Wolf Vostell’s *Fluxus Zug*,
Model Museum, Academy, Archive

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University

2013
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes Wolf Vostell’s *Fluxus Zug*, 1981, arguing that it was simultaneously a work of art, a museum, an academy, and an archive. I explore the art work/alternative institution in relation to other museums that Vostell conceived and realized from the 1960s until his death in 1998; the interdisciplinary collaborations that he established in the 1960s; his concept for an ideal academy from 1969; the archive that he began building in the 1950s; and recent theories of the Archive. This microhistorical study reveals Vostell’s centrality to contemporary experimental art. I argue that the spirit of Vostell’s art and ideas are very much alive today as artists demonstrate widespread interest in curating as an art practice, in the construction of alternative pedagogies, and in working in, with, and against the Archive.
Dedication

To Mark and my family
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Foreword

Upon entering Wolf Vostell’s *Fluxus Zug*, visitors first encountered the *Video Library/Communication Car*¹ where the history of Vostell’s art and artistic philosophy was presented in video, in slides, and in print. Posters for *Fluxus Zug* hung on the open door and on the inside wall, and a brochure and a catalog on *Fluxus Zug* were available for a modest fee [Fig. 1]. After this documentary “communication car” visitors entered the second shipping container: an installation of eight very large paintings featuring humans copulating with winged angels [Fig. 2]. Some of the figures are shown wearing gas masks. Their tongues stick out in lurid gestures and their genitalia are graphically depicted. The canvases spanned from floor to ceiling and had plastic rib steaks attached to them, underscoring the environment’s title, *The Angels or My Sweet Feast for the Eyes*² [Figs. 3–4]. The environment’s theme—“The Alienation of Man or Who Were the Angels?”³—provoked the public to consider the existential dilemma of the human condition and its relation to suffering, salvation, and history.

Container three, titled *The Rivers or Every Person is an Artwork*,⁴ ushered visitors down a long, narrow corridor dimly lit by blue light bulbs on the ceiling [Figs. 5–6]. Seventeen doorbell buttons installed along the walls at shoulder height beckoned people to sound an alarm. When pushed, distorted excerpts from Giovanni Battista Pergolesi’s *Stabat Mater*, sung by Spanish mezzo-soprano Teresa Berganza, emanated from hidden speakers and reverberated inside the

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¹ *Videothek/Kommunikationswagen.*
² *Die Engel oder meine süsse Augenweide.*
³ “Die Entfremdung des Menschen, oder wer waren die Engel?”
⁴ *Die Flüsse oder jeder Mensch ist ein Kunstwerk.*
Based on a thirteenth-century poem of Franciscan origins and dedicated to the Virgin Mary’s sorrows, the eighteenth century hymn—fragmented and played out of context—was virtually unrecognizable. The dark and confining passageway lent the music a sinister air, reminding at least one visitor of screams. In the absence of visual imagery, the sounds conjured chaos and fear, sensations amplified by the environment’s theme, “The Daily Noise Experience.”

While more brightly lit, container four was equally ominous, encrusted as it was in gray concrete. Enigmatically titled The Dances or Human Rights are Works of Art, the environment featured a typical living room setting complete with a chair, sofa, television set, framed hanging picture, and piano. The theme—the “Isolation of People”—situated one in the postwar period of the Berlin Wall with its hardened ideology and cemented divisions. Together these conceptual evocations and the intractable materiality of concrete transformed an intimate living space into a coldly hostile environment suggestive of the site where the fundamental rights of humanity were equivocated in the family home [Fig. 7].

This rigid domestic scene gave way to a 1965 Mercedes-Benz 600 car parked on a bed of finely ground coal that filled most of the fifth container [Fig. 8]. A color television embedded in the vehicle’s grill played “moving electronic portraits” of visitors entering the container, their images captured on a video camera installed on the car’s dashboard and relayed to the television [Fig. 9].

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6 Wolfgang Becker, letter to the author, August 26, 2010.
7 “Das tägliche Klang erlebnis.”
8 Die Tänze oder die Menschenrechte sind Kunstwerke.
9 “Isolation des Menschen.”
Twenty smaller TV monitors set in the car’s hood, roof, and trunk played distorted static, the sound and imagery corresponding to and commenting on the environment’s title, *The Winds or the Media.*\(^\text{10}\) Mirrors on the ceiling reflected the flickering screens of the upturned TVs, amplifying the environment’s theme, “The Media’s Stimulus Satiation,”\(^\text{11}\) which highlighted the overwhelming sensory stimulation created by twenty-one televisions broadcasting simultaneously [Fig. 10]. Artificial fireplace logs glowed in the car’s backseat and curtains partially covered the rear windows, insinuating that the automobile served as a second home [Fig. 11]. A limbless, blindfolded female mannequin, connected to a monitor by a plastic “feeding” tube, lay behind the vehicle on the coal-covered floor. The tube running between the mannequin and the television visually implied that she, like the viewers inside *Fluxus Zug,* was being force-fed by the meaningless static of the media.

Visitors tracked the coal dust from the floor of the fifth container into the sixth container, leaving traces that suggested the omnipresent nature of the mass media in contemporary society. Titled *The Stones or the Ancestry of People,*\(^\text{12}\) container six featured two round tables, each holding some twenty-five rotary telephones [Figs. 12-13]. Calf bones and lamb skulls replaced or were attached to some of the phone receivers. The phone cords connected to empty burlap coal

\(^{10}\) *Die Winde oder die Medien.* According to Stefan Klute, a volunteer who assisted with *Fluxus Zug* in Wuppertal, the TVs were meant to play distorted television programs. Due to technological problems, however, they mostly played static. Interview with the author, Wuppertal, Germany, December 3, 2010.

\(^{11}\) “Die Reizüberflutung der Medien.”

\(^{12}\) *Die Steine oder die Herkunft des Menschen.*
sacks hanging on the walls. The environment’s theme was “The Dialogue,” which, when considered in relation to the presence of animal bones, alluded to the German colloquialism for hard work—*Knochenarbeit*, literally, “bone work”—implying the difficulty of engaging in and maintaining meaningful exchange, as opposed to the constant drone of the mass media as presented in the previous container.

*The Clouds or the Iron Curtain,* the title of container seven, furthered the leitmotifs of the difficulty or lack of communication and of death associated in container six with mute bones and empty coal sacks. Reliefs of sculpted human ears protruded from the walls of this cramped environment while eight mannequins lay on eight beds staggered closely along the walls, requiring visitors to squeeze around them [Figs. 14-16]. The path was so narrow that parents had to pick up and carry their children’s strollers. Sheets of lead covered everything from floor to ceiling. The mannequins—wired to move mechanically—banged slowly against their encasements. Small holes in the lead allowed visitors to see part of the mannequins’ bodies [Fig. 17]. The scene suggested a hospital triage room, a morgue, or a collective coffin in which the walls literally had listened, even to death. The environment’s theme, “*Die Verletzung,*” translates as “The Injury,” “The Hurting,” or “The Damage,” evoking references to the consequences of espionage, and of spying and reporting on other citizens, all aspects of the Cold War. The word *Verletzung* also signifies a violation or an infraction of a law, as well as an infringement or breach

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13 “Der Dialog.”
14 *Die Wolken oder der eiserne Vorhang.*
of duty or contract. This multifaceted term encapsulates the environment’s many layers of meaning. Considered together with the heavy, dull gray lead and convulsing bodies, it hints at the suffering of Germans who had survived and endured two world wars and then lived in a country occupied by foreign troops and divided by the Iron Curtain. The lead simultaneously covered the dead and offered the living protection from possible radiation.

Leaving the lead-shrouded bodies and ears of container seven and entering container eight, *The Fires or My Combs are Made of Sugar*, visitors were suddenly confronted with seven taxidermied dogs lying on a bed of deep red, smoked Spanish paprika that covered the floor [Figs. 18-19]. The paprika was changed at every stop, so its strong aroma wafted throughout the space. Dried red pepper pods hung on strings from the ceiling and knives extended upwards from the dogs’ bodies [Figs. 20-21]. The environment’s vivid color and pungent scent underscored the environment’s poetic theme, “Radiation of the Natural Elements.” The striking juxtaposition of life and death—of visitors passing by dead dogs arranged on blood red paprika—also illustrated the concept of *duende*, a term used by Federico García Lorca to describe a deeply rooted, Dionysian-like, creative source of inspiration. *Duende*, according to Lorca, is connected to death, to the unconscious, and to a familiar spirit. It can be expressed in all the arts, but particularly in *cante jondo*, a type of flamenco music that singer Pastora Pavón Cruz, known as “The Girl of the Combs,” helped to popularize.

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15 *Die Feuer oder meine Kämme sind aus Zucker.*
16 “Ausstrahlung der Naturelemente.”
Finally, treading paprika, mixed with lingering remnants of coal dust from container five, visitors entered the ninth and last container: \textit{Vostell in NRW 1959-1981} [Figs. 22-23]. North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) was not only Vostell’s home state but also the region for which he had proposed, and sometimes realized, numerous projects. Some of these works appeared on the walls of this final container in the form of greatly enlarged black and white images, including his 1967 project to turn Cologne’s Cathedral into an artistic environment by having highways cut through its interior; his 1970 design for a “drive-in museum” in the form of two enormous television sets, located at a cloverleaf intersection outside of Cologne; his idea from 1971 for a museum inside a huge, transparent air pump that would cross the Rhine River adjacent to the Hohenzollern Bridge in Cologne; and his 1975 proposal for a museum of post-1945 German art in the shape of a ring in Bonn. Alongside the images of these unrealized projects, a photograph of Vostell’s first concrete-encased car sculpture, \textit{Stopped Traffic,}^{17} created in Cologne in 1969 was featured. Two additional photographs presented critical aspects of two of Vostell’s happenings: one pictured him bending to lay a loaf of bread on the ground during \textit{Bread Measurement}^{18} at the Cologne Opera House on March 15, 1969; and another showed the lettuce-filled crates that traveled in a train car between Cologne and Aachen for his year-long happening \textit{Salad,}^{19} 1970. Ending as it had begun—with documentation of Vostell’s work—\textit{Fluxus Zug} called attention to the diversity of Vostell’s oeuvre and to the careful way that Vostell constructed his legacy.

\footnotesize{17} Ruhender Verkehr.  
\footnotesize{18} Brotvermessung.  
\footnotesize{19} Salat.
Introduction

I want to measure myself against art history and I want to be a part of art history! - Wolf Vostell

I. Fluxus Zug

Wolf Vostell’s *Fluxus Zug*, 1981, was simultaneously a work of art and an unconventional institution. Publicized as a mobile museum and a living art school, I theorize that it was also an alternative archive. *Fluxus Zug* comprised nine freight container cars loaded onto flatbed railcars. The German Federal Railways (DB) and its sister company Transfracht supplied two of the containers (the first and last cars), and the Hamburg-based shipping firm Contrans provided the central seven containers. Vostell filled the Contrans containers with multi-sensorial and multimedia environments. The titles of the environments were printed in bold black letters on the exterior of the white containers. Vostell installed visual and textual documentation of his art and artistic philosophy in the DB/Transfracht containers.

The DB transported the environment-filled containers to sixteen cities in the West German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) between May 1 and September 29, 1981. The first stop was Dortmund; the final destination was Bonn.

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2 I use the German title, *Fluxus Zug*, rather than the English translation, *Fluxus Train*, throughout this dissertation. Other titles are translated into English in the body of the text for the ease of reading, with the title in its original language in the footnotes. Additionally, for the different containers/environments that comprised *Fluxus Zug*, I use only their shortened titles (e.g., *The Angels*).
capital of West Germany.³ Fluxus Zug was open to the public for five days in each city—from Friday through Tuesday, from 11:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m.⁴ Depending on the configuration of the town’s train station, Fluxus Zug either remained at a platform at the station, or it was moved by truck to a public square or park [Figs. 24-26].⁵ Once it arrived at its destination, the ends of the containers were opened and fabric was stretched across the gaps between them. The fabric served both to protect the environments and viewers from the elements and to prevent visitors from exiting Fluxus Zug before they reached the final container car. For, after people entered the first container—the Video Library/Communication Car—through the open side door, they were required to progress through all of the environments, one after the other, until they reached the final container—Vostell in NRW 1959-1981 [Fig. 27].

Approximately 60,000 people visited Fluxus Zug during its tour.⁶ The visitors ranged in age from school children to working adults and retirees. Their reactions varied widely. Some were saddened by the grief and weight of history that they felt pervaded the train; others found the environments to be entertaining and amusing.⁷ Likewise, the responses of journalists differed

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³ Fluxus Zug actually arrived in Dortmund on April 29, but it did not open to the public until May 1. The DB determined Fluxus Zug’s route: Dortmund, Aachen, Mülheim, Hamm, Bochum, Wuppertal, Cologne, Remscheid, Oberhausen, Essen, Düsseldorf, Münster, Leverkusen, Duisburg, Gelsenkirchen, and Bonn.
⁴ There is conflicting information in the literature about the number of days that Fluxus Zug was open at each stop. Some secondary sources state that it was open for just three days in every city. However, the Fluxus Zug catalog and newspaper articles from 1981 indicate that it was open for five days at all locations.
⁵ Fluxus Zug was moved to a square or park in Mülheim, Hamm, Bochum, Wuppertal, Cologne, Leverkusen, Duisburg, and Gelsenkirchen.
⁶ Bertram Müller, "Das Happening und seine Erben," Rheinische Post (Leverkusen) (September 25, 1981). LCA.
⁷ Wolfgang Becker, letter to the author, August 26, 2010.
greatly. One journalist referred to *Fluxus Zug* as “Utopia on Rails,” 8 but another called it a “Horror Picture Show”9 and a third emphasized “Corpses and Dead Dogs.”10 Regardless of how viewers interpreted the content of *Fluxus Zug*, Vostell was interested in hearing people’s opinions. He travelled by car to the different cities that hosted *Fluxus Zug* in order to hold opening press conferences and discussions with visitors. Whether standing in a park or sitting in a circle of folding chairs on a train platform, Vostell welcomed the public to converse with him about his nomadic project and about his art and artistic philosophy in general. Engaging in dialogue was a central component of the *Fluxus Zug* project. As Vostell wrote in a catalog statement, “The vital industrial and cultural landscape of North Rhine-Westphalia, with its heterogeneous population, is my dialogue partner for this project.”11

In order to enhance and further encourage the involvement of the citizens of NRW, a local contact person was appointed for each of the sixteen cities. These individuals assisted with logistics and organized a program of cultural activities to take place in their communities while *Fluxus Zug* was present. The events included art exhibitions, musical and theatrical performances, thematic dinners, and sporting games. They all related to the particular motto that Dagmar von Gottberg had ascribed to every city. Gottberg was a former attorney turned art consultant and gallerist, who was vital to the realization of *Fluxus Zug*. She is

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discussed at greater length below. For now it is sufficient to note that she managed logistics for the entire project and that she conceived of the mottos—the so-called “paths to the train”—as a means of generating interest in *Fluxus Zug* and of sparking people’s imaginations.\textsuperscript{12}

One of the best-documented paths is Wuppertal’s “The White Path.” While the idea of white may have called to mind the color of Bayer Aspirin, which was invented in Wuppertal in 1897, white also referred to the ancient Christian holiday of Pentecost, which coincided with *Fluxus Zug*’s stop in the city. Pentecost occurs fifty days after Easter and celebrates the Holy Spirit’s descent on the disciples. It is commonly known as White Sunday or Whitsunday because the early Church often administered baptisms on that day and the newly baptized wore white garments.\textsuperscript{13} Playing off of this tradition, Georg Schwarzbauer, an art historian at the Wuppertal Werkkunstschule who was the local contact person, proposed a “white coat festival.” He called for professionals who traditionally wear white coats (doctors, pharmacists, butchers, bakers, painters, etc.) to ride the Schwebebahn, Wuppertal’s unique suspension railway that runs the length of the city over the Wupper River. The white-coated

\textsuperscript{12} The path names were: Dortmund, “*Der tägliche Weg*” (The Daily Path); Aachen, “*Der widersprüchliche Weg*” (The Disputed or Contradictory Path); Mühlheim, “*Der poetische Weg*” (The Poetic Path); Hamm, “*Der harmonische Weg*” (The Harmonic Path); Bochum, “*Der Um-Weg*” (The Detour); Wuppertal, “*Der weiße Weg*” (The White Path); Cologne, “*Der akustische Weg*” (The Acoustic Path); Remscheid, “*Der eiserne Weg*” (The Iron Path); Oberhausen, “*Der mediale Weg*” (The Medial Path); Essen, “*Der köstliche Weg*” (The Tasty Path); Düsseldorf, “*Der andere Weg*” (The Other Path); Münster, “*Der Engel Weg*” (The Angels Path); Leverkusen, “*Der schattige Weg*” (The Shadowy or Shaded Path); Duisburg, “*Der tänzerische Weg*” (The Dance-like Path); Gelsenkirchen, “*Der gläserne Weg*” (The Glassy Path); and Bonn, “*Der Aus-Weg*” (The Way Out). *Fluxus Zug*, 64-5.

professionals would eventually descend down on the city from the Schwebebahn like secular disciples.

In collaboration with other individuals, Schwarzbauer organized other white-themed events for the city as well. He detailed these plans in his publication, *The White Book for the White Path*.14 A white line, drawn on the ground in chalk between the Von der Heydt Museum, the city’s art museum, and the train station where *Fluxus Zug* was set up, literally provided the public a white path to follow on their way to the train. Sixteen businesses along the way created special white window installations. On the evening that *Fluxus Zug* opened in Wuppertal, the art museum hosted an all-white dinner. People whose names were or incorporated the syllable “weiß,” the German word for white, were invited and encouraged to attend wearing white clothing. The meal featured food and drink that was either white in color or had “weiß” in its name—*Weißbier* (wheat beer), *Weißherbst* (a kind of rosé wine), and *Weißwurst* (veal sausage). The table was decorated with fruit dipped in white wax. There was even an art exhibition of works covered in white plaster.15

As this overview of the related events in Wuppertal highlights, between May 1 and September 29, 1981, *Fluxus Zug* encompassed more than the nine traveling freight containers that Vostell filled with art environments. People could participate in the related cultural programming in their town, and some had the opportunity to talk with Vostell. Johannes Rau, prime minister of NRW

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15 Schwarzbauer described these events to me in a letter dated September 23, 2010, and in conversation at his home in Wuppertal on October 28, 2010. See also *Das weisse Heft*. 
from 1978 until 1998, described *Fluxus Zug* as a cultural and sociopolitical focal point that fostered contact between the citizens of NRW and the artist and that integrated into the local art scenes.\(^\text{16}\) However, it was designed to be a temporary focal point, existing as a whole for only five months. Having introduced *Fluxus Zug*, it is now helpful to outline how this work that involved collaboration between the artist, citizens, industry, and government came to fruition and what happened to it after the end of September in order to provide a fuller picture of the project and the various parties involved in its realization. I will then discuss my reasons for focusing intensely on one work of art—*Fluxus Zug*—as a model and the larger issues that arise out of this microhistorical study.

II. Realizing an Idea

Karl Richter, head of the Secretariat for Joint Cultural Work in NRW, notified Vostell in a letter dated May 20, 1980, that the state would finance *Fluxus Zug*.\(^\text{17}\) Without NRW's contribution of 300,000 German marks, *Fluxus Zug* probably would not have been financially feasible. Richter highlighted three specific reasons in his letter to explain why the general assembly had reached its decision to sponsor *Fluxus Zug*. First, he stated, Eugen Thiemann, director of Dortmund's modern and contemporary art museum, the Museum am Ostwall, confirmed that his institution would take ultimate responsibility for handling contracts. (It would be the *Vertragsabschließendes Institut*). The museum was

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\(^{16}\) *Fluxus Zug*, 4.

\(^{17}\) Dr. Karl Richter, Sekretariat für gemeinsame Kulturarbeit in NRW, letter to Wolf Vostell, May 20, 1980. AHV.
founded in 1947, and Thiemann, the second director, from 1967 to 1987, was a staunch proponent of experimental postwar German art.

The second reason that Richter cited was the Secretariat for Joint Cultural Work’s agreement to finance the project. Although Richter did not explicitly say so in his letter, this support was in line with a 1976 mandate articulated by Gerhart Baum, the Parliamentary State Secretary from 1972 until 1978. Baum asserted that while creating art was an individual artist’s responsibility and the state should not intervene, “all the relevant state institutions should conceive of themselves as organs of a Kulturstaat [culture state] and give every possible financial support to the arts.” This was precisely what NRW’s funding of Vostell’s Fluxus Zug demonstrated.

The third factor that Richter noted was Dagmar von Gottberg’s involvement. She would be the full-time contact person, serving as liaison between Vostell and all other parties. She would also be in charge of the project’s logistics. Because of her integral role to Fluxus Zug, it is worth briefly exploring how she became involved in West Germany’s contemporary art scene in general and in the Fluxus Zug project in particular.

Gottberg was born in Dresden in 1944, but she was raised in Düsseldorf. She studied political science in Paris and law in Bonn. In the early 1970s she

18 Baum went on to become Federal Minister of the Interior from 1978 until 1982.
19 Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, “The Federal Republic 1968 to 1990: From the Industrial Society to the Culture Society,” in German Cultural Studies: An Introduction, ed. Rob Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 259. When the Federal Republic was founded in 1949, culture played a central role in defining the nation. The current concept of the Kulturstaat emerged in the 1970s, the decade that “became the highpoint of promoting culture as politics or specifically, the use of culture in the pursuit of social as well as foreign policies.” Frank Trommler, introduction to Frank Trommler, ed. The Cultural Legitimacy of the Federal Republic: Assessing the German Kulturstaat, vol. 6, Harry & Helen Gray Humanities Program Series (Washington, DC: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1999), 2.
moved to Hamburg from Paris, where she had worked for a year after passing her initial West German state law examination. In Hamburg she trained for a position in higher civil service, working in a competition court (Wettbewerbskammer) before serving as the personal advisor to former mayor and senator Dieter Biallas. Together, Gottberg and Biallas conceived of the “Hamburg Cultural Discussions,” and in 1977 Gottberg organized a cultural-political congress titled “Limits to Growth—An Opportunity for Culture” under the umbrella of the discussions. This was her first career-related foray into cultural affairs.

By 1978 Gottberg was working with AIESEC, a non-profit, youth-run organization that provides professional development opportunities for young people. Gottberg’s area of expertise was identifying prospects for art students in advertising for industry and trade. Drawing on this experience, she embarked on a private venture as an art agent and gallerist in 1979. From her small space on Schönstraße in Hamburg, she facilitated the realization of various art events and exhibitions. She continued this career until her death, acting as a mediator between industry, trade, art, and design students, and helping to secure funding for artists.

Coincidentally, Gottberg lived next door to an artist who created sculptures from industrial metal and plastic waste that he found around the

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21 I have been unable to determine Gottberg’s date of death. However, based on conversations I had with Peter Kruse, Axel König, and Jürgen Schilling, she died sometime in the early to mid-2000s.
harbor in Hamburg. In early 1978, when Gottberg was still associated with AIESEC, Peter Kruse, the public relations manager for the Contrans shipping firm, befriended Gottberg’s sculptor neighbor. Kruse met the man one day near the Contrans repair shop. Kruse was there for work; the artist was searching for materials to use in his sculptures. The sculptor invited Kruse to visit his studio (next door to Gottberg) and it was there that Kruse met Gottberg. This chance encounter turned into a seven-hour-long conversation that marked the beginning of fifteen fruitful years of collaboration and friendship between Gottberg, the art agent, and Kruse, the public relations manager.

Kruse recalled that, during their first discussion, the two developed a number of marketing designs and strategies for Contrans. They also talked about contemporary art while browsing through numerous art magazines, catalogs, and brochures that Gottberg happened to have in her home. One of the pamphlets was on Vostell. While looking at the information on Vostell’s art, Kruse and Gottberg together conceived an idea to put works of art in Contrans shipping containers and to have the containers travel to various places. Not only would their plan advertise Contrans, which was Kruse’s primary goal, it would also effectively merge art, industry, and design, which was Gottberg’s main interest. Moreover, such a project would support and expose the general public to the contemporary West German art scene. Both felt this was important. With his background in graphic design and typography, and his reputation as an experimental artist who had been working across media and disciplines since the late 1950s, Vostell was an ideal artist to participate in Gottberg and Kruse’s plan.
Gottberg called Vostell late that evening to explain their idea and to inquire about his interest in taking part. According to Kruse, Vostell was at first somewhat reluctant, but he agreed to join Gottberg and Kruse in this undertaking the following day. The three soon began preparations for what ultimately became *Fluxus Zug*. Vostell concentrated on developing an artistic and conceptual design. As I argue in Chapters 2 and 3, he drew inspiration for *Fluxus Zug* from his 1969 concept for an ideal academy. Gottberg and Kruse focused on logistics and on securing funding for the large-scale, costly undertaking.

Vostell imagined from the start that a train would be used to transport the art-filled containers. He envisioned this art train being twenty containers long. Vostell and Gottberg approached the state of NRW with their proposal. Although Contrans was based in Hamburg and Vostell had been living in West Berlin since 1971, they selected NRW because it is Germany’s most populous state, with a dense railway network connecting numerous cities, including the important art centers of Cologne and Düsseldorf. NRW is also Vostell’s home state. (He was born in Leverkusen, an industrial town near Cologne, on October 14, 1932.) In response to Vostell’s proposal, Karl Richter suggested that Vostell consider using a different form of transportation, perhaps a boat rather than a train. This was in June 1979. Vostell persisted. He wanted to use a train.

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22 Gottberg made the phone calls. It is unclear whether she contacted any other artists before Vostell, but, regardless, Vostell was the first artist to agree to take part in the plan. Kruse explained his meeting and collaborations with Gottberg over a series of email exchanges and phone conversations between December 10, 2010 and January 30, 2011.

23 Dr. Karl Richter, letter to Vostell, June 26, 1979. AHV.
As Vostell typed in a letter, dated September 1979, he planned to create objects and images for the train that would not be seen together in a traditional museum. This unconventional work of art/museum would travel to different cities in NRW and local schools would host lectures and discussions in the evenings. Vostell would produce and donate a video or film to the local museums and cultural institutions so that they would have lasting documentation of the work. In return, he anticipated that each city that hosted the train would purchase an object-image to help finance the project.\textsuperscript{24} Vostell was invited to publicly discuss this work and to attend a hearing about it at the Wuppertal-Barmen City Hall on October 25 through 27, 1979.\textsuperscript{25} No conclusive decision was reached at these meetings as to whether NRW would support Vostell’s idea, and just over three months later, Vostell was in competition with another artist for state sponsorship of their respective proposals. The other artist was Bazon Brock.

Vostell had known Brock since at least 1964, when the two performed with other artists in the Festival of New Art at the Technical University in Aachen. The politically charged festival occurred on July 20, 1964, the twentieth anniversary of Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg’s failed attempt to assassinate Hitler. It ended abruptly in pandemonium, as outraged students in

\textsuperscript{24} The cities Vostell initially included were Dortmund, Bochum, Duisburg, Mülheim, Recklinghausen, Wuppertal, Düsseldorf, Hamm, Gladbach, Essen, Krefeld, Münster, Cologne, and Aachen. Vostell, unaddressed letter, September 1979. AHV.
\textsuperscript{25} Dr. Karl Richter, letter to Vostell, October 25, 1979. AHV.
the audience stormed the stage and the police were called. Both Vostell and Brock continued to create provocative, politically-engaged art since then—Vostell through his participatory happenings, evocative environments, and experimentation with such diverse media as televisions, cars, and concrete; Brock through his teaching after becoming a professor in 1965, and through his concentration on art theory and aesthetics.

In early 1980, the now Professor Brock proposed to the Secretariat of NRW his own idea of creating an art train. Brock’s train would be ten cars long and it would complement Documenta VII, which was scheduled for 1982. Already in 1968 at Documenta IV, Brock had organized a “visitors’ school,” where he used action teaching to develop visitors’ visual literacy and to introduce them to contemporary art. He held a visitors’ school in subsequent editions of Documenta as well. The art train that Brock proposed to the Secretariat in 1980 would incorporate a mobile element to his artistic, educational outreach. The first part of the train would include work by such contemporary artists as Edward Kienholz, Jean Tinguely, Daniel Spoerri, and Joseph Beuys. The second part would showcase historical reconstructions of projects by Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo, and others. With this train, Documenta’s reach would be extended beyond the walls of the Fridericianum.

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27 Brock was professor at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg from 1965 to 1976, at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna from 1977 to 1980, and at the Bergische University in Wupperal from 1981 to 2001.
building in Kassel, where the exhibition is held. It would bring contemporary art and art history into the urban fabric of the city and to the general public.

After receiving Brock’s intriguing proposition, Richter wrote to Vostell. In a letter dated February 1, 1980, Richter detailed Brock’s idea and advised Vostell to reduce his own proposed art train to four containers. He further instructed Vostell to find a way to combine his desired train with Brock’s.29 Vostell and Gottberg must have continued to advocate for an art train devoted solely to Vostell’s art, as Richter wrote to Vostell again on May 20 confirming that NRW had decided to sponsor Vostell’s mobile museum. No mention of Brock was made in this correspondence. However, Brock, who began teaching at the Bergische University in Wuppertal in 1981, is credited for contributing to the activities related to Wuppertal’s “White Path” to Fluxus Zug.30

Precisely what convinced Richter and the other cultural ministers in NRW to support Vostell’s project instead of Brock’s is unclear. According to Richter’s letter of May 20, discussed above, the commitment by Thiemann and Gottberg to be responsible for the contracts and logistics, respectively, was a central factor. The DB’s willingness to participate was certainly also a reason. As a letter from November 10, 1980, states, “We also welcome this project very much because it improves the ‘train station scene’ and the image of the DB.”31 I would also suggest that Vostell’s plans to involve numerous cities in the state (not just one, as would have been the case with Brock’s Documenta train) and to have each city

29 Dr. Karl Richter and Müller, letter to Wolf Vostell, February 1, 1980. AHV.
30 Schwarzbauer, Das weisse Heft, 171.
31 Deutsche Bundesbahn, unaddressed correspondence, “Re: Ausstellungszug ‘Mobiles Museum’,” (Essen), November 10, 1980. AHV.
be an active participant in the project through the related cultural programming and discussions with the artist were a significant factor in the state’s decision to pay 300,000 marks.

Indeed, three government officials stressed the engagement with the state in letters published at the beginning of the Fluxus Zug catalog. Prime Minister Rau wrote about Vostell’s mobile project integrating into the diverse population and cultural landscape of NRW.\textsuperscript{32} Richard Erny, First Chairman of the General Assembly, commended the participating cities for working together and for supporting contemporary art, which, he wrote, is often perceived as strange, controversial, or hostile.\textsuperscript{33} Karl Richter declared that the mobile museum belongs to the cities of NRW, as they had bound themselves together through the cooperation of their cultural secretaries. Looking towards the future, he described Vostell’s mobile project as a prototype that would “hopefully see many variations and metamorphoses.”\textsuperscript{34}

In 2010, when the industrial Ruhr region of NRW was named the European Capital of Culture, there was a special five-car commuter train, the MELEZ Festival Train, created in collaboration with the DB that was arguably an iteration of Vostell’s Fluxus Zug, although no explicit reference to Fluxus Zug was made in the literature about the latter train or Vostell. The MELEZ Festival train had a theater car, salon car, white car, media car, and dance café, and it traveled between the region’s cities thirteen times. Every time it made its journey, the installations and performances in its five cars focused on a different theme.

\textsuperscript{32} Fluxus Zug, 4.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 9.
particular to the region. The themes ranged from soundtracks and literature to street art, the Balkans, coal mining, work, and solidarity. Whereas *Fluxus Zug* welcomed visitors inside only when it was stopped in the train station, park, or square, people experienced the MELEZ Festival train while it traveled between cities.\(^{35}\)

Another place where the affect of Vostell’s *Fluxus Zug* may be seen is in Hannah Hurtzig’s project, Mobile Academy, first realized in Bochum in 1999. Later Mobile Academies were realized in Berlin in 2002 and 2004, and in Warsaw in 2006. The Mobile Academy has also organized and collaborated with a variety of parties to organize talks and installations, festivals and archival projects throughout Europe. The project’s website describes the Mobile Academy as “a temporary institution frequently changing its location. … The model of this Art-Academy combines interdisciplinary courses with fieldwork, theory and activism. … Learning always means to confront ones own prejudices.”\(^{36}\)

Given that *Fluxus Zug* traveled throughout NRW (where the Ruhr region and Bochum are located), that it attracted some 60,000 visitors, that it generated much local publicity, and that it was publicized as a mobile museum, a living art school, and a mobile academy, it seems curious that neither the Mobile Academy nor the MELEZ Festival Train acknowledged *Fluxus Zug* as an antecedent. And

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\(^{35}\) The MELEZ festival lasted one month. The train traveled between October 2 and 31. The program for the MELEZ Festival is detailed in the brochure, *MELEZ 2010, Festival der Kulturen*, published by RUHR.2010 GmbH, “Essen für das Ruhrgebiet.” Information may also be found online at www.ruhr2010.de.

\(^{36}\) Mobile Academy, www.mobileacademy-berlin.com. Thank you to Kristine Stiles for calling this alternative academy to my attention.
yet, this omission is not surprising given the absence of scholarly attention that Fluxus Zug has received and the art historical reception of Vostell.

Aside from the critical essays that were commissioned for inclusion in the Fluxus Zug catalog by art historians Georg Schwarzbauer, Eugen Thiemann, and Jürgen Schilling, and by psychologist Wilhelm Salber on the role of travel in Vostell’s oeuvre, on the phenomena of trains, on the relationship between Vostell’s paintings and time, and on the topic of angels, respectively, Fluxus Zug has received only cursory mention in exhibition catalogs and monographs on Vostell. These subsequent, brief accounts primarily repeat the terms that were used to publicize the work in 1981. Because Vostell designed and edited the catalog with Gottberg, the texts written about Fluxus Zug since its realization reiterate what Vostell said himself about the project. They describe Fluxus Zug as a mobile museum and art academy with seven environments about love, death, and work. (Although Fluxus Zug comprised nine freight containers, Vostell did not refer to the first and last containers—the documentary containers—as environments. Therefore, these are rarely commented on. I attend to these containers in Chapters 1 and 4.)

The lack of scholarship on Fluxus Zug is the result of various factors. Despite the myriad media that Vostell worked in, he is most often associated with his large-scale happenings of the 1960s. By the time Vostell created Fluxus Zug in 1981, the art world had turned its attention to a younger generation of neo-Expressionist German painters—the so-called Neue Wilde. Moreover, the older Joseph Beuys, who taught a number of the painters at the renowned Düsseldorf Art Academy and had developed a kind of cult following around his
shaman-like persona, came to overshadow Vostell. In short, Vostell’s career was considered stale by the 1980s. Furthermore, after *Fluxus Zug* completed its journey around NRW on September 29, 1981, it disappeared from public view and from the historical record. *Fluxus Zug* was never meant to be permanent. However, Vostell envisioned that its seven central environments would be on display outside of NRW long after it completed its route in September. As I describe below, not only did this not happen, the environments that collectively comprised *Fluxus Zug* were divided into autonomous works of art, disconnected from each other and from *Fluxus Zug* in general.

III. After Bonn

*Fluxus Zug* was by design temporary and nomadic. It was scheduled to stay in each of sixteen cities for only five days, and its nine environment-filled containers were only supposed to stay together as a cohesive whole for five months. However, Vostell intended that the seven central environments (*The Angels, The Rivers, The Dances, The Winds, The Stones, The Clouds,* and *The Fires*) would subsequently be displayed at institutions in other parts of West Germany and in France. Presumably, the environments would not remain inside the Contrans containers but would instead be installed in appropriately constructed spaces within the institutions. Vostell told journalist Axel Hecht in August 1981 that the Kunsthalle in Hamburg, the Staatstheater in Stuttgart, and the Centre Culturel du Marais in Paris were all interested in temporarily exhibiting the environments. He also said that the art collector Peter Ludwig envisioned *Fluxus*
Zug becoming part of the foundation he was planning and which he established in October 1982. However, what Vostell really desired was to permanently loan the Fluxus Zug environments to the Nationalgalerie in West Berlin.\textsuperscript{37} Vostell had lived in West Berlin since 1971 and the Nationalgalerie honored him with a large retrospective in 1975.\textsuperscript{38} Unfortunately, most of these plans were not realized due to a series of unanticipated problems between Vostell, the state, and the railways, which began partway through Fluxus Zug’s journey and continued for seven months after its tour in NRW ended.\textsuperscript{39}

Fluxus Zug became embroiled in a financial dispute midway through its journey around NRW, and the DB impounded the train for four weeks in August before it could reach Münster, its twelfth stop. Fortunately, Vostell had already planned a four-week break during the month of August so that he could travel to Spain, where he had a second home and studio, to work on upcoming projects. In other words, it seems that the DB was at least courteous enough to wait until this dead period in the Fluxus Zug schedule to seize the environment-filled containers. This meant that Fluxus Zug at most missed one stop in its schedule. (It is unclear whether the train eventually stopped in Münster or not.) Regardless,

\textsuperscript{37} Axel Hecht, “‘Ich bin in eine bürokratische Falle geraten’,” *art: das Kunstmagazin*, no. 10 (October 1981): 59.
\textsuperscript{38} See Jörn Merkert, ed. *Vostell: Retrospektive 1958-1974* (Berlin: Neuer Berliner Kunstverein and Nationalgalerie Berlin, 1975). Berlin’s original Nationalgalerie was located in East Berlin. West Germany established its own Nationalgalerie in West Berlin in a new building designed by Mies van der Rohe that opened in September 1968. Today, the museum is known as the Neue Nationalgalerie.
\textsuperscript{39} Hecht, “‘Ich bin in eine bürokratische Falle geraten’.”
the DB’s confiscation of *Fluxus Zug* was an unexpected and unwelcome act for Vostell.\(^{40}\)

The railways took this action in an attempt to collect on an outstanding bill of 120,000 marks owed to the railway’s publicity company, the Eisenbahn-Reklame-Gesellschaft. This amount was the result of an unforeseen increase in the railways’ operating costs since the original estimate. Both Vostell and the state refused to pay the bill. NRW could not afford to provide any additional financial assistance and Vostell argued that artists should not have to personally pay to realize a work of art.\(^{41}\)

The DB released the *Fluxus Zug* containers in September after the cultural secretary negotiated a separate contract for transportation costs with the remaining cities and used funds allocated for other projects to cover 20,000 marks. *Fluxus Zug* was then allowed to complete its route.\(^{42}\) However, the railways seized the containers again after their final stop in Bonn ended on September 29. Only in April 1982 did officials relent on trying to recoup the unpaid 80,000 marks and permit the Contrans containers, which were still filled with the environments, to be returned to the company in Hamburg. The stipulation remained that if Vostell sold any of the environments, he should use the money to pay his debts. As lawyer and notary Peter Raue wrote to Vostell on

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\(^{40}\) The Aachen-based artists’ collective, Blaustich, on the other hand, took advantage of the dispute and organized playful, impromptu art actions consisting of “hunting” for *Fluxus Zug*. Documentation can be found in the AHV.

\(^{41}\) Regional and local newspapers reported on the dispute, including the *Leverkusen-Anzeiger* nr. 176 (August 2, 1981); *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* nr. 178 (August 5, 1981); and *Rheinische Post* nr. 180 (August 6, 1981). LCA. See also Jürgen Schön, “Vostell fahndet nach Liebe,” *Express* (September 8, 1981); and Hecht, “Ich bin in eine bürokratische Falle geraten.”

behalf of the cultural secretary, *Fluxus Zug* was a not-for-profit venture. No one should profit from it.\(^43\)

There was an unintended consequence to the DB’s seizure of the *Fluxus Zug* containers: the environments inside suffered damage from water and condensation during their time in “captivity.” A few objects were also stolen, including a cassette player from *The Rivers* (the interactive sound environment in container three) and the Mercedes-Benz hood ornament and the video camera from *The Winds* (the car with the embedded televisions in container five).\(^44\)

Vostell enlisted Horst Hahn, a restorer from Cologne, to work on repairing the works. Once restorations were completed, the environments were exhibited at the Centre Culturel du Marais. They never made it to Hamburg, Stuttgart, West Berlin, or to Ludwig’s foundation. Ultimately, the Museum am Ostwall in Dortmund purchased *The Dances* (the concrete-covered “living room” in container four), as well as eight sketches of the *Fluxus Zug* environments that Vostell made in 1980 while planning the project. A private collector in West Berlin purchased *The Clouds* (the lead-covered environment in container seven) and installed it in his basement.\(^45\)

The other environments stayed in the personal collections of Vostell, his wife, Mercedes Guardado Olivenza Vostell, and his two sons, David and Rafael. Vostell saved the documentary materials in his Happening Archive Berlin

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\(^{43}\) Dr. Peter Raue, letter to Vostell, April 20, 1982. AHV.

\(^{44}\) Horst Hahn, a restorer from Cologne, found mold, mildew, and rust. In addition, the knobs of the television sets in *The Winds* were loose or broken off, the concrete in *The Dances* was crumbling, and the paprika in *The Fires* was like a solid rug. Horst Hahn, restoration report, March 26, 1982. AHV.

\(^{45}\) Author’s interview with Mercedes Vostell, Malpartida de Cáceres, February 9, 2011.
(HAB), which he had officially founded in 1971. Vostell reconfigured *The Rivers* and *The Stones* (the altered telephones in the sixth container) into works that could be hung on the wall [Fig. 28]. He also separated *The Angels* paintings from container two between his family and Inge Baecker, his closest gallery dealer at the time. (Baecker had held a retrospective of Vostell’s work, which included sketches and a model of *Fluxus Zug*, in her Bochum gallery in May 1981 to coincide with the opening of Vostell’s mobile museum and living art school.\(^{46}\) *The Fires* (the taxidermied dogs lying on a bed of paprika with knives protruding upwards from their bodies in container eight) was exhibited in Madrid’s international contemporary art fair, ARCO, in 1984. The scent of fresh paprika wafted throughout the exhibition space. *The Winds* remained intact and has been included in exhibitions at various museums in Europe and the United States.\(^{47}\) In short, the environments that together comprised *Fluxus Zug* from May 1 through September 29, 1981, were removed from their original context, split up, and reconfigured as autonomous works of art.

The mobile museum, living art school, and alternative archive has received little attention since its demise, even as numerous contemporary artists today engage in practices that are temporary and nomadic, interactive and participatory, unconventional institutions and interventions into the archive. This dissertation seeks to reintroduce *Fluxus Zug* into the art historical record, analyzing its significance within Vostell’s oeuvre and within contemporary art

\(^{46}\) The exhibition was also a celebration of Galerie Inge Baecker’s tenth anniversary. Baecker opened her gallery with an exhibition of Vostell’s work.

\(^{47}\) *The Winds* has been included in such exhibitions as *Automobile and Culture* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles in 1984 and, more recently, *TV/ARTS/TV* at the Arts Santa Mònica in Barcelona in 2010.
practices more broadly. In particular, I argue that analyzing *Fluxus Zug* in relation to three institutions—museum, academy, and archive—and by considering *Fluxus Zug* as simultaneously critiquing and embracing these institutions, a more expansive understanding of what has become known as “institutional critique” emerges, an understanding that is more in line with the aims of the first generation of artists who, in a variety of methods and diversity of mediums in the late 1960s and early 1970s, questioned and critiqued institutions, specifically the Museum and the academy, and more recently the archive. This is a history in which Vostell belongs and out of which *Fluxus Zug* developed. Having provided an overview of *Fluxus Zug*, from the description of its environments in the foreword to the more general description of the overall project above, including how the idea arose and was funded and how the work was embroiled in a financial dispute and later dismantled, I will now lay out my methodology and the larger questions that this dissertation explores.

**IV. Methodology and Contributions to the Field**

This dissertation performs a close reading of Vostell’s *Fluxus Zug*, considering it as a work of art that was equally a museum, an academy, and an archive. In concentrating on one work—*Fluxus Zug*—as a case study, this dissertation draws on the methodological approach of microhistory. Historian Thomas Robisheaux explains that microhistory “explores events on the small
scale in which people experience everyday life.” As Italian microhistorian Giovanni Levi writes, such an approach acknowledges an individual’s agency and the structures that govern an individual’s actions, as well as an individual’s “constant negotiation, manipulation, choices and decisions” in the face of these structures. Microhistory is “an action and conflict model of man’s behavior in the world which recognizes his [or her]—relative—freedom beyond, though not outside, the constraints of prescriptive and oppressive normative systems.” Alf Lüdtke, a proponent of the German variant of microhistory known as the history of everyday life (Alltagsgeschichte), similarly argues: “[A]ctions and experience cannot be separated from the context of their genesis and impact.”

As I have already demonstrated briefly above, Fluxus Zug constituted three years of negotiations and collaborations between numerous individuals, organizations, structures, and systems. Vostell was but one of many individuals who influenced the shape of Fluxus Zug. Because of him, Fluxus Zug was comprised solely of his art and they were transported by train. Because of Peter Kruse’s role in conceiving the mobile project, Vostell’s environments were housed in Contrans containers. There were only seven Contrans containers and two DB/Transfracht cars due to the conditions that the state of NRW established before it agreed to fund the project. The state was persuaded to support Fluxus Zug.

50 Ibid.
Zug in part because Gottberg was so involved at all stages of the work’s development and realization, and in part because the work engaged with the cities of NRW through the “paths to the train” that Gottberg devised, the related programming that various local contacts organized, and the conversations Vostell had with the public. The DB dictated when and where Fluxus Zug traveled, or did not travel, as happened when they removed Fluxus Zug from circulation. Without ventilation or maintenance for four weeks while in the DB’s care, the environments became moldy and rusted. The cost and time that it took to restore the works, combined with Vostell’s frustration over dealing with West German bureaucracy factored into the decision to not exhibit the environments elsewhere in West Germany. These are just some instances that illustrate how actions cannot be separated from their context.

Highlighting such dynamics not only makes for a rich historical account. Revealing these specifics also helps to provide the concrete grounding that characterizes microhistories. This grounding serves to prevent the construction of overarching and static frameworks that can lead to totalizing interpretations of history. At the same time, the small-scale, detailed scope of microhistorical narratives contributes new insights into comprehending larger historical and social issues. In the case of this dissertation, a close reading of Fluxus Zug as work of art that was equally a (mobile) museum, an (ideal) academy, and an (alternative) archive highlights how Vostell developed an art practice—as an independent artist and as a participant in collective practices—that was simultaneously comprised of numerous and diverse modes of production. Understanding the concurrent role that various modes of artistic production
together play in comprising an individual artist’s practice and the larger construction of collective practices is particularly relevant to appreciating much contemporary art.

In addition, by considering *Fluxus Zug* as an unconventional institution, this dissertation more broadly contributes to discussions of institutional critique. I argue that Vostell aimed not only to critique institutions by creating his own alternative institutions, but he also intended to intervene into the art historical framework that shaped the public reception of his art. In the particular case of *Fluxus Zug*, I contend that Vostell attempted, among other things, to reclaim Fluxus at a moment when it was just beginning to be historicized and institutionalized. As he wrote in a statement published in the *Fluxus Zug* catalog, “The train is dedicated to the Fluxus group.”\(^{52}\) In recognizing Fluxus and in naming his nomadic museum and art school *Fluxus Zug*, Vostell used the trope of mobility to reassert a fluid understanding of Fluxus and to reinsert himself into the art historical narrative as a Fluxus artist.

This dissertation, however, is not about Fluxus per say. I do not intend to write a new history of Fluxus. Indeed, I do not consider *Fluxus Zug* a Fluxus work. However, Vostell was involved with Fluxus from its start. He also specifically titled his work *Fluxus Zug* and dedicated it to the Fluxus group. Moreover, he made *Fluxus Zug* mobile, a concept that he equated with Fluxus because of the word’s Latin root “flux.” For these reasons, *Fluxus Zug* does provoke questions about Fluxus. In particular, it calls attention to the increasingly narrow and exclusionary definition of Fluxus that has been

\(^{52}\) *Fluxus Zug*, 15.
constructed as Fluxus has become increasingly institutionalized, especially in the U.S.

What follows is a brief overview of Vostell’s early involvement in Fluxus. I also discuss how Fluxus has been historicized and institutionalized. The framework of microhistory is particularly useful for an examination of a collective movement like Fluxus, for in laying bare particular details, one comes to more fully appreciate how “[i]ndividuals constantly create their own identities, and groups define themselves according to conflicts and solidarities, which however cannot be assumed a priori but result from dynamics which are the object of analysis.”

V. Vostell and Fluxus: Historicized and Institutionalized

The first official Fluxus festival—the Fluxus International Festival of Very New Music—comprised a series of weekend performances at the Wiesbaden Museum in September 1962. Vostell, George Maciunas, and Nam June Paik organized the festival. Maciunas was born in Lithuania but had lived in the U.S. for some time. He arrived in West Germany in the fall of 1961 to work as a designer for the United States Air Force at its base in Wiesbaden. Maciunas had plans to publish a magazine that would call *Fluxus* and he envisioned organizing a series of Fluxus festivals as a way of publicizing the sort of works that he would publish in his magazine. Paik was one of the artist-musicians that

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54 He left behind the indebted AG Gallery that he had established in New York City in 1960/61.
Maciunas had identified for possible inclusion in the publication, and the two had been in contact since 1961.

Paik had moved from his home country of Korea to West Germany in 1956 to study music. He participated in the international summer courses of new music in Darmstadt, where he met such composers as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel, John Cage, and David Tudor. All of these composers emphasized music’s performative aspect. By 1959 Paik was living in Cologne, where he was involved in the city’s new music scene, taking part in performance evenings held at the artist Mary Bauermeister’s atelier and frequenting Stockhausen’s WDR Studio for Electronic Music.

Vostell had first visited Stockhausen’s WDR studio in 1954. When he moved to Cologne in 1959, Vostell reconnected with the studio and quickly established other contacts in the city’s cultural scene. Although he knew those who gathered at Bauermeister’s atelier, Vostell was not personally an active participant. The reason was that Vostell occasionally worked as a graphic designer in order to support his family. As Bauermeister remorsefully recalled in 2007, some participants (herself included) had looked down on Vostell because of this. They considered Vostell to be a “commercial artist,” as opposed to a “serious artist.”55 Vostell had no qualms moving between the two worlds. Indeed, he regularly used his design skills in his art and publishing ventures.

Despite what others may have thought of him, by the 1960s Vostell was regularly

55 Karsten Arnold, “Wolf Vostell auf Straßen und Plätzen ... durch die Galerien,” Sediment. Mitteilung zur Geschichte des Kunsthandels 14 (2007): 12. Vostell was trained in lithography and typography, and he took graphic design jobs when necessary to provide for his wife and two sons.
inviting people from various disciplines to gather at his home on Thursday evenings.\textsuperscript{56}

Vostell met Paik sometime between 1959 and 1961. Through Paik, Vostell met Maciunas. Through Paik and Vostell, Maciunas met artists from all over who were living in West Germany for various reasons.\textsuperscript{57} Together the three assembled the artists who performed in the Wiesbaden festival. They also compiled works by non-participating artists that were realized by others. The performances ranged from new and electronic music to action and event pieces that blurred distinctions between media and performance type. The emphasis on new music and performativity derived largely from the influence of Paik and Vostell and the artists they recruited to take part in the festival. Festivals in other Western European cities, organized by participants of the Wiesbaden festivals and by other like-minded artists performing action-based works, soon followed in such locations as Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris, Düsseldorf, London, and Nice.

Owen Smith has detailed the history of these early festivals in his essay “Developing a Fluxable Forum: Early Performance and Publishing” (1998)\textsuperscript{58} and in his book \textit{Fluxus: The History of an Attitude} (1998). In both texts, he delineates between “official” Fluxus festivals and “parallel” or “proto-Fluxus” festivals. The parallel and proto-Fluxus festivals included the October 5, 1962 “Parallel

\textsuperscript{56} Daniel Birnbaum, “Ripening on the Rhine: The Cologne Art World of the ’80s,” \textit{Artforum} 41, no. 7 (March 2003): 220.

