

The Artist as...

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Unfounded Exhibiting: Policies of Artistic Curating

It has become a standard and accepted practice in the cultural field since the 1990s (at the latest) for artists to take over various tasks that were once the reserve of the curator. This not only includes producing texts, but also encompasses the conception of exhibitions themselves, as well as their design and accompanying programming. But the strategies pursued here vary decidedly. The blurring of the boundaries between what were once separate professional tasks can allow for the successful establishment of new or hitherto barely noticed artistic approaches, encourage the development of collective work structures, or create expanded options for critical discursive or institutional analyses. Positions as widely varied as those of Andrea Fraser, Damian Hirst, Goran Dordevic, Julie Ault, IRWIN, Christian Philipp Müller, or Andreas Siekmann and Alice Creischer mark in an exemplary way the broad spectrum of curatorial artistic practice. But art critics and theorists, philosophers, literary scholars, and sociologists are also pushing their way into this terrain, which for many years had been reserved for the discipline of art history. At the same time, border incursions into the realm of art take place repeatedly from the academic side.

But to conclude that this trend towards blurring boundaries means that artists and curators are able to freely exchange tasks with unlimited ease, that any role can be adopted by any actor in the artistic field, ultimately falls short. That would suggest an arbitrariness in the formation of the professions in the art field, and not only ignores the specifics of the artistic approaches from which, in historical retrospect, these mutual role trans-

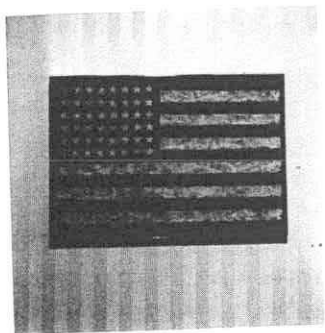
gressions resulted, but also the hierarchies, exercises of power, and status ascriptions that could be negotiated with these transgressions. It thus neglects a potential in artists' curatorial work of using self-reflexive approaches to disturb the dominant relations in exhibitions between locations, objects, exhibitors, and publics. The following will explore the shifting and thus also politically relevant perspectives that intersect in the aesthetic, semantic, social, and economic aspects of curating.

For this, first another look back: the ease with which artists now transgress onto the realm of the curator had its origins in two key developments from the late 1960s. On the one hand, Conceptual Art and so-called Institutional Critique directed the focus from an object-based art to an art rooted in ideas, art with a relational and discursive constitution. In a 1989 article summing up the historical role of Conceptual Art, Benjamin Buchloh said that this movement subjected the relationships among author, work, and audience to a radical redefinition, a redefinition that destabilized both the hierarchical position of the closed, unified work and the privileged position of the author.¹ One consequence of this approach was that the activities and contexts that participate in the production of meaning were made a component of artistic practice. It was as part of this development that the appropriation of curating took place. In this way, artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, or Daniel Buren broadened their activities to include selecting, compiling, arranging, presenting, and transmitting the work of other artists, cultural goods, and public or institutional spaces. From a critical distance, they confronted the criteria of curatorial practice that were standard until that time, with their own guidelines as alternatives. In so doing, the exhibition space itself became integrated into the artistic engagement. Decisive for the treatment of the exhibition space is that it is conceived as doubly contextualized, in both a physical as well as a social framework. As Juliane Rebentisch points out, this reflects the insight already formulated by Adorno that every experience of an artwork is related to a location in both a literal and a metaphorical sense: an insight that for art today is "on the whole not up for negotiation." Advanced artistic practice today thus always proceeds in an "installative" fashion, keeping the surrounding space in mind.² The essential decisions on making art visible and the positions from which these decisions are made, the criteria that lie at their foundation as well as the forms of address they imply are

now up for disposition—also at the hands of artists—and flow into context-related techniques.

