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Cover: Marcel Broodthaers, *Peinture à Moules* detail, 1965

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In Search of Religion, by Komar and Melamid 36

Three Oblique Situations, by Nicolas Calas 47

Peggy Guggenheim, by Marie Cosindas 50

Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde, by Benjamin Buchloh 52

Ree Morton, by Mary Delahoyd 60

Editorial Comment 66

Essential Differences: A Comparison of the Portraits of Lisette Model and Diane Arbus, by Shelley Rice 66

Books: "Lisette Model: An Aperture Monograph," by Ronny H. Cohen 71

Reviews, by Richard Flood 74

Hal Foster
Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.
Douglas Blau
Joan Casademont
Judith Lopes Cardozo
Shelley Rice
Ronny H. Cohen

Jeanne Silverthorne
Joanna Frueh
Christopher Knight
Hal Fischer
Mary Stottlet
Richard Armstrong
Micky Piller
Jean-Marc Poinot

*Allegories are to the realm of thoughts what
Ruins are to the realm of things.*

—Walter Benjamin

*One part of what delights us today
Was the cause of his death.*

—Charles Baudelaire on Edgar Allen Poe

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh

To the melancholic eye the world's gear and active machinations disintegrate into hieroglyphs: enigmatic characters that decipher what is normally concealed from the individual involved in the acts of production. Contemplative stasis lays bare to the bone. Pictures and dramas of industrious cultural enterprise tend to become scriptural once the artist addresses his own discourse. Self-referentiality, in the true sense of the word, as an analysis of one's proper material and historical condition of discourse and production, results, as we witnessed with Duchamp, in the epistemological model and the libidinal allegory; or, as in the case of Magritte, in the pictograph and in the rebus. The allegorical mode is dependent on yet another condition: that the objects of its analysis and representation, even though seemingly alive and vital, are in fact historically obsolete. If it seems that allegory saves things of the past from oblivion, it in fact also reveals the degree to which things of the present are encumbered by the past and obsolescence dominates present experience. As much as allegory makes reification its historical subject (of analysis, of memory) is as much as it makes ideology its historicized material. In describing one of his procedures for the demarcation and installation of objects, Marcel Broodthaers lists three essentials of allegory—the scriptural, the theatrical and the ruinous:

If one trusts the meaning of the inscription (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 0), the object itself assumes the character of an illustration referring to a kind of sociological novel. These objects, the mirror and the pipe submitted to the same number system (or the cardboard-box, the clock and the chair) become interchangeable on the stage of a theatre. Their destiny is ruined.¹

This could be called the allegorical mode in the work of Marcel Broodthaers: a dialectician by virtue of his abandoned poetical past and his early artistic confrontation and friendship with René Magritte, as well as by his philosophical and political position (he studied with Lucien Goldmann, the disciple of George Lukacs), he perceived the functions of (his) art under the contemporary conditions as those of a perpetually renewed reflective criticism of ideology, or, more precisely, of the ideology of art. He recognized the last and only political validity of a 19th-century social role model, precisely within the boundaries of that paradox: that of the artist who operates within a highly determined institutionalized space, which claims as its crucial difference from all other social activities its social and political autonomy—the avant-garde.

Born in Brussels in 1924 (the year of the publication of Breton's *First Manifesto of Surrealism*) Marcel



Marcel Broodthaers and René Magritte in 1967. Photograph by Maria Glissen-Broodthaers

MARCEL BROODTHAERS: ALLEGORIES OF THE AVANT-GARDE

Broodthaers, in contradiction to frequent misperception, was not a second generation Surrealist in the line of Breton.

In fact, as early as 1947, he joined a group called "Le Surréalisme Révolutionnaire" founded by members of the International European COBRA Movement: Pierre Alechinsky, Philippe Dotremont and Joseph Noiret. This group violently attacks the dominance of André Breton's esthetic, social and political positions which they consider reactionary. One of the first manifestoes of this group, published in Brussels on June 7, 1947, *Pas de quartier dans la révolution*, carries the signatures of René Magritte, Marcel Mariën, Paul Nougé, Louis Scutenaire, members of the first Surrealist group in Brussels, as well as that of Marcel Broodthaers and other newcomers. The manifesto states the incompatibility between Surrealism and the revolutionary principles of the Communist Party, which was declared the only valid revolutionary force.² Only in the early '50s does Broodthaers cancel his membership in the Belgian Communist Party, but as late as 1974 his criticism against Breton's Surrealism is still virulent.

