RASTERBILDER:

Parody in 1960s Representational Art in West Germany

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Abstract

Between 1963 and 1968, German artist Sigmar Polke addressed the subject of disillusioned modernity in a series of paintings called *Rasterbilder*. Polke selected everyday images from the West German mass media, imitating even the technical "rastering" process used to reproduce them, but with an important difference. His manipulations of the Benday dots used in the process imposed progressive distortions on the original images. This diversion of the viewer's attention to the processing of the image impairs the original image's power to communicate its socialized narrative. The *Rasterbilder* thus subvert the clarity and stability of the originals, by forcing the viewer to consider not what they "mean", but how they are made.

This thesis examines the *Rasterbilder* as an organic and independent cultural signifying practice that acknowledges the psychological, cultural and economic events of its time: the Cold War, the West German *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle), the formation of a consumer culture, and the rise of the mass media.

Art has had a strong tradition of being used as a tool of social ideology in Germany. The Third Reich's efforts to label modern art as "degenerate" and to mold visual culture were partly motivated by their desire to entrench symbols of a collective identity for all Germans. After World War II, the East German government took up the banner of representation to reinforce the ideology of worker solidarity. At the same time, through national exhibitions such as *Documenta*, the West German government promoted the abstractionism of modern art, attempting to create a new visual culture linked to those
of other democratic countries. By 1963, when Polke made the first *Rasterbilder*, the conflict between representational and non-representational art, and the political ideologies they had come to symbolize, was well-entrenched. In the context of this conflict in German visual culture, the *Rasterbilder* are an authentic visualization of life in 1960s West Germany.

Where the original media image claims a narrative truth by being a conventionally “realistic” picture of events, individuals, or products, Polke’s paintings create ironic distance from the original narrative by exaggerating its formal qualities, suggesting new questions and interpretations. His technique sets up a parodic duality very different from the works of Pop Artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. All use mass-media visual dynamics, but with very different effects.

The *Rasterbilder* are a form of parody that give the West German viewer an art that is representational, but that at the same time resists the image’s ideological implications of both fascist and communist representation and Western abstraction. The *Rasterbilder* destabilize the volatile media images that were central to the development of West German culture during the Cold War most clearly in a painting like *Bunnies*. Here Polke paints four women wearing the identifiable “Bunny” uniform used in the marketing of memberships in the Playboy clubs. His painting focuses on the juxtaposition of dots rather than the idealised female body used by many West German advertisers in the 1960s. This emphasis on the dynamics of processing is what moves Polke’s *Rasterbilder* beyond a fixed narrative ideology at a time when the social, political, and economic forces influencing post-war Germany used visual culture to promote their own social ends.
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Introduction

“What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow out of this stony rubble?”

T.S. Eliot’s poignant question has come to be a symbol of artistic despair and a search for an answer. The fragmented language and multiple narratives of “The Wasteland” are a rhetorical model for the disillusionment of modernity, as the social ideology of progress crumbled in the devastation of World War I. Eliot’s fragmented world, without moral authority to ground or centre it, influenced not only his contemporaries, but a whole new generation of artists seeking answers in the aftermath of another war more than 40 years later. In the 1960s, German artist Sigmar Polke addressed the subject of disillusioned modernity in a series of paintings called the Rasterbilder. This thesis explores Polke’s use of mass-media images at a time when the utopian vision of rebuilding a new social order after World War II began to fade for many West Germans, just before the civil turmoil of student protest in the late 1960s.

Polke’s use of media images provides a good opportunity to examine how the media projected social identity in post-war German culture, and how the artistic community responded to that projection. Between 1963 and 1969, Polke selected everyday images from the West German mass media, imitating even the technical “rastering” process used to reproduce them. But although Polke imitated both

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images and method of processing, the result was far from an exact copy. The strategies he used to manipulate the rastering of the Benday dots grew more and more intrusive, creating patterns that imposed progressive distortions on the original images. For example, in the early *Berliner* (Fig. 1, 1965), Polke simply mimics a logo from a bakery trade publication, adding four loaves of bread to the reprocessed image. Later on, in *The Duke and Duchess of Windsor* (Fig. 2, 1965), irregularly-shaped raster dots and inverted patterning obliterate the Duke and Duchess’ identifying characteristics. As we will see, Polke’s addition of the four loaves of bread and the processing of raster dots are only two of the visual strategies he used to move the *Rasterbilder* beyond direct appropriation.

The diversion of the viewer’s attention to the processing of the image, and not to its content, impairs the original image’s power to communicate its socialized symbol. When we consider which images Polke is undermining, the focus of his work becomes more clear. The media image usually clarifies or adds drama to a news story, or enhances the desirability of a product. The *Rasterbilder* subvert the clarity and stability of the originals by forcing the viewer to consider not what they “mean,” but how they are made. The images themselves are among the thousands that circulated in 1960s West Germany. Their very pervasiveness creates a visual national identity — models of and for everyday West German life. The social significance of paintings that rely entirely on what has been described as “throwaway images”\(^2\) is central to this thesis.

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This paper will examine how the *Rasterbilder* series is an organic and independent cultural signifying practice that acknowledges what Polke and his colleague Gerhard Richter described as "certain psychological, cultural and economic givens" in both the United States of America and Germany in the 1960s. Some of these "givens" were the Cold War, the West German *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle), the formation of a consumer culture, and the rise of the mass media. These trans-Atlantic social events had a special significance for post-war Germans. How the *Rasterbilder* participated in this psychological, cultural, and economic context is the focus of my thesis. This introduction traces its main themes.

Our first access to the context of the *Rasterbilder* is through the history of the period’s visual culture. Siegfried Gohr’s 1982 essay provides some valuable insight into this. Written for an exhibition on Expressionism (organized by the St. Louis Art Museum), it traces the development of post-war art in Germany:

It soon became apparent after World War II that as they consolidated, the two opposing political systems of East and West had actually split the avant-garde period by 1955. This put Germany, after a decade of indecision, firmly in the grasp of two mutually exclusive artistic doctrines. There were artists, of course, who attempted to build on those traditions and achievements which Hitler’s arts policy had cut short in 1933; their efforts were explained away and finally smothered by a stylistic consensus that in the western section of Germany brought forth a tamed version of non-objective abstraction, and to the east a social realism based on the Soviet model. The ideal stereotypes, which politics made available to art on both sides, left German artists no room for an attempt to meet international standards, not by imitating outside models but by consciously developing new ones out of the idea which two world

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wars had so violently destroyed, and hence, from a position of historical identity, to risk comparison on the international stage.⁴

Gohr’s observations help us understand why Polke’s use of representational media images in the *Rasterbilder* was historically significant. First, Gohr links artistic method with the dominant political ideologies: abstraction becomes the voice of democracy and capitalism, while realism becomes the emblem of socialism and communism. Second, he stresses the post-war division of Germany into ideologies of East and West, which likewise divided German artists into those who used stereotypical Western models of abstract art, and those who relied on the Eastern social realist style. According to Gohr, the political dominance of these models after 1955 inhibited the development of a more authentic visual culture rooted in the social experience of being German during the 20th century.

Given this framework, where does Polke’s *Rasterbilder* fit in? His use of ubiquitous media images, moving from the clear appropriation of the image to the disintegrating dot pattern, places his work in an interesting ideological position. To locate it, we need to briefly examine the history of German visual culture after 1933 in more detail.

Peter Adams has documented how the Third Reich used representational art for social purposes.⁵ He points out that to remove the unsettling effect of its

⁴ Siegfried Gohr, “The Difficulties of German Painting with its own Tradition,” in *Expressionism: A New Art from Germany* (St. Louis: St. Louis Art Museum, 1983), 27.

imagery and to establish a national cultural identity, the fascist government of the Third Reich attempted to wipe out all forms of modern art from public exhibition during the 1930s. In its place, they promoted a type of representational art that conveyed a sense of the permanence and history of nationalistic social values. According to fascist cultural policy, "good" art, unlike "degenerate" modern art, was realistic paintings or sculpture that stressed the values of country life, family, work, and the military. To give a moral and historical authority for this policy, fascist ideology used the iconography of classical Greek and Roman art. These classical images were easily accessible to the German viewer, and conferred a legitimacy on fascist cultural policy.

With the defeat of the Nazis, West-German artists were anxious to redefine modernism. After 1945, many who were previously barred from public exhibition had more and more opportunities to show their work. New galleries began opening in the major cities as part of post-war recovery. As Yule Heibel identifies, much of this early post-war art (shown between 1945 and 1950) was abstract in style. Heibel argues that these artists looked to abstraction because it was most capable of expressing the existential beliefs shared by many Germans immediately after the war.⁶


See also Heibel’s Ph.D. dissertation, “Toward a Reconstruction of Modernism or The Subject’s Dialectic of Evacuation: Modern Painting in Western Germany after World War II,” Harvard University, 1991. Heibel analyzes the different types of post-war German abstraction as a struggle to reconstruct visual subjectivity based on the "image of man." She argues that for some German artists, this reconstruction was a reaction to the Nazi cultural policy that sought to destroy individuality, partly through constructing a rigid image of man.
After 1950, the Bundesrepublik became more aligned with the political and economic ideologies of France, England, and the U.S.A., resulting in a struggle between cultural forces. During the first half of the decade, “furious debates” arose in the German press between the proponents of representational art and abstract art. Carl Hofer, a well-known German artist, championed representation's cause by asserting that it was a more authentic visualization of post-war Germany than abstract art. In contrast, Will Grohman, an art critic, defended abstract art as a new international vision of the post-war condition.

As for the German public, the sudden appearance of abstract art must have been confusing after decades of Nazi ridicule. According to Wieland Schmied, many saw abstraction as a visual style imposed upon them by the victors of World War II. But by 1955, the debates about what direction a new German modernism and art should take became more focused for the public with the first Documenta exhibition.

The year 1955 was an important one for the re-integration of the Bundesrepublik with Western Europe on all levels — social, political, economic, and cultural. Only ten years after the end of the war, West Germany was admitted into NATO and regained its status as a sovereign nation. In Kassel, just a few miles from the East German border, the West German government sponsored the first of what

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would become one of the most important art exhibitions in Europe: Documenta. This first national exhibition sought to re-establish Germany’s position in the art world by including German artists in a documentation of European modernism in the 20th century. The German viewer saw works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Vassily Kandinsky displayed as the guiding influences of 20th-century art. But they also saw the work of German abstract artists like Willie Baumeister, who had previously had their art suppressed, publicly connected with this modern tradition.

Two years later, in 1957, West Germany became economically integrated into Europe through admission into the Common Market, and in another two years, the West German government sponsored Documenta II. This time the exhibition focused entirely on abstract art, in both painting and sculpture. Werner Haftmann’s contribution to the extensive catalogue for Documenta II helps explain why. He described abstract art as “an insignia of true modernism,” because it avoided reproducing reality, but still defined a relationship to it. Tracing the pre-war development of abstraction from Kandinsky, Mondrian, and Klee through to the West German abstract artists, Haftmann went so far as to identify abstract art as the “expression of human liberty.” He instructed the German reader that abstract art internalized “our [Germany’s] radically

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11 Haftmann, 196.
changed relationship to reality and human existence," stressing that abstraction was a part of a world culture. Of course, these words had a special significance to West Germans. Freedom of expression and personal liberty were the basis of the market-driven economy that sharply divided them from their fascist past, and from the communist present in East Germany. In a way, Haftmann equated abstract art with the social substructure of post-war West Germany. His discourse positioned abstract art for the German viewer as a cultural practice that linked West Germany with Western modern culture.

Just as West Germany gradually aligned its art with Western culture, so East Germany followed a similar course with Eastern-bloc countries. As early as 1952, Walter Albrecht, the head of the East German government, defined the "New Man" as a hero-worker who fulfilled the dictates of the new socialist order. The artist had a special role as the creative agent of the new society "because the artist creates this newness, that progressiveness in the development of man, he helps to educate millions to the progressive."

To understand this new role for the artist, East Germans looked to the Soviet model of social realism and the socialist working hero. Soviet artists

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12 Haftmann, 196.

13 Karin Thomas, Zweimal deutsche Kunst nach 1945 (Köln, Germany: DuMont Buchverlag, 1985), 59.

14 Thomas, 61.

manifested this philosophy in an outpouring of representational worker portraits, and of industrial and agrarian landscapes that stressed economic development.\textsuperscript{16} For example, Otto Nagel’s \textit{Junger Maurer von der Stalin-Allee} (Fig. 3, 1953), shows a confident-looking young worker, hand on hip and making direct eye contact with the viewer, standing in front of scaffolding surrounding a new construction site. Gradually, portraits of individual heros like Junger Maurer evolved into idealized images of collective labour, as seen in Ronald Paris’ \textit{Heimkehr vom Felde} (Fig. 4, 1961), a typical genre painting showing field workers returning home after their daily labour.

To give greater direction to young artists living in East Germany, and likely also to offset the attraction of the \textit{Documenta} exhibitions, the East German government held the first \textit{Bitterfelder Conference} in April 1959, a few months before the opening of \textit{Documenta II}. The motto “Seize Your Pen, Comrade! The Socialist National Culture Needs You”\textsuperscript{17} wiped out the distinction between artists and workers. It identified art as a productive enterprise for the common good, turning out representational images to build a social ideology that all people could easily understand.

By 1963, when Polke made the first \textit{Rasterbilder}, the conflict between representational and non-representational art, and the political ideologies they had come to symbolize, were well-entrenched. This thesis examines the social significance of the \textit{Rasterbilder} in the context of this conflict in German visual culture, which was at its

\textsuperscript{16} Thomas, 44.

\textsuperscript{17} Thomas, 61.
height when the paintings were first exhibited in West Germany. The *Rasterbilder*’s imitation of “representational” images selected from the mass media thus had real social resonance for the West German viewer. But in fact, the *Rasterbilder* series is actually a form of parody. Its neutrality toward the content of the image offers the West German viewer a new picture of everyday life, but still in a familiar form. It gives them an art that is representational, but that at the same time resists the image’s ideological implications of both fascist and communist representation and Western abstraction.

We can understand Polke’s use of parody more clearly when we consider the shift in the West German mood from optimism to cynicism in the early 1960s. During the early 1950s, West Germans needed all the hope they could muster to build a new society. Influenced by the aggressively-positive American model of democratic freedoms and market capitalism, many West Germans were filled with the hope that they could rebuild their society on the Western model. However, ten years later, optimism was overtaken by what Schmied has identified as disillusionment “over [the] lost postwar utopias and over the free life in the West.”

Schmied explains further:

> Many ideals of the immediate postwar years began to tarnish about 1960. Among them was the dream of a gradual but inexorable advancement of art toward an ideal, pure, harmonious abstraction; another was the belief, born of naive yearning, in an all-encompassing internationality of the arts. Art can be many things — a passionate attack on injustice, sublime utopia, painful self-revelation, or frightening vision. But one thing it is not is a means to human fraternity, a tool in the service of international

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18 Schmied, 44.
understanding. The cruelties that Germany had inflicted on Europe in a terrible war could not simply be conjured away by a few German artists who, for all their undisputed talent and goodwill, began to paint abstract pictures in the same style and with the same élan as the pioneers of l’art informel/tachisme or Action Painting/Abstract Expressionism in Paris and New York.

Relinquishing these dreams, in which much hope and more enthusiasm had been invested, was no easy task. But by the early 1960s, it had become apparent that German artists had no other choice. Step by step, they emancipated themselves from the ideals of the postwar era, and began gradually to reassess their own traditions.19

This sober reassessment of the reality behind the idealism that supported abstract art was inevitable in the wake of the crumbling political and economic principles of the Adenauer government. For many West Germans, post-war ideals collapsed with the construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961. The Wall made real the symbolic division of the German people. The dream of a unified Germany dissolved under bricks, mortar, barbed wire, and guard posts. West Germany’s social identification with the West in the 1950s proved to be an insurmountable barrier to re-unification. With Adenauer’s election as the first chancellor of West Germany in 1948, the West German government pursued a close economic, political and military alliance with France, England, and the U.S.A. As West Germany moved toward a Western social ideology, East Germany gravitated toward Russia. As a result, many West Germans felt that the only way to re-unite Germany was to take a more neutral position, particularly during the Cold War. But after the actual physical barrier went

19 Schmied, 44.
up, this was impossible. As Norman Birnbaum has said, in the post-Berlin Wall era, West Germany felt a “creeping disorientation.”\(^{20}\) The economic rebuilding of the country became a half-hearted effort of a divided people.

