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*Mind Circles: on conceptual deliberation
–Hanne Darboven and the trace of the
artist's hand*

A JESPERSEN

PhD

2015

*Mind Circles: on conceptual deliberation
–Hanne Darboven and the trace of the
artist's hand*

Andrea Jespersen MA (RCA)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the Faculty of
Arts, Design & Social Sciences

May 2015

Abstract

The phrase '*de-materialisation of the art object*' has frequently assumed the mistaken role of a universal definition for original conceptual art. My art practice has prompted me to reconsider the history of the term de-materialisation to research another type of conceptual art, one that embraces materiality and incorporates cerebral handmade methods, as evidenced in the practice of the German artist Hanne Darboven. This thesis will establish that materiality and the handmade – the subjective – was embraced by certain original conceptual artists. Furthermore, it argues that within art practices that use concepts, the cerebral handmade can function to prolong the artist's conceptual deliberation and likewise instigate a nonlinear conscious inquisitiveness in the viewer.

My practice-based methodologies for this research involved analogue photography, drawing, an artist residency, exhibition making, publishing, artist talks and interdisciplinary collaborations with various practices of knowledge. The thesis reconsiders the definition of conceptual art through an analysis of the original conceptual art practices initiated in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s that utilised handmade methods. I review and reflect upon the status of the cerebral handmade in conceptual art through a close study of the work of Hanne Darboven, whose work since 1968 has been regularly included in conceptual art exhibitions. I discuss the many contradictions embedded in her practice, and establish how critics and theorists consistently simplified her work by predominately focusing on the conceptual aspects of her art practice. The thesis maps and analyses the historically disregarded fact that Darboven's practice depended on materiality, as present in both her intensively temporal handmade processes and her methodologies of collecting. To explore the current legacy of this analysis I contextualise contemporary encounters related to fine art practice and conclude with a dialogue, artist-to-artist, with Lucy Skaer.

Table Of Contents

Abstract	3
List of Images	6
List of Accompanying Material	9
Preface	10
Acknowledgements	12
Author Declaration	15
BOOK ONE	16
<i>Human Silver Halo</i>	18
Medical Museion, Copenhagen February – May 2013	19
<i>gaze-following (holding hands)</i>	20
<i>breath device</i>	21
<i>Haystacks of Healing (part one, two, three)</i>	22
<i>Thought Transmission</i>	23
<i>Tidy Table: model 51</i>	24
<i>Female Entanglement</i>	25
<i>common sense has no place at quantum level / Hubble</i>	26
<i>part of the equation</i>	27
<i>We are the ashes of dying stars, we are nuclear waste</i>	28
<i>we draw some arbitrary line and rule out whole areas of investigation</i>	29
<i>Concealed Ovation (part two)</i>	30
<i>Mind Circles</i>	31
BALTIC's Project Space, Newcastle upon Tyne October 2013	32
The first exhibition day	34
The first photograph	35
A wet photograph	36
Two photographs are missing	37
A public event (03.10.2013)	38
Another public event (05.10.2013)	39
A projection	40
Detail of the drawing	41
Photograph drying	42
At the end	43
BOOK TWO	46
Introduction	47
<i>Chapter One.</i>	
<i>HISTORICAL NOTIONS OF CONCEPTUAL ART</i>	59
Proto-Conceptual Art	60
Conceptual Art – Initial Appearance	65
Conceptual Artists – Initial Appearance	69
Conceptual Art – Defined by the Artists, 1960s–1970s	74
Conceptual Art – Defined by Critics and Art Historians, 1960s–1970s	81
Conceptual Artists – Gender	85

<i>Chapter Two.</i>	
<i>CONCEPTUAL CONFLICTS: ESTABLISHING HANNE DARBOVEN</i>	91
Conceptual Art Debates	92
Viewed Concepts	100
Darboven's Contemporaries	109
<i>Chapter Three.</i>	
<i>HANNE DARBOVEN – COLLECTING CONTRADICTIONS</i>	114
Public Image	115
Methodologies of Collecting	122
Welcoming Second-Hand Objects	130
<i>Chapter Four.</i>	
<i>TEMPORAL SYSTEMS HANDMADE BY HANNE DARBOVEN</i>	139
Handmade	140
Conscious Being	154
Copied 'Unbreakable' Systems	168
<i>Chapter Five.</i>	
<i>CONTEMPORARY DELIBERATION</i>	174
Recent Encounters: a Deliberation on Art	175
In Dialogue with Artist Lucy Skaer	181
Conclusion	196
Appendix	206
Art that Draws on Photography	207
When I met conceptual artist Luis Camnitzer (or 'know your audience')	217
References	219

List of Images

BOOK ONE

1. <i>gaze-following (holding hands)</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	20
2. <i>breath device</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	21
3. <i>Haystacks of Healing (part one, two, three)</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	22
4. <i>Thought Transmission</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	23
5. <i>Tidy Table: model 51</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	24
6. <i>Female Entanglement</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	25
7. <i>common sense has no place at quantum level</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	26
8. <i>Hubble</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	26
9. <i>part of the equation</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	27
10. <i>We are the ashes of dying stars, we are nuclear waste</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	28
11. <i>we draw some arbitrary line and rule out whole areas of investigation</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	29
12. <i>Concealed Ovation (part two)</i> , Andrea Jespersen.	30
13. 'The first exhibition day...', Andrea Jespersen.	34
14. 'The first photograph...', Andrea Jespersen.	35
15. 'A wet photograph...', Andrea Jespersen.	36
16. 'Two photographs are missing...', Andrea Jespersen.	37
17. 'A public event (03.10.2013)...', Andrea Jespersen.	38
18. 'Another public event (05.10.2013)...', Andrea Jespersen.	39
19. 'A projection...', Andrea Jespersen.	40
20. 'Detail of the drawing...', Andrea Jespersen.	41
21. 'Photograph drying...', Andrea Jespersen.	42
22. 'At the end...', Andrea Jespersen.	43–45

BOOK TWO

23. <i>Erased de Kooning</i> , Robert Rauschenberg.	62
24. 'Anti-Art' demonstrations, Jack Smith and Henry Flynt.	66
25. 'Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art', Mel Bochner.	70
26. <i>Wall Drawing No. 146</i> , Sol LeWitt.	75
27. <i>Measurement Room</i> , Mel Bochner.	76
28. <i>One and Three Chairs</i> , Joseph Kosuth.	78
29. <i>21x21</i> , Hanne Darboven.	88
30. <i>II-b</i> , Hanne Darboven.	92
31. <i>Art International</i> , April 1968.	95
32. <i>Sechs Bücher 1968</i> (Six Books), Hanne Darboven.	104
33. <i>Working Sheets / Constructions</i> , Hanne Darboven.	108
34. Hanne Darboven letter to Lucy Lippard.	111
35. <i>Untitled (Drawing New York 1)</i> , Hanne Darboven.	112
36. <i>FRIEDRICH II, HARBURG 1986</i> , Hanne Darboven.	116
37. <i>FRIEDRICH II, HARBURG 1986</i> (detail), Hanne Darboven.	116
38. The Hanne Darboven Foundation.	117
39. <i>Hommage à Picasso, 1995–2006</i> , Hanne Darboven. Hanne Darboven's home-studio.	118
40. The paving at the Hanne Darboven Foundation.	120
41. <i>For Jean-Paul Sartre</i> (detail), Hanne Darboven.	121
42. Hanne Darboven's home-studio.	122
43. Darboven's own artworks on display in her home-studio.	124
44. <i>For Jean-Paul Sartre</i> , Hanne Darboven.	125
45. <i>The Time of Bismarck</i> , Hanne Darboven.	127
46. <i>Construction New York</i> , Hanne Darboven.	130
47. 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', exhibition view.	132
48. 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', exhibition view.	133

49. 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', exhibition view (detail).	134
50. <i>Untitled</i> , Hanne Darboven.	143
51. <i>Ausstellung mit 6 Filmprojektoren nach 6 Büchern über 1968</i> (Exhibition with 6 Film Projectors after 6 Books), Hanne Darboven.	152
52. <i>Information</i> , Hanne Darboven.	155
53. <i>7 TAFELN, II</i> , Hanne Darboven.	169
54. <i>Language is not transparent</i> , Mel Bochner.	197

List of Accompanying Material

- 'Zētēsis: research generated by curiosity', Vol 1. No. 2, Article Press, 2013.
 - Please see 'Art that Draws on, with, and against Photography', Andrea Jespersen, pp.58–71.

- '*Human Silver Halo – Seats of the Muses*', Andrea Jespersen (ed.), eatingapples, 2013.
 - This publication formed part of the art exhibition 'Human Silver Halo' where it was distributed free of charge to the museum visitors.

Preface

This practice-based PhD has been informed by ten years of studio methodologies – the questions concerning the conceptual handmade would not have materialised without this sustained period of practice. Hence, the vantage point for this investigation is that of a deliberating artist, who opened her studio door and ventured out to engage with the methodologies of art history, art theory, philosophy and science.

The thesis has deliberately been constructed to incorporate different voices and writing styles that oscillate between the conceptual objective and the handmade subjective. It is separated into two books: the first book provides visual traces of my practice – artworks, art exhibitions, and interdisciplinary events, which informed this research. Book one is presented with a modest layout, to emphasise that this photographic documentation is merely a visual stand-in for my artworks and events. The second book contains the written thesis that starts with an art historical chapter, examining the emergence and development of conceptual art in New York City in the 1960s and 1970s. The following three chapters focus on artist Hanne Darboven and the conceptual handmade; an examination that is steered by my practice methodologies – ‘enhanded’¹ knowledge – and gradually accentuated in subsequent chapters. The final chapter draws on contemporary discussions related to the notion of cerebral artists, and is firmly rooted in recent encounters with artists, curators, historians, and writers.

As the title reveals, this thesis is a circular journey of deliberation guided by the hand of the artist; hence, it starts with documentation of my work, moves on to examine the history and theory of conceptual art, followed by an

¹ ‘Enhanded’ knowledge is a term that I have created to signify the extended mind (a term used in philosophy of mind) within art practices. Chapter Four examines this notion that the cerebral is enhanced by the handmade i.e. that the mind does not simply reside in the brain but relies on the whole body for cognitive processing and to assimilate knowledge.

elaborate cerebral handmade encounter with Darboven, and finishes with recent subjective experiences related to enhanced knowledge within the discourse of contemporary art in Great Britain.

Acknowledgements

It began with a 2005 talk by Professor Johnny Golding at the Royal College of Art. This talk was intertwined with references to physics, which blew my mind and opened my eyes to the possibilities inherent in interdisciplinary practice. Hence, my first acknowledgement goes to Johnny Golding for inspiration and furthermore for support throughout my research; by generously inviting me to a round-table talk, to present at a photography conference and to publish my first paper.

In Copenhagen, I wish to thank Professor Thomas Söderqvist and his team at the Medical Museion for welcoming me into their world and for hosting my first Copenhagen solo exhibition. I also wish to acknowledge the team at the Danish Art Workshops, who gave me an opportunity to work at their world-class facilities, which led to an extraordinarily productive and innovative time.

A very special thank you to Trine Opsahl for generously taking the time to play the harp in the empty Medical Museion auditorium for my videos and 16mm films. I also wish to acknowledge the fantastic Copenhagen bookbinder Klara K for her expertise and perseverance with hand binding three books, made from silver gelatin prints, that fought for their freedom. Thanks are also due to the glass experts Norman Veitch and Brian Jones at Wearside Glass Sculptures, who managed to do the impossible, and to Ian Crampton and his team at Stratford Wire Works, who even saved my car when the exhaust fell off. The video works' smooth running was helped along by the expert advice of artist Levin Haegele.

I wish to acknowledge the generous contribution of texts by the following experts for the publication *Human Silver Halo – Seats of the Muses* that was available free of charge to viewers at my Medical Museion exhibition; artist and Professor David Campbell; artist and lecturer Katie Cuddon; architect Dorina Sylvia Dobnig; potter and architect, Professor Brian Dougan;

Professor Johnny Golding, PhD candidate Kathrine Elizabeth Lorena Johansson; conservator Ion Meyer; physiotherapist Jo Smith Oliver; composer, harp therapist and former lawyer Trine Opsahl; thrill engineer and Professor Brendan Walker, and artist and lecturer Ben Woodeson.

In Newcastle upon Tyne, I wish to thank the team at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, especially chief curator Laurence Sillars and assistant curator Will Cooper who selected my project to be part of the 'Baltic 39 | Figure One'. However, my experimental exhibition at Baltic's project space would never have come fully alive without the generous support and participation of Professor Maia Angelova and Dr. Cristiana Cavina Pratesi.

In Germany, I wish to acknowledge the Hanne Darboven Foundation for making it possible for me to spend an afternoon exploring Darboven's home-studio. I especially wish to thank curator Miriam Schoofs for the lively conversation we had, I hope it will be the first of many to come. My warmest thanks also go to Lucy Skaer for generously welcoming me for a morning conversation in Glasgow.

Closer to home, I wish to acknowledge two friends who by sharing their PhD experiences inspired me to think that I could undertake such an endeavor; artist and Professor, Dr. Jo Longhurst and researcher Dr. Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt. I also wish to thank my parents for supporting me in my UK educational adventures and especially my mother for those numerous childhood years when she corrected my spelling, ensuring dyslexia was a gift, not a limitation.

It is important to acknowledge that this PhD would not have happened without the financial support of a Studentship from Northumbria University or the unwavering support from my excellent supervisor, Professor David Campbell – thank you.

Furthermore a very special thanks to the Angus-Hughes Gallery for hosting my first London solo exhibition, 'part of the equation', a fitting full stop to my PhD.

My last acknowledgement of course goes to Ben Woodeson, a great husband, a good proofreader and a one of a kind artist.

Author Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 36,935 words [*excluding bibliography (academic references), footnotes and appendices*]

Name: Andrea Jespersen

Signature:

Date: 01.05.2015

BOOK ONE

The ideal place to fully experience the following documentation, of two exhibitions, two interdisciplinary events and extended documentation of the artworks that have informed this thesis, is online on the website:

<http://jespersen.co.uk>

Online it will also be possible to view the exhibited films and BALTIC's documentation of the two interdisciplinary events – please do visit the website.

Exhibitions:

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/humansilverhalo.html

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/mind.html

Films:

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/human_video_common.html

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/human_video_ovation.html

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/mind_video_ovationthree.html

Interdisciplinary Events:

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/mind_video_MA.html

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/mind_video_CP.html

Publication

http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/human_publication.html

Human Silver Halo

Medical Museion, Copenhagen February – May 2013

This project is fully documented online at www.jespersen.co.uk – which is where the following images and text originated.

The exhibition ‘Human Silver Halo’ was the first outcome from a period as a visiting Guest Curator at the Medical Museion. The project started with conceptual engagement with the Museion’s extensive collections of artefacts, the knowledgeable people working there and especially the auditorium dating from 1787 that is still in use today.

The Medical Museion’s spectacular auditorium is explored as a beautiful architectural manifestation of western society’s value systems governing power and knowledge. Museums are great centres of shared knowledge, and are rightfully valued and celebrated by society. These same collections are also evidence of human curiosity and our quest for knowledge. Especially interesting and distinct from other similar institutions are medical museums, distinguished by the simple fact that we all have some embodied knowledge of the subject matter.

During an accompanying artist residency at the Danish Art Workshops, a series of human sized analogue photographs of the Museion’s auditorium were made, along with images of medical instruments from the collections and a film of a female musician playing the harp in the empty auditorium. Analogue photography was the primary medium for this project owing to its use of silver, which since Hippocrates has been connected with healing. Though antibiotics have replaced the medical use of silver today, further research into its clinical potential is ongoing, signalling a very human reluctance to surrender the idea of its healing properties.

The publication ‘Human Silver Halo – Seats of the Muses’, which explores the notion of healing, accompanied the project; an item distributed free of charge to the viewer with texts by eleven interdisciplinary contributors including academics, architects, artists, designers, and philosophers.

A few of the exhibited photographs have small clusters of red circles drawn onto their surfaces, made with a technical ink pen. These nesting circles are simple handmade marks. They embrace the intricate and aesthetic, asking the viewer to contemplate both the deliberate handmade marks and the photograph that accommodates them. The photo and drawing represent different value systems that in the artwork are appreciated and questioned equally – considering approaches to flattening the hierarchy within the power of knowledge.²

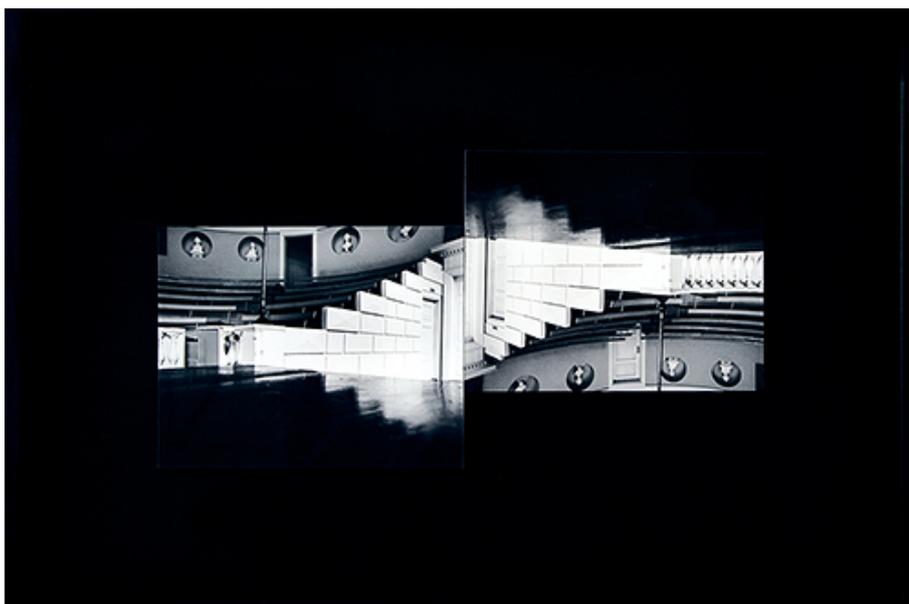
² http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/humansilverhalo.html [copyright of the site, image documentation and the written text is the author’s, created June-August 2013].

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



gaze-following (holding hands)
handprinted analogue silver gelatin print, red ink
diptych, each 49cm x 60cm x 2.5cm
2012

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



breath device
handprinted analogue gelatin silver print
diptych, 30cm x 40cm x 4cm
2013

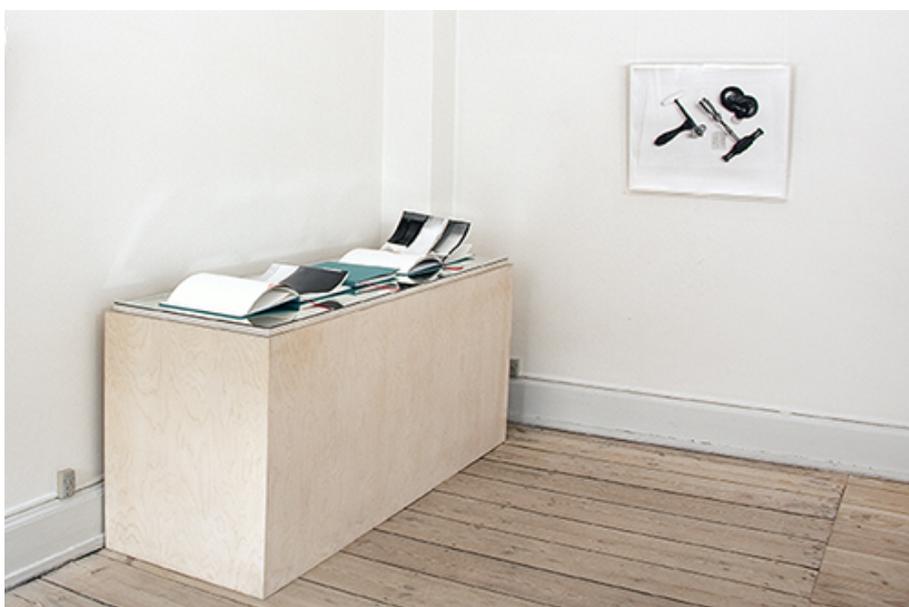
Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



Haystacks of Healing (part one, two, three)

handprinted analogue gelatin silver print, medical barrier material, silver foil, red ink
each book approximately 30cm x 30cm x 2cm
2012

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



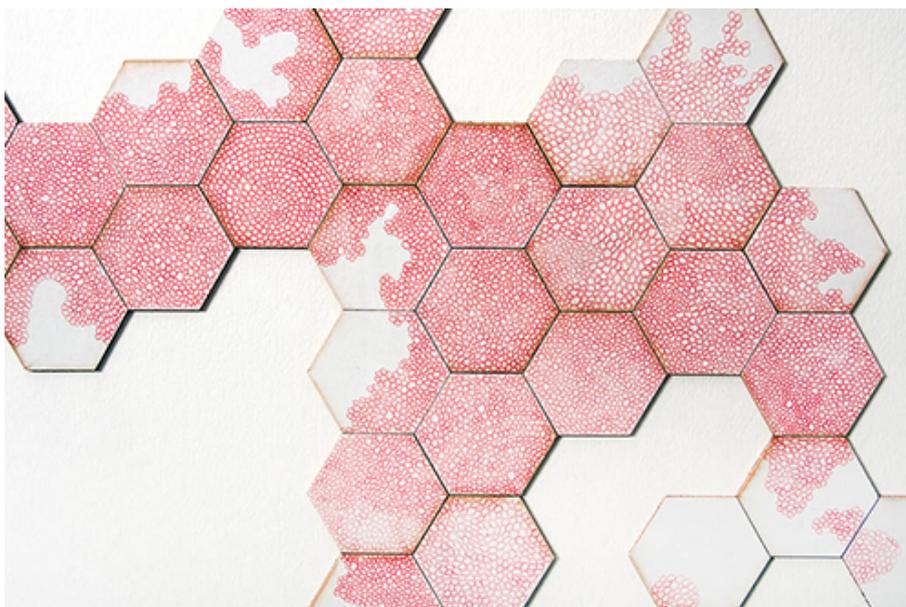
Thought Transmission

handprinted analogue gelatin silver print

56cm x 66cm x 6cm

2012

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



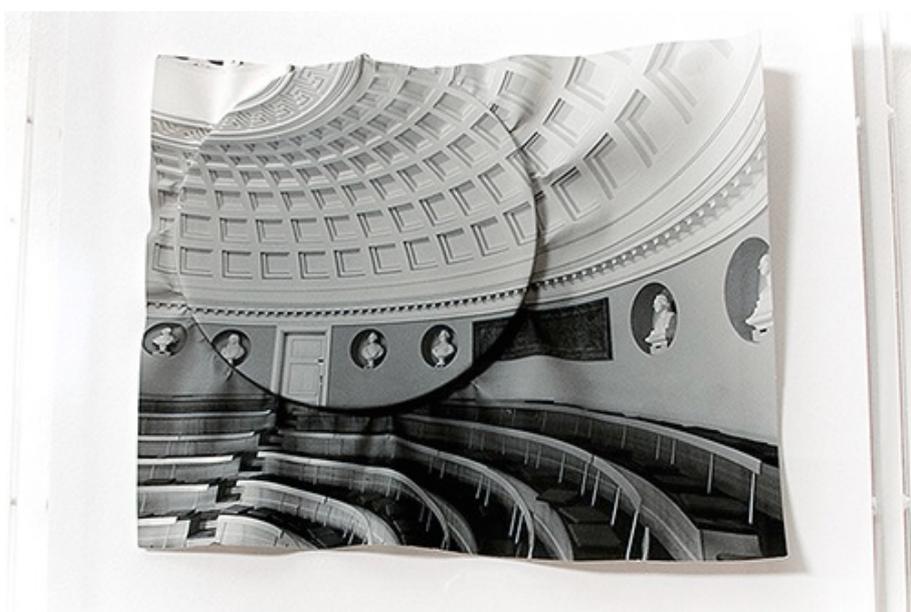
Tidy Table: model 51

51 laser cut paper on wood hexagons, colour pencil

50cm x 60cm x 4cm

2010 (2007)

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



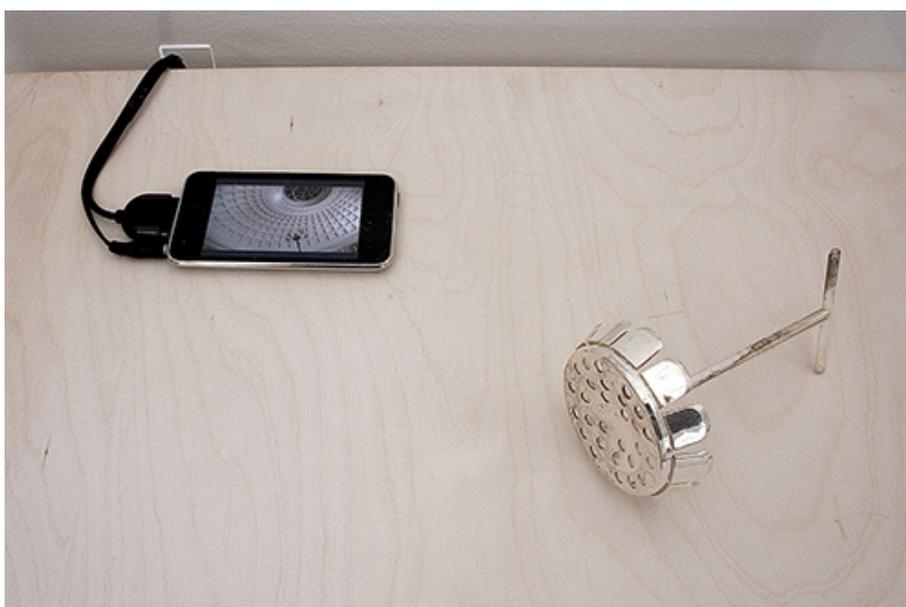
Female Entanglement

handprinted analogue gelatin silver print

30cm x 35cm x 8cm

2013

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



common sense has no place at quantum level
video 3.54 min, looped, displayed on iPod
music by Trine Opsahl
2012

Hubble
Sterling silver
10cm x 15cm x 10cm
2008

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



part of the equation

handprinted analogue gelatin silver prints
triptych, each 60cm x 70cm x 4cm
2012

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



We are the ashes of dying stars, we are nuclear waste
handprinted analogue gelatin silver print, wood floor (South London Gallery),
Borosilicate glass (medical grade), Mobilon band, powder-coated steel
150cm x 200cm x 70cm
2013

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



we draw some arbitrary line and rule out whole areas of investigation

handprinted analogue gelatin silver print, gummed paper tape, metal embroidery string, powder-coated steel

150cm x 200cm x 50cm

2013

Andrea Jespersen | Human Silver Halo



Concealed Ovation (part two)

silent video 4 min, looped

harpist Trine Opsahl

2012

Mind Circles

BALTIC's Project Space, Newcastle upon Tyne October 2013

This project is fully documented online at www.jespersen.co.uk – which is where the following images and text originated.

'Mind Circles' was an exhibition project that collaborated with the previously realised exhibition 'Human Silver Halo'. The physical origin for both exhibitions is the Medical Museion in Copenhagen, housed in a building the Danish King had built for his surgeons in 1787. The exhibited artworks were derived through conceptual deliberations that embrace the intricate and handmade. Similarly, the choice of medium for this extended 'medical' project became analogue photography due to its use of silver, which has been connected with anti-disease properties since Hippocrates.

'Mind Circles' was a laboratory, where artworks were in flux during the exhibition. The lab's 'raw' materials consisted of twelve large-scale (130cm x 180cm) analogue handmade photographs, a 16mm silent film, red ink, geometric objects and a couple of cross-disciplinary talks.

At the beginning there were twelve human-sized photographs pinned to the walls. Throughout the exhibition several photographs were made into objects. Individually, a photograph was removed from the wall, rolled up and soaked in water. The wet photograph was then shaped and left to dry over a geometric object; for example, a large sphere.

Two cross-disciplinary specialists visited the exhibition to further explore representations of knowledge. Maia Angelova, Professor of Mathematical Physics shared her specialist knowledge on symmetry and Dr. Cristiana Cavina Pratesi, Research Fellow in Psychology talked about the brain. Both events were informal talks where the speakers had been requested to use objects instead of the ubiquitous digital images that their fields generally rely on. During the talks, inspired by Maia and Cristiana and seated next to them, the artist drew on one of the photographs that had been placed on a large table. The drawing was made directly onto the photographic surface with red ink, and it consisted of simple yet intricate circles that anybody could do. The delicate circles accumulated into abstract drawings that consciously responded to the talks on symmetry and perception, as well as the original photograph that hosted the marks. It was a conscious public exploration of how specialist scientific (difficult?) knowledge can 'feed' us in a multitude of ways – ways that are not necessarily connected with traditional logic and understanding.

The last component in 'Mind Circles' was 'Concealed Ovation (part three)' a black and white 16mm silent film. It shows a fixed close-up of a woman's hands playing a harp within the Medical Museion's now familiar auditorium

(with thanks to musician Trine Opsahl). The harp-player's hands, together with the mentioned 'handmade' pieces and traces, lend a voice to a process of labour – a process of knowledge – that is a key factor when examining a history of knowledge, if the intention is to represent both genders.³

³ http://jespersen.co.uk/Jespersen_pages/mind.html [copyright of the site, image documentation and the written text is the author's, created November–December 2013].

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles

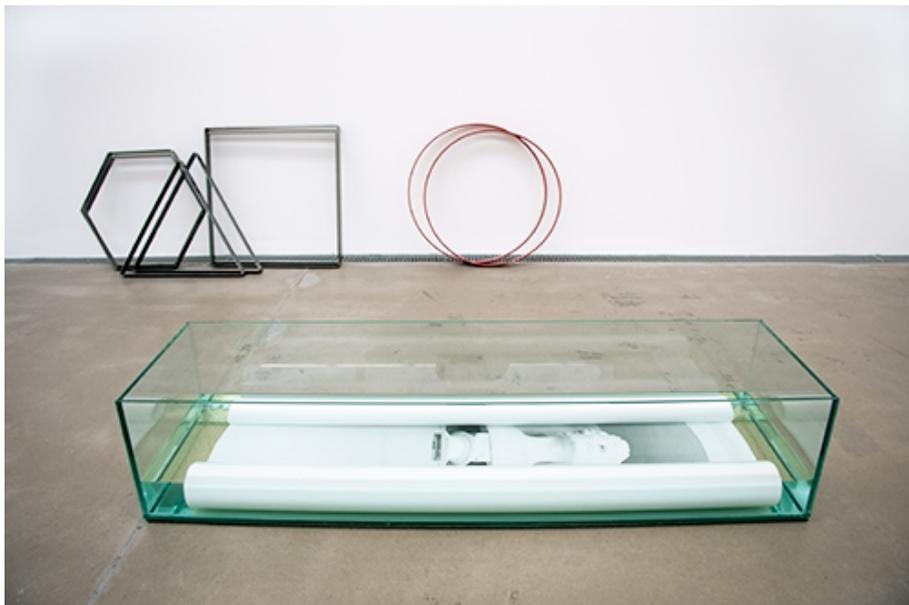


The first exhibition day

.... began with all twelve human sized handmade black and white photographs pinned to the walls, an empty table with a chair, six triangular metal structures at two differing heights, a glass container with water, four double geometrical metal frames, a sphere, two cubes and a 16mm cine film digitally projected.

- Everyday the exhibition changed and evolved, shifting shapes, positions, and relationships between the artist, viewer and artworks.

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



The first photograph

...off the wall, rolled up and immersed, soaking up water.

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



A wet photograph

...draped over an object and shaped, left to dry.

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



Two photographs are missing

...from the wall – one of these is now resting horizontally on a table and the other is now a photographic sphere, resting on a triangular metal structure.

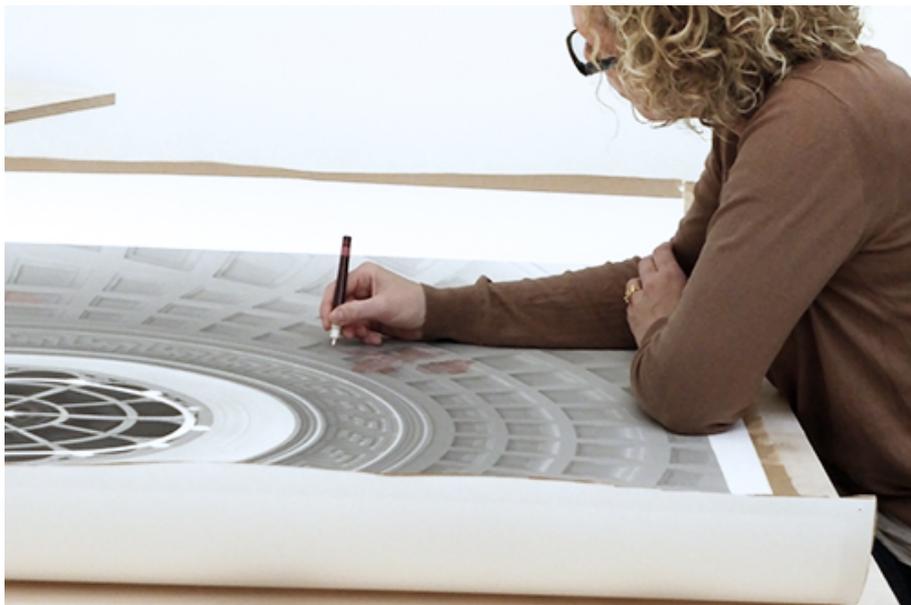
Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



A public event (03.10.2013)

...where Maia Angelova, Professor of Mathematical Physics shared her research into black and white symmetry, assisted by objects, while I drew red circles on to a photograph of the Medical Museion's domed auditorium ceiling.

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



Another public event (05.10.2013)

...where Dr. Cristiana Cavina Pratesi, Research Fellow in Psychology spoke about the brain, assisted by objects, while I continued to draw red circles onto the surface of a photograph of the Medical Museion's domed auditorium ceiling.

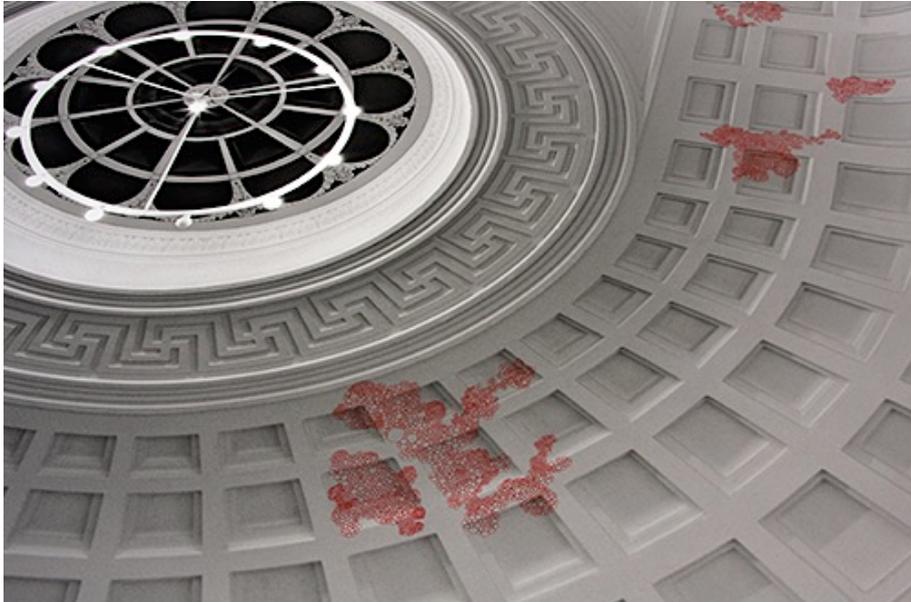
Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



A projection

...of a silent black and white 16mm film of harpist Trine Upsahl, playing in the Medical Muesion's empty auditorium.

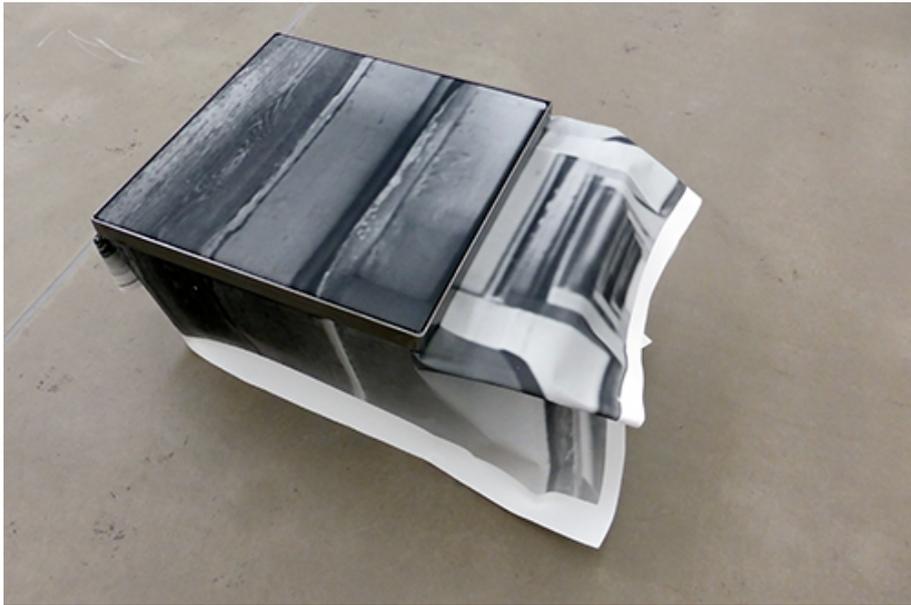
Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



Detail of the drawing

...made onto the surface of the photograph (resting on the table) that was instigated during the two public events – the drawing remains incomplete.

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



Photograph drying
...in a square double metal frame.

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



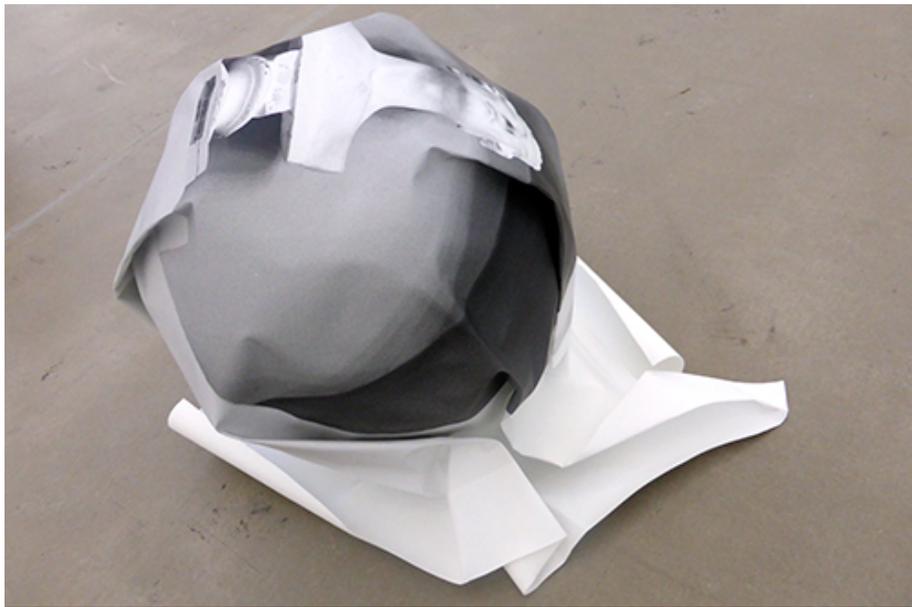
At the end

...of the exhibition, five of the handmade photographs were missing from the walls. Three had evolved into spheres of some sort, one as a square and the fifth had been drawn onto with red ink.

Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



Andrea Jespersen | Mind Circles



BOOK TWO

Introduction

The radical new art of the 1960s, which embraced philosophy, linguistics, science and popular culture, has had a substantial impact on subsequent generations of art. The intense debate that accompanied the formation of this art led to the creation of a critical art vocabulary, which was developed specifically to break up the then-established canon of formalist art criticism, as represented by the critic Clement Greenberg. It was in this 1960s environment that the term conceptual art materialised. This research enquiry respectfully contributes an appendix to the early debate, and articulates the views of certain contemporary artists for whom conceptual art is not constituted by the uncompromising definition often associated with that first generation.

British academia has taught me that its favoured definition for conceptual art is art historians Lucy Lippard and John Chandler's snappy 1968 phrase '*de-materialization*'.⁴ It has had a wide influence on the contemporary perception of conceptual art – a catchphrase that burnt itself into the minds of people, be they artists, critics, researchers, or historians – consequently becoming the simple definition of conceptual art. Even though artist Terry Atkinson, as early as March 1968, publicly contested the use of the term and was supported by certain critics and historians,⁵ the term survived, demonstrating the power of a catchy description. However, since the mid-1990s, there appears to be a readiness to explore a broader dissemination and definition of original conceptual art, as demonstrated by the related numerous exhibitions, symposiums and books.⁶

⁴ Lucy R Lippard and John Chandler's term is examined further in Chapter One.

⁵ For example, Robert C. Morgan, *Conceptual Art An American Perspective*, McFarland, 1994, p.116.

⁶ Such as: 'Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975', curated by Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995; 'Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s–1980s' curated by Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1999, and 'Open Systems: Rethinking Art c.1970', curated by Donna DeSalvo, Tate Modern, 2005.

The intention of this practice-based research is to establish that certain original conceptual art does rely on materiality and the handmade – the subjective. Furthermore, this research examines art practices that use concepts that utilise the handmade as a method to prolong the artist’s conceptual deliberation, and similarly instigate a nonlinear conscious inquisitiveness in the viewer. Steered by questions derived from my art practice, the emphasis of this research enquiry is on conceptual art that resists notions of de-materialisation. I have narrowed my research by not investigating the branch of ‘*ultra-conceptual art*’ that Lippard and Chandler classify as ‘*art as action*’.⁷ Instead, my research will centre on ‘*art as idea*’ and ‘*art as knowledge*’ to investigate how the time-consuming handmade, a process often associated with the aesthetic of craft, fits with first-generation conceptual art.

Book One of this thesis is a visual documentation of the practice-based methodologies that direct and permeate the entirety of this artistic research. Its position at the beginning of this thesis is significant, as an indicator of the primary importance art practice has to this enquiry’s contribution to new knowledge. The Copenhagen artist residency scrutinised how conceptual ideas influenced by institutionalised knowledge and the cerebral handmade can collaborate.⁸ My two solo exhibitions ‘Human Silver Halo’⁹ and ‘Mind Circles’¹⁰ explored different exhibition contexts and audiences. The first exhibition was in a medical museum in the Danish capital, which was the conceptual source material for all the artworks made during this research. The second exhibition was at an English regional art institution, where the

⁷ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, University of California Press, 1973 (1997), pp.viii–ix.

⁸ I use the term ‘cerebral handmade’ to distinguish this specific type of making from intuitive and subconscious handmade methods and those associated with craft. The cerebral handmade is a method that relies on the hands working while sustained by a continuous process of conscious deliberation.

⁹ For further detailed information and documentation see Book One pp.18–30. For an extended text that examines my practice methodologies and the work made at the Medical Museion, see ‘Art that Draws on Photography’ pp.207–216.

¹⁰ For further information and documentation see Book One pp.31–45.

curators had selected my project as part of an open call. One exhibition was a traditional art exhibition though in the context of a science museum; the other happened in an art context, but instead of being a fixed 'stable' exhibition, it was a public examination and sharing of my practice methodologies with both the gallery audience and invited scientists. These methods examined how knowledge, concepts and cerebral engagement can be furthered and stimulated by the hand working with the brain. Through practice and cross-disciplinary interactions there was a conscious exploration of the notion of the extended mind,¹¹ which dismisses the Cartesian notion that the mind is purely centred in the brain.

The original conceptual artists 'rarely felt the need to respect the academic boundaries';¹² similarly this practice-based research is situated as a cross-disciplinary project that reconfigures hierarchical knowledge into conscious nonlinear experiences for participants and institutions: scientists, academics, architects, designers and the general public. When my practice first suggested that the intellectual and the handmade can sustain each other, my research was initially encouraged by philosopher Jacques Rancière's seemingly parallel ploy to reconcile aesthetics and politics.¹³ However, although encouraged by Rancière and conscious of other canonised philosophers preferred within the discourse of art,¹⁴ I have prioritised valuing and maintaining my perspective as a cerebral artist, where my concepts are generated rhizomatous from the fields of human knowledge. Hence, in the thesis for this practice-based research I continue my cross-disciplinary concepts by employing a wide variety of sources, including medicine, neuroscience and philosophy of mind.

¹¹ The term 'extended mind' is further examined in Chapter Four on p.151.

¹² Michael Corris, *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.22.

