Lily Woodruff

Participatory Art
and Institutional Critique
in France, 1958–1981
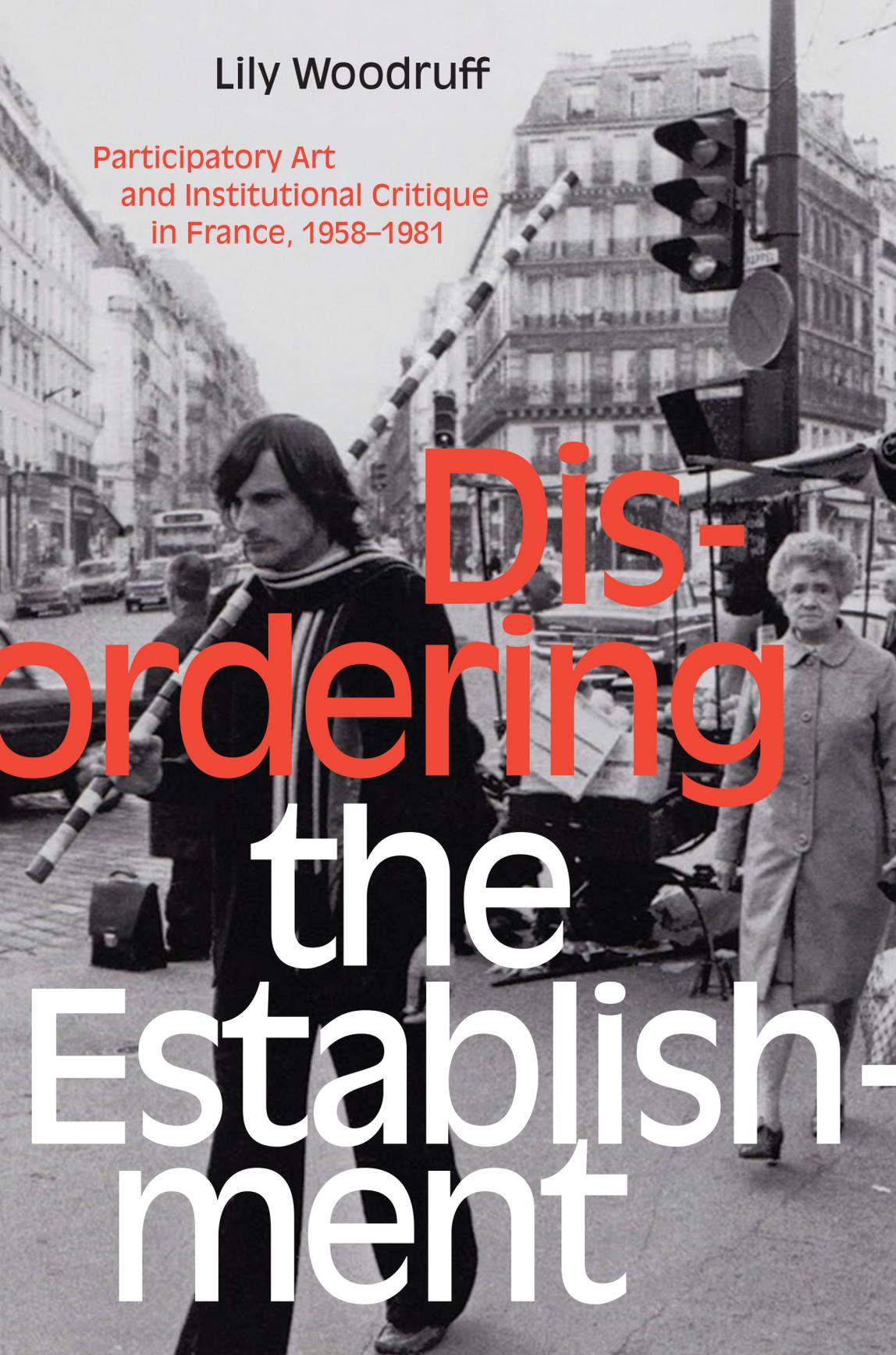
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Cover art: André Cadere, *Avenue des Gobelins*, Paris, April 1973. Photo by Bernard Borgeaud. Copyright Galerie des Locataires. Courtesy Succession André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize, Nancy.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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On the evening of January 22, 1977, artist André Cadere hosted a talk in the Parisian apartment of self-described "art agent" Ghislain Mollet-Viéville. Cadere spent three minutes describing the construction method and the ideas that motivated him to produce art objects that he referred to as "round bars of wood." This artwork, the ostensible cause for attendance at the event, was, however, absent. None of these bars were physically present at the talk, and Cadere did not show images. According to the artist's own recounting, it would seem that the art objects were no more important than any number of other factors to which he called attention: the private, noninstitutional space of the apartment and its décor, the diversity of the crowd that had assembled, and the fact that those present had come due to the familiarity of Mollet-Viéville and Cadere's names.[1]

By emptying the event of its center, Cadere performed what he described as the purpose of his art, that is, "to establish disorder," or *établir le désordre*, as the invitations read. Disorder was a theme that animated his public presentations, which included exhibiting his bars in the street and at other artists' gallery openings. It also animated his art objects as he composed his multicolored bars according to a formal logic based on inserting errors into a rigid compositional system. Cadere's presentation at Mollet-Viéville's apartment manifested disorder as it provided a pretext of relative organization in which the audience would gather before he invited its members to transform "establishing disorder" from the proper title of the event into the description of an action when he abruptly ended his talk by suggesting that those present establish disorder by leaving and returning to their homes. In this way, Cadere defined disorder in terms of negativity, and invited participation by nonparticipation. At the same time, however, he transformed nonparticipation into a conscious act of negation and a form of disorder that systematically refused convention.

Disorderly situations, conspicuous absences, and institutional contestation appear repeatedly as strategies for creating participatory art in France during the 1960s and 1970s. This book, which examines such practices, takes its title from that of Cadere's event. "Establishing disorder" is an apparently paradoxical proposition as, conventionally, the purpose of "establishing" is to create a system, a set of laws, a fund, and so on, so as to guarantee stability and

ETABLIR LE DESORDRE

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MOLLET-VIÉVILLE, 26 RUE BEAUBOURG (3ᵉ étage) PARIS 75003 TÉL. 278.72.31
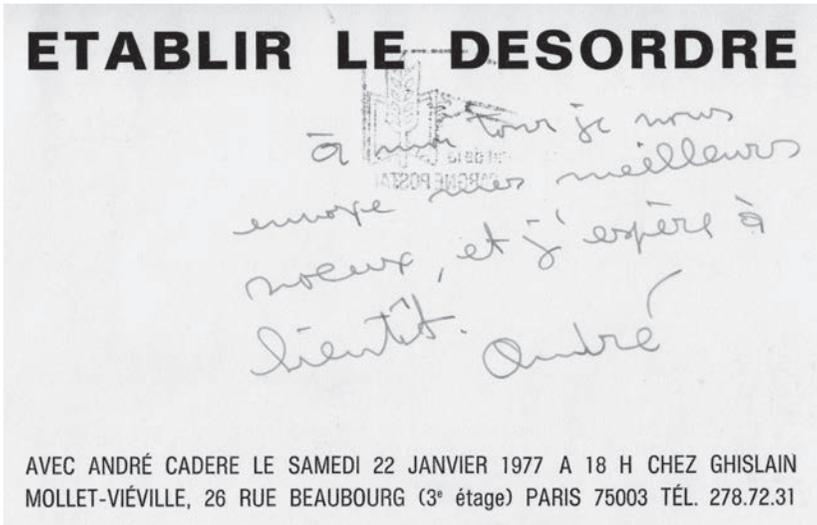
Figure I.1. André Cadere, invitation, *Établir le désordre* at Ghislain Mollet-Viéville's apartment, with a handwritten note to Bernard Marcelis, 1977. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Image provided by Bernard Marcelis.

order. It is the negation of what is ordered or, by the verb's Latin origin, *ordinare*, what is "ordained." Disorder, then, is the opposite of what is established. Cadere sought to create a state of perpetual uncertainty, of destroyed structures, but also of dynamism that would result from such a state of conspicuously unstructured situations. I invert Cadere's coupling so as to bring out another meaning that is contained within the concept of the original phrase. "Disordering the Establishment" calls attention to what is established at the official level. As the set of conventions that shape educational, labor, bodily, and spatial norms, and that constitute and govern arts institutions, the Establishment was critiqued by artists of the 1960s and 1970s who engaged in practices that were iconoclastic, that engaged in identity politics, and that threatened the wholeness and integrity of the body. Many of these practices continued strategies from the 1950s that used violence to shock the public out of the everyday calm that was settling over consumer society by reminding it of the brutality of recent and ongoing global and colonial wars.[2]

In other instances, artists challenged the presumption that museums could be places to access universal culture by constructing intimate myths of self that highlighted the ways that identity takes shape through storytelling processes informed by shared history and memory, social institutions, and constraining gender and beauty conventions.[3] The habitus that sociologist

Pierre Bourdieu defined during this time as a stabilizing force of everyday social practices was coming under attack across society as students, workers, intellectuals, activists, and artists attempted to rupture traditional and institutional structures in order to create a society that recognized the subjectivity of the individual while maintaining the solidarity of the group.

The range of artistic practices during this time was diverse, in part due to a broadly shared interest in breaking away from the dominance of the expressionist painting promoted by the École de Paris. Dada, Constructivism, and Surrealism provided alternatives to expressionism, and these tendencies were, in turn, inflected by the diversity of cultural experiences that constituted the increasingly cosmopolitan city of Paris. Modes of art production, such as geometric abstraction, for example, that had previously not found large audiences among the French were given new life by artists arriving from Eastern Europe and Latin America. Many artists adapted the techniques of the avant-garde to the enormous economic growth and rise in consumerism among the middle class that characterized the period that economist Jean Fourastié called in his book of the same title the "Thirty Glorious Years." As parallel modes of self-expression that were presumably available to the masses during this period, purchasing power and democratic engagement frequently wove together and became entangled as advanced artistic practices appropriated mass culture's methods of facture and signification, and reproductions of these experiments began to appear in department stores. Critique and celebration existed side by side and frequently blended together as artists responded to the specificity of their own historical time period.

One of the major events of the 1960s and 1970s that engendered institutional debate was the establishment of what has become France's most-visited museum of modern and contemporary art, the Centre Georges Pompidou. Although on the evening of Cadere's intervention at Mollet-Viéville's apartment he sidestepped the Establishment by hosting his event in a private residence, the specter of its authority was an absent presence that evening. As Cadere noted during his presentation, there was a concurrent event that marked this period of contemporary art in France: the new National Museum of Modern Art would be opening nine days later in the Beaubourg neighborhood just across the street from where Mollet-Viéville's apartment was located. Even if, as Cadere attested, this coincidence was desired by neither he nor Mollet-Viéville, he noted, "I tell myself that chance does things properly, and there is, perhaps, a relationship between establishing disorder and the opening of the Beaubourg museum." The planned disorder of Cadere's *établir le désordre* here seemed to benefit from order fortuitously created as though by coincidence.

After taking the presidency in 1969, Georges Pompidou conceived of the new museum as a way to appease the cultural dissatisfaction voiced during the mass strikes and student protests that had taken place in May 1968. During this time, museums and art fairs became subjects of scrutiny and condemnation as artists acted against the state's efforts to mobilize an ideal vision of French culture that required censoring and, in some cases, destroying art works. During the month of May a "cultural agitation committee" set up at the Sorbonne proposed a "strike on exhibitions," a "refusal to participate in official events in France," and a "refusal to sell works of art to the State."[4] Personnel went on strike at nearly all of the national museums, causing them to close, and the annual May Salon at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris saw around thirty artists withdraw their works from the exhibition halls before the event came to an end. Police, in response, destroyed works of art so as to reprimand "political contestation" and "disrespect of good manners."[5] In the years that followed, museums and art fairs continued to be subjects of scrutiny and condemnation as artists acted against the state's efforts to mobilize an ideal vision of French culture that included various degrees of censorship.[6] In the wake of these events Pompidou repeatedly attempted to use art, and contemporary art in particular, as a way of demonstrating that the government was in line with popular cultural sentiment.

While the Centre Pompidou—as the National Museum of Modern Art was legally named after Pompidou's death in 1974—was not conceived until after 1968, it drew upon over a decade of cultural policy.[7] When de Gaulle ascended to the presidency in 1958 it was on a promise to unify the country after years of political turmoil that had resulted from World War II. The following year, he wrote a July 24, 1959, decree that instituted the position of minister of culture, which had been designed for his former minister of information, André Malraux. As de Gaulle wrote in the decree, the mission of the minister of culture would be "to render accessible to the largest number of Frenchmen artworks that are essential to humanity, and first of all to France; to assure our cultural patrimony the vastest audience and to favor the creation of artworks and the spirit that enriches them."[8] The objective of exposing the masses to patrimony in order to create literacy around a set of shared objects continued France's nineteenth-century project of educational democratization, while the tradition of supporting culture with state funds dated back to the seventeenth-century establishment of the academies. As Hannah Feldman has demonstrated, however, Malraux's project, which took shape in his 1951 text *Les voix du silence*, represented a historical project of colonialism that was based on excising diverse historical and cultural specificities and replacing

them with a universalized representation of humanism abstracted into photographs of objects without context.[9] Although he had esteemed the communist party and Popular Front movements of the 1930s, his project was, as Feldman notes, not populist, but rejected the idea that there was "a people" possessing a legitimate folk culture. Instead, he sought a *musée imaginaire* that would emphasize formalism and detach artworks from the realities to which they testify so that he could reimagine French history through the needs of the government during the present moment—that is one that would whitewash the real historical violence of colonialism. This project, she shows, took place not only in his curation of artworks, but also in his urban transformation of the city of Paris itself into a museum that promoted a selective history. Beyond schools, "cultural" education under Malraux would take place in museums, including in the national museum of twentieth-century art that he envisioned. In order to effect a significant transformation of cultural practices across the country, a process of planning was necessary. Museum attendance in the early years of the new republic was low with only around 100,000 people visiting the museum of modern art in the Palais de Tokyo in 1960, and 1.5 million visiting the Louvre, as compared to the 4 million who walked through the doors of the Metropolitan Museum in New York in the same year.[10] Catherine Millet notes that during this time the word "culture," for the French, commonly connoted "heritage" and "continuity," so the institution of the Ministry of Culture signaled that "culture was state business, and therefore *everyone's* business."[11]

A series of primarily economic plans for restoration and modernization began immediately following the Second World War when the Marshall Plan began distributing millions of dollars to France, which were then transformed by the Monnet Plan into projects for infrastructure modernization projects and greater integration among European nations.[12] With the institution of the Ministry of Culture a decade later, it was decided that this work should be accompanied by cultural development. For the Fourth Plan (1962–1965), a Commission of Cultural Facilities and Artistic Patrimony was instituted, which created stability by permitting continual programming and budgets that lasted at least five years. It also integrated popular education activists, cultural professionals, and social science researchers such as Pierre Bourdieu, Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, Michel Crozier, Joffre Dumazedier, Pierre Guetta, and Pierre-Aimé Touchard into the planning process. In order to create an account of national culture, the commission began distributing questionnaires on cultural practices in order to study issues such as the public's attitude toward art, cultural aspirations, the practices of children, the role of television, and reactions to the *maisons de la culture* that Malraux had estab-

lished across the country as a way to decentralize high culture from Paris to the provinces.[13] These commissions revealed that an overwhelming 80 percent of the population claimed to have never been to the opera, theater, dance, or classical music concert. In 1968 the philosopher Francis Jeanson referred to this group as a "non-public," a term that suggests a disenfranchised mass that does not share traditional bourgeois cultural values.[14]

It was common among those involved with cultural policy to attribute such findings to the technical and consumer-driven culture of the 1960s. As Pompidou himself claimed, "The happiness that our engineers prepare for the man of tomorrow resembles truly too much the conditions for the ideal life of domestic animals."[15] Or, as the Commission for the Fifth Plan wrote in 1966:

> Accelerated urbanization of the territory uprooting collectives, the gigantism of artificial human groups as a factor of social disintegration, the isolation of rural zones, the mercantile and erroneous vulgarization of knowledge, "the increasingly abundant offering of obsessive, easy and vulgar entertainment" (Dumazedier), "the standardization of mœurs and forms" (André Chamson); the hostile ugliness of cramped and noisy habitat, the increased distances of work places, the inhuman rhythm of tasks to be completed, the collective conditioning by images, the separation of art as a métier, the commercial exploitation of places of relaxation and green spaces . . . and now the relative cultural under-development of France, does it not risk degrading the ensemble of cultural values over time?[16]

The commission became hostile to these so-called Thirty Glorious Years (1945–1975). In the style of Bourdieu, they differentiated between economic and cultural capital, identifying cultural stratification amid perceived economic affluence. Observing the seeming cultural impoverishment of the majority, they argued, "The era of the technical concentration of means would be that of the cultural proletarianization of the large part of society."[17] Stanislas Mangin—a former Resistance fighter, member of the State Council, and future advocate for immigrant rights—linked this inequality directly to the liberal economic system, stating that it was the "consequence of economic structures of industrial society tied to technical science, the passage from the appropriation of profit by the bourgeoisie to the appropriation of knowledge by technicians, that is to say the means drive ineluctably to perpetuate inequality in accessing culture. This passage is not the effect of chance, it is by definition the result of the natural evolution of contemporary industrial societies."[18]

If technocratic ends were to blame for cultural mass illiteracy, techno-

cratic means were also those by which officials envisioned a solution to this problem. Georges Combet, president of the Institute of Industrial Aesthetics, argued that access to culture "corresponds to health, morale, the security of man and of the collectivity" and that "if we created social assurances to protect man from sickness, from accidents, we must also protect against accidents of civilization," by providing access to culture. This comparison with social security retained the spirit of planners who placed state cultural intervention in the traditional frame of the paternalist welfare state.[19] As Laurent Fleury has pointed out, the state policy necessarily instrumentalized culture. Those who formed public policies were invested in evaluating their success, which meant that the value of democratization had to be judged according to standards like costs, accessibility, and social functionality rather than according to issues related to aesthetic and political interests. "Consequently," Fleury says, "the question of the democratization of culture is posed as a *technical question*. . . . The transformation of the political economy of culture in France runs the risk of reducing democratic aspects in the evaluation of policy choices to technical considerations about how their effects can best be measured."[20] Beyond these structural contradictions, there were practical problems as well. Malraux's new museum was beset with struggles, including the untimely death of its initial architect, Le Corbusier, in 1965; the events of May 1968, which led to the demission of Malraux himself in 1969; and a negligible budget that made it impossible to add any major contemporary works to its collection.[21]

As Fleury points out, by the 1970s, it had become broadly fashionable to condemn the 1960s project of cultural democratization as a failure due to the inability of institutions to alter the structures that appeared to determine the fates of individuals within society.[22] From the beginning there was a contradiction between the idea of public interest and the idea that the significance of artworks lies in the personalized relationship that individuals form with them, that is, there was a conflict between sharing and distinction, between rights and privilege.[23] In order to combat the cultural alienation of the "non-public," the planning commission proposed cultural development that envisioned using participation as a way for the masses to "master [their] destiny" and thereby "initiate a peaceful revolution on a scale as grand as that at the origin of the institution of obligatory public education."[24] Yet Malraux and Pompidou could think only to propose projects that seemed to reinforce their own stature.[25] Some fundamentally questioned the very possibility that government projects *could* institute culture. As Georges Bensaïd observed in his book on 1960s planning, "that which is planned—or aims to be—is not culture, but the infrastructure of culture: cement, planks, tape recorders."[26]

Culture exceeds institutionalization; it is a logical fallacy to imagine that the government could make people master their own destinies.

Pompidou conceived of the Beaubourg museum as a way to assert the prestige of Paris as an international center for the arts while providing a new ethos for cultural display. In discussing his plans for constructing the museum on the Beaubourg site, he told *Le Monde*, "I am struck by the conservatism of French taste, particularly the taste of those we call the elite, scandalized by government policy in the arts over the last hundred years and that is why I am trying to react," conceding, however, "with a mitigated effect."[27] Pompidou's own taste was unusually contemporary. With his preference for kinetic art, he famously commissioned decoration for the antechamber to the private apartments at the Élysée Palace from artist Yaacov Agam and collected works for himself and for the state from the historic and neo-avant-gardes. This art of rupture was intended to signal the new president's break with the past. Through his promotion of moving art such as that of artists that will be examined in this book's first chapter on the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), he sought to convey the idea of a France that was itself, as Laurence Bertrand Dorléac put it, "on the move."[28] Moreover, Bertrand Dorléac points out that doing so through art allowed Pompidou "to distinguish himself and in the most ostentatious way, through decoration," an observation that is instructive for understanding the decorative aspects of Daniel Buren's work, as I do in the second chapter.[29] Pompidou's museum presented a new strategy for cultural democratization based on the recentness of the works it would display, and the Bauhaus-inspired commitment to a multiplicity of disciplines, including cinema and music.

Most importantly, plans for the museum sought to erode alienating bourgeois rituals in which the art world had been nestled. The building was open into the night rather than only during "bankers' hours," when working people would not be able to visit; many exhibition spaces were free; and the administration devised a "correspondents program" to help draw people into the museum through community liaisons.[30] Furthermore, the vividly polychromatic service pipes and exposed scaffolding were designed to attract the curiosity of the public. According to its architects, Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, the building's success would depend on its ability to function as a venue for the spectacular presentation of the variety of street and private life that animated the city. "The centre," they wrote, "will act as a container" for the "goodies" of "both objective and subjective participatory activities both old and new."[31] The architects imagined that the building would undermine the barriers of the walls that contained it, as it "organized" "walking, meandering, love-

making, contacting, watching, playing, sleeping, passing, studying, skating, eating, shopping, swimming, summerland in winter and winterland in summer."[32] The architects suggested that the structure's flexibility would allow it "the possibility of interaction outside the confines of institutional limits."[33] The resulting museum drew massive numbers of visitors that far exceeded expectations. For Fleury, this is a sign that Pompidou's project of democratizing culture was a success. Furthermore, he takes this as evidence that Bourdieu's structuralist sociology was excessively constraining in its argument that the acculturation that occurs at the family level determines an individual's position in society later in life. Like progressives of the 1960s and 1970s, Fleury wants to believe in the possibility of social change, yet he takes the conservative position of trusting in the power of planning and state institutions to achieve this goal while accepting a definition of culture that privileges those institutions. In contrast, embracing an anti-elitist, anticonsumerist understanding of "culture" was key to the debates around institutional power and to the way that artists articulated their critiques of those institutions during the 1960s and 1970s.

Years before it opened, many associated the new museum with the appropriation of art as propaganda for the expression of state power. As much as the museum sought to be open to the public, critics of the time noted that the museum would also provide a way to regroup and control already-ubiquitous cultural manifestations, while transforming them into opportunities for commercial gain. The museum fell under attack since it was seen as a technocratic effort to modernize the city without regard for the historical and cultural significance of the neighborhood. Cognizant of Malraux's fated museum, Pompidou argued that he chose the plateau Beaubourg "because it was the only immediately available space and I wanted to go quickly, sure that if I waited, nothing would ever get done."[34] Yet, to say that the space was available is not to say that it was empty. Rather, construction of the new building accompanied the much-lamented destruction of the neighboring Les Halles markets and residential housing of the lower classes and elderly. Victor Baltard's iconic nineteenth-century glass and cast-iron architecture was torn down in 1969 after years of battles, and with it went an extensive community of vendors, restaurateurs, prostitutes, street sweepers, and others that radiated out to form the Beaubourg neighborhood.[35] For *Chroniques de l'art vivant* editor Jean Clair, the destruction of Les Halles and the Beaubourg neighborhood asphyxiated and ransacked popular culture to replace it with "a universal, abstract, international culture transcending life—like capitalist multinational societies." "Beaubourg," he went so far as to say, would be "the finial," on "a

micro-cultural genocide."[36] The museum was, then, a negative, commodified model for the establishment of what was otherwise the unordered spontaneity of everyday life.

At the same time, the new national museum provided an example of post–World War II state strategies to yoke popular participation to social pacification and economic growth. Since Liberation, General Charles de Gaulle had attempted to exploit the concept of participation as a strategy for creating greater social order. As leader of the Rassemblement du Peuple Français party that he founded in the mid-1940s, he proposed popular "participation" as a strategy for healing the political and cultural divisions created by wartime occupation. By de Gaulle's conception, however, what was at issue was less a matter of political representation and demands than a strategy for centralizing the government and modernizing the country as a whole. Participation here meant incorporating the worker into the process of industrial production so as to provide a way to ensure the dignity of man against the dehumanizing effect of what he referred to as "abusive capitalism" and "crushing communism."[37] Yet while unions sought basic rights for workers, de Gaulle's national unity was to be handed down from management to the workers as part of a business model that would replace class struggle and politics with worker access to information and profit-sharing.[38] His vision for empowering the worker was instead to create an alliance with management in which both would share the fruits of modern industry. In August 1967, de Gaulle signed an ordinance on "the participation of salaried workers in the expansion of enterprise" that sought to change the conditions of man "caught in the gears of a mechanical society"—a society that, as a result of policies adopted during de Gaulle's term as the first president of the Fifth Republic, had become increasingly run by technocrats.

As Louis Chevalier wrote in *The Assassination of Paris* (1977)—a book whose first-edition cover featured the construction site of the Centre Pompidou—technocrats were responsible for replacing living Paris with its historical-nostalgic simulacrum in the postwar era. In this transformation, the technocrats "signif[ied] an epoch." "In some future hand-book," he predicted, "in some dissertation yet to be written, they will doubtless speak of the century of the technocrats as one speaks of the century of the philosophes, but without adding that it too was an enlightened age and probably without saying that it lasted a hundred years." The technocrat in fact plays a minor, although considerable, role in this very book, which started as a dissertation. The technocrat is a cultural phenomenon whose positivist rationality and mechanical efficiency inspired artists of the generation to create what I refer to as

a "technocratic aesthetic." The schematic visual output of Op and kinetic artists like those in the GRAV resembled the geometric designs of corporate logos, while their rationalized, multiplied, and homogenized processes of production positioned the artist as an anonymous suit in a think-tank-like working group. Even as a negative example, the technocrat was present for others who responded with artworks that specifically reacted against "these men of ideas," who, as Chevalier put it, "simplify, scrutinize, reveal the universe and form perfect proofs," because projects where "all was foreseen must succeed."[39] These artists based their output in the real practices of everyday life to complicate through their scrutiny, highlight the exceptions to proofs, and refute rigidly structured models for organizing society, yet as is often unappreciated, they did so with the goal of destabilizing the efficiency of both the viewer's visual apprehension of the world and art institutions' primacy as sites for the display of art.

Less than a year after de Gaulle instituted participation as national policy, dissatisfaction with his model exploded as mass strikes and student protests swept the country. Artists and students of the fine arts academies in Paris and Lyon produced numerous posters, with the Atelier Populaire denouncing "participation" specifically. An oft-reproduced example features a hand neatly writing out a grammar exercise, practicing the conjugation of the verb *participer*: "*je participe, tu participes, il participe, nous participons, vous participez,*" while "*ils profitent.*" The educational theme of this poster develops more fully in another that shows a giant bureaucrat crushing university and factory underfoot while the caption declares "the university is the lab bench of participation." While the rhetoric of participation was geared toward the workers, the protesters of May demanded university reform based, in part, on the observation that university education was designed to mold students to become cogs in a capitalist machine. Grimmer renderings explicitly linked participation to suicide, illustrating their messages with an image of a noose, or at the Atelier des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, with a skeleton in a guillotine, its bony hand reaching up to release the blade that would snap its own skull from its neck. Just a month later, in an attempt to propitiate the left, de Gaulle responded to the May Movement by attempting to sympathize with what he perceived to be the protesters' grievances. With a Dadaist flair adapted for the postwar technocratic era, de Gaulle announced that "the machine is the absolute mistress" that pushes society "at an accelerated rhythm to extraordinary transformations," while suspending above its head the permanent "possibility of nuclear annihilation."[40] Rather than acknowledging that workers were being left out of the process of modernization as their income fell further behind that of

Figure I.2. Atelier Populaire, of the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, *Je participe, tu participes, il participe, nous participons, vous participez, ils profitent*, May 1968. Serigraph poster 26 × 19⅔ in. (66 × 50 cm). Public domain. Image provided by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
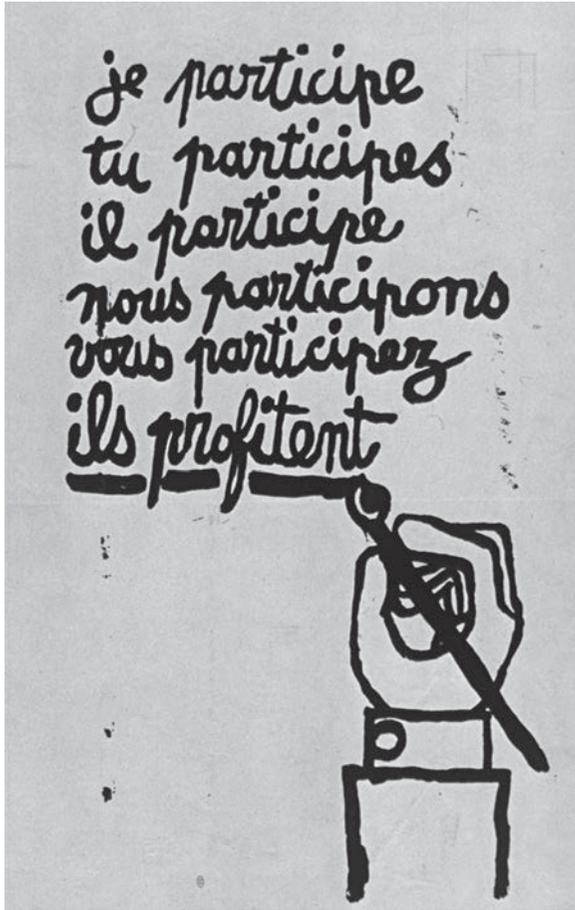
the managerial class, de Gaulle placed blame for the current lack of participation on the labor unions, which, he argued, were resistant to reforms he had proposed in the form of the Association Capital-Travail—a move that was to require businesses to establish work committees, but was perceived by many as progressive dressing on a fiscally conservative government.[41] De Gaulle's claim that the workers were unwilling to participate in the positive transformation of the country was a delirious misdiagnosis of the problem, considering that nine million workers had joined with student protesters to participate in mass strikes the month before.

As historians Martin Harrison and Philip M. Williams argue in their study *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic*, de Gaulle's own mode of encouraging "participation" in the months after 1968 fell back on the very techno-

cratic methods that had trapped the modern worker. De Gaulle consulted local groups and notables in such a way that resembled a public relations exercise designed to generate statistics that could be manipulated to provide proof of public support.[42] In a statement from June 1968, he further qualified his anemic concept of participation by noting that "many may discuss, but only one can decide." Detractors saw his vision of participation as a substitute for politics. They understood it to be based not on agonistic democratic processes, but a form of unity consistent with the already-existing bureaucracy that was designed to protect him from candid engagement with the world beyond his paternalist "republican monarchy."[43] Agreeing finally that May '68 was very important, de Gaulle poached its conviction, claiming that his own mode of participation was "a revolution."[44] His vision of social transformation, however, fell short of the ambitions imagined by a majority of the public, and in April 1969, workers again, along with a majority of the general population, voted against a constitutional reform whose failure caused de Gaulle to leave office. He was then replaced by the more moderate Jacques Chaban-Delmas, whose New Society also incorporated "participation" as one of its core strategies for ensuring that all members of society would participate in the modernization of the country.

For those who participated in the May Movement on the side of the protesters, de Gaulle's discussion of machine modernism was apt, yet it was not the technological transformations that they criticized, but the foundational conception of the society that went into producing these advances. In a tract distributed in March 1968 titled "Why Sociologists?," a group of students pointed to technocratic modes of analysis as being inherently incapable of properly diagnosing social problems.[45] Many prominent sociologists and philosophers alike complained during the postwar period that, with its adoption of positivist methodologies from the United States, sociology had lost its philosophical integrity to become a form of social engineering, while Marxists of the period argued that the social sciences were too bourgeois. Technocratic sociologists developed strategies to adapt the worker to the machine and increase productivity, yet they lost sight of the social consequences of the advertising, politics, housing, and so forth that they created. "In France," the students argued, "the rationalization of capitalism was ushered in with the advent of the postwar plans, but did not become a serious business until the rise of Gaullism with its authoritarian structures"—as they noted, it was not until 1958 that sociology degrees were introduced to the universities.[46] Rather than attending to juvenile delinquency, racism, or slums, the authors accused sociologists of serving the bourgeoisie and the state that employed them by maintaining order with

an eye to more efficiently producing the consumer goods needed for a modernization dependent on the unfettered expansion of capital.

The rationalized models of structuralism, sociology, information science, and their applications in technocracy, as well as the specious participation promoted by the state, factor historically and theoretically in the art practices that this book examines. Artists deployed the sociological methods of the questionnaire, the opinion poll, and statistical quantification of populations as tools that allowed them to draw their audiences into the production of artworks through direct interrogation. In some instances, their questions reflected back on the audience's views on art, while in others, audiences were implicitly asked to analyze their aesthetic preferences in terms of their social and cultural milieux. They structurally isolated the roles of artist, audience, gallery, and street in order to understand arts institutions as ideological apparatuses and position themselves, and their audiences, in self-aware counterpoint to them.

The expression "institutional critique" first appeared in Art & Language artist Mel Ramsden's 1975 essay "On Practice" to refer not just to art, but to a broader system of critical understanding that emphasizes a materialist and historical correction to the seemingly natural and idealist operations of museums, galleries, critics, and markets.[47] He argued, however, that critiquing institutions could become empty sloganizing that would reproduce the narcissism and spectacle that he identified with artists like Joseph Beuys and Jean Toche if the critique were not tied to specific institutional problems. Indeed, this was a distinction that Hal Foster later pointed to in seeking to rescue "neo-avant-garde" artists like Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, and Hans Haacke from Peter Bürger's accusation that this younger generation presented a derivative institutionalization of its radical ancestors.[48] Art of the 1960s continued historical avant-garde practices reaching back to the spatially contextualized poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé; the institutional provocations and curatorial gestures of Marcel Duchamp; and critiques of authorship as they took shape variously through the use of collage, monochrome painting, and constructivist attention to industrial processes and erasures of gesture. Rejecting Bürger's bias (and insisting on the type of materialist specificity for which Ramsden called), Foster argued that the critiques the historical avant-garde artists offered were themselves limited as they reinforced aesthetic autonomy, but that they provided lessons for artists of the 1960s who developed them into a "crit-

ical consciousness of history" by deconstructing the institutional contingencies that conditioned them.

Benjamin Buchloh historically situates the conceptual aesthetics of 1960s institutional critique in the post–World War II economic boom during which a bureaucratic class expanded and the labor struggles that had motivated the historical avant-gardes were displaced by what Buchloh calls the "aesthetic of administration."[49] Rather than production, this new art took its cues from management, and its aesthetic was based on the repetitive rhetorical form of tautology. Pointing to 1960s France as a privileged site of critical output on this subject, he cites both Roland Barthes and Guy Debord as particularly articulate commentators on the pernicious way that tautology erodes political awareness in everyday life, replacing it with "a dead, a motionless world" of spectacle in which "like produces like" and there is no distinction between means and their ends.[50] For Buchloh, this took shape in the work of artists like Buren, who formally pointed back to the institutions that showed his work as a way of highlighting the administrative structures and ideological power that subtend artistic display. Buchloh argued that in miming the logic of Theodor Adorno's "totally administered world," such artwork advanced the Enlightenment project to eliminate hierarchy and mystified experience, but that it was perhaps the last critical gesture possible within the separate sphere of artistic production.[51]

In fact, institutional critique emerged not only from the technocratic world of administration, but also from an era in which the ideology critique of philosophers including Louis Althusser and Henri Lefebvre informed major social transformations of the 1960s and 1970s. As Rosalyn Deutsche points out in her 1996 analysis on art and the spatial politics of urbanism, socially and politically conscious actors have been keen to demonstrate that arts institutions are not aesthetically neutral spaces, but ones that privileged artists resembling the ones that make up Buchloh's genealogy. Feminist artists, artists of color, and queer artists, among others, have critiqued arts institutions by refusing the idea of the artistic sphere as separate. The most important artworks, Deutsche argues, produce "critical images" that insist on the co-constitutive relationality between artworks and viewers, such that the latter recognize their responsibilities in producing the image world.[52] In the same period, Foster observes in his essay "The Artist as Ethnographer" that institutionally critical art that has adopted the community-based or discourse-specific subject matter typical of the social sciences must maintain a critical distance between the viewer and the artwork so as not to disregard the othering that produces social difference and marginalization in the first place.[53] Negotiating experiences of

phenomenal and structural immanence on one hand, and maintaining a distance that consequently fails to meaningfully influence the viewer-participant on the other, becomes a challenge central to the aesthetically and socially ambitious artworks this book investigates.

This book begins a few years before most narratives of institutional critique to consider how its strategies and goals have been relevant to an aesthetic diversity that ranges from optically rich kinetic art to the austerity of conceptualism and the miscellany of community-based practice. Despite the diversity of these approaches, the administered world figures in each instance as a source of mimesis and resistance. The selection of artists presented here proposes a sort of epistemological relay across a little over two decades in which the critique of institutions evolved in relation to techniques of governance and cultural pushback. Around the same time as the election of de Gaulle, members of what would become the GRAV began adopting the techniques and aesthetics of technocracy by transforming slick new materials, serial forms, and statistical techniques from which new cities and gadgets were being constructed, transforming them into rationalized compositions of Op and kinetic art. Simultaneously, the artists destabilized these forms so as to sharpen the perception of a sleeping populace, and they distributed questionnaires designed to make viewer-participants doubt their presumptions regarding the social impact art should have. Buren's critique of institutions was dramatically more pointed and less accessible to a general audience than was that of the GRAV. Appropriating the ubiquitous stripe motif of café awnings, he produced installations that used the lowbrow strategies of decorative ornamentation to highlight the liminal physical spaces of museums and galleries, and to escape from these spaces out into the streets. In so doing, it negotiated power and boundaries, pushing museums and galleries to accommodate forms of art and display that challenged their autonomy. Cadere antagonized the art world by attending other artists' exhibition openings with his own large and brightly colored artworks in hand, thereby appropriating readymade institutional rituals. His post-1968 attacks on galleries and museums are at once the most nostalgic for the bourgeois promises of individual freedom and the institutions that celebrated it, and the least charmed by "the proletarian off shoot" of radical leftist politics, which, as an émigré from communist Romania, he was disinclined to embrace. His strategy pivoted on his personal charisma, yet it did so as a challenge to the premise that institutions operated on subjective logics that allowed for exclusive insularity.

The clearest break from the institution offered by artists who grew out of institutional critique comes from the Collectif d'Art Sociologique (CAS),

which rejected traditional artistic processes, turning instead to one of the most influential and controversial disciplines of the time to make work based on interactions with the general public in the spaces of their everyday lives. Even as he understood it to be naïve, what Ramsden ultimately sought during the same period was not an art of institutional critique, but an "authentic" community practice that would do more than "just embody a commodity mode of existence."[54] The work of the CAS built on the leftist academic and activist discourses of the 1960s in search of just such an authenticity. Their multimedia work understood community in terms that resonated with the postmodern networks that Jean-François Lyotard described in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Even as France's technocratic government adapted to the late capitalist global economy, Lyotard characterized it as maintaining faith in the modernist grand narrative that society could be unified, even if it had to be engineered. The CAS, in contrast, highlighted contingencies of community building and community fracture often without producing anything that would resemble a commodifiable artwork, or commodified experience, for the viewer-participant.

Sociology and technocracy were tools of right-leaning politics and explicitly came under attack in the 1960s, yet the more or less explicitly leftist artists that this book examines responded with curiosity and cunning to the disciplines and government practices that defined the era in which they lived. While politics figured in the artists' works, however, their vision of participation was antithetical to that of the government as their purposes were oriented more toward doubt, reflecting on processes of interrogation, and pointing to the excesses and suppressions of the "mistress machine," rather than priming the public for its own submission. The degree of critical self-reflection on the rhetoric of the methods they deployed differed from one instance to the next, yet in each case the artists appropriated their methodologies in order to undermine the order that they were otherwise used to establish. Community interaction in public spaces around objects that artists produced in multiples undercut the space of the museum, the art market, and the concept of artistic originality from which the art establishment derived its power and authority. By devoting themselves to the social context in which art takes place, the artists continued the work that the agitators of 1968 complained sociologists were failing to perform. The artists sought to work across divisions between the individual and society, between segregated communities, and to create opportunities for art to become sutured into everyday life.

One of the strategies by which both the government and artists fostered participation was through processes of decentralization that replaced author-

itarian dictate with collaboration. In a similar vein to his participation pro-posal, which resulted in the greater concentration of wealth among the few, so again de Gaulle put forward a form of governmental "decentralization" in or-der to stabilize his own power. He attempted to transform an already-existing program of democratic decentralization into a technocratic deconcentration that would restructure the political landscape for economic revival among the socioprofessional class. Politically distinct local governments that had en-joyed relative sovereignty (and that were largely run by anti-Gaullist officials) found themselves under the jurisdiction of new regional governments that de Gaulle established in order to create intermediate control between national and local levels. As he hoped, these regional administrative units would func-tion as economic think tanks dominated by technocrats.[55] This promotion of government interests by decentralization was paralleled in the art-world ar-chipelago of *maisons de la culture* that Malraux proposed to install across the country. Adopting the antagonism between communism and capitalism that served as a foundation for de Gaulle's mode of participation, Malraux argued that his new arts institutions would provide art, not "for all" as he understood the totalitarian model to do, but "for each," that is to say, taking into account individual needs and tastes. His "modern cathedrals" were places where the middlebrow and rural poor would gather in order to be educated according to a program of universal cultural literacy so that they could discover "the best in them."[56]

Others interested in artistic decentralization in the same period, however, believed that democratizing art should mean that works would be relevant to the existing cultures of their audiences, and they argued that Malraux's pro-gram operated at the expense of regional cultural expression. In 1968, several *maisons de la culture* were reclaimed by protesters and in 1972, Clair devoted an issue of *Chroniques de l'art vivant*, *"La province bouge . . . ,"* to covering artists working outside Paris. In his editorial, Clair noted the cultural difference be-tween France and relatively "federalist" countries like Germany or the United States, where numerous cities drew talent to distinct regions, and he argued that the centralization of museums and galleries in the French capital effec-tively rendered the whole of the country increasingly provincial.[57] The artists addressed in this book took part in a larger trend of the era that focused on the importance of expanding sites of display and access in order to enrich the lives of the masses, yet, importantly, they did so by promoting the volition of the spectator through an active participation that undermined establishment forms of paternalistic pedagogy.

The street then became a privileged site of artistic display as it allowed

artists to exhibit independently of the authority of institutions and to reach a wider audience. By stepping beyond the walls of the museum or gallery, and farther, venturing beyond Paris, the artists attempted to apprehend the public in their daily lives, whether in pubs, at the market, or midcommute. Moving out into the spaces of everyday life meant that more people would have the opportunity to engage with their artworks, and in some cases it made the work more inherently participatory, since display in public spaces involved inserting the works into the flows of daily activity. Participation, in these cases, was as much a question of audience engagement with the works as it was about the works participating in public life.[58] This form of decentralization engendered a spontaneity that the artists turned to critical effect as they enjoined the public to incorporate an experience of uselessness into their regimented daily lives by gazing upon an aesthetically disorienting object, or with more pointed motivation, they asked members of the public to comment on their general quality of life. Decentralizing the display of their works to public spaces promoted the avant-garde objective of collapsing art into life by situating it within the flows of routinized expectation, but it is by this same disruption that the works sought to use decentralized participation as a strategy for altering the everyday itself. The reciprocity of participation produced accommodations of spectator to work, and work to environment, that sought the mutual and sympathetic transformation of art and life.

This progression away from the walls of the white cube gallery required a transformation in the art object as well. For the six artists associated with the GRAV, this meant adapting the geometric abstractions of the historical avant-garde, concerned as they were with tuning viewer perception to the rationalized machine aesthetics of their time, to a technocratic era in which rational structures threatened to overwhelm the sensitivities of the individual. By emphasizing optical effects, they sought to create a specifically kinetic perceptual awareness on the part of the viewer. The GRAV's 1966 expedition in the streets of Paris expanded the network of artistic exhibition spaces, but was nevertheless dominated by the same sculptural objects that the group mounted on plinths at the Denise René Gallery. They also incorporated hands-on interactive "gifts" that they gave to the viewers, such as whistles for cinemagoers and pins and balloons to be popped, as well as a questionnaire, thereby moving in the direction of site specificity and ephemeral situation-based practice. While Cadere also began his career making visually destabilizing Op paintings, after 1968 he developed the clutchable bars of wood as specifically mobile objects. Two years earlier, Buren began making in situ striped canvases and posters that critically reflected on their site specificity at the same time as they breached

the closed space that threatened to limit the significance and visibility of the art object. The CAS's media interventions and community interrogations inserted themselves into existing media and sociological networks while they specifically asked the audience to provide the content of the work in the form of information about themselves. They designed these purpose-built forms specifically for maximum distribution to the margins.

To greater and lesser extent, these works simultaneously enacted the demotion of the object that art and technology theorist Frank Popper backdated from Lucy Lippard's dematerialization of conceptual art to the participatory works of the early 1960s.[59] Even as the aesthetic experience remains central to many of these works, it is not the object itself, Popper argues, that is important, but the process of experimentation into which the object is inserted, and the indetermination as to how the audience will complete the work. Participatory art often eliminates the idea of the finished object, and thereby the masterpiece, substituting for it the research statement, the point of interrogation, the tentative proposition.

Seriality and repetition in particular recur as formal strategies in participatory practice as they materialize the rationalized ethos of anonymous technocracy and the mass reproduction of spectacle culture. The artists whose works this book investigates endeavor, however, to counter both the unity of the unique work of art and the monotony of spectacle monoculture by opening the work to differentiated experiences and interpretations. Responding to the regularized, multiplied forms of geometric abstraction, Umberto Eco argued that art composed by programmed seriality demands a new form of diffused attention as the work becomes self-different.[60] The subject, whether geometric pattern, survey response, or identically repeated striped awning fabric, elaborates itself over space and time so that any one iteration comes to be seen as part of a greater process of development or experimentation. In serial repetition, the same invariably results in the production of difference among the repeated elements as they are exposed to distinct contexts, and foremost is the developing process of contemplation in the one who regards the repeated object. While habit obviates attentiveness to the distinction of objects, people, or situations, difference in repetition encourages attention to individual forms in a constellation of moments. Attention to series makes what seems apparent become unknown, multiple voices react to a single provocation, and the fragments that make up these montages refer back to their roles in a larger process of signification. Attention to the objects, like the display of those objects then, becomes decentralized, or peripheral, or marginal.

Even as the artworks that this book discusses explicitly called on the

viewer to engage with the mechanisms of their creation and display, the work did not simply negate "autonomy." The majority are formally at a far remove from autonomous art's archetype—bourgeois easel painting—and self-consciously so, yet in retaining an antagonistic independence from authorship and the art market, the artists asserted their own autonomy as a form of engagement. Autonomy, in this case, is not freedom from political or religious propaganda made possible by the expansion of the capitalist market. The concept as deployed by these artists instead resembles the concept of *auto-gestion*, or self-management, a central organizing demand of workers and university students during the late 1960s and 1970s. This art, then, reflects back on the way in which the market and art museum have created their own structures that profit from artistic independence at the same time that they limit it by imposing their own historical and critical narratives. As Bürger observed, autonomous art is always only autonomous in relation to what it is autonomous from, and likewise, rather than simply rejecting museums and galleries, artists created objects that called attention specifically to the site of institutional authority as such, and devised exhibition tactics that bent curatorial convention to the benefit of the artist.[61] In conjunction with autonomy, anonymity appears repeatedly as a tactic of resistance against a market that props itself up on the profitability of recognizable names as seriality, automation, found materials, and collective working methods attempted to eliminate the artistic identity on which the market depends. At the same time, however, opposition makes itself visible as such when it adopts a name and a place from which it can pronounce its position. Whereas individual identities are written over by those of collective groups, Buren and Cadere, each working alone, embraced (more or less forthrightly) the power of individual authority, thereby placing in critical conflict the claims of their anonymous working methods with the need for a speaking subjectivity that would embody the antagonism contained within that anonymity.

To the degree that these artists showed in museums and galleries, their exhibitions aimed at leveling them with the streets, the individual home, and in the community as all became sites for immersion in the immediacy of the present as a vehicle to access an experience of the real. Participation and institutional critique provided alternative strategies by which artists could make political work while explicitly rejecting Zhdanovist and Maoist socialist realisms that provided pervading models to French communist painters in the postwar period.[62] Unlike militant art production, such as that displayed at the annual Salon de la Jeune Peinture (or Young Painters' Salon), where the art on display hewed to socialist realist modes even as it updated kitsch rep-

resentation with pop aesthetics, the artists that this book examines rejected referential realism.[63] They maintained that it promoted an understanding of art and representation that was ultimately conservative as it did not go far enough to undermine the museum model of display. It was at the 1967 Salon de la Jeune Peinture that Buren, and the artists with whom he showed at the time, proclaimed his rejection of painting, and of salons as reactionary venues where artistic imagination becomes pacifying entertainment for an audience that is not asked to reciprocate, intervene, or otherwise invest creatively in the work.[64] In place of realism, then, this participatory art sought to break down the barrier that representation throws up against the immediacy of interpersonal interaction. Artists attempted to integrate the real in the form of what the CAS artists referred to as "concrete experience." The real that the artists attempted to access through participatory situations would undermine the divide between art and life, yet would do so by recognizing the ideological frameworks present in both. In some instances, these works suggest that daily lived experience is itself representation—that it is a mediated realism that holds everyday people at arm's length, rather than giving them access to the real itself. In other instances, their works disordered established social relations, thereby approximating candid experience and creating the immediacy and impression of transparency that simulate an idea of the real. By framing and isolating concrete fragments from their motivated contexts in daily life, the artists' video- and audio-recorded interviews, photographs, and site-specifying spatial demarcations called attention to the processes of signification with the expectation that the participant would reintegrate a critical awareness of daily practices into the flow of a newly conscious social life.

The urgency to do so was thrown into relief by what Guy Debord famously argued was a postwar culture sufficiently infused by mediated representations that people had become divorced from immediate lived experience and the social relations that animate it.[65] The collapsing of geographic distances by the rise of television, the beginning of Soviet and American space exploration programs, and the possibility of nuclear annihilation defined the era in terms of immediacy and led many social commentators to feel that they had entered a "posthistorical" moment. This impression was, of course, one of the historically specific characteristics of the time, and borrowing the mass media techniques and rationalized methodologies of technical culture seemed to give artists a footing in a world that seemed, as Henri Lefebvre remarked, technologically beyond the grasp of the everyday citizen.[66] By explicitly rejecting historical reference in their works, these artists focused attention on immediacy, but they did so in such a way as to slow perception and draw at-

tention to the concrete minutiae of daily life. Participatory art endeavored to embed historical consciousness in the present and affirm that the agency of individuals was located in the process of questioning one's relationship to one's city, to one's community, to one's government, to the Establishment, in order to engage them critically and purposefully.

As Clair pointed out, artists who sought to rectify the destruction of organic community through participatory "animation" projects risked replacing a mythic former real life with the spectacle of it.[67] More recently, art historian Miwon Kwon has echoed this concern, pointing to the ways in which artists who organize participatory manifestations tend to impose a control over them such that the real conflicts that make community irreducible to representation are erased by the artist's vision.[68] The artists this book examines were conscious of such pitfalls and attempted to develop forms of participation that undermined their own authorial voice in order to privilege that of the participant. The critique of authorship deployed by these artists was not a simple formalist exercise of structuralist principles concerning the "death of the author." Instead, this critique actively reflected their conviction that the continual negotiation between the individual and society was fundamental to processes associated with democratic politics. Their critique of authorship suggested the possibility of a perpetual vocal and locational displacement beyond the "authority" of institutional spaces, so that no one individual could possibly fix an accepted interpretive mode to explain his or her intervention.

The political nature of the dual conflicts with institutions and engagements with the public that these groups exercised finds expression in Claude Lefort's theorizing of democracy as embedded in both social life and the aesthetic. Decades after his involvement with the antitotalitarian group Socialisme ou Barbarie, Lefort wrote about the role that institutions play in producing society. Modern society, he argued, creates separate institutions that effectively delimited spheres of knowledge that fail to consider the constitution and integration of the social sphere itself. The political, he argued, could not be defined by "political facts." Instead, he suggested, its activity was revealed "in the double movement whereby the mode of institution of society appears and is obscured."[69] That is, it is the conflict between the visibility and invisibility of those divisions that defines the power of institutions, and that produces politics. It was important for Lefort, writing in a moment when the crimes of Soviet totalitarianism were fresh on the conscience of leftists, to theorize democracy along these lines so that any fear of its capacity to put a dictator in power, or succumb to mob rule, would be assuaged. Instead, Lefort argues, democracy would preserve indeterminacy because within a democratic

system, the locus of power remains an "empty place," thanks to periodical redistribution of institutionalized conflict. In championing democracy, Lefort was absolutely seeking not revolution but, rather, the perpetual turnover of particular elements within a space whose openness to all potential voices gave it the accessibility of the universal. Access to power through suffrage does not mean that power resides in society, however, but, rather, it shows that democratic power "remains the agency by virtue of which society apprehends itself in its unity and relates to itself in time and space."[70] Emptiness, incompleteness, openness, and the unresolved sublations of dialectical tensions likewise play out across the artworks of the GRAV, Buren, Cadere, and the CAS as they seek to organize their expanded audiences as constitutive elements of the artistic institutions that they critique.

While artists sought to reform rather than revolutionize society, their goals were not necessarily a faint reflection of the ambitions that motivated the political scene in the years before and after the May Movement. In addition to the production of their art objects, the artists engaged in walkouts, wrote condemnatory tracts, and engaged in other protests of refusal. Notable among these was GRAV member Julio Le Parc's public rejection of the directionless aestheticism of the New Tendency exhibitions in Zagreb; Buren's performance protest with Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture in 1966; and the large-scale rejection of the period-defining *L'exposition* 72-72, which many artists identified as a cynical exercise of soft power by the new president as he sought to appease those who had protested his predecessor's government four years earlier. Censorship and arrest befell the artists by design, by serendipity, and by misfortunate abuse. Cadere and his artwork were routinely ejected from exhibitions during the 1970s, Buren was beaten and jailed by the police for postering in Bern in 1969, and Fred Forest was arrested by the police in São Paulo for holding a public performance of his work that suspiciously resembled a picketing protest during a period of strict censorship by the military government. Such demonstrations of censorship played to these artists' advantages by affirming the real impact of their formalist critiques that pushed at the limits of acceptable social behavior. Le Parc was more significantly inconvenienced in June 1968 when he was arrested for driving along a highway near a factory worker's strike and summarily deported by Interior Minister Raymond Marcellin on the authority of a 1945 decree that authorized the expulsion of any foreigner without explanation. Malraux eventually intervened and readmitted Le Parc to the country. Although there was an upsurge in confidence in the possibility for revolution in the years following 1968, Le Parc and other protesters did not call for a to-

tal overthrow of the government.[71] Indeed, in an interview between Jean-Paul Sartre and the leader of the May Movement Daniel Cohn-Bendit, which was published in the midst of the strikes and occupations, Cohn-Bendit repeatedly refused Sartre's suggestion that their goals were revolutionary. Although their actions may have implied more radical ambitions, Cohn-Bendit stated that what they were seeking was a succession of reforms, "adjustments of more or less importance."[72] Stopping short of storming the Elysée Palace, the leaders' rejection of vanguardism prevented the May Movement from achieving revolutionary stature, thereby earning the praise of Lefort, who commended their refusal of hierarchy, their opening up, without then filling in, that empty place of democracy.[73]

At base, the move to express singularity and the move to represent a larger society are consistent with each other as the anonymous symbol of the collective represents the individual in his or her appeal to a common ground as a basis for intelligibility. When individuals fail to seek the representation that is provided by democratic systems, they risk resigning themselves to authorities that eradicate difference and, as a result, produce banality and alienation. Indeed, as the support structures for alternative utopian social configurations came undone in the post-1968 years, the dark side of anonymity began to show in the suicides, as Kristin Ross calls them, of "nobody in particular."[74] The challenge of creating unified communities would then be to privilege the role of the individual as an essential constitutive element. Just as the artists took their relationship to the institutions of art as a point not of simple rejection, but of active contestation and negotiation, so too their efforts to activate both their own and the spectator's relationships to larger social and institutional fields enjoined the disorderly conflicts inherent in such associations.

Drawing upon the observations of philosopher Jacques Rancière, Ross argues that one of the major accomplishments of May 1968 was the destruction of the boundaries between social categories that had been created and policed by sociologists. The very union of students and workers, young and old, was in itself a meaningful enactment of the social change the protesters sought. The transgression of boundaries similarly served as a basic strategy for undermining the divide between art object and viewer, artist and institution, individual and community, which the artists showed to be mutually constitutive as they breached disciplinary boundaries between art, sociology, and journalism. Debate was a central strategy to many of these artists' efforts to strengthen social relations as they made use of artworks as launching points for discussion. A viewer confronted with a kinetic painting by the GRAV, for example, was to become aware that seeing is an active process, that the artwork depended on

the viewer to activate the illusion of movement on the still surface, and the resulting chaotic perceptual instability would call the lucidity of information communication and rationality into question. Buren sought to spur the public to act independently by confronting them with the absence of a direct message. Cadere vacated the gallery of traditional exhibition, instead promenading about with his bars that he used to instigate conversations with the public. The CAS interrogated the disagreements between individuals within neighborhoods, transforming grievance among elderly and ethnic groups into opportunities for self-expression through visual and auditory records that would provide fodder for dialogue.

This study is divided into four chapters, each of which situates the work of a particular group or artist within the set of interlinked problematics described above. Chapter 1 covers the first decade of the Fifth Republic, which approximately coincides with the founding and dissolution of the GRAV. This international group, composed of Horacio Garcia-Rossi, François Morellet, Julio Le Parc, Francisco Sobrino, Joël Stein, and Yvaral, was interested in the socially transformative potential of perceptual experience. I consider their claims in terms of what I describe as the "technocratic aesthetic" that they adopted to produce highly rationalized, schematic paintings, sculptures, and wearable objects. The artists offset the rigidity of their programmatic output with an "instability" that they argued would produce participation as the viewer became self-aware in the process of perceiving the optical illusion of their kinetic art. This instability further, I argue, provided a way for the artists to undermine the idea that information age cybernetics was inherently coherent. While the artists defined reality in terms of communication and made their objects according to "new methods of approximation, combinatory possibility, statistics, [and] probability,"[75] the instability of the work that they produced negated the communicative ability of the data on which their production methods were based. One instance of this was the questionnaires that they distributed at gallery exhibitions, notably during their *Day in the Street* (1966). This traveling exhibition, which they showed at public locations around central Paris, achieved the fullest expression of their efforts to recreate the "spontaneous totality" of everyday life, the loss of which Lefebvre lamented resulted from the calculations and good intentions of technocratic sociologists who were responsible for developing the planned communities and subsidized housing that the artists adopted as a site for the distribution

of their democratizing multiples. I analyze the group's popular reception through the mass spectacle metaphors that it evoked in the press. More than just destabilizing formal unity, the hypnotic effects of their work decentralized viewers, forcing them to either become attuned to the visual techniques of technocratic spectacle culture, or remain peripheral to the constitution of the work and any political implications it might otherwise yield.

Chapter 2 addresses the institutional critique of Daniel Buren. During the 1960s and 1970s, Buren produced paintings on striped awning canvas that he showed in situ both in galleries and in the streets, and *affichages sauvages*, wild postings of striped paper on public hoardings and construction sites. Like the GRAV artists, Buren was critical of the dominant models for making politically conscious art, and of the salons where they were exhibited, and like the Op artists, he turned to critiques of authorship and viewer participation in order to devise a form of art that would expose the power dynamic between artist and institution. He distanced himself from the GRAV's populist teleological interventions, however, suggesting that their participation was just another form of exploitation. In contrast, he drew upon advances in structuralist thinking of the 1950s and 1960s to develop an in situ practice that highlighted the formal, functional, and social contingencies of space. Rather than objects to be looked at for their formal qualities, he considered his striped abstractions "visual tools," and claimed that they would invite viewer participation by providing a provocatively minimal amount of visual information. Indeed, his public exhibitions are frequently so effectively suited to their place of display that they disappear into their environment altogether. My analysis focuses on the ways that his objects oscillated between visibility and invisibility, as they seemed to emerge from, or stand in contrast against, the public or private, temporary or permanent, architectural spaces in which he exhibited them. In doing so, his work shifted the perception of the viewer, not through optical illusion but through the artwork's relation to its spatial and institutional positioning. While the frequent alignment of Buren's work with conceptual art typically diminishes its visual aspects, my analysis addresses the role of visuality and perception, situating his work in dialogue with other artistic tendencies of his time, including abstract serial painting, *décollage*, and socially conscious geometric abstraction.

Chapter 3 investigates André Cadere, a Romanian artist who moved to Paris in 1967 and there began producing round bars of painted wooden spools, the display of which was intended to point to the spatial exercise of institutional power. Like Buren's striped abstractions, Cadere's "round bars of wood," as he called them, were produced in serial so that the recognizable objects

would stand out against the various grounds where he would position them. Cadere indeed adopted Buren's phrase "*il s'agit de voir*" (it is a matter of seeing) to insist that the critique his work offered operated through visual self-evidence rather than by referring to any external discursive apparatus. At the same time, Cadere engaged in a more persistently antagonistic relationship to arts establishments. Because he intended his work to be carried in hand, he was able to exhibit it anywhere and unexpectedly, often displaying it at other artists' gallery openings, a practice that both amused and enervated other artists and gallerists. Rather than illustrating structures of institutional power as did many of Buren's exhibitions throughout the 1970s, Cadere attempted to use his display tactics to change the way that the system worked. His critique resembled leftist politics of post-1968 France, yet with the key difference that his experience living through Soviet repression in Romania during the 1950s and 1960s contributed to the more liberal position that he adopted in his antagonism to what he saw as the false freedoms of the West. Cadere strategically used the position of marginality that he already occupied as a foreigner to assert his independence from a system that he made work for him on his own terms, while at the same time ranging across and diminishing the borders that divided the insides and outsides of the Western European art world.

Finally, Chapter 4 concerns the Collectif d'Art Sociologique, which sought to recuperate society by transforming the experiments in social science that were taking place in the years following 1968 into an artistic practice. Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thénot came together in 1974 to form a group that took the public itself as the medium of its artistic practice. Collaborating with intellectuals of the time, including sociologist Edgar Morin, philosopher Henri Lefebvre, and media-theorist Vilém Flusser, they attempted to use their art to develop a sociological practice that would improve community interaction. They used surveys and the mass media to solicit public participation, and organized community events designed to communicate across neighborhood boundaries by forefronting the textures of everyday life. The personal approach that they took to sociological interaction resembles the "phenomenographic" model that Morin argued researchers should adopt as a Balzac-like approach to observing gesture, dress, habitation, and other details in order to create a "sociological snapshot." At the same time, they highlighted the relational contingencies of the situations that they created in order to reflect on the impact of their own subjective positions, as well as the power relations that animated the places where they showed, which included galleries and museums, but also media venues like newspapers and television shows, and social-political contexts that ranged from social alienation of the

elderly in France to repression under the military dictatorship in Brazil. These artists refused to systematically analyze the data that they collected and they rejected functional resolutions and theoretical models. They instead chose to investigate what technocrats would have rejected as anomalous activities, and they embraced a permanent disequilibrium that resembles the instabilities cultivated by the programmatic painting and institutional critique examined in the first three chapters. According to Morin, such a practice would allow the sociologist (or artist) to discover holistic pictures of human subjects by analyzing social phenomena, because those phenomena would be understood as contingent and unstable.

The chapters progress chronologically with overlap between years of activity in order to demonstrate continuity and change. My intention is to demonstrate how these groups participated in a set of discourses current during the period in question, in particular around the relationship between art, politics, and society. In some cases, there was explicit influence, whether in the form of emulation or rejection. In every instance, however, the artists combined their critiques of institutions with a concern for the habitus of the social context in which their works took place. Although this study focuses on a limited period in the production of each artist, most of them were working for periods that extend well beyond the 1960s and 1970s, and their works testify to a broader historical trend that valued participation and critical display tactics as antidotes to the technocratic and consumerist culture that both fascinated and repulsed them. Juxtaposing these diverse practices should bring to light the various concerns and contradictions that animated one set of practices even as it remained secondary in another, thereby rendering the reader's understanding of each of the practices more complex. Further, by setting such practices in conversation, I hope that their relative utopian optimisms and realist pessimisms, vaunting of collectivity or retrenchment into the individual, humor and seriousness, and greater and lesser inclusiveness of the viewer will reveal the strengths, contradictions, and shortcomings of the various practices, and provide substantive fodder for furthering disorderly democratic art.

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THE GROUPE DE RECHERCHE D'ART VISUEL'S SOCIAL ABSTRACTIONS

In 1966 the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV)—an art collective made up of Horacio Garcia-Rossi, Julio Le Parc, François Morellet, Francisco Sobrino, Joël Stein, and Yvaral—loaded up a cargo van with a collection of their sculptures and modified body accessories and set out on a day-long tour of Paris. A map that they distributed to passersby marked out the major pedestrian hubs clustered around central Paris where the artists would stop, while drawings of stick figures, hours, and explanatory texts progressed clockwise around the perimeter, illustrating the participatory exhibitions that they would set up like obstacles in a board game. The reverse side of the map provided a history of the group and explained that in a city "woven by a network of habits rediscovered every day," "the sum of these routinized gestures can lead to total passivity" that they wished to displace with a "series of deliberately orchestrated punctuations." This sequence of events, titled *A Day in the Street*, resonated with contemporary international happenings and performance art in that it was ephemeral, loosely scripted, participatory, and with countercultural actions in public space that sought to disrupt automated behaviors and unify fragmented spatial perceptions while critiquing the hegemony of the (art) Establishment. The cartoonish illustrations and the inspired, but plainly stated declaration solicited the nonspecialist audience in their effort, as they explained, "to

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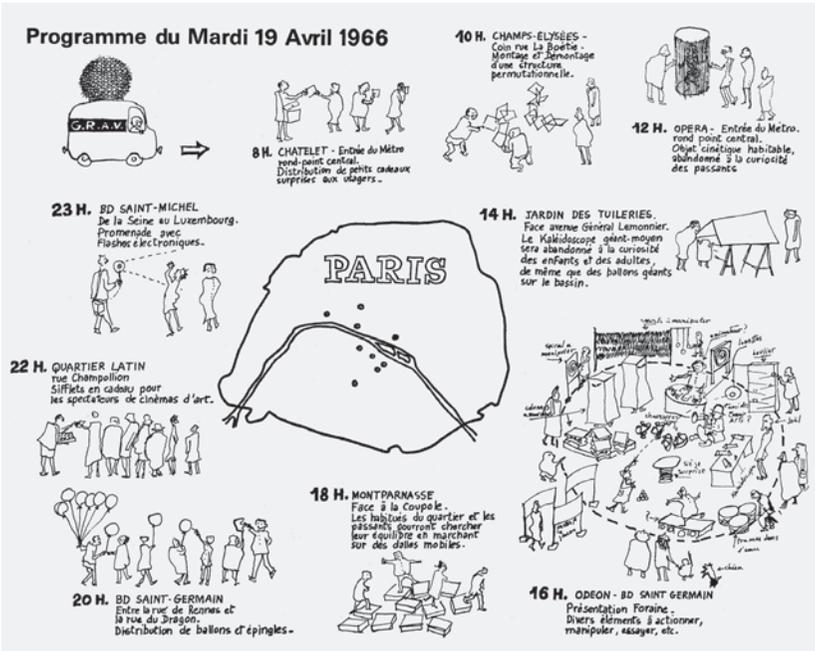
Figure 1.1. Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, *A Day in the Street*, 1966. Map, ink on paper, 8¼ × 10⅝ in. (21 × 26.9 cm). © Archives Julio Le Parc. Provided by Yamil Le Parc.

create a new situation" that overcame not just the habitual everyday of city living, but also the art-world routines of "more or less enthusiastic specialists and a vast indifferent public."[1]

Importantly, however, the GRAV's street action differed from others of its era in the way that it ambiguously reproduced the Establishment's techniques. For example, the artists distributed a questionnaire that resembled in equal parts the sociological inquiry and the marketing study that the public had grown accustomed to in recent years. "You are perhaps a member of what one calls the general public," the questionnaire addressed its audience. "Could you respond to several questions in order to help define the relationship between art and the general public?"[2] The questionnaire posed scenarios that were apparently straightforward, yet the multiple-choice responses that they offered humorously undercut any single-minded goals that such a questionnaire would be primed to posit. Instead, the multiplicity pointed to art's cultural overdetermination. "Modern art such as one finds it in the salons and art galleries," they suggested, is it: "interesting," "indifferent," "necessary," "in-

comprehensible," "intelligent," and/or "gratuitous"? On the surface, the artists' goal was to discover public attitudes to contemporary art, that audience's self-perception *as* audience, and the contexts that it understood to be appropriate to art viewing. Rather than directing a particular type of relationship to art, it engaged the possibility that one could see modern art as having more or less personal appeal, social purpose, an internally produced critical apparatus, and/or no worth whatsoever. The options were not of a kind, and their heterogeneity refused assumptions about the respondents' predispositions. Rather than honing opinions and categorizing populations, the artists' questionnaire highlighted a central, yet unstated and overlooked, tension in their work: a conflict that the artists routinely staged between the democratic ambition of their participatory displays and the technocratically rationalized structures of contemporary society. Indeed, while the GRAV participated in the period shift from phenomenological investigations of individual experience to structural critiques of social and cultural power, it did so via a slanted embrace of the cybernetic and information science that provided the technological arm of post–World War II spectacle society.

A Day in the Street is the work for which the GRAV became best known—likely due to the way that it fits into a dominant history of advanced post–World War II artistic production—yet this street action and the questionnaires that the group distributed developed a line of social and institutional critique that the artists had been pursuing independently since the mid-1950s. The apprehension of the unsuspecting viewer in the street and the play between order and disorder in the questionnaire's open-ended organization resembled the optically illusive paintings and sculptures whose apparently simple gridded structures would warp before the viewers' eyes into ambiguous constructions without clear points of focus. Artworks, such as Joël Stein's 1959 painting *Squaring the Circle*, seemed to reveal their own constructions even as they melted into illusion. Built from basic Euclidean forms, Stein's painting referenced the famously impossible ancient mathematical problem of deriving a square from a circle using only compass and straightedge, with the result that the circle and resulting square would be equal in area. Compass and straightedge are indeed the tools that Stein would have used to compose his canvas, which he divided into four quadrants, each containing nested squares representing eight colors progressing from yellow through orange to deep red, and back again. The straight, clean lines and precisely progressive values allow for a transparency of construction, yet the composition creates illusions of volume and pulsation, as the center appears to bulge into the viewer's space, and flashes of lighter yellow pull the eye to the canvas's corners. Rather than using

mathematical laws to perform the transformation, Stein appeals to the viewer's eye to imaginatively visualize the circle whose curved perimeter line would pass through opposing angles of the nested squares and reveal the meaning of the title. If squaring a circle is mathematically impossible, metaphorically Stein's painting describes how illusion may emerge from the geometric limitations that it contains. Moreover, by calling on the eye to perform the paradoxical title, the painting insists that viewers consider their own processes of viewing as they attempted to visually anchor the work. The work does not exist in an abstract mathematical space; rather, it is an object that demonstrates its relativity by depending on its relationship to an active viewer (see plate 1).

The GRAV understood its project as one of social engineering within the context of the art world. The systematic approach that they took to their work closely resembled the technocratic spirit of the postwar era in its efficiency, its tendency to create homogeneity for maximum combinatorial and interchangeable possibilities, and its objective of creating general cultural progress. They adapted the technocratic spirit of its time to a purely visual set of "research" propositions that critiqued cultural institutions by redistributed authority between the artist and their audience. The relationship between rationalized formal structures and the public is indeed one of the central ways in which the GRAV's relationship to technocracy takes shape. Writing in the wake of the student movement of 1968, Alain Touraine considered the form of government that had come to prevail under de Gaulle in terms of its relationship to society: "Technocracy is power exercised in the name of the interests of the politico-economic production and decision-making structures, which aim at growth and power and consider society to be only the collection of the social means to be used to achieve growth and reinforce the ruling structures that control it. On the deepest level," he continued, "the student movement is antitechnocratic."[3] While France streamlined in the postwar "years of speed" in order to reestablish its cultural identity in an increasingly internationalized art market, the artists' seemingly contradictory goal was to promote structural social cohesion through phenomenological instability. This physical transmutation of the regular progression of forms into visual instability such as in Stein's *Squaring the Circle* echoed the procedural reversal their work provoked through a number of counterintuitive twists in a logical progression of effects: programmed objectivity allowed for interpretive openness; destruction of the subjective authorship of the artist promoted the sympathetic engagement of the spectator; and the technocratic organization of production led to a democratic viewing experience that called for participation, communicative feedback, and the self-definition of the viewers as a community.