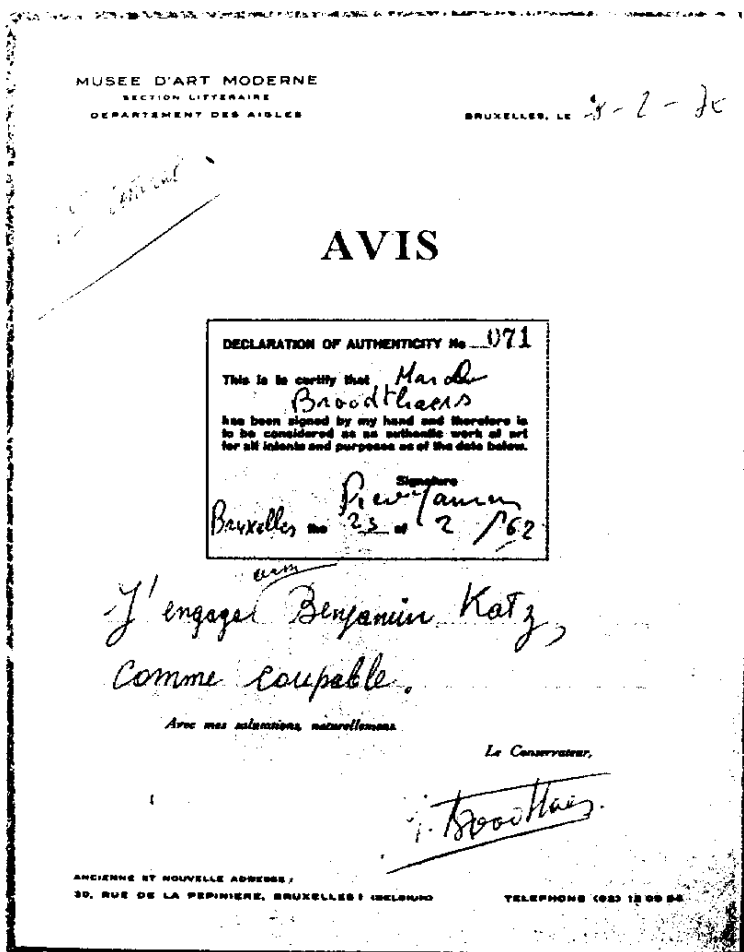
A close look at the work eventually makes his distance from any attempt at a premature solution of the contradictions between art and politics more apparent, but a programmatic statement of his, reply-

ing to the question as to whether he could be situated in a Surrealist perspective, should clarify the problem from the beginning. By denouncing a quote from Breton's *Second Manifesto* of 1930, Broodthaers proclaims:

I know this by heart: 'Everything makes us believe that there exists a position of the mind from which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, that which can be communicated and that which can not, the high and the low cease to be perceived as contradictions.' I do hope that I have nothing in common with this state of mind.³

If anything, it would be his persistent sense of contradictions that could be called the most prominent feature in Broodthaers' thoughts and statements and, of course, in his work. The sheer variety of operational modes and material categories of his art offers a spectacle of contradictions and inconsistencies in itself: objects, paintings and drawings, so-called environmental installations and at least two happenings, books and prints, photos and films, writings and typography.

Two of the most significant contradictions and oppositional paradigmatic shifts of Modernism from the first decade of this century are at the center of Broodthaers' allegorical methodologies, and they have determined his biography of the poet-turned-



Marcel Broodthaers, Musée d'Art Moderne, Section Littéraire, Département Des Aigles, 1970.
The work includes Piero Manzoni's Declaration of Authenticity No. 71, 1962.

painter in an almost exemplary fashion: the visual and material object assuming the status of an epistemological model (Duchamp's Ready-Made concept) and the linguistic sign becoming the object of semio-logical and poetical decomposition (de Saussure and Dada), and depending on them, in painting, (the Magritte of the late '20s). When Tristan Tzara in his Dada Manifesto (Dada No. 3, Zurich, December 1918) announces: "We will like a furious wind tear apart the laundry of clouds and prayers and we will prepare the grand spectacle of disaster, the big fire, *decomposition*," it should be apparent from his metaphors of clouds and prayers that this decomposition will be addressing first and foremost the realm of the superstructure—esthetic ideology in particular.

From the very first work of Marcel Broodthaers as an artist in 1964 (as opposed to his preceding poetical works, which included a film called *A Cinematographic Poem In Honour Of Kurt Schwitters*, 1957)—when he decided to sink up to the middle in plaster the almost complete edition of his last volume of poetry, a "found volume of poetry" as he called it, entitled *Pense Bête (Think Stupid/Animal)*—the perspective of his artistic investigation is clear. Broodthaers was not just analyzing transitional problems arising from making poetry into object, or the quasi-magical act of making an object/image a model of analytical thoughts that essentially questions its own discourse and production; more precisely, he focused on the historical and political scandal that is concealed in the seemingly neutral esthetic struggle between the categories. His announcement, accompanying his first exhibition in 1964, makes this point clear:

I have asked myself as well whether I could not sell anything and become successful in life. It's quite a while already that I am good for nothing. I am forty years now . . . the idea to finally invent something that is insincere crossed my mind and immediately I went to work. What was it? Actually, it was objects.⁴