¹³ Rancière critique the anti-aesthetic to instead defend a contemporary aesthetic that embraces politics, through his definition of 'politics' as an activity that makes what was overlooked be seen. Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, Polity Press, 2012.

¹⁴ Such as Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze; see 'Most cited authors of books in the humanities, 2007', Times Higher Education, 26 March 2009, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/most-cited-authors-of-books-in-the-humanities-2007/405956.article> [consulted 11.04.2012].

My research intentionally focuses on female artists and their practice, principally to establish their position as cerebral artists,¹⁵ a neglected art-historical and theoretical concept. Unfortunately, the field of art reflects the wider social issue of women not being proportionately represented within cerebral knowledge production,¹⁶ which in science is known as the Matilda Effect: the phenomenon of the systematic under-representation of women scientists.¹⁷ Consequently, by prioritising and ascertaining the notion of female cerebral artists, this artistic research contributes to feminist art history, theory and criticism, and calls for the definition of feminist artists to include conceptualism.¹⁸ Lippard asserted in the 1970s that conceptual art allowed more women to become artists, and she curated exhibitions that focused on female artists who also made conceptual art.¹⁹ This research contributes to the discourse of contemporary feminist art by emphasising that presently the cerebral is, at best, under-represented or, at worst, neglected. My future artistic research will continue to draw attention to the significance of how the human cerebral is represented within society. I take encouragement from recent current events such as the creation of the new British political Women's Equality Party,²⁰ the success of journalist Caroline Criado-Perez's campaign for the representation of female historical figures on banknotes,²¹

¹⁵ I use the term 'cerebral artist' specifically to indicate artists whose practice pivots on and is derived from continuous conscious idea development, which frequently draws on history and cross-disciplinary engagement. The term 'conceptual artist' overlaps with the term 'cerebral artist', although while both practices are idea based, the cerebral artist avoids the didactic to instead favour open cerebral processes – mindfulness – for both artist and the viewer. I use the term inspired by Moria Roth's 'a new cerebral breed of artist' (p.74). However, Roth refers to artists with a deliberate apolitical stance, which my use of the term 'cerebral artist' does not.

¹⁶ As philosophers Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret explore superbly in *Women Who Make a Fuss: The Unfaithful Daughters of Virginia Woolf*, Univocal Publishing, 2014. Stengers and Despret focus on women thinkers and do so while collaborating with a group of women scientists, historians, and academics: Françoise Balibar, Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, Laurence Bouquiaux, Barbara Cassin, Mona Chollet, Emilie Hache, Françoise Sironi, Marcelle Stroobants and Benedikte Zitouni.

¹⁷ Margaret W. Rossiter, 'The Matthew Matilda Effect in Science', *Social Studies of Science*, May 1993, vol. 23: 2, pp.325–341.

¹⁸ In this research, the terms 'conceptualism' and 'conceptual' are interchangeable. For a brief mention of how the two terms overlap, see the introduction to Michael Newman and Jon Bird (eds.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, Reaktion Books, 1999, pp.5–6.

¹⁹ See p.86.

²⁰ Founded on the 28 March 2015 by Sandi Toksvig and Catherine Mayer as a nonpartisan political party that campaigns for gender equality.

²¹ The feminist campaigner Criado-Perez raised awareness through online platforms, such as twitter, that the Bank of England were going to replace the image of Elizabeth Fry, the only woman

and the writing of philosopher Isabelle Stengers on '*what women do to thought*'.²²

This research is, furthermore, a contribution to the contemporary debate on artistic practice as knowledge creation – artistic research – which in Britain has gained momentum, possibly accentuated by the restructuring of policies throughout art and academia, and the creative industries and cultural economy generally. Intertwined with this debate is the notion of supposedly professionalising artists. In London, there have during the last five to ten years been several European Union funded programmes that have sought to improve the skill sets of artists, to sustain themselves financially.²³ British artists are not unified in an appreciation of this development; the concept of 'professionalisation' is contentious.²⁴ This research contributes to the broad debate by idealistically suggesting that an acknowledgment of the practising artist as a professional, including artists not involved with academia, is an opportunity for artists – on their own terms – to contribute valuable knowledge towards the discourse of art and society generally:²⁵ an idea that follows on from original conceptual art, which sought to challenge any need for 'a professional interpreter or critic'.²⁶ The subjective is used consciously in this research to emphasise the value of multiplicity in research, ensuring that art

represented on an English bank note, with an image of Sir Winston Churchill. Her campaign raised 30,000 signatures in support of the inclusion of women among the historical figures that appear on bank notes. Mervyn King, the governor of the Bank of England, several times dismissed Criado-Perez's campaign. In early July 2013 Mark Carney became the new governor of the Bank of England, and immediately met with Criado-Perez, subsequently announcing that Jane Austen would be the face of the new ten-pound note from 2017.

²² Stengers and Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss*, pp.83–88.

²³ One such 'professional development programme' was the 'New Creative Markets', which ran from 2007 to 2013 and was organised by [SPACE], together with Cockpit Arts, Four Corners and Photofusion. For practice-based academic research on this matter, please see the PhD project 'The Professionalisation of Visual Arts Practice in the UK During the Past Thirty Years', which artist Sarah Scarsbrook commenced in 2013 at Birkbeck University of London.

²⁴ See the discussion in *Mapping Artists' Professional Development Programmes in the UK: Knowledge and Skills* by Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt for the Chisenhale Gallery, London, March 2015, pp.4–5 and pp.32–33, http://chisenhale.org.uk/images/about/mapping_artists-web.pdf [consulted 29.03.2015].

²⁵ And thereby avoid Joseph Kosuth's 1996 observation: '*What this suggests is that the art-historical process is a kind of conspiracy, even if unwittingly so, to politically disenfranchise my activity as an artist.*' Kosuth, 'Intention(s)', in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.462.

²⁶ Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Artforum*, June 1967, p.79.

historians, curators and critics are joined by the practising artists – who I believe are prone to survey a different set of questions through a broader and more diverse contextualisation.²⁷

In my survey of the historical-critical context for original conceptual art, I have prioritised the original literature and art publications from the 1960s and 1970s. It could be perceived that Lippard has been privileged as a historical reference, but within the scope of this research on original conceptual art, conceptualism related to feminism and the English dissemination of Hanne Darboven's work, Lippard is the undisputed central source; ironically so, as she also coined the term de-materialisation, which this research argues against. All consequent dissemination post 1970s, of both original conceptual art and Darboven, quotes Lippard's 1960s and 1970s writing.

Of the most notable contemporary sources for this research is Alexander Alberro's writing, and his critical anthology co-edited with Blake Stimson on conceptual art, published in 1999.²⁸ This collection of original 1960s and 1970s artists' writing on art related to original conceptualism can be viewed as a spectacularly detailed expansion of Tony Godfrey's book *Conceptual Art*, published a year earlier, which specifically sought not to prescribe what conceptual art is.²⁹ Both Alberro and Godfrey draw attention to the fact that those who predominately took part in the original theoretical debate were those that supported a didactic rational linguistic conceptualism, making their notion of ultra-conceptual art dominant, although original conceptual artists such as Mel Bochner, Hanne Darboven and Sol LeWitt resided outside this kind of conceptualism.

²⁷ George Smith writes eloquently on this matter in 'The Non-Studio PhD for Visual Artists', in James Elkins (ed.), *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, New Academia Publishing, 2009, pp.87–95.

²⁸ Seth Siegelaub mentions in a 2009 interview with John Slyce that Alberro is the only person to have gone through his archive, and furthermore states: '*I remember being very happy that someone had spent time going into this history because, although everybody now has a Conceptual Art book in a series about modern art movements, there are not many serious studies around.*' Seth Siegelaub interviewed by John Slyce, 'The Playmaker', *Art Monthly*, no. 327, June 2009, p.3.

²⁹ Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon, 1998, p.16.

What can be seen as a recent continued accumulation, rooted in Alberro and Stimson's critical anthology, is Jörg Heiser's curation of artworks in 2007³⁰ under the term 'romantic conceptualism'.³¹ An artwork by Bas Jan Ader is cited by Heiser as the beginning for this type of art, which relates to the concept of emotion. Heiser's romantic conceptualism uses subjectivity and emotions *"to sensualise the supposedly "clear process with its own logic", making it contradict itself"*.³² While my research is interested in subjectivity, it does not focus on emotions but instead considers how the subjective can further and maintain the conceptual within an art practice. My research does not explore the subjective as *'a manoeuvre: a disregard for the (mostly unspoken) rules of seriousness, coolness and authority pertaining to Conceptual art'*,³³ instead the subjective is researched as a method to facilitate cerebral engagement for the artist and the viewer. Isabelle Graw similarly connected emotions to concepts in a 2006 text on conceptual expression – conceptual gestures – a re-examination of neo-expressionism painting that first appeared in the 1980s.³⁴ Graw deployed LeWitt's work to argue that conceptual work based on irrational systems may give some viewers an 'aesthetic kick'.³⁵

These recent re-examinations of original conceptual art have resulted in a broadening of our understanding and the definition of original conceptual

³⁰ The artists were Bas Jan Ader, Robert Barry, Ross Birrell, Lygia Clark, Didier Courbot, Tacita Dean, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Tomislav Gotovac, Rodney Graham, Henrik Håkansson, Mathilde ter Heijne, Susan Hiller, Douglas Huebler, Kollektive Aktionen, Louise Lawler, Yoko Ono, Kirsten Pieroth, Allen Ruppersberg, Frances Stark, Jan Timme, Andy Warhol, Lawrence Weiner and Cerith Wyn Evans.

³¹ Heiser did write on romantic conceptualism five years earlier in the article 'Emotional Rescue: Romantic Conceptualism', *Frieze*, issue 71, November–December 2002.

³² Jörg Heiser, *Romantic Conceptualism*, Kerber, 2007, p.141.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.148.

³⁴ Isabelle Graw, 'Conceptual Expression: On Conceptual Gestures in Allegedly Expressive Painting, Traces of Expression in Proto-Conceptual Works, and the Significance of Artistic Procedures', Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann (eds.), *Art After Conceptual Art*, The MIT Press, 2006, pp.118–133.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.129.

art,³⁶ by widening the list of conceptual artists and by the inclusion of groups that were previously overlooked in the canon, such as female artists or global artists.³⁷

This research contributes new knowledge to the continuous re-evaluation of conceptual art by avoiding the contemporary method of expanding the field of original conceptual artists. Instead, through the prism of contemporary art practice, this research focuses on one canonised original conceptual art practice. Right from the beginning, when the term conceptual art first emerged in the mid-1960s, Hanne Darboven was perceived by fellow contemporary artists, art historians, curators and theorists as a conceptual artist.³⁸ This exploration of Darboven's art practice aims to contribute new knowledge to practice methodologies relating to original conceptual art, and to position conceptualism as a possible means to enable enhanced knowledge. The intention is to establish that the handmade can further cerebral processes and thereby successfully challenge the dictum that the conceptual handmade is an oxymoron.

My own art practice, as documented in Book One, directs Book Two's written research and how it is configured.³⁹ Chapter One explores the emergence of conceptual art in New York City (hereafter NYC). This is not to suggest that conceptual art was limited geographically to this one place, and indeed, as noted, several authors have explored the wider global reaches of conceptual

³⁶ It is noteworthy that the contemporary authors or editors of books that have sought, since the 1990s, to re-examine conceptual art, and specifically use the term 'conceptual art', are predominantly male: Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (1999), Jon Bird and Michel Newman (1999), Michael Corris (2003), Tony Godfrey (1998), Robert C. Morgan (1994), Peter Osborn (2002), Luke Skrebowski (2009) and Camiel van Winkel (2012). The exception is Sabeth Buchmann, who co-edited *Art After Conceptual Art* (2006) with Alberro.

³⁷ For further examination, see Camiel van Winkel, *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will Be Closed: Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptualism*, Valiz, 2012, p.28.

³⁸ It is interesting to note that in the promotional writing for Hanne Darboven's most recent shows (2014–2015) there has been a notably restrained use of the words 'concept', 'conceptual' or 'conceptual artist'.

³⁹ This PhD research, although funded by the University of Northumbria at Newcastle, originates from questions that my art practice has generated over the years. The original PhD proposal and this final research have not been steered by any questions external to my art practice's concepts and methods.

art.⁴⁰ The impetus to concentrate on NYC is that Darboven established the conceptual foundation for her practice while she was living there from 1966 to 1968.

Throughout the first chapter I deliberately surrender to the historical literature available on the affiliations of original conceptual art. Absorbed by articles, I have often neglected the artworks themselves. This is not to indicate that I believe the written word is of greater importance than the artworks, on the contrary; as a visual artist, my vantage point is from the artwork. So although this chapter focuses on art historical literature, it was guided by questions generated from my art practice and previously experienced conceptual artworks.

The emphasis for the remaining four chapters is handmade conceptual art, which is derived from concepts that embrace materiality and the subjective handmade. Original conceptual artist Hanne Darboven personifies this range of art. My practice is rooted in concepts propelled by a questioning curiosity that is frequently sustained by handmade methods. I am acutely aware of the inbuilt restrictions inherent in any categorisation, including the label 'conceptual artist'; consequently, my practice thrives on questioning and negating conventional classification. Numerous artists are intentionally inspired by fellow artists, past and present; hence, art history becomes an integral part of their methodologies. I do not belong to that group, instead my work is diffusely coloured by the canon. Those artworks that I have thoroughly relished, which years later I still remember first experiencing, are the kind of art that indirectly has had the greatest effect on my practice. Darboven's work belongs to this group of remembered encounters, be they good or bad. What appeals to me are layers of complexities (perhaps appearing as contradictions) that draw me in and engage my curiosity to

⁴⁰ See for example Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon, 1998, or Peter Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon, 2002 (2011).

question and examine. From the perspective of a conceptual artist such as the young Joseph Kosuth, circa 1965, introduced in the first chapter, my methodology could be viewed as conceptually problematic; my drawing methodologies, though system based, have inbuilt continuous choice – openness. I value the limitations of a concept, however conceptual structures that incorporate ambivalence – play – can function as a dynamic dialectic to stimulate inquisitiveness in the viewer. I do not call myself a conceptual artist, but also neither a Danish artist nor a feminist; nonetheless I could be tagged as both.

To further explore this supposed contradiction in my own practice, I examine similar issues and questions through a study of the work of Hanne Darboven (1941-2009).⁴¹ Specifically I will focus on the role and status of the autographic trace within conceptual art, an aspect that was largely absent from the discussion originally surrounding conceptual art. I discuss the many contradictions embedded in Darboven's practice, to establish how critics and theorists consistently simplified her work by merely focusing on the conceptual aspects of her art practice. My methodology for these three chapters has been to combine written art historical sources with first-hand encounters, such as interviews, symposiums, site and exhibition visits.

The research into Hanne Darboven became a journey. First, there was a visit to the Hanne Darboven solo exhibition at the Camden Art Centre in 2012 and the accompanying one-day Hanne Darboven symposium at the UCL. This was followed by a visit in 2013 to MOMA's research library in NYC, to handle and closely engage with some of Darboven's artist books from the 1960s and 1970s.⁴² In 2014 I visited the Hanne Darboven Foundation in the suburbs of

⁴¹ Where possible the documentation related to Darboven's work is in the form of photographic snaps (glimpses) that I have taken. I have preferred to use these 'handmade' images rather than the perfect press images, to emphasise that this is my interpretation of Darboven that is distilled through my knowledge as a fellow practitioner.

⁴² I use the term artist books, though Darboven did not agree with this term, as I will expand on later in Chapter Three.

Hamburg, to experience her home-studio and to interview curator Miriam Schoofs at the Foundation. My latest visit was to the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid to see the large Hanne Darboven exhibition, 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', which for the first time exhibited object-groupings taken directly from Darboven's studio collections. These research trips, in combination with research into the original 1960s and 1970s art periodicals and Hanne Darboven's own published books, underpin these three chapters.

The German language has occasionally been a challenge. English is my second language and at the start of this research my assumption was – wrongly – that key texts would be in both German and English. My German is not fluent and hence my research is a continuation and a contribution to the English dialogue surrounding Hanne Darboven. Although Darboven's artworks are regularly infused with German words, the international acclaim her work has received illustrate that it is not limited by the viewer's language abilities. In this thesis, I sidestep any national issues that may be found in Darboven's work,⁴³ whilst instead contemplating her work in the context of International Western art.⁴⁴

This analysis began with art historical research to create a foundation of established knowledge and neglected facts. As the thesis unfolds the

⁴³ The majority of writing on Hanne Darboven's work is in German such as Elke Bippus, Ernst A. Busch, Hans Dickel and Klaus Honnef, all of whom have written several texts on Darboven's work in German without translations in English. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh wrote for the Artforum review, 'How German was it?' concerning the major exhibition 'Art of Two Germanys' at Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This show, that reconsidered post-war German art, in the year she passed away, only showed one small work of hers to Buchloh's surprise: '*The most scandalous injustice among many was the scant representation of the work of Hanne Darboven, clearly one of the most important figures to have emerged in West Germany since the '60s. She was accorded just one work...*', Artforum, vol.47, no.10, Summer 2009, pp.294–299. Again it would seem that Darboven avoids classification, also in regard to her nationality.

⁴⁴ In 1994 Darboven stated regarding the question whether she was a predominantly German artist: '*Not at all. When I went to New York in 1966 and spent three years there, coming back at the time of the death of my father, I did it honestly. I just see myself as an artist in this world but not a specifically German one. If my art, which I make for myself, seems German I can hardly be blamed. I have made it in all honesty and nothing more. In any event, I am half Danish from my mother's side and I have always lived in the two countries of Germany and Denmark.*' From an interview with Mark Gisbourne, 'Time and Time Again', *Art Monthly*, no.181, 1994, p.5.

'handmade' is introduced and allowed to flourish, culminating in the final chapter that maps my subjective contemporary encounters with curators, historian and artists.⁴⁵ The intention is to allow a space for ambiguous thinking, similar to Hanne Darboven's unpublished and poetic 1968 text (introduced in Chapter Two) that sidestepped the 'correct' terminology associated with original conceptual art. To further explore the contemporary legacy of this analysis the thesis closes with a dialogue with artist Lucy Skaer. The intention is to add a subjective format to the contemporary enquiry; two artists engaged in conceptual deliberation to uncover methodologies that have no respect for classifications – creating moulds, instead of squeezing into ill-fitting ones.

⁴⁵ Wherever possible I have prioritised people communicating in person. Words are unstable little symbols that I believe become strengthened by sound, and movement.

Chapter One.
**HISTORICAL NOTIONS OF
CONCEPTUAL ART**

Proto-Conceptual Art

When sweeping art historical summaries seek the 'originator' of contemporary art, with its notion that 'art can be anything', the popular choice is the French artist Marcel Duchamp.⁴⁶ He championed art that relied on the viewer's mind, which he achieved by confronting our assumptions of what constitutes a work of art. For a Parisian in 1915, to whom a bottle rack was an everyday functional object, the notion that it could be an artwork⁴⁷ simply on the basis of the artist saying so, was radical. Today's art consumer knows that art can be anything, and consequently this could suggest that we have caught up with Duchamp.⁴⁸ However, what was his status in NYC during the 1960s and 1970s, and did he have any direct influence on early conceptual art?

Numerous European artists, including Duchamp, arrived in NYC as a result of the First World War, though unlike the majority he remained when the war ended. His art career was long (sixty years) during the course of which he managed to maintain close contact with a range of art groups and movements, including the NYC Dada scene and the Paris Surrealists.⁴⁹ During the 1930s and 1940s, Duchamp was not a prominent figure on the NYC art scene.⁵⁰ The 1950s was when he began to attain a greater level of visibility, due in part to the advocacy of the musician and artist John Cage

⁴⁶ For instance the artist Joseph Kosuth and art historian Benjamin Buchloh view Duchamp as key for conceptual art. Kosuth even goes as far as saying '*...all art after Duchamp is conceptual*', 'Art after Philosophy' (1969), in Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (eds.), *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists Writings*, University of California Press, 1996, p.843.

⁴⁷ In 1913 Duchamp changed the notion of sculpture when he placed a bicycle wheel upside down on a stool, proclaiming that such objects were 'readymades'. His actions significantly changed the role of the artist through liberating art from specific materials or techniques. A year later in 1914 Duchamp exhibited a mass-produced bottle rack merely entitled 'Bottlerack'.

⁴⁸ During the last twenty years, countless books have been published examining the Duchampian legacy. This could imply that contemporary art historians and artists recognise Duchamp to be of great importance. In the introduction to Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (eds.), *The Duchamp Effect*, October Books, The MIT Press, 1999, pp.3–4, Buchloh notes that Duchamp's last piece could possibly be representative of a third period in his practice, which could introduce a new group of Duchampian studies. It seems that Duchamp will continue to unravel for decades to come.

⁴⁹ Duchamp even acted as a mediator for the Surrealists squabbles in the 1930s; Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous*, The MIT Press, 2001, p.93.

⁵⁰ Perhaps due to Duchamp then prioritising chess playing over art. He competed in major international tournaments during the mid-1920s, a boom period for chess, when prize money was readily available.

who had become heavily influenced by Duchamp's readymades. Cage is renowned for his 1952 composition 4'33" better known as the *Silent Piece* – it entails four minutes and 33 seconds of silence. The piece was made after Cage visited Harvard University and spent time in an anechoic chamber. He realised that silence was not the absence of sound – simply the absence of intended sounds – when he became aware of the sound of his own nervous system and his blood circulation. Cage was compelled to make work that caused people to be conscious of their own minds. As early as 1949 Cage had sought to change the theoretical foundations of serial music by applying Duchamp's model of practice, as signified in the readymade. Cage combined 'found' noises with the use of chance as a decision-making process.⁵¹ He was not making works simply to entertain, but rather hoped for a lasting impact on people's understanding of what might constitute an artwork.

During that same period, when Cage re-introduced Duchamp, a young Robert Rauschenberg had the idea to create a piece that involved erasing an existing artwork. In 1957 Rauschenberg made an unannounced visit to the studio of the renowned abstract expressionist painter Willem de Kooning. In later interviews Rauschenberg stated that de Kooning understood his idea, though he did not like it;⁵² hence, de Kooning had been keen to find a 'hard to erase' drawing that he would definitely miss. Rauschenberg recalls that it took him a month to erase the drawing – a detail that is significant. Why did Rauschenberg not simply dip the drawing in a bucket of bleach? Or choose another instant and brutal process of eradication? On the contrary, he had chosen to create the *Erased de Kooning* by employing an intimate time-consuming process achieved by hand. Essentially, his chosen process made him an expert in de Kooning's drawing methodologies. Rauschenberg did deface the drawing, though I believe his respectful approach undermined the

⁵¹ Moira Roth, *Difference/Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage*, G+B Arts International, 1998, p.x.

⁵² <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/24> [consulted 11.04.2012]. See also Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time*, Penguin Books, 1980, pp.96–97.

negative connotations of defacement or ‘the death of the author’.⁵³ Instead, I suggest that this artwork belongs to a practice of safeguarding and copying, informed by a subjective exploration of knowledge. Just as with Cage’s non-achievable total silence, the *Erased de Kooning* essentially embraces that established knowledge cannot be fully erased. The slow process that Rauschenberg utilised created a ghostly image of de Kooning’s work, hence the artwork signifies evolution, not revolution. Another significant point for this thesis is the fact that this piece predates the work produced by the conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s. The *Erased de Kooning* (image 23) fits neatly with original conceptual art; on hearing the idea, little is gained by actually seeing the physical object, except for verifying that the act has taken place. I have no doubt though, that it was Rauschenberg’s intention for us to see the piece, as was fitting a decade before the term conceptual art had officially arrived.



Image 23: Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning*, 1957.

Writer and art historian Moira Roth described Cage, Rauschenberg and choreographer/dancer Merce Cunningham, together with their hero Duchamp, as artists who represented an ‘*Aesthetic of Indifference*’.⁵⁴ Her Artforum article from 1977 notes their deliberate apolitical stance and she comments on the influence they would have on artists in the 1960s:

Yet many of the pop and minimal artists were actually sympathetic to radical causes, such as antiwar or Black Panther support demonstrations and the like. Why did they forget this when they went back to their studios to make art? Why this denial of commitment and feeling in art? Much of this bizarre

⁵³ Glenn Adamson in his 2012 keynote speech at Bath Spa University (see footnote 371 for further details) referred to the *Erased de Kooning*, as an emblem of postmodernism. I do not agree with Adamson’s interpretation of the artwork. If ‘the death of the author’ was indeed what Rauschenberg sought, then surely the piece would have been made using that suggested bucket of bleach.

⁵⁴ In her 1977 Artforum article; Moira Roth, ‘The Aesthetic of Indifference’, *Artforum*, vol.16, no.3, November 1977, pp.46–53.

discrepancy between life and art acts can be ascribed to the legacy of the Aesthetic of Indifference, together with formalist theories (which were aped with their own brand of 'indifference'). Clement Greenberg and his crew hated the Cage/Duchamp contingency but formalism and the Aesthetic of Indifference together provided a powerfully persuasive counsel to artists of the 1960s: play it cool. Formalist critics advocated a 'cool' making and reading of art: the focus on shape, color and relationship to space. As the Aesthetic of Indifference had been paralyzed by the politics of the McCarthy period, now the sensibilities of many artists of the 1960s were paralyzed by the neutral strategies prescribed by the Aesthetic of Indifference. Formalism, at least, only advocated coolness of form, but the Aesthetic of Indifference was a more potent and dangerous model for the 1960s; it advocated neutrality of feeling and denial of commitment in a period that otherwise might have produce an art of passion and commitment.⁵⁵

As Roth negatively implies, it is not a clear-cut case whether Duchamp played a defining role for conceptual artists in the 1960s. Others like Lippard⁵⁶ and art theorist Thierry de Duve⁵⁷ are dismissive about Duchamp having a specific influence on original conceptual art. In 1994 curator Elizabeth Armstrong interviewed conceptual artist Ed Ruscha about any possible Duchampian influence on his practice. He gave a cryptic answer:

I feel that the spirit of his work is stronger in my books than in anything else. But I don't use him as a reference; he's just so much a part of my history and my art – as he is for so many artists.⁵⁸

It is interesting that Ruscha would not mention Duchamp as a specific reference to his work, and instead refers to a general influence on artists. In the same interview Ruscha refers to someone he could not remember who had stated that:

...Duchamp's finest work is his use of time.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Roth, *Difference/Indifference*, pp.46–47.

⁵⁶ Lippard states: '...the obvious art-historical source, but in fact most of the artists did not find his work all that interesting. The most obvious exceptions, perhaps, were the European-connected Fluxus artist ...as responsible critics we had to mention Duchamp as a precedent, but the new art in New York came from closer to home'. Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, p.ix

⁵⁷ Thierry De Duve, 'Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism', translated by Rosalind Krauss, in Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (eds.), *The Duchamp Effect*, p.95.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Armstrong, 'Interviews with Ed Ruscha and Bruce Conner' (1994), Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (eds.), *The Duchamp Effect*, p.55.

That this statement stayed with Ruscha, and yet the name of the person who voiced it did not, appears noteworthy. It suggests to me that he agreed with this statement, which refers to a particular kind of temporal art practice. Another artist that Armstrong interviewed in the early 1990s was the artist Bruce Conner who knew Duchamp in the 1940s. Conner refers to Duchamp as an artist who personified a critical, analytical approach to art:

*Questioning as an overriding characteristic of what his work and he represented... I still feel that he dealt with enigmas and arbitrariness in the world with a sharp analytical mind.*⁶⁰

Conner's description of Duchamp's intentions appeals to my own passion for the process of questioning. Duchamp has said:

*I wanted to get away from the physical aspect of painting... I was interested in ideas – not merely in visual products. I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind.*⁶¹

Although he emphasised his interest in ideas, which were to become the basis of conceptual art, he did also refer to materiality. In 1961 Duchamp clarified that his choice of the readymades was '*...never dictated by any aesthetic delectation*'.⁶² Roth estimates that had Duchamp returned to Paris, he would have been one of many eccentrics working with objects. His readymades attracted attention simply as a result of Duchamp remaining in NYC. Duve also indirectly refers to the importance of NYC, in connection with Duchamp's association with conceptual art. Disregarding Lippard's direct obvious art historical source,⁶³ there appear to be other connections of interest to the kind of conceptual art this thesis explores; the kind of cerebral artist Duchamp was and as Ruscha's unknown man said 'his use of time'.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.56 – I have since found that the forgotten man was Duchamp's close friend the novelist Henri-Pierre Roche.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.57.

⁶¹ Roth, *Difference/Indifference*, p.23.

⁶² Ursula Meyer (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, E. P. Dutton, 1972, p.ix.

⁶³ As Lippard phrased it, see footnote 56.

Conceptual Art – Initial Appearance

Art history has no precise record of when the term ‘conceptual art’ was first used or by whom. The contributions from artists, critics and art historians, who are conventionally associated with the origins of conceptual art, are inconsistent.⁶⁴ One of the central participants in the 1960s and 1970s NYC art scene was Lippard, who neither trusts her own memory nor later ‘authoritative’ writings from others concerning this period, especially from those ‘who were not there’.⁶⁵ Lippard simply trusts her own original writing, maintaining that even in hindsight she knew most about the subject then. Buchloh, who moved from Germany to NYC in the late 1970s, conveys that the ‘*self-declared primary actors*’ (artists’) writing during this period are not to be trusted as sources.⁶⁶ One thing that writers in this field can generally agree on is how broad (too broad?) the term conceptual art is.⁶⁷ It represents many kinds of materials and processes, seemingly only exposing one universal connecting factor: at their core conceptual artworks have a supreme idea that dictates the artist’s use of both material and process.

When attempting to locate the initial occurrence of the term conceptual art, the first port of call is Henry Flynt, who in 1961 coined⁶⁸ the phrase ‘concept art’. This is really the only mention of Flynt in the general historical dissemination of conceptual art.⁶⁹ In some ways, his unique place in

⁶⁴ As an example, I include a quote from Alexander Alberro: ‘*Claims for the clarity and purity of the foundational lineage of conceptual art, therefore, should be considered with scepticism, since they are so limited, confusing, and often explicitly constructed in order to promote a particular, partial legacy. Of course this is not uncommon in the history of modern art, but it is remarkably blatant at the moment of conceptual art*’, in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, The MIT Press, 1999, p.xvi.

⁶⁵ Lippard, *Six Years*, p.vii.

⁶⁶ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ‘Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions’, *October*, The MIT Press, vol. 55, Winter 1990, pp.105–143 (p.108).

⁶⁷ Art historian James Meyer suggests that rather than conceptualism being singular it should be plural; ‘The Second Degree: Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art’ in Michael Corris (ed.), *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.111.

⁶⁸ And copyrighted; Buchloh, ‘Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions’, p.107.

⁶⁹ It would appear that since I did this initial research Flynt has had a revival and perhaps is being reinstated in art history. In 2012–2013 Flynt did have a survey exhibition of his paintings,

American experimentalism appears to have alienated him from his contemporaries in the 1960s. Flynt had a background in music, mathematics, and philosophy and even as a seventeen year-old at Harvard he was highly critical of established institutions of 'serious culture'. In 1961 he finished his first monograph called *Philosophy Proper* and he continued developing an eccentric philosophy that included: aesthetic, phenomenology, cognitive nihilism, and the 'logic of contradictions'.⁷⁰

It was through music that Flynt got involved with art. He met the Proto-Fluxus artist La Monte Young, a minimal composer and musician who questioned the nature and definition of music. In the 1960s Young was involved with the NYC's avant-garde music scene, inspired by Cage and Duchamp, where he curated concerts at artist Yoko Ono's loft. Flynt attributes his early meeting with Young as very influential, though by 1963 he had moved on. He began advocating anti-art, which culminated in joint protests with artist Tony Conrad and filmmaker Jack Smith outside cultural institutions in NYC (image 24). As the 1960s progressed Flynt was remembered predominately as an anti-art preacher, though he maintained his interest in art, with its ability to reveal unexpected structures. When Flynt is considered within the context of art, he is frequently connected with Fluxus, presumably due to his involvement with the Ono loft scene and the fact that George Maciunas, the central coordinator of Fluxus, had published his written



Image 24: Jack Smith and Henry Flynt picket MOMA in Anti-Art demonstrations, February 27 1963.

installations, word and sound pieces at Kunstverein, Düsseldorf, Germany. There has also recently been an interview with Flynt in Frieze by Ross Simonini, 'The New, The New', *Frieze*, no.162, April 2014, pp.102–107.

⁷⁰ For a further definition of Flynt's 'logic of contradictions' that rely on an understanding of formal logic and modern analytic philosophy (mathematical logic), http://www.henryflynt.org/meta_tech/logiccontra.html

works. Flynt objected to this categorisation, as he did not consider himself a Fluxus artist.⁷¹

It is interesting that Flynt's contemporaries, who did embrace conceptual art, avoided any association with his work. He is often referred to as a character who is hard to understand,⁷² and who was extremely politically committed at a time when, as Roth stated earlier, '*art was looking for no commitment*'.⁷³

Another reason for Flynt's exclusion could be that his methodologies had strong alliances with science and philosophy as opposed to art. Lippard did not consider his 'concept art' to have influenced the conceptual artists that she knew in the mid 1960s, and further dismissed Flynt's influence by stating:

*...in any case it was a different kind of 'concept' – less formal, less rooted in the subversion of art-world assumptions and art-as-commodity.*⁷⁴

Lippard's notion of a different kind of concept establishes that conceptual art is diverse and not singular, which subsequently facilitates a broader expectation and aspiration for concepts within art. Lippard was right that Flynt was not motivated to change art-world assumptions as his 1961 statement on 'concept art' declares:

⁷¹ In interviews with Flynt from the mid-2000, he voices surprise and contempt that the avant-garde artists that he met in 1960s were not intellectuals. Though in the same interviews he acknowledges that the avant-garde gave him the idea of totally non-traditional and aggressive experimentalism. His intentions were to apply this newfound possibility of experimentation to logic and mathematics. Looking back at the avant-garde that he was part of in the early 1960s he calls it '*...a complete farce! ...looking back at it now I would call it the debris of privilege*'. See Ben Piekut's four videos *Henry Flynt in New York* made between 2005–2007, <http://vimeo.com/benjaminpiekut>, [consulted 01.07.2012].

⁷² Morgan, 'Conceptual Art An American Perspective', p.119.

⁷³ I am aware that this contradicts the political ambitions often associated with conceptual art from the 1960s and 1970s; although even Lippard remarks in the postface to *Six Years* that conceptual art did not manage to free itself from capitalism (within three years it had embraced commercialization) and that conceptual art's real legacy has been; '*...the aesthetic contributions of an 'idea art''*' (p.263). Lippard later in the same text observes that few of the artist were directly interested in affecting the world; '*Hopes that 'conceptual art' would be able to avoid the general commercialization, the destructively 'progressive' approach of modernism were for the most part unfounded... these factors may make it unlikely that conceptual art will be any better equipped to affect the world any differently than, or even as much as, its less ephemeral counterparts. Certainly, few of the artists are directly concerned with this aspect of their art, nor can they be, since art that begins with other than an internal, esthetic goal rarely produces anything more than illustration or polemic*'. Lippard, *Six Years*, p.264.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.ix. On the point of 'art-as-commodity' Lippard had different aspirations from the artists themselves, who were keen to earn a living. See footnote 73.

The defensible value of the enterprise, I thought was aesthetic. Thus it was that all of mathematics and all of art (mainly music) which had syntactical pretensions were to be collapsed to a new genre of art. It was right to call it art, not 'science'. Even so, at the end of the concept art essay, I noted that concept art was entirely unsentimental, and I forthrightly acknowledged that that cast doubt on the appropriateness of classifying it as art.⁷⁵

That Flynt believed an artwork without sentimentality was not art, demonstrates that he was not involved in the 1960s art historical deliberations. I propose that Flynt was not averse to individual cultural institutions or indeed anti-art. Instead, I would suggest his art practice explored how to bridge different strongholds of knowledge, mirroring his own broad passion for cerebral practices embracing music, mathematics, philosophy, economics, and art.⁷⁶ Initially, Flynt did not appear of interest to my research; the published black and white photographs of his demonstrations today come across as performance – the placards having a role of their own. However, through this historical research and Flynt's recent recorded interviews,⁷⁷ it appears there is a shared meeting point: an interdisciplinary practice, where art becomes a vehicle to develop knowledge in its widest sense.

⁷⁵ 'The Crystallization of Concept Art in 1961', Henry Flynt, 1994, http://www.henryflynt.org/meta_tech/crystal.html [consulted 04.07.2012].

⁷⁶ He spent 8 years at the New School studying economics and in 1978 he was defending his PhD, though he did not graduate.

⁷⁷ Such as 'The New, The New' interview with Ross Simonini, *Frieze*, no.162, April 2014, pp.102–107.

Conceptual Artists – Initial Appearance

Minimalist art and its ideologies strongly influenced numerous young artists in 1960s NYC. One of those minimalist artists was Sol LeWitt. He embraced his broad influence on the emerging conceptual artists, and essentially he transformed himself into a conceptual artist.⁷⁸ His artworks and his published writing contributed greatly to establishing what conceptual art could entail. However, not all artists were keen to be associated with the original conceptual artists. The abstract painter Ad Reinhardt became the reluctant hero for conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth.⁷⁹ There were also several artists that were repeatedly categorised as conceptual artists against their wishes, such as the artists Carl Andre, Hanne Darboven, Douglas Huebler, and Lawrence Weiner.

Conceptual art was not a movement that artists formally joined, which leaves us without an official date for its commencement. In 1973 Lippard classified the starting point of conceptual art as 1966 and in the early 1990s Buchloh dated it to 1965. Art historian Robert C. Morgan agreed with them both in 1994 by placing the origin of conceptual art in the period 1965 to 1967. Guided by these three art critics and historians, I will explore this period of three years, by chronologically listing the potential conceptual events⁸⁰ that related to NYC:

1965 - Artist Dan Graham arranged the first LeWitt solo exhibition at his co-owned John Daniels Gallery.

⁷⁸ LeWitt has been in all three of the general survey exhibitions on conceptual art: the 1969 exhibition 'Konzeption-Conception' at Städtisches Museum, Leverkusen; the 1989 exhibition 'L'Art Conceptual, une Perspective' at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; the 1995 exhibition 'Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965-1975' at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

⁷⁹ Reinhardt was at the time developing a painting practice where he systematically attempted to nullify painterly marks by repeatedly brushing and re-brushing the surface to remove all traces of the stroke.

⁸⁰ This list of events has been edited using the main focus of this research 'art as idea' and 'art as knowledge'. For a broader view please look at Lippard's book *Six Years*, which covers events from 1966 to 1972; for further information on the book go to footnote 118 and pp.81-82.

1966 - Mel Bochner curates 'Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art'.

This exhibition is regularly cited as the first conceptual art exhibition, owing to how the drawings were displayed on plinths in ring binders that the viewer were intended to flick through. (image 25).⁸¹



Image 25: Mel Bochner, 'Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art', 1966.

- Ed Ruscha published *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, his third artist publication with photos.⁸²

- Bochner writes 'Primary Structures: A Declaration of a New Attitude as Revealed by an Important Current Exhibition' that was published in *Arts Magazine* June edition.⁸³

- Graham makes *Homes for America*, an artwork situated in an art magazine instead of in a gallery environment. Published in *Arts Magazine* December 1966 – January 1967 edition.

1967 - LeWitt's essay 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art',⁸⁴ which delineates his practice and accentuated what conceptual art

⁸¹ Though that clearly does not mean that the artists included were all conceptual artists as the list of contributors documents; Carl Andre, Anonymous, A. Babakhanian, Jo Baer, Mel Bochner, John Cage, M. Carsiodes, Tom Clancy, Dan Flavin, Jim Freed, Milton Glaser, Dan Graham, Eva Hesse, Alfred Jensen, Donald Judd, Michael Kirby, William Kolakoski, Robert Lepper, Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Robert Moskowitz, Tom Russell, Scientific American, John McCracken, Robert Smithson, Kenneth Snelson, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Tippetts – Abbett – McCarthy – Stratton (engineers and architects), Xerox.

My research shows that Hanne Darboven was not part of the exhibition, but in the book *Six Years* Lippard contradictorily uses an image of Darboven's work as an illustration for the show. I examine this point further in Chapter Two.

⁸² I am aware that Ruscha was based in Los Angeles. I include him here since his photo books influenced the 1960s conceptual artists in NYC. 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations' (1962) is Ruscha's first book that adopts the readymade model.

⁸³ 'Primary Structures' refers to the famous exhibition: 'Primary Structures: Younger American And British Sculptors', curated by Kynaston McShine at the The Jewish Museum, New York, 1966. The artists in the show were; Carl Andre, David Annesley, Richard Artschwager, Larry Bell, Ronald Bladen, Michael Bolus, Anthony Caro, Tony de Lap, Walter de Maria, Tom Doyle, Dan Flavin, Peter Forakis, Paul Frazier, Judy (Judy Chicago) Gerowitz, Daniel Gorski, David Gray, Robert Grosvenor, David Hall, Douglas Huebler, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Phillip King, Lyman Kipp, Gerald Laing, Sol LeWitt, John McCracken, Tina Matkovic, Robert Morris, Forrest Myers, Peter Phillips, Peter Pinchbeck, Salvatore Romano, Tim Scott, Anthony Smith, Robert Smithson, Michael Todd, Anne Truitt, William Tucker, Richard Van Buren, David von Schlegell, Isaac Witkin and Derrick Woodham.

⁸⁴ *Artforum*, June 1967, p.79.

was. Two years later he wrote 'Sentences on Conceptual Art',⁸⁵ which further defined the term.

- Joseph Kosuth directed the exhibition 'Normal Art' at The Lannis Museum of Normal Art⁸⁶ showing work by Andre, Rick Bartheleme, Bochner, Darboven, Walter de Maria, On Kawara, Christine Kozlov, LeWitt, Lee Lozano, Robert Morris, Dorothea Rockburne, Robert Ryman, Robert Smithson.
- The exhibition 'Art in Series' at Finch College Museum of Art, New York. Curated by Elayne Varlan, among the artists, were Bochner, Darboven, Graham, Eva Hesse, LeWitt.
- Bochner's article 'The Serial Attitude' published in *Artforum*, December, 1967, pp.28-33.
- Lannis Gallery exhibition 'Nonanthropomorphic Art by Four Young Artists: Kosuth, Kozlov, Michael Rinaldi, Ernest Rossi'.⁸⁷
- Kozlov sends out xeroxed and systematically cancelled calendar strips.
- Lamonte Young and Jackson MacLow re-publish *An Anthology* (first published in 1963) which includes 'Concept Art' by Flynt.

Examining the list, Bochner's exhibition 'Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art' warrants a closer look. In 1966 Bochner was invited to curate a drawing exhibition at the School of Visual Art in NYC, where he was also teaching. He approached

⁸⁵ *Art-Language*, vol.1, no.1, May 1969, p.11.

⁸⁶ The Museum was an East Village cooperative directed by Kosuth. Lippard mentions in the essay 'The Dematerialization of Art' (that she co-wrote with John Chandler); '...Actually, the 'museum' would be better called the Museum of Adnormal Art, since it pays unobtrusive homage to the late Ad Reinhardt and to his insistence that only 'art-as-art' is normal for art.' *Art International*, February 1968, p.32.

⁸⁷ This exhibition also included an artist statement by each of the artists. Kosuth in his statement among others said: 'My art objects are total, complete, and disinterested. They are made of non-organic, non-polar, completely synthetic, completely unnatural, yet of conceptual rather than found materials. (June, 1966)...It is not by mere chance that all of the work done by me included in this exhibition is labeled 'model'. All I make are models. The actual works of art are ideas. Rather than 'ideals' the models are a visual approximation of a particular art object I have in mind. It does not matter who actually makes the model, nor where the model ends up. The models are real and actual and are beautiful in more or less proportion to other models and who they are being viewed by. Insofar as they are, as models, objects concerned with art – they are art objects'. (February, 1967), Lippard, *Six Years*, p.25.

fellow artists asking them for 'working drawings'. There was no funding available for the show and thus, framing was unfeasible,⁸⁸ which resulted in Bochner photocopying the drawings. He made four identical folders, each with the same alphabetical order of photocopies; they were exhibited on separate plinths placed in the centre of the exhibition space (image 25). Bochner's exhibition radically blurred the lines between the roles of the curator and artist as well as between the viewer and the artwork. Furthermore, Bochner had elevated the medium of the drawn sketch to an artwork in its own right and turned the reproduced book into an art object. Art history often cites the 'Working Drawings...' exhibition as the first conceptual art exhibition,⁸⁹ not as a result of the artists in the show, but rather based on the kind of drawings shown and the way they were exhibited – photocopied, and placed in a folder for the viewer to flip through. Although, what if Bochner had got funding for this exhibition? Would the drawings then have been exhibited framed? It is essential to note that when Bochner photocopied the drawings, it became possible to endlessly replicate the work.⁹⁰ However, what happened to the original working drawings? Bochner recalled in 1997:

Before the opening, I returned the original drawings to the artists, and explained what I was doing. No one objected, although Judd expressed a certain skepticism when I called the exhibition 'my work'.⁹¹

I would suggest that Bochner's idea of photocopying the drawings was also a way of 'safe guarding' the original drawings. He had approached several eminent artists for drawings, such as the sceptical Judd and the minimalist artist Dan Flavin, who was the subject of Bochner's first published essay.⁹² There are similarities here with Rauschenberg attentively erasing the de Kooning drawing. Both Bochner and Rauschenberg appear to safeguard the

⁸⁸ Mel Bochner, *Solar System & Rest Rooms: Writings and Interviews 1965–2007*, The MIT Press, p.177.

