

# Living with Pop. A Reproduction of Capitalist Realism

Translations of key documents

Translations by Alexander Scrimgeour unless otherwise noted

## Düsseldorf and the Rhineland (1957-1964)

**1) Letter from Jean-Pierre Wilhelm to Ernst Brücher, Publisher of DuMont, 8 January 1962. (Translated by Sylee Gore, Berlin)**

Dear Mr. Brücher,

[...] I recently received a visit from an American named George Maciunas, with whom I'd already been corresponding for some time. He intends to publish a magazine called FLUXUS. Several weeks ago, he left the United States and settled in Wiesbaden, where he works. He is about 30 years old and very personable and intelligent. Enclosed is a preliminary sketch of his magazine project, on which I will be listed as "co-editor." I didn't want that at all, however, and would have preferred at most to be an "advisor." Maciunas has also been in contact with some of the Cologne groups, including Nam June Paik, H. K. Metzger, and Helms. Helms immediately distanced himself from the project when he realized it included the names of Diter Rot and Cl. Bremer. [...] However, Maciunas was hardly committed to them so dogmatically. He does not yet know the European situation well enough. His whole attitude is somewhat one-sided: Neo-Dada, musique concrète, etc. But this can be corrected. To make a long story short, he would like to consult with you, and I advised him to do so. Until now, he has intended to do everything alone, and drawing on his own financial resources. [...] He also said that it would be more sensible to publish a kind of annual art publication, so that a higher price than that for magazines could be charged. A record would also be included in the publication. He seems to know something about music. Please also have a look at the role in the concert projects, which I enclose.

**2) Letter from Jean-Pierre Wilhelm to Hansjörg Utzerath, Director of Kammerspiele Düsseldorf, 19 March 1962 (Translated by Sylee Gore, Berlin)**

Dear Utz,

By now you will have received my first letter about Helms. I've been visited by the Korean composer Nam June Paik, who also lives in Cologne. [...] He suggests an event to you which might be described as "Neo-Dada in Music." The authors are two Americans, a Japanese man, and a Korean (Paik himself). It is a movement that's spreading across the entire world.

Dick Higgins: Structures

George Brecht: Word event  
Toshi Ichiyanagi: Violin Piece  
N. June Paik: Etude platonique Nr. 2  
La Monte Young: "566"

Paik alone can carry off the whole event. All that's needed is a piano and blackboard. You would have to arrange all the details with Paik yourself. You would also have to pay him something, as he would otherwise earn hardly anything.

## Fluxus (1962-1964)

**1) Letter from Jean-Pierre Wilhelm to Raoul Hausmann, 27 January 1963** (Translated by Sylee Gore, Berlin)

My dear Dadasopher Raoul Hausmann,

[...] I am dictating this letter; hence PURE GERMAN! [...] Hülsmanns gave me your letter of January 23 and this morning the audio tape arrived as well, which I immediately listened to. It's of the best quality and will be played during the Fluxus festival at the Kunstakademie on the 2nd and 3rd of February. We're expecting a first-rate scandal. At this holy site. The director and professors have no idea what's in store for them. I've gone over the head of the director in summoning various newspapers and press agencies. It seems that TV will be there too. In my introductory remarks, I will accord you the important place which is your due. [...] How would you feel then about coming to Düsseldorf on this date? The New Germany cries out for you!

**2) Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, excerpts from introductory remarks to the Festum Fluxorum Fluxus, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, February 2-3, 1963.** (Translated by Sylee Gore, Berlin)

My dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to offer my greetings to one of those present here, that is Mr. Wind, Vice Consul of the Consulate General of the United States in Düsseldorf. We thank Mr. Wind for displaying interest in a new kind of movement to which so many of his fellow countrymen are contributing – indeed, the movement first got going due to the inimitable and spontaneous dynamism (which can at times transform itself into fanaticism) that is so characteristic of that nation.

It is a great satisfaction and honor to be able to speak to you in this time-honored building, which is full of traditions from the 19th century, when it played such a significant role. [...] As for what concerns this evening, it will be best for me to share with you just a few bare facts before the authors and performers speak themselves. But first I would just like to say that all participants have made great physical and financial sacrifices in order to make this presentation possible. Professor Beuys from the Academy has been intensely involved and had to overcome many difficulties. George Maciunas suspended his work in Wiesbaden

and summoned his friends to Düsseldorf. [...]

It was especially important to us that this program not be aligned exclusively with one group; so we sought out a larger variety in order to show the breadth of expressive possibilities within this movement, which as of yet does not have a fixed name, but which has proliferated with breathtaking speed across all the inhabited territories of the globe. As proof of this you can see the very simple poster that the Academy had printed. Nothing more than a long list of names that ring with the sound of every possible nation, including many Americans and Japanese. The block of names speaks for itself; even this has its own inner phonetic poetry. I have for you no more exact analysis than that; for that would be boring, and might also give away a few of the evening's surprises. Nor do I think it right to approach this movement so early on with, as has been nicely put, a kind of cataloguing and historical perspective. Their inner dynamism cannot be denied. They are winning supporters everywhere (you might call it an order of monks, without the monks and without the order), and audiences are participating everywhere.

### 3) Letter from Sigmar Polke to Gerhard Hoehme, circa 1966

Dear Professor Hoehme,

Since I now have your correct address, I think I'm about to have more luck with the postal service. I never knew that the university and the academy of arts were separate institutions. The one letter is now of course out of date, but since I wrote it and am actually very proud of having written it, and since you may be happy to read it, I am enclosing it here. I am very glad that you recommended me for the Poensgen Foundation and I'm grateful to you. But I don't have too much hope of course. Together with Mr. Bobek I picked out a few drawings, I assume that's the right approach. You would be very welcome to take a look into the portfolio beforehand.

With the crisis, that's such a matter, please don't get angry, I need a lot of time. I look forward to your return, and the dots look forward to it as well.

All best wishes, and thanks again for your kindness and efforts on my behalf.

Yours,  
Sigmar

### 4) Newspaper article "Kultur des Rasters, Ateliergespräch mit dem Maler Sigmar Polke" by Dieter Hülsmanns, *Rheinische Post*, May 10, 1966

The Culture of the Raster

A conversation with the painter Sigmar Polke in his studio

Sigmar Polke will soon have to leave his studio in the sanctuary of the Düsseldorf art academy, because he now, after five years' study, wants to leave the academy. But it has been a while since his first steps into the "the serious side of life." Already in 1963, he teamed up with Lueg, Kuttner, and Richter for a demonstrative exhibition in Düsseldorf, in order to showcase the newly discovered phenomenon of Pop art. This exhibition was followed by several more: the artist has since showed his work in Berlin, Wuppertal,

Munich, The Hague, and, most recently, in Hannover. More extensive exhibitions will follow in Berlin and Munich.

Sigmar Polke was born in 1941 in Oels. He came to Düsseldorf in 1953 and started studying at the Kunstakademie in 1961, with the professors Karl Otto Götz and Gerhard Hoehme. His artistic interest was initially devoted to Expressionism and later to abstract painting. But when he was confronted with a very different way of dealing with art at a "Fluxus" event in 1963, he was so impressed that he found it difficult to continue with everything he had previously thought and done. What increasingly came into the foreground was the relationship to phenomena such as the environment and time. So he painted things from everyday life, from the civilization that surrounds us.

\*

*- Mr Polke, you use existing images as sources for your pictures; you cut them out from newspapers and magazines. Why do you prioritize painting from photographs over invention?*

This question is always confusing to me, because I cannot offer you a complex answer. I have many reasons for it, some of which contradict one another or cancel one another out, and I know only that they are all important and each of them always contributes something. It could be that in this way I want to show how dependent one is on preconceived forms, how un-free in doing and thinking, and that one continually takes recourse to what already exists because that is what you have to do, consciously or unconsciously. That is not meant as a criticism but as an observation. It could be that I do it because in the act of copying I see an opportunity to recognize something, or that I want to find a way to deal with something, to overcome something; or because I want to do something entirely mechanically, like a machine. Or because I think that it is of no consequence at all how a picture is created. It can also be irony, it can be laziness, lack of skill, and stupidity. But it can also be the epitome of creative freedom, namely to do what one wants and considers right — even if it is to copy something. As for the existing images — which I can of course, if I want to, choose according to my completely individual conception and use to develop my own ideas — of course this doesn't cancel out the freedom of having a personal perspective on things, which applies in my case as it does for anybody else, and in this way a meaning for that which I am dealing with, directly or indirectly, is not invented but discovered.

