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Fluxus Heidelberg Center BLOG

This BLOG is maintained by the FLUXUS HEIDELBERG CENTER. See: WWW.FLUXUSHEIDELBERG.ORG.

This FHC BLOG will contain an overview of all news we find and get in connection to Fluxus. Articles, publications, events, celebrations, Biographies, you name it. Every month the collection of the blog will be published on the FHC website as a digital archive

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2009

Singapore Art Museum (SAM) hosts "This is Not a Print!"

Roy Lichtenstein - *Reflection on Minerva ('The Reflections' series)* 1990 - Edition 68/AP-16 / 142.2 x 117.5 cm.
Print, planographic, stencil, relief, collage, woodcut, embossing - Singapore Art Museum Collection
(C) Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

Singapore - Singapore Art Museum's new contemporary wing, 8Q sam presents This is Not a Print!, a selection of over 70 multiples and prints from the Singapore Art Museum's 1500-piece Tyler Art Collection. Acquired by the museum from master printer Kenneth Tyler's collection in 1999, this exhibition explores the relationship between the development of multiples in print making from the 1960s that embody the core ideas of contemporary art practice. On view through 26 July, 2009.

These include the denial of the authentic or 'original' work of art in favour of the parody of everyday objects, the collaborative production of artworks, the use of new materials and processes, as well as a desire for mass fabrication and distribution. The exhibition is divided into three sections; Artist's Multiple, Technologies of Vision and Expanded Technologies.

From Pop multiples prints by Jasper Johns and David Hockney to the sculpture and conceptual multiples by John Newman, Claes Oldenberg and Roy Lichstenstein, the exhibition traces the trajectories and convergences of the development of print making in Europe and America shaped by the concept of the Artist's Multiple. The Artist's Multiple can be traced to four origins: the readymade; (particularly Marcel Duchamp's idea that everyday objects can be re-ordered as art), the concern for making art accessible to publics (evident in Pop Art), the use of mass fabrication, new materials and industrial processes as exemplified in Minimalism; and the fascination with packaging of Fluxus.

In particular, this exhibition highlights the significance of Kenneth Tyler who played a critical role in expanding the boundaries of prints and multiples by experimenting with new materials and technologies collaboratively with artists. With the rise of conceptual art that focused on the artistic processes and ideas rather than the finished artwork, artists in collaboration with Kenneth Tyler at his print workshops began to produce various types of multiples such as Artist's Books, Pop multiples, Fluxus multiples, prints and sculpture multiples. Akin to the consumer society that thrives on mass

Contributors

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Links

Fluxus Heidelberg Center
Fluxus Heidelberg Center Videos
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IUOMA Site
Ruud Janssen's TAM & IUOMA Blog
Fluxus Blog
Tomato Times Blog
Nobody, Litsa and the Men

Litsa Spathi's Storefront

Fluxus Heidelberg Videos

Explanation of technical details about some videos made by the Fluxus Heidelberg Center. This booklet also contains some appendixes with texts previously published by the Fluxus Heidelberg Center (Litsa Spathi & Ruud Janssen).
Buy Now @ Lulu.com

Textual Architectures Sourcebook

Textual Architextures Sourcebook. Yes we can (fly), is the result of a Fluxus performance done by Litsa Spathi documenting the election of Barack Obama as first black president of the USA. The text of a newspaper article formed the basis for Fluxus Poetry. This book

produced goods, the Artist's Multiple aims to realize ideas through the multiplication and repetition of an object.

In the section, Technologies of Vision, we explore the expanded ways of seeing through the works of artist David Hockney. The use of a folding screen, a piece of furniture originating from China in the fourth century, acknowledges the use of multiple viewpoints in traditional Chinese ink painting and manipulates space and perspective, as seen in the work, Caribbean Tea Time.

The last section, Expanded Technologies, focuses on the use of new print making techniques and materials to expand the boundaries of prints. Tyler played a critical role in marrying graphics to the technology of its day. Robert Rauschenberg's Booster was the largest hand-pulled print when it was produced in 1967 at Tyler's print workshop. Besides the use of new materials in prints, Tyler merged different print techniques such as lithography, aquatint, etching, mezzotint and others into the artwork, earning a reputation for being willing to try almost anything to break new ground in print making.

