on the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time:

THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL 1957–1972

The exhibition was organized by Peter Wollen and Mark Francis, with Paul-Hervé Parsy, in consultation with Thomas Y. Levin, Greil Marcus, and Elisabeth Sussman

Elisabeth Sussman, Editor

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BITTER VICTORY:

The Art and Politics of the Situationist International

Peter Wollen

I

De Sade liberated from the Bastille in 1789, Baudelaire on the barricades in 1848, Courbet tearing down the Vendôme Column in 1870—French political history is distinguished by a series of glorious and legendary moments that serve to celebrate the convergence of popular revolution with art in revolt. In the twentieth century avant-garde artistic movements took up the banner of revolution consciously and enduringly. The political career of André Breton and the surrealists began with their manifestos against the Moroccan war (the Riff war) in 1925 and persisted through to the "Manifesto of the 121," which Breton signed in 1960 six years before his death, denouncing the Algerian war and justifying resistance. In May 1968 the same emblematic role was enacted once again by the militants of the Situationist International (SI).

The SI was founded in 1957 at Cosio d'Arroscia in northern Italy (fig. 3.1 and 3.2), principally out of the union of two prior avant-garde groups, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (MIBI, consisting of Asger Jorn, Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, and others) and the Lettrist International (LI, led by Guy Debord).[1] MIBI itself originated from splits in the postwar COBRA group of artists, which Jorn had helped found, and the SI was soon joined by another key COBRA artist, Constant. The ancestry of both COBRA and Lettrism can be traced back to the international surrealist movement, whose breakup after the war led to a proliferation of new splinter groups and an accompanying surge of new experimentation and position taking.[2] The SI brought together again many of

3.1
Guy D
d'Arros

3.1
Guy Debord and Piero Simondo at Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy

3.2
Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy

the dispersed threads that signalled the decay and eventual decomposition of surrealism. In many ways, its project was that of relaunching surrealism on a new foundation, stripped of some of its elements (emphasis on the unconscious, quasi-mystical and occultist thinking, cult of irrationalism) and enhanced by others, within the framework of cultural revolution.

In its first phase (1957–1962) the SI developed a number of ideas that had originated in the LI, of which the most significant were those of *urbanisme unitaire* ("unitary urbanism," integrated city-creation), psychogeography, play as free and creative activity, *dérive* ("drift"), and *détournement* ("diversion," semantic shift).[3] The SI expounded its position in its journal, *Internationale situationniste*, brought out books, and embarked on a number of artistic activities. Artists were to break down the divisions between individual art forms and to create *situations*, constructed encounters and creatively lived moments in specific urban settings, instances of a critically transformed everyday life. They were to produce settings for situations and experimental models of possible modes of transformation of the city, as well as to agitate and polemicize against the sterility and oppression of the actual environment and ruling economic and political system.[4]

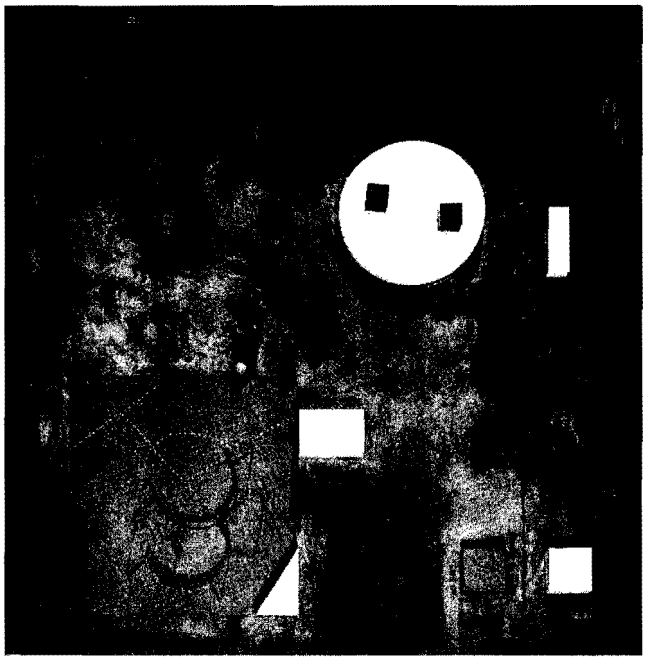
During this period a number of prominent painters and artists from many European countries joined the group, and became involved in the activities and publications of the SI. With members from Algeria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, and Sweden, the SI became a genuinely international movement, held together organizationally by annual conferences (1957—Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy; 1958—Paris, France; 1959—Munich, Germany; 1960—London, England; 1961—Göteborg, Sweden; 1962—Antwerp, Belgium) and by the journal, which was published once or twice a year in Paris by an editorial committee that changed over time and represented the different national sections.[5]

From the point of view of art, 1959 was an especially productive (or should one say, dialectically destructive?) year. Three artists held major exhibitions of their work. Asger Jorn showed his *Modifications* (*peintures détournées*, altered paintings) (fig. 3.3) at the Rive Gauche gallery in Paris.[6] These were over-paintings by Jorn on secondhand canvases by unknown painters, which he bought in flea markets or the like, transforming them by this double inscription. The same year Pinot-Gallizio held a show of his *Caverna dell'antimateria* (Cavern of anti-matter) at the Galerie René Drouin.[7] This was the culmination of his experiments with *pittura industriale* (fig. 3.4)—rolls of canvas up to 145 meters in length, produced mainly by hand, but also with the aid of painting machines and spray guns with special resins devised by Pinot-Gallizio himself (he had been a chemist before he became a painter, linking the two activities under Jorn's encouragement). The work was draped all around the gallery and Pinot-Gallizio also sold work by the meter by chopping lengths off the roll. His painting of this period was both a "diverted" parody of automation (which the SI viewed with hostile concern) and a prototype of vast rolls of "urbanist" painting that could engulf whole cities. Later in 1959 Constant exhibited a number of his *ilôts-maquettes* (model precincts) (fig. 3.5) at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.[8] These were part of his ongoing *New Babylon* project, inspired by unitary

3.3
Asger Jorn
Conte du nord, 1959

3.4
Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Caverna dell'antimateria
(Cavern of Anti-Matter), 1959

3.5
Constant
Ambiance de jeu
(Environment for Play), 1956



urbanism—the design of an experimental utopian city with changing zones for free play, whose nomadic inhabitants could collectively choose their own climate, sensory environment, organization of space, and so on.

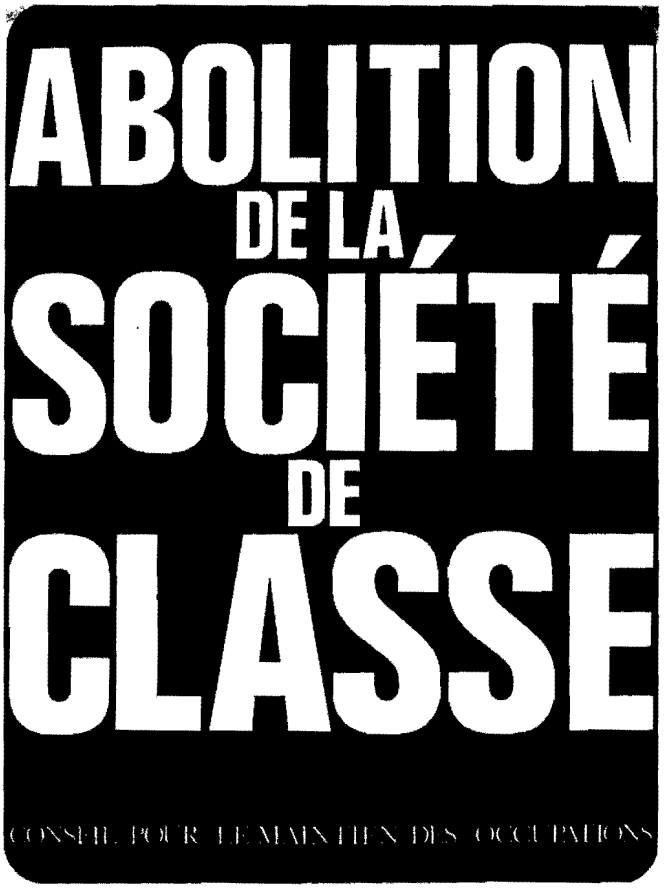
During this period, however, a series of internal disagreements arose inside the organization that finally culminated in a number of expulsions and a split in 1962, when a rival Second Situationist International was set up by Jörgen Nash (Asger Jorn's younger brother) and joined by others from the Dutch, German, and Scandinavian sections. In broad terms, this can be characterized as a split between artists and political theorists (or revolutionaries). The main issue at stake was the insistence of the theoretical group based around Debord in Paris that art could not be recognized as a separate activity with its own legitimate specificity, but must be dissolved into a unitary revolutionary praxis.[9] After the split the SI was reformed and centralized around a main office in Paris. Up to 1967, the journal continued to appear annually, but only one more conference was held (1966, in Paris).

During the first, art-oriented phase of the SI, Debord worked with Jorn on collective art books and also made two films, *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (1959) and *Critique de la séparation* (1961).[10] Debord's future orientation can already be clearly seen in the second of these films, which makes a distinct break from the assumptions of the first. Debord had been auditing a university class taught by the Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre; subsequently he began to collaborate with the revolutionary *Socialisme ou barbarie* group and issued a joint manifesto in 1960 with its leading theorist, Cornelius

Castoriadis. Fairly rapidly, his political and theoretical positions clarified and sharpened to the point where a split was inevitable.

After 1962 Debord assumed an increasingly central role in the SI, surrounded by a new generation of militants who were not professional artists. The earlier artistic goals and projects either fell away or were transposed into an overtly political (and revolutionary) register within a unitary theoretical system. In 1967 Debord published his magnum opus, *Society of the Spectacle,*[11] a lapidary totalization of Situationist theory that combined the Situationist analysis of culture and society within the framework of a theoretical approach and terminology drawn from Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (published in France by the *Arguments* group of ex-Communists who left the party after 1956)[12] and the political line of council communism, characteristic of *Socialisme ou barbarie* but distinctively recast by Debord.[13] In this book, Debord described how capitalist societies, East and West (state and market) complemented the increasing fragmentation of everyday life, including labor, with a nightmarishly false unity of the "spectacle," passively consumed by the alienated workers (in the broadest possible sense of noncapitalists and nonbureaucrats). Not until they became conscious (in the totalizing Lukácsian sense) of their own alienation could and would they rise up to liberate themselves and institute an anti-statist dictatorship of the proletariat in which power was democratically exercised by autonomous workers' councils.

Society of the Spectacle is composed in an aphoristic style, drawing on the philosophical writings of Hegel and



3.6
Abolition de la société de classe
(Abolition of Class Society)
Poster, 1968

the polemical tropes of the young Marx, and it continues to extol *détournement* (and the obligation to plagiarize) but, in general, it is a theoretical work without artistic pretensions. This did not mean, however, that the Situationists had retreated from all forms of action other than the elaboration of theory. The previous winter a student uprising at the University of Strasbourg, one of a wave sweeping across the world, had been specifically inspired by the SI and had based its political activity on Situationist theory.[14] The next year, of course, 1968, saw the great revolutionary uprising, first of students, then of workers, which threatened to topple the de Gaulle regime. Here again student groups were influenced by the SI, especially at Nanterre where the uprising took shape, and the Situationists themselves played an active role in the events, seeking to encourage and promote workers' councils (and a revolutionary line within them) without exercising powers of decision and execution or political control of any kind (fig. 3.6).[15]

The year 1968 marked both the zenith of SI activity and success and also the beginning of its rapid decline. In 1969 one more issue of the journal was published and that same year the last conference was held in Venice. Further splits followed, and in 1972 the organization was dissolved. For the Situationists 1968 proved a bitter victory. Indeed, ironically, their contribution to the revolutionary uprising was remembered mainly through the diffusion and spontaneous expression of Situationist ideas and slogans, in graffiti, and in posters using *détournement* (mainly of comic strips, a graphic technique pioneered after 1962) (fig. 3.7 and 3.8) as well as in serried assaults on the routines of everyday life—in short, a cultural rather than a political contribution, in the sense that the Situationists had come to demand. Debord's political theory was more or less reduced to the title of his book, which was generalized as an isolated catchphrase and separated from its theoretical project. Council communism was quickly forgotten by students and workers alike.[16]

Thus the SI was fated to be incorporated into the legendary series of avant-garde artists and groups whose paths had intersected with popular revolutionary movements at emblematic moments. Its dissolution in 1972 brought to an end an epoch that began in Paris with the "Futurist Manifesto" of 1909—the epoch of the historic avant-gardes with their typical apparatus of international organization and propaganda, manifestos, congresses, quarrels, scandals, indictments, expulsions, polemics, group photographs, little magazines, mysterious episodes, provocations, utopian theories, and intense desires to transform art, society, the world, and the pattern of everyday life.

This is a truth, but only a partial truth. Separated from the mass of the working class, the SI was bound to remain in memory and in effect what it had begun by being, an artistic movement just like the surrealists before it. But at the same time, this neither tells the whole story of the relation between art and politics nor does justice to the theoretical work of the SI and of Debord in particular. If we can see the SI as the summation of the historic avant-gardes, we can equally view it as the summation of Western Marxism—and in neither case does the conclusion of an era mean that it need no longer be understood or its lessons learned and valued. May 1968 was both a curtain call and a prologue, a turning point in a drama we are all still blindly living.

3.7
Gérard Joannès
Poster announcing the publication of No. 11 of the SI journal, 1967

CAMARADES, CECI N'EST QU'UN COMMENCEMENT. POUR EN SAVOIR PLUS LONG SUR VOUS-MÊMES, POUR RECONNAÎTRE RAPIDEMENT VOS POSSIBILITÉS LISEZ LA REVUE "INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONNISTE", LE NUMÉRO 11 VIENT DE PARAÎTRE, BOITE POSTALE 307 03 PARIS,

internationale situationniste

3.8
André Bertrand
Poster announcing the publication of No. 11 of
the SI journal, 1967

II

Western Marxism developed in two phases. The first followed World War I and the Bolshevik revolution. In 1923 Lukács published his collection of essays *History and Class Consciousness* and Karl Korsch the first edition of his book *Marxism and Philosophy.*[17] The immediate postwar years had brought a revolutionary ferment in Europe, which was eventually rolled back by the forces of order, leaving the Soviet Union alone and isolated, but in command of a defeated and demoralized international movement. In time, not only was this movement further threatened and mortally attacked by fascism, but the Soviet Union, the citadel of communism itself, fell into the hands of Stalin. The early writings of Lukács and Korsch are the product of this period of revolutionary ferment, while Western Marxism later developed under the shadow of fascism—Antonio Gramsci in an Italian prison; Korsch and the Frankfurt School in an American exile. Only Lukács went East to make his peace with Stalinism and adapt his theoretical position accordingly.