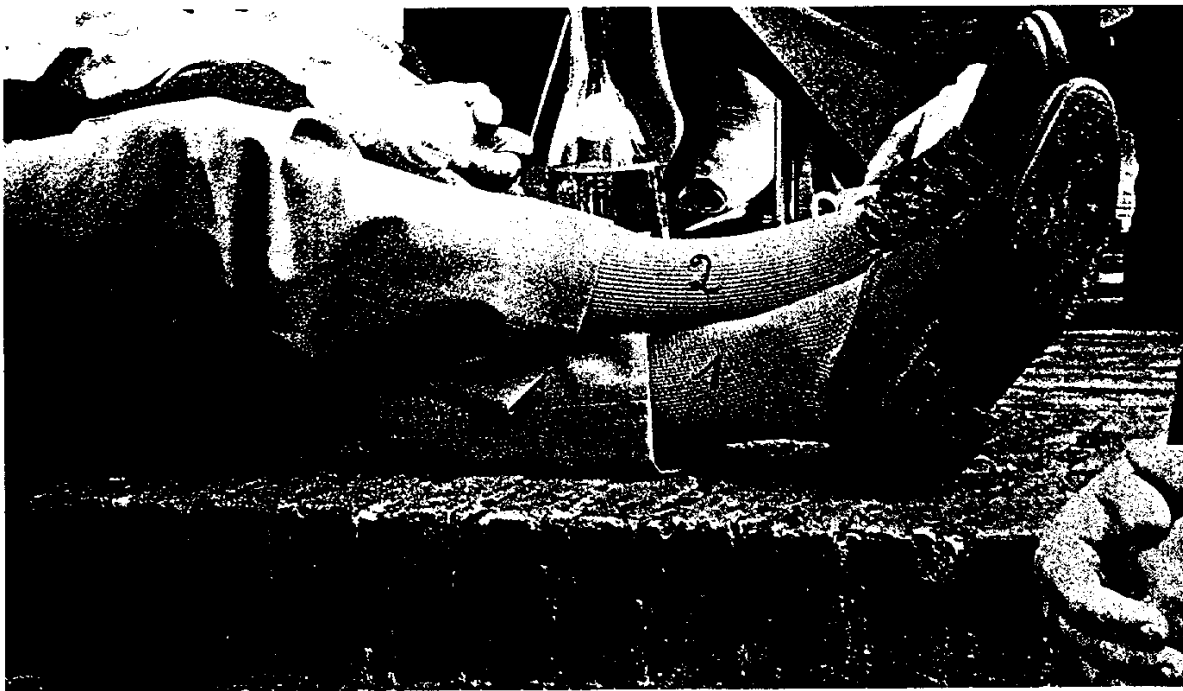
And, from a different angle of irony:

With the transition towards the visual arts I wanted to turn my back on poetry. Symbolically I wanted to free poetry from its ivory tower and therefore I threw it into the wet plaster to make a kind of sculpture out of it. . . .⁵

The choice of plaster and the process of having casts made or immersing found objects in that white material which takes the life out of the object as much as it objectifies life, is, in the art activities of the early '60s, neither original nor accidental. The plaster cast as a highly mechanized mode of production seems to solve the conflict between the apparently insurmountable presence and dominance of the mechanically reproduced object (in everyday reality and therefore, since Duchamp, logically in the esthetic discourse) and the equally strong human urge to dissolve that domination by the object and liquidate its presence through individual gestures of painting and sculptural invention. This conflict, essentially that between reification and primary process, is concretized and incorporated in various cast works, like Duchamp's *Prière De Toucher*, 1947, and his nude-cast in the final work *État Données*, 1947; in Piero Manzoni's achromatic



Broodthaers, *Museum-Enfants non admis*, 1967, blind stamp and print on plastic board. Private collection.



Marcel Broodthaers. Untitled. 1966. photograph/drawing.

objects and paintings of 1959 which feature objects like bread-rolls that have been dipped in kaolin; Yves Klein's plaster-cast portraits, 1962; and, of course, in American art, Jasper Johns' paintings like *Target With Plaster Casts*, 1955, and, most obviously, the work of George Segal from the early '60s. Broodthaers was living in Paris and working as a free-lance writer for a news agency. His first encounters with American Pop Art date from 1963 when he saw exhibitions at the Sonnabend Gallery. His accounts of that experience reflect the ambiguity of his response to an art of recently rediscovered objects that inform his subsequent work:

In Paris in 1963. The first show that I saw was that by George Segal. I was shocked. Therefore I decided to write about the Segal exhibition. I took a flaming critical position against this kind of art—one should not forget that our generation had an artistic background which was essentially surrealist and somewhat *mystique*.⁶

And later:

How I became successful? Quite simple. I only followed the footsteps in the artistic sands that were left by René Magritte and Marcel Duchamp and the very fresh ones by George Segal, Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg.⁷

and, even more obviously polemical in his essay "Like Butter in a Sandwich":

It is evident that if the intellectual muscle fails to function the whole place is overwhelmed by the violence of the attitude. Pop Art is an attitude of the spirit of our times, or rather, this tragicomical actuality.⁸

But, simultaneously, we can find statements by Marcel Broodthaers in regard to Pop Art that seem to contradict his critical skepticism. He acknowledges Pop Art as a major influence on his own work:

18 months ago I saw an exhibition of plaster casts by George Segal in Paris: that was my starting point. . . . Later it was also Lichtenstein, Jim Dine and Oldenburg. . . .⁹

Or:

I have been strongly impressed by the image that the American Pop Artists had to offer . . . I think particularly of Rosenquist, Jim Dine, Oldenburg and especially Segal.¹⁰

Broodthaers' relationship to the European artists' work, that in many ways could be considered the counterpart to American Pop Art, the *Nouveau Réalisme* in France and Italy, is equally ambiguous. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that his early object works from 1964–66 bear the marks of a strong awareness of what had been done by artists like Arman, Christo, and Klein—agewise his peers—during the late '50s and early '60s. Formal and material principles of selection and structure, serial accumulation of "found" elements from industrialized urban reality, a renewed reception and understanding of the full range of implications of the historic positions of Dada, all these features that constitute the *Nouveaux Réalistes'* work are present in Broodthaers' early object work as well. Yet, on first glance, it is obvious that his works take on a radically different perspective on these issues. It comes almost as a surprise to find out that in fact one of Broodthaers' first shows happened in Paris in 1966 at the Galerie J, directed by Janine Restany, the center of *Nouveau Réalisme* activities—especially if one reads Broodthaers' own comments on that movement:¹¹

My objects and images, 1964–1965, could not cause such confusion (with *Nouveau Réalisme*). The literalness shown in the appropriation of the real was intolerable to me because it meant an acceptance pure and simple of the ideas of progress in art . . . and elsewhere.¹²

There are only two ways to explain these blatant contradictions: either they are examples of an almost mindless opportunism which, after all, is not such a rare feature in the symptomatology of the artist as social character, or they are phrased in that mode of speaking which the English language identifies as "having one's tongue in one's cheek," a psycho-physiological gesture of refusal to substantiate physically, to commit oneself with the tool of speaking to what one says. This pattern of empty speech, which we have known as an esthetic tradition in French Dada and Surrealism, as *blague*, describes that narcissistic equilibrium of perpetual double negation that reflects and reveals the contradictions in mythical everyday thought and language—the deposit of ideology.