Singapore Art Museum is located at 71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555 / 8Q sam is located at 8 Queen Street, Singapore 188535 / Visit : www.singart.com/
Source: www.artknowledgenews.com
http://www.artknowledgenews.com/Singapore_Art_Museum_SAM.html

Labels: exhibition, Fluxus

posted by Litsa Spathi / Nobody @ 1:54 AM 0 comments

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2009

The Museum of Modern Art Acquires the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection of Fluxus Art

Various artists. Several versions of Flux Year Box. c. 1965. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008.

NEW YORK, NY.- The Museum of Modern Art has acquired the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, widely considered the largest and most important of its kind in the world, MoMA Director Glenn D. Lowry announced today. The collection, which was assembled in Detroit over three decades by the Silvermans, comprises approximately 3,000 works in mediums ranging from printed ephemera, multiples, drawings, and sculptural objects, to photographs and film. In addition, an archival component includes more than 4,000 files with such items as artists' correspondence, notebooks and scrapbooks, as well as documents and photographs related to Fluxus performances and events. The final component of the Silverman Fluxus Collection is a reference library of over 1,500 related books and catalogues.

contains the complete set of works and an explanation of the performance. A biography of Litsa Spathi is included.
Buy Now @ Lulu.com

Textual Architectures

Textual Architextures, Yes we can (fly), is the result of a Fluxus performance done by Litsa Spathi documenting the election of Barack Obama as first black president of the USA. The text of a newspaper article formed the basis for Fluxus Poetry. This book contains the final set of 24 works and an explanation of the performance. A biography of Litsa Spathi is included.
Buy Now @ Lulu.com

Fluxus Flesh Power

Fluxus Flesh Power is a unique publication with FLuxus Poetry where computer generated anagrams are presented both in text format as visual format. The book also includes a biography of the artist.
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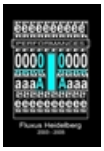

Performances Fluxus Heidelberg 2003-2005

B&W version. An overview of the Fluxus Performances done for the Fluxus Heidelberg Center by Litsa Spathi and Ruud Janssen. This publication contains an overview of the first performances done from 2003 till 2005. The texts of the scores and many B&W photos are published in this book.
Buy Now @ Lulu.com

Performances Fluxus Heidelberg 2003-2005

Colour Version. An overview of the Fluxus Performances done for the Fluxus Heidelberg Center by Litsa Spathi and Ruud Janssen. This publication contains an overview of the first performances done from 2003 till 2005. The texts of the scores and many full colour photos are published

Gilbert Silverman, a longstanding member of the Museum's Trustee Committee on Museum Archives, Library, and Research, with his wife Lila began collecting works by Fluxus artists in 1978, following an interest in the Dada movement. "Fluxus," a word encompassing flow and change, refers to a range of innovative and provocative artists, objects, and activities that emerged in the early 1960s. Building on an iconoclastic tradition fostered by Marcel Duchamp, and absorbing ideas about chance also encouraged by the work of John Cage, Fluxus combined visual art, experimental music, poetry and theater, and turned against the heroic Abstract Expressionist painting that dominated the 1950s.

"With this extraordinary gift, The Museum of Modern Art becomes a major center for scholarship on Fluxus art," said Mr. Lowry. "These works bring a new depth to our collection and archives, and will allow curators, artists, and academics, along with our general public, to more fully understand the progression of avant-garde art as it relates to both the 20th century and to today. The Museum is profoundly grateful to the Silvermans for their generosity."

"At MoMA, the Silverman Fluxus Collection will provide for a full representation of this highly significant art movement within the Museum's permanent collection galleries, thus demonstrating its vital relationship to other avant-garde tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s," said Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs. "Its distinction also lies in its ongoing relevance for contemporary artists today, working with a similar interdisciplinary approach and radical spirit."

Through their ongoing commitment to Fluxus, the Silvermans have made their collection available to scholars from around the world and have loaned large components of it to exhibitions exploring this movement, in addition to documenting its role in post-war art through a range of important catalogues. The couple enlisted Jon Hendricks to serve as curator of the collection in 1981. At MoMA, Hendricks will serve in a consulting capacity, working with curators and archivists to integrate the Fluxus collection into the Museum's holdings.

