not only with Frankfurt, but also with further advances in the West European art scene. The expanded and

⁵⁴ Paul Maenz, "Vor 1970 – Der Weg zur Galerie, (1975)" in *Art is to Change: Skizzen aus der Umlaufbahn* (Regensburg: Lindinger + Schmid GdbR, 2002), 44.

⁵⁵ Christian Ganzenberg and Meredith North, "Chronology," in *Peter Roehr: Field Pulsations*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2018), 296. See also Peter Roehr, letter to documenta Archiv, 1 July, 1965. documenta Archive, Kassel.

bilingual (German-English) texts on Roehr, written by art historians and curators such as Werner Lippert and Rudi Fuchs, and a contribution from Burkhardt Brunn and Charlotte Posenenske, elevated Roehr's work significantly to an international audience. The Lippert text "Concerning Condensation" from 1977 was the first influential text relating Roehr's work to historical developments in art of the previous decades. In 1978, Maenz and Jean-Christophe Ammann (later director of the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt) organized Roehr's works for a solo presentation at the Kunstmuseum Lucerne, which later traveled to the Museum of Modern Art Oxford. German-English texts by the art historian David Elliot, published interviews between Maenz and Martin Kunz, and English translations of Roehr's writings were particularly substantial in light of the developments in Conceptual Art of the 1970s.⁵⁶ These texts were the first foundational examinations of Roehr's work and provide key discussions to my and many others' analyses of his career.

As the focus of Maenz's gallery began to shift in the 1970s to more conceptual offerings such as Art & Language, Robert Barry, and Victor Burgin, Roehr's work was highlighted in numerous solo and group exhibitions at Maenz's gallery and across Europe. In 1979, Dorothea Loehr acknowledged Roehr's work in the Frankfurt art scene by including him in a group show titled *Aspekte der 60er Jahre*. Throughout the 1980s, Roehr's work was presented in solo shows at Maenz's Cologne gallery. In 1991 Roehr was again given a solo show when the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt opened under the leadership of Jean-Christoph Ammann. Despite these weighty presentations, Roehr and the Frankfurt art scene continued to receive little attention outside of Germany.

⁵⁶ By 1977, Maenz's Cologne gallery was representing conceptual artists such as Robert Barry, Joseph Kosuth, and Art & Language among others.

Roehr's first inclusion in a group show in the United States came in 1992, when the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis included his film and photo montages in *Photography in Contemporary German Art: 1960 to the Present*. This striking show traveled to the Guggenheim Museum in New York and later the Louisiana Museum of Modern art in Humlebaek, Denmark. That same year, Susanne Kaldenbach wrote a Masters Thesis for the Goethe University in Frankfurt, the first extensive academic examination of Roehr's serial work. When Maenz retired from his gallery activities in 1992, he donated a significant portion of his collection (including numerous works from Roehr) to the Neues Museum in Weimar. Later in 2000, Gerda Wendemann wrote the first comprehensive public monograph on Roehr in the context of the exhibition *Die Sammlung Paul Maenz* for the museum. This in-depth text was critical but has not been translated into English to date, therefore limiting its access to German speakers.

Dr. Renate Wiehager, who in the 1990s presented an important retrospective on Group ZERO at the Museum Esslingen, assumed direction of the Daimler Art Collection, a significant corporate Modernist art collection in 2001. By 2002 she was already presenting the works of Roehr in dialog with highlights in the collection such as Willi Baumeister, Anthony Caro, and Brian O'Doherty. Roehr has since become a pivotal figure in Daimler's Collection, most significantly in the series of *Minimalism in Germany* exhibitions (2010–15) that the collection has become known for. This has resulted in both the 2017 exhibition *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017*, which I co-curated, and the 2018 monograph *Peter Roehr: Field Pulsations* by the English poet Sarah Hayden and theorist Paul Hegarty.

The most significant exhibition of Roehr's work occurred in 2010 at the Museum of Modern Art Frankfurt and was jointly sponsored by the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, which also acquired his *Schwarz Tafeln* (Black Squares) in 2008, complete with a permanent exhibition space

in the museum (Figure 6). Maenz also donated Roehr's complete archive to the Museum for Modern Art Frankfurt in 2011, and soon after it was granted permission and funding for digitization. Upon the digitization project's completion in 2017 by archivist Nadine Hahn, the entirety of the archive is now fully accessible online and regularly updated as new materials related to Roehr are uncovered and donated. The most significant recent information related to Roehr are the materials related to the exhibitions *Serielle Formationen* and *19:45-21:55*, which were re-discovered by chance in Maenz's Berlin office in the summer of 2017. Although Maenz himself is still willing to discuss and promote Roehr's work, Roehr's gallery representation is held by the Medhi Chouakri gallery in Berlin. Maenz himself is slowly stepping away from larger activities and exhibitions, making this dissertation all the more important to continue positioning the artist and his works within an international dialogue.

1.4 *Serielle Formationen* 1967/2017: Bridges to a Networked Future

In 2014 I proposed to Dr. Renate Wiehager, director of the Daimler Art Collection,⁵⁷ that *Serielle Formationen* should be recognized on its 50th Anniversary. The then recent spate of retrospectives on Group Zero in New York, Berlin, and Amsterdam was already drawing attention back to 1950s and 1960s European artistic tendencies. Coming on the heels of dual exhibitions of Roehr and Posenenske's work across Europe in 2012, the Chinati Foundation had recently announced plans to show for the first time in the United States works by Peter Roehr and Charlotte

⁵⁷ Daimler is the parent company of Mercedes Benz. The collection began with a purchase of a work by Willi Baumeister (under whom Charlotte Posenenske studied in Stuttgart from 1951 to 1955) and has grown to include over 2500 works from German and international artists. Since 2000 Dr. Wiehager, an expert in Postwar European art, has directed the collection's program of exhibitions and publications.

Posenenske in Marfa, Texas in 2015. The exhibition at Daimler fit into the vein of previous exhibitions such as *Minimalism in Germany* and *Minimalism and After*, and well within the purview of Daimler Art Collection's brand identity. In 2017, on the 50th anniversary of this exhibition, I participated in the Daimler Art Collection's endeavor to re-stage and re-examine what can be seen retrospectively as *Serielle Formationen*'s historic presentation of the leading tendencies in art of the 1960s.

The subtitle of *Serielle Formationen 1967/2017*, "re-staging the first German exhibition of international tendencies in Minimalism," pointedly reflected the Daimler Art Collection's strength in minimal and conceptual art. While it promoted minimalism as the most prominent ground for the original exhibition, this was a view that could only come from a retrospective position taken fifty years later. While "minimal art" as a term in the 1960s was just beginning to infiltrate thinking and simultaneously draw criticism in relation to the ongoing reductionist tendencies from artists, Maenz and Roehr's focus on the serial form rather than strictly "minimal art" opened up an examination of the then contemporary artistic tendencies in avant-garde movements such as Nouveau Realism, Zero, Op und Pop art, Concrete-Constructivist art, as well as declared minimal and pre-conceptual works. The first European institutional presentation of Minimal Art as such was undertaken by the Gemeentemuseum in the Hague in 1968.

While the term "Minimalism" belied the full scope of *Serielle Formationen 1967/2017*, the intention was to show that these tendencies were part and parcel of the art historical moment. Working closely with Dr. Wiehager, this re-examination of *Serielle Formationen* was formulated within a timeline of exhibition that contained a critical conceptual element, including *Serial*

Imagery, curated by John Coplans, in 1967 and the *Art in Series* from 1968, which were also maintained under Minimalism's connection with conceptual art.⁵⁸

At the time of planning the 2017 exhibition, no photographs existed of the original space (except a black and white image from a newspaper article), giving those of us working at the collection a difficult task in tracking down the exact art works or making curatorial arrangements. What kind of narrative could we convey with such undefined historical data? This was a problem from the outset of my Masters research project on Roehr, and I had always maintained a firm belief that a curated exhibition would bring the complexities of this work into a useful dialogue. The original catalogue was a shaky image resource: often images representing the artists did not match the works shown in the Frankfurt exhibition. Yet clear relationships of aesthetic and historical networks, which intuitively built upon the 1967 ideas posed by Roehr and Maenz, emerged through the exhibition. Wiehager drew upon the Collection's significant holdings and afforded Roehr (represented by five works) and Posenenske (represented by four works) a greater presence in the space; yet the curatorial team made a point to also categorize specific works under somewhat more orthodox historical parameters.

One could observe the networked situation of these artists in the exhibition through ephemeral letters and documents, books, magazines, and films. This re-staging was conceptual in and of itself and unfolded through the dialogs and discussions in the exhibition space, much like in the original exhibition. My research benefitted from this interaction within the space, and moreover, reinforced the long-standing societal aspect of the original exhibition's intention. This

⁵⁸ Renate Wiehager, "The Emergence of the Generation of '67," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 39.

became more imperative when the organizing materials and documentation, long having been thought lost, appeared by sheer luck in the summer of 2017 during the exhibition's run.

While the position of the Daimler Art Collection's re-installation drew the pieces together to provide a fuller picture of the local and global postwar scene, this dissertation expands on and promotes these trends in a tight and cohesive examination of Roehr, his work, and his networks. Using the exhibition space as a framing device reveals that questions of influence or appropriation, ultimately the hallmarks of originality, were negated in the repetitive forms of the "unique" pieces. The Daimler Art Collection's re-installed exhibition continued the important dialogs from the original 1967 exhibition in tandem with new art historical findings. The tours and public events surrounding the exhibition revealed other contexts and nearly forgotten figures. The catalogs and monographs from the collection, as well as this dissertation, form a new in-depth perspective on this period.

While attention to many of the artists featured in *Serielle Formationen 1967/2017* has only increased in the intervening fifty years (such as Carl Andre, Hans Haacke, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, and Andy Warhol), others have been almost completely overlooked or nearly forgotten, despite having a certain presence in various art worlds of the 1960s. The cases of Bernhard Höke, May Fasnacht, and Wolfgang Schmidt (included in *Serielle Formationen 1967/2017* under "Further European Tendencies") are the most telling examples of this. gruppe x, long a mystery to even this intensive research project, finally came to light through this exhibition and provided a significant aspect of the show and my ongoing work.⁵⁹

These artistic figures and groups formed an important periphery to Roehr's artistic circle. The 2017 exhibition, conceived of as a network, visualized Roehr's work for future scholars such

⁵⁹ Frederick Schikowski, a German scholar on gruppe x, has provided valuable resources to this project.

as myself. By bringing cybernetics to bear in an examination of Roehr's complex network of ideas and artists, my dissertation therefore integrates artists as people as much as media, spaces, and artworks. While the diverse types of tertiary media, including publications, film, and ephemera for exhibitions will be discussed in the dissertation itself, the art historical network of ideas transmitted through a human element provides an equally significant aspect of building and interpreting artistic systems. This dissertation therefore lays the groundwork for a future, digital network project that will encompass artists and facilitators who organized the spread of information and ideas central to Roehr and others often overlooked in art historical scholarship on this time.

1.5 Chapter Outlines

In each chapter of this dissertation, I support my analysis with investigation into the emerging theories of cybernetics, popular culture, and, above all, the prominence of the serial form as a tool for subverting the organizational terms upon which these theories and tendencies drew: the industrial system of capitalism. How did "survival," as an attitude towards a larger system of exchanges in the ways Maenz and Roehr proposed, actually manifest itself in art during their time? And in what ways did the following fifty years color the analysis of these works, especially in light of formative discussions of the avant-garde?

My first chapter addresses Roehr's early life and the foundations of his work up to 1964, including the local Frankfurt avant-garde art scene and its wider networks to Nouveaux Realistes, Group Zero, and Concrete Art. This chapter establishes a connection between Zen and Roehr's proto-cybernetic ideas while also exploring Roehr's relationship to social theories through an examination of his early works –the *Fruhe Arbeiten*– as well as his Text Montages. Using

cybernetics, I propose that his primary adoption of the grid form produces a “matrix” for potential viewer interaction. The idea of the “matrix” was a key aspect of the sociological writings of Walter Benjamin—a fundamental theorist for Roehr— as well as a crucial element in the work of German cyberneticist Max Bense in Stuttgart, who was a significant influence on the Frankfurt art scene in the 1960s.

Chapter 2 examines the role of Roehr’s 1964–1966 production of his Photo Montages within the emerging dialogs of Pop Art, with particular attention to the issues of content, form, and the culture industry within images. Most explicitly, I investigate Roehr’s relationship with the systems of pictorial communication, both as an aid to and at odds with his system of seriality. I will explore this relationship through a question of how the imbrication of the Photo Montages and their grid structure yielded Roehr’s position on the subjective associations of imagistic content, particularly in his significant use of automobile imagery in the Photo Montages. As I argue, Roehr’s system of using advertisement photographs not only paralleled cybernetic communication, but also represented his decisive foray into more conceptual artistic methods.

Chapter 3 attends to Roehr’s first exhibitions in 1964–1966, as he moved through a relatively successful artistic recognition of his Photo Montages. At his first show at Adam Seide’s exhibition space in 1965, Roehr debuted his recently produced Film Montages, which used identical sequences of moving images in varying sets of repetition. The Film Montages, like his exhibitions of Photo Montages, were attuned to larger social systems of display. I therefore apply cybernetics in my analysis of the Film Montages in terms of the filmic qualities of sequences and systems of viewership. I conclude in this chapter with an examination of his societal and artistic relationships, which gave Roehr further impetus for expanding of his project into exhibitions.

Chapter 4 surveys Roehr's project leading up to the dual exhibitions in 1967, *Serielle Formationen* and *19:45-21:55*, an event he also facilitated with Paul Maenz at Galerie Dorothea Loehr, just outside of Frankfurt. These two shows highlight the conceptual significances of Roehr's works within the local and global art worlds. Furthermore, in this chapter I address key aspects regarding his shift to a conceptual basis, which I argue was based in his previous cybernetic affinities. Although Roehr died shortly after his curatorial forays, numerous posthumous exhibitions have examined his works both as products of their time and visionary premonitions for the contemporary moment. By incorporating cybernetics throughout my analysis of Roehr's work, I will have shown the critical moments and prescient ideas of his system of seriality, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the theoretical implications of applying cybernetics to his artistic project.

2.0 The Early Life of Peter Roehr and the Foundations of His “Montages”

Peter Roehr came from humble beginnings. Born in the last full year of World War II, he was not privileged, and experienced familial and personal hardship in the early years of his life. But that did not stop his thirst for acquiring knowledge of art. By the time he was 18 years old, Roehr had developed a visual program that informed his entire career, which consisted of identical elements placed within serial forms. Through a dedicated process of experimenting, theorizing, and creating, Roehr's method formed out of a combination of real-life experiences and an absorption of the artistic realm in West Germany. In this chapter on his early life, I will place his work into context with the inter-European network of Nouveaux Réalistes, Group Zero, and Concrete Art as a significant background for his artistic experimentation, while also tracing his theoretical ideas to emerging concepts on art, technology, and society in the work of figures such as the Zen philosopher D.T. Suzuki and the Frankfurt School theorist Walter Benjamin, as well as his early cybernetic connections to the Stuttgart School scholar Max Bense. This examination will position Roehr's work within a network of artistic ideas that he would continue to reference and grapple with throughout the rest of his short career.

2.1 Early Life

Peter Roehr was born on September 1, 1944 to Kurt and Elenora Roehr in the city of Lauenburg, Pomerania, now present-day Poland. As Roehr wrote in a brief “Lebenslauf”

(Curriculum Vitae), his family moved to the East German city of Leipzig shortly after his birth.⁶⁰ While Roehr was not forthcoming about the reasons, the move coincided with the end of the war and subsequent forced return of the *Volkdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) from regained Polish states, including the former German state of Pomerania.⁶¹ Roehr's grandmother continued to reside in the German Democratic Republic during his lifetime.⁶² Roehr mentioned very little about his childhood or the fact that his father, who was an engineer by profession, served as a soldier in the Second World War.⁶³ The postwar social and political situation strained the family. In 1947, Kurt divorced Elenora Roehr and left young Peter with his mother. Kurt and Peter would maintain a cordial yet distant relationship over the years. On at least one occasion, Peter sent his father a booklet of his work and informed him of his artistic activities.⁶⁴ Though mostly absent from his life, Kurt Roehr expressed pride and supported his son's work and career.⁶⁵

As Paul Maenz has pointed out, this familial disruption and relocation affected Roehr's schooling, especially after the war.⁶⁶ As impossible as it might seem, by 1951 Roehr had started

60 Peter Roehr, "Lebenslauf," undated. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.41. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. Unpaginated.

61 Tomasz Kamusella, "The Expulsion of the Population Categorized as 'Germans' from the Post-1945 Poland," in *The Expulsion of the 'German' Communities from Eastern Europe at the End of the Second World War*. EUI Working Paper HEC n. 2004. eds. Steffen Prauser and Edward Arfon Rees (San Domenico: European University Institute, 2004), 22, <https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/2599/HEC04-01.pdf?sequence=1>

62 Werner Lippert, "Concerning Condensation and Evaporation: Peter Roehr," in *Peter Roehr*, ed., Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris, (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 12. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, shown at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt in association with Schriften zur Sammlung des Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

63 The only mention of Kurt Roehr's involvement in the war are official documents from the West German military stating reasons for Peter's conscientious objector status. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

64 Peter Roehr to Kurt Roehr, letter, 23 June 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.417. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

65 Kurt Roehr to Peter Roehr, letter, 14 August 1966. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.414. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

66 Martin Kunz, "Interview with Paul Maenz, 5 January 1978," in *Peter Roehr: Work 1962-1968*, (Oxford: Holywell Press Ltd., 1978), 13. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 9 April – 14 May 1978.

at his 33rd elementary school.⁶⁷ After moving to Langen/Hessen in 1955, Elenora and Peter settled in Frankfurt by 1956. In 1959, at the age of 14, Roehr was dismissed from the eighth grade after he failed to pass his qualifying exams for Gymnasium. He began vocational school with a technical apprenticeship as a neon and commercial sign maker in nearby Wiesbaden.⁶⁸ Roehr then enrolled in the Industrial Art School to continue training after he passed his apprenticeship test in 1962. After passing the state exam, he pursued studying at the master apprentice level.

2.2 Zen and Roehr's Early Works

Roehr's first artistic experiments appeared around 1961, during the time of his apprenticeship. Despite his young age, Roehr's artistic impulses were nuanced and experimental. One of Roehr's earliest drawings was an assignment for one his art classes at the *Werkkunstschule* (School of Arts and Crafts) in Wiesbaden, while studying under Vincent Weber, director of the painting department.⁶⁹ This exercise, possibly charcoal and chalk on paper, provides valuable insight into Roehr's artistic training and early influences (Figure 7).

The drawing has simulated elements of a surrealist landscape yet is formulated as a regimented composition. Roehr created a symmetrical composition of four quadrants. This aspect is emphasized by the center axis of mostly defined columns of shading, from which a centrifugal motion breaks up the space in each of the sectioned areas. Roehr was clearly interested in emphasizing gradation and contrast, as evidenced in the subtle shifts in tone and abstract forms.

⁶⁷ "1951 wurde ich in die 33. Grundschule eingeschult." Peter Roehr, "Lebenslauf," Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.41.

⁶⁸ Kunz, "Interview with Paul Maenz," 10.

⁶⁹ On the back of the photograph is the hand-written note "Studien-Arbeit, Werkkunstschule, Wiesbaden, c. 1961". This drawing, like many other examples of Roehr's early work, was destroyed following his death.

Roehr's placement of a large mass of white in the center of the image creates a range of depth that interplays with the roughly crosshatched, column-like forms. Yet Roehr restrained the expressive gesture; this drawing has the quality of a study, rather than a developed sentiment.

In another early work from 1962 *Untitled (FR-4)*⁷⁰ (Figure 8), Roehr repeated paint blotches in a row. He intervened between his hand and the surface of the work by repeatedly pressing what appears to be the same sponge onto the paper. The first print, on the left side of the paper, has the most amount of paint and is demarcated by both clear definition and bleeding of forms. The second print of the sponge shows a blurring in the lower half of the second column, as if Roehr made a slight twisting motion after the paint absorbed into the paper. As indicated by the reduced amount of paint in third and fourth prints, Roehr appears not to have reapplied paint to the sponge.

Indeed, this could also be seen as the direct influence of Vincent Weber's teaching. Weber studied at the Bauhaus in the early 1920's under the painters Johannes Itten, Paul Klee, and Oskar Schlemmer, who emphasized through their instruction the technical practices of art making. Above all, the Bauhaus methodology of teaching, especially under Johannes Itten, was provocative for the time due to his emphasis on the student's sensorial and mental activity in conjunction with the physicality of materials. A student would therefore train their hand and eye together, for example, in the exercise of creating a black to white shade scale, or "drawing" with different string materials.⁷¹ Itten also used mathematical procedures to analyze historic works of art in scientific exactitude, while at the same time incorporating abstraction in nature studies.⁷² Bauhausian

70 FR stands for "Frühe Arbeiten." These are early works that use various techniques and were made before the Montages.

71 Michael Siebenbrodt and Lutz Schöbe, *Bauhaus*, (New York: Parkstone International, 2009), 71.

72 Ibid., 72.

pedagogy influenced many of the technical art schools in postwar West Germany, particularly those in Stuttgart and Ulm. Weber promoted principles similar to the Bauhaus style in his classroom, as seen in Roehr's studies that focused on repeating methods and patterns of creation.⁷³

A tension between creativity and technicality exists in *Untitled (FR-4)*, as if Roehr was methodically attempting to organize and simultaneously stress the gestural mark. Despite the variation of paint and sponge pattern in this painting, there is an exacting order to his alignment and design. The repeated sponge prints create dimensionality, yet the painting's flatness is emphasized by the lack of gradation. But for all the importance he placed on order and rigidity, the subtle mark of Roehr's actual hand is noticeable in the first paint-laden print: the pressure of pressing the sponge into the paper faintly outlined what appears to be his palm, and the smudges of paint indicate a twisting motion. Roehr used the stamping method for several other works, for example in *Untitled (FR-9)* (Figure 9) from 1962, which, in their conformation to a grid layout, showed a progression away from the expressive gesture towards a systematic abstraction.

At the same time Roehr was working by stamping in a grid layout, he was also experimenting with chance-based works. Even in these two works, a progression can be seen. In *Untitled (FR-11)* (Figure 10), Roehr concentrated the dropping of two different types of grains, which created a less uniform composition. In *Untitled (FR-51)* (Figure 11), a single type of grain was spread entirely across and up to the edges of the wood panel. By scattering the grains and seeds across the surface and painting them in monochrome white, Roehr removed the mediation of his hand in their creation. These chance and repetition works show Roehr's progression in eliminating the unique artistic gesture and his attempt to systematize the object. His refusal to title

⁷³ Alexander Hildebrand, "Vincent Weber (1902-1990): Lehrstück Mit Lehre," in *Die Werkkunstschule Wiesbaden, 1949-1970: Die Legendäre Talentschmiede* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2016), 28.

his works effaces the artistic gesture even further: he merely regulated a system in reference to the forces of their production. Yet, the chance composition combined with an all-over monochrome coating created a certain lyricism, especially when he used two different types of grains like in *Untitled (FR-11)*.

Roehr's complete adoption of his serial program of Montage in 1963 was based not on the chance-based scatter works like *Untitled (FR-11)*, but rather the grid layout works of *Untitled (FR-9)*. Yet Roehr expressed frustration with the emphasis on technical rather than creative drives in his studies.⁷⁴ Rather than dismissing the early work, his experiments provide a crucial establishment of the ideas Roehr utilized throughout the rest of his oeuvre. But Roehr did not develop his methodology in isolation: repetition, monochrome, and accumulation found in works by his contemporaries would orient Roehr towards his own aesthetic of ordered systems.

For his part, Roehr identified an early influence on his montages in Zen Buddhism:

Shortly before beginning to make montages – I was then 18 – I had read a pocketbook on Zen Buddhism. It is perhaps not by chance that the first idea for the montages occurred to me at this time. I still remember immediately attaching great importance to the idea of simple, precise, unpretentious serialization.⁷⁵

Art historian Werner Lippert identified the pocketbook in his collection as D.T. Suzuki's *Zen and the Culture of Japan*.⁷⁶ By expanding Lippert's short discussion further, Suzuki's writings on Zen provide an important window into the motivation behind Roehr's formative works. In

⁷⁴ Paul Maenz "Epilogue," in *Peter Roehr*, trans. James Whitman (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1977). 98. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at Kunsthalle Tübingen, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, and Frankfurter Kunstverein.

⁷⁵ Peter Roehr, "Notes on the Beginnings of his Work (1965)," in *Peter Roehr*, ed. Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris, (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 26. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, shown at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt in association with Schriften zur Sammlung des Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

⁷⁶ Lippert identifies the edition as one from the Rowohlt German Encyclopedia series. Lippert, "Concerning Condensation and Evaporation," 16.

particular, Roehr's Montages can be seen as at first akin to Zen meditations, a visual result of a renunciation of artistic self by working from within the confines of a system, which would transform into mechanized production.

As Suzuki writes, "Zen has nothing to teach us in the way of intellectual analysis; nor has it any set doctrines which are imposed on its followers for acceptance. [...] Whatever teachings there are in Zen, they come out of one's own mind."⁷⁷ This was often reflected in the Zen Kōan, a parable that presents a problem or riddle and was intended to enable a student to gain insight through the interactions of the characters within the story. Roehr's regard for a Zen attitude suggested his highly individualized interpretation of its implications, but his attachment was without explicitly or publicly proclaiming Zen as a philosophical doctrine of his program. Nevertheless, Roehr's work oriented toward Zen principles. As Suzuki explains, Zen is the inner mind, quieted and free from the hampering of logic and worldliness.⁷⁸ "The discipline of Zen consists in opening the mental eye in order to look into the very reason of existence."⁷⁹ Zen can be chaotic, if one chooses,⁸⁰ or Zen can form an ordered discipline. Zen is not a binary, but rather the experience of Zen reveals the unseen in the simple, unpretentious structures of life. In chance or repetition, insight into alternative realities collapses the structures of being that normally separate the division of the mundane from the precious.

Chance, it should further be pointed out, is not necessarily a system of complete chaos; as Suzuki pointed out, it could instead free the mind of logical assumptions.⁸¹ Yet chance, like Zen, is often misinterpreted as nihilistic and was often misconstrued in terms of Dada absurdism,

⁷⁷ D.T. Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 8.

⁷⁸ D.T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), 16–17.

⁷⁹ Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, 8.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 18.

especially when viewed in terms of art practice. Although Roehr did not explicitly make note of it in his writings, New York-based artist John Cage had also turned to his experiments with chance after attending classes taught by Suzuki in the 1950s. As Cage writes:

It was through the study of Buddhism that I became, it seems to me, less confused. I saw art not as something that consisted of a communication from the artists to an audience but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let the sounds be themselves. And in their being themselves to open the minds of the people who made them or listened to them to other possibilities than they had previously considered.⁸²

Roehr would not work in sound until later in 1966, but in the chance-based compositions of Cage, it is clear that Zen Buddhism and its aleatoric methods had permeated at least part of the early or pre-Conceptual Art practices, most notably taken up by various Fluxus artists (see below). A Zen orientation could have been reflected anywhere between two poles of chaos and order, without restriction, but always based in the individual approach to the system. While Cage's orientation tended to the anarchic pole, Roehr's tended toward the ordered. As Roehr understood it, organization is like entropy: the "ordering process" is "the tendency of a system of constant energy towards rest."⁸³ The chance-based method Roehr used to create *Untitled (FR-11)* and *Untitled (FR-51)* accompanied experiments that used an ordering process, such as the stamped *Untitled (FR-17)* (Figure 12). Roehr's serialization emphasized the simplest everyday object in a process that shows only its structural ordering tendencies.

Roehr's chance-based works also reflected the concept of the "One in All and the All in One." As Suzuki states, "Zen recognizes neither the One nor the All as something distinct from each other. The phrase 'One in All and All in One' is to be understood as a complete statement of

⁸² John Cage, "Precursors," interview with Richard Kostelanetz, in *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1991), 42.

⁸³ Peter Roehr, "Notes from the Estate," in *Peter Roehr*, edited by Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 29.

absolute fact not to be analyzed into its component concepts.”⁸⁴ Rather, insight is obtained from the ordinary interconnectedness of relational objects as the unity of their existing parts. Roehr reflected similar sentiments in his own writings: “I alter material by organizing it unchanged. Each work is an organized area of identical elements. Neither successive nor additive, there is no result or sum.”⁸⁵ Roehr’s statement from 1964 emphasizes a particular program for his later montages: while “there is no result or sum,” there is still a procedure with the underlying structure of organization. The simple and precise serialization of objects was most prominent when the objects are indistinguishable from one another, without the disruption of difference. The visual structure, however random, thus must only function as an inseparable whole. The viewer’s experience of unity, without difference, was therefore not led by an artistic hand, but rather an open system of possible meanings.⁸⁶

Despite Roehr’s experimentation with randomness, there is nonetheless a certain abstract lyricism among the different surface elements of *Untitled (FR-11)*. In addition, despite his attempt to even out the distinguishing features of the work by using a monochrome wash, one could point out that the scattering of multiple grains highlights an appealing textural quality. Roehr went on to use only identical elements in the rest of these chance-based works, like *Untitled (FR-16)* (Figure 13). In this work, Roehr created an all-over composition by spreading small wooden circles to the very edges of the wooden board. As Lippert pointed out, the square board and identical objects “already herald the ‘neutrality’ and ‘normality’ for which all later works always strive.”⁸⁷ Both

⁸⁴ Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 27.

⁸⁵ Roehr, “Notes from the Estate,” 29.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lippert, “Concerning Condensation and Evaporation,” 35.

Untitled (FR-11) and *Untitled (FR-16)* utilized the gesture, resulting in random chance, as the intervening principle of composition.

The experiments of Roehr's early period touched upon numerous leading principles in the European Art Scene in the early 1960s, showing evidence of the continuing presence of Bauhaus techniques via his professor, Vincent Weber, and the chance-based ideas of Cage. But with the scattered, monochrome works of 1962, Roehr's works opened up clear lines of interest in his contemporaries, namely the works of Nouveaux Réalistes and ZERO. And further, Roehr's interest in the systems of reality – a reality of existence embodied in the Zen principle of the 'One-in-All and All-in-One' – also opened theoretical avenues, namely to the writings of Walter Benjamin and, as will be seen, to ideas surrounding the technological and industrial environment of contemporary art and society. But these works also evidenced the development of his theory: "Since I was primarily concerned with theorizing – it was in September 1962 – and the theory rapidly metamorphosed, only a few montages were made."⁸⁸ As Roehr gained broader knowledge of the European Art world, he also encountered not only changes in visual formations, but also critique against the various realities of the age, be they technological, material, or ideological.

In one of his last early works, *Untitled (FR-22)* (Figure 14) of 1962, he purposefully denied the expressiveness of the gesture by impressing an inked rubber stamp bearing the word "*Drucksache*" (Printed Matter) in repetitive lines over the entire surface of the paper. The "Printed Matter" poses an ironic reference to the composition since what was used in reference to sensitive office material, now refers to itself as a different object. Although the stamp prints were identical and somewhat machine-like, the stamp required constant inking. The print of the stamp continued in the vein of *Untitled (FR-4)* (Figure 8), and this action emphasized certain words and areas over

⁸⁸ Peter Roehr, "Notes on the Beginning of his Work (1965)," 26.

others with even more irregular, vibrating effects. The use of words and language, both as *real* material and references to an existing *reality*, terms unique to the German and European Avant Garde as defined below, provide an early ironic nod to the tension that would underline Roehr's project.

2.3 Material, Technological, and Ideological Realities

Different ideas of what is real – “real” here being representative of technological, material, or ideological being in the world – were attended to by the diverse Avant-Garde artists in postwar Europe, with various configurations of social, political, and artistic import. Most explicitly, these ideas of the postwar, artistic world were emphasized by the dominating position of the Nouveaux Réalistes and Group ZERO⁸⁹ in Europe, a real that also connoted the new, postwar technological and industrial world of Europe. This broader art world would enter Roehr's Frankfurt slowly over 1960 to 1963 and unequivocally in the influential *Europäische Avant-Garde* exhibition in Frankfurt in 1963. Further explication of these ideas is necessary, however, before returning to this pivotal 1963 show and Roehr's developing work of the 1960s.

While European art at the end of World War II was slowly emerging from the rubble of destroyed cities, the emergence of Abstract Expressionism in the American art scene proceeded unimpeded with its grand gestural exercises. Similarly, its European counterpart was seen in the actions of Art Informel and Tachisme –the so-called second “School of Paris”– and had already

⁸⁹ “Group Zero,” lowercase, signifies the international group of artists sharing Zero's ideology, aesthetics, and unifying, conceptual motifs. “Group ZERO,” when appearing in all capital letters, refers to the unique German articulation of that artistic program.

in 1952 been somewhat formalized by Michel Tapié in his essay “Un Art Autre” (Art of Another Kind). Tapié described Art Informel (Formless art) as a break with Modernist painting, an antigeometric, antinaturalist, and non-figurative expression of spontaneity, which stressed their pursuit of something “wholly other.”⁹⁰

In the context of Postwar Europe, these grandiose, expressive canvasses quickly became a prop for a subterranean culture war, a counter measure to the Soviet Realism of the USSR and East Germany.⁹¹ Art Informel was given full range of exhibitions throughout Europe. Abstract Expressionism – and the debates and criticisms around them, artistic, ideological, or otherwise – did not reach West Germany until September 1958 with *The New American Painting* exhibition at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Berlin, a tellingly specific place in light of the divided times.⁹² When the larger West German public was given the opportunity to view the most significant works of the American Abstract Expressionist movement –in conjunction with their European counterparts – at documenta II in spring of 1959, the curators explicitly framed the works in terms of the “freedom” of the “creative energies”⁹³ while implicitly evoking the ideological divisions within the country, with Abstraction as a universal language serving as the antidote. However, the Abstraction promoted by Haftmann left out discussions of Formalism characterized by critics like the American Clement Greenberg, opting for a wholeness in European identity.⁹⁴

90 <https://web.archive.org/web/20130622185842/http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/movements/195205/description>

91 John Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines: Art in Germany 1945-1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007), 16.

92 Catherine Dossin, “Pop Begeistert: American Pop Art and the German People,” *American Art* 25, no. 3 (September 2011): 102. <https://doi.org/10.1086/663955>.

93 Werner Haftmann, quoted in Kristian Handberg, “The Shock of the Contemporary: documenta II and the Louisiana Museum,” in *On Curating* special issue “documenta: Curating the History of the Present,” eds. by Nanne Buurman and Dorothee Richter, no. 33 (June 2017): 36.

94 Ibid. Handberg expands on Haftmann’s position: “Compared to Greenberg’s contemporary formalism and promotion of American painting as heirs of the European modernist tradition, Haftmann was more aware of the positions of European postwar art, such as concrete art or spontaneous abstraction, even if he also left out significant fields not fitting into his art view, i.e. non-abstract art. His thinking was concerned with embedding abstract art in modern and contemporary experience, albeit by its expanded speculative realism, rather than the pure formalist self-

At nearly the same time, the Modernist monochrome was revived from Russian Constructivists and deployed by artists as a reductive counterpoint to the expressive, sentimental gesture. The monochrome was the ultimate tabula rasa: unending washes of gesso, kaolin, or single colors “convey the independent, non-illusionistic reality of painting,” an “imageless, colorless, and timeless surface” from which artists could test the limits of pure mental activity.⁹⁵ Paradoxically, the monochrome was both a flattening of space through its most basic, formal element, and the representation of an infinite space; a literal take on the physical reality of paint on canvas and an expression of a quasi-metaphysical or spiritual descent into a single color. As one of the first instances of a “Minimal” aesthetic, the monochrome cut out the unnecessary elements of painting, while allowing other components to rise to the surface. As I will briefly investigate through several artists of Roehr’s time, the inherent paradoxes of postwar art reveals some of the complex realities explored by artists of the era.

Lucio Fontana, one of the most influential artists for the postwar avant-garde, was living between Italy and Argentina in 1947 when he developed his *Concetto Spaziale* (Spatial Concept). One of Fontana’s practices was taking the idea of the picture plane and piercing it, thereby rupturing the flatness of the pure monochrome canvas as a material ground (Figure 15). Fontana, who condemned the false illusion of perspective, thereby made the two-dimensional material support three dimensions. As he outlined in his *White Manifesto* of 1946:

The artistic era of paralytic colors and forms has come to an end. Man becomes more and more insensible to congealed images without a sense of vitality. The ancient immobile images no longer satisfy the new man formed by the necessity of action and by the cohabitation with mechanics... *we are*

critique of Greenberg. From the Western German perspective, in the middle of the “chaotic panorama” of postwar Europe, “free” abstract art appeared as a sign of cultural identity of the rebuilt Western Europe.”

⁹⁵ Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 14.

*abandoning the use of known forms of art and we are initiating the development of an art based on the unity of time and space.*⁹⁶

The basis of Fontana's Spatialism is highlighted by the above quote, which rejected the illusory space of forms on canvas and took the canvas support as a vehicle of literal space. Most prominently, he would integrate electronic and mechanical projections through or onto the canvas surface, or, as in his *Concetto Spaziale*, pierced the physical picture plane, invigorating it into three dimensions. The monochrome canvas in this sense was a theatrical stage, a ground zero of time and history upon which Fontana's physical gestures revealed the void of the behind-the-canvas while at the same time destroying the surface of the illusion.

As Stephen Petersen offers, Fontana's synthesis of time and space in the art would be supported by new scientific materials and "would give appropriate expression to society's needs in the present and would help create the world of the future."⁹⁷ Integration, unity, and cohabitation with technological means also underlined Fontana's "Technical Manifesto of Spatialism" from 1951, wherein he states, "[a]ll things arise out of necessity and exploit the needs of their age. Transformations of the material means of life determine man's states of mind throughout history."⁹⁸ While Fontana relied on the traditional conception of the physical support of the canvas, the *Concetto Spaziale* was embodied in the act of creating the metaphysical space through the piercing and slashing of the monochrome canvas.

Yves Klein's *Relief Éponge Bleu Sans Titre (RE 47 I)* (Figure 16) from 1960, as with many of his monochromatic works, built up the surface of his monochromes in order to create an infinite

⁹⁶ Lucio Fontana, "White Manifesto 1946," in *Fontana*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1962), unpaginated. First published in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1946. Italics in the original.

⁹⁷ Stephen Petersen, *Space Age-Aesthetics: Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, and the Postwar Avant-Garde* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 49.

⁹⁸ Lucio Fontana "Technical Manifesto of Spatialism" in *The Italian Metamorphosis: 1943-1968*, ed. Germano Celant (New York: Abrams, 1994), 714–15. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 7 October 1994– 22 January 22 1995. Manifesto first published 1951.

space where “I no longer forced myself to function; I functioned naturally.”⁹⁹ Directly influenced by his relationship to Eastern philosophy and Judo, Klein began to explore the spiritual side of art. The drive to create metaphysical experience within the work of art can be seen in his turn to the pure color of International Klein Blue. By also incorporating sponges and stones into the monochrome, the composition provides a sublime texture without self-expression. As he wrote in 1958, “the immaterialisation of blue, the coloured space that cannot be seen but which we impregnate ourselves with”¹⁰⁰ was significant to a spiritual “being” in the experience of the painting.

Pierre Restany, a Paris based French art critic and, later, a theorist on the Nouveaux Réalistes, met Klein through Arman in Paris on December 1, 1955 after seeing Klein’s monochromes at the Club de Solitaires.¹⁰¹ Klein came with the intention of convincing Restany to write the catalog for the artist’s next solo exhibition at the Colette Allendy gallery,¹⁰² and the up-and-coming critic immediately agreed.¹⁰³ Restany began to see the changes in the Parisian art world, which had wanted to “keep a hegemonous situation” and “press the idea that there was a kind of abstract key to the reading of Cubism.”¹⁰⁴ In response, he saw the potential of everyday “realities” –the material in accumulation, collage, and technological impulses as a way to break from Modernist abstract traditions of the picture plane.¹⁰⁵ He found these tendencies in a group of artists, which Restany would formally come to name the Nouveaux Réalistes in 1960 over the

99 Petersen, *Space Age Aesthetics*, 91.

100 Yves Klein, *Yves Klein, 1928–1962: Selected Writings*, trans. Barbara Wright, (London: Tate Gallery, 1974), 35.

101 Nuit Banai, *Yves Klein*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2014), 69.

102 Ibid.

103 Michèle C. Cone, “Pierre Restany and the Nouveaux Réalistes” *Yale French Studies* No. 98, 2000, 59.

104 Michèle C. Cone, “The Late Fifties in Europe: A Conversation with French Critic Pierre Restany,” *Arts Magazine* 64 (January 1990): 67.

105 Catherine Grenier, “New Realisms and Pop Art, Art Without Art” in *Europop* (Cologne: DuMont Verlag, 2008), xxxv. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, 15 February – 12 May, 2008 at Kunsthaus Zürich.

course of a series of group exhibitions in May and October of that year. Restany pushed the idea that the progenitors of the new arts could be found in Dada, particularly Duchamp's ready-mades. As scholar Michèle Cone relays: "Bolstered by Duchamp's enthusiasm for technology, Restany maintained that it was wrong to read the new realist sensibility other than as a celebration of the modern everyday."¹⁰⁶ Although this applied to the materials used by the Nouveaux Réalistes, the mass produced commodity was also intertwined with the cult of the artist.

As early as 1913, Marcel Duchamp was already antagonizing the reality of art with the use of the ordinary commodity object with his formations of the readymade. As with the revitalization of the monochrome, artists in the postwar era looked to Duchamp's antagonism with fresh eyes, while at the time, Duchamp himself remained in "retirement." The "New Realism" of the post WWII era, as Catherine Grenier describes, referred to the direct integration of "reality in its most ordinary" into works of art.¹⁰⁷ The "new realist" was an artist who was a "receiver" as if "stamped by society, imprinted by art itself, defining no longer its formats but just its vectors."¹⁰⁸ This predominately European outfit of artists would push the vectors of the everyday in art in the same way as Duchamp. In Piero Manzoni's *Achrome* (Figure 17), a canvas covered with bread rolls coated in kaolin, a thin white paste used in ceramic and paper production achieves a pleasantly ambiguous textured monochromatic surface. The incorporation of real, material objects can also be seen in relation to the work of Henk Peeters, whose work also incorporated monochrome elements and materials as the basis for his pictorial content (Figure 18).

The technological, industrial everyday was emphasized in the Nouveaux Réalistes in Paris and across Europe. Dutch Avant-Garde artists and members of the group Nul in Holland like Henk

¹⁰⁶ Cone, "The Late Fifties in Europe," 63.

¹⁰⁷ Grenier, "New Realisms and Pop Art," xxxv.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., xxxvii.

Peeters, Herman de Vries, and Jan Schoonhoven, Belgian kinetic artists like Paul van Hoeydonck and Jean Tinguely, or the Italians Piero Manzoni and Daniel Spoerri under Azimuth were working simultaneously and independently of the French Nouveaux Réalistes. These independent artists quickly found resonance in similar artistic ideas and after the cohesion of the group in a series of exhibitions in 1960, formed an influential block of networked artistic techniques that resonated throughout Europe. Roehr's inclination for accumulation of the mass-produced object, his use of the monochrome, and interest in the industrial underpinning of society indicate an early ideological and aesthetic link with the above-mentioned artists.

Although Roehr most likely would have seen Klein's monochromes through quality reproductions, in *Untitled (FR-11)* (Figure 10) his use of monochrome color, the intervention of an object, and textural surface could also have alluded to Klein's works from 1957 to 1962. Roehr's *Untitled (FR-11)* and *Untitled (FR-14)* can certainly be seen in a similar vein. The various depths implied by textures and shapes created through the interactions of the grains are nullified by the white gossamer paint. The lyricism articulated by these textures is in concert with the infinite space of Klein's monochromes, yet, they retained an organizational property out of sync with the overt spiritualities suggested by Klein's gesture.

Much closer to Roehr geographically and linguistically, the Düsseldorf based Group ZERO exerted a prominent force on the German art world. In 1957, Otto Piene and Heinz Mack met in K.O. Götz's painting class at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Shortly after meeting Günther Uecker, they formed Group ZERO, and quickly staged the first *ZERO Abendaussstellung* (Evening Exhibition) on April 11, 1957 in Piene's Düsseldorf studio. The ZERO artists wanted to generate "a zone of silence and of pure possibilities for a new beginning"¹⁰⁹ through their works. From the

109 Otto Piene, "ZERO Manifesto" *ZERO* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), xi.

time of ZERO's founding, artists from the Spatialist and Nouveaux Réalistes movements participated in their group shows.¹¹⁰ Piene and Mack saw this potential unity in the visualization of light in the form of vibrations, which simulated at once stability and dynamism, beauty from the mundane:

Among all possible conditions derived from the concept of movement, only one is aesthetic: resting restlessness – it is the expression of continuous movement, which we call “vibration,” and which our eyes experience aesthetically. Its harmony stirs our souls, as the life and breath of the work.¹¹¹

Vibrations, at their core, are a repetitious, serial pattern of optical sensations, based in the determinant of motion. Although they started in painting, they moved to machines and materials to create movement environments.¹¹² Under these tenets, the German contingent of artists aligned with ZERO expanded to include the artists Hermann Goepfert in Frankfurt and Adolf Luther in Krefeld, among others. Supported by the influential Düsseldorf gallery dealer Alfred Schmela, ZERO rapidly gained attention in Europe as the headlining group of the continent. The divide between artists of the older generation and the rising trends in art around 1960 was later highlighted by Otto Piene. There was “the idealistic (occasionally romantic) trend, willing to provoke an alteration of objects and man from dark to bright (later on emphasized in ZERO, THE NEW IDEALISM, the manifesto of Mack, Piene, Uecker in Berlin and Brussels)” while the “new realism (Nouveau [R]éalisme) of the late Yves Klein, Tinguely, Arman, Spoerri – in some ways parallel to pop art in America.”¹¹³ The New Realism of Tinguely, Arman, Spoerri, represented a larger

110 Seminal shows such as *Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision* in Museum/Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium (dates 1959). See also: *ZERO*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (dates 1964).

111 Heinz Mack, “Resting Restlessness,” in *ZERO*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 40.

112 For a detailed history of the Düsseldorf ZERO artists' incorporation of painting and mechanical technologies, Christine Mehring's “Television Art's Abstract Starts: Europe circa 1944-1968,” *October* 125, no. Summer (2008): 29–64.

113 Otto Piene, “The Development of Group Zero,” *ZERO* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), xxi.

shift identified by Piene in relation to the Group Zero, and simultaneous to the Pop movement (see chapter 2).

Under Piene's rubric, ZERO artists and the New Realists aligned in their desire to free society's unconscious through the interaction of not only art and technological means but also art from everyday material culture. Within the works themselves, the romantic idealism of the first tendency of Zero acknowledged by Piene spoke to the dialectic between object and man, dark to light, a new beginning from a Zero point after the war. Jess Atwood's dissertation on ZERO examined this aspect: "Zero's interest in 'technology' included specific material references to military technology and thereby raised questions of Germany's war history as the basis for works that engage with visual memories and the role of perception in the postwar context."¹¹⁴ Piene's use of lights in dark environments for his "Light Ballets", Mack's vibrating kinetic sculptures, or Uecker's nailed constructions all transform the wartime elements of destruction into new possibilities for the postwar present. But more importantly, technology for Zero artists "also indicated a preoccupation with electronic technologies as a larger conceptual structure for the artwork itself."¹¹⁵ Technological means and industrial systems were used by the Zero group in order to detach "oneself from tradition," a move that would find support in the early 1960s in Frankfurt am Main, as discussed below.¹¹⁶

Even the more inherently radical impulses of these artists represented not a complete break with the tradition of earlier Avant-Garde movements but rather a continuation of their aims.

¹¹⁴ Eleanor Jess Atwood Gibson, "The Media of Memory: History, Technology and Collectivity in the Work of the German Zero Group, 1957-1966," (PhD. diss., Yale University, 2008), 65. ISBN: 978-0-549-97339-3

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Renate Wiehager, "54321 ZERO – Countdown to a New Art in a New World," in *Zero Aus Deutschland, 1957-1966. Und Heute (ZERO out of Germany. 1957-1966. And Today.)*, ed by Renate Wiehager, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2000). 16-17.

Fontana's connection with the Futurists was explicit in his manifesto, and in its reference to the future alliance of science, technology and art. As Stephen Petersen elaborated on Fontana's *White Manifesto*, the prewar Avant Garde was evoked by "making reference to principles of construction, dynamism, and the subconscious, it arguably reads as something of a collage of earlier modernist tracts..."¹¹⁷ Grenier also positions the New Realists in relation to Modernist artists, particularly in their desire to form groups under designated ideological positions, explicitly enforced by signing a manifesto in the vein of Suprematism and the Futurists. Piene, Klein, and Fontana in particular incorporated ideas in tracts echoing previous modernist ideas while cementing the role of current specialized technology.

Klein also conceded to the idealism of Modernism through the infinite vastness suggested by the synthetic IKB monochrome: the spiritual being in a painting directly referenced earlier tracts of Malevich and Suprematism. Klein, as Jaleh Mansoor further explained, "paradoxically treated the monochrome as a fabricated template that he manipulated according to the demands of his own particular self-branding."¹¹⁸ The self-branding of the artist, again in reference to Duchamp's work, was also seen in Piero Manzoni, who simultaneous to his monochrome "Achromes" was also marking himself as the commodity in works like *The Artist's Breath* from 1960 and *The Artist's Shit* from 1961. Similarly, the brand of the artist would also come to be attached to the Pop Art object.

The technical aspects cited by both the New Realists and Group ZERO were therefore somewhat diminished in relation to other competing ideologies, whether modernist, spiritual, or commercial. The divisions in postwar thinking were seen in the exclusion of Zero from documenta

¹¹⁷ Petersen, *Space-Age Aesthetics*, 49.

¹¹⁸ Jaleh Mansoor, *Marshall Plan Modernism: Italian Postwar Abstraction and the Beginnings of Autonomia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 45.

II in 1959 due to the German Art Historian and documenta consultant Werner Haftmann's allegiance to abstraction. While documenta's director Arnold Bode was eventually convinced to include ZERO artists in document III in 1964, "for Haftmann, who echoed the sentiments of [Theodor] Adorno and [the conservative art critic Arnold] Gehlen, groups employing technical materials and justifying their works with 'cybernetics' were not original, but derived their ideas from the 1920s."¹¹⁹ While documenta promoted its own agenda and allegiance to painting and abstraction, the debates surrounding the technological aspects of postwar tendencies continued to gain traction in various forms throughout the 1960s. Roehr's engagement with these ideas began with their infiltration through Frankfurt, and yet soon opened up to larger ideas beyond the city.

2.4 Roehr's Engagement with the German Avant-Garde

In Frankfurt, these tendencies were in effect simultaneous to the ideas flowing from the specific dialogs brought to the city through the small but flourishing gallery and art scene, spearheaded by figures such as Frankfurt gallerists Rochus Kowallek and Dorothea Loehr. As recent exhibitions have examined,¹²⁰ the larger Zero network in Europe produced localized situations of artistic ideas that both aligned and diverged from those of ZERO's founders, Otto Piene, Heinz Mack, and Günter Uecker. More importantly, the network that emerged out of

¹¹⁹ Joseph D. Ketner II, *Witness to a Phenomenon: Group ZERO and the Development of New Media in Postwar European Art* (Bloomsbury: New York, 2018), 127. See also Wiehager, "54321 ZERO," 18.

¹²⁰ *Countdown to ZERO*, (New York: Solomon Guggenheim Museum, 2014) Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Guggenheim Museum, 10 October 2014 – 7 January 2015. *ZERO. Let Us Explore the Stars*, 13 March – 8 June 2015, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin and 4 July 4 – 8 November 2015: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

connections to Zero fueled a more analytic, technical aspect of the local art scene in Frankfurt in 1960, beginning with Kowallek's Galerie dato opening with a solo exhibition by Piene in April of that year.

