

RADIO-ACTIVITY COLLECTIVE APPROACHES TO ART AND POLITICS

18 February – 23 August 2020

INTRODUCTION

Taking its cue from Bertolt Brecht's theory of radio, the exhibition *Radio-Activity* turns the spotlight on artistic and political collectives that launched their own publications and charted new channels of communication. "It is a very bad thing," Brecht said in 1932 about the radio of his time. "It was suddenly possible to say everything to everybody but, when one thought about it, one had nothing to say." Ten years after the first public radio broadcasts, a disillusioned Brecht proposed repurposing the new medium, transforming an apparatus of distribution into one of communication. Instead of merely broadcasting a single feed, it was to receive as well; more than making hearers listen, it would empower them as speakers and producers. Brecht's ideas for an "uprising of the listeners" came at the exact moment when radio broadcasting in Germany was brought under state control and increasingly taken into service as an instrument of propaganda. Starting in the late 1960s, Brecht's theory of radio sparked a vigorous debate. The concern at the heart of his critique had lost none of its urgency: Who determines how a society makes sense of the world? Who speaks, and who is spoken to? The utopian vision of boundless communication untainted by relations of power was electrifying. The exhibition puts the focus on projects from the 1920s-30s and the 1960s-70s, when various collectives emerged that, instead of accepting language and the societal status quo as a given, aimed to rethink them and pioneer forms of anti-national and international communication.

With

Association revolutionärer bildender Künstler Deutschlands (ARBKD), Tomaso Binga, Hans Brinkman, Cashmere Radio Berlin, Betty Danon, Isa Genzken, Gruppe SPUR, Kurt Günther, Wilhelm Heise, Ralf Homann/Manuela Unverdorben, Institute for Computational Vandalism, Jacqueline de Jong, Laboratorio P, Katrin Mayer, Karolin Meunier, Stephanie Müller, Andrea Lesjak, Kalas Liebfried, Stefanie Müller, Radio Papesse, Max Radler, Ketty La Rocca, Ruine München, Rudolf Schlichter, Xul Solar, Kurt Weinhold, Andreas Zeising, H. P. Zimmer, Lina Zylla

RADIO IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

The radio emerged from the development of radio communication, especially as a military apparatus, dominated in Germany by the Telefunken company, founded in 1903 as a monopolist. After the First World War, there was an “army” of qualified radio operators or signalmen. Although the technical possibility existed to transmit “to everyone,” the state and the economy feared its use by forces of the November Revolution of 1918 and the workers movement. It was only as a consequence of the Enabling Acts of 1923 that the government, strengthened by these laws, allowed radio to become a mass medium.

On October 29, 1923, the first state-controlled radio broadcast in Germany was aired from the Vox House in Berlin: An infantry regiment played *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*. The Funk-Stunde AG subsequently took up its regular broadcasting operations. The new form of communication met a social need: Within a year, there were ten broadcasting stations, covering almost the entire territory of the Reich.

The new medium was conceived as a non-commercial entertainment service. In their self-portrayals, the creators propagated neutrality, both in terms of party politics and religious denomination. From the beginning, the state monopoly and the “capitalist class’s” sovereignty over interpretation were targets of criticism.

The radios available on the market were expensive. This made it difficult for blue and white-collar workers—not to mention the unemployed—to partake of the new medium. One remedy was the do-it-yourself construction of radio receivers. Workers’ radio associations jointly constructed crystal radio receivers to listen to local radio stations; the bourgeois radio associations devoted themselves to tube receivers that could also receive more distant stations, for which high fees had to be paid.

In any event, radio quickly found its way into the private sphere. By the end of 1925, there were over one million registered listeners; despite the reduction of broadcasting fees the year before, countless users still remained unregistered.

Without much effort, vacuum tube receivers could be converted into transmitting stations, which allowed every technically experienced person to construct his or her own “private broadcasting station.” In 1924, an emergency radio law put a stop to this “radio piracy,” and a mandatory broadcasting license was introduced. From then on, the content and scope of radio programs were subject to state control. The Workers’ Radio Movement and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in particular formulated a policy of co-determination and their claim to a democratic radio alternative—ultimately without success.

In 1932, the newly elected government under Franz von Papen fully nationalized broadcasting, centralized its organization, and implemented a uniform regulation. After the National Socialists began their rule, the instrumentalization and harmonization of radio for propaganda purposes was further expanded, including the distribution of the inexpensive *Volksempfänger* (people’s radio), which, in 1932, counted four million official listeners in 1932 and, by 1943, sixteen million.

Kurt Günther
Gera 1893 – Stadtroda 1955
The Radio Listener (Radionist), 1927
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

In addition to the amusement, edification, and instruction of the population as a whole, radio certainly also had educational aspirations. Nevertheless, the impression of “light entertainment,” which was intended to distract from existing grievances and everyday problems of modern life, dominated. The Social Democratic newspaper *Vorwärts* commented ironically: “But now we have radio, stay decorously at home, and listen to the most pleasant and beautiful things.”

With his *Radionist*, also known as *Petty Bourgeois at the Radio*, Kurt Günther presented what was ostensibly precisely this situation of pacifying the bourgeois through radio culture: a narrow living room with a box radio, headphones, a bottle of red wine, a cigar, and an opera textbook. Through his active participation, the radio listener is at least exemplary in the sense of Brecht’s radio theory: listening and reading along with the opera booklet. What distinguishes Günther’s *Radionist* from Max Radler’s working class *Radiohörer* (Radio Listener) are his clearly bourgeois attributes. The depiction of the listener is based on one of Günther’s neighbors, who was bound to a wheelchair—information that again casts doubt on the caricature-like nature of the depiction: For those confined to their apartments, the radio does in fact open a window to the world.

Kurt Weinhold
Berlin 1896 – Calw 1965
Man with Radio (Homo sapiens), 1929
Private Collection

In the early days, radios were affordable for only a few. One of them was presumably the naked Mann mit Radio (Man with a Radio) in Kurt Weinhold’s painting. Weinhold depicts radio as a pastime for the well-to-do middle classes: Visibly relaxed and puffing a cigar, Homo sapiens (as he is called in the subtitle) sits in his apartment and listens. The headphones are connected to a crystal radio receiver. The model is a Berlin-based lawyer from Weinhold’s circle of friends. Not only Brecht, but also the authors of the various workers’ radio magazines of the time regarded public entertainment radio, in which recipes, travel reports, and Viennese waltzes were broadcast, as a diverting exertion of influence and political sedation, tailored to the bourgeoisie. The apparatus was switched on, while those who listened were switched off. After the Second World War, Weinhold himself drew a connection between his *Mann mit Radio* and National Socialism: “Radio as a means of stultifying the people, as this was extensively exploited during the Third Reich. A brain-erosion machine, coercion to switch off one’s own thinking.” In his portrayal of a naked, cabled man, he also aimed at the contradiction between technology and the body, a common theme at the time.

