MARCEL BROODTHAERS:

STRATEGY AND DIALOGUE

In Two Volumes

Volume I

The Text

Deborah Schultz

Trinity College

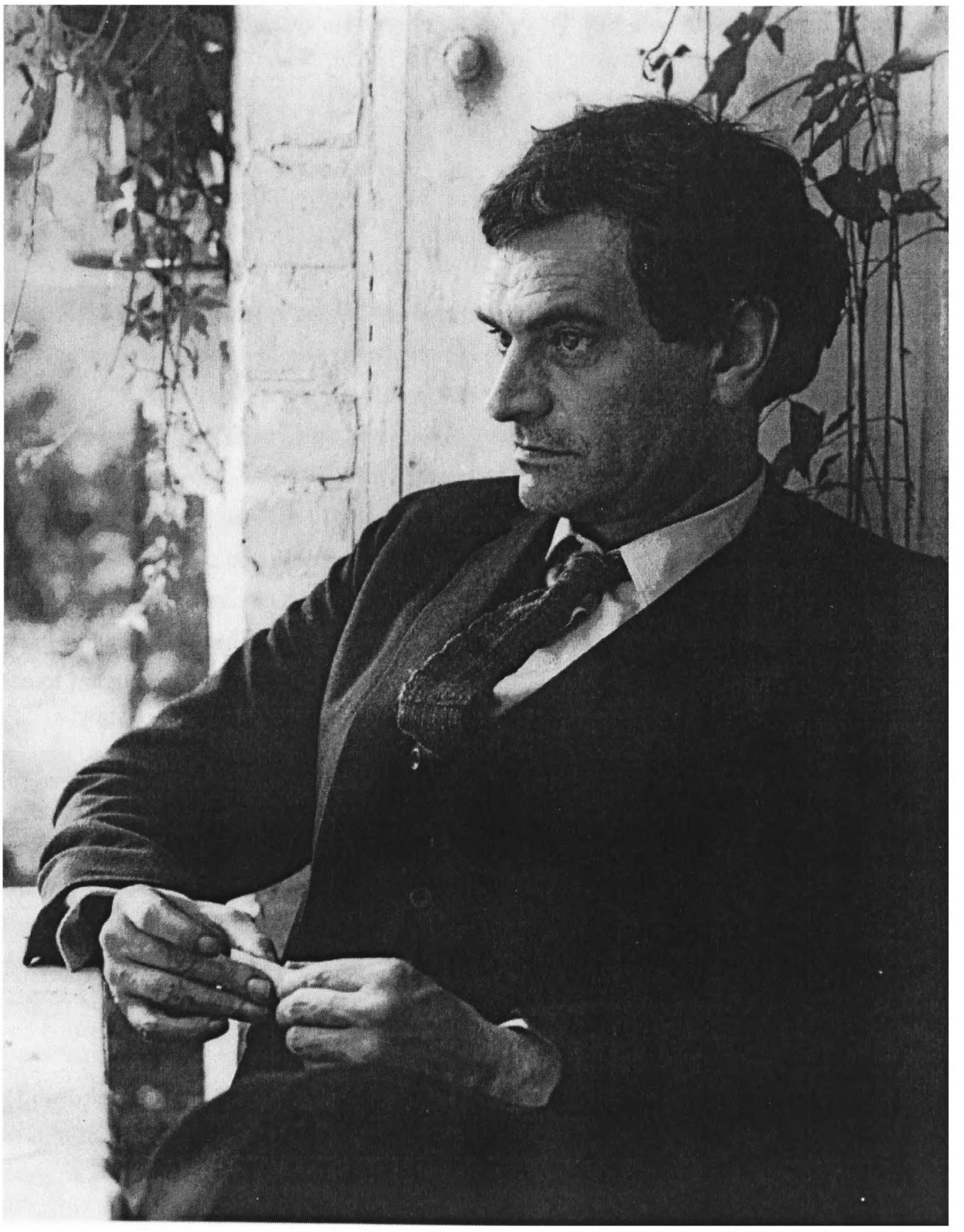
University of Oxford



Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Modern History, Trinity Term 1998 [ie 1999]TT



MARCEL BROODTHAERS: STRATEGY AND DIALOGUE

Deborah Schultz
Trinity College
Submitted to the Faculty of Modern History for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Trinity Term, 1998 [i.e. 1999] TT

Short Abstract

This thesis examines the work of Marcel Broodthaers (1924-76). It analyses why and how he became an artist, and considers his witty and ironic strategy for success. It explores his relationship with his contemporaries and predecessors, in 19th century French poetry, Surrealism, Pop and Conceptual Art. By making a conscious decision to become an artist, Broodthaers responded to, and commented upon, dominant movements of the period. He constantly referred to other artists and poets, for example Mallarmé, Baudelaire and Magritte, thereby bringing 19th century themes into the 20th century. In drawing upon his own background as a poet, he developed word-image and word-object concepts initiated by Magritte. In turn, these related to a use of language in what later became known as Conceptual Art.

This thesis provides a broad analysis of Broodthaers' work as a whole. It examines his questioning approach, and his rejection of conventional definitions to demonstrate their instability. By discussing his poetry and early writings, his objects, museum, and later retrospective exhibitions or *Décors*, I have aimed to show how the different areas of his practice both interrelated and combined the material with the poetic. I have examined Broodthaers' focus upon the relationship between objects (also central to Structuralist theories) and the importance of the context in which objects exist, whereby he questioned Duchamp's assertion of the power of the artist or museum to define objects as art. A focus upon the relationship between things also informs the artistic context, or dialogue, into which Broodthaers entered, as well as the geographical context he explored via maps, notions of the voyage, and a sense of place. The artist's political position and moral responsibilities in society are discussed by analysing the responses of Broodthaers, Buren, Beuys and Haacke to a series of events in the early 1970s.

MARCEL BROODTHAERS: STRATEGY AND DIALOGUE

Deborah Schultz
Trinity College
Submitted to the Faculty of Modern History for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Trinity Term, 1998 [i.e. 1999] TT

Long Abstract

This thesis examines the work of Marcel Broodthaers (1924-76) and places him within his artistic context. It sets out why Broodthaers decided to become an artist and his relationship with his contemporaries and predecessors, particularly in 19th century French poetry, Surrealism, Pop and Conceptual Art.

My initial intention in writing about Broodthaers was to provide a broad analysis of his work as a whole. Attracted to the visual qualities of his works, his wit and irony, I was intrigued by Broodthaers' subtle method of questioning and contradicting, defying conventional systems and definitions. He appeared unlimited by any boundaries, both in terms of his own activities and in the wide range of materials and media he used. I was interested in how he dealt with the role of art, the artist's position in society and the museum context. Aware that the decorativeness of his works formed only a superficial layer, I wanted to explore his underlying approach and way of thinking, to understand how the various areas of his activity interrelated.

As Broodthaers made a conscious decision to become an artist, and declared a clear desire to succeed, I decided to focus upon his intentions and his strategy. Although he achieved considerable success during his lifetime, I wished to examine why he is not better known today. Discussion of his writings and visual works would support my analysis. By becoming an artist and by his constant referencing of other writers and artists, Broodthaers appears to have been highly aware of where he stood in relation to those around him. Rather than certain key figures - in particular,

Mallarmé, Baudelaire and Magritte - having an influence upon him, Broodthaers' relationship with them was one of active dialogue, in which he remade and extended their works, thereby bringing together themes from the 19th with the early and late 20th century.

My starting point in analysing Broodthaers' way of thinking has been with his works, both visual and written; these I have examined formally and conceptually. From there I have proceeded to his critical and artistic approach in general. In developing Broodthaers' focus upon relationships, which in turn relates to Structuralist theories, I have selected areas of his work for particular examination: the early objects, the museum series, the *Décors*, the maps and other works from the *Salle Outremer*, and the 1972 open letter to Beuys. I have benefitted from the existing publications, and gained access to unpublished material, particularly from the Broodthaers archive in Brussels run by Maria Gilissen, Broodthaers' widow. The thesis also includes and examines material previously untranslated into English. Furthermore, I have benefitted enormously from discussion and correspondence with a number of Broodthaers' contemporaries who knew and worked with him, including other artists as well as curators and art historians. This direct contact has provided answers to specific questions as well as a more general understanding of the period.

The material is arranged chronologically, with some areas overlapping, especially in the more thematic chapters. I have divided Broodthaers' work roughly into sections which, although not inaccurate, are simplifications, but which help to deal with the complexity of his work and highlight the areas most relevant to my analysis. The year of Broodthaers' first exhibition, 1964, serves as the first useful marker. The early objects were made until around 1968 when Broodthaers opened his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, a huge enterprise in which he also adopted the roles of museum director and curator. Broodthaers formally closed the museum in 1972; the *Décors* exhibitions which began in 1974 and lasted until Broodthaers died in early 1976 serve as a structure for these later years.

In Chapter 1 I set out the background to Broodthaers' launch as an artist in order to show how his activities prior to and post 1964 interrelated. Broodthaers made a conscious decision to become an artist but by doing so, and I wish to stress this, he did not cease to be a poet. In terms of his thinking, use of language and 'poetic' imagination, his production as a poet and as an artist clearly overlapped. Chapter 1, therefore, presents a selected chronology from those years prior to 1964 to show the range of his interests and activities, particularly those with a visual dimension. I also establish the importance of Magritte and Mallarmé as key figures who would dominate his work in the visual arts, and I set out his relationship with his Belgian contemporaries at the time.

In the statement which was printed on the announcement for his first exhibition, Broodthaers set out why he wished to become an artist. His use of irony in this and other statements was two-fold. The basis of what he said was actually true - in this case that he had no money and, after his lack of recognition as a poet, he did want to be able to consider himself a success. However, not wishing to state these desires directly, he masked his words in irony and presented himself as insincere. He revealed how traditional notions of talent, commitment and sincerity were no longer necessary, and established art as a job dominated by making money. At the same time, he wished to show his critical perception of the commercial nature of contemporary art and used irony to conceal the seriousness of his critique, especially from the uninformed.

This statement serves, therefore, as a good example of Broodthaers' complex approach. Chapter 2 examines in detail this and a number of other texts and open letters in which he would also state a position only subsequently to negate it and claim the reverse. He would thereby show not only the opportunistic nature of the contemporary artist but the instability of words. He also enjoyed the formal pleasures of playing with the sounds and structures of language. Works which relate to the themes introduced in the texts are also discussed, including sections of his museum, particularly those relating to its establishment and its closure due to bankruptcy.

By imitating Pop Art - the main international artistic fashion of the period - Broodthaers wished to show how easy it was to play the art market. Chapter 3 begins by listing some of his early exhibitions, indicating how his strategy soon proved successful. The chapter goes on to discuss his early objects and how they related to the work of his contemporaries in Pop and *Nouveau Réalisme* as well as to Duchamp's readymades. Although Broodthaers presented himself as a Pop artist, this was clearly a marketing strategy. Beyond some superficial similarities, his works had developed not from Pop but from ideas related to contemporary philosophy and to his poetry - notions of the shell, of absence and presence and the relationship between component elements. Magritte was frequently cited by Broodthaers at this time, not only as a father figure whose dominance he sought to escape, but also as an important predecessor of Pop Art, in his depiction of everyday, familiar objects and in the clarity and banality of his style. Broodthaers also stated that he wished to develop further questions Magritte had initiated, with regard to word/image and word/object relationships. He did so in various different ways, which are examined in the thesis.

The chapter also includes the response to Broodthaers' objects by the Belgian Surrealists, voiced most strongly by Marcel Mariën. Mariën's response not only helps to contextualise Broodthaers work at the time, but also contributes toward a discussion on the role and (moral) responsibilities of the artist, central to the Surrealists' perception of the artist.

Chapter 4 expands upon the notion of the shell, examining sections of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* and the *Décors*, in which Broodthaers' own identity further developed. Broodthaers had introduced mussels and eggshells into his early objects as everyday, accessible materials, embodying both absence and presence. In *Pense-Bête*, his last edition of poetry from 1964, he had published a poem on *La Moule* in which he played on the relationship between 'la moule' - the mussel - and 'le moule' - the mould. He described the mussel as a perfect creature which creates the shell which then contains itself.

The metaphor of the shell can be extended to many other aspects of Broodthaers' work. In the first museum section he displayed packing crates and postcards of 19th century paintings. Within a museum context - itself a kind of shell - he presented the shells which surround and contain art but without exhibiting any conventional artworks. The shell analogy may also be made with other reproductions - slides, photographs, prints. However, in Broodthaers' work a shift occurs and these reproductions then become works in their own right in an ongoing process of re-presentation.

The *Décors* series of retrospective exhibitions also focused upon re-presentation and the museum context. Works from earlier in Broodthaers' career were shown alongside new works in various different arrangements. The *Décor* was, therefore, the exhibition, but also the work. By bringing objects together in this temporary way Broodthaers examined how the context in which an object is displayed determines its meaning. He questioned the assertion initiated by Duchamp with his readymades, and adopted by his successors in Conceptual Art, that the museum context confers an art status upon its contents. The chapter brings together material dealing with issues of originality, collecting, classification and the instability of language.

Chapter 5 examines works relating to maps, travel and 'the conquest of space', a phrase used by Broodthaers as part of the title of his miniature atlas of the world. The starting point for the chapter is the *Salle Outremer* and the wide range of works contained therein; related works are also examined. Maps serve as good examples of Broodthaers' method of combining the material with the poetic, symbols of power but also pertaining to tales of the sea and travel to distant lands, reminiscent of the 19th century writings of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Poe whom he cited. Maps also relate to Broodthaers' focus upon relationships and the importance of context. Whereas the early objects dealt with the relationships between component elements, and the *Décors* examined the museum context, I argue that the works from the *Salle*

Outremer deal with a broader perspective and a sense of place - an awareness of one's geographical location in the world.

On an individual level, by launching himself consciously as an artist Broodthaers was aware of location in relation to his artistic contemporaries. The notion of dialogue is examined throughout the thesis, in terms of how Broodthaers made his own versions of works by Mallarmé, Baudelaire and La Fontaine, as well as his frequent referencing of many other artists and writers, both contemporaries and predecessors. Chapter 6 focuses upon a series of events from the early 1970s which brought Broodthaers into direct contact with a few particular artists - Buren, Haacke and Beuys. The manner in which each artist dealt with the events contributes towards the thesis' underlying questions on the role and behaviour of the artist and of the museum, and the relationship between art and politics.

The chapter begins by looking at the considerable number of prestigious exhibitions in which Broodthaers' work was soon shown, proving that his strategy had been successful. I conclude that this was for a range of reasons - his contacts prior to becoming an artist, the particular dealers who supported him, and his method of commenting on contemporary styles, but with a wit and elegance which made his work accessible and masked its underlying critique.

Posthumously, although his work is well-respected by those within particular artistic and intellectual circles, it is not well-known in general. Broodthaers' early death and the nature of art in the 1980s have meant that until the early 1990s his work was largely neglected. However, through the referencing and retrospection of Postmodernism, and the reassessment of the 1960s and '70s, the significance of his work and the value of his questioning and discursive approach is becoming increasingly apparent. Discussion of Derrida's writings on deconstruction also help to set Broodthaers' work within a philosophical and linguistic framework. However, rather than as an illustration of Derrida's theories, Broodthaers' practice seems to have paralleled and complemented many of the ideas existing therein.

Although generally of a high standard, research and publications on Broodthaers' work to date have been fragmentary, with some areas covered extensively and others entirely neglected. Maria Gilissen, together with her assistant Krystyna Szymorowski, have begun working on a *catalogue raisonné* in thematic volumes published alongside related exhibitions. So far these have dealt with the slide projections, the *Section Publicité*, the print and book editions, and the films.

Some of the most analytical essays on Broodthaers' work are compiled in a 1987 volume of *October*, edited by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, and subsequently published as *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs.* As the title indicates, it contains writings and photographs by Broodthaers, and eight essays of varying lengths by American, Belgian, German and Swiss art historians and curators, including Buchloh himself. Each essay deals with a particular aspect of Broodthaers' work in some detail, but there is no overview of his work as a whole. In 1989 a book was published to coincide with a touring exhibition which originated at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Curated by Marge Goldwater and Michael Compton, the exhibition was the first, and to date only, major retrospective of Broodthaers' work in the United States. The book contains a biographical essay by Compton, together with essays on Broodthaers' films and museum works. In 1991, Catherine David at the Jeu de Paume curated a very comprehensive retrospective of Broodthaers' work. The catalogue is equally extensive, including texts by Broodthaers as well as articles by contemporary critics and curators with whom he worked. It is informative on individual works and exhibitions, but provides little in depth discussion or analysis on the artist as a whole.

Other catalogues have tended to include only brief introductory essays. In recent years a number of books, as well as exhibitions and related catalogues on the origins of the museum, its development and the notion of artists' museums have appeared. The most relevant here have been *Museums by Artists*, edited by A. A. Bronson & Peggy Gale in Toronto, 1983, Douglas Crimp's *On the Museum's Ruins*, 1993 and the exhibition *Els Límits del Museu*, at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in 1995.

Within this context Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* has been examined in some detail.

This thesis, therefore, has the following objectives: firstly, to examine why and how Broodthaers made the move from poet to artist, thereby initiating discussion on the status of the artwork and the position of the artist. Secondly, to explore his relationship with his contemporaries and predecessors. Thirdly, above all, to provide a broad understanding of Broodthaers' work as a whole and to show how the various areas interrelate. Despite my desire to explain and rationalise, I have discovered that much of his work intentionally repels logical analysis. However, by understanding that this was Broodthaers' intention, I have been able to see how these areas fit within the complex web of his practice. He questioned but did not provide straightforward answers. He shifted his position and contradicted himself, forcing the reader to stay alert. In this way he demonstrated the instability of relationships and the importance of context.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Translations and Abbreviations

Introduction.....p. 1

Chapter 1 **Transition: From Poet to Poet/Artist**.....p. 9

Chapter 2 **Textual Evidence: Intention, Insincerity and Commerce**.....p. 47

Chapter 3 **Broodthaers' Objects in Relation to Magritte, Pop and *Nouveau Réalisme***.....p. 87

Chapter 4 **The Museum, The *Décor* - Presentation and Re-Presentation**.....p. 142

Chapter 5 **The Conquest of Space: Maps, Mapping and the High Seas**...p. 178

Chapter 6 **Art and Politics: Broodthaers, Beuys, Haacke, Buren**.....p. 221

Conclusion.....p. 261

Appendix Open Letter to Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf, 28 September 1972.....p. 267

Bibliography.....p. 270

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my supervisor Professor Martin Kemp for his constant interest and enthusiasm as well as his stimulating comments and ideas. I have benefitted enormously from working with him. I am also grateful to Keith Hartley, of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, who was a co-supervisor in the early stages, and I definitely could not have managed without the support of Peter Suchin and Sherman Sam.

I am very grateful to Maria Gilissen, who, with the assistance of Krystyna Szymorowski, kindly allowed me access to the archives and provided me with publications. Michael Compton has been unfailingly generous; I am also grateful to Barry Barker and Jack Wendler for their time. Dr Elizabeth Cowling, Sarah Whitfield and Caroline Tisdall have been very helpful. Jürgen Harten in Düsseldorf has kindly answered a number of questions, and, thanks to their generous hospitality, I have enjoyed stimulating discussions with Professor Johannes Cladders, in Krefeld, and Leo Dohmen, in Antwerp.

Assistance with Broodthaers' own writings and references to 19th century French poetry was provided in Oxford by my college advisor, Dr Jonathan Mallinson, as well as by Dr Jim Hiddlestone and Professor Malcolm Bowie of the French faculty, all of whom devoted some of their valuable time to answer my questions. In St Andrews I was very kindly assisted by Dr Christine Crow and Anna Crowe.

Librarians all over Europe have been very helpful, particularly Catherine Heesterbeek, at the Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, who has enabled me unlimited access to the library. Many museum curators have also helped me, especially Dr Marianne Heinz of the Neue Galerie, Kassel, and Piet de Jonge from the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, who, at an early stage, warned me about the dangers of writing about Broodthaers! Many thanks also to Christine Brachot and Sarah Ben Abdullah at Galerie Isy Brachot, Brussels, as well as the very many other generous galleries which have sent me catalogues and other documentation.

At Trinity I would particularly like to thank Katie Andrews and Alastair Johnson, while in the Art History Department Mrs Ballard and Mrs Collyer have been extremely kind and patient.

Finally, I am very grateful to my family and my friends who have listened to Broodthaers' name for the last few years without complaining. Their warmth, generosity and thoughtful comments have been very much appreciated. I am particularly thankful to Georgios, Ana, Martin, Jaoued, Siofra, Tim, Chrystel, Steph, Julia, Tony, Hsien and Daniel.

Translations and Abbreviations

Where English translations are taken from existing publications this has been noted. Otherwise, all translations from French are my own, or with the assistance of Jaoued Ahmed, Thierry Morel or Siofra Pierse. Translations from German are with the help of Christian Beckmann or Petra Wagner and from Dutch by Martin Kuijer. I am extremely grateful to them all.

The following abbreviations have been used in footnotes:

Buchloh (ed.)	*Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1988
'Ten Thousand Francs Reward'	'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', based on an interview with Irmeline Lebeer, trans. in Buchloh, (ed.), pp. 39-48, originally published as 'Dix mille francs de récompense' in the catalogue to *Catalogue-Catalogus*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 27 September-3 November 1974, pp. 64-68
David (ed.)	*Marcel Broodthaers*, Catherine David (ed.), Paris, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, 1991
Goldwater & Compton	*Marcel Broodthaers*, Marge Goldwater & Michael Compton (eds.), Minneapolis, Walker Art Center & New York, Rizzoli, 1989
Compton	Michael Compton, 'In Praise of the Subject', in Goldwater & Compton
Tate	*Marcel Broodthaers*, London, The Tate Gallery, 16 April-26 May 1980
Figures	*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures*, Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle, 16 May-9 July 1972
Publicité	*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Publicité*, New York, Marian Goodman Gallery, 6 October-25 November 1995
Cinéma	*Marcel Broodthaers. Cinéma.*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 17 April-29 June 1997 and touring
Geneva	*Marcel Broodthaers L'œuvre graphique essais*, Geneva, Centre Genevois de Gravure Contemporaine, 1991
Jamar	*Marcel Broodthaers: Het Volledig Grafisch Werk en de Boeken,* Knokke-Duinbergen, Galerie Jos Jamar, 1989
De Vree	Freddy De Vree, *Marcel Broodthaers: Œuvres 1963-1975*, Brussels, Galerie Isy Brachot, 1990

Introduction

The 1960s and 1970s were years of great change and innovation in the arts. Marking the end of Modernism and anticipating Postmodernism, for many artists this was a period of questioning and re-evaluation not only of art but also of the context and manner - the institutional structures - in which art is presented. The new generation perceived Modernism as too limited, introverted and distant from the reality of contemporary life. Artists wanted to make works which would be more closely related, and therefore more relevant, to the world in which they lived. During an economic boom in the western world, the art market grew, leading to an increased number of individual collectors and new museums of modern art which needed to be filled. However, many artists reacted against the way in which the artwork was ever more clearly becoming a commodity, and sought alternative methods of expressing their ideas to oppose this possibility. From a present day perspective, twenty to thirty years on, those years appear lively, open and exciting, with artists energetically committed to their principles. As the fashions of the period are now termed 'retro', the '60s and '70s have passed into history and are being examined afresh.

There is often a readiness to simplify the complex interweaving of artists and movements from both the past and present. This is no less the case with the period in question during which a range of approaches existed roughly simultaneously, from neo-Dada or Pop to *Nouveau Réalisme*, *Arte Povera*, Fluxus, Happenings, Idea Art, Earth or Land Art, Minimalism and Concept or Conceptual Art, to mention only some. In retrospect, artists are often organised according to particular movements and those who refuse to correspond neatly are punished with disregard, their work thereby becoming marginal and insignificant.

Marcel Broodthaers (1924-1976) is a good example of the effects of this tendency. Despite achieving considerable success during his own lifetime, until fairly recently his posthumous significance has hardly been recognised beyond a particular

circle of specialist interest within the limited area of Belgium, the Netherlands, the Rhineland and, to some extent, Paris and New York. The complex and often contradictory nature of his work means that it does not fit easily into any particular movement apart from the rather broad and often all-encompassing scope of Conceptual Art.

Nevertheless, during his relatively short artistic career, from 1964-76, he achieved considerable success. To some extent it appears that the period allowed Broodthaers to become an artist in the way that he did: with no artistic training, it was often his wife Maria Gilissen (also untrained) or skilled craftsmen who made the actual works. Duchamp's introduction of readymades earlier in the century, together with the context of Pop and Conceptual Art, allowed the 1960s' artist to present his ideas through already extant non-art objects and images.

However, this does not mean that Broodthaers' work is not relevant to later periods. With major retrospectives in the United States in 1989, Paris and Madrid in 1991-92, and cited as a key figure for 1997's *Documenta X*, his importance is, clearly, currently being reassessed. One of the question this thesis will seek to address is why, having exhibited alongside some of the major international names of his period, little scholarly interest has, until recently, been shown in Broodthaers' work.

For the main part the thesis is structured upon two main themes which serve as means to understanding Broodthaers' work: his strategy - why he decided to become an artist - and dialogue - his relationship with his contemporaries. Whereas certain chapters may concentrate more particularly upon either one of these themes, they are largely interwoven throughout the thesis.

Broodthaers was a poet until the age of forty when he decided to launch himself as an artist. However, it is important to remember that he never stopped being a poet and that his background as a poet shaped his thinking as an artist. In his first exhibition, in 1964, he set out, ironically, his strategy for success - to make works, which galleries would exhibit and sell. The works he subsequently made

reflected his strategy in that he imitated some of the main movements of the time - in particular Pop, to a limited extent Minimalism, and Conceptual Art. He followed fashion in order to fit in and become part of the current fashion himself. However, he did not do so blindly, but examined and responded to the concepts which shaped those movements.

At the same time the 40 years before he began working as an artist never ceased to play a part in his production. Therefore, his work was also informed by Surrealism - the literary environment within which he had developed as a poet in Brussels. Of particular importance was René Magritte and his paintings and texts on the relationship between words and images. Marcel Duchamp was another key figure, whose work began to re-emerge during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Broodthaers' other interests were wide, extending to nineteenth century French poetry, especially that of Baudelaire and Mallarmé, the bestiaries of La Fontaine and the writings of Poe. He was very interested in contemporary politics and philosophy, especially Marxism as well as Structuralism and Poststructuralism, the ideas of Lacan, Barthes and Foucault.

This thesis, therefore, examines Broodthaers' strategy for success and locates his work in relation to that of his contemporaries. It seems ironic that Broodthaers has so often been left out of discussion of the period, when context and dialogue formed the basis of his work and his career strategy. By making the conscious decision to launch himself and then to follow the fashions of the time in order to succeed, he was clearly aware of the artistic context within which he would operate. In the title of a 1975 retrospective exhibition he described his work as *Voyages autour de la mode* - a pun which translates literally as 'travels around fashion'. In fact, themes of voyage, travel and the conquest of (artistic and territorial) space, which can frequently be found in the poetry of Mallarmé, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, form the basis of many works by Broodthaers, reflecting not only his awareness of his place in the art world but also of his context and location globally. These works will be examined in some detail.

In both his works and his strategy, Broodthaers appears to have taken into consideration Structuralist notions of the field which proposed that everything exists in relation to its context. In the case of the early objects, for example, this led to a shift of focus from the elements contained in the works, to the relationship between these elements. In the case of an artistic/literary context, Broodthaers located himself by constantly referring to other poets and artists both directly, by remaking works and by naming directly in texts and open letters, and indirectly, by the objects and imagery he used. He referred to contemporary artists as well as past artists and poets, demonstrating a particular nostalgia for the nineteenth century. He also mentioned film stars, composers, philosophers, writers - all those whom he admired. In addition to this, a number of more recent artists have referred directly to Broodthaers in their own work via titles, objects or images. As dialogue was at the centre of his practice, it seems particularly important that his work be analysed in relation to the context within which it exists.[1]

Research and publications on Broodthaers' work to date have been fragmentary with some areas covered extensively while others are entirely neglected. During the 1990s there has been a marked increase in interest. This may in part be due to the efforts of Maria Gilissen in curating exhibition and publishing volumes contributing to a *catalogue raisonné*. It is not only curators and critics who have begun to find his work significant, but also younger artists, for whom his importance seems to relate to a renewed questioning of definitions and the status of art, an interest in Conceptual Art as well as the work and legacy of Duchamp. Broodthaers' critique of the commercialisation of art, in which the structures that surround the

---

[1]Since beginning my research the exhibition *Marcel Broodthaers: Correspondances* was held in Zürich, at the Galerie Hauser & Wirth, 14 June-16 September 1995 and New York at the Gallery David Zwirner, 21 October-25 November 1995, with a publication edited and with an essay by Dorothea Zwirner. The publication largely comprises the results of a questionnaire, in which a number of Broodthaers' contemporaries were asked as to why he has had such a difficult reception, his relevant importance historically and currently, whether their own work is influenced by his and if they have any personal memories of him. Some responses are informative, others less so. A similar kind of survey was carried out by Marie-Pascale Gildemyn in 'Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers', *+-0*, Brussels, vol. 47 (1987), pp. 20-33.

work can ultimately determine it, is still as relevant today. Where amongst the 1980s painterly excesses and hyperbole of Neo-Expressionism, the clean-cut commercialism of Neo-Geo and the assertive slogans of New York feminism, Broodthaers seemed less relevant, he fits comfortably within 1990s postmodernist *différance* and logocentrism.

In this thesis, therefore, I hope to provide an overall view of Broodthaers' work and to show how the various (convenient but artificially defined) sections do not exist in isolation but, in fact, interrelate. I look not only at his visual works but also at his texts and poetry. Whilst I discuss some particular works and writings in detail, I also aim to analyse the thought patterns which determined his overall approach to his work. I hope to establish Broodthaers' significance, with particular regard to his informed and astute questioning of established structures in language, classification and art institutions. By examining the role of the artist and his position in society, he sought to 'deconstruct' myths surrounding the nature of his activity. At the same time, whilst displaying a strength of ideas, he indicated the importance of the materials and objects he chose to use. Although he imitated the dominant movements of the time, his works were also visually innovative. His attention to formal qualities and a use of craftsmen's skills developed gradually, leading to a certain visual distance between his work and that of his contemporaries.

In order to give some clarity and a simple structure to Broodthaers' work, I have divided it roughly into three chronological groups: the early objects from around 1963-1968, the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, 1968-1972, and the *Décors*, 1974-1976. Although these dates are accurate I am aware that they emphasise some areas of his activity whilst reducing the importance of others. Nevertheless, such a structure helps to digest his large and complex body of work. It is hoped that the text of this thesis demonstrates how this breakdown serves simply as a device of clarification, with the different sections of the thesis closely interrelating.

The chapters are arranged roughly chronologically, although not strictly so. Chapter 1 sets the scene for Broodthaers' decision to become an artist. It looks at his poetry, early texts, exhibition reviews and initial visual works. Chapter 2 examines in detail the texts in which Broodthaers indicated his strategy, his concept of the role of the artist and the artist's place in society. Examples of Broodthaers' work are discussed which deal with the relationship between art and commerce. Chapter 3 focuses upon the early objects whilst Chapter 4 discusses the notion of the shell in Broodthaers' work with particular regard to his *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles* and the *Décors*. Chapter 5 examines works on the theme of travel and space, with Chapter 6 examining the political nature of particular works and events of the early 1970s, locating Broodthaers in relation to his contemporaries.

There are a number of problems involved with writing about Broodthaers' work. Although it is possible to see a large number of his individual objects, paintings, prints, and so on, in private or public collections, many of his more significant works consisted of temporary installations or exhibitions in which each part was dependent upon the whole within which it was shown, as well as a particular temporal and physical context. Out of this context, these parts often have no particular value. Broodthaers was, therefore, not in favour of re-making complex works of this kind, although one such work/exhibition has recently been reshown.[2] For curators nowadays, the issue depends upon whether one defines an installation, for example, as an individual work, in which case it may be shown like any other work, or as an exhibition, in which case it would be 'recreated', a term which implies a degree of participation from the curator. Maria Gilissen, who was made responsible by Broodthaers for posthumous exhibitions of his work, tends to favour the first interpretation.[3] According to Gilissen, Broodthaers did not want to repeat himself during his lifetime, but this should not prevent us from showing his work now.

---

[2]I am referring to the *Section Publicité* at the Marian Goodman Gallery, 1995, and at *Documenta X*, 21 June-28 September 1997.

[3]Broodthaers wrote a brief will in which he gave his wife the right to decide which of the objects he left should be considered works; see Michael Compton, 'Marcel Broodthaers', in *Marcel Broodthaers*,

In retrospect, however, it is impossible fully to experience many of his works at first hand, outwith the temporal and physical contexts in which they were made, and one is largely dependent upon secondary sources - catalogues, reviews and other documentation. Broodthaers was aware of this problem (as I shall discuss in Chapter 2) and this is partly why he considered the catalogue an integral part of each exhibition. Nevertheless, the temporary nature of his work imposes limitations on the historian.

Aside from the hindrance of not being able, now, to see the original exhibitions, Broodthaers' work is not easy to discuss. It appears to form a web, every area of which is interwoven with so many other areas that to extract any one for examination seems to misrepresent the whole. Yet, attempting to discuss his entire output at once is overwhelming and confusing. A further problem is that in texts and statements Broodthaers often intentionally contradicts himself, hence denying any straightforward clues to interpreting his work and perhaps seeking to retain some of the 'mystery' which Magritte felt was so essential in art. As Freddy De Vree wrote, 'Broodthaers always acts in an allusive, indirect way in which the knot of meanings is not unravelled, but strengthened'.[4] Broodthaers' texts and comments are, therefore, integral to his practice.

This difficulty of interpretation at first sight is not aided by the fact that visually Broodthaers' work often appears very uncomplicated. He presents clear, familiar, apparently unambiguous objects and images which the viewer has no difficulty in describing on a formal level. However, the meaning and underlying intention are far harder to grasp. The apparent ease of decipherment means that the viewer, then intrigued, returns to enjoy the work but realises that in fact it is not as simple as it appears. Once ensnared in the web of his work one realises that there are ever more layers to comprehend. As Norbert Nobis has written, Broodthaers' works 'seem at once so harmless and so enigmatic that one has the feeling either of being able to understand them at first glance or of never being able to understand them at

---

London, The Tate Gallery, 16 April-26 May 1980, p. 25.
[4]Freddy De Vree, *Marcel Broodthaers: Œuvres 1963-1975*, Brussels, Galerie Isy Brachot, 1990, p. 34.

all. Whilst these works may seem superficial, we cannot help feeling that we are looking at something of great intellectual profundity'.[5] It is perhaps this lightness of touch and apparent superficiality which have led to a lack of substantial analysis and recognition of his work's significance.

Difficulties are furthermore compounded by the use of language in Broodthaers' work. As he used words in a manner which cannot easily be translated, the non-French speaking audience is always limited in its appreciation and understanding of both his writings and his visual works of which words formed a vital part. Broodthaers' use of puns and word plays means that translation is not only extremely difficult but often impossible. Even for someone who is fluent in French but not a native speaker, Broodthaers' range of references means that there are still difficulties in interpreting his work without a detailed knowledge of French literature and a sound understanding of Belgian culture.

Although I present the above as problems, it should also be pointed out that these are strengths of his work. Broodthaers wants the viewer and reader to think and to question, so for him to offer simple, straightforward interpretations of his work would be pointless. Because for him any work should be considered part of a greater whole, to understand one small element in isolation is meaningless. At the same time, it is impossible to perceive the whole, which cannot be clearly defined. As he wrote in 1972,

> We cast a stone into the water,
> circles appear, we coagulate them, and from
> these we extract a theory, we throw
> a stone further, and work
> voluntarily in darkness.[6]

---

[5]Norbert Nobis, 'Coming to terms with Marcel Broodthaers', in Hannover, p. 10.
[6]Marcel Broodthaers, 1972, press release, on the occasion of the exhibition *Marcel Broodthaers. Cinéma*, Santiago de Compostela, Centre Galego de Arte Contemporánea, 28 November 1997.

Chapter 1

Transition: From Poet to Poet/Artist

This chapter examines Broodthaers' poetry and works in the visual arts until around 1964. It may be tempting to simplify the chronology of his work and describe him as a poet who then became an artist. However, this would be inaccurate and misleading. Such labels are always limiting but in the case of Broodthaers, who sought to question and expand definitions, they are especially unhelpful. If any such terms must be used to indicate loosely the broad nature of his activity, it would be more accurate to say that he was a poet throughout his life, and at a certain point also began working in the visual arts. There are a few works I shall discuss which seem to symbolise this shift of focus, in which his main area of activity became the visual rather than the written. These include transformations into artworks of *Pense-Bête* (his last edition of poetry) and of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*.

The age of forty is generally given as a 'turning-point' for Broodthaers because of the statement published at his first exhibition, held in 1964, in which he set out his reasons for making artworks. It began: 'I, too, wondered if I couldn't sell something and succeed in life. I had for quite a little while been good for nothing. I am forty years old...'[1] However, many activities with which he was involved before this date were strongly visual in character. These include his volumes of poetry, early films and photographs. He also worked as a museum guide and wrote art criticism and exhibition reviews. These will be examined to show how he did not suddenly become 'an artist', but how throughout his life he engaged in a number of different

---

[1]Announcement for *Moi aussi je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose...*, Brussels, Galerie Saint-Laurent, 10-25 April 1964, trans. in Marge Goldwater & Michael Compton, *Marcel Broodthaers*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Center & New York, Rizzoli, 1989, p. 4. The original reads: 'Moi aussi, je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose et réussir dans la vie. Cela fait un moment déjà que je ne suis bon à rien. Je suis âgé de quarante ans...' (omission dots in the original)

activities at the same time. As well as art criticism, he also wrote articles on a wide range of topics, portraying his observations and thoughts at a particular time. These include articles on events of the time, for example the 1958 *Exposition Universelle* (World's Fair) in Brussels. In such accounts Broodthaers seemed to act as a witness to contemporary life (as Baudelaire had in his time).

Firstly, it is necessary to look at the context in which Broodthaers developed. Because the notion of dialogue is central to this thesis, this context will be examined through particular incidents and occasions which brought Broodthaers into contact with his Belgian contemporaries. Then, his volumes of poetry will be discussed, paying particular attention to their visual qualities and to themes which relate to his later visual works. Other activities which indicated Broodthaers' interest in the visual will also be signalled. Finally, those works will be discussed in which he transformed written into visual works.

Early Years

During the 1940s and '50s the Belgian artistic and literary scene was dominated by Surrealism. Broodthaers made clear his distance from Breton's Surrealist position (in the 1974 interview/text 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' which will be discussed in Chapter 3), but at that time he had contact with the Brussels circle based around Magritte, Paul Nougé and Louis Scutenaire. Relationships amongst the Belgian Surrealists, and with the French Surrealists, were often tense with an atmosphere of mutual criticism. There was an ongoing debate concerning the direction Surrealism should take, particularly in relation to Breton's approach, with splits occuring within Belgium.[2] The Brussels-based circle was, however, apparently impressed by the young poet Broodthaers, as Van Lennep has written, 'In the eyes of the Surrealists,

---

[2]See Marcel Mariën, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique (1924-1950)*, Brussels, Lebeer Hossmann, 1979 and Jacques Van Lennep, 'De Magritte à Broodthaers: Le Surréalisme en Belgique quarante ans plus tard', Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, *Bulletin*, vols. 1-3 (1981-1984), pp. 205-244. For a brief survey see the Introduction by Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque to *The Belgian Contribution to Surrealism*, Edinburgh International Festival, Royal Scottish Academy, 21 August-19 September 1971, pp. 6-13.

Broodthaers certainly appeared to be anti-establishment'.[3] One event in particular supported this opinion. On the occasion of a gala of Resistance poetry at the Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, soon after the German retreat in April 1945, Broodthaers cried out from the balcony, 'Louis Aragon, when will you stop compromising French poetry![4] Christian Dotremont followed this cry by slamming a door. He immediately reopened it, entered and sat silently. A brief account of this ambiguous episode was given by Marcel Mariën in his comprehensive survey, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique (1924-1950)*, together with a cartoon which referred to Broodthaers' outburst, originally appearing in the magazine *Combattre* (20 April 1945) (pl. 1).[5] The caption read: 'Ceux qui ne compromettent pas la poésie...' (Those who do not compromise poetry...) The drawing depicted a very conventional looking husband and wife going for a walk, who encounter a crazy looking man wearing an odd assortment of clothing, with a flower pot on his head and taking a carrot for a walk. The man says to his wife: "Oh! a reporter from the journal 'Le ciel bleu'!"[6] Broodthaers was not a reporter for the journal but his poem *L'Ile sonnante* was published in it in April 1945.[7] Desite the Surrealist nature of the journal Broodthaers' poem has been described as 'Symbolist in feeling and title'.[8]

During the 1940s and '50s Broodthaers had poems and articles published sporadically, rather than regularly, in various journals, not only those associated with Surrealism. During 1945 he had four articles published in *Le salut public (Hebdomadaire de précision politique et littéraire)*, a Brussels-based communist journal. The themes of the articles ranged from semi-autobiographical fiction in 'Le Rêve d'un jeune homme malheureux ou l'anarchiste anodin' (The dream of a young unhappy man or the anodyne anarchist), to politics in 'Le Problème allemand' (The German Problem), litterature in 'Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly ou le porte-drapeau' (Jules

---

[3]Van Lennep, 'De Magritte à Broodthaers', p. 208: 'Aux yeux des surréalistes, Broodthaers faisait certainement figure de contestaire.'
[4]Mariën, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique*, p. 345: 'Louis Aragon, quand cesserez-vous de compromettre la poésie française!'
[5]Mariën describes *Combattre* as the 'organe du Cercle des jeunes écrivains de l'U.L.B'; ibid., p. 344.
[6]Ibid., p. 344: 'Oh! un rédacteur du journal <Le ciel bleu>!'
[7]'L'Ile sonnante', *Le Ciel Bleu*, Bruxelles, no. 7 (5 April 1945).
[8]Michael Compton, 'In Praise of the Subject', in Goldwater & Compton, p. 16.

Barbey d'Aurevilly or the standard bearer) and film in 'La Taverne de la Jamaïque' (The Jamaica Tavern). Broodthaers had joined the Communist Party in 1943 and was a member until 1951.[9]

Broodthaers attended the first meeting after the Second World War of the Brussels Surrealist circle, which was held at the Café Parisien on 15 November 1945. Those present included Scutenaire, Paul Colinet, Irène Hamoir, Jean and Paul Bourgoignie, Dotremont and Mariën. The assembled decided to publish a journal called *Le Centrale*. Broodthaers was to be on the editorial committee but the project was never realised.[10]

In 1946 Broodthaers was amongst those artists and poets who responded to a questionnaire conceived by Magritte and published in the journal *Le savoir vivre*. The questions with Broodthaers' responses were as follows:

> 1. What do you detest the most?
> Those who follow 'good' popular proverbs who allow only just enough to be able to live; also poverty.
> 2. What do you like the most?
> Everything within reach; long journeys; any house...I don't know what I like the most; today, 12 May, at 10.30pm, it's to reply to this questionnaire...Two days ago I enjoyed thinking about the memory of the battle of Stalingrad; the number of possible things to like the most seems to me limitless.
> 3. What do you wish the most?
> Certain unspecific vulgar things; money obviously, because being especially deprived of this means, I am really 'embarrassed'; to be able to give free rein to all my feelings.
> 4. What do you fear the most?
> Boredom.[11]

---

[9]According to Benjamin H. D. Buchloh in Buchloh, Catherine David & Jean-François Chevrier, 'The Political Potential of Art', *Politics-Poetics documenta X - The Book*, Ostfildern, Cantz, 1997, p. 387. See also *Marcel Broodthaers*, Catherine David (ed.), Paris, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, 17 December 1991-1 March 1992, p. 34.

[10]Mariën, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique*, p. 342.

[11]Ibid., pp. 369-380; *Le savoir vivre*, Brussels, Le miroir infidèle, 1946: '1. Quelles sont les choses que vous détestez le plus?/Celles suivant les 'bons' proverbes populaires qui ne donnent que juste assez pour pouvoir vivre; ainsi la pauvreté. 2. Quelles sont les choses que vous aimez le plus?/Toutes celles à la portée de ma main; les grands voyages; n'importe quelle maison... Je ne sais pas ce que j'aime le plus; aujhourd'hui, 12 mai, à 22h. 30, c'est répondre à cette enquête... Il y a deux jours, c'était le souvenir de la bataille de Stalingrad que j'avais plaisir à remâcher; le nombre de possibilités d'aimer le plus me semble illimité. 3. Quelles sont les choses que vous souhaitez le plus?/Certaines choses vulgaires sans précision; de l'argent évidemment, parce qu'étant spécialement privé de ce moyen, je suis fort 'embarrassé'; pouvoir donner libre cours à tous mes sentiments. 4. Quelles sont les choses que vous redoutez le plus?/L'ennui.' (omission dots in original)

The answers varied enormously amongst those who replied. Some were clever and witty whilst others took the questions extremely seriously and wrote long detailed statements. Broodthaers does not seem to have given the questions too much thought and his responses spontaneous. At around this time he ran a bookshop in Brussels and also dealt in second-hand books. In 1950 he is recorded as having organised an auction from private collections of, 'Autographs, first editions, fine illustrated books, history, heraldry, hippology, modern litterature and fine books in German.'[12] His love of books was apparent throughout his life. When, in the 1970s, he had some money, he built up an interesting collection of rare and illustrated books.

During April 1947 Broodthaers was present at various meetings in which *Surréalisme Révolutionnaire* was discussed, regarding in particular the relationship between Surrealism and Communism. The meetings were organised by Dotremont, Paul Bourgoignie and Jean Seeger and a manifesto was subsequently published.[13] *Pas de quatiers dans la révolution!* (7 June 1947) was written by Dotremont and Seeger and signed by the group including Broodthaers, Magritte, Nougé and Scutenaire. It was published on 9 July in *Le Drapeau Rouge*, the Belgian Communist Party's paper. The manifesto was largely critical of Breton and in favour of group rather than individual activity. It recognised the communist party as the only possible vehicle for revolutionary change in society. A subsequent manifesto confirmed this position. *La Cause est Entendue*, dated 1 July 1947, was signed not only by Belgian Revolutionary Surrealists, including Broodthaers, but also by a number of dissident French artists.[14] The relationship between the Belgian and French Surrealists was not always harmonious and determined partly by Magritte's relationship with Breton. Briefly, during the 1940s Breton had become disillusioned with Magritte's work, in particular his 'surréalisme en plein soleil'. The Belgians in turn believed not only that Breton was far too autocratic but also that political change should come through political parties rather than artists' groups.

---

[12]The auction was held on 25 March 1950 at the Galerie Thémis, Brussels; see Compton, pp. 17-18.
[13]Mariën, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique*, pp. 406-409.
[14]Ibid., p. 412.

In 1948 Broodthaers published *Projet pour un film* (Project for a film) and *Trois poèmes de l'île deserté* (Three desert island poems) in the journal *Le Surréalisme Révolutionnaire*.[15] *Projet pour un film* has since been seen as a significant early poem for Broodthaers, as it indicates at this stage the interdisciplinary approach his work would take. The poem is short and acts as a brief imaginary scene:

> A fly penetrated the
> immobile landscape.
> The leaves tremble as it
> passes by, the birds come back to life and
> abruptly the mill-wheel
> started turning again.
> School is out.
> The teacher stumbling along plunges
> into a bush.[16]

Le Surréalisme Révolutionnaire was published in Paris and had correspondants based around Europe. The editorial team consisted of Dotremont, Noël Arnaud, Asger Jorn and Zdenek Lorenc with many of the contributions from Belgian Surrealists. Only one issue was ever published, shortly after which the movement dissolved. Many of those associated with *Surréalisme Révolutionnaire*, both the movement and journal, subsequently became members of Cobra, which was officially formed in November 1948.

Links between Broodthaers' early objects and Cobra have been traced in a 1991 article, in which Graham Birtwistle argued that Broodthaers made his first object not as a response to Pop Art, but as early as 1948 and as part of the Cobra movement.[17]

According to Birtwistle, in a letter dated 7 October 1948, Dotremont told Constant, then associated with Cobra, that he wanted to exhibit a work by

---

[15]Ibid., p. 424, *Le Surréalisme Révolutionnaire Revue bimestrielle publiée par le Bureau Internationale du Surréalisme Révolutionnaire*, Paris (March-April 1948), p. 4.
[16]*Projet pour un film*, trans. in *Marcel Broodthaers. Cinéma.*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 17 April-29 June 1997, p. 313: 'Une mouche a pénétré dans le/paysage immobile./Les feuillages frémissent à son/passage, les oiseaux ressuscitent et/brusquement le moulin à aubes s'est/remis à tourner./L'école est lâchée./Le professeur chancelant s'engouffre/dans un buisson.'
[17]Graham Birtwistle, 'Broodthaers before Broodthaers. An object from the Cobra period', *Jong Holland*, vol. 7, pt. 1 (1991), p. 61.

Broodthaers entitled *Le Crâne de Descartes* (The Skull of Descartes) in what would effectively be a Cobra exhibition in all but name since the group was not yet officially formed. Dotremont described the work as 'a skull with a note'. The exhibition, *De la chose à l'objet*, was due to be held in Brussels during November 1948, but never actually took place. Birtwistle claimed that *Le Crâne de Descartes*, 'would seem to have been very much the product of an environment in which, particularly through Dotremont's influence, writers were being stimulated to make word/object experiments based on the tradition of Dada and Surrealism'.[18] Birtwistle seems to argue, therefore, that because Broodthaers made a 'word/object' work at this time, he did so due to the influence of Dotremont. He attributed Broodthaers' subsequent break with the visual arts until the early 1960s to the fact that he did not become part of the Cobra group and therefore remained outside a circle of exhibiting artists. He claimed that Broodthaers subsequently never mentioned the work because he chose to construct his past carefully, reflecting his 'feeling for irony and his desire to weave a web of enigma around himself'.[19]

Birtwistle argued that many of Broodthaers' objects shared particular characteristics and materials with Cobra objects. For example, in Cobra exhibitions of 1949, 1951 and again in the early 1960s, at the time when Broodthaers began making objects, works were shown which included coal, a suitcase, and a bottle with texts, all of which would later feature in Broodthaers' work. Superficially, visually, similarities do exist. However, not so with regard to the methods used of working with the objects and the underlying concepts. At a time when a variety of materials were being used by many artists, the examples cited were not unique to Cobra and Broodthaers. Moreover, Broodthaers' use of coal, for example, was largely due to its significance as a Belgian product, and the way he used it to fill cases or cover surfaces related to concepts of shells, absence and presence, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. Although Broodthaers was undoubtedly familiar with the work of the Cobra artists, this does not imply that he was influenced by them and Birtwistle's

---

[18]Ibid., p. 61.
[19]Ibid., p. 62.

interpretation appears to be rather too critical of Broodthaers, without sufficient material to support his argument.

Partly in defence of my point of view, I quote from Freddy de Vree's monograph on Broodthaers in which he recounted Dotremont's memories of his relationship with Broodthaers. Dotremont told him that, 'We always kept in touch, we were good friends, although Marcel Broodthaers never had anything to do with Cobra...Broodthaers lived in the same intellectual environment, he lived in the same misery'.[20] Dotremont spoke about how they met in Paris when he was living under a bridge and they were both very poor with no money and nothing to eat. They met again by chance in the late 1950s in a cafe in Paris. Broodthaers told him that he had a little money and if Dotremont needed anything he could help him. Dotremont replied that he also had a little money now. '"Ah mais merde..." Broodthaers then said. As if we had both gone astray...'[21]

During the mid-1950s and 60s a few of Broodthaers' poems were published in *Phantomas*, a Brussels-based journal first published in 1953 by Marcel Havrenne, Theodore Koenig and Joseph Noiret. Havrenne had been involved with the Belgian Surrealist activities of the 1940s and the journal published largely from those associated with this circle. When Havrenne died in 1957 an issue of *Phantomas* was published in his honour, including a text by Broodthaers entitled 'Lui écrire une lettre (hommage à Marcel Havrenne)' (Writing him a Letter (Homage to Marcel Havrenne)).[22]

Broodthaers' relationship with those associated with Belgian Surrealism did not end abruptly. After all, there never was a strictly unified group, and these were friends as well as sometime colleagues. In 1966, for example, with his artistic career developing, he was given free rein over a special issue of *Phantomas* (pl. 2).[23] Although it was primarily a literary journal, Broodthaers' contribution was a mixture

---

[20]De Vree, p. 29.
[21]Ibid., p. 29 (omission dots in original).
[22]'Lui écrire une lettre (hommage à Marcel Havrenne)', *Phantomas*, no. 9 (Autumn 1957), p. 7.
[23]*Phantomas*, Brussels, special number, vol. 62 (February 1966).

of drawings with printed and handwritten texts. The drawings of mussels, pots, eggs, eggs on tables, signatures, numbers and words related closely to his works in other media at that time. However, in their fictitious and evocative character, the texts seem to be reminiscent of his earlier poetry. The special issue was published in a limited edition of 500 copies, so although it was mass-produced there were limitations.

Broodthaers' relationship with Magritte will be discussed in Chapter 3 with particular regard to Broodthaers' early objects and the relationship between Magritte and Pop Art. The responses of Magritte and of the other Belgian Surrealists to Broodthaers' work in the visual arts will also be discussed in Chapter 3. Here I shall only briefly mention one particular work in which Broodthaers paid homage to Marcel Lecomte, the poet and writer whom he knew well. Lecomte was one of the founding members of the Belgian Surrealist journal *Correspondance*, in 1924, with Nougé and Camille Goemans. However, by the following July he was expelled from the editorial committee, possibly because of his other, less radical literary associations and also because, unlike Nougé and Goemans, he did not support Breton's manifesto, 'La Révolution encore et toujours'.[24] It has also been suggested by Lecomte, that the split came because his colleagues felt that he was becoming too much 'a writer' (un écrivain) and would no longer follow 'an extra-literary path' (un démarche extra-littéraire).[25] Despite the expulsion they remained in contact and on friendly terms.

Broodthaers' homage was titled *Le Salon Noir* (The Black Room), and it was exhibited at the Galerie Saint-Laurent in 1966 (pl. 3).[26] The gallery was located above a bookshop, and four other artists were each invited to make an installation in separate rooms.[27] In fact, according to Stéphane Rona, of the four only Broodthaers

---

[24]Daniel Blampain (ed.), *Le Surréalisme Belge*, Brussels, Editions Labor, 1986, pp. 20-21.
[25]Ibid., p. 21.
[26]*Des Salles/Raüme*, Brussels, Galerie Saint-Laurent, 9 July-15 September 1966.
[27]Remo Martini *La Salle de Bain*, Annie Debie and Camiel Van Breedam *Le Grenier*, José Goemaere *La Chambre à coucher* and Emile Christiaens *La Cage d'Escalier*.

really used the space effectively, and understanded the idea of installation art which was still somewhat new.[28] Broodthaers' work consisted of a coffin stood upright, inside of which 35 glass pots stood in rows on shelves. Each pot contained a photograph profile of Lecomte either in positive or negative, creating a strong black-white image. Near the coffin stood a small table and chairs covered with black fabric. On the table was Broodthaers' visiting card with one corner folded over, and a glass dome which was signed and dated. Underneath the dome was some black tulle and various other items wrapped in silver paper - an eggcup, an egg, a small spoon, an oval shape, a fork and a plate. On the wall black tulle and a black fabric frieze were hung.[29] A photograph by Georges Thiry shows Broodthaers seated beside the work, apparently deep in thought. Broodthaers had asked Lecomte if he could make such a work; Lecomte consulted his tarot cards and accepted. A short time later, however, on 19th November 1966, Lecomte died suddenly in a restaurant close by the gallery.[30]

Broodthaers made a second homage to Lecomte the following year in 'à Marcel Lecomte' published in *Phantomas* (pl. 4).[31] This imaginary interview comprised a short dialogue between Broodthaers and Lecomte and read as follows:

> M.B.: Your name is not mentioned in Gotha, although you would think that it would be.
> Marcel Lecomte: I don't regret that my name is missing from Gotha, but it is missing.
> M.B.: Do you have a philosophy of absence?[32]

Lecomte's second reply is presented beside two photographs of his head taken by Broodthaers and reads: 'For me absence exists at the same time as presence.'[33]

---

[28]Stéphane Rona, 'Le Salon Noir de Marcel Broodthaers', Brussels, *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 16 (February 1977), p. 5.
[29]See *Marcel Broodthaers. Le Salon Noir 1966*, Antwerp, Ronny van de Velde Gallery, 16 September-15 October 1988 where the work was recreated. A slightly different description was given by Rona. He desribes a crystal ball made from silver paper under the glass dome and says that a funerary plaque made from fake marble hung from the curtains.
[30]Rona, 'Le Salon Noir de Marcel Broodthaers', p. 5.
[31]'Interview' (interview imaginaire de Marcel Lecomte), *Phantomas*, Brussels, nos. 68-72 (July 1967), p. 84.
[32]Ibid.: 'M.B.: Ton nom n'est pas mentionné au Gotha, bien qu'il donne à penser qu'il y soit./Marcel Lecomte: Je ne regrette pas que mon nom manque au Gotha, mais il manque./M.B.: Possèderais-tu une philosophie de l'absence?'
[33]Ibid.: 'Pour moi, l'absence est dans la même durée que la présence.'

Gotha is short for *Almanach de Gotha* which, since 1763, has given genealogical, diplomatic and statistical data including lists of noblemen and women. In his interview Broodthaers played upon the fact that the name Lecomte literally means 'the count'. On the preceding facing page in *Phantomas* four more photographs of Lecomte by Broodthaers were published around the title 'à Marcel Lecomte'. There appeared to be two of Lecomte's feet and two of a hand, although in fact only two negatives had been used with the negative of the hand reversed and that of the feet rotated ninety degrees to give another angle.[34]

Both *Le Salon Noir* and 'à Marcel Lecomte' draw on diametrical opposites - positive and negative, black and white, presence and absence, life and death. By combining them, and due to Lecomte's reply ('For me absence exists at the same time as presence') Broodthaers confirmed the (structuralist) belief that such opposites exist simultaneously. In other words, absence necessarily implies presence. Furthermore, although Lecomte was dead he continued to exist through his work and through posthumous contact with other poets due to their interest in his work, such as the interview with Broodthaers. Lecomte's position in relation to the Belgian Surrealists was also one of absence and presence as he was contemporary with them but largely outside their circles. In his treatment of these works, Broodthaers combines further qualities which are conventionally resented as opposites, namely humour and sorrow, lightness of tough and gravity of theme. Such an approach, which may be found throughout Broodthaers' work (as will become clear), was his method of making it easier both for himself and for the viewer to tackle and digest particular and difficult issues.[35]

Volumes of Poetry

---

[34]Four of the photographs from *Phantomas* of Lecomte have since been regrouped and re-presented as *A Marcel Lecomte* (1966), which was purchased by the Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels and is on permanent display. The group comprises two photographs of Lecomte's feet, together with one of his hand and one of his head.

[35]Broodthaers' own contact with the Belgian Surrealists continued to some extent even after his own death. For example, when *Le Salon Noir* was exhibited in 1988 at the Ronny van de Velde Gallery, Antwerp, the poet Marcel Piqueray wrote a short catalogue text, 'Marcel Broodthaers et Marcel Lecomte: des complices' (Marcel Broodthaers and Marcel Lecomte: the accomplices).

Broodthaers' first volume of poetry *Mon Livre d'Ogre* (My Ogre Book) was published in 1957 (pl. 5), followed by *Minuit* (Midnight) (1960) (p. 6), *La Bête Noire* (1961) (pl. 7) and *Pense-Bête* (1963) (pl. 8) (the translation of these titles will be looked at in due course).[36] The physical appearance of the books was always highly considered. They were not simply a means by which Broodthaers' poetry could be read but were also visual objects. The choice of paper, size and shape of book, font and layout were all carefully planned and different in each case. The typographical layout of each poem was very important and again the range of styles varied enormously. The editions were limited and numbered and Broodthaers worked with an artist on each one. A certain number of copies of *Mon Livre d'Ogre* contained a lithograph and, of *Minuit*, a monotype by Serge Vandercam. In *La Bête Noire* the etchings were by Jan Sanders, with three copies also illustrated by his drawings. In the case of *Pense-Bête*, Broodthaers added coloured paper himself. This sense of value - signed, limited editions with original works by artists - meant that the books fitted into the tradition of the *livre d'artiste* which had developed in France during the 19th century, rather than seem to anticipate the multiples or artists' books which would become prevalent during the 1960s and 70s and with which Broodthaers' later books had more in common (although now that he is better known as an artist than a poet his early books are often classified in libraries alongside artists' books.) The main reason why these books may be termed *livres d'artiste* is because, despite the attention Broodthaers gave to the early books' visual qualities, his main focus was upon the poems.

Whereas initially in his visual works Broodthaers' parody of the period was quite open, in poetry his form of referencing was more subtle. However, references abound, particularly to Rimbaud as well as Mallarmé and Baudelaire. *Mon Livre d'Ogre* has been described as 'rather Parnassian in character', whereas *Minuit* was 'more symbolist'.[37] Descriptive labels of this kind need to be applied loosely to

---

[36]See *Marcel Broodthaers: Catalogue des Livres*, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, New York, Marian Goodman Gallery and Paris, Galerie Gillespie, Laage and Salomon, 1982, pp. 8-15, and *Marcel Broodthaers: Het Volledig Grafisch Werk en de Boeken,* Knokke-Duinbergen, Galerie Jos Jamar, 1989, pp. 74-81.
[37]Compton, pp. 18-19.

Broodthaers' poetry because it was always very varied both in terms of its style and imagery. He seems to have tried out many different styles and poetic devices within one book or even one poem. His language was often very simple although the resulting images were complex. A childlike quality is evident in some of the fairytale narrative poems, with an underlying sense of nostalgia for a lost world. In *Mon Livre d'Ogre*, for example, he wrote about 'le Petit Poucet' (Tom Thumb) and ogres, whilst in *Minuit* we find poems entitled *La Princesse* (The Princess) and *La Fée Noire* (The Black Fairy). His imagery tended to derive from the natural world rather than the urban, with particularly close observations of animals in *La Bête Noire* and *Pense-Bête*. There is a faux-naif quality which would find its parallel in some of Broodthaers' visual works.

Broodthaers' writing method can be seen from the drafts.[38] According to Compton, he usually began by writing long poems which he then reworked and pared down many times. This may be why the meaning is often ambiguous and difficult to grasp. His method of working in the visual arts seems to have been characterised by a similar precision (which will become apparent in further chapters).

Broodthaers' poetry and visual works are often seen as quite separate activities. However, he referred to an untitled poem from *Mon Livre d'Ogre* in a number of later artworks. The poem reads as follows:

> O sadness flight of wild ducks
> Rape of birds at the granary of the forests
> O melancholy bitter castle of eagles[39]

The structure and wording are reminiscent of Rimbaud's 'Ô saisons, ô chateaux'. The subtle alliteration of 'aigre château des aigles' is unfortunately lost in translation. This final line became something of a leitmotif for the *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles*; in the catalogue to the *Section des Figures* it was printed beneath a

---

[38]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[39]*Mon livre d'ogre*, Ostend, Edition à l'Enseigne de l'Arquabuse du Silence, 1957, p. 14, translated in Compton, pp. 18-19, where it is noted that the third line was in fact originally jotted down ten years earlier in 1947: 'O Tristesse envol de canards sauvages/Viol d'oiseaux au grenier des forêts/O mélancholie aigre château des aigles.'

painting of a castle, the only exhibit which did not feature an eagle, but wherein, according to the imagery of the poem, one may suppose that eagles can be found.[40] The words may be seen as the poetic complement to the commercial concerns which dominated the museum project. This contrast is particularly acute in the *Section Publicité*, where they were beautifully inscribed in script on a copper plate beneath a small gilt-bronze eagle alongside images from advertising.

Broodthaers also repeated the first and third lines of this poem in *Le Zodiaque* (The Zodiac), the first poem of *La Bête Noire*. The title of the volume literally translates as 'The Black Beast', but it is also a phrase meaning someone's 'pet hate' and is often used in English untranslated. The poems and short prose pieces of *La Bête Noire* describe many different animals in the form of bestiaries, inspired by those of La Fontaine. (Broodthaers would return to La Fontaine directly in his edition and other works which take as their starting point *Le Corbeau et le Renard*). The form of the bestiary enabled Broodthaers to comment on society with a sharp wit. The spacial arrangement of the poems was also obviously carefully considered - the book is wide with the poems visually structured as though there is a central pole around which they unroll sideways, recalling Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*. *Le Zodiaque* reads as follows:

> Lost solitude, I have always been prey. Like the hare with long ears,
> I am timid. My shadow is immense.
>
> Sadness, flight of wild ducks. Melancholy, bitter castle of eagles.[41]

In 1963 Broodthaers published his second volume of bestiaries which he titled *Pense-Bête*. Once again there is more than one meaning to this phrase. *Pense-Bête* is used to mean a 'memory aide', like tying a knot in a handkerchief or a string around a finger.[42] However, it translates literally as 'Think Beast' or 'Think Stupid'. Considering the nature of the contents of the book, Broodthaers seems to have

---

[40]*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures*, Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle, 16 May-9 July 1972, p. 15.

[41]*La Bête Noire*, Brussels, published by the author, 1961, p. 3: 'LE ZODIAQUE/Perdu de solitude, j'ai toujours été gibier. Comme le lièvre aux longues oreilles,/je suis craintif. Mon ombre est immense./Tristesse, envol de canards sauvages. Mélancholie, aigre château des aigles.'

