

HOMESTORIES: PERFORMING & VISUALISING THE
FAMILIAL IN WEST GERMANY, 1961-1989

Volume I

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I, Alexandra Olivia Désirée Tait confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how postwar German artists, including Gerhard Richter (b.1932), Georg Baselitz (b.1938), Sigmar Polke (1941-2010), and Isa Genzken (b.1948), have publicly mediated, performed and interrogated the familial gaze during the three decades dominated by the divisive Berlin Wall. It considers the ways in which their paintings, artist's books, and more ephemeral paper-based and printed productions have reworked and reused 'personal' photographs in works that have been repeatedly dismissed as sentimental, kitsch or disregarded as 'documents.' My project not only resituates these ostensibly 'private' images – depicting the artists in and around the home, with partners, friends, collaborators, children, and other family members – but also positions them as significant contributions to the postwar German cultural engagement with the familial. I explore the cultural meanings of these liminal images on the threshold between the private and public, and aim to understand why and how these artists repeatedly return to the familial and domestic, and the place of these works in relation to the public consciousness of the family and home in West Germany. Situating Genzken, Polke, Baselitz and Richter's familial portraits within the context of the legal, economic, cultural and social construction of the family, I outline the material conditions and contradictions of postwar identity construction in West Germany. I argue that these works can be understood as a kind of conceptual and theoretical model for rethinking the place of the familial and the personal within the discipline of art history. Fundamentally, this thesis asks: what is the critical potential of the familial? And crucially, can these works offer an 'intimate' way of looking and a model of relationality that leads out of the cul-de-sac of the biographical?

IMPACT STATEMENT

The materials, arguments and research questions brought together in this thesis could bring about the following impact. It could potentially generate critical debates – both amongst specialists and a broader non-specialist public – about the social role of artists and the arts, particularly in regard to a nation’s engagement with its own history and (problematic) past. It could hopefully also generate new ways of thinking about familial images, and how we engage, both personally and as a society, with traditional and non-normative representations of couples and families. A curatorial project based on this dissertation’s research, including, but not limited to, an exhibition and catalogue, conference, panel discussion, and gallery talks, could engage non-academic audiences with important questions about conceptions of the familial and domestic. These could potentially generate a broader public debate about the increasing pressure to capitalise all social relations, including familial, often through photographs shared on social media. It would hopefully also encourage the preservation and promotion of more ephemeral works of art, and therefore inspire new ways of thinking about material and cultural heritage.

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CONTENTS

Volume I

Introduction	14
Chapter 1 Domesticating the Artist-Hero: <i>polke/richter richter/polke</i> (1966)	57
Chapter 2 Georg Baselitz's <i>Bedroom(s)</i>	120
Chapter 3 <i>Künstlerehepaar: I(sa).G(enzken).G(erhard).R(ichter)</i>	196
Conclusion	259
Bibliography	267

Volume II

List of Illustrations	294
Illustrations	308

INTRODUCTION

A man in a grey suit with corresponding glasses, tie, and hair is standing behind a podium with two small microphones, holding up a printed image in his right hand. The printout – the mismatched white margin framing the scene indicates a hasty copy-paste from the internet – depicts a figure turned away from the viewer towards a dark grey background. The red floral design on the cardigan and pink shirt underneath suggests we might be looking at a young girl, her blonde hair tucked into a neat, low bun. The image is not particularly clear; yet the blur might be the result of a low-resolution reproduction rather than indicative of the original. The banner across the lectern from which the man in grey is speaking provides some context. The image appears to be a prop during a speech he is giving for the German Civil Service Federation (*DBB Beamtenbund und Tarifunion*). Chancellor Angela Merkel will speak from the same podium, against the same garish purple background, a few hours later. The Federation's annual conference, under the theme – ‘*Europa - Quo vadis?*’ – is attempting, once again, to answer where Europe, specifically Germany, might be heading. It is a loaded question, even in January 2017, and one the country has been grappling with since the end of the Second World War. Thomas de Maizière, Germany's Minister of the Interior and the man holding up the poster, appears to be offering *Betty* (1988), a work by Gerhard Richter depicting his daughter turning towards one of her father's painted monochromes, as a possible answer (Fig. 1).

Richter's *Betty* shows the artist's young daughter seated, twisting her torso away from the viewer, and perhaps more significantly, away from her father, looking across her right shoulder (Fig. 2). The energy of her movement is heightened by Richter's blur; she won't be able to support this position very long and will be turning

back at any moment. And yet of course Richter's camera, and later his paintbrush, has captured her looking away. The painting is based on a photograph Richter took more than a decade before he painted the image. It is dated 1978 on panel 445 of *Atlas*, where Betty appears alongside photographs of apples, a bottle of wine, and the interior of a church, grouped together under the title 'Various Motifs' (Fig. 3). Many pages earlier, on panel 393 'Betty Richter' (1975), the girl is wearing the same pink shirt in five of the eight photographs (Fig. 4). Across the page, Betty appears three more times, lying on the floor (Fig. 5). Two of the photographs served Richter as source images for two further paintings entitled *Betty*, both painted in 1977, which makes their dating to 1978 in *Atlas* rather unlikely (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). This disorienting temporality is significant.

Photographs of Richter's family – particularly of his children and his wives – appear throughout *Atlas*. They represent fleeting moments from Richter's personal life and can be understood as evoking a similar sense of nostalgia as any family album might. Richter invites his viewers to look back, both with him and with Betty. Nevertheless, these photographs are very obviously not part of a family album, but rather appear amongst press and pornographic images, as well as sketches and collages, and continue to serve as sources for his paintings. Richter's 1988 painting of his daughter has become one of his most well-known, and possibly also his most well-loved. It ranked second in a 2001 survey conducted by *Frieze* which asked artists, museum employees and gallerists: 'If you could have any five artworks for your *home*, what would you choose?'

¹ As quoted in Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, translated by Elizabeth M. Solaro (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 307. Emphasis my own.

How has *Betty* come to operate as a kind of symbol for Germany's postwar experience? How did a painting based on what could essentially be classified as a family photograph end up being mobilised by Germany's Minister of the Interior for a political speech on the country's future almost thirty years after its production? Writing about family photographs, Marianne Hirsch defines the 'familial gaze' as 'the conventions and ideologies of family through which' family members 'see themselves' in relation to each other.² Yet in light of de Maizière's recent instrumentalisation of *Betty*, how do familial images operate beyond the confines of the immediate bourgeois nuclear family? This thesis explores how postwar German artists, including Richter (b.1932), Georg Baselitz (b.1938), Sigmar Polke (1941-2010), and Isa Genzken (b.1948), have publicly mediated, performed and interrogated the familial gaze. It considers the ways in which their paintings, artist's books, and more ephemeral paper-based and printed works have reworked and reused 'personal' photographs. It aims to understand why and how these artists repeatedly returned to the familial and the domestic, and how they position themselves in relation to the public consciousness of the family and home in Germany.

In his speech de Maizière argued that *Betty* is symbolic of Germany's preoccupation with the past and lack of engagement with its own identity.³ According

² Marianne Hirsch, 'Introduction: Familial Looking,' in *The Familial Gaze*, edited by Marianne Hirsch (Hanover, NE: University Press of New England, 1999), xi.

³ For a (German) transcript of de Maizière's speech, see Thomas de Maizière, "'Europa – Quo vadis?'" Rede des Bundesinnenministers auf der dbb Jahrestagung in Köln, 09.01.2017,' bmi.bund.de, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/reden/DE/2017/01/ministerrede-dbb-jahrestagung.html> (accessed 20.11.2017). Inspired by Neil MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, de Maizière presented his audience with five objects that he argued were representative of the current questions and problems facing Germany's civil service, including a polling card and the new *Ankunftsausweis*, a 'proof of arrival' for asylum-seekers, which registers certain biometric data, including fingerprints, emphasised repeatedly by de Maizière as crucial to the state's ability to manage future crises. At the end of his almost forty minute speech, de Maizière returned to another MacGregor text, his 2014 book *Germany: Memories of a Nation*, published in conjunction with a BBC Radio 4 series and an exhibition at the British Museum, which was restaged at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in late 2016, where it

to de Maizière, a viewer can never know enough about Betty to describe her to others because we cannot see her face. Similarly, so the Minister argued, Germany has neglected questions pertaining to its collective identity, including ‘who we are and who we want to be,’ while engaging with the past.⁴ Holding up his printed copy of the image, de Maizière quoted from Neil MacGregor’s *Germany: Memories of a Nation* (2014), in which *Betty* is described as ‘a metaphor for Germany’s subtle, shifting, obsessional engagement with its past. ... What Betty makes of her father and his generation, we cannot know. But, in a moment, this young woman will turn to face us, and the future.’⁵ Like Betty, who might be turning forward at any moment, the Minister urges his listeners to engage not only with their national past, but also with the present, stressing that as Germans ‘we must know our face, in order to provide others with information and orientation about ourselves;’ a form of self-portraiture offered as the answer to a nation’s continued search for a collective identity.⁶

This thesis hopes to make an original contribution to the current discourse on postwar German cultural production by analysing a group of works that have been repeatedly dismissed as sentimental, kitsch or disregarded as ‘documents’ rather than works of art. My project will not only resituate these ostensibly ‘private’ images – both photographs and contingent works on paper and paintings depicting the artists in and around the home, with partners, friends, collaborators, children, and other family

was necessarily retitled *Der Britische Blick: Deutschland – Erinnerungen einer Nation* (*The British View: Germany – Memories of a Nation*). The exhibition in Berlin closed the day of de Maizière’s speech, but was visited by the Minister previously, where he came across the 1991 print of *Betty*, which served both as the final work in the exhibition, as well as the exhibition poster.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German are my own. ‘Kennen wir unser Gesicht? Wissen wir genau, wer wir sind und wer wir sein wollen? Haben wir diese Fragen beim Blick in unsere Vergangenheit vernachlässigt?’ De Maizière, unpaginated.

⁵ Neil MacGregor, *Germany: Memories of a Nation* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 562-563.

⁶ ‘Wir müssen unser Gesicht kennen, um anderen, die zu uns kommen, über uns Auskunft und Orientierung zu geben.’ De Maizière, unpaginated.

members – but also position them as significant contributions to the postwar German cultural engagement with the familial. Providing the central case studies of my thesis’ three chapters, these works – in several cases projects produced by a pair of artists, such as Richter *and* Polke, and Genzken *and* Richter – are positioned as an extended, often casual and collaborative, form of familial ‘portraiture.’ All three chapters consider a series of double portraits which offer a self-reflexive exploration of the construction of artistic identities in relation to domestic spaces and partnerships. The second chapter is deliberately different in as much as it primarily focuses on a group of works produced by Baselitz alone, depicting the artist and his wife Elke Kretzschmar. It allows for a consideration of how the demythologisation – and contingent domestication – of the artist within these works is not necessarily dependent on collaboration. Instead it suggests that within these works this process is always relational, decentring the singularity of the self-portrait and the associated monographic privileging through social relations and representations of partnerships grounded in the intimate and emotional labour performed in the artist’s studio. The familial works are brought into conversation with a wider engagement and confrontation with the supposedly ‘private’ sphere of the family and home by West German cultural productions from the three decades dominated by the divisive Berlin Wall. Situating Genzken, Polke, Baselitz and Richter’s familial portraits within the context of the legal, economic, cultural and social construction of the family, I outline the material conditions and contradictions of postwar identity construction in West Germany. As I establish in this introduction and the following chapters, discussions of the biographical aspects of their works follow a similar pattern, including an early emphasis on formalist interpretations, which dismiss (or ignore) any potential autobiographical references, and later suggestions of a turn to the personal starting in

the 1990s. Yet I argue that the artist's books, photographs, and paintings considered by this project can be understood as a kind of conceptual and theoretical model for rethinking the place of the familial and the personal within the discipline of art history. Fundamentally, this thesis asks: what is the critical potential of the familial? And crucially, can these works offer an 'intimate' way of looking and a model of relationality that leads out of the cul-de-sac of the biographical?

Based on a photograph (which reproduces a painting by Richter in the background), reworked as a painting, and the painting then as an offset print in several editions, subsequently re-printed as a prop for a political speech, and screened to members of the audience and public via several different types of technology, the many versions of *Betty* speak to the complex blurring and inversions of different media and forms of reproduction performed by this dissertation's images. A singular, unique Polaroid can be the source both for a series of small sketches and monumental paintings. Like the many different versions of *Betty*, distinctions between copy and original are blurred. 'Private' photographs are reproduced – both mechanically and manually – on gallery posters, invitation cards, as well as on the cover and inside of publications that challenge clear delineations between exhibition catalogues and artist's books.⁷ Rethinking these previously marginalised artistic outputs decentres the privileged status of painting and sculpture in the literature on and oeuvres of Genzken,

⁷ The ways in which these objects resist classification is exemplified by the kind of access institutions grant researchers hoping to study them. Georg Baselitz's *Sächsische Motive* (*Saxon Motifs*), discussed in the second chapter, is classified as an artist's book by Tate Archives [7 BASE (ARTISTS' BOOKS), 53110], and is therefore only accessible in the Special Collections reading room under supervision, and stored in an elaborate protective box. At the V&A's National Art Library [111.L.21], the work is issued to readers like any other books in the general reading room. Scholars struggle to categorise the work as well: *Sächsische Motive* is included in Maria Linsmann's *Georg Baselitz: Künstlerbücher* (Cologne: Wienand, 2001) as a 'special edition', but not listed in the book's inventory of Baselitz's artist's books.

Polke, Baselitz, and Richter. Ephemera-based productions are put into direct dialogue with major painterly projects to recalibrate our understanding of both.

Life/Work

Since its production, Richter's portrait of his firstborn daughter has been variously heralded as a symbol of Germany's contentious relationship to its past, Walter Benjamin's concept of history and its associated critique of the conception of progress, as well as representative of the postwar probing of hierarchies and genres of art.⁸ And as de Maizière's recent speech highlights, *Betty* continues to be assigned a central role, beyond the confines of art history, in Germany's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*; the key concept which not only describes the nation's on-going 'process to come to terms with [/overcome] the past' but is also descriptive of much of the cultural production focused on analysing postwar Germany, its history, its people and its art.⁹ Robert Storr has

⁸ Kaja Silverman argues that 'the most obvious link' between Benjamin's angel of history and the portrait is 'the action at the center of each: that of turning around, like Ovid's Orpheus, to face the past. But there are other resemblances as well. Both establish an analogical connection between philosophy and a painting, and both rely on a figural account of history.' Kaja Silverman, 'Photography by Other Means,' in *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 211. Achim Borchardt-Hume has also linked the painting to Benjamin: '*Betty* evokes Walter Benjamin's oft-cited 'Angel of History' who, with his faced turned towards the past, is violently propelled into the future. In this sense, the girl acts as an analogy for the precariousness of Richter's position as a painter in the second half of the twentieth-century Germany, his desire to continue the great tradition of art and the impossibility to do so without stirring the two-headed beast of Germany's past and modernism's aesthetic ruptures.' Achim Borchardt-Hume, "'Dreh Dich Nicht Um': Don't Turn Around. Richter's Paintings of the Late 1980s,' in *Gerhard Richter: Panorama*, exh. cat., edited by Mark Godfrey and Nicholas Serota, with Dorothee Brill and Camille Morineau (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 164. On Richter's use of photography in painting, specifically in context of *Betty*, see Thomas Crow, 'Hand-Made Photographs and Homeless Representation' (1992), in *Gerhard Richter* (October FILES), edited by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 54-56.

⁹ On the problematic nature of the term, including Theodor W. Adorno's rejection of the idea of 'working through the past,' explicated in his 1959 lecture *Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (*The Meaning of Working through the Past*), see Sonja Boos, 'Speaking of the Noose in the country of the Hangman,' in *Speaking the Unspeakable in Postwar Germany: Toward a Public Discourse on the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 195-201. Peter Fritzsche discusses the term in context of the 'tendentious nature of memory work,' and how the concept was (and arguably continues to be) part of a self-conscious process

argued that *Betty* is representative of ‘shift in emphasis’: ‘previously the proponent of an impersonal and dispassionate art, Richter began to produce works of startling intimacy, although, in the past, he had frequently scattered images of family and friends among the facets of public modernity he chose to paint.’¹⁰ Despite acknowledging Richter’s previous engagement with, and reproduction of, personal photographs – ‘scenes from his own domestic life’ – Storr suggests that Richter’s self-portraits and ‘family’ paintings since the late 1980s ‘represent a new, psychologically charged, though still psychologically ambiguous, direction in his work.’¹¹ Produced in 1988, a year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, *Betty* is repeatedly characterised as representative of a significant shift, both in the artist’s own oeuvre, but also in the nation’s willingness to ‘face’ its past. My thesis suggests otherwise.

Richter is not the only German artist who repeatedly returned to and reworked family photographs during the fraught period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In a documentary from 2004, Georg Baselitz emphasises that he actively started painting from childhood photographs after German reunification, focusing in particular on images of his parents and siblings.¹² Like Richter, Baselitz had initially trained as an artist in East Germany, and after reunification learned that while a student there he was being watched by the Stasi: ‘every conversation and every step detailed and recorded.’¹³ The Stasi’s subversion, exploitation and violation of the private and domestic spheres

of ‘historicization’ and ‘mastering the past’ in postwar Germany. Peter Fritzsche, ‘What Exactly is *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*? Narrative and Its Insufficiency in Postwar Germany,’ in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, edited by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 25-40.

¹⁰ Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art / Distributed Art Publishers, 2002), 79.

¹¹ Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, 79.

¹² Heinz Peter Schwerfel, *Baselitz* (2004), DVD, Fridolfing: absolut MEDIEN, 2007. 11’ 24”.

¹³ As quoted in Peter Iden, ‘I always find myself in places that no one else has been to. Georg Baselitz in conversation with Peter Iden’ (2003), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 262.

has been well documented and theorised, and although this project is primarily focused on West Germany, it is attentive to the fact that the Federal Republic was, of course, inextricably linked to East Germany, not least through parallel infiltrations and instrumentalisations of the ‘home’ during the Cold War.¹⁴ According to Baselitz, the discovery of his surveillance by the Stasi, had the result that ‘having up to that point had no real content for my pictures, I now turned my attention to my family. I started painting my parents, my sister, my brothers – family pictures. It was an attempt to deal with history.’¹⁵ Although frequently contrasted as leading practitioners of two divergent styles of painting, Richter and Baselitz have similarly stressed the self-reflexivity of their work, their disregard for the content of their figurative paintings, and a comparable disdain for ideology, only for both to turn, seemingly unexpectedly, to highly charged familial imagery after German reunification.¹⁶ Yet as Baselitz acknowledges, his post-89 family portraits, analogous to his *Remix* paintings in which he reimagines earlier works, can be understood as ‘*the next stage* in my dealings with

¹⁴ Robin Schuldenfrei has outlined and traced the impact of these politicisations of the home during the Cold War; as she suggests ‘postwar dwelling was fraught with anxiety.’ She argues that ‘social and political dissonance ... found less-public manifestations in the spaces and activities of domestic life, in anxieties that the sweeping programs of modernism sometimes sought to manage and that it, and the scores of new, modern objects, living spaces, and “conveniences” it generated, often also provoked.’ Robin Schuldenfrei, ‘Introduction,’ in *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture*, edited by Robin Schuldenfrei (London: Routledge, 2012), xi, xiv. For an introduction to the significance of domestic interiors and the private sphere to both West and East German politics – expanded in the slightly later *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) – see Paul Betts, ‘Building Socialism at Home: The Case of East German Interiors,’ in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, edited by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 96-132. See also, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

¹⁵ As quoted in Iden, 262.

¹⁶ Richter has repeatedly claimed that his paintings, as well as his artistic process and production are free from any ideologies, see in particular Gerhard Richter, ‘Notes, 1988,’ in *Gerhard Richter Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 - 2007*, edited by Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 200-201. As outlined in detail in Chapter Two, Baselitz makes similar claims, see Georg Baselitz, ‘Somersaults Are Also Movement, and They’re Fun Too’ (1992), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 211.

my own biography.’¹⁷ In the 1997 catalogue for an exhibition of recent paintings by Baselitz – of which the vast majority are based on old family photographs – Richard Shiff describes Baselitz’s ‘new’ paintings as complex ‘reexplorations of not only the Baselitz family but the Baselitz territory,’ including the artist’s childhood in Nazi and then (East German) communist rural Saxony.¹⁸ Hal Foster, laying the groundwork for Benjamin H.D. Buchloh’s later dismissal of Neoexpressionism as a dangerous, reactionary example of new subjectivity, describes ‘a newly promoted art of local sentiments and archaic forms,’ arguing that artists like Baselitz were supporting ‘an academic model of meaning, one based on stylistic sources and biographical influences.’¹⁹ It was precisely this ‘return’ to the self, the autobiographical, ‘diaristic art’ as Foster writes, that seemed particularly problematic.²⁰ Yet what was similarly problematic, if not more so, was the kind of art history this return to figuration encouraged.

The pitfalls of biographical art history, and interpretations based on professed authorial intentions (frequently rooted within biography), were famously analysed throughout the period this project focuses on.²¹ Inevitably, as Rosalind Krauss

¹⁷ As quoted in Florian Illies, ‘A Backwards Look Forwards. Georg Baselitz in conversation with Florian Illies’ (2006), translated by Fiona Elliott, in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 279. Emphasis my own.

¹⁸ Richard Shiff, ‘A Family of Relations,’ in *Georg Baselitz: Recent Paintings*, exh. cat. (New York: PaceWildenstein, 1997), 12.

¹⁹ Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 30, 45. For a detailed discussion of Buchloh’s critique of Baselitz and Neoexpressionism, see Chapter Two.

²⁰ Foster, *Recodings*, 18-20.

²¹ Roland Barthes’ warning against accepting an author(/artist) as the ‘final signified’ of a work in ‘The Death of the Author’ (1968), parallels Rosalind Krauss’ later problematisation of ‘positive identification,’ particularly in regard to portraiture, outlined ‘In the Name of Picasso,’ *October* 16 (Spring 1981), JSTOR (778371): 5-22. As Charles Salas notes in his introduction to *The Life and the Work. Art and Biography*, Krauss’ denunciation builds on Barthes’ earlier dismissal of criticism ‘working backwards from signifiers to signified.’ Charles G. Salas, *The Life and the Work. Art and Biography* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 2. Krauss’ contribution to Salas’ anthology, ‘Who Comes after the Subject?’, provides an

highlighted in 1981, studies of portraiture are particularly susceptible.²² Even Buchloh and Kaja Silverman have failed to resist the temptation of referencing highly personal biographical details when discussing Richter's work, although it is not always immediately apparent what these add to their arguments.²³ The challenges presented by 'private,' autobiographical, images parallel those tied to notions of authorship. When Michel Foucault wondered if Nietzsche's laundry bill should be considered a 'work,' he simultaneously challenged how different typologies of authorship, including 'poet,' 'philosopher' or 'novelist,' are constructed, including contingent expectations of the type of work they produce.²⁴ I would like to suggest that these intertwined issues – 'suitable' work expected from a certain kind of artist, and a heightened awareness of the problematics of biographical art history – have led to many of the images discussed in this project to be considered documents, or documentary, rather than works of art. For example, many of the photographic portraits at the centre of the first and third chapters have been reproduced to 'illustrate' friendships and relationships, often in biographical timelines included in exhibition catalogues, rather than critically analysed

overview of the post-structuralist critique of authorship and biography, starting with Barthes. See Rosalind Krauss, 'Who Comes after the Subject?,' in *The Life and the Work. Art and Biography*, edited by Charles G. Salas (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 28-33.

²² 'We wish to achieve a type of signification beyond which there can be no further reading or interpretation. ... For the individual who can be shown to be the "key" to the image, and thus the "meaning" of the image, has the kind of singularity one is looking for. Like his name, his meaning stops within the boundaries of identity.' Krauss, 'In the Name of Picasso,' 10.

²³ In a footnote in 'Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity,' Buchloh reveals that Richter's father committed suicide, as well as that Richter's mother told the artist at a later point in his life that his father was not his biological parent. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity: Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning' (1996), in *Gerhard Richter* (October FILES), edited by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 94. Silverman has mistakenly identified Genzken, Richter's second wife, as the mother of his daughter Betty. The detail doesn't affect Silverman's analysis of Richter's work in terms of psychoanalytic theories regarding the death drive, and therefore seems as superfluous as Buchloh's reference to Richter's father's suicide. Silverman, 201.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?' (1969), in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. Two.*, edited by James D. Faubion, translated by Robert Hurley and Others, (New York: The New Press, 1998), 205-22. 'What is an Author?,' originally presented as a lecture in 1969, is often considered a response to Barthes' proclamation of the death of the author.

in the original context of their production. Yet what if the biographical could offer ways of defamiliarising the work of (a group of) well-established artists? The recent literature focused on early twentieth-century German art, and particularly artists associated with the German avant-garde groups, such as Berlin Dada and Cologne *Neue Sachlichkeit*, provides several examples of how to activate (auto-)biographical materials in critically constructive ways.

Michael White, Andrés M. Zervigón and Dorothy C. Rowe each offer examples of productive analyses of works that arose from a complex network of personal and professional relationships that blur any distinctions between public and private.²⁵ Although technically monographs, focused on John Heartfield and Marta Hegemann respectively, Zervigón and Rowe map intricate avant-garde networks of interpersonal relationships similar to those foregrounded in White's *Generation Dada*. Rowe's careful exploration of Hegemann's (intimate and creative) partnership with her husband Anton Räderscheidt is firmly rooted in both public and private visual and archival materials. These form the basis of her analysis of a series of photographic portraits of the couple through which she traces their performative collaboration and the gender politics both of their immediate (avant-garde) community, as well as the Weimar Republic. Zervigón's study of Heartfield similarly relies on a combination of private and public records, including letters from the artist's mother and German propaganda postcards. Such juxtapositions not only provide personal and wider socio-political contexts, they also underscore Zervigón's argument that Heartfield's artistic and political development, traced through an analysis of his early photomontages, are

²⁵ Michael White, *Generation Dada: The Berlin Avant-Garde and the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Andrés M. Zervigón, *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image: Photography, Persuasion, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Photomontage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Dorothy C. Rowe, *After Dada: Marta Hegemann and the Cologne avant-garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

both a response to and fulfilling a contemporaneous need for a ‘contingent, engaged, and aggressive’ photographic practice.²⁶ Arguably Zervigón over-psychologises Heartfield at times, mapping personality traits onto Heartfield’s practice. A range of biographical materials, such as personal letters and photographs, as well as diary entries, also provide the foundation of White’s book focused on the members of Berlin Dada. Like Zervigón and Rowe, White focuses on ‘an extended set of intimate relationships,’ and is aware of the associated challenges when tracing such networks which inevitably requires extensive biographical references.²⁷ White’s analysis of autobiographical materials – what he refers to as ‘life representation’ – is tied to his exploration of the artists often performative constructions and self-stagings of a variety of identities, including collective and political identities, but also radical challenges to traditional conceptions of identity, including those rooted within the family.²⁸ Although three very different projects, each of these studies offers a methodological approach to the biographical which interprets diaristic and autobiographical productions in ways that allows the authors to rethink and reposition their subjects, including in relation to partners, lovers, friends, and artistic collaborators. Similarly, Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübel’s study of postwar artist Hanne Darboven’s letters, drawings, photographs and other ephemera, offers an example of how to rethink an artist’s correspondence as a form of praxis related to their conceptual and material productions, as well as critical to their fashioning of an artistic identity.²⁹ My project

²⁶ Zervigón, *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image*, 7.

²⁷ White, *Generation Dada*, 12.

²⁸ See White’s discussion of Raoul Haussmann and Hannah Höch’s relationship in his fourth chapter, and how Haussmann ‘through his reading of [psychoanalyst Otto] Gross, was engaged in the construction of an alternative family identity for himself, in which, parallel to his actual role as a son, husband and father, Höch played the part of muse, child and mother...’ White, 151.

²⁹ See Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübel, “‘heute / today’ – Writing between Things,” in *Hanne Darboven: Korrespondenz 1967-1975* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther

hopes to activate the (auto-)biographical in similar ways, and as a critical apparatus to re-see and re-situate the visualisations of the familial and domestic at the centre of this project, and to position them as materialisations of social relations.

This thesis explores the mythologising and commodification of the artist within the art market, as well as its potential parodying, remaking, decentring and dismantling within partnerships, friendships and family life. It builds on the recent feminist art historical and architectural literature that has called for a re-evaluation of traditional categories of the 'home' and *home-work*, and envisioned new 'feminist domesticities.'³⁰ My project is invested in a similar set of questions concerning ideological constructions of belonging, of public and private, and of gendered divisions of labour.³¹ Much of this scholarship has focused on artists working during the same period considered by this project, particularly artists grappling with the contemporaneous feminist slogan 'the personal is political.' Or as Martha Rosler asked in 1979: 'how does one address ... the banally profound issues of everyday life, thereby revealing the public and political in the personal?'³² In 'House Work and Art Work,' Helen Molesworth suggests how the frequently dichotomised works of Judy

König, 2016), 19-82. I discuss their study, and Darboven's work, in some further detail in Chapter Three.

³⁰ See in particular the recent work of Jo Applin, Francesca Berry, and Julia Bryan-Wilson, including their contributions to the 'Feminist Domesticities' Special Issue of the *Oxford Art Journal* 40/1 (2017); Jo Applin, 'Generation Objects: Ida Applebroog's History of Feminism,' *Oxford Art Journal* 40/1 (2017): 133-151; Francesca Berry, 'Housewife Writ Large: *Marie mécanique*, Paulette Bernège, and New Feminist Domesticity in Interwar France,' *Oxford Art Journal* 40/1 (2017): 7-26; Julia Bryan-Wilson, 'Keeping House with Louise Nevelson,' *Oxford Art Journal* 40/1 (2017): 109- 131. See also *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial productions of gender in modern architecture*, edited by Hilde Heynen and Gülsüm Baydar (London: Routledge, 2005).

³¹ On the politics of feminine labour, including artistic, economic and social work, and particularly the decision to reject and reimagine certain state-sanctioned conditions of work, see Applin's *Lee Lozano: Not Working* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), particularly the fourth chapter 'Drop Out, Break Down,' 129-152.

³² Martha Rosler, 'For an Art against the Mythology of Everyday Life' (1979), in *WORK: Documents of Contemporary Art*, edited by Friederike Sigler (London / Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery / the MIT Press, 2017), 184.

Chicago, Mary Kelly, Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Rosler engage in productively comparable ways with questions of labour within the domestic sphere.³³ As she argues, their works from the 1970s and 1980s attempt to ‘rearticulate the terms of public and private in ways that might fashion new possibilities for both spheres and the labor they entail.’³⁴ Writing about Ida Applebroog’s works from the late 1960s, Julia Bryan-Wilson emphasises the artist’s defamiliarisation of domestic spaces, including her disruption of ‘the boundaries between private and public spheres – or, to reiterate the famed slogan, the collapse between the personal and political.’³⁵ Bryan-Wilson outlines how the contemporaneous women’s movement crucially highlighted questions regarding the gendered division of labour, and how, in turn, artists including Applebroog, reconstructed this crisis of the home through their art. In her recent work on Carla Accardi and Carla Lonzi, Teresa Kittler similarly analyses the artists’ constructions of ‘home’ and ‘alternative ways of living’ tied to their attempts to ‘rethink the nature of work in capitalism.’³⁶ This project asks how Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz’s blurring of public/work and private/life – of their intimate and working relationships – operate within the post-Fordist market pressures that collapse private life into work life.³⁷ My guiding questions are indebted to the radical ways

³³ Helen Molesworth, ‘House Work and Art Work,’ *October* 92 (Spring, 2000), JSTOR (779234): 71-97.

³⁴ Molesworth, 96.

³⁵ Julia Bryan-Wilson, ‘Our Bodies, Our Houses, Our Ruptures, Ourselves,’ in *Ida Applebroog: MONALISA* (New York: Hauser and Wirth, 2010), 23.

³⁶ Teresa Kittler, ‘Living Differently, Seeing Differently: Carla Accardi’s Temporary Structures (1965-1972),’ *Oxford Art Journal* 40/1 (2017): 85-107. See also Kittler’s ‘Picturing Home: Carla Lonzi’s *Autoritratto* (1969),’ in *Living art and the art of living: remaking home in Italy in the 1960s* (Doctoral thesis, University College London, 2014), 199-245.

³⁷ For a short introduction to the questions, debates and Marxist literature focused on the collapse of life and labour, particularly within the sphere of cultural production, see Joshua Lubin-Levy and Aliza Shvarts’ introduction to a special issue of *Women & Performance*, which focuses on how performance studies, and particularly notions of performativity, might offer new ways to theorise ‘living labor’ and the economic conditions under which the market structures all aspects of life, including ‘private’ life. Joshua Lubin-Levy and Aliza Shvarts, ‘Living Labor: Marxism and Performance Studies’, *Women & Performance: a journal of*

feminist art historians have rethought and continue to rethink domesticity and specifically biography. Griselda Pollock's early work and approach to biography, particularly in light of contemporaneous discussions concerning the 'death' of the author, offers effectual examples of how biographical details taken from an individual's unique lived experiences might be integrated into broader analyses of specific socio-economic and historical contexts. As Pollock wrote in her seminal *Vision and Difference*: 'There is a limit, an historical and ideological limit which is secured by accepting the death of the mythic figure of the creator/author but not the negation of the historical producer working within conditions which determine the productivity of the work while never confining its actual or potential field of meanings.'³⁸ Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that early feminist art historians such as Pollock and Linda Nochlin emphasised their subject's biographies to recover and reveal women's histories in order to decentre and challenge the masculinist canon.³⁹ Richter, Baselitz and Polke are hardly in need of such a rehabilitation. Genzken's use of familial imagery offers an important foil to that used and produced by her male counterparts considered in this thesis. Yet as Isabelle Graw has argued, Genzken's choice of materials – wood, plaster, concrete – and main medium – sculpture – as well

feminist theory, 26/2-3 (2016): 115-121. See also Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). I discuss this 'collapse' most explicitly in regard to Genzken and Richter's collaborative work in Chapter Three.

³⁸ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, femininity, and the histories of art* (1988) (London: Routledge Classics, 2003), 118.

³⁹ See for example early texts by Nochlin such as 'Women Artists after the French Revolution' (1976), in *Women Artists: The Linda Nochlin Reader*, edited by Maura Reilly (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 93-132, as well as later work such as 'Existence and Beading: The Work of Liza Lou' (2008), in *Women Artists: The Linda Nochlin Reader*, edited by Maura Reilly (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 357-372.

as a supposedly deliberate refusal of the personal, were part of a strategy to avoid ‘being reduced to the label “Woman”’.⁴⁰

Discussions of the biographical in Genzken’s work follow, at least superficially, a similar pattern to analyses of Richter and Baselitz’s works.⁴¹ Nevertheless, as Graw suggests, ‘Genzken’s situation has never been comparable – then or now – with that of such artists as Richter and Polke. Unlike them, she had to minimize the “personal” factor as far as possible.’⁴² Unlike her male contemporaries, who according to Graw could ‘risk’ occasional autobiographical references, Genzken’s refusal of the personal was necessary in order for the artist to be taken seriously both by commercial and public galleries, as well as to avoid biographical and gendered readings of her work.⁴³ For Graw, Genzken and other female artists’ interest in autonomous art and an ‘autonomous subject’ – however problematic such concepts might be – corresponds to their ‘interest in eliminating any linkage between private and public spheres’ in order to avoid being reduced to their gender.⁴⁴ Rather obviously, no readings of Richter and Baselitz’s works as ‘autonomous’ stem from the artists’ resistance to gendered readings of their paintings, instead they are usually understood as part of the artist’s opposition to the ideologisation and politicisation of art. Anna

⁴⁰ Isabelle Graw, ‘Free to be Dependent: Concessions in the Work of Isa Genzken’ (1996), in *Isa Genzken* (October FILES), edited by Lisa Lee (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 65.

⁴¹ Both Jeffrey Grove and Graw have suggested that much of the early literature on Genzken overlooked repeated autobiographical references. As Grove notes: ‘Her fearless self-scrutiny and willingness to inscribe her photography, collage, film, and sculptural assemblages not only with images of herself but also with revealing insight into her autobiography is an inflection that has largely been overlooked in previous considerations of her artistic development. In the rare instances when this facet has been mentioned at all, it has been in a cursory or dismissive fashion.’ Jeffrey Grove, ‘Isa Genzken’s Homage to Herself,’ in *Isa Genzken: Retrospective*, exh. cat., edited by Sabine Breitwieser, Laura Hoptman, Michael Darling, and Jeffrey Grove (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2013), 287. See also, Graw, ‘Free to be Dependent.’

⁴² Graw, ‘Free to be Dependent,’ 65.

⁴³ Graw, ‘Free to be Dependent,’ 66.

⁴⁴ Graw, ‘Free to be Dependent,’ 68.

Chave, in an article on ‘Minimalism and Biography,’ has highlighted such problematic depersonalisations. Chave argues that poststructuralism and neo-Marxism’s prioritisation of ‘the material and social over those of the individual or the subjective’ might have been grounded in an attempt to demystify the cult of the artist, but nevertheless included a heroisation of male artists.⁴⁵ Chave suggests using ‘biography to oppositional ends, exploring what has been at stake, and for whom, in exempting of certain artists from biographical scrutiny.’⁴⁶ Like Chave, feminist art historians focused on female agency have actively critiqued studies which hesitated to engage with biography.⁴⁷ They continue to highlight how the politics of the personal and domestic are not only highly gendered, but also highly fraught. This project considers how artists mobilised social relationships – partnerships, marriages, friendships – to explore potential counter-models to canonical and market-oriented constructions of the ‘artist-hero.’ As I will argue, Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz repeatedly (and much earlier than has been suggested) turned to images which intentionally register as intimate and private in order to problematise the totalising forces of the art market to commodify monographic authorship. Yet I also highlight how their complex fabrication, staging and collapsing of artistic personae within their ‘familial’ works exposes the limitations of fashioning an artistic identity outside of these institutions.

⁴⁵ Anna C. Chave, ‘Minimalism and Biography,’ in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 386-387.

⁴⁶ Chave, 387.

⁴⁷ See Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, ‘Introduction: Reclaiming Female Agency,’ in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 1-25.

(In)Appropriate Content

Reemphasising his discovery of a supposed ‘shift’ in Richter’s work after the production of *Betty*, Storr confronted the artist with this ‘unexpected’ and ‘surprising’ body of ‘very private’ works of art in an interview in 2002.⁴⁸ Richter expressed disbelief, ‘I can’t quite understand why this should be so extraordinary,’ acknowledging that the images are ‘very private, yes,’ but argues that ‘the only difference is that I have become more shameless. ... I don’t feel that I have to behave properly. Somehow I finally understood that I am allowed to do what I want.’⁴⁹ Private (family) images, Richter and Storr seem to suggest, are not suitable motifs for a contemporary artist of a certain standing, too ‘sentimental’ or ‘kitschy,’ and potentially too ‘beautiful, whole or ideal.’⁵⁰ Viciously dismissed by Richter as ‘a crazy feminist writer,’ Gisliind Nabakowski described the alleged unsuitability of ‘motives of private happiness’ in her review of the 1996 exhibition *Gerhard Richter. 100 Paintings* at the Carré d’Art in Nîmes.⁵¹ The exhibition included works such as Richter’s *S. with Child* (1995), a series of eight paintings based on a group of photographs depicting Richter’s third wife Sabine Moritz with their new-born son, including several images of Moritz nursing the infant (Figs. 8 - 15). Nabakowski devotes an entire paragraph of her fairly short review to the dismissal of the series, describing it as ‘anachronistic,’ ‘artificial,’ and the result of the ‘male projection’ of a ‘myth’ by ‘an elderly painter’, who has produced a new form of realism she describes as ‘shallow “*Weichmacher-Realismus*”’

⁴⁸ Robert Storr, ‘Interview with Robert Storr, 2002,’ in *Gerhard Richter Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 - 2007*, edited by Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 391.

⁴⁹ As quoted in Storr, ‘Interview with Robert Storr, 2002,’ 391.

⁵⁰ Storr, ‘Interview with Robert Storr,’ 392.

⁵¹ As quoted in Storr, ‘Interview with Robert Storr,’ 392. ‘... Motiven privates Glück.’ Gisliind Nabakowski, ‘Heilig, heilig, heilig! Trügerischer Weichmacher-Realismus: Gerhard Richter in Nîmes,’ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (18.06.1996), 36.

(Softener-Realism).⁵² Describing Richter as a former ‘master’ of painting and painterly technique, Nabakowski argues that his turn to private imagery represents a comprehensive departure from his previous work and engagement with the avant-garde.⁵³ Meanwhile Stefan Gerner has suggested that ‘the diffuse unease one feels upon turning away from these paintings may come from the difficulty in deciding whether they functionalize the private for aesthetic purposes or use the aesthetic to legitimize the private.’⁵⁴ Rachel Haidu has similarly described the series as ‘infuriating,’ expressing puzzlement at the fact that she likes the works, despite that ‘they seem to flaunt a rather heterosexist and highly conventionalized notion of Family, direct from the patriarch’s easel.’⁵⁵ And yet, Haidu draws significant parallels between Richter’s post-reunification ‘family pictures’ and his earlier work, which she argues ‘at their very core’ ‘posit ... a question of identity.’⁵⁶ Haidu claims that ‘in the so-called family pictures, obviously, this identity is defined along what we think of as a “private” dimension, rather than the more public dimension of, for example, German collective identity. That the family pictures generate such ambivalence whereas Richter’s *October 18, 1977* cycle is so universally celebrated is suggestive indeed.’⁵⁷ She insists that an analysis of Richter’s *S. with Child* must be tied to a parallel exploration of ‘Richter’s relation to his own authorship;’ that it is ‘precisely’ in this series of paintings the artist demonstrates how authorship matters.⁵⁸

⁵² ‘unzeitgemäß,’ ‘artifizuell,’ ‘Hier ist `a tout prix ein älterer Maler auf einen Mythos losgestrebt, dessen männlicher Projektion er bar jeglicher Reflexion - heilig, heilig, heilig! - im Studio unterlag.’ ‘...seichten “Weichmacher-Realismus”.’ Nabakowski, 36.

⁵³ ‘... das sie nicht entgegen dem von Richter in avantgardistischen Zeiten erprobten Malstil Wiedererkennbares, Horizonte, Landschaften vorweisen.’ Nabakowski, 36.

⁵⁴ As quoted in Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, 332.

⁵⁵ Rachel Haidu, ‘Arrogant Texts: Gerhard Richter’s Family Pictures,’ in *Gerhard Richter (October FILES)*, edited by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 153.

⁵⁶ Haidu, 155.

⁵⁷ Haidu, 155.

⁵⁸ Haidu, 155.

As the works at the centre of this project illustrate, ostensibly ‘private’ images have played a significant role in the oeuvres of Richter and Baselitz, as well as Polke and Genzken, long before German reunification. My research focuses on a generation of German artists whose works speak to an expansive exploration of the familial in West Germany, including in the new genre of *Väterliteratur* (father literature) discussed in Chapter Two.⁵⁹ This project articulates how these works are embedded not only in aesthetic discourse regarding the possibility of figuration and realism after Auschwitz, but also in the broader cultural questioning of identity construction in West Germany during the Cold War. I explore how the artists’ repeated confrontations with both German and personal histories address the legacy and significance of the ideology of the familial, as well as the changing relations between the private and public spheres. Repeatedly side-lined and trivialised – often in response to the artists’ insistence that their content was insignificant or neutral – the artists’ self-fashioning via and parody of notions of ‘home’ and ‘family’ during the decades preceding reunification is significant precisely due to the complex instrumentalisation and politicisation of the familial during the Cold War explored in the following chapters.

The bourgeois nuclear family in West Germany stood firmly at the intersection between the public and private spheres, used as a tool of propaganda during the Cold War, repoliticised after its appropriation by Nazi ideology, and symbolic of the

⁵⁹ For this thesis, I consider Richter and Polke, and artists born at the end of or right after the war, such as Anselm Kiefer – despite the significant differences in age – as part of the same postwar generation, in opposition to Joseph Beuys’ generation. Despite the fact that Beuys’ and Richter’s age gap – Beuys was born in 1921 – is similar to the age gap between Richter and Polke, I will argue that Beuys’ wartime experience is instrumental to the understanding and definition of different generations in postwar Germany. That Richter and Polke experienced the end of the war as children and infants allows them to construct and imagine their artistic identities against a very different legacy of the past than was the case for Beuys. As Michael White writes in his discussion of ‘generational consciousness,’ generations ‘were formed on a basis of commonly understood assumptions and notions of shared experience,’ and ‘what is being understood and remembered.’ White, *Generation Dada*, 16.

extensive commodification of daily life by postwar consumerism.⁶⁰ Used by lawmakers, economists and politicians, as well as designers and advertisers, as sites of identification and validation for the construction of public, national and private, personal identities from the immediate postwar years onwards, the family and bourgeois home became the sites of a comprehensive dis-identification during the years of the Student Movement.⁶¹ Consequently, my thesis argues that far from representing a kind of anti-ideological retreat into the sentimental, visualisations of the familial and domestic challenge artistic claims for neutrality.⁶² Drawing on contemporaneous discussions centred on notions of autonomy, by widely divergent figures such as Jürgen Habermas and Peter Bürger, I argue that the images considered

⁶⁰ On the use of family photograph as tools of Cold War propaganda, see Sarah E. James, 'A Family Affair: Photography, the Cold War and the Domestic Sphere,' *Photoworks Annual: Issue 20: Family Politics*, edited by Ben Burbridge and Celia Davies, (Brighton: Photoworks, 2013): 166-177; on the politicisation of the family in Nazi Germany see Paul Ginsborg, 'The greater world and the smaller one': the politics of the family in Germany, 1918-1945,' in *Family Politics. Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival 1900-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 312-396; for a detailed study of postwar consumerism in West Germany (and the United States) see Jan L. Logemann, *Trams or Tailfins? Public and Private Prosperity in Postwar West Germany and the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁶¹ On postwar family politics (and particularly the legal construction and definition of family in West Germany) see Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood. Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); on design and postwar consumerism see Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects. A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); on West Germany's counterculture and its ties to the Student Movement, see Sabine von Dirke, "All Power to the Imagination!" *The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Green* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1-66.

⁶² In his recent book on German photography, Andrés M. Zervigón links the advent of the portrait photograph during the Biedermeier era, and particularly family photographs set and exhibited within domestic spaces, to the German aristocracy and bourgeoisie's retreat 'from the repressive public sphere into a simple and idealized domesticity.' The space of the home is thus enforced as a depoliticised 'refuge' for the bourgeoisie (and as the opposite of the public sphere) through family photography. As I outline in my second chapter, such a 'turn indoors' is also often linked to family and domestic photography produced in East and West Germany during the 1970s. Andrés M. Zervigón, *Photography and Germany* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 25.

by this project interrogate the limitations of both individual and aesthetic autonomy.⁶³ Rooted in a close analysis of the cultural, historical contexts in which these works were produced through contemporaneous materials, including newspaper and magazine coverage of the family, comics and advertisements counting on the accessibility and legibility of the familial, and the changing status of marriage and the family in West Germany, this thesis explores visualisations of the familial in context of the larger cultural and political debates regarding the family and the familial during the Cold War. Parallel close readings of both cultural and historical materials fundamentally guide and inform the questions raised by this project, especially in context of the intimate models of reception and relationality offered by the often casual and informal portraits under consideration. These broader socio-cultural readings are part of this project's refusal to see Baselitz primarily as a conservative neoexpressionist and Richter, Genzken and Polke as purely conceptual (neo-)avant-garde practitioners. As I outline in the following chapters, the studies which have taken such a perspective have often focused on formalist readings that disregard content and wider context, crucially missing the artists' often humorous and parodic approach to decentring authorship, and their domesticated self-fashioning of artistic identities.

The images at the centre of this study often quite literally blur work processes, collaborations and friendships, and speak to artistic strategies based on social interrelations. As a result, all of the familial images considered in this thesis consolidate the rather problematic status of the 'specialist,' someone 'in the know,' who can identify 'the son,' 'the wife,' 'the friend.' Even if they are circulated outside the intimate partnerships and friendships from which they stem, how much is shared

⁶³ Habermas' influential study *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), and his analysis of the bourgeoisie's insistence on their autonomy within the private sphere is particularly central to my second chapter.

with the audience? Many of the images work as – and through – a kind of inside joke, their self-referentiality establishing and reinforcing group identities and boundaries, similar to avant-garde precedents established in particular by members of Dada.⁶⁴ While such a collaborative identity can offer a space of resistance, it, inevitably, also creates an ‘outsider.’ Yet the instrumentalisation of the family in West Germany to define a national identity against East Germany, when real families were quite literally divided by a wall – after defecting, Richter never saw his parents again – makes the artists’ construction of identities via the familial more than a metaphorical ‘game.’ The familial portraits involve ‘getting to know’ these works in an analogously intimate way that they require a viewer to get to know the artists who produced them. My thesis focuses on a network of partnerships, collaborators, and rivals, whose portraiture is often rooted in the (auto-)biographical in ways that challenge essentialist categorisations of their (other) work. Their familial ‘portraits’ connect Richter, Polke, Baselitz and Genzken not only in the form of visual documentations of their relationships with each other and their families, but also speak to shared explorations of conceptions of artistic identity and authorship rooted in parallel explorations of notions of home.

Family Home/Work

As a space of representation and identity-formation domestic spaces have played a starring role in the German popular press and celebrity culture, encapsulated in the denglish (the portmanteau of ‘Deutsch’ and English) term ‘*Homestory*’. The term

⁶⁴ On the ‘in-joke’ as an essential part of collaborative work and identity both within Dada, as well as in 1980s German artistic productions, see Gregory H. Williams, ‘In-Jokes and Out-Jokes: Constructing Audiences,’ in *Permission to Laugh: Humor and Politics in Contemporary German Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 145-177.

refers to the typical photo-essays found in tabloid magazines which portray a celebrity at 'home' often with (new) partners or family members, feigning to provide intimate access to 'stars' and their lives, and are often staged to improve or enhance the subject's reputation. Artists have and continue to feature heavily, including in their own subgenre. *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim* (*Art and the beautiful Home*), a German magazine published between 1949 and 1988, included a regular feature entitled 'Künstler zu Hause' ('Artist at Home'), written by art historian Juliane Roh.⁶⁵ *Home Stories: Zwischen Dokumentation und Fiktion* (*Home Stories: Between Documentation and Fiction*), a traveling exhibition shown at three different German municipal museums over the period of almost a year between 2006 and 2007, highlighted the continued artistic, curatorial and art-historical engagement with ideas revolving around the home, while simultaneously acknowledging the contingent performativity and fictionalisation inherent in 'Homestories.'⁶⁶ In assemblages, photographs and paintings, the artists explore the politics of domesticity, domestic interiors as unsettling, uncomfortable spaces, housework, and fluid conceptions of 'home' and 'homelessness.' As Isabell Schenk-Weininger highlights in the catalogue introduction, *Homestories* are 'more popular than ever,' and the concept has been expanded to include the numerous magazines, 'lifestyle' websites and television programmes aimed at 'prescribing families' how to live.⁶⁷ My thesis' title refers to this

⁶⁵ See for example Juliane Roh, 'Künstler zu Hause. H.P. Alvermann, ein Pop-Artist im Rheinland,' *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim* 11 (August 1966): 474-477. Similar stories focused on collectors, such as Rainer Wick and Hans J. Aubert's article 'Mit Pop-art wohnen. Ein Besuch bei Wolfgang Hahn,' *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim* 8 (August 1969): 363-365.

⁶⁶ The exhibition was shown at the Städtische Galerie Bietigheim-Bissingen (28. October 2006 – 14 January 2007), Stadtgalerie Kiel (27 January – 18 March 2007), and the Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg (12 May – 2 September 2007). It included works by Winfried Baumann, Karsten Bott, Werner Degreif, Simone Demandt, Sara Focke Levin, Kristof Georgen, Jörg Herold, Anja Kempe, Susanne Kutter, Pia Lanzinger, Jörg Lozek, Claus Richter, Ute Weiss Leder, Jan Wenzel, Christof Zwiener.

⁶⁷ 'Home Stories sind beliebter denn je. ... Im Internet gibt es aber auch Websites Nicht-Prominenter, die teilweise rund um die Uhr live Einblicke in ihre vier Wände gewähren.

global phenomenon encapsulated by the uniquely German term, and asks what if Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz's familial images were understood as *Homestories*? What kind of self-image are they trying to self-fashion through these works? As has been explored in numerous studies, the home – including home life, domestic interiors, and domestic consumption – played a central role during the Cold War, particularly within a divided Germany.⁶⁸ Sarah James has argued that 'the remodelling of the private realm and consumerism provided a central locus for East-West Cold War rivalry,' and 'the private and domestic sphere emerged as central to the reworking of postwar German cultural identity.'⁶⁹ Parallel to the Cold War politicisation of the home and domestic sphere, the bourgeois nuclear family was instrumentalised as a site of identification and validation against Soviet economic and socio-political models, especially in West Germany. The following chapters explore how Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz envision and construct domestic and private spaces, and contingent social and sexual relationships, and how they stage themselves and their partnerships within these environments.

Zahllose Wohn-, Architektur- und Heimwerkerzeitschriften füllen die Kioskregale, führen auf Hochglanzseiten vor, wie wir wohnen können, wollen oder sollen Auf allen Kanälen laufen Wohnsendungen, in denen Familien Tapetenwechsel verordnet, Häuser renoviert und komplette Einrichtungen ausgetauscht werden.' Isabell Schenk-Weininger, 'Home Stories,' in *Home Stories: Zwischen Dokumentation und Fiktion*, exh. cat. (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2006), 6.

⁶⁸ See, for example, the previously cited publications by Paul Betts. Other examples include Anna Minta and Carola Ebert's contributions to *Constructed Happiness – Domestic Environment in the Cold War Era*, edited by Mart Kalm and Ingrid Ruudi (Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2005); Anna Minta, 'The Authority of the Ordinary. Building Socialism and the Ideology of Domestic Space in East Germany's Furniture Industry,' 102-117; Carola Ebert, 'Into the Great Wide Open. The Modernist Bungalow in 1960s' West Germany,' 144-155. On the American domestication of the Cold War (and *Konsumterror*) within Germany, see Greg Castillo, 'Domesticating the Cold War: Household Consumption as Propaganda in Marshall Plan Germany,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 40/2 (Apr., 2005), JSTOR (30036324): 261-288.

⁶⁹ Sarah E. James, *Common Ground: German Photographic Cultures Across the Iron Curtain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 75.

How do these performative self-imaginings operate within art market and art historical expectations of ‘serious’ artists? This question is addressed most thoroughly through an engagement with the work of Benjamin Buchloh. The art historian’s numerous analyses of the artists at the centre of this project have not only been fundamental to my own study but the discipline as a whole. The collections of essays brought together in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (2000) and *Formalism and Historicity* (2015) not only pay tribute to Buchloh’s lasting influence – the earliest text was published in 1977 – but also offer an account of his criteria for ‘good’ avant-garde and ‘bad’ neo-avant-garde artists. This has hardly been Buchloh’s main aim throughout his career, rather the opposite as he states in the introduction to *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*:

One of the questions to be asked, then, is whether any criteria of judgement whatsoever might be reinstated. And, if so, to which registers of social and subjective experience and construction they could possibly refer. Yet simply by invoking the term “criterion,” it becomes instantly evident that the very concept is charged with a profoundly reactionary structuring of experience.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, his model of criticality is centred around and tied to an assessment of the radical critical potential of an artist’s production and resistance to the ‘catastrophic assimilation of artistic production to the principles of advanced capitalist consumer culture,’ which inevitably leads to a valuation of artists that have accomplished this (‘good’) and those that have failed (‘bad’).⁷¹ As I outline in the following chapters,

⁷⁰ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ‘Introduction,’ in *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), xxxvi.

⁷¹ Buchloh, ‘Introduction,’ in *Formalism and Historicity*, xxxv. See for example his comparison of the ‘profoundly reactionary artist’ Yves Klein’s monochromes to Aleksandr Rodchenko’s earlier, avant-garde, example: ‘while the authority of the specialized artistic producer had been deconstructed to the very limits of its elimination in the work of the original avant-garde, that authority is now vehemently reaffirmed in Klein’s emphasis on the essential difference between the original work of the artist and the products of the enemies of aura, the copyist and the faker.’ Buchloh, ‘The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avantgarde,’ in *Formalism and Historicity, Models and Methods in*

Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz's familial images intentionally operate within this framework, repeatedly self-assessing the critical potential of their productions, specifically within the totalising forces of consumer culture within West Germany during the Cold War. While Buchloh decided to, as he has highlighted himself, 'escape from the strictures of the highly overdetermined cultural identity of postwar Germany,' with the 'hope of finding a situation in which the model of postnational cultural identity seemed to have been historically achieved,' Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz stayed behind, and continued to question and challenge constructions of national, collective and artistic identities within (West) Germany itself.⁷² As I will argue, they did so specifically through a domesticated and socialised form of portraiture.

The 'End' of Portraiture?

In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue for *The Portrait Now*, held at the National Portrait Gallery in 1993, curator Robin Gibson writes:

During research for this project, especially in Germany where internationally successful artists practice a wide range of approaches to figuration, inquiries about relevant contemporary painters were met with looks of blank amazement and emphatic denials of the continued existence of any forms of portraiture.⁷³

If true, Buchloh would have been thrilled. As he argues in *Residual Resemblances: Three Notes on the Ends of Portraiture*, the portrait – 'resurrected again and again' since its 'cubist deconstruction' – has become 'the site where the myth of a natural

Twentieth-Century Art (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 345. The article was originally published in *October* 37 (Summer, 1986). I discuss this article in more detail in Chapter Three.

⁷² Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Introduction,' in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), xvi.

⁷³ Robin Gibson, *The Portrait Now*, exh. cat. (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 1993), 9. Later in the introduction, Gibson lists not only portraits produced by Richter and Baselitz, but also by Kiefer, Jörg Immendorff, and Markus Lüpertz.

motivation of the sign, and of the mimetic model of representation, would be most avidly reaffirmed within every generation of twentieth-century modernity.’⁷⁴ Following his usual model, Buchloh outlines how ‘a younger generation of artists’ responded to avant-garde strategies by ‘developing counter-strategies’ that ‘tend to be either reactionary or, as is more often the case... deny the radical implications in favor of a more reality oriented, conciliatory approach to the history of the genre, the conditions of production, and the social implications of the artistic strategy.’⁷⁵ Buchloh reserves his most scathing dismissal for German photographers Thomas Ruff and Thomas Struth, and particularly for their portraits of friends and family; ‘it is in this artificial redemption of the personal that its problematic dimensions become immediately apparent.’⁷⁶ And yet, in his final sentence for *Residual Resemblances*, Buchloh concludes: ‘The ties of family and friendship not only protect us from the onslaught of systematic alienation that governs social relations at large, they also guarantee the actual existence of a spectrum of space and forms of subjectivity infinitely larger and more differentiated than those allowed for by the culture industry.’⁷⁷

Reading Buchloh against himself is a key aspect of this thesis. It recognises Buchloh’s lasting legacy, critical contributions, and yet also acknowledges that he is a significant member of the network of friends, lovers, and rivals that this project traces. To reiterate Chave’s important question: what is ‘at stake, and for whom, in exempting ... certain artists from biographical scrutiny.’⁷⁸ Although writing about Minimalism

⁷⁴ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ‘Residual Resemblance: Three Notes on the Ends of Portraiture,’ in *Face-Off, The Portrait in Recent Art*, edited by Melissa E. Feldmann, (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 54.

⁷⁵ Buchloh, ‘Residual Resemblance,’ 65-66.

⁷⁶ Buchloh, ‘Residual Resemblance,’ 66.

⁷⁷ Buchloh, ‘Residual Resemblance,’ 68.

⁷⁸ Chave, 387.

specifically, her conclusion is arguably applicable to any ‘movement’ or group of artists whose reputations are entwined with those who have theorised their work:

at issue are the consequences not only of the discounting or disuse of biography but also of partial or uneven use of biographical information relative to the male and female artists in question, and relative to certain of the critics who bear responsibility for the imposing face, or facelessness, that Minimalism has come to assume in the public eye.⁷⁹

My thesis asks how Genzken, Richter, Baselitz and Polke’s familial images might be thought of in domesticated or familial terms as deliberately enabling the socialisation of otherwise formalist debates. And it explores how (artistic) identity is registered, performed and deconstructed within other contemporaneous representations of the familial in West German cultural productions.

The Artist’s Role in Germany

While this introduction has largely privileged Anglo-American scholars, particularly those associated with *October*, my project brings together this scholarship alongside a close engagement with German art criticism written during the decades under consideration. As I will argue in the following chapters, their familial works allowed Genzken and her male counterparts to present and construct artistic personae that challenged and redefined contemporaneous conceptions of artistic identity and the role of art in West Germany. Through the *Kulturbund zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands* (Cultural Association for the Democratic Renewal of Germany), founded in 1945, as well as the *Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten* (State Commission for Artistic Matters), established in 1951, the *SED* (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland*, Socialist Unity Party of Germany), ensured that East

⁷⁹ Chave, 387.

German artists ‘were aware of their responsibility to the workers’ movement, and that cultural reconstruction took place along politically acceptable lines.’⁸⁰ As Willi Wolfgramm proclaimed on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the *Verband Bildender Künstler* (Association of Visual Artists): ‘The main task of the association is to support the struggle of our people through the means of art... Every artist can and will further the struggle, life and work of our people with his art.’⁸¹ Perhaps the most telling difference between East Germany’s clearly circumscribed purpose of art, and West Germany’s continuous discussions regarding the postwar role of the artist, is captured by Hans Sambale’s description of an exhibition of works by twenty-two young Dresden artists in 1964. Describing the extraordinary interest in the exhibition in Hamburg by the press in an article for *Bildende Kunst*, Sambale recounts the moment a West German journalist asked two of the GDR artists, the ‘absurd question,’ ‘if, in their view, art had a social purpose?’⁸² Yet despite Sambale’s dismissal, West Germany’s often incongruous conceptions of the artist, definitively centred around the journalist’s question: does art have a social purpose? And if so, what role should the artist take within postwar society?