The Berlin Wall was just one of the causes of the general malaise. The 1962 raids on the Der Spiegel offices, arresting reporters and editors and seizing documents, reminded the people of the country’s fascist past.\(^{21}\) The ideals of democracy and freedom of the press once preached by the Adenauer government as part of a re-integration of Western standards and morals became merely words when they collided with government action. Der Spiegel had strongly opposed certain aspects of the government’s foreign policy.

Earlier on, the Wirtschaftswunder, the economic symbol of post-war prosperity, had also begun to crumble, as West Germans began to feel the pinch of the first post-war recession in mid-1960.\(^{22}\) They began to question the value of pursuing “the good life,” marketed by media images of sports cars, spacious apartments, expensive clothes, foreign vacations, and imported furniture.\(^{23}\) The middle class had expanded to include a newly-organized union worker. These workers had a different social identity than the non-union and foreign workers invited to staff the new low-paying factory jobs.\(^{24}\) These members of the newly-reconstituted middle class aspired


\(^{21}\) Fulbrook, 197–200.


\(^{24}\) Watson, 175.
to a much better standard of living. However, they eventually found that they could not live the artificial lifestyle promoted by the mass media. Birnbaum points out that fully two-thirds of the new middle class could not afford the idealized consumption espoused by the social elite and the mass media.²⁵

In the context of this disillusionment with the new Wirtschaftswunder values so vigorously promoted by the media, it is not surprising that Polke would simulate its images with a cynical eye. For imitation to move beyond appropriation into parody, however, the borrowed image must establish its own meaning, in the space created by its difference from the original.²⁶ Successful parody in the visual arts operates through the ambiguity created when the viewer recognizes the parodied image and its source, but also registers that the painted image differs significantly from the object of its appropriation. Examining Polke’s parodic strategy in depth will reveal the social significance of the tension between the content and processing of the Rasterbilder images. When Polke focuses on simulating the raster processing, the socialized media image becomes freer, less limited in its significance. As Polke has said about the Rasterbilder:

I like the blurriness and movement of dots, caused by an enlargement of the picture, the change of recognizability of the subject matter, the indecision of ambiguity of the situation, the remaining opening of openness.²⁷

²⁵ Birnbaum, 59.


²⁷ Sigmar Polke, “Kultur des Raster,” Interview with the Rheinische Post, 10 May 1966.
His subversion of the authority of the media image negates a dominant social motif in representational art. This visual strategy of privileging processing and subordinating content had a specific social significance for West German viewers of the 1960s. The *Rasterbilder*’s use of media images addresses the construction of social identity at the time. One of the dominant images in the series, for example, is that of the female body. As we will see later, Polke’s use of parody as a visual strategy reveals how his society constructed certain understandings about the female body through mass-media images.

For parody to work, the viewer must recognize the interplay between the originally-published image and its distorted duplication. The viewer must see both similarity and difference to grasp its significance. Polke’s use of the mass media as a source of images, and more particularly the type of images he selected, raises questions fundamental to the historical development of representational art in post-war Germany. Why use the mass media as a source? Why not, for example, choose pictures of German cultural icons like movie stars, instead of a boy brushing his teeth, a girl eating buttered bread, and three unknown Japanese dancers? The answers are intimately connected with Polke’s effort to neutralize the social significance of the images in the *Rasterbilder* by painting away from the duplicated images, not toward them. The image is just important enough to prompt the viewer to recognize its media source, and perceive Polke’s attempt to neutralize its ideological significance.

Polke’s ideas about the subordinate position of content in relation to process developed when he was collaborating as a “Capitalist Realist” with Gerhard
Richter, Manfred Küttnner, and Konrad Lueg from 1963 to 1968. Unfortunately, the only available writings by Polke that describe his association with Capitalist Realism are two pieces he co-authored with Richter: a press release\(^{28}\) and an essay for an exhibition catalogue at Galerie h, in Hanover, Germany.\(^{29}\) Given this relative absence of primary source material, I also rely on Richter's writings and interviews to describe the dynamics of Capitalist Realism during the 1960s. Since Polke and Richter were not only fellow students at the Düsseldorf Art Academy during the early 1960s, but also made and exhibited their art jointly, Richter's perspective is a valuable one — especially considering that Polke made the *Rasterbilder* at roughly the same time as he was collaborating with Richter.

The *Rasterbilder* were also made at a time when a group of artists associated with the Düsseldorf Art Academy challenged the authenticity of many of the artistic practices developed in the 1950s. "Fluxus" artists like Joseph Beuys discarded traditional methods of producing and displaying art objects by staging performances that involved the free flow or "fluxing" of various art forms into a single event. As we will see, Polke was aware of artistic developments in New York through publications like *Art International*,\(^{30}\) but his involvement with other Capitalist Realism artists, with

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\(^{28}\) Polke and Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, 15. The press release, in the form of a letter, invited the German news agency to the first collective exhibition of Polke, Richter, Lueg and Küttnner in Düsseldorf. The term “Kapitalistischer Realismus” first appeared in this release. The second time it appeared was on October 5, 1963 in *Der Mittag*, a newspaper circulating primarily in Düsseldorf.

\(^{29}\) Polke and Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, Appendix A, 39–56. The 1966 exhibition showed both Polke’s and Richter’s paintings.

\(^{30}\) One of the photographs that Barbara Rose used to illustrate her article, “Dada Now and Then” (*Art International*, June 23, 1963: 23–28) was a picture of the Sidney Janis Gallery exhibition “New Realists,” held in November 1962. *Der Mittag* used the same photo in its October 5, 1963 story about
Joseph Beuys, and with the Fluxus activities in Düsseldorf was much more immediate and influential. As a result, we have strong evidence to see the *Rasterbilder* not simply as a derivative of American Pop art, but as a body of work strongly influenced by Polke's own artistic community in Düsseldorf.\textsuperscript{31}

The three chapters of this thesis explore these themes in depth. Chapter 1 discusses the production of the *Rasterbilder*, tracing their development from Polke's early drawings and watercolours. The series progresses from a simple juxtapositioning of dots, to the multiple layering of dot screens. Comparisons with the 1960s paintings of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein show Polke's technical association with — and more significant, his departures from — his American contemporaries. Recently Evelyn Weiss and Tilman Osterwold have argued that Pop Art was an international art movement incorporating American, English, and German artists.\textsuperscript{32} They link Polke with Pop Art simply by the fact that he uses media images. However, they do not consider the way Polke manipulates the media images, and more importantly, the types of images he chooses. It is the treatment and images that we'll see are distinctly different from paintings by 1960s Pop artists like Warhol and Lichtenstein. Weiss and

\textsuperscript{31} The exhibition catalogue for *In The Spirit of Fluxus*, organized by Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss at the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1993), makes clear that given how diverse the activities of artists associated with Fluxus in both the USA and Germany during the 1960s were, no single understanding or perspective on Fluxus is possible.

Osterwold’s elevation of the image as a media-driven icon of popular culture is literally and ideologically worlds away from Polke’s neutralization of the image. His work is inescapably rooted in an understanding of 1960s West German society.

Chapters 2 and 3 discuss Polke’s interaction with West German culture in detail. Chapter 2 examines Capital Realism’s association of popular culture and art with the *Wirtschaftswunder*, and also its connection with Fluxus events, via selected West German exhibitions held from 1963 to 1968. Of special interest here is how the press perceived and explained Capitalist Realism to the German viewer, and how Fluxus activities in the Düsseldorf area influenced Polke’s creation of the *Rasterbilder*.

The final chapter considers how Polke’s use of parody affects the type of images he uses: popular post-war symbols of affluence used by the German mass media to boost the *Wirtschaftswunder*. In particular, advertisements using the well-groomed, shapely female body become metaphors for the reconstructed West German economy and for a new set of consumer-oriented social values. The power relationships created by these gender stereotypes are so overt that they allow us to see clearly how Polke’s parodic strategies work to subvert the dominant social values of the period.

As we have seen, Germany’s visual culture has been firmly connected to the ideologies that have influenced its society during the first half of the 20th century — so much so that during the 1950s, many of these social ideologies competed to use art to define an identity for post-war Germany. In the next decade, however, some Germans began to question these values, criticizing them for being imposed from
outside in the aftermath of World War II. Polke was one of those who called this adoption of largely Western values into question. His choice of mass-media images purveying consumerism, and his subsequent manipulation of their formal values points out how popular culture and the *Wirtschaftswunder* shaped so much of the West German identity via the mass media. The *Rasterbilder* thus itself became a form of visual culture that challenged many of the values of daily life in 1960s West Germany.
Chapter 1: The Rasterbilder as Parody

For parody to work in the visual arts, both artist and viewer must share a particular social context. The image must have enough resonance in the social and cultural milieu to be easily recognizable, and must also be politically charged enough that it automatically calls up associations for the viewer. These admittedly simple grounds for understanding how parody works do not imply that we should overlook its complex historical development. As Margaret Rose points out, "Beginning with the Greeks in the fourth century BC [parody was a] comic imitation and transformation of an epic verse . . . ."33 She traces the history of parodic techniques from the classical to the meta-fictional and critical in post-modern society. Her enumeration of parody’s various forms shows us that defining it is somewhat like the old maxim about describing an elephant. You can recognize one when you see it, but explaining what it looks like can get you into trouble, depending on whom you’re talking to.

With this caveat in mind, I will focus on one aspect of parody in Polke’s art that is present in all forms — how he processes the “inter-visuality”34 of the image by transforming it from the original source into the Rasterbilder. When Polke imitates or repeats mass-media images, and in doing so privileges the processing of the image, he displaces the “authoritative” meaning that the source image has come to be charged with. This privileging of process in the context of representational art, where the

33 Rose, 279–283.

34 I use “inter-visuality” to describe the relationship between the original mass-media image and its parody in raster form. The viewer’s perception of the Rasterbilder’s images can be called “inter-visual” because in seeing them, the viewer also perceives the original parodied image and other similar images circulating at that time.
symbolic content of the image is central, allows Polke to subvert both the style and the specific social message encoded in the source image.

Polke's use of mass-media images for the *Rasterbilder* has been well-documented. His interest in the media first became public in April 1963, when he co-authored a press release with fellow artist Gerhard Richter. The two invited the German news agency *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau* to the exhibition “Demonstrative Austellung,” organized by Polke, Richter, Konrad Lueg, and Manfred Küttner in Düsseldorf. The release, written in the form of a letter, describes the exhibition as showing a new form of art to the German public. It says in part:

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 . . . [that can be described by] such terms as Pop Art, Junk Culture, Imperialist or Capitalist Realism, New Objectivity, Naturalism, German Pop and the like. . . . 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

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Caldwell, 10.

36 Polke and Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, 16.
fundamentally changes the face of modern painting and inaugurates an aesthetic revolution.\textsuperscript{37}

In addition to identifying media images as a major cultural force, this letter associates Capitalist Realism with Pop Art and signals a new interest in popular culture as a social signifying practice. However, its connection of the two movements is on a very superficial level.\textsuperscript{38} Chapter 2 examines in depth the complex social dynamics of American Pop Art in West Germany. Like American Pop, Polke’s work does explore the significance of popular culture, but it is ultimately very different from its American counterpart.

All types of media images were equally useful to Polke, regardless of their form or source. As we have seen, the source image for \textit{Berliner} (Fig. 1, 1965) was a commercial logo for a story about baking flour that appeared in a German

\textsuperscript{37} Polke and Richter, in \textit{The Daily Practice}, 16.

\textsuperscript{38} Polke and Richter, in \textit{The Daily Practice}, 16. In a 1993 interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Richter explains the tenuous connection between Capitalist Realism and Pop Art:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Another absurdist text is Polke’s imaginary Richter/Thwaites interview. The term ‘Pop painter’ turns up in that: was it meant ironically, or did you all then define yourselves as the German representatives of Pop Art?}
\end{quote}

It was meant ironically; at that point we were trying to keep our distance from Pop. It was only at the very beginning that we were naive enough to go off with Konrad Fischer and do the rounds of the galleries, Sonnabend and Iris Clert, and announce: ‘We are the German Pop Artists.’

\begin{quote}
\textit{But the use of existing images and texts did come from the influence of Pop, which freed available, popular images from their contexts and saw them in a new way as pictures in new combinations.}
\end{quote}

Yes, of course, but maybe that can also be seen as the time-honoured practice of taking something over, setting it in a new context, and so forth. Nothing new, really.

(from \textit{The Daily Practice}, 256–258)
newspaper.\textsuperscript{39} BZ am Mittag (Fig. 5, 1965) was fashioned after the front page of a 1911 issue of BZ am Mittag magazine (Fig. 5[a], 1965), which featured an article about marriage.\textsuperscript{40} The girls modelling swimsuits in Freundinnen (Fig. 6, 1965) are from yet another magazine cover.\textsuperscript{41} And Taucher (Figs. 7 and 7[a], 1967) came from a photo image of an automobile accident in Stern magazine’s December 1966 issue.\textsuperscript{42} Nevertheless, none of these images is an exact copy of the media original. To some of these Rasterbilder, Polke adds new images, such as the four loaves of bread in Berliner. In others he overlays Benday dot screens, or adds blotches of black ink or paint. Occasionally, he combines all of these visual techniques to produce a painting such as Bunnies (Fig. 8, 1966), a parody of the famous Playboy Club’s use of the female body as a marketing strategy.

These changes create an incongruity between the source image and its Rasterbilder offspring. This chapter discusses how the Rasterbilder created an intervisuality of ubiquitous media images circulating in 1960s West German society, producing a parody that led the viewer to see the images in a specific social context — a context quite different from that of the American Pop artists using media images.

\textsuperscript{39} Hentschel, Appendix image #125.

\textsuperscript{40} Hentschel, Appendix images #126 and #127.

\textsuperscript{41} Hentschel, Appendix images #130 and #131.

\textsuperscript{42} Ingrid Misterek-Plagge, “Kunst mit Fotografie und die frühen Fotogemälde Gerhard Richter” (Münster, Germany: Westfalen, 1992), 306.
Benjamin Buchloh has noted Polke's use of parody as a visual style. His 1982 essay focuses not only on Polke's work, but also on Francis Picabia's and other modern artists' use of commercial objects and production techniques. Buchloh argues that post-war consumer culture converted the socio-political implications of parody in modern art into commodities. For Buchloh, this metamorphosis neutralized the ability of the art to act as a form of social critique. Quoting Marcel Broodthaers' statement that "all art is 'reification'" Buchloh says that this...

Buchloh uses a Marxist methodology that focuses on the post-war transformation of art from an agent of social criticism into a high-priced commodity. Sotheby's 1992 sale of Polke's *raster* portrait of Helmut Klinker (Fig. 9, 1965) for $100,000 US seems to confirm Buchloh's approach. However, this thesis looks at the paintings differently. It is founded on an historical understanding of representational art in Germany, beginning with the influence of the Third Reich in 1933, through to the effects of the division of Germany after World War II and the politicization of both democratic and communist...

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45 Buchloh, "Parody and Appropriation," 34.

46 Helmut Klinker was an important German art collector. Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg also painted portraits of him. See Figures 9[a] and 9[b].
ideologies on art and popular culture. I look at the Rasterbilder not as commodities, but as cultural signifying practices specific to a time and place. As I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, parody depends on this social context. For this reason, my thesis will move beyond discussing the "commodification" of modern art to consider the Rasterbilder as an authentic social vision of the realities and fantasies of life in 1960s West Germany.

An inter-visuality does exist between the source image and its parody simply through the fact of repetition. However, Polke intensifies this relationship to subvert the authority and centrality of the parodied image. In the raster paintings, the clearly-defined media image designed for mass circulation and easy public recognition becomes a matrix of black and white markings. On the surface, this may appear to be a form of one-dimensional ridicule. Margaret Rose points out that the historical dynamics of parody have indeed functioned as a burlesque of the intended target by using ridicule or exaggeration, but largely only in its pre-modern forms.\(^{47}\) She also identifies a post-modern type of parody that she describes as "meta-fictional." This parody is not limited to making fun of the parodied target. It also functions as a "reflection by the authors on their activity as author, or on that of others, or on the structure or composition of another text or on its audience."\(^{48}\) This understanding of parody is a more complex inter-textuality, because it acknowledges the multiple layers of significance between images, artist, and viewer.

\(^{47}\) Rose, 5-53.