It is the mode of speech that has separated itself from life to contradict life that has separated itself from speech. In a poem called "Ma Rhétorique", published in 1966¹³ (and later used as a sound tape in an installation that juxtaposed a tape recorded text repeated *ad infinitum* by Broodthaers with the chatter of a live parrot in its cage) Broodthaers confesses to that mode of speaking:

Moi Je dis Je Moi Je dis Je
Le Roi des Moules Moi Tu dis tu
Je tautologue. Je conserve. Je sociologue.
Je manifeste manifestement. Au niveau de
Mer des moules, j'ai perdu le temps perdu.
Je dis je, le Roi des Moules, la parole des moules.

Mussels, egg-shells, plaster casts, suitcases (the husk, the cast, the empty shell), are therefore, from 1964 up to 1967, the most attractive objects and materials for Broodthaers' accumulations, assemblages, and constructs. They seem to embody literal-

ly his prime concern: to distinguish the limits between outside husk and inside kernel, frame and body, the interaction between object and subject, or in more precise terms, the gradual transgressions from living dialectics to cultural reification that determine artistic production. The epithet "King of Mussels" is the grotesque but perfectly accurate description of that artistic role, and its empty mode of narcissistic speech mirrors its surrounding reification, yet it is condemned to continue these passive, pointless, powerless gestures. Again, Broodthaers' own statements are as ambivalent as they are precise:

Mussels, eggs, graceless objects without any content other than the air. Only their shells which obviously express their emptiness. We have to look at the base of things. With my words I deliver reality to you.¹⁴

In the very same volume of poetry that Broodthaers cast in plaster to transform it into his first object/sculpture, *Pense Bête*, we find poems that deal with the very phenomenon:

"The Mussel"

This trickster has avoided the mold of society by casting itself into its own proper mold. Therefore it is perfect.

Or, in "The Medusa" (jelly fish), another animal poem in the same volume, "the jelly fish is perfect, no shell, nothing but body."

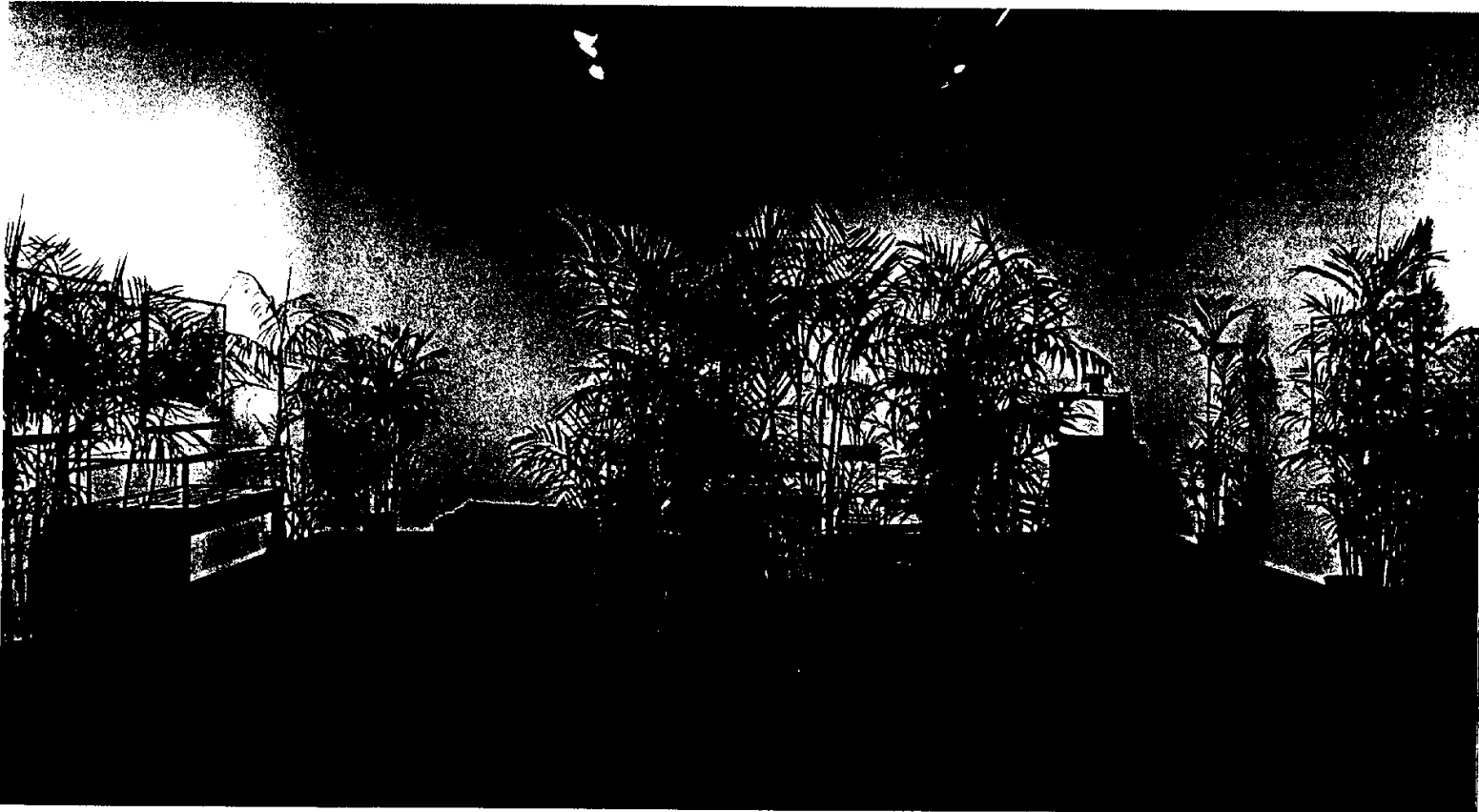
Material and primary process are obviously analogous phenomena and similarly, functional language on its primary level of discourse is analogous to the esthetic practice of poetry (as opposed to its secondary, mythical level of ideological appropriation).