In an article written in 1969 entitled ‘Künstler und Gesellschaft’ (‘Artists and Society’), Gisela Brackert argues that ‘art should not be something formal; instead it

⁸⁰ John-Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines. Art in Germany 1945-1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007), 156. For more on the *Kulturbund*, as well as its ban in the American and British sectors of Berlin, see Stonard, 156-168.

⁸¹ ‘Den Kampf unseres Volkes mit den Mitteln der Kunst zu unterstützen gehört zur Hauptaufgabe des gesamten Verbandes. ... Jeder Künstler kann und wird mit seinen Werken den Kampf, das Leben und Wirken unseres Volkes bedeutend fördern...’ Willi Wolfgramm, ‘Zehn Jahre Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands,’ *Bildende Kunst* 10 (1962), 507.

⁸² ‘Hat, nach Ihrer Ansicht, die Kunst einen gesellschaftlichen Zweck?’ Hans Sambale, ‘Ausstellung junger Dresdner Künstler in Hamburg,’ *Bildende Kunst* 8 (1964): 443. The review mentions that the exhibition included ‘70 Druckgrafiken’ (70 prints), including Gerhard Bondzin’s ‘construction worker’, Gerhard Kettner’s ‘grandmother portrait’, and Werner Haselhuhn’s ‘steelworker.’

should above all change the thinking habits of society.’⁸³ Brackert, writing almost two decades after the first *Darmstädter Gespräch*, suggests that ‘no other question is discussed with as much passion as the social relevance of the artwork and the role of the artist in modern industrial society.’⁸⁴ According to Brackert, modern artists were now expected to fulfil both a moral and political role, and the ultimate goal of art was to alter the mind of its audience, ‘the modification of reality!’⁸⁵ Two years earlier, in a speech given at Munich’s Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Academy of Fine Arts), Paolo Nestler passionately argued for a similarly engaged artist. ‘I am for a dedicated artist – why shouldn’t we commit ourselves to something in this conformist mass society.’⁸⁶ Like Brackert, Nestler’s expectations of the artist including nothing short of a transformation of mass consumer society. Other West German critics envisioned an explicitly state-sponsored role for contemporary artists. In 1964, Manfred Delling lamented how ‘the average German today has a deeper trust in his automobile brand, his detergent, German wine and German diligence, than in the achievements of our contemporary culture.’⁸⁷ Delling emphasised that while West Germany was spending

⁸³ ‘Daß die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse die Kunst verändern, läßt sich beim Gang durch die Geschichte, immer wieder feststellen; daß aber die Kunst die Gesellschaft verändern könne, ist bis heute ein gern geträumter Traum geblieben.’ Gisela Brackert, ‘Künstler und Gesellschaft,’ *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim* 7 (Juli 1969), 323.

⁸⁴ ‘...wird im Augenblick von den Betroffenen wohl keine andere Frage mit solcher Leidenschaft diskutiert wie die nach der gesellschaftlichen Relevanz des Kunstwerks und der Funktion des Künstlers in der modernen Industriegesellschaft.’ Brackert, 322. At the first *Darmstädter Gespräch* in 1950, attended by Hans Sedlmayr, Franz Roh and Theodor W. Adorno, amongst others, the three forcefully argued about the social role of art. For a short overview, see ‘Schlussgespräch aller Teilnehmer,’ in Hans Gerhard Evers, *Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit* (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, 1950), 189-228.

⁸⁵ ‘Veränderung der Wirklichkeit! (Das ist’s, was dem Kunstwerk von seinen progressive Freunden und Gegnern heute abverlangt wird.)’ Brackert, 322.

⁸⁶ ‘Ich bin für den engagierten Künstler – warum sollten wir uns in dieser konformistischen Massengesellschaft nicht engagieren. Das hat nichts mit dem anarchischen Menschen, den Sedlmayr als Antwort auf den kollektivierten Menschen zu sehen glaubt, zu tun. Denn Engagement ist nicht Anarchie, sondern Bewußtheit, Kontrollfähigkeit, Besonnenheit, aber Mut haben.’ Paolo Nestler, ‘Künstler in der Gesellschaft von morgen,’ *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim* 7 (April 1967), 329.

⁸⁷ ‘...der Durchschnittsdeutsche heute ein tieferes Vertrauen zu seiner Automarke, seinem Waschmittel, deutschem Wein und deutschem Fleiß hat als zu den Leistungen unserer

about the same amount on cultural diplomacy as France and England, approximately 173 million marks, the Soviet Union was spending two billion.⁸⁸ To counter this, the author argues, West Germany needed the help of contemporary artists, particularly as only exhibiting ‘works from our past,’ is ‘frequently interpreted’ to suggest ‘that we have nothing new to offer... one of the main arguments used against us by communist cultural propaganda.’⁸⁹ *Kulturpolitik*, according to Delling, would allow Germany to rebuild its reputation abroad.⁹⁰ Artists therefore had a significant international, political role to fulfil. And yet in 1970, in an article tellingly entitled ‘Kunst als kein Mittel der Politik’ (‘Art as no political instrument’), Martin Neuffer suggested that whatever public role art might have, ‘the most intense form of contact with art’ occurred between an individual and a work of art in the ‘private space of one’s own apartment, one’s own house.’⁹¹ This thesis considers how a group of artists reimagined and redefined their role in Cold War West German society within their own home and via friends and family.

Three (Artists’) Books, Three Exhibitions, Three Chapters

Gegenwartskultur. Das Wirtschaftswunder hat nicht nur den Lebensstil, sondern auch das Denken verändert.’ Manfred Delling, ‘Theorie und Praxis der deutschen Kulturpolitik im Ausland,’ *Das Kunstwerk* 18 (Oktober 1964), 4.

⁸⁸ Delling, 4.

⁸⁹ ‘Eine Kulturausfuhr von Werken unserer Vergangenheit wird vielfach sogar so interpretiert, daß wir nichts Neues anzubieten haben ... ein Hauptargument der gegen uns gerichteten kommunistischen Kulturpropaganda.’ Delling, 5.

⁹⁰ Delling, 3.

⁹¹ Neuffer singles out the ‘unique’ work of art specifically, arguing that prints and ‘serial objects’ are unable to offer such an experience. ‘Ein wesentlicher, für viele überhaupt der wichtigste Teil des menschlichen Lebens spielt sich im Privatbereich der eigenen Wohnung, des eigenen Hauses ab. Offensichtlich kann die Relevanz dieser ausschließlich persönlichen, eigengestalteten Umwelt nachhaltig gesteigert werden, wenn die Dimension Kunst in möglichst umfassender Weise ihr Bestandteil ist. ... jene ganz direkte und einmalige persönliche Beziehung zwischen dem individuellen Kunstwerk und seinem Besitzer zu begründen, die die intensivste Form des Umgangs mit Kunst darstellt.’ Martin Neuffer, ‘Kunst als kein Mittel der Politik. Zugleich: Apologie des Kunstbesitzes,’ *Kunstjahrbuch* 1 (1970), 57.

Each of the three chronological chapters of this thesis pivot around a catalogue–cum–artist’s book conceived of and produced alongside an exhibition: *polke/richter richter/polke* (1966) in the first chapter, Baselitz’s *Sächsische Motive* (Saxon Motifs) from the 1970s in the second, and *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter* (1987) in the final chapter. These are mobilised, alongside a series of double portraits, through close readings and as a framing device. While the books vary in format and content, each one was published alongside an eponymous exhibition for which they now serve as a material reminder and as an alternative mode of disseminating the ideas, information and works of art momentarily brought together in the space of a gallery. They offer a fundamentally different way of experiencing and accessing – and crucially also for producing – works of art by a group of established artists known predominantly for large-scale paintings and sculptures.

First published in 1972, also as an accompaniment to an exhibition, Germano Celant’s *Book as Artwork 1960/1972* argues that artist’s books ‘should not be read exclusively in relation to the communicational intentions of the medium, but in relation to a need to consider systematically a medium as an appendage of individuality and subjectivity.’⁹² Categorising the artist’s book both as a work of art and form of communication, Celant stresses the medium as an important space for experimentation and resistance, particularly for contemporaneous Fluxus and conceptual artists working during the 1960s and early 1970s. Since Celant’s early analysis of these works, they have continued to be read as radical ways of testing the conceptual and formal possibilities of art, and as sites of institutional critique.⁹³ Celant’s text is often

⁹² Germano Celant, *Book as Artwork 1960/1972* (1972) (Brooklyn: 6 Decades Books, 2010), 16.

⁹³ See for example Kate Linker’s analysis of the artist’s book as ‘the ultimate alternate space’ – ‘an artspace *beyond space* as a counter both to the commercially-limited object and to the

heralded as the first theorisation of the medium, and artist's books produced after 1960 seem to dominate much of the recent literature.⁹⁴ Yet, of course, artists were already appropriating the book format – in the form of collages, photo-essays, intermedial poetry, and other often ephemeral objects – much earlier in the century, and particularly during the interwar period, to test notions of authorship and originality, as well as restrictive categorisations of art.⁹⁵ As Johanna Drucker notes, 'the history of the book as an early 20th-century artform cannot be separated from the agendas of the artistic factions that comprised the historical avant-garde.'⁹⁶ In Germany in particular, Bauhaus and *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Realism) artists' books explored the medium as a way to produce new visual experiences and modes of communication, with photographic series playing a particularly central role.⁹⁷ Pepper Stetler, in her recent

paradox of the public precinct' – in Kate Linker, 'The artist's book as an alternative space,' *Studio International* 195/990 (1/1980): 75-79. Italics in original.

⁹⁴ Arnaud Desjardin notes that Celant's exhibition catalogue was 'chosen as the significant starting date' for his bibliography on artist's books, although he eventually includes two earlier texts. Nothing included in his extensive *The Book on Books on Artist Books* predates 1967. Arnaud Desjardin, 'Introduction,' in *The Book on Books on Artist Books* (London: The Everyday Press, 2011), 4. See also for example, Stephen Bury's *Artists' Books: The Book as a Work of Art, 1963-2000*, although Bury acknowledges that 'a history of the artist's book' should also include earlier examples by 'Blake, Morris, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, Marinetti' as well as works by 'the Russian futurists,' and 'Spanish Ultraism.' Stephen Bury, 'Towards a history of artists' books,' in *Artists' Books: The Book as a Work of Art, 1963-2000* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 2015), 20. Similarly, the long history of the artist's book – and particularly the role of photography in that history – is acknowledged in Hans Dickel's *Künstlerbücher mit Photographie seit 1960* (Hamburg: Maximilian-Gesellschaft, 2008), although all the examples included in the book, as the title suggests, date to after 1960.

⁹⁵ The titles of Riva Castleman's *A Century of Artists' Books*, exh.cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art / Harry N. Abrams, 1994) and Johanna Drucker's *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 2004) speak to pervasiveness of the medium in twentieth-century artistic productions. As Kathryn Brown suggests in her introduction to *The Art Book Tradition in Twentieth-Century Europe*, the medium itself also resists categorisation: 'As artworks produced in a wide variety of physical styles, employing diverse visual media, and testing traditional notions of authorial control, artists' books challenge recognizable categories and solicit a range of interpretive approaches.' Kathryn Brown, 'Introduction,' in *The Art Book Tradition in Twentieth-Century Europe*, edited by Kathryn Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 2.

⁹⁶ Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York City: Granary Books, 2004), 45.

⁹⁷ In *The Photography of Crisis: The Photo Essays of Weimar Germany*, Daniel Magilow argues that the photographic sequences and arrangements of photographs published in magazines, newspapers, as well as books, in Weimar Germany 'ambitiously replicated the

study of Weimar photo-books, argues that artist's books 'were inspired by the potential of modernity and called for utopian outcomes,' and reflect the artists' belief in the transformative potential of the medium.⁹⁸ Five years after Celant's initial analysis of the renewed engagement with and production of artist's books, Lucy Lippard set out the appeal of the medium for her contemporaries:

It [the artist's book] can be visual, verbal, or visual/verbal. With few exceptions, it is all of a piece, consisting of one serial work or a series of closely related ideas and/or images – a portable exhibition. ... Usually inexpensive in price, modest in format and ambitious in scope, the artist's book is also a fragile vehicle for a weighty load of hopes and ideals; it is considered by many the easiest way out of the art world and into the heart of a broader audience.⁹⁹

As I will outline in the following three chapters, the artists' books in this thesis react to and appropriate both avant-garde and postwar explorations of the book format – including the critical and transformative potential of the medium highlighted by both – at least partially in response to contemporaneous debates regarding the 'neo-avant-garde' and the institutionalisation of avant-garde strategies, particularly by Buchloh and Bürger.¹⁰⁰ They do so specifically through images that intentionally register as intimate and private; 'self-portraits' staged within the context of the family and the home.

functions and effects of traditional written language,' resulting in a profound shift in 'how we understand text and image.' Photo essays, so Magilow, not only allowed their producers to 'tell stories, make arguments, communicate ideas,' but also 'persuade listeners to see, think, and ultimately act in new ways.' Daniel Magilow, *The Photography of Crisis: The Photo Essays of Weimar Germany* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 4-5.

⁹⁸ Pepper Stetler, *Stop Reading! Look! Modern Vision and the Weimar Photographic Book* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2015), 14.

⁹⁹ Lucy R. Lippard, 'The Artist's Book Goes Public' (*Art in America* 65, 1977), in Lucy R. Lippard, *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984), 48.

¹⁰⁰ Bürger's influential *Theorie der Avantgarde (Theory of the Avant-Garde)*, published in Germany in 1974, as well as Buchloh's later delineations of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde strategies, are particularly central to these debates, and discussed repeatedly in this thesis.

It is significant that these publications were created alongside exhibitions. Polke and Richter's two-man show at August Haseke's newly opened galerie h in Hannover provided the artists with the unique opportunity to produce a publication early in their careers. Baselitz's works brought together in *Sächsische Motive* all stem from the early to mid 1970s, although they weren't published as part of a book until 1985, when they were shown at the Daadgalerie (German Academic Exchange Service gallery) in Berlin. Genzken and Richter's collaborative publication from 1987 was facilitated by a joint exhibition at Galleria Pieroni in Rome, where they had already shown together in 1983. Although strikingly different in many ways, their artists' books consist of similarly modest interventions that allowed the artists to raise important questions regarding the making, displaying, and distribution of art. As Andrea Fraser has outlined, beginning in the late 1960s, the 'institution of art' and its critique included not only 'all sites in which art is shown – from museums to galleries to corporate offices and collectors' homes' – but also sites of production of art, including the studio, as well as 'the sites of the production of art discourse: art magazines, catalogues...'¹⁰¹ Artists including Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Marcel Broodthaers offered far more radical critiques than those explored in this thesis.¹⁰² Fraser has emphasised how Haacke's institutional critique 'engaged the "institution"' as a network of social and economic relationships, making visible the complicities among the apparently opposed spheres of art, the state, and corporations.'¹⁰³ Haacke's

¹⁰¹ Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,' *Artforum* 44/1 (September 2005), 103.

¹⁰² For a short overview of the artistic practices from the 1960s and 1970s considered exemplary forms of institutional critique, see Alexander Alberro, 'Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique,' in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 2-19. The anthology also includes some of the early, foundational texts by Buren, Haacke and Broodthaers, including Buren's 'The Function of the Studio' (1971), discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁰³ Fraser, 105.

artistic practice and critique relied on exposing and questioning these relationships, and how artists and institutions ‘participate jointly in the maintenance and/or development of the ideological make-up of their society.’¹⁰⁴ As he famously concluded in 1974: ‘They work within that frame, set the frame and are being framed.’¹⁰⁵ Seth Siegelaub’s subversive reimagining of catalogues as exhibitions (displayed in a private apartment), as in the case of *Douglas Huebler* (1968), questions the socio-economic conditions under which art was being produced, displayed and sold, in ways that this project’s artists’ books-catalogues do not.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the productions considered here are reacting to similar questions concerning the institutionalisation and commodification of avant-garde strategies, and avant-garde aims to integrate and unify art and everyday life.

In West Germany, cultural producers tied these questions to contemporaneous debates regarding the social role of art, artists and exhibitions. Haacke lamented what he understood as ‘a great retreat to a private cocoon,’ arguing that: ‘as soon as a work enjoys larger exposure it inevitably participates in public discourse ... at that point, artworks are no longer a private affair. The producer and the distributor must then weigh the impact.’¹⁰⁷ In his study of exhibitions as an artistic medium and critical form, James Voorhies outlines how *documenta 5* (1972) included an exploration of the

¹⁰⁴ Hans Haacke, ‘All the art that’s fit to show’ (1974), in *Museums by Artists*, edited by AA Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 152.

¹⁰⁵ Haacke, ‘All the art that’s fit to show,’ 152.

¹⁰⁶ *Douglas Huebler* (1968) was Siegelaub’s first ‘catalogues-as-exhibitions.’ The catalogue included a statement by Huebler, a list of fifteen work, drawings, and images of the artist’s sculptural practice. As Sara Marinetti has noted: ‘Legend has it that several people went to Siegelaub’s apartment showrooms at 1100 Madison Avenue, hoping to see an exhibition that had no physical existence apart from the catalogue.’ Sara Marinetti, ‘Chronology,’ in *Seth Siegelaub: Beyond Conceptual Art*, exh. cat., edited by Leontine Colewij and Sara Martinetti (Amsterdam / Cologne: Stedelijk Museum / Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2016), 100.

¹⁰⁷ Hans Haacke, ‘Museums, managers of consciousness’ (1984), in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings*, edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 281.

institutional legitimisation of art, and how ‘art was made public by the instruments of film, books, television, and magazines, alongside more traditional modes of distribution like museums and exhibitions.’¹⁰⁸ Joseph Beuys’ *Bureau for Direct Democracy, through Referendum*, which ran throughout the exhibition, emphasised counter-institutional artistic practices as tools for ‘political and social change.’¹⁰⁹ As I highlight in Chapter Two, the construction of reality and its potential affirmation by artists was central to the thematic conception of *documenta 5*, and included Harald Szeemann’s curatorial aim to illuminate the social dimension of art and exhibitions. Walter Grasskamp has written of Szeemann’s investigation of display (and collecting) as a way to ‘touch upon the question as to what contribution *things* make to the *identity* of the person who possesses them, the question of the *biographical role of property*.’¹¹⁰ Exhibitions as part of a process of ‘bearing witness to individual attempts to establish a place for oneself in this world.’¹¹¹ While the exhibitions themselves did not always include a display of their familial works, one of the central arguments of this thesis is that Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz used the accompanying catalogues as a way to socialise their art through domesticated portraits of themselves, friends, and lovers. By domesticating forms of distribution and production – relocating the studio into living, dining and bath rooms, and even reimagining the studio as bedroom – the artists considered by this project critically reframed questions regarding the making and

¹⁰⁸ As Voorhies outlines, curator Harald Szeemann ‘polemicized the question of what was appropriate for the site of the institution by combining fine art with everyday objects and actions inside the Fridericianum and Neue Galerie, challenging the museum’s traditional authority in assigning value to visual culture. What he did, however, at least from [Robert] Smithson’s and other artists’ perspectives, was produce something even more restrictive.’ James Voorhies, *Beyond objecthood: The exhibition as a critical form since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017), 22.

¹⁰⁹ Voorhies, 92.

¹¹⁰ Walter Grasskamp, ‘Artists and Other Collectors,’ translated by Peter Marsden, in *Museums by Artists*, edited by AA Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 130. Italics in original.

¹¹¹ Grasskamp, 130.

circulation of art via the familial. As I argue in the following chapters, they repeatedly fail to provide answers to the questions they raise, yet their failure is both commonplace and productive.



Chapter One ‘Domesticating the Artist-Hero’ consists of a case study focused on the collaborative artists’ book *polke/richter richter/polke*. Contextualising the artists’ book within contemporaneous socio-political debates regarding the family provides the opportunity to introduce and elaborate the politicisation and commercialisation of the familial in postwar West Germany, and its ideological appropriation during the Cold War. My analysis of the artists’ book focuses on Polke and Richter’s staging of multiple identities – including familial and artistic – and their appropriation of petit bourgeois family photography. By thinking through their artists’ book in the context of contemporary discussions of the petit bourgeoisie, family photography and consumerism by cultural theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and Herbert Marcuse, Chapter One introduces and situates my thesis’ focus on visualisations of the familial and domestic in West German cultural productions.

Chapter Two ‘Georg Baselitz’s *Bedroom(s)*’ is conceived both as a response to attempts by the artist and numerous critics to limit discussions of his work to formalist, media-specific, and self-reflexive concerns around painting, as well as an attempt to reframe his artist’s book *Saxon Motifs* and extensive, continuous reworkings of his self-portraits with his wife Elke Kretzschmar from the 1970s. Baselitz’s *Bedroom* series not only queries the fantasy of the myth of the heroic artist, his portraits

also test the critical potential of intimate motifs and spaces bound up with an articulation of self and state within the supposedly ‘private’ sphere of the family and home. The chapter explores how Baselitz’s serial self-portraiture, read alongside a new genre of autobiography, *Väterliteratur*, can be understood as similar reassessments of the 1970s fraught trifecta of (artistic) autonomy, realism and subjectivity through an exploration of familial and domestic self-fashionings. And how, in turn, these works address and question contemporaneous conceptions of autonomy and authenticity, which are contextualised within the larger West German cultural debates regarding the relationship between images and reality. As I outline in this chapter, Baselitz has repeatedly returned to his double portraits with Elke to engage with and explore the limitations of his medium and genre. His inverted portraits showcase the convoluted process of ‘reading’ and interpreting (auto-)biographical images.

Chapter Three ‘*Künstlerehepaar: I(sa).G(enzken).G(erhard).R(ichter).*’ utilises the Weimarian model and avant-garde conception of the *Künstlerehepaar* (artist-couple) to frame my analysis of a series of photographic portraits from the 1980s, one of the significant, but rarely recognised, collaborative works made by Genzken and Richter during their relationship. I argue that their double portraits and particularly the use of these as part of a gallery exhibition – in the form of the catalogue-cum-artists’ book, as well as invitation cards – work to highlight, parody and challenge the commodification of intimate relationships. Through their artists’ book, Genzken and Richter construct a collaborative identity as an artist-couple (‘I.G.G.R.’) that blurs the dichotomised spaces of home and work, while they explore the artist’s studio as a potentially radical domestic space. I argue that their self-fashioning as an artist-couple decentres authorship in multiple ways, and read their

photographs and collaboration as a critical exploration of the postwar artist's dilemma of maintaining or disavowing the modernist aim of collapsing art into life.

CHAPTER ONE

Domesticating the Artist-Hero: *polke/richter richter/polke* (1966)

Three black-and-white photographs show the same six individuals in three different domestic settings (Fig. 16, Fig. 17, Fig. 18). Four adults and two children are depicted outside on the steps and in the doorway of an apartment building; inside at a table set with china and cutlery, finishing what appears to be some coffee and cake; and all together on a couch, a large carpet dominating the foreground of the photograph, while the dining table from the previous image protrudes into the scene from the left. The images seem familiar. The ostensible informality, the central framing and conventional, often frontal, posing, as well as the intimate, domestic settings, recall the visual conventions associated with a typical family snapshot. These images suggest the kind of family photographs that Marianne Hirsch has described as located ‘precisely in the space of contradiction between the myth of the ideal family and the lived reality of family life.’¹ The depicted scenes could be described as *kleinbürgerlich*, German for ‘small bourgeois.’ The photographs portray conventional petit bourgeois family scenes in other words.

Between Petit Bourgeois and Neo-Avant-Garde

In the first photograph, the group has been captured standing outside wearing an assortment of tailored coats, leather shoes, gloves and scarves (Fig. 16). Above the shoulder of the male figure bending down to hold onto the younger child, a ‘10’

¹ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 8.

indicates the building number. Shrubs and some grass on either side of the path leading up to the home, as well as four curtained windows, frame the group. From left to right we see Karin Polke, her son Georg, who is holding the hand of Ema Richter, Gerhard Richter, and to his left Sigmar Polke, holding his daughter Anna. Centrally positioned, the individual figures merge into a collective family unit. Crowded together at the focal point of the image and at the entryway into the home, there are points of physical overlap between each one of the six figures, which turn the individuals into a group. Writing in 1965, the same year the three photographs were taken, Pierre Bourdieu describes the family photograph as ‘an index and an instrument of integration,’ as well as ‘a ritual of the domestic cult, in which the family is both subject and object,’ arguing that photographic practice only exists ‘by virtue of its *family function*.’² According to Bourdieu, family photographs therefore not only function as a form of assimilation, but also serve as documents of such moments of collectivity. Gathered in front of the Richters’ apartment at Bensberger Weg 10 in Düsseldorf, Richter and Polke present their families as an integrated group and the photograph as a manifestation of their collective belonging.³ Yet such collectivism and assimilation also implies conformity – with private, family, and public, social norms. Positioning the family as both subject and object, Richter and Polke stage their familial self-presentation at the physical threshold between public and private space.

In the second photograph, we see the families gathered for coffee and cake (Fig. 17). To the left of the table, Ema, seated on a chair covered with a sheepskin, is looking at the Polkes’ daughter Anna, who is sitting on her father’s lap. Sigmar is

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle Brow Art* (1965), translated by Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), 19. Italics in original.

³ For a full account of this period in Richter’s life, see ‘Chapter Four: Transformation’ in Dietmar Elger’s biography *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, translated by Elizabeth M. Solaro (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 94-123.

seated across from his wife Karin, who is still wearing her coat seen in the previous image, while the shadow of the coffee pot dominates the empty wall space between the two. Georg Polke, the only figure looking out at us, is mostly hidden behind Gerhard who is sipping from a gleaming cup. Behind the figures seated at the table, and taking up the upper half of the photograph, are three paintings, including Polke's *Sausages* (1964) and Richter's *Uncle Rudi* (1965). While the setting domesticates the paintings by embedding them in a familial context, the paintings in turn serve to remove the scene from the conventional settings found in petit bourgeois family albums. The paintings both underscore and negate the purported dichotomy between amateur photography and fine art, and also divide the photograph into juxtaposing halves. The three paintings hung in a neat and ordered row as if part of an exhibition stand in stark contrast to the inadvertent chaos displayed on the dining table below. Yet the more obviously recognisable self-reflexivity of a curated gallery display also serves to highlight the staged, constructed nature of family photographs. Presented as a casual, coincidental snapshot, Georg's direct gaze – like the perfectly arranged paintings – interrupts the scene, acknowledging its construction.

In the third photograph, the group has moved from the table – which can still be spotted on the left – to the couch (Fig. 18). Richter has removed his jacket and appears mid-conversation, possibly even giving a toast, as he raises a glass in his hand. Prominently hung above his head appears to be one of Günther Uecker's nail reliefs. If Richter and Polke's paintings in the previous photograph served as points of interruption in what otherwise appears as a typical petit bourgeois domestic interior, Uecker's work fully debunks the supposedly conventional setting. The work disrupts the staged narrative and homely domesticity, which in turn radically corrupts and

socialises it's 'pure abstraction.'⁴ The chair that Ema was sitting on in the previous image has been moved to the corner next to Polke, as it would have obstructed the image and covered Richter, serving as an additional reminder of the construction of the settings. The back of Polke's head is reflected in the mirror on the wall, which is also reflecting the edge of a window and a bowl of apples, inadvertently creating a momentary still-life within the mirror. The blur along the entire right edge of the photograph, most likely an out-of-focus wall or door, interrupts and frames the viewer's privileged access to the intimate scene, serving as a reminder that family photographs are usually circulated 'within a distinctly private, often familial sphere of consumption.'⁵

Yet these photographs do not appear in a family album. Rather the first image showing the Richters and Polkes outside an apartment building is prominently included in the artists' book *polke/richter richter/polke*, produced in 1966 (Fig. 19). The image is the largest of eleven photographs reproduced in their collaborative work created on the occasion of an exhibition at August Haseke's newly opened galerie h in Hannover (Fig. 20).⁶ The second and third photographs of the families do not feature in the artists' book. Yet they are both included amongst almost one hundred photographs taken at this time, housed in a folder labeled 'Polke Richter' in the Richter Archive in Dresden. Visually the three photographs could very obviously be

⁴ For a concise overview of the politics of non-referential abstraction in postwar Germany, see John-Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines. Art in Germany 1945-1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007), 210-223.

⁵ Catherine Zuromskis, 'On Snapshot Photography: Rethinking Photographic Power in Public and Private Spheres,' in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, edited by J.J. Long, Andrea Noble and Edward Welch (London: Routledge, 2009), 53.

⁶ For the facts relating to Richter and Polke's early meeting, friendship, and rivalry, as well as the organisation of the 1966 exhibition at galerie h, I am much indebted to Dietmar Elger's history of both. See in particular his 'Nachwort' in the exhibition catalogue of *polke/richter richter/polke* held at the Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden in 2014 (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2014), 35-50, and his essay 'galerie h,' translated by Michael Hofmann, in *polke/richter richter/polke* (London: Christie's International, 2014), 17-26.

considered part of a series of images. Nevertheless, the three photographs relate to *polke/richter richter/polke* in three very different ways.⁷ Their connections to the artists' book, to each other and their subsequent distribution and interpretation introduce the major themes I will touch upon in this chapter.⁸ Intriguingly, the third photograph has never been published because Richter, according to his Archive, considers the image 'too private.'⁹ In response, the Archive has argued that the first two photographs of the families are more obviously staged; for example the paintings hanging above the dining room table were never permanently displayed together in either Richter or Polke's apartment. The three photographs have therefore taken on different layers of meaning – private and public, personally and professionally, as familial, domestic objects and as works of art – dichotomies that they both reinforce and expose. As I will argue, *polke/richter richter/polke* similarly challenges these traditional binaries.

⁷ While the first photograph is included in *polke/richter richter/polke*, the second photograph showing the families enjoying cake and coffee is considered to be part of a group of approximately forty source photographs from which Richter and Polke made their final selection. The photograph has been frequently reproduced and almost as frequently erroneously considered one of the eleven photographs included in the artists' book. The third photograph has never been reproduced before.

⁸ No one has explicitly stated which photographs should be considered part of the final selection. Elger, in conversation with Richter, has identified several photographs, including Figure 17, of the families seated at the table, as part of a final selection. However, Richter does not remember exactly which photographs made up the approximately forty photographs from which Polke and him chose eleven. The Archive considers certain photographs, such as Figure 18, as definitively not part of the final forty, due to Richter's refusal to let them be published. Other images in this category include several photographs depicting Polke holding and playing with his daughter Anna, and several close ups of Polke pulling faces, as well as similar close ups of Richter. Kerstin Küster (Gerhard Richter Archiv Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden) in conversation with the author, February 2015.

⁹ Kerstin Küster in conversation with the author, February 2015.

A 'Capitalist Realist' artists' book

In addition to eleven black-and-white photographs, the artists' book also includes reproductions of two paintings – Richter's *Uncle Rudi* (1965) seen in the second photograph discussed above, and Polke's *Bedroom* (1965) – as well as short biographies of the artists, and a text collage, which consists of self-composed texts, as well as passages appropriated from the science fiction novella *Perry Rhodan* and from contemporary newspapers and magazines (Fig. 21, Fig. 22). In a recent interview, Richter emphasised that the artists' book was 'entirely DIY' and described his collaboration with Polke: 'We used to meet up and just have an incredibly good time sticking things together and laughing ourselves silly. And we also took delight in being provocative. Everyone else was making deadly serious catalogues and we poked fun at everything.'¹⁰ As has been suggested elsewhere, Richter and Polke's main interest in participating in the exhibition at Haseke's gallery seems to have been the opportunity to produce a publication.¹¹ While a small exhibition catalogue was published for Richter's 1964 exhibition at René Block's gallery, no formal publication existed yet regarding Polke's work. Neither artist expected any significant sales from the show. However, Haseke, who had just recently opened his gallery, was able to provide the artists with the small catalogue thanks to his father-in-law's printing business. The exhibition was therefore the artists' first opportunity to present themselves through an entirely self-produced publication – to present and construct their public personae as

¹⁰ As quoted in Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'Interview with Gerhard Richter,' in *Gerhard Richter Books*, edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Dieter Schwarz (Dresden/New York: Gerhard Richter Archiv/Gregory R. Miller & Co, 2014), 36.

¹¹ Dietmar Elger cites several letters from Richter to Heiner Friedrich in which Richter mentions the potential publication. Elger also highlights the fact that both Richter and Polke assign the artists' book a prominent position in their oeuvre, as well as in their catalogue raisonné; the artists' book is number 2 in *Sigmar Polke. Die Editionen 1963 – 2000, Catalogue Raisonné, Ostfildern-Ruit 2000* and number 3 in *Gerhard Richter. Editionen 1965 – 2004, Ostfildern-Ruit 2004*. See Elger, 'Nachwort,' 38-39.

artists, as well as present and create new work. The exhibition can also be understood as Richter and Polke's final contribution to Capitalist Realism; a 'movement' under which the two artists aligned themselves starting in 1963, along with fellow Düsseldorf academy students Manfred Kuttner and Konrad Lueg (later known as the gallerist Konrad Fischer).¹² Richter, Polke and Kuttner all lived in East Germany before moving to Düsseldorf, and both Richter and Kuttner were trained in Socialist Realism at the Dresden Kunstakademie. The exhibition poster for Richter and Polke's 1966 show provocatively asks: 'Pop? Capitalist Realism?' without providing a concrete answer, and it would be the last time the artists used the term themselves (Fig. 23).¹³ It would also turn out to be their only two-man exhibition until 2014, four years after Polke's death.¹⁴

The artists' book's title is spread over the front and back cover – the front reading *polke/richter* and the back *richter/polke* – encouraging someone handling the physical object to open it from either end (Fig. 24). Richter has since explained the reasoning behind the title and layout of the artists' book by claiming that: 'Alphabetically, I come second, but I did more of the work, and that's maybe why I

¹² The founding myth surrounding Capitalist Realism includes the countless retold story of how Polke, Richter and Kuttner's first encounter with American Pop Art occurred in 1963 thanks to Lueg, who showed his friends copies of *Art International*. Partially a response to the success of American Pop Art, the artists' participation in Capitalist Realism should also be understood as a shrewd financial decision. Lueg, noticing the individual successes of the members of Gruppe 53 and ZERO, which he attributed to their participation in a group 'movement', successfully convinced his fellow students that they would have more luck securing exhibition spaces, gallery representation and sales as a group. See Lueg's draft letter to city officials asking to rent the empty butcher shop, in which he refers to the foursome as Group 63, later edited out by Richter. Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, 54-55.

¹³ As Stephan Strsembski has noted, the art dealer René Block would continue to use the term Capitalist Realism until he declared its end in 1971. Stephan Strsembski, 'Capitalist Realism?', in *Ganz am Anfang: Richter, Polke, Lueg & Kuttner, sediment 7* (2004), 57.

¹⁴ In 2014, Christie's London put on the first two-man show featuring works by Polke and Richter since the 1966 exhibition. Polke passed away in 2010. The Christie's catalogue also marks the first time that a fully translated English version of the artists' book text was published.

suggested it. But probably the real reason why it came out like that was just to make the catalogue look more unusual.’¹⁵ In many ways, the cover can be understood as a signpost for what the artists’ book reveals inside, challenging various conventions associated with a traditional catalogue, family album, collage and artist’s book. Opening it from the front reveals Polke’s biography and the reproduction of *Bedroom* on the following page, while opening it from the back uncovers Richter’s biography and the reproduction of *Uncle Rudi*. Yet Richter’s biography is semi-fictional, falsely citing Waltersdorf as his birthplace, rather than Dresden where he was actually born in 1932. Richter has explained this fictionalisation by arguing that Waltersdorf sounded much more ‘interesting and mysterious’ than Dresden.¹⁶ Read in context of the eleven photographs included in the artists’ book, which alongside the outdoor family photograph consists of variously staged, often parodic self-portraits, autobiography as both a literary and photographic genre is presented as a performative act of self-invention. And portraiture emerges, as Marcia Pointon has described it, as a ‘manifest blend of fact, fiction and familiarity.’¹⁷

Although the photographs in *polke/richter richter/polke* do not have any captions, the title of their artists’ book seems to declare the main subject of their work rather boldly. At first glance, the photographs seem to further confirm the autobiographical subject matter of their collaboration. Opening the artists’ book from the front, we see: Richter sleeping on a couch; a stern looking Richter wearing a particularly silly hat; Richter and Polke taking a bath; the picture of the two families

¹⁵ As quoted in Dietmar Elger, ‘galerie h,’ in *polke/richter richter/polke* (London: Christie’s International, 2014), 20.

¹⁶ Elger, ‘Nachwort,’ 40. It is worth noting that Richter has been rather ambivalent about his training and artistic formation in East Germany. Richter purposefully distanced himself from the works he created in Dresden once he defected to West Germany in 1961.

¹⁷ Marcia Pointon, *Portrayal and the Search for Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 26.

outside; Polke and Richter walking through a garden gate; Richter apparently naked except for a sheepskin wrapped around his torso; a closely cropped image of Richter and Polke looking out at us; Polke with bits of tape stuck on his face; Polke interacting with an outdoor sculpture; Polke hanging off a tree branch in a cemetery, and a final photograph of Polke and Richter crouching under some shrubs in a park (Figs. 25 - 33). These performative and often humorous images are representative of the complex fabrication, staging and collapsing of multiple roles that Richter and Polke construct and act out across their collaborative work. In *Memoirs of the Blind. The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, Jacques Derrida argues that: ‘if what is called a self-portrait depends on the fact that it is called “self-portrait,” an act of naming should allow or *entitle* me to call just about anything a self-portrait ... anything that happens to me, anything by which I can be affected or let myself be affected.’¹⁸ If one considers the photographs self-portraits, then Polke and Richter seem to take Derrida’s definition to the extreme both through their images and their text. According to Derrida, self-portraits always retain ‘a hypothetical character’ because they are dependent upon a ‘verbal event that does not belong to the inside of the work,’ that ‘calls the third to witness.’¹⁹ Although Richter and Polke perform ‘the act of naming’ themselves – through their chosen title – their public presentation of their artists’ book calls upon a larger public to witness their acts of self-invention and self-imaging, to signify meanings. Derrida’s text specifically analyses the process of drawing a self-portrait, arguing that every self-portrait is a reflection of past, present and future selves, and therefore a *memoir*. And although photographs, particularly family photographs, are often considered similar

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind. The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, exh. cat., translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 65. Italics in original.

¹⁹ Derrida, 64.

memorialisations, the obvious performativity of Richter and Polke's staging of multiple identities destabilises the authenticity of their photographs as memories. Yet while Richter and Polke do not literally 'trace' their various performative roles on paper, their staged photographs do depend on a witnessing viewer; and therefore 'appear,' as Derrida describes self-portraits, 'in the reverberation of several voices.'²⁰

The text collage included in *polke/richter richter/polke* similarly consists of numerous 'voices.' The original manuscript edition sent to the printer allows, thanks to colour-coded markings in the margins – green for citations, red for manipulated or self-composed texts – and differences in paper, for the various elements of the text collage to be identified (Fig. 34).²¹ The printer manuscript also emphasises the painstakingly detailed decisions made by Polke and Richter regarding every element of their collaboration, including the array of textual fragments incorporated in their artists' book. Certain snippets of their text collage seem to come straight from tabloid magazines or advice columns, with confessional references to alcoholic husbands and difficult relationships. 'My husband likes a drink,' starts one paragraph in the artists' book, '... that's what makes him so popular among friends and colleagues – but less so with me and his family.'²² Another page in *polke/richter richter/polke* includes a woman's description of her daily life:

I have a great deal of time on my hands because I am alone. My husband died two years ago, and my two sons are both married. My life revolved around those three men. ... Following lively and

²⁰ Derrida, 64.

²¹ Polke's contributions are on lighter paper than Richter's often lengthy typed quotations. Some of Richter's contributions are based on earlier texts by the artist, see Gerhard Richter, 'Notes, 1964-1965,' in *Gerhard Richter Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 - 2007*, edited by Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 29-35.

²² Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke* (1966), translated by Michael Hofmann, in *polke/richter richter/polke* (London: Christie's International, 2014), 38. All cited quotations from their text collage come from Hofmann's translation. There are three publications all entitled *polke/richter richter/polke*, including the original 1966 artists' book, the 2014 Christie's publication, as well as the Walther König publication also from 2014.

stimulating pastimes, I like to meditate. I sit very still and relive the wonderful times I had with my husband and sons.²³

These female voices act to counter and complicate the flamboyant posturing of the two male artists, and highlight problematically stereotyped, negative constructions of female identity. The texts also merge accounts of domestic life and the mythologising construction of artistic identity. For example, the paragraph focused on the widow, is followed immediately by the deliberately absurd sentence authored by the pair: 'We cannot depend on good paintings being made one day: we need to take the matter into our own hands!'²⁴ Followed a few sentences later by: 'In all my life I have never snored, no matter what the tape machine claims. I know that good painters don't snore.'²⁵ The artists' book also includes parodic advice, such as: 'If someone wants to become a painter, he needs to consider first whether he wouldn't be better suited to some other activity: teacher, minister, professor, manual worker, assembly line, because only truly great people can paint!'²⁶ The discordant narratives function in a similarly disruptive manner as the photographs. By negating a linear reading of the text by offering overlapping, and contrasting voices, the collage text, like the photographs, encourages the identification of the various 'characters' presented throughout *polke/richter richter/polke*.

Dispersed throughout the book, and making up the majority of the sourced text, are fragments from various issues of the multi-authored science-fiction series *Perry Rhodan*. Richter has recounted their interest in the weekly sci-fi novels: 'in those days we couldn't wait to get our hands on anything that other people dismissed as vulgar,

²³ Polke and Richter, 31.

²⁴ Polke and Richter, 31.

²⁵ Polke and Richter, 31.

²⁶ Polke and Richter, 35.

that didn't count as literature.'²⁷ His comment however, does not do the series' popularity justice, which was not only the bestselling sci-fi series in West Germany, but also in the world, with over one billion copies sold since its initial publication in 1961. Every page of the collage text includes at least one reference to the series, which centres on American astronaut Perry Rhodan's adventures as 'Grand Administrator of the Solar Empire.' In the series, Rhodan repeatedly saves Earth from self-destruction, while also participating in intergalactic warfare. Rhodan is eventually granted immortality and continues to battle aggressive aliens over several millennia. Exemplary of the appropriated passages found in the artists' book is the following fragment, which comes right before the paragraph focused on the daily life of the widow quoted previously:

One of the Epsals, 1.60 meters tall but almost as wide, stomped up with echoing strides and stopped in front of Perry Rhodan. He wore the standard uniform, but was carrying an unusually heavy disintegrator as well as an impulse blaster; an earthling would have needed both hands to carry it.²⁸

Other fragments reference Rhodan's famous spaceship: 'All the nuclear engines of the CREST II were failing. That meant CREST II would fall. Bang in the middle of the battlefield outside the city.'²⁹ The artists even edited some of the passages in order to insert themselves as characters into the plotline: 'The heavy armoured bulkhead of the airlock slid almost inaudibly into the hulls of the vessel. Perry Rhodan, Polke and Captain Richter strode through the space that was left by the two lines of Epsalic commandos.'³⁰ Through their appropriations, Polke and Richter playfully align themselves with a decisively masculine and heroic fictional hero. Yet, such theatrical

²⁷ As quoted in Obrist, 34.

²⁸ Polke and Richter, 31.

²⁹ Polke and Richter, 34.

³⁰ Polke and Richter, 31.

self-fashioning only underscores the absurdity of assuming such a stereotyped and fictionalised masculinity, which stands in obvious contrast to the female voices adopted throughout the artists' book, as well as to the images that depict mundane domestic scenes or infantilise the artists. Yet by juxtaposing conventional codes of masculinity and femininity in a hyper performative manner, and by adopting contrasting gendered identities, Richter and Polke subvert societal gender norms. The absurd contradictions, collaborative performances and divergent voices included in the artists' book displace any potentially uniform, singular male authorship and wed the production of artistic identities to both hypermasculine sci-fi fantasy and the social relations that constitute family life. The artists exploit the comedic impact of their work to question and challenge traditional conceptions of the artist. Reading the *polke/richter richter/polke* self and double portraits alongside the text collage emphasises the performativity of Richter and Polke's self-staging, highlighting the fictiveness of the various personae they adopt across their artists' book.

'The best catalogue that ever – anyway up to now – has been made'

In the vast literature focused on Richter and Polke, their early artists' book has been largely neglected. Albeit brief, Jeanne Anne Nugent's discussion of *polke/richter richter/polke* in her unpublished dissertation is one of the rare examples in which the work is contextualised within Capitalist Realism. Nugent notes that by 1966 'the group itself had been pared down to Polke and Richter.'³¹ She understands many of Richter's works from this period, including *Uncle Rudi*, as a way for the artist to 'document biographical and historical relationships through a private and psychological

³¹ Jeanne Anne Nugent, *Family Album and Shadow Archive: Gerhard Richter's East, West, and All German Painting, 1949-1966* (Doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 270.

preoccupation with resettlement issues.’³² Similarly to Nugent, Christine Mehring sees the artists’ book, along with Richter’s 1968 collaboration with Uecker in *Living in the Museum*, as a sort of culmination ‘on Richter’s approach to the notion of “home.”’³³ Referencing the artists’ defection to the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany), Mehring argues that their collaborations were ways of addressing ‘the divided world that Richter and so many *Spätaussiedler* and *Republiksflüchtlinge* experienced and that had brought about their need to define and create a sense of home to begin with.’³⁴ Mehring’s text on Richter’s early collaborations includes a slightly expanded discussion of the artists’ book, consisting of a constructive analysis of the work’s reflection ‘on the status of art and artists’ and how the work ‘ironically mocked the traditional image of artists as important and powerful geniuses.’³⁵ Robert Storr’s very brief mention of the artists’ book argues that ‘the photographs of the pair ... amount to performance pieces.’³⁶ Dietmar Elger’s various discussions of the artists’ book can be described most succinctly as providing detailed historiographies of the work, including insightful citations and elaborations of personal letters and various other documents, such as the invitations and printer manuscripts, related to the exhibition. In their history of Capitalist Realism in *How It All Began*, Günter Herzog and Stephan Strsembski similarly reference a vast array of documentation relating to the ‘movement,’ as well as to the 1966 exhibition, including a typically parodic letter from

³² Nugent, 255.

³³ Christine Mehring, ‘East or West, Home is Best: Friends, Family and Design in Richter’s Early Years,’ in *Gerhard Richter. Panorama. A Retrospective*, exh. cat., edited by Mark Godfrey and Nicholas Serota, with Dorothée Brill and Camille Morineau (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 40.

³⁴ Mehring, ‘East or West, Home is Best,’ 40.

³⁵ Christine Mehring, ‘Richter’s Collaborations, Richter’s Turns, 1955-1971,’ in *Gerhard Richter: Early Work 1951-1972*, edited by Christine Mehring, Jeanne Anne Nugent, and Jon L. Seydl (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010), 100.

³⁶ Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002) 30.

Polke to Haseke in which Polke describes the artists' book as 'the best catalogue that ever – anyway up to now – has been made. It will be a cultural political event of the first rank and of international significance.'³⁷ Yet none of the art historians offer an extended interpretation of the work.³⁸

While numerous of the eleven photographs that were included in the artists' book, particularly the one of the two artists taking a bath, have been reproduced in various publications, they are rarely identified as being part of a collaborative and artistic material production. Rather they are usually taken at 'face-value,' as actual family snapshots, their obvious performativity ignored and used instead to illustrate mentions of Richter and Polke's friendship without any reference to the book. Similarly, fragments taken from the text collage have been variously quoted in a range of books, articles and catalogues, frequently without a reference to their source. Instead of acknowledging their context within an often nonsensical, parodic and fictional text, quotes from the book have been repeatedly cited as independent artist's statements.³⁹ Sentences from the artists' book such as 'I am averagely healthy, averagely tall (172

³⁷ As quoted in Günther Herzog, 'How it All Began,' in *Ganz am Anfang: Richter, Polke, Lueg & Kuttner. sediment 7* (2004), 41.

³⁸ Not even the lengthy exhibition catalogue *Living with Pop. A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism* includes much more than an introductory paragraph summarising the artists' book. Of the more than ten essays, only two mention the artists' book. In his discussion of the photograph showing the Polkes and Richters having coffee and cake, Mark Godfrey erroneously claims that it was 'first published in the artist's book that Richter and Polke made on the occasion of their *polke/richter* show at galerie h,' a mistake repeated in the caption of the reproduced photograph. Mark Godfrey, 'Sparkling Wine, Fast Cars, Smiley Apples, Palm Trees, Apparitions and a Family Tea. Richter and Polke, 1963-1966,' in *Living with Pop. A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism*, exh. cat., edited by Elodie Evers, Magdalene Holzhey and Gregor Jansen (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2013), 236. Mehring has also mistakenly claimed that this photograph is included in the artists' book. See her reference to 'photographs of their families (gathered for coffee and cake)' in her description of the images included in the artists' book in her essay 'East or West, Home is Best,' 41.

³⁹ Dietmar Rübél suggests the artists might have themselves encouraged this quotation of fragments as artists' statements when he writes that Polke 'made use of his pithy statements decades later.' Rübél, 'Everything is wrong... On the Use of Image and Text in Capitalist Realism,' in *Living with Pop. A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism*, exh. cat., edited by Elodie Evers, Magdalene Holzhey and Gregor Jansen (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2013), 245.

cm) and averagely attractive. I mention it because you have to look like that to paint good pictures,' have been cited without their context.⁴⁰ Directly after a paragraph taken from *Perry Rhodan* with references to aliens and space crafts, Richter and Polke's collage text includes the following statement: 'To me, some amateur snapshots are better than Cézanne. It's not a question of painting good pictures, because painting is a moral act.'⁴¹ This fragment in particular shows up repeatedly in the Richter literature as an independent artist's statement.⁴² Such use of the material contained within the artists' book can therefore reproduce and reinforce the very mythologising and aggrandising artistic identities Richter and Polke seem intent on parodying. Already two months after their exhibition opened at galerie h in 1966, in the introduction to a newspaper interview with Richter, another fragment taken from the artists' book – 'I want to be like everyone else, think what everyone else thinks, do what gets done anyway' – is quoted without any references to the work but rather attributed to his 'origin from the other part of Germany.'⁴³ Yet significantly, the fragment included in *polke/richter richter/polke* can be understood as a direct response to Andy Warhol's famous 'What is Pop Art?' interview with Gene Swenson from three years earlier.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Polke and Richter, 34. See for example, Eckhart J. Gillen, 'Is Capitalist Realism in Fact a Socialist Realism?,' in *Living with Pop. A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism*, exh. cat., edited by Elodie Evers, Magdalene Holzhey and Gregor Jansen (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2013), 143.

⁴¹ Polke and Richter, 29.

⁴² See for example, Hal Foster, *The First Pop Age. Painting and Subjectivity in the Art of Hamilton, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Richter, and Ruscha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 174.

⁴³ 'Seine Herkunft aus dem anderen Teil Deutschlands... .' Dieter Hülsmanns, 'Das perfekte Bild. Ateliergespräch mit dem Maler Gerd Richter,' *Rheinische Post*, no. 102 (3.5.1966).

⁴⁴ The published interview opened with Warhol's statement that: 'Someone like Brecht wanted everybody to think alike. I want everybody to think alike. But Brecht wanted to do it through Communism, in a way. Russia is doing it under government. It's happening here all by itself without being under a strict government; so if it's working without trying, why can't it work without being Communist? Everybody looks alike and acts alike, and we're getting more and more that way. I think everybody should be a machine. I think everybody should like everybody.' As quoted in G.R. Swenson, 'Andy Warhol: Interview with G.R. Swenson' (1963), in *pop art redefined*, edited by John Russel and Suzi Gablik (London: Thames and

The reasons for these frequent misquotations and decontextualisations of both images and text fragments are unclear, yet I would like to propose the medium of the work as a possible explanation. While the paintings, installations and happenings associated with Capitalist Realism have been fully integrated into the artists' oeuvres, the unassuming and ephemeral nature of *polke/richter richter/polke* would seem at least partially responsible for its neglect and misreadings. Consisting of a total number of twenty pages, the flimsy, poorly printed publication is barely held together by its red cardboard cover. Polke and Richter's artists' book is definitively not an *edition de luxe*. Yet it is of course exactly its low-cost production that offered the potential for a wider circulation of the work. As Hans Ulrich Obrist suggested in a recent interview with Richter, 'the book is in fact a very democratic medium. It's the only work of art that anyone can afford.'⁴⁵ An artist's book of the kind that Polke and Richter created therefore seems to want to assume and presume an audience beyond the limitations and restrictions of the gallery and museum. The artists offer the private, familial images included in their artists' book for a public form of consumption beyond the family album, and potentially beyond the confines of cultural institutions.

Polke/richter richter/polke raises several questions and issues I will address in this chapter. The first question is, of course, why Polke and Richter would include within it, photographs more suited for a personal family album alongside more explicit performances, parodies and representations of works of art? How are Richter and Polke questioning and challenging the dichotomy of public versus private? And how

Hudson, 1969), 116. As Jennifer Sichel has argued this statement in particular has 'sustained many of our most rigorous arguments about Warhol's practice, Pop, and postmodernism.' And yet as her recent archival discovery revealed, the Swenson interview was heavily redacted and opened with a discussion of homosexuality, which dramatically alters the meaning of Warhol's frequently cited 'opening' remarks. See Jennifer Sichel, "'Do you think Pop Art's queer?'" Gene Swenson and Andy Warhol,' *Oxford Art Journal* 41/1 (March 2018), 59-83.

⁴⁵ Obrist, 105.

does their artists' book relate to the politics and ideology of the family in Cold War West Germany? What are the effects of their appropriation of conventions typically associated with the family album and their playful and subversive domestication of artistic labour and works of art? How does their obvious staging of conventional family snapshots, along with parodic self-portraits, question the construction of identities – both in terms of private, familial roles and the public, social role of the artist? Hirsch has described subjectivity as 'relational' and 'affiliative' and linked the act of looking at a family photograph to the process of identification and disidentification.⁴⁶ Richter and Polke's appropriation of the conventions of family photography, and their probing of conventions of portraiture – including notions of likeness and type, or what Bernard Berenson described as the difference between a portrait and an effigy – investigates this construction of identity.⁴⁷ As Paul Ginsborg writes in his introduction to *Family Politics*, 'families are subjects as well as objects.'⁴⁸ This is epitomised in many ways by conventional family photography, as well as the process of being photographed, as Roland Barthes spells out in *Camera Lucida*. Barthes describes how 'the Photograph (the one I *intend*) represents the very subtle moment when, to tell the truth, I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object.'⁴⁹ This process, as well as the family photograph positioned as an instrument of self-knowledge and for the construction of identity, described by both Hirsch, and more famously Barthes, is interrogated and made explicit by Richter and Polke. My aim is to outline how they do

⁴⁶ See in particular Hirsch's chapter, 'Masking the Subject,' in *Family Frames*, 79-112.

⁴⁷ The portrait, according to Berenson, is 'the rendering of an individual in terms of decoration, and of the individuality of the inner man as well as of his social standing,' and therefore stands for likeness. An effigy on the other hand portrays the sitter's social role and 'social aspects.' Bernard Berenson, 'The Effigy and the Portrait,' in *Aesthetics and History* (London: Constable Publishers, 1950), 188.

⁴⁸ Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics. Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival 1900-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), xii.

⁴⁹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), translated by Richard Howard (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 14. Italics in original.

so through their artists' book. This provides the opportunity for a close reading and analysis of Polke and Richter's collaborative project, as well as their participation in and contributions to Capitalist Realism. My analysis of their artists' book focuses on how Richter and Polke constructed and acted out several identities across their work, through the inclusion of a semi-fictional biography, staging of petit bourgeois family imagery, inserting themselves as characters into a science fiction novel, and challenging notions of artistic identity through infantilised and parodic images of themselves. As an extension of this analysis, I examine how Polke and Richter explore subjectivity in Cold War West Germany through a collaborative form of self-portraiture and as tied to social, economic and political understandings and constructions of the familial.

Reading *polke/richter richter/polke*

Family photographs and family albums in particular encourage a very specific way of looking. As Hirsch argues, looking at family photographs entails seeing and identifying individuals and how they 'are constituted as subjects in relation to each other' – mother to son, sister to brother, uncle to niece.⁵⁰ Writing about a childhood photograph of his deceased mother in a now famous passage, Barthes traces this familial way of looking, arguing that:

the Photograph sometimes makes appear what we never seen in a real face (or in a face reflected in a mirror): a genetic feature, the fragment of oneself or of a relative which comes from some ancestor. ... The Photograph gives a little truth... But this truth is not that of the individual, who remains irreducible; it is the truth of lineage.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Hirsch, 5. Italics in original.

⁵¹ Barthes, 103.

Family photographs, usually viewed in sequence in an album, therefore encourage an active looking for resemblances and connections through comparative viewing. The family photograph is then, as Hirsch elaborates, ‘the product of a process of *familiarity* which it illustrates – the exchange of looks that structure the complicated form of self-portraiture which reveals the self as necessarily relational and familial, as well as fragmented and dispersed.’⁵² Richter and Polke’s artists’ book in many ways mimics this act of looking at a family album. However, by encouraging a public consumption of their work – initially at a commercial gallery – the artists negate what is usually a particularly private sphere of consumption. Yet the objectification and fragmentation of the self in family photographs as outlined by Hirsch and Barthes is retained in their staged self-portraits. Their photographs visualise different strategies of staging the self, including through and via the family; interrogating what Derrida describes as the self-portrait’s ‘performative fiction that engages the spectator.’⁵³ Derrida also argues that when looking at a self-portrait, the viewer ‘*observing the work alone,*’ never knows if the artist is depicting ‘*himself or something else* – or even himself *as something else, as other.*’⁵⁴ By contrast, Richter and Polke’s self-portraits rely on the viewer’s recognition of their excessive performativity to stage the self as multiple others, including as infantilised male artist and petit bourgeois family member. The artists re-appropriate the function of family photography, including its affirmation of affiliative identities, to capture generalised subjects, effigies rather than likenesses. By collapsing their identities into a collaborative project, the artists encourage a different kind of serial looking.

⁵² Hirsch, 83.

⁵³ Derrida, 65.

⁵⁴ Derrida, 65. Italics in original.

Flipping through their artists' book encourages a viewer to look for differences and variations, to identify multiple and varied roles and identities. Their artists' book does not present the viewer with a narrative, neither of a family lineage nor fictional storyline. Both their text collage and photographs disrupt any such attempts by only providing textual and visual fragments. Although the photographs depict the same individuals, Polke and Richter are very obviously, and often humorously, acting out various roles, as when Richter is shown naked except for the sheepskin he uses to cover his body, or Polke, wearing a formal suit, hangs off a tree branch, dangling above a number of tombstones. Similarly, their collage text includes nonsensical passages such as the following: 'If it was up to her, all policemen would wear windowpane uniforms, and they would replace the bird of state with plaid. Everyone would carry spotted handkerchiefs.'⁵⁵ By destabilising and re-appropriating the family photograph and family album, Richter and Polke emphasise the role of both as a private site of identity construction and at the same time make explicit the masquerade and fictionalisation involved in such an identity formation contingent on photography. Writing specifically about the photographic portrait, Barthes argues that 'since every photograph is contingent (and thereby outside of meaning), Photography cannot signify (aim at a generality) except by assuming a mask. It is this word which Calvino correctly uses to designate what makes a face into the product of a society and its history.'⁵⁶ Hirsch similarly turns to the idea of the mask, writing that:

on the one hand, the mask is a metaphor for the photograph's power to conceal, for the frustrations of the photograph's surface. On the other hand, we can see the mask as a metaphor for the semiotic lenses or screens through which we read photographs, and through which the images themselves are constructed as objects of social meaning.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Polke and Richter, 38.

⁵⁶ Barthes, 34.

⁵⁷ Hirsch, 85.

Richter and Polke's artists' book, through the re-appropriation of the family album, through the negation of family photography, and through the staging and acting out of multiple identities, unmask these constructions and screens of looking.

Cold War Sci-Fi

Dismissed by Richter as 'vulgar,' *Perry Rhodan* is nevertheless an integral part of the artists' book, as well as integral to Richter and Polke's staging of multiple identities across their work. The series, first published in 1961, focuses on Rhodan, who, along with three fellow American astronauts, is the first man to land on the moon, where they discover an alien spaceship (Fig. 35, Fig. 36). Armed with the superior technology of the Arkondies aliens, Rhodan and his colleagues return to earth, landing their spaceship in the Gobi Desert. After almost starting an atomic war, which they are able to prevent thanks to their newly discovered super technology, Rhodan proclaims a 'neutral' Third Power with himself as its leader, which sees him and his crew declared enemies by the 'Western' and 'Eastern blocs,' the latter of which also includes the 'Asiatic Federation.' The parallels between the ideologically divided world depicted in *Perry Rhodan* and the political reality experienced by West Germans during the 1960s are manifold and unmistakable. Read in context of a divided Germany and the threat of a nuclear war in light of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, *Perry Rhodan* reflects a distinctly Cold War era. References to 'the roaring of the unleashed nuclear thrusters' and 'blinding bursts of energy,' to 'the inferno,' and an 'approaching catastrophe,' found throughout the *Rhodan* fragments cited in *polke/richter richter/polke*, are not only indicative of their sci-fi source, but also of real Cold War

anxieties.⁵⁸ A 1965 cover story from the widely circulated *Spiegel* magazine begins with a lengthy fictional scenario in which French nuclear bombers prevent a Third World War (Fig. 37). The exaggerated language, references to heroic fighter pilots and cataclysmically destructive weapons which will make the enemy – in this case the Soviet Union – ‘tremble,’ mirror the apocalyptic adventures described in *Perry Rhodan*.⁵⁹ Such fears were not only evoked by sci-fi novels and sensationalist media stories; Herbert Marcuse’s 1964 *One Dimensional Man*, a text to which I will return in more detail, opens with the following question: ‘Does not the threat of an atomic catastrophe which could wipe out the human race also serve to protect the very forces which perpetuate this danger?’⁶⁰ Throughout his book Marcuse repeatedly refers to the ‘very real possibility of nuclear war,’ the ‘threatening nuclear war’ and the ‘brinkmanship of annihilation.’⁶¹ Several of the sourced fragments included in the artists’ book therefore evoke the historically and culturally very specific context of Cold War West Germany. Capitalist Realism, and particularly *polke/richter richter/polke*, must be understood in this context.

