

Strategies for Survival (1986)

02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

Strategies for Survival (1986) is an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness in 2023, funded by the BC History Digitization Program at the University of British Columbia.

Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists was organized by the Vancouver Artists' League, as a component part of *Vancouver: The Place, Vancouver: The People*, a City of Vancouver centennial project for 1986.

Find the rest of the project linked at unitpitt.ca



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02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

QUOTE

Backing of the individual artist: support for the artist in the Federal Republic does not look much better than it does in other Western nations. While there are numerous city, state and federal stipend programs, the actual number of artists receiving subsidies is small.

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00:00:00

Dr. Thomas Deecke, West Germany:

Backing of individual artist: Support for the artist in the Federal Republic does not look much better than it does in other Western nations. While there are numerous city, state and federal stipend programs, the actual number of artistic— artists receiving subsidies is small.

[Tone.]

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02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

INTRODUCTION (2023)

Strategies for Survival (1986), is an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness, re-presenting the partial proceedings of *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, June 9, 10, and 11, 1986.



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00:00:21

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

Welcome to *Strategies for Survival (1986)*, an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness, re-presenting the partial proceedings of *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, June 9, 10, and 11, 1986.

[Tone.]



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02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

DOCUMENTS AND ACCESS

For expanded access, this document presents textural and lightly edited transcripts of the presentation.

On the right is the timestamped textural transcript, with all the *ums*, *ahs*, pauses, and grammatical idiosyncrasies of the spoken word, meant to be read with the audio, linked [here](#).

This column on the left provides the lightly edited, easy-to-read transcript. This can be read with or without the audio, and subject headings from the original conference papers, or added for this project, are linked in the [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#) above; matching the timestamps at right.



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00:00:49

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

If you've already listened to the 2023 introduction (track 00, linked [here](#)), you may wish to skip ahead in this text [to [00:02:00](#)] and then skip ahead in the audio to match the timestamp.

[All the timestamps are linked in the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS](#) above.]

If you haven't listened to the introduction, or any of the other recordings, you'll want to know that this is a multi-part project, presenting archival audio recordings alongside textural and lightly edited transcripts, for expanded access.

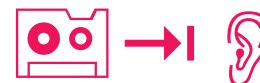
On the left of each transcript document is a lightly edited, easy-to-read transcript that, in some cases, directly excerpts the original conference papers; this can be read with or without the audio.

(By the way, if you're listening to the audio recording, and wondering, "where are the transcripts?" you can find links to those documents in the audio description!)

This column on the right presents the textural

transcript, with all the *ums*, *ahs*, pauses, and grammatical idiosyncrasies of the spoken word, to match the archival audio as close as possible—it may be difficult to read this side of the page without the relevant audio recording, [linked [here](#)].

[Tone.]



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02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

DAY 1, SPEAKER 1

Dr. Thomas Deecke, a historian, curator, and writer from West Germany, was the first speaker at the conference, a last-minute replacement for Jürgen Partenheimer, an artist from West Germany.

The cassette tapes found in the UNIT/PITT archives provide a complete document of his presentation, “Public promotion and private support for the arts in Germany (special accent on the visual arts).” He also reads “Breaking down the Bridges,” from a lecture given by Jürgen Partenheimer at the University of California, Davis, in 1985; and his own text on “metalanguage,” for which he read a translation of “Gesang Weylas,” [“Weyla’s Song” or “Weyla’s Canto,” in his translation.]

Dr. Thomas Deecke is introduced in the transcript, so the biography of Jürgen Partenheimer, from the original conference pamphlet, is included below.

📅 1986 / ● 2023 / 📅 1986

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00:02:00

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

Dr. Thomas Deecke, a historian, curator, and writer from West Germany, was the first speaker at the conference, a last-minute replacement for Jürgen Partenheimer, an artist from West Germany.

The cassette tapes found in the UNIT/PITT archives provide a complete document of his presentation, “Public promotion and private support for the arts in Germany (special accent on the visual arts).” He also reads “Breaking down the Bridges,” from a lecture given by Jürgen Partenheimer at the University of California, Davis, in 1985; and his own text on “metalanguage,” for which he reads a translation of “Gesang Weylas,”—“Weyla’s Song,” or, in his translation, “Weyla’s Canto.”

The poem is read in German by Mike Bourscheid, an artist from Luxembourg, living there again, via Vancouver.

After the tone, I’ll read the biography of Jürgen Partenheimer from the original conference papers. After another tone, we’ll join the conference in



edited transcript



1986.

[Tone.]



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textural transcript



02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)



BIOGRAPHY (1986)

JÜRGEN PARTENHEIMER (WEST GERMANY)

Jürgen Partenheimer is a native of Munich who presently lives and works in Düsseldorf. As an artist he has exhibited in San Francisco, Washington, Vienna and New York; as a scholar and critic he has taught at the University of California, the San Francisco Art Institute and Concordia University in Montreal.



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00:03:12

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

Jürgen Partenheimer is a native of Munich who presently lives and works in Düsseldorf. As an artist he has exhibited in San Francisco, Washington, Vienna and New York; as a scholar and critic he has taught at the University of California, the San Francisco Art Institute and Concordia University in Montreal.

[Tone.]



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02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

INTRODUCTIONS (1986)

Marion Barling, conference coordinator:

I would like to introduce Mr. Ottfried Zimmerman, who will introduce Dr. Thomas Deecke, who unfortunately you do not have bibliography material on [as he is replacing Jürgen Partenheimer, the invited speaker], but we will provide that for you later.

So, would you like to welcome Ottfried Zimmerman—

[Audience applauds.]



Ottfried Zimmerman (Goethe Institut Vancouver), introducing Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Thomas Deecke from Berlin. As Marion Barling said already, he is replacing Jürgen Partenheimer, who had to cancel his planned visit very shortly. We are very lucky

00:03:38

Marion Barling, conference coordinator:

Then I would like to introduce Mr. Ottfried Zimmerman, who will introduce Dr. Thomas Deecke, who unfortunately you do not have bibliography material on, but we will provide that for you later.

So, would you like to welcome Doc— um, Ottfried Zimmerman—

[Audience applauds.]

[Noises off-mic as speaker comes to the stage.]

Marion, speaking quietly to Ottfried: “—when the light comes on...”

Ottfried, off-mic: “I don't need the podium anyway...”

Marion says again: “—when the light comes on...”, and Ottfried replies: “Okay.”]

Ottfried Zimmerman (Goethe Institut Vancouver), introducing Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

edited transcript



textural transcript



02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)



though to find Mr. Deecke in so short a time. In a way of speaking, we got him in the morning with his coffee cup in his hand, and he was here in the afternoon—

[Ottfried chuckles.]

—and even now replacing another person, the first speaker.

So, he is the trouble-shooter in arts apparently.

Dr. Deecke studied history of art, archaeology, and history, at the universities of Fribourg, Munich, and Berlin. His PhD thesis was on the drawings of Lovis Corinth.

After his studies he joined the DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service [or Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst], which runs a program for international artist exchange and artists-in-residence in Berlin. Some of you may have heard of that.

