

The emergence of the generation of '67

RENATE WIEHAGER

"For more than half my life I have been labelled the 'generation of '68,' along with all the other apt and somewhat less apt descriptions possible. For a few decades now, people aren't shy about putting the adjective 'old' in front of the label, emphasizing it sympathetically. This does not apply to me; I was never part of the 'generation of '68.' I am from the generation of '67, an old one if you like. 1967 – That was my year!"

Reinhard Mey, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, January 2, 2017, p. 7

In May 1963, theoretical discourse in Germany turned to serial discourse. The death of the renowned publisher Peter Suhrkamp—an explicit opponent of the large print-runs in book culture that accompanied the emergence of the paperback—left the way free for his successor Siegfried Unseld to found the 'edition suhrkamp.' The graphic concept of the front cover as a colorful spectrum of the rainbow (diversity of opinion) over gray cardboard (qualitative solidity) with consistent typography as well as the decision to publish both literary and philosophical texts enabled insights into the theoretical and literary world for a broad public.¹ Volumes 1 and 2 exemplify this approach: Bertolt Brecht's 'Leben des Galilei' [Life of Galileo] and Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus logico-philosophicus.' This was followed by Walter Benjamin's essay on the sociology of art 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' [The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction] in July 1963. Following the first publication of the essay in German in 1955 in the two-volume edition of Benjamin's work, edited by Theodor W. Adorno and Gretel Adorno, this epochal text was first made available to a wider German audience with the 'edition suhrkamp' volume. In 1964, Hans Magnus Enzensberger's seminal collection of essays 'Einzelheiten' [Odds and Ends] was published, containing analyses on the dialectics of literature and politics, art and society, and on the production process—not of goods but of the contents of consciousness. As Enzensberger wrote, the consciousness industry "is actually the key industry of the twentieth century."² Herbert Marcuse's 'Kultur und Gesellschaft I' [Culture and Society I], published in 1965, went on to sell around 80,000 copies.

The next momentous step towards the establishment of theoretical discourse in society via paperback and in the serial design of graphic 'Minimal Art' for books came in 1965 when Siegfried Unseld founded the 'Theory' series. This series, however, really only gained momentum when the name was changed to 'suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft' [suhrkamp paperback scholarship]. From the very beginning the concept behind the book series allowed for contending approaches from linguistics and literary studies, philosophy and history of science, sociology and natural sciences—a veritable expansion of the theoretical landscape that was phenotypical of the mid 1960s when ethnology and psychoanalysis as well as film theory and archaeology were equal expressions and modes of a new consciousness.

As Paul Maenz reminisces, "consciousness industry describes the situation at the time and was not least of all the core of the 'dissatisfaction' we were feeling, something that applied to art and society in equal measure. We were suffering at the hands of the lyrical-hedonistic, cloudy background music, as it still surrounded Zero and New Tendencies. Correspondingly, Roehr's deliberations always demonstrate a desire for conceptuality, for 'structure'; the exhibition 'Serielle Formationen' [Serial Formations] is an expression of this. It is a pity that Peter did not live to experience Art & Language and the analytical wings of Conceptual Art, which addressed much of what busied us back then in the true sense of the word, including social and political topics."³

This introduction is perhaps a surprising one. However, the topics and names touched upon here, the title, the forms of discourse and publication represent, in my opinion, the intellectual background against which the specific historical relevance of the exhibition 'Serielle Formationen' unfolds—divorced from the chronology of the tight circle of the art world of the day. The nonhierarchical neighborhood, the interdisciplinary discourse of different schools of thought, literature and science of the legendary 'Suhrkamp culture' found expression in terms of the artistic trends of the time in the 1967 exhibition curated by Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr. The exhibition was conceived in a consistently overlapping manner with regards to 'isms' and styles, groups and nationalities, media and processes. Although, and this is decisive in this context, analytical penetration of the artistic material with regards to structural and non-material similarities, which make the sound of the time 'audible' and visible, was not avoided, rather it is evident in establishing 'Serielle Formationen' as a material expression of intellectual positioning:

"Artistic action and reaction is provoked by the immediate environment," stated Maenz/Roehr in their introduction in the exhibition catalog of 'Serielle Formationen,' 1967. They continued: "this applies as much as to the themes dealt with as to the material used and the structure of the artworks themselves. Current and topical artworks and other statements from artists who live in developed countries are, of course, not all uniform or standardized. Despite current obligations, the quality of all artistic products appears to lie in their uniqueness. In this regard, the following observation is of particular interest: If you look at art from the past ten years you will make a surprising discovery. Despite rapidly changing tendencies, styles and thriving yet short-lived 'isms,' despite the different problems and concepts in individual cases, you can easily find a common denominator in many of these artworks: serial formations of the visual components. Regardless of the respective theme, similar methods are used in the composition of the image. Such phenomena can certainly also be described from an art-history point of view and substantiated chronologically. However, in an environment in which the existence and quality of vital products depend on whether they are produced in high numbers, in series, the fact that artists of the most divergent ways of thinking suddenly and often independently of one another start to make use of serial formations can surely not be explained in relation to aesthetics alone."⁴

Peter Roehr left behind a small library which contained an annotated suhrkamp edition of Benjamin's 'Artwork' essay and Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus.' A sentence in Benjamin's essay underlined and singled out by Roehr is as follows: "for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual". And in Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus' he marked the sentence: "There cannot be a hierarchy of the forms of elementary propositions. We can foresee only what we ourselves construct."⁵

Why restage 1967's 'Serielle Formationen' today in 2017?

Why restage the exhibition 'Serielle Formationen,' jointly curated by Peter Roehr and Paul Maenz for the Studio Galerie [Studio Gallery] in the University of Frankfurt for close to five weeks (May 22 to June 30) in 1967, today? Specifically, in the 'Students' Gallery of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Studienhaus Foundation, under Siegfried Bartels' leadership. An exhibition that—in contrast to the 1969 'Attitudes' exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann—does not feature in surveys of twentieth-century German art?

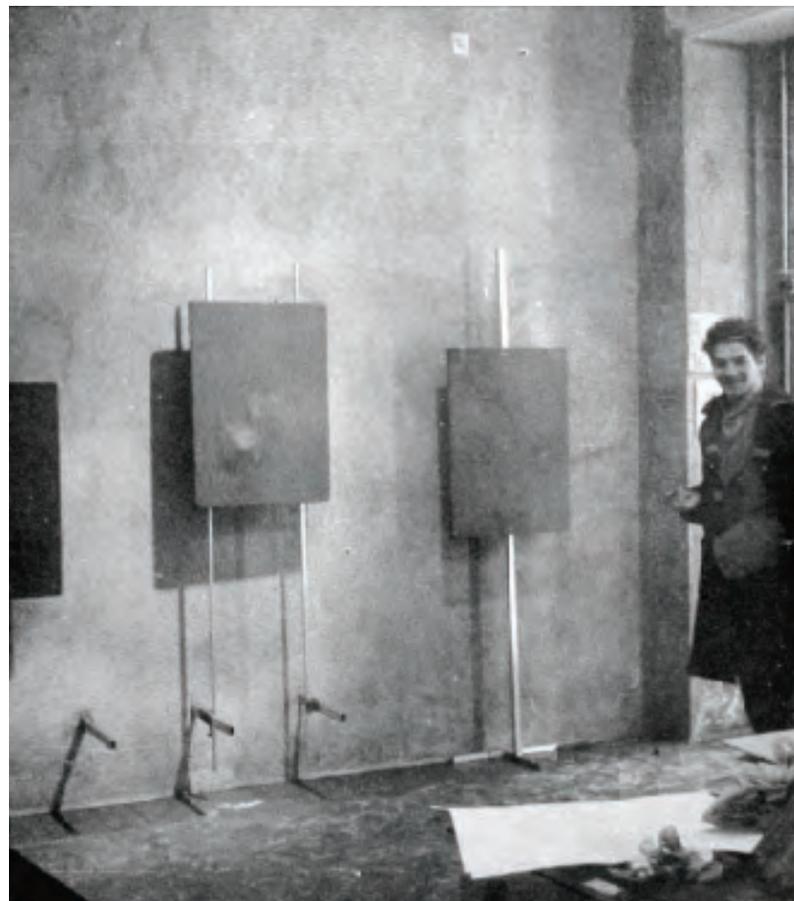
Here, just three very different examples of the lack of response to this important exhibition are noted: In his book on the foundations of modern art—'Grundlagen der modernen Kunst,' published in 1987—Werner Hofmann does not deal with the phenomenon of 'seriality,' nor does he mention the name Peter Roehr.⁶ Around two decades later, two comprehensive publications on 'Das XX. Jahrhundert. Ein Jahrhundert Kunst in Deutschland' [The 20th century. A century of art in Germany], provide a multifaceted picture of art developments (and the pioneering spirit of art circa 1967). However, 'Serielle Formationen' and the name Roehr go unnoticed.⁷ In 2002, the first edition of the 'DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst' [DuMont Dictionary of Contemporary Art Terms] appeared without an entry on 'seriality.' While the second edition (2014) dedicates a detailed entry to the topic, the name Peter Roehr is not mentioned.⁸