Style & Technique: Familial Identities

Richter and Polke not only take on alternate identities such as ‘Captain Richter’ in *Perry Rhodan*’s parallel universe, the artists also assume their distinct painting styles as autonomous identities. The second page of their text collage includes the following characteristically nonsensical passage:

I love dots. I am married to many dots. I support happiness for dots.

⁵⁸ Polke and Richter, 29, 36, 32.

⁵⁹ ‘Rüstung/ Force de Frappe. Keule im Keller,’ in *Der Spiegel*, no. 48 (24.11.1965), 112-130.

⁶⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1964), ix.

⁶¹ Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, xiii.

The dots are my brothers. (I am a dot as well). We used to play together, today we have gone our separate ways. We meet at family occasions and ask each other: how's it going?
'You know, Elly', he said perfectly calmly, 'we are only allowed to love things that have no style, e.g. dictionaries, photographs, nature, me and my pictures!' I sighed: 'How right you are. Style is an act of violence, and we are not violent, and ...' '...and we don't want war', he ended for me, 'no more wars!'⁶²

The sentences on dots have frequently been linked to Polke, particularly as he was creating his *Rasterbilder* at the time, while the references to style have since been quoted as an artist's statement by Richter. Nugent has argued that through these statements, the artists 'provocatively asked' their audience 'to believe they had become their work' and that the two artists were literally identifying themselves with their distinctive styles.⁶³ I would further argue that mirroring their appropriation of conventions of family photography throughout the artists' book, Richter and Polke, by referencing family and friends and linking them to their stylistic choices, make familial their work process. Their artistic styles are socialised by being cast in terms of familial relations. Combined with the subsequent quotation on the violence of style, Richter and Polke's artists' book could be read as placing the fraught postwar battles of abstraction versus figuration, modernism versus realism – what Andreas Huyssen has described as the 'political codification of Cold War aesthetics' – in a provocative, and familial context.⁶⁴ Capitalist Realism itself of course – as a label and expression – is a direct response to and reflection of this politically reinforced dichotomy, existing as it were only in relation to the unnamed, yet always implied Other – Socialist Realism. Its impact and parodic potential relies on a basic awareness of the politics of

⁶² Polke and Richter, 29.

⁶³ Nugent, 270.

⁶⁴ Andreas Huyssen, 'Figures of Memory in the Course of Time,' in *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures*, exh. cat., edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, 2009), 225.

representation in a divided Germany. Polke and Richter suggest the family and the domestic as a site for reimagining and re-contextualising the postwar ‘crisis of representation’ in both provocative and personal, private terms.

By making their techniques familial, and by literally *bringing home* their artistic production – by staging and taking their photographs in and around the home – Richter and Polke domesticate both their labour and their works. Of the eleven photographs reproduced in *polke/richter richter/polke*, eight depict the two artists in and around the home. If we add the reproduction of Polke’s painting *Bedroom*, almost seventy percent of the images included in the artists’ book have a domestic setting. The majority of the photographs found in the archival folder related to the collaboration similarly depict the artists in the living, dining and bath rooms of an apartment, as well as in the kitchen (Fig. 38, Fig. 39). Polke’s children appear in several of them, including in the photograph of Polke with tape stuck to his face. The blurred outline of the artist’s son Georg can be seen leaning against the doorframe in the background of the image. Tables, chairs, a couch, tea sets and cutlery, amongst a ray of other typical domestic items, also appear in many of the photographs. Despite the unremarkable nature of these objects, domestic consumer goods became the site of key political disputes and tools of propaganda during the Cold War. Epitomised by the frequently cited ‘kitchen debate,’ which took place between Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon in 1959, consumer products, along with the family, ‘became the contested subject of competing ideological systems.’⁶⁵ Seen in context of the Cold War repoliticisation and objectification of the family as a consumer, Richter and Polke’s

⁶⁵ Sarah E. James, ‘A Family Affair: Photography, the Cold War and the Domestic Sphere,’ in *Photoworks Annual: Issue 20: Family Politics*, edited by Ben Burbridge and Celia Davies (Brighton: Photoworks, 2013), 166.

comic self-stagings parody and expose prevailing and powerful ideology-based forms of identity construction.

The Family: A Cold War Pawn

During a *Bundestag* session in 1959, CDU politician Bernhard Winkelheide declared the family ‘the central problem of the postwar era.’⁶⁶ Although writing specifically about Britain, Juliet Mitchell’s characterisation of war as ‘powerfully antithetical to the characteristics of the family under advanced capitalism,’ rang true for the German family as well.⁶⁷ Particularly in West Germany, this crisis of the family – what Mitchell has described as the ‘wartime de-structuring and post-war re-structuring of the family’ – was instrumentalised to ensure the legal affirmation of the bourgeois nuclear family.⁶⁸ The family and the family home were, once again, central to the articulation of class and gender, as well as national identity. ‘Restoring the family’ back to its prewar bourgeois family model, along with its binary sexual division of labour, became ‘a central part of a larger agenda for social and political reconstruction’ in West Germany.⁶⁹ Laws, particularly Article 3 and 6 of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) of 1949, were used to re-inscribe the sexual division of labour, legally defining the family and gender through access to labour and consumption.⁷⁰ Although Article 3 gave women constitutionally guaranteed equal rights, specific labour laws continued to restrict married women’s access to paid labour outside the home, as well as making it

⁶⁶ As quoted in Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood. Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

⁶⁷ Juliet Mitchell, ‘Social Psychotherapy and Post-war London,’ in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism. A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 227.

⁶⁸ Mitchell, 227.

⁶⁹ Moeller, 14.

⁷⁰ For a detailed discussion of the *Grundgesetz*, particularly Article 3 and 6, see Moeller’s second chapter ‘Constitution Political Bodies. Gender and the Basic Law,’ in *Protecting Motherhood*, 38-75.

dependent on a husband's consent. Essentially this meant that while women's rights were guaranteed in the public sphere, they were not considered equal within the private sphere of the family. Masculine and feminine identities were therefore (legally) bound to, constructed and defined via the family, which in turn re-established dichotomies of public and private spheres with the associated gendered division of labour. The family was inscribed as a 'moral institution' and 'the organic basis of state and society,' with politicians arguing that Soviet style equality 'would lead to the destruction of the family, as women were compelled to work in occupations for which they were unsuited, and would deny women the possibility of fulfilling their obligations as wives and mothers.'⁷¹ Additionally, the family, through laws and economic policies passed in the 1950s and 1960s, was promoted as essential to postwar national recovery. Political debates about a family wage (for male wage-earners) and government subsidised family allowances repeatedly stressed how such measures would increase the consumption of consumer goods, which in turn would stimulate demand, resulting in economic growth and therefore an increase in tax revenue.⁷² 'Woman's housewifely role within a reconstituted West German family was, then,' as Erica Carter has argued, 'promoted not only on moral, cultural and religious grounds but also as a route to economic stabilization.'⁷³ Family politics therefore emphasised the nuclear family not only as essential for a stable social order, but also as the basis of national economic recovery (Fig. 40). It was also used to define a national identity against and distance West Germany from Soviet family models. Mass consumption was used to

⁷¹ Moeller, 48, 57.

⁷² See Moeller's 'Reconstructed Families in Reconstruction Germany,' in his *Protecting Motherhood*, 109-141.

⁷³ Erica Carter, 'Deviant Pleasures? Women, Melodrama, and Consumer Nationalism in West Germany,' in *The Sex of Things. Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, edited by Victoria de Grazia with Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 360.

demonstrate and promote Western ‘superiority’ during the Cold War and actively promoted through economic policies focused on the family, including policies on housing, private spending and transportation.⁷⁴ As Jan L. Logemann has pointedly summarised: ‘the expanding material standard of living became central to the self-definition of both Americans and West Germans in the era of cold war competition.’⁷⁵ Increasingly therefore, consumer goods were seen and promoted both as sites of identification and validation for the construction of national identities, as well as for private, personal identities.

Promoted as such by political and economic policies, the family in West Germany was characterised as the ultimate and idealised space of consumerism. Writing about family photographs, Bourdieu suggests consumer products can have a similar effect within the image world, arguing that ‘the accumulation of consumer durables, the refrigerator, washing-machine or television, contributes to the reinforcement of the family unit.’⁷⁶ Polke and Richter’s revelatory imitations defamiliarise domestic sites of identification and validation through their excessive performativity. By acting out and staging multiple identities, including familial, artistic, as well as collective and collaborative roles, Polke and Richter make explicit the construction of affiliative identities, taking advantage of the liminal and alternative space provided by the artists’ book, situated between the private, domestic consumption associated with the family album and the public accessibility afforded by their low-cost medium. The obvious domestic setting of the images, as well as the grainy snapshot quality of the photographs, recall family photographs. Yet as I have

⁷⁴ Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels. Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 172.

⁷⁵ Jan L. Logemann, *Trams or Tailfins? Public and Private Prosperity in Postwar West Germany and the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 21.

⁷⁶ Bourdieu, 28.

argued, despite their setting and conventional, often frontal pose, the obvious performativity of the ‘roles’ they have chosen to depict, negates traditional expectations of family photographs. Similar to characterisations of Cold War consumer goods, Hirsch has proposed family photographs as instruments of self-knowledge, as inscriptions of family life and perpetuations of familial ideology.⁷⁷ Polke and Richter’s photographs resist each of these by making their construction explicit. *Polke/richter richter/polke*, as well as several other Capitalist Realist works, deconstruct and unveil the material conditions and contradictions of identity construction under postwar capitalism.

Horror in the Living Room

Polke and Richter’s self-reflexive exploration of the familial must be understood both within the context of the Cold War West German politicisation of the family, as well as within Capitalist Realism’s visualisation of the commodification of identity construction. Alongside their artists’ book, Polke and Richter exhibited several paintings at galerie h, including numerous paintings of consumer goods, such as chairs, curtains and chandeliers; images the artists painted from photographs and advertisements (Fig. 41, Fig. 42). Discussing these paintings in an interview with Robert Storr, Richter described these works in reference to Hannah Arendt’s ‘banality of evil’:

It can be a concern to describe the banal as something terrifying. The chandelier is a monster. I don’t need to paint a monster; it is enough to paint this thing, this shitty, small, banal chandelier. That thing is terrifying. ... those who had this thing in the middle of their living room ... that was part of our culture, and I don’t want to attack that even though I myself might have suffered

⁷⁷ Hirsch, 6.

under it. ... There was nothing but crime and misery in those living rooms.⁷⁸

Richter raises not only Arendt's juxtaposition of evil and the banal, but also embeds the atrocious within the domestic. Richter and Polke's exploration of the familial includes a parallel exploration of the monstrous residing within the domestic. As highlighted in my introduction, Robin Schuldenfrei has asserted that domestic spaces and domestic objects – such as the living room and chandeliers mentioned by Richter – reproduced and generated postwar anxieties.⁷⁹ She argues that the '*political stakes of domestic culture and the domestic culture of politics*' manifested in material objects, interior spaces and 'patterns of living.'⁸⁰ In his epilogue to Schuldenfrei's anthology on postwar anxiety and domesticity, David Crowley suggests that particularly in West Germany, modern architecture and design were perceived as 'an opportunity to remake the world – in material and moral terms – from the ruins of the Second World War.'⁸¹ Focusing specifically on the West German pavilion at the 1958 World Fair, Crowley argues that modern family homes were not only 'given special significance above all other social sites in the national display,' but also presented spaces 'without a past or even an unconscious.'⁸² Richter's comment situates and locates the banality of evil in

⁷⁸ As quoted in Robert Storr, 'Interview with Gerhard Richter,' in *Gerhard Richter. Forty Years of Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 294. Published in 1963, Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, introduced the influential and controversial concept of the 'banality of evil' through Arendt's discussion of Adolf Eichmann's trial in Israel, which took place in 1961. Arendt's discussion of Eichmann's compliance with the *Führerprinzip* and personal decision (and therefore choice) to commit numerous atrocities was paralleled by contemporary German discussions surrounding 'enforced obedience.'

⁷⁹ See both her 'Introduction' and her chapter 'Assimilating Unease: Moholy-Nagy and the Wartime/Postwar Bauhaus in Chicago,' in *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture*, edited by Robin Schuldenfrei (London: Routledge, 2012), xi-xiv; 87-126.

⁸⁰ Schuldenfrei, 'Introduction,' xii. Italics in original.

⁸¹ David Crowley, 'From Homelessness to Homelessness,' in *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture*, edited by Robin Schuldenfrei (London: Routledge, 2012), 279.

⁸² Crowley, 280.

West Germany's living rooms, the very site of domestic consumption and identity construction promoted by Cold War politics. Additionally, Richter refers to the chandelier as 'an image of horror' and symbol of 'petit bourgeois culture,' denoting the class politics inherent in mass consumption, and particularly in domestic consumption tied to the hegemony of the bourgeois nuclear family.⁸³

Analogous to discussions of family photography, definitions of ideology have emphasised the 'integrative capacity of ideology,' and therefore its role in the construction of (class and collective) identities.⁸⁴ When defining 'the monogamous Family' in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), in which Friedrich Engels attempts to articulate the connections between the development and emergence of private property and the 'monogamous Family,' he notes that 'its decisive victory is one of the signs that civilization is beginning.'⁸⁵ Later in his text, Engels defines this new kind of 'civilized family' as 'the first form of the family to be based not on natural, but on economic conditions – on the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property.'⁸⁶ As I have argued these connections between the material home and the family took on new, often fraught political, meanings in Germany. They did so both through international Cold War propaganda and rhetoric, as well as through the specifically West German experience of postwar capitalist prosperity. A spread from the popular German magazine *QUICK* from May 1964 seems particularly revealing in this context (Fig. 43). On the left page we see the first page of an article on 'Der Mensch, der Adolf Hitler hiess' (The man,

⁸³ Storr, 294.

⁸⁴ Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, Second Edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 12.

⁸⁵ Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 92.

⁸⁶ Engels, 95.

called Adolf Hitler), which focuses on Hitler's 'bloody path to dictatorship.'⁸⁷ On the right, we see an advertisement for Cirkel coffee with a mother serving her husband some coffee while he plays with their son and a toy train set.⁸⁸ The contrast between the two pages – a discussion of Hitler's murderous rise to power with the idealised and commercialised staged family idyll on the opposite page – recalls Richter's description of terrifying, yet banal domesticity. The magazine, one of numerous issues of *QUICK* which Richter used for source images for his photo-paintings during this time, and which was available for free to students at the Kunstakademie, was not unique in providing its readers with this kind of stark opposition.⁸⁹ While such glaring juxtapositions between the political and domestic sphere characterised the image world of other Cold War news publications, including famously American *Life* magazine, the comparisons took on a specific note in Germany.⁹⁰ Almost every single magazine preserved in the Richter Archive from this time includes an article on World War Two and its contemporary repercussions, indicative of the late German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which began in the 1960s, spurred on in part by the televised Eichmann trial in 1961 and the revelations of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, which took place between 1963 and 1965. Although not an obvious advertisement,

⁸⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German are my own. 'QUICK berichtet über den blutigen Weg zur Diktatur.' 'Erst der Staatsakt dann der Mord,' in *QUICK*, no. 20 (17.5.1964), 104.

⁸⁸ The advertisement's text reads: 'So much responsibility after the end of the work day claims the whole man. A coffee perhaps?' 'So viel Verantwortung nach Feierabend verlangt den ganzen Mann. Ein Kaffee gefällig?' *QUICK*, no. 20 (17.5.1964), 105.

⁸⁹ Richter, as well as Polke, would have probably been unable to regularly purchase magazines for source images for their paintings. It is therefore most likely that they looked at magazines at the Academy. Kerstin Küster in conversation with the author, February 2015.

⁹⁰ On Bertolt Brecht's photobook *Kriegsfibel*, his utilisation of 'the violence of juxtaposition' to document the Second World War through images taken from the popular press, including from *Life* magazine, and its relation to Weimar photo-essays, see Sarah E. James' first chapter 'Cold War Primers. German Identity and Photography in the Postwar Period,' in her *Common Ground. German Photographic Cultures Across the Iron Curtain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 15-45.

another particularly brutal contrast is provided by the cover of the December 1962 issue of the *Neue Illustrierte* (Fig. 44). The perfectly staged family under the Christmas tree, again with a son and father playing with a toy train set, stands in shocking contrast to the title story about missing and orphaned children still searching for their relatives almost two decades after the end of the war (Fig. 45). Next to these articles discussing Germany's recent past, the reader would find numerous examples of advertisements directly targeting families, claiming the purchase of their product would improve family life (Figs. 46 - 48). As Paul Betts has suggested, this domestication of design objects through the family already began in the immediate postwar years. 'The ideal of the modern family flanked by new design objects became one of the most enduring images of the decade. Indeed, over 40 percent of all product photographs from the '50s used the family living room as a backdrop.'⁹¹

As I have outlined, Cold War propaganda saw this domestication politicised. Usually aimed at women, the advertisements reinforced the notion that the affirmation and validation of a woman's identity as wife and/or mother was through and dependent on both her family and certain consumer goods, paralleling the contemporaneous legal construction of gender via the family. However, Western Cold War interests also saw a new 'celebration of male domesticity,' 'shifting the terrain of definition of masculinity from production to consumption.'⁹² Considered essential for continued economic growth, it was of national interest to encourage all members of the family, regardless of gender, to participate in domestic mass consumption; to promote German nationalism as 'the collective quest for personal and national prosperity.'⁹³ The above-

⁹¹ Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects. A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 216.

⁹² Medovoi, 172.

⁹³ Carter, 361.

mentioned advertising images depicting men as fathers and consumers, as well as the photographs found in *polke/richter richter/polke*, visualise this domestication of masculinity. Yet seen alongside Richter and Polke's parodic images of infantilised masculinity, the performativity found both in their photographs and the advertisements is emphasised and exposed. The family and consumer goods as sites of identity construction and signifiers of gender and class are destabilised when revealed as obvious masquerades.

These connections between the family, capitalism and consumerism visualised by Richter and Polke were not only challenged by East German communism, but also increasingly questioned by the postwar generation in West Germany. American Pop Art, later often characterised as 'glorifying the commodity market,' was initially understood by many young members of the Student Movement as 'protest and criticism rather than affirmation of an affluent society,' an interpretation tied to their hope that 'Pop art could be the beginning of a far reaching democratization of art and art appreciation.'⁹⁴ As Andreas Huyssen outlined in 1975, 'Pop,' when it first took West Germany by storm in the 1960s, 'seemed to liberate high art from the isolation in which it had been kept in bourgeois society.'⁹⁵ Richter and Polke's domestication of their works, their style and techniques, seems to confirm this potential. However, others almost immediately understood the international success of the American Pop movement as a 'cultural catastrophe,' 'inasmuch as it encouraged everybody to regard art as merchandise to be treated in the same way as the products whose emblems Pop art celebrated.'⁹⁶ Capitalist Realism problematised and challenged both interpretations

⁹⁴ Andreas Huyssen, 'The Cultural Politics of Pop: Reception and Critique of US Pop Art in the Federal Republic of Germany,' *New German Critique*, no. 4 (1975), JSTOR (487818), 78.

⁹⁵ Huyssen, 'The Cultural Politics of Pop,' 79.

⁹⁶ Walter Grasskamp, 'Flamingos, Color charts, Shades of Brown. Capitalist Realism and German Pop,' in *Living with Pop. A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism*, exh. cat., edited by

of Pop. Instead of offering a direct critique or celebration of the commodity market, Capitalist Realism highlighted the commodified relationship between subject and object, signified and signifier. Derrida argues that ‘one will always be able to dissociate the “signatory” from the “subject” of the self-portrait.’⁹⁷ Capitalist Realism asked if this is still the case when the subject is constructed via an object, not just in portraiture but in society in general.

Petit Bourgeois Realism: The *Vanitas* Paintings of German Pop

Among the paintings exhibited at galerie h in 1966 were Polke’s *Family I* (1964) and the holiday snapshot *Beach* (1966), as well as Richter’s *Curtain* (1965), *Chair in Profile* (1965) and *Flemish Crown* (1965) (Figs. 49 - 53). Walter Grasskamp has described these paintings, particularly those by Polke, as ‘petit bourgeois realism,’ which ‘broke through the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie,’ through its choice of motives taken from the ‘wallpaper’ and ‘curtains’ the petit bourgeoisie found in ‘magazines, furniture stores and scrapbooks.’⁹⁸ For Bourdieu, the meaning which a specific social class conferred on a particular subject or object could be read from its choice of what each class deemed worthy ‘to solemnize and to immortalize,’ ‘what is perceived as worthy of being ... captured, stored, communicated, shown and admired.’⁹⁹ Yet Richter and Polke’s enactment of the petit bourgeoisie goes beyond visualising the banality (and horror) of sites of identification such as consumer goods

Elodie Evers, Magdalene Holzhey and Gregor Jansen (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2013), 215.

⁹⁷ Derrida, 64.

⁹⁸ ‘...durchbrach in seiner Motivauswahl die kulturelle Vorherrschaft des Bildungsbürgertums, indem er sich zu den Motiven bekannte, die dem deutschen Kleinbürgertum so lange auf Tapeten, Vorhängen, Markenzeichen und Trivialbildern, in Zeitschriften, Möbelhäusern und Sammelalben untergejubelt worden waren, dass er diese Motive zum Schluss für seine eigenen hielt.’ Walter Grasskamp, ‘Kleinbürgerlicher Realismus,’ in *Der vergessliche Engel. Künstlerportraits für Fortgeschrittene* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 1986), 38.

⁹⁹ Bourdieu, 6.

and the amateur family photograph. Bourdieu argues that the ownership of a camera and photographic equipment, as well as the use of photographs, serve as markers of class, with the various meanings conferred on photographic practice and choice of subjects indicative of class values, a class's relationship to culture and social aspirations.¹⁰⁰ Richter and Polke's appropriation and staging of multiple roles across their artists' book, through both images and text, exposes these aspirations, as well as the self-staging and flexible subjectivity that such objectification and constructions of identity afford. As Hans Magnus Enzensberger noted in his essay *On the Inevitability of the Petty Bourgeoisie*:

No one can change his ideologies, his clothes, his modes of behavior more rapidly than the petty bourgeois. He is a new Proteus, ever eager to learn something – even to the point of losing his identity. Always fleeing the old-fashioned, he is constantly hastening to catch up with himself.¹⁰¹

Enzensberger, co-founder and editor of the influential magazine *Kursbuch*, which played a significant role in the Student Movement by articulating, circulating and popularising influential debates within the New Left, expresses a very particular kind of disdain for the petit bourgeoisie, one which related directly to an increasing frustration with mass consumption, class politics and 'the affluent worker.' According to Marcuse, the *embourgeoisement* of the working class in contemporary 'affluent society' – its integration into capitalism via consumption and conformity – was

¹⁰⁰ Bourdieu, 13-72.

¹⁰¹ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'On the Inevitability of the Petty Bourgeoisie: A Sociological Caprice' (1976), translated by Judith Ryan, in *Sigmar Polke: We Petty Bourgeois! Comrades and Contemporaries. The 1970s*, exh. cat., edited by Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübél (Cologne, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011), 203. On Polke's appropriation of slogans from *Kursbuch* and the parallels between Polke's works from the 1970s and Enzensberger's work, see 'The Embarrassing Class' in Lange-Berndt and Rübél's introduction, 37-42.

resulting in the ‘complete degradation of man to an object, or rather subject/object.’¹⁰² Capitalist Realism’s depiction of consumer goods interrogate this objectification by making explicit the blurring of subject and object through mass consumption.

‘Every communist behind the Iron curtain wants a fridge, an auto and a TV. This is his idea of heaven. Medieval art was about God and the New World. This art is about now, this world. It is about heaven on earth.’¹⁰³ Peter Ludwig’s description of American Pop, which he began collecting in 1965 in vast quantities, not only caricatures its appeal for West German collectors, it also encapsulates the correlation between personal happiness and consumption as promoted by postwar consumerism. The neon slogan of the Düsseldorf furniture store Berges, which was the location of Richter and Lueg’s 1963 happening *Living with Pop – A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism*, read: ‘Schoener Wohnen Durch Berges’ (‘Better living through Berges’) (Figure 54). In 1957 the minister of economics Ludwig Erhard promised that ‘prosperity for all’ was possible through a combination of public and private spending; a better life could be achieved for all West Germans through collective consumption.¹⁰⁴ Conformity via consumption thus continued to be stressed as both of personal and national interest. As proclaimed in *polke/richter richter/polke*: ‘I want to be like everyone else, think what everyone else thinks, do what gets done anyway.’¹⁰⁵ Yet Richter and Polke’s parallel exploration of the fragmentation and objectification of the self via consumption in *polke/richter richter/polke* questions such conformity. Similarly, Capitalist Realism’s visualisations of consumer goods and domestic

¹⁰² Herbert Marcuse, ‘Liberation from the Affluent Society’ (1967) in *The New Left and the 1960’s. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, Volume Three, edited by Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 2005), 80.

¹⁰³ As quoted in Catherine Dossin, ‘Pop begeistert. American Pop Art and the German People,’ *American Art* 25, no. 3 (2011), JSTOR (663955), 106.

¹⁰⁴ Logemann, 38.

¹⁰⁵ Polke and Richter, 31.

consumption can be read as destabilisations of such sites of identity construction. The paintings, happenings and installations of Capitalist Realism interrogate consumerism at the intersection between individualism and collectivism in light of the promotion of mass consumption as ‘a great leveling force’ by Western Cold War propaganda.¹⁰⁶

As previously highlighted, the painting hanging on the wall next to *Uncle Rudi* in the photograph showing the Polkes and Richters having coffee and cake, is one of Polke’s sausage paintings. The painting is part of a larger series of works produced by Polke, which includes works such as *Chocolate Painting* (1964), *The Sausage Eater* (1963) and *Biscuits* (1964) (Figs. 55 - 57). Besides food products, Polke also painted *Socks* (1963), *Shirts* (1964) and *Plastic Tubs* (1964), as well as *Bedroom* (1965) reproduced in *polke/richter richter/polke* and exhibited in 1966 (Figs. 58 - 60). In a similar vein, Konrad Lueg painted *Coat-Hangers* (1963) and *Sausages on a Paper Plate* (1963), paintings that were shown at Lueg and Richter’s happening *Living with Pop* (Fig. 61, Fig. 62). Polke and Richter’s, as well as Lueg’s, still lifes noticeably lack the glossy advertising surfaces of their American counter-parts. Their obvious painterly production – smudges of paint and the varying sizes, shapes and colouration of the depicted products – emphasises the construction of both the paintings and their depicted subjects. Although Polke, Lueg and Richter used advertisements as source images, their works could never be misunderstood as such as they lack the idealisation often associated with such imagery. I would like to suggest that the paintings Richter and Polke produced in the 1960s of consumer goods, including household goods and foods, are *vanitas* images both in regard to the disillusionment contained within the original Latin meaning of *vanitas*, as well as the more specific art historical definition

¹⁰⁶ Logemann, 98.

of the term.¹⁰⁷ Polke's biscuits, Richter's curtains, and Lueg's coat-hangers are explicitly not mass produced consumer goods, which the artists emphasise by drawing attention to their painterly production. Their painterly 'mistakes' serve as moments of rupture, removing their depicted subject/objects from an alienated, mechanised form of production, while highlighting their transience. A largely negative newspaper review of the first Capitalist Realist exhibition concluded by asking: 'The explanation for Dadaism was that it was a reaction to the last war; is this perhaps the reaction to our *Wirtschaftswunder*?'¹⁰⁸ The artists used their modes of production and medium to resituate and posit consumer goods to interrogate and expose mass production and the objectification of identity, offering their 'individualised' painterly representations of consumer products as points of contrast to dehumanising collective conformity. In contrast to his variegated sausages and coat-hangers, Lueg's *Uncle H.* (1965) has had his individuality erased, his face replaced by the repetitive pattern of a wallpaper print (Fig. 63).

Richter, Lueg and Polke's absurd and comical paintings of consumer goods, as well as their happenings and installations, have been repeatedly described as parodies of petit bourgeois aspirations and domesticity. Richter's *Flemish Crown* (1965), has been described by Hal Foster as 'an exemplum not just of a homey thing but of petit

¹⁰⁷ The Latin word *vanitas* as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* refers to 'an exclamation of disillusionment or pessimism,' linking it directly to the phrase *vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas* – 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity' – as found in the Vulgate translation of Ecclesiastes 1:2. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, *vanitas* is defined more specifically as referring to 'a type of still-life picture depicting an object or collection of objects symbolizing the brevity of life and the transience of all earthly pleasures and achievements.' 'vanitas,' n. OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/view/Entry/221393?redirectedFrom=vanitas&> (accessed 20.01.2015). 'Vanitas,' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, Third Edition, edited by Ian Chilvers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 724.

¹⁰⁸ 'Für den Dadaismus hatte man die Erklärung, er sei eine Reaktion auf den letzten Krieg; haben wir hier vielleicht die Reaktion auf unser Wirtschaftswunder vor uns?' 'Auch das sind Kunstwerke,' in *NAZ* (25.5.1963), no author given.

bourgeois taste at its homeliest.’¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Lueg’s paintings of consumer goods were described by Block as rendering ‘ironic the behaviour of the German petit bourgeoisie, which came through the war unbroken.’¹¹⁰ Yet their works go beyond simple parodic portrayals of a specific social class. An advertisement for a furniture store in a 1964 issue of *Stern* magazine declares in large font: ‘Ihre Wohnung ist Ihre Visitenkarte’ (‘Your apartment is your calling card’) (Fig. 64). Capitalist Realism repeatedly emphasised this objectification and alienation of the individual through affiliative identity formation. Inasmuch as their works often negate their commercial sources, one could describe the artists’ contributions to Capitalist Realism as subversive appropriations. Polke and Richter’s exploration of the familial must be understood both within the context of the Cold War West German politicisation of the family, as well as within Capitalist Realism’s visualisation of the commodification of identity construction. Richter and Polke’s artists’ book, alongside Capitalist Realist paintings of consumer goods, blur and question the gendered spheres of (artistic) mass production and consumption. The resulting disillusionment subverts objects as stable sites of identity construction. Yet as Marcuse lamented in 1964: ‘the people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced.’¹¹¹ In context of this commodification of the self, *Spiegel* magazine’s first issue in January 1966 seems to predict a looming identity crisis. Written across its

¹⁰⁹ Foster, 191.

¹¹⁰ As quoted in Christine Mehring, ‘The Art of a Miracle: Toward a History of German Pop, 1955-72,’ in *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures*, exh. cat., edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, 2009), 159. Mehring also provides the counter opinion by quoting Hans Strewlo’s essay on the occasion of Lueg’s exhibition at Galerie Block in 1966, in which Strewlo argues that ‘Lueg’s homage to washcloth and towel is a celebration of modern life. One will search in vain for a biting social critique.’ Mehring, 159.

¹¹¹ Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 9.

cover in bold letters, the large question mark filled with images of televisions, food, jewellery, cars and family homes, the magazine threateningly asks: 'Is the *Wirtschaftswunder* over?' (Fig. 65).

'Living Contradiction'

In many ways 1966 marked the moment of full-fledged West German disillusion. 1966 saw the first recession in the FRG since the currency reform of 1948. The SPD joined the CDU/CSU in a 'Grand Coalition,' paving the way for the much-debated Emergency Laws, and essentially signifying to many citizens, and particularly to student members of the New Left, the lack of a genuine alternative within the political establishment.¹¹² 1966 also saw student demonstrations against the Vietnam War 'moving toward open confrontation with the state.'¹¹³ Yet, of course, this sense of disillusionment with mass consumption and its objectification of identity had already started to emerge in the years leading up to 1966, captured in many ways by Capitalist Realism's *vanitas* works. Parallel to Polke and Richter's (and Lueg's) humanisation of images of consumer goods and domestication of artistic production, Marcuse was writing about the effects of the mechanisation of labour. According to Marcuse 'changes in the character of work and the instruments of production,' were leading to an 'assimilation in needs and aspirations, in the standard of living, in leisure activities, in politics.'¹¹⁴ In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse argues that conformity through consumption was resulting in the loss of individual humanity and inspiring false

¹¹² On the Grand Coalition and the Emergency Laws, see Sabine von Dirke, "All Power to the Imagination!" *The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 34-35.

¹¹³ Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993), 53.

¹¹⁴ Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 29.

needs.¹¹⁵ Capitalist Realism offered its paintings and happenings as sites of rupture and as parodies of the commodification of identity. While Marcuse sees ‘high culture’ (art, literature, and dialectical thinking) as potentially subversive means to transgress and negate ‘alienated existence’ – if it can surmount its ‘repressive desublimation’ and objectification under capitalism (which he is rather pessimistic about) – Capitalist Realism, through its conspicuous combination of mass and high culture, makes explicit what Marcuse described as ‘the flattening out of the antagonism between culture and social reality.’¹¹⁶

By portraying a generic petit bourgeois subject in a noticeably performative and absurd manner, the artists highlight their ‘props’ – domestic settings, consumer goods such as furniture and clothes – as sites of identity construction and affirmation. Marcuse describes this unmasking in relation to Bertolt Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* (estrangement effect) and argues that this produces a ‘dissociation in which the world can be recognized as what it is.’¹¹⁷ The resulting disillusionment was directly proportional to the Cold War politicisation of consumer goods. The disillusionment also stemmed from false promises – of ‘better living’ and ‘prosperity for all.’ As Richter pointed out in a recent interview in which he discusses *polke/richter richter/polke*: ‘we both lived in social housing. And of course we didn’t fill the bath with water for the shot in the tub!’¹¹⁸ Richter would claim throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s that his choice of subjects, including for his paintings of chairs, chandeliers and clothes-dryers, was arbitrary and objective (Fig. 66). Yet in Richter’s much later,

¹¹⁵ Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, ix-xvii, 19-55.

¹¹⁶ Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 57. For Marcuse on the integration of higher culture, see his third chapter, ‘The Conquest of the Unhappy Consciousness: Repressive Desublimation,’ 56-83.

¹¹⁷ Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 67.

¹¹⁸ Obrist, 35.

and very personal explanation of his choices, his familial motifs are linked to the objectification of the family through consumer objects:

Because at some point, of course, I did care about the motifs. I didn't find the clothes-dryer ironic; there was something tragic about it, because it represented life in low-cost housing with nowhere to hang the washing. It was my own clothes-dryer, which I rediscovered in a newspaper - objectivized, as it were. Or the families - they were often people I knew. And if I didn't know them, at least they had something in common with the families and lives that I did know.¹¹⁹

The shared sense of disillusionment described by Richter is indicative of class distinctions based on material goods, in this case the clothes dryer, and the failure of 'levelling' mass consumption. Particularly in West Germany, certain consumer products and shops continued to be perceived as signifying specific class differences.¹²⁰ Class aspirations could therefore still be enacted via consumption. As Enzensberger noted 'the petty bourgeois claims to be anything but the petty bourgeois. He seeks to establish his identity not by siding with his class, but by distinguishing himself from it by denying it.'¹²¹ More than a century earlier, Karl Marx described the petit bourgeoisie as 'a living contradiction.'¹²² Through their contributions to Capitalist Realism, including their artists' book, Polke and Richter made visible the collapsing

¹¹⁹ Gerhard Richter as quoted in 'Interview with Sabine Schütz, 1990,' in *Gerhard Richter Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 - 2007*, edited by Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 253.

¹²⁰ See Logemann, 101-106.

¹²¹ Enzensberger, 202.

¹²² 'Like the historian *Raumer*, the petty bourgeois is composed of On The One Hand and On The Other Hand. This is so in his economic interests and *therefore* in his politics, religious, scientific and artistic views. It is so in his morals, in everything. He is a living contradiction.' Karl Marx, 'Letter 72. Marx to Schweitzer. 24 January, 1865,' in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence 1846 - 1895. With Commentary and Notes*, translated and edited by Dona Torr (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1943), 176. I am much indebted to Danny Hayward's *Marxism in Culture* seminar 'The Merely Schematic Contradictoriness of the Petty Bourgeois: An Aesthetic Inquiry,' held on December 12, 2014, for providing an overview of the various contested definitions of 'petit bourgeois.'

of family and home into one through consumerism, at the same time unmasking its false promise of collectivism.

In contrast to mass consumption, the artists ironically suggest painting as an alternative collective habit. 'All painters and everyone else should be made to paint from photographs. And in the same way that I do (which means the choice of photographs as well).'¹²³ Even Perry Rhodan's colleagues heed the artists' call for collective painting. Polke and Richter edited a fragment from the science fiction novel accordingly:

The squat, green-feathered Epsal hovered beside the beavermouse, which was not distracted and worked steadily on. The Epsal looked at the model, an archive photograph of Perry Rhodan and Kroa-Mhakuy on planet Quinta. He compared it to the painting and said, as though to himself: '... it's just as well you're conventional, Gucky, and don't mind painting beautiful pictures! You are as close to Rafael as to the Surrealists, the Impressionists, cave-painters, Zero, Picasso, Fluxism and the millions of poor devils who take snapshots of their families. That's your greatness...'¹²⁴

With references to ZERO, Fluxus, and photo-paintings, statements such as 'only truly great people can paint!,' and performative self-portraits, Polke and Richter's artists' book is also a reflection on contemporary artistic practices and the role of the artist in Cold War West Germany. Their text collage merges parodic self-authored reflections on painting with appropriated passages discussing everyday life, humorously embedding and demystifying artistic production within everyday experiences by equating it with manual labour: 'paintings are made following a recipe. Their manufacture must happen without any inner participation on the part of the painter, the way streets are paved, or house-fronts painted. Making paintings is not an artistic

¹²³ Polke and Richter, 32.

¹²⁴ Polke and Richter, 37.

act.’¹²⁵ Their parody and infantilisation of the myth of the artist is contingent on their unmasking of the role of the artist and artistic production within the context of Cold War mass consumption. Despite associating themselves with Rhodan’s heroic masculinity through the insertion of themselves as characters into the science fiction series carrying his name, Polke and Richter present the artist as an anti-hero.

Photographs such as the banal image of the two artists walking through a garden gate – which also served as the cover image for the invitations to their exhibition – together with their text collage, parody and dismantle romantic notions of a heroic, alienated artist via a parallel parody of the petit bourgeoisie (Fig. 67). As Mary Douglas suggested in her seminal essay on humour in 1970, a joke ‘works only when it mirrors social forms; it exists by virtue of its congruence with the social structure,’ while the joker lightens ‘the oppressiveness of social reality, demonstrates its arbitrariness by making light of formality in general, and expresses the creative possibilities of the situation.’¹²⁶ Gregory Williams has argued that Polke’s humorous works from the 1960s depend on a performativity staged and explored specifically within ‘private settings,’ and highlight the new ‘embrace of the trivial and an accompanying perception that seriousness need no longer be the primary goal for postwar German artists.’¹²⁷ Inspired by and responding to Fluxus, Polke and Richter

¹²⁵ Polke and Richter, 35.

¹²⁶ Mary Douglas, ‘Jokes’ (1970), in *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 1999), 158, 159.

¹²⁷ Gregory H. Williams, *Permission to Laugh: Humor and Politics in Contemporary German Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 29. And yet the subject of his comic works was often very serious. As Williams suggests, *Wir wollen frei sein wie die Väter waren* (*We want to be free like the fathers were*, 1964), ‘can be read as referring to the desire for creative freedom that manifested itself in Weimar-era Germany, or one might more accurately interpret “the fathers” as the generation responsible for the rise of Hitler and against whom the protest movement of the late 1960s was later directed. The crudeness of its rendering, the disproportionately small lettering, and the appearance of an amateurish attempt at dynamic graphic layout place it more firmly in the realm of the topical joke, a humorously infantilizing response to the highly professional Nazi propaganda machine.’ Williams, 30-31.

make visible and satirise petit bourgeois capitalist norms. Their self-portraits parody both their own performative ‘family life’, as well as stereotypically conventional family life by staging themselves as absurdist caricatures of the petit bourgeoisie.

Through numerous events and actions, including the legendary *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* held at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1963, Fluxus artists used humour and a diverse range of artistic events to disrupt and challenge accepted and conformist bourgeois behaviour.¹²⁸ Kristine Stiles has described the Fluxus performances as ‘unadulterated foolery, abandon, nonsense and unmitigated silliness,’ which ‘exaggerated the conceptual paradoxes and contradictory behaviours that guide and determine life.’¹²⁹ The photographs which document these Fluxus actions reveal the absurd juxtapositions which underlined both their works and their humour (Fig. 68). Richter and Polke’s photographs rely on similar dichotomies. The image of Polke hanging off a branch is jarring and humorous both due to its location – a cemetery – but particularly because of his clothing, which initially suggests both bourgeois conservatism and its associated expectations of normative behaviour. Through their performances and actions, Fluxus artists tested the boundaries of both accepted behaviour, as well as traditional conceptions of art. ‘The joke,’ as Douglas has argued, ‘affords opportunity for realising that an accepted pattern has no necessity.’¹³⁰ For several Fluxus artists the potentially transgressive and subversive nature of humour was a liberating way of challenging societal and artistic conventions. Yet as Benjamin Buchloh has argued, parody, in order to be recognised as such, ‘must ultimately remain

¹²⁸ *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* was attended by both Richter and Polke. On Fluxus and humour, see Kristine Stiles, ‘Fluxus Performance and Humour’ (1995), in *The Artist’s Joke*, edited by Jennifer Higgin (London/Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel/The MIT Press, 2007), 52-58. Thomas Kellein sees *Living with Pop* as a direct response to *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*. Thomas Kellein, *Ich nenne mich als Maler Konrad Lueg*, exh. cat. (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1999), 23.

¹²⁹ Stiles, 54.

¹³⁰ Douglas, 150.

within its limits' and therefore turns 'into a renewed legitimation of existing power structures.'¹³¹ Jokes, as Douglas emphasises, ultimately represent only 'a temporary suspension of the social structure.'¹³² And as Simon Critchley reiterates in his study *On Humor*, 'most humour, in particular the comedy of recognition – and most humor is comedy of recognition – simply seeks to reinforce consensus;' it 'simply toys with existing social hierarchies in a charming but quite benign fashion.'¹³³ Dismissing parody 'as a mode of ultimate complicity,' Buchloh contends that parody is 'a mode in which the victim identifies itself voluntarily with its defeat, in spite of its seemingly demolishing victory over the oppressor's codes by laughter.'¹³⁴ Polke and Richter's artists' book questions art's ability to transgress and permanently subvert such codes, questioning both the redemptive possibilities of art and laughter.

Art & Artist as Consumer Good

In almost every photograph in *polke/richter richter/polke*, as well as in photographs documenting the happenings and openings associated with Capitalist Realism, Polke and Richter are wearing formal, dark suits and ties (Fig. 68, Fig. 69). Clothes, of course, like furniture, are as much about identity construction and affirmation as any other consumer goods. Particularly in portraiture, clothing has served for centuries as a way to construct the sitter's identity, relying on material attributes to articulate the role of the subject as king, clergyman or landowner; 'the soldierliness of the soldier, the judiciousness of the judge, the clericality of the clergy.'¹³⁵ Alternatively, clothing

¹³¹ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Parody and Appropriation in Francis Picabia, Pop, and Sigmar Polke' (1982), in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 363, 351.

¹³² Douglas, 158.

¹³³ Simon Critchley, *On Humor* (London: Routledge, 2002), 11.

¹³⁴ Buchloh, 'Parody and Appropriation,' 353.

¹³⁵ Berenson, 188.

could and can also represent the social aspirations of the subject. In an advertisement for men's clothing included in a 1964 issue of the popular magazine *Bunte*, the text appeals to consumers by claiming that: 'For many men important doors remain closed. Because they neglect something: their clothing. All doors will be opened to you if you are always dressed correctly' (Fig. 71).¹³⁶ The accompanying picture shows three smartly dressed men, ascending the stairs to success so to speak, being welcomed by open doors, held ajar by two smiling women. Yet Richter and Polke's choice of suits and ties can be understood as more than just a masquerade of petit bourgeois and financial aspirations. Indeed, Thomas Kellein has suggested their clothing can be understood as a direct parody of members of the Düsseldorf neo-avant-garde.¹³⁷ Writing specifically about Richter and Lueg's happening *Living with Pop*, Kellein states:

For since 1960, the ZERO artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker had appeared at openings there wearing black suits and brimming with proprietorial pride. Since 1957 the slightly older ZERO artists had been consciously using white paint and light to distance themselves from the image of the suffering artists that went with Informel: so in 1963 the young Pop artists, Lueg and Richter, started to poke fun at the others' cleanliness, orderliness and snappy clothes. At the same time they were openly ironical in their comments on the German economic miracle.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ 'Vielen Männern sind wichtige Türen verschlossen. Weil sie etwas wichtiges vernachlässigen: Ihre Kleidung. Alle Türen stehen Ihnen offen, wenn Sie immer richtig angezogen sind.'

¹³⁷ Similarly, Gilbert & George have admitted that their trademark suits – an essential aspect of their 'living sculptures' and their paradoxical 'conservatism' – can be understood as a response to (rather than a parody of) the artists working in Düsseldorf at the time. The artists have stated that: 'We wanted to be tidy and clean and good, not alienate 90% of the public. Most people who went to a Fluxus thing would be offended by it and walk out.' As quoted in Martin Gayford, 'Interview by Martin Gayford 1996,' in *The Words of Gilbert & George. With Portraits of the Artists from 1968 to 1997*, edited by Robert Violette and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames and Hudson / Violette Editions, 1997), 260. In the same interview, the artists acknowledge that it was Konrad Lueg (/Fischer) who helped launch their careers: 'He arranged for us to do a show in the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle. After that it was just total success overnight.' Gayford, 260.

¹³⁸ Kellein, 23.

Uecker, Mack and Piene had, like Polke and Richter, studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Yet the Capitalist Realists' connections to the local neo-avant-garde went beyond associations through the academy, and the younger generation of artists very consciously positioned themselves in reaction to their colleagues.

In Elmar Hügler's documentary *Kunst und Ketchup* (1966), released the same year as Richter and Polke's exhibition at the galerie h, Lueg, Richter and Polke are each featured and interviewed as part of a larger report on 'Pop-Art and Happening.' After being introduced to several happenings and performances by Wolf Vostell and Joseph Beuys, amongst others, the viewer first encounters Lueg, Richter and Polke, halfway through the documentary. Walking by and looking inside the window displays of a street of shops in Düsseldorf, we see the three artists pass elaborate arrangements showcasing evening gowns and handbags (Fig. 72). Their first exhibition of Capitalist Realism had taken place in exactly such a shop located on a similar street, in the space of an empty butcher shop, where they displayed their works of art in a comparable display window, presenting their art for a similar kind of visual consumption. Shortly thereafter, Richter and Lueg not only presented their works but also themselves as 'goods for sale,' when they spent the majority of their happening at the Berges furniture store seated on furniture placed on top of pedestals. One of the archival photographs related to *polke/richter richter/polke* depicts the two artists gazing upon a plethora of brand-new, sleek designer furniture displayed in an elegant store (Fig. 73). A few months after the exhibition at galerie h, the three artists took part in the week-long exhibition *Hommage à Schmela* at Galerie Schmela. Lueg recreated a petit bourgeois dining room in the gallery, completed with patterned wallpaper, napkins and china, and hosted a 'tea' party entitled *Coffee and Cake* (Fig. 74, Fig. 75). A celebration of Düsseldorf's artistic community – several artists represented by the

dealer Alfred Schmela, as well as family and friends gathered around the dining table – the event recalled Berges’ promise of ‘better living.’ Yet by hosting what would usually be an intimate family affair inside a commercial gallery, Lueg once more made explicit the commercialisation and objectification of the familial. At the same time, by situating and embedding their works of art in commercialised settings and linking them explicitly to domestic consumption (and its politics and ideology), the three artists problematise the possibility of apolitical artistic autonomy, despite Richter’s repeated insistence that his art was free from all ideologies and any message.¹³⁹

Furthermore, enacted by their venue choice, Capitalist Realism suggested a collapse and commodification of private and public spheres. Only two years later, West Germany would witness a much more radicalised and violent appropriation of the commercialised public sphere and department store, when the Red Army Faction (RAF) founders Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader left bombs in the clothing and furnishing departments of the Kaufhaus Schneider in Frankfurt.¹⁴⁰ During their trial in the autumn of 1968, Ulrike Meinhof visited Ensslin in prison and wrote her article ‘Arson in Department Stores’ in response. Meinhof argued that ‘the progressive momentum of an act of arson in a department store does not lie in the destruction of goods but in the criminality of the act, the breaking of law;’ German laws which according to Meinhof were placing and protecting objects and property above and over

¹³⁹ On the postwar ‘fetishization of autonomy,’ exemplified by the ‘autonomous abstraction’ and ‘absolute paintings’ of ZEN49, see Yule F. Heibel, *Reconstructing the Subject. Modernist Painting in Western Germany, 1945-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 64-80. In 1988, Richter wrote: ‘My profound distaste for all claims to possess the truth, and for all ideologies – a distaste which I have often expressed, with varying degrees of skill (and which has shown itself so clearly in my pictures, in my way of working, in my whole attitude...),’ see ‘Notes, 1988,’ in *Gerhard Richter Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 - 2007*, edited by Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 200-201.

¹⁴⁰ See Stefan Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, translated by Anthea Bell (London: The Bodley Head, 2008), 30-32; 36-39.

people.¹⁴¹ Richter, Polke and Lueg's appropriations and unveilings of the commodification of public and private spheres stand in stark contrast, yet nevertheless entail important contributions to contemporaneous social and political protests centred on the commercial sphere, including, particularly within department stores. As Alexander Sedlmaier has outlined, members of Spur and *Subversive Aktion*, alongside residents of *Kommune I*, reimagined and established the commercial sphere in West Germany as a space of protest during the early 1960s, and political happenings in department stores became increasingly popular throughout the decade.¹⁴² Capitalist Realist works and happenings should be understood in this context. Nevertheless, although their repeated explorations of West German Cold War domestic consumption opens up the associated objectification of identity for extensive questioning and reconsideration, the artists offer no comprehensive critique and no alternatives. While Baader and Ensslin have been linked to a neo-avant-garde 'anti-bourgeois discourse and ideology,' and even been posited as 'post-avant-garde,' Capitalist Realism, by contrast, parodied and problematised the neo-avant-garde's cult of persona instead.¹⁴³

Anti-Heroes: The Myth of the Artist

In Hügler's documentary, Lueg narrates the scene of the three artists 'window shopping.' In his opening sentence, he declares: 'I and my colleague wanted to do something different, something that is also against the abstract and to fulfil the wish

¹⁴¹ As quoted in Aust, 39.

¹⁴² Alexander Sedlmaier, 'Department Stores: Political Protest in the Commercial Sphere,' in *Consumption and Violence: Radical Protest in Cold-War West Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2014), 25-60.

¹⁴³ See Sara Hakemi, 'Das terroristische Manifest. Die erste Generation der RAF im Kontext avantgardistischer und neo-avantgardistischer Diskurse,' in *1968. Handbuch zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, edited by Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2007), 277-288.

of a new figurativeness.’¹⁴⁴ Yet Lueg and his Capitalist Realist colleagues were not only responding to the abstract work of their teachers at the academy, such as Karl Otto Götz, and the ‘new figurativeness’ of American Pop. Rather their parody of the artist-hero is a direct response to Beuys’ contemporaneous shamanistic self-staging of the artist.

At a time when critical theorists in France were attempting to instigate the death of the author, the mythologising of the artist took on new proportions in West Germany.¹⁴⁵ Central to this development was Beuys and the ‘myth of origin’ he constructed around his biography and artistic development. Beuys was not only a dominant figure in the West German art world. As professor of monumental sculpture at the academy in Düsseldorf, where he had been a student from 1947 to 1951, he was also of critical importance to and influence on many of the students at the Kunstakademie at the time. During the 1960s both Richter and Polke produced multiple works which were in direct dialogue with Beuys’ artistic production.¹⁴⁶ Beuys’ ‘mythical narrative’ was based on and originated in his wartime experience as a *Luftwaffe* pilot, and his claim that after a plane crash in the Crimea the Tartars nursed

¹⁴⁴ ‘Meine Kollegen und ich. Ich und meine Kollegen wollten eben was anderes machen, was gegen, was auch gegen das Abstrakte ist und dem Wunsch nach einer neuen Figürlichkeit nachkommen.’ *Kunst und Ketchup. Ein Bericht über Pop-Art und Happening*, directed by Elmar Hügler (1966; *Die Stuttgarter Schule. Zeichen Der Zeit: Arbeit und Kultur*, Berlin: absolut MEDIEN, 2011), DVD, 19:34-19:47.

¹⁴⁵ Roland Barthes’ ‘The Death of the Author’ was published in 1967. Michel Foucault’s ‘What is an Author?’ considered by many as a response to Barthes, was presented as a lecture in 1969.

¹⁴⁶ Several of Polke and Richter’s works from the 1960s and early 1970s have been linked to Beuys. See for example Kathrin Rottmann, ‘Polke in Context: A Chronology,’ in *Alibis. Sigmar Polke 1963–2010*, exh. cat., edited by Kathy Halbreich, with Mark Godfrey, Lanka Tattersall and Magnus Schaefer (London: Tate Publishing, 2014), 25-29; Uwe M. Schneede, ‘Gerhard Richter’s Images of an Era,’ in *Gerhard Richter: Images of an Era*, exh. cat. (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2011), 13. Beuys’ attendance of various Capitalist Realist happenings, including the first exhibition by all four artists in 1963, as well as Richter and Lueg’s *Living with Pop*, which also included a work by Beuys, has also been repeatedly emphasised by various critics and art historians, including Elger.

him back to health with fat and felt. In works such as *Fat Chair* (1963) and *The Pack* (1969), Beuys directly links his materials, including his use of lard, to this artistic mythology, which Buchloh has described as the artist's attempt 'to come to terms with the period of history marked by German fascism and the war resulting from it' (Fig. 76, Fig. 77).¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Beuys' enactment of the Hitler salute during his notorious performance at the Festival of New Art, as well as his fictitious autobiography *Life Course/Work Course* published on the same occasion, strongly rely on provocation through and invocation of National Socialism, as does Beuys' falsified wartime account.¹⁴⁸ In contrast to the light-hearted masculinity enacted by Richter and Polke in images such as the one of them taking a bath together, Beuys' constructed mythology often reflects a type of masculinity defined (and demolished) through war and army service. His work has been discussed in regard to a postwar German 'wounded manliness.'¹⁴⁹ While his use of materials and his own 'war-injured' body in performances has been understood as the artist's attempt to 'demonstrate and symbolically go through healing processes which promise salvation from the fascistic past for German society.'¹⁵⁰ Beuys' fashioning of the artist-hero therefore included his conception of the artist as an instigator of radical social transformation and renewal. Beuys envisioned and staged the artist as a social reformer, and conceived of the artist as an outsider, shaman, and bearer 'of social truth.'¹⁵¹ Conversely, Polke and Richter's

¹⁴⁷ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique' (1980), in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 47.

¹⁴⁸ For Beuys' falsified wartime account, see Buchloh's 'Beuys,' 45-48. The Festival of New Art took place on July 20, 1964, the twentieth anniversary of Operation Valkyrie, the failed coup against Hitler.

¹⁴⁹ See Corinna Tomberger, 'Show Your Wounded Manliness: Promises of Salvation in the Work of Joseph Beuys,' *Paragraph. A Journal of Modern Critical Theory* 26 (2003), 65-76.

¹⁵⁰ Tomberger, 65.

¹⁵¹ Thierry de Duve, 'Joseph Beuys, or The Last of the Proletarians,' *October* 45 (Summer, 1988), JSTOR (779043), 51.

performative portrayal of multiple personae in their artists' book questions the credibility of such impersonations. At the same time, by collapsing their identities through a collaborative enactment, Richter and Polke reject the artist as singular cult figure and the petit bourgeois cult of personality.¹⁵² In contrast to Beuys, who saw his work as a way to reshape society, Richter and Polke make no such powerful claims for the artist's role in society or for the function of art itself.¹⁵³

Rereading *Uncle Rudi* (by way of a conclusion)

Richter's *Uncle Rudi* was not only reproduced in *polke/richter richter/polke* but also exhibited for the first time at the 1966 show at galerie h (Fig. 78). *Uncle Rudi*, based on a family photograph of Richter's uncle in a Nazi *Wehrmacht* uniform, features heavily in the expansive literature focused on the artist. Art historians, including Buchloh and Kaja Silverman, have focused on the painting in their discussions of paternal identification, the paternal image, trauma and the influential writings of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich on mourning.¹⁵⁴ Yet neither Buchloh nor Silverman mention *Uncle Rudi* in context of its original presentation in the artists' book and at the gallery exhibition in 1966, or discuss it in terms of Capitalist Realism. However, thinking through the painting alongside works such as Richter's *Flemish Crown* and *Curtain*, and Polke's *Bedroom* and *Beach*, as it was originally displayed at galerie h, as well as in context of its reproduction in their artists' book, allows for a

¹⁵² On Beuys' 'culture of spectacle,' see Buchloh's 'Beuys,' 41-64.

¹⁵³ Tomberger quotes Beuys on the social possibilities of art: 'Beuys extended idea of art intended to form a social sculpture in the sense of reshaping society, in his own words: "how we mold and shape the world in which we live."' Tomberger, 68.

¹⁵⁴ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity: Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning' (1996), in *Gerhard Richter* (October FILES), edited by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 71-94; Kaja Silverman, 'Photography by Other Means,' in *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 168-221.

differently nuanced understanding of these works, which is currently missing from the discourse.

Published in Germany in 1967, the Mitscherlichs' *The Inability to Mourn* has been extremely influential on studies of postwar German cultural production.¹⁵⁵ The book asks two main questions: 'What is the relationship of guilt and responsibility to mourning, or not mourning?' and 'What are the collective consequences of the inability to mourn?'¹⁵⁶ The Mitscherlichs famously argue that in the wake of World War Two and the defeat in 1945, Germans should have, collectively, fallen into a state of melancholy and depression. The Mitscherlichs' study also investigates familial constructions of identity, which they discuss at length in regard to the postwar 'destruction of the paternal model,' which according to the psychoanalysts 'could hardly have been more complete than it was in Germany after World War II.'¹⁵⁷

Additionally, the Mitscherlichs argue that:

for the great majority of Germans who lived through the Third Reich, looking back on the period of National Socialist rule is like looking back on the obtrusion of an infectious disease in childhood, even though the collective regression in which they engage under the Führer's care was at first highly pleasurable: it was magnificent to be a chosen people. Indeed, for a great many, this belief, while not unshaken, has still not been refuted.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ See Eric L. Santner's work on postwar German cinema *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Michael Schneider's study of postwar German literature 'Fathers and Sons, Retrospectively: The Damaged Relationship between Two Generations,' translated by Jamie Owen Daniel, *New German Critique*, no. 31 (Winter 1984), JSTOR (487888): 3-51; and Lisa Saltzman's monograph *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999) to name just a few examples.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Jay Lifton, 'Preface,' in Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* (1967), translated by Beverley R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975), vii.

¹⁵⁷ Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* (1967), translated by Beverley R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975), 200.

¹⁵⁸ Mitscherlich, 15-16.

Unsurprisingly, the Mitscherlichs' book was instrumental for the German Student Movement, as its publication coincided with the *68er Bewegung*. Along with the earlier Auschwitz trials, the Mitscherlichs' work inspired the West German intelligentsia and Student Movement to increasingly focus on the FRG's failure to acknowledge and work through its Nazi past. Particularly the postwar generation, including Ensslin and Baader, increasingly understood West Germany as a 'apolitical, consumerist, American-protected cocoon,' which 'actively conspired with its Western masters to deny the German past, to bury it in material goods and anti-Communist propaganda.'¹⁵⁹ The West German Student Movement was therefore in many ways a uniquely familial conflict.¹⁶⁰

Buchloh frames his analysis of *Uncle Rudi* via his now influential theory regarding 'paternal disidentification'. He describes the work as 'linking the bankrupt conventions of history painting with the banality of the family photograph.'¹⁶¹ Drawing on the Mitscherlichs' writings, Buchloh sees Richter's monumental *48 Portraits* (1971-72) as the 'artist's Oedipal construction of an acceptable image of identification,' and therefore 'an elaboration of the process of identity construction,' as well as 'a manifest of disidentification' since a postwar German paternal identification would have to include the negation of 'the "natural" paternal image of the Germans as fascists' (Fig. 79).¹⁶² Buchloh's discussion of subjectivity and artistic identity is contingent on his analysis of Richter's family works in regard to mourning and historical memory and situates them in the context of totalitarian commemorative

¹⁵⁹ Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), 416.

¹⁶⁰ As Michael Schneider has noted: 'there were, of course, sharp political conflicts between fathers and sons in bourgeois homes in France and Italy during the period of the student movement, but such conflicts rarely resulted in an actual break in the natural emotional relationships between parents and children, as was often the case in German families.' Schneider, 'Fathers and Son's, Retrospectively,' 5.

¹⁶¹ Buchloh, 'Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity,' 88.