After that, Dr. Deecke was the Director of Westfälischer Kunstverein, and what that means, he will explain himself. He can do it much better than I. Kunstvereins are very important and interesting institutions in Germany.

It's my pleasure to introduce—

[Mic feeds back.]

—Dr. Thomas Deecke from Berlin. As Marion Barling said already, he is replacing Jürgen Part—Partenheimer, who have to cancel his euh, planned visit very shortly. We are very— very lucky though to find Mr. Deecke in so short time. Euh, in a way of speaking, we got him in the morning with his coffee cup in his hand, and he was here in the afternoon—

[Ottfried chuckles.]

—and even now replacing another person, the first speaker.

So, he is the trouble-shooter in arts apparently.

Euh, Dr. Deecke studied, euh, history of art, archaeology, and history, at the universities of Fribourg, Munich, and euh, Berlin. His euh, PhD thesis was on the drawings by Lovis Corinth.

After his euh, studies he joined the euh, D-A-A-D, the German Academic Exchange Service, euh, which runs um, a program for artist exchange—international artist exchange and artists-in-residence—in Berlin. Some of you may have heard

edited transcript

textural transcript

02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

At present he lives in Berlin, as a freelance writer, lecturer, and organizer of exhibitions. One of his interesting projects, I suppose, is to organize the program for—well how do you say it? Berlin has been selected European City of Culture for 1988.

That's a new program—the previous cultural cities were Athens, Florence, and Amsterdam. Now, for 1988 it's Berlin, and Dr. Deecke is very heavily involved in the program for this year.

That should be all from my side, and I'll pass the [mic] on to our speaker.

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Thank you.

[Audience applauds.]



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of that.

It's—

[Ottfried adjusts the microphone, says off-mic: "It's too loud, no?"]

Marion: "No."

Ottfried: "I tried to turn it away, euh—"

Marion: "They can't hear you, but it's okay."

Ottfried: "Sorry, I get too— too much echo, so I thought it's— it's too loud. Right."]

Ottfried Zimmerman:

Well— euh, after that, euh, Dr. Deecke was the Director of the euh, Westphalien Kunstverein, and euh, what that means, he will explain you euh, himself. He can do it much better than I do. Kunstverein is a very important and interesting institution in Germany.

Euh, at present he lives in Berlin, as a freelance writer, lecturer, organizer of exhibitions. Euh, one of his euh, interesting pro— projects, I suppose, is to euh, organize— euh, the program for a—um, well how do you say it?—euh, Berlin has been euh, selected Cultural City of Europe for 19—euh, '88.



edited transcript



textural transcript



02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)



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Um, that should be all euh, from my side, and I pass the [?] on to our speaker.

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Thank you.

[Audience applauds.]



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CULTURAL ABUNDANCE

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

I'll speak about two things. A longer part of my speech will touch, I hope, on many of the questions I was asked to answer, that you are interested in. And a smaller part of my speech will handle about art.

My theme is public promotion and private support for the arts in Germany, with a special accent on the visual arts.



Like Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany is a union, composed of 11 states of varying sizes—including three cities in which municipal and state undertakings are more or less the same.

The German constitution delegates artistic, educational, and—to a lesser degree—scientific authorities, to the Länder—as we call them—the states, or individual state governments. For this reason, there is no central cultural minister, but rather a loose union of ministers—in some countries they call them senators—the so-

00:08:13

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Now I don't know— ah, yeah, [?]- okay.

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called [Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs], the highest authority in cultural matters. This is the one body where very general guidelines for a common cultural policy are deliberated and delivered. However, the Conference members are scrupulously careful not to assign any real responsibility or influence to the federal government.

A look in Germany's history brings the structure into perspective. The country was established from numerous other countries and city-states of various sizes, all brought together under a federal government of Bismarck, in 1871.

[Dr. Deecke pauses.]

Before the National Socialists came into power in 1933, there were many more states than exist today, and—partly as a result of the liquidation of Prussia in 1947—the present state boundaries are relatively arbitrarily drawn. At any rate, each state can look back on a longer tradition—several

countries they call them senators—in the so-called Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs Conference, the highest authority in cultural matters. This is the one body where very general guidelines for a common euh, cultural policy are deliberately delivered. However, the Conference members are scrupulously careful not to assign any real responsibility or influence to the federal government.

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textural transcript

02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

centuries, at least—as a sovereign nation with its own local history and cultural life, and own form of government ranging from kingdoms to secular or religious principalities to earldoms and oligarchically-structured city-states. The independence of these sovereignties didn't always result in sharp or defined regional differences. In most of them, the capitals and seats of governments all served as centres of culture and learning. Every average-sized state had at least one university, one art academy, one or more theatres, an opera, some orchestras, choirs, museums of various types.



Since most of these still exist—even in East Germany, where, on the other hand, cultural life is entirely centralized—there is sharp and lively competition among them. The views that have arisen by the sheer number of these institutions and the proximity to one another of many of the former seats of governments are the other side of the coin. City and state government are often so concerned with guarding their privileges that—in

tradition—several centuries, at least—as a sovereign nation with its own local history and cultural life, and own form of government ranging from kingdom to secular or religious principalities to earldoms and oligarchically-structured city-states. The independence of these sovereign—sovereignties didn't always result in sharp or defined regional differences. In most of them, the capitals and seats of governments all served as centres of culture and learning. Every average-size— sized state had at least one university, one art academy, one or more theatres, an opera, some orchestras, choirs, museums of various types.



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edited transcript



textural transcript



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areas like the Rhine-Ruhr district—cities only a few kilometres apart maintain their own opera houses, their large museums, even if there is barely enough of an audience to fill one of the houses. Competition for artwork escalates prices, and exhibition policies have sometimes come to be pursued on a purely “dog-eat-dog” basis.

This cultural abundance would not be possible without the crucial financial support provided by city and states, and, indirectly, federal largesse. A cultural life without state funding is unthinkable in the Federal Republic—this is probably different from what happens in Canada—since private support from individuals, as well as from foundations, play only a minor role.

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PATRONAGE

The example of Professor Peter Ludwig, Germany's greatest collector, who buys almost exclusively for public museums—not only for German ones anymore, also for Austrian, and East German ones—was the exception to the rule in Germany for long time.

But during the last couple of years, the situation has changed. On the one hand, the US-American example of private sponsorship—with all the influence that it exercises on the museums' collections policies, cannot always be rated as being positive. And changes in the tax laws, on the other hand—though the changes are still insignificant and the law is still being worked on, and, hopefully, will be improved. These have lent wings to the private foundation system so that with the aid of individual sponsors and sometimes-revived benefactors' associations—for instance the Friends of the Nationalgalerie Berlin, or the Friends of the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, and others—the museums are enabled to buy art on a larger scale.

00:13:35

The example of Professor Peter Ludwig, Germany's greatest collector, who buys almost exclusively for public museums—not only for German ones anymore, also for Austrian, and East German ones—was the exception to the rule in Germany for long time. But during the last couple of years, the situation has changed insofar as the US-American example of private sponsorship, on the one hand—with all the influence and—that it exercises on the museums' collections policies, and that cannot always be rated as being positive—and changed in the tax laws, on the other hand—though the changes are still insignificant and the law is still being worked on, and, hopefully, will be improved—have lent wings to the private foundation system so that with the aids of individual sponsors and—sometimes revived—benefactors' associations—for instance the Friends of the Nationalgalerie Berlin, or the Friends of the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, and others—the museum are enabled to buy art on a larger scales.