*- But you could also use other pictures as the sources for your paintings, why take raster-dot images from newspapers?*

I do that, too, but the raster-dot pictures particularly speak to me. I like the technical means, the cliché character of the raster. It is a way of thinking about multiplication and reproduction, which is also of course tightly connected to making copies. I like how it is impersonal, neutral, and fabricated. The raster is for me a system, a principle, a method, structure. It decomposes, distributes, orders, and equalizes everything. I like the way that the dots in a magnified picture swim and move about. The way that the subject changes from recognizable to unrecognizable, the undecided, ambiguous situation, the way it remains open. I like it because it seems true to its own nature.

- Do you believe that through your pictures you see an aspect of our time and show it to us? Does seeing not also mean knowing a little, knowing about interrelationships and backgrounds?

Understood in this way, I believe that the raster I use does indeed show a very specific view of things; it is a general situation and interpretation: namely the structure of my time, the structure of a social order, of a culture, standardized, segregated, atomized, subdivided, grouped, specialized.

- Do you want to make it part of a social critique?

No. It cannot be a painter's job to investigate whether something is good or bad and to judge it. He shows something, he says, "It is like this." No more than that. I do not want to shock, and nor do I believe that any art wants to shock, not even Pop art.

- Beyond the purely technical, what do you find interesting about the raster picture?

It's the specific spatiality, a space that goes into the infinite, a vastness and coldness. It could evoke ideas of the planets or the cosmos. Lots of dots vibrating, resonating, blurring, re-emerging, thoughts of radio signals, radio pictures, and television come to mind. Then a particular atmosphere creeps into my pictures, a little loneliness, abandonment, vastness, and yearning. It is not even that this is what I wanted to show; it is just there, like ambient noise.

- But you don't only paint raster paintings. There are also the brush drawings that remind one a bit of Mickey Mouse or cartoons, but also the sparingly overpainted fabric samples...

... you see, my need to make raster paintings originates in one of my own character traits, which is my love for the purely technical, for the impersonal. But one has so many character traits. I am just as romantic and sentimental as sober and practical, just as expressive and emotional as I am cautious, funny, and crazy. Each of these traits can find its own mode of expression when it is more strongly present in me. It determines my behavior as I paint, and I don't consider it a mistake if I then experience a completely different world, a completely different perspective on things. And out of this perspective I then make these drawings or other paintings. You see, I have split myself up, so to speak, in order not to do an injustice to myself and the things outside of me and thus somehow suppress them. Maybe all that will merge together at some point, I can't say; I am quite happy about this kind of many-sidedness, I'm happy that I don't only see black and white, but both at once.

#### **4) Newspaper article "Das perfektste Bild, Ateliergespräch mit dem Maler Gerd Richter" by Dieter Hülsmanns, *Rheinische Post*, May 3, 1966**

##### The Most Perfect Picture

A conversation with the painter Gerd Richter in his studio

Gerd Richter's studio is in the interior courtyard of a city block. You can get there only by going through a gas station; his neighborhood is one of car workshops and tradesmen's shops. These everyday, average surroundings must suit the artist very well, if one hears

him say, "I like everything that has no style," or, " I don't want to be a personality or to have an ideology. I want to be like everyone else, think what everyone else thinks, do what is being done anyway." His origin in the other part of Germany, where an ideology wants to determine all thinking and doing, may be the source of his aversion, which he also puts like this: "To have an ideology means having laws and guidelines; it means killing those who have different laws and guidelines. What is that supposed to be good for?"

Gerd Richter came to painting through a series of detours. Born in 1932 in Waltersdorf in [the region of Germany known as] Oberlausitz, he first visited a trade school, was then an unskilled laborer, a painter for advertising and stage sets, and worked in a photography lab, before going to the art academy in Dresden in 1953. There, until 1957 he stayed in a class for mural painting. His paintings from this time were realistic and strongly influenced by Beckmann. Until March 1961 he was freelancing in Dresden while pursuing his interest in photography on the side. When he came to West Germany that same year, he followed the advice of friends and joined the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, where until 1963 he attended the painting classes of Professor Karl Otto Götz. The sudden confrontation with a great many different kinds of art left him feeling unsure and almost brought him to the point of despair. Only when he encountered the "Fluxus" group as well as through the emergence of American Pop art did he start to pay attention to photography again. In the meantime he has exclusively specialized in painting from photographs, and he has shown such paintings in many exhibitions.

*- Mr Richter, what attracts you so much about a photograph that you paint a copy of it?*

A photograph — unless the art photographers have "fashioned" it — is simply the best picture that I can imagine. It is perfect; it does not change; it is absolute, and therefore autonomous and unconditional. It has no style. The photograph is the only picture that can truly convey information, even if it is technically faulty and the object can barely be identified. A painting of a murder is of no interest whatever; but a photograph of a murder fascinates everyone. This is something that just has to be incorporated into painting.

*- Your pictures contain representations of human beings, animals, and objects. These are things that you could just as well paint from nature. So why do you use a photograph as your source?*

Because it saves time, for one thing. Nowadays one must rationalize one's work, and anyway I have no desire to spend a month in front of one canvas. Secondly, I am cutting out a certain degree of stylization, which is unavoidable in painting from nature, and which I want to avoid.

*- If you avoid all stylization and abstraction, and paint such a close approximation to photography, isn't it strange that you don't make your pictures directly by photomechanical means?*

I don't find it strange at all. Everyone who uses photographs "paints" from them in one way or another: whether with brush, collage, silkscreen, or photographic canvas is not important. The only strange thing is that I want to produce just this kind of picture and no other: the kind of picture that I can't at the moment produce in any other way. But maybe one day I'll work out how to eliminate the process of copying.

- *You also paint portraits from photographs. In portrait painting, isn't it desirable to know the model?*

Not at all. I don't think the painter need either see or know his model. A portrait must not express anything of the model's "soul," essence, or character. Nor must a painter "see" a model in any specific, personal way; because a portrait can never come closer to the model than when it is a very good likeness. For this reason, among others, it is far better to paint a portrait from a photograph, because no one can ever paint a specific person — only a painting that has nothing whatever in common with the model. In a portrait painted by me, the likeness to the model is apparent, unintentional, and also entirely useless.

- *So how significant are the things represented in your pictures?*

Highly significant, definitely. Just not significant in the sense of conveying information about reality, which is what photography is there for. I never paint to create a likeness of a person or of an event. Even though I paint credibly and correctly, as if the likeness were important, I am really using it only as a pretext for a picture.

- *So you don't really care at all what you paint?*

No, that's not it at all. I don't abolish representation. The painting can't be turned upside-down, for instance. The object is so important to me that I spend a lot of effort on choosing the subject, so important that I paint it. I am fascinated by the human, temporal, real, logical side of an occurrence which is simultaneously so unreal, so incomprehensible, and so atemporal. And I would like to represent it in such a way that this simultaneity is preserved.

##### **5) Newspaper article "Handtücher und Waschlappen, Ateliergespräch mit dem Maler" Konrad Lueg by Dieter Hülsmans, *Rheinische Post*, April 26, 1966**

Towels and Washcloths

A conversation with the painter Konrad Lueg in his studio

One of Konrad Lueg's first exhibitions took place with Gerhard Richter in a furniture store in Düsseldorf. They called it "a demonstration of capitalist realism" and gave it the slogan "Living with Pop." They originally planned a conventional exhibition of paintings, yet the two artists decided not only to exhibit their own work but also the entire furniture store — as well as their own persons. The exhibition was destined to be a noteworthy success; more than a hundred guests attended this demonstration.