The cool, repetition-based regularity emblematic of GRAV's works embraced an international geometric abstraction that stood in stark contrast to what the artists saw as the stagnating expressionisms and figurations of the French art scene. In 1961, on the occasion of the second Paris Biennial, the artists published a tract titled "An End to Mystifications" in which they outlined the fundamental flaws with art from across Paris's aesthetic and political spectra.[4] The minister of culture, André Malraux, had established the Paris Biennial in 1959 with the goal of securing the city's standing in the international postwar art world. His strategy involved staging exhibitions highlighting the works of artists who were under thirty-five years old at the time alongside exhibitions of artists who were under thirty-five during earlier decades going back to the nineteenth century. This curatorial strategy may have reminded visitors of the ongoing relevance of France's historical avant-garde, yet for the GRAV it signaled the "subjugation of 'Young Painting' to recognized painters" and "the fecklessness and lack of awareness among exhibitors and organizers alike with regard to the real facts of life affecting people in this day and age." Beyond the biennial, they highlighted the aesthetic homogeneity that spread across contemporary art salons that promoted irrelevant values, including emotion, cultivated viewership, and a preference for the unique work of art. In this context, lyrical and *tachiste* expressionisms typical of the art that dominated the School of Paris took on the quality of platitude as they became ossified in continual repetition that was already being reproduced by the next generation. Despite the visual dynamism of much of the abstract painting produced in France in the 1950s, the GRAV observed the prevailing art's culturally stabilizing function as it reproduced values that called for art to be the definitive and irreplaceable product of an "Inspired Artist."[5] One might, furthermore, observe the irony that the conservative authority and authenticity that such gestures conveyed was delegitimized by the fact that the indexical mark that was supposed to register the unique event of creation was devalued by the sheer volume at which such works were being produced for the salons.

However outrageous some contemporary art may have been, it did not do enough to refashion art since it failed to undermine the concept of the artist him- or herself.[6] Describing the relationship between the artist and society as one of "mystification," their analysis of the problem was typically Marxist. They highlighted the social and economic aspects of the relationship so as to identify the resulting works as products of commodity fetishism. As they saw it, there was a general overestimation of aesthetic and anti-aesthetic concepts that were seen to be the product of a unique artist's vision, which could be sold to an elite audience in a market that appraised artworks based on their abil-

ity to generate profit. The relation between the artist and work, or audience and work, was corrupted by the influence of the concept of prestige such as it overtook and replaced any other significance that one might imagine to be the province of the artwork itself. For the GRAV artists, one of the ways in which prestige manifested was through literary or historical reference that would be understood by a spectator who had privileged access to an intellectual interpretive apparatus external to the art object. Reference, as exercised by the viewer, was intrinsic to the mechanics of commodity fetishization in which relations between objects replace relations between people. In the case of art, references between artworks replace the immediate and candid experience of the viewer before the object.[7] The group's attentiveness to the pitfalls of mystification furthered its conviction that it was necessary to bring the spectator back to an experience that would rest uniquely in the visual domain, or, as the group put it, they wanted to make work that would appeal exclusively to the "human eye." This would universalize access, making all viewers equal before the work, while eliminating recognizable forms—be they idealizing classicism, cubist syntheses, or the free forms of art *informel*, or others. To the perceptual "instability" of the optical or kinetic artwork, the artists added the interpretive instability of an object that refuses to settle into a recognizable narrative.

The GRAV's polemically reductive perspective on art in France at the beginning of the 1960s is a reflection of the degree to which geometric abstraction was cast as an antithetical artistic approach in the years after World War II. In reality, as Serge Guilbaut has observed, the School of Paris during this time was divided into "a mosaic" that fractured along political lines.[8] In the years immediately following the war, the French Communist Party rejected the validity of abstract art, leading many young leftists to fill their salons with socialist realism, while critics promoting abstraction privileged lyricism over geometric regularity, attacking the latter as inappropriately cheerful and decorative for their "apocalyptic age."[9] France promoted the work of numerous artists of the historical avant-garde who were instrumental in the development of geometric abstraction—notably the cubists, purists, and those associated with the short-lived constructivist association Cercle et Carré—yet in the years following World War II, energy behind the movement came from artists whose sources were conspicuously international, many of whom had recently emigrated. The most established of them was Victor Vasarely, who had moved to Paris from Budapest in 1930 and is widely credited with being the progenitor of Op art. In 1939, Vasarely met Denise Bleibtreu, a small-store owner who came from a family of leftist art collectors, and five years later she and Vasarely converted her store into a gallery.[10] In 1955 the Denise René Gallery—which

championed the work of Op artists and would go on to give the GRAV its first show—held the landmark kinetic exhibition *Le mouvement*. This show is frequently credited with "introducing" France to kinetic art, although it did so by showing that kinetic art was an already-familiar entity, and by questioning the supposed categorizations that would separate it from more mainstream forms. The intergenerational roster of artists included Marcel Duchamp, who was not primarily known as a kinetic artist, and the catalogue included an essay by Jean-Paul Sartre that exalted the inspiration of Alexander Calder's mobiles and, in so doing, breached the supposed divide between expressionist art aligned with existentialism and supposedly vacuous geometric abstraction, which was here represented as a form of kineticism.[11] In this context, then, the exhibition also introduced the social mission of this work in publishing Vasarely's "Notes for a Manifesto," which called for a "spatial" abstract art, the motion and duration of which would generate a sense of "presence" that would be accessible to all audiences, regardless of their access to specialized arts education. This art would be a "common treasure" that, in his words, would "hold happiness for us in the new, moving and touching, plastic beauty."[12]

During the mid-1950s, "optimism" began to appear in manifestos and critical essays praising the artworks of an international gamut of young artists who were looking to move past the horrors of the war and imagine a better future. Attempting to define the ethos of this new historical period, art critic Pierre Restany exemplified the spirit of optimism. Promoting work of the GRAV, among others, Restany argued that artists of the era "revivified confidence in Man through Science and Technology" and intended "to participate organically in the continual elaboration of a new world order." The new "humanism of intelligence," as Restany put it, was essentially rational with "its superior values of control, of adaptation of consciousness." As artists abandoned the interior, egocentric visions of the world that they had inherited from Romanticism, they would embrace "dignity" and "efficiency" in order to "assure the happiness of the man of today."[13]

Technological idealism drove the projects of many artists, critics, architects, and urban planners from the postwar era as they gathered into multidisciplinary teams with the goal of merging plastic activity with a "techno-scientific social basis" that would prospectively create the world of tomorrow today.[14] Such was the case with the German-based transnational group of artists associated with the ZERO network, whose optical and kinetic sculptures incorporated materials of the consumer world in order to create telegenic perceptual experiences and audience participation. Group N and Group T, both communist collectives from Italy, concentrated on Op art and

immersive installations that called attention to the experience of space and time on the perception of the viewer. In Croatia, a multidisciplinary group called Exat 51 undermined the division between fine and applied art by adopting a constructivist-inspired abstraction to counter officially sanctioned socialist realism. Beginning in 1961, artists from each of these groups began convening for the New Tendencies exhibitions in Zagreb, which extended the project of Exat 51 by promoting "research"-based art for the computer age. After exhibiting in the first two New Tendencies shows the GRAV members took a hiatus from associating with the work of their peers. Le Parc penned a sarcastic manifesto criticizing the organizers of New Tendencies for their vapid academicism and lack of program.[15] The GRAV's own work, in contrast, was governed by a rigorous set of principles designed to reinforce the collective ties of the group to each other and to society, which he illustrated by adumbrating his vision of *A Day in the Street* that the GRAV would carry out two years later.

Before the GRAV formed, however, its members had absorbed messages linking geometric abstraction and social change from a range of sources. Garcia-Rossi, Le Parc, and Sobrino attended the School of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires together, where they took classes with Lucio Fontana during the period in which he was working on his "White Manifesto" (a text that calls for a new art form committed to technological perceptual experience). Le Parc has highlighted the influence of artists descended from the Mexican muralists who were living in Buenos Aires at the time, as well as the importance of museum exhibitions that introduced them to Vasarely and the Marxist abstract painters of Arte Concreto-Invención.[16] The latter group linked its De Stijl–influenced geometries to explicit political stances that presage those of the GRAV. Declaring its alignment with the Soviet Union, the group stated that Invenciónismo worked "against fiction through the inventive act" and was committed to the liberation of mankind as it affirmed "his control over the world."[17] During this time, Le Parc and Garcia-Rossi participated in the Students' Movement, and Le Parc took a leading role in upending the school's administration. Between 1958 and 1959 the three moved to Paris to seek the center of the art world. It was there that they met Vasarely, and through him, the artists that would make up the GRAV.

During the same period, the French artists independently cultivated a preference for geometric abstraction via a similarly international set of references. Morellet traces his interest in geometry back to the Islamic decorative motifs that he saw on a visit to the Alhambra, and to Max Bill—the Swiss artist and founder of the Ulm School of Design in Germany—whom he encountered while living in Brazil briefly during the early 1950s.[18] When Morellet returned

to France, he extended his network of artist friends and professional contacts. He traveled several times to Ulm to meet with Bill and Argentine Tomás Moldonado; he also befriended the Paris-based Americans Jack Youngerman and Ellsworth Kelly, and eventually Venezuelan Jesús-Rafael Soto, Vasarely, the Hungarian artists Vera and François Molnar, and Stein, who had recently completed his studies at the School of Fine Arts in Paris and was frequenting the studio of Fernand Léger.

The GRAV artists united around the Molnars, who in their art and writing pursued a programmatic mode of art production that entwined cybernetics and Marxist politics. As Jacopo Galimberti has shown, the Molnars read and passed along Georg Lukács's *The Destruction of Reason*, which was an important text for the GRAV as well as other artists associated with the Denise René Gallery.[19] Lukács opposed bourgeois subjectivism and irrationality to dialectical thought, a binary that appealed to the artists who were pursuing what they considered a purely rational mode of art production amid an irrational mass of ego-driven splotches. On the occasion of the second New Tendencies exhibition in 1963, Molnar and Morellet elaborated on the scientific clarity of Marxist methodology in their essay *For an Abstract Progressive Art*.[20] They defended abstraction against the prevailing popularity of figurative art among French communist artists and Lukács alike, and argued that abstract art was not opposed to the principles of dialectical materialism. Specifically, they addressed the theory of reflection in which consciousness "reflects" the material world. Whereas capitalism produces a false reflection of material reality and therefore false consciousness, art, Lukács argued, could have a consciousness-raising, or "defetishizing," effect by allowing viewers to reexperience the world beyond the immediate appearances of everyday life.

Molnar and Morellet proposed updating this theory by rethinking it according to "topology," a branch of mathematics that served as a popular metaphor during the 1960s, in particular for those working at the intersection of art and science or engineering.[21] The artists argued that the one-to-one correspondence between world and image that the theory of reflection proposed could be rethought according to flexible topological equivalencies in which circles could be contorted into squares as long as the points between them retained a one-to-one relationship. The artists' use of the term "topology" was itself flexible, however. They used it to argue that abstract forms such as music or painting could "reflect" the world without resembling it realistically, and they used it to describe accords between forms and disciplines such as music, dance, and architecture—or, as they would carry this out in their own artwork, painting, sculpture, and wearable devices. Most importantly, the idea

of topology allowed the artists to imagine a progressive abstract art based on rational, experimental, interdisciplinary processes. "Progressive art," as they specified, would model itself on scientific research, would seek adaptations in architecture and urbanism, and would have active participation of the spectator as well as collective criticism. Topology echoes through the progressive series of logical maneuvers that the artists carry out in the essay as it explains their escape from material or disciplinary specificity, as well as their expanded understanding of art's place in society.

As Molnar and Morellet suggest, perception would be the glue to hold the twist of topologically related disciplines and forms together. Citing French information theorist Abraham Moles, the artists argued that experimental art "fixes goals tied to communication; it recognizes that consciousness and the pleasure of the public in its totality are necessary."[22] But from where would this consciousness come? Seeking to establish a properly Marxist material basis, they concentrated on the object itself and its relationship to perception, employing a diagram from Charles W. Morris's 1938 monograph, *Foundation of a Theory of Signs*, to illustrate the concept. In the diagram, three concentric bubbles shaded with lines represent the first visible object itself (an artwork, for example), then the perception of the object, and finally aesthetic appreciation. With the visible object at the core, perception overlaps and exceeds it, and aesthetic appreciation similarly overlaps the object and perception of it, yet extends beyond them both, so that the object, perception, and aesthetic appreciation are, all three, mutually inflected. The artists recognized that perception is influenced by psychological and social factors, and they believed that by making perception the central issue of their art production they would be able to create works that extended beyond the object itself and into the space of "the public and its totality." The perceptual and discursive circulation of the art object took form in a "cycle of actions" diagram that they used to illustrate their vision of the relationships between artwork, creator, society, and spectator. In it, direct and reciprocal relations communicate between all nodes except artwork and society, which can only be connected via the intermediary of the artist or spectator. The diagram highlighted the role of human actors and, in turn, demonstrated the importance of viewer perception.

Recognizing that cultural conditioning causes some images to be more perceptible to spectators than others, the artists aimed to produce works that would be universal by not producing familiar images. They turned to Gestalt exercises as scientific demonstrations of forms, believing their ambivalence to exceed cultural influence. Gestalt therapy attempts to improve a subject's contact with his or her community through perception by highlighting awareness

of differences and similarities between forms while exploring the interruptions between them. It points up exactly the indeterminate nature of relations between shapes in order to focus on perception as key to the way that the subject is integrated into his or her environment. In this way, Gestalt affirmed the artists' conviction that perception is the basis of any theory of knowledge.[23] Like the figure-ground reversals that make either a black or white cross emerge from a divided circle, or the reversible perspective drawing of Schrödinger's stairs that appear to either ascend from a floor or descend from a ceiling, Morellet saw his own *Network* paintings, in which black lines intersect as they traverse white grounds, as independent of cultural conditioning. Like the circle that emerged from Stein's nests of squares in *Squaring the Circle*, the overlapping superposed fields of black parallel lines on a white ground of Morellet's *4 Doubles Grids 0°- 22°5 - 45°- 67°5* (1958) creates the impression of smoothly curved, bursting rosettes. The reason for this illusion, the artists observed, is that physiological limitations prevent the eye from being able to accommodate every point in a field simultaneously. In so doing, Morellet's painting extends the either/or perceptual ambivalence of the Gestalt exercise to visual fields in which points of center and periphery constantly chase across the surface, and the visual object at the center of Morris's diagram erodes the barrier that separates it from the viewer's perception.

With Bill, Gestalt acquired a second meaning specific to the production of the visual environment. Bill used the term to describe the motivated relationship between function and appearance in technologies ranging from stools and clocks to machine components. Modifying the famous Gestalt maxim of psychologist Kurt Koffka that "the whole is other than the sum of its parts," Bill argued that "*gestalt* is the sum of all functions in harmonious unity," a harmonious unity that he referred to as "the good form.[24] These were forms that did not exceed the functionality of the object, but emerged from that functionality and expressed it perfectly. For Bill, "good" was a moral issue as much as a question of taste. In opposition to the "misguided extravagance" that he associated with upward mobility, the good form was "true," "sincere," and "unostentatious."[25] It was based on "quality" and "good value" that would make "beautiful" products available to a mass public. More than an object, the good form also demanded a specific mode of production. Bill imagined that the attractiveness and usefulness of these objects would be guaranteed by a scientific rationality under which "built-in safeguards, as in technology" would prevent the designer's "personal taste and abilities (or lack of them)" from corrupting the balance of naturally according elements. The rationality of the design would guarantee that the object would be relevant to its era.

Just as the forms of technologies are produced from advanced knowledge in order to serve their period-specific functions, so the research and development that determined the good form would guarantee that it always responded to the current needs of its social context. In its scientific modes of production and democratic ambitions, Bill's good form was a socio-aesthetic model for the GRAV's artistic ambitions.

The future GRAV artists, however, judged that the artworks of Bill, Vasarely, and others of their generation were overly determined by artistic intuition and therefore not dissimilar enough from those of the expressionist painters. Passages in some of Vasarely's canvases and Bill's uses of color did not conform to the established program of absolute control that the artists took as central to the replacement of artistic authority by mechanical, disinterested scientificity. In 1960, several of the artists exhibiting together as a group calling itself Motus declared their opposition to what they perceived to be the false claims of lyricism, and stated that they were "against personality."[26] Not without their own colorful flourish, however, Motus adopted as its motto "*motus et bouche cousues*," or, roughly, "keep it under your hat."[27] This invitation to secrecy playfully resonated with the anonymity of the artists who declared themselves to be "more a group of paintings than a group of painters." The development of an anonymous style meant reducing their paintings and sculptures to programmatically determined, coolly executed studies in objectivity. Abstract, gridded canvases, often in the black and white of Gestalt exercises, were insistently self-referential and squeezed out any potential room for the subjective expression of the artist. In reducing their own subjective import, the artists' pared-down geometries sought to eliminate affective responses on the part of the audience just as their works would reject their own emotional impulses.

Technocratic Aesthetics

In July 1960, Motus regrouped with several new members to form the Centre de Recherche d'Art Visuel (which six months later would evolve, yet again, into the GRAV) and printed an "acte de foundation" that they branded with a logo, the design of which succinctly communicated the group's approach to elaborating visual possibility through basic, systematic alterations of black and white, square and circle.[28] The document spelled out nine stratagems that the center would use to unify their plastic activities and discoveries so as to generate a constant movement of ideas and ensure that no one individual would be responsible for his own work or that of the entire group. The criteria by which each individual was considered to be a valuable member of the group

became more objective as they attempted to overcome the "traditional attitude of the unique and inspired painter," replacing this figure instead with individuals whose research, organized and supported by the group, would, little by little, constitute a solid theoretical and practical basis for the center. At the same time, working together would develop individual capacities as individual questions were to be submitted to the group, which would then work together to find solutions for the individual artist. Each discovery generated through the combination of individual research and collective problem solving would then create a point of departure for each member. The formal strategies of "approximation, combinatory possibility, statistics, [and] probability" that the artists adopted to conceive their experimental works then also served as the principles by which they would efficiently organize their collective research. The artists would classify the research projects according to their origins, objectives, the relations existing between them, and their possible contradictions, and archive them in order to advance "progress in the art of rational decision making."[29]

Considering the objects that they produced not as finished artworks, but rather as research, they conceived of their process as a continual progression based on trial and error. As in a scientific experiment, or in a process of communication, the intention of a piece may have been successfully conveyed by translating it into concrete form, or it may have failed completely, thereby generating new questions to be examined through more experimentation. This can be clearly seen in the development of the GRAV's work over a period of a little more than a decade. Their initial abandonment of arbitrary choice for rational progressions of forms then evolved into an embrace of the perceptual instability present in such forms, which then became the creation of environments. Each step along this progression produced an increasingly active role for the viewer. The evolution of the forms and their relationship to their public show that, at each juncture, the artists observed the visual effects of the range of objects that each member in the group was producing, that they identified the causes of those effects and then elaborated on them in the next step of a continually evolving process. The group's guidelines so closely resemble the technocratic language of the era that they could have served as the blueprint for the procedures followed by captains of industry.

More than just a form of power efficiently pursuing progress, technocracy itself, as Henri Lefebvre noted, had become an aesthetic in 1960s France. Technological advancements defined some of the most significant changes of the era: the development of cybernetic technologies, the increasing influence of engineering and science on policy, the rigorous systematization of the social

sciences and philosophy all coincided with a new period of economic affluence that changed daily life by putting refrigerators and televisions in the homes of the expanding middle class. With the advancement of techno-consumer society, the figure of the technocrat took on popular appeal as a modern hero. The technocrat used technological knowledge to discover rational solutions that would respond to precise problems that were discovered through practical experimentation. Using economics and engineering to unify a society that no longer formed what Lefebvre referred to as an organic, "spontaneous totality," the technocrat became the model for the reigning ideology that fetishized coherence in form and structure.[30] For these reasons, critics expressed concern that media messages were determined by a faceless elite that controlled the transmission of information, and consequently determined the character of the public sphere. "The technocrat is very much in style today," remarked journalist André Toulemon. "We don't know him personally, but we hear speak of him at every moment, we express his ideas, his projects, his plans, his directives."[31] Yet whereas the opinions exerted by such anonymous actors created a sort of stability, it was understood to be essentially deceitful, as the goals of technocrats were self-serving: "If political power is weak, it is the technocracy that governs. But what is technocracy? A sort of feudalism?: groups supported by their banks, men of certain 'bodies', of certain activities trying to make politics evolve in the direction that is most useful to them. . . . A president, at least, one can change! (?) But one does not change the Council of State or the Inspector of Finance or the directors of banks every four or seven years."[32] Perhaps most importantly, however, technocratic stability was seen as capricious as it failed to fundamentally represent the concerns of an electorate. Whereas the control of information by a social elite would appear to create stability, its ultimate effect would be the opposite.

On the eve of the 1965 presidential elections that would grant President de Gaulle a second term in office, traditionalist center-right politician Raymond Boisdé was sufficiently concerned by the shift from political contest to technocratic rule that he published his book *Technocracy and Democracy*. The effects of technocratic information control in the early Fifth Republic had observably insidious effects. Boisdé noted that amid otherwise relevant debates between liberals and statists as to the virtues of individual competition and collective cooperation, one could not neglect to notice that those who truly held the power were the technocrats to whom modern society faithfully subjected itself. While during the German occupation and in the years just following World War II, citizens had actively imagined the civilization to come, Boisdé notes that during the early 1960s, political indifference began to smother popular

politics. By March 1968 the melancholic lack of engagement with the strife of the poor and oppressed had become sufficiently stifling that journalist Pierre Viansson-Ponté wrote in a prognostic and widely cited *Le Monde* article, "what currently characterizes our public life is boredom."[33] Socialism and capitalism, Boisdé argued, no longer formed the basis of political contestation as each had lost its ideological focus to become simply a technique of economic progress.[34] "The only modern debate," Boisdé went so far as to suggest, "is the choice of a 'political system'—that is: of the organization of powers. . . . Technocracy or democracy?"[35] Whether private or national, whether in France, the United States, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the health of enterprise in the postwar era would mean that society at large as collectivities of workers, equipped with materials for the purpose of producing economic results, had come to form a social entity. Regardless of their social function, they all shared the common basic objective of surviving in a rapidly evolving society, oriented with a "prospective" attitude toward the future. They resembled less a grouping of people with shared goals—such as liberté, égalité, or fraternité—than a machine driven toward economic prosperity.[36]

For Boisdé, the dominance of the technocrat was not at issue. Rather, the question was how to avoid oppressing citizens under the authority of those who organize the social effects of constantly changing technology. Integrating workers into the collectivity of a workforce would become as important a goal as guaranteeing the participation of a sovereign people in the realization of their destinies. Yet he understood technocracy and politics to be ultimately opposed, the machinery of modern life producing a taste for leisure and distraction at the same moment that specialization made economic and international affairs opaque to the greater public. Lack of interest in political action, Boisdé noted, posed a "humanist" problem that required "an antidote against the poisoning of strictly material preoccupations."[37] Where technocratic experts make the decisions that create a homeostatic society, politics increasingly falls within the purview of high culture, the greater population loses its taste for political action, and politics becomes separated from the human beings that compose a society. Like Boisdé, Lefebvre noted the disturbing contradiction between the rise of technological society and a simultaneous drop in social engagement as the population became enraptured by consuming the signs of technological advancement while delegating their political investments to a technical elite. In point of fact, Lefebvre argued that more than anything, it is the image that the technocrat gives of himself that is most toxic as he provides the impression of a rationalized society that is largely incoherent. Having turned its space-aged gaze toward the stars, Lefebvre notes,

society had lost its ability to focus its scientific capacities on the impoverishment of life on earth. "It is clear that the old term 'alienation' (religious, ideological, political), is too weak to characterize this situation at once monstrous and normalized, intolerable and tolerated, crushing and imperceptible." In a culture in which lobbies have replaced a politics interested in the well-being of its citizenry with a politics that promotes the sale of cars "we quickly observe," Lefebvre wrote, "that the crisis of 'man' and of humanism is first of all *practical*."[38] In order for technology to have a positive role, it would have to be in the service of politics rather than the other way around.

In this context, the claim of Otto Hahn—a critic friendly to the GRAV's pursuits—that Le Parc wanted to be "a technocrat of painting" betrays a tinge of condemnation. Amid the alienation that Boisdé and Lefebvre described, Hahn's preference for clear "meditations on culture" or the "definition of new problems" makes sense.[39] While the GRAV's elimination of the personality of the artists in favor of group anonymity adopted the effects of a technocratic aesthetic, however, I argue that they did so in response to "new problems" posed by the culture in which they found themselves. In order to produce an advanced art appropriate to the competencies of a technologically advancing society, they embodied its ways of seeing. In their historical context, the group positioned the affective neutrality of their compositional programming as a radical innovation. In a short television documentary from 1962, the artists responded to a public whose questions and accusations dramatize contemporary reactions to their work.[40] Morellet defends the group against the claim that they are not a real avant-garde but only the prolongation of a kinetic art movement that began forty years earlier by arguing that what is different about their work is precisely its attention to programmed process. Stein and Morellet take in the respondents' sometimes aggressive enthusiasm with surprise, pointing out that their goal was not to generate violent opposition. Citing other movements of the postwar era, Morellet noted that the GRAV was not trying to do something new, and that they realized they were surpassed by pop art that orchestrated and commercialized scandals that blended advertising with fecal matter.[41] While the avant-gardes of the 1950s incited violent reactions from their audience through works that shocked the public with an anti-aesthetic of nudity, abjection, and references to nihilistic violence in order to rebel against the postwar return to order, the GRAV's relatively conventional production of painting and sculpture attempted to restore their audience to a posture of calm contemplation. As Morellet put it, they were trying to regain the interest of a disoriented and exhausted public. In contrast to artistic attempts of the previous decade that sought to catch their spectators off-guard

by assaulting them with events that expressed the artist's social critique, the GRAV developed an aesthetic of self-evidence.

The artists composed a visual program that produced a sort of mechanical aesthetic. Explaining the process for "establishing" (rather than "painting") one of his canvases, Joël Stein explained to the TV audience, "one departs from a mathematical framework, rigorously drawn in the beginning, and in which each element is controlled, numbered, each one of the forms has a color that is attributed in advance, and this progression is absolutely mechanical. That is to say that it does not respond to good taste, to effects, to a satisfaction of an aesthetic order, but uniquely to a sort of unwinding that one gets from a motor, for example."[42]

In the same year, Morellet described the process of making artwork as "the development of an experiment [that] should happen all by itself, almost over and above the programmer." In what could serve as a description of his own *Network* series, he proposed, "Let us take an example. If you superpose very simple forms (good forms in accordance with Gestalt theory) and if you vary the angles of superposition, a whole series of structures appears."[43] Morellet saw this self-composing art as the latest development in a historical evolution, the goal of which was the diminution of artistic intentionality. His rough genealogy positioned "thoughtful, conscious choice," based on "the classical conception of rational intelligence," at the most primitive stage in the evolution of visual arts. He followed this with "unconscious intuitive choice," which corresponded to Romantic art of the nineteenth century, and finally with "cybernetic choice," in which the contemporary period largely eliminated artistic individuality as compositional decisions would be made by "increasingly powerful new machines, electronic brains."[44] The new cybernetic art based on Gestalt experiments would not only merge forms, but, as Morellet suggested, it would generate an anti-aesthetic that made use of mathematics to produce a visual therapy for the viewer.

It is not surprising that cybernetics would have played an influential role in the GRAV's work at this time, as Norbert Wiener's *The Human Use of Human Beings* had been published in a French edition in 1952, and by the time of its second English-language reprinting in 1961, Wiener noted that statistical information and control theory had become so commonplace that his book already risked seeming trite.[45] Nevertheless cybernetics enjoyed broad success across the arts and social sciences throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, as it inspired the development of sociological systems theory that sought to explain human interaction and set off an international wave of experimentation as artists took data, environmental feedback, statistics, and probability—or, as

the 1970 Museum of Modern Art exhibition called it, "information"—as their working medium.

The expansion of rationality to scales of the technological sublime comes through in Morellet's *Random Distribution of 40,000 Squares Using the Odd and Even Numbers of a Telephone Directory, 50% Blue, 50% Red* (1960), which organizes random information to the effect that the organization itself becomes absurd and meaningless. Probability here undermines the referent in the promotion of code itself. This version of the painting, which Morellet reproduced in a variety of binary color codes, is composed of 50 percent blue and 50 percent red squares that he distributed based on the determination of, as the title indicates, the ordering of numbers in a given source: the Cholet telephone book (a source that was particularly appropriate given that much early cybernetic research was carried out at Bell Labs). Morellet claims that he turned to this source as a structuring device that would help him produce a painting governed by three rules: eliminate all interest in form and structure, only employ two colors and make the colors appear in a ratio of 50/50, and "obtain a random distribution of each detail."[46] As the even split of colors was generated by random order, so Morellet's strict rules were accommodated by the seemingly random selection of the telephone book—an archive of numerated information, scientifically generated (see plate 2).

In Wiener's book, he describes cybernetics as the study of effective messages of control and communication, which are measured according to processes of statistical probability by which a machine accurately translates incoming information into a reproducible signal. Morellet's painting resembles cybernetic "control," as the red and blue squares accurately reproduce the signals that are given by the telephone book—indeed, Morellet's concept of "cybernetic choice" relies on such faithful reproduction. The work, however, misapplies both communication and control. Any apparent order that the painting suggests is undermined by the meaninglessness of its logic, as Morellet destabilizes "communication" by stripping away the reference of the source material. Even if the telephone book's lists of numbers associated with individuals' or institutions' names were not in themselves meaningful, one knew that through the combination of the number and the device of the telephone, telephony would link one human being to another, and verbal communication would ensue. Morellet's painting misreads the purpose of these codes, so that the functionality of the individual telephone number is cancelled and replaced with a representation of immensity. The red and blue squares communicate the idea of communication or, rather, the process that must first take place in order for communication to happen. The work virtually arrests

the viewer at the stage of flipping through a book full of numbers, not unlike the lists of numbers that Hanne Darboven would begin producing later in the decade, or that On Kawara would generate with his *Today* series (1966–2014) or book *One Million Years* (1971). Morellet, like Darboven and Kawara, points to the fact of the number as a constructed abstraction. Whereas the ultimate goal of cybernetics was the communication of a message with a referent, Morellet's painting provides an instance of the GRAV artists' use of abstraction to undermine assumed technocratic efficiency, as the work eliminated reference to anything. Morellet focused on the aesthetics of communication itself. Here, the signal remains semantic noise.

Paradoxically, the promise of compositions determined from a mechanical basis was that they might destabilize mechanical responses because human perception had sufficiently adapted to them. Umberto Eco made this argument in an essay he composed for the *Arte Programmata* catalogue that accompanied works exhibited at New Tendencies. For Eco, geometric paintings and sculptures responded to the divided attention exemplified by youths of the period who, to the dismay of the older generation, could study while listening to the radio. Balancing attention between co-present forms had become the new dynamic norm. Programmed art, according to Eco, captured this new form visually through the presentation of mathematical systems that delineate "'fields of events' where random processes can happen." Such artworks draw then on a "dialectic of planning and causality." The viewer is unable to focus his or her attention on a single element within the work that, as a result, does not form a synthesis but only produces the permanent openness of a "process of indefinite completion."[47] The forms within an open work were always different not just from one another, but also in their kineticism, different from themselves. In the openness of permanent transformation, these works, Eco argued, would embody a democratic potential. Their formal openness would produce a social openness as it required the same genre of participation displayed by Eco's perceptually multitasking student.

This tension between artistic freedom and the determinations of technology was a central concern in Jack Burnham's 1968 book *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, which analyzes the diversity of postwar geometric abstraction and practices of Op and kinetic art as they shift from the mechanical to the cybernetic age. Burnham saw the "drive toward total mechanization" in art of the time as analogous to the engineer's objective of producing a "'closed kinematic chain'—the ability of man to control motion and power in a determinate fashion" through pair-closure elements that produce greater efficiency of a joint while reducing its freedom of movement.[48] Importantly, however, Burnham

distinguishes between machine aesthetics that are more commonly associated with objects, and the GRAV's own commitment to the eye and instability, such as one sees in the "fields of energy" of information science.[49] Fields pervaded the technologized world through repetition that "can be perceived in the redundant array of solid-state components fitted into switching circuits in electronic equipment, the sameness that prevails over glass and steel façades of curtain-wall office buildings, the grill patterns which appear on electrical appliances and the raster structure of light display boards for computers."[50] The field structure of modern networks created a vision of fluid movement expanding into infinity, but the regularity of these gridded forms also produced physical and optical instability. He characterized this instability as "the result of looking at many small random motions representing a homogeneous field of activity," such as one sees in the waving stalks of a wheat field or surface disturbances on a lake.[51]

In considering the precursors to the programmatic art of New Tendencies, Burnham cites Mondrian's first lozenge paintings from the late 1910s as the earliest instance of repetitive field structuring in art. Mondrian was, in fact, an artist that the members of the GRAV regularly cited as a source of inspiration. In a 1957 letter, Morellet wrote to Vasarely that he saw Mondrian as "the beginning of a new époque characterized by analysis and sacrifice."[52] Le Parc identified the beginning of Op art as Mondrian's *New York Boogie-Woogie* (1942) (subsequently continued by the *Homage to the Square* series [1950–1976] by Joseph Albers, who was another significant influence on the artists).[53] In 1960 the group collectively pointed to Mondrian's 1941 writings as specifically relevant to their investigations of the plane between the viewer and the art object rather than the object itself.[54] As Mondrian asserted, with abstract, nonsubjective art, the art object would cease to function as a representation and become instead a concrete presentation of reality through the objectification of vision itself.[55] In an essay on dialectics in Mondrian's process, Marek Wieczorek argues that the optical flickering effects created by his early gridded "diamond" canvases resulted in a "field of forces and accentuates not forms but relationships," that is, not the object, but the dialectical tension that exists between objects, or between the canvas and the subject viewing it.[56] As Wieczorek demonstrates, Mondrian understood identity to be produced in dialectical relationships of mutually exclusive opposites, such as figure and ground, so that the dialectic would never sublate, or neutralize, into something like visual flatness. Instead the artworks remain "alive" as their scintillation guaranteed that the space between the viewer's eye and the work would be preserved, and the dialectic would remain active.[57] Rather than qualifying unity in terms of "harmony," as
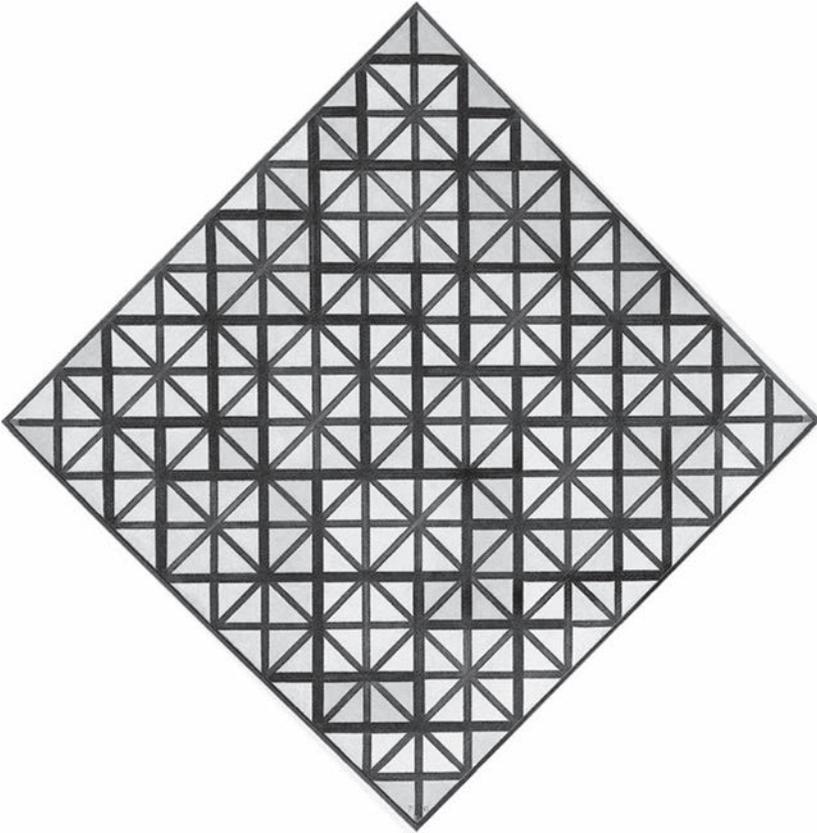
Figure 1.2. Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Grid 3: Lozenge Composition*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 33¼ × 33¼ in. (84.5 × 84.5 cm). © Piet Mondrian Foundation.

did Bill, for Mondrian, unity required being able to see both sides of a dialectic simultaneously without them resolving into a distinct third term.

Wieczorek focuses on Mondrian's *Composition with Grid 3: Lozenge Composition* (1918), the work that directly preceded and is largely identical to the diamond painting that Burnham cited, and that strikingly resembles Morellet's later optical paintings of overlapping grids. Mondrian's diamond is composed of two 8-by-8 gray grids on a white ground that overlay each other to create a weave of horizontal and diagonal lines and 45-degree angles across the diamond-shaped canvas. Some lines are nearly imperceptibly thicker and darker, encouraging the eye to scan across the surface. Referring to this as his "starry sky" painting, Mondrian took inspiration from the impressionists as he abstracted the relations between points that one sees in looking up at
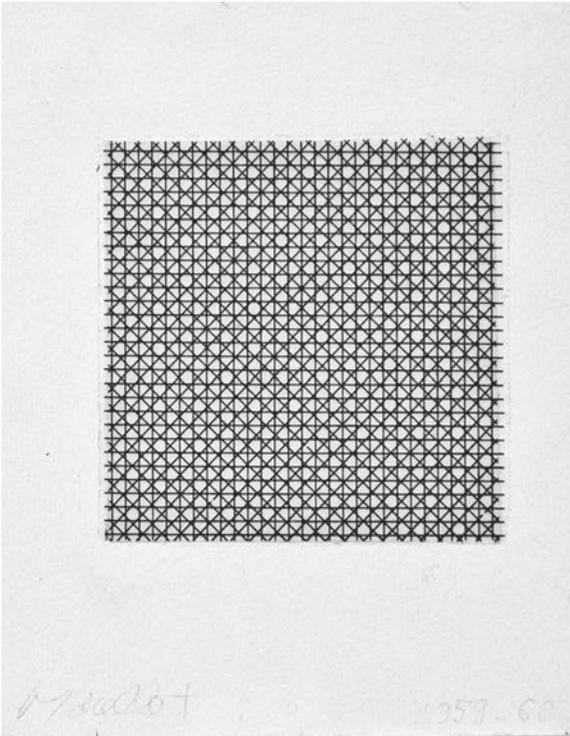
Figure 1.3. François Morellet, *Etude, trames superposées,* 1959–1960. Craftint on paper, 5 × 4¾ in. (13 × 12 cm). © Studio Morellet.

the night sky, and, indeed, this painting produces a twinkling effect not unlike the movements of Burnham's wheat fields and open waters. Importantly, however, the movements in the painting are created not by natural forces like wind or atmospheric interference, but by perceptual illusion. The expression of the painting comes from the impression received by the eye in the process of seeing.

Le Parc took the night sky as a subject in his 1958 painting *À partir d'un ciel de Van Gogh* (*From a Van Gogh Sky*). The black and white painting demonstrates his own translation from art that makes use of a relatively "natural" way of looking at the world to the art object as an abstracted renewal of that world such that the structure of the painting's composition becomes the subject of the work. It is also the sole work by Le Parc whose title refers to something other than composition or the operation it seeks to achieve. Compositionally, Le Parc's painting falls between Vincent Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* (1889) and Vasarely's similarly cosmic composition, *Cassiopeia 2* (also from 1958). Le Parc isolates Van Gogh's and Vasarely's most emblematic elements and strips

Van Gogh's composition down to the barest indications of dynamism. Van Gogh's galactic whirlpool of blues and yellows is reduced to black and white blocks such that a set of sharply delineated spaces carved out by curvilinear forms pushes from left to right across the canvas in a continual flow as they arch up and swirl back on themselves. As in Vasarely's composition, Le Parc has mirrored the upper register of the painting in negative in the lower half of the canvas. Around the same time, Le Parc completed a series of black and white paintings in the same style composed of interlacing circles, squares, and triangles whose reticulation created the impression of a perpetual shifting of alternating solids and voids. Abstraction was a form of reference that escaped representational conventions and appropriated its subject as a source of information. Reference in *From a Van Gogh Sky* pays homage to post-impressionist studies in opticality at the same time that it walks the line between an abstract study of forms in themselves and representational painting. The painting retains a hierarchy of subjectively arranged forms, the composition of which is conceived so as to image a subject beyond the work itself, even as that subject is abstraction itself.

Closer, perhaps, to Mondrian's twinkling night sky are the gridded mobiles of suspended plastic squares from Le Parc's series *Progressive Ambivalent Sequences* (1959–1960), which the artist acknowledges were inspired by Mondrian's writings. Burnham points to a mobile from this series that is titled *Determinism/Indeterminism* as an example of field instability.[58] The title comes directly from Mondrian. The same year that he composed his first diamond painting, Mondrian wrote "From the Natural to the Abstract: From the Indeterminate to the Determinate" and "Supplement: The Determinate and the Indeterminate." In these essays he argues that the goal of art, and the success of neoplasticism in particular, is to see the enduring universality of determinacy against the indeterminacy of subjectivity and unbridled nature.[59] Through the process of maturation, subjective vision would become increasingly consistent, which is to say, more determinate, yet Mondrian saw the process of approaching determinacy as a "reciprocal action of the opposites" in a "continual *repetition*."[60] Determination and indetermination were the kind of mutually defining dialectical opposites that might exchange positions according to the understanding of the artist, but like his twinkling paintings of the natural sky, they would refuse to resolve into a stable unity. Similarly, Le Parc emphasized the irresolution. His regularized artworks maintain instability as fundamental to their concept of progress.

As Le Parc noted in the catalogue for the first New Tendencies exhibition, where he showed *Determination/Indetermination*, these terms involved

Figure 1.4. Julio Le Parc, *À partir d'un ciel de Van Gogh*, 1958. Acrylic on canvas, 76¾ × 51 in. (195 × 130 cm). © Archives Julio Le Parc. Image provided by Yamil Le Parc.
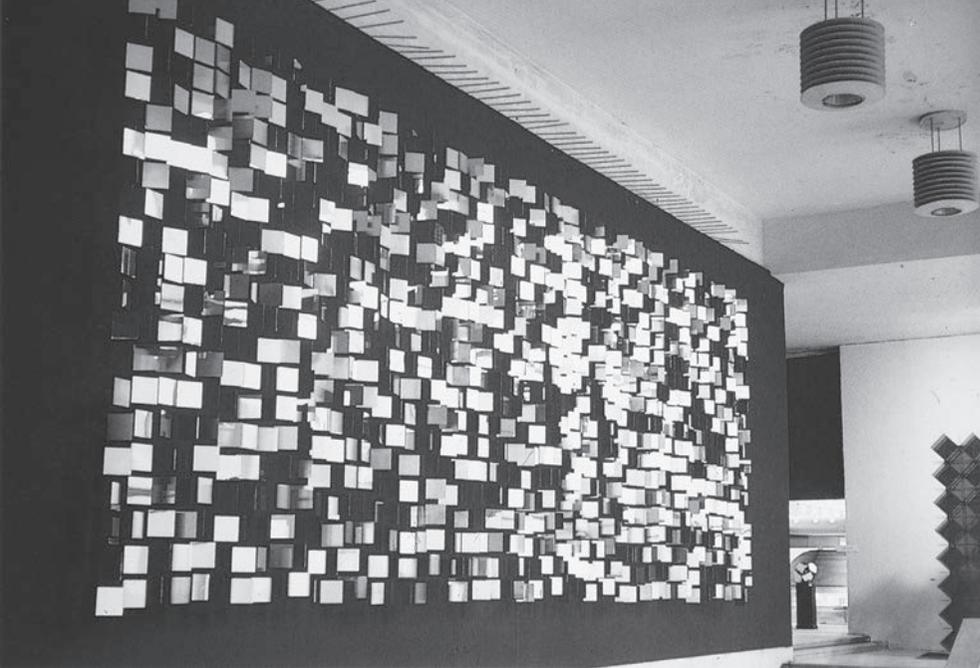
Figure 1.5. Julio Le Parc, *Continual Mobile*, installed at the Biennale de Paris, 1963.
© Archives Julio Le Parc. Image provided by Yamil Le Parc.

"intervention of circumstances outside the work per se" and "means of approximation: combinatory possibilities, statistics, probability controlled chance, etc."[61] Reproductions of the mobile have since been lost, but it is likely that it would have been similar to *Continual Mobile* (1963). The latter was composed of two parallel planar surfaces of equal surface area: a large black rectangular wood panel, in front of which was a second silver plane composed of individual metallic squares. The silver squares were suspended by nylon monofilament, thereby creating a wall of sections that rotated freely along their vertical axes so that, depending on the random positioning of the squares and of the viewer, there was an equal probability for the rate of occurrence in the visibility of black as of silver as individual squares patched and purged. As mobiles, their very form existed in time and constantly produced indetermination, while the continuous rotating of tiles effaces the boundaries defining individual objects in flashes of reflected light. Like the GRAV's paintings that reject the isolation of stable fragments by drawing them into a larger, shifting field, determination and indetermination in Le Parc's mobiles co-define each other, as the potential for indefinition of each element is demonstrated by its shifting neighbor, and the definition of each momentarily indefinite element is shown by its still counterparts to have a definite expression. Similarly, the work is determined in that it is a visual demonstration of the principle of its own construction. Be-

ginning with a principle that served as a basis for the construction of the work, the art-machine was free to self-compose as the panels variously pirouetted in a nearly infinite array of combinatorial permutations. While this work, like all the others, was based on a "neutrality of form" that was systematically determined, the unwinding of its motor process emphasized the randomness that made it unlikely that one would ever see the same exact composition twice. Furthermore, the work would destabilize the perceiving viewer. As Le Parc himself described *Determination/Indetermination*, the work created an "indeterminate perception-time" as its elements fluidly, ceaselessly shifted.[62]

Mondrian's combination of universality and abstracted perception provided the GRAV with a model for demystifying art while allowing it to be approachable by any viewer. Through the rational dialectical method that Lukács advocated, they were able to arrive at an instability and activation of the viewer that had a defetishizing effect as it allowed the viewer to reexperience the world. For the GRAV, the self-different shifting forms were not only open and productive of open reading for formal reasons proper to themselves. They were also open because they eliminated the possibility for reference to subjects beyond themselves. Significantly, the GRAV artists differed from the technocrats in their attitudes to interpretation. The artists understood the influence of widely recognizable forms to be important anchoring points for immutable, conservative interpretation. When one woman from television likened the GRAV's geometries to "Arab architecture," and another voice identified it as "scientific Impressionism," Stein expressed surprise at the audience's tendency to orient itself in relation to the work through historical interpretations, despite the fact, of course, that the group members were themselves influenced by exactly such precedents. Icons, symbols, the Ideal forms of classical art, and movements or familiar formal processes with established interpretive mechanisms would allow for preformed interpretations to be applied to artworks whose meaning would always already be stabilized by convention. While the artists found inspiration in historical achievements, their artistic ambitions required that they hide their sources so that the viewers would be entirely absorbed in the experience of looking in the present moment. Anonymous, homogeneous forms would allow for completely new situations that would promote interpretive, and consequently social, openness.

Art for the Masses

As artists developing a technocratic aesthetic, the members of GRAV applied themselves to the same problems that occupied the actual technocrats engaged in changing the landscape of postwar France. During the 1950s and

1960s, government programs developed the efficiency necessary to overcome what was effectively a housing crisis. During the war, France lost 1.35 percent of its population but a full 16 percent of its housing stock, leading to a massive shortage that was further exacerbated by a rise in birth rates and migration to cities.[63] In response, the government began developing *habitations à loyer modéré* (HLM), or rent-controlled housing units, that were largely built quickly and cheaply just beyond the periphery of the urban center of Paris.[64] Known as the *grands ensembles*, these suburban housing parks created their own set of problems, however. The original architectural designs were frequently modified to make construction cheaper; the same design teams were used on many of the projects, leading to widespread visual monotony; and building materials and design did not accord with the popular tastes and social practices of the French. The units were frequently small and noisy, and the neighborhoods lacked adequate basic services like sufficient schools, shopping and cultural centers, and connections to public transportation or parks, which led to social and psychological duress. Sarcelles, one of the most notoriously alienating cities, lent its name to a form of urbanism-induced anomie that came to be known as *sarcellite*.[65]

In response to these problems, sociologist Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, a researcher in working-class housing issues, and Pierre Sudreau, the first minister of construction under de Gaulle, attempted to find sociological solutions by calling for the democratization of planning. Sociology was not popular with historians and philosophers who saw the field as treating social facts as "things" while evacuating them of their subjects and their liberty, and prominent sociologists themselves complained of the misuse of sociological techniques, as they were haphazardly appropriated for marketing purposes in private enterprise. In the words of Chombart's professor, Georges Gurvitch, sociologists doing empirical research were "straw technocrats" seized by "testomania" or "quantophrenia."[66] Nevertheless, Chombart, Sudreau, and teams of experts associated with the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urbanism collected data on the population through marketing surveys and opinion studies that included installing models of housing units at the Household Arts Shows that resembled painting salons for egg beaters and washing machines. The sociologists led visitors through personal homes in already-constructed units and distributed many questionnaires. In this way, developers were able to determine that potential residents would prefer larger common living spaces, hallways, and masonry, and that they were willing to commute an additional thirty minutes in order to have their own houses. Chombart and Sudreau were, according to Brian Newsome, committed to democratizing the build-

ing process in order to improve the quality of life in new developments, even if their social aims remained relatively conservative.[67] Many architects, town planners, and state officials did not embrace these participatory planning techniques, however. As Le Corbusier and Michel Lods insisted, it was not the place of the future resident to weigh in on the design of an apartment. The experimentation that was needed to solve the housing crisis could be undertaken only by the expertise of the technocrat. In the mid-1960s Chombart ceased working with the government, complaining that officials deployed potentially democratizing studies more in order to legitimize their own decisions than to respond to peoples' needs.

In a 1960 article, Lefebvre outlined the problems with technocratic city planning in terms that displayed a formal imagination similar to that of the GRAV. He observed that sociology was becoming more efficient and "operational" as it sought to produce concrete effects rather than scientific knowledge. The technocrats were more concerned with eliminating problems than with becoming conscious of them.[68] In particular, he was concerned with the sociologists' drive to eliminate boredom and dissatisfaction in order to produce equilibrium and stability. He observed that technocratic city planning paternalistically atomized the city into family units that were destructive to the social fabric because they lacked spontaneous, collective urban traditions that develop across centuries. This resulted in a "puerile functionalism" that imagined it could predict aspirations and needs in advance, yet which actually resulted in boredom due to the fact that the spontaneity on which culture thrives cannot be defined, reduced to analysis, or enclosed in operational synthesis. Spontaneity, on the other hand, would create a sense of plenitude and satisfaction in everyday life. Lefebvre's proposed sociology of dialectical humanism broke the rigid unity of the technocratic city by taking account of the "non-functional, of the supra or transfunctional . . . in social relations" by promoting the "ludic" as a way of restoring emotion and surprise to social structures.[69]

Just as the GRAV embraced information science in the postwar era with the effect of deforming its rationalism, so they took up the HLM as a social fact that offered new opportunities for artistic intervention. Even if they did not make explicit observations about the suburban developments, it could be said that, like Chombart and Lefebvre, the group's objective was to ameliorate the quality of life for their residents by improving both the appearance of the buildings and the quality of engagement that the viewer would have with art objects in them. The HLM presented a new formal context that demanded new artistic forms. In an uncharacteristic embrace of the rhetoric of artistic

expertise, Le Parc penned a letter to the Craftint Manufacturing Company asking if they would provide him with a quantity of their products that were beyond the artist's financial means in 1960. "The character of my investigations," he wrote, "drives me to the point where the utilization of traditional materials has given way to experimentation with the new materials of modern technology. . . . My current experiments transform little by little into true works of art, with characteristics belonging to our era where all the paths of human investigation converge, and thus, united with my capacity and artistic sensitivity, the purity and the quality of materials that you fabricate find themselves exalted by an artistic use."[70]

Indeed, five years later the group was featured in an article that appeared in the trade magazine for the French electric company. The author, art critic Anne Tronche, saw industrial materials as already producing aesthetically compelling effects in the uses for which they were designed: "It suffices to look around us to understand the vast phenomenon of visual saturation that seizes us in a time when factories are being mechanized and stylized in the extreme, where cities rise up in the magic of glass and aluminum, and where, thanks to the perfecting of the optical, of astronautics and of underwater research, the eye plunges in the world of unknown colors and forms. A new aesthetic is born that takes account of the upheaval of social structures." Central to these new artistic investigations, noted Tronche, were the technologically advanced materials that artists such as those working with the GRAV were using: nylon, polyester, Plexiglas, plastic, stainless steel, and, of course, electricity. "This symbiosis between art and science opens perspectives and presages a profound change in our everyday décor," she concluded.[71]

In 1965 Sobrino created his first "permutational structure" on an architectural scale for none other than the city of Sarcelles. Constructed of stainless steel, the uniform interconnected plates of the twenty-foot-tall tower matched the identical prefabricated and interlocked housing units, while creating an alternating rhythm of metal and void that responds to the syncopation of windows in the façade of the facing apartment block. The work was part of an ongoing series of "structures" made from Plexiglas or metal that he created throughout the 1960s. Much like the ready-to-assemble flat-pack furnishings found in the homes of budgeting urbanites today, Sobrino's towering sculptures were constructed from identical subdivisions of prefabricated slatted squares. Owners could easily slide together small-scale models to produce constructions of various heights and breadths, depending on the space allowed. The visually seductive crystalline structures created shifting patterns of light and shadow, and they would offer a perceptually engrossing alternative to the

monotony of the HLM. The monumental work that he created for Sarcelles lightens by proximity the weight of its neighboring concrete constructions, since circumambulating his tower reveals that its volume is composed entirely of reticulated surfaces. Shining and flashing in the sun, the stable object would twinkle like the field structures of Mondrian's diamond compositions to create a dialectic that does not resolve into formal stability, and that provides a transfunctional icon based on the spontaneity of viewer participation.

Shortly after the GRAV began making works that it considered appropriate to the new housing developments, fashion and industrial designers began appropriating optical patterns to embellish the modern age. The same forces of mechanical reproduction that allowed for the destruction of the autonomous art object also produced the conditions for another kind of multiple: that of the capitalist commodity made ubiquitous by its availability at the local Prisunic department store.[72] "Dresses, wigs, gloves, eyelashes, earrings, the woman of '66 has 100% adopted Op-art" announced an article in the daily metro newspaper *Le Parisien*.[73] "Kilometers of 'Vasarely' are sold: fabric, dishtowels, scarves, sheets, napkins, wrapping paper." Vasarely's own response to this condition, seemingly without irony, equated these products of planned obsolescence—designed for private consumption and to the benefit of private enterprise—with the establishment of a public good. "I am not for creations as private property," he said, referring to his own authorship. Instead, "one must create multipliable art."[74] Morellet adapted Vasarely's position to a strategy in the battle with expressionism, proposing that they convince the public of their own superiority by "producing 'canvases' in series and selling them cheaply."[75] The GRAV would echo this sentiment in an essay on multiples six months later in which they humorously reversed the prestige of the unique work. By suggesting that "owning a work is less alienating when a hundred people own the same work," the group would challenge the fetishization of taste, implicitly suggesting that individualism is a form of social alienation.[76] Multiplying the number of art objects available for purchase would instead broaden the relationship between art and viewer to an entire imagined community that shared the experience of the artists' challenge to ordinary perception. In order to truly alter the relations between audience and art, however, the "cultural demands" of the object would need to change since making multiples would not in itself lead to a fundamental shift in the perception of art's aura. As long as art remained a product of speculation, it would simply allow a somewhat larger audience to consume the myth of the sacred art object.

Speaking not of dishtowel patterns, but of their own artistic works, the GRAV similarly related their production of multiples to the processes of in-

Figure 1.6. Francisco Sobrino, *Permutational Structure S,* 1965. Stainless steel, 20 ft. 4 in. × 88½ in. × 88½ in. (620 × 225 × 225 cm), installation view, Sarcelles, 1965. © 2014 Archives famille Sobrino / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VEGAP, Madrid. Provided by Délia Sobrino.

dustrial production, as they hoped to reach unit volumes reaching into the thousands. As François Pluchart noted, they imagined that ideally their art objects would be available for distribution at Monoprix.[77] If one were going to make artworks for the HLM, they would have to not only be made of the materials from which the *grands ensembles* were fabricated, but also have to re-create the serial repetition of the building units. The anticipated demand determined the method by which the works were supplied. Necessarily, this social need had an economic component. As multiples themselves, *grands ensembles* apartments were designed to be cost-efficient, and so was the art that the GRAV made for them. The scale of their production and cheapness of their manufacture was to make them affordable to those with modest incomes—a

sort of *art à prix modéré*, even if their manufacture and purchase were not sub-sidized by the government. Critic Saul Yurkievich noted that "if [Le Parc] could, he would give [the work] away."[78] Comparably, journalist Christiane Duparc observed that their work could be purchased for less than the price of what might, by comparison, be assumed to be its functional equivalent: the television![79] Nevertheless, dynamizing the perceptual experience of the HLM was to remain a utopian fantasy, as the GRAV sold almost no works until the late 1970s, and then they did so only through the traditional conduit of the gallery.[80]

Importantly, however, it was not financial gain that motivated the GRAV to dream of mass retail distribution, but the distribution itself. The artists countered their high-tech aesthetic with a low-tech design that made it pos-sible for them to be produced by anyone "with half a talent for construction." Likening the work to the craft of a weekend bricoleur was not uncommon. Already in 1963, an article on the work of the GRAV had appeared in the mag-azine *Craft Horizons*. Set among essays on "Crafts for the Aging" and instruc-tions on how to make traditional pottery, the magazine ingratiated the artists with its readership by suggesting that "their work, elegantly conceived, gives one the impression of being at a Hollywood premiere." Thanks to the availabil-ity of industrial materials and simplicity of design, the alienated inhabitants of technocratic efficiency's everyday banality could thus produce their own private fantasy stage sets of mass escapism. *Craft Horizons* keenly observed the disorienting visual effects produced by kinetic works that sought to merge time into the spatial field of the object. Crafters could anticipate "incompre-hensible, identical repetition of detail, resulting in retinal fatigue so that the image blurs," while "transparent materials create ambiguous space."[81] If sim-plicity of construction in the GRAV's paintings and sculptures was intended to empower viewers by allowing them to observe the mechanics of the illusion, then putting the tools to construct illusionistic objects in the hands of the viewers would only further develop their capacity for demystification. Larry Busbea describes such art environments as confronting subjective agency with spectacular immersion through the conflation of optical and literal, phenom-enal and actual spaces. In the GRAV's own work, he describes the "inherent incompleteness of the art object" such as the perpetually moving and blurring mobile, as an aspect of their "social project, which involved seeking sublation via the demystification of high culture, without, however, celebrating mass culture."[82] Yet the artists embraced a popular culture that was not reducible to that planned by the technocrats or sold by the culture industry. The spectac-ular appeal of mass aesthetics would be democratized not only by broad distri-

bution of serially produced objects, but, moreover, crafting could provide an exceptional occasion for a theoretically infinite serialization of the works, and the sovereignty that the spectator would have over the object would become increasingly popular.

A few months later, the group began putting their artworks directly in the hands of the spectators at the Third Paris Biennale, where they presented an architectural installation that organized sixteen of their works into a series of rooms and corridors called *The Labyrinth*. In addition to flashing neon lights and slowly twirling mobiles, a number of works created environments that required the bodily engagement of a viewer who would no longer just look with the eyes but would understand that looking could be determined by a body that moves through space. Curved mirrors, inhabitable nylon-cord cylinders, suspended body-length strips of reflective sheet metal, and balls suspended against mirrored trihedra required the viewer to manually reach out and stretch, tap, or rotate objects in order to traverse barriers and release the potential energy of objects at rest. Movement was no longer only a visual illusion perceived by an immobile viewer, but it was also now produced by the relational displacements of both viewer and art. In a text that the artists composed on the occasion of exhibiting this funhouse-like environment, the artists explained their difference from the technocratic disposition: "The interest invested by the Group in the viewer is different from that which might be lent him by a scientific mind in search of findings, which might use him as a statistical factor by subjecting him to tests. It is also a different path than that which, preoccupied with cybernetics and electronics, leaves the spectator on the margins of highly technical projects, or considers them as informational elements for producing changes in the work with electrical cells."[83]

Instead, the labyrinth would allow the participant to control the action him- or herself. Nevertheless, the participation that the artists envisioned depended on an element of surprise and discovery. Slow revelation of corridors and unanticipated spaces revealed themselves by twists and turns. The form of a labyrinth highlights architecture's ability to control the actions and movements of individuals as it puts the participant in a continually tentative position.

The figure of the labyrinth itself multiplied across disciplines and ideological dispositions during the 1950s and 1960s, symbolizing play, discovery, and freedom for groups as different as the Situationist International, the New Realists, and Spatial Urbanists.[84] As the GRAV began to move away from individual objects and more toward environments, installations, and networks, the stylistic distinctions that had been important during the 1950s faded. Al-

though the group's formal language consisted almost entirely of circles and squares arrayed in various colors and patterns, Catherine Millet went so far as to suggest in a later review of Le Parc's work that the artist had more in common with Jackson Pollock or Mark Tobey than Vasarely.[85] Seemingly taking interpretive cues from Jean Tinguely's métamatic drawing machines, Millet argued that the two expressionist artists allowed for greater systematicity and autonomy of elements in their paintings than Vasarely due to the latter's persistent belief (as the GRAV artists had themselves observed years earlier) in the importance of artistic choice. Regardless of whether or not Pollock or Tobey could be said to embrace or eschew authorship, it is the case that the GRAV artists' works share some features with the expressionists. Most notable perhaps are the large-scale and all-over compositions that give the impression that the work could envelop the viewer into its own environment. Indeed, similar to Allan Kaprow's environmental adaptation of expressionist canvases in the American context, the GRAV artists would soon try to incorporate the viewer bodily as they expanded their works to create labyrinthine installations to walk through or, in one case, drive through.[86] Claiming to be inspired by Pollock's environmental all-over style, Kaprow created representational happenings and accumulations that transmitted the cacophonous immediacy of the minutiae of everyday life. Le Parc, in fact, acknowledged the influence of Pollock's even spatial spread across the canvas on his own work.[87] The GRAV's early paintings and sculptures of the 1950s and 1960s gesture to infinity by pulling the viewer into an encompassing space of fragmented, shifting, distracted vision. As the paint wrapping around the edge of Pollock's stretcher bars alludes to the infinity of the space beyond the canvas, so Stein's modestly sized *Squaring the Circle* indicates a continuation beyond the boundaries of the frame as bars of red, yellow, and orange continue to expand past the circumference of the circle in the completion of their series.

The expansiveness of the groups' early work is implied by a set of photographic studies that Le Parc manipulated like puzzle pieces in the composition of a larger painting, *Instability* (1959). In the photograph, black circles borrowed directly from Vasarely dot a white canvas in a perfect grid, but each of the circles is deformed in the same way, as a slice has been lopped off at a quarter of the way across its diameter in order to leave each circle with a flat side. As the circles progress from right to left and top to bottom along their horizontal and vertical axes, they rotate slightly so that the flat side has turned 90 degrees off its original axis by the time it reaches the opposite side of the photograph. To compose the canvas then, Le Parc made four enlargements of the photograph so that they could be arranged in various orientations to pro-
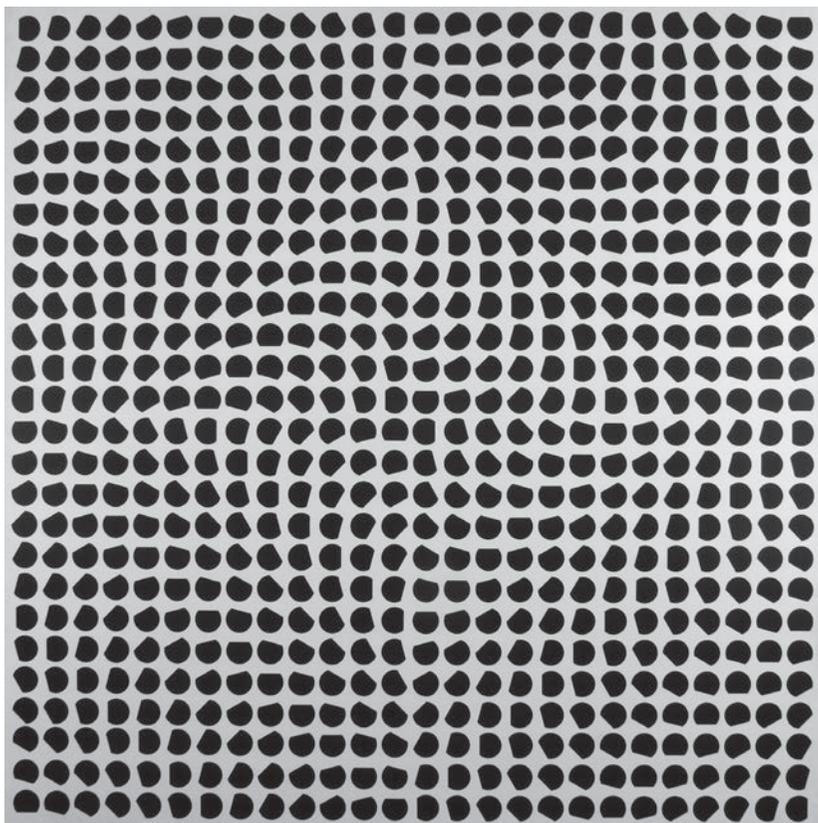
Figure 1.7. Julio Le Parc, *Instability*, 1959. Acrylic on canvas, 37⅖ × 37⅖ in. (95 × 95 cm). © Archives Julio Le Parc. Image provided by Yamil Le Parc.

duce different visual vectors. The arrangement that he chose, and which survives in his notebooks, is one in which the photographs themselves follow the same permutational logic of the circles within them as each is rotated 90 degrees from the next, and the four come together to compose a larger square. Since each enlargement is identical, Le Parc's canvas truly illustrates the "anywhere is everywhere" of a Pollock that is "going in all directions simultaneously."[88] Standing before the canvas, one becomes lost within it. It becomes impossible to focus on serial details as the contortion of each isolated element draws attention outward and elsewhere. The whole insists on its relation to the part and vice versa, as every focused moment is instantly distracted by what is in the peripheral field, and, likewise, each focused moment itself quickly becomes periphery as the eye is drawn away and the viewer is drawn in. The camera perfectly expresses the purpose of the mechanical geometry of a GRAV
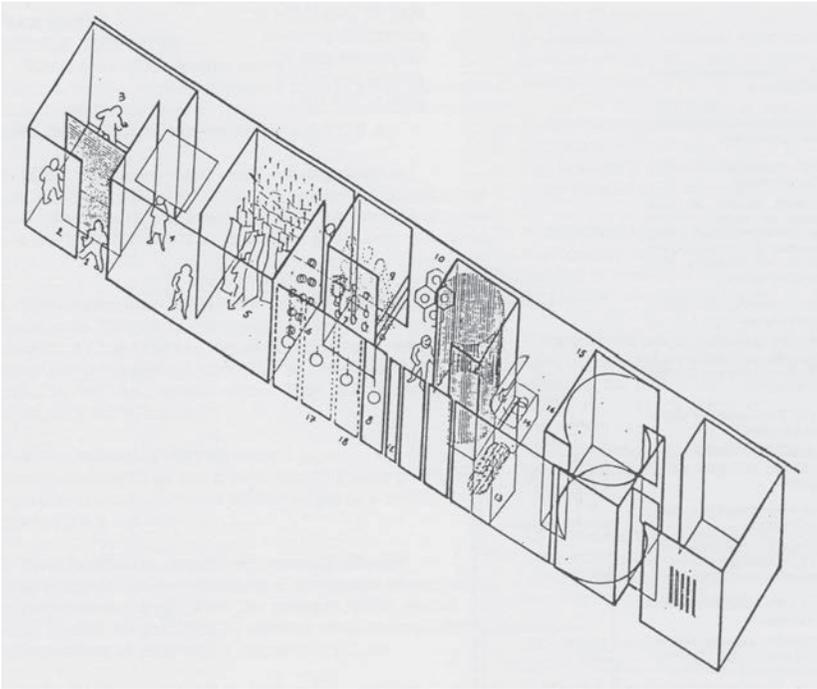
Figure 1.8. Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, preparatory drawing for the exhibition *Labyrinthe*, 1963. © Joël Stein. Image provided by Yamil Le Parc.

work. Just as the anonymous forms lend themselves to identical replication, so the camera allows them to proliferate, rendering them all the more universal in their ever-diminishing particularity. With this process of composition and infinite expansion through repetition and permutation of the photograph, the expansion of the work of art would become only as limited as its mechanical reproducibility.

The GRAV's labyrinthine environment appears to draw specifically from the group's devotion to geometric abstraction rather than from the chaos of the city streets. The motif of the labyrinth appeared five years earlier in a series of engravings and paintings by Stein. The simple blue and green, or blue and black parallels, invite the eye to trace lines through the angles that contort across planar space. At the same time, the alternation of proximate colors creates visual confusion that exacerbates the unsustainability of the concentration required to do so. As the eye is drawn in, it becomes lost within the maze. He quickly extended the optical tactility of his two-dimensional labyrinths to develop an object that invited manual tactility. Stein painted
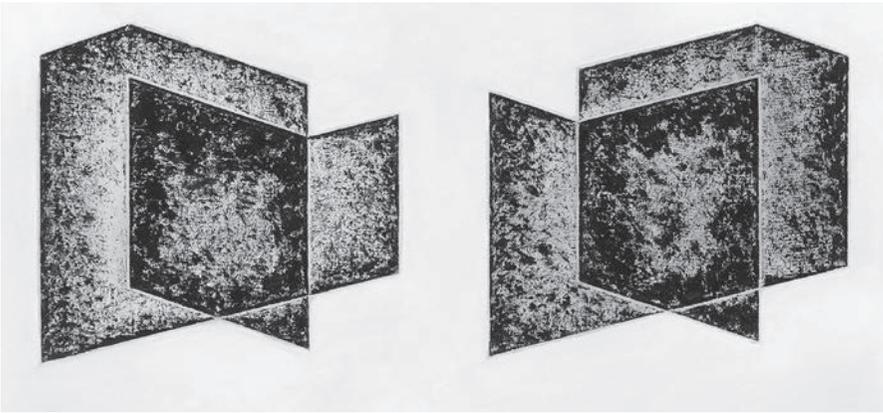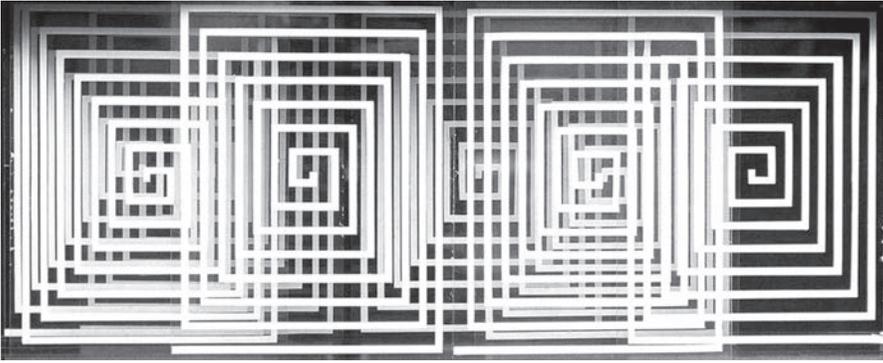
Figure 1.9. Joël Stein, *Labyrinths*, 1958. Painted wood and lucite. Photograph by the author.
Figure 1.10. Josef Albers, *Equal and Unequal*, 1939. Oil on Masonite. 19 × 40 in. (48.2 × 101.6 cm).
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1976.1.80 © 2018 The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Tim Nighswander/Imaging4Art.

seven panes of glass with white lines that followed the dimensions of the panes
themselves in a rectinilear inward spiral. The seven identical plates could then
be flipped or rotated 180 degrees and slid left or right among four long paral-
lel grooves carved into the deep-set black wooden frame that held them. Any
number of paths could then be created by the superposed patterns of inter-
secting lines. The reversable, manipulable object formally resembles El Lissitz-
ky's early twentieth-century *Prouns* or Josef Albers's isometric and rotational
geometries, such as in his oil-on-masonite painting *Equal and Unequal* (1939).
Both Lissitzky and Albers created technical, architectural constructions that
eliminated the realism of linear perspective in favor of impossible volumes
that illusionistically overlap and recede into depthless space. Albers's work,
in particular, resonates with the work that the GRAV would later carry out,

as he sought to investigate the relationships between the counterposed imbalances of simplified forms. The isometric architectural plan that the GRAV used to communicate the layout of their labyrinth mediates between the abstraction of the group's geometries and the inhabitable space that, in escaping functional utility, remains itself a sort of abstraction—an image that does not just absorb the viewer's attention, but into which one can actually enter. The labyrinth was an object of confusion, disequilibrium, and optical illusion, but equally of concentrated participation. As an architectural structure, it was the ideal environment for framing objects whose effects depended on perpetual immersive attentiveness.