\textsuperscript{57} Owen Smith, \textit{Fluxus: The History of an Attitude} (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 43. Due to the funding that West Germany dedicated towards new music, many experimental musicians went to West Germany to study. See Amy C. Beal, \textit{New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to Reunification} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) also brought many artists to West Germany.

\textsuperscript{58} In \textit{The Fluxus Reader}, edited by Ken Friedman (West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1998).
Performances of the Newest Music," which Vostell organized in Amsterdam, and the “Festival of Misfits,” which took place in London from October 23 through November 8, 1962. Such festivals are distinguishable from “official” Fluxus festivals, according to Smith’s history, by two factors. First, they did not use the name Fluxus in their titles. Second, due to illness, Maciunas was neither present nor involved in their planning or realization. While Smith contends that Maciunas does not equal Fluxus, he insinuates that the parallel and proto-Fluxus festivals were not Fluxus not just because they did not call themselves Fluxus, but also because Maciunas was absent from them.

Smith does acknowledge the influential roles that artists like Paik and Vostell played in introducing Maciunas to numerous other artists who took part in the Fluxus festivals. He also posits that Fluxus was not a movement but an attitude: it was a “fluid group of artists who were associated personally and conceptually at various times with the rubric ‘Fluxus,’” and it is “impossible to and/or incorrect … to pinpoint a specific date or location for its beginnings.” Yet, at the same time, Smith credits Maciunas with “almost single-handedly … bring[ing] together an international group of non-gallery-oriented artists who would form the core of Fluxus in the early 1960s.” Indeed, he asserts, “All of the ‘official’ or ‘institutional’ Fluxus activities from 1962 to 1978 have one historical common denominator: George Maciunas.” This period of “official” or

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59 Vostell had an exhibition of his work at the Galerie Monet in Amsterdam at that time.
60 Smith, Fluxus, 5.
61 Ibid., 2.
62 Ibid., 25.
63 Ibid., 53.
64 Ibid., 3.
“institutional” Fluxus that Smith demarcates—the supposed “core of Fluxus”—is bookmarked by the Wiesbaden festival in 1962 and Maciunas’s death in 1978.

I highlight these contradictory statements because they point to a central problem in the way that Fluxus has become historicized and institutionalized, particularly in the U.S. Namely, Maciunas, the self-proclaimed chairman of Fluxus, who attempted to wrest control over the diverse and fluid community of artists and artworks associated with Fluxus during his lifetime, has posthumously come to be a defining figure in determining what was and was not Fluxus. According to the Maciunas-based model, if Maciunas identified a work as Fluxus, then it is deemed Fluxus. If not, then it is not considered Fluxus. Because Maciunas came to view Vostell as a rival and “ex-communicated” him from Fluxus, Vostell has come to occupy an uneasy position within the history of Fluxus.

Vostell not only performed in Fluxus festivals, he also documented and featured Fluxus artists and artworks in his publications and, later, in his permanent museum, the Museo Vostell Malpartida in Spain. Already in June 1962, Vostell showcased a number of artists who became central figures within Fluxus in the first issue of his journal dé-coll/age: Bulletin of Contemporary Ideas. He included Fluxus-associated artists and works in the next five issues as well. (Arguably, the seventh and final issue of dé-coll/age featured a Fluxus-associated artist as well, namely himself, but this issue focused only on one project: Vostell’s Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room, 1968, a work which is discussed in Chapter

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2.) In 1965, Vostell and Jürgen Becker edited the anthology *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme. A Documentation*. More than thirty years later, Fluxus artist Dick Higgins described this book as “the first international anthology and still the best overall source [of intermedia].” What makes these publications so valuable is that they are comprised of facsimiles of the original documents that were submitted for inclusion. In this way, although the publications consist of reproductions of photographs, manuscripts, newspaper articles, and other documents, they function as sites of primary information. Fluxus works are also central to the collection of the Museo Vostell Malpartida, which Vostell first conceived around 1975 but which did not realize its full institutional form until the late 1990s and early 2000s. This museum is discussed at greater length in Chapter 1.

Despite Vostell’s participation in and promotion of Fluxus from its beginning, Maciunas decided to exclude Vostell from the “collective front” that he wanted Fluxus to be by the summer of 1963. Maciunas believed Vostell was purposefully attempting to “sabotage” Fluxus by publishing Fluxus works in dé-coll/age. This was essentially an issue of ego. Maciunas’s own plans for publishing Fluxus works had been delayed and he was particularly upset that

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69 Smith, *Fluxus*, 111.
Vostell had published Fluxus materials first. As he grew increasingly concerned with exercising control over the institution of Fluxus, Maciunas not only expelled artists from the group, he created “official” historical charts, publications, and programs. To represent Fluxus in Vostell and Becker’s *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme*, Maciunas contributed some Fluxus newspapers and the *Fluxus I Yearbook* (works he compiled, designed, and printed). He also submitted a selection of works by George Brecht, Robert Watts, Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, and Takehisa Kosugi, as well as some photographs of Fluxus concerts. In addition, Maciunas included a letter, dated November 3, 1964:

> In general you can say that Fluxus is against serious art or culture & its institutions, against Europeanism. Also against art professionalism, against art as commercial article or way to earn a living. Also against every form of art that promotes the artist-ego. ... Fluxus is a collective.... In this aspect Fluxus is different from your dé-coll/age. ...  

Maciunas was asserting control over Fluxus and spelling out for readers and for posterity that Vostell’s publications were not Fluxus. This “official” history has provided the basis for determining the content and organization of one of the largest collections of Fluxus works: the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection.

As Hannah Higgins notes in her book, *Fluxus Experience* (2002), the Silverman Collection “is the only major collection in the world that holds uncompromisingly to the Maciunas-based paradigm for Fluxus.”

The Silvermans began collecting Fluxus works in 1978, the year Maciunas died. In 1981, they appointed Jon Hendricks curator of the collection, which was then

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70 Ibid., 90-1.  
71 My translation of the German translation by Tomas Schmit, which is quoted in Becker and Vostell, *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme*, 201-2.  
located in Detroit. Hendricks is a co-founder of the political Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG, 1969-76) and was a friend of Maciunas and sometimes collaborator. In the process of creating a Fluxus canon, Hendricks “progressively excluded” works that Maciunas did not intend to be part of Fluxus. Higgins points out that as this constructed canon became ever narrower and more institutionalized, “the production quality of each catalogue rose as increasingly prestigious venues sponsored the exhibitions.” For example, the first catalog Hendricks published of the Silverman Collection, *Fluxus Etc.* (1981) was printed on cheap newsprint and card stock and was “comparatively open in its inclusion of materials that fall outside Hendricks’s strict definition of Fluxus....” In contrast, *Fluxus Codex*, published in 1988 by Harry N. Abrams and marketed by the publisher as a “catalogue raisonné of Fluxus” compiled by “the recognized authority in the field,” is a 616-page publication with more than 800 illustrations, including sixty-eight full-color, glossy plates. The Fluxus works in this book adhere to Maciunas’s and Hendricks’s definition of Fluxus. Today, this version of Fluxus appears in high-quality, colorful, digital images on New York’s Museum of Modern Art’s (MoMA) website. MoMA acquired the Silverman Collection in 2009 and named Hendricks its consulting curator, thereby further legitimizing and institutionalizing the Maciunas-based paradigm of Fluxus.

73 Ibid., 158. The first catalogue, *Fluxus Etc.*, was published in 1981 by the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.
74 Ibid., 158.
An excerpt from Hendricks’s reply to my inquiry about Vostell’s *Fluxus* Zug sheds light on his definition of Fluxus:

… I don’t feel that it’s Fluxus at all. Rather it’s a kind of anti-Fluxus work, that is, it’s contrary to the idea of Fluxus, which were generally cheap, disposable, accessible works, not unique ‘masterpieces’ for the market place. But this isn’t to say that Vostell wasn’t very important to Fluxus, he brought many of the artists together and participated in the early Fluxus concerts, etc.76

While, as I noted above, I do not consider *Fluxus Zug* a Fluxus work per say, *Fluxus Zug* nonetheless suggests a more expansive and interdisciplinary notion of Fluxus, its history, and its legacy.

Playing on and with the Latin etymology of “fluxus,” meaning flowing, moving, and suggesting uncertainty, Vostell created a nomadic and temporary work, titled it *Fluxus Zug*, and dedicated it to the Fluxus group. It existed in the interstitial space between media—what Dick Higgins theorized as “intermedia”—as well as between disciplines and between institutions. It points far beyond the objects, publications, and material ephemera that tend to characterize today’s institutional, market-driven version of Fluxus. It could be argued that through *Fluxus Zug* Vostell aimed to recoup Fluxus’s critical social dimension and its emphasis on process and the act of “constructing, reconstructing, and examining the nature of meaning.”77 But he did so with the grandiose, spectacular, polymorphic means that typified his happenings and

76 Jon Hendricks, email to the author, July 18, 2011.
with the understanding that Fluxus was a “mood,” which, in its beginnings, “encompass[ed] the most divergent artistic concepts.”

Vostell explained to art critic Achille Bonito Oliva in 1978 in what sense his work is Fluxus:

… I create open processes, … I practice an art that is not comprehensible straightaway. The objects that I make and the events that I stage stay in the mind and stir thoughts in the public for months, for years. … It is a mobile imagination, whereas artists who are not Fluxus produce a static imagination.

Vostell’s emphases on open-endedness, on process, and on sparking individuals’ imaginations so that they experience society and their place in it in a different way constitute a pluralistic understanding of Fluxus. Such a view is characteristic of a German take on the movement. It is also more in line with the limited scholarship that theorizes non-object-based frameworks for analyzing Fluxus.

Fluxus artist and historian Ken Friedman describes Fluxus a “laboratory.” It was a place where people explored philosophically complex questions about the nature of and relationship between art and life. However, Friedman privileges Maciunas as the key figure in his otherwise potentially elastic, inclusive perspective of Fluxus. In his recent essay, “Freedom? Nothingness? Time? Fluxus and the Laboratory of Ideas” (2012), Friedman underscores the importance of intermedia for Fluxus artists and provides a comprehensive

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80 Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 165.
overview of the meaning of intermedia, but illustrates the article only with “official” Fluxus publications—i.e., works that Maciunas sanctioned.

Cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen argued in an essay written for the 1993 exhibition *In the Spirit of Fluxus* at the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis that Fluxus should be viewed as a phenomenon. “[A]s soon as one begins studying Fluxus as a phenomenon of the late 1950s and early 1960s,” he writes, “one begins seeing its traces everywhere in the artistic movements that followed in the 1960s and 1970s, from Minimalism and concept art to performance art, video, mail art, and correspondence art.”82 For Huyssen, Fluxus cannot be contained within a specific range of dates, nor can it be limited to an association with a particular person.

Art historian Kristine Stiles theorizes that “the ontology of Fluxus is performative.”83 She examines how Fluxus stresses interaction between the material and mental worlds, and how Fluxus works situate “the body in the center of knowledge as the principal means by which to interrogate the very conditions in which individuals interact with things and thereby produce social meanings.”84 Such a theoretical framework allows for the inclusion of broad range of artworks.

Similar to Stiles, Hannah Higgins focuses on the experiential nature of Fluxus works and argues for understanding the Fluxus group as a flexible social formation in *Fluxus Experience*. She even outlines how Fluxus is discussed in countries outside the U.S., including Germany and Italy. However, she describes

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84 Ibid.
these “temporally and socially elastic, experientially open ended, and adaptable to multiple perspectives” as “welcome alternative[s] to the dominant model.”

The dominant model is the Maciunas-based model—a paradigm that Higgins works to move beyond but at times seems to remain beholden to. Indeed, the majority of the works she examines for their experiential nature are part of the “official” Fluxus canon, a result, perhaps, of the influence of growing up with Fluxus artist-parents, Alison Knowles and Dick Higgins.

A comparable conundrum occurred in the recent exhibition, *Fluxus and the Essential Questions of Life* (2011), at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College. As the title suggests, the exhibition was organized around questions that Fluxus provokes: “Art (What’s It Good For)?”; “Change?”; “Danger?”; “Death?”; “Freedom?”; “God?”; “Happiness?”; “Health?”; “Love?”; “Nothingness?”; “Sex?”; and “Staying Alive?”. The included works were drawn primarily from the museum’s George Maciunas Memorial Collection of Fluxus, which was founded in 1978 shortly after Maciunas’s death. Notably, the first gift donated to the collection—a work that is specifically mentioned in the preface to the exhibition catalogue and that conceptually engages with all of the exhibition’s questions—was omitted from the exhibition. The work is Vostell’s *Technological Oak Tree (T.O.T.)* (1978). Dick Higgins donated it to the museum. Like *Fluxus Zug*, *T.O.T.* work is not an “official” Fluxus work, yet both provoke questions about the nature of Fluxus and the way in which Fluxus has become historicized and institutionalized. Having provided an overview of Fluxus and its

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85 Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 165.
historicization and institutionalization, I turn now to the outline of this dissertation.

VI. Chapter Overview

The chapters of this dissertation are organized thematically, with each chapter considering *Fluxus Zug* as a different type of institution: as a museum, as an academy, and as an archive. Because *Fluxus Zug* was first and foremost a mobile museum, the museum is the subject of the first chapter. I theorize that *Fluxus Zug* was a counterpoint to the museum that Vostell founded in rural Extremadura, Spain, around the time of *Fluxus Zug*. Vostell initially imagined that the museum in Spain, which would feature Fluxus, would be outdoors, subjected to the elements, and therefore in a constant state of flux. However, over time, and especially since Vostell’s death in 1998, his museum in Spain—the Museo Vostell Malpartida—has become increasingly institutionalized in the traditional sense of a museum. The Museo Vostell Malpartida, in other words, shifted in the opposite direction as *Fluxus Zug*. Intended to disintegrate into the landscape, Vostell’s museum in Spain is now permanently located in a recently renovated wool-washing complex. With *Fluxus Zug*, Vostell had hoped that the environments that comprised it would remain on public view inside another institution, namely, West Berlin’s Nationalgalerie. Instead, it was taken apart and disappeared from public view and from the historical record. This chapter explores the relationship between these two museums and situates both within
the context of institutional critique. I argue that *Fluxus Zug* presents a dynamic concept of a museum as a work of art.

The second and third chapters consider *Fluxus Zug* as the other type of institution it was publicized as: an academy. I theorize that *Fluxus Zug* is a variation on an idea Vostell had for an ideal academy in 1969. His earlier concept emphasized mobility and interaction with the public. It was to travel by train or cars throughout West Germany. Evolving out of Vostell’s own artistic practice, the experimental, collective practices of the 1960s, and the revolutionary spirit of 1968, Vostell imagined that the ideal academy would comprise a team of advisors from various disciplines. They would converse with the public over the academy’s self-run television and radio station, and they would instigate “learning events” in public locations. When Gottberg and Kruse approached Vostell nearly ten years later with the opportunity to realize a large-scale nomadic project, Vostell returned to his previous model for an ideal academy. He altered his initial concept to parallel the shift in the art world from ephemeral, experiential, and collective practices to more tangible, expressionist, object-based work. Rather than gather a constellation of different advisors around whom teaching and learning would occur, Vostell made a collection of artworks that the public could learn from and presented himself as the creator.

Chapter four looks at *Fluxus Zug* as an archive. Vostell did not label his art train as an archive, but he drew on materials from the archive he officially founded in 1971, the Happening Archive Berlin (HAB), as well as from the larger Archive of history in creating the environments and documentation cars of *Fluxus Zug*. This chapter discusses the archive as a repository of physical
materials and as an artistic practice, as well as from a theoretical perspective, drawing on the recent interest by artists and scholars in the archive and its role in the construction of history.

Museum, academy, and archive. While I examine these three institutions in separate chapters, they are all related. Vostell’s engagement with them as an integral part of his artistic practice prefigures contemporary artists’ interest in curating, teaching, and archiving. *Fluxus Zug* presents a unique case study for examining these various modes of artistic production that together may comprise an individual artist’s practice, as well as the larger construction of collective practices.
Ch. 1: Mobile Museum

An opening of the traditional museum—my mobile cultural work.

- Wolf Vostell

I. Introduction

Vostell publicized *Fluxus Zug* first and foremost as a museum, and his promotional materials proclaimed: “The Mobile Museum Vostell: 7 Environments about Love, Death, Work.” He dedicated it to the Fluxus group that he helped to found in Wiesbaden in 1962. *Fluxus Zug* was the second museum that Vostell established, after the Museo Vostell Malpartida (MVM), which he officially founded in October 1976 in Malpartida de Cáceres, Spain, the rural Extremadura village where he established his second home in January 1977. Malpartida is approximately eleven kilometers southwest of Cáceres, the hometown of Mercedes Guardado Olivenza, whom Vostell married in December 1958. Vostell conceived the MVM in 1974 as an open-air museum in Los Barruecos, an area three kilometers south of Malpartida, characterized by its unique granite formations. There, he imagined installing built environments that would coexist with nature and be experienced physically. The environments, like the landscape, would be subjected to the elements such that the museum and its art would eventually erode, decompose, disintegrate, and disappear. While Vostell did install two environments in Los Barruecos, the MVM evolved into an increasingly permanent institution that incorporates a portion of the grounds of

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1 *Fluxus Zug*, 15.
Los Barruecos, but whose collections are predominantly housed within an eighteenth-century lavadero complex that had been used for wool-washing. The MVM fully opened when renovations to all the buildings were completed in July 1998, three months after Vostell died and seventeen years after Fluxus Zug was realized.

Today the MVM houses the Wolf and Mercedes Vostell Collection, Gino Di Maggio’s donated Fluxus Collection, and a collection of conceptual art by artists primarily from Spain, Portugal, and Poland. The MVM is also home to the Archive Happening Vostell (AHV, previously known as the Happening Archive Berlin, or HAB), the Happening Fluxus Library, and Vostell’s personal library. Acknowledging the lavadero’s historical significance for the region, one room of the MVM contains ethnographic displays of the history of wool washing in Los Barruecos and of the area’s livestock trails. There is a café for visitors as well.

Individuals and the local and regional governments financially support the museum, and the MVM is now an established and ever-growing museum with an Association of Friends of the Museo Vostell Malpartida, which was incorporated as a non-profit organization in December 1985, and which works to expand the museum’s collections, to organize artistic and cultural activities, and to promote collaboration between private and public institutions in Spain and abroad.

In contrast, Fluxus Zug was a museum continuously on the move with no roots. Housed within industrial shipping containers and sent by train to different
towns every five days;\(^2\) it ceased to exist as a museum after five months, when its journey around NRW ended in Bonn on September 29, 1981, and its installations were removed from the containers shortly thereafter. Whereas the MVM became increasingly institutional in the traditional sense of being a museum that organizes exhibitions, preserves and systematically catalogs its collections, publishes catalogs, and sponsors events and concerts, *Fluxus Zug* confused the distinctions between institution, artwork, and media spectacle by being all three simultaneously. At its core, though, *Fluxus Zug*, like the MVM, embodied what Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago theorize defines a museum: “[M]useums are ‘performances’—pedagogical and political in nature—whose practitioners are centrally invested in the activity of making the visible legible.”\(^3\) In addition to being performative, the museum was also a visual art medium for Vostell, as Rachel Haidu has suggested and I agree.\(^4\) Through his museums, Vostell aimed to make legible the magnitude of his own oeuvre and his importance as a contemporary artist, as well as the art historical significance of other artists associated with Fluxus and happenings and the movements’ experimental, performative, and conceptual spirit. Moreover, he aimed to establish venues for open-ended discussions between the artist, the art, and the public. The museums he created (*Fluxus Zug* and the MVM) took different forms and were created in very different locales (urban West Germany and rural Extremadura,

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\(^2\) The only exception was the month of August, when the Deutsche Bahn confiscated the containers in an attempt to collect on an outstanding bill, as is described in the introduction.


respectively) but, as I will demonstrate, they are intrinsically related to each other, to Vostell’s art making, and to his standing within the dominant art historical narrative.

This chapter considers the relationship between *Fluxus Zug* and the MVM, arguing that the former is the dynamic counterpoint to the latter. In *Fluxus Zug*, Vostell realized the museum in flux that he initially imagined when he conceived the MVM. I trace the development of both museums and the forms they took, situating them within the social, political, and cultural milieu of their respective locations. I theorize that *Fluxus Zug* and the MVM reflect the perceived significance of Vostell and the media in which he worked within the dominant narrative of contemporary art history around the time of their creation. Furthermore, I contextualize *Fluxus Zug* and the MVM within practices of institutional critique that began in the late 1960s, although Vostell has not previously been discussed in such terms. Three unrealized museum projects that Vostell proposed in the 1970s for Cologne and Bonn provide a point of entry for my analysis. It is to these museum projects that preceded both *Fluxus Zug* and the MVM that I now turn.

II. Three Utopian Museum Projects

The three museum projects that Vostell created, and that I will focus on, include *Project for a Drive-in Museum in Cologne* (1970); *Museum of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century for Cologne* (1971); and *Project for a Museum of German Art after 1945 in Bonn* (1975) [Figs. 29-31]. The first two take the form of
photomontage prints; the latter is an assemblage. Vostell included an enlarged reproduction of each inside the final container of *Fluxus Zug*. In presenting them in the car entitled *Vostell in NRW 1959-1981*, Vostell seems to have suggested that he held these works in high regard as part of his oeuvre. Their inclusion also indicates that Vostell considered the museums he proposed to be works of art, inseparable from the other media in which he worked and the other activities he organized. In addition, they serve as documentation that *Fluxus Zug* was one among multiple museums that Vostell imagined for NRW.

An aerial photograph of a cloverleaf intersection illustrates the setting of the Drive-in Museum. Devoid of any other identifying landmarks, only the inclusion of “Cologne” in the title alerts viewers to the specific geographic location.\(^5\) Pictures of two television sets placed on top of the middle of the intersection represent the museum’s buildings. Vostell explained how the museum would function and what type of art it would exhibit in handwritten notes that surround the montaged image.

The first television would have rooms filled with environments and objects. There would also be a hotel inside the television, and each room would have access to a library and video service. The hotel would allow commuters and

\(^5\) Vostell reused the same image in 1972 in an exhibition Warsaw. Text typed on the television screens of the 1972 version lists a highway crossing near the entrance to West Berlin as the location, and mentions the inclusion of an intermedia archive in addition to a film and video archive. A database would store information about all the interdisciplinary art. A copy of the image can be found in the SA/SS. Vostell created another version of the drive-in museum for West Berlin in 1971, using a different aerial photograph of intersecting roadways, that was included in the publication *Museum in Motion?*. The 1971 drive-in museum was similar in function and features to the 1970 and 1972 versions, although Vostell specified that there would be parking spaces in front of the façades so that passersby could stop to watch the projected programs and videos as in a drive-in movie theater. He also expressed his desire that Berlin’s Art University and the headquarters of artists’ professional organizations be housed in the museum. See *Museum in Motion?*: *The Modern Art Museum at Issue*, ed. Carel Blotkamp, et al., trans. Andrea Gasten (Amsterdam: Government Publishing Office, 1979), 370-3.
art aficionados alike to live and sleep inside the museum and to interact
intimately with the art over an extended period of time. The second television
set would feature a drive-in movie theater that would screen films about art. It
would also contain a film and television museum, and an art and science
laboratory. These would elucidate the role of electronic media in art and in
society, as well as the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of advanced
contemporary art. Vostell, who had experimented with and incorporated
television as a medium in his art since as early as 1958, insisted that new
technologies could express content in new ways. Drawing on Marshall
McLuhan’s famous dictum “The medium is the message,” which Vostell was
familiar with at least by August 1966, Vostell told Jürgen Schilling in 1980 about
his own incorporation of new technologies:

> Without new technologies there is no new content, or stated differently,
with new technologies one can now again newly express old content;
there is no new subject matter, only just the new forms and the new
technologies allow for new possibilities for communication
(Aussagemöglichkeiten).

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6 Notably, in 2010, in the middle of his exhibition-installation, SOMA, at the Hamburger Bahnhof
in Berlin, Belgian artist Carsten Höller created a hotel-like “room” that one or two guests could
rent for one night. The “room” consisted of a bed placed on top of a raised circular platform in
the middle of Höller’s installation. The installation included twelve live reindeer, twenty-four
canaries, eight mice, two flies, large mushroom sculptures, refrigerators filled with real
mushrooms and containers of reindeer urine, television monitors, clocks, and other objects.
SOMA was an art and science laboratory that explored the mythical drink made by Vedic
nomads in northern India during the second century BCE. See Dorothea Brill and Udo

7 According to his daily calendar from 1966, Vostell sent a package to McLuhan on August 29.
SA/SS. In December 1966, Vostell composed a proposal for an intermedia festival to take place in
Cologne in 1967. He listed McLuhan as a presenter, along with Max Bense, for a symposium at
the festival. See Interfunktionen 1 (1968). Vostell later created a rubber stamp that read
horizontally “MCLUHAN MULTI HAPPENING KAPROW” and vertically “SUPER MULTI
MIXED MEDIA.” Vostell’s name was written directly below Kaprow’s. Stamped in the copy of
Interfunktionen 2 (1969) in the AHV.

8 Jürgen Schilling, Wolf Vostell: Dé-coll/agen, Verwischungen, Schichtenbilder, Bleibilder, Objektbilder
Following this logic, making television and video integral to the Drive-In Museum would open possibilities for the museum to convey, and for the public to interpret, information in new and profound ways.

Television and video would not only be present inside the museum, both of the TVs that comprised the museum’s buildings would broadcast a different program on their large exterior screens (i.e., on the museum’s façade). The first TV would project a different work of art, action, or happening every day. The second one would show a West German television channel to contrast with the art programming. With screens measuring approximately fifty by fifty meters, drivers would be able to see the programs from the highway at a distance of five to ten kilometers away. The museum’s façades would function like drive-in movie theater screens and enable the institution to infiltrate the spaces of everyday life. According to McLuhan’s theories, the medium of television would provoke the public’s creative participation.\(^9\) Perhaps the juxtaposition of art and popular programming playing simultaneously on two adjacent screens would have stimulated more interaction between the public and the museum, as viewers would be forced to reckon with the different broadcasts flickering in front of them.

Vostell incorporated many of the same features of the Drive-In Museum into the Museum of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century in Cologne the following year (1971), including television, a hotel, and a mass transportation system. Rather than the highway, though, this museum would incorporate the

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railway. Instead of a TV set, Vostell used a different common object to represent
the museum’s form: an air pump. He notated that the air pump would be
transparent and twenty meters in diameter. The large, clear tube would be
connected to the Hohenzollern Bridge, which crosses the Rhine River and
connects Cologne’s main train station to the Messe/Deutz station, located on
opposite sides of the river. What is important to recall in this context is that
retreating German troops destroyed the important bridge near the end of World
War II. It was rebuilt shortly after the war’s end with one set of arches
supporting two train tracks and a pedestrian sidewalk. A second set of arches
bracing two more train tracks was added in the mid- to late 1950s. Fifteen years
before the bridge was enlarged a third time, Vostell envisioned that the air pump
museum would serve as the third pairing of train tracks across the Rhine.¹⁰ The
museum was a creative solution for expanding the bridge’s capacity and for
bringing the general public into contact with contemporary art as they engaged
in an ordinary activity, namely, commuting.

To illustrate the museum and its setting, Vostell affixed a small metal
bicycle tire pump to a photograph of Cologne that features the Hohenzollern
Bridge. He then taped the photomontage to a larger sheet of paper and wrote
text beside the photograph explicating how the museum would operate. Trains
would travel through the museum, allowing passengers to see into the
institution from their seats and resulting in the juxtaposition of art and life
processes. Because the tube would be transparent, those inside the museum

(February 16, 1971).
would presumably also have a view of Cologne and people on the ground would be able to see into the museum. Those outside looking in could catch a glimpse of the art inside the museum along with the trains traveling through the museum and the passengers inside the trains. Vostell did not stipulate what sort of artworks would be exhibited, but he did write that a flat panel television with a screen measuring twenty-five by twenty-five meters would be attached to the exterior of the air pump. The TV would broadcast ideas and images from the museum, day and night. Additionally, a projector mounted inside the hole where an air pump connects to a tire valve would project ideas onto the clouds over the city. The employment of the television and projector would turn the environs of Cologne into a museum and the general public into museum visitors. Vostell would blur the usually clearly delineated separation between the interior and exterior of the museum. According to critic Heinz Ohff, Vostell also intended that the museum would house an archive, a hotel, and a café on its second floor.\footnote{Ibid.} Thus, while the museum’s form—an enormous air pump—is reminiscent of the supersized sculptures of mundane objects by Claes Oldenburg, Vostell imagined that his oversized air pump would be an inhabitable, architectural structure. People and ideas would circulate throughout the air pump museum as people traveled across the Rhine in trains, pondered the art, studied in the archive, stayed in the hotel, and congregated in the café.

What is more, the museum that Vostell proposed for Cologne would serve multiple needs of the community in the name of art. The air pump would simultaneously function as a museum and as additional train tracks to help
alleviate congestion. The museum’s hotel would provide a place for tourists to sleep, the café a space for people to gather and eat, and the archive a location to preserve materials and for individuals to research. All of this would be centrally located and easily accessible, bridging the Rhine River and connecting the historic city center with its notable Cathedral (Dom) on the left bank with the Trade Fair Hall (Messe) on the right bank.

Unlike the two museums Vostell proposed for Cologne, the Museum for German Art after 1945 in Bonn, conceived in 1975, would not project content outside its walls via electronic media, nor would it incorporate a hotel or café. It was simply to be a large, hollow, transparent ring that would encircle the Rhine River, arcing over the water above ground and curving under it below ground, and large enough for people to enter and walk through.\textsuperscript{12} Vostell pictured the museum with an enlarged aerial photograph of Bonn. In the upper right-hand corner, he drew a sketch of the river’s elevation and glued an actual ring on top of it. He also attached a larger translucent tube to the center of the photograph so that it arches over the river like a massive pedestrian bridge, connecting one side of West Germany’s capital city to the other. A watercolor that Vostell created of the same museum project in 1975 explains that the upper half of the ring would present images (\textit{Bilder}) and objects, while the lower half would feature environments and sculptures [Fig. 32].\textsuperscript{13} Vostell did not specify in what kind of

\textsuperscript{12} A subterranean antecedent to Vostell’s ring museum in Bonn is architect Philip Johnson’s underground art museum, constructed in 1965 across the property from his Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut. The bunker-like structure was featured in such magazines as \textit{Vogue}, \textit{Look}, and \textit{Art in America} in 1966.

\textsuperscript{13} The watercolor was reproduced in \textit{Berliner Kunstblatt}, no. 10 (September 1975): 9. Vostell wrote on the watercolor that the museum was dedicated to then Federal President Walter Scheel, a
transparent material the ring museum in Bonn or the air pump museum in Cologne would be built, but the emphasis on transparency is suggestive of glass, a materially significant substance as Walter Benjamin posited decades earlier.

Benjamin theorized glass as a modern material *par excellence*: Nothing can adhere to the hard, smooth material, including traces of the past, and, as a building material, glass counteracts the forming of habits that prevent people from living life to the fullest. According to Benjamin, “Glass is, in general, the enemy of secrets.”14 Citing architect Paul Scheerbart, Benjamin further wrote in December 1933, eleven months after Hitler seized power as Chancellor of Germany: “‘The new glass-milieu will transform humanity utterly.’”15 The potential for such a powerfully symbolic material would be fitting for postwar museums of post-1945 art in West Germany. Glass institutions, especially museums in the form of an air pump or a ring, would contrast starkly with the monumental neo-classical stone façade of an institution like Munich’s House of German Art (Haus der Deutschen Kunst) designed by Paul Ludwig Troost under Hitler’s orders. The House of German Art held the annual propagandistic Great German Art Exhibitions, and was built to replace the nineteenth-century glass and steel Glass Palace that burned down on June 6, 1931.16 Not only would glass physically contrast with stone architecture, it would leave no historical traces, as

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15 Ibid., 734.

16 See the Haus der Kunst website for an overview of the institution’s history: http://www.hausderkunst.de.
Benjamin hypothesized, and if glass architecture could change society, as Scheerbart asserted, then museums made of glass would, theoretically, bring about a new and better future untarnished by the legacy of fascism. The material transparency of glass could also be interpreted as a visual metaphor of postwar West Germany’s ideology of political transparency.\(^\text{17}\) While Benjamin speculated about transparent architecture that could actually be built changing society, Vostell ventured into the realm of visionary architecture, such as museums built of television sets, air pumps, and rings, which he believed also had the potential to provoke transformation.

Indeed, Vostell argued in *Fantastic Architecture*, the book he co-edited in 1969 with his friend the artist Dick Higgins, that visionary architecture could alter human experience.\(^\text{18}\) The two artists had issued an open call in 1967 for “architectural ideas, projects and fantasies by artists, musicians, poets, constructors, philosophers, happenings makers, collagists, decollagists and others working actively in cultural fields.”\(^\text{19}\) Vostell and Higgins declared that the “dreams, projects, concepts, etc.” that they would publish would “force architecture to become contemporary.”\(^\text{20}\) Their idealistic tone carried over into the book, printed two years later. A manifesto-like text by Vostell opens the book before an introduction by Higgins. Vostell proclaimed that fantastic or pop architecture is influenced by “the new methods and processes that were


\(^\text{19}\) A copy of the call for submissions can be found in the SA/SS.

\(^\text{20}\) Ibid.
introduced by Fluxus, Happenings, and Pop,” and characterized by “change—i.e., expansion of physical surroundings, sensibilities, media, through disturbance of the familiar.”21 He closed his text with a rally cry: “Our projects—our environments are meant to free man. Only the realization of utopias will make man [sic] happy and release him [sic] from his frustrations! Use your imagination! Join in…. Share the power! Share property! [Vostell’s emphasis].”22 Higgins elaborated upon Vostell’s statements and upon architecture’s inextricable relation to the perception and use of space in his official introduction. Because of the existing building standards, Higgins asserted, the built environment is not in tune with the “richness of our time.”23 Practicing architects are constrained by “oldfashioned [sic] building codes, zoning practices, archaic planning systems …, and trade union regulations.”24 Artists, on the other hand, he implied, are free from such restrictions, and can conceive new ideas to rectify the current situation.

Similar to Vostell’s museum projects for Cologne and for Bonn, the majority of the works featured in Fantastic Architecture were not meant to, or could not, take physical form as actual buildings. Created by different artists between 1917 and 1969, the contributions to the anthology include drawings, photomontages, handwritten and typed texts, and documentary photographs of land art projects.25 The creative concepts and works of art were intended to open

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 The book features contributions from Gerhard Rühm, Claes Oldenburg, Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters, Erich Buchholz, Bici Hendricks, Franz Mon, Ben Vautier, Dennis Oppenheim,
a dialogue about the nature and function of architecture and space, as well as the role of artists in shaping contemporary society through the built environment.

Higgins further explained:

Some works here are process architecture. Some raise the question of durable versus temporary space. Some deal with the problem of consistency—which most recent architecture assumes is valuable in a work. Others deal with the expansion of the possibilities, plain and simple, into additional areas of technology and function. Some are fantasies, raising questions in the mind of the reader, which hopefully will lead to new approaches towards design away from the drawing board. And perhaps these last are the most important body of work in this book, whose purpose is to answer nothing but to raise the most provocative questions.  

I propose that it was in the spirit of “fantastic architecture”—of artists pushing the expectations and boundaries of the built environment—that Vostell envisioned his museums, including the utopian museum projects for Cologne and Bonn. Years later, Jürgen Schilling would coin the term “consciousness landscapes” (Bewußtseinslandschaften) to describe Vostell’s collaged images of architectural structures, which as exploratory investigations and unreal environments could only exist as concepts. These “consciousness landscapes” belong to a history that stretches back at least to the 1920s when European avant-gardes employed collage as a means to envision the reconstruction of Europe after WWI. More contemporaneous with Vostell’s collaged environments were the “paper architecture” of the Italian collective Superstudio (1966-78), who used


28 The Museum of Modern Art’s “Cut ‘n’ Paste: From Architectural Assemblage to Collage City,” July 10-December 1, 2013, exhibition presents the history of such works.
photocollage to imagine experimental architecture and design that could be a force of change in society.

Vostell believed that artists should have a voice in city planning and in reshaping the architecture of city centers, as Ohff noted, and as Fantastic Architecture attests. Yet, as the examples described above highlight, Vostell was particularly interested in the museum as a specific kind of institution. To summarize, he envisioned his 1970s alternative museum structures for Cologne and Bonn in unconventional forms: 1) a drive-in museum in the middle of a highway intersection composed of two television sets; 2) a transparent air pump, large enough for a train to pass through, attached to a bridge; and 3) a transparent ring encircling the Rhine River above and below ground. These visual ideas for art institutions must be understood as more than architectural proposals for new museums, especially at a time when architects were beginning to overturn expectations for art museum architecture, as in the postmodern structures of the Centre Pompidou in Paris (designed in 1971, opened in 1977) and the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (designed in 1977, opened in 1984). The museum-cum-artwork called attention to the architectural frame, and the relationship between that frame, the art inside, and the world outside. They also raised questions about the relationship between the Museum, art, and everyday life, as well as offered a critique of the Museum, its politics, and its legitimating authority.

Vostell’s conceptual museum works, then, were not unlike those by artists associated with institutional critique, such as Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, 29 Heinz Ohff, “Ein Bunker wird Museum,” Der Tagesspiegel (April 10, 1977). HO/BG.
and Hans Haacke. Nevertheless, Vostell has not been analyzed within this context aside from in the 1979 catalog *Museum in Motion?: The Modern Art Museum at Issue*, in which a different version of Vostell’s *Drive-In Museum* is reproduced. Indeed, recent publications related to institutional critique do not mention Vostell’s name at all (Alberro and Stimson, 2009; Raunig and Ray, 2009; Welchman, 2006; Preziosi and Farago, 2004; Kravagna and Kunsthaus Breganz, 2001; McShine, 1999). Even A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale’s edited anthology, *Museums by Artists* (1983), does not include Vostell.\(^{30}\) I explore this neglect in the following section before returning to *Fluxus Zug* and the Museo Vostell Malpartida, for I argue that Vostell’s turn to creating actual museums after envisaging conceptual museums in two-dimensional form was motivated in large part by his being written out of influential movements in contemporary art history as art historians, critics, and curators codified their histories in terms narrower than the movements’ beginnings. One such movement was institutional critique. Another was Fluxus.

**III. Critiquing Institutions**

Vostell told his friend, gallery owner Michael Wewerka, in a 1985 interview: “I competed against the Museum at the beginning of the 1960s, but then the Museum was occupied by conservative forces.”\(^{31}\) He may have

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\(^{30}\) The title of this publication is a nod to Documenta V, organized by Harald Szeemann in 1972, which included a section titled “Museums by Artists.” The works featured in this section included Broodthaers’s *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles, Publicity Section*, Marcel Duchamp’s *Boîte-en-valise* (1938-41), and Claes Oldenburg’s *Mouse Museum* (1965-77).

“competed against” Museums, but he was not opposed to them per se. Vostell believed in the Museum’s inherent value as a cultural institution, as evinced by his conceptual museums (Cologne and Bonn) and actual museums (Fluxus Zug and the MVM). By “Museum” with a capital “M,” I refer to the historic idea of the public European institution born out of the French Revolution. Such an institution was, as Alexander Alberro has written, underpinned by Enlightenment philosophy and its promise of “the production of public exchange, of a public sphere, of a public subject.”

Holding institutions accountable to this ideal was a distinguishing characteristic of the early years (the late 1960s and 1970s) of artistic investigations that have become known as institutional critique. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray identify the “‘first wave’ of institutional critique” with artists who “investigated the conditions of the museum and art field, aiming to oppose, subvert or break out of rigid institutional frameworks.” Lynn Zelevansky has noted that artists’ attention to institutional critique, like the idea of the public Museum, arose during a period of social upheaval:

32 Vostell also “competed against” the art market, even as he worked with gallery dealers who sold his art on the market. In 1970, for example, Vostell, Beuys, and others staged a protest outside of the Cologne Art Market, calling for a “free art market” that would include Beuys-like actions and Vostell-like happenings—artworks that could not be easily commodified. Meanwhile, their dealer, René Block, was inside the Market offering a work by Vostell for DM 40,000 and a Felt Suit by Beuys for DM 1,200. See Cathérine Dominique Baus, “Kunstmarkt 67: von der Institution Kunst zur Organisation Kunstmesse” (Diplomarbeit, University of Cologne, 2006), 56, http://www.wiso.uni-koeln.de/wigesch/diplarb/DiplarbeitBaus.pdf; and Klaus Jürgen-Fischer, “Kunstkritisches Tagebuch XVII: 14.10.70,” Das Kunstwerk (January 1971): 44.
34 This term is sometimes capitalized as “Institutional Critique.” See Alberro and Stimson, eds., Institutional Critique.
Given the contradictory nature of museums and the power they are perceived to have, it is not surprising that in the mid-to-late 1960s when cultural mores—fueled by the Civil Rights Movement, opposition to the Vietnam War, and a nascent feminism—encouraged the questioning of authority, the relationship between art and the power structure that surrounds it became the focus of work by an international group of artists.\footnote{Lynn Zelevansky, “From Inside the Museum: Some Thoughts on the Issue of Institutional Critique,” in \textit{Institutional Critique and After}, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006), 173.}

How artists questioned and challenged the Museum’s authority varied greatly.

Daniel Buren, for example, framed and pierced the facades and interiors of institutions with his trademark standardized striped canvases, diverting attention from the art object, towards the institution’s architecture and the network of social, cultural, and economic factors that effect the perception of objects. In 1970, Buren penned the essay “The Function of the Museum” to clarify his critique of the Museum as a “privileged place” that provides an aesthetic, economic, and mystical framework that effects how artworks are interpreted and valued. For Buren, acts of preserving, collecting, and serving as a refuge for objects establish and perpetuate the power of the Museum and maintain its privileged role in determining the framework for what is considered high, or fine, art.\footnote{Daniel Buren, “The Function of the Museum (1970),” in \textit{Institutional Critique}.} Rather than make its historical and ideological construct transparent, Buren sought to expose how the Museum makes it disappear, as if Museums have a natural relation to the production and exhibition of objects.

Brian O’Doherty’s series of essays “Inside the White Cube,” published in 1976 in \textit{Artforum}, reinforce Buren’s position. While focusing on the white cube of the gallery space as an institution that is anything but neutral, O’Doherty underscores the gallery as an historical construct, a product of modernism, and a
kind of tomb. O’Doherty contends that the white cube creates the aura of
timelessness for the artworks inside its walls and establishes a false dichotomy
between the art inside and the social and political world outside. The white cube
is a structure of exclusion. Whereas O’Doherty theorized the gallery as a
modernist white cube, an empty container able to capitalize on the illusion and
ideology of being uncontaminated by a context, in “Museum: Managers of
Consciousness” (1984), Hans Haacke argued that museums instill in, and control,
the public with opinions and attitudes about art by representing themselves as
educational organizations. As Haacke demonstrated, both in this essay and
numerous artworks, the State and corporations also influence the “opinions and
attitudes” that museums introduce by being their funding agencies, but this
aspect of the museum is also relatively invisible or not disclosed at all.

In his infamous work, Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a
Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971 (1971), Haacke directly exposed the
collusion between the Guggenheim Museum and some members of its board of
directors. The work documented the underhanded business dealings of
Manhattan Real Estate, which owned and operated tenement housing, and
Haacke’s work also exposed the firm’s close ties to multiple art institutions,
including the Guggenheim, which responded to the exhibition of this
information by cancelling the show and firing Edward Fry, the curator who
brought this work into the museum. Eleven years later in The Chocolate Master
(1982), Haacke narrated the ethically compromised business and art collecting
practices of Peter Ludwig, the chocolate-maker and art collector. For it was

38 Der Pralinenminister.
Ludwig, who permanently loaned his art collection to the city of Cologne as an inducement to build a new museum for his art. Coincidentally, Vostell was employed between 1969 and 1971 to design five expanding editions of a catalog that documented the art of the 1960s in Ludwig’s collection.39

While Haacke bluntly exposed the “the nature of art as institution, the authorship of the artist, the social behavior of the art world, the network of cultural policies such as the role and function of the museum, the critic, and the public, and many other sociological problems,”40 in his Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles41 Marcel Broodthaers subtly examined “how the process of institutionalization takes place.”42 A fictive museum, founded in September 1968 in response to political events of that year, Broodthaers’s “museum” was, in fact, a four-year project, realized in twelve “sections” in seven locations in Belgium and Germany. The first two sections were installed in his living room in Brussels, and later sections were set up inside the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle and Documenta in 1972. In 1971, Broodthaers offered his “museum” for sale at the Cologne Art Fair with the installation of the “Financial Section.” The fictive museum parodied and critiqued the cultural hierarchy of State and museum politics, and it called

41 Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles.
attention to the role of language in shaping the making and reception of art, as well as being what philosopher John R. Searle identifies as an institution itself.\textsuperscript{43}

Unlike Broodthaers’s parody of the Museum, Vostell’s collages of utopian museum projects for Cologne and Bonn present the Museum itself as an artistic medium and a concept to be deconstructed and critically examined. Moreover, the combination of his proposed museums’ unconventional architecture—including a popular culture icon, the television, and the materially transparent air pump and ring—provoke questions about the relationship between the museum’s physical structure and the art it contains, and how museum architecture may impact the art it presents and how that art is perceived. In addition, Vostell’s specification that his museums include all artistic mediums, from paintings, sculpture, environments, performance and performance documentation to electronic and mass media, and even an art and science laboratory, highlights how museums decide which artworks to include and which to exclude. By integrating a hotel, a television broadcast, a highway intersection, and a major railway and passenger bridge, his museums also interrogate how the normative museum accentuates the separation between itself as an institution and the quotidian world.

Vostell’s museum projects broke through the divide between art and social, political, and economic factors in comparable ways to how Buren, Haacke, and Broodthaers offered institutional critiques. But while they are typically associated with such practices, Vostell is never considered in this context.

\textsuperscript{43} Searle writes, “An institution is any collectively accepted system of rules (procedures, practices) that enable us to create institutional facts.” John R. Searle, “What is an Institution?,” in \textit{Institutional Critique and After}, 50.
Indeed, the history of institutional critique and the artists who have come to comprise its predominant canon were codified retrospectively by Benjamin Buchloh in his 1990 essay “Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions.” The essay traces the history of conceptual art from art that aimed to “assault” the status of the object’s “visuality, its commodity status, and its form of distribution,” to art which performs “a critique that operates at the level of the aesthetic ‘institution.’” According to Buchloh, the latter—“a paradigmatic change of postwar artistic production”—was manifest after 1966 especially in the work of Broodthaers, Buren, and Haacke. The names of these three artists, along with Michael Asher and sometimes Robert Smithson, are routinely repeated by scholars writing about institutional critique since Buchloh’s essay, which is considered the authority on the subject.

Yet, as Brian Holmes has stated, “other histories could be written.” What Buchloh did, Holmes points out, was to trace a teleological evolution for institutional critique from two propositions by the conceptual artist Lawrence

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46 Ibid., 136-7.
47 Ibid., 142-3.
48 Brian Holmes, “Extradisciplinary Investigations: Towards a New Critique of Institutions,” in Art and Contemporary Critical Practice, 57. As Kristine Stiles pointed out to the author on July 17, 2013: “Among the most obvious and egregiously forgotten antecedents for such institutional critiques is Warhol’s “Raid the Icebox 1 with Andy Warhol,” which opened in October 1969 at the Houston Institute for the Arts before traveling to the Isaac Delgado Museum in New Orleans and ending its tour at the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design in June 1970 where the idea, in fact, began. What Warhol did was to assemble an idiosyncratic collection of objects from RISD’s museum collection, gathering together such things as Native American baskets and mound builder’s vessels, nineteenth century women’s shoes and parasols, along with a variety of sculptures from different time periods and cultures, textiles from around the world, paintings, and other objects, and exhibit them as he found them in the museum’s storage rooms.”
Weiner, propositions based in minimal and conceptual premises. However, Holmes notes that it is equally possible to argue that Weiner’s propositions, prefure the symbolic activism of Gordon Matta-Clark’s ‘anarchitecture’ works, … which confronted the gallery space with urban inequality and racial discrimination. From that departure point, a history of artistic critique could have led to contemporary forms of activism and technopolitical research, via the mobilization of artists around the AIDS epidemic in late 1980s.49

Put differently, Weiner’s writings did not necessarily lead to institutional critique, just as institutional critique did not develop only according to the trajectory that Buchloh established and claimed for only certain artists, a fact attested to by the diversity of artists’ writings included in anthologies like Institutional Critique (Alberro and Stimson, 2009); The Museum as an Arena (Kravagna and Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2001); and exhibition catalogs like The Museum as Muse (McShine, 1999), Museums by Artists (Bronson and Gale, 1983), and Museum in Motion? (Blotkamp et al., 1979). “Artists’ writings are as much a part of the construction of visual knowledge as are works of art,” as Kristine Stiles asserts.50 These statements, theories, and publications support a more expansive understanding of the aims of the first generation of artists who, in a variety of methods and diversity of mediums in the late 1960s and early 1970s, questioned and critiqued institutions, specifically the Museum.

In 1979, Carel Blotkamp and his co-editors added Vostell to the developing context and discussion of institutions and the Museum when they included a version of Vostell’s Drive-In Museum (1971) in their catalog Museum in Motion?, a publication that also featured such artists as Buren and Haacke, and

49 Ibid., 56.
50 Stiles and Selz, Theories and Documents, 11.
the provocative curator Harald Szeemann [Fig. 33]. Best known for organizing the groundbreaking exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (Bern, 1969), followed by Documenta V, still considered today the most important edition of this singular international exhibition, Szeemann was known for challenging institutional and curatorial conventions. Blotkamp also published Frans Haks’s 1979 interview with Joseph Beuys in the *Museum in Motion?* catalog in English for the first time. This interview subsequently appeared in an edited version in both *The Museum as Muse* (1999) and *The Museum as an Arena* (2001). In the interview, Beuys contended that the university is a better institution than a museum “because in a university there is an interdisciplinary relation between all the fields of human activity, and this interdisciplinary relation is capable of developing a new concept of art....”51 He went on to say “museums nowadays are divorced—completely removed—from all the problems of the world.... The museum of the future ... will permeate every aspect of society. ... [M]useums should be like universities....”52

Eight years before Beuys made this statement, Vostell had already envisioned the type of museum that Beuys advocated in his *Drive-In Museum* (1971). Like the drive-in museum that Vostell would eventually reproduce in *Fluxus Zug* (discussed above), the drive-in museum that appeared in *Museum in Motion?* would be located at a highway intersection, but in West Berlin rather

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than in Cologne. One TV-building would screen a variety of artworks while the other would broadcast a national program. There would also be a hotel inside the museum. The museum would be directly engaged in, and encourage critical reflection of, society and world issues as a result of being located in the city divided by the Berlin Wall, the iconic symbol of Cold War tensions; connected to the West German Autobahn, itself notorious both for German engineering and numerous deaths from car accidents; and composed of TVs, staples of modern life, that would project news and popular entertainment programs, as well as works by artists responding in multiple ways to a variety of contemporary issues. Moreover, according to the text Vostell typed on one of the television screens in the montage, the proposed museum would be home to Berlin’s Art University and the headquarters of artists’ professional organizations. In other words, Vostell imagined integrating the museum and the university. He later accomplished this aim both in the Museo Vostell Malpartida, which hosts exhibitions and performances as well as discussions and lectures by scholars and artists, and in Fluxus Zug, whose concept and form was, as I analyze in Chapters 2 and 3, as interconnected with Vostell’s 1969 concept for an ideal academy as it was to his earlier ideas for alternative museums. Yet, while the Beuys interview with Haks would be reproduced in two publications on artists that reflected critically on the Museum after Museum in Motion? appeared in print, Vostell’s image/concept would not. This emphasis on an interview over a visual work of art was characteristic of the 1970s into the 1990s when W.J.T. Mitchell began to theorize the “pictorial turn,” and argued for the parity between the production of
linguistic and visual knowledge. Although Vostell’s montage incisively analyzed the issue of institutional critique and was in dialogue with other artists who in various ways critiqued institutions, after the 1979 publication of Museum in Motion?, Vostell’s contribution to institutional critique was systematically omitted and his work forgotten in this art historical context.