[42]This would explain why, amongst the poems on animals, there are some on fingers. These are repeated periodically through the book perhaps as a way of remembering them.

intended that the literal meaning should apply. The poems are even more condensed than those in *La Bête Noire*, and the meanings seem to emerge most clearly by visualising the words. Broodthaers introduced the poems with a short text entitled 'Art poétique' (Ars Poetica), which recalls Horace's well-known essay of the same title. Broodthaers' essay was quite short in which he spoke about his own approach to poetry. He was evidently aware of his enigmatic style as he declared that, 'A taste for secrecy, hermetic practices, for me they're all one, and a favorite game'.[43] He went on to admit what initially appears a surprising source of inspiration:

> Works of jurisprudence have often excited my imagination. Each word in them has its place, a very precise place. The ambiguities of law surely derive from differing interpretations of the text, from the spirit and not from the letter.[44]

However, legal texts are dependent upon interpretation, and so for the poet/writer familiar with structuralist theories, they may, therefore, have been of considerable interest. Broodthaers stated that his interest in language stemmed from the time he learnt to read. He described this interest as a passion:

> A dangerous passion, an obsession, whose meager results you have here, a few poems deflected from their natural state, from people and from things.[45]

It is a 'deflected' (détourné) quality which characterised Broodthaers' poetry. Bearing this in mind as Broodthaers' intention, helps us to understand his poetry as well as his subsequent work in the visual arts, for we do not, therefore, expect to find easy, straightforward meanings. The poems are densely packed with imagery which has to be studied and considered at length in order to be unpacked and deceifered. They have a playful quality - poetry as a puzzle, a rebus, a game. They are often very

---

[43]'Art poétique', from *Pense-Bête*, 1963-64, trans. Paul Schmidt, published in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (ed.), *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1988, originally published as *October*, no. 42 (Fall, 1987), pp. 14-15: 'Le goût du secret et la pratique de l'hermétisme, c'est tout un et pour moi, un jeu favori.'

[44]Ibid.: 'Les ouvrages juridiques, souvent, excitèrent mon imagination. La place que le mot y occupe est une place nette. L'ambiguïte du Droit tient sans doute à l'interprétation du texte; à l'esprit et non à la lettre.'

[45]Ibid.: 'Passion dangereuse, passion obsédante dont voici un résultat maigre, quelques poèmes détournés de leur nature de gens et de choses.'

short, consisting of only a few words, and resemble thoughts on paper, like verbal doodles. The styles used are very varied. *Les Asticots* (Maggots) seems prosaic and descriptive:

> They subdivide. And never stop.[46]

Yet the imagery is vivid. The paradox is that through self-destruction twice as much new life is created. But of course this is all illusion as the maggots only look as though they are subdividing. By contrast *Le Cancrelat et le Boa* (The Cockroach and the Boa) has a more hermetic charcter:

> At last I see through myself. I'm afraid of being seen.
>
> I am a boa,
> it's the most terrible thing that can happen to a snake.[47]

The cockroach seems to stand for the negative, suicidal aspect of self-knowledge. Unable to face its own inner reality it would prefer to disappear altogether. The snake has already lost its own identity. In French, as in English, the word 'boa' means both a 'feather boa' and a constrictor snake. The feather boa is a bizarre combination of a snake, a creature which lives on the ground, and the plumage of dead birds. We imagine that for a quick, cunning creature like a snake it must be terrible to become a limp line of feathers. However, the snake/boa of the poem can only see himself as a feather boa, diminished and other. *Le Porc* (Pork) also seems to spiral inwards as all the elements contained in the first part of the poem relate back to the pig. The final line, however, offers a form of escape to broader perspectives:

> Precious morsels
>
> chops hams head
> porcelain collar
> ears on the snout of the counter...

---

[46]*Les asticots* from *Pense-Bête*, in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 22-23: 'Ils se coupent en quatre. Ils n'arrêtent pas de se couper.'

[47]*Le Cancrelat et le Boa* from *Pense-Bête*, in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 20-21: 'Enfin, je vois clair en moi-même. J'ai peur d'être vu./Je suis un boa,/c'est la chose la plus terrible qui puisse arriver à un serpent.'

I read in your tiny eyes a children's book[48]

These poems have very strong visual imagery. In contrast with the descriptive fairytale nature of some of the earlier poems which gradually build up an impression at the time of reading, those in *Pense-Bête* are short, sharp and compact, but need to be mulled over for some time afterwards.

Reworkings: The MTL Exhibition and Mallarmé's Throw of the Die

Many of the poems published in *La Bête Noire* and *Pense-Bête* were shown in reworked versions in a 1970 exhibition at the MTL Gallery in Brussels, which can be seen as a link between Broodthaers' poetry and visual art during the period when he was working primarily as an artist.[49] I shall, therefore, examine certain aspects of and works from this exhibition here.

The exhibition consisted of typed manuscripts of poetry and other texts on which he had made alterations, scribbled and drawn, together with handwritten notes and sketches. The pages were not framed but exhibited on a table, on the wall under plexiglass and in a file folder which was to be kept closed during the exhibition. In contrast with the fragmentary, and what could be seen as unfinished nature of the show, the pages were organised into sections A to D, with numbered sub-sections. The sections were listed in the catalogue with each page described briefly. The impression received by the spectator would probably have been that of a rich accumulation of ideas and works in progress. Indeed, it was an exhibition about the working processes of the artist in which the many stages of the development of ideas were made visible. The pages did not appear to be prepared for exhibition but were shown in the messy state in which they existed. There were no finished versions but simply the many reworkings.

---

[48]*Le Porc* from *Pense-Bête*, in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 16-17: 'Ces morceaux précieux/cotelettes jambons tête/foulard en porcelaine/oreilles sur le groin de l'étal.../Je lis dans tes yeux minuscules un livre enfantin.'

[49]*L'exposition à la Galerie*, Brussels, MTL, 13 March-10 April 1970. For a detailed description of this exhibition see Anne Rorimer, 'The Exhibition at the MTL Gallery', in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 101-125.

The first five pages of 'Section A' took as their starting point Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A throw of the die will never abolish chance) (1897).[50] When Broodthaers met Magritte in the mid-1940s Magritte presented him with a copy of the poem. It became an important link between two of Broodthaers' key figures, as well as between his own writing and art-making practices. The primary position of the pages in the MTL catalogue system indicate this importance. On two of the five pages Broodthaers typed the poem as prose, to which he then added handwritten notes and doodles.[51] On the other pages were his handwritten notes about his previous works and other ideas based on the poem. He paraphrased Mallarmé in 'poetry is the source', and stated that: 'Mallarmé is at the source of contemporary art.'[52] Mallarmé's poem was revolutionary in drawing the reader's attention to the visual qualities of poetry. The words, of varying sizes, were printed across the double page emphasising the surrounding white space. In his preface to the poem Mallarmé referred to these 'blanks':

> The 'blanks' in effect, assume importance and are what is immediately most striking: versification always demanded them as a surrounding silence, so that a lyric poem, or one with a few feet, generally occupies about a third of the leaf on which it is centered; I don't transgress against this order of things, I merely disperse its elements. The paper intervenes each time an image, of its own accord, ceases or withdraws, accepting the succession of others.[53]

In his further reworkings of the poem, Broodthaers emphasised this relationship between the words and the surrounding space in which they are set. Shortly before the MTL exhibition he published three editions which he exhibited in *Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé: Marcel Broodthaers à la Deblioudebliou/S*

---

[50]*Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* was published in the journal *Cosmopolis* in May 1897 and on its own by the *Nouvelle Revue Française* from Gallimard in 1914; see Henry Weinfield (ed.), *Stéphane Mallarmé Collected Poems*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, p. 264.

[51]The pages are published in David (ed.), p. 149.

[52]Part A, 1c of *L'exposition à la Galerie*: '"La poésie est la source." Mallarmé est à la source de l'art contemporain.' Broodthaers paraphrased Mallarmé rather than quote verbatim the final words of the Preface to *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, 'Poésie - unique source' (Poetry - unique source); see Weinfield (ed.), *Stéphane Mallarmé Collected Poems*, p. 123.

[53]Stéphane Mallarmé, Preface to *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, in Weinfield (ed.), p. 121: 'Les 'blancs' en effet, assument l'importance, frappent d'abord; la versification en exigea, comme silence alentour, ordinairement, au point qu'un morceau, lyrique ou de peu de pieds, occupe, au milieu, le tiers environ du feuillet: je ne transgresse cette mesure, seulement la disperse. Le papier intervient chaque fois qu'une image, d'elle-même, cesse ou rentre, acceptant la succession d'autres.'

(Literary Exhibition around Mallarmé: Marcel Broodthaers at the Deblioudebliou/S). The title of the exhibition was a pun based upon the English pronunciation of the initials of the gallery where it took place - the W(ide) W(hite) S(pace).[54] In each version, black bands replaced the lengths and thicknesses of Mallarmé's lines of text.[55] The first edition, comprising ten copies, was on twelve aluminium plates (pl. 9). They suggest printing plates, and Broodthaers, therefore, presented finished works reminiscent of what would usually be an unseen stage in the process of printing. Each plate represented a double page spread following exactly the same dimensions and layout as Mallarmé's original. Broodthaers also added a blank plate at the beginning to emphasise the primary importance of the empty page.

At the same time Broodthaers produced a book edition on opaque white paper in an edition of 300 (pl. 10). This he considered the catalogue to accompany the aluminium plates. For the cover of the book he copied the cover of Mallarmé's 1914 publication, and made a few alterations: he replaced Mallarmé's name with his own, the subtitle *Poëme* with *Image* and the publisher NRF with Galerie Wide White Space, Antwerpen and Galerie Michael Werner, Köln. The layout of the contents was the same as that of the aluminium plates with the black bands replacing the words. On the first few pages of the book he also included the words of the poem typed out as prose, he therefore extracted the words of the poem from their layout and by doing so drew attention to Mallarmé's arrangement. This emphasised the separation of verbal from visual.

In direct contrast with the solidity and opacity of the aluminium or white paper, Broodthaers also produced an edition of 90 copies on translucent paper (pl. 11). The lightness and semi-transparency of the paper meant that the following few pages could, to some extent, be seen simultaneously. Broodthaers also provided

---

[54]*Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé: Marcel Broodthaers à la Deblioudebliou/S*, Antwerp, Wide White Space Gallery, 2-20 December 1969. According to Anny De Decker, the director of the gallery, James Lee Byars, who exhibited there in the spring of 1969, used to call the gallery by its initials. Broodthaers was very friendly with Byars (who called him 'Baby Baudelaire') and repeated Byars' pronunciation to parody the popular use of abbreviations and to emphasise Mallarmé's fondness for the English language. See Anny De Decker, 'Le carton d'invitation', in David (ed.), p. 141.

[55]Visually, the black bands of varying length recall Man Ray's, Untitled Poem, 1924.

white cards, however, which would negate this effect and enable the reader/viewer to look at each page separately.

In Broodthaers' versions, Mallarmé's words are translated into pure image and the distinctive spatial arrangement of the poem is emphasised. It was this attention to space, giving it greater importance, which prompted Broodthaers to state that, 'Mallarmé is at the source of contemporary art...He unwittingly invented modern space'.[56] He later described Mallarmé as 'the founder of contemporary art'.[57] In his versions Broodthaers extended the poem to abstraction; he extracted or deleted the words to leave a purely visual arrangement of shapes.[58] This separation was again particularly apparent in *Exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé* in which alongside the editions was a tape recording of Broodthaers reading the poem. The visual format could therefore be looked at whilst the words could be heard - the two separated by medium.

In terms of 1969 contemporary art, Broodthaers clearly drew associations with Minimal art and its concern with the arrangement of forms within a given space. The black bands, in their purity and simplicity, are like geometric shapes, arranged within the confines of the plate or the page. The plates, of identical dimensions, resemble the serial units of Minimalism and machine-cut aluminium was much favoured at the time. Similarly, the books were mass-produced without evidence of the hand of the artist. Broodthaers had passed from making *livres d'artiste* to artist's books.

Parallels have also been drawn with the work of the Situationists. Alain Jouffroy who spoke to Broodthaers in 1969 described the above works as, 'A situationist type of deflection, which put the accent on the importance of visual forms,

---

[56]Part A, 1c of *L'exposition à la Galerie*: 'Mallarmé est à la source de l'art contemporain...Il invente inconsciemment l'espace moderne.'

[57]See the text to *Ma Collection. A Daniel Buren*. (1971), Broodthaers' entry in the catalogue to *Amsterdam, Paris, Düsseldorf*, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1972, p. 59: 'Le second volet de "Ma Collection" est orné d'un portrait du poète européen Stéphane Mallarmé en qui je vois le fondateur de l'art contemporain. "Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard."'

[58]The notion of deletion as homage is central to Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953). Rauschenberg asked de Kooning to give him a drawing which he then spent a month erasing. Although perceived as a way of dealing with the dominance of Abstract Expressionism or even an act of vandalism, Rauschenberg described it as 'Poetry'; see *The Works: Robert Rauschenberg*, BBC2, 15 November 1997.

rather than on the meaning of the poem'.[59] Note Jouffroy's use of the word 'détournement' meaning 'deflection' or 'diversion', reminding us of Broodthaers' 'détourné' in 'Art poétique'. A deflection or a shift of focus from the norm was a constant feature throughout Broodthaers' work. However, although Broodthaers was working contemporaneously with the Situationists, he had no particular contact with them.

Broodthaers later said that,

> As for the idea of establishing a direct relationship between literature and the visual arts I think I have done this by taking as subject Le Coup de Dés...of Mallarmé, a few years ago. And, perhaps, other works...[60]

He does not mention which other works. However, establishing such a relationship was important for Broodthaers perhaps because it reflected his own dual interests. Mallarmé's poem was evidently a good choice, as in *Un coup de dés* he had expanded the visual potential of poetry as far as he felt able to at the time without 'transgressing' too far from the then 'order of things'. Broodthaers, within the context of the visual arts, translated the lines of poetry into equivalent forms. These he then presented as arrangements on metal plates, but also on pages in the format of a book. The bridge between literature and the visual arts was therefore established and crossed many times within the sphere of these particular works.[61] Broodthaers proposed Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* as,

---

[59]Alain Jouffroy, 'Marcel Broodthaers Post Mortem', in *Marcel Broodthaers L'œuvre graphique essais*, Geneva, Centre Genevois de Gravure Contemporaine, 1991, p. 16: 'Détournement de type situationniste, qui mettait l'accent sur l'importance des formes visuelles, plutôt que sur le sens du poème.'

[60]Text from 1973, published in David (ed.), p. 13: 'Quant à l'idée d'établir un rapport direct entre littérature et arts plastiques je pense l'avoir fait en prenant comme sujet Le Coup de Dés...de Mallarmé, et cela il y a quelques années. Et, peut-être, d'autres travaux...' (omission dots in original)

[61]Many other artists have also made visual versions of Mallarmé's poem including Mitsou Ronat, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, réalisé par Tibor Papp, Paris, Change errant d'atelier, 1980, and Etienne Soubriau, *Les Dessins trans-conscients de Stéphane Mallarmé. A propos de la typographie de Un coup de dés*, Paris, Librarie Nizet, 1960; I am grateful to Professor Malcolm Bowie for this help.

> a treatise on art. The last in date, that of Leonardo da Vinci, has lost some of its consequences, since it accorded too much importance to the visual arts and, one senses today, to his masters (the Medicis?)[62]

The issue of patronage will be discussed further in Chapter 6 but as can be seen here the influence of the patron was clearly a concern for Broodthaers. The treatise he was probably referring to here was the *Paragone*, in which Leonardo spoke about the immediacy of images, and warned the poet that,

> your pen will be worn out before you can fully describe what the painter can demonstrate forthwith...and your tongue will be parched with thirst and your body overcome by sleep and hunger before you can describe with words what a painter is able to show you in an instant.[63]

In proposing *Un coup de dés* as a replacement treatise, Broodthaers seems to have been suggesting that it offered a fairer balance, according equal importance to poetry and the visual arts.

The relationship between Mallarmé's poetry in general (not only *Un coup de dés*) and Broodthaers' poetry and visual works was subtle and complex. Apart from a shared heightened awareness of the arrangement of words on the page, many Mallarmean themes and objects appear in Broodthaers' work, such as the castle, ship or shipwreck, clock, mirror, lamp, dice and the notion of chance.[64] Not only the title but also the contents of *Minuit* bear evidence of Broodthaers' ongoing homage to Mallarmé. However, thematic links alone do not indicate conceptual approaches in which there are less similarities. For whereas Mallarmé perceived poetry as a means of transcendence, Broodthaers tended to be concerned with the material world before him and in his visual works Broodthaers often seems to have presented the material objects or images to which Mallarmé alluded in words. Some examples are the

---

[62]Part A, 1d of *L'exposition à la Galerie*, trans. in Rorimer, in Buchloh (ed.), p. 111: 'un traité de l'art. Le dernier en date, celui de Léonard de Vinci a perdu de son importance, car il acordait aux Arts Plastiques une place trop grande et on le devine aujourd'hui, à ses maîtres (les Médicis?)'

[63]Leonardo, *Paragone*, p. 50, quoted in David W. Seaman, *Concrete Poetry in France*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, UMI Research Press, 1981, p. 4.

[64]For further discussion on thematic links between Broodthaers and Mallarmé see Jean-Christophe Royoux, 'Projet pour un Texte: The Cinematographic Model in the Work of Marcel Broodthaers', in *Cinéma*, pp. 297-310.

objects in the *Section Cinéma* (which included a mirror, a mask and a clock) and the film and print edition *Chère petite sœur* (which are discussed in Chapter 5).

Their different approaches are revealed, for example, by the ways in which both Mallarmé and Broodthaers treated concepts of absence. For Mallarmé the present physical world was merely a banal reflection of the timeless, abstract, ideal world. For him the ideal is absent, it is elsewhere and the poem is a means to transcend this world and reach the ideal. Broodthaers' motivation was different; rather than transcend this world he engaged with it as it exists. His concepts of absence were embodied in material form in terms of the empty shell, the content of which was missing. These shells were real and tangible or visible and became a constant theme in his work. They existed as mussel and eggshells, empty pots and suitcases as well as empty packing crates. This attention to the shell was also exemplified by a focus upon the museum structures which surround contemporary art (discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.) Broodthaers' version of *Un coup de dés* fits into his attention to the structure of things, as by removing the words he emphasised the visual structure of the poem. The contents were absent, or, in the case of the book version, extracted and displayed elsewhere.

Mallarmé's writings had implications for 20th century linguistic theory. In 'Crisis in Poetry' from 'Variations on a Subject' (1894), he wrote that,

> The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet as speaker, yielding his initiative to words, which are mobilized by the shock of their difference; they light up with reciprocal reflections like a virtual stream of fireworks over jewels, restoring perceptible breath to the former lyric impulse, or the enthusiastic personal directing of the sentence.[65]

This passage is extremely potent. His 'disappearance of the poet' seems to foretell Barthes' 'death of the author', although Mallarmé stressed the autonomy of words rather than the role of the reader. As will become clear with discussion of his visual

---

[65]Mary Ann Caws (ed. & transl.), *Stéphane Mallarmé Selected Poetry and Prose*, New York, New Directions, 1982, p. 75; *Stéphane Mallarmé Œuvres complètes*, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1945, p. 366: 'L'œuvre pure implique la disparition élocutoire du poëte, qui cède l'initiative aux mots, par le heurt de leur inégalité mobilisés; ils s'allument de reflets réciproques comme une virtuelle traînée de feux sur des pierreries, remplaçant la respiration perceptible en l'ancien souffle lyrique ou la direction personnelle enthousiaste de la phrase.'

works, Broodthaers would have been particularly responsive to Mallarmé's concept of the relationship between words in terms of 'the shock of their difference' and as 'reciprocal reflections'.

La Clef de l'Horloge

A number of Broodthaers' works from throughout his life were, therefore, intended as bridges between poetry and the visual arts, and although Broodthaers' versions of *Un coup de dés* discussed above dated from 1969, his interest in the visual arts was clearly evident during the period while he was primarily a poet. A good example of this interest would be his first film, the seven minute long, black and white, *La Clef de l'Horloge (Un poème cinematographique en l'honneur de Kurt Schwitters)* (The Key to the Clock (A cinematographic poem in honour of Kurt Schwitters)) (1957) (pl. 12), the title alone indicative of Broodthaers' approach of combining different areas of activity.[66] The film was based around a Schwitters exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, and although Schwitters was only just becoming widely known, Broodthaers recognised the continuing relevance of his work.[67] Schwitters would prove to be a key figure for artists in the 60s, for Rauschenberg and for the *Nouveau Réalistes* in particular, for his collages of everyday discarded materials.

Broodthaers gained access to the exhibition after hours and made the film with the assistance of gallery technicians. Although the images are of works by Schwitters, it is not a documentary but a film about time, in which Schwitters' collages of found materials depict the passing of time. The tick-tock of a clock can be heard in the background on the soundtrack and a wheel turning on one of the works seems to represent the clock of the title. Broodthaers did not simply use film as a means of recording images but made the viewer aware of the medium itself by inverting positive and negative, and by moving both the camera and the subject. He played with cinematographic time by reversing both the images and the sound. As a

---

[66]For discussion of the film see Bruce Jenkins, 'Un Peu Tard: Citation in the Cinema of Marcel Broodthaers', in *Cinéma*, pp. 289-291 and Royoux, in *Cinéma*, pp. 299-301.
[67]*Kurt Schwitters*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 13 October-11 November 1956.

counterpoint to the images he added a love poem in the form of a dialogue between a man and a woman.[68] This narration began with the man giving a straightforward account of the works exhibited. However, it soon becomes more subjective and romantic. Broodthaers did not perceive Schwitters' materials as discarded junk, but found in them a lyricism akin to poetry. Through the camera he focused on details with the aid of a torch which he moved across the surfaces. Due to his method of making the film, the formal qualities of individual works or objects were downplayed for the benefit of this lyricism:

> And so, even when the composition was defended by a carefully drawn structure, I did not hesitate to isolate the objects, to transpose them to a context redolent of the mystery of attics.[69]

Although the film was first shown at a festival in 1958 titled *Filmexprmntlfilm*, Broodthaers rejected the term experimental which he felt implied that the medium of film has certain built-in limitations. For 'anti-film is still film, just as the anti-novel can never completely escape from the framework of books and writing; but my film widens the frame of an "ordinary" film'.[70]

Schwitters was also a poet, and Broodthaers responded to his use of numbers, words or fragments of words in the collages, with the camera paying particular attention to these elements. As materials in Dada artworks these numbers or words were freed from conventional significance. They were often fragments, found by chance, and generally did not have any particular meaning or value. An exception was the word 'merz'. As Broodthaers' narration on *La Clef de l'Horloge* informs the viewer, Schwitters was the inventor of 'merz' art, derived from part of the word 'commerz'. The word 'merz' appeared on one of the collages, torn from an

---

[68]See Broodthaers' entry in the catalogue to *Filmexprmntlfilm*, Brussels, 21-27 April 1958, facsimile in *Cinéma*, p. 23.

[69]'La Figure 0', first pub. in *Kurt Schwitters,* Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle; Berlin, Akademie der Künste; Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie; Basle, Kunsthalle, 1971, p. 15; also in *Cinéma.,* p. 25, trans. p. 315: 'Aussi, à partir de compositions même défendues par une structure soigneusement dessinée, je n'hesitai pas à isoler les objets, à les replacer dans un contexte évoquant le mystère des greniers.'

[70]'Interview de Marcel Broodthaers', Brussels, *Trépied*, no. 2 (February 1968), pp. 4-5: 'anti-film reste quand même film, comme l'anti-roman ne peut échapper complètement au cadre du livre et de l'écriture; mais mon film élargit le cadre d'un film "ordinaire."'

advertisement for the 'Commerz und Privatbank,' and it became a word in its own right for Schwitters, to represent the character of his work. 'Merz' was a word which he felt successfully combined the influence of commercialism in contemporary society with the disruptive and anti-conventional nature of Dada. Broodthaers, therefore, responded with great interest to Schwitters' collages which brought together words with images, real materials with lyricism, and commerce with poetry, a combination of qualities which characterised his own works. Broodthaers achieved a similar balance in *La Clef de l'Horloge*, which took as its starting point works in an exhibition, but which went beyond a documentary in taking elements of these works to construct a fiction.

Further Visual Interests: Photography and Art Criticism

During 1957 Broodthaers worked at the Palais des Beaux-Arts giving guided tours and presenting a programme of films entitled 'Exploration du monde', with which he then travelled to other Belgian towns. In 1959 he presented a second programme, 'Poésie cinéma', this time of films he had selected himself. The programme comprised short films and parts of films by contemporary filmmakers including documentaries and animation, as well as extracts from mainstream and documentary films which he called *Actualités reconsidérées* (Reconsidered News).[71] A similar collage or montage approach was evident in his own film, *Le chant de ma génération* (The Song of my Generation) (1959) (now lost), in which he combined Second World War newsreels with contemporary travelogues, in order to show, 'the trace that the war has left in the feelings of people today'.[72]

At the same time Broodthaers began taking documentary style photographs of current events. In 1957 he met the photographer Julien Coulommier who taught him how to take photographs and in a text entitled 'A propos de Julien Coulommier' Broodthaers discussed his ideas on the relationship between photography and

---

[71]'Poésie cinéma', Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, April 1959, in the Broodthaers archive, quoted in Bruce Jenkins, 'CB: Cinema Broodthaers', in Goldwater & Compton, p. 97.
[72]Text on *Le chant de ma génération*, 1959, published in *Cinéma.*, p. 29 & 315: 'la trace que la guerre a laissé sur la sensibilité de l'homme d'aujourd'hui.'

poetry.[73] In 1959, Broodthaers' poem *Le Jardin de la prison* (The Garden of the Prison) was published in *Edda*, accompanied by a photograph of the same title by Coulommier.[74] They also worked together on a larger project which was eventually realised in book-form in 1987 as *Statues de Bruxelles* (Statues of Brussels), with texts by Broodthaers and photographs by Coulommier from around the city.[75]

The World's Fair was held in Brussels in 1958, and the two also visited the building site together where Broodthaers worked for a week in order to write an article on the preparations. Coulommier recalled how Broodthaers was very taken by the 'poetic illusion' of a balloon-like pavilion.[76] Broodthaers' article, 'Un Autre Monde' (An Other World), was published in *Le Patriote illustré*, in which he wrote about the Atomium and how it functions as a symbol rather than an accurate representation of a molecular structure.[77] He associated the Atomium with stories of 'science fiction' (a term he described as 'a remarkable association of words!')[78] as well as those of Jules Verne and Grandville. He compared photographs of the Atomium, or 'l'"Objet"', with images from Verne's *De la Terre à la Lune* (1865), and Grandeville's *Un Autre Monde* (1844), from the latter of which he took the title for his own article.[79] He described Grandville's book (of which he had a first edition) as, 'a satirical phantasmagoria which one of these days will come back into being'.[80] Grandville was an artist of considerable importance for the Surrealists who saw affinities with their own work in the dream-like scenes he depicted. The illustrations in *Un Autre Monde* were among his most bizarre, depicting a fantastical world inhabited by anthropomorphic forms. His intentions in *Scènes de la vie privée et*

---

[73]'A propos de Julien Coulommier', 1957, extracts published in the press release for *Photographies de Julien Coulommier*, Brussels, Galerie Aujourd'hui, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 4-18 October 1958.
[74]'Le Jardin de la prison', Brussels, *Edda*, no. 2 (March 1959).
[75]Broodthaers & Julien Coulommier, *Statues de Bruxelles*, Brussels, Editions des Amis du Musée d'Ixelles, 1987, originally conceived in 1957.
[76]Coulommier quoted in David (ed.), p. 41.
[77]'Un Autre Monde', Brussels, *Le Patriote illustré*, vol. 74, no. 10 (9 March 1958), p. 389.
[78]Ibid.: 'Quelle singulière association de mots que Science-Fiction!'
[79]*De la Terre à la Lune* (1865) was published as part of a series of romantic tales of adventure collectively titled *Voyages Extraordinaires*, the first of which was *Cinq semaines en ballon* (1863). A film version of *De la Terre à la Lune* was made in 1958 (the year of the World's Fair and Broodthaers' article). Verne is perhaps best known for *Le Tour du Monde en quatre-vingt jours* (1873) which would undoubtedly have caught Broodthaers' interest in tales of travel by sea to distant lands (see Chapter 5).
[80]'Un Autre Monde': 'une fantasmagorie satirique qui l'un de ces jours reviendra à l'actualité'; J. J. Grandville, *Un Autre Monde*, Paris, H. Fournier & Cie, 1844.

publique des animaux (2 volumes, 1842 and 1844, also in Broodthaers' library) and in various newspapers and journal illustrations were more clearly political. A committed Republican, his own political opinions were well-known and during a period of press censorship he disguised leading public figures as animals in his satire of contemporary society. These caricatures can be seen as the visual and political equivalent of the moralising bestiary and Grandville was familiar with the genre having illustrated La Fontaine's *Fables* (Paris, 1838).

Broodthaers took Grandville's *Un Autre Monde* as the starting point for a 1960 film, which he eventually abandonned, and two slide series. In *Grandville & M.B.* (1966) half the slides were of caricatures and illustrations by Grandville, while the other half comprised slides of Broodthaers' own work from this period. The series no longer exists, with some of the slides possibly reused in *Caricatures-Grandville* (1968) (pl. 13), which included 100 slides of caricatures and illustrations by Grandville, Daumier and other 19th century artists. These ranged from the fantastical, to scenes from the French Revolution proclaiming 'Liberté'. The latter were nicely juxtaposed with slides of newspaper photographs of student demonstrations from May and June 1968.

In 1957 Broodthaers also made two trips in a hot air balloon which he recounted in 'Le ballon ce n'est pas fait pour se tuer!' (The balloon was not made for killing oneself!), an article illustrated by his own photographs published in the weekly, Brussels-based, Socialist journal *Germinal*.[81] He would refer to the journeys again some years later in relation to his experiences as an artist (see Chapter 3).

Between April and June 1961 Broodthaers wrote a series of articles titled 'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', in which he recounted his experiences and impressions of the city, including visits to some galleries (which will be discussed in Chapter 5). He then spent some time in Paris where he wrote articles on general cultural issues published in a French magazine, *Le Magazine du Temps*, and illustrated by his photographs. In January 1962 he gave a guided tour of the Rothko exhibition at the

---

[81]'Le ballon ce n'est pas fait pour se tuer!', *Germinal*, Brussels (29 September 1957), pp. 1 & 6. Perhaps Broodthaers hadVerne's tale *Cinq semaines en ballon* in mind.

Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. Rothko's work is not of obvious interest to Broodthaers and it seems that at this time he was simply looking at all contemporary art, although with a particular interest in developments and innovation in American art. He also began to write art criticism, including articles on the Dutch artist Livinus, inventor of 'photopainting...an art of light', the mural painter Fernando Lerin, and Magritte's and Delvaux's frescoes in the Palace of Congress.[82] In Paris he saw a George Segal exhibition at the Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, an experience he later described as, 'the point of departure, the shock that led me to go as far as to make my own works'.[83]

Another decisive event occured in early 1962 when he met Manzoni who had an exhibition at the Galerie Aujourd'hui, Brussels, and who on 23 February signed him as a *Scultura Vivente* (Living Sculpture). Manzoni gave him a certificate of authenticity which declared that, as from that date he was, 'to be considered as an authentic work of art for all intents and purposes'.[84] Meeting Manzoni at that time, two years before his own first exhibition, highlighted the differences for Broodthaers between the visual and written arts. He later recalled:

> We met as if we were actors. This meeting with Manzoni on 23.2.62, the date of the certificate which states I am a 'work of art', allowed me to appreciate the distance which separates the poem from a physical work which implies the space 'fine arts'. To put it another way, the value of the message with the notion of the message as merchandise alone identified with merchandise.[85]

---

[82]'A la Galerie d'Aujourd'hui. Un précurseur: LIVINUS', Brussels, *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, no. 959 (5 January 1962), p. 5, 'Le mur de Fernando Lerin', Brussels, *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, no. 974 (20 April 1962), p. 8, and 'Un tombeau', Brussels, *Architecture* (May-June 1963), p. 175.

[83]'A la Galerie d'Aujourd'hui. Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers', Brussels, *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, no. 1086 (1 April 1965), p. 5: 'ce fut le point de départ, le choc qui m'entraîna jusqu'à produire moi-même des œuvres.' Similar ideas were expressed at greater length in the interview with Marcel van Maele, 'Mosselen: op en top pop', *Kunst van Nu*, Amsterdam (December 1965), n.p.

[84]Piero Manzoni, *Declaration of Authenticity*, no. 71, 23 February 1962. The certificates resembled cheques drawn from a cheque book, each with an added red, burgundy, green or yellow stamp. As a work of art for life Broodthaers' had a red stamp whereas green limited the status to certain activities, yellow to certain parts of the body whilst burgundy stamps were for life but had to be bought. The exhibition was *Castellani, Manzoni,* Brussels, Galerie Aujourd'hui at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, from 17 February 1962.

[85]*Piero Manzoni*, Brussels, Galerie des Beaux-Arts, November-December 1987: 'Nous nous sommes rencontrés comme si nous étions des comédiens. Cette renconte avec Manzoni, le 23.2.62, date du certificat selon lequel je suis 'objet d'art', m'a permis d'apprécier la distance qui sépare le poème d'une œuvre matérielle mettant en cause l'espace (fine arts). Autrement dit, la valeur du message avec seulement la notion de marchandise du message identifié à la marchandise.'

Broodthaers felt that in the visual arts the idea and its visual manifestation are far closer to merchandise than in poetry in which there is a greater distance between the original penned manuscript and its eventual publication. In poetry the notion of the 'original' work does not have the same value as the original work of art. A recurrent preoccupation for Broodthaers (and throughout this thesis) was the differing status and reception of the works he produced as a poet and as an artist.

'Gare au défi!' - Early Interests in Pop

This very brief survey is simply meant to indicate Broodthaers' range of interests and activities at this time, some of which will be examined further in due course. Broodthaers discussed both the Segal and Manzoni exhibitions in 'Gare au défi! Le Pop Art, Jim Dine et l'influence de René Magritte' (Beware the challenge! Pop Art, Jim Dine and the influence of René Magritte), written on the occasion of a Dine exhibition at the Galerie Aujourd'hui, in which Broodthaers expressed his mixed feelings for Pop art at that time.[86] He displayed no particular art historical knowledge and wrote rather from the point of view of someone clearly intrigued by the work he had recently seen, posing many questions, as though trying to understand it. Throughout the article it is evident that he was very aware that these were American artists and he tried to relate their work to a European audience. He began by describing Segal's work as, 'Figurative art, perhaps, but so stripped down that it seems to fall into a special void'.[87] He observed how Segal's figures, engaged in their everyday activities, interacted with, 'real objects...products made in a factory, not in an artist's studio'.[88] This mixture of real and artificial both seemed to fascinate and confuse Broodthaers. On the one hand, by using real objects and casts, the works seemed to operate on the same level as found objects; in this sense he felt that they

---

[86]'Gare au Défi! Le Pop Art, Jim Dine et l'influence de René Magritte', *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 1029 (14 November 1963), p. 9, trans. in Buchloh (ed.) by Paul Schmidt, pp. 33-34. 'Gare au défi' is an untranslatable, Belgian idiomatic expression, translated variously as 'Beware the challenge' (Compton in Goldwater & Compton, p. 23) and 'Beware! Defiance!' (Schmidt in Buchloh (ed.), p. 33). Compton has suggested that this title refers to Louis Aragon's essay 'La peinture au défi'.
[87]Ibid., p. 33: 'Art figuratif, peut-être, mais de caractère si dépouillé qu'il semble tomber dans un vide spécial.'
[88]Ibid.: 'des objets réels. Ils ne sortent pas d'un atelier d'artiste mais d'une fabrique. '

negated imagination. On the other hand, he thought that the use of real objects can free the imagination. In either case, he felt that the viewer would relate interpretation of the work directly to himself: 'This is Narcissus triumphant. This is black humour, so black it blinds us. This is, in fact, a lot of things at once.'[89]

In 1965, Maria Gilissen, Broodthaers' wife, took his photograph with the critic Otto Hahn and one of Segal's 'crude casts' (pl. 14).[90] In the photograph, Broodthaers sat beside Hahn and held his arm; Hahn in turn held the arm of the plaster figure. By darkening the image of himself in the photograph, the focus of the viewer's attention falls on these three hands linked together. In this way, the critic may be said to imitate the work of the artist, but both critic and artist were in turn imitated by Broodthaers. The photograph visualises in a very consise way how Broodthaers set out to succeed in the art world through parody.

'Black or absurd humour' (l'humour noir et l'absurde) was also a quality of Manzoni's work which Broodthaers went on to discuss briefly in 'Gare au défi'. His humour was identifiable by,

> his tubes of perfume carefully displayed in glass cases, or his paintings made of pliable mineral wool. Manzoni is dead, I mean physically. He died young. Is there any connection between this premature death and his chosen artistic stance? The humour he employed is clearly no easy position. And if that was the cause, then we have some serious questions to ask of the art world - of the world in general.[91]

The questions Broodthaers raises are not easy to answer. While they initially appear ludicrous, they demand to be taken seriously and cannot easily be dismissed. By asking such questions in the way he did Broothaers seemed to be implying an affirmative answer, a situation strangely validated by his own death at a young age.

---

[89]Ibid.: 'Gare au défi', 'C'est la victoire de Narcisse. C'est d'un humour si noir que nous voilà aveuglés. C'est, en effet, beaucoup de choses.'

[90]Ibid.: 'vulgaires moulages.' The photograph of Broodthaers and Otto Hahn sitting beside a cast by Segal (1964), was taken by Maria Gilissen and altered by Broodthaers. It was published in *Phantomas*, Brussels, nos. 51-61 (December 1965), p. 302.

[91]Ibid.: 'ses tubes de parfum soigneusement disposés sous vitrines et ses tableaux composés de facile laine de verre. Manzoni est mort, physiquement mort. Il était jeune. Y a-t-il un rapport entre cette mort précoce et l'attitude qu'il avait adoptée sur le plan artistique? Il est certain que l'humour dont il se réclamait n'est pas une position confortable. Et si cela est la cause, profonde sera notre interrogation devant les événements artistiques, devant tous les événements.'

If, therefore, Manzoni (and Broodthaers) died young because of the use of humour, it seems to imply that 'the art world' and 'the world in gneral' do not favour this particular 'artistic stance' - 'no easy position' to take. The implications of Broodthaers' questions are ultimately open-ended. However, he raised them just prior to launching his own artistic career in which he clearly felt there would be some considerable dangers to overocme.

Broodthaers had found Segal's figures threatening, and claimed that Manzoni and Arman would also, 'certainly be listed in the book of terrors of the twentieth century'.[92] He went on to describe some of Dine's work. Like Segal's they combined real objects with artifice:

> One is a painting of a bowler hat, and (stroke of genius!) on the shelf is a real bowler hat. Only not quite, because it is covered with a layer of paint (black), and it seems to have stuck. Casual, burlesque, American features that evoke film comedy. His means are rather sparse, elementary, but still pictorial.[93]

Broodthaers' ironic tone seems to indicate that, although there were features of it he enjoyed, he did not take the work of the Pop artists entirely seriously. The American identity of Segal and Dine seemed important and he used this as a means of explaining their work.

His feelings towards the work he had seen were, therefore, mixed and he went on to give his general impression of Pop art, associating it with American film comedy:

> There is a name for these Americans who fly in the face of harmony and good taste. Pop art, it's called...Pop art originates in pamphlets, in provocation, in poetry. It hurls a curse, and calls down insult and contempt upon itself in return.[94]

---

[92]Ibid., p. 34: 'Bien sûr, Manzoni sera dans le livre terrible du XXe siècle. Et le français Arman...'
[93]Ibid.: 'L'un d'eux représente un chapeau melon et, ô génie, sur la tablette un véritable melon, un chapeau. Pas tout à fait cependant, il est recouvert d'une couche de couleur (noire) et ça parait coller. Burlesque et détendue, voilà une physionomie américaine qui n'est pas sans rappeler le cinéma comique. Moyens plus que sobres, moyens élémentaires mais encore picturaux.'
[94]Ibid.: 'Une étiquette recouvre les artistes américans partisans du défi à l'harmonie et au bon goût. C'est 'Pop Art'...Le Pop relève du pamphet ou de la provocation ou de la poésie. Il lance la malédiction et sur sa tête appelle l'injure et le mépris.'

His point of view was based upon the notion at that time that Pop - originally known as neo-Dada - related to Dada and had a similar provocative nature. Broodthaers associated Pop with Magritte, whose work he believed, 'certainly influenced and determined the course of this entire artistic movement now flourishing in New York'.[95] He went on to explain why:

> Magritte denies the aesthetic nature of painting (which does not prevent him, almost in spite of himself, from creating some beautiful paintings)...Still faithful to his initial purpose, he continues to elaborate a poetic language aimed at undermining that upon which we depend. Jim Dine's life-size bowler hat is, I imagine, intended as a salute to Magritte.[96]

Broodthaers felt that by making works which reflected everyday activities and commodities, the Pop artists sought to deny aesthetic qualities. He saw parallels between Pop and Magritte's work, in terms of the relationship between the object and the image. Dine's bowler hat piece is a particularly good example, as are many works by Warhol, which Broodthaers alludes to indirectly. He concluded 'Gare au défi' by suggesting that it was not worth taking the works so seriously as to merit analysis:

> Does all this need an explanation? Is there any other explanation than the context of a world devoted to advertisements, overproduction, and horoscopes?[97]

Although he had appeared to enjoy or was intrigued by some of the works he had seen, the article concluded on rather a pessimistic note. In a 1965 interview, however, he explained that he had initially misunderstood Pop: 'I had confused Pop Art with American Juke box. Later I was to have another look and I accepted it.'[98]

---

[95]Ibid.: 'cetainment influencer et déterminer tout ce courant de l'art qui fleurit à New York.'
[96]Ibid.: 'Magritte nie le caractère esthétique de la peinture. (Ce qui n'empêche qu'en dépit de lui-même, il a réussi quelques beaux tableaux.)...Fidèle à ses parti-pris initiaux, il continue à élaborer un langage poétique destiné à saper celui dont nous vivons. Le chapeau melon de Jim Dine gradeur nature est, j'imagine, destiné à le saluer.'
[97]Ibid.: 'Faut-il une explication? Y en a-t-il une autre que le contexte des mondes voués à l'actualité publicitaire, à la surproduction et aux horoscopes.'
[98]Jean-Michel Vlaeminckx, 'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers', *Degré Zero*, Brussels, no. 1 (1965) n.p.: 'J'avais confondu Pop Art et Juke box américain. Après, j'ai été revoir et j'ai accepté.'

I shall return to Broodthaers' response to Pop and the relationship between Magritte and Pop in Chapter 3 with a discussion of Broodthaers' early objects in relation to Pop and *Nouveau Réalisme*. I shall conclude this chapter by looking at some key early works made just prior to and around the time of Broodthaers' debut exhibition.

The First Objects and *Pense-Bête*

On 31 January 1964 Broodthaers submitted four works for the 'Prix de la Jeune Sculpture Belge' (Young Belgian Sculpture Prize). These included *Briques* (Bricks) (1963) (pl. 15), brick-shaped sponges with a trowel piled up on a shelf-like structure, and *Monument Public No. 4* (Public Monument No. 4) (1963) (pl. 16). He received a distinction for the latter, which was subsequently shown in the prizewinners' exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts.[99] The basis of the monument was a box which, acording to the advertisement printed on it, contained a 'U.S. Astronaut Space Helmet'. There was a shelf on top of the box, on top of which stood a tall stack of egg cartons, half unwrapped, with some of the cartons placed on the shelf beside. Plaster seeped out from between the layers of cartons. On the top of the tall stack was a plastic ball, and also on the shelf was a tin can. As a monument it was neither grand nor impressive. However, the use of materials such as plaster, plastic and especially the box advertising a space helmet, inscribed it very much within its time. Bearing in mind his interest in the World's Fair as well as Verne's (Grandville's and Poe's) adventure stories, Broodthaers was clearly fascinated by new technology, bizarre inventions and the idea of travel to other worlds and planets. His concept of the 'conquest of space' and the linguistic implciations of this term will be discussed in Chapter 5.

In April 1964 Broodthaers had his first one-man exhibition at the Galerie Saint-Laurent in Brussels and his career as an artist was launched. Included in the exhibition was *Pense-Bête* (1964) (pl. 17), which is often seen to symbolise

---

[99]*Lauréats du Prix Jeune Sculpture Belge*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1-12 February 1964.

Broodthaers' move from poet to artist. In this work Broodthaers set in plaster the fifty remaining unsold copies of his last edition of poetry, still half in their wrapping paper. He later explained the significance of this act for him:

> With the transition towards the visual arts I wanted to turn my back on poetry...Symbolically I wanted to free poetry from its ivory tower and therefore I threw it into the wet plaster to make a kind of sculpture out of it.[100]

In contrast with the crisp appearance of the books, the base is rather messy with the plaster apparently built up quickly by hand over a ball made of plastic, a material redolent of Pop culture. The books could still be lifted off the base and read but by doing so the integrity of the work as sculpture would be destroyed. In fact, Broodthaers was somewhat disappointed to discover that most people were more interested in looking at the books as part of the sculpture than in trying to read the poems:

> I was surprised to find that viewers reacted quite differently from what I had imagined. Everyone so far, no matter who, perceived the object either as an artistic expression or as a curiosity. "Look! Books in plaster!" No one had any curiosity about the text; nobody had any idea whether this was the final burial of prose or poetry, of sadness or pleasure. No one was affected by the prohibition.[101]

Broodthaers' position towards the work appears strangely irresolute: he had transformed the books into an artwork, yet wanted people to read them. His success with the edition as poetry, however, seems to be indicated by the fact that a number of copies remained unsold. The books aroused greater interest as part of the artwork than as poetry.

---

[100]Ludo Bekkers, 'Gesprek met Marcel Broodthaers', *Museumjournaal*, Amsterdam, vol. XV, no. 4 (15 February 1970), pp. 66-71, extracts from an interview in French, 13 December 1969, p. 67: 'Met de overgang naar de beeldende kunst wilde ik precies de rug keren naar de poëzie...Ik heb simbolisch de poëzie uit haar ivoren toren willen halen en heb daarom de dichtbundel in het natte gips geworpen en er een soort sculptuur van gemaakt.'

[101]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Mais à ma surprise, la réaction de celui-ci fut tout autre que celle que j'imaginai. Quel qu'il fût, jusqu'à présent, il perçut l'objet ou comme une expression artistique ou comme une curiosité. "Tiens, des livres dans du plâtre!" Aucun n'eut la curiosité du texte, ignorant s'il s'agissait de l'enterrement d'une prose, d'une poésie, de tristesse ou de plaisir. Aucun ne s'est ému de l'interdit.' Broodthaers may have seen work based around books in *John Latham*, Brussels, Galerie Aujourd'hui, October 1964; see Van Lennep, p. 238.

The transformation of the books into visual objects in fact occurred in two stages. The first was earlier on and affected most of the edition, in which Broodthaers stuck squares of coloured paper randomly over areas of the pages, partially precluding the possibility of an easy reading of the poetry. The brightly coloured paper he used was the shiny kind that children often play with and so added a light, playful quality to the work. Visually the squares were simple, strong shapes of pure colour which contrasted with the bold font in which the poems were printed. They could be lifted and the poetry read, so the preclusion was temporary; Broodthaers did not prevent the poetry from being read but forced the reader to interact with the books to a greater extent than usual.

Pense-Bête, as well as meeting Manzoni, signalled to Broodthaers how his relationship with his audience would alter when he changed his public identity from that of poet to artist. As a poet he had often felt that his position was somewhat isolated. In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he later reflected upon how, 'Until that moment I had lived practically isolated from all communication, since I had a fictive audience. Suddenly I had a real audience.'[102] Louis Aragon and Jean Cocteau expressed similar views at greater length in the preamble to their *Conversations on the Dresden Gallery* (1956). As writers, they discussed how their practice differed from that of the artist. According to Cocteau,

> A writer produces a phantom, but a painter produces a work of flesh and blood...The toil and fatigue of work in the plastic arts cannot be compared with the solitary dramas of literature, of the art of writing.[103]

They reiterated the argument that painting does not need to be translated for the spectator, unlike poetry which is far more open to misinterpretation. Aragon believed that an 'international language' of painting was advantageous,

---

[102]Ibid.: 'Jusqu'à ce moment, je vivais pratiquement isolé du point de vue de la communication, mon public étant fictif. Soudain, il devint réel.'

[103]Louis Aragon & Jean Cocteau, *Conversations on the Dresden Gallery*, trans. Francis Scarfe, New York, Holmes & Meier, 1982, p. 15, orig. pub. as *Entretiens sur le Musée de Dresde*, Paris, Editions Cercle d'Art, 1957.

> because from the very first moment when a painter faces his canvas he is no longer alone, for behind him or in the back of his mind there are those absent spectators, who sooner or later are bound to become present.[104]

It is as part of the visual nature of painting that the painter automatically becomes a visible figure. Aragon and Cocteau's outlook on their own practice appeared somewhat pessimistic, for according to Cocteau, 'Writing involves a terrible solitude', whilst Aragon believed that, 'There are always far more people going to look at pictures than reading poems'.[105]

One should be careful neither to over nor understate the effect Broodthaers' relationship with the Belgian Surrealists would have on the visual work he produced. Although he knew and associated with them his poetry from that period cannot be described as Surrealist, and later on, in certain statements (which will be discussed), Broodthaers sought to establish a clear distance between his work and Surrealism. That many of his visual works were openly in response to works by Magritte should not be misread as a close relationship with Surrealism in general. In giving a chronology of the wide range of Broodthaers' interests and activities, I have wished to set out his ongoing visual interests and make clear that he cannot simply be defined as either poet or artist.

Although he would publicly declare his intention of becoming a successful artist, Broodthaers' formative years as a poet undoubtedly influenced his approach as I hope I have shown and shall continue to make clear throughout this thesis. In a 1974 interview he spoke about the importance of his activities as a poet and their subsequent perception by the public:

> My former activity is not recognised by the artistic public although it remains with me and also with a few of my friends. It's like a refusal of the public to recognise this aspect.[106]

---

[104]Ibid., p. 16.
[105]Ibid.
[106]'Marcel Broodthaers. Prix 'Robert Giron' 1974', *+-0*, Brussels, no. 5 (September 1974), pp. 4-6:

Perhaps 'the artistic public' found it easier to take him more seriously as a 'pure' artist. However, in a short article published in the catalogue to the 1967 exhibition *Marcel Broodt(h)aers / Court-circuit*, the Belgian *Nouveau Réaliste* critic Jean Dypréau asked: 'Who said that today poetry is everywhere except in poems? Marcel Broodthaers wrote poems, he remains a poet, but for him the poetic act has become principally a plastic act.'[107] Further on in the article he re-emphasised this point humorously: 'Let's be sure about it: Marcel Broodthaers will never give up being a poet. He'll always grumble about being a producer of artworks.'[108] Works such as *Pense-Bête* and *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* indicate the close ties with poetry in Broodthaers' visual works. In their transformation of written into visual, these works seem to symbolise a shift of focus rather than a total change of his own activity. Before going on to discuss his early objects it is necessary to examine in some detail why Broodthaers decided to become an artist.

'mon activité antérieure n'est pas perçue par le public artistique bien qu'elle persiste selon moi et selon tout de même quelqu'uns très rares de mes amis. Il y a là comme un refus du public de perçevoir cet aspect.'

[107]Jean Dypréau, 'Le Corbeau et le Renard', in *Marcel Broodt(h)aers / Court-circuit*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 13-25 April 1967, n.p.: 'Qui a dit qu'aujourd'hui la poésie est partout sauf dans les poèmes? Marcel Broodthaers a écrit des poèmes, il est resté poète, mais l'acte poètique est devenu pour lui principalement un acte plastique.'

[108]Ibid.: 'Soyons-en sûrs: Marcel Broodthaers ne renoncera jamais à être poète. Il renâclera toujours au fait d'être un producteur d'œuvres d'art.'

Chapter 2

Textual Evidence: Intention, Insincerity and Commerce

> The aim of art is commercial.
> My aim is equally commercial.
> The aim (the end) of criticism is also commercial.[1]

Blunt statements presented as acknowledged facts set out Broodthaers' perception of art, his own aim in making art, and the aim of art criticism which he also perceives as a commercial enterprise. This chapter examines as evidence a number of texts and open letters in which Broodthaers dealt with these issues; related artworks will also be discussed. I begin by looking at why he decided to become an artist and his perception of the role of the artist.

Broodthaers made a deliberate decision to begin working in the visual arts. Wanting to comment on contemporary art 'from within', he moved from writing articles on artists and exhibition reviews to making artworks himself. In a number of texts he discussed, often ironically, the motivation of the artist in general and his own personal decision to make art. He claimed, for example, that it was because he did not have enough money to buy works by others; often he emphasised his insincerity and indifference to make clear that he perceived these to be characteristic of contemporary art in the early 1960s, most notably Pop art. He examined the position of the artist in society and questioned whether or not art-making can be considered a job, thereby rejecting popular notions of art as an elevated activity.

---

[1]'A MTL ou à BCD', Brussels, February 1970, reprinted in *Belgische Kunst 1969-1977*, Ooidonk, 1978, p. 97: 'Le but de l'art est commercial./Mon but est également comercial./Le but (la fin) de la critique est tout aussi commercial.'

The late '60s saw the development of Conceptual art and attempts to make art which could not be absorbed within the established commercial system. Broodthaers too began to make works which related to these tendencies, most notably by establishing his own *Musée d'Art Moderne*, a set-up which also enabled him to play a joint role of producer and curator. Nevertheless, the way in which he presented certain aspects of his museum, in particular its opening and closing, indicate how he felt that commercial considerations remained dominant.

Broodthaers' blunt statements with which I opened the chapter are not entirely satisfying. They appear as statements but raise certain questions concerning the value of art, and how this value can be measured. In a number of works Broodthaers seems to offer possible systems, for example, art in relation to gold. The artist's signature as a value-denoting mechanism is also discussed, in authenticating something as art and as the work of an artist.

In many of the texts examined, Broodthaers' method of discussion, or his strategy, was one of establishing a position for himself in order subsequently to contradict it. To an extent he presented himself as opportunistic. However, he showed that his position as an artist was not static but existed as a response to the context in which he found himself. Although texts and works will be discussed in relation to Pop and Conceptual art in general, certain works by Warhol and Johns are especially pertinent. Similarities of approach will also involve references to Duchamp and Manzoni.

I am fully aware that Broodthaers' declared intention should not be interpreted as revealing the 'truth' of his work. He may often have said things he did not mean or failed to say what he did mean. However, the texts I discuss here were all carefully conceived and executed. They were not off the cuff remarks but form part of Broodthaers' entire output and I believe should carry the same significance as visual works and exhibitions.

'I, too...': Broodthaers Enters the Art World

Often quoted to mark his transition from poetry to the visual arts is the announcement Broodthaers made for his first one-man exhibition, held at the Galerie Saint-Laurent, Brussels, in 1964 (pl. 18). The statement in full reads as follows:

> I, too, wondered if I couldn't sell something and succeed in life. I had for quite a little while been good for nothing. I am forty years old... The idea of inventing something insincere finally crossed my mind and I set to work at once. At the end of three months I showed what I'd done to Ph. Edouard Toussaint, the owner of the Galerie Saint-Laurent. 'But this is art,' he said, 'and I will gladly show it all.' If I sell something he'll take thirty percent. These, it seems, are normal conditions; some galleries take seventy-five percent. What is it? In fact, only some objects![2]

In this faux-naïf statement, Broodthaers set out his position in terms of where he stood at present and how he intended his future to develop. It is worth examining in some detail because it concisely defined his approach and his thinking on the state of contemporary art.

Firstly, the assumption that by selling something he could consider (ironically) that he had succeeded in life indicates the basis upon which he believed contemporary art existed. In other words, to be able to consider oneself successful depended upon sales and the recognition of others rather than upon the quality of the work itself. Broodthaers alternated between the self-deprecating honesty of a forty year old who felt he was 'good for nothing', and outright cynical ambition. This combination is particularly acute in the sentence in which he stated that although 'the idea of inventing something insincere' had not, apparently, come quickly or naturally to him, once conceived he wasted no time in attempting to realise it.

A sense of timing structured the text. Broodthaers revealed that at the end of a remarkably short time he had made some things which, in the opinion of the gallery

---

[2]Announcement for *Moi aussi je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose...*, trans. in Goldwater & Compton, p. 4: 'Moi aussi, je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose et réussir dans la vie. Cela fait un moment déjà que je ne suis bon à rien. Je suis âgé de quarante ans... L'idée enfin d'inventer quelque chose d'insincère me traversa l'esprit et je me mis aussitôt au travail. Au bout de trois mois, je montrai ma production à Ph. Edouard Toussaint le propriétaire de la galerie Saint Laurent. Mais, c'est de l'Art, dit-il et j'exposerais volontiers tout ça. D'accord lui répondis-je. Si je vends quelque chose il prendra 30%. Ce sont, parait-il des conditions normales; certaines galeries prenant 75%. Ce que c'est? En fait, des objets. Marcel Broodthaers. Galerie St Laurent rue Duquesnoy Du 10 au 25 avril Vernissage vendredi de 6 à 8 heures.' Apollinaire considered publishing a collection of his calligrammes under the title *Et moi aussi je suis peintre*; see Robert Little, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, London, The Athlone Press, 1976, p. 40.

owner, were art. In other words, it was not difficult to make art, or at least, to make things which a gallery owner - the person who sells the goods - would consider art. Once this had been established, Broodthaers immediately returned to the theme of money, setting out the terms on which his work would be sold. A definition of art and the means of its sale were thereby inextricably linked.

His success now imminent, Broodthaers ended the statement by bringing the reader down to earth with a question and answer to break all illusions: 'What is it? In fact, only some objects!' On the one hand he had managed to fool the gallery owner into perceiving his mere objects as art. Yet on the other hand, what is art? It is, literally, objects. This ironic and circular statement set the tone for Broodthaers' questioning and self-reflective approach to art.

The statement is visually very strong. The text is printed in bold type over pre-existing adverts, so whereas the text is always the same, the image varies upon which it is printed. Although one can still see the images, they are entirely dominated by Broodthaers' text. He thereby replaced adverts for commercial products with his own self-proclamation and self-promotion.

Broodthaers' explicit insincerity is striking. This is firstly because it is unusual to admit insincerity. Secondly, a person normally becomes an artist due to a genuine desire or need for self-expression and not for cold, objective reasons. It is unexpected for an artist to be motivated by the prospect of financial gain, not least because making art is not an activity in which this is generally guaranteed. Broodthaers, however, (with irony) seemed to believe otherwise, and his initial experience with the gallery owner's approval of his work confirmed his beliefs. By making works easily, purely for the purpose of making money, it seems that Broodthaers, in his newly proclaimed role, had no driving need for self-expression. The works he made could be seen as empty of genuine, individual, content or meaning, as they were an imitation of whatever was successful at the time so that he may also succeed.

Throughout this chapter it is worth bearing this first statement in mind as the basis upon which Broodthaers decided to begin working as an artist - to become successful and make money. However, his insincerity should not always be taken at face value. In an article from the end of 1965 published in *Phantomas*, 'Comme du beurre dans un sandwich' (Like butter in a sandwich), Broodthaers discussed why he had decided to change. Again his reasons were not those one would generally expect, although his tone was characteristically ironic. He began by explaining that he used to go to exhibitions not to look at art but to meditate:

> I could have gone elsewhere but I needed this excuse. At the end of ten years in this comfortable situation, I finally transformed myself into an amateur. I enjoyed my bad faith.[3]

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre discusses both irony and bad faith as 'attitudes of negation':

> In irony a man annihilates what he posits within one and the same act; he leads us to believe in order not to be believed; he affirms to deny and denies to affirm; he creates a positive object but it has no being other than its nothingness.[4]

Sartre considers bad faith an attitude of negation towards the self, in which 'consciousness instead of directing its negation outside turns it towards itself'.[5] He went on to say that 'the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing falsehood'.[6] There is always, inevitably, an element of self-deception in bad faith.

Broodthaers, in stating that he 'enjoyed' his 'bad faith', indicated that he had been pleased to deceive himself as to why he visited exhibitions. He had not been prepared to admit to himself his interest in art - the 'displeasing truth' - and preferred the self-deceit that he visited exhibitions to help himself meditate. Likewise, his

---

[3]'Comme du beurre dans un sandwich', *Phantomas* (51-66 December 1965), pp. 295-296: 'J'auraus pu aller ailleurs, mais il me fallait ce prétexte. Au bout d'une dizaine d'années dans cette situation confortable, je me transformais en amateur, enfin. Je jouissais de ma mauvais foi.'
[4]Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), London, Routledge, 1996, p. 47.
[5]Ibid.
[6]Ibid.

insincerity was also in bad faith, preferring to make insincere objects than admit a genuine desire to make art.

'Comme du beurre...' continued by explaining that from the somewhat uncritical stance of 'art lover', Broodthaers developed an increasingly intense desire to play a more active role and begin a collection of his own: 'This desire became more and more intense. It became a real pain. Fortunately'.[7] The overwhelming nature of his desire recalls the 'dangerous passion', the 'obsession' he had spoken about in 'Ars Poetica' (1963). He went on to explain that,

> Since I could not build a collection of my own due to the lack of even the minimum of financial means, I had to find another way of dealing with this bad faith from which I drew so many strong emotions. I would therefore become a creator, I told myself. Creator rather than artist suited this definition better for it implied a marvellous indifference.[8]

Again, Broodthaers wished to deceive himself as to his genuine interest in making art. He presented a series of personae, in seemingly logical succession, each of which he could adopt due to his 'bad faith' or 'indifference'. However, firstly as an art lover, then as a collector, and finally as a creator, he was gradually able to operate closer to the level of production. Whilst maintaining an air of indifference, he became a producer rather than consumer.

Roland Barthes underwent a similar shift of identity which he explained in the essay 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure...':

> I put myself in the position of the subject who *makes* something, and no longer of the subject who speaks *about* something: I am not studying a product, I assume a production.[9]

Barthes, however, adopted the role of 'amateur', that is, a person who produces something purely for the love of it, rather than for financial or other strategic gain.

---

[7]'Comme du beurre dans un sandwich': 'Ce désir ne fit que croire. Il devint laninant. Heureusement.'
[8]'Ibid. 'Comme je ne pouvais édifier de collection faute d'un minimum de moyens financiers, il ne me restait plus qu'à traiter autrement de cette mauvais foi où je puisais tant d'émotions fortes. Je serais donc, créateur, me dis-je. Créateur, plutôt qu'artiste, ce titre convient mieux pour la définition car il inclut cette merveilleuse indifférence.'
[9]Roland Barthes, 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure...' (the title is not translated), Lecture given at the Collège de France, 1978, trans. Richard Howard in *The Rustle of Language*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989, p. 289.

Identifying himself in this way was just one method by which he attempted to breakdown hierarchies in the arts.[10] Broodthaers, meanwhile, became a producer in order to make money and succeed. At the same time he would also write about art, thereby assuming both positions of 'production' and of 'studying a product'.

In both texts discussed here, Broodthaers' choice of language was powerful and emotive. In the first he spoke about selling, succeeding and inventing something insincere, in the second, bad faith, an intense desire which becomes painful, strong emotions and a marvellous indifference, to draw upon just a few of the terms he used. Both texts were written in a succinct, punchy style, in which each word plays a part in building up the overall effect. Interestingly, both were written in the past tense, which, with the ironic tone, adds to a sense of distance between Broodthaers and the feelings he describes. He seems to speak objectively, looking back on his insincerity and bad faith uncritically.

Through bad faith he presents his decision to become an artist as though by default - as a means of making money and becoming successful and/or because he did not have enough money to build up his own collection; both reasons were determined/motivated by financial circumstances.

Broodthaers the Collector

It is worth examining briefly Broodthaers' desire of becoming a collector. Largely unfulfilled, the desire manifested itself in various ways.

Broodthaers had always been involved with a number of activities or played a variety of roles. During the late 1940s he ran a secondhand bookshop the contents of which reflected his own interests. In the mid-1970s, when he had more money, he would collect similar books of his own. These included first editions, poetry, literature, social and natural history as well as some typically 19th century tales of curious characters and ideas.[11] He also collected fine illustrated books from which he

---

[10]For more on the 'amateur' producer see Peter Suchin, 'The Destruction of Art as an Institiution: the Role of the Amateur', *Variant*, no. 5 (Summer/Autumn 1988), pp. 51-54, and 'Imperative Pleasures', 'Round Midnight 5' (supplement distributed with *Artists Newsletter*), (April 1997), n.p.