More than just creating a relationship between spectator and art object, the labyrinth manifested the social significance of the multiple. The point of the multiple was not to re-create many times in separate apartments the experience of the unique work of art. Rather, as Le Parc put it, "one must strive toward the 'collective multiple,' the game room, the public action, where spectators are simultaneously engaged, where each person will become at once actor and object of the spectacle." In effect, what interested the artists was the way that the spectator was him- or herself produced by the work of art. If it was successful, not just the work would be multiple, but the spectators themselves would function as a group of multiple individuals. The success of such work then would depend entirely on location and the availability of large groups of potential collectives. "These labyrinths, these game rooms," Le Parc said, "they must be placed in barracks, schools, HLM, to vanquish the loneliness of the masses, and find in some way the participatory conditions of primitive societies."[89] As though ironically, the artists then distributed their first questionnaire when they showed *The Labyrinth* at the 1962 exhibition *Instability*. The purpose was to determine, among other issues, whether the participants saw this work as destined for museums, art galleries, public buildings, private collections, HLM, Brasilia, or the participant's own house.[90]

In effect, their goal was to help the individual break out of society's various prisons. In an effort to effect a real physical investment in the work and the collective then, next to a labyrinth that they installed at the 1963 Biennale de Paris, the group posted a sign that said "It is forbidden not to participate, it is forbidden not to touch, it is forbidden not to break."[91] By the end of eight days, none of the works in the labyrinth functioned any longer. The evils of civilization may also have provided inspiration to the existential, angst-ridden expressionism of the 1940s and 1950s, but by the mid-1960s it may have been this same abstract work that produced the need for expressions of catharsis. As one journalist joked, it was perhaps the biennial's "kilometers of tachist

monotony," which visitors "suffered" just before arriving at the GRAV's in-stallation, that caused them to be so brutal with the lighthearted interactive display.[92]

While Op art had already found its way into popular culture via the mul-tiples of street fashion, in 1966 the GRAV decided to take their own brand of "collective multiple" beyond the walls of the gallery and into the street in a sort of traveling version of the labyrinth.[93] The works presented during *A Day in the Street* asked the viewer to participate voluntarily in the generation of in-stability as he or she physically engaged with the objects presented. Like Stein's *Squaring the Circle*, his giant *Kaleidoscope* built geometric forms upon each other, but rather than gradating color, it abstracted the viewer him- or herself into fragmented forms that refracted and multiplied into an expanded geode-sic sphere. Sobrino's *Modular Elements for Manipulation* invited participants to work in construction teams to transform identical lozenge-shaped Plexiglas "elements," which were transparent and reflective, into a large sculpture of various possible dimensions that, like Stein's kaleidoscope, would then reflect its construction team in fragments that would shift with the movement of the viewer. Transported directly from the labyrinth, Yvaral's *Penetrable Kinetic Structure* similarly fell somewhere between sculpture and environment. Like the artist's other works in nylon cord, this habitable object made use of moiré interference of slightly skewed sets of parallel lines. Testimony reports that this cylindrical screen caused the city to shimmer and accelerate as viewer and exterior environment passed independently on either side.[94] Le Parc's curved *Mirror Passage* turned back on the viewer, distorting his or her reflection in what Alain Jouffroy described as a sort of sadistic narcissism.[95] His *Lunettes pour une vision autre* (*Glasses for an Other Vision*) refracted the line of sight with reflective curved or slatted metal strips, *Shoes for an Other Approach* made it impossible for the wearer to maintain balance atop their spring-loaded soles, *Spring Seats* continuously tried to eject sitters, and his *Mobile Tiles* tipped back or forth depending on one's footfall. The works continuously put the viewer, sitter, or pedestrian in a state of disequilibrium that required conscientious effort in order to apprehend the world through the most ordinary functions. In addition to these larger works, the group handed out balloons to female passersby and pins to pop them to their male counterparts, they distributed whistles to cinemagoers queued up to buy tickets, and, to end the day, the group created a paparazzi-like scene of media spectacle as they paraded from the Place Saint Michel to the Jardin Luxembourg at 11 p.m., illuminating peo-ple on the street with electronic camera flashes.

With *A Day in the Street* the avant-garde tradition of attempting to erase

Figure 1.11. Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, *Modular Elements for Manipulation*, installation view, *A Day in the Street*, Paris, 1966. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Provided by Yamil Le Parc.

the distinction between art and life could merge with the site of the organic "everyday," to use Lefebvre's term, as human potential was activated at the level of what Michel de Certeau would later write of as "daily practice." By 1966, however, it would seem that the supposed rationality of the public sphere had become sufficiently saturated by the quantifications of market researchers that many were weary of the group's intentions. As Pierre Descargues noted, many assumed that the artists were going to attempt to sell them something, or anticipated that the event would be followed by a survey.[96] And, indeed, it was! Alongside their art objects, the artists handed out flyers that explained their ambitions to "smash the routine of a weekday in Paris" with participatory situations, and that then proceeded to ask them about their perceptions of the art world. Rather than just collecting information about the viewer's attitudes, however, the questions acted like Stein's kaleidoscope

Figure 1.12. Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, *Penetrable Kinetic Structure,* installation view, *A Day in the Street,* Paris, 1966. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York ⁄ ADAGP, Paris, Provided by Yamil Le Parc.

Figures 1.13, 1.14, and 1.15. Julio Le Parc, *Lunettes pour une vision autre*, 1965. Image provided by Yamil Le Parc.

Figure 1.16. Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, *Mobile Tiles,* installation view, *A Day in the Street,* Paris, 1966. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Provided by Yamil Le Parc.

or Le Parc's glasses, fragmenting and juxtaposing perception so as to develop an "other approach" to art. The questionnaire opened up the possibility that one could see modern art as having more or less personal appeal (88 percent affirmative), social purpose (71 percent affirmative), an internally produced critical apparatus (68 percent affirmative), and/or absolutely no worth what-soever (51 percent affirmative). In addition to asking about the purposes of art, the artists similarly asked about the effectiveness of the demonstration under way, suggesting that it may or may not be related to gallery exhibition, that it could be seen as self-promotional publicity, pretentious, political, intelligent, or purely amusing. Unlike the surveys of technocrats, this process could not claim to impart any actual scientific value, however, not least of all because of its radical lack of quality control. Only 79 percent of those who filled out the

Vous faites partie peut-être de ce qu'on appelle le grand public. Pourriez-vous répondre à quelques questions pour nous aider à préciser le rapport entre l'art et le grand public ?

rayer d'une croix la mention inutil.

A découper suivent le pointillé.

1 L'art moderne tel qu'on le retrouve dans les salons et galeries d'art est-il :

intéressant	oui	non
indifférent	oui	non
nécessaire	oui	non
incompréhensible	oui	non
intelligent	oui	non
gratuit	oui	non

2 Cet art moderne est donc :

destiné à tout le monde	oui	non
destiné à des spécialistes	oui	non

3 Préférez-vous une exposition d'art d'avant-garde

dans une galerie d'art	oui	non
Préférez-vous notre initiative dans la rue	oui	non
Y-a-t-il un rapport entre ces deux situations	oui	non

4 Cette manifestation vous paraît :

utile	oui	non
gratuite	oui	non
stupide	oui	non
intelligente	oui	non
justifiée	oui	non
opportune	oui	non
amusante	oui	non
prétentieuse	oui	non

5 A votre avis, quel caractère se dégage de cette tentative :

publicitaire	oui	non
culturel	oui	non
expérimental	oui	non
artistique	oui	non
sociologique	oui	non
politique	oui	non
aucun	oui	non

6 Cette initiative, peut-elle avoir des prolongements et se trouver développée par exemple dans le Paris de l'an 2.000

oui | non

7 Etiez vous présent à cette manifestation oui | non

Y avez vous participé oui | non

A quel endroit.........................

Pour dégager de cette enquête des résultats plus précis et éventuellement vous tenir au courant des activités du Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, veuillez remplir le plus lisiblement possible, les lignes ci-dessous

Nom.................................

Age .... Sexe ....

Profession ....

Adresse ....

GROUPE DE RECHERCHE D'ART VISUEL
6, CITÉ PROST, PARIS 11e.

Figure 1.17. Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, *A Day in the Street* questionnaire, 1966. Ink on paper, 8¼ × 10⅝ in. (21 × 26.9 cm). © Archives Julio Le Parc. Provided by Yamil Le Parc.

questionnaires were present at the event, and only 68 percent of those actually participated! As any sociologist would note, accurate results for any study cannot be achieved in a short period of time, certainly not in *a day*.

The same year that the GRAV descended on the streets with their questionnaires, Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel published their own sociological study of art culture, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*.[97] The study was designed as an attack on Malraux's *maisons de la culture*, which he had developed across the country in order to promote literacy of high art among the masses. Like the GRAV artists, Bourdieu and Darbel opposed Malraux's mystical regard for art that saw its value as self-evident, and like the GRAV artists, they tabulated data acquired through questionnaires. Relative to the GRAV, however, the sociologists' aims were rather modestly constrained by the observational and theoretical nature of their profession, as they simply aimed to demonstrate and explain the contingency of taste rather than fully overhaul the *habitus* that determines it. Indeed, while the GRAV and Malraux were ideologically opposed, their ambitions were comparable, as both aimed to improve society. Whereas for Malraux this involved molding it to an ideal model, however, the GRAV artists aimed to make art more democratic by doing away with the concept of taste altogether. Rather than opposing sociological

data to technocratically produced monoculture, as did Bourdieu and Darbel, the GRAV artists took the sociologists' conclusions as self-evident and instead chose to harness the questionnaire for its very ability to corrupt its subjects. While social scientists in the postwar period attempted to develop cybernetically influenced approaches to the social sciences through systems theory, Wiener was skeptical of the applicability of such experimentation. He noted that, unlike physical phenomena, which can be isolated to the extent that the researcher does not excessively influence the test results, it would be nearly impossible not to affect a *human* subject.[98] The problem with the opinion inquiry, Touraine has observed, is that it "puts those that it interrogates in a very particular situation: an inquirer, an unknown, a stranger to the work or living place, poses questions to a person while this individual conversation, and this provoked reflection maximally isolate him from his milieu and from his everyday problems."[99] This, indeed, is a perfect analysis of *A Day in the Street*, conveyed as though in its greatest success.

The artists used their source obliquely, less to communicate scientifically acquired data on a topic of interest than to hijack a methodology and turn it to other ends. In the spirit of the development of sociology as yet another "machine" for the collection and control of communication in the modern age, the GRAV artists adopted it as an artistic technique. Similar to the controlled incoherence of Gestalt theory gone awry in Morellet's telephone paintings, the GRAV questionnaires evolved into a critique of the cybernetically influenced field of sociology by sabotaging the singular message that the tool was designed to efficiently communicate and replacing it with open-ended uncertainty. In the same way that they misappropriated other source material such as the telephone book to draw attention to the perceptive processes of communication, the questionnaires were primarily educative as they used the process of questioning more as a suggestion of ideological construction than an effort to collect data.

Already, it would seem, their test subjects were prepared. While the original questionnaires from *A Day in the Street* are lost, responses from an earlier questionnaire, which were distributed alongside their labyrinth at the 1962 *Instability* exhibition, indicate that respondents were already equipped for free-form appropriation of the social-scientific attempt to create categories into which they should fit. They undermined any faith that one might have in attentiveness to the questions by blacking out entire sections seemingly at random; one person added hatch marks next to each given "yes" or "no," to suggest degree of accord or discord, and thereby complicated the disingenuous simplicity of the process by exerting more individual agency than requested;

Figure 1.18. Questionnaire response to the exhibition *Instability,* 1962. Ink on paper, each 8½ × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm). © Archives Julio Le Parc. Provided by Yamil Le Parc.

and viewers found multiple ways of simply rejecting the premise of several questions altogether, as did Vasarely, who refused to single out favorite works from the exhibition as the questionnaire asked and instead insisted on the group's collective identity by writing simply "GRAV."[100] Rather than attempting to create determining structures by which to organize broad cultural trends, the GRAV's use of the questionnaire was consistent with their conviction that the viewers' process of perception was central to the creative act itself. At the same time, their understanding of the role of observation was not inculcated in a *habitus* in which the viewer's disposition before the object merely affirmed the underlying assumptions of art that formed a general ideological disposition. Rather, the questionnaires had a heuristic function, as they posed questions as a series of potential alternatives for interpreting contemporary art that would undermine fixed ideas. Far from treating their subjects as "things," their use of sociology provided the opportunity for a form of feedback that made use of the communicative advantage of the public sphere, albeit in a way that promoted disarray and dissent as much as rationality and consensus.

Unfortunately, as Restany observed, the project was not a triumph. At Opéra in particular, passersby were unwilling to take time out of their day

Figure 1.19. Questionnaire response to the exhibition *Instability*, 1962. Ink on paper, each 8½ × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm). © Archives Julio Le Parc. Provided by Yamil Le Parc.

to experiment with the unfamiliar devices on display. Public space here was more for passing through on the *métro* en route to the *boulot* rather than for spontaneously engaging a new perceptual experience of the city. This tended to be the case throughout the right bank . . . and then it rained. "The members of the GRAV went to the general public," Restany noted. "They brought experimentation without deception, with method (maybe too much) and good humor." And even though brief unexpected moments of communication were established, "Paris did not come to meet them. It would be profoundly unjust to blame it," Restany argued. "This effort was not a master-stroke, but the lesson is profitable: we can better measure the great distance that still separates art from life."[101] If their project did not revolutionize society, however, it did make an impact at the level of the individual art critic. Whereas Restany himself was among the most well known of a generation that centralized the role of the critic who would attach himself to a signature group, the promotion of which would then double as self-promotion, in writing about *A Day in the Street,* in contrast, Restany took to the sidelines. As least for a day, he distanced his own position vis-à-vis the work just as the artists attempted to displace their own position as determinate of its meaning. The critic took on

a role closer to that of the GRAV itself as he stood back to observe the behavior of the public. It was the audience, in this case, that determined the success or failure of the work.

Collisions

Several of the interactive objects from *A Day in the Street* reappeared two months later when Le Parc represented France at the 1966 Venice Biennale and won the painting prize, despite the fact that the work he exhibited was not painting. The work he showed at Venice, as well as at a set of two simultaneous exhibitions at each of Denise René's two gallery locations in the fall, were the same types of games and interactive objects that the group as a whole had shown in the labyrinths and during *A Day in the Street*. These included the *Spring Seats* and *Lunettes pour une vision autre* as well as hand- and body-length mirrors whose reflective surfaces had been deformed in order to distort the reflection of the viewer. While there was not a van in Venice to taxi the artworks around the city as there had been in Paris a few months earlier, here the van itself transformed into Le Parc's *Anti-Car*. An agglomeration of the forms and ambitions contained in these other works rigged onto the chassis and motor of an old Citroën 2cv, the work produces another approach for descending onto the streets.[102] As Le Parc stated, he considered the work an ironic comment on the use of the automobile in modern life. As a symbol of consumer society, the car went from being celebrated during the 1940s and 1950s to being derided during the 1960s. Le Parc wanted his own *Anti-Car* to be a "maieutic machine" for "deconditioning." The Greek *maieutikos* refers to midwifery and is a term often used to describe the Socratic process of "delivering" insights believed to be latent in the mind of one's interlocutor. The maieutic method encourages learning but is opposed to forms of teaching that involve the direct inculcation of ideas. Rather than providing new information, it encourages learning by provoking the recall of what one already knows; rather than telling, it shows by leading the individual toward the nature of specific concepts or labyrinthine aporias of frustration. Le Parc's car, then, was intended to cause the person "driving" it to be aware of, and to question, habitual gestures— including steering, braking, and shifting—that one typically must execute unconsciously in order to give undivided attention to the road and avoid hitting other cars or pedestrians, especially pedestrians who might accidentally lurch into traffic because they are unable to walk properly while wearing Le Parc's spring-loaded shoes, or to see what is directly in front of them while looking through his slatted glasses!

One favorable review of an exhibition that Le Parc held at Denise René

Figure 1.20. Julio Le Parc, *Anti-Car*, various materials, installation view, Paris, 1966. © 2014 Julio Le Parc / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Provided by Julio Le Parc Archives.

took the work on its own terms, seeing it as "inverting alienation" through a form of consciousness raising that came through participation.[103] Yet in other cases, it was not the popular aspects of the work that received accolades, but the work's ability to appeal to metaphysical aesthetic standards. According to one reviewer, Le Parc's large curved mirrors presented "une leçon de félinité pour chattes de luxe" (a lesson in felineness for luxurious pussies) and in doing so "created such a pure beauty as could not be spoken of other than in musical language." The critic was at a loss for words and suggested that one just had to see it.[104] In another instance, a reviewer justified Le Parc's prize at Venice by bizarrely commenting on the "artisanal virtuosity" that it takes to make Op art (most Op paintings are created by applying industrially fabricated acrylics in paint-by-numbers fashion, to a surface that has been divided into separate color fields using drafting tools).[105]

The majority of the criticism that the artists received questioned the artistic validity of the work. Numerous critics commented that, rather than art, these objects reminded them of what one would expect to see at Luna Park. Those who made this particular criticism did not seem to be amused.[106] Conversely, others praised it simply because it entertained, as was the case with a

reviewer from *Time* who likened the biennale exhibition to "FAO Schwartz on the 23rd of December."[107] Alain Jouffroy found Le Parc's games humanistic in the warmth of their ability to amuse, although his reasons for embracing their novelty derived from postwar Europe's deep artistic conflicts. For the most part, Jouffroy was repelled by the biennale's promotion of nationalism, the senility of the commissioners, and the disordered and disavowing art of "a generation that fought on all fronts to triumph, every year, over the accusation of being imitators, [an accusation] that has weighed on each of its members since the day that Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt shook hands over an ocean of cadavers of all colors."[108] Le Parc's games, in contrast, one could neither win nor lose, thereby giving them a purity that, for Jouffroy, was refreshingly gratuitous.

Art historian Arnauld Pierre traces the prehistory of Le Parc's games back to the turn-of-the-century fairs that exhibited new achievements in rational technology and its theatrical deformation in spectacle that had been so influential to the Dadaists and the Delaunays.[109] Pierre has described the GRAV's interactive works as isolating and exaggerating "constraints" so as to transform "a mechanism that is unconscious most of the time" into "a perceptual act that is consciously motivated" via "the exacerbation of the most quotidian situations."[110] With these later works, however, Pierre argues that their interest in the eye and objectivity is "overrun by the imponderable," by "illusion and evanescence, the fleeting reflection and ungraspable shadow, metamorphosis as the only stable state."[111] In the GRAV's festive overthrow of everyday perceptual experiences, then, their interactive game–like objects recall Walter Benjamin's description of bumper cars, whose ludic attraction is anything but gratuitous.[112] "What the Fun Fair achieves with its Dogem cars and other similar amusements," Benjamin wrote, "is nothing but a taste of the drill to which the unskilled laborer is subjected in the factory." The repetitive slam of the cars, like the isolated constraints of the GRAV's games, provided what Benjamin described as "a sample which at times was for [the alienated worker] the entire menu."[113] Whereas for Benjamin, the amusement park functioned as a training ground that prepared the worker for the shocks and conveyor-belt automation of the factory, the GRAV intended their works as a form of deconditioning that would make the participant more sensitive to his or her environment. Whereas the GRAV's earlier works may have provided, in Pierre's assessment, a "'dynamic touch,' made of exploratory and performative movements . . . bringing about the finest and richest perceptions," works like the *Anti-Car* would seem to undermine by oversaturation the delicate distinctions between cutaneous and articulated forms of sense perception.[114]

In the case of both Benjamin's bumper cars and Le Parc's *Anti-Car*, what is essential is that the experience is one of experiential immersion. The reference point for Benjamin's modern immersive context was the cacophony of the big city whose traffic and jostling crowds merged haptic experiences with optic phenomena, producing a sort of shock of which the factory was only one expression. Benjamin's urban dweller might still possess the fragmented vision of a "kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness," such as he cites from Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life*, but in an era beset with traffic signals and the flows of energy they control, fragmenting one's gaze had become more a survival skill than an epicurean leisure activity. Just as the bumper car trained the worker to adapt to the machine of the factory, so the bumper car–like experience of Benjamin's crowd effectively transformed the passerby into a sort of dodging, smiling automaton mechanically weaving through a mass of bodies. It was such mindlessness as produced by this hustle and bustle that the GRAV sought to combat with their objects. Whereas the worker could be said to be an actor in his own process of alienation, the work of the GRAV artists attempted to make him or her both actor and consumer and thereby replace alienation with self-reflective awareness. Stein's *Kaleidoscope* would seem to literalize Baudelaire's metaphor while updating it to correspond to the aesthetic of the technocratic era. For Baudelaire, the metaphor described a diversification of views that served a primarily social function, as the flâneur immersed himself in the crowd so as to gain proximity and identify the rag picker, prostitute, and other "heroes" of modern life. For a time in which the technocrat had become the new modern hero, the physical object of the kaleidoscope was less a tool for casting the gaze outward than for concentrating on the proficiency of the eye looking, effectively, at itself. The social purpose that Le Parc claimed for the group's work took place, in the first instance then, at what Pierre describes as the proprioceptive level. Both the bumper cars and the GRAV's perceptually destabilizing works honed, as Benjamin put it, the "art of being off center" by training the senses, yet the GRAV purposefully used this instability with the ambition of creating a greater sensitized whole.

Exceptionally, Otto Hahn and the Situationist International questioned the GRAV's success at achieving such a whole based on the terms that were primary to the artists themselves, even as their critiques took opposite positions in explaining the group's failure. Each considered the effectiveness that the objects could have in producing a new relationship with the viewer given their status as art. As Hahn asked:

Neither masterpieces, nor meditations on culture, nor definitions of new problems, what is the work of Le Parc good for? If it does not convey anything other than the beauty of a reflection that undulates, one does as well to look at the thousand sparkles of a diamond or the perfection of a crystal. By a pirouette or alibi, Le Parc avoids responding: his spring seats, eye glasses with fragmented vision, ironize on the modest contribution of the artist; on the other hand, the participation of the public, the spaces of activation, the construction of game rooms remain ideas too vague to justify the function of art. Here are the limits and the contradictions of an art whose ambition aims for universal reconciliation.[115]

Hahn's reference to universal reconciliation recalls the avant-garde conflict that Bürger outlined around the same period: "When art and the praxis of life are one, when the praxis is aesthetic and art is practical, art's purpose can no longer be discovered, because the existence of two distinct spheres (art and the praxis of life) that is constitutive of the concept of purpose or intended use has come to an end."[116] Hahn claims that in attempting to merge into the space of everyday life, the GRAV ultimately risked self-defeat in an inability to retain the distinction necessary to make its critique identifiable as such. The more the wearable objects resemble everyday things to be used in everyday space, the more they undermine the idea of the artist's exceptional position. Alternatively, if they are taken as purely aesthetic and autonomous objects, they lose their ability to effectively comment on society. Hahn would agree with the GRAV that art should be more than simply beautiful, yet at the same time, he would have its appeal be more specific than a general overhaul of social interaction.

As Guy Debord argued on the other hand, "there can be no fundamental cultural renewal in details, but only *in toto*," and this can only come about through a perpetual attentiveness to the present moment. In his "Avant-Garde of Presence" essay, Debord set in opposition two types of avant-gardes: those of absence, as defined by Lucien Goldmann, and an avant-garde of presence, of which he saw the Situationist International as exemplary.[117] Goldmann identified a postwar avant-garde that defined itself in terms of absence, as it fundamentally negated the reification of society while finding itself incapable of proposing any alternative. "Most of the great avant-garde writers express above all," Goldmann writes, "not actual or possible values, but their *absence*, the impossibility of formulating or perceiving acceptable values in whose name they might criticize society."[118] For Debord, Goldmann's formulation is a form of resignation. "What Goldmann calls the avant-garde

of absence," he insisted, "is nothing more than the *absence of an avant-garde*." In contrast to this, Debord offered examples of ways in which contemporary avant-gardes, such as the GRAV, had attempted to encourage presence through the integration of materials from daily life, and through the participation of the spectator him- or herself. Debord, indeed, recognized an affinity between their theories and what he called the GRAV's "para-situationist" interest in "deforming spectacle" by transforming the position of the spectator into that of a participant.[119] Rather than simple deformation of spectacle as it existed, however, Debord argued that what was needed was a critical assessment of how spectacle functions in society.

Like Hahn, Debord was suspicious of competing artistic movements' efforts to achieve a "universal reconciliation" of art and life, but for him this was because what these artists offered was not true integration but mere dissolution of artistic practice into existing social structures. Unlike Hahn, Debord believed that the problem with the GRAV was that their work was too artistic. If one wanted to fully integrate the spectator, it would be necessary to eliminate the spectatorial position itself through the eradication of the conventional artistic object. According to Debord, the GRAV ultimately maintained a divide between artist and viewer such that viewer participation served primarily artistic purposes and even the gratification of the artist. For Debord, the real question was not that of viewer participation in the artistic object, but of individual participation in life itself. All art, as Debord saw it, was already participatory as it constructed a particular mode of spectatorial engagement, and as long as it was art, participatory art would be no different. Debord wrote: "To the degree that participation becomes more impossible, the second-class engineers of modernist art demand everyone's participation as their due. They distribute this invoice with the instruction booklet as the now explicit rule of the game, as if this participation had not always been the implicit rule of an art where it actually existed (within the limits of class and depth which have framed all art). They urge us insolently to 'take part' in the spectacle, in an art that *so little* concerns us."[120]

Debord flattens any distinction between participation in work, questionnaires, or games. Integration of the spectator through participation in works of art could not approach the force with which that spectator was already, and without choice, integrated into modern technocratic society—indeed, by asking the viewer to conform to a set of preestablished rules of engagement, participatory art risked causing the viewer to submit to the same repressive and reifying mechanisms as the society Debord's situationism aimed to revolutionize.

According to Debord, the GRAV's interest in programming ultimately would undermine any effort to integrate the spectator into anything greater than the systematized work. Integration into given systems through art claiming to be participatory would not provide an experience of the "present or the potential of the revolutionary movement," but, rather, it would reproduce a type of "sociometry" that simply "transmute[s] modern depoliticized workers into devoted militants of leftist organizations, reproducing so well the model of established society that, like a factory, they could hire a few psychosociologists to apply a little oil to their microgroups."[121] Further, participatory art risked exacerbating the alienation of spectacle society and undermining its own program by taking part in what Debord called "the sinister spheres of the cultural police of spectacle society who organize 'participation in things where is it impossible to participate'—work or the leisure of private life."[122] Le Parc's text on spectacle provided Debord with proof that it was, at base, an avant-garde that made no important distinction between participation and absence. "In this concern for the spectators' violent participation," Le Parc writes, "one could even arrive at non-realization, non-contemplation, non-action. One might then be able to imagine, for example, a dozen inactive spectators sitting motionless in the most complete darkness and saying nothing."[123] What proposed itself as an avant-garde of presence risks then ultimately approaching something more like the negating avant-garde of absence. Whereas Goldmann described an avant-garde writing that was self-conscious in its frustration and impossibility, the participation that the GRAV offered could be argued to give the cover of presence for the real nonaction of absence that is at work.

True to Debord's accusations (and counter to Hahn's), the group's goal was never to make anything other than art, and in an interview from 1967, Le Parc affirmed that the GRAV was committed to remaining within the network of arts institutions because this was the sphere whose gravity attracted intelligible response with the greatest force.[124] Their embrace of the artistic milieu may have limited the scope of their ability to work against social alienation, yet their project was primarily more reform-oriented from the beginning as it attempted to reduce alienation through a form of mediation and adaptation of larger cultural trends to artistic production. The articulation of presence and absence in the work of the GRAV, does, however, present a challenge to the project that they sought to achieve. Indeed, the Le Parc citation that Debord isolated as evidence of the group's potential slide into nonaction was not representative of the group's interest in participation. The quotation was taken selectively out of a context that went on to identify absolute states of passivity as antithetical to their project. As Le Parc continued, "If they could

no longer think, and perhaps no longer breathe, one would reach the highest level of a new art. But in remaining within these concerns, one could try to find solutions far from the absurd. Because such precocious improvisation returns to a stage of despair and boredom where it is not simply an incapacity to achieve clarity."[125] Contrary to Debord's claims, the group's ambition was not then to produce a lifeless situationism. As the work shifted from easel painting and discrete objects to sense-saturating environments and wearable devices that physically intervene between the body and the world, it invited a self-abandonment into a state of distracted nonattention that forms one half of the unresolvable dialectic that describes the GRAV's work. Although the questionnaires and optical puzzles invited deduction, these objects would not deliver the viewer to a final rational clarity. Rather, in the GRAV's embrace of illusionism, they perpetually decenter the viewer from his or her own experience and create effects of tenuous presence that reject independent experience of sovereign mastery over the visual illusion.

One of the dominant effects that threatened the experience of total presence that the viewer could potentially have before the work came about by rendering vision peripheral. In the first tract in which the group introduced the idea of instability and the anonymity of form, they specifically identified homogeneity as producing instability in the periphery of vision.[126] The use of the periphery could make the viewer more aware of the activity of viewing, as it caused the eye to be constantly drawn away from any single point of focus because all the action appears to be just outside the direct line of sight. If drawing attention to the periphery remains a suggestion in the GRAV's early two-dimensional canvases, it becomes the only mode of engagement possible with Le Parc's *Displacement* series. These works from the mid-1960s make use of reflective metal placed at an obtuse angle to the main line of sight. His *Screen of Reflective Slats* (1966), for example, consisted of a 2.24-meter-by-2.6-meter metal frame with wide, highly reflective slats of metal oriented vertically and set parallel to one another. When looking through the screen, the viewer would see the image of what was directly on the other side, but at the same time, the peripheral slats would reflect the scene so that it was effectively fragmented and decentralized. What is fragmented is not the image of the scene opposite but the single point of view from which one looks as it becomes impossible to take in the whole. Rather, all reflections angle back to what is directly in front of the viewer, showing it from different points of view that would be impossible to apprehend in a glance otherwise. In this way, the work also collapses multiple moments in time, which would correspond to each point of view, into a single moment. With the screen it is possible to shift one's attention from

Figure 1.21. Julio Le Parc, *Screen of Reflective Slats,* 1966. 88⅕ x 102⅖ × 31½ in.
(224 × 260 × 80 cm). Image provided by Yamil Le Parc.

one position to the next and to truly focus on an individual section of the work. This becomes impossible with the glasses that he designed in the same years. Le Parc removed the lenses from basic black frames and replaced them with, again, reflective sheets of metal, which were then arranged to produce different distortions in vision. One pair reproduced the *Screen of Reflective Slats* in horizontally rotated miniature, while numerous others involved reflecting the vision of each eye in opposite directions, as two separate fragments bolted to the nosepiece curved out and away from the face. This distorting immersion of the viewer into the world displaces the viewer but at the same time provides him or her with a kaleidoscopic vision that breaks apart conventional perspectives, both literal and metaphorical.

Rather than the avant-garde rupture with spectacle society that Debord proposes, the GRAV's work invites perpetual displacements that recognize

technocratic rationalism in an effort to trace alternative paths through its planned landscapes. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari saw beyond the regularized grid of Op art to align it with the amorphous and nonformal constructions of patchwork quilts.[127] Despite the optical quality that the tendency's name suggests, Op art trains the haptic eye to discover variations and intervals among the regularity of the striated grid—a trajectory that the GRAV uncovered as they developed the repeating fragmented forms of their gallery canvases into perception-fragmenting tactile objects. With them, the housing block or city garden that had been kept at an optical remove by their gridded planning would come into close range on a spring afternoon, as one literally peered through a giant kaleidoscope to investigate the details of a world not just turned upside down, but triangulated back on itself. Although Deleuze and Guattari propose a binary distinction between smooth and striated spaces, they are not completely opposed, but, rather, "they are constantly being reversed into each other." This is an alternative to Mondrian's solution for evading sublation by working in polar opposites, which considers the artwork as immersed within a larger cultural context that it must negotiate in order to be meaningful. Rather than the radical opposition that Debord proposes, smooth space negotiates the terms by which the enemy defines itself. "The struggle is changed or displaced in [smooth space] and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries."[128] Using language familiar to the transdisciplinary theorizations of Molnar and Morellet, Deleuze and Guattari observe that eliminating dialectical binaries is "the beginning of a typology and topology of multiplicities."[129] The fixed points of metric determination that plan cities, strategize political campaigns, analyze marketing, and structure *habitus* transform via haptic perception into vectors and events that unite play and work, public and private, street and art. Yet, as Deleuze and Guattari warn, "Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us." Deviations are constant, and just as play can revivify the monotony of alienated labor, so it can always be turned back into a training ground in the guise of a pressure release valve.

Testimony from Garcia-Rossi suggests that even if the GRAV departed from easel painting's traditional modes of address, their form of fragmentation nevertheless participated in the production of the self-conscious bourgeois individual. Throughout the 1960s Garcia-Rossi produced objects that resembled the television sets to which the group's work occasionally suffered comparison. Rather than displaying the nightly news, Garcia-Rossi's light boxes projected multicolored lights reflected off of internal rotating objects against their translucent screen. Some of the boxes project abstract shapes,

Figure 1.22. Horacio Garcia-Rossi, *Instable Light Box: Ambiguous Portrait of the GRAV Members,* 1966. 23⅗ × 23⅗ × 15¾ in. (60 cm × 60 cm × 40 cm). © Galerie Lélia Mordoch.

and in other instances letters spelling out "*mouvement*" or the artist's name slowly shift across the screen. In one box, faintly blurred head shots of each of the GRAV members drift about—their overlapping faces symbolically reinforce the group's production process, as collective anonymity would cause individual members' identities to bleed together. At the same time, the boxes linger in a dreamy hypnopompic state, halfway between the dream world and alert consciousness. Indeed, as Garcia-Rossi recounts, a psychoanalyst purchased one of the light boxes just for their ability to produce this effect.[130] The analyst installed the box in his office so that it faced the patient, and he reported that the slowly shifting lights of the box induced free association. Not quite relinquishing all faculties in sway of the type of hypnotic trance induced by Jean-Martin Charcot, the patient nevertheless drifted into the "unconscious thinking" that Sigmund Freud's talking cure advocated as a way to access the

condensations and displacements of dream work.[131] Crucially, what separates Garcia-Rossi's boxes from televisions is the difference between the programming of the abstract "open work" that allows for self-directed association, and the programming of televisual flow whose associations are predetermined by a master source.

According to Debord, the GRAV's interest in cybernetic processes would ultimately reintegrate the spectator into the systematized work, yet we should ask what kind of feedback that work-art system generates. The two forms of anonymity-based instability that the technocrats and the GRAV proposed suggest alternative distributions of power. While the technocratic vision of social systems recognized the hierarchical assertion of power of the few over those who affirm it, the GRAV's proposal for an ideal system attempted to achieve equal degrees of contingency on the part of both the artist-authority and the participating viewer. The group's espousal of limited yet essential participation conjures Debord's concern at the same time that it describes the perversion of participation that de Gaulle promoted. Whereas de Gaulle imagined that the worker would participate in industry by profiting from the expertise of management without the need for self-determination, the GRAV encouraged participants in its work to understand and critique the structures of artistic "management," from the base level at which an artist creates a work to the discursive circulation of presumptions and prejudices that inscribe art in social practice. This does not necessarily require eliminating the artwork and the spectatorial positions that it produces. Rather, it requires attention to the myriad ways in which existing structures are articulated in order to understand one's own approach, and therefore agency, with regard to them. Proprioceptive awareness momentarily alienates the senses from any perceptive whole that would allow the viewer to experience subjective mastery, yet the "perceptual gymnastics" required to work within the GRAV's kinetic illusions and disabling objects exacerbate the distraction that Eco celebrated to the point that the viewer becomes aware of distraction itself. Those who choose to engage with such works risk slipping into a state of automation, this time as technocratically subject versions of Benjamin's bumper car–riding factory workers. By creating works that ask viewers to perpetually negotiate with illusions constructed by the artists, however, the GRAV resisted generating its own form of mystification based on physical enigma.

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DANIEL BUREN'S
INSTRUMENTAL INVISIBILITY

Early in his career, Daniel Buren was explicit about wishing to distance his work from that of Op and kinetic artists. In a 1969 letter to Jacques Caumont and Raphaël Sorin, who were organizing an exhibition on "Art in the Street" at the National Center for Contemporary Art, Buren explained that he did not want his work included in the show because he did not want to be represented as one artist among others, and he particularly objected to being shown among the "kinetic thingamajigs" that he expected would garner greater attention due to the audiovisual techniques by which they would be transmitted.[1] Caumont, perhaps, could have predicted Buren's negative reaction since earlier that year, he had helped Buren produce a series of short films in which Op and kinetic art and the social ambitions of its artists came up for derision. In a series of dialogues, characters from everyday life liken the types of objects the GRAV and Victor Vasarely produced to faddish gadget commodities that were financially out of reach of the popular, "democratic" audience that the artists hoped to target. More pointedly, the film mocked the ambitions, such as those of the GRAV, to transform the vision of public housing residents. Rejecting the presumption that participation in art is an unequivocal good, one of Buren's characters quips, "I am sure that it would be much more agreeable to be exploited."[2]

During this same period, however, Buren became well known for his brightly colored, high-contrast abstractions composed of geometric-stripe motifs, which he would display both in gallery exhibitions

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and in the streets in order to highlight the role that institutions play in making artworks meaningful. Despite these superficial formal similarities, Buren's work cannot be understood as aligned with Op or kinetic art since its goal is not to create visual distortions in the eye of the viewer. Typically, Buren's striped canvases are read (against his wishes) as a form of conceptual art meaningful less for their visual appearances than for their ability to point to the institutional structures of power in which they operate. Nevertheless, his ambitions and techniques resonate with those of the Op artists that preceded him, and particularly with the work of the GRAV, in the way that they combine an interest in destabilizing vision with a critique of the norms of arts institutions and restrictive cultural practices more broadly.

During the same period in which vision as a mode of acquiring knowledge about the world was coming under attack from phenomenologists in France, Buren reduced the visual elements in his work to the repetition of the simple 8.7-cm-wide stripe motif, a standard pattern for the awnings of bars and cafés in Europe. By adopting the visual language of his environment, the work took on a sort of camouflage that played between visibility and invisibility, and so articulated a distinction between the spaces in which the work emerged from its ground as art, and others in which it blended into its background as a form of decoration. Inserted into marginal architectural and urban spaces, this anonymous, commonplace pattern called attention to the structural and ideological features of institutional and urban spaces alike. Moreover, the in situ relationship of specificity between the artworks and the particular settings for which the artist conceived them demanded the direct experience of the viewer in order to undermine the cultural policy of the period. Censorship of popular music, the imposition of bourgeois cultural standards on the masses, and the technocratic selection of a class of official artists were distancing the public from a candid, thoughtful engagement with art during the period. By using advertising and ornament as decentralized display techniques, Buren sought to recenter the viewer in a contemplative and intentional relationship to artworks, and via those artworks, to become cognizant of the contingent ways in which institutions construct cultural experiences.

Unsticking: Influence and Rupture

In April 1968, Buren struck out onto the streets to begin pasting posters that he had commercially printed with his striped motif at two hundred locations across Paris in what he called *affichages sauvages*, or wild posterings.[3] The posters were green and white striped, and he pasted them among others condemning the war in Vietnam and announcing meeting times for protests. Famously,

Figure 2.1. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Hommes/Sandwichs*, travail in situ, April 1968, Paris. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris / Photo: Bernard Boyer.

this included pasting over a handwritten poster announcing a meeting for a leftist group at the University of Paris Nanterre, the site of the planning for the strikes and protests that subsequently developed into the May Movement (see plate 3). They went up on palisades surrounding construction sites covered with advertisements, but also beneath the busts of Nicolas Poussin and Pierre Puget on the entry gate of the School of Fine Arts, as though inserting Buren into the noble history of the institution while also bringing it in line with street culture, as the art students themselves would do the following month when they went on strike and converted its facilities into the Atelier Populaire. The posters went on the walls in the gallery district of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and the following month he had sandwich men carry them on their backs throughout the city during the 1968 Salon de Mai. Normally conveyors of advertising, their commercial functionalism was replaced by an art form that resisted clear messaging and its own salability. The city spaces into which Buren slipped his stripes were those of messages written on walls permanent and temporary, in which citizens spoke urgently to each other and commodities trumpeted their merits.

This movement toward appropriation of the visual culture of the street is indebted to the innovations of Raymond Hains and Jacques de la Villeglé, the décollagistes who, since the late 1940s, had been pulling torn posters from

walls and palisades, pasting them to canvas, and displaying the results in galleries. He praised works like Hains's *Panneau d'affichage* (1960) that show multiple layers of colorful posters violently torn away from their metallic support as "sauvage," using the same word that he applied to his own later project of affichage.[4] Buren was struck by the décollagistes' work when he discovered it in 1959 at the first Paris Biennial, and reflecting on it decades later, he contrasted it favorably against American pop art, arguing that while both groups took their inspiration from the streets, the latter stripped away all cultural references in order to produce a merely anecdotic work that, importantly, he considered deficient because it reproduced the efficiency of advertising.[5] In contrast, he saw Hains and Villeglé as producing work that was profound in the way that it addressed pictorial issues in painting without using painting itself (see plate 6). The work of the décollagistes offered several models for Buren as they traversed boundaries between public and private spaces of street and arts institutions and used the discursive construction of painting against itself to push at the conventional understandings of what painting is and how it communicates.

Hains's and Villeglé's formal choices and sites of display, moreover, combined with the effect of highlighting the function of arts institutions in a way that resembles an incipient version of the institutional critique that Buren would later develop. Buren's praise for the artists' ability to address pictorial problems without using the tools of painting speaks to friction with institutional authorities that the artists encountered at the 1959 biennial. After being invited to exhibit, they were rejected because their work did not conform to the expectations of the preestablished exhibition category "painting"—a muddle that displayed surprising conservatism on the part of the organizers considering that décollage carried forward historical avant-garde techniques from Dada and Surrealism in its use of readymade advertising and the automatic tearing that gestured toward the unconscious of the public rebelling against political and commercial propaganda, not to mention that by 1959 the two artists had been making décollage for a decade already.[6] The exhibition organizers resolved this conflict by establishing the more versatile and accommodating "salle des informels," but this formalist confounding of disciplinary norms exposed the limits of art-institutional practices and presuppositions, and prefigured the antidisciplinary actions that Buren would undertake seven years later alongside his collaborators Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni.

In opposition to painting, what décollage presented was a fragment of the real displaced from the streets outside to the interior space of art exhibition—a

characteristic of their work that was emphasized by the fact that Hains proposed to show at the Paris Biennial not just torn posters, but the very wooden palisades to which the posters had been pasted. As Hannah Feldman points out, these temporary walls were part of a major transformation of Paris during the years following World War II, as the character of the city and people's experiences of it were being demolished and reconstructed. More than merely blocking the construction sites that were to remain invisible, the palisades acted as screens, Feldman argues, that redirected attention to themselves, and presumably the content of the posters, which would imaginatively transport the viewer far from the reality of the demolitions themselves. The work, then, spoke directly to the ways that people perceived the space of the city, yet it did not embrace the political calls for change or the social utopianism that characterized movements of the historical avant-garde.[7] Instead, its disruptive détournement of mass media reversed the propagandistic messages of Charles de Gaulle's politics and highlighted an absence of democracy that reflected the interests of the people, especially in the face of the Algerian War of Independence.[8] The work questioned the reality from which Hains stripped it and presented, as Feldman argues, a way of "questioning the assurance with which viewers trust the certainty that they know what they are being asked to look at, let alone to see."[9] Like the concealment of urban transformation behind the palisades, the political valence of décollage is in the way that it tears aporias of meaning through propagandistic legibility. Rather than presenting a clear political consciousness, décollage suggests that the public is itself unrepresentable—an idea at odds with the public that de Gaulle sought to manifest through his repeated referenda. Along with this rejection of political specificity, Hains shifted emphasis to the role of context in determining the visibility of an object that remained invisible trash in the streets, but within the gallery appeared as the expression of an underrepresented public.[10] Moreover, as Feldman argues, Hains's work highlights the gap between the public of the gallery public and the "silent, negative double of the anonymous public," showing that the two were not only different, but "incompatible" with each other in their own legibility, and consequently in the expectations they could bring to the possibility of political representation.[11]

While building on their use of the public poster as artistic material, Buren's own *affichages sauvage* would reverse Hains and Villeglé's trajectory, moving from the gallery back out to the street. Frustrated by the political limitations of the supposedly radical painting of his own time, Buren decided to focus attention on the ideological limitations of the institutions that supported such work. In doing so, he would play with the visibility afforded by

the institutional frame. Whereas Hains's palisades highlighted the distinction between looking at the surface of a thing and seeing the historical and social transformations it implies, Buren's posters would court the general invisibility of urban décor to put pressure on the art audience as a group who is able to see institutional critique in the streets where it is otherwise functionally invisible to a general public.

More immediately, however, décollage appeared as a technique in Buren's paintings in 1964 when he began to systematically experiment with layering, collage, and destruction. In the canvases that he submitted for the Third Prix Lefranc that year, he layered paper, paint, charcoal, and other materials on canvas, sometimes tearing the paper away in sections to expose the layers beneath the surface. Layered, warped, wrinkled, and torn, the textures of works like *Peinture et collage sur toile* (*Painting and Collage on Canvas*; 1964) resembled the temporal build-up and wearing away from damage sustained by posters exposed to the elements. Their gestural lines and smears of paint recalled the graffiti that had fascinated Surrealists like Brassaï as expressions of the urban unconscious, and in some instances they recalled the soaped-out windows that mask the interiors of businesses undergoing renovation—both signs of the city in transformation. Beyond these references to the city though, they recalled a spate of contemporary artists who transformed unconstrained expression into a painterly style, and, perhaps like the American pop artists, evacuated the contextual reference points key to their social critique. Breaking away from the local influence of the School of Paris and its tachiste expressionism, Buren's work borrowed internationally from Cy Twombly's lyrical scrawls, which were widely exhibited in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, and CoBrA-style "naïve" paintings of vividly colored animals and other innocents. In his early paintings, the central expanses of color fields and marginalization of gestural elements that frequently run off the edge of the composition give the impression that these works have been excised from a larger context, much like the décollagistes' works, with the difference that the latter were literally removed from public space. Rather than discovering readymade images in the street, Buren did the work of the laborers who glued the papers to the billboards and of the public who undid the laborers' work by tearing those papers away. In this way, his collages were like easel painting studies that processed the form of décollage without adapting the social or cultural significance of the way that the form was constructed. He eventually abandoned this process. Unsatisfied with work that he considered to be nothing more than beautiful pictures, he instead turned toward the other significant element of the décollagistes' work: the cultural specificity of its siting, which I discuss further on.[12]

Buren's other major influence in the early years before he discovered the striped canvas was the painter Simon Hantaï. In 1962 Michel Parmentier and Buren developed a friendship with Hantaï that led to long conversations about his work and the contemporary art world. During the period in which they met, Hantaï had just recently begun working on the technique of pliage, which made it possible for Buren to consider the striped awning fabric as a basis for his own painting. To make works like *Mariale m.a.3* (1960), Hantaï folded then painted his canvas, resulting in jagged all-over networks of white and colored paint, the totality of which he would only see after unfolding the canvas. For Parmentier, the salient message in this work was that beauty disappeared as Hantaï reduced his palette, resulting in paintings that verged on monochromes.[13] In process and aesthetic these works resembled the folding that Parmentier adopted to produce his own horizontally striped canvases, and the nearly monochromatic striped paintings on which both he and Buren would eventually settle. For his part, Buren described Hantaï's influence in the way that he would "show things without pointing to them"—an observation that recalls Buren's later strategy of making a feature of a place visible without the artwork itself making any declarative statements about its subject, which was a central feature of his institutional critique.[14] This absence of direct indication came through in the way that Hantaï's process decentered artistic intentionality. Buren has spoken admiringly of the older artist's "blind" compositions in which the pictorial effect of the folding would not be visible until after the canvas had been painted—a practice that recalled the influence of André Breton and Surrealism on his work during the early 1950s after he moved from Budapest to Paris. These "blindly" produced pliages emboldened Buren to relinquish control over the composition of his stripes and, in some cases, their placement in urban environments. Like Hains and Villeglé, Hantaï was a transitional figure between two eras. On the one hand, he continued the techniques and procedures of the historical avant-garde in the oneiric, affective, and sublime effects that he could achieve with his richly saturated colors in compositions arrived at by chance procedures that resembled automatic writing. On the other, the coldness, automation, and repetition of his post-Surrealist work spoke of rationalist structural interrogations of material and the new consumer culture. Hantaï bridged the tachisme and existentialism of figures like Georges Mathieu and Bernard Dubuffet and the structuralist interrogations of process and context developed later by Parmentier and Buren, and eventually Supports/Surfaces.

As influences, Hantaï and the décollagistes may seem like an unlikely pair, given the differences between their artistic practices. Benjamin Buchloh

invited the comparison, however, in his essay "Hantaï/Villeglé and the Dialectics of Painting's Dispersal," proposing them as an example of post–World War II heterogeneity that defied existing formalist and social historical methodologies. Yet in their contemporaneity, the two shared a need to respond to cultural transformations toward spectacle and the postwar "culture of administrative rationality." Both rejected the expressive and figurative styles associated with the heroic artist, and the pathos of misery and derangement that had justified the use of graffiti and carnal imagery a decade earlier. Instead, they each, in very different ways, worked toward a "sterilized" automatism that deployed seriality, chance, and a combination of artisanal and mechanical processes.[15] In this way, they were in keeping with "every painter at that moment, Parisian or American," who Buchloh argues, "seems to have sought the proper register in which to anchor the determining condition of a total dispersal of a centered Cartesian subjectivity and the discrediting of conscious individual control."[16] Painting became a "mere" thing, the action of whose composition can be street events, such as the "found gestures of vandalism." What Buren took from Hantaï and the décollagistes was not the epistemological and methodological question that Buchloh later raised as to how one should write this history of art. His departure from each of his predecessor's works could be said to mark a shift as significant as *their* departures had been from Dada and Surrealism, thereby reproducing the influence gap, and confirming the significance of the methodological question. Indeed, the heterogeneity of artistic processes and aesthetics addressed in this book affirms Buchloh's quandary. Like the work of Hantaï and Villeglé, these processes are "neither mechanistically determined nor conceived of as arbitrarily autonomous," and similarly, the only way to understand them is by "understanding the multiple mediations taking place within each artistic proposition and its historical context."[17]

Buren's rationally crisp, uniform, and invariable stripes, nevertheless, fit with the strategic responses to the administered world that Buchloh lays out. He critiqued authorship via a rejection of expression and reaffirmed the graffiti of the previous generation as a display strategy appropriate to the cheery consumer culture that accompanied economic prosperity and lackluster political involvement. Buren's dialectic of rationalism and vandalism reminded viewers that anonymous authorship was a characteristic of not just advanced artistic practice of the postwar era, but of advertising as well. In doing so, however, it did not so much appease the contradictions between these fields, as Buren's later comments would accuse American pop artists of having done, as it created a critical mimicry in which his stripes appeared in spaces where they did not belong. The public hoardings of the commercial cityscape provided

the physical and semiotic support for his works, which alternatively stood out from, and blended into, the grounds on which they were situated, just as street signs and advertisements fill the backdrops against which city dwellers live their lives, while constantly attempting to emerge into the forefront of their awareness.

Buren discovered the stripe motif that would become his signature while searching for inexpensive material on which to paint at the Saint-Pierre market in Montmartre in 1965. He began purchasing it by the bolt, surrendering his choice in color scheme to the availability of the stock—a process that recalled earlier transformative stories of the avant-garde in which industrial fabrications became artistic objects. Like Duchamp's use of the urinal to call attention to the internal contradictions of the Salon des Independents in 1917, Buren used his found materials to reveal the ideological limitations of arts institutions during the 1960s and 1970s. While in early texts Buren virulently rejected Duchamp for his dependence on the very arts institutions he critiqued, his own work ultimately depended on institutions for ideological support, a fact that he later would come to recognize and embrace.

In the early works that Buren made during this period, he experimented with dividing the canvas into quadrants by painting loosely lined frames around exposed sections, over time covering progressively less area with paint, and eventually reducing the painted surface to only white outermost vertical edges, which he would cover with a matching white paint, thereby effectively minimizing the visual impact that the acrylic paint would have on the composition as well as its ability to be effectively photographed. In this way, he arrived at what has uniformly come to be described as the "zero degree" of painting, a designation that follows from Roland Barthes's 1953 book *Writing Degree Zero*, and coheres with the artist's esteem for the semiologist. Barthes's analysis of French literature describes the evolution of forms across historical periods from the uniform and universalizing presumptions of bourgeois writing at the first half of the nineteenth century to the diversified formal experimentation of its second half when, according to Barthes, authors ceased to believe that language transparently communicated its meanings and instead developed substantial rhetorical forms in which "literature was finally established as an object."[18] In describing the zero degree, however, Barthes considered the literary experiments of his own time, observing the purity and colorlessness of these works that he took to be a symptom of the disintegration of bourgeois consciousness. This new mode of writing attempted to escape from the formal devices of literature and create a neutrality that he likened to journalistic writing, or "writing in the indicative."[19] Absent of emotion, this

new style approached the functionality of "basic speech." Famously, Barthes characterized it as possessing "a style of absence that is almost an absence of style," a description that would double for Buren's minimal, austere stripes.[20]

Barthes's is not an absolute "zero," a formal baseline, or modernist reduction to the raw materials of medium specificity. Instead, he intended the "zero" to be understood as the midway point on a sliding scale, a neutral between positive and negative extremes. This distinction is important for understanding a difference between Buren's work and others' efforts at formal reduction. His art does not aim for purity but seeks to highlight contexts that can be thought of as opposites: museum and public space, easel painting and advertising. In the context of literature, Barthes uses the distinction between content and form to describe writing as occupying a neutral point between language used as a social force, which he describes as "the undivided property of men," and style as the "decorative voice" of the particular author. While language and style are both "blind forces," he argues, writing is an act of "authorial solidarity" in which the individual intervenes and participates in historical shifts in consciousness.

In Buren's visual work, achieving the degree zero meant making room for the viewer by creating visual situations that approached a sort of blankness. Developing a "style of absence" that was an "absence of style" was the first step in producing a critical art practice that would awaken viewers whom he saw as passively dependent on the artist and the institutions that validated their work. Like the GRAV, he aimed to make work that would not fit into a preexisting style or movement, which would allow viewers to apply a familiar set of prefabricated interpretations. At the same time, his work differed from the Op artists in the way that it responded to its environment, taking on the formal characteristics of advertising, or inserting itself into marginal architectural spaces. Its responsiveness and adaptability was made possible by the reduction in the force of a clearly imposed artistic vision. Attendant to this was the ephemerality of work that disappeared or degraded in the elements. Soon after arriving at the form of the degree zero in his canvases, he realized that he would need to extend his practice beyond the object itself in order to challenge institutional structures. The short-lived set of exhibitions that he undertook with Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni continued the project of encouraging viewer reflection based on the frustration and disappearance of clearly marked visual information.

In 1967, two years after Buren began making his awning-stripe canvases, he gained public notoriety for them with a show of contestation that defied institutional norms.[21] That year, Buren and Parmentier were invited to exhibit at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture. Since 1950, the salon had been the annual meeting ground for communist and socialist painters who embraced didactic figuration in order to unambiguously communicate humanist values.[22] The works that Buren and Parmentier produced were abstract and therefore already unlike the work that the salon normally exhibited, but the way in which they decided to participate fell even further afield of standard procedures. Nevertheless, they received permission from the organizers to perform their painting as a sort of manifesto against the art of the period. The first act of unconventional self-assertion was to "impose" the participation of Toroni and Mosset, whom the friends had recently met, and to request a larger-than-normal display space that the artists could use at their discretion. The stall that had been allotted to them remained empty, however, on the morning that the exhibition opened—a prescient display of the performance of refusal that was to follow. The four artists arrived that morning, not with completed paintings, but with their raw materials of facture: canvas, cans of paint, brushes, spray cans, staplers, as well as an audio recording, speakers, and a banner listing their names. They suspended the banner along the blank wall, turned on the tape, which repeated, in English, French, and Spanish, "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni invite you to use your intelligence," and each artist set about their daylong process of producing identical square paintings that conformed to their individual styles. Buren cut lengths of gray striped awning fabric from the bolt and painted the outer edges white. Parmentier folded his canvases into horizontal pleats, sprayed them gray monochrome, then unfolded them to reveal stripes alternating with raw canvas. Mosset painted a single black circle 7.8 cm in diameter in the center of each of his canvases. Toroni used his size 50 brush to paint grids of blue off-set daubs.

This public performance built on the formal transparency of their compositions by evidencing techniques that resembled drastically de-skilled manual labor. This was amplified by the fact that they produced the works in serial, generating an accumulation that undercut the preciousness of the unique, considered, crafted work of art so that instead their canvases resembled the inexpensive multiples that were current among advanced artistic practices of the time, including those of the GRAV; Daniel Spoerri's 1959 Multiplication d'Art Transformable project, in which he copied other artists' sculptures; or

Figure 2.2. Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni painting. Photo-souvenir: *Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*, 18ème Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 3, 1967, Paris. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris / Photo: Bernard Boyer.

the editions of artists' multiples produced by Claude Givaudan for the publishing house and gallery that he opened in Paris in 1966—all practices that claimed to democratize art by emulating manufactured commodities. Furthermore, the ad hoc display of the works, tacked up on the wall as they were finished, displaced the idea that presentation would be the event of an artwork, such as when a finished and framed work becomes visible to its public in a gallery, and particularly as suggested by the festive event of the exhibition opening. Instead, the artists performed display as a functional afterthought and made the event the labor of production itself.

As a group, Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni engaged in two primary activities. One was the *manifestation*, a form of anti-exhibition that negated audience and institutional expectations of what artworks should be and how they should be presented publicly. The second was the production of written tracts that they distributed at each of their events that anchored the meaning of what were often perplexing and abstract happenings (in Buren's case, this writing would expand into a voluminous collection of manifestos, reflections, and interviews over the following decades). To explain this first

manifestation to their public, the group distributed their first tract, "*Puisque peindre c'est . . .*" (Since painting is . . .), which established their position with regard to the ongoing debate between autonomy and commitment that was central to the engagement of the salon. In it, they announced their opposition to painting, calling it "a game" that produced compositions according to established rules. According to the tract, traditional painting, such as that by the other artists on view at the salon, acted as a "trampoline for the imagination," regardless of whether it launched the viewer in the direction of flowers, women, the war in Vietnam, Dada, the exteriority of the world, the interiority of subjective feeling, or the aestheticism of art itself. Because painting functioned to these deceptive ends, they declared, "WE ARE NOT PAINTERS."[23]

At 6 p.m., the artists stopped painting and unfurled a second banner that they appended to the first, thereby completing a sentence that read "Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni do not exhibit." What had previously been a label, which might describe as much the inert objects on view as the people making them, was transformed into a statement of protest. The artists packed up their materials, distributed a second tract, and left the space nearly as empty as it had been when they arrived. The second tract, *Manifestation 2*, explained that the artists were removing the works that they had spent the day producing from the salon as a symbolic act of their dissent from all salons in principle. Salons, they explained, "aggravate the laziness of the public," as they functioned as pilgrimage sites that annually attract viewers who would come to be comforted by, and swoon before, painting. They argued that this predictability produced "gadget-culture," and they accused the salons of being "objectively reactionary" because they showed painting to be a vocation supplied with a social function.[24] "For these reasons," they said, "we definitively break with all Parisian Salons and with all of the Painters that show there." Indicting contemporary salons (Salon de Mai, Salon de la Peinture à l'Eau, Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Salon des Indépendants, etc.), they explained that the lack of vision displayed by these institutions came from the fact that they were "the heritage of the Salons of the 19th Century. (the true Salons of the 20th Century being in a pinch those of *Arts Ménagers* [homemaking exhibition], of the Automobile, etc . . .) [*sic*]."

Such a comparison of art and consumer products is a provocative categorical infelicity that ignores more appropriate references, such as to the national exhibitions and world fairs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where new technologies that would revolutionize everyday life were put on display for a mass audience. The comparison between art salons of the nineteenth century and consumer salons of the twentieth invites the reader of

Figure 2.3. Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni after de-installing their paintings at the salon. Photo-souvenir: *Manifestation 1: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*, 18ème Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, January 3, 1967, Paris. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris / Photo: Bernard Boyer.

the tract to consider the historical avant-garde as a generator of commercial products whose equivalent would be post–World War II decorative household gadgets—an analysis that recalls his assessment of American pop art's integration of commodities into the realm of fine art, a model that Buren explicitly rejected as complicit with advertising. Buren and his collaborators' critique of art salons echoed a sentiment common among artists at the time. It recalled the GRAV, who in 1960 critiqued the mystifying force of the salons and their perpetuation of homogeneous art, and who tried to undermine this mystification by engaging the general public through the very same genre of the questionnaire that had been used to determine consumer sentiment at the Salons des Arts Ménagers. Whereas the GRAV sought to make artwork that could cohabitate with this new world of consumer products while improving conditions in which people would actively engage with their environment rather than passively consume it, Buren and his collaborators rejected the equation of art with consumerism, as they rejected the idea that one would be remunerated for painting as a vocation. Like the GRAV, they mimicked the aesthetic of rationalized production in order to undermine authorial exceptionalism, but unlike them, they did not seek to create ingratiating objects that would

delight the eye. Rather than a ludic game of discovery, the process of looking at Buren's, Mosset's, Parmentier's, and Toroni's works would be just as much an act of labor as the production of the works themselves.

The Salon de la Jeune Peinture lasted another twenty-two days after the opening. Visitors during these remaining days would find at the group's stall an installation of absence and refusal in which the significance of the large empty space leaned heavily on the textual support of the protest banners that remained. For *Le Figaro* critic Jeanine Warnod, the group's presentation was an example of nihilism that "expresses an avowal of powerlessness." In their protest she found resonances between their work and the politically functional figurative paintings on view, all of which she noted would correspond with the passions of visitors who look at the modern world with critical distance and "put everything in question in order to survive."[25] She did not recommend it though to lovers of painting, whom she advised not to visit the salon. Reflecting on this period of innovation years later, Buren contextualized their motivations within the political frustrations of the time:

> On the economic side, there was the boom without precedent from which we would draw strictly no benefit, from another, an omnipresent moral and political censure due to the consequences of the war in Algeria after that of Indochina, which wore down a part of the youth, and the authoritarian character, for us at a time totally outdated and archaic, of general de Gaulle and his police. Let us remember Maurice Papon and his "racist attacks" or the Minister of the Interior Marcellin. Few people today seem to remember the censure that descended upon the newspapers, the censure and daily control of information on television as on the radio, the ban on songs that were not politically correct, from Boris Vian to Georges Brassens, etc. An atmosphere that left little place for poetry, for freedom, for enthusiasm or for the initiatives of the spirit. A suffocating atmosphere, with the appearance of being tidy and policed, where in style and avant-garde artists, from Vasarely to Martial Raysse, had an open table at prime minister Georges Pompidou's place.[26]

The artists' only effective response, as they saw it, would be to create their own context apart from this "deleterious atmosphere that demanded to be exploded."[27] The zero degree became then not just a strategy for producing individual works of art, but a model for producing an entire context in which that art would be significant, one that made the conventions of artistic display visible.

Five months later, in June 1967, the group carried out an exhibition in the

Experimental Theater Center of the Decorative Arts Museum that inverted the structure of frustration at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture. Whereas the previous exhibition gave the audience very little to look at and deemphasized painting in favor of performance and explanation, this one, which prepped the audience for performance, reduced performance and explanation in order to emphasize the paintings themselves. They distributed an exhibition announcement that reinforced their renegade personae by displaying the artists' four faces in a grid that resembled mug shots, transforming Andy Warhol's *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (1964) into self-portraiture (a recursive instance of truth in advertising, they had pasted the posters in the neighborhood surrounding the Louvre illegally).[28] It invited people to a 9 p.m. show with a 5-franc entrance fee. For an hour and fifteen minutes, around 160 spectators sat patiently in the theater where four canvases were suspended in a grid that was organized alphabetically by the artists' last name, and "nothing happened." At 10:15 the artists distributed their third tract, "*Il ne s'agissait évidemment que de regarder des toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*" (It is a question of nothing other than looking at the canvases of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni), which provided formulas for their four types of repetitive, expressionless canvases, by way of describing them with the appropriate measure of zeal, complete with officious footnotes.[29] As though a demonstration of self-evidence, the text offered nothing but minimal, dry technical terms that, like the instruction-based art that Sol Lewitt began creating the following year, could have doubled as specifications for how to produce their work. Whereas previous tracts provided instructions for interpretation, here it turned out that interpretation would be unnecessary because meaning should be inherent in the objective qualities of the paintings themselves. Seeing should be understanding. Yet, as Marcel Duchamp, who was present in the audience that night, assessed at the time, "as frustrating happenings go, you can't get better than that."[30] Indeed, as Michel Claura would later recall, the group's early spectacular manifestations were intended to be "very humoristic," but most people did not perceive this because they were so aggressive.[31]

Ostensibly, the scene conformed to basic exhibition expectations. Unlike at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture, here paintings were present and visible, and the audience was positioned for relaxed contemplation. At the same time, the artists framed these features in confusion so that the relationship between the artworks and audience became unfamiliar. Within the context of the theater, the paintings were spectacle—a gesture that simultaneously evoked the show of live painting that the artists had put on six months earlier and the "spectacle" of contemporary consumer society that Guy Debord had been critiquing

Figure 2.4. Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni, poster from *Manifestation 3: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, June 2, 1967, Paris. © DB-ADAGP Paris.
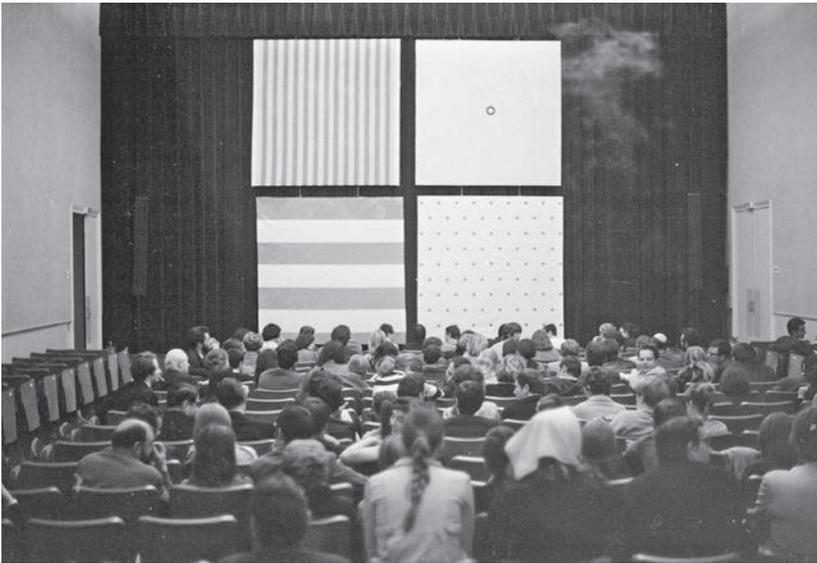
Figure 2.5. Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni, photo-souvenir: *Manifestation 3: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, June 2, 1967, Paris. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

since the 1950s, and which appeared as the focus of his book *The Society of the Spectacle* five months later. While the standard French use of "*spectacle*" refers to theater and performance, Debord distinctively defined it as "*capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image."[32] This world of spectacle critiqued by Debord was the exact same one that Buren would later position as the political context that his own work refused. The "frustrating" that Duchamp felt in Buren's work functioned as a technique for roughing up the smooth surface with which the advertising, television, and cinema of spectacle society dehistoricized war, politics, music, and visual art. In performing an explicit rejection of spectacle, the artists made paintings themselves disappear from the scene of the exhibition. Photographs from the event show the audience chatting with each other, milling about, and waiting. The paintings themselves do not appear to transfix the audience; rather they appear as a backdrop, an effect that the artists seem to have anticipated, as evidenced by the tract that functions to refocus attention on the artworks whose precarious positions in the event made them effectively disappear from the visual priority of the audience that had come to see them. In this way, the exhibition functioned as an antispectacle that framed the "style of absence" employed in the individual paintings.

Figure 2.6. Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni, photo-souvenir: *Manifestation 3: Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, June 2, 1967, Paris. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

Such frustrating exhibitions and claims of anonymity were part of the group's attempt to awaken the audience. A few months after the four last collaborated, Buren spoke with critic Georges Boudaille of the politically left weekly *Les lettres françaises* on the subject of anonymity, in which Barthes's analysis about the political relevance of the zero degree transformed into a moral dictate against social repression. On the traditional fetishization of artistic authorship, Buren said, "To think and to say that 'there was no haze in London before Turner' is very pretty, it's very poetic, but it's monstrous." Buren explained, "It's an attack on the thought of the individual. It is to force him to have the same dream as you."[33] Such an assault, at base, was the result of a strategy by which representation forced itself on the viewer. Rather than seeing artistic intervention as a way of bringing out aspects of the material world or internal thought so as to present them to a viewer who might have otherwise remained oblivious, Buren used Situationist language to argue that all art is a form of hijacking—"*l'art détourne des choses*"—that absconds with objective reality and replaces it with artifice, thereby irrevocably undermining the viewer's potential to see the world as it really is. The viewer could not be expected to exercise any resistance or independent thought in the face of artifice since artistic subjectivity would always hold sway over the viewer: on

the one side, the wily, plundering artist, and on the other, the negligent viewer bouncing up and down on the artistic trampoline. As long as an artist was expressing him- or herself through plastic means, whether in paint, readymade, or using the latest technology, the fundamental problem of creating "illusion" would remain because the work would impose the reassuring, and therefore overwhelming, will of an individual that one expects, indeed hopes, to find when taking in art. The myth of authorship, according to Buren, would inevitably be more persuasive than any attempt to claim that the author is simply a single mode for transmitting meaning.

Promoting the active participation of the viewer would require recognizing the ways in which art influences perception. To these ends, Buren sought to address perception in itself rather than taking it for granted as a tool that served cognition. Reducing the work to a phenomenological event, he promoted the idea that his painting isolated seeing as the only goal of the spectator before a work that has no greater purpose than to exist. In this way, he could confront the viewer by eliminating all attempts at communication through the art object that would become a thing *expressing itself for nothing.*[34] That is to say, he attempted to eliminate representation altogether in offering an object that was nothing more than a presentation of itself, and that moreover would escape all culturally determined aesthetic, moral, and commercial interests that might taint the art object's purity. As Boudaille suggested to Buren, the effect would be to desacralize the art, thereby making it truly democratic. Buren responded that it was not his intention to force the viewer to do anything, but he did admit that such an ideal object would create a situation in which "the observer finds himself alone with himself, confronted with himself before an anonymous thing that gives him no solution." Only when left to his own devices before the real of a fully anonymous form would the viewer "become intelligent," become capable of dreaming his or her own dreams, of writing his or her own text. More than just displacing the subjectivity of the artist in order to make room for that of the viewer, Buren declared "the only thing that one maybe can do after having seen a canvas like one of ours is total revolution."[35]

Affichages Sauvages

A revolutionary art would have to draw attention away from itself to instead reflect on the entire context in which it was produced and existed. Moving away from the zero degree, which, unlike Barthes, Buren understood to be a stopping point, he began to consider the work that he made a "visual tool" that could be used as an indicator of its environment. The visual tool would indi-

cate the construction of the surrounding world without pointing to it directly. More than this though, his work as a visual tool was to transform the place in which it was sited as it responded to the physical, functional, or symbolic characteristics of its location. He referred to this genre of artwork, which responded to the specificity of its situation, as "*in situ*."[36]

In "Limites critiques" ("Critical Limits"; 1970), one of the many explanatory texts that Buren would write, he outlined the relationship between the physical use of space, materials, and their ideological implications.[37] In particular, he provided a theoretical basis for his institutional critique by describing the way that ideology takes shape in art objects, and he argued for the transformative capacities of his own visual tools as they aimed to make the limits of institutions visible. Display conventions, he argued, highlighted the individual art object—whether painting, sculpture, readymade, land art, or other nontraditional practice—while the contingencies that made its creation and presentation possible dropped away into the background. The ideological conditions in which we experience art, he notes, are rooted in the objects themselves as they hide the material and structure of their facture, covering (in the case of painting) stretcher bars with canvas and paint, creating recto and verso, and promoting a single aspect of the ensemble, its painted subject matter, as the meaning of the work. Simultaneously, the museum or gallery disappears along with its administrative function in order to hold up the artwork as an example of free expression. He argues that it is generally, and incorrectly, understood that the museum and the culture that constructed it serve as the foundations that prop up and advance the works that they show, while in reality, culture and institution cover over and obscure the work in the same way that the paint obscures the canvas.

In an essay exploring the relationship between Buren's work and the democratic ideology of public museums, Douglas Crimp addressed this problem of visibility and institutional ambition. Citing former Museum of Modern Art Painting and Sculpture director William Rubin, Crimp noted that museums "are compromises invented by bourgeois democracies to reconcile the large public with art conceived within the compass of elite private patronage."[38] The cultures for which these artworks were produced are rarely the same as the culture that consumes them because of differences in mores, practices, and expectations across historical periods and geographic distances. As a result, the significance a work of art would have in the culture that produced it can generally be expected to translate only approximately if at all. This act of translation presents a challenge to museums that take on the charge of making the works intelligible for audiences that are, for the most part, unequipped to

make sense of them. The culture of the museum, informed as it is by experts, risks seeming foreign to the general public, and that overlays an additional level of interpretive refraction, which distorts the "original" meaning of the artwork. In "Critical Limits," Buren illustrated these relationships that Crimp would later describe in a succession of diagrams of nesting color-coded boxes and diagonal hatch bars that represent each of the elements in this schema and the ways that they obscure each other. In a diagram titled "what happens in fact (art such as it is situated)," a blue "museum" box frames and covers with blue hatch marks a yellow box representing the limitations of cultural expectation, as well as boxes representing painting, which covers over the canvas and chassis boxes. The diagrams create visual continuity between the elements that compose the artwork and the elements of the museum, so that the viewer understands the museum to be as much a composition of aesthetic choices as is the painting, and the painting to be as much informed by administrative expectations as is the museum. Both diagrams and art are striped geometric abstractions that reveal the structural relationships between art and institution. Additionally, the diagrams provide a map to understanding how Buren's artworks function insofar as his process involved identifying and isolating each of these elements and making them visible.