¹⁶² Buchloh, 'Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity,' 79-81.

portrait busts and photography's legacy on portraiture.¹⁶³ More than a decade later, Silverman returns to Buchloh's 'paternal disidentification,' also focusing on notions related to familial identity formation, particularly the paternal image, which she sees as 'the driving force' behind several of Richter's early works, including *Uncle Rudi*, Richter's painting of his father *Horst with Dog* (1965), as well as the much later series of his son *Moritz* (2000) (Figs. 80 - 83).¹⁶⁴

In the photograph showing Richter, Polke and their families enjoying coffee and cake, *Uncle Rudi* represents quite literally the horror in the postwar German family home. In their analysis of the postwar destruction of the paternal image and the adolescent construction of identity, the Mitscherlichs argue that parents had resorted to handing their children 'over to the consumer market,' an aspect of their argument often absent from discussion of their work.¹⁶⁵ As I have argued, several works produced under Capitalist Realism, including Richter and Polke's paintings of consumer goods such as sausages and chandeliers, make this post paternal disidentification form of identity construction explicit. In light of domestic consumption and the modern family home being touted as opportunities to remake and rebuild a democratic Germany and as essential elements of a new postwar German nationalism, Richter and Polke highlight the continued 'horror' at the heart of domestic bourgeois family life. In October 1964, Polke wrote a mock interview between Richter and John Anthony Thwaites.¹⁶⁶ The

¹⁶³ Buchloh contextualises his visual analysis of Richter's busts in *Two Sculptures for a Room by Palermo* through a discussion of the portrait bust and its role in totalitarian politics as a representation and 'restaging of the myth of the hero and the leader,' as well as authoritarian memorialisation and monumentalisation. Buchloh argues that 'the enforced commemoration of a living person' in Richter's busts 'is not aiming at a higher degree of control and domination, or at a consistent permeation of the social collection with the hieratic presence of the leader, but rather, the act of enforced commemoration seems to challenge the contemporary presence of artistic identity.' Buchloh, 'Divided Memory and Post-Traditional Identity,' 80.

¹⁶⁴ Silverman, 208.

¹⁶⁵ Mitscherlich, 191.

¹⁶⁶ As Robert Storr has noted in a footnote, the pseudonym adopted by Polke for the interview 'was the name of the English cultural affairs officer at the British Embassy in Munich,' who

parodic interview which opens with 'Thwaites' statement that Richter is 'the most talented of the German Pop painters,' anticipates the absurdity of Richter and Polke's later text collage: 'I have a lot of work, and I am well developed artistically, and also mentally and physically. ... And if you saw my new pictures, Mr Thwaites, you would collapse.'¹⁶⁷ The paintings inspired such reactions 'because they're so good! You've never seen such good pictures in your life.'¹⁶⁸ The 'interview' quickly turns sinister when 'Richter' suggests that 'it was more interesting earlier on, when the big death camps in Eastern Europe were using my pictures. The inmates used to drop dead at first sight,' while his drawings 'were mostly used for torture purposes' in Buchenwald, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen.¹⁶⁹ Polke, writing and answering as Richter, then suggests that 'I don't paint any more. I can't, because I don't want to spread terror, alarm and anxiety everywhere...'¹⁷⁰ At the root of 'German Pop,' according to Polke, posturing as Richter, was the horrific banality, the 'crime and misery' found in the 'terrible living room' in postwar Germany, only publicly acknowledged by Richter several decades later.¹⁷¹ Richter and Polke purposefully stage their collaboration and (de-)construction of multiple identities in this familial space of 'horror.' Family photography, consumer goods, and the postwar home are all similarly discredited as sites of identity formation,

also happened to be 'an art critic who wrote a short monograph' on the 'relatively conservative constructivist sculptor' Norbert Kricke, who in turn was a faculty member at the Düsseldorf Academy attended by Polke and Richter. Storr describes Kricke as 'the relentless enemy of his colleague Joseph Beuys.' And suggests that 'making Thwaites a figure of fun would thus seem, in the context of the mock interview, to have been a polemical gesture aimed at the modernist art establishment of the Rhineland by two young artists eager to dissociate themselves from it.' Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, 92.

¹⁶⁷ Sigmar Polke, 'Interview between John Anthony Thwaites and Gerhard Richter, written by Sigmar Polke, October 1964,' in *Gerhard Richter Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 - 2007*, edited by Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 24.

¹⁶⁸ Polke, 24.

¹⁶⁹ Polke, 24.

¹⁷⁰ Polke, 25.

¹⁷¹ As quoted in Storr, 'Interview with Gerhard Richter,' 294.

while simultaneously explored as the foundation of fictionalised and performative models of selfhood. Richter and Polke's artists' book, including the collage text, photographs and reproduced paintings therein, offers a fundamental critique of self-invention.

The Art of Self-Invention

The West German Student Movement relied heavily on the revolutionary potential of self-invention. Emancipation from a Cold War and specifically West German culture of conformity and the transformation of society would depend on the enactment of the working class by a largely (petit) bourgeois student body.¹⁷² Substitutionism would require students and their supporters to act as proxies, since the working class 'had been "bourgeoisified" and corrupted and could no longer serve as the social basis for radical opposition,' at least according to the *SDS* and Marcuse.¹⁷³ So although its goal was a transformation of society, of political structures and of the commodification of the individual, the Student Movement relied, in many ways similar to the petit bourgeoisie, on the possibility of masquerading as a different class. *Polke/richter richter/polke* could be seen in tension with such a position, via their overt questioning of the possibilities and limitations of such impersonations. Can self-invention lead to self-empowerment and self-determination? Can such self-stagings be instrumentalised for a cultural revolution? Is social, individual, class, or collective transformation possible by 'performing' a counter-identity?

Richter and Polke's exploration of familial sites of identity construction and its commodification of the individual relies on the viewer's recognition of their

¹⁷² See von Dirke, 29-66.

¹⁷³ Markovits and Gorski, 50. SDS is the abbreviation for the influential *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, the 'Socialist Democratic Student League.'

performativity. This recognition results in the disillusionment and destabilisation of affiliative identity formation, at the same time challenging its Cold War politicisation. Yet their artists' book provides no solutions to the questions the work raises. As I have argued, Richter and Polke, at least in 1966, make no claims that art might reshape society or artists can instigate lasting social change, in contrast to their (neo-)avant-garde contemporaries. Despite its unmasking of the petit bourgeoisie, Capitalist Realism was not heeding George Maciunas' call to 'purge the world of bourgeois sickness.'¹⁷⁴ In an interview given two months after their exhibition at galerie h, Polke stated: 'It can't be the task of a painter to examine and judge if something is good or bad. He illustrates, he says, this is how it is, not more.'¹⁷⁵

Subsequently Richter and Polke would explore very different answers to the questions raised by their collaboration. *Double Exposures* (1970) consists of four photographs in which Richter and Polke's portraits are superimposed on top of each other to the point of indistinction (Fig. 84). The images speak to a lived and performed friendship and collaboration, a shared interest in exploring techniques that allowed for the manipulation of photographic images, as well as to artistic strategies based on social interrelations.¹⁷⁶ Hubertus Butin describes the images as a 'visualization of a

¹⁷⁴ As quoted in Susanne Rennert, 'Purge the world of bourgeois sickness. The impact of the Düsseldorf Fluxus Events (1962/63) on Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke and Konrad Lueg, and Capitalist Realism in Berlin,' in *Living with Pop. A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism*, exh. cat., edited by Elodie Evers, Magdalene Holzhey and Gregor Jansen (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2013), 121.

¹⁷⁵ 'Es kann nicht, Aufgabe eines Malers sein, etwas auf gut oder schlecht hin zu untersuchen und zu beurteilen. Er zeigt auf, er sagt, so und so ist es, mehr nicht.' Sigmar Polke quoted in Dieter Hülsmanns, 'Kultur des Rasters. Ateliergespräch mit dem Maler Sigmar Polke,' *Rheinische Post*, no. 108 (7.5.1966).

¹⁷⁶ Polke and Richter both manipulate their photographs through a variety of techniques, often through multiple exposures. Jochen Poetter exhaustively lists all the ways in which Polke would alter his photographs, many of which were also used by Richter. Jochen Poetter, '1968/90,' in *Sigmar Polke: Fotografien*, exh. cat., edited by Jochen Poetter (Stuttgart / Baden-Baden: Edition Cantz / Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, 1990), 46.

close artists' friendship... they appear virtually fused together into a single person.'¹⁷⁷ And yet Butin acknowledges the strain in the artists' friendship at the time, describing their blurred portraits as 'no mere experiment, but rather, like a wishing-machine, the camera seems to conjure up the unity between the two artists.'¹⁷⁸ While Richter would continue to resist the politicisation of the visual, Polke, particularly in the 1970s and especially through his collective work, would take part in the neo-avant-garde's participation in the wider rebellion 'against a stifling atmosphere of cultural conformity.'¹⁷⁹ As Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübél suggest, 'Polke only existed in the plural during the 1970s,' as illustrated by his 'self-staging as flycatcher, deadbeat hippie and outsider.'¹⁸⁰ Polke, the authors argue, 'no longer wanted to appear, even superficially, like he belonged to the good-boys club of Bernd Becher and Gerhard Richter, who were, at that moment, increasingly playing up the role of gentlemen.'¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, in 1966, Richter and Polke, through Capitalist Realism, were still asking questions, rather than finding answers. They were exposing the difficulties of resisting and counter-acting the collective conformity they unveiled. If the petit bourgeoisie had perfected self-invention – and was, as Enzensberger argued 'always someone else' –

¹⁷⁷ Hubertus Butin, 'Unknown Photographic Works by Gerhard Richter,' in *Gerhard Richter: Portraits*, edited by Stefan Gronert (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 212.

¹⁷⁸ Butin, 212. In his biography, Elger recounts how 'Richter's relationship with Polke was from the beginning especially competitive,' and quotes Richter stating that: 'I remember how close this friendship was, but also how tough it sometimes was. ... In retrospect, I'm amazed it was so brutal.' Elger also quotes from a Richter interview with Robert Storr, in which Richter explained Polke and his changing relationship during the 1970s in reference to lifestyle and stylistic changes: 'Polke drifted into the psychedelic direction and I into the classical.' Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, 103.

¹⁷⁹ Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4.

¹⁸⁰ Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübél, 'Multiple Maniacs! Lines of Flight in Sigmar Polke & Co.,' in *Sigmar Polke: We Petty Bourgeois! Comrades and Contemporaries. The 1970s*, exh. cat., edited by Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübél (Cologne, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011), 37.

¹⁸¹ Lange-Berndt and Rübél, 42.

what agency did counter-identities have left? ¹⁸² In Cold War West Germany, *polke/richter richter/polke*'s exploration and unmasking of the familial posed a politically explosive question, even if it couldn't provide all of the answers.

¹⁸² Enzensberger, 202.

CHAPTER TWO

Georg Baselitz's *Bedroom(s)*

That's why I think content and subject are totally irrelevant. Unless you're painting a picture for the Reichstag, or a portrait – in which case you do have to address not only art history but also wider history.¹

- Georg Baselitz, 2014

Holding the small book open with two hands, an initial scan down the two pages reveals little beyond blotches of shades of blue, while faint black marks delineate indistinguishable forms (Fig. 85). The format of the work instinctually suggests such a linear 'reading,' yet eventually a viewer's eyes are guided upwards across the pages and the motifs emerge: an inverted male figure literally sits across the page from an upturned feathered wing. The singular wing which takes up most of the right page – its rows of smaller feathers expanding forcefully downwards into the larger, darker outlines – dwarfs the figure on the left, who appears static and motionless in comparison. Defying gravity, the upside-down figure and his chair are firmly rooted in swashes of black gouache in the upper third of the page, which demarcate the space around the graphite grey chair and blue legs of the bearded man. Connected across the double-spread through a shared colour palette, both images include a faint 'Aug 75' in the lower right-hand corner, ostensibly dating their production. Both the male figure – one of many self-portraits by Georg Baselitz from this period – and the wing appear repeatedly in the book, the latter reworked in numerous images of an eagle. The motifs

¹ As quoted in Cathérine Hug, 'Thinking Aloud: What Expressionism Tells Us Today. A conversation between Georg Baselitz and Robert Menasse, moderated by Cathérine Hug,' in *Expressionism in Germany and France: From Matisse to the Blue Rider*, exh. cat., edited by Timothy O. Benson (Zurich: Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft / Kunsthaus Zürich, 2014), 85.

are linked not only by their layout within the publication, but also by the ‘real’ location suggested by the title of the work: *Sächsische Motive (Saxon Motifs)*. How might they both be ‘Saxon’? In what ways are they embedded, and part of the upended landscapes depicted by Baselitz across a number of the 54 mixed-media works on paper brought together in a publication that defies categorisation – appearing as a kind of hybrid sketchbook, artist’s book and exhibition catalogue? What is their relationship with this fragmented ‘nature,’ Saxony, and each other?

The format of the publication and its size (23.5 × 17 cm) allow viewers a rare physical intervention into Baselitz’s work. Highly performative and activating, most of Baselitz’s vast paintings pivot around his iconoclastic act of upending figurative motives, including his own self-image, forcing viewers to consider his images as inversions of a visible reality. They compel viewers to attempt to physically ‘correct’ his distortions: viewers frequently angle their heads unnaturally to the side, repeatedly step away from and closer to his paintings, or even crouch down in front of Baselitz’s often immense canvases. The intimate scale of the book, which allows a viewer to rotate the images at will, provides the opportunity to undo the artist’s most iconic gesture. And yet, of course, Baselitz’s distorted ‘reality’ cannot be corrected. His images only work upside down and gain no further sense of ‘realism’ when turned ‘right’ side up. The book ultimately confirms what viewers can only guess in front of Baselitz’s monumental paintings.

In his *Saxon* book, Baselitz explores the inversion of images – a gesture adopted by the artist a few years earlier in 1969 – through a range of personal motifs, including portraits of his wife Elke Kretschmar and self-portraits (Fig. 86). The dynamic, gestural compositions produced in a mixture of gouache, ink, pencil, watercolour and ballpoint pen, as well as their layout and reproduction, suggest the

‘facsimile print’ released in 1985 in an edition of 1300 reproduces a sketchbook by Baselitz. Yet the book is more deliberately staged, more ‘curated,’ than it initially suggests. Published to accompany an eponymous exhibition at the daadgalerie in Berlin, both the exhibition and publication were the result of a collaboration between Baselitz and René Block, head of the daadgalerie and the visual arts of the *DAAD* (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, German Academic Exchange Service) Artists-in-Berlin Program at the time. Three commercial galleries lent work to the exhibition, and contributed to the publication costs, including the Galerie Fred Jahn, Galerie Sabine Knust and Michael Werner’s gallery.² The book’s hybridity thus spans multiple registers, and complicates its status amongst Baselitz’s production of artist’s books.³ While certain institutions, including Tate, consider the work an artist’s book, Maria Linsmann’s inventory does not include *Saxon Motifs*, but lists it as a special edition instead.⁴ Siegfried Gohr, in his article accompanying Linsmann’s publication, understands Baselitz’s artist’s books, editions, manifestos, as well as his public lectures, as connected elements of the artist’s continuous exploration of image and speech: ‘a kind of epiphany of signs, traced by the artist – in a fundamental search for himself in his own self [*einem Selbst in seinem Ich*].’⁵ As Gohr argues, they ‘pointedly

² Ariane Beyn, email correspondence with the author, 17.07.2018.

³ Several works by Baselitz are categorised as artist’s books rather easily, including *Malelade* (1990), *Bing* (1991), *Winter* (1992), *1001 Nights* (1995), and *Signs* (1999). Each of these was produced in a limited edition, and is packaged and presented as a small, precious, *edition de luxe* (with corresponding prices). While *Malelade* includes Baselitz’s own ‘poems’ alongside his etchings, *Bing* contains a text by Samuel Beckett, and *Winter* and *Signs* poems by Joseph Brodsky and Robert Creeley respectively. However, like *Saxon Motifs*, a case could be made for other publications by Baselitz, including his issue of *Krater & Wolke* (1990), originally classified as a magazine published by artists associated with Michael Werner’s gallery, but now frequently discussed as a series of seven artist’s books.

⁴ *Saxon Motifs* is classed by Tate Archives under 7 BASE (ARTISTS’ BOOKS), 53110. Maria Linsmann, ed., *Georg Baselitz: Künstlerbücher* (Cologne: Wienand, 2001), 52.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German are my own. ‘...daß sein Umgang mit Bild und Sprechen oder Schreiben nicht auf Entwicklung beruht, sondern auf Entdeckung, auf einer Art Epiphanie von Zeichen, die vom Künstler aufgespürt wurden – in einer grundlegenden Suche nach einem Selbst in seinem Ich.’ Siegfried Gohr, ‘Der Raum der

formulate' both the artist's understanding of his own 'profession,' as well as 'the general artistic and social circumstances,' of their production.⁶ Block's involvement in *Saxon Motifs* is telling. Even as an art dealer – his gallery closed in 1979, before he started working for the *DAAD* – he had understood his role both in social and economic terms.⁷ This had led to the founding of Edition Block in 1966, one of the oldest publishers of limited edition objects and prints.⁸ For Block, multiples offered artists the opportunity to critically reflect on their own working process, as well as industrial production, and aided the 'the democratisation and socialisation of the art market.'⁹

Several of the *Saxon* watercolours have been built up over and therefore obscure handwritten notes, the semiotic illegibility mirroring the inversion of the motives; both offering a sense of realism that is ultimately unfulfillable (Figs. 87 - 89). Temptingly, they also offer a form of self-disclosure through ostensibly private thoughts and sketches, neither of which, however, are decipherable. Baselitz continuously frustrates his viewer. Repeatedly, he abstracts the concrete. Two of the

Korrespondenz. Anmerkungen zu den Künstlerbüchern von Georg Baselitz,' in *Georg Baselitz: Künstlerbücher*, edited by Maria Linsmann (Cologne: Wienand, 2001), 40.

⁶ 'Hier fanden sich seine Haltung als Künstler, die jeweilige Auffassung seines Metiers oder die allgemeine künstlerische und gesellschaftliche Situation prägnant oder zugespitzt formuliert.' Gohr, 'Der Raum der Korrespondenz,' 38.

⁷ For an introduction to Block's politics and how they informed his gallery and exhibition practice, see Catharina Manchanda, 'Against Affirmative Culture: René Block's Appropriation of 'Capitalist Realism,' in *Critical Realism in Contemporary Art: Around Allan Sekula's Photography*, edited by Jan Baetens and Hilde van Gelder (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 90-99.

⁸ The first projects published by Edition Block were produced in collaboration with artists shown in the gallery next door, including Wolf Vostell, Joseph Beuys, as well as Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg.

⁹ 'Durch die nahezu unbegrenzten Herstellungsmöglichkeiten, die die industrielle Entwicklung geschaffen hat, ist die Auseinandersetzung mit der industriellen Fertigung für viele Künstler ein wichtiger Bestandteil ihrer Produktion geworden. Überall haben die Kunsthändler dem Anspruch ihrer Künstler nach Demokratisierung und Sozialisierung des Kunstmarktes Rechnung getragen und durch die Einrichtung von Editionen unterstützt.' René Block, 'Dem Multiple gehört die Zukunft (1972),' in *René Block: Ich kenne kein Weekend. Ausstellungsprojekte, Texte und Dokumente seit 1964*, edited by Marius Babias, Birgit Eusterschulte, and Stella Rollig, (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2015), 81.

drawings – are they drawings, preliminary sketches, or elements of one ‘complete’ work? – are dated ’71,’ despite being preceded, and succeeded, by images that have been dated 1975 (Fig. 90). This temporal slippage further complicates the categorisation of the images and their grouping together in the form of a publication.

As I argue in this chapter, akin to many of Baselitz’s other ostensibly ‘private’ images, his series of *Saxon Motifs* stress the unreliability not only of personal memory and familial images, but crucially, of notions of ‘family’ and ‘home.’ This chapter explores how Baselitz’s ‘intimate’ works and contingent portraits reassess the 1970s fraught trifecta of (artistic) autonomy, realism and subjectivity through an exploration of familial and domestic self-fashionings. They are contextualised within the larger West German cultural debates regarding the relationship between images and reality, fiction and documentation. I consider contemporaneous cultural productions which similarly engaged with questions concerning the family and home at a time when German ‘patriotism’ equally manifested as an active suppression of the recent past, as well as acts of domestic terror aimed at exposing the nation’s latent fascism.¹⁰

In a paired down palette of blues, blacks and browns, with occasional hints of rusty red and ochre yellow, Baselitz juxtaposes and blurs motifs deliberately singled out by the artist as ‘Saxon,’ a place and people central to the artist’s oeuvre and biography, as real and as constructed as the name Hans-Georg Kern adopted in tribute to his birthplace Deutschbaselitz. As Gohr argues, ‘as an artist, Baselitz moves in his self-created cosmos of motifs, words and methods of image-making [*Bildermachens*],’

¹⁰ For an overview of the (often violent) socio-political and ideological debates regarding what might constitute a viable ‘German’ identity during the 1970s, see Karrin Hanshew, *Terror and Democracy in West Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

at the centre of which ‘lies the real and at once imaginary place – Baselitz.’¹¹ The history of the small village in Saxony speaks to the arbitrary and yet highly significant renaming of large parts of Germany during and after the war: in 1937 the Nazi regime ordered that the town be joined with the neighbouring village Wendischbaselitz and renamed Grossbaselitz, a name it held in 1938 when Baselitz was born there and retained until 1946, when, as part of East Germany, it became known both as Deutschbaselitz and Němske Pazlicy. Baselitz adopted the name in 1961, when the construction of the Berlin Wall rendered the town inaccessible for the artist now living in West Germany. Yet 1975 marked a kind of ‘Saxon’ return. Having gained certain notoriety and success in West Berlin, Baselitz moved his wife and two children to the village of Osthofen in 1966, before the move to rural Lower Saxony in 1975 to Castle Derneburg.¹² Four years later, Baselitz asserted that ‘an artist’s isolation in society has never been greater.’¹³ The physical relocations with his family would literally manifest and reinforce the artist’s separation from wider society, as well as his birthplace across the border. Baselitz has argued that ‘up until 1969 I painted pictures that had both content and expression. The expression was grounded in the content. Suddenly the content was gone. ... Turning pictures upside down neutralises any message arising

¹¹ ‘Baselitz bewegt sich als Künstler in seine selbstgeschaffenen Kosmos aus Motiven, Vokabeln und Methoden des Bildermachens. Im Mittelpunkt dieses Kosmos ... liegt ein realer und zugleich imaginärer Ort – Baselitz.’ Gohr, ‘Der Raum der Korrespondenz,’ 38.

¹² Rejected from Dresden’s Art Academy, Baselitz was expelled from the Academy For Fine And Applied Arts (*Hochschule für Bildende und Angewandte Künste*) in East Berlin for ‘socio-political immaturity’ in 1957 after painting ‘incomprehensible’ works during a semester break in his first year of study. Subsequently Baselitz applied to the *Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste* in West Berlin, where he moved a year after his expulsion and studied until 1962. See Diane Waldman, ‘Georg Baselitz: Art on the Edge,’ in *Georg Baselitz*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1995), 14-15.

¹³ Georg Baselitz, ‘Four Walls and Skylight, or Rather No Picture on the Wall at All’ (1979), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 55.

from the content.’¹⁴ The artist has repeatedly insisted that his iconic gesture of inversion allowed him ‘to paint pictures with no content, no expression, no story.’¹⁵ Yet what are the implications of Baselitz’s apparent neutralisation of both private and often highly symbolic imagery, including his *Saxon Motifs*?

The artist has spoken about his conflicted notion of home at length, most publicly in 1992 when Baselitz delivered a lecture as part of a series entitled ‘Talking about Germany.’ Launched by the Bertelsmann publishing house, originally under the title ‘Talking about one’s own country’ (*Reden über das eigene Land*), previous speakers included Willy Brandt, Joseph Beuys, as well as Margarete Mitscherlich.¹⁶ As Baselitz noted ‘Germany and homeland are concepts – also more than that. It’s the place I didn’t have to decide on; I didn’t choose it.’¹⁷ Describing his childhood, the artist recalls identifying as German at an early age, particularly in comparison with local Sorbian children, who were marked out as different by both German children and their parents. Baselitz recounts in detail the destruction of the local schoolhouse, where his father worked as a teacher and where the artist was born, and the subsequent destruction of the local castle and its library by ‘the new regime’ after the war.¹⁸ ‘I am describing these things because I haven’t forgotten them and because I believe that these experiences ... increased my scepticism, my distrust towards events that I

¹⁴ As quoted in Mariana Hanstein and Lothar Schmidt-Mühlisch, ‘*The Picture Behind the Canvas is Not a Utopia*. Georg Baselitz in conversation with Mariana Hanstein and Lothar Schmidt-Mühlisch’ (1987), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 136.

¹⁵ Hanstein and Schmidt-Mühlisch, 136.

¹⁶ Most of the lectures have been published in the multi-volume series *Reden über das eigene Land*. Beuys and Mitscherlich’s lectures are both included in *Reden über das eigene Land: Deutschland 3*, edited by Hans Mayer (Munich: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1985).

¹⁷ Georg Baselitz, ‘Somersaults Are Also Movement, and They’re Fun Too’ (1992), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 220.

¹⁸ Baselitz, ‘Somersaults Are Also Movement, and They’re Fun Too,’ 210-211.

couldn't influence.'¹⁹ Baselitz powerfully argues that his wartime experience as a child lead him to mistrust 'anyone who devised models for other people to live by,' and to 'hate ideologies.'²⁰ They also significantly influenced the artist's conception of the role of art and the artist. Admonishing the politicisation of art – 'when colours became politically charged' – Baselitz insists that 'what artists do doesn't touch on anything fundamental even if they wish it did.'²¹ Much of the rest of his lecture is focused on Baselitz's insistence that 'themes and motifs' are 'ballast,' and artists useless and 'asocial.'²² The latter is particularly significant, as Baselitz has, throughout his career, discussed the artist as an outsider apart from society. Baselitz's claims for pure painting and painting's ability to (re-)invent its own reality are directly tied to this understanding of the artist.

In the opening lines of his speech, Baselitz repeatedly quotes Gottfried Benn, suggesting that he would use the poet's writings regarding 'the relationship between artists and their time' as his 'authority' and 'frame' for his talk.²³ Benn's work, nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature for five consecutive years until his death in 1956, had initially been banned by the Allies due to his early support of National Socialism, although the Nazi regime itself banned his expressionist poetry in 1935. A controversial and yet also highly popular figure rehabilitated during the 1950s, Benn is in many ways representative of the generation against which Baselitz and his contemporaries defined themselves, and which came to both a violent and creative climax during the 1970s.²⁴ As I will argue in this chapter, Baselitz's self-image is

¹⁹ Baselitz, 'Somersaults Are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too,' 211.

²⁰ Baselitz, 'Somersaults are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too,' 211.

²¹ Baselitz, 'Somersaults are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too,' 215, 219.

²² Baselitz, 'Somersaults are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too,' 215.

²³ Baselitz, 'Somersaults are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too,' 207.

²⁴ E.B. Ashton writes in his English introduction to Benn's writings: 'He was "the man who exerted the greatest influence after the war" and "one of the grand old men of literary Europe."' These paeans were sung to an unreconstructed Expressionist, an esoteric thinker who wrote

refracted and produced through a confrontation with this generation. Echoing Peter Hohendahl's analysis of Benn in light of Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Baselitz, without directly referencing the German poet, argued in his 1992 speech that: 'We can see that the avant-garde can change directions; it can move both forward and backward.'²⁵ Baselitz's conception of the artist is linked to Benn's own insistence on the autonomy of art: 'it has its own laws and expresses nothing but itself.'²⁶ The artist references Benn's concept of 'art carriers,' in his speech, which the poet described in his immensely popular autobiography *Double Life* (1950) as 'asocial, living only with his inner material, utterly disinterested in expansion, broad effect, increased reception, and culture.'²⁷ Such statements have, unsurprisingly, led to a critique of Baselitz as propagating 'the myth of the solitary genius whose perfection lies in absolute

only to express ideas to his own satisfaction, an eccentric stylist whose mature prose was as popularly unintelligible as his youthful verses had been commonly unpalatable – in short, an author one would expect to be esteemed by the older sophisticates, shrugged off as a has-been by the *avant-garde*, and ignored by the public. Yet the public ate up Benn's books, and German youth hung on the lips of this bald, heavy-lidded purist and self-styled relic of a bygone age. In part, no doubt, his magic lay in the promise of controversy. Dropping Benn's name among German intellectuals was enough, in the post-war years, to kindle a whole spectrum of reactions from angry red to mystic purple.' E.B. Ashton, 'Introduction,' in *Primal Vision: Selected Writings of Gottfried Benn*, edited by E.B. Ashton (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), vii. Italics in original.

²⁵ Baselitz, 'Somersaults are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too,' 217. Hohendahl has argued that 'We could, for instance, reconcile our findings with Bürger's theory by arguing that Benn is still a modernist and not part of the avant-garde. This thesis could be supported, for example, by the argument that the dadaists openly rejected the expressionists precisely because they failed to critique the institution of art itself. I suspect that Bürger would choose this explanation, but I am not certain whether Benn's prose, given its radically subversive character, could still be labelled as modernist in the same sense as one would define the prose of Hofmannsthal and Rilke as modernist. Hence, if we insist on the *difference* between Hofmannsthal and Benn, if we understand Benn as part of the German avant-garde, we are led to a crucial conclusion: the theory of the avant-garde has to be reformulated.' Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'The Loss of Reality: Gottfried Benn's Early Prose,' in *Modernity and the Text: Revision of German Modernism*, edited by Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 88. Italics in original.

²⁶ As quoted by Baselitz, 'Somersaults are Also Movement, and They're Fun Too,' 207.

²⁷ Gottfried Benn, 'From *Double Life: Future and Present*' (1950), in *Primal Vision: Selected Writings of Gottfried Benn*, edited by E.B. Ashton (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), 182.

independence from the world.’²⁸ As I will discuss in further detail, Benjamin Buchloh has gone so far as to describe Baselitz’s supposed adaptation of the artist’s traditional role as ‘dangerous.’²⁹ And yet, like Benn, Baselitz was highly critical of the notion of the genius. He dismissed both Jörg Immendorff’s ‘political’ attempt ‘to contribute to changing society, as an artist,’ as well as Markus Lüpertz’s belief ‘in a hierarchical society topped by the genius.’³⁰ In the same interview, Baselitz once more evokes Benn, this time in reference to Wilhelm Lange-Eichbaum’s monumental study *Genie Irrsinn und Ruhm* (*Genius Insanity and Fame*); originally published in 1928 it traced the relationship between genius and madness through hundreds of examples, focusing in particular on artists and writers, while later editions also included a lengthy entry on Adolf Hitler.³¹ Unidentified until now, two pages from Lange-Eichbaum’s introduction are reproduced in Baselitz’s *Saxon Motifs* (Fig. 90). Beneath two large wings, rendered in red and black, single words – including, repeatedly, *Genie* (genius) – emerge from beneath the feathers and through the opaque watercolours. A dark black line forms both the outline of a feather, while at the same time underlining ‘*Genie erträumt*’ – a genius ‘imagined’, ‘dreamed of.’

As I will argue, *Saxon Motifs* and its interconnected series of paintings, restate but crucially also query the fantasy of the myth of the artist. They test the critical potential of intimate, private motifs and spaces bound up with both the self-image of

²⁸ Suzi Gablik, ‘Connective Aesthetics: Art after Individualism,’ in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, edited by Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 77.

²⁹ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting,’ *October* 16 (Spring, 1981), JSTOR (778374), 61.

³⁰ ‘...er [Immendorff] hat sich politisch engagiert, er hat versucht, an einer Veränderung der Gesellschaft mitzuarbeiten, als Künstler. Lüpertz glaubt an eine Hierarchie innerhalb der Gesellschaft, die in einem Genie gipfelt, er versucht, dieses Genie zu sein. Ich habe solche Konzepte nicht interessant gefunden.’ As quoted in Éric Darragon, ‘Ein Deutscher werden’ (1994/1995), in *Darstellen, was ich selber bin. Georg Baselitz im Gespräch mit Éric Darragon* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2001), 112-113.

³¹ Darragon, 125.

the state and the artist. How might the postwar emphasis on personal autonomy (through a retreat into the private sphere) provide a fundamental re-reading of Baselitz's insistence on 'autonomous' art and 'outsider' artist? The 1970s in Germany have been described as a 'turn indoors,' albeit under very different conditions in East and West.³² Nevertheless, photographers, writers, painters, and filmmakers in both Germanys increasingly focused on everyday motifs of private and domestic life.³³ As will be outlined in further detail, and contextualised within this emphasis on domesticity, the 1970s saw the simultaneous emergence of a new type of self-portraiture and form of autobiography in West Germany.³⁴ Both question the viability of authentic representations of reality and foreground the inherent fabrication and fictionalisation necessitated by their genres.

Bedroom Portraits

While the Capitalist Realists reimagined their living room as a site of artistic production and capitalist consumption and relocated it to a department store during the 1960s, in the 1970s Baselitz would move his studio into his marital bedroom. *Saxon Motifs* includes a number of portraits of Baselitz and Elke, bar one – a close up of Elke's face – each one portrays the seated figures in the nude (Fig. 85, Fig. 86, Figs. 91 - 93). Spread throughout the book, the self-portraits depict Baselitz from various angles while seated on a chair. Two of the watercolours depict his nude figure framed

³² Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120-147.

³³ Betts, *Within Walls*, 211.

³⁴ This is perhaps unsurprising. As Shearer West has pointed out, the rise of self-portraiture and autobiography in Europe have often gone hand in hand: 'Although a self-portrait can convey little but traces or vestiges of an actual life, filtered through a medium with its own conventions and limitations, it is significant that the flourishing of self-portraiture in Europe coincided with the advent of autobiography as a genre.' Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 178-179.

against an abstracted window, the shades of green and brown used to outline and fill the space in one of the portraits echoing the colours of the trees captured on other pages of the book. Hints of a window also appear in one of the portraits of Elke, her face turned away from both the window and the viewer into the blank corner of the page, her hands between her thighs and slightly crossed feet suggesting both boredom and cold, echoed by the cool colour palette of the portrait (Fig. 93). Although seated, Elke is not portrayed on Baselitz's chair, a hint of a dark pillow to her left, and the low frame beneath her, indicating instead that the artist has depicted his wife sitting on a bed. This setting, along with the figures' positions, and their date of production, tie the *Saxon* portraits to a series that has occupied Baselitz since 1975, and continues to do so until this day.

The artist has reworked, reinterpreted and reimagined these images of Elke and himself throughout his career, creating a group of '*Bedroom*' works which not only lays bare his representational practices but is particularly revealing in its interplay between the single work and the series to which it belongs. Several parallel, or contingent, series were produced during the 1970s, one of which consists of nude portraits of Elke, which depict her seated on the ubiquitous 'kitchen' chair seen in Baselitz's self-portrait in *Saxon Motifs*, as well as numerous nude self-portraits, rendered not only in paint, but also in further drawings and linocuts. Crucially, Baselitz produces his portraits upside down from the beginning (rather than right-side up, only to turn them around after completion), and usually does so from photographs.³⁵ Elke

³⁵ Most of Baselitz's inverted paintings are based on photographs taken by the artist: 'Photographs are memories of objects, landscapes, or people. That's the only thing about photographs that interests me.' As quoted in Martin Schwander, "'I've no idea how I could ever have become a painter in California.'" Georg Baselitz in Dialogue with Martin Schwander,' in *Baselitz*, exh.cat., edited by Martin Schwander (Riehen / Berlin: Fondation Beyeler / Hatje Cantz, 2018), 49.

herself has recounted that the first portrait Baselitz painted of her in 1969 – her first inverted portrait – was based on a photograph taken in East Berlin (Fig. 94):

We were sitting at a table. It was a difficult and emotional moment. We were very happy to see our friends, but were conscious of the separation that existed between East and West. We grew up in the East and then moved to the West. Unless you have experienced that kind of move, it's hard to explain the conflicted feelings.³⁶

As outlined, Baselitz was torn both personally and professionally between East and West Germany. His supposedly 'autonomous' figurative paintings can be understood as both a rejection of East German Socialist Realism and Western abstract formalism at a time when postwar abstraction was still being promoted as the stylistic equivalent of political freedom and democracy.³⁷ While realism was temporarily relegated to East Germany, and considered 'to be covalent with communism and collectivism.'³⁸ Baselitz's disdain for ideology (as well as his move from East to West Germany) mirrors Gerhard Richter's similar rejection of the politicisation of artists and artistic styles. And although with very different results, both rely heavily on photography as a source for their large-scale paintings and intimate works on paper.

Two paintings by Baselitz from 1975 unmistakably rework the same source images as the *Saxon Motif* portraits. Each is based on a set of Polaroid portraits taken of Baselitz and Elke, presumably by each other. The unique Polaroid image, distinctly at odds with the reproducibility of photographs, has thus spurred a series of images. The portraits therefore also serve as a meditation on the cyclical obsolescence and co-

³⁶ As quoted in Michael Auping, 'Georg Baselitz: Portraits of Elke,' in *Georg Baselitz: Portraits of Elke*, exh. cat. (Fort Worth, Texas: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, 1997), 14.

³⁷ John-Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines. Art in Germany 1945-1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007), 89-135.

³⁸ Sabine Eckmann, 'Ruptures and Continuities: Modern German Art in between the Third Reich and the Cold War,' in *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures*, exh. cat., edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, 2009), 49.

existence of different forms of technology, the strikingly modern and near-instantaneous Polaroid image generating laborious, and rather archaic, wood- and linocuts, such as *Female nude on kitchen chair*, produced in seven different states between 1977 and 1979 (Fig. 95, Fig. 96). Yet while husband and wife are shown in singular portraits in works such as *Female nude* and in the *Saxon* book, the two over life-size paintings from 1975 depict the upturned, nude couple seated side-by-side, the Polaroid images combined into a double portrait.

In *Bedroom*, Elke's greyish blue figure on the left stands out starkly against Baselitz's energetic brushstrokes of warm yellows in the lower half of the canvas and reds above, which delineate her background and are interspersed with patches of white, as well as flecks of blue that peer out through the over-painted warmer tones (Fig. 97). In contrast, Baselitz's pinky flesh, more natural in its tones, particularly compared to Elke's muted greys, is set against bright blue swashes of mostly uniform colour, with the exception of the red chair and a few spots of complementary orangey-yellow. These contrasts, both in painted flesh and background colours, re-emphasise the painting's distinct lack of intimacy. There is no physical interaction between the nude couple; both figures are staring away from each other, as well as the viewer, with Elke's crossed arms creating an additional barrier and instinctively read as a defensive gesture. And yet, although Baselitz uses colour to divide the canvas and create separate spheres for his figures, colour also provides the only instances of connections and overlap. Part of Baselitz's head, with its distinct black beard and closely cropped dark hair, encroaches into Elke's yellow background, while the thick layers of red paint at the very centre of the painting 'bleed' into Baselitz's torso, where a fragmented stump and crudely outlined hand indicate the artist's left arm. Despite being painted upside down, the couple is physically grounded through their matching chairs, and yet the

lack of feet – particularly the abrupt end of Baselitz’s right leg, as if amputated – creates a contrasting sense of floating figures. The painting is a formal study in shapes and colours, and yet simultaneously explores the possibilities of figuration through modes of abstraction.

Baselitz’s leg, this time his left, also provides a moment of disruption in *Bedroom (Portrait Elke and Georg)*, which at 350 centimetres is a meter longer than its counter-part (Fig. 98). Painted in murky browns with hints of blue, the artist’s unnaturally elongated leg attempts to extend beyond the massive canvas. The upward extension of Baselitz’s leg leads the viewer’s gaze across the canvas and away from the figures, to the empty white space in the top right corner. As in the previous work, Baselitz uses negative space to create separate frames and spheres for his figures – in this case splitting the lower half of the painting into two distinct backgrounds for his portrait of Elke and his self-portrait through different shades of brown and beige – as well as to explore his working methods. The top third of the canvas is a study in textures and brush marks, the effects of drips and the translucency and opacity of paint, and reads like a deconstruction of the artist’s work process. The stark black outlines of Elke and Baselitz, their mask-like faces and angular limbs, undermines any sense of conventional portraiture. Particularly when seen together, Baselitz’s two earliest *Bedroom* paintings suggest a much greater interest in the exploration of formal composition and abstraction than the motif itself. And yet the paintings resist a hasty dismissal of content. The chest of drawers emerging from the dark, murky edge of the left side of *Bedroom (Portrait Elke and Georg)* continuously draws the viewer back into the physical space of both the canvas and the setting. It physical grounds the figures in a real space, and more specifically in the intimate space of their bedroom suggested in the painting’s title. The figures in *Bedroom (Portrait Elke and Georg)*

closely correspond to the images of Elke and Baselitz found in *Saxon Motifs*. Other than the angle of Elke's head – she faces straight ahead in the painting – and the significant difference in scale – the height of the painting is almost fifteen times that of the book – the female figure mirrors the bedroom portrait in *Saxon Motifs* almost exactly; hands between thighs, which further emphasise the dark triangle of pubic hair, the outward pointing breasts, and feet stretched out ahead. Baselitz, arms resting on his thighs, one leg angled back beneath the ubiquitous chair, shows close parallels to the self-portrait included across from the large feathered wing almost in the very centre of the publication.

As previously specified, wings appear repeatedly throughout the book, including on the pages reproduced from *Genie Irrsinn und Ruhm*, as well as in the images of eagles included in the work. On an early double spread in *Saxon Motifs*, two inverted eagles are depicted in various states of motion (Fig. 99). Particularly the eagle on the left page, dwarfed by his immense, oversized wings, which forcefully drag the bird of prey downwards, echo the later, isolated wing. The eagle plunging down through the sky is also a small-scale reworking of Baselitz's immense *Finger Painting – Eagle* (1972) (Fig. 100). Given that sketches normally come before larger scale works and are consequently often understood as a kind of preparatory study, the works on paper brought together in *Saxon Motifs* offer a different kind of retrospective 'work in progress.' *Finger Painting – Eagle* is part of small series of paintings, including self-portraits and portraits of Elke, in which Baselitz experimented with a new technique, painting his canvases entirely with, as the title would suggest, his fingers. Although it was a technique the artist would abandon by the end of the decade, he has described the process as a way to engage with his medium more intimately and physically, and was particularly intrigued by the resulting texture of the canvas when

applying paint with his fingertips: ‘it ... produced an effect that was very interesting: the surface of these paintings was very smooth – like the waxed cloth we used to have on the kitchen table.’³⁹ Baselitz had transformed his canvases into domestic objects just by using his hands. And yet their scale would ultimately exclude them from most domestic interiors. Gohr considers the recurring motif of the eagle part of an ‘iconography of the private’ developed by Baselitz during the 1970s, based on ‘memories of the Saxon homeland,’ and ‘sometimes from Polaroids of unremarkable facts of everyday life.’⁴⁰ Indeed, eagles are one of Baselitz’s earliest motifs, as seen in *Two Fighting Eagles* (ca. 1953-54), produced when the artist was only fifteen (Fig. 101). Beyond their personal meaning, it is, of course, as Diane Waldman has argued, rather easy to read the upturned eagles as ‘the discredited emblem of the Third Reich, its inversion in Baselitz’s painting reflects the eagle’s fall from grace.’⁴¹ Richard Calvocoressi has argued that ‘in the eagle paintings of the 1970s Baselitz successfully neutralised a traditional German symbol by drawing attention to the painterly qualities of an image;’ but admits that it is impossible to ‘ignore the note of absurdity’ in images such as *Eagle in Bed* (1982) (Fig. 102).⁴² While I will argue that the eagle is indeed bound up with the artist’s engagement with the Nazi past, his domestication of the German symbol – not always quite as literal as tucking the bird of prey into bed – suggests more complex readings. Combining a series of images – self-portraits,

³⁹ Erich Gantzert-Castrillo, ‘Artemak: Interview with Georg Baselitz, 17 June 2008, Studio in Ammersee, Upper Bavaria,’ translated by Fiona Elliott, in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 311.

⁴⁰ ‘... wie Baselitz in den 70er Jahren eine Ikonographie aus dem Privaten entwickelt... oft aus Erinnerungen an die sächsische Heimat geschöpft, manchmal nach Polaroids von unscheinbaren Tatsachen des Alltags gemalt.’ Siegfried Gohr, ‘Das ausgerissene Licht – Bemerkungen über den Holzschnitt bei Georg Baselitz,’ in *Georg Baselitz: Holzschnitte, 1966-1991*, edited by Andrea Firmenich and Siegfried Gohr (Cologne: Wienand, 1994), 17.

⁴¹ Waldman, 75.

⁴² Richard Calvocoressi, ‘Georg Baselitz,’ in *Georg Baselitz: Schilderijen/Paintings 1960-83*, exh. cat. (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1983), 14.

portraits of his wife, wings, eagles – with a text focused on the artist as both genius and madman, under a title referencing his homeland, Baselitz's *Saxon Motifs* offers a model of relationality that proposes an intimate, familial model of reception and reading quite at odds with the artist's, and many subsequent critics', insistence on understanding his works as a form of 'pure painting' and as 'autonomous.'

Particularly the early literature on the artist, mostly in the form of exhibition catalogues, regularly echoes Baselitz. In his catalogue essay for a 1979 exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum, Rudi Fuchs, after quoting Baselitz on 'pure painting,' argues that: 'The picture, vehicle of a completely artificial construction, presents itself to perception, - without secrets, not veiled by content. It does not seek to prove a thesis. It is pictorial artefact, painted without feelings, without passion, in cool detachment.'⁴³ Three years earlier, Theo Kneubühler similarly argued that 'with the inversion of the subject, the picture was able to realise itself,' in as much as that 'meaning was no longer based on the subject,' but on the newly 'autonomous picture.'⁴⁴ In his text on Baselitz for the 1977 *documenta 6* catalogue, reprinted in the Venice Biennale catalogue three years later, Kneubühler repeats that the content of Baselitz's works is insignificant: 'Be it an arrangement of objects, parts of a landscape, or figures, the quest for a meaning beyond the picture is not important since the picture does not consist primarily of objects, parts of a landscape, or figures, but of flecks, lines, and strokes.'⁴⁵ Instead, Kneubühler, uncritically echoing the artist, argues that: 'Baselitz

⁴³ Rudi Fuchs, *Georg Baselitz: Bilder 1977-1978*, exh. cat. (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1979), unpaginated.

⁴⁴ 'Mit der Umkehrung des Sujets realisiert sich das Bild selbst, was heisst: Bedeutung ist nicht mehr auf das Sujet bezogen (auch nicht auf die Umkehrung), sondern auf das autonom gewordene Bild.' Theo Kneubühler, 'Georg Baselitz,' in *Baselitz: Malerei, Handzeichnungen, Druckgraphik*, exh. cat. (Bern: Kunsthalle Bern, 1976), 16.

⁴⁵ English translation as per Theo Kneubühler, 'Georg Baselitz' (1977), in *Georg Baselitz. Biennale di Venezia 1980*, exh. cat., edited by the Commissioner of the Federal Republic of Germany, Klaus Gallwitz (Stuttgart: Dr. Cantz'sche Druckerei / Federal Republic of Germany, 1980), unpaginated. Original: 'Ob Anordnung von Gegenständen, Teile einer Landschaft oder

works on the painting and not on the motif.’⁴⁶ Although particularly apparent in these early catalogues, decades later the artist’s initial insistence on pure, self-reflexive painting continues to dominate the Baselitz literature, specifically that focused on his works produced during the 1970s.

Since their creation, Baselitz’s paintings from the 1970s have been repeatedly described as exclusively engaged with the process of painting. In their introduction to the painting section of the *documenta 6* catalogue, entitled ‘Painting as the Subject of Painting,’ Klaus Honnef and Evelyn Weiss discuss their selection process, including their focus on artists whose ‘exclusive subject, since the beginning of their artistic careers,’ has been painting itself; ‘painting about the object painting.’⁴⁷ Based on this selection criteria, Honnef and Weiss argue that ‘the paintings of Gerhard Richter, Jasper Johns and Georg Baselitz,’ were considered not only ‘indispensable,’ but could be understood as the ‘conceptual foundation’ of the ‘painting section of “documenta 6.”’⁴⁸ A decade later, John Caldwell would argue that while ‘it is possible to see the artist’s work up to about 1968 and since 1978 as expressionist to some degree, even if a limited one,’ it is precisely during the 1970s – ‘the decade between’ – that ‘Baselitz

Figuren – die für das Bild wichtige Frage ist nicht die nach der außerhalb des Bildes liegenden Bedeutung, weil das Bild primär nicht aus Gegenständen, Teilen einer Landschaft oder Figuren besteht, sondern aus Flecken, Linien und Strichen.’ Theo Kneubühler, ‘Georg Baselitz,’ in *Documenta 6. Bd 1: Malerei, Plastik/Environment, Performance*, exh. cat. (Kassel: Paul Dierichs KG & Co, 1977), 54.

⁴⁶ English translation as per above. Original: ‘Baselitz malt am Bild und nicht am Motiv.’ Kneubühler, *Documenta 6. Bd 1*, 54.

⁴⁷ ‘... ausschließliches Thema war von Anfang ihrer künstlerischen Laufbahn an die Malerei.’ ‘... einer Malerei über den Gegenstand Malerei...’ Klaus Honnef and Evelyn Weiss, ‘Malerei als Thema der Malerei,’ in *Documenta 6. Bd 1: Malerei, Plastik/Environment, Performance*, exh. cat. (Kassel: Paul Dierichs KG & Co, 1977), 46.

⁴⁸ ‘Im Hinblick auf dieses Argument muß die Malerei von Gerhard Richter, Jasper Johns und Georg Baselitz nicht nur als unverzichtbar, eher als konzeptionelle Grundlage des inhaltlichen Rahmens angesehen werden, den die Sektion Malerei der “dokumenta 6” gezogen hat.’ Honnef and Weiss, 46.

was concerned almost entirely with the problems of painting.’⁴⁹ Nevertheless, divergent interpretations do exist, away from a focus on purely formalist and self-reflexive concerns. It was Richter himself who questioned such interpretations, including Baselitz’s own claims, in 1991: ‘Comparable nonsense is written about Baselitz: by being turned through 180 degrees, his figures are said to lose their objective nature and become “pure painting.” The opposite is true: there is an added stress on the objectivity, which takes on a new substance.’⁵⁰

Baselitz has offered his own contradictory readings. The artist acknowledges that the subjects of his paintings are usually of a highly personal nature: ‘these motifs are intimate, there’s a personal connection.’⁵¹ In an interview focused specifically on his numerous portraits of Elke, Baselitz suggested that ‘everything is a self-portrait, whether it’s a tree or a nude. Everything that you see is a reflection of yourself.’⁵² Yet while he admits that ‘the motifs I paint – birds, landscapes, portraits, interiors – are actually very personal, very private,’ the artist also argued that it was partially due to their personal nature that they were ‘consequently uninteresting in terms of their content.’⁵³ In context of the contemporaneous literature engaging with Baselitz’s work and continued interest in ‘pure’ form and process over content, the artist’s dismissal of his intimate motifs is unsurprising. Yet the insistence on neutralising private images

⁴⁹ John Caldwell, ‘Baselitz in the Seventies: Representation and Abstraction,’ *Parkett* 11 (1986), 85.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Michael Auping, ‘Portraits of Resistance,’ in *Georg Baselitz: Paintings 1962 – 2001*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (Milan: Alberto Cetti Serbelloni, 2002), 22. And yet, similarly to the general acceptance of Baselitz’s claims, and as outlined in the preceding chapter, many critics echoed Richter’s early insistence that the motifs of his photo-paintings were arbitrary, only for the artist to contradict himself much later.

⁵¹ Evelyn Weiss, ‘Georg Baselitz in conversation with Evelyn Weiss at Schloss Derneburg, 22 June 1975,’ in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 32.

⁵² As quoted in Michael Auping, ‘Elke. Georg Baselitz in conversation with Michael Auping’ (1996), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 253.

⁵³ Weiss, 32.

and a conception of the artist as asocial and incapable of generating any lasting change can also be understood as a direct result of a much broader attempt within West Germany to depoliticise, at least superficially, its citizens' private lives. Nevertheless, despite – or perhaps precisely because of – attempts to reconstruct the postwar family and home as 'nonpolitical,' and Baselitz's own claims regarding the insignificance of his motifs, his *Bedroom(s)* exists in a transitional space that blurs the dichotomisation of the intimate/private and social/public.

Cult of the Private

In 1937, the Prussian *Oberverwaltungsgericht* (administrative high court) directed that 'in the struggle for self-preservation which the German people are waging there are no longer any aspects of life which are non-political.'⁵⁴ At least according to National Socialist law, the private sphere no longer existed. The Nazi politicisation of domestic life and the home, including cleaning and cooking within the home, as well as procreation and child-rearing, stressed the importance of the collective *Volksgemeinschaft* over individual autonomy.⁵⁵ This, along with the widespread destruction of most forms of housing during the war, ensured that 'a key element in building a post-fascist culture was the new accent on private life.'⁵⁶ Paul Betts argues that 'the postwar period may ... be characterized as a new 'culture of privacy' ... one that began by reinstating the boundaries between public and private life.'⁵⁷ He concludes that in West Germany, 'the restored nuclear family, domestic stability, and the 'private virtues' of individual propriety and decency were commonly lauded as the

⁵⁴ As quoted in Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics. Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival 1900-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 373.

⁵⁵ Ginsborg, 356-375.

⁵⁶ Betts, *Within Walls*, 120.

⁵⁷ Betts, *Within Walls*, 120.

bedrock of a post-fascist social order.’⁵⁸ As outlined in the previous chapter, West German politicians maintained that restoring the prewar bourgeois family model was crucial to postwar economic recovery and national stability. This was reinforced through economic policies and enshrined in law, giving rise to continued state intervention into and policing of citizens’ private lives. Nevertheless, publicly politicians stressed the ‘sanctity’ of privacy and the family. Sociologist Helmut Schelsky, a prominent member of the advisory board to Konrad Adenauer’s Ministry of Family Affairs and author of several widely-read books on the postwar German family, including *The Sceptical Generation* (1957), praised Baselitz’s postwar generation as one that successfully ‘fled from societal pressures into the private sphere,’ and was sceptical of ideologies, ‘depoliticized,’ and ‘nonpolitically democratic.’⁵⁹ Baselitz’s own description of himself as sceptical (particularly in his speech on Germany) and insistence on his ‘neutralisation’ of private motifs should be understood not only within the 1970s focus on medium-specificity and painterly self-reflexivity, but also as rooted within the depoliticisation of the personal in West Germany during the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Baselitz left East Germany. As Uta Poiger has successfully argued, this stress on the depoliticisation of private life also allowed West German politicians to suggest that ‘East German authorities did not properly respect the private sphere ... and therefore oppressed their own citizens.’⁶⁰ The alleged autonomy of the private sphere in West Germany served as another Cold War pawn.

⁵⁸ Betts, *Within Walls*, 120.

⁵⁹ Uta G. Poiger, ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll, Female Sexuality, and the Cold War Battle over German Identities,’ in *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, edited by Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 400.

⁶⁰ Poiger, 409.

Baselitz's opening quote suggests portraiture, and as I contend, particularly *self*-portraiture in West Germany, required a confrontation with both politics and (art) history. If we consider Baselitz's *Saxon Motifs* and contingent series of 'Bedroom' portraits as a positioning strategy within contemporaneous discourses on and discussions around autonomy, they suggest a 'resistant' reading. This chapter is conceived as a response to attempts by both the artist and numerous critics to limit discussions of Baselitz's work to formalist, media-specific, and self-reflexive concerns around painting, as well as guided by the methodological decision to consider and contextualise the historical and socio-political conditions which determined Baselitz's production. As I have already suggested, Baselitz's *Bedroom(s)* problematise technologically and ideologically restrictive delineations between specific media. Particularly in light of the artist's paradoxical insistence on his content's insignificance due to their intimate nature, the series also challenges contemporaneous conceptions of private and public.

A few months before she would help orchestrate the armed freeing of Andreas Baader with Gudrun Ensslin in May 1970 – often considered the founding moment of the Red Army Faction (RAF) – Ulrike Meinhof wrote: 'personal matters are always political ... the relationships people have with each other are totally political.'⁶¹ Anyone with a family would know 'the issues at stake;' it was clear 'private matters' – *Privatsache* – were not 'private matters.'⁶² The interdependence of family and state, and conception of bourgeois individuality formed within the private sphere, resulted

⁶¹ As quoted in Sarah Colvin, 'The Personal is Political (1966-70): From Feminism to a Language for the Revolution,' in *Ulrike Meinhof and West German Terrorism: Language, Violence and Identity* (Rochester: Camden House, 2009), 50. As Colvin argues, the Women's Movement's slogan – 'the personal is political' – was central to and repeatedly appropriated by Meinhof.

⁶² 'den [Konflikt] kennt, wer Familie hat, auswendig, nur daß hier einmalig klargestellt wurde, daß diese Privatsache keine Privatsache ist.' As quoted in Colvin, 55.

in what Thomas Lindenberg has described as West German ‘family-centered citizenship.’⁶³ This implied that the critique of and challenge to the family and private sphere during the 1960s and 1970s by the ‘sceptical’ postwar generation was also ‘an attack on fundamental understandings of the nation.’⁶⁴ It suggested a revolution. If the ‘personal is political,’ what are the implications for the relationship between private citizens and the state? In West Germany, ‘at a moment when a political language of “nation” and “nationalism” was highly problematic, an idealized conception of the family,’ and particularly of the private sphere, ‘took on enormous significance as a repository of quintessentially German values that had survived the Third Reich.’⁶⁵ Questions regarding the interrelation between the state and the (bourgeois) citizen in context of the public and private spheres were also central to Jürgen Habermas’ influential study of the development and decline of the public sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* published in 1962. Crucial to Habermas’ definitions of the public and ‘intimate’ spheres are conceptions of bourgeois individuality within the bourgeois family and state. As Habermas suggests, the bourgeoisie’s insistence on their autonomy within the private sphere is embedded in the interdependence between society, the market economy and bourgeois families. Habermas argues that the bourgeois family’s apparent private autonomy is based on its participation in the market economy:

To the autonomy of property owners in the market corresponded a self-presentation of human beings in the family. The latter’s intimacy, apparently set free from the constraint of society, was the seal on the truth of a private autonomy exercised in competition. Thus it was a private autonomy denying its economy

⁶³ Robert G. Moeller, ‘The Elephant in the Living Room. Or Why the History of Twentieth-Century Germany Should Be a Family Affair,’ in *Gendering Modern German History: Rewriting Historiography*, edited by Karen Hagemann and Jean H. Quataert (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 238.

⁶⁴ Moeller, ‘The Elephant in the Living Room,’ 238.

⁶⁵ Moeller, ‘The Elephant in the Living Room,’ 237.

origins (i.e., an autonomy *outside* the domain of the only one practiced by the market participant who believed himself autonomous) that provided the bourgeois family with its consciousness of itself.⁶⁶

Yet as Habermas argues, this self-image is at odds ‘with the real functions of the bourgeois family. For naturally the family was not exempted from the constraint to which bourgeois society like all societies before it was subject.’⁶⁷ Rather, the family, ‘as an agency of society,’ ‘served especially the task of that difficult mediation through which, in spite of the illusion of freedom, strict conformity with societally necessary requirements was brought about.’⁶⁸ In light of Habermas’ analysis, it is unsurprising that Schelsky initially dismissed rebellious behaviour by young adults ‘as a “private” matter.’⁶⁹ If the family ensured conformity, it followed that any threats to West German norms ‘could be resolved “privately.”’⁷⁰ As Habermas suggested, ‘the independence of the property owner in the market and in his own business was complemented by the dependence of the wife and children on the male head of the family; private autonomy in the former realm was transformed into authority in the latter and made any pretended freedom of individuals illusory.’⁷¹

Sean Keller’s argument that the strive for ‘autonomous’ art and self-determination, and the resultant formalism, might be understood as a reaction ‘to the anxieties of the postwar condition,’ is supported by Habermas’ analysis of conceptions

⁶⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 46.

⁶⁷ Habermas, 47.

⁶⁸ Habermas, 47.

⁶⁹ Poiger, 400.

⁷⁰ Poiger, 403.

⁷¹ Habermas, 47.

of autonomy by the German bourgeoisie.⁷² Keller focuses specifically on Peter Eisenman's writing and architectural practice from the 1960s and 1970s, yet his analysis that Eisenman's 'formal ambiguity' was part of the architect's attempt to achieve autonomy, might be similarly applied to Baselitz's contemporaneous ambiguous formalism.⁷³ Yet as Keller notes, Eisenman 'eventually came to understand that his formalism – especially when deployed to create domestic space – produced anxiety of its own.'⁷⁴ What postwar anxieties do Baselitz's domestic and familial images (re-)produce?

'Private' Spectacle

Baselitz's portraiture explores a destabilised subjectivity at the centre of the spectacle's reification of human relations. Although not translated into German until 1978, Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) and its analysis of culture within late capitalism, was fundamental to West German cultural debates regarding the relationship between images and reality throughout the decade. Using Buchloh's conception of the 'spectacularization' of artistic subjectivity as a starting point to rethink spectacular self-representations in terms of Debord's discussion of images and their regulation of social relationships and substitution for authentic experience, allows for new readings of Baselitz's works. In an article written in 1976, focused on a generation of European artists working at the turn of the 1960s, including Beuys, Georges Mathieu and Yves Klein, Buchloh discusses 'socially and historically defined

⁷² Sean Keller, 'The Anxieties of Autonomy: Peter Eisenman from Cambridge to House VI,' in *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture*, edited by Robin Schuldenfrei (London: Routledge, 2012), 127-146.

⁷³ Keller, 136.