Indeed, by the mid- to late 1970s, Vostell clearly understood that his position in the art world was waning and his work and contributions to institutional critique as well as to other movements like Fluxus and to various media were being elided, and he began actively turning his attention to creating a lasting museum, one that would protect, preserve, and exhibit its collections and that would highlight his own expansive oeuvre, situating it in the Fluxus, happenings, and conceptual artist network for future generations. In this regard it could be said that, sensing influential critics like Buchloh would increasingly ignore him and contemporaneous artists like Beuys would increasingly overshadow him, Vostell rejected the issue of institutional critique altogether and turned in the late 1970s to realizing a more conventional model of the museum in Spain with the Museo Vostell Malpartida. Around the same time, in West Germany, Vostell also started planning Fluxus Zug, the mobile museum/artwork in which he exhibited the utopian museums he had earlier envisioned for Cologne and for Bonn, along with seven new environments and other documentation of his oeuvre. Fluxus Zug was a kind of hybrid of the alternative and normative museum. As a museum it was to be transient, but its installations were made to be permanent, for Vostell ultimately envisioned them being put on

long-term display in West Berlin’s Nationalgalerie. *Fluxus Zug* was also a vanity museum created to highlight Vostell’s own art and to reclaim his originating position in Fluxus in Europe. Vostell intended, by extension, that “Vostell” and “Fluxus” would not only be at the forefront in the public’s mind but would also be intertwined in art history at the very moment when the history of Fluxus was beginning to be written. Moreover, by having *Fluxus Zug* travel throughout North Rhine-Westphalia, the state where both he and Beuys were born and where Beuys, but not Vostell, still lived at the time, and by visiting each city where *Fluxus Zug* stopped to interact with visitors, Vostell aimed to outshine the artist he saw as his rival.

The stakes were high. The international reputation of Beuys had surpassed that of Vostell, even though the two artists were described as “absolute equals” in the early to mid-1960s.\(^{54}\) By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Beuys had become renowned as an artist and professor throughout West Germany, particularly in NRW. Six years after Vostell had participated in the official founding of Fluxus in 1962, Beuys began stamping many of his works with the name Fluxus, claiming a place in a movement in which he briefly participated (1963-1964) and which he eventually rejected.

Although Vostell was central to the beginning of Fluxus, as artist Milan Knízák has written, it was only later that Vostell “vehemently claimed affiliation

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\(^{54}\) According to collector and publisher Wolfgang Feelisch, “When one spoke of German art [around 1965], one named ‘Beuys and Vostell’ in one breath and as absolute equals.” Alexander Braun, “‘... es gibt doch kaum etwas Schöneres als Veränderung’,” *Kunstforum International*, no. 96 (October 1996-January 1997).
with it.”55 Knízák does not clarify what he means by “later,” but it can be inferred from Vostell’s actions that he most fervently began asserting his connection to Fluxus when the movement started to be historicized and acknowledged by art institutions and a broader public. This must be seen as a strategic decision on Vostell’s part, as a conscious effort to be included in a movement that is now widely recognized in contemporary art history. As various scholars have noted, Vostell similarly attempted to intervene in the art historical narrative by retroactively backdating, or attempting to backdate, some of his artworks, especially those that incorporated new media and techniques that had since become more widely used and accepted.56

I call attention to the issue of the artist changing dates and retrospectively insisting on allegiance with an earlier movement for two reasons. Not only do

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56 Benjamin Lima traced an argument between Vostell and painter Reinhold Köhler about who was the first to work with torn posters and to use the term “décollage.” Benjamin Lima, “Wolf Vostell’s Décollage and the Forms of Destruction, 1958-1970” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2009), 24. Rudij Bergmann noted that one must be skeptical of dates, as Vostell attempted to backdate some of his early works with television. Rudij Bergmann, “ohne titel (für 711963),” in Vostell. Leben=Kunst=Leben, ed. Kunstgalerie Gera (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann Kunstverlags GmbH, 1993), 31. Julia Sissia questioned the year of Vostell’s happening, The Theater Is in the Street, dated by the artist to 1958, asking whether the work even existed prior to the public publication in 1969 of photographs purportedly from 1958, or if the work was a “staging of texts and images” and a reflection of the significance the artist wishes to grant to it retrospectively—more than ten years after its execution—within art history.” Julie Sissia, “Wolf Vostell’s Theater is in the Street: Manifesto for an Artist Public?,“ Arts & Societies (June 2011), http://www.artsetsocietes.org/a/a-sissia.html. I found that Vostell changed the date he met Austrian artist Alfred Kubin. According to an interview Rainer Wick conducted with Vostell on March 10, 1969, the typescript of which is in the SA/SS, Vostell met Kubin in 1955. However, as evinced by an article Wieland Schmied published in April 1984, Vostell subsequently altered the year, backdating his trip by three years to 1952. Schmied, “Vostell the Draughtsman: A New Concept of Reality,” Art Press (France), no. 80 (April 1984): 20-22; reprinted in German as “Ein neuer Begriff der Wirklichkeit. Wolf Vostell als Zeichner,” in an exhibition catalog by Galerie-Wewerka-Edition (1984), and in Wieland Schmied, Die fünf Hämmer des Wolf Vostell (Berlin: Edition M. J. Wewerka, 1992), 49-55. The earlier date appeared again most recently in the book Vostell — Ein Leben lang, published by Mercedes Vostell in 2012.
chronological discrepancies pose a challenge to constructing an accurate historical narrative. What is more, the act of claiming an artwork or event earlier than it was made or occurred, or of asserting one’s involvement in the inception of a movement years later, is a strategic intervention into the historical record that reveals an artist’s concern with staking his or her place in the history of art. Backdating an idea, the discovery of a term, or the creation of an artwork is a means of asserting one’s impact on developments in art history, a practice that the discipline of modern and contemporary art history encourages for how it emphasizes the early contributions to changes in art and thereby inherently promotes artists at the forefront of new ideas. In art history, a year or two difference in a new process, technique, or idea can mean the difference between becoming famous or forgotten.

Clearly by backdating and by creating his museums, one of which featured his own name (Museo Vostell Malpartida) and the other of which included the movement he desired to be associated with although he was better known for his happenings (Fluxus Zug), Vostell exhibited a kind of desperation to ensure his well-earned and well-deserved art historical precedence, which was being ignored and even altered by his arch competitor, Beuys, whose effort to assume the position in German Fluxus that belonged to Vostell was promoted by the West Berlin gallery dealer René Block. Block’s support of Beuys was particularly insulting to Vostell, for it was Vostell who, after being contacted by Block in June 1964, introduced the young gallerist to Fluxus, happenings, and
Even Beuys’s students at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie were tutored to disregard Vostell’s art, and art historians like Buchloh, whose aesthetics were determined by minimalism against the *Sturm und Drang* of a happening, especially of the happenings by Vostell, slighted Vostell and his contributions to art history. What is more, in the 1970s and early 1980s a younger generation of West German artists such as Anselm Kiefer and Georg Baselitz, who had studied under Beuys, and who were selected to represent Germany at the 1980 Venice Biennale, came to prominence. Beuys himself also began to captivate New York audiences when he was given a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in 1979, the same year Vostell began developing his concept for *Fluxus Zug* in earnest. Thus, by the time Vostell created *Fluxus Zug* and transformed the MVM into a permanent museum, Beuys had already eclipsed him and Vostell had fallen by the wayside in contemporary art history.

What I am suggesting then is that Vostell’s participation in and subsequent rejection of institutional critique was related as much to trends in contemporary art as it was to his concern over his art historical legacy. As Kynaston McShine astutely wrote, “[A]rtists are often, ultimately, wrestling with the issue of their dependence on the museum to endorse their place in art history. It is the civil institution of today, they feel, that will make them the

57 Block featured Vostell in numerous exhibitions in his West Berlin gallery. However, when he opened a short-lived second gallery in New York City in 1974, he showcased Beuys, who performed *I Like America and America Likes Me* in the space. Beuys was also the only artist Block invited in 1979 for the West Berlin gallery’s final show, *Ja, jetzt brechen wir hier den Scheiss ab* (*Yeah, let’s stop this shit now*), for which Beuys chopped off the plaster from the gallery’s walls and piled the remnants in crates outside the gallery. The crates of plaster were later shipped to Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York for the exhibition *From Berlin: News from the Coyote*, the title being a reference to Beuys’s *I Like America and America Likes Me* action.

cultural institutions of tomorrow.”⁵⁹ Vostell recognized that established museums were not going to corroborate his importance within art history. If he was to become a “cultural institution of tomorrow,” he would have to personally found a museum that would advocate for his significance. Having established Vostell’s interest in museums as a medium and in the Museum as an institution, as well as laid the ground for his concerns over his legacy, I now turn to the two museums that Vostell created, the two museums that were to document and publicize his place within contemporary art: *Fluxus Zug* and the *Museo Vostell Malpartida*. I begin with the origins of the MVM and then move on to discuss a museum that failed to open in Hannover as planned, before focusing on *Fluxus Zug*, as the former two preceded the latter and informed the form and significance of the mobile museum. I highlight some biographical elements throughout these sections, for certain personal experiences and microhistorical details illuminate key decisions Vostell made while realizing his two museums.

**IV. Finding Support and Making a Mark in Spain**

The Museo Vostell Malpartida grew out of Vostell’s idea to create an outdoor museum in Los Barruecos, which he visited for the first time on April 4, 1974.⁶⁰ He had been traveling regularly to Spain ever since he visited the mountainous village of Guadalupe in 1958 to study paintings by Francisco Zurbarán in the Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Guadalupe. Vostell learned

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about the paintings from a man I have been unable to identify but who hailed from Extremadura, Spain, and who Vostell met in Paris in 1954 while working in the city for the graphic designer A. M. Cassandre. At a Parisian movie theater, Vostell saw Luis Buñuel’s 1933 pseudo-documentary film Las Hurdes: Land Without Bread, which captured the lives of the impoverished peasants in Las Hurdes, a destitute region of Extremadura. The film and the Spanish man’s description of Guadalupe made a lasting impression on Vostell and influenced his decision to go to the village in 1958, ready to embark on his own career as an artist. He had left secondary school (Gymnasium) in 1950 without testing; trained in lithography at the Wuppertal Werkkunstschule (1954); taken art courses at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris (1955-56); and attended the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie (1957). In Spain he would study paintings by Zurbarán and Goya.

He arrived in Guadalupe in April 1958 with the German painter, Karl Ott, and the two artists soon met Mercedes Guardado Olivenza and Toñi Camacho, both from Cáceres and working in Guadalupe as teachers. The four

61 Wolf Vostell: Zeichnungen, 1952-1976, ed. Museum am Ostwall Dortmund (Dortmund: Willy Größchen, 1977), 32. Vostell designed fonts for Olivetti, an Italian company that contracted design work through Cassandre’s atelier. He also studied prints by such artists as Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Brueghel, Albrecht Dürer, and Francisco Goya in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. For more on Vostell’s employment with Cassandre and on the relation between his training in graphic design and the early years of his development as an artist, see Lima, “Wolf Vostell’s Décollage and the Forms of Destruction.”


64 I have been unable to locate information about Ott.

quickly became friends, and Vostell and Guardado soon became engaged. Vostell stayed in Spain for approximately five months. In July, he went with Guardado to Cáceres to meet her parents and to plan for their December wedding. While in Cáceres, Vostell also met local artists and held his first solo exhibition, comprised of the paintings he painted in Guadalupe. One of the artists that Vostell befriended was the painter Juan José Narbón, who would introduce Vostell to the village of Malpartida and to Los Barruecos in April 1974.

A few months before his visit to Los Barruecos, Vostell participated in an exhibition in Madrid with Timm Ulrichs, a German conceptual and body artist; the Italian Mario Merz, who was a central figure of Arte Povera; and the British performance artist and painter, Stuart Brisley. Although General Francisco Franco was still in power, the range of artists in this exhibition attests to the gradual opening of Spain to outside cultural influences. Perhaps sensing the impending end of Franco’s rule and his death on November 20, 1975, and certainly enjoying the recognition Spain afforded him by sponsoring exhibitions of his work, Vostell contemplated purchasing a second home in Spain in 1974. When he arrived in Extremadura in March of that year to explore various small villages in the region, Narbón notified the mayor of Malpartida and the deputy of culture that “a German painter of international renown” was coming to visit.

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66 Ibid., 17-8.
Together, on April 4, the artists, the mayor, the deputy of culture, and others made the short journey from the small village of Malpartida to Los Barruecos. Vostell was so impressed by the landscape that he declared the sculptural rock formations in Los Barruecos to be works of nature’s art, and he proposed establishing a museum in the middle of the landscape. He envisioned installing environments amongst the granite, thereby carving out a place for the coexistence of art and nature where their distinction would be less discernible. Exposed to the elements, as well as to the flocks of storks and herds of goats and sheep that continue even today to nest and roam, the art and the museum would exist in a state of perpetual flux. Initially Vostell planned that, like the earth and the rocks, the artworks and the museum would be continuously subjected to the dynamic process of weathering, aging, and wear. Their forms would constantly change and, eventually, the art and the museum would disappear into the landscape, challenging the very notion of an institution’s assumed permanency in line with the spirit of institutional critique.

Vostell’s interest in constructing works of art far outside the urban environments of traditional museums also belonged to the ethos of the period, and to the land and earth art pioneered by such artists as Walter de Maria, Dennis Oppenheim, Michael Heizer, Richard Long, and Robert Smithson in the mid-1960s. Vostell was familiar with the remote sites selected by all of these artists, who were featured in 1969 in the third issue of the German avant-garde journal Interfunktionen, founded by Friedrich Wolfram ("Fritz") Heubach in Cologne in 1968. Vostell had known Heubach since 1965, and Heubach included

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Vostell in multiple issues of Interfunktionen. What differentiates the environments that Vostell imagined for his museum, from the land art artists, is that Vostell did not modify the landscape itself by drilling or digging into or moving earth and rock. He superimposed his sculptural environments onto the land without otherwise altering it, creating a sculpture garden in the wild landscape. Another aspect that distinguishes Vostell’s outdoor works from those of land artists is that whereas earth works were conceived in part as a means of attempting to combat the commercialization of the art object, for Vostell installing works outdoors realized a form of his dé-coll/age concept, his lifelong artistic philosophy that incorporated the dynamic process of creation and destruction.

Vostell first embraced the term “décollage” some years after seeing it by chance in Paris on the cover of the September 6, 1954 issue of Le Figaro, as well as in a German-French dictionary. Defined both as taking-off and crashing, as an airplane might, he adopted the dialectical condition of the word, altering its spelling to dé-coll/age to emphasize the component parts of destruction and collage in time. Dé-coll/age provided a practical and theoretical framework with which Vostell developed his art, which was devoted to provoking a new level of public consciousness about the violence and destruction permeating contemporary society after World War II.

Precisely when Vostell first applied the term dé-coll/age to his artworks is complicated, as Benjamin Lima documented in his dissertation. Lima traced the paper trail of the Le Figaro anecdote and found that, in November 1963, Vostell claimed to have begun using the term dé-coll/age in 1958. He cited a “German-French dictionary” as the source of the word. Not until 1964 did Vostell directly reference Le Figaro, and only in 1966 did he write to Le Figaro to obtain a copy of the September 6, 1954 issue that he subsequently included in numerous publications. See Lima, “Wolf Vostell’s Décollage and the Forms of Destruction,” 32-33.

As is discussed further in the following chapter, dé-coll/age also served as the title of the journal that he published from 1962 to 1969, documenting advanced contemporary art.
of life, the world, and their place in society by presenting and performing acts of violence and destruction in his art, demonstrating how negative phenomenology constructs perception and knowledge as much as positive experiences. He told Rudij Bergmann in an interview in 1988,

[W]ars are inhumane. ... And war is pornography. And violence is bad. But there must be reflection on violence and on war. One cannot garnish them with lovely visual metaphors. So, flowers against war—I do not believe in that. Goya against war—yes.72

Vostell continued, responding to Bergmann’s questions about the role of art and the artist,

As an artist I...reflect the fear of death. The real driving force of art is the fear of death or the fear of brutality or the fear of disasters or the fear of violence. As an artist that is my principal theme.73

As to whether Vostell believed his art had a social function in terms of changing or improving society, he stated,

Heidegger talks about works of art as a statement (Aufstellung) of a piece of truth. We artists call this a settlement. I put this space, this ambiance, this environment, this sculpture garden as a world in the world. I add something to the world that does not exist elsewhere in this form. And that is firstly a social step in addition to the artistic step, which stimulates reflection.74

Art was Vostell’s means to intervene critically in experience, perception, and society. His effort to create an open-air museum must be understood within the context of his philosophy of dé-coll/age, for Vostell’s museum would be without an architectural structure to protect the works of art, a museum that, like the landscape and the environments installed in it, would visibly be destroyed over time.

72 Bergmann, “Interview, 27.11.88,” 138.
73 Ibid., 145.
74 Ibid., 148.
While the principals of dé-coll/age underpin the concept of his outdoor museum, the specific landscape was of equal importance. Vostell recalled about his first visit to Los Barruecos: “When I returned to Extremadura…, after having created my numerable Happenings, Fluxus Concerts and exhibitions throughout Europe and America, chance took me to Malpartida de Cáceres where the rocks of Los Barruecos told me: ‘Do something here.’” Like other land artists of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Vostell identified Los Barruecos as a tangible reality and he imagined how its physical conditions and particular location related to the philosophical conditions of his art. This approach represents what Miwon Kwon calls the phenomenological or experiential paradigm of site specificity in which viewers must experience art in situ where it is physically inseparable from its site, even if materially ephemeral.

In July 1975, Vostell began inviting artists and art historians to Malpartida. The guests included French museum director Suzanne Pagé, who had organized a retrospective exhibition of Vostell’s environments and happenings at the Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1974/75; Spanish art historian Maria Lluïsa Borràs, who specialized in the avant-garde; and Spanish painter Rafael Canogar. These visits underscore how Vostell conceived the functioning of his museum to be instructional and, even without a building, pedagogical. Vostell stated, “The Museo Vostell Malpartida must be a school, a model of art and

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77 Museo Vostell Malpartida, 277.
nature...”\(^{78}\) He introduced the citizens of Malpartida to, and educated them about, modern and contemporary experimental art by bringing scholars and artists to the rural village, and, what is more, the people of Malpartida welcomed him as an artist and an expert. In July 1976, with the assistance of the town’s mayor, Vostell established the Centro Creativo del Museo Vostell Malpartida (CC-MVM) in a municipal property as a space for artistic and cultural events. Narbón served as the center’s director. The CC-MVM opened with an exhibition of sketches by Vostell of the first environment he planned to create in Los Barruecos.

In October 1976, Vostell installed \textit{VOAEX (Concrete Journey through Upper Extremadura)},\(^{79}\) a car encased in concrete, set on an curvilinear concrete pad, and surrounded by a tall rock formation known as the “Treasury Rock” (“Peña del Tesoro”) [Fig. 34]. An undated sketch he made of the work details its location, both in terms of geography and of art history [Fig. 35]. In a hand-drawn map of Spain and Portugal, Vostell wrote the names of artists (Dalí, Picasso, Gaudi, and Miró), towns (Villafamés, Valencia, Cuenca, Madrid, Toledo, Malpartida, and Lisbon), and art museums (Museo de Arte Abstracto [in Cuenca], Museo de Arte Contemporanáneo [in Madrid], and Gulbenkian [in Lisbon]). Numbers written between the different cities indicate the approximate distance between them in kilometers. To the bottom right of the hand-drawn map, and underneath the names of the artists and the names of Villafamés and Valencia, Vostell signed his name, directly below the phrase “I will wait.” For what was Vostell waiting? To

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{79}\) \textit{VOAEX, Viaje de (h)Ormigón por la Alta Extremadura}.
be acknowledged with renowned Spanish artists as Dalí, Picasso, Gaudí, and Miró? For his museum to be seen on equal standing as the museums in Cuenca, Madrid, and Lisbon? For the museum to become a destination for art world celebrities? The map shows that the MVM is geographically located halfway between Madrid and Lisbon. The map also illustrates how Vostell, who lived part of the year in West Berlin, conceived of himself and the museum as being in dialogue with the artistic milieu of Spain and Portugal.

VOAEX, the first work Vostell installed in Los Barruecos, likewise referred to both Germany and Spain. Upper Extremadura, the region stipulated in the title, is the location of Las Hurdes, the setting of the film by Buñuel that Vostell saw in Paris in 1954. Vostell first visited Las Hurdes in 1975, the year before he installed VOAEX. He found that the region was still poor and rural, relatively unchanged in his eyes since the making of Buñuel’s film, and a stark contrast to his urban life in West Germany. Placed in the midst of Los Barruecos’s granite formations, the concrete-encased car of VOAEX visualizes the clash between urban and rural through the unexpected positioning of an automobile in the middle of a desolate landscape. This setting certainly differs from that of the first concrete car sculpture that Vostell made.

Entitled Stopped Traffic, the first concrete covered car was left in a parking space in front of the gallery Art Intermedia in Cologne in 1969 [Fig 36]. This is normal enough for a car, except the concrete made the car unusable. In

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81 Ruhender Verkehr. The title may also be translated as Stationary Traffic.
82 The sculpture was eventually moved to the median in 1989, so it no longer occupies a parking place.
Stopped Traffic, a thick layer of concrete covers the entire car down to the street such that only a basic geometric outline of the vehicle is perceptible and the mass appears to be thoroughly immobile. In VOAEX, the front end of the automobile is fully embedded in an imposing rectangular concrete block while the back half is covered only with a thin layer of concrete and its two rear tires are left exposed. The concrete block in VOAEX forms a wall that imprisons the front end of the black Opel that Vostell had driven to Los Barruecos from his home in West Berlin83 where another wall made of concrete, the Berlin Wall, constricted the public’s movements.

I propose that VOAEX be considered a self-portrait, with the car as a metonymy of Vostell himself, and the sculpture as a visual metaphor of his experience living between West Berlin, represented by the imposing concrete wall weighing down the car’s front end, and Malpartida, represented by the car’s back end, which is free from the wall but not untouched by traces of concrete. Not only did Vostell drive the automobile used in VOAEX from West Germany to Spain, but he also drove and incorporated cars so often in his art that Pablo J. Rico published a book in 2000 simply titled Vostell: Automobile.84 Concrete was also a material Vostell used often to symbolize ossification, mental and physical rigidity, and aggression—conditions he attributed especially to postwar West Germany. When asked to describe the differences between West Berlin and Malpartida, Vostell compared living in West Berlin to being in a “tragic climatic spa” (tragischer Luftkurort) that made him productive because the city contained

84 Rico, Vostell: Automobile.
the history with which he worked in his art. As Wieland Schmied wrote about Vostell in Malpartida: “Here people know him, people accept him, his advice is sought after, his cosmopolitanism (Weltläufigkeit) demands respect. Wherever he appears, he is welcomed, he is drawn into conversation.”

VOAEX, the first sculpture Vostell installed in Los Barruecos, the area he had declared in 1974 to be a work of art of nature and envisioned as the site of his museum, was more than a car encased in concrete amongst the rocks: it was an extension (metonymy) of himself, as well as his initial effort toward what would become the Museo Vostell Malpartida.

V. Failure and Disappointment in West Germany

Around the time Vostell was planning and creating VOAEX, he began preparing for the opening of an indoor museum in Hannover devoted to his environments. Spain was not to be the only country with a museum focused on Vostell, Germany would have one too, or so he believed. On April 10, 1977, Heinz Ohff published an article in the West Berlin daily newspaper Der Tagesspiegel that the new museum was scheduled to open in Hannover on May 13. The museum would be in a four-story WWII-era air raid shelter in the city’s northern Döhren neighborhood—a stark contrast to the location of the MVM in Spain. But like the MVM, the museum in Hannover would be devoted to

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85 Bergmann, “Interview, 27.11.88,” 152.
86 Ibid. See also Schmied, Die fünf Hämmer des Wolf Vostell.
Vostell’s environments, works that shared an affinity with his friend Allan Kaprow, who coined the term “environment” in 1958 to refer to the origins of happenings. For Kaprow, environments and happenings were events that would not be complete without full participation by everyone attending, a requirement that Kaprow argued was the logical extension of Jackson Pollock’s process of painting and Harold Rosenberg’s theory of action painting. But Vostell grounded his concept of the environment in a different lineage, that of Kurt Schwitters’s Merzbau (Merz building). In the book Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme that Vostell co-edited with Jürgen Becker in 1965, they credited Schwitters as the antecedent for environments, citing his first Merzbau, in his home in Hannover, begun in 1923, his second begun in Oslo, Norway in 1937, and his final in Ambleside, England, the last abode on his flight from Nazi Germany.

It was in the Schwitters tradition and in the same town where Schwitters created his first Merzbau that the new museum of Vostell’s environments would be established. In his article about the museum, Ohff noted that museums in general were “largely overwhelmed” in terms of their art to space ratio. Unlike paintings and sculptures, because of their size, environments often ended up in storage, or the artist would destroy the work as no one could accommodate it. As

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89 Schwitters coined the term Merz from the second syllable of the German word Kommerz (commerce). Jürgen Schilling argued that Vostell’s environments must be traced back to European, not U.S., influences. I would argue for a more nuanced understanding that allows for multiple antecedents, placing Vostell in dialogue with European and American artists. See Jürgen Schilling, Aktionskunst: Identität von Kunst und Leben? Eine Dokumentation (Lucerne and Frankfurt: Verlag C. J. Bucher, 1978), 127.
a result, he lamented, “[W]e are faced with the absurd fact that one of the most important means of expression in the present is also the one that we get to see least.”91 The museum in the Hannover air raid shelter would remedy this general conundrum by leaving Vostell’s environments on permanent public view. Not until the early 1990s, according to the historical trajectory traced by Julie Reiss, did installation art (of which environments were an early form) become a fully recognized, mainstream category of art. Prior to this period, installation art was primarily exhibited in non-traditional and alternative spaces, although some established museums of modern and contemporary art briefly supported temporary installation art in the late 1960s before a market-driven emphasis on painting returned by the early 1980s.92

Scant information exists about the would-be Vostell environment museum in Hannover, as the museum never materialized, but it is possible to sketch out some basic details. According to Ohff, planning for it commenced in 1975. Mercedes Vostell recalled that Uwe Kreutzfeldt, an artist from Hannover who had visited Vostell in West Berlin, approached Vostell with the specific idea and with the understanding that Kreutzfeldt would serve as the museum’s director.93 Ohff’s account and letterhead on which Vostell sketched the museum’s layout confirm Kreutzfeldt’s intended position.94 The Milan-based collector and dealer Gino Di Maggio had agreed to loan works from his collection to the museum,

91 Ohff, “Ein Bunker wird Museum.”
92 Julie H. Reiss, From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999). Although Reiss’s study concentrates on New York City, the general historical account she delineates corresponds roughly to the West German art scene.
93 Vostell, Vostell—Ein Leben lang. I have been unable to find any substantial information about Kreutzfeldt.
94 Vostell’s sketch is in the HOC/GRI.
which would be called the “Vostell Environment Museum Collection Di Maggio Hannover.” Vostell had met Di Maggio around 1970 and the two men and their families became close friends, spending many holidays together. Di Maggio’s interest in Fluxus, which he understood as “a nonviolent reaction to a brutal world, a negation of prevailing conditions,” grew out of his attachment to Dada. After meeting Vostell, he began regularly supporting and collecting his works along with those of other Fluxus associated artists.

The massive concrete air raid shelter was an optimal site for installing the large environments that Vostell had produced and that Di Maggio had collected. Little to no sunlight penetrated the exterior walls and each floor had an open layout rather than a series of small galleries as is typical of museums. Thus, the lighting of the art could be carefully controlled and the environments would be only minimally constrained by architectural dimensions in terms of their size and configuration. Such conditions were ideal for enabling viewers to become completely immersed in the works and acutely aware of their literal presence in the space, thus enhancing the phenomenological experience of the experience of the work, as Vostell intended.

In her book *Installation Art* (2005), Claire Bishop has discussed how artists structure installation art to determine the type of experience they want a viewing subject to have. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s writings, Bishop argues that in installations (and environments) that demand phenomenological

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96 For more, see Vostell, *Vostell — Ein Leben lang*.
perception, subject and object are reciprocally intertwined and interdependent, and viewers perceive the environment with their whole body, not just with their vision. Kristine Stiles theorized the metonymic subject/object viewing/performing relationship in 1987, and in a later essay discussed how Chris Burden “used his body to enhance feelings over seeing emphasizing physiological over visual methods of knowing, and thereby activating viewer proprioception” in his 1975 installation/performance White Light/White Heat. Such physiological, psychological, and sociological conditions were already anticipated by Vostell in his environments and happenings, and—like Kaprow—in his insistence that the environment and the happening become an entirely participatory, sensate, experience.

Returning to the proposed museum, in addition to Vostell’s environments being located on all four floors of the building, Ohff wrote that there would be documentation in the side wings and work by young artists in the foyer. Film and video could be projected as well, and the museum could mount temporary exhibitions. The first Vostell environment to be on view was to have been Fandango (1975), which would have been installed for the opening on May 13, 1977. Another part of the museum was scheduled to open to the public a week after Documenta VII, where, strategically, Vostell presented a room-size

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98 Bishop, *Installation Art*. In this context, we should note that the subterranean portion of the ring museum in Bonn that Vostell envisaged in 1975 would have replicated similar conditions for a phenomenological encounter with the installed environments and sculptures.

environment entitled The Villa of the Deaf, now in Di Maggio’s collection. All four of the floors in the former air-raid shelter would be fully installed in the autumn. The completed museum was to feature a reprise of Endogenous Depression (1973), as well as his installation Black Room (1958/59), Jaguar (1963), Doorknobs (1968), Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room (1968), Inductions (1969), German Room (1971), and Fandango (1975), along with documentation of Salad (1970) and Mania (1973). Without prior notice, however, the city of Hannover inexplicably ordered that the building be vacated before the environment museum opened. The Vostell Environment Museum Collection Di Maggio Hannover was never to exist except on paper. Kreutzfeldt left Hannover, Vostell withdrew from the venture, and Di Maggio remained with his collection of Vostell’s environments in Milan.

This was not the first time Vostell experienced disappointment in Germany with regards to museums and his environments. On October 26, 1975, he had written to Stephan Waetzold, general director of the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, the foundation that oversees Berlin’s national museums, criticizing the conservative direction that the Nationalgalerie in West Berlin had taken since Dieter Honisch became director after Wieland Schmied’s brief tenure as director from 1974 to 1975. In the letter, Vostell laid out a list of specific concerns and complaints about Honisch, including the following:

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100 La Quinta del Sordo.
103 A copy of the letter is in the HOC/GRI.
Honisch had not yet acquired any works by Berlin artists; the exhibitions he organized were unrelated to the art of Germany or Berlin; he ignored tendencies by younger artists in Europe or Germany; he represented German conservatism in 1968 and 1970 by exhibiting Gerhard Richter and the ZERO group; he ignored the critical and progressive art of Vostell and Beuys; he had not committed to creating a room for German Dada; and he spent 80,000 marks to purchase a large painting by Frank Stella, but, for art actions, he only announced the creation of an archive. For Vostell, the last deed was the most egregious. Still, Vostell told Waetzold of his fondness for the Nationalgalerie, located in West Berlin, the city he had called home since 1971, and he declared that, after the “Honisch era,” he would donate “a very large important work, and the time is ripe for an environment.” In 1981, Vostell imagined that he would lend long-term the environments he created for Fluxus Zug, but, like the fate of the Hannover environment museum, it was not to be. Honisch remained director of the Nationalgalerie (known as the Neue Nationalgalerie since Germany’s reunification) until 1997, one year prior to Vostell’s death. Thus, after the “Vostell Environment Museum Collection Di Maggio Hannover” failed to come to fruition and with the “Honisch era” still alive in West Berlin, Vostell redirected his attention back to Spain and to the open-air environment museum he had begun earlier in Los Barruecos.

104 Honisch remained director until 1997.
VI. Solidifying his Legacy in Spain

In January 1977, Vostell purchased the Topete Mansion, a gracious, large, old home in need of repair in Malpartida. There, he established his second residence (the first remained in West Berlin), as well as a studio. Mercedes Vostell continues to live in the Topete Mansion today. In January 1978, one year after solidifying his enduring relationship to Malpartida and the surrounding region, Vostell installed a second work in Los Barruecos, not far from VOAEX, the first environment he created amongst the area’s natural granite sculptures. Entitled The Dead Who Thirsts, the work is set on top of a large rock rather than on the ground like VOAEX [Fig. 37]. The Dead Who Thirsts is comprised of an empty lead box, entirely encased in a round column of concrete, laid on its side, and capped on one end with a “lid” to which empty dinner plates are affixed in a circular pattern. The arrangement of the plates may be understood as being in conversation with Daniel Spoerri’s “tableau-piège” or “snare pictures,” first made in 1960 by gluing objects from a dinner shared with friends to a board (later affixed directly to the tabletop) and hung on the wall, and prefiguring by one year Julian Schnabel’s exhibition at Mary Boone Gallery of huge paintings with broken dishes. But unlike the dirty dishes in Spoerri’s works and the fragmented dishes in Schnabel’s paintings, the plates in Vostell’s work are clean and whole and their arrangement is precise. The plates in The Dead Who Thirsts face westward so that the setting sun reflects off them, magnifying the sunlight and intensifying one’s awareness of the aridity of Extremadura and the tenuous

105 El Muerto que tiene sed.
balance there between life and death. At the same time, the reflecting rays turn
the work into a kind of beacon, drawing visitors to it and, by extension, to
Vostell’s art.

A plaque attached to the rock conveys Vostell’s wishes that the lead box
be opened and scientifically analyzed 5,000 years after the work’s creation. The
plaque is also the only indication to viewers that a lead box is hidden inside the
concrete. No physical objects will be found in the box, except perhaps bacteria
that may have grown, for Vostell did not put anything inside. Instead, prior to
closing the box and burying it in concrete on top of the rock in Los Barruecos, he
left the lead box open on a table in the village square in Malpartida for three
days.  

Villagers were encouraged to look inside and to transfer their thoughts
and psychic energy into it. The collective, intangible content was then sealed
and protected inside the lead box, which in turn was elevated onto the top of a
rock and entombed in concrete. Only when the concrete is chiseled away and the
lead box is opened will the thoughts and psychic energy be released. Freed after
5,000 years from the concrete that for Vostell symbolized ossification, the dead
(the townspeople who imbued the lead box with their psychic energy) would
finally be able to satiate their thirst for freedom. If in VOAEX, the artist left a
visual metaphor of himself, trapped under the rigidity of concrete, in The Dead

107 Bartolozzi, Wolf Vostell (1932-1998), 61. The three days during which Vostell invited the public
to contemplate his open, empty lead box corresponded to the first three days of the first Week of
Contemporary SACOM (Semana de Arte Contemporaneo Museo Vostell Malpartida) that Vostell
organized on behalf of the Museo Vostell Malpartida. SACOM 1 comprised a weeklong program
of art and ethnographic exhibitions, performances and happenings, and a roundtable discussion
with participating artists and the public, in addition to the installation of The Dead Who Thirsts.
SACOM 2 was held in April 1979, and SACOM 3 was in May 1980. In August 1983, DACOM
(Day of Contemporary Art) was organized in lieu of SACOM.
Who Thirsts he also enshrined an immaterial trace of the community that welcomed him and his art. In addition, while the plates on exterior point to Vostell being in conversation with artists like Spoerri and Schnabel, his act of capturing and imbuing the immaterial with meaning shows that he was equally in dialogue with such artists as Yves Klein and Robert Barry who also worked with immaterial substances.

In order to comprehend the significance of Vostell’s tribute to the people of Malpartida, it is helpful to momentarily consider a couple of events that happened a few years before Vostell installed The Dead Who Thirsts. First, the local Cáceres newspaper, Hoy, praised Vostell in 1974 for being “famous worldwide.”

Second, and more importantly, in October 1976 (the same month Vostell installed VOAEX in Los Barruecos), the mayor of Malpartida signed a contract with the artist that stipulated “the necessary land in the Los Barruecos property and the [abandoned, eighteenth-century] Wash House factory works [will be devoted] to the setting up of a museum of contemporary art which will be known as the Museo Vostell Malpartida de Cáceres.”

The local community provided Vostell the space to establish his open-air museum and to extend the institution indoors as well. What is more, they equated Vostell with contemporary art.

The support Vostell received in Spain cannot be underestimated. One year prior to the signing of the contract between Vostell and the mayor of Malpartida, as I explained above, Vostell had written that there was no place for his

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109 Museo Vostell Malpartida, 277.
environments in West Berlin’s “Honisch era” Nationalgalerie and, shortly after the signing of the contract, the planned environment museum in Hannover fell through. As he later told Jean-Jacques Lebel, “You see, I had to [establish my museum] near Mercedes’ home town in Extremadura, Spain because in Germany they didn’t allow it.” It is important to recall that it was in the 1970s when Vostell began feeling most rejected by Germany and when he was becoming a fading light in the contemporary art world while Beuys’s reputation was rising. In contrast, in Franco’s Spain and especially in desolate Extremadura at this time, many people were clamoring for avant-garde art and they were enamored with Vostell, who they considered cosmopolitan, having lived in Cologne, Paris, and West Berlin, and who not only exposed them to his own art, but who also introduced them to and educated them about other experimental artists and art movements.

Thanks to a generous donation in August 1978 by Karl Ludwig Schweisfürth, a German butcher and art collector with whom Vostell had become acquainted in the early 1970s, renovations to the wool washing complex in Los Barruecos commenced. The following month Vostell signed an agreement with Salvador Dalí, assigning Vostell the rights to construct Dalí’s unrealized The End of Parsifal, also known as The Parsifal Curtain, inside a

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112 El fin de Parzival, or Telón de Parzival.
lavadero building in exchange for Vostell making a TV-Obelisk in the courtyard of Dalí’s museum in Figueras. The End of Parsifal was not installed until April 1988, and renovations to the wool washing complex were not completed until July 1998. At that time, Gino Di Maggio’s Fluxus Collection, which Di Maggio officially donated to the MVM in October 1996, and the Collection of Conceptual Art were finally installed and opened to the public.

Together, the gifts of the wool washing complex from the mayor of Malpartida, the financial contribution from Schweisfürth, and the concept for a work from Dalí, all set in motion the evolution of the quixotic museum that Vostell initially imagined for the open-air museum at Los Barruecos. The MVM continues to encompass the constructed and natural sculptures in Los Barruecos, but the main part of the museum is the lavadero complex where the museum’s collections are now sheltered from, rather than exposed to, the elements. Although the village of Malpartida and the city of Cáceres have grown in population since Vostell founded the MVM, the institution remains isolated and remote, effectively making a visit to the museum a pilgrimage of sorts and building up the aura surrounding Vostell and his art, especially within Extremadura, the state that openly accepted the artist despite his nominal place within the dominant narrative of contemporary art history. Still, in spite of or perhaps bolstered by the support he had in Spain, Vostell did not entirely abandon his desire to establish a museum in his country of birth and to sensationally reinsert himself into his home state’s institutionally dense

\[113\] Vostell was hesitant to meet Dalí and waited many years before actually doing so, as Dalí had praised the fascist Franco, which conflicted with Vostell’s politics.
landscape and into the history of contemporary art. Nor did he forsake his original idea of creating a museum in flux. *Fluxus Zug* was the culmination of these dreams.

**VII. A Museum in Flux in North Rhine-Westphalia**

Around the time that Schweisfürth donated money to start renovations of the *lavadero* complex in Spain, explicitly the period that the MVM began to evolve into a permanent institution, Dagmar von Gottberg and Peter Kruse approached Vostell with the prospect of creating a mobile work of art in West Germany. Gottberg and Kruse proposed that Vostell install art inside Contrans shipping containers that would travel via train around the country, and Vostell agreed to take part. The objective for Gottberg and Kruse was primarily in publicizing Contrans, in connecting art and industry, and in supporting West Germany’s contemporary artists. They exposed the integral role of industry and commerce in making the artwork/mobile museum possible by leaving the Contrans name on the exterior of the containers. Vostell used the opportunity to create a spectacular work that would celebrate his own art and intertwine his own name with that of Fluxus, in his country of birth, where, as I have already discussed, Beuys’s name had both far surpassed Vostell’s and become associated with Fluxus. In this context, it is not insignificant to note that the state of NRW, under the leadership of Prime Minister Rau, agreed to generously finance and host the work, for it was Rau who, in 1972 as NRW’s Minister of Education, had officially terminated Beuys’s employment at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. In
other words, the man who ultimately fired Beuys from his teaching position later made Vostell’s mobile museum possible.

By September 1979 Vostell determined that he would create objects and images in environments that he claimed could not otherwise be exhibited in a traditional museum. He turned to the medium of installations (or environments) on numerous occasions to encapsulate key aspects of his diverse oeuvre. For example, he created environments at both Documenta IV, installing *Electronic dé-collage Happening Room* in 1968, and Documenta VI with *The Villa of the Deaf* (1977). One might also remember his intention to donate an environment to the Nationalgalerie in West Berlin, and one might consider his designs of the open-air museum in Los Barruecos and the failed museum in the Hannover air-raid shelter as well, as both were to focus on environments.

By November 1979 Vostell had compiled some possible names for his environment-filled containers on a train project: “‘FLUXUS-HAPPENING-ZUG’ +DAS MOBILE MUSEUM,” “Mobile Museum Vostell,” and “Fluxus Zug.” The names underscore how Vostell conceived of the project as being conceptually related simultaneously to happenings, Fluxus, and museums. Yet, and perhaps because Fluxus, happenings, and other performative and action-based art were largely ignored by museums at that time, Vostell decided on the title *Fluxus Zug*, evoking a link to the provocative “Fluxus International Festival of Very New Music” (the first Fluxus festival), of September 1962, that had taken place in a museum in Wiesbaden, and to the trailblazing 1970 *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition at the Cologne Kunstverein that had begun the process of historicizing the two movements.
Vostell was instrumental in realizing both the Wiesbaden festival and the *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition, and the memory of the latter must still have been fresh in his mind nearly a decade later when he started working on *Fluxus Zug*. For it was Vostell who had been in contact with the Cologne Kunstverein since his first solo exhibition there in 1967 and, as he told Gabrielle Lueg, it was due to his urging that Harald Szeemann and Hanns Sohm were granted permission to organize the exhibition.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Vostell was responsible for designing the catalog and his sketch of the exhibition layout reveals the presence of a train car at the entrance, titled *Flux-Toilet*.¹¹⁵ Vostell wanted visitors to enter the show by passing through this lavatory train car,¹¹⁶ an idea he appropriated the idea from Dada artists Johannes Baargeld and Max Ernst, who in April 1920 held an exhibition in a Cologne brewery where the public were forced to enter through the restroom.¹¹⁷ A woman wearing a communion dress sat inside reading obscene poetry and visitors were encouraged to destroy a work of art with the axe that Ernst had attached to it. The police quickly shut down the scandalous exhibition. Vostell had learned about this event when viewing the traveling Dada retrospective in Düsseldorf in September or October of 1958. By calling for the

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¹¹⁴ Wulf Herzogenrath and Gabriele Lueg, *Die 60er Jahre: Kölns Weg zur Kunstmetropole: Vom Happening zum Kunstmarkt* (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1986), 265.

¹¹⁵ Hanns Sohm and Harald Szeemann, eds., *Happenings & Fluxus* (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970). The publication comprises an invaluable collection of direct reproductions of primary documents; a chronology of artworks, festivals, and concerts from 1951 to 1970; and a bibliography for individual artists, happenings, and Fluxus. A removable pamphlet presents a diagram of the exhibition layout drawn by Vostell, an introduction by Szeemann and Sohm, essays about happenings and Fluxus by Fritz Heubach and Michael Kirby, and an index of the works in the exhibition.

¹¹⁶ Herzogenrath and Lueg, *Die 60er Jahre*, 565.

¹¹⁷ Vostell highlighted Baargeld and Ernst’s Dada exhibition on multiple occasions, including in a lecture he delivered with Allan Kaprow at New York City’s Cricket Theater on April 19, 1964, and in a lecture he gave at the University of Heidelberg on June 11, 1967.
public to enter the *Happening & Fluxus* exhibition through the lavatory train car, Vostell linked pre- and postwar avant-garde. Ultimately, visitors to *Happenings & Fluxus* were not required to pass through the train car, but a requisite scandal ensued in response to the art nonetheless, particularly in response to works performed by Viennese Action artists Otto Muehl and Hermann Nitsch.\(^\text{118}\)

Perhaps most importantly, as Kristine Stiles has explained:

> It was Vostell who taught the great collector Hanns Sohm how to look at contemporary art; how to collect its ephemera; how to focus on vanguard and counterculture publications; how poets were critical to the nexus of experimental art; and it was Vostell who introduced Sohm to the Viennese Action artists, who encouraged him to attend the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in 1966. In fact that photographs that Sohm took at DIAS remain among the best and most complete archival images of the events.\(^\text{119}\)

Nevertheless, and no doubt because Vostell was involved in questions of destruction and violence prior to and at the height of minimalism, which held such sway over the art historical establishment both in Europe and the U.S. from the mid-1960s on, art such as Vostell’s garnered little serious attention by major museums, art critics, or art historians until the 1980s.\(^\text{120}\)

Indeed, in the intervening years between 1970 and 1981 (the years between (*Happening & Fluxus* and *Fluxus Zug*), neither happenings nor Fluxus gained inroads into museums, despite the fact that the number of artists using

\(^{118}\) Proclamations that the exhibition “will burn” rang out and some 270 members of the Kunstverein voiced their disapproval by withdrawing from the association. What is more, Andreas Becker, chairman of the Cologne Kunstverein, deemed works performed by Muehl and Nitsch involving animal slaughter, bones, and flesh to be pornographic and closed the exhibition prematurely.

\(^{119}\) Hanns Sohm in conversation with Kristine Stiles, ca. 1979-1980, as explained to the author in 2013. Stiles both worked and lived for short periods of time in Sohm’s home before the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart acquired the archive in 1981.

\(^{120}\) Even as recently as September 2011 curators Peter Weibel and Bernhard Serexhe told Jean-Jacques Lebel, who had asked if Vostell’s work was “now acknowledged as important in Germany,” “‘No. His work is still considered too violent.’” Lebel, email to the author, September 3, 2011.
their bodies as the material for creating visual art had exploded. Regarding Fluxus in particular, the Walker Art Center would be the first major art museum to launch a serious historical review of Fluxus, *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, which opened in 1993; and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, putatively “dedicated to being the foremost museum of modern art in the world,” only acquired a substantial Fluxus collection—the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection—in 2009, forty-seven years after the first Fluxus festival in Wiesbaden. What captured the attention of the art world during the 1970s and early 1980s instead was painting, for it was also during this period that a group of Neo-Expressionist German painters came to prominence. Many of the painters had studied with Beuys at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie and had been painting for several years, if not decades, prior to being celebrated in the early 1980s as *die neue Wilden*, “the new wild ones.” These Neo-Expressionists, as Andreas Huyssen explained, returned “to the pictorial strategies of that pivotal movement of German modernism.” Among the heralded painters were Anselm Kiefer, who actually began his artistic career in the late 1960s by creating performances to be photographed, and Georg Baselitz, who had been painting since at least

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121 From The Museum of Modern Art’s website, www.moma.org/about.
123 In 1969 Kiefer dressed in paramilitary attire and traveled to France, Italy, and Switzerland, where he performed what appeared to be the Nazi salute in various public locations. He enacted this performance in his Düsseldorf apartment as well. Kiefer captured his actions in a series of photographs. The staged images first appeared in the artist books *Heroic Symbols (Heroische*
the early 1960s. As I noted earlier, these two former Beuys students were selected to represent West Germany at the 1980 Venice Biennale with a larger than life-size wooden sculpture, six paintings, and a series of artist books. The rise of the international art market in Cologne from the late 1960s on fostered the demand for such contemporary painting and sculpture, and the art market promoted painting and sculpture with an eagerness to reconstitute sales lost during the two prior decades dominated by unmarketable conceptual, performance, and installation art. While Vostell had created art objects throughout his career, his greatest innovations were associated with happenings and he therefore appeared retrograde in the 1970s with the advent of the Neo-Expressionist painters.

And yet, Vostell’s earliest known extant artworks are paintings, made in 1952. Although he was still painting in the 1970s and 1980s when the Neo-Expressionists became popular, Vostell had no intention of being defined as an artist by static objects, at the same time as he was very proud of the fact, Stiles remembers, that he had never had to work as anything but an artist because he was always able to sell paintings, prints, and drawings. More precisely, he did not want the art objects he produced to be circumscribed as static. For Vostell, 

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Sinnbilder), For Genet (Für Genet), and Montpellier, all of 1969. The photographs reappeared in 1975 in the twelfth issue of Interfunktionen, where they were collectively titled Anselm Kiefer/Between summer and fall 1969 I occupied Switzerland, France, and Italy (Anselm Kiefer/Zwischen Sommer und Herbst 1969 habe ich die Schweiz, Frankreich und Italien besetzt), or Occupations (Besetzungen) for short.

124 Baselitz made the sculpture, entitled Model für ein Skulptur (Model for a Sculpture), and three paintings entitled The German School, The Studio, and The Family, all made in 1980. Kiefer contributed artist books created between 1970 and 1978 with the common theme of “burning, lignifying, sinking, a silting up” (“Verbrennen, Verholzen, Versenken, Versanden”), and three paintings: Parsifal (1973), Germany’s Spiritual Heroes (1973), and The Ways of Worldly Wisdom—Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (1977-78).

125 For more on the art market in Cologne, see Herzogenrath and Lueg, Die 60er Jahre.

126 Stiles in conversation with Vostell in Malpartida de Cáceres, 1982, as told to the author.
the conceptual link between the act and process of creating and the resulting work remained central to his concept of art. For example, Vostell considered his paintings since the 1970s intrinsically connected to his happenings, stating in an interview: “In ’72 I turned towards the image/idea of the human being (Menschenbild), as I not only create the Menschenbild in happenings, but I also paint. Paint the Menschenbild anew in my sense.”\(^\text{127}\) Mercedes Vostell remembered that Vostell considered the paintings he made after the highpoint of happenings in the mid-1960s to be “frozen happenings.”\(^\text{128}\) It would take another twenty years before the relationship between the temporal act and the object would be explored in Paul Schimmel’s exhibition “Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979.” As Stiles noted in her catalog essay for the exhibition, it is “the body as material in art [that] was deeply tied to the need to assert the primacy of human subjects over inanimate objects, and was a response to the threatened ontological condition of life itself in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the advent of the atomic age.”\(^\text{129}\) Also, as Elaine Scarry has observed, “[T]he made object [is] a projection of the human body.”\(^\text{130}\)

In *Fluxus Zug*, Vostell aimed to highlight the performative, bodily origins of objects, and the existential compulsion to create artworks, as well as the social, historical, and political context in which he made his mobile museum and the

\(^{127}\) Bergmann, “Interview, 27.11.88,” 143.

