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SPECIAL ISSUE ON CAPITALIST REALISM

INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE

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This special issue is devoted to Capitalist Realism—a term coined in West Germany in May 1963 by artists Gerhard Richter, Konrad Lueg, Sigmar Polke, and Manfred Kuttner, and also, independently, less than a year later by Japanese artist Akasegawa Genpei in a manifesto entitled "'Shihon-shugi riarizumu' ron" (Thesis on "Capitalist Realism"). In both the German and Japanese contexts, the artists leveraged the term's connotative association with Socialist Realism—the prescriptive aesthetic first introduced in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s—to make an implicit analogy between communist and capitalist representational systems. If Socialist Realist murals and statues feature joyful communal harvests and heroic factory workers, might a comparable Capitalist Realism show advertisements featuring new consumer products and satisfied costumers? To bring this question into focus, the artists placed exaggerated emphasis on certain aspects of commodification and consumerism: in West Germany, Polke made paintings of advertisements that were oddly cropped and splotched, and Richter and Lueg used over one hundred model furniture displays at a Düsseldorf department store in a single evening for their event Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus. In Japan, Akasegawa created prints of the 1,000-yen note and then drew a tatami-sized ink reproduction

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of the currency.[1] At the same time, he began exhibiting household objects such as chairs, rugs, and fans, wrapped in brown paper packaging, a technique the artist would develop to great effect later.

The separate-yet-related emergence of Capitalist Realism in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and in Japan joined a growing international interest in critical "realisms" that were variously formulated by artists associated with Neo-Dada, Pop, Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, Situationism, happenings, and Anti-Art at the height of the Cold War. At that time, artists began to subversively appropriate and imitate advertising images, consumer goods, money, shopping displays, and more—all in pursuit of making visible the mechanisms by which capitalism represents, and thus appears to create, its own reality.

Capitalist Realism emerged in Germany as a pointed commentary on the proliferation of neo-avant-garde movements that were vying for international visibility at the time. For the press release of a May 1963 group show of paintings and events mounted in a vacant butcher's shop at Kaiserstrasse 31A in Düsseldorf, Richter, Lueg, Polke, and Kuttner described their work as "Pop-Art, Junk-Culture, *imperialistischer* and *kapitalistischer Realismus*, *neue Gegenständlichkeit*, and *Naturalismus*." The invitation to the show featured the words *imperialistischer Realismus* within a matrix of even more terms, taken from a list that appeared on the opening page of critic Barbara Rose's article "Dada Then and Now," included in the January 1963 issue of *Art International*: The New Realists, Neo-Dada, *Le nouveau réalisme*, Pop Art, The New Vulgarians, Common Object Paining, Know-Nothing Genre. In the article, Rose described a new generation of American artists as having an overarching fascination with "the American Dream they see commercialized, exploited, and fading before their very eyes."[2] Rose alludes to the possibility that the emerging interest in commercial America came after "a depression, a world war, and the subsequent polarization of East and West."[3]

Lueg had a copy of the *Art International* issue and, as Richter later recounted, the artists' neologism *kapitalistischer Realismus* derived from

1 Tatami mats, used to cover the floors in Japanese homes, were considered standard units of measurement for interior household space. Akasegawa used the standard size of the tatami then used in Tokyo as the measurement of his enlarged yen note reproduction: roughly 90 cm × 180 cm.

2 Barbara Rose, "Dada Then and Now," *Art International* (January 1963): 25.

3 Rose, 23.

Opening pages of Barbara Rose, "Dada Then and Now," *Art International* 7, no. 1 (January 1963): 22–23. © Barbara Rose.

Rose's remark.[4] Not only did Richter, Lueg, Polke, and Kuttner grasp the Cold War implications of Rose's argument, they also directed these implications back at the commercialization of art itself, and at the atmosphere of cultural imperialism in which galleries and critics from New York to London and Paris were coining new monikers that could easily be translated and adjusted for audiences across national borders.

In his review of the 2014 exhibition Leben mit Pop: Eine Reproduktion des kapitalistischen Realismus (shown at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and Artists Space New York) for this special issue of *ARTMargins*, Andrew Weiner views the moves made by Richter, Lueg, Polke, and Kuttner as ambivalently entrepreneurial—at once strategic deflections of the power of branding *and* sincere efforts to participate in the commercial success of Neo-Dada, Nouveau Réalisme, and Pop. Capitalist Realism grew from the artists' (especially Lueg's) capacious knowledge of the goings-on in the international avant-garde circa 1963. Not only did they mine news coming from elsewhere, as with the

4 Gerhard Richter, interview with Benjamin Buchloh (1986), included in *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings and Interviews, 1962–1993*, ed. Hans Ulrich Obrist (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 132–65. See also Stephan Strsembski, "Know-Nothing-Genre," in Elodie Evers, Magdalena Holzhey, Gregor Jansen, eds., *Leben mit Pop. Eine Reproduktion des kapitalistischen Realismus* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013), 132.

January 1963 *Art International* issue, they also avidly attended events in the Düsseldorf art scene, from happenings and Fluxus concerts to openings for new galleries.[5]

It is evident from Richter's, Polke's, and Kuttner's paintings and actions of 1962–64 that their fascination with the "capitalist" language of lifestyle marketing ran deeper than a promotional ploy. Their work at the time was informed by the education that they had received in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) before meeting in Düsseldorf. Richter's training in Socialist Realist painting at the Dresden academy, for instance, most likely entailed using photographs as the basis for archetypal images of the proletariat and its politics.[6] Therefore, it is not impossible that Richter, once in the West, perceived its consumerism-driven mass media as a parallel propagandistic effort to create archetypal images of the bourgeoisie.

Richter and Lueg used the term *Capitalist Realism* to describe their event at the Berges department store in October 1962, when they literalized ads and showroom displays that modeled daily domestic living patterns, such as watching television, making beds, and looking in the refrigerator. The event highlighted the "capitalist" angle of West Germany's "economic miracle" and did not mention the May invitation's use of "imperialist realism." This elegantly and strategically emphasized symmetrical deconstructions of cultural promotion on both sides of the Berlin Wall—as Richter retrospectively noted, "it made Socialist Realism appear ridiculous, and it did the same to the possibility of Capitalist Realism as well."[7]

As was the case in Düsseldorf circa 1963, in Tokyo, the neo-avant-garde thrived under conditions of international artistic exchange. A number of key artists, critics, and curators were traveling between

5 The artists had a famously coquettish relationship with their gallerists during this time. In March 1963, for instance, they went to Paris to introduce themselves to Ileana Sonnabend as German Pop artists and then almost immediately sought to distinguish and distance themselves from Pop. In 1964, Berlin gallerist René Block sought to represent the artists as "Capitalist Realists" (which he capitalized and turned into a bona fide "movement" by writing a manifesto). Gerhard Richter, despite having reservations about being labeled in this way, continued to show with Block. Richter, quoted in Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 77.

6 Eckhart Gillen, "Is Capitalist Realism in Fact a Socialist Realism?" in Evers et al., *Leben mit Pop*, 142.

7 Coosje van Bruggen, "Gerhard Richter: Painting as a Moral Act," *Artforum*, no. 23 (May 1985): 84.

the United States, Europe, and Japan; and contemporary European and American avant-garde movements were regularly featured in international and local magazines circulating among the Japanese artists.[8] In the early 60s, the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo had become a hub for the international avant-garde, hosting John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg, along with a number of Fluxus events and concerts that featured Japanese artists among its international roster. Though Tokyo lacked commercial galleries for avant-garde art, artists could show their work in two major "independent," unjuried exhibitions. The Nihon Independent tended to feature a Socialist Realist–inspired vein of "*reportage* painting" (*ruporutāgu kaiga*) focusing on the effects of the atomic bomb and social instability after World War II. Meanwhile, the Yomiuri Independent had become the stronghold of the Anti-Art movement, which was informed by new approaches to the Duchampian readymade and the Surrealist *objet*.[9] Despite these stylistic differences, both Independents exhibited strong leftist sensibilities informed by the Japanese Communist Party. The work featured in their shows often critically addressed aspects of Japanese society as it transitioned from a war-torn and defeated imperialist nation to a democratic consumer state.[10]

It was in this context that artist Akasegawa Genpei developed his "Thesis on 'Capitalist Realism.'"[11] Akasegawa had been trained in realist painting techniques, then influenced by the Nihon Independent. But after leaving art school and becoming more involved in the Anti-Art movement, his interest moved toward understanding everyday

8 The international connections between Japan, Europe, and the United States have recently been explored in the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) show Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde (2013); in MoMA's online *Post* series on Tokyo–New York Fluxus connections, http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/199-fluxus-nexus-fluxus-in-new-york-and-japan; and in the Walker Art Center's *International Pop* exhibition catalog.

9 For a thorough account of the Anti-Art movement, see Charles Merewether and Rika Iezumi Hiro, eds., *Art Anti-art Non-art: Experiments in the Public Sphere in Postwar Japan 1950–1970* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007). See also Doryun Chong, Michio Hayashi, Fumihiko Sumitomo, and Kenji Kajiya, eds., *Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945–1989: Primary Documents* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 44–69.

10 Chong et al., *Postwar to Postmodern*, 44–69.

11 Art historian Reiko Tomii has briefly noted the almost simultaneous coinages of Akasegawa's and the German artists' "Capitalist Realisms" in "'International Contemporaneity' in the 1960s: Discoursing on Art in Japan and Beyond," *Japan Review*, no. 21 (2009): 123–47. She also spoke on Japanese Pop during the Tate Britain Global Pop symposium in 2012.

objects as representations of capitalist reality. He began thinking about the yen note as a surface image printed on paper, a representation like any other picture. Yet he was fascinated with the difference between currency and other pictures, in that it also held a certain value and could be exchanged for commodities. Upon further scrutiny, Akasegawa also realized that the currency's officially authorized status depended on masking the fact that it was only a representation that could, as such, be copied. He developed single-sided, monochromatic "model" 1,000-yen notes, along with the proposal to produce so many of them that they would disrupt the authority of the state's "real" copies. At the same time, Akasegawa also became interested in furniture and household objects that he saw as representations of a consumer's status, and that, like currency, both depended on and disguised their nature as objects of mass production.[12] To complement the model yen notes, Akasegawa began to wrap these household objects, and he proposed to also wrap all such objects, so as to demonstrate their ubiquity.

In their capacity as commodities, currencies such as the yen and "real" furniture and household objects constitute part of the system of representation and reproduction that undergirds capitalism. As Akasegawa put it summarily in his essay on Capitalist Realism: "Real things are not absolute things. Real things are the embodiments of a dictatorial system of coercion which maintains that they are real."[13] The artist then described his objects as "models": that is, conceptual propositions that could potentially be replicated by others so as to disturb the system of "real things."

Akasegawa's "Thesis on 'Capitalist Realism,'" as much as his model yen notes and model wrapped furniture, form parts of the artist's decades-long critique of capitalism and communism as parallel systems requiring immense state bureaucratic control. Both ideologies needed reinforcement through the state's legal, housing, and industry departments, its mints and banks, and much more. Running parallel

12 Jean Baudrillard called this aspect of representation the domestic object's "symbolic value" in *Le Système des objets* [System of Objects] [1968], trans. James Benedict (New York: Verso, 1996).

13 Akasegawa Genpei, "'Shihon-shugi riarizumu' ron," in Akasegawa Genpei, *Obuje o motta musansha: Akasegawa Genpei no bunshō* (Tokyo: Gendai Shichōsha, 1970), 32. The essay originally appeared in *Nihon dokusho shimbun* (February 24, 1964) and was reprinted in translation as "Capitalist Realism" in *Concerned Theater Japan* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1970): 32–35. This translation is by Mayumi Kamata from *Obuje o motta musansha*.

to the experimental proto-conceptual scores, games, instructions, and demonstrations that were emerging at the time in Neo-Dada, Pop, Nouveau Réalisme, happenings, and Fluxus, his wrapped furnishings and yen notes responded to the Japanese government's sponsorship of a "consumer republic." And as was the case with the Düsseldorf artists who witnessed the economic miracle in their native Germany, Akasegawa's first-hand experience of Japan's own miracle resulted in similar circumspection regarding capitalism's promotion of consumption as a democratic ideal.

Pedro Erber's introduction and translation in this special issue of a slightly later essay by Akasegawa, his 1967 "The *Objet* after Stalin," further explores the artist's perspective. Erber analyzes the legal consequences of both the "Thesis on 'Capitalist Realism'" and "The *Objet* after Stalin," whereby the artist was accused of "imitating" state currency by making the model 1,000-yen notes. He also positions Akasegawa's critical concept of the *objet* within the cosmopolitan history of Tokyo's avant-garde community. These arguments, in turn, help illuminate Akasegawa's inventive ways of articulating capitalism through its purported communist mirror, equal to Gerhard Richter's statements regarding the false binarisms of the Cold War.

In both its German and Japanese incarnations, Capitalist Realism represented an effort to tackle the problems of "realism" and "reality" using the neo-avant-gardist vocabulary of the era. Throughout the interwar and into the postwar era, realism had been largely identified with Socialist Realism, both within the Communist Bloc and in affiliated Japanese and European art circles.[14] Critics on the left meanwhile advocated other types or modes of (revolutionary) realism, ranging from photographic mimesis to stylized and idealized figures and scenes. Efforts to reconceive realism from within Marxism were initiated as early as 1938 by Georg Lukács, who wrote "Realism in the

14 Multiple art and culture contexts figure here, including the ongoing popularity of Socialist Realism in Japan and across Europe in the postwar era. For a discussion of Socialist Realism in Japan, see Asato Ikeda, Aya Louisa Mcdonald, and Ming Tiampo, eds., *Art and War in Japan and Its Empire: 1931–1960* (Boston: Brill, 2013). In Europe, each national context was different. Italian Neorealist cinema's critiques of the political and social landscape could factor in as part of the "new realisms" of the era. The history of the French Communist Party's support of Socialist Realism is related by Sophie Cras in "*Nouveau réalisme*: From Socialist Realism to Capitalist Realism," *Own Reality* 6 (April 2013), http://www.perspectivia.net/content/publikationen/ownreality/6/cras-en/view.

Balance (1938)," and followed it up with *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* in 1955.[15] Eschewing both the avant-gardist abstraction of the early revolutionary period and the idealism found in more doctrinaire Socialist Realist art, Lukács supported a notion of "critical" realism that returned to realist formulations from the mid-19th century (especially Balzac). Responding to debates in Marxist aesthetics in Western circles (via the Frankfurt school), as well as in the Soviet Union (via Mikhail Livshitz), Lukács argued that art should present a totality of "objective" meaning so as to press consciousness toward the exposure of capitalism's processes of reification.

In France, the opposition between realism and avant-gardist modes of abstraction, collage, and found-object art was not as strong. Philosopher Henri Lefèbvre was key to bridging Marxism with renewed artistic interest in using everyday objects. Informed by his participation in the Surrealist circle during his early years as a scholar, Lefèbvre kept close ties with the art world throughout his career. In his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1958), he argues that the "potential way ahead for realism" is in paying more attention to those trivial habits of life under capitalism that make it appear natural.[16] Lefèbvre ultimately points to the Surrealist use of the *objet* as a medium for demystifying modern life.[17] His thinking had a substantial impact on a generation of philosophers and artists (including Jean Baudrillard and Guy Debord), who put forth new Marxist interpretations of capitalism's systemic efforts to sustain the illusion of its own reality by way of the mass media and object consumption.[18]

From a staunchly de Gaullist and anti-Marxist standpoint, French art critic Pierre Restany tried to establish what he considered a more "objective" realism based on sociological description. He appropriated the moniker of his Nouveau Réalisme movement from French Communist Party circles, who had been using it to defend alternative

15 Georg Lukács, *Essays on Realism*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981). For an overview of the history of realism in literature and visual art, see Matthew Beaumont, *Adventures in Realism* (New York: Wiley, 2007).

16 Henri Lefèbvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore (New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

17 Ibid., 12–14 and 107–74. Guy Debord's 1967 *Society of the Spectacle* popularized the notion of the spectacle as "the heart of the unrealism of the real society." Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone, 1995): 6.

18 Jean Baudrillard studied under Lefèbvre for a brief period while writing *System of Objects* (1968). Debord's close and intense friendship with the philosopher for a brief period greatly influenced the development of the Situationist International.

realisms within Socialist Realist orthodoxies.[19] Tracing the lineage of Nouveau Réalisme back to Cubism, Restany claimed that his new movement was connected to Fernand Léger's incorporation of new technology and commercial materials into art.

In New York, the gallerist Sidney Janis quickly responded to Restany's efforts to promote the (seemingly) ideologically neutral work of his Parisian-based artists, asking Restany to collaborate on a show called The New Realists that would put the Parisians side by side with American Neo-Dada artists. Just before the show opened in October 1962, Janis discovered the work of Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and James Rosenquist, and used Restany's framework to describe the work of these US artists. Incensed, Restany published an indictment of the exhibition in the January issue of *Art International*—the very same issue of the magazine used by the Düsseldorf artists to formulate their notion of *kapitalistischer Realismus*.

The basis for all these evolving claims to realism was a pervasive concern that any "realistic" rendering of commodity objects (whether Nouveau Réaliste, Neo-Dada, or Pop) had to contend with capitalism's methods of mass-production and mass-mediation.[20] While Restany adamantly defended Nouveau Réaliste "objectivity," and while Janis generalized Pop as a "factualism" in which vernacular objects had not been embellished with "artistic pretension," most artists and critics acknowledged the need for some sort of artistic intervention that would foster critical awareness of the consumer object's status as the end product of a process of production.[21]

For instance, Ellen Johnson's extensive essay on Claes Oldenburg in the January 1963 issue of *Art International* described the artist's work as "extreme realism" in which sloppy, fake plaster objects called attention to the fact that "everyday objects are *created*."[22] Indeed, Oldenburg's "stores" for the sale of sloppy plaster pies—along with

19 Cras, "*Nouveau réalisme*," n.p.

20 See, in particular, the early writings on Pop by Lawrence Alloway, Barbara Rose, Harold Rosenberg, Leo Steinberg, and Roland Barthes, anthologized in *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, ed. Carol Anne Runyon Mahsun (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989). See also Steven Madoff, *Pop Art: A Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997).

21 Sidney Janis, "On the Theme of the Exhibition," in *New Realists* (New York: Sidney Janis Gallery, 1962), exhibition catalog.

22 Ellen Johnson, "The Living Object," *Art International* 7, no. 1 (January 1963): 42–45. Emphasis in original.

Jasper Johns's cast bronze beer cans, Andy Warhol's wooden renditions of cardboard Brillo boxes made in a foil-lined "factory," and Arman's window "vitrine" displays—rather than being typical *trompe l'oeil* affairs, functioned as doubles of real consumer commodities that flaunted their own artificiality and constructedness. As such, these objects evoked the uneasy realization that manmade objects were everywhere, even if there seemed to be no original or source for them.[23] And as much as Warhol's or Arman's objects may have participated in an emerging atmosphere of dematerialized spectacle, there was always a resistant concreteness and palpability to them—"object strategies" of excessive repetition, dripped paint, and so forth—that put the spotlight on the difference between the artists' productions and those of industrial manufacturing and marketing or mass-media.[24]

Swedish artist Öyvind Fahlström, whose work is analyzed by Maibritt Borgen, is a case in point. Fahlström's work of the early 60s synthesized an enormous amount of information, ranging from the latest semiotic theories to far-reaching accounts critical of US capitalist imperialism. Fahlström is best known for his early- to mid-60s paintings and installations inspired by games and comic books, which were included in the New Realists show at Janis Gallery and the Venice Biennale in 1964. The artist retrospectively discussed his games as "realistic models (not descriptions) of a lifespan, of the Cold War balance, of the double-code mechanism to push the bomb button"—an apt characterization for all of his work, including his experiments in multimedia as part of the Experiments in Art and Technology's 9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering, of 1966.[25] Borgen analyzes Fahlström's work for this festival, *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*, as a complex reformulation of the "double-code" mechanisms at play in media streams and other forms of global communication. She makes the argument that the intricately mediated sequences of *Kisses*, including the happening *Mao-Hope March* (recently shown in the Walker Art Center's International Pop exhibition), were part of the artist's considerable effort to develop an avant-gardist semiotics in

23 On the theme of the double, see Roland Barthes, "That Old Thing, Art," in Runyon Mahsun, *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*.

24 Julia Robinson, *New Realisms, 1957–1962: Object Strategies between Readymade and Spectacle* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

25 Öyvind Fahlström, "Take Care of the World," in *Manifestos* (New York: Great Bear Pamphlet, Something Else Press, Inc., 1966).

which image-signs were seen as a materiality that could be "kneaded" into radicalized disruptive forms.

Fahlström exemplifies the period's engagement with realism through intensified appropriation, not only of common objects, but also through new forms of media and image culture. Though he is most often discussed as a European Pop artist, Fahlström's interest in concrete poetry and the Lettrist avant-garde, as well as his close ties with Neo-Dada and "happeners" in New York, hint at the complex circulation of ideas among these neo-avant-garde movements during the early 60s. The fluidity with which the artists associated with these trends engaged with the internationalization of mass media and consumption, as well as their wide range of artistic approaches—from painting to found-object sculpture, to new conceptual modes and happenings—challenged more limited, traditional understandings of Pop, a term that eventually superseded all others, including Capitalist Realism itself, as the umbrella descriptor of the moment. New histories of Capitalist Realism emphasize the multiple connections and relays, based on a shared engagement with the commercial and popular cultures of their respective regions, between artists not only from Britain, the United States, and Europe, but also from Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Eastern Europe.[26]

The heterogeneous practices that have been united under the banner of Pop appropriated both the "real" content and the equally "real" procedures of commercial business—its bureaucratic and manufacturing methods of reproduction, advertising, packaging, and distribution. In this regard, the projects of Akasegawa, Richter, Lueg, and Polke and their engagement with the commercial world of mass production must be considered an essential part of this trend. They could, in fact, open up further avenues of exploration into such Pop icons as Andy Warhol, who had early on called his art "Commonism," another verbal play that, like Capitalist Realism, positioned itself between communism and the capitalist mass-market.[27] With only indirect knowledge of the battle

26 For examples, see the Tate Modern Global Pop Symposium: http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/conference/global-pop-symposium. The Tate's exhibition The World Goes Pop runs from September 2015 to January 2016. Likewise, the Walker Art Center mounted the International Pop exhibition in 2015 and published a catalog: Darsie Alexander and Bartholomew Ryan, eds., *International Pop* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2015).

27 Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 204–5.

waging between Nouveau Réalisme and Pop in 1963, and just before Pop came to dominate artistic discourse, the Germans and Akasegawa focused on imitating the procedures as much as the "content" of capitalism, that is, on the very means by which capitalism replicates and reproduces its material infrastructure on a worldwide scale.

If Capitalist Realism emerged during the Cold War as a means of creating visibility for capitalism's emphasis on advertising, marketing, and stimulating consumption, what is its legacy for, or in, contemporary art? The question was taken up by the writers in the *Leben mit Pop* exhibition catalog, who see the continuation of the German Capitalist Realist project in paintings by Kai Althoff and Neo Rauch.[28] But if Capitalist Realism is not necessarily bound by Germany's postwar art history, and is to be understood as part of an international artistic response to capitalist expansion during the Cold War, then perhaps we need to see its continuation in contemporary art projects that expose global capitalism's new frontiers and its innovative mechanisms for representation and reproduction.

The historical path from the Capitalist Realism of the 1960s to contemporary artists and projects that address the present-day convolutions of neoliberal capitalism traveled by way of Soviet Sots Art of the 1980s (Erik Bulatov, Alexander Kosolapov, Komar and Melamid) and Chinese Political Pop from the 1990s and 2000s. In the first case, the (seemingly affirmative) quotation of propaganda imagery from Soviet everyday reality created an equivalent to the flaunting of consumer culture by Capitalist Realist and Pop artists in the West. In the case of China, artists during the 90s began to appropriate images of Mao in the context of the country's embrace of state-sponsored capitalism. More recently, Ai Weiwei and others have addressed the production of global art commodities in Chinese cities such as Jingdezhen. Since 2006, a collective named The Propeller Group, based in Ho Chi Minh City and Los Angeles, has made a number of projects addressing the complex ideological climate in Southeast Asia, where communist bureaucracies held over from previous regimes now coexist with neoliberal policies that cater to the region's media and global tourist industries. For their recent *TV Commercial for Communism* (2012), the group commissioned a Vietnamese ad company to rebrand communism. This

28 Gregor Jansen, "For Example: The World is Beautiful . . ." in Evers et al., *Leben mit Pop*, 271–84.

strategy of hiring capitalists to imagine and promote communal life resulted in a strangely compelling advertisement.

In this special issue, we also present the work of Stephanie Syjuco as a way of connecting the Cold War moment of Capitalist Realism to neoliberalism's battle with countless invisible enemies. Syjuco offers a speculative proposal featuring the new media technology of Google SketchUp to render a variety of capitalist objects—from Ikea bookcases to Philippine jeepneys to modernist homes—all wrapped in the dazzle camouflage patterns originally used on World War I ships. Her conflation of older camouflage war technology with potentially mass-producible objects and architectures speaks to the conditions of global capitalism as it operates in a diffuse field in which the promotion of war and consumerism merge.

As if formulated in some black-market design lab, Syjuco's model objects exhibit a confusing, overdetermined semiotics designed to appeal to a wide array of global clients. Her work is aligned with a cohort of artists dealing with stranger-than-fiction elements in capitalism's globalization. This includes not only the Propeller Group and Ai Weiwei, but also Thomas Hirschhorn, Minerva Cuevas, Omer Fast, and Goldin+Senneby. The camouflage signifiers in Syjuco's project can be related, for example, to Thomas Hirschhorn's *Utopia Utopia* (2005) installation, in which the artist speculates that the introduction of military street wear throughout the global fashion market will lead to an army of khaki-wearing consumers with no one to fight. This in turn is a fantastic update on Akasegawa's proposal to flood the world with model yen notes, or Warhol's tongue-in-cheek "commonist" proposals that everyone should be a machine or that Coca-Cola is a democratizing product because everyone from the president to the "bum on the corner" drinks it.[29] The efficacy of Syjuco's project and these others depends on a certain level of semiotic exaggeration and distortion also found in the "extreme" realisms of the 60s.

Artists today may not be living the same capitalism as the "Capitalist Realists" of the 60s, but they are still motivated to create or open up tensions within its now even-more-extensive system. At times, their provocations may appear too circumscribed by the neoliberal ideologies of "freedom of expression" and "entrepreneurial innovation."

29 Andy Warhol, *Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt, 1975), 100.

In fact, this is the argument made by Mark Fisher in his 2009 book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*[30] With only a brief nod to its origin in the 60s art context, Fisher uses the term *capitalist realism* to describe what he sees as a post-1989, post-postmodernist ideological formation whereby art and the imagination have been subsumed by capitalism's presentation of itself as the most viable and "realistic" system that "seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable."[31] But as this special issue's historical revision of the concept attests, it was the very same pretense—of capitalism as the most comprehensive and realistic (in short: the inevitable) system—that provoked simultaneous responses by artists from distant places around the globe already in the 1960s.

Fisher's criticism that contemporary art cannot withstand capitalist appropriation is not new and has long been part of the criticism leveled at the 60s neo-avant-garde.[32] While the debate is ongoing, an extensive look at Capitalist Realism reveals the fissures within capitalism's very own modes of (self-)representation. The subtlety of Capitalist Realist mimesis is what makes it such a relevant notion even for today's practicing artists. In this context, the excessive production of commodities continues to be rich artistic material with which to show not only, as Richter had it, the "ridiculousness" of capitalism's efforts to secure its own reality, but the often tragicomic conundrum caused by our own position within that system.

30 Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009). Another element of this strain would be the current critiques of accelerationism, which hold that any move to escape capitalism's velocity by "speeding-up" or accentuating its processes only feeds the system. See Steven Shaviro, "Accelerationist Aesthetics: Necessary Inefficiency in Times of Real Subsumption," *e-flux Journal*, no. 46 (2013), www.e-flux.com/journal/accelerationist-aesthetics-necessary-inefficiency-in-times-of-real-subsumption/. Fisher's thesis has sparked a new interest in Capitalist Realism. See Leigh Claire La Berge and Alison Shonkwiler, eds., *Reading Capitalist Realism* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014). This new volume in literary studies uses Fisher's thesis as a launching point.

31 Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 8.

32 This criticism was already part of the first reviews, including those in the 1963 January *Art International* issue. See also the critiques of Pop in Runyon Mahsun, *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, and Madoff, *Pop Art: A Critical History*. Benjamin Buchloh's critiques of neo-avant-garde artists' pervasive ambivalence have also been influential. See Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1965 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

FUNDAMENTAL FEEDBACK

ÖYVIND FAHLSTRÖM'S *KISSES SWEETER THAN WINE*

MAIBRITT BORGEN

I deplore my incapacity to find out what is going on. What life, the world, is about, through the confusion of propaganda, communications, language, time etc. etc.[1]

ÖYVIND FAHLSTRÖM, 1964

One thing was certain: compared to the "cool" of artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, Fahlström was "hot."[2]

MIKE KELLEY, 1995

Two actors throw a pillow across the stage floor constructed within the large military structure of the 69th Regiment Armory in New York. The pillow is white (as are the long men's shirts the performers wear) and it bounces, unnaturally, across the floor. From a loudspeaker hidden within the pillow rings out a single-channel sound of airplanes. It moves with the large, bouncing pillow across the space. In the background a screen transmits the image of a man in real time. He cuts hair, and then taps rhythmic

1 Öyvind Fahlström, "Take Care of the World," in *Manifestos* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 11–15.