Three counterexamples should be mentioned here as well: In his fundamental work on constructive concepts 'Konstruktive Konzepte,'⁹ Willy Rotzler mentions Peter Roehr under the heading 'Text—Buchstabe—Bild' [Text—Letter—Image]. Since the 1970s, Roehr found a true companion in the influential art scholar Karin Thomas, who always prominently presented Peter Roehr along with an image in diverse surveys on twentieth-century art.¹⁰ Karin Thomas says of Roehr (in 1985) that: "In Germany, it [the serial sequence, author's note] was, however, only made tangible in puristic sharpness by Peter Roehr from Frankfurt. Despite his untimely death in 1968, Roehr became an important mediator of conceptual art, given that he consistently focused on 'unvaried, seamless sequences.' His 'composition-less additions' were as much built on typographical and textual elements as they were on film sequences, advertising slogans, objects and photographic material."¹¹ In the preface of her publication 'Serielle Verfahren [Serial Procedures]: Pop Art, Minimal Art, Conceptual Art und Postminimalismus,' published in 2003, Elke Bippus presents the Frankfurt show of May/June 1967 and the exhibition 'Art in Series' at the Finch College Museum November 1967 as pioneering events, though Peter Roehr as an artist is only mentioned in passing.¹²

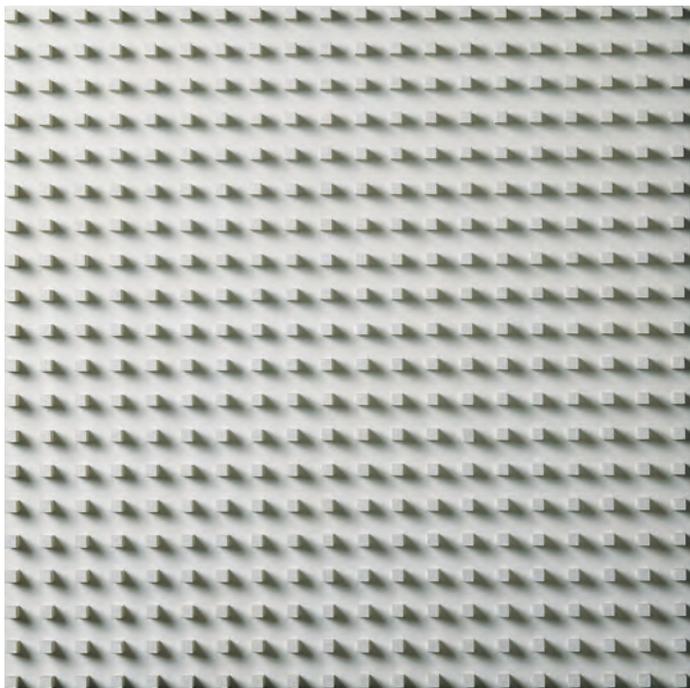


Installation view 'Serielle Formationen,'
Studio Galerie, Frankfurt, 1967

Curated by Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr.
F. l. Peter Roehr, Bernhard Höke, Christo



Installation view, YVES KLEIN, 'Proposte monocrome, epoca blu,'
Gallery Apollinaire, Milan, 1957



KLAUS STAUDT, *Seriell betont*, 1961
Daimler Art Collection

Once again, back to the question: why restage 'Serielle Formationen,' 1967, today in 2017? Here are eight compelling reasons:

- The exhibition represents a period between stylistically differentiated abstract tendencies of the time and the transition to post-informal art.
- It is one of the most important artist-curated exhibitions of the 1960s.
- The classic medium of the 'exhibition' becomes a form of discourse that dissolves the fixation on the marketable art object as presented in a museum in favor of an understanding of art as a temporary platform to discuss contemporary phenomena.
- It was the first exhibition to bring together the American positions of Concept and Minimal Art with the leading European representatives of Abstraction while simultaneously opening up to Pop and Fluxus.
- In its non-hierarchical presentation of parallel phenomena, 'Serielle Formationen,' 1967, postulates the strict conceptual basis of all artistic production 'after Duchamp'—as Joseph Kosuth put it.
- It is now time to (re)discover artists of that period such as Hans Breder, Hal Busse, Bernhard Höke, Wolfgang Schmidt, Michael Steiner, and gruppe x [group x].
- Following the rediscovery of the European Zero Avant-garde movement in the Guggenheim in New York, 2015, American art is only now beginning to discover the central position of German art of the 1960s by artists such as Charlotte Posenenske, Peter Roehr, and Franz Erhard Walther in terms of its quality.¹³
- Contemporary international art is currently taking note of 'Serielle Formationen' as discussed and artistically formulated in 1967.

Seriality' 1967—a transatlantic discourse

A. Seriality 1967—The European context

Where is the best place to begin in order to determine the art historical context of the exhibition title chosen by Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr in 1967? For the exhibition 'Serial Imagery' at the Pasadena Art Museum, 1968, curator John Coplans makes a plausible and broad connection: his essay begins with Claude Monet's 33 variations of Rouen Cathedral, 1892–94, and moves on to Marcel Duchamp's *Trois Stoppages Étalons*, 1913–14, and Gertrude Stein's *Poem Rose is a Rose is a Rose*, 1922, as an initial grounding for the topic. For Coplans, further exponents of the European tradition of 'Serial Imagery' include Wassily Kandinsky, Josef Albers, Piet Mondrian, Arnold Schönberg, and Yves Klein. The focus of his remarks, however, is on the representatives of 'The New American Painting': Ad Reinhardt, Frank Stella, Kenneth Noland, and Ellsworth Kelly; with Andy Warhol and Larry Bell, author and curator Coplans takes up a position in relation to the contemporary scene of West Coast Minimalism (Bell) and New York Pop Art (Warhol).¹⁴

For curators Maenz and Roehr of the Frankfurt University exhibition, this kind of art-historical safeguarding probably did not play any role. Exhibitions and theoretical definitions of positions in their contemporary era or recent past formed the focus of their attention.

In the prologue of the 1967 catalog, Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr wrote the following: "The areas of origin of the artworks on display cannot always be clearly defined, but, generalizing somewhat, one can say that the artworks originate from the following tendencies: New Tendencies, New Realism, Pop Art, Optical Art and Minimal Art. The artists live in various countries all over Europe, and the USA. Under the heading 'Serielle Formationen,' we have brought together a variety of different image arrangements, including sequences, accumulations, repetitions, combinations, variations, permutations etc. These possibilities actually intersect within some of the artworks, but fundamentally, the handling of several identical or similar elements is of the essence in every case."¹⁵

Let us begin with a succinct overview of the most important manifestations from the context of European Zero Avant-garde and early German Minimalism. In 1957, Peter Roehr (1944–1968) was too young to have experienced Yves Klein's much-discussed exhibition 'Proposte monochrome, epoca blu' in the Milanese Galleria Apollinaire: Klein exhibited eleven blue pictorial objects in the same format but at different prices (in this, he was reducing the material value to absurdity, while provoking discussion on the immaterial value of his artistic concept).¹⁶ The discussion regarding Klein's spiritual conception of monochrome and seriality was, however,



JAN HENDERIKSE, *Players*, 1961
Stedelijk Museum Schiedam

also present in the Rhineland around 1960 (Alfred Schmela opened his gallery in 1957 with an exhibition of varicolored monochrome by Klein; in the same year the artist began work on his monumental sponge reliefs for the Gelsenkirchen music theatre). The same is true of the USA: In 1961, the Castelli Gallery in New York and the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles exhibited large blue monochromes in serially identical format by Yves Klein, some of which Klein produced on-site. Two years after the Klein exhibition, Ad Reinhardt exhibited formally identical, square black images at Dwan Gallery.

One of the guests who attended the opening of Yves Klein's exhibition 'Proposte monocrome, epoca blu' at Galleria Apollinaire, Milan in 1957 was the young Piero Manzoni, who at the time was still creating images influenced by informal art. Around two years later, on December 4, 1959, he opened the Galleria Azimut in Milan with the exhibition '12 linee di lunghezza variante tra i 33,63 e i 4,89 metri' [12 lines with varying length from 33,63 – 4,89 m]—unmistakably a conceptually well-founded answer to Yves Klein's twelve blue monochromes. The twelve cardboard cylinders of approximately the same size varied only in the length of the line that was drawn on each label contained therein—and they varied in price from 25 to 80 thousand Lira.¹⁷

From today's perspective, Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni's exhibitions in Milan in 1957/1959 formulate the European 'founding documents' of a conceptual perception of imagery and the dissolution of classical panel painting in the seriality of abstract work organization. From here, the connection can be made to Peter Roehr's ten Schwarze Tafeln [Black Panels] from 1966: black laminated square cardboard shapes mounted on aluminum plates measuring 120 x 120 cm. Similar to Yves Klein and Manzoni, Roehr also makes the relationship between the 'conceptual-spiritual' value and the banal consumer value of his panels the subject of discussion: The invitations to the exhibition announce the price categories according to size, while simultaneously functioning as order coupons. "There are several samples and various sizes of each object. (In accordance with your wallet or the size of your apartment etc.) Therefore, you are not purchasing multiples, which are usually of less value than the unique objects of an artist. Because there are no unique objects from Roehr." (Peter Roehr in the invitation to the exhibition.)¹⁸

What is specific to the points selected here is that all three artists work with unvaried or nearly unvaried sequences while playing off the immaterial value of an artistic concept against the market value of an artwork. This differentiates them from the phenomena of working in series with regards to the Zero movement and geometric-constructive tendencies as well as the earlier aspects of Pop and Minimal Art, as diversely exhibited in European exhibitions in the 1960s.