Wilhelm Heise
Wiesbaden 1892 – München 1965
Withering Spring – Self Portrait as a Radio Tinkerer, 1926
Lenbachhaus Munich

Without a human counterpart, the artist works his way through the chaos of objects in front of him, which includes not only painting utensils and potted plants, but also components of the latest technology of the time. The tangle of cogs, screws, and connecting parts seems to be taxing. It is not an easy task to establish contact with the outside world.

Initially, only the well-to-do could afford the equipment approved by the Reich Telegraph Administration, as well as the high broadcasting fee. The great mass of those affected by the inflation constructed their own receivers and thus dodged the fee. Radio hobbyists were—in contrast to Heise's isolated figure—often organized in clubs. They initially came together without any political motivation to exchange experiences in constructing their own simple crystal radio receivers. In 1924, the broadcasting fee was reduced to two marks (the Workers' Radio Movement had demanded one mark), and many now registered their homemade receivers. By 1926, the first million radios were registered, and the number increased steadily. The triumphal march of public entertainment radio began.

Max Radler
Breslau 1904 – München 1971
The Radio Listener, 1930
Lenbachhaus Munich

The first program for private radio receivers was broadcast from Berlin in 1923. Most of the radios at that time were crystal radio receivers; for technical reasons, headphones were necessary for listening. Commercially available receivers were extremely expensive, which is why do-it-yourself construction was a practical alternative, especially for workers. The image of a factory in the background suggests that this is a working-class listener.

The Workers' Radio Movement went far beyond self-organization within the frameworks of radio hobbyist clubs. It united the workers in their efforts to utilize and exert influence on the new mass communication medium, both substantively and politically. Since they were largely denied access to the broadcasting stations, they organized themselves primarily in the form of associations and regularly published magazines, which, in addition to the radio program, contained political commentaries and entertaining texts.

Participation was an important aspect of Bertolt Brecht's radio theory: The intention was not to educate, but to train the listeners. They were to become active participants, indeed even co-players. Accordingly, lying prominently in front of the worker portrayed by Max Radler are, in addition to a radio magazine, a pencil and a pad full of notes.

Ernst Moritz Engert
Yokohama 1892 – Lich 1986
Radio, before 1933
Lenbachhaus Munich

Gerd Roscher
* München, 1943
Jutta Hercher
* 1957
Walter Uka
Lüneburg 1947 – 2009
"I'd like to be on the radio one day!" The Workers' Radio Movement of the Twenties, 1981
Video, 43 Min.
Courtesy of Gerd Roscher

Fachbereich Visuelle Kommunikation Hochschule der bildenden Künste Hamburg
(Eberhardt Droste, Jutta Hercher, Gerd Roscher, Walter Uka)
Cover and spread
„Ich möcht' einmal am Sender steh'n!" Die Arbeiter-Radio-Bewegung in den zwanziger Jahren
Eigenverlag 1981

"I'd like to be on the radio one day
And be allowed to speak. – Without censorship.
Just once. – One hour only –
'Baiting' – and sowing hatred and fire. –
Let me use the equipment just once
And talk about one single day of my life
With honesty, soberly giving 'my best.'
– Nothing more. – A miracle would happen.
– I want to see the angry grimaces
Of the complacent townspeople and smiling bourgeois,
Of the aficionados of jazz and rumba hubbub. –
All those who cower at the gamut
Who lie in wait for Hindenburg speeches and 'radio cabaret,'
When they hear: Attention! – Deutsche Welle!
A female worker speaks! – The topic: Hell [...]'
(Anonymous, Arbeitersender, vol. 5, no. 30, 22 August 1932)

Advertisement by the Listeners' Circle of Funkstunde e. V. for the catalog company Arbeiter-Kult and the
magazine Arbeitersender, Berlin 1929/31
Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Inv. Nr. Do 59/213
Reproduction. Photo: Deutsches Historisches Museum / I. Desnica

Arbeiter-Radio-Bund Deutschlands e. V.

Arbeiterfunk

Cover

From: Arbeiterfunk, Jg. 2, Ausg. 45, 6. November 1927

Reproduction. Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Signatur: 4°
Ona65/11-2,27/52.1927<a>

Arbeiter-Radio-Bund Deutschlands e. V.

Arbeiterfunk

Single page

From: Arbeiterfunk, Jg. 2, Ausg. 41, 9. Oktober 1927

Reproduction. Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Signatur: 4°
Ona65/11-2,27/52.1927<a>

Isa Genzken

* Bad Oldesloe 1948

World Receiver „Berlin“, 1991

Collection Daniel Buchholz and Christopher Müller, Cologne

The sculptor Isa Genzken once described her many *Weltempfänger* (*World Receivers*) created over the years as the largest sculpture in the world: From their various locations across the globe, the concrete radios communicate with each other and exchange information.

In the 1970s and 80s, processes of perception, especially that of hearing, were an important topic for Genzken as challenges for sculpture and photography. She appropriated advertisements for hi-fi equipment, shot large-format close-ups of ears and, in 1982, exhibited a radio-readymade for the first time as a counterpart to her sculptures and photographs.

Genzken's *Weltempfänger*, for which she affixes antennas to angular concrete casts, reveal the contradictory nature of the medium of the radio, similar to what Bertolt Brecht formulated in his "Theory of Radio": The sound (in Brecht's case: the content) of the ostensibly talking and transmitting object is turned off. In Genzken's concept, the individual work is only brought to life in the sense of a correspondence of ideas through an exchange of the works among themselves.

BERTOLT BRECHT'S RADIO THEORY AND COLLECTIVES IN THE 1920S

Brecht wrote his most important texts on the topic of the radio between 1929 and 1932. He became familiar with the limits of the medium as a means of mass communication in a society determined by capitalism when he wrote his first original radio play, *Lindberghflug* (*The Lindbergh Flight*, 1929). Despite their brevity and fragmentary nature, the explanatory notes on this "pedagogical experiment" and several subsequent texts became influential—at the very latest in the 1960s—as "radio theory."

Brecht saw broadcasting, which was organized by the private sector but controlled by the state, as having the responsibility of mediating between specialists and laymen—technically, politically,

and artistically. The performance of the two radio plays *Lindberghflug* and *Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* (The Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent, 1929) was intended to serve as a kind of demonstration of how the current function of radio could be questioned and changed at the same time. Brecht wrote: "It could be used for an experiment, a way of showing, at least visually, how listener participation in the art of radio could be made possible. (I regard such participation as necessary if the radio play is to become an 'art.')." Participation was at the core of his considerations. "*The Lindberghs's Flight* is not intended to be of use to the present-day radio but to change it. The increasing concentration of mechanical means and the increasingly specialized education—trends that should be accelerated—call for a kind of rebellion by the listener, for his mobilization and redeployment as producer."

Like all of his epic works, Brecht's *Lehrstücke* (learning plays) and radio plays were developed collectively and for a collective. Parallels can be drawn between Brecht's thoughts on community and radio and the essential demands and goals of the Workers' Radio Movement, although he was never directly involved in its organization.