The second phase of Western Marxism came after World War II and the victory over fascism of the Soviet Union (together, of course, with its American ally). Once again, the growth of resistance movements and the dynamic of victory brought with it a revolutionary ferment that triumphed in Yugoslavia and Albania, was crushed in Greece, and channeled into parliamentary forms in France and Italy. Immediately after the war Jean-Paul Sartre began his long process of interweaving existentialism with Marxism, and Lefebvre published his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1946).[18] A decisive new impetus came when the Soviet Union suppressed the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and a wave of intellectuals left the Western Communist parties. It is from this date especially that we can see the beginnings of the New Left and the intellectual crosscurrents that led to 1968.

The shift of the center of Western Marxism to France from Germany (the product, of course, of the catastrophe of fascism and the absence of a resistance movement in Germany) naturally led to shifts of emphasis. However, these were not as great as might be imagined, because French thought had already opened itself before the war to the influence of Hegel (and Martin Heidegger), and it was therefore possible to reabsorb Lukács's writings when they were republished in the post-1956 journal *Arguments.*[19] Indeed, there were many obvious affinities both with Sartre's method and with Lefebvre's.

Debord (fig. 3.9) dates his "independent" life from 1950, when he first threw himself into the artistic and cultural scene of the Left Bank—its bars, its cinemas, its bookshops.[20] His thought was marked in turn by Sartre (the concept of situation), Lefebvre (the critique of everyday life), the *Arguments* group, and Lukács (the subject-object dialectic and the concept of reification). In the first instance Debord envisaged Lefebvre's "everyday life" as a series of fortuitous Sartrean situations. Existence, Sartre had argued, is always existence within surroundings, within a given situation, which is both lived-in and lived-beyond, through the subject's choice of the manner of being in that situation, itself a given. Following Lefebvre's injunction to transform everyday life, Debord interpreted that as an injunction to construct situations, as an artistic and practical activity, rather than accept them as given; what he sought to do was to impose a conscious order at least in enclaves of everyday life, an order that would permit fully free activity, play set consciously within the context of everyday life, not separated from it in the sphere of leisure.[21]

3.9
Guy Debord (on the right)

From situation Debord enlarged his scope to city, and from city to society.[22] This, in turn, involved an enlargement of the subject of transformation from the group (the affinity-group of Lettrists or Situationists with shared goals) to the mass of the proletariat, constructing the totality of social situations in which it lived. It is at this point that Debord was forced to think beyond the sphere of possible action of himself and his immediate associates and engage with classical revolutionary theory. This, in turn, radicalized him further and sent him back to Western Marxism to reinterpret it on a new basis. Instead of changing transient and brief periods, limited ambiances, the whole of social space and time was to be transformed and, if it was to be transformed, it must first be theorized. This theory, it followed, must be the theory of contemporary (even future) society and contemporary alienation (the key idea for Lefebvre).

When Lukács wrote *History and Class Consciousness*, it represented a shift in his thought from romantic anti-capitalism to Marxism, made possible first by assigning the role of the subject of history to the working class and, second, by combining Marx's concept of commodity fetishism with the Hegelian concept of objectification to produce a theory of reification as the contemporary capitalist form of the alienation of human subjectivity. Debord, reading Lukács many decades later, was able to relate Lukács's theory of the reification of labor in the commodity to the appearance of consumerism in the long postwar boom of Keynesian capitalism. Just as Lukács was writing during the first period of Fordism, that of standardization and mass production, so Debord was writing in the second, that of variety marketing and mass consumption. Consumer society confronted producers with their products alienated not only in money

form, quantitatively, but also in image form, qualitatively, in advertising, publicity, media—instances of the general form of "spectacle."

However, in order to get from the *Report on the Construction of Situations* (1957) to *Society of the Spectacle* ten years later, Debord had to pass through the portals of the past—the legacy of classical Marxism, discredited by the cruel experience of Stalinism yet still the sole repository of the concept of proletarian revolution. Scholars have disagreed about the relation of Western to classical Marxism, drawing the dividing line between the two at different places. For Perry Anderson, Western Marxism results from the blockage of revolutionary hope in the West and the consequent substitution of Western Marxism, a formal shift away from economics and history towards philosophy and aesthetics in a long detour from the classical tradition. For Russell Jacoby, in contrast, Western Marxism is a displacement onto the terrain of philosophy of the political Left of the classical tradition, the failed opposition to Leninism, articulated politically in the council communism movement.[23]

Council communism, the literal interpretation of the slogan "All power to the soviets!" flourished briefly during the post-1917 period of revolutionary upsurge and marked the work of Lukács, Korsch, and Gramsci at that time. Lukács and Gramsci rallied back to the orthodox line, stressing the party as the condensed organizer of a diffuse class (the Hegelian "subject" and Macchiavellian "prince" respectively), while Korsch remained loyal to councilist principles, stressing the self-organization of the workers in their own autonomously formed councils. This debate over party and council, the necessary mediations between state and class, reached its highest peak at this period, but it had already taken shape before the war. The debates in the German party between Herman Gorter and Anton Pannekoek (from Holland), Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky, and those in the Russian party between Alexander Bogdanov and Lenin prefigured the postwar debates on councils.[24] In fact, Lenin polemicized mainly against both the Dutch councilists and Bogdanov in the immediate postrevolutionary years, and figures such as Lukács and Korsch, with no background in the prewar movement, only felt the backwash of the titanic struggles of their elders.

The immediate background to these clashes lay in the quite unanticipated appearance of soviets in the 1905 Russian revolution and the rise of syndicalism as a competitor to Marxism in Western Europe (and, with the rise of the International Workers of the World [IWW], in America too).[25] It is significant also that both the Dutch and Russian trends were associated with philosophical (as well as political) heterodoxy—Pannekoek and Gorter promoted the monist religion of science of Joseph Dietzgen, and Bogdanov the monist positivism of Ernst Mach. These philosophical deviations reflected the wish to find a role for collective subjectivity in politics that went beyond the limits imposed by scientific socialism, bringing them closer both to the syndicalist mystique of the working class as collectivity and the concomitant stress on activism (expressed in extreme form by Georges Sorel).

After the Bolshevik revolution, Left Communists with philosophical inclinations turned away from the modified scientism of Dietzgen and Mach (with its stress on monism and the subjective factor in science) to full-scale Hegelianism, covered by the tribute paid to Hegel

by Marx. Lukács and Korsch went far beyond reviving Hegel as a predecessor of Marx (turned into a materialist by being stood on his head) and integrated Hegelian concepts and methods into the heart of Marxism itself: especially those of totality and subject. In this way council communism appeared as a Marxist reformulation of syndicalist ideas and Western Marxism as a philosophical reformulation of scientific socialism. The link between the two was provided by the transformation of romantic, vitalist, and libertarian forms of activism into the Hegelian categories of subjectivity and praxis as the expression of the self-consciousness of the proletariat as a class. At the same time, they instituted a much more radical break with classical Marxism and suffered a much more serious political defeat than their predecessors.

Like Western Marxism, however, council communism was revived in France after the Liberation by the *Socialisme ou barbarie* group, who began a correspondence with the aged Pannekoek. Both the leaders of this group were ex-Trotskyists—Claude Lefort had joined the Fourth International after studying philosophy with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Cornelius Castoriadis was a Greek militant and economist who left the Communist party for Trotskyism during the German occupation of Greece, which he fled after the civil war. Lefort and Castoriadis then left the Trotskyists to set up their own journal, *Socialisme ou barbarie*, in 1949. The Fourth International was the single organizational form of classical Marxism to survive the debacle of Stalinism, but after Trotsky's assassination it split into a number of fragments, divided over the analysis of the Soviet Union. Loyalists followed Trotsky in dubbing it a "degenerated workers' state," while others judged it "state capitalist." A third path was taken by *Socialisme ou barbarie*, which characterized the Soviet Union as a bureaucracy and came to see a convergence both in the East and West towards competing bureaucratic state systems.

In 1958 the *Socialisme ou barbarie* group split over questions of self-organization, and Lefort left the group. Castoriadis remained the leading figure until its dissolution in 1966 (although there was another split in 1964 when Castoriadis abandoned Marxism).[26] Debord's contact with the group was primarily through Castoriadis who, it should be stressed, was not a philosopher but an economist whose misgivings over orthodox Marxist theory began with the law of value. When revolution is uniformly against a bureaucratic class, East and West, there is in any case no pressing need for Marx's *Capital*. Debord, however, did not follow Castoriadis entirely out of Marxism, though he often blurs the distinction between bureaucracy and capitalism, if only because the Lukácsian side of his system would collapse back into its Weberian origins and antithesis if the Marxist concept of capital was removed.[27]

Debord was able to take Lukács's ringing endorsement of the revolutionary workers' councils and transpose his critique of the Mensheviks to fit the Western Communist parties and the unions they controlled ("Moreover, the function of the trade unions consists more in atomizing and depoliticizing the movement, in falsifying its relationship with the totality, while the Menshevik parties have more the role of fixing reification in the consciousness of the working class, both ideologically and organizationally").[28] Debord had only to read "Communist" for "Menshevik" to fit a contemporary political analysis into the historic Lukácsian framework. But, for Debord, as for the *Socialisme ou barbarie* group, the fact that the Com-

munist party was bureaucratic in form and ideology, a force of order rather than revolution, meant not that an alternative party should be built but that the very idea of party should be rejected. Instead of a party, necessarily separated from the working class, the revolution should be carried out by the workers themselves, organized in self-managing councils.

At the same time, the concept of revolution itself changed from the Leninist model. Instead of seeking state power, the councils should move directly to abolish the state. The revolution meant the immediate realization of the realm of freedom, the abolition of all forms of reification and alienation in their totality, and their replacement by forms of untrammeled subjectivity. Thus the syndicalist specter rose up again to haunt social democracy, fortified by the philosophical armory of Western Marxism and carried, in accordance with Debord's temperament, to its extreme conclusion. Lukács had always assumed the existence of mediations within the totality, forms of unity within difference, but Debord's maximalist vision sought to abolish all separation, to unite subject and object, practice and theory, structure and superstructure, politics and administration, in a single unmediated totality.

The impetus behind this maximalism came from the idea of the transformation of everyday life. This in turn derived from Lefebvre's idea of total (that is, unalienated) man. Lefebvre was the first French Marxist to revive the humanist ideas of the young Marx and (though he never questioned the privileged role of economics in Marxist theory) he began to argue that Marxism had been wrongly restricted to the political and economic domains when its analysis should be extended to cover every aspect of life, wherever alienation existed—in private life and in leisure time, as well as at work. Marxism needed a topical sociology; it should be involved in cultural studies, it should not be afraid of the trivial. In the last analysis, Marxism meant not only the transformation of economic and political structures, but "the transformation of life right down to its detail, right down to its everydayness." Economics and politics were only means to the realization of an unalienated, total humanity.[29]

Lefebvre began his intellectual career in the 1920s in close association with André Breton and the surrealists. As a member of the *Philosophies* group he co-signed the manifesto against the Riff war in 1925 and remained involved with the surrealists at least until his entry into the Communist party in 1928 (although Breton denounced him by name in the "Second Surrealist Manifesto" of 1929 as base, insincere, and opportunistic—insults that Lefebvre did not forget when he vilified Breton in the *Critique of Everyday Life*).[30] Personal and political quarrels aside, in retrospect we can see how much Lefebvre owed to Breton—not only the idea of the transformation of everyday life, a fundamental surrealist concept, but even his introduction to Hegel and Marx. "He showed me a book on his table, Vera's translation of Hegel's *Logic*, a very bad translation, and said something disdainfully of the sort: 'You haven't even read this?' A few days later, I began to read Hegel, who led me to Marx."[31] Breton never swerved from his own attachment to Hegel: "The fact remains that ever since I first encountered Hegel, that is, since I presented him in the face of the sarcasms with which my philosopher professor, around 1912, André Cresson, a positivist, pursued him, I have steeped myself in his views and, for me, his method has reduced all others to beggary. For me, where the Hegelian dialectic is not at work, there is no thought, no hope of truth."[32]

III

Historians of Western Marxism have tended to discount Breton, seeing him as "offbeat" (!) or lacking in "seriousness."[33] Perhaps it is because, like Debord but unlike every other Western Marxist, he was never a professor. No doubt Breton's interpretation of Hegel, like his interpretation of Freud, Marx, love, and art (to name his major preoccupations), was often aberrant, but the fact remains that contemporary French culture is unthinkable without him. Not only did he develop a theory and practice of art that has had enormous effect (perhaps more than any other in our time) but he also introduced both Freud and Hegel to France, first to nonspecialist circles, but then back into the specialized world through those he influenced (Lefebvre, Jacques Lacan, Georges Bataille, Claude Lévi-Strauss) and thence out again into the general culture.[34] Politically too, he was consistent from the mid-1920s on, joining and leaving the Communist party on principled grounds, bringing support to Trotsky in his tragic last years and lustre to the beleaguered and often tawdry Trotskyist movement.

The 1920s were a period of dynamic avant-gardism, in many ways a displacement of the energy released by the Russian revolution. Groups like the surrealists identified with the revolution and mimicked in their own organization many of the characteristics of Leninism, including establishing a central journal, issuing manifestos and agitational leaflets, guarding the purity of the group, and expelling deviationists. (Characteristics which carried through, of course, to the Situationists.) But there were many features of the surrealist movement and specifically of Breton's thought that distinguish it from other avant-garde groups and theorists of the time.[35] Indeed, it might even be possible to think of surrealism as a form of Western avant-gardism, as opposed to the Soviet avant-gardism that not only flourished in the Soviet Union (futurism, constructivism, Lef) but also in central Europe. Especially in Germany there was a struggle between a Bauhaus- and constructivist-oriented modernism (often explicitly Soviet-oriented too) and expressionism, which had affinities with surrealism but lacked both its originality and its theoretical foundation. Constructivism too had its reformist wing, closely tied to German social democracy.

The Soviet avant-garde, like the surrealist, wanted to revolutionize art in a sense that went beyond a simple change of form and content; what was desired was the alteration of its entire social role. But whereas Breton wanted to take art and poetry into everyday life, the aim in the Soviet Union was to take art into production. In both cases the bourgeois forms of art were to be suppressed, but the Soviet artists and theorists stressed the affinities of art with science and technology, tried to take art into modern industry, and argued that artists should become workers or experts. Beauty, dreams, and creativity were idle bourgeois notions. Art should find a productive function in the new Soviet society and in such a role it would cease even to be art. "Death to art, long live production!"[36] Thus the scientism of orthodox Marxism and productivism of postrevolutionary Soviet ideology were imported into the world view of the militant artist. But Breton's Western avant-gardism went in the opposite direction, abhorring modern industry; anti-functionalist, deeply suspicious of one-sided materialism and positivism, and dedicated to releasing the values of romantic and decadent poets from the confines of literature, it aestheticized life rather than productivizing art.