Kowallek's friendship with the Zero artist Hermann Goepfert and the theorist William E. Simmat continued the intellectual activity and public programming started in the 1950s by Klaus Franck's Informel and French art-inclined gallery before its closure in 1961. However, Kowallek and Simmat began to guide the art scene in Frankfurt towards the new emerging tendencies in art and away from the expressive gestures of painting that had previously received attention in Frankfurt. Also in 1960, Goepfert presented work in the exhibition *Neue Deutsche Tendenzen* (New German Trends) in the foyer of the Cantatesaal in Frankfurt on October 28th and 29th. Also on view were works by Mack, Piene, Hermann Bartels, and Oskar Holweck, and at the attending Internationale Kunstgespräch, Max Bense and Simmat presented lectures.¹²¹ Bense, whose influential treatises on information aesthetics had already begun to make waves in Stuttgart, was "greatly admired by the Frankfurt circle" when he gave the opening speech.¹²² Along with German theorist William Simmat, Bense also provided texts for distributed gallery leaflets.¹²³ In December 1961 the gallery presented the *Exposition dato* with works from ZERO artists Piene, Mack, Uecker, Goepfert, Holweck, as well as Fontana, Klein, Manzoni, Enrico Castellani, Almir Mavignier, Henk Peeters, and Wolfgang Schmidt, among others.¹²⁴ When Kowallek closed Galerie

121 Beate Kemfert, "Hermann Goepfert and ZERO in Frankfurt am Main," in *The Artist as Curator: Collaborative Initiatives in the International Zero Movement 1957–1967*, eds. Tiziana Caianiello and Mattijs Visser (Düsseldorf: ZERO Foundation, 2015), 303. According to Elisabeth Walther's chronology on Bense, he delivered a lecture entitled "Die wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen einer möglichen Kunstkritik." http://www.stuttgarter-schule.de/bense55_64.htm#1962 This lecture was subsequently printed in *Kunst, Wissenschaft oder Propaganda? Funktionen der Kunstkritik, Kunstgespräche* in Frankfurt in 1960.

122 Kemfert, "Hermann Goepfert and ZERO," 307.

123 Ibid.

124 *Exposition dato* (1 December – December 31, 1961) Galerie dato, Frankfurt. Artists: Bernard Aubertin, Herman Bartels, Kilian Breier, Enrico Castellani, Carlfriedrich Claus, Lucio Fontana, Hermann Goepfert, Oskar Holweck, Ed

dato in 1962, he almost immediately opened Galerie d the following year with Simmat, where he featured the works of Goepfert, Schmidt, and Raimund Girke.

Although it is unlikely Roehr witnessed first-hand many of the Avant-Garde events before 1962 in Düsseldorf or Wiesbaden (since he was under 16 years old and in a full-time traineeship),¹²⁵ he was probably aware of their activities through the printed press and his first years at art school.¹²⁶ Roehr does make note that it was the literary and artistic organizer Adam Seide who introduced him to galerie d sometime in 1963, and it was what he saw there that interested him the most.¹²⁷ After 1963, however, Roehr's artistic production was enriched by the rapid developments occurring in the Rhein/Main region, and would lead to the deeper conceptual program of his montages. The March 1963 exhibitions by Galerie d promoted the work of Harry Kramer and the ZERO group. From artist flyers preserved in Roehr's personal archive, it is very likely that he saw both the Christian Megert (January 25–March 1, 1963) and Harry Kramer (March 8–April 20, 1963) shows at Galerie d.¹²⁸ Already, Roehr was defining his project in terms of ordering structures and the reduction of superfluous elements, two key elements that would play out over the course of his career.

Kiender, Yves Klein, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Henk Peeters, Otto Piene, Uli Pohl, Arnulf Rainer, Wolfgang Schmidt, and Günther Uecker.

¹²⁵ Martin Engler, "Schwarze Tafeln und der Tod des Autors/Black Panels and the Death of the Author," in *Peter Roehr* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag GmbH & Co KG, 2009). Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Peter Roehr – Werke aus der Sammlung at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt*, 28 November 2009 – 7 March 2010. 16.

¹²⁶ The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Roehr's city newspaper, was particularly thorough in covering artistic events around Germany, France, and Italy. Fluxus, Biennales, Group Zero activities were also reviewed in several of the major German papers, but particularly the *Deutsche Zeitung* and *Die Welt* from 1961 to 1964. See also: Wieland Schmied, "Bibliographie: Otto Piene," in *Mack, Piene, Uecker* (Hannover: Kestner-Gesellschaft, 1965), unpaginated. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at Galerie Schmied. Unpaginated.

¹²⁷ "Durch Seide lernte ich die galerie d kennen und damit simmat, kowallek, goepfert, meisenbug. eine zeitlang besuchte ich regelmäßig jede eröffnung bei d und auch in anderen galerien. Aber natürlich interessierte mich das, was bei d geschah, am meisten." Peter Roehr, Untitled note, undated. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.59. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

¹²⁸ Christian Megert and Harry Kramer, exhibition leaflets from the galerie d, Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, 1963.

In August of 1963, the landmark exhibition *Europäische Avant-Garde* was designed and executed by Kowallek and Simmat and held in the large, central space of the Schwannenhalle des Römers in Frankfurt. The term “Avant Garde” was critically deployed to cover all new groups such as “Neue Europäische Schule,” “Arte Programma,” “Neue Tendenzen,” “Anti-Peinture,” and Zero, under which artists Klein, Piene, Mack, Uecker, Castellani, Pol Bury, Peeters, and Goepfert among others were included (Figure 19). As Simmat wrote in the introduction:

The name avant-garde, they feel as a title of honor, although they know that it is only needed here and there to remunerate the value of their work. Belonging to the avant-garde is for them not a question of age, but of mental attitude. [...] And it would be something out of the ordinary, if at the same time it was a place where avant-garde art and the public are in constant, living contact.¹²⁹

Europäische Avant-Garde capitalized on Simmats and Kowallek’s personal connections with artists like Mack and Piene to bring the most current artists to the city.

The categorization into artistic groups of the Avant Garde, as Simmats, Kowallek, and artists in the show understood, meant association with certain aesthetic concerns, whether they were rooted in painting or a new program of materials. As Simmat explained: “Like all young styles, they make use of new methods and place new demands on the viewer. They demand a different, advanced aesthetic consciousness.”¹³⁰ The debates circulating in West Germany were brought to Frankfurt through figures like Kowallek, Simmat, and Goepfert. These personal associations with the European Zero group resulted in several exhibitions in Frankfurt. Above all

129 “Den Namen Avantgarde empfindet sie als Ehrentitel, obwohl sie weiß, das er hier und dort nur gebraucht wird, um Bedanken gegen den Wert ihrer Arbeiten anzumeiden. Zugehörigkeit zur Avantgarde ist für sie auch nicht Frage des Lebensalters, sondern der geistigen Haltung... Und es wäre etwas Außergewöhnliches, wenn es sich dabei zugleich um eine Stätte handelte, an der avantgardistische Kunst und Publikum in beständigem, lebendigem Kontakt stehen.” William Simmat, “Neue europäische Schule, Arte Programmata, Neue Tendenzen, Anti-Peinture, Zero,” in *Europäische Avant-Garde*, (Frankfurt am Main: Druckerei Hugo Hassmüller, 1963), 2. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name at Schwanenhalle des Römers, Frankfurt am Main 9 July –August 11, 1963.

130 “Wie alle jungen Stilrichtung bedient sie sich neuartiger Methoden, stellt an den Betrachter neue Anforderungen Sie verlangt von ihm ein anderes, fortgeschrittenes ästhetisches Bewußtsein.” Ibid.

the promotion of the Avant-Garde in Frankfurt defined a local space for increasing international activities. However, as one author noted at the end of his review of the show, “There are various avantgardes, and they heatedly feud among themselves.”¹³¹ Nonetheless, a cohesion between these groups was facilitated by a curatorial vision that recognized a new art that had “already taken its place in art history.”¹³²

Yet critical reception of Zero in Frankfurt, and overall in West Germany, was mixed from the beginning. Both Megert and Kramer had previously shown with the Zero artists in Frankfurt and elsewhere and their ideas mirrored larger Zero tendencies. The mobile, kinetic sculptures of Kramer seemingly confounded a reviewer for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ): “Meaning, sense, sensation are not sought, because nothing is more suspicious to Zero people than ‘statements.’ So the cogs doze off, aimless, unintentional – a nervous perpetuum mobile that does not have to do any work, does not release energy.”¹³³ The anonymous writer was most likely referring to Kramer’s “Automobile Sculptures,” which were constructed out of wire, mesh, gears, and wheels that moved and spun (Figure 20). The spindly constructions bridged the gap between Informel gestures and the mechanized, kinetic realm. The curious title of the “automobile” that moves but does not go anywhere could refer to the Duchampian joke of the Bicycle wheel upended. To the press, the works appeared as somewhat trite, lackluster derivations of Kinetic Art in general. The backlash of critics and museums against Zero in Germany was especially misapprehended in light of the ZERO artists’ recognition in the American art scene, where they received favorable

131 Quoted in Kemfert, “Hermann Goepfert and ZERO,” 308.

132 “Die neue Kunst hat sich ihren Platz in der Kunstgeschichte schon erobert.” Simmat, “Neue europäische Schule,” 2.

133 “Bedeutung, Sinn, Empfindung wird nicht erstrebt, denn nichts ist den Zero-Leuten verdächtiger als ‘Aussagen’. So dösen die Rädchen vor sich hin, ziellos, absichtslos- ein nervöses Perpetuum mobile, das keine Arbeit leisten muß, keine Energie freisetzt.” E.M.D., “Zeitgenössische Kunst in Frankfurt: Galerien regen zu Werkstattgesprächen an,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 March, 1963. Archive Rochus Kowallek, Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels e.V., Cologne.

acceptance on the East Coast. Donald Judd saw the works in New York at the Howard Wise Gallery and wrote in his review that they were among “the best in Europe.”¹³⁴ Two years after Kowallek’s *Europäische Avant-Garde* exhibition in Frankfurt and Zero’s debut in the United States, the Museum of Modern Art in New York mounted *The Responsive Eye* exhibition, and curator William Seitz featured many of the same European artists amended with American offerings.¹³⁵ The exhibition received widespread public attention with a recorded an attendance over 180,000, and was the subject of a documentary film by the young filmmaker Brian De Palma.

In addition to ZERO, a further and important reference point in examining the background of Roehr’s artistic experience were the numerous Fluxus events occurring in West Germany. From September 1 to 23, 1962, the Museum Wiesbaden presented *FLUXUS: Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik*, the first presentation of Fluxus in Europe. Clemens Weiler, then director of the museum, accepted composer George Maciunas’s proposal to perform the latest American compositions, such as works from John Cage, Benjamin Patterson, and Jackson Mac Low and others over the scheduled time. Other events quickly spread to Düsseldorf, Cologne, Paris, Copenhagen, and Amsterdam, and the ragtag, loosely connected collective of collaborators came to include German artists such as Wolf Vostell, Josef Beuys, and Tomas Schmit. In 1964 the University of Frankfurt’s Studio Gallery would host several Fluxus events featuring Wolf Vostell, and a two-part performance by Charlotte Mormon and Nam June Paik. Fluxus performances, like the New Realists, promoted a dissolution of artistic traditions through the use of systems that

134 Tina Rivers Ryan, “ZERO’s American Debut and its Legacy,” in *The Artist as Curator: Collaborative Initiatives in the International Zero Movement 1957-1967*, edited by Tiziana Caianiello and Mattijs Visser (Düsseldorf: ZERO Foundation, 2015), 365.

135 See Brian De Palma, *The Responsive Eye*, (New York: Zodiac Associates Productions, 1965), documentary film, 26 min.

utilized everyday actions and objects and saw itself in many ways as a continuation of Dada principles. The Frankfurt gallerist Dorothea Loehr promoted a similar action event in her “Bloomsday 64” event on July 26, 1964. Loehr’s “Bloomsday 64 Happening” poster (Figure 21) advertised “Actions, Agit Pop, de-Collage Happening.” The accompanying artist book qua catalog featured a manifesto by Stanley Brouwn, a de-collage by Wolf Vostell, texts by Franz Mon, and a photograph by Tomas Schmit. A performance occurred at 8:30 pm in the courtyard of Galerie Dorothea Loehr.

One year earlier, Bazon Brock presented the precursor of the Happening in the plaza of Frankfurt. He passed out an edition of a “newspaper” that took the iconic format of the *Bild Zeitung*, but one in which the Frankfurt-based artist Thomas Bayrle had meticulously replaced all the proper nouns with the name “Bloom” (Figure 22). In both the 1964 performance, “Bloom” was intended to be a direct reference to the principal character in James Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom: as a repetitive personality, “Bloom” supplanted the everyday signifier. In the “Bloomsday 64 Happening,” the name Bloom adorned the walls of the courtyard background for the event:

It was supposed to be a murder festival with all sorts of simultaneous, tumultuous actions, into which visitors were most willingly drawn in by the staged organizers of such absurd games – here: Vostell, Brock, Brown [sic]. The best and sharpest polemical impression (we only saw the television film) left Bazon Brock's pan-German parlor with barbed wire over all furniture, over plates and forks; with the slogans of the day, the *Bild* newspaper, whose agitation was meant there, also provided the text for the chorales in the nocturnal farm of the Loehr gallery.¹³⁶

136 “Es soll ein Mordsfest gewesen sein mit allerlei simultanen, tumultuösen actions, in welche die Besucher von den verseierten Inszenatoren solch absurder Spiele– hier: Vostell, Brock, Brown (sic)–bereitwilligste sich hineinsiehe ließen. Besten und schärfsten polemischen Eindruck (wir sahen nur den Fernsehfilm) hinterließ Bazon Brocks gesamtdeutsche Bürgerstube mit Stacheldraht über alles Mobiliar, über Teller und Gabel; die *Bild-Zeitung*, deren Hetze da gemeint war, lieferte mit den Slogans von Tag auch den Text für die Choräle im nächtlichen Bauernhof der Galerie Loehr...” Hanno Reuther, “Kunstbrief aus der Rhein-Main-Region,” *Das Kunstwerk*, 9 no.4 (October 1964): 46.

Brock also circulated Bayrle's newspaper in the city center. Although it is unknown if Roehr saw the Bloomsday performance at the time, his method of repetition echoed the experiments of these events, particularly in his 1963 turn to the use of text and his naming of Montages discussed below.¹³⁷

The events occurring in Frankfurt must also be seen in light of the Concrete Poetry movement, which emanated from Germany to all over the world. This "supranational" movement as Eugen Gomringer claimed, was facilitated by the ubiquity of the typewriter, available to people across almost all languages and cultures.¹³⁸ Concrete Poetry took poetry as its basic visual form, less reliant on meaning of the words but rather on the words as marks themselves, as the material transmitted to the viewer or reader through its structure. Emerging out of typographical experiments in prewar movements like the Bauhaus, Dadaism, and Futurism, postwar Concrete Poetry advanced investigations into reality through a semiotic mark on paper.¹³⁹

As Craig Saper points out, these Concrete Poems speak to a reader already besieged with the communication forms of mass-media, and artist publications perpetuated this movement rapidly through prints of their own.¹⁴⁰ Members of various movements in Art Nouveaux, Zero, and Fluxus experimented with forms found in Concrete Poetry, including artists directly linked to Frankfurt like Wolfgang Schmidt, who designed the catalog layout for the 1963 *Europäische Avant-Garde* exhibition. Bayrle's "Bloom" newspaper, and its circulation in Frankfurt in 1963 and

137 Gerda Wendermann pointed to the influence of these performances and Roehr's work, Gerda Wendermann, *Peter Roehr 1944–1968. Die Sammlung Paul Maenz, (Band 2): Neues Museum Weimar*. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000), 25. Her assertion was disputed by Martin Engler in his later essay "Schwarze Tafeln Und Der Tod Des Autors/Black Panels and the Death of the Author" for the 2009 exhibition catalog on Peter Roehr at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. Yet Paul Maenz noted earlier in 1977 that Roehr had always maintained an interest in theater, particularly the ideas of Bertolt Brecht, and he had in 1966 requested material from *Diskus* on Happenings and Fluxus events covered in the newspaper. See also chapter 4 in this regard.

138 Barrie Tullet, *Typewriter Art: A Modern Anthology* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2014), 40.

139 Craig J. Saper, *Networked Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 74.

140 Ibid.

1964, also gave precedence to printed typographical experiments, which fit into a growing desire for art objects that could be easily issued and acquired. The Frankfurt student newspaper *Diskus* published works of Concrete Poetry, including a discussion of Concrete Poetry and advertisements in 1966.¹⁴¹ Literary and art magazines across Germany and Switzerland also published Concrete Poetry experiments: *Bel Esprit/Schönegeist* based in Hannover, published the work of Timm Ulrichs, titled *Serielle Formationen* (Figure 23). His striated use of letters build upon each other, suggesting a nearly architectural shape of significance. Ulrichs' forms, struts and spires overlap as marks on the page, repeating distinct letters as construction elements. Although Ulrichs worked independently, his use of letters as constructions intersected with the Stuttgart School, headed by Max Bense and Eugen Gomringer, which had developed Concrete art into an entire international program, which also extended to Frankfurt.

Bense, in particular, was a favorite among artists around the galerie d and dato scene in Frankfurt. As Gerda Wendermann explained: "In line with Roehr's concept, he [Bense] called for the 'autonomous use of written language constituents' and dispensed with both typographic hierarchies and a reading chronology, which can still be found quite often in concrete poetry."¹⁴² Roehr's experimentations with the autonomous use of elements within a structure both resisted and upheld the ideas of Concrete Poetry. As I explain below, this was especially evident in the text works he soon developed, which would provide a crucial link to his developing ideas.

Against this historical context of Nouveaux Réalistes, ZERO, Fluxus, Concrete Poetry and other tendencies, Roehr's 1962 experiments can be seen as already developing a visual aesthetic

¹⁴¹ Ulrich Luetjohann, "Konkrete Poesie und Werbung," *Diskus*, October 1966. 13.

¹⁴² "In Übereinstimmung mit Roehrs Konzept forderte er die 'autonome Verwendung von schriftsprachlichen Konstituenten' und verzichtet sowohl auf typografische Hierarchien wie auch auf eine Lese-Chronologie, die in der Konkreten Poesie noch recht häufig zu finden ist." Wendermann, *Peter Roehr*, 29.

that best represented his concept of “simple, precise, unpretentious serialization.”¹⁴³ The concept of simple serialization removes the spectacle of a unique object, and instead allows the viewer to focus on the single, unremarkable element in a serial organization, like that which can be found in Concrete Poetry. It was not chance or the discrepancies of the hand, but rather the precision of the identical elements that accomplished the unpretentious seriality. While the quasi-grid format and redundant wording of “Drucksache” in *Untitled FR-22* (Figure 14) discussed earlier suited Roehr’s developing program, he disliked its irregular result, and began to search for more mechanical means of imprinting which he began with works like the Grafik *Untitled (GR-1)* (Figure 24), where he punched a grid of holes on a paper punch card. This allowed him to create multiples in themselves by using the same material basis.

Roehr fully formatted his works in a visual system of serial, identical grids when he acquired a typewriter in 1963, thus cementing the first series of “Montages.”¹⁴⁴ The categorical distinction between the Graphics (GR), Typed Montages (TY), and Text Montages (TE), were slight, but important.¹⁴⁵ The typewriter Graphics (GR) like *Untitled (GR-7)* (Figure 25) not only multiplied the mark, but were also multiples in a series themselves.¹⁴⁶ The Typed Montages (TY), for example *Untitled (TY-84)* (Figure 26) consisted of the repetition of a single letter. The Text Montages (TE), seen in *Untitled (TE-7)* (Figure 27) repeated phrases drawn from popular culture,

143 Peter Roehr, “Notes on the Montages,” in *Peter Roehr*, ed. Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris, (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 28. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt in association with Schriften zur Sammlung des Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

144 Kunz, “Interview with Paul Maenz,” 16. Maenz notes that Roehr did this in 1965 and retroactively applied this designation to all the works from the 1963 typewriter montages forward.

145 In every catalog of Roehr’s work, a separate section clarifies the distinctions of these works. The particular classifications I have used here are from the most recent documentation of his archive. As it is noted in the 1991 *Peter Roehr* catalogue, Paul Maenz designed the system of designations (abbreviation of the type of work – number) after Roehr’s death, while Roehr left all his works untitled in his lifetime; or alternatively, with dates of the works’ production.

146 The graphic works were hectographs, also known as a jellygraph, that were created by using a gelatin plate to copy and reproduce paper documents.

although here Roehr's grid was much less apparent as an organizational structure. With the Typed Montages, like *Untitled (TY-84)* (Figure 26) from 1964, Roehr limited the structural field in order to further suspend the mark of repetition in conjunction with its identical surroundings. In this Typed Montage, the letter "e" is repeated with very little variance in an almost perfectly square grid. While Roehr still encountered minor aberrations in the keystroke, the repeated "e" loses its function as a letter in sequence: it becomes a building block of repetition, rather than of contextual meaning. Like the visual unity of the Concrete poem, Roehr's Text Montages demonstrated that a letter in repetition is not subsumed to an indiscernible extreme but presented more fully balanced as a unit of structure.

Indeed, Roehr's Text Montages (TE), at times followed a similar grid pattern to the Typed Montages (TY), but also took up variations in redundancy. As *Untitled (TE-7)* (Figure 27) from 1963 demonstrates, Roehr chose to focus on the serial repetition of a word or saying. In *Untitled (TE-7)*, the word "frei" ("free") is typed repeatedly in the grid format, in the same manner as his Typed Montages like *Untitled (TY-84)* (Figure 27). Although Roehr had experimented with the single word "Drucksache" grid in his early works like *Untitled (FR-22)* (Figure 14), the typewriter displayed less variation than that of a hand-pressed stamp. The typewriter keystroke not only evenly applied ink on the surface of the paper, but also conformed strictly to the grid format.

In Text Montages like *Untitled* (Figure 28) Roehr made a slight variation on his main, gridded theme. He instead focused on serial repetition of the same phrase "Alles für unsere/ sozialistische Republik/ zum Nutzen/ für die Gesellschaft/ zum Nutzen/ für jeden einzelnen." ("All for our/ socialist Republic/ to the benefit/ for the society/ to benefit/ for every single person.") The source of this catchphrase was a political slogan for the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) National Front (NF), the political structure that controlled mass organizations and political parties

under Socialist rule in East Germany since 1961. In political propaganda posters such as seen in an example from 1963 (Figure 29), the drastic results of Roehr's simple and effective method are clear. In the NF poster, a benevolent worker welcomes the viewer into a socialist utopia, where everything is to the benefit of every single person. The interplay between image and text is seemingly inextricable.

Yet the contextual imagery has been excised from Roehr's Text Montage. The form of the Montage effectively echoes the display of the text as the viewer would read, or even, chant. The repetitious structure of the presentation is broken up into a stanza form of "1, 2, 3, 4." The editors of *Schöngest/Bel Esprit* added the numbers after Roehr submitted the work. Without the attending imagery, the text becomes abstracted, undefinable: to which socialist republic does this refer? In the aesthetic presentation of the simple text, the Montage calls into question the associations of the text to its subjective meaning. An undated note, written in the third person, clarified his idea:

Röhr's [sic] texts are the reproduction of a second reality, arbitrarily changed by a change of location. This change can be seen as the creative act. The confrontation of the element with its peers, is fixed in a literary environment and thus perceived literarily. Only in this way is it possible to perceive analytically extra-literary word and sentence combinations in literary terms.¹⁴⁷

Roehr was selective in his choice of early source texts for his Text Montages in that they all seemed to have had some public pronouncement. In *Untitled (TE-20)* (Figure 30), Roehr repeats the text of a Classifieds ad for an express cleaning service searching for a pants presser (*Hosenpresser*). Roehr repeats the text of the ad including the pay and the name of the company. By typing the

147 "Röhrs Texte sind die Reproduktion einer zweiten Wirklichkeit, willkürlich verändert durch einen Standortwechsel. Dieser Wechsel ist als die creative Tat anzusehen. Die Konfrontation des Elementes mit seinesgleichen, fixiert in einer literarischen Umgebung und somit literarisch wahrgenommen. Nur so ist es möglich, analytisch außerliterarische Wort- und Satzkombinationen literarisch wahrzunehmen." Unknown, "In welchem Verhältnis stehen Röhrs Arbeiten zur Realität?" Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.92. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

same thing in a redundant manner – especially phrases that would be repeated on the street or disseminated on a mass scale – Roehr was attempting to dislodge these words and phrases from subjective implication despite their fundamental grounding in an everyday, yet second, reality. Rather than reinforcing meaning, here, redundancy dissolves meaning. As Roehr described: “Characteristic of the texts is their non-directedness, the renunciation of constructed dynamics, tension, climax.”¹⁴⁸ As if in response, Lippert would later write, “[i]n place of new formal languages and internal relationships of tension, there is the undramatic totality of the whole.”¹⁴⁹ What Roehr seems to be describing, in “the non-directedness” of the texts was the flattening of intentionality and sentimental appeal, as well as the visual field, through repetition.

Roehr’s first production of works on the typewriter coincided with the postwar explosion of artistic publications, and those produced around West Germany and international centers circulated in Frankfurt. That graphic works could be rapidly reproduced and widely disseminated through publications gave weight to the potential “Art” had to reach audiences more broadly. Furthermore, the reproducibility of the printing would later open up avenues of distribution that would afford a more democratic way of acquiring of art. Although his typewriter works would not be published until June 1964, when they appeared in *Poetarium III*, the machinations of print in Frankfurt had a profound effect on his output and ideas moving forward. Yet, the “creative act” was found in the change of context, a different yet simultaneous “reality” to the world from which the sources of the Texts were drawn. The Text Montages, which Roehr would continue to produce throughout his career, represent the first foray into a theoretical stance, one that I argue appeals to the concurring rise of cybernetics.

¹⁴⁸ Roehr, “Notes from the Estate,” 29.

¹⁴⁹ Lippert, “Concerning Condensation and Evaporation,” 19.

2.5 Cybernetics and Technological Reproducibility

In light of the numerous artistic complexities occurring during the early period of Roehr's work up to 1963, several key ideas can be related to his development of the Montages. As explained above, the art scene provided a significant backdrop for Roehr's artistic foundations. However, a significant gap in previous literature on Roehr is an explicit connection among his interests in Zen, the grid form, and an emerging, cybernetic attitude. This section examines the telling connections between these seemingly disparate ideas. As I posit, Roehr's Montages maintained an openness to systems, at first guided by principles from Zen and tendencies of ordering toward technological and mass media forms, which eventually fostered the development of a cybernetic attitude in his later years.

As Roehr noted, his shift from the early works to the creation of the Montages coincided with an intense period of theorization in 1962 and 1963.¹⁵⁰ In one such note from this time, titled "Das Universum..." Roehr muses on the philosophical implications of systems, which "can be thought of as aggregates of individual parts. One begins to understand them when one makes the connection between these parts, the dynamic interaction within the whole organism, the object of the investigation."¹⁵¹ While the discussion of Zen can also be kept in mind, it seems Roehr was also thinking about the effects of systems on objects and "organisms." He evokes the Second Law

150 "Shortly before beginning to make montages – I was then 18 – I had read a pocketbook on Zen Buddhism. It is perhaps not by chance that the first idea for the montages occurred to me at this time. I still remember immediately attaching great importance to the idea of simple, precise, unpretentious serialization...When the idea came to me of making series from already existing materials, I quickly developed an entire programme...Since I was primarily concerned with theorizing – it was in September, 1962 – and the theory rapidly metamorphosed, one a few montages were made..." Roehr, "Notes on the Beginnings of his Work (1965)," 26.

151 "man kann sich Systeme als Aggregate von Einzelteilen vorstellen. Zu verstehen beginnt man sie, wenn man die Verbindung zwischen diesen Teilen, die dynamische Wechselwirkung innerhalb des Gesamtorganismus zum Gegenstand der Untersuchung macht." Peter Roehr, "Das Universum...", dated 1963 and revised again in 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.38, Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

of Thermodynamics in this regard, which according to its principles, energy moves from a state of Chaos to the “Ordering Process” of Entropy.¹⁵² As he stated: “It is therefore advisable to relate cybernetic systems and their self-regulating tendency to stability and regularity to the term Entropy.”¹⁵³

At the end of the document, Roehr notes that the discussion of this system “was perhaps an early attempt to write a theory of the Montages from existing texts,” notably Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* and Stafford Beer’s *Cybernetics and Management*.¹⁵⁴ But arguably, Roehr signals that the idea of cybernetics applies to the system of artistic interactions between object and viewer as well: “For our part, we can transform one system into another. There is also something else, namely certain tendencies in system behavior when the system is left to its own devices.”¹⁵⁵ Although not mentioned directly in his text, I argue that another facilitator for Roehr’s cybernetic synchronism can be found in the ideas of Max Bense, whose influence in Frankfurt was noted in his participation in Rochus Kowallek’s *Galerie d and galerie dato*. Maenz mentions Bense as one of the figures Roehr approached in discussing his works, however, nothing further was

152 Ibid. Norbert Wiener also discussed the function of the Second Law of Thermodynamics already in his 1950 book *The Human Use Of Human Beings*: “Thus the question of whether to interpret the second law of thermodynamics pessimistically or not depends on the importance we give to the universe at large, on the one hand, and to the islands of locally decreasing entropy which we find in it, on the other. Remember that we ourselves constitute such an island of decreasing entropy, and that we live among other such islands. The result is that the normal prospective difference between the near and the remote leads us to give far greater importance to the regions of decreasing entropy and increasing order than to the universe at large.” 39-40.

153 “Nach diesem Modell ist Ordnung „natürlicher“ als Chaos. Daher empfiehlt es sich, kybernetische Systeme und ihre sich selbst regelnde Neigung zu Stabilität und Regelmässigkeit mit dem Begriff -Entropie- in Zusammenhang zu bringen.” Roehr, “Das Universum...”

154 “Der obige Text ist wahrscheinlich ein sehr früher Versuch (Anf. 1963?) aus bereits bestehenden Texten eine Theorie zu den Montagen zu verfassen. Manche Teile sind direkt übernommen, manche leicht abgeändert. Quellen bestimmt unter anderem: Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* Fischer Verlag, ? , *Kybernetik und Management* PR, 65

Die Theorie ist nicht vollendet, es existiert der Anfang einer zweiten, zusammenfassenden, Version.” Ibid.

155 “Wir können unsererseits ein System in ein anderes transformieren. Dazu kommt noch etwas weiteres, nämlich bestimmte Tendenzen des Systemverhaltens, wenn sich das System sich selbst überlassen ist.” Ibid.

stated on the subject.¹⁵⁶ But indeed, Roehr's musing on the ordering process that relates to the entropic Second Law of Thermodynamics provides one hint at the connections Roehr found with Bense and other cybernetic thinkers.

Although he himself did not explicitly state it, Roehr's choice of the word "Montage" to designate organized identical items in sequence also carried a strong relevance to the ideas found in Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility."¹⁵⁷ Benjamin's essay was influential in not only West German artistic circles, but also philosophical and political groups after its reprint in 1963. An idea central to both Roehr and Benjamin was the way in which the reproducibility of the medium influences the perception of the viewer. The "authenticity of a thing" relies on its "historical testimony" and vice versa; both contribute to the idea of the "aura" of the work, which "withers in the age of mechanical reproduction."¹⁵⁸ This recalls Fontana's *Concetto Spaziale* or Klein's Blue paintings: in piercing (Fontana) and deepening the space (Klein), three dimensions emerge from two, thus in a way arresting the historical parameters of the canvas support, but also creating a time-less space that neither moves forwards nor backwards. The withering away of the unique aura of the image – the text, at this point in Roehr's work – as it appeals to the masses is integral to the development of a new communication and connection through the reproduced work. Perhaps Roehr was particularly struck by

¹⁵⁶ Maenz, "Epilogue," 100.

¹⁵⁷ Lippert, "Concerning Condensation and Evaporation," 17. Lippert indicates that Roehr highlighted and underlined specific passages in Benjamin's essay, which was re-printed in July of 1963 by edition suhrkamp. Wiehager also notes in her essay "The Emergence of the Generation of '67" that this was the volume found in Roehr's personal archive. In *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017). Paul Maenz has also noted that in 1965, during the production of the Photo Montages, Roehr began to use the term "Montage" to designate his works, retroactively including the Text and Typo Montages from 1963. Paul Maenz, "Epilogue," 99. To Roehr, Benjamin was relevant to the work from this time, whether or not Roehr had read "The Work of Art" during or after 1963.

¹⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility," in *Illuminations*, trans Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968 [1935]), 221.

Benjamin's formulation that "the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced."¹⁵⁹ Invariably, this method of communication was technological and social in character.

Benjamin writes, "[t]he masses are a matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art is issued today in a new form. Quantity has been transformed into quality. The greatly increased mass of participants has produced a change in the mode of perception."¹⁶⁰ Lippert notes that Benjamin's phrase "Quantity has been transformed into Quality" was underlined in Roehr's personal copy of "The Work of Art" and this phrase would also be repeated in the catalog essay for *Serielle Formationen* in 1967, (as discussed further in chapter 4).¹⁶¹ In Roehr's Text Montages, the process of mass automation mirrors mass consumerism, and the sphere of art mirrors both. In tune with the contemporary elimination of the auratic character of works of art, cybernetics opened up new possibilities for artists and their interaction with their audience.

In Benjamin's Weimar era and in Roehr's postwar era, the culture of machine automation was not only legible but unconsciously absorbed by the masses. Both understood that the technological medium held no distinguishing features aligned to existing notions of the uniqueness of art. Benjamin wrote, "[t]he manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well."¹⁶² The historical developments which Benjamin references are not the solipsistic confines

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Lippert, "Concerning Condensation and Evaporation," 20. See also: Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 239.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 222.

of *l'art pour l'art*, but rather an understanding of the inextricable social functions of art.¹⁶³ In Benjamin's formulation, the work of art has been severed from its subservience to ritual because the medium of social import has irrevocably changed in the age of technological reproducibility: "the adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception."¹⁶⁴ Art, removed of authenticity, now discharges a particular mass belief in the medium, an acutely salient point for Roehr.

The potency of Roehr's Montages rests not only in their loss of the authentic aura through repetition and the formal constraints of the grid, but also by their use of the machinations most prescient to modern society. The literal basis for Roehr's Montages were items already mass-produced and, theoretically, infinitely reproducible. The viewer's perception and recognition thus rely on the montage's material and its operation within the formal properties of the grid. Roehr's Montages are an attempt, through seriality and repetition in the grid, to unravel the pointed cultural associations a viewer has to objects and words through their transformation in a new given system of technological realities.

In order to maintain both Roehr's formal conception of simple serialization and explore the inherently social connections in the Montages' communication, a discussion of the work must be situated not only in the materials of their creation but also in the mechanized repetition of the object within a grid structure. Even when he did not use an explicit grid structure, as in the Typed Montages like *Untitled (TE-20)* (Figure 30), the single part is reflective of the larger whole, which

163 "For when, with the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction (namely photography, which emerged at the same time as socialism), art felt the approach of that crisis which a century later has become unmistakable, it reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*- that is with a theology of art. This in turn gave rise to a negative theology, in the form of an idea of "pure" art, which rejects not only any social function but any definitions in terms of a representational content." Ibid.

164 Ibid., 223.

was further suspended through repetition. Formally, the vocabulary of the grid offers simple serialization as an organizing structure, and it avoids imposing meaning in exterior context. Aesthetically, the organizing structure of the grid becomes a condition in which the individual identical elements are not utilized to create meaning through outside context, but rather became its own context. Roehr's recurrent use of the grid pattern indicated that this structure provided him with the greatest formal flexibility within a system of constraint. A grid pattern implies a temporal and spatial simultaneity in opposition to the causal nature of linear progression.

Indeed, a particular characteristic of Modern art, as Rosalind Krauss pointed out in her 1979 article "Grids," is the movement away from the subjectivity of the artist through the various formal possibilities the grid provides. Her analysis draws heavily from Structuralist methodology, which, like the grid, embodies the contradictory Modernist project. As she outlines, the grid is an organization that imposes an inner relation between its constituent objects: "flattened, geometricized, ordered, it is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal. It is what art looks like when it turns its back on nature."¹⁶⁵ The use of the grid in Modern art fosters a decisive break with past art by removing semblances of perspective, depth, but most particularly of narrative. Krauss situated the structure of the grid as analogous to the burrowing down – via the vertical columns as historical interjections – along the linear timeline of myths. Rather than the sequential unfolding through time and space, these vertical columns "are a way of unearthing the unmanageable opposition that promoted the making of the myth in the first place."¹⁶⁶ However, while acknowledging the pure materialism of the grid, Krauss argues against the focus on the reality of that very materialism. In a process similar to psychoanalysis, "where the 'story' of a life is similarly seen as an attempt to

¹⁶⁵ Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* 9, (Summer 1979), 52.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

resolve primal contradictions that nevertheless remain in the structure of the unconscious. Because they are there as repressed elements, they function to promote endless repetitions of the same conflict.”¹⁶⁷

She continues: “By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is presented as mere fragment. [...] [T]he grid operates from the work of art outward, compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame.”¹⁶⁸ But rather than the psychoanalytical subject of Krauss’s investment, Roehr’s position once again relates back to the Zen idea of “opening the mental eye in order to look into the very reason of existence,”¹⁶⁹ an idea he sought through the suppression of content and subjectivity in the grid. As he wrote in 1965, “the picture could expand itself in all directions and continue, being itself endless – but then it would be not this but another picture. Therefore the selection of objects and the decision how many to use are the only arbitrary acts of the producer.”¹⁷⁰ Following this thought, the grid indicates a world beyond the edges of its frame, a world which provided the material possibilities of this activation can only occur if the viewer recognizes there is no release, no beyond the frame, at the same time acknowledging the world beyond the frame *as* the illusory world.

Krauss maintains that the grid contains a metaphysical component even in modernist art. “The grid’s mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time it provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction).”¹⁷¹ Roehr’s Montages both uphold and resist this formulation. For Roehr’s grids, a “release into belief” should not to be understood along the Judeo-Christian or

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 60.

¹⁶⁹ Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, 8.

¹⁷⁰ Roehr, “Notes from the Estate,” 29.

¹⁷¹ Krauss, “Grids,” 54.

psychological implications Krauss aligns with Modern art, but more aptly stated, the grid is the Zen release *from* belief. Although Krauss writes that “one of the most modernist things about it [the grid] is its capacity to serve as a paradigm or model for the antidevelopmental, the antinarrative, the antihistorical,”¹⁷² but her turn to the psychoanalytical overlooks other possibilities for the grid, namely, in its ability to serve as a matrix for interaction.¹⁷³

I use the term “matrix” to describe Roehr’s grids both in terms of their sociological import – as a something within or from which something else originates, develops, or takes form – and the structural mathematical definition of a rectangular arrangement of elements into rows and columns.¹⁷⁴ As a structural form, a matrix opens up multimodal and dynamic possibilities of perceiving the parts and the whole, a possible transformation of “one system into another.”¹⁷⁵ It bears repeating that in Benjamin’s formulations, “the masses are a matrix,”¹⁷⁶ and Roehr’s grids are the display of a literal matrix of the elements themselves by reflecting their constituent parts, while signaling beyond their parts to a totalizing, perhaps social, organism.

Indeed, in Wendermann’s cursory examination, Roehr’s Text- and Typed-Montages were in parallel with the Concrete Poetry movement in Stuttgart.¹⁷⁷ Bense’s involvement with Rochus Kowallek’s Frankfurt exhibitions was due in part to his groundbreaking work on Information Aesthetics, in which he posited a structuralist, mathematical theoretical approach to art based on principles of semiotic systems developed in the earlier 20th century. According to Bense, the

¹⁷² Ibid., 64.

¹⁷³ See also Paul L. Snelson II, “Emergence of the Cybernetic Art Matrix: The Story of the Grid,” in *Cybernetics and Human Knowing*, Vol. 26 (2019), no. 1. 98. Snelson explicated Roy Ascott’s formulation of the cybernetic art matrix: “This concept is particularly relevant because it is not the actual resulting material object of a grid whether realized in two or three or including time, four dimensions that is the crucial piece of the art. It is the metadata, the idea, the concept and how it changes our inner mindscape as a tool of visualization and imagination.”

¹⁷⁴ “Matrix,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

¹⁷⁵ Roehr, “Das Universum...”

¹⁷⁶ Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 39.

¹⁷⁷ Wendermann, *Peter Roehr*, 26.

assessment of works of art could be measured by a rational aesthetic outside subjective guesswork, amounting to the “Information” contained within an aesthetic object. Crucially, Bense linked semiotics to the mathematician Claude E. Shannon's purely technical information theory, where he adapted the concepts of linguistic signs to the problem of signal loss in technological communication. Bense had already expressed interest in the technological possibilities of Walter Benjamin,¹⁷⁸ but as a link between the technical notion and the human notion of communication, Bense also built on Norbert Wiener's cybernetic theory of feedback and “negentropy”, whereby some proportion of the output signal of a system is passed to the input. In communicating information, negentropy pushes towards a system of order rather than disorder, a principle that Roehr explicitly tended towards from his earliest theorizations.

In his development of Information Aesthetics, Bense devised a model for theorizing how the process of art production, consumption, and criticism is procedurally related in terms that suggest computation.¹⁷⁹ As he examined in a 1958 essay published in *Das Kunstwerk*, the technical world and the aesthetic world are inextricable for humanity:

The supply of information requires, in order to exist, a technical reality to replace natural reality and that in the formation of this new artificial world, in addition to vital compulsion, spiritual compulsion is not hidden. Technical reality, on the one hand, is always the expression of a vital compulsion and, on the other hand, the expression of a spiritual compulsion, and that is the situation, the concern and the hope, the environment, for humanism and civilization...¹⁸⁰

178 See Max Bense, “Über Walter Benjamin und seine Literatur,” in *Merkur*, February 1951, vol. 5, issue 36, 181–184, and “Exkurs über Walter Benjamin und Ludwig Wittgenstein,” in *Programmierung des Schönen. Allgemeine Texttheorie und Textästhetik*. In the series *Aesthetica* IV. (Baden-Baden, Agis: 1960), 46–51.

179 Christoph Klütsch, “Computer Graphic-Aesthetic Experiments between Two Cultures,” 421.

180 “Zufuhr an Information bedarf, um existieren können, an die Stelle der natürlichen Realität eine technische Realität gesetzt hat und daß in der Ausbildung dieser neuen künstlichen Welt neben dem vitalen Zwang auch der geistige Zwang nicht verborgen bleibt. Technische Realität, das ist auf der einen Seite also immer der Ausdruck eines vitalen Zwangs und auf der anderen Seite auch der Ausdruck eines geistigen Zwanges, und das ist die Lage, die Sorge und die Hoffnung, die Umwelt, der Humanismus und die Zivilisation...” Max Bense, “Technik und Ästhetik,” *Das Kunstwerk* 3, no. 7 (September 1957): 3.

The tone of Bense's essay echoes Wiener's earlier discussion *The Human Use of Human Beings* from 1950. However, Bense's formulations provided the theoretical component to Concrete Poetry, wherein words were transformed into aesthetic, graphical signs. Particularly in a Montage like Roehr's *Untitled (TY-84)* (Figure 26), the "e" is identified as the only element within the grid's organization. But the very materiality of the repeated "e" is released from the external world and, at the same time, cannot be severed from the material world. It simply exists in its own separate system of organization, yet a mirror reflective of the technical world. Bense's ending of "Technik und Ästhetik" provides a clear way forward in this regard:

Art in technical reality is, if not all deceiving, subject to an increasing process of cultural and civilizational integration, and in this respect a new, great phase for art has apparently only just begun. Perhaps this phase of the penetration of art, more precisely the penetration of the aesthetic processes possible for man into his entire environment, in his innermost civilizational actions, is guided by a phase of withdrawal, the disappearance of art in the sense of the free, luxurious, classic-style artwork how the classic metaphysics of systems as an easily scatterable structure of our reflection has withdrawn more and more into science and literature.¹⁸¹

Crucially, Roehr's use of the grid as a matrix allows for a stasis between organization and substance and serves as a pivot to ideas found in art of Roehr's time as a fusion of structure and idea through the systems of their circulation; their own technical reality based in systems.

As I argue, Roehr's grid is not simply the material structure itself, but as a matrix, it also provides its metadata. Bense uses cybernetics as a hinge between the semiotic language and the mathematical; in a similar sense for Roehr, the grid as matrix serves as cipher for his concept of

¹⁸¹ "Kunst in her technischen Realität unterliegt, wenn nicht alles täuscht, einem zunehmenden Prozeß kultureller zivilisatorischer Integration, und in dieser Hinsicht hat offenbar eine neue große Phase für Kunst erst begonnen. Vielleicht ist diese Phase des Eindringens von Kunst, genauer des Eindringens der dem Menschen möglichen ästhetischen Prozesse in seine gesamte Umwelt, in seiner innersten zivilisatorischen Aktionen von einer Phase des Rückzugs, des Verschwindens von Kunst im Sinne des freien, luxuriösen Kunstwerks klassischer Prägung beleitet, ähnlich wie die klassische Metaphysik der Systeme als leichtzerstreubare Gefüge unserer Reflexion sich mehr und mehr in die Wissenschaft und in die Literatur zurückgezogen hat." Ibid., 9–10.

cybernetics. Since in West Germany cybernetics was popularized by the idea of a “utopian” transformation of systems rather than a scientific endeavor,¹⁸² it offered a telling accompaniment to the de-individualization of the artist in society that was emphasized by Roehr’s foundational theories. This basis of cybernetics allowed Roehr to see the potentialities in his program for not only other media, but also broader theoretical applications.

¹⁸² Philipp Aumann, “The Distinctiveness of a Unifying Science: Cybernetics’ Way to West Germany,” *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, 33, no. 4 (April 2011): 19.

3.0 Peter Roehr's Development: Photo Montages, Pop Art, and the Cybernetics of Images

Peter Roehr's interest in the relationship between the mechanical apparatus and products for mass society was apparent in 1963. However, his experiments in his program rapidly eclipsed his earlier work as he gained more access to mass-produced and mass-printed photographic material through his job at the Frankfurt branch of the advertising agency Young & Rubicam. This access allowed Roehr to expand both his production of work – resulting in the Photo Montages – and his understanding of the inherent complexities in theories and ideas surrounding the content of the image. Of significance was his exposure to and adoption of new emerging theories on communication and media studies, primarily emanating from the United States. Advertisement and communication systems were at once integral to Roehr's daily life and offered a deeper meditation on the same processes in an artistic arena. By 1966, Roehr's program had developed into a stage of maturity where his theories and concepts were in tune with the larger artistic world of Pop Art, and through which the resulting works he received offers for solo and group exhibitions.

Roehr's success was due to his production of the Photo Montages, which were composed of identical, mass-produced advertisements, arranged in simple grids like his *Untitled (FO-2)* (Figure 31). That they would prove to be a paradox for his program was due to the undeniably alluring quality of the images of consumption, wherein the tension between structure and content diminished his program of simple, serial forms. Rather than seeing this contradictory success as failure – even if Roehr himself stopped making imagistic works after the Photo-Montages – in this chapter I examine the complexities and paradoxes for Roehr's program in using images in the context of cybernetics. Images, especially the advertisements used in Roehr's program, drew on

the systems of consumption and production, while at the same time diminishing the role of the artist as a creative force. In particular, I examine a large body of his Photo Montages that use the automobile advertisement through Marshall McLuhan's contemporaneous theories on communication and systems as a further instance of Roehr's cybernetic attitude. In the final analysis, Charissa Terranova's formulations of the "prosthetic" cybernetics of the automobile in Conceptual Art allows for a more nuanced view of Roehr's Photo Montages as a matrix of contemporary consciousness.

3.1 Shift of 1964 Influences: American Advertising and Paul Maenz

In a development from the early works of naturally produced objects dropped randomly across a surface, Roehr devoted his Object Montages to meticulously collected identical materials of an industrial character and ordered them in strict grid arrangements. "I followed my theory and collected material. (I asked sales girls in cafes, for instance, to collect milk cans for me)."¹⁸³ The milk can collection resulted in the Object Montage *Untitled (OB-3)* (1963), while others, such as *Untitled (OB-7)* from 1965 (Figure 32), a machine-punched paper "N". As he noted, the production of Object Montages in 1963 and 1964 was "modest" due to the time required to collect materials, but he continued to explore his program through the Typed and Typo Montages (see chapter one).¹⁸⁴ While the repeated letter formation of *Untitled (OB-7)* can be seen in the vein of his

¹⁸³ Peter Roehr, "Notes on the Beginnings of his Work (1965)," in *Peter Roehr*, ed. Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris, (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 26. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, shown at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt in association with Schriften zur Sammlung des Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

simultaneous Typed Montages, the industrially produced, common object added a three-dimensional element to his works. Often, however, Roehr would use materials that he could easily access, such as office supplies, like the paper material used in *Untitled (OB-17)*. The common, impersonal objects were not quite denied their utility— the paper tab markers are indeed placed on paper, the common “N” was placed in rows to suggest sentences, as intended, but also become extra-ordinary in their banal and repetitive principle.

A more pronounced idea of the function of objects in space would increasingly come into play for Roehr’s installations, but the Object Montages also sometimes crossed into the world of advertising. As seen in the unnumbered Object Montage from 1964 or 1965 (Figure 34), the collected, identical beer coasters also doubled as an advertisement for the Henniger brewery and featured the iconic Henniger Turm (Henniger tower) in Frankfurt. Significantly, this work serves as a conceptual bridge for Roehr’s use of the advertisement in the Photo Montages of that same year.¹⁸⁵

Coinciding with the first publication of his Typewriter works in the June 1964 issue of *Poetarium III*, and the slow but steady process of creating the Object Montages, the world of advertisements opened up a significant avenue for his work. While pursuing his technical Master training in sign making in Wiesbaden, Roehr began student work in the mailroom for Young & Rubicam in Frankfurt in 1964. In September of that year, he met a young, up-and-coming Junior Art Director named Paul Maenz. Maenz was struck by Roehr’s reserved demeanor, but his curiosity was piqued by his artistic projects. After some reticence, Roehr showed Maenz his Type and Typo Montage works. At first, Maenz was critical of Roehr’s unwavering adherence to

¹⁸⁵ See Caption for *Untitled (OB-Unnumbered)* in *Peter Roehr*, ed. Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris, (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 52.

seriality and repetition. Like many others, at first Maenz did not understand why Roehr chose sheer redundancy over the play of variation that granted so many other artists a measure of success.¹⁸⁶ But he was eventually swayed by the convictions of Roehr's program, and in early 1965 wrote the introduction for a small portfolio booklet of Roehr's Montages, a crucial part of Roehr's later publicity campaign (Figure 35). While this was done with the goal of finding funding or publicity within a context of inter-cultural connection between West Germany and the U.S., Roehr's anxieties about a public misunderstanding of his work was also at odds with his larger project.

The publicity portfolio featured standard elements of an artist's book in a stylized, professional arrangement. The layout was minimal, with sparse information on the artist himself. The black and white reproductions of Roehr's works contained within the portfolio were carefully selected to feature aspects that highlighted his serial program. As indicated by the accompanying labels, the works were signified by only the dates of their production, rather than their later designation as Montages, which came later in 1965, after the printing of the portfolio.¹⁸⁷ Roehr saw potentialities in commercial rather than highbrow aesthetics as a means of connecting with a mass audience, a desire shared with the concurrent Pop Art rumblings in the United States. As Maenz later indicated to Martin Kunz for Roehr's retrospective in 1978:

This was the time when it was believed that one could bring such things closer to the public if one bypassed the elitist cultural establishment and addressed oneself directly to the public, while availing oneself of

186 Paul Maenz "Epilogue," in *Peter Roehr*, trans. James Whitman (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1977). 100. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at Kunsthalle Tübingen, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, and Frankfurter Kunstverein.

