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**ERRATA**

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I do not work with originals, or only with originals. But my contempt for originals is so profound that it restrains me from even copying the originals. Copies or duplicates are made to preserve the original in case it gets lost. My deep depreciation for the original even makes me desist from trying to prevent its disappearance through a copy. That means: I do not work with copies either.

And now it actually happened. The original manuscript and the galley proofs of this introduction got lost on their way from the printing shop to my desk. That is why I can only resort to recording fragments and notes to reconstruct what was to deconstruct the history of art.

What you are reading now is a sort of metaphysics of mistakes in printing, the rescue of the author from the ruins of the original. Purified misprints, not the work that has been purified from misprints, are the last historical-critical edition revised by the author. After all, history may be nothing else but a collection of misprints. Thus, an *œuvre* based on errata is systematically adequate to history, and therefore corresponds to the work of history.

Some minds, waiting in ambush at the road bends of a *feuilleton* or sharpening the instruments of their criticism there, will certainly ask about the sense and purpose of this book. It is universally known that the readers (of course, I am aware of the fact that it is rather presumptuous to use the plural number...) ally in this question to the critic. Therefore, we will not develop a theory proving that our art is the most beautiful one in the world.

The original idea was to write a book about an exhibition whose existence was uncertain. In the course of several weeks, objects, paintings, and installations were to be created in the museum

behind closed doors for an exhibition that, in the end, was not to take place. After the objects were finished and photographed all of them were to be destroyed. Only the photographic documents of these works were to be compiled in a catalogue so that not the exhibition itself but the catalogue of the exhibition would exist. But the simple doubtfulness and "unsecuredness" of the existential status of the exhibition would naturally have affected the authenticity of the catalogue itself. Not only the exhibition but also the catalogue would have smacked of fiction and simulation, even the existence of the exhibited or depicted works themselves would have been called in question. The ontological status of the works of art, of the exhibition, and the catalogue would have been doubtful. Through the dissolution of the ontological parameters of time and space all other remaining codes of art would have been affected. A catalogue without an exhibition about objects which do not exist would have been the ideal. As the history of art showed, especially that of the *avant-garde*, the dissolution of art in the work (for example the dematerialization of *Minimal Art* in *Conceptual Art*) is purely illusionistic, as long as it takes place in institutions (like galleries and museums). That is why the institutional dissolution of art is the next step to be taken. But because of this very fact the institutions have interdicted this step. "Without an exhibition there can be no catalogue", is the general rule with which the institutions questioned defend the traditional ontological status of art.

Under the compulsion to follow the conventional path from the errors of youth to the wisdom of old age, from the "exhibition soup" to the "catalogue spoon", I searched my way out by asking other artists to place their works at my disposal, thus

allowing me to illustrate my thoughts in the framework of a group exhibition. "Reaching the bounds of myself I stopped and bent over the abyss..." (Fernando Pessoa, *Faust*).

Naturally, I faced the problem which artists to select, which was neither without abyss nor without reason. Above all I did not strive for the usual confirmation of something known and therefore avoided famous names. Yet, the selected works of these relatively unknown artists ought to be at least equal in quality to the works of famous artists. Object A' should not only simulate object A, should not simply be of equal value, but should at the same time surpass and destroy it. The selected artists and their works should belong to those artistic schools, in the surroundings of which artists had become famous. The selected works, however, should speak for themselves, should neither be a ridiculous imitation nor a caricature of any other work or any other art trend. My private theoretical interest lies in the attempt to find works in which a style, an idea, a discourse flares up before being extinguished; I wanted to find works, better than the known ones, but overexposed in such a way that they nearly thrust the artistic school they represent into the darkness of the ridiculous. One might say that overexposed simulacra destroy the originals, because they are better than those. Once, however, the originals are destroyed, the simulacra can no longer exist, as they would refer to non-existent objects. The simulacra would adopt the existence of the originals, but at the same time would be something new and autonomous. Thus, simulacra of unknown originals would be created. By means of crossfading, the objects of the history of art would at the most shine through like ghosts. The originals would be pushed into the background by the copies and would become ghostly originals. In the end the whole history of art would become a ghostly funeral procession. The challenge lies in presenting contemporary art at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a corpse and, at the same time, reviving it or calling it into its very existence by an extremely creative audacity.