⁸⁹ See for example Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', p.109.

⁹⁰ A concept that two years later was taken up by art dealer and curator Seth Siegelaub in the exhibition and publication known as 'The Xerox Book' (1968).

⁹¹ Bochner, *Solar System & Rest Rooms*, p.179.

⁹² Bochner, 'Less is Less (for Dan Flavin)', *Art and Artists*, Summer 1966.

original subjective, while pushing the boundaries of what constitutes an artwork and who the author is. Rauschenberg's extended time spent with the work and Bochner's choice of drawings that explored cerebral working processes, both represent a notion of what I would call the 'conceptual handmade' – a cerebral process that relies on the hand, a symbiotic formation of enhanced knowledge.⁹³

It is only retrospectively that art history deems 'Working Drawings...' to be the first conceptual art exhibition. In 1972, writer Ursula Meyer noted in her book *Conceptual Art*, that the first exclusively conceptual art exhibition was (three years later than Bochner's exhibition) in 1969 titled 'January 5–31, 1969'. Art dealer Seth Siegelaub, who had a pivotal role in ensuring conceptual art was exhibited at museums and made it into their collections, curated it.⁹⁴ This supposed first conceptual art exhibition was held at the Dwan Gallery showing the work of Robert Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, and Wiener.⁹⁵ This section began by asserting that neither Huebler nor Wiener⁹⁶ wanted to be classified as conceptual artists, hence we are again presented with contradictions. In the following section I will explore the writing of LeWitt, Kosuth, and Bochner to establish further discrepancies in connection with the definition and interpretation of the term conceptual art.

⁹³ Enhanced knowledge is a term I have created to emphasise that the artists concepts, cerebral processes' can be strengthened by the handmade. Chapter Four explores this notion in more detail.

⁹⁴ Without Siegelaub's determination to engage with the museum institutions it is unlikely that conceptual art would have left such a strong influence. See for example my 2013 documentation of MOMA NYC's conceptual art section – it was mainly artwork that had come from Siegelaub's collection, which the museum has accepted into their permanent collection; see text for image 30 on p.92. For an extended examination of Siegelaub's role see Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, The MIT Press, 2003.

⁹⁵ Ursula Meyer (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p.xiv.

⁹⁶ On the 27 September 2014 Lawrence Wiener was in conversation with writer Gilda Williams at South London Gallery. Though it was billed as an 'in-conversation', Wiener was in charge making it more a talk. He was keen to establish that he was a sculptor and that '...art is about materials'. *What does an artist do? Manipulate materials...* He did bring up Lippard's term 'de-materialisation' to ridicule it as '...silly'. Though in the same breath I will have to note that he also believed that Masters of Fine Art or Practice-based PhDs are not something an artist should engage with!

Conceptual Art – Defined by the Artists, 1960s–1970s

The critical debate surrounding art during the 1960s had several conceptual artists at its centre. Their writing were published in the leading art journals of that period such as *Artforum*, *Arts Magazine*, *Art and Artists*, *Art in America*, *Art International*, *Art Voices*. Frequently one artist would write about another artist, typically from a previous generation,⁹⁷ essentially as Roth observed:

*...they contributed to the creation of a new cerebral breed of artist.*⁹⁸

These writing artists contributed to the critical dissemination of art during this period in a remarkable, enduring and hence influential manner. Researching these artists' articles, it is easy to assume that all artists can articulate issues concerning art succinctly and eloquently. Bochner clearly states that this was not the case then:⁹⁹

*...artists who wrote were looked at suspiciously, as if writing somehow tainted their visual practice.*¹⁰⁰

These artists, who during this period were engaged with published art theoretical discussions, have played a substantial role in how the term conceptual art is understood and defined. One of those artists is LeWitt, who was instrumental in the exposure of conceptual art to a broader audience. He noticed how ambiguously wide-ranging the term conceptual art was. In an attempt to clarify, he narrowed down the definition to two types of activities – conceptual art 'with a small c' and conceptual art 'with a capital C'.¹⁰¹ LeWitt's own work belongs to the first category, where artworks were made from traditional art materials, though orchestrated by a fundamental idea (image

⁹⁷ For example; Graham wrote several published articles on LeWitt's work. Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', p.108.

⁹⁸ Roth, *Difference/Indifference*, p.32.

⁹⁹ In Chapter Five I return to the issue of artists participation in art theoretical dissemination and how even today it is still not the prevailing opinion that artists are succinct about art.

¹⁰⁰ Bochner, *Solar System & Rest Rooms*, p.xi.

¹⁰¹ Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, p.vii.

26). The 'capital C' conceptual art signaled that material form was secondary to the idea and consequently made from inexpensive, ephemeral, unassuming materials or no materials at all.¹⁰²

As is frequently the case with the writing of conceptual artists, LeWitt's published texts are nothing if not ambiguous. For example a sentence from his *Artforum* article 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' from 1967 states:

*In conceptual art, the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.*¹⁰³

This sentence appears to give a clear picture of what conceptual art entails. However, two years later he published 'Sentences on Conceptual Art',¹⁰⁴ which consisted of a list of thirty-five points. I have chosen three of the sentences to illustrate the lack of consistency and clarity when seeking a definition from LeWitt:



Image 26: Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing No. 146*, 1972.

1 – Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.

5 – Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.

*13 – A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewers. But it may never reach the viewer, or it may never leave the artist's mind.*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² This kind of conceptual art is what Lippard also referred to as '*ultra-conceptual art*' that, as noted in the introduction, is not included in this research.

¹⁰³ *Artforum*, June 1967, p.80.

¹⁰⁴ First appeared in *O-9*, no. 5, January 1969, pp.3–5, republished in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp.106–107.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Another artist contributing critical writing to art publications around the same time as LeWitt was Bochner. Today, he is referred to as one of the original conceptual artists, underpinned in part by his exhibition 'Working Drawings'. Nonetheless, in 1970 he begins an *Artforum* article by admitting to not liking the term conceptual art.¹⁰⁶ Bochner's writing intrigues me, although his artworks, such as *Measurement Room* (image 27) from 1969, fail to do so. In that 1970 *Artforum* article titled 'Excerpts From Speculation (1967–1970)' Bochner focuses on perception and thinking, continuing the text by dwelling on the word imagination, and ending by criticising the term 'de-materialisation'. A quote from the article:

*A structure that concerns the non-object-oriented artist is the language which he uses to formulate his thoughts. There is nothing inherently anti-visual about this pursuit. Works of art are not illustrations of ideas.*¹⁰⁷

That Bochner focuses on thinking and consciousness (being in the world), combined with his rejection of dematerialisation, all chime with my practice and hence this research. Bochner describes an art practice that has moved away from the material processes that constituted its foundation. Instead his method pivots on the artist's ideas, which embrace and prescribe material choices and processes in accordance with those ideas. The notion that conceptual artworks do not belong to fields that broadcast a succinct message, such as illustration or advertisement, is essential as Bochner emphasises. Fundamentally art is not quantifiable, which should liberate the art audience to make a multitude of readings. This I believe is also the case for conceptual art, recalling what LeWitt stated: '*Conceptual Artists are mystics*' that '*leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach*'.



Image 27: Mel Bochner, *Measurement Room*, 1969.

¹⁰⁶ 'Excerpts From Speculation (1967–1970)', *Artforum*, vol. 8, no. 9, May 1970, pp.70–73.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.71.

Consequently was it important to the first generation of conceptual artists that the ideas behind their artworks were partly understood? Or is that irrelevant – is it enough that the viewer understands that there is an idea? According to LeWitt it is of no importance whether the viewer understands the artist's concept.¹⁰⁸ In 1968 the editor of British magazine *Artlog* Tony Godfrey¹⁰⁹ interviewed the British conceptual artist Victor Burgin. Godfrey comments that it seems to be a dilemma if the viewer needs to know all the concepts to approach a conceptual artwork. Burgin's superb reply supported the view of LeWitt:

It would be if you did, but you don't. For example, I can enjoy Seurat's 'La Grande Jatte' without sharing Seurat's enthusiasm for optical physics. Nevertheless, arguably, if Seurat hadn't have had that interest in the theory then we wouldn't have had that form of painting practice we call pointillism. The painting, we might judge today, has very little to do with optics, but it has a lot to do with Seurat's interest in optics. Or, to give another example, you can enjoy Sartre's novels without having read his philosophical work, I mean the technical work like Being and Nothingness; even though, effectively, his novels are the continuation of philosophy by other means.¹¹⁰

Joseph Kosuth was another artist who regularly contributed critical writing to art periodicals during the 1960s. While Bochner was dismissing the term conceptual art, Kosuth defensively established his conceptual art definition. In 1969 he published 'Art After Philosophy' as a series of three articles that ran in sequential issues of *Studio International*.¹¹¹ His aim was to educate through exposing the reasoning behind his work (image 28) and hence provide his audience with a '*...clearer understanding of conceptual art*'.¹¹² While Kosuth does specify that it is not his intention to speak for others, this article has

¹⁰⁸ Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.14.

¹⁰⁹ Tony Godfrey is also the author of the book *Conceptual Art* published in 1998 as part of Phaidon's popular book series 'Art & Ideas'.

¹¹⁰ Jan Hoet (ed.), *Kunst In Europa Na '68* (Art in Europe after 1968), Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst Citadelpark, Ghent, 1980, pp.195–198 (p.197).

¹¹¹ *Studio International*, 178, no.915–917 (October, November, December 1969), pp.134–137, pp.160–161, and pp.212–213.

¹¹² Ursula Meyer (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p.157.

become historically dominant – I have not come across any dissemination of conceptual art that does not refer to Kosuth's articles.

In 'Art after Philosophy' Kosuth is keen to separate aesthetics from art, as a way to distance his work from the formalist art associated with the critical writing of Clement Greenberg. However, Kosuth also claims that his rejection of aesthetics is owed to its concerns

'...with perceptions of the world generally'.¹¹³ It is understandable that

Kosuth wanted to break with the old by distancing his work from the formalists. However, his argument that it is essential to remove aesthetics from art, due to its connection with human observations of the world, is perplexing. Especially since Kosuth, in 'Art after Philosophy', curiously includes under the heading 'The Function of Art' a quotation by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.¹¹⁴ Again we are presented with contradictions that only continue; the philosophy quotation is one among ten quotations that interestingly Kosuth uses, which also include these three artists' quotes:¹¹⁵



Image 28: Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965.

The main qualifications to the lesser position of painting is that advances in art are certainly not always formal ones. – Donald Judd (1963)

The idea becomes a machine that makes the art. – Sol LeWitt (1967)

The one thing to say about art is that it is one thing. Art is art-as-art and everything else is everything else. Art as art is nothing but art. Art is not what is not art. – Ad Reinhardt (1963)

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.158.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 'The meaning is the use', Wittgenstein (1889–1951).

¹¹⁵ Joseph Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy', republished in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp.160–161.

Minimalist artist Judd and abstract painter Reinhardt both had great influence on Kosuth, but it is astounding he quotes LeWitt, who in that very same text he later rejects as an influence.¹¹⁶

It is striking how dissimilarly LeWitt and Kosuth went about the task of disseminating conceptual art. LeWitt's 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' is an inviting amiable text. He makes his role as an artist clear, separating himself from the art critics, and he uses a baseball metaphor plus a simple vocabulary making it a pleasurable read. 'Art after Philosophy' written two years later by Kosuth is the total opposite. Here, you have to focus and get your academic vocabulary, out of the cupboard. Whereas LeWitt saw no reason to quote anybody, Kosuth starts with two philosophers, referring to physicists and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which is not for the philosophically faint-hearted. When reading Kosuth, the writing style appears to be a conscious choice that performs to impress and exclude. The word 'pure' appears several times, as a tool to weed out art that others have referred to as conceptual, which according to Kosuth should not be classified as conceptual art. The vantage point that LeWitt chooses is that of the artist making artworks, whereas Kosuth is happy to take a different angle, leaning towards the conventions of art historians and critics. Neither is right or wrong, and evidently both artists' writings have had a great influence on the understanding of conceptual art. Although I still cannot help wondering if the age difference of seventeen years, with LeWitt the senior, was not a significant factor at play here. A later text by Kosuth from 1996 called 'Intention(s)' is an easier read and comes across as less antagonistic.¹¹⁷

Although Kosuth's emphasis is on 'art as idea', this research does not relate to his notion of conceptual art, due to his rejection of aesthetics and art that incorporates human observations of the world. With this in mind, I propose

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.175.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.460–468. First published in *Art Bulletin*, vol.78, no.3, September 1996, pp.407–412.

that '*art as idea*' can be divided in accordance with LeWitt's conceptual art theory, 'with a capital C' and 'with a small c'. '*Conceptual art as idea* (with a capital C)' would be represented by Kosuth, while LeWitt together with this researcher, would favour '*conceptual art as idea* (with a small c)'.

Conceptual Art – Defined by Critics and Art Historians, 1960s–1970s

Lippard has been an influential contributor to the critical analysis and definition of conceptual art. Her 1973 book *Six Years*¹¹⁸ has become the reference book for any subsequent historical examination of conceptual art. The book contains a chronological list of art related events that took place between 1966 to 1972 including books, periodicals, exhibitions, catalogues, articles, interviews and works by individual artists. Lippard was initially hopeful that conceptual art could be a political tool to liberate art from the way it was shown, both physically and geographically. Furthermore, Lippard had hoped that conceptual arts' limited emphasis on materials, would liberate the artist from economic constraints and hence from the museum-gallery system.¹¹⁹

Five years earlier in 1967 Lippard together with John Chandler wrote the influential article 'The Dematerialization of Art'.¹²⁰ In the text they outlined that 'ultra-conceptual art' was developed from two strands of either 'art as idea' or 'art as action'.¹²¹ This article has had a substantial impact due to the phrase '*dematerialization of the art object*', which has become integral to conventional interpretations of conceptual art, although it was challenged right from the outset. British artist Terry Atkinson, then a member of the conceptual artist group *Art and Language*,¹²² immediately wrote an open letter to Lippard questioning her term '*dematerialization*':

¹¹⁸ Her seminal book's full title is: *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information and some esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones), edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard.*

¹¹⁹ I return to Lippard and the book *Six Years* in Chapter Two.

¹²⁰ Later to be published in the February 1968 edition of *Art International*.

¹²¹ Lippard, *Six Years*, p.viii–ix.

¹²² He formed 'Art and Language' with Harold Hurrell and David Bainbridge in 1967–1968, but by 1974 he had left the group.

*It is more than plain then that when a material entity becomes dematerialized it does not simply become non-visible (as opposed to invisible), it becomes an entity which cannot be perceived by any of our senses. As far as material qualities go it is simply a non-entity. Thus, it seems to me that if you are talking about art-objects dematerializing, then you would be obliged to talk about objects of which there was now no material trace...*¹²³

Atkinson reminds us that conceptual art is part of the art world, even if many see it as a critique and liberation from it. Conceptual art still relies on there being something for the viewer to engage with. Hence, there will always be some material, in some form, however ephemeral it is. Two years later Bochner also commented negatively on the phrase in his *Artforum* article 'Excerpts From Speculation (1967–1970)':

*In the context of visual art what could the term 'de-materialization' mean? I find that it contains an essential contradiction which renders it useless as an idea. The inherent weakness is revealed when the derivation of the term is examined.*¹²⁴

By 1981 Lippard was acknowledging that the debate about conceptual art had been diverted:

*...visual art is about making things (even if those things have no 'pictures'). And this is what visual artists justifiably don't want to give up. In the late 60s we got sidetracked by the object/non-object controversy. Sheets of paper and videotapes, though cheaper than paintings and sculptures, are still objects. Conceptualism, we know now, is no more generically radical than any other ism, but it's no less art.*¹²⁵

In 1972 a year earlier than Lippard's *Six Years*, Ursula Meyer published her book *Conceptual Art*. Meyer delineates how conceptual artists have taken over the role of the critics and she uses one of Kosuth's many statements to validate this claim.

¹²³ Terry Atkinson, 'Concerning the article "the dematerialization of art"' (23 March 1968). The entire letter-essay is in Lucy R. Lippard papers, Archives of American Art, uncatalogued recent acquisition. Republished in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.53.

¹²⁴ Bochner, 'Excerpts From Speculation (1967–1970)'.

¹²⁵ Lucy R. Lippard, 'Hot Potatoes: Art and Politics in 1980' (1981), in Hilary Robinson (ed.), *Feminism–Art–Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p.117.

*Because of the implied duality of perception and conception in earlier art, a middleman (critic) appeared useful. This [Conceptual] art both annexes the functions of critic and makes the middleman unnecessary.*¹²⁶

It is encouraging to read Meyer's thoughts on conceptual art. Although some conceptual artists (Kosuth) saw aesthetics as the enemy Meyer acknowledges that aesthetics apply to all things that we encounter in our everyday lives, including conceptual art. Furthermore Meyer also establishes that the traditional language of art criticism in the 1960s and 1970s is not adequate when contemplating conceptual art. Instead, she looks to science for clues as to how to approach this new art via various processes of analysis, formulas, experimentation, image, parable, and poetry; '*...the extension of one field into another is conducive to discovery*'.¹²⁷ Meyer's inclusion of two physicists Julius Robert Oppenheimer¹²⁸ and Werner Heisenberg¹²⁹ likewise signals that in the 1960s there was a broader interest in science, as parts of an interdisciplinary approach to the dissemination of art.¹³⁰

This change of the art critical framework, which Meyer highlights, happened in a period of rapid social change, culminating perhaps in the first moon landing in 1969. It was also at the end of the 1960s that French literary theorist Roland Barthes wrote his best-known essay *The Death of the Author*, proclaiming that for the reader to be born the author has to die. Only two years later philosopher Michel Foucault continued the debate concerning the relationship between author, text, and reader in his essay *What is an Author?*. The appearance of conceptual art in this period can be attributed mainly to historical developments within art. What has not been mentioned is that this period also saw a shift in how exhibitions were planned and created.

¹²⁶ Joseph Kosuth, 'Introductory Note by the American Editor', *Art-Language*, vol.1, no.2, 1970.

¹²⁷ Ursula Meyer (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p.xv.

¹²⁸ Julius Robert Oppenheimer was an American theoretical physicist, born 1904 died 1967.

¹²⁹ Werner Heisenberg was a German physicist, born 1901 died 1976.

¹³⁰ Which is further examined in Chapter Four.

According to writer Jack Burnham¹³¹ it had been the norm to plan museum and gallery exhibitions around existing artworks, while during this period it was changed to instead consist of a selection based on submitted proposals. Burnham states in his *Artforum* text from 1970 that this implied:

*...that the artist's prime or gestural relationship to his materials is secondary and the intellectual cognizance is in many cases adequate.*¹³²

It is interesting to speculate whether it was conceptual art that led to the written artwork proposal for exhibitions or if indeed this happened simultaneously? Proposals for artworks are deeply embedded in the contemporary art world. Any exhibition or funding application will have to be underpinned with a substantial amount of writing. In his 1970 text Burnham implied that it was the museum and gallery system, with their demand for written artwork proposals, which further cemented conceptual art. Another interpretation of the shift noted in curatorial practice could be that curators got used to making exhibition choices from proposals, due to the accompanying written concepts of various conceptual artworks. Hence, artists with their conceptual art influenced curatorial practices embedded in the gallery and museum environment.

¹³¹ He worked as a sculptor from 1955 until 1965. Burnham participated in the written dissemination of art and wrote the influential and regularly quoted *Artforum* article 'Systems Esthetics' in September 1968, pp.30–35.

¹³² 'Alice's Head: reflections on conceptual art', *Artforum*, February 1970, pp.37–43. Republished in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp.217–219.

Conceptual Artists – Gender

The legacy of male conceptual artists is comprehensively documented, and the wrong assumption is therefore often made that the original conceptual artists were exclusively men. It is noticeable that this research has barely mentioned any female artists, whilst simply addressing the 1960s and 1970s writing by male artists. During that period, within the field of '*conceptual art as idea* (with a small c)', there are no published seminal texts on conceptual art by female artists.¹³³ The 1960s was a watershed moment when women started to gain influence on how they were portrayed and seen. The intuitive, haptic and gestural are habitually associated with the work of female artists. Roth's previously mentioned '*new cerebral breed of artist*' exasperatingly did not include women. The general assumption was that those artists, whose methods relied on the cerebral – for both artist and the viewer – were male and white.

As referred to in connection with Flynt, Yoko Ono was an active member of the Fluxus movement, organising and hosting performance events in her Chamber Street loft. Art history tends to align Ono with Fluxus artists owing to her performance pieces – happenings – such as her renowned 1964 'Cut Piece' performed in Tokyo and later that same year at Carnegie Hall in NYC. The piece consists of Ono sitting in a room surrounded by an audience, who are invited to cut pieces of her clothes with a pair of scissors. This is an artwork that is derived from an idea, though it is her text based 'instruction pieces' that I would situate with '*conceptual art as idea*,' such as her text piece from 1964 *Draw a map to get lost*. Ono identifies Cage as a mentor¹³⁴

¹³³ If instead this research had focused on '*conceptual art as action* (with a capital C)', then Adrian Piper's 1967 text 'A Defense of the 'Conceptual' process in art' and especially this quote would have been interesting to examine: '... *Only the intuitive is truly unlimited. I see all art as basically an intuitive process, regardless of how obliquely it has been dealt with in the past*'. Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.37.

¹³⁴ Cage taught Ono art classes from 1957–1960 in NYC. They became friends and she went on to do a concert tour in Japan with Cage and David Tudor in 1962. She has said about her first meeting with Cage: '*Then I met John Cage and he taught me that it's all right to do anything his work was like seeing a big green light that said 'Go!'*', Kristine McKenna, 'Yoko Reconsidered:

and like him she had an interest in the sensibility and aesthetic of minimalist Zen. Both artists were eager for the viewer to participate with their minds instead of only their vision. Ono did reject the art object as commodity and her 'instruction pieces' were an implicit critique of the concept of ownership.¹³⁵ Ono's use of non-traditional art techniques and materials would place her work with '*conceptual art with a capital C*', in accordance with LeWitt's classification. However, Ono does not appear as a contender in surveys on conceptual art. If she is referred to, it is merely as the founder of an experimental art environment that was based at her loft.¹³⁶ In an interview in 1993 Ono herself comments on meeting musician John Lennon in 1966:

...[it] marked the end of the quiet conceptual games I was playing.¹³⁷

It is interesting that she classifies her work in that period as conceptual. Is it the twenty-year gap that has changed how she, and art in general define conceptual art? I do rather wonder if she did quietly view herself as a conceptual artist in the 1960s and 1970s.

Lippard has noted that conceptual art helped the proliferation of female artists. The idea that anything could be art paved the way for an acceptance of cheaper 'art' materials and a wider exploration of methods that appealed to women.¹³⁸ Lippard refers in her writing to being continuously told in the 1960s

Just because she became Mrs. John Lennon doesn't mean she stopped being an artist', *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1993, http://articles.latimes.com/1993-04-11/entertainment/ca-21406_1_yoko-ono [consulted 16.08.2012].

¹³⁵ Marcia Tanner, 'Mother Laughed: The Bad Girls' Avant-Garde', in Marcia Tucker and Marcia Tanner, *Bad Girls*, The MIT Press, 1994, p.61.

¹³⁶ Even in later books on conceptual art such as Tony Godfrey's 1998 Phaidon book, Yoko Ono is only referred to twice. Neither of the two mentions are concerned with her works, but rather passing mentions as a prop for the Fluxus movement and La Monte Young. Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, p.102 and p.106.

¹³⁷ McKenna, 'Yoko Reconsidered', http://articles.latimes.com/1993-04-11/entertainment/ca-21406_1_yoko-ono/3 [consulted 15.08.2012].

¹³⁸ '*The inexpensive, ephemeral, unintimidating character of the Conceptual mediums themselves (video, performance, photography, narrative, text, actions) encouraged women to participate, to move through this crack in the art world's walls*'. Lippard, *Six Years*, p.xi.s

'there are no women making conceptual art.'¹³⁹ It was an assumption that frustrated her, since to her knowledge there were many. Lippard proved her point, by being involved with curating three women only exhibitions in the short period of two years.¹⁴⁰

- 'Twenty-Six Contemporary Women Artists' at The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in 1971.
 - It only included artists that had not previously had solo exhibitions in NYC.¹⁴¹
- 'Women Choose Women' at the New York Cultural Centre in 1973.
 - The first NYC museum survey exhibition organised by and exhibiting women.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.xi. Though in a talk in 2008 Lippard stated '*I am ashamed to say that there were only four and a half women in Number 7: Christine Kozlov, Rosemarie Castoro, Hanne Darboven, Adrian Piper, and Ingrid Baxter (who was half of the NE Thing Co.). 557,087 was not much better, despite the fact that it was almost twice the size. In terms of global representation, 557,087 was even worse. I can only mutter in my defense that I had not yet seen the light. I became a feminist a year later.*' Lucy R. Lippard, 'Curating by Numbers', *Tate Papers*, issue 12, 2009, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/curating-numbers> [consulted 17.07.2014].

¹⁴⁰ It is noticeable that since I wrote this chapter, there have been two books published on Lippard's curatorial practice during the 1960s and 1970s: Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin (eds.), *Materializing 'Six Years': Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art*, where the title plays on Lippard's mentioned 'de-materialisation' was published by the MIT press in 2012. That same year Afterall Books published Cornelia Butler (ed.) *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's Numbers Shows 1969–74*, which was published to coincide with the exhibition of the same title at Brooklyn Museum, NYC, 14 September 2012 – 3 February 2013.

¹⁴¹ Cecile Abish, Alice Ayccock, Cynthia Carlson, Sue Ann Childress, Glorianna Danvenport, Susan Hall, Mary Heilmann, Audrey Hemenway, Laurace James, Mablen Jones, Carol Kinne, Christine Kozlov, Sylvia (Plimack) Mangold, Brenda Miller, Mary Miss, Dona Nelson, Louise Parks, Shirley Pettibone, Howardena Pindell, Adrian Piper, Reeve Potoff, Paula Tavins, Merril Wagner, Grace Bakst Wapner, Jacqueline Winsor and Barbara Zucker.

¹⁴² The exhibition consisted of work from 109 artists from Women in the Arts (WIA): Cecile Abish, Pat Adams, Dana Romalo Andrews, Anne Arnold, Elise Asher, Helene Aylon, Alice Baber, Cathey Billian, June Blum, Regina Bogat, Blythe Bohnen, Maude K. Boltz, Isabel Case Borgatta, Susan Brenner, Lilly Brody, Gretna Campbell, Sylvia Carewe, Harriet Casdin-Silver, Muriel Castanis, Rosemary Castoro, Vija Celmins, Jane Couch, Virginia Cuppaidge, Betsy Damon, Filomena Dellaripa, Agnes Denes, Sari Dienes, Lois Dodd, Loretta Dunkelman, Martha Edelheit, Nancy Ellison, Carol Engelson, Harriet FeBland, Perle Fine, Audrey Flack, Phyllis Floyd, Mary Frank, Ruth Ann Fredenthal, Kimiko Fujimura, Suzi Gablik, Sonia Gechttoff, Dorothy Gillespie, Andree Golbin, Shirley Gorelick, Gloria Graves, Ilise Greenstein, Carol Haerer, Dorothy Healy, Carmen Herrera, Ethelyn Honig, Iria Inverna, Yvonne Jacqueline, Buffie Johnson, Phyllis Isaih Kimmel, Vera Klement, Jane Kogan, Joyce Kozloff, Louise Kramen, Suzanne Langle, Fay Lansner, Marion Lerner Levine, Golda Lewis, Marcia Marcus, Anita Margrill, Rosemary Mayer, Shiela Schwid Milder, Joan Mitchell, Claire Moore, Nancy Maass Mosen, Alice Neel, Betty Parsons, Pat Passlof, Nina Paull, Lil Picard, Felicity Rainnie, Judith Reed, Jeanne Reynal, Ruth Richards, Faith Ringgold, Gabriele Roos, Leatrice Rose, Ce Roser, Susan Sayre, Carolyn Schock, Arlene Slavin, Sylvia Sleigh, Joan Snyder, Helen Soreff, Nancy Spero, Pat Steir, May Stevens, Michelle Stuart, Mary Suzuki, Tania, Paula Tavins, Yvonne Thomas, Selina Trieff, Ruth Chai Vodicka, Charmion Von Weigand, Sylvia Wald, Alida Walsh, Joyce Weinstein, Hannah Wilke, Nina Yankowitz and Tobi Zausner.

- 'C.7,500' at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California in 1973.
 - It was an international women's conceptual show that travelled to seven venues, ending in London.¹⁴³

Examining the lists of exhibiting female artists from these shows, where many were new encounters, there are several artists that would comfortably fit the label 'cerebral artist' – such as Agnes Denes with her calculation drawings, Nancy Holt with her light installations, Christine Kozlov¹⁴⁴ with her 'rejective'¹⁴⁵ artworks, and Dorothea Rockburne with her abstract drawing sculptures. None of these artists though have quite as unequivocal a connection to this research of '*conceptual art as idea* (with a small c)' as the work of German artist Hanne Darboven.

Darboven moved to NYC in 1966, which was exactly when the term 'conceptual art' emerged. She obtained a small studio flat that had the dual function of home and studio, a logistic arrangement that was to have a significant influence on her art practice. In Germany

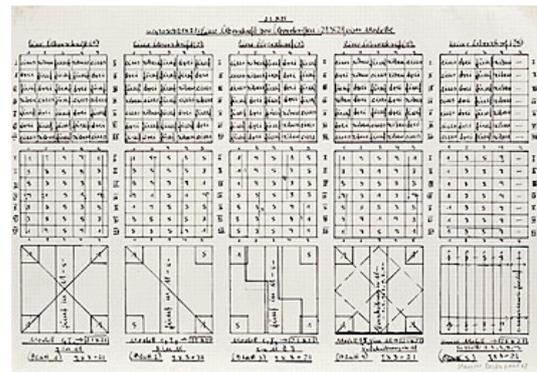


Image 29: Hanne Darboven, 21x21, 1968.

Darboven had been painting, however the small studio forced her to change her practice to avoid living in constant paint fumes. Her solution was to relocate her practice to drawing, where she worked on sheets of paper in a 'handy' standardised size (Image 29). Darboven resided in NYC for a period of

¹⁴³ 26 artists; Renate Altenrath, Laurie Anderson, Elenore Antin, Jacki Apple, Alice Aycock, Jenifer Bartlett, Hanne Darboven, Agnes Denes, Doree Dunlap, Nancy Holt, Poppy Johnson, Nancy Kitchel, Christine Kozlov, Suzanne Kuffler, Pat Lasch, Bernadette Mayer, Christiane Möbus, Rita Myers, Renee Nahum, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., Ulrike Nolden, Adrian Piper, Judith Stein, Athena Tacha, Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Martha Wilson. At the start of 2014 the 'Visual Arts Center of New Jersey,' Summit, United States exhibited 'Women Choose Women Again', with work by thirteen artists from the 1973 exhibition 'Women Choose Women' and thirteen contemporary female artists. The exhibition was curated by Mary Birmingham and Katherine Murdock.

¹⁴⁴ Kozlov was connected to Kosuth's circle of artists.

¹⁴⁵ A term coined by Lippard in regard to Kozlov's work in that period.

three years,¹⁴⁶ during which time she developed her unique system of working in series, with numbers and letters. Her conceptual system would go on to sustain and underpin the entirety of her successful forty-year practice. Darboven did not identify herself as a conceptual artist, although concept did have precedence in her practice. Meyer mentions in her 1972 book *Conceptual Art* that Darboven's work was not included, due to Darboven's request for her work not to be shown in the context of conceptual art.¹⁴⁷ Paradoxically, Darboven's work has consistently been positioned as conceptual art and has been included in the three general survey exhibitions on conceptual art: the 1969 exhibition 'Konzeption–Conception' at Städtisches Museum, Leverkusen, the 1989 exhibition 'L'Art Conceptual, une Perspective' at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and the 1995 exhibition 'Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975' at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.¹⁴⁸

When studying Lippard's women's exhibitions from the early 1970s, it is noticeable that Darboven was only represented in one of these. It suggests to me that Darboven was regularly associated with the male group of conceptual artists rather than with her female colleagues. Could it have been that because Darboven's work was already being shown regularly throughout this period, Lippard did not feel any need to include her? Or could it be personal relationships that came into play? Darboven and LeWitt were partly in a relationship while Darboven lived in NYC, and during that same period Lippard refers to LeWitt as both a close friend and '*...a major intellectual influence*'.¹⁴⁹ Either way Lippard did have a significant role in ensuring

¹⁴⁶ In the literature on Darboven, her NYC stay is regularly mentioned, although it is referred to as a two year period. I have chosen to be guided by Darboven's own statement in a 1994 interview with Mark Gisbourne where she refers to it as three years, see footnote 44.

¹⁴⁷ Darboven's request was made in October 1970. Ursula Meyer (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, footnote 16, p.XIII.

¹⁴⁸ Camiel van Winkel, *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will Be Closed: Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptualism*, Valiz, 2012, p.27.

¹⁴⁹ Lippard, *Six Years*, p.VIII.

Darboven's work received the attention it did, as the next chapter further explores.

Roth conveyed the notion of '*a new cerebral breed of artist*' and Lippard's statement '*women make conceptual art*' helped to cement the fact that conceptual artists included both genders. Which leads me to the question whether there is such a thing as original 'feminist conceptual artists'? The substantial compendium *Feminism–Art–Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*¹⁵⁰ does not list any of the aforementioned original conceptual artists such as Darboven, Kozlov, Rockburne, Ono or even Lozano, who Lippard crowned the '*major female conceptual figure in New York in the 1960s*'.¹⁵¹ Examining Phaidon's *Art and Feminism* for the same five women artists, only Ono is represented with her *Cut Piece* (1964), linked by feminist scholar Peggy Phelan to establishing a language for exploration of victimisation and survival in feminist art.¹⁵² It would still appear that the definition of feminist artists does not embrace the cerebral.

¹⁵⁰ Hilary Robinson (ed.), '*Feminism–Art–Theory: An Anthology 1968–2000*', pp.689–706.

¹⁵¹ Lippard, *Six Years*, p.xii.

¹⁵² Peggy Phelan, 'Survey', p.27, in Helena Reckitt (ed.), *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon, 2001 (abridged, revised and updated edition 2012).

Chapter Two.
**CONCEPTUAL CONFLICTS:
ESTABLISHING HANNE
DARBOVEN**

Conceptual Art Debates

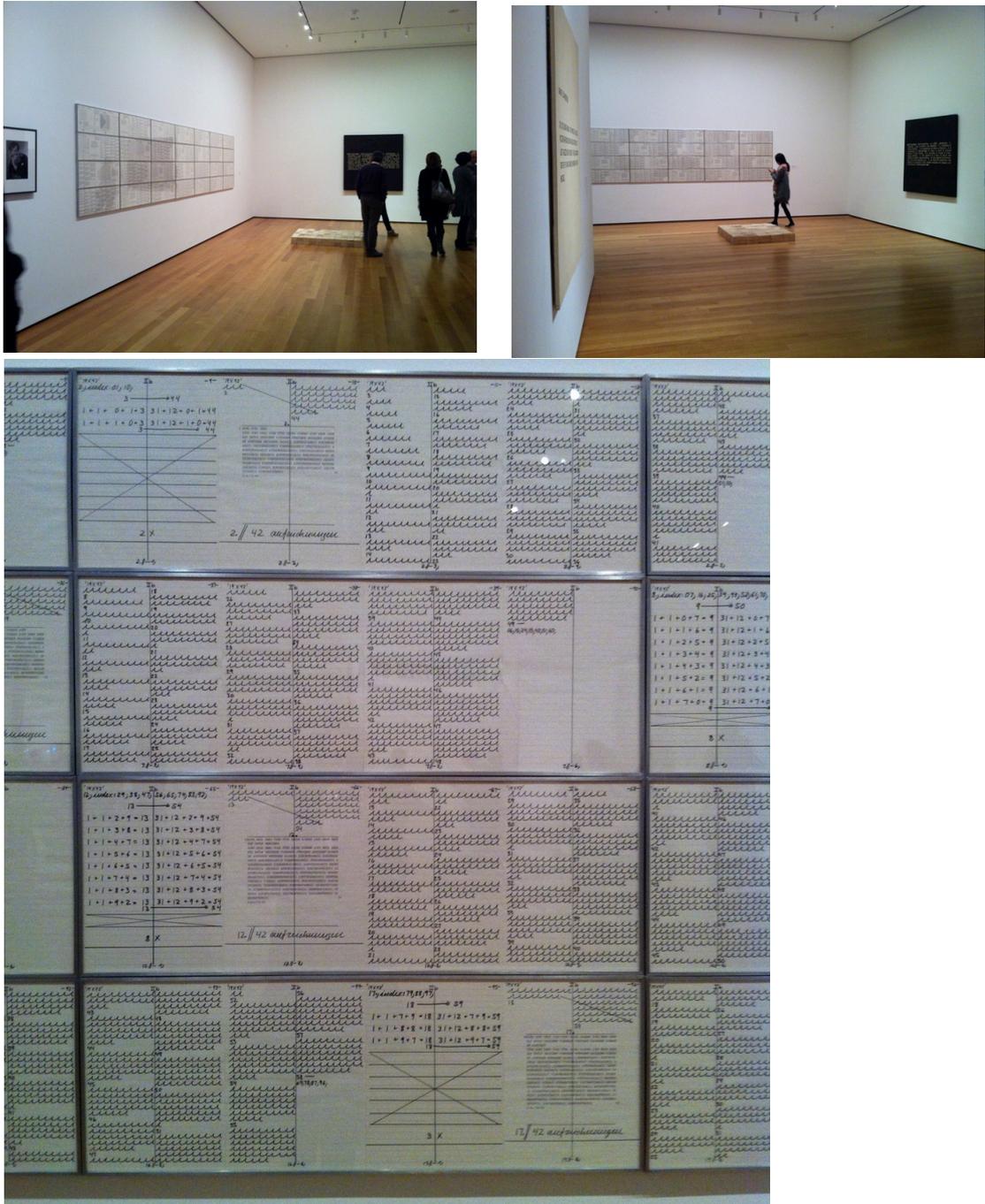


Image 30: Hanne Darboven, *II-b*, ink and typewriting on twenty-eight pieces of paper, 1970–73. These photographs were taken in the Conceptual Art section at NYC's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in spring 2013. Darboven's piece was surrounded by the work of Andre, Kosuth, John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Jan Dibbers, Ed Ruscha and Yvonne Rainer. MOMA highlights that many of the pieces on display are from the collection of Seth Siegelau.

Conceptual art is not and never was a fixed entity. The first chapter examined the rigid classifications sought from artists, critics and curators, without one consensus materialising.¹⁵³ In the intervening forty years no single unified definition has emerged, and if anything a wider multiplicity is being embraced. Those artists that have started practising art subsequent to the 1980s frequently appear flexible in their classification of conceptual art¹⁵⁴ unlike earlier generations.

Where does Hanne Darboven belong in these debates on conceptual art? What were her affiliations to this category of art that her work was persistently grouped with? What impact did this association have upon her practice and her exhibition strategies?

The first chapter established that Darboven's close friend LeWitt¹⁵⁵ was pivotal in the critical debate concerning conceptual art.¹⁵⁶ When Darboven declined to be in Ursula Meyer's 1972 book, entitled *Conceptual Art*, she resided in Germany and hence, she was not directly embedded in the NYC art debates (battles).¹⁵⁷ Unlike many of her contemporaries, who she exhibited with, Darboven did not publish her thoughts on conceptual art. One assumption could be that the geographical distance was a contributing factor as to why she avoided joining the conceptual art deliberations. The earliest

¹⁵³ The first chapter explored art historical sources. For a personal anecdote see '*When I met Luis Camnitzer (or 'know your audience')*' in the appendix. This meeting with conceptual artist Luis Camnitzer, who has been based in NYC since the 1960s, has coloured my understanding of generational and geographical discrepancies within contemporary art. My British art education at Glasgow school of Art and the Royal College of Art has only further solidified this view.

¹⁵⁴ Which is examined in the dialogue with Lucy Skaer in Chapter Five.

¹⁵⁵ They met in the autumn of 1966 at an opening at the Lannis gallery that was run by Kosuth and Kozlov, which was the first to exhibit Darboven in NYC, by which point the gallery had changed its name to the Museum of Normal Art.

¹⁵⁶ In 2013 at MOMA (where the photographs from the previous page are from) LeWitt was not represented in the Conceptual Art room instead his work was in the adjacent room representing Minimal Art. LeWitt's artwork was situated surrounded by Dan Flavin and Richard Artschwager works.

¹⁵⁷ Darboven was still seen to be a NYC artist in 1969, when the exhibition '*When Attitude Becomes Form*' in the catalogue describes her as a NYC based artist, when in fact she had returned to live in Hamburg, Germany. She lived the majority of her life (1941–2009) in her family home just outside Hamburg, where the family had a comfortable life as a result of their successful coffee business. The only exception were those three years (1966–1968) when she lived and worked in NYC, as referred to in the first chapter.

writing by Darboven (published in English) that I have found is a 1968 statement given to Lippard, which surprisingly was not published till 2000:

I build something up by disturbing something (destruction–structure–construction).

A system became necessary; how else could I see more concentratedly, find some interest, continue at all? Contemplation had to be interrupted by action as a means of accepting anything among everything. No acceptance at all = chaos. In my work I try to move, to expand and contract as far as possible between more or less known and unknown limits. I couldn't talk about any limits, I know generally, I just can say I feel at times closer while doing a series or afterwards. But whether coming closer once or not, it is still one experience. Whether positive or negative, I know it then. Everything is in so far in a proof, for the negative that a positive exists, and vice versa.

A circle as a symbol of infinity, everything; what is beginning, where? What is end, where?

I couldn't recreate my so-called system; it depends on things done previously. The materials consist of paper and pencil with which I draw my conceptions, write words and numbers, which are the simplest means for putting down my ideas; for ideas do not depend on materials.

The nature of ideas is immateriality.

Things have plenty of variations and varieties, so they can be changed. At this moment I know about what I have done, what I am doing; I shall see what will happen next.¹⁵⁸

I like the fact that the artist's statement compliments Darboven's work by offering a non-descriptive account of her practice, while simultaneously avoiding limiting individual experiences or interpretations of her art. However, this means it is not a succinct text that provides a clear definition of Darboven's views regarding conceptual art. This is not a piece of writing that pursues joining the critics or art historians to debate what conceptual art is.

In April 1968 the American magazine *Art International* published a text by Darboven on her practice (image 31). It appears similar to the above quoted text that Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson state had not been published prior to 2000. Both texts are credited to Darboven and they do appear to be

¹⁵⁸ This statement, sent by Darboven to Lippard in 1968, is noted in the source as previously unpublished and held in the Lucy R. Lippard papers in the Archives of American Art, as 'uncataloged recent acquisition'. Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.62.

made from the same core text with identical phrases surfacing and identical anchor points of ideas.

Artist's statements are regularly a continuous work-in-progress where the artist views their bundle of words as an inefficient tool with which to communicate – especially compared to the real thing, their artworks. It is possible that the two mentioned texts are indeed Darboven re-using bits of text and shifting around sentence structures;

however I do not believe this is the case. The fact that both texts are dated 1968 and connected to Lippard,¹⁵⁹ combined with the

acknowledgement that English was Darboven's second language, suggests to me that one text is Darboven's original (un-edited) and that the second is an edited version where the English language flows.