[11]The collection is now owned by Maria Gilissen, Brussels.

made series of slides for projection. Michael Compton has suggested that the reason why Broodthaers ran the bookshop was to enjoy the illusion of having a collection at a time when he could not afford to have his own.[12] In a 1973 text for a group exhibition catalogue Broodthaers offered a 'General theory of art and of the collection'.[13] In the first part, 'figure M.', he spoke about his own work exhibited on this occasion (*Série de neuf tableaux en langue allemande, Die Welt*). The exhibition was of works from the Jost Herbig collection and in 'figure B.' Broodthaers stated:

> If I was a collector...
> I would meticulously collect the works of Baumgarten and of Bernhard and Hilla Becher and also of Niele Toroni of which the variety never ceases to surprise me.[14]

'Meticulously' because of the meticulous nature of their work, which (according to Maria Gilissen) Broodthaers did like, so perhaps he was not even ironic when he spoke about the 'variety' of Toroni's work. Although since 1967 Toroni has covered flat surfaces with small squares of paint, applied by a no. 50 brush, at 30 cm intervals, an impressive range of visual qualities is possible within these narrow parameters. Toroni's aim is to deny, as far as possible, discussion about his work: '*...my work/painting cannot, must not be of more or less interest depending on what I could say to you or what others might say to you about it*. It's painting and that's all'.[15]

Broodthaers did buy one painting which he referred to as *Un tableau représentant le retour d'un bateau de pêche* and made a number of works based upon it (which will be discussed in Chapter 5). He found it in an antique shop in a touristy part of Paris, and pointed out that although it was unsigned, he paid quite a high price for it. Painted by an amateur in the 19th century, as a result of Broodthaers' works it

---

[12]See Compton, p. 18. Baudrillard has discussed the activity of collecting as a form of possessing, for when a functional object is placed in a collection it loses the use for which it was designed and becomes simply an object, possessed by the collector; see, Jean Baudrillard, 'The System of Collecting', in *The Cultures of Collecting*, John Elsner & Roger Cardinal (eds.), London, Reaktion, 1994, pp. 7-24.

[13]Broodthaers' catalogue entry to *Bilder-Objekte-Filme-Konzepte*, Munich, Städtische Galerie in Lenbachhaus, 3 April-13 May 1973: 'Théorie générale de l'art et de la collection.'

[14]Ibid.: 'figure B. Si j'étais collectionneur...je collectionnerais soigneusement les œuvres de Baumgarten et celles de Bernhard et Hilla Becher et encore celles de Niele Toroni dont la diversité ne cesse de me surprendre.' (omission dots in original)

[15]Niele Toroni, statement in *Contemporary Artists*, Joann Cerrito (ed.), Detroit, St James Press, 1996, p. 1171.

is now in the Crex Collection in Schaffhausen, a destination it would never have reached on its own merits alone.[16] Broodthaers also bought a small object made by a contemporary Belgian artist, Philippe Denis, from a Brussels gallery in around 1970. *Sans titre (gateau anniversaire tissu vichy)* (Untitled (gingham birthday cake)) is a very simple, small, round cake made of red and white gingham. Stick-shaped sweets stand on the top like candles.[17]

What could be called a collector instinct appeared frequently in various other forms throughout Broodthaers' life. Most obviously he developed the role of collector/curator/creator in the establishment of his own museum from 1968-72. He presented himself as collector of his own work in the *Décors* from 1974-76, but also earlier in *Ma Collection* (My Collection) (1971) (pl. 19), first exhibited by the Wide White Space in 1971 at the Cologne Art Fair - as Broodthaers wrote on the back of one of the boards '...à l'occasion d'une foire sans importance...'[18]

Ma Collection is a retrospective work, a visual *résumé* of Broodthaers' career as an artist and evidence of his success to that date. His stated intention in 'Comme du beurre...' now realised, Broodthaers' collection consists of his own work. A collage work, it is composed of two panels. The left-hand panel is partly covered with small photographs of catalogue covers of Broodthaers' previous exhibitions. Each photograph is labelled with a figure number from 'fig. 1' to 'fig. 24'. Beneath the photographs is a page from the Cologne Art Fair catalogue in which the photographs are reproduced; virtually the same images are thereby repeated. Also collaged is an advert from the German magazine *Der Spiegel* in which a man, Broodthaers, wears a *van Laack* luxury shirt and smokes a cigar. He looks suave and sophisticated as one would expect in such an advert. The caption beneath the photograph enlightens us that, 'The Director of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, refused to wear the van Laack monocle'.[19] On this copy of the advert Broodthaers wrote: 'What

---

[16]*Marcel Broodthaers, Slide Projections*, Eindhoven, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 13 September 1992-4 July 1993, p. 93.
[17]It is in the Broodthaers Archive, Brussels.
[18]David (ed.), p. 161 (omission dots in original).
[19]Advertisment for van Laack shirts, in *Der Spiegel*, Hamburg (22 March 1971), p. 166: 'Der Directeur du Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, weigerte sich, das van Laack Monokel zu tragen.'

should we think about the relations which link art, advertising and commerce? M.B. (the director)'[20] By displaying the advert alongside catalogues Broodthaers seems to be suggesting that these relations are rather close, and that advertising, whether in the form of catalogue covers or for a *van Laack* shirt, determines the way in which art/the artist is presented.

The right-hand panel is visually far simpler - a portrait photograph of Mallarmé labelled 'fig. 0' in very large stencilled letters. In a statement published in the catalogue to *Amsterdam, Paris, Düsseldorf*, where the work was exhibited, Broodthaers described Mallarmé as 'the founder of modern art'.[21] The 'fig. 0' label, rarely used by Broodthaers, suggests that he was also the original point of reference for Broodthaers' own work.[22]

He concluded by stating that he was 'particularly interested in the structures of repetition'.[23] Broodthaers' collection is composed largely of reproductions of the covers of catalogue to exhibitions including his work, and reproductions of these reproductions. The catalogue in which *Ma Collection* appeared would in turn be used as a component part of a future work. The process of reproduction extends endlessly, extending further and further away from the original works. Broodthaers dedicated the statement, somewhat amusingly, to his friend and contemporary Daniel Buren whose own work is intentionally repetitive - the 8.7 cm stripe he has always worked with since 1966 (and whose work had recently been excluded from an exhibition at the Guggenheim, discussed further in Chapter 6).

A slightly earlier collection or 'archival' work also from 1971 was *Rhétorique* (Rhetoric) (pl. 20) the very title of which implies insincerity and empty gestures. Originally intended as a *catalogue raisonné* of the *Section Cinéma*, *Rhétorique* was a photo-collage of six black rectangles with black and white photographs of elements of the *Section Cinéma* (a pipe, a clock, a mask, etc.). However, due to 'the interference

---

[20]Ibid: 'Que faut-il penser des rapports qui lient l'art, la publicité et le commerce? M.B. (le directeur).'
[21]'A Daniel Buren', in *Amsterdam, Paris, Düsseldorf*, p. 59: 'le fondateur de l'art contemporain.'
[22]For a complex discussion of the labelling used in *Ma Collection* see Royoux, in *Cinéma.*, p. 301.
[23]'A Daniel Buren', in *Amsterdam, Paris, Düsseldorf*, p. 59: 'Particulièrement intéressé par les structures de répétitions, je devais de rappeler le travail de Buren en lui dédicaçant le texte de ce statement.'

of an uncalled for editor', Broodthaers abandonned the project and encased the work he had made so far in a vitrine.[24] *Rhétorique* thereby became another transformed book-into-object in a comparable vein to *Pense-Bête*. But whereas in *Pense-Bête* a book of poetry can still be extracted from the object and read, in *Rhétorique* the vitrine is sealed and only the top pages can be seen; the pages are 'detached from the object' and raised to the level of artwork.[25] Both *Rhétoric* and *Ma Collection* anticipate the full scale archive-as-artwork of the *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles Section Publicité* (1972) and the retrospective nature of the *Décors*. Broodthaers relocates secondary material - catalogues and publications - to a position of primary importance in order to emphasise the structure of the contemporary artist's activity.

Broodthaers' collections of reproductions of his own work may be compared with Duchamp's portable museum, his *Boîte-en-valise* (Box in a valise) (1936-41) (pl. 21), each of which contained miniature versions 'of approximately all the things I produced'.[26] These boxes may be considered the artist's equivalent of the travelling salesman's box of goods, a convenient way of offering products for sale and thereby commenting on commercialism in art.

Duchamp's means of reproduction employed in the *Boîtes* were varied. His miniature versions of three-dimensional works may be seen as original works in their own right but also as small copies. The colour reproductions of two-dimensional works were made using a somewhat obsolete method of collotype printing with additional handcolouring. Notable is that Duchamp chose labour intensive methods to produce an extensive series of multiples (each of the 300 boxes contained 69 items). He thereby negated the definition of the multiple as cheap and easy to

---

[24]See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Contemplating Publicity: Marcel Broodthaers' Section Publicité', in *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Publicité,* New York, Marian Goodman Gallery, 6 October-25 November 1995, p. 93.
[25]The note reads 'Détaché de l'objet' - 'édition catalogue'; see Buchloh, in *Publicité*, p. 93.
[26]Marcel Duchamp in Ecke Bonk, *Marcel Duchamp: The Portable Museum: The Making of the Boîte-en-valise de ou par Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Selavy.*, trans. David Britt, London, Thames & Hudson, 1989, p. 20.

reproduce. This point is particularly interesting because some of the 'originals' (that is, large versions) of the works in the *Boîtes* were ready-mades and had involved the minimum physical labour on the part of the artist.

Unlike Duchamp, Broodthaers made his reproductions in *Ma Collection* using black and white photography - a relatively hands-off method. He chose not to reproduce artworks, but instead the covers of his catalogues, indicating that he considered exhibition paraphernalia, the contents of his collection, as more significant than the actual works exhibited. This paraphernalia has a more enduring existence than the exhibition as it forms the public's perception of the exhibition after the event; especially for those who have not actually attended it, perception is dictated by the way in which the exhibition is presented in the catalogue and in any other printed documentation. Broodthaers was aware of this and played upon it, as will be seen with the MTL catalogue in particular.

Broodthaers the Artist - Taking His Work Seriously

Broodthaers often reflected upon his relationship with his audience and was aware of his position as an artist. In a 1965 article, only a year after his launch, he expressed doubt about the direction his life had taken. With his usual irony, he wrote:

> Of course now I have a job, and I'd have a hard time escaping it. In my naiveté, I really believed I could postpone choosing a profession until my death. Into what trap have I fallen...? ...I fell into the hole...[27]

By defining his occupation as a job, Broodthaers wanted to destroy the popular perception of art as an activity of free self-expression or refined enjoyment as the term 'job' is neither inspiring nor elevated. It is very down-to-earth and reflects the sentiment of the concluding line from his 1964 statement, 'What is it? In fact, only some objects!' From these early texts, it is already evident that his method was one of defining his position and then contradicting it almost immediately; having set out to

---

[27]'Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers': 'Sans doute ai-je à present un emploi et j'aurai du mal à m'en défaire. Ce moment du choix d'une profession, j'ai bien cru, dans ma naïveté, pouvoir le reculer jusqu'à l'heure de ma mort. Dans quel piège suis-je tombé..? ..Je suis tombé dans le trou...'

succeed, he soon complained of feeling trapped. He continued: 'Yes, like all artists I'm now an integral part of society', thereby denying the common illusion of the artist as an outsider.[28] He ended by saying:

> Will I make other men fall into the trap? Who knows? I hope so.
> Having become a friend of society, I notice that its enemies are numerous, stupid and wicked.[29]

At this point it is pertinent to compare how Broodthaers perceived his newly-acquired status with Duchamp's and Breton's own self-assessments. Broodthaers presented making art as a job like any other. He took his job seriously, but complained about it, as one does. By contrast, in 1912, Duchamp had told himself, 'Marcel, no more painting, go get a job!'[30] Duchamp presented his art practice as a useless, frivilous way of spending time, and claimed that he should go and do something worthwhile.

Breton viewed the notion of work more philosophically, refusing regular employment even when he had financial problems. He did not believe that work had any value (and in this respect he differed fundamentally from the Communists):

> The event from which each of us is entitled to expect the revelation of his own life's meaning - that event which I may not yet have found, but on whose path I seek myself - *is not earned by work*.[31]

As an activity integral to the production economy of capitalist society, Breton did not consider work a means of coming closer to true reality. By contrast, he regarded play as a positive activity, for genuine pleasure rather than financial gain.[32]

---

[28]Ibid.: 'Oui, à présent, je fais partie intégrante de la société comme tous les artistes.'
[29]Ibid.: 'Ferai-je tomber d'autres hommes dans le piège? Qui sait? Je l'espère. Devenu ami de la société, je m'aperçois que ses ennemis sont nombreux, bêtes et méchants.'
[30]Thierry De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 15.
[31]André Breton, *Nadja* (1928), trans. Richard Howard, New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1960, p. 60: 'L'événement dont chacun est en droit d'attendre la révélation du sens de sa propre vie, cet événement que peut-être je n'ai pas encore trouvé mais sur la voie duquel je me cherche, *n'est pas au prix du travail*.'
[32]For a thorough and interesting discussion of the work ethic see Meltzer, *Hot Property*, 1994.

In 1970, however, Broodthaers made clear that he did not consider art a 'normal job' in the catalogue to his exhibition at the MTL Gallery, Brussels, in which he explored the working processes of the artist (the exhibition discussed in Chapter 1). In the catalogue he included two (apparently authentic although certainly written for the occasion) medical certificates and explained that he wanted these to be printed with a *résumé* of his biography because, 'The confrontation of the two certificates and the two exhibitions seems important to me'.[33] His written biography, compared with his visual *résumé* the following year in *Ma Collection*, is interesting in terms of what he chooses to say about himself at this point in his career as an artist. It reads as follows:

> Biography
> I am born on 28-1-24 in Brussels, Belgium, where I live and work. First cultural and public option in 1949. In 1958, I present a film on Kurt Schwitters, 7'-16mm at the festival of experimental film, at Knokke. My activity during this period is fragmentary and discontinued. It becomes regular in 1964.
> Beside the realisations in the galleries, since 1968 I am custodian of the Museum of Modern Art Department of the Eagles. In different forms it has been open to the public in Brussels, at own home, in Antwerp, at A30 70 89 and at the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf.[34]

In this brief and therefore highly-selective biography, Broodthaers did not mention the period he spent as a poet, perhaps because he decided this was irrelevant when presenting himself as an artist. His museum appears to have been of considerable importance to him because it comprised almost half the account.

The first medical certificate was printed as a facsimile of the original handwritten document in French, together with typed versions in French, Dutch and English:

> I, undersigned, doctor of medicine, certify that the actual health of Mr. Broodthaers Marcel does not require any special medical aid and that he can start taking a normal job again.
> Brussels, 15-1-70. Dr. A. Renard.[35]

---

[33]*L'exposition à la Galerie*, catalogue texts in French, Dutch and English.
[34]Ibid. According to Maria Gilissen, Broodthaers may have been mistaken with the dates he gave. His 'first cultural and public option' should probably be given as the publication of the poem *Projet pour un film* in 1948.
[35]Ibid.: 'Je soussigné Docteur en médecine certifie que l'état de santé de Monsieur Broodthaers Marcel

On the following page a second certificate appeared which was signed by Dr Jean Vermeylen. It read:

> I, undersigned, declare that Marcel Broodthaers' health makes it impossible for him to have any normal professional activity from 2-3-70 to 4-4-70.
> Bruxelles, 2 March 1970. Dr Jean Vermeylen.[36]

These dates virtually coincide with those of the MTL show, suggesting that when a person is unable 'to have any normal professional activity' he can produce a huge amount of artwork, as was the case in the MTL exhibition.

The first certificate was also published as part of Broodthaers' entry in the catalogue to the exhibition of Conceptual art *18 Paris IV 70*, which took place just after the MTL show closed.[37] The concept of this later show was to invite each selected artist to submit an exhibition proposal which, a couple of months later, could either be confirmed or modified. The first part of Broodthaers' catalogue entry described the theme of his initial project as his *Musée d'Art Moderne*. He suggested that his catalogue entry would comprise documentation of the museum. His contribution to the exhibition itself would be a film projected onto a screen which depicted a map of the world, and a letter which would either be a text or an image. The second part of his eventual catalogue entry was a letter to the curator of the show, in which he explained how he wanted to change his first project for the exhibition but that 'this will remain as a desire'.[38] There followed a facsimile of the above medical certificate from Dr Renard to explain why Broodthaers could not modify his project and would therefore withdraw from the exhibition. In other words, as the certificate stated that Broodthaers could take 'a normal job' again, working on an exhibition

---

ne nécessite pas de soins particuliers et qu'il peut reprendre normalement le travail. Bruxelles, le 15 janvier 1970. Dr A. Renard.'

[36]Ibid.: 'Je soussigné, certifie que l'état de santé Monsieur Marcel Broodthaers le met dans l'incapacité d'avoir une activité professionnelle normale du 2-3-70 au 4-4-70. Bruxelles, le 2 mars 1970. Dr Jean Vermeylen.'

[37]The group exhibition *18 Paris IV 70*, Paris, 66 rue Mouffetard, 18 April-May 1970, curated by Michel Claura and Seth Siegelaub. Twenty-one other artists participated including Weiner, Ryman, LeWitt, Kawara and Buren.

[38]Broodthaers in catalogue for *18 Paris IV 70*, pp. 54-59, in French, English and German.

project was not 'a normal job'. The fact that he chose to follow the certificate suggests that art-making was a temporary activity for him, during the time that he was unable to carry out 'a normal job'. As the exhibition was of Conceptual art, it seems that Broodthaers felt his catalogue entry alone woud be a suitable and justifiable contribution to make.

Broodthaers added two unnumbered pages to the MTL catalogue, including a 'Note sur les intentions' (Note on the intentions):

> Until now no critic wanted to use a medical certificate describing a good state of health and ability to work to justify an absence of work from the exhibition organised in Paris last April by Michel Claura and Seth Siegelaub entitled 18 Paris IV 70, much less connect this participation in a group event with my one-man exhibition at MTL in Brussels (of which this is the catalogue). The distinctive character of this exhibition was an abundance of works - see the adjoining letter - presented with a medical certificate describing in contrast to the first a bad state of health entailing the inability of normal work. This is why I believed it good to write this note leaving the reader to reflect on his opinion on art.[39]

In other words, the reader should consider whether making art is a 'normal job' or a 'normal professional activity'. Broodthaers' prolific output for the MTL show indicates that he did not consider it either.

The third addendum, inserted after the end of the exhibition, took the form of a letter from Broodthaers to the owner of the MTL gallery, in which he expressed his pleasure that the entire exhibition had been sold to a private collector in Brussels. He described how he himself had helped with 'the aim of promoting' the gallery owner's 'enterprise' by conducting 'a personal transaction' with the collector. He explained that he had sold a box to the 'client', which he pointed out was not only 'slated for the trash', but that even once it had been thrown out he had removed some manuscripts

---

[39]*L'exposition à la Galerie*: 'Jusqu'à présent aucun critique n'a voulu mettre en évidence le fait qu'un certificat médical décrivant un état de bonne santé et de capacité de travail a servi à justifier une absence d'œuvres dans l'exposition organisée à Paris par Michel Claura et Seth Siegelaub sous le titre 18 Paris IV 70, en avril dernier. Et encore moins de mettre en rapport cette participation à une manifestation de groupe avec mon exposition personnelle à MTL à Bruxelles (dont ce catalogue). La caractéristique de celle-ci était une abondance d'œuvres - voir lettre ci-jointe - présentée avec un certificat médical décrivant au contraire du premier un état de santé morbide entraînant l'incapacité d'un travail normal. C'est pourquoi j'ai cru bon d'écrire cette note en laissant au lecteur le soin d'y réfléchir selon son opinion sur l'art.'

and drawings from it. In other words, the box he sold had been rejected even after further contemplation. It was indisputably rubbish. Broodthaers went on to say that he hoped that this additional box would become part of 'the entire enterprise'. His choice of language based the relationship between artist, gallery owner and collector firmly upon financial affairs to the extent of exploiting the collector's desire to purchase apparently anything. He wanted to show how easy it was to fool the market.

On another occasion, Broodthaers tried to interest both genuine and opportunistic collectors. With a touching sense of (faux-)naivety, he explained how his works were not of great value. Having described one of his plastic plaques, *L'aile l'oie* (The Wing of the Goose) (made between 1968 and 1972), and considered his plaques in general (which in this text he referred to as 'paintings'), he added that,

> my 'paintings' are not worth much - not that they are not worth anything. But they are meant for people who prefer paintings to money; unless a change occurs and causes my prices to rise.[40]

From a position of modesty which might be appealing to the genuine artlover, he suddenly switched positions and concluded by trying to tempt the collector interested in buying art as an investment. He tried to exploit the nature of those collectors who are motivated by financial gain rather than genuine interest in the work.

Two years later, in 1972, Broodthaers had a second exhibition at the MTL Gallery (which had since moved to other premises in Brussels) entitled *Tractatus logico-catalogicus (ou l'art de vendre)* (Tractatus Logico-Catalogicus (or the art of selling)).[41] For this show Broodthaers reprinted the 1970 catalogue in a limited edition (only six copies were made), changing only the dates on the cover and leaving out the additional pages, which he explained, in a note, were not relevant to the new exhibition. In addition, he presented the print edition also entitled *Tractatus logico-catalogicus* composed of negatives of pages from the 1970 catalogue (pl. 22). The

---

[40] *Five Belgian Artists: Beekman, Broodthaers, Landuyt, Roquet, Van Hecke*, Brighton, Gardner Centre Gallery, 1971.
[41] *Tractatus Logico-Catalogicus (ou l'art de vendre)*, Brussels, Galerie MTL, 18 May-17 June 1972.

1972 show was therefore dependent upon that of 1970 in consisting solely of reproductions of the catalogue with only the most minor alterations. As in *Ma Collection*, Broodthaers indicated the importance he felt was given to the exhibition catalogue to the extent that a work or exhibition could consist almost solely of a catalogue or works based upon catalogues. He thereby reversed the usual logic in which the catalogue supports the exhibition rather than vice versa.

The title of both exhibition and print series obviously refer to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). Broodthaers would undoubtedly have been interested in Wittgenstein's treatise, much discussed at the time, on how the structures of language mirror those of reality, as well as his 'picture theory', in which pictorial forms correspond with groups of words in sentences. However, it is not clear how far Broodthaers' interest extended and Anne Rorimer has suggested that it did not reach beyond a general level. Instead, she argues, Broodthaers seems to have made his own witty version of Wittgenstein's title for pseudo-pretentious reasons, parodying the tendency of conceptual artists to make philosophical references to add *gravitas* to their own work.[42]

Taking a slightly different angle, however, Philippe Cuenat has argued that Broodthaers' use of the title of Wittgenstein's work is directly relevant.[43] The etymological root of the word 'tractatus' implies a handled or malleable material (from *tractare*, to handle). Broodthaers manipulated and re-formed both the catalogue and the original exhibition - the catalogue into a print, the first exhibition into a second revolving around the catalogue of the first. Form becomes dominant and reading the text is no longer of primary concern. To compose the print, Broodthaers laid out the pages of the catalogue as they would have appeared on the printer's plate prior to folding and cutting into the format of the catalogue. This means that half the pages appear upside-down. In addition the text is printed in white on black. All these factors mean that the words are less clearly legible and cannot be

---

[42]For further discussion of the exhibitions see Rorimer, in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 101-125, and of the print see Anne Rorimer, 'Le Tractatus Logico-Catalogicus', in Geneva, pp. 53-56.
[43]Philippe Cuenat, 'L'œuvre graphique dans le décor: l'entrée de l'exposition', in Geneva, p. 74.

read coherently; the text becomes an aesthetic form to be looked at rather than read, with denial of legibility a constant underlying theme in Broodthaers' work.

Broodthaers as Museum Director

So Broodthaers had a job - he had fallen into the trap. He had become an artist but really having wished to 'postpone choosing a profession' he continued to adopt other personae, including that of director of his own fictive museum - the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*. Although within the context of this museum he raised questions on many themes, such as the role of the institution, its nature and the context which defines contemporary art, it also enabled Broodthaers to play a joint role of producer and presenter. He also borrowed extensively from the collections of other museums. Furthermore, his museum questioned the relationship between art and commerce, particularly in the way it opened and closed. These events indicated the museum's underlying structure and will be examined here.[44]

Firstly, it is necessary to outline briefly how the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* originated. Broodthaers had participated in the occupation at the Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, in May 1968, the main institution of modern art in Belgium at that time. There, discussions were held on the role of institutions. Broodthaers was elected one of the four representatives of the Free Association (that is, the occupiers) who would enter into negotiations with the museum authorities. He participated in writing the manifesto which 'condemns the commercialisation of all forms of art considered as objects of consumption'.[45] Despite his active role,

---

[44]Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* has been discussed at length in a number of essays including Douglas Crimp, 'This is Not a Museum of Art', in *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993, Buchloh, 'The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers' and Rainer Borgemeister, '*Section des Figures*: The Eagle from Oligocene to the Present', in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 135-151.

[45]Manifesto, 30 May 1968, in Carel Blotkamp, Marjon van Caspel, Frans Haks, Frank van der Schoor, Jan van Toorn, Martin Visser (eds.), *Museum in motion? Het museum voor moderne kunst ter discussie. Museum in Beweging. The modern art museum at issue.*, 's-Gravenhage, Government Publishing Office, 1979, p. 248, trans. in Buchloh (ed.), p. 82: 'L'assemblée libre...condamne le système de commercialisation de toutes les formes d'art, considérées comme produits de consommation.'

Broodthaers left the occupation early. A sign of why he did so appears to have come in his first open letter, a form of communication he would frequently use.

In this letter he seems suspicious of the motivations of those who were at the occupation, as though they were looking to replace the authority of others with their own authority. He felt that 'culture' could easily be manipulated:

> A fundamental gesture has been made here that throws a vivid light on culture and on the ambitions of certain people who aspire to control it one way or another: what this means is that culture is an obedient material.
> What is culture? I write. I have taken the floor. I am a negotiator for an hour or two. I say I. I reassume my personal attitude. I fear anonymity. (I would like to control the *meaning/direction* of culture.)[46]

Broodthaers ended by saying:

> One more word for all those who have not participated in these days or who have scorned them: don't feel sold before you have been bought, or only just. My friends, with you I cry for ANDY WARHOL.[47]

In other words, those artists who complained of feeling abused by the system may simply have been asserting their own self-importance. Those who criticised the structures of power did so because they wanted to assume power themselves. They criticised the commercialisation of art, but for Broodthaers commerce is an inherent part of the existence of all art objects (a point which had become particularly clear to him when he compared his position as a poet with that of artist). The comment on Warhol refers to the fact that three days earlier he had been shot by Valerie Solanis. Icon of Pop art, Warhol epitomised all that those artists occuping the Palais opposed.

---

[46]Open Letter, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 7 June 1968, in *Museum in Motion*, p. 249, trans. in Goldwater & Compton, p. 42: 'Un geste fondamental, ici, a été fait qui jette une lumière vive sur la culture et les aspirations de quelques uns à son contrôle - de part et d'autre - ce qui veut dire que la culture est une matière obéissante./Qu'est-ce que la culture? J'écris. J'ai pris la parole. Je suis négociateur pour une heure ou deux. Je dis je. Je reprends mon attitude personelle. Je crains l'anonymat. (J'aimerais contrôler le *sens* de la culture.)'

[47]Open Letter, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 7 June 1968, trans. in Goldwater & Compton, p. 42: 'Un mot encore à tous ceux qui n'ont pas participé à ces journées ou qui les ont méprisées: il ne faut pas se sentir vendu avant d'avoir été acheté, ou à peine./Mes amis, avec vous je pleure pour ANDY WARHOL.'

Broodthaers frequently revised opinions which he had previously expressed with apparent conviction, suggesting that his position was one of opportunism. In a subsequent letter a few weeks later he remarked:

> In my letter of June 7, 1968, it should not read: "You don't have to feel that you sold out before having been bought." Rather, it should read: "You don't have to feel that you sold out after having been bought." This is only to content everybody's ass and everybody's father. My friends, who is Warhol? And Lamelas?[48]

Broodthaers looked for a way to continue the discussions which had begun in the Palais des Beaux-Arts. He decided to hold a meeting in his house, but realising that there would not be enough seats for everyone, contacted an art removals company and borrowed some packing crates: 'I thought it quite natural to have them sit on crates showing the very signs of packing which refer to art, crates used for packing paintings and sculptures.'[49] When he saw the crates in his house the idea for the first part of the museum was born. As he later remarked, 'This museum was born, not out of a concept but out of circumstances. The concept came later'.[50]

The *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle* (Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles, 19th Century Section) took place for exactly one year from 27th September 1968-69 (pl. 23).[51] At first the title appears to be a contradiction as there is never a 19th century section in a modern art museum, much less a department of eagles. However, onto the wall he stuck postcards of 19th century paintings by, for example, Ingres, Courbet and Puvis de Chavannes, and he projected a series of 50 slides of 19th century paintings, drawings and Magritte's *Le Domaine d'Arnheim* onto one of the crates.[52] He also stencilled slogans such as 'Handle With Care' and 'Keep Dry' onto the sides of all the packing crates. He

---

[48]Open Letter, Kassel, 27 June 1968; David Lamelas was a friend of Broodthaers, an artist and filmmaker: 'Ne lisez pas dans ma lettre du 7 juin 68: - Il ne faut pas se sentir vendu avant l'achat. - Mais, lisez: Il ne faut se sentir vendu après l'achat. - Ceci, afin de contenter l'âne et le père de chacun. Mes amis, qui est Warhol? Et Lamalas?'

[49]De Vree, pp. 12 & 33-34: 'Je trouvais naturel de les assesoir sur des caisses qui servent à emballer des tableaux, des sculptures.

[50]Ibid.: 'Le Musée était né, non pas à travers d'un concept, mais justement d'une circonstance. Le concept est venu après.'

[51]*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle*, Brussels, rue de la Pépinière, 27 September 1968-27 September 1969.

[52]This series has since become known as *Projections sur caisse* (1968); see *Projections*, p. 50.

painted 'Museum' on the window, 'Section 19ème siècle' on the door, and 'Département des Aigles' on the wall in the garden. A ladder leaned against one of the walls.

The *Section XIXème siècle* thus dealt with and presented many aspects of 'the artwork's institutional framing conditions'.[53] It could be described as a 'deconstructed' museum, bringing the structures of the museum to the fore; there were the crates to contain and transport artworks, the truck stationed outside the house to contain the crates, postcards, signs and an inaugural ceremony complete with speeches and a cold buffet (as announced on the invitation card). At the opening ceremony, speeches were given first by Broodthaers and then by Johannes Cladders, director of the new modern art museum in Mönchengladbach and who was very supportive of Broodthaers' work (pl. 24).

A description of the ceremony's events was given by Broodthaers in his open letter from Paris, dated 29 November 1968, under the subheading 'Politique'. He described how discussions were held on 'the fate of art' (le destin de l'art), with regard to the work of Grandville (slides were projected of his caricatures) and Ingres (who was represented on postcards and slides of postcards). Also under discussion was 'the relationship between institutional and poetic violence'.[54] Broodthaers, therefore, inscribed the show within a political framework by the above subheading, and by its origins in the occupation and discussions at the Palais des Beaux-Arts.

Broodthaers had signalled the inauguration of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* in the form of an open letter dated 7 September 1968.[55] The address on the letter was Ostend, which seems surprising since this fishing and tourism town is not usually associated with cultural events. The letter came from the 'Cabinet of Ministers of Culture' (Cabinet des Ministres de la Culture), and so conveyed an air of officialdom. By announcing the opening of a particular department, that is, the *Département des Aigles*, Broodthaers implied that this

---

[53]Crimp, 'This is not a museum of art', p. 209.
[54]Open Letter, Paris, 29 November 1968: 'le rapport entre la violence institutionalisée et la violence poétique.' See also commentary on the opening ceremony in David (ed.), p. 193.
[55]Open Letter, Cabinet des Ministres de la Culture, Ostende, 7 September 1968.

museum already existed, thereby giving this addition greater validity. The letter was directed towards 'the customers and the curious' (la clientèle et les curieux) and read as follows:

> OPENING
> We have the pleasure of announcing to the customers and the curious the opening of the 'Department of Eagles' of the Museum of Modern Art.
> The works are in preparation; their completion will determine the date at which we hope to make poetry and the visual arts shine hand-in-hand.
> We hope that our formula 'disinterestedness plus admiration' will seduce you.[56]

The letter seems official and yet in places is informal. For example, it was signed by Broodthaers 'on behalf of one of the Ministers', beneath which was added 'see you soon, dear friends', a friendly farewell suggesting that Broodthaers would soon be one of those Ministers himself.[57] At a time when institutions and hierarchies were being questioned, Broodthaers' self-appointment in a Cabinet of Ministers of Culture was not only amusing, but a remarkable volte-face considering the part he had played in the Palais des Beaux-Arts occupation only a few months earlier.

The letter was succinct and much was implied, indicating that the choice of wording was made carefully and precisely. The tone was pretentious and self-aggrandising. The aspirations the Ministers had of still uncompleted works sounded like the technique of a salesman trying to 'seduce' potential buyers. It is interesting that the announcement was directed towards the 'customers' and the 'curious' rather than the public in general, denoting a commercial basis for the museum. Even for those unfamiliar with Broodthaers' work, the tone and wording of the letter were obviously ironic. His phrase, or 'formula "disinterestedness plus admiration"' may echo Kant's notion of the 'disinterested delight' we take in experiencing the beautiful. However Broodthaers, within the context he had set up of addressing the letter to the

---

[56]Open Letter, Ostende, 1968, trans. in Crimp, 'This Is Not a Museum of Art, p. 206: 'OUVERTURE/Nous avons le plaisir d'informer la clientèle et les curieux de l'inauguration du 'Département des Aigles' du Musée d'Art Moderne./Les travaux sont en cours; leur achèvement détermina la date à laquelle nous espérons faire briller, la main dans la main, la poésie et les arts plastiques./Nous espérons que notre formule 'désintéressement plus admiration' vous séduira.'
[57]Open Letter, Ostende, 1968: 'Pour l'un des Ministres'; 'à bientôt, chers Amis.'

customer, implied that he was appealing to those whose motives were precisely not disinterested.

Alas, Bankruptcy - The Museum For Sale

Although Broodthaers believed that the art object is a kind of commercial unit, the various sections of his museum, in keeping with the tendencies of the time, offered ways of rejecting a commercial basis. The sections were temporary in nature and for the most part could not be bought or sold. The work was the museum itself and its contents were often borrowed from other sources for a limited period of time. A notable exception was the *Section Cinéma* (1971-72), the objects of which were sold through the Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp.[58]

The *Section Cinéma* was followed directly by the *Section Financière* which Broodthaers established at the 1971 Cologne Art Fair with the sole purpose of selling his museum due to its bankruptcy. In this way he seemed to consider his museum to be a kind of art object which functioned as a single entity. He produced an edition of nineteen wrappers for the Fair's catalogue which announced, 'Museum of Modern Art for sale, 1970-1971, due to bankruptcy' (Musée d'Art Moderne à vendre, 1970-1971, pour cause de faillite.) (pl. 25). (In fact, other forms of the museum soon followed, so even if a fictive museum could fictively go bankrupt this was not imminently the case.) On the inside of the wrapper he wrote a short text, 'with the aim of creating an intrigue'. He dedicated the wrapper to nineteen 'imaginary and real persons...The majority of them have never met each other'.[59] The names read as a list of many of those whom Broodthaers admired: Charles Baudelaire, J. B. Clément, Paul Colinet, Jacques Darché, Robert Desnos, Lucien Goldmann, Victor Hugo, J. D. Ingres, Buster Keaton, René Magritte, Edgard Poe, Jean Redon, Mark Rothko, Kurt Schwitters,

---

[58]All the objects except the piano were bought by the Städtisches Museum Abteilberg, Mönchengladbach, in 1972, under the direction of Johannes Cladders; see David (ed.), p. 211.

[59]*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Financière*, Cologne, Kunstmarkt, 8-13 November 1971: 'Dans le but de nouer une intrigue, je dédie cette jaquette...aux personnes imaginaires et réelles dont les noms suivent. La plupart d'entr'elles ne s'étaient jamais rencontrées.'

Jonathan Swift, J. B. Uyttendaele, Gustave ***, Jean Vigo and Wiertz. Although there were no takers for the museum itself, the catalogues were bought.[60]

An artfair is an arena in which galleries and dealers promote themselves and the artists they represent. It does not try to hide the commercial basis upon which it exists. Broodthaers, by aiming to sell his bankrupt museum within this context, emphasised the similarity between buying and selling art and dealing in any other commoditites or businesses.[61]

A publication of the *Section Financière* which Broodthaers had originally planned in 1971 with the Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, was eventually realised by the gallery, in a modified form alongside an exhibition, in 1987.[62] It formed part of a project 'concerning the sale of a kilo of pure gold in ingot'. Broodthaers' original plan had been a publication announcing a sale of gold in one kilo bars each stamped with the hallmark of an eagle. A contract in the publication set out the conditions for sale, which stated that the bars, or ingot, would be produced in an unlimited edition. Each bar would be accompanied by a handwritten letter from the curator (ie. Broodthaers), to guarantee authenticity and avoid the production of fakes.[63] It also pointed out that 'The purchaser is free to have his ingot or bar melted, so as to obliterate the mark, or to burn the letter of identification in order to enjoy fully the purity of the substance and the freshness of the original intention'.[64] The price of the gold was to be fixed at double the rate of the day, with payment to be made in cash

---

[60]By Michael Werner, the Cologne art dealer, who to this day continues to deal in Broodthaers' work.
[61]Broodthaers again considered selling his museum in 1973, for what price it should be sold and how a sale would change the museum; see 'Projekt für den Kaufvertrag', 'Der Nullpunkt', *Heute Kunst,* Milan, no. 1 (April 1973), pp. 20-23, translated in David (ed.), p. 231.
[62]*Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles Section Financière (Concernant la vente d'un kilo d'or fin en lingot)*, Düsseldorf, Galerie Konrad Fischer, 16 May-10 June 1987, n.p., all texts printed in French, German and English versions. A justification printed in the publication stated that the texts, choice of format, some of the typography and the photographs of the ingot were part of Broodthaers' original concept; the graphs and a citation were added by Maria Gilissen.
[63]The concept of genuineness and imitation in relation to gold was discussed by Theodor Adorno in 'Gold Essay', in *Minima Moralia*, 1945, trans. London, Verso, 1978. This essay together with Benjamin Joly, 'Minima Moralia, Gold Essay, 1945' was published in *Politics-Poetics documenta X - the book*. Within the pages of Joly's essay, a version of Broodthaers' advertisement statement for his first exhibition was published, thereby closely linking his discussion of authenticity with the discussion in the essays.
[64]*Section Financière*, n.p.

(suggesting a somewhat shady operation). An exemplar bar was to be deposited in a bank vault under the name of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*; the publication included a photograph of this bar.

An interview between Broodthaers and an anonymous journalist was also published in which Broodthaers stated clearly that the purpose of selling the bars was to finance his museum. The journalist asked whether or not the contract or indeed the museum were fictions and seemed unwilling to accept Broodthaers' response that 'Fiction or reality doesn't matter, it is a logical contract...it is a logical fiction'.

The journalist went on to ask Broodthaers if the proposed sale of the gold bars was 'a matter of literature'; Broodthaers replied: 'Silence/absence —> gold/theory'.[65] This equation seems to refer to Mallarmean themes in the use of 'silence' and 'absence' and recalls his essay 'Or' (Gold) (1896), discussed at length by Derrida in *La Dissémination*.[66] The journalist then either lost interest in the discussion with Broodthaers or simply lost the point. He appeared uninterested in Broodthaers' ideas and wanted simple, tangible answers. This became blatently obvious towards the end of the discussion:

> Journalist: I must leave you, I have an appointment with the horse which has just won the Prix des Nations. One last question: how do you do it?
> Broodthaers: I have read the press. I have read the history of the last 50 years of avant-garde art. I have read the 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus' of Wittgenstein. I have bought newspapers, reviews and books, cut them up into bits, mixed them up and finally discovered the formulation of the natural contract.[67]

Broodthaers' aphoristic reply appears as a summary of his methodology in the visual arts and of how he had approached his strategy for success. He spoke objectively and analytically. As in earlier statements, he contradicted notions of the artist as an

---

[65]The arrow in the equation is a device used in logic and the sentence reads as, 'If silence/absence then gold/theory'.

[66]Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (1972), trans. Barbara Johnson, London, The Althone Press, 1981, pp. 262-265. Mallarmé's essay was loosely based on the Panama scandal of 1893 in which the govenment of the day was forced to resign because its members were found to have taken bribes. An earlier newspaper article of his, 'Faits-Divers' (News Items), gave a factual account of the scandal, but in his essay Mallarmé focused upon exploring variations of the sound 'or'; see Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 398.

[67]*Section Financière*, pp. 12-13.

individual motivated by an inexplicable need for self-expression. He implied that his method as a contemporary artist was simply to digest and re-present contemporary culture. Whilst he sought to destroy myths concerning the way an artist works, he also wished to criticise those artists who actually do work in the way he described and simply repeat existing trends.

The theme of logic underlied Broodthaers' side of the dialogue, his point of reference again Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, with Broodthaers' simple, clear statements reflecting the importance Wittgenstein gave to clarity of speech. Broodthaers' choice of text is particularly interesting because he applied logic to a discussion on art, a practice not usually considered logical in either its making or interpretation.

Exchange Values: Art and Gold

The relationship between art and gold was the subject of a number of prints by Broodthaers including *Museum-Museum* (1972) (pl. 26) which also used the motif of gold bars. As he wrote in *Magie. Art et Politique* (1973, discussed in Chapter 6), he considered the commercial nature of engraving (or printmaking) equivalent to a 'Market study'. *Museum-Museum* is a screenprint in two parts, each part titled 'Museum' in uppercase letters, and composed of sixteen gold bars arranged in rows of four on a black background (a pattern not unreminiscent of the cool spacial arragements of Minimalism). Each bar was labelled in white script. On the first sheet the labels were the names of painters, arranged in chronological order from Mantegna and Bellini to Duchamp and Magritte. The format of labelling on the second sheet was the same as on the first. Three rows give the German names for commodities, from 'Fleisch' (meat) and 'Schokolade' (chocolate), to 'Benzin' (petrol), 'Gold' (gold) and 'Tabak' (tabacco). Broodthaers thereby defined the reification of art in visual terms and equated art with commodities. Gold is the constant against which all these commodities can be exchanged. All the gold bars/artists are presented equally; it therefore becomes irrelevant which artwork one is purchasing if it is only

for investment purposes. The labels on the bottom row of each sheet, printed in uppercase, read 'Imitation', 'Kopie', 'Copie', 'Original' on the first sheet and 'Imitation', 'Falsch', 'Kopie' and 'Original' on the second. These words denote concepts used to determine the value of a work in monetary terms, relevant to the original as well as the reproduction. The heading on each sheet, 'Museum', indicates that this is the institution which controls the process of exchange and may be seen as equivalent to a central bank.[68]

A comparative work on the themes of exchange and authenticity was the print *Gedicht-poem-poème/change-exchange-Wechsel* (1973) (pl. 27). This was also a diptych screenprint, and into parts A, B and C, each composed of columns of Broodthaers' initials. In A, the first part and titled *Gedicht-poem-poème*, these columns added up to corresponding numbers; in B, the number of initials was not calculated. In C, the lower half of the second part which was titled *change-exchange-Wechsel*, the initials correspond to amounts in various currencies - German marks, French francs, pounds and dollars. However, this time the sums do not add up. A number of signatures may relate to a certain amount of marks but a different amount of francs (125 marks buys you far more signatures than 1650 francs!) For Broodthaers, the signature was therefore a convertible sign or currency without a fixed value. Both the work and the signature are subject to inflationary and economic conditions particularly pertinent during the early 1970s, a time of rapidly rising inflation.

The use of gold as a comparative value to art also links the work of Broodthaers and Manzoni (as well as Duchamp[69]). In May 1961, Manzoni produced ninety small cans of *Merda d'artista* (Artist's Shit). Each can was 4.8 centimeters high, 6.5 centimeters in diameter, and contained thirty grams of his excrement. They

---

[68]This and other works by Broodthaers on the theme of money were exhibited in the large exhibition, *Les Couleurs de l'Argent*, Paris, Musée de la Poste, 19 November 1991-1 February 1992.
[69]For a full account of Duchamp's works dealing with the relationship between art and money see Dalia Judowitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, particularly Chapter 4 on 'Art and Economics', pp. 159-185.

were presented as a limited edition each numbered and signed by the artist. By labelling the cans *Merda d'artista* Manzoni suggested that this was no ordinary substance. He decided to sell his cans by weight for the equivalent current price of gold, thereby equating materials which are usually of the highest contrast in value.

Broodthaers did not make such a direct comparison but wrote a short two-part text, 'Eloge du désespoir' (Eulogy of Despair), for Richard Hamilton's etched version of his painting *Flower-Piece II* (1973) (pl. 28).[70] Hamilton and Broodthaers had met at *Documenta 4*, Kassel, 1968, where both were exhibiting, and were in contact while the latter lived in London from 1973-76. Hamilton's print depicts vases of flowers in front of which are two turds. The series from which this originated was generally not well received, as may be imagined. Broodthaers, however, felt he was able to see the work in transcendental terms, enjoying Hamilton's honest approach to those aspects of nature which the artist does not usually represent. He wrote 'Eloge du désespoir' in highly poetic, archaic French, yet with the irony implicit in Hamilton's work too.

In the first part, 'Le Desespoir des peintres' (The Painter's Despair), Broodthaers described a wild flower which is known by this name. In the second part, 'Le Desespoir de l'amateur' (The Art-Lover's Despair), he turned his attention to Hamilton's work. *Flower-Piece II* was an experiment in three-colour etching, a technical challenge of which the result was very successful. Broodthaers wrote of how the work, 'is of such beauty that it effaces the reservations that we may have had about the excremental form lying low on each plate...(the conventions of horticulture are fully respected)'.[71] He then moved on to what he considered the real basis of the etching, for, 'it is a question of form and mass, obliterating direct reference to reality.

---

[70]Hamilton included *Eloge du désespoir* (1974) in his publication *Trichromatic Flower-Piece Progressives* London, Petersburg Press, 1973-74 (a set of colour progressives for an etched version of *Flower-Piece II*). In Hamilton's highly appropriate obituary for Broodthaers, 'Roll of Honour', published in *Art Monthly*, vol. 1 (October 1976), each letter of Broodthaers's name relates to a writer or artist whom he admired and to whom he referred in his work: **M**allarmé, **A**pollinaire, **R**ené Magritte, **C**arroll, **E**dgar Allan Poe, **L**autréamont, **B**audelaire, **R**abelais, **O**scar Wilde, **O**ffenbach, **D**uchamp, **T**öpffer, **H**egel, **A**esop, **E**rasmus, **R**enard, **S**wift.

[71]'Eloge du Désespoir' (1974), translated by Hamilton, in Richard S. Field, *Richard Hamilton, Image and Process: studies, stage and final proofs from the graphic works 1952-82*, Stuttgart, Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1983, p. 57: 'dont la beauté efface la réserve que nous aurions pu avoir devant cette forme excrémentielle qui figure au bas de chaque folio...(les conventions de l'horticulture sont pleinement respectées).'

It would seem that the subject is not flowers but technique'.[72] He stressed how the technique the artist, in this case Hamilton, had chosen to use would determine the resulting image. Yet at the same time Broodthaers left his own position and that of the artist somewhat vague by concluding that interpretation of the work lies with the spectator: 'It is as though the artist knew of some theory of prosody and declined to utter it - he paints, he engraves, before the onlooker, who will, I hope find the key.'[73]

In the context of a still-life, of which an established, respected tradition exists, the turds are unexpected and offer a stark contrast with the flowers. It has been suggested that Hamilton intended them as a traditional still-life metaphor for the transitory nature of beauty.[74] In formal terms, bearing in mind that the work was an experiment in combining colours on the paper, the colour of the turd is made by mixing all the colours together. The same technique can produce the colours of the beautiful flowers as well as those of turds.

It is interesting to note the way in which Broodthaers structured his text. By dividing it into two parts he separated the painter from the art-lover, giving each a different area of concern. Whereas the painter deals with raw materials - the wild flower - the art-lover is one step removed from reality: his role is to interpret what the painter has produced. As Broodthaers' concluding sentence indicates, the art-lover can end up in despair if he cannot find the key to understanding the painter's work.

During the 1960s gold and money were not infrequent motifs amongst the work of Pop artists. Warhol in particular never attempted to hide his love of these materials. In 1962 he made a series of prints of dollar bills, for example *80 2-Dollar Bills, Front and Rear*, which came about following a discussion with a friend when he was looking for ideas for his work. Warhol pointed out that he was never embarrassed about asking people what he should paint, 'because Pop comes from the

---

[72]Ibid.: 'c'est ainsi qu'il est question de forme et de masse oblitérant la référence directe à la réalité.'
[73]Ibid.: 'Tout se passe comme si l'artiste connaissait la loi d'une prosodie dont it refuserait ou ne pourrait livrer le secret - il peint, il grave, devant les yeux ouverts de l'amateur à qui je souhaite de trouver la clé.'
[74]See Field, *Richard Hamilton, Image and Process*, p. 55.

outside, and how is asking someone for ideas any different from looking for them in a magazine?'[75] This approach encountered hostility from those who wanted to retain the 'mystique' of the artist, 'so they could adore you without being embarrassed by specifics'.[76] However, on this particular occasion his friend tried to help him by asking what he liked more than anything else in the world. Knowing Warhol, the reply was obvious - money. He produced dollar bills in rows which fill the canvas and manage to appear both banal and iconic.

Johns' account of how his *Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)* (1960) originated is similarly enlightening. He recalled:

> I was doing at that time sculptures of small objects - flashlights and light bulbs. Then I heard a story about Willem de Kooning. He was annoyed with my dealer, Leo Castelli, for some reason, and said something like, 'That son-of-a-bitch; you could give him two beer cans and he could sell them.' I heard this and thought, 'What a sculpture - two beer cans.' It seemed to me to fit in perfectly with what I was doing, so I did them - and Leo sold them.[77]

Painted Bronze (Ale Cans) reflected changing art movements, as de Kooning's remark revealed how the approach of the Abstract Expressionists differed from that of the younger generation of Pop artists and their dealers. As the title indicates, the cans were cast in bronze and then the labels were painted as fairly accurate likenesses of the original labels but without denying their painterliness. The cans were thereby made valuable by casting them in the material of traditional sculpture and indirectly seem to recall Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise* in Johns' careful and time-consuming reproduction of ready-made products.

Warhol made clear his love of money, Johns the mercantile skills of his dealer. I do not wish to set up a close set of similarities between these works. However, interesting in both anecdotes is how the works originated - not due to the needs of the individual artists for self-expression but through external prompts and

---

[75]Andy Warhol & Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s*, London, Pimlico, 1996, p. 16.
[76]Ibid.
[77]Jasper Johns, interviewed by G. R. Swenson, 'What is Pop Art?', Part II, *ARTNews* (February 1964), pp. 66-67, reprinted in Livingstone (ed.), *Pop Art: an international perspective*, p. 47.

suggestions. In comparison with the Abstract Expressionists, the Pop artists exemplified here appear superficial and without genuine, sincere motivation.

Exchange Values: The Signature

In a number of works Broodthaers also examined the notion of value attached to the artist's signature. Duchamp had, of course, questioned the role of the artist's signature, its value and authenticity, when he signed a urinal 'R. Mutt'.[78] For while the signature appeared to be that of an artist - in dripping paint how could it not be? - the work it was supposed to authenticate was not recognised as art at the time. Nor was the signature that of a known artist. Broodthaers set out Duchamp's method, as he saw it, in the catalogue to his 1972 Düsseldorf exhibition *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute)*:

> Whether a urinal signed 'R. Mutt' (1917) or an objet trouvé, any object can be elevated to the status of art. The artist defines the object in such a way that its future can lie only in the museum. Since Duchamp the artist is author of a definition.[79]

However, Broodthaers questioned Duchamp's concept in the Düsseldorf exhibition (discussed at length in Chapter 4) by placing labels beside the exhibits which declared, 'This is not a work of art'. In other words, Broodthaers suggested that just because an object was in an exhibition was not sufficient justification of its status as art, the very negation of Duchamp's intention in signing the urinal.

The artist who followed in the Duchampian tradition of signing something in order to declare it a work of art was, of course, Manzoni who used his signature as an artist as proof of authenticity in his *Sculture viventi* (Living Sculptures) (1961-2). Individuals were designated as artworks, including Broodthaers, whom he signed in 1962 as 'an authentic work of art for all intents and purposes' for the duration of his

---

[78]While the signature relating to questions of authenticity and authorship was of issue in all the ready-mades, in the case of *Fountain* this was particularly so with the signature itself inauthentic.

[79]*Figures*, vol. 1, p. 13: 'Ganz gleich, ob es sich um ein mit 'R. Mutt' signiertes Urinoir (1917) handelt oder um ein Objet trouvé, jeder beliebige Gegenstand kann in den Rang eines Kunstwerkes erhoben werden. Der Künstler definiert diesen Gegenstand so, daß dessen Zukunft nur noch im Museum liegt. Seit Duchamp ist der Künstler Autor einer Definition.'

lifetime. In 1970 Broodthaers reproduced Manzoni's certificate on notepaper from the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Littéraire* under the heading 'Avis' (Notice), perhaps to emphasise that Manzoni's 'black or absurd humour' was still important to him.[80]

Broodthaers reduced his signature to his initials, that is, to the minimum by which it could still be recognised as a sign and carrying the same value. With it he suggested the equation that the more signatures on a work, the higher its value, for example in the screenprint *La Signature Série 1 Tirage illimité* (The Signature 1st Series Unlimited Edition) (1969) (pl. 29) in which his initials cover the paper. The formal qualities of the print were carefully considered. The method used was screenprinting, recently adopted from industrial printing by the Pop artists, particularly Warhol, and used as a cheap and easily reproductive method in which virtually limitless copies could be produced. Broodthaers, furthermore, printed on tracing paper, suggesting that his signature could easily be reapplied anywhere. Although this was, as the title indicates, intended as an unlimited edition, it was inevitably limited, in fact to 60 copies which were signed but not numbered. Yet just as the signature may be equated with increased commercial value, at the same time the converse may also prove true, as through its very multiplicity the signature becomes valueless. In this print Broodthaers seemed to have thrown signatures around, without respect for their conventional value. He contradicted conventionality in which the signature must be handwritten to guarantee authenticity by printing it repetitively by a mechanical process. By contrast, the handwritten signature at the bottom of the print used to sign the work is virtually identical in appearance to all those above, and yet its value is entirely different. Broodthaers thereby highlighted the difference in value between the unique, the handmade (or handwritten) and the mechanically reproduced.[81]

---

[80]'Gare au Défi!, in Buchloh (ed.), p. 33: 'l'humour noir et l'absurde.'

[81]For discussion on repetition and imitation of the signature see Derrida's comments in a number of texts, in particular 'Signature Event Context', in *Margins of Philosophy* (1972), trans. Alan Bass, Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1982, p. 328.

Broodthaers used his signature to cover not only prints but also plinths - rather uninteresting, painted, wooden rectangular boxes. The plinth had long since been thrown out of the gallery and considered an unnecessary obstacle between the artwork and the space it inhabits. By signing plinths Broodthaers reintroduced them into the gallery space as artworks in their own right and, one suspects, as pseudo-Minimalist objects. Within the context of Broodthaers' own work the plinth is yet another prop for art, another device like packing crates or the gallery itself which frames the work. Yet his plinths do not support anything; as usual, the content is absent and the structure itself becomes the artwork.

Socle (Plinth) (1967) functions in a similar way to *La Signature Série 1 Tirage illimité* (pl. 30). On one side the plinth is covered with the now familiar 'M.B.' signatures in black on white; on a black-painted side there is only one signature and the date in white. This isolated signature looks the same as all the others but its function and value is different, that is, higher because it authenticates the work both as art and by this particular artist. *Signature de l'artiste* (Artist's Signature) (1972) comprises four plinths, each of which is signed on the top, with a tautological certificate which tells us that, 'This piece concerns the situation and the value (the increase in value) of the *Artist's Signature*'.[82] In other words, the work is about the work. Broodthaers plays with the title and the concept of the work by making them one and the same.

The signature is therefore a sign which indicates the presence of an artwork. It also functions as a form of currency denoting commercial value. Broodthaers made a further equivalence, that is, between the signature and narcissism. In his film *Une seconde d'éternité (D'après une idée de Charles Baudelaire)* (A Second of Eternity (After a idea by Charles Baudelaire)) (1970), which literally lasts for one second, Broodthaers' initials appear gradually and surprisingly slowly on the screen, as though drawn. This impression was achieved by using animation techniques and

---

[82]*Signature de l'artiste* (1972). 'Cette pièce concerne la situation et la valeur (la plus-value) de la *Signature de l'Artiste*'; see Rainer Borgemeister, 'La Signature, L'artiste', in Geneva, pp. 44-46.

drawing directly onto the frames of celluloid. Broodthaers described the film as representing,

> a particular artistic reality, which is expressed in artistic terms. I also think that on this kind of level it makes no difference whether it's my signature or someone else's. But I think that the foundation of artistic creation rests on an underlying narcissism.[83]

Elsewhere he stated that 'Narcissus is the inventor of cinema', and summarised his film as follows:

> On the model of Narcissus
> I wanted a film
> 1 second (24 images) long, just for me.
> (I gaze at myself in the film as in a mirror.)
> The idea was enough for me...[84]

Broodthaers projected the film in a continuous loop beside a plastic plaque which showed the final frame in which his signature was complete. This arrangement was made 'with the aim of presenting the static as against the kinetic image'.[85] A further two-dimensional version was *M.B., 24 Images/Seconde* (M.B., 24 Images/Second) (1970) (pl. 31), produced in an edition of fifty, in which he attached copies of the film to card. He numbered each of the 24 frames and signed and numbered each work in the edition. As far as a specific source for the title is concerned, Broodthaers' only explanation came in an interview in which he said that the film was 'inspired in a certain sense by the work of Charles Baudelaire'.[86] He may have been referring to the final sentence of 'Le Mauvais Vitrier' (The Useless Glazier) in *Petits Poèmes en Prose* (Poems in Prose) in which he asks, 'But what does eternal damnation matter, to anyone who has found infinite pleasure in a split second?'[87] Elsewhere the

---

[83]Interview with De Vree, pub. in *Cinéma*, p. 127: 'une certaine réalité artistique qui s'exprime sur le plan artistique. Je pense d'ailleurs que dans ce domaine, ma signature ou celle d'un autre c'est la même chose. Mais je crois que le fondement de la création artistique repose sur un fond naarcissique.'

[84]Untitled Text, *Cinéma.*, p. 127, source not given: 'Narcisse est l'inventeur du cinéma' and 'Sur le modèle Narcisse/j'ai voulu le film/d'1 seconde (24 images) pour moi seul./(Je me regarde dans un film comme dans un miroir)/L'idée me suffisait...' (omission dots in original)

[85]See David (ed.), p. 154: 'le but est d'opposer l'image statique à l'image en mouvement.'

[86]De Vree, in *Cinéma*, p. 127: 'Il est inspiré plus ou moins par l'œuvre de Charles Baudelaire.'

[87]Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Mauvais Vitrier' in *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, *Œuvres complètes*, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1975, vol. 1, p. 287: 'Mais qu'importe l'éternité de la damnation à qui a trouvé dans une seconde l'infini de la jouissance?' I am indebted to Dr Hiddleston, Exeter College, Oxford, for this suggestion.

narcissistic nature of the work has been attributed to Baudelaire's *Mon cœur mis à nu* in which he wrote that, 'The Dandy should aspire to be sublime without interruption; he should live and sleep in front of a mirror'.[88] Broodthaers explored Baudelaire and narcissism further in his print *Comédie* (Comedy) (1974) which is based upon the writer's stay at the aptly named Hôtel du Grand Miroir, Brussels in 1864.[89]

According to Broodthaers, to be an artist is to be narcissistic; the person who becomes an artist is inevitably narcissistic, because he wishes to gaze at himself via his work. As a poet who decisively relocated himself as an artist with a strategy for success it was necessary that he produce a body of work and promote himself convincingly, and his constant self-referencing firmly locates Broodthaers at the centre of his universe. In an article from as early as 1945 his self-confident, publicity-seeking stance was already established: 'If some slyboots were to ask me what I do in life, my response would be: Broodthaers, director of Broodthaers, attention press!'[90]

Guilty Pleasure

In a text from 1975 Broodthaers' earlier ironic and playful tone changed to one of cynicism and pessimism:

> What is Art?...In reality I do not believe it is legitimate to seriously define Art other than in the light of one constant factor - namely the transformation of Art into merchandise. In our time this process has accelerated to the point at which artistic and commercial values are superimposed. If we are concerned with the phenomenon of reification then Art will be a particular representation of that phenomenon - a form of tautology.[91]

He went on to express a continuing lack of faith in art: 'I have discovered nothing here, not even America. I choose to consider Art as a useless labour, apolitical and of

---

[88]Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 678: 'Le Dandy doit aspirer à être sublime sans interruption; il doit vivre et dormir devant un miroir.'
[89]For further discussion of*Comédie* see Borgemeister, in Geneva, pp. 47-51.
[90]'Le rêve d'un jeune homme malheureux ou l'anarchiste anodin' (The Dream of an Unhappy Youth, or the Anodyne Anarchist), *Le Salut Public* (Brussels), no. 3 (1945), p. 4.
[91]'To be a straight thinker or not to be. To be blind.', pub. in *Le Privilège de l'Art*, Oxford, Museum of Modern Art, 26 April-1 June 1975. 'Etre bien pensant ou ne pas etre. Etre aveugle.': 'Qu'est ce que l'Art?...En fait, je ne crois pas qu'il soit légitime de definir l'Art et de considérer la question sérieusement sinon au travers d'une constante a savoir la transformation de l'Art en marchandise.'

little moral significance.[92] Yet at the same time he revealed that, despite these conditions he had not lost the desire to make things. He seemed to hope that he would be proved wrong, and that despite his pessimism, others still had faith in him:

> Urged on by some base inspiration, I will not conceal that if the errors are mine I will derive a kind of pleasure from that fact: a guilty pleasure because it would depend on victims - those people who have believed me to be right.[93]

In a text which begins with conviction, increasingly throughout and especially towards the end there is a sense of confusion and of not being able to answer questions clearly. This lack of clarity is reflected in the title, 'To be a straight thinker or not to be. To be blind', and then in describing art as 'a form of tautology', writing on art as incomprehensible or 'Greek', and stating that 'inopportune linguistic researches confuse themselves'.[94] Although Broodthaers offers his own answer to 'what is art?', he points out that this is a question which 'Ever since the nineteenth century...has been posed incessantly', and therefore presumably without convincing solution ('nineteenth century' the time-scale as this is when the museum began to develop into the institution it is today). For Broodthaers the problems of definitions of art relate to the influence of museums in isolating works from the rest of life. He concluded that he had discovered nothing in art, indicating that art had contributed neither towards clarification nor enlightenment. By stating that 'Monsieur de la Palice is one of my customers', he expected that his own text would shed no light and merely stated the obvious.[95] He ended as follows:

---

[92]Ibid.: 'Je n'ai rien, rien découvert, pas même l'Amérique. Je fait le choix de considérer l'Art comme un travail inutile, apolitique et peu moral.'

[93]Ibid.: 'Une ignoble inspiration me poussant, je ne cacherai pas que si les torts sont de mon côté, j'en éprouverai une sorte de jouissance. Jouissance coupable puisqu'elle dependrait des victimes - ceux qui ont cru que j'avias raison.'

[94]Ibid.: 'Etre bien pensant ou ne pas etre. Etre aveugle'; 'Qu'est-ce que l'Art? Depuis le XIXe siècle...est sans cesse posée'; 'une forme de tautologie'; "de byzantin sur le sujet'; 'les recherches linguistiques intempestives se confondent.'

[95]Ibid.: 'Monsieur de la Palice est de mes clients'. 'Une verité de la Palice' is an expression meaning tautology after a general who was reportedly still alive fifteen minutes before his death having already suffered a fatal wound. See Nicholas Calas, 'Marcel Broodthaers' Throw of the Dice', *Artforum*, vol. XIV, no. 9 (May 1976), p. 196.

> All this is obscure. The reader is invited to penetrate this darkness in order to find in it a theory, or to experience fellow feelings - those feelings that unite all men and particularly the blind.[96]

As usual, Broodthaers leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions.

The point on which Broodthaers was absolutely clear in this text was that concerning the reification of art. As is evident in all these texts discussed, Broodthaers was critical of what he perceived to be extremely introspective structures surrounding art, particularly supported by incomprehensible writings of critics. He constantly wished to stress how art is not an isolated activity and the importance of social, economic and institutional conditions in determining the nature of a work of art. He emphasised this point in an imaginary interview with Magritte in which he played the role of critic. He observed that discussion of Magritte's work had tended to focus upon the relationship between the title and the image, thereby isolating the work from its social context. He suggested:

> What about, instead, rediscovering the events of life, of society...in short, of reconstituting the vanished reality surrounding your works? From then on they would appear as witnesses to the present, and not as poems.[97]

Here Broodthaers uses the word 'poems' to denote works separate from external concerns, and Magritte too identified a difference between poetry (to be taken seriously) and poems, which he equated with amateurish scribbles.[98] In the interview Magritte appeared not to understand Broodthaers' suggestion as though unused to this line of questioning. Broodthaers went on to point out that, 'This point of view could

---

[96]Ibid.: 'Tout cela est obscur, les lecteurs sont invités à entrer dans cette nuit pour y lire une théorie ou éprouver des sentiments fraternels, ceux-là unissent les hommes et particulièrement les aveugles.'

[97]'Interview Imaginaire de René Magritte', *Journal des Arts Plastiques*, Brussels, no. 30 (January 1967), p. 4, trans. in Buchloh (ed.), p. 141: 'Au contraire, retrouver les événements de la vie, de la société...bref, retracer autour de vos œuvres l'environnement disparu. Elles apparaîtraient, dès lors, comme des témoignages de l'actualité et non comme des poèmes.' According to Van Lennep, p. 240, an earlier interview between Broodthaers and Magritte was to have been published around 1950 in *Degré Zero*; see also André Blavier, 'Anthologie du Surréalisme en Belgique', in Patrick Waldberg, *René Magritte*, Brussels, André de Rache, 1965, p. 733.