But this aesthetics of absence should also satisfy another challenge, that of obtaining the material of its production as far away as possible from the very place of the history of art, from the institution, i. e., the museum. The objects stored or used in cellars, showrooms, workshops, offices, and archives, etc.,

were to acquire a new meaning by altering their context. With the help of museum readymades works of art were to be created that would sabotage the museum itself as an institution of the history of art. The meaning of functional objects that were used for the representation of art history and presentation of works of art was to be completely redefined by alienating the use of these objects. Cultural readymades served to offend a symbolic order as it is represented by the centre of architectural communication of a museum. All selected artists were to work primarily with readymades to thus terminate the historically coded ontology of the work of art. Consequently, all artists had one thing in common: to destroy – by altering the contextual meaning of cultural utensils – the bourgeois ontology of the object, whose absolutizing and defense were the sole purpose of the history of art. The central, albeit somewhat veiled subject of this history-of-art production, is the absolutely bourgeois ontology of the object as manifested and consolidated in the history of art. It is the more profound problematic nature of the ontological status of the work of art that reveals the questions about the original, the reproduction, the readymade, the machine, the real, and simulation.

Reproduction, readymade, mechanical production, simulation, etc., are elements of a strategy aiming at accelerating the "semiotization" of art and at discharging art from the sphere of tangibility, i. e., placing the ontological category of the necessary elements behind that of the possible ones and claiming that the possibility is an ontological category at all. Applying the principle of possibility means to break through the cage of the real. Totalitarian ideologies consider the realm of necessity as real and existing. Anything that is real is therefore necessary. Objectivity is a double assertion: for objective reasons the real is said to be necessary and the necessary is explained by the objective compulsions of the real. Subjective power that finally wins over in reality and turns into reality gains objective validity through this ideology. That is why any ontological doctrine is a priori of use for totalitarian systems and is also predisposed to them. In totalitarian systems there is a tendency to pass the variable off as constant by designating the possible as impossible and the status quo as necessary. A simple momentary element reflecting only the sub-

jectivity of the dictators is presented as an absolute existence, as an indispensable and unchangeable necessity. In a basically totalitarian society art is therefore only tolerated as representation of the real, as it thus assists to assert that the mere transient power relations, the present balance of power, the existence of the respective ruling class as something unshakably, absolutely real. As a representation of the real (the way something is) art is a means of power. Those pottering at objects, persisting in handicraft construction methods, accepting only objects individually manufactured, want to suggest a proximity to what exists (and not to the sign or symbol). In order to feign even more convincingly the aura of the real, the process of manufacture is often moved to the countryside or to the intimacy of a remote studio. Being obliged to the existence of his objects the artist potters about thus serving the Power. The artists, however, who came on my invitation created the major part of their works publicly right in the museum with the handicraft and conceptual help of co-workers. This more or less industrial way of production has made transparent the process of artistic creativity and at the same time unveiled the art of its secrets. Moreover, by their public method of creation these artists have often offended the symbolic order on which the power of the institution, i. e., the museum, is based. Thus, it is part of the traditional convention that exhibitions take place in the museum, but on no account are the objects of the exhibition created there. However, the way history art is made, presented, and produced is best analyzed and demonstrated on the very spot of history itself by incorporating the place, i. e., the museum, where history is made. The set pieces lying scattered about in the museum and objects of the code of the representative culture form an excellent treasure trove for the representation of this code, as well as for its alienation and deconstruction. The mise-en-scène of history on the spot of history itself is art.

As Heidegger's philosophy clearly shows, art has always moved within the triangle of work, truth and being. The work relates to the concept of being, just as truth. Heidegger sums up the prerequisites of classical aesthetics: "In the artwork the truth of being has put itself to work." To Heidegger, truth means the "unhiddenness of being". In this sense, "the essence of art" can be defined as "truth putting itself

to work". A demand that already Hegel called into question. From this basic triad further ones such as work, creator (author), original can be deduced. Moreover, all of bourgeois society is based on it. "The object nature of the artwork" and "the concept of the original" are metaphysical disguises of the bourgeois notion of ownership. For this reason, all attacks on the object status of the artwork, on the myth of the original, all questioning of the concept of the author, as carried out by the most radical forms of anti-art – from Dada to action, media and concept art – are rightly rejected or marginalized under the guise of "repressive tolerance" and excluded from the art market. It is precisely the art market, however, that produces art history in bourgeois society. The classical ontological triple should be reworked today. Being should be replaced by the sign. The reference to being in the age of media, simulation, reproducibility must be eliminated. Like Foucault, we must pose the question of truth as a question of power: Truth, discourse and knowledge are not to be brought into relation with the object, reality or objects but with the power strategies enabling and producing them, providing them possible conditions as well as legitimizing and consolidating them.