In the 1920s, numerous collective initiatives were formed with the aim of bringing about political change in society. They communicated their intentions in magazines and pamphlets and organized themselves into interest groups and political parties. In 1928, the "Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists of Germany" (ARBKD) was formed as a nationwide association, which was joined by several existing communist-minded groups. Rudolf Schlichter, George Grosz, and John Heartfield produced political satires for magazines, which placed the concerns of the workers in an international context based on solidarity.

"Art must intervene where the defect is to be found."
(Bertolt Becht, *On Utilizations*, ca. 1927–32)

"[...] a proposal to give radio a new function: Radio should be converted from a distribution system to a communication system. Radio could be the most wonderful public communication system imaginable, a gigantic system of channels – could be, that is, if it were capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of making the listener not only hear but also speak, not of isolating him but of connecting him."
(Bertolt Brecht, *Radio as a Means of Communication*, 1932)

„All those of our institutions which shape ideology see it as their main purpose to ensure that the role of ideology is *inconsequential* in accordance with a concept of culture which considers that the development of culture is already finished and that culture does not require a continued creative effort. [...] but when a technical invention so well adapted by nature to decisive social functions encounters such anxious attempts to keep it *inconsequential* and concerned with the most innocuous entertainment, then the irrepressible question presents itself whether there is no possibility of confronting the excluding powers with an organization of the excluded."
(Bertolt Brecht, *Radio as a Means of Communication*, 1932)

Rudolf Schlichter
Calw 1890 – München 1955
Bertolt Brecht, ca. 1926
Lenbachhaus Munich

Rudolf Schlichter is one of the painters who shaped our idea of the appearance of the people of the Weimar Republic; his portrait of Bertolt Brecht can be considered an icon of the era. Brecht, aficionado of cigars and fast cars—car parts serve as a backdrop—is shown here as a technophile, modern man. Leather jacket and tie are intended to document his sympathy for the working class. Schlichter not only follows Brecht's penchant for self-staging, but also allows the contradictions of bourgeois and proletarian attributes to coexist.

A further contradiction arises from the staging of Brecht, the famous author, as an individual figure and his penchant for collaborative work. The "Brecht brand" emerged quasi collectively: Collaborative working methods were at the core of his methodical approach to texts and theater, without all his collaborators being named or even known. During his long career as an author and theater producer, Brecht maintained intensive, long-term working relationships with Hanns Eisler, Elisabeth Hauptmann, Caspar Neher, Margarete Steffin, Helene Weigel, and Kurt Weill, among many others.

Rudolf Schlichter
Calw 1890 – München 1955
Helene Weigel, 1928
Lenbachhaus Munich,
on permanent loan from the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung

As a couple, Helene Weigel and Bertolt Brecht shaped the art of theater in the twentieth century. The actress from Vienna became acquainted with Brecht in Berlin in September 1923. Schlichter gives us a good impression of the personality who influenced the strong female characters in Brecht's plays and who led the Berliner Ensemble to world fame as its director from 1949 onwards. Brecht, however, was officially only its "Artistic Associate."

Helene Weigel is depicted in her famous dress of hand-woven blue linen, which served as a work uniform. She sits in front of the stage set of Brecht's play *Mann ist Mann* (Man Equals Man, world premiere 1928), in which she played the canteen owner Leokadja Begbick. In a play that deals with the interchangeability of human individuality, this figure is the only one who manages to preserve the core of her individuality. Many epic means are used for the first time in this parable, which Brecht later used systematically: direct addressing of the audience and commentary on the events by the characters, who step out of their roles, as well as poems and songs.

One of the play's statements, namely that humans "only become strong in the masses," was changed by Brecht as early as 1929 in light of the increasing influence of National Socialism and the fanaticizing of large masses of people associated with this.

Berliner Ensemble
Leaflet for Man Equals Man, 1966/67

Bertolt Brecht
Augsburg 1898 – Ost-Berlin 1956
The Lindbergh Flight, German Chamber Music Festival, July 27, 1929, Baden-Baden
Bertolt Brecht, Versuche 1-3, Heft 1, EA Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag 1932

The Lindbergh Flight. First version
Music: Kurt Weill & Paul Hindemith
Text: Bertolt Brecht
Recording: Berlin, Senderaum, 18.3.1930,
also broadcasted by the BBC and Radio Paris
Narrator: Ernst Ginsberg
Soprano: Betty Mergler
Tenor: Erik Wirl, Fritz Düttbernd
Singer: Gerhard Pechner
Berliner Funkchor
Berliner Funkorchester
Conductor: Hermann Scherchen
© Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv
(P) 1990 Cappriccio – Delta Music GmbH

Brecht used the term “Lehrstück” for six short didactic plays (1929–35), with which he strived to test a new aesthetic practice. They brought together the most diverse actors on and in front of the stage for the purpose of a collective exercise in art. The Lehrstücke were created in the context of Brecht’s reflections on both epic theater and radio theory. He cooperated with protagonists of Neue Musik who belonged to the Gebrauchsmusik (literally “utility music”) movement and promoted the collective production of music.

The world premieres of Lindberghflug and Baden Lehrstück vom Einverständnis with music by Paul Hindemith and Kurt Weill took place in 1929 as part of the festival of “German Chamber Music” in Baden-Baden, which was dedicated to music for film and radio and aimed at “the masses in the technical age.”

Lindberghflug thematised Charles Lindbergh’s successful crossing of the Atlantic in 1927; in Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis, this was contrasted with the misfortune of the French pilot Charles Nungesser. In both plays, the performance potentialities of the individual and the collective, both in success and failure, are condensed in the flying machine. In 1949 Brecht changed the title to *Der Ozeanflug* (The Flight Across the Ocean). He wanted to erase the name of Lindbergh who had expressed sympathies for Hitler’s Germany.

At the premiere of *Lindberghflug*, an exemplary radio listener sat on stage and had the task of participating by singing or reading along loudly. The listener could also be a collective, a school class for example. Brecht’s dramaturgy, which aimed at understanding, created a new situation of reception, for which old terms such as actor or musician, audience and listener no longer applied.

“On one side of the stage (with the screen behind them) are the broadcasting apparatus, the singers, musicians, speakers, etc.; on the other side, screened off so as to suggest a room, a man sits at a desk in his shirt sleeves with a musical score and hums, plays and sings the part of Lindbergh. This is the listener. Since quite a few specialists will be present, it will be probably be necessary to have on one side a sign saying ‘The Radio’ and on the other a sign saying ‘The Listener.’”
(Bertolt Brecht’s instructions for the world premiere of *The Lindbergh Flight* in Baden-Baden in 1929)

Much Ado around Kasperl

Text: Walter Benjamin

Recording: Köln 9.9.1932, Sendung des Westdeutschen Rundfunks (Jugendfunk)

Narrator: N. N. (Kasperl), Bruno Uepbach (Herr Maulschmidt), Kurt Ehrhardt (der Karussellmann), Hans Sacher (der Budenbesitzer), Willi Stassar (Löwenwärter), u. a.