[98]See Borgemeister, in Buchloh (ed.), p. 141: 'poems, "a words suitable for designating what Goffin and Floquet [two minor, conservative scribblers] produce".' See René Magritte, *Ecrits complets*, Paris, Flammarion, 1971, p. 354.

be interesting. It would be intended to start a lively critique of your images. I don't think it's ever been done'.[99] Once again, Broodthaers directs criticism at the critics.

The interview concludes by referring to the sociological or psychoanalytical analysis of Magritte's work which Magritte rejected. Broodthaers asked, ironically: 'There are a lot of bowler hats in your paintings. Why?... In what phase of your life did the bowler leave an impression? Do you have a childhood memory related to a bowler?'[100]

Insincere objects, bad faith, guilty pleasure - Broodthaers presents himself as opportunistic, a person of low moral standards who enjoys deceiving both himself and others. However, due to his irony and (apparent) openness, we soon realise that his insincerity is insincere and that he uses this pretense as a device in order to comment on the activities of others. He imitates so as to expose his perception of the contemporary artist - seeking success and financial gain by easily producing works which galleries can be fooled into exhibiting and gullible collectors into buying.

He sets up a series of different roles to play: creator, art lover or amateur, critic, collector, museum director. Interestingly, he almost never refers to himself as an artist, but rather as someone who makes art or objects. He is able to satisfy his earlier intense and largely unfulfilled desire of becoming a collector, by becoming a creator and making his own collection, or as a museum director and borrowing works from other collections. By adopting different roles he is able to understand the varying receptions of the artworks which each position entails and respond to different contexts. He can also put off having to choose only one profession to

---

[99]'Interview Imaginaire de René Magritte', in Buchloh (ed.), p. 141: 'Ce point de vue pourrait être intéressant. Il serait destiné à fonder une critique vivante de vos images. A mon sens, elle n'a jamais été faite.'

[100]Ibid.: 'Il y a beaucoup de chapeaux boules dans votre peinture. Pourquoi?...A quelle époque de votre vie, le chapeau boule vous a-t-il impressionné? Avez-vous un souvenir d'enfance qui concerne un chapeau boule?' See Didier Ottinger, 'Les Exercises Spirituels de René Magritte', in *Magritte*, Montreal, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montreal, 20 June-27 October 1996, p. 17, in which he discusses how Magritte rejected psychoanalysis as it sought to 'unveil' the mystery of his paintings and reduce his images to symbols.

follow, a conventional form of categorising and labelling by which he evidently feels limited.

Broodthaers believes that art is a commercial activity and within Western society of the 1960s and '70s art, an investment like any other. He wishes to dispel romantic illusions which surround art by making clear every aspect of its existence, from its point of production as the result of a kind of job, to its status as 'objects', to its exchange value. In works such as *Ma Collection*, *Rhétorique* and the MTL 1972 catalogue he emphasises the importance attached to catalogues and advertising. As I shall discuss at length in Chapter 4, he shifts to centre stage the paraphernalia which surround the art work, to indicate how these shells form part of the work itself. For Broodthaers art is not elevated above financial concerns and the activity of the artist is neither special nor mysterious. When asked 'how do you do it?', he is able to set out his method clearly and precisely. He had found his formula for success.

Chapter 3

Broodthaers' Objects in Relation to Magritte, Pop and *Nouveau Réalisme*

What is it? In fact, only some objects![1]

In Chapters 1 and 2, I have examined Broodthaers' background as a poet and the reasons why he decided to become an artist. It is now necessary to examine in greater detail the works he made during the first years of his artistic career, from c. 1963-68. He deliberately set out to succeed by following movements in fashion at the time and so this is the context in which these works will be discussed. During this period the dominant movements included assemblages, environments and happenings, Pop, Fluxus, *Nouveau Réalisme*, early Minimalism as well as work of the Situationists. However, I have chosen to focus upon Broodthaers' relationship with Pop and *Nouveau Réalisme* because these were the movements and artists with which he had particular contact and upon which he commented directly.

Broodthaers always worked in a variety of different media, however during this early period he predominantly made objects. The concept of the object as an artform has been of interest to many artists throughout this century. What is generally meant by 'object' is a three-dimensional entity but one which has different properties from sculpture. Whereas in sculpture the artist tends to work with raw materials, eg. wood, metal, stone, in making objects pre-existing forms are selected and reused. Yet there are no constant rules. To some extent, the application of either term depends upon how the artist wishes the work to be interpreted. For Broodthaers, as for many other artists of his generation, the term 'object' negates high art

---

[1]Announcement for *Moi aussi je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose..*: 'Ce que c'est? En fait, des objets.'

connotations. It is a means of linking the works closely with the everyday life from which they are derived. I shall examine how Broodthaers' approach was similar to and differed from that of his contemporaries.

Of particular significance to the development of the object as an artform have been Duchamp's readymades. Originally presented at the beginning of the century, as objects worthy of exhibition due to the choice of the artist, they have enabled subsequent artists, including Broodthaers, to work in an unlimited range of materials. During the dominance of Abstract Expressionism, and his publicly announced decision to give up art, Duchamp was largely absent from the art scene. However, by the late 1950s with the development of Pop, or neo-Dada as it was initially known, with publications on his work and exhibitions in the States, interest was renewed in his work and he became an important figure for contemporary art.[2] Although he rejected the attention of the Pop artists, claiming that their work had nothing to do with his and with Dada, their interest in his work persisted. His importance was subsequently reiterated by artists associated with Minimalism, Performance Art and Conceptual Art, and continues to this day. For Broodthaers, as for many other artists, of particular interest was Duchamp's wish to put art 'once again at the service of the mind'.[3] Although this had been Duchamp's aim at the beginning of the century, it was an intention shared by 'proto' conceptual artists in the late 1950s and '60s who were looking for a change from the predominance of painterly forms of production. Duchamp's irony and questioning of established art concepts greatly appealed to the younger artists at this time.

It is also pertinent to examine here Broodthaers' relationship with Magritte. As I shall discuss, at that time Magritte's work was considered of great importance for Pop Art. This was largely because Magritte was perceived as an artist who greatly

---

[2]For example, the opening of the Arensberg Collection in the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1954, Robert Lebel's monograph in 1959 and his first one-man exhibition in 1963 at the Pasadena Art Museum; see William Camfield, 'Duchamp's Fountain: Aesthetic Object, Icon, or Anti-Art?', in Thierry De Duve (ed.), *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1991, p. 160.

[3]Michel Sanouillet, & Elmer Peterson (eds.), *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1973, p. 125.

valued ideas, which he depicted with clarity, apparently paying little attention to formal concerns. In turn, the Pop artists appeared to display a disregard for formal qualities by using unconventional methods to express their ideas, such as mixed media works combining found objects, together with means adapted from mass media such as photography and screenprinting. For Broodthaers, it was not only Magritte's clarity of depiction, but also, with his own background in poetry, Magritte's word-paintings which were particularly significant, and he would attempt to develop further, concepts initiated by Magritte in these works. At the same time, Broodthaers' use of words should also be seen within the broader context of the period, in which words and letters were materials frequently used by many artists.

The notion of dialogue is central to this thesis and so, where it has been recorded, responses to Broodthaers' work during this period are also noted. Due to his former relationship with the Belgian Surrealists, their highly vocal response is examined in some detail. Broodthaers' early works have been described as Surrealist and so it will also be necessary to analyse why this has been the case.

Starting Out - Broodthaers' Earliest Objects

During this period Broodthaers lived mainly in Brussels and the exhibitions programme for the Palais des Beaux-Arts indicates the kind of work he may have seen. Between 1958 and 1967 the Palais showed *50 ans d'Art Moderne* which included Duchamp, *Art USA Now,* and exhibitions of works by Paolozzi, Rothko, Guston, Rauschenberg, Twombly, Arman, Klein, Motherwell and Raysse.[4] In 1961 Broodthaers had visited galleries in London, as recorded in 'Un poète en voyage...', and from 1962-63 in Paris. While we may speculate on the exhibitions Broodthaers may have seen at this time, his reviews, as examined in Chapter 1, record the shows he definitely saw.

During Broodthaers' first years of his career as an artist, then, objects were

[4]See chronology in *40 ans d'art vivant. Hommage à Robert Giron*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 6 March-12 April 1968, n.p.

predominant, as evident in the title of the 1965 exhibition *Objets de Broodthaers/Voorwerpen van Broodthaers*.[5] The catalogue listing of the 1967 retrospective exhibition *Court-circuit* and its accompanying film *Objet* also confirm the importance for Broodthaers of this method of working at the time.[6] The earliest objects Broodthaers made were those mentioned in Chapter 1: *Briques* (1963), *Monument Public No. 4* (1963) and *Pense-Bête* (1964), in which he used a wide range of materials, including pre-existing objects and fragments of objects. As with the ball in *Pense-Bête*, these were often made of plastic, thereby linking the works with the new materials of contemporary culture.

Examples of slightly earlier works include *La Grand-Mère* (The Grand Mother) (1964) (pl. 32). This is an oval wooden frame containing a brush, horsehair, eggshells, a mussel shell and various plastic, metal and wooden items on a bed of plaster, arranged in such a way as to ressemble, very roughly, a human face, although a far from flattering portrait. In *Boîte d'œufs en plastique* (Plastic Eggbox) (1965) (pl. 33) each of the curved sections contains a small item embedded in plaster - dice, metal keyholes, eggshell, plastic hearts and small plastic and metal objects. Some of the imagery is reminiscent of Broodthaers' poetry. These works were messy, using materials in disharmonious and slightly clumsy combinations. In *Les œufs de l'étoile* (Star Eggs) (1964) (pl. 34) eggshells are attached in a star-shape to the blade of a shovel painted yellow, which in turn is attached to a black wooden backing board. The title of the work and the star shape set on the midnight black ground seems to refer to Mallarmean themes. However, the shovel may also make reference to Duchamp and his snow shovel readymade, *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915).

During this period Broodthaers made a number of works which could be described as 'assisted readymades', in which, rather than simply chosing and exhibiting certain objects, he intervened in their finished state.[7] For example, *Une*

---

[5]*Objets de Broodthaers/Voorwerpen van Broodthaers*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Galerie Aujourd'hui, 2-24 April 1965, in David (ed.), p. 69.
[6]*Objet*, 16 mm, black & white, 10 mins., Brussels, filmed while the exhibition was being taken down.
[7]For definitions of the various types of readymades see Walter Hopps, Ulf Linde & Arturo Schwarz, *Marcel Duchamp: Ready-mades, etc. (1913-1964)*, Paris, Le Terrain Vague, 1964, p. 30.

Pelle (A Shovel) (1965) (pl. 35) is a shovel which he covered with wood-effect paper. With felt pen he drew tree roots on the blade and part of the handle and he painted the top of the handle green. He did not alter the overall form of the object but only its surface. The imagery, so closely associated with the object and its function, rendered it tautological; that is, a wooden shovel, used to dig the ground in which the roots of a tree lie is drawn with the roots and the top of the shovel is green like the leaves on a tree. A shovel was also the basis for *Pelle de Salon* (Salon Shovel) (1965) (pl. 36) in which the entire shovel was covered with wallpaper of a 19th century floral design.

Other assisted readymades took hats as their starting-point. *Chapeau blanc* (White Hat) (1965) (pl. 37) is simple and witty - a Homburg painted white with a black dot to created the illusion of a hole in the centre. It was attached to a board roughly painted black and white. *Chapeau buse avec trou* (Top Hat with Hole) (c. 1965) (pl. 38) is a black top hat with an actual hole in it. Often Broodthaers simply applied some paint or plaster to an object to render it an art object, for example, *Cymbalium* (Cymbal) (1964) (pl. 39) in which two brass cymbals are stuck together with plaster, or *Bombardon* (Bombardon) (1964) (pl. 40), a type of brass tuba which he painted. The titles he used at this time were often no more than descriptive terms by which the works could be recognised rather than in order to add poetic or conceptual dimensions.

In retrospect, these early works appear very experimental. They are examples of Broodthaers trying out a variety of different combinations of materials. They also show him starting to develop his ideas visually and becoming more familiar with working in three dimensions.

'I, too...': Starting to Succeed

As part of his strategy for success in following contemporary fashions, Broodthaers claimed that his early works were Pop and in 1965 some were bought by collectors of Pop art.[8] In the same year Broodthaers was included in *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme,*

[8]See Dieter Schwarz, 'Look! Books in plaster!', in Buchloh, p. 65, fn. 17. Works by Broodthaers were in the collection of Dr Hubert and Marie-Thérèse Peeters, Bruges who specialised in American Pop

etc... at the Palais des Beaux-Arts.[9] In fact, his strategy seems to have succeeded and he fulfilled his criteria for success as set out in the statement for his first exhibition extremely quickly. Between 1964 and 1968 he exhibited widely in Belgium and elsewhere in Europe both in group and one-man shows as well occasionally in the New York. In Belgium the most notable one-man shows were at the Wide White Space, Antwerp, in 1966 and 1968, and the Palais des Beaux-Arts, in 1967.[10] His works were soon bought by many private galleries and collectors, evident, for example, in the varied collections listed in the catalogue to *Court-circuit*.[11] Outside Belgium he had a one-man show at the Galerie J, Paris in 1966, the Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne in 1968 and work in group exhibitions in Paris (1965), Lausanne (1966), Milan (1966), New York (1967), the Netherlands (1968), Kassel (1968) and Düsseldorf (1968).[12]

It is difficult to estimate how far Broodthaers' rapid success reflected his position as a poet. Although he had not received critical acclaim nor been successful as a poet in any respect, not least financially, by the early 1960s he had moved in Belgian cultural circles for a number of years and knew many people. His name alone, therefore, may have attracted interest and attention. His exhibitions received some local publicity, with short reviews in Belgian journals and interviews on Belgian television in 1965 and 1966.[13]

Broodthaers' early support from Anny De Decker of the Wide White Space

---

Art: see *'Three Blind Mice', de collecties: Visser, Peeters, Becht*, Eindhoven, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 6 April-19 May 1968 & Ghent, Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 15 June-15 August 1968, pp. 51-53, which lists their collection as including *Table Blanche* and *Armoire Blanche* (both 1965 and often exhibited together) alongside works by Dine, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Rosenquist, Segal, Warhol and Wesselman. The works they owned by Broodthaers were sold (anonymously) at Christie's, London, 2 July 1992, in a sale which included other early works which may also have been in their collection; see Colin Gleadell, 'Salerooms: Broodthaers Flexes his Mussels', *Art Monthly*, September 1992, pp. 33-35.

[9]*Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc*..., Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 5 February-1 March 1965.

[10]*Moules, Œufs, Frites, Pots, Charbon*, Antwerp, Wide White Space, 26 May-26 June 1966, *Court-circuit*, and *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, Antwerp, Wide White Space, 7-24 March 1968.

[11]Apart from Peeters, these included Isy Fishman who would become a friend and collector of Broodthaers' work; see Walker, p. 36 and *Marcel Broodthaers Œuvres Majeures provenant d'une collection privée à Anvers*, Brussels, Yves Gevaert, 1984.

[12]See documentation in *Marcel Broodthaers*, Cologne, Museum Ludwig, 4 October-26 November 1980, pp. 115-124.

[13]*Estival*, R.T.B., September 1965 and *Interview with Marcel Broodthaers*, R.T.B., April 1966; see Bibliography in *Marcel Broodthaers*, Ludwig, p. 133.

Gallery appears to have been crucial for his subsequent success. The gallery, which ran from 1966 to 1976 and of which one of the first exhibitions was Broodthaers' *Moules, Œufs, Frites, Pots, Charbon*, soon became internationally respected as De Decker selected carefully the artists whom she would support and promote. Aside from Broodthaers those she frequently exhibited included Beuys, Buren, Byars, Christo, Andre, Richter, Weiner and Panamarenko. Her connections and reputation meant that the gallery soon began to represent its artists at the Cologne art fairs, thereby forging strong links with German galleries in the area, especially the Michael Werner Gallery in Cologne which would also begin exhibiting Broodthaers' work in 1970.

Becoming a Pop Artist

Widespread critical attention for Broodthaers did not develop until the 1970s. However, he provided many statements on his work himself. In the announcement to *Objets de Broodthaers/Voorwerpen van Broodthaers* he stated, without any doubt, 'I make Pop'.[14] Later that year he declared that 'the purest pop man is me'.[15] He explained how he had succeeded:

> Easily. I have just followed the footprints left in the artistic sands by René Magritte and Marcel Duchamp and those new ones of George Segal, Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg.[16]

Broodthaers thereby set himself within a particular artistic lineage. Elsewhere, when speaking about what had prompted him to become an artist, he reiterated these links. Aside from Segal, whose exhibition he had seen,

> there was Liechtenstein [sic], Jim Dine and Oldenburg who would complete the germination of seeds sown by the irritable, the clumsy, the great René Magritte. Pop art was inspired by his poetry and appropriated his humour and his severity. For my part, I could only accept the world in the form of social

---

[14]Announcement for *Objets de Broodthaers/Voorwerpen van Broodthaers*: 'Je fais du Pop.'
[15]Van Maele, 'Mosselen: op en top pop': 'Maar de zuiverste popman dat ben ik.'
[16]Announcement for *Objets de Broodthaers/Voorwerpen van Broodthaers*: 'Simplement. Je n'ai que suivi les empreintes laissées dans les sables artistiques par René Magritte et Marcel Duchamp et celles toutes fraîches de George Segal, de Roy Lichtenstein et de Claes Oldenburg.'

and human relations which presuppose art.[17]

Broodthaers, therefore, located his own work within a sociological rather than purely art historical framework, a position also taken up by Restany for the *Nouveaux Réalistes*.[18]

Broodthaers traced Pop back to Dada via Duchamp, as well as to Magritte, whom he claimed was never fully integrated within Surrealism; 'he stayed on the edges'.[19] In the 1968 open letter to the *Lignano Biennale*, Broodthaers reflected on his own early works and repeated his interpretation of Magritte's work:

> At first I displayed objects of everyday reality - mussels, eggs, pots, and advertisement imagery. This point of departure inscribed me within the context of Nouveau Réalisme and sometimes that of Pop Art when I treated my subject with the wish to reduce it to a theoretic diagram.
> One of the unforseen consequences of my activity was the rediscovery of René Magritte. I was able to push back the curtain woven by the Surrealists which hid the value of reality in his work.[20]

Magritte, himself, was known not to be particularly enamoured of Pop and rejected a position of paternity. However, according to Broodthaers, 'the art of Magritte is an art of ideas...There are many more qualities in Magritte's work which anticipate Pop Art than in Dada'.[21] Although Pop claimed its roots in the Dada of Duchamp's readymades and Schwitters' collages, Broodthaers felt that Magritte's clear depiction of everyday objects and attention to ideas rather than formal concerns were clearer influences. As he wrote in 'Gare au défi', 'Magritte denies the aesthetic nature of

---

[17]'Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers': 'Puis ce furent Liechtenstein [sic], Jim Dine et Oldenburg qui achevèrent la germination des graines qu'avaient semé l'irritable, le maladroit, le grand René Magritte. Le Pop'Art s'est inspiré de sa poésie et s'est approprié ses humeurs et sa sévérité. A mon tour, je ne pouvais qu'accepter le monde dans la forme des rapports sociaux et humains que supposent l'Art.'

[18]See Pierre Restany, 'Le Nouveau Réalisme: que faut-il en penser?', in *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme*, etc...

[19]Vlaeminckx, 'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers': 'Magritte n'a jamais été tout à fait intégré au groupe surréaliste. Il est resté en marge.'

[20]Open letter, Brussels, April 1968 to the Swiss-American journal *Art International*, published in the catalogue to the exhibition *Lignano Biennale 1*, Lignano, 1968, trans. in Buchloh (ed.), p. 90: 'J'ai d'abord mis en scène les objets de la réalité quotidienne, moules, œufs, pots, images publicitaires. Cette démarche m'inscrivait dans le Nouveau Réalisme et parfois le Pop-Art quand je traitais mon sujet avec la volonté de le réduire à un schéma théoretique./L'une des conséquences imprévues de mon activité fut la redécouverte de René Magritte. J'ai pu écarter le rideau tissé par les surréalistes qui cache la valeur d'actualité de son œuvre.'

[21]Vlaeminckx, 'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers': 'l'art de Magritte est un art d'idées...Il y a beaucoup plus de caractères dans l'œuvre de Magritte qui annoncent le Pop Art que dans Dada.'

painting (which does not prevent him, almost in spite of himself, from creating some beautiful paintings)'.[22] Pop, in its use of non-traditional art materials, seemed similarly to foreground idea over form, using whatever materials appropriately expressed ideas regardless of their aesthetic qualities (although in retrospect some works now look beautiful). Broodthaers believed that freedom from formal concerns was important for his own work in order that he may experience a decisive break with poetry. As he said in a 1965 interview,

> I place the idea before the form. The means of expression should be subordinated to the idea. With Pop, I acquired an indifference towards form which I never had with poetry.[23]

Yet within the same interview he admitted a revised approach for,

> I discovered recently that to express the idea adequately, I really had to play with formal elements. In a way one always comes back to formal elements.[24]

Within the development of Broodthaers' early works, and to a greater extent when his entire body of work is analysed, a gradually increasing attention to formal elements is clear. By examining works from the later part of this early phase, as I shall now go on to do, it is evident that Broodthaers soon developed the ability to use materials to express more complex, multilayered ideas.

Nowadays Magritte does not seem an obvious forefather of Pop, but during the early 1960s it was not only Broodthaers who regarded him in this way. For example, in his preface for the catalogue to *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme...*, Dypréau claimed that, in spite of himself, Magritte was the 'eminence grise' of Pop Art and that, 'the spirit of Magrittian work seems to me to be one of the main keys to the art of

---

[22]'Gare au défi', in Buchloh (ed.), p. 34: 'Magritte nie le caractère esthétique de la peinture. (Ce qui n'empêche qu'en dépit de lui-même, il a réussi quelques beaux tableaux.)...Fidèle à ses parti-pris initiaux, il continue à élaborer un langage poétique destiné à saper celui dont nous vivons. Le chapeau melon de Jim Dine gradeur nature est, j'imagine, destiné à le saluer.'

[23]Vlaeminckx, 'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers': 'Je place l'idée avant la plastique. Le moyen d'expression doit être subordonné à l'idée. Avec le Pop, j'ai acquis une indifférence envers la plastique que je ne possédais pas avec la poésie.'

[24]Ibid.: 'j'ai découvert récemment que pour exprimeer l'idée convenablement, je devais nécessairement jouer avec des éléments plastiques. D'un certain côté, on retombe toujours sur l'élément plastique.'

today'.[25] He believed this was particularly due to Magritte's treatment of the object. Works of Rosenquist seemed to him closest to Magritte; he did not explain why, only that they, 'seem to participate sometimes in the spirit of revolt of Surrealism'.[26] He also wrote that Dine's work, 'confronts us (in an equally Magrittian way of looking) with the object, its representation and its designation by word'.[27]

Broodthaers traced the artistic roots of Pop Art as well as its place in American culture. On a pessimistic note Pop seemed integral to,

> the development of American industrial society with all its alienations...American life presents a character - due to the industrial factor - which invades absolutely every aspect of private existence. In America nothing happens any more on the level of individual life. American life consists of a whole series of disavowals which build up, neutralise themselves, and finally annihilate completely the pleasures of existence which a human being normally possesses.[28]

He believed that European life was following the same direction, not because of American influence but because Europe was also becoming more industrialised. He felt that Pop Art both accurately reflected and revolted against the homogenity of contemporary life in America and in Europe, stating that, 'A work of Pop Art is an awareness of a certain reality'.[29]

Elsewhere Broodthaers responded more positively to what he perceived as Pop Art's direct relationship with contemporary life, with works which seemed to reflect the artists' awareness of the world around them rather than expressions of their

---

[25]Jean Dypréau, 'Preface' in the catalogue to *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc..*: 'Mais celui qui fut malgré lui semble-t-il, l'éminence grise du Pop est René Magritte. Son influence sur toute la jeune génération américane pour être plus subtile et plus secrète, n'en est que plus profonde...l'esprit de l'œuvre magrittienne me semble être une des clés majeures de l'art d'aujourd'hui.'

[26]Ibid.: 'Celle de Rosenquist, qui se sent le plus proche de Magritte, semble participer parfois à l'esprit de révolte du surréalisme.'

[27]Ibid.: 'Celle de Jim Dine nous confronte (dans une optique également magrittienne) avec l'objet, sa représentation et sa désignation par le mot.' See also Otto Hahn, 'Le Père du Pop Art', *L'Express*, Paris (30 November-6 December 1964), pp. 58-60.

[28]Vlaeminckx, 'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers': 'le développement de la societé industrielle américaine avec toutes ses aliénations...La vie américaine présente un caractère - de par son facteur industriel - qui envahit absolument tous les domaines de la vie privée. Aux Etats-Unis, rien ne se passe sur le plan de la vie individuelle. La vie américaine se compose de toute une série d'évasions qui finissent par s'ajouter l'une à l'autre, à se neutraliser et finalement à annuler complètement les possibilités de plaisirs de l'existence que normalement un être humain possède.'

[29]Ibid.: 'Une œuvre Pop est une prise de conscience d'une certaine réalité.'

inner emotions. He believed that Pop could especially help to bring poets back to reality, for 'Pop focuses upon objective reality which surrounds us and immediately we have to ask ourselves what is reality? Can I grasp reality?'[30] In *Comme du beurre dans un sandwich* he had given a more amusingly definition: 'Pop brings you everyday joys and sorrows between two slices of publicity like butter in a sandwich.'[31]

With irony, Broodthaers explained how contemporary art, characterised by 'ephemera, artifice and falseness', had increased his enthusiasm for producing his own works - those 'insincere' works with which he would begin his career.[32] He asked, apparently innocently, 'What is Art? Are Pop and Nouveau Réalisme Art?' Yet by posing such straight, simple questions he implied that positive responses were not self-evident.[33] He stated later in the article that, 'Pop is an attitude of the spirit of the times, or rather of this tragicomic reality. So is Nouveau Réalisme', claiming 'feelings of admiration' and of 'fraternity' for some of the artists involved, thereby linking himself with them as a fellow artist.[34] He commented on the relationship between the work and its audience, and, in particular the extent to which those who do not actually make works affect the way in which it is perceived, that is 'the critics themselves (and also the dealers)' who selected particular features by which a movement became known.[35]

For Broodthaers, therefore, Pop was the movement with which he chose to associate himself during the early years of his artistic career because of the way in which it reflected contemporary life. In seeking to establish his public role as an artist and move away from the insularity of poetry, Pop offered the approach he

---

[30]Van Maele, 'Mosselen: op en top pop': 'Maar pop, zeg ik, vestigt de aandacht op de objectieve werkelijkheid die ons omringt. Meteen mosten we ons afvragen: wat is de werkelijkheid? Kan men de werkelijkheid vallen?'

[31]'Comme du beurre dans un sandwich': 'Le Pop Art vous livre les joies et les peines de tous les jours entre deux tranches de publicité comme du beurre dans un sandwich.'

[32]Ibid.: 'l'éphémère, de l'artificiel, de la fausseté, souleva mon enthousiasme.'

[33]Ibid.: 'Qu'est-ce que l'Art? Le Pop et le Nouveau Réalisme sont-ils de l'Art?'

[34]Ibid.: 'Le Pop Art est une attitude de l'esprit de ce temps, plutôt de cette tragicomique actualité. Et le Nouveau Réalisme...des sentiments d'admiration et de fraternité.'

[35]Ibid.: 'La caractéristique de ces écoles d'ailleurs est d'être plutôt rassemblées par les critiques eux-mêmes (et aussi les marchands).'

needed. Nevertheless, his background continued to play a part in the kinds of works he produced. This appears evident in the fact that initially Broodthaers made discrete objects. These relatively small works, each an individual unit, seem to be just one step away from editions of poetry. Later, he would make installations and works of a temporary nature. However, the early objects were not very challenging in their use of space. They could easily be exhibited and just as easily sold, thereby fulfilling his stated criteria for success.

The Belgian Broodthaers and the Notion of a National Pop Art

Broodthaers' nationality was clearly important to him. On several occasions, for example, he spoke about the existence of a national Pop Art. At the opening of his 1964 exhibition *Sophisticated Happening by Marcel Broodthaers Peinture Sculpture Musique Nature Critique Poésie Instinct Clarté Dada Pop Trap Op* (the title a mix of English and French words), after reading a newspaper article on art and money he uncovered a chair of which the seat had been covered with eggshells painted black, yellow and red, the colours of the Belgian flag. He then played a recording of the national anthem, *La Brabançonne*.[36] It was one of his few Happenings.

Public activities for Broodthaers tended to be in the form of discussions and there were a number on Pop Art in Belgium. On 12 March 1965 Broodthaers participated in a public debate at the Palais des Beaux-Arts with Pierre Restany, and the Belgians Jean Dypréau and Bob Classens (all of whom were associated with *Nouveau Réalisme*). A further debate, *Le Pop'Art*, took place at the same location on 22 April 1965 in connection with the group exhibition *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc....* Broodthaers had work in the exhibition and spoke at the debate alongside Dypréau, Marcel Baugniet and Jacques Meuris. At the opening of his own show, *Objets de Broodthaers/Voorwerpen can Broodthaers*, at the beginning of April 1965, Broodthaers gave 'Une Leçon de National Pop Art' with Dypréau, Baugniet and

---

[36]*Sophisticated Happening by Marcel Broodthaers Peinture Sculpture Musique Nature Critique Poésie Instinct Clarté Dada Pop Trap Op*, Brussels, Galerie Smith, 23 July 1964. See David (ed.), p. 66.

Meuris. In an essay in the catalogue to *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, 1968, Otto Hahn stated wittily that,

> Marcel Broadhtaers (sic) is the most Pop of the Belgian artists. But no one knows what Pop is, and even less Art.[37]

The colours of the Belgian flag combined with everyday objects appeared frequently in Broodthaers' work from this period. *La Valise Belge* (The Belgian Suitcase) (1964) (pl. 41) is a work in two parts. An old battered suitcase painted black, yellow and red sits on wooden legs. It contains a red painted ball, a black umbrella handle and material painted to ressemble a Belgian flag. A wooden board which hangs on the wall behind has been painted black with thin yellow and red stripes. The rest of the umbrella and some plastic eggs painted black were attached to the black part of the board. Perhaps the umbrella is a reference to the anonymous figures in Magritte's paintings who wear bowler hats and carry umbrellas.

Further overt Belgian references were made in works such as *Trois tas de charbon* (Three Piles of Coal) (1966-67) (pl. 42) with a small Belgian flag stuck in the centre pile, the witty *Trois coquetiers rouge jaune noir sur assiette* (Three red, yellow and black eggcups on a plate) (1966) (pl. 43) and *Triptyque* (Triptych) (1966) (pl. 44). As the title suggests, this is a work in three parts, each part a canvas painted a colour of the Belgian flag onto which rows of eggshells were stuck. The most succinct of all such 'Belgian' works was *Fémur d'homme belge* (Thighbone of a Belgian Man) (1965) (pl. 45) - a man's thighbone painted black, yellow and red, which united 'nationality and the structure of the human being'.[38] (Broodthaers also made a *Fémur de la femme francaise* (Thighbone of a French Woman) (1965) painted blue, white and red.)

Broodthaers' use of the colours of the Belgian flag and his promotion of a

---

[37]Otto Hahn, Untitled Text in *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, n.p.: 'Marcel Broadhtaers (sic) est le plus Pop des artistes Belges. Mais personne ne sait ce qu'est le pop, et moins encore l'Art.' This spacing is the same as that in the catalogue.

[38]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', p. 40: 'Avec le fémur, nationalité et structure de l'être humain sont réunies.'

national Pop Art seem to reflect his need to assert Belgium's existence, not due to the dominance of American culture but within a European context. So often Belgium is perceived abroad as an insignificant country with little culture of its own (apart from a cuisine of *moules-frites*), ridiculed by the French but whose language half the citizens share. In 1974 Broodthaers would respond to Baudelaire's attack on his country with his own version of *Pauvre Belgique* (discussed in Chapter 5). Oblique yet pointed comments were also made by Broodthaers in the catalogue to his 1975 Paris show *L'Angélus de Daumier*, his first exhibition in a major French institution (discussed in Chapter 4). As he mentioned in the introductory notes,

> Don't forget that I'm of clear Belgian origin. Or furthermore the surprise with which Paris treats a foreigner.[39]

Broodthaers' proposal of a national Pop Art would raise the question of how the Belgian equivalent of a predominately American movement might appear. By suggesting links with artists across the Atlantic, Broodthaers was also able to distance his work from French dominated *Nouveau Réalisme* and set it within a more international context.

Developing his Style - Mussels and Eggshells

As early as the end of 1965, Broodthaers declared in an interview that he was over Pop and that in his latest works - large squares of mussel shells - his aim was in 'depicting nature as more beautiful than in reality', signalling a clear interest in formal concerns (for an example see pl. 46).[40] He went on to compare such squares (humorously) with works by Yves Klein, in that when Klein said that one square metre was more beautiful than one square centimetre of blue, for Broodthaers nine square metres were more beautiful than one square metre of mussels. In the same interview, Broodthaers admitted that he had revised his approach to the objects he had

---

[39]'Notes sur le sujet', *L'Angélus de Daumier*, Paris, Centre national d'art contemporain, 2 October-10 November 1975, vol. II: 'N'oubliez pas que je suis Belge de franche origine. Ou encore de l'étonnement que donne Paris à un étranger.'

[40]Van Maele, 'Mosselen: op en top pop': 'Nu toon ik de natuur moorier dan ze in verkelijkheld.'

formerly used in his work:

> My old love for such things as a hat, an apple, an umbrella is now over. I used to use them for making objects. Nowadays I eat the apple, wear the hat and carry the umbrella on my arm.[41]

He thereby restored functional qualities to objects which had been artworks, an approach he would also use in the *Décors*.

After the initial combinations of ugly and deliberately unrefined objects, Broodthaers soon began making works in which formal elements were more aesthetically considered. Many works from this period were based around shells and shell-like forms, including cooking pots and furniture filled or covered with eggshells or mussel shells, suitcases filled with coal, and small glass pots with advertising images (pls. 47-50). Abundant quantities of materials emphasised notions of repetition and reproduction. Three-dimensional objects were often shown in relation to their two-dimensional images on linen coated with photographic-emulsion, a method visually similar to Warhol's silkscreens on canvas. Mirrors reflected the image of the viewer back to him or herself.

Although repetition and reproduction were concerns central to Pop Art, Broodthaers' treatment differed, particularly in his choice of materials; he, for example, highlighted the natural processes of reproduction in eggshells and mussel shells whereas Pop tended to use predominately manmade forms. Broodthaers' materials were from around the house or equally accessible. He obtained the eggshells from one particular Brussels cook as he liked the way she cracked them. Belgian references also underlay his choice of mussels and coal, as well as chips, which appeared in photographic works. (Chips were also available from a barrow in the street, at the opening of Broodthaers' 1966 Wide White Space Gallery exhibition *Moules, Œufs, Frites, Pots, Charbon* (Mussels, Eggs, Chips, Pots, Coal).[42])

The starting point for these works, in particular those using mussel shells, may

---

[41]Ibid.: 'M'n oude liefde voor dingen als hoed, appel, regenscherm, is nu voorbij, ik maakte er voorwerpen van. Nu eet ik de appel op, zot de hoed op mijn hoofd en hang de regenscherm aan de arm.'

[42]See Goldwater & Compton, p. 36.

be traced to Broodthaers' poem in *Pense-Bête* entitled *La Moule* (The Mussel):

> The Mussel
> This clever thing has avoided society's mould.
> She's cast herself in her very own.
> Other look alikes share with her the anti-sea.
> She's perfect.[43]

The play on words between 'la moule' (mussel) and 'le moule' (mould), entirely lost in English, is the pivot upon which the poem turns. The mussel is a creature which creates the shell which shapes it and therefore it can be said to create itself. It has avoided external pressures to conform. When the shell is empty it is a positive form or mould which contains its own negative. It is self-contained or, according to Broodthaers, perfect.[44]

Like mussels, eggs also had symbolic qualities for Broodthaers. In 'Evolution ou l'Œuf film' (Evolution or the Egg Film), a text published in *Phantomas* in 1965, Broodthaers set the scene for a nocturnal seascape with the sea, waves, the sun and stars. At the core of the text, he declared that:

> All is eggs. The world is an egg. The world is born of the great yolk, the sun. Our mother, the moon, is covered with eggshells. And the belly of a wave is white. A heap of eggshells, the moon. Dust of eggshells the stars. All, dead eggs.[45]

This section of the text also appeared in the catalogue to *Moules Œufs Frites Pots Charbon*, the title indicative of his range of interests at that time (pl. 51). Further texts by Broodthaers also accompanied photographs depicting related works. For mussels, the image was of a glass jar containing mussel shells with a drawing of a mussel shell pasted on the side like a label. In the accompanying text, 'Ma

---

[43]*La Moule*, from *Pense-Bête*, trans. in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 26-27: 'La Moule/Cette roublarde a évité le moule de la société./Elle s'est coulée dans le sein propre./D'autres, ressemblantes, partagent avec elle l'anti-mer./Elle est parfaite.'

[44]For a discussion of shell imagery, particularly in relation to living spaces, see Chapter 5 on 'Shells' in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958), trans. Maria Jolas, New York, Orion Press, 1964, pp. 105-135.

[45]'Evolution ou l'Œuf film', *Phantomas* (December 1965), pp. 111-113, trans. in Goldwater & Compton, p. 30: 'Tout est œufs. Le monde est œuf. Le monde est né du grand jaune, le soleil. Notre mère, la lune, est écailleuse. Et le ventre d'une vague d'eau est blanc. En écailles d'œufs pilées, la lune. Poussières d'œufs, les étoiles. Tout œufs morts.'

Rhétorique' (My Rhetoric), Broodthaers proclaimed himself 'the King of Mussels':

> Me I say I Me I say I
> The King of Mussels Me You say You
> I tautologize. I preserve. I sociologize.
> I manifest manifestly. At the sea level
> of mussels I have lost time lost.
> I say, I, the King of Mussels, the word
> of Mussels.[46]

'J'ai perdu le temps perdu' beautifully recalls Proust's famous novel but unfortunately the sounds of the words and the rhythms constructed through repetition, crucial to conveying the meaning of the poem, are lost in translation.

The text on eggs above was entitled 'Poème' (Poem), beneath which a photograph depicted a work of many eggshells, stuck to a board in the shape of an egg. Both these texts are very poetic, playing with rhythm and the sounds of the words. The texts on the following two pages of the catalogue were identical, except one was titled 'Théorèmes' (Theorems) and the other 'Le Perroquet' (The Parrot) - a suitable title for a repetition. The accompanying identical photographs were of bowls of chips, piled up high like the mussel shells, in defiance of nature. This text was more structured to make four points:

> 1. Mussel hides mould and vice-versa.
> 2. Magritte's pipe is the mould of smoke. A factory is the former mould of smoke.
> 3. Every object is the victim of its own essence; even in a transparent picture, colour hides the canvas and the moulding hides the frame.
> 4. An object is invisible when its form is perfect. Examples: egg, mussel, chips.[47]

For Broodthaers, a mussel is perfect because it is self-contained. It is both mould and cast. He also considered the egg and the chip to have perfect forms and, as such, to

---

[46]'Ma Rhétorique', in the catalogue *Moules Œufs Frites Pots Charbon*, trans. in Goldwater & Compton, p. 36: 'Moi Je dis Je Moi Je dis Je/Le Roi des Moules Moi Tu dis Tu/Je tautologue. Je conserve. Je sociologue./Je manifeste manifestement. Au niveau de/mer des moules, j'ai perdu le temps perdu./Je dis, je, le Roi des Moules, la parole/des Moules.' See also Birgit Pelzer, 'Recourse to the Letter', in Buchloh (ed.), p. 160.

[47]'Théorèmes', in ibid.: '1. 'Une moule cache un moule et vice-versa. 2. La pipe de Magritte est le moule de la fumée. Une fabrique est le moule ancien de la fumée. 3. Tout objet est victime de sa nature, même dans un tableau transparent la couleur cache la toile, et la moulure, le cadre. 4. Un objet est invisible quand sa forme est parfaite. Exemples: l'œuf, la moule, les frites.'

become invisible.

In the announcement for his 1966 exhibition at the Galerie Cogeime, Brussels, Broodthaers stated: 'I return to matter. I rediscover the tradition of the primitives. Painting with eggs. Painting with eggs.'[48] This may seem to imply working in tempera, but Broodthaers' interpretation was absolutely literal. (To emphasise his literalness, on the day of the opening he set up tables outside the gallery on which he placed cages of chickens.[49]) He used eggshells as a medium with which to cover a surface in the same way that a painter might cover a surface with paint, and in many works from this period mussel shells, eggshells or coal cover flat wooden surfaces of simple, geometric shapes. He thereby combined natural materials from the 'real' world with abstract shapes from the art world.

In the works which combined mussel shells with cooking pots, Broodthaers seemed to defy nature by sitting the lid on top of shells piled so high that they should have overflowed. The pot appeared to be constantly at boiling point. In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he explained how he used artifice in constructing the arrangement:

> A mussel conceals a volume. When the mussels overflow the pot, they are not boiling over in accord with a physical law, but following the rules of artifice whose purpose is the construction of an abstract shape.[50]

In fact the shells were held together with resin, mixed with green paint reminiscent of the sea or white paint to ressemble a cream sauce. The titles of the works tended to be straightforward descriptions, for example *Grande Casserole de Moules* (Large Casserole of Mussels) (1966) (pl. 52). However, some were more suggestive, such as *Triomphe de Moule I (Moules Casserole)* (Mussels' Triumph I (Mussel Casserole)) (1965) (pl. 53).

Broodthaers also covered surfaces of small desks, tables or chairs with mussel

---

[48]Announcement for *Je retourne à la matière. Je retrouve la tradition des primitifs. Peinture à l'Œuf. Peinture à l'Œuf,* Brussels, Galerie Cogeime, 27 September-9 October 1966.
[49]David (ed.), p. 93.
[50]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Une moule cache un volume. Le débordement des moules de la casserole ne suit pas les lois de l'ébullition, il suit les règles de l'artifice pour aboutir à la construction d'une forme abstraite.'

shells or eggshells. By doing so he denied their usual functional qualities; one can no longer sit on the chair or work on the desk. Duchamp had rendered useful objects into artworks in a similar manner, for example, by setting a bicycle wheel on a stool in *Roue de bicyclette* (Bicycle Wheel) (1913) or by hanging a bottlerack from the ceiling in *Porte-bouteilles* (Bottlerack) (1914). Prohibiting the use of a chair also recalls Beuys' *Fettstuhl* (Fat Chair) (1963) in which a wedge of fat covers the seat of a chair. However, whereas Beuys' use of fat was for highly personal reasons, as a metaphor for his life story, Broodthaers' eggs or mussel shells have no such private meanings.

Broodthaers often combined materials according to their visual qualities. For example, the top of a black desk was covered with mussels shells and a white desk with eggshells. In *Chaise lilas avec œufs* (Lilac Chair with Eggs) (1966) (pl. 54) both the white chair and the eggshells were partially sprayed lilac, thereby unifying the form. These works are very witty and tactile. Because of their former functions, we imagine the result of sitting on the chair or putting something on top of the eggs on the table. Whereas in this work the strength of the chair offsets the fragility of the eggshells, in other works Broodthaers combined similar materials. In *Coupe avec coquilles d'œufs* (Dish with Eggshells) (1967) (pl. 55) a glass dish is piled high with eggshells, bringing to mind the delicate nature of both materials. *Cinq pots avec coquille d'oeufs et poussins* (Five Pots with Eggshells and Chicks) (1966) (pl. 56) is similarly light in feel. Small glass pots, that is, transparent moulds, contain eggshells and fluffy toy chicks. It is an unusual work in the sense that although the shells are empty, their contents, or the representation of their contents, are present. As Broodthaers wrote in a 1965 review of his exhibition at the Galerie Aujourd'hui:

> Mussels, eggs, objects without any content except air and devoid of grace. Only their shells express the void. It is necessary to look at the plinth. The fact is that I reveal reality to you with my work.[51]

---

[51]'Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers': 'Des moules, des œufs, des objets, sans contenu autre que l'air et sans grâce. Seulement leurs coquilles exprimant le vide forcément. C'est le socle qu'il faut regarder. En fait, je vous livre de la réalité avec mes œuvres.'

Broodthaers referred to 'reality' and implied that it was the structures of art - the shells, the plinths - which reflected reality. The contents were missing, but the shells remained and Broodthaers focused upon these shells rather than upon what was absent.

In these early works, the notion of absence existed not only in terms of Broodthaers' choice of materials but also in the composition of the works. As he said in 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward':

> The subject is rather that of the relationship established between the shells and the object that supports them: table, chair, or cooking pot. It's on a table that you serve an egg. But on my table, there are too many eggs, and the knife, the fork, and the plate are absent - absences necessary to give speaking presence to the egg at the table, or to give the spectator an original idea of the chicken.[52]

Unlike the Surrealists, Broodthaers did not juxtapose incongruous objects. On the contrary, he brought together objects which are often related but he combined them in more direct relationships. By eliminating certain parts of the usual equation he thus makes the viewer look afresh at the remaining elements. He thereby introduced a shift of focus, from the component parts of the works to the relationships between them. Again in 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', he stressed that he was particularly interested in what he termed 'encounters':

> I don't so much organize objects and ideas as encounters of different functions that all refer to the same world: the table and the egg, the mussel and the pot to the table and to art, to the mussel and the chicken.[53]

Although Broodthaers appears to have been repeating himself here, he did so to introduce the concept of art into the equation.

An interesting comparison may be made between these works of Broodthaers and Magritte's *Les Affinités électives* (Elective Affinities) (1933) (pl. 57), in which he

---

[52]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Le sujet est davantage le rapport qui s'installe entre les coquilles et l'objet qui les supporte. Table, chaise ou casserole. C'est sur une table que l'on sert un œuf. Mais sur ma table où il y a trop d'œufs il y manque le couteau, la forchette et l'assiette. Absences nécessaire pour faire parler l'œuf à table ou pour que le spectateur ait une idée originale de la poule.'
[53]Ibid.: 'Plus que d'objets et d'idées, j'organise la rencontre de fonctions différentes qui renvoient au même monde: la table et l'œuf, la moule et la casserole à la table et à l'art, à la moule et à la poule.'

depicted an egg inside a cage.[54] The image originated from a 'magnificent error' Magritte made at the moment of waking when he thought he saw an egg rather than a bird in the birdcage in his room.[55] The egg is huge and its form echoes that of the cage which it almost fills. However, what particularly interested Magritte was the bringing together of related objects in a direct relationship in which the usual link, the bird, was omitted. He considered the vision of the egg in the cage a kind of revelation which inspired him from then on to work on the resolution of a particular problem - the relationship between objects. *Les Affinités électives* has since been considered a turning point in Magritte's work, marking a break with orthodox Surrealism.[56] Nougé has pointed out that the connection between the egg and the cage was not only that of the missing bird, but that both the cage and egg can be seen as objects of containment. However, whereas the egg is a 'cage of promise' the birdcage signifies 'imprisonment'.[57]

Pop or not?

The works of Broodthaers from c. 1963-68 which now appear to us most Pop are those in which he cut images of made-up eyes, lips or faces from advertisments in magazines and inserted them into glass pots. They appear particularly Pop because the images he used were indirect, that is, ones which, as it were, had been pre-processed through advertisements. For Pop often did not celebrate life directly but rather through its representation in mass media. The fashions reflected in the make-up were contemporary and the pots, although not recent products of the 1960s, were

---

[54]The term is taken from Goethe's novel, the second part of *Faust*, titled *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), translated into English as *Elective Affinities* (1872). Goethe belived that understanding is based upon finding connections between things, 'like links in a chain'; see Sarah Whitfield, *Magritte*, London, The South Bank Centre, 1992, pl. 60.

[55]René Magritte, 'La ligne de vie', in *Ecrits complets*, p. 110.

[56]See Ottinger, 'Les Exercises Spirituels de René Magritte', p. 21, who argues that in seeking the resolution of particular problems, Magritte's approach became lucid and mathematical, in contrast with the Surrealist poetics of Breton, 'dictée de la pensée en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison' (*Manifeste de surréalisme*, 1924). In the article Ottinger presents evidence to argue that Magritte has been labelled Surrealist due to laziness and habit. He quotes Magritte and his Belgian contemporaries to show that he did not make automatic painting and that he rejected the significance attached to dreams. However, he concludes that unlike the Surrealists, after the War, Magritte remained faithful to Breton's 'point' in the Second Surrealist Manifesto.

[57]Paul Nougé, 'Pour illustrer Magritte', *Le Fait accompli*, nos. 34-35 (April 1970), n.p., in Whitfield, *Magritte*, pl. 60.

combined with structures of chipboard or plexiglass. In *La Tour visuelle* (The Visual Tower) (1966) (pl. 58) Broodthaers built up layers of identical glass pots sandwiched between chipboard circles, each pot containing an identical image of an eye in a structure which could continue endlessly. Both the pots and the eyes had been reproduced by means of a mechanical process in limitless editions. They were mass-produced and factory-made.

In *Casier de sourires* (Compartments of Smiles) (1966) (pl. 59) Broodthaers inserted images of Marilyn Monroe's lips in pots within a chipboard structure. Warhol's 1962 screenprints of the contemporary icon were well-known. However, Warhol also made a number of works in which he isolated particular facial features by which Monroe could be recognised. An example is the screenprint *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* (1962) (pl. 60), in which repeated images of her lips fill the paper in a grid format, echoing the repetitive nature of mass media. Apart from *Casier de sourires* Broodthaers made many works which focus on her lips or eyes by which she is immediately recognisable.

Broodthaers' use of a cut-out eye recalls Man Ray's *Objet à détruire* (Destructible Object) (1923) (pl. 61) as well as many works by Martial Raysse in which eyes or lips are highlighted. An example is *Mystérieusement vôtre* (Mysteriously Yours) (1962) (pl. 62), an oil painting of a woman's head, in which her eyes appear to have been collaged on from another work. With her hair in a fashionable style, it is a work completely of its time.[58]

Broodthaers' interest in the use of language and play on words forces us to identify the materials he used, not only visually but also in words. Therefore a glass pot containing an eye leads us to a glass eye - *un œil de verre* - an artificial or imitation eye made from glass. The fashion-conscious mascaraed eye is as false as the glass one thus leading back to themes of authenticity and insincerity.

Broodthaers' relationship with Pop was, therefore, not as close as at times he

---

[58]*Mystérieusement vôtre* was exhibited in *40 ans d'art vivant. Hommage à Robert Giron.*

claimed it was. In the earliest works, for example, *Monument Public No. 4*, *La Grand-Mère* and *Boîte d'œufs en plastique*, due to his use of overtly contemporary materials, a form of Pop Art could be argued. In his use of a Belgian flag motif, he could be said to have made the Belgian equivalent of works by Johns, and in his constructions with everyday objects relating to works by Dine. Broodthaers' subsequent focus upon repetition and reproduction in his objects and photographic canvases draws his work more closely to Pop. However, as I have shown, Broodthaers also dealt with many other concepts, and aspects of his choice of materials and working methods soon meant that it was difficult to accommodate him within Pop. An example to illustrate this difference is *Chaussures FF* (FF Shoes) (1964) (pl. 63), which initially recalls Oldenburg's *Green Ladies' Shoes* (1962) (pl. 64). However the comparisons do not extend far. Oldenburg fabricated a pair of fashionable ladies shoes from wire, muslin and plaster, which he then covered with thick green paint. Broodthaers used a real pair of old stilettoes, which he arranged with the shoe for the right foot placed on the left. This one was painted green and black and contained three white balls. The other was yellow and brown and filled with mussel shells and bones painted red. Broodthaers' objects seem to have a narrative, a history. Something seems to have brought these materials together. Oldenburg's shoes were not factory-made but ressembled a pair of shoes in a very straightforward way. They implied nothing more than a fashionable pair of shoes.

Furthermore, although Broodthaers' pots of mussels may be seen as the Belgian cultural equivalent of Oldenburg's burgers, as a national, popular food even on this level such comparisons are superficial. The laborious processes of eating and cooking mussels means that they are not just a means of quickly satisfying hunger and the cultural connotations of mussels in Belgium are very different from those of hamburgers in New York. As the German artist Christian Philipp Müller has commented:

> Such an art, however lowly its materials, demands a sophisticated, or rather a cultured, audience. It is made up not of coca-cola botles or urinals but of some of the traditional elements of good life, European style: food, wine,

literature and wit.[59]

Additionally, in Broodthaers' work, mussels have complex metaphorical qualities as shells or containers, as described above. Broodthaers frequently used plastic and plaster in his earliest works, but he soon tended towards materials derived from nature. Although the shells (or shoes) he used were empty, they had formerly contained life, whereas Oldenburg's shoes never were or could be worn. Broodthaers' objects embodied a sense of the passing of time through changing organic processes. Even the glass pots containing advertising images of eyes or lips were remnnant of human life. The pots were factory-made, but even in the 1960s appeared old-fashioned beside throwaway plastic containers. They connoted a kitchen larder and would usually have contained homemade jam, compot or pickles. By contrast the materials and imagery of Pop were strictly non-organic and factory-produced to reflect a more commercial society.

Broodthaers differed from the Pop artists in the importance his literary background played upon his work as an artist. While he sought to distance himself from poetry and establish himself as an artist, writings of a poetic nature continued to play a central role in his work. Catalogue texts were not subordinate to but of parallel importance to the works exhibited. Although at the time Broodthaers' works appeared to relate closely to Pop, in retrospect the links are less convincing, and his concerns clearly differed from those of his contemporaries. As Broodthaers explained, he found it difficult to become part of a group: 'I'm a rebel in spite of myself. I try to join the social group, in short to be defined socially. I try but the contact has not been made.'[60]

Nouveau Réalisme?

Visually Broodthaers' accumulations of existing materials and his working methods

---

[59]*Corespondances*, p. 74.
[60]Vlaeminckx, 'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers': 'Je suis révolté malgré moi. J'essaie de rejoindre le group social, bref d'être défini socialement. J'essaie, mais le communication n'est pas faite.'

seem to relate his objects more closely to *Nouveau Réalisme* than to Pop.[61] However, his relationship with this movement was equally complicated, and Broodthaers both identified and distanced himself from it.

The work of the *Nouveaux Réalistes* reflected the debris of consumer society, incorporating real objects showing signs of use or age as opposed to the glossy images presented in advertising and repeated in Pop. César's compressed cars, Spoerri's dinner leftovers and Hains' torn fragments of posters are all good examples. Arman produced a series of *Poubelles* such as *Poubelle d'atelier* (Studio Dustbin) (1960), a cardboard box filled with refuse from his studio and *La Poubelle de Jim Dine* (Jim Dine's Dustbin) (1961), a transparent plastic cylinder filled with Dine's waste paper and packaging. Arman prepared for his 1960 exhibition *Le Plein* (The Full), by foraging around in dustbins, filling the gallery space with the rubbish he found.[62] A strong element in *Nouveau Réalisme* was the use of assemblage, rather than juxtaposition, of accumulations of the same material. Restany felt strongly that there were sociological reasons for the methods and the materials used by the *Nouveaux Réalistes*; in this particular respect Broodthaers' approach was similar. However, like Pop they also worked with manufactured materials and objects. By contrast, Broodthaers' materials are often natural or appear to be relics of former rather than contemporary times. Although Broodthaers claimed that he wanted to embrace reality with his work, his artistic existence seemed to remain at a certain distance from the life of the street. He had compared his position as a poet with that of travelling in a hot air balloon (which he had experienced at first hand in 1957), occasionally making emergency landings[63]; meanwhile both Pop and *Nouveau*

---

[61]*Nouveau Réalisme* was founded on 27 October 1960 at the home of Yves Klein with the signing of the *Déclaration constitutive du Nouveau Réalisme* by the artists Arman, François Dufrêne, Raymond Hains, Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Jacques Mahé de la Villeglé and the critic Pierre Restany. César, Mimmo Rotella, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Gérard Deschamps and Christo would also later participate. Group activities and exhibitions continued until around 1964.

[62]Arman, *Le Plein*, Paris, Galerie Iris Clert, October 1960; the exhibition was his response to Klein's *Le Vide* (The Emptiness) held at the same gallery in 1958; see Jean-Paul Ameline, *Les Nouveaux Réalistes*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1992, p. 36.

[63]Van Maele, 'Mosselen: op en top pop': 'Voor ik aan de pop begon - 18 maanden terug - was ik een dichter. Vier gedichtenbundels en twee ballonreizen - bij de tweede reis kwam ik in een storm terecht en moest een noodlanding uitvoeren bij Tilburg - dat is alles was ik geprosteerd had.'

Réalisme were more firmly on the ground. As an artist too, Broodthaers seemed to remain in his air balloon analogy, watching rather than participating.

Broodthaers felt that *Nouveau Réalisme* differed significantly from Pop in its response to consumer culture, in that 'the Restany movement is rather quietly assenting to the forms of modern civilisation. Almost a glorification. They are looking for a new aesthetic, tailored to the civilization in which they live'.[64] By simply accumulating things and displaying them in cabinet-like structures in galleries, artists such as Arman were not analysing contemporary culture but seemed to accept it uncritically. Even though they used refuse materials, they arranged them in an artistic manner. Their work did not challenge or oppose the position of art in society. By contrast Broodthaers saw Pop as 'primarily an opposition' which aimed to create a popular art for everyone.[65] In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', he tried to distance his early work from 1964-65 from *Nouveau Réalisme*: 'The literalness linked to the appropriation of the real didn't suit me, since it implied a pure and simple acceptance of progress in art...and elsewhere as well.'[66] Restany presented his own approach more positively in a catalogue essay to a 1988 retrospective: 'I chose the optimism of the present as opposed to the pessimism of memory.'[67] Restany felt that art should reflect the positive aspects of contemporary society and by the late 1950s no longer needed to be a response to the Second World War which still dominated European culture.

Despite his wish to establish a distance between his work and *Nouveau Réalisme*, in 1966 Broodthaers exhibited at Galerie J in Paris, which was run by Pierre Restany's wife. In an article at this time Restany analysed Broodthaers' work,

---

[64]Vlaeminckx, 'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers': 'le mouvement Restany est plutôt un acquièscement aux formes de la civilisation moderne. Presque un glorification. Ils sont à la recherche d'une esthétique neuve, à la mesure de la civilization dans laquelle ils vivent.'

[65]Ibid.: 'le Pop est d'abord une opposition.' He continued, 'Rauschenberg a coutume de répéter qu'aux Etats-Unis chaque artiste est un opposant.' ('Rauschenberg is in the habit of saying that in the United States every artist is an opponent.')

[66]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'La littéralité liée à l'appropriation du réel ne me convenait pas car elle traduisait une acceptation pure et simple du progrès dans l'art et...ailleurs.' (omission dots in original)

[67]Pierre Restany, 'Nouveau Réalisme: The Richness of the World of Objects', *Nouveau Réalistes*, New York, Zabriskie Gallery, 17 May-8 July 1988, p. 4.

suggesting that Broodthaers' use of assemblage was one of appropriation or predation, the 'furtive gathering, clandestine gathering, poaching', of scrap materials.[68] By contrast, he claimed that *Nouveau Réalisme* did not appropiate but dominated the materials it used, an interpretation rather different from Broodthaers'. Restany observed that Broodthaers then contained his prey 'systematically within a functional frame' - mussels in cooking pots, eggs on a table or in a bowl, eyes and lips in glass pots which reminded him of a laboratory scene.[69] In conclusion he stated that Broodthaers wanted to give, 'a new dignity to scrap, not through a neo-fetishism of the object, but by putting it under lock and key, in safety, in a logical technical context'.[70] Broodthaers did not agree entirely with Restany's analysis, but admitted that what he said reminded him of the fact that previously he had rejected the inheritance he had been left by his father.[71] This was a decision he later regretted, and which may have led to a desire in him to own something, whether it be mussel shells, eggshells or pots with photographs inside them.[72]

There is one particular work by Broodthaers which made direct reference to Restany. Titled *Les Fouilles (Caisse de fouille restanienne)* (Excavations (Restanian Excavation Box)) (1967) (pl. 65) it comprises five wooden boxes of varying sizes each containing plaster debris, stones, sawdust, papier mâché and painted bones. The effect is one of abandon and decay as, perhaps, may be found in a former archaeological excavation. The materials were not arranged in any particular manner, making the work distinctly unlike most of Broodthaers' work and more akin to *Nouveau Réalisme*. The title originated from a visit Restany made to Broodthaers'

---

[68]Pierre Restany, 'Marcel Broodthaers et Pierre Restany parlent de peinture et de braconnage', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 1122 (17 March 1966), p. 6: 'la cueillette furtive, la cueillette clandestine, le braconnage.'

[69]Ibid.: 'tu les insères systématiquement dans un cadre fonctionnel.'

[70]Ibid.: 'une dignité nouvelle à l'objet de rebut, non par un néo-fetichisme de l'objet, mais par une mise sous clé, en sûreté, dans un contexte technique logique.'

[71]Ibid.: 'Cela me met en mémoire un événement important de ma vie: il s'agit d'un héritage que j'ai refusé, l'héritage paternel. Mon père possédait quelques biens et je me suis en effet arrangé pour ne pas posséder ces biens.' The only possession Broodthaers kept from his father was his fork which he wrapped in silver foil and made into *Fourchette* (Fork) (1974), now exhibited in the Musée Royaux de Beaux-Arts de Belgique.

[72]Ibid.: 'On dirait effectivment qu'il y aurait une sorte de regret et peut-être chez moi une espèce de désir de devenir propriétaire de quelque chose, que ce soit de coquilles de moules, de coquilles d'œufs ou de ces pots dans lesquels les images sont enfermées. C'est possible.'

studio on 9 March 1967, recorded in his catalogue essay for *Court-circuit*, in which he described the following scene: 'My discreet and weary eyes fall to the ground: I discover there a field of ineffable excavations between two beds of dust and neglect.'[73] Although Broodthaers sought to distance himself from *Nouveau Réalisme*, he appears to have had a good relationship with Restany and an exchange of ideas during this period.

Materiality and Transcendence: Works by Manzoni

One of Broodthaers' most important relationships with a contemporary artist at this time was with Manzoni, who had signed him as an artwork in 1962. Also a European although not a *Nouveau Réaliste*, Manzoni and Broodthaers shared not only conceptual but also stylistic similarities. Like Broodthaers, Manzoni also covered surfaces with a single material in his *Achromes* (Achromes), which he made from 1957 until his death in 1963, and which Broodthaers would have seen at Manzoni's Brussels exhibition in 1962. For Manzoni, *achrome* or no colour meant white, and the early *Achromes* comprised kaolin on folded canvas or kaolin-impregnated squares of canvas (pl. 66). In subsequent *Achromes* canvas surfaces were covered with cotton wadding, cobalt chloride, polystyrene, fibreglass or fake white fur (pl. 67). Velvet-covered canvases were filled with rows of breadrolls covered with kaolin or rolls of cotton wool. Manzoni worked with both organic and inorganic materials, but all of which appear to have undergone a process and are not in their original state. They are insubstantial materials and appear artificial and lifeless.

Although in the *Achromes* Manzoni filled the frame with his materials, he also declared that he did not understand why a painter should feel obliged to fill in a canvas, and indicated that fundamentally, his aim was to reach a level of purity in art: 'Why not empty the receptacle, liberate this surface? Why not try to make the

---

[73]Restany, 'J'attends ton coup de fil, Marcel!' in *Court-circuit*: 'Mes yeux, pudiques et lassés se baissent à terre: j'y découvre un champ de fouilles ineffable, entre deux couches de poussière et d'oubli.' The work was bought in 1967 by Isy Fishman (and in 1985 by the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris); see *Marcel Broodthaers Œuvres Majeures provenant d'une collection privée à Anvers*, no. 3.

limitless sense of total space, of a pure and absolute light, appear instead?'[74] Manzoni believed that art did not have to be limited by the dimensions of a canvas or by any defined space, because 'There are no dimensions in total space'.[75] A white surface has the potential to be multiplied infinitely and his *Achromes* could be sections of much larger entities. Similarly a line can also be conceived as a section of an infinite line and hence his *Linea di lunghezza infinita* (Line of Infinite Length) (1960, in an edition of 19), in which tubes of varying sizes contained lines printed on paper. While the idea is amusing of selling inflatable containers of air (*Fiato d'artista* (Artist's Breath) (1962)), it relates to Manzoni's concept of nothingness and of the infinite. Signing living artists was yet another way of escaping the restrictions of the canvas.

Manzoni, like Broodthaers, Johns and many other artists of the period used the alphabet as the visual material for some of his works.[76] For Manzoni the alphabet was a non-personal choice of subject matter and in a number of *Composition* works from 1958 to 1961 he stencilled or machine-printed rows of letters, thereby employing methods which emphasised a lack of personal involvement.[77] He retained the conventions of alphabetical order and simply presented letters, that is, the signs or elementary units from which words, language, speech and writing are then composed.