2 Mike Kelley, "Myth Science," in *Öyvind Fahlström: Die Installationen*, ed. Sharon Avery-Fahlström (Bremen: Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst; Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1995), exhibition catalog, 19.

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sequences on a microphone: one, two, three knocks. Another screen introduces him in a news text as a Vietcong barber who, while working on a South Vietnamese base, sends out information via a primitive radio transmitter: a single tap denotes a helicopter, two a propeller plane, and three a jet plane. The sound of airplanes taking off gradually increases in intensity, until it emanates from a series of loudspeakers across the space and mixes with the rhythmic taps from the barber on the microphone. A large papier-mâché head of the American president Lyndon B. Johnson is hoisted slowly from the floor. Above the screens, a bright spotlight hits a large, worn, and dirty standard on the building's wall. Golden letters on a faded red background spell out a slogan, "Never disobeyed an order, never lost a flag."[3]

This sequence describes a fragment of Öyvind Fahlström's (1928–1976) one-hundred-minute performance *Kisses Sweeter than Wine* (1966). The performance was an artistic investigation into how humans and machines can sometimes operate in similar ways, and it unfolded through a series of visually saturated, interlocking tableaux in which performers, objects, and projected images interacted with each other. These tableaux are the focus of this article, because it was through them—and more specifically, through Fahlström's manipulations of everyday visual elements he labeled "life material"—that the artist performed a significant intervention into commercially mediated culture, an intervention that would become a consistent feature in his art. In *Kisses*, the artist manipulated this material primarily through the use of screens, turning communication technologies and the global image flow into sites of critical inquiry. Jean-François Chevrier calls such procedures Fahlström's "geopoetics": his transformation of global power dynamics into poetic material that could be challenged through manipulation.[4] And as Fahlström wrote as far back as 1953, the ultimate goal of his manipulations was to change rigid thought processes, because "every assault on current language forms is ultimately an enrichment of conventional

3 For a complete description of the performance, see either Öyvind Fahlström, script for *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*, Klüver/Martin Archive, Berkeley Heights, NJ, or "Kisses Sweeter than Wine," two radio programs, broadcast January 4 and 18, 1967. The audio tracks could, as of July 2015, be accessed at www.modernamuseet.se/sv/Stockholm/Utstallningar/2015/I-samlingen-Oyvind-Fahlstrom/Radiorepotage-av-Fahlstrom/.

4 Jean-François Chevrier, "Another Space for Painting: Concrete Lyricism and Geopoetics," in *Öyvind Fahlström: Another Space for Painting* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani [MACBA], October 18, 2000, to January 8, 2001), exhibition catalog, 8.

thinking."[5] For, as he argued in 1962, aesthetic experience could, under the right conditions, prompt the spectator to "manipulate the world."[6]

Kisses Sweeter than Wine was central to Fahlström's artistic practice. While multimedia structure and narrative impurity are salient features in his art generally, *Kisses* was part of a turning point in his career during which his acts of manipulation turned toward an engagement with life. Beginning that same year, Fahlström manipulated media images by painting on them, collaging them together, or, as he did in *Kisses*, showing them side-by-side and in sequences on screens. These manipulations served to make the spectator connect elements and mentally "finish" the work of art in ways similar to a specific type of painting and installation that Fahlström invented and named "variable." In a variable painting or installation, a series of elements, such as cutouts, could be shifted around using magnets, wires, or hinges, among other things. Each installation of variable elements was labeled a "phase." In *Kisses*, Fahlström manipulated audiovisual material by a process he called "kneading," a method based on the modeling and reworking of language as if it were a physical material. Kneading contained a set of manipulations that made language operate beyond normative structures of syntax and meaning, and instead sought to create a new kind of language game that, in *Kisses*, centered on the mass media's manipulation of reality.

The performance occurred twice, on two consecutive nights—October 21 and 22, 1966—in a very specific context: a large art and technology festival called 9 Evenings: Art and Engineering. 9 Evenings was initiated by Billy Klüver, a research engineer from Bell Labs in New Jersey, together with artist Robert Rauschenberg, as an ambitious attempt to frame a new set of essential questions for advanced art in an increasingly technologized society, and, as Klüver stated in the catalog, to facilitate "an approach [for art] towards the real world" in light of such increased technological influence.[7] For the festival, ten artists—

5 Öyvind Fahlström, "Hipy Papy Bthuthdth Thuthda Bthuthdy," translated in Antonio Sergio Bessa, *Öyvind Fahlström: The Art of Writing* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 142. The title "Manifesto for Concrete Poetry" was given this piece when it was published in the collection of Fahlström's poems *Bord-dikter* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1966).

6 Öyvind Fahlström, "Manipulating the World," *Art and Literature*, no. 3 (1964).

7 Billy Klüver's preface to *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering (Catalogue of an exhibition presented under the auspices of the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc. in cooperation with Experiments in Art and Technology, Inc.)* (New York: Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, 1966), event catalog, 3.

John Cage, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs, Alex Hay, Robert Whitman, Deborah Hay, and David Tudor, as well as Fahlström and Rauschenberg—had collaborated with more than thirty engineers, mostly from Bell Labs, for more than nine months. This enormous undertaking was matched by the large scale of the 69th Regiment Armory, which reflected another of the organizers' ambitions: in Klüver's words, to "break the Judson Church barrier of 500 faithful spectators" and to confront a larger audience unfamiliar with contemporary art.[8]

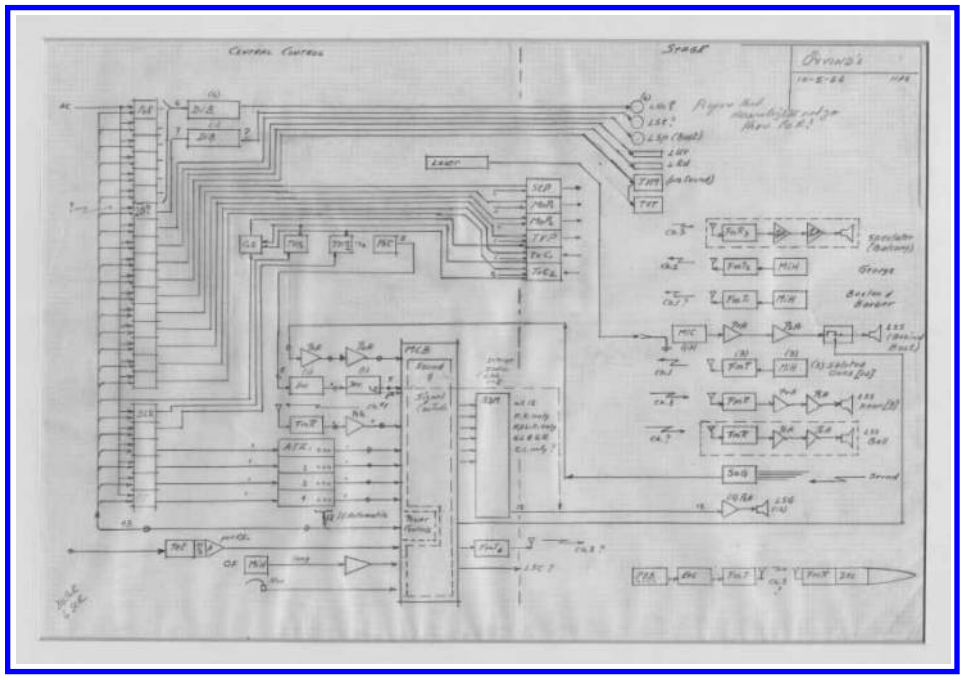
Although it succeeded in filling the rows of bleachers rented for the occasion, 9 Evenings was initially viewed as a spectacular failure, or at best as a missed opportunity to establish a truly radical synthesis of art and technology.[9] Although intense marketing prompted thousands of people to attend, many left disappointed by the lack of technological spectacle, lamenting the "tediousness" of the happenings caused by the long intermissions and the abundant technical problems.[10] Fahlström's meticulously scripted structure did not exempt *Kisses Sweeter than Wine* from criticism. Lucy Lippard wrote in a searing review that "Fahlström definitely got, or took, the worst of the art-technology 'synthesis,'" and called *Kisses Sweeter than Wine* "packed with gimmicks, stretches of pure tedium and . . . some of the most memorable, if irrelevant, images of the Evenings."[11] But such critique, I will claim, misread the core investigations in Fahlström's performance,

8 Billy Klüver most prominently helped Jean Tinguely create his self-destructing machine *Homage to New York* (1960). 9 Evenings followed a series of art-technology collaborations at Bell Labs, which had among other things an artist-in-residency program and a computer music collaboration and a series of computer graphics that were exhibited at the Howard Wise Gallery in April of 1965. It was also the culmination of a longer chain of research by Klüver, who in a 1965 unpublished manuscript "saw art becoming more functional, the difference between art and life becoming extinguished, technology becoming an integral part of life, and the artist's use of the engineer being inevitable." See Norma Loewen, "Experiments in Art and Technology: A Descriptive History of the Organisation" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1975), 41.

9 See, among other reviews, Lucy Lippard, "Total Theatre?," *Art International* 11, no. 1 (January 1967): 39–42, and Brian O'Doherty, "new york:9 armored nights," both reprinted in *9 Evenings Reconsidered* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, List Visual Arts Center, May 4–July 9, 2006), exhibition catalog.

10 Billy Klüver, "Theater and Engineering—An Experiment. 2. Notes by an Engineer," *Artforum* 5, no. 6 (February 1967): 31–33.

11 Lippard, "Total Theatre?," 41. O'Doherty, in his review, called the performance "a staggering display of inventiveness" and claimed that "Boschian in feeling, its iconography was similarly profuse." Brian O'Doherty, "new york:9 armored nights," reproduced in *9 Evenings Reconsidered*, 79.



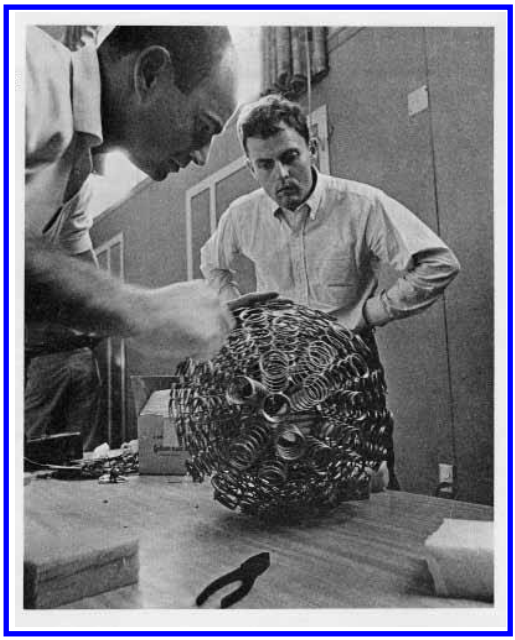
Herb Schneider. *9 Evenings Engineer Drawing (Öyvind's)* [for Öyvind Fahlström, *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*], 1966. Graphite on graph paper, 10 5/8 × 15 5/8 inches (27 × 39.7 cm). Image courtesy of Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

for it is exactly through its series of "irrelevant" images, gimmicks, and tedium that *Kisses Sweeter than Wine* presented a potent critique of capitalism as a totalitarian system that only benefits the wealthy; a system that masks itself as individual freedom of choice, but in effect only poses choices for passive consumption. Rather than focusing on individual images, *Kisses* reroutes or disturbs the *circulation* of images, more specifically the ideological implications of such circulation, and performs its politics through such disturbances.[12] I argue that Fahlström interrupted the smooth transmission of images in advertising, news, and celebrity culture through procedural feedback loops in which images reflected back onto one another, and then back onto the audience. These procedures test the value of images within the larger structures of ideology, as well as their functions as signifiers within political, economic, and language systems, and how these images serve as tools to undermine or uphold those systems.

12 David Joselit raises a similar point about artistic engagements with the medium of TV networks: "If a commodity's meaning results from its *circulation* it is possible to develop a politics whose goal is not to abolish or 'critique' commodification, but rather to reroute the trajectories of things." David Joselit, *Feedback* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 5.

MANIPULATING MATTER: FROM CHARACTER FORM TO LIFE MATERIAL

In *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*, life material connects art directly to social space inasmuch as, Fahlström argues, life material "may face out onto reality, the environment from which [it was] taken."[13] In the performance, one such use of life material combined an image from the Vietnam War, a photograph of emaciated American prisoners of war marching with bowed heads toward interrogation in Saigon, with a cover from *The New York Times* announcing the "Great North-Eastern Power Failure," a reference to a 1965 power failure that left much of the northeastern parts of the United States without electricity. However, in this context, the term "failure" might equally suggest the inability of the American government to manage the escalating situation in Vietnam. Such constellations of images produce a potent and explicit critique of political hegemony, capitalism, and the Vietnam War. This critique played out primarily over three large screens that cut across the almost square stage space of the Armory, each of which projected a different form of media: slides, film, and live, closed-circuit TV footage of the onstage action recorded by two cameras—one placed toward the front of the stage, the other transmitting from the "rear-TV area."[14]



Peter Hirsch and Öyvind Fahlström with ball designed to carry bouncing sound source, 1966. Photograph by William Rivelli.

These screens provided an important site for Fahlström's geopoetics, connecting his work with specific sensibilities from Pop Art. In this sense, and particularly through his use of "life material," Fahlström distanced himself from other performances in 9 Evenings

13 From a transcript of the radio program "Tidsspegeln (1964)," in Teddy Hultberg, *Öyvind Fahlström on the Air—Manipulating the World* (Stockholm: Sveriges Radios Förlag, 1999), 34.

14 Fahlström, script for *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*.

that attempted to eradicate the border between art and life by moving the spectator's experiences as close to new technology as possible.[15] In the summer of 1966, while preparing for 9 Evenings, Fahlström sent a telegram from Stockholm to New Jersey, addressed to Billy Klüver as the interlocutor with the engineers at Bell Labs. In the telegram, Fahlström outlined a sequence of elements he planned for his performance: "CHEMICAL REACTIONS ANTIGRAVITY ORGASMRAYS KETCHUPLACES [SIC] . . . HUMAN COMPUTERS CHINESE SPARROWS ASTROGIRLS . . . AND ESSO TIGERS STOP" and then curiously ended the telegram: "WHY NOT ASK WARHOL?"[16] It is likely that the question "Why not ask Warhol?" was to be followed by the words "instead of me," suggesting a conscious attention toward the visual language of mass-media images shared by both artists. It seems probable that Fahlström related his own manipulations of life material to similar procedures in Warhol's work, such as the ways that Warhol's images of consumer goods and celebrities deliberately negated their intended, ideological meaning. Alternatively, however, Fahlström may also have recognized that Warhol's depiction of consumer goods, as described by Thomas Crow, "dramatized the breakdown of the commodity exchange," a breakdown that compared directly to Fahlström's own technological manipulation of smooth image flow.[17]

While *Kisses Sweeter than Wine* marked a turn toward direct manipulation of mass-media material in Fahlström's art, his use of images culled from popular culture, especially comics, had already associated him with the "new realism" of American Pop and European Nouveau Réalisme from the early 1960s. Fahlström's association with

15 The other performances did not use mass-media material in the same, direct way. Their feedback loops instead processed the events within the audience-performance interaction, such as when, in *Physical Things*, Steve Paxton allowed the audience to step onto the stage floor and walk through a series of tunnels and chambers formed from roughly 20,000 square feet of clear polyethylene, secured with adhesive tape and supported by the air pressure from about ten fans.

16 Öyvind Fahlström, Telegram, Klüver/Martin Archive, Berkeley Heights, NJ.

17 Thomas Crow described Warhol's assessment of American and Soviet societies as equally homogeneous in the following way: "The spectacle of overwhelming Western affluence was the ideological weapon in which the Kennedy administration had made its greatest investment, and it is striking to find Warhol seizing on that image and negating its received political meaning (affluence equals freedom and individualism) in an effort to explain his work." Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," in *Art in America* (May 1987): 312.

Pop was manifest in his American debut at the New Realists exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York in December 1962. Despite his consistent inclusion in Pop frameworks, Fahlström was never a Pop artist. Like Warhol, he was attracted to the mass-media image as a symbol with wide cultural recognition, but only for the potential it had to be manipulated.

Fahlström was initially a writer of concrete poetry, journalism, and plays, and he brought a specific model of manipulating language from these practices to the manipulation of mass media in *Kisses* (especially its semantic manipulation of language, the foundation for Fahlström's sense of realism). In the text that formulated his artistic "program," "Hipy Papy Bthuthdth Thuthda Bthuthdy" (1953), later given the additional title "Manifesto for Concrete Poetry" when it was published in 1966, Fahlström proposed that poetry should discard "timeless symbols" for an instant connection to its social reality. Such realism was the core of his "concrete" program, and to achieve it the writer had to manipulate language directly. The manifesto went further, describing "kneading" as the specific ability to manipulate language by modeling it as if it were physical material:

> KNEAD the linguistic material; this is what justifies the label concrete. Don't just manipulate the whole structure; begin rather with the smallest elements—letters, words. Recast the letters as in anagrams. Repeat letters within words; throw in alien words, *plea–vroog–se–do*; interpose letters that don't belong, aacatioaanniya for action; explore children's secret code languages and other private languages; vocal glides: *gliaouedly*.[18]

When the writer "kneads" a word, he or she uses language *as concrete matter*, as physical material, beyond the implied expectations the reader has to meaning and syntax. To give an example, Fahlström kneads the polite adverb "please" into "plea–vroog–se–do." Transformed in this way, the word gains both a "nonsense-dimension" and an additional, deliberate phonetic quality. The overarching purpose of kneading is to oppose the smooth state of what Fahlström called the "Lalere," or the "law of least resistance," where words remain fixed within systems of function and meaning.[19]

18 Fahlström, "Hipy Papy," 142.
19 Fahlström, "Hipy Papy," 138.

Portrait of Öyvind Fahlström while working on "Sitting . . . ," 1961. Photograph by Billy Klüver.

In *Kisses,* the language game of "kneading" took the form of a technological manipulation of visual, auditory, and narrative material. Before *Kisses* began, the three screens established a cue as to the mediated nature of such kneading. While the audience was taking their seats, Fahlström put up, across the three screens, a "test image" of one of the elements that made up his large, variable "game-painting-installation" *Dr. Schweitzer's Last Mission* (1965–66). This image showed a yellow "bamboo organ"—a yellow bamboo fence shaped as a classical organ with bamboo poles as the organ pipes. The organ is an homage to the multifaceted identity of Albert Schweitzer, a Nobel Prize winner and missionary in Africa who had also played the organ. In *Kisses,* the larger middle part and two smaller side parts of the bamboo organ were projected on three screens in different media: the slide screen to the left showed a color slide of its left panel; the film screen in the middle projected black-and-white footage of the bamboo organ's central panel; the TV-projection screen to the right, meanwhile, showed a live feed of a large black-and-white photocopy of the instrument's right panel, located in the backstage area and filmed in real time.

Spectators saw these simultaneous projections as a triptych combined from the three screens. By showing side-by-side images of the element's three parts mediated by various media—still photography, film recording, and live transmission—the triptych posed kneading as a game of representation, one that was, as such, analogous to the play of representation performed by Joseph Kosuth in his famous *One and Three Chairs* (1969). Kosuth questioned the "real" status of a chair by representing it in three different ways: through the dictionary definition of the word "chair," through a photographic image of the chair, and by presenting the object itself. Fahlström similarly questioned the reality of media representation. Neither the film

recording nor the live transmission nor the color still showed the "real" object. The three parts of the bamboo-organ element were instead represented by three kinds of mediation (the photographic still, the recorded film, the live transmission), each with its separate operating logic. Yet at the same time all three parts of the object connected to form a cohesive whole, thereby presenting a totally mediated reality.

These procedures retroactively reveal yet another function that Fahlström assigned to kneading within the context of *Kisses*. Kneading could connect various geotemporal spaces separated by different media, geographies, or times. Such kneading extends to the way Fahlström consistently brought images and performers together throughout the performance. Life material such as the photo of the marching American soldiers injected events that took place far away into the real-time action in the performance space. Kneading mass material thus became, for Fahlström, a new way of "manipulating the world." Likewise, when the barber taps and the pillow simultaneously bounces across the stage floor, three geographies meld together on stage. One was the psychiatric hospital, presented through a slide that introduced the two main performers as psychiatric patients, identical twins named Charles and George who have an infallible ability to match days and dates in multiple centuries; the second was the military intervention in Vietnam; and the third was the Armory itself. To drive home the point, Fahlström followed the cacophony of airplane noise in the performance by shining a spotlight from the stage onto the slogan "Never disobeyed an order, never lost a flag," located on the Armory wall, to alert spectators to the fact that this location was a functioning military facility that had trained soldiers for the Vietnam War. Through kneading, the performance in this way made reality and mediation collapse and provide feedback loops onto one another.

Another important influence for Fahlström's methods of manipulating language was the musique concrète compositions of Pierre Schaeffer. Fahlström had bought and heavily annotated Schaeffer's *À la recherche d'une musique concrète* when it was published in 1952.[20] For Fahlström, Schaeffer's "sonoric objects" defined a model in which real-life sounds were manipulated through procedures of recording, cut-

20 Fahlström's original copy of Schaeffer's *À la recherche d'une musique concrète* can be found in the collection of Sharon Avery-Fahlström, The Öyvind Fahlström Foundation, MACBA, Barcelona.

Performer with Johnson Head [in *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*], 1966.
Image courtesy of Bell Labs.

ting, and splicing. The sounds were, in Fahlström's terms, "blocked off" from their context and "abstracted." Schaeffer recorded the real-life sounds of locomotives, then cut out a small fragment of the engine sound and repeated it. This manipulation made the sounds operate on new terms within the music, neither as a referent for a real locomotive nor as pure rhythm. Fahlström believed he had found a way of modeling material in such a way that an individual unit became abstracted from its initial context, but still retained a link to its original meaning.[21]

Kneading was eventually transferred to the manipulation of life material. In 1966, Fahlström began to manipulate media images, either by combining them into new images or by painting directly on the photographic paper with oil paint made explicitly for coloring photographs.[22] As Fahlström found when working with life material, though, a further layer was added to kneading, insofar as media images always come with their own set of predefined meanings.

21 Fahlström's copy of *À la recherche d'une musique concrète*, 22.

22 *Roulette* (1966) is the first work in which Fahlström painted directly on photographic paper.

Öyvind Fahlström 2162 75
Köpmangatan 8
Stockholm C

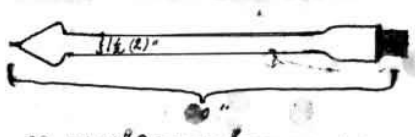
25 - 8 - 66

Dear Alfons Schilling

Very glad to hear you will be assisting me ! I will be in New York Sept. 15th. Until I get there are a few things that you might get started with, or at least prepare the grounds for making or getting them . They are mentioned in a long list I sent Billy a while ago and that's what the numbers refer to .

copy To Billy Klüver

16. when Hodges at Bell starts making body" , balloon, for my "missile " , which is to float with helium - could you with his assistance make three arrows , made of mylar cushions , to be filled with helium , and stiffened with a very light slim stick of wood :



exact form and proportions are not important . As long as they are roughly this way and can be shot with a bow and then "stop " in the air)

18. get at "Relaxacisor" massage-gadget, see leaflet that Billy has . Equip it with contactmikes so one hears sounds of gadget massaging girls breasts.

26. Find where you can get paint - which is not visible when you paint it on textile - but appears when wetted. Yellow colour I want to appear.

30. Find small clear balloons to be filled with helium and look like bubbles : varying diameters : 2 to 4 inches.

Are you good att sculpture ? I'm not. I need a large head of president Johnson ; head plus 2-3 inches of neck - height in all 22 inches . It should be fairly naturalistic . Painted grey . Made of tough material (not too heavy) able to be thrown against a light glas sheet , and fall , without breaking) and have space inside for transmitter-receiver and loudspeakar (if possible - otherwise we will just attach it tr.-red. etc. outside) . And in the back of the head: a hole large enough for a hand. What do you think?

Other sculpture : a ' large ' mouse . Fairly naturlistic (but not very detailed , neither does Johnson-head have to be) . With hole behind large enough for hand. 30 inches long . Light enought to able to be carried on one hand and Johnsonhead on the other , without difficulty. Does not have to be unbreakable like head.

Would you call Station WBAI in New York and have them make a tape dub of "Nightmare in Nirvana " , interview of Charlie Hayden with drug addict "Saint Philomena " . Mrs . Jane Hunter to be contacted . Costs 20 dollars . Written earlier to Billy about it. I also need transcript of it (you get it from the station too, cost 2 dollars.

Miss Susan Crane

When I come to New York I will need to film dripping ketchup-bottles (ketchup-race) with that sort of prism-lens that multiplies images Could you help me to get hold of it?

Have any ideas of how to film with camera sliding down facade of skyscraper , facing downwards ? (Give experience of suicider falling against street !)

Film of snow-fall that rotates , without actualling rotating the projector.?! (We can get snow-fall here I hope or in New York, the problem is to make it turn around)

Im sure some of this sound confusing ,but write or call me

best

Fahlström conjoined images based on structures of "bisociation," a term he adopted from Arthur Koestler's theory of creativity in *The Act of Creation* (1964). In Koestler's book, bisociation denotes the possibility that ideas and images can function in several, possibly incompatible, contexts at once, and hence transgress conventional thinking.[23] Fahlström saw great potential in Koestler's methodology for putting together material in structures, in that "when one has element A and finds an element B . . . there is a violent spark when one rubs A against B! That is to say, the result is completely different from, and much bigger than, the sum of the two."[24] The pillow emitting the sounds of aircraft is but one example from *Kisses* that corresponds to such thinking. Here, the aggressive sound of the airplane engines and the physical shape of a soft, white pillow form a conscious play of "incompatible" physicalities. At the same time, a similarity of movement—flying objects—promotes semantic links. Fahlström proposed that such dual semantic relations created a set of internal logics or "game rules" that worked differently from the contemporary collage structures Robert Rauschenberg developed in his combines. Fahlström believed that the materials in the combines were deliberately emptied of meaning, their "tint" of social space, so that a figurative everyday material, such as a newspaper photograph, served purposes in the work of art of a value equal to that of a nonfigurative everyday material, such as a piece of thread.[25] By contrast, bisociation does not remove the "tint" of media circulation; on the contrary, it emphasizes that tint as a tool to connect back to the social space from which the material was lifted. By kneading individual images and bringing them together in structures of bisociation, the various geographies of stage space, media space, and global space could collapse into each other.

23 "I have coined the term 'bisociation' in order to make a distinction between the routine skills of thinking on a single 'plane,' as it were, and the creative act, which . . . always operates on more than one plane." Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 35–36.

24 Öyvind Fahlström, "Den Livsvigtige teatern," *Konstrevy* (Stockholm) 41, no. 4–5 (1965): 123–127 [also called "After Happenings"].

25 "When Rauschenberg pastes in newspaper photographs of Eisenhower or of a ballet dancer in his combines he seems to expect this kind of subject to be so overloaded with connotations that the viewer capitulates and accepts the everyday meaning, that he reacts in an 'empty' and routine way. Eisenhower becomes one element among others, just like a dab of paint, a piece of string, a page from a calendar." Öyvind Fahlström, "Bris," *Rondo* (Stockholm), no. 3 (1961), 26–32.

SCREEN SPACE

In *Kisses*, Fahlström drew increased attention to the ways that the mass media's technological operations of transmission and reception guided image flow. An important factor in his shift in attention was the artist's encounter with the world of global media following his move to New York in 1961, thanks to a grant from the Swedish-American Foundation. Another important influence was the work of Fahlström's new neighbors in New York, for Fahlström and his then-wife Barbro Östlihn moved into Robert Rauschenberg's old studio on Front Street in Lower Manhattan. Fahlström quickly became associated with a wider circle of artists and performers preoccupied with happenings: Rauschenberg, Yvonne Rainer, Alex Hay, Claes Oldenburg, and others. Rauschenberg and Rainer had integrated multimedia technology and elements of popular culture into performances much earlier than 9 Evenings, and these investigations might have informed the multimedia elements that Fahlström had already included in slightly earlier, happening-based works.[26] *Kisses* deviated from these earlier happenings, however, in its explicit focus on manipulating mediated reality. It was more closely aligned with two dramatic works for radio that Fahlström undertook in the 1960s—*Birds in Sweden* (1963) and *The Holy Torsten Nilsson* (1966)—in which he directly used tape technology to cut, splice, and bisociate "life material."[27]

Fahlström's focus on media transmission in *Kisses* functioned both as an internal logic that structured the artwork and as a model of social reality. An onstage display of transmission and reception drew attention especially to television and to how it consistently manipulates images and, in the process, social reality: manipulation of distance via transmission, manipulation of content via editing, manipulation of context by presenting images on an individual screen. As art historian Branden Joseph rightly notes, a medium such as television can create a unified screen space by editing out any differences or complexities that might disturb the media's "iconic" images, and can bridge over geographical difference or split between an image's site of production, transmission, and reception. As a medium of presentation, Joseph

26 For example, see Rauschenberg's *Map Room II* in 1965. Norma Leuwen claims, based on an interview from 1973, that Fahlström stated that it was Billy Klüver, whom Fahlström knew from Stockholm, who introduced Fahlström and his wife Barbro Östlihn to the New York art scene. Loewen, "Experiments in Art and Technology," 22.