Broodthaers perceives the various processes that lead into plastic material concretion as processes of reification, commodification and ideological appropriation. These are the criteria that determine the object-nature of the work of art under capitalism—its shell, its mold, its framework, its form of institutional circulation and commercial distribution is understood as a hidden mode of alienation and domination. This paradoxical nature of the visual arts and their present day reality (as opposed to Broodthaers' fiction of an artistic past where production and reception were primarily determined by the historical process of political enlightenment and the formation of individual consciousness)¹⁵ is concretized in the dialectical status of his very first work, the sculpture *Pense Bête*, with which he enters that discourse and which will, from 1964 onwards, be developed with ever increas-

ing acumen and poignancy. He later commented on this work, which terminated his failure as a poet and began his career as an artist:

... for me, this book is an object of interdiction. ... Here you cannot read the book without destroying its plastic qualities. I believed that this concrete gesture would have confronted the viewer with this interdiction. But very much to my surprise the viewer reacted in a totally different manner than I had expected. ... Nobody was curious to read the text, not knowing whether they were looking at interred prose, or poetry, sad or pleasant. Nobody was affected by the interdiction.¹⁶

The transition from language to object, the object-language of art, and art's conceptualization to the status of language are the critical points of Broodthaers' investigation. If material concretion, objectization within the discourse of art, has become impossible without being simultaneously appropriated by the ideology of the cultural industry, and thereby made to support and affirm the very same socio-political conditions that it originally set out to negate, then the discourse itself has to be critically negated. The paradox and dilemma, however, is that this critical negation itself has to assume the status of the object-



Marcel Broodthaers, *A Wintergarden*, installation, 1977, "Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art," The Art Institute of Chicago.

Even within radical art there is still so much falsehood, because by anticipating construction of genuine historical potentiality, in fact art neglects to construct it.¹⁷

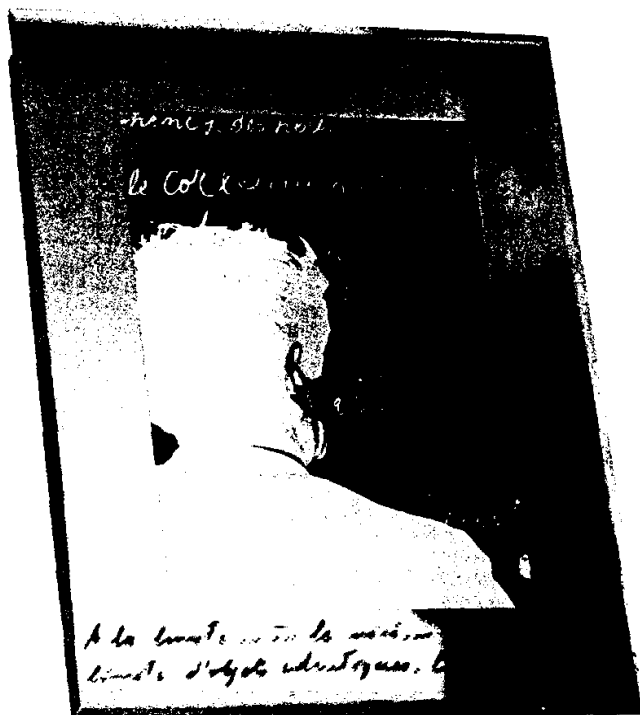
I am neither painter nor violinist. What really interests me is Ingres. I am not interested in Cézanne and his apples.¹⁹

In the publicity for this programme (films at Brussels, December 1972) there have appeared the words "essential complement to his visual art" and elsewhere "experimental films." These do not seem to me appropriate to describe the films which I wish to show. It is not cinematographic art, it is no more and no less than something to talk about like a picture by Meissonier or Mondrian. . . . these are just films.²⁰

garde practice and its historical inefficiency as well as the commodity status of the avant-garde products and the distributional and institutional framework governing it. Numerous statements by Broodthaers make clear that he was systematically addressing these issues in his work:

Or, a few years later:

Broodthaers' versatility in imbuing visual signs with historical material concretions and including their full range of their inherent dialectics (the contradictions of the reality from which they arise as ideological meaning as well as their own contradictory nature in shaping and determining that reality and our reading of it) is puzzling. No sign seems to have the same meaning twice, no semiological element or function is secured. No wonder then that the rebus, the riddle that challenges the reader's vision and dictates read-