Buren argued that any painting like his, which "revealed its contradictions" by exposing its construction, no longer found its proper place in the gallery or museum. By venturing beyond these spatial limitations, the *affichage sauvage*, he argued, "shatters or masters the limits of the museum" and the "unique point of view." In important ways, however, this project was different from the GRAV's *A Day in the Street* of two years earlier. While both used public space and explicitly or implicitly solicited the participation of the people who become the public in those spaces, the two projects diverged in their addresses to their audiences and in the ways that they envisioned the city. The GRAV created spectacular events that sought to attract the participation of the public by engaging them directly with explanatory material, such as maps that directed them to all of the day's events and questionnaires that surveyed their responses to the event. Their use of public space demonstrated that they understood the city to be composed of flows of people who were susceptible to being reawakened to the ludic potentials of the everyday. Buren, in contrast, took a less invasive approach in his address to the public. Indeed, he was opposed to approaching an audience directly or asking people for their responses to artworks as Pierre Bourdieu proposed to do decades later at Buren's 2002 retrospective at the Centre Pompidou.[39] Instead, Buren's public displays merged into the fabric of a city that functioned primarily as image.

Picking up on the increasing presence of advertising in the public sphere, the vast majority of surfaces on which he affixed his stripes were the hoardings from which commercial advertising addressed the city, that is, spaces in which life was reified into pictures. The choice of the poster as a support for artistic activity was particularly relevant in the French context. Since the nineteenth century, the public display of commercial and political posters in France and other francophone countries far outstripped the quantity displayed in the rest of Europe and North America. Although postering had dropped off during the Second World War, the twenty years that followed saw a dramatic increase in the amount of per-capita revenue that went toward poster advertising, and at the end of the 1950s, postering entered the realm of centralized technocratic study with the founding of the Center for the Study of Advertising Supports in 1957 and the Institute of Research and Advertising Studies in 1958, organizations whose objective was to provide reliable data on postering and its consumers in France.[40] By moving his work out into the street, Buren was not escaping institutional limits but moving from one space of regulation to another. The presence of the poster in these spaces would highlight and negate its function through a play of visibility and invisibility.

Photographs by Bernard Boyer documenting the April 1968 Paris installation of Buren's *affiches sauvages* show how the posters fit seamlessly into this world of representation. Buren's papers overlap and cover advertisements for banks, vacuum cleaners, and tennis tournaments. The bold green of their industrially printed stripes complements the red, yellow, and black of the posters over which they are pasted, while their clean geometry parallels boundary edges, and the sharp contrasting white matches the graphic letters that stand out starkly against illustrations and photographs that dramatize the messages of the advertising. Although Buren reduced his own authorial judgment in this project by inviting the printer to select the color of the stripes that he eventually pasted all over the city, the harmonization of color is not the product of chance, but rather conforms to the visual logic of effective graphic design. It is bright, bold, attention-grabbing, and visible from a distance. At the same time, however, in standing out, the posters also blend in. A series of photographs of a single billboard at the corner of rue de Buci and rue Grégoire de Tours in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés neighborhood shows the daily life of schoolchildren, shop owners, elderly men, and women passing at this active intersection, as well as the bicycles and mopeds that have been parked against the wall where the posters are situated. Despite the fact that the billboard fills the background of the photograph as a bright pop of color in the otherwise gray and beige cityscape of stone and concrete, the pedestrians seem inured to

its charms. As much as Boyer's photographs document the environment surrounding Buren's work, they also capture the invisibility of commodity culture, and consequently the invisibility of Buren's artworks, the optical effects of which mimic those of the billboards that are shocking in their banality.

Like the caterpillars, moths, and butterflies that Roger Caillois described in his 1935 essay "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," Buren's wild posters participate in the sort of camouflaging that can be read as an adaptation to mass culture. If Buren's stripes mimicked the advertising spaces into which he inserted them, it was, in part, because they were destined to do so by their very origin as mass-produced awning fabric. From the stripes' source as three-dimensional exterior decoration for cafés and restaurants, the motif returned, transformed as a poster into an image of an original, able to cling to and blend with any surface in the urban media environment. Caillois, an interdisciplinary sociologist who collaborated with artists and writers of the Surrealist movement, found it suitable to explain insect camouflage in artistic terms, describing the process as "sculpture-photography" in which the animal body directly reproduces the textures and colors of its surroundings.[41] This process of adaptive ornamentation, in which something—a color or texture—is added to the body, corrupts the insect's autonomy and highlights its dependence on its environment. The result is a blurring of boundaries that undermines what Caillois considers a most fundamental distinction, that between the organism and its surroundings—a figure-ground relationship of the natural world, whose corruption he likens to schizophrenia. Beyond what camouflage revealed about the experience of insects, for Caillois, it took on a poetic function as it pointed to the importance of distinction, such as "between the real and the imaginary, waking and sleeping, ignorance and knowledge," because in situations of camouflage, the insect replaces its own distinctiveness with that of its environment.[42] This "temptation by space" was an assimilation of the organism to its environment that took place through visuality, in which the space was first perceived and then represented. In this space "the living creature, the organism, is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among others; it is dispossessed of its privilege and literally no longer knows where to place itself."[43] Caillois likens this sense of loss and dislocation to the schizophrenic's sense of being devoured by a space in which one cannot place oneself. Instead, one has a feeling of being "similar, not similar to something, but just *similar*."[44] This absence of a specific thing to which one feels similar is like an ambiance that manages to surround and fill in the backdrop of everyday life without conveying a strong sense of presence.

By moving into these spaces, Buren was attending to an everyday invisi-

bility that was nevertheless a new area of research and design. These walls had remained in the background for the GRAV, whose three-dimensional works formed the streets around them into a sort of main stage that they occupied with immediacy and presence. Buren's posters, in contrast, adhered, if adversarially, to the new role that architects envisioned for advertising during the 1960s, when slick, modern architecture was replacing older, more ornate, buildings. Xavier Arsène-Henry, a modernist architect of *grands ensembles* residential constructions, wrote enthusiastically about the positive role that advertising might play in the new city. Referring to public postings generally, and advertising specifically, he observed that "words and images have a considerable influence on our comportment," and argued that artists would be essential to their perfection. "Just like antique monuments," he wrote,

> we can admire the marvelous plastic usage that has been made of the "letter," titles or inscriptions: we see clearly everything that artists can take from the street signs and signals, store signage and windows, advertising panels, etc. It is without doubt, in our days a "material" with which urban architects can obtain effects that are not negligible, and that can accompany, underline, valorize the living, attractive, colorful, moving character of certain façades, of pedestrian passages or urban perspectives. One need only see the effect of gaiety of decked-out streets on the occasion of a festival, or the attractiveness of the street in the days leading up to Christmas. Far from reproaching contemporary architecture for its rigor, its reasoned and balanced character, we agree that, in the framework of the simple rules that define the expropriation and the surfaces of advertising, the addition of colorful decorations, whose aspect remains always light and occasional, will bring a multicolored and mobile note that will not destroy the harmony of the volumes and façades.[45]

Far from having a deleterious or corrupting effect on the purity of modernist architecture, advertising would become a festive decoration that would amplify the spectacular presentation of the city. Yet he argued that it would be preferable to regulate their usage and not give "free reign to regrettable installations": "Letters, signs, figures, slogans, panels, fixed and mobile effects, we say yes . . . but not anywhere, and not however."[46] Their locations would need to be regulated for aesthetic reasons that, inferring from his logic, would have social consequences. As Arsène-Henry imagined them, the ads would not just disappear into the backdrop of the city, but would play an important role in shaping its residents.

In May 1969, Buren pasted over an entire billboard that was situated ad-

jacent to one of the most significant new constructions of the post–World War II period. Jacques Caumont took a series of photographs of Buren as he pasted over one of three billboards overlooking a parking lot at the corner of the avenue du Maine and the rue du Commandant René Mouchotte. In several of these images, the angle captures in the background the older buildings with their masonry exposed where adjacent buildings had been demolished and in the far distance the gridded expanse of the façade of the Mouchotte, a seventeen-story, 88,000-square-meter bar-style construction project designed by Jean Dubuisson in 1966 as part of the Fifth Republic's urban renovation program. Situated in central Paris on the platform above the Maine-Montparnasse train station, the building was designed to be multifunctional—a mix of business offices, stores, services, and 752 upscale residential units. It was to be the largest apartment building within Paris and operate as a "grand ensemble in the city," yet socially it was the antithesis of the anomie for which the new cities beyond the periphery came to be known. Its façade conformed perfectly to Arsène-Henry's vision of urban animation as the exterior curtain-wall of the building formed a grid that would come alive with luminous animation once the sun set and residents turned on their lights. The building became famous the year before Buren's intervention, when in May all of its residents reportedly used their floor-to-ceiling windows to hang flags in support of the movement, thereby hijacking the building's iconic façade and transforming it, as architect Pascal Perris has put it, into a "geopolitical map."[47] The "village Mouchotte," as the complex came to be known, was inhabited by a homogeneous mix of executives, functionaries, company bosses, and other professionals, who were young, cultivated, wealthy, well connected, informed by contemporary thinking on urbanism (notably Henri Lefebvre's "Right to the City"), and had "the means necessary to manifest this critical thought on a large scale in reality."[48] Their proximity to the Latin Quarter meant that many of the residents participated actively in the centralized demonstrations throughout the movement, while, back at the building, activists established an association that distributed a newsletter and also developed a daycare, a tutoring program for students, and dance and tennis clubs. Making this intersection the site of his urban intervention, Buren, like the Mouchotte residents, transformed one form of urban decoration into another—the building itself manifesting his intentions while its cultured residents likely would have provided a knowing and supportive audience.

Caumont's photographs reveal the labor of installing the posters as Buren stands high up on what appears to be a somewhat rickety wooden ladder, poster in one hand and broom in the other, a bucket of wheat paste hanging

Figures 2.7. and 2.8 Daniel Buren, installing his stripes next to the Mouchotte. Photo-souvenir: *Affichage sauvage*, travail in situ, Paris, May 1969. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

from one of the rungs. The work appears not artistic, but workmanlike. It is possibly dangerous, not in a daredevilish way, but in the everyday way that blue-collar workers put their bodies at risk as a matter of course. As photographs of artistic process, Caumont's are the opposite of those that would highlight the individuality of the artist and the particularity of his gesture, such as those published in *Art News* during the 1950s. They reject dramatic performances of live painting, such as Georges Mathieu enacted beginning in the 1950s, or Buren's own performance with Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni. Buren blends in so effectively as the figure of the anonymous worker that there is no suspicious indicator that would alert a passerby to the fact that he is committing an illegal act of graffiti that is at the same time an act of stealing, since the work involved appropriating a private parcel of city space that was owned by the corporation Dauphin, which otherwise would have cost hundreds of francs to rent, and for which Honda had already paid.[49] Rather than searching for meaning in a fantasy world of beauty, happiness, and speed, Buren's posters pointed only to themselves and to the space that they occupied—that is, they indicated the other media that invariably surrounded them. In so doing they highlighted the everydayness of the urban space and its potential for transformation, effectively opposing the way that advertising was being imagined by modern architects and urbanists like Arsène-Henry for the new, affluent city of the 1960s. By making work that integrated into the background, Buren evoked the present absence of overlooked advertising while simultaneously pervading public spaces by adopting their techniques of display. In their scattered dispersal across the city, the posters did not proclaim a privileged site that would allow them to stand out as a singular clear figure, or point of origin, against the ground of a city that disappears from view once the viewer becomes absorbed in contemplating the significance of the artwork. Instead, the form and significance of the work take meaning from the ground into which they are woven as they are layered atop and beneath the other posters that welcome them in their formal and procedural logics.

Buren made the rules for displaying these posters explicit in September 1969, when he showed them remotely as part of Lucy Lippard's exhibitions *557,987* and *955,000*, which took place in Seattle and Vancouver, respectively. Because he could not travel to install the posters himself, he sent an example of one in the mail and told Lippard to reproduce it as many times as she liked in colors chosen by those who volunteered to paste them around the cities. Giving the volunteers the freedom to hang whatever color posters wherever, and crediting them in the catalogue, Buren wished to communicate that the labor of the artist and that of the volunteers were equal, as were the theory and

practice that each metonymically represented. At the same time, he provided two limitations: the stripes were to be oriented vertically, and they were to avoid "optical games so that they [could] retain their anonymity."[50] The games to which Buren refers would have caused the posters to stand out as artistic objects in public space, rather than conforming to the instrumentalized display conventions of advertising as it acts as a vehicle for clear communication. The *affichages sauvages* nevertheless played on visuality as they made use of optics to the extent that the posters blended with their environments while making use of the visual semantics of social spaces. In order for Buren's posters to work in the way he intended, they would have to masquerade as functional. This would mean standing out like all other advertising, and therefore hiding in plain sight. At the same time, their multiplicity functions differently from that of advertising and other posters. While the intended message of an advertisement is designed to be gleaned from its target audience in a single viewing, Buren's *affichages sauvages* would likely have been unintelligible if only one of the posters were seen. Because of their siting and blank abstraction, they depended on their multiplicity in order to be legible at all. Seen once, the posters would conceivably be meaningless, but seen multiple times they become recognizable as intentional interventions into, and disruptions of, the visual field.

Buren's hostility toward the total corruption of culture was revealed by the catalyzing force of the critiques on society, politics, and education that arose during the student and worker strikes in the spring of 1968. Publishing a response to the movement in the following October's issue of *Galerie des arts*, Buren sketched out some of the main points that would need to be addressed in order to formulate a revolutionary art. He argued that characterizing the breakthroughs of Paul Cézanne, Duchamp, or Jackson Pollock as revolution constituted an "abuse of language." Insofar as they begat new versions of what they struggled against, that is, new styles, traditions, schools, and ultimately academicism, such artists' works could only be said to be reformist, producing one generation after the next in a slow process of aesthetic evolution. Attending only to aesthetic concerns served to cover over the relationship between art, politics, and society. In line with contemporary leftist cultural and social thought, Buren argued that escapist art that pretended to be independent of the "reality" of institutional structures functioned as "the security valve of our repressive systems" and participated in the "generally alienating quality of culture." This would have included the politically engaged works on display at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture and those that artists had introduced into the Renault factory in 1968 as part of an effort to break down the barrier between

the autonomous realm of art and that of the worker. Commitment only furthered cultural alienation according to Buren, because it presented "political and intellectual virtue" as distractions from the underlying networks of social and cultural control. A revolutionary art would need to address itself to the base rather than the epiphenomenal aesthetic concerns that wove together the opaque netting of the superstructure. Buren concluded his response to May by posing the question, "How can the artist contest society, while his art, art in general, objectively 'belongs' to that society?"[51]

The same month he opened his first official personal exhibition at Guido Le Noci's Galerie Apollinaire in Milan. For the exhibition, *Il s'agit de voir. . .* , he adapted his *affichage sauvage* to the context of an arts institution. Gluing green and white striped paper completely over the glass doors to the gallery, he barred visitors and passersby from entering the empty space for the duration of the exhibition, but he also thereby made the work more visible than it otherwise would be, by removing the work from the gallery's interior and placing it in view of the atrium onto which the gallery opened. The goal of making the work maximally visible was reinforced by the title, *Il s'agit de voir* (It is a matter of seeing)—a simplification on the earlier double negative "*il ne s'agissaient que de regarder.*" Simply looking at the stripes should be sufficient to understand the work of the artists, and moreover, this should be true over and above the apparatus of spectacle that constituted the negative situation of their display. If the former instance of looking, and looking alone, attempted to enforce the autonomy of the artworks, *Il s'agit de voir* similarly positioned the stripes in a privileged and highly visible position that both stood on the shoulders of and conspicuously negated the mores of the institution that made it visible.

And yet, like the paintings on view at the Museum of Decorative Arts, here again the stripes threatened to become invisible to anyone unfamiliar with Buren's work. In this play of visibility and invisibility, *Il s'agit de voir* continued the camouflaging effect of the *affichages sauvages*. In part, this visual ambiguity would arise from the placement and technique that Buren used, which, he noted, was the standard used by workers for sealing glass doors shut.[52] Similarly, he described the door to the gallery as "*condamné*," as if it were in ruins, a word choice that suggests that there is a reconstruction in progress—if not a literal physical renovation on the interior that visitors could not see, then an ideological overhaul due to Buren's intervention. In emptying the gallery and blocking out the windows, the project recalls Yves Klein's *Le vide* (1960), in which the empty space of the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris was presented to the public, framed by the pomp and paraphernalia of gallery openings and
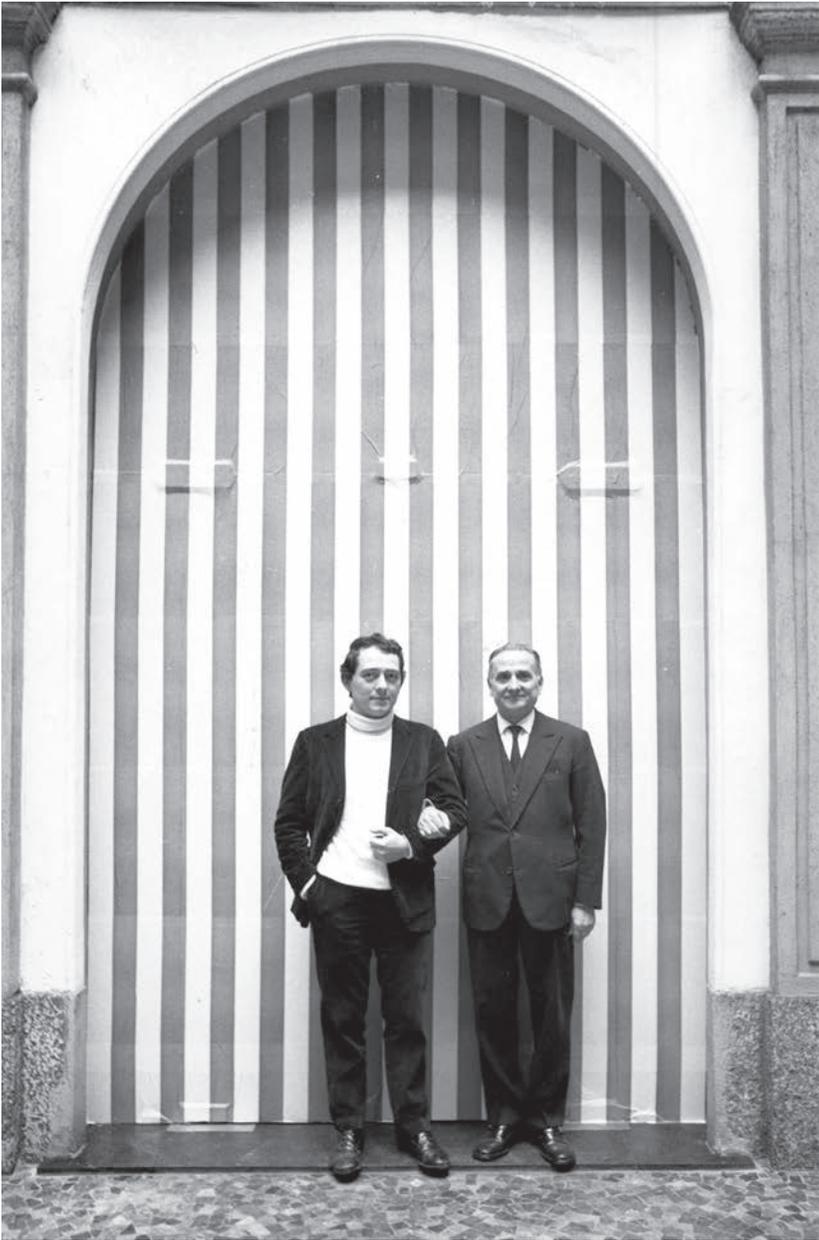
Figure 2.9. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: Daniel Buren and Guido Le Noci in front of the Galerie Apollinaire, October 1968, Milan. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

official state affairs; in creating an exhibition that made it impossible to enter the gallery, it resembled Arman's *Full Up* (1960), although the material of the former artist's conspicuous trash heap was more incongruous in its setting; and in barring off a space and operating in the street, it echoes Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Wall of Oil Drums—Iron Curtain, rue Visconti, Paris* (1961–1962), for which the artists built a barricade of oil drums that completely halted the passage of all traffic. Buren's work participated in the tradition of negation advanced by these preceding French artists, but with the important difference that his work took aim precisely at norms of gallery display. Whereas Klein celebrated the legitimacy of the gallery as a space that could support the gesture of showing nothing to his public except a space that was "impregnated" with his artistic will, and Christo and Jeanne-Claude abandoned the gallery altogether to frustrate the public by making Cold War and petrol politics an impediment to their daily lives, Buren's work was more subtle, barely noticeable even, and it used public space to invite its audience to think about how arts institutions make work visible. Even so, he reports that seeing the gallery closed enraged people, and that one went so far as to spit on him in response.[53]

While Buren's initial forays into working with the striped motif allowed the weave of the source canvas to remain visible, and he removed the stretcher bars in order to dismantle the ideological presuppositions embedded in the fabric of the artwork, his adaptation of this method to arts institutions would perform a similar process of isolating and highlighting the physical structures of the spaces that composed them. The architectural settings of the institutions would then be submitted to a similar set of procedures. As with the *affichages sauvages*, this institutional critique frequently involved installing works in unexpected places. Doorways and windows, in particular, became frequent supports for his stripes. These elements highlighted transition points by passing from the interior of a gallery space to the street, thereby demonstrating continuity between the institution and the cultural/urban context in which it was situated, much like his striped canvases highlighted both the painted surface and its dependence on its support. These doors, windows, and sometimes administrative offices, ceiling tiles, stair risers, and exterior scaffoldings, while essential aspects of architectural design, were marginal spaces and elements of architecture, rather than the central space to which one typically looks when searching for the art in an exhibition. These spaces were like architectural paratexts that themselves frame, support, and tie the main subject, the work, to the institution and culture on which it depends for its display, its intelligibility, and, consequently, its existence.

As Buren's works demonstrated, these structures of the museum were im-

mediately before the visitor, yet hiding in plain sight, obscured by the fact that the system had been so naturalized that it became invisible. "Only the knowledge of these successive frames/limits and their importance," he wrote, "can permit the work/product such as we conceive it to be situated in relation to these limits and thereby to unveil them."[54] The consequences of making them visible, according to Crimp (and to Boudaille before him), would be to enhance the democratic mandate of those institutions that sought to represent them. If we can understand Buren's Galerie Apollinaire work as deconstructing the exhibition in order to propose a response to the question he had been pondering a few months earlier in the midst of May, the installation suggests that in order to contest society, one must denaturalize the terms in which it proposed to function. Relevant to these concerns, this work rejects a limited understanding of the gallery as a democracy-supporting public sphere by closing it off and forcing the art object into the popular space of the street. Buren's approach to the general public was not as solicitous as that of the GRAV with their mobility, questionnaires, and invitations to destroy the work by touching. Instead, his work of the 1960s focused back on the institutions whose practices resulted in distinctions between inside/outside, public/private, art world/everyday life. Buren's austere abstraction might not have been intelligible to the GRAV's audience, but it signaled to those habituated to the European postwar avant-garde artworks that the Galerie Apollinaire typically showed, that the subject of Buren's work was the fact of the gallery as privileged cultural space. In this way, his work spoke to the bourgeois public sphere of its contingencies while inviting its members to experience a moment of exclusion and being pushed back out to the public space of the street.

During the period in which Buren was developing his theories, the relationship between democracy and art institutions took explicit shape in the clash between artists and the government at the exhibition *72-72: Douze ans d'art contemporain en France* (*Twelve Years of Contemporary Art in France*). The exhibition was conceived by then-president Georges Pompidou, and organized by François Mathey, as a way to highlight French art production between 1960 and 1972. It drew strong criticism from artists and critics alike, however, who saw it as an inaccurate and deadening revision of recent art history, as well as an effort to use artists to endorse Pompidou's government in the wake of May 1968.[55] According to its critics, this exhibition exceeded the typical, unintentional influence that exhibitions would have on the signification of artworks by simple virtue of functioning as translators of cultural information by actively shaping the meaning of the works against the wishes of the living artists who made them. In response, protestors showed up, riot police
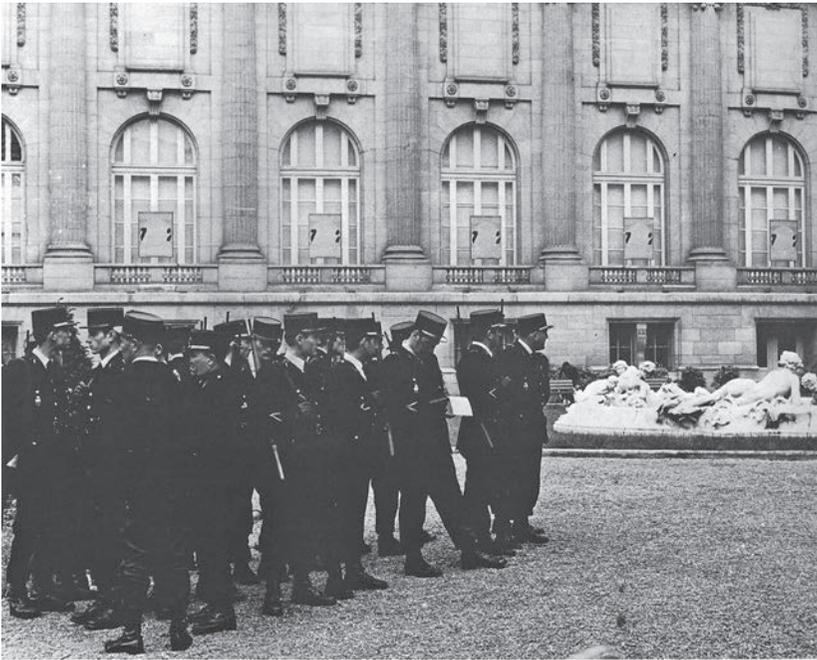
Figure 2.10. This photograph and the next one document the protests outside the exhibition *72-72: Douze ans d'art contemporain en France* and were published alongside Daniel Buren's article "Une exposition exemplaire" in *Flash Art,* no. 35–36, September–October 1972, p. 24. Photo: D. Alkan, of the Front des Artistes Plasticiens, titled *Grand Palais: Vernissage expo Pompidou, 16 mai 1972. "Défense de l'Exposition Pompidou par les gardes Mobiles. Photo prise avant la 2ém charge de la Police contre la soixantaine de manifestants qui osaient exprimer leur opinion.* Courtesy *Flash Art.*

beat them, and artists removed their works from the halls of the Grand Palais. In response to the organizers' efforts to control the narrative of the conflict that sprung up around the exhibition, Buren published an article in *Flash Art* titled "Une exposition exemplaire," in which he shows how the ground game in the competition for lofty ideals takes place rhetorically at the level of petty offense. A third of the invited artists refused the invitation to participate in the exhibition, so, in response, Mathey called them "sourpusses" and claimed that he truly only regretted the absence of two or three—a comment that, Buren noted, put in doubt the quality of the exhibition he was organizing in the first place. Journalists contributed to discrediting the artists by dividing them among those who were at fault for choosing to participate in the contested exhibition, and the outsiders who were caricatured as "excited leftists" producing art of dubious quality while playing into the hands of the "hardest elements of Power" by protesting.[56]

Figure 2.11. *Entrée de l'expo gardée aprés la 2èm charge de CRS. 16 mai 1972.* Photo: Attali. Courtesy *Flash Art*.

Buren's own analysis, in contrast, took the side of the protestors by articulating a critique that was of a piece with his artistic project. Addressing the organizers and artists who chose to participate in the exhibition, he wrote, "You are not the naïve toys of power, but one of the wheels of this very power, an ideological wheel that is indispensable to the proper functioning of the repression that is more and more present every day." From what was essentially an Althusserian perspective, anyone associated with the exhibition was being manipulated by those with more power. Not just representations of that power structure, they themselves constituted the power that controlled them. To illustrate the effective function of the exhibition, he cited a *Marie-Claire* article bidding its bourgeois readers to go out and buy art from the galleries representing the artists in the exhibition as a way to guarantee the well-being of their grandchildren, whose fortunes would be enhanced by their speculation. This complicity between art and the economy was echoed by Minister of Cultural Affairs Jacques Duhamel, who stated that the exhibition aimed at establishing a future harmonious collaboration of artists and power. The market potential and "power" of this artwork, however, would have to be defended by

police intervention. Raymond Marcellin, the minister of the interior who had deported Julio Le Parc in June 1968, called on the riot police to violently put down the opposition to the exhibition, showing, as Buren ironically observed, "where to find the harmonious collaboration." Where the modes of ideological production failed to be reproduced by artists willing to participate in the exhibition, the government's values had to be upheld by force. In these "helmeted games of official art," as Buren called them, he noted that the exhibitors tried a "last fraud" to bring the avant-garde within its orbit by posting a photograph of the police charging at the protest that had taken place on May 16 alongside what Buren described as "sinister and puerile declarations." They integrated the protest into the exhibition via documentation that gave evidence of the exhibition's own historical importance. According to Buren, exhibiting the photographs was a way of "making the 'sour' and 'excited' enter the exhibition by force." The demonstration was appropriated as a "work" in the exhibition, giving it "an air of contestation."[57] The institution thus attempted to recuperate the protest and present it on the organizers' own terms, and in so doing "harmoniously" recognize the position of the protestors as a valuable aspect of the exhibition history, and a demonstration of their own liberal ability to tolerate and incorporate dissent.

Consistent with his analysis in "Critical Limits," then, any message, however oppositional, when brought under the umbrella of the institution, became an argument for the institution. In stating this, however, Buren turns it around not as a resolution, but as a warning: "in these photos 'of the exhibition' the exhibitors are the helmeted and armed individuals. Justice is thus rendered to them."[58] Exhibiting themselves recursively, the organizers demonstrated the violence necessary to mount an art exhibition. Alongside his article, Buren himself chose to publish two images of the May 16 events. In one, the riot police stand around outside the Grand Palais before charging the sixty-some demonstrators that had come, and the second shows the entrance to the exhibition after the police had charged for a second time. If, in the context of the exhibition, such photographs would have confirmed the authority of those in charge, in the context of Buren's article, they came under the criticism of his own interpretive apparatus, as evidence of institutional malfeasance.

Despite Buren's early rhetoric about revolution, sympathies with the positions of radical groups, and attacks on other artists for only offering moderate advancements in the history of art, we cannot understand his project as an attempt to overthrow the institutions whose power structures he critiques. Rather, Buren's stripes intervene in the space of arts institutions in order to demonstrate how artworks, including his, depend on the institutions for their

intelligibility, and his relationships with the institutions where he showed were generally friendly. As he discussed in an interview with Catherine Millet years later, many different people work for institutions, and "if an artist has found a way to challenge the institution it is because someone at the museum agrees with what the artist is doing and that person is likely in conflict with other members of that institution." This nuanced perspective was beneficial to the dissemination of his work.[59] A photograph memorializing *Il s'agit de voir* speaks to this complicity between the artist and gallery director as the two pose like metonyms for their assets, arm in arm, grinning before the stripes that are as fused to the gallery as the two men are to each other. Just as the gallery provided Buren with his first solo exhibition, Buren's work in turn effectively promoted the gallery by serving as a monumental advertisement, transforming its entryway into a variation on the advertising hoardings where he had pasted the same striped papers in previous months. Crimp argues further that such complicities are the reason that, despite early protestations to the contrary, Buren presented his work as painting. It is only by presenting itself within the context of such a conventional artistic category that the work is able to ask, "What makes it possible to see a painting? What makes it possible to see a painting *as a painting*? And, under such conditions of its presentation, to what end painting?"[60]

Phenomenological Aspects: Authenticity and Illusion

Buren's institutional critique required direct viewer experience of the original work in situ in a way that undermined contemporary critiques of medium specificity. During this same period artists associated with pop, land art, and conceptual art were undermining hierarchies between direct experience and its mediation through strategies that included equalizing, or eliminating entirely, distinctions between artworks and their photographic representations. Buren sought to distance himself from such a collapse of distinctions. In the preface to a book of photographs documenting his use of the stripes as a "visual tool" from 1965 to 1988, he highlighted the irony of the ways in which viewers are willing to accept photographs of artworks as though they are the works themselves in a way that they will not do with, as he gives the example himself, a threatening crocodile.[61] A photograph of a crocodile will not bite, but for Buren, photographs of his artworks are dangerous as they threaten to consume what they represent. Photographic mediation, he argued, is powerful and yet "treasonous" because it eclipses the artwork about which it purports to speak and creates its own separate reality. For this reason, when photographs of his work have been printed, Buren has always been careful to have them

labeled not with the title of the work alone, but with the designation "*photo-souvenir*"—a way of pointing to the fact that *ceci n'est pas un œuvre d'art*. At the same time that the photograph functions as a "*photo-rappel*" (photo-reminder), however, he noted that it also functions as a "*photo-oubli*" (photo-forgetting) when the image overtakes and replaces the first impressions that one might form while seeing the original artwork in situ. At base, these issues of memory were issues of visibility, and the language Buren used evoked the mimicry and invisibility of camouflage. Referring to photographs as "cameleonesque," he described the relationship between the photograph and the artwork as the superposition "of one image on another, the second—under pretext of memorization—accelerating the process of forgetting the memory that one had of the first by substituting for it and succeeding at making therefore a sort of perfect palimpsest." The term "*photo-souvenir*," however, does not just emphasize the idea of the photograph as a sort of note-taking device, or memory aid, but in pointing to its function as such, it also guards against the idea that the image will become a "*photo-oubli*" by eroding the power of the photographs to be mistaken for what they represent. The expression "*photo-souvenir*," Buren hoped, would give the photographs a "somewhat negative, passive aspect" that would "reduce the impact that the photo-souvenir has immediately."[62]

Buren did not see treason as the essence of photography, however, but as a function of its relationship to perception. The more spatially sophisticated the artwork, the more treasonous the image becomes. Since a work that is spatially complex, and in some cases, surrounds the viewer, requires active seeing, it evolves as the viewer pieces together a full range of vision. Buren intended his *affichages sauvages* and other installations to multiply points of view, encourage the mobility of the viewer, and enlarge the frame of vision beyond two dimensions. Whereas being in the space with the work produces an active viewer because "one must discern among the heteroclite elements, stoop, walk, climb, descend, retrace one's steps," photographic representation undermines this complexity by framing a selection of the site and reinserting the viewer into a familiar, simplified position in which one is able to clearly identify the photographic subject. Buren articulated his position on photography specifically in opposition to André Malraux's plans to use the photographic reproduction of artworks in the creation of his *Musée imaginaire*. Buren saw Malraux's efforts to democratize art as "laudable," yet he described this project as a "discount museum," which he ultimately saw as a perversion of the masses.[63] Photography would seem to be an ideal medium for establishing artistic autonomy outside the museum, as photographic reproductions are able to freely circulate beyond institutional borders and find an audience independent of the museums and

galleries. In this light, Malraux's use of photography could itself be read as a critique of traditional arts institutions for the way that it undermined the aura of the precious objects that undergird institutional authority. Yet, as Buren shows, photography can just as easily be used as a tool for the assertion of institutional projects that diminish the historical and cultural specificity of artworks in order to recompose them according to their own narrative interests. In the shadow of Malraux's plans, Buren's insistence on the perceptual distinction between the artwork and its photographic representation focused attention on the value of the specific aesthetic experience of the viewer in order to assert the ability of the artwork to be autonomous vis-à-vis the museum, while contingent on its relationship to its situation in the world and in relation to viewers.

Buren placed emphasis on the eye and seeing, however, during a period in which sight and visuality were repeatedly being put in question by structuralist philosophers in France. As Martin Jay has demonstrated, during the postwar era, phenomenologists, psychoanalysts, and semioticians developed critiques that sought to undermine the primacy of vision and the "disembodied eye" that had emerged during the Enlightenment with Descartes to instead situate sight within the flux of a sensorial body.[64] It became common during the period in which Buren was developing his practice to think of the subject not as standing apart from the world and seeing from an omniscient remove, but as immersed in a world of images that themselves could no longer be expected to reveal deep truth and knowledge but instead provided only surface illusions. Moreover, vision became associated with repression in the form of surveillance, functioning as part of an apparatus that compelled self-regulation of behaviors, turning the supposed seeing subject into an object of the other's controlling gaze. Given the strong intellectual culture of critique around vision, it is interesting that Buren insisted so strongly on seeing as the key aspect of his work, yet the way in which he did so sought to reveal the relationship between the invisible and the visible in order to show how institutional structures hide and reveal, frame and marginalize.

Jean-François Lyotard took an interest in interpreting Buren's work through a phenomenological lens at the end of the 1970s, arguing that it provided a vision appropriate to the culture and politics of the moment. In his early attention to painting, Lyotard had focused on figurative work, writing about Cézanne, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty had done three decades earlier in the wake of World War II with his essay "Cézanne's Doubt," before turning his interest toward the art of his own time, befriending and writing about hyperrealist cinematic painter Jacques Monory.[65] Eventually, however, he

came to argue that realism assumes a viewer with an intact subjectivity, one that can look at an artwork and take for granted that that viewer recognizes what he or she sees. In an implicit attack on the artistic restrictions and presumptions that characterized both the former Zhdanovist doctrine of the Soviet Union and the realist tendencies of French leftists during the period in which he wrote, Lyotard argued that this ideal viewer is not only presumed to understand "what an apple is," but, moreover, is able to identify its socialist traits.[66] Such a worldview was not appropriate to Cézanne, who painted famously uncertain studies of apples during a time when understandings of perception were destabilized by advances in physiology, and it would not be appropriate to France in the 1970s, in a country and during a time that was still negotiating the ongoing process of decolonization, seeking its footing after the fall from the supposed utopian heights of 1968, and in the midst of an oil crisis and economic downturn that brought the end of the Thirty Glorious Years. Lyotard argued that Europe was particularly saddled with doubt about its economic future, its relationships with its former colonies, the nationals that were migrating to the metropole, and its cultural relevance in the shadow of US hegemony. In a time when subjectivity was so in question, realist art, he argued, was not appropriate. Rhetorically, he asked, "Will I recognize my apple?" Lyotard distinguishes between what is given in reality and the realm of ideas in which thinking takes place. In order to make the viewer think, the artist must produce work that, in his words, "exceeds what is given" and makes visible what is not immediately apparent.

Lyotard's essay, "Faire voir les invisible, ou: Contre le réalisme," focused on Buren's outdoor artwork *Les couleurs: Sculptures* (1977) and its indoor pendant *Les formes: Peintures* (1977), both of which were purchased by the Centre Pompidou on the occasion of its opening, and both of which undermined the institution's ability to capture and control their visibility. For *Les couleurs* Buren had fifteen flags measuring around 1.5 by 3 meters each and made from striped fabric in five different colors—sky blue, yellow, orange, red, and green—each of which appeared three times, and each of which had its extreme vertical edges painted white (see plate 12). The flags were positioned on rooftops and monuments across the city, including on the Palais de Chaillot, the Grand Palais, and the Louvre, and he positioned telescopes on the rooftop terrace of the museum, complete with guides that instructed visitors on where to point the telescopes in order to see them.[67]

The museum had just opened its doors on January 31, 1977, following years of construction, an even longer public debate, and decades of itinerancy for the national public collection of modern art, which had been progressively grow-

ing since the nineteenth century. *Les couleurs* was among the first artworks to be collected specifically for the new location, and it was the first from among these to go on public display. The work celebrated the new building both in its architecture and in the position that it occupied in the city. Making use of the new museum's panoramic roof terrace, which provided sweeping views north, west, and south, the work privileged the museum as offering the only complete view of the work so that a visitor would be able to see all of the flags in quick succession from a single location, knowing, thanks to the collaged photographs of the cityscape identifying the name of each flag location like a distant mountain peak, that they had achieved a comprehensive view of the artwork. While Buren's *affichage* projects could only be seen punctually, and would most likely be seen unexpectedly, *Les couleurs* provided visual stability. For Alfred Pacquement, who was a curator at the time when *Les couleurs* was installed, and its director at the time of the museum's Buren retrospective in 2002, the work was particularly appropriate to the building whose glass walls provide views out over most of the city.[68] Placing the flags beyond the frame of the building and thereby creating a work that required specifically seeing across the boundary between the inside and outside, museum and the streets, affirmed the vision of planners and architects who imagined the Centre Pompidou as a museum that would be integrated with the city, a permeable structure that would welcome the street culture of the neighborhood.

A few pages away, in the same catalogue, Buchloh argued that the way in which Buren fulfilled the vision of the museum did not work to level it with the street, but instead reinscribed its authority. Like Lyotard, Buchloh's concern over the state of contemporary art was anchored in cultural and political developments of the time. He pointed to shifts in support for the arts during the 1970s that resulted in artists losing the personal freedoms they had enjoyed in the previous decade, which had allowed artists to produce more politically and formally radical art. In periods of economic hardship, artists, he argued, became "symbolic legitimation" for private enterprise and public institutions.[69] Projects like *Les couleurs* evidenced this by using size and scale as "cynical compensation for critical negation," and in consequence, became "simply decorative" rather than socially engaged. Indeed, Buchloh's position on Beaubourg resembled that of many leftist artists, critics, and intellectuals of the era who lamented Malraux's cultural policy of the previous decade. "The utopian promise of the museum, to offer equality and public access to historic knowledge and cultural experience," had become, he argued, "perverted into a cynical strategy of populism that sells public legacies of bourgeois culture as a sedative/substitute," which becomes itself "consumable goods" that "conceal

its real price of labor."[70] Flags were loaded with associations of nationalism and corporatism, as the flag was ubiquitous in France at the time—a fact that was highlighted by the proximity of Buren's stripes flying in direct proximity to those of the department stores La Samaritaine, the Galeries Lafayette, and the Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville, while others were planted directly atop architectural monuments to national culture. Whereas Buchloh's 1977 essay "Formalism and Historicity" argued that Buren's painting both drew on the history of art and "assum[ed] the role of the critical historian of his own activity," with this new work he reevaluated his judgment, finding it to have become a form of entertainment too squarely focused on the present.[71] With the loss of its critical historicity, its status degraded, according to Buchloh, to "mere objecthood" or "mere aesthetic voluntarism, i.e., decoration."[72]

Equally interested in the ambiguities of *Les couleurs*, Lyotard offered a contrasting reading of the work that commended its destabilizing effects on the institution. He rejected the idea that the flags were a sign of "Caesarism" in a battle to take over the capital—an effort that would accord with Louis Chevalier's accusation that the new museum for which the project was designed was part of the technocratic takeover of the lived city—and instead read it as embracing instability. In understanding the visual effect of the project, Lyotard distinguishes, as Buren might have, between the project as experienced directly and its photographic reproduction.[73] The *photos-souvenirs* of flags soaring among the roofs, chimneys, and domes of the city, he argues, generated the impression of domination due to the way that they zeroed in on their optical targets and were then manipulated in the darkroom to produce the ideal clarity, lighting, and enlargement. Most importantly, Lyotard considered the role of the margins that are eliminated by the *photos-souvenirs*. Without them, one is left with the impression that the work is monocular, linear, immobile, definitive. For the viewer standing atop the Centre Pompidou and trying to match up the guides with the city as seen through a telescope, the process did not create an affirmative one-to-one relationship. Instead, as Lyotard described, the viewer "explores, grazes the deranged space, held by a thousand unexpected *à côtés*," while the banners themselves are constantly readjusted by the weather.[74] The experience of looking through the telescope plunges the viewer into a distortion in which the vertically oriented, disembodied vision of monocular perspective is augmented to the point that it is denaturalized, becoming a visual hindrance. In this way, the telescopes' technique for emphasizing the participatory nature of viewing is not unlike Le Parc's distorting glasses for another vision that plunged their wearers into a virtual kaleidoscopic world, with the difference that Buren trades Le Parc's fascination with the distrac-

tion of dominant peripheries for a near total lack of peripheral vision, resulting in a frustrating inability to scan. Additionally, by creating a work about distance viewing, this in situ project put in question what the actual site of the work would be. Is it the place where the artwork is installed, or is it the place from which it is seen? In separating the two spaces, Buren effectively amplified the idea of the disembodied eye, while, according to Lyotard, immersing the viewer in the density of the city landscape. As with the imagined realist apple, Lyotard might have wondered, Will I recognize my flag? Yet such a question posed here implies more pointedly the roles of nationalism and commerce as constitutive elements in the formation, or corruption, of the public sphere and the individual's in/ability to identify with social markers dressed up as officialdom.

As a pendant to *Les couleurs: Sculptures*, Buren conceived another set of striped canvases titled *Les formes: Peintures* to be installed inside the museum. For this project he cut black and white striped canvases to the exact dimensions of five paintings hanging in the museum's modern collection, painted the extreme left stripe with white acrylic paint on the recto side, and mounted them on the wall directly behind the paintings so that they could not immediately be seen.[75] The only way that a museum visitor would know that the striped canvases were there would be by reading the explanatory wall labels for Buren's works that were affixed below those identifying the paintings that covered them. The artist delegated the choice of paintings to the museum authorities, who selected works that were important to the collection, represented different periods and dimensions, and were regularly placed in the continuity of galleries.[76] Although the curators made choices consistent with their usual working processes, for Buren, these specific canvases did not convey any particular meaning; rather, the installation referred back to his argument in "Critical Limits." In writing about *Les formes*, Buren echoed a point from his earlier essay, stating that the project "reinforces the fact that underneath a frame, there is always something that the frame ignores or camouflages or that is foreign to it, that is to say the wall, and this wall is not innocent."[77] Aligning perfectly with the frame of the host painting, the hidden canvas invites the viewer to step away from a standard viewing position to nearly place his or her head against the wall in search of the meager thinness of the canvas in cross-section.

For Lyotard, this movement of the viewer physically displacing him- or herself in space as necessary to the correct visualization of the work recalled the anamorphic skull in Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), and Jacques Lacan's analysis that anamorphosis counters the symbolic order of painting

Francis Picabia
Paris 1879 – Paris 1953
L'œil cacodylate, 1921

Achat de l'Etat, 1967
AM 4408 P

Daniel Buren
Boulogne-sur-Seine 1938
Les Formes : peinture, 1977
Sous "L'ŒIl cacodylate" de PICABIA, un tissu de 365 x 191,5 cm
rayé blanc et noir de bandes verticales de 8,7 cm et dont
la première bande blanche à gauche est recouverte de peinture acrylique blanche
4 peintures, toutes du même type, se trouvent derrière 4 autres oeuvres du Musée.

Achat du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1977
AM 1977 - 662

Figure 2.12. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Les formes: Peintures*, travail in situ, 1977, collection MNAM, Centre Pompidou, Paris. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

by undercutting what is illusionistically represented to instead force a recognition that the painting exists in real space. Of course, all of the modern paintings behind which Buren's stripes were situated had already undermined the reign of linear perspective and broken with illusionistic space, yet in doing so the artists mostly worked within the frame of the object whose autonomy was not in question. If modernist painting broke with the illusion that the painting was a window into a three-dimensional space to instead call attention to it as an object constructed from materials, Buren's *Les formes*, like *Les couleurs*, advances this movement by recognizing the objecthood of the artwork while reinvesting it with three-dimensionality by showing it to be integrated into the world of which it is a part. In this way, his challenge to disciplinary boundaries was an essential aspect of his institutional critique. His two-dimensional canvases and posters were not intended to be flat surfaces in themselves, but to exist only in relation to the three-dimensional spaces that surrounded them; his *peintures* were *formes*. Similarly, as "*couleurs*" his stripes took on the forms of *sculptures* as flags that wave and billow in the wind and drape in folds as they rise above their rooftop plinths and dot the city with color. Asserting the physical integration of the work into real space exceeded the physical limitations of the institution, while corrupting disciplinary specificity undermined the

conservative epistemological distinctions whose boundaries continued to be policed by formalist artists, critics, and salon organizers.

As important as the promiscuous range of sites at which Buren's work would appear was the range of ways in which it disappeared. It was their challenge to visibility that unified his two projects for the new museum. Buren himself observed that while *Les couleurs* was "as far as possible" from the museum and therefore "(at the limit of the visible)," *Les formes* could be found in "the most interior place possible of the Museum, in its heart even, within its hanging works," it was "the closest possible," and also therefore "(at the limit of the visible)."[78] Buren used the invisibility of his own work to put pressure on the functions of museum institutionalization. The work not only pointed to the support of the museum by intervening on the wall that physically supported the paintings, but it also pointed to the system of paratexts that it uses to inscribe artworks within epistemological systems of identifying, categorizing, and cataloging. The artwork was present but invisible, much like institutional power itself, and like institutional power, if one knew the stripes were there, one could look for them, and they would reveal themselves. Considering the problem of institutional critique in visual art, Lyotard offered that if one wanted to conceive an exhibition in which the invisible presuppositions of art exhibitions are made visible that one would have to understand the visible and invisible as "trespassing" on each other in "reciprocal implication."[79] Drawing on Gestalt theory, he argued that "the visual does not have a homogeneous reality, but necessarily comports the invisible" in an alternation between seeing and not seeing in a temporal unfolding. Each element of the visual object is, in principle, successively visible, but the totality of this object is, in principle, simultaneously invisible. "The visual then does not include only the unseen, but also the invisible."[80] It is not only that the whole cannot be seen in the moment, but also that seeing it completely is impossible. It slips away in being exposed. Its totality is necessarily invisible. Such interpretation demanded recognition of the intersubjective relationship between the artwork and the viewer as well as the fact that a perception in flux meant a destabilization of meaning for the artwork. Meaning would be fixed neither by the institution nor by the artist on whose mastery the institution depends.

Conclusion: Decorative Means and Ends

The "style of absence" that characterized the zero degree became in Buren's work a style of disappearance. The camouflaging that occurred as the color and geometry of his stripes and installations mimicked the appearance of advertising and the function of wallpaper, flags, or other devices was visual, but

it was also rooted in the social appropriateness of the stripes to the contexts in which they were situated. Buchloh dismissively referred to *Les couleurs* as "decorative," yet others have embraced this aspect of Buren's work and championed the social importance and history of the decorative arts. Defenders of the decorative, including Buren himself, have pointed to the way that decoration has long participated in the interdisciplinary blurring of boundaries between painting, sculpture, and architecture, and, in so doing, has often created installations that were in situ long before site specificity became a category of art practice. Others have argued that exhibiting "minor" decorative art progressively undermined the hierarchy of major fine arts museums. For Buchloh, however, decoration raised the problem of cultural affirmation as the "merely aesthetic" displaced "critical negation."[81]

Those defending decoration would seem to have agreed with Buchloh on the affirmative history of the decorative arts. In a roundtable conversation on Buren's work that took place in 1992—after Buren had passed decisively into creating dishes and wallpapers for private residences—philosopher Jean-Louis Deotte noted that at the root of the word decorative is decorum: "the ensemble of rules that it is suitable to follow in order to maintain rank in good society."[82] François Mathey, chief curator at the Museum of Decorative Arts, and the general commissioner of the 1972 "expo Pompidou," similarly praised the historical decorative while lamenting its undignified moral fall. Citing seventeenth-century poet Antoine Furetière, he argued that the decorative was a way of adding theater to the world. Yet he observed an "insidious slippage" during the nineteenth century from the sentiment of moral or social obligation in decorum to bourgeois decoration. Mathey argued that during the reign of Louis-Philippe I, "ornament disappeared along with simple decency," and in this same moment, the "decorative" appears as decorum's farcical double alongside the rise of industry and money.[83] During this period, decorative art became associated with the profit of the industries that were used to mass-manufacture art objects for the first time, and we see the triumph of the effect of different styles that are linked not by historical force, but by the mere fact of their affectation in a sort of nineteenth-century pastiche. Referring to the *juste milieu* art of the July Monarchy, but using language that could be applied to the culture of advertising that Arsène-Henry described during the Thirty Glorious Years, Mathey argued that "the everyday universe borrowed the supposed mask of art, itself taxed with the 'decorative,' as if it were necessary to add to it a supplementary value. This excessively decorative art well expressed the complacent satisfaction of a certain society padded in its certitudes." For Mathey, the most important thing is that artwork be "just,

dignified, moral," all qualities that modern decoration failed to achieve.[84] In contrast to this, Buren embraced the decorative and rejected morality, yet the way in which he did so did not embrace the spectacle that Debord condemned. Instead, Buren minimized the consumerist messages that his art would have communicated through the effect of blending into its environment by embracing its visual style.

In a 2001 interview, Buren differentiated among various ways of understanding the decorative and defended his work against the judgment that its decorative element was somehow anticritical:

> I am absolutely not put off by the terms "decoration," "décor," "decorative," etc. The curious thing, is that they were, it seems to me, led astray of their initial meaning during the entire 20th century to become a sort of insult imposed on works that are made to carry this qualification. . . . The decorative for me, in the best sense of the term, is an integral part of art, be it ancient, classical, or modern, figurative or not, in two dimensions or three dimensional. What's more, to work directly in the place, on the place, with the place, or against the place, recognizes *ipso facto* a physical attachment to the place in question and in this way rejoins one of the characteristics of art called decorative. To deny it would be stupid. But the decorative is stronger and subtle and slides into all works, even the most traditional and transportable that think they escape it, and therefore often appear to the detriment of these here, because they become the "décor" of a wall, of a space, of a place that they never either thought about or conceived. These works become therefore decorative in the most pejorative sense of the term.[85]

Buren would have his own work escape the denigrated form of decoration since it is composed in situ and thereby acknowledges the unavoidable attachment of art to physical space. Importantly, in contrast to the in situ's capacity to transform the space in which it exists as its critical function, through the years he would deploy the term "decorative" to deprecate institutions' use of artworks.

Perhaps more notably, Buren accused Harald Szeemann of using artists' work decoratively in his text "Exhibition of an Exhibition," which he prepared as a response to *Documenta V* (1972). "More and more, the subject of an exhibition tends not to be the display of artworks, but the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art," Buren wrote. "The works presented are touches of color—carefully chosen—for the picture that each section (room) composes in the ensemble," and in so doing, the curator has a leveling effect on all of

the artworks. Art is destroyed in being exhibited in such circumstances because, as Buren noted, "even if yesterday, the work became famous thanks to the Museum, today it no longer serves as anything other than a decorative gadget for the survival of the Museum as a picture, a picture whose author is none other than the exhibition organizer himself."[86] The historical distinction that Buren made in this statement pointed to a particular innovation of Szeemann's at the end of the 1960s, when he effectively became as well known as the artists that he showed for the exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitude Becomes Form: Works-Processes-Concepts-Situations-Information* (1969). Szeemann's curatorial choices for this show innovated the idea of the "invitation exhibition," in which he allowed the invited artists to use the Bern Kunsthalle, where Szeemann was director, as a studio space for producing whatever they chose, rather than having the curator select specific works from the artists' studios in advance. This in itself can be understood as an act of curatorial institutional critique, which echoes Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni's painting demonstration at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture two years earlier. It was indeed one that displeased the Kunsthalle's board of directors, yet Buren understood this technique to be a false display of freedom, an "illusion of liberty" that masked the power structures in play. Notably, this included Szeemann's unusual acquisition of private funding from the tobacco company Philip Morris, whose support allowed him to act unilaterally in organizing the exhibition. As sociologist Christoph Behnke has argued, Szeemann's curatorial innovations deprofessionalized exhibition in a way that was antagonistic to bourgeois divisions of labor while inventing the idea of the curator as a "managerial" "administrator" of art.[87]

Buren was not invited to exhibit in Bern, but he arrived anyway, prepared to argue for a truer artistic liberty by posting his own stripes around the city, including over advertising for cigarettes. The city responded by encroaching on Buren's bodily liberty by arriving at his apartment in the night, roughing him up, and taking him to jail, where he was charged with defacing the city. While Buren's intervention was less destructive than, for example, Michael Heizer's, which involved destroying a section of pavement with a wrecking ball, his did not fall within the protective sanction of the institution, so it incited the repressive force of the police. Three years later, Szeemann invited Buren to exhibit at *Documenta V*, but again Buren protested Szeemann's curation, this time by countering his "gadget decoration" with nearly invisible white stripes painted on white paper that he used to decoratively cover the walls of several galleries. In this way, he inserted himself among the other works on display while breaking up Szeemann's curatorial program. Buren's comments

Figure 2.13. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Exposition d'une exposition, une pièce en 7 tableaux*, travail in situ, in *Documenta V*, Kassel, 1972. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

on decoration are essential to understanding the critical function of *Les formes* five years later. The invisibility of the stripes hiding behind the other canvases in the Centre Pompidou's collection can be seen as presenting a challenge to curatorial authority. Hiding his own canvases was an act of refusal, a protest against the museum, whose role was thereby limited to categorizing, documenting, conserving, but not, in this case, displaying or "decorating."

This use of the decorative and decorum for the purposes of institutional critique was being developed at the same time that Buren was working, albeit in a different visual mode, by Marcel Broodthaers. Through the 1970s, Broodthaers used décor not just as a strategy of display, but as the very subject of his artwork. These works emerged in the aftermath of 1968, during which Broodthaers himself gave a speech against institutional authority at the Palace of Fine Arts in Brussels. Later that year he presented his *Musée d'art moderne*, a set of wooden art shipping crates stamped with standard signage indicating the proper way to transport the crate and its would-be precious contents along with a set of postcard reproductions of artworks, even as the paintings or sculptures one would expect to see were absent. In 1972, he added the *Section des aigles*, and the *Section de publicité*, which developed first as a museum collection specializing in representations of eagles across epochs, cultures, and

high and low media, and then a variation on this theme that was devoted to representations of the raptors in advertising imagery. In these collections and installations, Broodthaers reproduced the trappings of art-museum bureaucracy in an effort to highlight the ideological production of the museum as an institution that is based in Enlightenment rationality, yet steeped in excesses that emerged in bureaucratic frustration and defeat.[88]

The decorative aspect of Broodthaers's work did not fully develop, however, until two years later, when, at the Palace of Fine Arts in 1974, he presented his *Un jardin d'hiver*, an accumulation of potted palm trees and folding chairs organized in such a way as to produce a cliché arrangement. Rachel Haidu sees in this work a critique of institutions that makes use of decorative vegetation in order to evoke an environment specific to the period of the nineteenth century in which museums came to flourish.[89] By creating an atmosphere reminiscent of the café or waiting room within the museum, he brought together public and private space to show that, more than just spaces of sensory perception, museums are conditioned by, and themselves reiterate, historical narratives. Despite the fact that the spaces that Broodthaers constructs provide comfort for the viewer, who is invited to sit among calming greenery, Haidu argues that the décors had an alienating effect on the spectator, who "awkwardly fail[s] to find a place in the arrangement of objects."[90] The following year he presented two installations titled *Décor: A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers* on the themes of nineteenth- and twentieth-century war, showing, as Haidu says, the "morbid nonchalance" of war's domestic spectacularization.[91] The spatial discomfort that Broodthaers created for his audience, Haidu argues, constantly restaged the theme of noncommunication and spoke to the political alienation of the post-1968 years. His perspective on communication was at odds with period enthusiasms over the potentials of free speech. While one can use this speech in public in order to claim self-representation, it is always ultimately refracted through (if not already originating in) the language of the administered world. A similar dialectic of freedom and control played out in the museum. Whereas art was supposed to embody authenticity and free expression, the museum, Broodthaers demonstrated, dehistoricizes its holdings as it takes objects out of the settings appropriate to their social engagement to preserve them in rationalized chronologies and taxonomies. Broodthaers used the decorative to describe this withdrawal from political engagement to the private world of fantasies cosseted by both comforting interior design and the administration that preserves it.

For both Mathey and Broodthaers, evocations of the decorative raise the specter of the nineteenth century. This period of rapid change and modern-

ization held the promise of mass democratization and expansion of cultural literacy, as well as the threat of evacuating or hollowing out tradition. Buren's practices, since at least his early demonstrations, have been interested in the historical development of arts institutions, as the artists made explicit in arguing for continuity with salons of the previous century—all were, as they put it, "objectively reactionary" in promoting the myth of artistic freedom. Rather than referring back to a golden age, however bureaucratized, Buren used the decorative to focus on the present. In some cases, this included, as with Broodthaers, a semiotic interest in advertising, but he added to this a focus on spaces of sensorial experience and viewer perception.

Buren's use of decoration as institutional critique functions according to the way that it articulates decorum. The bourgeois revolution that Mathey credited with its downfall was the very source of the awning materials that Buren later adopted. If the material that he used came from the world of decoration, the way in which his work operated made use of decorum in the sense that it required the rules of institutions in order to be intelligible. His use of the decorative allowed him to employ a minor art form typically associated with the margins of a space, and many of Buren's "decorative" works are unconventional installations that highlight the liminal spaces or the places where the building meets the surrounding world: the windows, doors, moldings, parts of the building that one sees or passes through. One would not be inclined to pay these spaces much attention if not for the chance that they were ornamented. Buren's stripes point to the contingencies of the museum or gallery and thereby make it appear less as a hermetic monolith. Such work is "just, dignified, and moral," to use Mathey's words, in ways that are intelligible to the art establishment without seeking to be agreeable to it by using the gallery spaces provided in the ways that the institutions intended. In a reversal of Mathey's dismissal of decoration in favor of "morality," Buren embraced the decorative in his work and argued in 1968 that the reason that he did not reject the art world entirely was because he was *not* a moralist.[92] If he were, he might have made a point of working, for example, exclusively outside the art world.

The rules that Buren followed were those of the museum, but his use of decorum can equally be applied to the minor arts of street advertising. In these instances, however, he mimics the rules to the effect that he disappears into his environment. The blankness of Buren's stripes, their insistence on ephemerality as they are destroyed in the weather and by the public, and the fact that the reality that they create disappears along with them, unpreserved by the camera, all suggest the absence of history in this work that does not

so much remember as it shows the process of forgetting, as it stages its own disappearance. In its application to the streets, then, it translates Mathey's observation that those who deal with the decorative "treat the living environment." While the GRAV also made objects that were intended to decorate private homes, Buren's use of the decorative was at odds with the former group's flashy, eye-catching sparkle, as his use of bright geometric colors disappeared, rather than leapt out, from their environment. The instability that his works generated was less based on optical illusion than the interpretive ambiguity that would follow upon seeing his work simultaneously in and out of place.

Buren's embrace of the zero degree decentered the artist, and his gallery and street installations worked to decenter the viewer. At the same time, the critique that his work made against French cultural policy evolved along with the adaptations of government to social demands. While retaining their ambivalence and visual instability, as Lyotard showed, arts institutions changed with the times, and Buren's objectives increasingly cohered with state projects. As Caillois observed, ornamentation was an essential aspect of mimicry, yet in the epigram to his essay he cited a warning that he elsewhere attributed to the Cabala: "Beware," he wrote, "in playing the ghost one becomes it."[93] The frightening power of the ghost is only one side of an ambivalence, the other face of which is marginalization and invisibility. To return to Crimp's question about the visibility of painting as such, the more that Buren's stripes were visible as artworks, the more they merged with institutional expectations. The camouflaging effect of Buren's work, and the decorum with which it followed the rules of its various sites, meant that the work risked losing its friction and transparently fading into complicity with the ideological values of the places in which he would situate his stripes.

ANDRÉ CADERE'S CALLIGRAMS OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

In 1973, André Cadere walked into an exhibition where the work of Daniel Buren—an artist he had recently started antagonizing—was on view. Cadere was carrying an example of his own artwork: an unwieldy, nearly seven-foot-long bar constructed from four-inch-diameter spools of wood that he had painted in conspicuous yellow, red, and black. The exhibition showcased recent abstract European and North American painting and took place in an otherwise vacant, luxurious apartment in Paris. Observing a resemblance between the paintings on display and the object he had brought along, Cadere decided to leave his imposing bar in the entryway so that it could be appreciated alongside the other artworks. A few days went by, and he returned only to find that his bar had been hidden away in a closet. To make sure that its presence at the exhibition did not go unnoticed, he mailed out an exhibition announcement. On it, he titled his work *Unlimited Painting* and instructed visitors to seek out the sequestered bar in the "broom closet" at "16, Place Vendôme, first floor on the left." Noting the apartment's other not-to-be-missed attractions, the mailing additionally listed the apartment's mirrors, marble chimneys, faux marble painting, crystal chandeliers, "etc.," and "a painting exhibition reuniting certain painters who would put painting in question"—the full title of the exhibition the artist had originally come to see. The exhibition organizers—Buren's brother,

3

PEINTURE SANS FIN /   UNLIMITED PAINTING

Travail de Cadéré exposé en juin dans la partie appelée " Cagibi " d'un local situé au 16, Place Vendôme, premier étage gauche.

Le reste du local était occupé par :

— quelques miroirs

— des cheminées en marbre

— une exposition de peinture réunissant certains peintres qui mettraient la peinture en question

— de la peinture imitant le marbre sur certaines portes et murs

— des lustres en cristal

— etc...

Figure 3.1. André Cadere, invitation to the exhibition *Une exposition de peinture réunissant certains peintres qui mettraient la peinture en question* (*A Painting Exhibition Reuniting Certain Painters Who Would Put Painting in Question*), 1973. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

Michel Claura, and philosophy professor René Denizot—apparently did not agree with Cadere's guerrilla tactics, and by the end of the exhibition, *Une exposition de peinture réunissant certains peintres qui mettraient la peinture en question* (*A Painting Exhibition Reuniting Certain Painters Who Would Put Painting in Question*), the bar had mysteriously disappeared altogether.[1]

As Cadere claims to have understood the curators' intentions, his bar was perfectly suited to participate in the exhibition. In *Histoire d'un travail*, a catalogue raisonné that he assembled just before his death, Cadere reflected on the appropriateness of *Unlimited Painting*: "In the manner in which this piece consisted in an assemblage of segments of *painted* wood, it assumed a relationship to painting. Additionally, the painted surface being cylindrical, it is without end, with neither recto nor verso. In that way, my work has the status of covering the domain of painting, all while putting it in question."[2]

Based on the self-descriptive title of the exhibition, Cadere's work, as he presented it here, would have engaged productively with the other artists' works that were on display. Photographs documenting the exhibition's installation show Giorgio Griffa's wide swathes of creased cloth stained with pigment loosely hung from nails in the wall; Robert Mangold's identically

proportioned, smooth, heavy monochrome easel paintings conjoined along their vertical sides; Robert Ryman's studies comparing various shades of white square figures and grounds; Alan Charleton's painting groups in which one canvas framed another that hovers within its borders; Niele Toroni's canvases, marked by the perfect indexical imprint of the brush with which they were serially dabbed before being dropped from the ceiling and rolled several feet across the floor; and Buren's prefabricated awning-material pieces, one that partially stretched across a window like a valence and a second that covered an entire wall, including the painting that hung upon it, its gilded frame barely peeking from behind the edge of the striped canvas. These avant-garde experiments put painting in question by investigating the boundaries between the visible and its physical support.[3] Pigment separated from medium, paint achieved object status, the industrial rubbed up against the handmade, and canvas was liberated from stretcher and pointed to the support of the space around it. Focusing on the materiality of his artworks was similarly of central importance to Cadere, who called attention to their physicality in referring to them as "round bars of wood," yet unlike some of the invited artists, he insisted his formalism could not be constrained by the ideological programs of the institutions that at least some of them claimed to resist.

The gambit that Cadere staged in leaving his bar behind put pressure on the relationship between art that, in 1973, continued to produce itself as autonomous, and art invested in social and institutional critiques. Formally, all of the painting presented at *A Painting Exhibition* drew from the abstract investigations made possible by the establishment of artistic autonomy in a market that promotes individual authorship. Several of the artists on show, however, practiced a strain of minimalist painting that rejected the idea of the artist as the author of a worldview that he or she could bestow on a public by producing great artworks. Among these was Buren, who had been very visibly establishing his own brand of site-specific institutional critique since the mid-1960s and whose essay "Limites critiques" ("Critical Limits"), discussed in chapter 2, Cadere was apparently referencing with his own *Unlimited Painting*. In Buren's text, he outlined the cultural and institutional frameworks that delimit an artwork's possible range of meanings, and although the text can be used as an interpretive key to understanding his own work's use of surfaces and supports, it did not claim a position that would allow artists to emancipate their work from those limits. Cadere's purpose was seemingly to place himself within the orbit of the more prominent artist so as to call attention to his own work, which was formally and strategically very similar, but with the crucial difference, so Cadere argued, that he was more institutionally independent,

Figure 3.2. Installation of *A Painting Exhibition . . .* , 1973. Photograph by Eustachy Kossakowski. © Anka Ptaszkowska. The negative is owned by Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland.

"unlimited."[4] His interjection at the exhibition highlighted what he saw as Buren's overreliance on stable institutional locations, and did so through a two-fold process that tested the bounds of acceptable display at the exhibition and put in question the critical effectiveness of the work's decorative aspect by equating the officially exhibited paintings with the apartment's other paraphernalia. In doing so, he called attention to a situation in which neo-avant-garde painting could be seen as a collection of formalist exercises consistent with the consumable bourgeois narrative of autonomous artistic progress.

Formal commonalities between Cadere and Buren push back against autonomy by highlighting the centrality of performance and display as fundamental to encasing objects that refused to communicate directly in layers of meaning that are not primarily visible. Like Buren, Cadere produced a single type of iconic work based on systematically repeated formulas that he intended to eliminate his own subjective import and neutralize the significance of viewer interpretation. In 1970, he began making "round bars of wood" exclusively, and by his premature death from cancer in 1978, he had produced approximately two hundred of them. The similarity among the bars meant that their display, which changed according to institutional and physical context, became their primary and most significant variable. Their handiness gave them a portability that allowed the artist to show them while traversing the private/public boundaries of galleries. While Buren's work from this period similarly played across the boundaries of institutional limitation, the highly visible and intentional attachment to the body of the mobile artist was the feature by which Cadere argued their opposition to Buren.[5] Whereas in situ works generally complemented the sites in which they were placed, Cadere reversed the hierarchy of influence such that the bars created a constellation of display locations—both upscale galleries and downtown street corners—that would be defined by their shared relation to his round bars of wood. Rather than creating harmony between work and site, Cadere's juxtapositions, more often than not, based their critique on the cultural inappropriateness of the art object's presence within and outside artistic contexts.

His intervention at *A Painting Exhibition* demonstrated that this inappropriateness is always arbitrarily determined by subjective decisions, in this case, those of the curators, even as their framing of the show suggested that their process was based on a transparent and rational set of criteria. The lengthy, descriptive title that Claura and Denizot chose for *A Painting Exhibition* bore a family resemblance to the instructive aesthetic of titles like *Il ne s'agissait évidemment que de regarder des toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni*, discussed in chapter 2, as it announced a common mode of thinking about art and its

relationship to display. The title reproduced the formal logic that Claura identified in the paintings as they sought out what he referred to as a "neutrality" that did not tell the viewer what to think. In this way, the work on view echoed Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni's manifestos from 1966 that encouraged greater intellectual engagement on the part of the viewer by presenting them with less to see. The title announced both what the exhibition did, "reuniting certain painters who would put painting in question," and its self-awareness as a particular form of event, "an exhibition." Such a conspicuous statement of the obvious positioned the organizers as thinking in the same vein and sharing the goals of the painters. If the painters were making painting about painting, then the exhibition organizers were making an exhibition, but the way in which that exhibition was then *about* exhibition was limited to formal exercises, rather than investigating the cultural limitation that Buren had written about in his 1971 essay "Critical Limits." The exhibition masked any politics present in the painters' works with a pastiche of the conceptual penchant for tautology. While a number of the artists shown in the exhibition have historically been grouped under the category of conceptualism, it would seem that for Claura, conceptual art was nothing more than a style whose content was as enriching as its visual presentation. As he stated in a dialogue with Seth Siegelaub from the same year (yet while speaking as though conceptual art's moment had passed), conceptual art "had the seductive appeal of intellectual pretense. It was, in fact, a mixture of trivial gags and big ideas: in place of having a painting, no more than a title is provided, but, at the same time, 'it poses a problem.' This provided for the instantaneous assimilation of the magic of the word: if it is 'conceptual' it is interesting. Spiritual and intellectual elevation by conceptual art—there is no doubt that it was this hope that caused a large part of the clientele to follow it."[6]

Such a statement reduces a movement—which, by 1973, was varied enough to itself be questionable *as* a movement—to a marketing strategy that European artists adopted because it was an inexpensive and expeditious way to align themselves with the American avant-garde from which it originated. Though six years earlier Claura had worked with and promoted Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni's explicitly oppositional demonstrations against institutional conventions, Cadere's exhibition suggests that with *A Painting Exhibition* Claura now evacuated the political intent from the work and reduced its social significance to the marketability he helped to guarantee through the manipulation of the codes he himself established. Exposing the lack of neutrality in Claura and Denizot's exhibition of the work was, of course, Cadere's ambition.

More than an acknowledgment of his own work's affinity with these paintings, Cadere's observation that he too was putting painting in question affected a false naiveté that oversimplifies his own project. The parodic self-evidence of Cadere's *Unlimited Painting* announcement clarified his intentions.[7] Playing off of Claura and Denizot's adopted conceptual aesthetic, Cadere exposed the material reality that was masked by the assumed transparency of the exhibition's reduction to the zero degree. While Claura and Denizot transformed description into a proper name, Cadere responded by listing the exhibition title among generic mirrors, chimneys, and chandeliers, thereby returning the proper name to the status of a common one. The self-evident disinterestedness of Claura and Denizot's title ostensibly served to distance the exhibition from any contingent aspects that might creep in to bear on either its motivation or its reception, yet not only did Cadere insist on the divergence between the literal and the metaphorical uses of the title's wording, but the tools that he used to pry these two registers of signification apart were specifically the luxury objects whose presence among the artworks had previously been merely incidental. Drawing an equivalence between the exhibition's status as an event composed of paintings and the other objects in the room, he undermined the idea that the paintings were neutral and spot-lit the contingencies of their classed context, which reduced intellectual investigation to a commodity of bourgeois taste culture.