\(^{48}\) Rose, 92.
The *Rasterbilder* seem to do more than merely invert the relationship between content and style to question social viewing conventions — a technique that Mikhail Bakhtin describes as having the same effect as a medieval carnival, when fools dressed as wise men and beggars as kings:

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the intellectual order: it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibition.\(^{49}\)

This temporary celebration of a freedom from viewing convention does not appear to be important to Polke. In fact, he mockingly identifies himself with his medium:

‘Believe it or not, I really see my surroundings as dots.’ I love all dots. I am married to many of them. I want all dots to be happy.

Dots are my brothers. I am a dot myself. We always used to play together, but nowadays everyone goes his own way. We meet only on family occasions and ask each other ‘How are things?’\(^{50}\)

Polke is not speaking with Bakhtin’s “optimistic utopianism”\(^{51}\) expressed through comic visual inversion. His cynical identification with his technique reflects a much darker form of indifference that sets himself, his paintings, and dots on equal terms. As we will see in the next chapter, Polke’s statement does not deny the *Rasterbilder* the status of being a significant form of cultural production. However, his tone marks his

\(^{49}\) Hutcheon, 74.

\(^{50}\) Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, “Text for Exhibition Catalogue,” Galerie h, Hanover, Germany, 1966, in *The Daily Practice*, 42.

\(^{51}\) Hutcheon, 74.
parodic style as one of studied indifference. This fits with Schmied’s observation that post-1960s West German art expressed a generalized malaise associated with the loss of the 1950s’ utopian vision. Polke appropriates, mimics, then parodies mass-media images to reject the idealization of post-war German art. Every one of the multiple images he chooses becomes subject to manipulation and exposure as they are subordinated to the play of raster dots.

If we think about the Rasterbilder from the point of view of how they are painted rather than what is painted, the social significance of Polke’s parody becomes clearer. John Caldwell has remarked that Polke uses “throwaway images.” But it might be more accurate to say that Polke uses the images of a throwaway culture. Each of the mass-media images is so saturated with the consumer values of their time and place that it doesn’t really matter which one he chooses. Any image will do. Each is a variation on the same theme, and so loses its individual importance.

Several critics have discussed Polke’s stance of indifference toward the image, but have always identified it as part of the general Pop Art affinity for the everyday. Buchloh compares Polke’s use of media images to Duchamp’s use of ordinary objects as “readymade art,” adopted also by Picabia, Warhol, and Lichtenstein. Marco Livingstone’s study of Pop Art as an international movement characterizes Polke’s use of raster images as an “affinity for commonly available

52 Schmied, 44.
53 Caldwell, 10.
54 Buchloh, “Polke und das GröBe Triviale,” 135–150.
material correspond[ing] to a thematic turning toward [the] material and the consumer world."\(^55\) Livingstone says the images engaged 1960s life "in all its banal familiarity."\(^56\) But a closer look at how Polke produced one of his raster images reveals some important differences between West German and American popular culture that make Polke's signifying practices very separate from those of the American Pop artists.

One early example is the logo used for *Berliner* (Fig. 1, 1965), a graphic of a smiling chef, complete with white hat, focusing on the torso only. The source image initially appeared as part of a story in a German newspaper called "Bäckerblume" (Baking Flour) (Fig. 1[a]). The logo's original significance was simply that it represented the typical West-German baker. In the raster painting, Polke not only modifies the Benday dots that compose the drawing, but changes the logo by adding more related images that expand the matrix. He enlarges the figure of the chef, giving him chest and shoulders, and centres it on the upper half of the canvas. He also adds four loaves of bread, placing them prominently in the foreground. The viewer's attention is now drawn to the product — the baker has become the happy producer of almost aggressively-abundant consumer goods in the new *Wirtschaftswunder* culture. Polke's strategy is to select a ubiquitous mass-media image, then to alter it just enough to draw attention to its form, so the viewer must stop and re-consider it. Mimicking the raster printing process focuses attention firmly on production values rather than the


\(^{56}\) Livingstone, 12.
image’s value as a signifier. The resulting painted image is not a copy of the media logo, but repeats the image in a way that stresses its difference. The source image is at once recognizable and yet newly-composed, so the viewer grasps the carefully-hidden mechanics of the original. As we’ll see later on, the effect is much different than Warhol and Lichtenstein’s more opaque treatment of the process.

To grasp these differences, we need to know more about the technical process. Newspapers, magazines, and other forms of print media use special printing techniques to produce a clear, sharply-defined image. They can’t, for example, use photo negatives to mass-produce an image and expect any degree of precision. To use a photograph, they must transfer the photo to a metal plate. But merely engraving the image onto a plate still does not produce a satisfactory quality of tone, as we can see from Figure 10. To produce the shading required for halftones, the mass media use a special engraving process:

In making a halftone engraving, it is necessary to break up the entire surface of the photo into a multitude of small dots of varying sizes to reproduce the infinite variety of tones in a picture. The dots in the highlighted (light) area will be the smallest; in the middle they will be larger; and in the shadow area the dots will be so large as to merge into solid blacks, relieved only by a tiny white hole in the plate surface.  

The photoengraving process most widely used during the 20th century was invented in 1906 by John Day, a New York printer. His process involved laying a screen (raster in German) of dots and patterns on a lined metal plate, and then chemically fixing the

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photo to the grooved plate. The process reproduced the photo image as a screen of
tonal dots (see Fig. 11). It is this raster processing of Benday dots and patterns that
Polke simulates in the Rasterbilder.

We can see how the Rasterbilder grew out of Polke’s interest in colour,
dots, and patterns in three early works. Two are both entitled Punkt (Dots) (Figs. 12
and 12[a], 1963), and the third Profil-Bild (Fig. 13, 1967). The smaller version of Dots
uses both ball-point pen and watercolours to make irregularly-shaped circles. First
Polke dabs watercolour marks randomly across the paper’s surface. He then uses the
pen to “circle the circles” as it were, with the same haphazard, sloppy casualness that
he made the first watercolour dots with. The juxtaposition of the pale orange dashes
and the sharp blue pen sets up a distinct but harmonious contrast. The larger
watercolour Dots (Fig. 12[a]) is more regular and subdued. Irregular watercolour
circles are again laid out on the paper surface, in a more-or-less horizontal and vertical
grid of coloured circles. Profil-Bild shows the grid becoming more uniform, acting as
the anchor for the representational image that grows out of it. Here Polke lays out a
vertical grid of thin black lines and over it a pattern of small square boxes, each
containing a small white star. A blue line connects the boxed stars, forming a man’s
profile. This raster process of laying out a grid of dots, then connecting them to create
an image, is taken another step further in Rasterzeichung (Portrait of Lee Harvey
Oswald) (Fig. 14, 1963).

Most viewers immediately associate any portrait of Oswald with
President John F. Kennedy’s assassination on November 9, 1963. Oswald’s image
became immediately recognizable to the public through the extensive reporting of the events around the world. However, Polke seems to show no interest in Oswald’s intensifying celebrity status, simply reproducing his profile through the interplay of dots. In fact the effect is rather an opposite one, as Oswald becomes yet another black-and-white image processed by the media. The background and Oswald’s profile are defined by white space rather than line, while his hair and distinguishing facial features are filled in by white dots in black space. After applying a single grid of black dots on white paper, Polke joined certain dots with black paint to form Oswald’s features, then added some white dots in the blacked-out areas. The result is a version of the halftone engraving process, only rendered by hand, in paint.

Polke uses other methods to pull representational images from a grid of geometric dot patterns. The table in the *Rasterbilder Tisch* (Fig. 15, 1963), like Oswald’s face, is formed by juxtaposing two different grid screens against an overall background grid of black dots. In addition to the interplay of these patterns, which form the undersection of the table, Polke has drawn thin lines connecting the dots in the background pattern to create the table top, a vase standing on it, and a picture frame in the upper-left corner. Polke has moved away from the simple patterns of dots seen in the portrait of Oswald, to juxtaposing a series of different screens and using sharp, thin lines to connect the dots. This use of line is the central feature in *Ohne Titel* (Untitled: Vase) (Fig. 16, 1965). Here Polke has abandoned the grid entirely — the line is the dominant structural form, giving the table, a vase with flowers, and picture frames a solid presence. It’s a stark contrast to *Vase II* (Fig. 17, 1965), where
Polke gives a similar vase and tabletop a very different treatment. He again integrates the use of grids with lines, but this time emphasizes the grids. Polke lays out a single screen of coloured dots, then places a screen of black dots vertically to the canvas surface, contained by thin lines barely tracing the vase and flowers. Without a close inspection, the viewer can't see the vase's outline. The objects appear to be formed merely by the cluster of black raster dots over the pink-and-blue background grid.

This overlay of grid patterns marks a significant change in Polke's production techniques. In the early *Rasterbilder*, he hand-painted dots with a rounded object, such as a pencil eraser or a brush (see Fig. 18). Later on, he applied paint to the surface over a pre-formed stencil to make the Benday dot patterns. Using multiple overlays allowed Polke to manipulate the image, simply by slightly adjusting the overlapping dot screens. The shift in focus that this more sophisticated technique allowed is most pronounced in *Bunnies* (Fig. 8, 1966). This raster painting shows four women standing together casually, yet posed for the camera. Each is wearing the headpiece of rabbit ears and the skintight uniform that marked them as Playboy Bunnies, cocktail waitresses at the private Playboy Clubs, who sold memberships to men via the mass media. Like Oswald, they have become mass-media commodities for visual consumption. Each woman's identity is submerged under a marketable exterior. Polke builds their figures by overlaying and shifting the register of three dot patterns having different tonal ranges. Simple black dots surrounded by white bands are mixed with grainier grey areas, and white dots surrounded by black bands. Polke plays against the underlying blacks and whites by adding off-register colours: a mix of
yellows, pinks, and violet-blues. These multiple layers of overlapping dots impede the clarity of the image — the women have become de-personalized figures of dots with long legs and short costumes. The overt sexuality of the Playboy ads is undercut by Polke’s technique of parodying the raster processing. Reducing a photograph of individual women to a pattern of bleached-out dots allows Polke to shift the focus of the original Bunny ad. A true post-modernist parodist, he both simplifies and adds complexity to the commercial technique through his formal interplay of dots and colour. As a result, he invites the viewer to do the same to the image’s content.

_Bunnies_ shows how Polke’s formal manipulations of off-register images shift the subject matter in and out of focus. The resulting diffused image is obscure enough to prevent immediate _identification_ with the image; yet clear enough to permit _recognition_ and insist that we see the difference. These are the mechanics of parody: similarity but with a difference.59

Other visual techniques work with the shift in register to imitate but differentiate the raster images from their media models. Black blotches scattered over _Tisch_ (Fig. 15) and _Berliner_ (Fig. 1) suggest printing errors, counteracting the smooth, finished quality of the mass-media originals. The messy surface of the raster paintings reminds the viewer again that we are not looking at the perfect media image that replicates the parodied image in all its hyper-glorification. We are seeing difference rather than sameness. Polke’s off-register printing colours are similarly deliberate errors. As we saw in _Bunnies_, the faded yellows, pinks, and violet-blues are not the

59 Hutcheon, 7.
typical airbrushed flesh tones of Playboy photos. They suggest a poorly-processed printing job, a product that doesn’t fit the mould. *Freundinnen (Girlfriends)* (Fig. 6, 1965) uses colour in a similar way. Two young women are self-consciously striking “sexy” poses. Blotched and uneven tones of pink-red define the form of one of the girls, while the other is simply composed of shaded blue dots. The bleached-out yellow background becomes more intense on the right edge of the canvas, focusing attention away from the figures. The technique seems to suggest that the two girls are — like the Bunnies — carelessly bleached out, used to sell familiar goods. As Polke pointed out in the letter to the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*, this treatment of the image crosses cultural boundaries. *Bunnies* incorporates American cultural symbols into the *Rasterbilder* series, while in *Japanische Tänzerinnen (Japanese Dancers)* (Fig. 19, 1966) Polke looks to the Far East. As in *Bunnies*, he juxtaposes Benday dot patterns and applies a washed-out yellow painting over the surface of the canvas to parody Eastern culture in modern showgirl dress.

More intrusive formal changes in other *Rasterbilder* make their differences even more pronounced. We have already seen how the addition of four loaves of bread to *Berliner* gives much more emphasis to the image’s focus on the product for consumption. If we look closely at *Bunnies*, we see more subtle but still intrusive additions. Polke has drawn in shoulder straps, and bent the bunny ears. According to Playboy Enterprises, the bunny uniforms were never supported by such
straps, nor were the ears ever bent. Are Polke's Bunnies more modest, or worse for wear? Or is he teasing us to see them so? In Taucher (Fig. 7, 1967), Polke again takes liberties with the source image (Fig. 7[a]). Comparing the two reveals that he has blended out the landscape setting of the land and water (which are crucial to understanding the original news story of the accident) and added another diver and some scuba equipment to the canvas, shifting the focus more squarely to the new figure. Polke's strategy removes the image from the confining limitations of the accident as reported and visualized by Stern. The raster painting becomes more open-ended. What are the four black forms, presumably divers, going after? Who is the man in the white jacket, what is he pointing at, and what has happened? Taucher's narrative is no clearer than the various shades of grey realized by the overlapping of black-and-white dots. Where the original media image claims a narrative truth by being a conventionally "realistic" picture of an event, Polke's painting creates ironic distance from the original narrative by exaggerating its formal qualities and suggesting new questions and interpretations.

These overt, formal intrusions and consciously sloppy technique are what sets Polke's work far apart from the smoothly-precise Pop mainstream. Like Polke, American Pop artists Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol also appropriated mass-media images, and commented on the socializing forces of 1960s consumer culture. But even early on, critics recognized that the differences were more remarkable than the similarities. As early as 1964, the German newspaper Der Tagesspiegel observed that

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in the *Rasterbilder* “Polke gets very close to Lichtenstein’s raster painting; however there might be an increasing harshness to be expected [in Lichtenstein’s paintings] to replace the still very painterly softness sometimes presented in [Polke’s] paintings. Polke’s paintings are of a monstrous fascination.” 

Polke and Lichtenstein both mimicked commonality in Benday dots and had an affinity for the mass media. However, the differences between their work ultimately overshadow the similarities.

A close examination of one of Lichtenstein’s works shows how he uses the same tools as Polke, but with a much different effect. Like Polke’s *Bunnies*, *Freundinnen*, and *Japanische Tänzerinnen*, Lichtenstein’s *Girl with Ball* (Fig. 20, 1961) depicts a young woman wearing clothing that reveals her body — in this case, a bathing suit. She holds a large beachball over her head. The source image appeared in a New York newspaper to attract upper-middle income families to Mount Airy Lodge, a large resort in Pennsylvania (Fig. 20[a]).

Lichtenstein enlarges both woman and beachball to occupy the entire canvas, changing the scale of the original figure to create a more dramatic impact. Not only does the enlarged scale and absent text distinguish the painting from the original media model, but Lichtenstein also adds a precision and clarity to the design quality of the woman’s figure not present in the advertisement. He delineates the figure with a thick blue line that sharply contrasts the solid areas of yellow, blue, white, red and the pinkish raster dots.

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61 Der *Tagesspiegel*, September 18, 1964.

This contrast, precision, and clarity are what distinguishes Lichtenstein’s images from Polke’s *Rasterbilder*. Lichtenstein uses the same tools, but in a different manner. In all of his 1960s paintings, he juxtaposes dots against line, colour, and form to simplify and clarify the image, which heightens the effect of the mass media production technique rather than radically altering it. Lichtenstein outlines various elements of his painting deliberately to imitate the graphic design used by the media model. As a result, he creates similarity rather than difference. After choosing an ad or comic-strip image, Lichtenstein drew freehand, or projected the image onto a canvas. When he had transferred the basics of the composition to the canvas, he then painted-in the image with a pattern of dots, either by hand or using a metal stencil. Applying paint with a roller resulted in an even distribution of colour over the surface of the canvas. This method produced well-rounded dots in a regulated pattern of lines. Because Lichtenstein does not juxtapose, reverse, or overlay multiple dot screens, unlike Polke, his dots maintain a one-to-one correspondence to the original image. If we compare Lichtenstein’s *The Refrigerator* (Fig. 21, 1962) to its source advertisement, we can see how he increases its graphic clarity, and makes the new image even more overtly “real” (see Fig. 21[a]).