Konrad Lueg lives in Düsseldorf, was born here in 1939, and also studied at Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. He first attended the painting and drawing class of Bruno Goller, tried out stage design, and was later a student under K. O. Götz. If you ask him what kinds of things he painted at this time, he says "A bit of Götz with Twombly [*sic*] on top of it." He took a particular interest in Twombly [*sic*] but the Pop art that came over from America was the impetus for his own independent work. He began to paint athletes from photographs, which he showed in 1964 at Galerie Schmela. The intensity of color that characterizes these works has remained a constant in all his pictures, whatever their subjects.

*- Would you, Mr Lueg, consider "Pop artist" a valid description of yourself?*

Yes and no. Some years ago it would still have been true without any ifs and buts. The impetus for my own work came from Pop art, more specifically from a picture by Roy Lichtenstein that I saw in a magazine. Together with Richter I grew up under this "sign." We were among the first to do something like that in Germany. But in the meantime my work has developed further, and although it doesn't deny its Pop origins it has after all become something else.

*- What is the story of your artistic development — which is to say, how did you start out?*

It started with the desire to paint. If certain conditions were met, my parents allowed me to take private tuition in painting and drawing. So for a year I then drew sketches, I went out to the surrounding area and painted landscapes, farmhouses, and dunghills. The techniques I learned in this way were very useful, I had a portfolio to present to the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie and they accepted me.

*-What did you paint or do after the end of your studies at the academy?*

As I said, the motivation came from Lichtenstein. After various experiments I came to photography. I painted brightly colored faces and heads, using newspaper photographs as source images, and keeping the contrasts of the photographic black-and-white techniques. A little later I painted athletes, footballers, boxers, and so on.

*- What do you find particularly interesting about this subject, if one can call it that?*

The coloration. [Farbigkeit.] I found the colorful shirts with the stripes and numbers very appealing. I made a whole series of these pictures and then I moved into cutting life-size figures out of wooden panels. I painted them on both sides and put them in front of reflective foil, so that it looked as if two teams of players were standing opposite one another.

*-You dropped this subject of athletes quickly afterwards; why?*

I just couldn't think of anything more to say about it. I also didn't want to any more, to which I should add that I am very impatient and quickly turn my attention to something new. For a little while I had a plan to do something similar with girls from the ice show, but it wasn't "typical" in the same way.

*- In February of this year you had an exhibition in the Berlin gallery Block, which had the title "Handtücher und Waschlappen" ("Towels and Washcloths"). How did you come up with that?*

These works were a development from the wallpaper pictures that came before.

*- Wallpaper pictures?*

Yes, one day I remembered an old housepainter's technique that was used a lot after the war, and what it involves is using a rubber roller with flower patterns and similar motifs to paint the walls instead of using wallpaper. Using this pattern repeat process, I made



pictures that first of all continued to feature human figures. But then the pattern developed a life of its own. I enlarged it, monumentalized it, introduced rhythmic distortions and offset sections.

*- But how did you come up with the towels?*

My interest in the repeating patterns also drew my attention to other things. So I discovered not only a similar phenomenon in wrapping paper, but also in my wife's trousseau, in the towels. I could simply take them out of the cupboard and partly put them under glass and in frames, but I also hung them up just as they were and exhibited them. Maybe one shouldn't try to make any art at all, but just open one's eyes and find the things in one's own surroundings.

*- Is social critique or a critique of our time an aspect of your works?*

No, that is not my intention, and nor are there any literary elements. What it's about for me is simply the picture, and the coloration. The starting point in most cases is the ornamentation on found objects. That is why I am always looking for new things, the washcloths and towels are probably only a kind of transition phase, it's not my style to find some shtick and then ride it to death.

## Kaiserstraße 31A (1963)

### 1) *Man sollte eine Gruppe gründen*, manifesto written by Konrad Lueg, no date (1963)

Ten years ago some young painters, sculptors, and designers from the Düsseldorf area founded a group, the "Gruppe 53," in which many of the progressive artists from North Rhine-Westphalia started out: Brüning, Dahmen, Gaul, Hoehme Salentin, Royen, Kalinowsky, Werthmann, Kaufmann, Sackenheim, Klaphek, Wind, and others. This "Gruppe 53" no longer exists. This group of originally more or less unknown artists are today teachers, professors, renowned people occupying the top positions in cultural life, partly under contract with their galleries, all more or less successful, they no longer need the benefits of being able to show their work together.

Today, ten years later, there is again a group of young people who are in the same situation as the founders of the "Gruppe 53" at that time. They lack opportunities to exhibit, venues in which to publish, and financial means.

Although one or two of them have had solo exhibitions, maybe they were awarded some funding or "even" had a work reproduced in *Kunstwerk* (Work of Art), that is no reason not to show with others with whom they share an outlook.

*It is time to found a group!*

A group is an association of people with shared interests (not a political party)

A group brings the following advantages to its members:

1. Exhibition opportunities on a larger scale
2. Financial support from the city and state

3. A collective jury of their own
4. High quality catalogues
5. Contact with critics, dealers, and collectors
6. Exchanges with other groups
- 7.
- 8.
- etc.

The visual appearance of the group comes about in consequence of the collaborative jurying of the work of the individuals within it.

**2) Application to rent a vacant storefront at Kaiserstraße 31A, Düsseldorf, March 30, 1963**

*Gerd Richter*  
*Düsseldorf Hüttenstr. 71*

To the Department of City Planning  
Municipality of Düsseldorf  
1963

Düsseldorf, 30 March

Application to rent a store in the Kaiserstrasse to four painters and designers ~~from the~~ "Gruppe 63" for 8 days.

Herewith we would like to submit a request for permission [*authorization*] for the use of a store in the Kaiserstrasse.

We would like to show oil paintings and graphic works in an eight-day-long exhibition in one of the storefronts that are slated for demolition. (The dates for the exhibition can be determined by you, the storefront at Kaiserstr. 31 seems particularly well suited.) The exhibition does not have a commercial purpose, but seeks to inform about a new *figurative* direction in art and to exhibit for the first time ~~the Gruppe 63~~ *a group of young Düsseldorf artists*.

The Düsseldorf-based "Gruppe 63," being a young group, has to date had few opportunities to show work in Düsseldorf (the last exhibition took place in Fulda). [*Sentence marked for deletion*] The galleries that would come under consideration for such an exhibition are too expensive, already booked far into the future, rent only on a four-week basis, and only show already-established artists. It is thus very difficult for a young group to show their work, although it is of course absolutely necessary for them to present themselves to the public.

These reasons, along with the fact that the storefronts would be so well suited for this purpose and it would be a great shame if they were to remain completely unused until their demolition, make our request very pressing, and we would therefore politely ask you to investigate the possibility of such a rental and to try to work towards a favorable outcome for us.

In conclusion we would like to reassure you that we will give you an absolute guarantee that we will keep to the terms of our agreement (dates etc.) Because we all have studios and homes and the exhibition is, as an informational exhibition, not intended to exceed eight days, an absolute compliance with all conditions is assured. In addition, it would not be favoritism in relation to others who are rejected in their applications to rent the stores, because we are not running a business in that sense and no sales will take place.

We would be extremely grateful if you were able to make possible this one-off and short-term exhibition.

Thank you very much in advance for your consideration and the time spent processing the application.

Yours respectfully,

Gerd Richter  
Düsseldorf  
Huttenstr. 71

Manfred Kuttner

Sigmar Polke

Konrad Fischer  
Düsseldorf

*We believe that you, our city of Düsseldorf, known for your support of the arts, will be supportive of our efforts.*

### **3) Press release for the exhibition at Kaiserstraße 31A, no date (probably May 1963)**

Manfred Kuttner . Konrad Lueg . Sigmar Polke . Gerd Richter .

Special exhibition in Düsseldorf, Kaiserstrasse 31a from 11 to 26 May 1963. Opened daily from 11am-1pm and 3pm-6pm. Exhibition opening on Saturday, 11 May 1963 at 11 am.