As did Lukács, Breton brought about an irruption of romanticism into Marxism, and both figures drew upon

a literary background and reflected the convert's enthusiasm for the drama of revolution.[37] But there were three significant differences between Breton and Lukács. First, Breton was himself a poet rather than a critic and, for this reason, the problem of practice was located for him directly within the sphere of art. Hence his theoretical stance had a direct bearing on his own activity. Second, as a result of his training as a medical psychiatrist, he turned to Freud and integrated elements of psychoanalytic theory into his thought before he made any formal approach to Marxism. In some ways Freud played the same kind of role for Breton as Georg Simmel or Max Weber for Lukács, but Breton's interest in Freud took him into the domain of psychology whereas for Lukács the engagement was with sociology. Thus when Breton read Marx or Lenin it was in relation to the mind, rather than in relation to society as with Lukács. Third, Breton, despite his Hegelianism, insisted always on retaining the specificity and autonomy of artistic revolution, intellectually and organizationally.

Breton spelled out his position very clearly from the beginning. Thus in the "Second Surrealist Manifesto" he sets himself the question: "Do you believe that literary and artistic output is a purely individual phenomenon? Don't you think that it can or must be the reflection of the main currents which determine the social and political evolution of humanity?" He rephrases the question in his answer: "The only question one can rightly raise concerning [literary or artistic output] is that of the *sovereignty of thought.*" Quoting Engels, he then concludes that art, as a mode of thought, is "sovereign and limitless by its nature, its vocation, potentially and with respect to its ultimate goal in history; but lacking sovereignty and limited in each of its applications and in any of its several states." Thus art "can only oscillate between the awareness of its inviolate autonomy and that of its utter dependence." The logic of Breton's argument presumes that it is the task of the social revolution to get rid of that limiting "dependence" on economic and social determinations, but meanwhile art should fiercely guard its "inviolate autonomy." He goes on to dismiss the idea of proletarian art and concludes that "just as Marx's forecasts and predictions have proved to be accurate, I can see nothing which would invalidate a single word of Lautréamont's with respect to events of interest only to the mind."[38]

When he wrote this, Breton was still a party member. It was not until 1933 that the break came, despite Breton's public support for Trotsky, his rift with Louis Aragon over the subordination of art to party politics, and his increasing exasperation at the cult of labor in the Soviet Union. (André Thirion, a Communist surrealist, wrote: "I say shit on all those counter-revolutionaries and their miserable idol, WORK!"—a position later taken up by the Situationists.)[39] After leaving the party, his line remained constant. In the 1942 "Prolegomena to a Third Surrealist Manifesto or Not," he explains that theoretical systems "can reasonably be considered to be nothing but tools on the carpenter's workbench. This carpenter is *you*. Unless you have gone stark raving mad, you will not try to make do without all those tools except one, and to stand up for the plane to the point of declaring that the use of hammers is wrong and wicked." For Breton, Marxist and Freudian theory, like politics and art, were distinct but compatible, each with its own object and its own goals. Breton did not try to develop an integrated "Freudo-Marxism" (like Wilhelm Reich or Herbert Marcuse), but maintained the specificity of each in its own domain, psyche and society. It should be clear what

the implications were when the Situationists later rejected Breton and accepted Lukács.[40]

For Breton, the transformation of everyday life moved on a different time scale from that of the revolution. It could take place for *individuals* here and now, however transiently and imperfectly. In Breton's interpretation of Freud, we find that everyday reality can satisfy us all too little. As a result we are forced to act out our desires as fantasies, thus compensating "for the insufficiencies of our actual existence." But anyone "who has any artistic gift," rather than retreating into fantasy or displacing repressed desires into symptoms, can "under certain favorable conditions" sublimate desires into artistic creation, thus putting the world of desire in positive contact with that of reality, even managing to "turn these desire-fantasies into reality." In his book *Communicating Vessels* Breton describes how his dreams reorganize events of everyday life (the "day's residues" in Freudian terms) into new patterns, just as everyday life presents him with strange constellations of material familiar from his dreams.[41] The two supposedly distinct realms are in fact "communicating vessels." Thus Breton does not argue for dreams over everyday life (or vice versa) but for their reciprocal interpermeation as value and goal.

Breton's concept of everyday life reminds us of how Freud in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* mapped out the paths by which desire (*Wunsch*) inscribes itself in everyday gestures and actions. Breton wanted to recast this involuntary contact between unconscious desire and reality by a voluntary form of communication in which, as in poetry, the semantic resources of the unconscious, no longer dismissed after Freud's work as meaningless, were channeled by the artist, consciously lifting the bans and interdictions of censorship and repression, but not seeking consciously to control the material thus liberated. For Breton, Hegel provided the philosophical foundation for a rejection of dualism—there was no iron wall between subject and object, mind and matter, pleasure principle and reality principle, dream (everynight life, so to speak) and waking everyday life. We should be equally alert to the potential of reality in our dreams and fantasies and of desire in our mundane reality. As Breton succinctly put it, the point was both to change the world and to interpret it.

In many ways, Breton was less hostile to the scientific approach than was Lukács, less ingrained in his romanticism. For Lukács science ruled the realm of human knowledge of nature, whereas human history itself was the province of dialectical philosophy, of a coming-to-consciousness of the objective world that was simultaneously the attainment of self-consciousness. Breton, on the other hand, was quite happy to accept the scientific status of historical materialism with its objective laws and propositions about reality, provided that equal status was given to poetry with its allegiance to the unconscious, to the pleasure principle. Thus Breton was completely unconcerned by any concept of consciousness, class or otherwise. For him, there was the possibility of science—the concern of somebody else, since he lacked the totalizing spirit—and there was poetry, the field of unconscious desire, with which he was intensely concerned while recognizing the claims of science and orthodox Marxism in almost all his public pronouncements. It is no wonder that Breton's Hegelianism (based, we should remind ourselves, on the *Logic*) was so inimical and seemed so scandalously inept to the mainstream of Marxists and existentialists who read Hegel, in con-

trast, through the *Phenomenology of Mind*, or through a totalizing theory of history.[42]

Debord's rejection of surrealism focused mainly on the blind alleys and wrong turnings down which Breton's faith in the unconscious and belief in "objective chance" (a phrase, incidentally, borrowed from Engels) came to lead him in his later years. Increasingly, Breton began to dabble distractedly in occultism, spiritualism, and parapsychology, to become a magus rather than a poet. Debord's refusal to accept Breton's supernaturalism led him to deny any role to the unconscious and to be extremely sceptical about Freud in general. (In *Society of the Spectacle* he toys with the idea of a "social unconscious" and concludes, "where the economic *id* was, there *ego* [*le je*] must come about.")[43] Thus in the 1950s, Debord joined the Lettrist movement and then split from it to form the Lettrist International with a few friends. Lettrism sought to go beyond the schism between abstract and figurative art (which marked West and East as well as different trends within surrealist painting) by reintroducing the word into the sphere of the visual (*metagraphie*), establishing a kind of interzone between dadaist word-collage and concrete poetry. Lettrists, under the leadership of Isidore Isou, also used a pseudo-technical vocabulary of neologism and sought to combine technical innovation with neo-dadaist scandal.[44]

Despite opting for Lettrism rather than surrealism, Debord was still able to collaborate with the Belgian surrealists around *Les lèvres nues* in the late fifties, and he continued to recognize the legacy he had inherited from surrealism (albeit in mutilated form) while also striving to supersede it—to go beyond the realization of art to its suppression, that is, its integration into the totality through its own self-negation. What this meant in effect was both the inversion of surrealism (the ego, rather than censoring unconscious desire, was to consciously free the self from the determinism of the unconscious) and the displacement of the surrealist notion of poetic freedom as the uncompromising release of repressed desire into the practical and conventionally political register of council communism. This displacement also involved, of course, a semantic shift in the meaning of the word *desire* (from unconscious to conscious) that enabled the SI to endorse the surrealist slogan "Take your desires for reality" adopted by the Enragés at Nanterre (rather than the suspect "Power to the imagination" launched by the 22 March group).[45] The poetic revolution *must be* the political revolution and vice versa, unconditionally and in full self-consciousness.

However, the LI around Debord was not the only channel by which surrealist and Marxist thought reached the SI. The artists from the COBRA movement brought with them their own revision of surrealism and their own political positions and theories. Asger Jorn (fig. 3.10), in particular, was not only a prolific artist and dedicated organizer, but also a compulsive writer and theorist. The first phase of the SI was marked as much by Jorn as by Debord and though Jorn resigned from the group in 1961, his influence was lasting. He was never criticized or denounced by Debord, either through the period of the schism (when Jorn collaborated with both parties, under different false names) or during the highly politicized period before and after 1968. Debord paid a moving posthumous tribute to his old comrade (Jorn died in 1973) in his essay in *Le jardin d'Albisola* (1974), a book of photographs of the ceramic garden Jorn had built in Albisola, northern Italy in the late 1950s, the time of their first contact.[46]

3.10
Asger Jorn (on the right), with Guy Debord (left)
and Michèle Bernstein (center), in Paris

IV

COBRA (the name originates from the initial letters of Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) was formed by a group of artists from Denmark, Holland, and Belgium (including Jorn and Constant) in November 1948.[47] In broad terms, COBRA was an outgrowth of the disenchantment with surrealism by artists whose political ideas were formed during the Resistance. After Breton returned to Paris, he took a militantly anti-Communist line politically and sought to reimpose his own views and tastes on surrealist groups that had flourished independently during his exile. These artists were unwilling to break with Communist comrades with whom they had worked in the struggle against the German occupation and wanted to see surrealism move forward onto new, experimental ground, rather than revive prewar trends, especially towards abstraction in painting and supernaturalism in ideology.

After the Liberation, groups of French and Belgian Communists split with Breton to form the Revolutionary Surrealist movement, but then split among themselves over how to respond to Communist party attacks on even pro-Communist surrealism (the French wanted to dissolve the group, the Belgians disagreed) and over abstract art (the French in favor, the Belgians against). Meanwhile, Christian Dotremont, a poet and leader of the Belgian faction, had made contact with Jorn, Constant, and their friends. They too had been formed by the Resistance and were active in small avant-garde groups. At the end of the war, Jorn returned to Paris (where he had studied with Fernand Léger and worked with Le Corbusier in the late 1930s). There he met members of the French surrealist movement who later joined the Revolutionary Surrealists, and also Constant, with whom he struck up a friendship. He even went on a pilgrimage to visit André Breton, who dubbed him "Swedenborgian" but reportedly "got lost in the labyrinth of theories delivered sometimes rather abruptly in Jorn's gravelly French." There had already been a definite surrealist influence on Danish painting, but of a diluted, eclectic, and stylized kind. Despite his initial sympathy and interest Jorn felt the need to find a new direction.[48]

Later the same year (December 1946) Jorn went north to Lapland to spend time in retreat, reading and writing, developing the outlines of a heterodox Marxist theory of art. Before the war, Jorn had been deeply influenced by the Danish syndicalist Christian Christensen, and he continued to honour Christensen, paying homage to him in the pages of the journal *Internationale situationniste* many decades later. During the Resistance Jorn left syndicalism for communism, but he always retained the libertarian principles he had learned from Christensen as well as a faith in direct action and collective work. The theoretical project Jorn set himself was massive and arduous. Essentially he wanted to recast elements from surrealism (magic, child art, "primitive" art, automatism) and combine these with strong strands of Scandinavian romanticism and libertarian activism within a materialist and Marxist framework.[49]

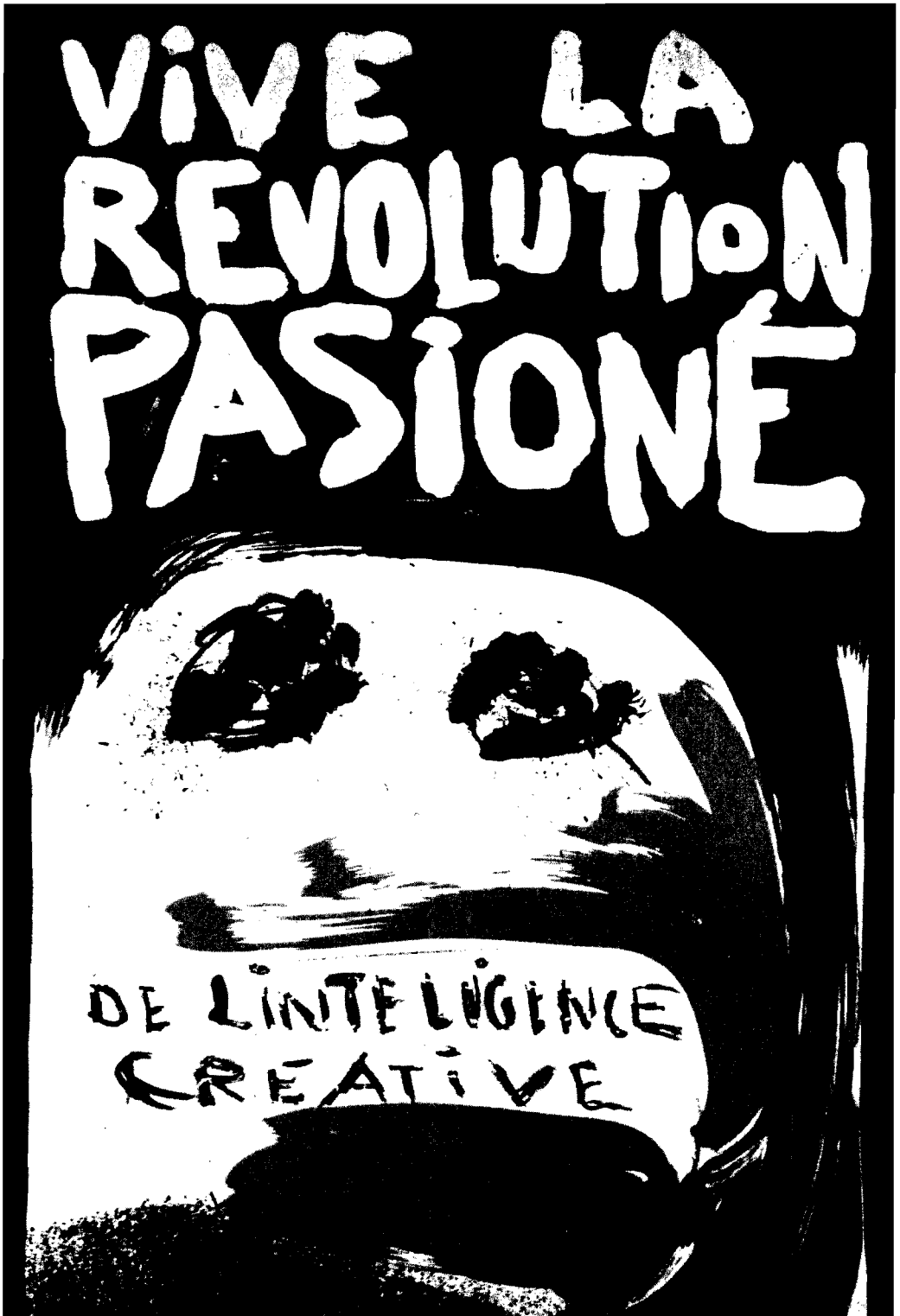
Jorn began by defining materialism in relation to nature. Materialist art would express the natural being of humans as well as their social being. It would be on the side of instinctive vitality and would involve physical gesture. European art was vitiated by its classical heritage, its metaphysical overvaluation of reason and the ideal. The "materialist attitude to life" must involve the expression of natural rhythms and passions, rather than seeking to subordinate activity to a sovereign reason or engage in

the unnatural and slavish copying of nature. Materialist art, therefore, was Dionysiac rather than Apollonian; it was on the side of festival and play—"spontaneity, life, fertility and *movement*." Jorn consistently attacked classicism (and its surrogates, realism and functionalism) and favored instead the "oriental" and the "nordic," which he associated with ornament and magical symbolism respectively. (It is interesting that Breton, in the "First Manifesto of Surrealism" also celebrates the nordic and the oriental as privileged fields for the "marvellous.") The nordic especially fascinated Jorn, who worked closely with the eminent Professor P. V. Glob and other scholars on studies of prehistoric and ancient Scandinavian society and art.[50] Jorn believed that the intensively local and the extensively cosmopolitan should mutually reinforce each other.