His intervention at *A Painting Exhibition* set up a situation of competing autonomies—those of the artworks, those of the exhibition organizers, and those of the artist—by calling attention to the juxtaposition of what was being displayed and how. The curators placed the abstract painting they had selected within a tradition of modern art progressing toward the achievement of self-definition, for art's sake alone, and Cadere responded by pointing to the disjuncture between the curator's ideal and the material reality of the exhibition. While the sanctioned artists' individual projects were subsumed by decorative affirmation, Cadere resisted this system by valorizing the autonomy of the artist rather than the autonomy of the artwork. This analytic nexus around the gallery space, the authority of institutions, and the notion of artistic autonomy defined his practice more broadly as he traveled through the streets of Western Europe and New York with his work, attended other artists' openings, and devised clever ways to highlight the power differentials that normally remain invisible in the art world. Through this antagonistic position he fashioned himself as a rogue art celebrity, manipulating the multiple provinces of institutional participation in the name of institutional resistance.

The politics of Cadere's institutional critique should be understood in terms of his personal history as a migrant who relocated to Western Europe in order to escape the persecution he suffered under the state institutions of communist Romania. Cadere's father, Victor Cadere, had been a diplomat under the government of King Carol II. When the communists came to power, the Cadere family was stripped of its livelihood, Victor Cadere was convicted of "intensive activity against the working class" and sent to prison, and the family lost its home and source of income. André Cadere's ambitions to attend university as a philology student were quashed, and he was conscripted into the army's labor brigades due to his "unhealthy social background."[8] Under communism, the arts and humanities were considered potentially threatening ideologically to the government, so their study was restricted to members of the proletariat whose work conformed to the Soviet socialist realist model. Cadere's only access to the art world was through working for official artists as an assistant and life model for artists like Corneliu Baba, often posing in the costumes, and with the accouterments, of industrial workers. In this way, he gained artistic training, while further education in the arts came from the underground salon of Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcas, the son of the founder of the National Museum of Art, which the communists closed in 1948. The salon provided nonaligned intelligentsia a gathering place where, through music recitals and readings of literature, they attempted to keep alive the humanist culture that was otherwise being censored.[9] It was this climate that caused Romanian artists and intellectuals to leave the country after 1965, when the death of the general secretary of the communist party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and the rise of Nicolae Ceausescu led to a relaxation on travel and other restrictions.[10]

Cadere left Romania for Paris in 1967. While the anti-authoritarian practice that he developed resembled the politics of French leftists during May 1968, Magda Radu notes that having just "crossed over the iron curtain," he would have hesitated to embrace Marxist ideas, a political position that he confirmed in a 1978 interview when he told Sylvère Lotringer, "I've been accused of being a Marxist. I completely deny that charge."[11] An art historian, fellow Romanian émigré, and friend of Cadere, Sanda Agalides notes that one might have expected him to begin making art for art's sake once he arrived in the West and was no longer constrained by state prohibitions.[12] Indeed, when he first arrived in Paris, Cadere began producing paintings in the vein of the Op and kinetic art that resembled a more subjective variation on the highly systematized work that the Group de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) was pro-
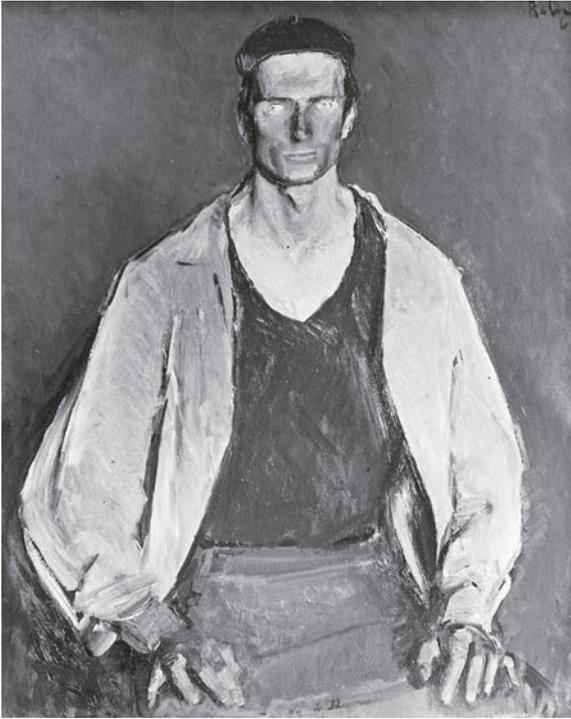
Figure 3.3.
Corneliu Baba, *Portrait of a Worker*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 3¼ × 4¼ ft. (1 × 1.3 m). Provided by Magda Radu.

ducing around the same time. He quickly shifted, however, to developing the portable bars intrinsic to his process of institutional critique. Indeed, the abstract paintings and objects, and the process-oriented display tactics that Cadere invented in Paris, were strikingly different from the mural painting that he had completed as an artist's assistant in Bucharest, yet as the Romanian authors of *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere* (2011) argue, the work that he made in Paris was entirely related to the politics of his experiences as a Romanian.

The role of Cadere's background in his work, however, is ambivalent. He acknowledged that his interest in the margins may have been related to the fact that he came from "a country which is outside the Western cultural system, a totally marginal country," and it is frequently argued that his display strategies of traversing "frontiers" between public space and private gallery derive directly from his experience as a migrant—that, in performing this mobility, he continuously played the role of the "foreigner."[13] As Radu argues, however, Cadere worked against his origins as his exilic experience led him to reject any overt association with national identity. He "rejected autobiography," as she puts it, with the result that his friends in the West knew almost nothing about his life in Romania.[14] Instead, she notes that he preferred to

embrace the cosmopolitan fluidity of a contemporary artist negotiating the currents of the international exhibition circuit. As he claimed, in an interview with Lynda Morris, it was only in "international situations" that he did not feel like a "stranger," and as Radu notes, the incident that brought him the widest notoriety was one in which he loudly and publicly rejected *Documenta V* director Harald Szeemann's attempt to force him to play the role of Romanian pilgrim and travel to the exhibition on foot, thereby placing him in the overdetermined lineage of his compatriot Constantin Brancusi, who famously walked from Romania to France in 1903.[15] For his insubordination, Szeemann barred Cadere from participating in the exhibition, yet it would seem from Radu's interpretation that the exposure he received rewarded him for his rejection of particularity.

Cadere's relationship to his personal history is not one of complete rejection, however. Rather, he preferred to occupy his position as a foreigner strategically. As a case in point, an anecdote from *Documenta V* reports that after being disallowed from showing his work, Cadere walked the galleries of the exhibition with a small tape recorder blaring "The Internationale" because, in Cadere's words, he wanted "to annoy them."[16] This seeming retaliation substituted Szeemann's romantic fantasy of the Eastern immigrant with another myth from the Soviet bloc, as he transformed an artifact of ideological kitsch celebrated by leftists in the West into an obnoxious imposition. Agalides uses the term "frontier position" to describe this combined lack of sentimentality toward his homeland with a lack of interest in capitulating to the models offered by the West. Aware, on one hand, of "the difference between revolutionary promise and lived reality," he was equally attentive to the ways that "democratic freedom in Western Europe was largely a vague approximation of true freedom."[17]

Although Cadere's art might not be described as *art for art's sake* according to the modernist terms that Agalides likely had in mind, the relationship between art and autonomy was one of his primary concerns. While his pursuit of aesthetic freedom was legible in the *barres de bois rond*, which are the primary focus of Western commentators who tend to read his work in terms of its relationship to minimalist and conceptualist developments, the idea of freedom is moreover present in the politics of his display tactics, which the Romanian historians in Radu's book interpret independently of aesthetic concerns for the most part. "Contestation was not an attribute of this work, but was the work itself," writes Agalides.[18] The freedom that he aggressively sought to assert vis-à-vis the gallery system was a way of correcting for the lack of freedom that he found in Paris, Kassel, and elsewhere in the West. That this would be

a preoccupation for him comes as self-evident to Radu, who argues that the reason that he built his identity on marginality in the West was not because he was from the East, but because marginality already described his condition of existence in Romania.[19] Cadere was explicit about this during an artist's talk titled "Presentation of a Work, Utilization of a Work" that he gave at the invitation of Bernard Marcelis, who at the time was a university student in the Philosophy and Letters Department at the Catholic University in Louvain Belgium in 1974. Cadere told the group of students, professors, artists, and gallerists, "It should be pointed out that the author comes from an Eastern country. This represents a determining factor. Can we imagine an American artist bringing his work to an exhibition without being invited? The Western mentality, nourished by pride, by intellectual scorn (and material comfort), makes such an attitude inconceivable; except to those who, coming from marginal countries, have nothing to lose."[20]

Coding his practice in terms of desperation, Cadere transforms a perceived weakness into strength, re-reads an absence of institutional patronage as a way to access a freedom "truer" than that of rule-bound artists. The form of autonomy that Cadere pursued in the West resembled his experiences of the Romanian salons and other "zones of autonomy" in which, as writer and literary theorist Matei Călinescu described it, "What we were doing was an attempt to construct a parallel universe and an identity . . . completely alien to the reality of those years of Stalinist Russification of the country and our (false) public identity."[21] Against this stacking of associated binaries true/false, with freedom/ideology, with private/public, Cadere did not align only with one side or the other, but instead chose to pursue a "true freedom" that pointed to, and resisted, such categorization.

Presentation, Conversation

At his talk in Louvain, Cadere described how the formal aspects of the bar and their public display were united aspects of his production. Standing in front of a lecture hall, with one of his bars leaning against the wall, he explained how the bars were assembled from wooden spools that he cut from dowels according to a ratio that fixed the height to diameter at 1:1. He then drilled out the spools, painted them uniformly black, white, or any of the six colors of the rainbow, threaded them onto a dowel, and affixed them with glue. The number of spools, and therefore the length of each bar, was determined by a compositional scheme based on mathematical permutations. Cadere devised a system whereby the colors of the bars were ordered according to predetermined permutations that he sequentially reordered until exhausted.[22] In size,

Figure 3.4. André Cadere delivering the talk "Présentation d'un travail, utilization d'un travail" in Louvain, 1974. Photograph by Bernard Marcelis. © Estate of André Cadere / Hervé Bize Gallery. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

the bars came in two widths, either just smaller than a wrist or larger than a bicep, and they ranged from the length of a femur to the height of a somewhat tall man. An individual bar might have anywhere between three and seven colors and be twelve to fifty-six times as long as its diameter. The resulting bars were more or less conspicuous, more or less portable, more or less easy to hide in a broom closet—a theme that was humorously illustrated by Cadere's friend, the artist Jacques Charlier.

Cadere's system of ordering was central to the way that he understood and valued color as primarily efficient and practical. "The essential function of color," he said at the talk, "is to differentiate things." "If you open a transistor, you see wires in the interior, groups of wires. It is evident that they are not colored to render the interior of the transistor pretty, but to show that they have different functions."[23] Similarly, these sequences negated any subjective idea of attractiveness, and instead functioned to assure that each spool would be distinguished from the next, like the color-coded wires in the transistor, because no two spools of the same color would ever touch. Further, because the ordering was systematized, every possible combination was known in advance, and it could be guaranteed that none would be repeated. Difference was the
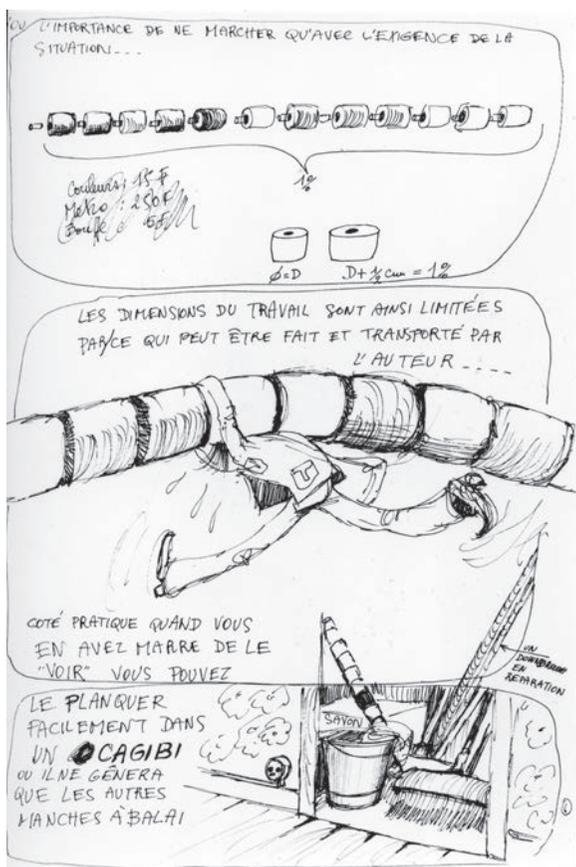
Figure 3.5. Jacques Charlier, illustration of André Cadere's process and exhibition tactics, 1975. Ink on paper, 11 × 8¼ in. (27.9 × 21 cm). © Jacques Charlier. Archives Jacques Charlier.

sole function of each spool of wood along the bar, and, as such, the purpose of the color was not to create aesthetic harmony, but stark, serviceable contrast.[24] As an example, Cadere humorously invited his audience to imagine him camouflaged reptilian against his environment: "There is behind me a chalkboard that is green, pale green. You see me because, in relation to this chalkboard, I am a different color. If my clothes, if my skin were exactly the same pale green, you would not see me."[25] Like Cadere, the bars are not uniform in color, and as such there is no background against which they would not strike a conspicuous figure. In contrast to the marginal visibility of Buren's posters, which function by nearly blending into their surroundings, Cadere's bars were meant to pop out from, or grate against, the contexts in which he situated them. If Buren played with the idea of marginality from the strong position of being a celebrated artist, Cadere used a position of actual marginality to, as Buren later said of his influence Simon Hantaï, "show things without pointing to

them."[26] By the incongruity of their bright presence, the bars acted like high-lighters that caused the social and procedural conventions of the art world themselves to stand out from practices that, even though drawing from the tactics of the avant-garde, were in some ways relatively routine or, one might say, decorous.

Cadere's colorful thought experiment raises a second point, however, regarding the relationship of his work to abstract painting. In using color to signify only itself rather than using it mimetically or representationally, he linked his work to the historical avant-garde's tradition of arguing that abstraction is a mode of realism that forefronts the objective status of the material of painting itself. His absurdist vision of the world as monochromatic abstraction invites comparison with works such as Alexander Rodchenko's *Pure Red Color, Pure Yellow Color, Pure Blue Color* (1921), while pointing to the fact that one of color's objective functions is to visually differentiate between things such as they frequently appear in everyday life. By suggesting that his audience cast the scene of his speech in pale green, he performs an artistic conjuring that transforms the world around him into something like a painting in order to deny the impracticality of this abstraction and insist upon a functional realism. Color's objective status in Cadere's work does not take on abstracted pure form but exists only according to the way that it operates relationally. The wooden spools, in all their colorful contrast, exist not in an abstracted or mimetic space but in this world, and their own differentiation from it was essential to their social use.

In its use of mathematical permutation, tautology, and conceptual notation, Cadere's work resonated with 1960s and 1970s international conceptual art, but with the difference that his work insisted on the live situation of its display. His repetitions of imperfect serial structures recall Sol LeWitt's obsessional systems of lines and cubes based on the subversive "idea of error"—errors with which he had firsthand experience as an artist's assistant in 1970 when he worked on *Wall Drawing #45* at the Yvon Lambert Gallery.[27] His use of display to counter the power of the museum or gallery draws clearly on Buren's arguments in "Critical Limits" and other texts, at the same time that this interest in audience and accessibility recalls Lawrence Weiner's claim that his work could theoretically—and therefore actually—belong to anyone anywhere. In his 1968 "Declaration of Intent," Weiner wrote, "The artist may construct the piece," and "the piece may be fabricated," but crucially, "the piece need not be built." This total openness would then create what Weiner called "a universal common possibility of availability."[28] Similarly, the rules that guided the construction of Cadere's bar were so central to the work that it could be

argued that fabricating the bars was secondary. As Cadere noted, "In what concerns the work, the chosen rule—the mathematical permutations—is abstract and universal; it exists outside of the work. It 'pre-exists' it."[29] Although the logic of this abstract system could foresee all possible configurations of bars, it could not exhaust the variety of meanings that they would produce, or that they would attract, depending on the particularities of every possible situation in which they could be positioned. Universality was essential in both cases, then, in terms of the logic of the works produced as well as the distribution of the work to a potentially universal audience. Unlike Weiner, however, Cadere maintained control over the handmade production of his bars, and he required that the work be seen in its physical manifestation, unlike the pure conceptual state in which Weiner's work found its completion. Indeed, like Buren, Cadere rejected associations with "the conceptual movement," seeing it as an art historical classification.[30] Because the bars functioned by highlighting the relationships between the actors who compose that universal, the bars needed to take shape as visual objects. If universal access and relevance were the ideal, contingency formed the basis for his critique of institutions as they actually functioned. As he explained in Louvain, "We put two people in relation in presenting one to the other. This placing in relation normally leads to a conversation. This evening the situation is different: we present an object, a thing." Echoing the title of Buren's 1968 exhibition at the Galerie Apollinaire, Cadere insisted that "the point is to see" (*il s'agit de voir*), yet rather than thinking about seeing in terms of spectatorship as either phenomenal or evidential, he emphasized the social and participatory role of the audience, continuing "and the seeing, here, leads to a discussion." Interaction around the art object would be maximized by subverting what Cadere described as "the refuge in comforting subjectivity" that would be invited by "recourse to literature and sentimentality." By maintaining the objective autonomy of the artwork, he noted, "all the components, all the presented coordinates, can be discussed."[31]

This description does not substantially differentiate it from art for art's sake, however, which also had a use insofar as it provided disinterested fodder for the cultivation of the public sphere. Indeed, it seems that a significant aspect of Cadere's project was the generation of a sort of mobile salon in the sense that everywhere he exhibited his work he brought with him an inexhaustible conversation that began with a description of his own work, then roamed afield. As gallerist Yvon Lambert recounts, "He was enormously interested in twentieth century art. He knew how to talk about it very, very well. At the same time, he was familiar with the art of the Eastern-European coun-

tries, from the beginning of the century to the 20s and 30s, countries where astonishing things took place, things which are now well known, but which at the time we knew very little about, or nothing at all."[32] Cadere made use of aesthetic discourse in order to ingratiate himself to the world of Western European dealers who were exhibiting and helping to make the careers of the conceptual artists whom Cadere considered his peers, yet this same discourse also allowed him to make an argument about the limits of freedom. By pairing artwork and conversation, he intertwined the relationship between free expression and free exhibition of his artwork, which could take place beyond restrictive boundaries, be they those of the state or those of the institutions of the art world. In reflecting on this relationship between autonomy and display, Ghislain Mollet-Viéville testified, "It was an independence that allowed him to leave it, indiscriminately, in a gallery, the artistic space par excellence, but also in the window of a baker's shop, which obviously isn't a representative place for art. . . . The advantage of these appearances was that they stirred comment, discussion, perhaps not at the level of the discussions that took place in his presence, but in any case discussions that could take place in the artist's absence. We could continue to show his works, comment on them, even if he wasn't there."[33] By exhibiting his work everywhere, it became possible to discuss all components and all coordinates and, moreover, to discuss them all over the city and beyond.

At the same time that the universal may offer a forum for equal access, it can similarly mask a law that becomes invisible if not inflected by deviation. In order to undercut the possibility that an ideal would subsume his work, the bars incorporated such deviation by manifesting it in their composition. Calling upon René Descartes's observation that planes, or in the case of painting, stretched canvases (*tableaux*), are composed of parallel lines, Cadere observed that his own work was different from easel painting in that it emphasized a temporal succession of elements rather than providing an immediate impression, such as one might hypothetically receive when looking at a flat surface.[34] He likened the geometrically linear alignment of the bars to the process of reading, which, he noted, presupposes a succession of different events that occur, such as in a narrative. The established systems of permutations accounted for such difference, yet because these differences were systematized, they did not manage to produce the rupture that Cadere sought. "In relation to this [mathematical] law, the only event possible," he noted, "is an error." To create disturbance in the universal and thereby distance it from the "completely idealistic thinking" that he associated with minimalism, he incorporated a reversal of two spools into each bar so as to disrupt the order, yet he did so subtly
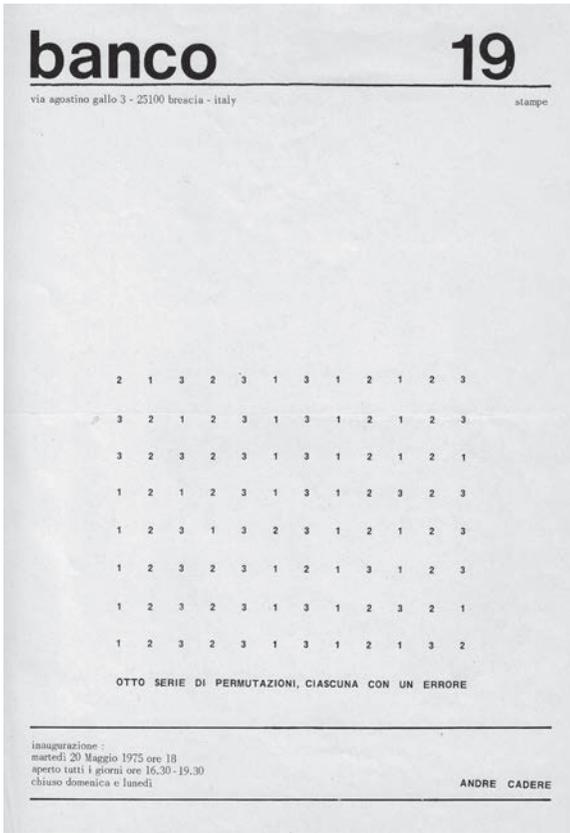
Figure 3.6. Invitation to exhibition at Galleria Banco in Brescia, Italy, 1975. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

by placing the errors at the interior of the sequence and without a succession of two spools of the same color so as not to allow the error to dominate the allusion to a universalizing order.[35] He thereby sustained a balance between system and event.

The invitation for his 1975 show at the Galleria Banco in Brescia highlighted this relationship between order and disorder as it presented a series of 1s, 2s, and 3s organized in a 12-by-8 grid, captioned "eight series of permutations, each with an error." The rational, regulatory organization of data in the gridded structure furthered the play of order and its undoing as it invited the viewer to search for the patterns that make up the permutations, while the announcement of an error frustrated attempts to do so. Searching for the error would additionally prolong the presentation of the bars by drawing the audience into the participatory process of viewing through the promised discovery of anomaly embedded among the impassive regularity of repetition. More

than an aesthetic organization asserting the rationality of the bars' structure, the grid also provided, according to Cadere, "an exact description of the eight pieces" as they were "set at an equal distance one after the other in parallel" in an "installation of the classic type," that is to say, against gallery walls.[36]

Seemingly with regret, Cadere referred to gallery exhibitions as showing "a negative possibility" for display that he "must not hide."[37] He insisted that gallery exhibitions, such as those staged by many of the best-known minimalist and conceptualist artists depended on and reinforced the power of the art galleries. Yet, even as the abstract formulation that determined his own bars' color-coding conformed to the gridded structure of the invitation, the arrangement of bars in gallery exhibitions still highlighted their relationship to real physical space and therefore contingency. At the MTL Gallery in Brussels, the ceiling was supported by four arches running the length of each of two walls of the space with a desk below one of them. Using the bars as indicators of this architectural feature of the room, Cadere leaned one bar up against the wall, centered directly under each arch. Like minimalist installations of the previous decade, his gallery display tactics pointed to the architectural space itself, indicating the floor, walls, ceilings, and other incidental features. Traversing a room, a sequence of nearly identical bars would call attention to its length as they receded off into the distance, installations in window sills would indicate the liminal spaces of the gallery as located within a larger world beyond its walls, or a bar atop a heating radiator would highlight the devices that made the space comfortable.[38] Like minimalist sculptures, Cadere's bars additionally highlighted the body's relationship to these spaces by causing the viewer to look for the work in atypical locations. A row of bars mounted near the ceiling would oblige the viewer to experience his or her position in relation to the work beyond the ideal position of single-point perspective by compelling the viewer to crane the neck back in searching upward, while a shock of bright color laying across the base of a wall would call attention to the forgotten marginal spaces of the gallery that often collect dust and scuff marks.

More frequently, however, Cadere's use of the gallery signaled the social function that the space served as an institution. By choosing the arches as the points around which to anchor the logic of the bars' disposition, Cadere was able to create a contrast between the physical space of the room and its function as a gallery since the gallerist had already established a situation of difference within the uniformity of the space by placing a desk beneath one of them. While seven of the bars leaned against a wall then, the eighth inclined toward, and was supported by, the desk, which became overdetermined by its symbolic and utilitarian functions as it was shown to be functionally identical with the
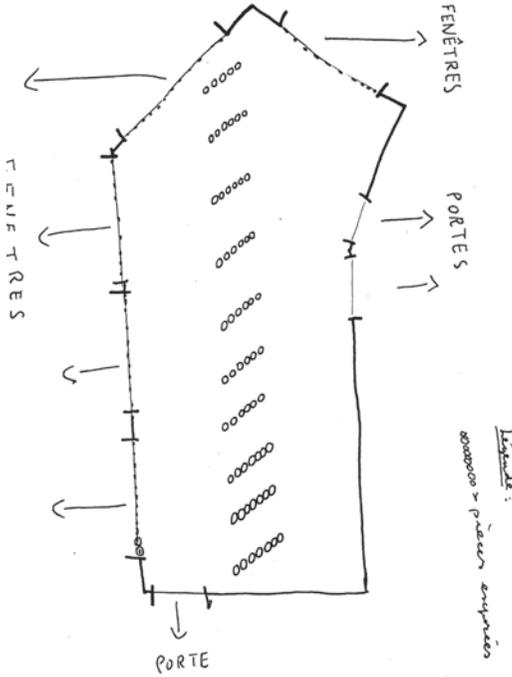
Figure 3.7. André Cadere, sketch for installation plan at the MTL Gallery, March–April 1977. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

gallery as a place for the display of art, while the association of the desk with work space additionally reflected back on the gallery as an institution as it collapsed place with administration. More than an abstract system by which objects are managed, valued, and redistributed, administration additionally consists in a set of physical tasks; it is a form of work undertaken by people who themselves sit behind desks such as the one in Brussels. While the other seven bars were protected by the conventions of traditional gallery display and as such were not to be touched, the eighth bar was available for the viewer to pick up and manipulate, much as pens, typewriters, ledgers, and staplers are handled by gallerists and their secretaries. By positioning the eighth handy bar against the desk, Cadere undermined the idea that art and the gallery are autonomous from society by embedding the gallery within a larger system of work and exchange, and he did so by placing the art object directly into the hands of the people who make that system function.

Figure 3.8. Invitation to exhibition at Galleria Banco in Brescia, Italy, 1975. Photograph by Massimo Minini. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

Although he frequently exhibited his bars in galleries, the critical meaning of the work was located in the streets. "One must—and exactly to mark the independence with regard to power," he told the Louvain audience, "exhibit also outside of the artistic sanctuaries: in a street, a metro, a restaurant, finally everywhere, since the presence of the wall is not necessary."[39] While the gridded numbers of the Brescia invitation referenced the relative independence of the concept from the object through the use of a symbolic system of representation, a second invitation published by Galleria Banco accentuated the importance of transforming ideas into visible, or even tangible, objects, as it presented a full-page photograph of the work's exhibition: walking down the street, the artist traverses the entryway to the gallery with one of his bars cantilevered over his left shoulder, the bar acting as a bridge between these two worlds. In the distance it is just possible to make out the word "Banco," spelled across the entryway of the gallery, which nearly disappears into the shadows of receding arcade while the artist and his work occupy a brightly

illuminated foreground set against the edifice's exterior wall. Stepping away from the large archway that takes up the majority of the width of the image and frames the gallery in the background, Cadere simultaneously steps away from the gallery while exiting its photographic representation as, cropped into the extreme left margins of the scene, his left hand and foot extend past the photograph's edge. With his body turning away from the camera and his head slightly lowered, the nearly six-foot-long bar becomes the focus of the image as it juts out across the darkness of the arcade that it leaves behind. On Lynda Morris's copy of the invitation, Cadere used a red pen to draw in some facial hair and a sack from the end of his pole so that he looks like a vagabond. While the gridded invitation captured and isolated the bars' relationship between abstract order and error, the photograph in the second functions as an image of the last step in their progressive independence, as the stationary bars leaning against the walls inside pull away from the support offered by the gallery's walls, transition to the liminal space of administrative functionality, and finally gain the independence to be found in the space of everyday life.

Calligrams and Incompatibility

The Banco photograph captures Cadere's gallery practice, yet, like Buren, he was careful to distinguish between the artwork and its representation through documentary media. In 1974 he used a photograph similar to the Banco one to speak to this point directly. Reproduced in a series of four enlargements, a horizontally oriented, black and white photograph taken by Bernard Borgeaud shows Cadere turned squarely away from the camera so as to display to full advantage the bar that he carries over his shoulder as it spans, and extends beyond, the full width of the frame. A brief textual description of the work, broken into four fragments, is printed along the bottom of each enlargement so that when viewed together the statement reads as a single whole, in this way reproducing the temporal "narrative" development Cadere spoke of at the Louvain lecture. At the same time, however, the text and image collude in delegitimating themselves as presentations of the work. "Exhibited where it is seen," the caption reads, "this work is contrary to the text and photo printed here. Dependent on the constraints of this book text and photo have a single relation with what they describe: incompatibility." This formula of text and image insisting on their nonidentity with their presumed referent echoes René Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (1929), in which a pipe appears above a text that insists "this is not a pipe" (*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*). Although the psychological depth and literary motifs of Surrealism had gone out of fashion during the 1960s, elements of Magritte's influence lingered in the linguistic

play and absurdist literalism of Marcel Broodthaers, at whose exhibitions Cadere himself exhibited, and more generally in the evocations of imaginative freedom that flowed through the rhetoric of the May Movement.[40] In 1968, Michel Foucault published a short book, *This Is Not a Pipe*, in homage to the recently deceased painter. In it, he demonstrated that Magritte's works function as what Foucault called "unraveled calligrams," in the sense that they take the word and image that normally come together in the calligram to form a unified whole and instead present them separately on the canvas in order to undermine the calligram's specific function. The calligram, Foucault argues, normally creates an identity between text and image with the effect that they produce a "double cipher" that fixes meaning to an extent that neither text nor image could do alone.[41] The calligram would guarantee an easy translation of ideas across media of reproduction such that, for example, the word "pipe" written out in a shape that appears to be that of a pipe would communicate precisely and unequivocally the concept of a hollow device designed for burning and inhaling substances. Whereas in the calligram, text and image occupy the same space, in "unraveling" and setting them side-by-side "the common place . . . has disappeared" along with our commonplace myths of communicative transparency, in which we look at a picture of a pipe and say "that is a pipe," or, in the case of Cadere's work, look at a photograph of a round bar of wood and say "that is a round bar of wood."[42]

There is a determinative distinction between representations of Cadere's bar, such as in text or photograph, and immediate presentations of the object itself. Text and photograph cannot help but give rise to the distance that separates live presentation of the object from representation, as it freezes the artist and his bar in a single moment. Repeating the photograph four times visualized its difference as a medium of reproduction distinct from the scene it isolates and records. Rather than see Cadere and his bar in the photograph, the fact of representation itself comes to the fore. With each repetition of the same, the information in the photograph diminishes, representing less and less of its subject as it becomes ossified into an image of itself. There is no bar to be seen there. What is exhibited is a photograph. In this way, the photograph enacts the separation of resemblance from affirmation that Foucault identifies as the operation of the unraveled calligram and replaces it with the more loosely circumscribed relations of similitude. Whereas resemblance is on the side of representation and presupposes a model that can act as a key to the meaning "which rules over it," similitudes are based on a structure of repetition "which ranges across it."[43] Text and photo repeat and circulate discursively in reference to the bar even as they remain incompatible with each

other. While the text flatly declares its own inadequacy, each reprinting of the single image drives home the photograph's inability to substitute for the experience of seeing the bar in the round. The text's description that "a round bar of wood is an assemblage of painted segments in which the length is equal to the diameter and follow one another according to a method comporting errors" fails to provide a vision of the wide range of brilliant color combinations in groupings variously arrayed in accordance with their number and scale. Similarly, the still studio photographs of the bar balanced on the artist's shoulder give no indication of the use to which he put the object as a signal of independence, as it escaped the display conventions dictated by books, galleries, and museums. Rejecting the ambiguities and slippages of similitude, Cadere insisted on presence.

While Cadere emphasized the distinction between the bars and their secondary layers of representation, be they in the form of photograph, text, or curatorial program, he was not antipathetic to them, and indeed seems to have considered his bars to be operating in a parallel mode. In a series of letters to Lambert that Cadere composed on his deathbed in 1978, the artist, who had been a classical languages student as a youth in Romania, reflected on the form and function of his work and observed, "I am astonished by the rapport between a round bar of wood and language. My work is by definition visual," and with slight variation, he echoed the statement printed below the Borgeaud photographs, reinforcing that "it exists where it is seen."[44] This association of language and visuality had arisen at the beginning of his career in Paris, when he adapted his concepts for the medium of the press. In 1971 he participated in a roundtable discussion on the "Role and Social Situation of the Artist," which was published in *ArTitudes*, an art journal that promoted body art and other anti-academic forms. Among columns of text recounting the proceedings, he had the word *écriture* printed four times, each time framed in a box, printed larger than the surrounding text, and each time in a different font so as to single it out as a distinct entity on the page while transforming the word into a calligram.[45] Through its framing and the stylization of its font, the word became a picture composed of lines forming letters in sequence that visualized what it signified linguistically. This is not an unraveled calligram, but, rather, it is the unique instance in which the word and image that compose the calligram are identical. Written out, "écriture" conflates presentation and representation without a gap between them. At the same time, "écriture" functions differently from the rest of the words on the *ArTitudes* page in that no other provides a picture of its signification. In recognizing this, the reader is reminded of the gap between text and referent, or the fact that, as Cadere
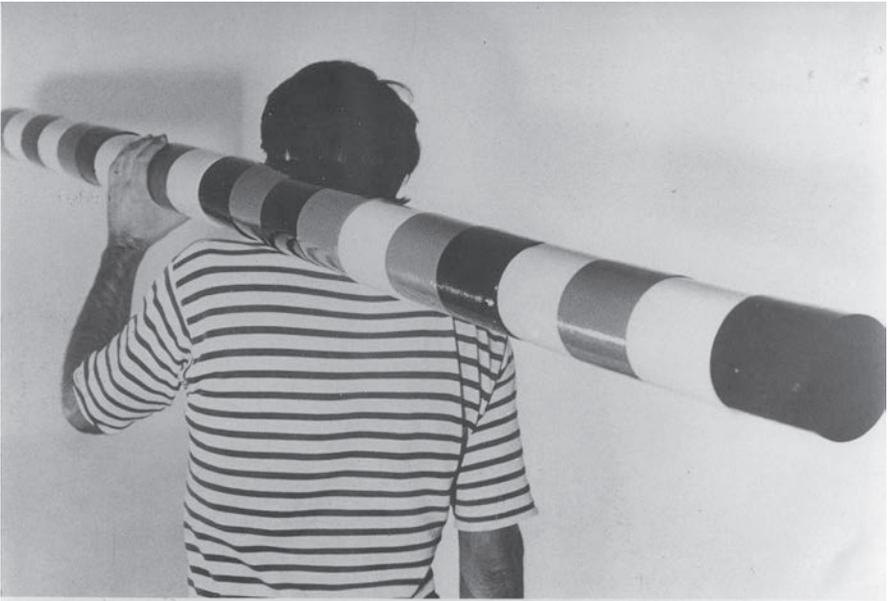
LA BARRE DE BOIS ROND EST UN ASSEMBLAGE DE SEGMENTS PEINTS DONT LA LONGUEUR ÉGALE LE DIAMÈTRE
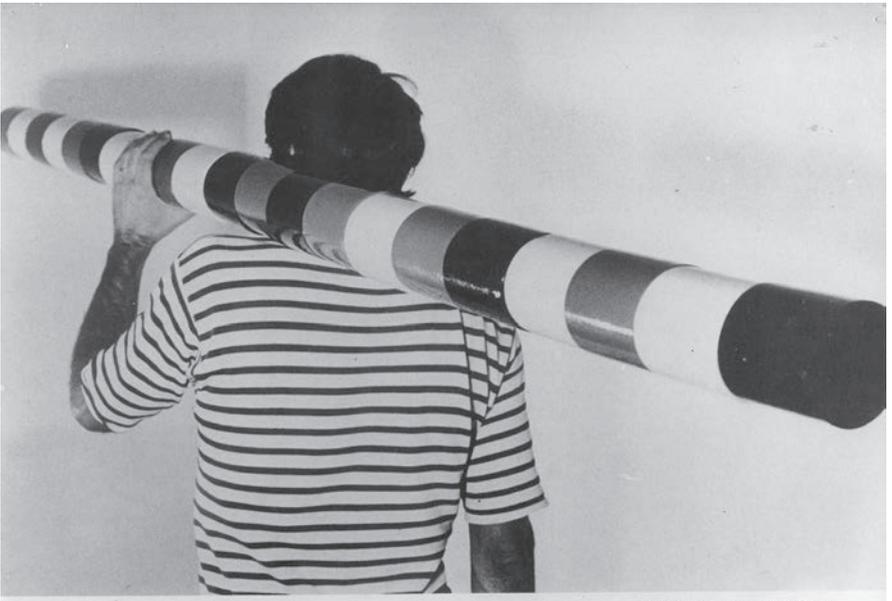
ET SE SUCCÉDANT D'APRÈS UNE MÉTHODE COMPORTANT DES ERREURS.   EXPOSÉ LÀ OÙ IL EST VU,

Figures 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12. Series of identical photographs by Bernard Borgeaud with text by André Cadere. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.
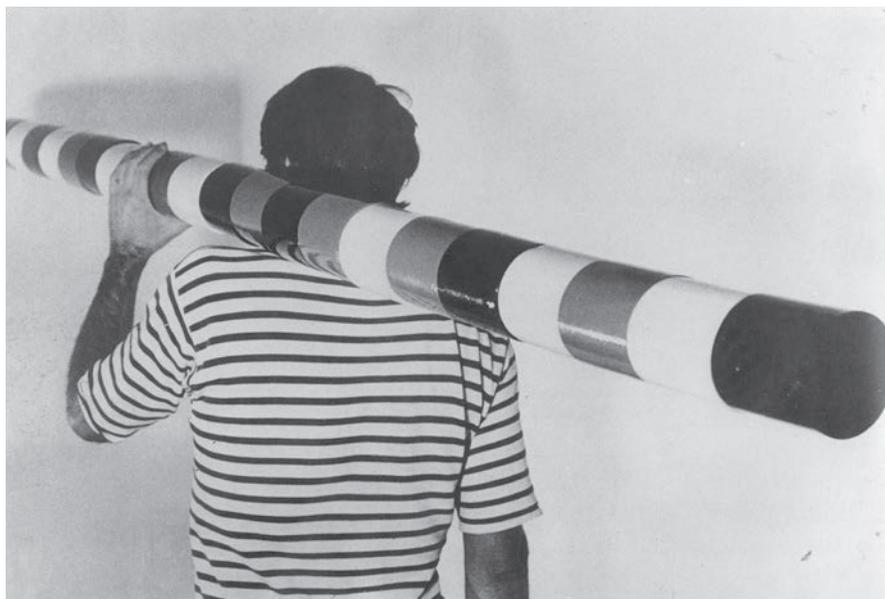
CE TRAVAIL EST CONTRAIRE AUX TEXTE ET PHOTO ICI IMPRIMÉS. DÉPENDANT DES CONTRAINTES DE CE LIVRE
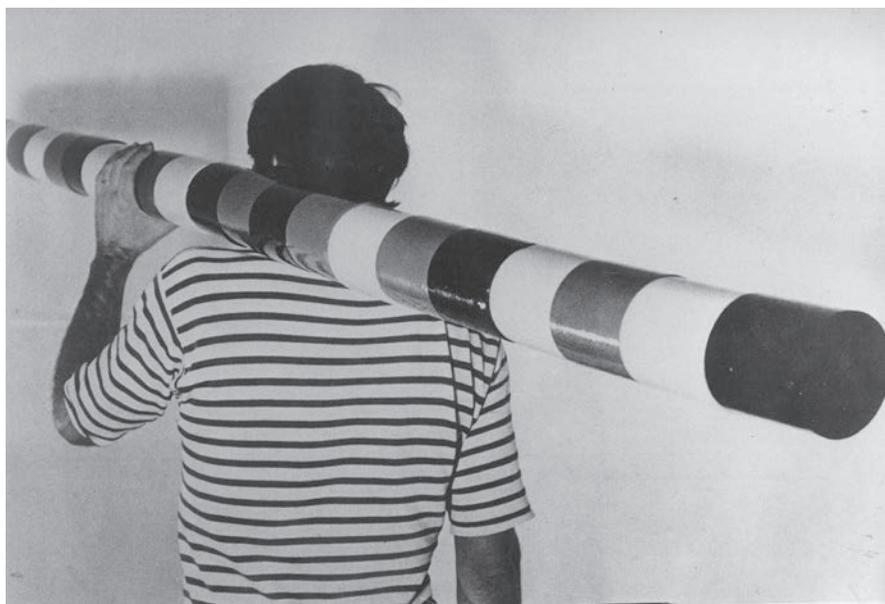
TEXTE ET PHOTO ONT UN SEUL RAPPORT AVEC CE QU'ILS DÉCRIVENT : L'INCOMPATIBILITÉ. CADERE, 1974.

Figure 3.13. René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 25⅜ × 37 in. (64.45 × 93.98 cm). © Museum Associates / LACMA.

would state two years later beneath the Borgeaud photographs, the words that the artists speak and the works and social situations they describe are incompatible. His work is like language not because language represents it, but because just as language performs its function wherever it is, Cadere's work should be considered exhibited wherever it is, without dependence on the context in which it is seen.

The issues of representation in Cadere's calligram-like text/photo projects are conveyed in the logic that he used to display his bars. If an image of a pipe is not a pipe, then similarly a gallery exhibition of art is not the same as an artwork being made visible for public consideration. Fundamentally, the problem of representation was in its ability to fix meaning or sway interpretation. Maintaining a distinction between his work and its corollary similitudes carried over into the independence that he sought to maintain from arts institutions, such that rather than considering the gallery show representative, it became one instance of exhibition among many in which the work was shown. Insisting that his work was "exhibited where it is seen" allowed him to play up cultural distinctions between visibility and exhibition and put pressure on the cultural presumption that aligns exhibition with gallery and museum spaces. Opening a gap between art institutions and exhibition was

his objective when he challenged the tautology of Claura and Denizot's show that declared itself *A Painting Exhibition*. Rather than countering, as Magritte might have, by pointing out the distinction between the exhibition and the work it represents, he mounted his own exhibition with the curators' (unwilling) support, thereby effectively arguing against a hierarchy in which a well-networked exhibition like Claura and Denizot's would have priority over Cadere showing his bar wherever he went. By exhibiting his work in a way that was a procedural extension of the intention he had for the intrinsic qualities of the object, he further sought to collapse work with exhibition. In comparison, *A Painting Exhibition* was relatively distant from the art objects that it would represent.

Pushing the playful antagonism against the two, Cadere sent out an announcement for a second exhibition featuring the same bar that had disappeared from *A Painting Exhibition*. In this instance, the invitation listed the different locations for four bars, each of the same dimensions, and each composed of three colors. Whereas for the other bars he provided the addresses for art spaces in Berlin, Naples, and Paris, for the other, he gave the addresses and phone numbers of Claura and Denizot, along with an explanation of how the bar had disappeared. None of the bars would be simultaneously visible, but one was un-see-able. As a sort of antagonism against the visual possession of the audience, the exhibition existed as a purely conceptual object that positioned an imagined constellation of autonomous objects beyond the ability of an individual to requisition one of them.

Earlier, in 1973, Cadere had been invited by Anka Ptaszkowska to show at an experimental gallery of conceptual art, Gallery Six, that she ran with Claura and in consultation with Buren.[46] For this exhibition, Cadere staged a similar critique to the one that he would mount at 16 Place Vendôme, but by different means. Mindful of the struggles for power taking place between artists and institutions at the time, Ptaszkowska devised a strategy for an exhibition that was intended to put in relief the argument that "every exhibition is like a coffee grinder that grinds up artists' works."[47] The resulting exhibition showed the works of ten artists, including Cadere, according to a mathematically systematized schedule so that each of the artists' works would be visible in different configurations across a period of thirty-six days. This resulted in a gross inequity of exposure for the various artists, against which "the artists were invited to defend themselves."[48] The only artist of the group who truly did, according to Ptaszkowska, was Cadere, who concocted a work composed of two parts: a round bar of wood that would be in the gallery during the entire thirty-six days of the exhibition, and an object label that Ptaszkowska would

Quatre barres de bois rond, chacune étant composée de 21 segments dont la longueur - 100 millimètres - est égale à leur diamètre. Ces segments, peints successivement en différentes couleurs, sont assemblés conformément à un système de permutations comportant chaque fois une erreur.

1) B 0 0 2 0 1 3 0 0   =100=   =10x11=

   rouge - jaune - violet

   se trouve à Berlin (galerie Folker Skulima, 68 Fasanenstrasse, 1 Berlin

   15, tel : 881 82 80)

2) B 0 2 1 3 0 0 0 0   =100=   =11x12=

   jaune - blanc - orange

   se trouve à Naples (galerie Modern Art Agency - Lucio Amelio - 58 piazza

   dei Martiri, Napoli, tel : 399 023)

3) B 1 0 2 0 3 0 0 0   =100=   =11x12=

   noir - jaune - rouge

   est disparue en Juin 1973 du cagibi d'un appartement situé au 16, place

   Vendôme, 75001 Paris, pendant que dans le reste du local se déroulait

   une exposition de peinture réunissant certains peintres qui mettraient

   la peinture en question. Comme cette barre de bois rond aurait été

   installée dans le cagibi par les organisateurs, pour toute information

   s'adresser à :

   Michel Claura, 1 villa Seurat, 75014 Paris, tel : 331 88 02

   René Denizot, 117 rue Championnet, 75018 Paris, tel : 225 01 07

4) B 1 2 0 0 3 0 0 0   =100=   =11x12=

   noir - blanc - rouge

   est visible en permanence - durant une période indéterminée- sur le

   balcon situé au 6ème étage du 139, bd. Saint-Germain, 75006 Paris

   (au-dessus du café "Le Saint-Claude")

André Cadere   Paris, le 8 Décembre 1975

Figure 3.14. André Cadere, invitation for presentations of round bars of wood at various locations while implicating Michel Claura and René Denizot in the disappearance of the bar that Cadere brought to the opening, 1975. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

affix to the wall on the days when his work was scheduled to be on view. Divided into two propositions, section one of the label announced to the reader that the bar "could be seen" during the entire duration of the exhibition, while section two stated that on that given day it was considered exhibited. It read, "From the perspective of the exhibition organized by Madame Anka Ptaszkowska (exhibition taking place in the same space) the round bar of wood described above should be considered as work number . . . series . . . by artist number. . . ."[49] The blanks that the gallerist would fill in with numerical values highlighted the mathematical rigidity that reduced the artists to the curator's counted coffee beans. Cadere's own enumeration countered by demonstrating that, in fact, two separate exhibitions were taking place: his and that intended by the gallery. He marked the distinction between the two through his wording, which contrasted a work that "is seen" against the perspective of the "exhibition." In both the organizers' conception and Cadere's, there was a direct link between visibility and exhibition, yet Cadere's wall label forced Ptaszkowska into a contradiction whereby her determination of whether or not the bar was exhibited depended not on a relationship to its visibility, but solely on the authority of the gallerist. As Cadere concluded: "Thus, the organizers were in their turn, caught in their own trap."[50] Whereas Magritte's declaration "this is not a pipe" highlighted the difference between language and its referents, Cadere showed that in the case of exhibition, the referent is ambivalent, and that our understanding of the relationship between visibility and exhibition is determined nominally by social conventions, while showing the distinction to be an absurd exercise of power.

Frequently, however, Cadere himself performed the gestures of institutional authority by producing timetables for displays that would take place in the city streets and mailing them out as exhibition announcements to the contacts he had accumulated through the process of meeting people at exhibitions. One such timetable provides a schedule of twenty consecutive locations where Cadere would be with his work on June 25, 1974. As the announcement indicated, beginning at 16:00 (4:00 p.m.), he would travel from the Pont Neuf metro station along the odd-numbered sides of streets to a series of intersections. He noted his anticipated coordinates with to-the-minute precision (e.g., "16h36–coin quai de Conti/rue Guénégaud") until he descended into the Saint-Germain-des-Prés metro, "quai direction Porte d'Orléans," where the exhibition abruptly came to an end at "17h28," as though he and the bar vanished two minutes before the half hour, unavailable to be seen by any of the passengers on what would likely have been a crowded rush-hour train car on that Tuesday evening as the train approached the Montparnasse

hub. He repeated this exact exhibition on June 25, 1975, this time following the even-numbered side of the street, and repeated it again on June 25, 1976, this time reversing the course of travel and following the odd side of the street. According to Marcelis, people would show up along the routes, with itineraries in hand, to see Cadere walk through the streets. For Agalides, Cadere's improvised movements through the city were "an affirmation of what totalitarianism prohibits and denies," a "therapeutic exercise," and refutation of "the maniacal planning of production, timetables, uniforms, surveillance" that the Eastern bloc used to guarantee coordination.[51] Rather than negating totalitarian structures and strictures, however, Cadere frequently mimicked them with the hyper-precision of his own timetables, which determined with seemingly arbitrary authority when a viewer can become an audience to an artwork that is present even if not on display. Reversing Agalides's argument then, Cadere's manipulations of timing in exhibitions such as those he staged both at Ptaszkowska's gallery and in his solo show draw a parallel between communist Romania and the arts institutions of the West with the effect that he remained unaligned with both.

If Ptaszkowska's curatorial program acknowledged the challenges posed by institutional critique without attempting to modify institutional authority, collaborations with experimental gallerists whose projects complemented his own provided opportunities to envision a new synthesis among cultural workers. Art historian Ida Biard's curatorial project the Galerie des Locataires (Renter's Gallery) is notable for the degree to which it corresponded to Cadere's mobile and anti-Establishment practices. Having moved to Paris from Zagreb to study, Biard occupied a similar "frontier" position from which she sought to realize a socialist ideal of freedom within a spectacularized Western art world.[52] Her commitment was to experimental, "dematerialized" artworks that sought to merge art into life, which she additionally manifested by dematerializing her gallery into a set of mail art exhibitions and a physical location in Paris that she called "French Window"—a space that was literally a window of the apartment that she rented at 14 rue de l'Avre, in the fifteenth arrondissement, in which she posted artworks and around which artists would sometimes perform. The Galerie des Locataires sought to erase dominant binaries such as artist/curator, individual/collective, and private/public, a process that included altering the terminology of display to emphasize that she "communicated" rather than "exhibited" works.[53] Biard considered herself to be not the director of a gallery, but a "tenant" in a space, as the word *locataire* signaled. As art historian Ivana Bago notes, in adopting this position "she was tied not to property, but to precarity."[54] Indeed, the language that Bago uses to describe

UNE PRESENTATION DU TRAVAIL DE CADERE

AURA LIEU A PARIS LE 25 JUIN 1974

16 h 00 - métro Pont Neuf,quai direction Porte de la Villette
16 h 10 - bouche métro Pont Neuf
16 h 25 - coin Pont Neuf/quai de Conti
16 h 28 - coin Pont Neuf/quai des Grands Augustins
16 h 30 - coin quai des Grands Augustins/rue Dauphine
16 h 35 - coin impasse de Nevers/quai de Conti
16 h 36 - coin quai de Conti/rue Guénégaud
16 h 46 - coin rue Guénégaud/rue Mazarine
16 h 47 - coin rue Mazarine/rue Jacques Callot
16 h 50 - coin rue Jacques Callot/rue de Seine
16 h 56 - coin rue de Seine/rue Mazarine
17 h 02 - coin rue Mazarine/rue Jacques Callot
17 h 05 - coin rue Jacques Callot/rue de Seine
17 h 07 - coin rue de Seine/rue Jacob
17 h 08 - coin rue Jacob/rue de l'Echaudé
17 h 16 - coin rue de l'Echaudé/rue de l'Abbaye
17 h 20 - coin rue de l'Abbaye/place St. Germain des Prés
17 h 21 - coin place St. Germain des Prés/boulevard St.Germain des Prés
17 h 23 - bouche métro St. Germain des Prés
17 h 28 - métro St. Germain des Prés,quai direction Porte d'Orléans

les rues seront utilisées du côté impair .

Figure 3.15. André Cadere, invitation to exhibition of his work on the odd-numbered side of streets in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés neighborhood, Paris, June 25, 1974. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

the position of the tenant and the metaphor of the "window" in which Biard showed works resonates with the language frequently used to describe Cadere's mobile practice. Concerning Biard's position negotiating societal influences of the East and West, Bago uses the language of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to describe her as a "nomad" whose window "occupied and inhabited space through constant distribution and deterritorialization."[55] Additionally, like Cadere, who chose to retain his Romanian citizenship while living in Paris, and additionally referred to himself as a "squatter in the art world," Bago writes, "the tenant is a permanent guest and a temporary host, free of the bounds of territory and possession, he or she is always ready to move on."[56]

Their shared commitment to deterritorializing boundaries included being a pointedly bad guest. Such was the case in 1973 when the Galerie des Lo-

LA GALERIE DES LOCATAIRES

POSTE-RESTANTE:

MILAN, PARIS, ZAGREB, DUSELDORF, LONDRES

présente un travail de

C A D E R E

le 22 novembre 1973 dans le vernissage d'Adami à la Galerie
Maeght, 13 rue de Téhéran, 75008 Paris
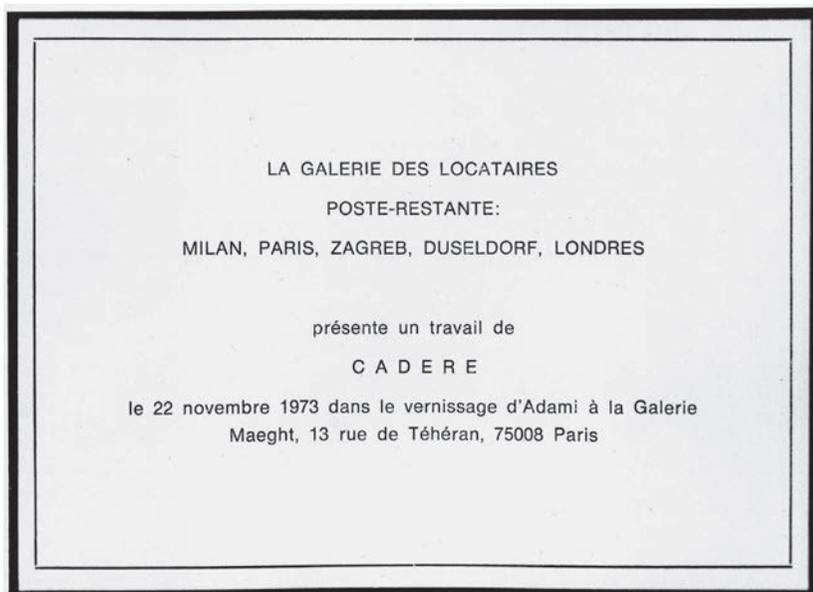
Figure 3.16. André Cadere, invitation to exhibition of his work at Valerio Adami opening, Galerie Maeght, Paris, November 22, 1973. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

cataires supported an exhibition that Cadere held, uninvited, at an opening for the celebrated Italian easel painter Valerio Adami, at Galerie Maeght, an institution that was instrumental in attempting to return Paris to its pre-war cultural stature by exhibiting an international selection of young artists whose works resonated with those of the historical avant-garde.[57] According to Cadere's recollection, to protect itself against his anticipated incursion, the gallery stationed an employee at the door who announced upon his arrival, "You do not have the right to enter with this weapon. This is an honest establishment," and confiscated the work.[58] After relinquishing the bar and insinuating himself among the crowd, Cadere shook a second small bar out of his pant leg, thereby successfully hatching a "presentation of a work" complete with apposite discussion. Cadere contrasted the "entirely pacific, non-aggressive" guerrilla actions that he undertook in exhibiting his work at other exhibitions against iconoclastic acts that involve physically attacking works of art. His own bar was "a very little thing," he pointed out, the presence of which would not prevent an exhibition from taking place. Despite his pacifist claims, however, Cadere used Cold War language to argue that "the war takes place on the plane of the essential, ideological, and the aggression, the violence

Figure 3.17. André Cadere exhibition at Valerio Adami opening, Galerie Maeght, Paris, November 22, 1973. Photographer unknown. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

always comes from the side of power."[59] In a recounting of the event that he published in the next issue of *Flash Art*, he declared that art that is made to hang in galleries does nothing but reinforce the power that the directors of these galleries have over the art.

In other instances, however, Cadere devised strategies that foregrounded the reciprocity between artist and gallery according to a model that did not work to reinforce the power of one side over the other. *Six Pieces by Cadere* (1974) re-created a circuit between Cadere and Biard, but further extended it to incorporate Ferdinand Spillemaeckers' MTL Gallery in Brussels after Spillemaeckers defended Cadere in a conflict that had taken place at the Congress of Conceptual Art three months earlier.[60] For *Six Pieces* Cadere extended Biard's demonstration that a gallery space was not necessary by showing his work not in her apartment/gallery window, but in the street, and nearly three miles away on the avenue des Gobelins. This contradiction would confront Cadere's authority and that of galleries by overcoming the double limitations that galleries posed on the visibility of artworks first by mounting them within enclosed spaces and second by determining when works are viewable according to the gallery hours and the limited amount of time allotted for each exhibition. He countered the conventions of gallery display with his own ironic legalese. Like his later timetable announcements, the one for *Six Pieces* listed the hours during which he would be exhibiting his work, yet these times did not correspond to the hours when the work would be visible. Instead, he specified that "after 2:30 (and before 12:30) the work was no longer (not yet) considered as being exhibited, even if it was seen in the space of the exhibition. Similarly, outside of this space, for example several meters from there in front of the house at no. 9," where Cadere had stationed a bar on a balcony, "the work was not considered as being exhibited, even if it was seen during the hours of the exhibition."[61] This contradicted his own determination that the work would be "exhibited where it is seen," again highlighting the irony of the distinction between visibility and exhibition, which Cadere considered to be a corrective to Ptaszkowska's exhibition, which took place simultaneously.[62]

If *Six Pieces* asserted the importance of dislocation from the gallery, at the same time it indicated the object's essential dependence on the situation of time and place as constitutive of the object's identity. As a paratext to the exhibition, the invitation design communicated key information about how the presentation of the bar should be interpreted. Just under the title were listed the days, hours, and addresses where the bar would be shown. The vertical columns of identical names and numerals that fall into line with the repetition of the same data day after day highlight the fact that the only thing that changed

was the day of the week and the numbers one through six that corresponded to each of the "six pieces."[63] As the only two variables, the invitation suggests that it was the uniqueness of the day itself that defined the work. To reinforce this point, during this six-day period, even the bar remained constant. While Cadere repeatedly insisted upon the singular necessity of showing the bar, this was not due to some self-evidence of the object as much as it was a question of the showing. *Il s'agit de voir*, not *il s'agit de barre*. Indeed, by emphasizing the presentation itself, the work became less self-referential in its objectivity as it opened up to the constitutive contingency that surrounded it, whether that was the street on an April afternoon, the gallery opening of another artist, or a conventional gallery installation.

A spread that Biard published in *+ - 0*, the art journal that she edited, several months after *Six Pieces*' second exhibition at the MTL Gallery, illustrated the two exhibitions aptly. On the left page, a large black and white photograph shows Cadere walking down the street. As in the Brescia and Borgeaud photographs, his back is turned to the camera, and the bar, tipped over his facing shoulder, is in full view. He shuffles past a restaurant awning advertising Kronenbourg beer and a tree that, in early spring, has yet to bloom. A man with a briefcase passes on the left, and a short woman with a scarf tied around her head gesticulates excitedly to an interlocutor outside the frame. Below the photograph, a caption explains that the scene is an "illustration for the exhibition that took place from 1 to 7, ave. des Gobelins, Paris 13th," and identifies the exhibition's sponsor as the Galerie des Locataires. Similarly, the page on the right represents the exhibition such as it was sponsored by the MTL, yet the two pages are conspicuously similar. In the photograph printed at the top of this second page, Cadere cuts a familiar figure while the same leafless tree frames the left side of the photograph, the briefcase-carrying man strides around him, and indistinguishable gestures express the thoughts of an uncannily recognizable woman in the foreground. With every shadow and scrap of litter in place, it becomes clear that the same negative has been printed twice. If there were any doubt that the images were one and the same, the caption that is itself also identical to that of the facing page underscores that we are still looking at Cadere pacing up and down the avenue des Gobelins. All that has changed is the gallery information and date. Captioning the second printing of the photograph from the first exhibition with the information for the second tightened the affinity between the fragments of information such as they create a discursive realm distinct from the events to which they refer.

The interchangeability of the two images, captioned with different information, effectively unraveled, again, the bar and the modes of reproduction

that would allow it to be visualized in other times and places. The identical photographs indicate the similitude between the two exhibitions, yet no one day of presentation could be understood as replaceable with another. A text printed at the bottom of the two pages explains that while habitually it is the galleries that are stationary and whose "social reason" remains the same as changing art exhibits pass through them, in this case, "the roles are inverted," as the work remains the same and the "social reason" of the galleries changes. If art shown in galleries takes on the meaning of the gallery, then in this case the galleries would signify according to the meaning that Cadere assigned for them—that the gallery has no other purpose than to promote art. Moving the art itself beyond the walls of a gallery, or to another city altogether, put the gallery in this position, since the only label that would be affixed to the work would be the invitation, which was not immediately evident to passersby. Indeed, the solo exhibitions that Cadere executed without any institutional support were largely indistinguishable from those for which a gallery supplied publicity as both included the artist exhibiting in the streets, and both generally involved the use of gallery spaces, regardless of whether or not Cadere was invited.

Widely distributed materials were constituent elements of Cadere's project, but they remained secondary as promotion or as a record of work that insisted on a presence in time and space, such as Walter Benjamin identified as an aspect of the authentic object that such mechanical reproduction seeks, and fails, to replicate.[64] Contrasting the object of the bars themselves, such as one sees them today at museum retrospectives, against what would have been the experience of encountering Cadere himself during the 1970s, Simon Neuenschwander has argued that "the photographs, invitation cards and films" that are left over "provide an incomparably stronger impression than the real bars themselves. The aura of the objects seems to intensify especially through these documents: they provide the most important context and, retrospectively, they are capable of representing the significance of the bars as powerful and enigmatic aesthetic instruments." Without the documentation of their guerrilla potential, the bars communicate only their "negative possibility." Yet there is not a "sense of the universal equality of things" in Cadere's use of discursive media.[65] Rather, the craftedness of the bars, with their hand-chiseled spools and the imperfections that accumulated on their surface with use, lay stress on their unique existences. It would seem that by simultaneously insisting on the presence of an original object, and its presence everywhere as it transgressed physical and symbolic boundaries, he attempted to incorporate the ability to be reactivated through encounters with new contexts—such as

Plate 1. Joël Stein, *Quadrature du cercle* (*Squaring the Circle*), 1959. Oil on wood, 31½ × 31½ in. (80 × 80 cm). © 2014 Estate of Joel Stein / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Provided by Virgile Stein.
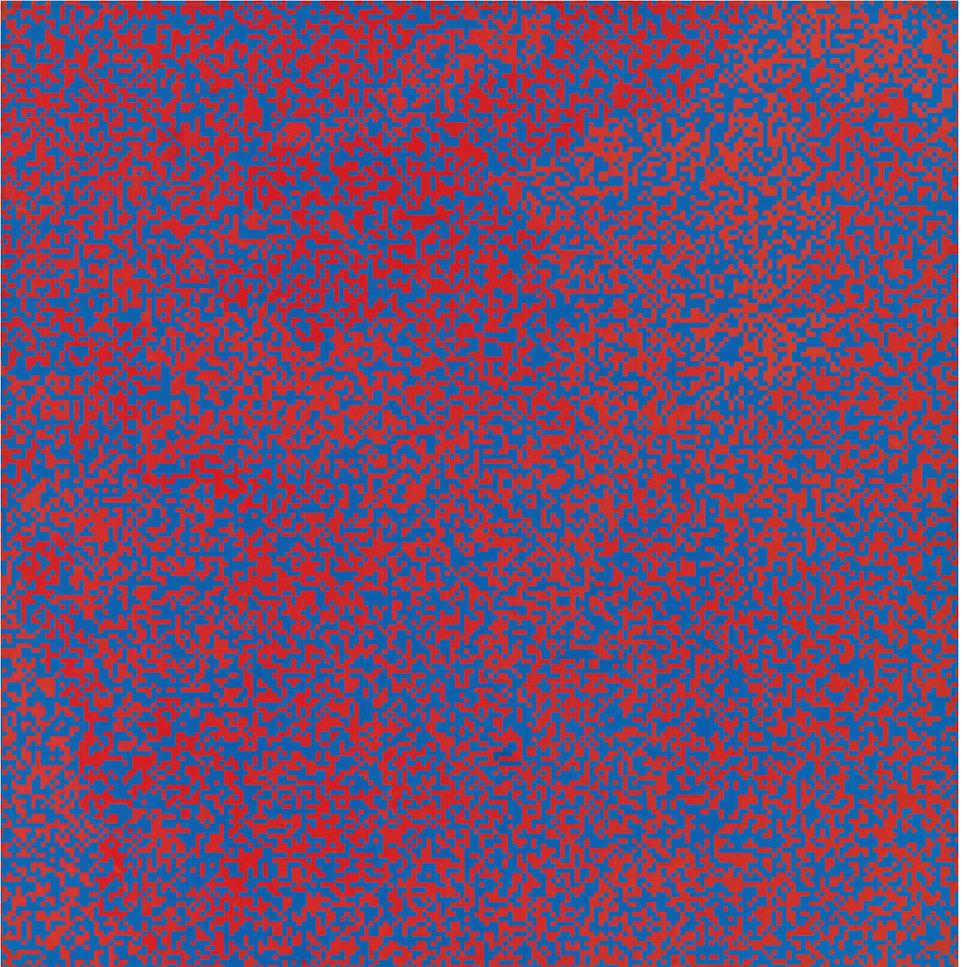
Plate 2. François Morellet, *Répartition aléatoire de 40.000 carrés suivant les chiffres pairs et impairs d'un annuaire de téléphone, 50% rouge, 50% bleu* (*Random Distribution of 40,000 Squares Using the Odd and Even Numbers of a Telephone Directory, 50% Red, 50% Blue*), 1960. Oil on canvas, 40⅝ × 40⅝ in. (103 × 103 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York, Enid A. Haupt Fund, 1184.2012 2014. © François Morellet / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Photograph © Museum of Modern Art / licensed by Scala / Art Resource, NY.

Plate 3. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Affichage sauvage*, travail in situ, Paris, April 1968. Detail.
© DB-ADAGP Paris.

Plate 4. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Affichage sauvage*, travail in situ, École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, April 1968. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

Plate 5. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Affichage sauvage*, travail in situ, rue Visconti, Paris, April 1968. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.
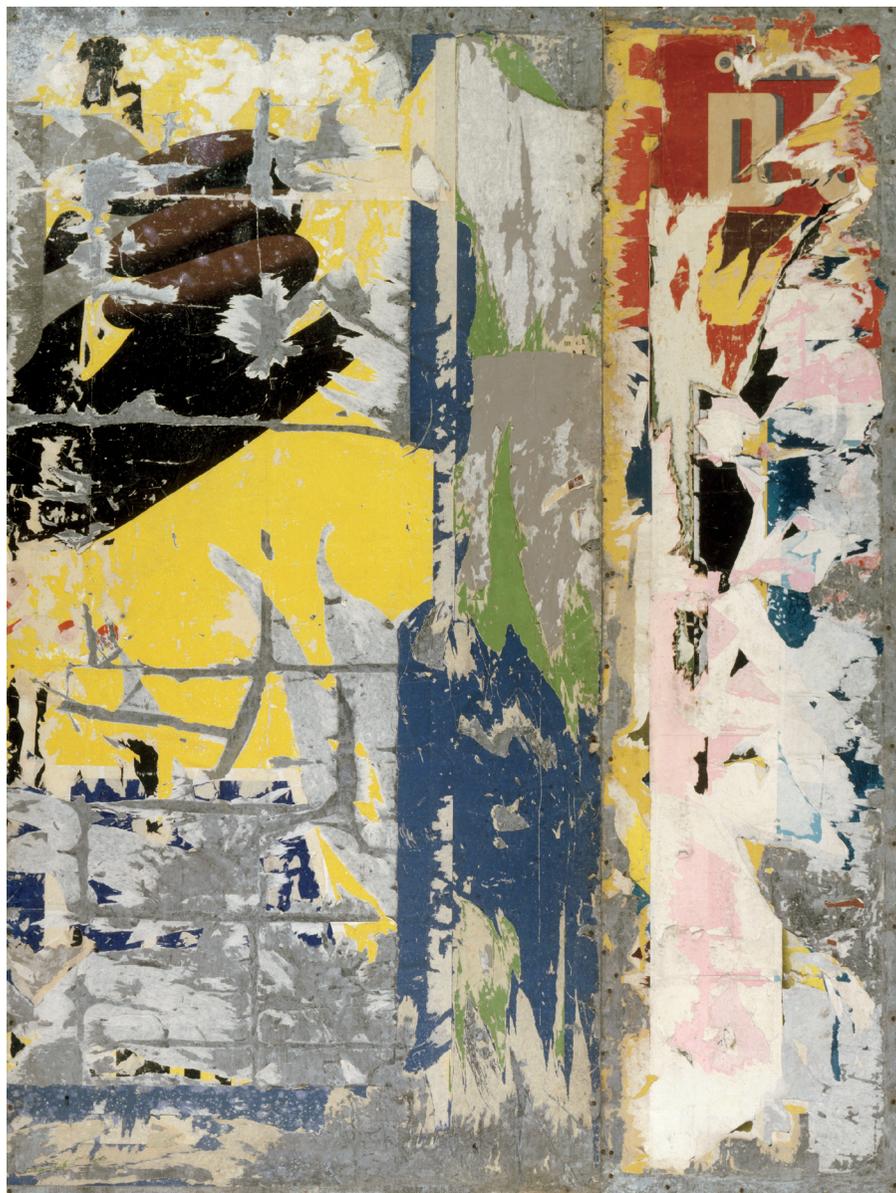
Plate 6. Raymond Hains, *Panneau d'affichage*, 1960. 78¾ × 59 in. (200 × 150 cm).
© CNAC / MNAM / Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

Plate 7. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Peinture et collage sur toile,* April–May 1964. 74 × 74⅓ in. (187.9 × 188.8 cm). Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

Plate 8. Simon Hantaï, *Mariale m.a.3*, 1960. Oil on canvas, 115⅗ × 82½ in. (293.6 × 209.5 cm). © CNAC / MNAM / Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.
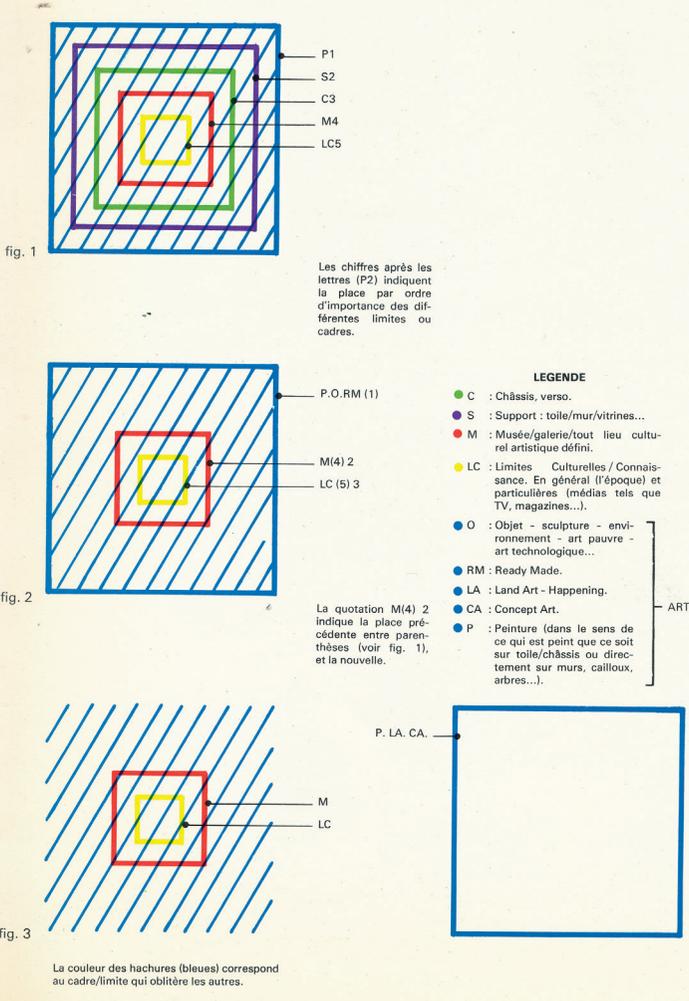
Plate 9. Daniel Buren, diagram from "Limites critiques," 1971. (The following is a translation of the French text in the photo.)