These sponsor groups mainly support international, modern, and contemporary art. Though the purchase of Antoine Watteau's painting *Homecoming to Cythera* in Berlin, and the *Evangeliar* of Henry the Lion, demonstrate that it is possible to mobilize a wide-ranging sponsorship for older artworks as well—plus public funds.

Concerning the private sponsors and collectors who, like Peter Ludwig, directly or indirectly collect artworks for museums and public galleries, the fact that they, of course, do satisfy their personal vanities, and that their interests as private collectors do shift the emphasis of a museum's collection, cannot be neglected. And that means that some museums—especially the smaller ones, which are supplied with less public funds—can lose their independence, and they—respectively, their directors—sometimes lose their scope of realizing their own conceptions.

In the extreme case of the museum in Darmstadt—respectively the modern department

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of this Landesmuseum—the whole building has been filled with the most disputed loan of a collection of the youngest, wild German painters, and other artworks, all from a gallerist’s—or better to say, an art dealer’s—possession. That means, in a way, that the museum has become an extended sales gallery for the loaning gallerist, or art dealer. Just because the city of Darmstadt—respectively the Land Hessen, as the body responsible for that museum—did not acquire the very famous collection of Mr. Ströher [founder of Wella], a collection of Minimal art, Pop art, and a big collection of Beuys artwork, for which the museum originally was intended, but the museum let it go to the bigger city of Frankfurt, only about 30 miles from Darmstadt.

So, in Darmstadt—and to a less striking extent in Germany—we approach US-American conditions, and we do not find that to be very positive. Of course, I am only talking about the form of private interference in the museums’ autonomy, which are considered negative in the USA as well. I

Darmstadt—respectively the modern department of this Landesmuseum—even the whole building has been filled with the most disputed loan of a collection of youngest, German, wild painters, and others’ artwork, from a gallerist—or better to say, an art dealer’s—possession. That means, in a way, the museum has become an extended sale gallery for the loaning gallerist, or art dealer. Just because the city of Darmstadt—respectively the Land Hessen, as the body responsible for that museum—did not acquire the very famous collection of Mr. Ströher—that’s this man with this euh, hair thing, Wella. Euhm— a collection of Minimal art, Pop art, and special of a— a big collection of Beuys artwork, for which the museum originally was intended, but let it go to the bigger city Frankfurt, only about 30 miles from Darmstadt.

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But let me return to the reasons for the particular
German system of public promotion of the arts.



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LEGACIES

A view of history explains the differences. In the Middle Age the rulers and the church were the sole supporters and patrons of the arts. The Renaissance brought a heightened sense of the individual and new classes of patrons—upper-middle-class dwellers in the wealthy, new city-states. The new bourgeoisie took over the role of art patrons after the French Revolution, creating the first museums for the public, the first Kunstvereins—typically German private institutions for the promotion of art—as well as establishing private collections. It bespeaks the character of the period that the burghers considered it a moral duty to uphold art as their national legacy, to be handed down to future generation. Of course, the role that prestige has played should not be underestimated.

• * •

The still-traumatic experience of inflation in the early 1920s and the total breakdown of the German economy after the defeat of World War I brought this period to an abrupt halt. Old fortunes

00:18:07

A view at historic— history explains the differences. In the Middle Age the rulers and the church were the sole supporters and patrons of the arts. The Renaissance brought a high—heightened sense of the individual and new classes of patrons—upper-middle-class dwellers in the wealthy, new city-states. The new bourgeoisie took over the role of art patrons after the French Revolution, creating the first museum for general public, the first Kunstvereins—typically German private institutions for the promotion of art—as well as establishing private collections. It bespeaks the character of the period that the burghers considered it a moral duty to uphold art as their national legacy, to be handed down to future generation. Of course, the role that prestige has played should not be underestimated.

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ceased to exist, big firms were transformed into anonymous companies, and the nouveau riche governed the economy, until they, in turn, were taken over by the Nazis, and cultural freedom—even of a private nature—became illegal.

×

The new state, the Federal Republic, conceived of itself as a “Government of Culture” responsible for the totality of its citizens and their cultural needs.

“ ”

“Art is no luxury—art has its social uses,” is how, for instance, the Berlin Senate—the government of Berlin—trenchantly phrased this ideology at one point. The state had taken over the role of patron of the arts, whether or not—in the opinion of not just a few artists and others—it has but imperfectly carried out its duties.

This support is given in several different ways: directly to cultural institutions, indirectly through so-called intermediate organizations, and backing to individual artists.

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THE LION'S SHARE

The lion's share of art financing in Germany comes through direct government support, paid for all cities and state theatres, operas, musical theatres, orchestras, museums, Kunsthallen [galleries without collections] and Kunstvereine [galleries with collections]. I will return to these very important institutions later.

Universities, colleges, and art academies will not be discussed here since their direct influence in the cultural scene is minor. With few or unimportant exceptions, there are no university museums or collections, no college ballets, theatre, or music stages, since such concerns have been taken over by the cities, and state institutions.

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as we have it in Germany—coalitions of parties. This can result in an imbalance in the distribution of funds—which are assigned according to the dictates of the majority, rather than to the dictates of quality. Musical and legitimate theatres tend to receive a disproportionately larger share of funds than museum and art institutions, since politicians assume that more people—read: potential voters—go to the theatres than to the museum, an assumption belied by the facts.

✘

In 1970, 37 percent of all cultural expenditure by the various governments—federal, state, and communities—were for theatre, including opera houses; 11.1 percent for museums and collections, and exhibition institutions; and 2 percent for music, including symphony orchestras.

In '76, the figures read 35 percent for theatre; nearly 10 percent for museum and collections; and 3.4 percent for music.

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These proportions have hardly changed in the meantime, but it is to consider that the amount

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[Dr. Deecke mutters: “oh my God, I knew that was difficult—”]

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CHOICE AND CHANCE

The state's influence ends—theoretically—with the director's choice, not always based on purely artistic considerations.

Within the framework of a several-year appointment to an institution, the director can count on a firm budget—normally—and relative freedom to do as he, or she pleases. From time to time a special event will warrant separate funding, at which point political influence may come into play. In general, the only stipulations for state funding are that the staff cost be accounted for—which is not to say that directors tone down their constant pleas for more personnel—and that funds earmarked for special events be kept strictly from that purpose. A definite flexibility is granted each institution's leadership in the matter of how this money is to be spent. These separate funds for personnel or special events come either from the appropriate government agency, or, to take the actual case of Berlin and Baden-Württemberg, two Länder counties in Germany—from lottery

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revenues. But this is an exception—only in these two counties of eleven.

The state-controlled lottery is bound by law to return a large portion of its profits to the public. This usually takes the form of special allotment—and in Berlin and in Baden-Württemberg, these are assigned to the arts. Both of the Berlin Kunstvereins, for instance—one is leftist, and the other is more conservative—are financed in this way, to the tune of about 500,000 US dollars per year. But this is a Berlin particularity, other Kunstvereine are far less supported.