Jorn never really completed his theoretical task, though he published a vast number of articles and books in addition to leaving many unpublished manuscripts. He wrestled continuously with the problems of the dialectic, drawing not directly on Hegel but on Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* and *Anti-Dühring*. He tended to reduce the dialectic to the simple combination of opposites into a unity, and then be uncertain how to unsettle this new synthesis that itself threatened to develop in a one-sided way. In the end he even invented a new logic of "trialectics"! There is an aspect to Jorn's theoretical work that is reminiscent of Dietzgen or Bogdanov, an attraction to forms of mystical monism, as he strives to reconcile Søren Kierkegaard or Emanuel Swedenborg with Engels and the dialectic of nature. Often too he seems caught between the constraints of system building and spontaneous impulses towards provocation and proliferation, which spring no doubt from his libertarian background.

Constant, though rather more sparing in his prose, developed a line of thought similar to that of Jorn, but much simpler. For Constant, surrealism had been right in its struggle against constructivism ("objective formalism") but had become too intellectualized. It was necessary to find new ways of expressing the impulse that lay behind surrealism in order to create a popular, libertarian art. In his painting, Constant, like Jorn, developed a style that was neither abstract nor realist, but used figurative forms that drew on child art and the motifs of magical symbolism without effacing the differentiating trace of physical gestures. For both Constant and Jorn, art was always a process of research, rather than the production of finished objects. Both were influenced by libertarian syndicalism—Jorn through Christensen, Constant via the Dutch tradition of Pannekoek and Gorter. They stressed the role of the creative impulse, of art as an expression of an attitude to life, dynamic and disordered like a popular festival, rather than a form of ideational production (fig. 3.11).

In Brussels, Christian Dotrement was of course much closer to surrealism than Jorn or Constant, much more influenced by French culture.[51] The COBRA group in general had an ambivalent relationship with Paris. Dotrement, as the closest, perhaps experienced this love-hate relationship most intensely. In the immediate postwar years he was attracted immediately to Lefebvre's critique of everyday life. Lefebvre seemed to offer the possibility of an alternative to surrealism and existentialism that was Communist without being orthodox. Art should pair itself with the critical spirit to transform consciousness through "experiments on everyday life." At the same time, Dotremont was deeply influenced by the work of Gaston Bachelard, whose works on poetic reverie and the four elements had been



3.11
Asger Jorn
Vive la revolution pasioné
(Live the Passionate Revolution)
Poster, 1968

appearing through the early 1940s. Bachelard stressed the distinction between images of perception and those of the active imagination that allowed us to see, for instance, figures and scenes in the flames of the fireplace or the whorls of wood. For COBRA artists, Bachelard pointed to a third path between realism and the delineation of purely mental dreams and fantasies by one section of surrealist painters, while also avoiding the abstraction of the rest of the surrealists. After he was introduced to Bachelard's work, Jorn too was deeply impressed. At the museum he instituted at Silkeborg in Denmark there is a startling and magnificent portrait of Bachelard, one of the few he ever painted.

COBRA thus brought together elements from surrealism, a commitment to revolutionary politics, an openness to experimentation and new ideas, and a determination to make art that was materialist, festive, and vital. COBRA wanted to displace the three major contenders in the Paris art world: the decomposing School of Paris (which sought to unite a refined cubism with a pallid fauvism), orthodox Bretonian surrealism, and the various forms of abstract and nonfigurative art. By the time the movement dissolved in 1951, after only three years of existence, it had both succeeded triumphantly and failed miserably. It triumphed historically but failed in its immediate aims in that it proved impossible at that time either to set up alternative art centers to Paris or to conquer the Paris art world from the outside. Although many of the COBRA artists stayed in loose touch, the group broke up organizationally and geographically. Jorn and Constant both ended up in the Situationist movement (which underwent the same problems between Paris and the COBRA capitals). In the end, of course, COBRA was recognized at its full value, but not until Paris was displaced as an art center—first by New York, then by a redistribution of influence within Europe (and eventually between Europe and New York).[52]

The immediate reasons for the breakup of the group were organizational and political, personal and material. The Danish group pursued a life of its own (like ostriches, Dotremont complained, in contrast to the French, who were often more like giraffes with their heads held high in the air); the Dutch and the Belgians began to drift to Paris, and Paris in turn began to absorb elements of COBRA back into the mainstream; personal difficulties (Jorn went off with Constant's wife) threatened to divide close friends. The COBRA artists were often literally starving. Jorn described in a letter to Dotremont how he and his family were forced to "sleep on the floor so that we don't have to buy a bed" in a studio without gas or electricity. Both Jorn and Dotremont suffered from tuberculosis, a disease promoted and aggravated by poverty, and at the time of COBRA's dissolution they were both hospitalized in the same clinic in Denmark.

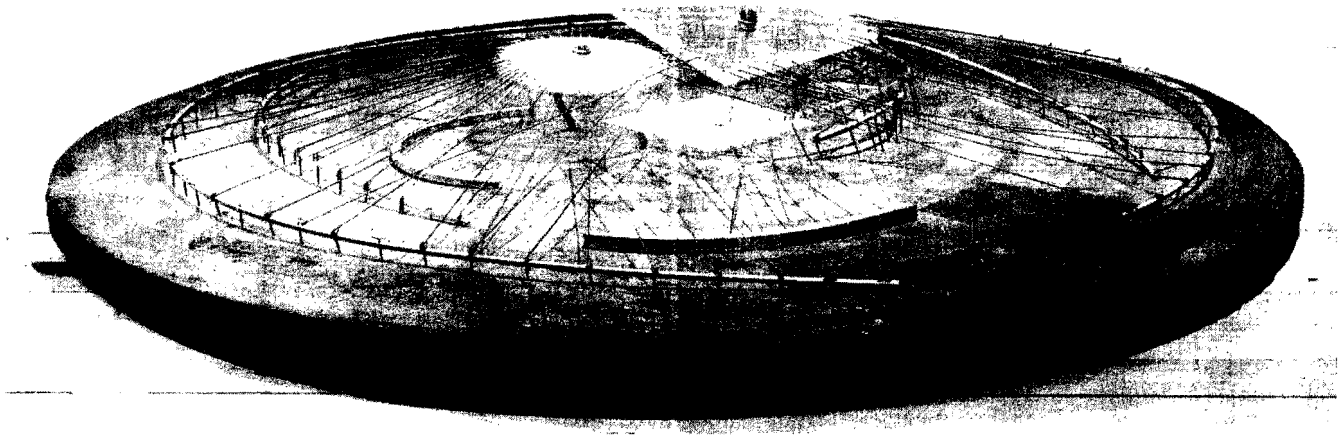
But political problems played a part too. The COBRA artists were militant in the Communist party (Dotremont) or sympathetic to it, even if inactive (Constant, Jorn). But the brief heyday of the Liberation was soon halted by the tightening grip of Stalinism and the beginnings of the Cold War. When COBRA was formed and held its first exhibition in March 1949, it had friendly relations with the Communist parties. COBRA was able to maintain contact with the parallel ex-surrealist Bloc group in Czechoslovakia even after the 1948 seizure of power by the Communists in Prague. But, in 1949, with the persistence of the Berlin blockade, the formation of NATO, the declaration of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the ever-increasing pressure against Tito from the Soviet

Union, Revolutionary Surrealist and COBRA artists began to feel themselves squeezed, caught in an untenable position. Later that year Dotremont tried unavailingly to stake out a claim for artistic autonomy at the Communist-controlled Salle Pleyel peace congress in Paris, and in November matters came to head at the COBRA exhibition in Amsterdam at the Stedelijk Museum. The wave of purges and show trials had already begun in Eastern Europe, and Dotremont's second attempt, at an experimental poetry reading, to clarify his political position led to barracking, forcible ejections, and fistfights. "When the words *Soviet* and *Russian* were mentioned, that brought the house down. . . . There was an undescribable uproar, anti-Soviet jeers and anti-French insults flying." Or as he put it in his reading: "La merde, la merde, toujours recommencée."[53] COBRA found itself caught in the crossfire between Communists and anti-Communists.

Dotremont, Constant, and Jorn reacted to this dilemma in different ways. Dotremont eventually became disenchanted with politics altogether and began to take the first steps towards de-politicizing the movement. Constant and Jorn disagreed. In a world in which "politics are (not without our complicity) put between us and the Universe like barbed wire," it was all the more important to struggle to maintain a genuine and direct relationship between art and politics, to reject stultifying labels and ideological prejudices—"Experimentation in these conditions has a historical role to play: to thwart prejudice, to unclog the senses, to unbutton the *uniforms of fear.*"[54] However, Constant and Jorn interpreted this historical role differently. Constant began to move out of painting altogether, collaborating with the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck and then, after the dissolution of COBRA, moving to London and devoting himself to research into experimental urbanism and city planning. Constant sought an art that would be public and collective in a way that easel painting could never be, a transposition into contemporary terms of the idea of the communal, festive use of space (fig. 3.12). Jorn persisted in painting after his recovery from tuberculosis, but was eager to find a way of reviving the COBRA project in a purer, more advanced form: a hope realized with the foundation of the SI after his meeting with Debord (in many ways, a second Dotremont, less problematic in some ways but, as it turned out, in others more).

Looking back at the COBRA movement, it is possible now to see many points of similarity between COBRA attitudes and those of Jackson Pollock or Willem de Kooning (who often looks like a displaced mutant of Dutch COBRA). Pollock, like Jorn, extolled the spontaneous, the vital, the ornamental (in Jorn's sense of the "arabesque"). His background too was in political mural art, which he rejected for a new approach, indebted to surrealism but departing from it.[55] Like Jorn he was influenced by indigenous ritual art—Indian sand painting and totems rather than Viking runes and ancient petroglyphs. Pollock's *Blue Poles* can be measured with Jorn's great *Stalingrad* now in the Silkeborg Museum. If Jorn always resisted the pull of abstraction, it was largely because of his political commitment, the quest for an art that would be neither bourgeois, Stalinist (social realist), or surrealist. Art, for Jorn, should always retain both the social and the realist poles or else it would be undialectical, one-sided, metaphysical. Jorn's experience of the Resistance and the vicissitudes of the Cold War in Europe prevented the headlong slide into individualist abstraction of his American counterparts (ideologically counterposed to Soviet social realism in Cold War terms).

3.12
Constant
Ontwerp voor een Zigeunerkamp
(Model for a Gypsy Camp), 1958



After leaving a Swiss sanatorium in 1954, Jorn began to visit Italy for his health and because it was relatively a cheap place to live. Indefatigable as ever, he had founded MIBI while still in the clinic, and soon he was able to combine some of the old COBRA artists with new Italian friends, drawn first from the Nuclear Painting movement led by Enrico Baj, and then (after 1955) the group gathered around Pinot-Gallizio in Alba. This new venture of Jorn's began after he was approached by the Swiss artist, Max Bill, who had been given the job of setting up the new Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, which was planned as a "new Bauhaus." At first, Jorn was enthusiastic about the project but he soon found himself in violent disagreement with Bill, who was linked to the "concrete art" movement of geometrical abstractionists and wanted the new Bauhaus to provide training in a technological approach to art, an updated rerun of the old productivist model. Soon Jorn was writing to Baj that "a Swiss architect, Max Bill, has been given the job of restructuring the Bauhaus where [Paul] Klee and [Wassily] Kandinsky taught. He wants to reproduce an academy without painting, without any research in the field of the image, fictions, signs and symbols, simply technical instruction."[56] As the references to Klee and Kandinsky suggest, this was in many respects a repeat of the controversies that had divided the old Bauhaus when László Moholy-Nagy was appointed and productivism triumphed.

Jorn was in favor of an ideal Bauhaus that would bring together artists in a collective project, in the spirit of William Morris or the Belgian socialist, Van der Velde, who had inspired Walter Gropius. But he was resolutely opposed to functionalism and what he regarded as a moralistic rationalism that threatened to exclude spontaneity, irregularity, and ornament in the name of order, symmetry, and puritanism. The polemic against the technological thinking of Bill brought Jorn to formulate a theoretical and polemical counterattack on the grounds of general aesthetics and urbanism. At the 1954 Triennale of Industrial Design in Milan, Jorn engaged in public debate with Bill on the theme of "Industrial Design in Society."[57] Jorn argued that the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier had been revolutionary in their day, but they had been wrong in subordinating aesthetics to technology and function, which had inevitably led towards standardization, automation, and a more regulated society. Thus Jorn began to venture into areas that brought him closer again to Constant, as well as to the members of the LI, who were simultaneously developing their own theories of unitary urbanism, psychogeography, and *dérive*.

V

In 1955 Jorn met Pinot-Gallizio, a partisan during the war who was then an independent Left councilman in his hometown of Alba and shared Jorn's interests in popular culture and archaeology. Together they set up an Experimental Laboratory as a prototype Imaginist Bauhaus, libertarian (without teachers or pupils, but only coworkers), aiming to unite all the arts, and committed to an anti-productivist aesthetic. In this context, Pinot-Gallizio began to develop his new experimental paints and painting techniques, drawing on his background as a chemist, and Jorn began to devote himself to collaborative works in ceramics and tapestry, seeking a contemporary style for traditional crafts and expanding his painting to new materials and forms. The next year, Pinot-Gallizio and Jorn organized a conference in Alba, grandly entitled the "First World Congress of Free Artists," which was attended by both Constant and Gil J Wolman, who was representing the LI (Debord himself did not attend). Wolman addressed the Congress, proposing common action between the Imaginist Bauhaus and the LI, citing Jorn, Constant, and the Belgian surrealist Marcel Mariën approvingly in his speech, as well as expounding the idea of unitary urbanism. The stage was now set for the foundation of the SI.