I. Blocking Discourse (art such as it is perceived)

Figure 1 The numbers following the letters (P2) indicate the place by order of importance of the different limits or frames.

Figure 2 The quotation M(4) 2 indicates the preceding place between parentheses (see figure 1), and the new one.

Figure 3 The color of hatch marks (blue) corresponds to the frame/limit that blocks the others.

Key:

C: stretcher bars, verso.

S: Support: canvas/wall/vitrines . . .

M: Museum/gallery/any culturally defined artistic place.

LC: Cultural/knowledge limits. In general (the epoch) and in its particularities (media such as TV, magazines . . .).

O: Object—sculpture—environment—poor art—technological art . . .

RM: Readymade

LA: Land art—happening

CA: Conceptual art

P: Painting (in the sense of what is painted, whether that be on canvas/stretcher bars or directly on walls, stones, trees . . .).

II. — CE QUI SE PASSE EN FAIT
(L'art tel qu'il se situe)

Fig. 1 bis

M(4) 1
LC(5) 2
P(1) 3
S(2) 4
C (3) 5
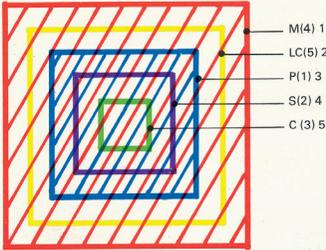
Le chiffre entre paren-
thèses est la place
occupée dans la fi-
gure 1.
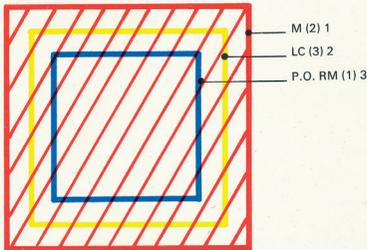
Fig. 2 bis

M (2) 1
LC (3) 2
P.O. RM (1) 3

LEGENDE

Les hachures rouges indiquent que M. est
la limite réelle (point de vue unique) de tout
ce qui se passe en son sein. Cependant,
P. oblitère toujours C. et S. Les hachures
bleues restent donc dessinées.

Pointillés : trace de la figure 3.

Le chiffre entre paren-
thèses est la place
occupée dans la fi-
gure 2.

Fig. 3 bis

M1
LC 2
P. LA. CA 3
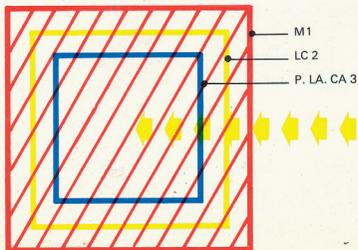
Plate 10. Daniel Buren, diagram from "Limites critiques," 1971. (The following is a translation of the French text in the photo.)

II. –What in Fact Happens (art such as it is situated)
Figure 1 bis: The number between parentheses is the place occupied in figure 1.
Figure 2 bis: The number between parentheses is the place occupied in figure 2.

Key: The red hatch marks indicate that M. is the real limit (the unique point of view) of everything that happens at its heart. Even so, P. still blocks C. and S. The blue hatch marks therefore remain. Dashed line: trace of figure 3.

Plate 11. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Affichage sauvage*, travail in situ, Paris, April 1968. Detail.
© DB-ADAGP Paris.

Plate 12. Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Les couleurs: Sculptures,* travail in situ, 1977, collection MNAM, Centre Pompidou, Paris. Detail. © DB-ADAGP Paris.

Plate 13. André Cadere, *Untitled*. 1968–1969. Oil on canvas, 51 × 76¾ in. (129.5 × 195 cm). © CNAC/MNAM/ Dist.

Plate 14. André Cadere, *Six Round Wooden Bars*. 1975. Painted wood, 47¼ × 4 in. (120 × 10 cm). © CNAC/ MNAM/Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

Plate 15. Hervé Fischer, detail of sacks of other artists' work that Fischer destroyed for *Hygiène de l'art: La déchirure*, 1974. Mixed media. © Hervé Fischer. Archives Hervé Fischer.

Plate 16. Hervé Fischer, detail of sacks of other artists' work that Fischer destroyed for *Hygiène de l'art: La déchirure*, 1974. Mixed media. © Hervé Fischer. Archives Hervé Fischer.

soleil	9
citron	8
caneton	6
banane	5
canaris	5
fleurs	5
boutons d'or	4
poussin	4
pull over	4
cocu	3
lumière	3
lune	3
pamplemousse	3
jaune	2
jonquille	2
paille	2
pomme	2
urine	2
réponses originales	15
sans réponse	21
total	108

Plate 17. Jean-Paul Thénot, interactive poll on the color yellow, 1972. Cardstock.
© Jean-Paul Thénot. Archives Jean-Paul Thénot.

is generally the province of the reproduction—into the authenticity of experience provided by the original object itself. As Cadere passed through crowds, retail spaces, galleries, and pubs, the bar took part in the rituals of everyday life. If he intended to attribute aura to the everyday, it was to revive a sense of participation and presence of the individual in it.

Space and Politics

Developing the theme of artistic autonomy, Cadere attacked another prominent strategy of avant-garde artistic production from the time: the in situ. While clearly influenced by minimalist display practices, he was critical of what he understood as a dependence that much minimalist art had on the institutional spaces that showed and promoted it. As the first part of a series of four exhibitions that fell under the theme *Space and Politics* (1975–1976), he held a debate at the Elsa von Honolulu Loringhoven gallery in Ghent. Here he presented a critique of site-specific works focusing on Carl Andre's *39th Copper Cardinal* (1975), which had recently been purchased by a local museum.[66] Andre's work consisted of a grid of copper plates laid out on the floor of the museum below a fresco from the Italian Renaissance—a relationship that Cadere observed was reinforced by a postcard that Andre authorized depicting his copper tiles, a decorative framing element on the wall that the work abutted, and the fresco on the ceiling. Cadere argued that works like Andre's, which were created in relation to architecture, were dependent on that architecture as well as the invisible economic power that backs it, and he likened the contemporary art market to the princely patronage of the cinquecento that had financed the production of works like the museum's fresco.[67] Cadere's evocation of Renaissance patronage and the contemporary art market, as well as his own engagements with the spaces of everyday life, resonates with the critique that Peter Bürger had forwarded in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, which had been published the previous year.[68] Cadere's attack on Andre suggested a distinction between two different forms of autonomy: a "bourgeois autonomy" associated with the institutionalization of art independent of the means-ends relations of life praxis, and the type of relative autonomy that Cadere aimed for, that is, an autonomy that took a critical distance from arts institutions by stepping beyond the spaces of the museum or gallery, which included weaving aspects of life praxis into its critique. Although Andre's sculpture could be said to achieve bourgeois autonomy as it pursued, arguably, exclusively aesthetic interests, it fell short of meeting the criteria of avant-gardist art. As long as art remained within the ideal sphere of art institutions separated from life praxis, Bürger argued, any better society that it might attempt to construct

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ANDRÉ CADERE'S CALLIGRAMS OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

would not be realizable due to the fact that such art is relegated to the realm of fiction and "semblance."[69] Although it could be argued that autonomous art itself offers a challenge to convention through the innovative, often non-representational forms that it presents, such art's promise is limited by the institutional context that frames it, and causes it to represent "bourgeois art" first and foremost. At worst, such art affirms the "bad society" that produced it. Although Andre was an iconic figure of the American neo-avant-garde, Cadere's critique positioned him within the tradition of the bourgeoisie such as it adhered to the separation of art into its own autonomous realm.[70]

As a contrast, Cadere offered his own mobile aestheticism in an effort to reorganize the relationship between institutional and extra-institutional praxes. His exhibition in Ghent included stepping beyond the "white, ideal and empty space of the gallery" to produce an extensive possibility of exhibition location, which included paying uninvited house calls with his art to those on the gallery's mailing list—a move that inadvertently approached the limits of artistic risk-taking when he was greeted at one address by a man with a gun. From Ghent, he traveled to Milan, where his exhibition took place entirely in a gallery space, though it abandoned the installation services offered by gallery architecture, instead using the gallery as a meeting point where the artist was personally on hand to discuss the work with visitors. At London's Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Cadere shouldered his bar every day from noon to 3 p.m. through the museum's galleries, offices, restaurant, toilets, and various other "fortuitous locations," where chance encounters lead to discussions on the relationship between space and politics. While the ICA show demonstrated the independence of the round bar of wood in its relation to the directed spaces of the institution, this event was far less successful than the simultaneous underground exhibitions of his work that Lynda Morris at the Slade School helped him organize every evening from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. at pubs around the city that were frequented by members of London's conceptual art community. Whereas only a few people visited the ICA, Cadere noted that the pub shows were very well attended, since, in his words, "all the important English dealers, collectors, American collectors, magazines came. Everyone came."[71] Finally, the "crescendo" of *Space and Politics* ended with an exhibition under a bus shelter in Paris.

The range of spaces at which Cadere showed his work undermined the special claim that institutions make to being privileged sites of art exhibition. Instead, Cadere created an alternative system for determining the value of potential venues—a system that humorously exposed the institutions' ideological contraband by proposing equivalences based on avowed functions.

Figure 3.18. André Cadere in conversation with the public during his *Space and Politics* exhibition at the Galleria Françoise Lambert in Milan, February 1976. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

Regarding the end of *Space and Politics*, Cadere quipped, "The choice of a bus shelter proved to be right because between 6 and 7 pm it rained a lot on that day in Paris, so everyone could very well leave the traditional shelter of the museum."[72] While convention typically positions the gallery or museum as a stable ground against which artworks differentiate as figures, Cadere inverted this relationship so that the work was the stable, unchanging ground against which the institution and even its functional replaceability were thrown into relief. By parading his critique in the spaces of everyday life, he showed art institutions to be embedded in life praxis and any claim to autonomy to be relationally defined. The relationships between the spaces in which Cadere showed were not based on resemblances in which the street or the bus shelter modeled itself after the gallery as its fictive double—these are not images of exhibitions; rather, his promenading in these spaces produces them as alternatives, or similitudes, so that the space of exhibition and the space of everyday praxis intermingle and become coextensive.

Although art historian Cornelia Lauf's analysis of Cadere conveys her esteem for his work, she nonetheless found a suitably analogous character from the history of theory, philosopher Maurice Blanchot's sad sack of a "man in the

street." The comparison is not wholly uncalled for as Cadere himself described his project using nearly identical terms to those Blanchot chose to describe the quality of everyday life. Cadere: "One can essentially say of this work that I produce it and that I show it, the one being the complement of the other, all of it constituting an everyday and ungraspable activity."[73] Blanchot: "Whatever its other aspects, the everyday has this essential trait: it allows no hold. It escapes."[74] As Blanchot saw it, by the end of the 1950s, French culture had become sufficiently saturated by domestic technologies that the bored citizen of everyday life had fallen asleep before the half-glow of televised spectacle. An anonymous automaton, the man in the street escaped social encounters as he went about his preprogrammed daily activities. As the animated Cadere progressed through his territories at a snail's pace, placing one foot in front of the next with deliberation, then stopping to glance at the activity streaming around him, his contemplative attention to the banal encouraged the viewer to steep in the humdrum. Whereas the passersby were motivated by their destination, the ambiguity of Cadere's purpose calls attention to presence itself. On one hand, such purposelessness reflects boredom, which, Blanchot observed, is the consequence of the unperceived becoming perceptible. During an exhibition in Genoa, Cadere commented on the nondescript exhibition locations, noting that the work was shown "at the whim of the different movements that only a city can trigger: encounters, curiosity, fatigue, boredom."[75] Yet his peripatetic weaving through the streets in an attempt to "establish disorder" only recalls Blanchot's anonymous "man in the street"; it does not enact it. Rather than a holdover from Vianson-Ponté's pre-1968 days of "boredom," his presence in public space figures the chorus of pedestrians whose idle footsteps Michel de Certeau would theorize during the early 1980s. They are not blindly directed by habit, but, rather, through "tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation," they give shape to space through "pedestrian speech acts."[76] This is not a man in the street, he is a man *of* the street, the un-self-conscious agent equivalent of Cadere in that the movements are not, as de Certeau differentiates, "localized." Instead, they actively "spatialize."

In inhabiting both everyday and art institutional spaces, Cadere took on roles that situated him alternatively as a recognizable figure of artistic authority when he showed in specifically art-world contexts, and as an anonymous passerby in the crowd in the spaces of everyday life. Promenading through the streets physically did the work of removing art from autonomous institutions and embedding it within the space of daily life, as Cadere merged with the people that surrounded and absorbed him. A photograph from *Six Pieces* that was taken from inside a café provides a perspective that illustrates the

continuity between Cadere's exhibitions of his artworks and the exhibition of oneself that individuals perform when they step out onto the streets and put themselves on public display. Embedded within the café's interior, the photographer's camera captures not only Cadere on the street, but also the activity of spectatorship in the silhouettes of foreground patrons who look out onto the sidewalk, while the folding doors frame the street scene and create a vision of the city as spectacle into which the artist inserts himself. The image recalls those produced a century earlier by impressionist painters and photographers as they captured the radical transformations that Paris had undergone under Haussmannization. The process redeveloped the city as a spectacle in which the bourgeoisie would stroll up and down the city streets, exhibiting their class dominance through the public presentation of their wealth and leisure. A series of photographs taken by Borgeaud documenting *Six Pieces* provides an image of daily life on one of Haussmann's boulevards in 1973. As it makes clear, by Cadere's time, the stroll had been overtaken by the hustle and bustle of a city significantly larger and more densely populated than it had been in the nineteenth century. The photos show Cadere as he walks down the street, slowly putting one foot in front of the other, as couples, waiters, children, and others flow around him in a continuous stream of pedestrian traffic. His deliberate pacing holds the space around him and calls attention to the process of being in public, rather than quickly moving through it on the way to somewhere else.

Cadere's mode of presenting himself in public space does not call for a return to nineteenth-century bourgeois spectacle, however, as much as it resonates with the occupations of public space that took place in 1968. Using spray paint to reproduce the linear successions of colors in his bars across the city, his graffiti created a combination of textual and visual representations of the round bars of wood that merged with his displacements across Paris. The locations, like his peripatetic meanderings, were diverse and decentralized. He sprayed graffiti along a perimeter fence in the middle-class neighborhood surrounding the Parc Montsouris; in the heart of the Saint-Germain gallery district on the rue Visconti; and on a palisade at a construction site beneath high-rises in a popular neighborhood of an outer arrondissement. The marks of the spray paint left a record of Cadere's presence, an abstract mode of communicating, "Cadere was here." Just as taggers use spray paint to give private names to, and claim, public spaces, so Cadere's graffiti acted as a signature that recorded the human presence that animates a city. Although the bands of color did not display an overt message, the very gesture of producing graffiti recalled the slogans that had been sprayed across the city during the days of
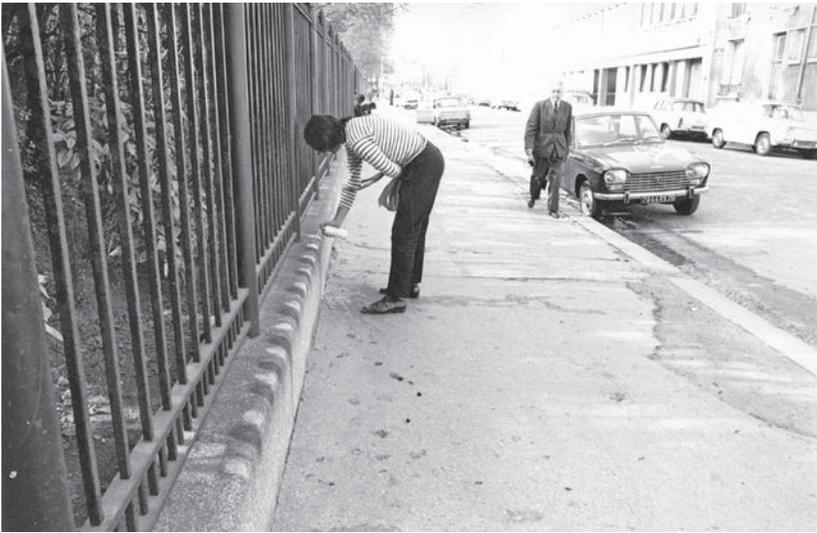
Figure 3.19. André Cadere spray painting at the Parc Montsouris, Paris, 1972. Photography by Daniel Pype. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

May '68. With the movement's imperative that the everyday citizen should "seize speech," the public began using the walls to encourage each other to "live without dead time," experience unshackled joy, and exhume the ludic leisure that has been paved over by the drab necessity of daily life.

The abstraction of Cadere's own marks entered into an assortment of political street interventions that ranged from the precise and specific, such as posters that named people, places, and dates for meetings; to the more aphoristic, philosophical, or inspirational; to the abstract, as in the case of Buren's *affichages sauvages*, or Cadere's spray paintings of colors in linear successions. Reflecting on the role of intellectuals during the May Movement, Blanchot wrote about their desire to merge into the crowds rather than participate from a lofted remove, and the way that graffiti spoke to this ambition:

> When some of us took part in the May '68 movement, we hoped to preserve ourselves from any pretension to singularity, and in a certain way we succeeded in not being considered exceptional, but like everyone else. So much did the force of the anti-authoritarian movement render it easy to forget particularities, and to not allow the young, the old, the unknown, the too well known, to be distinguished the one from the other, as if despite the difference and the incessant controversies, each person recognized himself or herself in the anonymous words written on the walls—words

Figure 3.20. Spray painting by André Cadere on a palisade in Paris, 1972. Photograph by Bernard Marcelis. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

which even if they happened to be elaborated in common, were never, in the end, proclaimed to be the words of an author, being everyone's and for everyone, in all of their contradictory formulations.[77]

The ambient association that Blanchot evoked is not so different from the kind of politics in which Cadere engaged in the following years, whether in his stated ambition of bringing people together in dialogue or traces left on walls. Borgeaud recalls that he and Cadere sought "to change the manner of thinking. To change the manner of conceiving relations, structures," yet they were not interested in "events" or the "factual" elements of politics.[78] Nevertheless, Cadere seems to have appreciated the importance of political specificity to structural change as he courted references to people, places, and laws in the locations he chose for his photos. In one instance he underlined a series of flyers that had been posted on the rue Visconti, calling people to join a demonstration that drew around 200,000 people to protest the murder of Maoist activist and Renault factory worker Pierre Overney in 1972. In another action on the same street, his signature succession of colors hovers in the space between the words "soutenons" and "Pleven," committing his support for the 1972 law named for the Minister of Justice René Pleven that outlawed racist speech in

Figure 3.21. André Cadere with graffiti underscoring Pierre Overney posters in the rue Visconti, Paris, 1972. Photography by Daniel Pype. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

France. While he may never have spoken to his friends and collaborators about Overney or Pleven, the causes that they symbolized resonate with his rejection of authoritarianism in the case of Overney, and his insistence on individual liberty in that of Pleven.[79] The social encounter might not be immediate in the cases of Cadere's abstract interventions, but the graffiti created the image of an imagined potential conversation, and collective process of interpretation, taking place among a socially diverse community, linked across a range of spaces.

This community included those in the art world, but it also broadened its reach to all of the specific individuals with whom Cadere came into contact in his meanderings. These included other émigrés like Agalides, who met him unexpectedly while he was showing his work at the Louvre, as well as the "transvestites" and "rockers" that he befriended and invited to his artist talk "Establishing Disorder," thereby creating, as Ghislain Mollet-Viéville described, a *mise-en-abyme* of the talk's theme, and the homeless with whom he would strike up conversation about his work in the metro.[80] The speech of others in the street was not of concern to Cadere, however. As he explained to Morris in a 1976 interview, "My work is the situation of my work in the art world. I am only interested in the art world because the work in the street is

Figure 3.22. André Cadere's graffiti intervening in writing in support of the Pleven Law, rue Visconti, Paris, 1972. Photography by Daniel Pype. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

always the same. In the street there is no development because people in the street react in the same way today as they did six years ago and as they would react twenty years into the future."[81] The primary reaction that he sought, rather, came from the specialist audience that was primed to understand the critique he was making of the power of the art world. This critique depended on the public and its spaces in order to provide an outside that could serve as a point of contrast, a space of independence.

By traversing the frontiers of the art world, crossing between public and private spaces while playing the role of the uninvited guest, Cadere created an "insider/outsider" position Agalides described as "an index of crisis."[82] In Romania the crisis was the "totalitarian paradox," in which novelty is required to institute a totalitarian government and yet it is prohibited by the governments it creates. At the same time that the government attempts to encompass the whole of society, there are still the outside positions, such as those that figures like Cadere occupy in secret as members of the former bourgeois class forced to pose as workers among the proletariat. Citing Giorgio Agamben, Agalides likens Cadere's position to that of living in a state of exception, subject to "the legal form of what cannot have legal form."[83] Once in Paris, his status did not stabilize; rather, onto this "crisis" was added his status as a "displaced person," a social position that he transformed into a strategy of institutional critique.

Figure 3.23. André Cadere exhibiting his work at the Louvre, with friends Gilbert and George, March 16, 1975. Photograph by Giorgio Colombo. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

Taking up this interpretive motif, Jean-Pierre Criqui argued that Cadere's new "place was that of a man who has no place, who infiltrates the interior in order to embody the exterior."[84] In so doing, he invented a position of perpetual negotiation for himself rather than assimilating into the system as it existed. This work of identifying, crossing, questioning, repurposing institutional and cultural boundaries is the political as Claude Lefort defines it, as practiced by an artist for whom negotiating boundaries was a perpetual imposed way of life.

Regarding his own position as a Romanian in the Western art world and society more generally, Cadere told Morris, "From my position there is nothing to lose. A Marxist position, like the quotation from Marx 'The proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains.' I feel myself to be in this position."[85] Several minutes later, he evoked the Cold War dialectic by locating America at the opposite end of the economic spectrum. "For American artists," he said, "the questions of art are very much about economics. It is a question about American society; from a very realistic point of view it is all about money."[86] Money posed a problem for Cadere, since despite his claim to having nothing, he had experienced some success in the West that put him in the position of coping

with the autonomy provided by the bourgeois art market. As he explained to Morris:

> It is really the most difficult situation. It is more interesting than before but it is more difficult. It is more interesting because by giving me a little money and making me well known, the art world has at the same time given me a little power. Now it depends what I do with that power. It is a problem that I now have a little power that I did not have before. It is a gift. Before I had only the power of work, now the power of the work continues but also there is the power to be well known. At the same time as I say I am well known I also feel a kind of freedom.[87]

His solution to this problem was to work within the apparatus of the bourgeois art market to expose its mechanisms.

While Cadere offered a critique of institutions' structural factors in an attempt to move art beyond the walls of the economic powers that effectively modify the meaning of a work, his artistic process expressed those systems' liberalist tendencies. The autonomy that he embraced did not ultimately challenge the foundations of art making and the institution as much as they did what Richard Rorty referred to as proposing new metaphors for how the system could function better. Indeed, as Foucault showed, it is useless to try and escape a system based on sovereignty through a liberal invocation of rights because doing so always ends up legitimizing that system's basic values.[88] Art institutions that depend on the concept of the autonomous artist will not be overthrown by an artist whose central preoccupation is independence from that system. As Bürger similarly comments, it is necessary to maintain a degree of convention within avant-garde critique if that critique is to be effective. If, by entering into life praxis, art creates too wide of a gap between itself and arts institutions such that "the praxis is aesthetic and art is practical," then art loses the framework that makes its critical apparatus intelligible as such.[89] In Cadere's view, improving the system meant granting the artist more independence and more responsibility. The official spaces of art exhibition were both the subject of his work and a platform from which he often chose to speak. Polemics such as he engaged through *Unlimited Painting* served his goal of transforming himself into, in his words, "a star."[90] Stardom was a tool that he hoped to use to serve his ideals. "I hope to integrate myself into the system," he wrote, "a system that exists because painters make the machine work."[91] Displacing culpability from the museum to the artists themselves would make it possible for the latter to proliferate the narratives that determine art's meaning.

Lotringer raised the complexity of Cadere's relationship to these systems,

suggesting, "What must be a bit perplexing to people is that you outline what could be a systematic challenge, and then you leave off without giving it a direction. Don't you think that's rather absurd?" To this Cadere agreed: "Yes, it's absurd enough. Precisely, there is no systematic challenge in it. I think that's an interesting point."[92] The display tactics that Cadere developed are consistent in their spatial challenges to institutional authority, yet this lack of direction that Lotringer identifies is an essential aspect of what could be called his antitotalitarian stance. While Bürger cites ambiguity as a shortcoming of the neo-avant-garde, whose work may be interpreted as either celebration or critique of reified consciousness (consumer culture, for example), the openness of an unresolved challenge, such as Cadere proposed with "establishing disorder" (discussed in the introduction to this book), offered no answers other than the dissolution of the restrictions that are imposed by systems of order.[93] To return to Foucault's distinction between resemblance and similitude, they are neither based on nor do they produce solutions that could function as models of a better system. The comparisons that his interventions invite among miscellaneous spaces challenge conventional determinations about incongruities. The effect is a suspension of the dialectic between the inside and outside of the art institutional system in which the resolution is left open to those who would take it upon themselves to determine the next step.

Traversing the boundaries that separate art institutions from the rest of the city, Cadere alternatively positioned himself as an anonymous figure in the crowd, an individual artist seeking to advance his career, and a perambulating force of institutional authority. The "new metaphors" that he offered to the system, however, involved a ceaseless pursuit of autonomy through which he operated on the presumption of working within an ideal liberal society in which every individual was free to participate equally, regardless of predisposition to the conventions of artistic exhibition. In recent years, the members of GRAV had attempted to make art available to everyone by replacing specialized knowledge with the viewer's pure experience of the physical object, and it is likely that Cadere himself was influenced by such motivations as he began producing Op paintings when he first moved to Paris.[94] In backing away from the specifics of perceptual experience to take a wider view of the structural system, however, he adopted an approach that questioned the preconditions of such perceptual experiences. Like the GRAV, he deemphasized the intention of the artist (as the one who might choose anything) in order to emphasize the object itself (as something that is visible). Yet he also reduced the importance that the individual viewer's experience plays in accessing the object, and instead focused on accessibility at the institutional level, and his interest in ac-

cess was primarily that of the artist to an audience, rather than of the audience to a new way of experiencing art. By providing equal access to its visibility, the work highlighted the fact that art's most basic requirement of being "seen" is always determined by those who control interpretation.

Cadere rebuffed the reader, however, in denying his or her access to interpretation. In doing so, he indicated that the death of the privileged position of artistic authorship would not necessarily occasion the birth of an exceptional status for the reader/viewer. Instead, he attempted to cancel any potential for a fixed meaning to be placed on the work. A mailing that Biard circulated for him around the time of the *Unlimited Painting* exhibition expressed the resistance that is constitutive of his work: "The paper on which this text is printed is to be thrown away, the text itself forgotten. Rather, what remains is that you have read the text, seen the paper. This brings you nothing, and in no way depends on you, this marks the limit of your power." The statement expressed the independent will that Cadere attempted to actualize through his exhibition strategies. Far from absolutely rejecting interpretation, however, he recognized all interpretive power as being equally relatively valid. As he explained, "Each person is defined by his or her manner of reacting. Rolling pin, fishing rod, erotic object, etc. These are words that in the first place define the person expressing them. What is important in this work is the fact that *it is exhibited where it is seen*."[95] By making the work's mere presence the condition of its exhibition, Cadere was able to cut out the middle man, exposing his work anywhere and everywhere: markets, pubs, basketball courts, sidewalk dumpsters, as well as museum exhibitions, and group and solo gallery shows—some of which with the consent of the institution, even. The meaning that viewers found in the work was incidental to Cadere's ambitions for it.

Amid the widespread rejection of political representation and the promotion of direct democracy in the years after 1968, Cadere's insistence on the presence of the object had less to do with its aura than with its ability to create situations that reflected critically back on their organizational structures and assumptions. Downplaying interpretation avoided the risk of creating a delimited consensus. Instead, his rejection both of his own authority as artist and of the interpretive authority of the viewer created a situation for the art object that reproduced the open place of representation that Lefort argued is at the heart of democracy.[96] Unlike Buren, who sought to awaken a lazy audience by confronting it with a sublime experience of isolation before a work devoid of meaning, the ways in which Cadere denied interpretive footholds were consistently social, as he organized exhibitions around debates, staged them in public squares and markets, positioned the work as a site of conflict that would

Figure 3.24. André Cadere exhibiting his work in the second of two identical walks, one and a half years apart, on West Broadway in New York, 1978. Photograph by Harry Shunk. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

generate discussion between interested parties, and was himself nearly always on hand to discuss the work as he carried it from place to place.

When an interviewer accused Cadere of violating an unsuspecting public by accosting them in the streets with his work, however, he turned the judgment around, countering, "Just the existence of the museums and galleries is an assault. . . . One can insult me, throw me from the doors of the museum, sequester my work: in this way one proves without ambiguity that 'Beauty, Art' are imposed with the police. . . . Of course from the point of view of power I deceive. But as I am saying, the rules of the game are not to be respected."[97] Cadere chafes the Establishment at the same time that this goal should be understood as fundamentally consistent with arts institutions' dependence on the role of the free artist following his or her instincts, visions, or research experiments, however they might be described. As Lauf notes, Cadere's actions caused him to be "barely tolerated by much of the system he unabashedly tried to subvert"—his encounters with Claura and Denizot, as well as with Buren and Andre are evidence of this—yet at the same time, he found champions among those, such as Biard and Spillemaeckers, who themselves were attempting to create institutions that would function as establishments of disorder.[98]

Figure 3.25. André Cadere outside the International Hospital of the University of Paris, June 1978. Photography by Bernard Joubert. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.

Cadere made his appeal to stardom on the basis of a group much larger than himself, as his art sought to incorporate the larger society of artists seeking representation, and of everyday people whom he addressed in the spaces where consciousness as a public forms, whether in museums, in pubs, or on the street. The ceding of identity, however, is ambivalent. The everyday escapes, for better or for worse. Writing a year after the May Movement, Blanchot described the actions of the government as it attempted to re-domesticate the man in the street, who had become emboldened by May, by asphyxiating politics. Plainclothes police officers surveyed the cinemas, cafés, and museums.[99] The state carried out random searches and arrests and prevented groups from gathering in public spaces. If falling under the eye of such oppressive surveillance had become unavoidable in the aftermath of '68, then transforming oneself into a suspicious character on the street or being uninvited at an exhibition was a subtly effective rejoinder.

Cadere's strategy for weakening the exclusive control that art institutions exercised over the showing of artworks engaged a constant dialoging between the space of the street and that of the institution in a one-man effort to continue what many have identified as perhaps May's most defining accomplish-

ment, that is, the toppling of sociological boundaries that separate students, workers, and intellectuals, or, in this case, the artist and the public. Whereas in 1968 this might have been a strategy for revolutionary change, by the mid-1970s the same process was akin to satisfying the precondition for a normal, functioning democracy. Indeed, Cadere's art practice took part in a movement of institutional critique whose practitioners moved forward with 1968's reaction against André Malraux's attempts to mobilize high art for the dissemination of a universal culture that would promote aesthetic sensitivity and civic commitment through spontaneous revelation. Rather than rejecting the universalizing project of museums as tastemakers for the state in the promotion of the particular free expression of artists beyond the museum, Cadere emphasized both sides of the equation such that he highlighted the dialectic in which neither position can exist without the other while refusing to settle easily into a stable exhibition routine.

Just as his international recognition was gaining momentum, the artist was diagnosed with the cancer that would take his life in August 1978. During his final weeks in the hospital, he held steady to his work, writing a series of final notes to Yvon Lambert and taking short walks with a small bar beyond the hospital's confines. Photos from his last summer show a gaunt man, unwavering in his commitment, seemingly proving his unlimited painting argument by showing that the critique in his work exceeded questions of institutionality. The everyday life in which his work found its ultimate relevance extended even into everyday experiences of dying. Although the bars themselves were not the work, the institutionalization of them as they were collected by individuals and museums constitutes an essential aspect of Cadere's broader practice, as he sought recognition among the community to whom they were primarily intelligible. Although Cadere participated in the period's critique of the Centre Pompidou, notably in his *établir le désordre* performance, which opens this book, his attitude toward that institution was typically ambivalent. As Marcelis recounts, before the museum opened, it officially communicated its esteem for his practice not only by acquiring a work, but by commissioning six bars of notable size that entered its collection before the museum opened. Incorporated into the most significant collection of modern and contemporary art in France, these bars stand as a monument to Cadere's ambitions and success, and yet the bars themselves continue to exceed the museum's ability to contain them, since a conventional inert display can only ever partially communicate their significance. By creating work that could both support and subvert the intended functioning of the museum, Cadere invented new metaphors to retool the machine.

THE COLLECTIF
D'ART SOCIOLOGIQUE'S
SOCIOLOGICAL REALISM

In 1971, Hervé Fischer began a project of self-destruction. It started with shredding his recent paintings, then moved on to photographing anticlimactic scenes of suffocation. By 1974, he was ready to expand the sphere of ruination to the art world as a whole, so he sent out a mailer inviting other artists to send him their artworks, which, free of charge, he would tear up, combine with his own destroyed art, and return so that the participants could then toss them in the trash. Titling this series *Hygiène de l'art* (*Hygiene of Art*), the project was a cleansing of the degraded academic art of the 1960s. The art world fascinated Fischer, yet in the years following 1968, salon culture and its discursive styles seemed socially irrelevant places for pessimistic intellectuals, as he put it, to "argue like mandarins over the genitals of angels."[1] If the salons represented the metaphysical, intangible, and immaterial, then, by contrast, the street was the site in which much of the visible and popular debate on what he considered the real problems of the present were taking shape in direct action. In the wake of his hygienic destruction, the street and the public that it metonymically represented provided a privileged site in which Fischer, along with Fred Forest and Jean-Paul Thénot, could experiment under the banner of the group that they created in 1974, the Collectif d'Art Sociologique (CAS). Acting as investigators, the artists carried out participatory projects based on questionnaires, documentary video, and mass media, as well as direct critiques of the art world to engage a public on a mass scale.

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Figure 4.1. Hervé Fischer, *Hygiène de l'artiste,* 1972. Performance. © Hervé Fischer. Archives Hervé Fischer.

In their turn toward participation as a panacea of artistic democratization, the CAS built on decades of experimentation by other artists, yet unlike the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), Daniel Buren, or André Cadere, they rejected traditional painting and sculpture to shift emphasis onto their audience by making artwork that required the public to complete it. Their critical engagements with art-world institutions had a pronounced populist streak. Rather than paint or steel, the public itself was to be the primary material of facture, as the artists worked to "make the reality of the social relations appear concretely" where they had otherwise been obscured by the "dominant ideology."[2] By inventing new opportunities for encounters among their audience-participants, they hoped to change the facts themselves and thereby create social change beyond the art world. A self-observed consequence of this was that the artists ended up privileging ethics and methodological innovation over aesthetic concerns, which they rejected as the purview of salons and academicism.[3] Simultaneously, the artists rejected the instrumentalizing processes of their adopted social science, thereby cutting themselves free of disciplinary constraints that require methodological rigor. This is not to say that their work was without logic, however. Constant

Usage ultime du chlorure de vinyle, Place Bourdelle
Montauban, 6.7.73

Figure 4.2. Hervé Fischer, *Usage ultime du chlorure de vinyle,* 1973. Performance. © Hervé Fischer. Archives Hervé Fischer.

experimentation led the artists to develop an ever-evolving range of formal strategies, yet their approaches to producing artworks that fostered their social ambitions corresponded with forms that were consistently specific to democracy itself. Notably, the artworks they presented to the public often took shape as empty spaces, whether in the form of unanswered questions or the aftermath of iconoclastic destruction. Their works not only effaced the authorial specificity of the artist, but also made space for the constant renewal that defines democratic participation.

Hervé Fischer: Clearing Space

Sociology was a highly conflicted field at the time when Fischer, Forest, and Thénot were turning to it as a source of their art production. As discussed in the introduction to this book and in chapter 1, French sociology had evolved significantly during the years following World War II, as it developed from a primarily philosophical field to one that was heavily influenced by positivist methods of quantification imported from the United States. In spring 1968,

sociology students at Nanterre, where Michel Crozier, Henri Lefebvre, and Alain Tourain had recently been hired, were responsible for instigating the movement of students and workers that developed during the spring, and their own discipline was a primary target of their critique. The students were dissatisfied with the way that sociology was taught in the university, as it provided a lack of practical training in empirical methods and did not prepare the students for careers in the field once they had completed their formal education. During this time, Fischer was reading texts published by the Situationist International, in whom he discovered a form of "new sociology," one that rejected quantitative and industrial methods and ambitions. These texts and the ethos of the period led him to abandon the paintings that he had been amateurishly copying from the models provided by books and galleries. "Bad derivative painting," as he put it, was abundant at the time, but he came to interpret this as a sociological fact and a form of "spectacle" that followed the market forces that determined what counted as successful artistic practice. The mass reproduction of works of art and their consequent ubiquity, he argued, had led to the point that painting had become irrelevant to a project of social change. Joining with the ethos and politics of the May Movement, then, he decided to break from art based on the logic of reification, to instead make art that "valorized the lived" as he turned decisively toward public engagement.[4]

Fischer's first project dedicated to living was based on erasure. Later, in 1973, Pierre Restany would introduce Fischer to the work of pop artist Martial Raysse and his ongoing project "hygiene of vision," started in 1959, for which the artist assembled cheap plastic cleaning products and cosmetics into obelisks and shadowboxes that confronted the materials used to scrub and conceal an imperfect world. Rather than taking on vision broadly as Raysse had, Fischer's focus narrowed on the art world, seeking to cleanse it of the artist and his works. In 1972 he produced a white plastic serigraphed sign with red lettering that read "DÉFENSE D'ART-FISCHER"—a pun on the signage posted on walls around French cities warning "défense d'afficher," or "no postering." Positioned between large brightly colorful easel paintings from the leftist pop movement New Figuration, Fischer's sign humorously rejected itself as an example of "art by Fischer," while antagonizing the art around it by implicitly denouncing the artistic authorship on which they stylistically made their names, as well as the appropriateness of hanging artworks within the space of the exhibition. In form, tone, and institutional implication, it recalled the 1967 Salon de la Jeune Peinture demonstration of Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni, at which the artists rejected painting and exhibition as an attack on the passivity of an audience seeking entertainment. Five years later, paint-

ing and exhibition had not waned, yet the variations for its contestation continued to evolve.

Fischer's plastics came in the form not of disposable commodity fetishes, but of clear plastic bags that could be used to dispose of artistic excesses, such as their work or, seemingly, themselves. Fischer used small bags for the sanitized display of destroyed art, put a larger one over his head, posed as though in the tranquil act of suffocating, and slid himself corpselike into another the size of a body bag as though dramatically literalizing Roland Barthes's "death of the author" thesis. Like the ironic alchemy that Barthes had imagined for the do-anything material in his *Les lettres nouvelles* essay, later reprinted in *Mythologies*, Fischer saw plastic as "an ideological vector that signifies modernity, hygiene, conditioning, and the ersatz universal," but he also foresaw "the final use of vinyl chloride for the dead, the conditioning under plastic of the individual in the 20th century."[5] If plastic served as a metaphor for postindustrial subjectivity, its ability to asphyxiate and sequester also made it the proper material for his antiformalist rejection of aesthetic experience in art.

His 1974 invitation to have other artists send him their art combined his hygienic destruction of demystification with the optimism of networked community as practice through the mail art that had developed among Fluxus artists of the 1960s. Influenced by communication theorists Marshall McLuhan and Abraham Moles, Fischer understood mail art as a way for an international subculture to express itself through an everyday system. As an alternative to the centralized authority of television, the democratized accessibility of the postal service made it a mass medium that allowed for a decentralized art practice that could take place on the margins of the art world.[6] Fischer was surprised when approximately 350 artists—many of whom were internationally prominent—responded to his call to participate in his "prophylactic campaign" and have their work destroyed as well. While he had conceived the project as an attack on easel painting, unsurprisingly the artists who participated were themselves largely invested in rejecting artistic convention, and as a result a wide variety of other media arrived at his door, including prints, drawings, sculptures, photographs, and videos, but also poetry, a manuscript, a manifesto, and other more experimental artworks, including a computer drawing, a skeleton, and seemingly used feminine hygiene products. One artist sent a portrait of Fischer for him to destroy, and numerous others, including French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou, the decorative artists Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, and Daniel Spoerri, returned Fischer's own invitation either preshredded or for Fischer to destroy himself. Contributions from Arman, Ben, César, Gérard Fromanger, Jean-Jacques Levêque, and François

Morellet confirmed the relevance of destruction among the most prominent artists in France, while contributions from artists like Americans Ken Friedman, Ray Johnson, and Fred Lonidier, German Wolf Vostell, Brits Genesis P-Orridge and Cosey Fanni Tutti, and Argentine Nicolás García Uriburu indicate that this process of auto-iconoclasm had an appeal that was not just international, but relevant to practices as diverse as punk performance, documentary, and feminist and ecological art.

Closer to the specificity of Fischer's adopted process, décollage artists François Dufrêne, Mimmo Rotella, and Jacques de la Villeglé all sent in examples of their artworks. The torn posters that Villeglé contributed highlighted the recent history of tearing as an art form, in particular one that could be said to have "sociological" sympathies, given the way in which they document the public gestures upon which their compositions are based. As discussed in chapter 2, décollage used tearing as a signature artistic practice that referenced street vandalism, mechanical anticompositional gesture, and pop culture, sometimes while commenting on the politics of the period. Unlike décollage, which Buren was drawn to for the way that it opened up new avenues for painting, and retained its public/private dialectic in order to make work that was still ultimately for the art world, Fischer's tearing did not seek to produce a new form of painting, or point to the contingencies of its legibility, but to eliminate such practices altogether. He did not use this project to employ the idea of public space but was oriented within an imagined community of artists for the purpose of eradicating insular artistic practices before turning decisively away to make work in collaboration with the general public. For this reason, Fischer considered the participation of many of the artists to be hypocritical because they were not committing to a rupture with their previous practices.

In process and as a finished ensemble, Fischer's project was intelligible to the artistic conventions he sought to abandon in the way that it created visual unity among the heterogeneous assortment of objects that he received. Artworks of diverse materials and textures became uniform quantities of scrap that fit into identical 10-by-4.5-inch transparent plastic sacks. The sacks removed the opportunity for visual pleasure of the things destroyed by sealing them off from the viewer, yet the fragments gratify in all their vivid color and in the conspicuous display of the familiar signatures of their famous makers. Each specimen was carefully hand labeled, signed, and dated by Fischer, and was identically imprinted with a bureaucratic rubber stamp that read "Hervé Fischer–Hygiène de l'art–La déchirure" (an artifact of the rubber-stamp aesthetics that he associated with mail art). Adopting the display strategy of the

easel painting that he sought to cancel out, the sacks then hung in neat rows on gallery walls, signaling the artist's intention that these specimens be considered part of a project that was self-consciously a work of art.[7] Before Villeglé and the décollagistes, Henri Matisse and Jean Arp had made the organization of torn fragments a standard avant-garde compositional practice, while categorization had developed among conceptual artists as a form of postindustrial deskilling. For Fischer, the tearing was as much creative as it was destructive, recuperative in the way that it communicated its message to an audience and "testified to the consciousness raising of the mystifying character of art, recognized by the artists themselves."[8] Nevertheless, the truly radical act, he observed, would have been to just dispose of the works without intervention or exhibition.[9] Instead, his hygiene combines the pathos of handmade destruction with a taxonomic sampling of the artistic milieu—a combination of the rational and affective that would characterize much of the CAS's efforts to merge art with social science.

As Fischer argued, this institutional conformity was a necessary contradiction for the project that aimed to be intelligible within an art-world context that he was not looking to reject as much as reform. Echoing André Cadere's critique of the false Western freedoms generated by an exclusionary market, Fischer expressed disappointment in a gallery system in which artists who claimed to be militants against the bourgeoisie frequented the most stylish art openings in order to be seen, seek rich clients, and flatter critics. "What assures the success of mediocrity," he concluded, "is the quantity of people that it concerns and satisfies."[10] In opposition to this art-world mass that was sufficiently large to support derivative bourgeois art, however, he posed another mass, that of the general public beyond the art world, whose existence falsified the democratic claims of supposedly committed artists. The same year as his prophylactic campaign, he spoke to the boundary between these worlds by enlisting students from the École des Beaux-Arts to glue serigraphed paper disks that he had produced to all of the "no parking" street signs around the Saint-Germain-des-Prés gallery district. The signs blended in with municipal signage, advertising, graffiti, and street interventions from other artists, such as Buren, Cadere, and others, who had made the same streets their canvases in recent years. Rather than providing the assurance of information or direction, however, Fischer's sign, titled *Douane culturelle* (*Cultural Customs*), announced the entry point to a district called "ART," and asked, "Do you have anything to declare?"—an effect he managed to illustrate in a photograph of the work that fortuitously captured a pair of police officers who unknowingly play the role of border guards. Here, the civilian at the frontier of the arts district and

the amateur without expert knowledge were asked to confront their absence of high-culture baggage and either stay out or acknowledge that they tread in territory that was undeniably foreign to them. Attuned to sociological data on the subject of cultural literacy, Fischer noted that a 1972 survey conducted by the French Society of Inquiries by Survey—one of the new statistical analysis firms founded at the turn of the 1960s—reported that 71 percent of French people claimed to have never visited an exhibition of modern art.[11] With these early works, then, he offered a manifesto of his critiques and intentions, and he cleared the field of posturing and debris. Reactions that his tearings received from his audience included accusations of nihilism and fascism and confirmed for him the division between insiders who understood contemporary art and were able to identify its references to recent practices, and those left baffled by the seemingly gratuitous destruction and censorship.

As Fischer explained to critic Bernard Teyssèdre in a 1974 interview, one of his aims with this work was to highlight the class division of the contemporary art world. Rather than embracing what he considered to be the "dandyism" of the leisure class, whose historical-avant-garde ambitions aimed to conflate art and life, he stated that his ultimate goal was "cultural disalienation."[12] "I am struggling," he explained, "to develop a materialist practice of art, not in the sense that I reduce the works of art to their material waste, but rather in the sense that I work from a materialist theory of culture and that I search to make evident the social *functioning* of artistic ideology in the class struggle, which is artistic, as well as economic and political." In some instances, however, he suggested reducing what he considered cultural waste to a waste product: "I suggest, if you have the means, to attack a Vasarely, a Mathieu, a Carzou, a Bernard Buffet, etc. cultural pollution of the bourgeoisie."[13] A key strategy of this project, which he considered to be a form of pedagogy, was to break down the barrier, as he put it, between the "sacred" space of institutions and the "profane" extra-artistic world by introducing the profane into the space of the sacred. "With the desacralization of society [in modernity]," he argued, "the symbolic separation between the sacred and the profane becomes more imperious, up to the point where today the desacralization of art itself implies the suppression of the separating frame."[14] That is, artworks that become "autonomous," thanks to the market in capitalist society, continue to guard their privileged status, but now it is not by association with church patronage or the ruling elite, but by producing new discriminatory sociocultural cleavages. "Today," he wrote, "it is the role of the museum or gallery to isolate the art from the profane, reserve its usage for the privileged, to found a system of founding values and guarantee respect, in the service of

Figure 4.3. Hervé Fischer, *Douane culturelle,* summer 1974. One of fifty serigraphy signs pasted over existing street signage in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés neighborhood of Paris. Archives Hervé Fischer.

the power of the elite."[15] "Hygiene," somewhat ironically then, meant a form of categorical pollution and the valorization of the profane. Fischer's process of destroying art symbolized the destruction of the idea that art is sacred, but, moreover, he sought to expose the class relations that he saw implied in the separation of art from society.[16]

If hygiene suggests health, then his *Pharmacie Fischer & Cie*, which was ongoing since 1972, was a way of turning to society to help cure its ills. Dressing in a pharmacist's lab coat and sitting at a table within a public place like a bookstore or town square, Fischer would talk individually with people about problems ranging from personal annoyances, such as their intolerance of listening to a family member practice the violin, to common but life-changing matters like their desires to have children (or be assured not to), to serious national political conflict. In response, Fischer would proscribe them "pills"—white Styrofoam pellets that he packed into small plastic boxes and labeled with the required cure. "We all have problems!" Fischer later stated about this project. "And it is known that in France, pharmacies are the most developed commerce aside from neighbourhood cafés. The quantity of pills that people take is increasingly enormous as statistics show."[17] Indeed, already in 1965 a group of amateur sociological activists in the suburbs of Paris had seized on the symbol of the pill to protest the external denigration of their city as the source of the disease "sarcellite."[18] The inventive "sarcellomycine" that they paraded through town symbolized the various neighborhood organizations that one could join in order to combat the alienating effects of living in a half-developed new city. The figure of the pill served as both symptom and response to the general medicalization of society, yet the cure that Fischer offered through his pharmacy was not an impersonal, quick chemical fix, but as with the Sarcelles activists, the personal contact offered by conversation—one that, indeed, resembles the intimacy that can develop on the French model between neighborhood pharmacists and regular customers seeking relief for minor ailments. The pill boxes acted as a sort of talismanic reminder of the encounter with the artist who invited people to publicly air their personal grievances.

In his 1977 book *Theory of Sociological Art*, Fischer described his ambition for his *Hygiene of Art* projects as freeing himself "of the heavy cultural bazaar that others have called the supplement of the soul, the *musée imaginaire*, masterpieces of human genius that stick to our soles."[19] Evoking André Malraux's 1947 essay, in which he praised the ability of photography to make artworks from around the world and across millennia accessible to the masses, Fischer joined a critique of the minister of culture developed by artists and

Figure 4.4. Hervé Fischer, *Pharmacie Fischer & Cie,* 1974. Performance at the Torcatis bookshop, Perpignan. © Hervé Fischer. Archives Hervé Fischer.

intellectuals alike who saw his vision as conservative and out of touch with the cultural practices of everyday people. Fischer understood the mechanical reproduction of auratic artworks not as the democratizing force that Walter Benjamin envisioned, but as a clog in the imagination, since a limited number of broadly distributed ideals prevented the public from being able to experience the world vividly and without expert vetting. Fischer's critique echoed Buren's frustration with the cultural dominance of models provided by artworks such as Turner's that supposedly eclipsed the fog of London itself. Like Buren and the GRAV before him, Fischer's strategy for coping with the weight of past influences was to reject historical precedent and focus on the present by developing works that would reveal the ideological mechanisms of art in society. Whereas the GRAV and Buren emphasized the importance of the viewer's immediate experience of the artwork itself, Fischer (like Forest and Thénot discussed below) sought to create the greatest possible direct contact among the public, often by reducing the presence of an identifiable art object and replacing it with an event, action, or experience. Destroying the artwork was the first step in this evacuation.

In Fischer's acts of negation—the destroyed artworks; the performances of suffocation; the confrontational, identity-stripping street signs—Teyssèdre nevertheless recognized a humanism. Explicitly opposing Michel Foucault's vision of a posthumanist future when "man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea," he saw in Fischer's attempt to reclassify artistic knowledge an effort to re-center man.[20] Specifically, he saw the "pedagogical" way in which Fischer sought to reveal truths of contemporary art to be a demonstration of optimism and a commitment to society. Rather than interpreting the destruction in Fischer's work as a nihilistic act of erasure, Teyssèdre recognized its effort at positive transformation. In a similar turn away from the structuralism of the foregoing decades, Fischer also rejected the influence of Barthes's degree zero, which had come to define the previous generation's experiments in painting, such as those of Buren. For Fischer, the idea of neutrality—"writing in the indicative," as Barthes described it—was an "idealist trap of bad bourgeois consciousness." "It is contrary," he later said, "to a productive socio-critical work, that aims to be active, politically effective."[21] The sociological method that he would come to embrace echoed a methodology that had been developing since the 1950s with the work of Henri Chombart de Lauwe and later Edgar Morin. Retaining the importance of eliminating models through destruction, he referred to the activist strategy of sociological art as a "negative utopia" or "negative pedagogy." In an article titled "Sociological Art as Utopian Strategy," which he published

in the final issue of the radical leftist conceptual art publication *The Fox*, he argued that the "negation of the negation (negation of bourgeois society by Marxist theory itself denied in its totalitarian and bureaucratic effects) gives way to *critical theory*, a questioning of society which affirms the possibility of *another* society without wanting (or being able) to specify the model."[22] Rejecting the technological and empirical sociologies that he saw manipulating a passive contemporary society, he wanted to create a form of art that would raise social consciousness by teaching critical thinking rather than promoting a new leftist dogma. Drawing from the linguistic model current in conceptual art, he imagined sociological art as a communicative message that passed dialectically between artist and the public, but one that was based on negative interference rather than positivist efficiency. In the early "hygiene" works, participation was limited to the donation of personal property, a silent response to an unfamiliar question, or a one-on-one conversation. Fischer's iconoclasm, however, cleared space for later art projects that developed the therapeutic pharmacy into efforts to open channels for communication across fractured community groups.

Fred Forest: Media Spaces

Like Fischer, Forest organized his earliest work around the participation of his audience, yet he devised schemes by which the masses could appropriate the communications networks of the media. Forest drew inspiration from his background working as a telephone operator in the 1960s, where he discovered an invisible connection between communication media. As a popular television show reached its end, the switchboard would light up as the show's audience decided to simultaneously place its calls.[23] All of a sudden, the television and telephone did not just convey information to, or between, their users, but in their convergence they revealed the behavior of their audience. A sociological image of the region's population appeared as the television, which otherwise unidirectionally conveyed information from network to viewer, could be seen to be one node in a conversation among viewers thanks to the more explicitly dialogic medium of the telephone. The invisible, atomized television audience suddenly illuminated in their unity appeared to flock around the temporal space created by television programming. Forest took an interest in visualizing the relationship between communication, media, and society, but also in restructuring it through processes that empowered the voices of the anonymous masses.

In order to address an audience that represented a cross-section of the public, Forest made and exhibited his photography, video, television, and

newspaper projects both within and beyond sites intended for the display of art. *Portrait de famille* (*Family Portrait*; 1967) was one of his first explicitly sociological projects, as it took as its subjects the residents of the Grand Ensemble housing project of Vallée au Renard, which was constructed in the southern Paris suburb of l'Haÿ-les-Roses—a city whose population quadrupled in the three decades following World War II, and where Forest himself lived at the time. To initiate contact with his subjects, he distributed a flyer titled "Game-Poll" to nearly seven hundred residential mailboxes, explaining that the project consisted of collecting photographs that they felt represented their clan, which Forest would then post as an artwork in the communal cultural center. In amiable language, he referred to participating in the project as "play" and reassured residents that the "technical or artistic quality according to conventional criteria has no importance here! What counts above all is the personal interest that you attach to this family document." Forest used the language of common sense to universalize their particular experiences and communicate that he understood their worldview. He imagined that he would therefore fix a problem that he anticipated they must all have. Echoing Henri Lefebvre's dissatisfaction with technocratic efforts to purge boredom from France's new housing developments without making space for spontaneity, as discussed in chapter 1, Forest wrote, "In a rather boring world that offers us so rarely the occasion to participate in an action 'different' from our routine chores we thought that this experiment would possibly interest you." He went on to doubly validate the individual families' affective attachments by referring to their photographs in the language of art, while democratizing that art by arguing, "Contrary to what one generally thinks, Art and Games can be accessible to everyone." This project shared with Fischer's *Hygiene of Art* a process based on soliciting contributions from the public that would then appear as a sociological group through their common display. If Fischer's project sought to clear a space within the realm of artistic production by undercutting the primacy of the traditional artistic subject, Forest's filled in such a space with a populist content. All of the residents would be able to see their own photographs surrounded by those of their neighbors, thereby creating an opportunity to visualize a community that may otherwise have been fragmented by the absence of spaces for shared public culture. The effect of doing so was not to make the public take the place of the artist, but to redefine the concern and practice of the artist in terms that approached those of the sociologist.

Rather than evidencing an art photographer's aesthetic interest, the images that Forest gathered from the residents of Vallée au Renard embody the notion of the medium's social value, such as Pierre Bourdieu elaborated in *Pho-*

tography: A Middle-brow Art (1965). With their range of levels of technical and artistic competency, the candid images exemplify sociological expectations of what middle-class photography is supposed to look like. The conspicuous snapshot quality of the photographs distinguishes them from those by professionals who are commissioned to pose their subjects for public display, and yet some of these private photographs are only minimally different from an official group portrait in that they adhere to a set of unstated social conventions. Perhaps it would seem futile to attempt even to produce anything different since, as Bourdieu observed, "there are few activities which are so stereotyped and less abandoned to the anarchy of individual intentions," and indeed, it is telling that Forest proposed to photograph his subjects in a dinner table set-up, and that this was the very genre of scene that at least one family had on hand to turn over.[24] The fact that the same snapshot was taken during the exceptional circumstance of the holiday season and that it featured children further conforms to Bourdieu's class determinism. Indeed, the project's very conception is predicted by the sociologist. As he argued, "Photographic practice only exists and subsists for most of the time by virtue of its *family function* or rather by the function conferred upon it by the family group, namely that of solemnizing and immortalizing the high points of family life, in short, of reinforcing the integration of the family group by reasserting the sense that it has both of itself and of its unity."[25] For Bourdieu, the psychological benefit of togetherness, however, is only the effect of social causes. Social causes allowed photography to exist, determined its limitations as a documentary medium, and, consequently, determined its psychological import. Class structures guarantee that close-knit families and the portraits they display will be

more important to lower- and middle-class people than to the wealthy, who statistically prefer images of landscapes to relatives.[26]

Forest's exhibition strategies further underscored his use of the medium as a transparent mode of communication, as he mounted the photographs and other documents that the families elected to provide in a series of exhibitions, the first of which took place in the central hall of the Vallée au Renard complex. His use of documents to secure tighter community bonds recalls the responses of villagers Bourdieu interviewed who considered photography a tool functionally equivalent to direct verbal communication. Dismissing the idea of using photography to create a new mode of interaction between familiars as "not worth it!" a peasant from the hamlet of Lesquire explained that the reason photography is not practiced in the village is because "we've seen each other too many times already! Always the same faces all day. We know each other down to the last detail."[27] By displaying the photographs at the community center, Forest's project would aim to re-create a hamletlike intimacy in a suburban environment known for its social alienation. If the intimacy of Lesquire obviated the need for photographic practice, then perhaps photographic practice could substitute for its face-to-face original.

The photographs themselves, however, do not provide a critique of public expectations of the visibility of private lives. In this case, arguing for the artistic validity of the middle-brow instead meant only further undergirding the functionality of the photographic documents as sociological evidence. The family photographs reveal the humanity of individuals in the candid exchange of regards between family members or in the desire to smile at the camera for posterity, and their public display sought to expand this intimacy to a community. At the same time, there is the risk that their public display would cause the photographs to be reduced to figures of a type. For the same reason that years later Barthes refused to publish the Winter Garden photograph in *Camera Lucida* for an audience for whom it will have no aching resonance, these family photographs also, displayed to an audience presumed not to know them, would no longer represent intimate fragments that stand in as shorthand for a host of particular known traits that animate a person in the mind of another. Instead, the images of anonymous family members would have been alienated from the affection that the authentic family snapshot conveys to those for whom it is intelligible as more than just a sociological fact.

While *Family Portrait* affirmed the lighthearted identity of subjects who were sociologically known quantities, the projects that followed took place across newspaper, radio, and television and consisted of the artist selecting a venue into which he would insert a "space" without determining what would

fill it. Titled *Space-Media*, these works eliminated the sociological expectation of the prior project's given context. On January 12, 1972, he published a nearly blank space in the art pages of *Le Monde* titled *150 cm² of Newspaper* in an effort to "explode the graphic structures of the information page" and "project a scalable content into this 'liberated' surface." A "true multiple" printed in an edition of 489,557 copies, the newspaper was composed by juxtapositions of columns of text, image, and advertisements on all variety of subjects. "The environment of contemporary man," he wrote, "appears as a compact mosaic where the anarchic multiplication of sonic and visual messages weave an increasingly dense network." Taking inspiration from John Cage, he attempted to break the typographic "asphyxia" with a "visual silence" that would make room for "possible contents."[28] A ludic combination of graphic and literary elements would create a sort of rebus of "pure imagination." Sociologist Jean Duvignaud poetically likened the *Le Monde* project to the spaces left blank on old geographic maps. "*Terra incognita*," this was the land of reflection.[29]

Breaking free from the strictures of artistic convention necessarily meant retaining certain signifiers of artistic practice in order to make the break legible as such. This rectangle of unprinted space surrounded itself with printed material that coached the viewer in how to understand and respond appropriately. The title of the work appeared above the blank, and, below, text explained that this was a communication experiment that the reader should seize with written or drawn self-expression. "The entire page of this newspaper will become a work. Yours," he declared, while suggesting that the reader might cut out his or her contribution to that day's news and dignify it with a frame. Such a recommendation doubly ironizes first on the fact that the viewer should chaotically intercede in a space of rational professionalism, and second in elevating the cultural status of the cheap newsprint by juxtaposing it with a frame. As Forest conceived of the newspaper exhibition as a radical departure from institutional conventions, he invited the reader to reinscribe the project within the conventions of artistic exhibition in a gesture that apparently held on to the idea that the proper place for two-dimensional work would be framed on a wall. While imagining the work framed might have simply been a conceit to further nudge *Le Monde* readers to conceptualize *150 cm²* as art, the proposition counteracts the immediate and ephemeral aspects of the moment of participation. Forest argued that "the necessary presence of the title: 'Le Monde,' at the top of the page, and the date of publication, contribute to authenticate the work, to complete it" in its quest to unite art and life.[30] The clearly printed publication date, "12 janvier 1972," became then not just a mark of the present, but it also prepared the moment for its own archiving. In a

Figure 4.6. Fred Forest, participant response to *Space-Media* project from *Le Monde,* 1972. Paper collage. © Fred Forest. Archives Fred Forest.
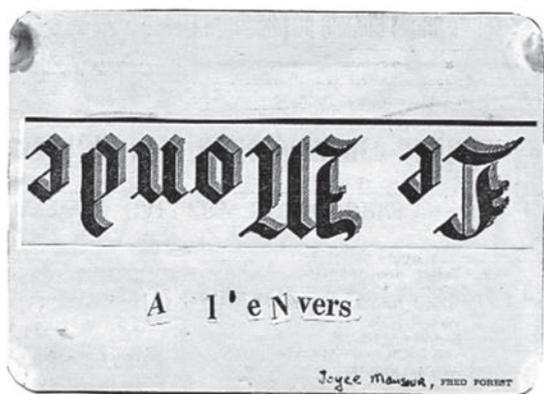
display strategy resembling that of *Family Portrait*, Forest invited the reader to mail his or her filled space back to him, in which case it would find its place in a collaborative "painting display" that the artist later mounted at the Albertus Magnus Center in Paris.

Over seven hundred individuals sent Forest their creative handiworks, which included paintings, collages, cartoons, mathematical equations, abstractions, and written statements expressing approval and abusive retort, in political and personal registers. Many of the responses demonstrated aesthetic or theoretical accord with the project in illustrations of color and compositional balance, and statements directly congratulating Forest on a brilliant idea. A particularly remarkable affirmation of the project's populist character came from a participant who cut out and pasted text from another newspaper simply reading "*le sans-culottes de la peinture*." Others were more critical. One used mathematical formulas to calculate the true surface area and show that with the frame's rounded corners, the work was fewer than 150 cm^2. Another display of geometric guile linked this false literalism to another of the work's central, yet uncertain, claims: that the page somehow belonged to the reader. This respondent was careful to note precisely that the work included 38 mm^2 of "Fred Forest," the printed name within the lower right corner of the blank space where one would expect to find a signature. The various *Space-Media* works would be valued, Forest noted, by the imaginative way that they engaged with current events, but also with the fact that they were authored by an artist with a recognizable name. Authorship offered another convention by which the work framed itself as art, as well as an encouragement that participating individuals valorize themselves and their place in the public sphere.

Those who submitted their participation to Forest received a response in-
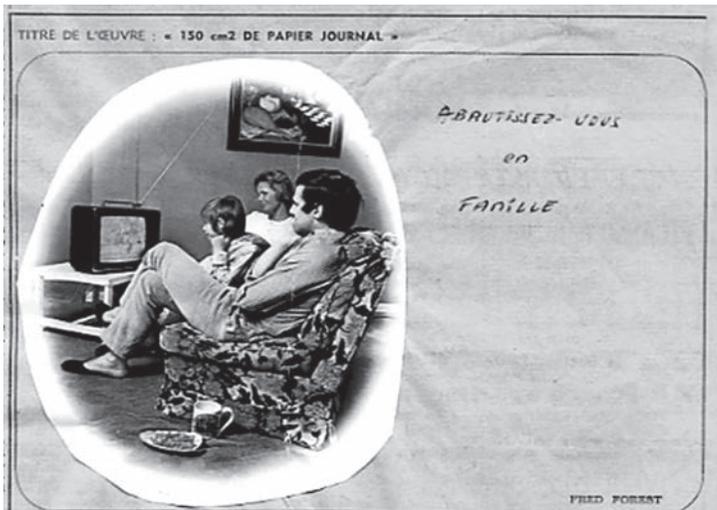
Figure 4.7. Fred Forest, participant response to *Space-Media* project from *Le Monde,* 1972. Collage and ink on paper. © Fred Forest. Archives Fred Forest.

viting them to discuss the meaning of art in the context of their collective display. "What is art today?" the invitation asked. "What will it be tomorrow? We know nothing of it—in any case, all is to be reinvented. Our era sees the multiplication of the technological means of communication, while in a paradoxical fashion, the individual remains isolated amidst the multitude. Perhaps the job of 'the artist' simply consists then in creating 'situations'—in creating structures within which, and by which, exchange is newly rendered possible at the human level."[31]

In fact, as with many of the projects that Forest conducted independently, the work that he would later carry out with the CAS was based almost exclusively on the creation of events that sought to create dialogue among groups of individuals gathered together, often with the stated purpose of trying to recuperate the socially transformative capacities of the documentary media with which he worked, including photography, sound recording, and video. As Czech media theorist Vilèm Flusser, Forest's occasional collaborator and interlocutor, put it:

The point of view of the journalist is reflected by the point of view of the reader, which is reflected by the point of view of the visitor to the exhibition which is reflected by the point of view of the journalist who writes, and thus follows in a circular progression that is practically infinite. *Such*

a labyrinth of reflecting and reflected reflections is an excellent tool for the ethical, aesthetic and existential intellectual comprehension of a situation, because it destroys established points of view (ideologies) and it permits the situation to reveal itself in multiple facets. It permits that is, choice.[32]

Flusser's phenomenological approach resonates with Jean-François Lyotard's contemporary writing on art, such as on Daniel Buren, as discussed in chapter 2. According to the theorists, Buren and Forest both decentered the artwork by emphasizing the fragmentation of perception, which would decenter the power of any single institution and encourage thoughtful reflection on the part of the audience. Whereas Lyotard interpreted this fracturing as a way of highlighting the instability of direct immersive experience, Flusser argued that these kaleidoscopic refractions of various points of view would empower readers to overcome the threat of propaganda. Less a critique of mediation for its own sake, then, this was an appropriation in which those media more or less disappeared so as to elevate the gesture of the populace. Duvignaud likened the project to the writing that appeared on the walls of buildings in Paris during the May 1968 uprising.[33] "Forest offered them, modestly, an occasion to address to us a sign of intelligence," Duvignaud wrote.

> All passes as if on these white walls where a flâneur draws a line, a sign, a trace that a second stroller prolongs. Another passes who adds another trait. Then others. . . . And from all this disorder, from all this chance is composed a complete figure, often abstract but significant, a figure that cannot be different from what it is, and that imposes itself as such. The responses received by Forest constitute thus a coherent ensemble, a "good form" in which each message was unconscious. Whatever do we not do in this way, once we allow ourselves to be invaded by objective chance—that, in the end, of Breton.[34]

Unlike the Surrealist exquisite corpse, none of Forest's projects actually allowed for the progressive piecemeal accumulation of a collective creating together, but they did attempt to instigate imaginative projection through the coalescence of the chance that arises from collectives who thereby proliferate the choice that Flusser describes, perhaps even toward greater social transformation.

At the same time, however, it was not clear that Forest necessarily envisioned a revolutionary role for his work. Inverting Buren's appraisal of the "security valve" function of art as an escape from the reality of institutional domination, Forest used the same language but inversely, observing that the

Space-Media works would have an "eminent therapeutic function constituting a sort of security valve" for "the anxiety that feeds off of a generalization of information that makes each individual live all the dramas of the world." "Wedged on the news page between political crisis and tragic news-in-brief," Forest envisioned that "'space-medium' will play a securing role, giving the page the possibility to be apprehended differently."[35] The work then evoked interpretations that oscillated between revolutionary disruption and salubrious appeasement. While Forest's appropriation of the media performed a sort of ideological critique, his democratizing gestures were often more about creating a space akin to writing letters to the editor or public access television than about exposing and undermining the mechanisms of media and institutional power.

While artists of the 1960s and 1970s celebrated mass media for its potential as a democratic site for public debate, the same were also frequently criticized from both the left and the right for their lack of neutrality and promotion of vacant prattle. Those responsible for television's development in France, however, had lofty and socially progressive aims that resonated with the ambitions of the CAS. French television in the immediate aftermath of World War II was largely influenced by the Resistance and spirit of the Liberation. Despite the fact that in these early years, there was only one channel, which was controlled by the state, television's mission was to provide a public service that would aid in human progress through the creation of informed citizens of a "*république de télévision*," in which one could participate in democratic action without leaving the couch.[36] During the 1960s and 1970s, however, data indicated that as the number of televisions in French households increased from 39 percent in 1965 to 83 percent in 1975, and the number of available channels increased from one to two in 1964, then to three in 1972, there was a simultaneous decline in readership of books and the popular press. As historian Philippe Poirrier concluded, by the end of the 1960s, "the merchandising of programs and wishes of telespectators testif[ied] to the failure of TV as tool of democratization."[37] State control over television was not able to prevent it from turning into another source of consumerism, nor apparently was it able to guarantee that any particular political message was received. If, on the one hand, Charles de Gaulle orchestrated meticulously controlled televised spectacle-ceremony to secure a visual image of himself as the incarnation of the state, he also understood that television could be his enemy. Once fortune turned, it was this same medium that he blamed for the "conditioning of public opinion by the press" and the "passivity of the masses" leading to dissent.[38] In the years following 1968, state media underwent multiple changes

as people in France stopped listening to the national French Radio-Television Agency programming, preferring instead peripheral stations independent of government control. This forced the government to institute a number of information reforms aimed at decentralizing television.

It was in this environment of diversification that Forest began working with mass media as a pedagogical artistic material in order to create a stronger sociality. Artistic projects using media structures reversed paternalist diffusion by instead inviting the viewer, listener, or reader to participate directly in their processes, while he also began appearing on discussion programs to present his work in conversation with critics for a mass audience. Forest sought to transform the democratic "action" of passively reading the newspaper or watching television by making spaces within media into which the viewer could envision his or her own existence as part of the daily variety. A week after his *Le Monde* publication, the television iteration of *Space-Media* aired on *Tele-Midi* 72, a variety television program that emerged from the partial loosening of state control on television, and that regularly featured performances by artists and musicians. Cutting from a shot of the stage-set band playing jazzy filler music, Forest's piece was introduced by the program's host, who referred to the *Le Monde* work. Then the screen switched to a tape of a nearly blank surface in the lower corner of which the identifying logo "TM72" appeared. Hardly a pure emptiness, the blank space was additionally filled with the sound of Forest speaking in a robotic and hypnotic tone reminiscent of an early twentieth-century radio play.[39] "Attention, attention," he said as the shot zoomed in to eliminate the logo, "your television is not broken, your antenna is not broken. You are participating live in the *Space-Media* experiment to bring the world to its original beginning. The white returns to zero, to begin, to begin again, to invent as you like, as you wish. Empty space, free space, space free to be filled." The screen went black, and the voice repeated "space free to be filled, space free to be filled, space free to be filled"—as though in a more entertaining, amiable, populist version of Buren's objective of confronting the viewer with nothing, so that he or she might become more thoughtful. In its references to zero, emptiness, new beginnings, and in its use of the monochrome, this experiment recalls postwar efforts by artists such as those associated with the German-based, international ZERO network to create a new optimistic world that embraced technology, while shifting away from painting and toward communications media. This broadcast video, according to Forest, was not about "the real" of blankness, but about its diffusion via television and the "contemporary world marked . . . by the development of media and the circulation of information."[40] In this way, it also recalled Nam

June Paik's 1969 address to American public television viewers of his *Electronic Opera #1*, in which Paik announced the project's status as "participation TV" while instructing viewers to close their eyes. Forest's work, however, was both less mysterious than Paik's surreal abstractions of contemporary cultural imagery, which made sophisticated use of cutting-edge editing equipment, and more journalistic in its request for concrete response. While the space was already filled with Forest's instructive message, he also hoped that the absence of visual information would have provided the viewer with the occasion to respond with his or her own subjective plenitude. Returning to the image of *Tele-Midi 72*'s set, the host spoke to the viewer, explaining that Forest invited everyone to send in their comments, what they imagined during the experiment, any drawings that they might have produced, and so on, during the twenty seconds in which he coaxed the audience to fill the space. The televisual flow then turned to three men talking about how the environment was being destroyed by Japan's industrial boom.