187 Werner Lippert, "Concerning Condensation and Evaporation: Peter Roehr," in *Peter Roehr*, ed., Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris, (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 17. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, shown at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt in association with Schriften zur Sammlung des Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. See also Paul Maenz "Epilogue," 112.

commercial methods...commercialism certainly influenced him [Roehr] for he quite consciously understood it to be a modern popular aesthetic.¹⁸⁸

Maenz was also crucial in first giving Roehr access to mass-produced materials on a much larger scale from projects he worked on such as Maxwell Coffee or American cars, when he was later in New York working at the headquarters of Young & Rubicam. A large amount of image proofs from Maenz would come to form the majority of Roehr's Photo-Montages, several of which can be seen for example, in the Art Directors Club magazine 1965 (Figure 36).¹⁸⁹ In turn, Roehr's aesthetic seems to have influenced Maenz's designs at the ad agency (Figure 37).

Further augmenting Roehr's artistic campaign, Maenz sent him articles from American art publications, including Barbara Rose's article "ABC Art" from the October-November 1965 issue of *Art in America*, and several articles on Warhol.¹⁹⁰ It is also likely that Roehr's introduction to North American theorists, critics, and artists was accelerated by Maenz's connection to New York. To this extent, Roehr was up to date on the progression of American art, and at least open to its potentials more than many others in West Germany, save for those select few in the rising gallery world. Maenz, through his job as well as his own personal interests, forged connections in the New York art world that would prove useful to Roehr's career.¹⁹¹ His artistic connections explain why

188 Martin Kunz, "Interview with Paul Maenz, 5 January 1978," in *Peter Roehr: Work 1962-1968*, (Oxford: Holywell Press Ltd., 1978), 13. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, April 9–May 14, 1978.

189 As the Archive Peter Roehr at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt notes in their remarks, this is the only known example to show the original advertisement template of images that Roehr used for 11 of his Montages. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/32.40. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

190 Copies of these articles were found in Roehr's Archive with hand-written notes from Maenz.

191 Paul Maenz, "Vor 1970 – Der Weg zur Galerie, (1975)" in *Art is to Change: Skizzen aus der Umlaufbahn* (Regensburg: Linderger + Schmid GdbR, 2002), 41. Notably, Maenz and the curator and publisher Willoughby Sharp formed the publication called Kineticism Press in 1966. Maenz also befriended Sol LeWitt, through whom he became acquainted with other artists like Agnes Martin and Carl Andre in the New York scene. Maenz introduced Roehr's work to these artists and galleries around New York.

Roehr's montages were included in the New York Multiples Gallery group exhibition *Prints and Multiples* in 1966, the only showing of his works outside of Europe in his lifetime.

In 1964, working with images provided to him by Maenz as well as ones he collected himself, Roehr began to produce Photo Montages like *Untitled (FO-2)* (Figure 31) in addition to his Text and Object montages. Clearly visible in *Untitled (FO-2)* is the way in which the advertisement images maintained particular qualities that set them apart from Roehr's previous works. The printed image, a partial view of a Maxwell House coffee jar, leaves a patently absorbing impression. The single, identical image of the bright red label of the coffee jar was cropped in the original advertisement photograph, but in Roehr's arrangement in rows of 7 by 3, the lines of the label and jar line up almost imperceptibly with one another. Although the arrangement of mass-produced identical items in a grid was already the central core of Roehr's program, his use of images rather than text or industrial objects opened up a new set of dialogs on materiality and visuality. Roehr's attempt to sever the image from its exterior commercial context brings it into conflict with the advertisement quality of the image and the product itself. As it will be seen, the development of his photomontages represented Roehr's entrée into artistic dialogs beyond the confines of Frankfurt and West Germany.

Roehr, like many others in Germany, was introduced to the work of Andy Warhol through newspaper and magazine articles circulating Pop around 1964, and Roehr specifically encountered the reproduced images of Warhol's works in a November 1964 *Der Spiegel* article on Pop Art at the Wiener Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts in Vienna, Austria.¹⁹² As Maenz later pointed out, Roehr's reaction to seeing works so similar to his own was mixed: "[H]e realized that they were

¹⁹² Gerda Wendermann, *Peter Roehr 1944–1968. Die Sammlung Paul Maenz, (Band 2): Neues Museum Weimar*. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000), 43. See also Christian Ganzenberg and Meredith North, "Chronology," in *Peter Roehr: Field Pulsations*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2018), 279.

still 'illustrations' and, all in all, a 'romantic conception' of art. He held his own ideal in response, namely to become unrecognizable as the author behind the 'no longer invented' images."¹⁹³ The commercial optimism of images in the United States contrasted with the halting realities of recuperation in Postwar West Germany. From the beginning, Pop Art and New Realism were placed into a transatlantic discourse—a discourse that concerned the relationship between the United States' consumption-driven art works and Europe's objective, formal experimentation. Even though Warhol would come to be the figurehead of these debates, both New Realism and Pop avowed their imbrications in economic and social relationships. This conceptual impulse thus necessarily arose in connection with direct social reality, one that extended through the art works and their ability to communicate in systems of media and its patterns. Whether artists followed the ideas of these dominating movements directly, or sought alternative means, the reality of the 1960s was undeniably the mass-produced, mass consumed object.

The deception of the mass product was already signaled by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their essay on the Culture Industry in 1947. In Adorno and Horkheimer's conception, works of popular culture were the very tool of domination; only serious, high art, separated from reality, could attempt to repudiate the negativity of reality. For Herbert Marcuse, on the other hand, high art's separation from reality was the very reason for its failure to enact radical change in reality. As Andreas Huyssen posited, for Marcuse the integration of art into reality and vice versa would signal the elimination of affirmative culture and manifest in a revolution in the patterns of bourgeois life.¹⁹⁴ However, although Huyssen was doubtful if "Marcuse would have interpreted Pop art as a sublation of culture" it was the idealism of Marcuse's position and "his influence on

¹⁹³ Paul Maenz, quoted in Ganzenberg and North, "Chronology," 279.

¹⁹⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 146.

the Pop reception in the Federal Republic [that made] Pop's links with the anti-authoritarian revolt evident."¹⁹⁵ Roehr, in his own artistic endeavors, arguably echoed more of Marcuse's idealism than Adorno's negativity. But Pop art itself also differed from Roehr's project in a number of ways.

As Wendermann explains: "Contrary to Warhol, Roehr employed the available materials without being directly influenced by what is depicted in the respective images, nor did he thematize their content."¹⁹⁶ However, unlike his Text or Object Montages, Roehr's Photo Montages held a particular charm. Maenz stated that "[w]hat appealed to people were exclusively these photo pictures, which they suddenly began to see as a kind of modern publicity art, and the more informed amongst them connected it with Warhol."¹⁹⁷ Roehr himself was explicitly aware of these connections and attempted to distinguish his program from those under the Pop style, when in a November 1965 letter to Ernst Knorr following the exhibition *Pop und Neue Realisten* in Gelsenkirchen he wrote:

It's not, I think, Pop, even if it sometimes has strong similarities. I feel a lot rather as an esthete and formalist, so mentally more in the zone of Zero, but not so nebulous... An advertisement photo and a self-adhesive marker point are both - if one can say so - civilizing events whose form interests me "despite their diversity."¹⁹⁸

In this letter, Roehr purposefully states that his program adheres to a method where formal qualities of the arrangement of materials take precedence, rather than the subjective, emotional responses

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ "Im Gegensatz zu Warhol bediente sich Roehr des verfügbaren Materials, ohne von dem, was die jeweiligen Abbildungen repräsentierten, direkt beeinflusst worden zu sein, wie er auch nicht deren Inhalte thematisierte." Wendermann, *Peter Roehr*, 45.

¹⁹⁷ Kunz, "Interview with Paul Maenz," 13.

¹⁹⁸ "Es ist, glaube ich, auch kein Pop, auch wenn es manchmal starke Ähnlichkeiten aufweist. Ich fühle mich viel eher als Ästhet und Formalist, also geistig mehr in der Zone von Zero, jedoch nicht so nebulös... Ein Werbefoto und ein selbstklebender Markierungspunkt sind beides - wenn man so sagen kann - zivilisatorische Ereignisse, deren Form mich interessiert Trotz ihrer Verschiedenartigkeit." Peter Roehr to Ernst Knorr, 18 November, 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.248. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. Also quoted in Wendermann, *Peter Roehr*, 49.

to a result of one ‘type’ of Montage. As he further stated in the letter to Knorr: “During my first exhibition, I noticed that the audience primarily perceived literary and then aesthetically, while the reverse order seemed to me to be more correct.”¹⁹⁹ And yet, his distinction of his works did not stop the differing categorizations and misunderstanding of his project during this time due to their similarity in style or content, both of which were antithetical to the aims of his production.²⁰⁰ Those very categories are also of help to understand Roehr’s project by what it was not quite: ZERO, New Realism, and especially Pop. As was examined in chapter one, ZERO and the New Realists were connected to a continuation of Modernist artistic aims, which resulted in traditional appeals to the subjectivity of the viewer –be it spiritual, metaphysical, or transcendental– led by the enlightened artistic creator. However, Pop Art presented an entirely different set of appeals; not to sentimentality, but to the product and media consuming public. Roehr did not necessarily see his project in line with either of these aims, but rather throughout 1964 and 1965, began to increasingly find commonalities with their methods of production over the style or movements to which they adhered.

Roehr’s Photo Montages that used advertising images, such as *Untitled (FO-13)* (Figure 38) from 1964, were compelling in regard to the blossoming Pop Art style. *Untitled (FO-13)* repeats an identical image of a woman sipping from a cup of steaming liquid while giving a coy aside glance. Any emotional or sentimental connection is severed by the rigid aesthetic of the grid. But if *Untitled (FO-13)* is compared to Warhol’s *Marilyn Monroe Diptych* (Figure 39) from 1962, the subtle differences in their formal properties are significant. The rigidity of Roehr’s grid disrupts

199 “Bei meiner ersten Ausstellung habe ich bemerkt, daß das Publikum vorwiegend zuerst literarisch und dann erst ästhetisch wahrnimmt, während mir die Reihenfolge umgekehrt richtiger schiene. Falls Sie aber literarische Gedanken dazu haben, nehmen Sie sie natürlich rein.” Ibid.

200 Maenz, “Epilogue,” 102. As Maenz stated: “He did not see himself in the tradition of Neue Tendenzen or Nouveau Réalisme, but he was viewed from this perspective which he in turn found too romantic.”

any further reading of the interior image through exterior context. The repeated image of an anonymous model cannot be reclaimed into a singularly sentimental appeal. There is no variation of the image aside from the visible borders between the identically printed images. *Untitled (FO-13)* dispels the iconic status of the image in its unrelenting, identical repetition.

Conversely, in Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe Diptych* (Figure 39) the iconic status of the movie star is elevated as the high-art subject. Warhol, whose career also started at an advertising firm, was similarly prescient of the communicative power of the advertising image. He amplified the cultural sentimentality of Monroe to the pseudo-religious emblem within the art historical framework of the diptych, fabricating some sort of profane altar. As if reading the image from left to right, Monroe's bright, garishly painted face fades to a washed out black and white trace, reflecting both the manufactured cult of celebrity and its lurid tabloid reproduction. Warhol's use of the grid further evokes a subjective viewing experience: although each element is an identical image, the variation of his printing process releases the unique, singular image from constraint within the whole image. Despite the framework of the grid, its variation in printing and color offer an image of Monroe that is eternally, maybe divinely, enjoyable.

As it was examined in Chapter 1, the formation of Roehr's program was spurred by a Zen approach to materiality and reality, which simultaneously occurred during the time of the New Realists, Zero, and most importantly for this examination, the early formation of a cybernetic attitude towards systems of communication through ideas found in Max Bense's theories of Information Aesthetics. Roehr's career in the advertising world was an undeniable aspect to his production of the Photo Montages, yet the conflict this posed to his overall program would create an insurmountable tension. Significantly, the visual pattern of unaltered images, more so than text or objects, gave Roehr's Photo Montages a glossy, pleasing quality. As it will be seen, Roehr

eventually turned to other mass media options at his disposal, resulting in his later Film and Sound montages. Brought into dialogs with American ideas, the changing social environment created a new visual culture of Pop-Art that was also reflected in increasingly popularized sociological theories. For Roehr, who in August of 1965 took a job in the information department at a Frankfurt ad agency, experimenting with the methods of communication found logical continuation in the ideas of Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian-American media theorist who he also began to read around this time.²⁰¹ In contrast to Adorno and others of the Frankfurt School who voiced deep skepticism about the effects of mass media, the writings of Marshall McLuhan provided most of the general population with a first step into new ideas about media and the breakdown of the hierarchies of art.

McLuhan's formulation of "the medium is the message" was a defining slogan of the 1960s, and very much in tune with cybernetic thinking. Mediums reflect the personal and social consequences brought about because, as an extension of man himself, changes to the medium occur through the technological field. Yet, media are a transmitter of other ideas: "characteristic of all media, means that the 'content' of any medium is always another medium."²⁰² Mediums are in and of themselves objects which affect society, despite the content they carry. "The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance. The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense

201 Lippert, "Concerning Condensation," 13. McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* was published in English for the first time in 1964. Lil Picard wrote about McLuhan's ideas for the first time in the March 1966 issue of *Das Kunstwerk*.

202 Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message," in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 8.

perception.”²⁰³ McLuhan gave precedence to the artist who understands the role that multiple media play in the perceptions of the viewer, a role that Roehr would have understood to be in line with his own formulations.

As McLuhan further wrote in an essay entitled “Ads: Keeping up with the Joneses”, which appeared in *Understanding Media*: “Ads seem to work on the very principle that a small pellet or pattern in a noisy, redundant barrage of repetition will gradually assert itself.”²⁰⁴ Writing contemporaneously with Roehr’s ad-driven production, McLuhan’s writing offers just one of many entrées into Roehr’s work. In works such as *Untitled (TE-7)* (Figure 27), Roehr presents only the “redundant barrage of repetition” as the result itself, thereby stripping the word or phrase of context, meaning, and directedness. Thus, any word or phrase, when submitted to the same structure of a popular saying, can become a slogan.²⁰⁵ The slogan, which appears to have an explicit meaning within itself, is in fact imbued with the power of appeal from relevant but extraneous context. Whether it is a chant in the stands of a political rally or a sports arena, a corporate tagline or the catchphrase of a favorite television star, cultural phrases gain significance through an appeal to different aspects of society.

But Roehr’s Montages, although they promote McLuhan’s formulations of “the redundant barrage of repetition” as their primary function, seek an opposite effect on the advertisement. They exist as a product of their construction, only to exist “as is” by revealing their construction as a construction, thus shattering the illusion of pictorial or verbal significance. While this once again

203 Ibid. 18.

204 Marshall McLuhan, “Ads: Keeping Upset with the Joneses,” in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 227. First published in English in 1964. First published in German 1973.

205 For clarification, one immediately recalls the Dadaist use of the word “Dada” as a non-sense slogan. But for the Dadaists, the inclusion of outside context through the bewildering juxtaposition of different collaged elements was a necessary morass in which the slogan “Dada” functioned.

aligns with Krauss's formulation of "unearthing the unmanageable opposition" in burrowing down into the structure of mythmaking through the grid, the everyday quality of the advertisement broke open a divide between art and reality. Indeed, if a slogan is a phrase or word imbued with a special power from its repetition within context, a phrase or word can equally be exposed as the ordinary and banal without the support of context. As Roehr stated: "In a certain sense made objects are language – if vocabulary and its usage are language."²⁰⁶ Roehr's thinking from his previous works was developing at this point from more metaphysical implications, such as those derived from Zen and Bense's formulations, towards an engagement with society through more advanced theoretical structures centered around communication and media studies that overlapped with the forms of Pop art.

3.2 Pop Art and West Germany

Despite the formal emphasis of Roehr's project, the acceptance of his montages by gallerists and critics reflected the broader cultural connections between West Germany and the United States. The importance of Roehr's work becomes clear through an examination of the reception of Pop in West Germany at this particular moment. For just as Pop Art was in the process of shifting the artistic and social terrain in New York, West Germany's social and artistic worlds were also on the threshold of momentous change. Of course, the ramifications of American influence in postwar West German culture are still open for critical debate and continual

²⁰⁶ Peter Roehr, "Notes from the Estate, 1964," in *Peter Roehr*, edited by Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 30.

exploration.²⁰⁷ But with Pop Art as one of the torchbearers, the 1960s in particular can be singled out as a crucial advancement of cultural dialogue between the two countries.

The emerging terminology of Pop and New Realism associated with exhibitions and sprinkled in Roehr's discussion of his own work relays the changing art world from the beginning of his work in 1963 to the world of 1965. Arguably, the impact of magazines and publications were as significant a factor as physical exhibitions in the dissemination of both a visual language of terms and the ideas behind them. *Das Kunstwerk*, the predominant German language arts magazine, as well as Arts International and to an increasing degree Art Forum, were instrumental in disseminating these ideas through print.²⁰⁸ Lil Picard, an American living between New York and Germany, first reported on the events in New York for the German newspaper *Die Welt* in August 1962,²⁰⁹ and rapidly disseminated more information in arts magazines like Art International and *Das Kunstwerk* extensively from 1962 onward.²¹⁰

The history of Pop in New York can be traced to as early as 1959 and 1960, with shows at the Judson Gallery; the Martha Jackson Gallery featured works by Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns,

207 For extensive discussion of this subject, see Uta G. Poiger's *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), and Andreas Huyssen "The Cultural Politics of Pop," in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). See also Catherine Dossin's *The Rise and Fall of American Art, 1940-1980s: A Geopolitics of Western Art Worlds*, a key study in the international reception of Pop Art on the European continent. As well, her reconfiguration of the history of Pop Art in Germany in her article "Pop Begeistert: American Pop Art and the German People" provides a recent evaluation of Pop Art's reception in West German culture. In particular, endnote 3 of Dossin's article explains: "Huyssen's explanation has been repeated by several other German art historians... and has de facto become the official story." Catherine Dossin, "Pop Begeistert: American Pop Art and the German People" in *American Art*, 25, no.3, (Fall 2011): 111. <https://doi.org/10.1086/663955>.

208 Roehr began his subscription to *ArtForum* sometime in 1966. A notification from *ArtForum* for Roehr's due payment listed their Los Angeles address, where they were located from 1965–67. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.19. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main

209 Günter Herzog, "Wie die Pop Art nach Deutschland kam," in *Wie die Pop Art nach Deutschland kam, sediment* 25/26, ed. Günter Herzog in conjunction with Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels e.V., Cologne. Nürnberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst (2015): 10.

210 See also Max Kozloff, "Pop Culture, Metaphysical Disgust, and the New Vulgarians," in *Art International*, March 1962, 34-36; Barbara Rose, "Pop Art at the Guggenheim," *Art International*, May 1963, 22. "Pop Art Diskussion," *Das Kunstwerk*, April 1964. 2-32.

and Robert Rauschenberg in 1961; and Andy Warhol's Campbells Soup Cans premiered at the Ferus Gallery in 1962. Pop Art's status in America was cemented with these breakout shows. But the *International Exhibition of the New Realists* at the Sidney Janis Gallery in 1962 brought together New Realist artists from France, Italy and Switzerland with British and American Pop artists into a genuine international dialog for the first time. Although Pierre Restany was left disappointed by the overwhelming reception of Pop at the expense of his Nouveaux Réalistes,²¹¹ the art world was left excited at the possibility of the new American art.

West German artists, collectors, and gallery owners were also introduced to American Pop when Ileana Sonnabend – wife of the influential New York gallery dealer Leo Castelli – exhibited the works of Warhol, Lee Bontecou, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claus Oldenburg under the title *American Pop Art (Pop Art Américains)* at her Paris gallery in May 1963. Warhol's solo exhibition in Sonnabend's gallery in January 1964 featured the first European exhibition of the artist's works and proved to be a decisive show with the debut of several of his Disaster paintings, including *Orange Car Crash*, *White Disaster*, *Green Disaster* and *Race Riot*.²¹²

Das Kunstwerk's lengthy article "Pop Art Diskussion" in April 1964 granted wider access for a German audience to current Pop Art and set the stage for the upcoming summer schedule of events. In summer 1964, both documenta III and the Venice Biennial featured works by Pop artists, but with great resistance by European curators of a certain Modernist inclination. documenta III was still attempting to support older Modernists while also catching up to the latest developments in Germany, a rift that caused tension between the director Arnold Bode and curator Werner

²¹¹ Lucy Lippard, *Pop Art*, (New York: Praeger, 1966), 83.

²¹² Liam Considine, "Disaster in Paris: Andy Warhol and the French Automotive Imaginary c. 1964," in *Art History* 39, no.3 (June 2016): 546.

Haftmann.²¹³ The division was clear in the exhibition layout: Bode's contribution "Aspekte" (Aspects) was stationed on the ground floor, while Haftmann's section of Painting and Sculpture occupied two floors of the expansive Fridericianum. On the smaller top floor, an late edition featured developments in Kinetic Art, with the works of Group Zero and Op Art.²¹⁴ Bode curated the Aspekte and Kinetic artists, but it ran counter to Haftmann's return to a "Survey of Modern Art;" his curation of hand drawings emphasized quality, while his distrust of a "social import of art" was favored by West German critics.²¹⁵ Haftmann's introduction to his *Malerei, Skulptur* (*Painting, Sculpture*) catalog explicitly explained why he left out Pop Art for documenta III. He viewed the "involvement of pop art in everyday culture" as belonging to a branch formerly known as Arts and Crafts, where "the results are subservient to function and set themselves up as objects for emulation. They are basically pedagogical."²¹⁶ Despite Haftmann's dismissal of Pop Art for documenta III, the exhibition as a whole did present the artists Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Larry Rivers, and Eduardo Paolozzi in self-contained displays. Haftmann also preemptively announced that the Pop movement would appear in the next iteration in the context of industrial design and architecture, though the changes over the intervening years would deny his prediction.²¹⁷

213 Werner Haftmann would leave his position as curator for documenta after the 1964 exhibition to take up the directorship of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin.

214 Justin Hoffmann, "Documenta 3," in *Archive in Motion: Documenta-Handbuch*, eds. Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005). Published in conjunction with the exhibition *50 Years documenta 1955-2005* at the Museum Fridericianum, Kassel 1 September – 20 November 2005. 214.

215 Ibid., 213.

216 Werner Haftmann quoted in Justin Hoffmann, "Documenta 3," 214. Hoffmann further explains that Haftmann's use of the word pedagogical is critical: "Haftmann's rejection of social factors in art production—which he terms 'pedagogical'—goes hand in hand with his repudiation of a close link between theory and art..."

217 Martin Engler "Twilight of the Gods: documenta in Times of Change," in *Archive in Motion: Documenta-Handbuch*. Eds. Michael Glasmeier and Karin Stengel (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005), 235. Published in conjunction with the exhibition *50 Years documenta 1955-2005* at the Museum Fridericianum, Kassel 1 September – 20 November 2005.

When Robert Rauschenberg won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennial in 1964, the American Pop Art movement seemingly cemented its hold on European continent. The *Frankfurter Rundschau*, the city's more left leaning newspaper, ran an article on the Biennial in July 1964 titled "Pop Art, the Art in the time of the Supermarket" ("Pop Art, die Kunst im Zeitalter der Supermärkte"). The author Udo Brontolone summarized the show:

Pop Art is a fruit of American pragmatism, but it reaches far beyond the United States. It is a mistake to dismiss it lightly with cheap ridicule, but it is also too early to give a more far-reaching verdict on it. In any case, Rauschenberg, even if he does not always spurn the extreme and the bluff, is a real painter who uses preformed material, although he is an amazing one.²¹⁸

This reticence to support or reject Pop Art, as well as pointing out that Pop Art was speaking to a global audience, was indicative of ideas circulating as the exhibition was taking place. Coterminous with the landing of Pop art in Europe, Roehr's production increased significantly over the course of 1965 as he acquired large amounts of commonly produced photographic material. Yet rather than emulating the tendencies in fashion, Roehr's project maintained his strict, repetitive system over the course of his use with images.

Lucy Lippard's book *Pop Art* from January of 1966 further attempted to make clear the multiple avenues of interest for Pop, including those who "chose to depict everything previously considered unworthy of notice, let alone of art... nothing was sacred, and the cheaper and more despicable the better."²¹⁹ Warhol in particular was a focus for Lippard, who like many, was drawn to the effectiveness of simultaneous distancing and subjectivity of his content and form. Lippard

218 "Pop Art is eine Frucht des amerikanischen Pragmatismus, greift aber schon weit über die Vereinigten Staaten hinaus. Es ist verfehlt, sie Leichter Hand mit billigem Spott abzutun, aber auch noch früh, ein weiter reichendes Urteil über sie abzugeben. Rauschenberg jedenfalls, auch wenn er das Extrem und den Bluff nicht immer verschmäht, ist ein wirklicher Maler, der unter Verwendung vorgeformten Materials, doch mit einem erstaunlicher." Ugo Brontolone, "Pop-Art, die Kunst im Zeitalter der Supermärkte," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, no. 170. 25 July 1964, 13.

219 Lippard, *Pop Art*, 82. The first German translation of *Pop Art* appeared in 1968.

devoted a chapter to European and Canadian Pop art practices in her 1966 book. A pointed phrase sticks out: “By emphasizing the picturesque, the ominous, the satirical aspects of commercial subject matter, the Europeans are being true to themselves... To create a genuine Pop Art, a European artist would have to disentangle the Pop motifs of Americanization from his own heritage; a clean break is usually impossible as well as undesirable.”²²⁰ Lippard’s assessment of European artists, and the tendencies of *Nouveaux Réalisme*, was undeniably filtered through works shown in New York.

While the Europeans in general were given an entire chapter in her book, German artists were sequestered to a few short pages, and not looked upon with high regard. Lippard acknowledges: “It was in Germany that Dada had many of its most memorable moments, and the ‘new objectivity’ of Pop Art would seem to be appealing to the Teutonic mind. Nevertheless, as John Anthony Thwaites has pointed out: “Pop Art proper exists in Germany only in the world of its epigones. Quite possibly, Pierre Restany is right: ‘Pop is a product of the megalopolis, and since the loss of Berlin, Germany has no super-cities to inspire it.’”²²¹ Given the lack of German commentators –Lippard was American, Thwaites was British but lived in Germany, and Restany was French– a distinctly German cultural understanding seemed to be absent on a larger scale. By aligning German Pop with earlier Dada tendencies or as a derivative of current fashion²²², Lippard via Thwaites via Restany stirred little interest in the English-speaking reader to further explore artists in her five-paragraph truncated analysis of German artists, who were only vaguely related to the newest tendency. The shortcomings of Thwaites and Lippard have become clear as recent

²²⁰ Ibid., 173.

²²¹ Ibid., 192.

²²² Ibid.

surveys of Pop have shown the multiple and diffuse ways the style advanced as a Pan European, and particularly a German associated, phenomenon.²²³

Indeed, the development of the New Realists and other art forms of the early 1960s had already cultivated an international facet of the European art sphere; suddenly specific cultural meanings could be flattened and related through the overreaching method of mass communication of daily life, an idea Roehr approached during 1964 and 1965 through the Photo Montage program based in formal methods: “*What does the picture say to us? It expresses no subjective opinion. The message is the object itself: content and form are identical.*”²²⁴ While McLuhan’s ideas had clearly entered Roehr’s theoretical grounding of the Photo Montages, Boris Groys also later clarified the systemic nature of West Germany’s response to Pop Art. In an interview with John Paul Stonard, he stated:

The form and content of an individual artwork and also its reception, are determined not by individual personal projects, or political intention, or whatever else, but *rather by the state of technical development, including social systems that support this development.* It seems to me that German and French thought is more responsive to these kinds of impersonal, technical and uncontrollable forces.²²⁵

223 See Dossin *The Rise and Fall of American Art, 1940-1980s: A Geopolitics of Western Art Worlds*, especially chapter 5. See also: Christine Mehring “Art, Technologies, and the Avant-Garde. The Art of a Miracle: Toward a History of German Pop, 1955–72” in *The Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, (New York: Abrams, 2009). Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 25 January – 19 April, 2009, at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 23 May–6 September, 2009 and the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, 3 October–10 January, 2010; Martina Weinhart, “German Pop: Bemerkung über eine Nicht Allzu Naheliegende Beziehung,” in *German Pop*, eds. Martina Weinhart and Max Hollein (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2014); Jost Hermand, “Resisting Boogie-Woogie Culture, Abstract Expressionism, and Pop Art: German Highbrow Objections to the Import of ‘American’ Forms of Culture, 1945-1965,” in *Americanization and Anti-Americanism: The German Encounter with American Culture after 1945*, ed. Alexander Stephan, translated by Carol Poore, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

224 Roehr, “Notes from the Estate,” 29. This quote was stated to be written in 1965. Emphasis in the original.

225 John Paul Stonard and Boris Groys, “Boris Groys in Conversation,” *Immediations* 4, (2007): 7. My emphasis.

That Groys highlighted both the technical and social systems at play in Germany's reception of Pop is profound, and as it will be seen, provide a decisive ground upon which connections to cybernetics developed in larger public and artistic discourses.

Roehr arrived at similar conclusions, and already highlighted the technical forces in his 1965 publication. In answer to Maenz's question of finding parallels to other tendencies in the fields of science or engineering Roehr answered: "The substantial achievements of our era are of a technical sort and more intelligible than those of other periods. Art is an integral part of its era."²²⁶ The adaptations of his program in the mediums of his works from 1964 onwards indicated both an attunement with technical experiments and the massive shifts originating with the New Realists and spurred on by Pop Art's arrival in the European art scene and market.

But Pop Art represented something else entirely, as Andreas Huyssen summarized: "From the very beginning, Pop proclaimed that it would eliminate the historical separation between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic, thereby joining and reconciling art and reality."²²⁷ As Huyssen outlined, the Pop Art movement particularly resonated with the younger generation of West Germans as a material form of anti-authoritarian values: "many Germans did not see these works as affirmative reproductions of mass produced reality; they preferred to think that this art was intended to denounce the lack of values and criteria in art criticism and that it sought to close the gap between high or serious, and low or light art."²²⁸ While academic and traditional cultural critics "preferred to meditate in seclusion"²²⁹ over the failures of high modernism, Huyssen posits that

226 Peter Roehr, "Ten Questions Put to Peter Roehr," in *Peter Roehr*, trans. James Whitman, (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1977). Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at Kunsthalle Tübingen, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, and Frankfurter Kunstverein. 26. Originally published in Peter Roehr's "Montagen," Frankfurt 1965, 6. See Figure 35.

227 Huyssen, "The Cultural Politics of Pop," 143.

228 Ibid., 142.

229 Ibid.

the youth generation embraced Pop because it fragmented the boundaries between high and low art vis-à-vis its use of everyday objects and images of life.

For Huyssen and much of the emerging radical, anti-authoritarian student movement, the revolutionary potential of Pop was initially situated in a critique of bourgeois ideology and its exaltation of modernist art and institutions. Popular culture, and arguably the freedom one had to make a mass-produced object one's own, went against those very icons of modernism. The lofty gestures of abstraction dictated by the unique character of the artist were becoming increasingly unwieldy and out of fashion in a culture that was questioning the moral structures of the previous decades. Huyssen's formulation of the West German reception of Pop was rather from the bottom up: it seemed to offer a critique that appealed directly to the culture of the youth movement/New Left, and a separation from all previous attempts at social change from the position of the bourgeois Modernists who sought to recuperate pre-Nazi degenerate art. In its direct appeal to everyday consumers of popular culture rather than a continuation of Modernism's failed project, Pop seemingly offered freedoms that even New Realism or ZERO could not.

As Walter Grasskamp explains "West Germany was not ready for Pop," until prewar movements like Dada and Expressionism were reconciled in the artistic heritage of Postwar West Germany.²³⁰ Falling along the lines of John Paul Stonard's discussion of the recuperation of German artistic heritage covered in my Introduction, Grasskamp explains that this "European Catch-up" and "transatlantic reorientation" of Modernist art was due ironically to the exile of modern artists and their dealers from fascist Germany, handing New York the ingredients to form

²³⁰ Walter Grasskamp, "Flamingos, Colour Charts, Shades of Brown. Capitalist Realism and German Pop," in *Europop*, ed. Tobia Bezzola and Franziska Lentzsch. (Cologne: Dumont Verlag, 2008). xlvii. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at Kunsthaus Zürich, 15 February – 12 May 2008.

an international market for art.²³¹ “In addition to the imposition perceived by many postwar Germans of the obligatory rehabilitation of Modernism, there was the imputation of having to accept America’s ascendancy as of the victorious powers in the culture sphere as well.”²³² Indeed, this was made explicitly clear to Europeans in documenta III’s return to a retrospective recuperation of Modernism, while Robert Rauschenberg was winning the preeminent prizes in other European venues.

Catherine Dossin adds another nuanced aspect to the West German reception of Pop art via the increasingly fluid dealings of European gallery owners and collectors with their American counterparts. Following the role of Sonnabend’s May 1963 Paris exhibition *American Pop Art (Pop Art Américains)* in disseminating pop to Europeans, she traced the routes of transaction taken by the most prominent gallerists. With the increase in international flights to New York, as Günter Herzog also points out in his chronology of West German gallerists, in fall of 1963 gallery owners Alfred Schmela and Rudolf Zwirner made a Pop Art tour of the United States.²³³ Kaspar König and the collector Dr. Peter Ludwig (later founder of the Ludwig Museum in Cologne) began to take trips abroad to buy Pop art directly from galleries in New York. The gallerists Heiner Friedrich, Franz Dahlem, and Zwirner would also emerge as market leaders for Pop art. Hein Stünke and Rudolf Zwirner conceived of the Köln Kunstmarkt (Cologne Art Fair) as a place to bring together the progressive gallerists of West Germany and Europe. From its September 13th–16th 1967 debut, the Cologne Art Fair’s representation of the German galleries and their heavily Pop inspired work cemented Pop Art as a profitable aesthetic for the gallery enterprise. Dossin and Herzog posit a more top down exploration of Pop art’s reception, in which information about the

²³¹ Ibid., xlviii.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Dossin, “Pop Begeistert,” 110. And Herzog, “Wie die Pop Art,” 11.

movement was disseminated via newspapers, newly recovered postwar galleries, and the taste-makers personal contact with Pop artists in New York and European cities like Paris and London.

Although Dossin explicitly states that it is not her intention to analyze whether or not Pop “intended to create works critical of capitalist society,”²³⁴ the works certainly were “part and parcel of the German economic boom of the 1960s.”²³⁵ As Dossin posits, the German reception of Pop art began slightly earlier than the rise of student movements, and instead reflected the German economic recovery of the early 1960s. Specifically, she argues that by 1965 Pop Art, as it participated in the market, was already known to be at the very least complicit with the machinations of consumer culture in West Germany.²³⁶ As Dossin points out, German newspapers also quickly disseminated the international status of Pop with a series of articles linking Pop to American commercialism via the pre-existing gallery system. As *Der Spiegel* printed in “Suppe fürs Volk” from November 1964, “[t]he subject matter, for long time scorned and banned, was again raised to the sacred cow: more than that, it was the golden calf. Pop-Art today provides prices over 30,000 marks.”²³⁷ The cultural discourse surrounding Pop was already steeped in the market forces of capitalism, not only because of the appeal of popular commercial imagery, but also because of the ways in which it entered the public consciousness of West Germany.

Pop appeared to the youth as a DIY culture – as an anti-authoritarian critique – although it wasn’t necessarily the objects themselves, which were already circulating in the market that captured attention, but the ideas that they could (possibly) stand for any one consuming

²³⁴ Dossin, “Pop Begeistert,” 110. See also her Endnote 4.

²³⁵ Ibid., 107.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ “Der Gegenstand, seit langer Zeit in Hohn und Bann, wurde wieder zur heiligen Kuh erhoben, mehr noch: Er wurde zum golden Kalb. Pop-Kunst erbringt heute schon Preise bis über 30000 Mark.” Anonymous, “Pop Art: Suppe fürs Volk,” *Der Spiegel*, November 11, 1964, 138.

individual.²³⁸ It was only later that Pop revealed itself to the younger German generation to be a reification of the very commercialization the New Left so adamantly opposed. Primarily, Pop incorporated imagery that was already ingrained in public consciousness, and represented societal wants, desires, and needs, which represented a welcome freedom in the face of decades of repression. Although Huyssen and others might have viewed Pop's aesthetics as revolutionary in the face of bourgeois modernism, that American Pop was already demanding 30,000 marks in 1964 West Germany was a remarkable market success.²³⁹ But the subjective interpretation of the Pop aesthetic, like the medium of the advertisement, opened to multiple subjective desires – revolutionary, critical, engaging – but offered only a commodity, the art object, in return. Yet as it will be seen, German artists who took on the Pop moniker seemed to echo more strongly satirical and critical positions against bourgeois society, which also had roots in Modernist art such as Dada and Surrealism. The disparate histories of “Pop Art” in West Germany nonetheless indicated the necessity of a spectrum in viewing the ubiquitous commodity to self-produced product, rather than firm definitions of style.

In the Rhineland, a variation on the Pop aesthetic resonated throughout artistic circles. Notably in Düsseldorf, a center for the gallery scene, the Düsseldorf Art Academy students Gerhard Richter, Konrad Lueg, Manfred Kuttner and Sigmar Polke formed a loose group working under a concept they termed Capitalist Realism in 1963. In her 1966 book Lippard mentioned the group as a representative configuration of Pop in Germany, but dismissed it as “not very original

²³⁸ While Huyssen does not explicitly use the phrase “do-it-yourself” in his text, DIY culture can be seen as integrally connected with the ideas of both Pop Art and democratic aims. The DIY aspect of Pop, especially with per chance to reuse and remake images and objects of popular culture, and its attending public disregard for style, polish, finish, or education that marked previous artistic movements, allowed one to pursue their own desires and wishes by using the same materials as an elevated Pop Artist in New York.

²³⁹ The equivalent of \$59,700 or €62,685 in 2017.

Pop.”²⁴⁰ But Lippard failed to see that the group emerged in reaction to previous artistic movements and groups in Düsseldorf, mainly against their professor K.O. Götz, and the prevailing interests in group ZERO, and that Pop Art offered a counter balance to these tendencies.

Lueg introduced the group to Pop Art via an article in the January 1963 issue of *Art International*, which featured reproductions by Lichtenstein, Oldenburg and Warhol.²⁴¹ A few months later, Lueg composed a document that framed the shared interests of the group, a framework that would cohere the group enough in order to gain access to exhibitions and hopefully gallery representation.²⁴² The manifesto, titled “One Should found a Group,” was rejected by Richter, and the manifesto was never signed by the group as a whole.²⁴³ Lueg, who had recently graduated from the Düsseldorf Academy and was pursuing a career as a freelance artist, spearheaded efforts with Richter in order to procure a show. They were unsuccessful in finding a gallery to show their work. In the DIY attitude upheld by Huyssen, the first exhibition of the group occurred on May 11th, 1963 in a rented store in Düsseldorf. The accompanying exhibition press announcement featured a closely cropped newspaper image pasted directly in the center of the square card, framed by the four artists’ names.²⁴⁴ Concentric square rings of questioning art terms

240 Lippard, *Pop Art*, 193.

241 Konrad Fischer in conversation with Stella Baum, “I Enjoy Looking Back on the Years: Record of a Conversation with Konrad Fischer by Stella Baum,” in Brigitte Kölle, *okey dokey Konrad Fischer*, ed. Brigitte Kölle, (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007), 278. Originally printed in “Stella Baum: Die frühen Jahre. Gespräch mit Galeristen,” in *Kunstforum International*. 104. November/December, (1989): 277-281. Also quoted in Stesembski and Kölle.

242 Brigitte Kölle, “Life and Works,” in *okey dokey Konrad Fischer*, ed. Brigitte Kölle. (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007), 20.

243 Ibid., 21. See also: Stephan Strsembski, “Capitalist Realism?,” in *Ganz im Anfang/How It All Began: Richter, Polke, Lueg & Kuttner, sediment 7*, ed. Günter Herzog, in conjunction with Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels e.V., Cologne. Nürnberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, (2004): 57. Strsembski notes that Richter rejected this manifesto due to his aversion to forming a collective or group. Strsembski quotes Richter: “The moments were rare when we did something together and formed something like an emergency management, otherwise we were more like rivals.”

244 Brigitte Jacobs, “Documentation,” in *Ganz im Anfang/How It All Began: Richter, Polke, Lueg & Kuttner, sediment 7*, ed. Günter Herzog, in conjunction with Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels e.V., Cologne.

further bordered the center, and the exhibition information hugged the outermost edge of the paper.²⁴⁵ Visually, the invitation recalled the graphic centering of the Concrete Poetry of Ferdinand Kriwit, who a frequently published in *Das Kunstwerk*, but it also encapsulated the mass-media commercial image favored by Pop. One can imagine turning the work around in the hands as one read, adding an element of play and participation to the card.

While their first exhibition was presented in a relatively straightforward format, the group's show in October of 1963 utilized the environment of a furnished department store as extra leverage. *The Leben mit Pop- eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus* began promptly at 8pm October 11th, 1963. Dressed in suits and ties, Lueg and Richter sat motionless in a "living room" using the store's furniture displays raised on pedestals. Visitors were admitted in groups and at 8:35, the two artists announced a tour of the store. While product advertisements crackled over the speakers, the visitors toured the four floors of the store with the artists. Alfred Schmela, who could not attend on the opening night, was represented by a life-sized papier-maché sculpture. "A second sculpture was that of John F. Kennedy, the acknowledged favorite of the German youth. We placed this statue in the elevator, so that the audience went up and down with Kennedy."²⁴⁶ Joseph Beuys donated an outfit, which hung on a hallstand; the shoes were filled with margarine and he had "placed brown crosses all over the place."²⁴⁷ As the visitors toured the store qua 'apartment' they were "repeatedly asked to act in a disciplined way...most did not keep to the specified route, they romped through the building and made rows of provisionally set up beds collapse."²⁴⁸ Lueg

Nürnberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, (2004): 73. Jacobs notes that each of the invitations were handmade, with an individually selected newspaper image pasted in the center.

²⁴⁵ Strsembski, "Capitalist Realism?," 56. Jacobs also notes in her "Documentation" that these were pulled from the *Art International* article Lueg introduced to the group.

²⁴⁶ Lueg, "I Enjoy Looking Back," 277.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Kölle, "Life and Works," 22.

reminisced that Mr. Faust, the owner of the store, “wanted to sue us! But a year later, after he noticed how much was published on our Demonstration, with the name of his store always mentioned, his anger subsided.”²⁴⁹ While the demonstration only lasted until 9:30 that evening of the 11th, the artists’ static works of art showed until October 25th.

The demonstration, Lueg stated, “wasn’t meant politically, just that, as opposed to the socialistically oriented Germany, we lived in the capitalistically oriented one.”²⁵⁰ This was made clear in Richter’s letter on behalf of Kuttner, Lueg, and Polke to Herr Kluth at the *Wochenschau*, which announced the opening: “For this exhibition bears no commercial, but an exclusively demonstrative character.”²⁵¹ Richter directly placed the group’s work under which directly related to characteristic terms associated with Pop Art.²⁵²

Already in 1963, the Capitalist Realists outlined their artistic practice in a context that acknowledges the basic economic and cultural conditions of industrial society. With this direct appeal to the Pop movement, the Capitalist Realists were attempting to give credence to their own works, and more pointedly, the ideas circulating in German society. Shortly after their first exhibition in Düsseldorf with the Capitalist Realists group, Lueg and Richter traveled to Paris to present their works in the context of Sonnabend’s 1963 exhibition. In what Strsembski termed the first ‘self-help exhibition,’²⁵³ the do-it-yourself attitude of these artists was in line with Huyssen’s formulations of the West German reception of Pop. The invitation card for this show included individual inflatable balloons printed with the words “Leben mit Pop” (Figure 40). Instructions

249 Lueg, “I Enjoy Looking Back,” 277.

250 Ibid.

251 Gerhard Richter, “Presseerklärung zur Ausstellung Kaiserstraße,” Typoscript, undated (probably May 1963), Archiv Manfred Kuttner, Erkrath. Reprinted as Document 2.3. in Brigitte Jacobs “Documentation,” 72. “Für diese Ausstellung, die keinen kommerziellen, sondern einene ausschließlich demonstrative Charakter trägt.”

252 Ibid.

253 Strsembski, “Capitalist Realism,” 55

printed underneath the attached balloon encouraged the recipient to “1. Blow it up! Regard the inscription! 2. Let it Burst! Regard the sound! Pop!”²⁵⁴ The participatory aspect of the invitation emphasized the event’s participatory elements.

Yet the German variety of Pop art in the form of the Capitalist Realists quickly dissipated. Kuttner’s work had been sidelined by the other members and the tensions between Richter and Polke had boiled over to the point of animosity.²⁵⁵ Although they exhibited together at Rene Block in West Berlin in 1964, the last show of the remaining members of the group (Lueg and Richter) was in autumn of 1966 at the Galerie Patio, located in Frankfurt, and perhaps Roehr saw this last iteration. The tongue-in-cheek show was called *Die beste Ausstellungs Deutschlands*, and in the gallery, Lueg covered the walls in kidney shapes of red and green, individually screen printed on square cardboard. Richter presented his *Large Pyramid*, a massive blurred painting that also took up an entire wall in the space.²⁵⁶ Both works required the audience to become immersed in the works: one a domestic setting, the other an exotic locale of tourism and pleasure. Lueg and Richter parted ways with each other and German Pop after this exhibition in Frankfurt, and few other artists stepped in to fill the void. Richter and Polke would individually use the ideas and techniques formulated in the group’s existence to have commercially successful careers. Lueg, after participating in Roehr and Maenz’s *Serielle Formationen* and the event at Dorothea Loehr in Frankfurt in 1967, opened his own gallery in Düsseldorf (see chapter 4 of this dissertation). Richter would turn to a varied program of painting blurred portraits and landscapes before moving on to complete abstraction, and eventually, becoming one of the most successful German artists of the latter half of the 20th Century.

²⁵⁴ Jacobs, “Documentation,” 76.

²⁵⁵ Kölle, “Life and Works,” 24.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

Boris Groys reinforced the idea that German Pop art provided an alternative perspective: “German artists, who reacted to American Pop with a kind of nationalist programme of German Pop, based on everyday life in Germany, but also on images of the Nazi past, and later with images of the German terrorists and so on... It produced a strong awareness of the specific configuration of their own mass culture.”²⁵⁷ Groys is undoubtedly referring to Richter’s blurred portraits of Nazi figures and later German Red Army Faction terrorists. More importantly, he identified the “nationalist program” of mass culture representations – in West Germany, by West Germans – as a commercial artistic strategy that accommodated the international art market.²⁵⁸

While in Frankfurt the ‘reconciliation’ of modernism in the form of Group Zero with European Avant-Gardes provided much of the local background around Roehr, Pop’s connections to the city were fewer and further between. While the Frankfurt scene was vying with other cities in West Germany for the latest art, it tended to tried and true artistic movements and, in 1964 and 1965, that often meant a rather conservative outlook.²⁵⁹ Early traces of Pop could be seen in the collaborative works of Bloomsday 1964, such as Bayrle’s layout for Bloomzeitung Newspaper (Figure 22), produced for Bazon Brock’s performances in 1963 and 1964 the Dorothea Loehr Galerie. While I drew connections to Concrete Poetry and the graphics of this newspaper in Chapter 1, that all the proper names replaced with the word “Bloom” in bold headline grabbing fashion can also be seen as a forerunner to Pop art. While Bloomzeitung was produced during Bayrle’s stint at an underground publishing press, his work, *Kennedy in Berlin* from 1964 (Figure 41) was also exemplary in a style of Pop that, for example, used serial repetition as a central motif.

²⁵⁷ Groys, “Boris Groys in Conversation,” 8.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ *Das Kunstwerk* published an exposé on the gallery activities in Frankfurt in their “Kunstbrief aus der Rheinder Rhein-Main-Region” in their October 1964 issue. The summer program included exhibitions of Klaus Jürgen Fischer, Gerhard Hintschich, Carl Heidenreich, but also Peter Paul Rubens among others.

At the center of the image, Kennedy appears as a haunting and somewhat morbid visage in this 1964 work, created following his death in November of 1963. Yet, Bayrle's image of the former president of the United States emphasized the idea that he was still a "favorite of the German youth" through the multi-faceted throngs encircling him. Roehr met Bayrle and his partner Helke at the Galerie d'opening of Hermann de Vries in May of 1964, and the two quickly became close artistic acquaintances.

As previously noted, Roehr's exposure to Pop first came through the circulating newspaper and magazine coverage, his visits to exhibitions around the immediate area of Frankfurt and later reinforced by Maenz's encouragement from New York. However, of equal and undeniable consequence in his work at this time was the fact that he worked at the advertising agency in Frankfurt, the most American of German cities. Roehr's serial process was not swayed by the introduction of Pop on the scene – since Nouveaux Réalisme had already made a great impression. If shifts in his work can be detected, it can be argued that Roehr's interaction with the image material actually became a more restrictive system.

In his ever-expanding quest to find large quantities of material for his montages, Roehr wrote to industrial producers, advertising agencies, and companies. Sometime in 1965, Roehr sent a letter (and likely his publicity book) to the advertising branch of Volkswagen. In June of 1965, Volkswagen directly answered Roehr's request: "Your montages are visually quite interesting, though to us a meaningful application is not yet clear. In any case, it is welcomed that you set yourself tasks that are not commonplace. We are happy to comply with your request and send you without any obligation 100 copies of our brochures 151.001.00-8 / 64 by separate mail."²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ "Ihre Montagen sind optisch recht interessant, wenngleich uns eine sinnvolle Anwendung noch nicht klar wird. Es ist jedenfalls zu begrüßen, daß Sie sich Aufgaben stellen, die nicht alltäglich sind. Wir entsprechen Ihrer Bitte gern und senden Ihnen ganz unverbindlich 100 Exemplare unserer Prospekte 151.001.00-8/64 mit getrennter Post."

Although Volkswagen most likely supported Roehr out of a sense of gaining “cultural capital,” the donation of material was a boon for Roehr, and the Montages that came from the source material provided by the large company were arguably the most visually striking of his works and would come to account for 90 percent of the Photo Montages. The direct connection to a major car producer in this way illuminates a relationship between Roehr’s Photo Montages and their content, but also to the relationship between the Photo Montages and the viewer as well. This difference is made clear in reference to the work of Andy Warhol, whose “Death and Disaster” works both parallel and contrast with those of Roehr.

3.3 Peter Roehr and Andy Warhol

By 1965 Roehr had seen enough of Warhol’s work (in print) to be particularly struck by their comparisons. In April 1965, he drafted a letter to the Stable Gallery, who represented Warhol at that time, to ask for his personal address in order to make contact with him.²⁶¹ The co-attending projects of Roehr’s Photo Montages and Andy Warhol’s works come into greater comparison and contrast, not only due to their visual similarities but also the difference in their methods, systems, and ideologies. Yet as it will emerge, Roehr and Warhol’s work differed significantly in their intention. As it was seen in the Type and Text Montages (Figures 26 and 27), the issue arose in conjunction with using an entire word or phrase versus a single cropped item. For example, in

Redacted, to Peter Roehr, 20 July 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.527. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

²⁶¹ Peter Roehr, to Stable Gallery, 25 April 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.495. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

Untitled FO-13 (Figure 38) the unaltered image of the woman sipping a cup of coffee gives a complete scene, fully encapsulating an image of the product to be enjoyed and desired by the consuming public.

In *Untitled (FO-55)* (Figure 42), the single image frame displays a lone car ascending the rough terrain of an unknown, but somehow familiar, landscape. Despite being overwhelmed by the endless background, the VW Beetle is still identified by its distinct shape. The endless background allows the images to fuse into one another yet maintain separation, an all in one, one in all totality of images. However, the image evokes an unconscious emotional reaction in the viewer: whether it is the pursuit of adventure in an unknown land, or the attempt to overcome insurmountable odds, this image manifests the desires of the viewer in a product. Returning to the comparison of Warhol and Roehr then illuminates the frame of not only desires and subjectivity in understanding of society, but also the ways in which the larger systems of communication at play affected them.