Besides a common approach to urbanism, there were other issues that linked Jorn, Pinot-Gallizio, and Constant with the LI: a revolutionary political position independent of both Stalinism and Trotskyism (and their artistic correlates, social realism and orthodox surrealism), a dedicated seriousness about the theory and goals of art combined with an unswerving avant-gardism, and a common interest in the transformation of everyday life, in festivity, in play, and in waste or excess (as defined by the norms of a purposive rationalism). The journal of the LI was called *Potlatch* after the great feasts of the Northwest Coast Indians of Canada and Alaska, in which the entire wealth of a chief was given away or even "wastefully" destroyed. Described by Franz Boas (and his native informants) and then by Marcel Mauss in his classic *The Gift*, the idea had fascinated both Bataille and Lefort of *Socialisme ou barbarie*, who reviewed Mauss's book in *Les temps modernes* when it was reissued after the war. Potlatch was taken to exemplify the opposite of an exchange or market economy—objects were treated purely as gifts rather than as commodities in the setting of a popular feast.[58] Generosity and waste rather than egotism and utility determined their disposal.

The theme of festivity is linked, for Jorn, with that of play. In his 1948 essay, "Magi og Skønne Kunster" (Magic and the fine arts), Jorn observed that "if play is continued among adults in accordance with their natural life-force, i.e., in retaining its creative spontaneity, then it is the *content* of ritual, its humanity and life, which remains the primary factor and the form changes uninterruptedly, therefore, with the living content. But if play lacks its vital purpose then ceremony fossilizes into an empty form which has no other purpose than its own formalism, the *observance of forms*." Festivity is thus ritual vitalized by play. In the same way, the formal motif of art must be vitalized by the creative figure, the play of calligraphy. This concept of play linked Jorn closely to Constant, who was deeply influenced by Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, published in Holland just before the war.[59] Huizinga argued that man should be seen not simply as *homo faber* (man as maker) or *homo sapiens* (man as thinker) but also as *homo ludens* (man as player). He traces the role of play both in popular festivities and in art—in the rhythms of music and dance, as well as masks, totems, and "the magical mazes of ornamental motifs." Huizinga's thought converged in France with

that of Roger Caillois, who also made the link to festival and thence to leisure: "*Vacation* is the successor of the festival. Of course, this is still a time of expenditure and free activity, when regular work is interrupted, but it is a phase of *relaxation* and not of *paroxysm*."[60] Play too had a crucial place both in Breton's thought and Sartre's. In the background, of course, was Friedrich Schiller's celebration of play in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man.*

In 1957 the SI was proclaimed at Cosio d'Arroscia and the collaboration between Jorn and Debord was sealed by the publication of a jointly composed book (a successor both to COBRA's "writing with two hands" and Lettrist *metagraphie).* This work, *Fin de Copenhague*, like *Mémoires* (see fig. 7.1–7.5) published two years later in 1959, was both a *détournement* of found images and words and a piece of impromptu, spontaneous, collective work in the festive spirit.[61] The common ground between the different currents in the SI was reinforced and enriched by theoretical publication in the group's journal and by joint artistic projects. These established both an enlarged aesthetic scope and a clarified political direction to which all the parties could contribute. The next task was to make a dramatic intervention in the art world and this was achieved in 1959, when both Jorn and Pinot-Gallizio held exhibitions in Paris in May, and Constant at the Stedelijk in Amsterdam later that year.

Jorn's show of *Modifications* was intended, in a startlingly original manner, to position his work not only within the Situationist context of *détournement*, but also between Jackson Pollock and kitsch (the two antinomic poles proposed by Clement Greenberg, who valued them as good and evil respectively) in a gesture that would transcend the duality of the two. In his catalogue notes Jorn stressed that an art work was always simultaneously an object and an intersubjective communication, a sign.[62] The danger for art was that of falling back into being simply an object, an end in itself. On the one hand, Pollock produced paintings that were objectified traces of an "act in itself," through which he sought to realize his own self in matter for his own pleasure, rather than as the realization of an intersubjective link. The action of painting failed to be effective as an act of communication. On the other hand, the anonymous kitsch paintings that Jorn bought in the market were merely objects in themselves with no trace of subjective origin at all, simply free-floating in time and space. By overpainting them in his own hand, Jorn sought to restore a subjectivity to them, to reintegrate them into a circuit of communication, a dialectic of subject and object.[63]

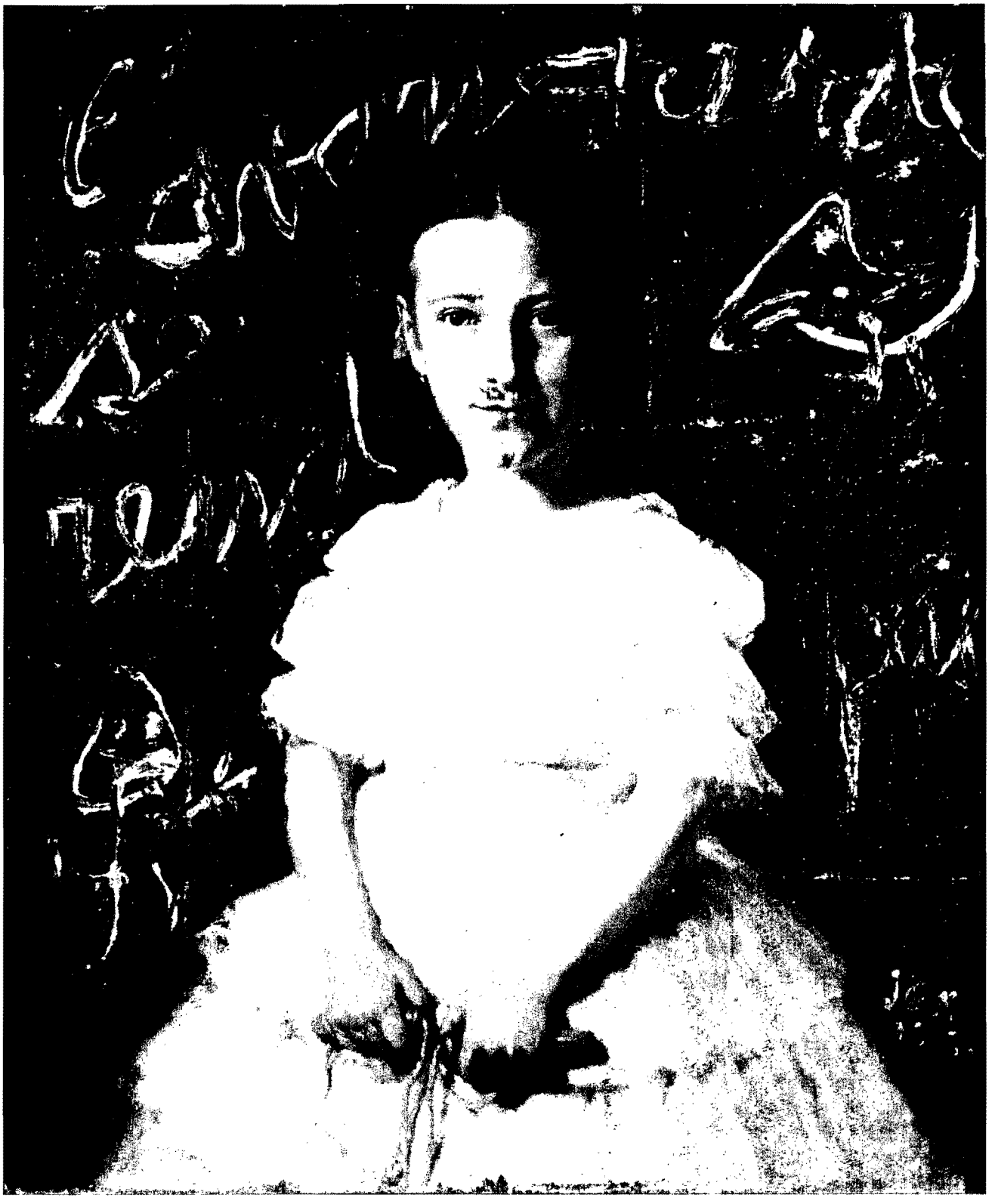
Jorn characterized Pollock as an oriental painter (on the side of abstract ornament) and the kitsch works as classical (on the side of representation, both idealizing and naturalistic). In the past, Jorn had himself taken the side of the oriental against the classical. Thus he commented on the *Laocoön*, "Laocoön's fate—the fate of the upper class," identifying the snakes (the serpentine, oriental line) with the natural, the materialist, the revolutionary classes, and the representation of Laocoön (the classical form) with the ideal, with repression and sublimation. However, in the case of his own *Modifications*, Jorn characterized his project as nordic rather than oriental, going beyond the oriental/classical antinomy. Here the nordic, separated out and set over and against the oriental, implied the use of symbolic motifs rather than the abstract ornament. Thus the paintings were magical actions that revitalized dead objects through subjective inscription, transforming them into living signs (collectively appropriated motifs, which were also spontane-

ously subjective figures). The kitsch paintings were not simply *détournées* but were sacrificial objects in a festive fertility rite. Objectified beings were broken open, vandalized, and mutilated to release the "becoming" latent within them.

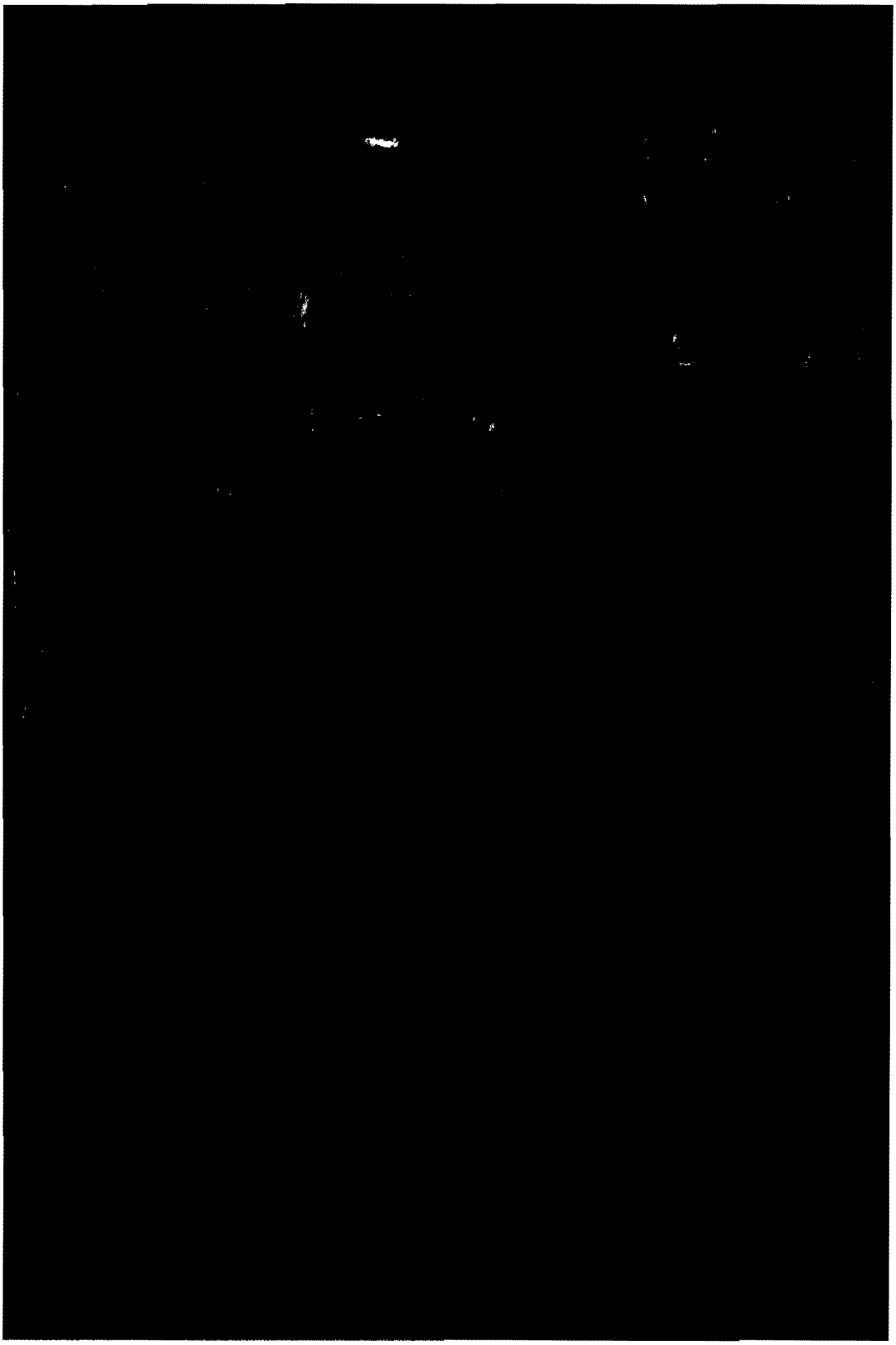
At the same time, Jorn saw the *Modifications* as a celebration of kitsch. It was only because kitsch was popular art that a living kernel could still be found in it. In his very first contribution to the Danish art magazine *Helbesten*, during the war, Jorn had written in praise of kitsch in his essay "Intimate Banalities" (1941). Jorn wanted to get beyond the distinction between high and low art. While his sympathies were always on the side of the low in its struggle against the high, Jorn also wanted to unite the two dialectically and supersede the split between the two, which deformed all human subjectivity. In this article he praised both the collective rage for celluloid flutes that swept a small Danish town (trivial, yet festive) and the work of a tattoo artist (an ornamental supplement, both mutilation and creation, like that of the *Modifications* themselves). Further, in combining high with low, Jorn also wanted to deconstruct the antinomy of "deep" and "shallow." In "Magi og Skønne Kunster," he had long previously remarked how "today we are unable to create general artistic symbols as the expression of more than a single individual reality. Modern artists have made desperate attempts to do this. The basic problem is that a general concept must be created by the people themselves as a communal reality, and today we do not have that kind of fellowship among the people which would allow that. If the artist has plumbed the depths, like Klee, he has lost his contact with the people, and if he has found a popular means of expression, like [Vladimir] Mayakovsky, he has, in a tragic way, betrayed the deeper side of himself, because a people's culture which combines the surface issues with the deeper things does not exist." Thus, for Jorn, the deconstruction of antinomies could only be fully realized through social change, but in the meantime artistic gestures like those of the *Modifications* could symbolically enact their possibility and thus help form the missing fellowship (see the four following color plates).