Director: Karl Heil

© (P) Stiftung Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (DRA) 2003

The Kasperl radio play is the only surviving example of Walter Benjamin's ca. 80 Radio Works. It is fragmentary.

Between 1927 and 1933, at the same time as Brecht’s Radio Theory, Walter Benjamin created over eighty broadcasting programs. He wrote radio plays, was a lecturer in the youth program *Jugendstunde* and in the literary program for adults, and hosted evening radio plays. Like Brecht, Benjamin criticized radio as an entertainment industry; he called for critical listeners and strove for a development from consumers to producers, from “listener to specialist.” As a key step in this direction, he considered the possibility of feedback, to which he encouraged and challenged the listeners of his broadcasts, because “[o]nly in feedback does the relationship between science and popularity change fundamentally.” In his radio writings, Benjamin oriented himself on the observations of Ernst Schoen, who had taken over the artistic direction of the radio station in Frankfurt am Main in 1929. Through him, it became possible for Benjamin to work both there and for the *Funk-Stunde* in Berlin. Schoen’s programmatic motto, which Benjamin shared, was: “For every listener, what he or she wants and a little bit more (namely of what we want).”

Paul Westheim

Eschwege 1886 – Berlin 1963

Box with Columns. Anti-fascist Art Criticism

Gustav Kiepenheuer Bücherei (Leipzig und Weimar) 1985

Artist and Critic

Announcement of the conversation between George Grosz and Paul Westheim at the Berliner Funkstunde

Fotografie From: Die Funk-Stunde 1931

Reproduction. Courtesy of Andreas Zeising

“Cultural questions are questions of power.” This formulation of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) from 1928 included the insistence on access for progressive artists, scientists, and politicians to public radio programs. In order to prevent an excess entertainment and propaganda on state-controlled radio, cultural advisory councils were commissioned to supervise broadcasts in the fields of art, science, and popular education. Experts from museums and universities, as well as art critics, gladly seized the opportunity to promote both old and new art on the radio. The critic, collector, and publicist Paul Westheim made a major contribution to the establishment of radio as a medium that could contribute to the understanding of contemporary art. As early as 1930, however, such progressive tendencies in the acoustic mediation of art were curtailed. Radio programs were instrumentalized to convey “national-cultural and regional characteristics, and thus an awareness of homeland and customs.”

When Westheim conducted an interview with George Grosz, who was known for his left political stance, for the radio program Funk-Stunde in 1931, it became clear that controversial current issues could not be discussed in the purportedly “neutral” medium of radio. Westheim was disappointed about the capitulation of the radio audience. The medium had become the instrument of increasingly authoritarian politics. In 1933, Westheim, persecuted as a Jew, was forced to emigrate, first to France, then to Mexico.

Bertolt Brecht (Author)

Augsburg 1898 – Ost-Berlin 1956

George Grosz (Illustrator)

Berlin 1893 – 1959

The Three Soldiers. A children's book, 1932

„Die drei Soldaten / mit Zeichnungen von George Grosz, ein Kinderbuch, / ist der vierzehnte der „Versuche“. Das Buch soll, vor- / gelesen, den Kindern Anlaß zu Fragen geben.“

Bertolt Brecht, Versuche 13–19, Heft 6, EA 1932, here: Suhrkamp Reprint 1977

Rudolf Schlichter

Calw 1890 – München 1955

Their Programme and their Deeds

From: Der Knüppel, Jg. II, Ausg. 1, 1924

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Georg-Grosz-Archiv 1155

George Grosz

Berlin 1893 – 1959

Rudolf Schlichter

Calw 1890 – München 1955

Hindenburgbath I and II (Schlichter); Borkum Borkum, Above All! (Grosz)

From: Der Knüppel, Jg. II, Ausg. 5, 1924

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Georg-Grosz-Archiv 1155

„Rote Gruppe“

George Grosz

Berlin 1893 – 1959

Rudolf Schlichter

Calw 1890 – München 1955

Cover (Schlichter) and Satirical Self-Portraits (Grosz, Schlichter)

From: Die rosarote Brille, n. d. [1924–1927]

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Georg-Grosz-Archiv 1155

László Dállos (Pseudonym L. Griffel)

Ungarn, 1896 – 1937

7 Years of German Republic!

From: Der Knüppel, Jg. III, Ausg. 13, 1925

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Georg-Grosz-Archiv 1155

John Heartfield

Schmargendorf 1891 – Ost-Berlin 1968

Photo Montages by Heartfield

On view as part of his contemporaneous exhibition in Moscow organized by the International Bureau of Revolutionary Visual Artists at the State Museum for New Western Art (GMNZI)

From: Moscow News. The Five-Day Weekly, Ausg. 77, 1931

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Georg-Grosz-Archiv 1155

John Heartfield

Schmargendorf 1891 – Ost-Berlin 1968

Photo Montage for the Deutsche Freiheitssender, 1937

Spread from

Peter Dahl, Arbeitersender und Volksempfänger. Proletarische Radio-Bewegung und bürgerlicher Rundfunk bis 1945, Syndikat 1978

In 1924, the “Rote Gruppe” (Red Group) was founded as the first association of communist artists. The Spartakusbund (Spartacus League), which was close to it, published the group’s manifesto in its journal Die Rote Fahne. Among the members of the Red Group were George Grosz (Chairman), Rudolf Schlichter (Secretary), and John Heartfield (Group Secretary), as well as Otto Dix, Sándor Ék, Conrad Felixmüller, Otto Nagel, and the theater director Erwin Piscator. In a dispute several years earlier, several of them had left the “Novembergruppe” (November Group), an association of architects and artists who strived to influence cultural policy and aimed at a stronger connection between art and the general public.

The artists of the Red Group regarded art as a tool of political and educational influence. Between roughly 1923 and 1928, they produced numerous works for the communist press and related organs: Drawings by Dix and Schlichter appeared in Die Rote Fahne and the satirical magazine Der Knüppel, and Heartfield’s photomontages were an integral part of the Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (AIZ).

The target group of these journals was the workers’ movement. Great emphasis was placed in international solidarity, there were reports on relevant events in China, Russia, and elsewhere, and articles occasionally appeared in Esperanto. Creating illustrations for the underfunded magazines was hardly enough to earn a living: Der Knüppel paid fifty marks for a full page—a job for “so-called idealists,” Grosz quipped.

The perceptions of the artists of the Red Group and the Communist Party of Germany about the role of art and its distinction from propaganda increasingly diverged over the years. Grosz in particular had to justify his work time and again before party committees. In 1928, the

organization merged into the newly founded "Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists of Germany" (ARBKD).

Association Revolutionärer Bildender Künstler Deutschlands (ARBKD)

Invitation to the General Meeting from Heinz Tichauer to Franz Edwin Gehrig-Targis, 1928

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Gehrig-Targis 8

Association Revolutionärer Bildender Künstler Deutschlands (ARBKD)

Typescript with History of ARBKD , 1931 (?)