Variations were made concerning the number of letters or columns. In the print edition *8 Tavole di accertamento* (8 Tables of Assessment) (1960), 'ABCDEFG' was stencilled six times, once in red, the other a black outline. The edition also contained maps of Ireland and Iceland, printed in black line with little detail.[78]

---

[74]Piero Manzoni, 'Free Dimension', 1960, trans. in *Art in Theory 1900-1990 An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (eds.), Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, p. 709.
[75]Manzoni, *Identité Italienne*, in Harrison and Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, p. 710.
[76]According to Jan van der Marck, Manzoni may have seen Johns' alphabet works when they were shown at the Venice Biennale, 1958 and at the Milan, Galleria del Naviglio, 1959; see Jan van der Marck, 'Piero Manzoni: An Exemplary Life', in *Art in America*, May-June 1973, p. 76. According to Nobuya Abe, Manzoni stopped making an alphabet work 'when he learnt that the American artist, Jasper Johns, had spoken about it in public'. However, this comment has not been developed further; see Nobuya Abe, 'Piero Manzoni', *The Geijutsu-Shincho*, Tokyo, no. 3, March 1960, printed in translation in Freddy Battino & Luca Palazzoli, *Piero Manzoni Catalogue Raisonné*, Milan, Edizioni di Vanni Scheiwiller, 1991, no. 201.
[77]This is how the works have been titled in the catalogue raisonné, see Battino & Palazzoli, *Piero Manzoni Catalogue Raisonné*, pp. 225-226.
[78]In the catalogue raisonné the alphabet works in *8 Tavole di accertamento* have been titled *Alfabeto* (Alphabet) and the maps *Irelanda* (Ireland) and *Iselanda* (Iceland), see Battino & Palazzoli, *Piero*

Manzoni has not explained his choice of countries, but one may surmise that he was amused by the parallels between two small, craggy islands of which the names differ in only one letter. Within the context of the edition, this subtle difference points to a need for linguistic assessment or verification, hence the title. The edition also included a black line referring to the *Linea* works, and prints of Manzoni's fingerprints, that is, unsophisticated, physical signs which represent himself, the artist and perhaps another kind of language. In 1961 Manzoni produced a number of bookworks which he also entitled *Tavole di accertamento*, in which the whole alphabet was printed continuously on pages of the book, the size and format of which ressembles a school jotter.[79]

Just as Manzoni presented the alphabet as the signs which represent language, *1-30 settembre* (1-30 September) (1959) deals with a similar objectivity.[80] The work comprises the pages of the month of September torn off a calendar and arranged on paper in chronological order, with each page bearing a number in large bold print. As there are thirty days in the month the pages fit into a neat, grid format. The work is very simple with the numbers as signs to depict the passing of time.

Manzoni used his thumbprint as his signature, his own language, in a series of object works entitled *Uovo con impronta* (Egg with Thumbprint) (1960), in each of which a hard-boiled egg with his thumbprint on it was set on a bed of cotton wool in a small wooden box. In the performance *Consumazione dell'arte dinamica del pubblico divorare l'arte* (The consumption of dynamic art by the art-devouring public), Milan, 21 July 1960, Manzoni hard-boiled eggs which he then signed with his thumbprint and distributed to the audience to eat. As he said, 'I gave my art to the public to eat...and they swallowed these artifacts consecrated by the 'personality' of the artist: direct communion: the exhibition was consumed by the spectators in one hour and ten minutes'.[81] In such a description, Manzoni, ironically, presented the

---

Manzoni Catalogue Raisonné, pp. 461-462; elsewhere they have been titled *ABCDEFG*, see *Piero Manzoni*, Madrid, Fundación 'la Caixa', 9 October-15 December 1991. All these titles therefore seem somewhat provisional, that is, as nothing more than convenient ways to identify the works.

[79]See Battino & Palazzoli, *Piero Manzoni Catalogue Raisonné*, pls. 149-150.

[80]This work has been titled *1-30 settembre 1959* in *Piero Manzoni*, Madrid, 1991.

[81]Manzoni in a letter to Shozo Yamazaki, 22 July 1960, quoted in Anna Costanini, 'Piero Manzoni in

event in quasi-religious terms to highlight the reverence with which the artist and the artist's signature are often treated. By giving the consecrated eggs directly to the public to eat and thereby eliminate as works of art, Manzoni aimed to break down the distance between himself the artist and the public, and to make the public fully participatory in the performance. He refused a position of authority or superiority for the artist by saying that, 'it is not our business to educate, nor is it our business to pass on messages'.[82]

Broodthaers was evidently interested in Manzoni's work, and reacted positively to it as evident in 'Gare au défi'. He seems to have been most impressed by Manzoni's approach and his black sense of humour, for example in the *Sculture vivente* or the tins of *Merda d'artista*, in which Manzoni revealed an irreverence for the status of artworks and the role of the artist. It is with the conceptual basis of these works rather than their existence as objects that the similarities with Broodthaers are most convincing. For whereas Manzoni's objects embodied strong, material qualities, especially those using numbers and letters, these qualities were combined with mysterious, transcendental notions of infinity and timelessness. This combination lends his objects a strange, discomforting quality in which the insubstantial materials, especially the tufts of fibreglass, appear otherworldly and supernatural. Although comparisions can be made with Broodthaers' works, it is perhaps more appropriate to examine, for example, the *Achromes*, Manzoni's largest body of works, in relation to works by those contemporaries with whom he exhibited, for example, fellow members of the Italian group *Azimut*, Castellani and Fontana, as well as Henk Peeters, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene of *Zéro International*. Within this context, the *Achromes* appear less conceptual and more concerned with using new and different materials to find alternative ways of dealing with the two-dimensional surface of the canvas.[83]

Context 1933-1963', in Germano Celant, *Piero Manzoni*, London, The Serpentine Gallery, 28 February-26 April 1998, pp. 270-271.

[82]Manzoni, 'Libera dimensione', *Azimith*, no. 2 (January 1960), quoted in Costanini, 'Piero Manzoni in Context 1933-1963', p. 271.

[83]See *Zéro International*, Nice, Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain, 11 April-8 June 1998.

New Realism and Sur-realism

Nouveau Réalisme has often been presented as the European equivalent of Pop and clearly comparisons can be made. However, although Broodthaers argued that European society was becoming as industrialised as American, it still had some way to go. To American critics of the time, such as Lucy Lippard, *Nouveau Réalisme* appeared very different in character from Pop. Just as Broodthaers and Dypréau related Pop to Magritte, she saw *Nouveau Réalisme* as a clear descendant of both Dada and Surrealism. To her eyes, the work exhibited in the *New Realists* exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1962, appeared, 'pale, overworked, and strongly Surrealizing compared with the new Pop Art'.[84] Lippard believed that, 'Surrealism is the obvious predecessor of many New Realist objects, and its trenchant eroticism is another major legacy'.[85] In contrast with Duchamp's readymades or Johns' ale cans (the examples she gave), she claimed that the *Nouveaux Réalistes* never simply presented objects, but always invested them with,

> a soupçon of mystery and elegance by fragmentation, juxtaposition, or slight alteration. It is not the directness, the banality, the refreshing anonymity of urban reality that appeals to them, but the hitherto unrecognised strangeness latent in every common object, old or new.[86]

A sense of 'strangeness latent in every common object' clearly inscribes the work within Surrealism, an interpretation with which the *Nouveaux Réalistes* would have disagreed. Broodthaers' early works have also been described or exhibited on similar terms by Surrealists.[87] However, Broodthaers made absolutely clear that the position he adopted was not Surrealist. In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he quoted a crucial and well-known passage from Breton's *Second Surrealist Manifesto* to indicate his distance from a Surrealist approach. When asked: 'Do you situate yourself in a surrealist perspective?', he replied:

---

[84]Lucy Lippard, *Pop Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1966, p. 174.
[85]Ibid., p. 176.
[86]Ibid., p. 176.
[87]For example, an untitled work c. 1964 of two ceramic bowls with painted eggshells was exhibited in *Surrealist Sculptures*, London, Faggionato Fine Arts,12 October-16 December 1994.

> This one I know by heart: "Everything leads us to believe that there exists a state of mind where life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, no longer seem contradictory." I hope I have nothing in common with that state of mind. With *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* Magritte did not take things so lightly. But then he was too much Magritte. By which I mean that he was too little *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. It is with that pipe that I tackled the adventure.[88]

Unlike the Surrealists, Broodthaers did not seek to resolve contradictions; he did not want to integrate art with life, nor the exterior world with dreams to create a 'surreality' as, like Magritte, Broodthaers did not believe in attaching too much importance to dreams. Instead of eliminating contradictions and reconciling opposites, Broodthaers preferred to use them as tensions in his work. Although Broodthaers also wished to offer alternatives to conventional forms of classification, he did so within the context of art and literature, rather than by attemping to challenge life more broadly. In 1947 he had signed *Pas de quatier dans la revolution* supporting the position of the Belgian Surrealists in that political change should come through the Communist Party and not through art. In an entirely different context, Broodthaers' opposition to the fusion of art with life and politics would manifest itself in his open letter to Beuys (discussed in Chapter 6).[89]

Broodthaers felt far more in accordance with Magritte's approach in works which dealt with the relationship between words with images, although he felt that Magritte could have taken this direction further, but 'he was too little *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*'. However, it is often the case that subsequent artists germinate earlier ideas

---

[88]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Vous situez-vous dans une perspective surréaliste?/Je connais ceci par cœur: "Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement." J'espère n'avoir rien de cet état d'espoir. Magritte avec "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" est moins aisé. Mais encore, il était trop Magritte. C'est-à-dire qu'il n'était pas assez "Ceci n'est pas une pipe". C'est à partir de cette pipe que j'ai tenté l'aventure.' Broodthaers also refered to this passage indirectly in his text in the group exhibition catalogue *Actualité d'un bilan*, Paris, Galerie Yvon Lambert, 29 October-5 December 1972. Concerning this 'point' see also Michel Carrouges, *André Breton et les données fondamentales du Surréalisme*, Paris, 1950.

[89]The Broodthaers archive contains an extract copied by Broodthaers from Bataille's, 'La "vieille taupe" et le préfixe *sur* dans les mots *surhomme* et *surréaliste*', pub. in *Tel Quel*, no. 34 (Summer 1968), an article often cited as part of Bataille's (and *Tel Quel*'s) critique of Breton and the problems of Surrealism in relation to revolution. Written as a response to the *Second Surrealist Manifesto* (1930), *Tel Quel* published Bataille's article in 1968 to help distance the student movement from Surrealism. In fact, the section Broodthaers copied (from 'Du point de vue...' to 'déguisé en nécessité divine') relates more particularly to his interest in concepts of the eagle, commenting on the power and imperialism of the eagle. The article also appears in George Bataille, *Œuvres complètes vol. II Ecrits Posthumes 1922-1940*, Gallimard, 1970, pp. 93-109.

and paintings with words formed only part of Magritte's whole body of work. With regard to Broodthaers' objects, his interest in 'encounters' means that they are closer in character to Magritte's 'elective affinities' than to the Surrealist juxtaposition which derived from Lautréamont's 'fortuitous meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table'.[90] Broodthaers did not bring together unlikely combinations nor wish to develop the 'latent possibilities' (latences) of everyday objects.[91] He did not particularly use things which he had found by chance but made his choices carefully; at the same time the objects did not, however, become fetishes. We never feel that Broodthaers cared particularly about eggs, shells or even shoes in a meaningful way. He chose materials which were accessible partly as a matter of convenience, but also because they fitted his broader interests in absence and presence, repetition and reproduction. Although some of Broodthaers' objects from this period look bizarre and witty, for example eggshells on a chair, this should not limit them to an interpretation as Surrealist.

'Rosettes of Mussels and Medlies of Eggshells': The Belgian Surrealist Response

Broodthaers did not intend a Surrealist reading of his objects. However, it cannot be dismissed without consideration. Within the notion of dialogue established in this thesis, and in view of Broodthaers' former associations, it seems pertinent at this point to examine the Belgian Surrealists' response to his work.

In the early 1960s those who identified themselves as Belgian Surrealists centred around Marcel Mariën. They were less than enthusiastic about most contemporary non-Surrealist art, ranging from *tachisme* to *Nouveau Réalisme*.[92] The main criticism levelled against Broodthaers did not concern the nature of his artwork but the belief that he had 'sold out' when he started to become successful. Surrealism demanded a strict code of conduct from fellow artists and because Broodthaers had

---

[90]Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, Canto VI, Paris, 1874: 'Beau comme le rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie.'
[91]André Breton, 'Crisis of the Object', in *Surrealism and Painting* (1965), trans. Simon Watson Taylor, London, Macdonald, 1972, p. 279.
[92]Van Lennep, 'De Magritte à Broodthaers', p. 224.

been associated with the movement, they felt that this criticism was relevant and justifiable.

Artists seen to be 'selling out' had long been a problem for the Surrealist movement in general. Breton quoted Nougé's remarks on the issue in the *Second Surrealist Manifesto*, when he complained about,

> some of our friends who appear to me to be a trifle too preoccupied with placing and selling their paintings, for instance. "I should be grateful," wrote Nougé recently, "if those among us whose name begins to mean something, would erase it."[93]

Breton continued:

> The approval of the public is to be avoided like the plague. It is absolutely essential to keep the public from *entering* if one wishes to avoid confusion. I must add that the public must be kept panting in expectation at the gate by a system of challenges and provocations.[94]

Mariën quoted Breton in his definitive survey of Belgian Surrealism, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique (1924-1950)*, and applied particular criticism to the *Nouveaux Réalistes*, whom he believed had sold out to commercialism:

> The surrealist attitude which disowns the approval of the public, this public 'whom it's absolutely necessary to keep from *entering* if one wants to avoid confusion', whom it's necessary 'to keep exasperated at the door by a system of challenges and provocations', - the surrealist attitude can evidently not take sides with this brilliant trade even though the 'nouveau réaliste', having arrived at the supreme ease of fortune, persists in playing the game, imitating without end not to become disagreeable. One such, who began by plagiarizing the warehouses of the nazi camps with their accumulated series of glasses, rings, teeth, twenty years later continues to accumulate all that comes to hand. Another packages with the attentiveness of a packer in a large shop, who would work extra hours. A third tirelessly enlarges the same drawn stripes. A fourth daubs curtains. Everything is permitted ad nauseam and, as it is sold expensively, they don't blush about it.[95]

---

[93]André Breton, 'Second Surrealist Manifesto', in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1969, p. 177: 'quelques-uns de nos amis qui me paraissent un peu trop préoccupés de la vente et du placement de leurs tableaux, par exemple. "*J'aimerais assez*, écrivait récemment Nougé, *que ceux d'entre nous dont le nom commence à marquer un peu, l'effacent*."'

[94]Ibid.: 'L'approbation du public est à fuir pardessus tout. Il faut absolument empêcher le public d'*entrer* si l'on veut éviter la confusion. J'ajoute qu'il faut le tenir exaspéré à la porte par un système de défis et de provocations.'

[95]Mariën, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique*, p. 44: 'L'attitude surréaliste qui désavoue l'approbation du public, ce public "qu'il faut absolument empêcher d'*entrer* si l'on veut éviter la confusion", qu'il faut "tenir exaspéré à la porte par un système de défis et de provocations", - l'attitude surréaliste ne peut évidemment practiser avec ce reluisant négoce alors même que le "nouveau réaliste", arrivé aux

Mariën referred to Broodthaers in a footnote:

> Marcel Broodthaers, however, when he started in pop art in 1965, and to whom I pointed out that his tricoloured tibia, representing the *Homo belgicus*, or his spade covered with wallpaper, were quite simply 'surrealist objects', replied to me that 'Yes...certainly...but *there's no need to say so*'. After that, with his rosettes of mussels and his medlies of eggshells, he took the decorative and safe way that we all know.[96]

Mariën seemed to be in no doubt that what Broodthaers had made were Surrealist objects. He thereby implied that Broodthaers had not been successful in his intentions, that is, to make Pop Art. Broodthaers' response indicates how, if his work was misinterpreted, he would not offer a correct reading. He allowed the misinterpretation to continue until the person understood. His response to Mariën has been described by Maria Gilissen as particularly cruel because Mariën failed to grasp the irony of his remark and Broodthaers made him appear a fool.[97] Mariën dismissed all Broodthaers' subsequent work as 'decorative'. Although the book was written in 1979, Mariën does not seem to have spent any time considering Broodthaers' later works.

In 1972 Mariën made *L'étrange maladie de Monsieur B.* (The Strange Illness of Mr B) (pl. 68), a mixed media work comprising a small, deep, wooden frame painted dark pink containing a mussel shell situated on a black velvet background. Written in white on the shell is: 'N'ouvrir qu'en cas de déces' (Only open in the case of death).[98]

---

suprême aisances de la fortune, persiste de jouer le jeu, s'imitant sans cesse pour ne pas déplaire. Un tel, qui a commencé par plagier les entrepôts des camps nazis avec leurs accumulations sériées de lunettes, de bagues, de dentiers, vingt ans après continue d'accumuler tout ce qui lui tombe sous la main. Un autre empaquette avec l'assiduité d'un emballeur de grand magasin, qui ferait des heures supplémentaires. Un troisième agrandit inlassablement les mêmes bandes dessinées. Un quatrième peinturlure des drapeaux. Tout est permis jusqu'à la nausée et comme ça se vend cher, ils n'en rougissent pas.'

[96]Ibid., p. 44, fn. 72: 'Cepandant, Marcel Broodthaers, à ses débuts dans le pop'art, en 1965, et à qui je faisais remarquer que son tibia tricolore, figurant l'*Homo belgicus*, ou sa bêche recouverte de papier peint, étaient tout simplement des 'objets surréalistes', me répondit que 'oui...bien sûr..., mais *qu'il ne fallait pas le dire...*' Après quoi, il devait prendre avec ses rosaces de moules et ses agrégats de coquilles d'œufs la voie décorative et de tout repos que l'on sait.'

[97]In a conversation with Maria Gilissen, 23 March 1996; see also Compton, p. 30.

[98]The work is in the collection of Christine and Isy Brachot, Brussels; see Van Lennep, 'De Magritte à Broodthaers', p. 227.

In 1991 Mariën was interviewed for an article published on the occasion of Broodthaers' posthumous retrospective at the Jeu de Paume. The author of the article, Danièle Gillemon, did not seem to have a very high opinion of Broodthaers' work, and she quoted Mariën at length in support of her point of view. By this time Mariën had slightly revised his definition of Broodthaers' work, conceding that he had founded the 'national school of pop art', although in which he owed his ideas to Surrealism, a debt he claimed Broodthaers would not admit. As Mariën put it, Broodthaers 'knew that he owed these finds to Surrealism but did not want this to be known.'[99] Mariën continued his attack, stating that,

> Very quickly he became aware of the whole commercial advantage that he could take from these "innovations", in which, for that matter, he barely differed from a good number of the most famous artists.[100]

Mariën believed that with the support of certain influential people 'the joke went beyond hope and the trickery instituted itself on an international level'.[101] He stressed the commercial ability of the art dealers, on whom Broodthaers' success depended: 'These dealers behaved exactly like explorers who in the past traded trinkets for gold.'[102]

Gillemon went on to state that although certain objects by Broodthaers initially had some impact, one quickly came to realise that his work was simply insignificant and hermetic. The themes of self-mockery and insincerity soon wore thin from having been repeated so often. She pointed out that it was 'an open secret' that not only had Broodthaers not made all the works himself, but that works were made posthumously.[103] However, Mariën claimed, with more than a hint of irony,

---

[99]Marcel Mariën quoted in Danièle Gillemon, 'De la casserole au Jeu de Paume, la moule transfigurée', *Le Soir* (20 December 1991), p. 10: 'De la casserole au Jeu de Paume, la moule transfigurée'. 'Il savait qu'il était redevable de ces trouvailles au surréalisme mais ne voulait pas que cela se sache.'

[100]Ibid.: 'Très vite, il sentit tout le parti commercial qu'il pouvait tirer de ces "innovations", en quoi d'ailleurs il ne différait guère de bon nombre d'artistes parmi les plus célèbres.'

[101]Ibid.: 'la plaisanterie marcha au-delà des esperances et la tricherie s'instaura à l'échelle internationale.'

[102]Ibid.: 'Ces marchands se comportent exactement comme les explorateurs qui autrefois échangeaient des babioles contre de l'or'.

[103]Ibid.: 'Broodthaers, c'est le secret de polichinelle, ne fabriquait pas toujours de ses mains les objets qu'il concevait et un certain nombre d'entre eux, c'est toujours le secret de polichinelle, carrément posthumes, ont plus explicitement encore échappé à son contrôle.'

that it was possible to check when the works were made. Soon after Broodthaers' death Belgian mussels were affected by a fatal disease, which meant that since then only Dutch mussels were sold in Belgium. Therefore, in order to verify the authenticity of the work, one need only determine the origin of the mussels; 'Il suffit de vérifier leur provenance.'[104]

Mariën's attack was ill-founded, particularly on the question of authenticity for Broodthaers never claimed to have physically made all the works himself. In fact, it was important to him to work with craftsmen and to appreciate their own skills. Mariën, in his criticism, seemed to have remained with the opinion that the artist should not only be responsible for the idea but also for producing the actual artwork, an approach rejected by artists from Duchamp and Dada to Pop Art and Minimalism.

Mariën's other criticisms of Broodthaers may have been partly founded on the fact that Broodthaers had become successful and recognised with apparent ease whilst he had not. However, Broodthaers, in the statement for his first exhibition, had made his strategy extremely clear. He set out to sell his work and therefore succeed. By achieving success so quickly, he indicated how easy it was to play the market (or, at least, how easy he had found it to do so). Mariën disagreed with this strategy. According to Leo Dohmen, his close friend and colleague, Mariën did not feel that it was worthwhile to comment on a corrupt market and on what he considered essentially weak art, that is, Pop or *Nouveau Réalisme*. Mariën saw no value in simply repeating work of this kind and stated that 'Il a fait tout pour' - that Broodthaers did everything in order to succeed, behaving in the way the bourgeois art market would like and expect.[105]

The Mariën circle of Surrealists was particularly appalled by part of Broodthaers' 1975 text, 'To be a straight thinker or not to be. To be blind', which I discussed in Chapter 2. Reflecting on his career as an artist, Broodthaers had claimed: 'I have discovered nothing here, not even America. I choose to consider Art

---

[104]Ibid. A response to this article, entitled 'Pauvre Belgique...' and signed by "L'Eternel Brûlot", was sent to Mariën on 31 December 1991 (in Mariën archive, Brussels). The author defended Broodthaers and criticised the style of the article as stupid and nasty, based upon rumours and lies.
[105]In a letter from Leo Dohmen, 5 May 1996.

as a useless labour, apolitical and of little moral significance.'[106] Dohmen explained their response to such a comment, in that, 'Naturally, this lack of commitment in his plastic work was exactly the reason why the Belgian Surrealists did not like it at all.'[107] Taking Broodthaers' words literally and out of context, one may conclude that he did not consider art of much value. However, knowing and understanding his work and approach more broadly, his committment is clear. Even in the same text Broodthaers indicated that despite such pessimism (or realism), due to 'the transformation of art into merchandise', he was still committed to art. It appears that Broodthaers' irony in his examination of art and commerce was misunderstood, and his sucess deemed unacceptable by the Surrealists.

A further instalment of Mariën's critique on Broodthaers took the form of a letter Mariën's sent to the Belgian gallery director Isy Brachot III in 1993 on the occasion of the exhibition *René Magritte et la pensée* in which works by Magritte, Broodthaers, Mariën and Mesens were exhibited at the Galerie Isy Brachot in Brussels. Mariën's complaint in the letter was that works by Broodthaers were shown in the same exhibition as works by Magritte. Making reference to one particular work by Broodthaers, he did not conceal his anger in writing that,

> The plaque "Rue René Magritte Straat" is the product of such opportunist stupidity that this alone is enough to discredit him. As I knew his hidden face well, his presence is as incongruous as for a patriot would be a German corpse in the tomb of a Belgian or French unknown soldier.[108]

Mariën described Broodthaers' work as 'an admirable fraud' and, with a sigh, decided that, 'Alas, it is only admirable in terms of the reigning stupidity'.[109] Mariën cited both Magritte's Renoir and 'vache' works as examples of the fact that he never made

---

[106]'To be a straight thinker or not to be. To be blind': 'Je n'ai rien, rien découvert, pas même l'Amérique. Je fait le choix de considérer l'Art comme un travail inutile, apolitique et peu moral.'
[107]In a letter from Leo Dohmen, 5 May 1996.
[108]Marcel Mariën, 'La mauvaise compagnie', letter to Isy Brachot III, 11 January 1993, on the occasion of *René Magritte et la pensée*, Brussels, Galerie Isy Brachot: 'La plaque "Rue René Magritte Straat" relève d'un tel crétinisme opportuniste que cela seul suffirait à le déconsidérer en l'occurrence. Comme j'ai bien connu sa face cachée, sa présence est aussi incongrue que le serait pour un patriote un cadavre allemand dans la tombe du soldat inconnu belge ou français.'
[109]Mariën, 'La mauvaise compagnie': 'une escroquerie admirable...Mais hélas! elle n'est admirable qu'en fonction de la bêtise régnante'.

work with the intention of becoming successful. Although these works were heavily criticised at the time, Magritte persevered with them and 'never made the slightest concession to the taste of the public'.[110] By contast, Mariën claimed that,

> Broodthaers never ceased to concede to any propitious fashion with the sole aim of succeeding financially. I saw him from his debut 'playing the game' not without secretly taking the mickey out of those who fell for it. I would add that he is scarcely in a position to invoke Duchamp, *half a century* after the bottlerack.[111]

Mariën concluded by saying that were it not for the fact that the exhibition associated Broodthaers with Surrealism he would not care for his 'promiscuity'.

However, Mariën was not always so uncritical and supportive of Magritte. When he felt that Magritte was benefitting from his own success by making copies of his work he decided to expose this perceived commercialism in a very public way. In 1962 Mariën wrote a spoof statement, *La Grande Baisse* (Great Bargain Sale), which he illustrated with a fake 100 Belgian franc banknote, *Les Traveaux Forcés* (Hard Labour), made by Leo Dohmen, in which the king's head was replaced by that of Magritte. This was an offence considered forgery and which warranted 'hard labour', that is, 'les traveaux forcés'.[112] Mariën's text, in part based upon an earlier text by Magritte entitled 'La Ressemblance', discussed Magrittean concepts of mystery and resemblance in amusing and convoluted terms. It offered paintings made to order by Magritte, indicative of Mariën's criticism of the fact that Magritte was making variations of some of his paintings.[113] Dohmen has claimed that the spoof,

---

[110]Ibid.: '[Magritte] n'a jamais fait la moindre concession au public.'

[111]Ibid.: 'Broodthaers n'a cessé de concéder à une mode propice au n'importe quoi, dans le seul but de parvenir matériellement. Je l'ai vu à ses débuts "jouer le jeu" non sans se foutre en secret de ceux qui donneraient dans le panneau. Ajouterais-je qu'il serait mal venu d'invoquer Duchamp, un demi-siècle après le porte-bouteilles.'

[112]In the collection of the Brussels, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, under René Magritte *La Grande Baisse* (1962), tract, AACB no. 157; see Van Lennep, p. 207. Magritte may have become worried by the use of a forged banknote attributed to him because, according to Mariën, he had made money from exchanging forged notes in 1953 and so would not have wanted this earlier case to come to light, for which he might still have been prosecuted; see Marcel Mariën, *Le Radeau de la mémoire: Souvenirs détérminés*, Brussels, Le Pré-aux-Clercs, 1983, pp. 175-180.

[113]These variations included English language versions of some of the paintings with words (presumably for the American market). However, it is amusing that, for example, the original French version of *La Trahison des images* (1929) is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, whereas the 1935 English version is in the collection of the Galerie Isy Brachot, Brussels and Paris; see Whitfield, *Magritte*, pl. 67. See also Marcel Mariën, *Le Jumeau d'Amérique*, Brussels, Les Lèvres Nues, 1983, in which Mariën also criticises Magritte for making copies of his own work.

> was *not* done because we were jealous of Magritte's financial success, but because there was a risk of developing treason to Magritte's original beliefs. I am positive that he enjoyed the leaflet at the outset but later the pressure of his customers made him turn angry. It is well known that Magritte *always* detested the "hard labour" involved in the painting of his masterpieces.[114]

Despite his worries, Magritte was reported to have found the text amusing: 'It can't be denied, it's quite funny. It's not lacking in wit. I could never have done it.'[115] David Sylvester, editor of the Magritte *catalogue raisonné*, has not been so generous, stating that,

> Mariën has made virulent attacks on every worthwhile artist mentioned in his writings, from Duchamp to Broodthaers, on the grounds of their corruption by capitalism. Mariën has manifestly seen himself as a Jeremiah with a responsibility to be the scourge of anyone connected with Surrealism or Surrealists...who has let the side down.[116]

It is unfortunate that Mariën has spoken so frequently and vocally on Broodthaers' work, possibly giving an unbalanced view of the Belgian Surrealist response. For his part Magritte commented only once but was supportive. In a 1964 letter to Lecomte, on the occasion of Broodthaers' first exhibition, he wrote:

> I am letting you know that at the Galerie Saint-Laurent I have seen an object which would play an effective role in a museum vitrine, during the next exhibition 'du rêve'.
> It's a music stand that Broodaerts (sic) has conceived. With this object on show, the museum will be (to a certain extent) as surrealist as it wishes.[117]

---

[114]In a letter from Leo Dohmen, 5 May 1996.

[115]Interview with Magritte in *Le Soir* (3 July 1962) in David Sylvester (ed.), *René Magritte Catalogue raisonné*, London, Menil Foundation & Philip Wilson, vol. III, 1992, p. 120: 'Remarquez bien, c'est assez drôle. Même que ça ne manque d'esprit. Moi je n'aurais jamais pu réaliser cela.' Breton was also impressed, believing that the spoof was by Magritte himself. He responded with an article, 'Magritte et les marchands' *Combat-Art*(3 July 1962), in which he stated that, 'De ces doigts qui ont si souvent apprivoisé le mystère, cette fois une pincée de beau sel.' He also corresponded directly with Magritte, and even when Magritte pointed out that he was not responsible, Breton told him, in a letter dated 12 July 1962, 'C'était d'un humour du plus grand goût, avec cette distance que cela marquait tant à l'égard du cours de la Bourse des *autres* que de la tendance individuelle si générale à se prendre trop au sérieux. Une dérision exquise...'; see Sylvester (ed.), vol. III, pp. 122-123.

[116]David Sylvester, *Magritte*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1992, p. 313. See also Marcel Mariën (ed.), *La Destination: lettres à Marcel Mariën (1937-1962)*, Brussels, Les Lèvres Nues, 1977, no. 278.

[117]René Magritte, in a letter to Marcel Lecomte dated 21 August 1964, published in *Ecrits complets*, p. 728: 'Je te signale que j'ai vu à la Galerie Saint-Laurent un objet qui tiendrait un rôle efficace dans une vitrine du musée, lors de la prochaine exposition 'du rêve.'/Il s'agit d'un pupitre pour musicien que Broodaerts (sic) a imaginé. Avec cet objet exposé, le musée sera (dans une certaine mesure) surréaliste comme il le souhaite.'

Magritte was probably referring to *Pupitre à musique* (Music Stand) (1964) (pl. 69) in which mussel shells were stuck on plaster which had been smeared over sections of a red, wooden music stand. It appears from the letter that Lecomte was connected with a museum and Magritte, in his typically generous manner, thought that it should acquire this work by Broodthaers for its collection. Which museum is not clear but the purchase was not made (since the provenance of the work has been solely through private collections).[118] Magritte seemed to feel that interpretation was open on the character of the work. He continued to take an interest in Broodthaers' work, attending his exhibitions until he died in 1967.[119]

The Curse of Magritte: Following in Father's Footsteps

As will have become clear from the many references already made, Magritte was an important figure for Broodthaers' development as an artist. This was partly because of the perception at the time of his influence on Pop Art, by means of which Broodthaers distanced Magritte from Surrealism. However, Broodthaers was also strongly motivated to develop concepts instigated by Magritte in his word-paintings. Broodthaers also cited *La Trahison des Images* as a work of key importance to him in the catalogue to *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures*, discussed in Chapter 4. (The other work cited was Duchamp's *Fountain*.) Many works by Broodthaers, particularly films, drawings and plastic plaques, feature an actual pipe or image of a pipe.[120] The pipe is the sign which, according to Magritte in *La Trahison des Images* is not a pipe but which, in Broodthaers' work, unambiguously refers to Magritte's word-image concepts.

Broodthaers did not regard Magritte only with uncritical reverence. As he had said in 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he felt that Magritte could have gone further with *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, but he also felt slightly trapped, claiming that, 'Magritte

---

[118]According to the Galerie Willy D'Huyser, Brussels, who owned the work at one time; see also Goldwater & Compton, p. 113.
[119]For example, *Court-circuit*; see photograph of Magritte at the opening in *Cinéma*, p. 47.
[120]These include the many versions of the film *Ceci ne serait pas une pipe (Un film du Musée d'Art Moderne)* (1968-70), and the plastic plaques *Quatre Pipes Alphabet* (1969), *Les Pipes cassées* (c. 1969-70) and *Modèle: La Pipe* (1972).

was a father who ate his children'.[121] Broodthaers made a few versions of a plastic plaque entitled *Rue René Magritte straat* (1968) (pl. 70) (which had so angered Mariën), depicting a red brick wall, with a white puff of smoke in the top, left-hand corner (perhaps coming from an absent pipe). A sign on the wall reads 'rue René Magritte straat'. As Brussels is a bilingual city, both French and Flemish versions are always given for street names, an aspect of everyday life which unintentionally highlights the arbitrariness of language, with two different versions presented as equally valid. The plaque appears as a kind of homage, although Broodthaers also claimed that, 'It is not sufficient to enter the rue René Magritte, but it is also necessary to go out of it'.[122] In 1991 Jacques Charlier made his own homage to Broodthaers - a blue and white enamel street sign which reads 'rue Marcel Broodthaers straat'.[123]

A further work by Broodthaers indicative of the double-edged nature of his relationship with Magritte was *La Malédiction de Magritte (Les Nuages)* (The Curse of Magritte (The Clouds)) (1966) (pl. 71). In this mixed media work, glass pots filled with cotton wool sit on a shelf attached to a backing-board on which a blue sky with clouds are painted. The work can be seen as a three-dimensional version of Magritte's many paintings from the 1930s of cloudy skies, each of which was titled *La Malédiction*. The title was given by Nougé (who often titled Magritte's work), to provide a juxtaposition with the positive mood usually associated with blue skies.[124] Broodthaers' title does not simply appear to have been a reference to Magritte's paintings but also indicative of the nature of relationship.

What particularly interested Broodthaers was Magritte's discussion of the

---

[121]Jean Dypréau, 'Du Pop-art à l'environnement' in *La Métamorphose de l'objet, Art et Anti-art 1910-1970/Metamorfose van het Objekt, Kunst en Anti-Kunst 1910-1970*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 22 April-6 June 1970, p. 142. Dypréau records that Broodthaers told him, 'Magritte était un père qui mangeait ses enfants.'

[122]Dypréau, 'Du Pop-art à l'environnement', p. 142, in which he records that in a 1968 letter to Dypréau, Broodthaers wrote, 'Il ne suffit pas d'entrer dans la rue René Magritte, il faut encore en sortir.'

[123]Jacques Charlier, *Rue Marcel Broodthaers straat* (1991); blue enamel street sign. The sign was briefly in situ with an official inauguration held on Tuesday, 12 November 1991. All those interested in attending were instructed to meet at Café le Windsor, situated beside the plaque, 2 rue Egide van Ophem, 1180 Brussels; the plaque was exhibited at *Editions Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains*, Brussels, March 1994.

[124]Whitfield, *Magritte*, p. 57. See also Sylvester (ed.), vol. II, p. 173, for difficulties in titling all versions the same.

relationship between words and images and in many works Broodthaers also dealt with this relationship or that between words and actual objects. However, Broodthaers' method differed in many ways from Magritte's and it is this difference upon which the following pages will focus.

Magritte, in paintings such as *La Clef des Songes* (The Interpretation of Dreams) (three versions dated 1927, his first word-painting, 1930 & 1935) and *La Trahison des Images* (1929) (pl. 72), examined the relationship between a thing and the name by which it is known. In *La Clef des Songes* the canvas was divided into four or six sections, in each of which an object was painted with such clarity that the viewer is in no doubt as to what has been depicted. In the 1927 version these objects were a bag, a penknife, a leaf, a sponge (pl. 73). However, the labels beneath the images contradict expectations. The bag was labelled 'le ciel' (the sky), the knife 'l'oiseau' (the bird) and the leaf 'la table' (the table). Only the sponge, labelled as 'l'éponge', confirmed established forms of classification. Magritte thereby disrupted any one system which the viewer may apply in order to understand the work, whether this system is conventional, in which case the images conventionally relate, or openly arbitrary, in which case they do not relate. This approach was explained by Magritte in the first proposition of the text 'Les mots et les images' (Words and Images), in which he set out many aspects of the relationship between words and images: 'An object is not so wedded to its name that one cannot find another which suits it better.'[125]

Despite contradicting conventions, the *La Clef des Songes* canvases have a didactic feel to them. They are quite small, rendering them all the more like pages from school textbooks or classroom posters.[126] Breton described them as 'object lessons' (leçons de choses).[127] By labelling objects in this arbitrary/non-arbitrary

---

[125]René Magritte, 'Les mots et les images', *La Révolution Surréaliste*, Paris, no. 12 (15 December 1929): 'Un objet ne tient pas tellement à son nom qu'on ne puisse lui en trouver un autre qui lui convienne mieux.'

[126]René Magritte, *La clef des songes* from 1927 measures 38 x 55 cm, 1930 measures 81 x 60 cm and 1935 (English language version) measures 41 x 27 cm.

[127]André Breton, 'René Magritte's Breadth of Vision', 16 February 1964, pub. in *Surrealism and Painting*, p. 402.

way, Magritte sought to give them a freedom from conventional association, that is, from 'the obsessional urge to give meanings to things so as to use them or dominate them'.[128] Sylvester has also shown how Magritte's choice of images related to his short, poetic text from 1928, 'Théâtre en plein cœur de la vie' (Theatre at the very heart of life), in which Magritte described a princess running,

> through limitless fields in search of mysterious proofs. She exhausts the thoughts and actions of a multitude of people. She surmounts poetic obstacles: the suitcase, the sky; the penknife, the leaf; the sponge, the sponge.[129]

In a painting from later in 1927, *L'Avenir des Voix* (The Future of Voices), Magritte depicted what appear to be the same bag, leaf and sponge, in this case, together with a pipe. The canvas was not divided into sections and the objects were not labelled but appear suspended in the sky above some hills. By depicting the objects in the same way in each painting, Magritte presented them as standard types, as exemplars, rather than as objects with individual and unique qualities. He did not, for example, depict a specific leaf, but the notion of a leaf which he represented with a particular and familiar sign. Thus when the labels do not correspond conventionally with the images, the viewer is particularly confused.

Magritte's objects were limited in number, and mostly consisted of paintings on bottles or plaster casts. He also made two objects which incorporated words, *Ceci est un morceau de fromage* (This is a piece of cheese) (1936) (pl. 74) and *Le Bouchon d'Epouvante* (The Horrendous Stopper) (1966) (pl. 75). In *Ceci est un morceau de fromage* a small painting of a piece of cheese stands on a glass plate beneath a glass cheese dome. The cheese is painted with extreme illusionism and, in relation to the title, raises questions of what is real and what is artificial. It can be seen as the three-dimensional equivalent of *La Trahison des Images*.

---

[128]René Magritte, 'Un art poétique', 1955, in *Ecrits complètes*, no. 113, quoted in Whitfield, *Magritte*, pl. 69.

[129]René Magritte, 'Théâtre en plein cœur de la vie', pub. in *Distances*, Paris, vol. 1 (February 1928), quoted in Sylvester (ed.), vol. I, pp. 239-240: 'Maintenant la princesse court, amazone sans vertige, sur des champs sans limite à la recherche des preuves mystérieuses. Elle use les pensées et les actes d'une foule infinie de personnages. Elle franchit de poétiques obstacles: la valise, le ciel; le canif, la feuille; l'éponge, l'éponge.'

Le Bouchon d'Epouvante took quite a different approach and was Magritte's only work of this kind. In order that the work be made, Magritte sent a series of instructions in a letter to Marcel Mabille, a collector of his objects. Mabille was to buy a bowler hat and to have a gold label printed like those on old pharmacy jars, with the words 'usage externe' (external usage) in bold black letters.[130] Mabille should then stick this label onto the hat and Magritte would sign it. Magritte suggested that to display it, Mabille should place the hat on a stand in a square glass box. For his part in the construction of the work, Magritte said that he had provided the concept and the title.[131] Dating from the year before he died, the work appears to have been Magritte's version of conceptual art.

In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' Broodthaers explained how a word-painting by Magritte (he did not specify which) had influenced him from the start of his artistic activity:

> I was haunted by a certain painting by Magritte, the one in which words figure. With Magritte, you have a contradiction between the painted word and the painted object, a subversion of the sign of language and that of painting so as to restrict the notion of the subject.[132]

Broodthaers, in his use of words, did not set up such clear contradictions but examined a whole range of word/image and word/object relationships. Magritte had dealt with the relationship between a word and a depiction; Broodthaers examined not only this relationship but also that between a word and an object. So whereas Magritte was concerned with certain problems of painting - in particular, illusion and representation - Broodthaers was interested in more philosophical and linguistic issues. By using actual objects he shifted his frame of reference from a specific art problem to a broader context, and examined the way in which objects are labelled.

---

[130]In the end the labels were printed in red and black on white paper; see Sylvester (ed.), vol. III, p. 458.
[131]Ibid., p. 430.
[132]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', p. 39: 'J'étais hanté par une certaine peinture de Magrite, celle-là où figurent des mots. Chez Magritte, il y a contradiction entre le mot peint et l'objet peint, subversion du signe du langage et de la peinture au bénéfice d'un resserrement de la notion de sujet.'

Broodthaers' focus in his word-object works was not upon the component parts of the works - the words or the objects - but upon the relationship between them. This constituted a comparable shift of focus to that in his objects of the 1960s, in which he established the subject as the relationship between, for example, shells and pots or eggs and tables. From c. 1963-66, although he wrote texts for his catalogues, there seems to have been an absence of words from his visual works, as though he wanted to make a clean break with his use of words as a poet.

Thereafter, words gradually reappeared, and at first were incorporated within the objects. The most straightforward were those in which he combined a word with the image or object with which it is conventionally associated. For example, there are a number of works entitled *L'Œil* (The Eye) (1966) (pl. 76) in which an illustration of an eye, taken from an advertisement, was inserted into a glass pot, much like those in *La Tour Visuelle*. The word 'l'œil' appears printed beneath the image. To the informed viewer, the work recalls Magritte's word-image paintings. However, in direct contrast with these works, as well as with Saussurean linguistics, Broodthaers affirms, rather than denies, the name by which something is known. By doing so he pushes the linguistic arguments a step further and questions whether the word-image/object relationship is wholly arbitrary . This point was also made in a photographic canvas from 1967, *Un Tableau Magritte* (A Magritte Picture) (pl. 77), in which the name 'Magritte' appears, in beautiful calligraphic script, above a photographic image of the artist, looking at Broodthaers' *Court-circuit* catalogue. The viewer recognises the name and associates it with the artist's work. It is an interesting portrait by Broodthaers of his father figure, who looks with apparent approval at his catalogue. Having openly responded to Magritte's work, Broodthaers develops a mutual exchange - a dialogue - by showing Magritte's interest in his work.

Broodthaers made many other works with conventionally corresponding words and images or objects. In *Valise Charbon* (Coal Suitcase) (1966) (pl. 78) a suitcase is filled with coal with the word 'Charbon' stencilled on the lid. In *Sculpture*

(Sculpture) (1974) a suitcase was filled with plaster balls. In this case the word 'Sculpture' was stencilled on the lid. Broodthaers thereby set up not only word/object associations but also definitions of art. Whereas in *Valise Charbon* he simply described the contents of the case, in *Sculpture* he made an interpretative statement by defining the contents as art.

L'Erreur (The Error) (1966) (pl. 79) took a slightly different approach. Rows of eggshells were stuck on the bottom half of a canvas which had been painted black. On the top half the word 'moules' was written roughly in white paint. The possible error lies in the viewer's interpretation of the word 'moules' and whether it refers to mussels (la moule) or moulds (le moule).

Puzzles Without Solutions: *Le Corbeau et le Renard* and *Eloge du Sujet*

This chapter will conclude by examining two works by Broodthaers which relate to the themes under discussion here and in which he brought together words, images and objects.

In a 1968 interview with the film journal *Trépied*, when asked about *Le Corbeau et le Renard (d'après La Fontaine)* (The Crow and the Fox (after La Fontaine)) (1967) Broodthaers explained how he had brought the various elements of his film together:

> I took the text by La Fontaine and transformed it into what I call personal writing (poetry). In front of the typographic representation of this text, I placed a number of everyday objects (boots, a telephone, a bottle of milk) so that they would enter into a close relation with the printed characters. This was an attempt to deny as fully as possible both the meaning of the word and that of the image. Once the filming was over I realised that projection on a normal screen, ie., on a simple white canvas, did not reflect exactly the image I wanted to compose. The object remained too much outside the text. For the text and object to be integrated, the screen had to be imprinted with the same typographic characters as those in the film. My film is a rebus that you need to want to decipher. It's an exercise in reading.[133]

---

[133]*Le Corbeau et le Renard (d'après La Fontaine)* (1967), film, 16mm, colour, 7', Brussels; presented at the festival *Film Exprmntlfilm 4*, Knokke Le-Zoute, 25 December 1967-2 January 1968, where it was rejected from the official programme but shown out of festival without the special screen. 'Interview de Marcel Broodthaers', *Trépied*, trans. in *Cinéma*, pp. 319-320: 'J'ai repris le texte de La Fontaine et je l'ai transformé en ce que j'appelle une écriture personnelle (poésie). Devant la typographie de ce texte, j'ai placé des objets quotidiens (bottes, téléphone, bouteille de lait) dont la destination est d'entrer dans un rapport étroit avec les caractères imprimés. C'est un essai pour nier

This text can be read in relation to many of Broodthaers' works using words, images and objects, and concludes with what seems to be an accurate comment on his entire body of works - 'a rebus that you *need to want to* decipher' (my italics). The viewer is forced to make a considerable effort in order to understand Broodthaers' work beyond a superficial level.

The film was one of many works in which Broodthaers took as his starting-point La Fontaine's well-known fable *Le Corbeau et le Renard*.[134] In 1967 Broodthaers wrote a poem which combined fragments of the fable with phrases from elementary writing lessons and references to Mallarmé's *Igitur*. The text became Broodthaers' 'personal writing' or 'poetry'. A typographic impression of the text was made on canvas which was then mounted on wood. A shelf was attached and the typography formed the backing-board for the film. Objects from everyday life (such as boots, a telephone, a bottle of milk) were placed on the shelf and a film was made of these static objects. Aside from the objects already mentioned there were also small photographic cut-outs of works by Broodthaers (thereby incorporating self-reference and repetition) and of certain people who were important to him: Broodthaers and Magritte each wearing a bowler hat, Broodthaers' wife Maria washing mussel shells, and his young daughter Marie-Puck standing before *Table blanche* (White Table) (1965), a white-painted table covered with eggshells.

In Broodthaers' film, it was the camera which moved across the text or the object, rather than the actual objects which were animated. As Broodthaers said,

> At the origin of my intentions, there was this idea of the cinema that dispenses with the notion of movement. Film stock as a place for storing ideas - a rather special kind of can.[135]

---

autant que possible le sens du mot comme celui de l'image. Le tournage terminé, je ne suis aperçu que la projection sur l'écran normal, c'est-à-dire la simple toile blanche, ne reflétait pas exactement l'image que je voulais composer. L'objet restait trop extérieur au texte. Il fallait pour intégrer texte et objet que l'écran soit impressionné par les mêmes caractères typographiques que ceux du film. Mon film est un rébus qu'il faut avoir le désir de déchiffrer. C'est un exercice de lecture.'

[134]There is not room here for a thorough analysis of Broodthaers' many and complex works based upon *Le Corbeau et le Renard*; for more details see *Cinéma*, pp. 52-67 and David (ed.), pp. 116-131, including Anny De Decker, 'Le Corbeau et le Renard', pp. 118-121.

[135]Untitled text relating to *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, 1967, pub. and trans. in *Cinéma.*, pp. 58 & 319:

Rather than using film as a means of telling a narrative, Broodthaers perceived the film can as a kind of magic container in which ideas could be collected and stored.

The film was projected onto a specially-made screen on which fragments of Broodthaers' poem also appeared (pl. 80). The screen ressembled a close-up of part of the backing-board but on a larger scale, with few complete sentences and the words cut at either edge of the screen. There was constant repetition in a dense layering of words and images, offering many different combinations and preventing an easy reading of the text. The relationship between the text and the objects was arbitrary, thereby freeing the words and images from their conventional associations: 'I remove the object from its usual context, I place it in another.'[136]

Broodthaers had defined a similar method in 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': when asked in the opening question, 'Do objects function for you as words?', he said, 'I use the object as a zero word'.[137] He does not specify which objects. Broodthaers' reply was perhaps a reference to the neutral, colourless writing of the *nouveau roman*, and in particular to Barthes' seminal text *Le Degré zero de l'écriture* (1953).[138] Barthes referred to linguistics, in which, he explained, there has been established, 'the existence of a third term, called a neutral term or zero element...writing at the zero degree is basically in the indicative mood, or if you like, amodal'.[139] He described it as an 'innocent' rather than 'impassive mode of writing', a 'transparent form of speech, initiated by Camus' *Outsider*'.[140] Broodthaers', seems to have suggested in his brief reply, that his objects should be read in a similar way - as 'amodal', 'innocent' units which can be moved around, like words on a page.

'A l'origine de mes intentions, il y aurait ce point de vue sur le cinéma qui écarte la notion de mouvement. La pellicule est un lieu de conservation des idées - une boîte de conserve d'un modèle particulier.'

[136]Ibid.: 'Je retire l'objet de son contexte normal, je l'insère dans un autre.'

[137]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Les objets fonctionnent-ils, chez vous, comme des mots?/J'utilise l'objet comme un mot zéro.'

[138]Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), trans. Annette Lavers & Colin Smith, New York, Hill & Wang, 1967; see also Jonathan Culler, *Barthes*, London, Fontana, 1983, p. 29.

[139]Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, p. 76: 'l'existence d'un troisième terme, terme neutre ou terme-zéro...l'écriture au degré zéro est au fond une écriture indicative, ou si l'on veut amodale.'

[140]Ibid., p. 77: 'On ne peut donc dire que c'est une écriture impassible; c'est plutôt une écriture innocent...parole transparent, inaugurée par *l'Etranger* de Camus.'

Although Broodthaers described the film as 'an exercise in reading', it was a very visual work in which the words were to be looked at as much as read. As Broodthaers wrote, 'the book becomes a film, the film becomes a painting (the screen)'.[141] Elsewhere he stated clearly that the typographic canvas, 'was conceived not as a page designed to be conducive to reading but as an image with a visual value'.[142] As in his versions of *Pense-Bête* and *Un coup de dés*, Broodthaers had transformed a textual into a visual work. However, whereas in *Un coup de dés* he extracted the verbal from the visual without preventing the words from being understood, with the poem printed separately or audible on a tape recording, in *Le Corbeau et le Renard* the effect was of confusion and indecipherability, with the text fragmented and unreadable. Film seemed the ideal medium in which to examine the relationship between words and images, because, for Broodthaers,

> film is the extension of language. I began with poetry, then visual art, and finally cinema, which brings together several different elements of art. That is to say: writing (poetry), the object (visual art), and the image (film). The difficult thing, of course, is the harmony between these elements.[143]

Le Corbeau et le Renard, formed part of an edition which would also include typographies on cardboard and photographic canvases (pl. 81).[144] Broodthaers' use of film was not as a medium to be seen by the public in a conventional cinema. He made films as an integral part of his visual work and so they were shown, often on special screens, in galleries, as works in exhibitions. However, by making *Le Corbeau et le Renard* part of an edition, or multiple, the notion of film as an accessible medium was still implicit. As Broodthaers said in the *Trépied* interview:

> You could say this film is close to 'Pop Art'. It is one of those 'multiples' that

---

[141]*Cinéma.*, p. 52.
[142]Untitled text relating to *Le Corbeau et le Renard*: 'a été pensée non comme page destinée à favoriser la lecture mais bien comme image de valeur plastique.'
[143]'Interview de Marcel Broodthaers', *Trépied.*: 'Le film, pour moi, c'est le prolongement du langage. J'ai commencé par la poésie, puis la plastique et finalement le cinéma qui réunit plusieurs éléments de l'art. C'est-à-dire: l'écriture (la poésie), l'objet (la plastique) et l'image (le film). La grande difficulté, c'est évidemment l'harmonie entre ces éléments.'
[144]There were two editions; for details of each see *Cinéma*, pp. 62-63. The first shown in *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, Antwerp, 1968, the second, a slightly modified version, at the same gallery, from 17-30 June 1972.

> have been talked about for some time now as a means of distribution for art...It will therefore be exploited as a work of art, of which each copy comprises a film, two screens and a giant book. It's an environment.[145]

Although the first version was intended in an edition of 40, due to costs only 7 copies were finally made, with the remaining 33 produced in a cheaper, folio version.[146] Although *Le Corbeau et le Renard* was an edition, produced using mechanical methods, it did not fulfil the necessary criteria for a multiple as it became expensive and inaccessible. The text was based upon a classic fable from French literature by La Fontaine with indirect references to Mallarmé, both of which give the work a historical and literary perspective. Furthermore, the atmosphere of the 1968 Wide White Space exhibition opening was set by two friends of Broodthaers playing violin concertoes of Bach and Vivaldi. Although Broodthaers sought to locate himself within Pop Art, a work as complex as *Le Corbeau et le Renard* clearly indicates how his approach was different.

In the works discussed above Broodthaers wrote on the actual objects or works and/or projected words onto them. He integrated words with objects and images as closely as possible. By contrast, in *Eloge du Sujet* (Eulogy of the Subject) (1974) (pl. 82) he made a distinct separation between the two by writing words on labels which he placed in front of objects.[147] Unlike *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, in many cases there appears to be an association between the word and its adjacent object.

Eloge du Sujet does not fit into the context of Broodthaers' early objects. However, it is relevant to a discussion showing the range of his word-object works and how his works relate to those of Magritte. It consists of two museum style glass cabinets, set one in front of the other, with a framed print hung on the wall behind.

---

[145]'Interview de Marcel Broodthaers', *Trépied*: 'Ce film se rapproche si vous voulez du 'Pop-art'. C'est l'un de ces 'Multiples' dont on parle depuis quelques temps comme moyen de diffusion de l'art...Il sera donc exploité comme objet d'art, dont chaque exemplaire comporte un film, deux écrans, et un livre géant. C'est un environnement.'

[146]De Decker, in David (ed.), pp. 118-121.

[147]The work *Eloge du Sujet* has the same title as the exhibition in which it was first shown at the Basel, Kunstmuseum, 5 October-3 November 1974.

The first cabinet contains a closed wooden paintbox with a label stuck on the lid on which the date of the work is printed, '1974'. The font is bold and modern, reminding the viewer bluntly that the work has been made in the second half of the twentieth century. The second cabinet contains a variety of objects each with a label placed on or beside it. In contrast with the style of the '1974' label, these have a very elegant, somewhat old-fashioned font, often known as *écriture anglaise*, and which Broodthaers used in a number of works. On the raised back row the objects and labels are a cardboard box with (a label reading) 'perspective' (perspective), a stretched canvas with 'chevalet' (easel), a hat with 'sujet' (subject) and a milk bottle with 'style' (style). On the front row there are a silk tie on which flying ducks are depicted with 'valeur' (value), a hand mirror with 'image' (image), a wooden palette with 'la pipe' (the pipe) a canvas satchel with 'apprêt' (primer) and an envelope with 'cheveux' (hair). In the centre there is also a label which is not associated with an object on which the word 'figures' (figures) is printed. On the wall behind the cases hangs a framed 19th century print of a man with a racehorse. The caption on the print reads: 'Blink Bonny. Vainqueur du Derby anglais en 1857' (Blink Bonny. Winner of the English Derby in 1857). Broodthaers added a label which reads 'couleur' (colour).

In *Eloge du Sujet* Broodthaers' objects are presented as clearly and distinctly as Magritte's images are depicted in his word-paintings. The individual objects are not ambiguous and there appears to be no question as to what the viewer is looking at. Broodthaers seems to have taken a similar didactic approach to Magritte in the sense that the objects with their labels are all 'figures' which illustrate certain points, as in a child's school book. Many of the objects and labels seem to refer to the 'vocabulary' of images used by Magritte - mirror, hat, pipe. They also identify aspects of painting in general - perspective, style, image, colour, easel, stretcher - in much the same way as Broodthaers' *Salle Blanche* would in 1975 (discussed in Chapter 4).

However, the simple fact that Magritte was working with two-dimensional images and Broodthaers with three-dimensional objects meant that each had different issues to negotiate. Whereas Magritte was examining the relationship between word

and image in terms of illusion and representation, Broodthaers was dealing with actual objects. Although the words on Broodthaers' labels do not identify the objects within a conventional system, the relationship between the two was often not entirely arbitrary. As Barbara Reise wrote, *Eloge du Sujet* was an example of, 'The artist as structuralist...the object is be read, the word to be viewed, their possibly metonymic relationship to be pondered'.[148] Often it appears as if an intermediary link is missing, for example, the hat and 'sujet' is without the person, or the viewer is required to look in the mirror for the 'image' to be provided. The work is a eulogy to the subject, but although the objects are present, the subjects which give particular meaning to the objects are absent.

I hope to have shown how Broodthaers' approach in his word/object and word/image works was extremely varied. Whereas in some cases he applied conventional labelling, in others, for example *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, the relationship was intentionally arbitrary. In many works the link was by association, rather than direct and conventional correspondence, in which Broodthaers was dealing with 'encounters', that is, the bringing together in more direct relationships of 'objects and ideas...that all refer to the same world'. His method, therefore, was similar throughout his visual works, whether dealing with objects, images or words, in that he brought these elements together in various different and changeable combinations.

Broodthaers' early objects exist in relation to both Pop and *Nouveau Réalisme* although they cannot be entirely identified with either movement. By critiquing at the same time as imitating, Broodthaers was able to comment on the fashionable movements of the time 'from within'. As a result he began to achieve his strategy for success as set out in his 1964 statement, attracting the attention of curators and collectors who would exhibit and sell his works.

---

[148]Barbara Reise, 'The Broodthaers Museum Gambit', *Art in America*, vol. 63, pt. 3 (May-June 1975), p. 53.

Some European writers and critics of the time also became interested, most notably Pierre Restany, Jean Dypréau and Otto Hahn, although criticism from a broader sphere did not develop until the 1970s. Broodthaers continued to work with objects beyond this period, although rather than making discrete units which dealt with the relationship between parts of the work, his focus shifted again to the context in which the works were exhibited. The early objects would be re-presented from c. 1974-76 in various arrangements in the retrospective exhibitions or *Décors*, thereby offering new readings in different contexts.

Chapter 4

The Museum, The *Décor* - Presentation and Re-Presentation

This chapter discusses the notion of the shell in Broodthaers' work, from c. 1967 to 1976. In Chapter 3 we have seen how he used shells as component parts of his objects. These ranged from 'real' shells, that is, eggshells and mussel shells, to containers which have a shell-like form such as pots, suitcases and cabinets. In this chapter I shall show how the notion of the shell can be extended metaphorically to the context within which these works are presented - the museum. This context is not only the physical structure of the museum but also the many structures which determine the way in which the works are presented: catalogues, postcards, signs and labels. These can be seen as the layers or shells which surround the actual artwork.

In order to examine the many layers and functions of the museum 'from within', Broodthaers set up his own - the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*. This museum was composed of many different sections, some of which have already been discussed. The themes of this chapter will draw upon the *Section XIIème siècle*, the *Section Folklorique*, the *Section Publicité* and certain works relating to the *Section XIXème siècle*. The *Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute)* will be examined in detail. Often considered his major achievement, in this section Broodthaers questioned museum classification and the power of the museum to label an object as art.

Two years after the closure of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, in 1974 Broodthaers began a series of retrospective exhibitions or *Décors*, in which the exhibition functioned as a temporary framework within which a variety of works could be brought together. Early objects were re-presented alongside new works with each *Décor* providing a different context. This chapter discusses both the museum series

and the *Décors*, drawing out the notion of the shell present within each. By way of lengthy introduction, some of Broodthaers' earlier retrospective exhibitions and works are examined, tying in with notions of reproduction and re-presentation. Just as the focus in the objects was upon the relationship between component elements in the work - for example the eggs and the table - so the emphasis in the museum sections and the *Décors* was upon the relationship between works and the reframing of works in different contexts. Broodthaers' approach reflected the 'structuralist' belief that the artwork does not exist in isolation, but the way it is perceived and interpreted depends upon what is placed directly beside it as well as the larger context in which it is seen.

The museum series and *Décors* also enabled Broodthaers to fulfil his desire of becoming a collector. As he had mentioned in 'Comme du beurre dans un sandwich', he wanted to have his own collection but lacked the financial means to do so. Instead he decided to make his own works. He could also be said to have collected the works of others through reproductions in the form of slides and postcards. The notion of the collection is a strong current in Broodthaers' work, whether in terms of individual works of his (*Ma Collection*, *Rhétorique*, *Le Catalogue et la Signature*), or collections of his works (*Court-circuit*, the *Décor* exhibitions), works by other artists which he collected temporarily (some sections of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*) or reproductions (slide series', postcard reproductions, prints which he hand-coloured). The *Section des Figures* is examined as a collection, which in turn was assembled from various other collections, of a vast range of objects and images. All the exhibits were connected by the image of the eagle, the symbolic connotations of which will be discussed.

During the period within which the works in this and the following chapters were made, Conceptual Art was dominant in Europe and the United States. Therefore, it is within this context that the works discussed should be considered. Broodthaers did not declare himself a Conceptual artist in the way he claimed he was a Pop artist or not a *Nouveau Réaliste*. By the late 1960, he was sufficiently successful to be shown in his own right, rather than feel the need to attach himself

closely with any particular movement. However, although his works exist on a visual rather than purely conceptual level, the importance of ideas, his appropriation of 'readymade' images, his questioning of the definition of art and of the museum context inscribe his work within Conceptual Art.

Looking Back Already: Early Retrospectives and Reproductions

Broodthaers began making retrospective exhibitions as early as 1967 with *Court-circuit* (Short Circuit), in which he presented sixty works of Pop Art from the previous three or four years. These included casseroles of mussels, furniture with eggshells, and glass pots containing magazine cuttings of lips or eyes. He had also recently begun working with linen coated with photographic emulsion, which was then attached to a wooden stretcher. Black and white photographic images of earlier works were transferred onto this 'canvas', with the combination of materials and technique granting the images a greater importance than mere reproductions.

The images both remind the viewer of earlier works and become works in their own right. In the catalogue to *Court-circuit*, *Le système D* (The D System) (1967), was identified as, 'A poem on three cards on the theme of the reproduction of the reproduction of a reality reproduced'.[1] Other works in the exhibition referred to or included photographic or filmmaking equipment directly. *Le caméra qui regarde* (The Watching Camera) (1966) (pl. 83) comprised a tripod, on top of which sat, as in *La Tour Visuelle*, a circular sandwich of two wooden boards, between which were several glass pots, each pot containing a magazine image of an eye. He thereby equated the eye of the camera with the photographically reproduced images of human eyes. In an amusing catalogue text, which illustrates how Broodthaers' work was received at the time by the *Nouveau Réalistes*, Restany described how in the twentieth century there was 'an excess of information and of visual enticements'.[2] He explained

---

[1]*Court-circuit*: 'Le système D Poème en 3 cartons sur le thème, la reproduction de la reproduction d'une réalité reproduite.' There is no photographic documentation of this work but, according to Maria Gilissen, it was probably three cards printed in the three colours of the Belgian flag with the text which begins 'Le D est plus grand que le T' from *Le Corbeau et le Renard*.

[2]Restany, 'J'attends ton coup de fil, Marcel!', in *Court-circuit*: 'un excès d'information et de sollicitations visuelles.'

that Broodthaers could not avoid being affected by this: 'Plunged up to his neck for 43 years in the saturation bath of mass media Broodthaers desperately looks for **his reality**, which is, perhaps, finally, **the art of others**.'[3]

Works from the *Court-circuit* exhibition reappeared in what can be seen as a one-work condensed retrospective, *Le Catalogue et la Signature* (The Catalogue and the Signature) (1968) (pl. 84), which functions in a similar way to those other archival works from 1971, *Ma Collection* and *Rhétorique*. The basis of *Le Catalogue et la Signature* was a square photographic 'canvas'. Images of earlier works, some of which were exhibited as individual three-dimensional objects or two-dimensional reproductions in *Court-circuit*, were printed as a border, including *Un Tableau Magritte*. The central square of the work was black, with Broodthaers' initials in white (apparently) randomly signed across it five times. Slides of other earlier works were projected onto the black area, with the images overlapping the border images. The 'canvas' thereby became a screen, a receiver for other reproduced images.[4] There was even a slide of the screen itself, increasing the chain of reproductions yet further. With Broodthaers' signature printed on the 'canvas' it is as though each projected image becomes a signed image invested with the status of an original work rather than a reproduction.