The focus of the Silverman Collection is the Fluxus movement as envisioned by George Maciunas (1931-1978), a Lithuanian-born American artist, art historian, and graphic designer, who gave Fluxus its name and served as its catalytic figure. It includes art by some 150 individuals, working both individually and collectively. Among those making major contributions to the movement were such artists as , George Brecht (American, 1926-2008), Robert Filliou (French, 1926-1987), Dick Higgins (American, 1938-1998), Milan Knížák (Czech, b. 1940), Alison Knowles (American, b. 1933), Yoko Ono (Japanese, b. 1933), Nam June Paik (American, b. Korea, 1932-2006), Benjamin Patterson (American, b. 1934), Mieko Shiomi (Japanese, b. 1938), Ben Vautier (French, b. Italy, 1935), Robert Watts (American, 1923-1988), La Monte Young (American, b. 1935), and many others.

While fostering an international viewpoint, Fluxus also celebrated the connections between life and art. Commonplace activities were elevated, and humor and irony encouraged. Ideas, concepts, chance events, and playfulness were favored over conventional artistic facility. Collectivity was esteemed as much as individual contributions.

Among the earliest manifestations of Fluxus, in 1962, were festivals held across Europe, in Wuppertal, Wiesbaden, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, London, and Paris. Ideas embodied in these unorthodox performances spread to a range of artists worldwide. Maciunas himself encouraged such collective activities and often designed posters, flyers, and announcements for them, with a graphic aesthetic that became a Fluxus signature. He also spread the word through Fluxus newspapers and other printed ephemera, and compiled work by Fluxus artists into scrapbook-like compendiums that he planned as periodicals. Among Maciunas's compendium formats was the "Fluxkit," comprising an attaché case filled with objects by various Fluxus figures. Some elements, known as "scores," were written or printed

in this book.
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Rail Track

Visual Poetry and Fluxus Performance by Litsa Spathi. A Journey from Breda to Munich that is presented in a visual way.
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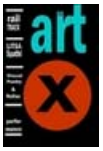

Rail Track - Variation 2

Rail Track - Variation 2 has the same content as the first edition. It contains Visual Poetry and Fluxus Performance by Litsa Spathi. A Journey from Breda to Munich that is presented in a visual way. Only the cover is different.
Buy Now @ Lulu.com

Balla Balla Size XL

Balla Balla Trilogy is a conceptual work where Visual Poetry and a Fluxus Performance are combined. This is part SIZE XL of this Trilogy. The final result of the performance is the installation of these three books
Buy Now @ Lulu.com

Balla Balla Size XXL

Balla Balla Trilogy is a conceptual work where Visual Poetry and a Fluxus Performance are combined. This is part SIZE XXL of this Trilogy. The final result of the performance is the installation of these three books
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Balla Balla Size X

Balla Balla Trilogy is a conceptual work where Visual Poetry and a Fluxus Performance are combined. This is part SIZE X of this Trilogy. The final result of

instructions describing simple actions that could be undertaken by anyone and hopefully instigated wider participation in the movement.

Maciunas also planned for Fluxus centers from Amsterdam and Copenhagen, to Nice, Prague, and Tokyo, with some to include Flux Shops that could help in the sale of inexpensive, editioned Fluxus artworks. The goal was a kind of mass-production, with distribution methods that could circumvent the gallery system and combat the idea of art as commodity. Fluxus's revolutionary and idealistic spirit provided the potential to make art available to all.

As the most definitive of its kind, the Silverman Fluxus Collection at The Museum of Modern Art will join other public collections where this generative movement can be seen and studied. Important repositories of Fluxus include the Archiv Sohm at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and the Jean Brown papers at the Getty Research Institute, as well as smaller concentrations of material at the Tate, Walker Art Center, Centre Pompidou, Moderna Museet, and several university museums.

Following a process of relocation and inventory, the Silverman Fluxus Collection will be available at MoMA for scholarly access and exhibition purposes. Cross-disciplinary in nature, the Collection will be utilized by curators from all Departments of the Museum.