On the other hand, parallel to this, in the course of the rapidly increasing activities in the art field of the 1960s and its differentiation, a new profession began to form, that of the freelance curator. The prototypical example here is the Swiss curator Harald Szeemann. Ever since leaving Bern's Kunsthalle in 1969, he worked exclusively as a freelancer on a project-by-project basis in a structure he called an "agency for intellectual guest workers [Gastarbeiter]." In 1972, he was the first Documenta curator in the history of the exhibition to set an overarching theme, thereby providing guidelines to which the invited artists had to subordinate themselves. Szeemann thus created a position for himself in the field where exhibitions still consisted of individual artistic objects, but generally had become the "works" of their curators. The later hype built up around this, setting in at the latest in the 1990s with the "exhibition auteur," is tellingly accompanied by the de-professionalization of the curator, as Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak have shown.³ For the curator schools that since then have seemingly been sprouting up everywhere, are not the primary source of the cast chosen to organize the most prominent freely-curated exhibitions. Instead, it has been figures like Hans Ulrich Obrist or Roger M. Buergel, who came from other professions and precisely did not follow a normed curating career, who have attained the most prominence in the area.

The potential for conflict among agents encountering one another in the same area of operation ignites around the question of who can claim to produce meaning. Against the organizers of thematic large exhibitions or exhibition-makers stylized as "super artists," the artists argue that they are being denied the power to determine the appearance and the contextualization of their works. Curators have become far too important in relation to artists—this was the initial tenor of a lecture series organized by the artist Susan Hiller in Newcastle in 2000. This tendency, it was argued, should now be resisted by once again placing artists "at the center."⁴ The discussion continues a debate already initiated by Harald Szeemann's 1972 Documenta: while several artists responded to the dominant position of the curator in setting the theme by withdrawing their participation, others protested publicly by publishing letters or articles, by conceiving their own contribution to the exhibition as a critical commentary, or—as in the case of Daniel Buren—by transforming the exhibition itself into the



Daniel Buren, *Photo-souvenir: „Exposition d'une exposition, une pièce en 7 tableaux“, 1972 (Detail)*
Installation view Documenta 5, Kassel, 1972
© VBK Wien

battleground on which to struggle over definitional power. For the relationship between artist/curator, Buren's positioning became a kind of historical turning point, as he defined it as competing, dynamic, and in so doing also as productive. He showed how the authority hitherto ascribed to both artists and mediators is the result of relationally determined processes of aesthetic, discursive, and social acts, thus providing the critique of those authorities, as exercised in art since the 1960s, with a model of equal negotiating status. With the even color stripes, typical of his work, that Buren installed in various rooms beside and behind the other artworks on display, his contribution to the catalogue, and the compilation of a bibliography that consisted solely of texts he played a role in creating, Buren undertook an act of self-empowerment on numerous levels. He appropriated tasks that belonged to the curator's core area of activity, and in so doing transformed both those exhibiting with him as well as the exhibition as a whole into an object and part of his work. Buren's Documenta contribution theatrically displayed the various techniques that are bundled in exhibiting, along with their conditions, thus re-appropriating the definitional participation that other protesting artists had already thought lost.⁵

Ultimately, this controversy represented yet another variation in the debates circling around the crisis of the author, in which the dominant role of the “creator” in producing meaning in a work was reasserted. The dissolution of the unified artist subject and the freeing of artistic work to engage in social, economic, and discursive systems of reference is emblematically embodied by the figure of the curator and his or her always already rela-