As is evident from the index of works in the 'Serielle Formationen' catalog, multi-piece series of images or objects did not play a central role in the historical 1967 exhibition probably on account of the limited space in the Studio Galerie and to save on transport costs. Exceptions: Dibbets and



Piero Manzoni (r.) at the exhibition opening '12 linee di lunghezza variante tra i 33,63 e i 4,89 metri' Galleria Azimut, Milan, 1959

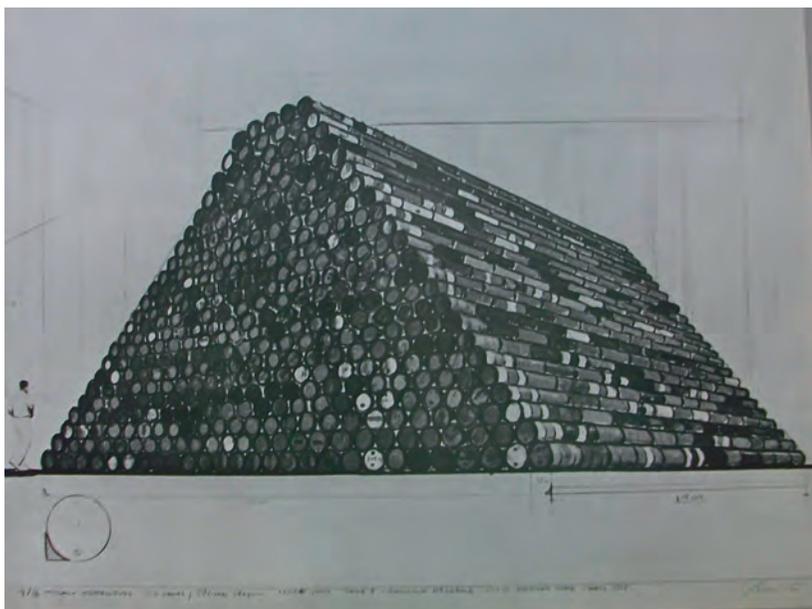
Gonschior, who exhibited three- and two-piece pictorial objects in the same format, Bernhard Höke, who is present with Vier Kleinserien Wasserhände [Four Small Series of Water Hands], 1963, Konrad Lueg with Anordnung aus 19 Flächen in 14 verschiedenen Mustern und Farben [Arrangement of 19 Surfaces in 14 different Patterns and Colors], 1967, as well as Charlotte Posenenske with Kombination aus vier gleichen Elementen [Combination of Four Similar Elements], 1967, made of aluminum. The focus of the exhibition was instead on works that treated seriality as a guiding compositional element within the picture itself: as a geometrically ordered structure of micro-elements in frequently quadratic forms, as systematically structured abstract modules, or as a pre-defined concept of the methodical construction of an image. This aspect in all its variants is present in the various exhibitions that curators Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr visited in the early 1960s in Frankfurt, Brussels, Paris, Antwerp, Amsterdam and The Hague et al., or became acquainted with through various other media.

Among the artists whom both curators invited to the exhibition in Frankfurt in 1967, reference should once again be made to Piero Manzoni, who gave seriality an existential charge within the picture (lifetime/bodily experiences/traces of physical handling of material etc.). Achrome, 1959, made of squares of canvas sewn together and displayed in our 2017 exhibition, was one of the exhibits from the 1967 show. Manzoni sewed the squares of canvas next to one another so that a potentially endless, open structure emerges as a physical principal of serial modularity. In 1960, Manzoni wrote the following about this 'colorless' monochrome and its conceptual proximity to the Lines that were developed at the same time: "This indefinite surface, uniquely alive, even if in the material contingency the work cannot be infinite, is, however, infinitable, infinitely repeatable, without a solution of continuity. And that is even more apparent in the Lines, for in these there no longer exists the possible ambiguity of the 'painting.' The line develops only in length and extends towards infinity. The only dimension is time."¹⁹

Enrico Castellani provides another example. He co-founded the Galleria Azimut in Milan in 1959 along with Manzoni. With his serial nail sequences and tensed canvases, he created sculptural-haptic pictorial objects that often work with explicit structures of light and shadow. By way of comparison, Klaus Staudt's relief *Seriell betont* from 1961 is characterized by mathematical sobriety. Staudt was influenced by the Munich-based galerie nota and the *Nouvelle Tendances*. In 1967 he was teaching at the University of Art and Design in Offenbach, near Frankfurt. The relief represents a rational design process based on a structure field with square grids and an organized number of micro elements.

At the same time as the abstract 'Serielle Formationen' described above, artists in Europe were also working with everyday materials, images from the media and consumer products. Such artists were influenced by the work of Marcel Duchamp, only beginning to be received at this time, as well as by *Nouveau Réalisme*, *Fluxus* and earlier *Pop Art*. Representative of this tendency is Jan Henderikse's *Players*, 1961, a parallel version of which was also on display in the original exhibition in Frankfurt in 1967. Henderikse was a co-founder of the Dutch *Nul Group*. The approx. twenty assemblages in Henderikse's early work from 1960/61 consist mainly of small pieces of plastic waste the artist might have found washed up on the coast or the banks of the Rhine. The found objects are either displayed on neutral backgrounds or glued into used fruit or vegetable crates. Aside from the predominantly chaotic 'allover' structures in the early assemblage group, the serial addition of cigarette boxes in *Players* references contemporary *Zero* aesthetics and reflects aspects of *Pop*. Henderikse is against idealization and economy, against a view of art as a kind of ideological vanguard, and against symbolization and auratization—which, in his time, still largely dominated *avant-garde* art.²⁰

Christo's graphic 4716 *Metal Trashcans*, 1967, represents a more prominent example of 'serial formation.' Christo was closely connected with, although not a member, of the *Paris Nouveaux Réalistes* group around 1960. The drawing marks an extended version of one of Christo's and Jeanne-Claude's first projects from 1962. To criticize the construction of the Berlin Wall one year following its construction, the two artists blocked the passage of the *Rue de Visconti* in Paris with 204 oil barrels. Their installation, called *Iron Curtain*, created a heightened public interest in the artists' work and can be seen as the significant starting point of their international career, leading them to realize projects such as the covering of the *Reichstag* in Berlin. The usage of trivial, mass-produced objects of industrial origin provoked the audience as well as the public in a diverse manner: via the explicit anti-aesthetic of the material, via the political message presented in the title of the works, and via the unannounced blocking of public space.



CHRISTO, *4716 Tonneaux Metalliques*, 1967
Galerie Der Spiegel



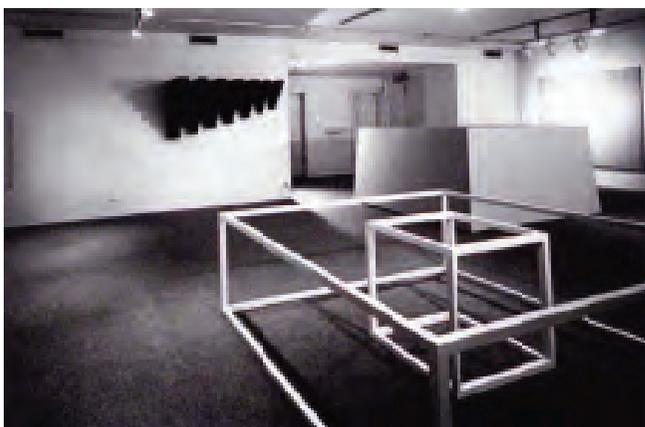
Installation view 'Art in Process'
Finch College Museum of Art, New York, 1966

B. Seriality 1967—The American Context

"A lot of fashion and little boom" is how Paul Maenz entitled his 'Letter from New York' in May 1966. His letter opened issue 9 of the popular journal 'Egoist' run by the Frankfurt author and gallery owner Adam Seide. Maenz was a student at the 'Folkwangschule für Gestaltung' [Folkwang School of Design] in Essen from 1959 to 1964, and from 1964 to 1967 he worked as Art Director for Young & Rubicam, alternating between Frankfurt and New York. In his humorously ironic 'letter,' he succinctly highlights the epigonic offshoots of *Kinetic* and *Op Art*, postulates an "application, culmination of style" and "a strong, often brutal eclecticism" as constitutive of "American talent," and analyses the chauvinistic climate of the New York art market where even current art tendencies are promptly circulated as "tax-privileged capital investments." Hans Haacke arrived in New York and exhibited at the Howard Wise Gallery; Heinz Mack and Otto Piene (who had already exhibited at the Howard Wise Gallery in 1964) were in town; the opening of the Donald Judd exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery became a meeting point. According to Maenz, Warhol achieved "relatively stunning popularity" with his *Campbell Soup* cans, while at the same time the eight-hour screening of his film *Sleep* was the talk of the town.²¹

Just a few months later in November 1966, Paul Maenz reported the breakthrough of *Minimal Art* in New York.²² The Jewish Museum opened the pioneering exhibition 'Primary Structures' in the summer. According to Maenz, this exhibition probably meant "the definitive okay for the fourth international style Boom that emanated from the USA." Following *Abstract Expressionism*, *Pop Art*, and *Optical Art*, this was the emergence of a young generation of American artists who wanted to disavow the "emotional charge of their abstract-expressionist predecessors by glorifying a minimum—or pure insignificance (Barbara Rose)." Here Maenz cites the American art historian Rose, who had tentatively given the new style of art a name in her essay 'ABC Art' from 1965.²³ Maenz dedicates the rest of his letter to detailing the identifiable phenomenality of the works and the concepts fundamental to them: *Form, color, material / dimension, time, space / repetition, idea, matter*.²⁴

Seriality as an artistic strategy took root in the USA with Josef Albers' artwork series *Homage to the Square*, starting from 1950, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage from the mid-1950s, and a little while later, Frank Stella's images (the structural seriality of the *Black Paintings*), Jasper Johns's painting-objects (*Flags and Targets*), Kenneth Noland's stripe paintings and Larry Poon's *Dot Paintings*. Donald Judd's first solo exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery in February 1966 marked a generative moment in relation to exhibition practices, initially in New York: *Series of iron cubes* vertically arranged on the wall, *aluminum cubes* arranged in intervals and connected via a flat metal structure, and *three steel cubes* on the ground. Sol LeWitt's first solo exhibition in the Dwan Gallery in New York was no less radical: *Modular, grid-shaped serial structures* as open white cubes fill the space as horizontal and vertical volumes.²⁵