Collections in Miniature

Broodthaers described the slide projections as a 'système de lecture' or a 'photo-film'.[5] As a poet/artist who sought to remove the boundaries between media, slides were a means of reproducing and re-presenting works in a combination of media. He wrote and drew directly onto slide film with coloured felt pens and Indian ink. He also used images from sources other than his own works, including book and magazine illustrations, particularly from the 19th century by Grandville and from Epinal,

---

[3]Ibid.: 'Plongé jusqu'au cou depuis 43 ans dans ce bain de saturation des mass media Broodthaers cherche désespérément **sa réalité**, qui est peut-être, finalement, **l'art des autres**.'
[4]It also existed as an individual object and was sold as such, without the slides; see *Projections*, p. 54, in which the slides are listed as in a private collection in Brussels and the photographic linen in a private collection in Antwerp.
[5]Anna Haakens, 'Introductory Essay', in *Projections*, p. 10.

postcards, playing cards, old children's games and comic strips.[6] During the 1970s when he had some money he built up a considerable collection of rare illustrated books from which he often made slides.[7] He collected images from a range of sources and, in turn, the series of reproductions become workd in their own right, with Broodthaers the artist selecting, framing, and deciding the sequence of images within each series.[8]

There are interesting historical parallels between Broodthaers' collections of images through reproductions, and paintings of collections of paintings. The latter were particularly popular in the 17th century in the southern Netherlands, especially in Antwerp. In David Tenier the Younger's self-portrait, *The Artist in his Workshop* (1635) (pl. 85), the room is filled with paintings, all of which can be identified. *The Artist in his Workshop* then becomes a kind of condensed catalogue or self-advertisement of Tenier's work in which a wide range of his paintings can be seen simultaneously. The miniature size of the works shown offers comparison not only with Broodthaers' *Ma Collection* but also with Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise*. Duchamp himself compared his box to the case of a travelling salesman and also to a museum collection of works:

> Instead of painting something the idea was to reproduce the paintings that I loved so much in miniature. I didn't know how to go about it. I thought of a book, but I didn't like that idea. Then I thought of the idea of the box in which all my works would be mounted like in a small museum, a portable museum, so to speak.[9]

Comparisons between Broodthaers' slide series of images by a variety of artists, such as *Caricatures et peintures du XIXème siècle* (pl. 86) and *Projection sur caisse* (both

---

[6]It is interesting that the postcards which were used in the *Section XIXème siècle* have since entered a private collection; see *Projections*, p. 50. Because they were used as component parts in artworks, they have acquired a value which the apparently identical postcards in the museum shop do not possess.

[7]The books are kept in the Broodthaers archive, Brussels. Those he used for the slide projections are listed in the Appendix to *Projections*, pp. 133-135.

[8]Through reproduction the artist also controls the size of an image. Malraux, in 'Museum Without Walls', discussed how, in an art book, a work tends to lose its relative size and all the reproductions are roughly equal. See André Malraux, 'Museum Without Walls', in *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 21.

[9]Marcel Duchamp in conversation with James Johnson Sweeney, 'Regions which are not ruled by time and space...', in Sanouillet & Peterson (eds.), p. 136.

1968) (pl. 87), can also be made with Tenier's *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Italian Painting Gallery* (1651), which is in the collection of the Brussel's Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, and Willem van Haecht's *The Cabinet of Cornelis van der Geest* (1628). Once again, all the works reproduced in these paintings can be identified. However, in van Haecht's work the particular scene depicted, of a visit to van der Geest's collection by Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella, has been proven fictitious; that is, although the visit took place in 1615, many of the works included by van Haecht had not yet been made.[10] Rather than representing a particular event, the painting, therefore, condenses not only the size of the works but also a period of time. The racks of postcards in the contemporary museum shop similarly function as a miniature condensed version of the museum collection itself. Browsing through, one is able to see a whole range of works at once (although the classificatory system is generally different from that employed in the actual rooms, with the cards arranged alphabetically according to the surname of the artist). Broodthaers, through his use of slide reproductions, was able to create his own virtual collection of works from a variety of different sources and artists. In fact, his slides were taken not from the original works but from book or other reproductions, thereby offering him yet greater freedom in his choice of images and ability to enjoy 'vicarious possession' of the originals.[11]

The comparisons between Broodthaers' collections of miniature reproductions and the 17th century paintings described above were not suggested by Broodthaers himself. Nevertheless, they are useful in locating his work within a broader context. It is also worth noting that Broodthaers' *Section XVIIème siècle* took place in Antwerp, which in the 17th century was also the European centre for the production of small scale paintings for *Kunstkammern*, that is, for private collections of

---

[10]Christopher White, 'Artis Pictoriae Amator: An Antwerp Art Patron and his Collection', in *Peter Paul Rubens: Man & Artist*, New Haven & London, Yale, 1987, p. 39.

[11]See Donald Preziosi, 'Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity', in Paul Duro (ed.), The Rhetoric of the Frame. Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 99, in which he describes museums as 'repositories of unique objects whose principal value is private enlightenment, entertainment, fetishization, and vicarious possession. You may not be able to own one..you certainly can't touch them; but you can if you wish buy a cioy of one and paper your existence with what for you can become "a permanent part of your life".'

pictures.[12] Works were made on a small scale because they were easier to export, they could be grouped more readily and because the houses were small. Broodthaers' Antwerp section which took place in 1969 seems to be a fitting 20th century equivalent of the 17th century *Kunstkammer*, with its postcards of works by Rubens - small scale and ideal for sending abroad (pl. 88).

Broodthaers was certainly interested in the structure of the *Kunstkammer* and *Wunderkammer* or Cabinet of Curiosities. In fact one of the unfinished parts of the *Musée d'Art Modern Département des Aigles* was named the *Section Folklorique/Cabinet de Curiosités* (pl. 89).[13] This was to have been held in the Middelburg Zeeuws Museum's Folk Department, which contained various objects displayed in cabinets. Broodthaers gave the collection a small canvas on which he had written 'MUSEE - MUSEUM Les Aigles' which Marie-Puck had then embroidered. The rest of the project was left unfinished but there was to have been an accompanying catalogue which included photographs by his wife Maria Gilissen of a series of objects in the collection.[14] The photographs were taken but the catalogue was not produced.

The 17th century paintings described above which comprise other paintings can be seen as shells or containers for miniature works, as two-dimensional versions of Duchamp's suitcase. The canvas provides a frame within which the miniature works are contained. Both the postcards and packing crates of the *Section XIXème siècle* and the *Section XVIIème siècle* can also be seen as shells of the original works; the packing crates take care of the works when they are transported from one place to another, the postcards are easily transportable images which represent the original works which are elsewhere. Walter Benjamin, in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', equated reproducibility with transitoriness and uniqueness with permanence. In his discussion of the 'aura' of a work he also used the analogy of

---

[12]*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIIème siècle*, Antwerp, A 37 90 89, 27 September-4 October 1969.
[13]*Musée d'Art Modern Département des Aigles, Section Folklorique/Cabinet de Curiosités*, Middelburg, Zeeuws Museum, Département Folklorique, 1970.
[14]David (ed.), p. 205.

the shell, in that to reproduce a work is 'to pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura.'[15] Douglas Crimp, however, has argued that it is precisely through reproductions that the original develops an aura, because the reproduction reminds us that the original is unique. The possibly infinite number of reproductions depend upon the original for their existence. It is through the 'presence' of the reproductions that the 'absence' of the original is made all the more apparent.[16] Crimp stresses the fact that,

> the museum has no truck with fakes or copies or reproductions. The presence of the artist in the work must be detectable; that is how the museum knows it has something authentic.[17]

Broodthaers' museum with its contents of slides and postcards defied the traditional nature of the institution. By setting up and running his own museum he was able to bypass any such obstacles.

Broodthaers considered the issue of originality in 'Où est l'original?' (Where is the original?). This was a text written to accompany *Musée-Museum* (1972) (pl. 90), a print edition comprising a lithograph of an architect's drawing of the ground floor of his house in rue de la Pépinière showing the layout of the *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles*. Colour postcards were inserted into the lithograph, slides of which had been projected during the *Section XIXème siècle*. The edition of 100 was divided into two unequal parts: 60 contained colour postcards of paintings by Ingres (*La Grande Odalisque* and *Le Bain turc*) and Courbet (*Les Dormeuses*), with the remaining 40 containing black and white postcards of drawings by Ingres (*Portrait du violoniste Paganini* and *Portrait de Mme Victor Baltard*). The architect's drawing and Ingres' work are visually compatible with a similar precision of line. The architect's drawing acts as another defining shell of the museum, another line surrounding the contents. The museum was a temporary installation and once its

---

[15]Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1955), in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, London, Fontana, 1973, p. 217.
[16]Douglas Crimp, 'The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism', in *On the Museum's Ruins*, p. 111.
[17]Ibid., p. 112.

duration had ended what remained were these drawings and documentation rather than actual works.

In the text Broodthaers answered himself by saying that, 'The original work will be made up of postcards inserted into a plan'.[18] The plan referred to his house, the site of the museum, and the postcards to those which had been on display; 'The 'original' content of this situation diverted these reproductions from their usual use and aim'.[19] In other words, in the *Section XIXème siècle* Broodthaers had invested the postcards with a certain value which they do not otherwise have. He concluded that the notion of the 'original' was a tautology 'which could be a critique if it was not signed by the author'.[20] By signing each copy of the edition Broodthaers gave postcard reproductions the status of original works.[21]

In *Musée-Museum*, reproductions, that is, reminders of original works, had become components of other original works. Furthermore, these particular postcards depicted works by Ingres, thereby conflating 19th century images with 20th century reproduction techniques. Rather than the notion of the original becoming lost in the layers of reproductions, Broodthaers presents it as flexible and shifting.

Another work dealing with similar themes and which developed from the *Section XIXème siècle* is *Mademoiselle Rivière et Monsieur Bertin* (1975) (pl. 91). This is a collage of nine black and white photographs laid out in three rows of three. Three of the images depict details of packing crates in the *Section XIXème siècle* with words stamped on the surface of the crates - 'Picture', 'With Care' and 'Keep Dry'. One shows the inside of a crate, clearly revealing that it is empty. The other five are

---

[18]Text written to accompany *Musée-Museum*, 1972: 'L'œuvre originale serait constituée par les cartes postales inserées dans un plan.'
[19]Ibid.: 'Le contente 'original' de cette situation detournait ces reproductions de leur usage et de leur but habituels.'
[20]Ibid.: 'Ou encore une tautologie qui pourrait être critique si elle n'était signée par l'auteur.'
[21]The plan of a museum was the basis of *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles, Section Documentaire*. In August 1969, Broodthaers and Herman Daled dug the plan of a museum in the sand on the beach at Le Coq, on the Belgian North Sea coast. They put up signs which read 'Musée d'Art Moderne Section XIXème siècle', Défense absolue de toucher aux objets' and 'Il est strictement interdit de circuler sur les travaux' in French and Dutch. They wore caps with 'Museum' written on them. The next tide washed the plans away.

black and white photographs of colour slides of postcards of paintings by Ingres which were projected onto the crates in *Projection sur caisse* (1968). The original paintings are held in the Louvre, the archetypal 19th century art gallery. The middle row of photographs are of *Mlle Rivière* (1805), a woman with whom Broodthaers imagined he could fall in love, with the two on the bottom row of *Monsieur Bertin* (1832), a painting Broodthaers considered a remarkably accurate portrayal of the bourgeoisie.[22]

Although in the photographs the viewer immediately recognises the Ingres paintings, what one sees is actually many steps removed from the original. The packing crates were from an art removals company, and Broodthaers intended that although the slide was projected onto the outside, it would seem to reveal what may be inside the crate. The slide thereby acts as a form of x-ray, enabling one to see both the contents and the exterior of the crate simultaneously.[23] At the same time, however, the photograph of the interior reveals that the crate is definitely empty.[24] The projected image then becomes a magical and intangible illusion. As the slides are projected in sequence onto the crate/screen, one image disappears and another appears in its place, emphasising the transcient nature of the images. The slides, photographs and packing crates are layers or shells which surround the original work. However, at a certain point, these layers are no longer simply reproductions, but take on the status of original works.

Ingres was the artist Broodthaers represented more than any other in the first part of his museum. In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he would say that, 'It is Ingres who interests me, not Cézanne and the apples'.[25] Broodthaers thereby referred back to the 19th century as the period relevant to his work as an artist. He rejected Modernism's focus upon formal qualities, which he exemplified with Cézanne's

---

[22]See entry in *Catalogue of the Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art*, London, 1981.
[23]Ibid.
[24]A photograph of an empty crate was also used as the image on the poster for the *Section XIXème siècle* exhibition. The posters were displayed in the *Section Cinéma*, Düsseldorf, Burgplatz 12, January 1971-72, reconstructed at the time of the touring exhibition *Marcel Broodthaers Cinéma* at the Düsseldorf, Kunsthalle, 27 September-16 November 1997; see also David (ed.), p. 211.
[25]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Ce qui m'interesse, c'est Ingres. Ce n'est pas Cézanne et les pommes.'

preoccupation with compositions of apples. In the second half of the 20th century Ingres is perceived as the archetypal 19th century academic painter who seems to epitomises the spirit of the Louvre.

Particularly pertinent to Broodthaers' work is Ingres' use of copying and reproductions. A perfectionist, when Ingres made copies of his paintings he did not miss the opportunity to make slight alterations or improvements, rather than simply copy the original exactly. This meant that the distinction in his work between 'original' and 'replica' often became blurred. In his *Ecrits sur l'art*, Ingres asked rhetorically, 'Is not a good copy worth more than a bad but original painting?'[26] However, he was criticised by some of his contemporaries both for repeating the same forms frequently and for copying from other sources. These were very varied and ranged from paintings by Titian and Raphael to Greek vases and engravings. He made tracings and there is a nice coincidental use of transparent images in Ingres' tracings and Broodthaers' slides of paintings by Ingres.

Ingres also made miniature reproductions of his own works in oil or watercolour to send to friends and patrons in France while he was living in Italy, so that they would be kept up to date with his work. Small versions were easier to transport. Two copies of *La Grande Odalisque*, for example, were each made around postcard size, a fitting parallel with Broodthaers' use of postcard reproductions of Ingres' work.[27] It is, therefore, not surprising that Ingres was one of the first artists to embrace photography as a cheap means of making small format reproductions.

Postcard reproduction was similarly awarded a certain value by Aragon and Cocteau in *Conversations on the Dresden Gallery* in the late 1950s, in which they discussed paintings in that particular collection, but solely through black and white photographs and colour slides as the actual paintings had been taken by the Soviets.[28]

---

[26]Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Ecrits sur l'art*, Paris, 1947, 24, p. 80; see also Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*, New York, Zone Books, 1996, p. 248.

[27]See Marjorie B. Cohn, 'Introduction: In Pursuit of Perfection', p. 18, in Debra Edelstein (ed.), *Ingres*, Louisville, Kentucky, The J. B. Speed Art Museum, 1983.

[28]See also Johannes Gachnang, 'Chaos, Wahnsinn', in exh. cat., *Chaos, Wahnsinn: Permutationen der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Krems, Kunsthalle, 20 July-27 October 1996, p. 20.

Aragon and Cocteau's knowledge of the Louvre collection enabled them to discuss other works without seeing the originals. Particularly interesting is that, in the course of their extensive discussions, they never expressed regret that they were only able to look at reproductions and not at the original works. One would expect that they would feel frustrated at not being able to experience, for example, the size of a work or the texture of its surface. Instead they commented on how the composition worked differently depending on whether the reproduction was in black and white or colour.

Classifying Objects - But Are They Art?

As collector/curator of his own museum, Broodthaers had the freedom to question established practices. He questioned the status of the 'work of art', regarding values attached to notions of the original, reproduction and the signature. He also questioned the role and status of the museum as a context with the power to define an object as a 'work of art'. The exhibition which examined this question is often the work by which he is known, the *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis Heute)* (Museum of Modern Art Department of Eagles Figures Section (The Eagle from Oligozan to today)) (pl. 92).[29] Held in the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle from May to July 1972 it comprised 282 objects each bearing the image of an eagle. The effect was that of 'a strange bird of prey aviary'.[30] Whilst some were indisputably 'works of art' (for example, Magritte's *Fontaine de jouvence* (1957), which depicted an eagle of stone, or a specially commission painting by Gerhard Richter[31]) others ranged from jewelry and ceramic pots to logos on wine labels or typewriters. There was also 'the real thing' in the form of stuffed birds. All the objects had been borrowed from either museums or private sources and all were returned at the end of the exhibition.

---

[29]For detailed discussion of this exhibition see Borgemeister, in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 135-151.

[30]Jacques Meuris, 'Broodthaers-en-Allemagne', *Clés pour les Arts*, vol. 21 (May 1972), p. 15: 'une étrange volière à rapaces.'

[31]Reference is made to these paintings in an interview with Richter in which he said that Broodthaers asked him 'de faire un échange. C'est arrivé ainsi.' He described Broodthaers as 'un homme incroyablement sympathique et fascinant...Mais ce qu'il fait, je ne le comprends toujours pas. J'aime bien, j'ai plaisir à regarder son travail'; see Doris von Drathen, 'Entretien avec Gerhard Richter', *Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, vol. 40 (Summer 1992), pp. 86-89.

Broodthaers broke with conventional classification regarding both the range of exhibits and the nature of his own activity. Instead of making works to be exhibited he took on the role of curator and borrowed objects from other sources. In this way his work was the exhibition itself rather than the contents exhibited. To emphasis the various origins of the exhibits he listed a number of the museums on the front and back covers of the two volumes of the catalogue and gave details inside the catalogues about all the objects exhibited and their museum sources, presumptuously listing the *Département des Aigles* alongside established museums. On the cover of the first volume was a photograph of three eagles' eggs with their original museum labels (pl. 93). It was an image which neatly encapsulated the main underlying themes of Broodthaers' work at this time - the shell, the museum, classifying, word-image relationship, the symbol of the eagle, repetition.[32]

Broodthaers' unplanned method of setting up an exhibition allowed developments to happen by chance and the Düsseldorf exhibition was no exception:

> Chance doesn't allow itself to be contained, it really doesn't. Chance is finally the only ray of light that falls on an undertaking such as this one. It liberates and at the same time lets one progress more or less casually, so that in an unexpected way one becomes aware of what one has taken on.[33]

This meant that the exhibition evolved gradually with the site of exhibition also the site of production. This had also been the case in the *Section XIXème siècle* in which the site of the museum was part of Broodthaers' house. Broodthaers had been aware from the outset that the Düsseldorf exhibition was experimental in character and because loans were coming from so many different locations he was not sure what the results would be before the installation was complete.[34] As he said in an interview

---

[32]The cover of the second volume of the catalogue featured a cross-section diagram of an eagle skull adding a life-death dimension to the binary structure of the catalogue.

[33]'Auszug aus einem Gespräch mit Marcel Broodthaers', (extracts of an interview with Jürgen Harten and Katharina Schmidt), carried out in French and German in May 1972, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 222, German translation in the press folder for *Figures*, 6 p; English trans. in Buchloh (ed.), p. 138, fn. 5.

[34]See 'Section des Figures', in *Figures*, vol. II, p. 4, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 218: '"L'Aigle de l'oligocène jusqu'à nos jours" a été annoncée comme une exposition expérimentale, ce qui signifie la même chose que: votre résultat n'était pas d'emblée assuré.'

with Johannes Cladders: 'With my museum I pose the question. This is why I do not need to give a reply.'[35]

By bringing the objects together thematically, Broodthaers commented upon the equally absurd ways in which museums departmentalise their stock. In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', the 'interviewer' made reference to Lautréamont's often quoted line on chance juxtaposition when asking about Broodthaers' method of chosing objects:

> This sort of claim to embrace artistic forms as far distant from one another as an object can be from a traditional painting - doesn't it remind you of the encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table?[36]

In his reply Broodthaers distanced himself from this suggested Surrealist method. Instead, he indicated that his choice was based less upon juxtaposition and more upon a disruption of conventional forms of classification:

> A comb, a traditional painting, a sewing machine, an umbrella, a table may find a place in the museum in different sections, depending upon their classification. We see sculpture in a separate space, painting in another, ceramics and porcelains..., stuffed animals...Each space is in turn compartmentalized, perhaps intended to be a section - snakes, insects, fish, birds - susceptible to being divided into departments - parrots, gulls, eagles.[37]

The Düsseldorf exhibition, then, seems to have had less to do with Surrealist juxtaposition and more in common with Foucault's 1966 publication *Les Mots et les Choses*. The 1970 English translation was titled *The Order of Things*, thought by some to be Foucault's original title, and it is a questioning of the established order of things which interested Broodthaers.[38] In his introduction, Foucault explained how

---

[35]In an interview with Johannes Cladders, 28 January 1972, pub. in *INK-Dokumentation 4*, Zurich, 1979, p. 32, initially intended for the catalogue of *Documenta 5*; the text was eventually inserted on loose, photocopied sheets; see also David (ed.), p. 229: 'Avec mon musée je pose la question. C'est pourquoi je n'ai pas besoin de donner la réponse.'

[36]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Cette façon de prétendre embrasser des formes artitiques aussi éloignées les unes des autres qu'un objet peut l'être d'une toile traditionelle ne fait-elle pas penser à la rencontre d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie sur une table de vivisection?'

[37]Ibid.: 'Un peigne, une toile traditionelle, une machine à coudre, un parapluie, une table peuvent prendre place au musée dans des sections différentes selon un classement. Nous voyons les sculptures dans un espace réservé, les peintures dans un autre, les porcelaines et les faïences..., les animaux empaillés... Chaque espace, à son tour compartimenté, peut être destiné à une section - les serpents, les insectes, les poissons, les oiseaux - susceptible d'être divisée en départements - les perroquets, les oiseaux-piecheurs, les aigles.' (omission dots in original)

[38]See David Macey, 'Words and Things', in *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, London, Hutchinson, 1993,

the inspiration for his book was a passage by Borges, who in turn had quoted 'a certain Chinese encyclopedia', in which the taxonomy of animals revealed 'another system of thought'; this other system indicated 'the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*'.[39] Broodthaers was precisely not afraid to think *that*, and by selecting objects thematically he encouraged the viewer to question conventions of museum classification and definitions of art.

Beside many of the objects he placed a small plastic label on which was a number with 'This is not a work of art' in English, French or German (pl. 94). In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he explained why:

> "This is not a work of art" is a formula obtained by the contradiction of a concept by Duchamp and an antithetical concept by Magritte. It allowed me to decorate Duchamp's urinal with the emblem of an eagle smoking the pipe. I think I underlined the principle of authority that has made the symbol of the eagle the colonel of art.[40]

With the label Broodthaers contradicted Duchamp to say that although these were exhibits in a museum that did not necessarily make them art. He also rejected the notion of the 'readymade', for example with regard to the Regency style mirror which was exhibited: 'This mirror is not however to be classed under the label 'Ready Made'. Let us say that it is not a urinal.'[41] In other words, it was a mirror. The closing words from Broodthaers' 1964 statement are worth bearing in mind: 'What is it? Quite simply, objects.' He suggested that saying something is art is simply conceptual - a matter of applying a different label to it, but which can easily be removed or altered. He further complicated the issue by selecting most of the objects for the *Section des Figures* exhibition from other museums. Many of these were originally functional

---

p. 173.

[39]Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (1966), London, Tavistock, 1970, p. xv.

[40]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': '"Ceci n'est pas un objet d'art" est une formule obtenue par la contraction d'un concept de Duchamp et d'un concept antithétique de Magritte. Ce qui m'a servi à décorer l'urinoir de Duchamp de l'insigne de l'Aigle fumant la pipe. Je crois avoir souligné le principe d'autorité qui fait du symbole de l'Aigle le colonel de l'Art.' In the *Section Publicité* Broodthaers included a photograph of *Fountain* with a superimposed emblem of an eagle printed in red.

[41]Text in catalogue to *Documenta 7*, vol. I, 19 June-28 September 1982, p. 27: 'Ce miroir n'est cependant pas à classer sous l'étiquette 'Ready Made'. Disons qu'il n'est pas un 'urinoir'.

objects but had since entered the museum and acquired the status of art; Broodthaers denied this status with the simple application of the plastic labels.

The *Section des Figures* looked like a kind of *Wunderkammer* which opened its doors to both (conventionally speaking) art and non-art objects but all of which may be of interest to a collector. Like the *Wunderkammer*, it presented a mixture of natural and artificial objects. The question of classification was an issue for the collector too, who had to decide whether something should be included in a *Wunderkammer* or its close relative a *Kunstkammer*. This decision was often difficult to make, as an object could be included in the *Kunstkammer* simply because a well-known artist was involved in its production. If not, a virtually identical object would be placed in a *Wunderkammer*. In addition, classification often alters during the course of time depending upon relative rarity of objects and materials, and shifting monetary values.[42] However, unlike the *Kammern*, Broodthaers' use of a thematic structure was not established in order for the viewer to consider the fascinating nature of the contents. Broodthaers was not concerned with presenting beautiful objects but with the structures which contain them.

In the first volume of the *Section des Figures* catalogue Broodthaers included a photograph of Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) and of Magritte's *La Trahison des Images*, both of which were already icons of 20th century art (pl. 95). The accompanying text was entitled 'Method'. Concerning the Magritte, Broodthaers simply instructed the reader to 'Read the text by Michel Foucault *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.'[43] With regard to Duchamp's work, Broodthaers wrote a longer text which is repeated here in full:

---

[42]For more on the cabinet of curiosities see the Introduction in Oliver Impey & Arthur MacGregor (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, pp. 1-4. Douglas Crimp disagrees with the very notion implicit in the title of this publication as an example of 'the obliviousness of traditional art historians to questions posed to cultural history by Foucault's archeology. He claimed that the selection and classificatory systems of the cabinet are utterly different from those of the museum, in that, rather than 'evolve' into the modern museum, the cabinet was 'dispersed'; see 'This is not a museum of art', pp. 225 and 234.

[43]*Figures*, vol. I, p. 13: 'Lesen Sie den Text von M. Foucault "Dies is nicht eine Pfeife".' Michel Foucault, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, Montpellier, Editions Fata Morgana, 1973, was first published in *Les Cahiers de chemins*, 1968, trans. James Harkness, *This is not a pipe*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1983. In 1971 the Galerie Michael Werner advertised Foucault's essay at the Cologne Art Fair as a publication of Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des*

> Duchamp
> Whether a urinal signed "R. Mutt" (1917) or an *objet trouvé*, any object can be elevated to the status of art. The artist defines the object in such a way that its future can lie only in the museum. Since Duchamp, the artist is author of a definition.
> Two facts will be brought into focus here: that in the beginning Duchamp's initiative was aimed at destabilizing the power of juries and schools, and that today - having become a mere shadow of itself - it dominates an entire area of contemporary art, supported by collectors and dealers.
> To show that this initiative is still alive, let us recall that in a very recent past artists applied the definition of what is art to the definition itself - to the language of the definition - and in this way brought about an infra-literature.[44]

Broodthaers acknowledged the debt Conceptual Art owed to Duchamp. The fact that Duchamp had enabled the artist to be 'author of a definition' also meant that Broodthaers' own museum could exist in the way in which it did. As he told De Vree with reference to the *Section XIXème siècle*,

> And in the same way as Marcel Duchamp has said: "This is an object of art" I, in fact, said "This is a museum". There is a difference, however. After one year I had all this material collected by the company to which it belonged, and then expanded (the idea of) the Museum.[45]

This emphasis on the temporary nature of the exhibition and of its contents as art was also central to the concept of the *Décor*, as will be discussed.

Art and the Eagle

Why the Department of Eagles? Broodthaers acknowledged he had 'eyes (like the eagles)', but this is merely an interesting starting point.[46] The image of the eagle in

---

Aigles, however it did not appear. In 1973 the same edition was advertised by the Cologne-based bookshop Walter König, in *Kunstmarkt*, no. 2 (1973), p. 124, however it also did not appear; see Ludwig, p. 135.

[44]*Figures*, vol. 1, p. 13, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 217: 'Peu importe qu'il s'agisse d'un urinoir signé "R. Mutt" (1917) ou d'un objet trouvé, n'importe quel objet peut être élevé au rang d'œuvre d'art. L'artiste définit cet objet de telle manière que son avenir ne relève plus que du musée. Depuis Duchamp l'artiste est l'auteur d'une définition. A ses débuts l'initiative de Duchamp visait à ébranler la puissance des jurys et des écoles, aujourd'hui - devenue l'ombre d'elle-même - elle est dominante dans tout un secteur de l'art contemporain, soutenue par des collectionneurs et des marchands: ces deux aspcts sont mis ici en lumière. Pour montrer que cette initiative est toujours vivante rappelons que dans un passé très récent des artistes ont appliqué la définition elle-même - au langage de la définition- et ont fait surgir ainsi toute une infra-littérature.'

[45]De Vree, p. 34.

[46]*Kunst bleibt Kunst. Projekt '74 Köln. Aspekte internationaler kunst am Anfang der 70er Jahre*, Cologne, Kunsthalle, 6 July-8 September 1974, p. 151, in which he stated his support for Hans Haacke whose proposed work was not exhibited: 'I have ears (like the asses) and eyes (like the eagles) - therefore I want to regret the absence of Hans Haacke. As I have come to know, the piece which he

Broodthaers' work dates back to his untitled poem in *Mon livre d'ogre* in which he spoke of, 'O Tristesse envol de canards sauvages, O mélancholie aigre château des aigles'. In a 1969 interview he explained how he had rediscovered the poem after fifteen or twenty years. The name *Département des Aigles*, therefore, was 'a literary memory'.[47] In the Düsseldorf exhibition the only exhibit which did not feature an eagle was a painting of a castle, wherein, according to the imagery of the poem, one may suppose that eagles live (pl. 96). The line became something of a leitmotif for the museum, as the poetic complement to the more theoretical, materialist nature of the works exhibited. At the entrance to the *Section Publicité* the words were inscribed in script on a copper plate beneath a small gilt-bronze eagle, in contrast with the commercial themes of the exhibition. They also appeared on the cover of the jacket he made to announce the sale of the museum due to bankruptcy.

Broodthaers denied any importance to his choice of symbol, claiming that, in applying his 'method', as quoted above, of conflating theories of Duchamp and Magritte, 'I would undoubtedly be no more fortunate with the serpent, the lion or the bull.'[48] It is interesting that the alternatives he gave were also of animals, all of which were densely symbolic, reflecting his use of the bestiary as a means of examining human qualities. In a three-point statement on his use of the eagle he set out his aims clearly:

> 1. To baffle every ideology which can be formed around a symbol (it is false).
> 2. To study objectively these symbols (the eagles) and particularly their use in artistic representation (eagles are useful).
> 3. To use the discoveries of conceptual art to illuminate objects and pictures of the past.
> Conclusion: The eagle is a bird.
>
> Musée d'Art Moderne
> Département des Aigles
> Curator: Marcel Broodthaers[49]

---

projected for this place, will be exhibited elsewhere. This is consoling me.'

[47]Bekkers, 'Gesprek met Marcel Broodthaers': 'C'est un souvenir littéraire.'

[48]*Figures*, vol. 1, p. 16, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 217: 'Je ne serais sans aucun doute pas plus chanceux avec le serpent, le lion, le taureau.'

[49]Typescript, 2 November 1971, in the Broodthaers archive, Brussels: '1. Mettre en défaut toute idéologie qui peut se former autour d'un symbôle (c'est faux)./2. Etudier objectivement ces symbôles (les aigles) et particulièremet leur usage dans la représentation artistique (les aigles sont utiles)./3. Utiliser les découvertes du conceptual art pour éclairer objets et tableaux des temps

Broodthaers' unambiguous conclusion - 'The eagle is a bird' - finds parallels in the *nouveau roman* and in particular in the writing of Alain Robbe-Grillet. In 'Nature, Humanism and Tragedy', published in 1957, Robbe-Grillet discussed the anthropocentric position of contemporary literature, which criticised him harshly if, instead of saying 'The world is man', he would say 'Things are things, and man is only man.'[50] Robbe-Grillet in turn criticised the use of metaphor as a means of creating a false unity between, for example, man and nature. By applying qualities such as 'magnificence, prestige, heroism, nobility' and 'pride' to non-humans and objects, man reflects these qualities back onto himself. Robbe-Grillet complained that this approach added nothing to one's understanding of the objects and furthermore was misleading, as 'a utensil is entirely matter and form'.[51] Robbe-Grillet privileged the sense of sight over all other senses because sight allows a certain distance from the object and leaves it undisturbed. In this way, 'To describe things, in fact, is deliberately to place oneself outside them, facing them. It is not, any longer, to appropriate them to oneself nor to transfer anything to them'.[52] He did not seek to deny the fact that man is only able to view the world from his own subjective viewpoint. Indeed, he emphasised this point and its parameters: 'The relative subjectivity of my look serves precisely to define my situation in the world. I simply avoid making common cause with those who turn this situation into a kind of slavery.'[53]

In the *Section des Figures* Broodthaers constantly shifted between a 'matter and form' approach and a use of metaphor. Despite denying importance to his choice of the eagle, both volumes of the catalogue contain a number of texts by Broodthaers, in which it soon becomes clear that he did in fact choose the eagle because it has such

---

anciens./Conclusion: L'aigle est un oiseau./Musée d'Art Moderne/Département des Aigles/Conservateur: Marcel Broodthaers'

[50]Alain Robbe-Grillet, 'Nature, Humanism and Tragedy' (1958), in *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, trans. Barbara Wright, London, Calder & Boyars, 1965, p. 77.

[51]Ibid., p. 82.

[52]Ibid., p. 91.

[53]Ibid., p. 94.

complex symbolic qualities and is not simply 'a bird'. The second volume of the catalogue contained an essay by the anthropologist, Michael Oppitz, whom Broodthaers had invited to contribute in order to add a more "scientific" dimension to the discussion. In his essay, Oppitz described the 'heavy symbolic burden' of the sign of the eagle: 'The eagle, in whatever form it is encountered, is after all strongly invested with emblematic, mythological significance. It variously connotes strength, virility, rigour, freedom, authority, aspiration towards the absolute.'[54] Broodthaers himself described the symbolic meaning of the eagle as, 'grandeur, authority, strength. Divine spirit. Spirit of conquest. Imperialism'.[55] Oppitz argued that all the eagles displayed in the Düsseldorf exhibition bear these symbolic values whether they are emblems on helmets or are actual stuffed birds. However, 'By identifying the symbolic presence in every conceivable eagle, Broodthaers engages in an incessant defusing of the eagle's mythic power'.[56] By including, therefore, such a diverse group of eagles within the one exhibition, Oppitz argued that Broodthaers undermined the mythical power of the eagle. Especially in Germany, where the *Section des Figures* exhibition took place, the eagle is a national symbol, with long-standing connotations of power and authority.[57] Broodthaers, as a Belgian, was certainly not unaware of the power of the eagle symbol within German culture but because he chose eagles from such a wide range of other cultures too this potency was diminished. In contrast with Duchamp's urinal and Magritte's pipe - everyday objects which, according to Oppitz, had become 'cherished fetishes'[58] - Broodthaers reduced all the exhibits to the level of 'object'.

In one of the texts from the second volume of the catalogue, Broodthaers claimed that the web of mythologies around the eagle was misfounded and cited the

---

[54]Michael Oppitz, 'Eagle/Pipe/Urinal', trans. in Buchloh (ed.), p. 154.
[55]*Figures*, vol. II, p. 18, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 221: 'grandeur, autorité, puissance. Esprit divin. Esprit de conquête. Impérialisme.'
[56]Oppitz, in Buchloh (ed.), p. 155.
[57]For more on the German symbolic value of the eagle see Gislind Nabakowski, 'Ein Museum und seine perspektiven', *Heute Kunst*, vol. 1 (April 1973) pp. 18-21, an article written shortly after the Düsseldorf exhibition. Broodthaers chose not to exhibit any eagles associated with Nazi symbols as, presumably, these would have been too strong and limiting images.
[58]Oppitz, in Buchloh (ed.), p. 156.

naturalist Konrad Lorenz: 'The eagle is a beast, he said basically. It is even afraid of a bicycle.'[59] Broodthaers warned against, 'admiring without reservation. The sublime idea of art and the sublime idea of the eagle'.[60] It becomes clear that many of the qualities Broodthaers associates with the eagle he would equally associate with art, in particular 'admiring without reservation'. He went on to state that, 'The eagle is, like the paper tiger, a puny monster. It hides in public museums. This is also reflected in my fictive museum which I founded in 1968 and to which I gave the name "Department of Eagles"'.[61]

For Broodthaers, the museum is a fiction just as the mythical qualities of the eagle are fictions. Similarly, the museum can grant art a certain mythical status and power. Like the eagle, art can often convince us of its grandeur and authority. Both the eagle and art have a power which crosses cultural and historical boundaries. However, especially since Duchamp, art is often dependent upon the institution of the museum for possessing that strength. Broodthaers set up his fictive museum in order to ask questions about real museums for, 'With the help of a fiction like my museum it is possible to grasp reality as well as that which reality conceals'.[62] Broodthaers' ultimate aim, therefore, was not to discuss the various mythologies of the eagle, but to use his method to 'deconstruct' similar myths concerning art. Broodthaers quoted Oppitz, who had written that he had, 'pulled some feathers out of the mythical eagle'.[63] This emphasis on reality characterised Broodthaers' museum works: 'I seek to defend a sense of reality rather than theory and dream.'[64]

---

[59]*Figures*, vol. II, p. 18, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 220: 'L'aigle est bête, dit-il en substance. Il a peur même d'une bicyclette.'
[60]Ibid.: 'admirer sans réserve. La répresentation majestueuse de l'art et la répresentation majestueuse de l'aigle.'
[61]Ibid., trans. in David (ed.), p. 221: 'L'aigle est, comme le tigre de papier, un monstre chétif. Il niche dans les musées publics. Cela se reflète aussi dans mon musée fictif que j'ai fondé en 1968 et auquel j'ai donné le nom de 'Département des Aigles.'
[62]Ibid.: 'Je crois qu'un musée fictif comme le mien permet d'avoir prise sur la réalité comme sur ce qu'elle cache.'
[63]*Figures*, vol. II, p. 19, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 221: 'Michael Oppitz abonde dans mon sens quand il écrit que j'ai arraché quelques plumes à l'aigle mythique.'
[64]*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Littéraire*, Open Letter, Brussels, 31 October 1969. 'Je tiens à défendre un sens de la réalité plutôt que la théorie et le rêve.'

Broodthaers' *Section des Figures* brought together a wide variety of objects for a limited period of time. His work was the exhibition itself - a temporary structure or shell which framed the objects in a particular way. The contents were photographed and subsequently exhibitioned in the *Section Publicité* (pl. 97).[65] The original plan had in fact been to show the *Section des Figures* at *Documenta 5*, however, it was not possible to retain all the exhibits for this length of time and the dates of the exhibitions overlapped by one week. The *Section Publicité* thus came about due to particular circumstances.[66] Whereas *Section des Figures* dealt with art and the museum, the focus in *Section Publicité* was on the relationship between advertising and art. The contents - the photographs as well as advertisements, catalogues, posters and slides - were reproductions - moulds or shells of the original works (pl. 98).

In response to *Section des Figures*, Lothar Baumgarten made *Homage to M.B.* (1973), in which he filled a chest with eagle feathers on which he had painted the names of North American tribes. It has been described by Craig Owens as both a homage to Broodthaers and a '(structuralist) critique' of the *Section des Figures*.[67] Baumgarten, whose father was an anthropologist, often worked with Michael Oppitz, and from the late 1960s he made many works in which he juxtaposed nature with artifice, with particular focus upon the indiginous people of North and South America.

A further response, and not without a hint of irony, was made by Baumgarten and Oppitz in their 1974 joint exhibition *T'E - NE - T'E - eine mythologische Vorführung* (T'E - NE - T'E - A Mythological Presentation).[68] On one side of the

---

[65]The *Section Publicité* was exhibited initially in the Neue Galerie at Kassel, *Documenta 5*, 30 June-8 October 1972. A detailed catalogue with an essay by Buchloh was produced for the Marian Goodman exhibition.

[66]'Interview with Marcel Broodthaers and Georges Adé', conducted beside the *Section Publicité* for a documentary film on *Documenta 5* directed by Jef Cormelis for Belgian Radio and Television, transcribed in *Publicité*, p. 11.

[67]Craig Owens, 'Improper Names', *Art in America*, vol. 74 (October 1986), p. 129; see also Jill Lloyd, 'German Sculpture since Beuys', *Art International*, vol. 6 (Spring 1989), p. 10-11.

[68]Lothar Baumgarten & Michael Oppitz, *T'E - NE - T'E - eine mythologische Vorführung*, Düsseldorf, Gallery Konrad Fischer, from 22 May 1974.

invitation card was a photograph of an eagle with 'Hommage à M.B., Aigle.' typed below (pl. 99). On the other side of the card the word 'Rabe' (raven) was printed in red. The date, address and authors of the show was typed below, defining it as 'an exhibition for the mind and the intellect'.[69] Broodthaers responded immediately and sent back a reply card which took the same format as the invitation (pl. 100). On one side he printed double-headed eagle crests under the title 'Veritable Eau de Cologne'. Beneath this he typed a statement in a mixture of German and French: 'To L. Baumgarten and M. Oppitz **to salute** the exhibition for the mind and the intellect.'[70] On the reverse side, in response to their red 'Rabe' Broodthaers printed 'Fuchs' (fox) in the same font as 'Rabe' but in black. Beneath this, in the elegant *écriture anglaise* he often chose, Broodthaers asked the question, 'Mais qui mangera le fromage?' (But who will eat the cheese?). Although the bird is given as raven rather than La Fontaine's crow (corbeau) the references are clear. The exhibition catalogue also made direct reference to Broodthaers' work, with a copy of the second part of the *Section des Figures* catalogue appearing in a photograph and in the bibliography.

Past Present Future: 'The décor is not an end in itself.'

The *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles* closed at *Documenta 5* in October 1972. The *Décors* began just under two years later and continued until Broodthaers' death in early 1976. As in the museum series, Broodthaers played the role of curator, although this time bringing together collections of his own work. The *Décors* were a series of retrospective exhibitions in which Broodthaers re-presented objects and images as well as photographic reproductions of these works from the previous ten or twelve years in temporary combinations with new works. The effect was that of reminding the viewer of earlier works but seen from a later perspective. Some of the exhibitions or parts of exhibitions consisted only of new, temporary works. Whereas the focus of the objects was upon the relationship between the component parts, the

---

[69]Baumgarten & Oppitz, invitation card to *T'E - NE - T'E*: 'Eine Ausstellung für die Sinne und den Verstand.'

[70]Marcel Broodthaers, reply card dated 20 May 1974. 'An L. Baumgarten und M. Oppitz **pour saluer** die Ausstellung für die Sinne und den Verstand.' (bold type in original)

Décors can be seen as dealing with the relationships between objects on a larger scale. The term *Décor* was carefully chosen by Broodthaers, as he explained in 1975:

> I have tried to articulate in a different way the objects and pictures made on dates ranging between 1964 and this year, to form the rooms in the spirit of "décor". That is to say, to give back to the object or painting a real function. The décor is not an end in itself.[71]

In other words, the *Décor* was a temporary frame for objects and works rather than a permanent home. The same objects could subsequently be shown in various other combinations in different exhibitions. According to Barbara Reise,

> It was as if the old works became his alphabet or dictionary, and he evolved a new grammar for them to make a fresh statement: a statement about the experience of exhibiting and of experiencing exhibitions: a statement whose grammatical significance was in the strategy and referents of the installations and choice of works.[72]

The term *Décor* also has theatrical connotations which were particularly apparent in the exhibition titled *Décor (A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers)* held at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, in 1975 (pl. 101).[73] According to Barry Barker, then curator at the ICA, Broodthaers' intention had been to make a film for which the exhibition would be the set.[74] The term *Décor* then becomes all the more appropriate, with the rooms in the ICA functioning as the setting within which the action would take place.

Décor (A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers) was not a retrospective but contained objects selected for the exhibition. It comprised two rooms which contrast the 19th and 20th century approaches to war and to life. The 19th century room contained two cannons, a coiled stuffed snake, a revolver, two candelabras, two whisky barrels, two plastic crabs, (one on the seat and one beneath) two red velvet upholstered chairs and some potted palms. The objects and plants were presented as

---

[71]*L'Angélus de Daumier*: 'j'ai tenté d'articuler différemment des objets et des tableaux réalisés à des dates s'échelonnant entre 1964 et cette année, pour former des salles dans un esprit "décor". C'est-à-dire de restituer à l'objet ou à la peinture une fonction réelle. Le décor n'étant pas une fin en soi.'
[72]Reise, 'The Broodthaers Museum Gambit', p. 52.
[73]*Décor (A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers)*, London, Institute of Contemporary Art, 11 June-6 July 1975. The work was later shown at *Documenta 7*.
[74]From a conversation with Barry Barker, 6 January 1994.

individual exhibits on small rugs of artificial grass. In the 20th century room modern garden furniture was set up - a round table with a parasol, around which four chairs were arranged. A jigsaw puzzle of a painting depicting the Battle of Waterloo lay unfinished on the table. Automatic rifles - the equipment of modern warfare - were lined up on a shelf. Both rooms were artificially lit by prominently placed spotlights which enchanced the air of theatricality.

Whereas Broodthaers usually altered the objects he used rather than present them as readymades, in *Décor (A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers)* this was not the case. Most of the objects were in fact rented from a supplier of film props. Once the exhibition was over they would be used in many other non-gallery settings, as props rather than as art objects. Broodthaers' method here contrasted with Duchamp's, in which the artist chooses an object which then becomes redefined as art permanently. Broodthaers was aware of this difference and commented on it to Barker. Although, in fact, the cannon, for example, would not be used in warfare again, the point is still valid - the object existed as artwork only for the length of time of the exhibition. This also meant that the *Décors*, and this one in particular, like most of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* sections, denied the opportunity for commercial investment. The contents of most of the other *Décors* were borrowed from already existing collections. The work was the exhibition - a temporary immaterial structure - which could not be bought or sold.

Décor (A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers) was inextricably linked with the cultural and temporal context within which it took place. As Barker later recounted, the nature of the show developed gradually during the months preceeding it and up to the last minute Broodthaers was not sure what the results would be or whether or not they would be successful.[75] Broodthaers asked Barker to obtain certain objects for him, which seems to indicate that he knew what he wanted but exactly how the objects looked was not important. Barker had difficulty obtaining, in particular, the 19th century cannon. After many unsuccessful attempts at trying to persuade the

---

[75]Barry Barker, 'Décor. A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers. Préparatifs pour un film.', in David (ed.), pp. 274-275 and in conversation, 6 January 1994.

army museum to lend him one and so that he would not return empty-handed, he bought the aforementioned jigsaw puzzle for Broodthaers' daughter. However, Broodthaers assumed it was meant for him and was delighted as it fitted neatly into the concept of the show and the film. It was also by chance that the objects were eventually borrowed from a props suppliers and the cannons had actually been used at the Battle of Waterloo. Broodthaers' working method was open, flexible and able to respond to the unexpected.

By placing outdoor objects indoors Broodthaers emphasised the link between the work and the broader context in which it existed. The ICA stands on the Mall and the dates of the exhibition coincided with Trooping the Colour which takes place there every June. At this time Broodthaers was living in London and in his desire to understand the culture within which he now lived Broodthaers was keen to see the ceremony and to incorporate it into his work. The film which resulted, *La Bataille de Waterloo* (The Battle of Waterloo), was just over 11 minutes long and consisted of shots of the exhibition intercut with coverage of the ceremony as viewed from the balcony of the ICA (pl. 102).[76] In fact, Broodthaers decided to focus the camera not only on the actual ceremony but also on what would usually be off-camera scenes - people milling around, soldiers relaxing, a policeman on horseback. He liked to observe people going about informal activities as well as the events on show. The exhibition inside the ICA could be seen in shots both of the whole rooms and of individual objects. There was a continuous intertwining of 19th and 20th century, of the past being remembered in the ceremony taking place today, and of the present in which a girl puts together and breaks up a jigsaw puzzle on which the image is a painting of the Battle of Waterloo. The sounds were a mixture of the ceremony with its regimental bands and the melancholic overture from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. In witty juxtaposition we hear a cannon fired during the ceremony and see the 19th century cannon inside the gallery, or we hear Wagner and see soldiers going through their positions, synchronised as though they are dancing to the music.

---

[76]*La Bataille de Waterloo*, 35 mm & 16 mm, colour, sound, 11 min. 20 sec., London. For description of the film see Bruce Jenkins, in Goldwater & Compton, pp. 105-108 and *Cinéma*, pp. 293-294.

By combining the ceremony outdoors with the objects indoors Broodthaers draws attention to the theatricality of war and the ceremonies which serve to remind us of those events. He shows the battle depicted on the jigsaw puzzle and Napoleon's image on a brandy bottle label alongside the annual parades and forces the viewer to consider what is actually real and what is artificial. Although the origins of the ceremony, the jigsaw and the label lay in real events, what do any of them tell us about what actually took place? As with the accumulated images of eagles in the *Section des Figures* and *Section Publicité*, Broodthaers drew attention to the way in which images become displaced, recycled and banal through advertising.

The site and the short period of time uring which the exhibition took place provided a temporary and very specific setting or shell for the objects. Subsequently they could be used or shown on other contexts, bearing out Broodthaers' words that 'The décor is not an end in itself'.

'Nouveaux trucs, nouvelles combines': New Combinations

The ICA exhibition consisted of two rooms which were interdependent. Broodthaers' final *Décor, L'Angélus de Daumier*, comprised eight rooms, each of which was rather more self-contained but which came together within the exhibition (pl. 103). *L'Angélus de Daumier* was held in late 1975, at the Centre national d'art contemporain, Paris, which, at that time, was housed in the what was once the home of the Rothschilds. Broodthaers must have been delighted by this close coincidental relationship between art and money in which an art centre was located in the former home of a famous banking family. One room in the centre was retained as a museum of the Rothschild family and contained their 19th century furniture and antiques. In contrast with other artists who exhibited in the centre, Broodthaers included the Rothschild room in his series of rooms or 'Salons'. It could not be entered but viewed through a roped off doorway. By including this room Broodthaers drew particular attention to the place in which his exhibition was held.

The title of Broodthaers' exhibition was 'mysterious', which Pontus Hulten, who was then director of the centre, encouraged the visitor to decipher.[77] This is not a straightforward task. Millet was currently undergoing a revival and a large retrospective of his work would open shortly in Paris. His painting, *Angélus*, is well-known, so perhaps Broodthaers wanted the visitor to think of this work and then ask why the name of Millet was changed to Daumier. The fact that it was an almost unknown Belgian artist who was rearranging aspects of French culture added to the confusion.[78] Some visitors have been recorded as thinking, not surprisingly, that they were going to see an exhibition of work by Daumier.[79] *Angélus* may also refer to the bell which is rung before prayers at morning, noon and sunset. Daumier's angelus would, therefore, awaken the viewer to the contemporary world beyond the art exhibition.

In the catalogue text titled 'Motivational Ideas', Broodthaers hesitated as to whether or not, as an artist who was still active, he would be wise to explain his motives. He thought that 'it would certainly be better...initially to let the art critics make mistakes'.[80] In two other catalogue texts ('Note' and 'Art and Politics') he spoke about the relationship between his work and the context in which it exists, both the art context and the contemporary world. He belated the dominant role played by the middlemen and collectors, and informed the reader: 'If I exaggerate the importance of this situation, let Daumier do me justice.'[81] Daumier had satirised not only judges but also the bourgeois collectors who judge artworks. Broodthaers indicated the close relationship between contemporary politics and his work by requesting that 'as a symbol of solidarity with the Spanish Democrats, the opening of the exhibition will

---

[77]Pontus Hulten, foreword in *L'Angélus de Daumier*, vol. II: 'Allez-voir l'œuvre de Marcel Broodthaers, et déchiffrez vous-même le titre mystérieux de son exposition: <L'Angélus de Daumier>.'
[78]See an article written shortly after the exhibition and after Broodthaers's death by a French critic, Jean-Louis Pradel, 'L'Angélus de Daumier: Marcel Broodthaers', *XXe siècle*, no. 46 (September 1976), p. 152: 'Qu'un Belge, presque inconnu, dérange un sacro-saint étiquetage, il y avait de quoi s'interroger!'
[79]Calas, 'Marcel Broodthaers' Throw of the Dice', p. 198.
[80]'Idées motivations',*L'Angélus de Daumier*, vol. II: 'Il vaut mieux certainement de...laisser d'abord se tromper les critiques d'art.'
[81]'Art et Politique', *L'Angélus de Daumier*, vol. II: 'Si j'exagère l'importance de cette situation, que Daumier me fasse justice.'

end half an hour before the usual time'.[82] By citing Daumier as the figure of reference for the exhibition Broodthaers emphasised a 19th century dimension to his work, whilst at the same time stressing the relevance of his work to the contemporary world.

L'Angélus de Daumier consisted of a series of rooms, all of which, except *La Salle Blanche* (The White Room), contained a mixture of works, some of which had previously been seen. Each room became an individual unit with its own particular character and would exist only for the period of the exhibition. In the catalogue Broodthaers wrote a short paragraph on each of the rooms, concluding every time with the slogan, 'Nouveaux trucs, nouvelles combines' (New tricks, new schemes). These words, quoted from the early comic strip *Les Nouvelles Aventures des Pieds Nickelés*, whose picture appeared on the cover of the second part of the catalogue, seem to sum up humorously the nature of the exhibition and of the *Décors* in general.[83]

Broodthaers gave all the rooms the names of colours, with the Rothschild room *La Salle Rose* (The Pink Room). At right-angles and therefore in direct relation to it stood *La Salle Blanche* which related to Broodthaers' own former home in the rue de la Pépinière, Brussels (pl. 104). The original concept for *La Salle Blanche* was to recreate the *Section XIXème siècle*. A wooden reconstruction was made of one and a half rooms of the house, and Hulten's suggestion was to reassemble its contents of packing crates, postcards, and so on. However, given the different temporal, physical and conceptual context, Broodthaers felt that a literal reconstruction of the earlier exhibition would be meaningless. Therefore, he decided to deconstruct the objects and replace them with words which describe various aspects of art; these were elegantly written by a sign-writer on the walls and floor of the room. Some of the words refer to basic, conventional materials such as 'huile' and 'toile', written prominently above the windows, while others identify techniques of 'perspective',

---

[82]Ibid.: 'comme geste symbolique de solidarité avec les Démocrates Espagnols, le vernissage de l'exposiiton sera interrompu une demi-heure avant l'heure habituelle.'

[83]Broodthaers owned an edition of *Les Nouvelles Aventures des Pieds Nickelés*, no. 10, *La Vie est Belle*. Reflecting his own interest in popular culture, Bataille wrote an article on 'Les Pieds Nickelés' published in *Documents*, Paris, no. 4 (1930), pp. 215-216. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Broodthaers knew this article.

'composition' and 'dessin'. Broodthaers included words relating to imagery and atmosphere - 'yeux', 'peau', 'nuages', 'soleil' - and more general terms - 'style', 'sujet', 'figures' and 'image'. He also included words concerning the presentation of art - 'musée' and 'galerie'. The words he used can be considered the vocabulary of art, the ingredients or alphabet from which many possible works may be constructed. They function as a shell which forms around and describes absent artworks. However, some of the words jar with a somewhat cosy image by relating to commercial concerns - not only price, value and percentage but also 'marchand' (dealer), 'voleur' (thief) and 'filou' (swindler). Broodthaers brings the viewer down to earth, but does so unexpectedly, due to the elegant calligraphic style in which all the words are written.

The use of words rather than images recalls some of Magritte's word-paintings, in particular those in which beautifully and precisely inscribed words relate to indeterminate shapes. As Magritte wrote in 'Les mots et les images', 'Sometimes the name of an object takes the place of an image'.[84] He also wrote that, 'The words which serve to designate two different objects do not show what may distinguish those objects from one another'.[85] In *La Salle Blanche* all the words take the same calligraphic style and no visual associations are suggested by the way in which a word is written. All the words, therefore, have equal value or lack of value.[86]

La Salle Blanche also recalls Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* in the emphasis given to the relationship between words and the space they inhabit. *La Salle Blanche* can be seen as a three-dimensional poem, a field within which words float around freely. In some areas words seem to have gathered in small groups, bringing

---

[84]Magritte, 'Les mots et les images': 'Parfois le nom d'un objet tient lieu d'une image.'
[85]Ibid.: 'Les mots qui servent à désigner deux objets différents ne montrent pas ce qui peut séparer ces objets l'un de l'autre.'
[86]As part of the recent Magritte exhibition curated by Ottinger, a number of contemporary artists were invited to make special installations. These included Joseph Kosuth who selected a dozen of Magritte's word-paintings which he hung in a dark-painted room. Cloud-like shapes were painted on the walls with words inscribed in a Magritte-style script. However, whereas the words in Magritte's paintings usually denote familiar objects, the terms Kosuth painted were more abstract and conceptual, thereby bringing Magritte's work into a postmodernist context. The effect on the viewer was described as that of entering 'through a frame into the paintings, into a place, however, where floating, unmoored concepts replaced the object nouns in Magritte's black shapes'; see Douglas Ord, 'Ceci n'est pas Magritte', *Canadian Art*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Winter 1996), pp. 12-14.

particular images to mind when read together. This impression of scattering recalls not only Mallarmé's throw of the die but also Broodthaers' concept that 'The alphabet is a die with 26 sides'.[87] As if to emphasise this point in *La Salle Blanche* the letters 'a b c' appear centrestage (at the top of a list of words on the back wall of the room). Broodthaers seems to be saying that just as artworks are made up of the elements listed in words, so the words in turn are composed from letters.

The impression of scattering also points to the ambiguities of language and the Structuralist absence of fixed meanings. Words take the place of images, but they bring different images to the mind of each receiver. The apparently random arrangements suggest that neither words nor their meanings are fixed in place, but are temporarily 'anchored' (to borrow Barthes' analogy).

Working with words directly on the walls of a space was popular in the 1970s amongst many artists including Baumgarten and Lawrence Weiner. However, aesthetically, the similarities between Baumgarten's or Weiner's work and Broodthaers' do not extend far. Both Baumgarten and Weiner use a clean, hard-edge, mechanically printed font which, although carefully selected, foregrounds the conceptual message over the aesthetic. By contrast, Broodthaers, although he did not write the words himself, chose to employ the calligraphic skills of a sign-writer, thereby adding a very 'hands-on' and decorative touch.

Parallels are more relevant, particularly with regard to Weiner's work, when one considers the relationship between, as Buchloh has described it (in Derridean terms), the 'work' and its 'supplements'.[88] Whereas usually writing and the artwork are separate entities, since 1968, Weiner, by presenting words as art, has conflated the two. This has also been Broodthaers' method in *La Salle Blanche* in making the words about art the artwork itself. However, one striking difference between the works described above has so far been overlooked. The method of working directly

---

[87]Broodthaers quoted in Anny De Decker, 'L'Edition', in David (ed.), p. 141 & attributed to an Untitled Poem, 1966-68, published in Goldwater & Compton, p. 6: 'L'Alphabet est un dé à 26 faces.'
[88]Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'The Posters of Lawrence Weiner', in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (ed.), *Lawrence Weiner. Posters November 1965-April 1986*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design & Toronto, Art Metropole, 1986, p. 167.

on the walls of a space in the late 1960s and '70s came about largely as a response to the commercialisation of art and the desire by artists to make works which could not be bought and sold. Site-specific works were made which were not transportable. However, in the case of *La Salle Blanche*, although the writing is directly on the walls of the room, the entire room is actually a unit which can be transported (albeit not easily). In Baumgarten's and Weiner's works the viewer enters the space and experiences the surrounding work; *La Salle Blanche* is cordoned off and cannot be entered. It can only be viewed from the front and functions as a kind of painting or 'tableau'.[89] Whereas Broodthaers' original motivation in establishing his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* was as a response to the discussions of 1968, *La Salle Blanche* did not challenge the institution. It is now in the collection of the Centre national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

In its direct relation to the *Section XIXème siècle*, *La Salle Blanche* brought the museum series full circle. Whilst the *Section XIXème siècle* consisted of the shells of packing crates and postcards which surround the artwork, *La Salle Blanche* drew attention to the shell within which those other shells had been contained. The bare wooden structure of *La Salle Blanche* which ressembled a large packing crate, in turn was contained within the yet larger shells of the room and the exhibition. The issue of reproduction was also brought into play with *La Salle Blanche* an elaborate reproduction of the *Section XIXème siècle* rooms. These rooms were recreated so accurately that *La Salle Blanche* seems to ressemble a mould from which more rooms can be cast. In fact, a copy was made by the Centre Pompidou for the 1989 Walker Art Center retrospective because the 'original' was considered too fragile to travel.

Although *La Salle Blanche* was not site-specific in a fixed sense it was a work which came about as a response to a particular situation and developed on site. In a review of *L'Angélus de Daumier*, Otto Hahn wrote that, 'for Broodthaers the setting

---

[89]See William Olander, 'Missing Persons', ARTNews, vol. 82, pt. 2 (February 1983), pp. 112-115, a review of the exhibition *Tableaux: Nine Contemporary Sculptors*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, 17 September-6 November 1982. The exhibition curators, Michael R. Klein and Robert Stearns, in their catalogue essay, cite the theatrical *tableau vivant* (living picture) as the precedent for the modern tableau.

up of an exhibition is largely the work of art. He stands in front of the rooms like a painter in front of his canvas and everything is put together slowly'.[90] According to Hahn, this approach had developed largely due to Broodthaers' laziness. He claimed that whereas young artists often produce many poor quality works because they simply enjoy working and want to make things, Broodthaers spent so long thinking that by the time he came to make something he had reached the essence of his idea and eliminated everything which was superfluous.

Whether Broodthaers' method resulted from laziness, or, as appears more likely to be the case, from precision and thoughtfulness, it is clear that many ideas were densely packed into his works. As in his poems, the essence of the work is often so pared down that it becomes difficult to unpack. Although during the setting up of exhibitions changes were often made and the eventual works could not be foreseen, the results were precise and carefully constructed.

Buren's Notion of the Frame

In the *Décors*, therefore, as in Broodthaers' museum sections, the exhibition was a temporary structure holding particular contents for a limited period of time. The museum or exhibition can be seen as a shell or a frame, the latter an analogy used by Daniel Buren, who was at the opening of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles,* and who knew Broodthaers well. In 'The Function of the Museum', he identified its three main roles:

> 1. Aesthetic. The Museum is the frame and effective support upon which work is inscribed/composed. It is at once the centre in which the action takes place and the single (topographical and cultural) viewpoint for the work.
> 2. Economic. The Museum gives a sales value to what it exhibits, has privileged/selected. By preserving or extracting it from the commonplace, the Museum promotes the work socially, thereby assuring its exposure and consumption.
> 3. Mystical. The Museum/Gallery instantly promotes to 'Art' status whatever it exhibits with conviction, i.e. habit, thus diverting in advance any attempt to question the foundations of art without taking into consideration the place

---

[90]Otto Hahn & Stéphane Rona, 'Au C.N.A.C. à Paris. Marcel Broodthaers', *+-0*, Brussels, no. 11 (November 1975), p. 7: 'pour Marcel Broodthaers la mise en place de l'exposition est en grande partie l'œuvre d'art. Il est devant les salles, comme le peintre devant sa toile et tout se construit lentement.'

> from which the question is put. The Museum (the Gallery) constitutes the mystical body of Art.[91]

Buren's analysis is far more 'scientific' than Broodthaers'. He sets out his points clearly and unambiguously. However, despite these differences in approach, conceptually they seem to have a similar perception of the relationship between art and the museum.

The notion of the frame has been a constant theme in both Buren's visual works and texts. In 'The Function of the Studio', he has examined the whole range of

> frames, envelopes, and limits - usually not perceived and certainly never questioned - which enclose and constitute the work of art (picture frame, niche, pedestal, palace, church, gallery, museum, art history, economics, power, etc.)[92]

To these he has added 'the artist's studio', the importance of which as a framing device he has felt to be surprisingly overlooked. However, for Buren the studio is the frame of prime importance as this is the place where the work is produced. Thereafter the work will be 'subject to infinite manipulation' as 'it is in the studio and only in the studio that it is closest to its own reality, a reality from which it will continue to distance itself.'[93] By contrast he perceives the museum as a kind of cemetery, where a whole range of works with different origins and intended meanings end up. For Buren this is 'the unspeakable compromise of the portable work'.[94] The working practices of Buren, of Broodthaers in the museum sections and the *Décors*, and of many other artists during the late 1960s and '70s was such that the site of production and of exhibition became one and the same.

Working in this way, however, has its own particular limitations and Buren has considered the problem of Broodthaers' posthumous reputation. The later exhibitions were site-specific, dependent upon Broodthaers' response to a particular

---

[91]Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Museum', written in 1970 and first published by the Oxford, Museum of Modern Art, on the occasion of his exhibition held there from 31 March-15 April 1973. Later published in *Artforum*, vol. XII, no. 1 (September 1973), p. 68.
[92]Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Studio', written in 1971 but published for the first time in *October*, vol. 10 (Fall 1979), p. 51.
[93]Ibid., p. 53.
[94]Ibid., p. 54.

site whilst working within it. Moreover, they were exhibitions inextricably linked with the wider, political and economic context in which they were made. By definition this would seem to suggest that they cannot be recreated without him and in other contexts. This has largely been the case, with the exceptions being the *Section Publicité* and *Décor: A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers*.[95] Buren has lamented the fact that it is 'heaps of the smaller things, small-scale work, more or less haphazard drawings' which are usually exhibited but which he considers of minor importance.[96] It is, however, through these works, as well as the publications and other documentation, that Broodthaers' posthumous reputation develops.