Buchloh aptly comments that Lichtenstein imposed on his painterly reproductions “chromatic and compositional ordering principles of a rigid, predetermined nature . . . [that] enabled him to refrain from almost all creative decisions.”\(^{63}\) In other words, Lichtenstein accepted and repeated the structured

composition of the media images, exaggerating their graphic clarity to emphasize their status as mechanically mass-produced icons of American culture. Lichtenstein himself points out how this hyper-duplication of commercial techniques idealizes the image:

> This [comic strip] technique is a perfect example of an industrial process that developed as a direct result of the need for inexpensive and quick colour printing. These printing symbols attain perfection in the hands of commercial artists through the continuing idealization of the image made compatible with commercial considerations.\textsuperscript{64}

Where Lichtenstein maintains the structured relationship between painted image and media image, Polke changes its formal values by manipulating commercial processing techniques. On another level, Lichtenstein's careful delineation of the idealized image plays into the viewer's expectations, idealizing it even further to emphasize its iconic status. Polke's shifting register of dots, colour, and printing errors subverts our expectations, creating difference and dislocation.

Lichtenstein's interest in commercial processing techniques to idealize media images also shows up in his use of heavy outlines and bright contrasting colours. In *The Engagement Ring* (Fig. 22, 1961), the same wide black line defines the individual features of all the objects in the composition: man, woman, lamps, drapes and window. Boldly-contrasting primary colours mix with white and black to further emphasize the comic-book quality. Lucidly defined with a shading differential, colour is applied at full strength. Polke, on the other hand, shows no interest in such deliberate segmentation. In the only places where he uses outlines, *Vase II* and *Tisch*,

the lines are only faintly visible. They almost look like sketches from initial drawings rather than integral parts of the finished painting. As we saw in Bunnies, Japanische Tänzerinnen, and Freundinnen, Polke’s colours are muted and diluted, imitations of mistakes rather than ideals.

Similar sets of differences appear when we compare Polke’s work to that of Lichtenstein’s contemporary, Andy Warhol. Warhol also reproduced the graphic techniques of 1960s media images in painted form, but with a twist. Rather than turning products into cultural icons, he turned cultural icons into products.

From 1962–63, Warhol produced multiple images of female movie stars using silkscreen techniques, which simply duplicated the original images. For Marilyn Monroe, he selected Gene Kornman’s publicity still from the 1953 film “Niagara.” (Fig. 23, 1962) The original image was a full-bust portrait of the film star. Warhol isolated Monroe’s head by cropping the photo at the collarbone. His pencil drawing of the cropped image was transferred onto a synthetic film, which was then silk-screened to produce the final image. The line drawing established which areas would be applied with colour, such as Monroe’s eyes, lips, and hair. These were set off with masking tape, which clearly divided the flat, brilliant hues from one another. The effect was an idealized, sharp-edged, and hyper-real image, similar to Lichtenstein’s comic strips.

The images produced by both artists share an arresting visibility and easy product identification that attracted and held the viewer’s gaze.

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As we saw when we compared Polke's work to Lichtenstein's, Polke shares Warhol's interest in mass-media images. All three artists selected mass-produced and distributed images, and aimed to duplicate their processing techniques. However, the technical similarities end there. The Rasterbilder deliberately avoid the clean look of Warhol's and Lichtenstein's paintings. The sharp outlines in Lichtenstein's Girl with Ball and Warhol's Marilyn Monroe become a diffused mixture of Benday dots, washed-out colour, and blank space in Polke's Bunnies and Freundinnen. The centrality of the female body as product in Lichtenstein's and Warhol's paintings is emphasized by the cleanness of the graphic design and the bright hues required for easy recognition. It's a treatment of content that suggests veneration rather than indifference. It's also a treatment that Polke was aware of and capable of executing, as we can see from some works completed before the Rasterbilder.

Earlier on, from 1963–64, Polke had experimented with the graphic designs used by mass merchandising, in a series of paintings featuring consumable goods. Socken (Fig. 24, 1963) shows three sharp-edged, precisely-folded maroon stockings. In Der Wurstesser (1963), a string of sausages spreads across the canvas in a similar hyper-realist style, about to be eaten by an open-mouthed man in the upper-right corner. (Food was a favourite subject matter for these "graphic"-style paintings. In the social context of post-war West Germany, the subject matter would have special importance.\(^{66}\) The next year's biscuits in Kekse (Fig. 25, 1964), the chocolate bar of

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Schokoladenbild (Fig. 26, 1964), and plastic tubs in Plastik-Wannen (Fig. 27, 1964) all show the same graphic precision of composition, line, and colour found in Warhol’s and Lichtenstein’s works. They were based on the marketing logos that were the underpinning of consumer culture, and used formal techniques associated with commercial illustration. The products they represent certainly had significance in post-war Germany. As Katharina Schmidt says, “They express the privations endured and the astonished contemplation of a sudden newfound abundance. Deprivation and riches occupy the opposite ends of the comic seesaw, and neither one seems willing to give up the game.”

The point is that Polke chose to move away from an idealized rendering of the manufactured products. Why? Clearly it could not achieve the effects he wanted. By subordinating and manipulating content to the rastering technique, Polke could create a wider gap, a deeper inter-visuality, between the ideal and the real that moved his work out of the Pop mainstream and into a more specific parody of images in West German visual culture. Chapter 2 explores the social and cultural forces behind this transformation.

67 Schmidt, 34.
Chapter 2: The Influence of Capitalist Realism

So far I have identified Polke's *Rasterbilder* as separate from the Pop Art mainstream on largely technical grounds, examining how his *rastering* sets up a parodic duality very different from the works of Pop Artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. This chapter examines the cultural and social forces operating in 1960s West Germany that inform the *Rasterbilder*’s style. Let us begin by looking at Polke’s personal history (intertwined with the social history of Germany immediately before and after World War II) and his creative collaborations, principally with Gerhard Richter and the other “Capitalist Realists.”

Polke and Richter expressed shared ideas, concepts, and values through their collaborations from 1963 to 1968. In 1964, Richter commented on how important the association was:

"Contact with like-minded painters — group means a great deal to me. Nothing happens in isolation. We have worked out our ideas largely by talking them through. Shutting myself away in the country, for instance, would do nothing for me. One depends on one’s surroundings. And as the exchange of the other artists — especially the collaboration with Lueg and Polke — matters a lot to me: it is part of the input that I need."\(^{68}\)

This intellectual affinity can be partially explained by the shared experience of living through a devastating war. Since Polke and Richter had both lived in fascist Germany,\(^{69}\) their early experience of visual culture was based on the ideology that all

\(^{68}\) Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, 24.

\(^{69}\) Polke was born in 1941 in Oels, Silesia (now Olesnica, Poland). Richter was born in 1932, in Dresden.
forms of modern art destabilized modern society and corrupted German morals. In lieu of modern art, the Nazis substituted stereotypical images that sought to form a national consciousness for all Germans. As Adolf Hitler said, “Art has at all times been the experience of an ideology and religious experience and at the same time the expression of a political will.”

Peter Adams has documented how the Third Reich used certain stereotypical concepts, forms, and styles to create a consistent National Socialist model for the German people. Classical iconography gave legitimacy to realistic paintings and sculpture that venerated simple country life, family, work, and military power.

After the war, while Polke and Richter were still in East Germany, a similar visual ideology based on the Soviet model of Social Realism used idealized images of families, workers, farmers, and soldiers as emblems of social heros. Like the National Socialists, the East German communist government banned all forms of art that did not conform to its ideals of a national workers’ solidarity.

When Polke and Richter moved to West Germany, they were confronted by an equally earnest but contradictory cultural programming. The West German government had sponsored Documenta I in 1955, to re-connect German artists with Western culture and modernism. Four years later, the emphasis shifted to abstract

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70 Adams, 9.

71 Adams, 10.

72 Thomas, 45–63.

73 Craig, 230.

74 Polke emigrated to West Germany in 1953, and Richter in 1961. Beginning in 1961, both artists studied at Kunstakadmie, Düsseldorf.
art in Documenta II. Abstraction had now become a progressive form of visual culture by purporting to be a universal language that cut across all national boundaries. Little wonder that in 1963, Polke and Richter looked — with more than a little cynicism — for a totally new way to express their vision of post-war life. What better way to do this than by using the inescapable force of the mass media?

It is an understatement to say that the rise of the mass media after World War II had international impact. In West Germany, as in America, it played a critical role in forming a new post-war national identity. As John Ardagh has described, before World War II the German press consisted of hundreds of small newspapers that primarily focused on local events. A truly national media did not exist before the rise of fascism in 1933; the German public didn’t conceive of a national identity as being paramount over a local one. After the war this all changed, at least for West Germans. One of the principal factors that contributed most to raising a national consciousness was Konrad Adenauer’s policy to build a strong central government in Bonn to counterbalance the power in East Germany during the Cold War. The other was his desire to integrate the Bundesrepublik as a sovereign nation with other democratic and capitalist Western countries, primarily France and the United States of America. Events involving Germans began to take on a national and international importance as parochial interests became subordinated to national directives.

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75 Ardagh, 361.

76 Craig, 41–54 and Ardagh, 11–24.

77 Ardagh, 84–90.
At this time, entrepreneurs like Alex Springer began building large media empires of newspapers and magazines to capitalize on this new national consciousness. Springer’s newspaper Bild Zeitung was one of the first to build a national distribution. Others followed to compete for a national readership. The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung provided a conservative business orientation to events, while Die Welt (another Springer paper) was more liberal in its coverage. The Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Rundschau, rival papers, vied for the liberal readership. Strong national magazines also emerged. Stern and Der Spiegel, patterned after the American Time magazine, reported national and international events weekly. These national media slowly re-shaped how millions of West German readers saw themselves and their society.

As in North America, the resulting social effects became a concern for many intellectuals. Marshall McLuhan was one of the first to point out the media’s totalitarian tendencies:

All media works us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the message. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media works as environment.79

Many West German writers also began discussing the transformative power that did so much more than merely distribute news stories and events to a reading public. Two

78 Ardagh, 364.

books dealing with the new media power widely circulated in West Germany were Eric Fromm’s *The Same Society* (1955) and later on, Herbert Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* (1964). In *The Same Society*, Fromm analyses the media’s power to build consensus. Nine years later Marcuse could use more forceful language, saying outright that the media was a new form of social control. He believed the mass media was so powerful as an agency of socialization that it displaced the primacy of the family in post-war society. Marcuse and Fromm do not contest the legitimacy of any social reality produced by the media. Their concern is rather the media’s power to manipulate how we perceive everyday events. They address how texts and images produced by modern technology re-create images of society and the individual’s place in it.

Polke and Richter understood the power of the mass media very well. In their letter to the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau* in 1963, inviting the news agency to their first joint art exhibition in Düsseldorf, they were careful to position themselves as artists who acknowledged the media’s power, saying:

> Pop Art recognizes the modern mass media as a genuine cultural phenomenon and turns their attributes, formulations, and content, through artifice, into art.

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83 Polke and Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, 16.
Capitalist Realism identifies the mass media as a genuine cultural force in West German society. For the Capitalist Realism artists, the media was not just reporting events. The newspapers and magazines visualizing everyday life in West Germany defined the social values the country used to rebuild itself after World War II and during the Cold War. The second point stressed in the letter was that conventional art — presumably the dominant forces of abstract art in West Germany and representative Social Realism in East Germany — no longer visualized modern culture for West Germans. For this reason, the Capitalist Realist artists rejected conventional art, “its sterility, isolationism and artifacts, its taboos and its rules.”

Polke and Richter also explained that their art used “certain aspects of mass media such as format and content [for their] own uses and the process of art production.” Finally, the artists emphasized that their new art was not a copy of American Pop Art, even though it also used the media as the source of its images. The invitation to the news agency explained that 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 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.

Capitalist Realism did have special significance in the context of 1960s West Germany that was separate from the American Pop Art phenomenon. Although

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84 Polke and Richter, in The Daily Practice, 16.

85 Polke and Richter, in The Daily Practice, 16.

86 Polke and Richter, in The Daily Practice, 16.
we’ll later see that Richter dismissed a wider social significance for Kapitalistischer Realismus, it got such wide exposure through 1960s exhibitions and newspapers that today it is a common name for Polke’s, Richter’s, Lueg’s, and Küttner’s collaboration to identify post-war West German art with the power of the mass media. In addition to its cultural implications, Capitalist Realism also acted as a political dynamic. Even if it was intended as cynical commentary, it was a social provocation that could not fail to have political and economic implications, occurring as it did two years after the construction of the Berlin Wall. Jürgen Harten has said:

To see the frivolity that probably gave rise to the slogan one must remember that at the time ideological taboos attached to the very mention of the terms Socialism and certainly capitalism – the Federal Republic of Germany was very far from any dialogue with the East.

The fact that Polke, Richter, Lueg, and Küttner dared to call their art “capitalist” and “realist” in the same breath was shocking in the social deadlock between East and West Germany. The two socially-charged words created an ambiguity that set up a perfect context to parody cultural images of everyday life and artistic convention.

The Capitalist Realist “manifesto” caught the attention of the press enough to do a story on it. On October 5, 1963, Der Mittag carried a piece about the forthcoming “Demonstration for Capitalist Realism — Life with Pop,” to be held the next week at the Berges Furniture Store in Düsseldorf. The event was organized by

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Richter and Lueg, who took great care to call it a "demonstration" rather than an art exhibition, even though they did exhibit their paintings. The article’s explanation of what Capitalist Realism was, and how it applied to the forthcoming event, was sketchy at best: "The exhibition — I have forgotten to mention — stands under the motto: Life with Pop — A demonstration of Capitalist Realism." It did, however, mention Pop Art to try and set a context for its readers: "The artistic movement called ‘Pop Art’ is considered to be the greatest radical change of art in America since Cubism." The reader got no textural clues to connect Capitalist Realism and American Pop Art, but the accompanying photo (Fig. 28) did provide a clearer association. The image shows an installation view of part of the New Realists’ exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, 1962. Considering the paper’s thin supply of information on modern art, this picture was likely supplied by Richter and Lueg. It originally appeared in an article written by Barbara Rose called “Dada Now and Then” (Fig. 28[a]), in which Rose explained the difference between artists’ historical and contemporary practices of using everyday images or objects. After outlining the post-war debates on the dominance of abstraction and the subordination of representation, she explains that “New Realist” art marks the rejection of abstract art, and the return of the

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89 Der Mittag, October 5, 1963, 18.

90 Der Mittag, October 5, 1963, 18.


representational image, “via T.V., magazines, highway billboards, supermarkets, comic books and by the way of saloon paintings or Social Realism.”

Der Mittag offered no explanation for Capitalist Realism’s use of mass culture, but did comment on its irony, observing that

It shows less pictures than objects . . . none of the art objects will be for sale when every other item in the store is available for purchase . . . this demonstration for Capitalist Realism has no mercantile traits, that is, the exhibited objects are not for sale; which shows on the other hand an absolute idealistic outlook. Because Capitalist reality can hardly be separated from money and the pursuit of profit.

The article wryly sums up that “whether one wants to live with Pop or not — one has to live in any case with furniture.” Though none of the paintings were for sale, the “Demonstration of Life with Pop” did associate Capitalist Realism with the consumer culture of post-war West Germany — even if the newspaper poked a little fun at it:

But in order that one might also say something very favourable about Capitalist Reality, here from Berges:

Special offer of the season:
a clothes closet with shelves, 110 cm
a bed 100/200 cm
a night table
everything genuine ‘Tola’ complete DM 266.

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93 Barbara Rose, 23–28.

94 Der Mittag, October 5, 1963, 18.

95 Der Mittag, October 5, 1963, 18.

96 Der Mittag, October 5, 1963, 18.
Insignificant as it might have appeared at the time, *Life with Pop* has been described as one of the most important art exhibitions held in Europe during the 20th century.\(^{97}\) Adopting the *Wirtschaftswunder*'s systems of mass production, distribution, and marketing, it equated art with the household furnishings displayed and for sale. But it also connected art with the reality of living in post-war Germany by exhibiting both art and artists as part of an economic system that played a significant role in the division of the country. If we examine *Life with Pop* in greater detail, we will better understand Capitalist Realism's significance to Polke's *Rasterbilder*.

In a 1970 interview with Rolf Gunther Dienst, Richter described *Life with Pop* as a Capitalist Realism “Happening”:

> I'd like to come back to that slogan 'Capitalist Realism.'

Heinz Ohff reported that you were an adherent of Socialist Realism.