Installation view 'Ten'
Dwan Gallery, New York, 1966

Three pioneering theme-based exhibitions followed in quick succession: 'Art in Process' opened at the Finch College Museum of Art in May 1966 (with Judd, Flavin, LeWitt, Morris, Smithson and other artists who maintained generally heterogeneous approaches); 'Primary Structures' in the Jewish Museum New York in April/May 1966; and 'Ten' in the Dwan Gallery in New York in October 1966 (Carl Andre, Jo Baer, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, Robert Morris, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Smithson, Michael Steiner). Then in November 1967, the Finch College Museum exhibited 'Art in Series.' Incidentally, like the Studio Galerie in Frankfurt, the Finch College Gallery was a university gallery that explicitly conceived its presentations as a form of discourse for a student audience.²⁶

'Art in Series' displayed artworks by Judd, Johns, Flavin, Kelly, and LeWitt, among other. However, work by Eva Hesse, Jo Baer and Hanne Darboven were also exhibited, and supplemented by the presentation of contemporary serial music by Karlheinz Stockhausen and Morton Feldmann. Mel Bochner was the curator of the first Conceptual Art exhibition at the same location.²⁷ In his important essay 'The Serial Attitude,' Bochner reflected on the curatorial background to the 'Art in Series' exhibition, and it should be underlined in advance that both the exhibition and his analysis date from half a year 'after' the opening of the Frankfurt exhibition.

The conceptual artist Mel Bochner made well-founded commentaries on the developments of the time in several texts in the mid-1960s. In November 1966 his essay 'Systematic Painting' appeared in parallel to the exhibition of the same name in the Guggenheim Museum New York, in the summer of 1967 'Serial Art Systems: Solipsism,' and then in December 1967 the above-mentioned essay 'The Serial Attitude' were published.²⁸ According to Bochner, serial structures in art were a method, an expression of an artistic attitude, rather than a style of art in the traditional sense. Bochner lists examples of this, ranging from Muybridge's photograph series from the 19th century and seriality in linguistics and music to the number pictures of the likes of Jasper Johns. Bochner furthermore insists that previously defined processes and rules, generally from the fields of mathematics and languages, must underlie both the serial method and working in pictorial series. Bochner distinguishes between "modular repetition," "progression," "permutation" and "rotation/inversion." He is of the opinion that the anti-expressive and anti-subjective tendency of the artistic process is fundamental, as is overcoming individual decisions in favor of objective processes.²⁹

Bochner's texts—in which he comments in detail on Sol LeWitt as a true representative of serial conceptualizations—led the way for LeWitt's oft-cited analyses, published in the Aspen Magazine in 1966 and surely also known to the Frankfurt curators Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr: "Serial compositions are multi-part pieces with regulated changes. The differences between the parts are the subject of the composition. If some parts remain constant it is to punctuate the changes. The entire work would contain

subdivisions which could be autonomous but which comprise the whole. The autonomous parts are units, rows, sets or any logical division that would be read as a complete thought."³⁰

In this context, reference should also be made to Jack Burnham's essay 'Systems Esthetics' published in 'Artforum' in 1968. This essay discusses the artistic practice of, for example, Dan Flavin, Les Levine and Hans Haacke within a broader social and technological setting, laying an important foundation for the institutional critique that formed shortly thereafter.³¹

Two further contemporary exhibitions formed "key experiences" for Paul Maenz,³² who had been working in New York since 1964 on a regular basis. These exhibitions had a direct influence on the selection of artworks and artists for 'Serielle Formationen.' The 'Ten' exhibition in the Dwan Gallery in New York in October 1966 (Carl Andre, Jo Baer, Dan Flavin, Don Judd, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, Robert Morris, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Smithson, and Michael Steiner) and, of course, 'Primary Structures' in the Jewish Museum New York, in April/May of 1966, with artworks by 42 artists—the exhibition that heralded "a new aesthetic era" (Hilton Kramer, critic for the New York Times) and supplied Minimal Art with its visual foundations.³³ Michael Steiner, whose work Maenz encountered in the Dwan Gallery, took part in the exhibition in Frankfurt with a drawing. Maenz acquired the sculpture First Modular Structure, 1965, from Sol LeWitt in the artist's studio, which is exhibited today in 2017 as it was in 1967. Maenz also came into contact with Carl Andre's textual works in New York, and he brought Andre's German Poem to the Frankfurt exhibition.

The reception of Carl Andre's work is shaped by his sculptures, which were developed in the context of the Minimal movement in the US around the 1960s. At the same time, his confrontation with language and poetry took on a fundamental role in his oeuvre. Since the beginning of his artistic career, poems acted as a conceptual expansion of his sculptural practice; they functioned as entries to catalogs about his work or as immersing analytical instruments for his sculptures. Furthermore, they mark an independent position in relation to the development of avant-garde poetry. Andre lays words on paper just as he lays bricks, wooden cubes or metals in exhibitions, through which his poetry can be understood as semi-sculptural configurations. In the context of the exhibition 'Serielle Formationen,' 1967, Andre's 'poems' create a transatlantic parallel to Peter Roehr's typomontages. The page German Poem, 1967, shows the short German words "bahn ding feld flur keil kurs laub loch pfad rand riff zaun." The handwritten words are arranged vertically and horizontally on grid paper and change direction at every line. These twelve words as well as the first four lines are repeated across the page. The first word on the page "bahn" [train] refers to Andre's biography when the public seemed to have lost interest in his work, he left New York in 1960s and worked as a brakeman and conductor on the Pennsylvania Railroad for four years.³⁴

In the 1960s, Sol LeWitt took on a leading role in implementing a new radical, conceptual and reduced aesthetic that defined itself as an explicit contra-movement to Abstract Expressionism. The intellectual foundation and theoretical conceptualization of the work, even if it has not been realized, was valued as equally as important as any artistic production, as all construction steps, thoughts, considerations and concepts add to the final piece and therefore take on the same significance. In conjunction with this, LeWitt put the conceptualization at the center of artistic creation. His aesthetic, infused by Constructivism and Bauhaus, builds the foundation of a reduced form vocabulary and the theoretical basis of conceptual art. The sculptures First modular Structure, 1965, and 5 Cubes with hidden Cubes, 1967/77,³⁵ resemble his early explorations of architectonic space structures, which he realized by applying grid constructions, basic geometric forms and cubic volumes. Paul Maenz commented on LeWitt's First Modular Structure, which Maenz had in his own collection: "There is the (wooden) model from 1965 (as exhibited in 1967 in the 'Serielle Formationen' exhibition in Frankfurt, and exhibited again in 2017). In 1965 in the US there was a large wooden frame that was later destroyed. Another large wooden frame was produced in 1974 (for the exhibition 'On Art/Über Kunst' in the Kölner Kunstverein which I curated); this frame was likewise destroyed. Finally, in 1975 the current metal frame was created,



*Installation view 'Primary Structures,'
Jewish Museum, New York, April 1966,
Works by Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Robert Grosvenor*



*SOL LEWITT, First Modular Structure, 1965
Collection Paul Maenz*

which I acquired in the same year. Perhaps even more interesting: First Modular Structure was the last of LeWitt's black sculptures (from that time on he only made white sculptures), but at the same time his first 'modular' sculpture."³⁶

The sculpture 5 Cubes with Hidden Cubes shows five white cubes on baseplates with a striped grid as a serial sequence. In each cube one to four smaller cubes are hidden (fifteen in total). The first cube is a single cube with no cube hidden; the baseplate therefore only has one line. The second cube has one cube hidden and consequently two lines on the baseplate. The third cube has two smaller cubes hidden and three lines on the baseplate. The fourth cube has three hidden cubes and four lines, and the fifth cube contains four hidden cubes and five lines on the baseplate. The lines indicate the number of cubes.

*In this catalog, Alex Bacon writes the following about the sculptor Michael Steiner (*1945, USA) who is hardly known in Europe nowadays: "Michael Steiner was born in New York City in 1945 and was an especially precocious student of the latest advances in contemporary art. He attended the High School of Art & Design on 57th Street, nearby to many of the cutting edge galleries of the day, and which he consequently had access to while still just a teenager.³⁷ As such, in the early 1960s Steiner was able to see pivotal exhibitions of key artists like Frank Stella, Mark Rothko, Dan Flavin, Barnett Newman, Donald Judd, and Robert Morris at spaces like the Leo Castelli, Betty Parsons, Sidney Janis, and Green galleries. Steiner began to regularly exchange studio visits with many of these artists, and others like Robert Smithson, despite the fact that they were a generation or more older than him. Accordingly, he was engaged with the then nascent 'minimal' aesthetic."*

**Concept behind the exhibition 'Serielle Formationen,' Frankfurt 1967
Unpublished documents, letters, recollections, drafts**

For Peter Roehr, the topic of seriality was a central aspect of theoretical deliberations on his artistic practice as well as in relation to the artistic developments of his day long before the opening of the exhibition in 1967. Adolf Luther's text from 1965 demonstrates how intensively Roehr exchanged with artist colleagues on the matter. The text details Luther's first meeting with Roehr and summarizes their discussion on 'the principle of a strict sequence of similar elements:'