Warhol's culturally constructed subjects "saturate his art with life's traces,"²⁶² creating art that can no longer be separated from the subjective viewer's experience within life. The dissemination of culture, as McLuhan pointed out, was propagated by the increasing sophistication of the media of the masses, equally applicable to its headlining news or advertised brands. Alloway indicated this as well when he wrote: "The communication system of the twentieth century is, in a special sense, Pop art's subject."²⁶³ Communication systems and media possibilities were equally a concern for Roehr, however as it will be seen, the mass-produced quality of his materials granted different results than those of Pop art. The tabloid imagery that populated Warhol's "Disaster"

²⁶² Lawrence Alloway, *American Pop Art* (New York: Collier Books, 1974), 113. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

²⁶³ Ibid., 7.

works played upon one such aspect of popular communication. In *Green Disaster #2* (Figure 43) which debuted at Sonnabend's Paris gallery in 1964,²⁶⁴ Warhol's presentation of two off-kilter rows of the same accident photograph create a dynamic offsetting of frame within a frame. The gruesome intensity of each image is lessened by both the neutral green color and the heavily contrasted multiple print. Slight variations between the individual duplicates highlight a unique quality of the supposedly same self-contained scene, itself maintaining the "ripped from the headlines" quality perpetuated by lurid sensationalism. The incongruities of Warhol's presentation only emphasize that innate human desire to devour the mass distributed tragedy as a discrete unique experience in order to set oneself apart and distinct, always in subjective relation, to the event.

As Lippard pointed out in 1966, "our senses are so overloaded with artificial emotion from politician's speeches, bad movies, bad art, ladies' magazines, and TV-soap operas that a *stark* repetition like Warhol's means more than an ultra-expressionist portrayal of accident victims ever could."²⁶⁵ Yet, the gruesome photographic image of death went beyond the vague memorialization Warhol implied; as a consumable and relatable material, indeed, much as one would connect with a brand of soup or a celebrity, the works tread an ambiguous line between sentimentality and voyeurism. Per Robert Indiana: "None of these images 'spoke' about the things they pictured; they

264 Among other Pop and early Minimal art works, Karl Ströher purchased *Green Disaster #2* from the collection of New York collector Leon Kraushar. The purchase was made on the advice of the gallerists Franz Dahlem and Heiner Friedrich after Kushar's death in 1967. It was then donated to the Museum of Modern Art Frankfurt in 1981 as a key donation in the founding of the museum. According to Dossin: "Dahlem was able to convince Ströher to go to New York and buy the Kraushar (sic) collection... Ströher kept only the pieces he thought were important and resold the rest. He thereby gave other West Germans the opportunity to own works that, without him, would not have gone to West Germany. For Ströher, collecting art, and Pop art in particular, was not a matter of personal interest but of public responsibility." In Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art*, 193-194.

265 Lippard, *Pop Art*, 99. Emphasis in the original.

processed the way reality had been made to look already by the camera- and someone else's camera at that."²⁶⁶

According to Grenier, the photograph in Warhol's and other artists' Pop works, "represented no more than a preparatory stage of the painted picture; likewise, the mechanical means and industrial products they used did not mean that their work strayed from the paths of painting."²⁶⁷ The photograph in Pop art always existed as part of a larger process, and in its altered form at the hands of Pop artists it resonated the painterly aura of a unique object. John Curley pointed out that the silkscreen process "emphasized the ambiguity, or even the abstraction, of a media photograph in transmission."²⁶⁸ Yet the transmission aspect of the photograph was resisted by Roehr's use of the exact, unaltered and identical advertisement image, an even more accurate, repetitive barrage of "what you see is what you get."

Even while describing the mechanical process of Warhol's Death and Disaster series, Lippard refers to them in the tradition of paintings.²⁶⁹ Indiana reinforced this as well, stating that "individuated differences 'slipped in,' revealing themselves only through almost microscopic scrutiny... These inconsistencies were deliberate... calculated, in the sense that they could be counted on to appear, and sloppy, like the slosh of one mechanical process over another, a liquid mopped over a photographic image."²⁷⁰ Warhol's conscious manipulation of the photograph

266 Catherine Grenier, "New Realisms and Pop Art, Art Without Art," in *Europop* (Cologne: DuMont Verlag, 2008), xxxix. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, 15 February – 12 May 2008 at Kunsthau Zürich.

267 Ibid.

268 John J. Curley, *A Conspiracy of Images: Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, and the Art of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 172.

269 "The Death and Disaster paintings, despite, or rather because of, their 'mechanical' execution, become one of the few forceful statements on this aspect of American life to be found in recent American painting. Just as we are fascinated by the newspaper or magazine photographs that are their sources, so we are doubly titillated by confronting these photographs in a less casual context – that of art – even if as Warhol points out 'when you see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn't really have any effect.'" Lippard, *Pop Art*, 98.

270 Robert Indiana, *Andy Warhol and the Can that Sold the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 100.

echoed the gesture of painting, a subjective touch that created a unique mark of an artist in touch with the desires of society. As Lawrence Alloway wrote in *American Pop Art*, “the shift from image to image constitutes a kind of covert return to the characteristics of the autographic touch.”²⁷¹ The deliberate action of leaving the gesture, while also proclaiming his intention to be like a machine, was the paradox as well as the lure of Warhol’s brand.

Indiana says, “Warhol knew which accidents were ‘right’ for his work and which ones wouldn’t do. He brought the idea of aesthetic choice to bear on procedures that seemed to be a refutation of aesthetics, and on paintings that mocked the art of painting.”²⁷² That this process of alteration was completely rejected by Roehr was significant: his Photo Montages laid bare “the systems of communication” akin to Pop art’s concerns without allowing an extraneous aesthetic aura of the gesture of painting to permeate the image. Although Roehr was becoming more interested in the potentials for media transmission,²⁷³ a survey of the content of his images also provides another insight into the Photo Montages, as well as illuminating reasons why, at the end of 1966 he chose to abandon this type of Montage in his overall project.

Untitled (FO-55) (Figure 42) evokes a sentimentality akin to Warhol in its pictorial content. As a single visual entity, it becomes a symbol of personal significance. Again, McLuhan is apt here: “The need is to make the ad include the audience experience... The steady trend in advertising is to make the product as an integral part of large social purposes and processes.”²⁷⁴ Grasskamp notes that in Germany “domestic advertising was so provincial that it would never have passed muster as a glamorous, painterly apotheosis... the German counterpart to the American emblems

²⁷¹ Lawrence Alloway, *American Pop Art*, 113.

²⁷² Indiana, *Andy Warhol and the Can*, 101.

²⁷³ See chapter 3 in this regard.

²⁷⁴ McLuhan, “Ads,” 226.

of consumer culture were the staid...old-fashioned stylization- none of it the stuff of product mythology.”²⁷⁵ While it is unknown if the direct source material – sent to him by VW in the letter above – used by Roehr for his Photo Montages came from the American or German advertising campaigns, the Beetle was an international brand and icon. It will become clear that their advertisements on both sides of the Atlantic reflected that shift.

However, as an advertisement the VW Beetle in Roehr’s source material for *Untitled (FO-55)* clearly encapsulated the “product mythology” of American advertising, and was akin to what McLuhan described as a “group icon.”²⁷⁶ The image is no longer a private possession, but rather “it offers a way of life that is for everybody or nobody.”²⁷⁷ For McLuhan, the advertisement, particularly photographic images like the one Roehr began to use in early 1965, hinged on the instant, unconscious, and homogenized relay of information: a regulated and collective icon.²⁷⁸ However Roehr did not celebrate the icon within the subject matter, but rather focused on the qualities of the image within a context of his system of seriality. The fantasy of the unique object was undone by the maximalist banality of the image in repetition.

The difficulties Roehr experienced in the reception of his works as “Pop” over the course of 1965 and 1966 as discussed below can be seen in the ways his works tended to be so close to the overwhelming aesthetics of the style, itself bolstered by mass media influences. In positing a cybernetic attitude to this overwhelming system at play in Roehr’s work, the paradoxical distancing of the self while simultaneously exposing the subjective desires of that same self—the

275 Grasskamp, “Flamingos, Colour Charts, Shades of Brown,” xlvii-xlix.

276 McLuhan, “Ads,” 230.

277 Ibid.

278 McLuhan was of course not the only theorist writing about the dehumanizing effects of automation upon society. Herbert Marcuse, whose book *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* was published in 1965, also examined the inherent connection between the rise of advanced industrial society and the technological subordination of society through dependence on the commodity.

fodder for Pop art success and downfall- can be seen in one of the most significant industrial and commercial objects of the time: the VW automobile.

3.4 The Cybernated Vision of the Automobile

The automobile, arguably, represented a crux at which Roehr's model of seriality could not overcome its content. However, I would like to argue that the automobile, and its attending advertisements, went beyond even the 'group icon' that McLuhan formulated. Indeed, as the epitome of the man-machine hybrid of the postwar era, I draw from Charissa Terranova's discussion of the automobile in conceptual art as an "apparatus – a prosthetic connected to the body and systems of infrastructure"²⁷⁹ as a formative extension of Roehr's connections to cybernetics. As perhaps the second cohesive instance identifiable in Roehr's work in which the cybernetic properties of things, people, and ideas are situated within a circulation feedback loop of larger social systems, the attending dialog provides a fruitful stationing of Roehr's work in the 1960s, and another springboard for his continual development of a conceptual art.

The VW Beetle, as Bernhard Rieger examined, "came to articulate and communicate a broad range of sentiments that, given its prominence, highlight key aspects of West German collective identity."²⁸⁰ As what might be considered the most West German collective icon, Rieger explains that the Beetle was seen not only in the domestic context as a "quintessential embodiment

²⁷⁹ Charissa Terranova, *Automotive Prosthetic: Technological Mediation and the Car in Conceptual Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 2.

²⁸⁰ Bernhard Rieger, "The 'Good German' Goes Global: The Volkswagen as an Icon in the Federal Republic," in *History Workshop Journal*, 68, no. 1 (October 2009): 5.

of the values West Germans embraced as they rebuilt their ruined country,”²⁸¹ but also as “their unofficial, yet prominent representative on the international [economic] stage.”²⁸²

While explicit in his examination of the VW company’s origins in the former Nazi regime,²⁸³ Rieger’s analysis more closely examines the postwar conditions under which the Beetle was viewed. “Detaching the automobile from the Nazi era, [Volkswagen director Heinz Heinrich] Nordhoff linked his product to values like moderation and utility, which, in his reading, dominated the culture of the postwar era. [...] The small car from Wolfsburg appealed because of its consistency and trustworthiness. It was ‘true to itself and its friends,’ and so signaled a ‘normalization of life.’”²⁸⁴ The Beetle’s “virtues” in the postwar era championed the new normalcy of the everyday person and more importantly, of a nation re-branding itself.

The advertisement example from the early 1960s given by Rieger (Figure 44) perpetuates this notion of stability, dependability, and above all, normalcy. On a plain white background, the advertisement leads with a question to the reader: “Warum werden so viele Volkswagen gekauft? (Why are so many Volkswagens purchased?)” The extremely small text directly underneath stated the Beetle’s sales statistics, which was immediately confirmed by the text “Dafür gibt es viele Gründe. Das ist der wichtigste.” (There are many reasons for that. That is the most important.) Dominating the rest of the spread was a grid of photographs of the same Beetle, each one showing it receding toward the horizon. Each of the photographic frames showing the progression of the

²⁸¹ Ibid., 6.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ “Both in Germany and abroad, it was common knowledge that the car’s main design features – its round shape, its torsion-bar wheel suspension, its air-cooled rear engine – stemmed from the 1930s. It was also well known that Ferdinand Porsche had secured Hitler’s support to develop an inexpensive, robust family vehicle as part of the dictator’s plans to advance mass motorization so as to demonstrate National Socialism’s purported commitment to creating a classless, racially pure ‘national community [promoted as the Volksgemeinschaft]’ in the sphere of consumption.” Ibid., 5.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 11. Rieger cites the ‘true to itself and its friends’ and ‘normalization of life’ from the Volkswagen owners’ magazine *Gute Fahrt*, no. 9 (1952): 3.

car was accompanied by text underneath. Beginning with “Der VW läuft (The VW runs)” and progressing along with the car, the text repeated “und läuft (and runs),” gradually diminishes.

As David Head notes, the quality and control of production at the Beetle factory so impressed the top American advertising agency DDB (Doyle, Dane, Bernbach) that the creative directors based their campaign on it.²⁸⁵ Crucially, the selling points of thoroughness and quality control were relayed through the advertising image and layout:

The campaign was built on selling a single advantage of the car in each panel. The picture was kept simple, the copy was short, factual, and straightforward. Each ad gave a specific reason why the car was good, and the artwork was held to ‘honest’ black and white regardless of how slick the magazine it was to be published in.²⁸⁶

The shift from the sentimental, nostalgic aesthetics of the 1950s to the 1960s was characterized by a new “directness” in advertising.

As Michael Kriegeskorte indicates, “[t]his directness results, among other things, from the clear, sober geometry of the surface guidance, which are completely subordinate to the content-related concerns of the advertisement.”²⁸⁷ The clear, functional advertisements were direct and easy to understand, while the minimal design also gave the ad campaign a cool, fashionable sensibility. The Volkswagen “Theory of Evolution” campaign (Figure 45) ran a similar grid layout to the “und läuft” ad that appeared in German and was published on September 14th, 1962 in *Life* Magazine. Beginning with the year 1949 – the year West Germany was instituted as a Federal

285 David Head, *Made in Germany: The Corporate Identity of a Nation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), 59-60.

286 Ibid.

287 “Diese Direktheit ergibt sich unter anderem als der klaren, nüchternen Geometrie der Flächenaufleitung, die dem inhaltlichen Anliegen der Anzeige vollkommen untergeordnet ist. Keine formalen Schnörkel stören die Wirkung der Fotos. Die Werbebotschaften schienen dadurch klarer und deutlicher und deshalb leichter und schneller verständlich zu werden... Rein funktionale, die Form der Anzeigen, vor allem in der Autowerbung.” Michael Kriegeskorte, *Werbung in Deutschland 1945-1965: Die Nachkriegszeit im Spiegel ihrer Anzeigen* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1992), 136.

Republic – and proceeding to the future year of 1963, each panel presented the identical side view of the Beetle in a 3 by 5 panel grid. The text below the grid posed a series of questions in refrain asking the reader to find the physical differences, whether there were spoilers or new chrome work, then to identify the one with the more efficient heater or the more powerful engine. Both refrains ended with the phrase “You can’t.” Volkswagen’s “Theory of Evolution” was that there was no distinction between the 1949 model and the 1963 model in the flashy, physical sense of the idea of evolution, that “the reason you can’t see most of our evolutionary changes is because we’ve made them deep down inside the car. And that’s what makes our theory: never change the VW for the sake of change, only to make it better.”²⁸⁸ The rhetorical questioning of the advertisement borders on cheekiness, absurdism, or possibly the Zen Kōan. Regardless, the dry text accompanied the straightforward layout and together they reflected the dependability of the product. And the product sold.

As John R. Blakinger effectively argued, for Warhol, the ad campaigns in *Life* Magazine not only provided imagistic sources for his Disaster paintings, but also inspired the layouts.²⁸⁹ “By imitating the layouts of advertisements but changing the narratives they originally produced in the magazine, Warhol undermined the truth claims behind consumerist spectacle.”²⁹⁰ His intervention in the narrative but not the layout of the advertisement, as seen in *Green Disaster*, countered the “Volkswagen Theory of Evolution” narrative of progress with the “numbing crashed cars” of destruction, “an ultimate end to technological improvement.”²⁹¹ Similarly, Liam Considine

288 Volkswagen Beetle Company, “Theory of Evolution” Advertisement, first printed 14 September 1962. *Life* Magazine. Reproduced in John R. Blakinger, “Death in America and Life Magazine: Sources for Andy Warhol’s Disaster Paintings,” in *Artibus et Historiae* 33, no. 66 (2012): 268.

289 Ibid., 269.

290 Ibid., 279.

291 Ibid.

examined the Disaster series in the context of Warhol's debut at Sonnabend's Gallery in 1963 and French automotive advertising in the 1960s, ultimately claiming that "their disturbing realism highlighted their material singularity on the canvas and in the gallery as painting-objects, while their dialectical counterparts moved through the French press as simulacral advertising images."²⁹² For a German public, the use of the VW Beetle so directly smashed could not have been overlooked.

Circulation in West German advertisements transformed the bodily experience of the automobile into a visual stimulation. So linked, the activated (particularly German) viewer associated the image of the automobile with the object itself as a cipher for various feelings: freedom, security, and an interconnected citizenry. As disconcerting as the corporate advertisement may be, the method of its communication via the medium arose in response to the desires of contemporary society. Roehr understood the implications this method of communication posed for other possible outcomes. As he displayed with the Typed montages (Figure 28), the idea of simple serialization was an inherent engagement with the social via culturally signified objects that have been removed from their significance, in order to display the form as content. However, the human element was never completely absent from Roehr's Montages: someone wrote the slogans of the sources for the Text Montages or verbalized them for the Sound Montages; someone occupied the photographs of the Photo Montages (Figure 38), or framed the content through their camera lens.

Once again returning to Walter Benjamin, the mass relation to the industrial world altered the sense perceptions of that mass to the uniqueness of the work of art. For Benjamin, works of photography "capture images which escape natural vision," since the images shown manipulate

²⁹² Considine, "Disaster in Paris," 563.

scenes or arrest time.²⁹³ The addition of a caption in “illustrated picture magazines” directs the masses to the construction of meanings in the photograph, despite what may or may not be seen. Yet as Benjamin pointed out, the rise of photography also occurred simultaneously with the rise of socialism, a revolution in both the perception and ideological structures of the mass to itself.²⁹⁴ Benjamin determines that since art of the age of mechanical reproduction is no longer based in ritual, in authenticity, in tradition, it is based on politics. In other words, we can understand that the mass forms a matrix that transforms new works in this understanding.

Roehr’s selection of material for the Photo Montages perhaps signaled an idea of what this transformation entailed. In the work, *Untitled (FO-46)* (Figure 46), Roehr chose the advertisement photograph of VW workers laboring over the body of an unfinished Beetle. Seemingly caught in a moment of rest, one of the three workers flashes a grin at the camera: a picture perfect image of a German worker physically producing the new national emblem based on hard working ethics and economic stability and order. Yet, intentionally robbed of a caption, and serially repeated in the grid, meanings—especially political ones – that arise from this Photo Montage remain murky.

The difference between Warhol’s *Green Disaster #2* (Figure 43) and Roehr’s work *Untitled FO-108* (Figure 47) can be fundamentally situated in the formal qualities of seriality and rigidity within the grid, which assists in the divestment of the emotional and sentimental investment by the artists, albeit on different levels. Yet, the sentimentality of the advertisement content lingers. By presenting the advertisement “as is” in a work like *Untitled (FO-108)*, Roehr offers the individual identical image as only the self-same information flow and creates optical patterns that function without the clear intervention of the artist’s hand. Here the buildings of a city are reflected in the

²⁹³ Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 220.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 224.

hood and roof of the VW Beetle and this double reflection within each frame creates an almost vibrating pattern of the whole. Wendermann explains that: “The technological aura is being broken time and again by accessories from the world of fashion, which were supposed to transform the model of the Beetle to a fashionable trendsetter in the ad campaign at the time. Roehr was indeed aware of the fashionable aspect typical of the time.”²⁹⁵ The slick black shine of the hood, reflecting the skyscrapers of the most bustling city in the world, evoked for any viewer a hip and vibrant impression of a metropolis.

The shimmering metal and paint of the automobile at once appealed to the technological aspects of ZERO, with the implied aspects of speed, movement and reflection attuned to the kinetic and vibrating works favored by the group. Prior to Warhol’s Disaster paintings, the celebration or destruction of the automobile was also used in the works of the Nouveaux Réaliste artist César, such as *Compressed Sunbeam* from 1961; Pop artist John Chamberlain’s twisted metal sculptures made from old auto parts, such as *Knoll* (1961); and by Richard Hamilton’s early Pop drawing *Hers is a Lush Situation* from the late 1950s. While César and Chamberlain’s crushed cars predated Warhol’s destroyed machines, Hamilton infused his mechanical drawing with a cool, enveloping sensuality. Like Pop, the car came to symbolize the desires and dreams of a consuming world.

The automotive advertisement capitalized on possibilities for capturing the attention of the consumer through printed, static means, as a group icon. Like automobiles rolling off the assembly line one after the other, so too does the repetitive advertisement embrace its ability to shorten the physical distances between humans and the psychical projection of spaces. Moreover, the reproducibility of icons had gone beyond merely their mechanized forms, but rather extended into

295 “Die technologische Aura wird immer wider gebrochen durch Accessoires aus der Modewelt, die in der damaligen Werbekampagne das Käfermodell in einen modischen Trendsetter verwandeln sollten. Dieses zeittypischen, modischen Aspekts war Roehr sich durchaus bewusst...” Wendermann, *Peter Roehr*, 42.

a whole range of networked systems of desires, social ties, and environments. In Marshall McLuhan's section on the automobile in *Understanding Media*, the car too is formulated as a technological medium: "The simple and obvious fact about the car is that, more than any horse, it is an extension of man that turns the rider into a superhuman. It is a hot, explosive medium of social communication."²⁹⁶ For McLuhan, the artist was particularly attuned to the changes different mediums of technological communication posed to the perceptions of the viewer.

Jack Burnham would also point out that in the 1960s "a striking parallel exists between the 'new' car of the automobile stylist and the syndrome of formalist intervention in art, where 'discoveries' are made through visual manipulation. Increasingly 'products'—either in art or life—become irrelevant and a different set of needs arise...[such as] defining alternative patterns of education, productivity, and leisure."²⁹⁷ As a cybernetic cipher, the automobile in artistic works was uniquely attuned to the reproducible aspect of emerging forms of art. Within Roehr's grids as matrices, the advertisement photographs of automobiles functioned as a pointed cybernetic communication device of the utmost order. While for McLuhan the automobile was merely one step in an extension of man into his environment, Roehr, like Burnham, perhaps unconsciously understood the formal technics of the car as a foray into connecting his audience to a more significant, intertwined set of frameworks.

Charissa Terranova frames the interaction of the human, the car, and the conceptual artistic environment in terms of a cybernetic feedback loop: "one does not simply look at the work of art for meaning but looks through the prism of technology within art, entering into a network of

296 Marshall McLuhan, "Motorcar: The Mechanical Bride," in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 221.

297 Jack Burnham, "System Aesthetics," *Dissolve into Comprehension: Jack Burnham, Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*, ed. Melissa Ragain. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015), 116. First published in *ArtForum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968).

political and economic relations.”²⁹⁸ At the center of her exploration, Terranova explores the automobile as a cybernetic, alternative understanding of the ‘conceptual turn’ in art that draws heavily on theories from Marshall McLuhan and Jack Burnham, phenomenology and the human sensory body, in order to “resituate conceptualism in terms of technological provenance.”²⁹⁹ At play for all of these theorists was the ability of a machine to extend the perceptual functions of the human mind into a person’s environment, in order to conceptualize larger forces at play between man, machine, and ultimately, new conceptual works of art.

The automobile, as Terranova formulated, is a “prosthetic” mode of sensing the world, transformed into a vehicle of subjective desire and sensation in contemporary art. “[I]n works of art [...] the car functions as an apparatus – a prosthetic connected to the body and systems of infrastructure – through which to see and experience the world, both in motion on the highway and as a citizen interconnected to other citizens of the world.”³⁰⁰ In re-visioning the technological world of art with the automobile as its crux, Terranova frames the cyborg vision of the activated viewer as one that has changed – and continually changes – their environment. Terranova’s thesis therefore positions the viewer as the *kybernetes* (the steersman), the driver of the cybernetic network, “connecting road to car to urban landscape to fellow human to global political economy in a feedback loop where car, highway, and human body function like a biomechanical semiconductor.”³⁰¹ Taking the cybernetic feedback loops into account, the crushed and destroyed cars offered disaster and death, whereas Roehr’s Photo Montages unified automated behaviors and unconscious subjectivity. The advertisements, themselves mediums nesting other mediums, are

298 Terranova, *Automotive Prosthetic*, 5.

299 Ibid. 10.

300 Ibid. 2

301 Ibid. 2.

further displaced by Roehr's grids of themselves; the quantity overwhelms their image quality. The inherently social aspect is not in conflict with the rigidity of the grid as matrix, but rather reflects the already existing organization of society itself.

When the image, like the VW Beetle in *Untitled (FO-55)* is repeated in Roehr's signature grid pattern, its iconic resonance is broken. The total composition forces the single narrative image to work in conjunction with its identical image. The identical images are therefore, as Roehr's friend and artistic associate Charlotte Posenenske would later write, the "mutually completing elements that are arranged to work in the same manner as a composition of disparate elements."³⁰² But rather than promoting an alternate message through juxtaposition, Roehr's Photo Montages are staid, regulated, monotonous: critical, sympathetic, radical, humorous intentionality is absent. The trap of sentimentality, one that provides an excuse for the viewer to take in the voyeuristic pleasure of a grisly death scene (as in Warhol's *Disaster Paintings*), was denied to the viewer in the Photo Montages. Roehr's choice of image lacks the immediacy of recognition, as was seen in *Green Disaster*; rather, the monotonous image repeated loses the unique relatable quality of the icon in order to offer up different possibilities of social and artistic recognition.

However, in a work like *Untitled (FO-96)* (Figure 48), the frame of each identical image is still presented in an unaltered state, but its content is much less identifiable. Indeed, the gap between each individual frame has been almost completely erased, while the repeating red lines that border the upper side of the frame blend seamlessly into one another. As the silver chrome lines³⁰³ disappear into the side of the frame, they almost line up with the next image, individually

³⁰² Charlotte Posenenske and Burkhard Brunn, "On the Montages of Peter Roehr," in *Peter Roehr*, trans. James Whitman, (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1977), 66. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at Kunsthalle Tübingen, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, and Frankfurter Kunstverein.

³⁰³ This appears to be a cropped image of a car roof rack.

distinguishing each frame and harmonizing it with its neighbors. Per Wendermann: “Since Roehr’s central interest still pertains to the materials’ features and their optical dynamisation through repetition unchanged, he categorically distrusted the distracting ‘contentuality’ of the photo montages, which appeared increasingly uncontrollable to him.”³⁰⁴ As Wendermann examines, for Roehr, the content was less at play than the dynamics of their structure, while, as examined above, the opposite was true for Warhol. Due to its unidentifiable content, yet formal synthesis with only its identical image, *FO-96* can therefore be seen as a highlight of Roehr’s experiments with the Photo Montages. However, a further element of the cybernetics of the automobile leads this discussion to the realm of conceptual art. As Terranova points out “as a pop phenomenology, conceptual car art frames the car as a catalyst of emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic experience.”³⁰⁵ In his increasingly dematerialized Photo Montages of car parts, the viewer is offered an ever-increasing role in their completion.

From 1964 to the end of 1966, Roehr’s program had developed from the Text Montages to the Object Montages, but he could not produce them at a significant rate. The introduction of advertisements as the basis for his Photo Montage program built upon ideas found in his Text Montages, yet they opened up the possibilities for greater audience engagement. Indeed, the use of imagery in his program was a stunning turn for Roehr and his audience. It also opened up doors to the gallery world that had previously been closed to him. More significantly, the role of cybernetics became more pronounced. As it will become clear in the following chapter, the role of

304 “Da Roehr’s zentrales Interesse jedoch unverändert den Materialeigenschaften und deren optischer Dynamisierung durch die Wiederholung galt, mißtraute er grundsätzlich der ablenkenden ‘Inhaltlichkeit’ der fotomontagen, die ihm zunehmend unkontrollierbar erschien.” Wendermann, *Peter Roehr*, 43.

305 Terranova, *Automotive Prosthetic*, 30.

interaction among man, machine, and systems would play a critical role in Roehr's Montage program.

4.0 Peter Roehr's Film Montages, Exhibitions, and Networks

As the year 1965 approached, Pop was very much at the forefront of Roehr's thinking. As the previous chapter examined, his Photo Montages were beginning to attract attention, and while Roehr evidenced a fervent opposition to the advertisement image's evocation of desire or sentimentality, as McLuhan formulated and Warhol celebrated, he was highly attuned to commercialism as a popular aesthetic.³⁰⁶ As I examined in Chapter 2, interest was also reflected in the broader acceptance of Pop in West German society. Just as Roehr had experimented with the tendencies found in the European avant-garde only to refine them under his individual system, the trend of serial repetition – particularly framed through Pop art – became a “reality” within the industrially produced objects as an aesthetic method indicative of the time.

In 1965, while still producing his Photo Montages, Roehr received a new set of materials in the form of films reels from advertising and commercial domains. Until the middle of 1966, Roehr produced his Film Montages, serial repetitions of sequences that incorporated movement, time, and cinematic space. Perhaps more than the Photo Montages, Roehr's unpretentious program of simplicity was stymied in the complexities of the content of the materials. My analysis in the following pages will show that the repetitions of Roehr's cinematic sequences, particularly their use of time as well as space, remain indebted to a continuing theoretical underpinning of cybernetics. I will demonstrate that they seek a homeostatic balance between viewer and the technics of the filmic medium.

³⁰⁶ Martin Kunz, “Interview with Paul Maenz, 5 January 1978,” in *Peter Roehr: Work 1962-1968*, (Oxford: Holywell Press Ltd., 1978), 13. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, April 9–May 14, 1978.

Simultaneous to his latest direction in the Film Montages, Roehr began to formulate an aspect of his program that would include the greater participation of artists, theorists and above all the audience. Although he was stimulated from the beginning by repetition in the natural world, in machine environments, in commercial imagery, in publicity and public discourse, the resonating motif of seriality in other works of art struck Roehr as larger than any individual artist's concerns. Through his system, Roehr reworked the material reality of the given object into a conduit for other paths of introspection. This was in part due to his continuing theoretical development, which included reading and studying more American writings such as Barbara Rose's essay "ABC Art," as well as writings by Robert Smithson, Sol LeWitt, and Donald Judd.³⁰⁷ In each of these instances of artistic interaction from 1965 to 1966, Roehr's approach was based in a cybernetic attitude, one that was gradually shifting focus from the qualities of mediums to the role that larger systems of the art world played in the realization of his works.

4.1 1965–1966: Roehr's Fledgling Artistic Career

At the height of his gallery showings in 1966, Roehr received a critical review of his show at the Galerie Aachen by the art critic Klaus Honnef. Writing for the *Aachener Nachrichten*, Honnef pointed out that perhaps Roehr's art was a synthesis between Op and Pop art, as a "return to objectivity as a reaction to Tachism and Informel, [while] on the other hand, it creates new appreciation for the constructive painter."³⁰⁸ Since Roehr was not a painter, the comparison was

³⁰⁷ Gerda Wendermann, *Peter Roehr 1944–1968. Die Sammlung Paul Maenz, (Band 2): Neues Museum Weimar*. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000), 59.

³⁰⁸ The full quote is: "In den Bildern Peter Roehrs spiegeln sich zwei wichtige Kunstströmungen der letzten Zeit. Auf der einen Seite die Rückkehr zur Gegenständlichkeit als Reaktion auf Tachismus und Informel, auf der anderen

intended to highlight his reaction against figurative art, and Honnef's comparison of Roehr with painters did not end there. As another frame of reference, Honnef evoked Roehr's contemporary Gerhard Richter, who also was using the photograph as base material. Richter's process of painting left the viewer wondering if the images were actually "blown-up photographs" or a painted image.³⁰⁹ In contrast, according to Honnef, "Roehr leaves his works with the allure of foreign materials whose depiction –by virtue of their alignment– is brought to the viewer's attention. However, with deeper immersion into the picture, they dissolve into the benefit of color impulses which assume a separate existence."³¹⁰ By extracting from the world of advertisements, he suggests, Roehr's work placed their optical cohesion to the fore in their grid formations, and thereby "reveals the banal beauty of everyday things."³¹¹ The divergence between this optical play and the banality of the everyday provided an unexpected and interesting contrast.

When Roehr's Montages are examined in this aspect, his imagistic works certainly did accord with the larger cultural consciousness, multifaceted as it might be, circulating at the time. In the same way his early work was viewed through the lens of Nouveau Réalisme and New

Seite die neue Wertschätzung für die konstruktiven Maler, vorab für die geometrischen, etwa Victor Vasserey und Josef Albers, als Reaktion auf die Neigung zum Figurativen. Aus beiden widerstreitenden Richtung bezieht Peter Roehr seine Inspirationen und seine Techniken, beide fügt er zusammen in interessanten, farblich beweißen sehr reizvollen, intimen Arbeiten." Klaus Honnef, "Bilder aus der Konsumwelt," *Aachener Nachrichten*, March 8, 1966. 4.

309 "Mit seiner Technik der "seriellen Montagen" geht er über den deutschen Maler Gerhard Richter hinaus, der auch in der Welt der Reproduktionen seine künstlerische Wahrheit sucht, sich freilich von Peter Roehr insofern unterscheidet, als er Foto-Sujets penibel abmalt, so daß von ferne kaum zu unterscheiden ist, ob da ein Bild hängt oder die überdimensionale Vergrößerung eines Fotos." Ibid.

310 "Roehr beläßt seinen Arbeiten den Reiz fremder Materialien, deren Darstellung kraft der Reihung zunächst verstärkt ins Bewußtsein des Betrachters gehoben wird, sich allerdings bei längerer Vertiefung ins Bild zugunsten von sich verselbständigenden Farbimpulsen auflöst." Ibid.

311 "Peter Roehrs Vorliebe gilt der Reklame- und Konsumwelt, welcher er seine Motive entlehnt. Fotos der Autoreidenwerbung, Detailaufnahmen von Kühler- oder Heckfront eines Automobils, Fahrzeuge in hübschen Landschaften, allesamt farbliche Reproduktionen, klebt er abstandslos jeweils auf einer Linie zusammen. Vermöge des ständigen Repetierens der, für sich genommen, autonomen Einzelteile, die bis zu einem bestimmten Grad ihren Eigenwert behalten, entstehen faszinierende Wirkung, entstehen erregend monotone Rythmen. Roehr offenbart in seinen Bildern die banale Schönheit von Alltagsdingen." Ibid.

Tendencies, his Photo Montages were equally viewed in light of the recent influx of Pop Art. It is not surprising that Roehr's work gained the attention of broader artistic circles by 1966; these connections will be examined at the end of this chapter.

Concurrent to his artistic production, Roehr was also working diligently to gain further exposure not only in West Germany, but also in the United States. He wrote three American artistic and cultural foundations in April of 1965 to ask for information, presumably funding opportunities, on their programs. Roehr was consciously aware of the problems facing the reception of his work: "Everybody who really honestly tries to realize a certain unexplored aesthetic field, very soon knows the social problems. This problem isn't necessarily [sic] killing the person but – much more likely – makes him stop working. That is my story! Except I'm most active right now."³¹²

The Ford Foundation and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation politely informed him that their resources were not available for West German artists, and the Wildenstein Foundation flatly stated they did not fund grants in his area of study.³¹³ Critically, the "social problems" that Roehr referred to in his letter reflected his frustration that the "unexplored aesthetic field" held so much potential that was wasted. These problems could also refer to the wider range of critics and galleries, who might not support unvetted aesthetic projects. Whether or not Roehr thought that American audiences would have understood his montages differently remains an open-ended question, and there was little fanfare when his works were shown amongst other graphic works in the Multiples Gallery show in New York in 1966. However, this series of correspondences display both Roehr's interest in expanding his art practice, possibly in the United States, and the resolve

³¹² Peter Roehr, to the Ford Foundation, 29 April, 1965. Inv.-Nr.:2014/75.108, Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Modern Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. Roehr also sent identical letters to the Wildenstein Foundation 28 April, 1965 (Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.115) and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 29 April, 1965 (Inv.-Nr.:2014/75.110).

³¹³ Firestone to Roehr, 7 May, 1965 (Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.109) and Goldberg to Roehr, 12 May, 1965 (Inv.-Nr.: 2014/74.114). Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Modern Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

in his own conceptual program. He wrote to numerous practicing artists, as diverse as Wolf Vostell, Lucio Fontana, Andy Warhol, and Matthias Goeritz, as well as galleries, museums, magazines and the documenta archive in Kassel.³¹⁴ His letters followed a simple format of introduction, followed by explanation of his project. Roehr included his illustrated publication booklet with Maenz's foreword from 1965 and his own statements on the work, or simply photographs of his works, in the letters. Roehr often did not receive a response, but he continued to inquire and submit his work as part of his strategy of exposure.³¹⁵

Yet Roehr's serious self-promotion and tireless work began to provoke interest from galleries in Düsseldorf, Hamburg and other cities around West Germany. Although his montages were continually viewed within the framework of a German response to Pop, this misjudgment exposed Roehr to gallery owners like Alfred Schmela and Udo Kulturmann. Alfred Schmela in particular was one of the most highly regarded postwar art dealers in Europe, after showing the groundbreaking work of Yves Klein, Group ZERO, and Joseph Beuys over the years. Maenz recalls driving Roehr to Düsseldorf in 1965, where he showed the influential dealer his portfolio. Schmela was at first impressed with Roehr's work and offered him the opportunity to exhibit his works, possibly in the upcoming "Weiss-Weiss" group show.³¹⁶

It was all the more frustrating for Roehr when Schmela later stipulated that only the Photo Montages would be considered for exhibition. Schmela later retracted his offer completely,

314 documenta responded nearly a year later, but the letter never appeared in Roehr's archive. His portfolio and letter were later used in Harald Szeemann's 1972 artist file for documenta V.

315 One exception was the artist Matthias Goeritz, then based in Mexico City and a critical contributor to the Concrete Poetry movement based in Stuttgart. He expressed interest in Roehr's work and encouraged him to continue his project. Matthias Goeritz, in a letter to Peter Roehr, 11 December 1966. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.139. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

316 Paul Maenz "Epilogue," in *Peter Roehr*, trans. James Whitman (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1977). 102. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at Kunsthalle Tübingen, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, and Frankfurter Kunstverein.

“referring to Roehr’s young age and the resemblances between the montages and Warhol’s silk-screens respectively [and] Arman’s accumulations.”³¹⁷ A letter from Schmela to Roehr later that year informed him that the works he kept from the summer were not selling, and that Roehr should make arrangements to retrieve them.³¹⁸

In October of 1965, Roehr’s Photo Montages were included in two exhibitions that occurred simultaneously. Several of the Montages were presented in the group exhibition *Pop und Neue Realisten* at the Pianohaus Kohl in Gelsenkirchen and curated by Ernst Knorr. His first solo show *Abendausstellung II* (Evening Exhibition, Figure 49) premiered at Adam Seide’s private living room qua exhibition space on the second floor at Röderbergweg 64 in Frankfurt. The exhibition included the recently produced Photo Montages using the Volkswagen image material, an installation, and the debut of his newly produced Film Montages.

The *Pop und Neue Realisten* group exhibition was curated by Ernst Knorr and featured Roehr’s works— including the original Photo Montage *Untitled (FO-34)* (Figure 50), which was also printed in Seide’s *Egoist* 8 (see below)— alongside artists like Jim Dine, Arman, Daniel Spoerri, Christo, Jan Henderikse, Henk Peeters, Wolf Vostell, Gerhard Richter, and Sigmar Polke among others.³¹⁹ At the opening, the critic John Anthony Thwaites gave an introduction and Irmin Schmidt, a student of Karlheinz Stockhausen, improvised a musical score.³²⁰ Again, while Roehr was pleased with the show, he still felt he had to distinguish his program from other works on display that adhered to the styles of Pop and Nouveaux Réalisme.³²¹

317 Ibid.

318 Alfred Schmela in a letter to Peter Roehr, 29 November, 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.484 Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

319 Christian Ganzenberg and Meredith North, “Chronology,” in *Peter Roehr: Field Pulsations*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2018), 283.

320 Ibid.

321 Peter Roehr to Ernst Knorr, 18 November, 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.248. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Although it is unknown if Roehr attended the opening in Gelsenkirchen or if he saw the show later, it is certain that he was active in preparing the *Abendausstellung II* (Evening Exhibition) at Adam Seide's gallery space. Seide was an up and coming literary and artistic organizer in Frankfurt am Main, who had met Roehr in 1963 at a *Volkshochschule* (adult education center) course in Frankfurt.³²² The two bonded over visits to art exhibitions and film screenings, and Seide would become a primary supporter of Roehr's work in Frankfurt. In the autumn of 1965, Seide published the eighth edition of *Egoist*. Roehr's opening exhibition on October 16th was also the release party for the publication. While the essays throughout the issue primarily examined Fluxus and Happening events in Frankfurt and throughout Germany, the reproduced art works seemed to be engaged with their own inner discussion: a number of works which displayed "serial forms" were printed, although without line credit, including one of Roehr's Photo Montages, *Untitled (FO-34)* (Figure 50), and several unidentified photographs of sculptures and objects, including works by gruppe x (Figure 51).³²³

Ending the quasi-essayistic series of photographs of serial works was a cartoon depicting a nude woman posing before an artist in the studio. With the nudity and bodily attitude of a traditional classical model, the joke arises with what the artist himself is representing: instead of a figural representation of the body, the clearly bohemian artist – barefoot, rolled pants, shaggy hair, and bearded – paints only the breast of the model. The idealized body of the woman is so reduced to an abstract part that the geometric abstract works in the background appear more similar to the work depicted than the figure herself. The joke directs attention to the upending of the traditional

322 Peter Roehr, *Untitled Statement*, Undated, Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.59. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt. Unpaginated.

323 gruppe x would not make their official public appearance until January 1966. See also later in this chapter.

and sexualized figural motif through a new representational leitmotif of serial tendencies in contemporary art and attitudes.

As seen in a series of photographs taken prior to his solo exhibition (Figure 49), Roehr showed his Photo and Object Montages, as well as a site-specific, temporary installation of cubed industrial packaging. Indeed, in a famous and often reprinted photograph of Roehr, he inadvertently performs similarities to the cartoon in the installation of this work (Figure 52). Seide also found inspiration in the works and placed himself in the frame of the exhibition's installation, a photograph which was then re-printed on the cover of *Egoist* 9 (Figure 53). Thomas Bayrle's personal contemporaneous account was more revealing when he wrote, "[y]ou could not escape the fascination these works exerted; after all, they seemed so instant as if they had just come from the printer."³²⁴ The instantaneous quality of these works once again showed Roehr's developing artistic identity and yielded a certain level of exposure. But works associated with the growing Pop brand came with commodification of the artist himself, as explored in Chapter 2. Figures in the Frankfurt art scene gathered for the exhibition at Seide, including Rochus Kowallek, William Simmat, Hermann Goepfert, Adolf Lichter, and Ed Sommer. In addition to his Photo Montages, the audience members were the first to see Roehr's Film Montages, his latest works of serial repetition.

After the Seide exhibition, several of Roehr's Photo Montages were printed on the back of the January 1966 issue of *Diskus* (Figure 54). The Montages were presented unaltered, and the prominent feature was accompanied by a short statement by Paul Maenz: "Peter Roehr makes simple pictures, simple texts, simple films. Montages [...] The results of this method: simple

³²⁴ Thomas Bayrle, "Peter Roehr," in *Peter Roehr*, (Frankfurt am Main: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2010), 148. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main.

pictures, simple texts, simple films, whose unsuspected beauty is without hysteria.”³²⁵ By beginning and ending the caption with the phrase “simple pictures, simple texts, simple films,” Maenz emphasized Roehr’s work method while also again mirroring his repetitious structure (see Figure 37).

Roehr’s work had also attracted the attention of Valdis J. Āboliņš, the director of the Galerie Wallstraße in Aachen, who wrote to Roehr in February 1966.³²⁶ Udo Kulterman also expressed interest in Roehr’s work.³²⁷ Roehr obtained the show in Aachen at Āboliņš’ Gallery Wallstraße in March of 1966, where along with his Photo Montages that were vividly reviewed by Honnef earlier in this section, he presented his Film Montages for the first time outside of Frankfurt. However, the moving image, as with the Photo Montages, presented its own set of insights and challenges to his overall project. While the Photo Montages made up the middle years of Roehr’s works, his Montage program of images came into maturity with his Film Montages.

325 The full statement is: “Peter Roehr macht einfache Bilder, einfache Texte, einfache Filme. Montagen. Ereignis ist, daß ohne manipulation der einzelnen Materialeinheiten (abgesehen von ihrem lokalen wechsel) diese allein durch ihre berührung mit gleichartigen in eine Aktion geraten, die überraschend ist. Subjektiv. An den Montagen ist die auswahl des Materials und dessen Menge. So ergibt sich die Situation einer wechselnd tendierenden balance zwischen den werten, die der verarbeitete gegenstand als Erbe seiner herkunft mitbringt, und seiner puren ästhetischen Qualität. Die ergebnisse dieser Methode: einfache Bilder, einfache Texte, einfacher Filme, deren unvermutete Schönheit ohne Hysterie ist.” Paul Maenz, caption, in *Diskus*, January 1966. 16.

326 Valdis J. Āboliņš, to Peter Roehr, 14 February 1966. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.11, Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt.

327 Udo Kultermann, to Peter Roehr, 15 February 1966, Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.284, Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt.

4.2 Film Montages

As he continued production on typewriter and Photo Montages, Roehr came upon a private archive of “Crime, Horror, and Sensation Films from the 1950s”³²⁸ and began in September and October of 1965 to produce what would become his Film Montages. When he received over 100 reels of American television commercials and movies from Maenz in 1965, he found that unlike the photomontages, film provided a medium in which sensations and subjectivity played a larger role through the aspect of time. With this trove of material, he would produce 20 Film Montages until September 1966.

The basis of film technology is the recording, editing, and the eventual projection of single images in a sequence to form a narrative. Roehr, seemingly for the first time, worked in cooperation with others on the production of his works due to the advanced technical process of cutting and splicing multiple reels in a correct frame.³²⁹ Furthermore, in order to determine a precise, yet completely subjective balance between the length and number of sequences, Roehr invited his friends and acquaintances to viewings to approximate the perceptual limits of the images by an audience.³³⁰ He meticulously cut each film section by hand and taped them together. The proofs were then sent to film editor Roland Krell, who then technically spliced the segments together in a studio, sometimes without having seen the material previously.³³¹ He also relied on

328 “Krimis, Horror, und Sensationsfilme aus den 50er Jahren,” Peter Roehr, “Kino”, undated, Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.104. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt.

329 Specifically, the film editor Roland Krell, who along with Maenz, is given credit at the beginning of each Film Montage ‘group.’ Roehr also wrote to the company Kinax, in Dillenburg, Germany, requesting that his films be copied and montaged together. Peter Roehr, to Firma Kinax. Contact copy of letter, 5 November, 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.237. Archive Peter Roehr, Frankfurt am Main.

330 Roehr, “Kino,” Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.104.

331 “Ein Teil meiner Filme wurden (allerdings aus Terminschwierigkeiten) von Roland Krell ganz alleine hergestellt und gezeigt – ohne daß ich sie zuvor gesehen hatte. Sie war so, daß wir auch später keine Änderung daran vorzunehmen hatten.” Peter Roehr, “Forts.,” 6 October, 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.32. Archive Peter Roehr, Frankfurt am Main.

friends to transport the material itself. Unlike the paper sources that formed the Photo Montages, the film canisters were bulky and carried large import taxes from the United States to West Germany. There was also the fear that they could be impounded or heavily taxed by customs agents; however, Maenz shrewdly commissioned a Lufthansa pilot friend to transport the canisters of film in his luggage when flying from New York to Frankfurt.³³²

Like the Photo Montages, the Film Montages were striking in their visual appeal. Roehr gave them self-referential titles like *Tunnel*, *Verkehr* (Traffic), and *Haaretrocken* (Hair Drying) followed by a number corresponding to the series of repetitions. After the crowd sourced determination of sequences— the suitable length and number of times the single sequence could be shown without being subsumed or overpowering the larger whole— Roehr selected identical sequences that emphasized medium specificity of film—qualities of light and movement: “[w]hat interested me was not the literary content of the scenes, but rather the elapse of movements, which when starting up where they had left off yielded a movement-network.”³³³ The “movement-network” between the identical images that Roehr pinpointed is therefore linked to both the duration of sequences and their break from narrative structures through the repetition process. At the formal level, Roehr’s mechanical process of montage not only pressures the communicative properties of the filmic medium; the repetitions provoke an alienation of the viewer’s subjectivity from the image contents. They are no longer illusions given by context. This was further reinforced

³³²Paul Maenz, in discussion with the author, Berlin 2015. There is further evidence this was a common practice, as Roehr’s archive contains a series of correspondences with an Italian film artist Gianfranco Baruchello, who proposed shipping Roehr a reel of his film for one of Roehr’s proposed projects via an Air Italia pilot. Baruchello ended up sending the film via post. Correspondences between Peter Roehr and Gianfranco Baruchello, Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

³³³ Roehr, “Kino” document, Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.104. “Ich versuchte die Länge des Gesamtstreifens so zu bemessen, daß der Film dann endete, wenn dieses Netz sich auflösen drohte, und die Bewegung Eigencharakter annahm.”

by informing the viewer what they were about to see via the title and the number of repetitions to be shown before the images even appeared.

Such straightforward processes are evident in each of Roehr's Film Montages. Preceding the presentation of the Film Montages, a short statement by Roehr flashed on the screen for approximately 13 seconds: "I change material by repeating it unchanged. The statement is: the behavior of the material to the frequency of its repetition."³³⁴ The movement/duration connection in segments such as *Neon* (Figure 55) and *Haaretrocknen* (Figure 56) result in variations on a theme, in spite of their apparent difference in content. *Neon* is introduced by the short title "Neon x12," before cutting immediately to a perspective from inside a moving vehicle as it enters a brightly lit tunnel. Just as the vehicle begins to change lanes, the film abruptly returns to the beginning of the sequence. The four-second segment repeats 12 times, without variation: the same shift from dark to light, the same car just ahead, the same florescent lights illuminating the tunnel. The single sequence of movement into the depths of the cinematic frame further stresses movement by time and by speed. Although the viewer figuratively descends in time and space then jerks back to the beginning, they are locked in a continuous cycle of experiencing the same image.

Haaretrocknen (Figure 56) functions according to a similar arresting of the image through its repetition in time and space. The supposedly freshly showered yet impossibly glamorous woman has an immediate cinematic quality. Her vigorous hair drying motion, the slight flip of her head, the subtle zoom of the camera toward her delicate jaw and mouth, are actions that are meant to instantly attract the viewer's gaze. The pleasurable consumption of the sequence, however, is denied by its excessive repetition. Additionally, *Haaretrocknen* is accompanied by the jarring

334 "Ich verändere Material indem ich es unverändert wiederhole. Die Aussage ist: Das Verhalten des Materials zur Häufigkeit seiner Wiederholung." Title statement to the Film Montages.

repetition of a jazzy ditty and the slogan, “[i]f you’re using a detergent-based shampoo, use Breck!,”³³⁵ depriving one of any pleasurable viewing experience. This deprivation has an alienating effect, one that impaired the subjective connections of the viewer with the images.

The effect of this montage sequence created a tension between the single sequence of images and its repetition. The moment of movement is highlighted, only to lead nowhere while dramaturgy is continually interrupted, arrested in time: an exercise in Bertolt Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*. The process of estrangement or alienation exposes the constructed nature of the medium through the distancing of the audience’s emotional connection with the perceived images. As Walter Benjamin pointed out in his essay “The Author as Producer,” the “principle of interruption” is inherent in the process of montage itself, where “the superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted.”³³⁶ Referring specifically to Brecht’s Epic Theater, Benjamin explains:

The interruption of action, on account of which Brecht described his theater as “epic,” constantly counteracts illusion on the part of the audience. [...] [I]nterruption here has the character not of a stimulant but of an organizing function. It arrests the action in its course. [...] [The effect of montage] is to expose what is present.³³⁷

Benjamin further illuminated the effects of film in his discussion of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, stating that film’s “social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of

335 Unfortunately, the synchronization of sound in the Film Montages became severely disjoined from their original accompanying sequences in the transfer from 16mm to VHS to DVD. The “Extra Mileage” slogan was not originally connected to the Haaretrocknen montage. The original Breck shampoo commercial slogan “If you’re using a detergent based shampoo, use Breck!” provided the original soundtrack. This can be heard in the previous montage sequence Scheinwerfer x14. When one views the Film Montages in their original 16mm format, the sound and image synchronization is aggressive and overwhelming.