⁷⁴ Keller, 137.

artistic identities' held in particularly 'high esteem' in 'postwar Europe.'⁷⁵ According to Buchloh, the 'new type of artistic subjectivity' was bound to an understanding of the artist as both 'shaman or high priest,' and 'fool or clown,' and reflects 'particular social needs for a new mythical subjectivity.'⁷⁶ Buchloh argues that particularly 'in the case of Mathieu, Klein and Beuys, the subject is spectacularized in compliance with the reactionary requests of postwar society.'⁷⁷ In an article published in *Artforum* four years later, Buchloh singled out the same three artists as 'grand masters of fusing the avant-garde with the culture of spectacle,' and is particularly dismissive of Beuys' position, which the art historian describes as the 'compulsive self-exposure as the messianic artist.'⁷⁸ What Buchloh finds particularly troubling is how such a spectacularised subjectivity is inevitably bound up with the artist's work – 'the cult and the myth seem to have become inseparable from the work' – and depends on 'a claim for charisma.'⁷⁹ The 'spectacularization' of the self by artists such as Beuys, as well as Andy Warhol (also referenced by Buchloh), relied on a theatrical persona that performs and stages the artist as a cult figure in society. Their self-display and self-fashioning, particularly during the 1960s and in rather different ways, acknowledges and exploits the spectacle's mediation of the interaction and relationship between artists and their public. Baselitz's artistic self-fashioning problematises the mediation and experience of 'reality' in pointedly different ways, reframing and critically

⁷⁵ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Formalism and Historicity' (1976), in *New Realisms: 1957–1962. Object Strategies Between Readymade and Spectacle*, exh. cat., edited by Julia Robinson (Madrid / Cambridge, MA: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía / The MIT Press, 2010), 85.

⁷⁶ Buchloh, 'Formalism and Historicity,' 86.

⁷⁷ Buchloh, 'Formalism and Historicity,' 86.

⁷⁸ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique' (1980), in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry. Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 43, 59.

⁷⁹ Buchloh, 'Beuys,' 45; 'Formalism and Historicity,' 85.

examining societal articulations of the self specifically within 1970s West German politics of appearance and spectacle.

Baselitz's self-representation, contingent on a serialisation of himself *with* his wife – and in stark contrast to the singular cult figures performed by Beuys and Warhol – plays to Debord's definition of the spectacle as 'a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.'⁸⁰ In Debord's society of the spectacle, representation has replaced authentic experience. In Baselitz's series, conceptions of the self are mediated by supposedly 'private' spaces and images. The alienation repeatedly described by Debord extends Georg Lukács' own analysis of modern society, the commodity and reification. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), Lukács specifically uses marriage to exemplify the impact of reification on all human relations, and how 'it stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man.'⁸¹ The extensive impact of reification, the objectification of social relations and reduction of human subjects to objects is, according to Lukács, that there is no longer a 'natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical or psychic 'qualities' into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process.'⁸² With such debates in mind, Baselitz's double-portraits can easily be read as an exploration of the reified and destabilised subjects at the centre of the West German family-state.

In 1981, art historian Heino Möller published a shortened version of his doctoral thesis from 1978, focused, as the title suggested, on 'the depiction of the bourgeois private sphere in art and commodity advertising.'⁸³ Möller's book speaks to

⁸⁰ 'The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.' Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 12.

⁸¹ Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (1923), translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), 100.

⁸² Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 100.

⁸³ Heino R. Möller, *Innenräume/Aussenwelten: Studien zur Darstellung bürgerlicher Privatheit in Kunst und Warenwerbung* (Gießen: Anabas-Verlag, 1981).

the contemporaneous ‘turn indoors’ both by artists and art historians. Quoting Habermas’ study and clearly indebted to Debord’s work, Möller sets out to trace the depiction of the private sphere from the sixteenth to the twentieth century in order to ‘apprehend the transformation of the bourgeois private sphere as a crisis of bourgeois culture and yet to understand the conveyance of this crisis in the work of art as a potential instructional insistence on truth over strategies of commodity aesthetics.’⁸⁴ Möller contrasts the idealised representation of the private sphere in advertising with what he understands as increasingly ‘negative’ and ‘inaccessible’ portrayals of the private by contemporary artists.⁸⁵ Möller’s case-studies are divided thematically, including a section on representations of the bedroom. Under the heading of ‘The dissolution of interpersonal identity. The threat to privacy in the bedroom,’ Möller compares a number of representations of the ‘most intimate core’ of the private sphere from the 1960s.⁸⁶ With examples ranging from Edward Kienholz to Claes Oldenburg, Möller argues that artists were ‘un-idealising’ and ‘de-ideologising’ petit bourgeois married life while ‘negating the private sphere through the public sphere of the intimate.’⁸⁷ Contemporary representations of the bedroom – the ‘nucleus of private interpersonal intimacy and unobserved emotionality’ – were representative of the ‘erosion of private life by the banality of everyday life’⁸⁸ It is in this context and understanding of the private and public spheres, including a perception of the marital

⁸⁴ ‘... die Aufgabe besteht darin, einmal die Veränderung bürgerlicher Privatheit als Krise bürgerlicher Kultur zu fassen und dennoch die Vermittlung dieser Krise im Kunstwerk als potentiell aufklärerisches Insistieren auf Wahrheit gegenüber den Strategien der Warenästhetik zu begreifen.’ Möller, 13.

⁸⁵ ‘In der Kunst der Gegenwart allerdings sind Darstellungen des Privaten weniger häufig und oftmals auffallend “negativ” oder unzugänglich.’ Möller, 10.

⁸⁶ ‘Die Auflösung zwischenmenschlicher Identität. Die Bedrohung der Privatheit im Schalfzimmer.’ Möller, 113-124. ‘

⁸⁷ ‘... so daß in der Öffentlichkeit des Intimen die vorgegebene Privatheit aufgehoben wird.’ Möller, 120.

⁸⁸ ‘Die Aushöhlung der Intimsphäre in der Banalität des Alltags.’ Möller, 116. ‘... als Kernzelle privater zwischenmenschlicher Intimität und unbeobachteter Emotionalität.’ Möller, 119.

bedroom as the potentially last remaining intimate space of interpersonal subjectivity, that Baselitz begins his series of *Bedroom* self-portraits with his wife, which explore the relationality of images and selfhood in postwar Germany. Far from representing a 'neutral,' comfortable retreat into the domestic, Baselitz's double portraits continue to test the limitations of individual, as well as artistic autonomy. They also speak to the artist's complex negotiation of West Germany's postwar intergenerational conflicts.

Remix

Titles such as *Dystopian couple* (2015), *Stove soot* (2015) and *A poor future* (2015) hint at the artist's relentless exploration of age and physicality (Figs. 103 - 105). *Oh, rosy, oh rosy* (2015) is anything but (Fig. 106). Measuring almost three by three meters, the enormous image includes a pink haze running down the central space between the upturned couple, covering the female figure to the right almost entirely, while leaving the outer left-side of the larger, skeletal, male figure in ghostly grey. The blushing pink – so kitsch it could only evoke rose-tinted glasses – fails to disguise the fragility of the deteriorating bodies below. Baselitz's withering body suggests this is no virile, omnipotent artist-hero. Based on a new set of Polaroids taken by the then 78-year old artist and his wife, Baselitz's recent series is, recognisably, also a reworking of his earlier *Bedroom* portraits from four decades earlier.⁸⁹

Since Baselitz's extensive reworking of his 1975 portraits between 2014 and 2015, they have been repeatedly linked to Otto Dix's painting *The Parents of the Artist*

⁸⁹ As the artist recently admitted: 'I must say, I've enjoyed portraying my age and my wife's age. Sometimes with humor, mostly without. I'm astonished that I can even do it, because in the past I've always resisted even any hint of that. When I used to paint my wife, I never wanted to show that I love my wife.' As quoted in Schwander, "'I've no idea how I could ever have become a painter in California,'" 53.

II (1924) (Fig. 107).⁹⁰ In an interview in 2016, the artist explained his interest in Dix's painting thus:

In double portraits there's always a hierarchy, with emphasis on the male. But in Dix man and woman are equal, same height, same weight, same degree of suffering. Dix portrayed his parents with their petit bourgeois-ness and poverty and all they've lived through lined on their faces, but the context is also important: the Nazis confiscated the portrait.⁹¹

Yet as Richard Shiff suggests, the most obvious reworking of Dix occurred in Baselitz's portraits *My Parents (Remix)* and *My Parents by Dix (Remix)* both from 2005, in which the artist paints a couple seated on a similar Biedermeier couch as Dix's parents, similarly dressed and with similarly enlarged hands resting on their laps (Fig. 108, Fig. 109).⁹² Despite the obvious stylistic differences, the most visually striking discrepancy on a first comparison between *My Parents (Remix)* and Dix's portraits is that Baselitz has portrayed the male figure with Hitler's distinctive haircut and moustache. The painting and its title present an intricate semantic and visual riddle. Visually, the painting suggests an inversion and conflation of Baselitz's double portrait with Elke with Dix's portrait of his parents. The Hitler attributes and title however indicate Baselitz's parents, or at least members of the (Nazi) war generation, possibly even Hitler himself, are being portrayed, in stark contrast to the generation memorialised by Dix's portrait. Even an extended engagement with the works, a

⁹⁰ The catalogue accompanying the first exhibition of his reworked portraits in 2016 suggests: 'the reference for his own double portraits has continued to be a 1924 painting by Otto Dix of Dix's parents sitting side-by-side on a sofa: care-worn people in humble circumstances.' Catherine Lampert, 'High in the incubator – Georg Baselitz at 78,' in *Georg Baselitz. We're off*, exh. cat. (London: White Cube, 2016), 8.

⁹¹ As quoted in Jackie Wullschlager, 'The controversial German artist Georg Baselitz on his White Cube show,' *The Financial Times* (29.04.2016), <https://next.ft.com/content/9133e070-0c5f-11e6-9456-444ab5211a2f> (accessed 24.06.2016).

⁹² As Shiff also points out, unlike the Dix portrait, Baselitz has added 'the missing footwear,' and painted his parents with rather large feet and shoes. Richard Shiff, 'More Bill Than Bill,' in *Georg Baselitz. We're off*, exh. cat. (London: White Cube, 2016), 68.

prolonged attempt to read Baselitz's portraits, fails to successfully establish if the *My Parents (Remix)* paintings portray Baselitz's parents, Dix's parents, Hitler, or present another reworking of the artist's double portrait with Elke. I would argue that this continuously frustrated process of interpretation lies at the heart of Baselitz's portraiture and the artist's reorientation of conceptions of artistic identity.

As the artist's *My Parents (Remix)* and *My Parents by Dix (Remix)* exemplify, and is fully epitomised by Baselitz's extensive *Bedroom* series, the artist's inverted portraits showcase the convoluted process of reading and interpreting images. The contradictions offered by *My Parents (Remix)* guide viewers to explore the mediated nature of interpretation and acknowledge the inaccessibility of a 'true' portrait or representation. Visual codes and conventions are used to multiply and destabilise potential meanings, thereby drawing attention to how they control our access to images. Each possibility – Dix's parents, Baselitz's parents, Baselitz and Elke – provides a potential interpretation that reinvents and reimagines the two figures in contradictory ways, which allow a viewer to think through Baselitz's portrait across divisive generational and temporal boundaries. At the same time, the multiple and contradictory readings Baselitz so readily offers up, work to undo the very notion of an 'objective reality' Dix hoped to capture in his portraits from the 1920s, or the neutrality of the motif repeatedly suggested by Baselitz. Rather his series highlights the inevitably ambiguous interpretations portraiture offers, and the complex process involved in producing, as well as reading, images that question any presumed access to a definitive 'reality.'

Baselitz's *Remix* paintings are representative of some of his visually most explicit engagement with Germany's Nazi legacy. In reworking his notorious *The Big Night Down the Drain* (1962-63) in 2005, as well as in the associated untitled drawings

from February and April 2006, Baselitz repeatedly turns to the physiognomic characteristics of Hitler to both clarify and challenge understandings of the earlier painting, which significantly has been interpreted as a self-portrait (Figs. 110 - 112).⁹³ Seven years later, Baselitz reworked both his *Bedroom* portraits and Dix's painting once more in *Complementary Brownish* (2012) and *The Yellow Dress has Become Blue* (2012), continuing to blur possible distinctions between portrayals of Dix's parents, the artist's parents, and himself and Elke (Fig. 113, Fig. 114). Similar to the *My Parents (Remix)* paintings, Baselitz's *Nightingale First Time* (2008) also depicts a seated couple, hands in their laps, with the faint white outline of Dix's sofa framing the couple against the stark black background of the work (Fig. 115). The figures in *Bedroom* (2009) are similarly framed by the distinctive couch of the parental portraits, yet in this case, besides the title's obvious reference to previous self-portraits with Elke, the cap worn by the male figure recalls Baselitz's many self-portraits, both painted and in sculpture, in which the artist depicts himself wearing a cap, often emblazoned with the word 'zero,' as in the eponymous self-portrait *Zero* (2004) (Fig. 116, Fig. 117). These works in turn have been linked to Baselitz's sculptural double-portrait *Sing Sang Zero* (2011) and self-portrait *My New Hat* (2003), the recurring hat a reference to 'a photograph of a war veteran who claims to have unearthed a 'Pimpf' cap, of a type worn by the 'Pimpfe', the youngest section of the Hitler Youth, aged from ten to fourteen' (Fig. 118 Fig. 119).⁹⁴ As John-Paul Stonard has noted, while

⁹³ Baselitz has discussed his reworked 'self-portrait' with Hitler haircut and moustache, declaring: 'An manchen Stellen ist das Bild wie eine Karikatur – aber den Hitler habe ich besser getroffen. Damals haben ja alle zu mir gesagt, das bist du selbst! Aber ich hatte doch ans Dritte Reich gedacht, an die deutsche Vergangenheit. Und jetzt habe ich das Bild mehr in diese Richtung gesteuert, jetzt sieht man den Adolf besser.' Baselitz quoted in Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, 'Remix,' in *Baselitz: Remix*, exh. cat. (Munich / Ostfildern: Pinakothek der Moderne / Hatje Cantz, 2006), 18.

⁹⁴ John-Paul Stonard, 'Baselitz Black or History as Background,' in *Georg Baselitz: Le côté sombre*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, 2013), 29.

Baselitz himself was too young for compulsory membership, his older sister was a member of the girls' equivalent, the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls), which Baselitz vividly remembers and has captured in his large-scale sculpture *BDM Group* from 2012, which draws parallels to *Sing Sang Zero* from a year earlier, which depicts Baselitz and Elke as similarly monumental black figures linking arms just as Baselitz's sister does with her friends in *BDM Group* (Fig. 120).⁹⁵ The *Bedroom* portraits from 1975 have served the artist as points of departure to rework, revisit and revise his self-imaging via the familial since their initial conception. As Marianne Hirsch argues, 'familial subjectivity is constructed relationally,' and the artist's parents, sister, and most prominently his wife, have each prompted the artist's autobiographical work.⁹⁶ The artist has also continuously returned to his double portrait to engage with and question his medium and genre.

A comparison of *Picture Sixteen* (1993) and *Bedroom (Remix)* (2005), each of which I would argue represent a significant moment in Baselitz's *Bedroom* series, speak to this engagement and questioning of his medium and the genre of portraiture (Fig. 121, Fig. 122). The overwhelming sensory experience provided by each of these paintings is first and foremost initiated by their scale. Two to three times life-size, Baselitz's monumental figures dwarf viewers, while simultaneously providing insight into the artist's work process. While a viewer has to distance herself from the work to take in the entire motif, and particularly in the case of *Picture Sixteen* to read the abstracting shapes as figurative, engaging with the paintings more closely reveals a plethora of shoe prints across the canvases. At the bottom of the 1993 painting, just around eye level, as well as along the right side of the canvas, the multi-coloured shoe

⁹⁵ Stonard, 'Baselitz Black or History as Background,' 27-30.

⁹⁶ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 9.

prints stand out against the stark black background. Similarly, in the very centre of *Bedroom (Remix)*, a viewer can make out shoe prints next to the imprint of a can of paint, which hint at the painting's creation. Having started out painting his canvases mounted on a wall, Baselitz's increasingly monumental works inspired him to lay his canvases on the floor, resulting in the artist walking across them while painting.⁹⁷ As Shiff has noted, while Baselitz now paints most of his works on the floor, he continues 'holding a photograph or art reproduction inverted in his hand as he works.'⁹⁸ Writing about the same process, Michael Auping has emphasised the importance of Baselitz painting upside down, rather than "right-side up".⁹⁹ As Auping argues, painting the image upside down from the beginning and from a photograph, 'disorients and distances him [Baselitz] not only from his subject, but also from the conventions of portraiture so that what is left is an invention rather than a transcription.'¹⁰⁰ The extent to which Baselitz prioritises invention over transcription in his portraiture becomes apparent when attempting to read *Picture Sixteen* as a portrait. The thick, brightly coloured smears of paint against the dark background, Elke's incomplete head, and not least the distracting pattern of shoe prints, fragment the figures to the point of abstraction. It is only possible to definitively identify the couple when the painting is seen as part of Baselitz's series. Hung across from *Bedroom (Remix)*, as is frequently the case in the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, the paintings slowly reveal their connections and affinities, most notably through Baselitz's use of colour. While *Picture Sixteen* is painted in bright, even neon, pure colours against a black

⁹⁷ Rudi Fuchs describes the process as follows: 'He now paints pictures while standing bent over, his arm and brush making weightlessly pendulous movements.' Rudi Fuchs, 'GB, ricordo,' in *Georg Baselitz: Le côté sombre*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, 2013), 123.

⁹⁸ Richard Shiff, 'A Family of Relations,' in *Georg Baselitz: Recent Paintings*, exh. cat. (New York: PaceWildenstein, 1997), 12.

⁹⁹ Auping, 'Portrait of Resistance', 22.

¹⁰⁰ Auping, 'Portrait of Resistance,' 22.

background, Baselitz renders himself and Elke in pinks, beiges, and reds on a white canvas in *Bedroom (Remix)*. Emphasising his hands and genitalia through the use of a strong tone of coral, which is also used for the mouth and around his neck, the figures' bodies and various body parts are easily identified, unlike in *Picture Sixteen*. And yet both paintings include the same incongruous rectangular shape of blue topped by bright yellow in almost the same spot in the upper third of the canvas, slightly to the left from the centre, beneath the couple's feet. These are the same tones of blue and yellow that divide and make up the background of the original *Bedroom* painting from 1975. Once visibly marked and thereafter recognised as part of the series, the figures in *Picture Sixteen* can subsequently only be understood as another reworking and reproduction of a portrait of Georg and Elke. And yet alongside the original source of the series, the three paintings come together to reveal the fractured and multiplied subjects at centre of the series, through both their similarities and differences. While Elke's gesture of crossed arms is the same in both the 1975 and 2005 paintings, and Baselitz's gaze once more eludes the viewer, Elke's head is turned distinctly towards Baselitz, echoing the tilt of the head and gaze of the female figure in *My Parents (Remix)*, once more blurring easy distinctions between allegedly dramatically dissimilar generations.

Similar to the original works, Baselitz's numerous reiterations of his *Bedroom* paintings challenge conceptions and expectations of portraiture. In several cases Baselitz emphasises their painterly production and abstraction, as in *Nightingale First Time* with its erasure of distinctive facial features, and fragmented torsos, as well as the limited colour palette. In other works, such as *My Parents (Remix)*, Baselitz's grey colour scheme, and reductive black-and-white palette, recalls early family portrait photography, including through the figures' frontal rigidity and formal postures.

Portrait photography is also referenced in his similarly rigid, frontal self-portrait *Zero* which reverses the black-and-white colour scheme, akin to photographic negatives.¹⁰¹ As Karen Lang argues, Baselitz's early *Hero* paintings from the 1960s, as well as works such as *Bild für die Väter* (1965), 'evokes and satirizes the artistic tradition of the heroic portrait.'¹⁰² Baselitz's later double portraiture pushes this caricature further by blurring and challenging artistic traditions and fraught generational divides.

Baselitz's reworkings of his 1970s *Bedroom* double portraits via Dix include significant blurrings and connotations in other aspects as well. While some titles might quite literally name the space of the bedroom, the inclusion of Dix's distinctive couch would suggest a living room instead. Baselitz and Elke are also represented in various states of undress, particularly jarring in the case of the 2009 *Bedroom*, in which the couple are both wearing shoes, Baselitz the aforementioned cap, but are otherwise clearly naked. In *Bedroom (Remix)* (2005), a nude Elke is contrasted with a naked Baselitz who is wearing the distinctive black shoes and socks also seen in the contemporaneous *My Parents (Remix)* and *My Parents by Dix (Remix)*. The paintings hover between categorisations as more general 'nudes' and individualised portraiture complicated by their convoluted settings. A depiction of a nude couple in their bedroom might seem more 'natural' than portrayed in their living room, and yet both equally blur boundaries between the spectator and voyeur. The couple is never particularly sexualised, and yet their 'acceptable' nudity in the bedroom dependent on conventional acceptance of marital (hetero-)sexuality. During the late 1960s and early

¹⁰¹ Stonard sees 'the recent novel, image-generation function assumed by the photographic negative in Baselitz's work,' as a 'necessary consequence of the inverted motif adopted over the preceding forty years.' Stonard, 'Baselitz Black or History as Background,' 62.

¹⁰² Karen Lang, 'Expressionism and the Two Germanys,' in *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures*, exh. cat., edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, 2009), 95.

1970s, West Germany ‘eliminated “obscene texts and images” as a legal category and substituted “pornography,” which, as of January 1, 1975, was regulated rather than banned.’¹⁰³ This might seem insignificant considering the widespread tolerance of ‘the nude’ in art, particularly in painting, throughout the centuries. And yet a decade before he started working on his *Bedroom* series, Baselitz’s *The Big Night Down the Drain* and *The Naked Man* (1962) were confiscated by the police; ‘the West German government maintained that the threat to public morality in this case outweighed the loss of an individual’s right to freedom of expression.’¹⁰⁴ Both figures in *The Big Night Down* and *The Naked Man* are painted with a prominent erection, emphasising their sexuality in markedly different ways than the couples shown in Baselitz’s *Bedroom* series. And yet the series still tests the dichotomisation of ‘private’ and ‘public’ in multiple ways. When should sexuality, morality, ‘the bedroom,’ or the previous generation’s Nazi legacy be considered a ‘private matter,’ and when was it political? And when can an artist’s production be understood as ‘autonomous’ both from content and from socio-political realities?

Autonomy & the Spectacle

Baselitz’s series of self and double portraits begun in the 1970s offer a reorientation of conceptions of the artist and (artistic) autonomy. They articulate the limitations of producing and reading images within a ‘Society of the Spectacle,’ and the implications of the commodification of experience. They do so specifically in light of contemporaneous discussions around the ambiguous interconnections between images and reality; a debate extending the previous decades’ disputes regarding aesthetic

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Heineman, ‘Introduction: Sex, Consumption, and German History,’ in *Before Porn was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Waldman, 3.

autonomy. As Alex Potts has outlined, clashes concerning definitions of autonomy dominated the postwar ‘culture wars’ of the 1950s and 1960s: ‘a moment when the emphasis in assertions of artistic autonomy shifted from opposition to bourgeois values and norms to opposition to the mechanisms of the market and its capacity to transform even the most radical-seeming artistic gestures into commodities and spectacle.’¹⁰⁵ Potts is summarising aspects of Bürger’s own theory of autonomy delineated in his influential *Theorie der Avantgarde (Theory of the Avant-Garde)* published in Germany in 1974. According to Bürger’s text, the avant-garde rejected aesthetic autonomy – ‘the detachment of art as a special sphere of human activity from the nexus of the praxis of life’ – in favour of their aim to transform everyday life through art, and was paralleled by their rejection of notions of the individual ‘genius’ often associated with definitions of autonomous works of art.¹⁰⁶ Tracing the ‘problem of the autonomy of art in bourgeois society’ in an eponymous chapter of his book, Bürger identifies the contradictory nature of the avant-garde’s aim: ‘for the (relative) freedom of art vis-à-vis the praxis of life is at the same time the condition that must be fulfilled if there is to be a critical cognition of reality. An art no longer distinct from the praxis of life but wholly absorbed in it will lose the capacity to criticize it, along with its distance.’¹⁰⁷ Seven years earlier, Debord had warned against such a subsumption of art, and yet also argued that ‘every discipline, once it becomes autonomous, is bound to collapse.’¹⁰⁸ According to Debord, ‘art’s declaration of independence is thus the beginning of the end of art.’¹⁰⁹ Where Bürger and Debord agree is the subsequent negation of the avant-

¹⁰⁵ Alex Potts, ‘Autonomy in Post-War Art, Quasi-Heroic and Casual,’ *Oxford Art Journal* 27/1 (2004), 47.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), translated by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 36.

¹⁰⁷ Bürger, 50.

¹⁰⁸ Debord, 131.

¹⁰⁹ Debord, 133.

garde's revolutionary and transformative intentions. While Debord points to the spectacle's ability to absorb and neutralise criticism, Bürger blames the institutionalisation of avant-garde practices by the neo-avant-garde.¹¹⁰ According to Bürger, 'neo-avant-gardiste art is autonomous art in the full sense of the term, which means that it negates the avant-gardiste intention of returning art to the praxis of life.'¹¹¹ Yet as Potts argues, this oversimplifies the postwar approach to autonomy, overlooking artists' interests in aesthetic autonomy as a possible way to produce works of art uncompromised by socio-political and economic demands – stated interests at the centre of Baselitz's desire to create 'autonomous' works – as well as offering the possibility 'to fashion a more compelling autonomy emancipated from the fixed and hollowly self-regarding norms then associated with the image of modern artist as heroic individual.'¹¹² This conception of the 'quasi-heroic' artist, described by Potts as an 'assertion of artistic autonomy' in the immediate postwar years, recalls, in turn, Buchloh's characterisation of 'spectacularized' artists from the 1950s and 1960s, and is unsurprisingly similar to conceptions of the artist as a unique genius against which the interwar avant-garde had defined its production. For several postwar artists and art historians, different definitions and appropriations of autonomy therefore provided radically different ways of staging and conceiving of artistic subjectivity in relation to the spectacle.

Conceptions of artistic identity and the role of art underwent a dramatic transformation in 1960s West Germany. Echoing the discordant, drawn-out postwar debates about the relevance of art and artists, the decade saw the artist transformed into an important political instrument, a transformative forerunner, and heroic

¹¹⁰ See Bürger, 58; Debord, 143.

¹¹¹ Bürger, 58.

¹¹² Potts, 47.

reformer, only to be dismissed as socio-politically irrelevant and ineffective. The first issue of *Kunstjahrbuch* – published in 1970 and launched to provide an overview of the German art scene and the major debates of the previous ‘art season’ – was largely dedicated to what was repeatedly described as an already clichéd conception of the artist’s role within society. Karl Ruhrberg, director of the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf at the time, argued that discussions of the ‘social relevance’ of art had become a cliché, and that the idea of socially transformative art was a ‘bourgeois dream’ that had already ended.¹¹³ After the failed student revolution of 1968, following Beuys’ widely publicised staging of the artist as radical shaman, and in light of a newly proclaimed *Kulturpolitik*, which designated culture as the ‘third pillar’ of foreign policy, it once more seemed unclear what role the artist should take within postwar, Cold War West German society.¹¹⁴ In 1973, Georg Jappe, predicting a looming crisis, provided a bleak summary of the challenges facing the new decade: ‘Baader-Meinhof, Fürstfeldbruck, dissolution of parliament ... and documenta, one is inclined to add. Art, perhaps for the first time this century, is in a state of unwitting self-destruction.’¹¹⁵ Art and artists, Jappe seems to suggest, were as much in a state of crisis, as West Germany itself.

Despite its apparent incongruity, Jappe’s statement speaks to the extent to which the RAF, also known as the Baader-Meinhof Group, shaped and influenced

¹¹³ ‘... bürgerlicher Traum... .’ Karl Ruhrberg, ‘Wann ist Kunst “gesellschaftlich relevant”?’ *Kunstjahrbuch* 1 1969/70 (1970), 60, 61.

¹¹⁴ While serving as foreign minister, Willy Brandt famously declared culture as ‘die dritte Säule der Aussenpolitik,’ the other two being politics and the economy. For an overview of German Cold War *Kulturpolitik* see Olivia Griese, ‘Auswärtige Kulturpolitik von Bundesrepublik und DDR: Institutioneller Überblick,’ in *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik und Kalter Krieg. Die Konkurrenz von Bundesrepublik und DDR in Finnland 1949–1973* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 23-54.

¹¹⁵ ‘Baader-Meinhof, Fürstfeldbruck, Auflösung des Parlaments ... und documenta, ist man fast geneigt hinzuzufügen. Die Kunst ist, vielleicht zum erstenmal in diesem Jahrhundert, in einer unbewußten Selbstzerstörung begriffen.’ Georg Jappe, ‘Das Jahr des Saturn. Flippt die Kunst aus?’, *Kunstjahrbuch* 3 1971/72 (1973), 9.

every aspect of life in West Germany throughout the 1970s, and particularly during the summer of 1972.¹¹⁶ Both the arrests of high-ranking RAF members, including Baader, Ensslin and Meinhof, as well as the Olympic massacre in Munich, dominated the news cycles for months. As Martin Steinseifer has argued in an article framing terrorism as a ‘media event,’ the mass media coverage and use of images from the 1972 summer not only mediated people’s experiences of these events, but also activated images as powerful *Ereignisbilder* (event images).¹¹⁷ Leith Passmore’s study of terrorism as ‘performance’ reiterates Steinseifer’s analysis by arguing that ‘the discursive creation of terrorist conflicts and identities, however, is not simply the work of words. This work is also “done” by images.’¹¹⁸ This creation and performance of identities, and particularly its ‘relationship to reality mediated predominately by photographic images,’ was also central to *documenta 5*’s exploration of images and their relationship to ‘reality’ during the summer of 1972.¹¹⁹

Documenta 5 not only took place under the shadow of ‘Baader-Meinhof,’ but artists also directly reflected on their role in response to the RAF during the exhibition.

¹¹⁶ Less than a month before *documenta 5* opened its doors in late June, Baader, Holger Meins and Jan-Carl Raspe were arrested under spectacular circumstances broadcast around the world. Six days later, Ensslin was arrested, followed by Meinhof shortly thereafter. After their arrests, and in the midst of Kassel’s *documenta* and Munich’s Summer Olympics, a Palestinian terrorist commando unit organised by Abu Hassan, who had met the Baader-Meinhof Group during their ‘guerrilla’ training in Jordan two years earlier, broke into the Olympic village and the Israeli team’s sleeping quarters. Two athletes were shot, and nine taken hostage. After lengthy negotiations, the terrorists and their hostages were taken to Fürstenfeldbruck airport, a NATO airbase, from which the captors hoped to go on to Cairo. During a gunfire exchange with German authorities at the airport, all nine Israeli athletes, one German policeman and five terrorists were killed. For further information, including the RAF reaction to the massacre, see ‘Black September’ in Stefan Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, translated by Anthea Bell (London: The Bodley Head, 2008) 181-183.

¹¹⁷ Martin Steinseifer, ‘Zwischen Bombenterror und Baader-Story. Terrorismus als Medienereignis,’ in 1968. *Handbuch zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, edited by Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2007), 289-301.

¹¹⁸ Leith Passmore, *Ulrike Meinhof and the Red Army Faction: Performing Terrorism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 4.

¹¹⁹ Passmore, 4.

Arguably one of the exhibition's most iconic works, Beuys and Thomas Peiter's collaborative *Dürer, I will personally guide Baader + Meinhof through Documenta V* (1972) speaks to both the continued interest in art as a tool of social and political change, and yet also reflects an increasing unease regarding how artists should and could respond to 'the greatest challenge yet to post-war German society.'¹²⁰ The two wooden panels, carried around *documenta* by Peiter, reproduce parts of a discussion Beuys and the performance artist had in Beuys' *Bureau for Direct Democracy, through Referendum*. Speaking to Peiter who was dressed as Albrecht Dürer, Beuys provocatively stated: 'Dürer, I will personally guide Baader and Meinhof through *documenta 5*. Then they will be resocialized.'¹²¹ As Svea Bräunert has argued, rather than interpreting the work as reflective of Beuys' sympathies with the RAF, as is frequently the case, it should be understood as 'a comment on the relationship between the state, the public, mass media, art, and the urban guerrilla during the early 1970s,' including the contemporaneous art world's rather 'artificial view of radicalness and politics.'¹²² Beuys' stated aim to 'resocialize' members of the Red Army Faction – via an exhibition visit – tests the social role of art to its very limits. A year later, collectors could see the work on Michael Werner's booth at the Cologne art fair, where it was displayed next to Baselitz's self-portrait *Finger Painting – Nude* (1972) (Fig. 123).

While the Federal Republic was facing economic and political turmoil, as well as the emergence of new forms of both national and international terrorism, artists working in West Germany were facing their own existential dilemma. After the 1960s – a decade, which had provided art with a 'social mandate' – perceptions of the artist

¹²⁰ Aust, xii.

¹²¹ As quoted in Svea Bräunert, 'The RAF and the Phantom of Terrorism in West Germany,' in *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures*, exh. cat., edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, 2009), 267.

¹²² Bräunert, 265, 267.

had changed.¹²³ A conception of the artist as exemplary and special, or as a role model, was no longer valid. According to Jappe, *documenta 5* had failed not only to deliver its self-proclaimed aim of illuminating the role of art in solving social problems but displayed too many new works with an ‘aversion to analysis and social criticism.’¹²⁴ The first *documenta* to be curated with an overarching theme, *documenta 5* was demonstratively entitled ‘Questioning Reality – Pictorial Worlds Today.’ Both lauded and reviled, many of the exhibition’s critics, including Jappe, seemed unsure of what kind of realities and realisms artists were expected to engage with.

Marking his first participation in the influential exhibition, Baselitz’s works were displayed in the ‘Realism’ section of *documenta 5*. Curated by Jean-Christophe Ammann, director of the Kunstmuseum Luzern, ‘Realism’ occupied almost the entire ground floor of the Neue Galerie, with the upper floor of the building filled by director Harald Szeemann’s controversial ‘Individual Mythologies’ and ‘Self-Representation’ displays. As the works exhibited in the Neue Galerie in Kassel made clear, *documenta 5* not only marked the end of the Arnold Bode era, it also signalled the end of a curatorial focus on abstraction. As outlined in the preface to the catalogue, *documenta 5* aimed to explore the ‘relationship between image and reality,’ a particularly pertinent choice in context of the contemporaneous media coverage of the RAF.¹²⁵ According to the exhibition organisers, works of art were to be ‘understood as systems,’ which ‘absorb reality’ in different ways, with a distinction made between different ‘levels of

¹²³ ‘Die sechziger Jahre, unter dem Generalthema Individuum und Gesellschaft stehend, gaben der Kunst zum erstenmal wieder einen gesellschaftlichen Auftrag.’ Jappe, 9.

¹²⁴ ‘... eine Aversion gegen Analyse und Gesellschaftskritik.’ Jappe, 12.

¹²⁵ ‘... das Verhältnis von Abbildung und Wirklichkeit.’ ‘Vorbemerkung,’ in *documenta 5. Befragung der Realität. Bildwelten heute*, exh. cat., edited by Harald Szeemann (Kassel: Verlag documenta / Bertelsmann Verlag, 1972), 1.2-1.3.

reality.’¹²⁶ Szeemann and his team argued that art could reflect these different levels in three different manners: 1. ‘the reality of the subject’ – the reality of what is depicted; 2. ‘the reality of the image’ – the reality of the visual representation; and 3. ‘the identity or non-identity of the reality of the work-transcending objectivity and image’ – a ‘new reality’ produced by the work of art, such as an imagined utopia.¹²⁷ The construction of reality and its examination, questioning and potential affirmation by artists was central to the thematic conception of *documenta 5*. Baselitz’s critical exploration of mimesis through his own semi-autobiographical and semi-fictional form of portraiture seemed particularly suitable.

Baselitz’s portraits offer a more sustained critique of representation (-al painting) than their dismissal as ‘expressive’ suggests. As outlined previously, Baselitz’s double portraiture offers viewers complex, at times contradictory readings. Both his gesture of inversion, as well as his serialisation of motives, prompts viewers to repeatedly revisit and reconsider Baselitz’s images. Considered as aesthetic and conceptual acts, Baselitz’s strategies of transformation take on additional significance in light of contemporaneous discussions around realism. The artist’s performative inversions encourage his viewers to ‘correct’ his distortions. Yet, as Baselitz’s *Saxon*

¹²⁶ ‘Kunstwerke werden ... verstanden als Systeme, welche auf die eine oder andere Weise Wirklichkeit in sich aufnehmen... Demgemäß wird unterschieden zwischen drei Wirklichkeitsebenen...’ ‘Vorbemerkung,’ 1.3.

¹²⁷ ‘1. Die Wirklichkeit des Abgebildeten... 2. Die Wirklichkeit der Abbildung... 3. Identität oder Nichtidentität der Wirklichkeit von werktranszendenter Gegenständlichkeit und Abbildung.’ ‘Vorbemerkung,’ 1.3. Maria Bremer’s discussion of the exhibition concept – via the exhibition draft proposal from 1971 – is particularly valuable. As Bremer points out: ‘Questioning the varying critical potential of images in a thrust both enlightening and didactic, the *documenta 5* concept paper further recurred to a semiotic model, arranging the objects to be shown into three “structural categories.” Images could either affirm “the reality of the image” or “the reality of what is portrayed”; or, alternatively, “the identity or non-identity of the image and what is portrayed.”’ Maria Bremer, ‘Looking Back at *documenta 5* and *documenta 6*,’ in *Modes of Making Art History, Stedelijk Studies 2* (2015), <http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/journal/modes-of-making-art-history/> (accessed 26.02.2016).

book demonstrates, his works offer no further insight when turned right-side up. If the gesture is supposed to 'neutralise' Baselitz's private content, the inversion of the inversion does not suddenly compromise its alleged 'autonomy.' The momentary act of identification – 'eagle,' 'tree,' 'nude,' – always occurs despite Baselitz's abstraction. As Wassily Kandinsky famously recounted in 1913, he was temporarily unable to recognise his own painting after it had been turned on its side.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, attempting to recreate the same effect the next day in his studio, he failed: 'even on its side, I constantly recognized objects... Now I could see clearly that objects harmed my pictures.'¹²⁹ Kandinsky turned to abstraction, 'pure painting' focused on form and colour, instead. Yet despite his own exploration of abstraction, Baselitz's work continues to depend on references to physical 'reality'.

Despite, or perhaps through, its problematic exclusion of Socialist Realism, *documenta 5* challenged contemporaneous definitions of realism.¹³⁰ According to the *documenta* curators, realism(s) – particularly the types exhibited in Kassel – never genuinely depict or replicate reality. As argued in their theory-heavy exhibition concept and catalogue, art provided the opportunity to explore and expose the ambiguous connections between 'reality' and its representation. Two years later, at the fourteenth *Deutscher Kunsthistorikertag* in Hamburg, German art historians would

¹²⁸ 'I returned home with my painting box having finished a study, still dreamy and absorbed in the work I had completed, and suddenly saw an indescribably beautiful picture, pervaded by an inner glow. At first, I stopped short and then quickly approached this mysterious picture, on which I could discern only forms and colors and whose content was incomprehensible. At once, I discovered the key to the puzzle: it was a picture I had painted, standing on its side against the wall.' Wassily Kandinsky, 'Reminiscences' (1913), in *Complete Writings On Art, Volume One (1901-1921)*, edited by Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 369.

¹²⁹ Kandinsky, 370.

¹³⁰ The catalogue includes a one-page section entitled 'Socialist Realism,' in which the curators acknowledge that it would have been desirable to include examples of Socialist Realism, however, after two years of negotiations, they received a declination from the Department of Cultural Affairs in Moscow.

continue the discussion through heated debates about the implications of such conceptions of realism, which almost resulted in the split of their national association. A review of the conference suggested the politicisation of the disagreements could have been avoided, if the ‘relationship between autonomous (“pure”) art and realism’ had been clarified and outlined in more detail in advance.¹³¹ The debates centred on disparate definitions of ‘naturalism’ and ‘realism,’ including if realism always implied a ‘critical portrayal of the respective social reality’ encountered by the artist.¹³² Ideologically divided, some art historians at the conference suggested ‘true’ realism could only ever be produced from an ‘oppositional stance,’ and was therefore always ‘critical.’¹³³ The pervasiveness of these discussions and debates is highlighted by the number of exhibitions centred on ‘realism’ that took place in Germany (as well as internationally) in the first years of the new decade.¹³⁴ Amongst these, *Realität* –

¹³¹ ‘Beim Realismus-Thema wäre ein Ausufern zu vermeiden gewesen, wenn man... das Verhältnis Autonome (reine) Kunst – Realismus genauer anvisiert hätte.’ Günter Passavant, ‘XIV. Deutscher Kunsthistoriker Tag in Hamburg 7. – 12 Oktober 1974: Bericht und erste Folge der Resümees,’ *Kunstchronik* 3 (March 1975), 71.

¹³² J.A. Schmoll, called Eisenwerth, summarising Georg Schmidt in his conference paper: ‘... sollte ‘Naturalismus wieder einfach jegeliche um Naturwiedergabe (einschließlich Naturstudium) bemühte Kunst genannt werden (quasi wertneutral), ‘Realismus’ hingegen nur die kritische Darstellung der jeweiligen gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit.’ As quoted in Passavant, 99. Passavant’s review includes a stinging critique of ‘Marxist oriented’ art historians and their contributions to the conference, 81.

¹³³ ‘... das “echter” Realismus primär nur aus einer oppositionellen Haltung entstehen kann... es resultiert aus der Definition, daß “Realismus” immer kritisch und immer sozialintendiert ist... .’ J.A. Schmoll, called Eisenwerth, quoted in Passavant, 99, 100.

¹³⁴ To name just a few international examples: 22 *Realists* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970; *Radical Realism*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1971; *Relativerend realism*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1972; *Photo-Realism*, Serpentine Gallery, 1973; *Hyperrealisme in België*, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Gent, 1973. Examples from Germany include: *Amerikanischer Fotorealismus*, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Frankfurter Kunstverein & Kunst- und Museumsverein, Wuppertal, 1972-1973; *Mit Kamera, Pinsel und Spritzpistole: realistische Kunst in unserer Zeit*, Städtische Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, 1973; *Neuer Realismus*, Kunstverein Konstanz, 1974; *Neue Berliner Realisten*, Städtisches Gustav-Lübcke Museum, Hamm, 1974.

Realismus – Realität stands out in particular as it toured seven museums throughout West Germany over the period of a year, following the end of *documenta 5*.¹³⁵

The questions posited by *Realität – Realismus – Realität*, through its juxtaposition of reality and realism in its title alone, speak to a similar set of issues addressed by *documenta 5*, as well as those Baselitz grappled with during the period. The exhibition was divided into three sections, each of which interrogated a different approach by artists to ‘reality’ and ‘realism’, and identified with a representative artist. Marcel Duchamp, Warhol and Beuys are, according to the curators, ‘exemplary protagonists,’ whose works demonstrate the ‘new and radical’ questioning of ‘*Wirklichkeit*’ (reality), and new attempts at ‘*Wirklichkeitsbewältigung*’ (coming to terms with reality) since the beginning of the 20th century.¹³⁶ Not unlike *documenta 5*, the exhibition interrogated and questioned contradictory definitions of realism.¹³⁷ The new decade’s questioning of the role of the artist in society corresponded to a reengagement with notions of autonomy and realism, as well as theories of the spectacle. What role do conceptions of the artist and realism play in a society’s

¹³⁵ The exhibition was installed at the von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, Haus am Waldsee Berlin, Kunsthalle Kiel, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum Duisburg, Westfälischer Kunstverein Münster, and the Städtisches Museum Leverkusen.

¹³⁶ Thomas Kempas et al., ‘Vorwort,’ in *Realität – Realismus – Realität*, exh. cat., edited by Johann Heinrich Müller, Tilman Osterwold and Rolf Wedewer (Wuppertal: Lucas / von der Heydt-Museum, 1972), 3.

¹³⁷ Each artist’s ‘realism’ is discussed in terms of the image of the artist each conception of reality produces. In his entry on Warhol, Tilman Osterwold argues that ‘Warhol’s produced reality’ includes an initial ‘production phase’ centred on the artist as ‘consumer, individual, machine, work and cult.’ Beuys’ approach to his art is presented as equivalent to the artist’s approach to his biography. In his attempt to ‘coalesce his life and his art into a pictorial unity,’ Beuys, according to the catalogue, would ‘touch up reality.’ Tilman Osterwold, ‘Realität/Warhol/Realismus,’ in *Realität – Realismus – Realität*, exh. cat., edited by Johann Heinrich Müller, Tilman Osterwold and Rolf Wedewer (Wuppertal: Lucas / von der Heydt-Museum, 1972), 100-101. Karlheinz Nowald, ‘Realität/Beuys/Realität,’ in *Realität – Realismus – Realität*, exh. cat., edited by Johann Heinrich Müller, Tilman Osterwold and Rolf Wedewer (Wuppertal: Lucas / von der Heydt-Museum, 1972), 120.

conception of reality, and vice versa? If images mediate our experience and access to reality, what responsibility do producers of images have?

In 1967, Debord had attempted to address at least parts of these questions in *The Society of the Spectacle*. The prominent analysis of advertising images and its production in the *documenta 5* catalogue, with references to ‘false consciousness’ and passive consumption, can be understood as both a response to Debord’s popular text, as well as a genealogy of his ideas.¹³⁸ Consisting of a series of 221 short theses, and influenced by Hegelian Marxist theories of alienation, including Lukács’ writings on reification, Debord’s book focuses on postwar mass consumption and commodification.¹³⁹ At its core is Debord’s claim that in contemporary consumer society, social relations are ‘mediated by images’.¹⁴⁰ His opening first thesis boldly states that: ‘All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.’¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, ‘culture,’ according to Debord, is both ‘the general sphere of knowledge, and of representations of lived experience.’¹⁴² Art and artists therefore play a fundamental and contradictory role within the spectacle.

Debord’s appropriation, application and revision of theories of subjectivity, alienation and commodification are used not only to describe the spectacle, but also to

¹³⁸ See ‘3.2 Werbung und Design’ in *documenta 5. Befragung der Realität. Bildwelten heute*, exh. cat., edited by Harald Szeemann (Kassel: Verlag documenta / Bertelsmann Verlag, 1972), 1.53-1.54. The catalogue also includes a section entitled ‘Verdinglichung,’ a term employed by Georg Lukács in his influential *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), see ‘5.3 Verdinglichung,’ in *documenta 5. Befragung der Realität. Bildwelten heute*, exh. cat., edited by Harald Szeemann (Kassel: Verlag documenta / Bertelsmann Verlag, 1972), 1. 69-1.80.

¹³⁹ Debord repeatedly cites both Marx and Lukács. Much of his 112nd thesis is focused on Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness*, a lengthy quote from which also serves as the epigraph for Debord’s second chapter ‘The Commodity as Spectacle.’ Marx is quoted almost continuously, for example in Theses 79-81, 84-89, 125, 176; Hegel in 127, 180, 215 and others. For an overview and analysis of the philosophical and theoretical influences on Debord’s text, see Tom Bunyard, ‘Debord, Time and History,’ *Historical Materialism* 19.1 (2011): 3-36.

¹⁴⁰ Debord, 12.

¹⁴¹ Debord, 12.

¹⁴² Debord, 130.

analyse how the spectacle has fundamentally changed society and individuals. In his fifth thesis, Debord describes the spectacle as ‘a weltanschauung,’ and in his sixth, he outlines some of its ‘specific manifestations – news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment – the spectacle epitomises the prevailing model of social life.’¹⁴³ Highly complex, and at times contradictory, *The Society of the Spectacle* traces what Debord sees as the consummate dominance of the commodity in contemporaneous society and its expression through the spectacle.

Debord’s characterisation of the family in terms of consumption and its simultaneous need for and reproduction of moral repression and pseudo-gratification, is analogous to his analysis of the spectacle. According to Debord, the spectacle ensures and reproduces its own continuity by manifesting ‘itself as an enormous positivity, out of reach and beyond dispute.’¹⁴⁴ ‘The attitude that it demands in principle is the same passive acceptance,’ so Debord, ‘that it has already secured by means of its seeming incontrovertibility, and indeed by its monopolization of the realm of appearances.’¹⁴⁵ This is similar to the passive obedience demanded and replicated by the bourgeois family’s insistence on patriarchal authority, as outlined by Karl Marx, and reiterated in Habermas’ analysis of the ‘intimate’ sphere.¹⁴⁶ Debord describes a similar dependency between the spectacle and capital, as well as capital as the foundation of social relationships, including between family members, echoing, in

¹⁴³ Debord, 13.

¹⁴⁴ Debord, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Debord, 15.

¹⁴⁶ See in particular his critique of Henry Sumner Maine’s *Lectures on the Early History of Institutions* (1875). Marx and Engels also comment on the importance of obedience within bourgeois family models in *The German Ideology* (1845-1846). For an overview of Marx’s critique of Maine’s analysis of patriarchal authority and modern, private family forms, see Heather Brown, ‘The Family, the State and Property Rights: The Dialectics of Gender and Family in Precapitalist Societies,’ in *Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 176-209.

particular Lukács' discussion of reification and marriage.¹⁴⁷ Just as the emergence of the monogamous bourgeois family marked a turning point for Engels, so the spectacle for Debord: 'the spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life.'¹⁴⁸

One could argue that Baselitz's intimate motifs are 'neutral' only in as far as they could be described as equally alienated. Reading Baselitz's self- and double portraits against the decade's pervasive and socio-politically pivotal discussions about realism and reification, reveals their engagement with questions of authenticity, artistic subjectivity, and constructions of reality. If taken at his word, the series of portraits speak to the continued failure of Baselitz's attempts to work within an apolitical formalism or produce images uncompromised by socio-economic forces. By visually situating and self-imaging himself as part of a German family, including his own, as well as the larger collective Nazi family of the previous generation, Baselitz not only fails to produce autonomous images that resist and oppose the politicisation of art, he also fails to produce a conception of the artist as independent from socio-political and economic demands. Rather than neutral, autonomous or detached, Baselitz's familial double portraits recall the Surrealist's *Compensation Portraits* (1942). At the suggestion of Duchamp and André Breton, the exhibition catalogue to *The First Papers of Surrealism*, a group exhibition in New York that several of the participants were unable to attend due to the ongoing war, included 'substitution' portraits – 'a disparate set of found prints or photographs, each one identified with the name of a Surrealist group member' (Fig. 124).¹⁴⁹ While Leonora Carrington is 'represented' by

¹⁴⁷ Debord, 26. Italics in original.

¹⁴⁸ Debord, 29.

¹⁴⁹ David Hopkins, 'The Politics of Equivocation: Sherrie Levine, Duchamp's 'Compensation Portrait,' and Surrealism in the USA, 1942-45,' *Oxford Art Journal* 26/1 (2003), 51.

Walker Evan's portrait of Allie Mae Fields Burroughs, Giorgio De Chirico's name is paired with the image of a portrait bust, and Joan Miró's with that of a photograph of a laughing couple. In his detailed analysis of the portraits, David Hopkins argues that 'identity here becomes defined in relation to varying registers of contingency. Physiognomies are shown to have no fixed relation to name.'¹⁵⁰ Baselitz's conflation of his portrait with Hitler, his father and Dix's father raises similar questions regarding appearance, identity and self-invention. Baselitz's spectacularisation of the artist within the private sphere reproduces a reality that centres on the reification produced by this spectacle and demonstrates the mediation of this reality by images. The modern, bourgeois portrait insisted on capturing the 'unique' individuality of a person, the sitter's authentic self. Authenticity in portraiture implied capturing a person's likeness as well as their inner thoughts and feelings; their 'personality as a whole,' as Dix maintained.¹⁵¹ Yet as the discourse around realism made clear, art in 1970s West Germany could no longer claim to have access to such a 'level of reality.' Authenticity, similar to autonomy, no longer seemed feasible. Writing about 'the changing view of man in the portrait,' in his eponymous text from 1969, John Berger suggests that 'the demands of a modern vision are incompatible with the singularity of viewpoint which is the prerequisite for a static painted 'likeness.'¹⁵² Berger links this change in modern vision to changes in 'modern means of communication;' a change replicated in 'the mode of narration.'¹⁵³ For Berger, the crisis of the painted portrait was paralleled by the

¹⁵⁰ Hopkins, 51.

¹⁵¹ As quoted in Matthias Eberle, 'Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany: A Brief History,' in *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, exh. cat., edited by Sabine Rewald (New Haven / New York: Yale University Press / The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 35.

¹⁵² John Berger, 'The Changing View of a Man in the Portrait' (1969), in *The Look of Things. Essays by John Berger*, edited by Nikos Stangos (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 41.

¹⁵³ Berger, 40.

contemporaneous ‘crisis of the modern novel.’¹⁵⁴ In West Germany, this crisis elicited both new forms of portraiture and new forms of (auto-)biography.

Suchbild: New Subjectivity, Neoexpressionism & latent facism

Writing about portraiture in *Kunstforum International* in 1973, Heinz Ohff asks ‘what is new’ about ‘the New Portrait’?¹⁵⁵ Discussing recent works by Baselitz, Richter and their contemporaries including Eugen Schönebeck and Arnulf Rainer, Ohff questions if recent German portraiture is actually particularly ‘new’.¹⁵⁶ He concludes that what has changed is the reality artists engage and come to terms with, a reality dominated by the photograph, including ‘posters, magazine images, television scenes,’ and ‘snapshots,’ which ‘belong to our reality and shape our relationship with it, as well as with our fellow man.’¹⁵⁷ In place of Debord’s spectacle, Ohff offers the photograph specifically, and in place of alienation, he elaborates on people’s *Substanzlosigkeit* (insubstantiality). Ohff argues that whereas ‘the “old portrait,” tried to depict the substance of an individual,’ the new portrait ‘depicts, deliberately and inadvertently, his insubstantiality.’¹⁵⁸ In his conclusion, Ohff acknowledges the destabilised figure at the centre of the ‘new portrait’: ‘Man, still the measure of all things in painting right up to Im- and Expressionism (and right up to Picasso), is now regarded with scepticism

¹⁵⁴ Berger, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Heinz Ohff, ‘Das Neue Porträt oder: Was ist neu daran?’, *Kunstforum International* 6/7 (1973): 94-123.

¹⁵⁶ ‘... sollten wir daher zuerst einmal fragen, was eigentlich so neu daran ist.’ Ohff, 94. Ohff cites the overuse of the word ‘new,’ as in the case of ‘New Realism,’ or ‘Neo-Impressionism.’ A decade later, in his dismissal of Neoexpressionism, Buchloh, similarly questioning the use of ‘new’ in several recent exhibitions, writes: ‘as though the prefix *neo* did not indicate the restoration of preexisting forms.’ Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority,’ 55.

¹⁵⁷ Ohff, 95.

¹⁵⁸ ‘... hat das “alte Porträt” versucht, die Substanz eines Menschen zu schildern, das “neue” schildert, gewollt und ungewollt, seine Substanzlosigkeit.’ Ohff, 121.

and disbelief.’¹⁵⁹ Two years later, Werner Lippert, in a *Kunstforum* article about recent examples of self-portraiture, echoes Ohff’s contextualisation of new types of figurative representation within societal approaches to mediated reality, as well as the ‘modern means of communication’ referenced by Berger.¹⁶⁰ Echoing the discussions advanced by *documenta 5*, portraiture, and specifically self-portraiture, in 1970s West Germany, is understood not as a reflection of but inevitably a confrontation with ‘reality’. A reality, which included the alienation of individuals and the commodification of human relationships and experiences through images. An exhibition at the Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim in 1975, tellingly entitled *Der ausgesparte Mensch* – the absent man –, explored how artists were confronting these characteristics of the new reality they faced. Thematically conceived as a survey of the image of man in contemporary art, Heinz Fuchs, writing in the catalogue, outlined how the exhibition traced the ‘objectification’ of the human figure and simultaneous ‘personification of objects’.¹⁶¹ Fuchs writes about contemporaneous transformations of the ‘experience of space’ and ‘experience of reality,’ alongside man’s transformation into ‘types,’ ‘living mummies’ and ‘masks.’¹⁶² Confronting and engaging with a construction of (artistic) subjectivity within the private sphere, Baselitz, along with a new generation of German (auto-) biographers, explore this new reality.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Der Mensch, auch in der Malerei noch bis hin zu Im- und Expressionismus (und bis hin zu Picasso) Maß aller Dinge, wird mit Skepsis und Zweifel betrachtet.’ Ohff, 123.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Wo in einer Gesellschaft Kommunikationsunfähigkeit und Identitätsverlust zwangsläufig Hand in Hand gehen, wird das Selbstbildnis zum expliziten Sinnbild einer Ausbildung von Identität über eine Kommunikation mit der Umgebung, über eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Umwelt...’ Werner Lippert, ‘Das Selbstporträt als Bildtypus,’ *Kunstforum International* 14 (3. Quartal 1975), 105.

¹⁶¹ Heinz Fuchs, ‘Der ausgesparte Mensch,’ in *Der ausgesparte Mensch: Aspekte der Kunst der Gegenwart*, exh. cat. (Mannheim: Kunsthalle Mannheim, 1975), unpaginated.

¹⁶² ‘In der Kunst der Gegenwart gibt es Werke, die besonders deutlich... die Umkehr der Raumerfahrung, die Wirklichkeitserfahrung, ... erkennen lassen.’ ‘... Menschen, die zu Typen werden...’ ‘... lebenden Mumien...’ ‘... der Mensch als Schablone.’ Fuchs, unpaginated.

Often considered part of the larger German literary production of the 1970s and 1980s labelled *Neue Subjektivität* (New Subjectivity), several authors turned to portraying their fathers in biographies that could be described more accurately as autobiographies. As Roy Jerome argues in his definition of the new genre of *Väterliteratur* (father literature), while the ‘analysis of the father’s experiences during and after National Socialism constitutes a biographical moment,’ the novels’ ‘examination of father-son relations constitutes an autobiographical moment.’¹⁶³ Frequently only conceived of after a father’s death and inspired by an accidental discovery of war diaries or photographs, the books have been labelled ‘obituaries.’¹⁶⁴ Jerome describes the novels as reactions to ‘a crisis of subjectivity,’ after the father’s death, which ‘sets in motion the necessity to return within the writing project (and often in body) to those sights of childhood which have born subjectivity.’¹⁶⁵ Such personal biographies, similar to Hirsch’s familial gaze, would therefore suggest a humanising of the Nazi subject. Yet as Michael Schneider argues, ‘in retrospect,’ the largely male authors ‘often saw their parents *only* as political subjects who had either actively or passively supported the most criminal system of this century.’¹⁶⁶ ‘The grim silence of the paternal generation has been bitterly avenged,’ so Schneider’s assessment of the genre, which emerged after sharp generational divisions intensified

¹⁶³ Roy Curtis Jerome, *Trauma and the Self: The Disintegration and Production of Subjectivity in the Aesthetics of the German *Väterliteratur** (Doctoral thesis, University of Oregon, 1995), 5.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Schneider, ‘Fathers and Sons, Retrospectively: The Damaged Relationship between Two Generations,’ translated by Jamie Owen Daniel, *New German Critique*, no. 31 (Winter 1984), JSTOR (487888), 4. Some of the examples provided by Schneider include a photograph of a father ‘dressed in a snappy SS-uniform,’ the discovery of a father’s law exam written on the ‘moral and legal significance’ of *Mein Kampf*, and the discovery of a father’s diaries from the war, as in the case of Christoph Meckel, which would inspire the author to write *Suchbild*. Schneider, 10.

¹⁶⁵ Jerome, 14.

¹⁶⁶ Schneider, 12. Italics in original.

during the Student Movement.¹⁶⁷ Many of these (auto-)biographies, including Bernward Vesper's *Die Reise (The Trip, 1977)* and Christoph Meckel's *Suchbild: Über meinen Vater (Image for Investigation: About My Father, 1980)*, follow a similar pattern. They include an attempt to work through their father's sense of identification with National Socialism before the war, and complex postwar self-image, which is compared and contrasted to the author's own sense of self shaped by the father and family during childhood, as well as during the protest movements of the 1960s. While such personal narratives often serve as the basis of these novels, they also critically address the complex interrelationship between the personal and the political.

As Richard McCormick has argued, the 1960s protest movement in West Germany 'dissolved in large part because of the failure to resolve the personal/political split adequately.'¹⁶⁸ McCormick suggests the 'problematic relationship of political commitment and personal experience' are grounded in the equally problematic dichotomisation of the public and private spheres – the "political/objective" and "personal/subjective" – and reflected in the 'division commonly seen to exist between the "politicized 1960s" and the "subjective 1970s."¹⁶⁹ Yet as Mererid Puw Davies has suggested, the 'protagonists' of the protest generation 'sought to valorize subjective experience as a prime intellectual or political criterion.'¹⁷⁰ Publishing 'private' texts, including letters and diaries, combined documentary impulses with claims for authenticity, while simultaneously offering a critique of traditional literature and forms

¹⁶⁷ Schneider, 11.

¹⁶⁸ Richard W. McCormick, *Politics of the Self: Feminism and the Postmodern in West German Literature and Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 23. McCormick summarises the Student Movement's 'contradictory impulses' as: 'toward social commitment and narcissistic self-indulgence, toward existential liberation and political dogmatism, toward engagement in international politics and concern with issues of personal "life-style," toward sexual emancipation and leftist asceticism.' McCormick, 22.

¹⁶⁹ McCormick, 22-23.