tionally defined role, which is per se structured by a multiple bind, since not only the exhibiting artists need to be satisfied, but also the institution as employer, patron, and financier—not to forget the various possible audiences of the show. Whereas in a situation of clear professional differentiation, the curator position is supposed to serve the ends of artistic expression, seeking the best possible mode of presentation for a posited prior meaning of the object, the blurring of curatorial and artistic realms dissolves both the unity of the artwork as well as that of the artist subject. Furthermore, they exemplify a transformed definition of artistic work that goes beyond the replacement of the triumvirate of “author, art work, and creative act” by that of “producer, work, and production,” which took place in art in general after 1960. Here, the figure of a manager of information, objects, locations, money, and people begins to establish itself, a figure whose work comprises connecting, and whose multi-faceted product can be described as a set. The term “set” links two meanings: things that—for a limited amount of time—are considered as belonging together on the one hand, and associations with the realm of theater and film, on the other, i. e., the stage or place prepared for the *mise-en-scène*. It is no accident that the subject position constituted here also exhibits similarities to the performing arts, since it corresponds to the tasks, authority, and status of the theater or film director in multiple ways: His or her activity comprises essentially staging the given conceptual guidelines with the help of the personnel and material media he or she organizes. Stylized as “auteur,” he or she thus marks the last bastion against the loss of authority of the artist-subject, indeed mobilizing its mythical functions once again.⁶ The filmic “auteur” condenses the reclamation of the status of the author as expressed in post-minimal, site-specific artistic modes of working, like those of Bruce Nauman or Richard Serra.

But it should also be remembered that film directors and curators differ quite fundamentally on one point: in the case of the latter, no final remaining products are produced. In contrast to works of film, which take on a material form that surpasses their presentation or projection, a form that can turn it into a collected, stored and tradable good, a curatorial product exists for but a limited time, to then again disintegrate into its individual components—which only then can once more be traded. More like a theater director, the curator allows a temporary constellation to emerge in which spatially and temporally structured layers of meaning are



Duane Hanson, *Lady with shopping bags*, 1972
Installation view of the exhibition *Weather Everything* by Eric Troncy,
Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, 1998

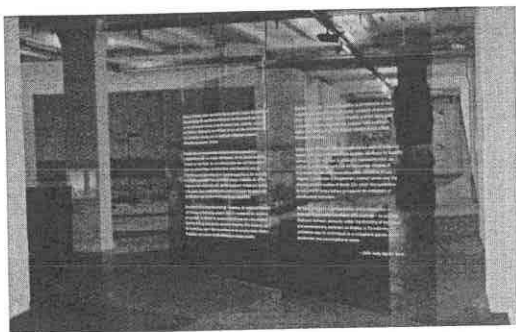
brought to confront one another. While often only limited to one or just a few presentations, the analogy between theater performance and art exhibition exposes the processual moment that inheres in curating. As in the theater, the stages of emergence and presentation are addressed in this way, as are the relational dynamics during development and performance. On this basis, the two decisive aspects that are at issue in the competition between artists and curators can be set in relation to one another: on the one hand, the status of those who claim the power to produce meaning, and on the other, the techniques used to produce that meaning.

The primary issue in this competition for the authorial position in the curatorial realm is the artist's or curator's respective scope of action. In the 1998 Leipzig exhibition *Weather Everything*, the French curator Eric Troncy hung a pictorial object by Bazile Bustamante before a wall decorated with Warhol wallpaper, and grouped various female figures by Duane Hanson, Katharine Fritsch, and Helmut Newton along an axis of vision (Fig.).⁷ If one reduces this procedure exclusively to the combinatory act, it exhibits similarities to Buren's combinatory act at documenta 5, placing artistic objects in contexts that not only counter the white cube's logic, but define it in an emphatically relational way, even if by way of tensions and contrasts. But Troncy's arrangements are also engaged in an antagonistic relation to artists that fortifies authorities rather than making them negotiable. The attitude is one of saying "I" as a curator, refusing to stand in service of the works exhibited and instead providing a "personal" alternative design.⁸ The defensive reactions triggered by such a position deny curators

with a non-artist background the right to this kind of reinterpretation. It picks up the critique already formulated at the 1972 Documenta, and continues it in a form of re-hierarchization that consists, for example, in the emphatic refusal of artists to be called curators. It mirrors, above all, a form of attributing status in the artistic field, which, regardless of the acts performed, decides on the scope for maneuvering. The relationship between curators and artists can thus be described as analogous to the relationship between priests and prophets as defined by Pierre Bourdieu. The priest, according to Bourdieu, possesses authority by virtue of his office and exercises control over access to the means of producing, reproducing, and distributing the sacred by belonging to the church. He defends and maintains the existing doxa and sees himself as a mediator between God and humanity.⁹ Applied to the field of art, the mediators take on "gate-keeper" functions in their role as "priests," watching over the possibilities of producing, presenting, and distributing art, mobilizing the valid set of values and rules in judging art as art, and consider themselves as agents between art and the audience.