Finally, for Jorn, revitalization was also revaluation. The act of modification restored value as well as meaning. Here, Jorn returned implicitly to the Marxist theory of value, which he was to develop in a personal way. Jorn (in a way reminiscent of Bataille's postulate of a "general economy" that incorporated a domain of excess excluded from the "restricted" economy of exchange and utility) reformulated the Marxist formula C-M-C into the expanded N-U-C-M-C-N-U (nature-use-commodity-money) as the basis for a socialist economy in which the economic cycle was contained in the natural cycle, transforming "economic utility" into "natural use."[64] Jorn always insisted that Marxism was not simply the theory of exploitation as the general form of extraction of a surplus, because a surplus was necessary for socialist society if it was to go beyond functionalism and utility to excess and luxurious enjoyment, the social forms of creative, playful ornament. Socialism was ultimately based on natural rights, and the realm of freedom could only be attained by reintegrating history into nature. Thus the transformation of paintings as commodities (objects bought in the market) into sites of spontaneous, natural creativity—the revaluation of exchange value as natural use value—was itself a prefiguration of a truly communal society.

Pinot-Gallizio and Constant followed different paths. Rather than seeking like Jorn to reinscribe unalienated



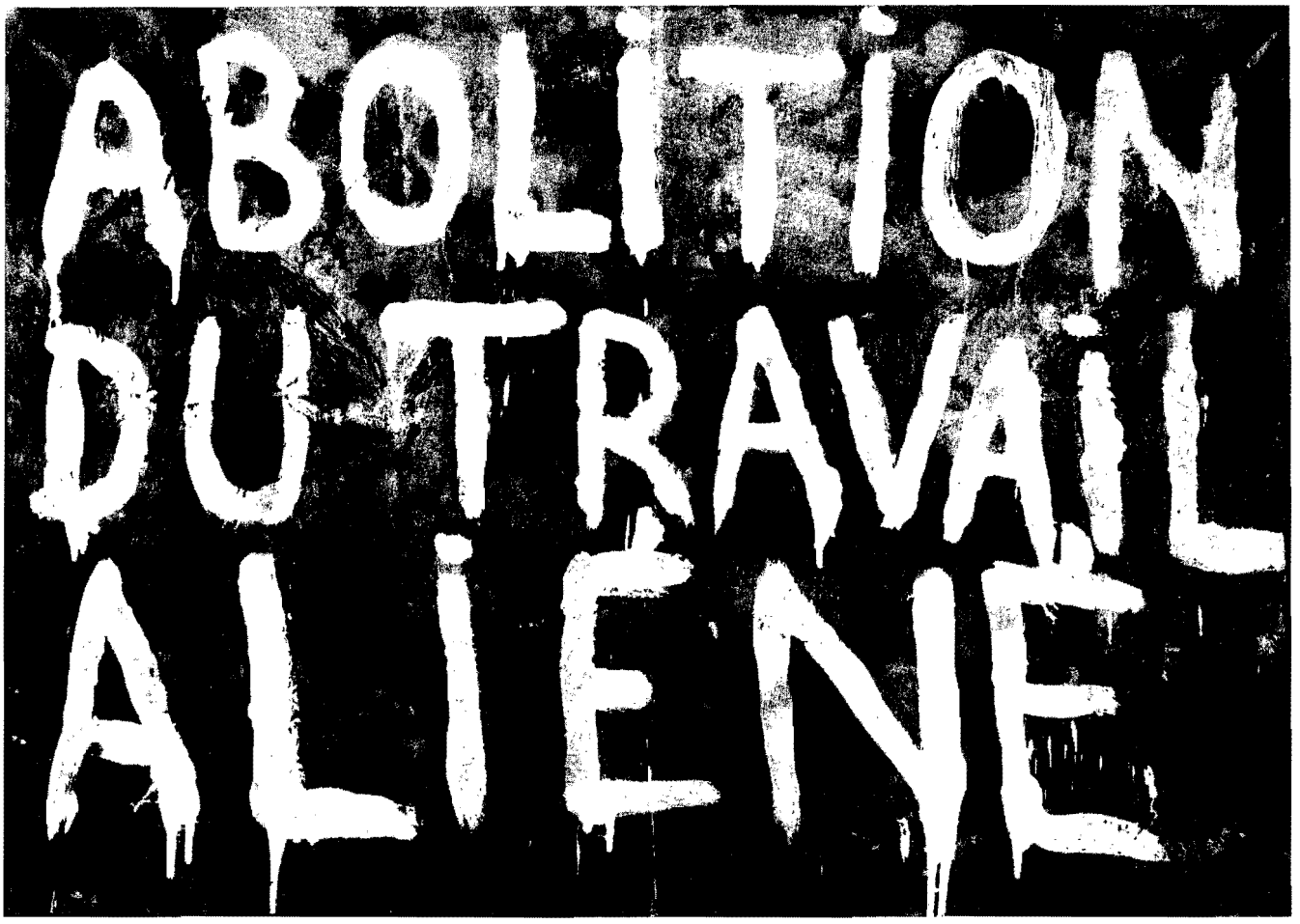
Asger Jorn
L'avant-garde se rend pas (The Avant-Garde Doesn't Give Up), 1962



Asger Jorn
Le pêcheur (The Fisherman), 1962

Asger Jorn
Paris by Night, 1959

Asger Jorn
Lockung (Temptation), 1960

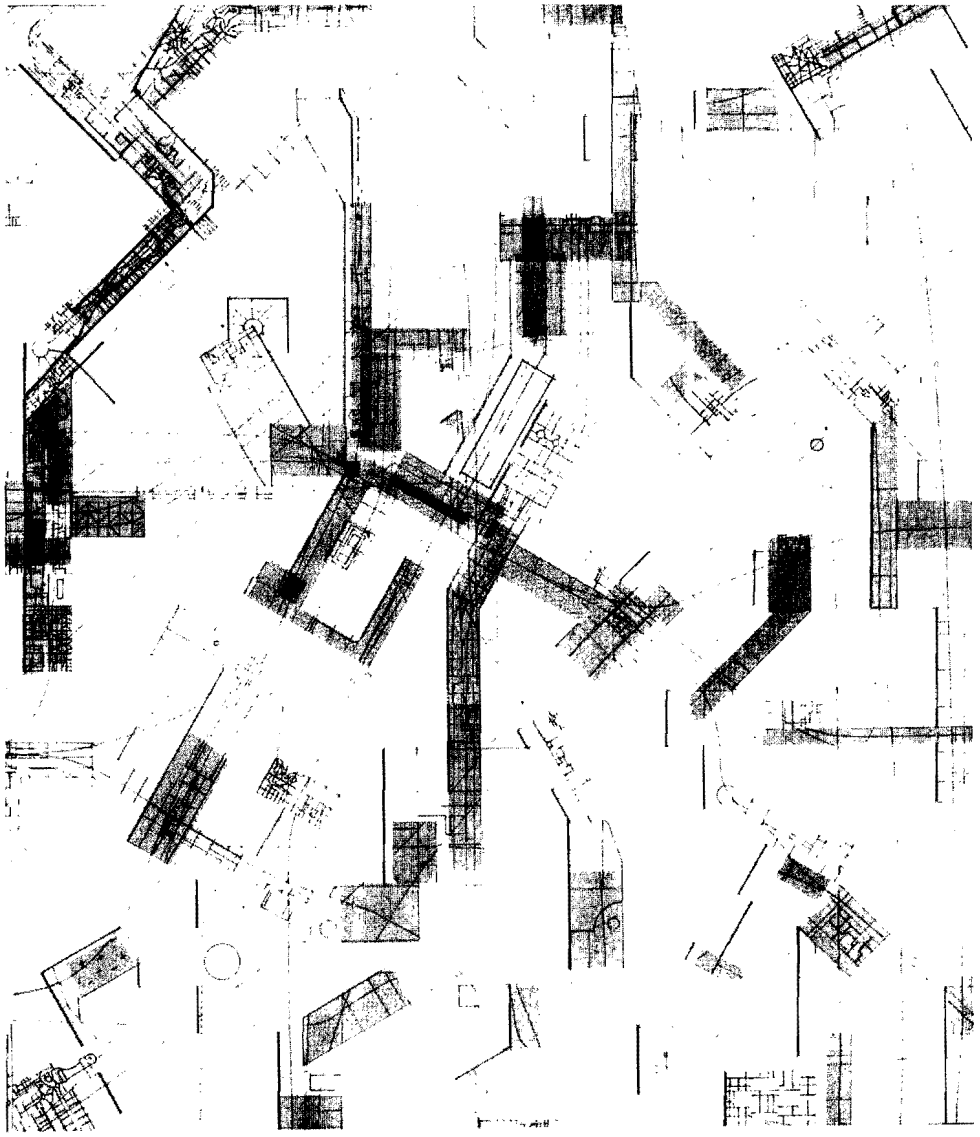


3.13
Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio/Guy Debord
Abolition du travail aliéné
(Abolition of Alienated Labor)

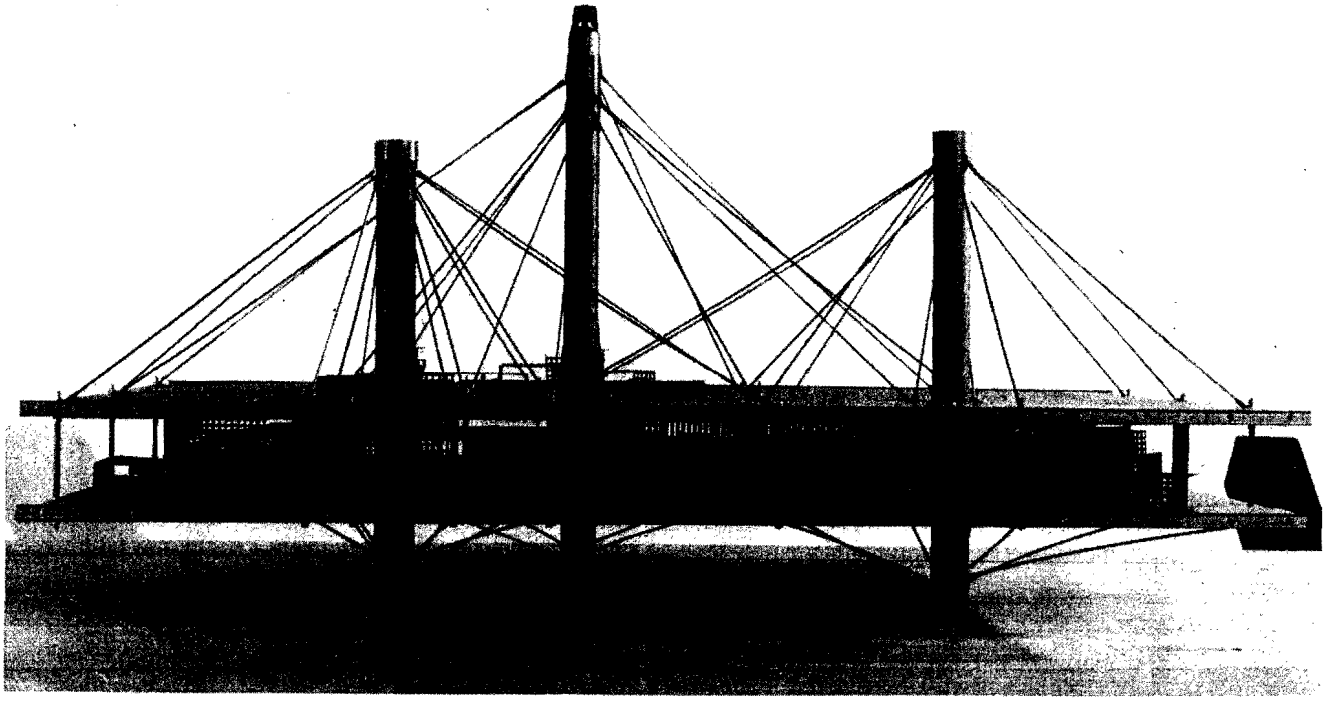
3.14
Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Pittura industriale
(Industrial painting),
Installation photograph,
Musée national d'art moderne,
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989

creativity into easel painting itself, albeit in an original, dialectical form, they each began to push beyond the limits of easel painting. For Pinot-Gallizio the economy of standardization and quantity, of unending sameness, must be superseded by a civilization of "standard-luxury," marked by unending diversity. Machines would be playful, in the service of *homo ludens* rather than *homo faber*. Free time, rather than being filled with banality and brainwashing, could be occupied in creating brightly painted *autostrade* (freeways), massive architectural and urbanistic constructions, fantastic palaces of synesthesia, the products of "industrial poetry," and sites of "magical-creative-collective" festivity (fig. 3.13). His exhibition in Paris was designed as the prototype cell of such a civilization. The gallery was draped all over (walls, ceiling, and floor) with paintings produced by Pinot-Gallizio's pioneering techniques of "industrial poetry" (fig. 3.14). The exhibition was to use mirrors and lights to create the effect of a labyrinth, filled with violent colors, perfumes, and music, producing a drama that would transform visitors into actors. Pinot-Gallizio's aim, encouraged by Debord, was to create in one ambiance a premonitory fragment of his totalizing futurist vision.[65]

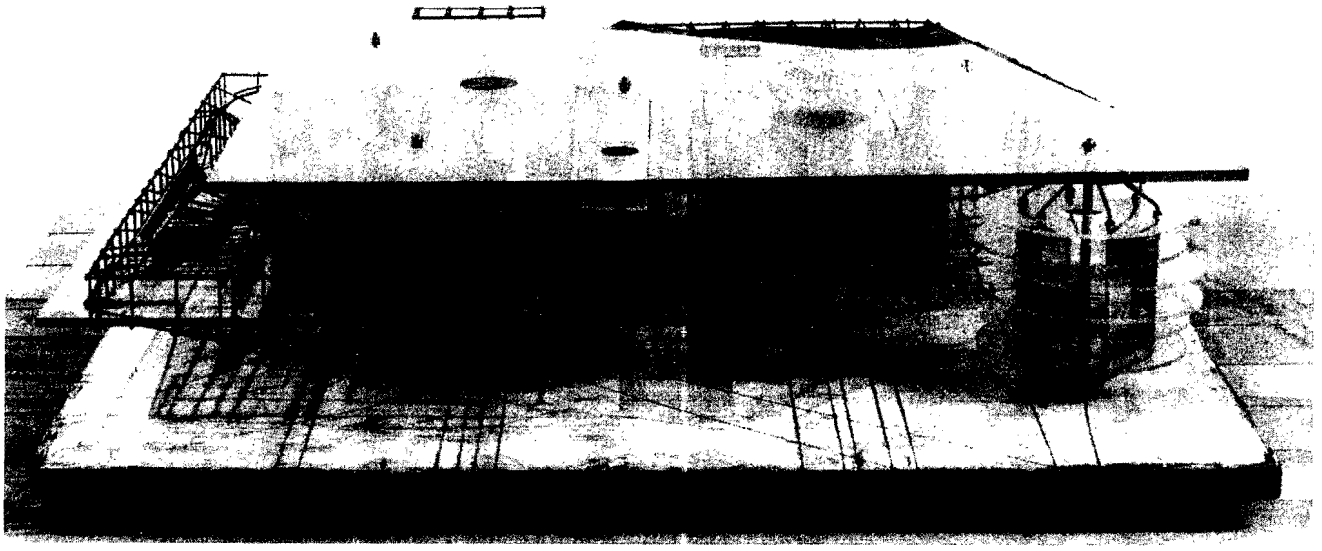
Constant's *New Babylon* project was similar to Pinot-Gallizio's in its conceptual basis but very different in its style. In his 1959 essay "Le grand jeu à venir" (The great game to come), Constant called for a playful rather than functional urbanism, a projection into the imaginary future of the discoveries made by the Lettrist method of *dérive*, drifting journeys through actually existing cities to experience rapid, aimless changes of environment (ambiance) and consequent changes in psychological state (fig. 3.15).[66] Constant had been inspired by Pinot-Gallizio, who had become the political representative of the gypsies who visited Alba, to build a model for a