Source:
http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=2&int_new=29018

Labels: fluxus collection, Moma

posted by Litsa Spathi / Nobody @ 1:27 AM 0 comments

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2009

The Four Faces of Willem De Ridder

A series of four films by Sükran Aziz based on a performance by Dutch Fluxus artist Willem De Ridder, exploring four different modalities of the communication process.

source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPBwzRJVdf0

Labels: Fluxus, Fluxus Video, Netherlands, Willem de Ridder

posted by Fluxus Heidelberg Center @ 2:24 AM 0 comments

the performance is the installation of these three books.
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Fluxus Collection Donated to MoMA

Courtesy MoMAGeorge Maciunas, Announcement of "Flux Shop & Mail Order Warehouse for Fluxus Newspaper No. 5" (1965)

NEW YORK—The Detroit developer Gilbert Silverman and his wife, Lila, have decided to donate their extensive collection of Fluxus works to the Museum of Modern Art, the New York Times reports.

Silverman first learned of Fluxus, the avant-garde movement of the 1960s and '70s whose best-known figures include Nam June Paik, Christo, Claes Oldenburg, Yoko Ono, and George Brecht, when he traveled to Japan in 1970. Since then he has assembled approximately 3,000 works in various mediums, more than 4,000 files' worth of artist notebooks and correspondence and documents related to Fluxus events, and a library of over 1,500 volumes. All of it will go to MoMA, where he is an honorary trustee.

"I've been attached to three museums: the Modern, the Detroit Institute of Art, and the Israel Museum," said Silverman. "But the Modern is the Mount Everest of the contemporary art museums, and I wanted it to be available to the public. It just makes sense."

For MoMA, the donation represents an important addition to the collection. "It is a whole sector of the 1960s and early '70s that has not been a part of our narrative in the way American Pop art and Minimalism has," said Peter Reed, the museum's senior deputy director for curatorial affairs.
Published: February 13, 2009
source: ARTINFO
http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/30403/fluxus-collection-donated-to-moma/

Labels: **fluxus collection**, **Moma**

posted by Litsa Spathi / Nobody @ **2:21 AM** **0 comments**

MoMA Updates Identity, Acquires Giant Collection of Fluxus Art

MoMA Updates Identity, Acquires Giant Collection of Fluxus Art

Lots of news out of New York's Museum of Modern Art, but first things first: you have only a scant four days left to see the enduringly fascinating "Marlene Dumas: Measuring Your Own Grave," our pick for Best Museum Exhibition of 2008. The show also happens to be one of the first to feature the museum's refreshed identity, masterminded by Pentagram's Paula Scher and and further developed and applied by Julia Hoffmann, MoMA's Creative Director for graphics and advertising. "The new system...employs prominent use of the MoMA logo as a graphic device, dramatic cropping and juxtapositions of artwork, and a brighter color palette to create a bold, contemporary image," notes Pentagram's blog. "The identity also underscores the museum's leadership role in the field of design." And can you name that typeface? That's right, it's Matthew Carter's MoMA Gothic.

As if the new identity wasn't excitement enough, today MoMA announced its acquisition of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, widely considered the largest and most important of its kind in the world (and oh, how we hope it's all carefully tucked into old-fashioned suitcases!). Assembled over three decades by the Silvermans, the collection cosnsists of approximately 3,000 works "in mediums ranging from printed ephemera, multiples, drawings, and sculptural objects, to photographs and film." There are also thousands of files packed with artists' correspondence, notebooks and scrapbooks, and documents and photographs related to Fluxus performances and events. Capping things off is a reference library of more than 1,500 related books and catalogues. Among the 150 artists represented in the collection are George Maciunas (the artist, art historian, and graphic designer who coined the term "Fluxus"), George Brecht, Yoko Ono, Dick Higgins, and Nam June Paik.

source:
http://www.mediabistro.com/unbeige/museums/moma_updates_identity_acquires_giant_collection_of_fluxus_art_108559.a
c=rss

Labels: **fluxus collection**, **Moma**

posted by Litsa Spathi / Nobody @ **2:11 AM** **0 comments**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2009

Fluxus Art Bolsters MoMA's Collection

The New York Times

Inside Art

Fluxus Art Bolsters MoMA's Collection

By CAROL VOGEL
Published: February 12, 2009

After he had collected things as curious as antique locks, the Detroit developer Gilbert Silverman started to embrace art of the avant-garde. "All I could afford was very late, contemporary art," he recalled. "I liked Dada, but it was too expensive."