But whoever tips the balance of this mediating position and dares to transgress to the side of art producers violates the rules. In the religious field, this would correspond to the transformation of priest to prophet. Here, power stems not from the office, but the individual's personality and charisma. He or she is interested in producing and distributing "new sacred goods," something that can also serve to discredit the old. The group of initiates that gathers around him, as befitting the process of sacralizing former sacrilege, can develop from a sect to a church, and become the new administrators of the true doctrine.¹⁰

If institutional and charismatic power are played out against one another in the two positions of priest and prophet, curator and artist, this means for the current situation of curatorial practice in the artistic field that especially free curators due to their lacking institutional anchorage need to rely on personal charisma by which they acquire authority in a processual manner.¹¹ Like the prophets, this entails allying oneself more closely to the object of mediation than to the mediating authority or the audience. If prophets are characterized by the fact that they are not, like priests, humanity's advocate before God, but rather the mediator of God to humanity,¹² something analogous can be said about curators: they are less advocates of the various art audiences vis-à-vis artists and art, but rather the agents of art and artists in public.



Installation view of the exhibition *Outdoor Systems, Indoor Distribution* by Julie Ault and Martin Beck, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst Berlin, 2000

In turn, artists can through their curatorial activities participate in the institutional securities and claims, that are otherwise denied them in project-based work.¹³ For the limited time of the preparation and realization of the exhibition, their work undergoes a treatment that makes it comparable to institutionally administrable procedures, and thus worthy of a compensating honorarium. And they find themselves again in the “priestly” role of “gate keeper,” allowing them to decide on the access, contextualization, and positioning of works and fellow artists. All the same, this change of roles is not without its own sacrifice: while curators take on the artist’s precarious working situation, artists in curatorial roles often lose their special status as beyond the everyday and hence charismatic.

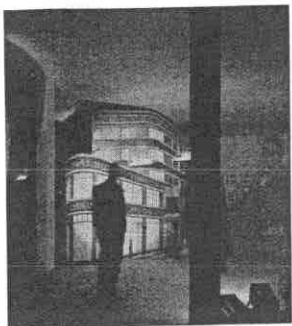
The conflicts around the economic and symbolic compensation of artists’ curatorial work permit the profits of the mutual exchange to outweigh the downsides only when the roles taken are held in process. The oscillating between various duties and requirements as well as the flexible expansion and transformation of one’s own activities make it possible to understand the ascription of the “prophet” status as something mobilizable, ready for action. The prerequisite for this is divorcing the tasks from the roles, and their conscious and variable re-articulation.

For that curating can, in a very basic sense, be described as the practice of establishing contexts and constellations among objects, persons, sites, and contexts. Preliminary conceptual work, selection, combination, presentation, and discursive mediation intersect with one another. Within artistic practices, they take the place of material production and can thus

be compared with those forms of labor that for Maurizio Lazzarato mark post-Fordist economic structures. Meant here are activities in the so-called secondary service sector, like management, organization, consulting, publishing, and teaching, activities that rely on knowledge and skills in using information and culture.¹⁴ The over-proportional increase in this area of labor and its structures over the past few years must also be seen in relation to the increased attention that has been paid to curatorial activities since the 1990s, for it is here that intersections result between the cultural and economic fields, which also play a key role in the current social position of artists. In the model function attributed to the artist in terms of economic labor conditions, these “immaterial” activities wind up being linked to concepts such as freedom, self-determination, but also self-administration and self-optimization.¹⁵