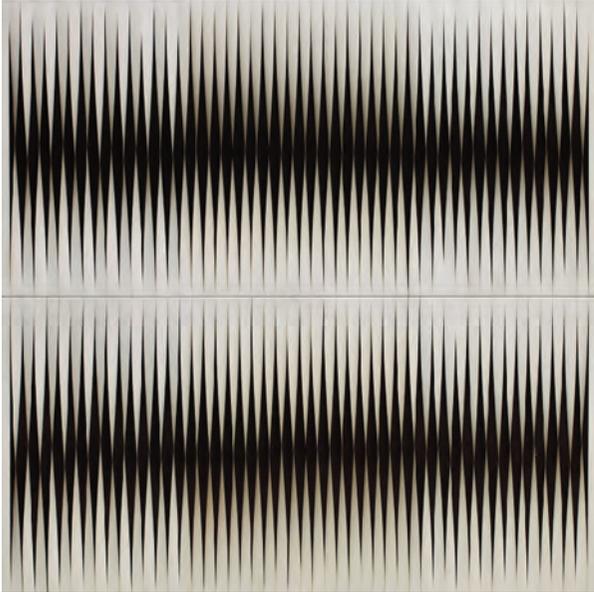
Adolf Luther
Peter Roehr—an encounter, 1965

We now know that there are pictures, picture objects, and autonomous objects. This state of knowledge did not exist at the same clarity in 1965, when an exhibition opened at the Galerie Loehr in which my works appeared along with those of Megert, Cremer, and Spindel. Amid the confusion and crowds of the opening, a very young man addressed me and engaged me in an intense conversation. Little by little, it emerged that he had a number of very specific questions in mind, to which he clearly wanted precise answers. To wit, he wanted to know why I would now and then apply to my objects a principle of strictly regular sequencing of similar elements. I explained this to him in a few words, and he naturally responded with a further question: why did I not apply the same principle to all objects? There were still the old glass objects manufactured using the interstitial glass technique, which thus consisted of two clamped glass panes with the space in between filled with ground glass. It did not seem to me to be the opportune moment to go into this in more depth, so I only said that it depended upon the light, that for me the subject was the main thing, but that it would be better to deal with this in peace and quiet, and asked whether he would like to come to the gallery next morning.

I was completely surprised when Peter Roehr, the very youthful looking interested person from the previous evening, was there next morning with a number of printed papers with him, I got to hear his questions again, and so it went on: I did not yet know everything about light, and thus, the final decision on the arrangement of the material must remain secondary, since my actual medium, light, was not material in its composition. But I had used sequencing for some time because it was probably (insofar as this could be done) the most unambiguous expression of my intentions possible without resorting to literature, even if it was an incomplete suggestion. I wanted to avoid design, otherwise the result would never be a real object. And so, yes, the serial version was better. It seemed that this was what he wanted to hear—he showed me his printed papers. He gave them to me, and I read them. These were a number of his own sequences—I believe that I saw five mark pieces, buttons etc., and I found that quite strange. One always saw this straight away of itself: in spite of all proximity, I found that quite alien, and then the conversation moved on; as intended, to the question of the position occupied by the serial in general. This was totally clear to me, because it concerned me so much and because I had frequently considered it, but never, until that time, in such a trenchant and contradictory way. Thus, I believed that the serial was as important to my concepts as the monochrome. Seriality was the reduction of the graphical statement to nothing, just as the monochrome is the reduction of the color to the zero value of the message that in my opinion can only have seen it in this way.

I don't know to what extent Roehr agreed with me. I rather had the impression that, for him, there was another factor in play, but I can no longer identify what it was. Then, the conversation suddenly ended. Others had gathered around and listened to us, and then Dorothea or Sabine must have come because something had to be done in a hurry, and we planned to continue the conversation the next time I came to Frankfurt [...].³⁸

One year previously in 1964, Paul Maenz and Peter Roehr got to know one another in the American advertising agency Young & Rubicam, where Roehr worked as a student assistant and Maenz as Art Director. According



WALTER LEBLANC, *Torsion 190 c 54*, 1965
Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf

to Maenz, Peter Roehr decided on the majority of the artists for 'Serielle Formationen' following extensive joint discussions, while he contributed to/curated predominately the American part and looked after the 'presentation' of the exhibition and the catalog.³⁹

A look at the list of 50 artists (47 plus three members of *groupe x*) shows that they essentially belonged within the context of contemporary European Zero exhibitions between 1962 and 1966, as well as to the changing groupings connected to *Nouveau Réalisme* and *New Tendencies*—these were the artists whom Peter Roehr, Paul Maenz and their artist friends Jan Dibbets, Thomas Bayrle and Charlotte Posenenske (the latter, like Roehr himself, was of course present in the exhibition) could frequently go visit together from their homes in Frankfurt.

An important step towards a European perception of related tendencies was the great 'Nul' exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1962. From this context, the following reappeared in Frankfurt in 1967: Enrico Castellani, Hermann Goepfert, Hans Haacke, Jan Henderikse, Oskar Holweck, Yayoi Kusama, Piero Manzoni, Almir Mavignier, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Günther Uecker, and Herman de Vries. A year later, many of these artists participated in the big exhibition 'Europäische Avantgarde' [European Avantgarde], Galerie d in the 'Schwanenhalle des Römer' in Frankfurt city hall (July 9 – August 11, 1963), curated by Rochus Kowallek, William E. Simmat and Hermann Goepfert. Artists who exhibited here were also re-invited by Maenz/Roehr: Walter Leblanc, Adolf Luther, Dieter Roth and Paul Talman. This was followed by the major Zero exhibitions of international artists in London, Philadelphia and once again Amsterdam. In 1966, the German Zero group disbanded.

This spectrum of artists was augmented by those Paul Maenz met in the US and whom he could, in part, present in Germany for the first time (Carl Andre, Ronald Bladen, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, Larry Poons, Michael Steiner, and Andy Warhol).

Furthermore, around fifteen artists participated in 'Serielle Formationen' whose work is lesser known or not known at all today, or who stopped their artistic work prematurely and/or left Germany:

– Hans Breder: left Germany in 1965 to work as an assistant to the sculptor George Rickey. In 1968 he founded the 'Intermedia and Video Art' program at the University of Iowa, where he lives to this day.

– May Fasnacht: born in Rheinfelden in Germany in 1936. Living in Bern in the 1960s, she made serially producible synthetic objects and made appearances in performances connected to Harald Szeemann.⁴⁰

– Eberhard Fiebig: he was active in the 1960s in the Frankfurt art scene and created an extensive, construction-related body of sculptural work, and is still active in the artists' network 'art.engineering' today but hardly received any attention internationally. The latter is also true of the following

– German artists who exhibited in Frankfurt in 1967: Hermann Goepfert, Kuno Gonschior, Ewerdt Hilgemann, Thomas Lenk, Adolf Luther, as well as Klaus Staudt and Felix Schlenker (who in 1967 as director of the *Kleine Galerie* [Small Gallery] in Schweningen invited Peter Roehr to a solo exhibition of his *Schwarze Tafeln* [Back Panels]).

– Furthermore, Bernhard Höke is more or less unknown nowadays. In the 1960s he was an unbelievably busy, active and polemical artist, author and publisher of editions, and overall inspiring figure. Among other things, he was behind the early art films of Gerry Schum, such as *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum* [Consumer Art—Art Consumption], 1966.

– Konrad Lueg: as a gallery owner and exhibition organizer, from today's perspective Konrad Fischer was a formative representative of art of the 1960s/70s; however, after only four years of activity he stopped creating his own artistic work in 1968.

– Finally *gruppe x* (Wolfgang Lukowski, Peter Thoms, Jürgen Wegener), whose sculptures and objects, which were often serially reproducible and constructive, invited visitors to actively participate in exhibitions.

An important starting point for the selection of artists for the 1967 exhibition was the art history research Peter Roehr carried out in 1965/66 on a 'chronology of serial art.' As Roehr explained to Siegfried Bartels, director of the *Studio Galerie* in Frankfurt:

"Seriality interests me—aside from the connection to my own work—because I believe it to be one of the artistic means that spans across various different styles. So just as for instance the monochrome stretches from informal art to constructivism, Kinetic Art from the figurative to the concrete and so on, it seems to me that 'serial art' comprises just as many 'styles' (mainly New Tendencies of course), and it is time to register this phenomenon according to these (overarching) aspects for once. As far as I am aware, nobody has attempted to do this yet.

And that is the reason I am writing to you: while gathering the documents for my chronology I took the opportunity to ask a few people if they would like to take part in a collective exhibition of this type. The problem now is to find an institution that would take on such an exhibition. That is when I thought of you.

Hopefully this does not give you a fright. If, in principal, you think it is a good idea to do something like this, then we are already half way there. If the project should come to fruition I would take over all of the organizational aspects. I have put together a list for you of the people who, in my opinion, would be suitable for selection. Those who would actually be selected would to a large extent depend on your financial resources. I would more than likely be in a position to ensure that Rochus Kowallek or Udo Kultermann could open the exhibition—and do so without charge.

List: J.J. Schoonhoven, Marianne Aue, Uecker, Zoltan Kemeny, Lui Tomasello, Paul Talman, Armando, Jan Henderikse, de Vries, Henk Peeters, Klaus Burkhard, Bernhard Höke, v. Graevenitz, Andy Warhol, May Fasnacht, Sol LeWitt, Roehr, Piene, Arman, Mavignier etc.

As I already said: on their own, none of these people are particularly surprising, but brought together in such a way that guides the observer in a certain direction, they would in my opinion reveal new aspects."⁴¹

It was probably in the summer of 1966 that Roehr drafted clear categories for his 'Chronology of Serial Art,' put together an initial list of possible artists and attempted to create an "Index of serial painters and serial montages."⁴²

Categories

Several of the following categories apply to each artist. In order to create some kind of delimitation, results that arise from a certain combination (e.g. 2 & 3) are not considered. This is of course a matter of discretion that does not have to be universally valid.