Lueg and I used ‘Capitalist Realism’ as a slogan for a Happening. And that’s how it caught on. It was not so much about our work as about that particular Happening.\(^{98}\)

Richter’s identification of *Life with Pop* as a “particular Happening” places the event in the context of a lively debate about the relationship between art and its audience that was taking place in Düsseldorf at the time. It came to a head just a few months before, on July 18, 1963 at Galerie Zwirner. Allan Kaprow and Joseph Beuys debated the

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\(^{98}\) Obrist, 62.
structural differences between “Happenings” and “Fluxus” events. Both sought to subvert the traditional categories and aesthetics of art to create a new art form that reflected the experience of everyday life by collapsing formal genres. Kaprow, a performance artist who had studied with the avant-garde musician John Cage, was a proponent of the Happening. Beuys was an artist and professor of sculpture at the Düsseldorf Kunst Academy, where Polke and Richter were students. Beuys specialized in Fluxus performances: the free-flow or “fluxing” of various art forms into a single event. Words, sounds, and actions of all kinds came together at once to bring art and “real” life into one experience. Beuys argued for the significance of the artist as a performer acting out a planned ritual, with the audience as passive observers. Kaprow, on the other hand, insisted that a true Happening was a spontaneous, interactive event between the artist and audience, an improvised theatrical activity. But although they differed on the means, both Beuys and Kaprow recognized the importance of art exhibited in the present, in an immediate time and space rather than in a gallery, detached from life. They also agreed that the artist no longer needed credentials as a painter, sculptor, actor, or dancer. He or she could be anyone. As Beuys said, “everyone is an artist.”

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101 Stachelhaus, 61. The origins of this debate go back to 1958, when John Cage and Nam June Paik performed a musical composition at Galerie 22, Düsseldorf. They demonstrated Cage’s theories that a musical piece was always in a continuous process of change, and that everyday objects could and should be used as musical instruments, because music was based on the sounds of daily life. Beuys attended this event, as he did Paik’s concert in 1962 at the “Neo-Dada in der Musik” festival at the Düsseldorf Kammespiele (see Temken, 49). It appears that Cage’s ideas influenced both Kaprow
Beuys' first Fluxus concert at the Düsseldorf Academy, "Festum Fluxorum Fluxus," was held on February 2 and 3, 1963. Like Cage and the artist Nam June Paik, he did not seek to operate within any traditional aesthetic of culture. Orchestrating various forms of visual, spoken, and auditory art, Beuys abandoned traditional sound and instrumentation, stressing instead the continuous flow of activity. On the first night, Beuys played "Composition for Two Musicians," winding up a musical toy and watching its two mechanical musicians play until wound down. The second night he played the first movement of his "Siberian Symphony." This he performed sitting at a piano surrounded by a chalkboard, a dead hare, electrical wire, and assorted debris (Fig. 30). The events were introduced and explained by Jean Pierre Wilhelm, the former owner of Galerie 22 in Düsseldorf. While Wilhelm owned Galerie 22, he featured a mixed program of abstract paintings by artists such as Karl Otto Göetz and Gerhard Hoehme, Polke's teachers at the Academy, as well as featuring Happenings and Fluxus events.

As Polke has said, he "felt at home in the Wilhelm Gallery." It's not a big leap to conclude that he was influenced by the Fluxus focus on process, and on

and Beuys, though they stressed only the differences at Galerie Zwirner.


104 Klaus Schrenk ed., *Aufbrüche* (Köln, Germany: DuMont Buchverlag, 1984), 87. Jean-Pierre Wilhelm opened Galerie 22 in 1957. In addition to Fluxus events, visual artists who had studied with Cage, such as Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly, were also exhibited.

105 Hentschel, 64.
using non-traditional materials. Polke began producing the *Rasterbilder* right at the height of the Fluxes and Happenings that were an integral part of his environment.

With this outline of the debates on the role of art and artists in Düsseldorf, we can now better understand Richter’s description of *Life with Pop* as a “particular Happening.” Let’s take a closer look at the event itself.

*Life with Pop* incorporated the entire store — merchandise, artists, art, and invited guests — into a Capitalist Realist event. Lueg and Richter randomly hung their paintings throughout the store, distributing them among four floors of furniture “of current style”: 81 living rooms, plus 72 bedrooms, kitchens, and children’s rooms. The core of the demonstration was in two rooms. The first was the exhibition room, where the artists sat among miscellaneous household effects as a part of “a display of arrangements lived in, living room.” The second was the waiting room, where the invited guests gathered before entering the exhibition room.

The waiting room, like the entire furniture store and the exhibition room, was filled with a variety of items, including 39 chairs. To emphasize Capitalist Realism’s association with the media, the artists placed on each chair a copy of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, dated October 11, 1963. Various magazines devoted to modern lifestyles were also scattered about. Two life-sized sculptures of art dealer Alfred Schmela and American President John F. Kennedy completed the decor (Fig. 31). Kennedy presumably symbolized a cultural association with America, and its mass-merchandising of consumer goods. Schmela was a gallery owner who often held

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Fluxus performances, principally by Joseph Beuys. One of Polke’s first solo exhibitions, “Homage à Schmela,” was held in 1966 in Schmela’s gallery in Düsseldorf.

In the exhibition room, Richter and Lueg waited the arrival of their invited guests (Fig. 32). The room was decorated with modern furniture: a coffee table set with a meal, and a television set showing the news, followed by a show called “The Adenauer Era.” Next to the entrance door, the artists pinned Joseph Beuys’ official Academy suit to the wall (hat, yellow shirt, blue trousers, socks, and shoes). Attached to this suit were nine small strips of paper, each marked with a brown cross. Beneath Beuys’ shirt, they placed a cardboard box containing shortening and margarine, representing the fat Beuys used in many of his sculptures.

The inclusion of Beuys’ suit, the brown crosses, and the fat in the inner room where Lueg and Richter greeted their guests gives us some insight into the links between Capitalist Realism, Polke’s Rasterbilder, and the Fluxus philosophy. Beuys first exhibited fat in a sculptural work at the same event where he debated with Allan Kaprow, just three months before Life with Pop. In fact, we can see the Berges Furniture Store demonstration as an enactment of that discussion. At the debate with Kaprow, Beuys had exhibited a small cardboard box, a Fat Chest that held a glob of

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107 Other West German galleries that regularly featured Fluxus exhibitions and performances were Galerie René Block in West Berlin, and Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal. During the 1960s, Beuys, Polke, and Richter exhibited their paintings in many of the same galleries. For example, in 1964 Beuys participated in Fluxus events in Galerie René Block and Galerie Parnass. In 1964 Polke and Richter participated in group exhibitions at Galerie Parnass; in 1965 two exhibitions at Galerie René Block; and in 1966 one exhibition at Galerie René Block. Polke also had solo exhibitions at Galerie René Block in 1968 and 1969.
fat in one of its corners. This use of fat applies to Capitalist Realism and to the
Rasterbilder on many levels. First, using such a material for art works against the
value of West German market capitalism that art is a beautiful commodity. This fits
with the Fluxus aim to break down the established mechanisms of both art and the
commodity-driven market.\textsuperscript{108} Including fat in the inner room, surrounded by objects
related to consumer culture, helped the artists emphasize that their paintings and
sculptures were not for sale in a store where everything else was. Using a common
substance for art production also closely parallels Polke’s use of ubiquitous mass-
media images for the Rasterbilder. (Andreas Huyssen points out that the use of media
images as everyday objects having no particular value or importance was a
characteristic of Fluxus practice.\textsuperscript{109}) Finally, Polke’s emphasis on process over subject
matter is similar to Beuys’ theory that art is social processing: “It is the
transformations of substance that is my concern in art, rather than the traditional
aesthetic understanding of beautiful appearances.”\textsuperscript{110} The symbolic presence of Schmela
and Beuys at Life with Pop literally brought the Fluxus issues into the same room as
Capitalist Realism.

\textsuperscript{108} Andreas Huyssen, “Back to the Future: Fluxus in Context,” in \textit{In the Spirit of Fluxus}, 144. Huyssen comments that many of the Fluxus aesthetic strategies are similar to those used by the Dadaist movement after World War I. In fact, the \textit{Kunstverein für Rhineland und Westfalen} organized a large Dada exhibition, “Dada: Documents of a Movement,” in Düsseldorf in 1959. The exhibition “included hundreds of pictures, objects and literary works produced between 1916–1922 in Dada centres of Zurich, New York, Cologne, Hanover, Berlin and Paris” (Kristine Stiles, “Between Water and Stone,” in \textit{In the Spirit of Fluxus}, 68). Many of the Fluxus artists would likely have seen these works.

\textsuperscript{109} Andreas Huyssen, in \textit{In the Spirit of Fluxus}, 144.

The brown crosses affixed to Beuys' suit are also significant. The *Braunkreuz* has religious and social resonance; it joins the Christian cross with the colour associated with Nazism. As Beuys' signature, it located his art in the painful context of German history, rejecting the dominant conventional aesthetics expounded by Werner Haftmann and *Documenta II*. In Capitalist Realism, where the social ideologies of East and West Germany, and art and commodity meet, the brown cross identifies an outwardly unreproachable value system with dreadful tyranny, an emblem of the social history of Germany. Andreas Huyssen's observations about the sober overtones of the reception of Dada in post-World War II Germany are also valid commentary on the edge that Fluxus symbols gave to Capitalist Realism:

> Perhaps the postwar reception of Dada in Europe was more emphatically coded by the literature of absurdism (Beckett, Ionesco) and by the shadow that Auschwitz cast over any cultural enterprise after 1945. The Dada reception in the United States, in turn, may be said to be more playful, provocative, less weighted down with metaphysical residues, and simply oblivious to those memories of political terror and the Holocaust.\(^\text{111}\)

Loaded with social triggers, *Life with Pop* was an interactive though carefully-planned event bringing together elements of both Fluxism and Happenings. Richter and Lueg wrote a careful script for the proceedings (see Appendix A). Each activity was scheduled. The demonstration began at 8:00 p.m. Guests gathered in the waiting room, where Richter and Lueg were seated on an elevated stage (see Fig. 33), much like Fluxus performance artists. But after a short while, both artists stepped

\(^{111}\) Andreas Huyssen, in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, 144.
down to mingle with their audience. At about 8:30, after over 100 guests had collected, the artists began leading them through the exhibition room to the kitchen area, located in the basement, where everyone drank beer. At 9:30 p.m., the last guest left the building.

Richter and Lueg’s invited guests actively participated in the experience, but were very much led by their script. Beuys’ symbolic presence in the inner chamber with Richter and Lueg signalled an attempt to break down the traditional categories and expectations of art. As the letter to the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau* stated, Capitalist Realism attacked “conventional painting with all its sterility, its isolations, its artificiality, its taboos and its rules.”  

This focus on the process, not the aesthetics, of the result subverted the old to usher in a new visual culture for West German viewers.

But Capitalist Realism was not simply a name for an event that synthesized the Fluxus and Happening discourses. It did have a specific social significance in 1960s West Germany that Richter, Polke, and the other Capitalist Realism artists chose to downplay. They argued that what they painted was not important. Why Polke took this stance becomes more clear when we consider the essay he wrote with Richter for an exhibition of their paintings at Galerie h in 1966.  

Normally catalogue essays discuss the exhibited paintings. However, Polke and Richter go to great lengths not to directly discuss their exhibition. Their essay is really a stream-of-consciousness narrative that mixes together memories, bits

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112 Polke and Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, 16.

113 Polke and Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, 39–56. Appendix B is a copy of the essay that was part of the Galerie h exhibition catalogue.
of a science-fiction novel, and tongue-in-cheek comments about painting. We could dismiss it as a practical joke on the reader.\textsuperscript{114} But we could also see it as an attempt to have the paintings speak for themselves, to avoid taking a stand and imposing opinions in a world where war and political confrontation made the whole idea of asserting one's beliefs distasteful. Polke and Richter mock us for asking impossible questions about their paintings with deliberately absurd answers:

‘‘Believe it or not, I really see my surroundings as dots.’ I love dots. I am married to many of them. I want all dots to be happy.

Dots are my brothers. I am a dot myself. We used to play together, but nowadays everyone goes his own way. We meet only on family occasions and ask each other, ‘How are things?’

‘Do you know, Elly,’ he said quite calmly, ‘one must love only things that have no style, such as dictionaries, photographs, nature, me and my pictures!’

I sighed: ‘How right you are, because style is violence, and we are not violent, and . . .’

‘. . . And we don’t want war,’ he finished the sentence for me. ‘No more war, ever!’\textsuperscript{115}

In view of the Cold War raging at the time, the last sentence is a particularly bitter one. Masking the social significance of art with indifference avoids confrontation.

\textsuperscript{114} Using humour or “goofing off” was a big part of Fluxus performances. For the Fluxus artists, the nonsensical was another strategy to break down artistic conventions. See Kristine Stiles in \textit{In the Spirit of Fluxus}, 72.

\textsuperscript{115} Polke and Richter, in \textit{The Daily Practice}, 42. The mix of memories and excerpts from futuristic fiction continue for five more pages.
Taking a stand means taking and defending a point of view which turns into violence sooner or later, be it physical or political.

Like the dialogue of the Theatre of the Absurd, Polke and Richter's seemingly incomprehensible comments show us how absurd the art world has become, how it inflicts its codes and categories as surely as any dictator. Their refusal to speak invites the viewer to consider a range of possibilities. Indifference thus becomes a way to create freedom. For the Capitalist Realists, art can mean anything, something, or nothing — within, of course, the limits of the artist's manipulations of the visual experience.

Given their long experience with didactic art, this painting of indifference must have been confusing to the German public. When René Block opened his Berlin Gallery in 1964 with "Neodada Pop Decollage Kapitalistischer Realismus," featuring Polke, Richter, and the other Capitalist Realism artists, the German newspaper Der Tagespiegel felt compelled to try to explain. Under the headline "Is There a Capitalistic Realism?" the paper discussed the paintings as a "confrontation of the use of everyday objects as a 'new object'-oriented representation." The article associates Polke's use of mass-media images with Lichtenstein's Pop "comic-strips," but acknowledges a difference in the Rasterbilder:

Polke gets very close to Lichtenstein's raster paintings, however, there might be an increasing harshness to be expected, to replace the still very painterly softness sometimes present in his paintings. Polke's portraits are of

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116 Der Tagespiegel, Berlin, September 18, 1964, 34.
a monstrous fascination which is also present in Konrad Lueg's athletes.\textsuperscript{117}

Two years later, the newspaper did not feel compelled to make the comparison. The René Block Gallery gave Polke a one-man show in 1966, and \textit{Der Tagespiegel} featured one of the \textit{Rasterbilder, Strand (Beach)} (Fig. 34, 1966), in an article. The black and white beach landscape uses a reversing dot screen to both divide land from sea, and sand from people. The dot raster is so blurred it completely extinguishes all character and gender differences. Under the title "Reality Inside the Raster,"\textsuperscript{118} the newspaper explains how Polke uses, like "every newspaper image," an "enormous amount of small or larger white or black dots. Of these — illusion like — each media image of a photo is composed . . . Part of what we visually ‘know,’ we know only through the raster of the autotypy (print)."\textsuperscript{119} The social content of the image is obscured by a fascination with the process, "[the] same dots converting realistic representation (media images) into structural visual processes of a fascinating nature."\textsuperscript{120} Content or meaning is dislocated onto technique, leaving the viewer intrigued, but disturbed. In the small catalogue for the exhibition, Joseph Beuys calls Polke's \textit{raster} paintings "stumble pictures,"\textsuperscript{121} an odd but appropriate description. As \textit{Der Tagespiegel} pointed out, the viewers of representational images stumble when they

\textsuperscript{117} Der Tagespiegel, September 18, 1964, 34.

\textsuperscript{118} Der Tagespiegel, May 15, 1966, 37.

\textsuperscript{119} Der Tagespiegel, May 15, 1966, 37.

\textsuperscript{120} Der Tagespiegel, May 15, 1966, 37.

\textsuperscript{121} Joseph Beuys, "Sigmar Polke," exh. cat., (Berlin: Galerie René Block, 1966).
encounter a *Rasterbilder*. The attempt to recognize an image is diffused by the interplay of *raster* dots. We become fascinated by dots for their own sake.