Such economistic appropriations ignore the fact that these activities are acts of transformation: the processing, reprocessing, or revising of existing information or cultural goods, and their translation in terms of media and context. Functionalization according to economic criteria of efficiency thus constantly runs the danger of being undermined or counteracted by possible parallel conceptualizations, for curatorial practice bears the potential for allowing the overlapping of meanings to such a degree that they exhibit a kind of resistance. Just as artistic objects are able to maintain an element of their original, context-determined significance in an exhibition, even if they are subject to a “clearinghouse” effect, which—as Allan Sekula described for collections of photography—tears them from their traditional contexts of meaning,¹⁶ various meanings of the site also overlap with one another. This exemplifies what Juliane Rebentisch attributes to sculptures and installative interventions: that they constantly constitute a space of “their own,” in which they aesthetically “grant and fill [einräumen]” their public or institutional space, making it “legible through themselves.”¹⁷ Curatorial acts intend to bring the various determinations of the individual elements with which they work into relation with one another, and in so doing do not create any fixed images or stills, but for their part, generate processual events that are set in motion by way of relational tensions and crises, acts of reception, or the mobility of what is collected.

In this way, for example, Julie Ault and Martin Beck transformed with *Outdoor Systems, Indoor Distribution* (2000) the exhibition space of Berlin’s Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (NGBK) into a field of experi-



Installation view of the exhibition *Im Geschmack der Zeit. Das Werk von Hans und Marlene Poelzig aus heutiger Sicht*, by Christian Philipp Müller, temporary project space at Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, 2004

mentation in which they explored the conditions of emergence, characteristics and effects of space (Fig.). This staging was conceived as exemplary, “as if the space itself would be a testing ground for how certain spaces can be constructed, and how that process can be shown within the format of an exhibition.”¹⁸

Urbanist and architectural constructions of space were brought to intersect with various modular forms of exhibition display, utopian fantasies found themselves confronted with the reality of their execution, structures, intentions, and functions of the exterior space grew wildly into the space of the NGBK. With a multiplicity of presentation techniques, Ault and Beck guided visitors through the space, setting the audience into discursive as well as physical motion. In so doing, the linkage, overlapping, and interpretation of various contexts served not least to interrogate quite fundamentally the conditions and possibilities of exhibiting. They thus allowed the realms of outside and inside, contoured both by society and more specifically by the art field, to interpenetrate one another, just as they placed their own role between artistic and curatorial speaking positions, between production and immaterial labor. The NGBK served as a site of struggle, a field of action and an object of study at one and the same time.¹⁹

In 2003–04, Christian Philipp Müller practiced this process-oriented form of dealing with the roles and tasks potentially tied to the curatorial in different stages. The multiplication of functional interlacing and references is already implied in the title of the three-part exhibition on the work of the couple Hans and Marlene Poelzig: *Im Geschmack der Zeit: Das Werk*

von Hans und Marlene Poelzig aus heutiger Sicht (In the Taste of the Time: A Contemporary View of the Work of Hans and Marlene Poelzig). This title not only indicates that Poelzig’s way of working was very pragmatically oriented to the respective aesthetic preferences of his surroundings, but also that the exhibition sought to illustrate the various references from which the changeability of style derive (Fig.). As the exhibition traveled from Berlin to Frankfurt am Main, to Basel, Müller placed the material in various spatial situations that each stood in a specific relationship to Poelzig’s work: the apartment house in Berlin’s Weydinger Straße 20 on Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz and the former administrative headquarters of IG Farben AG in Frankfurt am Main stood for the architect’s different orientations over the course of his career, while in Basel’s Architekturmuseum, a form of historical distancing stepped in place of the biographical references. In each of the three exhibitions, Müller rearticulated the physical and functional characteristics of the space, altered the selection and arrangement of material, changed the character of the overall impression, and declared the conditions under which the exhibitions in each case came to be a subject of the exhibition. In the course of the three stages, Müller subjected his own position to continuous transformation, placing himself first in the role of the artist commissioned to realize a project, than as a member of a team complemented by academics and project leaders, and finally, in the role of a curator treating historical material. The different modes of work performed, the roles taken on, and the various forms of presentation within the project intersect to form a dynamic web of relations between artists and curators, which leads to the project’s independent, critically employed free space of interpretation.²⁰