Cent-Fox  
u.Fox-Tönende-Wochenschau  
Herrn Kluth  
Düsseldorf  
Graf-Adolf-Str. 83-87

Dear Mr Kluth,

We take the liberty of drawing your attention to an unusual group of young painters with an unusual exhibition. We are exhibiting in Düsseldorf, on former shop premises in the section of Kaiserstrasse that is due for demolition. This exhibition is not a commercial undertaking but purely a demonstration, and no gallery, museum, or public exhibiting body would have been a suitable venue.

The major attraction of the exhibition is the subject matter of the works in it. For the first time in Germany, we are showing paintings for which such terms as Pop Art, Junk Culture, Imperialist or Capitalist Realism, New Objectivity, Naturalism, German Pop and the like are appropriate.

Pop Art recognizes the modern mass media as a genuine cultural phenomenon and turns their attributes, formulations, and content, through artifice, into art. It thus fundamentally changes the face of modern painting and inaugurates an aesthetic revolution. Pop Art has rendered conventional painting – with all its sterility, its isolation, its artificiality, its taboos, and its rules – entirely obsolete, and has rapidly achieved international currency and recognition by creating a new view of the world.

Pop Art is not an American invention, and we do not regard it as an import – though the concepts and terms were mostly coined in America and caught on more rapidly there than here in Germany. This art is pursuing its own organic and autonomous growth in this country; the analogy with American Pop Art stems from those well-defined psychological, cultural, and economic factors that are the same here as they are in America.

We take the view that the newsreel ought to document this first exhibition of *German Pop Art*, and we ask you to consider the possibility of a report. If you would like further detailed information on us, our work and our ideas, we shall be glad to supply them.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**4) Guestbook entries, taken from guestbook of the exhibition at Kaiserstrasse 31A, Düsseldorf, May 11, 1963**

To the Pop-artists  
I congratulate you: on the successful import  
I reject: fifth-hand art

Thwombly [sic] Lichtenstein  
Warhol  
Afterbirths –  
That is not alive  
– Heide

The Catholic City Mission finds this exhibition absolutely deplorable. It recommends the congregation's intercessory prayer for the exhibitors.  
17.5.63 Düsseldorf prelate [name illegible]

No money for wild animals!  
A disgrace !

Absolute decadence! D. Heinzmann

Here it becomes clear once and for all that abstract painting has ended. We can only marvel at the audacity of this young group. G. D. Carlus

You obviously want to make fools of us. But it is evident that these are the deviant daubings of a loveless clique (Rembrandt still lived for art and has achieved great things by

doing so). One can only say: a sorry decline! Dr S. Lenz

Entartet!

Illiterates of Painting?

These "painters" need proper jobs, then they might turn into reasonable people. Friedr. Fischer-Diskau

Open the window

Hold a speech

If the results are good

Hold a new speech

—Arthur Kørpke

This is not how it works!

Criminality or nonsense — that is the question here! Arno Pfeil

German art is dead, long live German art!

Alfred Leonherde [?] says about Pop art: "Pop art is great!" and continues, "I get a lot out of Pop!"

No money for wild animals!

##### 5) "Die letzte Masche" by Yvonne Friedrichs, *Rheinische Post*, May 16, 1963

The Last Stitch

Pop art, the latest rage from America, has found its way to Düsseldorf and created an exhibition forum for itself because "after all, something has to happen," as the group of young enthusiasts ensures, as they knit this last stitch. Youth was also dominant among the guests at the opening at the exhibition space Kaiserstrasse 31a. What the intended purpose was could not exactly be determined from the smoke-clouded conversations, but the exhibitors definitely want to shock. Whether from naïve conviction or for the sake of titillation could likewise not be adequately determined. Looking at the things on show, one cannot help but see that the distance from these objects to art is a great one – if, that is, the intention is to lead to this goal and not to take great strides in the opposite direction.

But first of all: What is Pop art? As a term it is an abbreviation of popular art. What does it want? It attempts to use the mass media — magazines, cinema, radio, television — as the anchor points for making a statement. So for example paintings comment on and critique images from magazines, which are creatively exaggerated, taken out of context and given new signification: in short they are "artistically" embellished.

In the exhibition that then looks something like this: Gerd Richter (born 1932 in Dresden, studied at the Kunstakademie there, came to Düsseldorf in 1961) has converted a magazine photo — a group of decorous smiling young ladies with one gentleman — into a large-

format oil painting. But the viewer's own smile fades in the face of the horrifying slashes and rips imposed on tender young female flesh through the use of red enamel and nail sand other bloody effects intended to call into question the cheap, flat, and "putrid" qualities of this festive occasion. The Silesian artist Sigmar Polke, born 1941 (who has lived in Düsseldorf since 1952, and studied with Hoehme and Götz at the Kunstakademie), turns to the "earliest painting of a child," by "elaborating upon" existing magazine and advertising images. So for example, he turns a beautiful model (from a fashion magazine) into a "Madonna" by blurring the print with turpentine. Gory pictures from crime reports have been cropped to intensify their effect. The 24-year-old Düsseldorf Konrad Lueg studied with Goller and Götz at the city's Kunstakademie, and here presents blurry arrangements of template-like magazine blueprints whose sense is hard to decipher. The kinetic paintings of the Thüringian painter Manfred Kuttner (who studied at the academy in Dresden, then in Düsseldorf in 1960 with Macketanz, Hoehme, Götz) rise advantageously above these sensationalistic tabloidlike banalities. A sense of motion is created in these serial radial, spiral, and grid compositions — which are painted with energy-filled luminous colors — not through motors, light effects, or the viewer moving through the room; rather it is created by flicker effects that force the eye, in its attempt to balance things out, to move quickly — a process that repeatedly gives rise to new pictorial combinations.

**6) Newspaper article "Auch das sind Kunstwerke. Ausstellung junger Künstler / Reaktion – auf was?" unsigned article, *NRZ an Rhein und Ruhr*, June 25, 1963**

That, Too, Is an Artwork.

An Exhibition of young artists / A reaction – to what?

For some time a storefront in the Kaiserstrasse is breaking all the rules. Its decoration primarily consists of a red chair, a washing-powder packet, and a bundle of illustrated magazines titled "*Massenmedien*" (Mass Media). If you look a bit more closely, you'll understand that what's going on is an exhibition of young artists.

The first thing that you notice when you look inside is an ingenious ashtray — a hole in the floor. The young intellectuals, the angry young men, or whatever they should be called, are sitting in the middle of the exhibition, surrounded by their works. Colorful magazine advertisements have been daubed with red paint or carefully crossed out with care in several large-format works, in one corner is a pale pencil sketch of a girl's face — for which a magazine has again been the source — in the other corner more splotches of paint; there are also simple room divisions from red or green squares or vertiginous spirals. All in formats that can be measured in meters, for the sake of the effect.

But if someone perhaps presumes that the creators of these works are ridiculing the viewers or even themselves, he is mistaken; they are (they claim) entirely serious. Although they admit that most visitors to the exhibition take it with a dose of humor, there are supposedly also those who straightforwardly enjoy it. One can even buy the artworks after all. Without batting an eyelash, sums with four digits are quoted.

The explanation for Dadaism was that it was a reaction to the last war; do we maybe now have before us the reaction to our economic miracle?

7) Newspaper article "Der neue Realismus in jedem Heim? Eine aufsehenerregende Ausstellung von vier jungen Künstlern" unsigned article, Düsseldorf Nachrichten, May 29, 1963

The New Realism in Every Home?  
A sensational exhibition of four young artists

Art has once again got the realism that so many have passionately yearned for. But this is no realism for the cozy home setting, where it would give you a sense of yearning that makes one's mouth water. The new Realism pitilessly exposes the illusionism of the present, using its own tools. It destroys the frosting of sentimentality and decries the bloodthirsty sensationalism of modern mass media. Under the designation "Pop art," it has been making a splash in the USA for months. Pop art doesn't lead ad absurdum through montage, as Dada did so often; Pop art is a reflection of our monstrous reality.