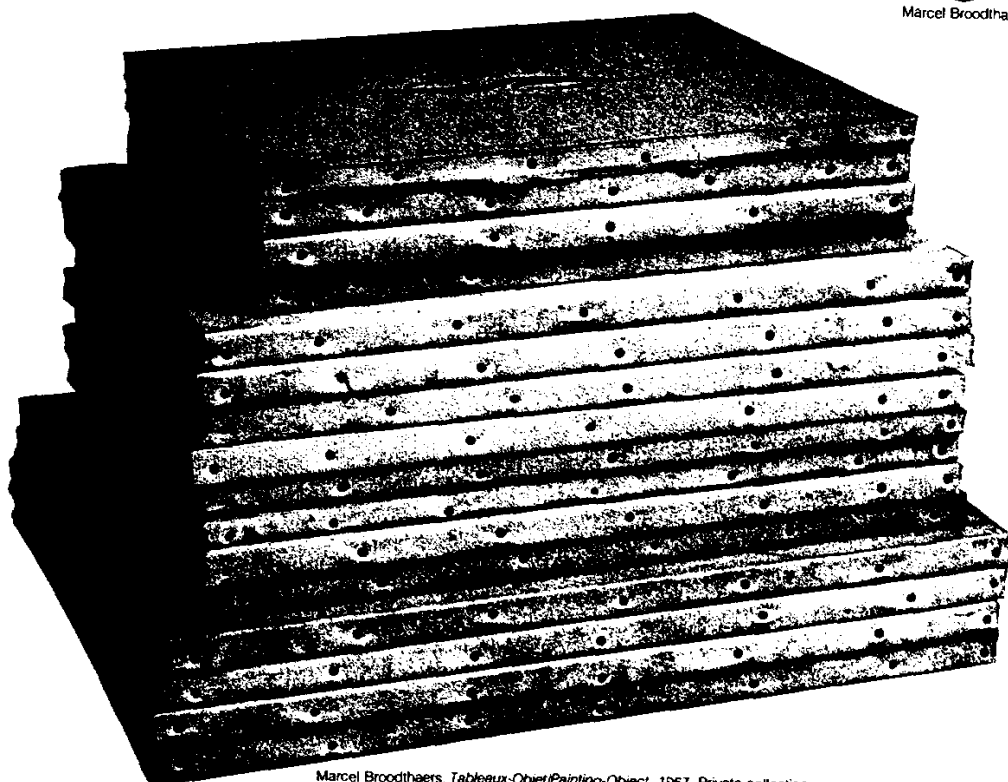


56

ing to the eyes with the pleasantries of children's games, has been one of Broodthaers' favorite strategies to decipher the interdependency and interaction of fragmented language and reified imagery that constitute the discourse of art as ideology. In one of these works, which he conceived as a cover design for the English art magazine *Studio International*, children's alphabet blocks are assembled on the front page to form the line FIN(E) (A)RTS—the letter e having been substituted by the image of the eagle and the letter a by an ass, thus making the sentence into another pun on the perpetual renewed proclamation of the end of the arts. That this work is again a polemical statement on certain forms of Conceptual art prevailing in the early '70s becomes even more apparent when we look at the back of the same magazine where a paid advertisement, designed by Broodthaers for a commercial gallery, appears disguised as art (or vice versa). The advertisement employs again the same alphabet blocks in no apparent order. Images (horse, zebra, watch, dog, umbrella) alternate with alphabetical letters and numbers. Each cube carries a handwritten caption which results in the following sentence: "éléments du discours ne peuvent servir l'art, une faute d'orthographe cachée vaut un fromage" (elements of discourse cannot serve art—a hidden orthographer's mistake is worth a cheese).²⁴ The same attitude had been voiced by Broodthaers in a theoretically more explicit aphorism which again was part of a cover design for an art magazine. The text read "View: according to which any artistic theory functions as an advertisement for



Marcel Broodthaers, *Peinture à Moules/Mussel-Painting*, 1965. Private collection.



Marcel Broodthaers, *Tableaux-Objet/Painting-Object*, 1967. Private collection.

he artistic product, whereas the artistic product functions as an advertisement for the powers under which it was born. There is no other space, but this view according to which . . . etc., etc., . . ."²⁵

A series of works, begun in 1968, concomitant with the foundation of the *Musée d'Art Moderne—département des Aigles—Section XIX^e Siècle* and concluded around 1971, when Broodthaers began a new type of serially arranged typographical "paintings," screened on traditional canvas, is entirely based on the rebus principle. These plaques, printed and embossed plastic sheets (85 cm by 120 cm) look like the predecessors—or afterimages—of advertisements and commercial signs from the period of transition from private manufacture to organized enterprise. Their outdated "factory-style" (material, production, typography) situates them with that of the Duchampian ready-mades and they share with them the secret attraction and delusion of dysfunctionalized objects that seem to bespeak a more humane past stage in the development of the means of production. Broodthaers called them *poèmes industriels*. As they shift between vision and reading they balance between object and sign. Hybrids between ideogram and pictograph, their function is to simultaneously perform and deconstruct the ideological and the esthetic sign. The epistemological relevance on the level of the integration of language into art is comparable to that of Duchamp's in regard to objects in the Ready-Made concept. In Broodthaers' *poèmes industriels* it becomes apparent that language, under the extreme pressure of its collective abuse as a means for oppression and exploitation, can only function as poetry if it disintegrates into its own allegory: the plaques are monuments to the individual word more than just the serialized, objectified language of concrete poetry that marked Broodthaers' original former position and practice as a poet.