When Susan M. Pearce terms exhibition materials “objects in action” that carry meaning, take it on and alter it continuously,²¹ she is describing a form of dynamic that results from the curatorial practices as practiced by Ault/Beck and Müller. Such a practice that accounts for the movement that can emerge through different audience groups and by the forms of addressing them²² as well as in spatial recontextualizations or variations in constellation, by way of display, accompanying programs, or reformatting as a catalogue, ultimately represents a continuation of site-specific modes of working. But it also goes beyond this, placing the accent even more emphatically on processuality, contingency, and the generation of space. Here is where we can locate the critical potential that Marion von

Osten attributes to her own curatorial activity²³—a potential that Michel de Certeau calls “criminal.” The space-generating physical and discursive movements he engages in maneuver between the codes and serve to temporarily combine various things, to then separate them again. The space that they generate over and over again is, for its part, formed and saturated by conflict programs and contractual agreements²⁴ that can again offer an occasion for new formations. In the curatorial practice of artists, this ability is located in an un-clarifying of the norms that decide about the status of those participating in the production of meaning, in the expressly transitory creation of significance and the performance of its processes.

Notes

- 1 Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October*, 55 (1990), pp. 105–43.
- 2 See Juliane Rebentisch, *Ästhetik der Installation*, Frankfurt/M., 2003, pp. 232 f.
- 3 Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, “From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a Singular Position,” *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, London, 1996, p. 238.
- 4 Sune Nordgren, “The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation. 30th March, 2000, University of Newcastle, Department of Fine Art. James Lingwood and Sune Nordgren in Conversation Chaired by Professor John Milner,” *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation*, eds. Sarah Martin, Sune Nordgren, Newcastle, 2000, p. 21.
- 5 For more on Daniel Buren’s work at documenta 5, see Beatrice von Bismarck, “Der Meister der Werke. Daniel Burens Beitrag zur documenta 5 in Kassel 1972,” *Jenseits der Grenzen. Französische und deutsche Kunst vom Ancien Régime bis zur Gegenwart. Thomas W. Gaehtgens zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Uwe Fleckner, Martin Schieder, Michael Zimmermann, Cologne, 2000, pp. 215–29.
- 6 See Diedrich Diederichsen, “Künstler, Auteurs und Stars. Über menschliche Faktoren in kulturindustriellen Verhältnissen,” *Kunst / Kino. Jahresring 48*, ed. Gregor Stemmerich, Cologne, 2001, pp. 43–56.
- 7 The exhibition *Weather Everything*, along with another show curated by Troncy in Le Magasin, Grenoble—Dramatically Different (1997)—is documented in *Weather Everything*, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, 1999.
- 8 See in this context the introduction that Eric Troncy had printed in the accompanying volume to the conference: “If in the beginning of the ‘90s, the curator could behave

as a simple producer, he may now be in the position to say ‘I’, and manipulate art-works in order to produce a very personal vision of art.” (*Die Kunst des Ausstellens / The Art of Exhibiting. International Conference*, Stuttgart, 2001)