Pop art is in the air in Germany, too. An unmistakable sign of it is a Düsseldorf exhibition of four young artists, who have recently ended their studies with the "informel" painter K.O. Götz at the Kunstakademie. Gerd Richter, Konrad Lueg, Sigmar Polke, and Manfred Kuttner rented an empty storefront on the side of the Kaiserstrasse that is due for demolition. It couldn't be missed, as there was permanently a cluster of curious people attracted by a washing-powder packet with a three-letter logo — the middle letter, an M, is here upside-down — and a chair that is painted pink. Anyone who had the courage to enter the space was hit in the face by what he sees daily in photographs and on billboards: blown-up pictures of a shooting above laughing toothpaste-advertising girls, the victims of an avalanche next to the sunburnt flesh of barely dressed bathing beauties ... Gerd Richter has an astounding ability to transfer these facets of a most brutal reality onto the canvas. He is the only one of the four artists who has completely given himself over to Pop art.

Konrad Lueg has a conception of painting that is connected to the lyrical scribbles of the American Cy Twombly, but perhaps still more to the ideal of *peinture*, which he doesn't escape from even in rudimentary drawings of cosmetics and the girls who have been done up in them. Here reality is approached via the path of "art brut," an experiment that makes Lueg appear very interesting to us.

Polke's combinations of advertising pages, comics, etc., dispense with a decisiveness of approach. They pale in comparison with the pointedness of Richter's paintings. Manfred Kuttner's works make use of the various frequencies of light waves of sharply contrasting colors, that bring spirals and square fields with circles into dynamic motion: this painting is kinetic, if you want the word for it, a technique that has previously been used primarily by sculptors. The imprecision of the execution maintains some slight connection to the other works.

There is a lot in this exhibition that is not fully articulated; everything is still in a process of becoming. Without doubt, however, it heralds a leap, if not a leap forwards then still a break of the very young with what already exists, which for them already begins with *informel*. The impetus comes from Pop art: it comes from their immediate surroundings, rather than as the next step in an art-historical progression.

# Möbelhaus Berges (1963)

1) Announcement "Herbstliche Visionen! Ein Leben mit Pop," *Der Mittag*, October 5, 1963

Autumnal Visions!  
A Life with Pop

The artistic event of the month is set to become an exhibition that Mr Lueg and Mr Richter are organizing with the support of the Berges furniture store. Berges has set one room aside for this exhibition, which takes place October 11 – 25. It is the second exhibition of this kind in Düsseldorf. It shows fewer pictures than objects that are stripped of their utility and to be understood from a purely artistic standpoint as manifestations of our time. The artistic movement known as "Pop art" is described as the greatest upheaval in art since Cubism. Berges — the biggest furniture store in [Düsseldorf's] historic center, whose management has always had a soft spot for artistic talent — is supporting, with this exhibition, the youngest and most revolutionary development of art, whose effects can not yet be foreseen — at least that is what the experts say.

The exhibition — I forgot to mention — has a motto:  
Living with Pop — a demonstration for capitalist realism.

With signs and a lift interested parties will be led into the office spaces of Berges, where they can decide for themselves whether they actually want to live with pop or not. Also notable is that this demonstration for capitalist realism does not have any commercial aspects, i.e., the exhibited paintings are not for sale, which is in turn evidence of a thoroughly idealistic sensibility. For capitalist reality can hardly be separated from money and from the desire for profit.

That's it for the exhibition. But since we are just talking of Berges, it may not be amiss to note that — regardless of whether you in fact want to live with pop or not — you still have to live, in any case, with furniture.

The Berges furniture store guarantees that this furniture is well-made and good value for money, and that it corresponds to your personal sense of style. Furthermore there is currently a display of upholstered furniture in Berges, where the things on offer have amazing shapes and colors. Among them is the much-loved "Cumulus" television- and recliner seat, which is without equal in form and comfort.

Visitors to Berges will however find on many floors a combination, so uncommonly important to their own well-being, of furniture, decoration, lighting, carpets, and a multitude of ceramic products. But so that one can also say something especially advantageous about capitalist reality, here, from Berges:

The special offer of the season:  
a wardrobe with shelving, 110 cm  
a bed, 100/200 cm  
a bedside table  
everything in genuine Tola wood, the whole lot for 266 DM

The house of good furniture: Berges



Ask Berges if you want to live more beautifully  
From October 11 to 25 Berges is presenting an art exhibition, Lueg and Richter, "LIVING WITH POP"

**2) Program, *Living with Pop*, October 11, 1963**

Please note the number assigned to you is: 138

PROGRAM (roman numerals)

CATALOGUE

(letters)

for a demonstration for capitalist realism

Living with Pop

Friday, 11 October 1963, Flingerstrasse 11, Düsseldorf

- I) Start 8 p.m. Report to 3rd floor.
- A Waiting room, 3rd floor (decor by Lueg and Richter)
  
- II) When your number is called, visit Room No. 1, 3rd floor.  
Disciplined behavior is requested.
- B Room No. 1: sculptures by Lueg and Richter  
(plus one work on loan from Professor Beuys)  
*(Couch with Cushions and Artist*  
*Floor Lamp with Foot Switch*  
*Trolley Table*  
*Chair with Artist*  
*Gas stove*  
*Chair*  
*Table, Adjustable, with Table Setting and Flowers*  
*Tea Trolley, Laid*  
*Large Cupboard with Contents and Television*  
*Wardrobe* (with loan from Professor Beuys)

- III) When your number is called (approx. 8:45 p.m.), visit other exhibition rooms on 2nd and 1st floors and ground floor. During this tour (Polonaise), please refrain from smoking.
- C Exhibition rooms on several floors (selected by Lueg and Richter) (52 bedrooms, 78 living rooms, kitchens and nurseries, paintings by both painters; guests of honor, Messrs. Schmela and Kennedy)
- IV) On completion of tour, see A, etc.  
Subject to alteration.

Thank you for your attention.

Konrad Lueg and Gerd Richter

### 3) Script for loudspeaker announcements, *Living with Pop*, October 11, 1963

[Music]

20:05 Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I welcome you in the name of the Berges store and the artists Lueg and Richter.

[Music]

20:10 Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, please take a seat in the waiting room and wait until your number is called.

[Music]

Those ladies and gentlemen with numbers 1 through 9 are now asked to enter the exhibition room.

[Music]

Those ladies and gentlemen with numbers 10 through 17 are now asked to enter the exhibition space.

[Music]

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our newly arrived guests, and ask those with the numbers 18 through 24 to enter the exhibition room number 1. I repeat: the numbers 18 through 24.

[Music]

The numbers 25 through 31 please, 25 through 31.

[Music]

The number 32, 32 please enter the exhibitions space.

[Music]

We would like to welcome our newly arrived guests and ask them, too, to take a seat in the waiting room and wait for their number to be called. The numbers 33 through 42 may proceed.

[Music]

43 through 50

[Music]

(Music in approximately three-minute intervals)

51 through 58

[Music]

59 through 73

M-

74 through 79

M-

80 through 87

M-

88 through 95

M-

96 through 178

M- [Music]

Ladies and gentlemen, in a few minutes the grand tour through all further exhibition rooms will begin.

[Music]

I would like to kindly request our guests join Messieurs Lueg and Richter for the grand tour of the exhibition.

[Music]

Young people who buy such a complete and yet inexpensive bedroom set have the security of knowing that they can add to it bit by bit with cupboard and dresser – available in either beech or cherry.

Single or double room? This broad Swedish bed offers a new solution to the problem. The cupboard marks the shift from wood to glass doors.

Here the wall unit has been equipped with an attractive dressing table – a generous solution.

The valuable, authentic period furniture that we admire in castles, museums and old, well-maintained townhouses was even in those days made from beech and cherry wood.

Ever-new and different combinations! This time: a bed where a bedside table comes attached and a pipe footboard. The commode is mounted on slim metal feet.

You can buy these items of furniture piece by piece and complete the set, and so you can fit out, add to, and modify your home just as you wish.