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OPEN DEBATES

Should differences arise between the political authorities and the directorship of an artistic institution, the liberal press, the radio, and the television will generally line up on the side of the art. The debate will thus be carried out into the open, often leading to active public involvement.



At this point, a few remarks are necessary about West German fundamentally different way of running radio and TV. Both are properly considered cultural institutions. There are two TV systems, both are publicly supported and—while adapted to the state—they are able to avoid direct parliamentary or governmental control. The ruling bodies in radio and television are made up of representatives of important organizations including political parties, the churches, trade unions, business group, and other diverse associations. In this way, an attempt is made to represent a broad cross-section of the people, which guarantees a variety of opinions. Commercial TV is limited to about half an hour in

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the afternoon, in one block—so nobody has really to see it!—and profits from advertising cover only a fraction of television costs. That means that we have to pay for it, but it's not very much.

Dependence on business is therefore very minor. Along with the daily and weekly printed press, TV and radio stations are regarded as the most important cultural mediators, critics, and partners. Radio stations even step in sometimes as organizers and subsidizers, especially in the case of music festivals, and avant-garde or multi-media events. The now traditional musical festivals of Donaueschingen, Bremen, and Darmstadt have played decisive roles in the development of post-war German and European music.

In recent years a change of consciousness can be stated for this field as well. The rather conservative government of the Federal Republic of Germany is changing the broadcasting system insofar as it allows—respectively, will allow—private TV stations on special channels, and on cable. Despite all appreciations of the idea of competition, we can already notice that the fight for the so-called “audience rating” will not lead to an improvement in quality of the TV programs—

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and of the two quasi-official ones neither—but that the light and insipid programs will be extended.

I set a high value on this description of the TV programs because they—though in our view still far too little—help to circulate the “minority” culture—and that’s our culture. And in that they periodically report on “high-culture” events, comment on them, and criticize them.



To some extent, television in the Federal Republic has been a medium with a cultural mission, a medium so-called intellectuals could use without feeling ashamed. It’s can be doubted whether it will continue to accomplish this task, but the fight for culture in TV has not definitely been settled.

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CLUBS AND DIAMONDS

But let me return to the Kunstvereins. There are very few things or terms which are called German and nevertheless are seen as being positive. I want to make this somewhat self-critical remark, although I just read in an essay by a painter and author Armando—Dutch, by the way—that it should be a particular German characteristic—one among many, probably—to sometimes to be too self-critical. But I stick to my command, and I am sure that the adjective German will unfortunately remind you of a lot of unpleasant things, too.

×

So, one of the few institutions which really are very German but good, are the Kunstvereine. These are institutions we could describe as “friends of arts”—organized associations which have made it their business to promote the arts, especially the visual arts, and mainly contemporary and modern art. The foundation of the Kunstvereine dates back to the early 19th century, after the churches had been secularized and the kings had been deprived of their power by the Napoleonic

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This emancipation movement has left its mark up to this days. During the time of the so-called Third Reich, the Kunstvereins were banned—respectively were “brought into a line” as they call it, which means that they were controlled by the National Socialists. But right after World War II they were reestablished according to the old statutes and articles—and along the sheer classical bourgeois line—to remain independent, and accepted—and still accept—the role of mediator between audience and artists.

In a way, they form the preliminary step to heaven—the museums and the important galleries. They enable the experiment, the first step to be done. They are the breeding-grounds for the

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I dare to declare that the main artistic experiments of the 60s and 70s could not have been realized without these non-commercial institutions in Germany, though I do not underrate the importance of the committed art dealer—or as we in Germany prefer to call him, “the gallerist.” Moreover, the thematic exhibition—the discussion of a social condition for art in the 60s and 70s—was invented by the Kunstvereins, and only subsequently was adopted and—with far more financial resources—elaborated in greater detail by the museums.

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situation that the Kunstvereins could no longer finance their work only from their own resources—the membership dues—but must depend on the allowance provided by the cities and the states. This, of course, subjects the Kunstvereins to the financiers' requests, and that problem cannot be removed through discussion. But support as subsidiary principle—that means the support of the already existing institution which provides the cultural infrastructure—is the most important factor. Preserving the Kunstvereins' independence is the first essential for the great importance for the young visual arts in Germany and beyond.

A couple of years ago, we therefore founded the working pool of German Kunstvereine, called Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Kunstvereine, a kind of lobby with two main tasks: to establish the nonpareil, autonomous position of the Kunstverein in the cultural life of the Federal Republic of Germany, and to procure means—also from federal funds—for supra-regional large-scale projects, in which the variety of the more than hundred Kunstvereins is integrated to the unity of a cultural event.

The first large-scale experiment can be regarded

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PASSE-PARTOUTS

These serve a vital stimulus to the cultural scene in their own jurisdictions and beyond. The responsibility for representing German culture abroad falls to the Goethe Institut and the German Academic Exchange Service, [or DAAD, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst]. In contrast to similar institutions in other countries, both are run as private organizations. This means that they are able to act independently of the official foreign cultural policy—or at least they try! And they do—sometimes to the chagrin of German embassy officials and the government. The independence of these institutions permits a flexible presentation of art, freeing the respective directors from direct pressure from either their own or foreign government.

Attempts to arrange exhibitions of what has been called “airport” or “consular” art, however—pictures by nephews and sons of government leaders—must frequently be nipped in the bud.

[Audience laughs.]



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The DAAD, whose main task is to send German scholars abroad and to bring foreign scholars to the Federal Republic, also supervises an Artist in Berlin program. This program of stipends was originated by the Ford Foundation in 1961–62—after the erection of the Berlin Wall—for the benefit of foreign artists in the field of visual arts, music—meaning composition—literature, and film. Funding of the programs was subsequently taken over by the DAAD.

Twenty-five stipends—about \$1,400 USD per month, plus travel expenses—are awarded annually for a year-long stay in Berlin. The aim of the program is to counteract Berlin's geographical and psychological isolation, as well as to give foreign artist an opportunity to take part in the city's cultural and artistic life without the burden of material worries.



The program has aided over 350 important artists, some of whom even have permanently or temporarily put down roots in Berlin. For instance, George Rickey, the American, or Ed Kienholz, and

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Like the Goethe Institut, the Artist in Berlin program has a solid budget from the state authority. Funds allotted included \$800,000 USD for grants and activities, and \$190,000 USD for personnel and administration of the program. Its directors are appointed—with the co-operation of government representatives—by the ruling body of the program, and are thereafter independent—except for being accountable to state and federal auditing offices, whose control is limited to budget checks and overseeing the orderly dispersal of funds. Attempt on the part of political authorities to extend their influence to matters of content has to be anticipated. And here, too, the press has taken the role of watchdog.