¹⁷⁰ Mererid Puw Davies, *Writing and the West German Protest Movements: The Textual Revolution* (London: Institute of Modern Languages Research, 2016), 208.

of art and culture.¹⁷¹ Davies singles out *Väterliteratur* as a new genre which specifically came out of the protest movements of the previous decade, and ‘highlight the anti-authoritarian thesis that there is no division between the personal and the political.’¹⁷²

Like Baselitz, Vesper and Meckel repeatedly question and make explicit the limitations of their genre. Each engages with a childhood dominated by National Socialism, an articulation of self within the supposedly ‘private’ sphere of the family and home, and with violence and latent fascism. The past and present are continuously blurred. As previously cited, Baselitz’s eagles have been understood as part of an ‘iconography of the private,’ combining the artist’s memories of his Saxon childhood with images of the everyday. ‘Reading’ *Saxon Motifs* – its eagles, landscapes, and portraits – alongside examples of *Väterliteratur* reveals similar conceptualisations of memory and parallel attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* alongside *Wirklichkeitsbewältigung*. The notion of coming to terms [*bewältigung*] with the past [*Vergangenheit*] has become synonymous with the literature focused on postwar German cultural productions. *Väterliteratur* and its authors’ delayed attempts at coming to terms with their postwar upbringing and parents’ association with National Socialism, seem particularly exemplary. Contextualised within the contemporaneous discourse regarding the experience and representation of ‘reality,’ Vesper and Meckel’s texts offer parallel examinations of coming to terms with reality to Baselitz’s own critical exploration of mediated *Wirklichkeitsbewältigung*.

Vesper, founder and editor of the influential *Voltaire Flugschriften* and later *Edition Voltaire*, interweaves his personal recollection of his Nazi father and

¹⁷¹ Davies, 26-27.

¹⁷² Davies, 212.

oppressive childhood, with descriptions of his political and revolutionary hopes.¹⁷³ Yet the intense public interest in *Die Reise* stemmed not only from Vesper's descriptions of his involvement in the Student Movement, but particularly from his account of his relationship with Ensslin, his fiancée until 1967, when she left him for fellow RAF co-founder Baader. Ensslin is also the mother of Vesper's son Felix, to whom the book is dedicated, and who plays a central role throughout the novel. One of the most startling scenes in the book is Vesper's description of his father's death, a man who used to receive a birthday telegram from Joseph Goebbels according to another passage in the novel.¹⁷⁴ 'My story clearly falls into two parts,' so Vesper, 'one is bound to my father, the other begins after his death.'¹⁷⁵ 'When he died, I whispered the name "Gudrun" in his ear....'¹⁷⁶ Published posthumously in 1977, six years after Vesper's suicide in a psychiatric ward, and at the height of the 'German Autumn,' Vesper's autobiography encapsulated West Germany's socio-political crisis of the 1970s.¹⁷⁷ *Die Weltwoche*

¹⁷³ As Timothy Brown outlines, *Edition Voltaire* was one of the important 'left-oriented presses' established in the late 1960s, a period defined by the 'intense politicization ... and battles over the meaning of literature.' Under Vesper, *Edition Voltaire* published 'an impressive range of titles on topics of history and cultural and political criticism.' Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 149.

¹⁷⁴ 'Früher, als Joseph Goebbels es sich nicht nehmen ließ, ihm zum Geburtstag ein Telegramm zu schicken... .' Bernward Vesper, *Die Reise. Romanessay* (1977) (Frankfurt a.M.: Zweitausendeins, 1981), 451.

¹⁷⁵ 'Meine Geschichte zerfällt deutlich in zwei Teile. Der eine ist an meinen Vater gebunden, der andre beginnt mit seinem Tod.' Vesper, 39.

¹⁷⁶ 'Als er starb, flüsterte ich ihm noch den Namen "Gudrun" ins Ohr....' Vesper, 39.

¹⁷⁷ In early September 1977, Hanns Martin Schleyer, chairman of Daimler Benz and president of the West German Federation of Industries, was kidnapped by members of the RAF, with the intention of securing the prison release of Baader, Raspe and Ensslin. During the kidnapping, Schleyer's driver, as well as three police officers, were shot. This is often considered the beginning of the 'German Autumn.' The German Autumn generally refers to a series of events, which occurred over a period of seven weeks in 1977, starting with Schleyer's kidnapping. After the government refused to negotiate a prisoner exchange, a Lufthansa plane with 86 passengers was hijacked in early October. The plane eventually landed in Mogadishu, where it was stormed by a special German task force on October 18. All hostages were liberated. On the same night, Ensslin, Baader and Raspe were found dead in their cells in the Stammheim maximum-security prison. An official investigation concluded all three had committed suicide. The following day, Schleyer's body was discovered in an abandoned car. Earlier in 1977, RAF members had also assassinated Siegfried Buback, the West German

called the book ‘the legacy of an entire generation.’¹⁷⁸ With his critique of Germany directly tied to his father’s biography, and his hopes for the future contingent on his son, the postwar family, so Vesper’s book suggests, was always political, and articulations of the self equally so.

Meckel’s critical reflections on aesthetic autonomy through an analysis of his father’s poetry and writing problematise the very notion of producing art independent of socio-political demands. While Vesper dedicates a section of his book to the dangers of the subsumation of revolutionary writing, Meckel discusses the ‘problematic self-isolation of the lyrical I,’ and the how the war ‘lacerated the illusion of independent art.’¹⁷⁹ Meckel’s novel traces the parallel destructions of his father’s sense of self, his family and the nation during the war. The author contrasts this unravelling with the subsequent performance and at times surreal re-enactment of their prewar bourgeois family life after the father’s return home following his imprisonment as a prisoner of war. Linking the rebuilding of war-torn families and a war-torn nation to a collective disregard of recent history, Meckel summarises: ‘what was known as the reconstruction of state and family, swiftly emerged as restoration.’¹⁸⁰ Throughout his text, Meckel emphasises that writing his novel ‘would not have been possible without

Attorney General, and Jürgen Ponto, the head of Dresdner Bank. For further details regarding the kidnapping, see Aust, 305-311.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Nachlaß einer ganzen Generation,’ as quoted in Christian Schultz-Gerstein, ‘Die Zerstörung einer Legende,’ *Der Spiegel* 52 (24.12.1979), 146.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Problematische Selbstisolierung des lyrischen Ich.’ ‘... zerfetzte die Illusion von der unabhängigen Kunst.’ Christoph Meckel, *Suchbild: Über meinen Vater* (1980) (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2012), 32. In ‘1. Lesen–Schreiben,’ Vesper writes about how the petit bourgeoisie – ‘the ones who read and write books’ – ‘have the power to delay... the downfall’ of fascism, capital, and the ruling class. (‘... wenn nicht diese todesgeile, Bücherlesende und schreibende Kleinbourgeoisie... .’ ‘Das Proletariat allein hat die Macht, die herrschende Klasse zu stürzen; diejenigen, die Bücher lesen und schreiben, habe die Macht, den Sturz wiederum zu verzögern.’). Vesper, 433-435.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Was Wiederaufbau von Staat und Familie hieß, entpuppte sich schnell und bieder als Restauration.’ Meckel, 132.

fabrication;’ that it is precisely ‘invention, which reveals and conceals the person.’¹⁸¹ According to Meckel, this new form of (auto-)biography, required the author to both destroy and reinvent his father through his work process.¹⁸² Jadvyga Bajarūnienė summarises the problem of *Väterliteratur* as ‘the relationship between “truth” and fiction.’¹⁸³ And in his review of the new genre in context of postwar German literature, Jochen Vogt similarly focuses on the novels’ different ‘degrees of fictionalisation.’¹⁸⁴ Vesper in particular openly struggles with his attempt to confront and represent reality; specifically the ‘disbelief in the nature and the ability of language to define reality.’¹⁸⁵ Citing numerous passages from Vesper’s lengthy text, Andrew Plowman examines Vesper’s continuous confrontation ‘with the problem of autobiographical writing,’ including ‘the unreliability of self-knowledge.’¹⁸⁶ An awareness of the obstacles of their genre and the possibilities of ‘authentic fiction’ foregrounds Vesper and Meckel’s problematisation of self-expression and the narration of personal experiences in their novels.¹⁸⁷ Vesper describes how when he initially conceived of his ‘relentless autobiography’, he wanted to ‘interweave, that I am a notorious liar.’¹⁸⁸ Vesper and

¹⁸¹ ‘Ohne Erfindung ist das nicht zu machen. ... Die Erfindung offenbart und verbirgt den Menschen.’ Meckel, 74.

¹⁸² Meckel, 74.

¹⁸³ ‘... das Verhältnis von “Wahrheit” und Fiktion....’ Jadvyga Bajarūnienė, ‘Autobiografisches und Geschichtliches in der späten Prosa von Günter Grass,’ *Literatūra* 49/5 (2007), 174.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Fiktionalisierungsgrad.’ Jochen Vogt, ‘Er fehlt, er fehlte, er hat gefehlt... Ein Rückblick auf die sogenannten Väterbücher,’ in *Deutsche Nachkriegsliteratur und der Holocaust*, edited by Stephan Braese, Holger Gehle, Doron Kiesel, and Hanno Loewy (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1998), 389.

¹⁸⁵ Jerome, 22.

¹⁸⁶ Andrew Plowman, ‘Bernard Vesper’s *Die Reise*: Politics and Autobiography between the Student Movement and the Act of Self-Invention German Autumn: The Critical Reception of *Die Reise*,’ *German Studies Review* 21/3 (Oct. 1998), JSTOR (1431233), 507, 516.

¹⁸⁷ In her analysis of filmic autobiography, Nadja Gernalzick attempts to distinguish between different types of autobiography, including ‘real’ and mock, as well as autobiographical fiction and ‘authentic fiction.’ Nadja Gernalzick, ‘To Act or To Perform: Distinguishing Filmic Autobiography,’ *Biography* 29 (Winter 2006): 1-13.

¹⁸⁸ ‘... “Schonungslose Autobiographie”... .’ ‘... daß ich “einflechten” wollte, ich wäre ein “notorischer Lügner”... .’ Vesper, 24, 25.

Meckel's trepidations about expression, representation and self-imaging, and particularly about each of these within portrayals of the family, reflect a similar awareness of the fragmentation and fictionalisation of the authorial self in the process of articulating an (artistic) identity.

Alexander Kluge's work – both his writing and films – offers a further example of how cultural producers during the 1970s confronted both their national and familial histories through semiautobiographical fiction. As Kluge has emphatically stated: 'I always proceed realistically, but because I consider reality to be the greatest liar of all, our errors are often for me a more precise record than the so-called facts.'¹⁸⁹ Kluge has acknowledged that works such as *Neue Geschichten* (1977) - which tellingly can be translated both as new 'stories' and new 'histories' – written between 1976 and 1977 at the height of the RAF's 'campaign,' was an attempt to discover and identify a 'patriotic core.'¹⁹⁰ Across 149 stories, many of which are 'illustrated' with photographs, maps, drawings, and graphics, Kluge intertwines historical 'facts' with personal 'fiction.' In the short introduction he notes 'The form of the impact of an explosive bomb is memorable. ... I was there on April 8, 1945 when ten meters away such a thing hit.'¹⁹¹ Kluge recounted the childhood memory again in his own *Reden über das eigene Land* lecture. Held in 1983, Kluge, like Baselitz almost a decade later, described his childhood during the war. Crucially he emphasised that 'from this experience in the cellar below and the loss of the house,' he developed his 'strategy from below.'¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ As quoted in Mark M. Anderson, 'Documents, Photography, Postmemory: Alexander Kluge, W.G. Sebald, and the German Family,' *Poetics Today* 29/1 (Spring 2008), 133.

¹⁹⁰ As quoted in Anderson, 137.

¹⁹¹ 'Die Form des Einschlags einer Sprengbombe ist einprägsam. ... Ich war dabei, als am 8 April 1945 in 10 Meter Entfernung so etwas einschlug.' Alexander Kluge, *Neue Geschichten. Hefte 1-18. 'Unheimlichkeit der Zeit'* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 9.

¹⁹² '... aus diesem Erlebnis unten im Keller und dem Verlust des Hauses die Kategorie der *Strategie von unten* entwickelt habe.' Italics in original. As quoted in Angela Bandeili, *Ästhetische Erfahrung in der Literatur der 1970er Jahre. Zur Poetologie des Raumes bei Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, Alexander Kluge und Peter Handke* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014), 237. For

As Inga Scharf has analysed in her study *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema: Homeless at Home*, this loss of home – of house and *Heimat* – is a key aspect of representations of place in New German Cinema.¹⁹³ As she suggests, ‘the place called “West Germany” is in temporal terms largely represented as *being stuck in the past*,’ reflected both through national and personal memories.¹⁹⁴ Focusing specifically on Kluge’s work, Scharf argues that both ‘the end of WWII’ and ‘the collective deaths of the RAF terrorists’ are understood ‘as narrative/temporal points of reference in (West) German national as well as individual memory.’¹⁹⁵ In film’s such as Kluge’s *Die Patriotin* (*The Patriot*, 1977), ‘the representation of such national benchmarks as part of Kluge’s filmic collages calls upon the audience to remember and maybe even to emotionally relive,’ both personal and national memories and participation.¹⁹⁶ *Die Patriotin* features high school teacher Gabi Teichert, played by Hannelore Hoger, attempting to quite literally unearth forgotten and buried history in a German forest, as eerie and disconcerting as Baseltz’s inverted ‘Saxon’ trees. Hoger already appeared in Kluge’s contribution to the anthology film *Germany in Autumn* (1978), by eleven New German Cinema filmmakers including Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Edgar Reitz, in a scene of her digging for ‘missing’ history in the snow. Kluge’s ‘re-appropriation’ of certain actors throughout his films parallels Baseltz’s complex repetition of motifs and return to certain ‘protagonists’ in different guises, further

an analysis of Kluge’s ‘strategy from below’ and ‘strategy from above,’ particularly as developed and outlined in *Neue Geschichten*, see David Roberts, ‘Alexander Kluge and German History: ‘The Air Raid on Halberstadt on 8.4.1945,’ in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, edited by Tara Forrest (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 140-146.

¹⁹³ See particularly Inga Scharf’s second chapter, ‘The Unsettling Setting,’ in *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema: Homeless at Home* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 45-82.

¹⁹⁴ Scharf, 137. Italics in original.

¹⁹⁵ Scharf, 136.

¹⁹⁶ Scharf, 136.

frustrating any possible attempts by viewers to draw clear distinctions between fiction, documentary and auto/biographical. In an early analysis of Kluge's work, Andreas Huyssen argued that 'Kluge's whole project, whether in film, theory, or literature, questions the classical oppositions between the rational and irrational, the analytic and the emotional, the real and the unreal.'¹⁹⁷ Huyssen argues that Kluge 'was and was not part' of *New Subjectivity*, but that during the late 1970s he would increasingly 'insert his own authorial self' into his work focused on the Third Reich, including through family snapshots.¹⁹⁸ Ultimately Huyssen understands Kluge's work as a response to a number of questions which I would argue Vesper, Meckel and particularly Baselitz also actively engage with: 'What can the storyteller do once reality evades representation and most representations of reality are no more than simulacra? How do the modern media affect memory? How does the author construct the text/reader relationship in an age of atrophied experience?'¹⁹⁹

Like Baselitz, Vesper and Meckel (and in several ways Kluge as well), produce their self-studies refracted through the experiences of the previous generation. The postwar West German family is presented as the foundation of multiple, at times necessarily fabricated, identities. And the dichotomisation of the private and public as inherently problematic. In one of the most cited passages of *Suchbild*, Meckel writes:

I did not intend to occupy myself with my father. Writing about him seemed unnecessary to me. The case, a private case (*Privatfall*), was closed. ... Since I have read his war diaries, I can't let the case rest; it is no longer private. I discovered the notes of a person I did not know. To know this person was not possible, to consider him possible – unfeasible. ... The person, that I knew

¹⁹⁷ Andreas Huyssen, 'An Analytic Storyteller in the Course of Time,' *October* 46 (Autumn 1988), JSTOR (778682), 120.

¹⁹⁸ Huyssen, 'An Analytic Storyteller in the Course of Time,' 124.

¹⁹⁹ Huyssen, 'An Analytic Storyteller in the Course of Time,' 120.

or thought to know, was only part of someone else, whom no one knew.²⁰⁰

At a press conference for an exhibition focused on his *Remix* paintings, Baselitz reflected back on his early work, and his decision to ‘set about producing pictures that were pure provocation.’²⁰¹ Baselitz links this artistic decision to his biography: ‘My first provocative act was aimed at my father, my paternal home, my village, my town, my school, then East Berlin, then West Berlin.’²⁰² A year earlier, he admitted that ‘not a day goes by without my wife and I talking of things that happened in the war. And it’s not that different in painting.’²⁰³ All of the images central to Baselitz’s *Saxon Motifs* – the self-portraits and wings – are combined in a series of images, repeatedly and deceptively entitled *Triangle between Arm and Torso*. Created almost simultaneously to *Saxon Motifs* and his *Bedroom* portraits, the artist’s formal studies of his nude body could also be described as studies of the Nazi salute.

Baselitz’s self-portraits from the 1970’s depicting the artist with an outstretched arm multiply their meanings as a series. They are linked most obviously by gesture – both the gesture of the raised arm, and the transformative gesture of inversion. If one would accept the artist’s insistence on ‘pure painting,’ the first gesture is irrelevant, the second only a strategy to erase the first. However, proposing, quite

²⁰⁰ ‘Ich hatte nicht die Absicht, mich mit meinem Vater zu beschäftigen. Über ihn zu schreiben erschien mir nicht nötig. Der Fall, ein Privatfall, war abgeschlossen. ... Seit ich seine Kriegstagebücher las, kann ich den Fall nicht auf sich beruhen lassen; er ist nicht länger privat. Ich entdeckte die Notizen eines Menschen, den ich nicht kannte. Diesen Menschen zu kennen war nicht möglich, ihn für möglich zu halten – unzumutbar. ... Der Mensch, den ich kannte oder zu kennen glaubte, war nur ein Teil jenes anderen, den keiner kannte.’ Meckel, 58-59.

²⁰¹ Georg Baselitz, ‘Press conference for the exhibition *Baselitz Remix* at the Albertina, Vienna, 17 February 2007,’ translated by Fiona Elliott, in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 284.

²⁰² Baselitz, ‘Press conference,’ 284.

²⁰³ Thomas Wagner, ‘Painting was never dead, it was prohibited. Georg Baselitz in conversation with Thomas Wagner,’ in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 272.

literally through the series' title, a formalist study of the abstracted body and geometric shapes, and yet simultaneously staging that study through a repeated engagement with and enactment of the Nazi salute, Baselitz, rather conspicuously, seems to parody the very idea of a neutral, apolitical formalism instead.

Baselitz's *Triangle between Arm and Torso* from 1973 and 1977 could hardly be more different (Fig. 125, Fig. 126). The earlier portrait is painted mostly in soft blues, pinks and browns, the soot black beard and hair identifying the artist and linking the work to other self-portraits. The artist's pose is rigid: a straight black line outlines his back and legs, as well as his fixed, outstretched arm. His gaze follows his extended arm, leading the viewer's own gaze repeatedly along the curves of his shoulder, across his elbow, towards his clenched fist. Below his arm, and extended along his entire torso, is the outline of a large, white wing – the title's triangle – its soft, sketchy contours emphasising the rigidity of his arm. Despite the fictional wing, the portrait could be described as naturalistic: the figure is rendered through subtle modulations in flesh, including suggestions of a tan, with a contrast between the darker tones of his torso and legs to that of his lighter hips and buttocks. In the 1977 version, Baselitz is depicted in patches of grey, his face darkened to the point that only hints of a single eye can be distinguished, the subtly modelled nose and detailed rendering of an ear from the 1973 portrait have disappeared below abstracting outlines. The vibrant red, dripping down the lower third of the canvas, and contrasting energetic brushstrokes of stark white and black, produce an eerie, violent backdrop to the ghostly figure. The energy and motion of the artist's work process – the sweeping motion of dragging a brushstroke across the vast expanse of his monumental canvas – are reiterated by the figure's gesture. The artist's right arm is depicted twice, once in the same position as in the 1973 version, extended parallel to the ground, and once raised higher up, fingers

extended to the sky, the unmistakable gesture of the Hitler salute. This description, of course, presents a reading of Baselitz's portrait the 'right side up.' What Baselitz actually depicts is an inverted Nazi salutation; a figure turned on its head with extended arm and fingers determinedly pointing at the lower right corner of the canvas, thereby upending an act of communication and conformative ritual pivotal to National Socialist declarations of loyalty and belonging.²⁰⁴

Baselitz repeatedly returned to these 'Nazi' self-studies, and engaged particularly actively with the motif in 1977 – the year of the 'German Autumn' – as demonstrated by a series of contemporaneous linocuts produced in four different states (Fig. 127, Fig. 128). Tellingly renamed *Nude with Three Arms*, the series is visibly inscribed with an additional emphasis on gesture, prompting a viewer to trace the violent movement of the artist's arm both in form of the artist's mark on the page created during the production of the images, as well as in the represented Nazi salute. A similar gesture, a similar movement of the arm – albeit at times in different directions – is responsible for both the work of art and the salute. This notion of violence is, I believe, crucial to contextualising these self-portraits by Baselitz, as well as to my reading of them as socio-politically engaged meditations on spectacularised subjectivity. As Peter Weibel has argued in his discussion of representations of the RAF in postwar German art by artists including Beuys and Richter, the events leading up to the 'German Autumn' can be understood as 'a specific historical moment where

²⁰⁴ Discussing how National Socialism transformed and politicised the mundane act of a mutual greeting, sociologist Tillman Alert contends that: '... the Hitler salute fused with the structural principles of the greeting, turned it into a loyalty oath and membership badge, and thus utterly distorted its normal function as a gesture of mutual acknowledgment and reciprocal commitment.' Tillman Alert, *The Hitler Salute: On the Meaning of a Gesture*, translated by Jefferson Chase (New York: Picador, 2009), 97.

the violence of the RAF mirrors the violence of the Holocaust.’²⁰⁵ Weibel understands RAF violence as ‘a social and political effect of the traumas of World War II and the Holocaust;’ a violence developed and inspired by and in opposition to the violence committed by the previous Nazi generation.²⁰⁶ A particularly confronting cartoon from a 1977 issue of *Der Spiegel* speaks to the pervasiveness of these discussions in West Germany at the time. The cartoon, entitled *Hitlers Kinder (Hitler’s Children)*, was published alongside an article covering the Hanns Martin Schleyer’s kidnapping – an event which marked the beginning of the notorious ‘German Autumn’ – during which RAF members used a pram as an obstacle to get the industrialist’s convoy to stop (Fig. 129).²⁰⁷ The cartoon depicts a beaming Hitler pushing an oversized pram prominently labelled ‘RAF,’ from which a number of gun-bearing figures, importantly both male and female, emerge. The cartoon takes the transgression of gendered roles within a family as its punch line, while claiming Hitler as the father of left-wing terrorism, thereby exonerating an entire generation of parents, pithily illustrating the Mitscherlich’s suggestion of extensive, narcissistic denials of mourning alongside victim identification in the postwar years.²⁰⁸ First published in 1977, British journalist Jillian Becker’s controversial book *Hitler’s Children: The Story of the Baader-Meinhof Terrorist Gang*, articulated at length what the eponymous cartoon insinuated;

²⁰⁵ Peter Weibel, ‘Repression and Representation: The RAF in German Postwar Art,’ in *Art of Two Germanys. Cold War Cultures*, exh. cat., edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, 2009), 259.

²⁰⁶ Weibel, 258.

²⁰⁷ For a detailed discussion of the gendered representation of RAF terrorists, as well as the Schleyer kidnapping pram ‘as a memory object’ now on permanent display in the German History Museum in Berlin, see Clare Bielby, ‘Remembering the Red Army Faction,’ *Memory Studies* 3(2) (2010): 137-150. See also, Patricia Melzer, ‘“Terrorist Girls” and “Wild Furies”’: Feminist Responses to Media Representations of Women Terrorists during the “German Autumn” of 1977,’ in *Death in the Shape of A Young Girl: Women’s Political Violence in the Red Army Faction* (New York: NYU Press, 2017), 109-151.

²⁰⁸ Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn* (1967), translated by Beverley R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975), 25. See the previous chapter for a discussion of the influential text by the Mitscherlichs.

that RAF political terrorism was a continuation of National Socialism, particularly what Becker sees as its blatant anti-Semitism. Baselitz's contemporaneous serialisation of his Hitler salute self-portraits can be understood as a direct engagement with this framing of the postwar generation as 'new' Nazis.

Baselitz's Nazi salute self-studies, as well as the later conflation of his own portrait with that of his father and Hitler, parallel Vesper and Meckel's attempts at self-discovery via an in-depth exploration of the previous generation's experience of National Socialism. Yet these explorations are deeply rooted within their own historical specificity. In his discussion of postwar painting, Ralph Rugoff delineates the works' 'post-modern temporality,' in which photography's claim for instantaneity is combined with painting's more ambiguous temporality: 'engaging us in an elusively shifting experience of time and physical presence – an encounter that echoes the confusions between first and second-hand experience engendered in a media-saturated culture.'²⁰⁹ At a time when the media coverage of the RAF continuously produced an experience of such post-modern temporality, Baselitz, Vesper and Meckel's works repeatedly draw attention to the fictionalisation which accompanies such an experience of 'reality'. The contradictory temporality inherent in their genres – their autobiographies and self-portraits are produced by repeatedly 'looking' back at their familial and national pasts – opens their works up as means to critically reevaluate mediated experiences and social relationships. Refracted through the previous generation's crimes and mistakes, West Germany's new forms of self-portraiture and autobiography reflect a tangible sense of trepidation about contemporaneous productions of representations of 'reality' and claims to authenticity.

²⁰⁹ Ralph Rugoff, 'Painting Modern Life,' in *The Painting of Modern Life: 1960s to Now*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Publishing, 2007), 14.

In his stinging critique of the return of figurative painting, Buchloh singles out Neoexpressionism as a particularly retrograde example. According to Buchloh, artists such as Baselitz were ‘committing themselves to the emerging myth of Germany’s cultural heritage and national identity through the adoption of the artist’s traditional role,’ while simultaneously demonstrating their ‘wilful ignorance or rejection of all the aesthetic, epistemological, and philosophical developments of the first two decades of the century.’²¹⁰ Buchloh contextualises his denunciation of Baselitz and Neoexpressionism by drawing parallels between the return to representational painting during the interwar years by artists including Pablo Picasso, and the postwar reaffirmation of ‘obsolete modes’ such as landscape painting and female nudes.²¹¹ Buchloh argues that the initial return to traditional representation ‘around 1915’ – after artists such as Duchamp and Kazimir Malevich had ‘systematically broken down’ ‘conventions of mimetic representation’ – not only reaffirmed ‘traditional values of high art’ but more significantly ‘cleared the way for ... outright authoritarian styles of representation.’²¹² For Buchloh, the legitimisation and idealisation of cultural traditions was paralleled by a similar authoritarian affirmation of “eternal” or ancient systems of order (the law of the tribe, the authority of history, the paternal principle of the master).²¹³ According to Buchloh’s understanding of Neoexpressionism as a renewal of ‘the fictions of national and cultural identity,’ this signified a dangerous return to a sense of nationalism, authoritarianism and repression.²¹⁴ Simultaneously, Buchloh argues that what he sees as the Neoexpressionists’ adaptation of the artist’s traditional role and the ‘bourgeois conception of the avant-garde as the domain of heroic male

²¹⁰ Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority,’ 62.

²¹¹ Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority,’ 55-56.

²¹² Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority,’ 39-40, 42.

²¹³ Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority,’ 43.

²¹⁴ Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority,’ 61.

sublimation' serves as the 'cultural legitimation of social repression.'²¹⁵ Published in 1981 – after a decade marked not only by RAF terrorism, but also an extraordinarily aggressive governmental response, including mass surveillance and censorship – the German art historian's article exhibits a palpable sense of anxiety regarding the socio-political implications of a return to figuration.²¹⁶ Having argued that *Neue Sachlichkeit* and *Pittura Metafisica* paved the way for fascist painting in Germany and Italy respectively, as well as 'socialist realism in Stalinist Russia,' Buchloh wonders 'to what extent the rediscovery and recapitulation of these modes of figurative representation in present-day European painting ... cynically generate a cultural climate of authoritarianism to familiarize us with the political realities to come.'²¹⁷ Despite, or specifically in response to, the objection to the politicisation of art by artists including Baselitz, Buchloh also highlights the dangers of apolitical critical analysis which lacks historical specificity; singly out the previously mentioned discussion of Baselitz's paintings by Rudi Fuchs in 1979 as an example.²¹⁸ Yet as I have argued, the artist's double and self-portraits from the 1970s complicate Buchloh's characterisation and dismissal of the artist. Instead of reiterating and reproducing failed prewar myths of German and artistic identities, as Buchloh suggests, Baselitz's portraits question each of these, while reassessing politicised formalist debates within 1970s discourses regarding representations and conceptions of reality.

Dismissing Buchloh's text as 'a Marxist blitzkrieg,' Donald Kuspit proposes a radically different reading of Neoexpressionism.²¹⁹ In direct opposition to Buchloh,

²¹⁵ Buchloh, 'Figures of Authority,' 57.

²¹⁶ Hanshew, 152-191.

²¹⁷ Buchloh, 'Figures of Authority,' 40.

²¹⁸ Buchloh, 'Figures of Authority,' 65.

²¹⁹ Donald B. Kuspit, 'Flak From the "Radicals": The American Case Against Current German Painting,' in *Expressions: New Art from Germany*, exh. cat., edited by Jack Cowart (Munich / Saint Louis: Prestel / The Saint Louis Art Museum, 1983), 43.

Kuspit argues that Neoexpressionists ‘lay to rest the ghosts – profound as only the monstrous can be – of German style, culture, and history, so that the people can be authentically new. ... They can be freed of a past identity by artistically reliving it.’²²⁰ Kuspit expands and adjusts this analysis in another article focused specifically on Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer, in which he argues that their art – ‘haunted by the question of its relation to the Nazi past’ – ‘shows mourning gone amiss, ineffective.’²²¹ Kuspit argues that the two Neoexpressionists engage with the Nazi past in different ways, and yet that both ‘articulate an ingrained [German] sense of being damaged and disturbed;’ an ‘inherent’ understanding of the self as ‘a damaged subject.’²²² Kuspit understands Baselitz and Kiefer as part of a lost generation ‘caught between the generations’, whose works must be considered ‘a survivor’s art.’²²³ For Kuspit, their art attempts to work ‘through the guilt of surviving,’ with the associated frustration of ‘being a victim of history,’ and ‘of being vulnerable to a historical past one cannot change.’²²⁴ This latter characterisation of Neoexpressionism seems to anticipate and articulate Baselitz’s own views, expressed four years later in an interview with Kuspit, when speaking of his identity as a ‘German painter,’ Baselitz asserted: ‘it was as though the children were being punished for the stupidities of the fathers. ... I was born into a destroyed order, a destroyed landscape, a destroyed people, a destroyed society.’²²⁵ Persistently reading Baselitz’s paintings through the Nazi past, as an attempt ‘to move towards an emotionally healthy new nation ... by dwelling on the old suffering,’

²²⁰ Kuspit, ‘Flak From the “Radicals”,’ 46.

²²¹ Donald Kuspit, ‘Mourning and Melancholia in German Neo-Expressionism: The Representation of German Subjectivity,’ *The Centennial Review* 35 (Fall 1991), JSTOR (23738727), 461, 478.

²²² Kuspit, ‘Mourning and Melancholia,’ 463.

²²³ Kuspit, ‘Mourning and Melancholia,’ 461, 462.

²²⁴ Kuspit, ‘Mourning and Melancholia,’ 462.

²²⁵ Donald Kuspit, ‘*Goth to Dance*. Georg Baselitz in conversation with Donald Kuspit’ (1995), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 242, 245.

Kuspit's reading is crucially missing the contemporaneous context of Baselitz's paintings.²²⁶

Taking up where Kuspit leaves off, Lisa Saltzman, in her monograph on Kiefer, briefly turns to Baselitz, reading his works from the mid-1960s as imagining a 'crisis of identity, screened through these absent, lost, or discredited fathers.'²²⁷ Like Kuspit, Saltzman focuses on Baselitz's *Heroes*, echoing his reading of them: 'The men, like the landscapes in which they stand, appear in a state of decay and disintegration.'²²⁸ In turn, she reads Baselitz's later works, similarly to Buchloh, as 'assertions of artistic authority, masculinity, and German identity.'²²⁹ According to Saltzman, after painting 'a vision of defeated masculinity' and 'paternally indexed figures' during the 1960s, Baselitz would quickly 'assume the once discredited, but now reinstated paternal role and artistic role.'²³⁰ Kiefer on the other hand, Saltzman argues, would take up 'the paternal legacy and the role of the father as means of negotiating his own identity in relation to history.'²³¹ Following her discussion of Baselitz's works from the mid-1960s, Saltzman turns to Kiefer's *Heroic Symbols* and *Occupations* series from 1969-70 and 1975 respectively, works which include paintings, as well as an artist's book containing photographs and watercolours, the majority of which depict the artist raising his arm in a Hitler salute. A comparison of the two artists' series of 'Nazi' self-portraits offers two divergent approaches, and an understanding of Baselitz antithetical to that of the artist described by Buchloh and Saltzman.²³²

²²⁶ Kuspit, 'Goth to Dance,' 242.

²²⁷ Lisa Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

²²⁸ Saltzman, 52-53.

²²⁹ Saltzman, 54.

²³⁰ Saltzman, 54.

²³¹ Saltzman, 61.

²³² One of Baselitz's first sculptural works – with a similarly deceiving title as his *Triangle* portraits – *Model for a Sculpture* (1979) depicts a rough-hewn figure in black and red, arm rigidly extended to the sky. When it was exhibited at the 1980 Venice Biennial, it caused a

Kiefer's enactment and performance of a paternal Nazi figure is quite literal. Dressed in his father's uniform, or possibly a similar set of clothes mirroring a Nazi uniform, Kiefer 'plays' at being a Nazi.²³³ In the photographs for *Occupations*, Kiefer poses in front of significant national, often imperial monuments, including Roman ruins and royal statues, although none of his public stagings took place in Germany, where the Hitler salute was and continues to be illegal (Fig. 130). As Saltzman acknowledges, 'in these images, Kiefer is very much the son... there is something childish ... in the masquerading 'dress-up' games.'²³⁴ Their performativity is blatant, including in his *Heroic Symbols* paintings, particularly in examples such as *Heroic Symbol V* (1970), depicting the artist performing the salute surrounded by monumental sculptures floating above the landscape (Fig. 131). In several images Kiefer performs the Hitler salute wearing a dress, rather obviously 'undermining the hyper-masculine subjectivity of the Nazi' (Fig. 132).²³⁵ As Saltzman argues, Kiefer 'inscribes himself as a victim, victim of the historical legacy, of the paternal legacy, against which he has

scandal, particularly because the sculpture was exhibited alongside 'Germanic' works by Kiefer. In some of the earliest texts focused on the sculpture, Baselitz's 1977 linocuts, such as *Nude with Three Arms*, are described as showing 'the evolution of the sculpture's form in the artist's imagination.' No references are made to the Hitler salute or that the linocuts are self-portraits. Mark Francis, *Georg Baselitz: Model for a Sculpture*, free information sheet (London: The Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1980), unpaginated. Baselitz himself has claimed 'that this gesture was interpreted as a particular salute was just nonsense. Nothing at all of that sort had been in my mind.' As quoted in Heinz Peter Schwerfel, 'Georg Baselitz in conversation with Heinz Peter Schwerfel' (1988), in *Georg Baselitz. Collected Writings and Interviews*, edited by Detlev Gretenkort (London: Ridinghouse, 2010), 194. Martin Schwander has recently argued that interpretations of the gesture – both in the painted portraits and the sculpture – as the Nazi salute ignore 'all indications of the actual creative connotations inherent in this ambiguous gesture.' He suggests Baselitz's self-portraits with an outstretched arm and wing are based instead on Edvard Munch's *Bath* (1907) and Dürer's famous *Wing of a Blue Roller* (ca. 1500). Martin Schwander, 'Pictures in a Hall of Mirrors. An Introduction,' in *Baselitz*, exh.cat., edited by Martin Schwander (Riehen / Berlin: Fondation Beyeler / Hatje Cantz, 2018), 18.

²³³ While Saltzman suggests that Kiefer does not wear a uniform, Kathleen Soriano describes Kiefer as 'dressed in his father's army uniform.' Kathleen Soriano, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking,' in *Anselm Kiefer*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2014), 22.

²³⁴ Saltzman, 56.

²³⁵ Saltzman, 61.

tried so hard to articulate and negotiate his own identity.’²³⁶ And yet while Baselitz has described himself in similar terms in his interview with Kuspit, his self-portraits propose something rather different.

Unlike Kiefer, Baselitz depicts himself nude, not relying on any costumes to enact a Nazi soldier in his parallel series of Hitler salute self-portraits. While Kiefer masquerades as and challenges a paternal legacy via clothes in his *Heroic Symbols* and *Occupations* series, recognisably performing the role of a Nazi father, Baselitz is stripped bare; this is the son as a German fascist, no paternal role-playing implied. And yet, as Debord famously proclaims in his ninth thesis of *The Society of the Spectacle*: ‘In a world that *really* has been turned on its head, truth is a moment of falsehood.’²³⁷

The *Bed Room*’s Indexicality

In late 2017 an undated colour offset entitled *Bed Room* appeared for sale at auction (Fig. 133). At 15 × 10 cm, the reproduction of Baselitz’s 1975 *Bedroom*, is the ‘standard’ size of a photograph, and almost one-twentieth of the original size of the painting. A white strip running across the entire lower length of the offset evokes the Polaroid images which served as the original source for the painting. Across the bold white strip and bottom of the colour image, Baselitz’s thick black signature ‘authenticates’ the reproduction below. Akin to a publicity autograph card, the double portrait has been transformed into a collectible. While Baselitz’s marital bedroom – the alleged nucleus of intimacy – is now undeniably revealed as a space in which interpersonal relationships are mediated, and authentic experienced replaced, by images.

²³⁶ Saltzman, 65.

²³⁷ Debord, 14. Italics in original.

Bed Room's complex reversals and problematic 'indexicality' to its referent(s) are emblematic of the intricate questions offered by Baselitz's self and double portraits. Many of them remain unresolved. Yet what Baselitz's domestic portraiture and series initiated in the 1970s do confirm is an engagement with issues beyond media-specific and self-reflexive concerns as suggested by their categorisation as 'autonomous.'²³⁸ In spite of claims that his work propagates a nationalist myth of the artist, Baselitz's familial portraits from the 1970s display a critical engagement with contemporaneous concerns regarding divisions between the personal/subjective and political/objective in light of the decade's socio-political challenges. Any intentions to 'neutralise' private motifs are revealed as both paradoxical and illusory.

²³⁸ In a recent interview, Baselitz acknowledged that the discourse around 'painting as an autonomous object' was 'absolutely naïve.' As quoted in Schwander, "I've no idea how I could ever have become a painter in California," 49.

CHAPTER THREE

Künstlerehepaar: I(sa).G(enzken).G(erhard).R(ichter).

A richly illustrated article focused on Gerhard Richter in a 1983 issue of *ART. das Kunstmagazin* includes two photographs of the artist: a close-up of Richter's face standing in front of one of his monumental abstract paintings in his atelier, and one of the artist at home with his wife Isa Genzken. The second photograph, reproduced in black and white, depicts the two artists in their apartment in Düsseldorf, seated on their couch, Richter smoking, with a relaxed Genzken looking intently at her husband who seems engaged in conversation with a figure outside the camera's frame (Fig. 134). As the photograph's caption notes, hanging directly above their heads and prominently displayed on the wall of their living room, are two renderings of their proposed design for a subway station in Duisburg. Although the reflections on the surface of the frames obscure some of the details, the designs hint at the monumentality of their project. Rather than a painted mural, as might be expected based on Richter's early training in the medium in Dresden, the two artists' design for multiple platforms across the station included colourful enamel panels interspersed with mirrors and matched by equally bright escalators. Not realised until 1992, twelve years after the artists received the commission, and just a year before Genzken and Richter finalised their divorce, the large-scale public art project is a rare example of a collaborative work by the two artists.¹ Indeed as recently as 2013, the underground station has been described as the

¹ According to Richter's biographer, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh introduced the artists in the early 1970s, while he was in a relationship with Genzken. In 1972, Genzken enrolled at the Düsseldorf Art Academy (*Kunstakademie*), where she studied painting with Richter. The couple moved in together shortly after Richter's separation from his first wife Ema and Genzken's simultaneous separation from Buchloh in 1979. They were married in 1982, and

‘only work’ created collaboratively by the former ‘*Traumpaar*’ (dream couple) of the German art scene.² Yet a number of works produced by the artists during their relationship, such as *Tri-Star* (1981), a record by Genzken over-painted by Richter, and Richter’s Sonic Youth album cover, are at least partial collaborations.³ A crucial collaborative work which could be understood as an extension of the artists’ conception of the Duisburg station is also missing from the vast literature focused on the two artists.

Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter, the ostensible catalogue produced for the eponymous exhibition held at Galleria Pieroni in December 1987, has been both misunderstood and misappropriated, due mainly, as I will argue in this chapter, to the artists’ four double portraits which frame the catalogue, and which subtly register, challenge and extend notions of ‘family’ portraiture (Figs. 135 - 138). At first glance the images resemble the kind of intimate, personal snapshots that profess to offer unmediated access to the private lives of the figures depicted, similar to the photograph of the artists included in *ART*. As a consequence, the Pieroni portraits, similar to the *polke/richter richter/polke* photographs, have been mainly reproduced to ‘illustrate’ and ‘document’ the artists’ relationship; used to certify and corroborate written references to the couple in biographies, exhibition catalogues, and online articles.

finalised their divorce in 1993. See Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, translated by Elizabeth M. Solaro (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 240-243.

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German are my own. ‘Beauftragt wurde das Traumpaar der Szene damals, es ist wohl das einzige Werk, das Gerhard Richter und Isa Genzken ... gemeinsam geschaffen haben.’ Andreas Rossmann, ‘Arme reiche Stadt,’ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (09.08.2013), 34.

³ *Tri-Star* is included in Richter’s *Editions* catalogue raisonné, where it is described as ‘a joint project.’ ‘57. *Tri-Star* 1981,’ *Gerhard Richter: Editions 1965 – 2013*, edited by Hubertus Butin, Stefan Gronert, and Thomas Olbricht (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2014), 226. In her autobiography, Kim Gordon acknowledges that without Genzken’s assistance, Richter would have never agreed to let the band ‘use one of his candle paintings for the cover of *Daydream Nation*. We were still thinking in vinyl terms back then, and the painting was the perfect scale for a record cover, a Duchamp ready-made, almost, to enter the mainstream.’ Kim Gordon, *Girl in a Band* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), 99.

Unsurprisingly, none of these reproductions acknowledge the original context in which a viewer would have first come across the collaborative double portraits.⁴ Yet the joint model of authorship constructed by Genzken and Richter through the Pieroni exhibition, and their exploration of the field of exhibition practice and self-portraiture as means of consolidating artistic and familial collaborations, complicates our understanding of the seemingly casual photographs, and demand an analysis of the portraits beyond their current (mis-)use by curators and art historians. As demonstrated in my first chapter, Richter had conceived of and produced a collaborative and highly personal exhibition catalogue before. In order to fully grasp the implications and rightful place of the Pieroni double portraits within the artists' oeuvres – as well as the conceptual and critical nature of their negotiation of constructions of artistic personae and identity – it is necessary that *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter* is understood as a collaborative work equal to Duisburg.

A catalogue for an exhibition held at a commercial gallery in Rome would appear to have little, if anything, in common with a public art commission aimed at remodelling a busy underground station in an industrial city in Germany. *König-Heinrich-Platz*, the underground station in Duisburg redesigned by Genzken and Richter, is, like most other public spaces, experienced collectively. People rush past the eye-catching wall panels, down the equally bright, monochrome escalators, briefly reflected in the enamel and mirrored surfaces while waiting on the platform (Figs. 139 - 141). The space combines several of Genzken and Richter's distinctive imagery, including Genzken's hyperbolos and Richter's brightly coloured abstractions from the

⁴ Both in Elger's Richter biography, as well as in the 2013 catalogue for Genzken's MoMA retrospective, a Pieroni double portrait is reproduced without attribution or reference to the original context. See Fig. 9.6 in Elger, 243; Fig. 6 in Stephanie Weber's 'Chronology,' in *Isa Genzken: Retrospective*, exh. cat., edited by Sabine Breitwieser, Laura Hoptman, Michael Darling, and Jeffrey Grove (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2013), 307.

late 1970s. The mirrors in particular reflect the collective experiences at the heart of many public art commissions. As the artists emphasised in their conception of the design for the station, ‘the mirrors have a social dimension: people see not only the station and the art and design, but they also see themselves in conjunction with their surroundings and in relation to others.’⁵ Their ‘overall artistic design,’ according to Genzken and Richter, was developed ‘towards modernity and utopia,’ combined with their aspiration for ‘functional art that, ideally, will exert its effect and convey its meaning before the observer even recognizes it as art.’⁶ It is perhaps unsurprising that the artists appear to repeatedly echo Walter Gropius’ *Bauhaus Manifesto* (1919), in which the architect exclaims that the ‘ultimate aim of all visual arts is the complete building,’ itself reflective of a changing shift in attitudes towards art’s social role in Germany.⁷ Article 142 of the Weimar Constitution, written the same year as Gropius’ *Manifesto*, obliged the state to both ‘protect’ and ‘participate’ in the ‘cultivation’ of the arts, thereby constitutionally reimagining the state as the ultimate ‘patron of the arts.’⁸ This was further enshrined in law by the National Socialists through an ‘art in architecture’ programme still known as *Kunst am Bau*, controversially upheld and

⁵ Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, ‘Description of design for the ‘König-Heinrich-Platz’ Underground Station’ (1980), in *Gerhard Richter Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961 - 2007*, edited by Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 118. In a 2003 interview, Genzken suggested Richter found their underground station collaboration ‘much too social,’ but that she ‘absolutely wanted it.’ Genzken continued: ‘I think it’s very good when you can get away from your ego a bit and find that you can do something together with someone who you value very highly as an artist.’ As quoted in Michael Krajewski and Isa Genzken, “‘Fragility can be a very beautiful thing,’” translated by Fiona Elliott, *Parkett* 69 (2003), 98.

⁶ Genzken and Richter, ‘Description of design for the ‘König-Heinrich-Platz’ Underground Station’ (1980), 117.

⁷ Walter Gropius, ‘Programme of the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar’ (1919), in *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, edited by Catherine Ince and Lydia Yee, exh. cat. (London: Barbican Art Gallery / Koenig Books London, 2012), 15.

⁸ Beate Mielsch, ‘Die historischen Hintergründe der “Kunst-am-Bau”-Regelung,’ in *Kunst im öffentlichen Raum: Anstöße der 80er Jahre*, edited by Babette Peters (Cologne: DuMont, 1989), 29.

adopted almost word for word by the Federal Republic in 1950, and directly referenced by Genzken and Richter in their design description.⁹

Genzken and Richter envisioned a (public) work of art that would ‘enable people to experience themselves as social beings,’ and thus would directly impact and influence its surroundings and viewers.¹⁰ In a later interview, Genzken observed that she believed ‘humour, cupid, love and surprise are the future of modern art,’ wholly personal and subjective notions very much at odds with both Minimalism and Conceptualism, with which her hyperbolos and ellipsoids are often associated (Fig. 142).¹¹ Richter’s colour chart and abstract paintings from the 1970s have similarly been linked to neutral, ‘impersonal’ conceptual art.¹² Yet the artists would draw inspiration from precisely these supposedly neutral works for their ‘utopian’ design, which, with its references to Venus and elements of surprise, include the very concepts later mentioned by Genzken in her aspirations for modern art.¹³ As Dietmar Elger has argued, the reference to the planet named after the goddess of love was hardly coincidental given the nature of their relationship, and three years later, Richter titled two of his large abstractions *Juno* (1983) and *Janus* (1983), appropriating ‘the shape of Genzken’s ellipsoids in the vertical columns of *Juno*,’ and painting both in the bright

⁹ ‘For the artistic design, we have focused mainly on the level of the station platform, rather than the places that are usually chosen for public art incorporated into architecture, or *Kunst am Bau*.’ Genzken and Richter, ‘Description of design for the ‘König-Heinrich-Platz’ Underground Station’ (1980), 117. They refer to the programme again in the last section of their description, 119. For a history of the programme, see Mielsch, 21-44.

¹⁰ Genzken and Richter, ‘Description of design for the ‘König-Heinrich-Platz’ Underground Station’ (1980), 118.

¹¹ As quoted in Diedrich Diederichsen, ‘Diedrich Diederichsen in conversation with Isa Genzken,’ translated by Matthew Gaskins, in *Isa Genzken*, edited by Alex Farquharson, Diedrich Diederichsen, and Sabine Breitwieser (London: Phaidon Press, 2006), 29.

¹² Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 51.

¹³ The curvatures of Venus and Mercury are represented by the artists on the ‘scale of 1: 40,000’ and ‘1: 1,000’ respectively on Level 3 of the underground station. Genzken and Richter, ‘Description of design for the ‘König-Heinrich-Platz’ Underground Station’ (1980), 117.

colour palette used by the artists for their underground design (Fig. 143, Fig. 144).¹⁴ As their collaboration suggests, Genzken and Richter seem to have taken Gropius' call to 'desire, conceive and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity' to heart and as a very personal mission.¹⁵ As I will argue in this chapter, seen in context of their Duisburg design proposal, the Pieroni collaboration can be understood as a continuation of their critical exploration of the postwar artist's dilemma of maintaining or disavowing the modernist aim of collapsing art and life, while examining the implications of blurring the boundaries between public and private spaces.

The photograph showing Genzken and Richter sitting in their living room underneath their Duisburg design, reproduced in *ART* in 1983, enshrines their utopian desires in their marital home. The couple's artistic aims are incorporated into their domestic life; the designs serving as daily visual reminders in their private living quarters of their shared goals for communal public life. Yet Genzken receives no mention in the written profile of Richter, an act of violent marginalisation only partially counteracted by the couple's visual self-staging as equal partners living and working collaboratively in the accompanying photograph. Portrayed in bathrobes and pyjamas and therefore ostensibly at home, the Pieroni cover portrait feigns to provide an intimate access similar to Brigitte Hellgoth's photograph in *ART*. And yet a comparison quickly demarcates the self-portrait as a decisively different image. It reveals the gaps between a staged ideal and specific domestic space, and the divergent

¹⁴ Elger, 255. Elger's text mentions references 'to the planets Venus and Mars, named after the Roman gods of love and war.' However, the original German description by Genzken and Richter refers to 'Merkur' (Mercury), Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, 'Beschreibung der Konzeption für die Gestaltung des U-Bahnhofes "König-Heinrich-Platz",' in *U-Bahn-Kunst in Duisburg: Isa Genzken, Yael Niemeyer, Gerhard Richter, Manfred Vogel* (Duisburg: Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum Duisburg, 1992), unpaginated. This corresponds, as noted in the previous citation, to the translation provided in *Gerhard Richter Text* (2009).

¹⁵ Gropius, 15.

forms of performativity solicited by different kinds of photographic portraiture. While Hellgoth's portrait could be understood as precisely the kind of 'illustrative,' casual snapshot for which the Pieroni portraits have been mistaken, Genzken and Richter's own double portrait conveys a very different self-presentation as a *Künstlerehepaar* (artist-couple). Hellgoth's photograph fulfils the expectations encouraged by tabloid magazine models of photo-essays that offer 'private' images of celebrities at 'home.' Richter's burning cigarette – only moments away from having to be flicked against an ashtray –, Genzken's position on the couch – the artist has sunk so deeply into the sofa she has had to prop herself up awkwardly on various cushions – suggest a transitory moment, a 'real' snapshot. And yet the artists are noticeably aware of the position of the camera, their keen evasion of its gaze highlighting their proximity to the photographer attempting to capture them 'spontaneously.' Even without the knowledge that the artists took their Pieroni portrait with the help of a self-timer, their relationship to the camera is strikingly different. Frontal, on eye-level, there are no false pretences of spontaneity or cosy, banal domesticity. Although their clothing is indicative of the privacy offered by a home, even suggests the most private domestic spaces of bath- and bed-room, their poses, the overt performativity, and their direct engagement with the camera, exhibit the characteristics of a studio portrait. I will return to the pivotal importance of the space of the studio to the Pieroni portraits later in this chapter. For the moment, what is essential is to distinguish Genzken and Richter's double portraits from the 'casual' images for which they have been mistaken, and demonstrate the crucial role they played in the artists' self-fashioning as a *Künstlerehepaar*. It is imperative to note that, as Dora Stiefelmeier, advisor to and

eventual co-owner of Galleria Pieroni, has confirmed in a recent conversation, the artists designed the catalogue themselves.¹⁶

The conceptualisation of Genzken and Richter as a *Künstlerehepaar* is reinforced throughout *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*. Transcending notions of individualism and pushing the very boundaries of collaboration, the artists are referred to and conjoined by their initials as I.G.G.R in the catalogue text. In his essay, Paul Groot refers to the artists in the plural, yet repeatedly uses 'I.G.G.R.' in place of their full names, while suggesting that through their portraits 'we become participants of moments in their private life, which is a shared *Künstlerleben*' (artists-life).¹⁷ The conflation of their names suggests that Genzken and Richter are no longer two distinct artists, despite the conflicting evidence provided by both the exhibition, which showed works produced individually by the artists, as well as the reproduction of three sculptures and three paintings in the catalogue, the former undoubtedly by Genzken and the latter by Richter, and yet the captions reference no artists, only titles, dates, and dimensions (Figs. 145 - 150).

As Erika Esau has outlined, 'the idea of the artist-couple as a union of like-minded souls sharing creative endeavours had its roots in German Romanticism.'¹⁸ Esau's article focuses on how the notion of the *Künstlerehepaar* developed into a full-fledged 'phenomenon' and well-known term by the 1920s, which directly influenced conceptions of the artist in Weimar Germany, after 'the artist-couple became in the nineteenth century an identifiable ideal and an entrenched construct within German

¹⁶ Email correspondence with the author, 27.03.2017.

¹⁷ 'Wir werden Teilnehmer an Momenten im Privatleben der beiden, das ein gemeinsames Künstlerleben ist... .' Paul Groot, 'Die Selbstporträts von I.G.G.R.', in *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter* (Rome: Edizioni Pieroni, 1987), unpaginated.

¹⁸ Erika Esau, 'The *Künstlerehepaar*: Ideal and reality,' in *Visions of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, edited by Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), 29.

cultural life.’¹⁹ It notably served as an ideal for the Weimar avant-garde, including as a model of collective praxis, through which emancipatory and radical conceptions of professional and familial collaborations could be experienced. As I will elaborate in further detail, it also provided the opportunity to reimagine the bourgeois nuclear family, its gendered division of labour, and associated dichotomisation of private/family and public/social spaces. Crucially, as I contend in this chapter, Genzken and Richter’s appropriation of this avant-garde model of the *Künstlerehepaar* critically interrogates not only the fetishisation of individualised authorship and the monographic work of art, but also of the space of artistic production.

Doppelportrait

As the central image of a commercial gallery catalogue and exhibition invitation cards, the Pieroni cover portrait is counterintuitive (Fig. 151). What (literal) image of the artists, could they be trying to sell? The artists appear to parody the frontal, expressionless portraits expected of ‘serious’ artists in publicity images. As previously noted, their clothing suggests a private setting, albeit not the traditional domestic space of the living room or kitchen, but rather entails an expanded sense of domesticity, which also includes the intimate and erotic. The absurdity of the cover portrait stems largely from the suggestiveness of Genzken and Richter’s choice of attire; it could, depict the couple having ‘just woken up,’ but of course an alternative is that the image could be a post-coital portrait as well. Either option relocates the bedroom into a rather more public space, including both the commercial gallery and the artists’ studio.

The first spread of *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter* is equally suggestive. A blank page on the left with the exception of a barely legible ‘1980’ printed in the lower

¹⁹ Esau, 28-29.

right corner is contrasted with a double portrait on the opposite page, ostensibly dating the photograph (Fig. 136a). A half-length portrait, Genzken and Richter are shown from a further distance than in their cover image. Yet Richter seems to have barely adjusted his position. The exaggerated stare and open bathrobe, now exposing even more of the artist's naked torso, are similarly absurd as in the cover image. Genzken has tilted her head intimately towards Richter's, equalising their marked difference in height. Both artists have draped an arm around their partner. More telling however is the background of the image. Brightly lit and shaded walls respectively provide contrasting backgrounds for Genzken and Richter in the cover image, and yet mostly fade into an indistinguishable background thanks to the camera's close focus. Although equally blurred, the expanded space behind the artists in the second Pieroni portrait, allows a viewer to make out an open doorway behind Genzken. Yet the doorway is the only demarcation of space; the large blank walls lack any type of detail that would indicate the artists are actually at 'home.' This is particularly noticeable because Genzken and Richter's garments insinuate a specific kind of setting, and therefore raise expectations of details, such as mirrors, a sink, closet, or even bed, that would confirm the reciprocity between certain types of clothing and analogous domestic spaces.

The incongruity of the portraits works on multiple levels. As cover and publicity images, the portraits are parodic and sarcastically subversive. The apparent paradox presented by the artists' choice of clothing, setting, and direct engagement of the viewer is both mocking and playful. Amateur photographic portraiture is inherently a domestic genre, but typically transformed into a studio genre when practiced by artists. Genzken and Richter's Pieroni portraits self-consciously resist categorisation, including as a publicity image, private snapshot, family portrait, or commodified work

of art; a resistance that depends at least partially on their incorporation into a commercial exhibition catalogue. The double-paged spread after the second portrait not only states the exhibition title, dates and location, it also includes the following publication details:

Edizioni Pieroni, Roma
Fotografie: Genzken e Richter, Köln
Stampa: Serilito, Sambuceto (Ch)
Legatoria: D'Ancona, Sambuceto (Ch)
Selezioni: Studio Faro, Roma

In collaborazione con il GOETHE-INSTITUT ROM, LUFTHANSA, CARTIERE ITALIANE RIUNITE S.p.A. (C.I.R.)

The comprehensive demystification of Genzken and Richter's double portraits entailed by their reproduction alongside the above warrants its detailed transcription. Genzken and Richter are transformed from the originators of high art – the paintings and sculptures reproduced in the following pages – to 'mere' photographers equated to the catalogue's printer and bookbinder. The Goethe-Institut and Lufthansa are granted a larger font and full capitals. Genzken and Richter's literal inscription as and transformation from artists to publishing employees, and therefore from monographic master to producer, is an additional element of their self-fashioning as a collaborative artist-couple which decentres authorship in multiple ways, including through casual labour. As emphasised previously, the artists' conceptualisation as a *Künstlerehepaar* is repeatedly reinforced throughout the catalogue, including via seemingly 'minor' publishing details. These serve to highlight the more transgressive and parodic aspects of the portraits that are obscured or disrupted not only when they are uncritically reproduced in catalogue timelines but also when the artists have reproduced the portraits themselves.

The first two Pieroni double portraits are reproduced in Richter's monumental *Atlas* alongside a third image of the couple, depicted wearing the same set of domestic

clothing (Fig. 152). Seated against the backdrop of a large window frame, seen from a slightly elevated position, and avoiding the gaze of the camera, the portrait of the couple has little in common with the other two, besides the obvious correspondence in casual attire. Although the portrait is equally staged and feigns to provide a similarly 'intimate' representation of the artists, the lack of a direct engagement of the viewer through the confrontational gaze, renders the couple significantly more passive than in the other two self-portraits. Crucially, the portrait mimics certain aspects of couples' portraiture which emphasise and stage a 'subservient' female partner to a more dominantly posed male figure. And yet Richter has, for perhaps obvious reasons, grouped the series of three portraits together on *Atlas* panel 415.

First exhibited as *Atlas* in 1972, Richter started collecting and arranging source photographs, newspaper articles and press images, as well as sketches and collages, in the mid 1960s.²⁰ Alongside newspaper clippings that have served as source images for his paintings, elaborate sketches, including for exhibition layouts, as well as pornographic imagery, *Atlas* includes a significant number of family photographs. The opening panels include some of the few photographs Richter and his first wife Ema Eufinger were able to bring with them when they defected to West Germany (Fig. 153). Later photographs of Genzken, including on holidays with Richter and his daughter Betty, also appear across several pages (Fig. 154). Both panel 414 and 415 are labelled '*Doppelportrait* (Double Portrait), 1981,' linking the images together through title, date and position in Richter's massive project (Fig. 155). Grouped together, the series of five photographs appear to appropriate and parody various tropes of family and holiday photography. As Stefan Gronert has argued, *Atlas* is not simply

²⁰ An on-going project that has been exhibited repeatedly, *Atlas* is fully accessible on the artist's website, and has been republished numerous times.

a collection of source materials, but rather must be understood as ‘an artistic construct.’²¹ And while the five double portraits are not as obviously manipulated by Richter as many other images included in his monumental work, including through blurring, double exposures or through an overlay of colours, Genzken and Richter’s self-portraits are equally staged and constructed.

Informal and relaxed, Genzken and Richter act out expectations of holiday snapshots in the double portraits reproduced on *Atlas* panel 414. Richter, once again shirtless, smiles contently at the camera, while Genzken catches our eye through her reflection in the window. The light blue haze in the background hints at misty mountains or valleys, a rural setting also insinuated by the second photograph, which reads like a parodic advertisement for an alpine holiday. Genzken is depicted napping in a field of uncut grass, while Richter gazes into the distance, too smartly dressed for a real hike. As Vanessa Joan Müller writes in her catalogue essay for the exhibition *Urlaub* (vacation) from 2000, conceived by Genzken for the Frankfurter Kunstverein, holidays redefine the ‘relationship between voyeurism and exhibitionism,’ and its settings – the beach, vacation home, hotel – become ‘the public sphere of the private.’²² Müller is writing specifically about Genzken, when she describes how her works ‘play with the removal, or at least shifting, of the exterior and the interior,’ in which ‘the relationship between looking outward and looking inward experiences a partial dissolution’ (Fig. 156).²³ The double portraits of panel 414 and 415 are set at a similar threshold between public and private; however, they blur these binaries in different

²¹ Stefan Gronert, ‘Art History as Art’, in *Gerhard Richter: Early Work 1951-1972*, edited by Christine Mehring, Jeanne Anne Nugent, and Jon L. Seydl (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010), 134.