\(^{128}\) Fritz Emslander, “Für mich waren die Happenings das Wichtigste’: Ein Gespräch mit Mercedes Guardado Olivenza Vostell,” in Das Theater ist auf der Straße: Die Happenings von Wolf Vostell, ed. Markus Heinzelmann, Fritz Emslander, and José Antonio Agúndez García (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2010), 34.


environments inside it. He presented in *Fluxus Zug*’s first container the history of his art and artistic philosophy, which was grounded in a concern for enhancing one’s awareness of the conditions of the society in which one lives, a concern that underpinned the imagery and content of the remaining *Fluxus Zug* containers. *The Angels* paintings provoked consideration of the tensions between Eros and Thanatos, suffering and salvation, and peacefulness and violence. The distorted song fragments that emanated in response to one’s act of pushing a doorbell button, evoked human cries in the dark, narrow corridor of *The Rivers*, suggesting the pain and torment of those transported by train to concentration and death camps, calling to mind the millions killed during the Holocaust, as well as human anguish more generally. The rough, hardened concrete in *The Dances* brought the materiality of the Berlin Wall, and the hostility and opposing ideologies it symbolized, into the family living room, a space that is supposed to be welcoming. *The Winds* raised questions about our relationship to and reliance upon such ubiquitous modern technological innovations as television and cars by integrating the *Fluxus Zug* visitors into the environment, capturing and broadcasting their live images on a television that was set into the luxury Mercedes-Benz’s grill, and by literally attaching a mannequin, a metaphor of a real human being, to a TV via a feeding tube. *The Stones* metaphorically visualized the difficulty of participating in and maintaining meaningful exchange in modern society with other human beings, as well as nurturing respectable relationships with other living beings and with earth’s natural resources, by wedding animal bones with telephones that connected to empty burlap coal sacks. The lead-covered convulsing “corpses” that crowded *The
Clouds and the sculpted human ears that protruded from the container’s walls transported visitors into the traumatic, paranoid milieu of Cold War Germany where the affects of two world wars lingered and the threat of nuclear annihilation was tangible. The Fires displayed death as a spectacle with taxidermied dogs lying on a bed of blood red Spanish paprika, the enticingly smoky aroma of which filled the air, tempting visitors’ olfactory sense and appetites. Finally, there were the archival images of artworks and proposals for projects that Vostell had created for NRW—including the utopian museums for Cologne and Bonn discussed above; his first concrete-encased car sculpture, Stopped Traffic (1969); and the happenings Bread Measurement (1969) and Salad (1970), both of which used foodstuffs (bread and lettuce, respectively) to draw attention to historical, social, cultural, ecological, and political issues. This material documented Vostell’s enduring commitment to creating art that addressed social as well as aesthetic concerns, and that facilitated new ways of looking at, thinking about, and acting in the world, and these artworks and all that they embodied were transported by train around NRW. Vostell acknowledged and called attention to both the fascination and fear that trains can provoke in Europe, and especially in Germany. He reproduced artworks by other twentieth-century artists that incorporated trains and photographs of trains and train stations taken during and after the World Wars in the Fluxus Zug.

The artists and artworks that Vostell included in the catalog—a selection of the artists he was in conversation with—included a Russian agit-prop train, a painting by Giorgio de Chirico, a poster by A. M. Cassandre, a collage by Hans Hollein, an action by Günter Saree, and performances by Jochen Gerz and John Cage.
As a train that carried Vostell’s provocative artworks as its passengers to the public spaces of train stations, town squares, and parks, *Fluxus Zug* was as much entangled in its sociopolitical and historical context as it was within its art historical context. Art served as a lens that would ideally help the public see their place in the world and Vostell’s place in art history from new perspectives.

This brings me to the final context in which I would like to situate *Fluxus Zug* in this chapter: in relation to two other exhibitions of contemporary art in Cologne that were open around the same time as *Fluxus Zug*, namely, *Westkunst: Contemporary Art since 1939* and *Passive-Explosive*. Vostell was well aware of both exhibitions—three of his works were included in *Westkunst* and he knew Gustav Metzger, Cordula Frowein, and Klaus Staeck, the organizers of *Passive-Explosive*—and he saved brochures for them in his archive, filed with his materials for *Fluxus Zug*. Moreover, the publicity materials for *Passive-Explosive* that Vostell kept explicitly state that it was mounted as a direct response to *Westkunst*. These three exhibitions may be seen as a constellation, for despite their stated differences and varying formats, each attempted to expand the history of contemporary art beyond the confines of the traditional museum space and the expected art historical narrative. The question of how artists and art historians, critics, dealers, and curators negotiate history is illuminated when *Westkunst, Passive-Explosive, and Fluxus Zug* are considered in relation to, rather than in isolation from or in opposition to, one another. I turn to these exhibitions,

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132 The images include trains carrying wounded soldiers, transporting people to Auschwitz, sitting in the background empty as Trümmerfrauen (“rubble women”) clear away debris, and offering hope of an escape for the masses of civilians filling, sitting on top of, and clinging to the side of the cars.
which will bring this chapter to a close, now, beginning with Westkunst, the largest of the three, and the exhibition that Vostell and the organizers of Passive-Explosive simultaneously aimed to distance themselves from and to participate in.

VIII. A Constellation of Contemporary Art Exhibitions in Cologne

Kasper König curated Westkunst, a joint project of Cologne’s museums that was open from May 28 to August 16, 1981, in the massive Trade Fair Hall (Messe) located adjacent to the Messe/Deutz train station where Fluxus Zug stopped from June 12-16. Westkunst visualized the history of contemporary art in thematic, chronological groupings, featuring a total of 832 artworks by more than 200 Western European and American artists that spanned the years 1939 to 1972. Architect O. M. Ungers designed the exhibition space, a progression of twelve rooms in varying sizes and configurations that transitioned from a rather “closed layout” to a “more flexible, open-plan format,” reflecting the shifting aesthetic tendencies over the decades.133

Richard Calvocoressi described the constructed space in his October 1981 review as allowing for “an uncluttered installation” and “ease and pleasure of circulation,” while Jean-Marc Poinso theorized in 1996 that the fabricated setting simulated a museum in order to “reassure the visitor of the permanence of the frame.”134 Poinso’s assessment implies that by recreating a museological setting

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inside the Trade Fair Hall, *Westkunst* drew upon the Museum’s authority in order to lend weight to the story of contemporary art that the exhibition presented, an account that Calvocoressi noted did not “stick rigidly to the received modernist line but..., in its own words, explore[d] the paths of both ‘continuity and contradiction.’”\(^{135}\) Rather than begin with the historic avant-garde or with the end of WWII, König started with the outbreak of WWII, proposing that the years 1939 to 1945 were a period of incubation: Western European artists either went into inner exile or they emigrated to the United States where they gradually began impacting developments in contemporary art. In turn, after the war’s end, artists in the U.S. began to influence art in Europe, at the same time as some prewar and wartime trends persisted. As this basic overview suggests, the criteria of “esthetic quality and innovation” determined König’s curatorial mission,\(^{136}\) and it was this emphasis, along with the exhibition’s layout, organization, and groupings of artworks, that made *Westkunst* the subject of much debate and critique.

Reviews expose how critics derided the exhibition for not conforming to their own individual agendas.\(^ {137}\) Among other objections, they contended that *Westkunst* was dominated by U.S. artists, too focused on 1950s abstraction and Pop art, dismissive of the prewar avant-garde, and lacking in Conceptual Art, video, photography, and art made after 1972. The general omission of art from


the 1970s was due in large part to the fact that Westkunst exceeded its budget by 1.5 million marks, so König was forced to alter his original plans. He turned over responsibility for what was to be the exhibition’s final section, entitled Today, to Cologne art dealer Rudolf Zwirner, who invited other dealers to submit works by artists they represented. The result was a supplementary exhibition that showcased art made circa 1981 by approximately thirty-five artists, most of whom were painters. Grace Glueck denounced “Today” in The New York Times as “essentially a trade show, with each dealer offering his hottest item,” while Benjamin Buchloh condemned the organizers for giving the impression that painting was still the most significant medium of art. It should not be forgotten, however, that this was the decade when the Neo-Expressionists flourished in the art market.

Criticism of Westkunst was not confined to König’s selection of artworks or to his turning over Today to dealers. They questioned the way König grouped the artworks in Westkunst as well. One such example was the placement of figurative paintings by Edward Hopper beside abstract Homage to the Square paintings by Josef Albers, a juxtaposition that Glueck described as “strange.” She parenthetically explained, “The rationale is that they were both done during the same period [the mid-1950s],” implying that figurative art belonged with figurative art and abstract art with abstract art, even though the comparison met

139 Numbers of how many artists were included vary: thirty-eight according to Buchloh; thirty-seven according to Werner Hofmann; thirty-three according to Glueck.
the exhibition’s aim of showing “continuity and contradiction.” Buchloh declared such pairings “faddish” and “postmodern,” a term that for him carried a negative connotation. “Jokes like dumping a [David] Hockney painting in the middle of earth work documentation clearly won’t do,” he proclaimed at the end of his review.143 Like Glueck’s remark about the Hopper/Albers grouping, Buchloh’s comment insinuates that a similar date of creation does not justify comparing such aesthetically disparate works of art as a representational painting and an earthwork. Yet, the pairing of a figurative painting and earthwork documentation could provoke intriguing questions about the multiple media and methods of working that together and simultaneously make up contemporary art; about the interconnections between studio-based art like painting and land art; about the relationship between and ontology of a work of art and documentation of a work of art; about how earthworks, created outside of art institutions like the museum and the market, made their way back into these institutions; and about creativity more broadly.

In addition to dismissing König’s strategy of highlighting the coexistence of a wide range of media, styles, and tendencies in contemporary art, Buchloh even contested the exhibition’s name, writing:

*Westkunst*, a poignant coined word for our new Cold War climate, is as reminiscent of Beuys’s *Sueterlin* coined words (such as *Westmensch*) as of the German Reich’s aggressive defense system, the *Westwall*. Both title and date suggest that the history of contemporary European and North American art could at that point still be written in such a way as to exclude the contributions to twentieth-century art made by artists in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe.144

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144 Ibid., 3. Sueterlin is a form of German handwriting
In order to grasp the significance of his critique, it is important to recall the scathing article about Beuys that Buchloh published in *Artforum* the previous year, which condemned the artist for fabricating his quasi-mythic origins and for turning himself into a shaman-like figure for the German nation.\(^{145}\) Buchloh launched another argument in the spring of 1981 (immediately prior to the opening of *Westkunst*) against figurative painting with his essay “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting.” Published in the journal *October*, the article asserts that the return to figurative painting, or to what the author considered “traditional modes of representation,”\(^{146}\) marks a regressive turn towards authoritarian tendencies and “the collapse of the modernist idiom.”\(^{147}\) According to Buchloh, this had happened in the 1930s and it seemed to be occurring again in the late 1970s and early 1980s, hence another reason why he denigrated the Hockney/earthwork juxtaposition in *Westkunst*. Buchloh’s privileging of art that critiques power, that probes the relationship between art and its social, political, and economic contexts, and that follows the conceptual, minimalist trajectory, has influenced and continues to influence much art historical scholarship today, leading to numerous artists—Vostell included—being dismissed as reactionary. This ideology lay at the base of Buchloh’s critique of *Westkunst*, just as the championing of “the political” underpinned the objections of Gustav Metzger, Cordula Frowein, and Klaus Staeck, who reacted against *Westkunst* not by writing reviews but by organizing an exhibition, *Passive-Explosive*.

\(^{145}\) ‘Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol. Preliminary Notes for a Critique.’

\(^{146}\) Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression,” 39.

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 40.
Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck contended that König omitted political art. More precisely, he excluded the sort of art that Metzger and Staeck created and that Frowein, an art historian, participated in and supported.\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Passive-Explosive} was designed to correct this prejudice, and it opened on July 31, two months after \textit{Westkunst} welcomed its first visitors, and closed on August 13, three days before \textit{Westkunst} ended. It was installed in six rooms of the Federation of Visual Artists Cologne (BBK\textsuperscript{149}), in the historic Hahnentorborg, an old city gatehouse located at the edge of the city’s old center on the opposite side of the Rhine River as the Trade Fair Hall where \textit{Westkunst} was mounted. Rather than display singular, original works of art or even photographs of artworks, \textit{Passive-Explosive} featured photocopies of texts and images, as well as books, documents, and posters of works of political art since 1959. Everything could be and was mechanically reproduced. Unlike \textit{Westkunst}, \textit{Passive-Explosive} purposefully prevented the consolidation of aura around the unique art object, following Benjamin’s 1936 theories in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” The materials they exhibited were disposable, the stuff of mass culture. They were not for sale as were the artworks in the \textit{Today} exhibition in the Trade Fair Hall. Nor did the works in \textit{Passive-Explosive} have much, if any, economic value then, despite having since accrued considerable value by 2013 standards.

\textsuperscript{148} Metzger is best known for “auto-destructive art” and for organizing the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in London in 1966. Frowein was Metzger’s girlfriend at the time of “Passive-Explosive” and collaborated with him on numerous occasions, as well as participated in exhibitions and symposia about artists living in exile. Staeck is a highly independent artist who made a name for himself producing politically provocative photomontage posters, stickers, postcards, and leaflets, which he anonymously put in public space.

\textsuperscript{149} Bundesverband Bildender Künstler Köln e.V.
Although the art that *Passive-Explosive* privileged was not the focus of *Westkunst*, it would be misleading to say that König entirely excluded politically-oriented work. For instance, photographs of early Fluxus performances and events were arranged in glass case, while the exhibition’s 524-page catalog, edited by Laszlo Glozer, offered an overview of some other manifestations of political art and about the social and political context of the period covered by *Westkunst*. Additionally, with the assistance of the West German Broadcasting (WDR), König and Glozer made a series of nine films that screened daily in the exhibition and that also broadcast on the third West German television station, so even people who did not attend the show could learn about various aspects of contemporary art. Most pertinent to *Passive-Explosive* (and to Vostell’s *Fluxus Zug*) is the seventh film, entitled *Happening - Art and Protest 1968*, which covered the years roughly 1960 to 1975. The film discussed the politics of happenings and actions, especially in relation to the revolutionary period of “1968,” and showed original footage of works by Allan Kaprow, Vostell, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Al Hansen, Beuys, Hermann Nitsch, Tomas Schmit, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Peter O. Chotjewitz, Thorwald Proll, and Bazon Brock. The liberal, leftist politics that these artists embodied and conveyed in their art was similar to that of the artists and art that drove the curatorial agenda of Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck, just as the concurrent strands of “continuity and contradiction” underpinned König’s mission in *Westkunst*.

Another way in which Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck sought to distinguish *Passive-Explosive* from *Westkunst* was through the layout. Whereas *Westkunst* was

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150 Künstlerfilm-Datenbank, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), http://kuenstlerfilm.ifa.de.
primarily organized chronologically, although themes also played a role, Passive-Explosive centered exclusively on themes, each of which had a unique exhibition strategy. Some of the thematic groupings are as “strange” or “postmodern” as König’s pairing of abstract and figurative painting, or representational painting and documentation of earthworks, but Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck focused on creating a dichotomy between Passive-Explosive and Westkunst from the moment visitors entered the BBK that paradoxically required that they engage the exhibition they claimed to be countering. The first room, the section that would set the mood for the remainder of the show, was entitled the “Structure Room.” It concentrated on all that was problematic about Westkunst, documenting artists’ protests against the big survey show and offering a critical examination of the first film from the Westkunst film series, 1939: Art in the Shadows of World History, which looked at European and American art before and during WWII, considering government initiatives to mobilize the masses through art and exhibitions, the affects of artists emigrating from Nazi-occupied areas to the U.S., and ways in which various well-known artists responded to world politics. The film also featured interview clips with Arno Breker, one of the Third Reich’s official sculptors. I have found no documentation about how Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck analyzed the film. Nonetheless, it is possible to analyze this first room.

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151 The description of the exhibition strategy is based on a flyer for the exhibition, a copy of which is in the AHV.
152 Strukturraum.
While the purpose of presenting this documentation at the start of *Passive-Explosive* may have been to establish the cool, critical, experimental nature of the exhibition, as opposed to the allegedly more conservative and apolitical stance of *Westkunst*, the “Structure Room” enabled Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck to participate in the very exhibition from which König had excluded them, the same exhibition that their own project was a reaction against. What is more, Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck publicized *Passive-Explosive* as a direct response to *Westkunst*, thereby using the name recognition of *Westkunst* (remember that *Westkunst* opened two months before *Passive-Explosive* and remained open through the duration of *Passive-Explosive*) to bolster recognition of their own project. They engaged in a dialogue with the larger, popular show from the outset, which suggests that they were grappling with questions of how to negotiate their own place in art history and their exclusion by established institutions like Cologne’s art museums, which sponsored *Westkunst*, at the same time as they were known for being anti-establishment artists. They leveraged the power of the big exhibition’s name to draw attention to the art that they made and championed, and they launched their attack from within another art institution, the Federation of Visual Artists Cologne. Today, Metzger and Staeck are recognized in contemporary art history as anti-establishment, politically engaged artists, and Frowein as an art historian, who specializes in art by artists living in exile.

*Passive-Explosive*’s strategy of creating a dialogue with *Westkunst*, albeit in the form of an argument against it, was also apparent in the “Interaction
Room,"154 where a selection of articles on Westkunst were juxtaposed with a book in which visitors were encouraged to write their own commentary and suggestions of other artists and art movements that should be featured in Passive-Explosive. The issues the articles raised about Westkunst may have influenced visitors to see Passive-Explosive as righting the wrongs of Westkunst by including art that the larger exhibition excluded, but the book that visitors could write in had the potential to open up Passive-Explosive to the same sort of critiques that were directed against Westkunst, including questions about the organizers’ curatorial decisions. I have not located any record of what visitors thought about either show, but it should be noted that the sort of political art featured in Passive-Explosive is now integral to contemporary art history.

For example, in the semi-circular “Textile Room”155 there were photocopied documents pertaining to happenings, Fluxus, environments, psychedelic art, feminist art and the women’s movement, and video attached to hanging fabric. The obviously impermanent fabric “gallery walls” contrasted with the permanent-looking walls that Unger had built in the Trade Fair Hall for Westkunst. The makeshift “walls” in the “Textile Room” were also appropriate to the art that was documented in the room. Happenings, Fluxus, and environments were realized using common materials, often in non-art spaces; textiles were a central material for numerous feminist artists; and a hanging sheet could be used as a screen on which to project video. The materials in the

154 Interaktionsraum.
155 Textilraum.
“Museum Room”\textsuperscript{156} explored the idea of a museum and posed the question “How can art that is ‘past’ be adequately presented?”. Four examples of rooms with flexible exhibition possibilities were offered to elicit reflection. The issues addressed in this room could be compared to institutional critique, as well as to Vostell’s explorations of the Museum as a medium and to artists’ interest in curating as a kind of post-studio mode of working, something that is rather commonplace in 2013.

The “Kinetic Room”\textsuperscript{157} focused not just on kinetic art, but also on idea and concept art, technological art, earth art, auto-destructive art, the Situationist International, and other such art. Documentation of these divergent art movements was attached to hanging, movable blackboards, hinting at the appearance of unity in what was essentially a hodgepodge grouping of different artworks and movement that was not unlike the pairings that König was criticized for creating in Westkunst. The difference was that the organizers of Passive-Explosive saw all of the art they selected as existing under the rubric of political art. It is difficult, however, to understand how this justification is more acceptable than König’s of intending to show “continuity and contradiction.”

The final section of Passive-Explosive was titled “Political Art.” It comprised a semi-circular wall covered with newspaper and magazine clippings, a practice Metzger had engaged in since 1961, creating a visual impression of an “abundance of political and social events” and revealing the imbricate contexts in which artists create art and in which art is received. Documentation of

\textsuperscript{156}Museumsraum.  
\textsuperscript{157}Kinetischer Raum.
international political art and reactions to it covered another large adjacent wall. This installation in particular highlighted politics and its intertwining with art around the world, and reminded visitors of Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck’s aim of attempting to deconstruct the authority of establishment institutions, as manifest in the form of Westkunst, from within an institution, the artist-run federation. As I have shown, the position that Metzger, Frowein, and Staeck took in championing political art over other art required that they initiate in a dialogue with Westkunst even as they sought to reject the account of contemporary art that König told in Westkunst. Likewise, Vostell simultaneously demonstrated his desire to participate in Westkunst, to be critical of it, and to be more experimental with his mobile museum Fluxus Zug.

Vostell’s happenings and his participation in Fluxus were featured in the seventh Westkunst film, and three of his works were displayed in the exhibition. The works on view were Frigidaire (1959), a dé-coll/aged, dented, and rusted cover from an oven, or an objet trouvé; Sketch for Cityrama I\(^{158}\) (1961), a drawing and transfer print of the plan for the “permanent realistic demonstration” by the same name that required invited participants to visit to twenty-six places in Cologne that Vostell had chosen between 1958 and 1961, and to view the “forms of decay” and perform a particular action or think about something at each spot; and Electronic Paper Block\(^{159}\) (1961-69, simply titled Paper Block in the Westkunst catalog), paper garbage pressed and bundled together with twelve attached speakers, two Sinuston generators, and an amplifier that worked together to

\(^{158}\) Partitur zu Cityrama I.
\(^{159}\) Electronischer Papierblock.
make both audible and visible the sounds generated by, within, and around the bundle of paper, thereby calling attention to multiple dimensions of the mundane material. These three works and the documentary footage presented in the film are generally representative of Vostell’s oeuvre. The works encompass his artistic philosophy of dé-coll/age, his integral role in happenings and Fluxus, his early dialogue with Nouveau Réalisme from his days in Paris (something he downplayed but is evidenced by the objet trouvé and the Arman-like block of compressed paper waste), his experimentations with sound and incorporation of everyday materials, and his training in graphic design and printmaking. Still, Vostell argued that he was not satisfied with König’s project.

A letter that Vostell wrote to Hanns Sohm, which I discovered in the Sohm Archive, reveals that Vostell was troubled by how Westkunst, in his opinion, “discriminated” against performance. Dated September 15, 1980, the letter expresses Vostell’s concern over König and Glozer’s plan to exhibit happenings and Fluxus only through documentation. The insinuation is that Westkunst should have incorporated live art, but Vostell provided no suggestions as to how this should be accomplished or other ways in which happenings and Fluxus could be included in a survey exhibition like Westkunst. Instead, he implored Sohm, who by then was known for the important collection of happenings, Fluxus, and other experimental art that he had begun under Vostell’s guidance, to not associate with the likes of those involved in planning Westkunst. Given this plea, Vostell’s own decision to allow his works to be exhibited in the Trade Fair Hall must be called into question. Why would he agree to have three works in a show that he so fervently opposed that he insisted
Sohm distance himself from it? The answer, I argue, lies in Vostell’s realization that his position in contemporary art had been surpassed by Beuys and by a younger generation of artists. Westkunst not only generated international publicity, it was a joint project of the art museums in Cologne, the city where Vostell had lived for twelve years and established himself as a vanguard artist in the late 1950s and 1960s. That König, acting on behalf of the city’s art museums, included Vostell in Westkunst, therefore, was evidence that Vostell indeed had played an important role in contemporary art history and that he deserved to be recognized for his contributions.

Nonetheless, Vostell continued to ponder the question he implied in his letter to Sohm about how to capture the essence of happenings, Fluxus, and other performance-oriented art in an historical exhibition without relying solely on documentary photographs, scores, film footage, or the remnants of or fallout from live events. How could one convey the conceptual link between the act and process of creating and the work that resulted? How could one encourage active participation in the work? Vostell’s solution, I propose, was to make motion and the performative inseparable from the exhibition as a whole. Fluxus Zug was his attempt at realizing this strategy.

Not unlike Westkunst, Vostell’s mobile museum offered a survey of contemporary art history, albeit told entirely with works that Vostell created circa 1981. Fluxus Zug ushered visitors from a history of Vostell’s own art (Video Library/Communication Car) to a more general history of contemporary art, from painting (The Angels) to sound art (The Rivers), then on to minimalist-like sculpture (The Dances), to television and video (The Winds), to conceptually-
oriented art (*The Stones*), to figural sculpture (*The Clouds*), to multi-sensorial art (*The Fires*), and finally to art and archives (*Vostell in NRW 1959-1981*). All of these works were in the form of environments, and, through its physical motion, the train that transported these environments literally made *Fluxus Zug* a work in flux, a museum that in its movement across time and space embodied the action-based principles of Fluxus and happenings. Meanwhile, the program of related activities for each town that *Fluxus Zug* stopped in made *Fluxus Zug* a nomadic node of activity for the community’s interaction and collaboration, a kind of precursor to what has more recently been termed “relational” art (Nicholas Bourriaud) or “dialogical” art (Grant Kester), and a successor to the prewar avant-garde, especially Soviet agit-prop trains, as Vostell acknowledged by reproducing two photographs of an agit-prop train in the *Fluxus Zug* catalog. Furthermore, in holding press conferences and discussions with visitors, Vostell performed the role of the artist/educator, using art to expand the public’s worldview and understanding about living in contemporary society. *Fluxus Zug* demonstrated how traditional art forms like painting and sculpture coexist with, are precedents for, contain the kernels of, and eventually fold into experimental art, which in turn becomes part of the establishment, and the cycle starts over.

*Fluxus Zug* was a museum, a work of art, a history of contemporary art, and a history of Vostell’s oeuvre that developed out of and existed in its particular cultural, social and political context. The form it took, especially when considered in relation to other museums that Vostell conceived, reveals the ways in which Vostell intended *Fluxus Zug* to spectacularly reclaim his place in art history at a moment when the movements he wanted to be connected with were
beginning to enter the art historical record and art institutions, but his name was fading away. As the following chapter explores, another place from which Vostell’s name has faded, but which was a significant part of his development as an artist, relates to the role of the artist/educator and to another art institution, the academy.
Chapter 2: The Ideal Academy

In life I’m not a down-and-out, I’m not a fighter. I can’t fight in the streets, I’m not fomenting rebellion in the streets, but through my work I try to create models that allow others to liberate themselves, to have a freer life. … I do it through the action and the object. - Wolf Vostell

I. Introduction

In January 1969, Friedrich Wolfram (“Fritz”) Heubach asked Vostell and Beuys in separate interviews to imagine their ideal academy. Beuys proposed a free school that would foster the development of open creative people who would, in turn, shape society. This free school would take shape through the creation of a new political party, such as the German Student Party (DSP), which he had helped found in 1967 at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie where he had been a professor since 1961. For his part, Vostell envisioned the ideal academy, verbally in the interview and visually in a drawing, as both a happening and a laboratory on wheels. It would travel throughout the country by train or cars with a team of advisors (Berater) from various disciplines. The team would interact with the public by initiating “learning events” (Lehrereignisse), holding seminars, and fueling conversing over the television and radio station that the academy would manage. Vostell allowed that the ideal academy’s make-up

3 Deutsche Studentenpartei.
would evolve in the future, depending on developments in communications technologies and the changing needs of society.

Whether or not Vostell was aware of the fact, the form of his ideal academy parallels the idea that Theodor Adorno elucidated in a 1967 essay, “Education After Auschwitz,” which advised special “television programs be planned” and “mobile educational groups and convoys of volunteers could be formed, who would drive into the countryside and in discussions, courses, and supplementary instruction attempt to fill the most menacing gaps.” Adorno wanted to prevent a relapse into the psychological conditions and motives that led to the Holocaust, and he believed this could be accomplished by augmenting the education of people living in rural areas, who he, nevertheless, condescendingly described as in need of “debarbarization.” In contrast, Vostell aimed to intervene primarily in cities and towns, and, similar to Beuys, he was concerned with cultivating individuals fully cognizant of the complexities of life and the society and world in which they lived. Armed with a more empathetic worldview, such individuals would, by extension, not allow the conditions that gave rise to fascism to reemerge.

Beuys and Vostell’s interviews appeared in the second issue of the German avant-garde journal Interfunktionen (1969), which Heubach had founded in Cologne in 1968. Typed documents from two of Beuys’s students also appeared in the journal’s ideal academy section: Heinrich Scheidgen’s proposal

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5 Ibid.
6 In addition to the topic of the ideal academy, the second issue also documented Labor, an interdisciplinary collective that is further discussed below, and Fluxus.
described a future art academy that embraced an expanded definition of art and incorporated such disciplines as psychology and cybernetics, while Jörg Immendorff’s text outlined the purpose of the LIDL Academy, the action-turned-alternative-academy that he established with others at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie on December 2, 1968. Immendorff, who was also a secondary school (Realschule) art teacher at the time, created the LIDL Academy in order to generate dialogue between future art teachers and students. It had no hierarchy, no director, and no professors, and it was open to everyone, regardless of his or her affiliation with the Kunstakademie. Both Heubach and Vostell participated in the LIDL Academy.

Besides being published in the same issue of Interfunktionen, these four ideal academy models shared the belief that the structure and curriculum of the traditional academy needed to be overturned; and art was to be understood as existing in an interconnected, interdisciplinary web, informing and informed by other disciplines, technologies, and realms of life. In her 2011 study of the artist as a teacher, Antje Kramer demonstrated how numerous artists in the 1960s and 1970s shared these convictions and believed the key to the development of “‘complete men,’ ones capable of transforming society,” resides in fostering learning and knowledge through art.

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7 Additional documentation of the LIDL Academy (copies of letters and newspaper articles) was included in a later section of the journal called “Current Documents” (Aktuelle Dokumente).

8 Kramer argues that Vostell shared this objective with other artists who also theorized about being artist-teachers and establishing alternative academies in the 1960s and 1970s, including Yves Klein, George Maciunas, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Arnulf Rainer, and Joseph Beuys. She also astutely notes that, because of their universal, totalizing pedagogical vision, these artists “envisaged [the student or pupil] in absolutist terms that seemed to render obsolete any nuanced questioning about his status or his individual future.” This problematic deserves closer attention that cannot be given here. Antje Kramer, “The Artist as Teacher: On the Egalitarian Myths of Art

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context of embodying this role of the artist-teacher, Vostell rarely is considered, largely due to the fact that he was never employed full-time as an instructor at an art academy or university, as were Beuys and Immendorff. But also, Beuys usurped Vostell’s place in the public mind with regard to his political and pedagogical contributions to the period. Nevertheless, Vostell was a teacher and his ideological positions were clear in the content of his work. He taught through his art, and the ideal academy model that he outlined and envisaged for Heubach in Interfunktionen must be understood as Vostell’s effort to crystallize in words and an image how his art and artistic philosophy had long been politically intertwined with a pedagogical mission.

In this chapter I examine the structure and aims of Vostell’s ideal academy, locating it in relation to his own and other artists’ interests in art and education, as well as to the broader revolutionary spirit of “1968.” More specifically, I contextualize his ideal academy within the tumultuous period of West Germany’s 1968 and the concurrent upheavals at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie that inspired Heubach to address the ideal academy as a topic in his journal’s second issue. I propose that analyzing the model academy that Vostell imagined in 1969 illuminates how he taught through his art and how he later conceived Fluxus Zug as both a mobile museum and a “living art school.” Moreover, I will suggest that Fluxus Zug was an alternative version of Vostell’s ideal academy, one that, as he anticipated in his interview with Heubach,
reflected the entirely changed artistic, social, and political milieus between 1969 and 1981.

Beuys remains arguably Germany’s most infamous artist-educator, and the central figure that challenged the Kunstakademie’s traditions. Because Vostell considered Beuys his arch rival, I examine Beuys’ idea for an ideal academy in tandem with that of Vostell; and I also outline Immendorff’s LIDL Academy to clarify Vostell’s participation in LIDL, and his collaboration with Immendorff on multiple occasions in experimental art/education ventures. But I begin my exploration with Vostell. In particular, I start by examining how Vostell established himself as an artist within an expansive interdisciplinary network of individuals that formed as a direct result of his initiatives and activities, many of which were responses to the politics of “1968.” I then discuss the situation at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie that motivated Heubach to publish on the ideal academy. In that context, I consider the actions of Beuys and Immendorff, their roles as artist-teachers, and their visions of the ideal academy. Finally, I return to Vostell and the ideal academy that he articulated in Interfunktionen, and the advisors he named to serve in the academy during its first year. Chapter 3 continues the exploration of the ideal academy but focuses on the drawing Vostell made of it and on the relationship between Vostell’s ideal academy and Fluxus Zug.
II. Living the Ideal Academy

Vostell began to forge connections with experimental artists and musicians already in 1954 when, as a student of lithography at the Wuppertal Werkkunstschule, he traveled to Cologne and met composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. Drawing on his training in design and printmaking, Vostell also promoted and documented contemporary, experimental art in publications. Most notable were his journal *dé-colla*ge (1962-69) and the anthology he co-edited with poet Jürgen Becker, *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme* (1965). By the mid- to late 1960, Vostell was notorious for bringing together people of diverse specialties during Thursday evening gatherings at his home in Cologne, and he formed interdisciplinary collaborations with a number of various attendees.

One such enterprise was Labor, Inc., \(^9\) which Vostell co-founded with Heubach, composer Mauricio Kagel, composer and filmmaker Alfred Feussner, and artist Ursula Burghardt\(^10\) on January 11, 1968. Labor was a laboratory for the interdisciplinary research of visual and acoustic events, including radio, television, and theater, but independently of established institutions. The group opened its first festival, “5 Day Race,”\(^11\) in the underground parking garage of Cologne’s Kunsthalle on October 15, 1968, while the second annual Cologne Art Market took place inside of the Kunsthalle above ground. The city’s cultural affairs minister, Kurt Hackenberg, partially financed the festival, which was

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\(^9\) Labor, e.V.
\(^10\) Burghardt and Kagel were married.
\(^11\) “5 Tage Rennen.”
billed as an alternative to the economically driven Art Market. On view in the parking garage were objects, multimedia environments, and interactive, process-based works by Vostell, Kagel, Feussner, and Burghardt, as well as Nam June Paik, Gábor Altorjay, and LIDL.¹² The festival was intended to last for five days, the same duration as the Art Market. However, the participants closed “5 Day Race” after just three days out of solidarity with X-Screen, a platform for showing experimental film in West Germany.¹³

X-Screen was founded in Cologne in 1968. Like Labor, it received funding from Cologne’s Department of Cultural Affairs to hold a five-day-long film festival at the same time as the Art Market. The film festival, entitled “Underground Explosion,” was held in a subway station that was under construction. Christine Mehring has posited, following the recollection of Cologne-based gallerist Rudolf Zwirner, that Hackenberg supported alternative festivals like “5 Day Race” and “Underground Explosion” precisely so that he could manage them and prevent them from becoming too radicalized.¹⁴ Indeed, “Underground Explosion” was shut down for its provocative content. When the police raided the X-Screen festival on its second evening (October 16) and confiscated body art films, verging on pornography, by Otto Mühl, the most radical anarchist artist associated with Viennese Actionism, and others,

¹² The works were as follows: Vostell, Magnetostriktion in Milch; Kagel, Ornithologica multiplicata; Feussner, Vorspann; Burghardt, Krumme Ebene; and Altorjay, Kurzschluss. Paik, who it seems was unable to attend submitted a selection of works from his “Exhibition of Music,” which was held at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal in 1963. Immendorff built a LIDL stamp house (Stempelhaus). He sat inside the structure and stamped messages.

¹³ For more on “5 Day Race” and on Labor, see Mauricio Kagel’s discussion with Wulf Herzogenrath and Gabriele Lueg, as well as documents related to Labor and Vostell’s discussion with Lueg in Herzogenrath and Lueg, Die 60er Jahre, 175-82, 87, 92-5, 264-67.

demonstrations outside of the Art Market ensued. The members of Labor were among the protestors.

In the second issue of *Interfunktionen*, Heubach published the history of Labor and documentation of its first festival, including sketches and diagrams of the works of art in it, as well as an explanation about why “5 Day Race” closed early. This information immediately preceded the section on the ideal academy, which clearly suggested a connection between the organization and aims of an ideal academy and the radical activities of the artists, as well as the protest actions of Labor. Although it was not mentioned in *Interfunktionen*, there is also a direct relation between the protest actions of Labor, the ideal academy, and the demonstrations at the openings of Documenta IV in Kassel and the 34th Venice Biennale. For example, the protests surrounding X-Screen followed a demonstration at the opening of Documenta IV on June 26, 1968, a demonstration instigated by Vostell, Immendorff, and Chris Reinecke (Immendorff’s wife at the time). Heubach also took part. This protest was, in turn, inspired by the demonstrations at the opening of the 34th Venice Biennale on June 22, as well as by the revolutionary spirit following the Paris events of May 1968.

Vostell had been invited to recreate his room-sized multimedia environment, *Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room*¹⁵ (or *E.d.H.R.*, 1968) at the Venice Biennale as part of a special exhibition, *Line of Research: From the Informal*...

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to the New Structures, and he participated in the protests while he was at the Biennale. A photograph of Vostell holding up a role of his German Student Wallpaper (1967) outside of the Italian Pavilion reveals how he merged his politics with art all the while maintaining a sardonic wit [Fig. 38]. The long roll of paper is printed repeatedly with a cropped section of a page from Stern, an illustrated West German newspaper, the headline of which shouted: “The Battered Fight Back.” This heading appears below a large image of a young woman escorted by policemen while holding her bloodied head. The picture begs the question: Was the woman’s head bloodied by the same officers accompanying her? To the right of the headline is another smaller image of a youth wounded after being beaten by the police during a violent demonstration in West Berlin against the Shah of Iran’s visit to the city on June 2, 1967. During the protest, Benno Ohnesorg, a twenty-six-year-old student, who attended the demonstration, was shot and killed by the undercover policeman Karl-Heinz Kurras. It was the first and only protest that Ohnesorg had attended. His death incited a wave of violent and destructive reactions throughout Germany. Vostell had attempted to sell his German Student Wallpaper to students outside of the Free University and the Technical University in West Berlin, encouraging them to use it to cover the walls of their rooms, the entrances to the universities, the supermarkets, and police stations. However, to Vostell’s frustration, few

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16 Linea de la ricerca: Dall’Informale alle nuove Strutture.
17 Vostell, Vostell — Ein Leben lang, 104.
18 Deutsche Studententapete.
students understood the work, even after long discussions with the artist, and only a few purchased a roll.\textsuperscript{19}

Vostell’s wallpaper calls attention to the specific West German context in which Vostell, Heubach, and their colleagues lived, worked, and discussed current events and out of which the ideal academy emerged, as much as it also conjures Andy Warhol’s mass media images of disasters from the early 1960s and his \textit{Cow Wallpaper} of 1966. More importantly, the wallpaper highlights the frictions that had been building in West Germany since the early 1960s when a series of occurrences that anticipated May 1968 events in Paris began. It therefore had (and still has) the potential to provoke critical reflection about the sociopolitical conditions of the period, and about how Germany’s past affected its present and future.

The erection of the Berlin Wall, beginning on August 13, 1961, confirmed the ideological divide between East and West, and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, from December 10, 1963 to August 10, 1965, placed the crimes of the Holocaust and twenty-two of its perpetrators back in the public spotlight. But it was Ohnesorg’s murder on June 2, 1967, that most immediately anticipated the mounting tensions in Germany. In order to extinguish the fires of unrest that ignited after Ohnesorg’s death, the Federal Republic enacted the so-called Emergency Laws (\textit{Notstandsgesetz}), which greatly expanded the government’s authority to “‘safeguard’ against future ‘civil unrest’.\textsuperscript{20}”

\textsuperscript{19} Vostell, \textit{Vostell — Ein Leben lang}, 98.

\textsuperscript{20} Timothy S. Brown, “‘1968’ East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History,” \textit{The American Historical Review} 114, no. 1 (February 2009): 73. Brown’s article offers an insightful analysis of what “1968” encompassed and meant in the two Germanys.
was widespread. Not only were Germans still grappling with the specter of their
country’s fascist past, but also former Nazis remained in positions of power,
including Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, who headed the ruling coalition
from 1966 through 1969. The question of whether the adoption of the
Emergency Laws was a sign of a resurgent authoritarian and fascist regime
loomed large in the imaginations of many citizens, particularly young people.

To produce *German Student Wallpaper*, Vostell drew on his training and
experience in graphic design and printmaking, employing the technique of
rotary printing to create an infinitely reproducible work of art, which calls forth
memories of West Germany’s longer “1968.” He produced the work as a multiple
under Edition Block, an arm of René Block’s West Berlin gallery, in December
1967, six months after Ohnesorg’s death. By publicly displaying *German Student
Wallpaper* while protesting outside of the Venice Biennale, Vostell demonstrated
the power of visual imagery to convey political messages that challenged the
establishment, namely the Federal Republic and the police that perpetrated
violence especially against students. In the case of Vostell’s protest action in
Venice, the establishment was the Venice Biennale, which refused to implement
his instructions for how viewers should participate in his environment *Electronic
dé-collage Happening Room*.

*E.d.H.R.* was comprised of five television sets and diverse objects arranged
on a floor strewn with shards of glass [Figs. 39-43]. The objects ranged from skis

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21 The coalition was between the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic
Union (CDU). Kiesinger was affiliated with the CDU.
22 Vostell’s *German Student Wallpaper* was the eighth multiple that Edition Block published. It was
released in an edition of 200. Each roll measured 50 x 1000 cm.
and a pile of shoes to chocolate, a bomb, a shovel, cloth, and ultra-violet lights. The televisions displayed manipulated and distorted programs and static. Images of pornography and of violence and destruction—many from the war in Vietnam—were printed on transparent sheets and projected by slide projectors against various surfaces in the space. Motors moved the skis, the shovel, a rake, a sickle, and other objects. Viewers were encouraged to walk across the shards of glass and to become part of the multimedia environment. As one among many other objects in the room, viewers became part of this three-dimensional collage, their footsteps on the glass adding to the cacophony of sounds created by the other objects in the environment. Viewers’ bodies would provide living, breathing, moving surfaces onto which two-dimensional images of victims and perpetrators were projected. Juxtaposed against and standing amongst images and objects of sex, violence, and destruction, viewers were made to directly confront their relationship to the world and the consequences of their action or inaction.

Vostell collaborated with the German engineer Peter Saage, whom he had met shortly before, to make the responsive environment E.d.H.R.²³ Saage wired the room to a computer that received electrical pulses based on the position of viewers. The computer recorded the positions and then controlled the behavior of the various elements in E.d.H.R. If the room was empty, the computer drew on the information it had stored about the previous viewers. If too many people were in the room at the same time, the control pulses temporarily lost control.

²³ Vostell also credited Heubach and Altorjay as collaborators—the former for art psychology and the latter for theology. See Merkert, Vostell: Retrospektive 1958-1974, 194.
Therefore, Vostell requested that no more than three people be in the immersive, technological room at once. When it was installed at the Venice Biennale, a newspaper article reported that Vostell had “insisted that viewers be led through the five rooms filled with bivouacs that adjoined his exhibition. When officials refused, Vostell closed his room, but allowed a number of his friends to see it.”

This was also when Vostell joined the protests against the Biennale.

Four days after demonstrating against the Venice Biennale, where officials prevented him from realizing his political and technologically innovative environment in the manner that he stipulated, Vostell returned to West Germany. In Kassel he led a protest action with Immendorff, Reinecke, and Heubach at the opening of Documenta IV. Headed by curator and Documenta founder, Arnold Bode, the fourth edition of Documenta might be characterized as market-driven, emphasizing American abstraction, Pop art, and Minimalism. Conceptual and performance art, including happenings and Fluxus, were excluded. In order to call attention to the organizers’ bias, Vostell and the other artists interrupted the opening press conference to carry out the so-called “Honey Blind Action.”

Their indignation was fueled by the last-minute cancellation of the multimedia festival, which Vostell had organized to exhibit experimental art that was not accepted into Documenta IV.

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25 A better-known use of honey to spark discussion is Beuys’s *Honey Pump in the Workplace* (*Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz*), installed at Documenta VI in 1977. Comprising an electronic motor and two marine engines with copper rollers that pumped two tons of honey through a series of plastic tubes lubricated with margarine over the duration of the exhibition’s one hundred days, the installation was a metaphorical circulation system. Beuys explained the work in a discussion with Volker Harlan that is published in Harlan, ed., *What is Art?: Joseph Beuys*, trans. Matthew Barton and Shelley Sacks (Forest Row: Clairview Books, 2004).
According to Heubach, the Documenta council was ultimately responsible for foiling the multimedia festival, which was designed to offer an alternative vision of contemporary art than the one presented by the establishment, especially as such artists as Stockhausen, Allan Kaprow, Bazon Brock, Dick Higgins, George Maciunas, and Daniel Spoerri had agreed to participate in the festival. Vostell had arranged for the festival to take place in the Kassel State Theater, which would have made the difference between “official” (in Documenta) and “unofficial” contemporary art obvious, as the theater is adjacent to the Fridericianum, the main exhibition site for Documenta. The location of the theater also would have underscored the interdisciplinary nature of the art in the multimedia festival, particularly regarding the relationship between art and performance. However, the authorities twice succeeded in preventing the exhibition of this unconventional event of—first by rejecting the work from Documenta and second by blocking the multimedia festival.

Undaunted, the “Honey Blind Action” collided with the official opening of Documenta much to the delight of the media. During the “Honey Blind Action,” Immendorff held up a painted plywood polar bear mounted to a stick and put honey on the organizers’ microphones; Reinecke hugged and kissed people; Vostell dumped a bag of change in front of Documenta’s organizers as “a contribution to [their] retirement fund”; and Heubach helped to hold up a

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27 Ibid.
Despite, or perhaps because of, the media coverage, Heubach understood that the controversies surrounding Documenta IV needed to be properly contextualized and permanently documented in order to prevent the protest action from becoming a simple anecdote devoid of an intended purpose.29

Shortly after the “Honey Blind Action,” Heubach brought out the first issue of Interfunktionen, dedicated to “Documenta-Documentation.” Printed in an edition of one hundred and twenty copies, at seventy-five pages each, Interfunktionen 1 included newsprint or stationary facsimiles of original documents—primarily media reports and correspondence—depending on which paper best suited the type of document. Heubach expanded the scope of Interfunktionen in subsequent issues to include texts and works by artists outside of West Germany who worked in conceptual and performance art, new media, new music, earthworks, and video. He incorporated theoretical texts as well. Some issues contained irregularly sized and unbound pages printed on a variety of paper stock to reflect the variety of information featured in the magazine. Heubach employed the strategy of “direct” layout specifically to mimic the look and feel of the original documents, whether these were manuscripts, newspaper articles, or photographs.30 As Gwen Allen has pointed out, Interfunktionen presented facsimiled documents, enabling the journal to function as a site of primary information focused on art and related documents, both of which were

30 Moure, Behind the Facts, 49.
featured as directly as was possible in reproduced form instead of relying on an editor’s interpretation or on a slick publication.

Heubach published ten issues of Interfunktionen, increasing the print run each time and eventually reaching 1,000 copies. He continued to use the strategy of direct layout as much as possible, allowing the artists’ contributions to dictate the design of the issues, despite the cost of doing so. When special issues with signed contributions by artists did not bring in sufficient funds, Heubach used his salary as a research assistant at the University of Cologne to fill budget gaps. Once, Beuys donated a significant amount of money to the journal. His support, Heubach recalled, persuaded others to help finance the journal because “they viewed Beuys as a relatively secure market commodity.”31

In 1973, Heubach turned over the publishing reins to Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, despite the fact that the two disagreed about which artists to support. According to Buchloh, “‘We agreed on [Sigmar] Polke and Immendorff,’ but ‘I could not stand Vostell, and [Heubach] wasn’t so supportive of [Marcel] Broodthaers and [Daniel] Buren.’”32 Buchloh had a master’s degree in German literature and had spent two years in London writing fiction before returning to West Germany in 1971. In Cologne, he became part of the contemporary art and publishing world and met Heubach through his friend, the ethnographer Michael Oppitz.33 Buchloh published only two issues before the journal was forced to close in 1975. The last issue featured photographs from Anselm Kiefer’s Occupations series (1969), which showed the artist performing the Nazi salute in

31 Ibid., 51.
32 Quoted in Mehring, “Continental Schrift,” 233.
33 Ibid., 183.
public locations in France, Italy, and Switzerland. Buchloh recently recalled that the decision to include Kiefer was “a response to [Heubach’s] support of all these [Vostell et al.] German body artists. Now that was German body art.”

The publication of these images caused much outrage. Dealers pulled their advertisements, rendering any future issues of the journal financially unfeasible.

Five years later, in a symbolic gesture, Heubach withdrew the rights for Interfunktionen from Buchloh after Buchloh published a damning critique of Beuys in Artforum in January 1980, which intimated the artist’s unreconstructed fascism. Buchloh’s article condemned Beuys for fabricating his quasi-mythic origins and for turning himself into a shaman-like figure for the German nation. While Heubach had also at times been critical in Interfunktionen of Beuys’s work, he also felt indebted to Beuys for his support. Thus, when Heubach wrote critically of Beuys, he wrote under the pseudonym of Gufo Reale. Gufo reale is Italian for Eurasian eagle owl. The name is an ironic counterpoint to Beuys’s identification with various animals, particularly with the hare and the stag, as well as to Beuys’s repeated use of the term “Eurasi” in various actions to suggest a union between two cultures. Moreover, the name is a commentary on Beuys’s

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34 Kiefer was dressed in what appeared to be a Nazi military uniform. He also performed the salute in his studio in Düsseldorf. The full title of the project is Anselm Kiefer/Between Summer and Fall 1969 I Occupied Switzerland, France, and Italy (Anselm Kiefer/Zwischen Sommer und Herbst 1969 habe ich die Schweiz, Frankreich und Italien besetzt). It is commonly known as Occupations (Besetzungen). Buchloh subsequently published an article criticizing Kiefer’s paintings and Neo-Expressionism in general. See Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression.”

35 Quoted in Mehring, “Continental Schrift,” 233. For his part, Kiefer, who was born in 1945 and therefore knew only of the Nazi regime secondhand, stated in June 1980, “I do not identify with Nero or Hitler, but I have to reenact what they did just a little bit in order to understand the madness. That is why I make these attempts to become a fascist.” Quoted in Lisa Saltzman, Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 60.


role as a professor and pseudo-shaman and on his relationship to Germany. In ancient Greek mythology, the owl was a symbol of wisdom and protection, as it was the favorite bird of Athene, the goddess of wisdom. The owl is also symbolic of the underworld, while the eagle is associated with Germany, the nation for which Beuys embodied the role of savior.

Heubach reproached Buchloh for substantiating Beuys’s identity as an artist-redeemer in his (Buchloh’s) Artforum article: "This archaic shamanism, the story of his plane crash, that was all fiction! It’s your own fault if you take that seriously. The weight of the story was a function of the audience." Heubach, in other words, focused his most direct criticism on the critic, rather than on the artist. Heubach’s allegiance to artists goes back to 1965, when, as a psychology student, he met Vostell who introduced him to contemporary art and the new music scene. Through his own journal dé-coll/age, the publication of which is inextricable from his art practice, Vostell taught Heubach the importance of remaining as true to the original as possible when publishing and disseminating artists’ work and documentary materials; and Heubach credits dé-coll/age as a model for Interfunktionen.

Vostell founded dé-coll/age in June 1962 as a venue to promote and circulate new, experimental, interdisciplinary art, particularly Fluxus, happenings, new music, and concrete poetry. All seven issues of dé-coll/age were compilations of facsimiled originals on different types and colors of paper. Some special issues included original, signed contributions as well—a practice that

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38 Quoted in ibid., 233.
39 Allen, Artists’ Magazines, 211.
Heubach, as noted above, continued with *Interfunktionen*. Vostell adjusted the format of each issue to best fit its varied contents and to allow the submissions to speak for themselves. He published the last issue of *dé-col/age* in February 1969, and dedicated it to his *Electronic dé-col/age Happening Room*. Heubach, who Vostell credited as a collaborator of *E.d.H.R.*, wrote the introduction to the issue.

The final issue of *dé-col/age* was published one month after Heubach interviewed Vostell and Beuys about the ideal academy and compiled documentation for *Interfunktionen 2*, including material on Immendorff’s LIDL Academy, the Labor group, and Fluxus; Vostell designed the cover and printed the issue. What these details demonstrate is that Vostell mentored Heubach, introducing him to contemporary, experimental art, including him in interdisciplinary collaborations and protest actions, and, by example, teaching him how to publish artists’ materials, just as he had tutored the great German collector of happenings and Fluxus, Hanns Sohm. Moreover, the interdisciplinary networks and collaborations that Vostell established and instigated might also be considered ideal academies for how they served as models for alternative learning. However, in his brief introductory remarks to the ideal academy section in *Interfunktionen*, Heubach did not mention Vostell as an inspiration for his interest, rather he cited the controversies at the Düsseldorf Kunstkademie as the impetus for his consideration of the topic of the ideal academy.\(^{40}\) The debates to which Heubach referred centered largely on the challenges posed to the Kunstkademie’s conservative faculty by Beuys and Immendorff, disputes that erupted in protests there. Given this specific context

\(^{40}\) The Kunstkademie grew out of a drawing school that was established in 1762.
and the facts that Beuys was such an influential teacher and Vostell’s rival, I now turn to Beuys—his training and teaching at the Kunstakademie, and his founding of the German Student Party (DSP), which served as the model for his view of an ideal academy.