27 For a thorough description of these two works see Hultberg, *Öyvind Fahlström on the Air.*

writes (quoting Samuel Weber), television "overcomes spatial distance by *splitting the unity of place* and with it the unity of everything that defines its identity with respect to place: events, bodies, subjects. . . . It is a *split* or a *separation* that camouflages itself by taking on the form of a visible *image*."[28] In *Kisses*, Fahlström removed that camouflage and brought the separation Joseph mentions back into consciousness by splitting his multiple image projections further across three other types of screens: a white cotton "snow field" on the floor; a glass sheet suspended from the ceiling; and the bodies of the performers. Adding to this sense of discontinuity, viewers' attention was consistently guided in multiple directions by the simultaneous presentation of different narrative layers. In the pillow-fight sequence, for example, the audience would see the Vietcong barber tapping on his microphone at the same time that they saw other elements such as the pillow fight between the shirt-clad twins Charles and George, while an intense orange glow on the film screen added further layers of disruption. The spatio-temporal triptychs of onstage and onscreen action created a sense of "discontinuous and fluctuating" visual space, words that Lucy Lippard used in 1966 to describe Fahlström's variable paintings and installations, such as *Dr. Schweitzer's Last Mission*.[29] This discontinuous and fluctuating visual space was held in check by semantic connections between widely different elements, such as "hard" and "soft" flying objects. These medium-based critiques of television's editing raised the question of how such editing, and the resulting flow, may be interrupted.

Such interruptions also took the form of disturbances affecting the border between media and reality. Performers' physical presence in space and their simultaneous representation as images on screens merged the televisual sites of producing and receiving images. Immediately before the pillow fight, while the twins Charles and George entered the stage in a silent golf cart, the screen showed a live transmission of 18th-century mathematical genius Jedediah Buxton, or rather Buxton as played by Robert Rauschenberg, who sat in the rear TV area. When Fahlström addressed him from his place in the control booth at the left of the stage, Buxton turned his head in response—an

28 Branden W. Joseph, *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 190–91.

29 Lucy Lippard, ed., *Pop Art* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 174–81.

act that spectators saw as an image on the large TV screen, not the body on the stage, which was hidden from direct view. At the same time, the sound of Fahlström's voice served as evidence that spectator and performer inhabited the same space. Buxton's body became simultaneously perceptible in screen space and in stage space, eroding the division between body and image or object and representation in much the same way that we saw happen with the organ triptych across the three screens in *Kisses*. The repetition of the body as an image created new patterns of feedback between media and reality, foregrounding the media's inherent capacity to represent reality through an edited version of it.

The initial plan for *Kisses Sweeter than Wine* foregrounded such editing procedures in ways that differed from the work's final iteration in New York. 9 Evenings was first conceived as a festival of art and technology in Stockholm, Sweden, but due to a series of disagreements and conflicts between the organizing parties, the series of performances was relocated to New York in August of 1966. In Stockholm, the event had been planned for Teknorama, Sweden's National Museum of Science and Technology. In the version of *Kisses* conceived for that venue, the audience would have sat in the auditorium, which Fahlström called "Sweden," while the action would have taken place in the adjacent exhibition space, which he called "USA."[30] The audience would only have seen performers as projections on screens, which would have inserted an artificial distance between the performers and the spectators. When 9 Evenings was relocated to New York, Fahlström kept the screens, but rather than using them merely to transmit the performers' appearance, by collapsing screen space and stage space through a closed circuit of transmission, he used them to emphasize how transmission acts as a precondition for spectatorship.[31]

The main point of this reframing was to emphasize the presumed participatory potential of media networks, an investigation that was undertaken by surprisingly few other artists in 9 Evenings. Marshall McLuhan suggested that global communication networks "compel commitment and participation."[32] Yet such participatory potential was debunked already at the end of the first section of *Kisses*. Here, the

30 "Öyvind Fahlström: Questions, Requests," Klüver/Martin Archive, Berkeley Heights, NJ.

31 Öyvind Fahlström, "Letter Addressed to 'Steve [Paxton?],'" Klüver/Martin Archive, Berkeley Heights, NJ.

32 Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium Is the Massage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), 23.

soundtrack played a recording of Fahlström's daily attempt to phone the Office of the British High Commissioner in Shanghai. In 1966, a newly established phone line made it possible to call China from the United States for an hour every day, even though no diplomatic relations then existed between the two countries. Fahlström consistently attempted the call every day for a week in order to record a conversation about the weather in Shanghai and play it during *Kisses*.[33] However, every time Fahlström called, the Chinese operator denied the existence of the British Trade Commission.[34] By failing to establish a direct line of communication between two countries without diplomatic ties, Fahlström could not, he claimed, prove "McLuhan's and Cage's thesis that technology bridges political barriers."[35] This deflation of participation's emancipatory potential as it relates both to open structures and to technological infrastructure served as a model throughout *Kisses*. In the context of 9 Evenings, such a questioning of techno-utopias also touched on whether any form of participatory art growing out of the "machine-age" discourse of the 1960s—from Jean Tinguely's drawing machines *Meta-matics* to Sonia Sheridan's *Interactive Paper Systems* (1969–70), in which spectators could photocopy parts of their bodies—could radically alter the passivity of spectatorship. That questioning of participation was counter to Fahlström's earlier happenings, such as *Fahlström's Hörna* (1964), in which Fahlström had involved the spectators directly by having them vote for the most and least popular spectator, among other things. *Kisses* limited such direct involvement to simple gestures such as holding balloons and loudspeakers. While other artists in 9 Evenings attempted to connect to the outside world via technology (such as John Cage, whose work included open phone lines to various places, such as the Bronx Zoo Aviary), Fahlström shifted the emphasis from a transmission of sources from the outside to a realism that emphasized the images that made up real-life politics. He proposed that techno-utopias could not help solve the confusions of propaganda and "what the world is about."[36] Rather, such

33 Öyvind Fahlström, transcript of telephone call to Shanghai, Klüver/Martin Archive, Berkeley Heights, NJ.

34 "Kisses Sweeter than Wine," two radio programs, broadcast January 4 and 18, 1967.

35 Öyvind Fahlström, "Armory," *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* 36, no. 7 (1967): 516–22 in *Öyvind Fahlström*. Centre George Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne (Paris, 1980), exhibition catalog, 37.

36 Fahlström, "Take Care of the World."

manipulations required critical reflection on the role of images in creating a thought pattern that made people presume that such a utopia existed in the first place.

FEEDBACK

Fahlström made a final metareflective pun that seemed to thoroughly drive home his point that passive spectatorship, and perhaps technology, numbed the individual. He placed a "TV viewer" on the stage for most of the performance, a passive, isolated, and masturbating individual who seemed to be the embodiment of television's bad influence. Fahlström's apparently moralizing gesture was interplayed with a set of consistent mediatory operations in which smooth space (that of media networks) and global space (that of American proxy wars fought with guns, goods, and glamour) collapsed into one another. But Fahlström's TV viewer should not be taken at face value as a moralizing comment, for he was looking at a blank TV screen, not at images. The gesture instead added yet another layer to Fahlström's manipulation of mass media's flow of images, for his TV viewer was a stand-in for the performance's audience, and thus central to a feedback loop of spectatorship. According to Norbert Wiener, feedback loops emerge when a processing organism adjusts its future performance in accordance with what it learns.[37] Such feedback was evident in a segment repeated five times throughout *Kisses* in various media (film, sound, and action). In one of these iterations, seven performers in white shirts who lay on the white snowfield in front of the movie screen rose up. They carried seven large placards: six that displayed the face of American entertainer Bob Hope, and one of Chinese leader Mao Zedong. The performers bent down as if facing a strong wind and walked struggling toward the left of the stage. The action was a reenactment of the *Mao-Hope March*, which Fahlström had staged on a windy day in New York City on September 1, 1966, just weeks before its reiteration in *Kisses*. In the *Mao-Hope March*, seven protesters—among them Fahlström himself and his wife Barbro Östlihn—carried picket signs of Bob Hope and Mao Zedong through New York's busy streets. Only a few bystanders noticed the single image of Mao, and even then several could not identify him (one even went so far as to suggest that it was Bing Crosby).[38] The

37 Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings* (New York: Avon Books, 1967), 36.
38 Transcription of soundtrack of *Mao-Hope March*, prepared by Sharon Avery-Fahlström.

bystanders' confusion reflected the incompatibility of these two televised images, the TV celebrity and the Chinese leader, to coexist (or, in Fahlström's discourse, be bisociated) within the same matrix of a street protest.

More importantly, by bisociating such images, Fahlström proposed further patterns of feedback between a smooth mediated reality and the noise of lived reality. During the march, Bob Fass, a popular nighttime host for the leftist radio station WBAI, followed the demonstration and asked people in the street whether they were happy and what made them happy, and solicited their reactions to the march.[39] The replies were recorded on audiotape and edited by Fahlström into a soundtrack for the images. It was played during *Kisses*, telling the story of a generally happy New York populace in 1966. The recorded answers stand in stark contrast to *Kisses*' simultaneous references to the Vietnam War, foregrounding the disjuncture between global warfare and happy lives at home. Like Fahlström's TV viewer, whose continuous gaze at a blank screen should be read as a deliberate attempt to ignore the images of the Vietnam War that were otherwise dominating US television, the spectators in the streets had mentally "turned off" the war. Fahlström's work therefore suggested a mode of tactically "hacking" visual culture in order to negate the possibility of turning off and ignoring reality. This kind of visual hacking would soon characterize other instances of activism against the Vietnam War, in works such as Martha Rosler's photo-montages *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967). Rosler's juxtapositions posed images as potent tools that drew attention to the inherent complicity between domestic politics and faraway warfare, and to spectatorship as an act that either accepts or disrupts the current status quo.

Fahlström staged *Mao-Hope March* only in order to include it in *Kisses*, as a public event designed primarily to be reported through reproducible media. It consequently shares features with what historian Daniel Boorstin has called a "pseudo-event," an event whose effect lay in its reenactment rather than in its enactment.[40] *Mao-Hope March*

39 Fahlström, "Armory," 88. In his text "Media för 'The Movement'" from 1968, Fahlström describes WBAI, and especially Bob Fass's nighttime show, as New York's countercultural "movement" radio. In Fahlström, *Om Livskonst O.A.* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1970), 120–28.

40 Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America* (New York: Vintage, 1961).

Film still from *Mao-Hope March*, New York, 1966, projected during *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*. Image courtesy of Klüver/Martin Archive. ©2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

at first sight adhered to the conventions of a street protest organized to advocate a political cause: a group of people, carrying placards, marching down a street. However, Fass's recordings of the bystanders' comments shifted the focus from the message on the placards to the bystanders' reactions. That reversal of information flow operated in a way akin to other "pseudo-events," such as the tactical media activism conducted by the Youth International Party, or the Yippies, whose political performances included throwing money onto the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange in 1967. While Boorstin's term describes the social effects of technology in pessimistic terms, *Mao-Hope March*, like the Yippie actions, used the system—throwing money onto the stock exchange floor to interrupt the brokers' trading, for example—to produce critical feedback.[41]

Fahlström supported the Yippies and shared their distaste for the

41 The Youth International Party was founded as a "movement" only in 1967. They ran Pigasus, the pig, for president, but a series of earlier actions are assigned to them. David Joselit describes the Yippies as conducting an "image-oriented brand of activism, which combines textually based information theories with a sophisticated image politics." David Joselit, "Yippee Pop," *Grey Room*, no. 8 (Summer 2002): 65.

established political system and for representative democracy alike.[42] Yippie cofounder Abbie Hoffman had used advertisements to disrupt the regular flow of television programming. In a similar way, *Mao-Hope March* interrupted the normal flow of signals from sender to receiver. Instead of conveying a message through the demonstration itself, the message was conveyed through the spectators and the statements they made about their lives while caught off-guard. The war and the larger political situation meanwhile were addressed mostly by being absent from the spectators' statements. The *Mao-Hope March* thus added another layer to the series of feedback loops invoked in *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*. The performance bisociated images—Bob Hope and Mao—that were radically incompatible according to the mass media's compartmentalization of politics and entertainment into separate spheres; and within the context of *Kisses*, the footage of the event was further bisociated with spectators' statements on the soundtrack, as these two elements were played in disjunction with one another. The divisions between media space and stage space became destabilized, as did the borders between these spaces and the public space of the street where the performance initially took place. *Mao-Hope March* therefore did not use the pseudo-event as an empty gesture, as Boorstin had originally conceived it. Rather, *Mao-Hope March* turned real people, the spectators on the street, into life material that produced a final feedback loop, allowing the spectators of *Kisses* to reflect on the conditions that affected their own "viewing."

According to Fahlström, such disruptions and feedback loops provided an important model for art's activation of the spectator. That model would develop a new mode of participation whereby, as he wrote, viewers could "play" with any work of art conceptually rather than physically.[43] Fahlström called such participation in *Kisses* a "social game" in which blank spaces served as ruptures, as semiotic gaps or holes, in the generally smooth flow of information offered by the mass media.

42 A letter shows that Fahlström supported their case with a drawing in 1974, *The Patty Mucha Papers* (MSS 342), Fales Library and Special Collections, New York. In *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*, this distaste is mirrored directly in a speech Fahlström directed to the audience in which he described a politician as "a specialist merely in acquiring power and remaining in power for as long as he can manipulate" and told people, probably with stark sarcasm, to "never vote." Fahlström, script for *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*, 22.

43 Öyvind Fahlström "A Game of Character," *Art and Literature* (New York) no. 3 (fall-winter 1964): 220.

The screens on stage in *Kisses Sweeter than Wine* did not continuously show images. Often, one screen would be used for projections while the others were left dark, drawing attention to the work's lack of narrative resolution. On one level, the empty screens pointed toward Abbie Hoffman's description of blank space as "the transmission of information whereby the viewer has an opportunity to become involved as a participant."[44] Such activations of a gap operate on radically different terms from how television, as Branden Joseph asserts, creates cohesive and iconic images by editing out difference. On another level, the empty screens provided a rupture that sets his work apart from Pop Art, as a mode of questioning Pop. It is this mode of questioning that returns us to Fahlström's own initial, ambiguous question, "Why not ask Warhol?"

In Pop Art, Fahlström located a set of unstable images that could shift awareness to how images circulated. An unpublished interview with Billy Klüver makes it clear that Fahlström was fascinated by a set of "doubly objective" appropriative maneuvers in Warhol's art. In the interview, Fahlström defined American Pop, and Warhol's work in particular, as being characterized by an attempt to close the gap between art and life by shifting the focus to the objects' second life as media images, rather than insisting on their "material presence" in the work of art. The term "double objectivity" describes the way that an objective "life-motif," as Fahlström coined it in the conversation, such as Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*, is lifted from popular culture, and then subsequently presented through what Fahlström labeled an "objective" medium that is itself a readymade, such as silkscreen.[45] The finished image is by this operation doubly removed from the object's material presence in physical space. Or, put another way, such a procedure of double objectivity, or double mediation, leaves a blank space behind—the space of the real object—while exposing the procedures of mediation that the object undergoes to become an image of consumption.

These mediations repeat a maneuver to remove the artist's "hand" from the work of art that, for both Warhol and Fahlström, was put in motion in 1962: for Fahlström when he invented variable paintings and installations, including *Dr. Schweitzer's Last Mission*; and for Warhol

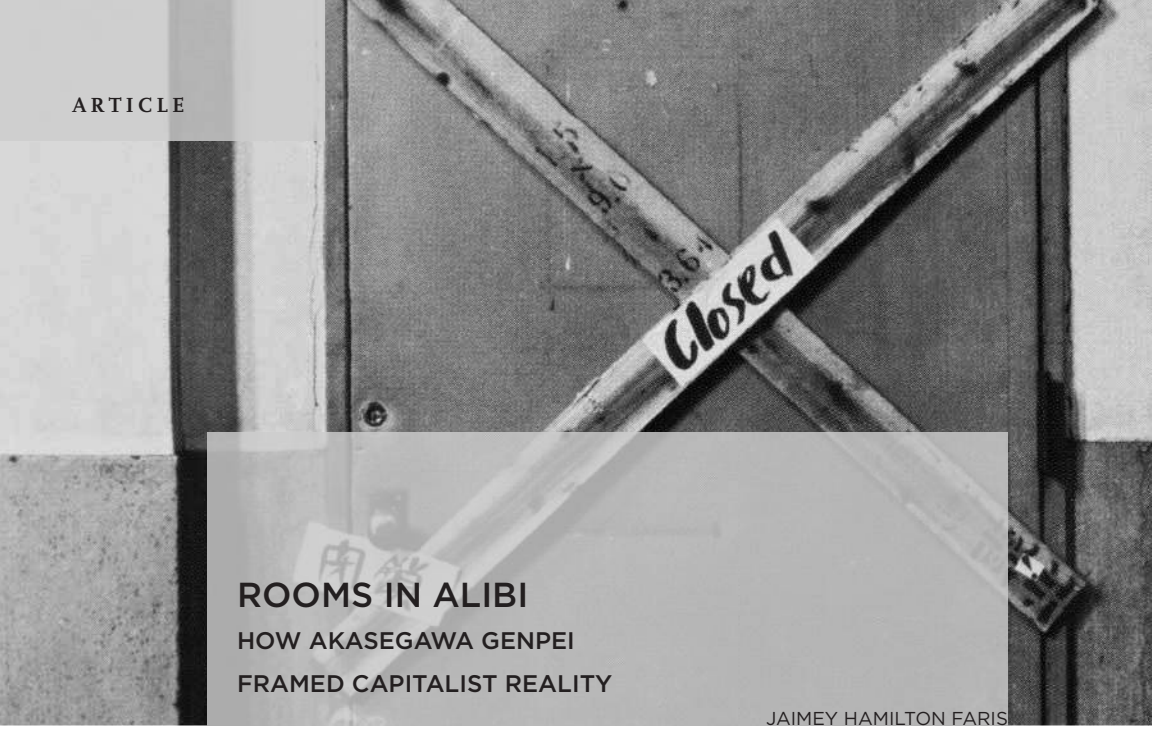
44 Abbie Hoffman, "Yippee—The Media Myth," in *Revolution for the Hell of It* (New York: Dial Press, 1968), 81–82.

45 Billy Klüver, "Den Nya Konsten i New York + Öyvind Fahlström Intervjuad af Billy Klüver," unpublished manuscript, archives of Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

when he moved from hand-painted lines to serial repetition of images in silkscreens.[46] Fahlström noted that this process of "double removal," and its eradication of an artist's subjectivity from Pop Art, contained the potential to make spectators mentally "finish" the work of art. This was not demanded by direct manipulation, but by more subtle strategies of semantic manipulation *within* the image, and especially in the relation between images—most notably, through modes of "kneading" representation, as we saw with the image of *Schweitzer's* bamboo organ. Fahlström attempted a similar investigation when he left a series of gaps open in the fragmented structure of *Kisses*, creating blank space through such disruptions. As such, Fahlström's attempts to destabilize media narratives throughout *Kisses* resonate with his desires to challenge real-life conventions and create new modes of politics. He sought to challenge the spectatorship we all participate in all the time: the spectatorship of media.

Ultimately, these blank spaces raise different notions of participation and freedom. By destabilizing an image and tearing it loose from its normal flow, Fahlström wanted to circumvent the smooth flow of images within the tension of the Cold War. He situated this critique in the politics of the mediated image as it participated in narratives of consumerism, of American life, and of the Vietnam War. In Fahlström's terms, technology was a means to create and distribute images, either as a supportive vehicle for the system or as the platform that could disrupt it. In *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*, the performance space became a geopoetic space in which the artist tested the effects of a new language of global media, and the influence that this language could exert on the fixity of meaning within social and political contexts. He presented the discontinuous and fluctuating space of global media as a space from which the potential for change happens through affective responses in the spectator. We might even say that he proposed an emancipatory potential in art by acknowledging that such empty spaces within the media's flow of information hold new potential for active and engaged viewing, and as a result, could create a space for political change.

46 Jonathan Flatley, "Like: Collecting and Collectivity," *October*, no. 132 (Spring 2010): 78.



ROOMS IN ALIBI

HOW AKASEGAWA GENPEI FRAMED CAPITALIST REALITY

JAIMEY HAMILTON FARIS

In one condensed, somewhat elliptical statement from his February 1964 art manifesto "'Shihon-shugi riarizumu' ron" (Thesis on "Capitalist Realism"), Akasegawa Genpei explains a crucial category for his work—the model:

> Although the model [*mokei*] itself does not have any direct offensive ability towards the real thing, it is a loophole through which to view the battle between real things and imitations in which the monopoly of "real things" is unsettled in the world of actual objects [*jitsubutsu*]. It gives a clue for observation.[1]

Expressing the sentiments of the Tokyo avant-gardist *Han-geijutsu* (Anti-Art) movement, Akasegawa avoids the word "art" and instead unfolds a complex thesis about how his so-called *mokei* (models)—a series of monochromatic, uncut sheets of one-sided printed 1,000-yen notes and brown-paper-wrapped furniture and household objects—could obliquely expose the power that commodity systems had over

1 Akasegawa Genpei, "'Shihon-shugi riarizumu' ron," in Akasegawa Genpei, *Obuje o motta musansha: Akasegawa Genpei no bunshō* (Tokyo: Gendai Shichōsha, 1970), 32. The essay originally appeared in *Nihon dokusho shimbun*, February 24, 1964, and was reprinted in translation as "Capitalist Realism" in *Concerned Theater Japan* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1970): 32–35. All translations included in this article are from *Obuje o motta musansha* by Mayumi Kamata.

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domestic life in Japan and elsewhere. The artist's style of writing is inspired by Kafka's conspiratorial fiction, while the tenor of his theoretical analysis is informed by Marxist and Surrealist understandings of perception as a complex entanglement of subjectivity and objectivity. Models, Akasegawa argues, are curious objects—neither art nor ordinary, everyday things—that act as "loopholes" through which the commodity can be seen anew.

"Thesis on 'Capitalist Realism'"[2] was published in a local newspaper shortly after the artist was indicted by state authorities for imitating currency in January 1964. While it was written specifically in reaction to the government's charges, the essay is also an important marker in the artist's career, establishing and clarifying Akasegawa's interests regarding the fundamental relationship between representation and reality, especially as it was affected by capitalist modes of production. The larger agenda of the essay was to expose capitalism and its crime of systemically reproducing currency and commodities to the extent that they appear as natural and omnipresent "real things." As Akasegawa puts it: "Real things are not absolute things. Real things are the embodiments of a dictatorial system of coercion which maintains that they are real."[3]

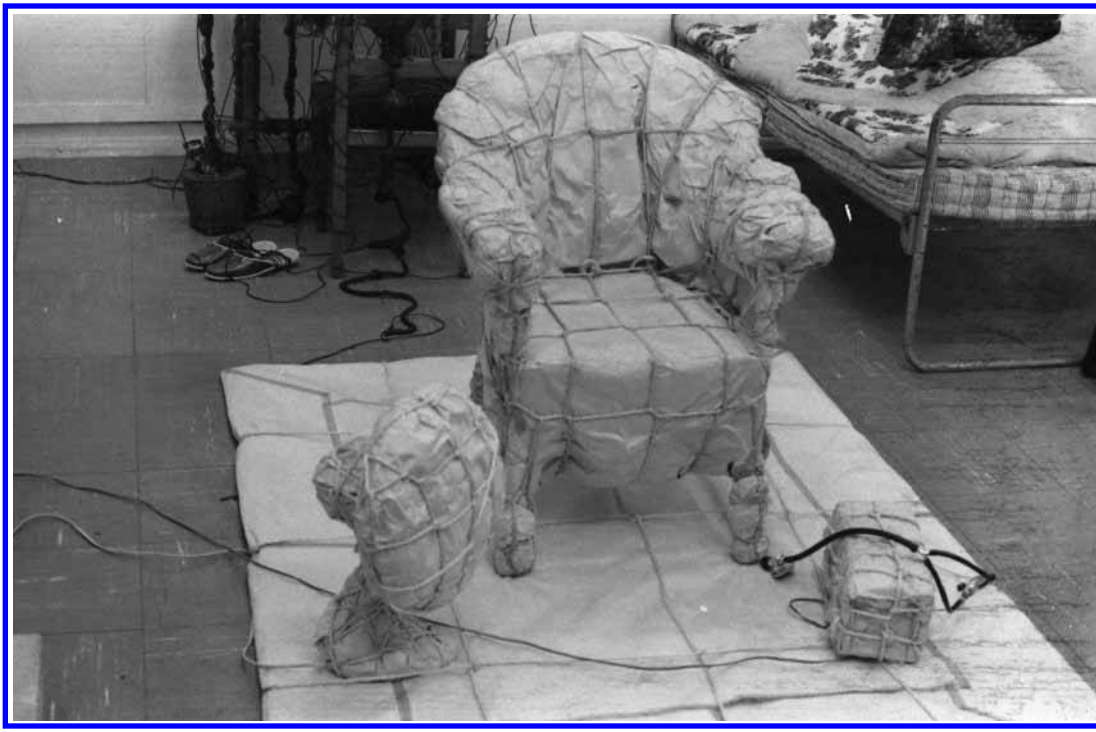
In the essay, Akasegawa describes his "model" yen notes as one part of a proposal to unsettle capitalism's "dictatorial system of coercion." Reiko Tomii and William Marotti have argued in their extensive and foundational analyses of Akasegawa's work that the artist was interested in exploring how his 1,000-yen notes exposed the fact that official currency, although also just printed paper like his own, carried an exchange value that made it "real."[4] In this context, his model yen notes, though different from counterfeits or imitations, could undermine the legitimacy of the government's currency.[5] Akasegawa

2 Here forward referred to simply as "Capitalist Realism," in quotes.

3 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 32.

4 Imitating currency was a softer charge than counterfeiting, made under an obscure Japanese law that allowed the government to pursue its case against the artist. In the end, this argument did not affect the outcome of the trial; Akasegawa was found guilty of imitating the 1,000-yen note. See especially Reiko Tomii, "State v. (Anti-)Art: Model 1,000-Yen Note Incident by Akasegawa Genpei and Company," *Positions* 10, no. 1 (2002): 141–72; William Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); and William Marotti, "Simulacra and Subversion in the Everyday: Akasegawa Genpei's 1000-Yen Copy, Critical Art, and the State," *Postcolonial Studies* 4, no. 2 (July 2001): 211–39.

5 Tomii uses the example of model airplanes in "State v. (Anti-)Art."



Akasegawa Genpei. Installation from Fuzai no Heya/Room in Alibi, 1963. Mixed Media. © Akasegawa Genpei. Image courtesy of the Chiba City Museum of Art/SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

ultimately proposed that by making so many copies of his model yen notes, he could "increase the world's supply to the point of saturation," thereby forcing the government to show how it establishes the "realness" of its currency by defending it against fakes in court.[6] The second part of Akasegawa's proposal deals with "model" wrapped furniture. How these objects exposed the "realness" of, in this case, furniture has not garnered as much analytical attention as the model 1,000-yen notes, and thus requires more explication.

Akasegawa's choice of domestic objects and his use of the term *model* point to his interest in the language of modern industrialization, in which a model is considered a prototypical object to be re-produced, an object used to promote or advertise, or an ideal behavior to be repeated by others. Often the generic, serial mass-production of objects is masked by their display as a model set, a prototypical tableau of complementary commodities used to instill the fiction of singularity, and a desire to possess that singularity. Jean Baudrillard perhaps summed this up best in his book *System of Objects* (1968). Devoting an entire chapter to the emerging role of the model in domestic interior design

6 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 29.

as suburbanization and lifestyle consumerism intensified across Europe, Baudrillard writes:

> The status of the modern object is dominated by the MODEL/SERIES distinction. . . . The model had once been a signal of distinction, an indication of originality, upon which the series of mass-produced objects were based. But now the difference between the two has disappeared. Models are serially produced, but displayed as if singular. They come to stand for the essence of a domestic product, which gives birth to the series.[7]

Baudrillard's commentary targets the popularity of postwar marketing's *demonstration effect*, a term coined by American postwar economist James Duesenberry in 1949 to argue, firstly, that capitalism's "values"—its high standard of living and social benefits—are best reflected in the material goods it produces; and, secondly, that this is best communicated by simply putting model American products and manufacturing methods on display.[8]

Akasegawa's most thorough experiment with model wrapped furniture was a living room ensemble in Fuzai no Heya/Room in Alibi, a group exhibition held in July 1963. Several months after, in "Capitalist Realism," he advanced the following proposition regarding this kind of model wrapping: "If we are to isolate and conceal the countless number of latent objects in our everyday lives—all the chairs around the world, for example—what would be the result?"[9] Akasegawa intended his wrapped furniture to act as a model of both an object and an action that "isolates and conceals," ridding the world of chairs so that viewers are able to realize the extent to which their reality is saturated with consumer objects.

His ensemble, consisting of a chair, rug, radio, and fan, can to be situated in a postwar Japanese context in which household furnishings and new electric appliances were widely advertised as symbolic of Japan's entry into modern capitalist society. They also correlate with the expanded "object strategies" of the 1963–64 international art world,

7 Jean Baudrillard, *Le Système des objets* [System of Objects], trans. James Benedict (1968; repr., New York: Verso, 1996), 147. I also explore the relationship between Baudrillard's book and the Nouveaux Réalistes in "Arman's System of Objects," *Art Journal* 61, no. 1 (2008): 54–67.

8 James S. Duesenberry, *Income, Saving, and the Theory of Consumer Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949).

9 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 29.

in which environments, *objet-tableaux*, events, instructions, scores, and demonstrations widely referenced domestic objects, behaviors, and environments.[10] If we compare Room in Alibi with related works of the period, including Christo's wrapped objects, George Brecht's *Chair Event*, Allan Kaprow's domestic environments and happenings, and Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg's Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus, the particularities of Akasegawa's interest in the function of the model within mass-production and domestic display come to the fore.[11] Positioning Akasegawa in this international art context may also help clarify his notion of Capitalist Realism as an independently conceived concept in relation to Richter and Lueg's use of the same term. In approaching the artist's model furniture through these domestic and international lenses, we are better able to see how he both highlighted and disturbed the ways in which models were used at the time to promote household consumption.