The viewers never stumble around American Pop Art — it pulls them into its precise images. As might be expected, West Germans gave artists like Warhol and Lichtenstein an enthusiastic reception. The clarity of the graphic design and vibrant colours of the images perhaps gave viewers a new way to understand their Westernized culture, and to identify with the symbols of American popular culture in order to put Germany's fascist past and communist counterpart behind them. With the first exhibition of Pop Art in 1964 in Berlin, West Germans began enthusiastically acquiring and displaying the art of Warhol, Lichtenstein, and other artists associated with American Pop. Large collections were amassed by German industrialists Peter Ludwig and Karl Ströher, so extensive that they were placed in museums for public display. They also circulated throughout Germany as popular travelling exhibitions.¹²² The graphic idealization of heady consumerism likely appealed to a post-war generation who wanted to identify with Western affluence. American Pop supported the *Wirtschaftswunder* culture as the social symbol of a new West Germany.

But Andreas Huyssen attributes the immediate popularity of American Pop Art in West Germany to other factors.¹²³ He says that for many young West Germans, American Pop was a form of social protest. It criticized the social ideology

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that bound Germany to its past. Warhol and Lichtenstein were symbols of the 1960s student movement that rejected the moral authority of an older generation associated with fascist Germany.\textsuperscript{124} Huyssen also asserts that other West Germans found in American Pop a new form of “honest” representation that they felt was more “real” in depicting everyday life. Pop Art was more tangible and accessible than subjective, abstract art. Huyssen shrewdly observes that “the works themselves [American Pop Art] only partially suggested such an interpretation, but it was strengthened by the needs and interests of individual recipients determined as they were by age, class origin and contradictions of consciousness.”\textsuperscript{125} The smooth perfection of the images allowed for easy entry, digestibility, and multiple uses. American Pop Art was the perfect product for all that West Germans wanted to be.

By \textit{Documenta IV} in 1968, Pop Art was so much a part of the West-German consciousness that it occupied a large part of the national exhibition. Not only did \textit{Documenta IV} feature the well-known Warhol and Lichtenstein, but also numerous other American artists associated with the Pop movement: Jim Dine, Richard Artschwager, Robert Indiana, Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, George Segal, and Tom Wesselmann. Lesser-known English Pop artists like Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Allen Jones, Richard Smith, and R.B. Kitaj were also shown. Yet Polke’s \textit{Rasterbilder} were nowhere to be seen.

\textsuperscript{124} Huyssen, 143.

\textsuperscript{125} Huyssen, 143.
Why not? Perhaps because they simply were not considered to be Pop Art. Their blurry images, washed-out colours, and disturbing manipulations of the original had little in common with the cheerful clarity and brightness of American and English Pop. The Rasterbilder's more disturbing inter-visibility sets up a disjointedness between viewer and image that Pop Art hurries to smooth over with well-defined borders and solid colours. Their medium is indeed their message. Polke's intrusive formal distortions allow him to point to a corresponding duality between the source and the original, and his outward indifference is as subversive as any spoken manifesto. The paintings are what they are, yet hint of being much more. The substructure of raster dots dominate the viewer's reception, forcing us to work harder to see the embedded image. In contrast, Lichtenstein and Warhol's bold outlines and idealized forms seem to give us the essentials, to make access easy. They reproduce what experience has conditioned the viewer to expect. In the next chapter, we'll see how these artists either question or confirm their society's visual codes by analyzing one of the most controversial subjects of 1960s visual discourse — the female body.
Chapter 3: Polke’s Exposure of Gender Stereotypes

Theodore W. Adorno has observed that “every epoch possesses its own advanced aesthetic material, and only by employing it can an artist make a valid statement about that epoch.”\textsuperscript{126} In 1960s West Germany, as in many other countries during that time, radically-changing views of how society saw the female body and women in general were an important part of that era’s “aesthetic material.” This chapter will analyze what sort of statement Polke made (or resisted) about visual codes by looking at how he uses the female body in the Rasterbilder. As we have seen, many of these paintings replicate the images of the female body from the mass media. We’ll explore what Polke’s parodic technique reveals about the place of women in his society, particularly compared with American images produced by Lichtenstein and Warhol.

We begin with the now-familiar Bunnies — a quintessential illustration of women on display. If we compare Bunnies to Lichtenstein’s Girl with a Ball and Warhol’s Marilyn Monroe, we find that the element of display is indeed the common denominator. In each case the original media image was used to sell something: membership in a private club, a vacation at a resort, or a movie. Although each image is associated with a different product, they share a common understanding of the female body as an enticement displayed to encourage consumption.

The difference lies in the artists’ formal treatment of their similar source images. As Chapter 1 describes, Polke’s raster dot screens and diluted, off-register colours are a strikingly different use of the same tools that Warhol and Lichtenstein used to produce clear graphic delineations and bold tones. These formal differences signal totally different attitudes to visual gender codes, even though they participate in a social discourse about gender that permeated the German and American media in similar ways. Polke and Richter alluded to both the similarities and differences in their letter to the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*:

The fact that this artform [Pop Art] grows organically and independently on German soil while it is at the same time, analogous to American pop, is attributable to certain psychological, cultural and economic givens which are the same here as in America.\(^{127}\)

Michael Kriegeskorte has identified some of the many functions that mass-media advertising served in West Germany after World War II.\(^{128}\) One of its most important tasks was to integrate West Germany’s thriving post-war “miracle economy” with international market consumerism, replacing the pre-war production model of capitalism. Post-war advertising did not aim to provide essential information for making choices between competing products. It was designed to define a lifestyle that marked the post-war generation as different from pre-war fascists, and that marked West Germans as different from East Germans.

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\(^{127}\) Polke and Richter, in *The Daily Practice*, 15.

This symbolic demarcation also had a good deal of influence on the restructuring and expansion of the middle class. Before the war, the German middle class consisted mostly of business and professional people. Factory workers were considered working class. During the post-war *Wirtschaftswunder*, the middle class absorbed millions of these now highly-paid union workers. The ranks of the working class were in turn filled by a large migration of foreign workers, seeking in the West German factories higher wages and better living conditions. Since many factory workers perceived themselves as part of the new middle class, they wanted a lifestyle that set them apart from these foreign workers.

Kriegeskorte asserts that this social context made it possible for advertising to construct social identities for millions of viewers between 1945 and 1965. Before the mid-1950s, brand identification was not important, since the demand for all consumer goods exceeded the capacity of production. However, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, production capacity equalled and in many cases exceeded demand. Aggressive advertising campaigns attempted to stimulate consumer needs by marketing social identity — created, of course, by acquiring certain products.

We can see how various visual strategies worked to promote consumption in a 1962 advertisement for one of the symbols of West Germany’s post-war recovery: the Audi automobile. Manufactured in West Germany during the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the Audi was one of the symbols of German prowess in manufacturing and engineering. The ad (Fig. 35)\(^\text{129}\) sells the product by first selling

\[^{129}\text{Revue: No. 48, 1962.}\]
stereotypical gender roles. The image is a frontal view of the car; the viewer looks over the hood into its interior. Four people sit inside. The driver is male. A woman, presumably his wife, is next to him. In the back seat are an elderly woman and a young girl, whom we assume to be grandmother and granddaughter. The advertisement thus unites a strong symbol of post-war economic accomplishment with a happy West German family, in a powerful combination of gender codes. All four people are stylishly dressed, which places them in the upper-middle class. The smiles on their faces show contentment with their status. However, the direction of their gazes signal different roles within their social structure. Woman and child look forward to the future through the front glass. But the elderly grandmother looks to the man as he drives. This dynamic is explained in the generation gap that played an important role in the era of the economic miracle. In 1962, the grandmother would have lived through the rise of the Third Reich, World War II, and of course its aftermath. As a young girl, she would have understood her role as subordinate to the ultra-male patriarchy of the Third Reich. But she is also a symbol of the fascist era itself — a non-threatening one, since she is female. A grandfather figure would have a much more unsettling effect.

The ad signals that men still direct German society, but they are "new" men of a new era. The grandmother looks to the male as the driver of the family, leading them forward in the symbolic Audi, without the presence of the grandfather to cast a painful shadow.

As post-war children, woman and child would not experience the same level of submissiveness as the grandmother. Since the new "Basic Law" (the
Constitution adopted in 1948) clearly stated that "men and women have equal rights," they don't need to look to the male. But significantly, they still happily allow him to drive the car. As Gordon Craig points out, the equal rights provision of the Basic Law was designed to reverse fascist gender policy, but it had little impact on the daily lives of most West Germans. More influential were the encoded messages about gender roles that appeared daily in the German press. For example, the advertisement for Robert Bosch products (Fig. 36) in *Constanze*, a popular women's magazine, assigns certain products to a divided world. In the superior upper half of the image, Bosch products are identified with arrows as parts of an automobile, typically male territory. In the subordinate lower half, the slogan "Bosch Im Haus" is visualized by a smiling woman wearing her kitchen apron, an open refrigerator in the background. A modern post-war housewife, complete with apron, necklace and lipstick, she is not going to drive the symbol of West Germany's economic recovery, but will use its products to nourish and support the men who do.

The media did much to promote this stereotype of woman as wife and mother, the heart of the nuclear German home. Stories about the family and children were typically illustrated with pictures of women. Since women were the primary consumers of household goods, marketing campaigns were targeted toward them. An ad for UHU-Line toothpaste, for instance, shows a young mother helping her daughter

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130 Craig, 166.

131 *Constanze*, No. 13, 1951.
learn about dental hygiene (Fig. 37). But as we take a closer look at the ads for more personal goods or services, we see a second social stereotype coming into play: that of the seductive glamour-queen offering visual and physical pleasure. The famous 1960s Luxor soap ads are a wonderful example of a marketing strategy that associated personal hygiene with physical beauty and the glamour of American Pop culture (Fig. 38). The German text for the ad reads "The Starting Point of Success." But the main focus is on an image of Marilyn Monroe that occupies over half the page, and that is far more prominent than the soap bar itself. The movie star is glamour personified, with the light falling over her hair and heavy make-up accenting the seductive look in her eyes. An open mouth and bare shoulders complete the picture of sexual availability. In fact, five years after the ad appeared in Freundin, the name "Luxor" was changed to "Lux" to emphasize its association with luxury. The combination of glamorous female body, sexuality, and appeal to personal consumption reinforced the female gender stereotype of being a product displayed to fulfil sexual desire.

A similar ad for a Porolastic bathing suit (Fig. 39) shows this use of the female body more openly. It features a drawing of a very shapely woman wearing a tight-fitting bathing suit. As she unwraps her large beach towel, she displays herself to the viewer, inviting him to look at her. Even though she is barely dressed according

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132 Freundin, No. 5, 1956.
133 Freundin, No. 5, 1957.
134 Kriegeskorte, 33.
135 Freundin, No. 5, 1954.
to post-war German standards, she shows a strong self-confidence as the object of the
gaze she invites. Make-up and jewellery enhance her own status as product. The beach,
a place of self-indulgent leisure, has replaced the sidewalk of the city as the new
catwalk for this post-war woman. No text is needed. The female body, presented for
observation in a playground of luxury, signals to the female viewer that this is the
post-war look for women: shapely and inviting. Likewise, the male viewer understands
his role: that of invited observer of the female body. This is the visual dynamic that
appears in Polke’s use of four Playboy waitresses, Lichtenstein’s use of a girl with a
beachball, and Warhol’s use of Marilyn Monroe. Each artist employs the mass-media
visual dynamics of the female body as product, but with very different effects.
Warhol’s *Marilyn* shows us the idealization and dehumanization of a particular woman.
His portrayal of her as a media trophy emphasizes the media’s transformation of
women into targets of a gender stereotype. Lichtenstein’s hard-edged dots imprison the
female body in a regulated formula of attractiveness. But while Warhol and
Lichtenstein’s hyper-realism confirms the visual codes used by the visual media to
define women, Polke’s use of parody subordinates and pokes holes in them.

As in America, the gender gaze that presents the female body as an
object on display was used to sell a number of products in West Germany. The
German advertisement for “8 to 4” body deodorants (Fig. 40)\(^{136}\) is a good example.
The image actually has little to do with preventing unpleasant body odours. A well-
dressed male stands casually in a pleasant landscape, looking downward from a

\(^{136}\) *Quick*, No. 28, 1962.
distance on an attractive young woman who is wearing a formal evening dress. Her necklace, cut low in front, is of course presented to the viewer. The man observes the woman as she narcissistically observes herself in the water. His dominant position and gaze sets the gender relationship for the viewer. These same visual dynamics are those that Polke undercuts in his visualization of the “Bunnies” used to sell memberships in the Playboy Clubs.

Let’s first examine the original image used by Playboy. Hugh Hefner inspects a chorus line of ten “Bunnies” wearing their brightly-coloured, tight-fitting costumes (Fig. 41, 1964). This costume was so much a part of the Playboy identity and marketing strategy that to legally protect its unique design, Playboy Enterprises had the costume registered with the U.S. Patents Office. The women assume a standard modelling pose for their boss, as he stands in front of them wearing casual clothes. His right arm gestures toward them. In his hand is a pipe, with the narrow stem extending towards the line-up. The dynamics of the gender gaze present to the male viewer the enticement of having the opportunity to extend his pipe if he purchases a membership. He has only to choose from among the line-up of products for his pleasure.

Polke’s four Bunnies (Fig. 8) are of course wearing the famous costume, complete with trademark fitted body suit, high-heeled shoes, bow ties, modified tuxedo collars, and rabbit ears. The costume and its association with Playboy Clubs were widely known in West Germany by this time, through numerous media pictures of Hugh Hefner, the wide circulation of Playboy magazine from newsstands throughout

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137 Edgren, 89.
the Federal Republic, and from articles in Der Spiegel discussing the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{138} Described by American Time magazine as “glorified corsets that push their [women’s] bosoms out, cinch their waists in, run to a sharp V in front and feature a cotton-tail in the back,”\textsuperscript{139} the costume associated women with the “cuteness” and eager breeding habits of rabbits as part of Playboy’s ideology of spectator sex. Beginning in 1953, Hefner linked together symbols of the middle-class male’s upward mobility — sports cars, hi fi’s, fine food and drink, and voluptuously naked women — with fiction by well-known authors, interviews with celebrities, and articles written by sociologists and theologians discussing the shifting moral values of the post-war era. This spectacle of sex and power found its counterpart in the Playboy Clubs.

The Playboy Clubs were a living parody of the magazine. The implausible gloss of the magazine’s images of the female body, achieved by lighting that flattened and softened contours, and airbrushing that removed all blemishes, came to life when a young woman greeted a Club member with, “Good evening. I’m Barbara. I’m your Bunny”\textsuperscript{140} (emphasis added). As Der Spiegel explained to its German readership, pleasure and leisure were becoming respectable and accepted values in American society.\textsuperscript{141} Worldwide circulation figures of over 4 million copies per month showed that the acceptance of these social values was becoming

\textsuperscript{138} Der Spiegel: April 1963, 70, and November 1964, 91–95.

\textsuperscript{139} Time, March 3, 1967, 76.

\textsuperscript{140} Time, March 24, 1961, 55.

\textsuperscript{141} Der Spiegel: April 1963, 70, and November 1964, 91-95.
international. Using aggressive hedonism that advocated the consumption of food, wine and women, the Playboy Clubs were a business success from the opening of the first Club in Chicago in 1960.\textsuperscript{142} Six years later, when Polke painted \textit{Bunnies}, Playboy International had 17 clubs operating in the US and London, and intended to expand internationally with clubs in Paris, Berlin, and Munich.\textsuperscript{143}

Both \textit{Playboy} magazine and its embodiment in the Playboy Clubs used their Bunnies to create the same gender gaze presenting women's bodies as objects that we have seen operating in mass-media advertisements throughout West Germany. These images of women combine photographic technology and written text to construct what Michel Foucault described as the power to create a social subject by organizing a visual way to understand social relationships.\textsuperscript{144}

What moves Polke's Bunny image beyond appropriation into parody is that he resists reproducing the glossy production elements that fuel the image's social resonance. Polke's multiple layering of Benday screens diffuses our focus, his off-register colours washing out the sharp contrasts of the media original. Because he resists simulating the high-gloss, airbrushed female body, yet retains its representational qualities and social signifiers, Polke can neutralize the gender gaze.

\textsuperscript{142} Edgren, 356.

\textsuperscript{143} Edgren, 356.