III. Beuys and the DSP

In 1969, Beuys was a popular professor at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, one of Germany’s premier art schools. He had attended the Kunstakademie as a student from 1946 to 1952, where he was a master student of sculptor Ewald Mataré from 1947 to 1952. Mataré was one of many who had been expelled from his professorship at the Kunstakademie under the Nazi regime and included in the Degenerate Art Exhibition of 1936. Mataré was reinstated as a professor at the Kunstakademie in 1945.\(^\text{41}\) It is of consequence that when Beuys attempted to join the faculty in 1958, six years after completing his studies with Mataré, it was Mataré who blocked Beuys’ application, arguing that, “Beuys would certainly fail as a teacher.”\(^\text{42}\) But three years later, in 1961, Beuys prevailed, joining the Kunstakademie faculty as professor of monumental sculpture.

As a student Beuys deeply admired his teacher, Mataré, who was one of the most successful artists in Germany in the 1940s and 1950s. Beuys expressed his respect by creating numerous works that formally resembled Mataré’s sculpture. However, as Pamela Kort has shown, Mataré’s reception as an artist

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changed around the time that Beuys was completing his studies, and once Beuys was appointed to the faculty of the Kunstdakademie, he rarely mentioned Mataré.⁴³ In 1958, the year that Beuys first applied to join the Kunstdakademie’s faculty, art historian Werner Hofmann derogatorily wrote in his publication *Twentieth Century Sculpture* (1958)⁴⁴ that Mataré’s work was “becoming increasingly ornamental.”⁴⁵ Hofmann’s critique foreshadowed the decline of Mataré’s standing as an artist. It was also telling of the fraught climate in postwar Germany, where in the immediate postwar years critical debates raged about what art style and imagery was most appropriate for the new German nation after Nazism. In the immediate postwar years, art was generally understood to embody identity such that the search for a visual language, which would distance postwar Germany from Germany under the Third Reich, was a pressing matter hotly debated by artists and intellectuals.⁴⁶

Hofmann concluded his introduction to *Twentieth Century Sculpture* with a statement by the German sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck, who had studied at the Düsseldorf Kunstdakademie from 1901 until 1907: “I believe that we are once again approaching a period of truly great art, and that we shall soon find the expression of our era in a monumental style appropriate to our time.”⁴⁷

Significantly for posterity, Lehmbruck was the only German sculptor invited to take part in the Armory show in New York in 1913. In 1939, New York’s

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¹³ Ibid., 31.
¹⁷ Translated by and quoted in Kort, “Beuys,” 29.
Museum of Modern Art included multiple sculptures by Lehmbruck in the exhibition “Art in Our Time.” His legacy was perceived as being akin to that of Albrecht Dürer as “both indigenously German and internationally significant.” But Lehmbruck, who had died prematurely by suicide, had not lived long enough to fulfill his potential role as a leader able to reestablish Germany’s cultural prominence in the world. As August Hoff lamented in 1933 in a pamphlet entitled *Wilhelm Lehmbruck,* “‘Lehmbruck has remained without an immediate successor.… Perhaps he will only find the proper succession in a coming generation.’” Mataré’s legacy, in contrast, moved in the opposite direction. He went from being one of the most successful German artists to a minor regional figure.

Kort has theorized that Beuys was aware of this long, contentious quest, and that he envisioned himself as a potential heir to Lehmbruck, not to Mataré. Not only did Beuys mention Lehmbruck as an influence in his resume when he reapplied to the Kunstakademie’s faculty in 1961, but he also utilized the phrase “Profile Successor” multiple times in his *Lifecourse Workcourse* (1964), a curriculum vita cum work of art, in such a way that may be interpreted as signaling the promise of his own legacy to come. Moreover, Beuys publicly thanked his “‘teacher Wilhelm Lehmbruck’” (despite the fact that Lehmbruck died in 1919) when accepting the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Prize in Duisburg on

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48 Ibid., 19.  
49 Translated by and quoted in ibid., 29.  
50 This act may also have been a strategic move, intended to impress the hiring committee, as Lehmbruck had been a student at the Kunstakademie.  
51 “Profil Nachfolger.”  
52 *Lebenslauf Werkauf.*
January 12, 1986. Also in his acceptance speech, Beuys described his first encounters of Lehmbruck’s sculptures between 1933 and 1941 and a book that he claimed he found in 1940-41 at the Reichsuniversität in Posen. (He would have been at the university on break during military training.) Kort suggests that the book to which Beuys cryptically referred most likely was Hoff’s 1933 Wilhelm Lehmbruck publication mentioned above. Although Beuys did not publicly elaborate upon Lehmbruck’s significance until his 1986 speech, the principles and terminology that he had adopted by 1964 suggest that Beuys was in dialogue with ideas that Hofmann championed in his introduction to Twentieth Century Sculpture about the differences between sculpture and painting and between sculpture and plastic, and about the period being ripe for sculpture to reemerge in importance. This was the same introduction that Hofmann closed by quoting Lehmbruck about the coming “period of truly great art” and the realization of a “monumental style appropriate to our time.”

Beuys introduced the term Plastik (plastic), rather than Skulptur (sculpture), to describe his work in 1964, explaining: “Whereas Plastik derives from Greek plastikos, and describes the activity of modeling, Skulptur (sculpture) derives from a Latin word (sculpere) that indicates the process of reductive carving.” In his emphasis on Plastik, Beuys summoned the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, who posited in 1778 that, “the beginnings of language, partly preserved by Greek myths, are the actual source of the plastic ideal,” and

54 Ibid., 25.
55 Ibid., 29.
56 Ibid., 27.
that “sculpture was truth, whereas painting was merely a dream.”\textsuperscript{57} For Herder, language is a plastic material that creates form, through an additive process from the inside out. Beuys drew on these concepts to arrive at his “expanded concept of art” and notion of “social sculpture.” The plastic, for Beuys, referred both to the artistic technique of modeling and to the general character of art, of creating order out of chaos. He extended the plastic to characterize all human activity. Although Beuys created sculptural objects throughout his lifetime, social relations became the primary object of his artistic practice and his teaching for how they take shape through the process of discussions, interpersonal interactions, and political engagement. Large lecture discussions in which Beuys often used blackboards filled with his writings, typified his classes at the Kunstakademie.\textsuperscript{58} This consideration of human activity as art was, to draw on Lehmbrock’s terminology, monumental.

In the summer of 1967, Beuys merged politics with his teaching activities and art practice by initiating the founding of the German Student Party (DSP) in front of the Kunstakademie. He envisioned the DSP as a work of art, as well as a site for shaping the future by providing direction for the student protests that had gathered strength following Ohnesorg’s death. The DSP is an example of


\textsuperscript{58} Beuys adapted the practice of using blackboards from the practice of Rudolf Steiner [1861-1925]. Steiner founded the Anthroposophical Society in 1912. Between 1919 and 1924, he delivered over 2,000 public lectures during which he wrote with colored chalk on black paper to illustrate his ideas. Beuys typically used white chalk on blackboards. See Allison Holland, ed. \textit{Joseph Beuys & Rudolf Steiner: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition} (Victoria: National Gallery of Victoria, 2007).
how the concepts of \textit{Plastik} could be harnessed to create order out of chaos.\textsuperscript{59}

Among other demands, the DSP called for self-determination, equality, attention to ecological issues, and a united Europe.\textsuperscript{60} The following year, in line with the DSP’s call for self-determination at the Academy,\textsuperscript{61} Beuys took a stand against the admissions limits, enforced by the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, by allowing anyone to attend his classes, and eventually permitting up to five hundred students to enroll over the official limit set for his course. This brazen confrontation to the rules of the Kunstakademie contributed both to his burgeoning popularity amongst the students and to his notoriety amongst the faculty and directors, as well as the state’s minister of culture who, after extensive legal measures initiated by the Kunstakademie against Beuys, dismissed the artist from his position in 1972.\textsuperscript{62} The actions and reactions by the Kunstakademie faculty and directors, and by Beuys and his students, were well publicized and helped to establish Beuys’s reputation as an anti-establishment figure and teacher. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that carrying out the DSP’s demands at the Kunstakademie ultimately led to Beuys’s dismissal from his professorship, the DSP was the sort of new political party that Beuys told Heubach in the \textit{Interfunktionen} interview would lead to the development of a free school and of the ideal academy.

\textsuperscript{60} Ecological concerns became increasingly important for Beuys. Questions of ecology arose around the DSP as Beuys considered animals members of the party, making the DSP the largest party in the world. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Here, the Academy is used to refer most broadly to an institution of higher learning, not just the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, outside of which the DSP was founded.
\textsuperscript{62} See Cornelia Lauf, “Joseph Beuys: The Pedagogue as Persona” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1992), 8; and Beckmann, “Joseph Beuys,” 98. In 1978 Beuys won a case in Federal Court that overturned his dismissal from the Kunstakademie. He was granted lifelong rights to his former studio in the Kunstakademie. (Beckmann, 92.)

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At the same time as Beuys was attempting to realize a version of his ideal academy from within the established Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, Jörg Immendorff, one of Beuys’s students, also formed his ideal academy inside the traditional academy. As with Beuys, the Kunstakademie took legal measures against his anti-establishment activities. Heubach, who, along with Vostell, collaborated with Immendorff and participated in Immendorff’s LIDL Academy, documented the conflicts between the alternative and established academies. In order to grasp the controversy that the LIDL Academy generated, it is useful to first consider its origins.

IV. Immendorff and LIDL

Immendorff proclaimed the founding of the LIDL Academy with other students on December 2, 1968. It grew out of the politically engaged activities that he had begun to carry out with Chris Reinecke in 1966 and 1967. The first action that Immendorff officially realized under the name of LIDL—a name he selected because, like Dada, it was nonsensical—occurred on January 31, 1968. Immendorff tied a block of wood to his left ankle and dragged it on the sidewalk as he walked back and forth in front of the Federal Parliament in Bonn. He had painted the block with the colors of the German flag (black, red, and gold) and with the word “LIDL,” written in white letters. Police showed up after thirty
minutes and charged Immendorff with denigration of the Federal Republic. The charges were later dropped.

In order to understand why dragging a painted block of wood on the ground was such a cause for alarm, one must remember the tense, volatile milieu in West Germany at the time. It is also important to note that, in general, the German flag was not displayed with pride, as the idea of German nationalism was still tainted with the history of Nazism. Furthermore, Immendorff’s action was a play-on-words. In German, the phrase to have a “Klotz am Bein” (block at one’s leg) signifies that one is burdened by something. By dragging a block painted with the German flag from his leg in front of the nation’s Parliament, Immendorff suggested through his artistic action that he was troubled by Germany and its politics. This action set the tone for the subsequent activities of LIDL, including the creation of the LIDL Academy. LIDL became a platform for Immendorff and LIDL’s collaborators to explore various structures within German society and to construct possible alternatives to existing institutions, both theoretically and practically, and as a collective. This is why the name LIDL appeared as a participant in Labor’s “5 Day Race” instead of Immendorff.

On December 9, 1968, one week after the founding of the LIDL Academy, participants began building the first LIDL Academy classroom out of cardboard, paper, and poles inside of the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. That evening, the Kunstakademie director, Eduard Trier, verbally issued an order—a Hausverbot—banning Immendorff from the school. Tensions between the student and the

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64 Ibid., 28.
faculty had been building prior to this incident, given Immendorff’s proclivity for challenging authority and conventions. Trier followed up his verbal order with a written one on December 10 that stated the culture minister of NRW had granted Trier formal permission on December 4 to issue the *Hausverbot*. In response, the LIDL Academy participants carried out their activities inside of the Kunstakademie, while Immendorff established a temporary LIDL Academy base outside of the Kunstakademie, a post he successfully occupied until December 23, when officials tore it down.

On January 2, 1969, while still expelled from the Kunstakademie, Immendorff entered the building, carrying a simple, small, rectangular model of a building, marked with the name “LIDL Academy,” in his hand and set up an information stand inside the Kunstakademie. Needless to say, this provocation did not please the Kunstakademie faculty. Despite the protests of students and a few professors, including Beuys, Immendorff and his alternative academy were again expelled from the established institution. In an ironic twist of events, nearly thirty years later Immendorff returned to the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1996 as a professor. He taught at a secondary school in Düsseldorf between 1968 and 1980, followed by several visiting professorships at art schools including the Academy of Art in Hamburg, the Academy for Arts and Crafts in Cologne, and the Städel School in Frankfurt. In other words, the anti-establishment artist, who formed an alternative academy, later joined the faculty

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65 Trier was appointed chair of art history at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1964. He was director from 1965 until 1972. A copy of the letter from Trier to Immendorff, as well as other documentation concerning LIDL, is in *Interfunktionen* 2.
of several established academies but continued to challenge the establishment from within, just as he had done with the LIDL Academy.

Heubach presented facsimiled letters and newspaper articles of the disputes surrounding Immendorff, the LIDL Academy, and the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in *Interfunktionen* 2. As he had done in the first issue of *Interfunktionen*, which covered the protests surrounding Documenta, Heubach, following Vostell’s example from *dé-coll/age*, allowed the documentation to speak for itself and for readers to draw their own conclusions. The documentation appeared both before and after Heubach’s interviews with Beuys and Vostell about the ideal academy. In this way, the LIDL Academy stood as an example of an ideal academy that had, at least to some extent, already been realized. The LIDL Academy and the controversies it provoked also was indicative of the general revolutionary atmosphere of 1968, both in West Germany and around the world, and testified to the specific situation at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie that had sparked Heubach’s interest in the question of the ideal academy in the first place, and that informed the ideal academy models that Beuys and Vostell proposed. Having laid out the ways in which Vostell embodied the role of the artist-teacher and the contexts of 1968, the controversies at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, and the ideal academy models of Beuys and Immendorff, I return to the ideal academy that Vostell proposed in *Interfunktionen*. 
V. Articulating the Ideal Academy

Vostell, who had attended the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie briefly as a student in 1957, was the only one featured in the ideal academy section of *Interfunktionen* who was not directly affiliated with the Kunstakademie in 1968/69. He was, however, one of the first collaborators of LIDL and a participant in the LIDL Academy, so he did have indirect ties to the Kunstakademie through Immendorff. Between Vostell, Beuys, and Immendorff, Vostell was also the only one who never was, and never wished to be, a full-time teacher or professor. Why then did Heubach choose to interview Vostell about the ideal academy?

I suggest that this was a way for Heubach to acknowledge publicly the seminal role that Vostell had in Heubach’s own informal artistic education and the significant role that Vostell could, and should, play in educating a broader public. Whereas Beuys had the title of professor, and was in this regard widely recognized as a teacher, Vostell had no such title. He was an artist, trained in both graphic or commercial art and fine art, and comfortable experimenting with an array of media as artistic materials. Creating art was his means of teaching and he identified educating humankind as central to his art practice: “To educate man not for one thing, but for the totality of life’s questions and phenomena, to shape existence through art, ... this is and this will always be my problem and

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66 In an undated typed brief, Immendorff listed the first LIDL colleagues (Mitarbeiter) as “Klaus Stein, Johannes Stuttgart, Gabor Altorijay, Chris Reinecke, Fritz Heubach, Wolf Vostell, Mauricio Kagel, Peter Saage, Jörg Immendorff, and Peter Dürr.” Ibid., 86.

67 Author’s interview with Mercedes Vostell, Malpartida de Cáceres, May 30, 2008.
my aesthetic task.” Through actions and the art objects resulting from them, as well as through the incorporation of new technologies like television, Vostell sought to provoke the public into more fully perceiving the experience of being a social being involved in “our multi-material and multi-mixed technological existence.”

Yet, Vostell’s art is rarely discussed in terms of education. It is more often described in terms of destruction. To be sure, Vostell did destroy in order to create, sometimes more spectacularly than others. For example, on September 9, 1963 he orchestrated a locomotive engine to crash into a Mercedes-Benz parked across railroad tracks on in Wuppertal as part of his happening No-9-dé-coll/agen. Vostell believed that art that employed various means of destruction and construction could produce in viewers and participants a new awareness of and knowledge about the dialectical condition of modern life. This was part of his lifelong artistic philosophy of dé-coll/age.

While Vostell first saw the term “décollage” in France in a headline about a plane crash, as I noted in the previous chapter, the concept was particularly relevant to the conditions of postwar Germany. Dé-coll/age underscored the otherwise seemingly incommensurable aspects related to the immediate history of Germany in the 1950s and 1960s by juxtaposing past and present, progress and regress.

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68 Quoted in Michel Giroud, “L’Épopée Transmedia d’un Utopien / An Utopian’s Adventures in Transmedia,” in Wolf Vostell: Mon art est la résistance éternelle à la mort / My art is the eternal resistance to death, ed. Carré d’Art-Musée d’art contemporain de Nîmes (Paris: Archibooks, 2007), 24. The date of this quote is unknown.


70 In order to differentiate between Vostell’s philosophy and his journal, I do not italicize “dé-coll/age” when referring to his philosophy.
prosperity and paucity, technology and nature, and especially the ability of technology to be both productive and annihilating. In these ways, dé-coll/age may be compared to the dialectical conditions of culture articulated by the German philosophers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their seminal work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1949), written in exile in the U.S. during the final years of World War II in an attempt to analyze fascism in the wake of the failure of the Enlightenment.

When Heubach asked Vostell to articulate how his ideal academy would be organized, he offered Vostell the chance to elucidate the relationship between his artistic philosophy and education. In other words, Heubach provided Vostell with the opportunity to formulate what he had already been doing in different terms, namely, as an ideal academy. Vostell laid out a model in his ideal academy interview and drawing, both of which speak to his own art practice, which embraced a variety of media and disciplines and addressed social and political topics through the collaborative networks that he instigated and through direct engagement with the public. His ideal academy model also evokes the radical cultural and sociopolitical values that he intended to disseminate throughout West Germany at that historically explosive period in world history.

The form and organization of Vostell’s ideal academy is revealing of his and other artists’ attempts to unify the otherwise separate categories of “art/academy” and “art/education.” Introducing the punctuation of the slash between two terms acknowledges how they may signify alternatives (as in and/or) and how they may function to separate parts of a unified meaning (as in
a fraction 2/3rds). In parsing these two formulations (art/academy and art/education), I take up Todd Presner’s use of the slash in *Mobile Modernity*, where he introduced the formulation “German/Jewish” to highlight the “separatrix,” or what he describes as “the line between the two words ... the cut that separates them.” In the context of the ideal academy, the questions become: Does the slash locate opposition (art versus academy; art versus education), signify simultaneity (art and academy; art and education), and/or require a choice (art or academy; art or education)? The separatrix, Presner theorizes, following Jacques Derrida, calls attention to the relationship between the two words, a relationship that is “characterized by an unresolved tension, a back-and-forth that is never subdued or sublated into a third term” and that “must be articulated according to its historical specificity.” In addition, the Old French etymological origin of the slash is the word “splinter,” which further suggests a sharp break in something that was whole and a unity that has been shattered or cleaved through. With these modes of thinking in mind, I return to an analysis of Vostell’s ideal academy.

*Form and Media*

Vostell explained to Heubach that the ideal academy would be a mobile laboratory, comprised of an ongoing series of artistic and political interventions into everyday life. Conceived as a nomadic year-long happening, it would

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., 4.
provide a creative framework and an artistic worldview on daily life, opening a space through which people from all walks of life could interact under the auspices of art. The ideal academy would travel via automobiles or by train to different towns in West Germany. Approximately twenty advisors would travel with the academy: individuals representing the arts, politics, and the sciences, as well as a doctor, a sexual advisor, a psychologist, an electrical engineer, a political scientist, and a sociologist. These professionals would initiate learning events with the public in such locations as factories, exhibition halls, movie theaters, and banks, as well as minister to public psychosocial and psychophysical needs.

The ideal academy would hold open seminars where anyone could ask any question—nothing would be taboo. Each advisor would provide an answer to all questions, so that those posing questions would receive a multiplicity of responses. The diversity of perspectives and opinions offered would mirror the convoluted conditions of reality, and would function as correctives to the authoritative voice of the single specialist who characterized traditional, patriarchal academies, like the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie.

To wit, Vostell stipulated at the beginning of the Heubach interview that the ideal academy could only begin after the end of the old academy. He even envisioned different ways that the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie might dissolve. For example, the academy could be moved and restructured inside of a convent. Another option was to organize an international meeting of Red Cross nurses in the academy’s existing building. A third possibility was to instruct all of the academy’s students and teachers to polish the school’s doorknobs until everyone
decided to voluntarily leave the academy and the professors asked to be dismissed from their positions. Vostell declared that the emptied Kunstakademie building could then be used for the cultivation of mushrooms, a nod to the composer, John Cage, a renowned mycologist. These various means of destroying the established academy in order to create something new could be seen in relation to Vostell’s philosophy of dé-coll/age, but they could equally be considered a direct assault by Vostell on Beuys, for Vostell was advocating for the dissolution of the academy where his rival was a popular and influential professor; and he was insinuating that the students had become mere lackeys polishing the doorknobs.

In addition to events and seminars, Vostell’s ideal academy would run its own radio and television station. These would allow the public and advisors to be in contact, regardless of their physical proximity. The public could query and discuss all topics directly with the advisors over the popular forms of mass media, whether personal or social, cultural or political, psychological or physical. The use of radio and television would allow the sociocultural politics of the academy to permeate all aspects of daily life of West Germans and possibly even of East Germans. For while armed guards controlled physical movement across

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74 Cage taught an experimental composition course at The New School for Social Research from 1956 to 1961. Artists like Allan Kaprow and Dick Higgins, who were close colleagues and friends of Vostell, attended. Prior to The New School, Cage taught at Black Mountain College in the summers of 1948 and 1952. In 1952, he orchestrated a proto-happening there. In October 1954, Cage performed with David Tudor in Donauschingen and Cologne, West Germany, and met Stockhausen in Cologne’s WDR radio station. This was the same year that Vostell first met Stockhausen. While I have not found evidence that Vostell met Cage in 1954, he most likely would have heard of Cage’s name around that time. Vostell certainly would have been familiar with Cage by late 1958 or 1959. Cage and Tudor returned to tour in West Germany in 1958. Among other cities, they stopped in Düsseldorf and in Darmstadt. Kagel and Paik were in the audience in Darmstadt. Vostell befriended Kagel and Paik in 1959. For more on the experimental music scene in West Germany, see Beal, New Music, New Allies.
the border between East and West Germany, the airwaves remained porous, and radio and television broadcasts spilled over the divide.

Claudia Mesch has explained in her study of modern art produced in Germany in the era of the Berlin Wall that it was due to the strength of West German television signals, for “[t]elevision played a key role in penetrating the border as a cultural barrier in Cold War Germany.”\textsuperscript{75} Not only did television stations air programs probing Germany’s history, particularly of Nazism, they covered the arts. After the West German state added a third television channel in 1964, the number and types of visual arts programs exploded in 1965 and continued to increase through the late 1980s.\textsuperscript{76} While the networks tended to privilege film and video art—easy media to show on television—they also extensively covered such exhibitions as Documenta and such performance- and action-oriented art as happenings and Fluxus. In addition to presenting exhibitions and artists’ actions in special reports and programs in a magazine or series format, the channels broadcast live performances and festivals, anti-television interventions, and art films and videos. They did not avoid controversial subject matter, as inclusivity and tolerance were equated with democracy, and democratization was one of the “four Ds”—the others being denazification, demilitarization, and decentralization—that the Allies implemented as part of their mission to “reeducate” the Germans after the defeat

\textsuperscript{75} Ulrike Claudia Mesch, \textit{Modern Art at the Berlin Wall: Demarcating Culture in the Cold War Germanys} (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008), 206.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 228. According to a study by a research group at the University Siegen, West German television broadcast approximately 10,000 programs on visual art in the thirty years before commercial television was introduced, and the programming increasingly focused on late modern and contemporary art. Ibid., 207. Commercial television was not introduced to West Germany until 1984; prior to this, all stations were public and state-run.
of National Socialism. This is all to say that a culture in West Germany existed in which television presentations of the sort of provocative and educational programming that Vostell wished to see his ideal academy broadcast existed.

Germans also have a history of employing the radio for educational purposes as well. Hitler used the radio to broadcast his vision and personality, and radio became essential to his rise to authority. The image of the radio—specifically the affordable Volksempfänger, or the people’s receiver—even stood as a symbol of the Führer himself in many official paintings and propaganda posters.\(^77\) In light of this history, after WWII, the Allies took advantage of the role that radio could play in reorienting Germans towards democracy. Drawing on the radio network established in the mid-1920s under the Weimar Republic, the Allies established a decentralized public radio system for postwar West Germany.\(^78\) The six radio stations in the western zones (not including West Berlin’s station) began collaborating in June 1950 while retaining their own separate identities. They exchanged programming, shared recordings, and formed associations with a larger network of western European radio stations to broaden their offerings.\(^79\) All of the stations within the West German network had to adhere to a contractual policy that viewed public radio as educational. This understanding informed what they aired. Performances of new music and discussions of controversial topics were key to the educational mandate. Such programming was believed to demonstrate tolerance and democratic

\(^77\) Ibid., 63.
\(^78\) Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 25.
\(^79\) Ibid., 26.
As early as November 1947, the Northwest German Broadcasting (NDWR) began a three-night-per-week, late-night program featuring challenging subject matter and experimental music. In 1951, NDWR founded what became one of the most well known venues for new music: Cologne’s electronic music studio. The electronic studio soon became synonymous with the experimental composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, who joined it in 1953 and remained until 1963. As noted above, Vostell met Stockhausen in 1954. Vostell frequented the electronic studio and Stockhausen’s concerts where he also met Nam June Paik; and Stockhausen visited Vostell’s studio after Vostell returned to Cologne in 1959. Given his exposure to the experimental studio and its success, as well as the historical connections between radio, education, and democracy, it is not surprising that Vostell would select radio as a traditional technological medium through which his otherwise unconventional ideal academy could reach a broad audience.

In fact, five months after Vostell proposed to Heubach that the ideal academy have its own radio station, Vostell actually realized 100 Times Listen and Play, a radio action play (Aktionsspiel). The interaction generated by the play among the public, the radio station staff, and the artist is indicative of what Vostell believed the ideal academy’s radio station should provoke. Aired on

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80 Between 1946 and 1975, the decentralized, state-subsidized network of stations, along with the station in West Berlin, collectively commissioned 933 new works of music. Between 1979 and 1981, the eleven existing West German stations produced over 2,000 live or studio recordings of new music. Ibid., 53-5.
81 After 1955, NWDR split into two stations the West German Broadcasting (WDR) and the North German Broadcasting (NDR). The electronic music studio became part of WDR.
83 100 mal Hören und Spielen.
WDR on May 19, 1969 at 9:30 p.m., *100 Times Listen and Play* began with an announcement that the regularly scheduled concert was being interrupted. This message was repeated multiple times throughout the radio action play so that the public was continuously made aware of the fact that the program was an artistic intervention. For his part, Vostell announced on air a variety of tasks that listeners were instructed to carry out, including “slam your refrigerator door seventeen times”; “send a telegram to Chancellor Kiesinger with the text ‘telegram’”; and “go into the street after the program and press your ear against a wall for seven minutes.” Listeners’ reactions varied from delight and curiosity to confusion and anger. Several listeners called the radio station to express their enthusiasm or their outrage over the unexpected program. Some reported on what they felt or had learned from performing the actions that Vostell suggested. The conversations were broadcast during the action play, creating a chaotic, multi-layered, real-time experience for listeners precisely akin to the aim of happenings, which Vostell had pioneered, to include the public in responsible interaction in the polis, a very different goal and strategy from Fluxus, body art, and performance that followed happenings and that in most cases retained the proscenium stage. The wide-ranging reactions provide evidence of how Vostell cleverly exploited the potential of radio to stimulate discussion.

Another example of how the radio was used to generate critical debate that is pertinent to Vostell’s ideal academy is Alexander Mitscherlich’s provocative lecture, “Are Happenings Dangerous? Thoughts on the

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84 An excerpt from the work can be heard on *Musik in Deutschland 1950-2000: Fluxus – Happening - Performance* (Deutscher Musikrat in cooperation with RCA Red Seal/BMG Classics, 2004).
Unconquered Present in Art,” delivered over the radio in 1965. The German psychoanalyst began his polemic with a review of Vostell and Becker’s anthology *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme*, which had been published earlier that year. Mitscherlich panned Pop, happenings, and Fluxus in West Germany, arguing that they uncritically revived earlier artistic forms and practices like Surrealism, that they lacked artistic talent, and, most significantly, that they neither activated viewers’ minds nor critically examined the legacy of fascism.  

Despite Mitscherlich’s claims, Vostell believed that happenings could be a critical, educational, artistic medium, so much so that in 1969, as I have explained, he envisioned his own ideal academy as a happening. Moreover, despite their opposing opinions, Vostell proposed that Mitscherlich, who by 1969 had become renowned for his view that Germans had repressed their feelings of guilt and remorse for having supported Hitler, join the first contingent of ideal academy advisors, proving his intent to expose multiple viewpoints as part of the educational process of an academy.

Drawing on Sigmund Freud, Mitscherlich and his wife Margarete had argued in *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (1967) that Germans had not yet mourned and worked through the legacy of fascism.  

85 Mesch, *Modern Art at the Berlin Wall*, 172-5. The following year Mitscherlich published a version of his radio lecture in a German literary magazine in which he declared that happenings and their materials were not an artistic medium (*Kunstmittel*), but rather were a cult medium (*Kultmittel*). Alexander Mitscherlich, “Happenings--organisierter Unfug? [Happenings--organized Horseplay?]”, *Neue Rundschau* 77, no. 1 (1966): 106-14.  

86 The original German title is *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*. In this book Mitscherlich shifted his focus from the arts to (West) German society at large, a shift that parallels Mitscherlich’s university studies in Munich. He started as a student of art history, history, and philosophy, and even began to write a doctoral thesis on nineteenth century representations of Martin Luther. Mitscherlich only fully turned to psychoanalysis after his advisor died in 1932 and he could not find another advisor because his initial advisor was Jewish.
American historian Brian Puaca has recently contested this analysis, arguing that 1950s and 1960s West German history textbooks for students between the ages of twelve and nineteen years old represent “a kind of collective memory” and reveal an open discussion with school children of Germany’s fascist past. By the 1960s, Puaca continues, “the most widely adopted textbooks … struck a balance between the victimization of the Germans and the terrible crimes committed against others by the Nazi regime.” That the analysis of German society’s ability to reconcile itself with the past had an effect on adults who had lived through the war was an entirely different matter that clearly Vostell and the Mitscherlichs were keen to address in public debate, challenging citizens to consider German culpability for its war crimes and their resonance in postwar society.

Returning to Vostell’s ideal academy interview, when Heubach asked Vostell how the ideal academy would be funded, Vostell suggested that the public, rather than the state, be responsible for maintaining the ideal academy and supporting its advisors, a proposition that itself was ideal in so far as Vostell imagined that the alternative cultural views held by the individuals he selected to teach would be either intellectually or financially supported by the public and its taxes. Nevertheless, he proposed that participants in every town would collectively pay for the advisors’ cost of living while the academy was temporarily located in its community. By financially subsidizing the ideal

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87 Brian M. Puaca, “Teaching Trauma and Responsibility: World War II in West German History Textbooks,” New German Critique, no. 112 (Winter 2011): 141.
88 Ibid., 137.
academy, Vostell reasoned that individuals would invest and participate in the ideal academy as much as possible. In so doing, they would confirm the inextricable link between art and education that was foundational to Vostell’s conceptualization of the ideal academy. He designed the ideal academy first and foremost as a work of art, specifically as a happening, an unconventional academy able to intervene in everyday life through learning events performed in public locations, open seminars, and its own television and radio station.

The Ideal Advisors

Vostell would be just one of approximately twenty advisors who would instigate learning events with the public and provide advice in seminars and over television and radio under the auspices of the ideal academy. Thus far, I have only described this team of advisors in the abstract. However, in his interview with Heubach, Vostell identified twenty-two individuals, plus LIDL, as candidates for the ideal academy’s initial team of advisors. Their diverse backgrounds underscore Vostell’s broad, interdisciplinary approach to education, especially when considered after the above examination of the basic structure that Vostell outlined in his interview. The inclusion of artists and non-artists alike highlights his belief in art as “an egalitarian social practice grounded on the principles of dialogue, democracy, and shared creation.” Furthermore, Vostell’s selection of specific individuals to serve together as advisors attests to the radical aesthetics, cultural values, and revolutionary politics that he wanted the ideal academy to represent and to disseminate throughout West Germany.

89 Kramer, “The Artist as Teacher.”
and, perhaps eventually, beyond Germany’s borders. While the ideal academy was a means for Vostell to promote himself as an artist, his larger aim was to create a conceptual model able to provoke social change at a particularly volatile period in history.

Comprising this dream-team of advisors were happenings and Fluxus artists, psychoanalysts, philosophers, political activists, experimental musicians, and technicians. Vostell listed them by last name: Kagel, Saage, Lebel, Gorsen, Heubach, Cohn-Bendit, Teufel, LiDL, Weissner, Maciunas, Zappa, Kaprow, Higgins, Knízák, Vautier, Flynt, Gasch, Mitscherlich, Ginsberg, van Dyn, Altorjay, Katty Gottesmann, and Costard. Assuming that van Dyn is a misspelling of van Duijn, the only advisor that I have been unable to identify is Katty Gottesmann. A brief discussion about the advisors—what they were known for and what they might have contributed to the ideal academy—sheds light on how Vostell’s ideal academy model attempted to mend the art/education rupture by becoming enmeshed in the very fabric of society, sending numerous notorious cultural figures from Europe (both East and West) and the U.S. around the nation and broadcasting their ideas over the airwaves into people’s homes and workplaces.

All of the artists named were associated with happenings or Fluxus. American Allan Kaprow coined the term “happening” in 1959 with 18 Happenings in 6 Parts; and Vostell and Kaprow began corresponding in 1962, maintaining a rich cross-Atlantic exchange of information and ideas for the rest of their lives. They forwarded photographs and texts of their work, and kept

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each other abreast about other artists and exhibitions. The two artists even delivered an action lecture together in New York City in 1964, which highlighted the similarities and differences of their artistic philosophies and approaches. Vostell explained,

The basic idea of our happenings is the same: we both work with the audience, let the audience do things. ... Basically I’m interested in performing DECOLLAGES: decollage actions, decollage symbols, which are actions of reduction and mutation—whereas you rather do collages and rather construct than take apart! Perhaps we differ in what we regard to be the forerunners of the happening. Though your field of action is America and my one is Germany....

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Vostell went on to describe a Cologne Dada exhibition with Max Ernst and Johannes Baargeld from April 1920:

People entered the exhibition through a public urinal. A girl wearing a first communion dress welcomed visitors and began reciting obscene poems. Among other objects on display, Ernst presented a block of wood with a hatchet attached to it. Visitors were invited to use the hatchet to destroy the wooden object/work of art.

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Vostell had learned about this scandalous exhibition from the traveling Dada retrospective that he visited when it was in Düsseldorf in September and October of 1958. This encounter with Dada was formative for his artistic development, for it provided a historical lineage for viewer participation and acts of destruction in art.

Four years Vostell’s senior, Kaprow grounded his practice in the action painting of Pollock. He was also influenced by John Dewey’s pragmatism as

92 Ibid.
93 The Dada exhibition also stopped in Frankfurt and Amsterdam. Based on the narrative that Vostell’s widow laid out in Vostell—Ein Leben lang, Vostell saw the Dada exhibition sometime during the three months that he spent in West Germany after his time in Guadalupe and before his marriage in Cáceres. The contrast between Zurbarán’s paintings and Dada must have been rather shocking.
exhibited in his book *Art as Experience* (1934), which Kaprow read as an undergraduate in the 1940s at New York University. The teachings of John Cage, whose weekly experimental music composition class at the New School for Social Research in New York Kaprow attended from 1957 to 1958, were equally formative in his development. The curator Paul Schimmel has argued that Kaprow’s shift from action-collages to environments speaks to his “efforts to reconcile Pollock and Cage, the painterly and the conceptual, the physical and the theoretical.”

Happenings went beyond environments in terms of the movements and participation they required of the audience. By the mid-1960s, when the term “happenings” had lost its original context after being absorbed into popular culture and cocktail parties, Kaprow stopped defining his works as such, and began creating what he called “activities,” increasingly private, introspective works that required the performer to follow a text directing the activities.

The precision with which Kaprow defined his own practice reflects the academic credentials that he would have brought to the ideal academy. Kaprow earned a master’s degree in art history from Columbia University in 1952 with a dissertation on Piet Mondrian written under the direction of Meyer Schapiro. He was also a prolific writer and art theorist throughout his life, and, unlike the majority of ideal academy advisors, he was a teacher by profession. Kaprow’s first appointment was at Rutgers University in 1953. He went on to teach at the

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Pratt Institute, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, the California Institute of the Arts, and at the University of California at San Diego.

For Kaprow, teaching, writing, and art were all interrelated. This is perhaps most evident in a series of three essays that he wrote entitled “The Education of the Un-Artist, I, II, and III,” published in 1971, 1972, and 1974, respectively. Citing numerous contemporary artists as examples, and contextually grounding his argument in contemporary culture, Kaprow argued for the integration of daily life into a new type of art that he called “un-art,” as well as for the destruction of traditional high art. He further called for “un-artists” to concern themselves with transforming “the global arena” rather than producing marketable objects. While Kaprow had been thinking about art and education since he was a student, his essays about un-art and un-artists were particularly influenced by exchanges with he had with the French economist-turned-poet-artist Robert Filliou. Kaprow had been in constant contact with Filliou since the early 1960s. Vostell and Filliou knew each other since at least 1961, when Filliou took part in an exhibition at Vostell’s studio in Cologne. Although Vostell did not name Filliou as an ideal academy advisor, he is worth noting here, as Filliou spent many years theorizing the relationship between art and education. This is evident in letters Filliou sent to Kaprow in 1967—the

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96 The first two parts were published in *Art News*; part three was published in *Art in America*. All three essays are reprinted in Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 97-126, 30-47.  
97 Filliou studied economics at the University of California at Los Angeles and then worked as an economic advisor for the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency. After writing *A Five Year Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of South Korea* in 1953, he ‘dropped out,’ abandoned all political affiliations, studied Gandhi and Zen, wrote poetry, and began making art.” Stiles and Selz, *Theories and Documents*, 686.
letters that Kaprow drew upon while theorizing un-art—and in Filliou’s interactive book *Teaching and Learning as Performance Art* (1970).

In response to discussions organized by New York State University on the subject of experimental curriculum in 1967, Filliou wrote to Kaprow advocating for an Institute of Permanent Creation. The alternative institute would be a place for interaction between artists and students and for the “des-education” of students coming out of the traditional, intellectually and creatively stifling, university system. A central tenant of “des-education” was to do away with “the idea of admiration.” As Filliou noted, “The artist is a student, too, and the student an artist, once he chooses not to forget, but rather to remember.”  

Significantly, Filliou named Vostell as one of the artists he believed could contribute to the Institute of Permanent Creation. Filliou reproduced his letters to Kaprow in *Teaching and Learning as Performance Art* in 1970. The book also included discussions with such artists as Cage, Kaprow, and Beuys, dating from the late 1950s into the 1960s, and blank spaces for the reader to take notes and amplify the discussion. It could be argued that Filliou’s *Teaching and Learning as Performance Art* book served a similar function as the radio and television stations that Vostell envisioned for his ideal academy, namely, providing a venue for the public to actively contemplate their questions and ideas about art, education, and life in relation to various artists and creative personalities.

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98 Ibid., 734.
99 Other artists Filliou named included John Cage, Philip Corner, La Monte Young, Benjamin Patterson, Emmett Williams, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Marta Minujin, Red Grooms, Jonas Mekas, Shadrach Woods, Bob Watts, Ayo, and Öyvind Fahlström. Ibid., 736.
Another seminal figure in the history of happenings, Vostell named Jean-Jacques Lebel, to the advisory committee of the ideal academy. A French artist and poet that both Filliou and Vostell named as an ideal artist/advisor for their respective alternative institutions, Lebel identified art as a medium for desublimating sexuality and releasing it as a revolutionary force, following his mentors André Breton, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp. He was also a political activist, who protested against the Algerian War (1956-62) and actively participated in the student/worker uprisings in Paris in 1968. He organized such exhibitions and festivals as artistic and political demonstrations as *Anti-Trial 1, 2, and 3* (1960-61)\(^{100}\) and the notorious International Festivals of Free Expression (1964-67).\(^{101}\)

Lebel grew up in the midst of and learned from artists who had been involved with Dada and Surrealism. His father, Robert Lebel, knew most of the artists involved in these movements and in 1959 published the first biography of Duchamp. Breton served as an artistic and political mentor to the young Jean-Jacques, who was an official member of the Surrealist movement from 1953 until 1960.\(^{102}\) In 1960, Lebel realized his first happening, *The Burial of Tinguely’s The Thing* (1960) in Venice, while the Venice Biennale was taking place.\(^{103}\) The happening ended with the “death” and “burial” in Laguna San Giogio near San

\(^{100}\) Lebel and Jouffroy organized a series of three exhibitions under the title of *Anti-Trial (Anti-Proces)*. The first took place in Paris in April 1960; the second occurred in Venice in June and July 1960. Laurel Jean Fredrickson, "Kate Millett and Jean-Jacques Lebel: Sexual Outlaws in the Intermedia Borderlands of Art and Politics" (Dissertation, Duke University, 2007), 258.

\(^{101}\) Carolee Schneemann performed her renowned work *Meat Joy* (1964) at the first Festival of Free Expression in Paris.


\(^{103}\) Ibid., 340.
Marco of the Tinguely sculpture. The violence enacted upon the sculptural object was, as Laurel Fredrickson has contended, an invocation of violence as metaphor.¹⁰⁴

Lebel later became friends with Beat poets like Allan Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and William S. Burroughs, and with psychoanalyst Gilles Deleuze and philosopher Félix Guattari. As Fredrickson has noted, the Beat poets “introduced [Lebel] to a poetry of the body and poetics of the breath and their vernacular speech in poetry and novels celebrated explicit sexuality.”¹⁰⁵ Lebel, in turn, introduced the poetry of Ginsberg and Corso to France by being the first to translate their poems into French.¹⁰⁶ Together the poets and Lebel experimented with hallucinogenics like mescaline. The visions Lebel had and the altered non-linear perception that he experienced under the influence of the drug had an impact on his happenings. Drugs like mescaline and LSD “promised to facilitate the shedding of conventional thinking and repressive relationships, making it possible to enter a prelapsarian state of innocence essential, in [Lebel’s] view, to social change.”¹⁰⁷ While the Beat poets opened Lebel’s eyes to new modes of expression and perception, Lebel, according to Stiles, taught Deleuze and Guattari through his “associations, activities, and very life style” about the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 340-3.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 58.
¹⁰⁷ Fredrickson, “Kate Millett and Jean-Jacques Lebel,” 58. According to Fredrickson, LSD-laced sugar cubes were passed around and ingested by the audience/participants of Lebel’s happening 120 Minutes Dedicated to the Divine Marquis, staged during his third Festival of Free Expression in Paris on the 4th, 5th, and 27th of April, 1966.
complex network they would later theorize as the rhizome. The artist, in other words, tutored the psychoanalyst and philosopher, introducing them to visual art, explaining abstraction, introducing them to the counterculture and figures like Bob Dylan, introducing them to smoking pot, and much more.

Lebel and Vostell became friends and colleagues when Vostell participated in Anti-Trial 3 in Milan in July 1961. Vostell featured Lebel in his publications, including the fourth and sixth issues of dé-coll/age (January 1964 and July 1967, respectively) and the anthology Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme (1965). Lebel invited Vostell to participate in various exhibitions and festivals, including Anti-Trial 3 and the first Festival of Free Expression (May 1964). When the art dealer and gallery owner Ileana Sonnabend refused to include Vostell in an early exhibition of action artists that she had hired Lebel to curate in 1965, Lebel, out of principle, “stomped out and never spoke to Ileana again…. [O]ur ground-breaking historical show never materialized.” Vostell’s naming of Lebel as an ideal academy advisor reveals how the two men consistently acknowledged each other’s significance as artists. At the same time, Lebel’s participation in the ideal academy would have created a link between the nomadic institution and the historical lineage of Dada and Surrealism, as well as between art and radical, activist politics. In 1966 Lebel published Le Happening, the first book in Europe dedicated solely to the phenomenon of happenings.

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109 Lebel, email to the author, September 3, 2011. Lebel explained that they had “assembled great works by Kaprow, Rauschenberg, Schneemann, Grooms, Pommereulle, Kudo, Erró, Ono, Filliou, Oldenburg, Dine, Minujin, Knowles, Higgins, Paik, Moorman, etc.” He included Vostell because of “his excellent publication ‘Decollage’ and his many happenings.”
While Lebel went “underground” to avoid arrest for illegal activities following the mass protests of Paris 1968, Milan Knízák, a Czechoslovakian artist Vostell named as an ideal academy advisor, was repeatedly arrested and imprisoned for his art and activities. By the time of the so-called “Velvet Revolution” of November 17 to December 29, 1989, Knízák had been jailed over 300 times. Knízák started performing actions on the streets in Prague in 1962, after having spent two years and four months drafted into the army. He also created crude assemblages and put objects directly on the streets during the early 1960s. It was also around this time that a community of artists led by Knízák—including Knízák, Jan and Vít Mach, Sonia Švecová, Jan Trtílek, Zdenka Zizkova, and Robert Whitman—came to be known as AKTUAL began to take form. By 1964 members of AKTUAL were creating “ceremonies” and “demonstrations of objects” that Knízák understood as an “affirmative alternative to the repressive experience of communism.” The demonstrations often incorporated elements of destruction: shooting at books (*Killed Books*), encasing books in cement (*Documentary Books*), and damaging and reassembling records (*Destroyed Music*). AKTUAL also performed mock war games, they walked through the city streets, and called for meetings in apartments, among other actions.

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111 ———, “Uncorrupted Joy,” 299.

112 The group’s original name was Aktuální umění (Actual Art). In 1966 they removed the word “art” from their name.

113 Stiles and Selz, *Theories and Documents*, 687.
By the end of 1965, Knízák stopped using names to describe his art. Names, he felt, were too contrived and he intended to “dissolve his art ‘into the stream of everyday life.’” He wrote,

I did not want to regenerate the art world or make fun of it or search for new forms, either; I had the feeling that art had to abandon exhibition rooms and grow (anonymously, in all probability) into people’s lives. I thought not artists, but art should remain anonymous so that people who came into contact with art would approach it just as they would any other activity in life.

Knízák wanted to “smuggle” art into the lives of Czechs. His samizdat publications helped him “smuggle” his art into the West as well. These textual and visual works helped to put him in contact with Fluxus, Vostell, Kaprow, radical activists like the Dutch PROVOS, and other artists and intellectuals. Vostell helped to publicize Knízák’s work by including him in dé-coll/age 6 (July 1967) and encouraging Hanns Sohm to collect his work and that of AKTUAL. Including Knízák in the ideal academy would have spread his art/life politics and forms of aesthetic resistance to an even broader audience, defying the communist regime’s attempts to contain the rebellious artist through imprisonment.

Another artist Vostell named as an advisor and that he featured in dé-coll/age 6 was the Hungarian Gábor Altorjay, who studied at the Theological Academy in Budapest from 1965 until 1967 in order to avoid serving in the Hungarian military. The following year Altojay realized the first happening in

Hungary, *The Lunch (in memorium Batu Kahn)*, with Tamás St. Auby and Miklós Erdély.\(^{117}\) Around the same time, he began corresponding with artists like Vostell and Dick Higgins. In an undated letter to Vostell that was likely written in early 1967, Altorjay wrote that he had secured a copy of Vostell and Becker’s anthology *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme*. In working through the ideas and practices of the mostly Western European and American artists in the book, Altorjay saw various similarities with his own artistic interests. He hoped to meet Vostell and his artist friends. He wanted to engage Vostell in conversations about Vostell’s principle of dé-coll/age, to discuss happenings, and to learn about the newest art in Germany from the elder artist.\(^{118}\) Altorjay was able to do this when he fled Hungary for West Germany in September 1967, escaping repeated interrogations, house searches, and the confiscation of his passport.\(^{119}\) Altorjay soon met the collector Hanns Sohm and the artist Bazon Brock in Stuttgart. Through them and Vostell, he expanded his circle of acquaintances. In 1968 he participated in a number of exhibitions, happenings, and actions in West Germany, including the “5 Day Race” and “Honey Blind Action.” Vostell also credited Altorjay as a collaborator for his *Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room*, noting his specialization in theology. This suggests that Vostell believed Altorjay would have contributed to the ideal academy a unique combination of art, activism, and theology.

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118 JBP/GRI.

To complement the artists involved with happenings, Vostell proposed such Fluxus artists as George Maciunas, Ben Vautier, Dick Higgins, and Henry Flynt. Maciunas, like Altorjay, had fled from Eastern Europe, specifically Lithuania, to the West. In 1961 he organized a series of concerts and performance events at his AG Gallery in New York City, following a similar series organized by La Monte Young and Yoko Ono at Ono’s New York loft. These laid the foundations for the Fluxus festivals that he co-organized with Paik and Vostell, beginning in 1962, when he moved to West Germany, leaving his bankrupt gallery behind in order to work as a graphic designer for the U.S. Air Force. While Maciunas conceived of Fluxus as an artistic collective as well as a publication, he increasingly sought to dictate and control what was and what was not called Fluxus. Because Vostell published works by artists associated with Fluxus in his dé-coll/age journal, Maciunas and Vostell saw each other as rivals (similar to the interaction between Vostell and Beuys). Nonetheless, Vostell appointed the self-appointed chairman of Fluxus to his ideal academy.

Ben Vautier, commonly known as BEN, created works that often humorously critiqued the artist’s ego and capitalism. A participant in the earliest Fluxus festivals, BEN proclaimed “EVERYTHING (TOUT) art and began signing the world.”120 He hand painted words and short statements on canvas and objects in his characteristically loopy cursive. Between October 23 and November 8, 1962, during the Festival of Misfits, BEN lived for one week as a “living sculpture” in the window of Gallery One in London. He painted phrases like “look” and “stop looking / you are too curious” on the gallery window. Near his

120 Stiles and Selz, Theories and Documents, 685.
bed, he wrote “SLEEPING BEN-BEN” on the window. As Stiles has argued, “Through word and action, Vautier visualized the interconnection between the linguistic devices that organize categories of experience and the action of artists who mediate between viewer and viewed to negotiate cultural meanings.” His works also incorporated humor, which surely would have been welcomed by the ideal academy participants.

Higgins was a lifelong friend and collaborator of Vostell’s since the two exhibited and performed together in proto-Fluxus events in West Germany in 1961 and in the first Fluxus festivals in Western Europe in 1962. In 1964, he founded Something Else Press and, in 1966, started Great Bear Pamphlets and Something Else Newsletter. These publishing ventures produced manifestoes, scores, and poems by artists who contributed to realizing what Higgins theorized in 1965 as “intermedia,” art at the interstice of traditional distinctions between media and disciplines, ranging from the sciences and social sciences to the humanities. Intermedia also stands at the intersection of art, culture, religion, politics, and everyday life. Hannah Higgins, an art historian and Dick Higgins’s daughter, has elaborated upon the concept of intermedia:

[1] Intermedia is an unstable descriptive term predicated as it is on the dynamic exchange between traditionally distinct artistic and life categories. … [I]t relies on structurally codependent relationships. ‘Intermedia’ art … is not so much a thing as a function, allowing for almost limitless artistic formations and experiences.