In Broodthaers' *poèmes industriels* the syntactic structure, consistent with the development of poetry since Dada—Tzara and Schwitters in particular—has been fragmented and stripped to the discrete semantic unit, the enigmatically purposeless word. The lowest, most subservient and functionalized elements of syntax and grammar—the punctuation marks—suddenly appear to be liberated from their roles and assume a gregarious visual importance in their own right; the disproportionately enlarged commas or acute accents, for example in the plaques *Cinéma I* and *Cinéma II*, appear to be floating in the typographical field like mechanically produced clouds from a factory chimney, whereas the blown-up periods as marks of punctuation and order in *Cinéma I* take on the faces of clocks with their hands at noon in the identically cast, but differently screened relief-plaque *Cinéma II*. The word *Modèle*, in both plaques identical as a quote from an industrial commodity, underlines the "patented" nature of objectified language. The same act of typographical liberation happens to the enlarged exclamation mark in the plaque *Tirage Illimité*, 1969, where the rhetorical sign is juxtaposed with an unidentifiable flag (whose missing center stripe suggests that the exclamation mark was cut out of its body) and the embossed words (an alphabetical enumeration of the centers of political student revolts

at that time; Amsterdam, Berlin, Nanterre, Paris, Milan, Brussels) remain blind-stamped letters, whereas the periods separating them are printed in color. The most complex of the plaques is the first, bearing the title *Museum—enfants non admis* (children not admitted). Again, as in the *Cinéma* signs, the name of the institution of cultural industry is centered in a white rectangular field. The four lines of text, blind-stamped, with the exception of the conspicuously black periods, commas, acute and circumflex accents that seem to float randomly like amoebas (tadpoles more precisely) over the field, read as follows: "A form, a surface, a volume, subservient, an open angle, hard fishbones, a director, a female servant and a cashier. All day long, until the end of times."

This is a listing of the essentials of the institutionalized and rigidly ordered hierarchical space of avant-garde culture from which life has been banned and has vanished. The haunting melancholy of this still life of hardly visible white words is Surreal juxtaposition of elements of metonymy and metaphor. (*Metonymy*, in the sense that the historically isolated and disconnected elements of a purely formal discourse of plasticity in art where form, surface, volume, and open angle are disqualified as subservient and pointless in comparison to the power of the political structure that dominates them—represented by "director and employee" and the economic order. *Metaphor*, as in the blank and hard skeleton of a dead fish, a true still-life element from the iconographical tradition of *vanitas* representations, which seems to be materially concretized and reflected in the blank white surface of the industrially produced plaque and colorless letter-relief.)

It is left open whether the fishbone metaphor relates to the obsolete elements of a formalist artistic discourse, or whether it refers to the abstractness of the governing power structure, or whether it quite simply stands for the vanished life and therefore has its humorous dialectical complement in the phrase that prohibits children access into the realm of reification. The bottom line of the relief adds the equivalent notions of time experience to the object experience of the still life: the *semper idem* of the perpetually identical *toute la journée* and *jusqu'à la fin des temps* coalesces presence and future into an abstraction of spatialized time, where there is no room for development and growth, change and dialectical flux, continuum and memory.

To the same degree, however, that Broodthaers reveals the historical nature of esthetic reality in its contemporary practices of cultural institutionalization and commercial reification (as seemingly hermetically closed systems that do not allow for any movement or dialectical change, nor any interaction with the essentially political nature of historical reality), to the very same degree, does he insist on a dimension within human experience that subverts and rejects the stasis and passivity of reification.

The very act of reading itself achieves the potential of an emancipatory move inasmuch as it destroys the domination of the object over the subject, as it liberates the language and the individual's conscience from the limitations and bonds of interest and func-

tion. It is at this point that the frequent image of children's alphabet cubes or awkwardly drawn or painted, scattered, individual, single, discrete letters from the alphabet become transparent as the hieroglyphs for the new reading lessons (he once summarized a whole group of these works in an exhibition under the title: *Apprendre à lire* [learn to read]), the new alphabet for a new history lesson that would still have to be learned by mankind.

The formal and material transformation of the alphabet as the basic condition of radically (in the true sense of starting from the root of the word) changing our material apprehension of the world is at the origin of the typographical revolution that accompanies the major movements in 20th-century art: El Lissitzky, for example, in his comments on the design for a new book for children, *Of Two Squares*, stated:

... by reading, our children are already acquiring a new plastic language, they are growing up with a different relationship to the world and to space, to shape and to color; they will surely also create another book.²⁶

In Marcel Broodthaers' vision, one that has been broken by the unaltered conditions of bourgeois capitalist life, this new alphabetical order is perceived dialectically as both more emphatic in its anticipation and more pathetic in its avowed skepticism:

This would be an A.B.C.D.E.F. . . . of diversion, an art of diversion. . . G.H.I.J.K.L.M.N.O.P.Q.R.S.T.U.V.W.X.Y.Z. . . To forget. To sleep, serenely, well thinking. New horizons shape themselves. I see new horizons approaching me and the hope of another alphabet (see catalogue).²⁷

The deadpan statement ("see catalogue") that crudely terminates the visionary and divinatory promises becomes even more grotesque as a negation of such Utopian euphoria when one actually discovers that the catalogue pages that Broodthaers is referring to are simple reproductions of typesetters' font-schemes and font-sample-sheets that exemplify various typefaces by spelling *The Fine Art of Printing* in various sizes.