ROOMS

Akasegawa's notion of Capitalist Realism was conceived in an artistic atmosphere in which Socialist Realist modes of expression were seen as increasingly outdated in the context of Japan's emerging consumer republic.[12] Trained in realist oil painting techniques and working his way through Surrealist *engagé* styles, Akasegawa came of age in the intensely politicized Tokyo art scene of the late 1950s.[13] The Nihon Independent, one of the two major annual venues in Tokyo, was then dominated, as Akasegawa put it, by "Socialist Realist paintings show[ing] numerous workers thrusting clenched fists up to the sky."[14]

10 Julia Robinson, *New Realisms 1957–1962: Object Strategies between Readymade and Spectacle* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

11 Reiko Tomii has called attention to some of these international connections as "resonances" in "International Contemporaneity in the 1960s: Discoursing on Art in Japan and Beyond," *Japan Review*, no. 21 (2009): 123–47. See also her forthcoming book *Radicalism in the Wilderness: International Contemporaneity and 1960s Art in Japan* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

12 For a discussion of Socialist Realism in Japan, see Asato Ikeda, Aya Louisa McDonald, and Ming Tiampo, eds., *Art and War in Japan and Its Empire: 1931–1960* (Boston: Brill, 2013).

13 See Marotti's extensive history of the political nature of the art scene during this time in *Money*, 117–99.

14 Akasegawa Genpei, "The 1960s: The Art Which Destroyed Itself: An Intimate Account," in *Reconstructions: Avant-Garde Art in Japan 1945–65*, trans. John Clark, ed. David Elliot and Kazu Kaido (Oxford, UK: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1985), 85–90, citation 85–86.

Not impressed with this stereotype, he instead became involved in the Neo-Dada group associated with the Yomiuri Independent, indebted more to Surrealist notions of the *objet* (see Pedro Erber's introduction to "The *Objet* after Stalin" in this issue): "I had changed trains, from the Socialist Realist Nihon Independent to join 'Capitalist Realism' on the other side."[15]

At its height, the Neo-Dada group, part of the Anti-Art movement in which everyday objects were included in aggressive and agonistic assemblages and performances, was intimately connected with the protest movement against Anpo, the US–Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security.[16] In this political situation, the Japanese government sought to promote democracy and wealth through its Income Doubling Plan, while also managing to maintain an imperial and paternalistic elite bureaucracy.[17] This made an undeniable impression on the young artist, who was not directly political, but who soon began to produce work in which he explored capitalism's bureaucratic underpinnings and everyday instantiations, specifically in Japan.

Akasegawa's appetite for taking on capitalist ideology first surfaced in November 1962 during a symposium on the relationship between artistic and political action that was sponsored by *Keishō* art magazine under the title Signs of Discourse on Direct Action. The proceedings of the event were published in two parts early the following year, in the same journal.[18] During a conversation at the symposium, Akasegawa, along with artists Nakanishi Natsuyuki and Takamatsu Jirō, reflected on the new political reality in Japan, in which the protests against the

15 Ibid.

16 Reiko Tomii, "Geijutsu on Their Minds," in *Art, Anti-art, Non-art: Experimentations in the Public Sphere in Postwar Japan, 1950–1970*, ed. Charles Merewether and Rika Iezumi Hiro (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 35–64.

17 For a good and brief economic and political contextualization of the artistic situation of this period, see Doryun Chong, ed., *Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012); and Yaguchi Kunio, "The 1964 Tokyo Olympics and a Turning Point in Japanese Art," in *Nihon no bijutsu: Yomigaeru 1964* [1964: A Turning Point in Japanese Art], ed. Tōkyōto Gendai Bijutsukan (Tokyo: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 183–89.

18 "Chokusetsu kōdō no kizashi—Hitotsu no jikkenrei ni tsuite" [Signs of Direct Action—Concerning One Experiment] *Keishō*, no. 7 (February 1963): 15–23; and *Keishō*, no. 8 (June 1963): 1–18. Akasegawa recounts this era of his work in Akasegawa Genpei, *Tokyo mikisā keikaku—Hai reddo sentā chokusetsu kōdō no kiroku* [Tokyo Mixer Plan: Records of Hi-Red Center Direct Action] (Tokyo: Parco, 1984; repr., Tokyo: Chikuma Bunko, 1994). Excerpts also appear in Akasegawa Genpei, *Akasegawa Genpei no bōken: Nōnai rizōto kaihatsu daisakusen* [The Adventures of Akasegawa Genpei] (Nagoya: Nagoya Art Museum, 1995).

US military as well as US political and economic influence were beginning to die down. Art, the three artists agreed, had to move toward "events" for an "uneventful" time. Nakanishi argued that he and Takamatsu had already attempted to create such events when, dressed in business suits and with their faces painted white, they had performed anomalous activities in busy train compartments and stations along the major commuter line in Tokyo. In *Yamanote Line Incident* (1962), "What we tried to do," Nakanishi said, "was to stubbornly repeat events that did not belong to the structure [*kōzōsei*] of this container [*utsuwa*], add them to the events that daily gush forth."[19] Akasegawa, excited, took up Nakanishi's point and asked how "such things could be harmonized within a tableau."[20] He then began to explore the ways in which objects, actions, and environments gained coherence in relationship to each other and how the artists' anomalous acts could disrupt this.

The discussion at the 1962 symposium laid the groundwork for the formation of Hi-Red Center (1963–64), an art collective in which the three artists set about creating subtle activities that called attention to the ways in which small gestures and ordinary objects were related to "structures" (as Nakanishi called them) or "systems" (as Akasegawa called them in "Capitalist Realism") as wide-ranging as newspapers, currency, commodity circulation, train lines, and public sanitation. In all of their work during this short period, the three artists inflected the seemingly innocent and mundane bureaucratic policies (e.g., the Income Doubling Plan) and the habitual behaviors (such as sitting quietly on a train) of Japan's so-called *kanri shakai* (managed society)[21] with an absurdist, almost sinister element.[22]

Domestic furniture sets and living rooms also became potential

19 Nakanishi and Akasegawa, quoted in "Chokusetsu kōdō no kizashi," *Keishō*, no. 7: 16, 21.

20 Ibid.

21 J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

22 Yamada Satoshi and Mitsuda Yuri, eds., *Hai reddo sentā: "Chokusetsu kōdō" no kiseki ten* [Hi-Red Center: The Documents of "Direct Action"] (Nagoya: Nagoya City Art Museum and Shoto Museum of Art, 2013); Akasegawa Genpei, *The Principles of Art by Akasegawa Genpei from the 1960s to the Present* (Chiba: Chiba Museum, 2014). See also Marotti, *Money*, 208–44; Reiko Tomii, "After the Descent to the Everyday: Japanese Collectivism from Hi-Red Center to The Play, 1964–1974," in *Collectivism after Modernism*, ed. Gregory Sholette and Blake Stimson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 45–76; and Taro Nettleton, "Hi-Red Center's *Shelter Plan* (1964): The Uncanny Body in the Imperial Hotel," *Japanese Studies* 34, no. 1 (2014): 83–99.

sites of intervention. Akasegawa's interest in the living room as a particular form of tableau was consistent with a large number of assemblages made in the early 1960s that responded to the way that advertisements presented domestic commodities as if they were theatrical *tableaux-vivants* that "harmonized" objects with each other as part of larger ensembles: TVs and dinners; dining room, living room, and bedroom sets; refrigerators and their branded consumables; and so forth.[23] The January 1963 issue of *Art International*, which was published just after the *Keishō* conversation but before Akasegawa's Room in Alibi, might have sparked the artist's imagination in this regard. On the pages of that issue, one could find a wide variety of assemblages, replete with appliances, furnishings, and branded goods: George Segal's *The Dinner Table*; Enrico Baj's bureau; Claes Oldenburg's *Stove*, his *Table and Chair* sets, and *TV Dinner*; Roy Lichtenstein's *Woman Cleaning* (a refrigerator), and *Roto Broil*; George Brecht's interactive cabinet; Tom Wesselman's kitchen and bedroom environments; Daniel Spoerri's "snare" paintings (his signature table/chair sets mounted vertically on the wall); and, last but not least, Christo's *L'empaquetage* (Wrapping), essentially a bundle of bedding tied with rope. It is likely that Akasegawa perused the issue, studied its images, and absorbed the wide range of domestic rooms and arrangements, even though he was unable to read the texts, which grappled extensively with the assemblage and appropriative aesthetics then known under names such as "the New Realists, Neo-Dada, *Le nouveau réalisme*, Pop Art, The New Vulgarians, Common Object Painting, and the Know-Nothing Genre."[24]

Around the same time, in March 1963, Akasegawa began making the yen notes as well as his first wrapped objects. For the Yomiuri Independent exhibition, the artist intended to feature a tatami-sized realistic ink drawing of the 1,000-yen note, called *Morphology of*

23 Edward Kienholz used the word *tableau* specifically to describe his environments, but the term was also used throughout the literature on object-oriented Pop during this period. In *System of Objects*, Baudrillard talks about interior decoration and the composition of model displays as "harmonizing" structures of atmosphere (26).

24 Tokyo Neo Dada and Anti-Art, still under the radar of this Swiss publication, were not mentioned. Though it cannot be confirmed that Akasegawa saw the issue, Akasegawa was generally well informed about contemporary art through multiple sources, including Shinohara Ushio. Shinohara mentioned the importance of the issue in *Zen'ei no michi* [The Avant-Garde Road] (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppan-sha, 1968). See also Hiroko Ikegami, ed., *Shinohara Pops! The Avant-Garde Road: Tokyo/New York* (New Paltz, NY: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at the State University of New York at New Paltz, 2012), 100.

Akasegawa Genpei. *Morphology of Revenge (Take a Close Look at the Opponent before You Kill Him)* and *Fact or Method, 1, 2*, 1963. Ink on paper, 90 cm × 180 cm; and canvas, paper, and rope. 15th Yomiuri Independent, 1963. © Akasegawa Genpei. Image courtesy of the Chiba City Museum of Art/SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

Revenge (Take a Close Look at the Opponent before You Kill Him). But, as the artist recounted, he was not satisfied with the piece displayed on its own, so he placed two large blank canvases on either side of the drawing. He wrapped these canvases in paper and rope and titled them *Fact or Method, 1, 2*. The artist described his wrapping as both an expression of the "nonexistence" of the canvas and as the "packaging of art itself."[25] That is to say, the paper acted as a material contradiction or paradox, both obscuring the canvas while at the same time presenting it on the wall as a commodity wrapped and ready to take home. Japanese curator Yamada Satoshi has argued that this composition of a packaged canvas on each side of the yen note mimicked Marx's representation of the fluid circulation of capitalist exchange value as C-M-C (the commodity-money-commodity formula).[26]

Fact or Method, 1, 2 was Akasegawa's initial foray into wrapping as a way of simultaneously obfuscating and exposing the nature of the commodity. As he recounts in "Capitalist Realism," wrapping was necessary because "real things . . . are things one cannot easily look straight at."[27] He then adds, "For instance, a man cannot see the inside of his eyelids clearly. In order for him to take a straight look at them, he needs to cut off his eyelids."[28] The eyelid frames the visible, but is itself invisible. In his analogy Akasegawa makes the point that commodities and money, so naturalized by consumer lifestyles, are structuring forces that, much like eyelids, are hidden in plain sight. If he could not exactly "cut off" commodities in order to gain a perspective on them as frames, he could, as an artist, at least try setting them in yet another kind of "frame" through which commodities as frames might be observed indirectly. Wrapping, ultimately, functions in this paradoxical sense: an opacity that isolates an object and creates conditions under which the observer renews her curiosity about the object hidden underneath.

By May, Akasegawa developed another series of wrapped packages that he placed on sidewalks and train platforms. This was part of his contribution to Hi-Red Center's Sixth Mixer Plan. The packages looked similar to Christo's wrappings—one of which had been featured in the January *Art International*—but, as Akasegawa remembers it, he had no

25 Akasegawa, "The 1960s," 88.
26 Yamada Satoshi interviewed by William Marotti in 2006, cited in *Money*, 267.
27 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 27.
28 Ibid.

Akasegawa Genpei. Wrapped objects on the platform of Shinbashi Station (Sixth Mixer Plan), 1963. Mixed media. © Akasegawa Genpei. Image courtesy of the Chiba City Museum of Art/SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

knowledge of Christo at this point. He recalled that it was only after these first wrappings that Tone Yasunao, a close friend and musician from the concretist Gurūpu Ongaku, showed him an image of Christo's wrapped motorcycle in a Fluxus newspaper. "I remember thinking it was a bit inadequate since it was wrapped in something transparent—like vinyl," said the artist. "I, on the other hand, had been considering the package more in the manner of a scientific idea rather than as an artistic act."[29] Akasegawa always maintained that he had independently invented his wrapping method, which, given his knowledge of the European avant-garde, could have just as likely been based on Man Ray's *Enigma of Isadore Ducasse* as on Christo's contemporaneous packages. Regardless of whether or not Akasegawa was aware of Christo, the two artists shared an interest in the function of wrapping as a loose reference both to the packaged newness of a consumer object

29 Akasegawa, "The 1960s," 89.

and to its obfuscation. Yet Akasegawa was already pursuing not just singly wrapped objects, as Christo did at the time, but also the relationships that wrapped objects had to each other, and to their shared environment.

In July 1963, the art critic Nakahara organized a group exhibition called Fuzai no Heya/Room in Alibi for the opening of the Naiqua Gallery in the Shinbashi area of Tokyo. The exhibition included ten artists (including all three Hi-Red Center collaborators), who each created their own interventions within an environment fully furnished as if it was a domestic interior. Shimizu Akira placed a stuffed hawk on a bed, while Takamatsu wrapped his signature black cords (reminiscent of entrails clogged with small toys, kitchen implements, and the like) around a desk, chair, and lamp set up in a corner of the room. Akasegawa took the center space, wrapping a rug, chair, fan, and radio with brown craft paper and rope. Though obscured, the objects were

Fuzai no Heya/Room in Alibi invitation, Naiqua Gallery, July 15–27, 1963. Image courtesy of the Chiba City Museum of Art/SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

clearly recognizable by shape and context as a living room set; the fan and the radio were turned on, with muffled sounds emerging from under the paper.

The show had two titles: the Japanese *fuzai no heya* meaning "room in absence," and the English "room in alibi." The awkward phrasing of the English was most likely the result of translation by Nakahara, who was not fluent in English. Serendipitously, the two titles worked together in loose correlation to playfully insinuate a criminal quality throughout the exhibition. Nakahara articulated the conceptual program of Fuzai no Heya/Room in Alibi in the flyer accompanying the exhibition:

> What is at stake here is not presence but absence. The appearance of "Room" is a means to indicate just the opposite. The quasi-furniture gathered here provides concrete evidence to dispute its own reality.[30]

When writing a review of the show in the local paper, Nakahara reprinted the text from the pamphlet and additionally bookended it with an introduction and a conclusion that addressed the criminological implications of the term *alibi* in English a bit differently, ending with the following statement:

> By the way, what kind of crime, do you think, was committed in this room? Our gentle criminals disappeared without a trace, making it look as though nothing had happened. Without the smell of gunpowder, bloodstains, or signs of a struggle, the room is as hushed as a graveyard. . . . Here the fetish of commodity is dying from a fatal wound.[31]

Here Nakahara views the artists as "gentle criminals" and the furniture as victims, which foregrounds the subversive qualities of their gestures. But this ultimately contradicts his earlier claim made in the pamphlet regarding the room's culpability.

Going back to this earlier supposition, the purpose of the exhibition, and especially of Akasegawa's tableau of wrapped furniture, was to suggest that the room itself was suspect, providing "evidence that

30 Nakahara Yūsuke, Invitation for Room in Alibi, reproduced here.

31 Nakahara Yūsuke, "Fuzai no heya: Onkō na hanzaisha-tachi," *Nihon dokusho shimbun* (August 5, 1963); trans. Reiko Tomii, in *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945–1989: Primary Documents*, ed. Doryun Chong, Michio Hayashi, Fumihiko Sumitomo, and Kenji Kajiya (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 138–39.

would dispute its own reality." That is, Akasegawa was not so much perpetrating a crime *in* the room, but instead attempting to "frame" the everyday crimes *of* rooms and their objects in the way they systematically asserted themselves as "real things" and structured everyday behaviors. Indeed, in his "Capitalist Realism" article, Akasegawa leveled a direct accusation against chairs as perpetrators, asserting that his models were "methods of observing the criminal."[32]

MODELS

In Room in Alibi, Akasegawa's strategic display of a chair, rug, fan, and lamp as part of a domestic set locates the "crime" in innovative Tokyo housing projects influenced by Western models of modern living. Indeed, the demonstration room and the model were very powerful Cold War tools. Throughout the 1950s, tours, expos, and trade fairs were organized, mostly across Europe, in which model homes were a central feature: most famous was the 1959 American National Expo in Moscow where Nixon and Khrushchev conducted their debate about capitalism around a dryer.[33] In Japan, the government's robust "Housing Miracle" was based on such models of modernization. With most major Japanese cities devastated by either saturation bombing or nuclear attack during World War II, a building boom throughout the 50s and 60s rapidly introduced new architectural layouts that included electricity.[34] The Japan Housing Corporation and Construction Ministry oversaw many of these projects, including the so-called *danchi* developments, a type of Western-style apartment dwelling that was heavily promoted to young urban professional families. The floor plans of the *danchi*, influenced by Western notions of hygiene and "chair-sitting" lifestyles, put a new emphasis on the nuclear family's living requirements, with bedroom and living spaces clearly defined, and sleek new appliance-friendly dining/kitchen

32 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 27.

33 Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); Simon Partner, *Assembled in Japan: Electronic Goods and the Making of the Japanese Consumer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

34 Ann Waswo, *Housing in Postwar Japan: A Social History* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002); Egami Wataru, "Danchi no kinrin kankei to komyuniti" in *Daitoshi no kyōdō seikatsu: Manshon danchi no shakaigaku*, ed. Kurasawa Susumu (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1990).

units. The modern countertops and vinyl flooring in the kitchen made tables and chairs necessary. By the 60s, with the consumer economy growing at unprecedented rates, most residents of the *danchi* were buying not only a modern kitchen and dining room set, but also stuffed chairs, a protective rug to be laid over the tatami, and electric fans to increase the poor circulation inside the buildings.[35]

If these types of Western-style sets were becoming more and more common throughout the *danchi* complexes, Akasegawa saw in them evidence of the paradox that undergirded their claim to reality. Each domestic object could be associated with others like it elsewhere, while also simultaneously masking that association by asserting its own uniqueness within a particular household set. In "Capitalist Realism," Akasegawa called attention to such interdependencies:

> If we are to isolate and conceal the countless number of latent objects in our everyday lives—all the chairs around the world, for example—what would be the result? . . . People who had been sitting tightly in chairs would be in a half-sitting posture at tables; or legs of tables would have to be extended, so that people could stand up while having a meal; or table legs would have to be cut off in order for people to work lying down; at the same time, there would be more straps in trains; barbers would need footstools; peoples' legs would become thicker. . . . The rules in the world thus far would be broken, and by the transfigurations of human behaviors along with tables, the principle of chairs as a whole would be seen at a distance; at the same time, the world system that had concerned and regulated chairs would become observable.[36]

Akasegawa proposes a reverse or counter model to the sort of "system of objects" Baudrillard had analyzed. Rather than act as a prototype to cultivate consumer desire, Akasegawa's model is a prototype designed to destroy the capitalist consumer object world. Serially wrapping and "eliminating" every chair would trigger a domino effect across the entire domestic landscape in which all other domestic objects associated with the chair, especially tables, would become useless. Even if this could not come to pass, Akasegawa argues, at the very

35 Waswo, *Housing in Postwar Japan*, 80–100.
36 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 29.

least, the "world system that had concerned and regulated chairs would become observable"—a statement that refers back to the artist's discussion of making the invisibility of the commodity situation indirectly visible through his wrapping method.

Akasegawa's understanding of the model as a conceptual mode meant to imagine a potentially repeatable scenario might have its origin in Fluxus-oriented events, scores, and instructions circulating in Tokyo during this time. Composer Ichiyanagi Toshi, then married to Yoko Ono, performed some of his event scores at Sōgetsu Art Center (SAC), outside of Tokyo, in 1961. In 1962, Ono followed with her own performance and display of some of her Instruction Paintings. Both artists, along with a number of other Fluxus members, had adopted George Brecht's practice of using a written score as a model proposal for a repeatable event or action upon an object. Since 1958, the New York–based Fluxus artist had been creating what he called "events" to propel his inquiry about the possible realities of objects. Brecht developed his method in the context of John Cage's famous composition course at the New School in New York. As relationships developed between the Tokyo and New York Fluxus artists, some of Brecht's scores were chosen for display in 1962 as part of the exhibition of World Graphic Scores at Minami Gallery in Tokyo.[37]

One of Brecht's earliest pieces was *Chair Event*, created for Martha Jackson Gallery's Environments, Situations, Spaces exhibition in April 1961. He placed a stack of printed scores along with three chairs in three different spaces within the gallery. The score consisted of a few simple statements: "Sitting on a black chair. Occurrence. Yellow chair. (Occurrence.) On (or near) a white chair. Occurrence." He considered the statements to be models for self-reflective observation. As art historian Julia Robinson has explained, Brecht's scores prioritized language over the object and left the completion of the proposed activity up to each viewer.[38] This ultimately reframed the content of the piece from what one did with the chair to *how one thought about* what one did with the chair. In effect, it created a distance between the object and the viewer similar to Akasegawa's wrapping as a model "framing" device.

37 Midori Yoshimoto, "Fluxus Nexus: Fluxus in New York and Japan," Post (MoMA website), last modified July 9, 2013, http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/199-fluxus-nexus-fluxus-in-new-york-and-japan.

38 Julia Robinson, "From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht's Events and the Conceptual Turn in the Art of the 1960s," *October*, no. 127 (Winter 2009): 77–108.

Despite their similar interests in indirect observation, there are major differences between Akasegawa's and Brecht's ideas of what constitutes a model. First, Akasegawa did not want to rely solely on the language-based score. During the Direct Action symposium, he and his colleagues specifically criticized proposals for unrealized events because they had not yet proven their disruptive potential. Instead, he leaned toward the model as a concrete example of an already completed activity that could then be repeated by others. The second difference is that Akasegawa was much more invested in making his viewers aware of the object's commodity status than Brecht. So, while Brecht's written scores generally focused on subjective interpretations of *a* chair, Akasegawa aimed to demonstrate (and reverse) the ways in which *all* chairs, as commodities, were asserting their authority across the domestic landscape.

In "Capitalist Realism," Akasegawa set out to explain the concept behind his already completed Room in Alibi. Although the manifesto described a different type of scenario than the actual piece, the text and installation worked together to describe the importance of thinking about the relationship between the model set and serial mass production. While "Capitalist Realism" proposed the serial wrapping of "all chairs" so as to show how they could destroy other objects that functioned in relation to them, Room in Alibi attended to the alternative proposition—to wit, that wrapping the objects in a single household set can create better visibility for their nature as part of a series. That is, Akasegawa wanted to show that each apartment's living room was only considered unique because it disavowed the fact of the furniture's mass production. Living rooms were usually individually decorated and arranged with furniture marked by some marginal yet distinguishing features, such as differently colored upholstery. In essence, this system of "marginal differences" was what allowed each and every living room to claim its original and singular status.[39] By wrapping the set, Akasegawa obscured those marginal differences and redirected the viewer's attention back to the generic qualities of each object, and on the system of mass-production as a whole.

To best understand how Room in Alibi did this, it is useful to compare the piece to two other art events of the period that directly referenced model displays: the first, Kaprow's March 1963 environment/

39 See also Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, 141.

Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg, Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus (Living with Pop—A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism), Mobelhaus Berges, Düsseldorf, October 11, 1963. © 2015 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photograph by Reiner Ruthenbeck.

happening *Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hoffmann*, was meant to parody the middle-class housewife's compulsion to arrange furniture in a room. Kaprow, who had taken Cage's composition course with Brecht, began to develop his installations and happenings based on scores and instructions. *Push and Pull* used large cardboard instructions outside the door of the room to goad viewers into "pushing" and "pulling" the chairs, desks, and beds inside. Kaprow was astonished to see that most visitors wanted to put the room back in order.[40] Clearly the way they arranged their living rooms and bedrooms back home dictated how they conceptualized the arrangement of the furniture in *Push and Pull*.[41]

The relationship of the model set to the mass-produced series was also the focus of the second event worthy of being noted here, Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg's Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus, held in Düsseldorf on October 11, 1963.

40 Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 85.

41 As an interesting side note: On his trip to Paris in July of the same year, Kaprow had organized a happening in the showrooms at the Bon Marché department store that featured a number of demonstrations occurring simultaneously within the store, including washing machines wrapped and unwrapped by a "zombie salesman." Judith Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 62–63.

During this event, the two artists used all 52 model bedrooms, 78 model living rooms, and 41 kitchen displays inside Düsseldorf's Berges department store in order to undo the fiction of the model's singularity. The artists began by demonstrating the "correct" use of the ensembles, based on the countless fairs and expos in Western Germany that prominently featured model homes with model furniture and came complete with model families who were paid to inhabit the space for the duration of the show.[42] Richter and Lueg for their part inhabited a model furniture display at the department store. Sitting on couches that did not face the television set, and with their feet awkwardly dangling off the ledges, the artists' lounging was both hilarious and appeared to be strangely uncomfortable. At the end, the artists invited their audience to wander through the displays. Many people took up the artists' model behavior by trying the beds—most of which had only been provisionally assembled, and so collapsed.[43]

Living with Pop—A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism was a direct response to the assemblages of domestic environments in the pages of *Art International* and to the "events" and "happenings" the artists saw in Düsseldorf and Paris that spring.[44] Highly informed about the various discussions around Pop, New Realism, and Fluxus, they sought to position their work as part of these emerging "realistic" depictions of consumer objects. Richter and Lueg argued that their interest in Capitalist Realism stemmed from "well-defined psychological, cultural and economic factors that are the same here [in West Germany] as in America."[45] They made a point of arguing that their work referenced capitalism's "organic and autonomous growth"—a language that indicated their own interest in capitalist mass-production and marketing.[46]

Kaprow's *Push and Pull* and Richter and Lueg's Living with Pop

42 Christine Mehring, "The Art of a Miracle: Toward a History of German Pop, 1955–72," in *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, ed. Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, 2009), 153–69.

43 Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg, "Programme and Report," in *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings and Interviews, 1962–1993*, ed. Hans Ulrich Obrist (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 19.

44 Elodie Evers, Magdalena Holzhey, and Gregor Jansen, eds., *Leben mit Pop. Eine Reproduktion des kapitalistischen Realismus* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013).

45 Gerhard Richter, "Letter to a Newsreel Company, 29 April 1963," in *Daily Practice of Painting*, 16.

46 Ibid.

differed in their treatments of the furniture set. Where Kaprow showed how sets upheld their authority by referencing other sets, Living with Pop attempted to upset this authority by emphasizing the repetitive nature of the displays, all within Berges's department store. Akasegawa took another approach by using his wrapping logic for Room in Alibi. On the one hand, the room and its objects insisted on their unique "presence"—dramatized by the fact that the radio and fan are turned on and audible underneath the wrapping, as if to be used at any moment—while the wrapping signified a model of that room's "elimination." This strange, contradictory "absent presence" could then redirect the viewer's attention not just towards the furniture that constituted the room, but to the more philosophical, and potentially subversive, understanding of *how one thought about* the furniture that constituted a room. It reframed the image of the room so that a viewer could become conscious of how consumer and domestic habitudes were inculcated by rooms (and by the capitalist agents, structures, and institutions that constructed and advertised such rooms).

LOOPHOLES

As Akasegawa himself argued, his interest in the model was related to its ability to create a "loophole": a conceptual, nonsensical, ambiguous space between object and event, opacity and transparency, presence and absence, the singular and the multiple. If not literally a frame, such a loophole acted figuratively as a framing device through which the already pervasive framing or structuring power of commodities could be viewed. Akasegawa's attempt to create a model loophole in Room in Alibi was the first of a number of reframing efforts taken up in association with the Hi-Red Center collective. Soon after Room in Alibi, the artist largely abandoned the notion of wrapping because, he argued (in an implicit critique of Christo), to repeat the procedure would only lead to an uninteresting escalation of wrapping the entire world.[47] Instead, he began to concentrate on other kinds of loopholes. Rooms and containers were turned inside out, repeated within each other, minimized, expanded infinitely.

In June 1964, Hi-Red Center put on the Great Panorama Exhibition at the Naiqua Gallery, a five-day show featuring altered tin cans on display throughout an exhibition space that was "closed" for

47 Akasegawa, "The 1960s," 89.

Hi-Red Center. Closed door, Great Panorama Exhibition, Naiqua Gallery, June 12–16, 1964. Image courtesy of Hanaga Taro/Chiba City Museum of Art. Photograph by Hanaga Mitsutoshi.

the duration of the exhibition, until the last, "opening" event.[48] As Akasegawa recounted, "Usually we have an opening party with people drinking sake on the first day of the exhibition. . . . However, in the case of Great Panorama, we did the closing first. Only the members of Hi-Red Center went to the gallery with nails and hammers and sealed the doors from the outside."[49] An announcement of the show was pasted on top of the boards, along with the closed signs. Only on the last day of the show did the gallery open to excited Japanese and international art cognoscenti, including Jasper Johns, who had been in Tokyo working and milling about the scene since that May. The collective asked him to open the door to the room full of empty cans.[50]

48 Reiko Tomii, "Voiding the Exhibition: Hi Red Center and Matsuzawa Yutaka," in *Voids: A Retrospective*, ed. John Armleder et al. (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2009), 427–32.