… Significantly, even though secondary systems of knowledge (art, music, poetry, theater) contribute to the intermedia function, it is the life media (spontaneous decisions, the relationship to the environment, and

121 Ibid., 686.
the physical parameters within which the work occurs) that keep it always within the primary informational, or experiential, modality.\textsuperscript{122}

Vostell’s ideal academy would have profited by and needed Dick Higgins’s theoretical expertise, as well as what Vostell considered his fantastic performance works, which were among the most important of the Fluxus actions.\textsuperscript{123} Higgins could also have provided a framework through which to contextualize the ideal academy’s integration of a wide range of media and disciplines, as well as the intermingling and blurring of art and daily life through its interventions into the social fabric via its television and radio stations and its activities in the public sphere. Higgins may even have inspired Vostell’s interest in creating alternative museums as I discussed in Chapter 1, for as Higgins wrote in 1966:

\textit{Does it not stand to reason … that having discovered the intermedia … the central problem is now not only the new formal one of learning to use them, but the new and more social one of what to use them for? … Could it be that the central problem of the next ten years or so, for all artists in all possible forms, is going to be less the still further discovery of new media and intermedia, but of the new discovery of ways to use what we care about both appropriately and explicitly? … We must find the ways to say what has to be said in the light of our new means of communicating. For this we will need new rostrums, organizations, criteria, sources of information.}\textsuperscript{124}

With its diverse team of advisors and employment of various media and discussions with the public, Vostell’s ideal academy would have contributed to Higgins’s call for exploring ways to responsibly and effectively communicate with the aid of intermedia.

\textsuperscript{122} Higgins, \textit{Fluxus Experience}, 93, 95.
\textsuperscript{123} Wolf Vostell unpublished interview with Kristine Stiles, Malpartida de Caceres, Spain, 1980, in Kristine Stiles Collected papers, 1900–ongoing, Special Collections. Rubenstein Library, Duke University.
The left-wing musician/mathematician/artist/philosopher, Henry Flynt, an errant Fluxus participant, had coined the term “concept art” in his 1961 essay, “Concept Art.” Flynt wrote that, “since ‘concepts’ are closely bound up with language, concept art is a kind of art of which the material is language.” This notion of concept art differed extensively from the idea that most artists associated with conceptual art employed, such as Joseph Kosuth, who created sculptural works in 1965 that have been widely accredited with the inception of the movement of conceptual art, or with the international group Art & Language, based in England and founded in 1967. Flynt’s concept also differed from the minimal, formal aesthetic that came to characterize the conceptual art of such artists as Sol Le Witt beginning around 1967. For Hannah Higgins, Flynt’s work encompassed embodied experience—“all realms of an individual’s experience are expressible through the ‘material of language’”—whereas the latter (i.e., Le Witt’s conceptual art) is “strictly disembodied,” language was a medium in itself. Yet, as Le Witt himself explained in his 1969 “Sentences on Conceptual Art”: “Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.”

But for Flynt, concept art came out of neither. Rather it was based on his thinking about mathematics. At the nexus of these triangulated approaches, it is important to note that the artist Robert Morris had initially been involved with Fluxus, attended most of Flynt’s lectures on art, and wrote Flynt numerous

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126 Higgins, Fluxus Experience, 116.
letters about his concepts, even though by 1963 Morris had officially abandoned all association with the Fluxus movement as a letter of April 1964 attests. Language was one of the primary materials that Vostell employed to give his ideal academy form, as he articulated it to Heubach in the interview. Language also would have been a central medium for the ideal academy advisors, as they engaged with the public in seminars and over the television and radio stations.

Action was to be the other prime means of educating the public. For this reason, Vostell named LIDL and, by extension, Immendorff, as an advisor. Of course, LIDL’s inclusion was also a provocative act on Vostell’s part, as Immendorff’s name had been splashed across the newspapers for his “scandalous” LIDL activities, some of which Heubach documented in Interfunktionen 2. Like the other artists Vostell named as advisors and appropriate to the aims of his ideal academy, LIDL de-emphasized aesthetics and the art object. LIDL instead stressed ideas and interactivity, and presented everyday actions and materials as art. It also focused on collaboration, rather than on the work of an individual. In addition, Immendorff was Beuys’ student, so Vostell could be seen to have been competing with Beuys for the attention of his students.

Vostell also named advisors who worked outside the visual arts to further emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the ideal academy as well. Peter Saage

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128 See Morris’s letters in Flynt’s Blueprint for a Higher Civilization (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1975): 68, 70-71. See also Morris’s letter of 4/4/64 to George Maciunas now in the SA/SS, which reads: “Dear Sirs: Will you kindly return all manuscripts, photographs, drawings or writings of whatever nature by me which may be in your files. I do not wish to publish any of the above mentioned writings, drawings or photographs. With the exception of this document, permission is hereby withdrawn to reproduce in any Fluxus publication any of the works of the undersigned. Most sincerely, Robert Morris, 277 Church St., NYC 13.” Thanks to Kristine Stiles for this citation.
and Joachim Gasch were not necessarily well-known figures, but they were both non-artists who collaborated with Vostell on various art projects. Saage, an electrical engineer, was responsible for the technological components of such works as Vostell’s E.d.H.R. and T.E.K./Thermoelectric Chewing Gum.\textsuperscript{129} Gasch was a radiologist, who Vostell worked with on at least one occasion in 1969 to make X-ray prints. While Saage and Gasch would have brought a technical side to the ideal academy, Fritz Heubach, Peter Gorsen, and Alexander Mitscherlich would have added a philosophical and psychoanalytic perspective. Heubach was a doctoral student of psychology at the University of Cologne when he founded Interfunktionen and interviewed Vostell about the ideal academy. He was studying under psychologist Wilhelm Salber, who drew on Gestalt theory and phenomenology in his unconventional studies of daily life, film, art, and literature.\textsuperscript{130} Gorsen is an Austrian-born philosopher and art historian, who has published and theorized on art, sexuality, and pornography, and was deeply involved with the Viennese Action artists, especially Hermann Nitsch, Otto Mühl, Günter Brus, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Peter Weibel, Valie Export, and the filmmaker Kurt Kren. Mitscherlich, as noted above, was a German psychoanalyst, who was best known for publishing, with his wife Margarete, The Inability to Mourn in 1967. What is notable about all three of these individuals is their engagement with art from the perspective of their respective academic disciplines, which would have been useful for helping the public to critically

\textsuperscript{129} T.E.K./Thermoelektrischer Kaugummi.

\textsuperscript{130} Wolfgang Schirmacher and Sven Nebelung, eds., German Essays on Psychology (New York: Continuum, 2001), 313.
analyze the work of the artists in the ideal academy, as well as challenging the artists to consider their own practice from a different angle.

Vostell also selected popular cultural figures from West Germany and the U.S. to serve as advisors. They included the avant-garde composer Mauricio Kagel, the experimental filmmaker Hellmuth Costard, the controversial and socially critical rock star Frank Zappa, and the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, as well as Carl Weissner, who translated Beat poetry and the lyrics of musicians like Zappa and Bob Dylan into German. Weissner also translated Vostell’s lectures and happenings scores for the publication *Miss Vietnam and Texts of Other Happenings* (1968), as well as edited the avant-garde, multilingual literary newspaper, *Klactoveedsedsteen* (1965-67), based in Heidelberg.  

Kagel moved from Buenos Aires to Cologne in 1957 in order to be part of the music scene there. He was influenced by serial music and the use of symbols in musical scores, as well as by Cage, who Kagel met in the summer of 1958. Concerned with finding a new way of notating and scoring music graphically, Kagel incorporated photography and, for electro-acoustic sounds, used an oscillographic form.  

Kagel and Vostell met after Vostell moved to Cologne in 1961. While Mercedes Vostell was especially happy to have found someone to speak Spanish with, Wolf and Mauricio began experimenting together with new music. On January 11, 1968, the two co-founded Labor, the laboratory for the interdisciplinary research of visual and acoustic events, together with Kagel’s

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131 Weissner drew the name *Klactoveedsedsteen* from the title of a well-known song of the same name by jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker from 1947.

wife, the artist Ursula Burghardt, and the composer and filmmaker Alfred Feussner. In other words, Kagel would have provided a creative outlet for merging music and life and for considering the role that experimental music could play in understanding the world.

Kagel was not afraid to test the boundaries of musical notation and of what constituted music. Zappa similarly broke the mold of musical genres and critiqued mainstream society through often humorous lyrics. However, their names were not associated with scandals in the way that Costard and Ginsberg were. Costard, who turned to filmmaking after studying psychology, made the news after screening his film *Especially Valuable*\(^{133}\) (1968) at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1968. The short film critiqued the Film Promotion Act that the German Parliament passed in 1967. What authorities found most troubling is the fact that the eleven-minute film features a “talking” penis followed by a woman’s hand masturbating the penis (neither the man’s nor woman’s body are visible, just the man’s genitalia and the woman’s hand and forearm) while various images, some sexual, some not, pass on the screen like a slideshow. The film ends with the penis ejaculating on the camera and a candle being blown out. Accounts of the film appeared in such national news outlets as *Die Welt* and *Der Spiegel*. Its inclusion in the important Oberhausen film festival led to equally significant discussions in West Germany about sexuality and artistic expression, conversations that could have continued in the context of the ideal academy. Vostell’s interest in including Costard may be related to Vostell’s own explorations of sex and sexuality in his art, which often juxtaposed erotic and

\(^{133}\) *Besonders wertvoll.*
pornographic imagery with images of violence and destruction, raising questions about the relationship between love, sex, violence, and death. Costard’s participation would also have complemented the provocative beliefs about sexuality that Lebel would have brought to the ideal academy.

Ginsberg would have contributed another attitude towards sex as well as towards drugs. He had notoriously caused an uproar in the U.S. with his explicit poetry, his open celebration of his homosexuality, his experimentations with hallucinogenic drugs, and his fervent belief in no censorship. A letter that Ginsberg wrote to Vostell in 1969, however, shows that what Vostell was probably most interested in Ginsberg’s politics and how he used his art to confront the authorities. Ginsberg began in his correspondence: “Dear Wolf, Yes certainly use my testimony in Chicago Trial – It is an excerpt from 200 typed pages of transcript.” The trial to which Ginsberg referred is the notorious Chicago Seven Conspiracy Trial, which involved seven political activists accused of inciting riots during the Chicago Democratic National Convention in 1968, including David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, John Froines, and Lee Weiner. Black Panther Bobby Seale was also charged but his prosecution was declared a mistrial. The trial lasted five months, as the defendants and their lawyers used the courtroom as a platform to critique American society in line with the ideals of 1968. They called more than one hundred witnesses, as well as such writers and performers as Ginsberg, Norman Mailer, Arlo Guthrie, and Judy Collins. Vostell included an excerpt of Ginsberg’s testimony in his edited anthology Actions: Happenings and Demonstrations since

134 JBP/GRI.
1965 (1970). While this publication disseminated Ginsberg’s philosophy to the public, having Ginsberg participate in person in the ideal academy would have allowed the public to more fully engage with the poet’s ideas and beliefs.

Finally, Vostell identified three political activists of May 1968, who drew on the practices of happenings and action art as ideal academy advisors: Roel van Duijn, Fritz Teufel, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Van Duijn was a founding member of the Dutch anarchist movement, PROVO, in 1965. The PROVO advocated “expert” drug use, took a relaxed attitude towards sex, and demonstrated a concern for the environment and social policy. The PROVO aimed to turn the city into “an arena of pleasure and play.” But they also proposed radical and important social changes in Holland called the “White Plans.” These plans included the “White Bicycle Plan,” which called for limiting central Amsterdam streets to public transportation, walking, and biking, using a bicycle sharing system that the PROVO initiated; the “White Wives Plan,” which advocated sex education in schools and establishing a network of clinics that would provide contraceptives; the “White Kids Plan,” which proposed that parents form groups and share childcare duties; and the “White Car Plan,” which promoted car sharing. The PROVO public meetings took the form of happenings and occurred at various locations in Amsterdam. Van Duijn explained the significance of organizing meetings as happenings:

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136 As noted earlier, I am assuming here that “van Dyn,” as it is spelled in Interfunktionen 2 is a misspelling and that it should have been “van Diujn.”

A happening is no individual creation, but a collective one. At the happenings there is in principle no passive public that looks on with folded arms. Even the plain-clothes policemen at the Lieverdje [the site of many of Provo's happenings], who first observed quietly, can seldom withstand the temptation to get involved, although their behaviour is mostly more instrumental than creative.... Today's happenings are not only a precursor of this hopefully coming collective activity, they are at the same time a means to set a large déclassé youth into motion.\footnote{Roel van Duijn, in \textit{Provo} 7 (February 1966): 25-6. Quoted in ibid.}

Vostell may have met van Diujn when he was in Amsterdam in October 1962, where he had an exhibition, realized a happening, and participated in a Fluxus festival; but he certainly met the PROVO at the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in London in the fall of 1966.\footnote{According to Mercedes Vostell, he met the PROVO in 1962. Vostell, \textit{Vostell—Ein Leben lang}, 57. Although the group had not yet officially formed, the PROVO spirit was alive at this time. However, a letter Dick Higgins wrote to Vostell, dated August 24, 1966, suggests that Vostell actually met the group in 1966: “I don’t know much about the PROVOS except that Gustav Metzger and J-J Lebel both think highly of them. I envy you being in London and meeting them and, of course, Knizak, of which more again later.” From “HAB. 100 Briefe,” JBP/GRI.} It is not difficult to imagine that PROVO's effective use of the urban environment and the strategies of the happening to weave its politics into Dutch society would have blended with the aims of Vostell's ideal academy.

In West Germany, Teufel also drew on happenings, as well as on liberal sexual politics when he cofounded Kommune 1 (or K1) in January 1967. K1 was the first politically active commune in West Germany, which developed as a counter-model to middle-class society. In 1970 Vostell used a famous black and white photograph of the group on the cover of \textit{Actions: Happenings and Demonstrations since 1965} [Fig. 44]. The image shows members of K1 standing naked and facing a wall, their backs to the camera, and their arms and legs spread as if they were about to be frisked by a police officer. A young boy at the far right similarly stands with his legs spread, but his head is turned. He looks
back at the camera, his eyes meeting the viewer’s gaze and provoking questions about social norms.

Teufel not only made a name for being part of a commune, he was also known for such disruptive events as creating and distributing a series of four handbills with K1 member Rainer Langhans. The flyers related to the May 22, 1967, Brussels department store fire, which killed over 300 people. In form, the flyers parodied both the Bild-Zeitung’s sensational, reactionary journalistic tone and the student movement’s Marxist, anti-American, anti-imperialist rhetoric. Teufel and Langhans handed out the pamphlets to passersby in front of West Berlin’s Free University and were later accused and then acquitted of inciting arson. Richard Langston has argued that K1 neither intended to provoke arson or violence. Rather, they sought to “expand the boundaries of their own revolutionary praxis…by provoking outsiders.”

Expanding boundaries and provoking the public were aims of the ideal academy as well.

Finally, the inclusion of Daniel Cohn-Bendit as an ideal academy advisor underscored the importance of the academy’s long-term commitment and developing alliances across all sectors of society. Cohn-Bendit, who today is a leader in the Green Party/Free European Alliance Group in the European Parliament, was perhaps the most famous, and certainly the most visible leader, of the student movement in France during 1968. Notably, at that time he also advocated for education reform and for the creation of an alternative academy:

We must launch a university ourselves, on a completely new basis, even if it only lasts a few weeks. We shall call on left and extreme left teachers who are prepared to work with us in seminars and assist us with their

140 Langston, Visions of Violence, 156.
knowledge—renouncing their “professional” status—in the investigations we shall undertake.

In all faculties we shall open seminars—not lecture courses, obviously—on the problems of the workers’ movement, on the use of technology in the interests of man, on the possibilities opened up by automation. And all this not from a theoretical viewpoint..., but by posing concrete problems. ¹⁴¹

Cohn-Bendit’s and Vostell’s ideas for an alternative academy are similar in multiple ways. Both proposed open seminars, collaboration, and action, rather than lectures. Both suggested that technology had a potentially positive use for alternative education. Moreover, both offered models that could be temporary, for the aim was that the principles taught by their ideal institution would become engrained in society that the institution itself would no longer be necessary.

What differentiates Vostell’s ideal academy from Cohn-Bendit’s is the different ways in which they were framed. Cohn-Bendit discussed his institution within the context of politics; Vostell framed his ideal academy in the context of art—as a happening, the intermedia seeking to blur the distinctions between art and life, and between artist and viewer by making everyone an active participant in an open-ended process designed to alter perception.

As this overview of the ideal academy advisors suggests, Vostell’s ideal academy was intended to be unruly, anarchistic, and revolutionary, as well as deeply committed to social, cultural, and political issues, and, most of all, to art. The range of advisors, from artists and musicians to psychologists, poets, technicians, and politicians would have cultivated countercultural discussions with the public across myriad topics and from numerous perspectives, mirroring

the realities of society. As it traveled throughout West Germany, provoking conversations, challenging expectations, disseminating information, and raising questions through seminars, actions, and the television and radio stations, the ideal academy, the mobile yearlong happening, the artwork-cum-institution, would generate and circulate knowledge that could not be taught in a traditional academy, and it would eventually be woven into the very fabric of society.

This chapter has explored the ideal academy as Vostell articulated it in his interview with Heubach, its relationship to Vostell’s earlier interdisciplinary collaborations and his protest activities, and the team of advisors that Vostell envisioned for the academy’s first year. The following chapter turns to the drawing Vostell made of the ideal academy—a visual appendix to his verbal description—that reveals more about the ideal academy’s conceptual form and its geographical context, as well as gives a sense of the sort of learning events that Vostell imagined the advisors might instigate. The next chapter also considers the relationship between the ideal academy and Fluxus Zug, how the former informed the latter, and how the form and function of each is indicative of the milieu in which Vostell conceived it.
Ch. 3: From the Ideal Academy to Fluxus Zug

I. Introduction

“The Ideal Academy”: An Autobahn and High-Speed Train Happening! is the drawing Vostell made as an appendix to his ideal academy interview. Dated January 1969, it covers two opposing pages in Interfunktionen [Fig. 45]. The central image (printed on the left-hand page) is a map of West Germany’s autobahn network as of December 31, 1967. Its inclusion indicates where the ideal academy would travel. The map also makes apparent the country’s division. The majority of the interwoven dark lines that represent the West German highways steer away from the East German border. Yet two clearly visible routes penetrate the border to reach West Berlin. One stretch extends from Cologne to Hannover and crosses the border at Helmstedt. The other runs from Hamburg to Berlin. This highway network, together with the rail lines, which had similarly limited border-crossing points, would provide the means to move Vostell’s alternative institution throughout West Germany as it traveled by car or train, the two modes of transportation available to the general public and the means by which the ideal academy would infiltrate the very fabric of daily life. To the left of the highway map is a handwritten list of West German cities and arrows pointing toward the map, a seeming indication of where the academy would stop during its travels. Four sweeping arrows then lead from the map to instructions for the suggested actions written on the opposing page. A capital

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“H” enclosed in a dotted line, between the map and instructions, is a symbol that Vostell often used to signify the site of a happening. The broken circle around the “H” suggests how a happening, while distinct from everyday life, is not entirely separate from it, and presents a porous boundary just as the ideal academy and life would be interpenetrable.³

This drawing serves as the focal point of this chapter. Building on the previous chapter that examined the ideal academy that Vostell articulated in his interview with Heubach, this chapter analyzes the model institution as Vostell envisioned it in his conceptual image. I begin with a discussion of the happening’s significance for Vostell, as the drawing he made of the ideal academy makes especially apparent that the artist considered his alternate institution a happening. Next, I analyze the instructions for actions listed on the ideal academy drawing and speculate about the sort of knowledge they could have produced for those who participated in these “learning events.” Finally, I explore the relationship between the ideal academy and Fluxus Zug, arguing that the latter must be considered a later iteration of the ideal academy, as the inclusion of half of the ideal academy drawing in the Fluxus Zug catalog suggests. I argue that the exclusion of the drawing’s second page and the form that Fluxus Zug took is indicative of the different cultural, social, and political climate of 1981, along with the changed environment and productions of contemporary artists and their relations to art history as compared to the climate of 1968 when Vostell first envisioned the ideal academy.

II. Drawing as Happening

The title—“The Ideal Academy”: An Autobahn and High-Speed Train Happening!—and the “H” within a perforated circle, underscores the model institution’s status as a work of art and as a happening. Combining performance with the visual arts, happenings gnawed at the boundaries of art in an effort for art to affect the quotidian, daily encounters, and events of participants, insisting that the audience relinquish its passive role to participate actively in life and art. Experiential, non-linear, and non-hierarchical, happenings involved elements of chance and took place in multiple locations outside of the conventional institutional spaces of museums, galleries, and theaters.

Vostell retroactively declared that a “dé-coll/age demonstration,” which apparently took place in Paris and which he titled The Theater is in the Street (1958), was his first happening. While Benjamin Lima refers to this event as a “street event,” not a happening, this distinction is superficial at best as happenings regularly took place in the streets. That said, Lima’s description calls attention to the fact that artists explored similar modes of art making but under a myriad of names. Julie Sissia suggests that The Theater is in the Street “perhaps never existed as anything other than a published montage of photographs and texts,” that it only appeared in publications in 1969, and that “the sole really real spectator of this happening, in fact, [is] the reader of the written works, handed

4 Das Theater ist auf der Strasse.
5 I previously discussed Vostell’s habit of backdating as a conscious intervention into the historical record, with the intention of being recognized as an original in order to claim a place in the histories of contemporary art, a discipline too often concerned with artists at the vanguard.
over to a mental reconstruction of a work that exists only qua graphic montage[.]” Sissia’s reading is more useful for considering the significance of happenings in Vostell’s oeuvre, as well as for thinking about a more expansive definition of a happening, but one that still remains wedded to its foundational tenets.

Among other instructions, the written score for *The Theater is in the Street* asks passersby to read aloud the fragmented texts on the torn posters pasted on exterior building walls in the city. Vostell’s studio window overlooked a wall covered with posters when he lived in Paris in 1958, the very year he worked for A. M. Cassandre, the well-known poster designer. This is the year that Vostell allegedly realized *The Theater is in the Street*, so he was acutely aware of the presence of street posters and likely noticed passersby’s interactions with the graphic placards. If one considers how Vostell experienced walking in Paris streets in 1958, and if one thinks about his observations and memories of fellow citizens walking and observing in their environment, then it is possible to grasp, even retrospectively, how he could imagine this activity as his first happening, an experience for which he did not yet have the vocabulary to articulate and therefore only retroactively framed as a happening. Following Sissia, the images and texts that illustrate the happening allow readers to participate even today,

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7 Sissia notes that the work did not appear in publications before 1969, when four photographs labeled as being related to the event appeared in a catalog published by René Block. The images clash with the text that lists the actions to be undertaken by participants of the event. Sissia theorizes: “The reader then becomes a performing spectator and Vostell the theatrical director of his oeuvre and of this particular work in the history of avant-garde movements via the use of the very tools of art history: publications and exhibitions.” Sissia, “Wolf Vostell’s *Theater is in the Street.*”
and a more generous reading of participants in 1958 Paris might imagine them going about their daily lives more aware than not of their urban world and each other, just as Vostell imagined them engaged in his happening.

Three points are relevant here. First, by 1969 (when Vostell published The Theater is in the Street), the Situationist International’s (SI) theories of détournement (diversion, distortion, misappropriation, and rerouting,) and dérive (drift, or drifting) were well known. These terms that tutored the urban walker in ways to re-experience and take possession of city environments were legendary in the period following the Paris 1968 May revolution in which the SI not only actively participated but in many ways initiated. That Vostell may have encountered SI ideas in late 1950s in Paris is possible, but not probable, that he knew them by 1969 is certain. Thus, that Vostell may have conceived of his happening as early as 1958 must be understood in the context of his interest in the affiche lacerée (torn posters) movement begun in the late 1940s by Raymond Hains (and taken up later by Jacques Villeglé, Mimmo Rotello, and others), but in the atmosphere of 1969, the notion would have been in keeping both with the politics of the period and the growing reputation of the SI. Secondly, The Theater is in the Street is not the only happening that Vostell would describe as his “first,” another “first” would be an experience he had as a child, as I shall discuss below. Third, Vostell’s second “dé-coll/age demonstration”—Cityrama I, 1961, which took

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8 “Mode d’emploi du détournement” originally appeared in the Belgian surrealist journal Les Lèvres Nues #8 (May 1956).
9 The term dérive was first published in Internationale Situationniste No. 2 (Paris, December 1958).
place in Cologne—was also later identified as a happening, but only in 1964.\textsuperscript{10} This re-description occurred on his second trip to New York during the “action lecture” he gave with Kaprow at the Cricket Theater in New York City on April 19, 1964.

Apparently introduced to Kaprow by Dick Higgins in 1962, Vostell had been in communication with Kaprow for two years (according to Vostell) when he organized YOU, the actual event that he first called a happening.\textsuperscript{11} Kaprow had coined the term “happening” in 1959 to describe “a collage of rather abstract events for moveable audiences…. a new art form that couldn’t be confused with paintings, poetry, architecture, music, dance, or plays.”\textsuperscript{12} Kaprow’s first happening, \textit{18 Happenings in 6 Parts}, took place on October 4, 1959, at the Reuben Gallery in New York City. For Kaprow, happenings grew out of assemblage and environments of the late 1950s, which closely resembled the work of Robert Rauschenberg. But rather than being objects like those of Rauschenberg, environments were immersive artistic spaces in which people “are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds [them].”\textsuperscript{13}

Kaprow also theorized environments, and, by association, happenings, as extensions of Jackson Pollock’s action painting, arguing in his 1958 essay on “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock” that Pollock “left us at the point where we must

\textsuperscript{11} Vostell, “Genesis and Iconography of my Happenings,” 13.
\textsuperscript{13}———, “Notes on the Creation of a Total Art (1958),” in \textit{Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life}, 11.
become preoccupied with and even dazzled by the space and objects of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if need be, the vastness of Forty-second Street.”¹⁴ Art historian Judith Rodenbeck has described Kaprow’s call for attention to the details of the everyday as “not simply idealistic refocusing, but rather … a forensic realism.”¹⁵ Kaprow further deemed painting, even Pollock’s action painting, as incapable of capturing the realities of postwar life. Art needed to move off the canvas and into the world, where it could encourage the public to take responsibility for events in real time, a view Kaprow held that reflected his distress over public passivity in the McCarthy era. In 1961, he proclaimed that happenings were “a moral act, a human stand of great urgency, whose professional status as art is less a criterion than their certainty as an ultimate existential commitment.”¹⁶

For Vostell, the ethical import of happenings was tied to his personal experience growing up in Europe during WWII. He underscored how different his childhood memories were from those of Kaprow in his part of the lecture they both delivered at the Cricket Theater. Whereas Kaprow remembered seeing “heaps of tires,” Vostell’s “dominating childhood image was the dying man.”¹⁷ Moreover, Vostell declared,

I saw my first happening when [I was] nine years old: during [an] air-raid alarm we had to run out of school a mile into the country, each of us

children had to hide himself under a different tree, and from there I saw airplane battles and bombs coming from sky to earth like bird swarms.\textsuperscript{18} Poetically naming the traumatic destructive event in his life a “happening,” Vostell, like other postwar German vanguard artists, identified the traumatized body as “the primary matrix of historical experience,”\textsuperscript{19} emphasizing how the unconscious remembers traumatic events, and how such memories become manifest in other forms in one’s life. By insisting that participants’ bodies both acted and were acted upon in his happenings, Vostell aimed to “generat[e] knowledge of the past that would bring about an expanded experience of German time after fascism.”\textsuperscript{20} “To know the past is to fantasize about, configure, and conjoin forms of embodiment both past and present,” Richard Langston writes about the postwar German avant-garde.\textsuperscript{21} Langston further notes that bodies also “function[ed] as vital fantastic conduits between the deficiencies of cognition and the vanished historical experiences of German fascism.”\textsuperscript{22} Langston’s attention to the post-fascist period draws on Giorgio Agamben’s notions of bare and full life: bare life, or merely biological life, is what the Nazi concentration camps produced, while full life is the life that Germany’s national

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. It is interesting to note that Beuys produced his fictional biography, \textit{Lifecourse Workcourse}, calling his life events “exhibitions” in July 1964. I do not know whether or not Beuys knew about Vostell calling his childhood experience a happening in April 1964, but there is an intriguing parallel with both artists referring to their biographies in terms of art that would be worth exploring elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{19} Langston, \textit{Visions of Violence}, 17.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 134.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
body politic enjoyed.\textsuperscript{23} The postwar German body served as the index of the real and imagined effects of fascism that lingered after its demise, and Vostell understood this fact firsthand.

To trigger recognition of these intertwined modalities of life, Vostell explored and visualized violence, destruction, death, sacrifice, and survival in his art. While he may have invented earlier dates for his concepts of the happenings, one fact remains: Vostell was among the few first artists in Europe who concentrated on the problems of life and death, violence and destruction, and what those experiences meant in terms of cultural and social experience. While blurring the boundaries of art and life, he conjured past memories, dreams, fantasies, and experiences, making them present in reality and culture. In so doing, he created new models for living in post-1945 society. “I believe that it is necessary to give society a dialectical and pacifistic idea, possibilities of behaviour that prepares it for violence, against fear, against the idiocy of life,” Vostell commented, adding: “I cannot change life, but I can give things that help humanity to change…. [T]here will always be brutality, violence, but if one day people were to change their behavior, life would be different.”\textsuperscript{24} Vostell believed that happenings contained a healing potential, helping individuals “find a new relation to [the world].”\textsuperscript{25}

While Vostell determined the happening’s structure, he left its realization up to participants to order, unravel, make sense of, and experience. In a similar

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 129-30.
\textsuperscript{24} Vostell quoted in Oliva, Encyclopaedia of the Word, 146.
\textsuperscript{25} Vostell, “Genesis and Iconography,” 1.
way, he aimed to have his ideal academy operate in the world through the actions and involvement of participants. Vostell also allowed for participants to decide whether, and to what extent, they would perform the actions he suggested. “Each happening is the sum of yes-decisions and no-decisions,” he told the audience at the Cricket Theater. He then listed examples of some of these decisions. Among them were instructions similar to those Yoko Ono described that same year in her book *Grapefruit*, 1964. As it was first published in Japan in Japanese, Vostell could not have known it. Among other instructions, Vostell exclaimed:

- Look into the eyes of the person next to you!
- Feel your heartbeat!
- Hide your face!
- Think of the not mastered past!
- Think of the not mastered presence!

In *Grapefruit*, Ono wrote her “Instructions” for an equally varied number of activities, from “Listen to a heart beat.” and “Listen to each other’s pulse by putting your ear on the other’s stomach.” to “Bandage any part of your body. If people ask about it, make a story and tell. If people do not ask about it, draw

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26 Ibid., 7.
28 All from ibid.
29 Beat Piece, 1963 autumn.
30 Pulse Piece, 1963 winter.
their attention to it and tell. If people forget about it, remind them of it and keep
telling. Do not talk about anything else.”

Both Ono and Vostell challenged the public to acknowledge consciously
the presence of others, and to experience them as living, breathing, sentient
beings whose experiences related to one’s own physical and psychical existence.
Such a call to consider the past, and the not yet understood present, invokes
thoughts that Adorno delivered in a 1959 lecture in Wiesbaden. “In Germany …
the past has not yet been mastered,” he explained, “largely due to the nation’s
degeneration into ‘an empty and cold forgetting.’” While Adorno left Europe
for the US in 1937, Vostell and Ono lived through WWII in Germany and Japan
respectively, and would thereafter experience the necessity of the immediacy of
the body, its history, and its future. In Vostell’s happenings, an individual’s
decision to perform or not perform a particular action, or series of actions, could
be understood in ethical terms that drew attention to the immediate fascist past
and its invisible continuity and violence in the present. Conceived as a yearlong
happening, Vostell’s ideal academy will now be considered in this context.

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31 *Conversation Piece (or Crutch Piece)*, 1962 summer. All pieces are cited from Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*
32 Adorno’s essay, “The Meaning of Working through the Past,” was first delivered as a lecture in
Wiesbaden in 1959. The version cited here is from Theodor W. Adorno, *Can One Live after
Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford:
33 As I discuss in Chapter 4, Vostell asserted that he and his family moved eastward and survived
the war in Czechoslovakia.
Yes-Decisions, No-Decisions

Returning to the ideal academy drawing, the “yes-decisions and no-decisions,” what I consider as suggested “learning events,” which Vostell wrote to the right of the autobahn map, read as follows:

REST STOP HELMSTEDT: POLISH
door handles from 99 CARS!\(^{34}\)

ON THE SIDE OF WIESBADEN 4KM SPOON SCULPTURE\(^{35}\)
between Cologne and Düsseldorf throw gold coins out of moving car into the landscape!\(^{36}\)

62 KM south of Stuttgart—lay out 1 KM of bread next to the guardrail\(^{37}\)

These succinct actions and themes belie the layered memories and experiences that each elicits, from “polishing” and “spoons” to “gold” and “bread.” I shall now turn to these topics in an effort to explicate their meaning in the broader context of postwar West Germany.

Polishing

From the end of World War II until the fall of the Berlin Wall, the town of Helmstedt was Checkpoint Alpha, a major border crossing between West and East Germany and the gateway to the shortest route between West Germany and

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\(^{34}\) RASTSTÄTTE HELMSTEDT: 99 Türklinken von 99 AUTOS PUTZEN!
\(^{35}\) VON WIESBADEN SEITLICH 4KM LÖFFELPLASTIK
\(^{36}\) zwischen Köln und Düsseldorf gold-Münzen in die Landschaft aus fahrenden AUTO werfen!
\(^{37}\) 62 KM südlich von Stuttgart—1 KM mit Brot auslegen neben der Leitplanke
West Berlin, a trip that Vostell personally took on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{38} This is the site that Vostell picked for the ideal academy to stop and for the public to “CLEAN 99 car door handles from 99 CARS!” Travelers who stopped at the rest stop were visually confronted with Germany’s East/West divide and the continued presence of the Allied and Soviet militaries, which signified the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union that were being staged on German soil. Anyone who polished “99 door handles from 99 CARS!” at the rest stop would have had ample time to ponder the geopolitical situation. But more to the point, the physical, tactile, repetitive act of polishing would also have drawn the public’s attention to both the car itself and its handle as objects that had also been touched by countless other individuals. Handling, feeling, fingering, cleaning, buffing, shining, and polishing put the participant in direct contact with those hands that had built, attached, turned, opened, and closed the car doors in such places as Wolfsburg, the headquarters of Volkswagen, located just over twenty miles northwest of Helmstedt. By requesting the public to polish the car door handles at the Helmstedt rest stop, Vostell could be said to have simultaneously called attention to the realities of Germany’s divided present and Cold War hostilities, and to the Nazi past.

\textsuperscript{38} Spiegel recently published an online article about the architecture of the rest stop at Checkpoint Bravo, Checkpoint Alpha’s counterpart, located at the edge of West Berlin, referring to it as “Germany’s most famous rest stop.” See Anne Haeming, “Deutschlands berühmteste Raststätte: Pop-Art am Checkpoint Bravo,” Spiegel Online (July 3, 2010), http://www.spiegel.de/auto/aktuell/deutschlands-beruehmteste-raststaette-pop-art-am-checkpoint-bravo-a-700973.html, accessed November 6, 2012. Regarding Vostell’s travels between West Germany and West Berlin, see Vostell, \textit{Vostell—Ein Leben lang}. 198
Helmstedt might be considered an index of the Third Reich, Hitler’s development of an efficient highway system, and the creation of an affordable car for every Aryan family: the *Volkswagen*, or “people’s car” (*Volk* connoting racially pure Germans). The VW would provide Germans access to the nation’s newly built, state-of-the-art highway network. The campaign for these cars was launched in 1937 by the “Strength through Joy”\(^39\) (KdF) program, which the Nazis founded in November 1933 as a subsidiary of the German Labor Front, designed to provide affordable material goods and leisure activities for the masses and to improve conditions and appearances in the workplace.\(^40\) The production of cheap goods by German companies satisfied citizens’ materialist desires by persuading consumers that the Reich had improved their standard of living, and, thereby contributed to the development of a sense of national pride and allegiance, even as the Reich was promoting a pure racial community and companies were using forced laborers. By the mid- to late 1960s, factories like VW, I-G Farben, Krupp, and Siemens were criticized for their use of forced labor, a practice that Peter Weiss highlighted in his 1965 play, *The Investigation*, which was based on testimony given at the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial of 1963-65, and a play with which the inquisitive, cultured Vostell was certainly familiar.

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\(^{39}\) *Kraft durch Freude.*

\(^{40}\) For example, KdF organized inexpensive tours to and within Germany, offering Germans the opportunity to participate in collective, anti-materialistic experiences. The strategically organized and controlled tours promoted communal bonds between citizens and with the land, as well as promoted a specific image of Germany. The tours emphasized Germany’s rich history and its awe-inspiring landscapes by showcasing such places as medieval towns, the Tannenberg memorial, the Romantic Rhineland, and the Black Forest. KdF also emphasized clean, efficient work environments, which were believed to boost workers’ productivity and spirits. See Shelley Baranowski, “Selling the ‘Racial Community’: *Kraft durch Freude* and Consumption in the Third Reich,” *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth-Century Germany* (2007).
VW was one of the first German companies to use Soviet prisoners of war for forced labor during WWII, starting in 1941.\(^{41}\) In the spring of 1942, VW also began to use Eastern workers (Ostarbeiter), civilians deported to Germany from the German-occupied Soviet territories for slave labor. Approximately half of the Eastern workers were women for whom, in February 1943, VW established a factory-run nursery (Ausländerkinder-Pflegeheim) in Wolfsburg,\(^{42}\) developed under the auspices of a three-point program created by Robert Ley, Reich Labor Minister, and Leonardo Conti, Chief of the German Medical System.\(^{43}\) Prior to this, pregnant women were returned to their home country.\(^{44}\) In addition to the minimal German staff, VW appointed largely untrained Russian and Polish women as nurses. The infants lived in deplorable conditions and approximately 350-400 died from starvation, disease, and insufficient care. U.S. soldiers discovered and exhumed the children’s unmarked mass graves located near the nursery barracks in June 1945, and in June 1946, a British military court held in Helmstedt sentenced Dr. Hans Körbel, the chief factory physician, and Ella Schmidt, a nurse in charge of the nursery, to death for the neglect and

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\(^{42}\) Ibid.


\(^{44}\) Volkswagen AG, 52.
subsequent deaths of the children; and a second nurse was sentenced to five years in prison.\textsuperscript{45}

VW also forcibly employed French civilians and POWs, Dutch students, Italian military internees, and concentration camp prisoners. The latter were housed in satellite concentration camps, specially built by VW in April 1942, in cooperation with the SS (the \textit{Schutzstaffel}, or the black-uniformed elite paramilitary corps of the Nazi party).\textsuperscript{46} Altogether, nearly 20,000 men and women worked for VW as forced laborers during WWII.\textsuperscript{47} As part of its more recent initiative to educate the public and its employees about this past, the company paid two German historians, Hans Mommsen and Manfred Grieger, the equivalent of $2.2 million to research what turned out to be a scathing account of how entwined VW was with the Nazi regime, \textit{Volkswagen and Its Workers during the Third Reich} (1996).\textsuperscript{48} Vostell’s polishing instruction on this, his ideal-academy-as-happening drawing, may have generated the memory of forced labor during the war, remembrance of the men, women, and children who endured or perished there, as well as confronted participants with the recollection of those who enforced and benefitted from these practices and their


\textsuperscript{46} Volkswagen AG, 81.

\textsuperscript{47} Volkswagen AG, 157.

legacy. Numerous companies that took advantage of such Nazi policies still maintained flourishing businesses at the time.

This rich and troubling history is the latent, yet present, content of Vostell’s emphasis on “CARS.” For, the automobile had become a status symbol of West Germany’s postwar economy and, for some, a fetish. German historian Arnold Sywottek has argued that West Germany’s so-called economic miracle of the 1950s reassigned the role of cars as “not so much a matter of luxury or prestige, but what might be classified as ‘necessary consumption’.”49 By contrast, German historian, Hannah Schlissler contends that “[c]ars in general were objects of desire, and nothing marked that ascent of the West German economy [in the 1950s] better than the exploding motorization of the population.”50 Within the context of the ideal academy, the argument must be made that cars functioned both as objects of “necessary consumption” and as “objects of desire,” transporting its cargo of references and advisors throughout the country.

The Helmstedt action is not only associated with Germany’s past and present, for polishing door handles as an artistic act was something that Vostell called for on at least four other occasions around the time he articulated his idea for the ideal academy. Most immediately, he advised Heubach (in his ideal academy interview) that the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie could be emptied out if students and teachers were required to polish the school’s doorknobs! Moreover,

on May 18, 1968, Vostell wrote to Hanns Sohm complaining about the reactionary mentality of the students in the Karlsruhe Art Academy. Vostell’s letter explained that he had presented slides and films of his and Fluxus artists’ films, and then called for students to clean the academy’s doorknobs with Weedol, a chemical used to kill weeds. The students, to Vostell’s surprise, became incredibly upset. “Thus, much became clear—unfortunately in a negative sense for the students,” Vostell wrote Sohm.\(^{51}\) Vostell did not elaborate, but given his complaint about the conservative approach of students, the cleaning action may have intended to help students make the connection between Vostell’s own and Fluxus artists’ experimental work and the decontamination of the entrance to the classroom as a metaphor for cleansing the mind of weeds.

A year later, on May 8, 1969, Vostell revisited this polishing motif in his happening *Stop and Refuel*,\(^ {52}\) sponsored by Galerie van de Loo in Munich. This time, he instructed participants in the event to ask farmers in a nearby village if they could polish their door handles and to do so should the farmers agree.\(^ {53}\) Vostell also contributed a work involving polishing doorknobs to the 1969 exhibition *Art by Telephone* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.\(^ {54}\)

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\(^{51}\) The letter is in the SA/SS.

\(^{52}\) *Rasten und Tanken*.

\(^{53}\) The invitation, instructions, and a few photographs of the happening can be found in Heinzelmann, Emslander, and García, eds., *Das Theater ist auf der Straße*, 238-9.

\(^{54}\) The exhibition was open from November 1 through December 14, 1969. It was originally planned for Spring 1968 but had to be postponed due to technical difficulties. An LP with the recorded conversations between the artists and van der Marc was released as the catalog. The jacket cover credits Laszlo Moholy-Nagy’s *Telephone Paintings* of 1922-1923 as the inspiration for the exhibition’s concept. As the title of the paintings suggests, Moholy-Nagy called a fabricator in Berlin and provided him with instructions to make the paintings. The fabricator then produced the paintings per the artist’s specifications.
idea was that the thirty-six invited artists would call the curator, Jan van der Marc, with verbal instructions describing a work of their own art so that he could have it produced without the artist being present or contributing a physical object. The phone conversations were recorded and relayed onto a forty-four-minute-long LP released as the exhibition’s catalog. Vostell told van der Marc that ninety-nine doorknobs were to be polished simultaneously at official buildings, police stations, and so on. Participants were to drag their feet as they polished. There is no documentation of anyone performing or critiquing Vostell’s work, so one is left to ponder how an American audience would have reacted to such a monotonous task. The added stipulation of dragging one’s feet, an action that implies boredom and resistance, certainly would have made the work more challenging and added to the exhaustion of the worker. It also would have sharpened performers’ awareness of their own physicality and the tactile sensations and sounds it generated.

Spoons

Similar to the Helmstedt polishing action, the Wiesbaden prompt, “4KM SPOON SCULPTURE,” relates both to West Germany’s post-1945 condition and its National Socialist past, as well as to modern art and recent art history. In

keeping with the aesthetics of Fluxus and Pop art, the idea of creating a sculpture of spoons suggests a celebration of the readymade and ordinary objects as art. His suggestion for a spoon sculpture, four kilometers in length or in height, could have been a nod to the monumental sculptures that the Pop and happenings artist Claes Oldenburg had begun to visualize in drawings, such as Proposed Chapel in the Form of a Swedish Extension Plug (1967), not unlike Vostell’s contemporary art museum in the form of a giant air pump (1971) discussed in Chapter 1, or it could have been a call to create a sculpture using normal spoons in line with the activities of Fluxus artists.

As I have already noted, Vostell had been involved with Fluxus since its inception in Germany in 1962, and although his focus on the principle of dé-coll/age and his tendency to work on a grand scale generally distinguished his art from the simple works that typify Fluxus pieces, he remained committed to carrying on the name of Fluxus and to staking a claim to its history. He did so especially once Beuys appropriated the movement and began routinely stamping much of his work “Fluxus Zone West,” the name he also called the German Student Party (DSP) in the fall of 1968 when he began admitting all students to his classes.56 When Beuys told Heubach that “my party” is a representative model for the ideal academy, he referred to the DSP/“Fluxus Zone West.”57 For Heubach, Beuys’s merging of the DSP and Fluxus raised questions about the

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56 Heubach, Interfunktionen 2, 85.
definition of Fluxus, especially in light of the fact that Beuys had only a few years earlier distanced himself from Fluxus.\textsuperscript{58}

Vostell made his concern about Beuys’s appropriation of Fluxus obvious in a manifesto-like text that he drafted on December 10, 1968, and claiming his own constituents, signed with his name appended with the phrase “Interfunktionen, Team for Art Theory, Cologne; collaborator of LIDL Academy, Düsseldorf.” Heubach included this manifesto at the end of \textit{Interfunktionen 2}, the same issue that featured the ideal academy. Among other assertions in the manifesto, Vostell declared:

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item Fluxus West is the Fluxus group of Ken Friedman in California, U.S.A.
\item Fluxus Germany is Vostell
\item Fluxus city in Germany is Cologne
\item Fluxus and Happening Center in Germany is Labor in Cologne
\item Fluxus is incompatible with cult of celebrity or mystical patterns of behavior
\item Fluxus West is not in Europe\textsuperscript{59}
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

For Vostell, Beuys had encroached into the territory and alliances that Vostell had established since 1962. Hence Vostell’s insistence that “Fluxus West” was not in Europe, that Fluxus in Germany was headquartered in Cologne where Vostell lived, not in Düsseldorf where Beuys lived and taught, and that Fluxus was not


\textsuperscript{59} In Heubach, \textit{Interfunktionen 2}. n.p.
suited to the shamanistic persona created by Beuys. Vostell wanted to set the historical record straight.

Vostell had performed in the early Fluxus festivals in Western Europe, including the first festival, which took place in Wiesbaden in September 1962, that he had co-organized with Paik and Maciunas. Vostell had also promoted Fluxus in his dé-coll/age journal. Beuys did not become involved with Fluxus until he assisted Jean-Pierre Wilhelm in organizing the Festum Fluxorum at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in February 1963. Wilhelm was the founder of Galerie 22 in Düsseldorf, and he had known Paik since at least November 1959, when Paik performed *Hommage à John Cage* at the opening of Galerie 22. Paik, who had met Vostell in Cologne in 1959 and had been in correspondence with Maciunas since 1961, put Wilhelm and Maciunas in contact. In late 1962 or early 1963, Maciunas and Wilhelm began discussing holding a Fluxus festival in Düsseldorf. Wilhelm contacted Beuys at the Kunstakademie to help organize the festival. Beuys suggested to Maciunas that Vostell, who had already participated in multiple Fluxus festivals in Western Europe, be invited to participate. Maciunas agreed, despite his belief that Vostell’s dé-coll/age journal rivaled his publishing ambitions for Fluxus.

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60 See Smith, *Fluxus*, 43, 95.
61 Ibid. 90. Vostell was already aware in November 1962 that Wilhelm was planning a Fluxus festival with Maciunas for Düsseldorf, as Wilhelm had written to Vostell on November 11, 1962 about it. Letter from Wilhelm to Vostell, November 11, 1962. A copy of the letter is in the JBP/GRI.
62 A letter Paik wrote to Maciunas on January 15, 1963, highlights the animosity Maciunas felt towards Vostell: “... You strive for monopol, [sic]... The largest success of Fluxus is Copenhagen. Who made it? VOSTELL! I had no acquaintance with [Addi] Kopke [sic]. Vostell brought me to him one day and we, Vostell and I—recommended you to Kopke [sic]. Vostell made propaganda...
Precisely when Beuys and Vostell first met is unclear, but it may well have been in the late 1950s in the context of the Darmstadt experimental music circles in which Paik was involved, or at ZERO public events in 1959 and 1960. But for certain, the two first performed together at the Festum Fluxorum at the Kunstakademie, and subsequently performed together on multiple occasions, including in the Festival of New Art at the Technical University in Aachen on July 20, 1964, which famously ended abruptly when students stormed the stage after one student, who was inadvertently splashed with acid that Beuys was planning to use in his performance, jumped up, and hit Beuys in the face. A photographer captured the now iconic image of Beuys, blood running from his nose, raising his arm in what appeared to be a Heil Hitler salute while holding a cross in his other hand.\footnote{Smith, *Fluxus*.}

Initially, Vostell was eager for Beuys’s participation in his activities, and he introduced Beuys to other Fluxus and happenings artists, as well as to the young, aspiring, West Berlin-based gallerist René Block after Block initiated contact with Vostell in mid-1964.\footnote{One of, if not the, earliest letters Block wrote to Vostell was dated June 19, 1964, when Block invited Vostell to submit two works for a group exhibition that he was planning for his gallery in the fall of 1964. JBP/GRI.} In 1989, Block recalled, “In Berlin information flowed sparingly. Vostell knew everything, and from him I heard about Fluxus of you and Fluxus in Décollage No. 1 and No. 3....”

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item For more on this festival, see Langston, “The Art of Barbarism and Suffering.”
  \item Quoted in Smith, *Fluxus*. Vostell initiated contact with Koepcke, who lived in Copenhagen, sending him a letter written on the back of a poster for *Cityrama* (1961/62). Vostell wrote that he had heard many interesting things about Koepcke from Daniel Spoerri and that he would like to meet him in Copenhagen. Vostell also indicated that he was enclosing a copy of *TPL: Tombeau de Pierre Larousse* (Wuppertal: Verlag der Kalendar, 1961), a book of poetry by François Dufrêne that was illustrated with images of décollage posters by Vostell. Vostell’s letter to Koepcke can be found in the SA/SS.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
and other movements.”\textsuperscript{65} Despite the formative role that Vostell played in Block’s education as a curator and dealer, Block became increasingly devoted to representing Beuys, whose works and performances he marketed as Fluxus. As early as October 31, 1966, it was Block, not Beuys, who identified Beuys’s performance \textit{Eurasia} as Fluxus.\textsuperscript{66} Two years later, Beuys claimed the name Fluxus for the DSP when his popularity as both an artist and teacher had begun to soar. Vostell, in the meantime, had become identified primarily as a happenings artist, which seemed passé in the period during which body art emerged. Although he continued to have numerous exhibitions and although he established two museums dedicated to Fluxus (the Museo Vostell Malpartida and \textit{Fluxus Zug}), after the late 1960s and early 1970s, Vostell was rarely discussed as an innovative artist, eclipsed by the limelight of the charismatic, equally self-promoting Beuys. Thus, the Fluxus manifesto that Vostell penned in December 1968 and that Heubach published in \textit{Interfunktionen 2}, evinces Vostell’s jealously, anger, and frustration over the history being invented by Beuys and his circle, and the rising tension between him and Beuys.

With this background in mind, let me return to Vostell’s instruction for a spoon sculpture, but now in relation to German history, specifically to the Nazis’ confiscation of everyday goods from Jews and others before their transportation to concentration camps. Recalling the masses of silverware found at Auschwitz and elsewhere at the war’s end, Vostell’s spoon sculpture could have served as a

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metonymy of the millions stripped of their wealth and banished to work and death camps. At the war’s end, the Allies had forced millions of Germans to confront the recently abandoned camps and come face-to-face with the crimes of their nation. German citizens, young and old, male and female, were made to view the piles of emaciated corpses. Some even had to assist in carrying the bodies to mass graves. After the victims’ physical remains were buried, silverware, suitcases, shoes, and gold fillings, photographs, and films provided evidence of their existence of the tragedy.