1 — systematic. This means that certain rules are stipulated for making or creating artwork. If these vary or are intermittently altered, see point 6.

2 — unsystematic. This applies to scattering or other random arrangements. Scattering within a system is also termed unsystematic in this categorization.

3 — center-oriented. A serial arrangement refers to a certain point or emanates from such a point. Only systematic processes are considered here.

4 — direction-oriented. This refers to serial arrangements that only move in one direction. Likewise, only systematic processes are considered.

5 — dispersed arrangement. These arrangements may be regular or irregular. They are arranged throughout the work with a certain degree of continuity, without concentrating on a particular point or direction.

6 — variable. This refers to the variation of serial units, or modifying the rules. Only phenomena that display a dominating constant will be considered.

7 — representational. This refers to both serial representational paintings as well as montages consisting of objects.

+ — Symbol for 'sometimes.' This accompanies the numbers that designate a category that in part appears in the case of some artists with various serial works, but is not the norm.

Carl Andre 1, +4, +3, 5 // Arman 2, 5, 7 // Bernard Aubertin 1, 5 (+2, 5) // Marianne Aue 1, +4 // Giacomo Balla 1,4 // Marta Boto 1, 5 // Klaus Burkhard 1, +3 // Enrico Castellani 1, +4, 5 // Joseph Cornell 1, 5, 6, +7 // Toni Costa 3 // Narisco Debourg 1, 5, 6 // Equipo 57 1, 5 // May Fasnacht 1, 5 // Dan Flavin 1, 4 // Gene Davis 1, 4, 6 // Getulio 1, +4, +5 // Mathias Goeritz 1, 5 // Gerhard v. Graevenitz 2, 5 // Gruppe X 2, +4, +5 // Gruppo N 1, 5, 6 // Hans Haacke 1, 5 // Jan Henderikse, 1, +2, 5, +6, 7 // Bernhard Höke 1, +5, 7 // Donald Judd 1, 4 // Zoltan Kemeny 2, 5, 6 // Yves Klein 1, 5, 6 // Kusama 2, 5, 6, 7 // Walter Leblanc 1, 4 // Sol LeWitt 1, 5 // Konrad Lueg 1, +4, +5 // Wolfgang Ludwig 1, 3 // Agnes Martin 1, 5 // Almir Mavignier 1, 5, 6 // Heinz Mack +1, +2, 4, 6 // Guido Molinari 1, 4, 6 // Francois Morellet 1, 5, 6 // Piet Mondrian 1, 6 // Henk Peeters 1, 5, 6 // Otto Piene 2, 5, +6 // Larry Poons 1, 4, 6 // Bridget Riley 1, 4 // Peter Roehr 1, 5, +7 // Markus Raetz 1, 4, +7 // J.J. Schoonhoven 1, 5, +4 // Klaus Staudt 1, 5 // Joel Stein 1, 5, 6 // Günther Uecker +1, +2, 6 // J.R. Soto 1, +4, 5 // Paul Talman 1, 5, 6 // Lui Tomasello 1, 5 // Herman de Vries 1, +4, +5 // Andy Warhol 1, +4, 5, 6, 7 // Ludwig Wilding 1, +3, 4 // Walter Zehringer 1, 5, 6

Index of serial artists and serial montages [*Years without names denote that, in Roehr's opinion, there are no substantial aspects of seriality evident, author's comment.*]

1909 // 1910 // 1911

1912 Giacomo Balla

1913 to 1918

1919 Piet Mondrian

1920 to 1945

1946 Joseph Cornell

1947 // 1948 // 1949 // 1950

1951 J.R. Soto

1952 // 1953

1954 Almir Mavignier

1955

1956 Mathias Goeritz, Zoltan Kemeny

1957 Günther Uecker, J. J. Schoonhoven

1958 Enrico Castellani, Marianne Aue, Lui Tomasello

1959 Otto Piene, Paul Talman, Arman

1960 Gerhard v. Graevenitz, Heinz Mack, Hans Haacke, Henk Peeters, Yves Klein

1961 Andy Warhol, Armando

1962 Peter Roehr, Walter Leblanc, Jan Henderikse

1963 Bernd Höke, Herman de Vries, Donald Judd

1964 May Fasnacht, Klaus Burkhard, Carl Andre

1965 Sol LeWitt

1966

A short while later Bartels and Roehr sent out the invitations. The example below is the invitation letter to Adolf Luther—whereby here, as in the overview of the ‘Chronology,’ the American positions are missing (Carl Andre, Ronald Bladen, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, Larry Poons, Michael Steiner):

Student body of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität
Public Corporation
General Student Committee
6 Frankfurt am Main
Jügelstraße 1 Studentenhaus
Tel. 770643180 and 777575
Victoriastraße 112
7th December

Dear Mr. Luther,
From the beginning of May to the end of June 1967, the Studiogalerie of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, is holding an exhibition, provisionally entitled ‘Serial Art.’ The exhibition is being assembled under the directorship of Mr. Peter Roehr. Images and objects of different tendencies that share a common factor of sequences and repetitions will be displayed. It is intended that Rochus Kowallek should open the exhibition.

Those expected to take part include:

Armando	Bernhard Höke	Klaus Staudt
Bernard Aubertin	Zoltan Kemeny	Günther Uecker
Marianne Aue	Kusama	J. R. Soto
Klaus Burkhard	Leblanc	Paul Talman
Konrad Lueg	Mavignier	H. de Vries
Castellani	Mack	Andy Warhol
Joseph Cornell	Henk Peeters	W. Zehringer
May Fasnacht	Otto Piene	
G. v. Graevenitz	Christian Megert	
Jan Henderikse	Markus Raetz	
Gruppe X	Schoonhoven	
Hans Haacke		

We would like to include an artwork by yourself. We had in mind something similar to the Weiß-Weiß (White-White) exhibition in Bern—or something else (if possible not less than 1 x1 m) which involves as little variation of forms as possible.

If you would be so kind as to inform us by the 15th of January 1967 as to whether we can count on your participation. We will bear the cost of transport and insurance, if you will send us the pictures packed in a crate by express delivery by the 15th of April 1967. We could also pick them up ourselves.
In the event of a sale (if you do not wish to sell, please inform us) the Studiogalerie will take a commission of 20%.

We would be very pleased to be able to count on your assent.

Yours sincerely
Siegfried Bartels
Studiogalerie43

Peter Roehr

The letters contained in the Peter Roehr Archive in the MMK Museum Moderner Kunst Frankfurt [Museum of Modern Art Frankfurt] show that by the spring an ever wider network of people full of ideas was enthusiastically working on planning the exhibition. Ewerdt Hilgemann wrote long letters detailing his visits to his artist friends (in particular Jan Dibbets). He drew up long lists of exhibition sites in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands that could be approached regarding the possible takeover of the Frankfurt exhibition. He also made practical considerations on the transportation of the artworks and already started designing the catalog and portfolio.⁴⁴

‘Seriality’ forms a subversive system and a critical process The theoretical discourse of the texts in the ‘Serielle Formationen’ exhibition catalog 1967

Two undated notes by Peter Roehr, which probably originated during the organizational preparations for the exhibition in spring 1967, comment on the topics of ‘the serial principle’ and ‘the New Tendencies.’ The notes were probably meant to be incorporated in to the accompanying catalog text:

“In speaking of Serial Art, the fundamental differences in relation to Kinetic or Monochrome Art, for instance, must be clear. The serial principle is applied for the sake of seriality itself in a few cases only [...]. The vast majority used this manner of arrangement as a vehicle for conceptualization (for example Kinetic, New Tendencies, Constructivism etc.); it provided an opportunity to avoid a ‘composition,’ that in many cases was perceived as onerous and unnecessary. It was the shortest and above all most unproblematic way to arrive at the actual goal, the visualization of the intentions. It seems to me that the original aspect of an anti-contrapuntal ‘composition’ was completely lost sight of; in the first works of serial painting—which originated at the beginning of the serial movement (no matter how organized or incidental the movement may have been)—this aspect was demonstratively developed and mastered. The principles and results were taken up with a certain sense of impartiality, if you will, by artists who discovered simplicity and clarity in this ordering principle and who needed this for their work.”⁴⁵ And the second note reads: “The ‘New Tendencies’ formed as a group at a time when artists’ interest in ‘peinture’ started to wane. Artists not only defied the ‘École de Paris,’ which up until that point had been highly respected, by neglecting composition (in the classical sense employed up until then), and viewing it as a problem of little importance; they also turned to the ‘material’ itself. Aside from a few ‘Müllbilder’ [Waste Pictures] (Raysse, Arman, Spoerri), many artists now developed pictures and objects produced from the same materials: glass, metal, plastic, paper.

Constructive elements take precedence—and in tandem with the interest in materials and the disinterest in composition, it was only a small step to serial configurations. ‘Objectification’ is the topic of almost all artists’ commentaries in the early 1960s. They were searching for order, (for lucid) simplicity and clarity. And since things do not exist by themselves but always in relation to other things, it appeared clarifying and insulating to put them together with other similar objects. In this, the confrontation, the contrast, the contrapuntal in space, and also in time, was delayed. And thus change was delayed, the change that the object experienced through togetherness with other lines: a change occurred, but one that was the most natural, the least manipulated, the most honest and most objective.”⁴⁶

These notes take up the analytical tone typical from artistic practice; the same tone of Peter Roehr’s ‘Chronologie der Seriellen Kunst’ [Chronology of Serial Art], which he was working on in 1965/66. It is a retrospective of the phenomena of recent developments in art and of differentiations of art features with regard to his immediate contemporaries. What is completely missing here are the critical social and ideological comments and analyses that take center stage in the texts in the ‘Serielle Formationen’ exhibition catalog.