49 Akasegawa, *Tokyo mikisā keikaku*, 152.

50 Ibid.

It is not inconceivable that the Great Panorama Exhibition was planned as a sly response to Johns's *Painted Bronze* (1960), a set of cast renditions of Balanchine beer cans, one open, one closed. Johns had been a celebrity in the Tokyo Neo-Dada world since art critic Tōno Yoshiaki had written an extensive article on him and Rauschenberg in the art journal *Geijutsu shinchō* in 1959.[51] Around the time of Great Panorama, Shinohara was also making imitation *Flags* and painting a magazine image of *Painted Bronze*, and he was then gearing up for Rauschenberg's anticipated visit that fall by making ten imitation *Coca-Cola Plans*.[52] Much in the same way that Room in Alibi participated in the proliferation of *objet-tableaux*, Great Panorama could be seen as a response to the proliferation of "cans" in the art world—from Johns's initial model to those of Wesselman, Manzoni, Warhol, and Fluxus.[53]

The Hi-Red Center artists served Sapporo beer at the opening (closing) and invited the crowd to view their own variations on cans. There were jars filled with live cockroaches and sealed with the Hi-Red Center trademark "!"; a piece called *Canned Mystery* (a prototype for a product eventually sold in the Fluxus catalog for $4.00); and Akasegawa's *Uchū no kanzume* (Canned Universe), a series of opened cans with their contents removed and labels repositioned on the inside. *Uchū no kanzume* was in many ways the purest instantiation of Akasegawa's model concept after Room in Alibi. The artist left the lid of each can open so that viewers could see the label, which signified the reversal of the container's space. With the outside of the can now its

51 Tōno Yoshiaki, "Kyōki to sukyandaru: Katayaburi no sekai no shinjin tachi" [Madness and Scandal: Fantastic New Faces of the World], *Geijutsu shinchō* 10, no. 11 (November 1959): 104–12.

52 Johns's stay was chronicled in detail in Tōno Yoshiaki's August 1964 issue of *Bijutsu techō*. See also Hiroko Ikegami, "Shinohara Ushio's Dialogue with American Art: From Imitation Art to Pop Ukiyo-e," Post (MoMA website), last modified September 16, 2014, http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/477-shinohara-ushio-s-dialogue-with-american-art-from-imitation-art-to-pop-ukiyo-e.

53 It is not certain how extensive were Akasegawa's conversations with Johns. It would be worthwhile, but outside the scope of this argument, to explore their connections further. At that moment, Johns was making a painting featuring a cast leg of the critic Takiguchi Shūzō sitting on a chair, eventually called *The Watchman*. In Johns's notes for the piece, he says: "The spy [the artist] must be ready to 'move,' must be aware of his entrances and exits. . . . Somewhere here there is a question of 'seeing clearly.' Seeing what? According to what?" Jasper Johns, *Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 59–60. Johns indicated in *Time* that his *Flag* paintings were actually responses to Shinohara's "imitations," so more two-way correspondences between Johns and the Japanese artists are possible points of exploration.

Akasegawa Genpei. *Uchū no kanzume (Kani-kan)* [Canned Universe], 1964. Tin can and paper. © Akasegawa Genpei. Image courtesy of Chiba City Museum of Art/SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

inside, viewers, the gallery, Tokyo, and everything beyond became the contents of the can and its packaging.[54] Here, the simple strategy of turning the commodity inside out did the work of exposing its ability to frame or structure reality.

Akasegawa argued that *Uchū no kanzume* could best express its nonsensical logic only as part of a set:

> I made [*Uchū no kanzume*] not only from a can of crabmeat, but also from one of salmon. . . . The important point is that while the can of crabmeat packaged almost all of the cosmos, a very slight unenclosed residue was left. Yet almost all of the cosmos was enclosed in the following can of salmon. Whilst there was an unenclosed residue in this too, it had already been enclosed by the can of crabmeat. That is to say, while A was enclosing B, A was also being enclosed by B. . . . The packaging of the cosmos was thereby reached in a composite manner.[55]

Akasegawa's idea is that each reversed can with its label inside needs another can to envelop its outside, an outside that the other can, paradoxically, also helps create (the small space remaining on the inside of the can). The reversed can, within the "reversed" Great Panorama

54 Like Akasegawa's choice of furniture, the imported crabmeat subtly and strategically referenced a generalized "capitalist" force of international market infiltration of Japan's fishing industry—most notably in connection to the famous 1929 leftist novel *Kanikōsen*, translated to film in 1953, about a crew on a Japanese crab-canning ship.

55 Akasegawa, "The 1960s," 90.

Exhibition, acts as an oblique countermodel, the loophole through which viewers can contemplate the commodity system as a tautological enclosure of reality. As with the wrapping method used to refocus the viewer's perception of furniture as commodities, the lid and label of the tin cans, cut off and reversed, offer yet another absurd and oblique method to make the invisible logic of the commodity visible.

Indeed, there is a consistency to Akasegawa's pursuit of the conceptual and perceptual space of the loophole all the way through to the end of Hi-Red Center's activities. With the help of Shigeko Kubota (already an established member of Fluxus), Akasegawa created *Bundle of Events*, which listed all Hi-Red Center events on a map of Tokyo, and then was crumpled into a ball and tied with a string. The piece functioned as a model wrapped object. Here, as with the first wrappings, the paper acted paradoxically both to "eliminate" all Hi-Red Center activities (keeping them clandestine, as the artists preferred) and to expose their status as commodities. Finally published in the March 1965 Fluxus newspaper, no. 5, *Bundle of Events* at once referenced the group's counterprototype events and made their models purchasable as Fluxus "commodity" objects.

Akasegawa's various framing activities can be read as attempts to uncover invisible structures within the reality of capitalism, structures that affirm the commodity's paradoxical underwriting of uniqueness

Hi-Red Center. *Bundle of Events*, 1969. Paper and rope. Producer: Akasegawa Genpei. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, New York Museum of Modern Art.

through replication and mass-production. Akasegawa's wrapped furniture pieces are testimony to how hard it can be to observe this paradox. Indeed, as a complement to the proposal of the model yen notes, the model wrapped furniture pieces greatly enrich the conceptual program set forth in the artist's "Capitalist Realism" manifesto, extending Akasegawa's accusations beyond the specific bureaucracies of the legal and currency systems and toward capitalist modes of production at large. The two projects operate in tandem: while the model yen notes propose to make the capitalist system observable through the overproduction of currency, the model wrapped furniture proposes to make it observable through the opposite force, the elimination of commodities.

Whatever the strategy, Akasegawa emphasized the importance of observation itself. As he states in "Capitalist Realism," "The observer is the world's concerned onlooker. Although his contact with and agitation of the things around him produce actual changes in those things, the concerned onlooker's goal is not to foment such changes but only to observe them."[56] Coming from an artist with such sharp insight, this is not necessarily a statement against avant-garde commitment. Rather, it is an indication of reality's new complexity at such a crucial juncture in Japan's modernization.

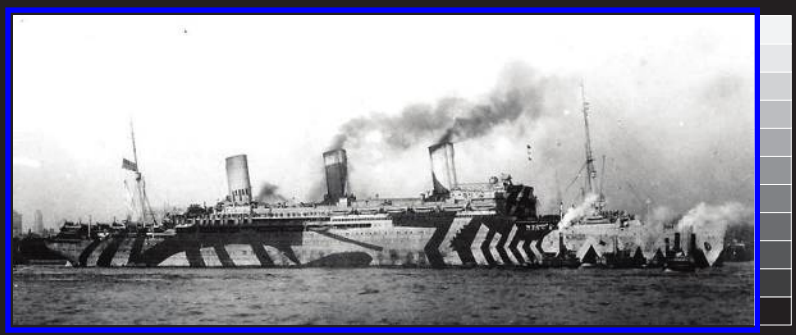
NOTE *This article is dedicated to Akasegawa Genpei (1937–2014). A version was presented in 2013 at the CAA panel The Global Sixties, chaired by Caroline A. Jones and Stephen Nelson. I owe deep gratitude to them and to my readers, especially Reiko Tomii, Namiko Kunimoto, and John Szostak. Special thanks to Ushio Chiho, James Jack, and Mayumi Kamata for research and translation assistance, and to the* ARTMargins *editors for their sustained editorial guidance.*

56 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 32.

Stephanie Syjuco

Speculative Propositions:

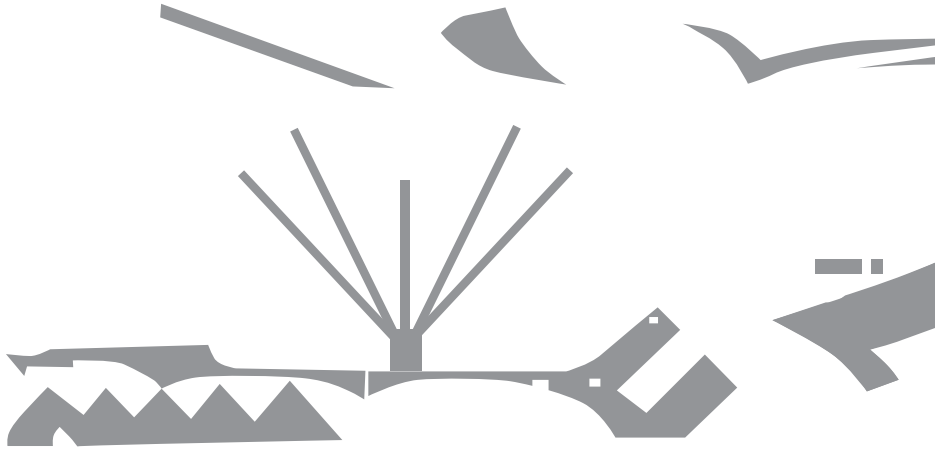
A Visual Pattern Sampler



Around the time of World War I, a peculiar form of marine-vessel camouflage was developed as a tactical façade for British and American warships and other watercraft. "Dazzle camouflage," as it was known, did little to hide the watercrafts themselves. Rather, it was designed to confuse enemy aim through its chaotic black-and-white patterns. Vintage photographs of these ships provide startling images of such graphic warfare. At the same time, the extreme angles and cutout shapes, influenced as they were by Cubist experiments in painting, recall a host of other art forms from Soviet Constructivism to ethnic and tribal patterning, Op Art, and graphic design.

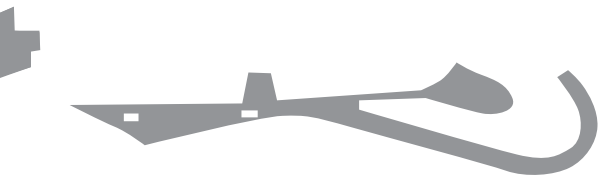
As an artist researching these images, I began speculating on the side effects of these ships' routes as globally operative vehicles of conquest and empire. Their razzle-dazzle war-paint patterns not only camouflaged the ships; they also acted as symbolic markers of dominance. I wondered: How might these patterns have been altered or updated in the present era and transferred onto other forms—modern architecture, commodity culture, or trade vehicles—as a means of cross-pollination and hybridization across cultures and continents?

ABOVE The USS *Leviathan*, 1918. Photographed by the New York Navy Yard. US Naval History and Heritage Command Photograph. http://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-51000/NH-51392.html



What follows are my speculative experiments with dazzle camouflage applied to a range of objects: from Philippine *jeepneys* (WWII-era American jeeps transformed into vernacular public transport) to cargo-ship containers carrying global commodities produced by colonized labor forces; from an improbable line of cheaply made IKEA furniture to an Indonesian ikat weave inserting itself into an Anni Albers textile.

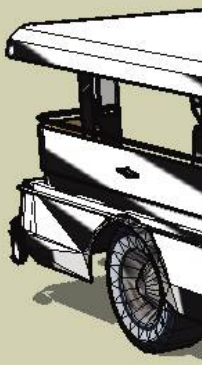
The video *Ornament and Crime (Villa Savoye)* wanders through a 3D digital rendering of Le Corbusier's iconic French modernist building that has been haplessly taken over, inside and out, by ethnic Vietnamese and Algerian textile patterns. Difficult to discern, its perfection ruined by visual patterns that have their origin in former French colonies, the building, as it appears in my video, bears witness to historical trauma and migration.

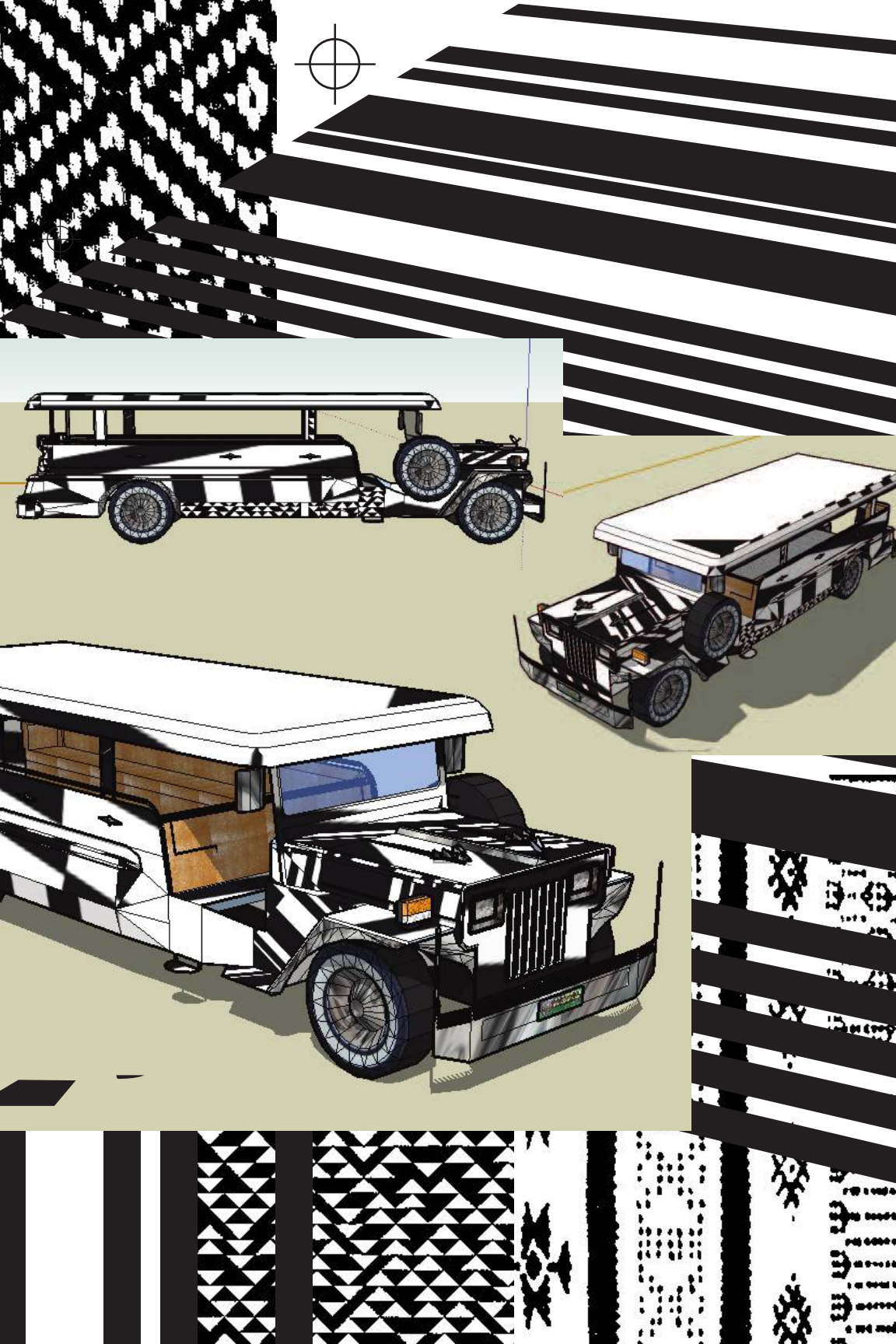


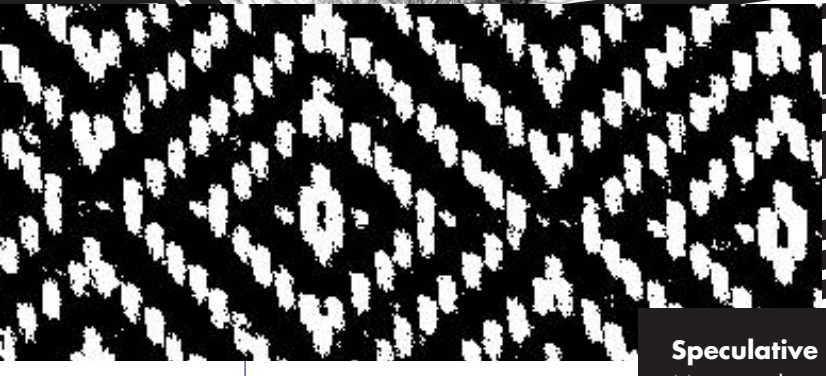
The following speculative visual propositions are mash-ups, flows of images and patterns that collide references to dazzle camouflage with other contemporary visual forms.

Speculative Proposition: Contemporary cargo-container ships adorned in dazzle camouflage, modern-day "battleships" of capitalism and commerce.

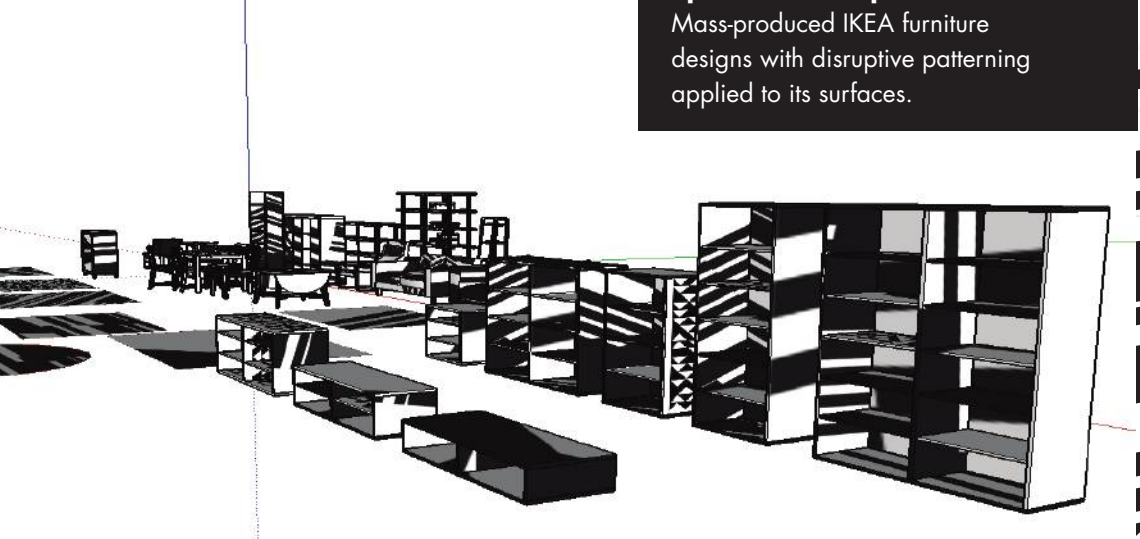
Speculative Proposition: Painted *jeepneys* in a graphic patterning that highlights their hybrid pedigree (in the Philippines, *jeepneys* are leftover US Army jeeps-turned-public transport).

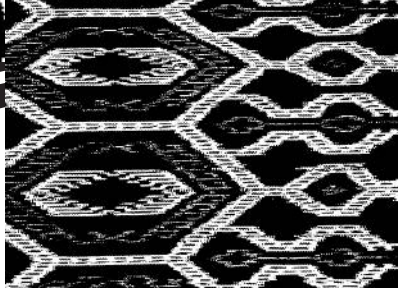


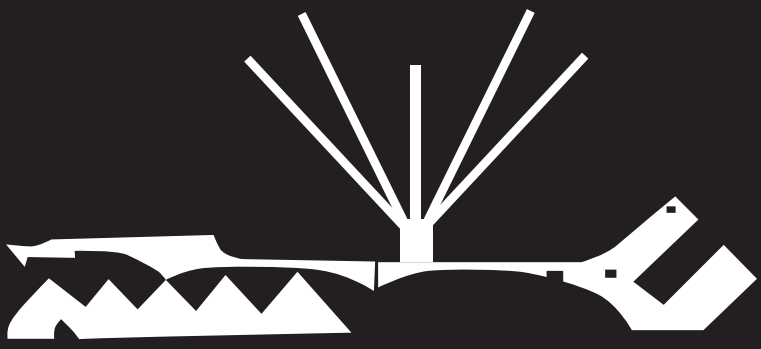




Speculative Proposition:
Mass-produced IKEA furniture designs with disruptive patterning applied to its surfaces.







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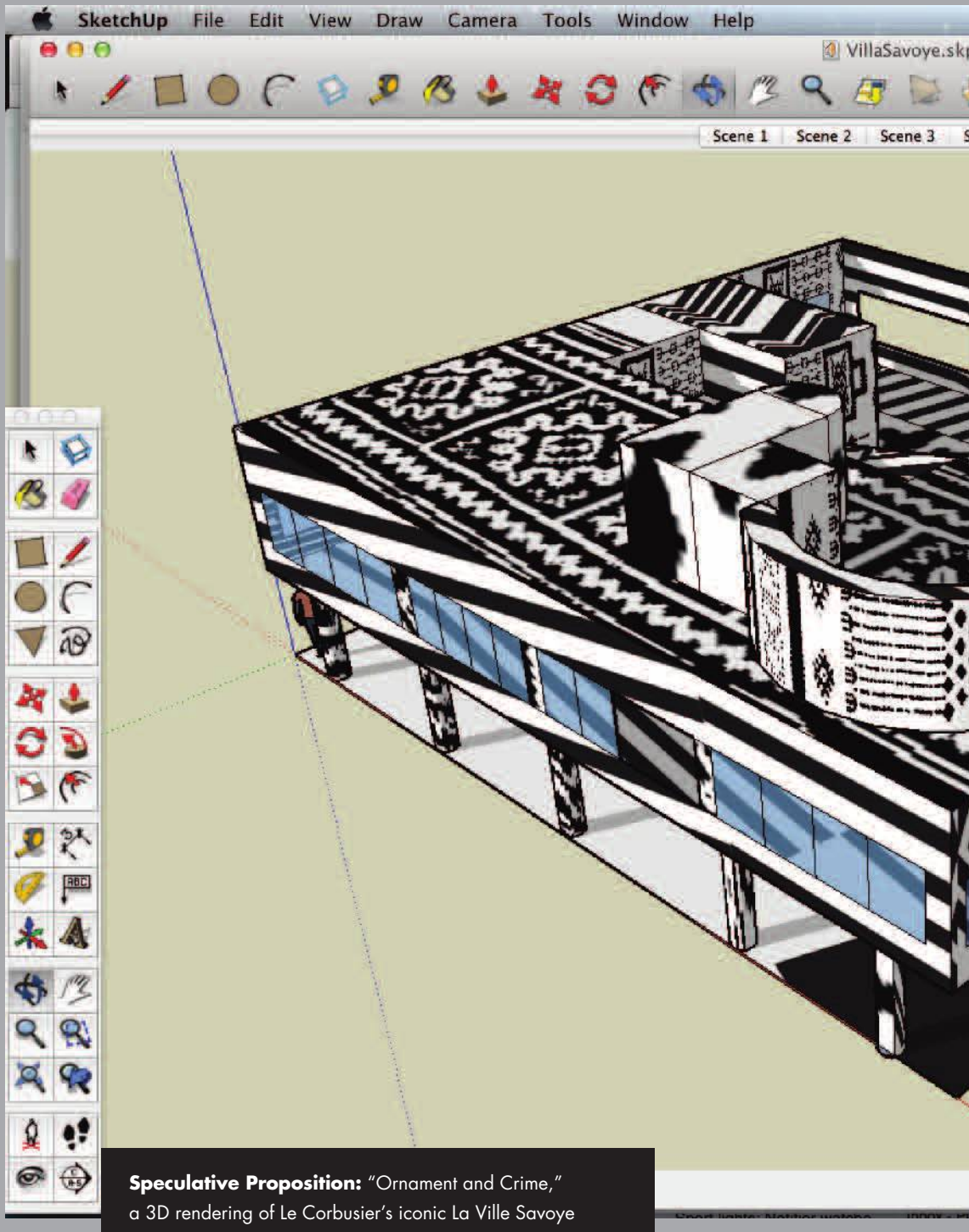
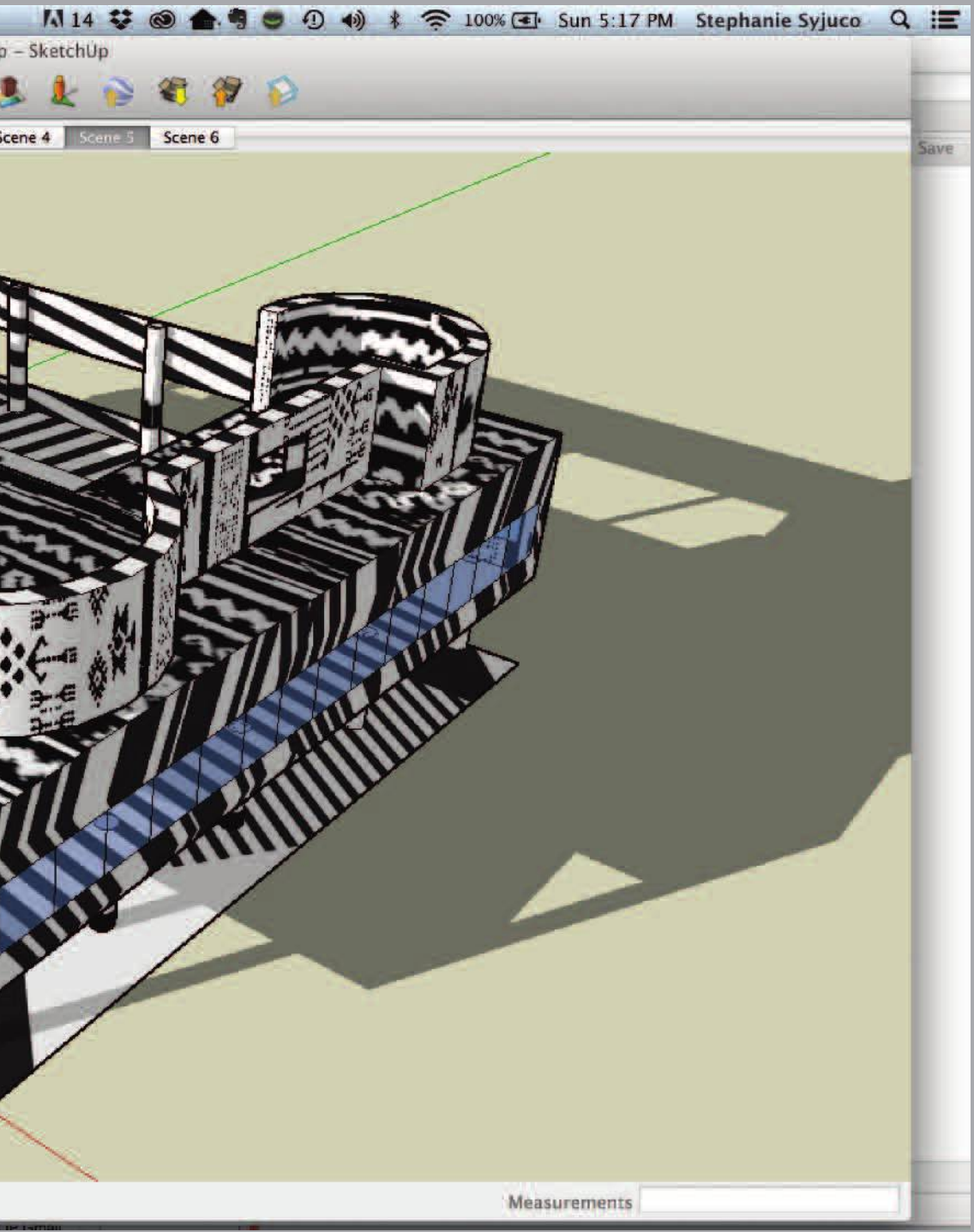