The text published in 1968 in the section

'Artists on Their Art' is an easier read:

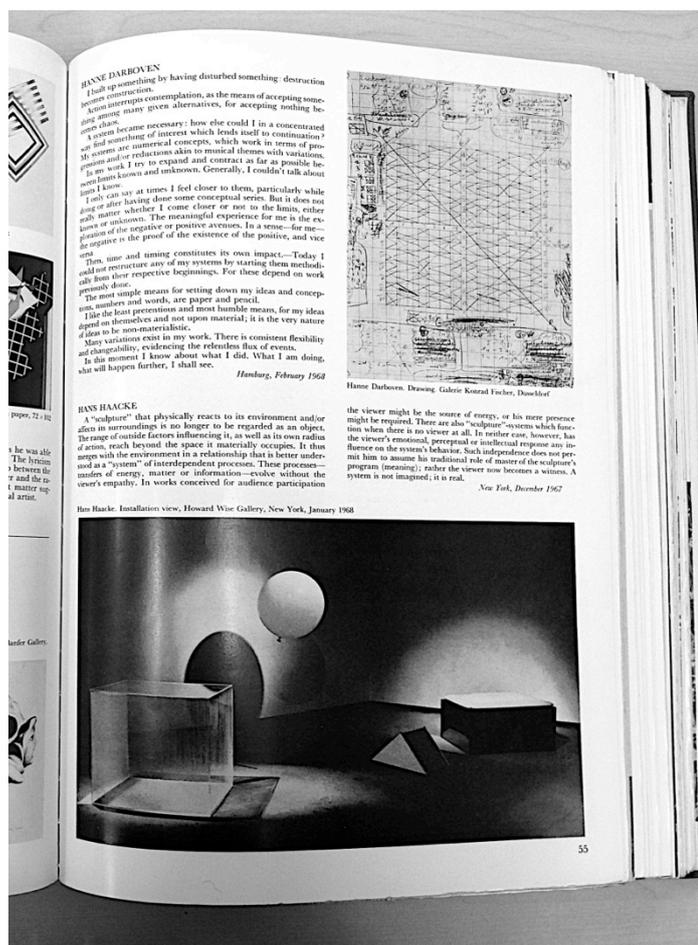


Image 31: *Art International*, April 1968, p.55.

¹⁵⁹ The Advisory Editors on *Art International* in April 1968 were Lippard as well as Umbro Apollonio, Jorge Romero Brest and James Mellow. It was two months earlier in February 1968 in the same journal that Lippard with John Chandler wrote the influential article 'The Dematerialization of Art'.

I built up something by having disturbed something; destruction becomes construction.

Action interrupts contemplation, as the means of accepting something among many given alternatives, for accepting nothing becomes chaos.

A system became necessary; how else could I in a concentrated way find something of interest which lends itself to continuation?

My systems are numerical concepts, which work in terms of progressions and/or reductions akin to musical themes with variations.

In my work I try to expand and contract as far as possible between limits known and unknown. Generally, I couldn't talk about limits I know.

I only can say at times I feel closer to them, particularly while doing or after having done some conceptual series. But it does not really matter whether I come closer or not to the limits, either known or unknown. The meaningful experience for me is the exploration of the negative or positive avenues. In a sense – for me – the negative is the proof of the existence of the positive, and vice versa.

Then, time and timing constitutes its own impact. – Today I could not restructure any of my systems by starting them methodically from their respective beginnings. For these depend on work previously done.

The most simple means for setting down my ideas and conceptions, numbers and words, are paper and pencil.

I like the least pretentious and most humble means, for my ideas depend on themselves and not upon material; it is the very nature of ideas to be non-materialistic.

Many variations exist in my work. There is consistent flexibility and changeability, evidencing the relentless flux of events.

In this moment I know about what I did. What I am doing, what will happen further, I shall see.

Hamburg, February 1968¹⁶⁰

In the 1968 archived text that was first published in 2000, which I suggest is Darboven's original unedited version, there are no mentions of 'conceptual' or for that matter 'concept.' Instead the words 'idea' and 'systems' are used. In the text published in 1968 'conceptual series' appears where the archived (original) text simply states 'series.' This *Art International* (Lippard edited) text also has a paragraph that does not exist in the text that was dormant for thirty-two years:

My systems are numerical concepts, which work in terms of progressions and/or reductions akin to musical themes with variations.

¹⁶⁰ 'Artists on Their Art: Hanne Darboven', *Art International*, 1968 April, p.55.

This addition refers to numbers, music and concepts whereas the dormant text focuses on words and numbers as a means to communicate ideas. The 1968 published (edited) text used the word '*restructure*' and has the statement '*these depend on work done previously*' where the dormant archive text used the word '*recreate*' and the phrase '*it depends on things done previously.*' The archived (original) text also uses the word '*contemplation*':

Contemplation had to be interrupted by action as a means of accepting anything among everything. No acceptance at all = chaos.

Essentially the *Art International* (edited) text used language that belongs within that period's critical debate concerning conceptual art. It is a focused text with several concrete statements. The dormant (original) text that was hidden in Lippard's archive seems more poetic and cryptic. It focuses on the methodologies of making that are inherently fuzzy and harder to define in the written language, which the aesthetic of the text mirrors beautifully. Both texts are credited to the year 1968, which is two years prior to Meyer mentioning that Darboven declined to be part of her book on conceptual art. My speculation is that the text published in 1968 was an edited version of the text from Lippard's archive. If that is the case, could this experience of being 're-written' or her practice being 'conceptualised' by edited words, perhaps have led Darboven to want no further entrapment in the 'conceptual art box' she had already been placed in? Hence, her declining to be in Meyer's book *Conceptual Art*. Interestingly a quote from the archived (original) text does appear in Lippard's 1973 *Artforum* article 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers',¹⁶¹ and also in the catalogue for the 1974 MOMA exhibition 'Eight

¹⁶¹ *Artforum*, October 1973, p.39. '*I build up something by disturbing something (destruction – structure – construction). A system became necessary, how else could I see more concentratedly, find some interest, continue, go on at all? Contemplation had to be interrupted by action as a means of accepting anything among everything. No acceptance at all = chaos. I try to move, to expand and contract as far as possible between more or less known and unknown limits. At times I feel closer while doing a series, and at times afterwards. But whether I come closer or not, it is still one experience. Whether positive or negative, I know it then. Everything is a proof, for the negative that a positive exists, and vice versa.... I couldn't recreate my so-called system. It depends on things done previously. The materials consist of paper and pencil with which I draw my conceptions, write words and numbers, which are the most simple means for putting down my ideas; for ideas do not*

Contemporary Artists' with an acknowledgement that the quote was '*...in correspondence with Lucy Lippard*'.¹⁶² That these two later published texts, which are both credited to Lippard, use the archived (original) text further supports my argument that the 1968 published (edited) version was not in keeping with how Darboven wanted to position her work.

During my visit to the Hanne Darboven Foundation I asked curator Miriam Schoofs to tell me about Darboven. They met in the 2000s and Schoofs recalls meeting a strong personality '*a fascinating rigid lady, even severe who was not sympathetic to questions concerning her practice*'. Darboven was not interested in being understood as a conceptual artist, although her work was conceptual, hinging on idea-based systems. Schoofs remembers Darboven expressing, after forty years of practice, an opinion that '*everything had already been written*'. Darboven's aversion to being pigeonholed was not limited to her art practice and extended to her personal style that could be described as androgynous.¹⁶³ However, she did not show any interest in participating in the restructuring of the 'image of woman' that has collectively taken place since the 1970s.¹⁶⁴ Regarding the issue of feminism it would appear that Darboven fits perfectly with Roth's notion of '*the aesthetic of indifference*'.

The fact that Darboven was a keen letter writer might seem to provide the perfect source to establish an insight into her views and thoughts on conceptual art. Alas, when Darboven did write about her work, it was

depend on materials. The nature of idea is immateriality. All things have plenty of variations and varieties, so they can be changed'.

¹⁶² Jennifer Licht, *Eight Contemporary Artists*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1974, p.29. The quote is '*...I try to move, to expand and contract as far as possible between more or less known and unknown limits*'. In the 1968 Lippard edited text the same sentence says '*...I try to expand and contract as far as possible between limits known and unknown*'.

¹⁶³ The image of Hanne Darboven will be further examined in Chapter Three.

¹⁶⁴ A prominent component was the Guerrilla Art Action Group that was formed in 1969. It was an anonymous group of women (Lippard was most likely part of the group since she refers to it as 'we') that wore guerrilla suits during their performances. Their collected message was to highlight the inequality within the art world against women and non-white artists. They were involved with public happenings or text-pieces in the urban environment or in traditional printed matter, such as magazines.

intertwined in personal dialogues with her parents and her close artist friends, such as LeWitt. These letters would frequently slip into a kind of poetry in the vein of Gertrude Stein's style¹⁶⁵ or become a form of word play, appearing aesthetically more like a drawing than a letter.¹⁶⁶ During her time in NYC, she wrote regularly to her parents detailing both her life and work.¹⁶⁷ However to the best of Schoofs' knowledge, there are no known records in the Hanne Darboven Foundation's archives that document she had any written dialogue with art critics or curators. As Schoofs flatly states '*no it was not her*' to engage in the art theoretical discourse. Darboven's only dialogue with curators occurs in relation to concrete dealings concerning the installation of works and the technical or administrative issues related to exhibitions. Or simply keeping the curators informed about which exhibitions she had scheduled for the next month or year.

Having established that Darboven lacked any interest in publicly elaborating on her practice, how does the Hanne Darboven Foundation catalogue its founder and represent her to the public? There is no grand statement that she was a conceptual artist. Instead this Foundation, initiated by Darboven before her death, fittingly leaves her work and practice room to breath, allowing multiplicity and complexity to remain in our understanding of her work. Thankfully, at her Foundation there is not going to be a concise simplified explanation at hand for the public.

¹⁶⁵ Lippard refers to Darboven's letters as being '*Gertrude Steinian letters*'. Lucy R. Lippard, 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers', *Artforum*, October 1973, p.37.

¹⁶⁶ See image 34 on p.111.

¹⁶⁷ These private letters from 1966–1968 were published in the book 'Hanne Darboven Briefe aus New York' in 1997. A book on Darboven's other correspondence is planned to be published late 2015 by König. Darboven copied all the letters she wrote and the Hanne Darboven Foundation holds the full archive. I further examine Darboven's habit of copying in Chapter Four.

Viewed Concepts

In 2013 the Fondazione Prada restaged in Venice¹⁶⁸ the seminal 1969 Bern exhibition 'When Attitudes Becomes Form', originally curated by Harald Szeemann. This serendipitously presented me with an opportunity to historically contextualise Darboven's work with that of her contemporaries. The architectural layout of Bern Kunsthalle had been meticulously copied to construct a facsimile inside the Venetian Palazzo. The artworks were placed exactly as curated by Szeemann in 1969. The attention to detail was exemplary; if it had been impossible to borrow the original work or produce a replica, an outline of tape acknowledged the 1969 location of that specific piece.

Naturally my experience of the 2013 exhibition was different from that of the viewer's forty-five years earlier. Today, it is an exhibition stuffed full of early works by what we now recognise as iconic artists. The insurance value of these prized artworks inevitably made parts of the exhibition inaccessible, with invigilators frustratingly standing next to the already densely packed artworks. This was to be expected and preferred, as otherwise there might have been no exhibition at all. It was noticeable to me, by today's standards, how closely situated the artworks were to each other. One of the curatorial premises for the exhibition appeared to be the removal of boundaries between artworks and viewers. The close proximity of the artworks surprised me to such an extent that it made me question my knowledge of general exhibition strategies in the 1960s. Were these shows generally this tightly packed with artworks? The consensus¹⁶⁹ supported my own impression that

¹⁶⁸ Shown during the 2013 Venice Biennial.

¹⁶⁹ I have consulted several curators and artist, to hear whether they perceive that 1960s and 1970s exhibitions were curated with the artworks situated in close proximity to each other. Specifically, I spoke with Assistant Professor Dawna Schuld, Department of the History of Art (Indiana University) at the 'Imaginary Exhibitions' conference at the Henry Moore Institute, 7 November 2013. Schuld's research focus is on American art in the 1960s and 1970s. Her quick response was that this period saw the rise of minimalist art that was exhibited with plenty of space around it, setting the norm for how we today expect a museum exhibition layout to be; with space between artworks.

this was not the norm for exhibitions of this period, influenced as many were by the display protocols of minimalist art.

In the exhibition 'When Attitudes Becomes Form' Darboven showed her 1968 piece *Sechs Bücher Über 1968*, which consists of six landscape-sized books made on American letter sized paper.¹⁷⁰ These books were exhibited in two white painted plinths with glass tops, inaccessible to the viewer's touch, making the viewer look down on the books with only the top as a vantage point.¹⁷¹ I find it remarkable that this early in Darboven's career, she chose to protect her artworks from the viewer. This suggests to me that it was the artist herself that made this choice, rather than it being a question of monetary value that forced the exhibiting institution to protect the artwork.¹⁷²

In my own practice, I have made several artworks that consist of books. To me, the choice of making a book has always been connected with the viewer being presented with a familiar and accessible medium. Conceptually, a book acts as a source of shared knowledge that historically is a tactile object that we physically interact with, on our own terms, using our hands. This exhibition demonstrates that Darboven did not use the medium of the book within the context of art exhibitions as a democratic, accessible medium. In 1969 she created her first editioned book, titled *1968-1977: New York* and she continued to use the book format as an artwork both in exhibition

¹⁷⁰ The paper did not look as if it was A4 and due to the date of the exhibition, when Darboven had just spent three years in NYC, I would speculate that the paper used in this piece is US letter paper size, 8.5 by 11 inches (216 mm x 279 mm). Schoofs agreed with me that they were not made from A4 paper and most likely letter sized. I will return to Darboven's use of paper in Chapter Four.

¹⁷¹ I use the word plinth here, since the only viewing point is the top surface, hence from a distance they are simply plinths rather than a display case (vitrine).

¹⁷² At my visit to the Foundation I raised this question with Schoofs, who speculated that perhaps the display method had been a condition of the Foundation, due to this piece being one of Darboven's earliest works; hence, the insurance is enormous. According to the substantial book that the Fondazione Prada published in connection with the 2013 exhibition, the original image documentation from 1969 shows that Darboven's piece was exhibited in two white plinths with glass tops, precisely as in the Venice 2013 exhibition. Germano Celant (ed.), *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969 / Venice 2013*, pp.166–168 and pp.174–176.

environments and as a stand-alone artifact.¹⁷³ Books underpinned her whole practice as is evident in the substantial place they have in her complete oeuvre. Those that were published in connection with her solo exhibitions were devised by Darboven and did not function as an explanatory introduction as a regular exhibition catalogue does. Instead, Darboven appeared to use the publications as another strand of output in her art practice,¹⁷⁴ though paradoxically she did not want them to be categorised as ‘artists’ books’.¹⁷⁵

Within the curatorial premise of ‘When Attitudes Becomes Form’, Darboven’s exhibited artwork appears strangely out of step. This was an exhibition that revolutionised how the viewer perceived exhibited artworks. The white plinths had been abolished and instead the artworks were placed directly on the floor, or even chipped into the wall of the institution as Lawrence Weiner did.¹⁷⁶ The missing plinths puzzled the viewers in 1969 – to them the white boxes acted as signposts, indicating the ‘art’. Unfortunately, without these signifiers of cultural status the public accidentally destroyed several of the works in the Bern exhibition.¹⁷⁷ It was a large show with 69 artists, but the only white plinths¹⁷⁸ were the two that each contained three of Darboven’s books. Her work was protected from the viewer, utilising a formal method of exhibition display that historically was a signpost for art. Though the piece consisted of reproductions made on cheap standard-sized paper, the finished exhibited work does not sit well with the notion of conceptual art. These were

¹⁷³ For further details on the many books that Darboven published please refer to this terrific chronological source that unfortunately is only in German: Elke Bippus and Ortrud Westheider, *Hanne Darboven Kommentiertes Werkverzeichnis der Bücher*, Walther König, 2002. Her first editioned book ‘1968–77: New York’ (1969) is mentioned on pp.26–29.

¹⁷⁴ Darboven established a long term working relationship with one specific printer who over the years printed her books for her.

¹⁷⁵ Miriam Schoofs, ‘Hanne Darboven: I inscribe, but I describe nothing’, *Flash Art*, no. 288, Jan–Feb 2013, Feature (digital magazine version no page number).

¹⁷⁶ Lawrence Weiner, *A 36" x 36" Removal to the Lathing or Support of Plaster or Wallboard from a Wall*, 1967.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Demand and Rem Koolhaas, ‘Why and How: A Conversation with Germano Celant’, in Germano Celant (ed.), *When Attitudes Become Form Bern 1969 / Venice 2013*, pp.393–421.

¹⁷⁸ Curator Celant about the exhibition ‘When Attitudes Become Form Bern 1969 / Venice 2013’ stated: ‘...like the fact... that there wasn’t a single plinth...’, further highlights how alien Darboven’s plinths were in the show, *ibid.*, p.396.

precious art objects behind glass, safeguarded just as Bochner had done by photocopying the working drawings for his 1966 exhibition, making it possible for him to safely return the originals to their makers. Darboven tightly controlled how the audience experienced her piece. Inherently by looking down at the books the viewer will experience a denial of access to a familiar haptic medium. The exhibited piece displays only one spread in each of the six books. The thick ream of paper that each spine reveals, hints at the information we are denied – are not trusted with.

The piece *Sechs Bücher Über 1968* was also exhibited as a piece of six black and white 16mm cine-films that were also made in 1968. At the recent Hanne Darboven exhibition at Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, they exhibited both the books and films together (image 32). The film version was displayed as six projections positioned in parallel, showing the books page by page.¹⁷⁹ That Darboven decided this early in her career to show these six books as films, suggests to me that she was exploring exhibition methodologies to safeguard her time-consuming work.¹⁸⁰ She was examining how best to look after the original piece while still showing it. Film was one way to avoid any physical viewer interaction with the books while still allowing the piece to be viewed.

¹⁷⁹ In the Museo Reina Sofia 2014 Darboven exhibition, they exhibited both the six books and the six digital projections in the same room. The books were exhibited in two plinths, though unlike the ones in the 1969 'When Attitudes Becomes Form' exhibition, these had clear sides allowing you to see the books from more angles. When you entered the gallery room the six projections faced you and the three books were on each side of the entrance, opposite the projections. Both display methods seem frustrating to the viewer. Though the idea of filming each page seems democratic and manages to show each page, the experience of six projections next to each other negates a focused experience. Instead the digital projections with their cold light and slightly different colour balances, made a dizzying display.

Both films and books were also in the 2012–2013 exhibition 'Materializing 'Six Years': Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art' at the Brooklyn Museum in NYC. An exhibition dedicated to Lippard's curatorial work.

¹⁸⁰ Johannes Cladders notes in the 1969 publication accompanying Darboven's first museum exhibition 'Ausstellung mit 6 Filmprojektoren nach 6 Büchern über 1968' at the Städtische Museum Mönchengladbach that Darboven filmed her books due to the lack of space at the exhibition venue. See Elke Bippus and Ortrud Westheider *Hanne Darboven: Kommentiertes Werkverzeichnis der Bücher*, p.33.

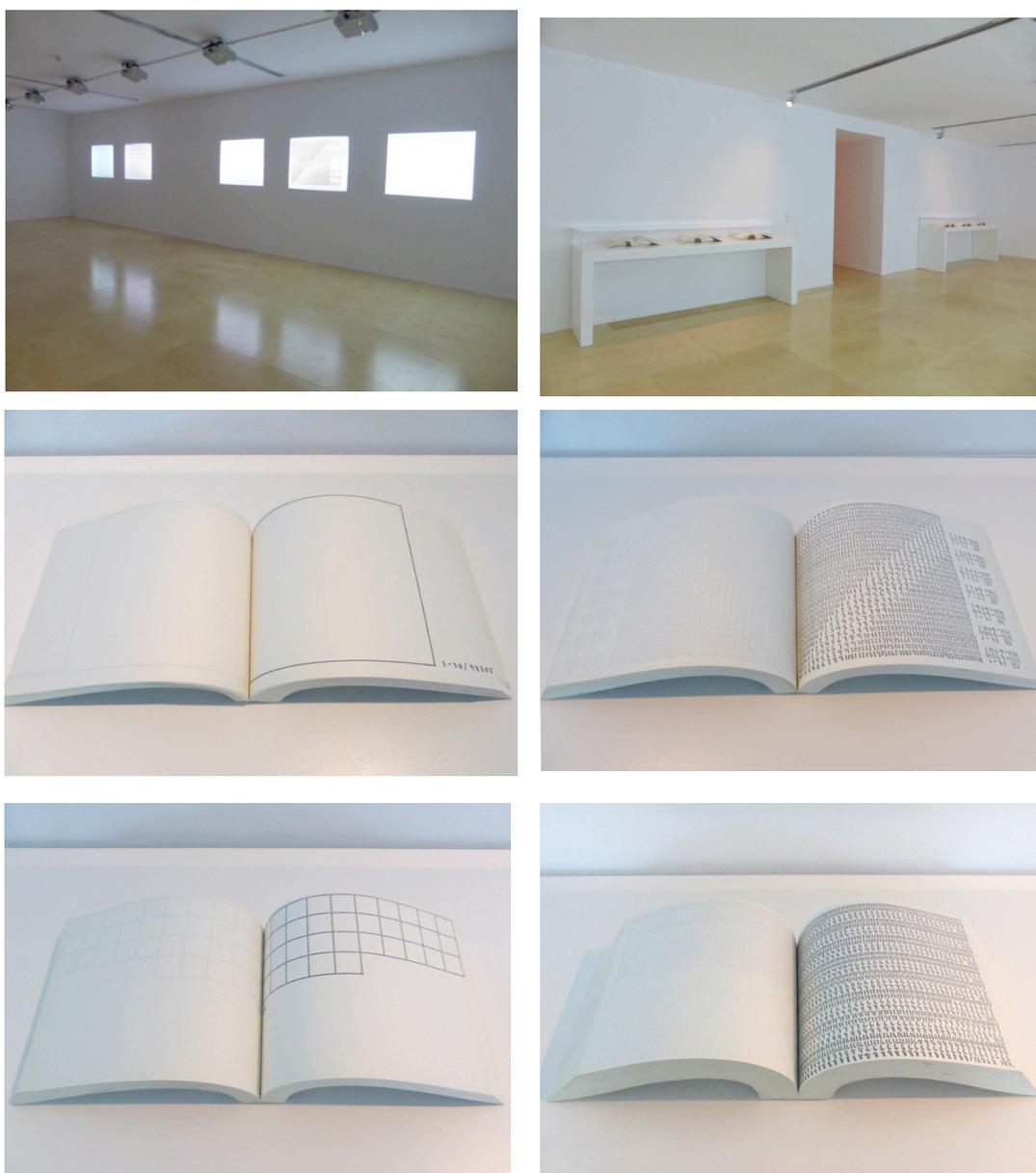


Image 32: Hanne Darboven, *Sechs Bücher* (Six Books), 1968.

Lippard mentions in a 1973 article that books were not present at Darboven's first NYC solo exhibition at the Castelli Gallery:

*...because they have been treated so badly when shown in America.*¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Lippard, 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers', p.35.

This would appear as a key transitional moment, when Darboven's success with exhibiting books that began in 1969, shifts in 1973, since the books have been disrespectfully treated in America.¹⁸² That the book medium became a nuisance to exhibit for Darboven, explains why her exhibition strategies evolved to embrace traditional representational formats for art – framed drawings accompanied by the commodity of a printed book.¹⁸³ The notion of the unique 'artist made' original piece of art, a commercial product, is not in keeping with the aesthetic or idea focused notion of conceptual art. Darboven was keen to exhibit her work, though not in the informal way that her contemporaries did in 'When Attitudes Becomes Form'.

Although Darboven's framed drawings did evolve to become room-sized installations, the action of framing every written-drawing changes everything. By taking single sheets from her books and encasing them in frames that were then hung in grids, wallpapering whole rooms, they became 'walk-in books' – with the neat side effect of further amplifying their commodification. During my conversation with Schoofs, I enquired as to Darboven's framing methodologies. I was keen to discover if there were any records of how she came to the decision to use the traditional frame, in a period when the norm would have been to informally pin a drawing or photograph to the wall. After all, a year earlier in 1968 was when LeWitt did his first wall drawing at the Paula Cooper Gallery. Alas, while her colleagues were experimenting with

¹⁸² Lippard does not clarify when or where Darboven's books got handled badly. These are the American group exhibitions that Darboven participated in between 1967 to 1973.

1967: 'Normal Art', Lannis Museum of Normal Art, New York.

'Art in Series', Finch College Museum, New York.

1968: 'Language II', Dwan Gallery, New York.

1969: 'No. 7', Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

'Language III', Dwan Gallery, New York.

'557,087', Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington.

1970: 'Information', Museum of Modern Art, New York.

'Art Concepts from Europe', Galerie Bonino, New York.

1971: 'Formulation', Addison Gallery, Andover, Massachusetts.

'Guggenheim International Exhibition', Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

1972: 'De Europa', John Weber Gallery, New York.

1973: 'C. 7,500,' Gallery A-402, California Institute of the Arts.

¹⁸³ Lynne Cooke '*...she even once expressed the view that she preferred her work in the format of a handheld book.*', in 'Open Work. Hanne Darboven (1941–2009)', *Artforum*, Summer, 2009, p.58.

liberating the art object, Darboven reversed to the traditional frame on a vast scale.

Why did she choose her numerous frames? Did the idea perhaps originate from the institutions hosting her exhibitions or her gallerist, Konrad Fischer? This was one of my main questions when I visited the Foundation. Unfortunately, Schoofs did not have an answer or any suggestions as to what prompted Darboven to frame her work. She simply, stated '*...there was the book and there was the frames... it is interesting, but I do not know*'.

Together with framing each written-drawing, laying them out bare, Darboven also chose to uncover the key for her writing system, which she named the 'index'.¹⁸⁴ It was disclosed visually as part of each artwork. In her early construction drawings they were registrations in the margin. Darboven's later work exposed the calculations that underpinned each piece on a separate accompanying index page. I have experienced numerous Darboven artworks over the last fifteen years, without remembering having had any inkling to dissect the artwork by using the 'index' as a method. Perhaps this is due to me not being an expert in mathematics, fluent in reading music scores or the German language. There is a comfort in knowing that there is a system, a reason; however, it is liberating not to worry about it. I agree with Lippard when she writes in 1973, '*The systems are accessible, but the least interesting part of the work*'.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Most texts on Darboven's work will give a long detailed account of Darboven's date-based conceptual system. I will refrain from repeating a consistent quoted section that I believe to be of less importance for my argument concerning Darboven's work. I can recommend the following texts on Darboven's 'index': Lippard, 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers', pp.35–39; Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka, *Constructed Literary Musical Hanne Darboven: The Sculpting of Time*, pp.37–41; Anne Rorimer, 'Numbering the Days: Hanne Darboven's Calendar Work', pp.13–14 in Valerie L. Hillings (ed.), *Hanne Darboven: Homage a Picasso*, Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2006. For further detail on how she converted her number structures into music scores, see Klaus Honnef's text quoted by Ann Goldstein in Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer (eds.), *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975*, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995, p.103.

¹⁸⁵ Interestingly Lippard writes this at the end of a five-page article where she has devoted a substantial part to describing Darboven's concepts. Lippard, 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers', p.37.

When contemplating Darboven's work I often wonder if it were acceptable to her that the artworks seem incomprehensible to many of her viewers. Did she mind that her audience did not dissect her 'index' while experiencing her artwork?

To me, it seems likely that Darboven did welcome an opaqueness concerning the interpretation of her work. Though she shows us her index, it does not present us with an understanding of the work. The concept is only half of the story, which was further underlined when she added her found objects and images to her artworks. This I believe is precisely why Darboven does reveal her index. I would argue that her legendary statement '*My secret is that I have none*'¹⁸⁶ rests on her awareness that conceptual art is more than simply the concept that gave birth to the artwork. Or as her close friend LeWitt had stated in 1969 as the first of his thirty-five sentences on conceptual art:

*1 – Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.*¹⁸⁷

I suggest that Darboven understood that numerous viewers would deem the index irrelevant to their experience of her work. On the issue of how to interact with her art, she said in 1994:

*As they want to, it is obvious how to read it. And if not [they can] just look... There is always a start and an end but you don't have to follow it. You can follow the signatures if you want to but you don't have to. It is totally open.*¹⁸⁸

Art historian Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka has stated that Darboven's early Constructions drawings look like a dress pattern (image 33).¹⁸⁹ I do not agree,

¹⁸⁶ Franz Meyer, *Hanne Darboven: Ein Monat, Ein Jahr, Ein Jahrhundert Arbeiten Von 1968 Bis 1974*, Kunstmuseum Basel, 1974, p.11. '*Mein Geheimnis ist, dass ich keines habe*'.

¹⁸⁷ First appeared in *O-9*, no. 5, January 1969, pp.3-5, republished in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp.106-107.

¹⁸⁸ Hanne Darboven interviewed by Mark Gisbourne, 'Time and Time Again', pp.3-6 (quote from p.6).

¹⁸⁹ Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka, 'Constructed Literary Musical: On the System of Writing' in *Constructed Literary Musical – Hanne Darboven – The Sculpting of Time*, p.9.

although I do know of how to construct a piece of clothing using measurements and patterns. My associations with that piece rather belong with technical drawings used within architecture and design. *Working Sheets / Constructions* become plan-drawings that explore designs related to the flow of people in a public square or design choices for paving. These associations demonstrate the human need to make sense of abstract patterns rather than revealing what inspired the artist. My past experiences and knowledge of architectural drawing have influenced

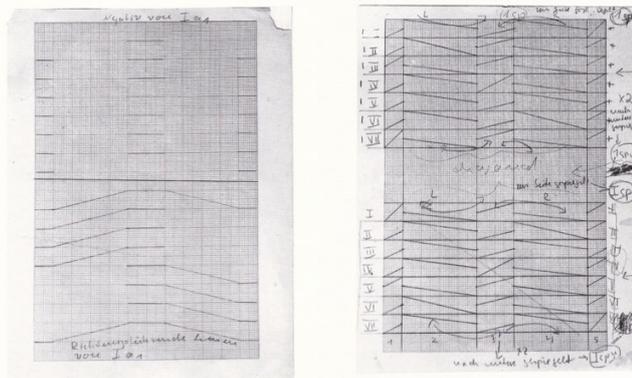


Image 33: Hanne Darboven, *Working Sheets / Constructions*, 1965–1969.

my reading of the artwork and I would suggest that Burgbacher-Krupka might have some knowledge of dressmaking. I believe what was essential for Burgbacher-Krupka and myself in our conscious process of questioning the artwork, was that this handmade artwork resisted any easy deciphering, although we were aware that it was a conceptual artwork.

Darboven acknowledged that her audience could think whatever they wanted, just as Burgbacher-Krupka and I did. It makes me think of Abbie Hoffman's notion of 'Blank Space',¹⁹⁰ an interrupted statement or unsolved puzzle that becomes a transmission of information when the viewer gets an opportunity to become involved as a participant. For Darboven it appears there were many possible interpretations of her artworks, but she deliberately left them to others, while she got on with the writing.

¹⁹⁰ Hoffman was an American activist who in 1968 wrote '*Revolution for the hell of it*' where in the section called 'Blank Space as Communication' introduced the notion of 'blank space' to involve a participant; Abbie Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of it*, Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005, p.81.

Darboven's Contemporaries

In NYC during the 1960s a certain kind of drawing emerged, that Lippard classified as 'permutations'.¹⁹¹ Bochner's 1966 exhibition 'Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art' was the first show perceived to have exhibited this new type of drawing. Owing to the artists Darboven knew and the timing of the exhibition, whilst she was residing in NYC, it seems plausible that she saw this pivotal show. In Lippard's book *Six Years*, where she chronologically describes conceptual art related events during 1966 to 1972, naturally, Bochner's 'Working Drawings' exhibition is listed. However, it is unexpected that it is accompanied with an image of a Darboven work titled *Permutational Drawing, 1966*;¹⁹² her work was not in the show, so why use her drawing to illustrate a show that included numerous other artists?¹⁹³

Darboven is mentioned in the introduction to the 2001 renewed *Six Years* edition, however her first chronological entry in the original 1973 edition is on page 30, where she is referred to in connection with the 1967 opening of the Konrad Fischer gallery.¹⁹⁴ Consequently, Lippard's choice to illustrate a show one year previously with Darboven's work seems inconsistent. This would suggest that Lippard perceived Darboven's work as representative of these new 'permutation' drawings, but it also leaves an intangible connection between Bochner and Darboven that I appreciate. Strictly speaking, these two artists do not have much in common, other than their objections to the

¹⁹¹ First mentioned in the article 'The Dematerialization of Art' (that Lippard co-wrote with John Chandler), *Art International*, February 1968, p.35.

¹⁹² It is strange that Darboven's piece in *Six Years* was called 'permutational drawing' since Darboven's other drawings from this period 1966–1969 are either called *untitled* or titled *Konstruktionen* (Constructions).

¹⁹³ It was not only artists that Bochner had photocopies from as he accumulated one hundred copies. He also included copies from a composer, an architect, a biologist, a mathematician, a choreographer, an engineer and he copied pages from the Scientific American magazine. There was also a copy of the gallery floor plan and the installation diagram for the copy (xerox) machine. Bochner, *Solar System & Rest Rooms*, p.177.

¹⁹⁴ The Düsseldorf gallery opened in October 1967 with a solo show by Carl Andre. The second exhibition at the gallery was Darboven's first solo show in December 1967. Andre has stated that LeWitt was the artist Konrad Fischer wanted to open his new gallery, but LeWitt was too busy.

term conceptual artist and the numerous conceptual exhibitions they have simultaneously shown in. During 1967 they both exhibited in the same two exhibitions¹⁹⁵ during Darboven's stay in NYC, and although Bochner co-curated one of the exhibitions, I have not been able to find any specific reference that they knew each other. According to Schoofs, The Hanne Darboven Foundation's archive has no known holdings indicating that there was any personal correspondence between Darboven and Bochner.¹⁹⁶

What are well documented are Darboven's friendships with the artists LeWitt, Andre and Weiner. In 2006 LeWitt made a reference to his first encounter with Darboven:

*She had a small group of drawings with her which she showed me. I was struck by the originality and depth of the work (...). The scope and elegance of this work and thinking is something one never forgets.*¹⁹⁷

The cerebral connections that LeWitt and Darboven shared, are I believe present in a review of a LeWitt show at the Dawn Gallery in NYC, written by Bochner in 1966. It is remarkable how well these same words would have suited a review of a Darboven exhibition.

*Vision unlocks within impassable areas. There is no invitation. Formality is a guise. Space tenses: past, present-future, plural-present. Perceptual phenomena: indeterminate sequence, infinite invention, coordinate disorder. Everything is still. Everything is repeated. Everything is obvious. The accumulation of facts collapses perception. The indicated sum of these simple series is irreducible complexity. An impenetrable chaos. They astound.*¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ 'Opening Exhibition: Normal Art', The Lannin Museum of Normal Art, NYC, November 1967, and 'Art in Series' Finch College, NYC, November 1967, which was curated by Bochner and Elayne Varian.

¹⁹⁶ However it would appear that there are contradicting accounts here since the Hanne Darboven website states 'In 1966, finally, Darboven moved to New York City where she met American artists and other representators [sic] of the upcoming [sic] Minimal and Conceptual Art such as Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Mel Bochner and Joseph Kosuth', <http://www.hanne-darboven.de> [consulted 13.08.2014].

¹⁹⁷ Deutsche Bank db artmag, <http://db-artmag.com/archiv/2006/e/2/1/418.html> [consulted on 4 April 2013].

¹⁹⁸ Bochner, *Solar System & Rest Rooms*, p.6.

Although, Darboven did not follow LeWitt's example to get involved with the written dissemination of conceptual art, she did take advice from another artist friend Andre,¹⁹⁹ who in those early years in NYC recommended that she never explain her art.²⁰⁰ Wiener appears to have agreed with Andre's guidance, since he has stated in connection with Darboven's work *'It is what it is'*.²⁰¹

In the Smithsonian Archives of American Art where Lippard has donated her archive, there are three letters online from Darboven to Lippard.²⁰² These letters illustrate Darboven's ambition to stay in contact with the people she had befriended in NYC. Visually, they are primarily Darboven artworks and secondly a letter that corresponds. In one, she quotes T.S. Eliot and on several of the pages we recognise her signature cursive scribbled 'UUUUU' (image 34). The only direct reference to the business of art is a thanks to Lippard for writing about her work, and a mention of receiving *Artforum* that same day. In October 1973 *Artforum* published Lippard's article 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers'. It seems safe to assume that this is the writing that Darboven is referring to in her letter dated third and fourth of October 1973. Lippard's five-page article is richly

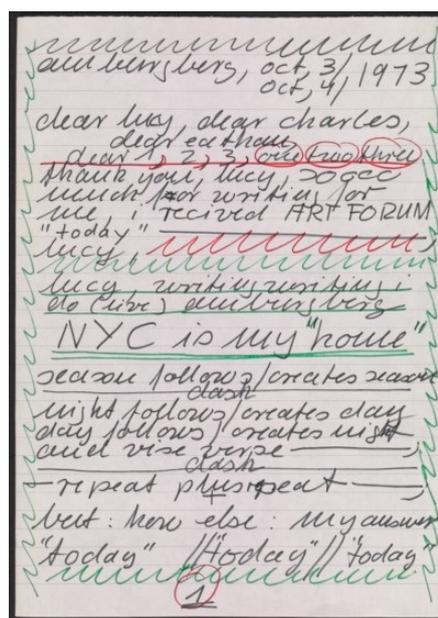


Image 34: Hanne Darboven's letter to Lucy R. Lippard and Charles Simonds, 1973 Oct. 3 & 4, this is the first page of three

¹⁹⁹ Carl Andre is another artist that does not consider himself to be a conceptual artist; *'I am certainly no kind of conceptual artist because the physical existence of my work cannot be separated from the idea of it'*. Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol.8, no.10, June 1970, pp.55–61 (p.60).

²⁰⁰ *'There is the concept and the period of its execution. I feel that I don't have to defend myself – 'never apologise and never explain'. This is not my saying, I took it from Carl Andre in the 1970s but now I repeat it daily which is a good thing: never, never explain.* Darboven in a 1994 interview with critic Gisbourne, 'Time and Time Again', p.6.

²⁰¹ *Deutsche Bank db artmag*, <http://db-artmag.com/archiv/2006/e/2/1/418.html> [consulted 04.04.2013].

²⁰² <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/images/detail/hanne-darboven-letter-to-lucy-r-lippard-and-charles-simonds-15056> [consulted 24.06.2014].

illustrated with nine documentations of Darboven's art. It is an article that has since been repeatedly quoted in English disseminations of her work. It gives a detailed account of Darboven's conceptual number based system and generously quotes the artist herself.

I believe Darboven's early line drawings made between 1966 and 1967 (image 35), connect with the work of Agnes Martin and Eva Hesse, who both also worked in NYC during that period. I wonder if these three artists knew each other? If they did, there could be a potential for a shared aesthetic, which could imply a broader NYC influence on Darboven's practice than the male conceptual artists noted so far.

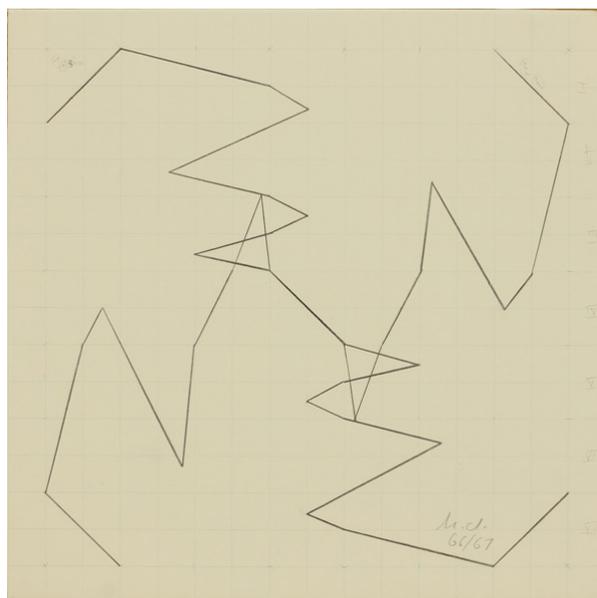


Image 35: Hanne Darboven, *Untitled (Drawing New York 1)*, 1966.

In her article 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers' Lippard mentions Hesse in relation to the positivity of absurdities in repetition, and art historian Briony Fer connects Martin, Hesse and Darboven in a 2004 chapter entitled 'The Infinite Line'.²⁰³ Unfortunately, no proof has emerged to suggest that Darboven did meet Martin or fellow German artist Hesse, who also had links to Hamburg; as of now there are no such records. However, it would be exceedingly unlikely that she did not experience their work, especially that of Hesse who Darboven showed work with in the 1967 exhibition 'Art in

²⁰³ Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line. Re-Making Art After Modernism*, Yale University Press, 2004, pp.61–63. Two years later Fer includes Darboven in her chapter 'Drawing Drawing: Agnes Martin's Infinity' in Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (eds.), *Women Artists at the Millennium*, The MIT Press, 2006, pp.184–185.

Series',²⁰⁴ plus the fact that they inhabited the same NYC art scene between 1966 and 1968.

What the historical records do emphasise is that Darboven's artist friends were male. Her choice could be viewed as a clever career strategy in the 1960s, when the demographic of successful artists were mainly white and male. I have found no known records that indicate it was a deliberate strategy, though it is notable that in the 1960s some critics²⁰⁵ dismissed Darboven's early work as 'woman's work'. Darboven was aware of these critics suggesting that her practice related to the stereotypical notion of females 'keeping hands busy'. She responded by announcing she was a 'queen worker',²⁰⁶ essentially dismissing her critics. This is in keeping with Schoofs recollections that she '*was a fascinating rigid lady, even severe.*' Darboven's long-term gallerist Konrad Fischer, a key figure for establishing conceptual art,²⁰⁷ and who also gave Darboven her first solo exhibition in 1967, noted in 2000:

'I had a fight only once, that was with Hanne Darboven. It was her fault, she was very difficult.' In a slight understatement, he added, '*With Richter I fight at least once a year, but that's different...*'.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ The exhibition was shown at Finch College, New York. Mel Bochner was also showing work in the exhibition and wrote about it in the often-quoted article 'The Serial Attitude', *Artforum*, December 1967.

²⁰⁵ Such as John Anthony Thwaites in his article 'The Numbers Game', *Art and Artists*, January 1972, vol.6, no.10, issue 70, pp.24–25: '*Otherwise – it is a danger she must face – her work could easily degenerate into a Higher knitting, with the female quality of patience, detail – and, not much else. A pioneer or a Penelope of the 20th century?*'.

²⁰⁶ Noted by curator Schoofs at the Hanne Darboven UCL symposium in 2012.

²⁰⁷ He was also instrumental in conceptual art being bought by museum institutions and major private collectors. In 1967 Darboven had her first solo exhibition 'Hanne Darboven – Konstruktionen – Zeichnungen' at the Konrad Fischer gallery in Düsseldorf, Germany.

²⁰⁸ Daniel Birnbaum, 'Art and the Deal', *Artforum*, vol.38, no.6, 2000, p.17.

Chapter Three.
**HANNE DARBOVEN –
COLLECTING CONTRADICTIONS**

Public Image

Early in 2012 University College London held a one-day Hanne Darboven symposium, which coincided with a rare British solo exhibition at Camden Art Centre.²⁰⁹ The majority of speakers that day surprised me by including a substantial amount of biographical reference about Darboven in their presentations.²¹⁰ To me at the time, it appeared to undermine a focused attention on Darboven's practice. It was intriguing to see images of her home-studio, hear about her family relationships and her tightly structured daily routines. However, as a fellow artist I thought it was an awkward focus in the context of an academic symposium that family history and weekly rhythms took precedence over practice, when the autobiographical had not been a subject matter for the artist. I left the symposium disappointed, with thoughts of gossip magazines and 'lifted curtains', rather than with a concise concept of why the speakers had included the biographical.

It was a subsequent visit to Darboven's home-studio in early 2014 that altered my opinion, when I had to recognise that the biographical should not be circumvented when examining Darboven's art, especially when the artist herself appears to have made no such division. There are many examples to support this argument, such as the book Darboven published of her handwritten letters, which were personal records of her everyday life that she had sent home to her parents during her years in NYC.²¹¹ She had a close relationship to her parents; indeed this could be seen as her main relationship during her lifetime.²¹²

²⁰⁹ The only other Darboven solo exhibition in a British public institution was at Museum of Modern Art, Oxford in 1973. It is interesting to speculate why this artist with an exceptional exhibition pedigree spanning both Europe and the USA, has received so little attention in Britain.

²¹⁰ The Darboven symposium was held at University College London organised and introduced by Professor Briony Fer and Camden Art Centre Director Jenni Lomax. The presenters were: Curator Miriam Schoofs, PhD Candidate Linzi Stauvers, Dr. Petra Lang-Berndt, Curator Lynda Morris, Artist Antoni Malinowski, Professor Margaret Iversen. It was noticeable that out of the eight speakers that day only one was a man.