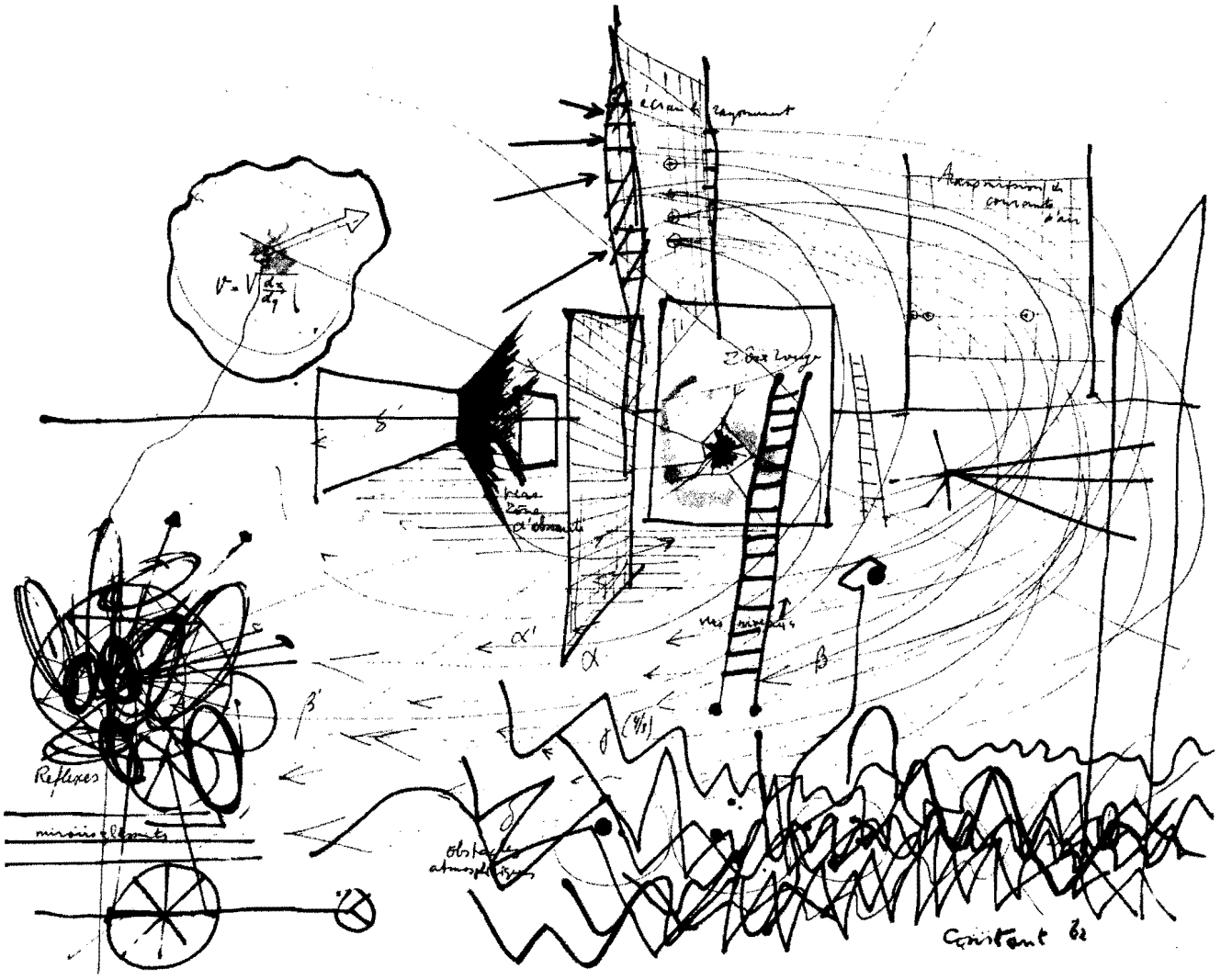
3.15
Constant
Labyratoire
(Labyratory), 1962



3.16
Constant
Hangende Sector
(Hanging Sector), 1960



3.17
Constant
Gele Sector
(Yellow Sector), 1958



3.18
Constant
Groep Sectoren
(Group Sector), 1962

nomadic encampment (see fig. 3.12). From this he developed to building architectural models of a visionary city (New Babylon), as well as making blueprints, plans, and elevations, moving out of painting altogether (fig. 3.16 and 3.17). Skeptical of the prospect of immediate political change, Constant set about planning the urban framework for a possible postrevolutionary society of the future. New Babylon was devised on the assumption of a technologically advanced society in which, through the development of automation, alienated labor had been totally abolished and humanity could devote itself entirely to play. It would be the ceaselessly changing, endlessly dramatic habitat of *homo ludens*, a vast chain of megastructures, each of which could be internally reorganized at will to satisfy the desires of its transient users and creators (fig. 3.18).[67]

Thus the SI launched itself into the art world, in Paris and Amsterdam, with exceptional ambition and bravura. Not only were the works formally pathbreaking, pushing up to and beyond the limits of painting, but their stakes, their theoretical engagement, went far beyond the contemporary discourse of art and aesthetics in its implications. It would be easy to look at Jorn's *Modifications*, for instance, as premonitions of postmodern "hybridity," but this would be to miss their theoretical and political resolve, their emergence out of and subordination to Jorn's general revolutionary project. There had not been such a fruitful interchange between art, theory, and politics since the 1920s. Yet, despite this, the Situationist intervention in the art world hardly lasted a year. In the summer of 1960 Pinot-Gallizio was expelled (he died in 1964) and Constant resigned, both as a result of disagreements and denunciations stemming from contacts they and/or their associates made in the art world outside the framework of the SI. In April of the next year, 1961, Jorn resigned as part of the upheaval that led to the schism of 1962, when Nash and the German SPUR group of artists (who had joined in 1959) were ousted and set up the dissident Second Situationist International and Situationist Bauhaus, which have lasted until the present, maintaining the project of a Situationist art, with vivid flares of provocation and festivity.[68]

The denial by Debord and his supporters of any separation between artistic and political activity, which precipitated the schism, led in effect not to a new unity within Situationist practice but to a total elimination of art except in propagandist and agitational forms. In fact, the SI simply reappropriated the orthodox Marxist and Leninist triad of theory, propaganda, and agitation that structured Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* while making every effort to avoid the model of leadership that went with Leninism. Theory displaced art as the vanguard activity, and politics (for those who wished to retain absolutely clean hands) was postponed until the day when it would be placed on the agenda by the spontaneous revolt of those who executed rather than gave orders. *Mirable dictu*, that day duly came to the surprise of the Situationists as much as anyone else, and the uprising was ignited, to an extent, by the impact of the preceding years of theoretical practice. The problem remained that the revolutionary subjectivity that irrupted into the objectified "second nature" of the society of the spectacle came from nowhere and vanished again whence it came. In terms of Situationist theory it represented a paroxysmic expansion and collapse of consciousness, detached from the historical process that faced the subject (before, during, and after) as an essentially undifferentiated negative totality.[69]

In a strange way the two legendary theoretical mentors of 1968, Debord and Louis Althusser, form mirror images of each other, complementary halves of the ruptured unity of Western Marxism. Thus Debord saw a decline in Marx's theory after the *Communist Manifesto* and the defeats of 1848, while Althusser, conversely, rejected everything before 1845. (They could both agree to accept the *Manifesto*, but otherwise near-total breakdown!) For Debord, everything after 1848 was sullied by an incipient economism and mechanism; for Althusser everything before 1845 was ruined by idealism and subjectivism. For Debord, the revolution would be the result of the subjectivity of the proletariat, "the class of consciousness." "Consciousness" had no place in Althusser's system, nor even subjectivity—he postulated a historical "process without a subject." When, after the defeat of 1968, both systems disintegrated, Leftists abandoned the grand boulevards of Totality for a myriad *dérives* in the winding lanes and labyrinthine back streets. Too many got lost.

The publication in France of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1960) and Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (1962) provided the basis for two fundamentally opposed totalizing myths: that of a rationalist pseudo-objectivity and that of an imaginary pseudo-subjectivity respectively, to be combatted on the terrain of Marxism by two antagonistic crusades, one precisely for a true revolutionary subjectivity (Debord) and the other for a true revolutionary objectivity (Althusser), each vitiated by the idealism and rationalism the other denounced.[70] One was, so to speak, abstractly romantic, the other abstractly classical. The unfulfilled dialectical project that remains (one that Jorn would have relished) is evidently that of rearticulating the two halves, each a one-sided development to an extreme of one aspect of the truth. Yet that one-sidedness is itself the necessary outcome of the pursuit of totality, with its concomitant critique of separation and refusal of specificity and autonomy. Ironically, Lukács's own analysis of the "society of manipulation" in *Conversations with Lukács*, published in 1967, the same year as *Society of the Spectacle*, takes up many of the same themes as Debord's book without the philosophical maximalism of Debord's own Lukácsianism.[71] We need to remember, too, André Breton's concept of the workbench and his insistence that compatibility is sufficient grounds for solidarity without the need to erase difference and totalize the protean forms of desire.

In 1978 Debord returned to the cinema to make *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni*, like his previous work a collage of found footage but with a sound track that is simultaneously an autobiographical, a theoretical, and a political reflection. He remembers Ivan Chtcheglov (the first formulator of unitary urbanism) and pays tribute to his dead comrades, Jorn and Pinot-Gallizio. He recapitulates the story of Lacenaire in Marcel Carné's classic film *Les enfants du paradis* (The children of paradise), long the object of his identification, like Dr. Omar and Prince Valiant.[72] He does not regret that an avant-garde was sacrificed in the shock of a charge: "Je trouve qu'elle était faite pour cela."[73] Avant-gardes have their day and then, "after them operations are undertaken in a much vaster theatre." The Situationist International left a legacy of great value. The wasteful luxury of utopian projects, however doomed, is no bad thing. We need not persist in seeking a unique condition for revolution, but neither need we forget the desire for liberation. We move from place to place and from time to time. This is true of art as well as politics.

Notes

1. For the history of the SI, see Mirella Bandini, *L'estetico il politico: Da Cobra all'Internazionale situazionista, 1948–1957* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1977), which also reprints a number of crucial documents, and Jean-Jacques Raspaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer, *L'Internationale situationniste: Chronologie/Bibliographie/Protagonistes (Avec un index de noms insultés)* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972), which, as the title indicates, includes much useful information. The full run of the SI journal is collected in *Internationale situationniste, 1958–69* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1975), and the "official" history of the movement is by Jean-François Marios, *Histoire de l'Internationale situationniste* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1989). In English, see Ken Knabb, ed. and trans., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981).

2. For COBRA, see Jean-Clarence Lambert, *Cobra*, trans. Roberta Bailey (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), and *Cobra, 1948–1951* (Paris: Association française d'action artistique, 1982), the catalogue of the exhibition held at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris (9 December 1982–20 February 1983). For the prehistory of the SI, see Gérard Berreby, ed., *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale situationniste* (Paris: Editions Allia, 1985). For Lettrism, see the self-presentation in Isidore Isou, *De l'impressionisme au lettrisme* (Paris: Filipacchi, 1974). See also Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) for an erudite and devoted account of Lettrism and its aftermath in the SI.

3. See Berreby, *Documents*, passim, and the journal of the SI, especially the first issue, for definitions. See also "Definitions" at the end of this volume.

4. See Guy Debord, *Rapport sur la construction des situations et les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale*, in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 607–19.

5. For group photographs, see the SI journal, passim.

6. The standard works on Jorn are the three volumes authored by Guy Atkins (with Troels Andersen), *Jorn in Scandinavia, 1930–1953* (New York: George Wittenborn, 1968), *Asger Jorn: The Crucial Years, 1954–1964* (New York: Wittenborn Art Books, 1977), and *Asger Jorn: The Final Years, 1965–1973* (London: Lund Humphries, 1980). See also Troels Andersen, *Asger Jorn* (Silkeborg: Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, 1974) and, for the *Modifications*, see Asger Jorn's essay "Peinture détourné," in *Vingt peintures modifées par Asger Jorn*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Galerie Rive Gauche, 1959); for a translation, see "Detourned Painting" in the section of Situationist documents in this volume, "A Selection of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World."

7. For Pinot-Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter*, see Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*.

8. For material on Constant, see Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*, and Constant [Nieuwenhuys], *New Babylon* (Den Haag: Gemeente Museum, 1974).

9. For the history of the "Nashist" Second Situationist International after the split, see Carl Magnus and Jörgen Nash et al., *Situationister i Konsten* (Sweden: Bauhaus situationniste, 1966) and the defense in Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture* (London: Aporia Press and Unpopular Books, 1988).

10. For Debord's films, see Guy Debord, *Contre le cinéma* (Aarhus, Denmark: L'Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé/Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie, 1964) and *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1978), which both contain full versions of the scripts of films made up to the date of publication. Sadly, the films themselves have been withdrawn by their maker. For an account of the place of Debord's films in the history of French experimental cinema, see Dominique Noguez, *Eloge du cinéma experimental: Définitions, jalons, perspectives* (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1979). See also Tom Levin's essay, "Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord," in this volume.

11. Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967). An unauthorized American translation was made by Fredy Perlman, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1970, repr. 1977 and 1983).

12. Georg Lukács's *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* first appeared in Berlin in 1923. Sections were translated into French in *Arguments*, nos. 3, 5, and 11, and a full French translation, *Histoire et conscience de classe*, was published in Paris in 1960. An English translation was not to appear for many years; see *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971).