²² Vanessa Joan Müller, ‘Longing for Other Places,’ in *Isa Genzken: Urlaub*, exh. cat., edited by Nicolaus Schafhausen, (New York / Frankfurt: Lukas & Sternberg / Frankfurter Kunstverein, 2000), 81.

²³ Müller, 81.

ways. Each of the *Atlas* double portraits enacts and challenges ideas around leisure. Yet if the two examples of *Double Portrait* on panel 414 are recognisable as potential holiday snapshots, even if staged and particularly in the case of the second image very obviously performative, the images on panel 415 speak to a more private form of leisure tied to domesticity.

While the first two double portraits in *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter* operate around notions of intimacy and privacy through leisure, the second set questions our expectations of the two through the space of work. As a parallel to the cover image of Genzken and Richter at 'home' in pyjamas and bathrobes, the image reproduced on the back of the catalogue, depicts the smartly-dressed artists in an exhibition space amongst Genzken's concrete sculptures (Fig. 138a). The platform trolley and shipping crates behind Richter suggest the viewer has disturbed the two artists during the installation of an exhibition, a particularly fraught moment in the circulation of works of art, exposing them to a specific kind of viewing (and buying) public. The previous page once again includes a barely legible date, '1987', inscribing the passage of time between the four double portraits (Fig. 137a). Seven years have allegedly passed between the front and back cover images; Richter's hair is greyer, Genzken's shorter. The image on the second to last page, across the minute '1987', once again depicts Genzken with her arm around her husband, head tilted towards his face, resting on his shoulder. Yet rather than standing at home dressed in loungewear, the grinning couple are seated at a table, on which a pair of glasses and a scattering of notes and pens suggest work in progress, while the fragmentary wall text behind them further insinuates a specific kind of exhibition space. Despite the ostensibly opposite settings (and temporal distance), the couple's poses and interactions with each other mirror the earlier two portraits. The Pieroni portraits therefore suggest that the artist-couple

moves seamlessly between ‘home’ and ‘work;’ their paintings and sculptures reproduced in the catalogue and framed by the four portraits, literally linking the two. They deliberately assert intimate and emotional labour into the production of both works of art and artistic identities. Genzken and Richter’s model of the artist-couple blurs the boundaries between domestic space and space of production. In place of this dichotomy, the artists offer up the space of the studio. Unlike Richter and Sigmar Polke, who relocated the studio into their living quarters – the living and dining room, the bathroom – and Georg Baselitz, who offered the bedroom as studio, Genzken and Richter imagine the studio *as* home. This is a significant reversal. What are the implications of reframing a space of production (and exhibition and often also a space of economic transaction) as an equivalently domestic space? As Michelle Grabner has argued the studio is traditionally a ‘determinedly undomestic,’ solitary, and definitively masculine space.²⁴ Genzken and Richter not only challenge and invert this conception of the studio, but also its fetishisation as a place outside of society, the privileged point of origin of original monographic works of art, where an artist can fully reveal and revel in his genius.

Spaces of Resistance

In 1971, Daniel Buren addressed the contradictory nature of the work of art produced in the space of a studio but ultimately always intended for a different space of exposition, be it the gallery, museum or collector’s home. In *The Function of the Studio*, Buren argues that the work made in a studio ‘falls victim to a mortal paradox from which it cannot escape, since its purpose implies a progressive removal from its

²⁴ Michelle Grabner, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2.

own reality, from its origin. ... The work is made in a specific place which it cannot take into account.’²⁵ Buren’s institutional critique centres around the problem posed by the studio, and the inevitable loss of a work’s ‘reality/truth’ upon leaving its site of production: ‘torn from their context, their “environment,” they had lost their meaning... This sense that the main point of the work is lost somewhere between its place of production and place of consumption forced me to consider the problem and significance of the work’s place.’²⁶ Buren’s solution is to abandon the studio entirely, proposing its negation: ‘the art of yesterday and today is not only marked by the studio as an essential, often unique, place of production; it proceeds from it. All my work proceeds from its extinction.’²⁷ Genzken and Richter could be understood as taking the exact opposite approach. Instead of advocating its erasure, the artists seem to foreground the studio not only as a space of origin for works of art, but also artistic identity. Their conceptualisation of the *Künstlerehepaar* is definitively tied to the space of the studio. Yet the boundaries between studio, home and (commercial) exposition are blurred. As Buren highlights, the status of a work of art (and of the artist) depend on a system in which the studio is understood ‘as the *unique space* of production and the museum as the *unique space* of exposition.’²⁸ Through the concept of the *Künstlerehepaar*, Genzken and Richter collapse these spaces, challenging their role in validating, authenticating and fetishising conceptions of originality and authorship. They highlight the fraught spaces inhabited and merged by the artist-couple – the marital home and professional workplace – and the role the work of art

²⁵ Daniel Buren, ‘The Function of the Studio’ (1971), in *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 158.

²⁶ Buren, 161.

²⁷ Buren, 162.

²⁸ Buren, 156. Italics in original.

and studio may play in blurring these boundaries between the ‘private’ and ‘public.’ I.G.G.R. blurs gendered spaces and names, simultaneously offering the artists’ initials as a brand name or potential corporate identity. Combined, their initials conceal and subjugate individualised identities and works of art.

Genzken and Richter’s self-fashioning as a *Künstlerehepaar* draws heavily on Weimarian iterations of this collaborative artistic persona. As Esau highlights in her discussion of Anton Räderscheidt and Marta Hegemann’s self-conscious staging as an artist-couple, ‘their living space became quite consciously the stage for the presentation of their public identity,’ and ‘an intriguing example of the conscious integration of private and aesthetic life as an intentional attempt to break down the traditionally defined distinctions between intimate and public spheres.’²⁹ Esau notes that the couple hosted a ‘standing exhibition’ in their apartment, ‘consciously labeled’ as an ‘exhibition,’ so not to be misunderstood as an interior design choice, and accompanied by a catalogue with prices.³⁰ Yet the most conclusive example of their commitment to the collapse of art into life appears to be a contemporary’s description of their home as ‘exactly the kind of New Objectivity practiced by Räderscheidt in his painting,’ including ‘little furniture, bare light bulbs,’ and ‘no ornamentation.’³¹ One would be hard-pressed to suggest an equivalence between Genzken’s concrete sculptures and Richter’s abstract paintings reproduced in the Pieroni catalogue, and their performative self-staging through their portraits. Groot attempts, rather unsuccessfully, in the conclusion to his catalogue essay: ‘I read somewhere that abstract and geometric art knows no self-portraits. The publication of this catalogue

²⁹ Esau, 36.

³⁰ Esau, 36.

³¹ Esau, 36.

seems to easily contradict this claim. Let us take this as a personal sign of I.G.G.R.’³² While I disagree with Groot’s reading, indeed his attempt to biographise the works runs counter to Genzken and Richter’s staging of the artist-couple, his attempt to pinpoint a certain self-referentiality approximates some of the most productive aspects of the portraits. Referencing Richter’s mirror works and Genzken’s *Ear* series – examples of each were exhibited in the Pieroni show – Groot argues that although both artists ‘strive for objectivity and classic detachment’ in most of their art, they have produced works that allude to the ‘more personal.’³³ And yet it is not so much the personal to which Genzken and Richter allude. Instead, I.G.G.R. challenges the more universal implications of the private sphere, including its construction of gender and dichotomisation of different kinds of labour, and tests the studio as a potential space of resistance to these. The studio reimagined as a potentially radical domestic space, not ‘the ivory tower’ described by Buren, or the mythologised refuge of masculine creativity.³⁴

Genzken and Richter are not unique in their self-fashioning within the space of the studio, particularly within the West German context. Yet as Caroline Jones has outlined, by the late 1960s, Buren was not the only artist to abandon the studio.³⁵ The industrial and serial production of works, the focus on objects made outside of the studio, and performance art, each challenged the primacy of the studio. Jones singles

³² ‘Irgendwo habe ich gelesen, dass die abstrakte und geometrische Kunst keine Selbstporträts kenne. Die Herausgabe dieses Katalogs scheint dieser Behauptung in einfacher Weise zu widersprechen. Nehmen wir das als ein persönliches Zeichen von I.G.G.R.’ Groot, unpaginated.

³³ ‘... die in ihrer sonstigen künstlerischen Arbeit eher Objektivität und klassische Distanziertheit anstreben. Wer allerdings ihr frühes Werk kennt, konnte schon einige Male eine Anspielung auf Persönlicheres wahrnehmen.’ Groot, unpaginated.

³⁴ Buren, 158.

³⁵ Caroline A. Jones, ‘Post-Studio/Postmodern/Postmortem,’ in *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 286-301.

out Minimalism specifically, and its ‘critiques of uniqueness, individualism, and idealism,’ which stand in direct opposition to ‘the legacies of the centralized modernist studio,’ including its ‘claims for authorship, and localism and authority.’³⁶ So how can Genzken and Richter be challenging precisely these ideas by domesticating the studio? Hanne Darboven’s construction and negotiation of artistic persona and identity provides a helpful contemporaneous foil.

Exploring how ‘Hanne Darboven becomes Hanne Darboven,’ Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübel describe ‘a process that encompasses her withdrawal to the house Am Burgberg, where her parents had lived in Hamburg-Harburg, and the extensions and conversions through which the building becomes a self-determined cosmos.’³⁷ Miriam Schoofs expands on this description: ‘The studio Am Burgberg marks both the beginning and end point of the material and conceptual world of Hanne Darboven. It is both home and reference point... it is the nucleus of her life and of her work.’³⁸ As the art historian acknowledges, despite her vocal rejection of subjectivity and individual expression, ‘the sober stringency of Darboven’s serial works is repeatedly interrupted by autobiographical references and allusions to the place of their production.’³⁹ The importance of the studio to Darboven’s self-fashioning is particularly visible in portraits of the artists, which she preferred having taken in her ‘home-studio,’ examples of which she insisted be used in exhibition catalogues of her work (Fig. 157).⁴⁰ In the home-studio portraits, Darboven is surrounded by paintings,

³⁶ Jones, 288.

³⁷ Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübel, ‘Vorwort/Preface,’ in *Hanne Darboven: Korrespondenz 1967-1975* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2016), 8.

³⁸ Miriam Schoofs, “‘My Studio am Burgberg’: Hanne Darboven’s Home-Studio as the Nucleus of her Oeuvre and Individual Cosmos,” in *The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven*, exh. cat., (Madrid / Hamburg: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Sofia / Deichtorhallen Hamburg – Sammlung Falckenberg, 2014), 32.

³⁹ Schoofs, 15.

⁴⁰ Schoofs, 20.

children's toys, taxidermy, her correspondence, and numerous other objects amassed in the space so fundamental to her construction of artistic identity. As Lange-Berndt and Rübél argue, Darboven's studio and collection have 'the function of taking back the world from the perspective of her private home,' and 'a stage on which to project her increasingly androgynous image.'⁴¹ As revealed in the portraits of Darboven, as well as in her letters and works of art, the home-studio served the artist as space in which to reject stereotypical female domestic roles, as well as 'established structures and systems.'⁴² And yet as Lange-Berndt and Rübél are quick to emphasise the home-studio was not intended as a utopian space, highlighting Darboven's insistence that 'there is no time for a private utopia.'⁴³ Similar to Genzken and Richter, Darboven's studio is a counter-site from which to expose and challenge (market and socio-political) enforcements of normativity. As Christopher Reed summarises in his introduction to *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*: 'if the domestic is the main area for the enforcement of conventional division of masculinity and femininity... the modern home has also been the staging ground for rebelling against these norms.'⁴⁴ Throughout the 1970s, second-wave feminist works, such as Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's *Womanhouse* (1972), increasingly began to explore alternative domesticities, which would 'disrupt conventions that rendered the home familial and banal.'⁴⁵ Genzken and Richter's own

⁴¹ Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübél, "'heute / today" – Writing between Things,' in *Hanne Darboven: Korrespondenz 1967-1975* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2016), 64.

⁴² Lange Berndt and Rübél, "'heute / today,'" 66.

⁴³ As quoted in Lange Berndt and Rübél, "'heute / today,'" 66.

⁴⁴ Christopher Reed, 'Introduction,' in *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, edited by Christopher Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 16.

⁴⁵ As Sharon Haar and Christopher Reed outline, *Womanhouse* 'turned an abandoned mansion into a walk-in rumination on the condition of women's lives,' and included a "'Nurturant Kitchen" where fleshly-pink cabinets and appliances stood out against walls studded with breasts that echoed the forms of fried eggs stuck on the ceiling, as well as a "Fear Bathroom"

modest engagement with domesticity in the late 1980s is therefore hardly original. Instead, as Reed and Sharon Haar have argued, ‘the feminist focus on the domestic faced competing trends’ during the 1980s ‘that turn the home from an arena of reform’ back to ‘a symbol of nostalgia.’⁴⁶ The studio however, although responsible for similar mythologisations as the home, provided no similar trap of nostalgic depoliticisation. If the home was threatening to transform into a reactionary utopia during the 1980s, Genzken and Richter offer the domesticated studio as a potential heterotopia.

Shortly after his death in 1984, a text by Michel Foucault entitled *Des Espaces Autres (Of Other Spaces)* was published based on earlier lecture notes. In the text, Foucault describes how ‘our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down,’ oppositions: ‘between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work.’⁴⁷ As I have argued, Genzken and Richter’s conception of the *Künstlerpaar* includes staging the studio as a potential site through which to eliminate these oppositions. In the same text, the French theorist argues that utopias ‘present society itself in a perfected form,’ which ultimately suggests that they are ‘fundamentally unreal spaces.’⁴⁸ As a counter to these unreal utopias, Foucault presents his conception of heterotopias, which he describes as a ‘simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live.’⁴⁹ Contentious, ambiguous and at the

where a bathing female figure made of sand dissolved in a tub.’ See Sharon Haar and Christopher Reed, ‘Coming Home: A Postscript on Postmodernism,’ in *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, edited by Christopher Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 256.

⁴⁶ Haar and Reed, 257.

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’ (1984), translated by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), JSTOR (464648), 23.

⁴⁸ Foucault, 24.

⁴⁹ Foucault, 24.

centre of continuous debates, no clear definition of heterotopia was provided by Foucault or has been agreed on since, unsurprising given the examples of heterotopias he provides range from brothels to museums.⁵⁰ Unlike utopias, heterotopias are real spaces and ‘counter-sites,’ which Foucault understands as ‘a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.’⁵¹ At the most fundamental level, heterotopias, according to Foucault, are sites that are both culturally specific and only accessible under certain (‘compulsory’ or ritualistic) conditions, which reveal and reimagine real places in society.⁵² Genzken and Richter’s self-portraits present a parallel space that both recreates and exposes the sites and concepts to which the conception of the *Künstlerehepaar* is connected. Their photographs reimagine the collaborative double portrait as a kind of heterotopic space.

Foucault uses the mirror as a metaphor for how utopias and heterotopias relate to one another:

The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. ... The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and

⁵⁰ As it is beyond the scope of this project to address the numerous contradictions and problematic omissions of Foucault’s text, including his use of colonies as examples of heterotopias, I will employ the term mainly as a foil for utopia, including Foucault’s focus on heterotopias as counter-sites which approximate and yet also invert utopias. For an overview of the many examples and definitions Foucault and subsequent critics have provided, see Mariangela Palladino and John Miller, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Globalization of Space: Foucault and Heterotopia*, edited by Mariangela Palladino and John Miller (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 1-12.

⁵¹ Foucault, 24.

⁵² Foucault, 25-26.

absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.⁵³

The correlation between utopias and heterotopias outlined by Foucault provides a productive framework through which to think through Genzken and Richter's self-fashioning. Their double portraits act as a kind of mask or mirror through which to reflect the multitude of tensions provoked by the spaces occupied and amalgamated by the notion of the artist-couple. As a counter-site to the politicised opposition between spaces allocated as private, familial, and related to leisure versus those considered public, social, or for work, Genzken and Richter's self-stagings enact and yet importantly also invert the 'public' and 'private' spheres. Their collaborative self-portraits construct a parallel 'other space,' that offers momentary escape from reality while simultaneously exposing that illusion. In his catalogue essay, Groot describes Genzken and Richter's self-portraits as a 'game,' in which viewers are both active 'participants,' as well as 'referees.'⁵⁴ The game, so Groot, depends on a viewer's belief that she has been 'invited to share a personal moment with the two artists.'⁵⁵ I would argue that this momentary illusion briefly outlined by Groot, only functions in relation to Foucault's mirror, which never disappears entirely. The performativity of Genzken and Richter's self-staging as a *Künstlerehepaar* enables the Pieroni portraits to both approximate an ideal, as well as unsettle the spaces reimagined as an artist-couple. Genzken and Richter's *Künstlerehepaar* exists in a liminal space of contradictory possibilities and projections that are always only momentarily fulfilled. Following

⁵³ Foucault, 24.

⁵⁴ 'Wir wissen uns plötzlich nicht nur im Mittelpunkt von zwei auf uns gerichteten Blicken, sondern werden Teilnehmer und Schiedsrichter in einem Spiel von Blicken und Gegenblicken, so als seien wir wirklich dazu eingeladen, einen persönlichen Augenblick mit den beiden Künstlern zu teilen.' Groot, unpaginated.

⁵⁵ See original passage in footnote above. Groot, unpaginated.

Foucault's metaphor, Genzken and Richter are ultimately absent from the utopia in which they momentarily find themselves reflected.

While Genzken and Richter's Pieroni portraits disrupt the oppositions outlined by Foucault, they do so, quite literally, within a framework that insists on the commodification and commercialisation of artistic identity. Yet by relocating – at least momentarily – the private space of the bedroom into the privatised space of the (commercial) gallery, they foreground their physical, sexual and emotional relationship in ways that complicates the status of monographic 'life work' in the art market. Their blurring of intimate and working relationships also highlights the totalising extension of production under Neoliberalism, when 'production moves from the closed space of the factory to become distributed across all social space, encompassing all spheres of cultural and social existence.'⁵⁶ As Jason Read argues, 'at the exact moment in which all of social existence becomes labor, or potential labor, neoliberalism constructs the image of a society of capitalists,' and a neoliberal subjectivity based on 'economic self-interest.'⁵⁷ In her analysis of Andy Warhol's 'merging of the professional and private spheres,' Isabelle Graw argues that 'the field of visual-arts production serves as a blueprint for a post-Fordist condition that aims at the whole person.'⁵⁸ Graw understands Neoliberalism as 'a social order' in which 'the market reaches into areas that were formerly considered "private" and sheltered from its evaluative logic, such as the body, health, social relationships, one's looks, one's friendships, etc.'⁵⁹ Combining visual analyses of works such as *Before and After* (1960)

⁵⁶ Jason Read, 'A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Foucault, Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity,' in *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium*, edited by Sam Binkley and Jorge Capetillo (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 11.

⁵⁷ Read, 11-12.

⁵⁸ Isabelle Graw, 'When Life Goes to Work: Andy Warhol,' *October* 132 (Spring 2010), 100.

⁵⁹ Graw, 'When Life Goes to Work,' 103.

– Warhol’s famous work based on a plastic surgeon’s advertisement for nose jobs – with eyewitness accounts which speak to the artist’s ‘instrumentalization of formerly private activities and friendships,’ Graw argues for a reframing of Warhol’s Factory as ‘a kind of biopolitical theatre’ (Fig. 158).⁶⁰ Warhol’s space of production is a place of ‘literal exploitation’ – friends and actors participating in his films are not paid – that also highlights and honours ‘transgressive’ identities and behaviours by exploiting the performers’ lives.⁶¹ Yet in spite of the art market’s tendency to ‘personalize all artistic production,’ Graw argues that Warhol nevertheless manages to resist the collapse of ‘person’ into ‘product,’ thereby also, at least partially, resisting the pressures of Neoliberalism to economise and optimise all aspects of (social/intimate/personal) life.⁶² How do Genzken and Richter’s photographs – as a potential heterotopic space – operate within these market pressures? As products of a commercial gallery exhibition they speak to the fetishisation of the artist, and yet Genzken and Richter posit an alternative conception of authorship and production that is not necessarily ‘productive.’ The artists, despite being portrayed in their studio, are never actually shown working. Their portraits challenge the assumption that merging life and work necessarily entails neoliberal economic optimisation. These are subtle transgressions, markedly different from the far more radical countercultural models explored by their (German) contemporaries, including Polke, who throughout the 1970s reimagined the studio as commune.⁶³ This radical decentring of the studio challenged the art market’s

⁶⁰ Graw, ‘When Life Goes to Work,’ 100, 107.

⁶¹ Graw, ‘When Life Goes to Work,’ 106.

⁶² Graw, ‘When Life Goes to Work,’ 113.

⁶³ Although Polke’s communal living and production during the 1970s was decisively more radical than Genzken and Richter’s later model, Beatrice von Bismarck notes that ‘the communal in Polke’s practice of those years functions as a reversible figure,’ with the artist differentiating between individual and collective work. On Polke’s interrogation of authorship via communal living and collective process, see Beatrice von Bismarck, ‘Community as Reversible Figure,’ in *Sigmar Polke: We Petty Bourgeois! Comrade and Contemporaries, The*

fetishisation of authorship and originality through collective labour in ways the collaborative production of an artist-couple does not. Yet Genzken and Richter's model of the domesticated studio and intimate artistic partnership is no less significant.

Avant-Garde Aspirations

Four years before their 1987 exhibition, Galleria Pieroni hosted the first exhibition exclusively focused on Genzken and Richter's works (Fig. 159, Fig. 160). The small catalogue includes the reproduction of several paintings by Richter and sculptures by Genzken, as well as a photograph depicting Genzken working in a studio, and a catalogue essay by Rudi Fuchs (Fig. 161). Hinting at the focus of his article, Fuchs argues that 'style is ... incompatible with the mental and aesthetic freedom which is the essential condition and quality of true avantgarde art. To fulfil its great historical rôle [sic], to fight the immobile centre of culture, art must free itself continuously.'⁶⁴ Interspersed with images of Genzken's hyperbolos and Richter's abstractions, Fuchs' text focuses on the production and 'formation of history' and 'meaning' by 'true avantgarde' works of art.⁶⁵ Developing his conception of the avant-garde via Francisco Goya's *Caprichos* and the French Revolution, Fuchs situates Genzken and Richter's works within a European artistic tradition he associates with 'the scared belief in human imagination as a great and productive force':

*Géricault's Raft of the Medusa, Delacroix's Liberty leading the people, Courbet's Burial at Ornans, Manet's Olympia, Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon, Boccioni's States of mind, Malevich's Black Square ... lead also to the paintings of Gerhard Richter and the sculpture of Isa Genzken.*⁶⁶

1970s, exh. cat., edited by Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübel (Cologne: Walther König, 2011), 381-394.

⁶⁴ Rudi Fuchs, Untitled, in *Isa Genzken Gerhard Richter*, exh. cat. (Rome: Galleria Pieroni, 1983), unpaginated.

⁶⁵ Fuchs, unpaginated.

⁶⁶ Fuchs, unpaginated.

According to Fuchs each of these works of art led to art which not only distances itself from style, but should be understood as ‘personal forms of that historical connection,’ which ties them together.⁶⁷ More than a decade after Fuchs would write these lines, long after the artist-couple split, Richter inserted himself and Genzken into a similarly linear and progressive understanding of art history and its avant-gardes. Significantly, *Overview* (1998), Richter’s survey of Western cultural productions, has been continuously exhibited in and served as the catalogue cover image for the exhibition *Gerhard Richter: Survey*, organised by the *Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen* (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations), which was installed at different institutions from 2000 to 2013, including in Colombia, Bolivia, Estonia, Russia, Iran and Indonesia (Fig. 162). The work can be understood as a now globalised positioning strategy within the Western art historical canon, which, similar to Fuchs, frames Genzken and Richter as the heirs and successors of avant-garde traditions. As Gronert has argued fervently in one of the first and rare analyses of *Overview*, Richter ‘uses art history and its methods to control the reception of his work by a broad public: by historicizing himself, by turning written art history into a picture and thereby rendering it absolute, by suggesting that his own understanding of his role is the sole correct one.’⁶⁸ Writing about Richter’s *Atlas*, Julia Gelshorn has similarly argued that the work ‘effectively represents an authorial intervention in the reception of his oeuvre. He not only reflects upon but also influences the way in which his art-historical reputation is determined.’⁶⁹ *Overview* could be understood as the culmination of this extended ‘intervention,’ in

⁶⁷ Fuchs, unpaginated.

⁶⁸ Gronert, ‘Art History as Art’, 141.

⁶⁹ Julia Gelshorn, ‘Appropriations: Gerhard Richter’s visual repertoire,’ in *Gerhard Richter – Ohne Farbe/ Without Colour*, exh. cat. (Burgdorf / Ostfildern-Ruit: Museum Franz Gertsch / Hatje Cantz, 2005), 25.

which the artist specifies exactly how he sees his and Genzken's positions in relation to Western, and particularly German, art history. Most of his timeline, spanning 'pre-1300' up to 2000, in 50-year intervals, is sparsely populated, with the majority of the figures considered worthy of inclusion appearing in the decades after 1900. Artists are entered into Richter's system based on their birth year, Genzken and Thomas Schütte, both Richter's students at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie and born in 1948 and 1954 respectively, the youngest and last additions to Richter's schema. Richter appears below Robert Ryan (b.1930) and above On Kawara (b. 1933), in a group that also includes Baselitz and Polke. Other German artists included in Richter's *Overview* are Paula Modersohn-Becker, Max Beckmann, Kurt Schwitters, Joseph Beuys, Blinky Palermo, as well as Darboven. Richter's canon, produced as an edition of 100 prints, 10 artist's proofs and 1000 poster copies, several of which are signed and dated, quite literally illustrates the institutionalisation of the avant-garde, as described by Peter Bürger. Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), which outlines both the failures of the avant-garde itself, as well as the subsequent aestheticisation of their revolutionary and transformative intentions, argues that the institutionalisation of '*the avant-garde as art*,' negates any potential 'avant-gardiste intentions.'⁷⁰ Although Fuchs' text is focused on Richter's paintings (as well as Genzken's sculptures), rather than on Richter's editions, his assessment of the artists' work as a continuation of avant-garde (and modern) traditions, seems at best an uncritical assessment of their artistic production, and at worst naïve, particularly when considered in the context of more thorough analyses of postwar appropriations of and self-conscious associations with the avant-garde. As Gronert emphasises, albeit without quoting Bürger directly,

⁷⁰ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), translated by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 58. Italics in original.

‘when Richter insists on a history of individuals . . . , and when he separates according to genres,’ – *Overview* divides his survey into five categories, including figures from art history, architecture, music, philosophy, and literature – Richter ‘negates avant-garde attempts to deemphasize individuality and to dissolve boundaries between media,’ the exact opposite of what Genzken and Richter attempt in their appropriation of the concept of the *Kunstlerehepaar* a decade earlier.⁷¹ Bürger’s analysis of the historical avant-garde ties their failures to the subsequent institutional legitimisation of avant-gardist ‘products’ as works of art. I would posit the concept of the emancipatory *Kunstlerehepaar* as the most unequivocal outcome of the avant-garde’s aspiration to unify art and life, as well as a potential ‘product’ as described by Bürger.

Genzken and Richter’s self-staging as a *Kunstlerehepaar* operates within this transformation of avant-garde aspirations into neo-avant-garde products. The institutionalisation of Genzken and Richter’s Pieroni portraits, through their prominent inclusion in exhibition catalogues, incorporation into Richter’s *Atlas* and website, as well as reproduction in biographies, newspaper articles, and other print and online media, has ensured a visibility for these images beyond that of almost any family snapshot, as well as many works of art, while simultaneously denying them the status of either. Genzken and Richter’s *Kunstlerehepaar* repeats a previous avant-garde trope but their repetition draws upon a very different conception of the artist. Bürger’s influential text has been at the centre of many subsequent conceptions of the neo-avant-garde posited in opposition to his theory. Benjamin Buchloh’s delineation of the relationship between the neo-avant-garde and historical avant-garde in his 1986 text ‘The Primary Colors for the Second Time’ is structured around a lengthy critique of Bürger. Dismissing Bürger’s critique of the neo-avant-garde’s repetition (and

⁷¹ Gronert, ‘Art History as Art’, 141.

institutionalisation) of avant-garde practices as determined by the outdated ‘cult of the auratic original,’ Buchloh proposes that it is ‘precisely the process of repetition which constitutes the specific historical “meaning” and “authenticity” of the art production of the neo-avant-garde.’⁷² According to Buchloh, the neo-avant-garde’s ‘process of repetition’ crucially included the ‘reconstitution of the artist’s traditional role.’⁷³ He argues that ‘the primary function of the neo-avant-garde was ... to provide models of cultural identity and legitimation for the reconstructed (or newly constituted) liberal bourgeois audience of the postwar period,’ who ‘sought a reconstruction of the avant-garde that would fulfill its own needs,’ which, as Buchloh emphasises, definitely did *not* include ‘the integration of art into social practice.’⁷⁴ Buchloh’s text, and much of his extensive work on the neo-avant-garde, focuses specifically on American and European artistic productions between 1955 and 1975. As Buchloh argues, it is only in the 1950s that one can witness ‘the reemergence of the key paradigms of the historical avant-garde,’ including ‘monochrome painting, the readymade, collage and assemblage.’⁷⁵ Buchloh suggests the mid 1970s as an end date due to what he describes as ‘the emergence of artistic positions ... that detach themselves more than any other postwar activity from the legacy of the historical avant-garde.’⁷⁶ As David Hopkins has acknowledged, while there are critics who argue for a neo-avant-garde production as late as the 1990s, he makes clear, in accordance with Buchloh, that ‘the termination date for the neo-avant-garde’ is usually understood as ‘the late 70s,’ despite the ‘notion

⁷² Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ‘The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde,’ *October* 37 (Summer, 1986), JSTOR (778517), 42-43.

⁷³ Buchloh, ‘The Primary Colors for the Second Time,’ 51.

⁷⁴ Buchloh, ‘The Primary Colors for the Second Time,’ 51.

⁷⁵ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, ‘Introduction,’ in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art From 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), xxiii.

⁷⁶ Buchloh, ‘Introduction,’ xxiv.

of the “neo-avant-garde” not actually being ‘entertained until the mid 1970s.’⁷⁷ I believe this periodisation and the debates concerning the definition of the neo-avant-garde during the late 1970s and particularly during the 1980s by critics such as Buchloh, a friend and former colleague of Richter, and Genzken’s former partner, is crucial to understanding the artists’ self-staging as a *Künstlerehepaar*. Although Buchloh, among others, has written about Richter’s work as neo-avant-garde, Richter’s collaboration with Genzken does not consist of an obvious return to key avant-garde devices such as monochrome painting, as definitions of the neo-avant-garde usually demand. Buchloh argues that one of Bürger’s main ‘delusions’ was to ‘situate neo-avantgarde practices in a perpetual, almost Oedipal relation to the accomplishments of the parental avant-garde of the twenties.’⁷⁸ Yet Richter’s *Overview*, Genzken and Richter’s conception for the Duisburg station, and particularly their construction of a collaborative artistic identity as a *Künstlerehepaar* would, at least superficially, seem to demand precisely such an analysis. Furthermore, the appropriation of the trope of the *Künstlerehepaar* could be understood as a return to perhaps *the* key paradigm of the German historical avant-garde. Nevertheless, I would hesitate to describe Genzken and Richter’s Pieroni portraits as a delayed final moment of neo-avant-garde repetition. Rather, I believe that their self-staging as an artist-couple in the style of the historical avant-garde serves as an alternative conception of the artist in opposition to German conceptions of the neo-avant-garde.

Crucially, the conceptualisation of the artist-couple allowed artists in both moments to envision new forms of collaboration generated through their art. I will use the example of Berlin Dada members Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann as an avant-

⁷⁷ David Hopkins, ‘Introduction,’ in *Neo-Avant-Garde*, edited by David Hopkins (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 2.

⁷⁸ Buchloh, ‘Introduction,’ xxiv.

garde foil to Genzken and Richter's reimagining and restaging of the artist-couple during the 1980s. Höch and Hausmann's aspirations for and realities as a *Künstlerpaar* encapsulate the many contradictions and challenges associated with the very concept. Their collaborative *dada cordial* (1919/20-22) serves as a productive starting point through which to explore the literature focused on the artists as an emblematic *Künstlerpaar* (Fig. 163). The parallels between artistic groups and conceptions of artist-couples seem particularly numerous for Berlin Dada, including visualisations of power and gendered relationships, self-fashionings as modern, attempts at 'progressive' re-framings of sexual and collaborative partnerships, and the construction of artistic identities through each of these. Michael White, although not exploring the idea of *Künstlerpaare* specifically, touches on each aforementioned element in his exploration of the Berlin avant-garde, particularly in his discussion of the relationships of George Grosz and Eva Peter, as well as Höch and Hausmann.⁷⁹ Quoting from a letter written by Hausmann to Höch, *dada cordial*, according to White, speaks to the 'antagonistic equivalence,' sought by Hausmann.⁸⁰ Significantly, the same letter by Hausmann also includes his discussion of the need to eliminate and forsake personal 'boundaries,' which according to Hausmann are shaped by the family, and prevent couples from experiencing 'community' within a relationship.⁸¹ Considered their only collaborative work, Höch subsequently labelled the collage/photomontage to indicate that she was responsible for the right side of the

⁷⁹ For White's analysis of Peter and Grosz's relationship and collaboration, see Michael White, *Generation Dada. The Berlin Avant-Garde and the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 119-138.

⁸⁰ White, 176.

⁸¹ 'Gemeinschaft erfordert seine Selbstaflösung ohne Grenze – die Unwahrheit der Grenzen soll ja überwunden werden! Das *Erleben* der Gemeinschaft als Bindung in Beziehungen muß an Stelle des *Glaubens*, der Religion treten Das Aufgeben *der* Grenzen, die wir aus der Familienatmosphäre heraus als Leitlinien gestaltet haben... .' Raoul Hausmann, 'Brief, 18.6.1918,' in *Hannah Höch, Eine Lebenscollage*, Vol. One (1889-1918), edited by Cornelia Thater-Schulz (Berlin: Argon / Berlinische Galerie, 1989), 404.

work, and Hausmann for the left, generating a separate binary of sorts through her compartmentalisation.⁸² Quoting Hausmann earlier in his chapter focused on the couple, White cites how the married artist poetically describes how in November 1915, he was able to seduce Höch: ‘/ where I won you, because I let my external egoistical barriers drop / and you could mirror yourself in me.’⁸³ Painted in the same year, White reads Hausmann’s *Self-Portrait with Hannah Höch* in relation to the poetic lines, arguing that the manner in which the blue and orange faces merge together both ‘recalls’ the artist’s suggestion that ‘Höch “mirror” herself in him,’ and ‘suggests a conjunction of two kindred spirits who fit exactly with each other’ (Fig. 164).⁸⁴ Hausmann’s portrait appears to encapsulate many of the idealised aspects associated with *Künstlerpaare*, including a perfect unity of both body and mind. A more fraught merging of the couple occurs in a double-portrait attributed usually to Höch and occasionally titled *Self-Portrait with Raoul Hausmann* (1919), but significantly is attributed to neither artist specifically in the extensive publication of her archive, where it is reproduced simply as ‘Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann. 1919. Double Exposure’ (Fig. 165).⁸⁵ Through the double exposure, Höch and Hausmann’s faces merge in the photograph, similar to Hausmann’s painted portrait. Yet their blurred outlines, disentangled hands, and the velvet black background are more sinister than the unity described by White in his description of Hausmann’s painting. Is Hausmann using his hand to prop up his head or grabbing Höch’s face, which violently blurs into his darkened hand? In a letter dated 17 September 1919, reproduced directly across

⁸² As White notes, general consensus now appears to be that the work most likely started out as a collaboration, but that Höch returned to the collage after the end of their relationship in 1922. White, 176.

⁸³ As quoted in White, 139.

⁸⁴ White, 144.

⁸⁵ ‘Hannah Höch und Raoul Hausmann. 1919. Doppelbelichtung.’ *Hannah Höch, Eine Lebenscollage*, Vol. One (1919-1920), edited by Cornelia Thater-Schulz (Berlin: Argon / Berlinische Galerie, 1989), 599.

from their double portrait in Höch's *Eine Lebenscollage*, Hausmann writes how Höch has 'often wondered about his conservatism,' which he argues is exactly the characteristic which also makes him 'revolutionary.'⁸⁶ It is this strange combination of the two – conservatism and revolution, Hausmann and Höch – which is 'mirrored' in *dada cordial*. The collage/photomontage consists of photographs of African men in tribal dress, an image of a veiled woman, fragments of an astrological chart, as well as beetles and a car.⁸⁷ White notes the 'gendered and racialised differences' emphasised on Hausmann's side in comparison to Höch's 'more abstract interaction of organic and inorganic things.'⁸⁸ Silke Wagener, however, in her study of gender relations and the avant-garde focused specifically on Höch and Hausmann, reads their collaborative work as a possible reflection of their questioning of the 'construction of gender' and potential for a '*neuen Menschen*' (new man).⁸⁹ Hausmann and Höch, like many of their Dada colleagues, were keen to challenge traditional values and normative behaviours, including societal expectations of couples, and particularly of women. As Renée Hubert has argued in her study of artist-couples, hardly any other male artist who was part of an artist-couple, 'so clearly formulated what a woman's position should be and outlined existing dilemmas' as Hausmann did, including recommending a radical

⁸⁶ 'Du hast Dich öfter über meinen Konservatismus gewundert: das ist grade das Gute in mir. ... Ich glaube, ich bin revolutionär, weil grade das Stärkste, Lebensfähigste in mir das Älteste sucht und Gefundenes nur schwer preisgibt.' Raoul Hausmann, 'Brief, 17.9.1919,' in *Hannah Höch, Eine Lebenscollage*, Vol. One (1919-1920), edited by Cornelia Thater-Schulz (Berlin: Argon / Berlinische Galerie, 1989), 598.

⁸⁷ For a detailed discussion of the texts included in the collaboration, see Renée Riese Hubert, 'The Revolutionary and the Phoenix: Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann,' in *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, & Partnership* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 279-286.

⁸⁸ White, 177.

⁸⁹ '...die Frage nach einem "neuen Menschen" auswerfen..., stellen auch sie die Frage nach der Konstruiertheit von Geschlecht.' Silke Wagener, *Geschlechterverhältnisse und Avantgarde: Raoul Hausmann und Hannah Höch* (Königstein/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2008), 220.

repositioning of women outside the patriarchal system he repeatedly decried.⁹⁰ Like an ideal *Künstlerpaar*, and despite Hausmann being married with a daughter, the couple attempted to both work and live according to an alternative, emancipatory conception of a ‘new man’ and woman.⁹¹ Yet the couple repeatedly failed to meet each other’s, as well as their own, utopian expectations.⁹² *Dada cordial* is both a material transformation of and radical challenge to contemporary cultural and societal realities, as well as an attempt to integrate these interventions into daily, collaborative, life. And yet Höch, retrospectively, insisted on distinct attributions of authorship. As Hubert, Wagener and White describe, influenced by the writings of Otto Gross and Franz Jung, Hausmann developed a conception of the family that encompassed the destruction and subsequent renewal of gender relations, society, and communal life.⁹³ Nevertheless, as Ellen Maurer has succinctly summarised in her contribution to *Der Kampf der Geschlechter (The Battle of the Sexes)*, Hausmann and Richard Huelsenbeck’s conception of the ‘new man’ was traditionally masculine, with little to no space for female colleagues. In spite of protestations to the contrary, the ‘new woman’ would always remain a ‘charming amateur,’ as Hausmann’s repeated interventions into Höch’s Dada participation ultimately demonstrated, and Höch herself would acknowledge in a later interview.⁹⁴ Yet despite these repeated failures, underlined by

⁹⁰ Riese Hubert, 289.

⁹¹ White argues that Hausmann ‘was engaged in the construction of an alternative family identity for himself, in which, parallel to his actual role as a son, husband and father, Höch played the part of muse, child and mother.’ White, 151.

⁹² White cites a particularly tragic letter from Höch to Hausmann, in which she questions whether she is ‘woman enough,’ after having an abortion. Hausmann responds with a passage about the newly liberated, independent woman, despite, as White points out, repeatedly addressing Höch as ‘child’ and ‘my dear child.’ White, 149.

⁹³ Wagener, 18.

⁹⁴ ‘... reizende, begabte Amateure.’ Ellen Maurer, ‘Dadasoph und Dada-Fee: Hannah Höch und Raoul Hausmann. Eine Fallstudie,’ in *Der Kampf der Geschlechter. Der neue Mythos in der Kunst 1850 – 1930*, exh. cat., edited by Barbara Eschenburg (Cologne / Munich: DuMont / Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 1995), 324-326.

both personal and societal sexism, the notion of the artist-couple continued to be upheld as an exemplary avant-garde model of existence, through which emancipatory and radical conceptions of professional-artistic and familial collaborations could be experienced and practiced. *Dada cordial* speaks to both this hope and failure.

Genzken and Richter's *Pieroni* portraits similarly trace an interconnected set of professional aspirations and personal failures. Posited as an alternative to the conception of the neo-avant-garde, their *Künstlerehepaar* suggests lovers as a model through which to negotiate artistic authorship, and as an alternative to the fetishisation of the monographic master. The couple were introduced by Buchloh, on whose recommendation Richter accepted Genzken as his student at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1973. For several years, all three were therefore actively involved with the Academy, where Buchloh lectured in contemporary art and criticism. In May 1979 Richter and his first wife Ema formally separated. In his biography of Richter, Elger notes that 'almost simultaneously Genzken and Buchloh ended their relationship too.'⁹⁵ Remarking on their willingness to act as 'merciless' critics of each other and each other's works, Elger compares their relationship to Richter's collaborations with Polke and Konrad Lueg during the 1960s.⁹⁶ Yet, inherently, their collaborative model included a confrontation with rather different sets of power relations and the politics of gendered relationships, as Höch and Hausmann confirm. This was exasperated by Richter's role as 'master' of Genzken's painting course at the Düsseldorf Academy, and the institutionally mandated power structure the model of the nineteenth-century *Meisterklasse* (master class), first established in Germany at the Düsseldorf Academy,

⁹⁵ Elger, 242.

⁹⁶ Elger, 243.

entails.⁹⁷ Despite, or more problematically perhaps because of, being enrolled in Richter's masterclass, Genzken turned to sculpture. Although their exhibitions at Pieroni also included examples of Richter's mirrors and Genzken's photographs, both catalogues foreground works produced by the artists in their separate media of painting and sculpture (Fig. 166, Fig. 167). As Buchloh has noted, 'nowhere is the socially imposed construction of gender roles more grotesquely evident than in the traditional categories of painting and sculpture,' and the decision to work with 'male-dominated practices and materials' was at least partially motivated by Genzken's 'recognition that it is within the artistic categories themselves as much as within social and institutional practices with which they are enforced that patriarchal domination is exercised.'⁹⁸ As outlined in the introduction, Graw has argued that Genzken's choice of medium and materials, including wood and concrete, were part of a strategy to resist gendered readings of her work.⁹⁹ While Richter's focus on abstract painting could therefore be said to perpetuate a particularly gendered practice, associated with the bodily inscription of virility and heterosexual masculinity, Genzken, almost from the start of her enrolment at the Academy, actively resisted hierarchical and patriarchal

⁹⁷ The three-tiered model of instruction at the Düsseldorf Academy, which included a beginner's course (mostly focused on drawing), a second level which focused on drawing and painting from a live model, and the advanced *Meisterklasse*, which provided students with their own studio and included supervision from a 'master' professor, was initiated by academy director Wilhelm von Schadow in 1831. See Johannes Myssok, 'Die Geschichte der Düsseldorfer Kunstakademie bis 1933,' in *Die Geschichte der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf seit 1945*, edited by Siegfried Gohr (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014), 11. Konrad Klapheck's interview concerning his time at the academy during the 1950s speaks to how little the educational model changed, including daily life drawing classes, and the challenges of being accepted into a masterclass. See Siegfried Gohr, 'Konrad Klapheck über seine Zeit als Student und Lehrer an der Akademie,' in *Die Geschichte der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf seit 1945*, edited by Siegfried Gohr (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014), 229.

⁹⁸ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Isa Genzken: The Fragment as Model' (1992), in *Isa Genzken* (October FILES), edited by Lisa Lee (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 24, 26.

⁹⁹ Isabelle Graw, 'Free to be Dependent: Concessions in the Work of Isa Genzken' (1996), in *Isa Genzken* (October FILES), edited by Lisa Lee (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 61-72.

constructions of authorship and artistic practices. In 1982, a year after Richter's divorce was finalised, the *Künstlerpaar* became a *Künstlerehepaar*. And yet within the time-span (1980-1987) merged by the Pieroni portraits, which includes their marriage, their first Pieroni exhibition in 1983, and the production of Genzken's sculpture *Betty*, named after Richter's daughter, the couple also separate repeatedly. In a harrowing interview given in 2016 to *Der Tagesspiegel*, Genzken spoke of her struggle with depression and alcoholism; 'I began to drink and drink – and behave very inappropriately – because of the disaster with my [ex] husband.'¹⁰⁰ The failure of her marriage to Richter, her failure to live up to the expectations elicited by a *Künstlerehepaar*, continues to occupy Genzken.

As Esau outlines in her article on artist-couples in 1920s Weimar Germany, expectations, including societal, personal, and artistic expectations, of a *Künstlerehepaar* often revolved around the term's association with notions and assumptions of the 'modern' and 'avant-garde.' A 1978 issue of *Kunstforum International* entirely dedicated to *Künstlerehen* (artist-marriages) speaks to the lasting legacy of the phenomenon in Germany (Fig. 168). Twelve years later in 1990, a rare double-issue of *Kunstforum* was dedicated to '*Künstler-Paare*', crucially dropping the word 'Ehe' (marriage), thereby acknowledging the problematic and exclusive focus on heterosexual couples and marriage, the previous term entailed (Fig. 169, Fig. 170). According to the special issues, collaborative couples continued to be understood as exceptionally original and a vanguard of progressive partnerships, with

¹⁰⁰ 'Hab angefangen zu saufen und zu saufen, habe mich sehr unangemessen benommen – wegen dieses Unglücks mit meinem Mann!' As quoted in Nicola Kuhn and Ulf Lippitz, 'Künstlerin Isa Genzken im Interview. "Zu Tokio Hotel tanze ich wie ein Teenager,"' *Der Tagesspiegel* (29.09.2016), www.tagesspiegel.de, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/sonntag/kuenstlerin-isa-genzken-im-interview-zu-tokio-hotel-tanze-ich-wie-ein-teenager/13621180.html> (accessed 01.11.2017).

several of the texts suggesting that ideals of collectivity, art's ability to transcend individualism, and distinctly avant-garde goals continue to be defining characteristics associated with artist-couples, despite the acknowledged contradictory examples. In his introduction to the 1978 *Kunstforum* special issue, tellingly entitled 'Artist-Marriages – between Tradition and Emancipation,' German art historian Michael Schwarz concedes that most women that were part of German artist-couples were consigned to the role of 'housewife, mother, wife' and suitably 'inferior ... artistic professions,' frequently by their own husbands.¹⁰¹ Published as part of an anthology focused on the *Neue Frau* in Weimar Germany, Esau's article emphasises the rather problematic 'conscious projection of the idea of the artist-couple' by artists such as Räderscheidt and Hegemann, as well as Oskar and Margarete Moll, during the interwar period.¹⁰² While the artists often professed a 'desire for radical social change,' and ideological and political commitment to 'the idea of equality,' female artists continued to be relegated often exclusively to domestic duties once married, and if they continued to practice, usually changed their medium.¹⁰³

Few images visualise this dissonance more strikingly than August Sander's series of double portraits titled *Malerehepaar* (painter couple) from the 1920s. Alongside Höch and Hausmann, Hegemann and Räderscheidt appear particularly frequently in the *Künstlerehepaar* literature, often through discussions of Sander's photographs of the artist-couple, one of which is included as an example of a *Malerehepaar* in his monumental *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (*People of the*

¹⁰¹ '... die meisten Frauen blieben Hausfrau, Mutter, Gattin... .' '... durch die Männer dekretierten Beschränkung auf bestimmte niedere Bereiche künstlerischer Tätigkeit...' Michael Schwarz, 'Künstlerehen – zwischen Tradition und Emanzipation,' *Kunstforum International* 28 (4/1978), 17.

¹⁰² Esau, 29.

¹⁰³ Esau, 32-34.

Twentieth Century) (Fig. 171). The couple – Hegemann ‘the epitome of the *neue Frau*’ thanks in particular to her *Bubikopf* hairstyle, and Räderscheidt, his hat considered a symbol of a ‘very specific form of Neue Sachlichkeit’ – have been heralded as an example of a particularly consciously constructed *Künstlerehepaar* as previously referenced in the discussion of the exhibition held at their home.¹⁰⁴ Members of the Cologne avant-garde, the couple’s self-conscious staging as a *Künstlerehepaar* was a fundamental part of their shared social and political beliefs and goals during the 1920s. As Marsha Meskimmon has noted, ‘within the Dada group and the ‘Group Stupid’ during the 1920s, Hegemann and Räderscheidt used their appearance (in costume at balls and in modish street clothes) as a form of aesthetic transgression of conventional bourgeois roles.’¹⁰⁵ These aspects of their ambitions and self-staging as an artist-couple are reflected in Sander’s portraits. As Dorothy Rowe has argued ‘one of the overriding ways of understanding the self-constructed dynamic between Hegemann and Räderscheidt is’ in Sander’s photographs, in which, according to Rowe, the couple ‘played out their self-constructed roles most subversively.’¹⁰⁶ And yet there is also something particularly threatening about Räderscheidt’s body-language in these images. Claspings onto Hegemann’s shoulder, her hands submissively folded in front of her body, Räderscheidt’s possessive gesture is repeated in a particularly menacing form in a second portrait by Sander, in which the artist grasps the back of his wife’s neck staring confrontationally at the viewer, while Hegemann has angled

¹⁰⁴ Esau, 35.

¹⁰⁵ Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren’t Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 122-123.

¹⁰⁶ Dorothy C. Rowe, ‘August Sander and the Artists: Locating the Subjects of New Objectivity,’ *Tate Papers* 19 (Spring 2013), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/august-sander-and-the-artists-locating-the-subjects-of-new-objectivity> (accessed 23.06.2017).

her body away from the camera and her husband (Fig. 172).¹⁰⁷ Renate Berger has described Räderscheidt's own double portraits of the couple as 'kafkaesque.'¹⁰⁸ It is difficult to imagine a less utopian image of self-professed progressive, modern, collaborative partnership.

Often quoted sarcastically, without addressing the rather sinister nature of the statement considering Margarete took 'Eheferien' (marriage-holiday) in 1928 in order to go to Paris, Oskar Moll, referencing his former role as his wife's teacher, once stated that 'he had to marry away his competition.'¹⁰⁹ As Berger has argued in her anthology focused on artist-couples, this 'strategy' was practiced by numerous male artists from the eighteenth long into the twentieth century.¹¹⁰ Even artist-couples such as Gabriele Münter and Wassily Kandinsky, again a result of a previous student-teacher relationship, and famously dedicated to the 'avant-garde agenda to reshape life through art,' faced a series of personal and artistic failures whilst attempting to negotiate the 'unchartered territory in which women and men might live and make art together as

¹⁰⁷ Rowe reads the portrait as 'subversive satire,' arguing that: 'the pose appears to replicate a stereotypical modernist representation of a domineering male artist holding his palette in one hand and grasping a female model by the back of her neck with the other: Räderscheidt subduing the wayward Hegemann in an effort of masculine assertion and artistic control in the manner of Otto Dix's infamous 1924 *Self-Portrait with Muse*. ... a visual game of gender and power performed by all three participants as a subversive satire of the conventional expectations of Hegemann's role as subservient model to her male artist husband.' Nevertheless, she later argues that 'Hegemann acted as his prop, both literally in his artwork and psychically as his defence against loss of ego,' and that Hegemann's 'development of a personal iconography of emancipation' occurred 'outside the boundaries of that which she obligingly performed as one half of the Räderscheidt-Hegemann *Künstlerhepaar*.' Dorothy C. Rowe, *After Dada: Marta Hegemann and the Cologne avant-garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 126-130; 133.

¹⁰⁸ 'kafkaesk.' Renate Berger, 'Leben in der Legende,' in *Liebe macht Kunst: Künstlerpaare im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Renate Berger (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 26.

¹⁰⁹ Esau, 34. Berger, 32.

¹¹⁰ '... einer bereits im 18. Jahrhundert praktizierten und bis ins 20. Jahrhundert favorisierten Strategie, da zahllose Künstler ihre Ehevinnen oder Mitschülerinnen durch Heirat dem Markt entzogen, ohne dass jemand die männliche Liebe zur Kunst deshalb infrage gestellt hätte.' Berger, 32.

equals.’¹¹¹ And yet the conscious public staging and conception of artist-couples relied on a self-imagining that posited these artists as ‘exemplars of modernity,’ both personally and professionally.¹¹² Although artistic partnerships and collaborations served the avant-garde as opportunities to deliberately reject the very notions of singular authorship, genius and other similar ideals, their radical conception of these relationships contributed to an idealisation of the artist-couple that has only increased in subsequent art criticism. The twenty-two couples presented in short profiles in the 1990 *Kunstforum* special issue are repeatedly described in terms which highlight this continued idealisation of personal and professional collaborations, and artist-couples as prototypes for an emancipated future. The issue even includes an excerpt from a book by psychologist Carola Meier-Seethaler, which is praised for its blueprint for a ‘utopian partnership.’¹¹³ Meanwhile, Fionnuala Boy and Les Evans’ collaborative works are described as the ‘extraordinary’ result of ‘two people creating something, which appears as if based on the experience of a singular person.’¹¹⁴ In his catalogue essay Groot acknowledges the ‘imaginary unity’ of the double portraits presented by the artist-couple, and yet he nevertheless conflates their names, markers of their individuality, both in his text and title.¹¹⁵ Catherine Grenier, in her 1990 article in *Kunstforum*, dismisses Groot’s work on another artist-couple as ‘utopian optimism.’¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Bibiana K. Obler, ‘Introduction: Engendering Abstraction,’ in *Intimate Collaborations: Kandinsky & Münter, Arp & Taeuber* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 1-22.

¹¹² Esau, 35.

¹¹³ ‘Sie entwirft eine Utopie der Partnerschaft.’ Carola Meier-Seethaler, ‘Befreiung zur Partnerschaft,’ in ‘Künstler-Paare u.a.m.,’ *Kunstforum* 106 (March/April 1990), 116.

¹¹⁴ ‘... etwas Außerordentliches gelungen, denn zwei Menschen haben hier etwas geschaffen, das so wirkt, als basiere es auf der Erfahrung eines einzigen.’ Mog Johnstone, ‘Boyd & Evans,’ translated by Regina von Beckerath, in ‘Künstler-Paare u.a.m.,’ *Kunstforum* 106 (March/April 1990), 208.

¹¹⁵ ‘imaginäre Einheit.’ Groot, unpaginated.

¹¹⁶ ‘utopischem Optimismus.’ Catherine Grenier, ‘L’artiste à deux têtes,’ translated by Christiane von Beckerath, in ‘Künstler-Paare u.a.m.,’ *Kunstforum* 106 (March/April 1990), 126.

Using Groot as an example, Grenier argues that collaborative works by artist-couples continue to be misconstrued as the manifestation and expression of ‘ideal communication.’¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, it was precisely such ‘enlightened’ (and ideal) partnerships that were considered central to a successful ‘participation in “modern” life’ in Weimar Germany.¹¹⁸ As Esau argues, ‘self-consciously “modern” artists ‘enthusiastically believed in the espoused principles of the Weimar Constitution;’ artistic and marital collaboration was therefore both a personal ‘romantic,’ as well as important ‘political’ goal.¹¹⁹ Genzken and Richter’s calculated self-representation, including in their Duisburg design, as well as in their Pieroni portraits, as a ‘modern’ artist-couple, borrows from and parodies these idealised constructions of avant-garde artistic identities bound to equally idealised expectations of personal and professional partnerships.

Schwarz’s 1978 introduction on artist-marriages includes a section specifically focused on postwar examples. According to Schwarz, collaborations by artist-couples provided the artists with similar opportunities as those anticipated by avant-garde artist groups, including the demystification of the artist as ‘individual author’ and ‘genius inventor.’¹²⁰ Buchloh argues that the neo-avant-garde’s restoration of the traditional role of the artist and legitimisation of a bourgeois viewer inevitably resulted in ‘the production of luxurious perceptual fetishes for privileged audiences.’¹²¹ Yet as I have argued, Genzken and Richter’s double portraits challenge this reconstructed myth of artistic genius and originality. Their self-fashioning as a *Künstlerehepaar* offers the potential of a radical re-conception of the artist in West Germany. As Karoline Künkler

¹¹⁷ ‘Ausdruck einer idealen Kommunikation...’ Grenier, 126.

¹¹⁸ Esau, 32.

¹¹⁹ Esau, 32.

¹²⁰ Schwarz, ‘Künstlerehen,’ 20.

¹²¹ Buchloh, ‘The Primary Colors for the Second Time,’ 50.

has argued, ‘artist-couple-portraits reflect back’ as ‘approving or critical example, as a role model, counter-image or *Schreckbild* (terrible vision) of the relationship between woman and man, love and work.’¹²² Genzken and Richter act out elements of all three – the ‘Vor-,’ ‘Gegen-’ and ‘*Schreckbild*’ – in their series of double portraits repeatedly challenging expectations and conceptions of both artists and families in West Germany.

(Re-)Productive Artist-Couples

Both Polke and Richter’s, as well as Baselitz’s, reimagining of the postwar family during the 1960s and 1970s respectively, included, or at least implied, conventional conceptions of the family, including not only wives, but also children, parents or siblings. Polke and Richter’s parody of the bourgeois ideal of the postwar consumer family and mythologised artist included their wives, as well as Polke’s children. Their infantilisation and domestication of the artist-hero is linked directly to their staging of their self-portraits in and around the home, as well as with their and as children. Baselitz’s series of double portraits with his wife also depends on a conception of the postwar artist as a ‘child’, specifically the difficulty of conceiving of an artistic identity in opposition to the previous Nazi and paternal generation. Baselitz’s familial portraits confront the postwar generation’s challenges with relational identity formation and violence through a transgenerational merger, which reimagines the artist and his wife as his parents. Genzken and Richter, following their avant-garde precedents, however,

¹²² ‘Vor allem in diesem speziellen Sinne strahlen Künstlerpaar-Bildnisse in die Kultur zurück: als zustimmendes oder kritisches Exempel, als Vor-, Gegen- oder Schreckbild vom Verhältnis zwischen Frau und Mann, Liebe und Arbeit.’ Karoline Künkler, ‘Modellhafte Paargemeinschaften am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts: Charlotte Berend-Corinth und Lovis Corinth, Hannah Höch und Raoul Hausmann,’ in *Liebe macht Kunst: Künstlerpaare im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Renate Berger (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 364.

focus wholly on themselves as a couple. Missing both from the pages of the *Kunstforum* special issues, and indeed most self-portraits by *Künstler(ehe)pare*, are depictions of children, even if the couple had several, emphasising partnerships that potentially prioritise the production of works of art over offspring. The collaborative artwork serves to challenge hierarchical and gendered division of ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ labour, reframing conceptions of a productive subject within the demands of capitalist production and social reproduction. As previously suggested, Genzken’s role and agency in the production of their self-portraits is crucial. The artists’ collaborative staging as a *Künstlerehepaar* includes a reframing of artistic identity that, despite the previous challenges to narrowly defined and essentially masculine conception of artists, incorporates female artists in a way the works discussed in my previous chapters do not.¹²³ It is revealing that this specific re-conception of the artist relied on a particularly radical challenge to conventional family structures.

In her introduction to *Künstlerpaare* of the twentieth-century, Berger argues that ‘the question how art and life, passion and rivalry relate to one another’ in context of an artist-couple’s production, is always particularly ‘charged, when value systems and gendered divisions of labour are questioned, as after the First and Second World War.’¹²⁴ Although Genzken and Richter’s collaboration occurred several decades after

¹²³ Equally telling is that the majority of the literature written on artist-couples, particularly the German literature, is written by female artist historians. To name just a few are Renate Berger’s previously cited anthology *Liebe macht Kunst*, including all 13 contributing authors, and Bibiana Obler’s *Intimate Collaborations*, as well as Lidia Głuchowska, *Avantgarde und Liebe: Margerte und Stanislaw Kubicki, 1910-1945* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2007); Annete Dorgerloh, *Das Künstlerehepaar Lepsius. Zur Berliner Portätmalerei um 1900* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003); and Nicole Birnfeld, *Der Künstler und seine Frau: Studien zu Doppelbildnissen des 15.-17. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2009).