Speculative Proposition: "Ornament and Crime," a 3D rendering of Le Corbusier's iconic La Ville Savoye in Poissy, France, wrapped in disruptive patterning culled from textiles from former French colonies.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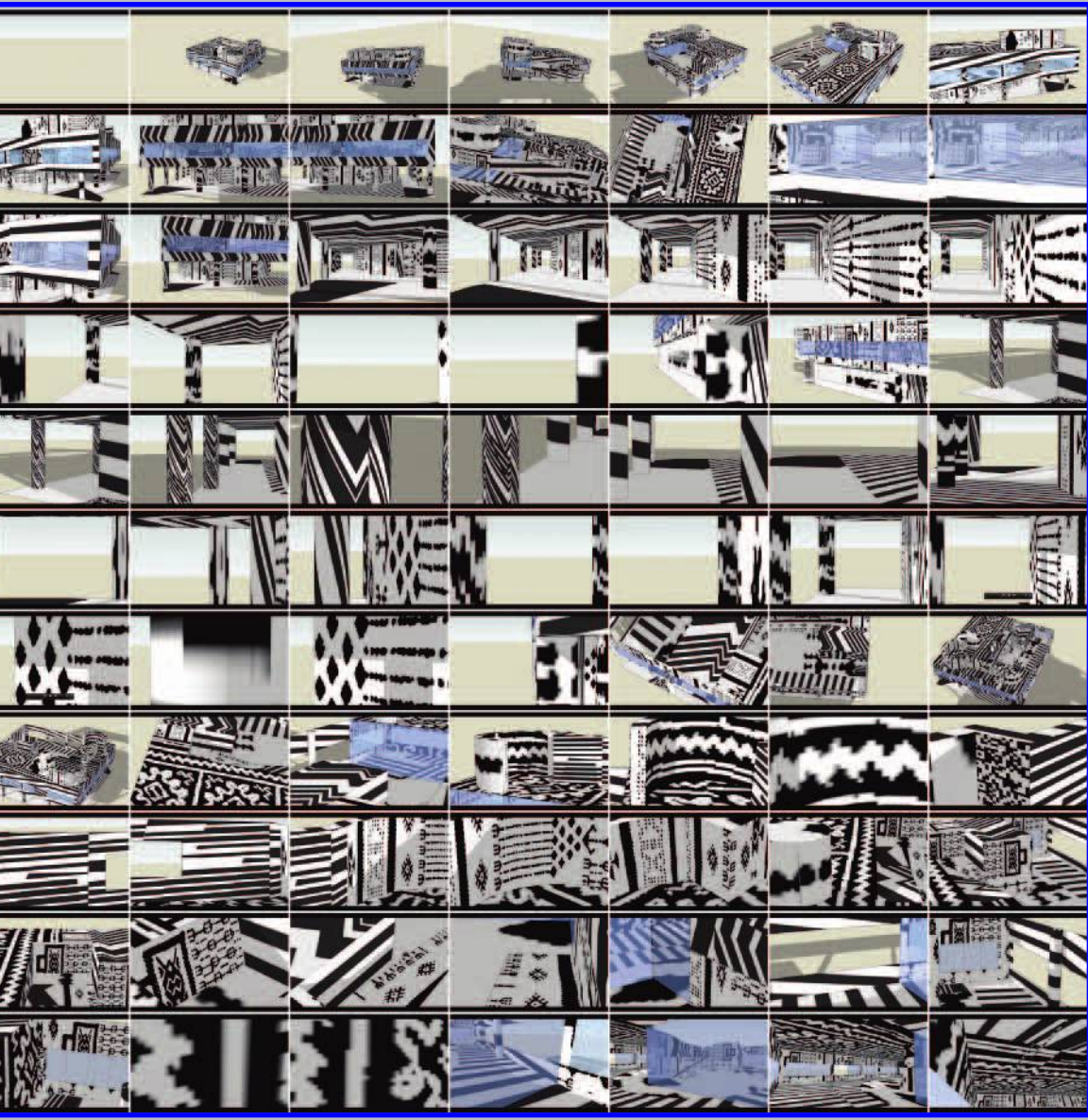
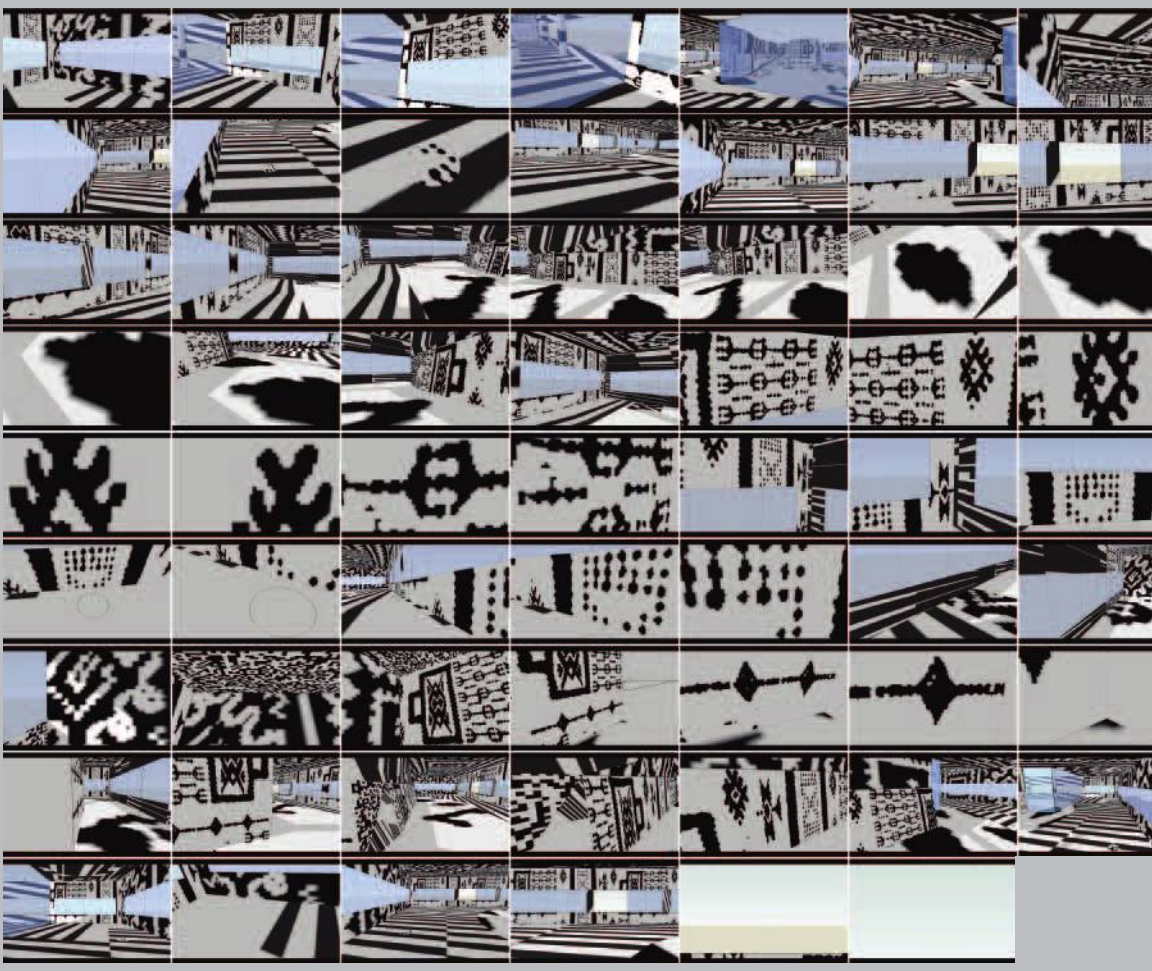
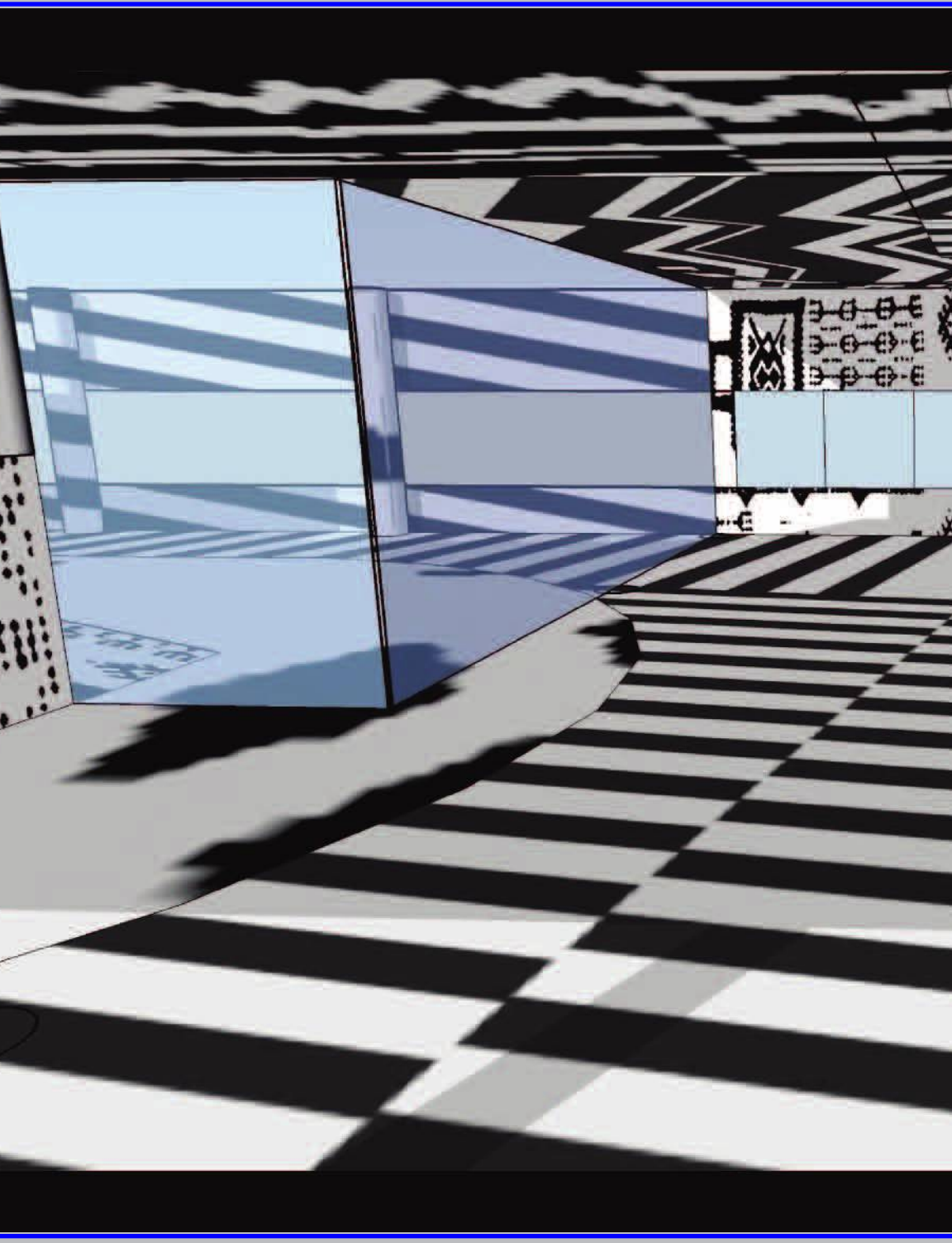
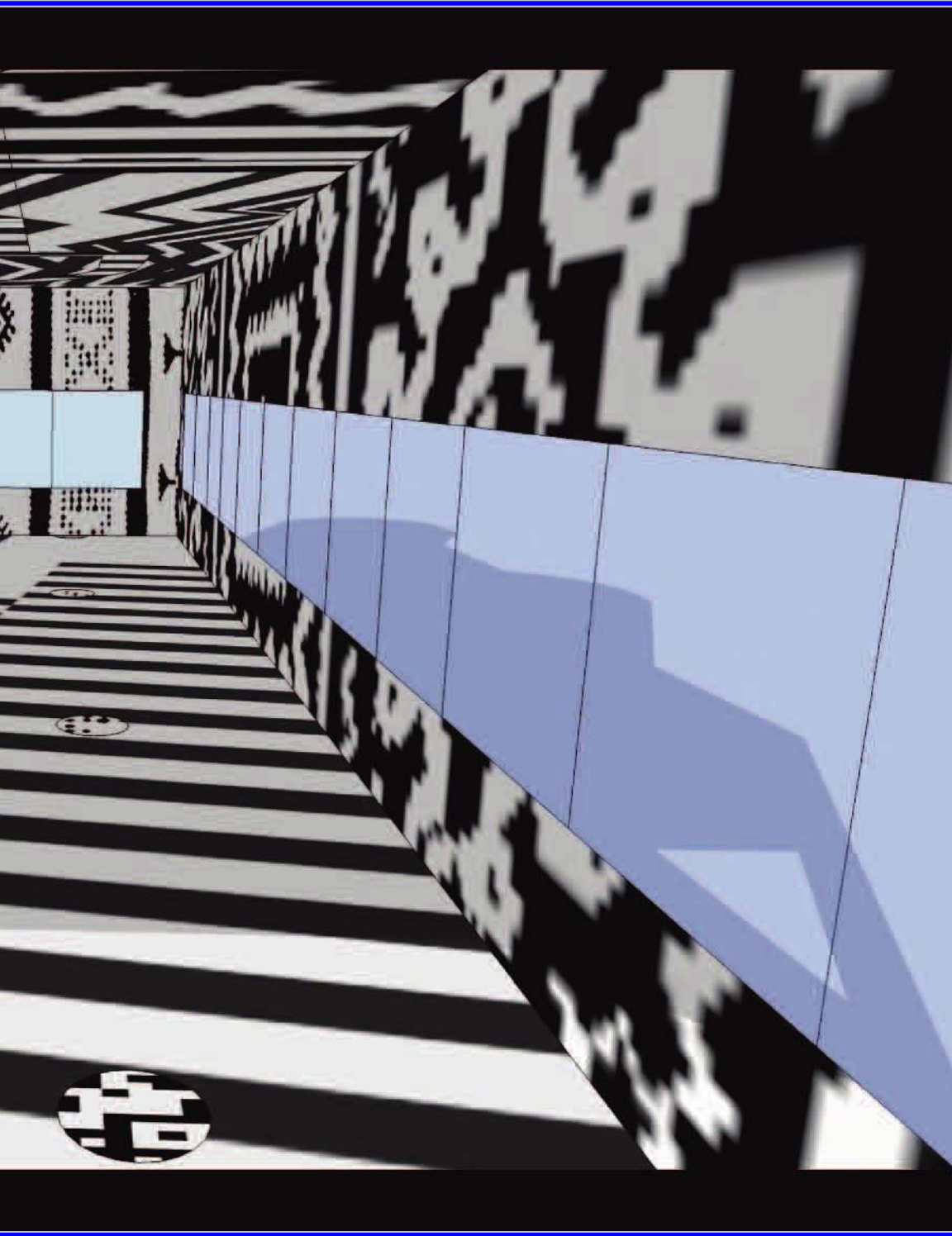


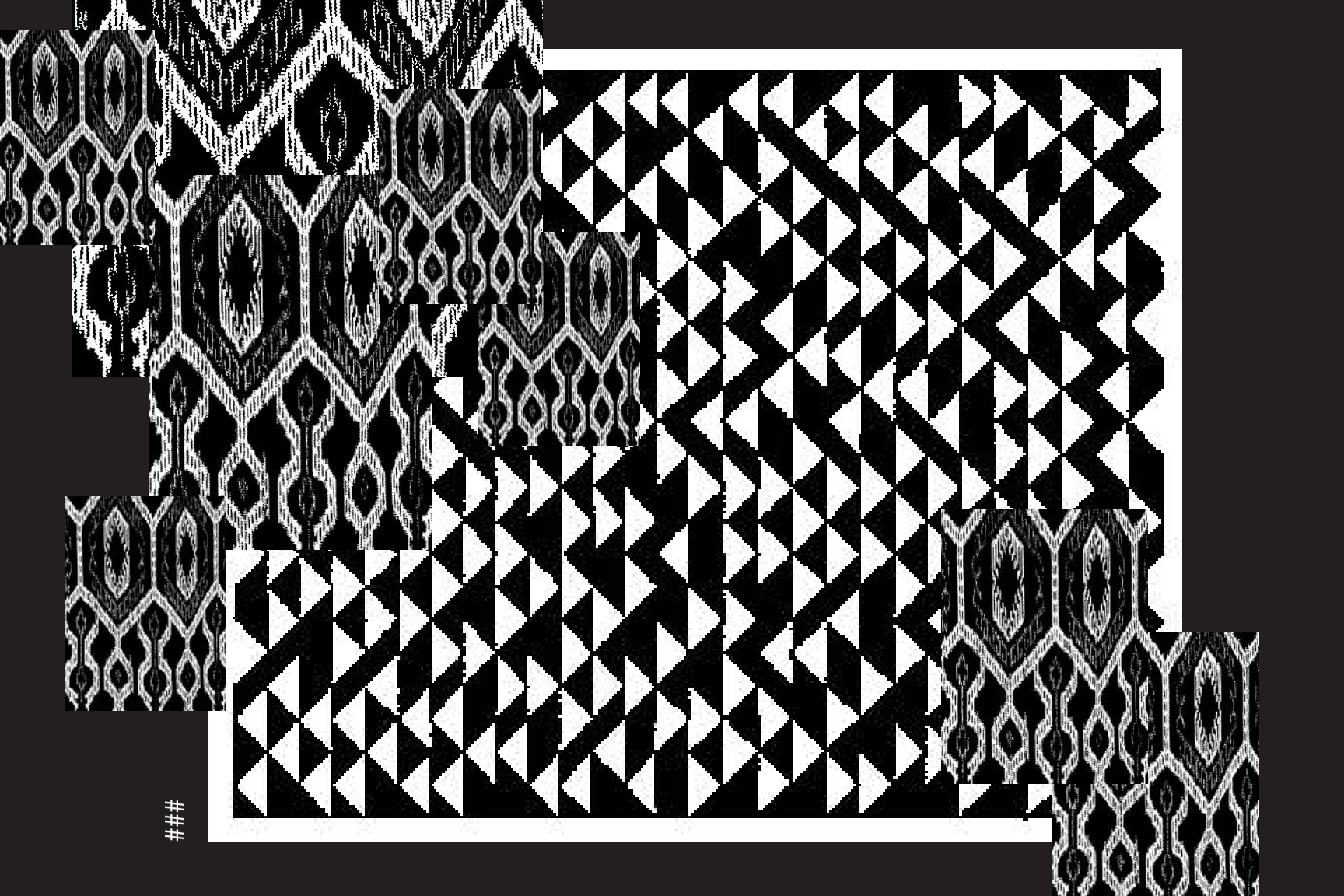


"Ornament and Crime," video stills, 22:00.'





"Ornament and Crime," interior shot of the 3D model used for the video.



###

STOFFBILDER[1]

ON CAPITALIST REALISMS

ANDREW STEFAN WEINER

Living with Pop: A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism, June 8–August 17, 2014, Artists Space, New York, 2014.

In 2013 the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf hosted the exhibition Leben mit Pop: Eine Reproduktion des kapitalistischen Realismus. The show traveled to Artists Space in New York City the following year, where it was entitled Living with Pop: A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism. The objectives of the exhibition were evident in its title, which was nearly identical to the name of an event staged forty years previously in Düsseldorf by Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg, in which the artists displayed themselves and their work in a furniture store alongside the store's contents.[2] Whereas Richter and Lueg had described their

1 The German *Stoff* translates not only as "cloth" or "fabric," but also as "material," "subject," "substance," and "stuff"; while *Bild* can also mean "image," "figure," or "likeness." For discussion of the polysemous connotations of the term *Stoffbilder* in the work of Blinky Palermo, see Christine Mehring, *Blinky Palermo: Abstraction of an Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 59. *Stoffbilder* is also the title of a work by Sigmar Polke, discussed in this article.

2 For critical accounts of the 1963 Leben mit Pop event, see Susanne Küper, "Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter: 'Leben mit Pop—Eine Demonstration für den kapitalistischen Realismus,'" in *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 53 (Cologne, 1992): 289–306; and Andrew Stefan Weiner, "Memory under Reconstruction: Politics and Event in *Wirtschaftswunder* West Germany," *Grey Room* 37 (Fall 2009): 94–124.

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performance as a "demonstration" of Capitalist Realism, the Kunsthalle presented its exhibition as a "reproduction."

On its face, this change of terms seemed meant to underscore two facts: first, that the horizon of the show was essentially historiographical, since the notion of Capitalist Realism was more or less discarded by the late 1960s; and second, that the materials it exhibited were not unique artworks, but instead facsimiles of paintings, together with archival materials and performance documentation. However, visitors to the Kunsthalle quickly would have ascertained that the term "reproduction" bore other meanings. Not only did it refer to a set of commissioned interventions by the neo-conceptual photographer Christopher Williams; it also indicated the curators' intentions to draw on recent research in order to reposition or even resurrect a

Installation view from Living with Pop: A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism, Artists Space, 2014. Image courtesy of Artists Space. Photograph by Daniel Pérez.

rather peripheral artistic tendency whose influence is more widely cited than understood.[3]

Even before the Düsseldorf exhibition, it was clear that Capitalist Realism had been experiencing a marked resurgence. Both Richter and Sigmar Polke have recently been the subjects of blockbuster career-surveying exhibitions: Richter's in 2011–12 at Tate Modern, Polke's in 2014 at MoMA, sponsored by Volkswagen. The canonization of these artists has of course been decades in the making, culminating in their each receiving commissions to design stained-glass windows in major churches.[4] Yet their lesser-known comrades have also been enjoying increased attention, with Lueg, Manfred Kuttner, K. P. Brehmer, and Reiner Ruthenbeck all receiving solo shows in the last several years. The Capitalist Realist movement—if that is what it was—has been the subject of renewed art historical, critical, and curatorial attention, in part as the result of ongoing attempts to reinterpret the history of Pop Art in terms of global, decentered networks of exchange.[5] At the same time (but largely independently), a group of UK- and US-based academics has sought to repurpose Capitalist Realism as a critical concept for theorizing contemporary political ideology and cultural production.[6]

3 A selection of this research can be found in the show's catalog, Elodie Evers, Magdalena Holzhey, and Gregor Jansen, eds., *Leben mit Pop. Eine Reproduktion des kapitalistischen Realismus* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013). The show was curated by Evers, Holzhey, Jansen, and Susanne Rennert, along with Stefan Kalmár and Richard Birkett for its installation in New York. For a recent overview of Capitalist Realism in relation to West German Pop more generally, see Christine Mehring, "The Art of a Miracle: Toward a History of German Pop, 1955–72," in Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, eds., *The Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures* (New York: Abrams, 2009), 152–69.

4 Richter's window was installed in Cologne Cathedral in 2007; Polke's for the Grossmünster church in Zürich. For more on these works see Christin Klaus, *Lux et Color. Gerhard Richters Kölner Domfenster im Kontext zeitgenössischer sakraler Glasfenster* (Marburg: Tectum, 2011), and Marina Warner, *Sigmar Polke. Fenster Grossmünster Zürich* (Zürich: Parkett/Zürich Grossmünster, 2010).

5 Two prominent examples of this trend are the 2015 exhibition International Pop, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the 2013 symposium Global Pop, Tate Modern, London. In Germany, the term Capitalist Realism has also been applied to the dramatic aesthetic of prominent directors including Thomas Ostermeier; for a discussion of Ostermeier's work in these terms, see Marvin Carlson, *Theatre Is More Beautiful Than War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010). Thanks to Shane Boyle for this reference.

6 See Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009) and Alison Shonkwiler and Leigh Claire LaBerge, eds., *Reading Capitalist Realism* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014).

While the timing of the Düsseldorf project was clearly well calibrated, it also merits scrutiny, if for no other reason than the fact that timeliness, simultaneity, and trendiness are chronically conflated in current art discourse, often under the problematically generic heading of "the contemporary." One example of such complication is the contrast between the apparent ubiquity of Capitalist Realism, both inside and outside art discourse, and its disparate rhetorical functions. Leftist academics including Jodi Dean and Mark Fisher have appropriated the term in order to revive long-stalemated debates on postmodernism, transforming the Jamesonian model of ideology critique by importing techniques from affect theory, new media studies, and communization theory.[7] In their view, Capitalist Realism designates the normative tendency to acknowledge neoliberalism as inevitable. At the same time, gallerists have used the same term as a selling point to link the fortunes of now-marginal figures such as Lueg and Kuttner to those of the market titans Richter and Polke. (As will become clear, this is hardly the first time that Capitalist Realism has served as a promotional brand.)

These seemingly incommensurable usages might reflect something inherently ambiguous in the term itself, at least as it has been historically realized. That said, the Düsseldorf exhibition manifested certain artistic and conceptual contradictions that are specific to the current politico-economic conjuncture. These problems were especially evident when the Living with Pop exhibition traveled to New York's SoHo neighborhood. The former manufacturing district, famously gentrified by experimental artists in the 1970s, is now a choice workplace for new-economy "creatives," an open-air luxury shopping mall, and one of the fifteen most expensive zip codes in the US. The irony in this situation lay uncomfortably close to the surface: whereas Richter and Lueg once designated a petit-bourgeois furniture store as art, documents of this event were now being displayed alongside high-end art galleries and home showrooms.

Such problems suggest the need for criteria to help us critically evaluate and productively engage with Capitalist Realism in its many recent manifestations. For this term to be useful—whether as an art historical periodization, a critical concept, or part of a broader

7 See Jodi Dean and Mark Fisher, "We Can't Afford to Be Realists," in Shonkwiler and LaBerge, *Reading Capitalist Realism*, 26–38.

diagnostic—it must function at some distance from the sort of contradictions that characterize so much contemporary cultural production. By analyzing the salient dimensions of Living with Pop, this essay seeks to delimit such a distance and to elaborate some of the ways in which we might conceive the contemporary relevance of Capitalist Realism, along with its potential as a rubric for future artistic and critical practice.[8]

Though the following inquiry touches on a number of historical issues, including the geographies of Cold War transnationalism and the consolidation of the North Atlantic art market, it looks to constellate these problems with more recent concerns regarding the curating of historical "re-exhibitions" and the political economy of advanced capitalism. In taking this approach, I ultimately mean to argue that Capitalist Realism is contemporary in different ways than we might assume, and that the designation of contemporaneity, which is so often automatic, is an operation that must be problematized, reconceived, and even under certain circumstances resisted.

REPRODUCTION BETWEEN ABSTRACTION AND MATERIALISM

While the existence of something called Capitalist Realism has for some time been common knowledge, the precise features of that entity have remained somewhat obscure.[9] It is not always clear who invented the term and what it meant, or how and why it was used. While the early output of Richter and Polke is now frequently described as Capitalist Realist, much less is known about the work of Kuttner and Lueg. Misconceptions circulate regarding Polke's involvement in the 1963 Leben mit Pop event (in which he didn't participate) and the activities of figures like Brehmer or Wolf Vostell (who did not work with Richter and his three initial collaborators, and only became associated

8 A note on terminology: In what follows I use Living with Pop to denote the 2013–14 exhibition. As will become clear, the term *Capitalist Realism* was first used by a group of four artists—Polke, Richter, Lueg, and Kuttner—before being applied more broadly to a group of about a dozen. Unless indicated otherwise, it should be clear from context which sense I am using. I would add that in using the term *Capitalist Realism*, I do not mean to impose a deceptive unity on a field whose identity was contested internally.

9 The use of this term in English is still relatively recent; in 1996 the *New York Times* obituary for Konrad Fischer (who painted under the pseudonym Konrad Lueg) mistakenly described his association with "Capital Realists." Roberta Smith, "Konrad Fischer, 57, a Dealer Who Discovered Many Artists," *The New York Times*, November 27, 1996, http://www.nytimes.com/1996/11/27/arts/konrad-fischer-57–a-dealer-who-discovered-many-artists.html, last accessed April 6, 2015.

with them in the context of the art market). Such uncertainty is only amplified by oddities such as Lueg's use of a pseudonym (he reverted to his given name, Konrad Fischer, when he began to work as a gallerist in 1967).[10]

It was thus a welcome discovery to find that the 2013 exhibition, together with its extensive catalog, had carefully mapped the emergence of Capitalist Realism, beginning with the term's initial usage in two 1963 exhibitions: the Demonstration of Capitalist Realism at the Möbelhaus Berges in October, and a lesser-known group show that Richter, Lueg, Polke, and Kuttner had staged in a vacant storefront in May. The success of these events, which were conceived both as artistic gestures and as publicity vehicles for the relatively unknown artists, led to gallery representation and a series of exhibitions in the West German Rhineland in the years 1964–66. It was during this time that the gallerist René Block began showing the work of the four Düsseldorf-based artists in West Berlin, using the term *Kapitalistischer Realismus* in a more expansive fashion that included other figures, such as Vostell, Brehmer, K. H. Hödicke, and Lothar Quinte. Block then sought to link Capitalist Realism to a burgeoning market for artists' multiples in the later 1960s, culminating in the publication of the limited-edition folio *Grafik des kapitalistischen Realismus* in 1971.[11]

By dint of its rigorous research and detailed presentation, Living with Pop successfully avoided the trap of imposing a false retrospective unity onto a set of practices that stands out today for its diversity and internal discrepancies. Instead, it incisively demonstrated the ambiguities at the core of Capitalist Realism. Rather than reductively diagnose this field as either "critical" or "symptomatic," the curators Elodie Evers, Magdalena Holzhey, and Gregor Jansen persuasively claimed that Capitalist Realism functioned both as a satirical program and as a marketable brand, cannily hedging its bets between ironic critique and collective promotion. In their words, the Capitalist Realists sought to

10 For more on Lueg's artistic career, see Thomas Kellein, ed., *Ich nenne mich als Maler Konrad Lueg* (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1999).