336 Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Levin. (New York: Belknap Press, 2008), 90.

337 Ibid., 91.

the traditional value of the cultural heritage.”³³⁸ Benjamin proposed that particularly for film, traditional values and cultural heritage formerly contained within the image were replaced by meanings accumulated through the proceeding sequences of images.³³⁹ In Roehr’s *Film Montages*, the viewer is provided only with the cut of high action; before one can ascertain a contextual meaning, the image reels back to the beginning. The sense of action, movement, and time are self-contained within its own self-referential treatment.

While the principle of montage had long been known in film studies, the view from the 1960s gave a telling impression. As John Kuiper examined Sergei Eisenstein’s silent montages in an *Art Journal* article from 1962, the construction of a film was often compared to poetry in that images like words form associations in sequence: “The image on the screen is compared with what went before and to some extent with which the spectator expects to come next.”³⁴⁰ Kuiper breaks down the tropes into three categories employed by Eisenstein in his silent montage sequences: similarity-contrast, “similar,” and metaphor.³⁴¹ These tropes are not limited to either poetry or cinema and effectively allow the viewer to construct associations through the given organization of images. “It is through the associative links of his thought that a spectator creates a pictorial image of the shot or sequence shown him on the screen.”³⁴² By “pictorial”, Kuiper intended to describe the union of external context represented by the camera’s image and internal perception in the viewer’s mind in the associative links of his own thoughts.³⁴³ The link the viewer creates through their senses is a “mental product,” which reveals a “mental attitude” to the sequences that

338 Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 221.

339 Ibid., 226.

340 John B. Kuiper, “Cinematic Expression: A Look at Eisenstein’s Silent Montage,” *Art Journal* 22, no. 1 (Autumn 1962). 34.

341 Ibid.

342 Ibid., 39.

343 Ibid.

are shown. Yet, the mental attitudes of the viewer to the content of the Film Montages, much like the associations played with in the Photo Montages, were denied in their banal repetitions, which nonetheless highlight the specific qualities of the medium itself.

While Kuiper alludes to the divide between Eisenstein's technique in relation to American cinema, in her discussion on cinema and cybernetics Uta Holl is much more explicit in the ideological divide between Russian and American techniques, which is attributed to the technique of montage versus editing. For the Russian Avant-Garde cinema, montage refuted the viewer's conscious perception of film in order to allow the relations between images to become deliberately dialectic, an ideological position where "false, bourgeois thinking encountered and corrected itself as other."³⁴⁴ In American cinema, editing gave the spectator a sense of identification with the actions on screen in that it "tried to unite heterogeneous elements as unnoticeably as possible into an omni-visionary perspective."³⁴⁵ As Holl pointed out however, both techniques adhered to standards and sanctions of the ruling ideologies.

Horkheimer and Adorno identified sound film as a totalizing force of the Culture Industry: "The more densely and completely its [sound film] techniques duplicate empirical objects, the more easily it creates the illusion that the world outside is a seamless extension of that which has been revealed in the cinema [...] Far more strongly than the theatre of illusion, film denies its audience any dimension in which they might roam freely in imagination..."³⁴⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno identify the captivation of the viewer in the film as a loss of the critical faculties that would allow the viewer to distinguish what is on the screen from their own lived reality. "The required

344 Ute Holl, *Cinema, Trance and Cybernetics* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2017), 28.

345 Ibid., 27.

346 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 99–100.

qualities of attention have become so familiar from other films and other culture products already known to him or her that they appear automatically.”³⁴⁷ Indeed, this is also the reality given by the Culture Industry itself.

But Roehr’s implementation of an alternative system based in the formal repetition of the self-same sequence not only yields other ways of interacting with the images, it also destroys the diegetic fantasy of film. Much like Roehr’s own artistic position, the Film Montages arrest both a dialectics of image construction and identification of the viewer with the images being shown. While the literary (read: narrative) quality in Roehr’s terms of the content exists on the superficial, illusionary level, it is nonetheless inseparable from the form, whose roots extend from the associations the viewer has in the capitalist system of desire. Although the mechanical process of Roehr’s methodology mirrored the processes of industrial production, it did not fulfill the viewer’s subjective desires for a sequential totalizing whole, that is, for the purposes of domination by the culture industry.

In the process of montage, a viewer cannot descend psychologically into the images on the screen rapidly cut and pasted and without the logic of natural time passing, because they instantly become aware of “the breach in the conventions of perception as a breach against technological conventions.”³⁴⁸ However, Roehr’s obvious technique overturned conventions, in that the Film Montages reveal the constructed qualities of a medium by reducing the inherently seductive qualities of narrative to a banal repetition. Roehr’s extremely obvious method of serial montage rises above Holl’s articulation that “even montage that tried to be conscious as an operation

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

remains unnoticed as a technique,"³⁴⁹ since there was nothing other than technique for the viewer to grasp.

For example, in *Haaretrocknen* the totalizing whole conflated the woman's potent sexuality with the product. The producers of this advertisement clearly played on the basic assumption that men would desire this woman, and women, who are the target audience for the product, want to be that desired figure. Desire and identification are so completely connected in advertisement that this simple formulation is written into even the smallest fragment of the whole. The advertisement in its totality would have been played between television programs, spaced out with enough frequency and variety so as to continually demand renewed attention. Even the advertisers understood the temporary nature of desire; this commercial would have a carefully planned run, and then be discarded and replaced with a new desirable being and image. Indeed, this very process gave Roehr access to the material itself.

In the soundless Film Montage *Ringer (Wrestlers)* (Figure 57), Roehr cut and assembled a sequence of two nearly nude men wrestling in a cinematically dramatic fashion. The men grimace and embrace one another as they attempt to gain the upper hand. Sweat pours from their bodies, glistening in the sun. But ten seconds into the sequence, the scene abruptly cuts off, and begins exactly in the same place. The sequence repeats ten times, and the Montage lasts just over one minute. From *Ringer*, the viewer cannot discern any other context or connect the sequence of images to any narrative other than what Roehr has presented. Their bodies are gripped in a mechanized, forever-repeating hold that denies the expectation of temporal conclusion.

In other Film Montages, Roehr focused on the height of action, the seeming completion of expectation, but returns with the same monotonous effect. In *Explosion x6* and *Sturz x13 (Fall)*,

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

the notable use of a car in action provides the expected outcome of the vehicles' destruction, only to restart once again. These effects are dramatic for Roehr's work. In *Explosion x6* (Figure 58), the camera is positioned at the bottom of a ravine and frames the side of an imposing cliff. The seven-second sequence immediately begins with an automobile cussing the clifftop and careening over the edge of the cliff. In a cinematically slowed dive, the car crashes fender first into the bottom of the ravine at the viewer's eye level. After a split-second delay, a fiery explosion engulfs the car and expands to fill nearly the entire frame, raging for only a second more before restarting again.

Sturz x13 (Figure 59), provides another perspective for the action sequence. The camera is positioned above a body of water. The sequence begins with a covered cargo truck already half-way in freefall off of an unseen surface. A split second later it crashes into the water at the center of the frame. The mighty splash's coronet forms as a second splash follows the rest of the truck into the water, lasting for two seconds longer before the Montage returns to the first frame of action. In both of these Film Montages, the automobile is a literal vehicle for time and movement, in a repeating forever of destruction and restarting.

The destruction of *Explosion x6* and *Sturz x13* Montages are in contrast to *Neon* and several other car centric Film Montages, including *Turn*, *Brücke* (Bridge), *Verkehr* (Traffic), *Durchfahrt* (Drive-Through), and *P.C.V.*, where the viewer is positioned within the car itself. The roadway hums along in the short time and space, only to be repeated the number of times shown. The sense of time and movement through the vehicle in these Film Montages is extended by the cut and repetition, rather than halted and restarted. In both cases of destruction and extension, the car itself is a machine of time and space, cybernetically interconnected with manufacturing and roadways.³⁵⁰

³⁵⁰ Terranova, *Automotive Prosthetic*, 12.

Returning to Charissa Terranova's discussion of the cybernetics of the automobile, the car represents a "bifurcated sense of time, wherein motion between points in space is at once effective and affective, causal and linear while also emotive and non-linear."³⁵¹ As she posits, the viewer's response to seeing a car in motion consists of multiple simultaneous temporalities: a mental emotional interior and a utilitarian exterior co-existing in a "Now" of time.³⁵² By basing her analysis in phenomenology,³⁵³ Terranova argues that technological bodies transform time both empirically and objectively (attached to its functionality) and emotionally and subjectively (arising from individual experiences).³⁵⁴ Beyond the phenomenological affect of bodies in time, Terranova evokes Benjamin's concept of the "Now-Time" [*Jetztzeit*] as "time's transcendent promise of inversion and flexibility, its tendency toward out-of-jointness, which for Benjamin posed a form of redemption, a means of reversal, and, more precisely, a cognitive opening onto alternative ways of being in the world."³⁵⁵ However, as Terranova pointed out, "Now-Time" and the car ushers not only unbounded freedom and speed but is also a carrier of failure and disruption. And yet in all cases, they are transformative of human emotions and the exchanges which take place in their environment. The Film Montages, especially those that show the car in various states of destruction, restarting, or perpetual movement, are a powerful vehicle of reminder of the capabilities of the filmic medium to shift the capabilities of time and space into fantasy.

Roehr's Film Montages lay bare the already existent social properties of the filmic medium: the mechanistic transformation of fantasy into the repressive constraints of commercial

³⁵¹ Ibid., 117.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Terranova reads phenomenology through Mark B. Hansen's analysis of digital time as a "thickness of the present" in the work of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Ibid., 121.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 122.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 144.

domination. The estrangement, dis-identification, and destabilization of the context through extreme formal organization compel a heightened awareness of one's perceptual functions, which is attentive to both the filmic medium and the construction of the self through systems of filmic discourse. This I argue, is fundamentally based in the cybernetic potential of the cinema. As Holl further examines, film offers an object for examining cybernetic processes "since the work of every filmmaker consists in using time manipulation and other cinematic techniques to re-apply a recorded series of events back to that series of events itself."³⁵⁶

Holl traces back the history of cinematic development to its roots in neurological cinematography of the nineteenth century, in the industrial revolution as well as medical experiments on optics, and the moment human beings adapted their own bodily movements and psychological responses in relation to a technological apparatus. However, the role of cinematography had a double effect: while human vision itself was altered, the perception of the human body was alienated.³⁵⁷ However, in Holl's view, this process is not multi-dimensional, in that these processes within the body are organized as "a hierarchical model of self-control," a homeostasis, while the exchange of experiences with others and especially with the apparatus of film fed into a feedback loop that "could be organized and at the same time technologically put together and newly put to use."³⁵⁸ The internal and external, thus operating on different scales, presented a challenge for creating a totalizing homeostasis of body, mind, and apparatus.

A prospect for Holl, and which I similarly argue was at play for Roehr's work, was found in "[t]he anarchic film people, misusers of apparatuses, experimental filmmakers like Vertov or Rouch" who "sought, by linking the depiction of ritual with a ritual of depiction, to turn the

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 144.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 37.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

medium as a homeostatic world process into a remedy.”³⁵⁹ Furthermore, Holl imagines “that cinema technology must be used in its genuinely technological sense in order to reshape the function of the absolute control of the cinematic into a homeostatic ‘beyond’ of cinema.”³⁶⁰ Roehr’s experiments with his project in the Film Montages maintain an allegiance to both his foundational project, as well as the mechanical constraints of the medium’s technics, arguably strove for the social and mechanical homeostatic beyond the cinema.

Yet the Film Montages prevent the completion of the total image by arresting the internal sequences of movement and time through repetitions, thereby disrupting the vestiges of illusion within the film and unraveling the “function of the absolute control of the cinematic.” Through their banal repetition, time relations between the viewer and the sequences are placed into new temporal unities: the forever repeating motions of hair drying and wrestling and cars moving both tempt the viewer towards expectation and alienate them in their lack of completion.

Like the Photo Montages, the Film Montages are self-contained and refer only to the form of their organization, despite their undeniable relation to and dependence on the outside world of images. This cybernetic feedback loop can be viscerally experienced in the tension of the repetition of the identical sequence, which distances the viewer’s sentimental investment by substituting the image for relations, through the technological alteration of the medium. Roehr’s Film Montages reveal the already constructed quality of subjectivity itself, by attesting to the difference of that which is also present, namely, the loss of an authentic self in service to a cybernetic homeostasis in the system of perceptions. Roehr’s Film Montages were a ‘queer’ alienation of the viewer from those exploited desires. If queering is understood as a destabilization of a system of controlled

359 Ibid., 38.

360 Ibid.

desires, silence becomes the tool that disrupts the transformation of heteronormative –read domination by the culture industry– desire into homogeneous discourse.³⁶¹ If Warhol’s reflective surfaces effaced the reconciliation of an authentic self, Roehr’s dull repetitions bring to bear the austere mediation and construction of subjectivity in the dominant system. This follows the general guide for Roehr’s cybernetic attitude, but one that is not fixed to mediums but rather to an increasingly anti-establishment attitude to the whole system.

A conceptual bridge between the Film Montages and audience participation can be found in a series of project “sketches” Roehr conceived of over 1966 and 1967. The first of these was *Lawrence of Arabia* (Figure 60), which definitively combined the Film Montages into his Object Montages, and “envision[s] a repetition in time and space.”³⁶² In an eight-by-four grid, 32 individual canvases would simultaneously show the same scene from the Hollywood blockbuster *Lawrence of Arabia*. It is not clear from Roehr’s notes how the images would be projected, but the “attempt is made here to highlight aesthetic properties from a ‘high-quality trivial film’, which have been washed out in the film by the context.”³⁶³ Roehr’s intention, as it was with his Film Montages, was to show the audience the aesthetics and technical qualities of film that have been overshadowed

361 Elsewhere, I have formulated Roehr’s Film Montages as a “queer silencing,” where “Roehr’s removal of his own artistic subjectivity creates an open forum by indicating other aspects of the system, namely, that which cannot be accounted for, but exists alongside the dominant formation of capitalist sexuality. The queer silence, in this sense, is the revelation of the constructed subjectivity itself. The Film Montages expose the constructed nature of the viewer’s subjectivity, through the constructed nature of the medium, in order to disavow the subjugation of identity within the system of capitalism itself.” The queer possibilities within cybernetic network relations is a fascinating future project. Meredith North, “Silencing Machine: Peter Roehr’s Film Montages as Queer Disavowal,” (paper presented at Geist and the Machine: A Graduate Student Conference on German Cinema and Film Theory, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 15, 2013).

362 “Das Projekt Lawrence von Arabien sieht eine Wiederholung in Raum und in der Zeit vor.” Peter Roehr, “Projekt: Filmmontage Lawrence von Arabien,” undated project sketch, Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.40 Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

363 “Es wird hier versucht, aus einem „qualitätsvollem Trivialfilm“ ästhetische Eigenschaften hervorzuheben, die in dem Film durch den Zusammenhang verwaschen wurden.” Ibid.

by the sweeping monumental narrative. His decision to use a “desert scene” from the film would be accompanied by 150 seconds of the original theme music.

Roehr’s use of a blank canvas as the screen for the sequences of film was notably reminiscent of other works. In 1952, Robert Rauschenberg’s collaborative project for an event with John Cage and Merce Cunningham was performed at Black Mountain College. While Cunningham performed a dance piece and Cage’s aleatory composition played, Rauschenberg’s monochrome *White Paintings*, which were installed in a cross on the ceiling, served as the backdrop screen for the projection of films and slides. In comparison with Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings*, which were laden with the Modernist transgression of the painterly illusion of perspective within the frame by transporting the outside world into the frame,³⁶⁴ the projection onto the multiple blank canvases for *Lawrence of Arabia* magnified – and simultaneously made banal – the Hollywood trope of the epic through time and space.

As he was receiving medical treatment in Freiburg in 1967, Roehr produced two further sketches that incorporated his concept of Montage into sculptural form. *Untitled (SK-3)* (Figure 61) consisted of spherical lamps of around 15 centimeters each in a six-by-six grid approximately 90 centimeters (35 inches) in width and length that were mounted on a wooden board. Roehr sketched the Montage from both the front and side and dictated that the lamps were to be left with no gaps in between and dimly lit, to the point that the “viewer cannot tell exactly if the Object is actually illuminated or not.”³⁶⁵ *Untitled (SK-4)* was similar in its six-by-six grid construction

364 Branden W. Joseph, “White on White,” *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 1 (October 2000): 113. Terranova frames the performance by Rauschenberg and Cage as one “of self-conscious alienation of their given métiers and, in turn, set in motion a cascading set of questions concerning the fundamental nature of the métier—the medium—as a Platonic and a priori given.” Terranova, *Automotive Prosthetic*, 56.

365 “Es wäre gut, wenn man sie so installieren könnte, daß [dass] die Glühbirnen in den Kugeln leicht glimmen. So, daß [dass] man von außen nicht genau feststellen kann, ob das Objekt nun beleuchtet ist, oder nicht.” Peter Roehr, “Projekt einer Montage aus kugelförmige Lampen” Peter Roehr, *Untitled (SK-3)*, project sketch, 1967. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. See also Figure 62.

(Figure 62), except that it used square “Illuminated Bricks” (“Leuchbaustein”) forms and was to be approximately 180 centimeters (71 inches). Further, Roehr stipulated that the illuminated bricks were would be made of frosted glass (“Milchglas”) and in addition to a dim inner illumination would also be lit from the outside.³⁶⁶ Roehr seems to have researched types of illuminated bricks since he gives an alternative construction that used rectangular bricks, which could be placed in five-by-seven grid. Furthermore, the cubic form Montages were planned to be produced in a series of five identical Montages, indicating they themselves could also be considered multiples.

It is notable that prior to 1967 and the completion of the Film Montages, Roehr had not incorporated direct light into any of his Montage works, despite having completed an apprenticeship training in neon light construction and sign making in 1962. However, these sketches can be associated with his previous works, particularly *Lawrence of Arabia*, but also his installation of Styrofoam bricks executed at Adam Seide’s living room gallery in 1965 (Figure 52). And yet these works also show the influence of cinematic qualities, especially light, at its most minimal effect, another idea that was possibly influenced by McLuhan’s writing.³⁶⁷ Rather than repeating the object in time, seriality is once again seen in the format of the grid. In its incorporation of dim illumination, the objects evoke a wall of illuminated forms that can also be likened to a cinema or perhaps television screen. Unlike moving images however, any sense of captivation was abandoned. The environment of these Montages would also dictate their interaction; if they were placed in a gallery setting, it is possible they would be given more

366 “Projekt einer Montage aus kubusförmige Lampen” Peter Roehr, Untitled (SK-4), project sketch, 1967. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main. See also Figure 63.

367 Marshall McLuhan wrote extensively about Light as a medium: “If the student of media will but meditate on the power of this medium of electric light to transform every structure of time and space and work and society that it penetrates or contacts, he will have the key to the form of the power that is in all media to reshape any lives that they touch. Except for light, all other media come in pairs, with one acting as the ‘content’ of the other, obscuring the operation of both.” McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 52.

attention. However, if they were placed in an environment where they went unnoticed, in an extra-artistic setting – that is, outside conventional exhibition spaces – it is possible they would not be even noticed.

Roehr imagined alternate plans for similar ideas to the Sketches, as evidenced in his *Freiburger Projekt (Freiburg Project)*.³⁶⁸ Although he does not explicitly state the use of his sketches in this formulation, the *Freiburger Projekt* was likely conceived of around the time he spent in the clinic while receiving medical treatment. The series of instructions dictates steps to create a montage directly in the city's environment. Evoking the idea of a cinematic or rogue advertising campaign, in the first "Phase" a Montage of common building materials would be constructed in a public place and at street view. In Phase Two, people walking by would possibly observe the Montage, "whether they perceive this environmental change, which is recognizable as artistic and senseless."³⁶⁹ Perhaps they would take pictures. In Phase Three, the press would begin to take notice of the Montages and report on their location and use, while simultaneously in Phase Four, the Montages themselves would be dismantled and disappear from the public view. In the fifth and final phase, the public would search for the Montages from the press reports, but find "where there is (no longer)[a Montage], but where there was, before they had noticed it."³⁷⁰ The idea that the Montages would exist outside of their existence, through the press and through people's imagination, represented not only Roehr's turn to a concern with viewing publics, but also with the qualities of mediums of transmission and communication.

368 Peter Roehr, "Freiburger Projekt," project note, dated April 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.417 Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

369 "Passanten später daraufhin beobachten, ob sie diese Umweltveränderung, die als kunstvoll und sinnlos erkanntbar ist, wahrnehmen." Ibid.

370 "Reaktion des Publikums, das durch den Pressehinweis nach Kunst sucht, wo keine (mehr) ist, wo aber welche war, bevor man sie bemerkte." Ibid.

Roehr wrote more extensively on the role of film in notes found in his archive, and he was particularly interested in the impact of film and media on the perception of the medium itself by the audience. In September 1966, Roehr wrote a tongue-in-cheek “advertisement” for the Film Montages, perhaps intended to serve as a publicity strategy.³⁷¹ The satirical marketing strategies are in full force in the following excerpt:

Justified question: What should you do with a film if you don't have a projector?

Hmm - you can of course give it away, lend it or resell it. With profit. Maybe in a few years, if, according to forecasts by the specialist trade, every third household will have a projector. (It can be assumed that this will happen, the photo industry will take care of that.)

But what's the point: spend thirty marks now to have fun in a few years?

The other way around: now spend thirty marks to get annoyed in a few years. About yourself.³⁷²

It is not clear if Roehr's advertisement for the Film Montages was successful or if he sold any. As previously stated, they were shown at Adam Seide's gallery as well as in Aachen. He did apply to have his films seen in film festivals. In 1966, they were shown at the Mannheim International Film Week, but the press largely ignored them.³⁷³ Over the summer of 1966, Roehr attempted to put together a selection of artist short films to be shown in galleries. His program included films by Jesús Rafael Soto, Gianfranco Baruchello, and Rudolf Hausmann; Andy Warhol was also planned but ended up not materializing. This selection would accompany the presentation of his Film Montages at Galerie Dorothea Loehr on August 17, 1966.³⁷⁴ Roehr had wanted to send

371 Peter Roehr, Untitled note, September 1966, Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.64 Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

372 “Berechtigte Frage: Was sollen Sie mit einem Film, wenn Sie keinen Projektor haben.

Hmm – Sie können ihn natürlich verschenken, verleihen oder auch weiterverkaufen. Mit Gewinn. Vielleicht in ein paar Jahren, wenn, nach Prognosen des Fachhandels jeder 3. Haushalt einen Projektor besitzen wird. (Ist anzunehmen daß das eintritt, die Fotoindustrie wird schon dafür sorgen.)

Aber was soll das: jetzt Dreißig Mark ausgeben, um in ein paar Jahren Spaß daran zu haben?

Andersrum: jetzt Dreißig Mark ausgeben, um sich in ein paar Jahren zu ärgern. Über sich selbst.” Ibid.

373 Ganzenberg and North, “Chronology,” 282.

374 Ibid.

this selection to other venues, but only one other presentation on September 1, 1966 in Aachen occurred.

Roehr created one final film in his life, titled *Monotonie ist Schön* (*Monotony is Beautiful*) in collaboration with Charlotte Posenenske while on a 1967 trip to Zeeland in the Dutch countryside (Figure 63). The two took turns holding the camera, and from the windows of Posenenske's Citroën car, filmed the monotonous countryside and roadways whizzing by. They themselves never fully appear in front of the camera in the cramped car, or when they are clearly standing along the side of a waterway, panning across the industrial bridges over long stretches of water to the shoreline. Many of the sequences seem to reference Roehr's *Montages*: long sequences of bridges, cars slowly passing by on the roadway, vast waterway beaches broken by cement pollards, repeating rows of carefully placed trees. As Posenenske wrote about the film "I like the artificial, the produced and maintained qualities there. Our films are so terribly amateurish and boring."³⁷⁵ While Posenenske's fascination with the constructed nature of industrial landscapes came through in the boring content of the scenes, the process of recording also harkens back to Roehr's repetitive *Film Montages* such as *Brücke* (Bridge) and *Verkehr*. Rather than repeating the same scenes, longer takes of the seemingly same landscape double-in for the extension of time.

Terranova selects the film in her chapter on the "Nows of the Automotive Prosthetics," although she mistakenly identifies Posenenske as the sole creator.³⁷⁶ She notes that the film conveys "a collective fascination over the new mode of registering mobile perception."³⁷⁷ Roehr's interest in repeating time (as seen in his *Film Montages*) and Posenenske's focus on man-made

³⁷⁵ Charlotte Posenenske, quoted in Terranova, *Automotive Prosthetic*, 131.

³⁷⁶ It is unknown how Terranova came to see this rare film. In addition to leaving out Roehr as a co-director, she notes that the film was 3 minutes long, when the full film is more than 14 minutes long.

³⁷⁷ Terranova, *Automotive Prosthetic*, 133.

interventions in environments (see below and chapter 4) clearly unite “[i]n a burst of democratized creativity, everyone can be a cineaste, or so it would seem.”³⁷⁸ Roehr’s co-teamed turn to behind the camera direction in this film was indicative of his spirit of collaboration on shared aesthetic goals.

While it is clear by now that the audience and their reactions to his works were becoming of increasing focus for Roehr in his program, he was also becoming increasingly interested in the actions and results of collaborative ideas with other artists. This began with the support of Maenz, but Roehr also came to see that his artistic associates in Frankfurt and beyond were also dabbling in industrious endeavors that utilized seriality and serial production of objects. As the final section of this chapter examines, Roehr’s program shifted to include a wider network of artists and dialogs. His attempts to form a mutual understanding of seriality at play in his and others’ works became the foundation for his last set of projects, which are explored in chapter 4.

4.3 The Development of Roehr’s Serial and Mass Art Network in 1966 until early 1967

Roehr was attempting in the Photo and Film Montages to approach the communication methods of the modern advertisement. Advertisements, as McLuhan pointed out, were unconsciously absorbed, and yet transformed into iconic products of personal significance. The Photo and Film Montages attempted through their repetition and organization to make the viewer conscious of the constructed nature of the image and remove the viewer’s personal identification from the content of the image, while still maintaining the very structures of those appeals.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 131.

Increasingly, Roehr's ideas from the Montages as artistic objects into more public and increasingly less materialized ideas were posing a clear antithesis to the aims of both the art market and larger forces of capitalism. Roehr's turn to the concept as work and the implications of transmission was no doubt due to a shift in the purposefulness of art in the later 1960s. In direct opposition to Warhol's concurrent celebration of consumerist machinations, Roehr used seriality and the rigidity of identical repetition in an attempt to undercut the artificial sentimental and personal connection with a single slogan, object, or image. As the contentious discussions laid bare, the impact of Pop on the 1960s inevitably coalesced around the influence of capitalism behind the works, rather than content or form. Indeed, the forces of capitalism had inflected all aspects of life, from sexualities to war, the art world (and its market) to the blockbuster Hollywood film.

In the summer of 1965, Roehr was called upon to perform obligatory two-year service in the West German Defense Service. While West Germany's military was decreed as neutral, the United States military was a strong presence in the country. Not only was this a constant reminder of West Germany's National Socialist past, but also served as an everyday indication of ongoing Cold War tensions with the USSR and escalations in Vietnam. Roehr submitted a refusal on the grounds of conscientious objection, stating that:

I strive to fulfill my obligations to the community. If any of the duties contradict my conscience, I think it is desirable to inform the community about it [...] War is a despicable and immoral event. I refuse to participate in it - or in any direct or indirect war preparation or war training. Gun service and training would put me in serious conflict with my conscience. I am convinced that no one has the right to determine the death of another! So I think I benefit the community by trying to mitigate the dangers of training or preparing for war.³⁷⁹

379 "Ich bemühe mich, meine Pflichten gegenüber der Gemeinschaft zu erfüllen. Wenn eine der Pflichten meinem Gewissen widerspricht, halte ich es für anstrengenswert, die Gemeinschaft davon zu unterrichten... Krieg ist ein verabscheuungswürdiges und unmoralisches Ereignis. Ich lehne es ab, mich daran – oder an jeder direkten oder indirekten Kriegsvorbereitung oder Ausbildung zum Krieg – zu beteiligen. Der Dienst an der Waffe und die Ausbildung zum würden mich mit meinem Gewissen in schweren Konflikt bringen. Ich bin überzeugt davon, daß kein

Roehr was allowed to serve his time in the civilian services, although this condition was ultimately lifted when Roehr's diagnosis of malignant lymphoma was deemed terminal.

Furthermore, it was necessary for Roehr to keep his sexuality hidden and overtly silenced. Despite many reforms to the German criminal code after the end of National Socialism, statutes of Paragraph 175, which barred homosexual relationships between consenting male adults, was left unchanged despite calls for revision. Homosexuality was still illegal in West Germany until its final repeal in 1994, and the number of convictions remained close to 3000 every year throughout the 1960s. To even be publicly accused of homosexual activity could mean loss of employment and social ostracization. Suggestions of "aberrant behavior" were tightly controlled, and a code of sexual morality extended through every facet of social and cultural life.

In June 1965 an article on "Bourgeois Morals" was published on the front page of *Diskus*. The author Heribert Adam likens the efforts of the times to keep art "clean" to the "cleansing" pursued by Nazi Germany. He criticizes politicians for their ties to the church and their endeavors to keep art conservative and, in particular, non-sexual, so as not to "spoil" the youth, while at the same time endorsing violent media. The industry could overlook overt sexuality when it was perpetuated by the heroics of heterosexual figures such as James Bond. Queer art and themes were being censored, since this taboo went against their efforts of maintaining citizens' morality. As Adam concluded: "[i]nstead of grumbling about 'moral degeneration,' one should first create actual democratic conditions that would enable mature citizens to act morally in the strict sense."³⁸⁰

Mensch das Recht hat, über den Tod des Anderen zu bestimmen! So glaube ich, ich nütze der Gemeinschaft, indem ich versuche, die Gefahren, die sich mit einer Ausbildung oder Vorbereitung zum Krieg verbinden, zu vermindern." Peter Roehr, letter and testament of Conscientious Objection, 24 November 1965. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.273. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

380 "Statt über 'moralische Entartung' zu greifen, wären erst einmal wirklich demokratische Verhältnisse zu schaffen, die den mündigen Bürgern erst moralisches Handeln im strengen Sinne ermöglichen." Heribert Adam, "Spiesser Moral," *Diskus*, June 1965. 1.

Satirically, the editors of *Diskus* placed Roehr's Photo Montage (Figure 64) as the accompanying image. The crossed bare feet of the repeated image, which came from an advertisement for foot cream, offered an ironic sensuality to the cutting editorial. While it does not seem that Roehr was explicitly against this placement, he also did not comment on the work appearing in this context.

Abstinence, in Roehr's particular aesthetic position, can be seen therefore as a perceptive political awareness. He echoed this in his personal life as well, by leaving the church and going through the arduous bureaucratic process of registering for conscientious objector status. Furthermore, the overt sexuality of imagistic material was quashed within his overarching system. Roehr did not explicitly state extra-artistic aims as a program for his work – that is, art in service of political aims – for that kind of statement would firmly ensconce his personal views in radical politics. For Roehr, this was merely falling into the same trap as previous Avant-Garde movements. Instead, he simply stopped making montages that did not achieve the aims of his serial project. Roehr's artistic position – like those of his politics – was that of the conscientious objector, neither apolitical nor radical, but one that chose not to participate on the grounds that neither side of the spectrum was correct. As Roehr stated around this time: "I feel identical with what I do. In the 'montages' I realize in an unrestricted manner everything that is important to me. I believe, I am free."³⁸¹ As he would come to see, the shifts in the art world began to correspond with his own artistic project and process.

While his serial forms focused attention on the relationship of the mass to the real, the theoretical awareness could only come from the direct engagement of participants with "the

³⁸¹ Peter Roehr, "Notes from the Estate, 1964," in *Peter Roehr*, edited by Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 29. The note itself was dated 1964/65.

works.”³⁸² Multiple mediums could be used with varying effects on the perception of the viewer without the input of the artist. When Roehr received a copy of Barbara Rose’s October 1965 essay “ABC Art” from Paul Maenz in New York, its significance immediately resonated with his own ideas. Rose’s article was one of the first discussions to identify “Minimal Art” in reference to “the empty, repetitious, uninflected art” of modern artists, dancers, and composers.³⁸³ In her history of certain artists working in the mid-20th Century, an aesthetics of emptiness characterized the works, tendencies that went against both against their Abstract Expressionist elders and the commercially driven works of their Pop artist peers.

It seems this was the juncture at which the term “Minimal Art” entered Roehr’s purview. But arguably, the term itself changed little in Roehr’s production or views on art, since he already embodied many of Rose’s ideas: “Considering ‘Minimal Art’ either art made from common objects that are not unique but mass produced or art that is not much differentiated from ordinary things, he [Richard Wollheim] says that Western artists have aided us to focus on specific objects by setting them apart as the ‘unique possessors of certain general characteristics.’”³⁸⁴ This only served to support the work that Roehr had been doing up to this point. Like other Minimal artists, he did not use the term to describe his works, and instead always referred to their serial ordering principle.

Rose’s essay focuses on works that were based in the idea that the young “ABC” artists and creators were not defined by a style but rather distinguished by a sensibility of “impersonality

382 Roehr’s statements on his work during this time utilized an expressive tone, questioning and prodding the depths of his images and process. The material for his works were chosen on their ability to conform to the single-minded idea of seriality and the serial form, not the basis of their medium specificity. If we take McLuhan’s idea that the medium is the message, the overall communication system was the actual medium.

383 Barbara Rose, “ABC Art,” in *Minimal Art* ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1968), 289. Originally printed in *Art in America*, October–November 1965.

384 Ibid., 277–78.

and self-effacing anonymity,”³⁸⁵ where the “once private (nudity, sex) is now public and what was once the public face of art at least (emotions, opinions, intentions) is now private.”³⁸⁶ Perhaps most striking for Roehr would have been Rose’s attention to the principles of “form as content” of these artists, in that “the simple denial of content can in itself constitute the content of such a work.”³⁸⁷ Rose concludes with a telling phrase: “in its refusal to participate, either as entertainment or as whimsical, ingratiating commodity [...] this new art is surely hard to assimilate with ease.”³⁸⁸ Roehr’s own sensibilities, aesthetics, and program aligned with Rose’s formulations, though he maintained a distance to the critical debates circulating through the American scene. Yet through this essay and Maenz’s observations in New York discussed below, Roehr precipitously began to see that he was not completely alone in his orientation and attitude.³⁸⁹

While Roehr objected to the larger forces of extra-artistic contexts at play in much of the art world, he ostensibly found understanding in a network of relationships and artistic ideas attuned to his attitudes. As he continued to frequent exhibitions and make acquaintances with artists over the period of 1965–66, a small cache of artists working in the tendencies described by Rose emerged in Roehr’s worldview. While some were based in Frankfurt, others were working in cities across Europe, and still others would be introduced to Roehr through Maenz’s connections. Many

385 Ibid., 280.

386 Ibid., 293.

387 Ibid., 281.

388 Ibid., 297.

389 As Jonathan D. Katz illuminated, these “silenced,” detached works of queer artists in the postwar era provided both a cover and a camouflage in the immediate postwar American Art scene. Most notably, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauchenberg, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, and Agnes Martin were among the artists who downplayed their subjective, biographical, or sexual orientation in order to create the most impersonal works of art. See also Jonathan D. Katz, “John Cage’s Queer Silence: or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse,” in *Writings Through John Cage’s Music, Poetry, and Art*, ed David W. Bernstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); “‘Committing the perfect Crime’: Sexuality, Assemblage, and the Postmodern Turn in American Art,” *Art Journal* (2008); “The Silent Camp: Queer Resistance and the Rise of Pop Art,” in *Visions of a Future: Art and Art History in Changing Contexts* eds. Kornelia Imesch and Hans-Jörg Heusser (Zurich: Swiss Institute for Art Research, 2004).

of them would be characterized by both their “impersonality and self-effacing anonymity,” often by use of the serial form.

Adolf Luther, a significant artist in Light and Kinetic art, in particular reflected on his familiarity with Roehr from an encounter at Galerie Dorothea Loehr in 1965:

I was completely surprised when Peter Roehr, the very youthful looking interested person from the previous evening, was there next morning with a number of printed papers with him[...] I got to hear his questions again, and so it went on: I did not yet know everything about light, and thus, the final decision on the arrangement of the material must remain secondary, since my actual medium, light, was not material in its composition. But I had used sequencing for some time because it was probably (insofar as this could be done) the most unambiguous expression of my intentions possible without resorting to literature, even if that was an incomplete suggestion. I wanted to avoid design, otherwise the result would never be a real object. And so, yes, the serial version was better.³⁹⁰

Luther was a successful artist in the early-postwar art scene, having shown frequently with the ZERO artists throughout Europe, as well as in Kowallek’s *Europäische Avant-Garde* exhibition in 1963 and other gallery shows in Frankfurt. While his work habitually played with light and optics to create environments, he intuitively used the serial form as a means of creating these spaces, a tendency that Roehr clearly began to see in other artists as well.

In addition to Luther, among the contacts of Roehr’s active exchanges on seriality included the artists Herman de Vries and Hermann Goepfert, both of whom were shown frequently at Galerie d and later Galerie dato. Significantly, Goepfert had a history of unselfishly supporting younger artists in Frankfurt, and he was already encouraging the Frankfurt collective gruppe x, whose affinity for Kinetic and Optical Art aligned with his own. At their public debut at Adam

390 Adolf Luther quoted in Wiehager, “The Emergence of the Generation of ’67,” in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 43. Although Luther and Wiehager state this exchange occurred in 1965, Adolf Luther’s Foundation website lists the exhibition at Dorothea Loehr as occurring in 1964. The Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels e.V. does not list Luther’s exhibition under Loehr’s gallery listing.

Seide's Living room gallery in January of 1966, gruppe x refused to disclose their identities in public exhibitions and instead defined themselves as an anonymous "production group."³⁹¹ Their works consisted of industrial metal structures that could be moved and manipulated in varying systems of assembly, and rather than being propelled by ambient wind or motorization, they were explicitly intended to be set into motion by the direct participation of the audience. Significantly, gruppe x promoted their works through magazines in the form of mail-in order forms. Their positions would be stated in bland, industrial-production language and their products were sold at very inexpensive costs. The consumer would receive a package of materials and instructions for assembly, but the arrangement and installation of the works was intended to be left open-ended.

In keeping with the overt industrial character of a "production group," they also chose to refer to their works as "objects" rather than the culturally loaded term "art," going so far as to mark their works with a stamp or label.³⁹² As Frederick Schikowski notes, this element was only partially motivated by play and amusement; more importantly "[a]nalogous to democratic co-determination, the means to this end was spectator participation, or as gruppe x put it, 'teamwork between author and consumer.'"³⁹³ Although they had numerous exhibitions of their works that included this participatory element, their primary aim was to produce serial objects in multiples that could be inexpensively purchased and constructed. Each artist had their own process in creating works, and their different objects were subtly designated by the letters A, B, or C.

391 "gruppe x ist da!" brochure insert in *Egoist* no. 9 (1966), edited by Adam Seide. Frederick Schikowski notes that Goepfert inadvertently "outed" the members of gruppe x at the opening, and their names were printed several times in discussions by Seide and Goepfert in *Egoist*. However, Schikowski further notes that their anonymity "was not breached in the face of media or art critics" until 1968 at the latest. See Schikowski's "gruppe x" in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 158, footnote 10. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Daimler Art Contemporary, Berlin.

392 Schikowski, "gruppe x," 150.

393 Ibid.

The “A” works, produced by member Wolfgang Lukowski, often consisted of folded material in three dimensional configurations. They were at first created out of tissue paper and later metal, which would give a consumer access to the material from their surroundings.³⁹⁴ Lukowski’s elements were painted in monochrome or simple two-toned color that allowed the participant/consumer to arrange the works according to their own desired formal or chromatic standards.³⁹⁵ Peter Thoms’s works went by the “B” designation, and as Schikowski pointed out, he was the member of gruppe x whose works could be considered more along the lines of Op Art.³⁹⁶ His works were created out of cloth or metal material that had a distinct, visible grid pattern, and that he then painted and attached in overlapping patterns to wooden boards. The grids, rigid from paint, could be moved (when attached by springs) or arranged (when attached by screws) by the participant.³⁹⁷ Jürgen Wegener’s objects were the “C” group of production, and were often the most Kinetic Art oriented of the group. Consisting of geometrically concise two-tone colored metal or Perspex panels, Wegener attached the panels in ways that allowed them to rotate and move at the consumer’s touch.³⁹⁸

As private citizens, Lukowski, Thoms, and Weneger all lived in the Frankfurt region and formed artistic associations with like-minded young figures like Roehr, Adam Seide, Thomas Bayrle, and later Charlotte Posenenske. Bayrle was particularly close with both Roehr and members of gruppe x, lived in the apartment above Seide at Röderbergweg 64, and was thus in the middle of the action.³⁹⁹ Bayrle even developed a series of raincoats with Helga Lukowski, the wife

394 Ibid., 152.

395 Ibid.

396 Ibid.

397 Ibid., 154.

398 Ibid.

399 Thomas Bayrle, in conversation with the author, Frankfurt, September 2016.

of Wolfgang Lukowski, who had her own fashion line with Silvia Ohanian. The wearable raincoats were printed with Bayrle's serial coffee cup motif and appeared in their own series of advertisements that were printed in *Diskus*, among other places. Roehr met gruppe x around 1965 (Figure 65), most likely through Goepfert and Bayrle, and witnessed first-hand the ideas this group promoted. Roehr and the members of gruppe x maintained an artistic friendship that included extensive, often late-night discussions on society, politics, and the state of the art world in Frankfurt and beyond.⁴⁰⁰

Charlotte Posenenske, who had first shown at Galerie Dorothea Loehr in 1961, had taken a four-year hiatus of exhibiting in Frankfurt until 1966 when she re-surfaced in the art scene. In the spring of 1966, Roehr met Posenenske, and the two developed a close artistic friendship.⁴⁰¹ Posenenske's work had quietly developed in the intervening years from minimal works on paper to large, folded works of cardboard and metal. Shortly after meeting Roehr, she exhibited again at Dorothea Loehr in the summer of 1966 with works of folded, lacquered aluminum panels that extended from the wall in sculptural forms (see chapter 4, *Serielle Formationen*). As she moved into differing series of these rearrangeable structures, Posenenske began to document systems of instruction and assembly, which would accompany the pieces when sold (at the price of the materials). This would allow the audience to have a democratic choice in the construction of the works, but that also accorded with Posenenske's intentions for the display of the works. Even after the two had simultaneously renounced the creation of artistic works, Roehr and Posenenske, along with her husband Paul Posenenske and Paul Maenz, traveled to Holland where they made the above mentioned *Monotonie ist Schön* film.

⁴⁰⁰ Peter Thoms in an informal conversation with the author Frankfurt, March 2018.

⁴⁰¹ Ganzenberg and North, "Chronology," 283.

Particularly in the Frankfurt scene, Roehr found like-minded artists who worked in similar, democratically driven ideas. Yet Roehr's network also had by this time extended out of Frankfurt across Europe. Roehr met Jan Dibbets while hitchhiking to London in the summer of 1966.⁴⁰² Dibbets' own career was fermenting in England, and at the time he was producing works that combined photography and the use of natural land. While at the St. Martins School of Art in London, Dibbets met Richard Long, John Johnson, and Barry Flanagan and these acquaintances would provide an impetus to include a British contingent of artists in the *Dies alles Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören* event at Dorothea Loehr later in 1967 (discussed in chapter four), although it is unknown if Roehr himself met these artists at the time. Roehr also visited London a second time with the Posenenskes in 1967.⁴⁰³ Along with Maenz, Charlotte Posenenske, and Bayrle he traveled to see shows throughout West Germany and the Netherlands during this period. In the summer of 1966, Maenz traveled back to Frankfurt to visit Roehr, and the two visited the Venice Biennale in September of that year, where they saw the American pavilion among others.⁴⁰⁴

In 1966, Maenz and Roehr's long distance collaboration began to focus more extensively on creating exhibitions and developing their conceptual ideas in tune with the times. Two key touchstones in New York occurred in 1966 that would later have cogency for Maenz and Roehr's views on art, the *Primary Structures* show at the Jewish Museum of Art from 27 April to 12 June and the *Ten* show at Virginia Dwan in October.⁴⁰⁵ These shows, which heralded the arrival of Minimal Art, had a profound effect on Maenz in New York, and he quickly immersed himself in the artistic activities of the vibrant city.

402 Maenz, "Epilogue," 104.

403 Brunn, "Memories of an Artist," 109.

404 A photograph of Roehr in the American pavilion was printed in Maenz's accompanying "Epilogue" essay. The site featured Helen Frankenthaler, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jules Olitsky.

405 Wiehager, "The Emergence of the Generation of '67," 42.

In November of 1966, Maenz wrote a report on the artistic and cultural activities in New York for Adam Seide's *Egoist* 9 (the same issue that debuted gruppe x), thus bringing the New York scene directly to the city's artistic milieu. Under the name "Baul Maenz" the "Preif" reviewed the colorful, raucous activities in the galleries and social world through a lively discussion of European artists, Pop art, and the merger of the consumption driven Madison Avenue with the underground evenings in Greenwich Village.⁴⁰⁶ His first-hand account of the wild New York scene undoubtedly provided an inspiration for his future attempts to change the rigid, conservative Frankfurt scene.

Maenz's acquaintance with the "Rasputin of Kineticism,"⁴⁰⁷ Willoughby Sharp, in New York led to a fruitful collaboration on Kineticism Press.⁴⁰⁸ In the "Statement" for their 1966 publication information booklet, the duo wrote:

There is no art, there are only works of art.
Works of art and artistic ideas are identical. They must be communicated
though all available media.
Media change meaning. The message of the media should be the artistic
idea. The artistic idea is most important.
Artists should utilize every technological medium to communicate their
ideas.
Multiples.
Multiples provide the greatest diffusion of art objects.
The clearest understanding of artistic ideas occurs through total
information.

⁴⁰⁶ Baul (Paul) Maenz, "Preif aus New York," *Egoist* 9 (1966): 3. It is unknown why this misprint of Paul Maenz's name and 'Brief' occurred, but Seide's penchant for jokes and humor, as well as his attention to detail, gives credence to the intentional mistake.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. Sharp would later go on to publish works of Kinetic and Op Art throughout the later 1960s, before founding the influential magazine *Avalanche* with Liz Baer in 1970. Maenz and Sharp maintained a long friendship, even after Maenz returned to Frankfurt. Sharp would also offer advice to Maenz when he opened his gallery in Cologne in 1970.

⁴⁰⁸ Paul Maenz, "Vor 1970 – Der Weg zur Galerie (1970)," in *Art is to Change: Skizzen aus der Umlaufbahn* (Regensburg: Linderger + Schmid GdBR, 2002), 41. Maenz referenced the formative impact of McLuhan on his thinking. McLuhan's ideas equally impacted Sharp, as he would later go on to form an intellectual point in his own career.

We are dedicated to the total distribution of artistic information in all media.⁴⁰⁹

Maenz and Sharp signed off on the statement with only their initials, followed by a brief biography of the two collaborators. They were explicit in that their roles as cultural motivators was the distribution of artistic talent that utilized exhibitions and media platforms. While Maenz and Sharp emphasized the increased role of media and information in the human transference of artistic ideas, the “Multiple” gave primacy to the concept as distributed information rather the object as a work of art itself. The potential of the published form (the oldest technological distributor of information) of artist portfolios and magazines to bring on a perpetual system of participation was already proliferating through Europe, as explored in chapter one. Indeed, by the early 1950s, Daniel Spoerri’s Edition MAT (*multiplication d’art transformable*) was already using the idea of the Multiple as an artistic object. For others such as the Concrete Poetry publication *Futura* (Stuttgart), *Egoist* (Frankfurt), exhibitions and printed materials went hand in hand, and it provided a mass platform for artists working in reproducible mediums greater frequency of distribution and acquisition. This mode of consumption allowed an interested buyer to skip the gallery tastemakers and high prices, and the Multiple was an avenue for a more democratic procurement of art.

By 1966, this came to include artist editions such as *Edition Et* (compiled first by Bernhard Höke and later Rochus Kowallek in Berlin), and *Futura*, which provided works of art as packaged books. With Kineticism Press, Maenz and Sharp saw the potentials for mass distribution of information and artistic material as a way to spread artistic ideas by circumventing the traditional roles that supported the commercial art world. Roehr, who was already producing Multiples of his

409 Paul Maenz and Willoughby Sharp, “Statement,” in Kineticism Press Booklet, New York, N.Y. 1966. Accessed in the Paul Maenz Gallery Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. A copy of this booklet can also be found in the Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

own typed works in 1964 that used the hectograph (Figure 26), also saw the potential for these mass printed mediums as an increasingly viable way to distribute his works, based on a network. His work was eventually published in two issues of *Edition Et*, numbers 2 and 4, which also featured artists like Thomas Bayrle, Charlotte Posenenske, Konrad Lueg, Bazon Brock and gruppe x.

A significant difference between the positions of the European journals and language of Maenz and Sharp's Kineticism Press statement was that it drew heavily from the ideas employed by Marshall McLuhan. That "artists should utilize every technological medium to communicate their ideas," also clearly resonated with Roehr in his diverse use of mediums for his Montages. However, I posit that Roehr – following Maenz and Sharp – was not only simply thinking in terms of expanding his Montage program into further technological ventures but, rather, into a concern for the larger systems of art and participation despite what form the object might take. This can be seen in Roehr's undated project for "The Do-It-Yourself Montages."

The idea, possibly inspired by the production and distribution methods of gruppe x, was to give buyers a packet of materials for the creation of their own self-made Montages. Roehr envisioned either packing the materials in a cardboard box – "similar to games for children" – or in a common plastic bag like those used for nails and other household articles.⁴¹⁰ Each would contain a set of 50 identical elements for the creating the Montages like labels, paper letters, or Polystyrene dishes, of which 35 would be used and 15 would be replacements. The package would also include glue, a piece of plywood on which the cardboard was glued ("to save one from painting or varnishing the wood"), a sticker of authorization from Roehr, and two hooks on which the

⁴¹⁰ Peter Roehr, "Projekt Do-It-Yourself," 2015/12.93. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

completed Montage could be mounted on a wall.⁴¹¹ An instruction manual would be provided and “it should make the individual phases of the creation clear in the form of a photo strip. One can include a small story, make it popular!”⁴¹²

Roehr expressed that he did not intend to make money off the sale of these Montages, and the price should be set not at a round number, but slightly off (he suggested 29,80 DM instead of 30,– DM). He hoped that *edition et* would be able to take over the distribution of the works, and that the sale would be placed by mail-order brochures.⁴¹³ Again, this direct to order process seems to have been stimulated by gruppe x, although Roehr lists the similar means of ordering “cutlery or furniture,” and that the “experience with this method is quite good.”⁴¹⁴ Roehr set these Do-it-yourself Montages at an edition of 100, with the stickers provided numbered. The multiple edition was clearly at the forefront of Roehr’s thinking in this project, but it does not seem to have been executed.

However, this project once again differed from previous ideas of the multiple and yet, was specific to Roehr’s stated goals. Often, multiples were authorized reprints or reproductions of other works, which retained some origin work. For Roehr’s Do-It-Yourself Montage, the edition would exist entirely separately as its own, completely distributed project, with no origin point to be found. His instructions, which were to be photographic, encouraged the buyer to create a small story, an individualized improvisation to the seemingly banal construction pattern. This act would not only make the banal construction of the montage fun, but also more unique to the buyer, a talking point brought up every time the Montage was engaged with on an everyday basis.