²¹¹ Hanne Darboven, *Hanne Darboven: Briefe aus New York*, Hatje Cantz, 1997.

²¹² According to Schoofs there is a book in the planning stage, soon to be published by König that will focus on Darboven's correspondence. These letters have not previously been made public and are

There are also several of her artworks that refer to her family and their home. One such piece is *FRIEDRICH II, HARBURG 1986* (image 36 and 37). It consists of 398 prints of the same photograph: a street scene in black and white where each image has hand-drawn text directly on the surface. The text varies on each photo according to Darboven's concept.²¹³ When



Image 36: Hanne Darboven, *FRIEDRICH II, HARBURG 1986*, 1986.

contemplating the installation of the framed photos, in a grid on the wall, they become synonymous. Clearly the writing is not the same on each photograph, but our mind are lazy, and quickly let us believe that the framed images with texts are identical. The photograph is the same, and the cursive handwritten text becomes an inferior component, which in a split second our mind negotiates as less important. In a book format we would have deliberated each image in a different way, and scrutinised it longer – by holding it in our hands, the detail of the written would have been allowed more emphasis.



Image 37: Hanne Darboven, *FRIEDRICH II, HARBURG 1986*, (Detail) 1986.

likely to uncover more about the private life of Hanne Darboven. It will include love letters, rumoured to include LeWitt and Andre.

²¹³ For an account of Darboven's method for this piece and documentation of each image, please refer to Burgbacher-Krupka, *Constructed Literary Musical Hanne Darboven: The Sculpting of Time*, pp.77–115. Interestingly, the short text accompanying the documentation does not mention that Harburg was where Darboven had lived since her childhood, though it does state '...a street scene at Harburg, to judge by its title...' p.79.

This is not a book but a wall piece. We are not holding the work in our hands intimately interacting with it, instead our bodies engage in a physical interaction, which involves our whole body navigating the environment that both we and the artwork share. We can step away to get a better view or overview, or walk up close to be able to make out the writing, thereby losing track of the overall image.

The title *FRIEDRICH II, HARBURG 1986* hints at the significance of this specific black and white image to the artist. It is not a randomly found photograph of any western urban street scene. Hanne Darboven's family home is in Harburg, in the suburbs of Hamburg, Germany. Today, these buildings are the headquarters of the Hanne Darboven Foundation. Her home-studio has been left exactly as they were when she passed away in 2009. It was Darboven's wish that the environment where she had worked was left intact. The Foundation's director is a distant family member, a businessman with a coffee company, without any specialist knowledge of art. Several people work for the Foundation and when I visited in early 2014 Miriam Schoofs kindly showed me around.



Image 38: The Hanne Darboven Foundation, Harburg, Hamburg (Germany), February 2014.

The Foundation consists of an expanded plot – a patchwork of four buildings that nest closely together. The main home for the Darboven family was the 17th century barn house with a thatched roof and patterned red brickwork, intersected by timber-framing (image 38). It oozes living history, human stories

and haptic knowledge – as far removed from Le Corbusier and white minimal interiors as is physically possible.²¹⁴

In the back garden I was greeted by Gertrude, Darboven's cat named after the writer Gertrude Stein. It was eager to get a bit of attention, to Schoofs' surprise. Gertrude was known for being selective in its human interaction, in contrast to the two goats, who quickly came to join us in the afternoon sun. These would most likely both be Mickey, the name that Darboven repeatedly chose for her beloved pet goats. They reminded me of Darboven's 2006 artwork *Hommage à Picasso, 1995–2006*, where a bronze goat by the artist Wolfgang Binding is in dialogue with 9,720 sheets of written-drawings encased in 270 frames (image 39).



Image 39:
Hanne Darboven, *Hommage à Picasso, 1995–2006*,
Deutsche Guggenheim, 2006.



Darboven's home-studio in Hamburg.

On seeing the bronze goat in the installation, wrapped by frames, we may think of Picasso's *She-Goat* from 1950.²¹⁵ Both artists had pet goats that

²¹⁴ Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier (1887–1965), one of the pioneers of modern architecture and urban planning.

²¹⁵ The *She-Goat* was originally made from a palm leaf, flowerpots, a wicker basket, strips of metal and plaster. Picasso went on to make two bronze cast of the original; one is in the collection of the

effectively became artist's muses.²¹⁶ Later that afternoon, walking around Darboven's home-studio, Mickey was everywhere – from the little wooden framed drawing of a goat, to the two full-scale bronzes. In the passageway between two extensions, there was a sign on the door to the garden saying *Mama Micky und Klein Micky* (Mummy Mickey and Little Micky), and the wall next to the door was full of framed photographs of goats, reminiscent of any family-album snaps. It appears that once again a Darboven artwork combines what is a highly personal and emotional subject matter with her strict conceptual numeral systems that are logical and systematically executed.²¹⁷

The public portraits of Darboven, which regularly show her wearing tailor-made men's suits, fit neatly with the dry and serious aesthetic of her art. These portraits appear to succinctly negate any stereotypical notions of how we expect a female artist to present herself. The status of an artist's image gained a new intensity in 1960s NYC, when Andy Warhol converted the artist's image into branding. The more I research Darboven the more Warhol appears as a ghost. In my conversation with curator Miriam Schoofs, I mention Warhol and she responded by mentioning that Darboven had been ill since her childhood and her bad health complicated her whole life. Schoofs simply noted that '*Darboven had to find an aim or an interest and a job to do in her life for her own – for her conditions*'.²¹⁸ I deliberately did not ask for a clarification. We both respectfully left these biographical details unexamined, and focused on the practice of artist Hanne Darboven.

I would suggest that Darboven was meticulous in how she defined herself as an artist. In NYC, she developed the art methodologies that she would

Musée Picasso, Paris and the other is in New York at the Museum of Modern Art's sculpture garden.

²¹⁶ For an extended text on the artwork *Hommage à Picasso* see Valerie L. Hillings, 'A Portrait of the Artists: Hanne Darboven's *Hommage à Picasso*' in Hillings (ed.), *Hanne Darboven: Hommage à Picasso*, pp.41–47.

²¹⁷ I could also have mentioned Darboven's 1989 piece *Existenz* (Existence) that include one of her Mickey goats stuffed.

²¹⁸ In conversation with Schoofs at the Hanne Darboven Foundation on the 25 February 2014.

continue to build on during her whole career. It would seem likely that in this same period she created her own artist's image in preparation for the challenges of her return to the family home. The coffee trade was the Darboven family business, making me inclined to believe that the importance of a 'unique selling point' was self-evident to Darboven.²¹⁹ She knew the power of advertisement and the positive effect that a strong image could have on her career. Perhaps advertisement is too commercial and direct a word – I use it here more in its capacity as a public announcement, which in Darboven's case was cerebral, never shouting or colourful, but understated; when I arrived at the Hanne Darboven Foundation there was no signage on the road.



Image 40: The paving that welcomes you at the Hanne Darboven Stiftung.

However, as I walked toward the houses, there under my feet in the elaborate pavement, was a circular compass star (image 40). It has at its centre Darboven's 'logo', which she also used as her personal ink stamp (image 41) since she conceived it in 1976.²²⁰ What I refer to as her 'logo' is a visual representation of her concept in its most reduced form. References have been made to Gertrude Stein's '*rose is a rose is a rose is a rose*' as

²¹⁹ Signage from the family business, in the form of advertisements with the Darboven company name such as calendars, is regularly present in Darboven's artworks.

²²⁰ Sibylle Omlin, 'My Work Ends in Music: Hanne Darboven's Notations as Musical Works', *Parkett*, no.67, May 2003, p.127.

Darboven's inspiration for the circular design,²²¹ although essentially it is, at its most fundamental, a representation of the structure that underpins all her work. There is no doubt that Hanne Darboven was a distinctive character, defying neat classifications, which she used to distil a recognisable image, if not a brand. Like Warhol, she skillfully knew how to consciously capitalise on eccentricity.²²²

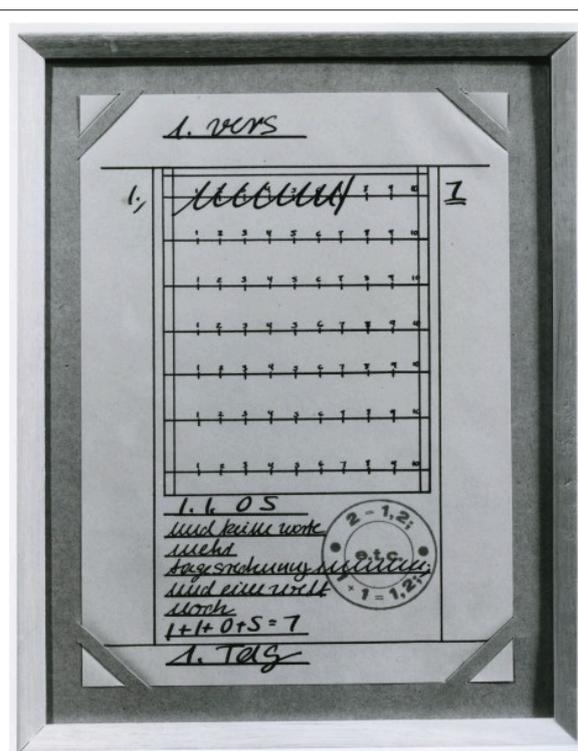


Image 41: Hanne Darboven, *For Jean-Paul Sartre* (detail), 1976.

²²¹ Coosje van Bruggen. 'Today Crossed Out, an Introduction by Coosje van Bruggen to Today, a Project by Hanne Darboven', *Artforum*, vol.26, no.5, January 1988, pp.70–73. See also footnote 165 where Lippard refer to Darboven's letters being 'Steinian'.

²²² However, when I mention Warhol in relation to Darboven, I want to emphasise that I do not agree with Sven Spieker's suggestion that Darboven's work is didactic in the sense of Warhol's negation of expressiveness. See Sven Spieker, 'Speaking From Within the System: Hanne Darboven's 'Didactic' Art', in the exhibition catalogue João Fernandes (ed.), *The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2014, pp.93–105. Spieker's chapter on Darboven that mentions Warhol continuously, was published a couple of months after my visit to the foundation and hence had not informed my question to Schoofs.

Methodologies of Collecting

Generally, the art historical dissemination of Darboven's work focuses on her conceptual system of writing and its dependency on her epic singular devotion to labour. The other element in her practice, her use of second-hand objects and images, has until recently been marginalised if not outright overlooked.²²³ Darboven's early construction drawings in the 1960s that Lippard termed 'permutation drawing' represented high culture, the avant-garde, at its most refined and perhaps inaccessible.²²⁴ Darboven's later artworks from the 1980s and onwards appear more accessible to their audience due to the inclusion of 'popular culture' in the forms of found objects and images.



Image 42: Documentation from Darboven's home-studio, images from the Hanne Darboven website [June 2014].

²²³ The 2014 Hanne Darboven Renia Sofia exhibition was the first time that sections of Darboven's studio collections have been on public display. The exhibition was accompanied by a richly illustrated publication with photographs from Darboven's home-studio and contextualised with texts by Miriam Schoofs, João Fernandes, Sven Spieker, Matt Mullican, and Harald Flackenberg. Prior to this publication Dan Adler wrote in 2009 intensively on Darboven's 1983 piece *Cultural History 1880–1983*, which is the Darboven work that contains the most items and images from her collections.

²²⁴ Permutations is first mentioned in connection to Darboven's work in the article 'The Dematerialization of Art' (Lippard and Chandler, *Art International*, February 1968, p.35), which contained a photo of *Serial drawing a* 1967 Darboven drawing. By 1973 Lippard included a similar Darboven drawing, dated 1966, in her book *Six Years* to illustrate a Bochner exhibition as referred to on p.109: the drawing titled 'Permutational Drawing', is not a Darboven title previously used.

Most of us may be collectors of one kind or another, though Darboven took on the task with typical dedication and professionalism.²²⁵ Her living and working environment was not minimal. Instead, it was a cluttered space, with kitsch second-hand objects occupying every inch of vertical and horizontal surface. This is an environment where objects have precedence (image 42). As I entered a little room on my visit, a children's chair was unexpectedly situated just inside the door entrance – a sure trip hazard for the less alert. Darboven would fill a room, and then merely build new rooms when she ran out of space, as the several extensions to the 17th century barn document. The result is a labyrinth of spaces, housing an accumulation of stuff. When during my visit I walked along the narrow carved out paths, it was noticeable that these objects were not covered in deep layers of dust; they are actively cared for.²²⁶ It is a seductive place that emanates inclusiveness – full of textures, colours and narratives. Everything that one does not associate with Darboven's artworks. However, there is one mutual feature that is evident in both her artworks and her home-studio collections, a passionate commitment with boundless ambition.

Darboven's vast and diverse collections of things were sustained by a habitually rigid system of afternoon 'antik'²²⁷ shopping with her mother. Obtaining used objects was an integral part of her practice; mornings were spent conceptually 'writing', while afternoons were seemingly more 'playful' sourcing these ostensibly random objects. Darboven's amalgamation of two seemingly separate methods was evident on my visit to her home-studio. Between the objects and her many writing desks are snippets of her own art.²²⁸ If Darboven sold an artwork and missed it she would simply make a

²²⁵ She established a long term working relationship with a local 'antik' (second-hand) shop owner who would source objects for her.

²²⁶ I should note here that these observations relate to my own studio collections of stuff that to my exasperation always appear to make great friends with dust.

²²⁷ *Antik* is the German word for antique. In German an *antik* shop is similar to an English second-hand shop that also stock cheap kitsch objects and items from house clearances.

²²⁸ There were also artworks by fellow artists and friends like On Kawara and LeWitt.

copy, so she could have it hanging in her home-studio.²²⁹ The piece *FRIEDRICH II, HARBURG 1986* mentioned early, concealed the ceiling in one room (image 43, top left).



Image 43: Some of Darboven's own artworks on display in her home-studio among her collected objects. The two top images are quick snaps made on my visit in February 2014. The bottom image is from the Hanne Darboven website [June 2014].

²²⁹ I explore Darboven's method of copying in Chapter Four.

Another piece I was especially happy to spot was *Quartett >88<* (Quartet ›88‹), which was neatly nesting in the space under the handrail on the staircase (image 43, top right and bottom). It is the only piece in her oeuvre that explicitly focuses on women.²³⁰

By the late 1970s Darboven had already established the three elements that she would continue to combine with her conceptual 'writing'. They consisted of collected imagery and objects, copied text by known authors, and music both in the written form and performed.²³¹ Initially in 1973, she incorporated written texts by various authors, philosophers, scientists, politicians, and artists.²³² Darboven would also centre a whole artwork on one writer such as in the 1976 piece *Für Jean-Paul Sartre* (For Jean-Paul Sartre) that hinged on the French philosopher (image 41 and 43).²³³

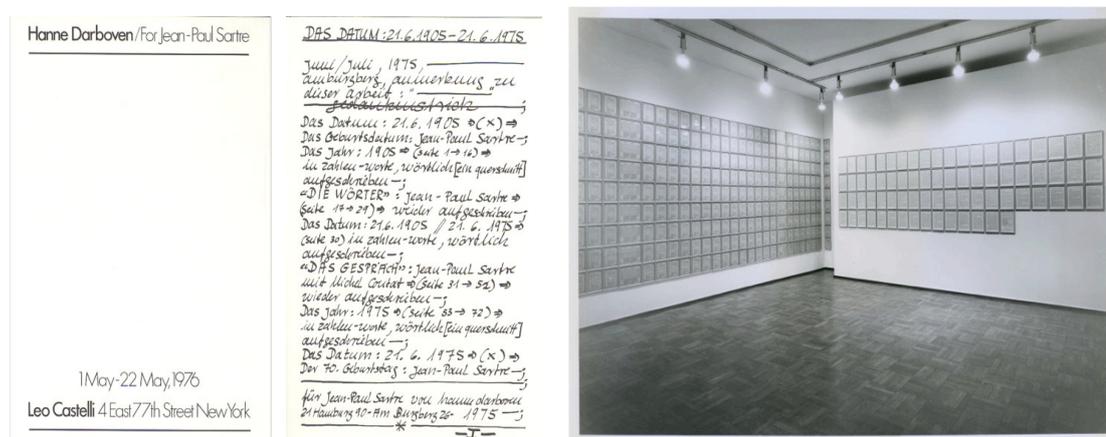


Image 44: Hanne Darboven, *For Jean-Paul Sartre*, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, 1976.

²³⁰ *Quartet >88<* include photographs of Marie Curie (1867–1934), Rosa Luxemburg (1870–1919), Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941). Darboven also includes typed life references for each women's birth year and year of death and at the end has an English and German version of Stein's *A Birthday book* from 1957. *Quartet >88<* is also a hardback book of 748 pages published by Walter König in 1990.

²³¹ *Wende >80<* (Turning Point ›80‹) 1981, is the first piece where Darboven uses text together with her number method of time to create a musical score. The text is a conversation between the two German politicians Helmut Schmidt and Franz Josef Strauss.

²³² Further examined in Chapter Four.

²³³ Darboven's first piece to incorporate authors' writings was *Odyssey* 1971.

In a 1984 interview Darboven's shared her deliberations concerning the piece, which highlights how her choice of text to copy was a calculated precise decision:

... I did a huge work for Sartre and at the time that I did it, in 1975, it was a most delicate time to be writing a work for Jean-Paul Sartre, especially in Germany. So I felt that I had to get his personal signature and approval for it in order to show it at Leo Castelli's Gallery in New York. I got it via Giselle Freunde and Simone de Beauvoir. These things today are totally unknown, that is what it meant at the time of the Cold War.²³⁴

During 1978 Darboven started incorporating found images and objects into her work, and shortly thereafter in 1979 she made musical transformations from her number system.²³⁵ *Bismarckzeit* (The Time of Bismarck) was her first artwork that incorporated a found object that in addition was an item made by another artist. *The Time of Bismarck* was exhibited at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum (Bonn) in spring 1979. The piece consists of 917 'written' drawings and a copper statue of Bismarck made by the artist Max Klein (1847–1908).

The statue depicts Germany's first chancellor Otto von Bismarck²³⁶ with his dog Tyras, renowned for always accompanying him (image 45a+b). This was a public bronze statue known as 'Bismarck' that from 1897 to the Second World War was situated at the Bismarckplatz in Berlin, Germany.²³⁷ When Darboven used the statue in her artwork it was literally a found object that was well known – a famous 'found' object.

²³⁴ Darboven's explanation stated in an interview with Gisbourne, 'Time and Time Again', p.4.

²³⁵ For an extended explanation of how Darboven converted her number system to music notes read Omlin's piece 'My Work Ends in Music: Hanne Darboven's Notations As Musical Works', pp.128–129.

²³⁶ Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), he united the then many small German states into one powerful German empire. In his unification of Germany he initiated wars with Denmark, Austria, and France. He was a conservative and a Lutheran Christian.

²³⁷ The statue was melted down during the war. Today the statue is back in place at Bismarckplatz. A recreation of Max Klein's statue was commissioned in 1996 and made by Harald Haacke.

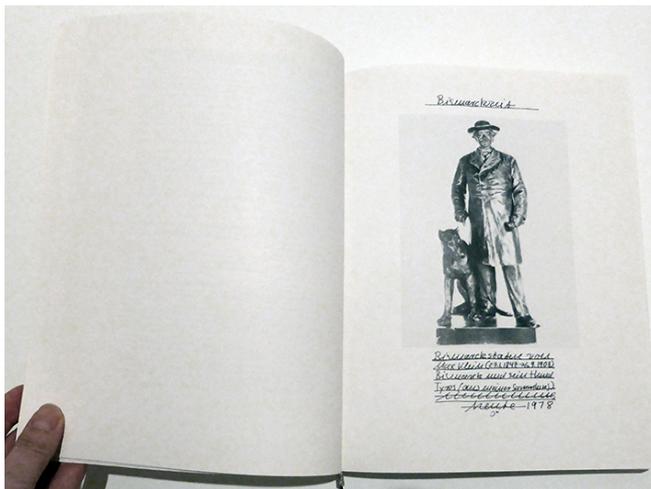


Image 45a: Max Klein, *Bismarck*, photo from 1902, Landesarchiv Berlin.

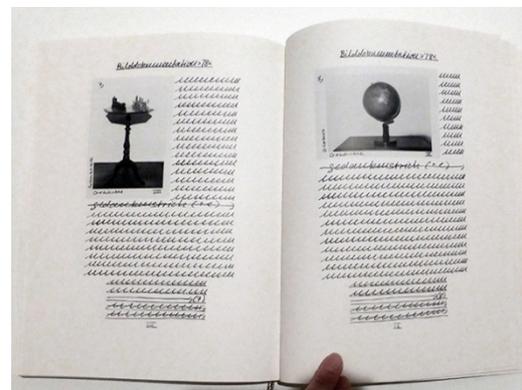
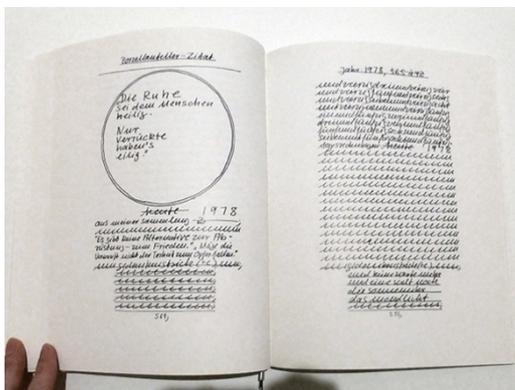


Image 45b: These spreads are from the book *Bismarckzeit* (The Time of Bismarck) that accompanied the Bonn exhibition in 1979.

I want to turn to Darboven's friend Lawrence Weiner, to further examine her method of collecting and its function among her conceptual written-drawings. You may assume that an artist like Weiner, who solely makes his artworks from words, would be keen to debate prose or literary influences, but you would be wrong. Weiner is a veteran at speaking about his work, which he demonstrates by derailing any attempt to clarify the meaning of a specific artwork – instead, his focus is on art in general.²³⁸ Weiner sees himself as a sculptor whose materials are words. This influential artist, who is associated with original conceptual art, surprisingly states '*art is about materials*', and

²³⁸ I attended an in-conversation between writer and art critic Gilda Williams and Weiner at South London Gallery on Saturday the 27 September 2014. The event was in conjunction with Weiner's solo exhibition at the gallery, 26 September to 23 November 2014. All quotes made in the above paragraph are from this one event.

that artists '*manipulate materials*', preferably familiar materials – the everyday object. Weiner also highlights the importance that the artist '*deals with what is in front of him*'. These points on art making fits with Darboven's use of the found object, image, and music,²³⁹ for they were all intricately part of her everyday life.

Similarly, I would suggest that Darboven's methods of collecting relate to how I use the digital notebook app Evernote.²⁴⁰ I make notes using the digital app to remember anything that could have potential relevance to my research – web pages, tweets, PDFs, emails, magazine and newspaper articles, photographs, written notes, and audio recordings. They have accumulated to form a collection of over 4,000 digital items. Some of these notes I used to write this thesis, others will generate concepts for future artworks, but the vast amount will never be used. Likewise Darboven was apparently involved in continuous enquiry, where she would acquire stuff as she came across it. There are some types of imagery or objects that reappear, indicating some specificity, such as the goats, though I believe that a substantial part of her methodology of collecting would have been down to a gut-feeling²⁴¹ – a sensibility that does not lend itself to the logic of words or concepts. The critic Hal Foster noted in 2004 the importance of human interpretation in contemporary art methodologies related to the archival:

*The archives at issue here are not databases in this sense; they are recalcitrantly material, fragmentary rather than fungible, and as such they call out for human interpretation, not machine reprocessing.*²⁴²

In my studio collection of found objects, there are numerous seeds for future works and walking among Darboven's stuff, I thought exactly the same –

²³⁹ Darboven had played music since childhood and had originally been interested in a career as a pianist.

²⁴⁰ Evernote [<https://evernote.com>] is a Californian company that started in 2007. Its digital apps for smartphones, tablets and computers are used by 100 million users worldwide.

²⁴¹ I prefer the everyday word 'gut-feeling', though in psychology and neuroscience they call it interoceptive awareness; those feelings that are mental though simultaneously on the cusp of being physical. I elaborate on the notion of gut-feelings in the fourth chapter.

²⁴² Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October*, vol.110, Autumn 2004, p.5.

there was an air of 'artworks yet to be', rather than a notion of defined museum treasures. This dormant prospect that can enable an artwork is also present in my many digital notes; there are connections that will happen, due to the searchable digital interface, where a random word can conjure up brilliant connections. Darboven, too, established a methodology of collecting that embraced the latent possibilities of complex networks. Her collections were on display in her working and living environment, for her to enjoy I am sure, though essentially to be the stuff artworks are made from. How many of us would built an extension rather than put some of our stuff in storage or send it to the charity shop? Darboven would, and did build several extensions over the years to enable her collections to be on display.²⁴³ This I believe illustrates the importance Darboven gave to her collected stuff forming diverse constellations, to ensure the construction of nonlinear dialogues that defy logic.

Darboven's methodology of collecting represents a social element to her practice. Each of these collected secondhand items speaks of human interactions, be it the object's maker, past owner, the people that introduced her to the objects, or her mother's companionship on their shared shopping trips. In contrast, Darboven's writing method is antisocial. A singularly introverted, precise moment that she dedicates to a specific task. Embedded in Darboven's studio collections are the freedoms of human collaboration and interdisciplinary connections – a hand reaching out. It is not a logical archival effort with a singular result. Instead, it is an archaeological exploration that embraces the nonlinear, the colourful and textural in an effort to excavate the debris of human pursuits.

²⁴³ For an extended history of Darboven's life and home-studio do see Schoof's detailed account in "My Studio Am Burgberg": Hanne Darboven's Home and Studio as the Nucleus of her Oeuvre and Individual Cosmos', in the exhibition catalogue Fernandes (ed.), *The Order of Time and Things*, pp.14–37.

Welcoming Second-Hand Objects

Easy accessibility eludes the work of Darboven. Her cerebral conceptual work is too stringently repetitive, minimal, and opaque – the one concession is her use of found objects and images. When slotted in between her wall-hung written-drawing installations, her everyday collected items annoy and seduce me in equal measures. I enjoy her pre-1968 *Konstruktion* (Construction) drawings (image 46) that simply consist of lines and numbers on paper; initially her use of the ‘readymade’ appeared to me as distractions, which got in the way of an intense cerebral puzzle.²⁴⁴ I have grown to like these later artworks too, although I am curious what motivated Darboven to combine the collected items with her conceptual paper-based methods.

In my practice the conceptual leads to two different methodologies; one involves prolonged solitary making and the other, used for my sculptures, hinges on teamwork with specialist professionals. Darboven similarly appears to have different methodologies for her written-drawings and found objects. Her writing is a solitary process, set within tight structures where the singular focus is on the collaboration between mind and hand.²⁴⁵ By contrast, Darboven’s

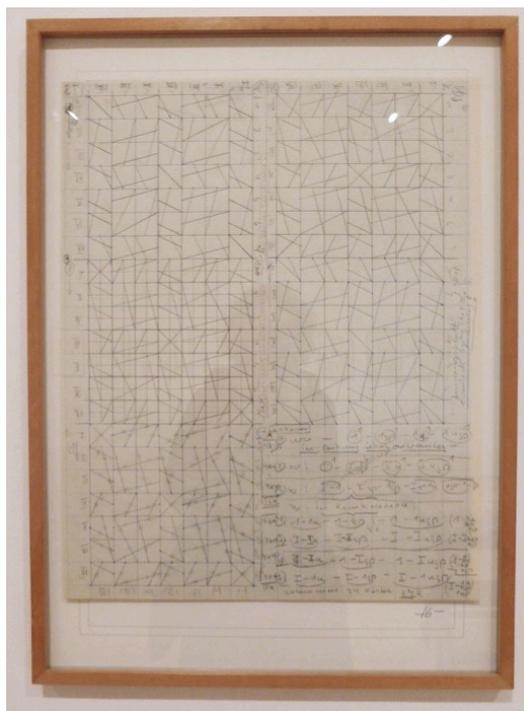


Image 46: Hanne Darboven, *Construction*
New York, 1966–67.

²⁴⁴ I should note here that my dissertation *Steppingstones of Boredom* at the Royal College of Art studied boredom in contemporary art where I briefly examined Darboven’s work. Hence, I am well aware that the flip side of an ‘intense cerebral experience’ is the potential that some viewers will experience boredom.

²⁴⁵ Chapter Four examines Darboven’s methodology of writing.

collecting embraces people, through relationships with her mother and the different networks she established to source second-hand objects in both Hamburg and NYC.

A year after *The Time of Bismarck*, Darboven started to work on possibly her best-known artwork *Kulturgeschichte 1880–1983* (Cultural History 1980–1983), made between 1980 and 1983. It is a monumental piece that incorporates nineteen second-hand objects with 1,589 panels of works on paper, and almost exclusively featuring found visual materials such as catalogue clippings, magazines, patterns, photographs, postcards and posters. It is hard to discern whether this is Darboven's best-known piece simply because it has the greatest amount of diverse visual imagery and objects of all her artworks. Or if indeed the fame is due to the esteemed Dia Art Foundation collection owning one edition of the piece.²⁴⁶ This work might appear to be the obvious choice for an exploration of the function of Darboven's found images and objects, but rather than join the rich written dissemination of *Cultural History 1880–1983*,²⁴⁷ I want to move beyond one artwork to focus on her overall practice. To help me do this I will examine a recent and unique Darboven exhibition.

In 2014 the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid curated the uniquely accessible Darboven exhibition 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven'.²⁴⁸ The curator João Fernandes had chosen groupings from Darboven's extensive collections that were then

²⁴⁶ The Dia Art Foundation consists of two sites Dia:Beacon and Dia:Chelsea. When they first showed 'Cultural History 1880-1983' between 28 March 1996 – 29 June 1997 it was exhibited at Dia: Chelsea in downtown Manhattan, NYC. It was later installed on long-term display between May 2003 – March 2005 at their Dia:Beacon location outside NYC.

²⁴⁷ The Dan Adler book that comprehensively examines the piece, without being blinded by Darboven's early association with conceptual art, is highly recommended. Dan Adler, *Hanne Darboven Cultural: History 1880-1983*, Afterall Books, 2009.
See also: Michael Newman, 'Remembering and Repeating: Hanne Darboven's Work', in Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly (eds.), *Robert Lehman Lectures on Contemporary Art, Vol.2*, Dia Art Foundation, 2004, pp.123–154.

²⁴⁸ 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven' was exhibited from 26 March till 1 September 2014. The exhibition was advertised online in February 2014 under the title 'Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven'.

meticulously exhibited alongside a broad selection of her artworks (image 47). It was a large exhibition that for the first time truly exposed the autobiographical elements in her work. In the Museo Reina Sofia's minimalist white exhibition spaces Darboven's collected objects visually confronted the viewer – dark heavy old-fashioned furniture, a stuffed monkey, a German police shirt hanging on the back of a chair, small wooden frames with photos of goats, an address book with pencil writing, a cut crystal bowl, a loupe, a selection of candles, wall hung frames, and much, much more. The positioning of each group of objects, remotely against the wall with a notable large gap, made these islands of objects appear adrift. In this context of the 'white cube' gallery they became alien objects that were uncomfortably out of place. In one of the galleries the 1971 piece *Homer. Odyssee, Einführung* (Homer. Odyssee) had been installed on two walls, facing a group of studio-objects. It is a classic Darboven work with neatly handwritten UUUUUUUU in a continuous flow of ink. A small colour photograph was exhibited next to each studio grouping, documenting how these objects were anchored in Hanne Darboven's home.



Image 47: Installation view from 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Spain, 2014.

This was the curatorial template for the exhibition; a group of eclectic studio objects, a photograph documenting their original setting and a large systematic artwork consisting of a great number of frames hung on the wall in a grid. Each exhibited studio environment (bar one) had at their centre a minimum of one work table that noticeably reminded us of the missing artist, who would have worked privately embedded among all this stuff.²⁴⁹

The exhibition started and finished with rooms that displayed artworks on their own, leaving the seductively kitsch and conceptually void stuff in the middle. I watched student groups navigating the exhibition as they ran dismissively through the minimal first rooms, only to be stopped in their tracks by the curious islands of 'things', talking to each other, pointing and getting their phones out to snap away (image 48). There was no doubt these young people were engaged. They eagerly devoured the voyeuristic opportunities provided by Darboven's personal objects in the show.



Image 48: Installation view from 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Spain, 2014.

²⁴⁹ Among the works exhibited were *Kosmos* >85< (Cosmos >85<) 1985, that was shown with a grouping of large exotic animals and the original card-album, which the artwork conceptually utilised (image 48). The piece *Milieu* >80< -: *heute* (Milieu >80< -: Today) 1979/80, was exhibited in a dialogue with a desk, a doll house, a book shelf and a wooden ladder with a collection of ceramic chamber pots.

The problem with this exhibition, I think, is that curator João Fernandes, on his own initiative and without Darboven's instructions, had paired artworks with tableaux taken from her studio collections of stuff. Each nesting cluster from the home-studio stole our attention away from the complex visual language of her concept driven art.²⁵⁰ It performed as a tricky forced meeting between gossip and cerebral gymnastics. This was in stark contrast to Darboven's exhibitions during her lifetime, where she used her collected items as if they were specimens from popular culture and history. When she positioned any selected objects in her exhibitions they formed meticulous dialogues with the framed wall-based work. Conversely, in this exhibition her items were presented in dense, convoluted environments (image 49), generating seductive chatter between them, rather than with the wall-based artworks.

Sadly missing from the Museo Reina Sofia exhibition was a room that truly replicated the womb-like compactness of being in her home-studio, where you are physically denied the space to step back or rest your eyes on a spot of white wall, floor or ceiling. A small room, faithfully exhibited with all its excesses, would



Image 49: Installation view (detail) 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Spain, 2014.

²⁵⁰ Or what Art Historian James Elkins determined as a problem of relative energy; '*...if an artist attempts to put one of these images in a larger composition, it will poison whatever is around it. ...In order for us to be able to stand in front of an image and experience the kind of richness of feelings that we associate with art, the image must be able to speak in several registers. These images shout all other images down.*' Elkins, *The Object Stares Back*, Harvest Book, 1996, p.116.

respectfully and more truthfully exposed Darboven's intriguing world of contradictions.

Nevertheless, 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven' unexpectedly pivoted on the artist herself. It accentuated the fact that her practice also relied on the subjective and autobiographical. This is a fact that appears to have been historically conveniently ignored in order to effortlessly situate her work within conceptual art. I do not believe Darboven worked to order time and things, as the Reina Sofia exhibition title insinuates. Instead, I would suggest she was exploring our limits of the known and unknown, as she stated herself:

*...In my work I try to move, to expand, and contract as far as possible between more or less known and unknown limits...*²⁵¹

This declaration could reveal a motive for Darboven choosing to combine the order of her cerebral concepts with the disorder of the paraphernalia of human life. A familiar everyday object removed from its customary context creates a potent catalyst for human questioning of the known.

Material culture is a relatively new field of academic study that has an openness and inclusiveness that older academic disciplines do not have. I would suggest that this is an important fact when examining artists' methodologies that include the everyday object or image. Stuff belongs to all of us. It does not have a tradition of exclusion that is intrinsically part of any of the conventional academic fields.²⁵² Anthropologist Daniel Miller suggests that by giving attention to what we make – our material culture – we will gain a more profound understanding of ourselves. The notion that stuff is omnipresent while simultaneously representing different importance, value, and meaning for each of us, presents the artist with a unique material. The

²⁵¹ Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.62.

²⁵² Anthropologist Daniel Miller emphasises in his recent book *Stuff* that both the term 'stuff' or 'material culture' are not well defined; Polity Press, 2010, p.7 (iBook version).

familiarity of everyday objects and images seduces us, whilst maintaining the ability to retain enough ambivalence to morph into the universe of the individual artist's vocabulary.

A dominant theory within material culture is semiotics, a theory that views stuff as signs and symbols relating to who we are, which fits with Darboven's statement that '*nobody has ever seen pure objects or people*'.²⁵³ It reminds me of Freud's theory of 'transferences' that states our present likes are linked to our previous likes.²⁵⁴ When we encounter a new object, it does not have to be identical to a previously known item for us to repeat a past emotional connection – just a slight similarity is sufficient for us to see the thing as familiar and hence experience a sense of contentment. Darboven's diverse multi-faceted collections provide a dimension of the well-known, once these common items are incorporated into her artworks. The objects become a kind of cultural specimen that reminds me of the Director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor's large BBC Radio 4 program 'A History of the World in 100 Objects'.²⁵⁵ MacGregor has refined and popularised a method that explores the history of humanity, by using individual objects from diverse periods that embrace a multitude of functions, productions and monetary worth. I listen daily to BBC Radio 4 when working in my studio, though this program became more than background noise. The key to the program's success was that I never saw any of the explored artifacts.²⁵⁶ Listening to MacGregor elaborating on each object, assisted by academic specialists on the various

²⁵³ Quoted by Historian Petra Lange-Berndt at the Hanne Darboven UCL symposium in London, 2012.

²⁵⁴ For further clarification on Transferences look at the Postscript for 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (1905 [1901])' from pp.116–119, in Sigmund Freud *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII: A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works*, Vintage, 2001.

²⁵⁵ The series was broadcast in 2010, one episode – one object – every weekday until the hundredth object was reached. It was transformed into the book: Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, Allen Lane, 2010. His latest project, fittingly for this thesis, has been 'Germany: Memories of a nation' a 600-year history in objects. An exhibition at the British Museum from October 2014 to 25 January 2015 and a BBC Radio 4 program in 30 episodes aired between September and November 2014 that led to a book with the same title by Neil MacGregor, published by Allen Lane, 2014.

²⁵⁶ There is a website I could have visited but it never tempted me, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/exploreraflash/?extratag=137&tag=&extratype=usertype&extrafilter=usertype>.

topics, my curiosity was hooked by the puzzle of these eclectic items. The lack of visual contributions in this context of verbal dissemination, highlighted to me how human paraphernalia have a formidable ability to generate curiosity driven knowledge.²⁵⁷

There is one clear reason why the notion of knowledge interests me; essentially it is a leveling point for all humanity – nobody does know it all. This fact should liberate us all to enjoy and embrace what we do not know, on even terms with what we do know. In my practice, I critically explore the different hierarchical structures surrounding knowledge. When I work with established collections that represent a field of knowledge, it is to investigate their institutional restrictions and add some of what I subjectively deem to be absent.²⁵⁸ Evidently there is more to value than what is preserved in museums, academia and history books. I agree with Miller when he notes that:

*The central problem confronted by the modern world is that universalism and particularity can so easily lose touch with each other.*²⁵⁹

Public collections and museums are epicenters that safeguard the knowledge that society values and celebrates. Hence, they represent proof of what we do not know and also of what we deem of lesser worth to explore, protect and display. I believe that Darboven's work marries the contradictions of the biographical / social history, conceptual / handmade, intimate / public and singular / plural.

²⁵⁷ I further explored the object's ability to facilitate new knowledge in two interdisciplinary events at my 2013 exhibition project 'Mind Circles', where Professor Angelova and Dr. Pratesi had been requested to use objects in their informal talks on mathematical symmetry and the brain, instead of the ubiquitous digital images that their fields generally rely on.

²⁵⁸ During my time as guest curator at the Medical Museion in Copenhagen (2011–2013), I explored the notion of 'healing' that we all inherently have an embodied knowledge of, though absurdly it is a word that professionals in the field of medicine avoid, while their success simultaneously relies on it.

²⁵⁹ Daniel Miller, *Stuff*, p.13 (iBook version).

Historian Petra Lange-Berndt has proposed that key to Darboven's collecting is a 'reclaiming of the world' in a female way.²⁶⁰ In my view, 'reclaiming' is not a word to associate with Darboven's ambition for her work; it is simply not political enough. That Musicologist Gerd de Vries characterises Darboven as being emphatically political²⁶¹ fits the work she presents us with. I think of the French Enlightenment's major achievement, the 18th century *Encyclopédie* edited by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. A twenty-year long project that for the first time sought to bring philosophy and craftsmanship together²⁶² in one place to 'change the common way of thinking'.²⁶³ Darboven copied text from the Brockhaus encyclopedia and she also used the word in a 1988 title.²⁶⁴ However Diderot's intention to interfere with the hierarchy of knowledge, I think, is mirrored in Darboven's complete oeuvre that cunningly fuses the canon of academia with the everyday – which we all have knowledge of.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Lange-Berndt's presentation at the Hanne Darboven UCL symposium in London, 2012.

²⁶¹ During an interview in 2003 Gerd de Vries mentions as a side issue that '*Darboven is one of the most politically aware people I know, by the way*'. It is an interview that gives a detailed insight into Darboven's musical work and the methods used in their making. Gerd de Vries interviewed by Sibylle Omlin for 'Hanne Darboven: My Work Ends in Music', in Hillings (ed.), *Hanne Darboven: Homage a Picasso*, pp.57–62. Quote from p.59.

²⁶² For a longer examination of this do see Richard Sennet, *The Craftsman*, Penguin Books, 2009, pp.88–106.

²⁶³ Denis Diderot, *Encyclopedia*, translated by Philip Stewart and Ann Arbor 'The Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project', Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2002, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.004> [consulted 28.12.2014]. Originally published as *Encyclopédie, Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 5:635–648A (Paris, 1755).

²⁶⁴ *abc enzyklopädie / 00–99 / heute* that consists of 26 booklets with 36 pages in each, published by Hanne Darboven in an edition of 50.

²⁶⁵ Isabelle Stengers also refers to Diderot in her fantastic article 'Another Look: Relearning to Laugh' that argues for criticism in the sciences to be infused with laughter and excitement. *Hypatia*, vol.15, no.4, Fall 2000, pp.41–54.

Chapter Four.
TEMPORAL SYSTEMS
HANDMADE BY HANNE
DARBOVEN

Handmade

Technology made big advances in the 1960s, mainly due to the space race between the USA and Russia. This had a trickle down effect on the consumer market, which revolutionised the office environment with items like the IBM 'type ball' writer and the Xerox photocopy machine, while the 1970s laid the initial foundations for the invention of the personal computer. During this period, the arts welcomed new technologies, instigating and exploring how they could be utilised to make art.²⁶⁶ In 1966 the Los Angeles County Museum of Art started the 'Art and Technology Program' where artists were paired with technology corporations,²⁶⁷ for example artists Robert Irwin and James Turrell worked with the Garret Corporation, a company that manufactured aerospace products for general industry and NASA. Also in 1966 Rauschenberg, together with engineer Billy Klüver, artist Robert Whitman and engineer Fred Waldhauer, founded 'Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.)' in NYC. Both these developments took place the same year that Darboven moved to America; however, she did not fully embrace the technological revolution that happened during her lifetime.²⁶⁸ Admittedly, there are artworks where she used a typewriter, though within Darboven's complete oeuvre, the typewritten appears subservient to the handwritten cursive.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ In the *Artforum* article 'The 'Art and Technology' Exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum (Two Views): Corporate Art' in October 1971, Jack Burnham established that art and technology collaborations flourished in the 1960s.

²⁶⁷ It was the museum's curator Maurice Tuchman that started it in 1966, with seventy-eight artists and thirty-seven corporations. For further information see Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s*, pp.9–11.

²⁶⁸ A few of Darboven's early books were copied with a copy machine, but I would argue that she used this medium as another printing tool. She did not experiment using this medium; instead she made her written drawings by hand and then copied the finished handmade piece.

²⁶⁹ This goes against the art of this period that did embrace technology. For example Seth Sieglaub and Jack Wendler's use of the photocopy machine in his 1968 'Xerox Book' that consisted of work made specifically for a book format using a photocopy machine. The artists included were Andre, Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, LeWitt, Morris and Weiner. When I was flipping through the 370 page book on my visit to MOMA's research library, it was clear that some of the artists had explored the medium more than others. I especially enjoyed Andre's play with square cubes that multiplied as you flipped through the pages; due to the thin paper you could view the previous page layout, which further strengthened the viewer's understanding of the piece.

Traditionally writing is utilised as a narrative tool to communicate with a reader through the meaning of words. This was not Darboven's method of writing, but still she designated herself as a writer rather than an artist, while stating:

*I write things down, but I don't describe anything.*²⁷⁰

Darboven's words often appeared isolated, as if they had been liberated from their prescribed communication roles. Her use of the cursive handwritten further distances the viewer from reading her work. When experiencing one of her large installations, the rhythm and movements of her writing are what the viewer emphatically recognises. We may step up close to decipher a word or two, though they never seem to be that rewarding, especially if your knowledge of German is limited. Moreover, even when there are a few English words, I find them hard to read. This could be a sign of our times. Handwriting is fast disappearing from our everyday lives, being replaced by the computer keyboard or our smart phones. Since 2010 the Guardian newspaper has regularly debated penmanship, asking questions concerning its value and bringing concerned attention to the poor standard of students' handwriting.²⁷¹ When experiencing Darboven's work we become engulfed in waves of words, where the meaning of each little grouping of text has less prominence when compared to the whole. It is evident that at the centre of the artwork is one individual, and although we may not be able to decipher these waves, they do signify an autonomous creation.