By the dissolution of the ontological status of the works of art, by jeopardizing the codes of art, by breaking the rules of the firm system of art, and by defrosting the frozen elements and stylistic devices of art systems in order to make them circulate freely. The history of art as a formal development, that has become rigid in the exact definition of styles and epochs, is perforated by being stirred up. Rigid styles dissolve, formal elements contradict each other. Thus, an abstract expressionist painting by Pollock is commented with the minimalistic boxes by Judd which are wrapped up pop-art-like in packing material. Three contradicting styles presented side by side in the museum without arousing suspicion, without producing an alienating or disturbing effect, degenerate into a horrible heterogeneity once they are combined in one and the same painting. As historically separate aesthetic systems of signs and symbols lose their purity by this blending the dirty tricks of the game are demonstrated. The indifference which works of art show for each other in a museum, the naturalization they experience there, make us realize that the intellectual content and the ideological

position of a work of art do not matter after all. Artists' manifestoes, programs, ideologies are sales strategies, and strategies for the placement of products. Once the product is put into the place where the producer had wanted it to be right from the moment of its creation, that is in the museum or in a distinguished private collection, the artistic program has served its purpose and insofar it is justified that it has no effect in the museum any longer. That is why the artistically manifested, realized criticism addressed to the museum inevitably also ends up in the museum and thus becomes an accomplice of the system, that is of what it criticizes. Therefore artistic messages of different kinds are exhibited in a museum, the most contradictory ideologic positions hang peacefully side by side, since on the way to the museum the expressiveness of the work disappeared. On the way to the museum art gets lost.

The true contemporary apocalypse would be Fordism in culture. The marketing of artistic products as a code, the substitution of art through cultural codes has its point of departure in Fordism as well. Ford realized: "Today's machines, especially those of everyday life, used away from the workshop absolutely must have exchangeable parts so that they can be repaired by even the most untrained worker." (Moving Forward, 1930, p. 128). The cultural version reads: Cultural products consumed away from everyday life, that is, without knowledge and no possibility of control, must be absolutely exchangeable so that they can be consumed by every untrained viewer. Ford's admonition is aimed at the machine built so that the single parts can be exchanged without the worker having to understand the total context. This is precisely what is happening in the cultural colonialization through our present cultural establishment. The consumer becomes able to consume single cultural products that are exchangeable clichés coded as culture, without understanding anything (about art). Inversely, cultural products are put together out of simple, "exchangeable parts", set pieces. The cultural landscape carries the stamp of exchangeable set pieces. The exchangeable single parts are simplified by the coding. The coding of culture transforms artistic products in exchangeable commodities.

The museum takes care of passing on certain data

and certain codes, by selecting only certain works of art. As any other history the history of art is thus determined by the particular structure of Power selecting only those data, codes, and works convenient to it. The structure of Power controls the way how these data are passed on. These hierarchies are modified by the casual approach to the historical elements of the history of art. An open conception of the development of art is set against the claim for absoluteness of history-of-art statements, or even against the absoluteness of the art claim. New works of art arise from the already existing art and culture and from cultural readymades. New works of art, new open structures arise from already known elements of stylistic nature, from already known materials of culture, from traditional elements of the museum presentation of history of art (e.g., show case, socle) by mixing them with elements of other systems of signs and symbols, art systems like architecture, or everyday systems like boutiques. Thus, not only do these works escape traditional systems of value, but also do common elements become apparent, as these systems of value or of signs and symbols are subverted. The detection of these common elements cruelly hurts the self-assurance of art. For instance, galleries are just like boutiques. They have the same strategies of display and presentation, also the same architecture. These considerations take a social development into account, whose existence can only be successfully denied by reactionary obscurantism. The industrialization of nature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not balk at the intellectual production due to the immense reproduction technology and the almost ubiquitous use of media for all events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. "Consciousness industry" was once the slogan for this development. The cultural industrialization has also turned the intellectual products into mass readymades. Insofar the artist who tries to tell the truth about his time may operate with history-of-art elements as readymades, so to speak as a readymade in the readymade or as a meta-readymade, as Duchamp used to do with elements of the history of industry. All of the artists selected work in an area in which the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath provided the foil. Only the solutions are different.

Fiction is passed off as a fact, but this is rarely true of the opposite: fact as fiction. In the same way as stories are told, that is without revealing that fiction

also forms the fact, history is made in every society. It belongs to the inventory of the political ontology not to present objects as effects of grammar, but to pass language off as a mirror of reality. But whoever has the present and the current theoretical structures in mind knows that "words and objects" (W. v. O. Quine) can no longer be distinctly separated as the plastic surgery of the idealism tries to make us believe.