411 Ibid.

412 “Sie sollte in Form eines Foto-Strips die einzelnen Phasen der Entstehung klarmachen. Dabei kann man eine kleine Story einbauen, populär gestalten!” Ibid.

413 Ibid.

414 Ibid.

Although they were most likely not aware of each other at the time, similar ideas were also being theoretically examined by the British cyberneticist and artist Roy Ascott, who published the first of a two-part essay on “Behaviourist Art and Cybernetic Vision,” in the journal *Cybernetica* in late 1966.⁴¹⁵ As Ascott examined, the fundamental change in the ways in which artwork is created and circulated has effected the behavior of the viewer in response, leading them from the old “deterministic culture” of art to one that is attuned to a cybernetic vision. While this includes a change in the parameters of art to include its systems of reception through the use of technology and science, it is also reflective of the change in modern industrial society, one that proposes a more agency-based interaction than McLuhan saw possible.

Most importantly for Ascott “[t]he vision of art has shifted from the field of objects to the field of behaviour, and its function has become less descriptive and more purposive.”⁴¹⁶ Jack Burnham would also parallel this thought later in 1968 with his own description: “We are now in transition from and object-oriented to a systems-oriented culture.”⁴¹⁷ Fundamentally, both theorists viewed the shift towards networks of relationships among artist-object-participant as a multi-directional feedback loop (“cybernetic vision”), rather than unidirectional (“deterministic vision”). As Ascott discussed, the current artist “is primarily motivated to initiate a dialogue, set feelings and ideas in motion, to enrich the artistic experience with feedback from the spectator’s response.”⁴¹⁸ Although he was most likely not aware of the activities in Frankfurt, his description accurately describes the work of Roehr, gruppe x, and Posenenske.

415 Roy Ascott’s “Behaviourist Art” appeared first in 1966, and “Cybernetic Vision” was published in 1967.

416 Roy Ascott, “Behaviourist Art and Cybernetic Vision,” in *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 110.

417 Burnham, “Systems Aesthetics,” 116.

418 Ascott, “Behaviourist Art and Cybernetic Vision,” 111.

In the first part of his two-part essay, Ascott notes that the medium of this type of participatory exchange does not necessarily imply the artist's need to work in the most technologically advanced systems, but rather to "provide a matrix for ideas and feelings from which the participants of his work may construct for themselves new experiences and unfamiliar patterns of behaviour."⁴¹⁹ As I have already laid out, Roehr's earliest grids provided the first instance of a matrix, while the seriality of his Montages provided a further layer of estrangement and disidentification of the artist in order to elevate the level of participation of the spectator. As he moved into the final phases of his program, these two ideas combined into a concern for the systems of artist-object-participant on a broader and more distributed scale.

Going further in a vein similar to Maenz and Sharp, Roehr planned to form an alliance of other "Mass Art Producers" who shared similar concerns and goals.⁴²⁰ To this end, he began investigating a group of loosely associated artists, which might have included Jan Dibbets, Ewerd Hilgemann, Bernhard Höke, Charlotte Posenenske, Thomas Bayrle, Timm Ulrichs, gruppe x, or any number of other artists working in artistic forms that held possibilities for multiple and serial forms, which relied on the participation of the viewer/consumer/spectator in the realization of the works. Indeed from 1966 to the end of 1967, Roehr began to plan numerous projects, although only a few came to fruition, due in large part to the onset of his serious health issues. As to the state of representatives in Germany, Roehr mentioned in a letter to Jan Dibbets in January 1967: "To the group of mass art producers: I have looked around Germany – things are sad. Is it in fact, that we only want to take people who produce editions? Or also some who do it every now and then? But if I have not yet found anyone to inspire us, I will continue to look around and find out

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 113.

⁴²⁰ Maenz, "Epilogue," 104.

more.”⁴²¹ In an undated letter that seems to reply to Roehr’s January letter, Dibbets wrote: “As for the group we wanted to form, the average Dutch person is too vain to do that. They do such work, but refuse to perform as a group. [...] Altogether not very hopeful (on the other hand very much hopeful, because it looks like the time is not ripe for it yet).”⁴²² Dibbets expresses support for Roehr’s project and pledges to help him in any future exhibitions. Indeed, Dibbets would show works in both exhibitions staged by Roehr and Maenz in 1967.

Another artist who expressed hope in an alliance of Mass Art Producers was Ewerd Hilgemann. In a letter to Roehr dated April 4, 1967, Hilgemann discussed his involvement with the exhibition *Serielle Formationen*, as well as an upcoming exhibition of “Roehr – Dibbets-Hilgemann”⁴²³ in a program of “Total Serielle Manifestation.”⁴²⁴ Hilgemann’s excitement was clear: “The ‘Total Serial Manifestation’ must nonetheless begin!”⁴²⁵ Although a joint exhibition of Roehr, Dibbets, and Hilgemann did not materialize, Roehr and Maenz included Hilgemann’s work in *Serielle Formationen* (see chapter 4).

421 “Zur der Gruppe der Massenkunst-Produzenten: ich habe herumgeschaut in Deutschland- es sieht traurig aus. Es ist doch so, daß wir nur Leute nehmen wollen, die nur Auflagen herstellen? Oder auch welche, die es ab und zu tun? Aber wenn ich auch bisher noch niemanden gefunden habe, der uns begeistern könnte, so werde ich mich doch weiter umsehen und mich informieren.” Peter Roehr, letter to Jan Dibbets, 30 January, 1967. Inv.- Nr.: 2014/75.75. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

422 “Was die Gruppe betrifft, die wir formen wollten, der Durchschnitt der Holländer sind zu eitel so etwas zu machen. Sie machen wohl solche arbeiten, aber weigern sich als Gruppe aufzutreten. Außerdem finden sie, daß in Deutschland (ausser 2 oder 3) nichts gibt nach zero und daß sie selbst viel besser sind. In Belgien stellte sich heraus, dass da keiner wohnt, der serielle Sachen macht. Alles bei einander nicht sehr hoffnungsvoll (auf der andere Seite aber doch auch wieder sehr hoffnungsvoll, weil es so aussieht, ob die Zeit noch nicht reif dafür ist). Selbst bin ich bereit all diese Sachen zu stützen. Ich werde außerdem mich noch weiter erkundigen aber beginn jetzt zu verstehen, dass es viel Zeit fragt, die richtigen Leuten zu finden. Wenn du mal arbeiten von mir nötig hast für eine Ausstellung, kannst du das immer bekommen.” Jan Dibbets letter to Peter Roehr, undated. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.74. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, recto.

423 Ewerd Hilgemann, letter to Peter Roehr, 5 April, 1967. Inv.-Nr.:2014/75.196. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

424 Ibid.

425 “Die ‘Total serielle Manifestation’ sollte unbedingt starten!” Ibid.

Yet not all of Roehr's attempts to form an alliance of Mass Art Producers would work out well. Roehr wrote to Timm Ulrichs in April of 1966⁴²⁶ shortly before he witnessed his performance *The First Living Artwork* (*Die Erste Lebende Kunstwerk*) in person at Galerie Patio in September of that year (Roehr appears as a spectator, sitting in the right corner of the frame, Figure 66). Ulrichs's typewriter work *Serielle Formationen* was published in the first issue of *Bel Esprit/Schönggeist* in 1963 (Figure 24), while Roehr's Untitled Text Montage (Figure 29) appeared in issue 2. Ulrichs's typewriter work corresponded with the surge in typographical artworks like those of Concrete Art, and Roehr was no doubt aware of Ulrichs's work by this time. Despite the similarities in title, their works had little in common either aesthetically or in project goals.

Ulrichs's artistic program had expanded from his 1963 serial works on paper to incorporate ideas circulating at the time, most notably the political aspects of durational performance, which he called his "Propaganda" and "Totalkunst" works. Akin to Manzoni's *Living Sculpture* and *Magic Base* series from the early 1960s,⁴²⁷ where the artist authenticated human bodies as art with a stamp and by placing them on a plinth, Ulrichs's performance at Galerie Patio in Frankfurt featured the artist sitting on a chair inside an elevated glass vitrine at the center of the room (Figure 66). Visitors to the five-day performance could walk around the box, although it is unclear if Ulrichs interacted with his audience. Despite declaring his work as "The First Living Artwork," Ulrichs's performance resonated with the work the Düsseldorf based Capitalist Realists' demonstration at Berges Department store in 1963, as well as Stanley Brouwn's earlier 1964 art-happenings at the Frankfurt Galerie Patio and Galerie Dorothea Loehr.

426 Peter Roehr, to Timm Ulrichs, 24 April 1966. 2014/75.522. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

427 Timm Ulrichs, oral history interview with Franziska Leuthäuser, 22 November 2015. Café Deutschland: im Gespräch mit der ersten Kunstszenen der BRD, Städel Museum, <https://cafedeutschland.staedelmuseum.de/gespraeche/timm-ulrichs>.

In the performance at Galerie Patio, Brouwn donned a polythene bag over his head and sat on a chair on a pedestal in the gallery. Though it was derived from his earlier sculptural works while he was with the Dutch Nul group, Brouwn's works after 1964 relied less on the spectacle of the artist and more on the participation of the audience, which was then documented on paper in the moment.⁴²⁸ As Peter van Meijden evokes, Brouwn's work in the 1960s was already anticipating conceptual, action-based works that use documentation as the continuation of their activity.⁴²⁹ Ulrichs denied knowing of Manzoni's work at the time of the performance and makes no mention of Brouwn's work in relation,⁴³⁰ but both Manzoni and Brouwn would have already been known in Frankfurt through reportage by newspapers.

Roehr mentioned setting up a two-person exhibition with Ulrichs in his April 1966 letter, but further communication on the matter seems to have occurred in person.⁴³¹ It is possible that Roehr visited Ulrichs while in Hannover at some point,⁴³² and perhaps discussed Roehr's ideas for a group of Serial Artists. Despite their seemingly aligned artistic programs, Roehr and Ulrichs did not pursue a working relationship. The relationship turned acrimonious when Ulrichs was left out of the *Serielle Formationen* exhibition in 1967, as seen in the letters Ulrichs wrote to Maenz and Roehr in spring 1967.⁴³³

428 Antje Von Graevinitz. "'We walk on the Planet Earth,' The Artist as a Pedestrian: The Work of Stanley Brouwn," in *Dutch Art and Architecture*, (1977), 278.

429 "If the archival moment took place already before the performance started, the law that governs the performance and the work positions itself before and above the production of the first piece of documentary evidence and shapes it without allowing the evidence to shape it in turn." Peter van der Meijden, "This Way Brouwn: The Archive – Present, Past, and Future," in *Performing the Archives/Archives of Performance*, eds. Gundhild Borggreen and Rune Gode (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013), 99.

430 Ulrichs, oral history interview with Franziska Leuthäuser.

431 Peter Roehr, to Timm Ulrichs, Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.522.

432 Roehr mentions that he had just returned from Hannover (where Kurt Roehr lived) in the 30 January, 1967 letter to Jan Dibbets, Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.75.

433 Timm Ulrichs to Maenz and Roehr, *Serielle Formationen* folder. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Adam Seide continued to support the quickly developing facets of Roehr's art career. In an undated, handwritten note, Roehr proposed a "*Kollektivausstellung*" ("Collective Exhibition") with Seide, writing in the third person that the collaborators were "not interested in exhibiting salable products if they are not being sold anyway!"⁴³⁴ The project was to be a multimedia environment. Three artists would be given three projectors to project up to two "Magazines" of their choosing, the theme and contents of which would be left up to the artists. The three projectors would run at the same time, forming constellations between the collaborators via their image choices.⁴³⁵

Although this project does not seem to have been executed, Seide did exhibit a solo show of Roehr's works in March of 1967, which seems to follow Roehr's proposal in a letter from August 3, 1966. As he wrote, "[w]e have already discussed that we only want to show one work, that is, one topic in multiplied output."⁴³⁶ Roehr suggested a title "Pictures of Pictures" (*Bilder von Bildern*) and laid out a theoretical discussion that "[t]he pictures (or THE picture) is identical to the fact and [...?] Again not."⁴³⁷ Roehr's emphasis was on the *idea* of the picture of pictures, and more importantly, a recognition of the whole process. This theoretical basis mirrored Roehr's recently completed series of identical Object Montages titled *Schwarz Tafeln* (Black Panels), which he began working on after renouncing the Photo Montages in 1966. His pictures of 'facts' were not a negative theme, but rather the absence of a theme, indicating Roehr's desire to have his viewer

434 Peter Roehr, "Vorschlag für die Ausstellung PRS," undated, Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.17. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

435 "Die Konstellation zueinander sind von der Autoren abzusprechen." Ibid.

436 Peter Roehr, to Adam Seide, 3 August 1966. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.16. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

437 "Die Bilder (oder DAS Bild) ist mit der Tatsache identisch und [...?] wieder nicht." Parts of the letter are illegible. Ibid.

experience only the system of seriality itself, within the larger network of experiences of pictures, and also seriality, that only they could recognize in everyday life.

The *Roehr bei Seide* exhibition was preceded by another of Maenz and Roehr's publicity campaigns (Figure 67), but also seemed to include elements of a collective participation of others. In a publicity brochure for the exhibition, Roehr and Maenz photographed models and themselves in a white cube gallery environment, with black grids of these Object Montages visible in every frame (Figure 68). The cartoon of Seide's *Egoist* no. 8 of 1965 (Figure 51) had come to life. The announcement booklet itself was not fixed in a flat layout, but rather functioned as a multiple within a multiple, since each row of images could be unfolded and arranged any way the viewer desired.

Roehr bei Seide featured only the multiple, identical Black Squares installed at the same height around the gallery space. As Maenz pointed out, Roehr anticipated the works would not be well received: "Expecting the public to find his works even more boring than usual, Roehr placed a T.V. set at the opposite end of the exhibition room 'to give the people finally a reason for turning their backs on my things with a clear conscience.'" ⁴³⁸ Hermann Goepfert sent a congratulatory telegram to Roehr and Seide. ⁴³⁹ Roehr's exhibition posed a response to earlier exhibitions, but one that was prescient to larger systemic issues. This focus predicated that Roehr's works could only offer a gateway to alternative adaptation as resistance to normative values.

As Roehr would write in an unpublished archival note from August of 1967: "Fighting reactionary art is only important in fighting against the reactionary in general. A fight for progressive art is only important in fighting to support everything progressive. But if you want to

⁴³⁸ Maenz, "Epilogue," 108.

⁴³⁹ Hermann Goepfert, to Adam Seide and Peter Roehr, telegram, 17 March, 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.137. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

support the progressive, the question arises whether you can do this best with progressive art. I doubt it.”⁴⁴⁰ Roehr seems to distinguish several things at once here. First, reactionary art and the reactionary can be read as one and the same, that is, the fascistic use of art as propaganda as seen in the Nazi era. However, if progressive art and progressive ideals follow this model, it would fall into the same trap as reactionary art and reactionary politics.

He continues: “The wish to engage with progressive art seems to stem mainly from the wish to engage with art, without being reactionary. The wish of engaging with art is decadent snobbism when you recognize the ineffectiveness of all art. What would remain would be the choice of other, more impactful media to overcome aesthetic problems.”⁴⁴¹ Roehr seems to be referencing the idea of art for art’s sake, and the “ineffectiveness” of art to implement real change. His choice to use various different materials was indicative of his desire to “overcome aesthetic problems” attached to the exterior qualities and properties of the medium, by focusing on the distribution of the objects. Roehr’s writings follow the ideas put forth by Maenz and Sharp already in 1966, but additionally parallel those of McLuhan and Ascott.

Significantly, this document followed Roehr’s decision to narrow his work production, by the end of 1966, to non-imagistic Object Montages like the Black Squares (Figure 67). As it was clear from his presentation at Adam Seide in 1967 (Figure 65), the influences of “ABC Art” and

440 Peter Roehr, untitled note, 31 August, 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.81. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

441 “Reaktionäre Kunst zu bekämpfen ist nur wichtig im Kampf gegen das Reaktionäre allgemein. Ein Kampf für eine Progressive Kunst ist nur wichtig im Kampf um alles Progressive zu unterstützen. Wann man aber das Progressive unterstützen will, stellt sich die Frage, ob man das am besten mit Progressiver Kunst tun kann. Ich bezweifle es. Der Wunsch sich mit progressiver Kunst zu beschäftigen, scheint mit hauptsächlich dem Wunsch zu entspringen, sich mit Kunst zu beschäftigen, ohne reaktionär zu sein. Der Wunsch sich mit Kunst zu beschäftigen ist ein dekadenter Snobismus, wenn man die Wirkungslosigkeit jeglicher Kunst erkannt hat. Was bliebe, wäre die Wahl anderer, wirkungsvollerer Medien zur Bewältigung ästhetischer Probleme. Die Veränderung ästhetischer Probleme interessiert nicht an sich, sondern nur im Hinblick auf ihre Verwertbarkeit. Hierbei stellt sich die Frage, warum man nicht die Verwertbarkeit Grundproblem sein sollte. (Brock; der Künstler, der sich im Produktionsprozess befindet und nicht mehr als Künstler erkennbar ist...)” Ibid.

the groups and artists in his circle of acquaintances had guided Roehr towards his ultimate, direct engagement with publics through the most minimal of aesthetics or a stated point. Although he also expressed interest in continuing work in film, it should be assumed this would have also followed minimal uses of the film medium.⁴⁴² Rather than framing the works as an absence of self through the loss of subjective touches of imagery, I situate this orientation towards the systems of artistic and societal feedback loops –where the exhibition or the showing operate as a vector for change within an already defined Institution. The works no longer needed to necessarily exist physically, as Roehr demonstrated in his *Sketches*, but their conceptual impact on environment and societies could emanate from parallels in reality. As Roehr stated: “Not only the act of making brings insight, but also the works made, the exhibition, etc. We must get away from the notion that idea and execution are the only decisive phases. The attitude of the artist is important– as the material, its presentation, or the critic and the press.”⁴⁴³

Although Roehr’s attempts to gather like-minded artists around a central concept of “Mass Art Producers” did not wholly get off the ground, his efforts represented another conceptual formulation that ideas existed through networks of interaction and dissemination. His networking efforts did pay off though, and it would be Roehr’s project for an exhibition of Serial Art that would bring together some of these artists under his conceptual idea. In combination with Paul Maenz’s network and experiences in New York, Roehr and Maenz would set their conceptual exhibition projects into motion in 1967. As explored in chapter four, the confluence of transatlantic

⁴⁴² In a note titled “Der Film ohne Story,” Roehr posits short sentence narratives. “We know the situation - even though we have never seen this specific before - from the cinema, from television. A situation is illuminated with a minimum of different types of information and its cliché character is pointed out.” (“Wir kennen die Situation – obwohl wir diese Spezifische nie zuvor gesehen haben – aus dem Kino, aus dem Fernsehen. Mit einem Minimum an verschiedenartiger Information wird eine Situation ausgeleuchtet, auf ihren Klischeecharakter hingewiesen.”) Peter Roehr, “Der Film ohne Story,” 28 September 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.19. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

⁴⁴³ Roehr, “Notes from the Estate,” 29-30.

ideas on the art object and the concepts behind them would prove to be a highly productive ground of transaction.

5.0 Serielle Formationen and 19:45–21:55: The Curatorial Experiments of Peter Roehr

Roehr's attempts to organize a loose group of "Mass Art Producers" and form exhibitions over the course of 1966 culminated with two exhibitions: *Serielle Formationen* at the Studiogalerie at the University of Frankfurt and "19:45–21:55" ("Alles dies, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören")⁴⁴⁴ Roehr and Maenz's evening event at Galerie Dorothea Loehr. Arguably drawing inspiration from the idea that the "clearest understanding of artistic ideas occurs through total information,"⁴⁴⁵ Roehr realized that conception of his works could be seen in light of others working in serially derived projects.

While in previous chapters I have discussed cybernetics as an undercurrent in relation to the production of Roehr's physical works, the apex of his project in 1967 must be formulated differently. The concept of systems has been an undercurrent of cybernetics throughout my discussion, but here, I would like to expand the discussion into the idea of systems and networks. Roehr's collaborative curatorial endeavors fundamentally shifted the concept of his art and brought them into closer connection with artists of his time. This chapter differs from my previous discussions of Roehr's work in that it takes the exhibition practices of Roehr and Maenz as its main focus, and rather than focusing on individual works of art themselves, brings the conceptual ideas behind the exhibitions to the fore. This follows the trajectory of Roehr, since he had stopped all other Montage efforts and returned to producing Object Montages, as seen in the previous

⁴⁴⁴ The artists and the documentation leading up to the event referred to it as "Alles dies, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören," hereafter known as "Herzchen," but documentation after the fact refers to that same event as "19:45–21:55," which will be designated as such.

⁴⁴⁵ Paul Maenz and Willoughby Sharp, "Statement," in *Kineticism Press Booklet*, New York, N.Y. 1966. Accessed in the Paul Maenz Gallery Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. A copy of this booklet can also be found in the Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

chapter's discussion of his work at Adam Seide's exhibition in March of 1967. As it will be seen, these exhibitions open up the concept of cybernetics within works to broader concerns for Roehr's networks of artistic ideas, the final phase of his works and concepts.

5.1 From Serial Art to *Serielle Formationen*

In November of 1966, Roehr wrote to director Siegfried Bartels of the Studiogalerie (Studio Gallery) at the University of Frankfurt to propose an exhibition on *Serielle Kunst* (Serial Art): "I am interested in the serial – apart from the connection to my work – because I think it is one of the artistic means that extend across different styles. Just as monochrome, for example, extends from Informel to Constructivism, from Kinetics to figurative to Concrete and so on, it seems to me that 'serial art' has included as many 'styles' (mainly, of course, the New Tendencies)."⁴⁴⁶ Roehr's idea to present an exhibition of Serial Art most likely grew out of a "Kategorien" ("Categories") document, which positioned artists who Roehr found to be working in serial forms, methods, or techniques.⁴⁴⁷ The turn to an exhibition indicated his desire to explore, academically or pedagogically, the repetitious motif which connected to many different styles over

⁴⁴⁶ "Das Serielle interessiert mich – abgesehen von der Verbindung zu meinen Arbeiten – weil ich glaube, es ist eines von den bildnerischen Mitteln, die sich über verschiedene Stile erstrecken. So, wie ja zum Beispiel die Monochromie vom Informel bis zum Konstruktivismus ausbreitet, die Kinetik vom Figurativen bis zum Konkreten und so weiter, scheint mir, hat die „Serielle Kunst“ ebenso viele „Stile“ eingeschlossen, (hauptsächlich natürlich die Neuen Tendenzen)..." Peter Roehr, to Siegfried Bartels, 17 November 1966. Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.29. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

⁴⁴⁷ Renate Wiehager, The Emergence of the Generation of '67," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 45. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Daimler Contemporary, Berlin.

the 20th Century. Clearly, Roehr's experiences and connections in the art world had by now inflected his ideas with a strong theoretical backing, despite only having just turned 22 years old.

The "New Tendencies" that Roehr mentioned in his letter was an emerging set of approaches spreading across Europe that were precipitated by artists working in advancements from formerly known ideas in Op, Kinetic, or Light Art, but included a specific element of participation. As examined in chapter three, the idea of participation was explicitly connected to his co-evolving desire to form a "Mass Art Network." Roehr continued in his letter that "it should be possible, and the time, to register these phenomena once according to these (overarching) points of view. As far as I know, no one has done this before."⁴⁴⁸ Indeed, in the commercial art market world, gallerists were capitalizing on styles – Pop Art being the most notable example – rather than ideas that foiled marketability. While some of the works Roehr viewed as having a serial art component, especially the commercial art darling Pop art, generally did not push the idea of an explicit motif of seriality but rather styles or themes of the time.

Roehr continued in his letter to Bartels, by explaining that "on their own, none of these people [artists] are particularly surprising, but brought together in such a way that guides the observer in a certain direction, they would in my opinion reveal new aspects."⁴⁴⁹ Roehr was clearly struck by the serial form in all of these various, differing, and developing styles; but more importantly, he was prompted by the ways in which these art works could reveal new associations and perspectives in the viewer more substantially than the singular works themselves. The concept of creating an exhibition to explore serial tendencies was a progressive step in Roehr's

448 "und es dürfte möglich und an der Zeit sein, diese Erscheinungen einmal nach diesen (übergeordneten) Gesichtspunkten zu registrieren. Soviel mir bekannt ist, hat das bisher noch niemand getan." Roehr to Bartels, Inv.-Nr.: 2014/75.29.

449 Ibid.

development, one that now bridged the gap from artist to exhibition maker. And as it will be discussed later, a similar trajectory was picked up by Mel Bochner and John Coplans in their separate, American exhibitions only a year later in 1968. Furthermore, the concept of artist as exhibition maker had already been operating as do-it-yourself idea for Roehr, and his intentions showed a desire to formulate conceptual projects for a broader public. Bartels was supportive of Roehr's idea in his reply:

I am not all that interested in solo exhibitions after certain experiences, as they more or less boil down to the self-display of a single person and the objective aspects of the works thereby fall short [...] Since the studio gallery has to fulfill the obligation of informing the student body firstly, it cannot confine itself to emphasizing one tendency of current art. Thus, only the other possibility of assembling exhibitions under certain over-individual aspects remains. Therefore, I can only welcome your suggestion.⁴⁵⁰

Bartels was clear in his intentions of allowing the student body to have an informative experience of the exhibitions in the studio. His emphasis on not showing single artist or one tendency exhibitions further propelled the idea that he was against setting up an avenue for single minded art historical examinations. Roehr's proposal thus fit directly in the conception of Bartel's democratic vision for the gallery. Yet while he was open to Roehr's exhibition proposal, he explained that with such a small budget and only himself running the space, Roehr would have to take on the responsibility of acquiring the works himself.

450 "Ich bin nach gewissen Erfahrungen für Einzelausstellungen nicht so sehr haben, weil sie mehr oder minder auf die Herausstellung einer einzelnen Person hinauslaufend die objektiven Aspekte der Werke dabei zu kurz kommen. Es sei den, eine Galerie setzt sich in die Lage, ein in sich geschlossenes Programm zu vertreten, so das die Einzelausstellung in einem verbindlichen Zusammenhang erscheint. Da die Studiogalerie in erster Linie eine Informationspflicht gegenüber der Studentenschaft zu erfüllen hat, kann sie sich nicht darauf beschränken, eine Tendenz der aktuellen Kunst herauszustellen. Es bleibt also nur die andere Möglichkeit, Ausstellungen unter bestimmten überindividuellen Gesichtspunkten zusammenzustellen. Deswegen kann ich Ihren Vorschlag nur begrüßen." Siegfried Bartels, to Peter Roehr, 20 November, 1966. Folder *Serielle Formationen*, Archive Paul Maenz Berlin, unpaginated.

With the assistance of Maenz, who was preparing to move back to Frankfurt from New York, Roehr began to quickly organize participants. He sent out invitations to acquaintances and friends who worked in the serial form before the year's end. Luther received a personally addressed invitation to exhibit in the provisionally titled exhibition *Serielle Kunst (Serial Art)* dated December 7, 1966.⁴⁵¹ Shortly after Bartels and Roehr had agreed to exhibit *Serielle Kunst*, Roehr (and Bartels) received a letter from Klaus Staudt, who perhaps also received a provisional invitation to show in the *Serial Art* exhibition. Dated January 10, 1967, Staudt, wrote that the term "serial art" was somewhat imprecise:

I don't think "serial art" is successful when it comes to "sequences + repetitions" with regard to the use of graphic elements. That is too imprecise! Sequences do not have to be repetitions and conversely repetitions do not have to be ordered. Serial art deals with very reduced searches: Serial formations of one or more graphic elements according to the laws of "combinations," "variations" or "permutation."⁴⁵²

Roehr's ideas for the *Serial Art* exhibition were thus guided in some ways by the experiences of Bartels and Staudt. Staudt, an early participant in the Zero circle of artists, gave the backing of an established artistic lineage. It seems that Roehr and Maenz also flirted with using the title *Serielle Elemente*, (*Serial Elements*) as seen in an undated English language announcement found in the

451 Klaus Staudt quoted in Renate Wiehager, "The Emergence of the Generation of '67," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 46.

452 "ich halte 'serielle kunst' nicht für glücklich, wenn es sich bezüglich der verwendung von bilderischen elementen schlechthin um 'reihenungen + wiederholungen' handelt. Das ist zu unpräzise! Reihungen müssen keine wiederholungen sein und umgekehrt sind wiederholungen nicht auch eine reihung angewiesen.

Die serielle kunst beschäftigt sich aber mit sehr reduzierten unsuchungen: Serielle Formationen eines oder mehrerer bildnerischer elemente nach den gesetzen der 'kombinationen', der 'variationen' oder der 'permutation.'" Klaus Staudt, letter to Siegfried Bartels and Peter Roehr, 10 January, 1967. Folder *Serielle Formationen*, Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated.

archive;⁴⁵³ but Roehr and Maenz decided to run with Staudt's analysis and change the title of their exhibition from *Serielle Kunst* to *Serielle Formationen*.

In his role as the organizer of the Studiogalerie at the University of Frankfurt, Bartels provided a crucial link to the younger university and social scene, to which Roehr and Maenz were hoping to appeal. Bartels was a pivotal figure in the Frankfurt art scene, but his involvement with the student body at the University of Frankfurt placed him in a unique position unlike the gallerists and other facilitators of the art scene in Frankfurt.⁴⁵⁴ He entered Frankfurt University to study Sociology in 1962 but shared an affinity for art with his older brother Hermann Bartels, a regionally accepted artist of some consequence. Hermann Bartels had exhibited with Informel artists of the 1950s like the Quadriga group in Frankfurt (at Klaus Franck's Zimmergalerie) and other West German cities. By the 1960s, Hermann's work was impacted by the rise of Concrete and Constructivist art and his contacts with galleries and artists across West Germany further introduced Siegfried to the burgeoning art world, including Frankfurt's Rochus Kowallek. While Hermann continued to exhibit his works, Siegfried Bartels began to assist Kowallek at Galerie d on a volunteer basis for technical support and organization of changing exhibitions. But the younger Bartels remained most in contact with the thriving hotbed of activity at Frankfurt University.⁴⁵⁵ When Kowallek encouraged Norbert Ely, the cultural advisor for the University, to set up a gallery within the university to show the latest works of art, he recommended that the

453 Press announcement of "Serielle Elemente," in English, undated. Folder *Serielle Formationen*, Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated. See also organizational list of instructions for Jack Oppenheim on paper with Paul Maenz's New York address. A second care/of address for Maenz lists Peter Roehr's Frankfurt address, indicating this was written in the time right before or after Maenz returned to Frankfurt.

454 The first examination of Bartel's role occurred only as recently as 2018 with the Museum Girsch's retrospective exhibition on the activities Studiogalerie.

455 Micaela Filla, "bilderSTURM. Art and Rebellion at Goethe University, Frankfurt, in the 1960s," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017). Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Daimler Art Contemporary, Berlin. 60.

leadership be given to Bartels.⁴⁵⁶ In 1964, the gallery opened in the *Studentenhaus* (Student Center) under his direction.

The Student Center on the Bockenheimer campus of Frankfurt University was a center of cultural activities for the school, and included the editorial office for *Diskus*, the *Neue Bühne* (New Stage) theater, a *Festssaale* (large lecture hall), and the Studiogalerie.⁴⁵⁷ Bartel's "[i]nterest in contemporary art, especially in its socio-political role and the interaction of the art and observer – together with his networking inside Frankfurt's art scene, seemed to predestine him for leading the studio gallery."⁴⁵⁸ This ideology was already displayed earlier in August 1962, when Bartels wrote for the student newspaper *Diskus* on the subject of democracy:

Confessions to democracy are so many and so influential in the Federal Republic of Germany that it hardly seems necessary to have even the slightest doubt about such tracing. We are of the opinion that democracy mainly depends on the disposition of one person, on the attitude of a Dr. [Konrad, Chancellor] Adenauer or a Mr. [Franz Josef, Defense Minister] Strauss. How power is exercised is a question of the character of ruling personalities. However, the term democracy does not refer to the rulers but the ruled.⁴⁵⁹

This belief in a democracy belonging to the ruled not the rulers directly impacted Bartels's agenda at the Studiogalerie. In another of Bartels's essays for a 1965 issue of *Diskus*, "bildung und bilder" ("education and art"), he offered a transparent system of criteria for the selection and showing of

456 Manfred Großkinsky, "Freiraum der Kunst: die Studiogalerie der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, 1964-1968: Einführung und Dank," in *Freiraum der Kunst: die Studiogalerie der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, 1964-1968*, ed. Manfred Großkinsky (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 13. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Museum Giersch der Universität Frankfurt in Frankfurt am Main, 18 March 2018 – 8 July 2018.
457 Filla, "bilderSTURM," 58.

458 "Sein Interesse für zeitgenössische Kunst -insbesondere für ihre gesellschafts-politische Rolle und für das Wechselspiel von Kunstwerk und Betrachter- sowie seine Vernetzung innerhalb der Frankfurter Kunstszenen schienen ihn für die Leitung der Studiogalerie zu prädestinieren." Großkinsky, "Freiraum der Kunst," 13-14.

459 "Bekenntnisse zur Demokratie gibt es in der Bundesrepublik so viele und so einflußreichen Politikern, daß es kaum geboten scheint, auch nur den leisesten Zweifel solchen Aussprüchen gegenüber zu hegen. Bei uns grassiert die Meinung, die Demokratie hänge hauptsächlich von der der Gesinnung einzelner Personen ab, von der Einstellung eines Herrn Dr. Adenauer oder eines Herrn Strauß. Es sei eine Frage des Charakters herrschender Persönlichkeiten, wie Macht ausgeübt werde. Der Begriff Demokratie bezieht sich nun aber nicht auf die Herrschenden sondern die Beherrschten." Siegfried Bartels, "Demokratie– Ja Oder Nein," *Diskus*, August 1962.

works of art in the Studiogalerie, as museum director for the Girsch Museum at the University of Frankfurt Manfred Grosinsky noted in 2018: “He emphasized the importance of presenting modern art with a conceptual, even philosophical basis and not wanting to offer a mere art of aesthetic edification”⁴⁶⁰ His program at the Studiogalerie opened up the avenues for students to understand art of the current day in line with these fundamental principles. Furthermore, “[i]n the face of original works of art and the remarks of competent mediators, the students should come into contact with current art in order to develop an understanding of art in dealing with the terms ‘art’ (kunst) and ‘image’ (‘bild).”⁴⁶¹ The direct appeal Bartels was making to the students, rather than the highfalutin art world, was a direct democratic application as well as an educational directive.

Art historian Michaela Filla remarked that Bartels’s intentions were clear in his earlier writings, but that the establishment of the Studiogalerie “informs students of contemporary art and in so doing introduces works that develop initiative. Works that could be classified in a phase of art history were excluded.”⁴⁶² Therefore, the gallery provided the space for a student body who embodied the edicts of “autonomy, self-determination and emancipation,” which fulfilled an “obligation towards a social order intended as democratic by broadening their intellectual horizons with regards to exactly those topics that the existing authorities deemed superfluous.”⁴⁶³ This was anti-authoritarian in that it deposed both cultural, art historical traditions, and the ruling authorities in general.

460 “Mit seinem programmatischen Beitrag „bildung und bilder“ erläuterte er Aufgabe und Anspruch sowie Auswahlkriterien: Großen Wert legte er auf die Feststellung, moderne Kunst mit konzeptioneller, ja philosophischer Basis präsentieren und nicht eine bloße Kunst der ästhetischen Erbauung bieten zu wollen.” Grosinsky, “Freiraum der Kunst,” 14.

461 “Angesichts originaler Kunstwerke und anhand der Ausführungen kompetenter Vermittler sollten die Studenten mit aktueller Kunst in Berührung kommen, um in der Auseinandersetzung mit den Begriffen „Kunst“ und „Bild“ ein „kunstverständnis“ zu entwickeln.“ Ibid. 14–15.

462 Filla, “bilderSTURM,” 60.

463 Ibid.

Grosinsky continues: “Therefore, the gallery takes on an autonomous role at the university and from itself, influences the consciousness of society, which makes its activity on other levels, especially politics, more credible.”⁴⁶⁴ Bartels presented a diverse program in the course of the gallery’s short existence that presented the work of artists from diverse artistic methods. In 1964, the space was established with an exhibition on New Graphics with presentations by artists Winfred Gaul, Georg Karl Pfahler, Lothar Quinte, and Arnulf Rainer on loan from the Galerie Rottloff in Karlsruhe.⁴⁶⁵ Co-organized by Siegfried and Hermann Bartels, the exhibition took place from June 30 – July 10, 1964. The Studiogalerie also presented solo exhibitions by Reimer Jochims, Leon Polk Smith, and Rupprecht Geiger, artists who directly challenged the tendencies of Art Informel.⁴⁶⁶ It also hosted two Fluxus concerts by Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik in 1965 and 1966, and Wolf Vostell performed his “Statt Theater. Seh-Buch, De-coll/age-Happening” there on September 23, 1966. In three short years, the exhibitions and events elevated the Studiogalerie as an alternative location for radical art, outside the traditional gallery and museum system operating elsewhere in the city.

By the time *Serielle Formationen* opened in May 1967, the student movement in Frankfurt had become increasingly radicalized. The death of Benno Ohnesorg in Berlin on June 2, 1967 became a catalyst for the turn towards a more violent protest movement. In August 1967, after the *Serielle Formationen* exhibition closed and during the planning for the upcoming Happening event at Dorothea Loehr, Roehr also came to see the importance of the role of the university:

464 “Mit Hinweis auf die Besonderheit, dass ,die Studentenschaft einer Universität eine Galerie unterhält’, erfülle diese ,eine Verpflichtung gegenüber unserer demokratisch gewollten Gesellschaftsordnung,’ wenn sie ihren geistigen Horizont dort erweitert, wo die bestehenden Autoritätsverhältnisse es als überflüssig erscheinen lassen. Damit übernimmt sie eine autonome Rolle an der Universität und beeinflusst von sich aus das Bewußtsein der Gesellschaft. Ihre Aktivität auf anderen Ebenen, insbesondere der Politik, wird dadurch glaubwürdiger.” Grosinsky, “Freiraum der Kunst,” 15.

465 Ibid., 17.

466 Filla, “bilderSTURM,” 60.

There is no extra-parliamentary opposition in federal and state cultural policy, as there is in political matters, where there is a critical extra-parliamentary opposition. This has led to the fact that the cultural endeavors of the federal and state governments have to be described as backward and reactionary. Academies, universities and art schools seem to me to be the suitable institutions that change this policy by finally starting to develop a cultural-political awareness and – rightly so – to criticize the existing conditions. Apart from the schools, there do not seem to be any other institutions that would be more suitable to take this position.⁴⁶⁷

Although he never publicly expressed support for the radicalization of political endeavors, Roehr clearly was taken by the ideas of democracy and participation, and most especially, with alternative institutions and facilitators of those platforms. This might seem surprising, since Roehr never attended formal art school training. However, he clearly saw the potential for reaching large swaths of the young population that were seemingly left out by large-scale, federally funded cultural programs and exhibitions. The Studiogalerie provided the prime location to reach an audience in tune with the times.

5.2 Organizing and Planning of *Serielle Formationen*

At the beginning of 1967 Maenz returned to Frankfurt from New York, bringing with him a small collection of art works and a handful of contacts in New York, London, and Germany. In

⁴⁶⁷ “In der Kulturpolitik des Bundes und der Länder gibt es keine außerparlamentarische Opposition, wie es in politischen Dingen eine kritische Außerparlamentarische Opposition gibt. Dieser Zustand hat dazu geführt, daß die kulturellen Unternehmungen des Bundes und der Länder als rückständig und reaktionär bezeichnet werden müssen. Mir scheinen Akademien, Hochschulen und Werkkunstschulen die geeigneten Institutionen zu sein, die diese Politik verändern indem sie endlich beginnen ein kulturpolitisches Bewußtsein zu entwickeln und – mit vollem Recht – an den bestehenden Zuständen Kritik üben. Außer den Schulen scheint es mir keine anderen Institutionen zu geben, die geeigneter wären, diese Position zu übernehmen.” Peter Roehr, “Einflussnahme von Seiten der Institutionen,” 15 August 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.77. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

the intervening months, Roehr and Maenz shifted the scope *Serial Art* to focus on only contemporary artists within the last ten years who manifested the serial form in their works. Roehr and Maenz, after settling on the name *Serielle Formationen*, then fully undertook the planning in early spring of 1967. Roehr's final solo exhibition at Adam Seide in March 1967 (see chapter three) required Maenz to undertake a significant amount of the organizing activities.

As the exhibition documents show, Maenz had a clear idea of what was needed to represent “serial forms” in the exhibition. Since Bartels could not offer any institutional support, the personal labor needed to acquire the artworks was immense and required creative workarounds. In a long letter to Jack Oppenheim in New York from 31. March 1967, Maenz described in Frankfurt the “strange kind of Aufbruchstimmung (feeling of optimism) in the air, the desire shared by those who think in more international terms, that something has to be done to escape from the so-called German isolation.”⁴⁶⁸ Maenz described the number of activities already occurring in Frankfurt, including the imagining of an Art Shop “not unlike Multiples, N.Y.; [and] a Black Box” that ostensibly functioned as a multiple, traveling with artists' works to galleries and museums.⁴⁶⁹ In the organizing context, Maenz gave an overview of what was needed to realize the exhibition:

The European artists are mostly easy to get a hold of because they usually are eager to be presented. Some Germans will come and install a work especially made for the show. Most enjoyable is that it seems as if we have discovered some new but very outstanding artists or some who have been ignored for the most obscure reasons. But then again the standard of the show is pretty high so that some artists who have been recommended won't be accepted.⁴⁷⁰

468 Paul Maenz, letter to Jack Oppenheim, 21 March, 1967. Folder *Serielle Formationen*, Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated.

469 Ibid.

470 Ibid.

Maenz implored Jack Oppenheim in New York for pictures of the artists' works but emphasized that they did not have to be photographs of the works that would actually appear in the show. He then went on to list the galleries and artists to obtain for loan: drawings by Robert Smithson and Michael Steiner from Virginia Dwan; a large drawing by Robert Bladen from the Fischbach Gallery; and from Leo Castelli, works by Robert Morris, Larry Poons and Frank Stella. Oppenheim sent most of Maenz's requests to Frankfurt, and although the drawings by Robert Smithson and Robert Morris could not be contracted, the *Serielle Formationen* catalog listed Castelli's gallery as the lender of Donald Judd's *Untitled* drawing.⁴⁷¹ In the catalog, lending galleries from New York also included the Betty Parsons Gallery (Enrico Castellani) and Richard Feigen Gallery (Bridget Riley).

Roehr and Maenz were further able to secure work from Galerie Dorothea Loehr (who loaned works by Walter Leblanc, Herman de Vries), and Galerie Ursula Lichter (who loaned Thomas Bayrle, Hermann Goepfert, Kaspar Thomas Lenk, Paul Talman, Herman de Vries) in Frankfurt; Galerie Zwirner in Cologne (who loaned Dan Flavin, Andy Warhol); Galerie Denise René (who loaned Victor Vasarely); and Galerie Orez in Den Haag (who loaned Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven). From Maenz and Roehr's personal collections came works by Hans Breder, Sol LeWitt, Yayoi Kusama, Piero Manzoni, Agnes Martin, Almir Mavignier, and Diter Rot. Artworks that were possibly provided by the artists included those of Christo, Dibbets, May Fasnacht, Bernard Fiebig, Kuno Gonschior, Hans Haacke, Jan Henderikse, Ewerd Hilgemann, Bernard Höke, Jiri Kolar, Yayoi Kusama, Adolf Luther, Charlotte Posenenske, Markus Rätz, Felix Schlenker, Wolfgang Schmidt, Klaus Staudt, and gruppe x.⁴⁷² This massive undertaking was

⁴⁷¹ Jack Oppenheim, letter to Paul Maenz. Folder *Serielle Formationen*, Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated.

⁴⁷² One can assume that these works were not provided through galleries or personal collections of the curators based on the fact that they had unlisted contributors.

organized and executed in only a few short months. Although in tune with previous “Avant-Garde” exhibitions, Maenz and Roehr set their exhibition apart by relying on a conceptual formulation of the “serial” that promoted an international, multidimensional overview of the current art scene.

In an undated English-language press release from Maenz and Roehr, the curators briefly summarized the exhibition’s position of presenting thought-provoking works from New Tendencies, New Realism, Hard Edge, Pop, Op or Minimal Art since 1957: “This exhibition intends to point out phenomena of great similarity that have occurred in the works of many artists within the last decade. All of the works shown feature succession, repetition, or accumulation of similar elements. Remarkable seems that the artists working in this manner very often are of quite different origin.”⁴⁷³ Although the curators provided examples of the tendencies that would be on display, they did not expand on the individual positions of the artists. The German press release written by Roehr and Maenz gave a more detailed portrayal of the exhibition and a list of represented artists.

Similar phenomena have been observed in the visual arts for about ten years, which have so far hardly been seen in context. Independently of each other, artists in many countries have developed creative expressions that can be compared, although the origins not only seem different, but often even incompatible. (New Tendencies, New Realism, Pop Art, Optical Art, Hard Edge or Minimal Art- ABC) It has been interesting for some time now to put such works together for an exhibition, because it is not only an insufficiently known aspect of contemporary art, but also a lack of clarity that has often led to misunderstandings when comparing different artistic concepts.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ Peter Roehr and Paul Maenz, Press Release (English), undated. Folder *Serielle Formationen*, Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated.

⁴⁷⁴ “Seit etwa zehn Jahren haben sich einander ähnelnde Erscheinungen in der bildenden Kunst beobachten lassen, die bisher kaum im Zusammenhang gesehen worden sind. Unabhängig voneinander haben Künstler viele Länder gestalterische Ausdrucksweisen entwickelt, die sich vergleichen lassen, obwohl die Ursprünge nicht nur unterschiedlich, sondern oft sogar unvereinbar scheinen. (Neue Tendenzen, Neuer Realismus, Pop Art, Optical Art, Hard Edge oder Minimal Art- ABC). So erschien es seit einiger Zeit interessant, solche Werk einmal für eine Ausstellung zusammenzustellen, weil es sich nicht nur um einen unzureichend bekannten Aspekte zeitgenössischer Kunst handelt, sondern auch um einen Mangel an Übersicht, der bei Vergleichen zwischen verschiedenen künstlerischen Konzepten oft zu Mißverständnissen geführt hat.” Peter Roehr and Paul Maenz, Press Release (German), undated. Folder *Serielle Formationen*, Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated.

Quite clearly, the gap between German and English was a barrier in expressing the ideas behind the exhibition. Although both press releases highlighted the serial form as it appeared in works originating from many different artistic concepts, the German was much more fluid and verbose in expressing their conceptual idea. Roehr referenced the German press release in a letter to a Herr Jülicher on April 8, 1967, a month before the exhibition opened.⁴⁷⁵ Artists listed on the press release, but not shown in the final exhibition included Marianne Aue, Paul Morgenson, Les Levine, and Robert Smithson possibly due to last minute issues in acquiring the works on loan.

By the time of the exhibition opening on May 22, 1967, Roehr and Maenz had refined their exhibition's premise, and they were mostly successful in acquiring works needed to execute their vision. As Roehr and Maenz put forth in their catalog introduction, the serial form of the last ten years was directly connected to an overarching shift of attitude in the world of consumption and undeniably drew from their experiences in both the art world and the social environment of the 1960s:

The consumer society of the 20th century: anyone who does not directly manufacture industrial goods probably distributes or processes them, and certainly uses them, daily, hourly, day and night. Being a functioning member of the consumption-oriented society does not depend upon a voluntary decision. It is hardly a moral question – it is simply one of survival [...]. It goes without saying that this situation has an effect on the consciousness of those involved – and this applies to the seemingly less integrated artist just as it does to the average citizen. Possibly more than anything else, art is a question of consciousness and contemporary art is a question of contemporary consciousness.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁵ Peter Roehr, to D. Jülicher, 8 April, 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated.

⁴⁷⁶ Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr, "On the Exhibition," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017). 122. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, organized and presented at the Daimler Art Contemporary, Berlin, 3 June – 5 November 2017. Originally printed in *Serielle Formationen*, catalog published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at the Studiogalerie, University of Frankfurt, unpaginated, 22 May – 30 June, 1967.

The acknowledgement of the “contemporary consciousness” of consumerist society working within the confines of systems signaled a larger concern for tendencies at work beyond the field of art and aesthetics. Material, popular culture shifts in the urban environment, and new negotiations with structures of power required alternate ways of interacting with the spaces and concepts behind works of art. Rather than focusing on the materiality of the works or finding commonalities in the background of individual artistic practices and thereby reinforcing previous categorizations of art, the artists’ divergent statements were given precedence in catalogue. In terms of concept, some of the artists spoke in terms of systems or permutations (Haacke, LeWitt, Judd), (im)personal reflections through the manifestation of the serial form (Martin, Kusama, Warhol), or used the serial form as a political stance (Höke). Some artists did not have statements on their works, or in the case of Roehr, used the statement space to say simply “*Nichts*.” Roehr and Maenz clarified their position in their introduction to the exhibition: “The commonalities of the artworks on display reside in their appearance, not in the concept behind them.”⁴⁷⁷ In terms of display, the first wing of the space was given to objects of a more optical and kinetic program that led into Pop, while the second wing displayed what might be considered more inclined to minimal tendencies of modular, systemic, and haptic forms.

Maenz and Roehr in some ways preempted criticism for the show when they wrote in the postscript of the exhibition introduction:

P.S. Shortly before the printing of the catalog, Bazon Brock, whose views we greatly value, commented on the idea of this exhibition, saying that its title and composition were inadmissible, because the artworks on display demonstrated arbitrariness of design more than serial conceptions... the intention is not to create an -ism or to shoehorn things into an unsuitable terminology. (Ullstein dictionary of foreign words: Series= a number, row,

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

or group of identical or similar objects, events etc. Formation= configuration, structure).⁴⁷⁸

Roehr and Maenz were attempting to find somewhat equal ground from which to view stylistic disparities among the works. But, as seen in recently discovered historical photos of the exhibition taken by Paul Maenz after installation but before the opening, certain aesthetic groupings did emerge within the exhibition space. These groupings roughly reflected those “-isms” and styles mentioned by Roehr and Maenz in their catalogue essay. Indeed, without any discernable wall text or labels, different pedagogical possibilities emerged in a space designated for a free-moving, free-thinking student body – a position reflecting Bartels’s intention of allowing students to understand art on their own terms. Fundamentally this was grounded and fostered in the space itself under the direction of Bartels; but as part of a broader shift in exhibition practices, *Serielle Formationen* belongs to a network of emerging conceptual projects and provides a critical presage to the “Concept” or “attitude” as the art work itself, ideas which were gaining traction at the time.

As I will argue, this exhibition fundamentally underlined an attitude that the serial form was a system of interaction and participation. The layout of the exhibition, as well as the introduction by Roehr and Maenz, reflected this conceptual, participatory orientation. By examining the exhibition through Maenz’s series of recently discovered exhibition photographs, a break away from Roehr’s historical narrative will introduce the works as the viewer would have seen them walking down the exhibition halls. Through this walkthrough of the space and exhibition, themes and connections Roehr and Maenz attempted to draw will fully become clear.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

5.3 *Serielle Formationen: A Walkthrough Tour*

The Studiogalerie was effectively two connected hallways of classrooms on the second floor in Frankfurt University's Student Hall (*Studentenhaus*) (Figure 69). The space was formerly used only for functional purposes, consisting of two long corridors each ending with a flight of stairs. When the Studiogalerie opened under Bartels, the large clubroom (*Große Clubraum*) was also used as a lecture and performance space.⁴⁷⁹ Although the main stairway at the southeast corner of the floorplan (Figure 70) would have been the primary access point for visitors, the three stairwells gave four points of access to the space. The multiple entries could have allowed the mainly student population to peruse the exhibition freely and from different visual perspectives. The space formed the main wing of the inner courtyard, where its windows looked upon students presumably gathering between classes. These not only provided natural light but also meant that many of the works were primarily hung along the south wall, and those works that were hung in the spaces between the windows were mostly not visible in the exhibition photos taken by Maenz. Most significantly, the gallery space was also the access hall for classroom and meeting spaces, so students were frequently around the works while moving from place to place within the Student Hall. The Studiogalerie thus functioned between an art gallery and a functional space. Whether the students chose to experience the works as a complete show, in parts, or simply as objects to be looked at as they attended meetings was entirely up to them.