\textsuperscript{144} Michel Foucault, \textit{The Birth of the Clinic} (London: Tavistock, 1973) and \textit{Discipline and Punish} (London: Penguin, 1977). In \textit{The Birth of the Clinic}, Foucault discusses how the gaze and institutional practices work together to form a subject, using as an example the way the "medical gaze" and the institutional practices of hospitalization intersect to define modern medicine. In \textit{Discipline and Punish}, he extends his theory of social processing to the penal system, by analyzing the power of surveillance (Panopticon) as a form of internalized discipline that creates a modern social subject.
Because he paints how it is, not what it is, he can work against the social significance projected onto the Bunny body. Thus *Bunnies* imitates the media image, but with a difference that parodies the original by privileging the process and neutralizing the content.

In contrast, Warhol’s *Marilyn* and Lichtenstein’s *Girl with a Ball* intensify the visualization of the gender gaze by focusing on what these images are in painstaking detail. Even the way they crop the original media image draws attention to how cleanly they duplicate the line of the female body, further highlighting it with intensified colour. They work with rather than under or against the visual marketing codes operating in their culture. Polke confirms no visual codes but his own indifference. In *Bunnies* we see Polke’s efforts to subvert the dominant codes associated with representational images. It is a visual strategy that hides from or exposes social ideology rather than redistributing it. The *Rasterbilder* avoid taking a specific position, offering a clear message, and pointing to a defined new socializing practice. They simply and cynically parody the process.
Conclusion

As German cultural historian Andreas Huyssen has observed, modern art in Germany has had a strong history of social criticism. In the 1960s, a decade of social ferment, this criticism became more overt. Huyssen points out that "the interpretation of [American] Pop as critical art certainly was fostered in Europe by the fact that European artists of the 1960s were indeed trying to develop an art of social criticism."\textsuperscript{145} With its icons of movie stars and comic strips, American Pop was perceived as a liberating force for West Germans. It symbolized a new lifestyle that rebelled against the authority of the newly re-built German social order.

This perception of American Pop Art as an influential social force is consistent with the way 20th-century modern art has been understood in Germany. The Third Reich’s efforts to label modern art as “degenerate” and to control visual culture were partially motivated by their desire to entrench symbols of a collective identity for all Germans. After the war, the East German government took over the official manipulation of visual culture, but with a different purpose: to reinforce a social ideology of worker solidarity. At the same time, through national exhibitions such as Documenta, the West German government supported modern art’s quest for individuality within a discourse of modernism that linked its visual culture with those of other progressive countries. What then is the significance of the Rasterbilder in the social context of these artistic polarities?

\textsuperscript{145} Huyssen, 142.
The Rasterbilder are best understood in the context of the debates that circulated among Fluxus events, gallery exhibitions, and Capitalist Realist Happenings. Drawing on many Dadaist strategies born from the previous World War, these activities expressed the absurdity of German visual culture in the aftermath of World War II. Given Germany’s social history, traditional concepts of representational art were simply not valid anymore. In this atmosphere, the most Polke sought was to re-visualize images already in circulation. Influenced by the Fluxus/Dada discourse, the Rasterbilder rejected the progressive optimism of the Wirtschaftswunder by abandoning the modernism seen in Documenta I and II, and as explained by Werner Haftmann.

Also central to understanding the Rasterbilder is the way Polke uses parody to visualize the selected media images. As Margaret Rose has explained, parody has historically meant using strategies of inversion or exaggeration to ironically critique the parodied target: it is imitation, but with a critical difference. But Polke’s imitation of the media rastering process focuses on the technical manipulation of the media image rather than the content of the image as a target. This neutralizes the hierarchy of the image’s visual authority. Polke’s privileging of style and corresponding neutralization of the image is true to his identification with Capitalist Realism and Fluxus artists. His mocking proclamation of his “love of dots” sidesteps the invitation to present an ideology of his own in reference to the images he reproduced. For Polke, what he painted was secondary to how he painted. Even though he chose volatile images that were central to the development of West German culture

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146 Margaret Rose, 54–99. See also Hutcheon, 32.
during the Cold War via the mass media, it is the process of destabilizing the image, asking the questions, that is most important. We see this most clearly in *Bunnies*, where Polke derails the marketing of the female body as sex object by playing with the dots that form the image. The medium becomes the message; the process, in true Fluxist style, more crucial than the product. This emphasis on the dynamics of processing is what gave Polke a shelter from fixed ideology at a time when both governments of East and West Germany used visual culture to promote their own social, political and economic ends.
Figure 1: Sigmar Polke, *Berliner*, 1965
Figure 1(a): Source image for Berliner Bäckerblume
Figure 2: Sigmar Polke, *Duke & Duchess of Windsor*, 1965
Figure 3: Otto Nagel, *Junger Maurer von der Stalin-Allee (heute Karl-Marx-Allee)*, 1953
Figure 4: Ronald Paris, *Heimkehr vom Felde*, 1961
Figure 5: Sigmar Polke, *BZ am Mittag*, 1965
Figure 5(a): Source image, from *BZ am Mittag* magazine, 1911
Figure 6: Sigmar Polke, *Freundinnen*, 1965
Figure 7: Sigmar Polke, *Taucher*, 1965
Figure 7(a): Source image for Taucher, from Stern magazine, December 1966
Figure 8: Sigmar Polke, *Bunnies*, 1966
Figure 9: Sigmar Polke, *Helmut Klinker*, 1965
Figure 9(a): Konrad Lueg, *Helmut Klinker*, 1965
Figure 9(b): Gerhard Richter, *Helmut Klinker*, 1965
Figure 10: Reproduction of an engraving made from a photograph without a halftone screen [from Woods, Modern Newspaper Production, (1963)]
Figure 11: Reproduction of Fig. 10, reproduced with halftone screen. The screen breaks up the continuous tone into a multitude of small dots [from Woods, Modern Newspaper Production, (1963)]
Figure 12: Sigmar Polke, *Punkt (Dots)*, 1963
Figure 12(a): Sigmar Polke, *Punkt (Dots)*, 1963
Figure 13: Sigmar Polke, *Profil-Bild*, 1968
Figure 14: Sigmar Polke, *Rasterzeichnung (Portrait of Lee Harvey Oswald)*, 1963
Figure 15: Sigmar Polke, *Tisch*, 1963
Figure 16: Sigmar Polke, *Ohne Titel (Untitled: Vase)*, 1965
Figure 17: Sigmar Polke, *Vase II*, 1965
Figure 18: Polke at work
Figure 19: Sigmar Polke, *Japanische Tänzerinnen*, 1966
Figure 20: Roy Lichtenstein, *Girl with Ball*, 1961
FREE BROCHURE TO HELP YOU PLAN
the Perfect POCONO HONEYMOON OR VACATION

INDOOR POOL
• HEALTH CLUB & STEAM ROOM
• Entertainment and Dancing Nightly
• Only 10 Min. from Camelback Ski Area.

* Honeymooners: Bklr. B
Vacationers: Bklr. V
• OPEN ALL YEAR

Mount Airy Lodge
MT. POCONO 2, PA.
Tel: 717-839-7133
DIRECT LINE CA 6-8842
NYC & Suburbs
N.Y.C. Phone: OR 4-6677
(open daily & Sun.)

Figure 20(a): Source image for Girl with Ball. Advertisement for Mount Airy Lodge in the Poconos, Pennsylvania, appearing in the “Travel” section of New York Times, 1963
Figure 21: Roy Lichtenstein, *The Refrigerator*, 1962
CLEANSING

CLEAN AND SWELL REFRIGERATOR!

Soda is the cleanser recommended by refrigerator manufacturers. Spritz damp cloth and wipe surfaces. Wash ice trays and other containers with a solution of 3 tbsp. soda to a quart of water.
Figure 22: Roy Lichtenstein, *The Engagement Ring*, 1961

IT'S...IT'S NOT AN ENGAGEMENT RING. IS IT?
Figure 23: Publicity still of Marilyn Monroe marked by Andy Warhol for cropping, 1962
Figure 24: Sigmar Polke, Socken, 1963
Figure 25: Sigmar Polke, *Kekse*, 1964
Figure 26: Sigmar Polke, *Schokoladenbild*, 1964
Figure 27: Sigmar Polke, *Plastik-Wannen*, 1964
**Ein Leben mit Pop**

Durch Wegweiser und durch einen Fahrstuhl wird der Interessent in den Büroräumen von Berges geleitet, wohin er sich entscheidet kann: entweder mit Pop leben will oder nicht.

Denn der Ausstellungsort ist nicht nur für die Interessenten geeignet, sondern auch für diejenigen, die sich für Pop interessieren.

Die Ausstellung zeigt, dass Pop in den 1960er Jahren in Deutschland eine breite Akzeptanz gefunden hatte.

**Delikat**

So wie hier wird die Ausstellung "Ein Leben mit Pop" auf der Berges sozialen Basis aufgebaut.

**Das Sonderangebot der Saison**

Der Besucher von Berges findet hier ein Vielfalt an Möbeln, das für Pop Fans interessant ist.

Figure 28: "Ein Leben mit Pop," Der Mittag, October 5, 1963
MUSIK UND ANTIMUSIK
DAS INSTRUMENTALE THEATER

Staatliche Kunstakademie
Düsseldorf, Eiskellerstraße
am 2. und 3. Februar 20 Uhr
als ein Colloquium für die Studenten der Akademie

George Maciunas
Niko Jovan Pilic
Emme Williams
Benjamin Patterson
Talmane K Fax
Elektr Haggens
Robert Watts
Jed Curta
Dieter Hillemanns
Tony Thaxton
Jackson Mac Low
Wolf Vostell
Jean Pierre Wilkins
Frank Trewbridge
Terry Riley
Tomas Schmit
Gary Lyon
Rudolf Hausmann
Caspari
Robert Filliou

Daniel Spoerri
Allan Knowles
Bruno Maderna
Nino Rota
La Monte Young
Henry Flynt
Richard Maxfield
John Cage
Yoko Ono
Jacek Piorkowski
Joseph Byrd
Jack Torme
Griffith Roe
Philip Corner
Achim Mr. Kropfchen
Kadrova Znak
Iwan Tom
Izochromezy
Ivan Anshel
Jürgen Fridholm
Toshi Ito
Cornelius Cardew
Pier Ambro
Giancarlo Luci
Brian Gysin
Sun Yonderhuk
Yoriki Matsuoka
Simone Morris
Sylvana Bussotti
Masaki Vitata
Jak H. Spek
Federico Raswalski
K. Penderecki
J. Stasilesas
J. Laidowsky
A. Saclia
Kuniharu Akiyama
Joh Kuri
Tori Takamatsu
Arthur Kipke

Figure 29: Poster for “Festum Fluxorum,” Düsseldorf, 1963 [from Jenkins, In the Spirit of Fluxus, (1993), 27].
Figure 30: Joseph Beuys performing *Siberian Symphony, 1st Movement*, at "Festum Fluxorum," Düsseldorf, 1963 [from Jenkins, *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, (1993), 69].
Figure 31: The waiting room of *Life with Pop*, 1963
Figure 32: The exhibition room of *Life with Pop*, 1963
Figure 33: Konrad Leug (left), Gerhard Richter (right) in the exhibition room of *Life with Pop*, 1963
Figure 34: Sigmar Polke, *Strand*, 1966
Jeder Kilometer ein sicheres Vergnügen


AUTO UNION DKW

Figure 35: “Audi” advertisement in Revue: No. 48, 1962
Figure 36: "Robert Bosch" advertisement in Constanze: No. 13, 1951
Figure 37: "UHU-Line" advertisement in Freundin: No. 7, 1955
Können Sie sich erklären,
warum gerade Luxor die Schönheitsseife so vielen Filmstars ist? Ganz einfach deshalb, weil sie selbst die Milder und die hautpflegende Wirkung von Luxor erkannt haben. Denn nur reinste und natürliche Rohstoffe sind in Luxor enthalten, was Ihnen die Gewähr sorgfältiger, schonender Hautpflege bietet. Überzeugen Sie sich selbst von der absoluten Reinheit dieser Seife. Sie riecht dieser schonen Seife, wie vollkommen diese Hautpflege ist, spüren Sie, wie sanft-milde Schale auf Ihrer Haut wirken lassen — das erfrische und verdient von Grund auf.

**LUXOR**
die reine, weiße Schönheitsseife

die gleiche Markenseife, wie sie Filmstars benutzen,
auch für Sie. 55 M.

*Die vollkommen reinen Luxor, gefördert von der gesunden Schönheit, Zielen auf eine sanfte, mildere Schönheit.

9 von 10 Hollywood-Filmstars benutzen LUXOR Toilette-seife.

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Figure 38: "Luxor" advertisement in *Freundin*: No. 19, 1954
Figure 39: "Porolastic" advertisement in Freundin: No. 5, 1954
Figure 40: “8 to 4” advertisement in *Quick*: No. 28, 1962
Figure 41: Hugh Hefner and Bunnies in Edgren, *The Playboy Book — Forty Years*, (1964), 89.
Bibliography


APPENDIX A

Programme and Report for a Demonstration of Capitalist Realism, October 11, 1963
Programme and Report:

The Exhibition Leben mit Pop – eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus, Düsseldorf, 11 October 1965

Please note that the number assigned to you is:

PROGRAMME (roman numerals) CATALOGUE (letters)

for a Demonstration for Capitalist Realism

Living with Pop

Friday, 11 October 1965, Flügelerstrasse 11, Düsseldorf

I) Start 8 p.m. Report to 3rd floor.
A Waiting room, 3rd floor (decor by Luerg and Richter)
II) When your number is called, visit Room No.1, 3rd floor.

Disciplined behaviour is requested.

B Room No.1: sculptures by Luerg and Richter
(plus one work on loan from Professor Beuys)
(Couch with Cushions and Artist
Floor Lamp with Foot Switch
Trolley Table
Chair with an 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 Luerg and Richter)
(52 bedrooms, 78 living rooms, kitchens and nurseries, paintings by both painters; guests of honour, Messrs. Schmela and Kennedy)

IV) On completion of tour, see A etc.

Subject to alteration.

Thank you for your attention.
Koond Luerg and Gerd Richter

REPORT

[12 September 1965. Planning of exhibition in furniture store,
Düsseldorf. Available space consists of one room on 3rd floor of office
block, floor area 52 m².

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,
odd and ends, and both painters. The individual pieces of
furniture stand on plinths, like sculptures, and the natural
distances between them are increased, to emphasize their status
as exhibits.
c) Programmed sequence of the demonstration for 11 October 1965.

List of rooms to be viewed on 11 October 1965:

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 reed buck antlers (shot in
Pomerania, 1938–42). On display: 39 simple chairs, on each a
copy of the Frankfurter Allgemeine for 11 October 1965. 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
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 a detective story,
G. Richter (blue suit, pink shirt, tie). A table set for coffee for
two, with cut marble cake and napkins 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-fresher.

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; Backwards on Paper
Plate; Coathanger.
By G. Richter: Mouth; Paper; Stage; Neuschwanstein Castle.
These rooms are lit normally.

8:00 p.m. Two store employees stand at the entrance, giving out
individually numbered programmes. 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 5-5 minutes. The first visitors to be
called enter the room hesitantly. The room soon fills up. By approxi-
mately 8:50 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 cupboard are looted.

8:55 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 9:50 p.m. the last visitor has left the building.
APPENDIX B

Text for Exhibition Catalogue,
Galerie h, Hanover, 1966
Many of my paintings measure $150 \times 200$ cm; many are $130 \times 150$ cm or $130 \times 140$ or 120 cm; some are $160 \times 180$ cm; some are considerably smaller, about $40 \times 30$ cm or even $18 \times 24$ cm. My largest paintings to date are $200 \times 190$ cm. Perhaps I shall now paint only small paintings, or else medium-sized ones and a few larger ones; I can't tell for sure.
A childhood memory: I let my little sister toboggan down a hill, without thinking that she was bound to hit an iron railing. The result was a deep laceration on her forehead; she had stitches, and I had a riding.

Carlton looked at the front gardens, the birds and the women, and then the scales fell from his eyes; he knew that he would never get the hang of it all. He asked me for a cigarette and took his leave.

Amid the terrifying roar of unleashed atomic power, the moun-
sinous space globe lifted off from the grey soil of Sexta. The blazing puffs of energy from its cavernous jet tubes were like a miniature sun, and a ring of fire expanded across the flat ground, pushing waves of red-hot debris ahead of it.

The men in the control room saw little of all this. Few had time to lance at the dimmed monitor screens, and to the others such a sight was nothing new.