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Gehrig-Targis 8

Association Revolutionärer Bildender Künstler Deutschlands (ARBKD)

„Provisional Chronology" Regarding the Foundation of the Association Revolutionärer Bildender Künstler Deutschlands (ARBKD), n. d. [1928–1933]

Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Akademie der Künste Ost 9104

"Art a weapon, the artist a fighter in the people's liberation struggle against a bankrupt system"—thus the opening line of the founding manifesto of the "Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists of Germany" (ARBKD, also known as Asso). The revolutionary artists' collective, founded in March 1928, with local groups in Dresden, Hamburg, Cologne, Leipzig, Munich, and other cities, was committed to combating the rise of fascism and its alliance with capitalism. It saw itself as a "brother organization" of the Soviet "Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia" (AChRR). In February 1933, the association was dissolved by the National Socialists and banned.

The ARBKD arose out of the initiative of artists from the KPD's Graphic Studio for Visual Propaganda located in the Karl Liebknecht Haus in Berlin. The head of the studio was the graphic artist and book designer Max Keilson, later also chairman of the association. Important members included Heinrich Vogeler, Heinz Tichauer and his wife Mia, Franz Edwin Gehrig-Targis, and Paul Urban; the "Red Group" around Grosz, Heartfield, and Schlichter was absorbed into the new association. Schlichter, who had become politically disillusioned, was only marginally active. Faced with an increasingly threatening political situation, the ARBKD artists changed their goals in relation to the revolutionary art of the early 1920s; instead of criticism of the ailing system, emphasis was now placed on constructive propaganda, logistics, and concrete solidarity with the workers' movement. The regional representatives of the ARBKD thus supported the activities of agitprop, theater, and amateur drama groups, as well as labor photographers and the workers' drawing movement.

ONE LANGUAGE FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD

"Workers of the world, unite!" urged Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their Communist Manifesto (1848). But unification required understanding: In the Weimar Republic, there were various efforts to rethink language and create forms of antinational and international communication. Paul Renner in Munich, for example, developed Futura, which, as the first supranational typeface, was designed to lead into a common future and spread to the four corners

of the globe. Esperanto, the international language conceived in the late nineteenth century by Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, became an instrument of left-wing political networking in the 1920s and was accordingly banned by the National Socialists. The idea of an idiom for Latin America (Neocriollo) by the Argentinean artist Xul Solar was also based on the concept of an auxiliary international language such as Esperanto, whereby the artificial language was used primarily by his own circle of friends.

In his speech at the opening of the Funkausstellung Berlin (Radio Exhibition) in 1930, Albert Einstein praised radio as a democratic means of making the works of outstanding artists and thinkers accessible to a broad public. With the help of radio, the horizons of all people could be continually broadened. In the period after the beginning of the Great Depression, in which national chauvinism was once again spreading with alarm, Einstein invoked radio as a medium for international reconciliation.

Radio once again raised consciousness for this desideratum: Although it was able to reach the “farthest corners of the globe,” the “Babylonian confusion of languages” made the “complete realization of radio culture almost impossible.” The wish was thus formulated: “International radio communication requires [...] an international radio language that can be easily used by all people.” Although several radio pioneers thought internationally, there was a lack of a supranationally understandable language—with the exception of music.

One language for the entire world: For centuries many have tried to create a universal language. Only one succeeded in designing a system that was learned by millions of people and still exists today. Under the pseudonym Dr. Esperanto (“Dr. Hopeful”), Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof made a proposal that would set a precedent: the Lingvo Internacia, a textbook written in Russian, which was self-published in July 1887 and presented the new world language on forty pages. Esperanto was not the only planned language (the term for languages that have been constructed, i.e. have not grown historically), but it has become the most successful. Ido, for example, conceived 1907, built on Esperanto and developed it further.

„From All Over the World. El tuta Mondo" in German and Esperanto
From: Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung aller Länder, Jg. VII, Ausg. 30, 1928
Reproduction. Photo: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Bestand Gehrig-Targis 126

Arbeiter-Radio-Bund Deutschlands e. V.
Article about Esperanto
From: Der Neue Rundfunk, Jg. 2, Ausg. 45, 20. November 1927
Reproduction. Photo: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Signatur: 4°
Ona65/11-2,27/52.1927<a>

Pamphlet about the Plan Language Ido, n. d. [1924–1933]
Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Inv. Nr. Do 57/1380.1
Reproduction. Photo: Deutsches Historisches Museum / I. Desnica

Xul Solar (Óscar Alejandro Agustín Schulz Solari)
San Fernando, Province Buenos Aires 1887 – Tigre, Argentina 1963
Neocriollo Notes, 1925
From: AZUL. Revista de Ciencias y Letras, Jg. II, Ausg. 11, 1931

Xul Solar (Óscar Alejandro Agustín Schulz Solari)
San Fernando, Province Buenos Aires 1887 – Tigre, Argentina 1963
Lugares (Places), 1919
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

Xul Solar (Óscar Alejandro Agustín Schulz Solari)
San Fernando, Province Buenos Aires 1887 – Tigre, Argentina 1963
A kien mais sube (Appr.: Who Else Comes Up), 1920
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

When Zamenhof introduced his world language Esperanto in 1887, he was not alone in his quest for international understanding. Born in the province of Buenos Aires, the artist, linguist, astrologer, and jack-of-all-trades Xul Solar designed his own language system. His “Neocriollo” combined Argentinean Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese with elements of indigenous languages, as well as French and German. Instead of a grammar, it was based on everyday Latin American idioms and slang.

The son of an Italian mother and a German-speaking Latvian father living in Argentina, Solar grew up trilingual. In addition, since the turn of the century, Buenos Aires had become a metropolis with over two million inhabitants and an almost Babylonian diversity of languages. A journey to Europe for almost twelve years (1912–24), during which Solar lived in London, Paris, and Milan, among other places, further fueled his interest in languages: In 1919, he wrote his first texts in Neocriollo.

The lettering of the gouache *A kien mais sube* (roughly: Who Else Comes Up) is written in Neocriollo. The watercolor *Lugares* depicts a fantastic map on which Italy and Spain border the Andes. The religious and military figures equipped with crosses, lances, and flags—representatives of a world of national territories and wars—gaze into a “pacific and future” horizon that seems to promise better times ahead.

Although it was conceived as an anti-colonial idiom for a united Latin America, Neocriollo was only used in paintings, a few published articles, and letters to friends such as Jorge Luis Borges. Solar’s claim that the creolization—understood as a social process of cultural crossfertilization—of language and art is desirable remains relevant to this day.

Incidentally, it was in Munich that Solar first used his artist forename Xul (as an inverse of the Latin “lux” for light)—in a letter to his family, which he thus signed in 1923. The trip to Bavaria had been on the horizon ever since he had purchased the recently published *Almanach des Blauen Reiter* (The Blue Rider Almanac) in Turin in 1912.