13. The journal *Socialisme ou barbarie* first appeared in Paris in 1949 and ran for forty numbers until it ceased publication in 1965. For a brief account of the group, see Dick Howard, *The Marxian Legacy* (London: Macmillan, 1977)—bearing in mind the implications of the word *legacy*—

and, more importantly, the republication of Cornelius Castoriadis's writings for the journal in his two-volume *Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). The history of the group is also retold from the point of view of a participant (with much hindsight) by Jean-François Lyotard in his *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

14. See Mustapha Khayati, *De la misère en milieu étudiant* (Strasbourg: Union nationale des étudiants de France, Fédérative générale des étudiants de Strasbourg, 1966). This key text was widely and rapidly translated into many languages in pamphlet form and served as the main means by which Situationist ideas were introduced into the student movements. For an English translation, see Christopher Gray, *Ten Days That Shook the University: The Situationists at Strasbourg* (London: Situationist International, 1967).

15. See especially the last issue of the SI Journal, *Internationale situationniste* 12 (September 1969). For a rival viewpoint, refer to Edgar Morin and Claude Lefort et al., *Mai 1968: La brèche* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), with contributions from the founders of *Socialisme ou barbarie*. For an English account sympathetic to the Situationist milieu, see Angelo Quattrocchi and Tom Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968* (London: Panther, 1969), and for a retrospective history with a number of comments on the impact of Situationist ideas, see Ronald Fraser et al., *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

16. For Debord's own account of the aftermath of 1968, see *La véritable scission dans l'Internationale* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972) with its withering dismissal of the "pro-situ" wannabees of the period. For a concerned critique of the "simulationist" art boom of the eighties and its debt to the dry husks of Situationist thought, see Edward Ball, "The Beautiful Language of My Century," *Arts* 63 (January 1989), pp. 65–73 [Due to editorial error, this issue of *Arts* was mistakenly printed as *Arts* 65, no. 5 (January 1988) and may be catalogued as such—ED]. The most significant attempt to make use of Situationist graphic techniques within a militant political framework, reviving the tradition of agit and poster art, has been in the work of Jamie Reid, especially during the *Suburban Press* and Sex Pistols periods. For Jamie Reid, see *Up They Rise: The Incomplete Works of Jamie Reid* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) with texts by Jamie Reid and Jon Savage.

17. Karl Korsch's *Marxismus und Philosophie* was first published in Leipzig in 1923, with the first English translation (with an introduction by Fred Halliday) published in London in 1970; for the American edition, see *Marxism and Philosophy*, trans. Fred Halliday (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). Korsch, like Lukács, was translated into French by the *Arguments* group.

18. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (Paris, Editions Grasset, 1947). A second edition was published by L'Arche in 1958 with an extensive new introduction. In the interim Lefebvre had been compelled to make a self-criticism by the French Communist party, which he left after the Budapest uprising of 1956. An English translation, *Critique of Everyday Life*, is forthcoming from Verso in London (Autumn 1990).

19. For the *Arguments* group, see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975). After leaving the Communist party, Lefebvre became an editor of *Arguments*. In due course, the group was unsparingly denounced by the SI.

20. For the Left Bank culture of the period, see Ed van der Elsken, *Love on the Left Bank* (London: André Deutsch, 1957) and Guillaume Hanoteau, *L'âge d'or de Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (Paris: Denoël, 1965), which provide an appealing photographic and anecdotal record. For a somewhat more scholarly account, see Paul Webster and Nicholas Powell, *Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (London: Constable, 1984).

21. Note also that for Debord the construction of situations was to be a collective activity.

22. Debord was able to totalize the partial critiques of "consumerism" that were typical of the period within a Marxist framework that also took account of the increased power and scope of the media.

23. See Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: NLB, 1976) and Russell Jacoby, *Dialectic of Defeat: Contours of Western Marxism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). These two critical histories, taken together, provide an excellent "stereoscopic" view of Western Marxism. Martin Jay's *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) provides an extremely thorough and illuminating overview, but for a reader interested in the SI, which Jay relegates to the status of footnotes to Lefebvre, it must be supplemented by, for instance, Richard Gombin's *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, trans. Michael K. Perl (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1975) and *The Radical Tradition: A Study*

in Modern Revolutionary Thought (London: Methuen, 1978), which unashamedly put politics in command of philosophy.

24. For Bogdanov, see Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics, 1904–1914* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), which is also useful on Pannekoek, Gorter, and Roland-Holst; also important is Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). See also Gombin, *The Radical Tradition.* Jacoby, in *Dialectic of Defeat,* cites Korsch's observation that the postwar disputes in which he and Lukács were involved were "only a weak echo of the political and tactical disputes that the two sides" (by which Korsch meant Lenin, on the one side, and Pannekoek and Gorter, on the other) "had conducted so fiercely some years before."

25. I have not been able to find a good history of syndicalism, although Phil H. Goodstein, *The Theory of the General Strike from the French Revolution to Poland* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1984) is full of interesting material. A number of books deal obliquely with the subject and there are also several national case studies.

26. See Lyotard, *Peregrinations* and Dick Howard's interview with Castoriadis in *Telos* 23 (Spring 1975).

27. The major issue in the split between Castoriadis and Debord seems to have been Debord's insistence on the abolition of labor. See *Internationale situationniste* 4 (June 1960) and 6 (August 1961).

28. See Lukács, *Histoire et conscience de classe.* My translation is from the French edition (which Debord used), translated by Kostas Axelos and Jacqueline Bois (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1960).

29. For an account of Lefebvre's political and philosophical career, see Jay, *Marxism and Totality.*

30. See André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Michigan University Press, 1969) and Henri Lefebvre's introduction to the second edition of *Critique de la vie quotidienne,* 2 vols. (Paris: L'Arche, 1958). The habit of vitriolic denunciation of ex-comrades was inherited by the SI and mars a great many of their pages. The reader often feels relieved that these writers never enjoyed real public power or influence.

31. See Jay, *Marxism and Totality.*

32. See Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France: La bataille de cent ans.* Vol. 2, *1925–1985* (Paris: Seuil, 1986). This staggeringly informative work is indispensable for an understanding of French culture far beyond the bounds of psychoanalysis.

33. Both Mark Poster and Martin Jay fail to understand the importance of surrealism. Neither Perry Anderson nor Russell Jacoby pay any attention to Breton and most of the standard discussions of Marxist "aesthetics," let alone "politics," prefer to steer rapidly away.

34. Within the Western Marxist tradition, Walter Benjamin was also greatly indebted to surrealism.

35. The standard history of surrealism remains Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Macmillan, 1965), which has been recently reprinted by Harvard University Press (1989). Helena Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism* (New York: Paragon House, 1988) provides a detailed chronicle of surrealist political activity.

36. From Rodchenko's memoirs, quoted in Vahan D. Barooshian, *Brik and Mayakovsky* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978). I have written about Soviet productivism elsewhere; see my *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1982).

37. For the background to Lukács's Marxism, see Jay, *Marxism and Totality*; Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: NLB, 1979); and Gareth Stedman Jones, "The Marxism of the Early Lukács: An Evaluation," *New Left Review* 70 (November–December 1971), reprinted in New Left Review, ed., *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader* (London: NLB, 1977). For Breton and Freud, see Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse.*

38. See Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism.*

39. See André Thirion, *Revolutionaries without Revolution*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Macmillan, 1975).

40. Debord's early interest in psychogeography reflects the influence of a traditional scientistic psychology. See, for instance, P.-H. Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne,* 2 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1952), which, despite its dedication to Marcel Mauss, relies on conventional statistical and empirical methods. It is also full of marvellous maps (which can also be seen plagiarized in the pages of the SI journal).

41. André Breton, *Les vases commicants* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970 [1933]).

42. Breton's Hegel was eventually superseded by Kojève's—even among those who had undergone Breton's influence.

43. A *détournement* of Lacan.

44. The Lettrists returned to dadaism and "modernized" dadaist techniques in the name of artistic research, while maintaining the dadaist penchant for scandal.

45. See the last issue of the SI journal, *Internationale situationniste* 12 (September 1969). For the Situationists and Enragés at Nanterre, see also René Viénet, *Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968). This book also contains many examples of Situationist comic strips, posters, and graffitti.

46. See *Le Jardin d'Albisola*, text by Ezio Gribaudo, Alberico Sala, and Guy Debord (Turin: Edizioni d'arte Fratelli Pozzo, 1974); for a translation of Debord's text, "On Wild Architecture," see the section of Situationist documents, "A Selection of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World," in this volume. Jorn wrote the introductory essay for Debord's *Contre le cinéma*, where he compares Debord to Godwin.

47. See Lambert, *Cobra*.

48. See Jens Jørgen Thorsen, *Modernisme* (Copenhagen: Thaning & Appel, 1965). Thorsen was a leading figure in the Second Situationist International.

49. See Graham Birtwistle, *Living Art: Asger Jorn's Comprehensive Theory of Art between Helhesten and Cobra (1946–1949)* (Utrecht: Reflex, 1986). This extremely important book gives a comprehensive account of Jorn's thought and writings during the formative pre-COBRA years and offers a number of insights on how these developed later. It draws extensively on both published and unpublished manuscripts. For a full bibliography of Jorn, see Per Hoffman Hansen, *A Bibliography of Asger Jorn's Writings* (Silkeborg: Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, 1988).

50. P. V. Glob's *The Bog People: Iron Age Man Preserved*, trans. Rupert Bruce-Mitford (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969) is a work of great charm and distinction that provides an English-language introduction to his writings. He contributed to many journals with which Jorn was associated.

51. For Dotremont, see the works on COBRA cited in note 2 above, and José Vovelle, *Le surréalisme en Belgique* (Brussels: A. de Rache, 1972). Belgian surrealism developed independently from French surrealism and was divided between various groups, relatively depoliticized like those around Magritte and heavily politicized, as was Dotremont.

52. Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) was the first pioneering study of the interlock between the art market, art movements, and global political power. Another such study is badly needed to bring the story up to the present.

53. See Lambert, *Cobra*.

54. Ibid.

55. Jorn had studied with Léger, as Pollock had with Benton and Siqueiros.

56. Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*.

57. Ibid.

58. See *Potlatch, 1954–1957* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1985), reprint of the journal of the Lettrist International.

59. *Homo Ludens* was published in Haarlem in 1938, then translated into German and published in Switzerland in 1944. The German translation was then retranslated into English and synthesized with Huizinga's own incomplete English-language version (made shortly before his death in 1945), and this new English version was published in London in 1949. A French translation was published in Paris in 1951. For the most recent American edition, with an introduction by George Steiner, see Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

60. Denis Hollier, ed., *The College of Sociology, 1937–39* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). See also Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1961).

61. *Fin de Copenhague* was republished in Paris by Editions Allia in 1985; it is also reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 553–92. For *Mémoires*, see Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* and his article in this volume, "Guy Debord's *Mémoires*: A Situationist Primer."

62. See Jorn, "Peinture détourné" and Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*.

63. For another sympathetic view of kitsch from within the Marxist tradition, see Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenberg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988).

64. See Asger Jorn, *Critique de la politique economique* (Paris: Internationale situationniste, n.d. [1960], summarized in Gombin, *The Radical Tradition*.

65. Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*. Among later painters, both Merz and Pistoletto were influenced by Gallizio early in their careers and pay tribute to him in Mirella Bandini's monograph.

66. Ibid. For a bibliography of Constant, see Lambert, *Cobra*.

67. For Constant's influence, see Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), which cites the Beaubourg museum in Paris as a spin-off.

68. In 1961, Jorn, Nash, and Strid founded the Bauhaus situationniste in Sweden. In February 1962, the SPUR group was expelled from the SI, followed by the Nash group in March. These expelled groups then formed the kernel of the Second Situationist International, founded later the same year. The Bauhaus situationniste still thrives, continuing to produce publications, sponsor events, and agitate for a Situationist path in art under the guidance of Nash and Strid. The Second SI has been a more notional body but has never been dissolved.

Nash, of course, is the doyen of Danish poets and his unflagging energy has kept the standard of artistic rebellion flying, not only through these organizations, but also through the journal *Drakabygget* and his involvement with the Co-Ritus group (with Thorsen and others) and the Little Mermaid scandal. See Carl Magnus and Jörgen Nash et al., *Situationister i Konsten*, cited in note 9 above. In his forward to the book, Patric O'Brian [Asger Jorn] writes as follows: "The anti-art of the late 1950s and early sixties stated that visual art was a useless medium for creativity and thinking. It was the radiation of art into pure existence, into social life, into urbanism, into action and into thinking which was regarded as the important thing. The start of situationism, the foundation of the First Internationale Situationniste in 1957, was a reflection of this thinking. The motto 'Réaliser la Philosophie' [*sic*] was a starting point for Situationist anti-art. But it caused also violent discussions in the First Situationist International. Opposing this point of view, Strid, Nash and Thorsen, among others, in 1962 founded the Second Internationale Situationniste. These five Situationists, Strid, Prem, Thorsen, Magnus, Nash, are all aiming to place art in new social connections. They are fully aware of the possibilities of artistic radiation. Far from creating any feeling of anti-art in their minds, this point of view gives visual arts a far more central position in their experiments."

Also associated with the Second SI was Jacqueline de Jong, who produced the *Situationist Times*. She was one of the few women closely associated with the Situationists, who, like other avant-garde groups, marginalized, undervalued, and overlooked women both in their circle and in society at large. Indeed, the SI journal blatantly reproduces images of women as "spectacle."

69. Although the SI itself dissolved soon after 1968, the fallout spread far. American groups flourished in Detroit, New York, and Berkeley, where Ken Knabb's anthology (see note 1 above) and Isaac Cronin and Terrel Seltzer's videotape, "Call It Sleep," helped popularize Situationist ideas in the radical community. In England, Situationist graphics were popularized within art colleges affected by the 1968 occupations and thence infiltrated the popular music scene. Jamie Reid's triumphantly subversive Sex Pistols polyptych ensures that the Punk debt to the Situationists will not be forgotten. See also Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*.

70. See Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), for a lucid account of the trajectory of Althusser and Althusserianism.

71. See Georg Lukács (with Heinz Holz et al.), *Conversations with Lukács*, ed. Theo Pinkus (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975). For comparison, see Guy Debord's de-Lukácsized *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1988), which is closer to the late Lukács.

72. Dr. Omar is the "Doctor of Nothing" played with such languorous disdain by Victor Mature in von Sternberg's *Shanghai Gesture*. Prince Valiant is the comic strip hero, evidence of a chivalresque bent on the part of Guy Debord—somewhat unexpected but consonant with his conception of a fraternal avant-gardism, militant and pure, devoted to the quest for the Grail of council communism.

73. Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*. Debord's work in the cinema concludes with this film, the last image of which bears the subtitle, "A reprendre depuis le début" ("To be recommenced from the start").