The Berlin Festival, Ltd.—which includes the Berlin Film Festival, and has to do with visual arts too—is a different example for art promotion. The singular political situation of this divided city necessitates an entirely new form of cultural organization. In order to function independently of the Socialist states, the idea of incorporating was hit upon. For the most part, this operation is financed by

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The Berlin Festival has been instrumental in promoting Berlin's role as a cultural centre of West Germany, especially in the field of theatre—experimental and otherwise—music, film, and literature. In 1976, the festival was organized under the general heading *Berlin—New York*. The inordinately attended Soho exhibition was the art academy's contribution to this subject—and was the beginning of a long series. The visual arts have traditionally had a harder time of it in Berlin than in the Rhine-Ruhr area around Düsseldorf or Cologne. Nevertheless, Berlin is undoubtedly the most culturally alive city in central Europe—the Pompidou Centre notwithstanding, in Paris.



The difficulties for the arts inherent in German federalism are reflected in one attempt—which has repeatedly run aground—to broaden the scope of the intermediate organizations. At the prompting of Willy Brandt, former Chancellor

necessitates an entirely new form of cultural organization. In order to function independently of the— euh, of the Socialist states, the idea of incorporating euh, was hit upon. For the most part, this corporation— this operation is financed by the city of Berlin, yet it is run as a business—a fact that strongly influences the type of decisions made.

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The difficulties for the arts inherent in German federalism are reflected euh, in one attempt—which has euh, repeatedly run aground—to broaden the scope of the intermediate organization. As the prompting of Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic, the administration and the parliament have for some time debated the creation of a national foundation—a sort of hybrid between the US National Endowment for the Arts and the British Arts or Canadian Arts Council. Based on the example of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, which administers the state art holding of 14 formerly Prussian museums and cultural institutions in Berlin, with a total annual budget of euh, more than 40 million dollars—the states would relinquish their rights in cultural matters to the federal government, or rather its national foundation. The fundamental threat of— to states' right posed by this idea, coupled with the Soviet veto of the attempt to base the foundation in Berlin—anywhere else is out of question, since Berlin was formerly the capital of Germany and, if only in theory, the foundation would be meant for all of Germany, the East included—have caused

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purchased from the collection of a former German industrialist and emigrant, Robert von Hirsch, at an auction in 1977 at Sotheby's in London.



Meanwhile, the idea of a national foundation is dead, though the discussion has left traces that cannot be wiped out anymore. The cultural jurisdiction of the states—of the Länder—seem to be too great for the cultural ministers and senators to agree to give away some of their authority. Efforts are made to install a broadly-structured “state foundation,” which could step into the breach, wherever important artworks run the risk of being sold to foreign countries, but these are still dreams of the future.

We are not interested in that, anyway, since the new art would hardly have any chance to profit from this foundation. Nevertheless, the national foundation has led to a very positive result for the promotion of modern art. The financial means that were appropriated for its establishment were claimed by the artists' union—Berufsverband bildender, the association of professional artists.

that this project— have caused this project to be scrapped for a foreseeable future. Part of the money already set aside for the foundation—as much as 35 million Deutsche Mark, that's about 22 million Canadian dollars—were ironically put to use to acquire important works of art considered part of the national heritage, which were purchased from the collection of a former German industrialist and emigrant, Robert von Hirsch, at an auction in 1977 at Sotheby's in London.



Meanwhile, this idea of a national foundation is dead, though the discussion has left traces that cannot be wiped out anymore. The cultural jurisdiction of the states—of the Länder—seem to be too great for the cultural ministers and senators to agree to give away some of their authorities. Efforts are made to install a broadly structured “state foundation,” which could step into the breach, wherever important artwork run to risk or— of being sold to a foreign country, but these are still dreams of future.

We are not inten— interested in that way, anyway,

The artists' union is a Künstlerbund, a private association—paid into the so-called “Kunstfonds” [art funds]. With this money, artists' projects are directly supported according to the decision of a selection committee built by these associations, and members of the Kunstvereins, and so on. The considerable amount of one million Deutsche Marks per annum, allows a widespread promotion, so that very many artists can be supported.



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MINIMUM WAGES

Support for the artist in the Federal Republic does not look much better than it does in other Western nations. While there are numerous city, state and federal stipend programs, the actual number of artists receiving subsidies is small.

According to a recent parliamentary investigation into the living and working conditions of German artists in all fields, they are at the bottom of the income pyramid—with average earnings not even reaching the minimum wage level. Teaching positions in schools and colleges, moreover, are very hard to come by because college degrees in art educations are often necessary, and life tenureships limit the number of openings. Along with 30 to 40 yearly DAAD stipends of between \$400 and \$500 per month—it's not very much!—for foreign studies by young artists, some smaller stipends are awarded by the states—two or three for a stay in Paris, at the Cité d'Art, and three or four stipends for Villa Romana in Florence

00:44:46

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and Villa Massimo in Rome. The latter two are administered by West German authorities and supported by the Deutsche Bank, and other banks in Germany, and awarded to younger artists who have already achieved some recognition. Writers and composers are also eligible for the Rome stipend, which is about \$500 to \$600 USD per month.



By the way, the Villa Romana—which is kind of our academy in Italy—was a gift of a German artist, Max Klinger, to the association of German artists, at the beginning of this century. The few—seldom materially substantial—prizes awarded to artists by cities or states, do indeed serve to enhance reputations. Yet, they can hardly alter the general desolate prospect for individual support, especially since it has become the practice repeatedly to supply the same people with different prizes. The German Critics' Association, by the way—which avoids prizes in all areas of art—offers no funds, just the honour—they don't have money. Since 1980 though, there has been

by the states—two or three for a stay in Pa— Paris at the Cit— euh, Cité d'Art, and three or four stipends for Villa Romana in Florence and Villa Massimo in Rome. The latter two administered by West German authorities and supported by de Deutsche Bank, and other banks in Germany, are awarded to younger artist who have already achieved some recognitions. Writers and euh— com— composers are also eligible for the Rome stipend, which is about 500 to 600 US dollars a month.



The euhm— by the way, the Villa Romana—which is kind of our academy in It— Italy—is— was a gift of a German artist, Max Klinger, to the association of the art— German artist, beginning of this century. The few—seldom materially substantially— prize awarded to artists by cities or states, do indeed serve to enhance reputations. Yet, they can hardly alter the general desolate prospect for individual support, especially since it had become the practice repeatedly to supply the same people with different prizes. The German Critic

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an important exception—it's the Karl Schmidt-Rottluff Stipend awarded by the publicly supported Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes [or, the Academic Endowment of the German People], a promotion for highly talented scientists and artists. From the estate of the great German Expressionist, Schmidt-Rottluff, this magnanimous prize is awarded for two years, in each case with monthly grants of about 1,200 Deutsche Marks—it's a very good grant—plus materials, plus exhibition, plus catalogue at the end. Again, private patronage takes the place of smaller national stipends.



In recent years, a lot has happened in the sector of private promotion in the form of prizes and competitions. Aside from the already traditional art prizes awarded by public authorities, they take an important part in promoting young talents. So, the perfume firm 4711, you might know, gives the Prize of the Glockengasse, as it's called—for instance. Instead of giving annual promotion parties for a new perfume, they offer

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three prizes for young artists, each with 15,000 Deutsche Marks per annum—that's good, it's quite a considerable amount. The selection is left to a free and independent jury of important exhibition organizers.

The same is valued for the revived Bremen Art Award—one of the oldest private awards in Germany—and there are a few others.