The formulation of truth and of authenticity, that was based on this clear separation of language and world, has collapsed since it became clear to what an extent the discourse of the language was interwoven with the texture of the facts, to what extent the description of the world also served the construction of the world.

But the nightmares of history are part of the style of the narration itself; there is a connection between the way a society has made its history and stories are told.

One could paraphrase Wittgenstein and assert that imagining a story means imagining a society in which the one story is told and not the other.

A new form of story telling and story making can be introduced only after the history is torn to pieces and dispossessed. The relation between word and object, between the symbolic and the real, between descriptive subject and the object-described can no longer be dissolved unilaterally. Narration and Power, fiction and fact, story telling and history making mix within the texture of the real and within the real of the text. Thus, in the same way societies make history or stories are told, every work of art alters the history of art as the artist tries to enter his name in it: The one who makes art, wants to write the history of art. But which Power decides whose name to enter? Which Power prescribes and alters? Which Power makes art and the history of art? Which Power says what art is and who makes art? Which Power decides what art should tell? Who is Clio, the Muse of history? The styles of the history of art, styles of narrations, texts, discourses of Power, that produce a subtext and push another discourse into the background. In this exhibition it is not the question of truth but the question of Power that is posed to art. Which Power legitimates a random discourse as art? Is not this Power represented by the institutions of the state itself, like in the domains of medicine and legislature?

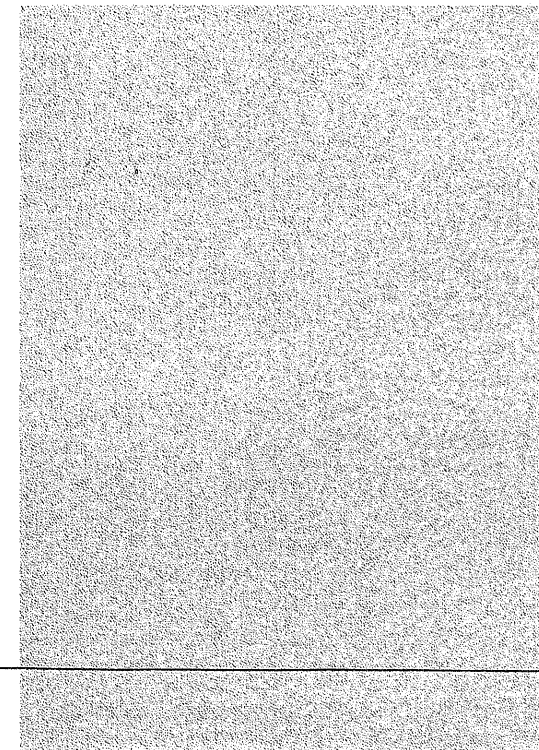
The group exhibition in question exhibits the forms of representation, presentation, reference, and exhibition with a selection of six types of artists representing different styles, media, and nations. It no longer only addresses the aesthetic and ethical questions of art. By the selection of the artists and works (sculptures, furniture, paintings, products, photographs, and installations) the question about the forms of discourse of art, about the forms of exhibition and presentation of art becomes a central one. Art is integrated into a configuration of texts, in which it is read, conveyed, and assessed as a text. The styles of the history of art, its forms and methods, eventually become readymades themselves. Six famous theoreticians in art and thus six typical manners of writing about art represent and interpret the discourses of the different types of artists, which, however, contradict each other (the first archaic-mystic, the second technical-medial, the third sociocritical, the fourth visionary, the fifth a post-modern painter, and the sixth a product designer). The issue no longer is what art produces or represents as is reflected in this conflict of contemporary art discourses, but art itself. Failure or discourse of art. Did the discourse lose its autonomy long ago? Is art itself only a simulation of what art and the functions of art once were? As I show how contemporary forms of discourse of art function, the function of art is put to the test. Different as the artists may be, they have one thing in common: the beautiful illusion that true art is always found where it is not an article of merchandise and where it is not expected, where nobody thinks about it, or calls its name. Insofar the withdrawal from art may be the most sophisticated form of art. With the help of self-referential methods the artists therefore conduct the duel of the objects, recode the use of the objects and of the practices of artistic action, orchestrate the game and codes of art in a cunning way. A fictive book like all of our lives?

I created various personalities in myself. I am constantly creating persons. Each of my dreams embodies itself in another person, as soon as it appears as dreamed. Then it dreams, not I.

In order to create I have destroyed myself. I have externalized myself in myself to such an extent that I cannot exist differently in myself than externally. I am the living stage, on which various actors appear performing various pieces.

Fernando Pessoa

Übersetzung: Astrid Lackner und Ines Kveder



Dies ist keine Abbildung eines Originals

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## DER LETZTE MALER