Within Broodthaers' work the shell exists on many different levels. He literally used mussel shells and eggshells as component parts of his objects, embodying notions of absence and presence, repetition and reproduction. Similarly, the museum or exhibition can be seen as an empty structure or shell, which may be filled with a variety of different, changeable contents. As Derrida would establish in *La verité en peinture*, when debating the relationship between the *parergon* and the *ergon*, the frame is an essential element of the work.[97]

Just as the objects dealt with the relationship between their component parts, the *Décors* re-present these objects in relation to new works. The context - the room in the exhibition - determines the way in which the object will be seen. The broader context of the museum defines the objects as art. Although Broodthaers' labels in the *Section des Figures* declare that 'This is not a work of art', during the period of the exhibition all the objects will only be looked at and none will be used for their original purpose. However, once the show is over, the objects can exist in other contexts. Broodthaers indicates how, in a post-Duchamp conceptual world, defining

---

[95]The *Section Publicité* was shown at the Marian Goodman Gallery, 1995 and at Kassel, *Documenta X*, 21 June-28 September 1997. *Décor: A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers* was shown at *Documenta 7*, Kassel, 19 June-28 September 1982 (see Chapter 6).
[96]Daniel Buren in *Correspondances*., p. 45
[97]Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (1978), trans. Geoff Bennington & Ian McLeod University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 15-147.

something as art is no more than applying a label which can just as easily be removed.

Throughout his career as an artist, Broodthaers constantly recycled and re-presented collections of his own works and images of his works. He also appropriated and reused images by other artists, for example in the slide series; he also made his own responses to works by other artists, poets and writers. He often used 'readymade' materials in his works, whether shells, postcards or 'readymade' images of works. The notion of originality is made redundant by this process. 'Où est l'original?' - the answer can be found in the working process itself, in the provisional relationships between objects, and in the temporary, surrounding shells or contexts.

Chapter 5

The Conquest of Space: Maps, Mapping and the High Seas

L'objet du monde est	The object of the world is
absent - dit-il	absent - he says
La carte politique	The political map
oui,	yes,
mais ni l'objet ni le	but neither the object nor the
monde.	world.
La grande aiguille de	The large hand of
l'horloge désigne non seulement le	the clock indicates not only the
chiffre 12, mais encore	number 12, but also
un nombre	a subtle
subtil qui	number which
motive,	motivates,
qui devient	which becomes
objet	object
et date.	and date.
L'objet aveugle est fermé.	The blind object is closed.
miroir > masque	mirror > mask
> coffre > >	> chest > >
> tableau	> picture
> musée	> museum
la boîte[1]	the box

Broodthaers lived most of his life in Brussels, moving to Düsseldorf in late 1969 and to London in early 1973 where he was based until he died in 1976. During, and closely preceding, those years in which he practiced as an artist, he travelled frequently within Europe, mainly to London and Paris. During 1961, for example, he visited London a number of times, as recorded in the articles 'Un poète en voyage...à Londres'; later that year he spent a few months in Paris. At this time Broodthaers was very poor and although he had previously run a bookshop he now owned only a couple of books. These included Rodolphe Toepffer's *Voyage en Zig-Zag* (1844), a

[1]Unfinished poem by Broodthaers in archives.

descriptive account of travels in the Alps and Northern Italy. During the 1970s Broodthaers had many exhibitions around Europe especially in Germany and Belgium. In 1974 he was awarded a DAAD fellowship and spent six months in Berlin. He also visited the United States that year where he worked on a film.[2]

Broodthaers was a keen observer, a quality which relates to his sense of place. In turn, this sense of place has implications on many different levels. One level is the the way in which Broodthaers' work developed in the visual arts which indicates the fundamental importance of those around him; from writing articles on the work of others, he began to make his own work. As he later recalled, Segal's exhibition in Paris was, 'the shock that led me to go as far as to make my own works'.[3] Works from the first years of his career were consciously constructed to imitate or comment on the art of the time, that is, on work made by other artists. By making works which related to the fashions of the period he aimed to exhibit, sell works, become recognised and, according to the criteria he set out, succeed.[4] He wanted to fit in. As a poet he had felt somewhat marginal and isolated, feelings not helped by his lack of evident success. Becoming an artist was a way of feeling more integrated with society.

Broodthaers' relationship with his contemporaries was, therefore, central to his place in the visual arts. In many works, articles, open letters, catalogues and so on, he referred directly to particular artists by name. He also referred to predecessors, both artists and writers, who were important to him. He thereby located himself in relation to them. However, this was neither simply a case of admiration nor influence. Broodthaers established what may be considered an active dialogue by making his own version of works by, for example, Magritte, Mallarmé and Baudelaire.

The notion of relationship, therefore, in terms of the artistic context in which works exist, was clearly fundamental to Broodthaers' activity. On another level, the

---

[2]*New York*, 1974-75, Part 1, mounted by Broodthaers, 1975, Part 2 by Maria Gilissen, 1984 and Part 3 destroyed in the laboratory, 16 mm, colour and black and white, 3 min.
[3]'Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers': 'le choc qui m'entraîna jusqu'à produire moi-même des œuvres.'
[4]As set out in the statement for his first exhibition at the Galerie Saint-Laurent, 1964.

notion of relationship was also a vital part of the actual works he made. For example, with regard to the objects, Broodthaers shifted his focus from the component parts to the relationship between these parts. As he said in 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', 'The subject is rather that of the relationship established between the shells and the object that supports them'.[5] The *Décors* dealt with the temporary exhibition which brings works together in a particular arrangement or relationship for a limited period of time. The way in which the viewer responds to and understands a work depends upon the context in which it is encountered. Likewise, the relationship between words and objects or images is not fixed, as Broodthaers indicated in many works.

According to Broodthaers nothing exists in isolation. Everything is, therefore, contingent to the context in which it exists, whether a work, or a part of a work, a word, or an artist and his whole body of work. This context exists in different dimensions. It may be one's immediate artistic circle, or one's country or continent. On a broader scale one may be aware of one's place in the world, as an artist or simply as a person.

Broodthaers was aware of his Belgian nationality. By this I mean that he was aware of his country's place in Europe, of the language he spoke and the bilingual structure of his country. He was also aware of his country's place within the art world. He sought to establish a national Pop Art, made works painted with the colours of the Belgian flag, used local Belgian materials including coal and mussel shells, and made works with reference to the North Sea.

On a broader scale, maps, travel and the sea have long been important themes in poetry, not least in the work of Baudelaire and Mallarmé as well as Rimbaud, Poe and Swift whose work Broodthaers also read. Broodthaers made many and varied works on these themes which will form the focus of this chapter. By dealing with these themes, these works indicate Broodthaers' awareness of geographic location as well as his poetic imagination and sense of adventure.

---

[5]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Le sujet est davantage le rapport qui s'installe entre les coquilles et l'objet qui les supporte.'

These works will be examined in some detail, making this chapter quite descriptive and methodical. Unfortunately it will not be comprehensive. Many unfinished works by Broodthaers have posthumously been exhibited and it is not always clear which works he intended to be shown. In an attempt at clarity, therefore, and as a convenient structure, I shall take as a starting point works contained in both versions of the *Salle Outremer* (Overseas Room), exhibited in *L'Angélus du Daumier* (1975) and in a Bern retrospective (1982). I shall then examine, where relevant, other works connected with the themes discussed. These include some of Broodthaers' works on Baudelaire, for whom the notion of the voyage was central to his life and poetry. The chapter concludes with the films Broodthaers made in London, *Speakers' Corner* (1972) and *Figures of Wax (Jeremy Bentham)* (1974), which indicate how the city appeared from his point of view.

Broodthaers career in the visual arts can, more generally, be compared to a journey. By this I do not mean a passage from poet to artist, which would be convenient but misleading to argue, for even while he worked as an artist Broodthaers never stopped being a poet. Rather, the period of time Broodthaers spent as an artist can be seen as a 'Voyage autour de la mode'. This was the title of two paintings and of an exhibition from 1975, and seems to encapsulate perfectly his approach to his career in the visual arts.[6] The phrase translates literally as 'Journey around Fashion' but appears similar to 'Voyage autour du monde' (Journey around the World), a phrase in common usage. 'Voyage autour de la mode' succinctly combines Broodthaers' sense of place and love of the poetic notion of the voyage with a playfulness, a lightness of touch, and his strategy of following fashion in order to succeed as an artist whilst maintaining a certain critical distance. As he said in 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', 'I have fabricated instruments for my own use in comprehending fashion in art, in following it, and finally in the search for a definition of fashion'.[7]

---

[6]*Voyages autour de la mode*, Karlsruhe, Galerie Grafikmeyer, 15 June-31 July 1975.
[7]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'J'ai fabriqué des instruments destinés à mon usage pour comprehendre la mode en art, la suivre et chercher finalement une définition de la mode.'

The *Salle Outremer*

L'Angélus du Daumier, contained thematic and retrospective rooms in which works from throughout Broodthaers' career as an artist were regrouped and re-presented in arrangements different from how they had previously been seen. The rooms included the *Salle Outremer* (Overseas Room) (pl. 103), the contents of which were described in the exhibition catalogue as follows:

> A large map of the world on which some labels were stuck, a notebook from an imaginary voyage, a compass, a book 'The Voyage on the North Sea', a painting of a fishing boat returning, some bottles, two plexiglass boxes, a second notebook, two small paintings entitled 'Voyage autour de la Mode', a suitcase, a drawing, the same drawing on a different colour background, eight drawings from the preparation of the film 'Le Poisson pourrit par la tête', a collage and some boxes of matches.[8]

Like 'Voyage autour de la mode', the title, 'Le Poisson pourrit par la tête' poses problems for the translator because the use of alliteration cannot be retained. Both the title and the work will be examined in due course.

The *Salle Outremer* was then exhibited at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1982 as part of a posthumous retrospective entitled *Marcel Broodthaers* (pl. 105). This exhibition also took the form of a series of rooms and, according to the catalogue, the following additions were made: two drawings in gouache and chalk on black paper entitled *Brouillard-Ouragan-...* and *Sud-Nord-...* (both 1972), a copy of the film *Un Voyage en Mer du Nord* (1973), a drawing in pencil on paper (after the painting of the fishing boat returning) (1973), a copy of the film *Projet pour un poisson ou le poisson pourrit par la tête* (1970-71), *Untitled* (Panneau a) (1975), a small drawing (of a boat) and *The Manuscript 1833* (1974).[9] In both Paris and Bern the works were exhibited simply and clearly on the walls and in glass cabinets with the minimum of additional

---

[8]Grande carte du monde sur laquelle sont collées quelques étiquettes, carnet d'un voyage imaginaire, une boussole, un livre 'Le Voyage en Mer du Nord', un tableau représentant le retour d'un bateau de pêche, des bouteilles, deux boîtes en plexiglass, un second carnet, deux petits tableaux intitulés 'Voyage autour de la Mode', une valise, un dessin, le même dessin sur un fond de couleur différent, huit dessins ayant servi à la préparation du film 'Le Poisson pourrit par la tête', un collage et quelques boîtes d'allumettes.'

[9]*Marcel Broodthaers*, Bern, Kunsthalle, 30 January-14 March 1982, n.p.

features. The large map, for example, was not framed but pinned directly onto the wall, a practice common at the time in exhibitions of Conceptual Art, as a means of emphasising the way in which the work is presented; frames are objects in their own right, as Broodthaers had indicated in the *Section Publicité* by exhibiting a series of empty frames.

Maps

Many of the works included in the *Salle Outremer* can be considered 'assisted readymades' *à la* Duchamp, in which Broodthaers altered existing objects, often by making only very subtle changes. He used a map of the world as the starting point for several works, as have many of his contemporaries including Johns, Alighiero e Boetti and Robert Smithson.[10] Maps are images which we (misleadingly?) expect to give us objective information. We conveniently forget that they are selective representations (unless reminded by writers such as Borges).[11] We consider that maps give us information 'as it exists'. However, they are entirely manmade and are continuously modified by man. The map which appeared in the *Salle Outremer* was the *Grande Carte du Monde* (Large Map of the World) (1972) (pl. 106), sometimes known as the *Carte du Monde Politique* (Political Map of the World) after the description which is printed on the original map. In this work, Broodthaers stuck four labels on which he had drawn in black ink onto an existing map of the world. On an area of the North Atlantic he stuck a drawing of a ship, onto the Pacific a bottle afloat, by the South Pole a flag, and south of Australia some writing. It may be argued that each label relates to each area in terms of what may be seen as a

---

[10]See Robert Storr, *Mapping*, published to accompany an exhibition at the New York, Museum of Modern Art, 6 October-20 December 1994. Kim Levin suggests that 'perhaps the map should serve as the preliminary emblem of postmodernism: indicating boundaries beyond the surface of the artwork and surfaces outside art, implying that boundaries are arbitrary, and flexible, and man-made systems'; see Kim Levin, 'Farewell to Modernism', *Arts Magazine* (October 1979), pp. 90-93, quoted in Jessica Prinz, *Art Discourse/Discourse in Art,* New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1993, p. 9.

[11]In 'Of Exactitude in Science' Borges tells of a map the same dimensions as the land it describes, indicating the absurdity of mapmaking; see Jorge Luis Borges, 'Of Exactitude in Science' (1933-34), trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni, in *A Universal History of Infamy*, London, Penguin, 1975. See also E. H. Gombrich, 'Mirror and Map', in *The Image and the Eye. Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, London, Phaidon, 1982, pp. 172-214.

nineteenth century view of the world. For example, the ship refers to trans-Atlantic travel, the bottle to adventure stories in far-away places and the flag to finally reaching the South Pole. Perhaps the indecipherable writing near Australia refers to as yet undiscovered territories. The map appears as a 'factual' document onto which Broodthaers added imagery often used in literature or poetry, associated with travel and the sea. With the addition of drawings he personalised an otherwise impersonal object.[12]

In many map works, Broodthaers' marks appear to have been made randomly. For example, in *Carte d'Europe* (Map of Europe) (1973) (pl. 107) he stencilled in large black letters 'D', 'E', 'F', 'G', 'H' and 'I' onto various countries. There does not appear to be any relationship between the countries and the letters assigned to them. In an untitled work from 1973 he drew ships and crosses, again on apparently random locations. This is a two part work, each part a simple outline map of the world on which no individual country is defined. On the first part, ships of varying sizes were drawn onto areas of land. On the second part, crosses were made on various points of land and sea around the world. It is a work which seems to suggest the notion that one can plot voyages and travel the world without leaving the map. In *Untitled ("fig. 1 fig. 0 fig. A fig. 2 fig. 12")* (1972) (pl. 108), 'figure' definitions were handwritten by Broodthaers over various countries on a small map which was attached to a dark backing board. Beneath the map a small print of a ship on stormy seas was also attached to the board. In this way Broodthaers combined 'factual' with 'poetic' elements. Maps, alphabets and didactic style labels are all systems which we expect to give us clear information. Broodthaers subverted these systems by treating them in random and disordered ways.

In the case of some works using world maps, Broodthaers did not touch the 'image' part of the map but altered or added words around it. A good example is *Carte du Monde Poétique* (Poetic Map of the World) (1968-70) (pl. 109) in which

---

[12]See also the two fictitious terrestrial and celestial globes by Tom Phillips with Sylvia Sumira, 1992, on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum. These are two plaster globes covered by paper with text and names from Phillips' book *A Humument*.

Broodthaers slightly altered the existing name of the map. He crossed out the 'li' in 'politique' and replaced these letters with an 'é'.[13] *Carte Utopique du Monde* (Utopian Map of the World) (1968-73) (pl. 110) operated in a similar way in that 'politique' was crossed out and 'utopique' inserted. He also made *Carte d'une Utopie Politique* (Map of a Political Utopia) (1973) (pl. 111) in which once again the title was altered, this time by crossing out 'monde' and replacing it with 'utopie'. He also altered the top left hand corner of the map from 'Edition A' to 'Edition ABCDEFGH...' Along related linguistic lines, in *Soleil Politique* (Political Sun) (1972) (pl. 112) Broodthaers used an existing image of the sun, showing its size in relation to various planets. Broodthaers eliminated the earth by marking over it, and added the word *politique* to the definition of the sun, thereby pointing out where the real power in the universe lies. In *Carte Politique du Monde* (Political Map of the World) (1972) (pl. 113) the map was attached to a black backing board beneath which the title was stencilled in gold letters with 'fig. 7.8' in white and 'Modèle' in gold.[14] A map is a model in the sense that it is a representation. It may be useful but it is simplified and distorted.

With a different kind of world map Broodthaers made *Boire la dernière goutte au fond de l'ocean. Carte du fond des océans.* (Drink the last drop to the bottom of the ocean. Map of the bottom of the oceans) (1974-75) (pl. 114). This work is also in two parts. The part which hangs above depicts a map of the world's ocean beds in which Asia lies in the centre of the map with America split on either edge. Broodthaers did not alter this map in any way. Beneath it hangs a drawing entitled *Boire la dernière goutte au fond de l'ocean.* and signed *à ta santé, M.B.* On the left hand side of the drawing, the letters of the alphabet are written, some randomly circled. On the right, in blue ink, is a drawing of a wine bottle standing on a table, with a cork in the top of the bottle and a label on its side. The year *1975* is written on the bottle above the label.

---

[13]Magritte painted a number of versions of *Le Monde Poétique*; see Sylvester (ed.), vol. I, p. 187, vol. II, pp. 243, 383 & 384 and vol. IV, p. 15 and A. M. Hammacher, *Magritte*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1973, pp. 124-125.

[14]This was the map which Broodthaers had used in *Un Film de Charles Baudelaire* (1970); see *Cinéma.*, p. 125.

Broodthaers' map works were, therefore, quite varied. He added drawings and marks randomly and altered the words which describe the map/image. He made very subtle, minimal alterations - 'small disturbances' - which have a significant effect.[15] He drew our attention to existing phrases which we no longer notice or question and forced us to consider what they actually mean. Within Broodthaers' body of work the map succinctly represents travel, distant lands, the voyage.

It seems fitting here to quote an extract from a novel by Philippe Sollers, which fortuitously describes Broodthaers' activity:

> The atlas stayed open on the chest of drawers. The child wanted to become an explorer, a geologist, an archaeologist and he will not be separated from his favorite book, the big red atlas. In the evening, he would take it with him to bed - it was with the aid of the atlas that he made up his stories; he could not be caught out on the names of towns, the colours of flags, the ground area of different countries, the depths of the different seas; he would draw maps, colouring them in, recopying them, tracing them with obstinate precision. But what he liked most of all was making up new captions for certain illustrations.[16]

Tales of Adventure Abroad...

In the Bern exhibition catalogue the *Carnet d'un voyage imaginaire* (Notebook from an Imaginary Voyage) was listed together with the compass, dated 1972, and given the alternative title of *L'Astragalus* (The Astragalus). A work not exhibited in the *Salle Outremer* but also including a compass was *Treasure Island (L'Astragalus)* (1974) (pl. 115), in which a tin resembling a book, in particular a copy of *Treasure Island*, contains a drawing of a ship at sea titled *L'Astragalus*, a compass and a coin. Broodthaers explained the meaning of the name *Astragalus* in a letter to his friend and fellow artist David Lamelas:

> My dear David,
> In order to reach Treasure Island you sail the first part of the journey aboard the Astragalus (the small bone in the foot). After that, for the second part, I believe that the 'Metaphor' will be of service to you. It's a sailing boat which weighs many tons. Attached here is 10p in case of trouble.

---

[15]Storr, *Mapping*, p. 23.
[16]Philippe Sollers, *The Park* (1961), trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, London, Calder & Boyars, 1968, p. 28.

12 December 1973 MB.[17]

There are a number of other meanings of the word *Astragalus* and it is not clear why Broodthaers referred to this one.[18] Perhaps like Broodthaers, Lamelas also made art objects as a means of reaching treasure.

Broodthaers again referred to *Treasure Island* in a text he wrote in the 1966 special number of *Phantomas* (examined in Chapter 1). He began by explaining the importance to him of Rimbaud:

> What is still close to my heart is the respect for certain values. Rimbaud. Particularly Arthur Rimbaud. The model of revolt. The intense, poetic model.[19]

Broodthaers went on to say that he would love, like Rimbaud, to occupy himself with matters in Africa, in the Congo. He felt that Stevenson, author of *Treasure Island*, would share his point of view. However, Broodthaers, unlike Rimbaud, enjoyed most of his adventures and voyages without leaving home.

...And Adventures Closer To Home - *A Voyage on the North Sea*

A Voyage on the North Sea was a book published in 1973 in three different editions: 1100 copies in English, 1000 in French and 1000 in German (pl. 116).[20] The first 100 copies of the English version and the first 10 copies of the French version were accompanied by a short, silent film of the same title which Broodthaers wanted to be 'seen as an intrinsic part of the publication'.[21] A slide series using the same images was also made, entitled *Bateau Tableau* (1973) (pl. 117). The starting point for the

---

[17]Quoted in Q. S. Serafijn, 'Notes of a Super Non-Individual Watcher', in *Marcel Broodthaers L'Invitation au Voyage*, Amsterdam, Exposorium Vrije Universiteit, September-October 1990, pp. 9-10.

[18]The other meanings are a leguminous plant, a bone in the neck, a string of pearls, carved decorations and mouldings; see Serafijn, 'Notes of a Super Non-Individual Watcher', p. 10.

[19]*Phantomas* (February 1966), n.p.: 'Ce qui me tient encore au cœur, c'est le respect pour certaines valeurs. Rimbaud. Particulièrement Arthur Rimbaud. Le modèle de révolte. Le modèle poétique intense.'

[20]*A Voyage on the North Sea*, London, Petersburg Press, November 1973, 15 x 17.5 cm, 38 pp., offset, printed in an edition of 1100; see Jamar, p. 105. The French and German editions were published in association with Petersburg Press, in Brussels by Hossmann and in Cologne by M. Dupont Schauberg respectively.

[21]Jamar, p. 105. The film was *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1973-74), 16 mm, colour, 4 min., London.

series of works was the painting of a fishing boat returning which was also exhibited in the *Salle Outremer*. This was a nineteenth-century, amateur, oil painting of a small fleet, dominated by a large fishing boat, which Broodthaers had bought in an antique shop in Paris (as mentioned in Chapter 2). Broodthaers commented on the overrated price he had paid for the painting in an interview with Oppitz and Buchloh, in which Oppitz asked Broodthaers if the painting was part of his personal collection:

> Yes. I have found this little picture for a high enough price in a curiosity shop in the rue Jacob in Paris. It is a little painting from around the end of the XIXth century. It is not signed. It is the work of an amateur.[22]

Elsewhere Broodthaers again spoke about the overrated price but in more lyrical terms:

> The seascape reproduced in these pages was purchased in a shop on the rue Jacob in Paris. Afraid that it might slip through my fingers, I dared not bargain for it and paid a high price - that of love at first sight - even though it was unsigned.[23]

It is interesting that Broodthaers made a point of noting that the painting was unsigned. Despite his own works which explored and questioned the concept of the signature he appears to have been quite conventional on this occasion with regard to the value of the painting.

Broodthaers also pointed out the close relationship between the medium and image in a pun:

> The French words *tableau* and *bateau* are pronounced with similar sounds. If we repeat several times in a row *tableau* and *bateau*, then without fail, just where the tongue twists, one word will be said in place of the other. Thus we could just as well be holding forth on the latest boat as on the latest painting.[24]

---

[22]Michael Oppitz and B. H. D. Buchloh, 'Interview with Marcel Broodthaers on his film *Analysis of a painting*', *Interfunctionen*, Cologne, no. 11 (November 1973).

[23]'Avertissement' (Notification), reproduced in *Cinéma.*, pp. 227 & 329: 'La marine reproduite dans ces pages a été achetée dans une boutique de la rue Jacob à Paris. De crainte qu'elle ne m'échappe, je n'ai osé la marchander et l'ai payée un prix élevé - celui du coup de foudre - bien qu'elle ne soit pas signée.'

[24]Ibid.: 'En paroles françaises, les mots *tableau* et bateau se prononcent à l'aide de sons semblables. Si l'on répète plusieurs fois de suite *tableau* et *bateau* l'on ne manquera, là où la langue fourche, de remplacer l'un par l'autre. C'est ainsi que l'on dissertera aussi bien sur le dernier bateau que sur le dernier tableau.'

In this way, equal importance was established from the start, as to the nature of the medium used and to the image represented. The image of the painting was evidently of interest to Broodthaers. When Oppitz asked, 'Do you like the images of ships or do you like ships?', he replied, 'The two'.[25]

In 'Avertissement' Broodthaers analysed the painting in some detail. He described what was depicted, deducing from the outfits worn that the fleet was manned by Bretons who were returning to Brittany. He offered a very positive interpretation of the scene - that although the wind was light, 'the principal force stretching them is the abundance of a victorious wind'.[26] In other words, their catch was so great and successful that the sailors felt victorious. Broodthaers imagined that those on the shore would be excitedly awaiting the fleet's return and that the two fishermen depicted on the deck of the large fishing boat were, 'reckoning up, if we could hear them, their share in the profits. The hold is full of cod, not to mention the turbot and the sole...'[27] Through such an analysis Broodthaers thereby constructed a wider context for the painting. From the starting point of a static image he not only examined the information which is given in the details of the painting but he also added further details of his own. The 'victorious wind' relates to a sense of conquest and adds tension to the scene. The speculative conversation of the fishermen is speculated by Broodthaers and fits his general interest in the financial aspects of their activities.

Broodthaers made many works which related to the North Sea and the Belgian coast. Aside from those with mussel shells, he also made a print edition, *Citron - Citroen (Réclame pour la Mer du Nord)* (Lemon - Lemon (Advertisment for the North Sea)) (1974) (pl. 118).[28] A large didactic image fills most of the paper. It is a copy, showing signs of ageing, of a nineteenth-century, colour print of men and

---

[25]Oppitz & Buchloh, 'Interview with Marcel Broodthaers'.
[26]'Avertissement', *Cinéma.*, pp. 227 & 329: 'la force principale qui les tend est l'abondance d'un vent victorieux.'
[27]Ibid.: 'supputent, si nous les entendions parler, la part de bénéfice qui leur revient de la campagne. La cale est pleine de morues sans compter les turbots et les soles...' (omission dots in original)
[28]*Citron-Citroen (Réclame pour la Mer du Nord)*, colour offset and screnprint on white paper, 105 x 66.3 cm, Amsterdam, Seriaal, 1974, edition of 100 numbered and signed copies; see Jamar, p. 54.

women fishing on the North Sea coast. Examples of local fish are identified with the names given in both French and Flemish. The second part of the print consists of a black strip with the two words of the title printed in lemon yellow. Since what often accompanies fish is lemon, the words are *citron - citroen*.

The pages of the book *A Voyage on the North Sea*, and its French and German counterparts, are of colour and some black and white images of the painting. Each page is filled with one or four images which show either the whole or details of the painting. Some of the details are taken at such close range as to become abstract images which focus upon the texture of the paint and canvas. As the 'reader' progresses through the book the details become closer, but by the end the full painting is again in view. A narrative and a sense of movement is thereby constructed as the 'reader' is led to examine the painting in a very controlled way.

The book format means that a certain period of time passes while the images are viewed. All the images cannot be seen at once. A rhythm develops during which the sea seems to become rougher with larger waves and buoys bouncing around. One can almost hear the sound of the waves and the boats moving through the water. At intervals throughout the book the images of the fishing boat and its entourage are intercut with black and white photographs which Broodthaers took at Ostende of a small twentieth-century yacht. The yacht does not seen to move as the images hardly change and the sea is extremely calm. Meanwhile, the oil painting appears to be alive and full of activity. The contrasts throughout the book are explicit: nineteenth and twentieth century, oil painting and photograph, colour and monochrome, work and leisure, activity and calm. In typically enigmatic style, Broodthaers hints at the idea behind working in this way:

> A Voyage on the North Sea.
> A book suggesting image as function. A book suggesting the text as function. More than a theory, the subject of this proposition reflects a *simple image* of the frustration that rules the social condition of today, for example this year. Perhaps I should add that *le sujet brille*.

28 -'74 M.B.[29]

The main body of the book is composed almost exclusively of images and so it is ironic that French and German versions should be made in which only the title and note are translated. The pages are uncut, giving the impression that were the binding to be removed, the images could be looked at in one continuous sequence. In a note printed inside the front cover Broodthaers warned against cutting the pages. It is repeated here in full:

> Before cutting the pages the reader had better beware of the knife he will be wielding for the purpose. Sooner than make such a gesture I would prefer him to hold back that weapon, dagger, piece of office equipment which, swift as lightning, might turn into an indefinite sky. It is up to the attentive reader to find out what devilish motive inspired this book's publication. To that end he may make use, if need be, of select readings from today's prolific output. These pages must not be cut.[30]

The text was repeated inside the back cover with a few changes. Rather than hold back, he asked the reader to,

> fling away that weapon, that dagger, which, swift as a miracle, might turn into a piece of office equipment.[31]

He concluded by advising the reader that 'to find out what motive inspired this book's publication' he should 'see catalogues, papers, revues'.

In this text Broodthaers was evidently making reference to Mallarmé's 'Le Livre, instrument spirituel' (The Book: A Spiritual Instrument) (1895), in which Mallarmé wrote about the then common practice of publishing a book with the pages uncut. For Mallarmé this implied 'an almost religious significance' - the folded pages, pure and uncut, containing the 'mystery' of the book.[32] In contrast with the newspaper, which he likened to 'the sea; literature flows into it at will', a book is, or can be, transcendental, 'a spiritual instrument', carefully constructed to lead the reader

---

[29]Publicity for the film, see *Cinéma.*, p. 235.
[30]*A Voyage on the North Sea*, inside front cover.
[31]Ibid., inside back cover.
[32]Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Le Livre, instrument spirituel' (The Book: A Spiritual Instrument) in *Quant au Livre* (As For the Book), (1895) trans. in Caws (ed.), *Stéphane Mallarmé Selected Poetry and Prose*, pp. 81-82: 'un indice quasi relgieux.'

to 'symphonic exaltation'.[33] He went on to describe 'the virginal foldings of the book' which 'invite the paper-knife':

> The folds will have a mark which remains intact and invites us to open or close the pages according to the author's desires. There can be only blindness and discourtesy in so murderous and self-destructive an attempt to destroy the fragile, inviolable book.[34]

Mallarmé described the kind of book which, in its attention to the visual arrangement of words on the page and the relationship between the size of the typography used and the rhythm of the text, would counterbalance the destructive presence of the newspaper format. His own attempt at such a work was, of course, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, which he wrote two years later in 1897.[35]

In a sense, because of the uncut pages and implied continuous sequence of images, Broodthaers' book and film versions of *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1973-74) seem to have exchanged methods of presenting images, as far as is possible. In the film, which lasts four minutes, the images are the same as those in the book, but alternate with frames which show page numbers - 'Page 1', 'Page 2', and so on. In this way words are added to a project which had been purely visual. (In fact, the pages in the book were numbered on the reverse side and can therefore be seen if the pages are cut.) In contrast with the feeling of movement in the book, the film is somewhat static in consisting of static images. In this way Broodthaers denied most of the qualities for which film is often used. Additionally, the viewer cannot control either the sequence of images nor the length of time given to looking at each image. This situation is the same with the slide series. Although he was not refering to Broodthaers' work, in 1969 Charles Harrison wrote that, 'Much of the most exciting and potent recent art has been concerned with time as duration, and with distance

---

[33]Mallarmé, 'Le Livre, instrument spirituel', in Caws (ed.), *Stéphane Mallarmé Selected Poetry and Prose*, pp. 81-83: 'Un journal reste le point de départ; la littératures'y décharge à souhait.' 'aucun moyen mental exaltant la symphonie.'

[34]Ibid., p. 83: 'Le reploiement vierge du livre...l'introduction d'une arme, ou coupe-papier...Les plis perpétueront une marque, intacte, conviant à ouvrir, fermer la feuille, selon le maître. Si aveugle et peu un procédé, l'attentat qui se consomme, dans la destrution d'une frêle inviolabilité.'

[35]For further discussion see David W. Seaman, *Concrete Poetry in France*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, UMI Research Press, 1981, pp. 117-150.

spanned as a means of invoking the passage of time through the spaces embraced by the mind'.[36] By working with a sequence of images, whether in a book, film or slide series format, Broodthaers was able to construct a period of time during which to engage the viewer and unfold a narrative.

Two other films were made which also took as their starting point the aforementioned oil painting and which slightly predated the film *A Voyage on the North Sea*. In *Analyse eines Bildes/Analyse d'une peinture* (Analysis of a Painting) (1973) the painting was shown in a gilt frame in a gallery and the film was made in such a way that, according to Oppitz, 'the actor is a picture'.[37] The film was also almost entirely a sequence of static images showing the painting and details of it, in relation to its frame and to a black background. Towards the end of the film, a blank white canvas was shown which, Oppitz suggested and Broodthaers agreed, was treated as 'a homology of the painted picture and the empty canvas'.[38] In the only action sequence Broodthaers is shown rolling up this blank canvas and then a projection screen, setting up a comparison between the two. Broodthaers thereby examined the nature of illusion. He indicated how a painting originates as a blank canvas and film is projected onto a blank screen. Once again he played with and expanded the medium of film: 'You have believed to see a painting, but nevertheless you have seen a film'.[39] When the film was first shown the painting was hung on the wall beside the screen.[40]

Another film based upon the painting was entitled *Deux Films* (Two Films) (1973). The first part was identical to *Analyse eines Bildes/Analyse d'une peinture* and was titled *Une peinture d'amateur découverte dans une boutique de curiosités* (An amateur painting discovered in a curiosity shop). The second was shorter, *Le*

---

[36]Charles Harrison, 'Against Precedents', in *When Attitudes Become Form (Works - Concepts - Processes - Situations - Information)*, Bern, Kunsthalle, 22 March-27 April 1969 & London, ICA, 28 September-27 October 1969, n.p.
[37]*Analyse eines Bildes/Analyse d'une peinture*, 1973, 16 mm, colour, 6 min., Brussels; see Oppitz and Buchloh, 'Interview with Marcel Broodthaers'.
[38]Oppitz & Buchloh, 'Interview with Marcel Broodthaers'.
[39]Broodthaers in ibid.
[40]The film was first shown at the opening of *Peintures Littéraires*, Cologne, Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, from 7 September 1973; see *Cinéma.*, p. 226.

même film, revu après critiques (The same film seen after criticism), but also included photographs of yachts which Broodthaers would use in the book *A Voyage on the North Sea*.[41] Although there was no soundtrack, the film was screened accompanied by a record of sounds of the sea, entitled *Bruitage Cinéma: Mer - Pluie - Vent - Tempête - Orage* (Cinema Sound Effects: Sea - Rain - Wind - Tempest - Storm).[42]

The painting and the photographs of a yacht were also used in two, two-dimensional, mixed media works both entitled *Journal d'un voyage utopique* (Diary of a Utopian Voyage) (1973) (pl. 119). Each was based upon printed images of either the painting of the fishing fleet or a photograph of a yacht. The images were then overworked with ink drawings to construct simple narratives.[43]

Travelling Words

Other films by Broodthaers which featured ships and the sea include *Chère Petite Sœur (La Tempête)* (Dear Little Sister (The Storm)) (1972) and *Histoire d'Amour* (Dr. A Huismans) (Love Story (Dr. A Huismans)) (1971). Each originated from old postcards. In the case of *Chère Petite Sœur* the postcard depicts a ship on stormy seas with a lighthouse in the background. It is in black and white with a bluish tone. On the border above the image the date is handwritten as '27 - 8 - 1901' and beneath the image an inscription reads:

> Dear little sister, this is to give you an idea of the sea during the storm which we had yesterday. I'll give you more details about it, best wishes and see you soon, Marie.[44]

Both a film and a print edition are based upon this card. In the film, the whole card and details of it are shown against a black background.[45] The words are repeated, a

---

[41]*Une peinture d'amateur découverte dans une boutique de curiosités*, 1973, 16 mm, colour, 7 min., Brussels. *Le même film, revu après critiques*, 1973, 16 mm, 5 min., Brussels.
[42]See *Cinéma.*, p. 233.
[43]See David (ed.), pp. 186-187.
[44]*Chère Petite Sœur*, black offset print on white paper, 63 x 44 cm, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, 1972, edition of 100 numbered and signed copies; see Jamar, p. 30: 'Chère petite sœur, celle-ci pour te donner une idée de la mer pendant la tempête que nous avons eue hier. Donnerai détail à ce sujet, bonne amitié et à bientôt. Marie.'

few at a time, as subtitles. At some points only the subtitles are on the screen. The reverse side of the card is also shown on which the Brussels destination address is written and the postmark 'Ostende' is shown. In the print version, Broodthaers transferred the image to a lithograph which he printed in negative with a black background on white paper (pl. 120). He repeated the date of the card above the frame and 'Chère petite sœur...' beneath it.

The atmosphere of the stormy sea and of the relationship between Marie and her sister are expressed powerfully and succinctly. Broodthaers has added nothing to what exists already, he simply selected and repeated in another medium. The card is an interesting example of a word/image relationship. The message is brief but the image corresponds exactly with the sender's wishes who did not need to use any more words.

By contrast, in the case of the film *Histoire d'Amour* (Dr. A Huismans) (pl. 121), the sender complained that he could not find the card he wished to send.[46] The film focuses on the writing which is on the reverse of the card. The message was sent from Dr. Huismans to a 'Mademoiselle' in Brussels and reads as follows:

> You see, Mademoiselle, that I keep my word. I have only one regret - not to find here nicer cards to send to you.[47]

The card was sent from Knocke on the Belgian North Sea coast and dated '21.8.07'. The camera follows the handwritten message closely so that the texture of the ink on the paper is evident. Details are isolated to construct the dialogue ('vous', 'je', 'parole', 'regret'). The postmarks are also studied, showing when the card was sent from Knocke and when it arrived in Brussels (remarkably, on the same day). The whole message and then five, colour, postcard images of seas are shown, four stormy and one calm. The viewer wonders if one of them is actually the image on Dr. Huismans' card. In fact, it is not, because all six postcards are now in the collection of the Neue

---

[45]*Chère Petite Sœur (La Tempête)*, 1972, 16mm, black and white and toned, 4 min., Brussels.
[46]*Histoire d'Amour* (Dr. A Huismans), 1971, 16 mm, colour, sound, 3 min., Brussels. The name of the sender reminds one of Joris-Karl Huysmans, but Broodthaers makes no reference to this.
[47]*Histoire d'Amour* (Dr. A Huismans): 'Vous voyez, Mademoiselle que je tiens parole. Je n'ai qu'un regret: c'est de ne pas trouver ici de cartes plus jolies à vous adresser.'

Galerie, Kassel, where they are exhibited as *Drehmaterial* (Filmmaterial) (pl. 122). They are framed and the image side of the card with Dr. Huismans' message cannot be seen. The image which did not satisfy his wishes remains a mystery to the viewer.[48]

As Susan Stewart points out, the postcard has little value in its own materiality (until, for example, it becomes rare). Its value lies in its role as evidence of what we have seen, when we send the card to someone else, or keep it for ourselves as a souvenir or *aide-mémoire*. Its small size means that it can easily be 'enveloped by the body...appropriated within the privitised view of the individual subject'.[49] This is what makes it so appealing and accessible. As viewers of Broodthaers' work we are offered access to private correspondence between unknown people from the past. In the films the words are carefully studied. The time allocated to each series of words in the film determines how long we study them. We are controlled by the medium of film and it is up to us to construct our own stories from the small pieces of information that we are given.[50]

Message in a Bottle

Broodthaers used wine bottles as the source of a number of works from the 1970s. For Baudelaire, who devoted a section of *Les Fleurs du Mal* to *Le Vin,* wine was a form of communication as well as escape - the means for a metaphorical voyage. Broodthaers also enjoyed drinking wine and, like the cooking pots and furniture of earlier works, wine bottles were easily obtainable, everyday items. He often pasted

---

[48]A postcard of a ship also formed the basis for *Mauretania (Avec mer)*, 1972, of which two versions were made: *Mauretania (AOX - XOA)* and *Mauretania (Fig. 0 - Figures Fig. A)*, 16 mm, colour, c. 2 min., Düsseldorf; a postcard and prints were filmed in *Ah, que la chasse soit le plaisir des Rois*, 1972, 16 mm, colour, 8 min., Brussels; see David (ed.), p. 316. In 1963 Broodthaers wrote a film proposal for *Les Cartes Postales* (Postcards) which was to have been based upon postcard-photographs of children from c. 1900 in juxtaposition with laws against contraceptives of the time; see text in the Broodthaers Archive, Brussels.

[49]Susan Stewart, *On Longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 1993, pp. 136-138.

[50]For an interesting comparative work see Susan Hiller's *Dedicated to the Unknown Artists* (1972-76), in which she presents over three hundred postcards of rough seas at English seaside resorts, and which she described as 'an exhibition piece with myself as curator, collaborating with/extending the work of the unknown artists who created the Rough Sea 'set' of postcards. The 'coincidental' pairings of alternative descriptive languages - verbal and visual - are sustained as levels of presentation throughout the piece'. See *Susan Hiller*, Liverpool, Tate Gallery, 20 January-17 March 1996, pp. 76-77.

labels onto them with simple drawings and short phrases. An amusing example is *Entre deux mers se dressait le Château Margaux* (1974) (pl. 123). The work comprises a green wine bottle standing between two clear wine bottles. On each of the clear bottles is a handwritten label which reads 'mer', whilst on the green bottle the label reads 'Château'. The work is a pun based upon the names of different wines. While the title literally translates as 'Between two seas stands the Château Margaux' it also refers to the wines called 'Entre deux mers' and 'Château Margaux'.

The bottles exhibited in *Salle Outremer* were four, white, Bordeaux bottles in clear glass (pl. 124). On each bottle Broodthaers stuck a label on which he had made a drawing. These drawings represent 'le 2ème jour' (the 2nd day) depicting a ship at sea, '3ème jour' (3rd day) showing a cliff, the sea and a setting sun, '8ème jour' (8th day) with some kind of strange fish, and finally '32ème jour' (32nd day) on which a ship is sinking. Once again, Broodthaers seems to be constructing a narrative by giving the minimum of information. The dates give a sense of duration and the viewer is left to fill in the details.

Perhaps these images illustrate a tale of disaster at sea by Edgar Allan Poe whose writings Broodthaers enjoyed and to whom he referred directly in *The Manuscript 1833 (Le manuscrit trouvé dans une bouteille)* (The Manuscript 1833 (The Manuscript Found in a Bottle)) (1974) (pl. 125) which was exhibited in Bern.[51] The work comprised a white Bordeaux bottle in clear glass, on which 'The Manuscript 1833' was inscribed, wrapped in tissue paper on which a text had been printed in English, French and German. The wrapped bottle was packed in a cardboard box on which 'Le Manuscrit trouvé dans une bouteille' was printed in English, French and German. On the back of the box the two dates '1833' and '1974' (the date of the edition) were linked with a hyphen. The English version of the text on the tissue paper reads as follow:

The Object:

---

[51]*The Manuscript 1833 (Le manuscrit trouvé dans une bouteille)*, wine bottle wrapped in white tissue paper in a white cardboard box, 30 x 7.7 x 7.7 cm (box), 49.5 x 36 cm (paper), Berlin, Edition René Block, 1974, edition of 120 numbered and signed on the paper; see Jamar, p. 58.

> An ordinary bottle, used for white Bordeaux wine. In the first third below the neck of the bottle the words 'The Manuscript' and the year '1833' are printed in a light black colour.
> The Subject:
> It's the tale of Edgar Allan Poe 'The Manuscript found in a bottle' published for the first time in 1833 in a newspaper at Baltimore.[52]

Poe was greatly admired not only by Broodthaers but previously by Baudelaire, who translated much of his work into French, and by Mallarmé who wrote *Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe* (The Tomb of Edgar Poe) (1876). Poe's tale, *MS Found in a Bottle*, won him a prize in the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor* (12 October 1833), one of the first signs of public recognition of his writing. *MS Found in a Bottle* is a fantastic adventure story describing a disaster at sea in which a ship becomes trapped in a whirlpool. The story itself only survived because the narrator cast it into the sea in a bottle just before the ship went down. In writing this grotesque tale, Poe was responding to then-current interest in exploration of unknown parts of the world and travel to distant lands. He based the story on his brother's first hand experiences at sea.

Broodthaers' *Manuscript 1833* is a tautology. The information on the bottle refers to the manuscript which in turn describes the bottle. The title, which is a description of the work, is written on the box. However, in fact, the manuscript is not in, but around the bottle. The bottle itself is empty of its original contents (wine) as well as its supposed new contents (the manuscript). The subject of the work is identified as Poe's tale but only by title - the contents (the tale) is absent. Only the structures of the work - the titles, dates, box, bottle - are in place.

Broodthaers also showed an interest in other works by Poe. These included *The Unparalleled Adventures of one Hans Pfaall* (1835) in which the hero flew to the moon in a balloon and *The Balloon Hoax* (1831) which became the subject of some drawings by Broodthaers (who had experienced balloon travel himself in 1957). In *The Balloon Hoax* Poe invented a journal which had supposedly been kept by two aeronauts who had inflated a balloon in Wales intending to fly to Paris but due to a tempest had been blown over the Atlantic and ended up on Sullivan's Island, South

---

[52]Jamar, p. 58.

Carolina. The story was taken seriously by New York's *Sun* newspaper for a couple of days until verification revealed the hoax. The exploration of space was of great interest to Poe, and Broodthaers enjoyed the 19th century perspective his writings offered on events of the 1960s and the first landings of man on the moon.

Broodthaers' film *Crime à Cologne* (Crime in Cologne) (1971) (pl. 126) also appears to have been inspired by crime stories of Poe.[53] The storyline is simple. A girl, sitting in a gallery window reading a book, is shot.[54] A man, whose head is out of the frame, puts his gun away. The acting is melodramatic, while the accompanying soundtrack is light and amusing - an extract from Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* which is usually associated with dancing the Can-Can. On the window the names are printed of many of those whose work Broodthaers enjoyed, the same names as those which appeared on the catalogue wrappers for the Cologne Art Fair, listed in Chapter 2. The names can be read from the street, however, Poe's name appears twice, with one version legible from inside the gallery. This means that his name stands out and attracts the attention of the viewer, placing him in a position of importance in the film.

Rotten Fish?

The two plexiglass boxes in the *Salle Outremer* contained paper printed with a fishmotif and there are many other works with printed or drawn images of fish.[55] Often these are simple and playful. An example is *Bordeaux* (1974) in which Broodthaers stuck a small colour print of a fish onto a green wine bottle.[56] The fish appears to be swimming in a green sea, that is, the glass. *Les Petits Poissons* (The Small Fish) (1973) (pl. 127) is a series of nine ink drawings each depicting different fish swimming in the sea.[57] The fish appear as a child might have drawn them - flat

---

[53]*Crime à Cologne*, 1971, 35 mm, black and white, sound, 1 min. 30 sec., Cologne.
[54]The gallery is the Michael Werner Gallery in Cologne which was showing Broodthaers' work at the Cologne Art Fair at the same time as the film was being made.
[55]See entry in the catalogue to *Marcel Broodthaers*, Bern.
[56]See entry in the catalogue to *Marcel Broodthaers*, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, 24 April-30 May 1986, no. 32.
[57]See *Marcel Broodthaers*, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, 3 October-5 November 1980, cat. no. 7.

and simplified, with distorted profiles. There are many other drawings of this nature which were only exhibited posthumously, suggesting that they may not have been ready or intended for exhibition.

The *Salle Outremer* did, however, contain eight drawings for the preparation of the film *Le Poisson pourrit par la tête* (1970-71) (pl. 128) and the Bern version additionally contained a copy of the film.[58] The film was made from a series of drawings which were then transferred to celluloid. Many of the drawings were actually of celluloid showing its perforations and individual frames. In this way Broodthaers drew attention to the medium in which he was working and, as with *A Voyage on the North Sea*, used film as a medium for static images. The drawings of celluloid contained images as well as patterns and numbers. Words were included which related to various fish and the general theme of the sea, some fragmented and incomprehensible. There were drawings of fish and parts of fish without heads but with scales or patterned skin and often labelled 'fig. 1', 'fig. 2', etc. The drawings of celluloid were in sections and did not run continuously. There were arrows and compasses which may have given a sense of direction but which, in fact, served to emphasise the static nature of the film.

On a print used to advertise the film Broodthaers wrote:

> 1. Is it a gothic fish? Style is the eagle of the sea.
> 2. The fish as an idea of non-communication. The fish itself as a motionless film.
> 3. The fish as childish art market. (dumping fish on the market)[59]

These words and several similar drawings of headless fish were linked together in a subsequent book edition from 1973 entitled *Jeter du poisson sur le marché du Cologne* (Dumping Fish on the Cologne Market) (pl. 129).[60] Each page shows a

---

[58]The film is also known as *Projet pour un Poisson (Projet pour un Film)*; 1970-71, 35 mm, black and white, 9 min., Brussels and Cologne; see *Cinéma.*, p. 180.

[59]*Der Fisch/ein film von Marcel Broodthaers*, in French, English and German, reproduced in *Cinéma.*, p. 187. The French version which was presumably the original language, reads as follows: '1. Le poisson est-il gothique? Le style, c'est l'aigle des mers. 2. Le poisson comme idée de non-communication. Le poisson, lui-même, comme film immobile. 3. Le poisson comme marché d'art enfantin. (Jeter du poisson sur le marché)' The English translation of the first sentence is clearly inaccurate and should read 'Is fish gothic?'

[60]*Jeter du poisson sur le marché du Cologne*, letterpress, in sheets, 21 x 14.5 cm, 12 pp. (including

simple drawing of one, two or three headless fish, the bodies covered with scales or stripes. The sentence 'le poisson pourrit par la tête' runs through the book with a word on each page giving a sense of movement and continuity. The words translate literally as 'fish goes rotten from its head', but are actually a proverb which implies that corruption in society begins at the top. Broodthaers, of course, chose the literal interpretation.

In this book Broodthaers seems to have been saying that art is sold in a market just like any other commodity, for example, fish. A fish market is not very glamorous and does not offer a very favourable comparison with the image intended to be projected by the art world. However, just as unwanted fish may be dumped on a market, Broodthaers suggested that the same may be true of unsaleable art, for example at the Art Fair held annually in Cologne, where his work was often shown.

Travels in a Suitcase

The suitcase exhibited in the *Salle Outremer* was simply entitled *Une valise* (A Suitcase), dated 1974. On one side of it was a patch of black paint onto which the letter 'A' was stencilled in white. In the Bern exhibition it stood closed on a plinth in front of *Ohne Titel (Panneau a)* (Untitled (Panel a)) (1975) so that the two works could be read together. *Ohne Titel (Panneau a)* can be seen as a retrospective work in which Broodthaers attached many black and white and colour photographs to a black painted backing board. Most of the photographs depict works by Broodthaers, with the remainder original photographs by Broodthaers or postcards of works by other artists. At various intervals across the board the letter 'a' was stencilled in white paint.[61]

On the one hand, the suitcase functions as a container or a mold, comparable to the shell of an egg or mussel. In some works Broodthaers filled a suitcase with mussel shells, bricks or coal. One such work, provisionally entitled *Valise Charbon*

---

cover), Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, 1973, edition of 50 copies; se Jamar, p. 99.

[61]I shall not enter into a detailed examination of Broodthaers' use of individual letters and figures as it is a large topic in its own right. For further discussion see Dirk Snauwaert, 'The Figures', in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 126-134.

(Coal Suitcase) (1966), is a suitcase, filled with coal and with 'Charbon' stencilled on white on the lid.[62] The suitcase is also a metaphor for travel, and this aspect has been developed further in works such as *Erasmus* (1974) in which a suitcase containing a map has 'Erasmus' stencilled in white on the side. In this sense the suitcase seems to symbolise the need to travel to acquire knowledge, like the so-called 'Wandering Scholar', Erasmus.

Many of the works exhibited in the *Salle Outremer* could be termed 'assisted readymades' - objects which Broodthaers had chosen and to which he had made the minimum alterations. Examples of unassisted readymades were the boxes of matches which he simply presented. The brand was 'Ship' and on the front of each box is a drawing/motif of a large sailing ship. Broodthaers displayed a variety of boxes - large, small and wrapped - in a glass cabinet with a number of other small objects.

Notions of Space

Not exhibited in either *Salle Outremer* but also relevant to the theme of the room is a book entitled *La Conquête de l'Espace. Atlas à l'usage des artistes et des militaires* (The Conquest of Space. Atlas for the use of Artists and the Military.) (1975) (pl. 130).[63] A print version, *Atlas* (Atlas) (1975), was also made which consists of the uncut pages of the book (pl. 131).[64] Whereas Broodthaers used existing maps largely to evoke imagery of adventure and discovery, in these works he dealt with maps as images which define space. By presenting his maps in a fragmentary form he was able to question, and draw comparisons between, boundaries in geographic space and in art.

---

[62]See David (ed.), p. 89.

[63]*La Conquête de l'Espace. Atlas à l'usage des artistes et des militaires*, offset, boxed, 38 x 25 mm, 38 pp., Brussels, Lebeer Hossmann, 1975, edition of 50 copies, unsigned but stamped 'Estate M. Broodthaers' and numbered by hand by the publisher after the artist's death; see Jamar, p. 117.

[64]*Atlas*, 1975, black offset on white Ingres paper, 49 x 63 cm, Brussels, Lebeer Hossmann, edition of 50 copies, the first 22 copies numbered and signed, the remainder stamped 'Estate M. Broodthaers'; see Jamar, p. 71.

The book is tiny and fits neatly into a box cover. It consists of shadow pictures of 32 countries arranged in alphabetical order. Each country is printed on a separate page and so appears as an island; the unifying atlas is dissected into its constituent parts. The choice of countries seems to be arbitrary. Most are European, although not all, and there appears to be no particular reason why these countries have been selected. On the title page Broodthaers' name is printed in *écriture anglaise* followed by 'La Conquête de l'Espace' in Times upper case letters. Beneath this is 'Atlas à l'usage des artistes et des militaires' again in *écriture anglaise* and then 'Bruxelles' in smaller, upper case Times. On the facing page a stylised image of an eagle appears with the date '1975'.

The work is witty and succinct with the title indicating the two meanings Broodthaers wished to imply with his notion of the conquest of space and the way in which these meanings interrelate via the shared term 'avant-garde'. For the military avant-garde, an atlas or map is a tool used for strategic purposes. It is a form of knowledge and can be used as a means of gaining power and control. The redrawn map then gives that power a material validity, albeit in a highly abstract form. Broodthaers destroyed the sense of power and control that maps can grant by changing the name of the map (in the previously discussed examples of world maps) or, in this case, by making each country roughly equal in size. By then printing each country on a separate page, arranged in alphabetical order, there is no hierarchy nor geographical relationship between them. It is not an atlas which can be used for travelling anywhere. Furthermore, to underline the loss of power, the book is tiny. It is handy, but of little real use.

For avant-garde artists, 'the conquest of space' suggests compositional problems. In other words, how to find new ways of negotiating two-dimensional forms on an empty canvas or three-dimensional forms in space. This is the purely formal interpretation. However, more broadly speaking, Broodthaers raises the question of the space in which art functions. This is not a self-contained neutral space as, according to Buchloh, Broodthaers disputed Modernism's 'claim to aesthetic

autonomy'.[65] As I hope I shall have made apparent, Broodthaers strongly believed that art does not exist in isolation, but is inextricably linked with contemporary social, political and economic circumstances. He elaborated on this point, albeit in an obscure manner, in part of a text for the 1972 group exhibition *Actualité d'un bilan* (News of a Balance Sheet):

> To change concepts one will first have to acknowledge that the Plastic Arts in an outdated linguistic framework serve only as a practice field for manœuvres of a more military than scientific type. Essentially, the subject is denied by its use as an operational means for the conquest of space, even if one claims to be engaged only in semantic research or a quest for the Holy Grail. The subject is a type of fraud if it is only considered on the level of thinking. Most art critics hardly pay any attention to this fact, as they spend their time thinking, naturally.
> THE CONQUEST OF SPACE[66]

The importance of the text was indicated by Broodthaers in describing it as an 'indispensable complement to the series of nine paintings exhibited for the first time in Paris due to the care of Yvon Lambert in October 1972'.[67] The paintings were the *Série en langue française (série de neuf peintures sur un sujet littéraire)* (French Language Series (Series of Nine Painting on a Literary Subject)) (1972) (pl. 132) in which Broodthaers printed short sentences on primed but unstretched canvases which read, for example, 'André Gide boit', 'Paul Valéry fume' or 'Charles Baudelaire peint' with a printers' device and the dates of each writer printed below. The canvases were pinned directly onto the gallery wall in three rows of three.

The exhibition included work by a wide range of contemporary artists including Andre, Buren, Toroni and LeWitt as a retrospective survey of the gallery.[68]

---

[65]Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde', *Artforum* (May 1980), p. 56.

[66]*Actualité d'un bilan*, trans. Laurent Sauerwein, p. 37: 'Pour changer de concept, il faudra reconnaître d'abord que les Arts Plastiques quant à la linguistique d'une mode dépassée ne constituent qu'un champ d'application propre à quelque manœuvre de style plus militaire que savant. Essentiellement, le sujet est désavoué par son uti-lisation comme moyen opérationnel propre à conquérir de l'espace même si l'on prétend n'obéir qu'aux impératifs d'une recherche sémantique ou d'une quête du graal. Le sujet est une forme d'escroquerie s'il est installé uniquement sur le terrain de la réflexion. La plupart des critiques d'art n'en tiennent guère compte puisqu'ils réfléchissent, naturellement. LA CONQUÊTE DE L'ESPACE

[67]*Actualité d'un bilan,* p. 35: 'Complément indispensable à la suite de neuf tableaux exposés pour la première fois à Paris par les soins d'Yvon Lambert en octobre 1972.'

[68]The other exhibitiors were Carl Andre, Arakawa, David Askevold, Robert Barry, Bill Beckley, Daniel Buren, Christo, Daniel Dezeuze, Jan Dibbets, Hamish Fulton, Douglas Huebler, On Kawara, Edward Keinholz, David Lamelas, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long, Robert Mangold, Brice Marden, Dennis

In an article co-curator of the exhibition Michel Claura, described it as 'a show that brought together for the first time in Paris some thirty artists who were and are still largely part of what has been considered as the artistic avant-garde of the western world for the past five years'.[69] Nowadays some of those names are less well-known. However, the inclusion of Broodthaers indicates his standing at that time.

The negotiation of space practiced by the artists in the exhibition was largely that of a Minimal or Conceptual nature. Many of the works were site-specific and related to the space of the gallery. Toroni, for example, also attached his work directly to the wall, whilst Andre exhibited a series of metal squares on the floor and Buren a 'curtain' of striped fabric which fitted the oval shape of the window. Space (this particular gallery space) was therefore a fundamental concern for these artists in determining the work which would be exhibited. Most of the artists worked with repetitive units of equal dimensions - Toroni's squares, Andre's metal squares, Buren's stripes as well as Broodthaers' own nine canvases.

Claura described the artists as members of the avant-garde and it is precisely upon this term that Broodthaers plays in his pairing of the military with the art world. Just as the advance guard prepares the way for the rest of the battalion, so the avant-garde artist considers that he leads the way in new art. According to Serafijn, both the military and artists seek the same strategic goal: 'material and/or mental richness. After that: consolidation, the defending of and clinging on to the conquered power'.[70] Elsewhere Broodthaers spoke about 'space and conquest' in relation to his own move into the visual arts (including the title of his 1975 ICA exhibition, *Décor (A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers)*). In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he explained that when he began making visual objects with *Pense-Bête*, he came into contact with the public in a different way from when he had been writing poetry:

Oppenheim, Edda Renouf, François Ristori, Robert Ryman, Salvo, Fred Sandback, Niele Toroni, Richard Tuttle, Cy Twomby and Lawrence Weiner.

[69]Michel Claura, 'Actualité d'un bilan', *Flash Art*, no. 38 (Janaury 1973), p. 14.

[70]Serafijn, 'Notes of a Super Non-Individual Watcher', p. 6: 'materiële en/ofo geestelijke rijkdom. Vervolgens: consolidatie, het verdedigen en vasthouden van de veroverde macht.'

> Suddenly I had a real audience, on that level where it is a matter of space and conquest...If space is really the fundamental element of artistic construction (form in language and material form), then, after such a strange experience, I could only oppose it to the philosophy of writing with common sense.[71]

The interviewer then asked, 'What does space conceal?' to which he replied:

> Isn't it like a game of hide and seek? Of course, the one who's hiding will always say he's somewhere else, and yet he's always there. And you know he'll turn around and catch someone. The interminable search for a definition of space serves only to hide the essential structure of art, a process of reification. Any individual who perceives a function of space, especially a convincing one, appropriates it mentally or economically.[72]

In other words, for Broodthaers art is not about negotiating space but material forms and the framework within which they exist. This is both the social/political/economic context as well as the institutional sphere. Broodthaers sought to break down myths surrounding art, particularly those of the autonomous art object. In making the journey from poet to artist he had to conquer the new space within which he and his art objects would exist. In this way, the symbol of the eagle links military with artistic power.

The phrase 'the conquest of space', therefore, has various implications: for the military it means the conquest of space in terms of land, for artists the conquest of the space within the works and in which their works exist, for astronauts (or Poe perhaps) it implies the 'space race', whilst for poets such as Mallarmé, the conquest concerns poetic space, the relationship between blanks and words, between words and the page, and overcoming the difficulty of writing.[73] A similar form of expression was also used by Breton who, in 'Political Position of Surrealism', quoted from André

---

[71]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Soudain, il devint réel, à ce niveau où il est question d'espace et de conquête...Si l'espace est bien l'élément fondamental de la construction artistique (forme de langage ou forme matérielle), je ne pourrais, après cette singulière expérience, que l'opposer à la philosophie de ce qui est écrit avec un sens commun.'

[72]Ibid.: 'Que cache l'espace? N'est-ce pas un jeu comme celui du Loup es-tu là? En effet, le loup dit chaque fois qu'il est ailleurs, et cependant il est là. Et l'on sait qu'il va se retourner et attraper quelqu'un. La recherche constante d'une définition de l'espace ne servirait qu'à cacher la structure essentielle de l'Art, un processus de réification. Chaque individu percevant une fonction de l'espace, et d'autant plus si elle est convaincante, se l'approprie mentalement ou économiquement.'

[73]See Mallarmé, 'L'Action restreinte' (Restrained Action), in *Quant au livre*, in *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 369-373. See also Maurice Blanchot, 'Mallarmé and Literary Space', in *The Siren's Song: Selected Essays*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch, Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1982, pp. 110-120.

Malraux's 1935 speech in Moscow as an example of the then current thaw in the Soviet arts policy and the Party's acknowledgement of the importance of poetry:

> Art is not a submission, it is a conquest.
> The conquest of what?
> Of feelings and the means to express them.
> About what?
> About the unconscious, almost always; about logic, very often.[74]

A Surrealist journal which appeared only once was entitled *La Conquête du Monde* par l'Image.[75] Published in Paris in 1942 it included poems by Eluard, an article by Dotremont on 'Notes techniques sur l'image dite surréaliste' and a text by Leo Malet on 'La clé du champ de manœuvres'. On the cover of the journal was a photograph of Picasso's *Objet* (Object) (1942), a bull's head constructed from a bicycle saddle and handlebars, with a text by Goethe which emphasised the power of certain images.

Broodthaers' atlas recalls a Surrealist map of the world (1929) (pl. 133) in which the size of each country was altered depending upon what was judged to be its spiritual, creative and political significance.[76] For these reasons, the USA ceased to exist, whereas Russia and Alaska filled most of the northern hemisphere, and the islands of the South Pacific assumed a new importance. The map was first published in a special edition of the Brussels journal *Variétés* entitled *Le Surréalisme en 1929* where it was attributed to 'XXX'. *Variétés* contained articles by the leading, contemporary, French and Belgian Surrealists and although the journal was printed in Brussels, the special edition was in fact edited by Breton and Aragon.[77] This might help to explain why Paris was defined as the most important city on the map while Brussels did not appear at all.

Baudelaire's Travels

---

[74]André Breton, 'Political Position of Today's Art', a lecture given by Breton in Prague, 1 April 1935, trans. Seaver and Lane, p. 229.
[75]*La Conquête du Monde* par l'Image, Paris, Editions de la Main à Plume (April 1942); see Dawn Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, London, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978, pp. 406-415.
[76]A Surrealist map of the world, first published in *Variétés: Le Surréalisme en 1929*, Brussels (June 1929), attributed to XXX, reprinted in Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, p. 464.
[77]Sylvester, *Magritte*, p. 137.

Also not included in the *Salle Outremer* but absoutely central to notions of the voyage was *Un Film de Charles Baudelaire* (A Film by Charles Baudelaire) (1970). It originated from a series of five or six monthly seminars on Baudelaire given by Lucien Goldmann at the Free University of Brussels during the winter of 1969-70 and which Broodthaers attended. The film was Broodthaers' contribution to the course instead of a piece of written work.[78] Broodthaers subsequently made an English version, *A Film by Charles Baudelaire* (1970) (pl. 134), which was largely identical apart from the subtitles, which were then in English, and the sequence of numbers which was a sequence of dates in the English version.[79] Broodthaers never showed the French version and so in this account I shall focus upon the English version.[80]

The title of the film indicates that it is supposed to have been made by Baudelaire himself. As Broodthaers explained:

> *Un film de Charles Baudelaire* is not a film for cinephiles. Why not? Because it was shot in the nineteenth century. And because the cinephiles have never seen reels dating from the time when Muybridge, the Lumière brothers and Edison were still unborn or were taking their first steps under the watchful eyes of their industrialist mamas and papas.[81]

By dating the film so early, Broodthaers granted himself a certain freedom in its format and content. Perhaps he was also suggesting that cinema may have developed along alternative lines and that present forms of cinema were too limited.