- 9 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Das religiöse Feld. Texte zur Ökonomie des Heilsgeschehens*, Constance, 2000, pp. 78–81.
- 10 See *Ibid.*, pp. 79–82.
- 11 In contrast to the priests, Bourdieu writes on the prophet’s accrual of authority: “They need to realize the *original accumulation of religious capital* by constantly achieving and re-achieving an authority that is subject to the constantly fluctuating irregularities of the relationship between the offer of religious services and the religious demands of a special category of layperson.” (*Ibid.*, p. 78.)
- 12 See *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- 13 These relations form the background for the conference organized in 1994 on Services, an exhibition held in the Kunstraum, Universität Lüneburg. See Helmut Draxler, Andrea Fraser, “Services: A Proposal for an Exhibition and a Topic for Discussion,” *Games, Fights, Collaborations. Das Spiel von Grenze und Überschreitung. Kunst und Cultural Studies in den 90er Jahren*, eds. Beatrice von Bismarck, Diethelm Stoller, and Ulf Wuggenig, Ostfildern (Ruit), 1996, pp. 196 f., as well as p. 197, “Services: Working Group Program at the Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg.”
- 14 See Yann Moulier Boutang, “Vorwort,” *Umherschweifende Produzenten. Immaterielle Arbeit und Subversion*, Toni Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato, Paolo Virno, (ed. by Thomas Atzert), Berlin, 1998, pp. 13 f.
- 15 See Ulrich Bröckling, “Totale Mobilmachung: Menschenführung im Qualitäts- und Selbstmanagement,” *Gouvernementalität der Gegenwart. Studien zur Ökonomisierung des Sozialen*, eds. Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann, Thomas Lemke, Frankfurt am Main, 2000, pp. 142, 157 f.
- 16 See Allan Sekula, “Reading an Archive,” *Blasted Allegories. An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists*, ed. Brian Wallis, New York, Cambridge/MA, London, 1987 (1993), p. 117. (Selected passage from: “Photography between Labour and Capital,” *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures, 1948–1968*, Halifax, 1983.)
- 17 See Rebentisch, *Ästhetik der Installation*, p. 262.
- 18 Julie Ault, Martin Beck, “Exhibiting X: Methods for an Open Form,” *Critical Condition. Ausgewählte Texte im Dialog*, eds. Ault and Beck, Essen, 2003, pp. 380.
- 19 On the execution of the exhibition in a publication format, see Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Outdoor Systems, Indoor Distribution*, Berlin, 2000.
- 20 On the exhibition project, see Christian Philipp Müller, *Im Geschmack der Zeit. Das Werk von Hans und Marlene Poelzig aus heutiger Sicht*, Amsterdam, Berlin, 2003.

- 21 Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections. A Cultural Study*, London, 1992, pp. 210-211.
- 22 On the aspect of addressing various publics and their effects, see for example, Irit Rogoff, "How to Dress for an Exhibition," *Stopping the Process?*, ed. Mika Hannula, Helsinki, 1998; Miwon Kwon, "Public Art as Publicity," *In the Place of the Public Sphere?*, ed. Simon Sheikh, Berlin, 2005.
- 23 Marion von Osten, "A Question of Attitude. Changing Methods, Shifting Discourses, Producing Publics, Organizing Exhibitions," *In the Place of the Public Sphere?*, ed. Simon Sheikh, Berlin, 2005, pp. 158 ff.
- 24 See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley, 1984, here: pp. 117 ff., 129ff.

Hal Foster

An Archival Impulse

Consider a temporary display cobbled together out of workday materials like cardboard, aluminum foil, and packing tape, and filled, like a home-made study-shrine, with a chaotic array of images, texts and testimonials devoted to a radical artist, writer or philosopher. Or a funky installation that juxtaposes a model of a lost earthwork with slogans from the civil rights movement and/or recordings from the legendary rock concerts of the time. Or, in a more pristine register, a short filmic meditation on the huge acoustic receivers built on the Kentish coast between the World Wars, but soon abandoned as outmoded pieces of military technology. However disparate in subject, appearance, and affect, these works—by the Swiss Thomas Hirschhorn, the American Sam Durant, and the Englishwoman Tacita Dean—share a notion of artistic practice as an idiosyncratic probing into particular figures, objects, and events in modern art, philosophy, and history.

The examples could be multiplied many times (a list of other practitioners might begin with the Scotsman Douglas Gordon, the Englishman Liam Gillick, the Canadian Stan Douglas, the Frenchmen Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, the Americans Mark Dion and Renée Green...), but these three alone point to an archival impulse at work internationally in contemporary art. This general impulse is hardly new: it was variously active in the prewar period when the repertoire of sources was extended both politically and technologically (e.g., in the photofiles of Alexander Rodchenko and the photomontages of John Heartfield), and it was even more variously active in the postwar period, especially as appropriated