It is no coincidence that texts on Darboven regularly mention details about her diligent work ethic, such as rising early each day to 'write'. This suggests to me that she was proud of her work ethic and that her vast amount of

²⁷⁰ Schoofs, 'Hanne Darboven: I Inscribe, but I Describe Nothing', *Flash Art*, Feature/ 288 Jan–Feb 2013, digital edition no page number.

²⁷¹ Rin Hamburgh, 'The Lost Art of Handwriting', *The Guardian*, Wednesday 21 August 2013.

written sheets functioned as a testimony both to herself and the world.²⁷² As noted, Darboven was an astute businesswoman who clearly controlled her image, including which details concerning her practice she unveiled to the public. She has stated:

*I have a clear conscience; I have written my thousand pages. In the sense of this responsibility—work, conscience, fulfillment of duty—I am no worse a worker than someone who has built a road.*²⁷³

When I visited the Darboven Foundation, Miriam Schoofs elaborated that for a German it is a familiar notion to feel guilty if you do not participate and contribute to society. At the Darboven symposium at UCL, art historian Margaret Iversen furthermore suggested that Darboven was somehow paying, with her strictly structured work, for having been born in Germany during the Nazi period; in effect repaying the sins of her country. In a rare British interview in 1994 Darboven stated:

*From 1975 to 1980 I wrote a huge work called Writing Time (Schreibzeit) including lots of programming. Then in 1983, I completed East West Democracy, but no more. I do not want to do any more historiographical writings now because I did such a lot and for a long time. Now I want to do my free work, that which I conceptually built up in New York in the 1960s. I feel I have fulfilled the responsibilities that I had to myself and to society.*²⁷⁴

²⁷² Or in Darboven's case perhaps it was not so much a case of the whole world as simply her parents. As Isabelle Graw writes 'Darboven was always concerned to prove to her parents that her work was orderly and meaningful. Her letters from New York are revealing in this connection. We learn from Eva Keller that expressions of gratitude to her parents run like a scarlet thread through those letters. In surprisingly dutiful and formal terms, Darboven wrote: 'I look up to you, thank you, and hope that my 'work' leads to something, and that I as your daughter can thereby give you pleasure'. Graw, 'Work Ennobles – I'm Staying Bourgeois (Hanne Darboven)' in M. Cathrine de Zegher (ed.), *Inside The Visible: an Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art. In, Of, and From the Feminine*, MIT, 1996, p.253.

²⁷³ Schoofs, 'My Studio Am Burgberg': Hanne Darboven's Home and Studio as the Nucleus of her Oeuvre and Individual Cosmos', in the exhibition catalogue Fernandes (ed.), *The Order of Time and Things*, p.18.

²⁷⁴ Darboven was interviewed by Mark Gisbourne in 'Time and Time Again', p.4. The interview was conducted to coincide with the installation of her piece *Frederick II (Friedrich Zwei)* at the Goethe Institute, London.

Even if the German work ethic did contribute to Darboven's stamina, it does not explain why her work schedule predominately rejected technology. I am curious as to why Darboven embraced the handmade – a labour that supposedly went against conceptual art, the kind of art her work was repeatedly linked to.

In the Reina Sofia exhibition 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', the first gallery rooms showed Darboven's early artworks dating from 1962 to 1968. They clearly demonstrated her early interest in methodically playing with systems. Play is not likely to be associated with Darboven's practice, though I believe it was present in these early pieces; especially in her use of a mutable material applied to

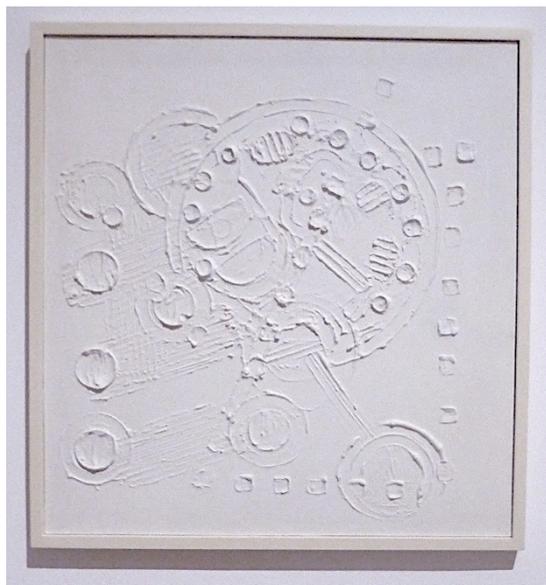


Image 50: Hanne Darboven, *Untitled*, 1962-1965.

boards (image 50). Similarly it was also apparent in *Perforationen* (1966), a group of works consisting of perforations made through squares of coloured paper, where the rich hues are attractively playful. Darboven has stated that during her time in NYC, she was looking for a system that would sustain her, since she was '...*too good at freedom*.'²⁷⁵

Freedom is the notion of freewill, non-confinement, openness, spontaneity, individualism and nonalignment.²⁷⁶ Freedom is considered by the western world as a human right, essentially a natural human condition, if all else was perfect – even a default setting. Examining Darboven's early works prior to

²⁷⁵ Lippard, 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers', p.39.

²⁷⁶ Philosophy has a special branch devoted to the notion of Freedom. See Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Freedom*, Reaktion Books, 2014.

1968 they echo an experimenting, developing, playful artist. I believe Darboven was motivated by individualism in equal measure to her notorious strict structures of cerebral concepts.

In my practice the conceptual structure could be referred to as the *game*, I identify with Yoko Ono's term 'quiet conceptual games',²⁷⁷ and the mindful handmade could be classified as *play*.²⁷⁸ These two notions, *game* and *play*, happily coexist – the conceptual part of my work is the *game*, and the cerebral handmade part becomes *play*. My experience would appear to correspond with that of sociologist Richard Sennett who argues that repetition of play becomes the foundation of practice.

*... play inaugurates practicing, and practicing is a matter both of repetition and of modulation. Play is, second, a school for learning to increase complexity.*²⁷⁹

Sennett supports his argument by referring to psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott,²⁸⁰ who advocated the importance of play for us all. Winnicott published *Playing and Reality* in 1971, a book that popularised his longstanding professional belief that play is imperative to sustain an individual's health. Theorist Roland Barthes also refers to Winnicott in a text on the work of artist Cy Twombly:

*... the British analyst D. W. Winnicott has shown us that it is a mistake to reduce a child's play to a pure ludic activity; he reminds us of the opposition of game (a strictly regulated play) and play (which has no such rules). ... this is not all; in a second phase of his procedure, Winnicott shifts from play – still too rigid – to playing: the child's – and the artist's – reality is the process of manipulation, not the object produced.*²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ See p.86 and footnote 137.

²⁷⁸ For more insight into my methods please see 'Art that Draws on Photography' in the appendix.

²⁷⁹ Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p.272.

²⁸⁰ Winnicott (1896-1971) is often quoted within the dissemination of art due to his term 'transitional object', which refer to an object's ability to be real while also being fictional. To Winnicott the 'transitional object' had a vital function within play.

²⁸¹ Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Form: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, Hill and Wang, 1984, p.172.

I do not agree with Barthes' statement that generically, the artist's reality is not *'the object produced'*, though I do support the definition of *game* and *play*. The notion of *play* is not generally connected with conceptual art, though it is present in Darboven's early work and continued in her use of handwriting and the readymade. The *game* in her practice is the conceptual number based system and *play* appears where she allows individualism, freedom, to seep in,²⁸² such as the handwritten and her daily afternoons of second-hand shopping. The notion of *play* that I associate with the handmade, handwritten, was also present in the weeks Rauchenberg spent working on the *Erased de Kooning*. He chose a method that was intimate and allowed him to be exposed to the artistic knowledge of his older and famous colleague – an enhanced knowledge that a 'disrespectful' bucket of bleach never would have provided him with.

Contemporary drawing practices employ theories of embodied knowledge, gestural knowledge, intuitive knowledge and tacit knowledge.²⁸³ None of these theories rely on the extended mind to proactively (consciously) deliberate. Embodied knowledge can be perceived to relate to this research; however, this type of bodily knowledge works well without the intellectual faculty, and if indeed we consciously focus on those actions that draw on our embodied knowledge they frequently become harder to do.²⁸⁴ Instead, next I will continue my argument that Darboven's practice utilises the handmade as a purposeful method to enhance intellectual processes.

²⁸² Philosopher Friedrich von Schiller goes as far as stating *'Man is only fully a human being when he plays'*, where to Ranciere notes *'Play's freedom is contrasted to the servitude of work'*. Ranciere, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, p.28 and p.31.

²⁸³ Within artistic research in British academia, drawing has a strong position. There are several universities with research groups that specialise in drawing; hence, it is a diverse field with many established artist/academic contributors such as Stephen Farthing, Steve Garner, Russell Marshall, Phil Sawdon, Richard Talbot and James Faure Walker. If my research enquiry had focused on drawing specifically it would have included the exquisite book by artist Nikolaus Gansterer, *Drawing a Hypothesis: Figures of Thought*, Springer, 2011.

²⁸⁴ One such action could be keying in an entrance code to a building. Walking my dog every morning, the last step in the routine is keying in my building's access code. My fingers do a dance and the door opens, but on those rare occasions when I pause for a split second and consciously look at the buttons and their numbers, my fingers freeze and I have no clue what the code is, although I have pushed those numbers daily for months.

Darboven's earliest drawings were made on millimeter graph paper and subsequently, in the 1970s, her working surface became the printed calendar page. This could indicate that these early conceptual handmade marks relied on a structure to sit between or work against. It makes sense to me; although her concepts determined what she was doing with her pencil, the printed pages gave Darboven another dimension to work towards or within. Her use of printed repetitive structural systems supplied her with a meditative space to work in, which could be seen as a method to 'measure' the 'perfect' structure against the handmade. The printed pages, be it the millimeter graph paper, calendar page or her later printed page templates,²⁸⁵ signify mass produced quantifiable, perfection – exactly everything that the handmade mark can never be. Nonetheless, it is Darboven's handwritten marks that excel. Barthes, though, asserts that there is no such thing as a virgin surface:

*No Surface, wherever we consider it, is a virgin surface: everything is always, already, rough, discontinuous, unequal, set in motion by some accident...*²⁸⁶

Within an art practice the conceptual could be perceived as an idea based systematic structure that creates rigid control, as Kosuth would have it, although in my work the conceptual has the ability to facilitate enhanced knowledge. My concepts have inbuilt ambivalence that relies on the subjective and without this cerebral dialogue the handmade would not exist in my practice; I would be left with Barthes' non-existent virgin surface. To me the temporal handmade²⁸⁷ is a method that relates to the cerebral activity of

²⁸⁵ Darboven in several of her works used a 'template' design that has close links to the red layout of the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, to which she was a subscriber until the mid-1980s. The following are examples of artworks where she prints templates that her images and text are then attached to before framing: *Milieu >80< -: heute* (Milieu >80< -: Today) 1979–80, *Schreibzeit 1975–1980* (Writing Time 1975–1981) 1980–83/1995, *Kosmos >85<* (Cosmos >85<) 1985.

²⁸⁶ Roland Barthes, 'Cy Twombly: Works on Paper', in Barthes, *The Responsibility of Form*, p.162.

²⁸⁷ I use the term 'temporal handmade' to indicate a method that uses the hand over an extended period of time and hence involves a sustained period of making.

mindful thinking, where the brain's small talk is sieved away until the focus is consciously on the concept of doing by hand.

Consciousness is intensively researched in philosophy, neuroscience, cognitive science and quantum physics, but how can it be represented in art? Is it a subject embodied in the final artwork or via the artist's process of making? In 1999, curator Lawrence Rinder acted on his conviction that since the 1950s a new aesthetic had emerged, one that centred on the viewer's experience of consciousness.²⁸⁸ He curated the exhibition 'Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium',²⁸⁹ which was accompanied by a catalogue with cross-disciplinary texts. Rinder notes that the art that interests him is 'consciousness art', a type of artwork that can come from any category of art, but shares an ability to embody consciousness. Rinder states:

*Consciousness Art is not didactic but, rather, direct and experimental. It emphasizes 'mindfulness'—an experience of profound self-awareness—over representing an exterior world or describing the technical workings of the mind.*²⁹⁰

Rinder emphasises that consciousness art has to have an element of mindfulness within it, and he clearly establishes that not all conceptual art does so.²⁹¹

Interestingly mindfulness, a method developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn and based on Buddhist meditation,²⁹² has become a fashionable contemporary tool to

²⁸⁸ Lawrence Rinder, *Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium*, Thames & Hudson, 1999, p.14 and pp.25–35.

²⁸⁹ The exhibiting artists were: Anonymous, Lutz Bacher, Robert Barry, Samuel Beckett, Louise Bourgeois, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Martin Creed, Cristabel Davé, Stan Douglas, Douglas Gordon, Rodney Graham, David Hannah, Jörg Herold, Gary Hill, Robert Irwin, Paul Kaiser and Shelley Eshkar, Agnes Martin, The Museum of Jurassic Technology, Yoko Ono, Kristin Oppenheim, Adrian Piper, Markus Raetz, Ad Reinhardt, Stuart Sherman, Imogen Stidworthy, Diana Thater, Rosie Lee Tompkins, Bill Viola, Gillian Wearing, Pascale Wiedemann, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. The exhibition opened in September 1999 at the California College of Art and Crafts, San Francisco.

²⁹⁰ Rinder, *Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium*, p.27.

²⁹¹ Rinder views the conceptual work of Lawrence Weiner and Robert Barry as consciousness art and that of Joseph Kosuth as not, attributed to Kosuth's works didactic propensities. *Ibid.*, pp.35–38.

assist both the productivity of corporate employees and the health of the NHS's chronically ill. Mindfulness is, in that context, a technique where one consciously focuses on specific chosen thoughts, and when practiced regularly it can effectively change certain areas of the brain's structure.²⁹³

Rinder establishes that consciousness art consists of nine different groupings of artworks, where each group corresponds with an aspect of consciousness:²⁹⁴ awareness, attention, qualia, unity, memory, first-person perspective, self-awareness, conceptual framing and metaphor, and empathy. In Rinder's examination of consciousness art the focus is on how the exhibited artworks trigger the viewer to be mindful, although not necessarily in a purely cerebral way. There is a grouping of artworks that does not fit within his nine main aspects, which, however, he still views as consciousness art because of the work's ability to instil visceral experiences of consciousness.

There are overlaps between Rinder's consciousness art and the kind of temporal handmade conceptual art that this research focuses on; both engage the viewer to be aware of their own consciousness. However, there are also discrepancies, the central one being that this artistic research examines cerebral artists that work with concepts: in which the viewers will be aware that concepts underpin the work, even when they choose not to actively engage with the concepts, or if the conceptual deciphering is impossible. Accordingly, this research focus on art practices that require the artist to engage consciously in the method.

²⁹² Kabat-Zinn (b. 1944) is Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, USA.

²⁹³ 'The results suggest that participation in MBSR is associated with changes in gray matter concentration in brain regions involved in learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing, and perspective taking'. Britta K. Hölzel, James Carmody, Mark Vangel, Christina Congleton, Sita M. Yerramsetti, Tim Gard and Sara W. Lazar. 'Mindfulness Practice Leads to Increases in Regional Brain Gray Matter Density', *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, vol.191 issue 1, 2011, pp.36–43, [http://www.psych-journal.com/article/S0925-4927\(10\)00288-X/abstract](http://www.psych-journal.com/article/S0925-4927(10)00288-X/abstract) [consulted 20.10.2011].

²⁹⁴ Rinder does refer to a possible tenth fundamental property of consciousness, that of 'forward motion', in the sense that consciousness is forward-oriented and cumulative. Rinder, *Searchlight*, p.55.

When the temporal handmade resides in a conceptual art practice, it can appear similar to meditation, meant here as a state of mind rather than a spiritual exercise. Physicist Bodil Jönsson emphasizes that thinking takes time and that creating new thoughts, developing them and getting rid of them when out-of-date, takes even more time.²⁹⁵ I believe that in an art practice the temporal handmade can reinforce the conceptual by facilitating an extended period of cerebral engagement. Sennett notes similarly:

*The ability to concentrate for long periods comes first: only when a person can do so will he or she get involved emotionally or intellectually.*²⁹⁶

This makes me think of writer Andrew Brown's cynical observation on the demise of the handwritten:

*There's no call for handwriting in most jobs today, any more than there is any requirement for independent thought.*²⁹⁷

While Darboven stated in a 1989 interview with writer Isabelle Graw that she is:

*...rewriting things by hand in order to convey myself through the mediation of the experience.*²⁹⁸

I interpret Darboven's comment to be an emphasis on how the human mind depends on bodily relatedness. The 17th century philosopher René Descartes is a figurehead in western sciences and humanities for the notion of dualism, which argues that the mind is detached from the body and hence the brain. I greatly sympathise with Descartes' most quoted statement '*I think, therefore I*

²⁹⁵ Bobil Jönsson, *Ten Thoughts about Time*, Robinson, 2005.

²⁹⁶ Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p.172.

²⁹⁷ Andrew Brown, 'Using a Pen Helps Us Discover Thought – but the Writing's on the Wall', *The Guardian*, Tuesday 26 November 2013.

²⁹⁸ Referred to by Schoofs in 'My Studio am Burgberg': Hanne Darboven's Home and Studio as the Nucleus of her Oeuvre and Individual Cosmos', in Fernandes (ed.), *The Order of Time and Things*, p.23, footnote 40.

am',²⁹⁹ although this is only because, unlike him, I believe that our mind, brain and body are a holistic unit. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio warns us that if emotions are fully removed from the reasoning process, our decisions deteriorate.³⁰⁰ Concepts in art represent the cerebral activity of thought, though I would argue that the cerebral handmade also exists.

When I draw on one of my photographs, the drawing does not change the original concept or idea, but rather accentuates notions of the concept, which otherwise would not have been materialised. The same goes for an extended time spent in the darkroom working with analogue photography.³⁰¹ In this darkened womb-like environment the mind becomes focused and crystal clear, a superb place for cerebral activities that generate conceptual systems precisely because the hands are active with method. A quote from my darkroom notebook:

- Slowly emerging is a vision seeped in red.
Warm orangey red - just like microscopic
films excavating the human body's
internal depths. The unromantic smell of
chemicals, contrasts any first notion that
this room is like a womb. Instead, it's a
cerebral place where vision can take a back
seat and hands are kings. What are
produced here are electrifying thoughts
some that never see the light of day -
moving hands.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Descartes' proposition '*je pense, donc je suis*' was published in *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison, et chercher la vérité dans les sciences (Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences)*, 1637.

³⁰⁰ Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, Vintage, 2006, p.xviii.

³⁰¹ In November and December 2011, at the outset of my PhD, I did a two-month artist residency at the Danish Art Workshops (Copenhagen, Denmark), where I worked with large-scale analogue black and white photography (silver gelatin prints). As compared to normal sized photographs, the size of these makes it a difficult and a very physical process; there is much skill involved, which unfortunately is disappearing, along with darkrooms with setups capable of large-scale analogue work.

³⁰² My thoughts from the darkroom on the 14 December 2011.

In art, the handmade is historically connected with the gestural, signifying bodily touch, emotions and often the unconscious, which support Descartes' notion of the body being detached from the mind.³⁰³ The handmade that I use in my practice, and that I would also connect with Darboven's practice, is a focused making by hand, which I would suggest relates to the 'extended mind'. This is a term first used by philosophers Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers in their 1998 paper 'The Extended Mind' that provocatively suggests that cognitive activities are not simply located in the brain.³⁰⁴ This idea has since been scrutinised by philosophers of the mind and neuroscientists, as in philosopher Zdravko Radman's edited collection of papers, which specifically focus on the hand's assistance in our cognitive processes.³⁰⁵ The 'extended mind' attributes the hand a vital role in both our perception and evaluation, by recognising that we understand abstract concepts by involving bodily movement.³⁰⁶ Evidently Darboven's practice was established long before Clark and Chalmers' notion of the extended mind; however, her strict game of concepts that eliminated freedom of play, which she was 'too' good at, and her rejection of technology resulted in an art practice that passionately embraced the cerebral handmade.

The 1969 Darboven exhibition at Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach (Germany), was accompanied by the publication *Ausstellung mit 6*

³⁰³ Furthermore, the handmade is a prerequisite within the field of craft, where experience and skill – 'tacit knowledge' – is key. In contemporary postdisciplinary craft, there has been a shift since the 1990s that broke with the traditional notion of craft aesthetics to instead reflect and relate to conceptual issues of society and material culture. This kind of craft is also referred to as 'conceptual craft', but although it relates to the conceptual and involves handmade processes, this research does not focus on processes where skill is paramount and hence does not explore notions of conceptual craft. For further reading on conceptual craft see for example Jo Dahn, 'Elastic/Expanding: Contemporary Conceptual Ceramics', in Maria Elena Buszek (ed.), *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, Duke University Press, 2011, pp.153–171.

³⁰⁴ The original paper 'The Extended Mind' by Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers is published in Richard Menary (ed.), *The Extended Mind*, MIT, 2010. This book also includes for and against responses to the original paper. A year later Chalmers contributed the chapter 'The Puzzle of Conscious Experience' to Lawrence Rinder's exhibition publication *Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium*, Thames & Hudson, 1999, pp.151–160.

³⁰⁵ Michael Wheeler, 'Is Cognition Embedded or Extended? The Case of Gestures', in Zdravko Radman (ed.), *The Hand; an Organ of the Mind*, The MIT Press, 2013, pp.269–270.

³⁰⁶ Jesse J. Prinz, 'Foreword: Hand Manifesto', in *The Hand; an Organ of the Mind*, p.xiii.

Filmprojektoren nach 6 Büchern über 1968 (Exhibition with 6 Film Projectors after 6 Books) (images 51).

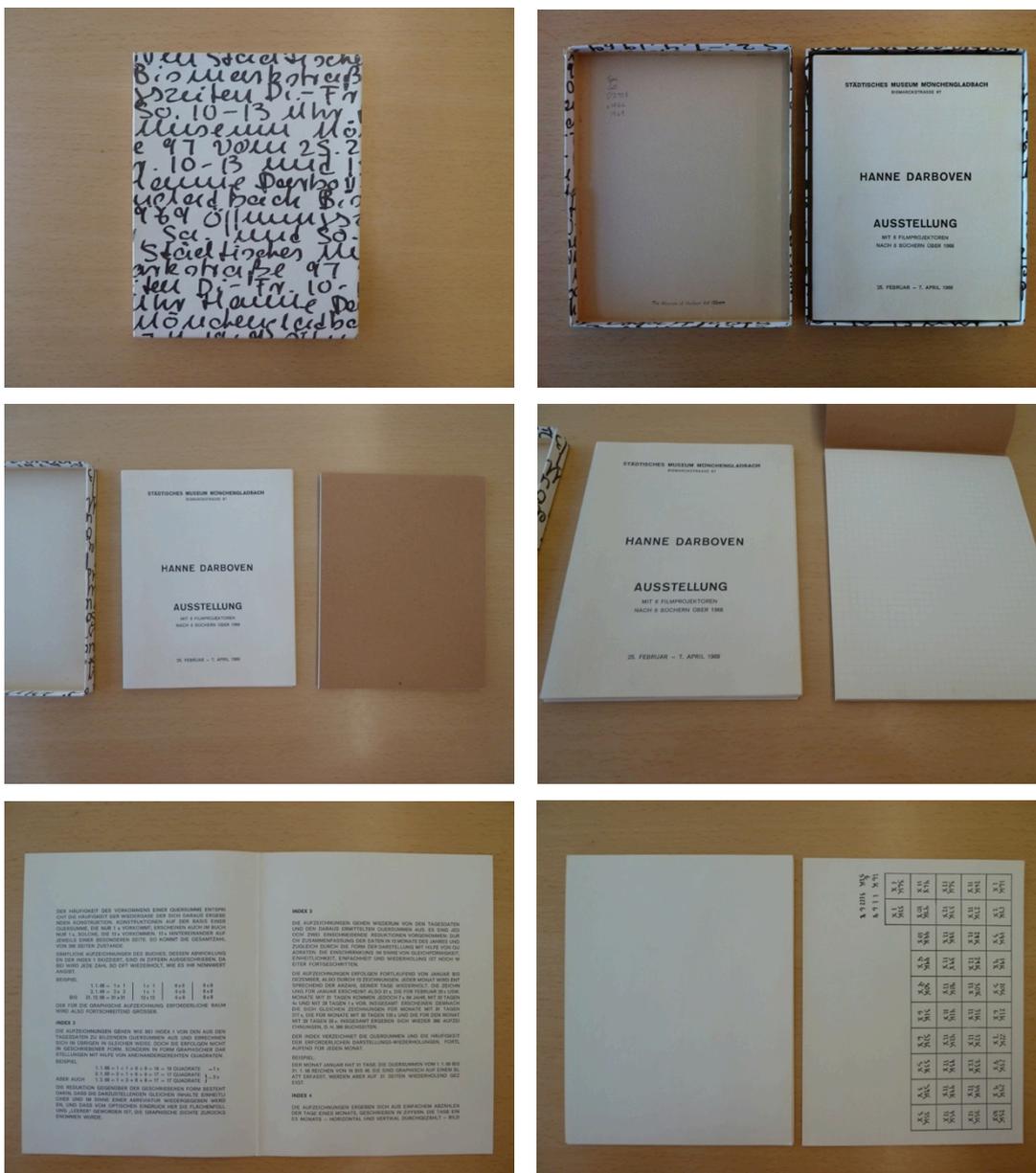


Image 51: Hanne Darboven, *Ausstellung mit 6 Filmprojektoren nach 6 Büchern über 1968* (Exhibition with 6 Film Projectors after 6 Books), 1969.

It consists of a box with three elements: an eight-page booklet with a text by curator Johannes Cladders, six loose thick sheets that contain Darboven's handwritten calculations in black, and a portrait sized pad of blank paper with a brown cover. This empty and unassuming, yet to be filled, pad of paper

suggests to me that Darboven wanted to share with the viewer her passion for the handwritten. It also suggests that her writing may have been laborious, but essentially it was pleasure mainly done for her and not for others. In Darboven's own words from 1994:

*There is never any sense of writing for others, everything is written for myself alone.*³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Gisbourne, 'Time and Time Again', p.6.

Conscious Being

Time continually expires – every second just passed will not reappear. There is no rerun ‘or let’s do it a different way this time around’.³⁰⁸ In the 1950s photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson coined the term the ‘decisive moment’, pinpointing the click of the camera shutter as supposedly freezing time.³⁰⁹ Every moment is unconditionally decisive or at least ought to be. I suppose we avoid contemplating this fact, in order to escape the immense significance that such an admission would have; every decision becomes onerous when viewed through a mortal lense. Nonetheless, art that explores the temporal essentially and implicitly contemplates loss and humanity.

Both notions I believe are present in Darboven’s time-consuming installations or books of notations. She oscillates between different categories of being – historical, political, cultural and cerebral – resulting in a critical questioning of humanity. Clearly, Darboven constructed conceptual methodologies that could facilitate and organise her everyday concentration. As viewers, when we cannot access her exact conceptual system, we look for other ways to maintain our attention. Repetition or seriality is a regular component within the field of contemporary art.³¹⁰ In the 1960’s the repetition prevalent in minimal art was seen as a contributing factor to the audiences’ loss of interest in artworks, in effect making the viewer wish for the traditional notions of

³⁰⁸ This is if we think of time as part of the classical notion of four dimensions. In contemporary theoretical physics there are other radical theories such as string theory that suggest there are eleven dimensions and parallel worlds. See for example physicist Leonard Susskind, ‘Using Maths To Explain The Universe’, *The Economist*, 2 July 2013, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2013/07/quick-study-leonard-susskind-string-theory> [consulted 14.08.2013].

³⁰⁹ Cartier-Bresson published a book with photographs in 1952, where the English version had the title ‘The Decisive Moment’. In the preface Cartier-Bresson referred to a text by the 17th century Cardinal de Retz: ‘*Il n’y a rien dans ce monde qui n’ait un moment decisif*’ (There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment).

³¹⁰ The notion of repetition has been explored by many, including critics Benjamin Buchloh and Hal Foster, who both contributed to this debate in several essays to the art journal *October* (1986 (37), 1993 (63), 1994 (70)). In *The Infinite Line: Re-making Art After Modernism* (2004) art historian Briony Fer seeks to move past seriality’s association with American minimalism to instead explore repetition as a method that can produce new ways of making and experiencing art.

theme and variation.³¹¹ However, what we predominately perceive as repetition is not truly an exact replication, but rather a resemblance, as is also the case in the work of Darboven. To simplify our everyday perception of the world, the human mind is expert at seeing repetition where none actually occurs.

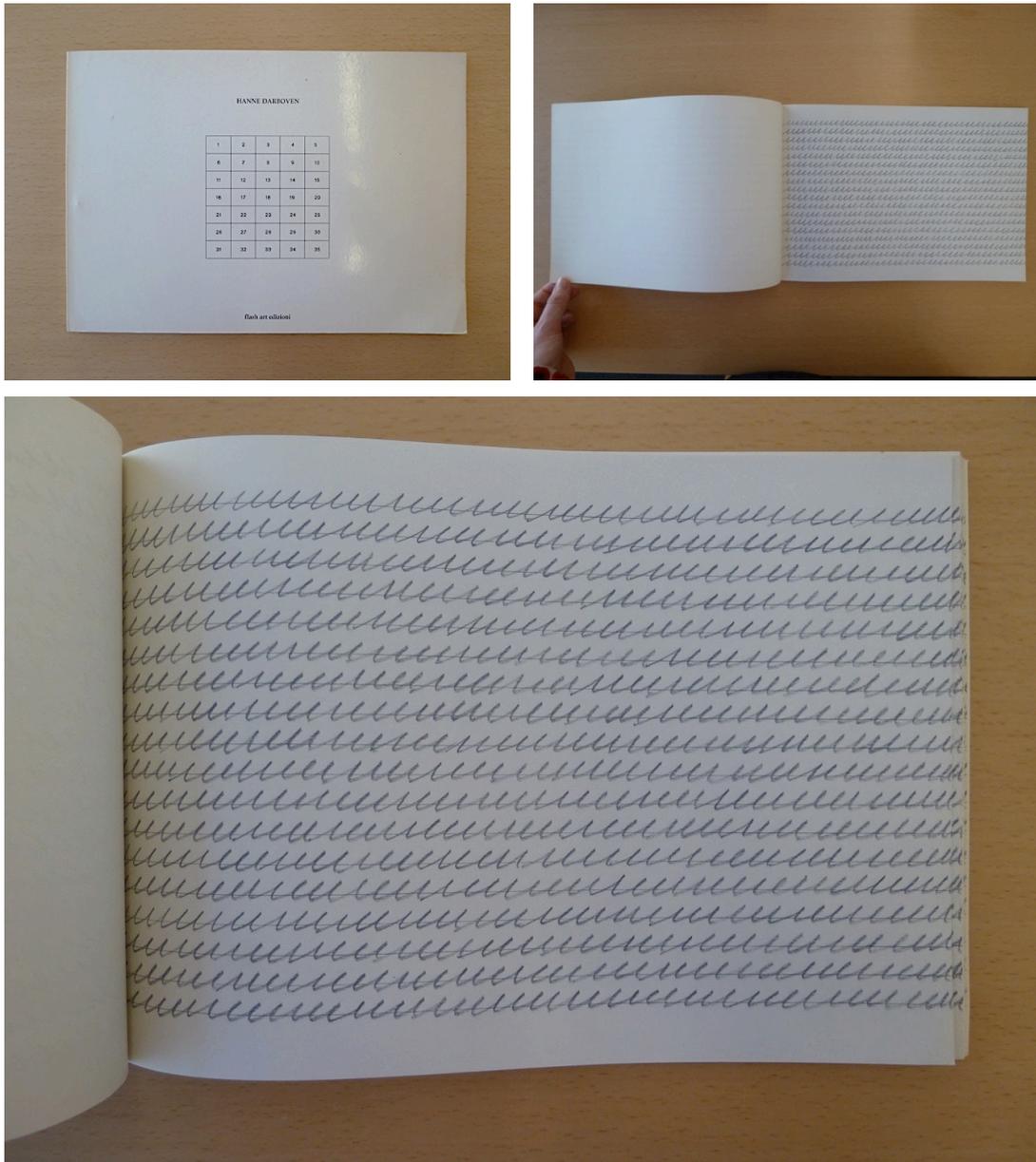


Image 52: Hanne Darboven, *Information*, Flash Art Edizioni, 1973.

³¹¹ Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*, University of Washington Press, 2000, p.118.

When contemplating what role the temporal had in Darboven's work, a practical question emerges; did Darboven do all the written work or did assistants do it for her? In my dialog with Schoofs at the Hanne Darboven Foundation she located my question within the problematic context of artist verification. It is part of the Foundation's remit to authenticate artworks in an effort to separate original Darboven artworks from fakes. According to Schoofs, Darboven did work night after night on her writing, although she also had help from her secretaries.³¹² It was Darboven's own hand that wrote the repeated word symbols she used throughout her career, such as the crossed out 'Heute' (Today), the copied texts from literature, her 'H.D.' signatures or her continuous 'UUUUUUUU' ³¹³ (image 52). While it would appear Darboven did have some assistance with her writing, however the monumental writing projects were predominately done by her.³¹⁴

The repetitive elements within Darboven's work prompt us to contemplate the time and laborious effort that she herself lavished on the artwork. The handwritten appears essential for this to happen, a human element – the hook that drags us in, saying 'come closer, I have something to show you'. I believe that Darboven's use of time is first and foremost personal – human – rather than merely belonging to the metaphysical debate on time. A quick scan of the titles for the written literature on her work, highlights that 'Time' is the component consistently preferred for interpretations of her work.³¹⁵ As early as 1974 art historian Franz Meyer noted in a text that Darboven's work was not as such concerned with calculations, rich mathematical systems, or

³¹² In conversation with Miriam Schoofs at the Hanne Darboven Foundation on the 25 February 2014.

³¹³ The U could be understood to mean the German word 'und' which translate to 'and' or &.

³¹⁴ One could question why it has any relevance whether an assistant made her work? After all that has been the norm for art practices for centuries. For my argument concerning the role of the handmade, it does make a difference and especially so in the context of original conceptual art.

³¹⁵ The 2014 Reina Sofia show was titled 'The Order of Time and Things: The Home-Studio of Hanne Darboven', which is simply a continuation of a long tradition, as the following selection of titles from texts on Darboven's work demonstrates: 'Hanne Darboven's Time: The Content of Consciousness' (Annelie Pohlen 1983), 'Hanne Darboven or the Dimensions of Time and Culture' (Jean-Pierre Bordaz 1986), 'Today Crossed Out' (Coosje van Bruggen 1988), 'Marking Time and Writing in the Work of Hanne Darboven' (Isabelle Graw 1990), 'Time and Time Again' (Mark Gisbourne, 1994), 'Darboven: The Sculpturing of Time' (Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka 1994).

numerology³¹⁶ and he continued by questioning whether her work dealt with a visualisation of time. He appears to refute this by noting that Evelyn Weiss, who curated the thematic groupings at the 1974 Cologne exhibition 'Project '74' where Darboven's work was situated within 'Time', had also emphasised that time was not Darboven's starting point nor her primary concern.³¹⁷ I would suggest that the temporal part of Darboven's practice is a methodology to be conscious of her own consciousness,³¹⁸ as she stated herself in a 1986 interview '*...writing is the dimension of consciousness*'.³¹⁹ This would appear to situate Darboven with the cerebral artists and Duchamp's 'use of time', although whereas he would avoid anything laborious, she embraced her extended periods of making. Darboven's friend Carl Andre referred to consciousness in a 1970 interview:

*The sense of one's own being in the world confirmed by the existence of things and others in the world. This, to me, is far beyond being as an idea. This is a recognition, a state of being, a state of consciousness – and I don't wish at all to be portrayed as mystic in that. I don't think that it's mystical at all. I think it's a true awareness that doesn't have anything to do with mysticism or religion. It has to do with life as opposed to death and a feeling of the true existence of the world in oneself. This is not an idea. An idea is a much lower category on my scale in that awareness, that consciousness.*³²⁰

Andre's state of consciousness that opposes the mystical is important, since I believe it also has connections with Darboven's practice. This is not the kind of flower power consciousness that the 1960s hippies were interested in,

³¹⁶ Franz Meyer's text was in the publication *Hanne Darboven: Ein Monat, Ein Jahr, Ein Jahrhundert Arbeiten Von 1968 Bis 1974* that accompanied the Darboven exhibition with the same title at the Kunstmuseum Basel, 1974, pp.3–12.

³¹⁷ In a recent text, Sven Spieker even states '*In fact there can be no visualization of time*', which appears similar to Terry Atkinson's observation that dematerialization was a non-entity in art. Sven Spieker, 'Speaking From Within the System: Hanne Darboven's 'Didactic' Art', in Fernandes (ed.), *The Order of Time and Things*, p.95.

³¹⁸ This is not the same as being self-conscious, which indicates that one is thinking about oneself. Being conscious of one's consciousness, relates to one individual being aware of their thought processes in general, rather than being aware of oneself. It differs too from philosophy that focuses on objective rational argument processes, instead being conscious of one's own consciousness is centred in the subjective, that specific one individual, with no introduction of rationalisation - or as Darboven is quoted saying on p.158: '*...I feel myself not thinking what other people think, but what I think*'.

³¹⁹ Jean-Pierre Bordaz, 'Hanne Darboven or the Dimension of Time and Culture', *Parkett*, vol.10, 1986, p.110.

³²⁰ Phyllis Tuchman, 'An Interview with Carl Andre', *Artforum*, vol.8, no.10, June 1970, pp.55–61 (p. 60).

where the unconscious was explored with the help of a variety of pharmaceutical products. Instead, this consciousness centres on a human awareness of social and cultural structures, hierarchies and the shadow of power they cast. In Darboven's practice this is manifested through the incorporation of history into her work, by the use of historical literary sources as the foundation for her hand copying. This methodology suggests to me that she was indeed contemplating while writing. In 1973 Lippard wrote of Darboven:

*She says she can only read by writing, by reexperiencing [sic] the words or numbers physically.*³²¹

In that same article, Lippard also quotes Darboven directly:

*...still each time I have to write, it becomes so calm so normal... I feel myself not thinking what other people think, but what I think.*³²²

The fact Darboven notes that she wrote to think, while regularly not writing her own words and instead copying published texts, leaves a gap that offers a meditative space – mindfulness – to be aware of one's thoughts. So what kinds of texts were they that she chose to contemplate for these prolonged periods of time? The following is a list of eminent artists, philosophers, poets, politicians, and scientists that Darboven amalgamated into her concepts:³²³

Rudolf Augstein (1923–2002)
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867)
Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986)

³²¹ Lippard, 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers', p.35.

³²² *Ibid.*, p.37.

³²³ This extended list has been accumulated in part from two sources: Angela Rosenberg, 'One and One is Two – Everyone Understands That', Deutche Bank – db artmag, 2006, <http://www.db-artmag.com/archiv/2006/e/2/4/426.html> [consulted 07.02.2014] and the new 2014 Hanne Darboven website where Miriam Schoofs has written a short text on Darboven's use of quotes, <http://www.hanne-darboven.de/?lang=en> [consulted 13.08.2014].

August Bebel (1840–1913)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Walter Benjamin (1892–1940)
Jacques Bergier (1912–1978)
Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898)
Niels Bohr (1885–1962)
Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986)
Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)
Marie Curie (1867–1934)
Alfred Döblin (1878–1957)
Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1929)
Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945–1982)
Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810–1876)
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)
Frederick the Great (1712–1786)
Heinrich Heine (1797–1856)
Homer (unknown, c. 8th century BCE)
Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843)
Karl Kraus (1874–1936)
Lao-Tse [Laozi] (unknown, c. 5th or 4th century BCE)
Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716)
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781)
George Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799)
Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)
Rosa Luxemburg (1870–1919)
Walter Mehring (1896–1981)
Paolo Neruda (1904–1979)
Louis Pauwels (1920–1997)
Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)
Walther Rathenau (1867–1922)
Frederick Reiners (1918–1998)
Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926)
Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891)
Ernest Rutherford (1871–1937)
Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866)
Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980)
Alice Schwarzer (1942)
Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948)
Gertrude Stein (1874–1946)
Mao Tse-Tung [Mao Zedong] (1893–1976)
Karl Valentin (1882–1948)
Paul Valéry (1871–1945)
Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1523)
Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)

It is a long list. While compiling it, I looked up each individual to note their date of birth and death, while I deliberately refrained from including their professions. The point was to linger on the fact that I did not know all these historical figures. Perhaps it is my knowledge of history that is not up to scratch, though compared with Darboven's general public, I am possibly an above average participant. Approximately half of the forty-eight names are familiar to me, and those that I did not recognise all have their German nationality in common.³²⁴ However, it was clear to me that they were all historical individuals or to use a contemporary word, famous. Not the Andy Warhol '15 min of fame' variety that we are continuously overexposed to, for these are people with solid accomplishments – the kind of achievements that changed society and whose effects can still be traced today, with the help of Google if need be. Darboven appears to have had an old fashioned idea of what it entailed to be famous. In a 1994 interview she highlighted that her interest was in the people that history remembers:

*To be historically famous there must be something of worth otherwise you never achieve lasting fame. I know from my [own] experience that to become famous requires a certain sort of being honest about something. Beyond that it is nothing but a silly joke, just a glimmer of glory and nothing of any worth happens afterwards. But being really famous means something... It might become symbolic, this I cannot say, but it is based on the deeper workings of consciousness and honesty.*³²⁵

That leaves us with another layer of ambiguity in Darboven's work, when examined in the context of international art where English is the predominant language. It is well documented that Darboven maintained a strong link to the NYC art scene, giving her a first hand experience of the barriers that different languages can create. She regularly exhibited her artworks in non-German speaking countries. Furthermore, she has made artworks where the concepts

³²⁴ There could be an argument for Germany's central role within European history, justifying that all Europeans ought to be well versed in key German historical figures. It is a logical argument, though as contemporary politics in EU illustrates, each country in Europe will always favour their individual national figures of historical significance, be they social or cultural.

³²⁵ Darboven in interview with Gisbourne, 'Time and Time Again', p.4.

were linked to public international law, world changing inventions, the world's children as well as NYC itself. Right from the start of her practice, with those three pivotal years 1966 to 1968 in NYC and further cemented by her representation since 1972 by NYC gallerist Leo Castelli, Darboven's art practice was international. There is a feeling that while she was physically sitting in Harburg working with German cultural and social history, she had one foot in Germany, while the other was firmly planted in the wider world. On the Hanne Darboven Foundation's old website,³²⁶ where the text is thankfully in both German and English, Dr. Ernst A. Busche made the following statement concerning Darboven's choice of exceptional and influential people:

...they are the 'Leitfiguren' (leading / central figure) of her life... Behind all this is more than just the knowledge of the educated middle-class; the impulse of enlightenment and humanity, of morals and ethics is crucial – the sphere of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative.³²⁷

Indeed, when I researched Darboven's historical characters, although it was interesting and I was happy to be introduced to these figures, it did feel somewhat like homework. It is clear that these individuals, which she chose to incorporate into her work, are figures that we perhaps ought to be acquainted with. However, her choice of using the cursive handwritten, which is hard to decipher, leads me to believe that this is not an effort endured simply to educate her audience.³²⁸ Rather, this is Darboven choosing to spend time familiarising herself with the work of these influential people – spending time in the company of her 'Leitfiguren'.

³²⁶ Since the early 2000s I have sporadically been involved with designing websites. The design of the Hanne Darboven website makes me speculate that it is at least ten years old, which would mean that it is likely that it was commissioned and designed while Darboven was alive, http://www.hanne-darboven-stiftung.de/frameset_german.html. Since this research started in October 2011 a new website, not for the Hanne Darboven Foundation, but simply for Hanne Darboven, emerged in 2014, <http://www.hanne-darboven.de>. Both websites are in German and English.

³²⁷ Text by Dr. Ernst A. Busche from the Darboven Foundation website http://www.hanne-darboven-stiftung.de/frameset_english.html [last consulted 07.02.2014].

³²⁸ I have already referred to my disagreement with Sven Spieker's suggestion that Darboven's work is didactic. See p.121, footnote 222.