On a trip to Japan in 1970 he discovered the work of the so-called Fluxus artists: an anti-art movement made up of a loose international collective of young writers, musicians and artists in the early 1960s that included figures like Nam June Paik, Christo, Claes Oldenburg, Yoko Ono and George Brecht. The work was fun and engaging, so much so that Fluxus art soon became a 30-year, all-consuming passion for Mr. Silverman and his wife, Lila.

"I've found material all over the world: Japan, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France, the United States," he said. Now Mr. Silverman, 84, and his wife have decided to give their entire Fluxus collection to the Museum of Modern Art, where he is an honorary trustee. The gift consists of about 3,000 works in many different mediums, like printed ephemera, multiples, drawings, sculptural objects, photographs and films. It also includes more than 4,000 files — artists' correspondence, notebooks and scrapbooks as well as documents and photographs related to Fluxus performances and events — and a reference library of more than 1,500 books and catalogs.

"I've been attached to three museums: the Modern, the Detroit Institute of Art and the Israel Museum," Mr. Silverman said. "But the Modern is the Mount Everest of the contemporary art museums, and I wanted it to be available to the public. It just makes sense." Once the collection is inventoried, it will be available at MoMA to scholars from all over the world.

For the museum the gift shores up its collections in an important chapter in the history of modern art, one that has clear roots in New York, said Peter Reed, MoMA's senior deputy director for curatorial affairs. "It is a whole sector of the 1960s and early '70s that has not been a part of our narrative in the way American Pop Art and Minimalism has," he added.

AROMATIC INSTALLATION

Imagine monumental, amorphous shapes of gossamer-thin fabric sacks that resemble massive teardrops or cow udders or even human intestines. Now picture them hanging from a ceiling in a bizarre cobweblike environment. That's what will emerge when the Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto takes over the cavernous drill shed at the Park Avenue Armory from May 15 through June 14.

The work of Mr. Neto, 44, who has created similar projects in Paris and Malmo, Sweden, will not only be tactile and visual but also aromatic. The membrane-like sacks are filled with a total of 1,800 pounds of pungent spices: turmeric and cumin, ginger, black pepper and clove.

His largest such installation to date, Mr. Neto's commission is the start of what will be an annual program of site-specific contemporary art projects at

the armory. “The space will give artists an unprecedented opportunity to create large-scale work,” said Rebecca Robertson, president of the Park Avenue Armory, who saw Mr. Neto’s work at the Pantheon in Paris in 2006, an installation she described as “a little bit heart stopping.”

The new project has been financed in part with a $200,000 Rockefeller innovation grant and includes educational programs.

Mr. Neto said that when he came to New York to see the armory, he was overwhelmed not only by its scale but also by the raw state of the drill shed. “It’s a very kind of romantic space that is one city block,” he said in a telephone interview from his home in Rio de Janeiro, explaining that this work will be divided into sections and floor pieces so that people will be able to walk through it.

“I am trying to create a space where you have different experiences that you move through,” he said. The pendulous sacks, he added, will be created to give the viewer the feeling that “everything is falling down.”

This isn’t the first monumental project in the drill shed that has been installed under Ms. Robertson’s watch. In September 2007 the artist Aaron Young created “Greeting Card,” a theatrical piece consisting of 10 motorcycle stunt riders performing for seven minutes on 288 panels of painted plywood covering the floor, the patterns from their ride creating colorful swirls and zigzags on the panels.

“Greeting Card” was organized by the nonprofit Art Production Fund, which presents art installations. Mr. Neto’s project has been put together by Ms. Robertson and Tom Eccles, the armory’s consulting curator and executive director of the Center for Curatorial Studies and Art in Contemporary Culture at Bard College.

“You wouldn’t encounter something like this anywhere else in New York,” Mr. Eccles said. “It’s what the city needs — a space where you can try out something daring.”

AUCTION OF A BRETON

Christie’s decision last month to merge two departments — 19th-century European paintings with old masters — has left an opening for Sotheby’s. “Now there are few other places to come and see just 19th-century paintings that are not the Impressionists,” said Polly Satori, director of the Sotheby’s 19th-century European art department. (Ms. Satori, it should be noted, ran Christie’s 19th-century European art department from 1987 until 2000.)