THE SITUATIONIST TIMES AND THE GRUPPE SPUR

In 1962, the SPUR artist HP Zimmer posed the question: “Is there a third state in addition to classical collectivism and classical individualism?” His answer: “The voluntary collective of individuals.”

An ideological positioning seemed necessary and yet not easy. Artist groups of the post-war period stood between an exaggerated Western, especially US-American celebration of the individual and the deterrent images of the faceless mass under National Socialism. Stalinist collectivism didn't offer viable examples either. The artist Jacqueline de Jong in the Netherlands and the Gruppe SPUR in Munich strived to follow the path of a “collective of individuals.”

Between 1962 and 1967, Jacqueline de Jong published the pan-European and cross-disciplinary magazine *The Situationist Times*. She produced six issues in close collaboration with a large number of artists and authors. At just under twenty years of age, de Jong had joined the left-wing intellectual and internationally networked movement “Situationist International” (SI). Among the other members were the author and filmmaker Guy Debord, as well as the artists Constant Nieuwenhuys and Asger Jorn, de Jong's later partner. The decision to publish *The Situationist Times* had already been made as early as 1960; the magazine was to function as a joint English-language organ of the SI and the Gruppe SPUR, which had served as the German section of the movement since 1959. Editorial supervision was entrusted to de Jong and Alexander Trocchi. In February 1962, however, Debord expelled the Gruppe SPUR from the SI; when de Jong spoke out against this, she, too, was forced to leave.

Applying the Situationist method of *détournement* (distortion or hijacking), the artist decided to publish *The Situationist Times* herself. In the first two issues of the magazine, extensive documentation was published concerning the court case against the Gruppe SPUR, which was accused of blasphemy and the distribution of lewd writings.

The Gruppe SPUR had been founded in 1958 by the Munich-based art students Heimrad Prem, Helmut Sturm, Lothar Fischer, and HP Zimmer. The artists challenged the provinciality of the Munich art scene, demanding changes in art and cultural policy and the renewal of the individual with the help of the collective. For both de Jong and the Gruppe SPUR, magazines and manifestos—as fundamental means used by collectives—were central to joint artistic and activist activity, while painting and sculpture were created as individual and collective works.

Gruppe SPUR

Selection from the Magazines, 1960-1961, and Manifests, 1958-1962
Lenbachhaus Munich

Gruppe SPUR

Architectural model SPUR-Bau, 1963
Joint work of the Gruppe SPUR
Lenbachhaus Munich

Gruppe SPUR

Drawings for the SPUR-Bau by Lothar Fischer and Heimrad Prem, 1963
Lenbachhaus Munich

The artists of the Gruppe SPUR published seven issues of their own magazine, formulated manifestos, and distributed flyers with provocative statements, which, in 1961, led to the Ministry of Culture banning them from exhibiting at the Haus der Kunst and taking them to court. The SPUR-BAU or Structure was a collaborative work for the 1963 Paris Biennale and represents an "irrational" project for the development of a visionary architecture for cultural coexistence. The artists described the model as follows:

"The main building is primarily intended for cultural uses and accommodates a gallery, a theater/concert hall, a movie theater, and libraries [...]. The colorful bands around the building indicate labyrinthine promenades that would no doubt need to be furnished with handrails for safety purposes. Passers-by can relax over a cup of coffee on the column platforms and enjoy the view from on high. Needless to say, staircases and paths here and there lead to the main building and the columns, whose interiors contain hotel rooms [...]. Near the exit road is the gas station; ample parking space is provided around and beneath the main building. A wide driveway takes visitors directly to the main entrance.

The proposed use of the buildings is merely a suggestion; the structures may well be adapted to serve other cultural activities, since the SPUR Structure's design is a work of unrestrained formal imagination rather than tailored to a specific purpose [...]. Technology and the visual arts join forces in the experimental development of a new irrational construction that will also spawn new uses. This SPUR-Bau is not utopian; it is a viable project."

HP Zimmer

Berlin 1936 – 1992 Soltau
Rien ne va plus, 1967
Private Collection

The painter HP Zimmer was a member of the "Gruppe SPUR," as well as of the successor collective "Geflecht." With *Rien ne va plus*, he created a personal history painting that recapitulated the experiences of a decade of collaborative artistic work. Depicted here is the "Geflecht" studio, in which eighteen people can be seen. In the foreground are the members of "Geflecht": Vera Zimmer, Helmut Rieger, Heimrad Prem, Hans Matthäus Bachmayer, and Zimmer himself. In the background, only dimly visible, are, among others, Jørgen Nash, Guy Debord, Otto van de Loo, Dieter Kunzelmann, Paolo Marinotti, and Asger Jorn. Zimmer comments on the events with a yellow cross: The time of being a member of a collective is over.

The "Gruppe SPUR" and "Geflecht" celebrated both artistic individuality and collective work: The joint working method was both a political and aesthetic statement on egalitarianism, which was not supported in the same way by all members in all phases of the collaboration. This offered potential for conflict, which is evident in the history of most modernist artist collectives at one point or another. Especially in 1968, such questions would then be discussed on a broad basis by students and in collective experiments.

Jacqueline de Jong
* Hengelo 1939
The Situationist Times, 1962–67
6 issues
Issues 1 and 2 edited with Noël Arnaud
Lenbachhaus Munich

Institute For Computational Vandalism
* 2014

Jacqueline de Jong
* Hengelo 1939

These are Situationist Times, 2017

Digital Interface

Video-Interviews: Jacqueline de Jong, Ellef Prestaeter

Recording: Michael Murtaugh

Photography: Øivind Möller Bakken

Interface: Institute for Computational Vandalism

As part of the project These are Situationist Times, developed by Torpedo (Oslo) and Ellef Prestsæter in collaboration with Jacqueline de Jong, Malmö Konsthall and Museum Jorn.

The *Situationist Times* was based on a size-able international community, but de Jong pulled the strings. She was editor of the magazine (for the first two issues together with Noël Arnaud), was responsible for the graphic design, commissioned texts and illustrations, drew and wrote contributions for the magazine, supervised the printing, and produced and collected extensive visual material on the various topics covered. Distribution was also self-organized: The artist called this improvised method “Service de presse for the people.” In 1964, she wrote the following about the freedom and concerns that such an undertaking entailed: “Subscriptions are not possible, since I only publish separate issues when it is financially possible (which means that we will have to find a printer who takes artworks in return!) and when I feel like it. There is enough material, but it takes an enormous amount of time and energy.”

Even then, de Jong emphasized that the contents of *The Situationist Times* did not belong to her and the authors but could and should be freely used. The digitization and online expansion of all issues by the Institute for Computational Vandalism (Nicolas Malevé, Michael Murtaugh, and Ellef Prestaeter) took root in this prerogative: It also made the rarely available magazine issues available to a contemporary audience in a form appropriate to the times.

WRITING AGAINST THE SYSTEM

“Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away so violently as from their bodies [...]. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement,” the Algerian-French writer Hélène Cixous demanded in her influential text *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975). Cixous was not the only one who conceived of the idea of an “écriture féminine,” a feminine form of writing in which the body and the mind were not opposites, but rather interacted with one another. In Paris, she found herself in one of the centers of feminist post-structuralism, which took a critical look at the

relationship between social reality and linguistic practice.