Forest's projects took part in the period trend among artists to find inspiration in the writing of Marshall McLuhan, whose *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* was translated into French in 1968.[41] Forest's work, like McLuhan's, focused on the media as tools that did specific cultural work independent of their content. Forest was less interested than McLuhan in how medium specificity influenced the message communicated. Instead, he applied an identical logic to each medium in his efforts to harness their broadcastability as seemingly transparent transmitters of any given content, which would themselves function as the message. Whereas McLuhan argued that all media could be arrayed along a hot-cold spectrum depending on the amount of participation that they demanded of their user, Forest manipulated the media so that television, newspaper, and radio would be as "cold" as the telephone by demanding that users provide all of the imaginative content.[42] The undefined open space of Forest's voids served as a sort of populist public sphere, as they made room among content that was determined by media professionals. It would seem, however, that in order to make a void recognizable as positive, intentional content amid a flow of miscellanea, it was necessary to frame and annotate it with instructions ancillary to the work itself. While Guy Debord had critiqued the instruction-based participatory art of the GRAV, reducing spontaneous engagement on the part of the public and thereby weakening the radicality of the potentially disruptive action, the instructions were necessary to explain Forest's unconventional intentions, and, like the questionnaires that the GRAV had used, they did not foreclose critical feedback from the audience, as was made clear by the responses to *150 cm²* of *Le Monde*.

In 1973, however, Forest's work's challenge to politics came into sharper focus when he was arrested for making sociological art at the twelfth São Paulo biennial. Flusser served on the planning committee for the biennial that year and invited Forest to exhibit under the newly formed rubric of "Art and Communication." Flusser, along with a team of other intellectuals, introduced this theme as part of a program to help the biennial recover from the 1969 boycott, during which artists from around the world, and in particular France, withdrew their participation in order to protest Brazil's repressive military government. In addition to importing his blank spaces to São Paulo newspapers and inviting the public to bring their drawings to display at his stand in the Ciccillo Matarazzo pavilion, Forest extended his contribution beyond the exhibition hall, to take a group of biennial goers and other artists on a premapped "sociological walk" of the popular, but gentrifying, neighborhood of Brooklin, where they visited the local barber, grocer, and cobbler, among others. He also mimicked the form of a political protest by inviting members of the public to march through the streets carrying blank protest signs in a project called *Le blanc envahit la ville* (*White Invades the City*). As a consequence of this action, he was apprehended by the military police, who ushered him into a car and drove him back to headquarters for questioning. During the late 1960s, artistic expression was menaced by the forced cancellation of exhibitions, destruction of overtly political artworks, and arrest of exhibition organizers. The most repressive measures in Brazil came with the decree of the Institutional Act #5 in December 1968, which attempted to eradicate a tradition of strong left-wing popular politics by overriding the constitution, thereby allowing the state to arrest and torture anyone it saw as threatening the stability of the regime. Highlighting technology, mass media, and youth at the 1973 biennial—those very categories that had been targeted in previous years—functioned as propaganda that would demonstrate, in biennial president Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho's words, "that artistic creativity always found freedom, unrestricted, uncensored."[43] Audience participation was supposed to draw large audiences to the exhibitions, while Matarazzo imagined that the artwork that the biennial courted would make didactic use of communication media in order to condition the viewer's relationship to it. For his activities at the biennial that year, Forest was awarded the Grand Prize in Communication.

With *White Invades the City*, however, Forest crossed an invisible line. The fake protest march began just outside the Department of Education, which was the site of many protests in preceding years. From there, the marchers proceeded through the streets of a shopping district, continued through Republic Square, across a viaduct and on to Cathedral Square, also a common protest

Figure 4.8. Fred Forest, *Le blanc envahit la ville*, performance at the São Paulo biennial, October 1973. © Fred Forest. Archives Fred Forest.

site, where they were apprehended by the police. Photos documenting the event show a group of anonymous people blending with a crowd as they walk down the street. It is not clear who is carrying a sign and who is not, thereby seemingly expanding the ranks of the protestors by adding in all accidental proximate pedestrians. The signs that they carry are clearly blank, yet they manage to read differently according to the situation. When passing down streets heavy with the signage of private businesses and advertising, they appear to have the hygienic effect of blocking out excessive visual noise from the cityscape, whereas gathered in Cathedral Square and surrounded by a crowd of onlookers, they read more as protest group.

The performers, in fact, were a group of only about a dozen people whom Forest paid to participate. They were residents of the Barra Funda slums located not far from the starting point of the march, and he offered them each CR$15 to hold the signs, although upon realizing that they would also be required to walk with them, one performer engaged in a bit of *real* protest asking that they be paid an extra CR$5, a request that Forest readily obliged. Taking a quasi-sociological interest in the participants, the press described them as ranging from parents seeking money to feed their children, to unskilled handymen. When asked what they would write on the signs, their responses were as diverse as the group. Some wanted to represent the colors of their soccer team, others wanted to protest to demand "a lot of beautiful women," while some leaned political, saying "Brazil, count me," or asked for more schools for the poor. One fake protestor commented directly on the condition of marching with the blanks directly, saying, "I just feel that we cannot fill these posters with things we feel and are in fact embittering the Brazilian people."[44]

In receiving newspaper coverage for his event, Forest attracted attention to a marginalized group that was excluded from news coverage, as they did not fit into headlines about the "economic miracle" that sectors of the country were enjoying, and they were among the least likely to mix among the public on the biennial grounds. Indeed, the low-tech form of direct street action contrasted sharply with the new national television networks that the state was establishing at the same time, while being covered by the press effectively transformed the unique presence and live spontaneity of street events into multiples like his *Space-Media* blanks, confirming that their presence in the public square would resound through the public sphere. The instability of this participatory work provided a mode to access the everyday crisis situation of life under a military dictatorship in terms that were specifically contingent, and the blanks that he used to open up spaces of communication provided sites for the expression of any content, free of censorship. The form-as-absence

of his blank works was constantly shifting, constantly adapting, and, in its essence, it refused any idea of a truth that was not relative to the position of the person speaking it, or the context in which it is spoken.

Jean-Paul Thénot: Statistical Subjectivities

Fischer theorized that allying sociology with art would provide an irrational corrective to an overly rationalized field and that the questions that would arise from the contradiction between these two positions would lead to cultural demystification.[45] While Forest's *Space-Media* projects invited an anarchistic intervention into those rigorously organized spaces that were designed to promote the rational absorption of knowledge in the public sphere, the conflict between the rationality of sociology and the irrationality of art found its most striking expression in a series of public opinion polls that Thénot organized in the early 1970s. He began sending questionnaires through the mail, and he asked people to return them so as to collect data that he could then organize into graphs and percentages that would form data portraits of society at large. Like a proper pollster Thénot used population information from the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) to distribute polls to the general population, then compile and present the information at exhibitions. Consistent with the qualities of good polls that Bourdieu identified, Thénot's appealed to a broad population in their subject matter, they evaded interest-driven bias in the ways that they posed their questions, and they left themselves open to the chance of receiving any possible response.[46] Unlike statistics-compiling political analysts, he further promoted this openness by refusing to interpret the data that he collected, arguing that he preferred to leave them to the future interpretation of his audience.[47]

The result of all this openness was questionnaires that were "marvelously useless," as art historian and critic Jean-Luc Pradel put it.[48] One of the first poll-based projects, titled *Identifications* (1972), instructed participants, "Fill out the following questionnaire attentively," only to follow up with the nonsensical: "If you had the opportunity to be transformed immediately into an animal, what animal would you like to be? Why?" Similarly pressing decisions would then have to be made about plants, words, celebrities, and gestures among other things. Such questions were determined by critics to "ultimately serve nothing," yet many had the effect of revealing personal values and opinions that individuals form around even the seemingly most mundane objects and activities by using humor and creativity.[49] It is not insignificant, for example, that similar responses could be grouped around the question from *Identities* (a later poll) of what type of construction one would like (or not like) to be.

The ornamental and highly iconic Eiffel Tower generated the greatest affirmative consensus (9 percent), while a greater number of respondents (17 percent) could agree that they would not want to be the multifunctional *immeubles* whose simple density promotes a high level of social contacts in urban areas. Following this were prisons (7 percent) and, only slightly less disagreeable, the mass housing units on the outskirts of major cities, the *habitations à loyer modéré* (6 percent). On the other hand, a poll he conducted in 1972 on color tested the ways that perception influences interpretation by varying between visual and linguistic modes of conveyance. This poll vaunted the visual as distinct in the quality of its evocations by showing that participants looking at the color gray received an impression of clouds, whereas those who simply saw the word were more likely to think of sadness. Similarly, the range of flowers, fruits, and abject associations were more specific and diverse when the respondent was presented with yellow card stock than with the catch-all generality "yellow" printed in black on a white background. While honing his message through linguistic and numerical data that signified the scientificity of sociological study, Thénot retained the rich imaginative impact that comes from visual experience.

As with Fischer's and Forest's community-dialogue projects from around the same period, Thénot compounded this openness by sending the compiled results back to those who responded with a note encouraging the recipient to "reinsert your response in the collection of results and to situate yourself in relation to the ensemble of the group, to think of yourself in regard to others, whether to find a conformity of opinion, or to affirm an original attitude." Critics concurred that what was important were not Thénot's "idiot questions," but the fact that the participant would stop in his or her daily life for a moment of self-objectifying reflection.[50] This secondary process of self-analysis with regard to the collective was that aspect of the work that exemplified this exercise's artistic-sociological value in the sense that it sought to transform the social material on which it worked. Jean-François Lyotard, under whom Thénot worked as he was receiving his doctorate in clinical psychology, elaborated on this in his essay "Preliminary Notes on the Pragmatic of Works," an essay that took as its primary examples works by Buren, but which included comments on the work of the CAS as well. The pragmatic of a work described the actual or possible effects specific to a given artistic process, whether based on painting, cinema, or language. Because interpretation both gives meaning to a work and transforms it, Lyotard considered interpretation to also be a pragmatic. Further, he argued that artworks only have an effect through their interpretation, and that as the work itself dissolves into the in-

terpretation from which it becomes indistinguishable, "the recipient himself becomes a metarecipient, and the pragmatic of the work a metapragmatic."[51] Buren's work carried out an analysis of the metapragmatic by calling attention to the reverse side of the canvas and the margins of display, and Thénot's work did so by making the responses to his questionnaires both constitutive of the work and the interpretation of the work.

At the same time, however, Thénot was interested to show that the responses that the polls garnered were themselves already influenced by social discourse. To this extent, Thénot attempted to separate out genuine individual response from those that appeared to be influenced by conditioning. For example, in reporting the results for the question about what animal the participant would like to be, he lists tigers, horses, and elephants individually along with the number of respondents who volunteered these responses. "Original" responses were not listed individually, but rather were lumped together as a category of nonconformity. To further this point, numerous of these early works were more than just polls, but were "competitions" whose results would be posted along with the results of the polls on gallery walls. But how could one possibly win at a game for which there are no right or wrong answers? Ironically, by being the least original in one's response. The winner was the person who could be said to be the most average representative of the society to which he or she belonged. Without judgment, Thénot noted that the results "show that the reactions with regard to each word, image, or thing, are not uniquely subjective, but are inscribed, among others, in the social field."[52] In this case, active participation in the questionnaires and in society is measured by degree of socially conditioned automation. As Thénot suggested, "The questioning, like the work of analysis that follows, which does not claim to establish laws, makes evident in a given socio-economic and historic context, the conditions, reflexes, and attitudes, coming from social determinisms."[53] His stated ambitions seemingly call attention to the fact of conformity without arguing that anything should be changed.

The majority of polls that Thénot sent out, however implicitly or explicitly, reflected back on art or the art world. A competition poll that he sent through the mail in 1972, asking "where should art take place?," resembled the questionnaires that the GRAV had asked six years earlier, while adding the weight of public opinion by integrating the results. The multiple choices included "in unspecialized public places," "in cultural places," or "anywhere." As with the other majority-rule polls, one's answer might be seen as correct according to consensus opinion, which would in turn determine the meaning of a work of art according to its conditions of reception. Numerous art-world polls that

Thénot conducted in the years 1973–1975 set out to demonstrate the division between the art world and the public. The poll that most clearly focused populist sentiment was one from 1974 titled *La cote des oeuvres: Sur les implications socio-économiques de l'oeuvre d'art* (*The Ratings of Works: On the Socio-Economic Implications of the Work of Art*). This poll presented images of modern and contemporary artworks, such as Paul Cézanne's *Landscape at Midday* (1885), Arman's *Cello Rage* [*Colère de violoncelle*] (1973), and Vasarely's *Vega Pal* (1969), along with their titles, media, and dimensions, and then asked respondents what they imagined the monetary value of the works to be. The majority of respondents undervalued each by tens of thousands, if not millions, of francs. Thénot then asked how they made sense of the price for which the works had actually been sold, to which the respondents offered up explanations including "egotism," "capitalism," "speculation," and "stupidity." Some justified that a Cézanne simply can be expected to command millions of francs. Others expressed disgust at the fact that such quantities of money were being spent on art when they could otherwise be used to feed the poor. Several said that they would be content with a reproduction. Thénot then asked the respondents how they would choose to spend their wealth if they commanded such sums (2,640,000 francs for the Cézanne, 72,100 francs for the Arman, 10,500 francs for the Vasarely). While the majority of the itemized nonoriginal responses expressed champagne wishes and caviar dreams of investment properties, yachting, and their lustrous regalia, a few had philanthropic aspirations. Only 2 percent reported that they would spend the money on art. The project could be said to play off of somewhat facile expectations that the majority of people would be shocked by the exorbitant amounts spent by the wealthy on objects whose only value is aesthetic or intellectual, as well as the responses that, given such quantities of money, they would spend it on nouveau riche fantasies of rich and famous lifestyles. Nevertheless, Thénot's poll valorized this perspective by posing questions that anticipated miscomprehension and shock from his audience, which consequently expressed as valid, due to the weight of public opinion, the point that the art world is alienated from society. While the questions implicated institutions, they were consistent with the group's general trend in producing work that was critical of art, but in its social and cultural receptions and perceptions, rather than through explicit institutional critique. The questions were ultimately more about art's audience than its venues.

While his polls on the costs of artworks drew a distinction between two different populations—those who belong to the art world and those who do not—a poll Thénot conducted the following year attempted to create a bridge between them. Echoing the focus on object interpretation in subjectivity in
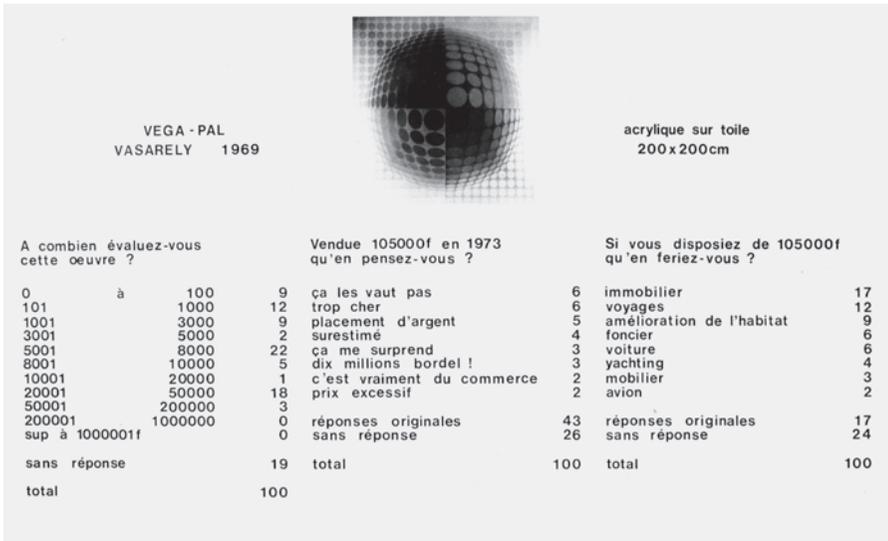
Figure 4.9. Jean-Paul Thénot, *La cote des oeuvres: Sur les implications socio-économiques de l'oeuvre d'art*, 1974. © Jean-Paul Thénot. Archives Jean-Paul Thénot.

the project *Identifications*, his 1974 work *Identities* brought this concern to art-works. Thénot assembled two publics: a group of randomly selected nonspecialists whose diversity made them representative of the larger population, and a self-selecting group of visitors to the Mathias Fels gallery—a public presumably familiar with contemporary art. Thénot provided the former group with artworks from specific individual artists as well as questionnaires that directed them to give their opinions of them. These descriptions alone were then displayed in the gallery, where the specialist public had to guess the artists' identities. The nonspecialists' responses were sufficiently accurate in providing formal descriptions of the works that a considerable majority of respondents were able to make out the contours of works by Christian Boltanski, Daniel Buren, Arman, and Jean-Pierre Raynaud. They were somewhat less in agreement on descriptions of work that might have been by Gina Pane in one case or Marcel Duchamp in another. In the instance of artist "#3," no two responses were alike. Commenting on the relevance of public perception, Thénot reflected that the description given by the public "is the image that the creator gives to be seen socially, willingly or not, consciously or not. It is the 'character,' analogous to the mask that the actor wears in classical theater."[54] Whereas Buren's stripes then functioned like a "mask" that branded the artists with a clear "identity," unidentified artist #3 could be said to have no iden-

tity whatsoever. His or her work projected no image of a creator. Achieving the anonymity that other artists of the period sought, it could be assumed that this work did not exceed itself, but existed in itself.

At the same time that it put individual identities in question, the *Identities* project also put the concept of identity into question. As Thénot implied, the identity of the artist is not tied to any discrete entity that is unique to an individual artist and somehow representative of the person that the artist is. Rather, "identity," such as the project demonstrates it, is determined socially and is contingent upon reception and interpretation as much as the projection of the individual. Thénot's work shows that identity is a process that remains dynamic and relational as it depends on public intelligibility, yet it does not question the possibility of being able to more or less fix an identity to an individual. Moreover, the project puts into question not only the identity of the artists, but also the identity of those who do the identifying, since Thénot addressed the two different publics according to each group's presumed area of competency. For the nonspecialist group the questions have no right or wrong answer, as they are asked merely to describe. These were consistent with the previous polls, as they pose questions no more demanding than "what does wood evoke for you?" Whereas the specialists' responses could be considered "right" or "wrong," they showed, according to Thénot, "the non-specificity of schemas and mental conflict, inherent in everyone as a function of their life conditions and the polyvalence of the 'identity' of these portraits."[55] Just as the artists' identities are fractured through the kaleidoscope of public opinion, so those who interpreted the questionnaires entered into a relational process that relativized their way of seeing and interpreting. As Thénot put it, "What was attempted, . . . was to re-propose to the public, with the purpose of recognition, the image of a character, such as another public perceived it. And this without the prejudice that this image would be its own."[56]

The same year that Thénot began sending his public opinion polls through the mail, Bourdieu wrote an article about the technique of polling, provocatively arguing that "Public Opinion Does Not Exist." The presupposition that there was such a thing was, in effect, a self-fulfilling prophecy, as it resulted in a system that testified to public opinion polling as a legitimate method of study. For Bourdieu, the problem with this is that such polls are based on three false assumptions. The first is that all people have opinions about all things or that they are capable of forming them. Many topics, Bourdieu points out, are simply not interesting to certain individuals, and many people do not have the competence necessary to form an opinion on subjects for which the polls are most often put to use, which is to say, politics. Second, he notes, one cannot

assume that all opinions are valid. When asking people to express opinions, in particular about subjects on which they are not informed, these opinions may have no real force behind them. Third, he argued that by asking the same questions of all people, opinion polls imply that there is a consensus among the types of questions that are worth asking—that the questions posed are the ones that are important to everyone. One of the things that makes opinion polls untrustworthy, moreover, is the fact that they are typically used to prove a political point. The mode of questioning has the capacity to translate ethical questions into political ones and generate legitimacy for policies and programs. The types of questions posed can determine, in advance, the conclusions that will be drawn such that those conclusions will, in most cases, be erroneous.[57]

The result is that polls oppose the political process that the idea of considering public opinion would purport to serve. "The opinion poll is, in the current state," Bourdieu wrote, "a political action tool; its most important function consists perhaps in imposing the illusion that a public opinion exists as a purely additive summation of individual opinions; to impose the idea that something exists that would be like the average of opinions or the average opinion."[58] Polls function, then, as consensus-generating machines, as they aggregate many individual opinions into what appears to be a unified mass opinion. Furthermore, by posing questions that have a limited range of responses, and to people who might not fully understand the implications of those offered, they encourage respondents to organize themselves into groups that may not actually represent their individual private opinions. "The 'public opinion' that is shown in the first pages of newspapers under the form of percentages (60% of French are favorable to . . .), is an *artifact* pure and simple whose function is to dissimulate that the state of opinion at a given moment in time is a system of forces, of tensions," and, according to him, "there is nothing less adequate for representing the state of opinion than a percentage." The tyranny of the majority in this case is not the opinion of the masses, but that of the technocrats who design the polling process to conform to their own political opinion. In opposition to the implicit understanding of "opinion" offered by the public opinion poll, the sociologist proposes a definition that is potentially more democratic. For him, "opinions are forces and relations of opinions are conflicts of force between groups."[59]

With their lack of political consequence and attention to sensorial experience, Thénot's statistical work retained some of the subtlety of the way that people experience the world, while ironizing its normalized representation. In some ways, however, the polls perfectly resemble those that Bour-

dieu described. Importantly, those who received Thénot's polls were just as ill-equipped to respond as Bourdieu's imaginary public would have been. The respondents had no reason to anticipate the arrival of the polls, nor would they necessarily be disposed to respond to the variety of questions posed. Like political polls, Thénot's caught the audience off guard by asking them to reflect on questions that they would probably not be inclined to ask themselves, yet here there was no threat of producing misleading results since the content was largely inconsequential. Instead, Thénot attempted to produce a situation of candid reflection. These polls did not manage to evade the problem of artificial grouping; rather, they demonstrated the fact that people tend to fall into groups, not by force of will to express the correct opinion, but through the unconscious, irrational, yet commonplace adoption of cultural trends. In revealing invisible consensuses, Thénot's polls put the concept of public opinion in doubt by demonstrating that something like private opinion may not exist at all. Rather than corrupting sociology through art, his polls confirm that the public itself resembles a manufactured readymade as rationalized as lists of births, deaths, and incomes.

Accepting Thénot's work on its own terms ended up posing a problem for at least one critic. For Jean-Marc Poinsot, the fields of sociology and art were fundamentally irreconcilable. On one hand, he argued that it would be impossible for an artist to produce sociology because the artist would inevitably turn data toward an end for which data are not intended (basically the same argument that Bourdieu made for why pollsters could not do sociology). On the other hand, sociologists could not be capable of making art because their aims are normative.[60] For his part, Thénot seems to have been convinced of the scientific standards by which he obtained his data. His use of INSEE and his frequent reference to the law of large numbers, as well as his occasional insistence that the work does not take place by chance, testify to this. If Poinsot did not see Thénot's work as sufficiently scientific, however, he also did not see it as sufficiently artistic. As he protested, the artist did not go far enough, because he failed to draw interpretive conclusions from the results of his polls. Somewhat bizarrely, Poinsot's own writing on Thénot's work seems to seek to make up for this perceived lack, as Poinsot himself goes about interpreting the data—a strategy to which various critics turned in attempting to make sense of the group's work. Writing that Thénot's work "aims less to provide an artistic image than a legible and understandable aspect to research concerning the relation to sensory, social and imaginary experience," Poinsot seems to have categorized this work as sociological study based on the understanding that art should be associated with imagery, rather than with the irrational

deformation of the processes of other disciplines.[61] Instead of seeing the polls as being about polling or public opinion, then, he took them at face value and consequently attempted to perform exactly the role of the sociologist that the group sought to critique.

Thénot's most sustained project with statistical polling and analysis was *One Hundred Readings of Marcel Duchamp: It Is the Viewers Who Make the Canvas* (1974). On the one hand, the project was an homage to Duchamp as a figure whose supposed turn away from retinal art had influenced later conceptual artistic practice such as Thénot's. On the other, it was yet another critique of the more esoteric and alienating elements of artistic establishments. For the project, Thénot again used INSEE data to select one hundred representatives of the general public. In addition to presenting them with images spanning Duchamp's career, he also repeated an earlier poll about raw materials, this time asking exclusively about those used by Duchamp, and additionally, he asked people to respond to a series of dates that corresponded to significant moments in Duchamp's career.[62] As with the other polls, here again he asked what these various dates, materials, and images evoked, and to what degree the respondents liked or disliked them. Just as the previous polls emphasized the importance of interpretation, so too in this case, Thénot noted that it is the one who looks who determines the meaning of the work of art.

The project was published in book format in 1978, just following the Centre Pompidou's inaugural Duchamp retrospective. In light of the fact that the bibliography on Duchamp was already large, including radically different views from historians and critics who analyzed his objects and his writings, and who speculated on works that he never even made, Thénot opened his own book by asking "Must we still speak of Duchamp?" For Thénot, it was the extreme diversity of projection onto his work that made it a relevant subject for his own polling, and that legitimized his addition to the larger discourse. In a preface to Thénot's publication, François Pluchart—an early advocate of his work, and editor of the avant-garde art magazine *ArTitudes*—observed that Thénot's response to Duchamp's postwar renaissance regarded the artist with the same distance from which Duchamp himself looked at the world around him.[63] To be sure, Duchamp's strategy of challenging early twentieth-century artistic conventions by addressing the ways that an audience perceives an art object provided a clear precedent for Thénot's own forefronting of public perception.[64] As Duchamp famously stated, and as Thénot cited in the title of the book itself, "it is the viewers who make the canvas."[65] Attention to the discursive determination of the meaning of any object provided a reason for Thénot to compile his public opinions about various objects, while extending this

to the artistic context gave him license to revisit Duchamp's work through these very same audiences. If, as the anonymous author of "The Richard Mutt Case" suggested, plumbers were responsible for America's greatest art, then, as Thénot would add, they might also be art's greatest audience.[66]

Importantly, however, Thénot replaced Duchamp's readymade object with a readymade methodology, situation, and population. As with Thénot's *Identities* project, again in *One Hundred Readings*, he had two major audiences: the first of which he used to produce the "sociological study," and the second audience for whom the first served as material for reflection on the issues that concerned them as specialists. While his method of interpretation allowed Thénot to consider the nonspecialist audience as legitimate interpreters of Duchamp, he also used interpretation for the specifically Duchampian purpose of calling upon the specialists to reconsider what they include in the category "art." Duchamp's readymade challenged public opinion by providing an object upon which artist and audience alike could reconsider artistic process and institutional categorization. Thénot's challenge to artistic reception, in contrast, combined canonized objects with experimental processes to question reception, as he replaced objects incongruous to the art context with questions incongruous to the objects interrogated and the art context both. Preexisting items and concepts, like "glass" or "1914," function like art objects in that they provide instances of rumination for those polled. It is to the second audience that sociology appears, again in Duchampian fashion, as a sort of readymade methodology with its readymade populations of study that Thénot presents for aesthetic contemplation, even though he himself has played no part in their manufacture, but, rather, has nominated them so as to create a critical situation. Just as Duchamp had chosen his readymades according to chance and the given constraints of a predetermined day and time when they would be selected, so Thénot chose a selection of objects and a representative population, and the resulting poll filtered out from there. The randomization of audience and types of questions that Thénot chose to ask made his reportage functionless and absurd, somewhat like a urinal might have seemed in an art salon fifty-seven years earlier.

In response to the Duchamp polls, Pluchart pointed to the public's inability to identify "major works of the twentieth century," and its difficulty in simply recognizing the subjects of the work at all.[67] While one could hardly reproach the general public for failing to pick out the "Malic Molds" or the "Halo of the bride" in Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–1923), one might have expected that more than 21 percent of the population in 1974 could have identified a bottle rack or more than 17 percent a

urinal, even when turned on its side. For Pluchart, the polls pointed to "a fairly strong incapacity to decode the image, itself somewhat surprising in a century where the visual has supplanted (temporarily?) writing, but which is owed precisely—by a curious counter phenomenon—to a saturation of images and notably those of television, absorbed without being chewed."[68] Anna Dezeuze has pointed out that one of the distinctions between Duchamp's readymades and participatory art is the shift from past participle of the "made" to the performative imperative "do."[69] While Thénot invites his public to "do" by looking critically, and reflecting on the results, he also demonstrates the persistent conservative inertia of an already "made" "public opinion" informed by conventional and habitual media consumption.

The CAS in the Field

In 1974 Fischer, Forest, and Thénot united their diverse practices to form the CAS. The three met at a salon that the body artist Michel Journiac held at his apartment for artists interested in the relationship between aesthetics and social engagement. After several months, however, they decided to break off from the group and write their first collective manifesto, which they published in the October 9, 1974, issue of *Le Monde*, and they distributed it at the following meeting as a way of announcing their split from the rest of the group. The 220-word manifesto emphasized their specific commitment to sociological content and methodologies in the form of a "new sensibility of social data, tied to the process of massification" that would appeal to "the methods of social sciences" and attract attention to "the channels of communication and diffusion."[70] Unlike the technocratic sociological practice to which they were responding, the artists endeavored not to mold society into a particular shape, but to create new experimental situations through which people would come to see themselves and their communities differently. Their strategy for creating sociological works would involve, as Fischer put it, "triangulating the analysis of the social real in constantly changing the point of view."[71] This triangulation incorporated a critical perspective on economic and institutional factors, but, foremost, it integrated the society that provided both the audience and material for the artists' projects as a necessary part of its interpretation. Making artwork sociological would involve breaking down the disciplinary, economic, and cultural boundaries that divided the public from art, from sociologists, and from other publics.

Emerging from this same time period, and with a similar interest in methodological connections between sciences and art, Lyotard's book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) looked back on the previous decades

to contrast two new and opposing phenomena: technocratic methodologies of social engineering, and increasingly pluralist and open social practices. He argued that after World War II, the "grand narratives" that had organized traditional social values across social and cultural fronts declined: people lost faith in communism as a project of political emancipation, social unity gave way to the valorization of the individual, spirituality was replaced by the rise of consumerism. Then, during the 1970s, people became more flexible as they began changing careers and relationships more readily, engaging in what Lyotard called "temporary contracts." While some of his contemporaries, like Lefebvre, lamented the perceived loss of an organic society, Lyotard embraced postmodern pluralism as a potential source of agency. Whereas the grand narratives that dominated the industrial age had been impersonal, the new "local" narratives could be relevant to contemporary everyday life. Fundamentally at odds with these progressive trends, however, technocrats were pursuing what Lyotard saw as an outmoded Habermasian grand narrative based on the idea that rational individuals could construct society as a "functional whole." Such consensus building, he argued, was antipathetic to the self-determination of the general public. "The technocrats," he observed, "declare that they cannot trust what society designates as its needs; they 'know' that society cannot know its own needs since they are not variables independent of the new technologies. Such is the arrogance of the decision makers—and their blindness."[72] A paternalistic attitude allowed the technocrats to self-identify as representative of society as a whole, the homogenization of which would serve the goal of increased efficiency. Accompanying this cultural reduction came a counterproductive instrumentalization of scientific knowledge. Studies of populations were indispensable to solving problems like housing, but echoing antitechnocratic thinkers like Lefebvre, Chombart, Bourdieu, and Tourain, he insisted that by drawing on research in order to inform policy decisions, technocrats reduced the range of experimentation so that outcomes would conform to objectives. Experimentation was further narrowed by funding allocations that limit the range of projects, thereby resulting in what Lyotard called "an equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth."[73] Drawing on Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, he countered that "invention is always born of dissent," and that knowledge advances not by filling out all the entries in a universal encyclopedia, but through experimentation, the assertion of counterexample, and—as the GRAV had promoted—the pursuit of instability. Taking a particular interest in the technology of rationalization, he concerned himself with the effect that cybernetics—a tool of technocratic efficiency—would have on knowledge production, and concluded that it was

not a threat to the heterogeneity of experience and communication in itself, but that the information stored in computers would need to be freely available in order for knowledge to remain inexhaustible. Performing the openness he promoted, Lyotard concluded by noting that his book was "the outline of a politics that would respect both the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown."[74]

Such an antitechnocratic politics of inconclusive potential describes the work that the CAS had been producing across the previous decade. This particularly took form in their interdisciplinary embrace of the social sciences, the pluralism of the communities with which they engaged, their commitment to openness through dialogue, their resistance to interpreting the information they collected, and their rejection of limiting aesthetic regimes. Formally, the work they produced often resembled the conceptual art of the previous decade, as their self-reflective videos, newspaper publications, and generally "journalistic" projects prioritized communicating "social facts." The artists specifically distanced themselves from conceptual art, however, seeing it as too idealist and tautological, not sufficiently critical of its ideological context. In substitution for Joseph Kosuth's exploration of "art as idea as idea," Fischer suggested that an appropriate characterization of sociological art might be "*art as ideology as ideology* in the sense," he explained, "that sociological art that questions the ideological meaning and function of art in society, does not itself escape the ideological statute of all discourse, of all practice."[75] Fischer argued that sociological art is a form of realism, and he recognized that this "real" was dialectically interdependent with the modes through which it was communicated, that it was a product of society. In contrast to Lyotard's technocrats, who imagined that society could not know its own needs, Fischer aimed to level this hierarchy by recognizing the performative impact of local narratives as sources of ideology and art alike.

Fischer's, Forest's, and Thénot's writings were marked by the language of the period as it was defined by Gaullism, the May Movement, and the influence of Maoism. Along with many other artists and critics at the time, the group expressed a suspicion of dominant institutions (in particular, the art market of New York), which they saw as exercising too much control. They sought instead to empower "the people" through a focus on the provinces, marginal media, and strategies that remained necessarily vague enough to encompass the wide range of needs and issues pertinent to a diverse population. Their watchwords, "participation" and "*autogestion* [self-management] of thought," borrowed directly from the rhetoric used during the May Movement. In a text titled "Third Front," the group proposed to "develop a socially

based practice through which artists [could] provide a critical contribution in a social transformation towards an 'autogestive' power base."[76] The expression "third front" was itself heavily marked by politics, as it recalled numerous attempts throughout the twentieth century to invent alternatives to the Cold War regimes of communism and free-market capitalism. Most recently, and in the French context, the term that the artists chose recalled de Gaulle's 1966 Phnom Penh speech, in which he pledged French nonalignment, pointedly in opposition to the US involvement in the war in Vietnam, as well as the "third way" that de Gaulle had proposed in response to the protests articulated during the uprisings of 1968.

The CAS's own third front did not, like de Gaulle's, attempt to temper political radicalism. Instead, the group aligned their rhetoric with that of the left, making references to Mao Tse-tung in their writings as a model for collectivity and grassroots action through deliberation. In Fischer's *Theory of Sociological Art* (1977), he draws on Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (1942) in order to underscore the primacy of artists in the formation of the type of social cohesion necessary for a political groundswell. Artists and writers from across classes and political affiliations could, by this vision, join together to build the foundation necessary to combat a political enemy. For Mao, as for the CAS, art would be an essential element in the dialectical transformation of the material base of society. As Mao noted, art was never hermetic, but always informed by class and politics. "Social life," he proclaimed, and as Fischer quoted, "is the sole source of literature and art and it surpasses them infinitely in the living richness of its content."[77] While Maoism provided one theoretical foundation for the group, their work departed significantly from the socialist realist art of China's Cultural Revolution. Indeed, Fischer wrote specifically against propagandistic communist art of any national origin, insisting that the contradiction between the old-fashioned representations of socialist realist art and revolutionary activity could not be overcome.[78] The art of the Cultural Revolution prescribed a narrow range of aesthetic correctness consisting largely of traditional modes of representation against which artists were at pains to counterbalance their own self-expressivity.

Nevertheless, the collective did not embrace artistic self-expression, but considered it a problem to be eliminated, as Fischer had explicitly sought to do with his destructive *Hygiene of Art* series, and as Forest and Thénot had done with their shifts toward blank spaces, found family photos, and questionnaires. The group's anti-art practice included proscriptions against both self-expression and against aesthetic activity generally. Once an aesthetic is set, Fischer argued, artworks become predictable, cease to evolve, and instead

enter into a symbiotic relationship with the market. The retention of any aesthetic program, he argued, would necessarily be repressive, as it promotes the interest of a dominant class as universal truth.[79] In this way, their critique of aesthetics echoed Lyotard's critique of technocratic uses of knowledge—both lacked the disinterest that would allow for experimentation. Like the GRAV, Buren, and Cadere, who rejected the expectations of dominant institutions, the group's anti-expressive gestures pushed against the idea that art would be a reflection of (in this case, bourgeois) economic forces. "In a class society," Fischer wrote, "the individual is a broken mirror."[80] It is dialectically composed of contradictions that include, and speak back against, the society that produces them. Such a viewpoint retains the "art" in anti-art, while believing that their synthesis has a creative potential to improve the conditions of everyday life. In contrasting aestheticism against the real, they attempted to create a practice that eliminated image production and took society itself as its material.

In their incorporation of sociology into artistic technique, the artists echoed the populist aspects of political movements to appeal to a broad general audience. As Margaret Canovan has pointed out, "participation" and calls for referendums, such as de Gaulle used to consolidate power, were typical of governments based on populist appeals for support.[81] Whereas this form of manipulated populism that Canovan describes is typically disparaged as vague, imprecise, and transient, the CAS's efforts at public engagement communicated its ephemerality and openness as aspects of their process that would serve the community instead of a strong leader. Ernesto Laclau argues that populism should not be understood as a political ideology, but as "a constant dimension of political action that necessarily arises (in different degrees) in all political discourses, subverting and complicating the operations of the so-called 'more mature' ideologies."[82] Populism, in Laclau's understanding, is a moment in politics that resembles Lyotard's desire for the unknown. If populism is imprecise, it is so purposefully as it aims to group the largest number of people under a heading defined by pure opposition. Broadly, the CAS affirmed that its "cultural activity" would have a "dynamic interrogative role" opposing "the power base" and the "cultural hegemony reflected in the international art market, which appropriates art as a commodity to bolster capitalist ideology."[83] In their artworks, this populism froths in opposition to market determinations that create aesthetic consensus.

The largest-scale and most successful of their joint efforts was a community-based project in the border city of Perpignan, France.[84] This project, which was largely coordinated and animated by Fischer, took place over two weeks

in 1976.[85] During this time the artists worked with thirty young French and German people who came from the Franco-German Youth Office, as well as a fleet of local specialists, including a sociologist, an economist, a historian, a worker's union leader, a pharmacist, a Roma bishop, a gallery director, a bar owner, a merchant, and a journalist at the local newspaper, the *Independent*. Together, they tried to repair a sense of collective belonging among the divided populations of the city by using techniques that combined the community documentation of Forest's *Family Portrait* with the multimedia of his *Space-Media* projects and with Thénot's questionnaires. Even as the artists embraced small-scale group communication as their ideal, they were suspicious of the village as a model. In fact, just as the villager from Lesquire found photography unnecessary, given the sufficient forms of communication that already existed, so the CAS turned specifically to what would be seemingly unnecessary documentary media to demonstrate to what degree they might, on the contrary, augment communication specifically by demonstrating the degree to which even small neighborhoods fail to communicate. Just the previous year, the group had turned their interrogative cameras on the residents of the small village Neuenkirchen, Germany, to ask "Is Neuenkirchen really a paradise?" This line of inquiry echoed Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's 1961 film *Chronicle of a Summer*, in which the anthropologist and sociologist probed Parisians with the question "Are you happy?," thereby revealing the complex mix of joy, anxiety, boredom, and historical traumas that subtended a period of supposed peace and prosperity.

If Lyotard provides a theoretical framework for understanding the perseverance of outmoded grand narratives under technocracy and the optimism of postmodern pluralism, the "multidimensional" sociology that Morin pioneered during the 1960s provides a model for an alternative methodology that could break away from technocratic restrictions. As Morin wrote in his two-volume work of 1975 titled *Spirit of the Times*, the new sociology that he envisioned was based on a temporality that privileged the present over extended duration, experience over theoretical frameworks, and it embraced the contingency of permanent disequilibrium rather than imagining that events such as those that transpired during the May Movement were inexplicable anomalies. In practice, Morin's sociology involved entering into what he described as the "observer-phenomenon dialectic," in which the sociologist would abandon any conceit of objectivity and embrace the relational aspect of the research process. The "sociology of crisis," as he called it, would be "phenomenological," by which he meant "more attentive to registering the event on the extreme side of participation," through attention to "psychology, affect, practice," than it

would be "to re-establishing the theoretical coherence" that had been "dispersed by the tremor." Describing the "phenomenographic" methodology that he employed while studying the effects of modern life on the remote Brittany village of Plodémet in his 1967 book translated into English as *The Red and the White: Report from a French Village*, Morin argued that researchers should adopt a "Balzac-like" approach to observing gestures, dress, houses, and so forth in order to create a "sociological snapshot." The result was a sociology that corrupted technocratic data with literary and ethnographic inspiration in order to "rise beyond fragmented disciplinary knowledge," and "reassemble a theoretical body of hypotheses in order to embrace and structure the phenomenon."[86] In this way, the sociologist would discover holistic pictures of human subjects by analyzing social phenomena because those phenomena would be understood as contingent and unstable.

Morin's phenomenographic approach followed on a trend that Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, discussed in chapter 1, helped to pioneer. As Jeanne Haffner reveals in her book *The View from Above: The Science of Social Space*, Chombart focused on everyday practices in relation to spatial organization in order to understand how people use, and are influenced by, the places where they live. Of particular interest were the lives of the rural working classes, whose traditional ways of life he considered both more authentic and threatened by modernity. Promoting a sort of populist excellence, Chombart argued that the cultivation and discernment that characterized French culture was found not in books, but in everyday life experiences that were themselves rooted in their relationships to space and the natural environment.[87] In order to develop a perspective and methodology suitable to this conviction, he called on academics to return to the countryside in extended trips to the École des Cadres d'Uriage, a school for the French elite that had been established during World War II in order to promote Vichy's National Revolution. Chombart's populism was ideologically opposed to the fascism of the war years, yet it envisioned a way to adapt the technocratic rule of the "cadres" to the interests of "the people" that he sought to ennoble through respectful study. Chombart believed that by escaping urban centers that were not in touch with the experience of the majority, the researchers would come to understand the relation of human practices to the landscape through sentimental response that would privilege "real" experience over theoretical abstractions. Adapting the techniques of war, he developed street-level and aerial photography-based practices that allowed him to survey the spatial behaviors of his subjects. Lefebvre condemned this move, arguing that Chombart's studies of space asserted the dominance of the eye and therefore the spectacle culture that participated in abstraction

away from the real of everyday life. Chombart's surveying, however, resulted in a suite of demographic maps that he published in his 1952 book *Paris et l'agglomeration parisienne*. These included a study showing the itinerary of a young female resident of the sixteenth arrondisement who, over the course of a year, moved primarily between home, school, and her piano lessons, while her impressions of the rest of the city remain, as Chombart put it, "vague and impersonal."[88] Guy Debord took Chombart's map as evidence of spatial alienation and social fragmentation, which he sought to stitch back together through the practice of the *dérive*, or drifting through the city. Illustrating this problem, Debord borrowed another of Chombart's maps of Paris, cut it into literal fragments that excluded large areas of undiscovered white space, and then reconnected a somewhat more socio-geographically diverse distribution with dynamic, arcing red arrows in a lithograph that he titled *Naked City* (1957). The CAS did not have the means to undertake such an extensive study of Perpignan, but they followed in the traditions established by Chombart, Morin, and Debord by studying social fragmentation though spatial dispacement with the intention of repairing fractured relations by dispensing with theoretical abstractions in favor of direct "real" encounters.

By 1976, Perpignan was not a village but an ethnically diverse city of more than 100,000 inhabitants. In order to conduct their socio-psychological therapy, the artists began by conducting an initial survey of traffic circulation, the locations of social services, places of employment, different types of housing, and other socioeconomic and cultural factors. Following from this data, they chose to focus on three regional zones, each of which had populations that were diverse in age, nationality, ethnicity, and cultural practices and preferences. The "popular" Le-Moulin-à-Vent was a suburban neighborhood dating to 1962 inhabited primarily by retirees, French citizens returned from North Africa, upwardly mobile young managers, and university students. The "immigrant" community of Saint-Jacques consisted largely of Arabs, Catalans, and Roma, while the seemingly ex-nominated "residential" La Real neighborhood suffered the conflicted relations between a crumbling bourgeoisie and an encroaching population of poor immigrants.[89] The sociological action performed involved training twenty-five young people including students of Fischer's from the École des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and interns from the Franco-German Office of Youth. The group ventured into Perpignan's neighborhoods to pose simple questions such as "What do you do here? How long have you lived here? Where do you work?" and take photographs, videos, and sound recordings documenting the individuals' physical appearance, their built environments, locations of leisure, gestures, and their local media, in-

Figure 4.10. Collectif d'Art Sociologique, Le-Moulin-à-Vent neighborhood, untitled community project in Perpignan, France, 1976. Archives Hervé Fischer.

cluding street posters, television programs, magazines, and so on. As they collected information, the groups acted as sorts of "*enquêteurs en derive*" (drifting pollsters), who "preferred to orient themselves in these 'spaces' with things other than maps and plans."[90] Indeed, like the drifting Situationists of the previous decade, the sociologist's purposes were specifically to mark out the effect of the built environment by moving through fragmented urban spaces in order to stitch them back together.[91]

Perpignan's newspaper, the *Independent*, supported their work by publishing articles that explained who the artists were and provided information about their practices and aims. The newspaper published announcements on where sociological art activities would be taking place, and the artists' attempts to integrate into the community were guided by the paper's journalist, Jacques Queralt. Contact with the locals was not always easy, however. The teams of sociological artist-volunteers that visited Le-Moulin-à-Vent met with what would seem to be an appropriate measure of social estrangement for a community suffering from the typical suburban problems of excessive noise, poor public transportation, and inaccessible lawns. Community centers promoting sports, culture, and youth activities were here, as in similar semi-urban constructions, no match for the alienation produced by the isolating architecture. Residents were scarce, and in the end the groups were only

Figures 4.11 and 4.12. Collectif d'Art Sociologique, Le-Moulin-à-Vent neighborhood, untitled community project in Perpignan, France, 1976. Archives Hervé Fischer.

Figure 4.13. Collectif d'Art Sociologique, Le-Moulin-à-Vent neighborhood, untitled community project in Perpignan, France, 1976. Archives Hervé Fischer.

able to interview representatives from the construction society, the priest who planned to abandon the parish, a pharmacist, a librarian, and the gendarmes whose barracks, Fischer noted, "resembled a tennis club villa."[92] That is, they were able to access those whose jobs involved being accessible to the public.

At the local pharmacy, the group hung boards with photographs and excerpts from recorded conversations from the community members with the tag line "do you agree?" Some had referred to the community as perpetually violent, while others insisted that the neighborhood was nearly perfect. Quotations about the neighborhood's chic dogs and police presence appeared in equal number. The project managed to incite discussion between the young and old, who complained, as one might expect, about each other's respective racket and stodginess. Yet, despite what would seem to be an inviting and relatively more trafficked location and comprehensive advertising by posters and loudspeakers, few showed up to the local exhibition of documents. The public who did stop in would react with what Fischer described as distrust when presented with images of themselves.

Many more people came to participate at the study of La Real, where the team was able to borrow the stand of a fishmonger in the central square. Several of the public participants were so enthusiastic about making their voices

Figure 4.14. Collectif d'Art Sociologique, La Real neighborhood, untitled community project in Perpignan, France, 1976. Archives Hervé Fischer.

heard that they even chose to project their "communication-interventions" through the group's bullhorn. Similarly, in Saint-Jacques the groups met with Roma children who were eager to have their photos taken, and parents who were keen to chat and interrogate the interrogators about their intentions. In Saint-Jacques they were also able to reach the larger population by speaking at the community's Mass. The group exhibited the hundreds of snapshots that they took in a shack that was under construction, and again they circulated comments among the inhabitants in order to spark discussion. The Roma's vivid interest to participate by walking off with the photographs of their friends and children required the group to spontaneously invent the new sociological-art strategy of bartering. In exchange for the photographs, then, participants were asked to leave a personal token, such as a cigarette, a bus ticket, a flower, which, as the traces of everyday life, became themselves data of sociological interest.

Throughout all of this, the team used film and video cameras as recording devices whose subjective reflexivity affected primarily the operator, and in this instance, the cameras, as participant Michael Vater pointed out, became a tool of animation. "For the inhabitants," he observed, the video camera in particular "had . . . a magnetic character as a new technological medium."[93] Similarly, in a subsequent report on the experiment, the Saint-Jacques team commented

Figure 4.15. Collectif d'Art Sociologique, Saint-Jacques neighborhood, untitled community project in Perpignan, France, 1976. Archives Hervé Fischer.

Figure 4.16. Collectif d'Art Sociologique, Saint-Jacques neighborhood, untitled community project in Perpignan, France, 1976. Archives Hervé Fischer.

Figure 4.17. Collectif d'Art Sociologique, Saint-Jacques neighborhood Mass, untitled community project in Perpignan, France, 1976. Archives Hervé Fischer.

that the camera seemed "to serve as a medium between them and us and it is in this perspective that we have adopted it."[94] As a tool of mediation, however, the camera potentially separates as much as it unites. One wonders about the potential alienation that the camera might have produced—especially in light of Fischer's observations about Le-Moulin-à-Vent inhabitants' reactions of distrust at the sight of their photographs, and the fact that Saint-Jacques parents expressed suspicion at the camera-wielding interrogators. Even as the group attempted to be as inviting of candid participation as possible, the media that they introduced into the lives of those who would not otherwise be habituated to seeing them would have most certainly produced a range of effects—not all of them consistent with their objectives.

Vater noted that judging this work would be a question not of results, but of process. "We were not in Perpignan in order to present results, but rather to reunite with the members of a society, to clarify problems, and analyze desires," he concluded. In the end, however, it was among the Roma that the group had the most evident impact, as the project managed to tempt them to break from their habits and enter into Perpignan's Palais de Congrès, a public building at the city center that most of them had never entered. Fischer observed that it was much more difficult to get people to attend this final indoor event. Whereas the street activities had easily drawn the attention of passersby, previous participants were less inclined to venture into, as Fischer described, "a large, somewhat official building, closed by a door, glass even, situated at the center of Perpignan, but outside the neighborhoods where our experiments took place."[95] The Palais de Congrès might as well have been a museum by the way that Fischer described it. Even as the group did not analyze their results, it would seem that they produced an unanticipated item of sociological evidence in the force of inertia that led each of their experiments to be relatively successful, not by virtue of the strength or weakness of the artists' plan or execution, but according to the preexisting social dynamics that characterized each neighborhood. In the years that followed, Fischer would undertake similar projects built around community interaction, politics, and self-concept in Amsterdam; the village of Winnekendonk, Germany; Montréal; and, most spectacularly, Mexico City.

Although the ambition of the group was to improve social relations across communities, their final failure to make people alter their typical behavior is, perhaps, evidence of a project well planned and executed, because the artists took diverse communities of Perpignan as they were rather than attempting to manipulate them in order to prove a point or advance their own careers. The project reflects greater problems of community-based art that attempts to

unify disparate groups into an ideal community. The collective, in this way, reflects Miwon Kwon's characterization of many community-based artists who "covet images of coherence, unity, and wholeness as the ideal representation of a community."[96] Yet, as they had demonstrated with their Neuenkirchen project, the artists did not naïvely believe in a falsely nostalgic, conflict-free image of small-town paradise. It was their sensitivity to the very grievances that they sought to air, and thereby dispel, that prevented them from thinking they might be able to significantly shift social dynamics. The habits and life-styles of the various communities were deeply rooted and based on culturally distinct modes of communication and ways of using public and private space. Despite the artists' utopian ambitions, in Perpignan they functioned as what Kwon calls a "collective artistic praxis," that is, their work was provisional and operated relative to the contingencies of the given situation. Kwon draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of the community as *dés-oeuvré*, or inoperative, un-worked, and organic to suggest that questioning a community's legitimacy is the only legitimate position to take. The CAS's Perpignan project identified and exercised the community's conflicts without artificially "working" them into a work of art. Instead, they provided a system that resembled the post-modern community that Lyotard envisioned, as their various interventions offered nodal points on a communication circuit through which individuals could come into contact.[97] At the same time, the project did not so much question to what extent a community is unworked as it demonstrated that in some cases communities were formed of little more than a coincidence of people co-occupying space.

As Thénot insisted, the group did not "claim to establish laws," yet their relationship to methodological convention was ambiguous. Methodology was a point of indetermination for the artists and became the central focus of a 1975 interview with critic Otto Hahn, who, after repeatedly asking what their methods were, finally suggested that perhaps their work was arbitrary and, in provocative contest to the artists' claims, simply based on their own psychology—an implicit challenge to their claim that their work is based not on the artist, but on the public.[98] While the dynamic "real" that the artists embraced was heavily colored by populist opposition, their abandonment of style meant that they were not employing the full range of political expres-sion. Rejecting aesthetic motivation, Fischer argued that "sociological art has no style," suggesting instead that it would be determined by its ability to in-cite communication.[99] Communication as production was central to a "real" that was not based on representation, yet their rejection of aesthetic concerns resulted in a lack of aesthetic self-consciousness that leads to a sort of socio-

logical realism, as they conformed to sociological expectations of how media function. The work's rhetoric of neutrality naturalized an image of society in which the self-expressions of ethnographic subjects are taken as the "real," while what is actually documented is a symbolically codified fulfillment of social expectation.

Refusing to draw conclusions from the data they collected resulted in the production of two forms of realism. Within the terms of the artists' own intentionality, it allowed them to maintain that their work presented society as it really is. As the artists intended, raw information would eschew the rationality of sociological processes, and the resulting "irrationality" would provide the basis of their anti-aesthetic of nonintervention. Conscious abstention from aesthetic manipulation of sociological data then provided one argument for accessing "the real" and therefore a realism based on its ideological opposition to aesthetics. Additionally, the social realism they created using the methods of sociology simultaneously presented the "real" of sociological interpretation.

Posthistorical Media

The pedagogical aspirations of the group reached their most institutional form when Fischer proposed that they start the Interrogative Sociological School in May 1976.[100] For two years Fischer's home and studio served as a space for artists and academics coming from as far away as East Asia and Latin America, and including local prominent figures such as Flusser, Lefebvre, and Restany, to give lectures on topics dealing with art, society, politics, and communication, while Fischer produced three issues of a publication called the *Cahier de l'École Sociologique Interrogative*. In the school's inaugural year, Flusser presented on the shift from a period in which the imagination could be said to have a historical dimension to what he saw as the "post-historic" period of the "technoimaginary."[101] World War II marked the turning point. Communication in the prewar period, Flusser argued, had been dominated by linear codes such as the alphabet, whose very structures contained a historical inclination in the fact that their process of signification unfolded progressively. The postwar era, in contrast, he read as two-dimensional surfaces, whose signification was "scenic," synchronic, and posthistoric, and whose forms corresponded to the abandonment of the types of overarching meta-narrative whose decline Lyotard also observed.[102] This temporal immediacy of the postwar visual environment was augmented by an ambient color saturation. Whereas the prewar period was tinged with gray text, gray photographs, and gray buildings and clothing, the postwar period, Flusser argued, was suffused with brilliance. Gesturing to the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages

as evidence of a period that was equally resplendent, he notes that these were still products of artistic imagination. Postwar pageantry, in contrast, was the potentially threatening product of "technicians"—from whence he derived the term "technoimaginary." "We must learn to master these techno-imaginary codes in order to avoid being manipulated by them, to struggle against the post-historic totalitarianisms that announce themselves on the colored surfaces that surround us," Flusser exclaimed. As the CAS noted, however, it was unclear what it would mean to reach the end of historical consciousness, and whether or not the "techno-imaginary adventure" would warrant its loss. "What," they asked, "would its political structure be?"[103]

The proposition of abandoning history posed a conceptual quandary for the artists. The idea that the age of nuclear energy and space travel had reached a sort of time beyond history was not new, yet the tactical suggestion of empowering oneself by adopting and mastering the "imaginary codes" of posthistoric technicians did not provide a self-evident set of answers for how one might retain any agency in a technocratic culture. To the contrary, empowering the worker by seizing history was the central ambition laid out by revolutionary Marxism, and the history of this tradition was explicitly materialist in its efforts to create a movement based in a common and equal access to its development and narration.[104] In its materialism and bottom-up organization of power, Marx's deep "history of humanity" was the opposite of Flusser's surface techno-imaginary, or Lyotard's end of grad narratives. The very divisions of labor produced by technocratic efficiency would alienate individual interest from that of the communicative community the collective was seeking to nurture. The division of labor, as Marx theorized it, would reform "collective history" as an "illusory communal life" that benefitted from the real ties that exist between people while imposing a "general" political interest that only alienates those it claims to represent.[105] For Marx, alienation could only be abolished through a universal movement of disaffected masses who would join in the "world-historical" force of revolution. "The proletariat can thus only exist *world-historically*, just as communism, its activity, can only have a 'world-historical' existence," Marx insisted.[106]

Fischer shared Marx's commitment to the central importance of community and cooperation in the development of consciousness, yet he sought to eliminate its historical development and replace it with a focus on the present. In the second issue of the *Cahier*, Fischer attempted to theorize a society that would overcome alienation by embracing a posthistorical position.[107] For Fischer it was history itself that was alienating, since he saw it not as the accumulation of material engagements, but as a mythic narrative that separates

man from everyday lived experience. "What characterizes all myth," he wrote, "is that it is a colorful explanation of origin, or of the end, a pseudo-explanation considered as efficient cause."[108] Specifically, the myth that he elaborated was a psychoanalytic metaphor of historical progress based on the Oedipus complex. According to Fischer, nineteenth-century man killed the Father —whether in the form of the king or God—and replaced him as the motor of history, while at the same time seeking a "forbidden" union with nature, or "Mother," that industrialization would seem to contradict. Whereas the previous historical period was oriented toward a mythic point of origin in the past, the period following has been directed toward a vanishing point of a future perfection that will be accomplished through historical progress, a progress that defines human value and existence and gives it meaning. Fischer draws this narrative of progress back to the Renaissance and identifies it as having a space-time structure that can be defined by the conical diagrams of linear perspective. The past origin begins at a single point and widens out toward the moment at which nineteenth-century man became master of his own destiny. At this point, a symmetrical cone begins to contract toward a future point at which history will be realized: there will be no more need for art because man will have reached the apotheosis of his creative potential in his replacement of God.

Fischer's determination to escape history then is based on the observation that its narrative organizes the relationships between every object that falls within its scope according to a single overarching logic. The positivism of scientific and technological advancement that dominates nature in its efforts to perfect humanity is just as much an "optical illusion" as the mathematically harmonious painted cityscape. With a pessimism that threw off balance Rouch and Morin's ambivalence, he argued that there is no such thing as progress, and that, in terms of happiness, we were no better off in the 1970s than we were in antiquity—a position that in later decades he came to reject. In an argument that contradicted the optimism of the Thirty Glorious Years that had just come to an end in 1973 as a result of the global oil crisis and subsequent stock-market crash, Fischer argued that the slave of yesterday may have been no more miserable than the line worker (*ouvrier à la chaîne*, or, literally, "chain worker") of modern times, and famines, concentration camps, fascist prisons, and nuclear arms are evidence that the force of destruction is as present now as it has ever been. He observes that, in a sort of self-perpetuating cycle, it is the very force of this destruction that inspires the narratives of progress that have legitimized it, and that this remained true even of the communist countries whose thought promoted the seizure of history by the proletariat.

As with the *Hygiene of Art* series in which Fischer attempted to undermine aesthetic mystification by tearing up works of art, so, in terms of history, he proposed a "mental hygiene" that would attempt to understand contemporary society without myth-oriented explanations. In seeming response to the questions inspired by Flusser's techno-imaginary, Fischer comes to suggest that one can only achieve an unalienated consciousness by abandoning schemas that organize the present according to the past or future, proposing instead that society live fully in the present. In his rejection of progress, Fischer then embraces McLuhan's metaphor of the interconnected "tribal man" who lives not according to temporal models of determinism, but according to spatial relations. Thanks to the engineered capacities of the techno-imaginary era, McLuhan's "global village" could be composed of far-flung spaces linked electronically. Fischer proposed then that it would be possible to replace conical geometries of linear time with a present of corporeal, sensitized immediacy that would put aside the "incest of the imaginary" suggested by his Oedipal model of history. "On a planet transformed into a global village," Fischer wrote, "man would regain his unity with nature, technologized like our bodies onto which cling all sorts of technical extensions that become our second nature: glasses, computer, car, etc."[109] McLuhan's vision allowed for the embrace of technology, but it did so in order to promote communication among individuals who could, as Restany said, "plug into the short waves of the present."[110]

It would seem that in this present moment the technical would become more than an extension of a man's eyes, hands, or legs. Restany, who collaborated with Forest in a live video performance in 1974 called *Restany dine à La Coupole* (*Restany Dines at La Coupole*), suggested that communication technology might become the "supplement of the soul" that Henri Bergson had said nearly half a century earlier would be necessary to balance man's technological overextension.[111] Forest's practice, according to the often-enigmatic Restany, "provokes the suture between the real and reality," by collapsing time and extending presence spatially, because video allows one to be seen in numerous locations at once. The artist and critic humorously demonstrated this proposition by staging a performance at the Montparnasse brasserie famous for its art-world habitués in which Restany dined in sync with a prerecorded video of himself eating, which appeared on a monitor at another table several feet away. Technology then would create a reality "a bit more true than nature" and lead to a "modular consciousness of phenomona." In words that echo Flusser's, he agrees that "writing is memory and the screen is forgetting," and he insists that the purpose of communication is not to provide historical memory, but

Figure 4.18. Fred Forest, *Restany dine à La Coupole,* 1974. Video.
© Fred Forest. Archives Fred Forest.

evidence of the present, since humanity is based not on being recorded, but on interactivity.[112] It is specifically through stopping time, then, he argues, that work such as Forest's creates a "humanism of the masses." If Flusser's technocratic imagination was oriented toward maximizing progress, the collective instead proposed an integrated imaginary that restored event-oriented communication to the center of lived experience. Similar to the GRAV's labyrinths, wearables, and environments, which, I argue in chapter 1, combat the alienation of the statistically defined Gaullist world by immersing the user in destabilizing sensory stimuli, the technology and community-based works of the CAS sought to produce a phenomenological artistic production whose saturation of the senses would, as Fischer proposed, "overwhelm the reductive structures of our schemas, stereotypes, values."[113] This immersion in the present moment would involve a perpetual becoming through action, thereby creating an intensity that recalls the saturation of the ambient fields of color

that Flusser described, and importantly, it would create what Fischer refers to as a "temporal autonomy."

In treating the same historical period that concerns Flusser and Fischer, however, Debord provided an understanding of time and history that would make the idea of temporal autonomy seem like an unrealizable, and potentially self-defeating, fantasy.[114] His model, like Fischer's, distinguishes between historical and nonhistorical time, yet Debord saw the benefits of the latter as being merely illusionistic in spectacle society. Prehistorical cyclical time, in Debord's writing, resembles the time of McLuhan's "tribal man" in that it is defined by the change of seasons and rich kinship bonds, while linear time is narrativized by those who claim the power to write history. For Debord, the division of labor at the onset of industrialization and the consequent rise of the bourgeoisie democratized access to the narrativization of history while providing the illusion that the worker is not alienated from it, but is intrinsic to its progress. What really takes place, according to Debord, is that the only history that remains in this phase is the dead history of laborers who produced commodities available to be consumed in the present. For him, ahistorical time is not a preferable intensity of immediacy that escapes narrative myths of history; rather it is the fact of daily existence for alienated workers. Instead of active engagement of the lived daily present with the forward movement of time, Debord suggests that individuals experience a *"pseudo-cyclical"* time that provides the illusion of real participation, while substituting ersatz reified representations of time-as-commodity for issues or experiences. In spectacle society, moments of life become compressed and intensified, and sold as vacation packages at locations set aside and developed for the purpose of leisure alone. Rather than driving history, the individual lives in an *"estranged present,"* cut off from direct communication, instead becoming a spectator to the products of forces determined elsewhere.

What Debord described then is the confluence and conflict between two modes of temporality and the reason why something like temporal autonomy would be impossible. An ahistorical present cannot truly exist because it produces what those driving history see as a temporal "surplus" ready to be poached and sold back exactly in the form of a world imagined by technicians. Fischer recognized, in fact, the ultimate impossibility of escaping art history altogether, and conceded that the best one could hope for might be to offer an alternative to the "alienating obsession with adding to it another linear segment," which is, he observes, the tradition of avant-garde practice.[115] Nevertheless, Debord insists on the importance of historical engagement and

imagines that even the false image of the worker's participation in determining historical development might stoke the revolutionary process. He argued that "by demanding to *live* the historical time that it creates, the proletariat discovers the simple, unforgettable core of its revolutionary project; and every attempt to carry this project through—though all up to now have gone down to defeat—signals a possible point of departure for a new historical life."[116] Rather than imagining that it might be possible to return to a cyclical time of social involvement, it will be necessary to embrace the historical vision of an irreversible time, but it must be a historical time without alienation. It is a time that must be playful and humanized.

Conclusion

The interpretive openness that the Collectif d'Art Sociologique invited resonates with the importance of the unbounded imagination as a tool of social critique and cohesion, and speaks to Forest's appeal to the members of the public to inject themselves into the media. Duvignaud's likening of *Space-Media* to May '68 for the way that it collected together unconscious expression, to be sure, recalls graffiti from the movement that spoke of "power to the imagination," the need to "imagine the lack" rather than "lacking imagination," or, citing Breton, that "the imagination is not given, but an object of conquest *par excellence*."[117] If the artists were going to eliminate aesthetic interest as the artistic reason of their work, then they would replace it with another form of "irrationality": that of raw data left unanalyzed, which was already an expression of unbounded fantasy. By emphasizing encounters, the imagination took precedence over the image, such that everyday life seemed to escape the reification of society based on preestablished narratives, whatever their temporal structure.

The invitation to the residents of Perpignan to, essentially, imagine the lives of their neighbors through mediated dialogue extended this openness. In this instance, the artists moved away from the determined structures that characterized the individual artists' earlier work. Here, discord became the mark of "the real" of social interaction. In Thénot's invitations to identify with a type of construction, or Forest's exhortations that viewers project themselves into the newspaper or television, the artists sought to turn the imagination toward therapeutic ends that involved first establishing individual investment in the project and then reconsidering one's choices as those that might be either original or of a piece with the larger society. In Perpignan the imagination was not focused around an artificial conceit, but derived from

the everyday lives of the people who lived in the city. While the artists' open-ended process resulted in a sociological portrait of the city as it was rather than trying to engineer a community, the ultimate impact of the experiment seems to have been low, as the projects simply revealed existing insular communities and social divisions. Even as participants were invited to interact in whatever spontaneous way they might, they ultimately reproduced another turn in a cyclical temporal narrative.

By refusing to analyze the results, the artists allowed the public to ostensibly speak for itself. Holding open this place between the real and sociology, or the rational and irrational, as Fischer put it, may have produced a demystifying negative dialectic that challenged artistic and sociological conventions. Yet it also risked producing a rhetoric of realism that collapsed the representation of the group onto the group itself, thereby affirming the community's identity. The artists created a sort of populist art in the sense that it availed itself of broad categorizations to speak with the voice of the masses, yet it did not go so far as to unite those voices under a single identity category, thereby constituting "the people" as a historical actor. Instead, it confirmed the idea that communities are plural, and realistically demonstrated the limits to communication. Borrowing from the language of Laclau then, the artists did not forge an "equivalential chain" between the members of an experimental community. Even as the artists reached out to the largest possible audience, across differentiating boundaries of age, class, and ethnicity, and beyond the central locations of art consumption to geographically and discursively peripheral sites, they were unable to unite the community in terms of either a positive relation of the community-in-itself, or a negative way via the opposition that the artists conceived between the public and art institutions.

The CAS's rejection of aesthetics meant that they themselves declined to speak for others, instead seeking to empower the masses by allowing them to speak for themselves. Unlike Buren or Cadere, who rejected any equivalence between their paintings and bars and any photographs of them, Fischer, Forest, and Thénot accepted a fluidity between immediate lived experience, its documentary representation, and self-conscious aesthetic manipulations. Such nondifferentiation presents a sort of media populism in its aggregated heterogeneity and flattening of hierarchies, be they of authorship (of artist or public), of degree mediation, or of kinds of materials used. This process risked naturalizing the concept of the real as immediately transparent, and, consequently, the sociologically mediated methods by which that real is perceived as methodologically and technically objective tools of transcription. Yet, as Flusser, Fischer, and McLuhan argued, each in their different ways,

phenomenologically and ideologically, the means of communication are difficult to tease apart from the messages they communicate, and they themselves become elements of the realities that they represent. Such fluidity matches the free play of language that the artists invited to collect around their activities, and in this way, they created instances in which the general public could self-identify as relational if not quite as collective.

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Even if it may have seemed during the affluent years following World War II as though technologically advanced French society had managed to escape the determinations of history, such arguments themselves are products of their time and participate in a process of historical narrativization. Dates like 1958, when Charles de Gaulle was elected president and founded the Fifth Republic; 1968, when millions of workers and students went on strike; and 1973, when the global oil crisis brought the Thirty Glorious Years to an end, provide anchors among cultural, economic, and governmental changes that more or less sharply influenced the relationship between art and society. The year 1981 marks the end of the story that this book tells, because of the changes effected in the Establishment with the election of Socialist Party leader François Mitterrand as president of the republic. With the left in power for the first time in decades, artists were brought within the ruling sphere, and the artistic contestation that characterized the previous decades declined. And yet Mitterrand did not institute the changes for which a generation of leftists had fought throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, he engaged in economic negotiations with the right toward a centrist position such that the 1980s witnessed the rise of neoliberalism and a transformation of the Socialist Party away from workers' rights and toward identity issues.

One of the most significant political changes during the 1980s was the shift away from populism and the interests of "the people," which tend to be associated with clearly left- or right-oriented politics, and toward the individual freedoms that characterize centrism.[1] Mitterrand's middling was the result of a strategy he had already announced at the beginning of the 1970s to entice communists to back the Socialist Party in elections. Early in his presidency, he was able to appease these voters by nationalizing major banks and industries, imposing higher taxes on the wealthy, increasing the number of public works, raising employment numbers and wages, improving working conditions, and implementing greater welfare benefits. By 1983, however, the franc was steeply devalued, and in order to remain within the European Monetary System, Mitterrand imposed austerity measures known as the *tournant de la rigueur*, which led to rising unemployment and accusations that he had "sold out" the people in favor of private enterprise. In this period of advanced capitalism,

the government chose a less conflictual, more consensus-based politics. This shift to the middle, however, alienated many who had been aligned with the left, and as their ranks diminished, those of the extreme-right Front National increased. The Socialist Party began attracting a university-educated electorate concerned primarily with ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, while concerns with class consciousness faded into the background. In the words of historian Nick Hewlett, among this concern for individual rights, "the traditional idea of the people had no place."[2] Instead, neo-republicanism sought—and often failed—to unify a multicultural society around defense of state intervention, citizenship, and secularism. With the disappointments of the 1980s came a reactionary revisioning of the 1960s. The romanticism surrounding 1968 faded, its political stakes were forgotten, a defeatist narrative about the movement's lack of durable effects arose, and neoliberal thinkers reinterpreted the movement as a depoliticized hedonistic triumph of individualism rather than collective contestation.[3]

During the early 1980s, the new government augmented and decentralized funding for the arts and increased public art programs, even as the minister of culture, Jack Lang, retained influence over these projects with an eye to their potential benefits to the economy.[4] One of the most iconic works of contemporary art in France, Daniel Buren's *Deux plateaux*, responded to a 1983 call from the new government for a major artistic project that would transform the courtyard of Paris's Palais Royal. The work is arguably the decorative apotheosis of Buren's career, both for the cost of its production and the place that it occupies at the seat of the Ministry of Culture. With its black and white striped marble columns of varying heights, the work combines a restrained elegance decorous to its site with a jungle-gym functionality sympathetic to the ludic public ambitions of 1960s participatory Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) sculptures. As Raymonde Moulin points out, financing by the state during these years resulted in a conflict between the egalitarianism of public works and the elitism of those who determine what counts as quality art—a conflict that indeed played out both among intellectuals and politicians as well as the general public, whose critiques ranged from budgetary issues to anti-Semitism. In the first few years of Lang's tenure, the budget for the arts in France more than doubled, then tripled with the goal of aligning contemporary art with the common good to the effect that "administering excellence" might also, as Moulin put it, "shut up populist scruples."[5]

This book is situated within a period in which political representation in relation to the general public was a prevalent concern for artists. Unlike the work of more recent participation-oriented artists working in France, such

as those associated under the umbrella of Relational Aesthetics, the artists that this book examines were specifically not interested in creating the harmonious "togetherness" that Nicholas Bourriaud promoted in his writing on the artists he associated with the category, but nor did they exactly produce forms of "antagonism," such as Claire Bishop promotes as a critical alternative.[6] Instead, the artists examined here attempted to invent and manipulate social situations that variously used interpellation and alienation, often together, so as to create instances of unity around forms of rejection. This can be seen in the GRAV's production of instability, Buren's provocative alienation of viewers, Cadere's suggestion that his audience "establish disorder" by disbanding, Fischer's hygienic destructions, or Thénot's invitation to those who responded to his questionnaires to second-guess their readymade compulsions by attempting to view the formal building blocks that make up the sensorial world in which they lived from an original perspective. Negation as artistic strategy persisted in artistic challenges to authorship, invisible institutional authority, and the technocratic hero's rationalized post–World War II world. Demystifying challenges to common sense would result in the creation of something like a populism based on negativity. Indeed, as Ernesto Laclau demonstrates, groups bond not through inherently shared characteristics of distinct individuals, but through those individuals' oppositional positions toward an enemy.[7] If social divisions were to be overcome such as they were during May '68, doing so would require first undermining the false premises of concepts such as public opinion, as Thénot's poll demonstrated by underscoring that automated interpretations are dictated by cultural expectation. The theme of openness in interpretation similarly refuses to provide the viewer with meaning. The "open work" that Umberto Eco theorized in relation to the GRAV's programmed paintings and sculptures resonates in the refusal by the Collectif d'Art Sociologique (CAS) to interpret the data they collected, and in the interpretive schemes that Buren and Cadere imagined their experiments might evoke. The artwork in each instance becomes a tool designed to emphasize viewer interpretation rather than presenting an artist's message for the viewer to passively absorb.