Through the main double doors, the visitor encountered the first wall of works in the exhibition space (Figure 71). Works by Klaus Staudt, Hermann Goepfert, Günther Uecker,

⁴⁷⁹ The clubroom seems to have served as the performance space for the Fluxus performances of Nam June Paik and Charlotte Mormon, as well as Wolf Vostell.

and Piero Manzoni greeted the viewer. These works were united in the artists' use of common materials such as metal, paper, and plastic in their relief constructions that gave light and shadow a certain materiality. The work by Staudt was listed in the catalog as *Doppelrelief* (Double Relief), which indicated his method of manufacture: using only identical wooden triangular pieces painted in black on one side, Staudt placed these in patterns in order to create dramatic shadows and light on a wooden board. Goepfert's work *Alureflector* (Aluminum Reflector) consisted of aluminum strips mounted on canvas, which reflected light at various angles. Uecker's *Zero Garden* utilized a circular sweeping pattern of bent nails, a process ubiquitous to the artist's work. The white painted paper squares of Manzoni's *19 Agosto* (1959), ended the first section of the exhibition. Certainly, Maenz and Roehr promoted the optical play of light, shadows, and reflective material as used by the earlier generation of artists associated with Zero in the works by Staudt, Goepfert, Uecker, and Manzoni. But upon turning to face the wall directly, the viewer would have encountered two rows of Andy Warhol's bright pink and yellow cows framing either side of the entry door. The large Pop works would not have been visible from outside the exhibition, and thus created an element of surprise. Having just premiered at Rudolf Zwirner's Gallery in Cologne a month earlier,⁴⁸⁰ the cow heads emphasized a colorful new direction of the serial form in contrast to the monochrome light and shadow works of the entry wall.

The first wall ended at an alcove, where Günther Uecker's nailed and painted monochrome sculpture *Lichtraster* featured straight rows of white nails on a white board, and Eberhard Fiebig's radial construction of clear plastic were stationed in the main path (Figure 72). In the alcove itself (Figure 73), seriality was clearly seen within the monochrome permutations.

⁴⁸⁰ *Kuhe und Schwebende Kissen von Andy Warhol* (Cows and Floating Pillows from Andy Warhol) premiered in Cologne, Germany at the Rudolf Zwirner Gallery from January – February 1967.

Maenz and Roehr placed the cubic reliefs of Ewerd Hilgemann, Herman de Vries (*Homogene Struktur*, and *Schattenobjekt* both from 1966), and Jan Schoonhoven (*Twee Verticalen*) along the eastern wall. Henk Peeters' work occupied the southern wall and was adjoined by two large windows. The rigid cubic forms of the works on the walls were offset by Markus Raetz's large, undulating wave relief positioned in the middle of the space. The organic, mesmerizing forms of Kusama's *Net Obsession*, which can partly be seen in Figure 71, provided a counterpoint to the rigid form's semi-relief structures on the wall opposite works by Hilgemann, de Vries, and Schoonhoven. The window of the brightly illuminated alcove faced south, so the changing light of day would have created different visual effects on the monochromes' relief surfaces.

The monochrome alcove was adjacent to the main hall, which continued into the optical patterns of works by Walter Leblanc, Jiri Kolar, and Paul Talman among others (Figure 74). *Twisting Strips R. 27* and *Mobilo Static pf 237* by Walter Leblanc were hung next to each other and offered a continuation of the optical, movement-based experience of the exhibition. It is not known if the students were allowed to touch the works, but Paul Talman's *Object Edition mat* (1964) signaled again the potential for user experience, as the small black and white balls mounted on a black frame could be moved into different optical patterns: the balls were half black and half white, and turning them would give the illusion of appearing and disappearing into their black frame mount.

After Talman's piece, Pop and imagistic works were signaled by Jiri Kolar's two untitled *Collage* works which framed either side of the doorway. His technique of "rollage" produced works that wove two different images together in a double image (*Doppelbild*). Kolar's work represented a visual bridge between the two "styles" of Op and Pop Art. Next to the second Kolar collage on the far end of the door, Thomas Bayrle's *Frau Am Meer* also used the doubling aspect

by presenting two identical paintings of a woman, which used his technique of composing larger subjects out of identical elements. He most likely used one of his multi-tone serial tulip patterns,⁴⁸¹ where the figure of a body composed of self-similar tulips emerges, in its own color tone, within an unbroken sea of the same repeated tulips. The Dutch artist Jan Henderikse's *Navy Cut* composition was comprised of identical discarded boxes of cigarettes. The European contingent was overwhelmingly represented in the colorful serial products and images of the first hallway, in tune with the commercially successful Pop Art in the United States now proliferating in Europe. Aside from the colorful Warhol at the other end of the hallway, American Pop was not prominently featured.

At the end of the first hall gallery (Figure 75), sculptures by gruppe x and Eberhard Fiebig concluded the first part of the exhibition. gruppe x's *A2* consisted of bent, two-toned white and blue painted sheets of metal that were placed in order on the floor, though they were intended to be arranged in different configurations by the viewer. Barely visible in the background of Figure 71, another one of gruppe x's sculptures (*C 7*) was set up next to a chair, implying that the works were actually meant to be activated.⁴⁸² Three movable crossbar rods were attached to a central core rod and held in place with latches. At each end of the moving rods were metal squares, colored white on the outside and black on the inside, so that when set into motion, the viewer would experience an optical play of moving colors. It is also likely that the *B1* work from gruppe x was displayed in this corner. Eberhard Fiebig's *Pneumatische Säule* (Pneumatic Column) consisted of

481 Bayrle's patterns often used Dutch shoes, tulips, Babel cheese brand cow heads, and human figures.

482 Although gruppe x remained anonymous, Jürgen Wegener, who was responsible for the C- group of objects, always intended for the works to be touched, and activated. When the *C7* work was installed at the *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017* exhibition at the Daimler Art Contemporary, the object was permitted to be activated. See Frederick Schikowski, "gruppe x," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 150.

inflated rubber balloons in six columns of five rows each that were attached to a black plinth. The organic serial forms contrasted with the industrial character of gruppe x's shiny metal forms. Despite all the possible works to be shown even in this hallway, the newspaper article for the show in *Diskus* printed only a single image of Fiebig's statue for its coverage, as I discuss below.

As the visitor entered the second hallway qua gallery of the exhibition, the curators' arrangement shifted from the Op and Pop repetition to a more minimal presentation of serial modular forms. Wolfgang Schmidt's *Serie 17* (Figure 76), immediately confronted the viewer upon entering the space from the second stairwell. The forms of *Serie 17* consisted of several colored, plastic sheets, which were folded into each other and attached with pins. The variable configurations of the forms, seen in Figure 76, displayed some of the multiple patterns that could be arranged using the same identical materials. *Serie 17* was also created with the intention of user activation and arrangement of forms, although it is unknown whether this happened in *Serielle Formationen*.⁴⁸³ Also visible in Figure 76 was Hans Breder's *Spiegelobjekt*, a sculpture consisting of identical, aluminum cubes set upon another mirror within a Plexiglas container. The reflective surfaces of the cubes reflected varying configurations of the space itself as the viewer moved around the sculpture.

From the perspective of Figure 77, one can see a space was filled with modular forms that would have lent themselves to the reflective world of Breder's *Spiegelobjekt*. Along the wall, Charlotte Posenenske's *Kombination aus vier Elemente*, which she later called *Series D*, was installed along the wall and consisted of four elements of identical folded metal sheets painted in

483 Frederick Schikowski, "Wolfgang Schmidt," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 141. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title, Daimler Art Contemporary, Berlin. See also *Edition et 4*, 1968, where diagrams for the *Serie 17* works were printed as multiples.

bright yellow. Although installed as a static sculpture on the wall, *Serie D* was also intended to be manipulated and arranged through a system of permutations. Placed next to one another, the colorful arrays of the *Serie 17* complimented the yellow surfaces of *Serie D*.

Evidently, Maenz and or Roehr decided to switch the placement of Breder's *Spiegelobjekt* and Sol LeWitt's *Structure*, as seen in Figure 78. The new placement of Sol LeWitt's modular *Structure* on the taller pedestal gave it equal presence in the space. Likewise, Breder's reflective surfaces on a lower pedestal allowed the viewer to experience more of the optical reflections from above and the side. This was especially true when the Breder was then seen in conjunction with Dan Flavin's bright yellow and pink florescent light piece *To Ingrid*, which was positioned on the small wall between two doors after Posenenske's wall sculpture.

On the other side of the door next to Flavin's work, Roehr's presentation of two of his *Untitled* works (Figure 79), a variation on the series of black squares he premiered for the Adam Seide show in 1967 (Figure 51). Roehr's large black, minimal work was seemingly at odds with its centralized placement. The materials listed in the catalog for Roehr's work, "steel and illuminated frosted glass elements" ("*Stahl und beleuchtete Milchglas Elemente*") was also different than what was presented. Indeed, Wendermann first noted that Roehr wanted to show the square light work from the Sketches project series (Figure 62).⁴⁸⁴ However, it is also likely that Roehr imagined showing the bulb work (Figure 61), doubled, due to the measurements listed at 90 by 90 by 15cm for each in the catalog, which does not correspond with the square block piece but rather the bulb work. Regardless, Roehr was not able to construct the illuminated works due to financial constraints, and therefore presented two of the *Black Panels*.

484 Gerda Wendermann, *Peter Roehr 1944–1968. Die Sammlung Paul Maenz, (Band 2): Neues Museum Weimar*. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000), 61.

The *Black Panels* were constructed out of black cardboard on board and set within a 5-by-7 grid. Their starkly minimal, monochrome presentation offered a contrast to the surrounding color, light, and reflective works in the environment: Flavin's brightly illuminated *To Ingrid* presented a twin form wedged between the two classroom doors, while the modular, doubled towers of Christo's *Barrels* construction also resonated with Roehr's untitled grids. The industrial character of the assembly and its presentation in the space reverberated with Bernhard Höke's *Wasserhände* sculpture, which was placed in the vicinity of the doubled grids and forms of Flavin, Roehr, and Christo (Figure 79 and 80). Höke's towers of stacked clear boxes contained rubber gloves filled with water, a variation on a work that first appeared in 1963. The organic, amoeba-like gloves within the rigidity of the clear plastic boxes produced a unique contrast in forms both within the works and against the rigidity of the surrounding works. As with other sections in the exhibition, the cohesion between these minimal works granted a level of comparison and contrast among structures through their forms, materials, and aesthetic tendencies.

Jan Dibbet's *3 Demontabele Multiples* hung on the other side of Christo's Barrel construction (Figure 81). These wooden and canvas works were also intended to be manipulated by moving the triangular pieces around the main square but were installed as static works. At the far end of the exhibition space (Figure 82), a large wall area was devoted to Konrad Lueg's 19 squares of plastic foil in various patterns and colors (*Anordnung aus 19 Flächen in 14 Mustern und Farben*).⁴⁸⁵ Maenz and Roehr also included different samples of Lueg's plastic foils in each of the catalogs.

⁴⁸⁵ Judging from the installation photograph, only 18 were installed. These works seem to correspond with the description of Lueg's last showing with Gerhard Richter as the Capitalist Realists at Galerie Patio, Frankfurt in 1966.

The catalog itself also functioned as a multiple: each of the 500 editions contained works from 6 of the artists within its pages. Each work maintained the page size of the catalog but offered radically different artworks. One of Roehr's typed and hectographed Untitled Montages from 1963 repeated the backslash key in an endless grid pattern. Ewerd Hilgemann's *Prägedruck* work was a monochrome white on off-white field of indistinguishable lines. Charlotte Posenenske offered an untitled work that consisted of a rubberlike blue material indented with several evenly spaced diagonal depressions. Kuno Gonschior's *Rot-Grün* print presented an optical assault of green blotches on a contrasting orange-red background. Hermann de Vries provided a print entitled *Random Distribution* that emulated computer graphics. And of course, there was the aforementioned random pattern sample by Lueg. This catalog also therefore became a vehicle for distributing artwork to anyone who purchased it, one that reflected Maenz's previous ideas first formulated in his experience with Kineticism Press. Roehr was equally in tune with the developments of the Multiple due to his previous enthusiasm for participating in publications like *Edition et.*

Serielle Formationen was on view for just over five weeks in the Studio Gallery, and during its run time it received mixed reviews in local newspapers and press. Eduard Beauchamp, a Frankfurt based critic, wrote a review of the show for the June 15, 1967 issue of the more conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Beauchamp's synthesis of the show evokes the themes Roehr had been attempting to theorize for his entire career to this point. He was quick to offer commendation to the curators for bringing the latest developments in art to Frankfurt, but he seemingly found the themes too tenuous to make distinct connections:

Is seriality even a theme? [...] [T]he method alone does not make the image, and to argue from the method point of view misleads to premature and one-sided theory. Sociology is introduced to the field: invoking the industrial

and consumer age with its necessary serial production, it is claimed that the series is to us what perspective was to the age of discovery and expansion.⁴⁸⁶

While he also praised the curators for their unacademic presentation, which opened the exhibition not to just the students but also the public, he paradoxically ends his final analysis in academic terms: “To put it academically: the serial formations do not put forth ‘iconology’ that is a history of meaning, but rather a history of motifs [...]. Limited finances only stretched to modest examples; this left even more room for jokes.”⁴⁸⁷ Beauchamp’s criticism reflected a traditional desire for art historical pedagogy that continued the Modernist aim of identification and differentiation in style, form, or at the very least “iconology” – a desire in line with the waning traditions of German cultural theorists out of touch with the changing times. Furthermore, Beauchamp’s disparaging statement that “method alone does not make the image”⁴⁸⁸ missed the ongoing conceptual orientation towards process and idea, which would later irreparably change the dynamics of the foundations of art historical thinking in Germany and around the world.

Adam Seide, the Frankfurt curator and critic who had already exhibited Roehr’s work on several occasions, wrote for the leftist newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau*:

It is hard to find anything to criticize. All one can say is that: a) the Studentengalerie has taken on a Herculean task that would equally be beyond the capacities of a museum, b) in the art, serial production exists, aside from graphics, only in the production of reliefs, sculptures, and objects, c) repetitions of forms of the same or of a similar kind are found in the most varied stylistic tendencies.⁴⁸⁹

486 Eduard Beauchamp, “Gemischte Serien [Mixed Series],” in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 184. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Daimler Art Contemporary, Berlin. Originally published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 June, 1967.

487 Ibid., 186.

488 Ibid.

489 Adam Seide, “In Serie [In Series]” in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 186. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Daimler Contemporary, Berlin. Originally published in *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Nr. 119, 25 May, 1967.

Seide's more novel approach to the exhibition allowed the student community to make their own decisions about the works. He understood the task of mounting such an exhibition would be difficult for even the most well-funded museum, but most likely would not have been ideologically supported in the ways in which Roehr and Maenz needed. However, by reserving judgement, he also did not spur much interest for a larger public. The exhibition also received a review by Hans Peter Reise in *Diskus*, and it highlighted both the sociological point of the introduction as well as the technical and aesthetic "style" of serial production. For Reise, the curatorial overview was lacking, "since it was decided to only demonstrate the methodological features without insisting on the presence of true serial conceptualization, one is confronted by artists whose works in the serial tradition are only individual pieces or products of chance, alongside artists whose work is actually designed serially."⁴⁹⁰ Reise pointed out that the exhibition seemed to have two distinct tendencies, which he argues could have been delineated more clearly with regard to the overarching theme of serial production. Overall, the German critics missed the intentions of *Serielle Formationen*, especially in their continual comparisons of the works based on style and form, or in conjunction with museum quality shows that displayed seemingly similar tendencies.

Arguably, the above critics fundamentally misunderstood Roehr and Maenz's conceptual backing in bringing the works together. As Renate Wiehager and others have effectively argued, *Serielle Formationen* was the first exhibition to bring Minimalist tendencies to Germany.⁴⁹¹ Through their examination of the serial form, Roehr and Maenz were consciously aware that the developing trend of "Minimal or ABC Art" in artistic making represented a fundamental turn away

490 Hans Peter Riese, "Serien Formiert," in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 188. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Daimler Contemporary, Berlin. First printed in *Diskus* 17. nr. 4 (June 1967).

491 See Wiehager, "The Emergence of the Generation of '67," and Wendermann, *Peter Roehr*.

from previous art: “repetitions and successions of similar elements are often used as the means, but without being in any way immediately understandable or interesting in the sense of being diverse or varied in their effect.”⁴⁹² While the American artists like Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Agnes Martin were represented under these positions, Roehr’s *Black Squares* Object Montages (Figure 77) also clearly fit within this definition. Furthermore, the works of Charlotte Posenenske, gruppe x, and Jan Dibbets also fell under these parameters. Likewise, *Serielle Formationen* paralleled discourses in the American art scene, and further examination into these comparable discussions provide telling insights into the artistic and curatorial potency of the show.

During the run of *Serielle Formationen*, Michael Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” essay was published in the June 1967 issue of *ArtForum*, and his formalist attack on Minimalism sent shock waves across the American art world. In Fried’s rigid dichotomy, the works of Modernist painters and above all, sculptors, sustained their limits as “Art” through the specificity of forms to the medium, while the Literalist (Minimalist) object extends into the boundaries of the external world by presenting another object in relations of reality. The object thus embraces its “objecthood” in a spectacle that “amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theater is now the negation of art.”⁴⁹³ Fried proposed that this negation, or “degeneration” of arts as they approached the conditions of theater was indicative of an assault on quality, value, and taste.⁴⁹⁴

492 Maenz and Roehr, “On the Exhibition,” 121.

493 Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” in *Minimal Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1968), 125. First published in *ArtForum*, June 1967.

494 Ibid., 142.

Fried viewed this tendency towards theatricality by the Literalist object as a perversion of the traditions of Modernist art.⁴⁹⁵ The Literalist object did not seek to remain in the autonomous realm of Art – to rely entirely on the “presentness” of the work of art in terms of its aesthetic, formal characteristics – but solicited the inclusion of a beholder in the experience of the work: “[e]verything counts – not as part of the object, but as part of the situation in which its objecthood is established and on which that objecthood at least partly depends.”⁴⁹⁶ Tony Smith, Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, and Donald Judd were among the artists Fried condemns for this approach. Paradoxically, Fried’s critique of Literalist art provided the fodder for artists and theorists to embrace the very ideas he critiqued: the object was no longer the center (in terms of the traditional ideas of Modernism), which allowed the overarching concept of the work to become the locus of experience. Fried’s critique of Literalist Art was written for a sequestered, New York-centered art crowd, yet it would come to have massive ramifications in art theory for years to come.

Fried’s formalist critique can be read as a refutation of many of Roehr and Maenz’s ideas and works along the lines of the conservative, academic criticism of the above mentioned Eduard Beauchamp. However, artists and critics immediately began to refute Fried, among them the American artist Mel Bochner. Particularly prescient to the discussion on seriality, his essay “Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism” was published in the Summer 1967 issue of *Arts Magazine* nearly simultaneously to Fried’s essay in *ArtForum* and *Serielle Formationen* in Frankfurt. Bochner

⁴⁹⁵ Christa Noel Robbins describes this “perversion” in relation to Fried’s disparagement of the homosexuality of the theater. Using Fried’s quote “I keep toying with the idea, crazy as it sounds, of having a section in this sculpture-theater essay on how corrupt sensibility is par excellence faggot sensibility.” From his letter to then-editor Philip Leider, Robbins explicates Fried’s public artistic sensibilities as deeply connected to his personal language through a discursive, queer reading of his attack on Minimalism. “That Fried understood minimalism’s ‘perversions’ to arise out of its pandering address to individual viewers confirms recent claims that ‘queer’ interventions into modernist and neo-avant-garde formations are manifest not in iconographic content or biographical background but as formal disruptions in the expectations of aesthetic legibility and relationality.” Christa Noel Robbins, “The Sensibility of Michael Fried,” *Criticism* 60, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 429.

⁴⁹⁶ Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 127.

begins his essay by criticizing the critics, and one could identify certain preemptive or coinciding refutations to Fried's critique.⁴⁹⁷ As Bochner wrote: "Art objects are qualitatively different from natural life yet are coextensive with it."⁴⁹⁸ Bochner openly evokes the idea that the space of life is part of the art object's domain, and at the same time, the art object contains different structural orders within itself that create possibilities for the object to exist in their environments. The "intrusion factor" of an art object is simultaneously identified by its "heightened artificiality" and its "clearly visible and simply ordered structure."⁴⁹⁹ Therefore, works of art that profess these ideas cannot be examined through parameters of style, metaphor, or meaning but in "terms of its own material individuality."⁵⁰⁰

The parallels of Bochner's ideas to Roehr and Maenz's *Serielle Formationen* exhibition were eerily similar when they stated in their introduction: "[I]n an environment where the existence and quality of products necessary for life depend upon whether they are produced in large batches – in series – and the fact that artists with very different ways of thinking should suddenly and often quiet independently make use of serial formations is surely not something that can only be explained in aesthetic terms."⁵⁰¹ Bochner discusses artists like Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, and Dan

497 Fried's formalist position was already well known from his 1965 "Three American Painters" essay. As Bochner wrote: "Criticism has traditionally consisted of one of three approaches: 'impressionistic' criticism, which has concerned itself with the effects of the work of art on the observer—individual responses; 'historical' criticism, which has dealt with an a posteriori evolution of forms and techniques—what is between works; and 'metaphorical' criticism, which has contrived numerous analogies—most recently to scientism. What has been generally neglected is a concern with the object of art in terms of its own material individuality—the thing itself. Two criteria are important if such an attempt is to be made. First, the considerations should be concrete (deal with the facts of the thing itself). Second, they should be simplificatory (provide an intellectually economic structure for the group of facts obtained). The latter is necessary because description alone can never adequately locate things. In fact, it very often confers upon them an enigmatic position. Nonetheless it offers more interesting possibilities than the impressionistic, historic, or metaphoric approach." Mel Bochner, "Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism," in *Minimal Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1968), 93. First published in *Arts Magazine*, summer 1967.

498 Ibid.

499 Ibid.

500 Ibid.

501 Maenz and Roehr, "On the Exhibition," 121.

Flavin as “systematic thinkers,” who valued the logic of the whole system over any individual parts. For Bochner, Andre and Flavin display an awareness of their environments that take into account a “phenomenology of rooms [...]”. Consequently the room seemed dematerialized and a vacancy ensued that was as much a part of the work as the arrangement of the fixtures.”⁵⁰² The environment is necessarily a considerable factor in the overall system, while at the same time these artists are beyond style or material qualities, since in the logic of the whole serial system, the “form the work takes is unimportant (some of these artists have ceased to make ‘things’).”⁵⁰³ Bochner identifies these artists’ works within the procedures of seriality as analogous to solipsism in their premise of logic within a contained, self-referential system. However, these systems ultimately depend on the viewer’s acknowledgement of this solipsistic system, in relation to their lived experience.

While Bochner would go on to identify his theory of seriality more succinctly in the “Serial Attitude,” as I discuss below, the basic premise of his proposal was that seriality was a process or “succession of terms [...] based on a numerical or otherwise predetermined derivation.” Through this system, artists were able to include the environment and the observer within an autonomous system. While Bochner’s “Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism” essay did sync with Roehr and Maenz’s position at exactly the same time, the clarity of their ideas would also correlate a year later in 1968 with Jack Burnham and his “System Aesthetics” essay.

Burnham’s “System Aesthetics” privileges a perspective on artists and objects that exist within an ongoing complexity of social relationships and organization, a system also identified by Marcuse, as well as Roehr and Maenz, as a way to allow for a certain individuality to come forth.

⁵⁰² Bochner, “Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism,” 99.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 100.

As Burnham wrote, “[i]n the past, our technologically conceived artifacts structured living patterns. We are now in transition from an *object-oriented* to a *systems-oriented* culture. Here change emanates, not from *things* but from *the way things are done*.”⁵⁰⁴ Fashioned in this way, Burnham – like Bochner – was able to incorporate an analysis of artists whose art objects relied less on their construction or form or style and more on the experiences of them within a given idea or concept. Burnham identified the artists Hans Haacke, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, and Robert Rauschenberg among others as crucial examples of artists that were engaged in these methods; tellingly, these artists were attacked by Fried in “Art and Objecthood” and also exhibited in *Serielle Formationen*.

The role of the artist within Burnham’s system had fundamentally changed: “[i]n an advanced technological culture the most important artist best succeeds by liquidating his position as artist vis-à-vis society. [...] Instead the significant artist strives to reduce the technical and psychological distance between his artistic output and the productive means of society.”⁵⁰⁵ Although he does not mention the term cybernetics specifically, the combination of human, artistic endeavors with a technical system clearly alludes to a basis in cybernetics. Again, this is wholly reminiscent of Roehr and Maenz’s curatorial introduction to *Serielle Formationen* and recalls the works of many of the artists on view in the exhibition.

From the outset, Burnham expressed his views of art in Marxist-materialist terms, and particularly saw the transformation of the object in light of permanent organizational changes happening within economic structures. A framework of the art object as commodity was not a new

⁵⁰⁴ Jack Burnham, “System Aesthetics,” *Dissolve into Comprehension: Jack Burnham, Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*, ed. Melissa Ragain. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015), 116. First published in *ArtForum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968). Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 117.

criticism, but a defining aspect to Burnham's systems-oriented theory positioned created objects as transformational in their newly realized ability to function as utilitarian objects. Burnham made it clear that systems offered an alternative to solipsistic formalism, which was no longer capable of addressing art's current condition.

In a systems orientation, Burnham saw art functioning beyond simply presenting environments or happenings: "it deals in a revolutionary fashion with the larger problem of boundary concepts."⁵⁰⁶ For Fried, this amounted to the theatrical, the death knell for Modernist Art; for Burnham, this was the necessary step that "post-formalist" art in its current age needed to take. "Where the object almost always has a fixed shape and boundaries, the consistency of a system may be altered in time and space, its behavior determined by external conditions and its mechanisms of control."⁵⁰⁷ As a proto-conceptual idea, Burnham's systems orientation positions art objects in a relation among relations, against the limits of a formalist art object: "it would be impossible to regard a fragment of an art system as a work of art in itself."⁵⁰⁸

This theory was inherently progressive, and indeed revelatory: "[t]here is no end product that is simply visual, nor does such an [literal] aesthetic rely on a 'visual' syntax. It resists functioning as an applied aesthetic, but is revealed in the principles underlying the progressive reorganization of the natural environment."⁵⁰⁹ Burnham's identification that there does not need to be an "end product that is simply visual" followed on Sol Lewitt's 1967 essay "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," as I discuss below. *Serielle Formationen*, similarly, can be placed between these two yardsticks of post-formalism and dematerialization.

⁵⁰⁶ Burnham, "System Aesthetics," 118.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., 119.

Serielle Formationen did not garner immediate recognition outside of Germany, though as I pointed out previously, Lucy Lippard and Klaus Honnef both later acknowledged the exhibition as a formative moment in the development of Concept Art. Still, the emergence of a contentious discussion from artists, theorists, and critics around the serial form in the United States later in 1967 and 1968 would also provide a key example of the ideas that, potentially, could have been discussed in relation to Roehr's *Serielle Formationen*. These discussions also served to expand the dialog on Serial Art into the United States, albeit with a distinct American point of view and lack of acknowledgement of the tendencies or positions occurring in Europe. The conversation centered on two exhibitions: *Art in Series* (in 1967-68), curated by Elayne Varian and Mel Bochner at the Finch College Museum of Art in New York and John Coplans's *Serial Imagery* (in 1968) at the Pasadena Museum of Art in California.

The first American exhibition on Serial Art occurred when Mel Bochner partnered with Elayne Varian after seeing her "Art in Process" series of exhibitions that took place at the Finch College Museum of Art in New York beginning in 1965. While the series promoted emerging ideas as "pedagogical demonstrations" for the student population, they ended up becoming nuanced perspectives on burgeoning conceptual systems, due to Varian's decision to present "the extensive pre-planning and fabrication that much contemporary work, including minimal practice, entailed."⁵¹⁰ When *Art in Series* opened in 1967, Varian did not publish a catalog, like *Serielle Formationen*, but the Finch College Museum provided statements from the artists in audio form

⁵¹⁰ James S. Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 175. When Bochner reviewed the show, it spurred a dialogue between Varian and Bochner that resulted in Bochner's presentation of *Working Drawings* in 1966. As James Meyer pointed out, the collaboration between Varian and Bochner on the exhibition *Art in Series* spurred the most theoretical conceptual aspects of Bochner's ideas.

that the visitors could play as they walked the gallery.⁵¹¹ Bochner assisted Varian on the selection of works for the show, but his audio contribution was a straightforward description of the system of the work.⁵¹² His broader theoretical discussion was printed in *ArtForum* a month after the show opened in order to expand on the conceptual ideas of the artist himself.

Bochner's "Serial Attitude" essay opens with the statement: "[s]erial order is a method, not a style, [...] we are dealing with an attitude. The serial attitude is a concern with how order of a specific type is manifest."⁵¹³ Bochner offers an approach in favor of conceptualizing seriality consistent with Roehr's attempt to bring the serial into a shared system of different types, which can be seen as a rebuke of Beauchamp's indictment of *Serielle Formationen* that the "the method does not make the image." Bochner distinguishes the "work in series" – different versions of the same theme – from those working in a serial method or order, a methodology of the series under the precepts of three basic themes.⁵¹⁴ Bochner breaks down the artistic tendencies of artists working in painting and sculpture like Morris, LeWitt, and Warhol, as well as serial music and composition, into various categories of modular, sequential, or simultaneous ordering: recent serial

511 However, these statements were typed and stored in the Art in Series exhibition files at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, and once again available to the public and it is possible to reconstruct the audio <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/exhibition-records-contemporary-wing-finch-college-museum-art-8114/series-4/box-10-folder-27>

512 Most of the statements describe the process of creating the works in a dry straightforward manner, reflecting Bochner's writings on the framework and background for the exhibition. Bochner's own statement for the exhibition: "Sixteen Isomorphisms: series A through D negative was conceived of as a series of photographs of a photograph shot in pseudo-isometric perspective of an arrangement of cubic[sic] blocks on a seven square orthogonal grid which was then serially reprinted[sic] by means of reversals, inversions, and rotations of the quadrants." Mel Bochner, "Sixteen Isomorphisms: Series A Through D Negative," Finch College Museum of Art Archives at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Box 10, Folder 27: Artist Statements, circa 1967. Unpaginated.

513 Mel Bochner, "The Serial Attitude," *ArtForum*, no. 6, 1968. 28.

514 "The serial order can appear in three ways: works that operate by means of a numerical or systematically predetermined process (permutation, progression, rotation, reversal); works where order takes precedence over execution; or works that were systematically self-exhausting." Ibid. As Nicolas Maclean explained, Bochner "made the important distinction between his understanding of Serial Art (a process that must be systematically predetermined) and contrasting views of Serial Art (i.e. thematic variation, where an artwork is developed during the process of creation)." Nicolas Maclean, "Introduction," in *The Serial Attitude*, (New York: Eykyn Maclean, 2016) 5. Published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name at the Eykyn Maclean Gallery, New York, 3 November – 16 December 2016.

art's systemic techniques provide an anti-expressionist counterpoint.⁵¹⁵ Although he did not want to offer "either metaphor nor analogy," Bochner brought to bear external systems of seriality in the form of mathematics, language, and map-making in orders of relation.⁵¹⁶ It is notable that Jack Burnham's "System Aesthetics" was published in the *ArtForum* issue following Bochner's essay. Although Burnham did not mention Bochner in light of his theories, their essays hovered together around similar topics from similar angles.

John Coplans, then editor at *ArtForum*, expressly rejected Bochner's theoretical positioning in his 1968 exhibition *Serial Imagery*, and his exhibition catalog essay offered a pointed critique of Bochner's essay.⁵¹⁷ Rather, as Coplans wrote in his concluding paragraph, the emergence of Serial Imagery was a ritual celebration of American life, whose diversity in form "reveals a local color that identifies the ambience of its origin."⁵¹⁸ Serial Imagery reflected its contemporary environment due to a highly systematic and internal process of production and specialization, rooted in industrial, modern society. However, for Coplans, this had little bearing on the aesthetic quality of the works themselves: "[t]aken together, the approaches of the artists mentioned above in no small measure evoke the underlying control-systems central to an advanced, 'free enterprise,' technological society. *Esthetically, of course, the paintings are no better or worse for our recognition of this quality.*"⁵¹⁹ For Coplans, sequential order or methodologies of serial practices were an insufficient measure of progressive works, perhaps due to an unconscious hedging of his bets on Fried's argument. Rather, they simply follow a path that

⁵¹⁵ Meyer, *Minimalism*, 179.

⁵¹⁶ Bochner, "The Serial Attitude," 28.

⁵¹⁷ Maclean, "Introduction," 5.

⁵¹⁸ John Coplans, "Introduction," *Serial Imagery* (Pasadena: Pasadena Art Museum, 1969), 18. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Pasadena Art Museum, September 17 - October 27, 1968, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, November 17 - December 22, 1968, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, January 25 - February 23, 1969.

⁵¹⁹ Coplans, "Introduction," 18. My emphasis.

modern art works of aesthetic value have always tread, in the display of motifs that have direct reference to the reality of lived experience. And indeed, Coplans focused almost solely on American paintings of a serial form, rather than the multiple mediums investigated by Bochner.

Neither *Art in Series* nor *Serial Imagery* gave much credibility to European or international art, yet both signaled the ways in which the technological and social environment were indelible markers of art in the United States. Both shows also closely echoed the ideas found in Roehr and Maenz's *Serielle Formationen* from one year earlier, though it is yet undetermined if either Bochner or Coplans had any awareness at the time of Maenz and Roehr's activities. The systems-orientation as theorized by Burnham would also later support the project of *Serielle Formationen*, albeit already after Roehr's decision to quit making work (see below). Arguably, despite being unknown and unacknowledged, *Serielle Formationen* should be seen as a theoretical and methodological antecedent to these two opposing shows.

Returning to 1967, one can glean an idea of the radical shifts on the horizon from the University of Frankfurt's student newspaper *Diskus*. In the April/May 1967 issue – the same issue that was circulating when *Serielle Formationen* opened – the first of two parts of Herbert Marcuse's "Das Individuum in der Great Society" ("The Individual in the Great Society") was published. Marcuse wrote the essay in English first in 1964, and it was translated into German by D.H. Wittenberg and A. (Angela) Davis, who was studying with Marcuse in Frankfurt at this time. The second part of Marcuse's essay was included in the following June issue, which also published the exhibition review of *Serielle Formationen*.

Marcuse, despite staying in the United States when the Frankfurt School was re-established at the University of Frankfurt, still held sway in Germany, especially due to his theoretical influence on Frankfurt School thinkers like Adorno. Although the publication of Marcuse's essay

and the staging of the *Serielle Formationen* exhibition seems to have been coincidental, crucial ideas can be discussed between the two, and indeed recovered, as relational positions within a rapidly changing social context. Most significantly, *Serielle Formationen* and Marcuse's essay recognized the question of how an individual within the industrial system might respond to these overwhelming forces.

In his essay, Marcuse describes the situation in advanced capitalist societies, particularly the "Great Society" of the United States, which operate on unequal terms of affluence for some, poverty for others. Those members of the affluent society "live in a universe of permanent defense and aggression."⁵²⁰ Marcuse also echoed Adorno's formulations of the Culture Industry, where this aggression and defense strategy "also manifests itself in the violence released and made productive by science and technology, in the entertainment of terror and fun inflicted on captive audiences."⁵²¹ The first part of Marcuse's essay then discusses the ramifications of this aggression, not only on the individual within these societies, but more alarmingly, in the escalating, international Cold War tensions between capitalist America and communist countries such as the Soviet Union and China. However, Marcuse argues that the "enemy" of capitalism is not necessarily communism per se, but rather the "Domino Effect" rebellions have on the consciousness of individuals: "[i]t is the most advanced industrial society which feels most directly threatened by the rebellion, because it is here that the social necessity of repression and alienation, of servitude and heteronomy is most transparently unnecessary, and unproductive in terms of human progress."⁵²² Marcuse states that new individuals with different needs and aspirations can only emerge through a break away from old established societies.

520 Herbert Marcuse, "The Individual in the Great Society, Part One" *Alternatives Magazine*, 1965. 14.

521 Ibid., 16

522 Ibid.

The second part of Marcuse's essay appeared in June of 1967, the same issue that published the review of *Serielle Formationen*. A significant portion was devoted to the "creative" functions of the individual in advanced industrial societies. "We must stress at the outset that this quest for the creative individual in advanced industrial society directly involves the social organization of labor."⁵²³ Marcuse was skeptical as to the success of such an endeavor, but he nonetheless sketched out frameworks under which creativity might find realization in society. Significantly, these "embodiments of creativity" must be produced "in the material process of production (such as houses, parks, furniture, objets d'art), or the material process of production must provide the material basis and environment for the creation and reception of such goods."⁵²⁴ In art and literature, in any creative impulse, Marcuse postulated that the emergence of an autonomous, creative individual "cannot be envisaged as a gradual transformation of existing alienated into non-alienated labor. [...] Autonomy rather presupposes a basic change in the relations of the producers and consumers to the [technological] apparatus itself."⁵²⁵ Indeed, in a fundamental transformation of society, individuality would mean not only the total transformation of the individual themselves, but also become a new existential dimension based in play, experimentation, and imagination, outside programs and policies in currently existing societies.⁵²⁶ This too resonated with artists and ideas found in *Serielle Formationen*, as well as with the hopefulness of the systems-orientation soon to be discussed by Jack Burnham. As Melissa Ragain conveyed, "like [Herbert] Marcuse, Burnham was invested in art's potential to remake industrial society. However, Burnham insisted

⁵²³ Herbert Marcuse, "The Individual in the Great Society, Part Two" *Alternatives Magazine*, 1965. 31

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 35.

that the power of art and science was primarily revelatory, not activist.”⁵²⁷ With the publication of Marcuse’s essay in the pages of *Diskus*, student readers in Frankfurt could not have missed the parallels to West German society.

There is no doubt that at the time Roehr and Maenz, and similarly *Serielle Formationen*, embodied the conduits Marcuse set forward through a nuanced yet pointed approach. Not only were many of the artists – gruppe x, Höke, Lueg, Posenenske or Roehr himself – in *Serielle Formationen* working towards fundamentally changing the “relations of producers and consumers,” but the entire show was presented under a rubric of autonomy through its emphasis on the raising of consciousness – independently through the individual. As Maenz and Roehr put forth in their introduction: “art is a question of consciousness and contemporary art is a question of contemporary consciousness.”⁵²⁸ However, in the true spirit of democratic mindedness, the autonomy of the individual must come from self-awareness of the conditions themselves, not from a prescriptive curatorial imperative. A total systemic change of the apparatus was an optimistic ideal in West Germany.

Paul Maenz later reflected that *Serielle Formationen* could not have taken place in the student center of the University of Frankfurt even one year later, in 1968.⁵²⁹ As Maenz pointed out the “conditions in 1967 [...] were favorable for a discussion,”⁵³⁰ since, by early 1968, student

527 Melissa Ragain, “Introduction,” *Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*/Jack Burnham, ed. Melissa Ragain (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), xvii. Indeed, Burnham would later go on to write an essay on Marcuse’s “Art in the One-Dimensional Society” in 1968.

528 Maenz and Roehr, “On the Exhibition,” 122.

529 “Without going into this any further, it would have been virtually impossible to hold such an exhibition at this Frankfurter Universität venue— a year later the political climate, the anti-bourgeoisie polemicism and the impatience with which the allegedly ‘politically ignorant’ open territory of art was met had become too intractable...” Paul Maenz, “Serielle Formationen” and “Dies alles Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören,” in *Serielle Formationen. 1967/2017: Re-Staging of the First German Exhibition of International Tendencies in Minimalism*, ed. Renate Wiehager. (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 2017), 126. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, Daimler Art Contemporary, Berlin.

530 Filla, “bilderSTURM,” 64.

radicalism manifested in outright hostility and turned against ideas and locations that proclaimed democratic, progressive positions. Benno Ohnesorg's murder at the hands of a police officer on 2 June 1967, gave rise to a movement that advanced the militant aspects of radical resistance.⁵³¹ As Filla also indicated: "[a]rt, but also the media and institutions that mediate it, were deemed affirmative. According to Siegfried Bartels, [...] for many students the works presented in *Serielle Formationen* were nothing more than the confirmation of the ruling ideology."⁵³² Even Marcuse and Adorno's theoretical positions would be eventually rejected by the students in the revolts of 1968.

In the last exhibition of the Studiogalerie in May through July 1968 of Eberhard Fiebig and Hajo Hangen, the student visitors verbally attacked the Systematic Art on view.⁵³³ The Studiogalerie closed shortly afterwards, as the student revolutions of 1968 escalated across Europe. Particular to German universities, the introduction of reforms on graduation time, number of courses offered, and a limit on the number of students who could enter the university system spurred the youth revolt. The Studentenhaus itself became a locus for sit-ins, discussions, and ultimately outright confrontation with authorities. That the generation of 1968 rejected any political or social position that was not radical (read: militant) enough was seen as a total rejection of the status quo that overshadowed more even-tempered ideas.

Serielle Formationen was revolutionary in offering the audience the opportunity to encounter the works through a conceptual lens that gave the audience a spectrum view of art and

531 For further reading on the militancy of the student movements in Germany, see *Studentenbewegung 1967–1969. Protokolle und Materialien*, eds. Frank Wolff and Eberhard Windaus, (Frankfurt am Main: Roter Stern, 1977); Karrin Hanshew, *Terror and Democracy in West Germany*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially chapter 1 "Democracy Made Militant;" Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003).

532 Ibid.

533 Ibid.

reality. Although the works were visually stimulating through a shared serial product, the curatorial framework considered the complete environment in networks of relation and networks of ideas. Arguably this was inherent in Roehr's production of the Montages in the previous years, however, his turn to engagement of publics held potential for different modes of encounters between art and people that acknowledge the systems around art. Further, Roehr – in cooperation with other artists and thinkers– reveals a question to the audience: What does art mean for the current age? It was as much a question for himself as his audience, and his project of seriality provided the springboard for other concepts of engagement, which would come to fruition only six months later with the event “Alles dies Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören.”

5.4 “19:45-21:55”: Alles dies Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören: Peter Roehr and Paul Maenz's Event at Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt

In the summer of 1967, after the closure of *Serielle Formationen* and as Roehr's writing was becoming decidedly more conceptual in nature, he and Maenz began planning their second and final event together. Discussions began in late June or early July and the show was settled for realization at Galerie Dorothea Loehr in early September of 1967.⁵³⁴ Due to Roehr's ongoing and increasingly severe illness, Maenz took on an increased role as primary organizer. However, as archival documents reveal, Roehr played an equal role in the conception of the “Herzchen”

⁵³⁴ Gallery Dorothea Loehr was relocated in 1966 from the inner city of Frankfurt to a former cow shed (Kuhhof) in the Niederursel neighborhood on the outskirts of the city.

exhibition behind the scenes.⁵³⁵ The event carried on the idea that art objects created for the market are an inherently bourgeois enterprise, and that art ideas are only effective in their dispersal through multiple and diverse mediums.⁵³⁶ Roehr had already formulated this position in 1966 in preparation for his Collective exhibition for Adam Seide⁵³⁷ by following Maenz and Sharp's orientation in their Kineticism Press brochure, and it undoubtedly informed their collective efforts moving forward. As Maenz later reflected, the artists "were asked to create artworks with an impermanent character, with the stated aim of creating an evening's worth of artworks that cannot be owned or traded and that would disintegrate even as they become complete."⁵³⁸ As it will become clear, the impermanent artworks were one step in a larger systemic process of information distribution.

As it has been made clear from the extensive notes and materials presented in chapter 3, Roehr advocated more direct engagement between artists and the audience, and this concept was reflected in Maenz's undated letter of invitation sent to Barry Flanagan, John Johnson, and Richard Long. In English, Maenz addressed the artists: "[e]very artist may do what he wants but it is important that we won't show an exhibition of the usual kind. [...] Everyone should contribute an environment or an installation of some kind or an 'action.' And actually we're not really thinking in terms of a happening. You see how flexibel [sic] the concept is and how open the possibilities are."⁵³⁹ Although he had typed out the title "Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören" ("All

535 Due to the multiple and differing titles for this event, the author refers to it as "Herzchen" (Sweetheart) in shorthand from this point forward. This is also supported by the folder in Paul Maenz's archive, which was also labeled in shortened form as "Herzchen".

536 Roehr, untitled note, 31 August 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.81. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

537 See Chapter 3 in this regard.

538 Paul Maenz, "19.45-21.55: September 9th, 1967. Frankfurt Germany," in *Field Pulsations*, ed. Wiehager (Cologne: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2018), 252.

539 Paul Maenz in letter to Barry Flanagan, John Johnson, and Richard Long. Undated. Original in English. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin. 2.

this will one day be yours, Sweetheart”) in his letter, he also included a handwritten alternative title of “That’s the way the cookie crumbles.” This title remained in a press release, where Maenz also clarified the “problem”:

The art trade and art market force certain behaviors and a certain type of production from artists. In many countries, the dissatisfaction of artists to submit to these conditions has increased, as they do not seem to be suitable for an actual progressive activity. Now some young artists have come together here in Europe to document their new views in a joint action.⁵⁴⁰

For *Serielle Formation*, the intention was to lead the audience to connecting differing phenomena of the serial form in new relations, while the “Herzchen” event was an attempt at “trying to offensively subvert the commodification of art, and, to some extent, the intellectual earnestness and the reverently silent art audiences that prevailed at the time.”⁵⁴¹ Yet it differed slightly from the press release of Galerie Loehr, which simply mentioned that the artists would “simultaneously, but independently of one another, stage transient situations for an evening. The thing promises to be quite progressive.”⁵⁴² In the same preparatory press release document, Maenz proceeded to give short biographies on artists Jan Dibbets, Barry Flanagan, Bernhard Höke, Richard Long, Konrad Lueg, Charlotte Posenenske, and Peter Roehr and explain the positions and the potential works they might offer. Gilbert & George were invited but could not take part.⁵⁴³ Tjebbe van Tijen, a Dutch artist, was also listed in the press release but ended up not participating in the event. Instead,

540 “Kunsthandel und Kunstmarkt erzwingen von Künstlern gewisse Verhaltensweisen und eine ganz bestimmte Art der Produktion. In vielen Ländern ist in zunehmendem Maß die Unzufriedenheit der Künstler gestiegen, sich diesen Verhältnissen zu fügen, da sie nicht für eine tatsächliche progressive Tätigkeit geeignet scheinen. Nun haben sich hier in Europa einige junge Künstler zusammengetan, um in einer gemeinsamen Aktion ihre neuen Ansichten zu dokumentieren.” Paul Maenz, “Dies Alles, Herzchen, Wird Einmal Dir Gehören (“That’s the Way the Cookie Crumbles”) undated, 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, unpaginated.

541 Maenz, “19.45-21.55,” 252.

542 “Sie werden simultan, aber unabhängig voneinander, einen abend lang vergängliche Situationen inszenieren. Die Sache verspricht recht progressive zu werden” Paul Maenz, “Invitation,” for Galerie Dorothea Loehr. Undated. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin. Unpaginated.

543 Maenz, “19.45-21.55,” 252.

Jan Dibbets suggested, or perhaps arranged, to have the British artist John Johnson present a work in the exhibition instead. Dibbets knew Flanagan, Long, and Johnson from St. Martins, but it is unknown whether Roehr met the British participants before “Herzchen.”⁵⁴⁴

The progressive element of “Herzchen”, as Roehr and Maenz conceived of it, rested as much on the art displayed as on how it would be distributed in the published catalog, film, and other media as a further result. The filmmaker Gerry Schum was gaining recognition at the time with his radical documentary films of the latest art scene through his productions for German television from 1967 to 1969. Prior to the “Herzchen” event, Schum had recorded footage from the San Marino Biennale in 1967. In a letter to Maenz from August 3, 1967 Bernhard Höke suggested that Schum’s video documentation would be imperative.⁵⁴⁵

The radical nature of Roehr’s vision was laid out in the August 31, 1967 document:

The desire to deal with art is a decadent snobbery when you have recognized the ineffectiveness of any art. What would remain would be to choose other, more effective media to deal with aesthetic problems. The change in aesthetic problems is not of interest, but only in terms of their usability. This raises the question of why the usability should not be the basic problem.⁵⁴⁶

It is clear that Roehr was wrestling with the idea of “progressive” art in light of the time, when art for art’s sake was devoid of a critical emphasis clearly needed to be remedied in light of the times. This idea followed on the heels of another note Roehr had written on August 21st 1967, where he questioned the role of the Avant-Garde: “The thesis that the artistic avant-garde changes the

544 As mentioned above, Roehr traveled to London at least twice in the years prior to “Herzchen,” one of which was a visit to Dibbets.

545 Bernhard Höke, letter to Paul Maenz. 3 August 1967. Folder “Herzchen,” Archive Paul Manetz, Berlin. Unpaginated.

546 “Der Wunsch sich mit Kunst zu beschäftigen ist ein dekadenter Snobismus, wenn man die Wirkungslosigkeit jeglicher Kunst erkannt hat. Was bliebe, wäre die Wahl anderer, wirkungsvollerer Medien zur Bewältigung ästhetischer Probleme. Die Veränderung ästhetischer Probleme interessiert nicht an sich, sondern nur im Hinblick auf ihre Verwertbarkeit. Hierbei stellt sich die Frage, warum man nicht die Verwertbarkeit Grundproblem sein sollte.” Roehr, untitled note, 31 August 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.81. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

environment seems to me to be a sentimental misconception by art people. The avant-garde is (in Europe more than in the USA) completely ineffective on the great mass.”⁵⁴⁷ Roehr’s question of the “usability” of the object predated Jack Burnham’s utilitarian function of the system, but both indicated the need for systems of art to function in other ways than previous iterations. Perhaps what Roehr meant by usability related to his turn to an outside the box view that pushed art beyond simple didactic purposes; art was needed to progress society – not artists– forward.

While Maenz executed the logistics, Roehr was involved in formulating the concept of the event as well as his own work. Roehr’s point by point break down of his contribution for “Herzchen” incorporated both his own work and the event as a whole and over time, as he laid out in a note dated from September 4th found in his archive: “[t]he entire action that I organize consists of six parts that extend over a longer period of time. The relationships will only be recognizable by the audience after the implementation of point 6. Due to the behavior characterized by the previous art contemplation, only point 3 will be recognized and recognized as an action.”⁵⁴⁸ He began with the first point, which informed artists of the project. The audience would not be informed as to what would occur, because “it would change the behavior of the audience.”⁵⁴⁹ During the event (point 2), an announcement would introduce Roehr’s Film Montage *Ringer*, which would then play for its duration (point 3).