11 Richter would later distance himself from Block's use of the term. In a 1984 interview, he said of Block's exhibitions: "We were amazed when that happened. It was a real joke to us. Konrad Lueg and I did a Happening, and we used the phrase just for the Happening, to have a catchy name for it; and then it immediately got taken up and brought into use. There's no defense against that—and really it's no bad thing." Richter, "Interview with Wolfgang Pehnt," in Richter, *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings 1962–1993*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, trans. David Britt (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 117.

combine artistic, political, and commercial interests in a "partnership of convenience"; their *modus operandi* was "provocative and self-marketing at the same time."[12]

Partly by directing viewers' attention to the compromised position of its subject, Living with Pop adopted an approach that departed from what are arguably the two most influential anglophone accounts of German Pop: Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's and Robert Storr's. Buchloh's authority on the subject derives from his long personal relationship with Richter and his experience as the editor of the influential experimental publication *Interfunktionen* and the curator of an important 1976 Polke exhibition; Storr's, from his tenure in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at MoMA, where he curated a landmark Richter mid-career survey and helped the museum acquire the painter's Baader-Meinhof cycle, *October 18, 1977* (1988).[13]

The outlines of the two accounts are well known. For Buchloh, whose approach was decisively informed by Adorno and Peter Bürger, Richter's and Polke's early work yoked the neo-avant-garde recovery of the readymade to a critique of the postwar culture industry and the administrative character of bureaucratic power; its specificity lay in its exposure of West German's amnesia regarding the extent of their complicity in the Nazi genocides. For Storr, operating within a comparatively formalist discourse of liberal connoisseurship, Richter and Polke were iconoclastic virtuosos whose painterly genius enabled them to recruit even the most radical anti-aesthetic gestures into the service of more-or-less modernist ideals. The relative merits of these views have been argued over the years in a series of spirited debates between Buchloh and Storr, along with their respective partisans, as for example around the question of whether Richter's turn to abstraction could be considered a postmodernist demonstration of the death of painting.[14]

12 Evers, Holzhey, and Jansen, "Demonstrative Exhibitions," in Evers et al., *Leben mit Pop*, 15–16.

13 Representative examples of their work include Buchloh, "Readymade, Photography, and Painting in the Practice of Gerhard Richter" and "Parody and Appropriation in Francis Picabia, Pop, and Sigmar Polke," in Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); and Storr, "Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting," in Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002).

14 For Storr's critique of Buchloh's reading of Richter, see Storr, "Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting," 83–84; for a Buchlohian critique of Storr's Richter retrospective at MoMA, see Rosalind E. Krauss, "Alien Encounter," *Artforum* 40, no. 10 (Summer 2002): 158.

Returning to these opposed accounts in the context of Living with Pop, one is struck by their surprising commonalities. Neither makes much effort to address Capitalist Realism outside Richter and Polke or as the product of a specific exhibition history; both are strongly biased toward painting (and to a lesser extent sculpture), and away from performance, intermedia experiments, activism, publications, and graphic design. Although both allude to Richter's and Polke's East German upbringings—Buchloh to validate their critique of Western capitalism, Storr to claim them for the post-1989 ideology of the "post-ideological"—neither investigates the artists' output prior to emigrating from the German Democratic Republic (GDR).[15] Rather than confront the complexities of state Communism as it actually existed in divided Germany, these narratives rely on a set of conceptual oppositions that conform to (and were even arguably derivative of) the ideological binarisms of Cold War cultural politics.

One of the major contributions of Living with Pop was to challenge these models, along with the critical and art historical orthodoxies they have helped to establish. Though the exhibition included reproductions of some of Richter's and Polke's best-known early works, it moved outside their canon to include compelling yet relatively obscure supplemental materials: for instance, a 1964 letter from Richter petitioning Block to represent Polke, and *polke/richter–richter/polke* (1966), a collaborative artist's book combining deadpan photographs with appropriated text from *Perry Rhodan*, a popular series of West German science-fiction pulp novels.

More importantly, the show situated the two artists' output within a determinate context of production, exhibition, and circulation. From correspondence and promotional materials, it soon becomes clear that Lueg played a pivotal role in launching Capitalist Realism: not only through his work on the Berges *Demonstration*, but also through his extensive knowledge of current art trends in Paris and New York, gleaned by regularly reading the Swiss magazine *Art International*. Such exposure, however mediated, was crucial in enabling Lueg and his collaborators to overcome their relatively straitened circumstances. Lacking funds to travel, the artists were largely dependent

15 In fairness, this could well be because much of the archival material regarding this period has only become available in recent years; see note 19 below.

on traveling exhibitions and gallery shows in their efforts to craft work responsive to developments outside the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

By closely attending to this dynamic, Living with Pop showed that Capitalist Realism was considerably more complex than "German Pop"—a commonly used rubric that reduces the movement to something like the local franchise of a global corporation.[16] It is not just that the singular politics of post-fascist West Germany made pop culture, and thus pop art, qualitatively different from its equivalents in the United States or the United Kingdom. Rather, the aesthetic matrix of the Capitalist Realists was shaped by a range of other movements, including Op Art, Informel, and kineticism. This more irregular, hybrid complexion was evident in works like Lueg's *BRD Triptychon* (1963), which dissolves magazine images into abstract color fields, or Kuttner's sloppy grids of neon shapes, which weaken the tautly structured forms of Bridget Riley or Gruppe Zero, transposing them into lurid Kodachrome hues. K. P. Brehmer's trenchant modifications of postage stamps and seed packets effected a similar displacement, fusing Duchampian tactics with modernist graphic design.

Viewed together, these disparate works reflected an inventive and unruly field of practices that belied the stability of a brand or identity. (In this respect, one wishes that the Düsseldorf exhibition had done even more to challenge the received definition of Capitalist Realism. Rather than respect the groupings originally formulated by the artists and their gallerists, it might have included unaffiliated but similarly minded artists such as Konrad Klapheck, Thomas Bayrle, Klaus Staeck, or Christa Dichgans.) Against the prevailing view of Capitalist Realism as a group of painters, Living with Pop clearly showed the movement's affinities with design, sculpture, media, and, perhaps most surprisingly, performance. Apart from the Berges demonstration, relatively little is known outside Germany about the various public events that were staged in and around Düsseldorf between 1963 and 1966. These included unannounced outdoor painting shows, displays in shop windows, an afternoon tea, and the one-day exhibition Volker Bradke: a pseudo-Stakhanovite tribute to a local art student that included special wallpaper, a banner, and Richter's only film.

16 The most recent example of such an approach is the 2014 Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt exhibition German Pop, curated by Martina Weinhart.

As one surveyed the exhibition's copious displays of archival documentation—with vitrine after vitrine of letters, event scores, newspaper articles, and rare photographs—it became clear that the performance aesthetic of the Capitalist Realists drew substantially from Nouveau Réalisme and Fluxus. These movements each had a strong presence in the Rhineland: the former through the gallerists Jean-Pierre Wilhelm and Alfred Schmela; the latter through a series of performances at venues including Atelier Mary Baumeister, Galerie Jährling, and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, many of which Richter and Polke are known to have attended.[17]

Viewed in this context, the public activities of the Capitalist Realists more closely resembled the satirical media events of their Nouveau Réaliste counterparts than the anarchic anti-aesthetic productions of the Fluxus circle.[18] Despite close contact with figures including Joseph Beuys, Richter and his collaborators opted for a more restrained mode of critique that travestied modernist aesthetics from within the relatively autonomous space of the existing art market. Here, "capitalist realism" bespoke a certain acknowledgment of or even acquiescence to prevailing power relations, rather than an attempt to take direct action to transform them. It is telling in this respect that the Capitalist Realists kept their distance from the emergent West German nonaligned Left, unlike Beuys, Vostell, and other artists who taught, performed for, or mobilized alongside student activists.

Compared to the radical cosmopolitanism of Rhineland Fluxus—which included, among others, the Americans Benjamin Patterson and La Monte Young, the Romanian-born Daniel Spoerri, and the South Korean–born Nam June Paik—Capitalist Realism might seem rather limited or even provincial, whether in its composition (its members were all German men) or its relative disinterest in international collaboration, exhibition, or distribution. However, such an assessment would miss the group's personal and aesthetic

17 Susanne Rennert provides a comprehensive overview of the relation between Fluxus performance and Capitalist Realism in her essay "'Purge the World of Bourgeois Sickness': The Impact of the Düsseldorf Fluxus Events (1962/1963) on Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Konrad Lueg, and Capitalist Realism in Berlin," in Evers et al., *Leben mit Pop*, 119–26.

18 On Nouveau Réaliste performance aesthetics, see Julia Robinson, "Before Attitudes Became Form—New Realisms: 1957–1962," in Robinson, ed., *New Realisms, 1957–1962: Object Strategies between Readymade and Spectacle* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

Installation view from Living with Pop: A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism, Artists Space, 2014. Image courtesy of Artists Space. Photograph by Daniel Pérez.

relationships to the Communist regime in East Germany, which were varying and conflicted but nevertheless formative. Richter, Polke, and Kuttner were all born and raised in what became the GDR. Of the three, Richter stayed the longest, studying mural painting in Dresden and only emigrating in 1961. Though the artists clearly advertised their background by ironically labeling themselves as lapsed Socialist Realists, art historians have been slow to track the relationship between their production in the FRG and their formation in the GDR.[19]

19 An important English-language compilation of scholarship on Richter's early work, which drew on recently released archival materials, was published in 2010; see Christine Mehring, Jeanne Anne Nugent, and Jon L. Seydl, eds., *Gerhard Richter: Early Work, 1951–1972* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010). No comparable volume exists on Polke or on the question of GDR-FRG emigration by artists more generally.

For example, it is only recently that Richter scholars have sought to connect his Düsseldorf-era work with his time in Dresden, situating his training in the specific context of Khrushchev-era East Germany.[20]

During this moment, imposed Soviet cultural policies began to encounter resistance from artists with various commitments to Western modernism, which was relatively accessible (if not widely circulated) before the border was closed in 1961.[21] Complicating matters further, as authorities began to allow the rehabilitation of such ideologically sympathetic figures as John Heartfield, artists and graphic designers sought to repurpose the prewar avant-gardes' techniques of appropriation and montage.[22] Such developments indicate the need to move beyond the sort of Cold War–era binarisms on which prior scholarship has often relied. It might well be that the most powerful art historical legacy of Capitalist Realism is the extent to which it disabled the then-dominant opposition between realism and abstraction. In equating the prevailing aesthetic ideologies of the NATO and Warsaw Pact blocs, Capitalist Realism sought to undermine them, if only symbolically or ironically. On the level of artistic form, it effectively recalibrated the relations between the characteristic tropes of the First and Second Worlds, whether by recoding, juxtaposing, or hybridizing them.

In the case of abstraction, the Capitalist Realists did not negate the aesthetics of Informel so much as they programmatically transvalued them. In a superficial sense, this was a matter of sight gags, cheeky visual puns that found the trademarks of high modernism in low places: all-over composition in the design of wallpaper and hand towels, grids in magazine layouts and garden trellises. On a more structural level, Capitalist Realism interpolated a different definition of abstraction. Rather than the antithesis of representation or figuration, it was to

20 For an example of such work, see Eckhart Gillen, "Painter without Qualities: Gerhard Richter's Path from Socialist Society to Western Art System, 1956–1966," in Mehring et al., *Gerhard Richter*, 63–89.

21 On Western modernism in the GDR, see Paul Kaiser, "Symbolic Revolts in the 'Workers' and Peasants' State': Countercultural Art Programs in the GDR and the Return of Modern Art," in Barron and Eckmann, *Art of Two Germanys*, 170–85; and Ulrike Goeschen, "From Socialist Realism to Art in Socialism: The Reception of Modernism as an Instigating Force in the Development of Art in the GRD," *Third Text* 23.1 (2009): 45–53.

22 For an analysis of the formal continuity between these practices and Richter's early paintings, see John J. Curley, "Gerhard Richter's Cold War Vision," in Mehring et al., *Gerhard Richter*, 11–35.

be understood as the operation of removing an image or object from its context, such that a relatively realistic painting of an advertisement for a chocolate bar could be viewed as abstract, or as an abstraction of an abstraction.

Such a substitution effectively altered the frame of reference within which abstraction operated, forsaking the aseptic precincts of modernist autonomy for the spectacle and traffic of a newly globalizing consumer culture. Abstraction could no longer serve as an avant-gardist shibboleth or a kind of purifying rite, but instead was transposed into the most banal, obvious, and even occasionally abject contexts: close-ups of donuts and sausages; images of accident victims; the bathrooms of shabby apartments. This simultaneous redefinition and devaluation of abstraction has clear antecedents in the visual culture of the GDR, where the recontextualization of images was a widespread technique in both art and journalism, and where it was common to deride modernist abstraction as a "realistic" depiction of the spiritual emptiness of capitalism.[23]

This withering skepticism carried over into the pictorial realism of the Capitalist Realists, which pitted the signifiers of classless utopia against the fact of increasing socio-economic stratification during the fabled West German *Wirtschaftswunder*, or "economic miracle." As Walter Grasskamp has noted of Polke, such depictions were unmistakably coded as a kind of "petit bourgeois realism": an art of polyester, package holidays, and plasticware.[24] In ironically elevating its objects, as in the mock-heroization of the anonymous student Volker Bradke, Capitalist Realism simultaneously belied the promises of both East and West in a kind of failed synthesis that emphasized the ideological functions of realism. At the same time, it established a strong tension between "the real" in its everyday meaning and "the Real" in the Lacanian sense of that which escapes all symbolic signification. As has been argued with regard to Richter's family photographs, the effects of Germany's wartime traumas—which were numerous, complex, and often not reducible to distinctions like victim/perpetrator, mourning/melancholy, or real/fantasied—were so pervasive as to restructure seemingly unalterable conditions of representation: the

23 Described by Curley, "Cold War Vision," 17.

24 Walter Grasskamp, "Flamingos, Color Charts, Shades of Brown: Capitalist Realism and German Pop," in Evers et al., *Leben mit Pop*, 212.

Installation view from Living with Pop: A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism, Artists Space, 2014. Image courtesy of Artists Space. Photograph by Daniel Pérez. From left to right, the artworks are: Sigmar Polke. *Interieur* (Interior), *Schlafzimmer* (Bedroom), and *Freundinnen* (Girl Friends), all 1965. Archival inkjet prints on Canson Fotosatin, mounted on reboard.

anteriority of the photograph, the silence of visual art, the conventional meaning of signs.[25]

The destabilizing character of these modifications was arguably most powerful when these bastardized versions of abstraction and realism collided. Such an encounter informed some of Richter's earliest postemigration paintings, such as the poorly rendered images and defaced surfaces of *Table* (1962) or the cuttingly titled *Party* (1963). A similar situation is reflected in Polke's *Stoffbilder* (Cloth Pictures), which used store-bought fabrics in modernist patterns to underscore the fact that abstraction was not only an artistic trope but a value-producing operation and a means to brand commodities for the mass market. In such examples, as in the path-breaking 1963 *Demonstration*, the readymade was reimagined as a tool to isolate and problematize abstraction in this broader sense, encompassing its ideological, social, and economic determinations alongside its conceptual or formal aspects.

25 See, for example, Rachel Haidu, "Arrogant Texts: Gerhard Richter's Family Pictures," in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ed., *Gerhard Richter* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

Just as evident as the radicality of the artists' approach was the fact that it deserves sustained, close analysis. Further attention needs to be paid not only to the manner in which Capitalist Realism adopted, fused, and refunctioned existing forms, but also to the ways in which such operations interacted with political contingencies. In some cases, such as René Block's exhibition Hommage à Lidice (1968)—which memorialized the Nazi massacre that occurred in the Czech village of Lidice in 1942, and which traveled to Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring—these moves gestured toward transnational solidarity with actually existing Communists. In others, they had a more negative or provocative character, as in Richter's ironic comparisons of Marxist-Leninist and consumerist "materialisms."[26] In still others, they evoked a certain melancholy pathos, indexing earlier hopes for a *dritter Weg* (Third Path) politics of socialist democracy; this position was supported by many, including Richter, but never materialized.[27] Such affect clearly assumes a different valence twenty-five years after German reunification, in a moment when the widespread failures of capitalist integration have led to a renewed outbreak of *Ostalgie* ([n]ostalgia for the former East).

BRANDED CRITIQUE AND THE CONTEMPORANEITY OF POP

In labeling their exhibition a "reproduction" of Capitalist Realism, the Düsseldorf curators clearly were not pledging a kind of transparent, historicist fidelity to their object. Rather, in a gesture of institutional autocritique, they acted to foreground their own active involvement in the production of artistic knowledge under contingent circumstances and with specific interests. If one of their objectives was to reframe art historical discussions of Capitalist Realism, another was to intervene in an ongoing debate concerning exhibitions that depict other, historically significant exhibitions, typically by restaging them.[28] This tendency has coalesced during the past five years, partly as an outgrowth of contem-

26 On the subject of his emigration, Richter once wrote, "I did not come here to get away from 'materialism': here its dominance is far more total and more mindless." Richter, "Notes, 1962," in Richter, *Daily Practice*, 13.

27 For discussion of Capitalist Realism as an ironic form of mourning for such a politics, see Weiner, "Memory under Reconstruction," 117.

28 For critical responses to this tendency, see Glenn Phillips, "Recurating, Remaking, Redoing," and Tara McDowell, "Towards an Ethics of Recuration," both archived online at http://curatorsintl.org/research/journals, last accessed April 14, 2015. Thanks to Julian Myers-Szupinska for these references.

porary artists' interest in reenactment, and partly due to an explosion of interest in the history of exhibitions—a phenomenon which itself can be traced to the increased professionalization of curating and the proliferation of graduate curatorial programs.

One model for this practice is reconstruction, the paradigmatic case being Germano Celant's reinstallation of Harald Szeemann's much-vaunted When Attitudes Become Form (1969) at the Fondazione Prada in Venice in 2013. Celant, collaborating with Rem Koolhaas and Thomas Demand, pushed this approach to its limit by essentially building a life-sized replica of the Kunsthalle Bern inside a Venetian palazzo. A contrasting approach is to recurate noteworthy exhibitions, whether by surveying works excluded from the original show or by commissioning new pieces that respond to their predecessors. One vocal advocate for this model has been Jens Hoffmann, who assembled his own 2012 show based on When Attitudes Become Form, along with a 2014 revisitation of the Jewish Museum's 1966 Minimalism show, Primary Structures. Closer to Capitalist Realism's home, the 2014 exhibition Les Immateriaux, for instance, staged at Düsseldorf's Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, was premised around Jean-François Lyotard's landmark 1985 exhibition at the Centre Pompidou.

The curators' multivalent strategy of "reproduction" might best be understood as an attempt to triangulate these approaches. In displaying archival photographs of the major Capitalist Realist exhibitions alongside obviously reconstructed versions of their contents, Living with Pop aimed to balance historical veracity with a certain skepticism, whether regarding the fetishization of curatorial auteurism or the market's ever-inflating valuation of postwar painting. At the same time, its inclusion of Williams's interventions—these consisted of a large advertising banner, a curated film program, and, weirdly, the display of a catalog for his own concurrent MoMA retrospective—made clear that the contemporary relevance of this material was not given, but had to be actively fashioned.

While there is something pleasantly nerdy or even quietly subversive about the idea of an archival meta-exhibition without any actual art, it is likely that the values of this model are not so much transgressive as pedagogical. Shows like Living with Pop, while labor-intensive, are inexpensive to produce and can travel easily. What's more, their

conceptual structure allows for insights that might not otherwise be possible. In this case, the Düsseldorf exhibition made a number of crucial points about the changing role of exhibitions in the 1960s. While the rise of the curator at this time is well documented, less attention has been paid to the activities of the impresario—figures like Pierre Restany and Jean-Jacques Lebel in France, or Block in the FRG—whose role was to stage public events and manage their coverage in the mass media. Often, as with Yves Klein, Gruppe Zero, or Vostell and Beuys, artists took on this task themselves. The fact that Richter and his collaborators acted similarly—witness Richter's 1963 letter to a news program informing them that an upcoming show would be "[the] first exhibition of 'German Pop Art' "[29]—was doubtless due to their exposure to the media-event aesthetics of Nouveau Réalisme, Zero, and Fluxus.

In highlighting the extent to which the Capitalist Realists acted not only as their own promoters but also as curators, Living with Pop explored the ways in which the turn away from the high modernist ideal of autonomy entailed a reorientation toward other spheres of society, whether commercial or political. Under these changed terms, the exhibition could function as a different kind of event, an unstable hybrid that was part time-based artwork, part promotional vehicle, and part demonstration or symbolic action. This altered stance might be understood in terms of an increased affinity for heteronomy, or external determination. By selectively opening the borders separating autonomous art from its presumed contaminants, Capitalist Realism situated itself within a complex and contradictory field of new possibilities: one in which, perhaps for the first time, it was not just possible but plausible to make commercially successful art that openly criticized capitalism.

It can hardly be a coincidence that this occurred at precisely the moment when the West German art market was undergoing a major structural transformation. As Christine Mehring has documented, nearly 400 new contemporary art galleries opened in the FRG and West Berlin during the 1960s and early 1970s.[30] This period witnessed the founding of the Cologne art fair in 1967, the first such market for

29 Richter, "Letter to a Newsreel Company, 29 April 1963," in Richter, *Daily Practice*, 16.
30 See Mehring, *Blinky Palermo*, 65–71.

contemporary art; it also saw the emergence of a powerful class of collectors and patrons whose support for American art would impact the development of Pop, Minimalism, and Conceptualism.[31] The annual report *Kunstkompass* published rankings of artists for the emerging art investment industry, while at the other end of the market dealers collaborated with retailers to build galleries selling modern and contemporary editions in department stores.[32]

While this rapidly changing marketplace afforded numerous opportunities for commercial success, not to mention many ripe targets for criticism, it also increased the threat of cooptation. One wonders whether the much-noted irony and black humor of Capitalist Realism was in some sense a mechanism for coping with the intense contradictions of this situation. Figures like Richter who had been trained to produce art as a vehicle of collective transformation found themselves largely making work for private consumption. Others like Vostell, Brehmer, or Thomas Bayrle, who had studied as graphic designers or worked in the mass media, produced objects that equated advertising with state propaganda but that also served in some sense as advertisements in their own right.

Capitalist Realism is sometimes said to have functioned as a brand, but this is only half-right. Richter, Lueg, Kuttner, and Polke indeed sought to position their work in relation to international trends; this is clear from their invitation to the first exhibition on Düsseldorf's Kaiserstraße, which linked Capitalist Realism with Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, and Neo-Dada. They also sought to poke fun at such designations, and at themselves for using them, as is evident in the other names their flyer suggested: Imperialist Realism, New Vulgarism, Know-Nothing Genre. Sometimes the artists took pains to control the marketing of their own work, as in a 1967 letter from Richter to his Munich gallerist rejecting the idea of "photo-painting" in favor of something "more precise, complex, and difficult."[33] Then there is the fact that their painterly styles each used signature tropes—Richter's blur, Polke's raster dots, Lueg's flat color fields, Kuttner's grids—to establish a kind of visual trademark.

31 One account of this phenomenon is Walter Grasskamp's discussion of the collectors Karl Ströher and Peter Ludwig in Grasskamp, "Flamingos, Color Charts, Shades of Brown," 211.

32 Mehring, *Blinky Palermo*, 70–71.

33 The letter is cited by Grasskamp, "Flamingos, Color Charts, Shades of Brown," 213.

Yet even as the artists worked within the economy of branding, they also sought to criticize it, whether through parody, defamiliarization, or subversive affirmation. The point is not that they were able to somehow transcend the contradictions of an anticapitalist commercial art practice. Rather, it is that Capitalist Realism served as a kind of *branded critique*: a conspicuously skeptical attention to the contradictions of market society, including the fact that such an attitude could itself paradoxically enough become a selling point. Under this label, the artists' ironic acknowledgment of their own complicity—a stance that is not the same as immanent critique—could preemptively inoculate their work against charges of elitism or bad faith. Such an attitude

Invitation to exhibition at Kaiserstraße 31A, Düsseldorf, May 11, 1963. Collection Tobias Kuttner. Image courtesy of Tobias Kuttner.

would also have added extra value to their work, by distinguishing it from its less edgy or self-reflexive competitors.

It is arguably this heightened contradiction between art's critical aspirations and its function as a specialized commodity that makes Capitalist Realism seem contemporary today, when the explicitly anti-capitalist neo-Duchampian aesthetic of artists such as Claire Fontaine is common at major fairs and galleries. One imagines Richter and his colleagues, who were among the first to diagnose (and profit from) this paradoxical dynamic, appreciating the irony of this rather Pyrrhic victory, even if they have also spoken out against the excesses of the resale market.[34] The phenomenal success of both Richter and Polke is itself another reason that Capitalist Realism seems so contemporary, because their near-ubiquitous influence has spawned generations of successful epigones, postmodernist and otherwise. A third, as noted above, is the demise of state Communism, which brought new talent into the Western market from the former East while stoking interest in Socialist Realist aesthetics as a kind of historical curiosity; such a dynamic underwrote the success of Neo Rauch and the so-called New Leipzig School.

There is a clear danger that Capitalist Realism could be written into history by the *soi-disant* victors—whether painting, capitalism, the West, or all three—and in some cases it already has been, and doubtless will continue to be. While it is very much to the credit of the curators of Living with Pop that their exhibition worked to offset this risk, it was significantly less clear whether their re-production of Capitalist Realism had effectively made an alternative case for the movement's contemporary relevance. This was due in part to the relative weakness of Williams's artistic interventions, which seemed more concerned with establishing his own legitimacy as a latter-day Capitalist Realist™ than with demarcating the parallels and divergences between 1960s West Germany and the current moment. Yet there is obviously a great deal at stake in how the present is defined, particularly with respect to how we understand the contingent determination of phenomena that might otherwise appear inevitable, such as the expansion of

34 Richter was recently quoted describing his feelings of "horror" at what he called a "hopelessly excessive" resale market; see Kate Connolly, "Amount of Money That Art Sells for Is Shocking, Says Painter Gerhard Richter," *The Guardian*, March 6, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/mar/06/amount-of-money-that-art-sells-for-is-shocking-says-painter-gerhard-richter?CMP=share_btn_fb, last accessed April 14, 2015.

the global art market, the structural transformations of advanced capitalism, or the role of Germany in the neoliberal debt regime of the European Union.

It is only with respect to this current conjuncture that one can conceive any meaningful relevance for Capitalist Realism as an art historical tendency. The same is true of Capitalist Realism in the distinct, more recent sense that Mark Fisher and others have sought to theorize it, namely as the ideology of neoliberalism, so memorably encapsulated by Margaret Thatcher, within which "there is no alternative" to capital. Given that one drawback of this critical discourse has been its relative lack of attentiveness to art, as well as to philosophical aesthetics more broadly, interventions like Living with Pop would seem to be in a privileged position to address these oversights. This could occur by tracing connections between specialized and popular forms, or by articulating practical and theoretical modes of speculative reflection.

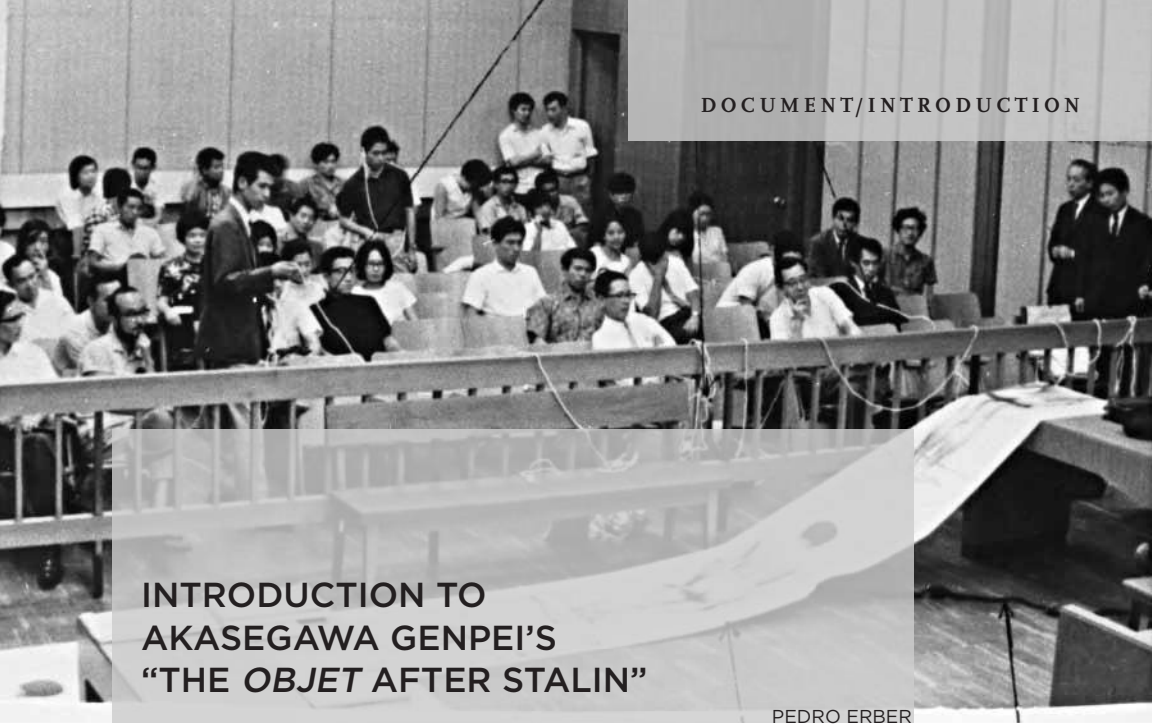
At its most incisive, the Düsseldorf exhibition documented some of the ways in which artistic production might contest the deep-seated ideological tendencies of the normative aesthetic regimes that might be called "capitalist realisms": their fetishization of authenticity; their propensity to naturalize the social or historical; their insistence on their own self-evidence; their tendency to posit a one-to-one correspondence between signs and phenomena, and thus to subsume perception and representation under the capitalist order of general equivalence. By scrutinizing and even disrupting the circuits between semiotic, ideological, and commercial economies, the Capitalist Realists demonstrated how cultural forms can effectively constitute the realities they claim to neutrally represent, even if they could not ultimately themselves contest their own mediating function within such relations.

With this said, the contemporary component of Living with Pop was too constrained for the exhibition to fully realize its considerable potential. Williams's guest-curated film program, though intermittently interesting, leaned too heavily toward leftist standards [Debord's *La Société du Spectacle* (1973), Farocki's *Ein Bild* (1983)] and symptomatic Hollywood pap [*The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006)]. Despite the merits of such projects as Zachary Formwalt's *In Place of Capital* (2009), which reframes Fox Talbot's attempts to photograph the Royal Exchange in terms of the putative unrepresentability of global capital, Williams's program failed to persuasively problematize the aesthetic character of contemporary capitalism, determined as it is by the

deterritorializing and retemporalizing effects of digital technologies, the changing status of labor under conditions of "cognitive capitalism," and the emergence of new forms of subjectivation, particularly those pertaining to debt.