“But we’re not a museum, we’re a business,” she added. “And in 2008 Sotheby’s sold $41 million worth of 19th-century paintings. It’s a good business. Ten of those works brought more than $1 million.”

On April 24, when the auction house holds its 19th-century sale, Ms. Satori anticipates the audience will be eager to visit its York Avenue galleries. One of the attractions will be “Washerwomen of the Breton Coast,” an 1870 landscape by the French realist Jules Breton.

The painting, which depicts a seascape with laundresses working by the water’s edge, once belonged to Edwin Denison Morgan, governor of New York during the Civil War era and a United States senator who died in 1883. After the sale of his estate in 1886 the painting disappeared and was known to scholars only as a black-and-white image in books and monographs.

Much to Ms. Satori’s surprise, the painting recently turned up in a Paris apartment, where the owner had hung it in his dining room since the 1950s. (No records of where he bought it exist, Ms. Satori said, nor can he remember where it came from.) Now Sotheby’s is selling the painting, and experts there say it could fetch $400,000 to $500,000.

"There's a real fan club for this artist," Ms. Satori said, adding that the price of the canvas was estimated conservatively given the tough economic climate. Several factors make the work particularly desirable, among them its large size — more than 4 by 6 feet — and its inclusion of several figures, something that was unusual for Breton. It is also a painting that he exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1870. "That shows it was something he was proud of," she added.

A version of this article appeared in print on February 13, 2009, on page C28 of the New York edition.

Many thanks to Billie Maciunas who sent me the link to this article!

Labels: **Billie Maciunas**, **Fluxus**, **Moma**

posted by Litsa Spathi / Nobody @ **10:14 PM** **0 comments**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2009

Divided We Stand: Art of Two Germanys

Both sides now at LACMA
By Doug Harvey
Published on February 10, 2009 at 11:35pm

I wonder what Syd Barrett was doing on July 21, 1990, whilst his former Pink Floyd bandmate Roger Waters was cranking the bombast to 11 in Berlin by supersizing that already bloated paean to bilious self-pity known as The Wall and conflating it with the decommissioning — six months prior — of the "anti-Fascist protective rampart" that had divided the German capital and stood as a symbol of Yankee/Soviet stalemate for the previous quarter century. Probably painting.

Courtesy Museum Ludwig, Cologne

Wolf Vostell, Coca-Cola (1961)

After his death in 2006, it was revealed that Syd had spent much of his three-decade withdrawal from show business making art, which he sometimes photographed before painting over or destroying. The question that nags me is this: Which is the greater creative act, micromanaging a spectacular but rehashed postmodern Gesamtkunstwerk for half a million people (and millions more via live satellite TV — and all ostensibly for charity!), or daubing away in a Cambridge cellar on a canvas that will probably never see the light of day?

What brings this to mind is "Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures," an ambitious and treasure-laden exhibit now happily displacing Damien Hirst

(among others) from the second floor of LACMA's BCAM building. It isn't just the superficial Berlin Wall reference that summons the mighty Floyd, but the jostling polarities at play, that between hubristic historical importance and unrecorded humility as artistic motivators, and of the almost cosmic narrative of good and evil that drove Cold War politics — and tried to oblige Art into choosing a side.

Completing curator Stephanie Barron's exceptional historical trilogy that began with 1991's Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany and continued with '97's Exiles and Emigres: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler, Two Germanys adheres to this übernarrative closely, albeit in a subtly nuanced and richly detailed way. Beginning with Richard Peter Sr.'s claustrophobic, horizonless documentary photographs of the charred rubble (and citizens) of Dresden, the exhibit winds in a chronological circuit through the schizophrenic era of reconstruction toward the conceptual terminus of reunification. Shell-shocked attempts to assimilate the recent carnage with the tools of Modernism provide the first of many painterly gems, with the luminous biomorphic abstractions of Willie Baumeister, who chose to remain in Third Reich Germany, working in secret after being classified as degenerate.