Point 4 explicitly laid out the importance that the role of television documentation would play: “It will have a significant impact on the impression of the audience this evening. The

547 “Die These, daß die künstlerische Avantgarde die Umwelt verändert, scheint mir ein sentimentaler Irrglaube der Kunstleute zu sein. Die Avantgarde ist (in Europa mehr als In den USA) völlig wirkungslos auf die große Masse.” Peter Roehr, “Der Begriff der Avant-Garde und Ihre Funktion,” 21 August 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.80. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

548 Peter Roehr. “Projekt: DIES ALLES, HERZCHEN, WIRD EINMAL DIR GEHÖREN.” 4 September, 1967. Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.82. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

549 Ibid.

audience can be significantly broadened through the use of this medium; the action is being pushed apart temporally.”⁵⁵⁰ The documentation aspect of the event would extend over time, both in film and in print. Roehr proposed that Kineticism Press in New York would summarize all six points of the group’s presentation. “It is only through this information that the action, insofar as it has already taken place, can be grasped by the public.”⁵⁵¹

Roehr summarized the document and the event: “The direct effect of all five points becomes the sixth point through the connection in which it relates to the action.”⁵⁵² It seems that Roehr took cues from Maenz and Willoughby Sharp’s concept for Kinectism Press that “Multiples provide the greatest diffusion of art objects” and “Works of art and artistic ideas are identical. They must be communicated though all available media.”⁵⁵³ In film, the possibility of seeing a record of the event would occur less frequently, due to air time, but show the action in its enactment; in the planned printed catalog and accompanying pictures, the event’s idea would last longer, but in a more fragmented form. Although the works themselves would cease to ‘exist’ outside of the planned event, the concept would be disseminated in other forms of media. The idea of multiple forms of the public and viewing put into a system was seen earlier in Roehr’s proposed projects of the *Sketches*, as well as the *Freiburger Projekt*, conceived of already prior to *Serielle Formationen*.⁵⁵⁴

Two small announcements were printed in the local *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (FR) in the days before the event, advertising the “vergängliche

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ See discussion of Kineticism Press in chapter 3.

⁵⁵⁴ As discussed in chapter 3, Roehr conceived of the *Freiburger Projekt* in April of 1967. Its aim was to install temporary Montages throughout a city (Freiburg, but anywhere with a local press), and then remove them once the press reported them. This would mean that the Montages only existed in the impressions of the viewers (who did not know what they were looking at) and the printed announcement.

Situationen” (“Transitory/Ephemeral Situations”) that would take place at Galerie Dorothea Loehr. Interestingly, there were slight differences in the write-ups for the actions. While both announcements stated the time and location, the *FAZ* simply used the title “Transitory/Ephemeral Situations,” stated that seven men and one woman would present the actions simultaneously but independently of each other, and that the participants came from England, Holland, and Germany.⁵⁵⁵ The *FR* titled their announcement “Progressives bei Frau Loehr,” and named all the artists as well as their nationalities.⁵⁵⁶ The announcement quoted the invitation as well: “[t]he event promises to be quite progressive.”⁵⁵⁷

In addition to the accounts given by Maenz to various interviewers, as well as Schum’s film, an unknown person chronicled the events of “Herzchen.”⁵⁵⁸ As a written record, the behind the scenes account gives detailed and objective observations of the two day set of activities for the “Herzchen” event.⁵⁵⁹ Perhaps this additional record of the event was also meant to document the proceedings for the public, or, perhaps it was only meant for Maenz and Roehr. Regardless, it provides a further, valuable record of works that were intended to be impermanent, but not lost to history.

On the basis of this document, as well as Schum’s film and the post-production catalog, it is possible to reconstruct a fuller description of the events leading up to and including the “Herzchen” event. The artists were invited to convene in the gallery space on the morning of

555 “Vergängliche Situationen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5 September, 1967. “Herzchen” folder. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

556 “Progressives bei Frau Loehr,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 6 September, 1967. “Herzchen” folder. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

557 Ibid.

558 The unknown chronicler operated much like a court stenographer, recording the events in real time over the course of the two-day installation and event process.

559 This document was found in the Herzchen exhibition folder in the Summer of 2017. It has not been referenced in any previous scholarship.

September 8th to begin preparing for the event the following evening. According to the chronicler, the day was a little late starting due to Roehr sleeping in, but he met at mid-morning with the unknown author and “Karin” drove them to the gallery.⁵⁶⁰ Thomas Bayrle dropped something off at the gallery. The photographer Gunther Guben began to photograph the actions taking place, which later formed the publication dossier for Herzchen.

At 12:25 Jan Dibbets began constructing the foundation of his “Wasserbeckens,” a dug-out rectangle of the floor of the cowshed turned gallery space (Figure 83). A garden hose pumped a slow stream of water into the indentation, which created a constant rippling effect on the otherwise still water. This work mirrored Dibbets’s work in the central courtyard. The plan was to cover the entire courtyard in sawdust but leave a negative circle in the middle, where the most foot traffic and activity would occur (Figure 84).

There was a search for sod strips, needed for both for Dibbets and one of John Johnson’s works, which Dibbets was in charge of installing according to Johnson’s written instructions. Two alternative works were proposed: the first required “6 or 7 (3x1 ft) turfs” placed in a line, along the side of which a white line was to be painted with a machine “that marks out football pitches or athletic running tracks.”⁵⁶¹ But by 14:30, a decision was made to execute the second of Johnson’s options: a small elevation that consisted of gradations of small stones, coarse sand, and fine sand piled in layers on a corner (Figure 85).⁵⁶² The unknown chronicler of events noted that “The

560 “Wann es losginge. – Sie hätten eben anrufen wollen. – ‘Die Poesenenske’ bringt ‘was’ zu Thomas Bayrle; danach kommen sie zu mir, ca.10 uhr.” Unknown Author. “Untitled Chronology for the Herzchen Event,” dated “Friday 8 IX ’67,” folder “Herzchen,” Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin, 1.

561 John Johnson, “Instructions,” undated. Paul Maenz Archive, Berlin. Unpaginated.

562 Suzaan Boettger, “The Lost Contingent: Paul Maenz’s Prophetic 1967 Event and the Ambiguities of Historical Priority,” *Art Journal*, Spring (2003): 41. As Boettger pointed out, the “corner pile is another motif with a famous precedent...” citing Joseph Beuys Fat Corner (1963) and Barry Flanagan’s simultaneous installation of a corner pile at the Paris Biennial.

‘walker’ [Begeher] of the room would be his own mole,” indicating an earth-work associated quality of the works in progress.⁵⁶³

The day progressed and the unknown chronicler detailed the pre-event actions and settings. Lunch was consumed, flowers were purchased, and a record player was obtained. After lunch Roehr and Karin drove to Frankfurt to collect more supplies. Curious visitors stopped by to see the action: “The blacksmith, curious, appears and polices our progress. He doesn't see any.”⁵⁶⁴ At the end of the day, Roehr returned from Frankfurt to paint his ‘Ringer’ sign, while gallery owner Dorothea Loehr provided tea for the participants. Maenz and Guben set up German, British, and Dutch flags to represent artists’ nationalities. Perhaps this was to emphasize the diversity of the artists, or possibly to display the different countries in participation and cooperation, or simply to draw attention to the show. Both were emphasized in *Serielle Formationen* and conceivably these ideas were also at play in Roehr and Maenz’s thinking for the “Herzchen” event.

On Saturday, the unknown chronicler recorded that no one of importance died so “All attention belongs to the actors.”⁵⁶⁵ Gerry Schum’s film team began to document the final preparations. Later in the afternoon, Konrad Lueg, (Samson Dietrich, known as S.D.) Sauerbier,⁵⁶⁶ and (an unknown) Fischer arrived at the space, presumably with the materials for Lueg’s “Sausage Constructions” (*Wurstartiges Gebilde*) (Figure 86).⁵⁶⁷ Bernhard Höke appeared shortly afterwards with large blocks of ice in a truck. Charlotte Posenenske acquired the sod needed for John

563 “Der ‘Begeher’ des Raumes wäre somit sein eigener Maulwurf.” Unknown Author, “Untitled Chronology for the Herzchen Event,” 2.

564 “Der Schmied, neugierig, erscheint und kontrolliert unsere Fortschritte. -Er sieht keine.” Ibid.

565 “Alle Aufmerksamkeit gehört den Akteuren.” Ibid., 3.

566 From 1965–1967, S.D. Sauerbier was responsible for the artistic project REVUE RENDEZ-VOUS, a collaboration of correspondences between Sauerbier and artists like Al Hansen, Bazon Brock, Dick Higgins, George Brecht, and Nam June Paik among others. He seems to have simply tagged along to help Lueg set up the works.

567 One can connect the concept of the balloon to Lueg’s earlier participation in the Capitalist Realist group, examined in chapter 2.

Johnson's work, so both of his proposed pieces were constructed in the same gallery space. Maenz installed Richard Long's work of sticks from Bristol along an interior wall. Jan Dibbets, with help from Roehr, Maenz, Katja Tiel, and several others, spread the sawdust delivered (also with the aid of Charlotte Posenenske) that day into a large circle in the middle of the courtyard (Figure 87). The narrator of Schum's film characterized this process as a change into an "Art Circus Arena."⁵⁶⁸ Konrad Lueg, Sauerbier, and Fischer enjoyed an afternoon schnapps (*Doornkaat*) while the rest of the installation works wrapped up with final details. As is clear from the chronicler's record, each artist chipped in and helped one another with the installation of every work before the show.

However, Barry Flanagan's piece presented an altogether different intervention. As it was with Long and Johnson, Flanagan was unable to attend and in lieu sent instructions for a participatory event. Dated August 22, 1967, these handwritten instructions "are essentially simple—they don't in fact call for action in the sense of participating in a structured event; but call for concentration or observation, rather than exhibition and demonstration."⁵⁶⁹ As seen in (Figure 88), the numbered actions required the lights to be turned off and on for ten second intervals, participants to stand in a queue, a ring, turn water on and off, pour salt from a container, scrape the crumbs from a slice of bread, and "appreciate and eat it all." Boettger notes that "With the loosely choreographed quality of a Happening, Flanagan's work promoted the direct experience of various loose or unfixed materials and textures as well as socially shared dining."⁵⁷⁰ However, this significantly differed from the information on Flanagan's work provided for the artists in the lead up to the event. Flanagan's original work was promoted as a sculptural work that promoted

⁵⁶⁸ Narrator, "Happening Abend," directed by Gerry Schum, documentary film for Hessischer Rundfunk. 1:30.

⁵⁶⁹ Barry Flanagan, "List of Instructions (or Designs) by Barry Flanagan," 19:45-21:55, catalog. Contribution page 3. Unpaginated. Original dated August 22, 1967, in Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

⁵⁷⁰ Boettger, "The Lost Contingent," 42.

haptic, participatory effects: the Fluxus like works were complicated, but not without some advantages.

Flanagan's structured actions could not exactly be followed in the frenzied activities of the evening, and the chronicler does not note attempts made to execute the actions in the moment. Maenz wrote in his letter to Flanagan, "[s]ince the whole idea was not to present anything similar to happenings or Fluxus, I was a little surprised when we received your contribution [...]" Unfortunately, the person who was asked for the realization was not able to work it out in a sensible and convincing way. Therefore, in the last minute, we thought it would be better (last not least for yourself) to cancel this part completely."⁵⁷¹ Flanagan's handwritten instructions were printed exactly in the later catalog as he sent them, showing Maenz and Roehr's intention to still execute the work in the form of a document – if not documentation – despite its failure to appear at the event itself. Significantly, Flanagan's intention matched the theme of the evening: "The agents or means of any 'art form' do not progress or develop in the first instant – it's more the case the awareness develops. Shapes, scales, theses, are constant or arbitrary; any beautiful or worthwhile manifestation is useless without the faculties sharpened to perceive whatever it may hold."⁵⁷² While this was significant to the in-the-moment experience of the event, it seems possible that Flanagan's importance came through as a theoretical underpinning for the whole event itself.

At promptly 19:45 on the evening of September 9th, the gallery space opened. As Schum's camera rolled and recorded the action, visitors received a flower instead of a ticket upon entry from a doorman who was seated in a car parked in the driveway of the gallery. The Beatles recently

⁵⁷¹ Maenz, letter to Barry Flanagan. 20 September, 1967. Folder "Herzchen", Paul Maenz Archive, Berlin. Unpaginated.

⁵⁷² Barry Flanagan, "List of Instructions (or Designs) by Barry Flanagan," Folder "Herzchen", Paul Maenz Archive, Berlin. unpaginated.

released album *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* blasted through four loudspeakers from the record player. Entering the gallery courtyard, the attendees immediately stepped into Dibbets's negative sawdust circle arena. Lueg began to inflate his "Würsts" (sausage-like transparent tubes) and "American weather balloons"⁵⁷³ with a vacuum cleaner set in reverse, and the objects then bounced amongst the crowd in the open air (Figure 89). People parted as Posenenske and her assistants, each clad in a clean white Service-Men Uniform,⁵⁷⁴ enacted her program of arranged elements of cardboard panels and boxes (Figure 90). Höke had set two large blocks of ice near torches in the courtyard, which caused them to slowly melt over the course of the evening (Figure 91). In the smaller spaces of the gallery, the works of Dibbets, Long, and Johnson offered a reprieve from the organized chaos of the courtyard (Figure 92). The site-specific works in the former animal stalls and the performance of ephemeral, repeated works in the courtyard differed in ideas of time and space.

Indeed, Schum's film characterized it as "something between a circus and a festival."⁵⁷⁵ The bright contrasting lights, loud music, and clamoring audience members were highlighted by the film's experimental techniques: sharp angles, long pauses, and emphasis on the audience participants as much as the works themselves. However, amidst the cacophony, "[f]ew perceived the things in the gallery as a synchronous spatial structure: sticks [Long], the basin [Dibbets], the pile of stones, the grass strip [Johnson]. These are not just objects. Perhaps it helps one to overcome communication difficulties by talking about projections and referring to projects."⁵⁷⁶ All the works

⁵⁷³ Narrator, "Happening Abend," 2:01.

⁵⁷⁴ Unknown Author, "Untitled Chronology," 4.

⁵⁷⁵ Narrator, "Happening Abend," 2:20.

⁵⁷⁶ "Von den wenigsten als synchrones Raumgebilde wahrgenommen: die Dinge in der Galerie: Reisigstäbchen [Long], das Bassin [Dibbets], der Steinhaufen, der Grasstreifen [Johnson]. Das alles sind nicht nur Objekte. – Vielleicht hilft man über kommunikationsschwierigkeiten weg, indem man von Projektionen spricht und Projekte meint." Unknown Author, "Untitled Chronology," 5.

could be said to have a conceptual premise; but the quiet contemplative works, although operating somewhat in the background, required a more cerebral mental projection of the viewer in order to see the connections beyond the walls of the stall. It is not a surprise then that Richard Long and Jan Dibbets in particular would later use natural objects, processes, and associations to the earth in the “Land Art” conceptual projects of the 1970s. Schum was particularly struck by these proto “Land Art” works, and in turn would be a particularly critical figure in disseminating the work of Dibbets and Long.⁵⁷⁷

At 20:15 Roehr’s Film Montage *RINGER* began playing (see chapter 3). The Film Montage was cast on one side of the building (Figure 93), and the courtyard activities stopped to allow the audience to view the massive projection. The unknown chronicler revealed: “[s]omeone says: all naked men. Yes, if they were women (but he said women) ... This (K.S.) seems to fail to recognize: men are up and coming. (Despite all opposition.) – Body, size, repetition. Finally, apparent rotation.”⁵⁷⁸ There are no other responses recorded by the chronicler, and while it is too much to suggest that Roehr intended his work to be seen as a queer representation, K.S.’s rejoinder serves as an example of the traditional (read: heterosexual) bewilderment of the time to “aberrant” behavior (see chapter 3).

⁵⁷⁷ Christiane Fricke, “*Dies Alles Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören.*” *Die Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum 1968-1979 und die Produktionen der videogalerie schum 1970-1973.* (Cologne: Peter Lang Verlag, 1994), 73. Fricke pointed out Schum’s experience of the event introduced him to the “land art appearance occurred with the unsalable ‘television exhibition event’... [Dies Alles Herzchen] opened Schum’s eyes to artistic phenomena.” (“unververkäuflichen ‘Fernsehausstellungs-Ereignis’ Land Art Erscheinung trat... [Dies alles Herzchen] hat Schum die Augen für künstlerische Phänomene geöffnet...”) As Klaus Honnef also noted, Schum would later invite Dibbets, Flanagan, and Long to create projects for his “Land Art” film exposé: “Was sie bewerkstelligen, hätte ‘ohne Fernsehen überhaupt nicht konzipiert werden können.’ (Jan Leering).” Klaus Honnef, *Concept Art* (Cologne: Phaidon Verlag, 1971), 25.

⁵⁷⁸ “Jemand sagt: alles nackte Männer. Ja, wenn das Frauen (er sagte aber Weiber) wären... Dieser (K.S.) scheint zu verkennen: Männer sind im Kommen. (Allen Widerständen zum Trotz.) – Leiber, Masse, Wiederholung. Schließlich scheinbare Rotation.” Unknown Author. “Untitled Chronology,” 5.

The activity started again, and Lueg's Wurst Balloons ran into trouble: "Holes appear in the blower ... The earth and the audience have them again – 'Let it rise', 'Let it stand', 'Let it hang' and 'Let it fall!' – Sex. Some may find the action bad, terrible, banal. – Constellations of horrors, friends(!) And lack of understanding is likely to coincide."⁵⁷⁹ After the rotating, sweaty, male bodies of Roehr's "Ringer" projection, the sexual overtones of the phallic Wurst (sausage) balloons was undeniable in the synchronized, awkward movements of another, phallic body. The presumably shouted commands – a private demand reserved for the bedroom transformed into the public sphere of multiple participants – came off with scandalously comedic effect. The chaos of the evening was generally celebrated, although one can presume the unknown K.S. was not amused.

The curious, phrase "KEINER DENKT AN STANLEY BROWN" was repeated three times in upper case letters throughout the Unknown Chronicler's narration of the night's events. As the documentation recorded the climax of activities, it blared with particular emphasis: "KEINERDENKTANSTANLEYBROWN! ERSTEHTAUCHNICHTAUFDENPROGRAM."⁵⁸⁰ Perhaps this was due to a misprinted list given to the photographer Günther Gruben, which accidentally listed Brouwn among the participating artists⁵⁸¹. Or, it might be possible that the chronicler clarified – as a response– the audience members' questions of Brouwn's inclusion in "Herzchen" due to some resonating themes between the two ephemeral events, as discussed earlier in chapter 3.⁵⁸²

579 "Am Gebläse entstehen Löcher... Die Erde und das Publikum haben sie wieder.- 'Steigen lassen!', 'Stehen lassen!', 'Hängen lassen!' und 'Fallen lassen!'- Sex. Einige mögen die Aktion schlecht finden, schrecklich, banal. – Konstellationen von Schrecken, Freunde(!) und Verständnislosigkeit dürften sich decken." Ibid.

580 Ibid.

581 A document from Gunther Guben, a copy of which is held at the Archive Peter Roehr, listed all the names of the participating artists, plus Stanley Brouwn's name.

582 As discussed in chapter 3, Brouwn's participatory works had been included in both Dorothea Loehr's Bloomsday '64 event. Galerie Patio in nearby Neu-Isenberg had also presented a work by Brouwn in 1964.

At some point in the evening, Höke had set up a pool of water on the small roof of one of the gallery walls, though it is unclear if this was the water runoff from his melting ice blocks or if it came from some other source. The rubber container burst, and a deluge of green water spilled over the side of wall. As Hans-Peter Reise noted, “unfortunately (!), no one was underneath” the unprogrammed waterfall, as there were some people who would have been enthusiastic to raise the mood.⁵⁸³ Later, Höke scaled another wall to an apparent chimney structure, in order to produce a smoke-stack sculpture. When it failed to have the desired effect, he set off small self-made smoke bombs (Figure 94). The courtyard filled with smoke and confusion and coughing. “A murder affair! A killjoy thinks of times of war. – No game without seriousness. Seemingly. That nobody can play undisturbed.”⁵⁸⁴ The neighbors called the police, and an ambulance also accompanied them. Although some people found the chaos humorous (“Franz Mon laughed”⁵⁸⁵), most people began to leave the event, and Maenz decided to end the event at 21:55. When curious revelers including the reporter Hans-Peter Riese, asked Maenz what the whole affair amounted to, he answered cryptically: “Don’t ask.”⁵⁸⁶ The artists congratulated each other respectfully and left the gallery for the evening.

“Herzchen” was the last artistic event Roehr and Maenz organized together, and it represented the closing transformation of Roehr’s serial program into a conceptual, systems orientation. Although seriality as seen in *Serielle Formationen* was not as apparent as an underlying structure in the “Herzchen” event, Roehr stayed true to his program with the presentation of his *Ringer* Film Montage and Charlotte Posenenske’s systematic arrangements of

583 Hans-Peter Riese, “Unter Wasser,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Tuesday 12 September 1967, Nr. 211.

584 “Eine Mordssache! Miesmacher denken an Kriegszeiten. – Kein Spiel ohne Ernst. Scheinbar. Das niemand ungestört spielen kann.” Ibid.

585 Ibid., 6.

586 Riese, “Unter Wasser.”

her *Series DW* also represented seriality in the context of the event. With the transitory nature of the “Herzchen” event, Roehr and Maenz’s conceptual impetus had shifted to a concern for a larger system of public engagement.

“Herzchen” thus reflected the numerous ideas circulating in Roehr’s thinking up to that point. Already in 1965, Barbara Rose discussed artists of a certain minimal or reductive sensibility who exercised the idea that “the simple denial of content can in itself constitute the content of such a work” (see chapter 3).⁵⁸⁷ Marshall McLuhan similarly identified an attitude in certain types of art in 1964: “I am curious to know what would happen if art were suddenly seen for what it is, namely, exact information of how to rearrange one’s psyche in order to anticipate the next blow from our own extended faculties.”⁵⁸⁸ Maenz and Willoughby Sharp affirmed a central tenet of their “Statement on Kinetic Art Press” in 1966: “Works of art and artistic ideas are identical. They must be communicated through all available media.”⁵⁸⁹ The information, idea, or concept behind the work of art, more than its form or content or style, was equally the concern of Roehr, and his partner Maenz, as it was for Mel Bochner in the summer of 1967.

The mid-1960s has often been highlighted as the moment the conceptual turn occurred in art across the United States and Europe. A final connection that can be drawn in relation to Roehr’s thinking is Sol LeWitt’s “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” which was published in the Summer 1967 issue of *ArtForum*, and concurrent to his inclusion in *Serielle Formationen* via a work in Maenz’s personal collection. LeWitt’s essay explicated the foundations for conceptual artistic practice: “In conceptual art the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an

⁵⁸⁷ Barbara Rose, “ABC Art,” in *Minimal Art* ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1968), 281. Originally printed in *Art in America*, October–November 1965.

⁵⁸⁸ Marshall McLuhan, “Challenge and Collapse,” *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 66.

⁵⁸⁹ Maenz and Sharp, “Statement,” 1966.

artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.”⁵⁹⁰ As with Bochner’s formulation of seriality and systems of exactly the same time, LeWitt’s essay identified that the idea would eventually take the place of the object. Additionally, LeWitt indicated the turn from an object orientation to a systems orientation, as Jack Burnham would describe in 1968. When placed into historical contexts of this time, “Herzchen” fundamentally fit into the diverse discussions of Conceptual art. But arguably, Roehr’s project had been operating in this attitude all along.

“Herzchen’s” presentation of works and ideas propagated a network of multiple sources: they went beyond the connotations of Fluxus, were in tune with Anti-form and Conceptual art, and prefigured lines of Environmental and Land Art. As Suzanne Boettger noted, “Herzchen” was the “exemplification of the Poststructuralist recognition of the impossibility of designating a linguistic or stylistic ‘big bang’ – the big O of Originality – in this case, of an artist’s priority or a movement’s origin.”⁵⁹¹ Indeed, with “Herzchen” Roehr and Maenz asserted their presence in the diverse histories of “Postminimalism avant la lettre.”⁵⁹² While I have identified key moments throughout this dissertation where a cybernetic attitude underscored Roehr’s serial project, his lasting impact on the art world can be defined in terms of his forward thinking, conceptual understanding of society and the art world.

As much as it would be seen to resonate with the ideas of *Serielle Formationen*, “Herzchen” anticipated the shifts toward information, concept, and systems that were soon to be

590 Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 12. First published in *ArtForum*, 5:10 (Summer 1967).

591 Boettger, “The Lost Contingent,” 47.

592 Ibid., 45.

preferred by artists. As I have explored throughout this dissertation, Roehr's fundamental attitude towards cybernetics anticipated the complexities of systems-oriented art production. Although he would not live to see his ideas played out in the larger art world, Roehr's belief in his program never wavered, for it simply had occurred out of its time. As Roehr himself stated: "Art is what changes existing aesthetic and social conditions by aesthetic means. Thus art is what puts in question the previous definitions of art."⁵⁹³ Roehr's serial program offered cybernetic matrices that were intended to change the system of art consumption through continual reflection on the very system of art consumption itself, a project that mirrored the reality of lived experience.

⁵⁹³ Peter Roehr, "Notes from the Estate, 1964," in *Peter Roehr*, edited by Gerd de Vries, trans. Karin von Abrams and Paul Norris (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1991), 30.

6.0 Conclusion

As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, Roehr's serial project was guided by a conceptual principle that can be examined in terms of the systemic and cybernetic thinking that came to the fore in his exhibition work on *Serielle Formationen* and *Alles dies Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören*. In chapter one, I examined Roehr's early student works and formulation of his Text Montages in relation to cybernetics and matrices. In chapter two, I discussed Roehr's continuously developing, serial program in regard to a cybernetic orientation, specifically to his use of images in his Photo Montages. In chapter three, Roehr's cybernetic attitude, seen in relation to the cinema and particularly in sequences and the arresting of time, simultaneously expanded into his interest in audiences and the public. In only a few years, Roehr's program had developed a cohesion and breadth that rivaled artists who had long distinguished careers.

In chapter four I discussed the expansion of Roehr's ideas into systems and cybernetic attitudes to exhibition practices. His partnership with Paul Maenz and the expansion into his network of associations was fundamental to *Serielle Formationen* and *Alles dies Herzchen wird einmal Dir gehören*, the apex of Roehr's artistic career into broader conceptual ideas. While there is still much work left to be done on the further implications of Roehr's project in the boom of Concept Art after his death, throughout the chapters above I have examined the role that cybernetic ideas and seriality played in his work in its time.

By 1967, Roehr's serial project had transgressed a physical form of seriality by incorporating repetition through transmissions in multiple formats, media, and, most critically, these projects drew connections to larger conceptual ideas of the 1960s. Gerry Schum's documentary on the "Herzchen" event aired as *Happening-Abend*, *Frankfurter Studio* for the Hessischer Rundfunk on September 23,

1967.⁵⁹⁴ Less than three months after recording the event, Schum released *konsumkunst-Kunstkonsum* for the West Deutsche Rundfunk, an exposé on the use of the multiple and industrial production methods used by artists in Europe. Although it featured several artists included in *Serielle Formationen* and the “Herzchen” event – including gruppe x, Charlotte Posenenske, Konrad Lueg, and others – and touched upon the ideas promoted by these exhibitions, the documentary did not explicitly mention either Maenz or Roehr.

Perhaps the omission from Schum’s documentary was due to the fact that Roehr, ever perceptive to the changing climate of art and society, had renounced making art sometime toward the end of 1967. As Maenz explained, the increasing severity of his illness had made Roehr realize that he would not live to see the recognition of his art, although he believed at some point it would be understood.⁵⁹⁵ Furthermore, Roehr had “developed a strong antipathy toward the culture whose mechanisms he considered not only socially frivolous; but also as misdirected political energy.”⁵⁹⁶ The shift in Roehr’s ideas from artistic considerations to social concerns was reflected in the numerous personal notes and ideas referenced in 1967, as seen in chapters three and four. One of Roehr’s last statements on art, written while in the hospital, clarified his views at the end of his life: “What I see in it[art] is capitalism, idiocy, an unspeakable vanity of everyone involved and an ambition that is perverted.”⁵⁹⁷ Roehr’s renunciation too can be seen in line with a conceptual,

594 In the Archive Peter Roehr at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, this video existed only in a low-quality VHS format until c. 2012. A digitized version was provided to the Daimler Art Collection for the exhibition *Serielle Formationen 1967/2017*, where it was shown continuously throughout the exhibition. Additionally, developed photographs and markups for the catalog formed part of the original donation, and existed as the only photographic record of the event. With the discovery of the Herzchen documents in 2017, additional negatives and documents proved a more extensive and unpublished documentation.

595 Paul Maenz “Epilogue,” in *Peter Roehr*, trans. James Whitman (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1977). 110. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at Kunsthalle Tübingen, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, and Frankfurter Kunstverein.

596 Ibid.

597 “Was ich drin sehe, ist Kapitalismus, Idiotie, eine unsagbare Eitelkeit aller Beteiligten und ein Ehrgeiz, der pervers ist.” Peter Roehr, untitled note, February 1968, Inv.-Nr.: 2015/12.27. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, unpaginated.

cybernetic attitude: the works themselves would resonate in times when their impact would be most useful, even if he himself was no longer around to promote them.

However, the effects of his collaborative curatorial efforts had already begun to resound with transatlantic, Euro-American ideas. *Serielle Formationen* created an important platform for artists not only in Frankfurt but also in the wider West German art world. “Herzchen” introduced a transitory, ephemeral element that highlighted the experience of the concept of the work of art. The direct effects of these efforts were immediately seen. Shortly after participating in the *Serielle Formationen* exhibition, Konrad Lueg began to write letters to his peers in the art world expressing his desire to open an avant-garde gallery.⁵⁹⁸ Undoubtedly this came from his experiences working and collaborating with the gallerist Alfred Schmela in Düsseldorf, but the timing of his letters, after participating in *Serielle Formationen*, indicates that the show also served as a catalyst for Lueg’s turn to gallery work, which also included a change in moniker – as a gallerist, he was known as Konrad Fischer.⁵⁹⁹ Tellingly, his first pick for the opening show was Sol LeWitt, but Lueg “had to settle” for Carl Andre, and gave him his first solo show in Europe in October of that year.⁶⁰⁰ In his second show, Fischer presented a joint exhibition of Charlotte Posenenske and Hanne Darboven over the Christmas holidays of 1967–68. This was Posenenske’s last art exhibition, for she too renounced her art practice entirely at the beginning of 1968. Many of the artists who participated in *Serielle Formationen* or “Herzchen” would go on to have significant

598 Brigitte Kölle, “Life and Works,” in *okey dokey Konrad Fischer*, ed. Brigitte Kölle (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007), 14.

599 Paul Maenz, “Vor 1970 – Der Weg zur Galerie (1970),” in *Art is to Change: Skizzen aus der Umlaufbahn* (Regensburg: Linderger + Schmid GdbR, 2002), 43.

600 Carl Andre, “My Life as an Artist would have ended long ago: A written conversation with Carl Andre,” in *okey dokey Konrad Fischer*, ed. Brigitte Kölle (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007), 93.

careers in Europe. Roehr's role in facilitating these connections was vital and is a fruitful subject for attention in the future.

On January 25, 1968, Roehr and Maenz began their last collaborative project together. Pudding Explosion, a "hippie-psychodelicatessen" Head shop opened at 9 Holzgraben in the center of Frankfurt (Figure 95). Charlotte Posenenske decorated the interior with sections of the industrial, cardboard forms from her *Series DW*, which had been arranged at the "Herzchen" event. Pudding Explosion offered, among other things, "hash-pipes without content," Mao-bibles, copies of manifestos from members of the Kommune I in Berlin, and "books with naked men inside"; the latter sold out immediately.⁶⁰¹ Since the name of the store directly referenced the "Pudding Assassination,"⁶⁰² the progressive and provocative nature of the shop was clear. Furthermore, it was also an extension of the DIY projects that Roehr had long been interested in, as well as a final act of rebellion against the status quo of conservative Frankfurt in times of rising tensions with the youth movement.

Der Spiegel pointed out that "Peter (Roehr) and Paul's (Maenz)" Pudding Explosion had come across (gestoßen zu sein) a successful space among "other Pop and trinkets," and the store sold six weeks of products in only six days.⁶⁰³ With the opening of the shop, Roehr and Maenz realized a desire to bring useful art to everybody, but only had a few dollars to spend. The flyers the two produced in 1968 for Pudding Explosion employed visual tactics to prevailing aesthetics in the Pop-Hippie-Psychedelic counterculture movement (Figure 96). The announcement of the

601 "Lies mich Baby," *Der Spiegel*, February 1968, 76.

602 The "Pudding Attentat" (Pudding Assassination) was a widely covered plot to be carried out by members of the Kommune I in West Berlin in April of 1967. Then Vice President Hubert Humphry was to visit West Berlin amid escalations in the Vietnam War, a primary opposition of the Student Movement. As it was reported, members of the Kommune I planned to attack the Vice President with bombs hidden in custard pies. 11 Members were arrested, but later released when the only materials the police could find were the ingredients to make pies, not bombs.

603 "Aber auch mit dem übrigen Pop und Plunder scheinen Peter und Paul auf eine Merktlücke gestoßen zu sein." "Lies mich Baby."

store's opening on January 25th featured bold and experimental typefaces, which were contained within the unfurling smoke clouds of a bearded hippie. Employing the Ben Day process of Roy Lichtenstein, the comic strip quality of the image and the plain white background for the Egyptian font letters proffered a striking advertisement image for the shop. Resonant with the psychedelic flows of American visual culture, advertisement hierarchies were disrupted. Deeper within the tendrils of smoke, humorous and bawdy insider jokes gave tongue-in-cheek nods toward the young, self-proclaimed, under-30 anti-establishment. Any number of gags and gimmicky paraphernalia of hippie culture were available for low cost purchase but also multiple writings of the radical revolutionary Kommune I in Berlin. The shop fulfilled the revolutionary desires of a rapidly changing youth culture.

In the spring of 1968, Roehr entered into his final phases of life. On June 8, 1968 Roehr wrote his last will, which bequeathed his possessions, art works, and documents to Maenz. Shortly after, Roehr attempted to end his life before his illness took its painful turn. The attempt was unsuccessful in the immediate sense, and after several days in the hospital, he died on August 15, 1968, a few days before his 24th birthday. He was cremated and buried at the Große Friedhof in Frankfurt am Main.

With the help of his friend Heimar Schröter, Maenz was able to organize the estate of Roehr over the course of 1968 and 1969.⁶⁰⁴ In his grief and in light of the revolutionary times, Maenz also shuttered Pudding Explosion in early 1969. At the beginning of 1970, Maenz wrote to Hans Haacke to express his desire to open an art gallery. Konrad Lueg had offered to enter into a gallery partnership with Maenz in 1969, but Maenz himself was not ready to return to the art world.⁶⁰⁵ But

⁶⁰⁴ Maenz, "Epilogue," 112.

⁶⁰⁵ Paul Maenz, in conversation with the author, June 2017. Berlin.

in 1971, Maenz moved to Cologne to open up his Gallery Paul Maenz. His respectful but competitive rivalry with Lueg would continue for decades. As he later stated, all the ideas for his gallery came from Peter Roehr.⁶⁰⁶ Roehr's ideas continue to resonate and inspire in the contemporary moment, particularly through the attention paid to his works in the context of serial art.

More recent discussions have attempted to clarify conceptual art practices in the 1960s. As Scott Lash and Celia Lury discussed: "The ideas or concepts of conceptual art are a 'self-regulating series and systems of rules for the production of objects out of preformed materials. They are a series of propositions, systems of rules (and the parallel with the feedback loops of computers and other new media objects such as brands is worth drawing).'"⁶⁰⁷ As well, Terry Smith writes, "[a]t its various beginnings, conceptualism was a set of practices for interrogating what it was for perceiving subjects and perceived objects to be in the world. (That is, it was an inquiry into the minimal situations in which art might be possible.)"⁶⁰⁸ While these were wholly particular to the individual, they were also broad in their application of systemic thinking. Fundamentally, I have only begun to draw out the stirring connections of Roehr's work to other foundational exhibition practices.

In 1972, Lawrence Alloway's "Network: The Art World Described as a System" was published in *ArtForum*. Appearing several years after Jack Burnham's "System Aesthetics" essay, Alloway continued the vein of conceptual, systemic thinking applied to the overall network of the art world. In describing this system, Alloway acknowledged the many aspects of the showing of a

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Scott Lash and Celia Lury, *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 69.

⁶⁰⁸ Terry Smith and Robert Bailey, *One and Five Ideas: On Conceptual Art and Conceptualism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 124.

work by an artist, from the private viewing in the studio to the purchase by a collector to the work's publication in a magazine, and its transformation into Information, wherein "[e]ach change of milieu will encourage different expectations and readings by a changing audience."⁶⁰⁹ Once again, Roehr and Maenz's final exhibitions predated Alloway's considerations, but the well-established critic and curator formulated ideas that were similarly found all over the 1960s art world. "The roles available within the system, therefore, do not constrict mobility; the participants can move functionally within a cooperative system. [...] All of us are looped together in a new and unsettling connectivity."⁶¹⁰ Connectivity, systems, and networks were a defining concern for the generation of the 1960s conceptual artists. As I have shown in this dissertation, we should now count Roehr among the most perceptive of them all.

⁶⁰⁹ Lawrence Alloway, "Network: The Art World Described as a System," *Network: Art and the Complex Present* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 3. First published in *ArtForum*, September 1972.

⁶¹⁰ Alloway, "Network," 4.

Appendix A List of Images

Images used in this dissertation have been redacted for copyright purposes. Locations of objects have been noted when known.

Figure 1. Exhibition view, *Serielle Formationen*, Studiogalerie, Frankfurt University, Frankfurt am Main, May 1967. Left to Right: Charlotte Posenenske, *Kombination vier gleicher Elemente* (Combination of four like elements), 1967. Dan Flavin, *To Ingrid*, 1966. Bernhard Höke, *Wasserhände* [Water Hands], 1963 (front), Peter Roehr, *1-6-67*, 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 2 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (OB-1), Object Montage, matchboxes on wood, 56.4 x 58 cm. 1963. Collection of the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Inv.-Nr.: 1990/13. (signed verso “Peter Roehr/für Alfred Lichter”)

Figure 3 Exhibition view, Peter Roehr, *Black Progression*, Galerie Dorothea Loehr, November 1967.

Figure 4 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FO-13), Photo Montage, paper on cardboard, 24 x 22 cm. 1964. Private Collection.

Figure 5 Cover of *Der Spiegel*, Edition 31, March 1964. Illustration.

Figure 6 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (OB-124 – OB-133), installation at Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main. Photo by the Author (cropped).

Figure 7 Peter Roehr, Student Work, (Werkkunstschule Wiesbaden/School of Arts and Crafts in Wiesbaden), Dimensions unknown, c. 1961, (destroyed)

Figure 8 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FR-4), paint on cardboard, 13,5 x 30cm, 1962. Private collection.

Figure 9 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FR-9), (probably paint on cardboard), 1962.

Figure 10 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FR-11), grains in oil on panel, 40 x 42 cm, 1962.

Figure 11 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FR-51), grains in oil on panel, 50x50 cm 1962. Private collection.

Figure 12 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FR-17), stamp on cardboard, 47 x 40 cm. 1962.

Figure 13 Peter Roehr *Untitled* (FR-16), 50 x 40 cm, wood and paint on wood. 1962.

Figure 14 Peter Roehr *Untitled* (FR-22), stamp on paper, 42 x 45 cm, 1962. Location unknown, Copy of photograph in the collection of Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main Inv.-Nr.: 2011/200.22

Figure 15 Lucio Fontana, *Concetti Spaziale-Attese*, oil on canvas, cut four times, 92 x 73 cm, 1962-1963. Collection of the Städel Museum, Frankfurt.

Figure 16 Yves Klein, *Relief éponge sans titre (RE 47 I)*, dry pigment and synthetic resin, natural sponges and pebbles on panel, 146 x 114 cm, 1960. Collection Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 17 Piero Manzoni, *Achrome*, kaolin and bread on canvas, 33 x 42 cm, 1961-1962. Sperone Westerwater, SW 07047.

Figure 18 Henk Peeters, *#62-26B*, feathers on plastic, 185 x 130 cm, 1962/1988.

Figure 19 Exhibition view, *Europäische Avant-Garde*, Schwannenhalle des Römers, Frankfurt am Main. Curated by Rochus Kowallek, Frankfurt am Main, 1963.

Figure 20 Harry Kramer, *Automobile Sculpture*, multiple dimensions, 1963.

Figure 21 "Bloomsday 1964," exhibition poster, Dorothea Loehr, black offset on white paper, 123 x 86 cm, 1964.

Figure 22 Thomas Bayrle, *Bloom-Zeitung*. 1963.

Figure 23 Timm Ulrichs, *Serielle Formationen*, ink on paper, 1960/1961. Published in *Bel Esprit/Schöngeist* Edition 1, 1963.

Figure 24 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (GR-1), Grafik, punched holes on punch card (multiple of 100), 8.2 x 18.1 cm, 1963. Number 5 in the collection of the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main Inv.-Nr.: 1990/383.

Figure 25 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (GR-7), Grafik, hectograph (multiple of 30), 21.5 x 21 cm, 1963. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main Inv.-Nr.: 1990/389.

Figure 26 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (TY-84), Typo Montage, typewriter on paper, 21.5 x 22 cm, 1964, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main Inv.-Nr.: 1990/14.

Figure 27 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (TE-7), Text Montage, n.d. Typewriter on paper, printed in *Schöngeist/Bel Esprit*, Summer, 1966. Original in Private collection.

Figure 28 Peter Roehr, *Untitled*, Text Montage, n.d. as printed in the October 1964 issue of *Schöngeist/Bel Esprit*.

Figure 29 National Front (GDR), Poster, 1963.

Figure 30 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (TE-20), Text Montage, typewriter on A-4 Paper, 1964. Collection Klassik Stiftung Weimar. Neues Museum Weimar.

Figure 31 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FO-2), Photo Montage, paper on cardboard, 32 x 29.5 cm, 1965. Museum Wiesbaden.

Figure 32 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (OB-7), Object Montage, paper on paper, 10 x 10 cm, 1965.

Figure 33 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (OB-17), Object Montage, paper on paper, 12.5 x 13.5 cm, 1965.

Figure 34 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (OB- No number), Object Montage, cardboard beer mat on pressed chip board, 57 x 57 cm. 1964/1965. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main Inv.-Nr.:1990/15.

Figure 35 *Montagen*, Vol. 1, 6 Sheets. 1965. Examples of Roehr's artist portfolio. Arranged by Paul Maenz. Archive Peter Roehr, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 36 (detail) *Art Directors Annual for Advertisements and Magazines*, submission from Young & Rubicam, Entry No. 20. 1965. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 37 Advertisement, Young & Rubicam Inc., New York City. No Date (c. 1964-1966). Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 38 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FO-13), Photo Montage, paper on cardboard, 24 x 22 cm, 1964. Private collection.

Figure 39 Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Diptych*, acrylic paint on canvas, 205.44 x 289.56 cm, 1962. Tate Modern.

Figure 40 Konrad Lueg and Gerhard Richter, *Leben Mit Pop*, 1963. Invitation card with rubber balloon. Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels (ZADIK), Cologne.

Figure 41 Thomas Bayrle, *Kennedy in Berlin*, Lithograph on cardboard, 43 x 61 cm, 1964. Sammlung Deutsche Bank.

Figure 42 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FO-55), Photo Montage, paper on plastic, 88.3 x 93.7 cm, 1966. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main Inv.-Nr.: 1990/20.

Figure 43 Andy Warhol, *Green Disaster #2* (Green Disaster Ten Times), 272,6 x 201 cm, 1963. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 44 Volkswagen Beetle Advertisement, West Germany, early 1960s.

Figure 45 Volkswagen Beetle Advertisement, United States, published 14 September 1962. *Life* Magazine

Figure 46 Peter Roehr *Untitled* (FO-46), Photo Montage, paper on plastic, 169 x 164 cm, 1965. Städel Museum.

Figure 47 Peter Roehr. *Untitled* (FO-108), Photo Montage, paper on plastic, 40.1 x 38.6 cm, 1965. paper on plastic. 40,5 x 38 cm. Sammlung Dr. J. Lindenberg, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 48 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FO-96), Photo Montage, paper on plastic, 43x 43.5 cm, 1966. Daimler Art Collection.

Figure 49 Peter Roehr and Adam Seide, Exhibition installation photographs, in *Abendausstellung II*, Adam Seide Galerie, 1965. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 50 Peter Roehr, *Untitled* (FO-34), Photo Montage, paper on paper, 91 x 91 cm, 1965. Private collection.

Figure 51 Excerpt, Cartoon in *Egoist* no. 8. Autumn 1965, P.9.

Figure 52 (Detail) Roehr installing a site-specific work at Adam Seide Galerie, exhibition installation photographs, in *Abendausstellung II*, Adam Seide Galerie, 1965. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 53 (Detail), Adam Seide in *Abendausstellung II* exhibition installation photographs, in *Abendausstellung II*, Adam Seide Galerie, 1965, and detail of the reprint on the cover of *Egoist* no. 9. 1966. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 54 Peter Roehr, Photo Montages, printed on the back page of *Diskus*, January 1966. Frankfurt University.

Figure 55 Peter Roehr, "Neon," Film Montage. 1966

Figure 56 Peter Roehr, "Haaretrocken," Film Montage, 1966

Figure 57 Peter Roehr, "Ringer," Film Montage. 1966

Figure 58 Peter Roehr, "Explosion," Film Montage, 1966

Figure 59 Peter Roehr, "Sturz," Film Montage, 1966

Figure 60 Peter Roehr, *Lawrence von Arabien* (Lawrence from Arabia), Project Sketch, 1967. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 61 Peter Roehr, "Montage aus Kugelformige Lampen" Project Sketch, 1967. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 62 Peter Roehr, "Project aus Kubusformige Lampen," Project Sketch, 1967. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 63 Peter Roehr and Charlotte Posenenske, *Monotonie ist Schön*, Film, 14:03, 1968.

Figure 64 Peter Roehr, *Untitled*, Photo Montage, 1965. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 65 Peter Roehr with gruppe x *object C2*, 1967. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, made available from the private archive of Jürgen Weneger. Photographed by Jürgen Weneger.

Figure 66 Timm Ulrichs, image of Performance, 1966. Galerie Patio, Frankfurt

Figure 66 *Roehr Bei Seide*, exhibition flyer, March 1967. Photographers Gabrielle Kotterba and Abisag Tüllmann. Photo of poster taken by the Author, object found in the Collection Marzona, Staatliches Bibliothek Berlin.

Figure 67 Peter Roehr *Untitled* (OB-124 – OB-133), Object Montages, paper on metal, 119 x 119 cm, 1967. Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 68 Photograph of exterior of the Studenthaus, Frankfurt University, ca. 1960s. Collection Museum Giersch, Frankfurt University.

Figure 69 Floorplan for the Studiogalerie, Frankfurt University. Collection Museum Giersch, Frankfurt University.

Figure 70 Left to Right: Andy Warhol, *Cow*, 1966; Klaus Staudt, *Weiß-Grau*, 1964–65; unidentified; Hermann Goepfert, *Alurefektor* [Aluminium Reflector], 1966; Günther Uecker, *Zero Garden*, 1966; Piero Manzoni, *Achrome*, 1959. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 71 Eberhard Fiebig, *Plexiglastransformation einer ebenen Figur Nr. 50* [Plexiglass Transformation of a Flat Figure, No. 50], 1967. Center: Günther Uecker, *Lichtstele* [Light Stele], 1960. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 73 Left to right: Ewerdt Hilgemann, *Doppelobjekt Nr. 52/53/67* [Double Object No. 52/53/67], 1967; Herman de Vries, *Homogene Struktur* [Homogenous Structure], 1966, and *Schattenobjekt* [Shadow Object], 1966; Jan Schoonhoven, *Relief*, 1967 (twice); Henk Peeters, *Witte Watten achter Nylon* [White Wadding behind Nylon], 1960–1964. Center: Markus Raetz, *Weißer Lütschine* [sic], 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 72 Left to right: (among others): Walter Leblanc, *Twisting Stripes R. 27*, no date, and *Mobilo Static Pf237*, no date; Bridget Riley, *Current*, 1965; Paul Talman, *Untitled* (Edition MAT), 1964; Jiri Kolar *Untitled Collage*, 1964; Jiri Kolar *Untitled Collage*, 1964; Thomas Bayrle, *Frau am Meer*, 1967; Jan Henderikse *Navy Cut*, 1966. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 73 Eberhard Fiebig, *Pneumatische Säule* [Pneumatical Column], 1967. Center: gruppe x, A 2, 1966. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 74 Hans Breder, *Spiegelobjekt* [Mirror Object], 1966; Wolfgang Schmidt, *Series 17*, 1965. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 75 Front to back: Charlotte Posenenske, *Kombination vier gleicher Elemente* [Combination of Four Like Elements], 1967; Dan Flavin, *To Ingrid*, 1966; Peter Roehr, *1-6-67*, 1967. Christo, *Barrel Construction*, 1967. Front: Hans Breder, *Spiegelobjekt* [Mirror Object], 1966. Center: Sol LeWitt, *First Modular Structure*, 1965. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 76 Charlotte Posenenske, *Kombination vier gleicher Elemente* [Combination of Four Like Elements], 1967; Dan Flavin, *To Ingrid*, 1966; Peter Roehr, *1-6-67*, 1967. Christo, *Barrel Construction*, 1967. Front: Sol LeWitt, *First Modular Structure*, 1965. Center, back: Hans Breder, *Spiegelobjekt* [Mirror Object], 1966. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 77 Charlotte Posenenske, *Kombination vier gleicher Elemente* [Combination of Four Like Elements], 1967; Dan Flavin, *To Ingrid*, 1966; Peter Roehr, *1-6-67*, 1967. Center: Bernhard Höke, *Wasserhände*, 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 78 Peter Roehr, *1-6-67*, 1967. Christo, *Barrel Construction*, 1967. Center: Bernhard Höke, *Wasserhände*, 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 79 Charlotte Posenenske, *Kombinationvier gleicher Elemente* [Combination of Four Like Elements], 1967; Dan Flavin, *To Ingrid*, 1966; Peter Roehr, *1-6-67*, 1967; Christo, *Barrel Construction*, 1967; Jan Dibbets, *Demontabele Multiples* [Demountable Multiples], 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 80 Konrad Lueg, *Anordnung aus 18 Flächen in 14 verschiedenen Mustern und Farben*, [Arrangement of 18 Surfaces in 14 Different Patterns and Colors], 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 81 Jan Dibbets, installing *Wasserbeckens*, “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 8 September 1967 at Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 82 Peter Roehr in front of the work by Jan Dibbets “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 8 September 1967. Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 83 Jan Dibbets, installing a work by John Johnson, “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 8 September 1967. Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 84 Konrad Lueg, plans for “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 85 Participants spreading sawdust for Dibbets work, “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 8 September 1967. Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). *Hessischer Rundfunk* documentary film, directed by Gerry Schum.

Figure 86 Barry Flanagan, instructions (or designs) for “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 22 August 1967. Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 87 Participants holding Lueg’s *Wurstartiges Gebilde* “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 9 September 1967. Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). *Hessischer Rundfunk* documentary film, directed by Gerry Schum.

Figure 88 Courtyard of Galerie Dorothea Loehr. Center: Charlotte Posenenske *Series DW*. Background: Konrad Lueg, *Wurstartiges Gebilde*. “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 9 September 1967. Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 89 Bernard Höke, melting ice blocks, “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 9 September 1967. Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 90 Visitor with John Johnson work. Center: Jan Dibbets, *Wasserbeckens*. “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 9 September 1967. Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt am Main (Niederursel). Archive Paul Maenz, Berlin.

Figure 91 Peter Roehr, “Ringer”, Film Montage “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 9 September 1967. *Hessischer Rundfunk* documentary film, directed by Gerry Schum.

Figure 92 Bernhard Höke, Smokestack, “Dies alles, Herzchen, wird einmal Dir gehören,” 9 September 1967. *Hessischer Rundfunk* documentary film, directed by Gerry Schum.

Figure 93 Interior of Pudding Explosion, featuring work by Charlotte Posenenske. Image reproduced for an invitation for the exhibition *1968 The Times They Are A-Changin’*, arranged by Paul Maenz for Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin. 2018. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

Figure 94 Pudding Explosion, flyer. 1968. Archive Peter Roehr Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.

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