¹²⁴ ‘Deshalb wird die Frage, wie sich Kunst und Leben, Leidenschaft und Konkurrenz in der Konstellation des Künstlerpaars zueinander verhalten, immer dann brisant, wenn Wertssysteme

the end of the Second World War, I would argue that their self-fashioning as an artist-couple occurred at a moment in which West Germany was still recovering from the upheaval of traditional value systems during the late 1960s, and particularly during the 1970s, outlined in the previous chapters. The 1980s in West Germany, now overshadowed by the monumental changes that occurred at the end of the decade, represented a moment of anxious and precarious stability in a country still coming to terms with the effects of national terrorism, the ‘German autumn’ of 1977, and the continued threat of nuclear war, including in 1983 when NATO’s *Able Archer-83* exercise was misinterpreted by Soviet intelligence.¹²⁵ And despite legislative steps towards equality, such as the elimination of a legally inscribed sexual division of labour within the family, women’s access to education and employment continued to be limited. Despite the considerable progress made during the 1970s, ‘the oil shock and the world economic recession’ meant that ‘by the time girls were educated in larger numbers and to higher levels,’ West Germany was experiencing ‘endemic mass unemployment.’¹²⁶ As in 1931, large numbers of unemployed men meant women faced particular prejudice and opposition when seeking full-time employment. It was therefore only during the course of the 1980s that women in West Germany gained greater access to education and careers, ‘revolutionizing society in terms of family and work life.’¹²⁷ Genzken and Richter’s calculated collaboration and staging as a *Künstlerehepaar* during the 1980s is embedded in a particularly transformational

zerbrechen und geschlechtsspezifische Arbeitsteilungen infrage gestellt werden wie nach dem Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg.’ Berger, 30.

¹²⁵ For a brief summary of the events related to the 1983 ‘crisis’ and the ‘Second Cold War,’ see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 227-8.

¹²⁶ Eva Kolinsky, ‘Women in Education: Schools, Vocational Training and Universities,’ in *Women in Contemporary Germany: Life, Work and Politics* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993), 102.

¹²⁷ According to Christoph Schiller, it was not until the late 1990s that labour force participation by women rose sharply. Christoph Schiller, *The Politics of Welfare State Transformation in Germany: Still a semi-sovereign state?* (New York: Routledge, 2016), xxvi.

moment when definitions of the postwar family were changing once again, including radical conceptions of the family which embraced childless marriages and departures from nuclear family norms.¹²⁸

A May 1984 issue of *Der Spiegel* magazine includes a lengthy report on the current ‘state of the family.’¹²⁹ As the article suggests in its subtitle, the coalition led by the Christian-Democrats had ‘promised’ a new ‘appreciation of the family’ in West German ‘society.’¹³⁰ Blaming several economic policies taken by the coalition, including reductions of maternity allowances (*Mutterschaftsgeld*) and housing benefits (*Wohngeld*), for the destruction of the family, the magazine argues that the conservative government was preventing couples from fulfilling their dreams of homeownership and more importantly the desire to have multiple children. The lengthy report, containing numerous interviews and examples, suggests that the rise of families with fewer children is due to a lack of governmental support, emphasising capitalist conceptions of ‘productive’ citizenry. As the previous chapter outlined, the family continued to be closely linked to conceptions of German nationhood during the

¹²⁸ On childlessness in Germany see Dirk Konietzka and Michaela Kreyenfeld, *Ein Leben ohne Kinder: Kinderlosigkeit in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007). On childlessness in the 1980s, see Marian Faux, *Childless by Choice: Choosing Childlessness in the Eighties* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press / Doubleday, 1984). As Faux has outlined, ‘like so many of the rapidly changing social and sexual mores of this era, motherhood, once virtually a mandate, has become a matter of choice.’ Faux, 2.

¹²⁹ “‘Für schöne Worte können wir nichts kaufen.’ SPIEGEL-Report über die Lage der Familien nach der Wende,’ *Der Spiegel* 19 (1984), 37-53. Since 1989, *die Wende* unanimously refers to the reunification of Germany, however, in the years leading up to the fall of the Berlin wall, the term was used almost exclusively to refer to October 1982, when after thirteen years in power, the Social Democrats (SPD) were replaced by a coalition between the CDU/CSU and FDP, and Helmut Kohl elected Chancellor. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (and his minority government) lost a vote of confidence in the *Bundestag*, after the FDP’s withdrawal from their coalition with the SPD in September 1982. For further details, see Jürgen Weber, ‘A Change of Government in Bonn: The Christian Democrat – Liberal Coalition under Helmut Kohl from 1982,’ in *Germany, 1945-1990: A Parallel History*, translated by Nicholas T. Parsons (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 167-188.

¹³⁰ ‘CDU/CSU verhiessen der Familie Aufwertung in der Gesellschaft.’ “‘Für schöne Worte können wir nichts kaufen,’” 37.

1970s, particularly in the West German popular press, and personal and political decisions understood as a challenge to traditional definitions of the family equated with a betrayal of Germany. The parallel rise of German neo-conservatism during the 1970s and 1980s, which further emphasised the importance of the family and nation, is reflected in the insistence that a family consist of a heterosexual married couple with multiple children, even if this defied actual reality, as exemplified in the various personal narratives included in the *Spiegel* report.¹³¹

That several *Künstlerpaare* during the 1920s, and Genzken and Richter during the 1980s, would stage themselves as self-consciously ‘modern’ and ‘avant-garde’ partners invested in equality, and importantly without children, seems consequential.¹³² Non-nuclear families challenge the dichotomisation and gendering of different kinds of labour, including paid/public/productive labour and unpaid/private/reproductive labour. Tony Siebers argues ‘that the new model of community is based on the romantic couple,’ and although his work on utopian desires focuses particularly on postmodernism, his argument that visions of community are inevitably connected to sexual politics holds true for both interwar and postwar Germany.¹³³ Both in Weimar and postwar (West) Germany, the *Künstlerehepaar* provided the opportunity to imagine and potentially even live out a form of intimate partnership that radically redefined gendered notions of the family, community, and labour.

¹³¹ For a history of the rise of neo-conservatism in Germany, see Jerry Z. Muller, ‘German Neo-Conservatism, ca. 1968-1985: Hermann Lübke and Others,’ in *German Ideologies since 1945: Studies in the Political Thought and Culture of the Bonn Republic*, edited by Jan-Werner Müller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 161-184.

¹³² As Julia Moore and Patricia Geist-Martin note, voluntary childlessness was ‘discussed as a consequence of feminism since the early 1900s, spiking first in the 1910s and then again in the 1970s.’ Julia Moore and Patricia Geist-Martin, ‘Mediated Representations of Voluntary Childlessness, 1900-2012,’ in *The Essential Handbook of Women’s Sexuality* Vol. One, edited by Donna Castañeda (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 233-251.

¹³³ Tobin Siebers, ‘Introduction: What Does Postmodernism Want? Utopia,’ in *Heterotopia: Postmodern Utopia and the Body Politic*, edited by Tobin Siebers (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 9.

In his 1978 *Kunstforum* introduction, Schwarz differentiates between distinctive types of collaborative productions by artist-couples, including ‘individual production with mutual influence,’ which he insists is usually created by artist-couples that still live according to conventional divisions of labour, which he contrasts with ‘individual, emancipated production’ by an artist-couple, which he suggests are particularly rare.¹³⁴ The most exceptional model however, according to Schwarz, is ‘mutual, non differentiable production,’ in which both partners are equally responsible for a work of art.¹³⁵ As Schwarz outlines, in such productions ‘the content, quality and development of works are determined by the partner relationship,’ as well as by ‘the couple’s self-image’ of themselves as ‘the producer of *one* work.’¹³⁶ He singles out Hilla and Bernd Becher, Genzken and Richter’s colleagues at the Düsseldorf Academy, as one of the very few artist-couples to have produced such work.¹³⁷ Later in the issue, the Bechers’ collaborative production as an artist-couple is described as unprecedented.¹³⁸ Schwarz argues that their photographs are the first examples of a singular work of art created by an artist-couple, and suggests their medium is particularly suited to obscure individual styles, essential for such collaborations.¹³⁹ At least according to Schwarz, the Bechers represent the pinnacle of the *Künstlerehepaar*.

¹³⁴ ‘Individuelle Produktion mit gegenseitiger Beeinflussung,’ ‘Individuelle gleichberechtigte Produktion,’ Schwarz, ‘Künstlerehen,’ 22-23.

¹³⁵ ‘Gemeinsame, nicht unterscheidbare Produktion,’ Schwarz, ‘Künstlerehen,’ 23.

¹³⁶ ‘...werden Inhalt, Qualität und Entwicklung der Arbeiten durch die Partnerbeziehung...bestimmt.’ ‘...bis hin zum Selbstverständnis des Paares als Produzent *eines* Werkes.’ Schwarz, ‘Künstlerehen,’ 23. Italics in original.

¹³⁷ In 1976, Bernd Becher became the first professor of photography at a German academy when he took up his post in Düsseldorf. The first intake consisted of eight students including Thomas Struth and Thomas Ruff. See Stefan Gronert, *The Düsseldorf School of Photography*, translated by David H. Wilson (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 20-23.

¹³⁸ ‘Die gemeinsame, nicht unterscheidbare Produktion von Kunst ist ein Phänomen, das erst am Anfang der 60er Jahre auftaucht. Bernhard und Hilla Becher waren die ersten, die ihre Arbeiten als von beiden konzipiert, fertiggestellt und autorisiert herausgegeben haben.’ Michael Schwarz, ‘Becher/Becher,’ *Kunstforum International* 28 (4/1978), 78.

¹³⁹ Schwarz, ‘Becher/Becher,’ 102.

Although critiques of notions of originality and authorship, particularly through repetitive, serial works, is key to Conceptualism as a whole, I would argue that the Bechers' engagement with these is bound more specifically to the model of the artist-couple outlined by Schwarz.¹⁴⁰ Their black-and-white photographs of industrial buildings, including water towers and gas tanks, devoid of human figures and shadows, emphasise a 'new objectivity' and anonymity dependent on seriality and repetition, which is underscored by their collaborative production (Fig. 173). Julian Stallabrass has asserted that 'the legacy of the prosaic photographic series is, after all, bound to conceptualism and a critique of conventional notions of artistic subjectivity, originality, and creativity,' and the Bechers' emphasis on series and ostensible objectivity can be understood as an extension of contemporaneous contestations of conceptions of creativity and individuality via the notion of the *Künstlerehepaar*.¹⁴¹ Grounding the Bechers' production in their specific national context, Sarah James has described their serial photographs as 'a complex response to the questions surrounding West German identity in the postwar period,' and argues that 'their refusal of individual subjectivity is heightened in the act of their artistic collaboration.'¹⁴² According to James, their rejection of the human subject and genre of portraiture, and focus on 'sites of human labour' in its place, 'enacts the abstraction of labour's use value and the commodity fetishism that replaces inter-human relationships with relationships between humans and things.'¹⁴³ If the collaborative *Künstlerehepaar*

¹⁴⁰ The Becher's seriality entails similar critiques as those practiced by several artists associated with Conceptualism and Minimalism, with whom the Bechers were initially often associated. Carl Andre wrote one of the first texts on the Bechers' work; Carl Andre, 'A Note on Bernhard and Hilla Becher,' *Artforum* 11 (December 1972): 59-61.

¹⁴¹ Julian Stallabrass, 'What's in a Face? Blankness and Significance in Contemporary Art Photography,' *October* 122 (Fall 2007), 88.

¹⁴² Sarah E. James, *Common Ground: German Photographic Cultures Across the Iron Curtain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 159.

¹⁴³ James, *Common Ground*, 184.

might offer a model of resistance to the totalising forces of the art market to commodify, could it perhaps serve as a similar site of resistance to the reification of social relationships? Or is the artist-couple in fact the definitive example of how personal relationships might be capitalised?

Luc Boltanski has suggested that in comparison to revolutionary hopes tied to changing ‘the domains of property rights, the economy and the state,’ a ‘much more radical revolution’ focuses precisely on ‘zones’ in which the ‘revolution had no right of entry: those of the most intimate relations between human beings, the sexual and the familial.’¹⁴⁴ At a conference focused on ‘Pictures, Subjects, and the New Spirit of Capitalism’ held in Frankfurt in 2006, Boltanski outlined how in response to the failures of the 1960s and 1970s, critiques of capitalism were adapted and adjusted. Echoing several of the aspirations tied to the concept of the *Künstlerehepaar*, Boltanski argues that one branch of these new forms of critique focus on and engage with questions of ‘marriage, cohabitation, the family and the legalization of family-equivalent relations’ – questions that involve ‘a radical redefinition of anthropology’ and ‘kinship.’¹⁴⁵ After the previous decades’ revolutionary failures, Boltanski suggests that during the 1980s (and 1990s) ‘the longing for total revolution becomes displaced from the domain of the production of material goods to that of the reproduction of human beings.’¹⁴⁶ As a result Boltanski argues that this new critique is no longer anti-capitalist, but rather ‘reformist,’ that due to the extent to which both social and artistic critiques have been folded into capitalism, this new form of critique does ‘not envisage

¹⁴⁴ Luc Boltanski, ‘The Present Left and the Longing for Revolution,’ in *Under Pressure: Pictures, Subjects, and the New Spirit of Capitalism*, edited by Isabelle Graw and Daniel Birnbaum (Frankfurt am Main / Berlin: Institut für Kunstkritik / Sternberg Press, 2008), 69.

¹⁴⁵ Boltanski, 69-70.

¹⁴⁶ Boltanski, 64.

an exit from capitalism in the near future.’¹⁴⁷ In her response to Boltanski, Graw, although challenging aspects of his analysis, suggests that particularly the art world’s problematic blurring of work and non-work, its emphasis on ‘contact capital,’ and ‘interest-driven’ relationships substantiate his hypotheses.¹⁴⁸ Rather than models of resistance or sites of problematisation, collaborations and collective work, once an essential part of a critique of the fetishisation and commodification of monographic authorship and originality, have been reified further. In their anthology on postwar collectivism, Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette argue that this is hardly surprising given that ‘the old modernist collectivism was indissolubly linked with a bigger ism, a bigger ideal that had failed – communism – and it had little choice but to distance itself.’¹⁴⁹ As they suggest, capitalism’s postwar ‘new collectivism’ ‘rarely claimed to find its unity as the singular correct avant-garde representative of social progress but instead structured itself around decentered and fluctuating identities.’¹⁵⁰ It’s new aim is ‘neither picturing social form or doing battle in the realm of representation, but instead engaging with social life as production, engaging with social life itself as the medium of expression.’¹⁵¹ Following these arguments, the familial and collaborative (/collective) might be able to offer a ‘new revolutionary horizon,’ but only one deeply embedded within capitalism.¹⁵² An attempt to envision a counter-model to market-oriented constructions of artistic identity, Genzken and Richter’s performative

¹⁴⁷ Boltanski, 66.

¹⁴⁸ Isabelle Graw, ‘Response to Luc Boltanski,’ in *Under Pressure: Pictures, Subjects, and the New Spirit of Capitalism*, edited by Isabelle Graw and Daniel Birnbaum (Frankfurt am Main / Berlin: Institut für Kunstkritik / Sternberg Press, 2008), 76-78.

¹⁴⁹ Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, ‘Preface,’ in *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, edited by Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xii.

¹⁵⁰ Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, ‘Introduction,’ in *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 10.

¹⁵¹ Stimson and Sholette, ‘Introduction,’ 13.

¹⁵² Boltanski, 68.

appropriation and staging of the *Künstlerhepaar* highlights the challenges of fashioning an identity separate from the forces it attempts to expose.

Problematic Portraiture

Considering their teachers' adamant rejection of the genre, the Becher students' engagement with portraiture seems particularly incongruous (Fig. 174). Buchloh, who himself taught the first generation of Becher students at the academy in the mid 1970s, has described their 'recuperation of photographic' portraiture as both an 'anti-modernist project' and 'manifest resistance to the conceptual radicality of the Pop artists and the Conceptualists.'¹⁵³ According to Buchloh, the portraits by Thomas Ruff and Thomas Struth from the mid 1980s not only negate the Bechers' insistence on anonymity and collective subjectivity, they also represent a reactionary counter-strategy in response to representations of subjectivity during the 1960s and 1970s. Providing examples by Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, and Roy Lichtenstein, Buchloh argues that 'in their hands, the genre now appears not only emptied of all individuality of painterly performance but of any remnants of interiority and privacy of the self as sitter.'¹⁵⁴ In contrast, Buchloh argues, Ruff and Struth revive the traditional genre of portraiture practiced by *Neue Sachlichkeit* photographers such as Sander.¹⁵⁵ Similar to his critique of Baselitz's supposedly uncritical attempt to re-establish and renew a national and cultural identity via German Expressionism, Buchloh dismisses the Düsseldorf School's apparent claim for continuity with Weimar *Neue Sachlichkeit*,

¹⁵³ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Portraits / Genre: Thomas Struth,' in *Thomas Struth: Portraits*, edited by Thomas Weski (Munich: Schirmer / Mosel, 1997), 159. Gronert cites how 'looking back on their days at the Akademie, the students ... singled out the seminars given by Benjamin Buchloh and the work of Kasper König as particular sources of inspiration.' Gronert, *The Düsseldorf School of Photography*, 22.

¹⁵⁴ Buchloh, 'Portraits / Genre,' 158.

¹⁵⁵ Buchloh, 'Portraits / Genre,' 159.

particularly what Buchloh sees as parallel rejections of social and historical contexts, and the resultant dehistoricisation of the genre of portraiture. Yet as James has argued, Buchloh misreads these portraits, particularly those by Ruff. In contrast to Buchloh, James understands the renewed engagement with the genre of portraiture by Ruff as a radical attempt ‘of defamiliarisation and alienation,’ extending avant-garde critiques ‘of the inadequacy of any ‘documentary’ photograph to register ... a person.’¹⁵⁶ James contends that not only do Ruff’s portraits draw on ‘earlier avant-garde models of photographic practice,’ including Marcel Duchamp’s portraits as Rose Sélavy produced collaboratively with Man Ray, his own self-portraits parody ‘the notion of the master’ artist so central to the Düsseldorf Academy (Fig. 175).¹⁵⁷ She traces how Ruff, via Duchamp, uses performative portraiture to decentre ‘artistic authorship and its gendered politics,’ extending the Bechers’ own critiques, and emphasis on seriality.¹⁵⁸ Both Genzken and Richter have also repeatedly engaged with Duchamp’s legacy – as I will outline below, portraiture, photography, and the space of the studio have played significant roles –which provides a productive final point of comparison through which to anchor the Pieroni portraits both within the specific context of the Düsseldorf Academy, as well as more pervasive critiques of authorship and originality.

Although Richter’s own response to Duchamp is often reduced to his attempt to demonstrate that painting ‘after Duchamp’ is possible, portraiture and photography have both been fundamental to his engagement. One of Richter’s first responses to encountering Duchamp’s work was a painted portrait of his first wife, naked and pregnant, descending the stairs of his studio, entitled *Ema (Nude on a Staircase)* (1966)

¹⁵⁶ Sarah E. James, ‘Thomas Ruff: Portraying Modernity,’ in *Thomas Ruff*, exh. cat., edited by Iwona Blazwick (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2017), 184.

¹⁵⁷ James, ‘Thomas Ruff,’ 184-185.

¹⁵⁸ James, ‘Thomas Ruff,’ 184.

(Fig. 176). As Jeanne Nugent has maintained, Richter's early photo-paintings, including *Ema*, should not only be understood as a counter to Duchamp, however, since they also allowed him to return to a subject largely banned during his time at the Academy in Dresden, and significantly, 'called attention to the ways photography has altered our perception of family, friends and topical events,' a critical aspect of Richter's work.¹⁵⁹ Arguably almost more important than the works themselves is the way in which Richter first encountered Duchamp's work in his 1965 retrospective at the Museum Haus Lange in Krefeld, which had a lasting impact on Richter's entire oeuvre. As Nugent notes, Elger's biography of Richter includes the following detail, not elaborated further, but of profound importance: '*Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2*, which today hangs in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was represented in the Krefeld exhibition by a full-scale photographic replica – which was labeled, in apt Duchampian fashion, as equivalent to the original' (Fig. 177).¹⁶⁰ Nugent suggests that 'Richter's encounter with the photographic replica provoked him to make photographic reproductions of selected photo-paintings beginning in 1967 as independent artworks,' including copies of *Ema* and *Uncle Rudi*, returning 'the new practice of photo-painting back to the conditions of a photograph.'¹⁶¹ In enduring ways, Duchamp has structured Richter's engagement with portraiture – both painted and photographic. In this context, Richter's collaborative self-portraits with Genzken, their blurring of gendered binaries and their names into a multiplied and collective signatory, seems particularly indebted to Duchamp's portraits as Rose Sélavy (Fig. 178). Amelia Jones' extensive analysis of Duchamp's Sélavy portraits from the 1920s

¹⁵⁹ Jeanne Anne Nugent, *Family Album and Shadow Archive: Gerhard Richter's East, West, and All German Painting, 1949-1966* (Doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 274.

¹⁶⁰ Elger, 104.

¹⁶¹ Nugent, 275-276.

is framed by Duchamp's status as the 'father-figure' of postmodern practices.¹⁶² As she argues, 'Duchamp's assertion that "[t]he artist is only the mother of the work," the ambivalence of his en-gendering is mapped. This startling phrase both opens the possibility of conceptualising authorship in feminine terms and closes down this femininity, qualifying it and implicitly assigning it to an artist assumed a priori to be male.'¹⁶³ His self-staging as Sélavy reinforces this playful decentring of male authorship and performative serialisation of selfhood. 'Marcel's masculine identity – like Rose's feminine one – was,' so Jones, 'continually marked by him as a fictive identity,' and the 'dual (sometimes multiple) authorial "I's" indicate the continual shifting of identities in his oeuvre and in his self-presentation in the public arena.'¹⁶⁴ Genzken and Richter, as well as Ruff, build on Duchamp's doubling (and multiplication) of the self in their own self-portraiture. Stefan Gronert has emphasised how Ruff's double self-portrait *Portrait (POR 093)* (1991) 'highlights the question of a unified identity' through image manipulation that is ultimately a 'variation on the classical means of double exposure,' which Ruff explores further in his *Other Portraits* series (Fig. 179, Fig. 180).¹⁶⁵ Ruff's doubling and manipulation has a similar effect as

¹⁶² As Jones writes: 'Duchamp as "ancestor-hero," as "spiritual father," as "generative patriarch": These designations of Duchamp's paternity in the popular press crystallize the tendency in art-historical discourse to configure the artist as paterfamilias, authorizing origin of subsequent movements and developments. Identifying Duchamp as "ancestor-hero" is a means of authorizing him, the ancestral line he "fathers," and, by extension, the interpreter (as knowing the "true meaning" both of Duchamp and postmodernism). . . . Duchamp is the "God" ensuring postmodernism's immanent (transcendental) radicality, as well as its apotheosis. . . .' Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 29.

¹⁶³ Jones, 146.

¹⁶⁴ Jones, 154.

¹⁶⁵ Gronert, *The Düsseldorf School of Photography*, 46. To produce *Other Portraits*, a series created between 1994 and 1995, Ruff borrowed a Minolta Montage Unit from Berlin's 'Police History Collection' to combine portraits he had taken previously. The Minolta Montage Unit, used by criminal police investigation units during the 1970s, creates a new portrait through mirror optics, by combining four portrait photographs. Ruff also used the machine to combine two of his own portraits. See 'andere Porträts / other portraits,' in *Thomas Ruff: Works 1979*

the performativity and overt self-staging of the Pieroni portraits; as James notes, the photographic double has the ‘potential to disturb the real and to emphasize the construction of the image.’¹⁶⁶

As Christiane Schneider has argued, a series of oil paintings produced by Genzken between the late 1980s and early 1990s, paradoxically provides some of the most productive insight into Genzken’s, mostly sculptural, practice.¹⁶⁷ The series also speaks to her engagement with Duchamp and Man Ray’s collaborative work. As Schneider describes, Genzken produced her *Basic Research* series by laying a canvas onto the floor of her studio, ‘squeegeed the oils over the canvas until they created an imprint of the uneven surface beneath with its structures, notches, streaks and traces of working materials.’¹⁶⁸ The series combines a number of questions Genzken continuously returns to, including the relationship between painting, sculpture and architecture, ‘the relationship between space and image, as well as between abstraction and representation.’¹⁶⁹ Genzken physically traces the minute but material changes produced by specks of dust on her studio floor through monochrome painting (Fig. 181). In 1985, Rosalind Krauss described ‘the accumulation of dust’ as ‘a kind of physical index for the passage of time,’ when discussing Man Ray’s photograph of Duchamp’s *Large Glass* (or *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*) (1915-1923) taken in 1920.¹⁷⁰ The photograph, signed by both Man Ray and Duchamp, and titled *Dust Breeding*, was included by Duchamp in his notes for *Large Glass*, and

– 2011, exh. cat., edited by Okwui Enwezor, Thomas Weski, and Valeria Liebermann (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2012), 118.

¹⁶⁶ James, ‘Thomas Ruff,’ 185.

¹⁶⁷ See Christiane M. Schneider, ‘Basic Research,’ in *Isa Genzken: Open, Sesame!*, exh. cat., edited by Kasper König, Nina Gülischer, and Andrea Tarsia (London: Koenig Books, 2009), 64-70.

¹⁶⁸ Schneider, 66.

¹⁶⁹ Schneider, 66.

¹⁷⁰ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), 203.

depicts the work lying on the studio floor covered in layers of dust (Fig. 182). In her brief discussion of *Large Glass* as a self-portrait, Krauss describes how Duchamp projects ‘the self as ... double,’ yet does so without noting the parallels to his Sélavy portraits.¹⁷¹ These are discussed in detail by Jones, who draws heavily on Jean-François Lyotard’s comparison of the two to Duchamp’s *Given: 1. the Waterfall, 2. the Illuminating Gas* (1946-66). Borrowing the term ‘incongruence’ from Duchamp’s *Large Glass* notes, Lyotard argues that Duchamp and Sélavy are ‘two figures of the same object N (= neuter, the name *Duchamp*) projected into two spaces, the masculine and the feminine. The accent is put here on the similarity of the figures, not on their incongruence. But it is their similitude that is incongruent with regard to the belief in the difference between the two sexes.’¹⁷² In both his Sélavy portraits and in *Large Glass*, Duchamp parodically disrupts the gendering and individualisation of authorship. Schneider argues that the parallels between Genzken’s painting and the Man Ray/Duchamp photograph ‘lies in the fact that at the very heart of the artist’s activities – the studio – the artistic act was limited to capturing a state that had seemingly come about without the artist’s influence,’ that both record how ‘time has left its traces.’¹⁷³ The space of the studio, in Duchamp’s case even its dust, has played an essential role in both artists’ models of decentred authorship.¹⁷⁴

Concluding a discussion of Genzken’s *Basic Research* series, Hal Foster remarks: ‘modernist art and architecture are not the only ruins in Genzken; the contemporary capitalist subject is also in deep trouble.’¹⁷⁵ He describes her later self-

¹⁷¹ Krauss, 202.

¹⁷² As quoted in Jones, 195-196. Italics in original.

¹⁷³ Schneider, 68.

¹⁷⁴ Krauss notes how Duchamp fixed the dust that had fallen on the surface of the sieves over several months. Krauss, 202.

¹⁷⁵ Hal Foster, ‘Fantastic Destruction,’ in *Isa Genzken* (October FILES), edited by Lisa Lee (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 194.

portraits, including her assemblage *Slot Machine* (1999-2000), an actual slot machine covered with photographs of celebrities, friends, and Genzken, as ‘portraiture of the ruined self’ (Fig. 183).¹⁷⁶ Foster suggests that Genzken’s portraiture effaces ‘any boundary between private and public or inside and outside, the very distinction between once thought to be the precondition of a self,’ comparing her ‘critique of the subject’ to a ‘dismantling of the self.’¹⁷⁷ I would argue these later self-portraits are significantly indebted to similar critiques, and a similar ‘blurring,’ explored by Genzken and Richter during the 1980s. In 1982, at her exhibition at the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Genzken exhibited *Weltempfänger* (*World Receiver*), which consists of a National Panasonic multiband radio receiver displayed on a slim base; the artist’s most obvious exploration of Duchamp’s readymade, and the same radio seen in Hellgoth’s photograph of the two artists at home (Fig. 184). Genzken’s later assemblages, made up of a range of objects, including dolls and toys, as well as mirrors and artificial flowers, and in many cases also include photographic self-portraits – in the case of *Untitled* (2012) even an old photograph of Genzken and Richter together – are often linked back to this much earlier work (Fig. 185). What has been overlooked is that her self-portraiture is as informed by Duchamp’s practice as her use of everyday objects.

Even if the Pieroni portraits are read as purely parodical, they nevertheless embrace complex social relations in unidealised and demythologising ways. Closely connected to and immersed in Düsseldorf’s renowned Academy, Genzken and Richter’s double portraits engage with a similar set of questions as their colleagues, offering their own response to the contentious place of the author, individual, and

¹⁷⁶ Foster, 198.

¹⁷⁷ Foster, 198.

originality. Their answer takes the shape of the collaborative *Künstlerhepaar* and domesticated studio.

Cycling through the Studio

In 1982, Benjamin Katz, the photographer and founding gallerist of Werner & Katz, where Baselitz had his ‘scandalous’ first solo exhibition in 1963, took a series of photographs of Genzken and Richter. Katz has been photographing Richter in his studio ever since, resulting in several exhibitions of his work focused on the painter. Most of these photographs show ‘the artist at work,’ and succumb to what Mary Bergstein has described as ‘the mystique of the artist’s studio;’ images that uphold ‘the legend of masculine domination through representations of studio life.’¹⁷⁸ Katz’s Richter photographs follow a precedent popularised in the postwar decades, particularly in American magazines such as *Life* and *Vogue*, as well as photo-books, including *Brassaï: The Artists of My Life* (1982) and Alexander Liberman’s *The Artist in His Studio* (1960), the obvious implication of the title that Liberman exclusively depicts male artists. As Bergstein argues, Liberman, who spent several years working as a photographer at *Vogue*, where he arranged photo-essays of Pablo Picasso alongside *haute couture* fashion spreads, and Brassai, who produced works both for *Life* and *Harper’s Bazaar*, ‘constructed an avant-garde modernism of personal legend,’ the studio staged as ‘a place of enchantment,’ ‘an inner sanctum, ... where domestic norms were suspended or reversed in favor of independence and self-expression.’¹⁷⁹ Katz has produced similar images of Richter: isolated in the studio,

¹⁷⁸ Mary Bergstein, ‘The Artist in His Studio: Photography, Art, and the Masculine Mystique,’ in *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 195-196.

¹⁷⁹ Bergstein, 196-197.

entranced by his work process, sleeves rolled up, cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, painting massive canvases laid out on the floor of his sparse studio (Fig. 186). His series of the artist-couple is different.

Across four black-and-white photographs, we see Genzken and Richter moving through the studio: a viewer can make out the back of several large-scale canvases propped up against the studio walls, another object (a painting? a sculpture?), tightly secured in layers of protective plastic and tape, appears ready for transportation, a tall easel, a monumental abstract painting, a set of small stools splattered in paint, and a central workbench not only demarcate the space but also hint at the work process (Figs. 187 - 190). Genzken, dressed in dark trousers, jacket and shoes, is framed by the largely white space, her back turned towards the viewer as she walks across the room and around the workbench, her smiling face blurred in the only image in which she faces the camera. Yet her smile is obvious and the reason equally so: Richter is circling through the studio on a bicycle. In the four photographs we see him once from the back driving past his painting, about to disappear behind the large column in the centre of the room; concentrating intently, trying to avoid a number of objects strewn across the floor; with the hint of a smile, trying to catch Genzken's eye, the two figures in motion and at opposite ends of the workbench; and the final – is it the final? the series instinctually reads this way – image, in which Genzken faces the viewer, turning towards Richter, who laughing, appears as if he is about to crash into the photographer, face as equally blurred as Genzken's.

Katz's photographs of the artist-couple entail a playful, humorous, and performative demythologising of the hallowed, virile space of the studio. The studio is reframed as a social, communal place. The boundaries and dichotomies – private / public, inner / outer, leisure / work, feminine / masculine – Genzken and Richter

interrogate through their conception of the *Künstlerehepaar* are tested more casually in Katz's portraits. They speak to a more mundane and banal blurring of the boundaries between family life and creative work. And they suggest that the transgressive rethinking of fraught binaries that the artist-couple propose is both urgent and already commonplace.

CONCLUSION

Two elegantly dressed couples are walking down the pavement, side by side, stepping forward with big smiles (Fig. 191). The tall male figure on the right, with familiar bald head and dark beard, has angled his upper body back towards the second couple, who joyously return his gaze, the second male figure sporting the same cheeky grin seen in Benjamin Katz's photographs discussed at the end of the last chapter. The four figures are positioned as a collective group, their familiarity with each other underscored by an exchange of mutual glances and synchronised body language. They are also clearly divided into two separate 'family' units. Elke Kretzschmar leans intimately into Georg Baselitz, who has turned around to look at Isa Genzken, who has taken Gerhard Richter's arm with her left hand, while holding onto his shoulder with her right. In a second photograph, the figures' individual harmony within their couples are highlighted further (Fig. 192). While no longer walking in synch together as a group, we can see the soles of Baselitz and Kretzschmar's right shoes, about to step forward in unison, while Genzken and Richter – turning to look at each other – have similarly harmonised their movements. Genzken's arm around the shorter Richter is mirrored by Baselitz's arm around Kretzschmar. Their intimate relationships, repeatedly explored in the double portraits discussed in this thesis, have been casually documented by Katz in these images taken in 1981. They depict the couples on their way to the opening of the 'Georg Baselitz Gerhard Richter' exhibition at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. The exhibition – dedicated to Marcel Broodthaers – was and continues to be considered a failure.¹ At the time, Raimund Hoghe wrote a review for

¹ In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Jürgen Harten recounts how Broodthaers, who passed away in 1976, had ordered two paintings from Richter and Baselitz for his fictitious *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, an eagle from Richter and, despite Baselitz's

Die Zeit, in which he dismissed the “two-man combination” as ‘arbitrary;’ ‘...similarities can certainly be found within specific biographical limits, but significant new knowledge about the work of the two painters is not to be found.’² In his biography on Richter, Dietmar Elger approvingly quotes Kasper König, who still maintains that the exhibition was ‘a completely misguided demand for harmony, in which the two heroes were suddenly supposed to embrace each other.’³ The consensus appears to be that despite some biographical overlap – Elger highlights how both artists grew up in East Germany before moving West, and that both would have a lasting impact on the next generation of German artists – Baselitz and Richter are ‘giants in opposing artistic camps,’ with little to nothing in common both personally and professionally.⁴ Yet as I have shown in this thesis, the two artists were amongst a group of German cultural producers who repeatedly engaged with similar questions regarding the familial, the ‘private’, the intimate and notions of home and family, at a time when each of these was being increasingly politicised and instrumentalised across a divided Germany. Despite their divergent styles, I have argued that they offer comparable models for rethinking the personal and biographical in their work and within the discipline of art history, and ‘intimate’ ways of looking that reveal new aspects of their familial portraiture.

The aim of this project has been twofold. First, to resituate and re-contextualise a group of works that have been repeatedly dismissed as sentimental, kitsch, and even

many eagle paintings, a snake from the latter. According to Harten, Broodthaers considered the snake the ‘anti-eagle,’ thus, indirectly at least, encouraging the dichotomisation of the two artists. Jürgen Harten, ‘Zum Vergleich,’ in *Georg Baselitz Gerhard Richter*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 1981), unpaginated.

² As quoted in Dietmar Elger, *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, translated by Elizabeth M. Solaro (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 259.

³ As quoted in Elger, 259.

⁴ Elger, 257.

reactionary, or have been disregarded as ‘documents.’ This included exploring both how and why these ostensibly ‘private’ images by Richter, Baselitz, Genzken, and Sigmar Polke have been marginalised and trivialised, and to what extent they might be ‘neutralised’ by the artists themselves. I have suggested that despite their repeated insistence on ‘autonomous’ art, their familial portraits parody the very idea of apolitical formalism. As an extension of this, I argued that formalist readings of the artists have often missed their humorous critiques of authorship and originality. Thinking through their double portraits as both familial, domestic objects and as works of art enabled an exploration of how they operate within the home, studio and the (commercial) gallery, and how they blur these public and private spaces. I have made the case that it was precisely the fraught spaces of the family and home – via relocations of the studio – that were reimaged by Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz as spaces of subtle transgressions against the commodification and fetishisation of not only artistic authorship and production, but also of social relationships. As I have suggested, their familial double portraits did not aim to provide a mimetic model of representation or an essentialist conception of identity. Instead, an expanded, often casual and collaborative form of portraiture was used to undermine, challenge and parody enforced socio-economic constructions of national, artistic, and familial identities. By highlighting their ephemera-based productions, this thesis has sought to decentre the privileged status of painting and sculpture in the literature and oeuvres of Genzken, Polke, Baselitz and Richter.

My second objective was to trace the relations between these artworks and the fashionings of artistic identities alongside the broader socio-cultural and economic construction of the family in West Germany. By engaging with the instrumentalisation and politicisation of conceptions of the family and home within Cold War West

Germany, I have been able to highlight how Genzken and her male counterparts challenged the associated dichotomisation and gendering of different kinds of labour, and the domestic and public spheres. This thesis hopes to have demonstrated that the artists at the centre of this project parodied and dismantled the mythologisation and commodification of the artist within partnerships, friendships and family life. And that their domestication of the artist(-hero) and artistic labour was contingent on explorations of contemporaneous conceptions of normative petit bourgeois behaviour and conventional family structures. As I argued in Chapter One, Richter and Polke socialised and demystified their work process and artistic styles by equating them to family members. As I emphasised, they humorously suggested the family as a site for reimagining and re-contextualising the postwar ‘crisis of representation’ in personal, private terms. Similarly, Baselitz staged his engagement with notions of realism and authenticity in his marital bedroom, reformulating the associated ideological debates in highly personal and intimate ways. This has profound implications for the fraught contradistinction of figuration and abstraction in a divided Germany. Their works render the strategic political and cultural instrumentalisation of the family and the home in both East and West Germany absurd. The destabilisation of the German family outlined in my second and third chapters has similar implications for the problematic (and politicised) dichotomisation of the private and public spheres. What this thesis has tried to contribute to the substantial literature on these artists is to show how they made a powerful case that the construction of familial and German identities is always semi-fictional, and that personal and national histories are inherently unreliable. This thesis opened by asking how a painting based on what could ostensibly be described as a ‘private’ family photograph has come to stand for Germany’s contentious attempts to come to terms with its past. The works of art at the centre of

this project question and test the very concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, including an artist's potential role in society's process of coming to terms with the past. As I have argued, they repeatedly highlight the limitations not only of their genres, but more significantly, of the social role of art and artists. I have argued that their reservations about the redemptive potential of art and artistic production are part of their personal, and reflective of highly fraught national, attempts to navigate the unresolved Nazi past. The German family and home are at the very centre of that unresolved history. Consequently, their questions regarding the critical potential of the personal have implications far beyond the often casual portraits produced by Genzken, Richter, Baselitz and Polke.

As stressed in the introduction, and emphasised in the individual chapters, Genzken, Richter, Baselitz and Polke's double portraits were produced and then initially circulated within an intimate network of collaborators, friends, colleagues and family members. Arguably the questions they raise are therefore addressed to a very small audience. Even when they were subsequently distributed via commercial institutions, they continued to be limited to a fairly exclusive group of individuals, the majority of whom were likely to recognise the often humorous – albeit at times very dark – nature of the artists' parodies. Nevertheless, the double portraits require a form of active participation, even if the questions they pose are mainly rhetorical. In the process of 'getting to know' the double portraits and the subjects portrayed, the viewer, at least momentarily, becomes part of the familial network from which they originated. This is particularly significant in terms of how the artists repeatedly mobilised social relationships to explore the varied ways in which the personal was and remains political.

My conclusion might suggest that this thesis sets out to make rather grand claims for the double portraits at the heart of this project. The opposite is true. I have repeatedly tried to stress the modest nature both of the works considered by this thesis, as well as of the interventions they make. The 1960s and 1970s saw radical countercultural explorations and re-imaginings of (artistic) collaboration, collective labour, and communal family life. In contrast, particularly the images considered in the first and second chapter rely on a rather conventional conception of the bourgeois nuclear family. The assumptions and expectations that Genzken, Richter, Polke and Baselitz challenge are significant, yet their transgressions are subtle. Nevertheless, they have important and lasting implications, including for models of criticality centred around assessments of the radicality of an artist's production. Relatedly, I make a case for a reconsideration of the biographical in the literature focused on these artists by looking at social relations, family connections and lived experiences as not just peripheral but as a way to reground understandings of what it means to be an artist and to collaborate, exchange and be engaged with and influenced by others. I have endeavoured to show how their 'intimate' artworks demonstrate the critical potential of the familial and domestic, but might also generate other ways of reading and interpreting works of art and images – based on social relations and intimacy. I hope to have shown that while these artists repeatedly engaged with questions of authorship precisely through 'private,' autobiographical works, they also explored the limitations of producing such images. Analogously, I have highlighted their failures in light of the increasing reification and attempt to capitalise social relationships under Neoliberalism and within the art market.

By drawing attention to Genzken, Baselitz, Richter and Polke's more ephemeral works, this project has aimed to defamiliarise and quite literally (re-)

personalise the work of a group of well-established and institutionalised artists. I have mobilised partnerships, friendships and intimate working relationships via close readings of both cultural and historical materials to work through this project's larger questions regarding visualisations of the familial. Here the biographical emerges as a critical apparatus to examine how this group of postwar artists revisited the modernist aim of collapsing art and life. Above all, this thesis endeavoured to foreground how their model(s) of relationality reveal the modest but nevertheless potentially radical horizons offered by the domestic and the familial, both for the artists themselves, as well as for art history.

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HOMESTORIES: PERFORMING & VISUALISING THE
FAMILIAL IN WEST GERMANY, 1961-1989

Volume II

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Introduction

Figure 1. Still from *dbb Jahrestagung 2017: Rede von Thomas de Maizière*, 9 January 2017, bmi.bund.de, <https://www.dbb.de/teaserdetail/artikel/bundesinnenminister-fuer-einen-starken-oeffentlichen-dienst.html> (accessed 12.08.2018).

Figure 2. Gerhard Richter, *Betty*, 1988, oil on canvas, 102 × 72 cm, Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis/USA.

Figure 3. Gerhard Richter, 'Various Motifs, Sheet 445,' *Atlas*, 1978, 51.7 × 66.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 4. Gerhard Richter, 'Betty Richter, Sheet 393,' *Atlas*, 1975, 36.7 × 51.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 5. Gerhard Richter, 'Betty Richter, Sheet 394,' *Atlas*, 1978, 36.7 × 51.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 6. Gerhard Richter, *Betty*, 1977, oil on canvas, 30 × 40 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne/DE.

Figure 7. Gerhard Richter, *Betty*, 1977, oil on canvas, 50 × 40 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 8. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 36 × 41 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 9. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 41 × 36 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 10. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 52 × 62 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 11. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 52 × 56 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 12. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 61 × 51 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 13. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 62 × 72 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 14. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 36 × 51 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 15. Gerhard Richter, *S. with Child*, 1995, oil on canvas, 46 × 41 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Chapter One – Domesticating the Artist-Hero: *polke/richter richter/polke* (1966)

Figure 16. Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, photograph, 'Polke Richter' folder, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 17. Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, photograph, 'Polke Richter' folder, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 18. Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, photograph, 'Polke Richter' folder, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 19. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 20. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, front cover, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm, Edition of 500.

Figure 21. Gerhard Richter, *Uncle Rudi*, 1965, oil on canvas, 87 x 50 cm, Lidice Collection, Lidice/CZ.

Figure 22. Sigmar Polke, *Bedroom*, 1965, dispersion paint on canvas, 160 × 125 cm, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach/DE.

Figure 23. Exhibition poster, galerie h, 1966, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 24. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, back and front cover, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966.

Figure 25. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 26. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 27. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 28. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 29. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 30. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 31. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 32. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 33. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, *polke/richter richter/polke*, 1966, 23.9 × 15.9 cm.

Figure 34. Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, printer manuscript for *polke/richter richter/polke*, 40 x 27 cm, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 35. Cover, *Perry Rhodan*, Issue 205.

Figure 36. *Perry Rhodan*, Issue 205.

Figure 37. Cover, *Der Spiegel*, Issue 48, 24.11.1965.

Figure 38. Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, photograph, 'Polke Richter' folder, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 39. Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, photograph, 'Polke Richter' folder, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 40. Election poster for Konrad Adenauer highlighting the CDU's 'miracle' 'social market economy,' 1953.

Figure 41. Installation view, *POLKE/RICHTER*, galerie h, 1966.

Figure 42. Installation view, *POLKE/RICHTER*, galerie h, 1966.

Figure 43. *QUICK*, Issue 20, 17.5.1964: 104-105.

Figure 44. Cover, *Neue Illustrierte*, Issue 52, 30.12.1962.

Figure 45. *Neue Illustrierte*, Issue 52, 30.12.1962: 14.

Figure 46. Sunil advertisement, *Neue Illustrierte*, 20.2.1966: 68.

Figure 47. OMO advertisement, *QUICK*, 8.5.1966: 63.

Figure 48. VW advertisement, *Neue Illustrierte*, 20.2.1966: 23.

Figure 49. Sigmar Polke, *Family I*, 1964, dispersion paint on canvas, 160 × 125 cm, Collection Elisabeth and Gerhard Sohst, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 50. Sigmar Polke, *Beach*, 1966, dispersion paint on canvas, 80 × 150 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 51. Gerhard Richter, *Curtain*, 1965, oil on canvas, 24 × 18 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 52. Gerhard Richter, *Chair in Profile*, 1965, oil on canvas, 90 × 70 cm, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam/NL.

Figure 53. Gerhard Richter, *Flemish Crown*, 1965, oil on canvas, 90 × 110 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 54. Reiner Ruthenbeck, 'Möbelhaus Berges Düsseldorf,' 1963, Archiv Reiner Ruthenbeck, Ratingen/DE.

Figure 55. Sigmar Polke, *Chocolate Painting*, 1963, enamel paint on canvas, 89.5 × 99.7 cm, Glenstone, Potomac/USA.

Figure 56. Sigmar Polke, *The Sausage Eater*, 1963, dispersion paint on canvas, 200 × 150 cm, Friedrich Christian Flick Collection/DE.

Figure 57. Sigmar Polke, *Biscuits*, 1964, oil and lacquer on canvas, 80 × 75 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 58. Sigmar Polke, *Socks*, 1963, enamel paint on canvas, 75 × 99.5 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 59. Sigmar Polke, *Shirts*, 1964, enamel paint on canvas, 100.4 × 123 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 60. Sigmar Polke, *Plastic Tubs*, 1964, oil on canvas, 95 × 120 cm, Private Collection, New York/USA.

Figure 61. Konrad Lueg, *Coat-Hangers*, 1963, casein colour on canvas, 140 × 90 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 62. Konrad Lueg, *Sausages on a Paper Plate*, 1963, casein colour on canvas, dimensions / location unknown, presumed destroyed in 1964 (black and white reproduction).

Figure 63. Konrad Lueg, *Uncle H.*, 1965, casein colour on canvas, 125 × 100 cm, Collection Marzona, Bielefeld/DE.

Figure 64. Arzberger advertisement, *Stern*, 27.9.1964: 73-74.

Figure 65. Cover, *Der Spiegel*, Issue 1/2, 03.01.1966.

Figure 66. Gerhard Richter, *Folding Dryer*, 1962, oil on canvas, 99.3 × 78.6 cm, Froehlich Collection, Stuttgart/DE.

Figure 67. Invitation card, galerie h, 1966, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 68. Hartmut Rekort, 'Fluxus-Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik,' 1962, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart/DE.

Figure 69. Opening of the first Capitalist Realism group exhibition at Kaiserstraße 31A in Düsseldorf, May 1963, Collection Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf/DE.

Figure 70. Exhibition opening at galerie h, 1966, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 71. Clothing advertisement, *Bunte*, 18.11.1964: 37.

Figure 72. Elmar Hügler, *Kunst und Ketchup*, 1966, film still.

Figure 73. Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, photograph, 'Polke Richter' folder, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 74. Reiner Ruthenbeck, 'Konrad Lueg's *Coffee and Cake*, Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf,' 1966, Archiv Reiner Ruthenbeck, Ratingen/DE.

Figure 75. Reiner Ruthenbeck, 'Konrad Lueg's *Coffee and Cake*, Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf,' 1966, Archiv Reiner Ruthenbeck, Ratingen/DE.

Figure 76. Joseph Beuys, *Fat Chair*, 1963, wood chair with fat, 89.9 cm (height), Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, Darmstadt/DE.

Figure 77. Joseph Beuys, *The Pack*, 1969, Volkswagen bus with sledges, Neue Galerie, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Kassel/DE.

Figure 78. Installation view, *POLKE/RICHTER*, galerie h, 1966.

Figure 79. Installation view, Gerhard Richter, *48 Portraits*, 1971-72, oil on canvas, each 70 × 55 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne/DE.

Figure 80. Gerhard Richter, *Horst with Dog*, 1965, oil on canvas, 80 × 60 cm, Private Collection, New York/USA.

Figure 81. Gerhard Richter, *Moritz*, 2000, oil on canvas, 51 × 45 cm, De Pont Museum, Tilburg/NL.

Figure 82. Gerhard Richter, *Moritz*, 2000, oil on canvas, 62 × 52 cm, De Pont Museum, Tilburg/NL.

Figure 83. Gerhard Richter, *Moritz*, 2000, oil on canvas, 62 × 52 cm, De Pont Museum, Tilburg/NL.

Figure 84. Gerhard Richter, 'Double Exposures, Sheet 61,' *Atlas*, 1970, 36.7 × 51.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Chapter Two – Georg Baselitz's *Bedroom(s)*

Figure 85. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, double spread, each page 23.5 × 17 cm, Edition of 1300.

Figure 86. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 87. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 88. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 89. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 90. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1971), 1985, double spread, each page 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 91. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 92. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 93. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 94. Georg Baselitz, *Portrait of Elke I*, 1969, synthetic resin on canvas, 162 × 130 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 95. Georg Baselitz, *Female nude on kitchen chair*, first state, 1977, linocut on paper, 220 × 151 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 96. Georg Baselitz, *Female nude on kitchen chair*, seventh state, 1979, linocut on paper, 202 × 137 cm, Tate, London/UK.

Figure 97. Georg Baselitz, *Bedroom*, 1975, oil and charcoal on canvas, 250 × 200 cm, Private Collection/DE.

Figure 98. Georg Baselitz, *Bedroom (Portrait Elke and Georg)*, 1975, oil and charcoal on canvas, 350 × 250 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne/DE.

Figure 99. Georg Baselitz, *Saxon Motifs* (1975), 1985, double spread, each page 23.5 × 17 cm.

Figure 100. Georg Baselitz, *Finger Painting – Eagle*, 1972, oil on canvas, 250 × 180 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich/DE.

Figure 101. Hans-Georg Kern (later Georg Baselitz), *Eagles*, 1953, pencil and watercolour on paper, 27.7 × 38.1 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 102. Georg Baselitz, *Eagle in Bed*, 1982, oil on canvas, 250 × 250 cm, The George Economou Collection, Athens/GR.

Figure 103. Georg Baselitz, *Dystopian couple*, 2015, oil on canvas, 300 × 290 cm, White Cube, London/UK.

Figure 104. Georg Baselitz, *Stove soot*, 2015, oil on canvas, 300 × 290 cm, White Cube, London/UK.

Figure 105. Georg Baselitz, *A poor future*, 2015, oil on canvas, 300 × 290 cm, White Cube, London/UK.

Figure 106. Georg Baselitz, *Oh, rosy, oh rosy*, 2015, oil on canvas, 300 × 290 cm, White Cube, London/UK.

Figure 107. Otto Dix, *The Parents of the Artist II* (1924), oil on canvas, 118 × 130.5 cm, Sprengel Museum, Hannover/DE.

Figure 108. Georg Baselitz, *My Parents (Remix)*, 2005, oil on canvas, 300 × 250 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 109. Georg Baselitz, *My Parents by Dix (Remix)*, 2005, oil on canvas, 300 × 250 cm, Rheingold Collection, The Albertina Museum, Vienna/AT.

Figure 110. Georg Baselitz, *The Big Night Down the Drain*, 1962-1963, oil on canvas, 250 × 180 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne/DE.

Figure 111. Georg Baselitz, *The Big Night Down the Drain (Remix)*, 2005, oil and charcoal on canvas, 300 × 250 cm, Collection of the artist.

Figure 112. Georg Baselitz, *Untitled (29. February 2006)*, 2006, ink on paper, 66.4 × 50.3 cm, Collection of the artist.

Figure 113. Georg Baselitz, *Complementary Brownish*, 2012, oil on canvas, 290 × 208 cm, Private Collection/CH.

Figure 114. Georg Baselitz, *The Yellow Dress Has Become Blue*, 2012, oil on canvas, 290 × 208 cm, Private Collection, Munich/DE.

Figure 115. Georg Baselitz, *Nightingale First Time*, 2008, oil on canvas, 300 × 250 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 116. Georg Baselitz, *Bedroom*, 2009, oil on canvas, 300 × 250 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 117. Georg Baselitz, *Zero*, 2004, oil on canvas, 250 × 200 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 118. Georg Baselitz, *Sing Sang Zero*, 2011, patinated bronze, 332 × 180 × 107.4 cm, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris/FR.

Figure 119. Georg Baselitz, *My New Hat*, 2003, cedar wood and oil paint, 310.5 × 83.5 × 107 cm, Pinault Collection, Venice/IT.

Figure 120. Georg Baselitz, *BDM Group*, 2011, patinated bronze, 366 × 242 × 149 cm, The George Economou Collection, Athens/GR.

Figure 121. Georg Baselitz, *Picture Sixteen*, 1993, oil on canvas, 427 × 288 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich/DE.

Figure 122. Georg Baselitz, *Bedroom (Remix)*, 2005, oil on canvas, 427 × 290 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich/DE.

Figure 123. Installation view, Michael Werner booth, Art Cologne 1973.

Figure 124. Marcel Duchamp and André Breton, *Compensation Portraits*, 1924, Young-Mallin Archive, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia/USA.

Figure 125. Georg Baselitz, *Triangle between Arm and Torso*, 1973, oil on canvas, 250 × 180 cm, Heidi Horten Collection/AT.

Figure 126. Georg Baselitz, *Triangle between Arm and Torso*, 1977, oil on canvas, 250 × 200 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 127. Georg Baselitz, *Nude with Three Arms*, first state, 1977, linocut on paper, 263 × 157 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/USA.

Figure 128. Georg Baselitz, *Nude with Three Arms*, third state, 1977, linocut on paper, 270 × 158 cm, Private Collection (black and white reproduction).

Figure 129. *Hitlers Kinder*, cartoon, reproduced in “‘Eigentlich müsste jeder verdächtig sein.’ Das Dilemma der Terroristen-Fahndung: Untergrund in Bürgermaske.’ *Der Spiegel* 38 (1977): 33.

Figure 130. Anselm Kiefer, *Occupations*, 1969.

Figure 131. Anselm Kiefer, *Heroic Symbol V*, 1970, oil on canvas, 150 × 260.5, Würth Collection, Künzelsau/DE.

Figure 132. Anselm Kiefer, *Heroic Symbols*, 1969, Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh/UK.

Figure 133. Georg Baselitz, *Bed Room*, undated, colour offset, 15 × 10 cm, Private Collection.

Chapter Three – *Künstlerehepaar: I(sa).G(enzken).G(erhard).R(ichter)*.

Figure 134. Brigitte Hellgoth, *Gerhard Richter and Isa Genzken* reproduced in *ART. das Kunstmagazin* 5 (May 1983): 61.

Figure 135a. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, front cover, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 135b. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, 1980, photograph, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 136a. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 136b. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, 1980, photograph, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 137a. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 137b. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, 1987, photograph, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 138a. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, back cover, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 138b. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, 1987, photograph, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 139. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, König-Heinrich-Platz underground station, 1980/1992, Duisburg/DE.

Figure 140. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, König-Heinrich-Platz underground station, 1980/1992, Duisburg/DE.

Figure 141. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, König-Heinrich-Platz underground station, 1980/1992, Duisburg/DE.

Figure 142. Isa Genzken, *Yellow Ellipsoid*, 1976, lacquered wood, 9 × 9 × 486 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 143. Gerhard Richter, *Juno*, 1983, oil on canvas, 300 × 250 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra/AU.

Figure 144. Gerhard Richter, *Janus*, 1983, oil on canvas, 300 × 250 cm, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco/USA (long-term loan from The Doris and Donald Fisher Collection, San Francisco/USA).

Figure 145. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, double spread, each page 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 146. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, double spread, each page 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 147. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, double spread, each page 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 148. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, double spread, each page 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 149. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, double spread, each page 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 150. Isa Genzken and Gerhard Richter, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, 1987, double spread, each page 21 × 25 cm, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles/USA.

Figure 151. Invitation card (verso and recto), Galleria Pieroni, 1987, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 152. Gerhard Richter, 'Doppelportrait (Double Portrait), Sheet 415,' *Atlas*, 1981, 51.7 × 36.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 153. Gerhard Richter, 'Album Photos, Sheet 3,' *Atlas*, 1962, 51.7 × 66.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 154. Gerhard Richter, 'Naples, Sheet 395,' *Atlas*, 1962, 51.7 × 66.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 155. Gerhard Richter, 'Doppelportrait (Double Portrait), Sheet 414,' *Atlas*, 1981, 51.7 × 36.7 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich/DE.

Figure 156. Isa Genzken, *Yachturlaub*, 1993/2000, 36 photographs, each 35 × 25 cm, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/DE.

Figure 157. Hanne Darboven in her studio, c. 1987-1988, Hanne Darboven Stiftung, Hamburg/DE.

Figure 158. Andy Warhol, *Before and After*, 1960, synthetic polymer paint and silk screen ink on canvas, 137 × 177.8 cm, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, New York/USA.

Figure 159. Installation view, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, Galleria Pieroni, 1983, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 160. Installation view, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, Galleria Pieroni, 1983, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 161. Isa Genzken in her Düsseldorf studio, 1983, reproduced as 'Studio, 1983' in *Isa Genzken Gerhard Richter*, exh. cat., Rome: Galleria Pieroni, 1983.

Figure 162. Gerhard Richter, *Overview*, 1988, offset print on heavy rag paper, 82.8 × 68.2 cm, Edition of 100, 10 artist's proofs (& 1000 poster copies).

Figure 163. Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann, *dada cordial*, 1919/20-1922, collage on test print of *Der Dada 1* (1919), 42.5 × 58.6 cm, Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Berlin/DE.

Figure 164. Raoul Hausmann, *Self-Portrait with Hannah Höch*, c.1915, oil on canvas, 48.3 × 59 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 165. *Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann (Double Exposure)*, 1919, Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Berlin/DE.

Figure 166. Installation view, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter*, Galleria Pieroni, 1983, Gerhard Richter Archiv, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden/DE.

Figure 167. Installation view, *Isa Genzken e Gerhard Richter: Sculture e Pitture*, Galleria Pieroni, 1987, Archivio della Galleria Pieroni, Rome/IT.

Figure 168. Cover, *Kunstforum International*, Issue 28, 4/1978.

Figure 169. Cover, *Kunstforum International*, Issue 106, March/April 1990.

Figure 170. Cover, *Kunstforum International*, Issue 107, April/May 1990.

Figure 171. August Sander, 'Malerehepaar,' c.1925, reproduced in III/13/13 *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts (People of the Twentieth Century)*.

Figure 172. August Sander, *The Painter Anton Räderscheidt and his Wife Marta Hegemann*, c.1925, Die Photographische Sammlung / SK Stiftung Kultur - August Sander Archiv, Cologne/DE.

Figure 173. Double spread, *Kunstforum International*, Issue 28, 4/1978: 100-101.

Figure 174. Thomas Struth, *The Richter Family I, Cologne*, 2002, silver dye bleach print, face-mounted to acrylic, 102.2 × 161.3 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York/USA.

Figure 175. Thomas Ruff, *L'Empereur*, 1982, C-print, 30.2 × 40cm (series of 8 photographs).

Figure 176. Gerhard Richter, *Ema (Nude on a Staircase)*, 1966, oil on canvas, 200 × 130 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne/DE.

Figure 177. Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, oil on canvas, 147 × 89.2 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia/USA.

Figure 178. Man Ray, *Marcel Duchamp as Rose Sélavy*, c. 1920-1921, gelatin silver print, 21.6 × 17.3 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia/USA.

Figure 179. Thomas Ruff, *Portrait (POR 093)*, 1991, chromogenic print, 186 × 180.9 cm.

Figure 180. Thomas Ruff, *Other Portrait 122/113*, 1994-1995, silkscreen, 52 × 36.8 cm.

Figure 181. Isa Genzken, *Basic Research*, 1991, oil on canvas, 148 × 148 cm, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/DE.

Figure 182. Man Ray, *Dust Breeding*, 1920 (printed c.1967), gelatin silver print, 23.9 × 30.4 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/USA.

Figure 183. Isa Genzken, *Slot Machine*, 1999-2000, slot machine, paper, chromogenic color prints, and tape, 160 × 65 × 50 cm, Private Collection, Berlin/DE.

Figure 184. Isa Genzken, *World Receiver*, 1982, multiband radio receiver, 37 × 51 × 20 cm, Collection of the artist.

Figure 185. Isa Genzken, *Untitled*, 2012, mirrors, perspex, wrapping paper, tape, plastic, artificial flower, frames, photographs, newspaper, 208.5 × 289 × 5.5 cm, Private Collection.

Figure 186. Benjamin Katz, '1987,' *Atelier Gerhard Richter*.

Figure 187. Benjamin Katz, '1982,' *Atelier Gerhard Richter*.

Figure 188. Benjamin Katz, '1982,' *Atelier Gerhard Richter*.

Figure 189. Benjamin Katz, '1982,' *Atelier Gerhard Richter*.

Figure 190. Benjamin Katz, '1982,' *Atelier Gerhard Richter*.

Conclusion

Figure 191. Benjamin Katz, *Gerhard Richter, Isa Genzken, Elke and Georg Baselitz*, 1981.

Figure 192. Benjamin Katz, *Gerhard Richter, Isa Genzken, Elke and Georg Baselitz*, 1981.