The bifurcating streams of Communist Party–sanctioned Socialist Realism and laissez faire expressions of the Westside "economic miracle" afford glimpses into summarily disparaged modes of narrative figuration and prescient op/kinetic gizmoism respectively, while the first stirrings of anticonsumerist skepticism that blossomed in the "Capitalist Realism" of Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke are traced to the 1950s typewriter and sewing-machine portraits of Konrad Klapheck. A tableful of Dresdenite Herman Glöckner's constructivist models — assembled in secret from tiny bits of trash to evade the disapproving eye of the East German Socialist Unity Party — provides a hauntingly poetic riposte to both official programs of aesthetic progress, while looking eerily contemporary — like something from last month's grad-school open studios.

Ironically, in an exhibit whose central concept is the search for a new German national identity, one of its most consistent themes is the ongoing struggle to cope with the emerging global cultural dominance of the USA, particularly the fine-art legacy of Pop — itself an attempt to forge some sort of continuity between lingering European concepts of fine art with the torrent of formal and symbolic information generated by American consumerism. Perhaps the signal work in this vein is multimedia fluxus associate Wolf Vostell's shredded-billboard decollage Coca-Cola, created in 1961 — the year the Wall went up.

Embodying a literal physical assault on the omnipresent pictorial manifestation of American commercial dominance, Coca-Cola nevertheless depends on the design virtuosity of the original materials for its success as a visual artwork — an ambivalence that remained at the heart of subsequent engagements with the popscape, from the aforementioned Capitalist Realists — represented by stellar reconfigurations of Polke's painting suite The Fifties (1963-69) and Richter's Volker Bradke (1966) installation — through the 1980s work of Martin Kippenberger and Rosemarie Trockel.

Similarly, the most prominent strain of postwar German art — the neo-expressionist figurative work of Georg Baselitz, Markus Lüpertz, Jörg Immendorf and A.R. Penck (plus the romantic landscapes of Anselm Kiefer), which eventually spearheaded the worldwide '80s revival of picture-making — was initially a reaction against the ostensibly neutral politics of MOMA-promulgated doctrine of pure abstraction. This was exemplified by the New York School of AbEx giants, whose paintings were, in fact, covertly supported by the CIA as Trojan-horse exemplars of Western democratic freedom.

Of particular concern to these German artists was the image's capacity to convey complex, simultaneous layers of narrative, historical, psychological and spiritual meaning — a necessary function if their art was to somehow channel the generational surge of national self-examination that erupted as

Nazi atrocities finally breached the wall of collective denial in the 1960s. Their success is evident in some of the most powerful works in Two Germanys — Richter's Eagle (1972) and Uncle Rudi (1965); Kiefer's Germany's Spiritual Heroes (1973) and Nuremberg (1983); Baselitz and Pandemonium I Manifesto co-author Eugen Schönebeck's array of broken and collapsed heroic figures; Penck's iconic, virtuosic pictograph Passage (1963).

The sincere semiotic universalism of Penck — whose best work was done when he was an officially nonrecognized artist in East Germany before finally emigrating in 1980 — along with Immendorff's often scathing cartoon broadsides typifies the other thematic continuity in Two Germanys; one which persists through the detailing of the '70s' multimedia explosion before dissipating in the late '80s with the erasure of the monumental symbolic and literal boundary of the Wall. That thematic continuity is the artists' individual and collective attempt to wrest a genuine progressive political position from a context in which all the relevant terms and symbols have been co-opted by authoritarian administrations. Not so successful, though Joseph Beuys did his damnedest. In fact, with few exceptions, the work in the latter part of Two Germanys seems anemic, reflecting — or even embodying — the Western strategies of trivialization and marginalization that replaced the censorious supervision of the waning Eastern Bloc.

Which brings my mind back to Roger and Syd. The danger of a show like this — kick-ass though it may be in terms of narrative and overall artistic strength — lies in the possibility of Art being mistaken as a subset of History: as a series of decorative artifacts reflecting the shifting fortunes of groups of armed men squabbling over real estate. The triumph of West over East was not the resolution of any sort of polarity, merely the defeat of one profoundly dehumanizing military-industrial complex by a slightly shinier one. Art is something different. And in terms of creating something new under the sun, is a massive, hierarchically orchestrated spectacle celebrating the hegemonic absorption of that less shiny regime that much different from one soliciting consent to the waging of Total War? The answer is Syd. Syd was the artist. Roger Waters is a dick.

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posted by Litsa Spathi / Nobody @ **3:48 AM** **0 comments**

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