Darboven's methodology of handwriting the words of these historical figures was an intimate process that hinged on the human element.³²⁹ In my practice, I photograph objects and environments that are treasured by society because of their association with established fields of human knowledge. By drawing or sculpturally manipulating these photographic representations of places and objects, I am explicitly contributing a singular human element. This methodology questions how the cerebral subjective can be present within social history, which implicitly negates the individual to facilitate the creation of a society built on objective knowledge. The handmade in Darboven's work appears to me to embrace elements of knowledge production that are not traditionally revealed to us. In one sense the 'handmade' is a description of a process of labour, manufacture – a process of knowledge – that does not belong with our traditional associations of academic hierarchical knowledge. I agree with contemporary philosopher Dieter Mersch when he ascertains that:

*Artistic knowledge is sited neither in logos nor in a 'ratio iudicandi', in fact not in any linear order of deduction, but in 'phronesis', the intelligence of the moment, or the epiphany—as attributed to wit or the 'ingenium' ...the ability to make connections without resort to rational principle—in a shrewd and 'crafty' manner.*³³⁰

When I spend an extended time writing, such as in this thesis, it has a proportionally negative effect on the time I choose to spend drawing. Hence, in my practice writing and drawing belong to a shared place of cerebral activity, which could relate to Darboven's statement that she was not drawing but writing. I believe that she designated her activity to be 'writing' to deliberately associate it with cerebral endeavor. Darboven read published historical texts and then handwrote – drew – what her mind had just received.

³²⁹ Critic Donald Kuspit stated similarly in 1980; '*And what is crucial to the understanding of Darboven's work is the way its unrelenting sequentiality generates alternatives to seriality, almost to the extent of becoming, paradoxically, a principle of individuation.*' In 'Systems as Desire: Hanne Darboven', *Art in America*, Summer 1980, p.118.

³³⁰ Dieter Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, Diaphanes, 2015, p.128.

Being dyslexic my short-term memory is foggy, which is why to me Darboven's methodology of copying texts seems unappealing. As a viewer of Darboven's installations I do not perceive her work as writing that requests or persuades me to read it. Even in her books the effort required to decipher her handwritten pages is such that I am not compelled to read the book from cover to cover, as this format traditionally encourages the reader to do. If indeed Darboven had been concerned with 'educating' her audience via her written words, surely she would have followed the efficient path of Weiner, who exemplifies the use of a rational readable printed typeface.³³¹ Or if indeed she wanted to maintain a cursive text that was evidently comprehensible, Darboven could have chosen a cursive typeface that would have removed her work from the subjective handmade, like the methods used by conceptual artist Marcel Broodthaers.³³² Darboven could also simply have written down her conceptual formula for an artwork and never 'put in the time' to execute it herself. This was how LeWitt made art, since he would 'write a piece' by stipulating how it should be made by gallery or museum art technicians, often themselves artists or draftsmen. Still, the captions to LeWitt's artworks did declare who did the drawing, such as in the 1969 piece *Straight Lines In Four Directions Superimposed* or the 1970 piece *Boxes With Drawing Series I, II, III, III* where the draughtsman was artist Adrian Piper, a detail that accentuates how the process of identifying emphasises the subjective handmade.³³³

³³¹ Lawrence Weiner originally used the extra-bold sans-serif font Franklin Gothic. As this font became too popular for Weiner's likening he began to design his own fonts. Stated by Weiner at his in-conversation with writer and art critic Gilda Williams at South London Gallery on Saturday September 2014.

³³² Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976) is a Belgian artist who is often associated with the notion of institutional critique.

³³³ *Straight Lines In Four Directions Superimposed* was drawn by Kazuko Miyamoto, Stephen Stravris, Jo Watanabe and Quiqui Watanabe for the MOMA exhibition 'Drawing Now' in 1976, catalogue by Bernice Rose, pp.71–73. *Boxes With Drawing Series I, II, III, III* is documented in the MOMA catalogue by Alicia Legg (ed.), *Sol LeWitt*, 1978. Interestingly, in Tony Godfrey's and Peter Osborne's books on conceptual art, which both have documentation of LeWitt's wall-drawings, there are no references to the draughtsman that drew them. Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, p.389 and Osborne (ed.), *Conceptual Art*, p.97.

That Darboven chose none of the above implies that she was interested in the trace as a direct cerebral experience. I use the word cerebral to distance these types of handmade marks from any notion of automatic writing that belongs with the unconscious and has its roots with Surrealism. A human agency is essential for Darboven's work, not as an erratic uncontrolled entity, but as a graphic technique that consciously repositions established knowledge. Critic Donald Kuspit noted in 1980 that the compulsive nature of Darboven's repetitions steal the picture. As he stated:

*...this compulsiveness means to break onto a new level of consciousness is indicated by the way it works on a purely visual level – although this may be a perverse way of interpreting an ostensibly Conceptual piece.*³³⁴

It is fantastic to see him admit to the limiting dictates of the definition of what conceptual art is, if viewed from Lippard and Chandlers' notion of dematerialisation or Kosuth's doctrine. I welcome Kuspit's honesty, a trait that inherently shows his loyalty belongs to art rather than with the theories that surround it. What Kuspit refers to as '*a new level of consciousness*' is what I would call mindful thinking. I use this method in my practice to conceptually explore subjectivity in relation to social unity and knowledge, as by using handmade methodologies I become conscious of my own consciousness – mindful thinking.³³⁵ The finished artwork does not necessarily make the viewer aware of his or her own consciousness, although they are confronted with a subjective effort, an action, which does reflect on consciousness.

³³⁴ Kuspit, 'Systems as Desire: Hanne Darboven', p.119.

³³⁵ I do relate 'mindful thinking' to Dieter Mersch's notion of 'artistic thought', which acknowledges that uncovering new knowledge inherently means uncovering what has not previously been thought: '*It means thinking in experiments with unknown results in order to lure out that which the 'labor of the concept' leaves chronically under-said. In this manner, 'artistic thought' is always critical thought and contradicts scientific thought and its regimes of truth*'. Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, pp.128–129.

Mel Bochner stated in 1973 that all art is consciousness viewed from the outside.³³⁶ I believe that what Bochner referred to as consciousness was rather the notion of being, since I would argue that some artists work hard to undermine their consciousness in order to enable them to access their unconscious. As Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio reminds us, we are only fully conscious when self comes to mind.³³⁷ This is where we jump off the cliff into the void of knowledge, where the choice is between philosophers with roots stretching back to Ancient Greece or scientists directed by futuristic digital imaginings.³³⁸ The legendary surrealist artist Meret Oppenheim, who took an active part in the discussions concerning the issues of feminism in 1970s, stated '*The mind is androgynous!*'.³³⁹ It is a sentiment that I think Darboven would have liked, though recent advances in neuroscience suggest that perhaps the female and male brains are different.³⁴⁰ However, we are all – men and women – independently (mostly unaware) authorities on consciousness simply by having a conscious mind. According to Damasio:

...a conscious mind arise when a self process is added onto a basic mind process. When selves do not occur within minds, those minds are not conscious in the proper sense...

*...consciousness is a state of mind in which there is knowledge of one's own existence and of the existence of surroundings.*³⁴¹

³³⁶ Bochner catalogue statement 'Ten to 10', Australia 1973, in *Solar Systems and Restrooms*, p.111.

³³⁷ Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio TED talk, *The Quest to Understand Consciousness* filmed March 2011, posted online December 2011, http://www.ted.com/talks/antonio_damasio_the_quest_to_understand_consciousness [consulted 14.02.2012].

³³⁸ For recent disagreements see for example The Guardian newspaper article 'Why Can't the World's Greatest Minds Solve the Mystery of Consciousness?', by science writer Oliver Burkeman, Wednesday 21 January 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/jan/21/-sp-why-cant-worlds-greatest-minds-solve-mystery-consciousness> [consulted 22.01.2015].

³³⁹ Therese Bhattacharya-Stettler and Matthias Fehner (eds.), *Meret Oppenheim Retrospective: an Enormously Tiny Bit of a Lot*, Hatje Cantz, 2007, p.123.

³⁴⁰ Madhura Ingahlakar and Alex Smith, 'Sex Differences in the Structural Connectome of the Human Brain', *PNAS*, January 14, 2014, vol.111, no.2, pp.823–828, <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/2/823.abstract> [consulted 20 January 2014].

³⁴¹ Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*, William Heinemann, 2010, p.8 and p.157.

That consciousness is subjective is what makes consciousness such a slippery subject matter, especially if the chosen research method relies on the objective, the favored scientific method.

Curator Joachim Kaak has noted that Darboven's work compels the viewer to continuously 'think along'.³⁴² The work prompts us to engage in sustained intellectual activity and Darboven asserted that in her work she tried to expand and contract as far as possible between the limits of the known and unknown.³⁴³ When I look at Darboven's music scores I do not have a need to hear the music;³⁴⁴ instead I look and see a pencil drawing reflecting an active mind – consciousness. In 1973 Lippard identified Darboven's drawn lines as '*brainwaves*'.³⁴⁵

This is where my three previously introduced concepts of enhanced knowledge, gut feeling, and mindful thinking come together. What these all have in common is the idea that our conscious minds, our cerebral processes, rely on the brain collaborating with the body. I have mentioned gut-feeling, also known as interoceptive awareness, in relation to Darboven's collecting methodologies. This is the human ability to detect changes in our bodies such as being aware of our heartbeats, which are processed in the anterior insular cortex of the brain.³⁴⁶ These are mental feelings that are on the verge of being physical. Likewise people that are involved with mindfulness also show activity in their insular cortex and over time their brains show measurable changes in the structures of those areas, associated with

³⁴² Joachim Kaak and Corinna Thierolf, *Hanne Darboven / John Cage: A Dialogue of Artworks*, Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2000, p.33.

³⁴³ Please see p.94, p.96 and p.135.

³⁴⁴ Darboven, as noted on page 125, made music so it is possible to listen to her work as performances, while her musical pieces are also sold as stand-alone CD editions or have been published as part of book publications. See for example these two publications that each include a CD: Ina Conzen, *Hanne Darboven: Kinder dieser Welt*, Cantz Verlag, 1997, and Valerie L Hillings (ed.), *Hanne Darboven: Homage a Picasso*, Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2006.

³⁴⁵ Lippard, 'Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers', p.35.

³⁴⁶ Claudia Hammond, *Time Warped: Unlocking the Mysteries of Time Perception*, Canongate, 2012, p.68.

learning, memory and self-referential processing.³⁴⁷ I suggest that Darboven's methods of collecting and her temporal handwriting both rely on cerebral processes that involve the extended mind. Furthermore, the evidence from neuroscience that the continuous practice of mindfulness enhances our brain and leads to an overall sense of well-being, may indeed have influenced and reinforced Darboven's German work ethic.

³⁴⁷ Britta K. Hölzel, James Carmody, Mark Vangel, Christina Congleton, Sita M. Yerramsetti, Tim Gard, Sara W. Lazar, 'Mindfulness Practice Leads to Increases in Regional Brain Gray Matter Density', *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, vol.191, issue 1, 2011, pp.36–43, [http://www.psychiatryjournal.com/article/S0925-4927\(10\)00288-X/abstract](http://www.psychiatryjournal.com/article/S0925-4927(10)00288-X/abstract) [consulted 20.10.2011].

Copied 'Unbreakable' Systems

The consistently publicised fact that Darboven spent hours writing every day, could lead to the false assumption that she worked in solitude. On the contrary, she surrounded herself with a small team of assistants.³⁴⁸ On my visit to the Foundation Miriam Schoofs referred to Darboven's studio environment as a kind of office organisation, which began when a friend was employed as a registrar, mainly to write the 'Index' to some of her early artworks.³⁴⁹ A joiner was also part of the team, who had originally worked for the Darboven coffee company, but eventually became more involved in doing things for Hanne Darboven, such as building her desks and shelves. Her team also included a framer who did some of the framing and created the hanging system in the home-studio,³⁵⁰ and in addition there were the many antique dealers who assisted her in obtaining items for her collections. However, during her last years she mainly worked with one local second-hand dealer, who once a week sold her items, just as he had done for a period of twenty years. Her office team also included a composer who transposed her number systems into musical scores. Each of these people had a specific role to play and was called upon when needed. I noted previously that the artists she befriended were all men, and here again, with the exception of one secretary, her assistants were men.

Darboven worked within what she proclaimed were strict systems that dictated her making, but any handmade method will be subject to some element of human error. How did Darboven feel about mistakes messing up her conceptual systems? In 2000 Joachim Kaak wrote about Darboven's

³⁴⁸ Schoofs refers, at our meeting at the Foundation, to two photographs of Darboven with the people that worked for her, and that it was *'really nice and good to see Hanne Darboven with her co-workers.'* I find the choice of word, 'co-workers', interesting, since these were people paid by Darboven to do set jobs, hence I will refer to them as studio assistants or simply assistants.

³⁴⁹ He died quite early in Darboven's career, therefore he did not work on later artworks.

³⁵⁰ As has previously been stated, Darboven had her work hung in her home-studio, not only on the walls but also on the ceiling, which required a specially designed hanging system.

1973 piece *7 Tafeln, II* (image 53),³⁵¹ where he described the artwork in great detail, as is regularly the case with writing on Darboven's work.

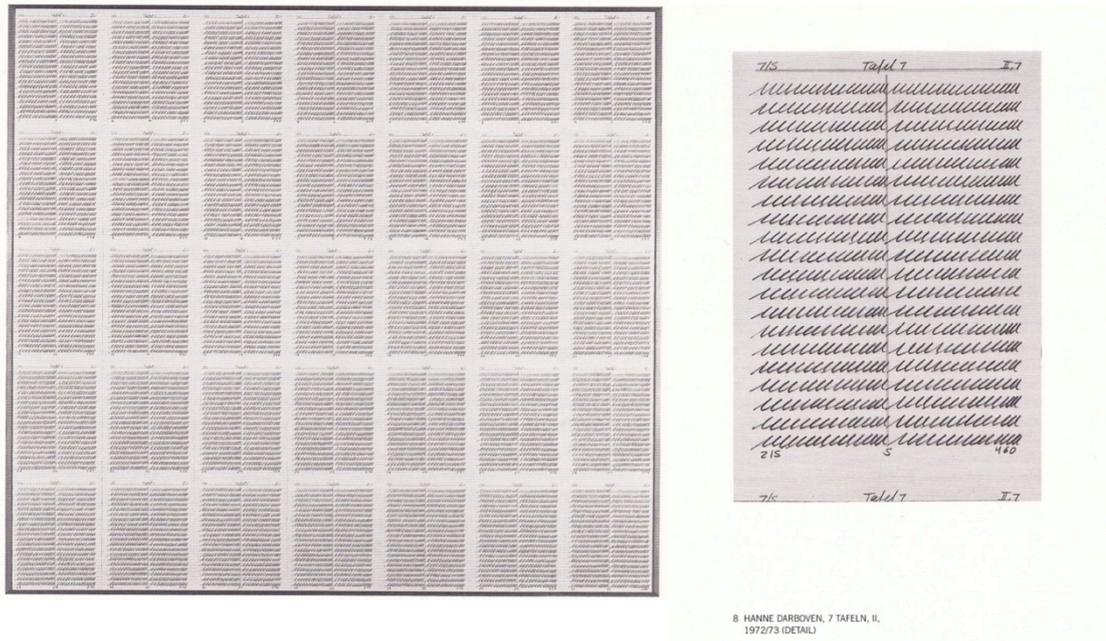


Image 53: Hanne Darboven, *7 TAFELN, II*, 1972/73, panel one of seven.

What attracted my attention was that he noted that Darboven originally intended this artwork to be in five groups, each consisting of seven panels however ‘...two of the groups were never executed.’³⁵² Kaak highlighted the fact and in a footnote also commented that groups ‘I’ and ‘III’ are now in private collections, though this is where his elaboration ended concerning the unfinished work. In a 1994 interview Darboven was asked if she ever made changes during the making of an artwork, to which her reply is ‘never’.³⁵³ Why then had *7 Tafeln, II*, which Darboven's original concept stipulated should be in five panels, been left with only three of them finished? Was this a one off or was Darboven fine with rewriting her concepts during the process of making,

³⁵¹ *7 TAFELN, II* (1972/73), pencil on paper, 245 pages, 35 x 25 cm each; mounted on 7 panels, 177 x 177 cm each, in the collection of Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany. The image documentation above is copied from the book Kaak and Thierolf, *Hanne Darboven / John Cage: A Dialogue of Artworks*.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p.12.

³⁵³ Darboven stated in interview with Gisbourne, 'Time and Time Again', p.5.

but simply never disclosed this in interviews? I brought up this question during my meeting with Schoofs,³⁵⁴ who unfortunately was unaware that *7 Tafeln, II* had been left unfinished. When I questioned what could have led Darboven to leaving the work unfinished, Schoofs noted that, at a guess, she might have been in hospital.

Original conceptual art supposedly dictates that concepts are fixed. Once the concept is in place, the work is execution without deviation. We know that Darboven would work long hours, and that she also had help from assistants with her writing endeavors.³⁵⁵ This makes the notion of an unfinished piece seem even more contradictory. If indeed the piece were partly aborted due to illness, logic would suggest that Darboven would employ others to do the job according to her Index. This again suggests to me that the writing process was a personal event, and if originally the concept stipulated her handmade involvement, the task could not simply be surrendered to others.

In her practice Darboven must have tested her conceptual systems in order to make decisions about which rules could or should be combined or not used. There is an assumption that working with concepts negates materiality and those choices that are inherently part of working with stuff. Paper was a stable component in Darboven's practice, and therefore presented her with material choices, such as the use of different sizes, thicknesses and surfaces. Darboven did not work with the same size of paper during her long career. In America the predominant paper format is letter-size, whereas us Europeans tend to use the A-sizing format (A4).³⁵⁶ At the start of Darboven's stay in NYC, she wrote asking her parents to ship some German graph paper.

³⁵⁴ In conversation with Schoofs at the Hanne Darboven Foundation on the 25 February 2014.

³⁵⁵ Darboven referred to how she '*...got others to continue the writing in accordance with my instructions*' in connection with her piece *Opus 26*, 1986–1988. Mentioned in an interview with Burgerbacher-Krupka in *Constructed Literary Musical – Hanne Darboven – The Sculpting of Time*, p.73.

³⁵⁶ Letter-size is 216mm x 279mm and A4 is 210 mm x 297 mm.

However, Darboven did eventually choose to use geometrical math paper, which is the American version of German graph paper. This American paper is slightly larger, being measured in inches instead of centimeters. It therefore appears that Darboven's surroundings did influence her practice, which indicates that her concepts were not allowed to become dictatorships. Concepts shift and morph, as they are after all chosen subjectively by the artist.

That Darboven swapped back to A4 paper on her return to Germany suggests that she was not as rigid as we may have been led to believe, from the early dissemination that focused on her use of the Gregorian calendar. She essentially comes across as slightly moderate – simply rational and practical in her choice of materials. It seems to be an oxymoron to describe Darboven as flexible, though that is what she appears to be if, for example, compared to her friend the conceptual artist On Kawara; he chose his materials specifically so that the concepts and methodologies would be the same wherever he was in the world.³⁵⁷

The mindful thinking of copying by hand that Darboven employed in her practice must have been rewarding, since it extended to her letter writing, where she copied every letter before posting. In Darboven's home-studio, emerging from her diverse collections of stuff, there are also framed copies of her artworks. As examined in her exhibitions, the artworks would exist as framed installations accompanied by a few objects, and the same works would also regularly exist as published books.³⁵⁸ An additional layer in Darboven's practice was her methodology of copying her own work in order to hang it in her home-studio. To me they appear similar to a printer's artist's

³⁵⁷ On Kawara (1933–2014) is famous for his 'Today' series (1966–2014), which consists of paintings made on canvas in a size that fitted in his suitcase. The paintings were numbered according to the specific date that he painted it. If he did not finish the painting during that particular one-day, he would destroy the painting. On Kawara embraced travelling and he appears to have made his concepts with that in mind.

³⁵⁸ A selection of Darboven's publications spanning 1969–1997 is given in the bibliography, p.223.

proofs that are produced in addition to the numbered editions; although within the art world drawings are seen as originals, one of a kind, it becomes an interesting dilemma when the artist herself copies her work by hand, simply to enjoy it in her home-studio. Coming across snippets of her various expansive artworks recalibrates them. Rather than being their normal encyclopaedic size, these snippets exist as 'tweets'; short bursts that hint at a larger 'picture'. They are not placed as the focus of our attention, but dispersed and slotted in, as one would insert a bookmark. Where Darboven wanted a larger portion of the original artwork on view, the ceiling appears to have been her preferred choice.

One explanation for Darboven's copying could be related to book publishing, the traditional commodification of writing, which could be further supported by her talent for business, as Schoofs stated:

*The economic, mercantile mindset of use and profit is one of two formative influences that shaped her character.*³⁵⁹

If indeed her time-consuming copying was motivated by a mercantile attitude, this would appear to go against the tenets of original conceptual art that often sought to problematise commodification by evading the conventional format of art objects in its production.³⁶⁰ That Darboven chose to copy her private letters makes me believe that her motivation was not money.³⁶¹ Instead I think of Rauschenberg's avoidance of my hypothetical bucket of bleach in the making of the *Erased de Kooning* – Darboven's method of hand

³⁵⁹ Schoofs, 'My Studio Am Burgberg': Hanne Darboven's Home and Studio as the Nucleus of her Oeuvre and Individual Cosmos', in Fernandes (ed.), *The Order of Time and Things*, p.18.

³⁶⁰ Lippard and Chandler's term dematerialisation refers to this deliberate revolt against 1950s large metal sculptures or abstract expressionist paintings, and to instead embraced performances, the photocopied page pinned to the gallery wall or work like Lawrence Weiner's piece that physically chipped away at the exhibition wall. However, as noted on p.67 footnote 73, Lippard in the 1970s quickly acknowledged that the original ambition to remove conceptual art from capitalism had failed.

³⁶¹ I think this is further accentuated by the fact that she was never in need of money, and that she chose to lead a simple life without luxuries or any excessive spending in her personal life.

copying to me appears motivated by the mindful thinking that advanced her cerebral processes and relates to my notion of enhanced knowledge.

Chapter Five.
**CONTEMPORARY
DELIBERATION**

Recent Encounters: a Deliberation on Art

A question that has resurfaced throughout the art historical and theoretical part of this research is – who should be empowered to deliberate on art?³⁶² It has been stimulating and encouraging to explore the numerous texts published in the 1960s by conceptual artists such as Bochner, Kosuth, and LeWitt. An assumption could be made that today's new norm of the practice-based PhD, with its substantial written thesis, is an evolution of the kind of art practice undertaken by Conceptual artists over forty years ago. I do not agree with that assumption. On the contrary, some ingrained preconceptions, such as the one voiced by Buchloh in 1990, that artists are not the best source when researching art,³⁶³ still appear to hold sway. To illuminate my view, I will focus on three recent public art events that had been advertised as deliberations on the practice of artists.

In 2012 I attended the one-day symposium 'Artist as Curator'³⁶⁴ expecting to hear artists sharing their methodologies on exhibition making.³⁶⁵

Unfortunately, with only one exception, the nine speakers were all curators.³⁶⁶

³⁶² Through the practice-based part of this PhD, I have explored how concepts that integrate academic knowledge could be shared, both with the general public, and in a wider context to bridge different fields of knowledge. I invited eleven cross-disciplinary contributors to write a text inspired by 'healing'. These texts were collected in a publication that was free to the visitors at my exhibition 'Human Silver Halo' at the Medical Museion (Copenhagen, 2013). Most of the contributors would never willingly have used the word healing; hence, they were displaced from their natural comfort area of expertise. Similarly, in my exhibition 'Mind Circles' at Baltic Project Space (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013) I invited two scientists to give a talk in the gallery space among the artworks while I was drawing on a photograph; the two speakers were denied the ubiquitous digital imagery that both fields (mathematics and neuroscience) depend on. Instead, they were asked to bring objects to use as support, which presented a challenge to both speakers. These events invited the scientists to connect with the general public in a manual 'hands on' talk that led to both speakers afterwards voicing a renewed mental engagement with their specialism and the non-specialist audience.

³⁶³ '*...any attempt at a retrospective survey must beware of the forceful voices (mostly those of the artists themselves)...*'; 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', p.107.

³⁶⁴ Organised by Afterall and part of the 'Exhibition Histories' research and publication project in association with the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna: the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College and Van Abbe Museum, Saturday the 10 November 2012 at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

³⁶⁵ The list of speakers was still not public on the day I booked my place at the symposium.

³⁶⁶ The speakers were, in the order of their presentation that day: Writer, art historian and curator Elena Filipovic; Curator, researcher and lecturer Elena Crippa; Art historian, writer and curator Ekaterina Degot; Art historian, critic and curator Alison Green; Lecturer, critic, curator and gallerist David Teh;

It was an interesting day, although the questions generated and the answers pursued naturally reflected the speakers' knowledge of curatorial methodologies, rather than those of an artist's practice. At the end of the day, when questions were requested, I enquired why there was only one artist speaking at a symposium titled 'Artist as Curator'. The reply from curator Pablo Lafuente was simply '*... artists are not succinct about their ideas*'. I was probably one of the few artists at the symposium, hosted by the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and, it appeared, predominately attended by their curatorial masters students. Regrettably, Lafuente's assessment consequently meant that at this symposium, artists' enhanced knowledge had been erased from the dissemination of a specific aspect of their practice.³⁶⁷ To remove artists' deliberations from a symposium entitled 'Artist as Curator', within the educational environment of tomorrow's curators, appears to me thought provoking and surprisingly old-fashioned, suggesting as it does that articulate, cerebral artists somehow do not exist.

Another episode, also in 2012, centred on an occasion when Mel Bochner was 'in conversation' with curator Achim Borchardt-Hume at the Whitechapel Gallery.³⁶⁸ Bochner's solo exhibition 'Mel Bochner: If the Colour Changes' was shown over two floors, with his early conceptual work from the 1960s and 1970s downstairs, and his recent paintings in the upper galleries.³⁶⁹ It had struck me that the early conceptual pieces had extensive descriptive captions, which appeared to lean towards the overly pedagogic, especially when compared to the captions accompanying his paintings that simply

Curator Valerie Smith; Artist and tutor Professor Willem de Rooij; Art historian, art critic, university lecturer and curator Ruth Noack.

³⁶⁷ It would be fair to question whether artists want to take part in academic dissemination of their art practice? Probably most would rather not, but with the steep increase in practice-based PhDs and the vast amount of artists that teach, I know of plenty that would. I am aware too that I am ignoring the fact that there was one artist that did talk at the symposium. His art practice straddles the field of art and curating; hence, his art practice overlaps a curator's practice. Putting that fact aside, I would still proclaim that one out of nine is in this context insufficient and as good as none.

³⁶⁸ This event took place on Friday the 12 October 2012 in connection with Bochner's solo exhibition 'Mel Bochner: If the Colour Changes' that was on at Whitechapel Gallery from 12 October to 30 December 2012.

³⁶⁹ One of Bochner's recent paintings did welcome the viewers as they entered the downstairs gallery, a large canvas full of thickly painted 'blah blah blah blah' across its surface.

stated title and year. I thought the lack of consistency was troubling, verging on the condescending by implying that the original conceptual pieces would be impossible for the viewer to engage with, unless they read the lengthy text next to each of these works. This methodology sharply contrasted to the cerebral freedom the viewer was allowed with the paintings exhibited in the upstairs galleries; were there really no words – nothing to say – about Bochner’s paintings?

It is a fundamental question for any artist working conceptually; how much of the concepts and processes that sustain the artwork ought to be revealed to the viewer? My own intention is to avoid prescribing ‘the’ meaning to the viewer, although there is no need for secrets, as Darboven similarly has stated.³⁷⁰ Aware of Bochner’s talent for writing on art, I was curious to determine whether he had been involved with the written contextualisation of his artworks at the Whitechapel Gallery. That day at the ‘in conversation’ event, I was sitting close to the front in the small auditorium. At the end when questions were invited, I directed my enquiry to Bochner, who started to reply, but immediately curator Borchardt-Hume shot forward to stop him. In no uncertain terms it was made clear to me that this was not an admissible question to ask the exhibiting artist. In Borchardt-Hume’s eagerness to declare this a ‘curatorial’ question that had nothing to do with the artist, he had simultaneously undermined an artist and writer with an oeuvre spanning fifty years. Bochner was a professional, diplomatic artist who quickly defused the situation, by simply stating that he was fine with the captions. I suppose Bochner’s involvement with critical writing during the 1960s, an experience that provoked suspicion and resentment from other artists, had made him keenly aware of the hierarchy of art.

³⁷⁰ Darboven famously stated ‘Mein Geheimnis ist, dass ich keines habe’ (My secret is that I do not have any); Burgerbacher-Krupka, *Constructed Literary Musical – Hanne Darboven – The Sculpting of Time*, p.115.

Undeterred by the hierarchical commotion, I mentioned to Bochner that I had enjoyed his writing from the 1960s and I was wondering whether he still wrote about art? Bochner replied that nowadays he only writes if others are not expressing similar observations to his own. What a great attitude! The contemporary artists I know, my colleagues and friends, predominately appear resigned to a notion that others, not themselves, deliberate on art and hence influence the contemporary dissemination of art and its meaning.

My last encounter, which took place at the 2012 Doctoring Practice Symposium in Bath, involved artists that are engaged with the written dissemination of art.³⁷¹ The keynote speaker that day was Curator Glenn Adamson, who began his introduction by stating that Fine Art practice-based PhDs are an oxymoron. His reasoning was that PhD research had to be quantifiable in the sense of being scientifically verified something that an art practice cannot ever be. Adamson continued by reasoning that it was the British University funding structure with its emphasis on the REF, Research Excellence Framework, that had fuelled the proliferation of practice-based PhDs, which now, to his great disappointment, were spreading to the rest of the world. This was not a popular view at an event mainly attended by practice-based PhD candidates. Many attendees displayed a strong sense of resentment towards Adamson for having accepted the invitation to present a keynote paper in an environment that he essentially believed should not exist. Instead, I chose to interpret Adamson's oxymoron as freedom – an invitation to embrace contradictions, just as advocated by Henry Flynt;³⁷² an opportunity to explore what practice can contribute to research and how deliberating artists can best infiltrate the system of academia to share their enhanced knowledge.

³⁷¹ The Doctoring Practice Symposium, Bath Spa University, Bath School of Art and Design (Sion Hill site), Friday 27 April 2012. The speakers were: (keynote) Dr. Glenn Adamson Head of Research The V&A; Dr. Emma Neuber, Dr. Michele Whiting and Dr. Linda Khatir Artists/Researchers; Professor James Saunders Head of Musical Research Bath Spa University; David Cushway, Ceramic Artist and Current PhD Researcher, Sunderland University.

³⁷² See Chapter One, p.66.

The art historian James Elkins, who critically examined the notion of artists' engagement with the dissemination of art in *Artists with PhDs*, curiously states in the last section of the book:

*I asked these artist-scholars (there isn't an easy term for what they are)...*³⁷³

I find it interesting that 'artists' is not a fitting definition. Perhaps Elkins' overriding criticality concerning the notion of artists being involved in research has influenced my reading of it,³⁷⁴ but Elkins does state:

*...history would seem to indicate that artists have been consistently misguided about what they do.*³⁷⁵

So there it is, anno 2009, yet still propagated in print, the notion that it is not reliable or sensible to 'allow' artists to be involved with the dissemination of art or to even comprehend their ideas. Elkins did show some impartiality by also including several texts by other authors in the book that defended the artists' role in the dissemination of art. I especially agreed with Henk Slager's statement:

*Thus, the most important methodological paradigm of artistic research could be described as an awareness of divergence without a hierarchy of discourses, as, for example, was the case with the prevalence of hermeneutics in art history in Modernism. Awareness of divergence implies the capacity to mobilize an open attitude and an intrinsic tolerance for a multitude of interpretations that, if necessary, could be transformed into a revolt against the danger of any one-dimensional contextualization.*³⁷⁶

³⁷³ James Elkins (ed.), *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, New Academia Publishing, 2009, p.168.

³⁷⁴ '... I expressed my surprise and suggested that the field of creative-art PhDs needs criticism', *ibid.*, p.130, footnote 1.

³⁷⁵ Judith Mottram makes the quote in 'Researching Research in Art and Design', *ibid.*, p.23.

³⁷⁶ Henk Slager, 'Art and Method', *ibid.*, p.53.

Original conceptual art was accompanied by idealistic hopes that it would help break down art's hierarchical structures. That this never materialised was noted by Lippard as early as the 1980s and Buchloh in 1990. My recent encounters demonstrate that the question of 'who deliberates on art' does not appear to have been liberated in the intervening twenty-five years. Artists frequently do not take part in the art establishment's dissemination of art, unless they are already part of academia, which means they have often adopted its conventions and language. I believe that artists need to be part of the dissemination of art, even those artists who deliberately avoid academia – this is a chance to endorse the inherent possibilities that exist in not being 'succinct', and for opening the door to share some enhanced knowledge.³⁷⁷ In the remainder of this chapter I have sought to flatten the hierarchy of 'who deliberates on art'. The tone of the text shifts to a dialogue between two artists, and the intention is to embrace the notion that cerebral artists can be just as eloquent about their ideas as theorists, curators and critics.

³⁷⁷ I have been encouraged over the last few years by the proliferation of publications, made and published by artists themselves, that side-step peer-reviewed publications and give the artists full control over the printed medium. My hope is that some of this writing will make its way into peer-review publications, since this is a way of insuring a wider contemporary dissemination, a broadening of the deliberation on art and just as importantly, these artists' deliberations become part of a broader historic legacy.

In Dialogue with Artist Lucy Skaer

The rationale to focus on one dialogue between two artists is principally to juxtapose the conventional art-historical research mapped in the first chapter. By focusing on one artist at the end of this thesis, instead of a traditional sample of a few artists, the role of the subjective – enhanced knowledge – is emphasised. The intent is also to avoid artists embedded in academia as lecturers or researchers. Artists that contribute to the theoretical art debate frequently hold positions in academia, which makes academic artists the predominant voice within the canon. Additionally, it is essential to maintain this research's emphasis on female artists, to examine how cerebral methods function in a contemporary conceptual art practice and how concepts are shared with an audience, to juxtapose it with historical enquiry. Artist Lucy Skaer met these criteria and welcomed a conversation on her art practice's use of concepts that incorporate materiality and the handmade. Thus, this subjective enquiry format, in which Skaer's words have deliberately been left unedited,³⁷⁸ is utilised as a case-study to record a contemporary art practice's use of concepts and the temporal handmade.

I met with Lucy Skaer on a January Thursday in Glasgow.³⁷⁹ As we settled down at the table, with our coffees, I gave an introduction to my research, before asking if she would call herself a conceptual artist?

LS:³⁸⁰ *Yes, I think I would. I think that there's a structure or a tactic behind a lot of the work. [Pause]. I mean, a lot of the works that I've been making in the last five years, there's a performative aspect in them. It is not performative, because I don't want people to see it, or to watch it, but the making of it, is a series of linked gestures that has a particular logic to it. For example, this*

³⁷⁸ Due to the limitations of the word-count for this practice-based PhD, I have had to leave out some of the issues discussed. All statements by Skaer that have been included are unedited.

³⁷⁹ 22 January 2015.

³⁸⁰ LS indicates Lucy Skaer's words that are in italic throughout.

work that I made 'The Ship of Fools' where I took the image from a wood engraving and I cut it into the museum floor.³⁸¹ Then I lifted the floor and scrambled the floorboards, and showed it again somewhere else, and again somewhere else. It went more and more into nonsense as it travelled. It's using the metaphor and enacting it in some manner. That the ship is meant to move, and it is meant to be nonsensical. I suppose, if you like, 'foolish conceptual'. [Laughter].

It's a good catchphrase, you seem to have an affinity with the 'fool'?

LS: *Yes. Well, I'm interested in that extreme subjective position that isn't part of a consensus, in a way. When I think about 'The Ship of Fools', I think about all of these different subjective positions that don't agree on a direction or a reality, and then they're all being observed from another point of view. I suppose I'm quite interested in images or allegories that suggest these different split perspectives, or different subjective positions. Another one I'm really interested in is 'The Dance of Death'. Death is the figure, and he appears to the person whom death is appearing to, but then us as a third party are looking on to this dual reality, if you see what I mean. I like those kinds of art historical things. I think that they are related to representation, and to image making.*

When people talk about conceptual art, there is an assumption that the subjective isn't part of the equation. What you are talking about is in some ways playing with that does it not?

LS: Yes.

I find that intriguing. I think about the concept as a kind of game. What I would call 'boring conceptual art' is when the game is simple, and when you 'get it' there is nothing else. When you see that same piece another time there is a

³⁸¹ The work was made for the 2010 group exhibition 'Intensif-Station' at K21, Kunst Sammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany.

feeling of, 'Oh, I got it the first time around' essentially leaving one disinterested the second time around. To me interesting conceptual art involves both the game and also some kind of 'play' that represent the subjective, a door where the artist allows the viewer in, but also where the artist is peeking through. I connect this with your fool.

Original conceptual art, kind of sought to 'kill off' the art that came before. In your practice, you embrace art history. It seems like one of your main inspirations comes from art. How do you perceive your use of art history?

LS: *I suppose in my work I'm quite aware of what history is, and who gets to write it, and who gets to speak about these things, and what seems rational and acceptable, and what seems irrational and unacceptable. In art history, I just see this real richness in things that have got in, that maybe don't get in a written history. The tactics of making images, I'm quite interested in the tactics. For example, one work that I think of as a conceptual artwork is this painting by Paul Nash called 'Equivalence for the Megaliths',³⁸² which I talk about in my artist talks. I think what he's doing there, is taking the ritual and historical space of these megaliths, of these Neolithic stones, and just inserting his own modernist forms into that. That to me is a really conceptual move. I suppose that is sort of a cheat. You can't really do that. You can't really cheat history in that way. But I love the move to try to do it.*

I think when I went to make that trip to Leonora that was the move that I was trying to make.³⁸³ It's to enter into a different era of art history. Amazingly, because she was so young when she was involved with surrealism and because she got to live to an old age, we could have this meeting of these different times. That led me to think quite directly about – not appropriation of other artworks, because it's not about authorship at all for me, but just the

³⁸² Paul Nash, *Equivalent for the Megaliths*, oil paint on canvas, 46cm x 66cm, 1935, in the collection of Tate since 1970.

³⁸³ In 2006 Skaer went to Mexico City to make an unannounced visit to the surrealist artist Leonora Carrington (1917–2011). Skaer made a 16mm film during her visit that forms part of the piece *Leonora* (2006–2008), that also includes a large drawing and two sculptural pieces in wood. The piece is in the permanent collection of the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow.

use of them. For me, those Brancusi 'Bird in Space',³⁸⁴ they do a particular formal thing. It's a thing that I can use, in a way, like a riff can be sampled on a record. So I think that idea of a direct meeting between Artists, and between people who make things, and people who have those kinds of values – I mean, that's a massive generalisation – but you might be more of a risk taker, or you might have not done the life path that your parents wanted. All of these different things. That is a really strong connection between Artists, even of different eras.

Hanne Darboven did an artwork called *Bismarckzeit*. Bismarck, as I'm sure you know, brought all of Germany's small kingdoms together to one united Germany. There was a statue of him with his dog Tyras that used to be in Berlin. The statue disappeared from Berlin, but Hanne Darboven got a replica that she then used in an artwork. I call it 'a famous found object' that she appropriated in her art. I suppose it's the same when you use these famous artworks that we all know in a totally different way. It becomes this familiar-unfamiliar thing. Which has a kind of potent-ness I suppose that you couldn't really find elsewhere, that also perform as a collapse of time between different periods. I'm interested in your use of time also in connection with drawing. Your drawings look like they've taken an awful long time to hand make. Have you moved away from making them?

LS: *No. I just made a huge one for New York. But I didn't make it. I made a very small amount of it. With those drawings, I'm actually not interested in the labour that's in them. I'm interested in making them look a certain way. So if I can make that in a much easier way, that's what I would do.*

So you work with artist assistants?

LS: *Yes. It's all predetermined. Those black drawings are based on a grid, and the different tonal values of the original image will be either like a point-five*

³⁸⁴ Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), *Bird in Space*, bronze, 137.2 x 21.6 x 16.5 cm, 1928.

centimetre grid, or a one-centimetre grid, or a point-seven-five. It's all laid out already.

Planned out. I did love that in your piece *Leonora* that the drawing in the curve had been left seemingly undone. You let the viewer in on your technique by having this section that is not complete, which I thought was generous. That makes me jump, but I will come back to the handmade. How important is it for you that the viewer understands all your ideas behind the work?

LS: *[Pause]. I think that it's quite difficult. I don't ever want to withhold information just to be annoying. [Laughter]. I try to talk about the work and to say what is behind it. But I also try to make the shows so that there is this formal interface with the viewer, so that the work is understandable when you walk into the room. Understandable, maybe on a level of just how formally it appears and how you are made to look at it in a certain way. Like those black drawings. You can't very easily read them quickly, so there's a delay where you're looking at it and shifts and it does a particular – almost like an optical thing. I don't know if it's the ideas behind the work, but the work is generated from a certain way of thinking. I hope that it's physical in the show.*

I think it is. I'm curious about that. You don't want to hide anything from the viewer of your concept?

LS: *Yes. I don't want to withhold any information and be fully obscure, because I think that's another tactic that's going on at the moment. It's a wilful secretiveness of the artist, and I find that not interesting.*

Going back to the idea of the game and the play, you set the scene, and if people are curious enough that they want to know all this stuff, it will be there available, in contextualising text for the exhibition. Have you had situations where you disagreed with what the exhibition text stated?

LS: *In general, it's part of the process that I find really cringe worthy and I don't particularly enjoy – because there's a certain way of speaking that different institutions need to do to try to bring in an audience. To try and help people understand these weird things. But equally, these big limestone boulders that I got from Lithograph City in the States that are in this show now, it's important that people know that they're from this place and that I went and got them. All of that information, I want to be there. Also sometimes I try to put it in the titles in some way, so that it's easy.*

I mean the titles that I have are quite often like a little word game themselves. Like the 'Leonora' titles where those brackets are different; there is the Joker, which is the farm and Death, which is the drawing and the Wheel. They're kind of like tarot card titles, subsets. I like to borrow the logic of some other system to put as a parallel. I didn't end up doing this, but the show at Murray Guy,³⁸⁵ which was called 'Sticks and Stones'. I made a work before that, which was a kind of forerunner to it. It was copies of copies of copies, again the same tactic.

So for you, it's not about your hand. Is it about skill and a knowledge that is inherently to do with the hand? For me, it is so strongly present in your work that there is this tactility that only the hand can do.

LS: *Yes. I think one thing is inhabiting a reference, which I do in a... Like when we were talking about how I use art history, or something. I would try to not only refer to something, but really live within that reference. I think it's the same with the making. When I work with a maker, I try to really thoroughly live within the logic of that maker.*

When you say you 'inhabit the making', do you spend a long time with these makers?

³⁸⁵ Murray Guy is Skaer's New York Gallery where she had just installed her solo show 'Sticks & Stones' 10 January – 21 February 2015.

LS: *Actually, it's really important. I work really closely with Simon Harlow, who just works here in Glasgow. I have done since he helped me with my degree show. He's a very important person to me. A lot of the things that we make, we talk a lot about how it's going to be. But generally, I have an idea of how I want it. Then there are these instances where the work evolves. Just when you're making something and you suddenly see what it does, and you tweak it, or you change it. Usually I'm not there massively for the actual sanding, but I'm in constant contact about how things are going.*

Lets return to the concepts, you are happy for the making process and these different materials, to have an input on the piece?

LS: *Yes, I suppose it's a contradiction in the work, that's probably at the heart of what we're talking about. Because I have a very strong formal idea of what I want, and I respond to how the materials are, and how they look together. So there's definitely a compositional element. I don't know if it's an intuitive thing, or just formal choices, that sometimes go against the concept of the work. [Laughter].*

Is that annoying when that happens?

LS: *I think that quite often the concept or the game is what generates the work. It's the kick-off point. But actually in the end, how the work as it speaks to the viewer is more important. Maybe the most perfect work would be if the conceptual kick-off point was completely hand-in-hand with how the formal work looked. It wouldn't be? Yes. It is purism isn't it that maybe is not necessary.*

It's that thing where you just want to go and scratch it a bit, just to add a bit of a ruffle in it. [Laughter]. You kind of avoid logic, don't you? You play with logic, but then you intervene?

LS: *Yes. I mean, I don't want to make a complete hermetic thing.*

When we were talking about time before, I noticed that I'm very drawn to things that are one particular precise moment within a longer timeframe. Even thinking back to this drawing that I did when I was a student. I did a drawing of Stonehenge with an aeroplane flying over it. Those different time trajectories and where they cross, I'm quite interested in. I've been working a lot with things that have a specific date, like these Guardian prints that are from 2013 – different months in 2013. How they then age themselves and how they age in the collective memory of what those events were. When I showed them, they only just preceded the show at Tramway, so you would be looking at things that were two months old, but you could remember. You would remember them in a particular way. Then now when I show them again, they've changed from events to just being people or clues. Like you recognise Gordon Brown or someone, but you don't think that's when Gordon Brown said that thing. So the way that you think about them has changed over time. I'm starting to do it with specific personal things, which is new in my work, because I've not done that before.