Old cherry-wood furniture from the Baroque era or in the Empire or Biedermeier styles is today a rare treasure. All furniture from the home program is made from the same choice cherry wood. Did you know that cherry has a special characteristic? Its tone gets warmer, clearer, and even more luxurious as the years go by.

[...]

A cupboard height of approximately 240 cm results in double the capacity. In spite of there being a lot of space, the cupboard remains easily accessible. Also well suited for use as a wall cupboard. From 180 cm to 400 cm wide, in each case with a tolerance of 45 cm.

[...]

#### **4) Letter from Konrad Lueg to Wolf Vostell, January 31, 1965**

Konrad Lueg  
Düsseldorf  
Poststr. 7  
Tel 25312

31 January 1965

Dear Mr Vostell,

Mr Block just gave me a call and asked me to send you some documentation concerning our demonstration for capitalist realism, which I am very happy to do.

Unfortunately there are no photographs of the furniture departments, which is a shame because we particularly wanted to give our guests an understanding of the furniture and the furniture store. But it seems that the photographers were not so quick to grasp this, however intelligent they are otherwise.

A comment on the invitation: It is the independent work of a printer, whom we sent only the typed text and the instruction to make an elegant, respectable invitation: --- it is a typographical event.

Everything, including the printed balloons, was paid for by the furniture store, which hoped for a killer advertisement as a result. Afterwards we were almost sued for conduct injurious to the interests of the company.

I believe that this book will become a very important and good thing, and I would of course be very happy if our demonstration for capitalist realism could be featured within it.

I wish you (and also the book) all the best,

Yours,

enclosed: 1 invitation, one program, 1 report, photos.

## 5) Report on *Leben mit Pop*, Konrad Lueg and Gerhard Richter

### REPORT

[12. September 1963.] Planning of exhibition in furniture store, Düsseldorf. Available space consists of one room on 3rd floor of office block, floor area 32 square meters.

A number of exhibition concepts were rejected, and it was resolved to hold a demonstration as follows:

- a) The whole furniture store, exhibited without modification.
- b) In the room set aside for the exhibition, a distilled essence of the demonstration. An average living room as a working exhibit, i.e., occupied, decorated with suitable utensils, foods, drinks, books, odds and ends, and both painters. The individual pieces of furniture stand on plinths, like sculptures, and the natural distances between them are increased, to increase their status as exhibits.
- c) Programmed sequence of the demonstration for 11 October 1963.

List of rooms to be viewed on 11 October 1963:

- I) Passage lined with window displays (26 large windows).  
Office entrance. Lift to 3rd floor.
- II) Waiting room (large landing on 3rd floor). On the walls: 2 boards inscribed WAITING ROOM. 14 pairs of roebuck antlers (shot in Pomerania, 1938–42). On display: 39 simple chairs, on each a copy of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* for 11 October 1963. On the stairs lie assorted picture magazines; by the lift stand two life-size figures (paper on wire mesh, varnished and painted), representing the art dealer Alfred Schmela and President John f. Kennedy. The space is lit by cold, rather dim, fluorescent light.
- III) Exhibition room. On 9 white plinths stand the following items. A tea trolley bearing a vase of flowers, and on its lower shelf the works of Churchill and the home-making magazine *Schöner Wohnen*. A cupboard with assorted contents. A wine-red chair. A gas stove. A green chair, occupied by K. Lueg (dark suit, white shirt, tie). A small occasional table; on it, a television set (showing News followed by 'The Adenauer Era'). A small standard lamp. A couch; reclining thereon, with detective story, G. Richter (blue suit, pink shirt, tie). A table set for coffee for two, with cut marble cake and *napfkuchen* and coffee in cups, plus 3 glasses and a plastic bag containing 3 bottles of beer and 1 bottle of grain spirit. The walls are painted white, with no pictures or other adornment. Next to the door is a wardrobe, containing the official costume of Prof. J. Beuys (hat, yellow shirt, blue trousers, socks, shoes; to which 9 small slips of paper are attached, each marked with a brown cross; beneath is a cardboard box containing Palmin and margarine). The room is lit by very bright, warm, fluorescent light, and by the standard lamp; there is a persistent smell of pine air-freshener.

IV) Extensive furniture exhibition of all current styles on 4 floors (81 living rooms, 72 bedrooms, kitchens, individual pieces. Store rooms. Tightly packed alcoves, cubicles, rooms, stairs and passages filled with furniture, carpets, wall decorations, appliances, utensils).

In a number of installations in the bedroom and living-room sections, paintings by Lueg and Richter are on show.

By K. Lueg: *Four Fingers; Praying Hands; Frankfurters on Paper Plate; Coat-hangers.*

By G. Richter: *Mouth; Pope; Stag; Neuschwanstein Castle.*

These rooms are lit normally.

#### *Report on the running of the Demonstration on 11.10.1963*

8:00 p.m. Two store employees stand at the entrance, giving out individually numbered programs. A total of 122 visitors were counted in, a small proportion of whom left before the end of the event.

The visitors take the lift to the 3rd Floor and enter the WAITING ROOM. Loudspeakers all over the building broadcast dance music and the voice of an announcer, who welcomes the visitors and summons them in numerical order to view the exhibition room, which they do in groups of 6–10 individuals every 3–5 minutes. The first visitors to be called enter the room hesitantly. The room soon fills up. By approximately 8:30 the announcements are being ignored, and everyone simply squeezes in. The food and drink in the exhibition is consumed by the visitors, and some of the contents of the cupboards are looted.

8:35 p.m. The exhibited artists descend from their plinths. They and the voice on the loudspeakers request the visitors to begin the grand tour.

Richter leads a first group to the bedroom department on the 2nd floor; Lueg follows with more visitors.

The loudspeakers continue to broadcast dance music, interspersed with selected texts from furniture catalogues. From the 2nd floor the tour proceeds to the living-room department below, and then on through the store room to the kitchen department in the basement. Most of the visitors fail to observe the prescribed itinerary and scatter or stray into the various departments.

By approximately 9 p.m., all the visitors have reached the kitchen department. They seat themselves in the 41 display kitchens and drink the beer provided. One visitor (an art student) protests against the Demonstration by removing all his clothing except a pair of swimming trunks. He is escorted from the building with his clothes under his arm.

By 9:30 p.m. the last visitor has left the building.

#### **6) Newspaper article "Die Kunst, die wir verdienen. Eine deutsche Pop-Art-Ausstellung," Hans Strelow, *Der Mittag*, January 11, 1964**

The Art that We Deserve  
First German Pop Art exhibition

Art is dead. Long live art. In the USA, in England and in France, the New Realism is taking the place of "informel" painting, which is increasingly losing its way in a noncommittal aestheticism. Here in Germany, the change is still looming in fits and starts. A year ago there were a few young artists in Düsseldorf who had just left the academy and did not

want to be swept along in the wide channel of abstract painters. At the time Konrad Lueg and Gerd Richter were working in the vein of Twombly [*sic*] and Liechtenstein [*sic*]. The decision to organize a “happening” in a furniture store was made just a few months ago, and it is perhaps the ideal location to demonstrate what Pop art wants: reality just as it is, unreflected and undigested, agglomerations of material that are largely unordered by spatial perspectives. The barriers between the artist’s life and the work have collapsed. Lueg and Richter included the entire furniture store from the cellar to the roof, as an enormous accumulation of negative forms, in which human beings spend their time.