The idea of a female form of writing also came into force in Italy. Applied to the discipline of art history, this meant—according to the art historian and critic Carla Lonzi—the abolition of the authoritarian perspective of criticism and the common narrative of (art) history as a string of individual achievements. Lonzi is considered a key figure of Italian feminism; her *Autoritratto* (Self-Portrait) was published in 1969. The book is a montage based on audio recordings of conversations Lonzi had with fourteen artist friends. Here, art history became an exchange: The distanced contemplation of works of art gave way to a fragmentary and personal examination. In 1970, Lonzi turned her back on art criticism and co-founded the cooperative “Rivolta Femminile.” Around the same time, women’s groups formed and split up again in various Italian cities, such as the “Libreria delle Donne” in Milan, whose members initiated the magazine *sottosopra* as an invitation to feminists all over Italy.

Although Lonzi insisted on a strict separation of art and feminism, her writing found parallels in the reflections of the artists from the circle of *Nuova Scrittura*. The term, coined by the artist Ugo Carrega in 1967, describes artistic approaches between literature and the visual arts. For women artists of the *Nuova Scrittura*, such as Tomaso Binga, Betty Danon, and Ketty La Rocca, the body was more central to their thinking than for their male colleagues. In their works, they dealt with the relationship between language and gesture, rule and error, writing and rhythm, word and image.

Ketty La Rocca

La Spezia 1938 – Florenz 1976

Il corpo e il linguaggio „J“ (Body and Language “J”), 1969–70

Mart – Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Donazione Mirella Bentivoglio

Ketty La Rocca

La Spezia 1938 – Florenz 1976

Fotografia con virgola (Photograph with Comma), 1969–70

The Ketty La Rocca Estate (Michelangelo Vasto), and Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf

Ketty La Rocca

La Spezia 1938 – Florenz 1976

Virgola con tre punti (Comma with Three Dots), 1970

The Ketty La Rocca Estate (Michelangelo Vasto), and Kadel Willborn, Düsseldorf

“It is not time for women to make statements: they have too much to do / and they would have to use a language that isn’t theirs, within a / language as alien to them as it is hostile [...].”

The Italian artist Ketty La Rocca created works in various media during the ten years from 1966 to 1976, in which the feminine—in contrast to the world determined and interpreted by the masculine—is at the center. She claimed for herself the right to speak subjectively and from the perspective of her body.

Influenced by experiments in visual poetry in the 1960s, La Rocca, as a member of the Florentine “Gruppo 70,” focused on questions of communication in the age of the mass media. She explored established linguistic conventions and their obvious limitations and meaninglessness in relation to the position of women in today’s consumer society. In collages, texts, and performances, she

revealed sexism and racism in visual and verbal codes. Her search was for a different relationship between signs and bodies; in response to experienced powerlessness, a new language of gestures and alphabetical signs was created.

La Rocca's alphabet series thus breaks down basic elements of language to individual letters and elements such as dots and commas. Using the letter "j" as a reference to the French "je" (I), she formulates a blueprint for a personal and physical language.

Tomaso Binga (geb. Bianca Menna)

* Salerno 1931

Alfabetiere Murale (Alphabet Mural), 1976

Collezione Archivio Menna-Binga, Roma. Dauerleihgabe an das Madre- museo d'arte contemporanea Donnaregina, Neapel

Tomaso Binga (geb. Bianca Menna)

* Salerno 1931

Forse inventavo l'amore (Maybe I Invented Love), 1975

Audio recording, Festival poEtiche, Rom, 2010

Courtesy of the artist

In 1971, the artist Bianca Menna adopted the male pseudonym Tomaso Binga. In doing so, she strived to provoke a discussion about the differences that were made between the sexes: Who was allowed what form of language and self-expression, what form of art? But for Binga, it was not only the position of women that was in a sorry state: She understood her work of the 1970s as a "challenge" to a social order based on the destruction of nature and marked by alienation through the world of work.

Already as a young girl, she had developed a fascination for language and poetry. Her reflections, which she continues to realize today in the form of texts, visual poetry, drawings, image collages, and performances, revolve around the gestures of writing and the interaction between language and social reality. Her body alphabet *Alfabetiere murale* was created at a time when the inscription and visibility of the female body was a core theme for feminist artists internationally. Graphically, Binga's alphabet is based on letter boards for primary school children: A new form of social interaction had to be learned letter by letter.

Betty Danon (geb. Beki Aluf)

Istanbul 1920 - Mailand 2002

7 hermetic poems for 7 rainy days, 1987

Mart - Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Fondo librario Archivio di Nuova Scrittura di Paolo Della Grazia

The conceptual artist and poet Betty Danon was born in Istanbul, but lived in Milan from 1956 onwards. Her wide-ranging artistic oeuvre took place mainly between book covers: From 1970 to 1990, she produced roughly fifty self-published books, mostly handmade unique works or titles in small editions. She was interested in language and sign systems, which she investigated in the form of graphic works, concrete poetry, and audio recordings. The psychoanalytic theory of Carl

Gustav Jung made an impression on her as a young woman, especially the idea of the archetype as the basic structure of human action, which is expressed in universally used symbols and signs. In 1980, Danon turned her back on the commercial artworld and began sending her works by mail. She is thus part of the international *Mail Art* movement.

The *7 hermetic poems for 7 rainy days* exhibited here were published in the form of a book. The artist used a decrepit, defective photocopier as her working tool, thus provoking a series of "errors" and blurred images. Danon described her works as abstract scores, which could be translated into movement or sound: The similarity to staves is evident on several pages of the 7 hermetic poems. In this work, Danon combined several long-held interests: the line as a basic element of both typography and drawing and "dynamic, psychic power," as well as the transformation of musical signs and sounds into visual form. Like La Rocca and Binga—albeit with different means and forms—Danon emphasized the gestural, physical moment of writing (here, of poetry). Her focus is on the animation of signs through movement and rhythm. Many feminists during this period opposed the dualism of the body (traditionally associated with woman) and the mind (as a synonym for the masculine) that prevailed in Western philosophy.

Carla Lonzi

Florenz 1931 – Mailand 1982

Sputiamo Su Hegel. La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale e altri scritti (Let's Spit on Hegel. The Clitoridian Woman and the Vaginal Woman, and Other Writing)

Scritti di Rivolta Femminile 1974

Maria Grazia Chinese

*Genua 1934

La Strada Più Lunga (The Longest Path)

Scritti di Rivolta Femminile 1976

sottosopra. esperienze dei gruppi femministi in Italia (Head over Heels: Experiences of the feminist groups in Italy), 1973-76

Libreria delle donne Milano

Reproductions. Fotos: Biblioteca delle donne, Bologna

Karolin Meunier

* Bonn 1975

A Commentary on "Vai Pure" by Carla Lonzi, 2020

Postcard

THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-PSYCHIATRY MOVEMENT

Who is speaking? Who can/may speak? Especially mentally ill people were repeatedly denied a voice. In the 1970s, the strategies of psychiatry were therefore up for debate in many countries. In the USA, Ken Kesey's critical novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* became a bestseller and led to the banning of lobotomies; in Italy, the psychiatrist Franco Basaglia proposed the dissolution

of psychiatric hospitals, and in Heidelberg, the physician Wolfgang Huber founded the "Socialist Patient Collective" (SPK) together with three colleagues and around fifty psychiatric patients. The SPK found ample support, and ultimately the collective counted several hundred members.