I wanted to pick up on that.

LS: *Biographical things, I suppose.*

Yes, your dad's coin collection.³⁸⁶ Again, if we go back to conceptual art where the subjective supposedly was to be avoided, and the question of what is being revealed to the viewer. How much do we tell of the things and research behind the artwork? When I read up on your work there was an emphasis that it wasn't just coins or a coin collection, it was your dad's coin collection. I'm interested in that placing of the biographical within the artwork. What function do you see it having in your practice?

LS: *With that coin collection work... This is not completely answering what you're asking. My work has this relationship to language, and it's quite often antagonistic to language, or text, or writing. Even like that title 'Sticks and*

³⁸⁶ Skaer has incorporated her dad's coin collection into the piece *You, Me, You, You, Me, You*, 2012.

Stones'. It's from the rhyme of 'sticks and stones can break my bones, but words cannot hurt me'. There's an antagonism between the words and the physical objects. The physical objects couldn't break your bones, and the words are innocuous, but with my dad's coin collection, I wanted to make one solid object from that. That is my father's coin collection. There it is, and there it will stay. It's no longer just coins that could go into circulation; there it is, as a fixed thing. That was what I was thinking about when I made that, because... This is a little bit of a tangent, but in the work recently, I've been using this tactic of combining, and aggregating, and conglomerating, putting together things. Like fusing things into one. So the most recent of those black drawings I did is a combination of all of the black drawings that I did before over the top of each other. It almost produces this impossible thing, because it's too much. It's too complicated. It's overloaded. But I suppose I've been using that as a tactic since ages ago, when I made these Venn diagram drawings. It was like a Rorschach blot with a snake, and the area that they shared was highlighted. It's a very easy A plus B equals this thing that has a third value that isn't part of our description. We don't have a word, or a language, or a name for it. What was the question?

It was the biographical – that it was your dad's collection, rather than just a coin collection.

LS: *So the biographical, it has this... Yes, it's a subjective. Yes, it is my dad's coin collection. I made another one from the front steps of his house. The one that I made of the steps of his house, the work is titled 'My Steps as my Terrace'. The terrace of houses, there are six houses in a row. Each of the steps is altered with another object to denote one of the houses on the terrace. So my house is denoted with a mirror, like a Roman bronze mirror, which is inset into the step. The woman who lived at number six collected Lucy Rie pottery, and so there's a Lucy Rie teacup at the position of number six in the step. So it's a kind of appropriation of different artefacts that have a different history, into being something that's being biographical, but it's also symbolic. It's representative, even if it's in the most subjective manner.*

It's very emotional, isn't it? We all have a dad, or had a dad that's the thing. The word 'dad' is so loaded. Everybody will come with different stories and baggage on reading that word. The assumption is that artists that work conceptually avoid emotions. By throwing 'dad' in, it becomes emotionally connected to something we all have embedded knowledge about. Obviously, it could be your dad's collection and you chose not say so to the viewer. Or it could be it was not your dad's coin collection and you simply opted to label it as being your dad's. There are all these possibilities adding an extra depth to the work. I hadn't seen that kind of biographical reference sneak into your work before that coin collection. That is why it really stood out.

LS: *Yes. I suppose when I made that work it was in a series with these lozenges, or these shapes that I had been working with a lot. It was like one, two, three of the sinker mahogany lozenges, and then something with a very personal thing. Again, this mixing of different eras, or different histories of things, but yes, they were part of a sequence within this material that I felt had lost its history. I mean, it has a really amazing history, but it has a submerged part to its history – the wood. The coins are now fused and not accessible anymore. They're permanently gathered.*

They have another value attached to them, through being part of your work. I suppose we talked around it, but I'm curious to hear if you have an answer to it. I'm interested in how you view, in your practice, the whole conceptual and what I call 'the handmade'. Maybe we could call it 'materiality' or the 'subjective'. Do you see them as having two very specific roles in your practice? Or do they work together?

LS: *I see them as pretty much integrated.*

So for you, those supposable two different ways of working, the conceptual and the handmade with its materiality and subjective method, belong to the same coin?

LS: *Yes, they do go hand-in-hand. But I think there's a distinction in some of the things that I make. Some of them, like the lithographic stones, the material has got an agency itself. That is what we're looking at, or we're talking about with that work. But then in another work, I might make something like these lozenges. The material is not that relevant. The lozenges are almost like a punctuation in the exhibition space to manipulate how the viewer will look at something, or to make a link between two things that are unconnected. So sometimes, the material is really meaningful, and sometimes it's just a formal tactic.*

I'm interested in briefly going back to what I call the 'time consuming' – something that's taken a long time to do. We talked about the handmade, and we established that you would rather not spend a long time doing something. You're quite happy to hand it over to somebody else to do it. There must be a place in your practice early on where the conceptual system is being played with, where you are figuring it out. Is it only your hand, which can do that?

LS: *With the drawings, I made all of the first ones myself, so I knew.*

How long did the first one take you to do?

LS: *Probably about a month of working really solidly. I worked from January to June in 2007, and I worked all hours of the day. I got a big callous on my elbow, and I got cramps and stuff in my hands, but it was fine. It was really weird as well, because I had nothing to talk to anyone about. I was living in New York at the time, and I would just only be able to talk about stuff that I heard on the radio. Because that's all I did, just listen to the radio.*

Did this structured time function as a process of generating new thoughts, new concepts for other works?

LS: *It was definitely a zone. I don't know how productive it was. The drawing was productive. Then of course, you have all these parallel thoughts. But I don't think more than I have if I'm reading or something.*

So you didn't feel that it fed into other works, but on the other hand you do feel it was comparable to reading, so it was a kind of mental process?

LS: *I always have a piece of paper next to me. When I was doing those drawings, I would be doing them and it would stop me smudging the work that I'd already done. Those are full of notes of things, and ideas, and shorthand for things. So yes, I guess it was part of it.*

Lucy Lippard called the different kind of drawing that emerged in the sixties 'permutational' drawings. To me these are drawings where thinking is embedded in the drawn line. When I look at your drawings, I get that too. We are in awe of the human dedication that was needed to do this drawing. It reflects on human perseverance via a determined mind that's persevering to do something quite boring. It isn't just the hand that is doing; the drawing also reflects the mind, doesn't it?

LS: *Yes. But are you asking me about what the daydreaming mind does while you're doing it?*

Is it daydreaming though?

LS: *It's just when the hand is busy, you think in a different way, don't you?*

Yes, I think I do, though I would not call it daydreaming. In my practice it represents a space for thinking that relates to the concrete. So after you had spent that half-year drawing, you thought 'I'm never going to do that again'?

LS: *I made those first ones, and then that summer I made the whale. That was the second. I think I made like three or four of those black drawings in the first bit. Then I made the whale. I recognised that trip to see Leonora and those works that I made for that installation, as being like an escape from the constraints of making those drawings earlier that year. It was going somewhere. It was meeting someone. It was sculptural. It was much more diverse, but it had much less direct logic to it. It was like a sidestep, in a way.*

On the finishing point, if we go back to the concept, how does a piece start?
Do you always have things on the go that then one leads to another?

LS: *Yes, sometimes. I don't know. I think it's just different with different points. So now I'm working on a project that is to do with my father's house, because it just seems like that's building up to something. So the next big part of research or something, is going to be in my father's house. That's the house where I grew up, so it's my own personal and cultural history. Then other than that, I don't know what that's going to be. But I want to make a sculptural intervention in some way with all that material.*

So you do use the word 'project', and you do use the word 'research'.

LS: Yes.

And you would call yourself a Conceptual Artist?

LS: *I find that difficult, because Conceptual Artist is so defined as something. But then if I'm actually thinking about it, there are these... It's difficult, isn't it? All that is conceptual art, in some way.*

I choose to say, 'Conceptual art is basically anything that starts with an idea that then determines the material and the form of the work.'

LS: *I mean, this project in Murray Guy is concept driven. It started with an idea and then it's fulfilling the idea.*

I am asking you, because some people have said to me, *'Why are you researching this, all art nowadays is conceptual art?'* That's one argument. Then you have the other side of the argument that would say that, *'What you do isn't conceptual art, because it is way too formal, or subjective, or material driven'*. There are arguments for and against. Therefore it's much more interesting what you say, how you feel comfortable, describing what you do.

LS: *Yes. I guess if I were giving an artist's talk, I would not stand up and say, 'I am a Conceptual Artist, and here is my thing.'* [Laughter]. *But if you say, 'Are you a conceptual artist?' then I have to say, 'Yes.'* In a similar way that if you would say, *'Are you a feminist?' I would say, 'Yes.'*

That is exactly my argument 'I am Danish – I'm a feminist' but I would never present myself as a Feminist Danish Artist. I see myself as an Artist. Finally, I have a love for questions, and I feel that your work fills the viewer's mind with questions. Does it interest you to switch on the viewers mind?

LS: *I think it's more of an emotional thing that I'm trying to do. Basically, if I'm looking at art or if I'm wanting to research something, I find the things that I can't place, that have a particular energy to them, or a particular – something that's completely not a verbal or a written concept, that's what I find most exciting. In a book, if I'm researching something, very often – I'm really interested in Neolithic things. But the way that those things are discussed academically doesn't interest me at all. It seems like the questions are completely not the ones that I am interested in. So I don't want to know what they were eating, or how their teeth wore, you know?* [Laughter].

So what do you want to know?

LS: *I suppose I want to know the different ways that the mind can work, the massive differences that we could think about things. Also the misunderstandings and mistranslations between cultures, or just between people.*

It is a really interesting thing, how much gets lost? We think we understand all the time, but perhaps we don't. A perfect place to stop! *[Laughter]*

Thank you.

Conclusion

I have a confession to make – I am a bibliophile who is slightly wary of the printed word as a signifier of certainty, and perhaps this is why Mel Bochner's 1970 piece *Language is not transparent* (image 54) appeals to me as a healthy warning. In my art historical and theoretical examination

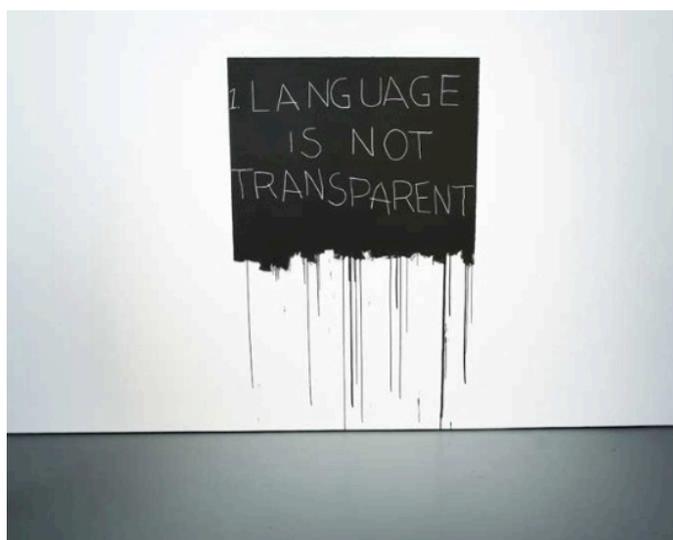


Image 54: Mel Bochner, *Language is not transparent*, 1970.

I have disregarded both Benjamin Buchloh's advice to focus on external interpretations of artists and Pablo Lafuente's comment that artists are not succinct about their ideas. Wherever possible I have instead prioritised the artists' own original words that frequently originated from conversations. I have travelled widely to experience Hanne Darboven's work and life beyond the written texts and photographed documentation. To contextualise the research within contemporary theories on art, I have chosen to prioritise the spoken word by attending numerous talks, symposiums, conferences and initiated conversations. The verbal language offers an unmediated experience of the speaker – the human subjective – that contextualises the words. Just as the neuroscientist asks the patient questions in order to establish the wellbeing of the mind, speech is a colourful, nuanced indicator of our individual faculties. That is essentially what this thesis has examined, the marriage of the conceptual and the material human subjective.

Central to this research and its contribution to knowledge is my own conceptual art practice, in which the handmade advances the conceptual, a missing argument in the literature on conceptual art. The questions examined in this practice-based research were developed and investigated through a cross-disciplinary artist residency, a new body of artworks, two solo exhibitions, two public cross-disciplinary events and a publication. Permeated

by my art practice, this research surveys and questions established categories of knowledge, while contributing to broader dialogues on approaches to sharing methods, terminologies and knowledge. My art practice establishes that the temporal handmade can strengthen conceptual deliberation, making it significant to distinguish this form of handmade method – the cerebral handmade – from those that are intuitive or automatic. My artistic research's involvement with science in cross-disciplinary projects, such as the artist residency and the curated public events, generated a cross-pollination of methods and put a focus on the hand's vital collaboration in human assembly and understanding of new knowledge. The overall motivation was to expand categories and hierarchies, as a device to contemplate how contemporary knowledge, for good and bad, is habitually structured by past beliefs and habits, be they art mediums, academic knowledge structures related to value, or contexts for dissemination of historic or cutting-edge knowledge. Central to this research's contribution is the emphasis that women also work cerebrally, while establishing that subjective explorations of established knowledge can engage both artist and their audience in a conscious deliberation.

Consensus is a word that science, with its adoration of definitions endeavors to embrace, while artists characteristically contemplate possibilities by resisting convention.³⁸⁷ Henry Flynt invented his own philosophical 'logic of contradictions', that itself repelled easy definition. To me Flynt appears to fit with Moria Roth's new cerebral breed of artists in the 1960s, although an artist that was especially committed to the fusion of interdisciplinary knowledge. The fact that conceptual art cannot be shoehorned into a simple definition was exemplified by Lucy Lippard's rejection of Flynt's concept art as

³⁸⁷ For a meditation on definitions please see Adam Phillips, 'Look It Up', in Judith Clark and Adam Phillips, *The Concise Dictionary of Dress*, Violette Editions / Artangel, 2010, pp.9–19. For a further exploration of artists as 'problem-solvers' see *ACT Lecture | Michael Corris: What Do Artists Know? Contemporary Responses to The Deskillling of Art*, ACT – MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology 2012, <http://video.mit.edu/watch/act-lecture-michael-corris-what-do-artists-know-10199/> [consulted 22.10.2012].

belonging to the 1960s conceptual art that she was involved with, and further emphasised by her 2013 assertion at a Whitechapel Gallery talk:

*People think they know what conceptual art is, but really it was a million things.*³⁸⁸

The multiplicity of conceptual art is rooted in art history and derived from an evolution rather than a revolution. If for a second we imagined conceptual art to have come from an art revolution, then Joseph Kosuth would have been the liberator perhaps helped by Lippard, who sought to subvert the art world's 'art-as-commodity'. In the intervening years Kosuth has softened his antagonistic language, though he has maintained a narrow definition of what conceptual art entails, as his 1999 statement illustrates:

*Conceptual art, simply put, has as its basic tenet an understanding that artists work with meaning, not with shapes, colours, or materials.*³⁸⁹

It is my opinion that numerous contemporary artists, of my generation and younger, appear to have evolved Kosuth's statement by negating his 'not'. I suggest a more fitting contemporary ending to his sentence could be: first and foremost artists work with meaning, while shapes, colours and materials exist to support the concept. This would be in the spirit of what art historian Thomas Crow refers to as a 'living and available' conceptual art:

If the history of Conceptual art is to maintain a critical value in relation to the apparent triumph of visuality, it must meet the conditions implied in their judgment on its fate: 1) it must be living and available rather than concluded; 2) it must presuppose, at least in its imaginative reach, renewed contact with lay audiences; and 3) it must document a capacity for significant reference to

³⁸⁸ Thursday the 11 April 2013 I attended the 'Exhibition Histories Talks: Lucy Lippard', where Lucy Lippard was in conversation with the writer Lucy Steeds. A video recording of the talk has been online since 20.05.2013, <http://www.afterall.org/online/exhibition-histories-talks-lucy-lippard-video-online/#.VTE89s7zBAc> [not consulted].

³⁸⁹ 'Intents(s)', Joseph Kosuth, in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.461.

*the world beyond the most proximate institutions of artistic display and consumption.*³⁹⁰

The early critical debate that surrounded the cerebral artists in the 1960s was notably influenced by the original male conceptual artists themselves. It is thought provoking that the two widespread, and I would argue overly narrow descriptions for conceptual art, dematerialisation and institutional critique, were not worded by the artists themselves, but rather by Lippard and Buchloh. LeWitt's more open and arguably less snappy definition 'conceptual art with a capital C or a small c' has not received the same exposure. Nevertheless, the artists still shaped the critical context with their enhanced knowledge, consequently assuring that their new radical and expansive art became part of the critical discourse. It is interesting to question whether indeed conceptual art would have been so influential, if it had not been for the existence of these artists' texts? I think conceptual art's lasting legacy has been cemented by these published artists' writings that have, understandably, greatly influenced the historical examination of conceptual art. As Ursula Meyer remarked in 1972, these artists had taken over the role of the critics or removed 'the unnecessary middleman' as Kosuth stated. Unfortunately, the original female conceptual artists do not appear to have been as eager or determined to publish their writings. Instead women's influence came via the writers Ursula Meyer and Lucy Lippard's published conceptual art books, which ensured that women did have an influence on the discourse surrounding original conceptual art.

That Hanne Darboven did not want to be included in Ursula Meyer's book on conceptual art has not altered the fact that she is one of the nineteen original conceptual artists that have exhibited in all of the three survey exhibitions on

³⁹⁰ Thomas Crow, 'Unwritten Histories of Conceptual Art' (1995), in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.568.

conceptual art.³⁹¹ There can be no doubt that viewed from an art historical context, Darboven is a conceptual artist who created conceptual artworks. This thesis has demonstrably documented that her work was not simply about concepts, as the early 1970s dissemination would have us believe, a position which has subsequently coloured the critical literature related to her work. Instead, Darboven's practice was an amalgamation of her mind, her hand, her time – the human subjective, as was so palpable in her home-studio collections that further demonstrated her boundless passionate commitment. Darboven chose to spend her time making her own artworks, rather than hand the supposedly tedious job over to the team of 'office' assistants that she employed. By doing so, Darboven signaled that her conceptual game, the idea that generated her systems, was simply one of several methods used in her art practice. This is a fact that it is important to emphasise; Darboven's work relied on a constellation of methods – game and play – where her concepts collaborated with cerebral processes that involved materiality and subjectivity, far removed from any notion of dematerialisation.

Moria Roth argued that the 'Aesthetic of Indifference' shaped the artists that became the 1960s cerebral artists, but the kind of conceptual art that Hanne Darboven represents is anything but Roth's aesthetic of indifference; on the contrary, she would be a perfect figurehead for an 'aesthetic of commitment'. Interestingly, the word occupation, which as artist Hito Steyerl suggests has supposedly replaced labour,³⁹² is, with its reference to vocation, a rather brilliant fit to Darboven's conceptual handmade efforts. Darboven's choice not to let others do the principal writing indicates that to her it was not simply a

³⁹¹ The general survey exhibitions on conceptual art are: the 1969 exhibition 'Konzeption–Conception' at Städtisches Museum, Leverkusen; the 1989 exhibition 'L'Art Conceptual, une Perspective' at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; the 1995 exhibition 'Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965-1975' at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. The nineteen artists are John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, Marcel Broodthaers, Stanley Brouwn, Daniel Buren, Victor Burgin, Hanne Darboven, Jan Dibbets, Dan Graham, Douglas Huebler, On Kawara, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman, Adrian Piper, Edward Ruscha, Robert Smithson and Lawrence Weiner.

³⁹² Hito Steyerl elaborates brilliantly on how the European Union has eradicated the words 'employment' or 'labour' and instead have replaced them with the word 'occupation'. Hito Steyerl, 'Art as Occupation: What Happens to Knowledge?', in Mara Ambrožič, and Angela Vettese (eds.), *Art as a Thinking Process: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, Sternberg Press, 2013, pp.224–229.

job – labour – that anybody could do, and so signifying her own central role in her conceptual practice, especially if we remember that she did claim to only write for herself. I think this is where a possible answer lies as to why Darboven did not get her assistants to do all the writing and why she instead devoted much of her life to handwriting. Donald Kuspit's reluctant statement of 'a new level of consciousness', in relation to Darboven's work, appears to me fitting, although rather than view it as new level of consciousness, I suggest that Darboven's handwriting extended her deliberation and perhaps even resulted in an overall sense of well-being, as the latest neuroscience discoveries would have us believe is possible. This is a conceptual art practice that firstly, engages the artist cerebrally with notions that frequently relate or respond to established academic knowledge; while the second phase incorporates another sort of cerebral activity, one that involves making, which allows the cerebral to extend to the body. The artist who works in this way wants to 'be aware' – present – so this is not unconscious or intuitive work; rather it is an art practice that relies on a continuous conscious deliberation that incorporates the handmade.

This research furthermore argues that within art practices that use concepts, the role of the handmade – the subjective – can encourage inquisitiveness in the viewer. This thesis has established that several of the original conceptual artists did not think that the viewer needed to understand their concepts. The conceptual pieces' ability to engage the viewer in his or her own conscious or emotional negotiation of the artwork is what constitutes a positive achievement. This is where complexity – shaped by nonlinear dialogues that defy logic – plays its role. If the artwork has a singular meaning, the art revolves around what the artist desires you to understand, rather than attracting viewers that are motivated to wander their own minds for possibilities. As stated in the introduction, the works that years later I vividly remember first encountering are artworks such as Darboven's, which pleurably avoid any one classification, instead embracing a wider range of possibilities.

Darboven's early 1968 statement gave emphasis to an exploration of limits 'less known and unknown', whereas in 1986 she poetically and ambivalently defined her practice as:

*Our work is not a philosophy nor a science of the physical world; it is itself an element of the physical world and can, as such, only be an object of science.*³⁹³

I take her 'object of science' to mean knowledge, which fits well with my argument that her practice became an enquiry into how the cerebral subjective can be present within social history. The human agency in Darboven's work is not an erratic uncontrolled entity, it is a graphic technique that consciously re-positions established knowledge and embraces elements of knowledge production that are traditionally invisible – the 'handmade' as a process of knowledge – that historically has been erased from the academy's hierarchical knowledge.

In our lives and throughout our education there is a focus on consistency and knowing 'the facts'. Not knowing is unquestionably seen as a negative, while the human default of not knowing is swept under the carpet, and therefore we ignore the fact that what we do not know far outweighs what we do know. The place where we are allowed to explore not knowing and perhaps even move along to the next step, of explicitly enjoying the complexity of not knowing, is in art. As writer Jennifer Higgie recently wrote:

Totalitarianism, fascism and fundamentalism may differ but, ultimately, they share a common aim: to negate complexity, individuality and diversity in order to create a single, violent ideology that is intent on destroying anyone or anything which might oppose its monolithic logic.

Art, by contrast, invites multiple possible readings; at its best, it embraces contradiction, dissent, ambiguity and idiosyncrasy. It could be said that all art – all non-propagandist art – is a form of resistance to the idea that the shape, the meaning, the myriad ways of living in and moving through the world should – or even could – ever be one thing. The greatest paintings,

³⁹³ Jean-Pierre Bordaz, 'Hanne Darboven or the Dimension of Time and Culture', p.110.

*performances, sculptures, installations and films refuse to represent anyone as a type: this is, perhaps, art's finest attribute.*³⁹⁴

This thesis has established that several of the original conceptual artists did unequivocally incorporate materiality into their practices. Darboven established a methodology of collecting that relied on the latent possibilities of complex networks, and numerous contemporary artists, exemplified in my dialogue with Lucy Skaer, display a similar commitment to a process of art making that comprehensively relies on materiality.³⁹⁵ These are art practices that embrace the nonlinear, the colourful and textural in an effort to excavate the debris of human pursuits; using human paraphernalia in order to generate curiosity driven knowledge.

I think there is a light touch to many contemporary works that use concepts. If there is any conceptual depth to these works, the artists frequently appear to resist advertising this. Instead these kinds of artworks are left to themselves, to engage the viewer in conversations that involve layers of interpretations, or simply to engage the viewer aesthetically.³⁹⁶ This open acknowledgement of the role of aesthetic materiality to seductively engage the viewer is the main difference between original and contemporary conceptual art. Original conceptual art can occasionally be a one trick pony – puzzles, didactic slogans or even simply boring. Instead their contemporary cousins leave the viewers to decide for themselves if they want their art experience to be a puzzle or simply an aesthetic experience. There is a sophisticated choice of engagement when interacting with these contemporary conceptual artworks,

³⁹⁴ Jennifer Higgle, 'The Solace of Art: Creativity as Resistance', *Frieze*, no.169, March 2015, p.17.

³⁹⁵ I would suggest this is also evident in the large exhibition projects that during my research have embraced alternative knowledge as represented in the human subjective, the handmade and materiality. Such as: 'Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing' curated by Brian Dillon for Turner Contemporary, Norwich Castle Museum and de Appel, Amsterdam, May 2013 – August 2014; 'The Encyclopedic Palace' curated by Massimiliano Gioni for the Venice Biennale 2013, Italy, 1 June 2013 – 24 November 2013; 'The Alternative Guide to the Universe' curated by Ralph Rugoff for the Hayward Gallery, London, 11 June – 26 August 2013.

³⁹⁶ For a further exploration of contemporary art that incorporates the hand into mainly digital mediums to signal the human see Laura McLean-Ferris, 'Hand Signals', *Art Monthly*, no. 379, September 2014, pp.7–10.

one which only functions precisely because we the viewers have been educated by original conceptual art. Again we are reminded that conceptual art is an evolution – contemporary artists that work conceptually, while endorsing the prospects of not being ‘succinct’, evidently leave a door ajar to the possibilities of enhanced knowledge.

Appendix

Art that Draws on Photography

A version of the following text was written for and published in the peer-reviewed journal Zētēsis in 2013 under the title 'Art that Draws on, with, and against Photography'.

Within contemporary art, there is a cluster of people who work exceptionally adeptly and knowledgeably with photography. Still, they introduce themselves as 'a visual artist' rather than as 'a photographer', hence emphasising that their art practice relies on photography to nest fruitfully within a multiplication of materials and methods. This is where my work is situated. In the following text, I will elaborate on the different roles photography performs within my art practice.

My latest body of work was made over a two-year period when I was visiting guest curator at the Medical Museion in Copenhagen. The large analogue photographs I produced were handmade during a two month residency at the Danish Art Workshops, and the finished works were exhibited in the solo exhibition *Human Silver Halo* at the Medical Museion. There were several reasons why I became interested in working with this particular medical museum. It is homed in a building that King Christian the VII of Denmark³⁹⁷ had built for his surgeons in 1787, with a preserved original auditorium, where corpses used to be dissected; it is still in use today though for comparably tame university lectures. My practice is based on a broad enquiry into society's built structures, the values we as a society uphold and the shadows of power they cast. To me this auditorium is a beautiful architectural manifestation of western society's value systems governing power and knowledge. It felt as if this building was begging me to reshuffle it; to embed

³⁹⁷ Queen Dowager Juliane Marie donated the plot of land in Bredgade, near Frederiks Hospital, and a building was completed in 1787 to the design of Peter Meyn.

some female knowledge³⁹⁸ within the history of medicine, where it is so sorely missed.

When I considerer photography for a new project it is the medium's methodologies and social history that are weighed. If these conceptual considerations validate the medium's use, I go, and dust off my photography gear. Black and white analogue photography became my primary medium for this project partly as a result of the medium's use of silver. Since Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, silver has been connected with healing and anti-disease properties. Though antibiotics have replaced the medical use of silver today, further research into its clinical potential³⁹⁹ is ongoing, signaling a very human reluctance to surrender on its healing properties.

I am an advocate of artists' active participation in cross-disciplinary sharing and questioning. Some of science's unanswered questions are a constant inspiration for my work; in particular I am curious about physics and neuroscience's search to pin down consciousness. During the last few years, some neuroscientists have focused on how the magician can teach them a thing or two about consciousness. A Guardian newspaper article in 2011 on this subject used the Dutch 15-century artist Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Conjurer* as an illustration.⁴⁰⁰ Art history is not where I tend to draw my inspiration, but somehow *The Conjurer* became a talisman for this medical museum and photography project.

³⁹⁸ I use this difficult term to highlight the supreme dominance of men in the history of medical knowledge. My intention was not to focus on gender when I began the project at the Medical Museion, but the blatant lack of one of the sexes made my work as a female artist take on a gendered dimension. I do not consider knowledge to be gendered in today's world, but in a historical context I believe it is. Generally, it is men that are represented in historical collections of specialist knowledge; hence, to me historically the female comes to represent a non-academic and alternative knowledge. My art practice explores how to combine these supposedly different 'kinds' of knowledge.

³⁹⁹ Salome Egger, Rainer P. Lehmann, Murray J. Height, Martin J. Loessner, and Markus Schuppler, 'Antimicrobial Properties of a Novel Silver-Silica Nanocomposite Material', *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*, May 2009, pp.2973–2976.

⁴⁰⁰ Mo Costandi, 'Sleights of Hand, Sleights of Mind: Magicians are Teaching Brain Researchers New Tricks', *The Guardian*, Friday 14 October 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/neurophilosophy/2011/oct/14/1#> [consulted 14.10.2011].

The methodologies I employed were chosen to explore how conceptual considerations and the handmade can coexist in mutual harmony. Furthermore, I wanted to investigate how photography can be used to collaborate with other mediums, objects, or the viewer's active interaction. My methods have roots in the art of the 1960s and 1970s, when a new kind of photography turned it's back on a solely aesthetic aim,⁴⁰¹ becoming a medium widely used in conceptual artworks based on the dominance of the idea. These early conceptual artists saw photography as an open medium and tool that did not have the heavy burden of the ideologies that haunted both painting and sculpture. American artists Edward Ruscha (b.1937) and Mel Bochner (b.1940) are often cited as some of the earliest artists who started to use photography non-pictorially to serve a specific idea. It is well documented that Ruscha has an ambivalent relationship to photography and has always maintained he is a painter.⁴⁰² Bochner too started his career as a painter and is now painting again,⁴⁰³ though in the 1960s he was frustrated with the '...very little rigorous thinking about the photographic issues'.⁴⁰⁴ He began his own investigation of photography between 1967–1970, which led to his piece *Misunderstandings (A Theory of Photography)*. His artwork consisted of ten note cards, one was a photograph and the rest were photo offset hand-written quotations about photography, where four are unidentified fakes. A lot has happened since Bochner's investigation into photography; in the intervening forty years several different strands of academia have thoroughly theorised photography. Today, photography is embedded into our everyday lives with the digital photograph's well-known mutability finally making all photography being perceived as potential 'fakes'. When I choose to work with black and white analogue photography, the aim is to consciously

⁴⁰¹ Until the 1960s art-photography had looked towards modernist painting and sculpture, favouring the pictorial traditions of modern art.

⁴⁰² Margit Rowell, *Ed Ruscha, Photographer*, Steidl and Whitney, 2006, p.11.

⁴⁰³ 'In Conversation: Mel Bochner and Achim Borchardt-Hume', Whitechapel Gallery, 12.10.2012. Bochner elaborated in this talk on his practice and new paintings that were shown at Whitechapel Gallery in the autumn of 2012.

⁴⁰⁴ Mel Bochner, *Solar Systems & Rest Rooms. Writing and Interviews 1965–2007*, The MIT Press, 2008, p.180. Bochner makes clear that his artwork was made in advance of the English translations of the seminal writings, in relation to photography, by Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes.

tap into the authority and idealistic notion of truth this medium stood for, prior to the arrival of the digital. I use this historic medium as a device to contemplate how contemporary knowledge, for good and bad, is habitually structured by past beliefs and habits. My intention is not to make a beautiful, flawless photograph in the spirit of pictorial photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946); I am happy to leave evidence in the form of dust marks to document that a negative was used to make the photograph. That said, I do not seek to work towards what I would call the ‘non-aesthetic’ of original conceptual art from the 1960s; photographic artworks in a familiar size, that mimic the perfunctory industrial, black and white documentary style, reminiscent of holiday-snaps processed at the chemist. Instead, I embrace craftsmanship and beauty as part of my practice, as is evident in, for example, the piece *Female Entanglement*; a small photographic print dried in an embroidery ring and portraying the medical auditorium with it’s fathers of medical history ‘beautifully scrunched up’.

The 1960s and 1970s also saw photography jump out of the confinement of the neat wooden frame, creating new possibilities of escaping its two-dimensional glass entrapment. Examples of this approach to photographic artwork and its presentation were displayed in 1970 at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in the exhibition simply entitled ‘Photography into Sculpture’. Artist Robert Heinecken (1931–2006) presented several photographic puzzle works in the exhibition, artworks that encouraged the viewer to arrange parts of photographs into an image of the participant’s own choosing. Heinecken worked with conceptual strategies using mostly found photographs, and his practice is frequently quoted as having ‘...*an irreverent attitude toward the photographic image that flew in the face of everything the medium was supposed to be...*’.⁴⁰⁵ Still, his beautiful and playful geometric puzzles, gelatin silver photographs, were cut to be carefully glued onto wood which, in my

⁴⁰⁵ Armory Center for Arts, posted on 7 July 2011, <http://www.armoryarts.org/about-us/news/wallace-berman-and-robert-heinecken-together-at-last/>.

view, also demonstrates a deep respect for the medium, an aspect rarely focused on. It is this playfulness that Heinecken's practice radiates, which is vital to me as a practising artist too. I admittedly photograph historically significant objects and spaces that were built by and represent predominately male power and knowledge, so that I can intervene in and contribute to some of the knowledge I believe is missing, but my motivation is to stretch the medium so as to widen the conversation. However, I have a lack of contentment with the photographic, so I am constantly interested in supplementing photography's shortages through forms of revision. Often, this happens either by drawing, cutting, shaping, or by subjecting it to conversations with other mediums as well as entering it into dialogue with older works from my practice.

The first piece to welcome the viewer at the 'Human Silver Halo' exhibition is *gaze-following (holding hands)*, a photographic diptych that has been partly exposed to the previously established drawing strategy of generating multiple circular forms on the photograph's surface. Ordinarily a drawing on a photograph could be referred to as defacement, but when I draw on a photograph made in a place that represents the unity of a specific social knowledge, my intent is to 'flatten the hierarchy' of knowledge. I draw simple circles, something that anybody can do. They evolve into time-consuming drawings that seek to pleasingly interrupt, to instigate a contemplation of the drawing on even terms with the photograph behind it. I become aware that I am 'spoiling' a perfectly decent photographic image. In some ways, I could be accused of corrupting the photograph and with it also the conceptual integrity of the representational system on which it is based. But instead, my motivation is to represent and highlight the presence of different value systems calling for our attention, but where none is superior. I use the circle as a democratic symbol of symmetry, and I agree with conceptual artist Hanne Darboven's thought on the circle '*... a symbol of infinity, everything;*

*what is beginning, where? What is end, where?'*⁴⁰⁶ Included in the exhibition is the 2007 piece *Tidy Table: model 51*, one of my earliest works to incorporate these tiny circle drawings, which was originally inspired by histology, cell specimens. This artwork is also my earliest piece using another geometric shape, the hexagon, which reappeared in a 2008 patchwork piece⁴⁰⁷ that took the shape of NASA's photographic documentation of the two Antennae Galaxies colliding.⁴⁰⁸

At first glance, the two traditional photographic still-lives exhibited may look as though they are trying to impress Stieglitz, presenting themselves as flawless photographs of surgical instruments, though at a closer inspection the photographic paper is disappointingly not flat, leaving a disrupting ghost of the less than perfect handmade. Furthermore in *Thought Transmission* it becomes part of the piece that the reflection of the viewer's face visually interferes with the photograph of two trepanning instruments from different historic periods. Trepanning is the surgical process of cutting a circular hole into the cranium, giving the earliest glimpses of a living brain. A brutal cut hole has now evolved into neuroscience and its search to define consciousness, bringing us back to the image of the previously mentioned talisman, *The Conjuror*, that sensitively reminds us not to undervalue skilled hands. The other still-life in the exhibition is a triptych *part of the equation* presented in traditional, dark wooden frames, lending some due respect to these common surgical tools from the history of medicine. The glass in these frames is anti-reflective, removing the viewer's own reflection, giving the impression that there is no glass and inviting the viewer to move closer. People have complimented me on not putting glass in these frames, allowing

⁴⁰⁶ Hanne Darboven, 'Statement to Lucy Lippard', in Alberro and Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, p.62.

⁴⁰⁷ *eons ago when the universe was a lot smaller*, six powder coated stainless steel structures, cotton patchwork, sterling silver, variable overall size, 2008.

⁴⁰⁸ It was a photograph of the Antennae Galaxies NGC 4038 and NGC 4039, available on NASA's Hubble website, where images made by the Hubble telescope are freely available to download by the public, <http://hubblesite.org/gallery/album/pr2006046a>.

them in and it is hard to decide whether to break this specific illusion or leave it well in place.

Earlier I used the phrase 'flatten the hierarchy', to indicate my interest in liberating the categories of knowledge we value and under-value as a society. In the exhibition's two large floor-based photographic pieces this notion becomes literal, by making the viewer look down on that which the architectural space of the Medical Museion would have us look up to.

The piece *we are the ashes of dying stars, we are nuclear waste* consists of a human-sized analogue photograph of the domed ceiling from the Medical Museion's auditorium. The gummed tape that was used to help the photograph to dry flat has been left on, leaving a rough brown edge as a witness to the physical handmade process that made it. The print is exhibited horizontally at knee height on a salvaged wooden floor to which it is pinned with four nails. On top of the photograph, a selection of glass objects is placed. One of these is a contact lens holder scaled up to hand size, and handcrafted in Borosilicate glass (medical grade). Artist Marcel Duchamp introduced the ready-made to the world in 1917 and since then everyday objects have had the potential, if so nominated by an artist, to be designated as art. I use everyday objects as an open catalyst for contemplation. The chosen objects are functional throwaway mass-produced items that have been altered in size and material; removing their original function leaves room for a potential new type of value. The aim is not to critique the mass-produced, but rather to celebrate the human inventiveness and curiosity that empowered it. I have used the contact lens holder in previous artworks,⁴⁰⁹ but it took me six years to find a glass-maker that had the expert knowledge required to craft the exhibited object. It is joined on the photographic surface by three groupings of glass rods and red long lasting synthetic elastic bands. One of the groups is still intact, and the two other structures are failed

⁴⁰⁹ *Panthalassa*, archival inkjet print on Somerset paper, 110 x 110 cm, 2006.

versions. These constructions are inspired by polymath Buckminster Fuller's 1950s tensegrity structures,⁴¹⁰ which were originally used within both architecture and engineering. Today, the tensegrity has even ventured into biology, where some⁴¹¹ use biotensegrity to better understand the human body, by integrating anatomy from the molecular level to the whole organism.

The other photographic floor piece is we draw some arbitrary line and rule out whole areas of investigation. It is roughly the same size and height as the previous floor piece, but it lies on a field of regularly spaced silver embroidery strings. Each end of the photograph is tucked beneath a single silver string, leaving the thick paper some movement. Looking down one sees a mainly white photograph of a bust of the esteemed surgeon Sophus August Wilhem Stein (1797–1868), who was also a professor of anatomy at the Royal Danish Art Academy. I celebrate any connection between art and science; hopefully, he takes no offence at having been lovingly moved to a more comfortable horizontal position, from his elevated pedestal hovering above us all in the auditorium.

Printing large analogue photographs inherently means you end up with a pile of time-consuming prints that are not quite right for exhibiting, due to a variety of darkroom inaccuracies. *Haystacks of Healing (part one, two & three)* is a piece made from such large, failed photographs. It consists of three books where one human-sized photograph has been cut into twelve photographs that each becomes two pages in the book. The first book (part one) is a photograph of Stein, the aforementioned surgeon, the second (part two) is a photograph of a pair of common surgical scissors,⁴¹² and the third (part three) is a photograph of the stairs parting the seats in the curved medical

⁴¹⁰ continuous tension – discontinuous compression structures.

⁴¹¹ As for example Dr. Randel L. Swanson see article; 'Biotensegrity: A Unifying Theory of Biological Architecture with Applications to Osteopathic Practice, Education, and Research', *The Journal of the American Osteopath Association*, January 1, 2013 vol.113, no.1, pp.34–52.

⁴¹² The Medical Museion has many more than they wish; the photographed scissors were so 'common' that they were not logged and hence not part of the museum collection.

auditorium. We all have an embodied experience of books, how they work, feel, and look, though few people have touched a thick mat gelatin silver print, better known as a black and white photograph. To me these books are Petri dishes collecting traces of the viewer. It was important to have the viewer's hands imprint their interaction on these expensive silver containing, time-consuming, handmade photographs, bound into good old fashioned physical books. The work became about allowing access to something fragile, expensive, and unique. The book covers are produced from a medical barrier material that is used in surgery. It is a cheap throwaway material, which even if it has touched our bodies we are most likely unconscious of, unless we work in an operating theatre. Conceptually it was important that the books were covered in this material as it gives us a conscious experience of a medical material normally only meant for the unconscious. In each of the three books, there is one drawing that is made on the back of one of the photographic pages. When I start drawing on a 'finished' analogue photograph a certain tension emerges; it has taken a long time to make... I do not want to ruin it... the intention is to add to the work instead of reducing it to nothing. When I draw or I am in the darkroom I become aware of my own consciousness in a way that I am not when working at the computer. The finished work does not necessarily make the viewer aware of his or her own consciousness, but they are confronted with a subjective effort/action, which does reflect on consciousness.

The two smallest pieces in the exhibition could lie in your hand, but are contained in a display case with only a set of headphones inviting the viewer's physical interaction. *common sense has no place at quantum level* is a three minutes and fifty-four seconds looped video with harp music by Trine Opsahl, shown on a hand-sized iPod with attached headphones. The video was shot from a fixed position towards the auditorium ceiling for fifty minutes, while Trine was playing the harp for an empty auditorium, with only the busts of the patriarchs of Danish Medicine in compulsory attendance. The finished video has had the original 50 minutes compressed to the duration of the harp

piece played, essentially creating a static photographic image with only the slight movement of shadows as an indication of time. The video is kept company in the display case by a previous piece, *Hubble* (2008), a sterling silver cast of a plastic strainer from a jar of gherkins.

When the viewer turns around from his or her position at the display case, with the headphones on and music in their ears, she or he will see a large monitor with the video *Concealed Ovation (part two)*. It is a silent video showing a fixed close-up recording of the movement of female hands playing a harp in the Medical Museion's auditorium. It is positioned at the far end of the exhibition to draw you closer. It is no coincidence that female hands are playing the harp. These hands, together with the mentioned 'handmade' pieces and traces, lend a voice to a process of labor – a process of knowledge – that I believe to be key if seeking to include both genders when examining medical knowledge historically. *Concealed Ovation (part two)* extends a silent gestural conversation with history as represented by the Medical Museion, via the two floor-based pieces in the exhibition, which also both have strings.

When I met conceptual artist Luis Camnitzer (or 'know your audience')

Is there a difference between the American and European contemporary notions of art? The contemporary art world is understood as a global market and with that an assumption emerges that it is hence a homogenous place where art is perceived and understood equally throughout the Western world.

As a Dane who has adopted Britain both for my education and as a home I often tend to agree with the above notion. I was set straight by conceptual artist Luis Camnitzer in 2003. I had been invited to the Drawing Center in New York for a meeting with Camnitzer to talk about my work. I remember that day well; the Big Apple showed itself from its best side, sunny, but not too cold or warm. I arrived at the gallery with a black A2 portfolio and a tube of drawings that rivaled my own height. The importance of this meeting with a well-established artist was not lost upon me. As I walked through the gallery and the offices to arrive at the large meeting room, I felt welcomed in that warm American way that some Europeans love to mock, but really did make that moment sunnier. Camnitzer was born in South America, but moved to NYC in the 1960s and has since then been part of the American art scene. He came across as intense, curious and a bit impatient for me to reveal the work I had brought. We spent an hour talking (or maybe it was less), but what has stayed with me ten years on is this: do not think you know your audience.

The surprise was one of my most exhibited pieces titled *still in search of a straight line...* which has been successfully shown in four countries on two continents. In his dry impatient way Camnitzer dismissed it quickly, which made me sit up and take notice. This particular artwork, made two years prior to the meeting, was then a pivotal work in my practice, but it had started to become irritating, being shown too much, to the detriment of newer work. I told Camnitzer that this specific piece was loved by curators and was shown regularly. His response, as I remember it today, was a dismissal due to (in his

own words) *'having been there the first time around'*; i.e. he was in NYC in the 1960s and 1970s when conceptual art emerged.

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