When one realizes that these ready-made typographical schemes are a contribution to a catalogue of so-called Conceptual art, the work's dialectic comes full circle. It insists on the collective historical necessity for the "new alphabet," as it denies the validity of the individual artist's premature solutions by denouncing them as being susceptible to cultural and ideological appropriation—because they are esthetic decisions, as opposed to material, political ones—and by negating them in the deadpan confrontation with the font-schemes of basic typography. It is on those grounds also, that one has to understand why Broodthaers' extremely developed sense of the meaning of typography leads him to a typographical design in his numerous books and prints, as well as in his paintings and films, that assumes the mask of a conservative classicism. Obviously, for the reasons indicated above, he could not align his usage of written language with the revolutionary typography of Dada and Constructivism. By negating their validity for his own work and its historical context, however, he continued all the more to insist on the original subversion and poetical potential of the new alphabets and their typographical concretion. ■

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This is Part I of a two-part essay. Part II will deal with the major museum installations by Marcel Broodthaers, and will appear in a forthcoming issue of this magazine.

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I would also like to express my thanks to Marie-Pascale Gildemyn who allowed me to read her unpublished master thesis *Marcel Broodthaers 1924-1976*, Ghent, 1978, on which I have relied for biographical information and which in many instances also provides references to Broodthaers' statements and writings.

All quotes from Marcel Broodthaers' writings are translated from the French by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh.

1. Irmeline Lebeer, Interview with Marcel Broodthaers, Exhibition Catalogue Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels 1974, p. 66.
2. Marie-Pascale Gildemyn, Marcel Broodthaers, op. cit. p. 10 and p. 26.
3. Lebeer, op. cit. p. 64.
4. Marcel Broodthaers, Invitation Card for Galerie St. Lambert, Brussels, 1964.
5. Marcel Broodthaers, Interview with Ludo Bekkers, in *Museums Journal*, vol. XV, no. 4, Amsterdam 1970, p. 66ff.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
7. Marcel Broodthaers, Invitation card for exhibition at Galeries d'aujourd'hui, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 1965.
8. Marcel Broodthaers, "Comme du beurre dans un sandwich," *Phantomas*, no. 51-61 (XII), Brussels 1965, p. 295f.
9. Broodthaers, *Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers*, Journal des Beaux Arts, no. 1068, Brussels, 1965, p. 5.
10. Bekkers, op. cit. p. 66.
11. A much closer connection can be traced between Broodthaers and the Italian artist Piero Manzoni, who, even though not a *Nouveau Réaliste* in the strict sense of their manifesto, shared a whole range of their programmatic concerns about the interrelationships between art and reality. His sense for organic materials and processes in art, as opposed to those of the classical categories of the modernist tradition, his awareness of the radically changed notion of the ready-made concept, connect his work much more directly with that of Broodthaers, than that of the *Nouveaux Réalistes*. He declared Marcel Broodthaers in his certificate no. 71 on February 23, 1962, as "an authentic work of art for all intents and purposes" for lifetime. And Broodthaers' necrologue on Manzoni, written in 1963 when he was still a poet, clearly reveals the deep respect and friendship he felt for this extraordinary artist: "Manzoni is dead, physically dead. He was young. Is there a connection between his untimely death and the attitude that he took on in the context of art? It is most certain that insisting on this kind of humor was not a very comfortable position to have taken. And if this should be the reason, then our inquiry into artistic events, into all kinds of events, will have to be profound and thorough. In any case Manzoni will be in the history books of the terrible 20th century." See: Marcel Broodthaers, *Gare au Défi*, Journal du Palais des Beaux Arts, no. 1029, Brussels, 1963.
12. Lebeer, Interview, op. cit. p. 66.
13. "Moules, Oeufs, Frites, Pots, Charbon, Perroquets," Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp 1966, s. p.
14. Broodthaers, *Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers*, op. cit. p. 5.
15. "I believe that my exhibitions have always and still depend on souvenirs of the epoch in which I presume the creative situation was one of heroic and solitary form. In other words one of: Read and See. Whereas today it is: May I present to you," Lebeer, Interview, op. cit. p. 66.
16. Lebeer, op. cit. p. 66.
17. T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetische Theorie, Gesammelte Schriften* Vol. VII, Frankfurt, 1970, p. 129.
18. Lebeer, Interview, op. cit. p. 64.
19. Michael Compton, *A Programme of Film by Marcel Broodthaers*, The Tate Gallery, London, 1977.
20. Editions Lebeer-Hossmann, Hamburg, Brussels, 1976.
21. Broodthaers, "Complément indispensable à la suite de neuf tableaux," *Actualité d'un Bien*, Yvon Lambert, Paris, 1972, p. 37.
22. Lebeer, Interview, op. cit. p. 66.
23. See: *Studio International*, Volume 188 no. 970, London 1974.
24. The cheese as metaphor for money is derived from La Fontaine's tale "Le Corbeau et le Renard," which a few months before had served already as a model to unmask the hidden tricks of the trade when Broodthaers replied to an "Hommage" exhibition that was installed by two young artists in his honor with the question "mais qui mangera le fromage?" (But who will eat the cheese?).
25. *Interfunktionen*, No. 11, Cologne 1974.
26. Sophie Lissitzky-Kueppers, *El Lissitzky*, N.Y. 1968, p. 359.
27. Flyer by Marcel Broodthaers, distributed on the occasion of the first installation of Un Jardin d'Hiver, Brussels January 1974.

Marcel Broodthaers, Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles, Section XIX^e Siècle, installation 1968, Brussels. Empty picture crates, installation equipment and postcards (Ingres, David, Courbet). Photograph by Maria Gilissen-Broodthaers.