Since the early 1970s, the physician Franco Basaglia has been regarded as the pioneer of an exemplary reform of psychiatry. It was thanks to him that many locked-ward psychiatric hospitals were transformed from places of deportation into laboratories of a new, more humane society. The aim was to return patients from their life behind bars to the freedom of the greatest possible self-determination.

Basaglia, working in psychiatric hospitals from 1961 onwards, was shocked by the conditions in the Italian cities of Gorizia and Trieste. His findings: The causes of mental illness are not only to be found in physiological aspects, but in living conditions and society. Together with physicians, psychologists, and sociologists, Basaglia designed new treatment models to return identity and self-determination to the mentally ill. They came to the conclusion that a successful treatment of illness was not possible in the existing clinics. Doctors should become advocates of the sick; outpatient treatment should enable the self-empowerment of patients, the initiation of rehabilitation, and a life in the midst of society.

Marco Cavallo, the sculpture of a blue horse created in 1973 by patients, artists, and the staff of the San Giovanni Hospital in Trieste can be considered a symbol of the de-institutionalization of psychiatric care. In Italy, the therapeutic successes, the high profile of Franco Basaglia, and favorable political conditions led to the adoption of a law for the reform of psychiatry in 1978, which, among other things, abolished psychiatric hospitals.

Laboratorio P

Marco Cavallo: Wall journal, poster, photography, 1973

Two spreads from

Giuliano Scabia, *Das große Theater des Marco Cavallo. Phantasiearbeit in der Psychiatrischen Klinik Triest*, Vorwort von Franco Basaglia, edition suhrkamp 1979

Franco Basaglia

Venedig, 1924 - 1980

L'istituzione negata. Rapporto da un ospedale psichiatrico (The Negated Institution. Report from a psychiatric hospital), 1968

First edition 1968, here: Einaudi, 7th edition 1974

Laboratorio P

Marco Cavallo: Sketches, *Giornale Murale* (Wall newspaper), and photographs, 1973

Reproductions

Courtesy of *Itinerari Basagliani - La collina*

In 1971, Franco Basaglia took over the management of the psychiatric hospital in Trieste, where more than 1,000 patients were accommodated, most of them in compulsory care. He reacted immediately by abolishing shock therapy and drug immobilization, encouraging the patients to leave their rooms and reclaim their former living spaces. Regular ward meetings with the patients created new forms of communication. The physician as the sole authority was called into question. The patients began to organize themselves and fight for their voices. New forms of cooperation

emerged: coops with employment contracts and remuneration, as well as supervised apartment-sharing communities in pavilions on the hospital grounds or in the city.

Supported by artists such as Vittorio Basaglia, Ortensia Mele, Federico Velludo, Stefano Stradiotto, and Giulio Scabia, Basaglia initiated various art projects with residents and staff, to which the townspeople were also invited.

In 1973, *Marco Cavallo*, a larger-than-life sculpture of a horse, was created at the suggestion of a patient. The name was taken from the old workhorse of the institution, Marco. Drawings, wall newspapers, and leaflets recorded the progress of the work and attracted more and more participants. Department P became an artistic workshop—Laboratorio P—where art, games, dance, and theater replaced the former passivity.

Marco Cavallo, painted blue, was placed on wheels, his belly filled with small letters from the people involved, in which they expressed their wishes and hopes. On March 25, 1973, a procession consisting of 400 patients, physicians, nursing staff and sympathizers began to move. The gates of the institution had to be broken open to bring the three-meter-high, six-meter-long horse onto the street. The caravan marched through the streets of Trieste to the cathedral chanting slogans such as “La libertà è terapeutica.”

Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv (SPK)

Cover and spread

Aus der Krankheit eine Waffe machen. Eine Agitationsschrift (Turn Illness into a Weapon. An agitational text), 1971

EA TRIKONT-VERLAG München, 1972

Mit einem Vorwort von Jean-Paul Sartre und einem Nachwort von „Einer Arbeitsgruppe der Arbeitersache München“

Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv (SPK)

Dokumentation zum Sozialistischen Patientenkollektiv Heidelberg, Teil 1 (Documentation of Socialist Patients' Collective Heidelberg, Part 1), 1972

Herausgeber: Basisgruppe Medizin Gießen und Fachschaft Medizin Gießen

Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv (SPK)

Dokumentation zum Sozialistischen Patientenkollektiv Heidelberg, Teil 2 (Documentation of Socialist Patients' Collective Heidelberg, Part 2) , 1972

Herausgeber: Basisgruppe Medizin Gießen und Fachschaft Medizin Gießen, Prolit-Buchvertrieb 1972

Asta Heidelberg und Sozialistischer Heidelberger Studentenbund (SHS)

Cover and spread

Dokumentation zur Verfolgung des Sozialistischen Patientenkollektivs Heidelberg (Documentation regarding the persecution of the Socialist Patients' Collective), 1971

Neues Patientenkollektiv Hannover & A. Janov

Thesen zur Strategie Psychotherapeutischer Arbeit in einer realen Welt (Theses Regarding the Strategy of Psychotherapeutical Work in a Real World), n. d.

psypol-reprint 3, psypol-info Bremen

Ugo Guarino (Gestalter und Illustrator)

Triest 1927 - Mailand 2016

Franca Ongaro Basaglia (Autorin)

Venezia, 1928 - 2005

Zitti e buoni! Technice del controllo (Quiet and Well-behaved! Technics of control)

Feltrinelli Economica 1979

Ugo Guarino (Graphic designer and editor)

Triest 1927 - Mailand 2016

Danilo Sedmak (Editor)

* 1937

Cover and spread

847 - Foglio dell'ospedale psichiatrico aperto di Trieste (847 - Leaflet for the Open Psychiatric Clinic of Trieste), 1974

Text on the cover:

Nothing human is alien to us

DANK

For their generous loans, we wish to thank

Daniel Buchholz und Christopher Müller, Köln

Collezione Archivio Menna-Binga – Rome / Tomaso Binga und / and madre – Museo d'arte contemporanea. Fondazione Donnaregina per le arti contemporanee

Institute for Computational Vandalism

MART – Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Donazione Mirella Bentivoglio und / and Fondo librario Archivio di Nuova Scrittura di Paolo Della Grazia

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid

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Fulvio Rogantin, Dublin

SPUR-Archiv, Berlin

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