While the ethos of 1960s social unification formed the backdrop to the work examined in this book, the artists themselves did not necessarily aim to generate something like a positivist conception of community. Populism presents a hegemonic position that would speak for a mass whose internal differences are bracketed, yet it offers this not as a general law such as habitus maintains, but as an active position of contestation against such laws. The challenge for artists was to attempt to unify the individual with the commu-

nity not through an acceptance of an ideology given by a spokesperson in a leadership position, but through a process of questioning such centralization itself. Such work encounters numerous problems. Foremost among these is the idea that participation as an artistic strategy manipulates the viewer by claiming to set him or her free. Looping the spectator into the production and hermeneutics of the artwork risks an excessive destabilization of the participant, who is alienated from the controlled experience of his or her senses in the work, a predicament that consequently produces another form of spectacular entertainment, as Guy Debord noted in the case of the GRAV. Such works may ultimately reproduce the sociological or technocratic systems that they intend to critically appropriate. In Buren's and Cadere's practices the relationship to the viewer continued to be playful and often humoristic even as Buren's early rhetoric was caustically aggressive, or Cadere's expressed a skepticism about the public's ability to contribute meaningfully to the social impact of his project. Both cases produced outcomes in which the work developed independently of the people who occupied the public spaces on which each artist depended to make their critiques of institutions. In this way, the works reinforced the sociological category—that of art-world distinction—that Kristin Ross has argued is antithetical to the notion of populism that operated in the politics of 1968. With the CAS's participatory works the role of the public surpassed even those of the GRAV, in that they abandoned the formalism that the prior group had maintained as central to their phenomenological investigations. Yet, for the CAS working in the mid- to late 1970s, an idea of the people as a unified group already began to recognize the fragmentation of communities along class, national, ethnic, and racial lines that would characterize 1980s politics, even as the artists attempted to foster communication and understanding across social divides.

The relationship between public and site evolved considerably across the trajectory that this book traces. For the GRAV, the work's site was almost an afterthought, as demonstrated by the fact that their works could be loaded into a van and plopped nearly anywhere during their *Day in the Street*. Individual works functioned as sites of encounter with the audience, and while their questionnaires critically posed the question of appropriate display venues (museum, gallery, street, public housing, etc.), their adventures into the city remained within central Paris, whose harried denizens and heavily trafficked cultural destinations seemed to function as ideal test cases for any other location. The group's institutional critique was based on undermining artistic dependence on, and support for, the ideological conventions of the art world—

the specifications of site were important to their project, but not as important as the perceptual experience of the individual viewer.

Buren's early work, by contrast, was radically and self-consciously site specific, yet his engagements with place focused almost exclusively on the physical manifestations of institutional control, as he called attention to the limits of visibility relative to expectation and intelligibility. If the GRAV used the city as a stage on which to situate the eventlike presentation of their spectacular objects, Buren insinuated himself into this background to investigate its contingencies. His *affichages sauvages* mimicked indecorous street graffiti while his gallery and museum installations highlighted the normally invisible points of transition and movement, thereby summoning the phenomenological experience of the viewer to serve as an allegory of invisible institutional priorities and decisions in a sort of bureaucratic Gestalt.

Although Cadere mimicked Buren's rhetoric, he shifted the coordinates of institutional site specificity by highlighting habitus and deemphasizing the physical contours of spaces. This could result in delightful surprises, as when he forewent a conventional lecture in conjunction with his Institute of Contemporary Art talk to instead surprise professionals in the art world by showing up to discuss his work at their habitual pubs in London, or it could be enervating, as evidenced by the multiple exclusion he faced when his bar was expelled from the exhibitions of other artists, thereby delineating the functional and affective charges of diverse sites by purposeful misuse. Furthermore, Cadere was keen to prove that his work could be exhibited well beyond galleries and urban cultural centers, yet the intelligibility of his bars as art came into question when, for example, he attempted to show the work at a pub in a remote village in western Belgium. Locals reportedly found the work irrelevant to their concerns, yet the situation of exhibiting art provided an instigation, if not an alibi, for an occasion of social mixing—a consistent theme in the work of an artist whose experience of the art world was frequently that of an outsider concerned with issues of exclusion. The physical site became an object of antagonism against which he posed a definition of site as process.

If Cadere transitioned from the local to the spatial, and the physical to the operational, the CAS hastened the movement toward the margins with their community-based projects, as their critique of arts institutions turned away from the sites of institutional authority and toward individuals and communities who live in specific places. The people who pass through a town square on a weekend afternoon or live in a particular housing block, and the dispersed networks of newspaper subscribers and television viewers, took precedence

over the structures in which they lived. Rather than developing a unitary specificity for a site, the artists of the CAS sought divergent scales, ranging from local commune to global village, that they would bring into contact. This process sometimes necessitated rejecting institutional spaces, yet their practice was sufficiently outside the bounds of artistic intelligibility that gallery representation provided a frame for their community projects to function as critiques of the art world as well.

The uncertainty of the populations that emerges across these artists' practices develops in relation to what Lyotard characterized as the diminution of metanarratives during the same period. This suggests that the breakdown of the revolutionary subject and the rise of identity politics were not inventions of the 1980s but parts of a longer continuous development of postmodern multiplicity. Within art, the withering of revolutionary aura took place at the level of Gestalt during the period in which Martin Jay observes the decline of vision as a master sense for apprehending the world. For the GRAV, I argue that this took the form of sensorial and physical instability as a challenge to the presumed rationality of technocratic planning. Buren's double rejection of expressive communication and of historical avant-garde models whose revolutionary potential he doubted sought not to organize his audience, but to destabilize both viewer and object, as the identity of his camouflaged works blended into mere environmental similitudes. Likewise, the CAS's modest concern not to create just one more avant-garde contributed to their acceptance of social fragmentation. Cadere's disillusionment was perhaps more profound, as his personal history testified to a breakdown in the emancipatory project broadly, which led him to question the supposed freedom afforded by the West. His peripateticism mapped a successive visibility for the display of his work without ever concluding that such a thing as a totality could ever exist, let alone be visible, much less desirable. Correspondingly, these artists' engagement with arts institutions was not one of triumphal rejection or overthrow, but continual negotiation for representation of their art, and the societies they envisioned, in appropriate terms.

In response to Buren's question from October 1968 about how the artist can "contest society, while his art, art in general, objectively 'belongs' to that society," one can point to the ways that artists destabilized ideas of belonging and the social both. This is not to argue that they sought a neoliberal rejection of society, but, rather, that their practices expressed hesitancy with the unity models that had been provided on the one hand by technocrats and on the other by modernist revolutionary ideals. Forming active spectators who are conscious of their present historical moment has, in every instance that this

book considers, been intended to strengthen the bond between individuals and their communities, yet the meaning of the artwork and the public upon whom the artists depended for their freedom in relation to arts institutions were necessarily contingent and negotiated. Their institutional critiques decentralized forms of belonging where the attempt to apprehend the other by destabilizing participation became the horizon of integration.

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NOTES

Introduction

1   André Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail* (Gent: Herbert-Gewad, 1982), § 44. On June 8, 1977, he held a second *Établir le désordre* event in Brussels, which led to a significantly longer two-and-a-half-hour debate with the public, possibly because it was mediated by Georges Roque. Lynda Morris, ed., *André Cadere: Documenting Cadere, 1972–1978* (London: Koenig, 2013), 134.

2   On the violence in post–World War II French art, see Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *L'ordre sauvage: Violence dépense et sacré dans l'art des années, 1950–1960* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004); Hannah Feldman, *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945–1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

3   On intimacy as a form of institutional critique, see Rebecca DeRoo, *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art: The Politics of Artistic Display in France after 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

4   Mireille Gaüzère, "Le Centre Georges-Pompidou," in *Culture et action chez Georges Pompidou*, ed. Jean-Claude Groshens and Jean-François Sirinelli (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 417.

5   François Derivery, *L'exposition 72-72* (Paris: E. C. Editions, 2001), 5.

6   Derivery, *L'exposition 72-72*, 6. There was heavy censorship in 1971: two works by Lucien Mathelin were taken down from the contemporary arts section of the Musée d'Art Modern de la Ville de Paris at the order of the police. The police closed a Bernard Rancillac show at Centre National d'Art Contemporain on the evening of its opening due to "disrespect of good manners." A canvas on the subject of racism by Paolo Baratella was destroyed in the town of Brive. Two canvasses by J. P. Favre and R. Claude were seized in Tours. A Gérard Tisserand was also taken down for political reason, and further censorship took place in Houdain, Aubenas, Vimoutiers, and Villejuif.

7   The museum was given the name of Georges Pompidou in the law of January 3, 1975.

8   Charles de Gaulle, "Décret n. 59-889 du 24 juillet 1959 portant organization du ministère chargé des affaires culturelles," *Journal officiel de la république française*, July 26, 1959, 7413.

9   Feldman, *From a Nation Torn*, 19–41.

10   Gaüzère, "Le Centre Georges-Pompidou," 415.

11   Catherine Millet, *Contemporary Art in France* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015), 13.

12   For a detailed analysis of the effect that the Marshall Plan had on art during the 1950s and 1960s in the Italian context, see Jaleh Mansoor, *Marshall Plan Modernism: Italian Postwar Abstraction and the Beginnings of Autonomia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

13 Philippe Poirrier, "Cultural Practices during the 1960s and 1970s," in Groshens and Sirinelli, *Culture et action chez Georges Pompidou*, 126.

14 Cited in Poirrier, "Cultural Practices during the 1960s and 1970s," 129.

15 Georges Pompidou, *Le nœud gordien* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984), 201–202, cited in Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, "L'art du movement," in Groshens and Sirinelli, *Culture et action chez Georges Pompidou*, 120.

16 Commissariat Général du Plan, Ve Plan, Commission de l'équipement culturel et du patrimoine artistique, Rapport general (La documentation française, 1966), 6, cited in Laurent Gayme, "La place de la culture dans la planification," in Groshens and Sirinelli, *Culture et action chez Georges Pompidou*, 147.

17 Commissariat Général du Plan, 151.

18 Commissariat Général du Plan, 151.

19 Commissariat Général du Plan, 146.

20 Laurent Fleury, *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices: The Transformative Power of Institutions*, trans. Michael Lavin (New York: Lexington Books, 2011), 53, emphasis in the original.

21 Gaüzère, "Le Centre Georges-Pompidou," 415–421.

22 Fleury, *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices*, xxii–xxiii.

23 Fleury, *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices*, 50.

24 Fleury, *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices*, 148.

25 Gaüzère, "Le Centre Georges-Pompidou," 419.

26 Georges Bensaïd, *La culture planifiée* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 14, cited in Gayme, "La place de la culture dans la planification," 143.

27 Georges Pompidou and Jacques Michel, "Le président de la République définit ses conceptions dans les domaines de l'art et de l'architecture M. Pompidou évoque les questions du plateau Beaubourg et des tours de la Défense," *Le Monde*, October 17, 1972, cited in Fleury, *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices*, xxvii.

28 Dorléac, "L'art du movement," 111.

29 Dorléac, "L'art du movement," 121–122.

30 On this last point, see chapter 7, "The Influence of Mediation Apparatuses on the Structuring of Cultural Practices: The Pompidou Center's 'Correspondents,'" in Fleury, *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices*, 99–114.

31 Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, cited in Nathan Silver, *The Making of Beaubourg: A Building Biography of the Centre Pompidou, Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 104.

32 Rogers and Piano, cited in Silver, *Making of Beaubourg*, 104.

33 Rogers and Piano, cited in Silver, *Making of Beaubourg*, 104.

34 Gaüzère, "Le Centre Georges-Pompidou," 421.

35 Louis Chevalier, *The Assassination of Paris*, trans. David P. Jordan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 210–263.

36 Jean Clair, "Les arts de la rue," *Chroniques de l'art vivant* 46 (February 1974): 2–3.

37 Pierre Mazeaud, "À 40 ans, la loi sur la participation reste d'actualité," *Le Figaro*, August 17, 2007.

38 Martin Harrison and Philip M. Williams, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973), 351–356.

39 Chevalier, *Assassination of Paris*, 103.

40 "La Participation. Recencement et analyse des déclarations du général de Gaulle. Rapport du Cercle d'Etudes de l'Institut Charles de Gaulle sous la direction de M. Philippe Cavenave," *Espoir* 5 (1973–1974): 46–48.

41 Between 1956 and 1966, minimum wage for workers rose only 6 percent whereas pretax incomes of executives and managers went up by 48.7 percent. Harrison and Williams, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic*, 13, 351–352.

42 Harrison and Williams, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic*, 399.

43 Harrison and Williams, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic*, 435, 437.

44 "La Participation. Recencement et analyse des déclarations du général de Gaulle," 48.

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46 Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, "Why Sociologists?," 36.

47 Mel Ramsden, "On Practice," *The Fox* 1, no. 1 (1975): 66–83.

48 Hal Foster, "Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?," in *Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 3.

49 Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 128.

50 Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 129.

51 Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 143.

52 Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 295.

53 Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in Foster, *Return of the Real*, 203.

54 Ramsden, "On Practice," 69.

55 Vivien A. Schmidt, *Democratizing France: The Political and Administrative History of Decentralization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 77–79.

56 André Malraux, "Intervention d'André Malraux à l'Assemblée Nationale sur le budget des affaires culturelles," Paris, October 27, 1966.

57 Jean Clair, "La province bouge . . . ," *Chroniques de l'art vivant* 33 (October 1972): 2.

58 In the last decade there has been an increase in academic work on participation in art. Notable sustained and critical contributions to the field include Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), which examines a series of politically critical practices across twentieth-century Europe; and Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), which addresses site-specific collaborative art projects from across the globe.

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60 Umberto Eco and Bruno Munari, *Arte programmata: Arte cinetica: Opere moltiplicate: Opera aperta* (Milan: Officina d'arte grafica A. Lucini, 1962), n.p.

61 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 50.

62 Francis Parent and Raymond Perrot, *Le Salon de la Jeune Peinture: Une histoire 1950–1963* (Montreuil: Jeune Peinture, 1983), 13.

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65 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 11–24.

66 Henri Lefebvre, *Vers le cybernanthrope: Contre les technocrates* (Paris: Denoël, 1971), 46–62.

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68 Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 110–124.

69 Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1988), 10.

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73 Cornelius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort, and Edgar Morin, *Mai 68: La brèche* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 59–60.

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Chapter 1: The Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel's Social Abstractions

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3 Alain Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society: Tomorrow's Social History: Classes, Conflicts and Culture in the Programmed Society*, trans. Leonard F. X. Mayhew (New York: Random House, 1971), 98.

4 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "Assez de mystifications," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 71.

5 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "Assez de mystifications," 71.

6 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "Transformer l'actuelle situation de l'art plastique," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV,* 74–76.

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10 Jean-Paul Ameline, "Denise René: Histoire d'une galerie," in *Denise René, l'intrépide: Une galerie dans l'aventure de l'art abstrait, 1944–1978* (Paris: Éditions Centre Georges Pompidou, 2001), 15.

11 The artists on view were Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder, Victor Vasarely, Jean Tinguely, Jesús-Rafael Soto, Yacov Agam, Pol Bury, and Egill Jacobsen.

12 Victor Vasarely, "Notes for a Manifesto," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 110–112.

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16 Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Interview," in Julio Le Parc et al., *Julio Le Parc* (Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2013), 85, 93.

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19 Jacopo Galimberti, "The Early Years of GRAV: Better Marx than Malraux," *Own Reality* 13 (2015): 10.

20 François Molnar and François Morellet, *Pour un art abstrait progressif* (Zagreb: Grafički Zavod Hrvatske, 1963), n.p.

21 For information on the use of the concept of topology in the design of space-frame structures, and the phenomenological backlash against "operational thinking" in French architectural and urban projects, see Larry Busbea, "Topological Polemics," in *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960–1970* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 139–168.

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23 Molnar and Morellet, *Pour un art abstrait progressif*, n.p.

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25 Max Bill, "The Good Form," in *Form, Function, Beauty*, 30.

26 Joël Stein, "Motus," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 53. This show included the works of Garcia Miranda, François Morellet, Sevanes, Joël Stein, Yvaral, and Vera Molnar. Molnar designed the invitation card for their Milan exhibition, which included a reproduction of one of her own canvases.

27 The expression was suggested by Danielle Morellet, in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 54.

28 The artists changed the name after deciding that the claim to be a "research center" was hubristic. François Morellet and Danielle Morellet, in conversation with the author, June 8, 2011. The artists' talent for designing logos found commercial cause in 1972 when Yvaral and his father redesigned the logo for the car manufacturer Renault.

29 Garcia Miranda Demarco et al., "Acte de Fondation," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 57–59.

30 Henri Lefebvre, *Vers le cybernanthrope: Contre les technocrates* (Paris: Denoël, 1971), 209–213.

31 Quoted in Raymond Boisdé, *Technocratie et démocratie* (Paris: Plon, 1964), 26.

32 Michel Drancourt, *La démocratie à refaire* (1962), 125, cited in Boisdé, *Technocratie et démocratie*, 27.

33 Pierre Viansson-Ponté, "Quand la France s'ennuie," *Le Monde*, March 15, 1968.

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35 Boisdé, *Technocratie et démocratie*, 13–14.

36 Boisdé, *Technocratie et démocratie*, 17.

37 Boisdé, *Technocratie et démocratie*, 23.

38 Lefebvre, *Vers le cybernanthrope*, 12–13.

39 Otto Hahn, "À quoi sert Julio Le Parc," *L'Express*, November 28–December 4, 1966, 78.

40 Édith Gerzenstein and S. G. Patris, *Arts plastiques*, Canal 1, January 1, 1962.

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44 François Morellet, "Le choix dans l'art actuel," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 167–169.

45 Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1961), vii.

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47 Eco and Munari, *Arte programmata*, n.p.

48 Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Century* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 220.

49 Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, 251.

50 Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, 253.

51 Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, 275.

52 François Morellet, "Letter to Victor Vasarely," in *Mais comment taire me commentaires?*, 9.

53 Obrist, "Interview," 93.

54 Centre de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "Essai d'appréciation de nos recherches," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 62–63.

55 Piet Mondrian, "Abstract Art [Non-Subjective Art]," in *The New Art—The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 334.

56 Marek Wieczorek, "Mondrian's First Diamond Composition: Spatial Totality and the Plane of the Starry Sky," in *Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory,* ed. Paul Crowther and Isabel Wünsche (New York: Routledge, 2012), 30–46.

57 Wieczorek, "Mondrian's First Diamond Composition," 35.

58 Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, 275–276.

59 Piet Mondrian, "Supplement: The Determinate and the Indeterminate," in Holtzman and James, *New Art,* 70–74.

60 Piet Mondrian, "From the Natural to the Abstract: From the Indeterminate to the Determinate," in Holtzman and James, *New Art,* 47.

61 Julio Le Parc, "[Untitled catalogue text]," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 70.

62 Le Parc, cited in Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture*, 276.

63 W. Brian Newsome, *French Urban Planning, 1940–1968: The Construction and Deconstruction of an Authoritarian System* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 1–5.

64 The government broke ground on the HML in 1955, and by 1958, the efforts of the Société Immobilière de la Caisse (SCIC) and employer-funded building companies managed to build more than 60 percent of the rental property in the Paris region. Just over ten years later—in 1969—the SCIC alone had constructed over 160,000 housing units. Newsome, *French Urban Planning*, 109.

65 While the term *sarcellite* was coined to describe the mental and physical toll taken on residents of the *grands ensembles*, its specific applicability to the suburbs was challenged in an unsigned article from *L'Express* that reflected on the fifteenth anniversary of the construction of the HLM at Sarcelles: "Quinze ans après, les Sarcellois se sont faits à Sarcelles. . . . La sarcellite n'existe pas, affirme, catégorique, un pharmacien, et nous vendons beaucoup moins de tranquillisants ici que dans le XVIe arrondissement." "Sarcelles an 15," *Réalités*, January 25, 1971, quoted in Anne Slack, "Le coin du pédagogue," *French Review* 46, no. 6 (May 1971): 1106–1108.

66 Newsome, *French Urban Planning*, 127.

67 Sudreau went so far as to hire Jeanne Aubert-Picard, a working-class mother of four, as a consultant on the Commission de la vie dans les grands ensembles. Newsome, *French Urban Planning*, 154.

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70 Julio Le Parc, "Letter to Craftint Manufacturing Company," October 26, 1960, Le Parc Archives, Cachan, France.

71 Anne Tronche, "Lumière et mouvement," *Contacts électriques* (July 1965): 32.

72 Gérard Blanchard, "L'Op-art à prisunic," *Opus International* 1 (April 1967): 90–92. It would seem that the history of Op art in fashion is further tied not just to new styles, but to new techniques of commodification. Blanchard cites Maïmé Arnodin as the first fabric designer in France to develop patterns influenced by the Museum of Modern Art's 1965 exhibition *The Responsive Eye*. Arnodin is often credited with democratizing French fashion through the growth of standardized and mass-produced prêt-à-porter.

73 Anonymous, "Après avoir révolutionné la mode, L'OP'Art descend dans la rue," *Le Parisien*, April 20, 1966, 22.

74 Anonymous, "Après avoir révolutionné la mode."

75 Morellet, "Letter to Victor Vasarely," 10.

76 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "Multiples Recherches," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 191.

77 François Pluchart, "Le Parc, Wesselman et Bellmer à l'assaut du romantisme pictural," *Combat*, November 7, 1966, 9.

78 Saul Yurkievich, "Julio Le Parc, promoteur de l'art technologique," in *Julio Le Parc*, ed. Jean-Louis Pradel ([Italy]: Severgnini, 1995), 292.

79 Christiane Duparc, "Julio Le Parc: Voulez-vous jouer avec lui?," *Le nouvel Adam*, December 1966, 83.

80 Both Morellet and Garcia-Rossi confirm the groups' lack of commercial success during the period and use the word "utopique" to describe the idea of installing the works in the HLM. François Morellet in conversation with the author, June 8, 2011; and Horacio Garcia-Rossi in conversation with the author, June 10, 2011.

81 Anonymous, "Design in Dimension: Movement, Light, and Color Create New Forms in Wire and Plexiglass," *Craft Horizons* (February 1963): 20.

82 Larry Busbea, "Kineticism-Spectacle-Environment," *October* 144 (Spring 2013): 94.

83 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "L'instabilité-le labyrinthe," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 124.

84 Guy Debord, "Die Welt als Labyrinth," *Internationale situationniste* 4 (June 1960): 5–7; Robert Rauschenberg et al., *Dylaby: Dynamisch labyrint: Robert Rauschenberg, Martial Raysse, Niki de Saint Phalle, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Per Olof Ultvedt* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1962); Busbea, *Topologies*, 23. Busbea, in partic-

ular, examines the way that the labyrinth offered a confluence of structuralist organization and phenomenological immersion.

85 Catherine Millet, "Julio Le Parc," *Les lettres françaises*, December 16, 1970.

86 Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," *Art News* (October 1958): 24–26, 55–57.

87 Julio Le Parc, *Le Parc: Couleur 1959* (Paris: Galerie Denise René, 1970), n.p.

88 Kaprow, "Legacy of Jackson Pollock," 27.

89 Duparc, "Julio Le Parc," 83.

90 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "Au Public," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 89.

91 Garcia-Rossi et al., "Defense de ne pas participer / defense de ne pas toucher / defense de ne pas casser," and "Assez de mystifications 2," both in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 126.

92 Duparc, "Julio Le Parc," 83.

93 The likeness between Vasarely's descent onto the street via the street fashions that he inspired and the GRAV's *A Day in the Street* was observed by numerous critics, including in the "Après avoir révolutionné la mode, l'Op'Art descend dans la rue"; and "Les rabatteurs de l'Op'Art," *Le nouveau candide*, May 2, 1966, n.p.

94 Pierre Restany, "Quand l'art descend dans la rue," *Arts loisirs*, April 3–May 27, 1966, 16–17.

95 Alain Jouffroy, "Le grand jeu de la Biennale," *L'œil* 39–40 (July–August 1966): 49.

96 Pierre Descargues, "Un groupe de manifestants d'un nouveau genre est descendu lundi dans les rues," *Tribune de Lausanne*, April 24, 1966, 6. Six years later, the magazine *Chroniques de l'art vivant* would use a similar questionnaire in order, as it claimed, not only to define its readership, but also to establish a dialogue.

97 Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

98 Wiener, *Cybernetics*, 164.

99 Claude Javeau, *L'enquête par questionnaire: Manuel à l'usage du practicien*, 2nd ed. (Bruxelles: Institut de Sociologie, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1971), 8.

100 Garcia-Rossi et al., *Instability* questionnaire, Le Parc Archives. All of the discussion of the specific questionnaire responses derive from the *Instability* exhibition.

101 Restany, "Quand l'art descend dans la rue," 17.

102 Henri Slotine, "Le produit de sa vente est destiné à la recherche médicale," *France-Soir*, October 1967, n.p. The *Anti-Car* was initially commissioned as part of a series of cars modified by artists that would be auctioned at a benefit for the Fondation pour la Recherche Médicale Française. Julio Le Parc in conversation with the author, July 13, 2016.

103 Gilbert Gatellier, "Les sélections de Gilbert Gatellier," *Arts loisirs*, November 9, 1966, 55.

104 Julien Alvard, "Pour chattes de luxe," *Le nouvel observateur*, November 23, 1966, 45.

105 Georges Boudaille, "La mode du Op," *Les lettres françaises*, June 23, 1966, 31.

106 André Fermigier, "[Untitled]," *Le nouvel observateur*, July 6, 1966, 37; Georges

Boudaille, "Venise 66 Succès des sculptures la peinture en désarroi," *Les lettres françaises*, June 23, 1966, 28. Notably, Boudaille commented that Le Parc's games were less amusing than pinball machines, even as he recognized that beneath the amusement they were intended to be serious.

107 Anonymous, "[Untitled]," *Time*, June 24, 1966, 38. Similarly, Jean-Jacques Lévêque, "Luna Park aux Arts deco," *La gazette des arts*, March 16, 1966, 49.

108 Jouffroy, "Le grand jeu de la Biennale," 45.

109 Arnauld Pierre, "Le parc d'attractions," in Le Parc et al., *Julio Le Parc*, 29.

110 Arnauld Pierre, "De l'instabilité: Perception visuelle/corporelle de l'espace dans l'environnement cinétique," *Les cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne* 78 (Winter 2001–2002): 55.

111 Pierre, "Le parc d'attractions," 47.

112 Thanks to Eric Michaud for this observation.

113 Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 176.

114 Pierre, "De l'instabilité," 44.

115 Hahn, "À quoi sert Julio Le Parc," 78.

116 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 51.

117 Guy Debord, "L'avant-garde de la présence," *Internationale situationniste* 8 (January 1963): 14–22.

118 Lucien Goldmann, cited in Debord, "L'avant-garde de la présence," 14.

119 Debord, "L'avant-garde de la présence," 16–17.

120 Debord, "L'avant-garde de la présence," 19.

121 Debord, "L'avant-garde de la présence," 19.

122 Debord, "L'avant-garde de la présence," 19.

123 Julio Le Parc, cited in Debord, "L'avant-garde de la présence," 19.

124 Anonymous, "Questions à Le Parc," *Robho* 1 (June 1967): 8.

125 Julio Le Parc, "À propos de art-spectacle, spectateur-actif, instabilité et programmation dans l'art visuel," in Garcia-Rossi et al., *GRAV*, 98.

126 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, "Assez de mystifications," 71.

127 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 483.

128 Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 500.

129 Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 483.

130 Horacio Garcia-Rossi in conversation with the author, June 10, 2011.

131 Garcia-Rossi's light boxes closely resemble the Luminoscopes that Nicolas Schöffer began making in 1959. These machines projected moving light onto a screen while emitting sound. Arnauld Pierre analyzes the hypnotic claims that were made about them in "I Am the Dream Machine: Les écrans hypnogènes de Nicolas Schöffer," *Les cahiers du Musée National d'Art Modern* 130 (Winter 2014–2015): 30–61.

1   Daniel Buren, "Lettre à Jacques Caumont," in *Les écrits (1965–1990), tome I*, 100. The situation escalated when Caumont and Sorin rejected Buren's effort to place himself "outside of history," stating that they would include documentation of his practice in the exhibition anyway, while proposing to make space for Buren's dissent by hosting a debate. In response, Buren brought legal action against the organizers, and they were required to "roam the streets" in order to scrub Buren's name from all the posters promoting the event. An anonymously published inset in the arts magazine *Robho* that detailed the quarrel concluded, "This rush was definitively the only demonstration that fully responded to the announced program: art in the street." See Anonymous, "Buren contre le CNAC," *Robho* 5/6 (1971): 67.

2   Daniel Buren, Michel Claura, and René Denizot, "Températures relevées sous abri et evolution probable du temps," in *Les écrits (1965–1990), tome I*, 65–67.

3   He replicated this model in cities throughout Europe, North America, and Japan into the early 1970s. In 1969 it was Düsseldorf, and with papers striped pink in Paris and red in Berne. In 1970 there were gray in Tokyo, Kyoto; orange in Turin; yellow in Amsterdam; and blue, gray, orange, pink, red, green, purple, and monochrome white in New York. In 1971, there was blue in Vienna and Frankfurt, and orange in Naples in 1972. In 1970 he posted them on benches across the city of Los Angeles for a project he called *Fifty Bus Benches*.

4   Daniel Buren, *Au sujet de . . . : Entretien avec Jérôme Sans* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 90–91.

5   Buren, *Au sujet de . . .*

6   Hannah Feldman, "La France déchirée: The Politics of Representation and the Spaces In-Between," in *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945–1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 115–116.

7   Feldman, "La France déchirée," 126–155.

8   Feldman, "La France déchirée," 154.

9   Feldman, "La France déchirée," 116.

10 Feldman, "La France déchirée," 126.

11 Feldman, "La France déchirée," 155.

12 Daniel Buren and Sarane Alexandrian, "Daniel Buren prend ses couleurs sans les choisir," in *Les écrits (1965–1990), tome I*, 17.

13 Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés* (Lyon: Arts Edition, 1991), 47.

14 Buren and Parmentier, *Propos délibérés*, 46.

15 Benjamin Buchloh, "Hantaï/Villeglé and the Dialectics of Painting's Dispersal," in *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 245.

16 Buchloh, "Hantaï/Villeglé," 250.

17 Buchloh, "Hantaï/Villeglé," 254.

18 Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Cape, 1967), 9.

19 Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 82.

20 Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 83.

21 Since their appearance as a group in 1967, it has been common to use the abbreviation BMPT, but honoring the artists' preference, I list their names individually. For an explanation of Buren's position against the moniker, see Daniel Buren, Charles Le Bouil, Mazaud, and Patrick Jude, "BMPT n'a jamais existé!!," in *Les écrits (1965-1990), tome II* (Bordeaux: Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1991), 167–174.

22 For a detailed chronology and analysis, see Francis Parent and Raymond Perrot, *Le Salon de la Jeune Peinture: Une histoire 1950-1963* (Montreuil: Jeune Peinture, 1983).

23 Daniel Buren et al., "Puisque peindre c'est . . . ," in *Les écrits (1965-1990), tome I*, 21. Specifically, here the reference to Vietnam is an attack on the "Salle Verte" at the exhibition, which was a space dedicated to works protesting the war.

24 Daniel Buren et al., "Lettre contre les salons," in *Les écrits (1965-1990), tome I*, 23.

25 Jeanine Warnod, "La negation de la Jeune Peinture," *Le Figaro*, January 5, 1967, cited in Bernard Blistène, Alison M. Gingeras, and Laurent L. Bon, *Daniel Buren: Mot à mot* (Paris: Editions de la Martinière, 2002), §M06.

26 Buren, *Au sujet de . . .* , 34–35.

27 Buren, *Au sujet de . . .* , 34–35.

28 Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 139.

29 Daniel Buren et al., "Il ne s'agissait évidemment que de regarder des toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni," in *Les écrits (1965-1990), tome I*, 25.

30 Cited in Millet, *Contemporary Art in France*, 29.

31 Michel Claura in conversation with the author, November 9, 2015, Paris.

32 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 24.

33 Daniel Buren and Georges Boudaille, "L'art n'est plus justifiable, ou les points sur les 'i,'" *Les lettres françaises*, March 13, 1968, 29.

34 Buren and Boudaille, "L'art n'est plus justifiable," 29, Buren's emphasis.

35 Daniel Buren and André Parinaud, "Entretien avec André Parinaud," *Galerie des arts*, February 1968, 4–5.

36 As Jean-Marc Poinsot points out, while the term "in situ" has long had currency in the field of anthropology to specify the discovery of artifacts at archeological sites, Buren first used the locution in 1974 while speaking about the notorious debacle of 1971 in which his work was removed from the Sixth International Guggenheim Exhibition due to the protest of several co-exhibiting American minimalists. In an interview with Liza Béar from 1974, he stated, "The only thing that I wanted to say with this piece could only be said by the piece itself *in situ*. In withdrawing it from view, this meant that each person spoke of it in the void." It was not until 1976 that the term began appearing as a regular feature of his rhetoric. He directly theorized the term for the first time in the 1985 essay "Du volume de la couleur." Jean-Marc Poinsot, *Quand l'œvre à lieu: L'art exposé et ses récits autorisés* (Geneva: Les Presses du Réel, 2008), 95 n. 21.

37 Daniel Buren, "Limites Critiques," in *Les écrits (1965-1990), tome I*, 175–190. The text was published in the catalogue of the exhibition *Invitation à lire comme indication de ce qui est à voir*, Galerie Yvon Lambert (Paris, December 2, 1970–January 5, 1971), which consisted of a striped canvas with painted peripheral stripes

suspended across the street outside the gallery. The exhibition title refers to the invitation, which provided a description of the work, thereby highlighting, and arguably equalizing, the role of the artwork and its support, the invitation. Buren says that he considered his writings to be tools to open a discussion around work that he expected people would not become capable of seeing until years later. Daniel Buren in conversation with the author, June 26, 2018, Minneapolis, MN.

38 Douglas Crimp, "The Ends of Painting," in *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 85–87.

39 Philippe Corcuff et al., *Pierre Bourdieu: Les champs de la critique* (Paris: Bibliothèque Publique d'Information / Centre Pompidou, 2004), 56.

40 Marc Martin, *Histoire de la publicité en France* (Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2012).

41 Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," trans. John Shepley, *October* 31 (Winter 1984): 23.

42 Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 16.

43 Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 28.

44 Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 30.

45 Xavier Arsène-Henry, "L'animation urbaine," *Urbanisme* 98 (1967): 34–35.

46 Arsène-Henry, "L'animation urbaine," 34–35.

47 Pascal Perris, "Jean Dubuisson: Un hérisson dans la tempête," *Colonnes* 11 (January 1998): 12.

48 Pierre Caillot and Gérard Monnier, "Le 'village Mouchotte' à Paris: Acteurs et militants de la modernité urbaine," in *Habiter le modernité*, ed. Xavier Guillot (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 2006), 55.

49 Buren notes that the relative invisibility of the work made it possible for him to produce incredible work because no one was expecting it. He was able to work in the middle of the day, in this case, because the work was so banal that few people recognized it as art. Conversation with Daniel Buren, June 26, 2018.

50 Daniel Buren, letter to Lucy Lippard, July 3, 1969, in *Daniel Buren: Mot à mot*, § A11–A12. The volunteers' names were printed in the exhibition catalogue along with the color of the posters they placed as a sort of key that would highlight the collaborative nature of Buren's work.

51 Daniel Buren, "Faut-il enseigner l'art?," *Galerie des arts* 57 (October 1968): 13.

52 Daniel Buren's website, http://catalogue.danielburen.com/artworks/view/1429, accessed August 3, 2016.

53 Conversation with Daniel Buren, June 26, 2018.

54 Daniel Buren, "Limites Critiques," in *Les Écrits (1965-1990)*, *Tome I,* 175.

55 Critic Pierre Restany and museum director François Mathey in particular broke over this exhibition because of the way that Mathey seemingly wrote Restany's influence on artistic collectives and contestatory art out of his exhibition. Brigitte Gilardet, "François Mathey's Programme, through the Eyes of Three Art Critics," *Critique d'art* 42 (Winter 2013/Spring 2014), https://critiquedart.revues.org/13593, accessed September 8, 2016.

56 Daniel Buren, "Une exposition exemplaire," *Flash Art* 35–36, (September–October 1972): 24.

57 Daniel Buren, "Une exposition exemplaire," 24.

58 Daniel Buren, "Une exposition exemplaire," 24.

59 Catherine Millet and Daniel Buren, "Esquiver les allégeances," *Art Press* 219 (December 1996): 63. Additionally, he was never interested in collaborating with the Art Workers Coalition in its campaign against museums because he refused to believe that artists and institutions formed two opposing blocs. Buren also never participated in the Front des Artistes Plasticiens, the group that organized much of the resistance to 72-72.

60 Crimp, "Ends of Painting," 87.

61 Daniel Buren, *Photos-souvenirs, 1965–1988* (Villeurbanne: Art édition, 1988), 3.

62 Buren, *Photos-souvenirs*, 3–4.

63 Buren, *Photos-souvenirs*, 4.

64 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). In particular, Jay discusses these themes in chapters 5, 6, 8, and 10, which focus on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Guy Debord, Louis Althusser, and François Lyotard, among others.

65 Sarah Wilson, *The Visual World of French Theory: Figurations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 158. In 1978 Lyotard published his first essay on Buren, in which he responded to several recent texts by Buren, notably his 1971 essay "Limites critiques," while integrating a discussion of the Collectif d'Art Sociologique, which is the subject of chapter 4 of this book.

66 Jean-François Lyotard, "Faire voir les invisibles, ou: Contre le realisme," in *Daniel Buren, les couleurs: Sculptures les formes: Peintures* (Paris: Le Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1981), 26.

67 Buren indicated that the positions could be changed by a curator as long as they were never displayed inside the museum.

68 Buren, *Mot à mot*, § A47.

69 Benjamin Buchloh, "The Museum and the Monument: Daniel Buren's *Les couleurs / Les formes*," in *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry*, 120.

70 Buchloh, "Museum and the Monument," 124.

71 Benjamin Buchloh, "Formalism and Historicity: Changing Concepts in American and European Art since 1945," in *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1977), 100.

72 Buchloh, "Museum and the Monument," 132.

73 As with the other artists about whom Lyotard wrote, he and Buren had developed a friendship at the beginning of the 1970s. Buren had invited him to the "Colloquium on the Semiotics of Painting" in Urbino in 1973. Conversation with Daniel Buren, June 26, 2018.

74 Lyotard, "Faire voir les invisibles," 26.

75 The paintings under which he mounted his striped canvases were Francis Picabia, *L'œil cacodylate*, 165 × 133.5 cm; Theo Van Doesburg, *Peinture pure*, 136 × 86.4 cm; Maurice Utrillo, *Le jardin de Montmagny*, 63 × 85.5 cm; František Kupka, *Plans verticaux I*, 156 × 99.5 cm; and Amedeo Modigliani, *Tête rouge*, 64.5 × 53.1 cm.

76 Daniel Buren, "Les formes: Peinture 1977 (Indications à lire comme description d'un travail à voir)," in *Les couleurs*: *Sculptures Les Formes: peintures* (Paris: Le Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1981), 62.

77 Buren, "Les formes."

78 Buren, "Les formes."

79 Lyotard, "Faire voir les invisibles," 28.

80 Lyotard, "Faire voir les invisibles," 28.

81 Buchloh, "The Museum and the Monument," 123.

82 Daniel Buren, Armelle Auris, Christine Buci-Gluksmann, Jean-Louis Déotte, Mathieu, Jacques Poulain, and Thierry Mazellier, "L'atelier de Daniel Buren: La réalité de la peinture, c'est le lieu," *Rue Descartes* 5/6 (November 1992): 250.

83 François Mathey, "L'art decorative, pour copie conforme," in *Daniel Buren / Entrevue: Conversations avec Anne Baldassari* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs / Flammarion, 1987), 88.

84 Mathey, "L'art decorative," 88.

85 Rudolf Sagmeister, Eckhard Schneider, and Daniel Buren, "Questions à Daniel Buren," in *Daniel Buren: Les couleurs traversées = Arbeiten vor Ort* (Cologne: Walther Koenig, 2001). It is notable also that in 1960 Buren received his diploma from the school of the Métiers d'art, where he studied painting and decoration, which was considered the most liberal of the disciplines at the time. In 1965, a commission to decorate the Grapetree Bay hotel on the Virgin Islands with mosaics led him to think about the relationship between art as architectural installation for the first time, which, Besson argues, can be perceived in the in situ works for which he would later become known. Christian Besson, "Naissance de Daniel Buren," in *Daniel Buren: Catalogue raisonné chronologique, tome II, 1964-1966*, ed. Annick Boisnard (Le Bourget: Ed. 11-28-48 / Villeneuve d'Ascq: Musée d'art moderne Lille Métropole, 2000), 6–22.

86 Daniel Buren, "Exhibition d'une exposition," in *Les écrits (1965-1990), tome I*, 261–262.

87 Christoph Behnke, "The Curator as Arts Administrator? Comments on Harald Szeemann and the Exhibition 'When Attitudes Become Form,'" *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 40 (July 2010): 28.

88 Rachel Haidu is particularly attentive to the presence and interpretation of bureaucracy in Broodthaers's work. Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 111–112, and passim.

89 Haidu, *Absence of Work*, 239–240.

90 Haidu, *Absence of Work*, 251.

91 Haidu, *Absence of Work*, 266–268.

92 Daniel Buren, "Interview with André Parinaud," in *Les écrits (1965-1990), tome I*, 38.

93 The Cabala reference appears in Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 88: "As the Cabala warns, one becomes a ghost in playing a ghost."

1   The bar was eventually recovered in 2006 for a retrospective, also titled *Unlimited Painting*. Presumably it was in the possession of René Denizot, the curator of *A Painting Exhibition*, during the three intervening decades.

2   André Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail* (Gent: Herbert-Gewad, 1982), § 6. A recent detailed formal analysis of the bars can be found in Matt Jolly, "The Barred Colors of André Cadere," *October* 144 (Spring 2013): 115–148.

3   Also participating in the show were Bernd Lohaus, Brice Marden, and Agnes Martin.

4   Conflicts between Cadere and Buren seem to have started when Buren protested Cadere's inclusion in an exhibition in Duerle following a symposium on "Art and Its Cultural Contexts" in Brussels in 1973. Buren was irritated by Cadere's practice of showing his work uninvited at other artists' exhibitions, which would have included *Unlimited Painting / A Painting Exhibition* only a few weeks earlier. Cadere began a sustained polemic against Buren and others, the height of which came in 1975, when Cadere printed and distributed a text to art-world figures at *Europalia 75*. He titled the text "Waterloo" in reference both to the festival location's proximity to the town of Waterloo and to its history as the site of Napoleon Bonaparte's final defeat as he attempted to solidify power and expand his empire. In the text, Cadere accuses all of the artists who were sanctioned to exhibit, which included Buren, as being "official artists of the Common Market" and accused them of being "Little Napoleons, the dictators of Art in France" that "are today so frequently used that, according to the logic of things, they have arrived here at the limit of Waterloo." This limit, as he specified, was the artists' dependence on the museum as a site for exhibiting their works. Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 26.

5   As evidenced in chapter 2, Cadere's clean opposition here is not completely appropriate, given that in numerous cases during Cadere's lifetime, Buren attached his stripes to surfaces outside arts institutions, and in several cases he affixed them to surfaces that were defined by their mobility. Notable examples of the latter are his 1968 exhibition *Homme/Sandwich* and his 1975 New York City exhibition *Seven Ballets in Manhattan*, although in both cases the mobility could be said to be "dependent" on the social expectation of the surfaces, given that their functions were to circulate, in the first as spaces of advertising and in the second as protest placards. Magda Radu suggests that Cadere even borrowed his idea of circulating beyond the gallery from Buren. Magda Radu, "André Cadere," in *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere*, ed. Magda Radu (Bucharest: National Museum of Contemporary Art, 2011), 65.

6   Michel Claura and Seth Siegelaub, "L'art conceptuel," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 289.

7   In a recent roundtable Sarkis shared his opinion that Cadere had wanted to participate in *A Painting Exhibition* officially, but that he "didn't stand any chance" because, according to Sarkis, he did not get along with them. "Sarkis, Conversation with Dinah Bird and François Michaud," in Radu, *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere*, 429.

8   Radu, "André Cadere," 63–80; Ioana Vlasiu, "Andrei Cădere: The Exercise of Marginality before 1967," in Radu, *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere*, 133.

9   Radu, "André Cadere," 90.

10 Radu, "André Cadere," 72.

11 Radu, "André Cadere," 72; André Cadere and Sylvère Lotringer, "Boy with Stick," *Schizo-culture: The Book*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext[e] Foreign Agents Series, 2013), 144.

12 Sanda Agalides, "Cold War Cadere," in Radu, *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere*, 195.

13 Cadere and Lotringer, "Boy with Stick," 140; Radu, "André Cadere," 76; Vlasiu, "Andrei Cădere," 138–139.

14 Radu, "André Cadere," 72–73. Prior to Radu's book, none of the English- and French-language scholarship on Cadere provided more than passing reference to Cadere's life and career before he moved to Paris. This division between East and West is evident in the bifurcated structure of Radu's book, in which the Romanian authors concern themselves with filling out his biographical and artistic profile from the years before he entered the history of the West, while the last section, consisting of conversations with artists who met him after he moved to Paris, makes no mention of his life and work before his move to Paris.

15 André Cadere and Lynda Morris, "André Cadere. Talking with Lynda Morris," in Alexander van Grevenstein, Astrid Ihle, Fabrice Hergott, and Karola Krässlin, *André Cadere: Peinture sans fin* (Cologne: W. König, 2007), 33. Cadere's conflictual engagements with art institutions are frequently narrated in terms of suffering. Christian Boltanski said of the *Documenta* incident that it demonstrated the "horror of the artworld. . . . It is a good example of the cruelty of that world. He was accepted only on the condition that he suffer, that he make his way there as though on a kind of pilgrimage, that he beg, in a way, to be exhibited." Radu, "André Cadere," 75. This sentiment is echoed by Sarkis, who said of Cadere's encounter with *A Painting Exhibition*, "he developed himself with an enormous amount of suffering," in which he analogizes this suffering with expressionism. "Sarkis, Conversation with Dinah Bird and François Michaud," 429. Similarly, Agalides argues that it is important that Cadere is sometimes the victim of his stratagems, that he remains visible even as he stumbles. She calls him a trickster in the sense that he is "homeless and nomadic, absurd, mischievous and hoaxy." Agalides, "Cold War Cadere," 217.

16 As told by Peter Jacobi. See Ioana Vlasiu, "Andrei Cădere," 139–140.

17 Agalides, "Cold War Cadere," 195–196.

18 Agalides, "Cold War Cadere," 204.

19 Radu, "André Cadere," 76.

20 Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail,* § 13, cited in Radu, "André Cadere," 76.

21 Matei Călinescu and Ion Vianu, *Amintiri în dialog* (Jassy, Romania: Polirom, 1998), 75, cited in Radu, "André Cadere," 80.

22 If the chosen colors were red, purple, and green, the resulting bar would be composed of either four or seven spools of each color organized in every possible combination of three, to produce a bar that was twelve or twenty-one times as long as its diameter. Were the bar red, purple, green, and black, each color would appear

five, six, or thirteen times in as many permutational possibilities to compose a bar that was twenty, twenty-four, or fifty-two times as long as it was thick.

23 André Cadere, *Présentation d'un travail, utilisation d'un travail* (Hamburg: Edition Lebeer Hossmann / Brussels: MTL, 1974).

24 While this is what Cadere claimed, it is worth noting that for his April 1975 exhibition at Berlin's Folker Skulima gallery, he chose to demonstrate this principle with a display that would seem to undermine it. For this show he lined six bars up against a wall, each composed of two colors that were the same, with the third color changing to one of the six remaining colors. The two fixed colors were red and yellow, and the first bar on display reconfigured the colors of the German flag: red, yellow, and black. Although it is not possible to determine his intentions from his color choice, as part of the same exhibition, Cadere chose to demonstrate that the bar "is independent from the wall as support" by leaning one against the Berlin Wall. The juxtaposition would seem to elevate his critique of immobility to a new level in presenting a contrast between the bad stasis of not just art, but walls generally, and the good freedom of mobility promoted by his own work.

25 Cadere, *Présentation d'un travail*, n.p.

26 Daniel Buren and Michel Parmentier, *Propos délibérés* (Lyon: Arts Edition, 1991), 46.

27 Rosalind Krauss, "LeWitt in Progress," *October* 6 (Autumn 1978): 56–60. Thanks to Bernard Marcelis for telling me about this connection. It is noted in Béatrice Gross, ed., *Sol LeWitt: Wall Drawings 1968–2007* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2012), 79.

28 Benjamin Buchloh and Lawrence Weiner, "Conversation with Lawrence Weiner," in *Lawrence Weiner*, ed. Alexander Alberro (London: Phaidon, 1998), 19.

29 Cadere, *Présentation d'un travail*, 14.

30 Cadere and Lotringer, "Boy with Stick," 150.

31 Cadere, *Présentation d'un travail*, 5.

32 Ghislain Mollet-Viéville et al., "Portrait of a Wooden Bar," in Radu, *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere*, 410.

33 Mollet-Viéville et al., "Portrait of a Wooden Bar," 421.

34 Cadere, *Présentation d'un travail*, 14.

35 Cadere and Morris, "André Cadere," 27.

36 Bernard Marcelis, "From Round Wooden Staff to Constellation," in van Grevenstein et al., *André Cadere: Peinture sans fin*, 73.

37 Cadere and Morris, "André Cadere," 23.

38 Several months before the opening of the heavily publicized and contentious *72/72 Douze ans d'art contemporaine en France* exhibition at the Grand Palais, Cadere participated in the Salon de Pâques at the Akademia Raymond Duncan in Paris, where he exhibited a bar atop a heat radiator that was exactly its same length. Writing about his participation in the salon, he wrote, "My idea was to show that a work that is independent in relation to the institutional cultural structures can be shown anywhere, in a circuit completely different and even contrary to that of the great official pomp of the Grand Palais." Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 2.

39 Cadere, *Présentation d'un travail*, 11.

40 For the influence of Magritte on Broodthaers, see Haidu, *Absence of Work*.

41 Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 20–22.

42 Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, 31.

43 Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, 44.

44 André Cadere, "Lettres à Yvon Lambert," in André Cadere, Jean-Pierre Criqui, Cornelia Lauf, and Bernard Marcelis, *André Cadere: All Walks of Life* (New York: Institute for Contemporary Art, PS 1 Museum / Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1992), 21.

45 André Cadere et al., "Rôle et situation sociale de l'artiste," *ArTitudes International* 3 (December 1971–January 1972): 5–8.

46 This gallery changed the numeral in its name for every exhibition to indicate the reciprocal relationship between the work show and the identity of the gallery itself. In total, the numbers ran 1–42 before it closed.

47 Mollet-Viéville et al., "Portrait of a Wooden Bar," 415.

48 Mollet-Viéville et al., "Portrait of a Wooden Bar," 415.

49 Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 4.

50 Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 4.

51 Agalides, "Cold War Cadere," 207.

52 Ida Biard, "La Galerie des Locataires et French Window, ou ces aspets du travail des artistes aujourd'hui" (master's thesis, Université de Paris I, 1974). Biard wrote her master's thesis on the subject of her gallery. In it she emphasizes the distinction between reality and reproduction. In particular she gives prominence to a lengthy quote from a 1973 edition of Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology*, in which he uses the characters from William Wyler's film *The Collector* (1965). In the film, Lévi-Strauss argues, there is a total inversion of values in which the hero obsesses over natural beauty—insects and pretty girls—while contemporary taste for artificial things is symbolized by a student who lives only through books because the artworks she learns to value are too expensive. False taste, he says, satisfies itself with reproductions in place of the immediacy of reality (though it is perhaps ironic that the anthropologist fails to mention that the hero's preference for natural beauty is also shown to be perverted, as his "collecting" proclivities turn out to be those of a serial killer). For Biard, the lessons in this reading are Marxist: "It is important, today, to show at all levels of human activity, the uselessness of privatization, of possession, which have become subjects of life and the categories in which it is inscribed. To persuade man of the intentional spiritual lie of private property, to show him the logic of the collectivization of the means of existence (food, housing, clothing . . .) will bring the end to the economy of consummation, of profit, of capital and will be the beginning of the human economy. This collective use of all the means of production and of existence will permit the realization of life—as creative work—art. Everything that is hoarded in man in the conscious form of the proprietor (small and large), and which Marx rejects under the name of 'Moloh' [juggernaut] will be put aside, and then only will man be that free being to which he aspires. From this attitude follows all my activity called The Galerie des Locataires and French Window."

53 Ivana Bago, "A Window and a Basement: Negotiating Hospitality at *La Galerie des*

Locataires and *Podroom—The Working Community of Artists*," *ARTMargins* 1, no. 2–3 (June–October 2012): 140.

54 Bago, "Window and a Basement," 125.

55 Bago, "Window and a Basement," 144.

56 Cadere and Lotringer, "Boy with Stick," 143; Bago, "Window and a Basement," 127.

57 Ida Biard's Galerie des Locataires sent out exhibition announcements in advance, alerting people to Cadere's guerrilla exhibition at the Adami exhibition.

58 André Cadere, "Le 22 novembre 1973 la Galerie des Locataires a presenté un travail de Cadere dans le vernissage d'Adami à la Galerie Maeght," *Flash Art* 44–45 (January 1974): 25.

59 Cadere, "Presentation of a Work," 10.

60 See note 4.

61 André Cadere, "Documentation of the exhibition *Six pièces de Cadere*," *+ - 0 4* (1974): 12–13.

62 Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 5.

63 Cadere demonstrated the importance of the regularity of the layout of this style of invitation in a typed and handwritten note for a 1978 show at the Galerie Vega. In the note he instructs that the unidentified address can fill in the dates and times that are convenient, but that all alignment and spacing between blocks of information must be respected so as to form neat rows and columns.

64 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, 220–223.

65 Simon Neuenschwander, "André Cadere—L'incompatibilité," in Radu, *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere*, 258.

66 It is possible that Cadere singled out Andre not only because of the museum's recent acquisition, but also as a reprisal for the role Andre played in the conflict in Duerle in July 1973 (see note 4). The conflict arose over Cadere's participation in an exhibition that had to be reconceived due to lack of funding. The Wide White Space and Paul Maenz galleries were incensed at his participation, according to Cadere, and incited a polemic against him. Cadere notes that Andre, who was represented by both galleries, sent him numerous postcards asking him to desist in defending himself, although it is not clear in what that defense consisted. Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 7; Sophie Richard, *Unconcealed: The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967–1977: Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collection*, ed. Lynda Morris (London: Ridinghouse, 2009), 148.

67 Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 31. It is not exactly correct to say that Carl Andre's works were fully dependent on architecture. While it is true that most of his works were installed in, and therefore dependent on, architectural support, Andre composed numerous works beyond the bounds of the gallery, and though his works were often conceived in regards to a site, Andre did not see them as being site specific, but, rather, argued that they could be transposed anywhere. Carl Andre and James Meyer, "There Is No Such Thing as the Ideal Space," in *Cuts: Texts 1959–2004* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 185–187.

68 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). While Cadere's equation of patronage in the Renaissance with the contemporary market economy offers a polemical flourish that allows him to define autonomy according to an absolute relationship to the criteria of space and funding, doing so ignores the historical distinctions that Bürger has been careful to outline. The degree to which Andre and Renaissance artists benefited from dependency-inducing patronage systems was determined by the control that the patron exercised over the artistic product and the social function it was intended to serve. While Bürger argues that the courtly art of the Renaissance saw the first step toward the "emancipation of art" as the artist became an individual figure possessed of an artistic identity, he observes a distinct break between art commissioned to reflect royal power and the experimental portrayals of "bourgeois self-understanding" sold on the free market. Further, he argues that while the avant-garde accepts bourgeois aestheticism, it rejects the idea that art should be autonomous from society. While Bürger noted that the historical development of artistic autonomy is generally ignored so as to argue that art is *essentially* autonomous, Cadere collapsed historical periods in support of his argument that no patronized art has ever been autonomous.

69 Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), cited in Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 11.

70 Lynda Morris has suggested an interpretation of Cadere's *Space and Politics* project that emphasizes a sympathy he had with Carl Andre. In 1976 a controversy erupted over the Tate's 1972 purchase of Andre's *Equivalent VIII* (1966), which was composed of 120 firebricks and portrayed by media as a scam perpetrated by the artist. Morris argues that in response to this misplacement of responsibility on the artist, rather than on the museum that purchased the work, Cadere wished to highlight the fact that it is arts institutions, and their purchasing power, that influence the meaning given to a work of art. "Lynda Morris on André Cadere," recorded June 6, 2013, Artists Space, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NHZ 70sOALY.

71 Cadere and Morris, "André Cadere," 23.

72 Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, § 37.

73 Cadere, *Histoire d'un travail*, §1.

74 Maurice Blanchot, "Everyday Speech," *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987): 14.

75 Cadere, cited in Bernard Marcelis, "André Cadere: The Strategy of Displacement," in Cadere et al., *André Cadere: All Walks of Life*, 68.

76 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 97.

77 Maurice Blanchot, *Les intellectuels en question* (Paris: Fourbis, 1996), 60, cited in Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 175.

78 Bernard Borgeaud, email message to author, January 25, 2018.

79 Karen L. Bird, "Racist Speech or Free Speech? A Comparison of the Law in France and the United States," *Comparative Politics* 32, no. 4 (July 2000): 399–418. Unlike in the United States, where we are accustomed to freedom of speech laws

protecting the rights of actors across ideological spectra, French law emphasized racial equality over freedom of speech in the aftermath of the Vichy regime and in consideration of the increasing racial diversity of the country during the post–World War II era. As Bird notes, however, it is not clear whether the law was designed primarily to promote equality or public order.

80 Agalides, "Cold War Cadere," 197–198; Mollet-Viéville et al., "Portrait of a Wooden Bar," 415–416, 420–421.

81 Cadere and Morris, "André Cadere," 17.

82 Agalides, "Cold War Cadere," 200.

83 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1.

84 Jean-Pierre Criqui, "Meditations on a Round Bar of Wood (and Several Other Matters)," in Cadere et al., *André Cadere: All Walks of Life*, 139.

85 Cadere and Morris, "André Cadere," 35.

86 Cadere and Morris, "André Cadere," 41.

87 Cadere and Morris, "André Cadere," 39.

88 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8–20 and passim; Michel Foucault, "14 January 1976," in *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003), 29–30. Rorty says that Foucualt is more of an ironist than a liberal in his acknowledgment of the factors that play into establishing vast discursive systems of power, an argument that the pervasiveness of this system makes it impossible to escape. At the same time, Rorty wants to adopt Foucault for his own liberalist cause because Rorty himself does not see any need to escape the system, but only to improve it through the same type of "ironic" recognitions of contingency that Foucault outlines.

89 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 51.

90 André Cadere and Claude Bouyeyre, "Cadere," *Opus International* 47 (November 1973): 63.

91 Cadere and Bouyeyre, "Cadere," 63.

92 Cadere and Lotringer, "Boy with Stick," 144.

93 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 61–62.

94 These early Op paintings were, as Criqui describes, presented like separate puzzle pieces that indicated indecision. This early form could also be interpreted as an invitation to the viewer to participate in the work by completing the puzzle. It also presages his eventual renunciation of artistic intentionality through the modularity of his construction strategy with the round bars of wood. Criqui, "Médiatations sur une barre de bois," 137.

95 Cadere and Bouyeyre, "Cadere," 63.

96 Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, 17.

97 Cadere and Bouyeyre, "Cadere," 63.

98 Cornelia Lauf, "Tactic of the Margin," in Cadere et al., *André Cadere: All Walks of Life*, 106.

99 Maurice Blanchot, "La rue," in *Écrits politiques, 1953-1993* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 180–181.

1 Hervé Fischer, interview with the author, July 19, 2016, Montreal.

2 Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thénot, "Manifesto 3," March 1976, reproduced in Hervé Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique* (Tournai, Belgium: Casterman, 1977), 34.

3 Fischer, interview with the author.

4 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 107; Fischer, interview with the author.

5 Hervé Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée* (Paris: Balland, 1981), 72.

6 In the same year, Fischer published a book consisting of rubber-stamp art that he had accumulated from nearly two hundred artists, and essays by himself, concrete poet Jiri Valoch, and Fluxus artist Ken Friedman. Hervé Fischer, *Art et communication marginale: Tampons d'artistes* (Paris: Balland, 1974).

7 In 1974 the La Bertesca gallery in Gênes, Italy, exhibited the work, which has since been collected by the Centre Pompidou.

8 Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée*, 70.

9 Bernard Teyssèdre and Hervé Fischer, "Entretien avec Hervé Fischer," *ArTitudes International* 4 (April–May 1973): 23.

10 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 109.

11 Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée*, 65.

12 Bernard Teyssèdre and Hervé Fischer, "La déchirure des œuvres d'art comme pédagogie: Dialogue entre Hervé Fischer et Bernard Teyssèdre," *ArTitudes International* 12/14 (July–September 1974): 45.

13 Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée*, 71.

14 Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée*, 73.

15 Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée*, 73.

16 Teyssèdre and Fischer, "La déchirure des œuvres d'art comme pédagogie," 45.

17 Sophie Duplaix, ed., *Hervé Fischer et l'art sociologique/and Sociological Art* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2017), 12.

18 Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 148–149.

19 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 114.

20 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 387.

21 Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée*, 69.

22 Hervé Fischer, "Sociological Art as Utopian Strategy," *The Fox* 3 (1976): 167.

23 Fred Forest, interview with the author, July 20, 2010, Paris.

24 Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 19.

25 Bourdieu, *Photography*, 19.

26 Bourdieu, *Photography*, 25, 47.

27 Bourdieu, *Photography*, 34, 57.

28 Originally, Forest had hoped to publish the work on the front page of the newspaper, surrounded by the text of articles, as though the work were itself a news story. Ultimately, however, the piece took the form of an advertisement, as Forest was

required to purchase space that was relegated to the arts section of the newspaper. Forest, interview with the author.

29

30 Jean Duvignaud, "Un pirate," in *Art sociologique*, ed. Fred Forest (Paris: 10–18, 1977), 15.

Duvignaud, "Un pirate," 15.

31 Fred Forest, "Aux 'players' du Space-Media," 1972, Fred Forest Archive, Inathèque.

32 Vilèm Flusser, "Fred Forest ou la destruction des points de vue établis," in *Fred Forest, un pionnier de l'art vidéo à l'art sur l'internet: Art sociologique, esthétique de la communication et art de la commutation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 14, emphasis in the original.

33 Jean Duvignaud, "Sur 150 centimètres carrés de papier journal," *Le Monde*, May 3, 1972.

34 Duvignaud, "Sur 150 centimètres carrés de papier journal."

35 Fred Forest, "Projet de création artistique en vue de la réalisation de 'space-medium' dans la presse," 1970, Fred Forest Archive, Inathèque.

36 Evelyne Cohen, *La télévision sur la scène du politique: Un service public pendant les Trente Glorieuses* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 27.

37 Philippe Poirrier, "Cultural Practices during the 1960s and 1970s," in *Culture et action chez Georges Pompidou*, ed. Jean-Claude Groshens and Jean-François Sirinelli (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 132.

38 Cited in Cohen, *La télévision sur la scène du politique*, 28.

39 Forest also performed this action on January 11, 1972, on the radio station Europe n. 1 in a work he titled *Live Waves to Fill on 348 Meters*. The radio diffusion also consisted of an attempt to create a void, but, unlike the television intervention, the invitation to mail in one's response was preceded by a moment of silence. Given the sonic nature of these radio interventions, then, it would seem that Forest considered that television was sufficiently dominated by the image that his message could be communicated without the elimination of sound. *Live Waves* was later repeated on France-Culture (June 9, 1972), France-Inter, and Jovem Pam in Bresil (1973).

40 Forest, "Projet de création artistique."

41 Forest met McLuhan in 1972, and McLuhan wrote a short piece, "Uncle Fred Is Here," in support of Forest's work with telephones. The piece did not speak directly to Forest's work, yet Forest reproduced it widely in his various exhibition announcements and catalogues.

42 For a discussion of hot and cold media, see "Media Hot and Cold," in Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 22–31.

43 Ricardo Mendes, "Bienal de São Paulo 1973—Flusser como curador: Uma experiência inconclusa," *Ghrebh* 11 (March 2008): 152. Written in the catalogue for the eleventh biennial in 1971, these were the objectives that would continue to influence programming in 1973.

44 Anonymous, "Branco invade sp e todos acabam na Prisao," *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio), November 8, 1973, B5.

45 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 10.

46 Pierre Bourdieu, "L'opinion publique n'existe pas," *Les temps modernes* 318 (January 1972): 1292.

47 Jean-Marc Poinsot, "Les enquêtes de J. P. Thénot: Art ou sociologie?" *Opus International* 55 (April 1975): 36.

48 Jean-Luc Pradel, "Le point de vue d'Opus," *Opus International* 55 (April 1975): n.p.

49 "Les champs sociaux de Thénot et l'intervention sur le message de Giovanelli," *Nice matin*, September 5, 1977.

50 Pierre Poch, "Le perpignanais, matériau d'art," *Sud* [Perpignan], September 20, 1976.

51 Jean-François Lyotard, "Notes préliminaires sur la pragmatique des œuvres," *Critiques* 378 (November 1978): 1080–1081.

52 Jean-Paul Thénot, "Pratique artistique et interventions sociologiques," in Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thénot, *Collectif Art Sociologique: Théorie—Pratique—Critique* (Paris: Musée Galliera, 1975), 61.

53 Thénot, "Pratique artistique," 61.

54 Jean-Paul Thénot, "Identités," *ArTitudes International* 15/17 (October–December 1974): 19.

55 Thénot, "Notes sur des interventions sociologiques," 67.

56 Thénot, "Identités."

57 The examples that Bourdieu provides throughout his essay indicate that he is motivated to demonstrate that polls do not accurately represent the working class. Bourdieu shows that the working class cannot be linked as a whole to right- or left-wing politics. Additionally, he indicates that opinion polls have the tendency of pigeonholing the working class by setting up questions that will generate class-based responses. Bourdieu, "L'opinion publique n'existe pas," 1292–1309.

58 Bourdieu, "L'opinion publique n'existe pas," 1293.

59 Bourdieu, "L'opinion publique n'existe pas," 1294.

60 Poinsot, "Les enquêtes de J. P. Thénot," 35.

61 Poinsot, "Les enquêtes de J. P. Thénot," 38.

62 The works polled were *Apropos of Little Sister* (1911), *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), *Bottle Rack* (1914), *With Hidden Noise* (1916), *Fountain* (1917), *lhooq* (1919), *The Large Glass, or The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–1923), *Étant donnés . . .* (1946–1966), and a photograph of a man playing chess.

63 Jean-Paul Thénot, *Cent lectures de Marcel Duchamp: Ce sont les regardeurs qui font les tableaux*, 2nd ed. (Crisnée, Belgium: Yellow Now, 2006), 136.

64 Thénot cites Duchamp from an interview with Pierre Cabanne in which he spoke directly to this point: "It is a product with two poles; there is the pole of the one who makes the work and the pole of the one who looks at it. I give the one who looks as much importance as the one who looks at it" (38). Originally quoted from Marcel Duchamp and Pierre Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, Collection Entretiens (Paris: Belfond, 1967).

65 Jean Schuster, "Marcel Duchamp, vite," *Le Surréalisme* 2 (Spring 1957): 143.

66 Anonymous, "The Richard Mutt Case," *The Blind Man* 2 (May 1917): 5.

67 François Pluchart, "Lecture de Jean-Paul Thénot," in Thénot, *Cent lectures de Marcel Duchamp*, 138.

68 Pluchart, "Lecture de Jean-Paul Thénot," 138–139.

69 Anna Dezeuze, *The "Do-It-Yourself" Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 3.

70 Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thénot, "Collectif d'Art Sociologique," in Fischer, *Theorie de l'art sociologique*, 23–24.

71 Fischer, Forest, and Thénot, "Collectif d'Art Sociologique," 23–24.

72 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 63.

73 Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 45.

74 Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 67.

75 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 16.

76 Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thénot, "Tiers Front / Dritte Front / Third Front," n.d., Jean-Paul Thénot Archives, Jouy.

77 Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*, cited in Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 63.

78 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 106.

79 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 94.

80 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 97.

81 Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), cited in Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 6.

82 Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 18.

83 Fischer, Forest, and Thénot, "Tiers Front / Dritte Front / Third Front."

84 This project has had various names over the years. In *Cahier de l'École Sociologique Interrogative* 3 (May 1980), which was dedicated to the project, it was descriptively referred to as *Investigation-Animation-Revelation of a City to Itself*. At Fischer's 2017 retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, he called it *Three Neighborhoods in Question*.

85 According to Fischer, Forest and Thénot agreed to participate in the Perpignan project because they had not completed much work as a collective, but that he conceived of it and did nearly all of the groundwork. This included familiarizing himself with the city's social problems, obtaining agreement from the city's mayor, contacting local friends and the city newspaper, negotiating the budget, and enlisting the participation of his students from the École Nationale Supérieur des Arts Decoratifs, where he was teaching, and from the Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse, to bring the German students. The energy, creativity, and engagement, he says, came from the students. Email from Hervé Fischer, April 3, 2019.

86 Edgar Morin, *L'esprit du temps* (Paris : Grasset), 1962, tome 2, 25–26; Morin, *The Red and the White: Report from a French Village*, trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 255

87 Jeanne Haffner, *The View from Above: The Science of Social Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 59.

88 Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne: Tome premier l'espace social dans une grande cité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), 106.

89 Hervé Fischer, "Deux experiences d'art sociologique," *Cahier de l'École Sociologique Interrogative* 3 (May 1980). *Cahier* was a project that Fischer began after the group had disbanded. Thénot and Forest were not involved in the editing, and no articles by them appeared. This issue, the third, was the last to appear and was devoted to reproducing documentation from the project in Perpignan and a similar one undertaken three years later in the commune of Guebwiller.

90 Bertrand Flachot, "La ville," *Cahier de l'École Sociologique Interrogative* 3 (May 1980): 118; Groupe du Quartier Saint-Jacques, "Réflexions sur la pré-enquête," *Cahier de l'École Sociologique Interrogative* 3 (May 1980): 126.

91 Guy Debord, "Théorie de la dérive," *Internationale situationniste* 2 (December 1958): 19–23.

92 GRAV, *Une journée dans la rue*, flyer distributed in April 1966, Paris, Julio Le Parc Archives.

93 Michael Vater, "L'art sociologique: Communication," *Cahier de l'École Sociologique Interrogative* 3 (May 1980): 109.

94 Groupe du Quartier Saint-Jacques, "Réflexions sur la pré-enquête," 127.

95 Vater, "L'art sociologique," 109; Fischer, "Deux expériences d'art sociologique," 101.

96 Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 153.

97 Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 15.

98 Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, Otto Hahn, and Jean-Paul Thénot, "Entretien avec Otto Hahn," in *Problèmes et méthodes de l'art sociologique* (Paris: Galerie Mathias Fels, 1975), 7.

99 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 106.

100 The school was initially funded by the artist's own salaries. In 1977, they began charging annual fees to those who wished to remain on their mailing list and participate in their seminars.

101 Vilém Flusser, "L'irruption du techno-imaginaire," February 16, 1977, Jean-Paul Thénot Archives, Jouy.

102 Vilém Flusser, "On the End of History," in *Writings*, ed. Andreas Ströhl, trans. Erik Eisel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 143.

103 Flusser, "On the End of History," 143. The collective poses this question at the end of the Flusser document for his presentation at the École Sociologique Interrogative, Jean-Paul Thénot Archives, Jouy.

104 Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 156.

105 Marx, "German Ideology," 160–161.

106 Marx, "German Ideology," 162.

107 Hervé Fischer, "Le mythe de l'histoire," *Cahier de l'École Sociologique Interrogative* 2 (April 1980): 33–47.

108 Fischer, "Le mythe de l'histoire," 46.

109 Fischer, "Le mythe de l'histoire," 41.

110 Restany cited in Fischer, "Le mythe de l'histoire," 43. Original source text not provided.

111 Pierre Restany, "De l'art sociologique à l'esthétique de la communication, un humanisme de masse," in *Fred Forest, un pionnier de l'art vidéo à l'art sur l'internet*, 56; Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942), 331.

112 Restany, "De l'art sociologique à l'esthétique," 57.

113 Restany, "De l'art sociologique à l'esthétique," 44.

114 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 113.

115 Fischer, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, 14.

116 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 106.

117 André Breton, *Le revolver à cheveux blancs* (Paris: Éditions des Cahiers Libres, 1932), 9.

Conclusion

1 Nick Hewlett, "Class, Class Conflict and the Left: The Place of the People in French Politics," in *France since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. Emile Chabal (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2015), 69.

2 Hewlett, "Class, Class Conflict and the Left," 75.

3 Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 1–7, and passim.

4 Raymonde Moulin, *L'artiste, l'institution et le marché* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 99.

5 Moulin, *L'artiste, l'institution et le marché*, 101.

6 Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presse du Reel, 1998); Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 51–79.

7 Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 70.

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