Big companies like Phillip Morris—who especially according to the American example support exhibition projects, but also offer several art awards—have discovered the prestigious value of exhibition and stipends for artists and have produced numerous emulations.

Meanwhile, in the Federal Republic, a manual of art awards has been published, which lists several thousand—though of extremely different qualities and amounts. All things considered, we can say that there could not be too many awards, and that there are still not enough.



The report about the appalling condition of the artist has prompted authorities in several states to intensify their support. Taking the lead, the

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Berlin Senate strengthens its efforts in the areas of artistic, self-helped programs, by establishing and funding print workshops and founding the Künstlerhaus Bethanien—Bethania artist house—which is partly modeled on PS1, in Queens, New York. It's a meeting place for German and foreign artists, with studios that rent for the price of maintaining them, workshops and exhibition and performance facilities. After restricting itself to inviting foreign guests, the Berlin Artist Program has so far sent three stipend recipients to PS1 for a year-long stay—with \$550, plus travel expenses, and a free studio; cities such as Düsseldorf and Cologne followed.



State support for artistic and public financing of cultural life, in general, have become facts of life in West Germany. Personal engagement and private initiative are still glorious exceptions. Demand for state support may be raised too often, while the multifarious aid sometimes seems to get frittered away—from time to time affecting the free flow of supply and demand, such as when

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State support for artistic and public financing of cultural life, in general, have become facts of life in West Germany. Personal engagement and private initiative are still glorious exceptions.

private galleries receive state aids for exhibitions. More efforts like the Berlin Festival are certainly in order. One thing is certain in this system of state art support—that a strong, liberal press is essential in the struggle to keep political authorities from influencing artistic decisions. Nothing could be worse for a democratic government—especially one with a tradition as young as West Germany’s—than a uniform, centrally-controlled artistic and cultural scene—a dictatorship of mediocracy and constraint.



Thank you, that’s first part.

[Audience applauds.]



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Thank you, that’s first part.



[Audience applauds.]

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BREAKING DOWN THE BRIDGES

Now I would love to continue with two little texts. One is from Jürgen Partenheimer, who originally was invited, and wanted to come, and couldn't come, and he asked me to read a short text he would have given here, too. It is a text by somebody who is an artist—I'm not an artist—and which describes his position a little. And afterwards, I'll read a very short text by myself too, about art.



“Our time has given us considerable insight and many tools. The artist continues to reflect upon the multitudinous absurdities and seriously proceed with his profession. He gets up in the morning, pierces a hole in the earth, and descends into the depth of the sky of his head. There he forges his forms on the anvil of the good souls of mankind, mocking the daylight and the paths of the rhinoceros. Cautiously he displays the treasures of his imagination and jealously watches over them.

00:52:08

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“Our time has given us considerable insight and many tools. The artist continues to reflect upon the multitudinous absurdities and seriously proceed with his profession. He gets up in the morning, pierces a hole in the earth, and descends into the depth of the sky of his hand— head.

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When he returns to the surface he resumes his inconspicuous profession behind the thousand desks of administration, fills out papers of vast meaninglessness and confuses man with modest wit and flawless manners. Now and again he awakes in his dreams and remembers his vertical entrance to the centers of the worlds where he redescends to his chamber of recollected observations of candid fantasy. In a somnambul state of certainty he removes an object of exquisite meaning and places it in a furrow of harvested fields where it is found by man and cherished with disturbed pride, conserved and passed from generation to generation—a sign of sensitive yet unknown energies. Meanwhile the artist, after his day’s work returns to rejoicing sleep.”



That was the text of Jürgen Partenheimer—
[“Breaking down the Bridges,” from a lecture given
at the University of California, Davis, 1985.]

[Audience applauds.]

displays the treasures of his imagination, and jealously watches over them. When he returns to the surface, he resumes his un— oh— inconspicuous profession behind the thousand desk of administrations, fills out papers of vast meaninglessness, and confuses man with modes— modest wit and flawless manners.

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“Meanwhile, the artist, after his day’s work, return to rejoicing sleep.”



That was the text of Jürgen Partenheimer—

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[Audience applauds.]



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METALANGUAGE

And another short text, about metalanguage. After all these dry things, I think it's necessary.

In a panel discussion between the two Germanist professors, Walter Jens and Hans Mayer, and philosopher Ernst Bloch, rebroadcasted on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Bloch's birthday—the author of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* [or *The Principle of Hope*], remarks that in some of the chorals of Johann Sebastian Bach, he sensed a touch of that kind of cognition beyond rational explicability, that he designates a new language of extended knowledge, experienced in, as he said, “inspired moments.”

Asked by Walter Jens whether literature as well offered him this experience, he referred to Eduard Mörike's “Du bist Orplid, mein Land”—“Weyla's Canto” from 1831—the poem about the yearning for another world, for the isle of fantasy, for the space of perfection.

In this poem it says—and those are the verses Bloch was speaking of as the open structure of a

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new language that touched him—I give you first the whole, in a very bad English translation, it's not possible really, but to give you the idea of it. The translation is:



You are Orplid, my land

That far off gleams

From the sea your sunned strand evaporates

The mist that moistens the gods' cheek

Aged-old waters are rising

Rejuvenated round your hips, my child!

To your goddess bow

Kings who are your attendants



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[Tone.]

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GESANG WEYLAS

[From the original paper in the UNIT/PITT archives:

Du bist Orplid, mein Land!
Das ferne leuchtet;
Vom Meere dampfet dein besonner Strand
Den Nebel, so der Götter Wange feuchtet.

Uralte Wasser steigen
Verjüngt um deine Hüften, Kind!
Vor deiner Gottheit beugen
Sich Könige, die deine Wärter sind.

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Mike Bourscheid (Luxembourg):

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[Tone.]

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TO ROMANTICIZE

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

And these two lines: “age-old waters are rising, rejuvenated round your hips, my child!” were the ones that Bloch spoke about.

The cancellation of the contrast between “uralt” [aged-old] and “verjüngt” [rejuvenated] and the unexpected, but—in view of the fantasy of the isle of Orplid—natural comparison with a child seemingly rising from the sea, may have started this feeling of freedom from the stock of interpretations of a metalanguage. Though they do not explain it, but occasioned the moving moment of realizing a surprisedly and deeply felt speechlessness. The experience of being overwhelmed by the sound of a musical concentration, by the assembly of words familiar, but at the same time connected in strangeness—by the way, in the fine arts the thinker Ernst Bloch did not find such a sensation—is being sensed as fulfilment, is realizing the ex— exceptionality of the genius, those individuals who, euh, in an

00:57:18

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unexplicable way are standing outside the line.



With a materialistically-oriented science that—still believing in progress, speaks of the universal practicability of a future in need of improvement and seeks to approach the secret of the nature of man and his talents in analyzing the hormones and manipulating the genes—corresponds a conception of art that is mainly conceived towards novelty and innovational shove. Its protagonists faster and faster heaping invention upon invention, style upon style, adaptation, hit upon hit.