If capitalism today would seem on the one hand to be unbelievably real, or perhaps just unbelievable, it has also assumed aspects of the hyperreal, the surreal, and the parafictional, recombining these qualities in ever-changing ratios. The practices that address this conjuncture most potently are seldom based on painting or on neo-conceptualisms like Williams's, much less the heavily hyped fripperies of "post-Internet art." One thinks instead of such work as Liz Magic Laser's public performances in bank vestibules or her détournement of the TED talk format in *The Thought Leader* (2015); or Melanie Gilligan's Web series *Popular Unrest* (2010) and *Crisis in the Credit System* (2008), which draw variously on corporate role-play, forensic procedurals, and reality TV. When it comes to grasping the complex genealogy of globally networked capitalism, perhaps no recent exhibition has been more effective than Anselm Franke and Diedrich Diedrichsen's *The Whole Earth* (2013), which combined archival research, commissioned "visual essays," and both historical and contemporary art in an effort to chart the convergence of the California counterculture and the nascent techno-capitalism of Silicon Valley.[35] While it is all too likely that capitalism will continue to constrain our efforts to imagine anything at all, including alternatives to capitalism, such efforts are evidence that this pressure can be resisted and that the conditions governing our everyday sense of "reality" itself can remain a site of ongoing and shared contestation.

35 These materials can be found in the exhibition's companion publication, *The Whole Earth: California and the Disappearance of the Outside*, ed. Anselm Franke and Diedrich Diedrichsen (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013).



INTRODUCTION TO AKASEGAWA GENPEI'S "THE *OBJET* AFTER STALIN"

PEDRO ERBER

Explosive, sharply witty, often paradoxical, and at times seemingly nonsensical, the writings of Japanese artist Akasegawa Genpei (1937–2015) provide a glimpse into a complex realm of postwar artistic practice through one of its most original and compelling voices. Published in the wake of Akasegawa's trial for mechanically reproducing single-sided, monochrome copies of the 1,000-yen note, "The *Objet* after Stalin" bears witness to a unique episode in the history of Japanese avant-garde art and casts light upon the singular circumstances that prompted the author to theorize on the meanings of artistic practice, its political potential, and the relationship between art and state power. Akasegawa's indictment, trial, and ultimate condemnation marked a watershed event in the relationship between art and the state in postwar Japan. His writings on the 1,000-yen note trial were collected in a volume suggestively entitled *Obuje o motta musansha* (An *Objet*-Carrying Proletarian). "Sutalin igo no obuje" (The *Objet* after Stalin), published here in English in its entirety for the first time, is one of the texts included in the volume.[1] More than just a historical document

1 Excerpts of "The *Objet* after Stalin" have been published in William Marotti's *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 303 and 309. A few other texts from the collection *Obuje o motta musansha* have also been published in English translation: "The Intent of the Act Based on the Intent of the Act—Before Passing through the Courtroom," translated by Marotti,

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from a particular time and place in 20th-century art, Akasegawa's text lies at the center of a realm of artistic practice and discourse whose potential impact on the global panorama of postwar art is just starting to come to the attention of an English-language readership.

ART AND POLITICS AFTER STALIN

Indeed, the political trajectory of Japanese postwar art—from the socially engaged painting of the late 1940s and 1950s, through abstraction, Surrealism, and Dadaism, to the defiant avant-garde practices of the 1960s—resonates deeply in Akasegawa's writings. Akasegawa Genpei (born Akasegawa Katsuhiko) belongs to a generation of artists who grew up amidst the dire socioeconomic conditions of Japan's early postwar period and came of age during the politically turbulent 1950s—a generation for whom art and politics were virtually inseparable.

From the late 1940s into the 1950s, the recently legalized Japanese Communist Party (JCP) played a major role in the production and exhibition of politically engaged art and in Japanese intellectual life in general.[2] Thanks to the JCP's active involvement in cultural politics, together with its widespread network of members and sympathizers, paintings such as the famous *Hiroshima Panels* (Genbaku no zu) by husband and wife artists Maruki Iri and Maruki Toshi, which depicted the horrors of atomic bombing, were exhibited in the most remote corners of the country, raising consciousness about pressing political issues that were systematically suppressed by the mainstream media. By the mid-1950s, however, the JCP's adherence to the Stalinist doctrines of Socialist Realism was dealing a significant blow to the project of a realist avant-garde. At the same time, French Informel painting was acquiring momentous popularity in Japan. This was due not only to a generalized desire to catch up with international trends or to the multiple visits of the French critic Michel Tapié and his group of

appeared in *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945–1989: Primary Documents*, edited by Doryun Chong, Michio Hayashi, Fumihiko Sumitomo, and Kenji Kajiya (New York: MoMA Publications, 2012), 187–190; and "Capitalist Realism" and "Final Statement" appeared in *Concerned Theater Japan* 1, no. 3 (1970): 32–35 and 36–43, respectively.

2 I discuss this further in my article "Art and/or Revolution: The Matter of Painting in Postwar Japan," *ARTMargins* 2, no. 1 (February 2013): 37–57.

Informel painters to Japan during the 1950s, but also to the support of leftist art critics such as Hariu Ichirō, who opposed the Stalinist turn of the JCP and felt disillusioned with the project of a realist avant-garde.

It was during this crucial period of cultural and political transformation that Akasegawa and his peers presented their first works at the Japan Independent Exhibition (1947–) and later at the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition (1949–1963), the annual no-award, no-jury exhibition that served as the breeding ground for Tokyo's 1960s avant-gardes. From 1960 to 1963, Akasegawa was a member of the avant-garde collective Neo-Dadaism Organizers (later known as Neo-Dada); besides Akasegawa, the group comprised core members Shinohara Ushio, Arakawa Shūsaku, Yoshimura Masunobu, and Kazakura Shō, and included, among others, the architect Isozaki Arata as a loosely affiliated participant. In 1963, Akasegawa joined Nakanishi Natsuyuki and Takamatsu Jirō to form a new collective called Hi-Red Center, whose name, despite its suggestive political connotations, was a combination of the English translations of the first characters of the family names of its three core members: *Taka* = "hi(gh)" (高), *Aka* = "red" (赤), *Naka* = "center" (中).

That same year, Akasegawa started his artistic explorations of paper currency. Before resorting to photomechanical reproduction, his first experiment with money was the manual copy of a 1,000-yen note magnified two hundred times, which he exhibited still unfinished in the 1963 Yomiuri Independent Exhibition. In a cheeky reference to the Stalinist doctrine of Socialist Realism, Akasegawa referred to his meticulous magnified reproduction of the 1,000-yen note as "capitalist realism": "Magnifying glass in hand, I performed a precise analysis of the bill and copied it on a panel at two hundred times its size. The picture, which I copied while remaining emotionally aloof from the task, was shit realism—not socialist but capitalist realism. It was not the design on the flag to be planted at the end of the quest, but a map of the road we are presently walking."[3] It is unlikely that Akasegawa was aware of Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke's usage of the expression "capitalist realism" around the same time: while all of these artists emphasized a politically critical edge to the term,

3 Akasegawa, "Capitalist Realism," 33.

Akasegawa Genpei. *Greater Japan Zero-Yen Note*, 1967. Courtesy of SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

Akasegawa Genpei. *Model 1,000-Yen Note.* Courtesy of SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

Akasegawa used it in a somewhat absurdly literal fashion, in which "realism" came to signify an exact imitation of the "real thing" in a way that ridiculed both the romanticism of Stalinist aesthetics and its capitalist antithesis.

A few months earlier, Akasegawa had participated with Takamatsu, Nakanishi, and others in a symposium aimed at discussing new forms of political action through art. The symposium's context was the aftermath of the demoralizing defeat in 1960 of the widespread popular movements against the renewal of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (a treaty known in Japan as *anpo joyaku*, or ANPO). William Marotti remarks that Akasegawa himself credited the symposium with raising his consciousness about the nature and potential of their artistic practices.[4] It is thus clear that the politically provocative character of his actions—including the 1,000-yen note copies—was not unknown to him, and was to some extent intended. Nonetheless, it would have been hard for

4 Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines*, 208.

Akasegawa to predict the major consequences of this particular experiment with money copying.

In January 1963, Akasegawa ordered three hundred photomechanical copies of the recto of a 1,000-yen note at a local print shop in Tokyo; he then mailed the copies to friends and acquaintances using the Japanese Post Office's cash mailers, along with an invitation to his solo exhibition at the Shinjuku Daiichi Gallery printed on the flip side. One year later, Akasegawa received his first visit from a police officer inquiring about the copies. The one-sided, monochromatic copies of the 1,000-yen note were not sufficient to prove Akasegawa guilty of counterfeiting; he was thus indicted under an old, ambiguous law dating from 1895, which controlled the "imitation of currency and securities."[5] Accused of "threatening society's confidence in paper currency,"[6] Akasegawa faced public trial eleven times between 1965 and 1967; he was finally sentenced to three months of imprisonment with hard labor, after the Supreme Court rejected his last appeal in April 1970.

The timing of Akasegawa's model of the 1,000-yen note contributed significantly to its wide repercussions. Between 1961 and 1963, the 1,000-yen note had been the object of numerous counterfeit attempts, including a major incident involving high-quality counterfeits known as *Chi-37*; the police were unable to solve these problems of fraud, despite an enormous mobilization of their resources. Meanwhile, according to Akasegawa's lawyer, Sugimoto Masazumi, it was while investigating a lesser incident involving an avant-garde group called the League of Criminals (*Hanzaisha Dōmei*) that the Tokyo Metropolitan Police first took notice of Akasegawa's money reproductions. In an episode reminiscent of Oshima Nagisa's film *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* (1968), a member of the League of Criminals was caught shoplifting a copy of *The Autobiography of the Marquis de Sade* from a Tokyo bookstore. One consequence of the arrest was that the police found a copy of a banned volume printed by the League of Criminals, to which Akasegawa had contributed a partial copy of his 1,000-yen note.[7]

During the trial, Akasegawa's defense tried to demonstrate that his reproduction of the 1,000-yen note constituted a form of avant-garde

5 Cf. Akasegawa Genpei, "Saishū iken chinjutsu" in *Obuje o motta musansha* [An *Objet*-Carrying Proletarian], 118–144; English translation as "Final Statement."

6 Akasegawa, "Final Statement," 41.

7 See Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines*, 20–21.

Model 1,000-Yen Note trial scene, 1966.
Courtesy of SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, Tokyo.

artistic practice and was therefore not to be deemed a criminal act. The entire "who's who" of postwar Japanese art gathered for the trial, transforming the courtroom into an improvised exhibition space in which artists and critics lectured the police and magistrates on a wide range of practices and theories of avant-garde art. Although legally defeated, insofar as the defendant was eventually convicted, the strategy seemed to have succeeded as an artistic event. As art historian Reiko Tomii has suggested, the "Model 1,000-Yen Note Incident" may even be regarded as a multilayered collaborative artwork, for "the body of this work consists of the first set of readings—interpretations and decipherings—produced at the time by Akasegawa and other parties immediately involved (fellow artists and critics, the general press, the interested public, etc.)."[8] Ultimately, however, *Model 1,000-Yen Note* belongs to a long history of artistic experiments with copying money. Marcel Duchamp—himself one of Akasegawa's models—had produced "fake" personal checks since 1919. In 1962, Andy Warhol exhibited copies of a one-dollar bill at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. Throughout the

8 Reiko Tomii, "State v. (Anti-)Art: Model 1,000-Yen Note Incident by Akasegawa Genpei and Company," *Positions* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 145.

1970s, Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles produced zero-dollar and zero-cruzeiro bills that would seem to have been inspired by Akasegawa's zero-yen note, were it not for the fact that Akasegawa's experiments remained mostly unknown outside Japan at least until the late 1980s.

For the displacement of art theory into the courtroom which Akasegawa's trial occasioned—and for the ultimate defeat of the logic of art by that of a vaguely defined public well-being—the fate of *Model 1,000-Yen Note* can also be compared to that of Richard Serra's 1981 site-specific sculpture *Tilted Arc* in downtown Manhattan's Federal Plaza. However, in Akasegawa's case, the legal activation of the logic and theory of art had a very particular implication, given the character of his artistic practices. Akasegawa was an artist who stressed repeatedly the importance of hiding the artistic identity of his own practices, of maintaining their "anonymity" (*mumeisei*); explicating that approach for the court's benefit amounted to a form of capitulation to the state's methods of interpellation. Akasegawa had long described the activities of the Hi-Red Center throughout Tokyo in the 1960s as attempts to practice "secret art" (*himitsu geijutsu*). According to Akasegawa, it was important to hide from the public the artistic identity behind the group's actions, in order to prevent the public from assuming the passive, contemplative attitude of spectators. Unprotected by the frame of art, yet testing the boundaries of established uses and habits, the group's practices were necessarily drawn to the nexus of crime, madness, and marginality. As critic Sawaragi Noi wittily remarked, under those circumstances, rather than "it is art therefore it is not a crime," Akasegawa and company could more consistently argue: "it is art, yet it is not a crime."[9]

In any case, this close proximity to, and constant flirting with, the realm of crime, this existence at the fringes of law and established social norms, constituted for Akasegawa an essential aspect of avant-garde art—indeed, its inherently political facet. Rather than direct opposition to the established powers, straightforward criticism of the capitalist status quo, or revolutionary propaganda, Akasegawa described the politicality of his artistic practices as a way of "tickling" the establishment.[10] Revealing the paradoxical nature of the rules that govern modern everyday life was one of the key operations through

9 Sawaragi Noi, *Nihon. Gendai. Bijutsu* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1998), 218.

10 Akasegawa Genpei, personal interview, November 10, 2006.

which his works and writings challenged the established order. In the Surrealist-inspired notion of the artwork as *objet*, Akasegawa found the most cogent embodiment of this paradoxical nature of the laws and logic governing modern capitalist society.

ART AS *OBJET*

The French word *objet*, phonetically transposed from André Breton's vocabulary into Japanese as *obuje* (オブジェ), was frequently used in postwar Japanese art in reference to object-based artworks. Its earliest uses date from the late 1930s, when the poet and critic Takiguchi Shūzō is credited with introducing the term in two articles published in 1938 in the Japanese photography journal *Photo Times*.[11] Transposed directly from the context of French Surrealism, the word *objet* was inserted into the Japanese artistic vocabulary stripped of its ordinary meaning of "object,"[12] both as that which is perceived by a subject and as a thing we use or encounter in everyday life. The Japanese term *obuje* is thus deprived of the ambiguity inherent to its usage in the French original; it is defined as "a method of contemporary art after Dadaism and Surrealism," which consists in the act of "isolating a ready-made article (*kiseihin*) or natural thing (*shizen-butsu*) from its original function and place, and presenting it as it is as an independent work (*sakuhin*), thus attributing to it a symbolic, illusionary meaning different from its everyday meaning."[13] In this way, it can be said that the transposition of the term *objet* into Japanese performs an operation similar to the method of *objet* art itself, in that it isolates the term from its everyday usage and gives it the almost magical meaning conferred on it by Surrealism. In the early 1960s, when avant-garde painters transitioned into creating three-dimensional, object-based art, the term *objet* fit perfectly the need for a conceptual understanding and genealogy of their new experiments.

In "The *Objet* after Stalin," Akasegawa's appropriation of the con-

11 Takiguchi Shūzō, "Shashin to kaiga no kōryū" [The Exchange between Photography and Painting], *Foto Taimusu* 15.5 (May 1938), and "Buttai to shashin: Toku-ni sururearisumu no obuje ni tsuite" [Object and Photography: Particularly Concerning the Surrealist *Objet*], *Foto Taimusu* 15.8 (August 1938). Cf. Anne Tucker, *The History of Japanese Photography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 150–51.

12 In Japanese, many other translations of "object" are available: *mono* or *buttai* as a synonym of "thing," *taisho* in the sense of the object as "target," *kyakutai* as the counterpart of the subject of action (*shutai*), and *kyakugo* as the grammatical object.

13 *Daijirin* [Japanese dictionary] (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1988).

ceptual framework of French Surrealism within the context of postwar cultural politics is announced already in the peculiar combination of Stalin and the surrealist *objet* in the essay's title. Written in 1967, at a time of rising political tensions, and shortly after Akasegawa's first appeal against the guilty verdict was rejected by the High Court, the text is filled with references to the weapons of street protests, such as bamboo spears and Ramune soda bottles (used to make Molotov cocktails). Akasegawa traces a parallel between an artwork and criminal evidence, between the museum and the courtroom: like Duchamp's urinal in the museum, a weapon "put to rest" as evidence in the courtroom is both tamed and liberated from its intended usage. Following this logic, Akasegawa compared, in his final court statement, the displacement of his 1,000-yen note into the courtroom by the prosecutors to the surrealist technique of defamiliarization (*dépaysement*): "This trial started because the Metropolitan Police Board and the Public Prosecutor's Office, a certain group of men, attempted to apply one law to one of my actions. The same sort of method is used in artistic works. It is called the montage or *dépaysement*, and, although these are now thought to be classic techniques, they remain most provocative."[14]

In Akasegawa's use of the word *objet*, it is important to keep in mind the "crisis of the object," announced by Breton as early as 1936, which strongly resonates not only within the Surrealist movement, but in a wide range of artistic experiments throughout the 20th century. According to Breton, the parallel developments of science and art since the early 19th century had brought about a dissolution of the object, which science reduced to a material thing and art turned into a mere support of aesthetic attributes;[15] in response, surrealism sought to re-enchant the world by recuperating the inherent strangeness and absurdity of objecthood. After the Second World War, movements as diverse as Minimalism and Conceptual Art in North America, Brazilian Neoconcretism, Arte Povera in Italy, and the Japanese collective Mono-ha shared this preoccupation with the status of the object as a focus of artistic experimentation and questioning, whether through reduction and dematerialization of the art object or, on the contrary, through ever greater emphasis on things and their materiality.

14 Akasegawa, "Final Statement," 36.

15 André Breton, "La crise de l'objet," *Cahiers d'art* 11, nos. 1–2 (1936): 21–26.

However, Akasegawa's understanding of this re-enchanted, autonomous world of objects is fundamentally different from contemporary proposals of an "object-oriented ontology" by thinkers such as Graham Harman, who stress the agency of material objects independent from subjective apprehension. While arguing for a liberation of the *objet* from the rule of subjectivity, Akasegawa acknowledges that this liberating process must take place within "our interior self" (*onore no naibu*) or, as he puts it even more cogently, inside our "skull" (*zugaikotsu*). Therefore, the liberated *objet* cannot exist apart from a relationship between materiality and consciousness. In brief, artistic practice (or at least the kind of practice Akasegawa pursued) liberates the *objet* from the rule of subjectivity—that is, from its condition as a mere object. But this liberation is inexorably an act of consciousness; it has its point of departure in the mind of the artist. This relationship comes full circle insofar as the mind itself, as Akasegawa wittily stresses, is not simply a disembodied entity, but a realm of activity that exists within our skull.

In pointing out the striking contemporaneity between the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and Duchamp's first ready-mades in New York, Akasegawa introduces a reflection on the ephemeral character of liberation and the risks of bureaucratization—of both art and revolutionary politics. Stalin figures in the text as an index of this threat and fate of bureaucratization. For the artistic community in postwar Japan, even more immediately than the bureaucratization of the revolutionary process in general, Stalinism was intrinsically connected with the bureaucratization and canceling out of political art under the guise of Socialist Realism. Akasegawa expressed this frustration with the ineffectiveness of Socialist Realist painting as a mode of political intervention in a later account of Japanese 1960s art in a volume significantly entitled *Now Action Is All That's Left!* According to Akasegawa, what young artists in the 1950s most desired was a mode of "immediate correspondence with society" (*shakai to no chokusetsu-na taiō*) through artistic practice. This desire for immediacy and social relevance, he argues, "was what first attracted painters to so-called Socialist Realist painting. However, this quickly became a pattern, and this pattern ended up playing the function of a sort of dike conserving the distance between painting and real society. This is roughly the same as what happens in politics with the bureaucratization of the revolutionary

government."[16] It is precisely at this moment that Akasegawa resorts to the production of *objets* as an alternative mode of political art, liberated from the frame of realism, and of representation in general.

In a more immediately political sense, the liberation at stake in Akasegawa's understanding of the *objet* was a liberation from capitalism, and more precisely, from the system of private property. Aesthetic liberation and political liberation were for him necessarily contemporaneous, figured through the ready-made and the Bolshevik Revolution respectively. Even more than to Breton and French Surrealism in general, Akasegawa's understanding of the *objet* is indebted to Takiguchi's own spin on the term. Indeed, the critic Tatehata Akira sharply pointed out the "surreptitious encounter" between Akasegawa's titular "*obuje o motta musansha*" ("proletarian who possessed *objets*" or "*objet*-carrying proletarian") and Takiguchi's formulation "*motazaru mono no monotsuki*" ("possession of the dispossessed").[17] Throughout the 1960s Takiguchi played the role of a sort of theoretical guru for the young generation of avant-garde artists who resorted to the methods of Surrealism and Dada as an inspiration for their radical practices. Among those artists, Akasegawa was probably the closest to Takiguchi's theoretical framework, particularly in his understanding of the *objet*. To some extent, for both Akasegawa and Takiguchi what is at stake in the *objet* is the paradox of private property, the impossibility of subjective possession and control over the world of things, over matter. As Tatehata puts it, "The *objet* for Takiguchi is the paradoxical fetish discovered from the point of view of non-private property (*hi-shiyū*), the incomplete, always itinerant, deviating matter. This non-private property, this deviation, Akasegawa grasps and explains, in a more strategic manner, as the renunciation of the power to dominate and control: the revolt (*hōki*: 蜂起) of matter by means of abandonment (*hōki*: 放棄)."[18] As that which cannot be possessed or entirely controlled, the *objet* can only be the paradoxical possession of the dispossessed or, in Akasegawa's vocabulary, of the proletarian (*musansha*: "the one without property"). To "possess" an *objet* is to renounce possession.

16 Akasegawa Genpei, *Ima ya akushon aru nomi! "Yomiuri Andepandan" to iu genshō* [Now Action Is All That's Left! The "Yomiuri Independent" Phenomenon] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1985), 68.

17 Tatehata Akira, *Tōi-naki kaitō: Obuje to chōkoku* [Answers without Questions: *Objet* and Sculpture] (Tokyo: Goryū Shoin, 1998), 8.

18 Ibid.

The *objet* is, thus, neither a thing in itself, nor that which exists only in the mind of a subject, but both at the same time. It is simultaneously a mode of subjective perception of matter, an attitude toward things (of the renunciation of power), and a condition of matter itself, namely of revolt against the rule of subjectivity. This double-edged character of Akasegawa's understanding of the *objet*, of his materialism, is what makes it fundamentally political. Precisely this logic of liberation through revolt and abandonment constitutes the theoretical core of "The *Objet* after Stalin." Like a bolide, perhaps more than any other of the essays included in the collection, this textual *objet* condenses Akasegawa's intervention into its most concise, fiery form.

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THE *OBJET* AFTER STALIN

AKASEGAWA GENPEI

Teargas bombs, stones, batons, Ramune bottles, manacles, bamboo spears . . . we could regard any of those as an "objet" (*obuje*). Inside a courthouse, on the other hand, they would all be called "evidence" (*butsu*). What is called "evidence" in the courthouse are things that have been used to perpetrate criminal acts or things someone planned to use in perpetrating criminal acts—but taken into the courtroom, where their "weaponness" has been coercively put to rest.

In addition, what we call "objet"—because of its autonomy—is similar to the condition called "evidence." However, we "civilians" do not possess our own courtroom that could forcibly impose the tranquility of "evidence." Hence, while we keep a foothold in daily life, we create a fictional courtroom-like space that intersects with daily life, where we carry out the naming of [something as] an *objet*. This is why, even if we have called it an *objet*, that thing can still be thrown against us at any moment and show itself as something that has the function of teargas, thus inevitably causing us to shed tears. Yet, in this case, our fear of teargas will be accompanied by another kind of anxiety—the anxiety provoked by the teargas bomb in the courtroom, a bomb whose function has been suspended. This anxiety arises from the fact that, although the mission of the teargas bomb is to be flung at one's opponents, on the other hand, a teargas bomb inside the courtroom-like

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space is just like "us" (including the opponents at whom teargas is flung) and is pleading for the same rights "we" do. In other words, the anxiety "we" (again, including those against whom teargas bombs are thrown) experience might well be that of being deprived of our position as teargas users.

The first time the name *objet* was attached to an ordinary thing around us was not in a courtroom, but in what could be called the courtroom-like space of the museum. The criminal (*geshunin*) who, in 1917, took a urinal into a museum in New York City was—needless to say—Marcel Duchamp. He liberated the urinal from the bathroom and chose for it the museum as a liberated space. We usually think of a urinal as something whose only mission is to receive our urine and conduct it out through the sewage pipes. Hence, Duchamp stripped us of our intrinsic power as managers and rulers of the urinal, thus setting it free, and consequently filling his own skull with freedom. The title *objet* was born under this condition of reciprocal liberation.

Something perfectly symmetrical happened in the same year, 1917, in Russia. With the same intention of attaining "freedom," in October those people in Petrograd took over the power of ruling their own lives. To some extent, it could be said that they won and carried off the urinal. For instance, we heard a lot from our ancestors who served in the Japanese imperial army about episodes like the one in which the *Eighth Route Army*, stationed in an east even more distant than Russia, encountering flush toilets for the first time in the cities they took over, inadvertently used them to wash rice. While doing so, however, they also seized the power to rule the Chinese continent and gained control over its toilets.

Between these two cases—one concerning the urinal in New York and the other concerning the toilets in northern China—there is a point of intersection, an instant in which the two cases dwell at the exact same spot. On the one hand, for the sake of freedom, power is abandoned; on the other hand, for the sake of freedom, power is captured. This thing called "freedom," which guides both cases, can only be achieved in the "over there" of their intention. Even if they can be said to intersect at some point, they do not stop at this intersection. At the moment in which their intended freedom is temporarily materialized, they depart once again from this intersection. Or, perhaps, they have no more than a project of intersecting at the "over there" intended by both of them.

The power that is over there, and which we planned to capture in the name of freedom, is connected to the power that was taken over and conquered; however, each of those powers faces a different direction. But at the moment we try to liberate ourselves from external rule, apart from turning ourselves to the power hanging over us, on the cusp of the act of trying to capture power, don't we also secretly renounce another kind of power, although not permanently—that is, the power to rule our interior self? By becoming an *objet*, the Ramune bottle can turn into a Ramune bomb; by becoming an *objet*, a flagstaff can turn into a bamboo spear (*takeyari*). However, the power inside us, which might have been renounced for a moment, comes to rule our perception once again as a Ramune bomb or a bamboo spear. It is perhaps at the precise moment in which someone renounces the power inside oneself, before the renunciation is threatened in this way, that the perception of an *objet* is born.

When we completely renounce everything, everything in us starts to revolt (*houki suru*). It might seem somehow insolent to put it this way. But even so, I don't think we renounce in order to revolt or that we revolt in order to renounce. These two extremes, if they are to be approachable by us, should present an element of unity. It seems a little exaggerated, but this is not merely a foolish attempt to unite both of them. Ultimately, the point is the birth of bureaucracy—and of bureaucratic art.

At any rate, the task of the *objet* after Stalin is probably latent in us, and the model 1,000-yen note (*mokei sen en satsu*) is one of those *objets*. This is also the struggle after Duchamp. This 1,000-yen note was abducted by the power of the state and placed within the courtroom as "evidence."

By the way, have you ever seen the model 1,000-yen note? Of course, it is very different from a fake 1,000-yen note (*nise sen en satsu*). A fake 1,000-yen note—independently of it being discovered as such in retrospect—is something meant to be used with the same exchange value as the 1,000-yen note. In a way, a model is a substitute originally meant for observation—a decoration or ornament. Instead of painstakingly repeating here once again what I have written elsewhere about questions such as the dichotomy of fake versus original or the idea of a painted model (*kaiga no mokei*), I want to think about the different kinds of power which appear—and disappear—around this model. And speaking of something whose memory is awakened by the idea

of a model: just like the Emperor's picture hanging over the Shinto altars of our families' homes during the sacred war, what's the danger in hanging high on the wall a model of the original 1,000-yen note, whose reality is so difficult to preserve?

That said, what the state power fears is not only a force (*seiryoku*) that tries to capture power; it also fears this model that attempted to renounce its own internal power of having continuous control over the 1,000-yen note as a 1,000-yen note. Moreover, it seems that it is not only the courtroom that fears such an *objet*, but also its local agent, the civil subcontractors of the public prosecutor's office inside our daily lives. People like the "art critic" who published a waffle article titled "Concerning the 1,000-Yen Note Incident" in the October 1967 issue of a journal called *SD* are good examples of that. In an article published in the November 1967 issue of the same journal, I carefully demonstrated this point, but it might be necessary to reaffirm the fact that it is not only the courtroom that has the right to judge and punish. But we, as well, are originally entitled to judge and punish the courtroom itself.

A trial is also an incident in itself, but the courtroom is a place for the retrospection of an incident. Of course, retrospection is also important, but we need as well a second and a third model. No, certainly not just a model, but something newly born.

For the time being, instead of a model, I plan to issue an original paper bill, and its face value is that of a "0-yen note." I am taking orders from those willing to own it.

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TRANSLATED BY PEDRO ERBER

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