Siegfried Bartels, director of the Studio Galerie, indicates the tone of the reflections when he points to the undoubtedly close connection between seriality and serial production in industrial society as well as to the key terms and phrases of the day connected to this, such as “increasing workers’ productivity” and “economic miracle.”⁴⁷ In the same way, Maenz/Roehr’s introduction emphasizes the phenomenon of ‘series production’ as the all-pervading principle of the fabric of economic life and the consumer goods industry. According to the authors, to be a part of this is no longer a matter of voluntary decisions or moral questions, rather it is simply an existential reality. Economic success is inevitably linked to increasing unit numbers, increasing sales and therefore to decreasing unit costs. The authors believe that the individual consciousness cannot avoid this pressured economization of economic and social processes. To supplement this, Enzensberger’s sentence cited at the beginning of this article is



CHARLOTTE POSENENSKE, *Serie E Drehflügel*, 1967/68–2011
Daimler Art Collection

applicable: “the consciousness industry is actually the key industry of the twentieth century.”⁴⁸

“Artistic action and reaction,” as Maenz/Roehr argue in the introduction to the theme of their exhibition, “are provoked by the immediate surroundings.”⁴⁹ The rest of their commentary can be summarized as follows: Advanced artistic positions of the most diverse provenience and cultural affiliations can manage to bring about a kind of “thrust reversal” of the all-dominating processes, in that these are structurally addressed and aesthetically analyzed, whereby at best a kind of free space for discourse and critical reflection would open up.

The following paragraphs of the introduction name, as already mentioned here, the participating artistic tendencies from Europe and the US, the material and processes used, and the aesthetic impacts.

Just as the ‘Serielle Formationen’ catalog was ready in the summer of 1967, the mood among the artists had already shifted. It seemed a utopian moment had arrived in that artistic participation in societal developments could not only symbolically formulate structural changes, but perhaps even initiate them. As Roehr noted at this time: “Art that changes existing aesthetic and social conditions using aesthetic media—that is art. Thus art is what previous respective definitions of art have called into question.”⁵⁰ But at this time disillusionment suddenly and emphatically set in regarding the desired potential of art to make an impact. In conjunction with Paul Maenz, Roehr opened the communications center ‘Pudding Explosion,’ and planned diverse forms of exhibitions. He contemplated the inexpensive sale of his artistic concepts as ‘art in bags’ and with his artist friend Jan Dibbets discussed setting up an ‘Art Shop’ for cheap art in the form of a supermarket.⁵¹

Paul Maenz commented that the joint opening of ‘Pudding Explosion’ in 1968 was an expression of a “definitive break from art contexts” for Peter Roehr: “While in 1968/69 this store on Holzmarktstraße in Frankfurt functioned as a kind of ‘communication center,’ it was, in fact, Germany’s first ‘headshop’ and bustling meeting point (American GIs/Vietnam, students of the left/rebels connected to Dutschke, hippies/flower power, ‘those who sympathized with drugs,’ etc.). As an aside: trendy in appearance, the store’s self-image, as well as the goods for sale, were underground and politically subversive (and on the radar of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the American Military Police). For Roehr, Pudding Explosion was the definitive break from art contexts, for me the farewell to the ‘consumer world of advertising.’ For Charlotte Posenenske, too, this situation characterized the environment in which she turned away from art and towards sociology (apart from the furnishings consisting of corrugated board, she also took care of painting the facade of the building: a giant Coca Cola bottles flashed through an equally giant portrait of Karl Marx).”⁵²

In February 1968, Charlotte Posenenske, who was a close friend of Roehr and Maenz and at the time lived in Offenbach near Frankfurt, formulated a statement on her artistic work that was then published as part of a survey among artists in the journal *Art International* in May 1968. In this, Posenenske described a minimalistic, formal vocabulary as well as serenity and processuality as constants of her sculptures. However she si-

multaneously maintained that quick, formal developments in art were faced with their rapidly declining relevance for society. She concluded: “I find it difficult to come to terms with the fact that art cannot contribute anything to solving urgent social problems.”⁵³

In order to correctly evaluate this development towards an increasingly pessimistic view and to place it in context, I believe it is important to briefly call to mind the political situation in Frankfurt in 1960s.

In June 1958 reports of the Frankfurt demonstrations against atomic weapons featured in the German press; in 1961 students protested against the murder of Lumumba; in June 1962 demonstrations for the re-unification of Germany took place in the city: based on these protests, Frankfurt, alongside Berlin, developed into a center of the student protest movement in 1960s. In 1963 international students took to the streets to seek improvements in their rights, protests against the Vietnam war began in 1965 with the first sit-down strike, to which the police violently reacted, followed by campaigns against the planned emergency laws. In Berlin, the anti-Vietnam demonstrations escalated into riots and culminated in the shooting of student Benno Ohnesorg in June 1967 and the arrest of Rudi Dutschke in February 1968. The discussion on erupting anti-Semitic activities at the beginning of 1960s was closely interlinked with these developments. The Auschwitz trial, which opened in December 1963 in Frankfurt, once again drew the world’s attention to the process of coming to terms with Germany’s past.

Members of the Frankfurt School, in particular Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, witnessed, reflected on and discussed both developments—antisemitism and the radicalization of student protests. As early as 1962 Adorno took up a position on the question of the function of art in times of political upheaval with his lecture titled ‘Engagement’ [Commitment] on Radio Bremen. Regarding the danger of the ideological appropriation of art, Adorno programmatically stated: “It is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men’s heads.”⁵⁴

In addition, for Roehr, Posenenske and many other artists of the time, the establishment of the Cologne art market in September 1967 probably triggered further doubt as to whether the metaphorical intervention of art into life would be able to remain outside the cycle of the circulation of goods and capital. The artists came to the bitter understanding that art cannot be kept out of the repressive structures of the ‘consciousness industry,’ that political effectiveness without the compromising adaptation to a society that produces goods and is the task of intellectual spaces of art is not possible. Perhaps Adorno’s sentence can be paraphrased here in that art ‘cannot’ simply reduce itself to an agitatory or politically exploitable motive in order to ‘recognizably’ prove its function to society without sacrificing itself in the process. Art only preserves authenticity through strict enforcement and the continued concentration of its own parameters: form, order, measurement, dimension; it develops in concrete temporal, spatial and historical contexts. “To spotlight alternatives,” as Adorno put it, would mandatorily bring with it a far-reaching orientation of art toward patterns expected by society. The rigorously elaborated artistic ‘form,’ on the other hand, presents the observer with a structure that he or she must reconcile with his or her own expectations.

1 Cf. Philipp Felsch, *Der lange Sommer der Theorie. Geschichte einer Revolte 1960–1990*, Munich: C. H. Beck, 2015, pp. 36ff.

2 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Bewußtseins-Industrie,” in: *Einzelheiten I. Bewußtseins-Industrie*, edition suhrkamp Vol. 63, Frankfurt a. M., p. 10.

3 Paul Maenz, email to the author, March 6, 2017.

4 Maenz/Roehr, “Zu dieser Ausstellung” [On this Exhibition], in: *Serielle Formationen*, published by Studio Galerie der Universität Frankfurt, edited by Peter Roehr und Paul Maenz, exh. cat. Galerie der Studentenschaft der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Stiftung Studienhaus, Frankfurt a. M., 1967, n. p.