This is confronted with the cognition of a metalanguage of arts, of which to speak the enlightened individual hesitates. In this famous work, *Passages of Walter Benjamin*, he differentiated the two appearance of art: its materialistic manifestations in the trace, and its metalanguage in the aura.



I quote:

edited transcript

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“The trace is the indication of nearness, though what is left may be far away. The aura is the indication of distance, though what it evokes may be near. In the trace we get hold of the thing, in the aura the thing takes hold of us.”



Here is no scope left to first pile up the invention, investigation, and analysis, and then go to the other extreme and try to veil any explanation in referring to the undeterminability of the mythic.



[Dr. Deecke mutters: “Some words are difficult.”]



Ernst Bloch’s realizing that this “seizure” from outside the rational view of life and thinking can be guideline and model and motive to stay for the unexpected. But to follow him means as well to walk on the small ridge between rationality and inspiration, without losing one’s balance. To explain the creation of an artwork by the scientifically pervaded chemical reaction cannot

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be successful—Aldous Huxley’s horrible vision of a *Brave New World* and retort-bred creativity are still products of the fear of the possibilities and the misuse of science to deduce the process in arts only from their innovative potential leads into the whirl of varying fashions, from which emulation and eclectic accumulation cannot offer any formula for escape.

But is there not also the risk of the reversal into the deliberately artificial atmosphere of the “as if” of an artificial space of myths and muddling rumour about the art of pictures, in which those who seek for historical—as well as picture-historical traces—are sent away by the artist and—even more, by the apologist—into the wide soft-sponge space of speculation, into which—at most—the unsharp method of psychoanalyst could carry a pale light for the explanation of the form?

“Magic is like art, to wilfully use the sensuous world,” says Novalis.

This seems to open a scope for the posthumous,

To explain the creation of an artwork by the scientifically pervaded chemical reaction cannot be successful—Aldous Huxley’s horrible vision of a brave new world and retort-breed creativity are still products of the fear of the possibilities and the mist— misuse of science to deduce the process in arts only from their innovative potential leads into the whirl of varying fashions, from which em— emulation and eclectic accumulation cannot offer any formula for escape.

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“Magic is like art, to wilful use of the sensual word,” says Novalis.

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which could be enlarged into the informal, and being used at random inevitably must end in an unconnected emptiness. But the word “wilful” includes the sense of “choice of will” and of “free will,” conceals deliberate acting directed by a temper. In lucky moments, this acting is joined by the capability for what metalanguage that Ernst Bloch believed to hear, and that Novalis tries to evoke with the term of “the Romantic.”

He says, “In giving a high meaning to the common, a mysterious aspect to the ordinary, the dignity of the unknown to the known, an infinite appearance to the finite, I romanticize,” he writes in the *Fragments*.

This confession—which in today’s comprehension of the word, poorer by infinitely many nuances, merely sounds like a banal recipe, a “take”—testifies the risk of the sensuous, open to the non-rational artistic intention, and speaks of the sublimation of the common, of the

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Thank you.

[Audience applauds.]



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Thank you.

[Audience applauds.]



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Q&A

Ottfried Zimmerman:

Thank you, Thomas Deecke, for the outline of the financial structure in Germany, in the arts, and also for the philosophical appendices.



In fact, I think I have found so much interest for the subject of financial support for the arts in Germany, that it seems somehow to be a possible model in the programming of the Goethe Institut, to, continue exploring in the next few years, and to invite other knowledgeable speakers to talk to those of you who live in Vancouver or around. But now we have about 10 minutes for questions, if there are any.

[Ottfried pauses.]

Actually, I'm so blind that I can't see anything.

[Audience laughs.]



I should rather move over here.

01:04:09

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[Audience laughs.]



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[Audience laughs.]



Question 01, from the audience:

Guten Tag, Herr Doktor.

[Mic feeds back.]

Question 01, from the audience:

Guten Tag, Herr Doktor. I was wondering about video artists in Germany. Is there any support for giving equipment to artists to do new technology art?

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

There are a few. There are some possibilities in a few museums. Like in Essen, they have a studio for video artists and sometimes even they allow an artist to use it!

[Audience laughs faintly.]



In Berlin, at Künstler Bethanien, its a possibility, but most of the activities in the field of video

I should rather move over here.

[Audience laughs.]



Question 01, from the audience:

Guten Tag, Herr Doktor.

[Mic feeds back.]

Question 01, from the audience:

Guten Tag, Herr Doktor. Ah— I was wondering about video artists in Germany. Like, is there any support for giving equipment to artists to do new technology art?

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Euhm, there is a few. There is— there are some possibilities and in some few museums. Like in Essen, they have a studio for video artists and sometimes even they allow an artist to— to use it!

[Audience laughs faintly.]



Euhm, and euh, in Berlin, um, at Bethanien—I



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textural transcript



02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)



are privately organized and financed. There are some— Especially the Cologne Kunstverein is very active in showing it and promoting all possibilities in the field of video.

But still there is no centre for video art in West Germany—we are still fighting for it. Finding a town or a community interested to install it—it's difficult. So, there are only very few really good artists, and they work mostly in America, and in other places.

[Dr. Deecke pauses.]

Bitte.

[Dr. Deecke chuckles.]

I should say something about alternative places in Germany. I didn't mention them, not specifically.

&

There are some in Germany also, like you have, a lot of alternative places, spaces for artists. But, in Germany, after a short while, maybe after one year, if they are interesting enough, and pushing

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quoted— Künstler Bethanien, is a possibility, but most of the activities in the field of video is, euh, privately organized and— and financed. There are some— especially the Cologne Kunstverein is very active in showing it and promoting all euh, possibilities in euh, the field of video.

But still there is no centre for video art euh, in West Germany—we are still fighting for it. Finding a— a town or a— a community which is interested to— to install it—it's difficult. So, there are only very few really good artists, and they work mostly in America, and— and in other places.

[Dr. Deecke pauses.]

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[Dr. Deecke chuckles.]

Oh yeah, I should maybe— I should say something about alternative places in Germany. I didn't mention them, not specially.

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02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

enough, they are able to get money from the towns and authorities. So, a very short time after, they are not alternative anymore, in the sense that they no longer finance themselves. And then they are, sometimes, or many times connected with existing institutions, like Kunstvereine and Kunsthallen, or small museums and then there is possibility to be financed by the art fund I spoke about, especially for special projects. So, we don't have the institution of alternative art places as you have it. It's not so broad, not all over.

[Dr. Deecke pauses.]

Ottfried Zimmerman:

Obviously, everybody's yearning for coffee, so maybe we'll close the session for the morning. Is that alright, Marion?

Marion Barling:

We do have coffee now. So, we will have a 10 minute—

Pardon? Yes, we have a coffee bre—

lot of alter— alternative places, spaces for artists. But, um, in Germany it's so that— after quite— after short while, maybe after one year, euh, if they are interesting enough, and— and pushing enough, they euh, are able to get money from the towns and authorities. So, very short time after they had— they are not anymore alternative, in the sense that they finance themself. And then they are sometimes, or many times connected with existing institutions, like Kunstvereine and Kunsthallen, or small museums and euh— and then they are— and— and then there is possibility to be financed by the art fund I spoke about, especially for special projects. So, euh— we don't have the institution of alternative art places as you have it. Not so broad, not all— euh, all over.