Alain Resnais’ graphic, thirty-two minute film, Night and Fog (1955) was an early example of cinematic documentation of the Holocaust. Resnais juxtaposed color footage made in 1955 of the abandoned grounds of Auschwitz with black and white footage made during the National Socialists’ rise to power and during WWII. The tranquility of the campgrounds ten years after their liberation contrasts starkly with the heaps of material goods that remained next to piles of corpses. Night and Fog was screened at film festivals and film clubs in Germany’s major cities just months after its release, and numerous articles and editorials appeared in German newspapers about the film, bringing it into the public spotlight.

67 Nuit et brouillard.
Four years after Night and Fog was released, Vostell created Black Room (1958-59), an environment that metaphorically invoked the genocide through its titling and incorporated objects. Black Room comprised three assemblages: Treblinka, Auschwitz Searchlight, and German Outlook [Figs. 46-48]. Each was made of a variety of materials, such as a child’s shoe, a light, barbed wire, photographs, and a small television. Although the items did not come from the camps or from the individuals who were imprisoned or killed in the camps, they conjure memories of those tortured and dead. The title of the third assemblage, German Outlook, along with the environment’s overall title, Black Room, suggest that the crimes perpetrated at Treblinka and Auschwitz continued to scar the worldview of Germans and the view of Germans throughout the world, imprinting them with the legacy of the heinous deeds and crimes against humanity.

Vostell created another, more immersive and interactive, environment in 1970 that also allegorically evoked the concentration camps and that incorporated spoons, T.E.K./Thermoelectric Chewing Gum [Fig. 49]. Composed of a dark room flanked by tall sections of barbed wire fence and a floor strewn with thousands of forks and spoons, viewers are invited to walk through the environment carrying a suitcase that Peter Saage, who had collaborated with Vostell for E.d.H.R. in 1968, had wired to amplify the sounds of visitors’ footsteps as they tread over the silverware, luggage in hand. Installed in Dortmund’s Schwarzes Zimmer.

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69 Schwarzes Zimmer.
70 Treblinka, Auschwitz-Scheinwerfer, and Deutscher Ausblick.
Museum am Ostwall since 2010, the audible clinking of metal and footsteps intensifies the eeriness that pervades the room, sharpening awareness of one’s body as it moves through the space. Carrying a suitcase while walking between barbed wire in the midst of eating utensils that litter the floor still summons images of the millions captured on film after being rounded up and transported to concentration camps, and simulates a corporeal relationship to these events. Vostell’s suggestion to create a four-kilometer spoon sculpture as part of the ideal academy would have functioned in a similar manner.

**Gold**

The Cologne and Düsseldorf action of throwing gold into the landscape, in contrast, may have called attention to the psychological and physical devastation of Germany and Germans during and after WWII. Leaving precious metal for the damaged environment could be interpreted as a curative offering, meant symbolically to heal the German land. Both Cologne and Düsseldorf sustained immense damage and great casualties during the war. British bombing raids alone destroyed sixty-one percent of Cologne and sixty-four percent of Düsseldorf.71 According to Konrad Adenauer’s *Memoirs*, only 300 houses stood intact in Cologne at the time of the Nazis’ surrender.72 Piles of rubble remained

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for years after the war’s end. Cologne’s City Hall, for instance, only rebuilt in 1972; and the historic city center was not fully renovated until 1986.\(^{73}\)

Despite the lingering physical damage in the postwar period, both Cologne and Düsseldorf rose to become wealthy metropolitan centers on the Rhine River. They also became well-known centers for avant-garde and commercial art. Cologne, where Vostell lived from 1959 until 1971 (before moving to West Berlin) was home to Kagel’s Ensemble for New Music, Stockhausen’s WDR electronic music studio, prominent galleries, and the annual Cologne Art Market, which began in 1967. Düsseldorf had the Kunstakademie and Beuys. Although Vostell, like Beuys, exhibited his work in galleries and was able to make a living and support his family from sales of his art, the two artists protested the commodification of art and the exclusion of happenings, actions, and conceptual art from such venues as the Cologne Art Market. During the “Honey Blind Action” discussed above, Vostell dumped a bag of change out in front of Documenta’s organizers in protest of their having denied the realization of the multimedia festival he had planned.\(^{74}\) Throwing gold, the standard of monetary exchange, into the landscape between Cologne and Düsseldorf could be interpreted as a demonstration against capitalism and its sway over the art world, as well as against these organizers’ resistance to happenings which were difficult to transform into commodities.


\(^{74}\) Moure, ed. *Behind the Facts*, 59.
A postcard that Vostell altered and mailed to Sohm in 1968 visually suggests this latter reading of the ideal academy action [Fig. 50]. The postcard is a black and white photograph of the Cologne skyline. It features the geometric Severin Bridge that crosses the Rhine in the middle ground and the Cologne Cathedral in the background, its spires mirroring the triangular structure in the middle of the bridge. Vostell used a black marker to draw on it nine U.S. dollar signs, eight of which he fully enclosed in circles. At the base of each circle is a short vertical line, making it appear as if the dollar signs were emblazoned on large round billboards attached to the tops of various structures in Cologne, including the bridge and the cathedral. The largest dollar sign, which Vostell drew on top of the river, is only partially encircled within a circle.

Like the dotted line that Vostell used to surround an “H” to indicate the site of a happening, the circle around the dollar sign on the river is perforated. The dollar is not contained. Vostell, in other words, used an easily recognizable symbol—the U.S. dollar sign—to suggest that capitalism controlled Cologne and that its influence pervaded the rest of the Rhineland, flowing down the river with the current. On the back of the postcard, Vostell wrote in quotation marks, “Cologne secret capital of the arts!” The quotation marks (along with the dollar signs on the opposite side) clearly indicate Vostell’s facetious irony. The Cologne Art Market made it obvious that money bought art. In the case of the ideal academy, however, throwing money into the German economy would only “buy” one an experience, not a tangible artwork. Offering gold to the region,
where art was increasingly associated with commodification and commercialism, would have been a way to validate the importance of action in art and experiences over consumable art objects.\textsuperscript{76}

In this sense, the gesture of throwing away gold recalls Yves Klein’s \textit{Ritual for the Relinquishment of the Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility Zones} (1962), with which Vostell would have been familiar. Klein sold zones, or “pure space impregnated with [his] presence,”\textsuperscript{77} of immaterial pictorial sensibility, which “exists beyond our being and yet belongs in our sphere.”\textsuperscript{78} “It is only by the intermediary of our taking possession of sensibility that we are able to purchase life,” Klein wrote in 1961.\textsuperscript{79} Buyers of an \textit{Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility Zone} paid Klein in pure gold. In return, the buyer received a receipt designed and fabricated by Klein, which he or she was then required to burn, while Klein threw half of the gold into “the ocean, into a river or in some place in nature where this gold [could not] be retrieved by anyone.”\textsuperscript{80} With the transaction complete, Klein declared, “From this moment on, the \textit{Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility Zone} belongs to the buyer absolutely and intrinsically.”\textsuperscript{81} Klein demonstrated that not the commodity but the immaterial pictorial sensibility had worth.

\textsuperscript{76} Vostell also asked participants to throw gold out of the bus and into the landscape near Munich in \textit{Stop and Refuel} (May 8, 1969). See Heinzelmann, Emslander, and García, eds., \textit{Das Theater ist auf der Straße}, 238-9.
\textsuperscript{78} Quoted in ibid., 87.
\textsuperscript{79} From Klein’s text, “The Chelsea Hotel Manifesto.” Quoted in ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Yves Klein} (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1967), 19.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
Vostell’s ideal academy action may have been a provocation, challenging West Germans, enjoying the benefits of the 1950s “economic miracle” (Wirtschaftswunder), to focus on experiences that money cannot buy and to reconsider what is valuable. Nevertheless, Vostell reveled in West Germany’s prosperity, driving luxury cars, some of which he subsequently encased in concrete as works of art, and indulging in caviar and Cuban cigars, all the while maintaining a critical view of postwar society and attempting to elicit strong reactions with counterintuitive acts. His instructions to throw gold away was an audacious, if not a foolhardy request in a country paying war reparations; where hyperinflation after WWI sent Germany’s currency plummeting from 4.20 marks, which equaled one dollar in 1914, to 4.2 trillion marks, equaling one dollar in November 1923; and where inflation after WWII led to the implementation of currency reform in 1948. Under the framework of art, Vostell asked the public to sacrifice further, or at least to consider the reason for not doing so.

*Bread*

The action that Vostell proposed be realized south of Stuttgart presented ideal academy participants with another opportunity to use a valuable good for an unexpected purpose: to place one kilometer of bread alongside the guardrail. This material offering highlights the dialectical juxtaposition of life and death that characterizes humanity’s existence. Bread is an ancient symbol of life, of procreation, and of the fecundity of the earth. West Germany’s highways, in contrast, had become increasingly associated with death, as the number of
automobiles and drivers on the roads increased exponentially after the 1950s. There were approximately 8,000 traffic fatalities annually in the early 1950s, 12,800 by 1956, and 190,000 in 1972.\textsuperscript{82} Despite these statistics and being fixated on destruction, Vostell relished driving and was an aficionado of large cars,\textsuperscript{83} even as he understood that the car was a potentially deadly machine. As he told the audience during his 1964 lecture at the Cricket Theater, “I regard a car not only as the nice means of moving on, but see the accident in the car, too.”\textsuperscript{84} Bread set on the side of the guardrail, a safety device installed to prevent drivers from veering off the road into dangerous or prohibited areas, therefore, may have served as a memorial to those who lost their lives in accidents. Both for the people placing the bread on the guardrail and for passersby, the loaves could have conjured thoughts of the thousands who died and continue to perish in highway accidents and, paradoxically, may have caused distraction (had the action been realized) that, itself, may have led to accidents. In this way the bread action could be said to demonstrate the dé-coll\textsuperscript{e}age principle of the binding interconnection between destruction and creation.

The act of offering bread may also have called to mind a religious ritual, especially in the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Christianity, as Jews eat only unleavened bread during Passover in commemoration of Jewish people’s

\textsuperscript{83} His wife recalled, with a chuckle in February 2011, how convinced she was that they would get stuck between buildings as Vostell drove their bulky German car through the rough, narrow, winding streets of small villages in Extremadura. The author in conversation with Mercedes Vostell, February 9, 2011, Malpartida de Cáceres.
\textsuperscript{84} Kaprow and Vostell, “Action Lecture: ‘The Art of the Happening.’”
flight from slavery in Egypt, and Christians use bread as the symbol of the body of Christ in the Eucharist. Catholics believe in transubstantiation, where the bread actually becomes the body of Christ when consecrated; Lutherans believe the divine is present in the bread. Beuys highlighted this spiritual transformation of bread in *Two Fräuleins with Shining Bread* (1966), which was published in the fifth issue of Vostell’s *dé-coll/age* journal. A collage with chocolate, brown oil paint, cardboard, and offset lithography on white notepaper, the work contains no actual bread, just the word bread in its title. Beuys described the work in a December 1970 interview, as related to spirituality:

> Bread as a substance represents the essence of human nourishment. The term “shining bread” means that bread has its origin in the spiritual realm. In other words, man does not live on bread alone, but on spirit. Quite in the same way as in transubstantiation, that is, transmutation of the Host in the church service; where it is said: this is bread only by outer appearance, in reality it is Christ. This, then, is transubstantiation of matter.

While Beuys used only the word bread in his work and challenged viewers to make the link between the linguistic phrase and the larger question of spiritual sustenance, Vostell was more direct in his employment of actual loaves of bread, making his work less mystical and inciting more immediate reactions from the public.

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85 I highlight these two religions as they are the most common in Germany.
86 *Zwei Fräulein mit leuchtendem Brot.*
Seeing (or thinking about) the number of loaves that it would take to cover a one kilometer stretch—more than four thousand by my estimation\(^{88}\)—being intentionally left to spoil on the roadside could also have summoned memories of the dietary rations that Germans endured during and immediately after the World Wars. The worst period of rationing occurred during the winter of 1916-17, a period known as Germany’s “turnip winter,” when shares were reduced to just six ounces of bread per person per day and one egg per person every fourteen days.\(^{89}\) During WWII, the Nazis implemented rations as early as August 27, 1939.\(^{90}\) The Americans and British continued this rationing system, which ranged between 1,040 and 1,550 calories per day, in the sectors they occupied in the years immediately after the war.\(^{91}\) Those living in West Berlin faced the prospect of starvation when the Soviet Union blockaded all routes to West Berlin on June 24, 1948, and stopped supplying food to those living in non-Soviet zones of the city the following day. The eleven-month Allied airlift brought citizens desperately needed food, fuel, and other supplies. In 1966, Vostell referred to the experience of living with limited food in Yellow Pages or an Action Page, a work that juxtaposes a page from the New York Yellow Pages listing grocery stores with a 1947 German ration card and advises participants to

\(^{88}\) If the average loaf of bread is nine inches long, it would take approximately 4,374 loaves to cover a one kilometer stretch.
follow the ration stipulations for one month [Fig. 51]. Kristine Stiles suggested that, in sticking to the rations, the public was asked to “enter into both the physiological conditions and mental spaces of the average German citizen” in the immediate postwar years. The work also contrasted the paucity of postwar Germany (demonstrated by the ration card) with the plethora of goods available in New York (implied by numerous grocery stores listed in the phone book page).

While the disparity between abundance and scarcity evoked by the loaves of bread may have sparked memories of hunger in Germany, it may also have provoked awareness about on-going hunger in Third World countries. The West German media’s accounts of famines around the globe around the time of the ideal academy placed conditions of poverty in Germans’ collective conscious, and Vostell was criticized on multiple occasions in West Germany for wasting large amounts of foodstuffs in his art. On March 15, 1969, for example, he measured the exterior of the Cologne Opera House with loaves of bread. A total of 1,164 loaves, placed end-to-end on the ground, were used in his action Bread Measurement. Heubach documented the work with reproduced photographs and texts in the third issue of Interfunktionen. Heubach also transcribed the taped reactions of passersby. Their comments included such statements as, “There were once times where we were happy when we had a piece of bread”; “That is real bread, that should be fed to the Negroes, not used to be laid on the street”;

93 Brotvermessung. Recall that an enlarged photograph of Vostell bending to place a loaf of bread on the ground during this happening was included in the final container of Fluxus Zug.
“Not a bad idea”; and “That is an artist, I know him, he makes rather crazy things, that is his work.” Vostell offered the same loaves of bread to the opera’s audience later that evening. Most declined the gift/reminder, rejecting a symbol of a communal bond of shared sustenance and spirituality as much as they rejected the memory of the pain of rationing, the memory of the Berlin airlift when Allied powers supplied food to West Berlin, the memory of having participated in war, and the memory of those who were starved to death in the Holocaust, memories after memories after memories tied to bread.

Vostell used bread again for an installation titled Energy, which he first created in Rome in 1973 and which was later included in his retrospective at the Nationalgalerie in West Berlin in 1975. Energy comprised 1,000 baguettes individually wrapped in the local daily newspaper and stacked like a wall around a parked Cadillac. Someone outraged by the work submitted a letter to the editor of the Südwester-Presse, a daily newspaper based in Ulm, and complained that such a waste of bread was an insult to popular sentiment. Any “Christian educated person,” he contended, must feel “deeply disturbed.” Even the Bild-Zeitung, an illustrated German tabloid that rarely concerned itself with art, weighed in about the inclusion of Energy in the 1975 exhibition with the

95 Energie.
headline “No Bread for the World.” Kym Lanzetta has argued that Vostell wanted to incite precisely such strong reactions as he impelled people to confront the excesses and wastefulness of modern daily life. Using bread as an artistic material, Vostell challenged the public to consider the conditions that allowed for the staple food to be treated as expendable surplus and to reflect upon their own actions, asking oneself if s/he were wasteful.

In his art and ideal academy, car door handles, spoons, coins, and loaves of bread were imbued with multifarious personal and cultural meanings, becoming instruments for action, contemplation, and learning. In combination with discussion of one’s experiences and interactions with an interdisciplinary team of advisors over television, radio, and in person, such activities could alter perceptions and contribute to a broader consciousness of history and present reality. The yes and no decisions of polishing, sculpting, throwing, and placing that Vostell called for in the ideal academy drawing-as-happening reveal his effort to unify the otherwise separate categories of “art/academy” and “art/education,” especially when considered in combination with the team of advisors, who he envisioned would travel with the ideal academy during its first year and initiate “learning events.” In his interview with Heubach, Vostell emphasized the team’s diversity and, by extension, the radical beliefs that would underpin the ideal academy. Vostell was able to make his mark by enabling the public to imagine “learning events” in which they might participate. Even if the

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97 Art historian Wieland Schmied cited this headline in his opening speech to Vostell’s retrospective. Quoted in ibid.
98 Ibid., 168.
ideal academy never did materialize in the ways that he had explained it to
Heubach, Vostell created a record for the future, enabling anyone interested in
his work to imagine an ideal academy unfolding, moving off the page into the
world.

III. From Ideal to Actual

Unlike Beuys (with the DSP) and Immendorff (with the LIDL Academy),
Vostell never seems to have intended to realize the ideal academy, beyond his
drawing and interview with Heubach. He did accomplish various elements of
the ideal academy in the interdisciplinary collaborations that he established and
in his happenings, but he left his overall vision of an open collective with its own
radio and television stations to stand as a conceptual model, articulated in 1969
in words and image, and documented in the *Interfunktionen* publication for
future generations to contemplate. However, in 1978, when Dagmar von
Gottberg and Peter Kruse contacted Vostell about participating in a project that
would install art in traveling Contrans containers—the project that became
*Fluxus Zug*—Vostell returned to his proposal for the ideal academy. This
connection is suggested by the inclusion in the *Fluxus Zug* catalog of Vostell’s
ideal academy interview and half of the drawing (the half with the map), as well
as by the fact that Vostell also described *Fluxus Zug* as a “living art school” and a
“mobile art academy.”
In his 1969 interview, Vostell told Heubach that after one or two years, the team of advisors would change, a different idea for communication would be implemented, and/or new concepts would be incorporated into the ideal academy. In other words, he left the structure of the model institution open to transform over time. Accordingly, if the ideal academy was still to be realized in the late 1970s or early 1980s, it needed a new and different form, incorporating the changed needs of society. Confronting Germany’s Nazi past was no longer at the forefront of German citizens’ minds as it had been during Germany’s long 1968. They were worried instead about environmental issues, about the potential for nuclear disasters, about famines in other countries, about the division of Germany, and about the economic downturn in their own country, among other issues. This certainly explains part of the reason why Vostell did not include the second page of his ideal academy drawing in the *Fluxus Zug* catalog, as the four prompts for action (the learning events), which Vostell wrote on the drawing’s right-hand page, generated significant consideration of this history. The page with the map—the section of the drawing that Vostell reproduced in the *Fluxus Zug* catalog—in contrast, called attention to the geopolitical situation in which Germany still found itself in 1981: divided in two and located at the forefront of the ideological battle between East and West. This half of the map also clearly stipulated that the ideal academy was a happening, the medium for which Vostell was, and largely still is, best known. Furthermore, the presence of the map, a visually recognizable representation of the country, served to remind viewers of Vostell’s close relationship to Germany and of the numerous works of
art and projects he had created in and designed for his home state, even as he was dividing his time living between West Berlin and Malpartida, Spain.

As well as shifting its emphasis away from the specific learning events proscribed in 1969 and towards its more general geographical context, the ideal academy also needed to express the transformation of the art world from the happenings and Fluxus of the earlier 1960s, and the heady period of conceptualism of the late 1960s and early 1970s, to a much more pluralistic, international scene in which action, conceptual art, installation, video art, and performance shared the stage with painting. In addition, Vostell had to reckon with the fact that he was no longer making headlines as an artist. He had been eclipsed by the personality and myth of Beuys, who, after losing his position at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, founded the Free International University in 1974 as a platform for public debate and the re-democratization of society, as well as by the large expressionistic paintings of many of Beuys’s students from the Kunstakademie that had also come to define contemporary German art for an international audience. This, despite the fact that Vostell painted throughout his career and should be seen as a forerunner of, or at the least as a contemporary to, a painter like Anselm Kiefer, who came to characterize so-called German Neo-Expressionism. Vostell has never been considered as such, again because his reputation as the pioneer of happenings in Germany eclipsed all the rest of his production as an artist.

Vostell’s original ideal academy was clustered around a radical, disparate group of advisors and a series of collective, immaterial, and experiential events
The later iteration of the academy, which he realized in 1981 as Fluxus Zug, still incorporated collaborative, nomadic, and experiential elements. Indeed, Vostell described Fluxus Zug as a mobile art academy where people could share their experiences and reflections with the artist during the open discussions he held in the cities where Fluxus Zug stopped. Also, with Gottberg, he encouraged citizens in North Rhine-Westphalia to organize and host local cultural activities that highlighted the unique characteristics of the different towns, their traditions, and their diverse populations, and to complement Fluxus Zug’s visit and to extend its reach beyond the train into the communities themselves. Plus, Fluxus Zug could not have been realized without the support of numerous individuals and organizations, ranging from the student volunteers, who helped ensure that everything inside Fluxus Zug was working and guided visitors through the environments, to the Deutsche Bundesbahn, which provided the flatbed railcars and access to the train stations so that Fluxus Zug could circulate through NRW.

However, the “living art school” and “mobile art academy” that Vostell realized in 1981 was predominantly centered around a grouping of tangible works of art—the series of environments—created by one artist, namely Vostell himself. Even when others assisted in the creation of an environment, it is credited solely to Vostell. For example, Dimo Madjaroff, the engineer who set and wired the TV monitors into the Mercedes-Benz in The Winds, is not explicitly
named as a collaborator, as was Peter Saage for his work on *E.d.H.R.* in 1968.\(^9^9\) Whereas Vostell acknowledged the contributions of his collaborators in previous works, he now put himself at the center of the work. As he explained to a group of visitors in Dortmund: “I know that it is not beautiful. I present us with questions, about our relationship to life, to materials, to the spiritual, to nature. I try to render psychic (*seelische*) events sensible.”\(^1^0^0\) He compared the environments to “modern fairytales,” layered with meanings, the significance of which he challenged visitors to unravel.\(^1^0^1\) He emphasized that he was the one who had given abstract problems physically perceptible form and presented them to the public.

The shift from an ideal academy built around a pluralistic collective’s actions and dialogue, to one centered around material works of art in the form of paintings, multimedia installations, and sculpture, but also to one that incorporated collaborative, nomadic, and experiential elements—all the while being associated with a specific individual artist (Vostell) and with Germany—best conveys Vostell’s reading at the time of the larger shifts in the art world and the impact of the art market, as well as his hunger to reinsert himself into the history of contemporary art as an artist adeptly working across a wide range of

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\(^9^9\) Madjaroff set and wired the television monitors in the Mercedes-Benz, a fact I only learned from my correspondence with Madjaroff. His name, along with numerous other names, appears at the beginning of the *Fluxus Zug* catalog, in a list of people who helped make *Fluxus Zug* possible. No information is provided about what these individuals did to make *Fluxus Zug* possible, and many of the entries lack first names. Nonetheless, I sent letters or emails to as many of the individuals as I could identify and for whom I could find addresses. Madjaroff was one of these individuals. Dimo Madjaroff, email to the author, August 24, 2010.

\(^1^0^0\) Stachelhaus, “Das Lachen bleibt im Hals stecken.”

\(^1^0^1\) Schürbusch, “Grosser Bahnhof für die Kunst,” 12.
media and in conversation with various disciplines, an artist who taught through his art despite never being employed at an established academy or school. In these ways, *Fluxus Zug* must be considered a later iteration of the ideal academy, as well as a mobile museum. As the final chapter of this dissertation argues, *Fluxus Zug* was equally another type of institution, an archive. Although not publicized as such, another layer of *Fluxus Zug*’s significance and a deeper understanding of Vostell’s place within contemporary art history emerge in considering the artwork/mobile museum/ideal academy in relation to the archive—to actual archives that hold the materials from which history is written and to theories of the archive.
Ch. 4: The Archive

One of the defining characteristics of the modern era has been the increasing significance given to the archive as the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored and recovered.... [I]t is in the spheres of art and cultural production that some of the most searching questions have been asked concerning what constitutes an archive and what authority it holds in relation to its subject.

-- Charles Merewether, *The Archive*

I. Introduction

Vostell was keenly aware of the significance and role of the archive. He drew inspiration for his art from the collective Archive of western history; he established the Happening Archive Berlin (HAB, known today as the Archive Happening Vostell, or AHV) to document his own oeuvre and the milieu of happenings and related tendencies; he mentored the dentist Hanns Sohm in building what is today one of the most valuable collections of contemporary avant-garde, happenings and Fluxus, countercultural, and underground art; and he ensured that the famous Italian collector Gino di Maggio would donate his rare and eclectic Fluxus collection to the Museo Vostell Malpartida so that it could both offer and embody the expansive scope of Fluxus. This history of Fluxus is important as it goes well beyond that being retrospectively constructed.

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in the United States, as well as establishes Vostell as a founding and central figure of Fluxus in the European context, which is also seldom acknowledged in the U.S. context. In addition to the many ways in which I have thus far described the purpose and function of *Fluxus Zug*, in this chapter I pursue its identity as an archive, most obviously for Vostell’s inclusion of portions of the HAB in the first and last containers of the train, but also for how it comprised both his personal and his assembled historical and visual archival material. I will also frame *Fluxus Zug* as a sign of the then already changing cultural perceptions of archival fixity and structure, and of Vostell’s intervention into the form of the archive, by linking disparate, fragmented materials throughout the seven central environments of the train, effectively transforming *Fluxus Zug* into a temporary, nomadic, additive storehouse able to trouble conventional notions of the archive. Finally, I consider how Vostell’s identity contributes to an understanding of the archive’s relation to embodied memory.

According to Jacques Derrida in his 1995 book *Archive Fever*, the etymological origins of the word archive reside in the concept of “arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded.” Derrida, further explains that it is “in this domiciliation … that archives accumulate. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public.” The term “archive” often evokes the idea of a repository of documents that preserve materials conceived as the externalization of internal

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3 Ibid.
memories from which history is written. The archive is also considered to represent the material artifacts that constitute collective cultural memory. In 1969, Michel Foucault theorized the archive as the material traces left behind by a particular historical period and culture, as well as “the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events.” He described the study of the archive in archaeological terms: “[T]he archaeologist of knowledge’ aims to recover and reconstruct the archive, to reveal how it shapes our relation to the past and the construction of historical meaning.”

The archive is a site of artistic and scholarly study, an extra-artistic practice, a means of critically intervening into historical narrative, and a body of records rarely considered today as neutral, all-inclusive, omniscient, or mnemonically stable. The various ways in which the materials saved in the archive are used and reused evince the continuous and difficult process of remembering and the more frequent act of forgetting, as well as the ways in which history is reconstituted and knowledge is created according to the perceived needs of the present. Contemporary artists, especially since the 1960s, have increasingly turned to the archive for information, creative stimulation, a model for art making, a means to critique the foundations for institutional power, and as a means to deconstruct constructions of knowledge. Vostell’s work

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6 ———, The Archive, 11.
must now be considered within, and to have contributed to, this context and effort.

Vostell commenced his interest in and use of archives in the 1950s when he began scrutinizing the archive of mass media images, and started to build his own collection, which consisted of all manner of material, from journalist’s photographs, newspaper and magazines clippings, and a wide range of assorted ephemera like posters, sketches, notes, and other records of his own and other artists’ work. In 1971, Vostell officially established the HAB in his West Berlin flat, transforming his private collection, or archive, into a public Archive. He considered the Happening Archive Berlin to be his greatest work of art for how it encompassed all aspects of his oeuvre, from his artistic philosophy of dé-coll/age to his pedagogical concerns, and from his varied modes of art making to his interdisciplinary network of collaborators. In 1981, the very same year that Vostell finished relocating the HAB from his home in West Berlin to his home in Malpartida, where it became known as the Archive Happening Vostell (AHV), he borrowed various materials from it to create Fluxus Zug. In other words, it could be argued that Fluxus Zug—as an alternate iteration of his archive—was the public manifestation of his private estimation of his greatest work of art.

This chapter begins by tracing Vostell’s explorations of the archive as a source of imagery and ideas, as an artistic medium, and as a mode of art making. After establishing his grounding in the physical archives that initially shaped Vostell as an artist, this chapter then considers how certain theories of the archive inform my analysis of Fluxus Zug as an archive and Archive with the capacity to frame the processes of remembering and forgetting. This chapter raises questions
about how memories and knowledge are formed, transferred, and passed from generation to generation, and how it conveys an artist’s intermediations in such processes.

II. Physical Archives

Encountering the Archive of Mass Media

Vostell’s first significant interactions with the archive of mass media occurred in conjunction with his work in graphic design, first in 1954 when he assisted A. M. Cassandre in Paris, and second, and more importantly, around 1961 when he was briefly employed as a layout designer for the illustrated news magazine, Neue Illustrierte, in Cologne. Thousands of photographs, ranging from images of war, death, and destruction to pornography, popular cultural images, and advertisements, passed through Vostell’s hands. Images and themes such as those that he saw during his time at the Neue Illustrierte appear in nearly all aspects of Vostell’s art. Indeed, he sought out material from mass media for his art, and it is difficult to imagine what kind of an artist he might have become without the mass media. As he told sociologist Rainer Wick in 1969:

I regularly read city advertisements, Spiegel, Stern, Paris Match, Life, and Konkret, watch all three [West German] television stations, buy journals every now and then, from time to time Look, from time to time Spanish and Italian magazines, sometimes all the magazines that there are in the week…. This is work material. I must go through hundreds of photos in order to find one that appears significant.

Vostell’s implicit acknowledgment of the power dynamics associated with the archive must also be balanced with his intercession in the mass media images,

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7 Arnold, “Wolf Vostell auf Straßen und Plätzen ... durch die Galerien,” 12.
8 Wick, Vostell soziologisch, 44.
and the evaluative process he used in dissecting the worth of the image for use in art, its impact as art, and its place in the intersection between art and society. Although archives can theoretically contain an unlimited amount of material, they do not. Even when something is saved, it is only when someone identifies a fragment from amongst all of the other fragments, deems it important, interprets it, makes it visible, and gives it a voice that it gains broader meaning and historical import in the present and contributes to shaping historical narratives. Nearly thirty years after Vostell’s discussion with Wick, Derrida remarked in his study on the archive, “There is no political power without control of the archive.” In deciding which image of a past event or experience was worthy of being selected out of the chaos of the mass media archive, Vostell exerted a high degree of control over the future value of an image, powerfully shaping what would be remembered and what would be forgotten by incorporating certain fragments of the archive—bits of information that he himself declared meaningful—in his art.

One of the best examples of how Vostell’s selective processes shaped and reshaped the reception of mass-mediated images is his famous collage Miss America (1968) [Fig. 52]. It features the tall, leggy, beautiful, English model Jean Shrimpton, often considered the first “super model,” pictured with a wide extended stride, but in between whose legs appear a closely cropped image of the notorious 35mm photograph taken by Eddie Adams of the South Vietnamese police chief, General Nguyễn Ngọc Loan, executing a Viet Cong prisoner, Nguyễn Văn Lém, with a pistol held at point blank range on February 1, 1968, in

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9 Derrida, Archive Fever, 4, fn. 1.
a Saigon street. This widely circulated picture came to represent the violence and brutality of the Tet Offensive. The association Vostell created of the beautiful woman, blood covering her eyes, dripping from her arm, pooling on and dripping off her fashionable sling-back shoe, with “Miss America,” a beauty pageant and cultural institution that exemplifies society’s obsession with physical appearances, asks viewers to consider connections between the violence in Vietnam and American interests and culture. Around the head of Nguyễn Văn Lém appears an aqua-colored cloud of smoke as if the gun had already fired, and below him are images taken immediately after his execution of soldiers standing around his dead body, blood streaming onto the street from his head. A partially legible text to the left of the aqua smoke cloud reads: “Dancing lights, near right: golden sequins sparkled....”

Juxtaposing the banality of a modeling shot and the text describing a glamorous scene with the brutality of the gunshot and the apparent callousness of the soldiers milling about the dead prisoner, Vostell exposed the pervasiveness of violence across cultures and the many forms that it takes, from making women into objects of desire to killing a man with the pull of a trigger. He highlighted how everyone is implicated in such violence, broadcast daily on the television and pictured in newspapers and magazines, the very sources of the images Vostell used in Miss America. The iconic images Vostell selected from the archive of mass media had and continue to have much currency in the popular imagination for how they provoke ideas about female beauty and sex, and the murderous cruelty of the Vietnam War. In Miss America, fantasy and reality, desire and savagery, collide and bleed together: the supermodel’s legs frame the
prisoner’s shoulders; his blood splatters on her arm and eyes; the aqua cloud of smoke that preemptively emanates from the gun envelops his head and her torso; beauty pageants, sex, and desire coexist with massacres, murders, and violence, in real life and in the imagination. What is more, Vostell cropped out the body of General Nguyễn Ngọc Loan, so, in theory, the hand that holds the gun could belong to anyone, even to the viewer of the work of art. In his selection, manipulation, and use of individual fragments from the archive as evidenced in Miss America and so many of his other works, including the environments he installed in Fluxus Zug, Vostell hinders contemplation of the fragments on their own or in isolation from one another, and he frustrates attempts at trying to untangle the images and all that they represent from each other, and from the culture in which we live. For Vostell, the fragments in the archive are not only indexes of specific events and evidence of their occurrences, they are also all linked, imprinted, and interlaced with Eros and Thanatos, and interact with and are juxtaposed to disconnected fragments that result from mediated existence. Few artists achieved this level of analysis of the media, except Warhol, whose minimalist aesthetic can be said to have represented the Apollonian binary of Vostell’s Dionysian vision.

**Founding the Happening Archive Berlin**

Vostell understood the interconnection between control of the archive and its affective power. At least by 1958 he had begun to save copious records of his own art, and materials related to the milieu in which he worked, in which he produced happenings and Fluxus events, and in which related tendencies like
Pop and Nouveau Réalisme developed. As noted above, he clung to sketches, notes, photographs, newspaper clippings, magazines and journals, correspondence, brochures, broadsides, and ephemera. Vostell knew all too well the centrality and role that such material played in art history and in systematically documenting one’s own oeuvre, especially as related to ephemeral events such as happenings and Fluxus performances. As Fritz Emslander recently noted, Vostell wanted to secure a safe place for this documentation for the future, a place of reference where scholars, collectors, artists, and curators could study the fragments of time-based art, the very fragments that Vostell preserved in his personal archive.\(^\text{10}\)

The founding of the HAB in 1971 in West Berlin instigated a shift from its prior private existence in Cologne to its public role in West Berlin, a transition that was motivated in large part by Vostell’s realization that he was no longer a central figure in Cologne’s contemporary art scene. While controlling the contents of his archive, he judiciously turned it into a public service at the very moment when the broader art historical Archive of contemporary art began to overlook, exclude, and forget him. Happenings had faded already in the mid-1960s, giving birth and way to political events on the streets during this turbulent era. With the HAB, as with his museums and academies, Vostell had found another way to manage his art historical legacy. Fully aware of the consequences of this transformation, he designed a special rubber stamp and stationery for the HAB, which he used to identify materials housed within the HAB and to mark correspondence, respectively.

\(^{10}\) Fritz Emslander, “Nach dem Happening,” in \textit{Das Theater ist auf der Straße}, 86.
More importantly, the stamp and stationary established the HAB as an institution. To further legitimate its institutional status, Vostell wrote a history of the HAB (printed on HAB letterhead), which commences in 1962 with the publication of the first issue of Vostell’s dé-coll/age journal and the first Fluxus activities in Wiesbaden. In this text Vostell proclaims:

*dé-coll/age* was the first art magazine in the world that featured authentic material of the Fluxus and happenings movement. Since this time I have not only archived the first manifestos, scores, and publications, but also letters and newspapers clippings (ca. 3000 pieces) that are related to this theme.

The text further explains that he, Vostell, had served as an advisor to the young gallery owner René Block and tutored Hanns Sohm in building his archive. Like Vostell, Sohm began his archive in his home. In 1981, the Sohm Archive moved to the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, where it remains today. After establishing his own credentials as a publisher and collector of Fluxus and happenings, and as a mentor to others—a role that the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart does not acknowledge in its overview of the Sohm Archive¹¹—Vostell then returned to the history of the HAB. Not only did the HAB have its own room, he wrote, but its materials, which are especially devoted to the “pioneers of happenings,” were also being constantly and systematically analyzed and researched, and the publication of a complete happening bibliography was in progress. In other words, Vostell portrayed the HAB both as at the forefront of contemporary vanguard art documentation, and as a serious scholarly institution. The document closes with

¹¹ The webpage for the Sohm Archive on the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart’s website asserts, “A resident of Markgröningen, a town outside Stuttgart, the dentist Hanns Sohm (1921-1999) collected authentic documents of a counter-culture now often referred to as ‘Neo-Dada,’ which attained its broadest spectrum of activities in the 1960s and ’70s. As these were objects which no-one else bothered to keep, Sohm can be said to have preserved this culture almost single-handedly.” See http://www.staatsgalerie.de/archive_e/sohm.php, accessed October 1, 2013.
information about the HAB fully opening to the public on May 1, 1973. Anyone who was interested would be able to ask to see specific manuscripts, publications, or dossiers. No original works would be for sale, though, as “the HAB does not pursue commercial goals.”

Regarding this final point, it is my view that the primary reason Vostell did not want the HAB to sell original materials was because he knew that the greater potential of the HAB would be its impact on the construction of art historical narratives, for the more inclusive the archive, the greater the chance that it might become a highly respected source of historical information especially on happenings, Fluxus, and Vostell himself; and the more control he maintained over the collection in one location, the better he could ensure, at least theoretically, that the history written about him would be written as he imagined it should be. Vostell was not wrong. For example, the contents of the HAB influenced Jürgen Schilling’s dissertaton, published in 1978 as Aktionskunst: Identität von Kunst und Leben? Eine Dokumentation. As a doctoral student, Schilling helped to organize Vostell’s materials chronologically in binders and in cardboard boxes; and Shilling used the archive to inform his analysis. Furthermore, he dedicated more pages to Vostell than to any other individual artist. Along with many other scholars, Vostell’s gracious support of Kristine Stiles’ doctoral research, upon her first visit to the HAB in West Berlin in 1978, also shaped aspects of her subsequent writing on happenings, Fluxus, and performance, and particularly her role in making certain that Vostell was

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12 A copy of the history is in the SA/AA.
13 See Schilling, Aktionskunst.
included in the international exhibition *Out of Actions* (1998) from which he had been excluded prior to her being hired as a consultant and catalog writer for the show. Finally, together with the Sohm Archive, the HAB has also greatly influenced my own scholarship.

To further advance the reach of his archive and influence, in 1973 Vostell self-published “100 Letters,” comprising copies of one hundred letters to him between 1962 and 1973 from artists, collectors, theater directors, gallerists, curators, museum directors, a chemical-technical assistant, and a doctor (who worked in the Physiological Institute of the University in Bonn). I do not know how many or to whom copies of these letters were distributed, but the American collector of Dada, Surrealism, and Fluxus, Jean Brown, obtained a copy that can today be found in her papers at the Getty Special Research Institute. Collectively, the letters testify to Vostell’s position as a respected authority on happenings and especially on Fluxus. Notably, multiple letters from Dick Higgins demonstrate Higgins’s concern about the direction of Fluxus under Maciunas’ growing influence and, similarly, a letter from Allan Kaprow documents Kaprow’s worries about Maciunas’ slow publishing process. For example, in a letter dated September 16, 1963, Higgins proclaimed to Vostell: “We need you here more than Europe does. [...] Maciunas is changing, starting to like the social involvements of things. This means that he is more open to the kind of universal politics that is in Hansen, Higgins, and Decollage.” By 1966, Higgins had changed his mind about Maciunas, writing:

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14 Kristine Stiles in conversation with the author March 10, 2009.
I am very busy, not only with babies, but with my book, with Allan’s version (more Kaprow than Stockhausen) of Originale, in which I am performing. That is my way of telling the world that I was very wrong in supporting Maciunas. Naturally I feel a little sad, with Maciunas going to Russia so soon after the publication of (three weeks from now) of my ‘Open Letter to Maria Joudina,’ in which I attack Maciunas and Flynt as the fascists they are, and point out the terrible damage they are doing, both to the political left and to art by pretending to set them in opposition.

Higgins was referring to the protest that Henry Flynt organized against Karlheinz Stockhausen’s concert at the Second Annual Avant Garde Festival at Judson Hall in New York on September 8, 1964. Flynt accused Stockhausen of musical racism, as Stockhausen opposed jazz with its African American origins, and bluegrass, which Flynt played and is inspired by American roots music and music from Appalachia. The demonstrators carried signs with such slogans as “Action Against Cultural Imperialism” and “Fight the Snob Art of the Social Climbers!” Higgins’s correspondence with Vostell exposes his displeasure with their action and the way that it negatively reflected on Fluxus and on art more generally. In his letters, Kaprow was more concerned about practical matters. For instance, he wrote on February 8, 1963: “I am worried about George Maciunas. His Fluxus ‘encyclopedia’ is still not issued and he wants to do my book on Environments and Happenings. I am worried that if I give it to him, it also, will not see the light of day.”

Other letters from numerous artists are addressed to Vostell’s publishing efforts, and praise him for the quality of articles and the content in dé-coll/age, as well as indicate that artists were eager for their work to be featured in the journal. Hanns Sohm and Hermann Nitsch requested copies of and information

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about the journal in letters written on January 24, 1963, and January 1966, respectively, and in 1967, Ben exclaimed simply, on a postcard: “Your last Number of Decollage was great.” In a letter dated June 30, 1963, Al Hansen explained to Vostell that he was struggling with having to move and not getting support for his art in New York, but that he would be sending materials for inclusion in dé-collage: “I have pictures ordered, stats ordered. I have hand written several pieces. I am going to type them for you. You have been very patient dear friend.” A letter from Henry Flynt, dated December 24, 1962, begins: “I hear that you published my essay, ‘General Acognitive Culture’ or whatever I was calling it at the time. Why haven’t you told me—maybe I would like a few copies? What is the price in $$? Or perhaps you would give me one or a few copies?”  

Flynt goes on to ask whether Vostell would be interested in publishing a book of Flynt’s writings on “such subjects as Serious Culture; the notion of ‘newness’; confusions in structure art and pure mathematics, in ‘literary culture,’ and in ‘music’ and ‘art’ as a whole; pure recreation; and leisure time and boredom.” Even if Flynt was upset about not being notified of his essay’s inclusion in dé-collage, his letter reveals that he recognized Vostell as someone who was dedicated to making vanguard art and ideas available to a broader public through his publications.

What Vostell’s publication of the letters in 1973 suggests and was meant to prove was the growing hostility to Maciunas’s self-appointed role as the manager of Fluxus and the fact that many of Vostell’s most esteemed colleagues

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17 A copy of “100 Briefe” is in the JBP/GRI.
(Higgins, Kaprow, and Flynt in particular) considered Vostell a better, more capable, and dependable publisher of Fluxus material, if not a more reliable steward of Fluxus. The letters also convey clearly that Maciunas worked within too narrow and constricting a definition of Fluxus and struggled to bring his Fluxus publications to fruition, while Vostell was understood as someone in whom at least 100 significant figures, in and related to the art world, could trust as deserving of crafting the historical legacy of Fluxus in a more expansive network.

Regardless of Vostell’s effort to persuade anyone who would listen that he continued to remain integral to, and important for, the evolving character of Fluxus, as I have already mentioned, his influence as a vanguard artist, or even a member of Fluxus, dramatically waned in the 1970s. Two years after assembling the “100 Letters,” on December 13, 1975, he wrote to Sohm to complain that Dieter Honisch, the director of the Nationalgalerie in West Berlin, had belittled the place of happenings and Fluxus in the contemporary art museum:

What is he doing! He buys decoration and how expensive…. A Stella for 80,000 DM and pats us on the shoulder in that he speaks of the establishment of an archive…. What is that [in] 1975, after the Sohm and Vostell Archives! We belong in the collection at least next to Stella and not in the archive with photos for 2,50 DM.¹⁸

Vostell did not want the Nationalgalerie to establish its own archive. He wanted his archive, the HAB, to shape the history of happenings and Fluxus, and to be understood as proof of Vostell’s guidance in shaping the Sohm archive (then still in Sohm’s home). Vostell’s letter especially highlights his frustration with being marginalized by Honish at the Nationalgalerie, and his rightful indignation that

¹⁸ A copy of the letter is in the AA/SS.
Stella, an American minimalist painter, would be presented in the history of German art and in one of the important museum collections in Germany, as more significant and deserving of a place in its permanent collection than Vostell, some fifteen years after he, Vostell, had initiated happenings in Germany, and twelve years after he helped to launch the first Fluxus festival in the nation.

Deeply discouraged, in January 1980, Vostell began shipping the HAB to his home in Malpartida where, in that remote part of Spain, the archive entered a new phase. Vostell contracted a local retired carpenter to build 171 boxes made of wood and glass to hold the materials from the HAB that documented his own work, which he separated from the remaining materials—books, magazines, journals, newspaper clippings, invitations, advertisements, posters, and other happenings and Fluxus ephemera. These he placed in what he then called the Happening Fluxus Library. It was only with the archive’s move to Malpartida that Vostell made a distinction between the materials pertaining to his own projects and the other archival documents, a division that the MVM, which houses the entirety of Vostell’s archive, maintains today. The final wooden and glass “project boxes” were completed in 1981. Josefa Cortés Morillo has suggested that Vostell’s boxes must be considered art objects, as each is a unique container, fabricated by a craftsman, and displays preparatory documentation (sketches, reference materials, correspondence, receipts, etc.) and artifacts of Vostell’s work, selected by Vostell.19

It is impossible to overlook the fact that Vostell’s endeavor, and even the form of the wooden and glass boxes, relates directly to the, by then, renowned *Beuys Block*, the vitrines containing relics of Beuys’s work that Beuys himself installed in 1970 at the Hessischen Landesmuseum in Darmstadt. A key difference being that Vostell’s project boxes fit on a bookcase, and they require individuals to physically interact with the materials inside them in order to see what is there, whereas Beuys’s larger vitrines occupy multiple gallery rooms and, with glass on the sides and top, viewers are able to see the contents without being able to handle them. While Morillo is correct that Vostell’s wooden and glass boxes are works of art in and of themselves, they must also be understood as Vostell’s effort to institutionalize his archive for scholarly study by demonstrating its value both as a textual and documentary collection and as a visual archive comprised of visual remainders from his live art, supplements that achieve a near reliquary status contained as they are in the handmade boxes. Following Gregory Sholette’s observation of the archive, in Malpartida Vostell’s archive became the repository of “dark matter,” or that which is critical to the art world but which has been excluded from, or made invisible by, established art world institutions.\(^2^0\)

Since Vostell’s death in 1998, the HAB has become an even more institutionalized archive for use by scholars, as Vostell’s family has embarked on continually enlarging, cataloging, and conserving documentary materials for and in the archive. In 2005, the MVM secured funding from the government of

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Extremadura in order to make the archive an institution under the Museo Vostell Malpartida’s authority. With this shift, the archive again changed names, officially becoming the Archivo Happening Vostell, a title that makes transparent the imbricate associations between the archive, happenings, and Vostell, just as the name Museo Vostell Malpartida makes the connection between the museum, Malpartida, and Vostell apparent.

While the evolving history of the HAB, from Cologne to West Berlin and finally to Malpartida de Cáceres, where it has joined an ever-growing complex of exhibition spaces, art installations, library, and archive, is critical to the artist’s history, what will concern us here is the archive’s relationship to the period when Vostell began to work on *Fluxus Zug* and how the move of the HAB to Malpartida contributed to shaping the form, function, and contents of *Fluxus Zug*.

III. Rethinking and Theorizing the Archive

*Mobilizing the Archive*

In *Fluxus Zug*, Vostell marshaled the combined visual and informational force of the HAB, together with documents of contemporary western history, to create the train’s environments, imbuing the train/work-of-art with multiple layers of meaning, and with a multiple identity: simultaneously a mobile museum, ideal academy (with all its pedagogical functions), and archive. Let me step back for a moment to remind the reader that before Vostell fully ensconced

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21 See the impressive webpage on the Museo Vostell Malpartida at this website: http://www.museovostell.org/.
the HAB in Malpartida, he used *Fluxus Zug* to transport the contents of the archive from West Berlin, across East Germany, and back into West Germany, where it was opened to the general public in train stations, town squares, and parks throughout North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous state in Germany. The opportunity to reconstitute the archive as a travelling museum and academy, precisely at the moment when Vostell knew his legacy was being eclipsed, and/or turned into the metaphorical “dark matter,” cannot be understated, especially when one recalls that Vostell considered his archive his greatest work of art.

The most obvious place to begin introducing *Fluxus Zug* as an archive is with its first and last containers: the *Communication Car/Video Library* and *Vostell in NRW 1958-1981*. These container installations were comprised of photographs, slides, videos, and publications documenting Vostell’s art, saved in and withdrawn from, the HAB and the wooden and glass project boxes. Aside from the greatly enlarged photographs in the final container, Vostell did not alter the original archival records, but he did carefully select which materials would be featured in the containers in a continuing effort to control and shape his reception, this time through the vehicle of the multipurpose role of *Fluxus Zug*, which as noted earlier also must be read as a sign of changing cultural conceptions of the archive. In what follows, I draw on various theories of the archive to inform my analysis, but I do not discuss every environment in-depth. Instead, I contribute to the scholarly unraveling of the myriad associations and significations of *Fluxus Zug* and its environments, or what Vostell called “modern fairytales.”
Sources of Inspiration and Creation

Vostell assembled fragments of his work and world history in *Fluxus Zug*. For instance, the Mercedes-Benz in *The Winds* (container five) was Hitler’s preferred make of vehicle, and the type of car Vostell destroyed in his 1963 *No-9-Dé-coll/agen*. But after WWII, advertisers equated the Mercedes-Benz car with German engineering and luxury. The monitors embedded in the hood and top of the sedan screened sequences similar to Vostell’s own early experiments with television as an artistic medium, and signified, the metaphorical “static” of the drone of oppressive media communications. The coal that covered the floor symbolized the former major industry of NRW’s Ruhr region. The sharp decline of mining for “black gold” led to wide-scale unemployment in the early 1970s, the effects of which made a visible mark on the region’s physical, cultural, and economic landscape, just as the coal that covered the floor in *The Winds* tarnished people’s shoes as they walked through the container.

The female mannequin that Vostell placed on the coal-covered floor behind the car visually resembles the cover image of *Der Spiegel* (April 13, 1981), which I found in the AHV, and which depicts a close-up image of a woman being force-fed for a story about whether force-feeding should be considered torture of imprisoned members of the Red Army Fraction (RAF, also known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang) [Fig. 53]. In the magazine photograph, a leather strap is tightened around a woman’s head, presumably Gudrun Ensslin, who was found dead in her prison cell on October 18, 1977, hanging from a rope made from jail towels. The picture in *Der Spiegel*, however, shows her being force-fed
through a plastic tube that enters her left nostril. I have determined that the female mannequin in *The Winds* directly refers to this cover, to the infamous history of the RAF, and to Ensslin’s death, the cause of which remains widely disputed in Germany [Fig. 54]. Moreover, in “force-feeding” the mannequin the “static” on the TV, Vostell created a visual configuration that asked viewers to consider the mass media they were forced to consume. In 1981 West Germans had only three state-run television stations to choose from. Today there are numerous twenty-four-hour-per-day stations, but the question *The Winds* poses, about the quality, content, and scope of reporting, remains incredibly relevant; and the television in the car’s grill, broadcasting live images of visitors passing by the Mercedes-Benz, offered an alternative vision of how television and video could be manipulated to present different perspectives than those mediated by the state.