The ready-made – the object of daily use elevated into an artwork, the discovery of Marcel Duchamp – is not enough for the American George Segal, whom the Düsseldorf gallery Schmela is showing in his first exhibition in Germany. He adds people into the mix. He surprises a woman in a café with a cup in her hand, another, who is painting her nails in front of a mirror, himself as he is getting onto a bicycle. Like the ashes of Vesuvius surprised the people of Pompeii, whose imprints were discovered last century. Segal’s life-size sculptural snapshots may be shocking the first time you confront them, and it is fear of the banality of our reality: the café table with plastic surface and the bench with a plastic covering are there, the people are cast in plaster. Segal, like all representatives of Pop art, shows us a mirror – if it is empty, we have to ask ourselves why. Segal refers to Brancusi’s idea, when speaking of a dream: filling the space that surrounds you. But beyond that it contains the idea of the incapability of pictorial space to capture reality. A new realism could not be that of our grandfathers, after the Dadaists had destroyed their world and its dishonest ideals in an anarchic and passionate act. This is why Pop art has so little to do with, for example, Schwitters’s collages. Pop art is not a protest, but the logical, decisive step from the monochrome canvas, the zero point of conventional art, going beyond it, into reality. Cezanne’s dissolution of natural forms in painting initiated this development. One can reject contemporary art but that won’t change anything about the fact that every time has the art it deserves. And one can accuse Pop art of many things, its primitive nature, its obviousness, but it can certainly not be accused of dishonesty.

## Galerie Parnass Museum Morsbroich (1964)

### 1) Letter from Gerhard Richter and Manfred Kuttner to the Minister of Education of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, April 2, 1964

Dear Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs !

At the end of the winter semester 1963/64 we finished our studies in painting at this city’s Kunstakademie. We both came in 1960 from Dresden, where we had previously studied and continued our studies here. Scholarships from the LAG helped us to finish our studies. By taking initiative regarding exhibition opportunities etc., we tried to set up contact to the outside during our time as students. The question – What happens afterwards? – was never far from our minds. But in order not to be at the mercy of this question and give up, we sometimes had to ignore it. But now the time has come and evasion is no longer possible. We turn to you with this letter not in hopes of a handout but because we believe

that you can understand our position in this situation and would like to ask you to let us know where we can be usefully deployed in a community, a city, or the state. Of course today every worker is needed in business or industry, but if nothing else should be left for us except to earn a livelihood by working at a lathe or on a construction site after 8 semesters of the art academy, it would probably make more sense to take this situation to its logical conclusion and break with tradition, dissolving the painting departments at art schools, including teaching positions and departmental employees. Aged 31 and 27 respectively, we still believe that the visual arts are necessary, also in a time characterized by industry, whether as part of a percent-for-art scheme, as wall-mounted pictures, or as avant-garde experiment. We would be happy to let you know more about our previous activities and can provide references from Prof. K.O. Götz or Prof. Hoehme. Please excuse that we write asking a favor. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

## 2) Financial statement form Gerhard Richter to Manfred Kuttner, March 9, 1964

Gerd Richter, Painter and Graphic Designer in Düsseldorf, Hüttenstr. 71, Tel 18970

To the Painter Mr Manfred Kuttner  
Erkrath (4006)  
Rathelbecker Weg

Düsseldorf , March 9 '64

Dear Mr Kuttner,

Forgive me for making demands upon your valuable time and attention. For me, too, bureaucratic measures, writing, and the like are always extremely inconvenient. But there is nothing for it. So be it then; I will be as concise as is possible.

A. General overview and details of the Wuppertal/Erkrath project. Itemized expenses:

- |                                   |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Rent, 2 days à DM 25           | = DM 50    |
| 2. Insurance, 2 days à DM 5       | = DM 10    |
| 3. Gasoline, 24.6 liters in total | = DM 13.45 |

according to which the total costs of the project amount to DM 73.45

(DM: Seventy-three)

The original accounts can be viewed in my office every day from 9 am – 5 pm.

---

This total sum of DM 73.45 is divided -- according to a verbal agreement -- between Messrs. Kuttner, Lueg, and Richter on March 9, '64 (Mr Polke signaled his agreement at a later date) -- five people, comprising Messrs. Kuttner I, Kuttner II, Lueg, Polke, Richter (in alphabetic order).





Dear Mr Jährling,

I'm sorry I couldn't meet you. I am very happy about the portrait commission. Here's the current stand:

Can be delivered by Christmas

"Sittings" not necessary (never! since I find them distracting), but instead just a few photos of Mrs. Schniewind, from which I'll pick one and paint from it. I need approximate details for the size of the painting. Usually I make two pictures, one "for good," one to throw away. (If at all possible, do not associate the commission with the demand to paint the picture 4 times next to or above the others, roughly like that [image]; I did that once and am really sorry I did, because that is usually barely more than decoration.) A single image is after all so much more beautiful [image]. Best would be if I call you again tonight.

Best wishes, Gerd Richter.

(Sigmar Polke also says hello, we are traveling together.)

#### 4) Newspaper article "OMO (na Lisa) oder der neue Realismus. Pop Art in der Galerie Parnaß," (unsigned article), *Westdeutsche Rundschau*, November 25, 1964

OMO – (na Lisa) or the new Realism  
Pop art in the Galerie Parnass

Three young Düsseldorf artists, just out of the Kunstakademie, are showing in the Galerie Parnass.

If one came to the opening expecting originality, in the form of a happening, a speech, or a musical performance (since the exhibitors are after all exponents of Pop art), then one would have been disappointed. Only an audio tape continuously produced intense noises. One would also have been disappointed by the works of these Pop artists on view, because one has seen Rauschenberg and a few Americans who created this style a few years ago.

There is the painted copy of OMO [washing powder] packaging, there is Mona Lisa is smiling in lurid colors, there are *the praying hands (but not by Dürer)* — early works by Konrad Lueg. At the moment Lueg appears to be obsessed with sport: footballers cut out of cardboard (all formally identical) are arranged in three rows, painted on both sides with striped green, white, and red or orange and blue shirts. They are standing in front of silver foil glued to the wall, so that they reflect their mirror images, and see the "opposing team."

All these works by Lueg are equal and exchangeable; the artist presents them dispassionately. Does he want to shock us with the lurid colors? That will be unsuccessful. Does he want to show us the modern world, a world of individuals without imagination? A world that uncritically elevates an Uwe Seeler [the German footballer] into an idol? But that would need a bit more imagination. As it stands, at any rate, what one sees seems more in praise of banality, a lack of criticality, and superficiality.

Even more vacuous is Sigmar Polke, who has painted large-format exact copies of raster photographs. What for? An artist who stands next to his work and not in it, who can no longer identify with his work, relinquishes art for ridicule.

And last of all Gerd Richter deserves a mention: He is both more gifted and more credible. Richter takes photographs and copies them. But for him the photo is what sketching was for the old masters. Why should one not make use of modern, technical means? But that only makes sense if, as here, the photo is used as a means to an end. Richter succeeded in some pictures (*Mailand: Dom* [Milan: Cathedral]). (Francis Bacon also uses photos — but he subjectivizes them in his paintings and in so doing creates such shocking effects.)

Dadaism had a legitimate purpose, and Pop takes its life from that, even if its practitioners deny it. Dada managed to shock, to shake things up. Maybe the Pop artists will manage that too. But every charlatanism is abominable if it doesn't know the value of laughter and only offers offense.

## Galerie h (1966)

### 1) Letter from Sigmar Polke to August Haseke, January 18, 1966

Düsseldorf, 18 January 1966

Dear Mr Haseke,

Here is the design for our catalogue. We believe that it is very well done, and will certainly impress people and be highly esteemed, in every conceivable way. (To be honest with you, it will be the best catalogue that has ever been made – at least up to now. It will be a first-rate cultural-political event with international significance, groundbreaking and progressive. In one fell swoop your gallery will be at the zenith of culture, mentioned alongside the best in the world, in the same breath as the Museum of Modern Art, Sidney Janis, Leo Castelli, Ileana Sonnabend, Iris Clert, or whatever names the others have, your name together with those of Kahnweiler, Thompson. The public will follow this development with great interest, those in the know will do so with deep satisfaction. The federal government will entrust you with responsibilities to match!)

Now back to the matter in hand.

We have made two catalogues, a small one is the original design, the large one we need to make so big because the typewriter text is bigger than the writing in the catalogue.

We took the catalogue for Neuenhausen (see attached sheet) as our template, by which I mean we took the lines and the approximate number of characters per line from there. We then stuck our texts into the large catalogue. The typesetter's task would now seem to be a very easy one.