- 5 Cf. Werner Lippert, "Von der Verdichtung und der Verflüchtigung: Peter Roehr," in: Werner Lippert and Paul Maenz (eds.), Peter Roehr, adapted by Gerd de Vries, exh. cat. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt a. M., 1991, pp. 15f.
- 6 Werner Hofmann, Die Grundlagen der modernen Kunst, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1987.
- 7 Andrea Bärnreuther and Peter-Klaus Schuster (eds.), Das XX. Jahrhundert. Kunst, Kultur, Politik und Gesellschaft in Deutschland, Cologne: DuMont, 1999, see especially the entries on the years 1966 to 1968; das xx. jahrhundert. ein jahrhundert kunst in deutschland, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung Bauermann GmbH, 1999. In the chapter "Cogito, ergo sum" on conceptual tendencies, the publication presents Hans-Peter Feldmann, Rosemarie Trockel, and Hanne Darboven, among others; Roehr is not mentioned.
- 8 Hubertus Butin (ed.), DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst, Cologne: DuMont, 2002; Hubertus Butin (ed.), Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst, Cologne: Snoeck, 2014.
- 9 Willy Rotzler, Konstruktive Konzepte, Zurich: ABC Verlag, 1977, revised and extended new edition 1988, p. 224.
- 10 Cf. for example: Karin Thomas, DuMont's kleines Sachwörterbuch zur Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts, 1st Edition Cologne: DuMont, 1973, 5th edition 1985, pp. 206f. (here Roehr comes under the term 'sequence' along side Andy Warhol, Piero Manzoni, Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre); Karin Thomas, Zweimal deutsche Kunst nach 1945. 40 Jahre Nähe und Ferne, Cologne: DuMont, 1985, pp. 114, 195; Karin Thomas (ed.), DuMonts Kunstlexikon des 20. Jahrhunderts, 1st edition, Cologne: DuMont, 2000, 2nd revised edition 2006, pp. 342, 350f.
- 11 Thomas 1985 (as with note 10), p. 195.
- 12 Elke Bippus, Serielle Verfahren: Pop Art, Minimal Art, Conceptual Art und Postminimalismus, Berlin: Reimer, 2003, pp. 10f.
- 13 Cf. the exhibitions: 'Franz Erhard Walther. Work as Action,' DIA:Beacon, Oct. 2010 – Feb. 2012; 'Charlotte Posenenske and Peter Roehr,' Chinati Foundation, Marfa Texas 2016; the DIA:Beacon is preparing Charlotte Posenenske's first extensive solo exhibition in the US for 2018. The New York Peter Freemann Gallery has been representing Posenenske's and Walther's work in the US since 2009.
- 14 Serial Imagery, edited by John Coplands, exh. cat. Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, 1969, pp. 7–20.
- 15 Maenz/Roehr in: exh. cat. Serielle Formationen 1967 (as with note 4), n. p.
- 16 See for example Sophie Cras, "De la valeur de l'oeuvre au prix du marché: Yves Klein à l'épreuve de la pensée économique" [From the value of the artwork to the market price: Yves Klein as seen through an economic analysis], in: Marges. Revue d'art contemporain, No. 11, 2010, pp. 29–44 [<https://marges.revues.org/446>].
- 17 Cf. Freddy Bartino and Luca Palazzoli, Piero Manzoni. Catalogue raisonné, Milan: Vanni Scheiwiller, 1991, p. 59. The detailed reviews of Manzoni's exhibition by Vincenzo Agnetti and Leonardo Borgese were first published in German in: Renate Wiehager (ed.), ZERO Italien: Azimut / Azimuth 1959/60 in Mailand und heute/and today, exh. cat. Galerie der Stadt Esslingen/Villa Merkel, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1996, pp. 166/168, Ital. pp. 167/169.
- 18 Cf. Peter Roehr 1944–1968. Neues Museum Weimar. Die Sammlung Paul Maenz Vol. 2, edited by Gerda Wendermann, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000, p. 66. For a contextualization of Roehr's Schwarze Tafeln between Kazimir Malevich and Zero (without mentioning Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni) cf. Martin Engler, "Schwarze Tafeln und der od des Autors," in: Peter Roehr. Werke aus Frankfurter Sammlungen, exh. cat. MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Städel Museum, Frankfurt a. M., Petersberg: Imhof, 2009, pp. 10ff.
- 19 Piero Manzoni, "Libera Dimensione," in: Azimuth, no. 2, January 1960, ed. by Piero Manzoni and Enrico Castellani. Engl. translation in: Dirk Pörschmann, Margrit Schavemaker (ed.), Zero. The International Art Movement of the 50s and 60s, exh. cat. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam 2015, p. 386; reprint in: Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas, 3rd Edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 2013, vol. 2, pp. 709–711, translates as follows: "This undefined surface, uniquely living, which in the material contingency of the work cannot be infinite, can on the other hand be multiplied to the infinite, without the solution of continuity. This appears more clearly in the Lines; in this case, no doubt remains. The line develops in length uniquely, to the infinite. Its only dimension is time."
- 20 On Jan Henderikse's oeuvre see: Renate Wiehager and Anton Melissen (eds.), Jan Henderikse. Archeiropoieta, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010.
- 21 Paul Maenz, "Brief aus New York," in: Egoist 9, ed. by Adam Seide, Frankfurt a. M., May 1966, p. 3.
- 22 Paul Maenz, "Das große ABC," in: Egoist 10, ed. by Adam Seide, Frankfurt a. M., Nov. 1966, pp. 48f.
- 23 Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," in: Art in America, Vol. 53, No. 5, Oct.–Nov. 1965, pp. 57–69; German in Gregor Stemmrich (ed.), Minimal Art. Eine kritische Perspektive, Dresden and Basel: Verlag der Kunst, 1995, pp. 280–308.
- 24 On the discussion of emerging Minimal Art between Maenz/Roehr cf. for example Wendermann, in: Wendermann 2000 (as with note 18), 2000, pp. 57ff.
- 25 On the principle of seriality in American and European art in the 1960s in relation to Peter Roehr's work see: Werner Lippert, "Einführung," in: Peter Roehr, exh. cat. Kunsthalle Tübingen et. al., Cologne: DuMont, 1977, pp. 9, 21. See also: Burkhard Brunn, "Dasselbe anders/Immer dasselbe" [The Same but different/Always the Same], in: Charlotte Posenenske/Peter Roehr. dasselbe anders/immer dasselbe, exh. cat. Kunsthau/Kunsthalle Wiesbaden 2012, Berlin: Distanz Verlag, 2012, pp. 9ff.
- 26 Cf. James Meyer, minimalism. art and polemics in the sixties, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 172.
- 27 The exhibition 'Working Drawings and Other Visual Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art,' Finch College Museum, December 1966, presented graphical concepts in ring binders.
- 28 Mel Bochner, "Systemic Painting," in: Arts Magazine, No. 41, November 1966, pp. 57–58; id., "Serial Art Systems: Solipsism," in: Arts Magazine, No. 41, Sommer 1967, pp. 39–43; id., "The Serial Attitude," in: Artforum, No. 6, December 1967, pp. 28–33.
- 29 Mel Bochner, "The Serial Attitude," in: Artforum, No. 6, December 1967, pp. 28–33.
- 30 Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)," in: Aspen Magazine, Nos. 5 and 6, 1966.
- 31 Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," in: Artforum 7, No. 1, September 1968. See also Caroline A. Jones, "Systems Symptoms. On Jack Burnham's 'Systems Esthetics'," in: Artforum 51, No. 1, September 2012, pp. 113f.
- 32 Paul Maenz, email to the author dated February 2, 2017.
- 33 Hilton Kramer, "Primary Structures—The New Anonymity," in: New York Times, May 1, 1966.
- 34 Cf. the publication of the page in Paul Maenz (ed.), Die Sammlung – The FER Collection, Cologne: Verlag Gerd de Vries, 1983, p. 51.
- 35 Cf. the publication of the sculpture in *ibid.*, p. 105.
- 36 Paul Maenz, email to the author dated March 6, 2017. See also: Die Sammlung Paul Maenz, Vol. 1, Objekte,

Bilder, Installationen, edited by Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1998, pp. 56ff.

37 Cf. Alex Beacon's essay on Michael Steiner in this publication.

38 Dr. Magdalena Broska from the Adolf Luther Foundation in Krefeld kindly provided the text.

39 Paul Maenz, email to the author dated March 5, 2017.

40 May (Annemarie) Fasnacht studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule [School of Arts and Crafts] in Bern, Switzerland, and with Germaine Richier in Paris. In 1966 she took part in a performance in Bern organized by Harald Szeemann: Fasnacht painted marks on a cow to show "meat regions." From 1968 to 1980 she worked in the joint design studio Suzanne Baumann, predominately in the area of exhibition design. Exhibitions: 1966 'Weiss auf Weiss' [White on White], Kunsthalle Bern. 1967 'Sitz-Kunst' [Seat Art] Schweizerischer Werkbund, Gurten, Bern. 1968 'Serielle Formationen' [Serial Formations], Studio Galerie, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main. Source: <http://zkm.de/en/person/may-fasnacht> (April 15, 2017). Cf. Margit Rosen (ed.), A Little-Known Story About a Movement, a Magazine, and the Computer's Arrival in Art, Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2011.

41 Peter Roehr to Siegfried Bartels, letter dated November 17, 1966. Peter Roehr Archive in the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt a. M., Inv. No. 2014/75.29r/2014/75.29v.

42 Cf. Peter Roehr Archive MMK (as with note 41), Inv. No. 2015/12.54BI1-3.

43 Dr. Magdalena Broska from the Adolf Luther Foundation in Krefeld kindly provided the material.

44 See Ewerdt Hilgemann's letters to Roehr from April 5 and 10, 1967 in the Peter Roehr Archive MMK (as with note 41), Inv. No.: 2014/75.195 and 2014/75.196. On the concept and implementation of the exhibition 'Serielle Formationen' see Wendermann 2000 (as with note 18), pp. 60f.

45 Peter Roehr, Peter Roehr Archive MMK (as with note 41), Inv. No. 2015/12.67.

46 Peter Roehr, Peter Roehr Archive MMK (as with note 41), Inv. No. 2015/12.68.

47 Siegfried Bartels, "[Foreword,]" in: exh. cat. *Serielle Formationen 1967* (as with note 4), n. p.

48 These connections were also presented by Meredith North in a paper entitled "The Politics of Seriality: Minimalism and Social Engagement in the Work of Peter Roehr" at the 'Minimalism: Location, Aspect, Moment' conference at the University of Southampton/Winchester School of Art in October of 2016.

49 Maenz/Roehr, in: exh. cat. *Serielle Formationen 1967* (as with note 4), n. p.

50 Peter Roehr, handwritten note, Peter Roehr Archive MMK (as with note 41), Inv. No. 2015/12.3.

51 Peter Roehr, typewritten letter to Jan Dibbets, Peter Roehr Archive MMK (as with note 41), Inv. No. 2015/75.73.

52 Paul Maenz, email to the author, March 5, 2017.

53 Charlotte Posenenske, "Manifest," in: *Art International Vol XII/5*, Lugano, May 1968. In the two artists' exhibition 'Serielle Formationen und Installationen,' works by Charlotte Posenenske and Peter Roehr were exhibited in October 1967, and for the first time together, in the Galerie Jülicher, Gützenrath (near Mönchengladbach). This exhibition has so far not been recorded in publications on Posenenske/Roehr (E-Mail from Manfred A. Jülicher to the author, April 10, 2017)

54 Theodor W. Adorno, "Engagement," in: Theodor W. Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur, GS, Vol. 11*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974, p. 413.

Bildteil/Plates 2

OP ART, POP ART, NOUVEAU RÉALISME, NEODADA