In *The Fires* (container eight), the installation featuring dead dogs, the arrangement and the positions of the dogs refers to an image Vostell cut from *Die Zeit* (October 26, 1979) of dogs found dead in a home in the Netherlands [Fig. 55]. The smoked paprika under the taxidermied dogs signifies Spain, Vostell’s adopted homeland. The environment’s subtitle, “My Combs are Made of Sugar,” also refers to Spain, as well as to the physical and emotional power of art, in that it recalls a line in a song sung by the renowned Seville flamenco singer, Pastora Pavon, about whom the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca wrote. Her performances exuded *duende*, he explained, a term that Lorca used to describe a deeply rooted, Dionysian-like, creative source of inspiration. *Duende* is also that

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22 I found this clipping in the AHV *Fluxus* *Zug* project boxes.
which imbues art with the power to elicit a somatic reaction and a heightened awareness of death in both the performer/artist and the audience. As a whole, the surrealistic scene of *The Fires*, with the dried red pepper pods hanging from the ceiling, blood red paprika covering the floor, and knives extending upwards from the dead dogs’ bodies, relates to the concept of *duende*, emphasizing the imbalanced relationship humans have to nature.

In addition to the sources already noted, a speech given in 1856 by Chief Seattle (of the Duwamisch Indians in the U.S. state of Washington) to President Franklin Pierce, in response to the president’s offer to purchase Indian land, may have provided additional inspiration for the underlying theme of *The Fires*. Chief Seattle’s speech is about the Duwamisch belief in the interconnection between humans, animals, and the earth as “our mother.” A photocopy of the speech, as it appeared in *Radius*, a quarterly journal of the Evangelical Professional Association (*Evangelischen Akademikerschaft*) in Germany (1976), is filed with the *Fluxus Zug* materials in the AHV. The incongruity of these source materials, which inspired the imagery and underlying subject of *The Fires*, calls attention to the vast array of artifacts that are saved in the Archive and that Vostell culled through; the role that chance plays in bringing certain materials to one’s attention; and the part the artist performs as an intermediary and creator, forging associations across diverse material remains, philosophies, and beliefs in works of art.

Moving to *The Clouds* (container seven), I found a small black-and-white picture in the AHV that Vostell cut from the catalog for the Zurich *Third World Exhibition of Photography* (1973), which throws light on the meaning of this
installation. It depicts a police investigator, who is photographing a body in a New York morgue [Fig. 56].\textsuperscript{23} The investigator occupies the photograph’s left foreground, his large camera pointed down at an angle towards an individual lying on a tray that has been pulled out from the refrigerated morgue unit. A white sheet is draped over the body from the person’s shoulders past his/her feet, but the person’s face remains uncovered. Multiple open trays with bodies covered by white sheets are visible in the middle ground and background. This photograph must be identified as a source image for Vostell’s organization of the “bodies” in *The Clouds*, pulled out on their metal slabs and covered by lead sheets.

Let me emphasize that in the case of all of the photographs I discovered in the AHV, the specificity of the images seems not to have been the primary concern for Vostell. Rather, as I discussed above with his *Miss America* collage, Vostell chose significant photographs from thousands of mass media images as points of reference for the construction of his environments in order to create an immediately startling effect, and a hauntingly associative affect, in viewers’ minds. Moreover, he chose images that conjured death, torture, mayhem, and destruction, the very acts that make up the traumatic voids of history and thus constitute the archive’s absences. Rather than being didactic, Vostell left visitors

\textsuperscript{23} A caption identifies the photographer as Perry Kretz. Born in Cologne in 1933, Kretz immigrated to the U.S. in 1950, where he became involved with a Puerto Rican street gang, worked as a “runner” for the Cosa-Nostra Family until he joined the U.S. military to escape the mob, and finally began working as a police photographer for the New York Identification Unit in 1966. He returned to West Germany in 1969, and began what became a thirty-five-year post as a photojournalist for the magazine *Stern*. See Perry Kretz, *Augen auf und durch: Mein Leben als Kriegsreporter* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 2010). It is difficult to say whether Vostell knew Kretz personally, but it is likely that Vostell saw many of the photographs Kretz took for *Stern*, which ranged from the mafia and gangs in the U.S. to the Vietnam War, and from anti-Franco demonstrations just prior to Franco’s death to homeless children in Bogota.
to arrive at their own associations, while simultaneously remembering actual
events and how such disparate archival references trouble the nature of memory,
the construction of history, and, with it, its archive. In 2004, Hal Foster
considered how contemporary artists use the archive as a mode of practice or
point of reference in what he called the “archival impulse.” According to Foster,
“archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced,
physically present,” by keeping the content of archival art indeterminate and
open to other permutations. Theorized as a place of endless creation, Fluxus Zug
contributes to the archive as a site of what Foster, following Foucault’s
archaeological analogy for the retrieval of knowledge, calls “excavation and
construction.”

That Vostell understood the power of archival images is powerfully
evincd in *The Angels* (container two), the series of eight large paintings that
depict angels copulating with humans, and that have plastic rib steaks attached
to their surfaces. Vostell brought together manifold leitmotifs and allusions in
these paintings. Theological histories of angels, or “angelology,” date the concept
of a heavenly messenger at least to Zoroastrianism, which depicted winged
divinities, yazatas, or angels, traceable to the earliest Zoroastrian sacred book, the
*Avesta*. Defined as supernatural beings in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, angels
mediate between God and mortals in the monotheistic Abrahamic religions.
Vostell titled each of his eight canvases after a different type of angel, often
employing the original Greek terms used by the Christian Neoplatonist, Pseudo-

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25 Ibid., 4.
26 Ibid., 22.
Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. late 5th to early 6th centuries AD), in *On the Celestial Hierarchy*. Vostell identified the paintings as Cherubim, Archangelo, Seraphim, Dynameis [Virtues], Archaí [Principalities], Kyriotetes [Dominions], Angeloi [angels], and Exousiai [Powers]. Not only are these types of angels described in various books of the Bible, but Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian-born founder of Anthroposophy, an esoteric spiritual philosophy that he developed out of Theosophy, also considered these angels, and lectured about how guardian angels could intervene in everyday life.27

As much as *The Angels* referred to the history of angels, the paintings are equally about Eros and Thanatos. As psychologist Wilhelm Salber posited in his contribution to the *Fluxus Zug* catalog, the paintings underscore the perpetual battle between libido and death, an existential conflict that Vostell became particularly interested in while reading the writings of Freud, Jung, and Lacan, among others, and as he considered the role of sex, violence, and death in the photographic archive of the *Neue Illustrierte* for which, as I mentioned, he worked as a young man. The erotic human/angels’ acts depicted in the paintings may also have been Vostell’s response to the images reproduced in the catalog *Eros in Pompeii: The Secret Rooms of the National Museum of Naples* (1975), a copy of which Vostell had in his possession in 1975, as a photograph taken of Vostell with the

27 See Rudolf Steiner, *Guardian Angels: Connecting with our Spiritual Guides and Helpers*, compiled by Margaret Jonas and translated by Pauline Wehrle (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2000). Although I found no documentation related to Steiner in Vostell’s archive—an archive always already marked by absence—it should not be inferred that Vostell was unfamiliar with Steiner’s ideas, especially as Steiner was well-known to have inspired Beuys’s concepts about art.
publication reveals.\textsuperscript{28} The rough, graphic quality of Vostell’s paintings, in particular, mimics the image opposite the catalog’s title page. In addition, specific poses of some of the figures in Vostell’s paintings emulate those of other examples of erotic imagery from ancient Greece that are reproduced in the \textit{Fluxus Zug} catalog with Salber’s essay\textsuperscript{29} [Figs. 57-58].

While angels conjure the past and religion, the plastic rib steaks attached to the angel paintings allude to Francis Bacon’s \textit{Head Surrounded by Sides of Beef (Study after Velazquez)} (1954), which, in turn, refers to Rembrandt’s \textit{Carcass of Beef} (1657) and to Chaim Soutine’s \textit{Carcass of Beef} (1925). In terms of happenings and performance, the presence of meat and bodies also calls to mind Hermann Nitsch’s use of animal carcasses in the “Orgies Mysteries Theater,” begun in 1961, and to Carolee Schneemann’s use of raw fish, chickens, and sausages in \textit{Meat Joy} (1964), first realized at the Festival of Free Expression in Paris, organized by Lebel. That Vostell used plastic steaks instead of real meat also puts the paintings in dialogue with Pop artist Claes Oldenburg, who created sculptures of food items, first out of plaster and enamel for \textit{The Store}, an installation in a storefront on Manhattan’s Lower East Side begun in 1961, and later out of vinyl. These artists and imagery were foremost in Vostell’s milieu and he clearly maintained a conversation with their symbols and materials in his angel paintings covered in imitation meat.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} The photograph, reproduced in the catalog \textit{Vostell V40: 10 Happening Concepts 1954-1973} (Milan: Mult(h)ipla, 1976), shows Vostell on the phone at his desk, a copy of the book clearly visible in the foreground.

\textsuperscript{29} Photocopies of these were also filed in \textit{Fluxus Zug} project boxes in the AHV.

\textsuperscript{30} See Foucault, \textit{The Archaeology of Knowledge}. 254
Furthermore, meat is equivalent to flesh, which begs the question of whose flesh is, metaphorically, in the angel paintings. Is it the dead flesh of the millions massacred in genocides? Or of soldiers and civilians who died during war? Perhaps the flesh is a more general reference to all human beings, the materiality of our bodies presented as flesh superimposed on the themes of Eros and Thanatos that undergird humanity. More questions are provoked than are answered.

Returning to elements of Eros and Thanatos in the paintings, or “frozen happenings,” as Vostell called them, I draw on Dagmar Herzog’s Sex after Fascism (2005), which explores how, in the aftermath of WWII, Germans negotiated the memory and legacy of Nazism and the Holocaust through their evolving interpretations of Nazism’s sexual politics. Herzog argues:

> Ultimately, and despite the contrary impulses, Nazism perpetuated and intensified certain aspects of the sexually liberalizing tendencies underway since the early twentieth century, even as it sought to harness those liberalizations—and the growing popular preoccupation with sex—to a savagely racist, elitist, and homophobic agenda. This was the distinctive innovation of Nazi sexual politics. The goal was not so much to suppress sexuality. Rather the aim was to reinvent it as the privilege of nondisabled, heterosexual “Aryans” (all the while claiming to be “cleaning up” sexual morality in Germany and overcoming the “Jewish” legacy). What needs to be confronted … is that this advocacy of sexual expression coexisted with virulent racism and mass murder.31

Sexual liberalism was condemned in the 1950s as contributing to fascist atrocities, and sexual conservatism became a means of mastering Holocaust guilt and shame. Memories of Nazism’s encouragement of pre- and extramarital heterosexuality were pushed aside and forgotten. This loss of knowledge,

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31 Dagmar Herzog, Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5. Regarding the “Jewish” legacy,” Herzog explains that, in the post-WWI Weimar Republic era, Jews were identified with sexual liberty.
combined with theories equating sexual repression with brutality that emerged in the 1960s, provoked many of the 1968 generation to fight for free sexuality, precisely, in their minds, to purge German society of its Nazi past. The 1980s saw a growing ambivalence about the sexual revolution, and an intensified politicization of sexuality influenced by gay, lesbian, and feminist activism, which may have shaped Vostell’s imagery, for his angels paintings, subtitled “Or my Sweet Feast for the Eyes,” appear as neither a celebration nor condemnation of sex, and throughout his life, Vostell continued to explore the deeply rooted social and cultural associations of sex and violence.

Finally, in the paintings, some of the angels and humans are depicted wearing gasmasks, an object that inevitably conjures death; and, in the German context, immediately recalls the soldier and civilian gas masks from the World Wars, as well as the “Civilian Protection Primer” (Zivilschutzfibel), a pamphlet mailed to every West German household in 1964 by West Germany’s Federal Agency for the Protection of the Civilian Population. It informed people about how to protect themselves against the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare, and includes photographs of gas masks, atomic explosions, wounded limbs, bunker life, and more. When asked about the meaning of the angel paintings, art historian Wolfgang Becker’s response was surprising. Born in 1936, he recalled WWII and Nazi atrocities, but his more immediate, and vivid, recollection was of gas masks used in Israel around the time Fluxus Zug was

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32 Richard Langston discusses this pamphlet in relation to Vostell’s happening In Ulm, um Ulm und um Ulm herum (1964) in Visions of Violence, 148-50.
realized, a period of Israel’s intense fear of an attack by Iran and Syria.\textsuperscript{33} Thus, in summation, \textit{The Angels} reveal that Vostell used the archive as a source of inspiration, a site of continuous creation, a vehicle for visualizing the precarious balance of order and disorder, calm and chaos, and memory and forgetting, all represented in the mute presence of aesthetic environments and assembled and painted objects.\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{A Sign of Loss}

In 1936, Walter Benjamin reflected in an essay entitled “The Storyteller” on how remembering and forgetting depend not on what the dead leave behind but on what the living decide to recall.\textsuperscript{35} This remark brings to mind, especially, the lead-covered environment of \textit{The Clouds} (container seven) with its simultaneous evocation of a hospital triage room, a morgue, and a collective coffin, crowded with bodies partially visible through small holes in the lead, all banging against their encasements as if alive and struggling to be free, heard, remembered, but with voices silenced by the weight of the lead sheets. Nonetheless, the cast ears that Vostell installed protruding from the walls, suggested that the walls knew all, for as Vostell stated while he was filmed standing inside the container: “Die Wände haben Ohren” (The walls have ears).\textsuperscript{36}

While the listening walls confirmed the mute voices of death, they were also a

\textsuperscript{33} Wolfgang Becker was then director of the Ludwig Forum for International Art in Aachen and the primary contact for \textsl{Fluxus Zug’s} stop in Aachen. Wolfgang Becker, letter to the author, August 26, 2010.

\textsuperscript{34} Sven Spieker, \textit{The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy} (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), xiii.


reference to espionage, spying, and the Cold War, where what mattered was not so much what the dead had said, done, or experienced but what the living declared the dead to have said, done, or experienced. The ears in *The Clouds* also call attention to how what has been said and heard is altered, forgotten, and lost over time.

As Sue Breakwell, following Derrida’s study of the archive, underscored in 2008, “the traces in the archive record only what is written and processed, not what is said and thought.” To this, Sven Spieker, in his 2008 study of the archive, art, and bureaucracy, adds, “[A]rchives do not record experience so much as its absence; they mark the point where an experience is missing from its proper place, and what is returned to us in an archive may well be something we never possessed in the first place.” Or, in the originating words of Derrida, “[T]he archive takes place at the place of original and structural breakdown of the said memory.” More recently, Glen Harcourt has theorized that the archive refers to “an object or process modeled by memory” that is always already in a form of “degradation and fragmentation modeled by forgetting.” The simultaneity of memory and forgetting that these writers all address is the fracture embodied by and in the archive. But precisely at such points of discontinuity, it is possible to enter the archive to leverage an interpretation of its contents and alter its implied trajectory. Wolf Vostell was a master of this tactic;

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38 Spieker, *The Big Archive*, 3.
he was a tactician of images and historical contexts reinterpreted through the objects, installations, and actions of art.

Also writing on the archive, Charles Merewether observed, “[I]t is in the spheres of art and cultural production that some of the most searching questions have been asked concerning what constitutes an archive and what authority it holds in relation to its subject.”41 Derrida counters with: “The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come. Perhaps.”42 Fluxus Zug’s third container, *The Rivers* could be said to bear out the realization of this “perhaps” in visualizing how Vostell interpreted the legacy of the deaths of millions at the hands of the Third Reich. While *The Clouds* conjured traumatic voids in a space, ironically, crowded with bodies, *The Rivers* captured the claustrophobia and panic of corridors that lead to death in the Holocaust with an empty passageway, lined with doorbell buttons and lit by blue light bulbs. Trying to describe his experience of container three’s dark, narrow corridor, Wolfgang Becker remembered being unable to bring himself to push its many doorbell buttons, for fear of triggering the distorted, fragmented sounds of *Stabat Mater*. For the fragments of the hymn reminded him of human screams.43 Like Vostell, Becker belongs to the generation of “war children” (*Kriegskinder*), and he interpreted *Fluxus Zug* in general as grieving German history and engaged in mourning (*Trauerarbeit*) its tragic mistakes.

*The Rivers* alludes to the darkest aspects of Nazi policy and the mass transports of Jews and unwanted “others” to the work and death camps. If

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43 Becker, letter to the author, August 26, 2010.
Berganza’s voice could be felt to reiterate human cries—the cries of the millions of victims transported on trains to their death—then the act of “pushing the doorbell buttons,” which produced the impression of screams, can be argued to have cast viewers into the simultaneous role of perpetrators and witnesses to what psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Dori Laub has described as the “event without a witness.” Laub writes that, “Not only, in effect, did the Nazis try to exterminate the physical witnesses of their crime; but the inherently incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims.” Vostell insidiously tricked participants into becoming perpetrators such that “pushing the bell” required them to experience, even if in small measure, a catastrophe in humanity. As historian Omer Bartov has observed, such a “crisis … casts doubt on the very definition of identity, on what it means to know who you are, where you come from, what you are capable or incapable of doing, experiencing or imagining…. It is a collective crisis for those of us aware of our responsibility for humanity.”

It was, perhaps, the cumulative experience of *Fluxus Zug* that brought viewers to the brink of such a confrontation, and then released them into the history of the visual archive presented in the last container car.

Physically constrained in their movements by the environments’ configurations and forced to proceed through the train from start to finish, from

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45 Ibid.

the first container to the last, visitors to and on *Fluxus Zug* boarded voluntarily in 1981 perhaps even expecting to be confronted with the memory of the infamy of German trains. But what they could not have expected were the absences delivered by *The Rivers* and the other environments. The event with no witnesses and the violence and death that plague human existence leave holes in the archive. Vostell reconfigured these holes in the unexpected juxtapositions of imagery and concepts that enabled him to weld history together in new visual configurations; to open interpretations out to the continuities of otherwise apparently disconnected histories; and to turn virtual perpetrators into actual witnesses. When dismantled five months later, *Fluxus Zug*—the temporary, museum/academy/archive—also left a void in the art historical archive. Through *Fluxus Zug*, Vostell called attention to how the knowledge constructed by a museum, academy, and archive is partial, especially in the context of time-based art. By instigating a dialogue about art, memory, and forgetting, Vostell intended *Fluxus Zug* to change the public’s perception and worldview, becoming a pedagogical tool for remembrance, reconciliation, and recovery. As he stated in 1970:

> I would like to arouse sensitivity to new forms and to action in people and focus their consciousness on these chaotic conditions [of the past and present]. With my work I would like to leave barbs behind in their consciousness so that they would judge the chaotic conditions more severely and in that way would be able to act against them.\(^{47}\)

Vostell’s “barbs” also poked holes in a viewer’s consciousness and conscience: one hole to remember and mourn the barbed-wire fences of the camps; another

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to grieve Germany’s separation; a third hole to recall and lament the barbs on the
crown of thorns that was used as an instrument of torture and mockery; and a
fourth hole to memorialize absence and invoke presence. Vostell made this last
hole in the late 1960s, when he assumed the appearance of a Hasid, a look he
maintained for the rest of his life in a performative, yet simultaneously lived,
identity as a German/Jew, an identity that is tied to the German train system and
that transformed Vostell into the personification of the lacunae of the archive and
its “perhaps.”

Performing / Embodying the Archive

Vostell accompanied the movements of Fluxus Zug by car in order to hold
press conferences and discussions with the public about the work in the different
towns. Despite his relative fame, when Fluxus Zug reached Leverkusen, Vostell’s
hometown, a former neighbor and classmate of the artist expressed surprise,
stating: “If it had been said that the fat Schäfer was coming to Leverkusen, all of
his acquaintances would have come.”48 Wolfgang Schäfer was Vostell’s birth
name, but he changed his name in the mid-1950s, according to one narrative,
adopting the pseudonym Wolf Vostell around 1954 when he decided to become
an artist. Isolde, his younger sister, apparently had told him that the name
Schäfer was too common, and suggested their mother’s maiden name, Vostell, as
unique and more fitting for an aspiring artist. Although Vostell later wrote that

48 Marie-Anne Scholaut, “Den dicken Schäfer kennt hier jeder,” Rheinische Post, September 5,
1981. LCA.
he did not officially change his name until October 14, 1957, he had already established his artistic identity with the name Vostell, a claim that the signature and date on one of his earliest extant paintings supports: “Vostell, 1953.”

Photographs of Vostell as a student in the 1950s show him dressed in a button-down shirt, tie, jacket, scarf, and a stylish fedora. In the early to mid-1960s, by contrast, he shaved his hair, grew muttonchops, and dressed more casually, often in jeans and a T-shirt. By the late 1960s he was captured on film occasionally wearing a black fedora reminiscent of those typically worn by Lubavitscher Jews, and by the 1970s he also began wearing what appeared to be a kippah rimmed with fur, but what was really a cap that his wife, Mercedes, had knit per his specifications [Figs. 59-61]. He also grew long, curled side-locks, and often wore a white button-down shirt, black pants, and a black coat. In short, Vostell affected the appearance of an Hasidic Jew until his death in 1998. He did not, however, practice Judaism, or any other religion, and he was not raised as a Jew. The German-born artist’s carefully constructed Jewish appearance became his artistic persona. Jean-Jacques Lebel told me that Vostell’s dress “attract[ed] lots of hostility,” and that, “it wasn’t pleasant to walk down the street in Berlin in his company because of the very nasty hateful reactions of the passersby.”

Vostell performed his identity as a provocative reminder of the millions turned to ash, and he did so at a particularly volatile moment in Germany’s

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50 The painting depicts Christ crucified to a burning fighter plane. It is reproduced in Sorin, Wolf Vostell: Mon Art est la Résistance Éternelle à la Mort.
history. West Germany was rent asunder in the 1960s as youths confronted their parents about the Nazi regime, and as members of the New Left and student movements increasingly ascribed the label of fascism to contemporary politics and conservative social policies. After the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel defeated Arab armies and occupied Palestinian territory, and the Emergency Laws of May 1968, which gave the West German state the power to squash civil unrest, many West German leftists began associating fascism with Israel and with the Federal Republic. Some of the New Left also equated their own sense of victimization at the hands of the Federal Republic with that of the Jews during the Third Reich; the most radical wore the checked Palestinian scarf to show their sympathy with what they perceived to be Palestinian victims of Israeli aggression. While Vostell sympathized with protests against oppression, his “Jewish” dress served as a visible reminder of the actual Jewish victims of the Holocaust and lingering anti-Semitism at a moment when the New Left was conflating contemporary West German and Israeli politics with Nazism and fascism. At the same time, Vostell’s persona may also be understood as a sign of the difficult endeavor of remembering and of the impossibility of ever fully knowing the past. Then again, it may have had something to do with Vostell’s own feelings of guilt.

Vostell was born just months before Hitler seized power. He told Kristine Stiles in 1982 that he spent WWII in Czechoslovakia with his family “in hiding in a small village.” They went east out of fear because “half of my family is Jewish
but not in recent history..."\textsuperscript{52} Certainly, given the massive destruction of the war, Vostell’s childhood fear was warranted, even though there is no evidence that his family was persecuted. Vostell discussed little about his wartime experiences. When he did, he generally repeated one of two stories. First: As a schoolboy, he witnessed an air raid—the bombs falling like “a swarm of birds” while he hid under a tree. He later declared this experience to be his “first happening.” Second: After hearing an explosion, Vostell and his mother found the scattered wreckage of a plane crash in the woods. He saw the destroyed plane, as well as “the pilot’s body ripped apart, his brain hanging in a tree.” This grisly scene later influenced the form of his 1973 environment, \textit{Mania}, which comprises a fallen pine tree with a brain attached to its trunk and hair attached to its branches. Animal brains in glass jars surrounded the tree. When it was installed at the Kunstverein Hannover for the exhibition “Art for Political Fight,” Vostell instructed visitors to take a jar with a brain in it and drive their car through Hannover, following the statistical curve related to “conscientious objection,” which Vostell had transferred onto a map of the city. In these ways, Vostell’s childhood experiences of war are foundational in his art.

I discovered a third story while researching \textit{Fluxus Zug} that provokes many questions and brings me back to my earlier contention that the train is key to understanding Vostell’s performative German/Jewish persona. In an article published in \textit{Zeit Magazine} (September 4, 1981), Vostell stated that his father worked as a railroad guard (\textit{Eisenbahnschaffner}). While other sources mention that

\textsuperscript{52} Kristine Stiles, Typescript “Wolf Vostell in conversation with Kristine Stiles, Malpartida de Cáceres,” August 27, 1982. AHV.
he worked for the railways, none include the remainder of Vostell’s account: “In the war,” he explained, “[my] father was constantly underway with trains. He often took us along and brought the family out of the dangerous zones. We were brought here and there the entire time. I saw a lot of horrible things as a child.”

I have been unable to determine when the railways hired Vostell’s father or what his initial duties were. My inquiries with the Bundesbahn archives turned up no information, but the archives of the city of Leverkusen reported that in 1925 Josef Hubert Schäfer (Vostell’s father) registered as a clerk (Schreiber), and in 1970 he registered as working for the Federal Railways as a Bundesbahnobersekretär, an office-based position.

These holes in the archive and Vostell’s general silence throughout his life about his father’s wartime activities and his own wartime experiences encourages speculation that Vostell may have hidden a secret regarding his father’s relationship to the Nazi Reichsbahn, which supported the deployment of the army, which sustained industry and the civilian population, and which transported millions to their death. Vostell’s sensitivity to the relationship between Germans, Jews, and trains, his abandonment of his birth name Schäfer, his adoption of his mother’s maiden name, and his “Jewish” costume all suggest the artist’s effort to dissociate himself from the fatherland and the legacy of the German railways, all the while deploying his constructed identity as a memorial to the Holocaust and as an embodied performance that transmitted social

knowledge and memories about the crimes of the fatherland. Vostell called attention to what Todd Presner, in Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains (2007), explained is the inextricable interconnection between modernity, Germans, and Jews.

Vostell’s widow told me that her husband had traced the lineage of the name Vostell to Sephardic origins. My own extensive searches into archival materials have yielded no concrete proof that this is accurate. Again, there is an absence in the archive, but according to Vostell, his mother’s maiden name provided a personal link to Jewish roots, specifically to the Sephardim expelled from Spain in 1492, the land where Vostell chose to leave his lasting mark as an artist by founding the Museo Vostell Malpartida and moving his archive there. As such, Wolf Vostell embodied both perpetrator and victim, German and Jew, not just in dress, but also in ancestry. With no archival material to prove this ancestry, Vostell chose to embody it. Wearing his Anzug (outfit of clothing or costume) while creating Fluxus Zug as an Auszug (exodus) through the past toward the future, Vostell set about unmooring fragments of the Archive from their latency, presenting the public with immediately recognizable images and references, both in his Fluxus Zug environments and in his performed identity. Alienated from their expected contexts and juxtaposed in surprising and strange

54 Here I draw on Diana Taylor’s concept of the repertoire, which she distinguishes from the archive, while asserting that the archive and repertoire exist in tandem and work alongside other modes of knowledge transmission. Taylor associates the archive and archival knowledge to the material artifacts of a culture that are saved in a repository and used for study. The repertoire, in contrast, is embodied memory, “all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge.” Diana Taylor, The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

55 Author’s interview with Mercedes Vostell, Malpartida de Cáceres, May 30, 2008.
ways, Vostell animated the Archive, its presences and absences, untangling conceptual links in visual space to events in time across cultures.
Conclusion

*Fluxus Zug* was a museum, academy, and archive, as well as a work of art. As I argued in Chapter 1, it must be seen as developing out of Vostell’s experimental museum designs from the 1960s and 1970s, and as the dynamic counterpoint to the Museo Vostell Malpartida, which transformed from Vostell’s idea for a fleeting, open-air museum meant to dissolve into the landscape, into an increasingly permanent institution as Vostell’s reputation as a vanguard artist began to wane by the 1970s. Chapter 2 explored how *Fluxus Zug* also grew out of the interdisciplinary collaborations that Vostell established in the 1960s as laboratories for developing new knowledge and, more specifically, out of his concept for an ideal academy, which he conceived in 1969 as a year-long happening that would involve a radical, diverse collective of advisors traveling throughout the country, interacting with the public in person and over the television and radio to challenge the status quo and call attention to intermedia’s pedagogical potential. Chapter 3 focused on Vostell’s ideal academy drawing, which highlights his ability to conjure manifold references, especially to Germany’s history and present, as well as to art history and contemporary art, through seemingly simple instructions for learning events that call attention to the dé-coll/age of life itself. Finally, Chapter 4 theorized that *Fluxus Zug* equally evolved out of Vostell’s interest in, interaction with, and creation of archives. I have argued that *Fluxus Zug* was an iteration of the Happening Archive Berlin that drew attention to the nature of the archive, the knowledge that can be
constructed by juxtaposing the fragments it preserves, and the questions that are raised by the absences the archive registers.

As an artwork/institution, *Fluxus Zug* was a rebuff to established institutions that had rejected Vostell in favor of Beuys and his students, Maciunas’s version of Fluxus, and Stella’s minimalist canvases touted by Dieter Honisch at West Berlin’s Nationalgalerie. The artwork/alternative institution was also intended to be a spectacular, celebratory event that reintroduced Vostell to a broad audience, as the significant artist that he understood himself to be. Tens of thousands of people visited *Fluxus Zug*, attesting to the successful collaboration between the artist, industry, the railways, and different cities in and the state of NRW. Nonetheless, *Fluxus Zug* was Vostell’s last hurrah before he retreated to Malpartida de Cáceres, even moving his “greatest work of art,” the HAB, from West Berlin to that remote part of Spain. *Fluxus Zug* was disassembled and forgotten. Yet, its concept and spirit remain today.

The affect and legacy of Vostell’s ideas for merging art and the academy, as well as his interest in building and exhibiting archives, are visible in the Mobile Academy that Hannah Hurtzig initiated in Bochum, Germany in 1999. The “temporary institution frequently chang[es] its location. … [and] combines interdisciplinary courses with fieldwork, theory and activism.”¹ In the 2000s, Hurtzig’s Mobile Academy also began preserving sound and video documentation of its collaborative projects on its website as archives, and creating touring installations of its archives. Another example where *Fluxus Zug*’s affect resonated was in the 2010 MELEZ Festival Train, which featured

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thematic installations and performances in its five train cars. The train traveled between cities in NRW’s Ruhr region to celebrate the region being named European Capital of Culture. Although Vostell was from NRW and *Fluxus Zug* stopped in Bochum and numerous other cities in the Ruhr that organized local cultural activities in conjunction with *Fluxus Zug*, neither the Mobile Academy nor the MELEZ Festival Train credit Vostell or *Fluxus Zug* as either a precursor or influence.

Then there is the painter Eric Fischl’s 2012 project, *America: Now and Here*, described on its website as “a cross-country journey of trucks filled with art” that made its way throughout post-9/11 America in order to reestablish idealism about art, and to “generate a national conversation through creative engagement and expression.” This traveling exhibition of visual art, poetry, theater, film, and music, brought work by 150 prominent American artists, such as Chuck Close, Jeff Koons, and Cindy Sherman, as well as poets like Billy Collins and Charles Bernstine, and musicians Joan Baez, Sting, and Philip Glass to towns and cities across the United States. Most recently, Doug Aitken realized *Station to Station*, a nine-car train that transported artists, musicians, writers, photographers, designers, and others from New York City to San Francisco, stopping in seven cities in between, from September 6 to September 28, 2013. Aitken referred to the work as a “nomadic happening” that “connected leading figures and

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2 America: Now and Here, http://americanowandhere.org/about/.
4 *Station to Station* stopped in New York City, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Santa Fe/Lamy, Winslow, Barstow, Los Angeles, and Oakland/San Francisco.
underground creators from the worlds of art, music, food, literature, and film for a series of cultural interventions and site-specific happenings. The train, designed as a moving, kinetic light sculpture, broadcasted unique content and experiences to a global audience.” In moving an eclectic, interdisciplinary collective across the U.S. by train (or by truck, in the case of America: Now and Here), having it stop in different cities to instigate a variety of creative events with the public, and framing the entire project as a “nomadic happening,” Station to Station (and America: Now and Here) realized elements of both Vostell’s 1969 model for an ideal academy and Fluxus Zug, but, although Aitken screened Vostell’s film, Sun in Your Head (1963), he made no mention of Vostell, Fluxus Zug, or the ideal academy on the project’s website; neither did Fischl. As critic Andrew Beradini wrote in 2011, Aitken “often borrows Allan Kaprow’s term ‘Happening’ for [his] performances, and in conversation he handily invokes Fluxus as a precedent.” Aitken and Fischl are both art school trained artists who most likely are familiar with Vostell, as must be Hannah Hurtzig and the organizers of the MELEZ Festival Train. Whether or not they are, the question still arises, given that the spirit of Vostell’s work is evident in all of these similar projects: Why is Vostell not mentioned? Why, after the peak of happenings, the art form that he, Vostell, pioneered and with which he is primarily associated, has his legacy failed to capture the public’s attention?

I have argued that Vostell’s relative obscurity is the result of several factors. Although he created works in conversation with the aims of the first

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6 See the project’s website: http://stationtostation.com/about.
generation of artists associated with institutional critique, Vostell has been omitted from its histories, following the publication of the Museum in Motion? catalog in 1979 and particularly after Benjamin Buchloh’s influential 1990 essay, “Conceptual Art 1962-1969.” While Vostell taught through his art and established collaborative platforms that integrated the arts and sciences, he is rarely discussed as an artist-educator because he was never employed full-time as a teacher. Moreover, despite building an extensive archive dedicated to happenings, Fluxus, and related tendencies, which reveals his centrality to experimental art, Vostell is overlooked by most artists and art historians. It is impossible to name as the cause of this neglect his move to rural Spain, even if it may be one of the reasons. Indeed, one must be dedicated to make the trek to the Museo Vostell Malpartida, a journey that this micro-historical study demonstrates is necessary to undertake in order to fully grapple with Vostell’s iconography and his rich but dispersed sources. In his lifetime Vostell demanded much from his public and he continues to do so to this day. While ignored by the contemporary art world in the 1980s, he was welcomed and celebrated in Malpartida where he left the most complete record of his work and legacy.

Friedrich Wolfram (“Fritz”) Heubach, who learned about contemporary experimental art from Vostell, who participated with Vostell in various works of art and artist-protests, who provided Vostell a public forum in 1969 to articulate his vision of the ideal academy as a happening, and who circulated his ideas about the history of Fluxus, wrote in 2004:

No matter how one judges his art, Vostell undeniably deserves credit for his tireless initiative in bringing the most diverse artists into contact with each other, and for frequently giving their work its first public airing (e.g.,
as editor of the journal *décol-lage* [sic] and initiator of various festivals), and by so doing he contributed quite essentially to the special place which current activities in art then had in Cologne.⁸

In 2003, Daniel Birnbaum wrote something similar:

No matter what you think of Wolf Vostell as an artist, he played a key role in bringing people from different disciplines together. Every Thursday night he would invite people like Beuys and Tomas Schmit to his house. He also published *Dé-coll/age*, a fantastic magazine. In a way, Fritz Heubach picked up from *Dé-coll/age* with his magazine *Interfunktionen*; it’s amazing how many important essays and artists [Vostell] introduced.⁹

Both Heubach and Birnbaum open their comments with phrases that suggest that the quality of Vostell’s art may have been at stake in the evaluation of his legacy; and both address Vostell’s ability to foster relationships and praise his skills as a graphic designer, combined with his drive to facilitate and disseminate experimental art through festivals and publications. For Heubach and Birnbaum, Vostell’s work behind the scenes made Vostell important. Not his art. But this is too easy and it is too soon to dismiss the quality and value of Vostell’s art, which made a powerful, pioneering contribution to postwar history and aesthetics, just as it is too soon to evaluate Beuys’s place in history, which despite the earlier assertions that Beuys is arguably Germany’s most infamous artist-educator, is not only on the wane but also under constant scrutiny by art historians and historians bringing to light details of his activities both during WWII and after.¹⁰

Nevertheless, this dissertation cannot conclude without final comments on the competition between Vostell and his nemesis. For, Beuys was hailed in a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in 1979, solidifying his art historical

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reputation. The following year, Beuys enjoyed a joint exhibition with Warhol at Lucio Amelio’s gallery in Naples, Italy. Today, MoMA declares Beuys to be “widely understood to be the most important German artist of the post–World War II period.” The Gagosian Gallery proclaims: “universally celebrated as one of the most important and revolutionary European artists of the last century.” A May 2013 article in Spiegel Online highlights Beuys’s status as “a German icon.” Beuys created a mythical world with metaphors for life, politics, aesthetics, and art, and he became associated with such materials as felt and fat, his concept of social sculpture, and his identity as a shaman and teacher, and with the name Fluxus. Regarding the latter, Tomas Schmit wrote in a letter of June 1969, “Beuys, who is now very famous here, uses the term Fluxus a bit too much and so everyone identifies Fluxus and Beuys (which isn’t right).”

Vostell attempted to reclaim the name Fluxus, even writing a Fluxus chronology in January 1969 that outlines pre-Fluxus activities in New York and Cologne; Fluxus pre-events; and Fluxus itself. The chronology ends with the

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13 Ulrike Knöfel, “Beuys Biography: Book Accuses Artist of Close Ties to Nazis,” Spiegel Online International (May 17, 2013), http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/new-joseph-beuys-biography-discloses-ties-to-nazis-a-900509.html. This article discusses Hans Peter Riegel’s recent biography of Beuys, which locates the artist within a circle of former and long-time Nazis, but Knöfel begins by highlighting how Beuys “has been regularly resurrected—as a myth, a heroic figure, a saint of contemporary art history and an innovator, even on the political scene. During the nearly 30 years since his death, he has become larger than life and, ultimately, sacrosanct: a German icon.”
15 According to Vostell’s chronology: pre-Fluxus in New York began in 1961 with Maciunas promoting experimental artists’ concerts and La Monte Young preparing the publication An Anthology, and pre-Fluxus ended in 1962 when Maciunas moved to Germany. Vostell claims that
pronouncement, “1962 was the year of Fluxus.”16 1962 was the year that Vostell helped to organize the first official Fluxus festivals in which he participated. More importantly, 1962 was one year before Beuys helped to organize and participated in a Fluxus festival in Düsseldorf, in February 1963. With this chronology Vostell wrote Beuys out of the history of Fluxus, just as Beuys’s fame eclipsed Vostell in art history. Beuys rose to prominence as a teacher and unique artist in the late 1960s and early 1970s, precisely the period when Vostell was busy establishing experimental, interdisciplinary collectives such as Labor, Inc. and Kombinat 1, a branch of Labor founded in 1969; and he was occupied with publishing works by his many diverse colleagues in his journal dé-coll/age and in anthologies like Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme (1965) and Aktionen: Happenings und Demonstrationen seit 1965 (1970). Vostell was also designing Heinz Ohff’s book Pop und die Folgen (1968) and five editions of the catalog documenting the art of the 1960s in the Ludwig Collection (1969-71). He regularly invited artists, intellectuals, and students to his home, introducing them to one another; and he continued making art. Whereas Beuys moved beyond surface rivalry, having achieved fame that assured his legacy in his lifetime, Vostell experienced his influence slip away and witnessed the art world

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16 The chronology was published in Interfunktionen 2, and is signed with Vostell’s name as well as Interfunktionen, Team for Art Theory Cologne, Collaborator of the LIDL Academy Düsseldorf.
turning its back on him. In response, he focused on his feud with Beuys, which Lebel recalled, “had become useless and boring.”

Beuys fostered the myth that grew around him, aided and abetted by his easily identifiable Christ-like costume of fisherman’s vest and hat; the widespread publicity surrounding his teaching and political activities at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie; the Kunstakademie’s efforts to oust him; and his famous and compelling performances. Germans recognized Beuys as an individual who survived the war as one of Hitler’s soldiers and who then assumed the role of savior, even washing the public’s feet and performing a self-baptismal in one of his actions. Vostell, in contrast, presented himself as the antithesis of everything beloved about Beuys: he assaulted viewers with his dé-coll/age happenings, performances, installations, and paintings woven together by the continuous threads of violence, destruction, sex, and death; his collages foisted difficult and painful memories revived in fragments of contemporary mass media, popular culture, art history, and history on the public; and in his equally assumed costume, he confronted the German public with the image of the Jew they had reviled and exiled to Hitler’s death camps. Like Beuys’s work, Vostell’s art production is uneven, ranging from smart and poignant to kitsch. The difference being that Vostell’s kitsch was didactic, while Beuys laced his kitsch with carefully orchestrated, and only vaguely understandable, myths, such that his rabbit persona and hare objects were mystified as Beuys’ “feminine

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17 Email to the author, September 3, 2011.
18 Beuys washed spectators’ feet as part of his action *Celtic +——* in Basel, on April 5, 1971.
principle” and his role as “leader of the animals.” While Beuys posed as the redeemer, Vostell assumed the role of the moralizer.

It has taken me nearly eight years to come to terms with Vostell’s ideal academy, beginning with my encounter with it in Interfunktionen 2 and later my interpretation of its role in Fluxus Zug, both of which, ironically, I first learned about in the Joseph Beuys Archive at the Museum Schloss Moyland in Bedburg-Hau, Germany. This dissertation stands as a testimony to the formative position Wolf Vostell holds in the history of art, and that Fluxus Zug foreshadowed in drawing together the museum, the academy, and the archive to which the Mobile Academy, MELEZ Festival Train, America: Now and Here, and Station to Station all attest. Today as artists demonstrate widespread interest in curating as an art practice, in the construction of alternative pedagogies, and in working in, with, and against the Archive, the spirit of Wolf Vostell’s art and ideas are very much alive.
Afterword: Writing out of History

Who is written into history, and who is written out? How and why does this happen? What can one do in an attempt to intervene and to ensure that one is written into, rather than out of, history? These are the larger questions that this dissertation provokes.

Vostell used history to fight back against history. More specifically, he used history in an effort to prevent his being written out of history. When existing art world institutions turned their attention towards other artists, such as Joseph Beuys and the neo-Expressionists, Vostell created his own institutions to preserve and promote his art. He established museums, academies, and archives, places where future scholars would be able to study the materials that others excluded from their collections, materials that demonstrated Vostell’s foundational place within Fluxus, happenings, and other developments in contemporary art, including institutional critique. When the art world centers of Cologne and West Berlin ceased to consider his art innovative and began to overlook him, Vostell moved to the periphery, choosing Malpartida de Cáceres, Spain, a rural village that lacked a contemporary experimental art scene due to the history of Franco’s fascist rule and therefore still viewed Vostell as a vanguard artist when critics in West Germany did not.¹ What is more, in incorporating in his art myriad fragmentary remnants of history that had slipped from memory, whether from ancient Greece or from his own earlier works of art,

¹ Vostell is not the only artist to have moved from the center to the periphery around the time his renown was beginning to be eclipsed. Another example is Robert Rauschenberg, who moved from New York City to Captiva, an island off the Gulf Coast of Florida, in 1970, after achieving fame with his combines and transfer drawings begun in the early 1950s and his silkscreened paintings begun in the early 1960s.

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Vostell sought to ensure the presence of the past for the future. The problem of being remembered versus being forgotten is a perpetual struggle, for history is in constant flux. This case study of Wolf Vostell and *Fluxus Zug* offers a model for writing history and simultaneously acknowledging its dynamic nature.
Bibliography

I. Archives

Abbreviations are used to refer to archival sources.

**AHV**  
Archive Happening Vostell, Museo Vostell Malpartida, Spain.

**HOC/GRI**  

**HO/BG**  
Part-Estate of Heinz Ohff (1922-2006), Berlinische Galerie, Berlin.

**LCA**  
Leverkusen City Archive, Leverkusen, Germany.

**JBP/GRI**  

**SA/SS**  
Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

**ZADIK**  
Central Archive of International Art Dealers, Inc., Cologne.

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Biography

Erin Hanas earned an MA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005, and a BA from Central College in Pella, Iowa in 2001. She received a research grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), a Foreign Exchange Fellowship from the University of Potsdam, and Graduate Fellowships from the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University, as well as conference travel awards from The Graduate School at Duke University and the Nordic Network of Avant-Garde Studies. As a Thompson Writing Program graduate fellow, she taught a course on academic writing at Duke University. She has also been an instructor and a teaching assistant in art history at Duke University and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her publications include “Raus mit der Sprache. Rein ins Leben: The Exposed Tongue,” in Representations of German Identity, edited by Deborah Ascher Barnstone and Thomas O. Haakenson (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2013), and “‘We are all Witnesses’: Susan Silas’s Helmbrechtswalk,” Montage (The University of Iowa, 2009). She has presented at numerous conferences, including the College Art Association Annual Conference, the Middle Atlantic Symposium in the History of Art, the Southeastern College Art Conference, the German Studies Association Annual Conference, and the Nordic Network of Avant-Garde Studies Annual Conference. Prior to studying art history, she worked as a glassblower.
Figure 1: Wolf Vostell, *Video Library/Communication Car* (container one), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Photo taken on May 30, 1981, while *Fluxus Zug* was in Bochum. From the Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
Figure 2: Wolf Vostell, *The Angels (container two)*, *Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Photo taken on May 30, 1981, while *Fluxus Zug* was in Bochum. From the Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
Figure 3: Wolf Vostell, *Archai*, from *The Angels, Fluxus Zug, 1981*.

Vostell named each of the paintings in the series after a different type of angel.

Figure 4: Wolf Vostell, *Kyrotetes* (detail), from *The Angels, Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Photo credit: Roger Schmidt. Courtesy of the Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund.
Figure 5: Wolf Vostell, *The Rivers* (container three), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Inge Baecker Papers, ZADIK, Cologne. Courtesy of ZADIK, Cologne.
Figure 6: Visitors walking through Wolf Vostell’s The Rivers, Fluxus Zug, 1981.

Figure 7: Wolf Vostell, *The Dances (container four), Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Photo credit: Roger Schmidt. Courtesy of the Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund.
Figure 8: Wolf Vostell, *The Winds* (container five), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981.
Inge Baecker Papers, ZADIK, Cologne. Courtesy of ZADIK, Cologne.
Figure 9: Wolf Vostell, *The Winds* (detail), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981, showing images of visitors broadcast on the television set in the car’s grill.

Photo credit: Roger Schmidt. Courtesy of the Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund.
Figure 10: Wolf Vostell, *The Winds* (detail), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981, showing the television monitors reflecting off the mirror-covered ceiling.

Figure 11: Wolf Vostell, *The Winds* (detail), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981, showing the fake fireplace logs inside the car.

Photo © Hans-Jürgen Hellweg (Dortmund). Courtesy of the Archive Happening Vostell, Museo Vostell Malpartida, Spain.

Photo © Hans-Jürgen Hellweg (Dortmund). Courtesy of the Archive Happening Vostell, Museo Vostell Malpartida, Spain.

Photo credit: Roger Schmidt. Courtesy of the Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund.

Photo credit: Roger Schmidt. Courtesy of the Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund.
Figure 15: Wolf Vostell, *The Clouds* (detail), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981, showing an ear emerging from the wall.

Photo credit: Roger Schmidt. Courtesy of the Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund.
Figure 16: Visitors squeezing their way through Wolf Vostell’s *The Clouds*, *Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

From the Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
Figure 17: Wolf Vostell, *The Clouds* (detail), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981, showing a hole in the lead covering the mannequins.

Figure 18: Wolf Vostell, *The Fires* (container eight), *Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Photo taken from the back end of the container. Inge Baecker Papers, ZADIK, Cologne. Courtesy of ZADIK, Cologne.
Figure 19: Wolf Vostell, *The Fires (container eight), Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Photo taken from the front end of the container, looking towards the train’s final car. From the Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
Figure 20: Visitors walking past taxidermied dogs in Wolf Vostell’s *The Fires*, *Fluxus Zug*, 1981.

Figure 21: Wolf Vostell, *The Fires* (detail), *Fluxus Zug*.

Photo credit: Roger Schmidt. Courtesy of the Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund.


Figure 24: *Fluxus Zug* at the station in Wuppertal.

Figure 25: *Fluxus Zug in Hamm, Santa Monica Platz.*

Figure 26: *Fluxus Zug* in Bochum, Ümminger Teich, May 30, 1981.

From the Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
Figure 27: Visitors entering *Fluxus Zug* in Bochum, Ümminger Teich, May 30, 1981.

From the Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
Figure 28: Wolf Vostell, *Die Steine*, 1981, transformed after the end of *Fluxus Zug*.

Figure 29: Wolf Vostell, *Project for a Drive-in Museum in Cologne, 1970.*


Figure 31: Wolf Vostell, *Project for a Museum of German Art after 1945 in Bonn*, 1975.

Figure 32: Wolf Vostell, *Suggestion for a Museum in Bonn for German Art after 1945*, June 25, 1975.

Figure 33: Wolf Vostell, *Project for a Drive-In Museum of Art for Berlin, 1971.*

Figure 34: Wolf Vostell, VOAEX (Concrete Journey through Upper Extremadura), October 1976. Los Barruecos, Extremadura, Spain.

Photograph by the author, May 1, 2008.
Figure 35: Wolf Vostell, detail of undated sketch showing Malpartida in relation to artists, museums, and cities in Spain and Portugal.

From the Heinz Ohff Collection, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
Figure 36: Wolf Vostell, *Ruhender Verkehr*, 1969. Cologne, Germany.

Figure 37: Wolf Vostell, *The Dead Who Thirsts*, January 1978. Los Barruecos, Extremadura, Spain.

Photograph by the author, May 1, 2008.
Figure 38: Wolf Vostell holding up his *German Student Wallpaper*, 1967, during a protest action outside of the Italian Pavilion, 34th Venice Biennale, 1968.

From the Lil Picard Papers, University of Iowa Libraries.
Figure 39: Wolf Vostell, *Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room* (detail), 1968.

Figure 41: Wolf Vostell, *Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room (detail)*, 1968.

Figure 42: Wolf Vostell, *Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room* (detail), 1968.

Figure 43: Wolf Vostell, *Electronic dé-coll/age Happening Room* (detail), 1968.

Figure 44: Picture of the Kommune 1 on the cover of Wolf Vostell, *Aktionen, Happenings und Demonstrationen seit 1965* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1970).
Figure 45: Wolf Vostell, “The Ideal Academy”: An Autobahn and High-Speed Train Happening!, January 1969.

Figure 46: Wolf Vostell, *Treblinka*, from *Black Room*, 1958-9.


Collection Berlinische Galerie.
Figure 47: Wolf Vostell, *Auschwitz Searchlight*, from *Black Room*, 1958-9.


Collection Berlinische Galerie.
Figure 48: Wolf Vostell, *German Outlook*, from *Black Room*, 1958-9.


Collection Berlinische Galerie.

Figure 50: Wolf Vostell, altered postcard mailed to Hanns Sohm, 1968.

From the Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
Figure 51: Wolf Vostell, *Yellow Pages or an Action Page*, 1966.

Figure 52: Wolf Vostell, *Miss America*, 1968.

Collection Museum Ludwig Cologne.
Figure 53: Cover of *Der Spiegel*, nr. 16 (April 13, 1981).

Photo courtesy Archive Happening Vostell, Museo Vostell Malpartida, Spain.

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Figure 55: *Die Zeit*, nr. 44 (October 26, 1979).

Photo courtesy Archive Happening Vostell, Museo Vostell Malpartida, Spain.
Figure 56: Reproduction of a photograph by Perry Kretz, cut from the catalog for the Zurich Third World Exhibition of Photography, 1973.

Photo courtesy Archive Happening Vostell, Museo Vostell Malpartida, Spain.
Figure 57: Ancient Greek vase painting.

Figure 58: Hellenistic relief depicting Heracles and a nymph.

Figure 59: Wolf Vostell in Paris, 1958.


Figure 60: Wolf Vostell, 1968.

Figure 61: Wolf Vostell, 1981.