Paragraph breaks between individual sections of text should only be introduced if it becomes necessary for reasons of space, which will probably not often be the case. Cuts that would make the typesetting easier can be done if they do not distort the meaning, the

same applies if any lengthening is necessary, but this will only be a question of individual words.

Concerning the photos. (The best ones that we have ever made.) There are 11 of them, one more than was agreed, and if the catalogue cannot cover the additional expense we will gladly pay for it, of course. Although they are of varying sizes, it works out so that they together make up 11 times 1/6 of the page. The measurements have to be taken from the dimensions noted in the small catalogue.

The biographical notes can be typeset in whatever way seems best to you.

I think that's it, if you have any questions, give Richter a call, he is back on Sunday from Rome. But I hope everything seems all right and hope that you like our idea, really like it, and that in spite of financial reasons you are able to decide to take on the catalogue as we have proposed.

With best wishes, your  
Sigmar Polke

## 2) Letter from Gerhard Richter with drawings to August Haseke, no date

Dear Ernst-August,

In haste.

This afternoon I selected the four heads and looked at them under the projector and I went for those that came out not in focus. Hopefully you will be able to make sense of the explanations.

I think all four of them are pretty good, so you can choose.

You'll then have to cut the images to right angles.

I do not think the heads are suitable for small screen-prints.

Picture size of 50x50 is the minimum.

Apologies for brevity. I'll give you a call.

Best wishes,  
Gerhard Richter

King Bernhard von Holland (you'll be able to find out the exact name and title)

Photo so out of focus that the picture isn't like this [image] but the bright upper edge becomes blurry like this [image] (that is, it becomes that wide)

Beatrix (you'll be able to find out...)

Photo so out of focus, that the bright pom-pom on the hat (down on the lower left over Beatrix's invisible ear [image] swells into something egglike (and not into a circle)

Shah of Persia

so out of focus, that only the eyebrow above the eye is visible as a dark spot, but not the eye itself.

### 3) Newspaper article "Alle Maler sollten Fotos abmalen – Auch die Zero-Leute werden jetzt gepopt und getoppt" Rudolf Jüdes, *Hannoversche Rundschau*, March 1966

All Painters should paint from Photographs – Even the Zero artists are now opped, popped, and mocked

"All painters, in fact everybody partout, should paint from photographs. And they should do it as I do it (including as regards the selection). After some time laws can be passed so that those who haven't painted enough from photos are punished. This would have to continue for about 400 years and then painting from photos in Germany should be forbidden."

These sentences are from the catalogue of the newest exhibition currently on view at the "galerie h" in Hannover. The painter Gerhard Richter (Düsseldorf) not only demands that people copy photographs but he does that himself too. The idea is: Art is always the opposite of whatever the majority has recently accepted as art, which is to say, the opposite of what is current. Richter is evidently trying to elegantly shove his painter colleagues from Group Zero off the map, with a dialectical 180-degree turn. And Sigmar Polke (also Düsseldorf-based) is helping him in this project.

Richter paints copies of old photos. Polke makes raster images of old photos. Both make use of the same subject-matter. But still what they both do is not the same, the artistic decisions made in each of their work are even opposed. One could say that Polke is Richter's mirror image, or vice versa, depending on one's point of view. It is good that the two of them have found their way to a pictorial collaboration. The questions that they take up are thus encountered at the same time as their flipside.

Richter uses effects from Op art and Pop art, to ironically present his social critique and engagement. In order to characterize the public consciousness of society, one should look at its photo albums, which is to say all the most private freeze-frames of this society. This, more or less, is the subject of Richter's painting. His painted photos, monochrome in a plethora of shades, and turned into a strain on the eyes through a blurring technique, are content-based critical art and painterly mannerism. The Pop effect is based in the conception of the theme.

Polke experiments with raster techniques. Such experiments have an artistic foundation, that goes back, as in fact with the whole of Op art, to the experiences of Impressionism. Using photos as the original source images is of no significance. In order to develop increases in visual density or places where it thins out or zones of disturbance Polke could also use abstract sources. Richter's engagement is thus here contrasted with the artistic accomplishment of Polke.

The "galerie h" has again hit the mark with this installment of its recently initiated series of avant-garde snapshots.

## Capitalist Realism in Berlin (Galerie René Block, 1964-1971)

**1) Letter from René Block to Gerhard Richter, June 19, 1964**

Rainer Block  
1 Berlin 20, 19 June 1964  
Altpichelsdorf 32 c/o Ruschin

Mr  
Gerd Richter  
Düsseldorf  
Hüttenstrasse 71

Dear Mr Richter,

I am planning on showing a collective exhibition in the fall of '64. I have so far invited Lueg, Salentin, Vostell, Quinte, Hödicke, Brehme, Press, and Kuttner. [Added: Kauffmann]  
[Added: With this exhibition I would like to stake out the work of my gallery.]

I would be very happy if you would participate in this endeavor (with circa 2-3 paintings). If you are not otherwise committed, a solo exhibition could follow next year.

I previously was the director of the department of drawings in the Freie Galerie – the Freie Galerie is surely familiar to you (among others: Manolo, Purrmann, Braque, Antes, and de Karmadec). I intend to expand my activities independently of the Freie Galerie, with about 30m of exhibition walls, and primarily to represent younger art in Berlin.

Should you not have any commitments elsewhere in the fall I would be very happy to hear from you soon (because of the summer break please use my private address), so that I can make a start on making the necessary arrangements concerning publicity.

With best wishes

PS  
Kaufmann, Brehmer, Hödicke have already agreed to participate.

**2) Letter from Manfred Kuttner to René Block, June 24, 1964**

Manfred Kuttner  
4006 Erkrath Rathelbecker Weg 33  
24 June 1964

Dear Mr Block,

Many thanks for your invitation to a group exhibition this coming fall. Please let me know the terms of the exhibition (exact date, transportation costs, etc.) I am not disinclined to participate in this exhibition. At some point we can discuss the possibility of a solo show next year. Please note my new address.

With best wishes

M. Kuttner

**3) Letter from Konrad Lueg to René Block, July 7, 1964 (wrongly dated August 7, 1964)**

Konrad Lueg  
Düsseldorf, 7.8.1964  
Lindemannstr. 75

Dear Mr Block,

I would like to participate in your group show this fall with two paintings. I heard about your conditions etc. from my colleague Gerd Richter. If these also apply to me I would agree to them.

Please do not take it the wrong way if I take the liberty to propose a young, gifted painter for your collective exhibition. It is Sigmar Polke, Düsseldorf, Elisabethstrasse 33. Polke showed at our demonstrative exhibition in May 1963 with Kuttner, Richter, and me.

I would like now already to wish all the best for your autumnal endeavor.

With best wishes,  
Konrad Lueg

Enclosed is the report about an event last year.

**4) Letter from Gerhard Richter to René Block, July 12, 1964**

12.7.64

Dear Mr Block,

Thank you for your letter from July 3 – Mr Lueg has in the meantime written to you that we are interested in seeing Sigmar Polke exhibited at your gallery, because he is a “Pop artist” like Lueg and I. We would be very pleased if that were possible. In order to intensify the “demonstration” of which you spoke, we would very much like to exhibit in one space. We would like ourselves to help install this space and design it in a “demonstrative” way. I can imagine that this is in keeping with your wishes for the show. Perhaps you can write what you think of it. – (With the clichés I want to do my best.)

With best wishes,  
Gerd Richter

4 Düsseldorf  
Hüttenstr. 71

**5) Letter from Sigmar Polke to René Block, July 30, 1964**

Düsseldorf, 30.7.64

Dear Mr Block,

Please forgive my long silence, I just came back home after two weeks' holiday and found your letter waiting for me. But now thank you very much for the invitation to participate in your demonstrative exhibition. I will pick out two of my newer works and make them available, although at the moment I cannot yet decide because I practically just walked through the door, but wanted at least to give you an answer. As soon as possible I will let you know more details and send you photos.

Until then very best wishes!

Sigmar Polke