[Dr. Deecke pauses.]

Ottfried Zimmerman:

Obviously, everybody's yearning for coffee, so maybe we close the session for the morning. Is that alright, Marion?

Marion Barling:

Um—

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Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

Oh, I beg your pardon, you wished to address—

Question 02, from the audience:

Just one question. What about the future for the International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research that [Joseph] Beuys started a while ago, and what is happening now with their programming after his death?



Dr. Thomas Deecke:

I do really not know what's happening, because everything is mixed up since he died. I hope that they will continue to work, but I'm not very hopeful. Because without Beuys, it won't work as it worked with him. So, hopefully it will continue awhile, but nobody knows in the moment—everybody involved in that field is shocked about his death.. So, we don't know. Hopefully, hm—

Question 03, from the audience:

Vous avez parlé de la situation des jeunes artistes, mais vous n'avez pas parlé de la situation des femmes artistes, en particulier. Est-ce qu'elles ont des centres où elles doivent exposer? Est-

[Mic feeds back.]

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Question 02, from the audience:

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Dr. Thomas Deecke:

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ce qu'elles sont ghettoïsées? Est-ce qu'elles peuvent exposer n'importe où? Est-ce qu'elles représentent 50% des artistes exposées en Allemagne? J'aimerais savoir.

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

I can't answer in French, I hope you get what I say. I did not speak about that. I should have done!

[From the audience, "yes!"]

Probably in Germany we have the same problem like you have. Women artists are not very well represented everywhere. But there is a very strong group of female artists fighting for their rights. I made a lot of exhibitions in Münster, and I showed a lot of female artists because I've always liked to show good art! And I don't look if it's from men or women. But in the field of official promotion there is still a lack of—how do you say it?

[Someone off-mic: "support?"]

—support of the art of women.



nobody knows in the moment—everybody is shocked about his dead— euh, what is involved in that field. So, we don't know. Hopefully, hm—

Question 03, from the audience:

Vous avez parlé de la situation des jeunes artistes, mais vous n'avez pas parlé de la situation des femmes artistes, en particulier. Est-ce qu'elles ont des centres où elles se— où elles doivent exposer? Est-ce qu'elles sont ghettoïsées? Est-ce qu'elles peuvent exposer n'importe où? Est-ce qu'elles représentent 50% des artistes exposées en Allemagne? J'aimerais savoir.

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

I can't answer in French, I hope you— you get what I say. Euhm, yeah, I did not speak about that. I should have— I should have done!

[From the audience, "yes!"]

But euhm, um, euh, probably euh, in Germany we have the same problem like you have. Euh, women artists are not very well represented everywhere. But there is a very strong group of euh, female artist fighting for— for their right. Um, I feel

But I think it changed, and a friend of mine, it was possible that she came instead of me, to here, but she couldn't. She would have told you about fighting for that, and she was very successful in time.

Question 03, from the audience:

Ici au Canada, il y a certains centres qui sont spécialisés dans la représentation des femmes. Est-ce que ça existe aussi chez vous? Est-ce qu'il y a des groupes qui se donnent des moyens pratiques, physiques, autre que l'action politique, pour exposer et se présenter?

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Yes, there is in Bonn—our capital, our little capital—a special museum for female art, women's art. Not very successful—yet. But they just started two, three years ago. And in all bigger cities there are groups, which show especially the art of women artists.

But the problem is, it's really a problem of quality. I mean, you have the same problems of quality

good—I made a lot of exhibitions in Münster, and I showed a lot of female artists by— because I— I— I've always liked to show good art! And I don't look if it's from men or women. But euhm, in all—in the field of official promoting there is still euh— euhm a lack of— euh—how do you say it?

[Someone off-mic: "support?"]

—support of the art of— of women.

But euh, I think it changed, and some euh, friend of mine, [Margarete Jörgensen?], she— she— it was possible that she came instead of me, to here, but she couldn't. She would have told you about euh, fighting for that, and she is very euh— euh, successful within time.

Question 03, from the audience:

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as male art, so, this is what they are dealing with. We had a meeting of a group of people who are interested in promoting the avant-garde art and we asked the public to—

[Dr. Deecke mumbles in German, searching for the word.]

—to make equally—I don't find the word— equal proportion for men and women in official positions. For instance, when a museum's director is needed, up 'til now it was written in the newspaper that they are looking for a man— it was always the male form! Now at least with this changed, maybe it changes a little. Not the whole situation, but I think it would take time. But, I must say, in the last three, four years, a lot of female art historians became museum directors— in Bonn, for instance, the last. So, it changes a little, but it takes time. Another 20 years...



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présenter?

Dr. Thomas Deecke:

Euh, yes, there is in Bonn—our capital, our little capital— is a— a— is a museum for— euhm— a special museum for female art, women art. Euhm, not very successful—yet. But they just started two— two, three years ago. And in all bigger cities are groups, euh, which show specially the art of— of euh— women artist.

But the problem is— is— it's really a problem of quality. I mean, you have the same problems of quality as male art, euh— and euhm, so, this is what they are dealing with. Euhm— we tried— we had a meeting of a group of— of people who— which were— who are interested in promoting the— the— the avant-garde art and we decided, and we asked— we asked the public the open— to euh, euh— put more—

[Dr. Deecke mumbles in German, searching for the word.]

—ah, to make euh, ah— to make equally—I don't

edited transcript

find the word—equal proportion for men and women in official positions. For instance, when a museum’s director is needed, it’s— up ‘til now it was written in the newspaper they look for a man— it was always the male form! Now at least with this changed, maybe it changes a little. Euh, not the whole situation, but I think it would take time. Still, we have euh— But, I must say, in the last three, four years, a lot of museum directors euh— are a lot of art historians— euh, female art historians became museum director—in Bonn, for instance, the last. So, it change a little, but it takes time. Another te— 20 years...



02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

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CLOSING REMARKS (1986)

Ottfried Zimmerman:

We are at time to close now.

[Audience applauds.]



Marion Barling:

We will have a 10-minute coffee break. There are muffins and things for you to get. The coffee is by donation, the muffins you must pay for.

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01:13:45

Ottfried Zimmerman:

We are at time limit—time to close now.

[Audience applauds.]

Marion Barling:

So, we will have coffee at the back. We will have approximately a 10-minute coffee break. There is also muffins and things for you to get. The coffee is by donation, ah— the muffins you must pay for.

[Tone.]

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CLOSING REMARKS (2023)

Thanks for reading. This was just one part of a multi-part project documenting *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League in 1986—if you're following along, all of the transcripts and audio recordings are linked directly [here](#), or can be found at unitpitt.ca

You may have noticed that, like most archives projects, this one is in progress. If you have any recollections or information that you'd like to share about the 1986 conference, or new thoughts in 2023, send us a message at info@unitpitt.ca



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01:14:13

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

Thanks for listening. This was just one part of a multi-part project documenting *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League in 1986—if you'd like to follow along, all of the transcripts and audio recordings are linked at unitpitt.ca, [directly [here](#).]

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[Tone.]



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02: Dr. Thomas Deecke (West Germany)