Perry Rhodan* sat in the command position, from which he could oversee the whole control room; its curiously shaped table had its own intercom and telecom terminals.

His wife Mory occupied one of the additional seats clustered around the command position, as did Melbar Kasom, who of course needed a recliner, and Atlan. Gucky’s recliner was empty. The coypu was on the move, no doubt, somewhere on board. Rhodan had given his wife a curt nod, just before lift-off. When on duty, they were no more and less than comrades, comrades in a battle that might end somewhere in eternity. Their own feelings took second place to their responsibility for the space empire of mankind.

The Halutian’s wide mouth opened in a chuckle. There was a hint of a twinkle in his great red eyes. His head gave an almost human nod. ‘It might have been worse,’ he said placidly. ‘The chief mistake was mine. I ought to have transferred my knowledge of spores to the memory sector of my plan brain....’

Perry Rhodan is a character from a popular series of science-fiction novels and booklets published monthly and weekly from 1961 to 1991 by Verlagsunion Pabel-Moewig, Rastatt, Germany. Portions of this text by Richter and Polke are taken from an unidentified book in this series.
Believe it or not, I really see my surroundings as dots. I love all dots. I am married to many of them. I want all dots to be happy.

Dots are my brothers. I am a dot myself. We always used to play together, but nowadays everyone goes his own way. We meet only on family occasions and ask each other 'How are things?'

'Do you know, Elly,' he said quite calmly, 'one must love only things that have no style, such as dictionaries, photographs, nature, me and my pictures!'

I sighed: 'How right you are, because style is violence, and we are not violent, and ...'
... And we don’t want war,’ he finished the sentence for me.
‘No more war, ever!’

When I met the love of my life, I fell so deeply in love that I would willingly have married her there and then. But we had one thing in common apart from our great love: concern for those close to us. She had lost her father at an early age and was taking care of her mother and sister. I was taking care of my parents. So we were in the same boat.
Time flew past, and we were very happy together.

You do well to report this. But you should of course make it clear that you are referring to isolated instances.

I would like to be like everyone else, think what everyone else thinks, do what is being done anyway.

The heavy armoured bulkhead of the airlock slid almost noiselessly back into the hull of the tender. Perry Rhodan, Atlan and Captain Redhorse strode between the ranks of battle-ready Epsalian Commandos. Just before he reached the airlock, Rhodan stopped.

‘Who is in command here?’

One of the (by Earth standards) disconcertingly massive Epsalians stepped forward.

‘Lieutenant Afg Moro, Sir!’

‘I need one of your men, Lieutenant.’

‘Sir, I . . . ’

‘No, not you, you must wait here for the operational order.’

Lieutenant Moro turned.

‘Sergeant Man Hatra, escort the Chief Administrator.’

An Epsalian, 1.60 metres tall and almost as wide, clumped forward and halted close in front of Perry Rhodan. He wore the same combat uniform as the others, but was armed with a massive disintegrator, as well as an impulse blaster that a Terran would have needed both hands even to carry. The Epsalian carried the impulse blaster in a special holster and held the equally heavy disintegrator casually in the crook of his arm.

I have abundant leisure time, because I lead a solitary life. My husband died two years ago, and both my sons are married. Those three men were my life. When the four of us were still together, my life was
full and marvellous. Whatever would become of me now, were it not for the values that I can still cherish? As always, the most important is duty. I have widened the scope of my duties to benefit more people. Classical music, which formed a deep bond between my husband and myself, now distresses me, but despite the tears I cannot do without it, because it is part of my life. Good literature, nature, and not least my visits to my beloved children and delightful grandchildren, are the cornerstones of my life. After vigorous and stimulating activity, I make a point of setting time aside for quiet reflection. Then I sit quite quietly and relive the very happy times I had with my husband and my sons. And so a lonely 61-year-old woman can still say Yes to life.

We cannot assume that good pictures will be painted one day: we must take matters into our own hands!

'Nonsense,' his logic sector chimed in. 'Tolot is in the same fix as we are. If he ever wants to get out of here, he has to back us up.'

Atlan stirred himself.

'We must act,' he decided.

He heard Henderson sigh with relief. A faint smile played across his features.

I have never snored in my life, whatever the tape-recorder may say. I know that good painters do not snore.

My intelligence knows no bounds.

He was clearly still in a state of extreme agitation. 'It — it was terrible!'

Sheriff Beatty felt the need to sit down. 'You mean to tell me that the driver of the car turned it around and deliberately drove over the girl a second time?'

Smiles nodded. 'Yes, that's right. I could see it all quite clearly.'

Beatty lit a cigarette. 'And why are you coming out with all this now, Mr Smiles? Why didn't you report what you saw straight away?'

Smiles gave a nervous laugh.

I would like to have a lot of children. When I walk down the street, I'd like all the children to call out Daddy, and I'd pat their heads and ask them 'What's your name? How old are you? Be good, my regards to your mother.'
My wife is 4 centimetres shorter than I am. Since I mostly walk rather crooked, it looks as if I too were only 168 cm tall. My mother-in-law is very short.

The image of greyish-yellow expanses of sand and a jagged mountain range filled Perry with unease. He needed no scientific analysis to tell him that such a world could not be created naturally. Someone must have built it. Someone had supplied it with a sun, gravitation and a stifling atmosphere. Why they had done so was immaterial. The depressing thing about all this was that mankind on Terra still had a few millennia to go before it attained the level of knowledge necessary to create a planet.

He now has many friends. He is an intelligent man, and they intend to find him a good job as a pharmacist, just as soon as his English is better. A major publishing house is to bring out his life story.

In a frenzy of despair, the Nomad Scout sprang up and hurled himself against the locked airlock of the ship. He rebounded, and the shock brought him to his senses. The alien guard was still watching. Krash-Ovaron stared at him. What a being! In a fight, he could probably have held his own against the city’s best hunters.

The alien moved. He pointed towards the city. The gesture was peremptory. It was a command to Krash-Ovaron to withdraw.

'I need the ship,' said Krash-Ovaron urgently, but as he spoke he realized that to the guard his words were only meaningless sounds.

Implacably, the guard pointed towards the city. Krash-Ovaron felt waves of pain surging through his body. Egg-laying time was approaching. By the time the hunt was over, he would have to find some place, or he and his brood would die together.

Slowly the alien approached him. He looked determined.

Krash-Ovaron realized that he now had only one chance of turning the situation to his own advantage: he would have to dismantle the Parablock and ask the aliens for help.

Krash-Ovaron shivered.

They would die, he vowed, for forcing him to abase himself.

All painters, everybody, ought to paint from photographs. And they should do it the way I do (including the selection process). Then such
paintings should be exhibited everywhere, and everywhere they should be hung — in homes, restaurants, offices, stations and churches, everywhere. Then great painting competitions would be held. The jurors would assess the entries according to theme, rendering and speed, and then they would award medals. Every day, on television and on the radio, there would be reports on the latest paintings. Eventually, laws could be passed so that people could be punished for not painting enough copies of photographs. This would have to go on for 400 years or so, and then painting from photographs should be banned in Germany.

His words were cut short by the wail of the alarm systems. Colonel Cart Rugo let out a cry of horror. Involuntarily, Rhodan glanced at the controls nearest to him. What he saw revealed the full magnitude of the approaching catastrophe.

All the atomic-powered machinery of CREST II seemed to be out of action.
This meant that CREST II was about to crash. Right in the middle of the battlefield, outside the city.

I am averagely healthy, averagely tall (172 cm), averagely good-looking. I mention this, because that is how one has to look to paint good paintings.

*Paintings must be produced to a recipe. The making must take place without inner involvement, like breaking stones or painting house-fronts. Making is not an artistic act.*

Harskin looked in the direction indicated and saw a gigantic monster. It was almost a living island, a cross between turtle and dinosaur. Its massive skull was armed with huge plates of armour, but the look in its eyes was by no means hostile or bloodthirsty. Round the monster’s neck hung a kind of basket in which sat three Gnorphs. The three scaly beings looked down with curiosity and sympathy at the three beings swimming in the water. This was obviously a rescue party.

*The girl carefully scrutinized the photograph, then pointed a scarlet fingernail at one man. ‘That’s him,’ she said excitedly.*

‘You couldn’t be mistaken?’ Jo panted.

*The girl shook her head vigorously. ‘No, Jo, I’m not making any mistake. That’s the man Mabel was going with.’*

Jo folded the cutting and put it away. ‘You’ve been a great help, Dolly,’ he said.

Perry stood on the terrace, took an occasional sip from his glass, and said softly, with a slight catch in his voice: ‘Look at this beetle, here on my sleeve.’ He pointed to a tiny pucym beetle, which was just about to fly away. ‘It mustn’t be disturbed; nothing must ever be disturbed. Always leave everything just as it is. Plan nothing, invent nothing, add nothing, omit nothing . . .’ He hesitated, and then went on. ‘This is the state of modest wisdom that allows us to transcend ourselves, to do something that we can’t grasp with our intelligence but only understand and admire in our hearts. I don’t mean that this has anything to do with passivity . . .’ He watched the departing pucym beetle with a faint smile. ‘It will be action: less noisy than we have been used to, but far stronger, more all-embracing; it will transform our existence, awesomely . . .’ His gaze was lost in the endless depths of space, and we
realized that in this one moment he had made us a gift of the Universe.

We stood there in silence for a long time, until Icho Tolot, the sturdy, ever-cheerful Halutian, brought us more wine.

If anyone wants to be a painter, he should first consider whether he is not better suited to be something else: a teacher, a government minister, a professor, a craftsman, a workman; for only truly great human beings can paint.

The last patient left at 10:30. It had by now, regrettably, become accepted that they would be seen at the practice on Saturday mornings. The doctor took off his white coat and washed his hands. As he did so, he watched himself in the mirror.

When Paddy awoke from deep sleep, the ship was in space, in zero gravity. He looked out through the porthole. The eternal night of space surrounded him. Behind was the gleam of Schaet; to his left was the golden globe of Alpheratz, and ahead were the stars of Andromeda: Adil, the Body; Mirach, the Loins; Almach, the shoulder.

'I must dot!' Icho spoke Interkosmo. He had learned the language
without difficulty and could speak it flawlessly. The only thing he found difficult was not talking as loudly as he usually did; if he had, the walls would have started to shake.

There were few items of furniture in the room. Three of them were comfortable chairs.

'I must just dot,' he said.

It was eleven a.m. I sat with my father beneath a sunshade on the main terrace of the Carlton Hotel. As I gazed at the blue expanses of the sea with its curly, white crests of foam, the wild and frenzied happenings of the night before seemed like a dream. Like a nightmare ... Bright red-and-white and blue-and-white beach umbrellas; the smell of the sea; the happy voices of bathers along four kilometres of beach, interspersed with the urgent cries of the ice-cream vendors. Nymphs with slender, naked limbs dived into the water and emerged spluttering. 'Marvellous,' I said. My old man had no time to answer. He was cracking his breakfast egg.

Strapped into their anatomically designed seats, they raced towards Hell. The opalescent fluid found its way into their mouths and noses, and they felt as if they were drowning. Icho Tolot was still writhing and shrieking on the ground, while Rhodan, Richter, Redhorse, Polke and the three mutants were reduced to helpless spectators of the monstrous creature's agony. Finally the last cry died away, and Rhodan's desperate wish came true. The Halutian recovered from the shock and regained control of his own metabolism. 'That was hard, wasn't it? But I believe there was no alternative.'

Where a dot is, something happens!

Dot — point — basic unit of geometry, intersection of two lines without extension — punctuation mark, said the Halutian. The 2.50 metre tall, two-headed mutant, Gorachin, gave a momentary grin with Ivanovich's face. Ivan had no time for that. Ivan saw his goal and once more unleashed his mental currents, causing calcium and carbon compounds to explode.

I stood up, hesitated for a moment and switched on the screen. I was startled to see the face of a Kirjen. It was an impressive, intelligent face, dominated by a long, flat nose and an extremely high
forehead. The blue-skinned features were unfamiliar, as was the head, surrounded by a thick, curly mass of fur.

'Welcome to Kanor. I am the contact man of my people, Erg Vatal.'

His thin-lipped mouth twisted into a smile. The four-jointed arm and 62-fingered hand appeared in the frame.

It was a flame, or something similar. A vibrant, shining form that hovered in mid-air and performed strange manoeuvres. It seemed to dance — now forward, now back, right to left, up from below. It was pale in colour, and at times it moved so quickly that Fed momentarily lost sight of it. Some day we shall no longer need pictures; we shall just be happy. For we shall know what eternity is, and our knowledge will make us happy. Life after death will be explored and will set us an example of new modes of conduct.

I paint my paintings on grounded canvas (synthetic emulsion as a binder for titanium dioxide), which I buy in Düsseldorf for 8 DM the square metre. I use the best pigments and oils, and the work is guaranteed to be as durable as is humanly possible.
The squat, green-feathered Epsalian hovered alongside the coypu, who imperturbably went on working. The painting was almost ready. The Epsalian looked at the original, an archive shot of Perry Rhodan's meeting with Kraa Mhakuy on the planet Quinta. He compared it with the painting and said, as if musing to himself: '... I'm glad you're conventional, Gucky, with no qualms about painting beautiful pictures. You have as much in common with Raphael as with the Surrealists, the Impressionists, the cave painters, Zero, Picasso, Fluxus and the millions of poor devils who photograph their families. Therein lies your greatness ...'

'Did you say something?' said Gucky.

'No, nothing important.'

The Epsalian hovered in the room for a while longer, then teleported himself silently to the ship's control room, where he went back to repairing the field generators.

Which is better: collecting art, or drinking and whoring? Everything in its proper time.
All hell broke loose. Across the monitors flickered the flames from the overloaded field screens. The ship lurched to and fro. The Antigrav could no longer absorb the shocks that struck in rapid succession. The giant command post collapsed in ruins. Through the wailing of the sirens, the cries of the wounded could be heard. Even Ferro Kraysch had been hurled out of his seat, and he stood up with great difficulty. He was blinded by the blood that ran down his face.

That was the end. Ferro felt no fear, only anger and disappointment that it had come so quickly. For all his caution, he had underestimated the enemy. To the aliens, the MOHICAN was no more dangerous than a ball. a plaything to toss around as they wished. Ferro’s anger turned to frantic rage. They had him in their power. Another direct hit shook the ship’s gigantic hull. But he would show them that a Terran was not so easy to beat.

I consider many amateur photographs better than the best Cézanne. It’s not about painting good pictures, because painting is a moral action.

Doubtfully, Perry looked at the illuminated positronics wall, with its bewildering array of flashing, multicoloured control lights. Could he justify sitting here and reworking a problem, when he could not even be sure it would prove relevant to the present situation? Was it right to build a hypothesis solely on the analogy between two processes? In front of him, on the main programme line, a green key lit up. The machine was ready to accept the programme.

Perry clenched and opened his fist. Then he firmly pressed the key. The green light went out.

‘Problem,’ said Perry hoarsely. ‘Generating structural formulae for two six-dimensional force fields. Analogy: the arrangement of force fields in a synchrotron particle accelerator …’

Seconds later, the machine was at work.

If they had their way, all policemen would wear screen-dotted uniforms, with a dot pattern instead of the German eagle. Every one of them would have a spotted handkerchief.

There were three of them, and they shimmered with an intense blue. For aeons they had been soaring above their world, which was bathed in a deep red glow. Their flight was noiseless, despite their gigantic size.
They flew no specific course, but appeared at regular intervals above Kraa, the largest city in their world. One hundred and twenty times in succession they came individually, and then all three appeared together.

He likes to bend an elbow, my dear husband does. I put it in that flippant way, to show that I like a laugh and can take a joke. But the way my husband gets his pleasure is harmful to himself. He is always finding an excuse to celebrate and drink a toast to someone. This makes him popular with his workmates and friends — but not with me and his family. This liquid hobby of his takes its toll of time, money, home life and ultimately health. Being a vegetarian and also a militant teetotaller (though not by any means a killjoy) puts me in a difficult position. Can you understand that? When I object, however justly and reasonably, all I get is a smile. That is why I'm taking the liberty of asking for your support. Perhaps you can get my husband to think twice, because he has a great respect for you. I know that. Please do bring up the subject.

Any one who is in trouble or has a screw loose had better go to a psychiatrist, but not paint. Painting is strictly for the healthy.

The newlywed Inge says: 'My father seldom parts with anything really valuable.'

'You're right there,' growls her husband. 'I found that out when I married you!'