The film was loosely based upon actual events - a voyage which Baudelaire's parents forced him to take between June 1841 and February 1842 at the age of twenty to separate him from his debauched Parisian friends and lifestyle. He was supposed

---

[78]Armin Zweite, 'Commentaires à propos d'un film de Marcel Broodthaers', in *Catalogue-Catalogus*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 27 September-3 November 1974. Zweite noted: 'Ce film a été réalisé à la suite d'un séminaire tenu par Lucien Goldmann sur Baudelaire. Broodthaers me raconta qu'il avait proposé ce film pour servir de thèse en lieu et place d'un travail écrit.'

[79]Each film was 35 mm, colour, sound, 6 min. 30 sec., Brussels and Paris. Broodthaers referred to the English version as *Un film de Charles Baudelaire (Carte Politique du Monde ou système de signification)* when it was shown in his exhibition *Film als Objekt - Objekt als Film*, Mönchengladbach, Städtische Museum, 21 October-7 November 1971.

[80]For an account of the French version see *Cinéma.*, pp. 116-119.

[81]Notice for the screening at the Brussels, Studio Arenberg, 1973; see *Cinéma.*, p. 121 and Jenkins in Goldwater & Compton, p. 103: '*Un Film de Charles Baudelaire* n'est pas un film destiné aux cinéphiles. Pourquoi? Parce qu'il a été tourné au XIXe siècle. Et que les cinéphiles n'ont jamais vu de bobines datées d'un temps où Muybridge, les frères Lumière et Edison n'étaient pas encore nés ou faisaient leurs premiers pas sous l'œil vigilant des mamans et des papas industriels.'

to have gone to India, however, instead he spent a short time in Mauritius and Bourbon (now Réunion) in the Indian Ocean, before returning to Paris. Broodthaers changed some of these details - in the film the journey lasts from 3 January to 17 December 1850, and the destination was Celebes and then the Island of Sala y Gomez in the South Pacific near Chile. Although Baudelaire expressed his boredom in many of the letters he sent during the journey, a large number of his later poems derived from, and elaborated upon, the experience. For Baudelaire, the motif of the voyage can frequently be found in his poems, often serving as a journey into the self or into dreams. In the films, his journey is charted using maps, and in the English version, dates, which give a sense of time passing. It is constructed as a kind of diary in which only the minimum of information is given. In a 1974 catalogue essay Armin Zweite sets out clearly the various elements, or 'The materials', of the film:

> 1. Dates. These begin with 3 January 1850 and proceed at regular intervals to 17 December 1850, then work their way back to April 1850.
> 2. Words. These are occasionally repeated several times. In order of appearance on the screen, the words are: **shark, Musée-Museum, knife, cook, silence, death, torment, noon, famine, scurvy, midnight, darkness, mystery**.
> 3. Images. These are overall views and details of a map of the world.
> 4. Sound. The words Enfants non admis are heard twice. There are twelve chimes of a bell and the continuous tick of a metronome.[82]

In the film these four 'materials' - dates, words, images and sound - are combined in various ways to construct a sense of the journey and the duration of time taken. At first only dates appear on the screen as subtitles. These are then intercut with individual words and sections of the map. Although initially the dates are given day by day in consecutive order, further on in the journey longer periods of time pass between entries. The dates build up a sense of monotony, whereas the words are evocative and seem to construct an adventure story - 'shark', 'knife', 'cook', and so on.

---

[82]Zweite, 'Commentaires à propos d'un film de Marcel Broodthaers': 'Le matériau...1. Dates. Elles commencent le 3 janvier 1850, s'écoulent en intervalles irréguliers jusqu'au 17 décembre 1850, puis remontent jusqu'en avril 1850. 2. Mots. Répétés parfois à plusieurs reprises, ces mots sont, dans l'ordre de leur apparition sur l'écran: **shark, Musée-Museum, knife, cook, silence, death, torment, noon, famine, scurvy, midnight, darkness, mystery**. 3. Images. Il s'agit de vues d'emsmble et de détails d'une carte du monde. 4. Sons. La phrase Enfants non admis se fait entendre à deux reprises, douze sons de cloche résonnent, battement continu d'un métronome.'

Close-up details of the map show the texture of the paper on which it is printed. As always Broodthaers makes the viewer aware of the materials he is using. The dates continue and the sections of the map shown move closer to Celebes and finally the Island of Sala y Gomez. By this point the adventure appears to have become a disaster - the words read 'famine', 'scurvy', 'death'. The date 'December 17th' is repeated a number of times and then the dates run in reverse order as a means of indicating the return journey to Europe.

In what appears to be stark contrast with the narrative of the journey, Broodthaers inserts the phrase 'Musée-Museum' a number of times. According to Zweite, this phrase serves to remind us that, '[the museum's] function is to collect experiences from all around the world and to conserve the relics thereof...In practice, the Museum can be defined as a place of hidden dangers which is therefore out of bounds for children'.[83] This is why Broodthaers repeated the phrase 'Enfants non admis' alongside the inscription 'Musée-Museum'. In a sense by reversing the sequence of dates the experience is then located in the past, in memory. Similarly museums tend to be dedicated to the past.

Broodthaers made a number of other works with reference to Baudelaire. These included the film *Une Seconde d'Eternité* (1970) (discussed in Chapter 2) and the print edition *Comédie* (1974). A book edition entitled *Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes* (I detest movement which displaces lines) (1973) (pl. 135) was based upon Baudelaire's poem *La Beauté* (Beauty). The title of Broodthaers' book was a line from the poem. In a note Broodthaers stated that,

> This book was based on a seminar by Lucien Goldmann, given in Brussels in the winter of 1969-1970, and which as an *artist* I had been invited to attend.[84]

---

[83]Ibid.: 'Une conclusion s'impose, dès lors, quant au sens de l'institution musée: celui de recueillir les expériences faites dans le monde entier et d'en conserver les reliques...En réalité, le Musée se définit comme un lieu qui recèle des dangers et comporte, pour cette raison, une interdiction qui vise les enfants.'

[84]*Charles Baudelaire. Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes.* Hamburg, Edition Hossmann, 1973, 32.5 x 25 cm, 16 pp., letterpress; see Jamar, p. 101.

The word *artist* was emphasised. Goldmann was a traditional Marxist in the manner of Lukács. His programme on Baudelaire has not been clearly established. It is possible that an examination of *La Beauté* formed part of it, as Broodthaers' book reveals knowledge of an early version of the poem which is not widely known. In Broodthaers' book the poem is printed twice, with the two versions identical apart from a slight variation. In the first version 'Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes' is printed in red with the rest of the poem in black; in the second version 'les étoiles' replaces 'toutes choses' in the line 'De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles' and these two words alone are printed in red. When the poem was first published in *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1857 the line was printed with 'les étoiles'. However, this was changed to 'toutes choses' in the second edition of 1861 and this is the version which is generally known.[85] Such detailed knowledge suggests that Broodthaers studied the poem at length. It is also possible that Goldmann spoke about Baudelaire's poem *Les Chats* (Cats), an analysis of which is included in an anthology published by the Université Libre de Bruxelles in late 1969.[86]

Broodthaers printed Baudelaire's name on the cover of *Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes* to imply that he was the author. This was also the case in a second book edition, *Charles Baudelaire. Pauvre Belgique*. (1974) (pl. 136), in which Broodthaers reworked Baudelaire's unfinished 1864 text, *Pauvre Belgique!*[87]

Baudelaire's experiences of Brussels were far from positive. They probably reflected his state of mind at the time and he let vent his frustrations in a fierce critique of the city and its inhabitants. Broodthaers, as a Belgian who admired Baudelaire's work, must have found *Pauvre Belgique!* of great interest and amusement.

Broodthaers' reworking of *Pauvre Belgique!* was extremely simple and precise. On the front cover he printed Baudelaire's name, whilst on the back his own.

---

[85]I am indebted to Dr Hiddleston, Exeter College, Oxford, for this information.
[86]Lucien Goldmann, 'Les Chats de Baudelaire', orig. pub. in *Revue de L'Institut de Sociologie de L'Université Libre de Bruxelles*, vol. 3 (1969), reprinted in *Structures mentales et création culturelle*, Paris, Anthropos, 1970, pp. 347-352.
[87]*Charles Baudelaire. Pauvre Belgique.*, Paris & New York, 1974, 32.5 x 25 cm, 152 pp., offset, edition of 44 copies.

He printed the title of the book, *Pauvre Belgique*, on both covers. A jacket of tracing paper printed with 'ABC' repeated four times with an additional 'A' masked the title on both covers. The place and date of publication were given as 'Paris 1974' on the front cover with 'New York 1974' on the back. On page 3 and 148 of the book, facsimiles were printed of the jacket of the Pléiade edition of Baudelaire's *Œuvres complètes*. The pages between were numbered and headed *Sur la Belgique* and *Pauvre Belgique*. These pages, therefore, appeared the same as those in the Pléiade edition with one fundamental difference: Baudelaire's text was omitted (pl. 137).

By putting both his own name and Baudelaire's on the cover of the book, Broodthaers presented it as a joint work and a dialogue between the two. However, Broodthaers' 'ABC' masked Baudelaire's title, suggesting that Broodthaers dominated the project. Broodthaers supplied ABC as a metaphor for the text, which is composed of letters of the alphabet. However, it is not easy to read the title, which is masked, or indeed the text, which is absent. The reader is reminded of Broodthaers' treatment of his own *Pense-Bête* in which pieces of coloured paper obscured easy reading of the poems, and his reworking of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*, in which the words were replaced by black bands. The empty pages also recall the empty crates of the *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles Section XIXème siècle*, the empty frames of the *Section Publicité*, not to mention all the empty mussel shells, eggshells, cooking pots, cupboards and suitcases. In each case the content is missing and only the surrounding structures remain. However, these structures are crucial as they contain, shape and define the contents.

In *Charles Baudelaire. Pauvre Belgique*. Broodthaers focused upon the issue of piracy of literature. During the 19th century Brussels was reknowned for illegal printing, one of Baudelaire's many criticisms of the city. By omitting Baudelaire's text, Broodthaers would, therefore, be able to defend himself against possible accusations of piracy. Broodthaers stated in a note that,

> One cannot call this book a pirated edition such as was the common custom of publishers in Brussels during the romantic period. If piracy there is, it turns out to be a reference whose particular form is a reflection of present

> controversies that go beyond a precise geographical framework. That at least has been my aim.[88]

Broodthaers seems to have been suggesting that in 1974 artistic piracy was not limited to geographical borders but existed internationally. By playing with the notion of piracy in a historical dimension, Broodthaers was able to offer a comparison with contemporary artistic practice. He forces the viewer to consider the grey area between appropriation and quotation, piracy and eclecticism.

City Life

Apart from the journey to the Indian Ocean and the stay in Brussels, Baudelaire spent the rest of his life in Paris. His many well-known writings on the city include the *Tableaux Parisiens* in *Les Fleurs du mal* and *Les Petits Poèmes en prose* also known as *Le Spleen de Paris*. In everyday Paris, Baudelaire found innumerable subjects for his poetry. He took pleasure in the life of the *flâneur* which the city offered - visiting galleries and studios, sitting in cafés and engaging in stimulating conversation with his contemporaries. He enjoyed wandering the streets, exploring the hidden corners of the city, meeting strangers by chance. Observing the ordinary life of the city was fascinating for Baudelaire and he considered alternative titles for *Le Spleen de Paris* such as *Le Promeneur solitaire* (The Solitary Stroller) and *Le Rôdeur parisien* (The Parisian Prowler).[89]

This 'pursuit of fantasy, which is linked with meanderings and amorous pursuit' was subsequently adopted by the Surrealists as an important activity.[90] Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (Paris Peasant) (1926), Breton's *Nadja* (1928) and

---

[88]Ibid.: 'L'on peut définir ce livre comme une contrefaçon telle qu'elle fut d'usage chez les éditeurs bruxellois pendant la période romatique. Si contrefaçon, il y a, elle se trouve être une référence dont la forme particulière renvoie aux polémiques actuelles dépassant un cadre géographique précis. C'est tout au moins, ce que j'ai visé.'

[89]Margery A. Evans, *Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at the Crossroads*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 16. Baudelaire and the city has been widely discussed; see also Peter Collier, 'Nineteenth-Century Paris', in Edward Timms & David Kelley (eds.), *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 25-44 and Christopher Prendergast, 'Framing the City: Two Parisian Windows', in Mary Ann Caws (ed.), *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy and Film*, New York, Gordon & Breach, 1991, pp. 179-195.

[90]Evans, *Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at the Crossroads*, p. 13.

L'Amour fou (Mad Love) (1937) were firmly located in modern urban life with accounts of daily strolls through different streets and quarters of the city. By contrast, the Situationists' walks through Paris should be seen as an objective, impersonal activity in which one gives up one's own point of view in order 'to listen attentively to the city'.[91] The notion of *dérive* (drifting) means that one should lose oneself in the city, literally. To this end, for example, they used a map of London to negotiate Paris. Debord made a number of his own maps of the city which he termed 'psychogeographic' guides. These were based upon standard, existing maps which he would cut up and reconstruct to indicate where he had recently been, linking collaged sections of the city with directional arrows. It was a means of disrupting and restructuring the existing (capitalist) spatial order of the city.

Broodthaers wrote a number of texts and made some films which reveal his own manner of observation and perception of city life. 'Climat' (Climate) was written in Paris in 1960 in which Broodthaers describes his wandering as a tourist through the streets.[92] The language is descriptive and poetic. He stops to look at a display of souvenir postcards, wanting a photograph of the Eiffel Tower but unable to find the right one. By looking at postcards of the city he confirmed his location. He crossed into another quarter and walked down to the Seine. 'The Nadja of André Breton' came to his mind but he tried to forget her: 'I had nothing better to do than kill wild dreams.'[93] He described his shabby hotel room but said that he felt at home there. The text ends with words which seem to make reference to Mallarmé: 'Midnight. The sun is blue. Silence.'[94]

In 'Climat' Broodthaers emphasised the fact that he was a tourist. He was not in his home city. This was also clearly the case in the series of six, short articles entitled 'Un poète en voyage...à Londres' (A Poet on his Travels...in London) (1961)

---

[91]Vincent Kaufmann, 'Angels of Purity', *October*, vol. 79, Special Issue on Guy Debord and the *Internationale situationniste* (Winter 1997), p. 61. See also Thomas F. McDonough, 'Situationist Space', *October*, vol. 67 (Winter 1994), pp. 59-77.
[92]'Climat', *Phantomas*, no. 15-16 (January 1960), p. 93.
[93]Ibid.: 'Je n'avais rien de mieux à faire qu'à tuer des chimères.'
[94]Ibid.: 'Minuit. Le soleil est bleu. Le silence.' Broodthaers also wrote about Paris in an article based around the cleaning of some prominent buildings: 'Comme un sou neuf', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 1025 (17 October 1963), p. 9.

which Broodthaers wrote for the journal *Beaux-Arts*, published by the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, between April and June 1961. Each article was based upon travels to London and titled 'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', except for one which was written in Brussels and hence titled 'Un poète en voyage...à Bruxelles'. The articles were a series of gentle observations on life in England at the time. In the first, he stated that he did not speak English. His reason - 'I am visual'.[95]

From the distance of London he was able to perceive the qualities and flaws of Belgian life more clearly. He made many comparisons, ranging from comments on the style of architecture in London ('a hundred thousand times more atrocious than in the city of Brussels') to the television programmes ('a hundred and forty thousand times worse than ours').[96] In one article he appeared particularly fascinated by the choir at St Paul's and the beautiful voices of the choirboys.[97] He went to Madame Tussaud's, where he thought Napoleon must have suffered from being placed beside Nelson, and the Chamber of Horrors, where nothing seemed to be missing from the range of torture instruments.[98] He visited the sights and went to the theatre but particularly seemed to enjoy simply walking the streets and witnessing everyday life. He took the role of observer who recorded uncritically the people and the way of life he saw. With the feigned ignorance of a foreigner he wandered into a private garden in the centre of a square only to be locked in by mistake. An old lady came to his rescue; 'She looked like Queen Victoria but smiled like Alice in Wonderland'.[99]

Broodthaers also wrote about the galleries he visited.[100] He was impressed that there were so many and recorded that he had seen some excellent shows. He suggested that artistic life in London developed in strength as the British Empire collapsed.[101] He visited some galleries around Bond Street and commented on the

---

[95]'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 931 (7 April 1961), p. 12: 'Je suis visuel.'
[96]'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 933 (21 April 1961), p. 13: 'L'architecture, cent mille fois plus atroce que celle de la ville de Bruxelles'...'Les programmes de télévision sont cent quarante mille fois plus mauvais que les nôtres.'
[97]'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 941 (16 June 1961), p. 10.
[98]'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', (7 April 1961), p. 12.
[99]Ibid.: 'Elle ressemblait à la reine Victoria mais souriait comme Alice au Pays des Merveilles'.
[100]'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, (21 April 1961), p. 13 and no. 942 (23 June 1961), p. 11.
[101]'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', (23 June 1961), p. 11: 'La vie artistique s'y développe en raison

extraordinary openings at which everyone drank a great deal but no one appeared to look at the works on display.[102] He concluded the final article, with the thoughts, 'I left England blind drunk. I understood nothing there. Should I go back there? Or go elsewhere? Or stay put?'[103]

Broodthaers and Bentham

The articles were short and offer witty observations but without much analysis. Most of the city-based texts and films by Broodthaers related to London. The films were *Speakers' Corner* (1972) and *Figures of Wax (Jeremy Bentham)* (1974) (as well as *La Bataille de Waterloo* discussed in Chapter 4).[104]

In *Speakers' Corner* (pl. 138) Broodthaers seemed to engage more directly and actively with British life at the time. It was made in connection with the series of paintings *Neuf peintures, Série anglaise* (Nine Paintings, English Series) (1972) (pl. 139) which were exhibited at the Jack Wendler Gallery while the film was made.[105] In the film Broodthaers stood at Speakers' Corner and held up a double-sided blackboard on which he wrote and erased words in chalk. The words read 'Pay attention', 'Visit Tate Gallery', 'For artists only', 'You are artists', 'Visit National Gallery'. At intervals there were drawings of stick figures. He also included some of the words from the *Neuf peintures, Série anglaise*, such as 'The Mind of William Blake' and 'The Turpitude of O. Wilde'. 'Silence' was written a number of times, crossed out and rewritten. In this way Broodthaers totally subverted the basis upon which Speakers' Corner exists, that is, to speak. He did not utter an audible word but only wrote words on the blackboard, much to the annoyance of some spectators who

---

inverse de la puissance politique, l'Empire a perdu la plupart de ses rayons.'

[102]Ibid.: 'C'était le vernissage et à Londres, c'est extaordinaire. On boit beaucoup et personne ne regarde les tableaux, ostensiblement.'

[103]Ibid.: 'Je quittai l'Angleterre, ivre-mort. Je n'y ai rien compris. Faut-il y retourner? Aller ailleurs? Ou rester sur ma chaise?'

[104]Within the *Section Cinéma*, Broodthaers screened *Belga Vox - Mode - 20th Century Fox* (1971), a programme of extracts from newsreels which included part of a fashion show and *Brüssel Teil II* (1971), a short documentary on Brussels which Broodthaers bought; see *Cinéma.*, pp. 150-153.

[105]*Speakers' Corner*, 192, 16 mm, black and white, 8 min., London; *Neuf peintures, Série anglaise*, London, Jack Wendler Gallery, 1-22 December 1972.

could not understand why he was there. Like a good actor, he kept a straight face throughout.

Figures of Wax (Jeremy Bentham) was a longer and far more complex film made while Broodthaers was living in London.[106] He had given a lesson at the Slade School of Art and in the first part of a letter from May 1973, to his friend and collector Jost Herbig, he mentioned his ideas for the film:

> My dear Herbig,
> I have been preparing myself during the long (English) days to write you a long letter. Ah, I have received the 20 catalogues of your collection after energetic demands.
> Things here get done very slowly. The first lesson that I gave at the Slade, consisting of the projection of films, was a celebrated lesson. A way of being memorable myself. The director of the Slade was present, barely recovered from a bout of 'flu. I was very moved by the effort he made. But he fell asleep. The thirty or forty students reacted scarcely at all. They appeared dull, strange in any case. I think I have lost my position. But I will perhaps make a film inside this famous building. One of the founders of this institution, Sir...? died in 1832. He bequeathed his skeleton to the school. The skeleton served as the ossature (Ha! Ha!) to construct a wax figure representing this eminent personality, life size.
> Dressed in everyday clothes of the deceased, with a straw hat imitating a topper, the figure is seated on a chair at the back of an illuminated cupboard, and observes with his blue eyes the innocent comings and goings of the new generation. Indeed, here is good scientific subject for a university film.
> In short, I will make a film if I succeed in waking up...[107]

Broodthaers was slightly mistaken with some details. Bentham was not a founder of University College London, to which the Slade School was attached, but was influential in its foundation. In keeping with his wishes and clear instructions, following his death his 'Auto-Icon' was made. His body was dissected, the skeleton remade and dressed and his head made in wax. He was seated in a glass-fronted case so that he could be 'present' at reunions of his friends and disciples. This was the case for a period of time, but since 1950 he has been kept in the South Cloisters of University College, across the quadrangle from the Slade where Broodthaers made the first part of the film.[108]

---

[106]*Figures of Wax* , 1974, 16 mm, colour, sound, 15 min., London.
[107]Letter to Jost Herbig, 20 May 1973, reproduced in Tate, p. 26. (omission dots in original)
[108]Broodthaers premiered his film at the Slade School on 10 December 1975. Immediately before the film, C. F. A. Marmoy, whose text formed the basis of the narration in the film, delivered an address

Figures of Wax was made in the style of a BBC interview/documentary, based around Broodthaers naively attempting a discussion with the 'Auto-Icon' (pl. 140). He tried to engage the figure in conversation by telling him:

> If you have a statement to make, please do so. If you have a secret, tell me...Give me an indication. If you wish to protest, I promise to keep it...Do you prefer to dream?

Broodthaers' words appear on the screen as subtitles. At the same time, a narration which runs through the film, tells of how Bentham had a dream which led him to found the Utilitarians, who discussed man's desire for pleasure and aversion to pain and how only pleasure is good. When Broodthaers (hardly surprisingly) failed to raise a response from Bentham he began reading a newspaper and smoking a cigarette. He then went out into the street and much of the film can be seen as his observations of life in London.

Broodthaers appeared to use the camera surreptitiously, observing people walking along the street, selling newspapers, talking. He filmed the man in Oxford street with his sandwich-boards advising less protein, less lust, etc. He seemed to notice words and numbers, for example writing on shop windows, street signs, numbers of buses. Other shots showed the colonnaded front of the Royal Exchange. Currency signs appear on the screen with the pound gradually diminishing in size whilst the dollar and deutschemark remain the same size. He examined in some detail the writing on the window of a discount shop advertising goods for sale. With the narration explaining how, according to Bentham, it is only rational to seek as much happiness as possible, the viewer inevitably wonders whether the people in the street are happy.

Piano music can be heard from time to time ranging from simple scales, to the *Grand Old Duke of York*, Chopin's *Death March* and finally a Beethoven piano sonata. We see Broodthaers moving his foot as if pressing a piano pedal - he seems to be playing the *Death March* for Bentham. He stops to look at mannequins in

---

on the 'Auto-Icon'; see *Cinema.*, p. 275.

Selfridges' window implying a comparison with the wax figure of Bentham. The street is also shown from the point of view of the mannequins. The passers-by gaze at the goods in the shop-windows and the mannequins return the gaze placidly.[109]

Figures of Wax has been described as Broodthaers' most political film. He sets Bentham's principles of Utilitarianism against the reality of life in London in 1974. At the beginning, a notice appears on the screen stating that although the film was made between the two general elections of 1974 this is not relevant. As we hear more and more about Bentham's beliefs on equality in society, equal rights to vote and the distribution of wealth, as well as how the government should seek the happiness of all its citizens, we realize that the timing of the film is, in fact, highly relevant. The narration ends by explaining how everything should be submitted to the scrutiny of reason and judged according to Utilitarian ideals; no institution is sacrosanct. Ironically, this must also be true of the institution which Bentham helped to found.

In the film Broodthaers showed how Bentham's ideas are still so relevant and may even appear radical. He presents images of life in 1970s London in an apparently objective manner. However, by carefully juxtaposing these images with the narration of Bentham's ideas, he provokes questions in the viewer's mind regarding the nature of contemporary life. He emphasises the instability of the currency markets and the effect this has on the lives of ordinary people.

The works in which Broodthaers made reference to maps, travel by ship and the sea were many and varied. They are good examples of Broodthaers' love of nineteenth-century poetry and literature, revealing his enjoyment of adventure stories and the idea of discovering distant lands. He worked with many powerful and seductive themes which can frequently be found in poetry - ships, voyages, stormy seas. As in much of his work, he combined the poetic, or immaterial, with the

---

[109]Baudelaire, in nineteenth-century Paris, witnessed the recent development of large, illuminated windows in the stores on the boulevards. Looking in the windows became part of the daily activity of the *flâneur*; see Prendergast, 'Framing the City: Two Parisian Windows', in Caws (ed.), pp. 179-195.

material. He distilled a flavour of the nineteenth century and filtered it through art-making practices of the 1960s and '70s. Within a broader context, he questioned strategies of the 'avant-garde' artist and located himself in relation to other artists.

By altering maps, Broodthaers indicated that their power is an illusory, man-made construct. Similarly, he perceived the power of the eagle as artificial and mythical. Through both poetic and material strategies, he sought to reveal what is illusory and what is real. At the same time he employed the notion of the artist as a military figure, required to conquer space in order to achieve power, on a number of different levels: the formal - the gallery space within which the work is shown; the institutional - the gallery as an institution; the social, political and economic - the world within which the work exists. By emphasising space, Broodthaers stressed its importance in determining the nature of the work itself.

Most of the works discussed in this chapter were made in the early 1970s. In many ways they relate to Conceptual Art, in Broodthaers' re-presentation with slight alterations of pre-existing objects and images, in his use of words as visuals and of texts, in his questioning of the conventional ways of working in each medium and in the means he used of exhibiting his works. However, his works also transcend the period and draw upon poetic imagery of the voyage and tales of adventure which were especially popular in the 19th century of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Swift and Poe. Broodthaers' own background as a poet continues to permeate his visual works in his use of images to construct narratives as well as to question definitions of art. His visual travels around the world were, at the same time, 'Voyages autour de la mode'.

> For the child in love with maps and engravings,
> The universe is equal to his vast appetite.
> Ah! how great the world is by lamplight!
> How small the world is in the eyes of memory![110]

---

[110]Charles Baudelaire, *Le Voyage*, trans. Francis Scarfe, *Baudelaire*, vol. I, London, Anvil Editions, 1986, p. 240: 'Pour l'enfant, amoureux de cartes et d'estampes/L'univers est égal à son vaste appétit/Ah! que le monde est grande à la clarté des lampes!/Aux yeux du souvenir que le monde est petit!'

Chapter 6

Art and Politics: Broodthaers, Beuys, Haacke, Buren

In 1964 Broodthaers set out his strategy for success in his exhibition statement *Moi aussi...* He wanted to sell his work and, thereby, according to the criteria he had set himself, he could consider that he had succeeded. In the statement he spoke about how he had gained the interest of a gallery owner who proclaimed that the work he had made was art and that he would be happy to show it. Broodthaers soon attracted other gallery owners too, particularly Anny De Decker of the Wide White Space, Antwerp and Michael Werner from Cologne both of whose support led to widespread recognition of his work.

As shown in Chapter 3, Broodthaers soon began to achieve his aims. During the mid-1960s he attracted the attention of, in particular, Belgian and German collectors and curators. By the 1970s he had become a player on an international scale, included in exhibitions with leading American and European artists. Within the notion of dialogue examined in this thesis, it will, therefore, be relevant to look at some of these exhibitions as examples of Broodthaers in relation to his contemporaries. Often there was little or no particular relationship between the actual works of the various artists exhibited beyond the rather broad framework of Conceptual Art.

For the main part of the chapter I shall focus in detail upon particular incidents from the early 1970s which link Broodthaers with Joseph Beuys, Hans Haacke and Daniel Buren. To some extent this choice of artists is arbitrary. Other artists could just as easily have been selected had particular incidents arisen involving them. Conceptually, Broodthaers and Buren shared concerns regarding the role of the artist and of the museum. However, in this chapter, what links them is not similarities or differences in their work, but particular incidents which serve as examples of what

could broadly be termed the moral behaviour of the artist, indicative of the way in which each artist behaved in, or responded to, particular situations. When Broodthaers made the decision to present himself as an artist he felt that his place in society had changed from when he was a poet. He saw the artist as a far more visible figure, in closer contact with the public. He questioned definitions of art and also the role of the artist and his place in society. Like many other artists of the time, he was interested in the relationship between art and the way in which it is presented in the museum (hence the setting up of his own fictive museum). The artists examined in this chapter reflect a range of different approaches regarding the role and position of the artist - in relation to other artists, to the museum and to society. The particular incidents discussed indicate their varying strategies. In order to emphasise the public nature of the incidents I shall deal mainly with sources published at the time. These show how those involved wished to present themselves publicly and include catalogue entries, journal articles and open letters.

Broodthaers in Context - 1970s Exhibitions and Critical Reviews

By the early 1970s Broodthaers had achieved some success in contemporary art. In fact, as Barbara Reise claimed in a 1974 letter, 'He's selling like hot cakes in Europe now - very much the anti-twin (sibling rivalry?) of Beuys'.[1] His strategy appears to have been realised remarkably quickly. As early as 1966 he had gained the support of Anny De Decker and exhibited *Moules Œufs Frites Pots Charbon* at the Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp. This was followed by the first showing of *Le Corbeau et le Renard* in 1968, the year in which, although not as part of the official programme, he was represented by the gallery in Kassel at *Documenta 4*. The Wide White Space continued to exhibit his work, with one-man shows and at the Cologne Art Fair in 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1974.[2] The private German galleries soon began to show his work, including the Galerie Michael Werner, Cologne, in 1969, which has shown his

---

[1]Barbara Reise, in a letter to Betsy Baker, editor of *Art in America*, 31 October 1974; see Barbara Reise archive in the Tate Gallery, London.
[2]For full and detailed listings of Broodthaers' exhibitions see Ludwig, pp. 115-132.

work since then and represented him at the Cologne Art Fair in the 1970s. The Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, showed two sections of his *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles* - in 1970 the *Section XIVème siècle (bis)* and in 1972 the *Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute)* and in 1971 the Städtisches Museum, Mönchengladbach showed *Film als Objekt-Objekt als Film*. In 1972 Broodthaers was also selected by Harald Szeeman for inclusion in the offical programme of *Documenta 5* where he exhibited the final installments of his museum, the *Section Publicité*, the *Section d'Art Moderne* and the *Musée d'Art Ancien, Département des Aigles, Galerie du XXème siècle*. The Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris showed his work in 1971 and 1973, the Galerie Françoise Lambert, Milan in 1972 and 1973. In London, although Broodthaers thought that no one would be interested in his work[3], Jack Wendler exhibited his work in 1972 and Petersburg Press in 1974.

Broodthaers' series of retrospective exhibitions, the *Décors*, began in 1974 with *Catalogue-Catalogus* at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, *Eloge du Sujet* at the Kunstmuseum, Basle, and continued in 1975 with *Invitation pour une exposition bourgeoise* at the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, *Le Privilège de l'Art* at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, *Décor. A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers* at the ICA, London and *L'Angélus de Daumier* at the Centre national d'art contemporain, Paris. Within a relatively short space of time, therefore, Broodthaers was showing in a number of major European museums.

Regarding group exhibitions, Broodthaers was soon selected to exhibit alongside leading artists of the period. Aside from the Pop art and other exhibitions examined in Chapter 3, he was selected for *Prospect 68*, a survey of recent work at the Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf in 1968 and *Konzeption/Conception* at the Städtische Museum Leverkusen in 1969. In 1970 he was included in *18 Paris IV 70* (his contribution discussed in Chapter 2). Curated by Michel Claura and Seth Siegelaub, the other artists included Weiner, Toroni, Ryman, Ruscha, Long, LeWitt, Lamelas, Kawara, Huebler, Gilbert & George, Dibbets, Buren and Barry.

---

[3]According to Compton, p. 53.

Broodthaers was exhibited in the United States, in 1969 in *Language III* at the Dwan Gallery, New York, in 1971 in *Multiples. The First Decade*, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, curated by John L. Tancock and in 1972 in *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf* (which will be discussed later in this chapter) at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, selected by Fritz Keers of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Blaise Gautier of the Centre national d'art contemporain, Paris and Jürgen Harten of the Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf. In 1972 he exhibited in *Actualité d'un bilan* in Paris at the Galerie Yvon Lambert alongside Andre, Buren, LeWitt, Weiner and others (discussed in Chapter 5) and in 1973 in *Bilder-Objekte-Filme-Konzepte* at the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich. This was a large and varied exhibition of Minimal, Conceptual and Performance-related works, in which Broodthaers showed a number of films, many of which formed the programme *Rendez-vous mit Jacques Offenbach*. He also exhibited preparatory material for some of the films, special screens, prints and various other works under the heading 'bilder' (pictures). Broodthaers' catalogue entry, which included his 'General theory of art and of the collection' (examined in Chapter 2), is interesting with regard to how he fitted in with his contemporaries. Within the context of this particular exhibition, in which many of the works and catalogue entries were very minimal, it is immediately clear that Broodthaers' work related not only to the present but also to the nineteenth century past.

In 1973 Broodthaers exhibited in *Deurle 11/7/73* and participated in a related conference, *Art and its cultural context/L'Art et son contexte culturel*, organized by Fernand Spillemaeckers of the Galerie MTL and held at La Cambre, Brussels. The other participants were Art & Language, Andre, Buren, André Cadere, Haacke, John Latham, LeWitt and Weiner. For his part Broodthaers did not speak in the discussion but instead showed his film *La Pipe* (1968-69).[4]

In 1974 Broodthaers exhibited in a group show, curated by Yves Gevaert at the Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, with Andre, Buren, Burgin, Gilbert & George,

---

[4]See David (ed.), pp. 304-305.

Kawara, Long and Richter. Later that year he was included in a large show organized by the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne entitled *Projekt '74. Kunst bleibt Kunst. Aspekte internationaler Kunst am Anfang der 70er Jahre* (discussed in this chapter) and in 1975 he was shown in *Mirrors of the Mind* at Multiples Inc. and Castelli Graphics in New York, curated by Nicolas Calas. Immediately posthumously he was included in *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art*, a touring exhibition which began at The Art Institute of Chicago.

As is clear from these very brief and selected listings, Broodthaers was often exhibited alongside artists with whom he appears to have had little in common. However, the framework for Conceptual Art was broad and this was often the criterion under which the artists were selected. Nevertheless, Broodthaers often stood out, for example in the *Bilder-Objekte-Filme-Konzepte* catalogue. Whereas most of the other artists were firmly located in the 1960s and '70s, particularly Andre, Buren and Weiner, Broodthaers did not hide his joint 19th and 20th century allegiances.

Critical attention had begun slowly during the 1960s with some interest from Otto Hahn, Pierre Restany and Jean Dypréau (examined in Chapter 3). The Amsterdam based *Museumjournaal* published interviews with Ludo Bekkers in 1970 and 1974 and an article by Anny De Decker in 1971.[5] Broodthaers' *Section des Figures* exhibition attracted much attention in German newspapers and a number of reviews were published. Irmeline Lebeer also published a general article on the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* in *Chroniques de l'art vivant* and in 1973 articles by both Broodthaers and Nabakowski on the museum were published in the first issue of *Heute Kunst*.[6] Broodthaers published further in *Interfunktionen*, edited by Buchloh, in 1973 on his work at *Documenta 5* and the open letter to Beuys, whilst in 1974 the cover and a feature were on *Racisme végétal. La Séance. Film de*

---

[5]Ludo Bekkers, 'Gesprek met Marcel Broodthaers', *Museumjournaal*, Amsterdam, series 15, no. 2 (April 1970), pp. 66-71 and Anny De Decker, 'Over de Wide White Space Gallery', *Museumjournaal*, Amsterdam, series 16, no. 5 (November 1971), pp. 261-266.

[6]Irmeline Lebeer, 'Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles', *Chroniques de l'art vivant*, no. 35 (December 1972-January 1973), pp. 20-21 and Broodthaers and Nabakowski, 'Ein Museum und seine Perspektiven', *Heute Kunst*, no. 1 (April 1973), pp. 19-23.

Marcel Broodthaers.[7] Broodthaers published artists pages for the May 1974 and March/April 1975 issues of *Studio International*, and the October 1974 issue included a special feature on Belgium, for which Broodthaers was invited to design the cover and write an article on the Wiertz Museum in Brussels. He was also included in an article by Michel Baudson and Yves Gevaert on the avant-garde in Belgium.[8] The Brussels journal *+-0* (Plus minus null) published various articles on Broodthaers, including an interview with him in 1974 and articles by Stéphane Rona in 1975 (amongst which a discussion with Otto Hahn) and in 1976 on *L'Angélus de Daumier*.[9] The *Décors* also formed the starting point for 1975 articles by Barbara Reise in *Art in America* and by Henri-Alexis Baatsch in *XXe siècle* whilst *L'Angélus de Daumier* was reviewed in Paris based journals, including Anne Tronche in *Opus International* and Jean-Louis Pradel in *XXe siècle*.[10] Again these listings are selective, but they give an idea of the kind of critical attention Broodthaers received. The scope tended to be limited to Belgium, the Netherlands, the Rhineland area of Germany, and, to some extent, France, with most of the articles relating to particular exhibitions. The journals which showed the most interest - *Interfunktionen* and *+-0* - were young and mainly interested in Conceptual Art.

Gallery attendances at the exhibitions are harder to gauge. Perhaps attendance at a gallery talk gives little indication of the general reception of a show, although numbers at a talk by Reise during *Le Privilège de l'Art* were clearly low. As Nicholas Serota, then director of the museum, wrote to Reise, 'I hope you weren't too

---

[7]'Changement de Propriete?', *Interfunktionen*, Cologne, no. 10 (1973), pp. 76-79 and pp. 160-162 and '*Racisme végétal. La Séance. Film de Marcel Broodthaers*', *Interfunktionen*, Cologne, no. 11 (1974), cover and pp. 60-72.

[8]'Feuilletons', *Studio International*, vol. 187, no. 966 (May 1974), pp. 240-241, cover and 'Musée Wiertz', Michel Baudson & Yves Gevaert, 'Aspects of the Avant-Garde in Belgium', *Studio International*, vol. 188, no. 970 (October 1974), pp. 114, and 142-143 and 'A Book by Marcel Broodthaers', *Studio International*, vol. 189, no. 974 (March/April 1975), pp. 107 and 108-115.

[9]'Marcel Broodthaers. Prix Robert Giron 1974.', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 5 (September 1974), pp. 4-5 and Stéphane Rona, 'Au C.N.A.C. à Paris. Einem Interview mit Otto Hahn, *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 11 (November 1975), pp. 7-9 and 'C'est l'Angélus qui sonne', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 12 (February 1976), pp. 18-19.

[10]Barbara Reise, 'The Broodthaers Museum Gambit', *Art in America*, vol. 63, no. 3 (May-June 1975), pp. 52-53, Henri-Alexis Baatsch, 'Objects sans objet', *XXe siècle*, no. 44 (June 1975), pp. 143-149, Anne Tronche, 'L'Angélus de Daumier', *Opus International*, no. 57 (October 1975), p. 58 and Jean-Louis Pradel, 'L'Angélus de Daumier: Marcel Broodthaers', *XXe siècle*, no. 46 (September 1976), pp. 152-153.

disappointed by the size of your audience - four of the six have since been in and said how much they gained from the evening and I could add my own interest. It's one of the crosses that we bear...'[11]

Buren at the Guggenheim

The particular incidents upon which this chapter will focus began on the occasion of the 1971 *Guggenheim International* - an annual exhibition of contemporary work in which 20 artists, including Buren, were invited to exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.[12] The show was scheduled to open on 11 February 1971. The artists had been selected some months previously. Buren stated that agreement for his project was made in October 1970 and accepted in writing on 6 January 1971. His proposal was to hang two, blue and white, striped lengths of fabric; that is, he would use the 8.7 cm stripe which had formed the basic unit of his work since 1966. One, 20 metres long, would hang inside the gallery from the centre of the dome to the first ramp, with the other, 10 metres long, displayed across a street nearby (pl. 141). However, the work was installed the day before the opening of the exhibition to protests from some of the other artists led by Dan Flavin. They claimed, as did the curator of the show, Diane Waldman, that Buren's work inside the gallery created difficulties in seeing their own work and they demanded that it be removed. They felt that because of the nature of a group show the selected artists should work together to accommodate one another. The Guggenheim, in seeking a solution, proposed that Buren exhibit only the work in the street and offered him a one-man show for the week directly after the *International* closed. At first Buren agreed, but he later withdrew entirely.

In a statement published in the June issue of *Studio International* Buren explained what had happened.[13] He claimed that he had intended to comment on the

---

[11]Letter from Nicholas Serota to Barbara Reise, 1974, in the Barbara Reise archive, Tate.
[12]*Guggenheim International*, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 12 February-11 April 1971. The other artists were Andre, Burgin, Darboven, De Maria, Dias, Dibbets, Flavin, Heizer, Judd, Kawara, Kosuth, LeWitt, Long, Merz, Morris, Nauman, Ryman, Serra, Takamatsu and Weiner.
[13]Statement by Daniel Buren in 'Gurgles around the Guggenheim', *Studio International*, vol. 181, no. 934 (June 1971), pp. 246-247.

architecture of the Guggenheim Museum and the type of work exhibited by the other artists in its *International*. By hanging the fabric through the centre of the museum, he believed he was able to stand up to the challenge of the architecture which he felt made it impossible to see most work clearly. He also believed that most of the work in the show had been designed for an empty box-type gallery space and would not work with anything else. He claimed that it was, 'art which is thought out in the anticipation of a space which will endow it with value; art which is therefore delusive, regressive and a hoax'.[14] He felt that the negative reaction towards his work by the other artists was precisely because he had revealed this contradiction. In relation to his work and the architecture of the Guggenheim, Buren claimed that their work looked insignificant. He collected signatures from 14 of the 20 exhibiting artists to support him and in protest against the perceived censorship. Five did not sign and one was 'out of town'.[15] Andre withdrew, which Buren took as a sign of support, although Waldman claimed that he did so because he was dissatisfied with the work he was meant to be exhibiting.[16]

In the statement, Buren's greatest shock appeared to be that what he perceived as censorship was instigated not by 'the System' (that is, the museum which might be expected to object) but by other artists. He maintained that the museum was effectively controlled by a group of avant-garde artists, in this case led by Flavin along with Judd and De Maria, who did not want their own positions of authority challenged. According to Jan van der Marck, in an article from 1978, Buren's withdrawal was,

> quite obviously the result of an unresolved European/American animosity and jockeying for position. The forced removal of what Buren opponents called "an intrusive-obtrusive drapery" was interpreted in France as a surrender to art-market forces and evidence of the Guggenheim's unsuitability as a place of culture and a museum of avant-garde art.[17]

---

[14]Buren in 'Gurgles around the Guggenheim', p. 247.
[15]Buren does not specify whom; see, ibid., p. 246.
[16]Statement by Diane Waldman in ibid., p. 248.
[17]Jan van der Marck, 'Inside Europe Outside Europe', *Artforum*, January 1978, p. 50, who quotes from *Chroniques de l'art vivant*, Paris, no. 19 (April 1971), p. 7.

Haacke at the Guggenheim

Haacke had been invited to have a one-man exhibition at the Guggenheim in 1971 upon the recommendation of curator Edward Fry. In a brief for the exhibition, Fry proposed that Haacke would show work from the series *Real-Time Social Systems*, concerned with 'inorganic systems', 'organic systems' and 'interactions between human organisms'.[18] The 'organic systems' related to Haacke's works from the early 1960s in which he had explored the effects of various conditions upon moisture. The 'organic systems' dealt with growth and development of plants and animals and included the hatching of chickens within the museum. The 'interactions between human organisms' consisted of information processing and involved the *Visitors' Profiles* - questionnaires which would gather demographic and socio-political information on visitors to the exhibition. These questionnaires would thereby make comparisons with information from other recent surveys. Haacke was interested in identifying the visitors to the exhibition and in analysing their opinions. He was also to exhibit a series entitled *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings* (pl. 142), concerning ownership of various properties around Manhattan and presenting information on the ways in which they had been acquired.

Although the Guggenheim originally agreed to these proposals, problems arose with the final arrangements. Many meetings were held between Haacke, Fry and Thomas M. Messer, director of the museum. It became evident that the areas of disagreement which could not be negotiated centred around the questionnaires and the *Real Estate* works. The exhibition was due to open on 30 April 1971. On 19 March, Messer sent a letter to Haacke in which he outlined his misgivings. He was concerned about the possibility of libel cases being brought against the Guggenheim because of the *Real Estate* works, which implicated certain individuals in malpractices but did not provide conclusive evidence. He claimed the work was too

---

[18]Barbara Reise, 'Background to the Foreground: the Haacke Exhibition History', *Studio International*, vol. 181, no. 935 (July/August 1971), p. 31.

risky for the museum, to the extent that he described it as 'a muckraking venture'.[19] He felt that such works could not be shown within the limited role of Guggenheim. He explained the position of the Guggenheim as follows:

> We have held consistently that under our Charter we are pursuing esthetic and educational objectives that are self-sufficient and without ulterior motive. On those grounds the trustees have established policies that exclude active engagement toward social and political ends. It is well understood, in this connection, that art may have social and political consequences but these, we believe, are furthered by indirection and by the generalized, exemplary force that works of art may exert upon the environment, not, as you propose, by using political means to achieve political ends, no matter how desirable these may appear in themselves. We maintain, in other words, that while art cannot be arbitrarily confined, our institutional role is limited. Consequently we function within such limits, leaving to others, areas which we consider outside of our professional competence. [20]

Haacke employed a lawyer to investigate the possibility of libel charges being brought against himself or the museum. Since the information he used in the work was held in public records and was therefore not confidential it would appear that such charges would be difficult to sustain. These were essentially visual works, in which Haacke simply presented information alongside photographs without making direct comment or evaluation. As Schuldt wrote in a review of Haacke's work at *Documenta 7*, but which equally applies here,

> All the content of these pieces can be found in the public domain; Haacke does not ferret out hard secrets, but de-manipulates, or undoes the effects of manipulation, combining one item of information with another. It is as simple as putting two and two together, but it is necessary, and effective, because too often two and two are not seen together.[21]

Discussions continued between Haacke and the Guggenheim with Haacke suggesting some modifications. However, on 1 April, Haacke received a letter from Messer stating that the exhibition was cancelled. With regard to the questionnaires, it was felt that although these had not been instrumental in leading to the cancellation, the

---

[19]'The cancellation of Haacke's exhibition: Thomas M. Messer's 'misgivings' in 'Gurgles around the Guggenheim', p. 248.
[20]Ibid., pp. 248-249.
[21]Schuldt, 'Hans Haacke; Marcel Broodthaers', *Artforum* (October 1982), p. 85.

Guggenheim was not a suitable place for conducting an activity of this nature. In a letter to Haacke of 5 April, Messer explained that,

> the poll appeared to us inappropriate and the polling under museum auspices of a public that by and large comes for other purposes than to divulge its income, its political convictions and its attitude toward extra-artistic issues seemed an imposition to be avoided.[22]

Edward Fry was sacked on 23 April because he disagreed with the Guggenheim's point of view. There followed a petition of support for both Haacke and Fry protesting against this example of censorship signed by many, mainly American artists.

The statement by Messer on behalf of the Guggenheim is clearly indicative of the perceived role of the museum in 'pursuing esthetic and educational objectives that are self-sufficient and without ulterior motive', ulterior meaning outwith the (narrow and artificial) confines of the museum space. Whereas Buren's work directly linked interior and exterior spaces, he proposed to do so with striped fabric. He wished to draw attention to and question the uses of the museum space, but his message was not political. His work was seen to be inappropriate on aesthetic and visual grounds not by the museum but by the other exhibitors.

By contrast it was the very nature of Haacke's work, its artistic status, which the museum brought into question. Messer stated that the 'social systems' would be outwith 'our understanding of what an art museum should or could do'.[23] In an interview with Barbara Reise, he maintained that political issues could be dealt with by art, but in more indirect ways:

> Art has in the past, and I am not sure that it will not continue to do so, had the capacity to summarize and to sharpen reality through metaphoric means, through a symbolic language which was larger than particular issues.[24]

With reference to Haacke's real estate works, Messer went on to say that,

---

[22]Messer, 'Gurgles around the Guggenheim', p. 249.
[23]See Barbara Reise, 'A tail of two exhibitions: The aborted Haacke and Robert Morris shows', *Studio International* , vol. 181, no. 935 (July/August 1971), p. 31.
[24]'"Which is in fact what happened" Thomas M. Messer in an interview with Barbara Reise, 25 April 1971, *Studio International* , vol. 181, no. 935 (July/August 1971), p. 35.

> at the point at which the intention and the result is no longer general summary, metaphoric and symbolic, by the point it addresses itself to a known specific topical situation, its status as a work of art - or at least its immunity as a work of art - is in question.[25]

Messer thereby sought to justify the exclusion of Haacke's work upon the grounds that, by dealing with issues directly rather than metaphorically or symbolically, it may not be art. He felt that such work, 'no longer has a self-contained creative objective, but is something with an ulterior motive'.[26] This, in turn, according to Messer, precludes its status as art. At a time when artists were attempting to make art more accessible, by relating it more directly to 'ulterior' activities, the notion of a 'self-contained' art was clearly reactionary. Haacke's political works revealed the limitations of a museum such as the Guggenheim which was largely dependent upon private funding.

1972 Broodthaers' Open Letter to Beuys

Both Buren and Haacke's fiascos with the Guggenheim are mentioned here because they were commented upon by Broodthaers and are indicative of the behaviour of each artist in particular situations. On 25 September 1972 Broodthaers wrote an open letter to Beuys which contained an oblique reference to Haacke's recent experiences. More specifically it raised questions on the intentions of the artist and on the relationship between the artist and supporting institutions. The letter was published in the Düsseldorf *Rheinische Post* on 3 October 1972 under the heading 'Politik der Magie?' (Politics of Magic) (pl. 143). It was the second letter Broodthaers had sent to Beuys, the first on 14 July 1968 from Brussels.[27]

In the 1972 letter, Broodthaers claimed to have found, in a rundown Cologne apartment, a letter written by Offenbach to Wagner. Offenbach, who was from

---

[25]Ibid., p. 36.
[26]Ibid., p. 37. Reise asked Messer about Buren's proposal for the *Guggenheim International* as a critique of the space and of a group show functioning within it. Messer replied that the building was relevant to all the exhibiting artists but also that 'Buren's action was essentially an upstaging or an attempted upstaging of everyone else, and reaction was predictable'.
[27]See *Museum in motion*, p. 249.

Cologne, had apparently decided not to send the letter and it was found by Broodthaers some time later in a semi-decomposed state. Broodthaers included as much as possible of Offenbach's letter in his to Beuys but unfortunately some parts were illegible. Broodthaers pointed out that he wished to retain the handwritten look of the letter to prove that it was 'veritablement authentique' (truly genuine).[28]

Offenbach, in his letter, stated how, as composers, he and Wagner were very different from one another and that he felt this distance would only increase. He wrote:

> 1848...in 1849. Your essay Art and Revolution...discuss...magic...politics... which you must surely be aware of. The politics of magic? of beauty or of ugliness? ...Messiah![29]

Offenbach disagreed with Wagner's view that 'the musical drama' was the 'only form capable of uniting all the arts'. He continued:

> I wish to register my disagreement if you allow a definition of art to include one of politics...and...magic...[30]

The link between art and magic referred to Beuys' self-proclaimed role on many occasions as, varyingly, shaman, magician, alchemist and healer. Myths abound concerning Beuys, to the extent that Buchloh has questioned whether or not the famous crash in the Crimea during the Second World War, upon which most of his work was based, was actually fact or fiction.[31] In the letter Offenbach went on to state that,

> King Louis II had Hans H. sent away from his castles. His Majesty prefers you to this specialist of compositions for the flute.

---

[28]'Mon cher Beuys', Düsseldorf, 25 September 1972, open letter to Beuys published in German under the title 'Politik der Magie?' in the *Rheinishe Post*, Düsseldorf (3 October 1972), reprinted in facsimile as well as in French and English in *Magie. Art et Politique*, Paris, Multiplicata, 1973.

[29]*Magie. Art et Politique*, p. 13: '1848...de 1849. Ton essai 'L'Art et la Révolution' de...magie...politique... dont tu ne parais guère avoir conscience...La politique, de la magie? De la beauté ou de la laideur? ...Messiah...' (omission dots in original)

[30]Ibid.: 'j'exprime mon désaccord si tu inclus dans une définition de l'Art, celle de la politique... magie?...' (omission dots in original)

[31]Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol: Preliminary Notes for a Critique', *Artforum*, vol. 18 (January 1980), pp. 37-38.

> I can understand - if it is a matter of artistic choice. But is not the enthusiasm that His Majesty displays for you motivated by a political choice as well? I hope this question disturbs you as much as it does me.[32]

The king was, of course, Ludwig II of Bavaria, Wagner's patron and staunch admirer. The castle in this case was not one of Ludwig's but the Guggenheim Museum. Hans H. is Haacke and the letter evidently refers to the cancellation of his show at the Guggenheim, a political decision presented as one of artistic value. However, Broodthaers also pointed out that 'His Majesty' (that is, the patron, or, in this case, the Guggenheim) was enthusiastic about exhibiting Beuys' work. The letter concluded on a powerful note which raised the issue of integrity:

> What ends do you serve, Wagner? Why? How? Miserable artists that we are!
> Vive la musique.
> Jacques Offenbach.[33]

In using the word 'miserable', Offenbach/Broodthaers seemed to suggest that he and Wagner/Beuys were poor in spirit and unworthy. He thereby implied that the 'ends' sought to be served may not have been honourable.

Interesting comparisons may be made between Broodthaers and Offenbach, whom Broodthaers had already named in the title of his 1972 film programme *Rendez-vous mit Jacques Offenbach*. Although Offenbach was born in Germany, he achieved success when he moved to Paris. Similarly, Broodthaers became recognised far more quickly in Germany than in his native Belgium. Offenbach and Wagner evidently sought very different ends through different means, each developing a new kind of opera which were not at all alike. Offenbach's *opérette* was a light comic opera. It appeared to be nothing more than mere entertainment, yet 'he entertained his public with a parody of its own social mores and expectations. Offenbach's operettas

---

[32]*Magie. Art et Politique*, p. 13: 'Le roi Louis II éconduit Hans H. de ses châteaux. Sa Majesté te préfère à ce spécialiste des compositions à la flûte. Je comprends, s'il s'agit d'un choix artistique. Mais cette passion que le monarque nourrit à ton égard n'est-elle pas également motivée par un choix politique? J'espère que cette question te troublera autant que moi.'
[33]Ibid.: 'Wagner, à quelles fins servons-nous? Pourquoi? Comment? Pauvres artistes que nous sommes!/Vive la Musique./J. Offenbach'

could thus become a powerful instrument of oppositional critique'.[34] Broodthaers employed a similar strategy 'of ironic affirmation in a situation in which a self-mystification such as that of Joseph Beuys tended to obscure the actual social position of the artist'.[35]

The parallels between Beuys and Wagner are equally striking. Wagner had sought to develop a revolutionary type of musical stage work which he termed 'musical drama' or simply 'drama'. As Offenbach commented in the letter, Wagner saw this as the only direction worth following, in seeking to find a form to unite all the arts. Wagner wanted to develop a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which loosely translates as 'a total work of art'. He despised the type of opera which he considered entertainment for the elite. In 'Art and Revolution' and other treatises he described the creation of an art form to which ordinary people could relate and feel spiritually uplifted. He conflated theories of artistic and social revolution and developed ideas based upon his own concepts of socialism, of self-realization and of social regeneration.

Beuys also used the term *Gesamtkunstwerk*, not in the sense of uniting all forms of the arts, but in terms of broader issues. He claimed that, 'All questions of man can be only a question of form, and that is the totalized concept of art'.[36] Whilst canvassing on behalf of the Green Party for election to the German parliament in 1976 he stated that:

> I absolutely acknowledge that I can derive everything from art. I would say to the voters in the street that the concept of politics must be eliminated as quickly as possible and must be replaced by the capability of form of human art. I do not want to carry art into politics, but make politics into art.[37]

Beuys was not elected, but such statements alarmed some commentators.[38] If politics was to become a form of art then any activity could similarly be justified as art.

---

[34]Stefan Germer, 'Haacke, Broodthaers, Beuys', *October*, vol. 45 (Summer 1988), p. 74.
[35]Ibid.
[36]Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz & Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works* (1973), trans. Patricia Letch, New York, Woodbury & London, Barron's, 1979, p. 283.
[37]Ibid., p. 277.
[38]See, for example, Buchloh, 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol: Preliminary Notes for a Critique', Buchloh, Rosalind Krauss & Annette Michelson, 'Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim', *October*, no. 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 3-31, Eric Michaud, 'The Ends of Art according to Beuys', trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October*, vol. 45 (Summer 1988), pp. 38-46 and Timothy O'Keefe, 'The Secret Block for a Secret

One of the reasons for Broodthaers' criticism of Beuys was a television interview which Beuys gave, without the authorization of or even informing Broodthaers, in the *Section des Figures* in the early summer of 1972. According to Harten, then director of the Kunsthalle, 'Broodthaers complained that Beuys had misused another artist's exhibition for his own auratic image'.[39] The interview probably had nothing to do with Broodthaers' exhibition, but due to the media attention the exhibition had attracted, the television company perhaps thought that it would provide an exciting setting. Beuys would have heard about the exhibition but did not contact Broodthaers before the interview. Instead, he appeared to use the exhibition as a backdrop for himself: 'Beuysian irony at the cost of Broodthaersian *détente*'.[40]

Broodthaers' letter raises questions regarding the position of the artist in society and the integrity with which each artist maintains his self-stated values. Buren had been shocked by the censorious behaviour of fellow artists at the time of the *Guggenheim International*. Broodthaers, however, did not question the decision of the Guggenheim in rejecting Haacke's work. He felt this was only to be expected of an institution reliant to some extent upon donations from private sources.[41] Broodthaers' concern lay with the ambiguity of Beuys' position - the distance between his highly publicized discourses and his conduct in specific circumstances.

In a 1968 interview in the film journal *Trépied*, Broodthaers was asked how he perceived the artist's role: 'Today, whether consciously or unconsciously, artists are *engagé*. The problem is to be consciously...authentically *engagé*...'[42] In using the term *engagé* he was, of course, referring to Sartre who, in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948) had advocated 'une littérature engagée', that is, a politically

---

Person in Ireland: Drawings by Joseph Beuys', *Studio International* (September 1974), p. 10.
[39]In a letter from Jürgen Harten, 13 March 1998.
[40]Jürgen Harten, '*Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute*, Düsseldorf 1972', in Bernd Klüser & Katharina Hegewisch (eds.), *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*, Frankfurt & Leipzig, Insel, 1995, p. 227.
[41]Compton, p. 53.
[42]'Interview de Marcel Broodthaers', *Trépied*, pp. 4-5, in *Cinéma*, pp. 59 & 320: 'Aujourd'hui consciemment ou inconsciemment l'artiste est engagé. Le problème c'est d'être engagé consciemment...authentiquement...' (omission dots in original)

responsible and committed literature.[43] However, by 1974, to the question in 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward', 'Have you ever made art *engagé*?', Broodthaers replied: 'I did once. They were poems, concrete signs of engagement since without compensation. My work in those days consisted in writing as few as possible'.[44] In other words, Broodthaers believed that his earlier work as a poet was *engagé* rather than that as an artist, that the more closely an activity related to financial gain, the less *engagé* it could be.

As already discussed, Broodthaers felt that as a poet his relationship with the public was less direct than as an artist. In 'Ten Thousand Francs Reward' he went on to say that:

> In the visual arts, my only possible engagement is with my adversaries. Architects are in the same position whenever they work for themselves. I try as much as I can to circumscribe the problem by proposing little, all of it indifferent.[45]

Of course, he was playing his, by now familiar, *faux naive* role again, demeaning the value of his work in order to make it more slily effective.

Although the open letter to Beuys was very powerful, even aggressive, in the above remark Broodthaers revealed a respect and a need for opposing points of view.[46] An open letter is an interesting device with which to address one's adversaries. Whereas letters are generally private documents, intended only for the eyes of the specifically named receiver or receivers, an open letter is written with a public audience in mind. However, this is very much a passive audience, which is not

---

[43]Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature* (1948), trans. Bernard Frechtman, New York, Harper & Row, 1965. For more on authenticity and engagement see William L. McBride, *Sartre's Political Theory*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1991 and Linda A. Bell, *Sartre's Ethics of Authenticity*, Tascaloosa & London, The University of Alabama Press, 1989. See also Broodthaers' poem, *Qu'est-ce que la peinture?*, handwritten at the end of a letter to Jost Herbig (London, 23 May 1973), pub. in Tate, p. 31: 'Qu'est que la peinture?/Eh bien c'est la littérature./Qu'est que la littérature, alors?/Eh bien c'est la peinture./Qu'est - ce que le reste?/Ce qui reste, c'est une reforme./Comme de la lune, quand elle/est pleine, quand elle n'est qu'un/mince croisant, quand elle est/nuit noir théorique.'

[44]'Ten Thousand Francs Reward': 'Avez-vous fait de l'art engagé?/Auparavant. Et c'était des poèmes, signes concrets d'engagement, car sans récompense. Mon travail consistait alors à en écrire le moins possible.'

[45]Ibid.: 'Avec l'art plastique, je n'ai pu m'engager que chez mes adversaires. Les architectes sont dans la même situation, quand ils travaillent à leur compte. J'essaie autant qu'il m'est permis de circonscrire ce problème en proposant peu et de l'indifférent.'

[46]Beuys does not appear to have responded, at least publicly, to Broodthaers' letter, according to letters from Caroline Tisdall, 19 May 1995 and Jürgen Harten, 13 March 1998.

expected to reply. When not to a particular person, Broodthaers' letters were either addressed 'A mes amis' or 'Chers amis', informal and engaging terms which set a friendly tone. By presenting in a public forum what would usually be private, Broodthaers gave the (deceptive) impression of making the reader privy to his personal and inconsequential thoughts. In this way he was able to make what would otherwise be controversial points (and then frequently contradict himself) without offending anyone.[47]

Broodthaers and Beuys - Concurrent Events of 1972

It is necessary to examine the broader context within which the 1972 open letter was sent. Broodthaers' relationship with Beuys had begun in the late 1960s when he was initially enthusiastic about Beuys' work. Broodthaers had been involved with the filming of Beuys' action *Eurasienstaff* at the Wide White Space in February 1968. De Decker's husband, the artist Bernd Lohaus, had known Beuys from Düsseldorf and, like Broodthaers, Beuys became one of the artists regularly exhibited in the gallery. De Decker recalled how, 'Marcel always regarded the work of Beuys with astonishment. They [both] belonged to the [World] War [II] generation, and Marcel always said, "Ah, it's horrible. That Beuys was in his Stuka, bombing me, while I was [huddling] in the cellar."'[48] During the winter semester 1968-69 Broodthaers was an invited guest at the 'Lidl Academy'. Founded by Jörg Immendorff, a student of Beuys, the 'Lidl Academy' operated within the Düsseldorf Art Academy as a kind of 'free academy', with around fifty students and guests rather than professors.[49] Other guests included Panamarenko and Per Kirkeby. On 14 July 1969 Broodthaers sent Beuys an open letter from Brussels which began by declaring,

> My dear Beuys,

---

[47]For a detailed discussion of Broodthaers' open letters see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Open Letters, Industrial Poems', in Buchloh (ed.), pp. 67-100.

[48]*Wide White Space 1966-1976*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 28 October-31 December 1994, p. 28.

[49]In May 1969 the 'Lidl Academy' would be declared illegal by Professor Trier, Director of the Academy, and the Academy was closed from 7-12 May; see Adriani, Konnertz, Thomas, pp. 188-189.

> God how difficult it was to call a German a friend when you're born in another land. Beuys, you are a friend and Dutecke is a friend. Beautiful Germany is coming back to life.[50]

The letter was friendly but at the same time made some ambiguous comments, for example, when Broodthaers addressed,

> Beuys, concentration camp poet with your copper tables, magic sparks, your felt full of cemeteries, your beds lined by the plague, with your recent friends, South Americans, Jews, Yankees...[51]

He looked forward to seeing Beuys soon, telling him, not without a hint of irony, that 'There are plenty of people here [in Brussels] divided between analytical geometry and faith in an incredible god'.[52]

In an open letter from the following year addressed to 'Chers amis' and sent from the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème siècle*, Broodthaers stated 'I love Düsseldorf' and that he had some contacts there.[53] He named some places in the city which he liked and Beuys, Palermo, Ulrich (whose surname he had forgotten) and Immendorff at the Academy. However, Broodthaers appeared slightly confused by these feelings for the letter concluded,

> Dear friends, from Antwerp to Brussels is the same number of kilometers as on 10 May 1940.
> So, it is strange that I can at the same time reflect upon my museum and upon the feelings which tie me to Düsseldorf.[54]

When, at the end of 1969 his house was to be demolished in Brussels, Broodthaers decided to relocate to Düsseldorf. Apart from his contacts with other artists it was also a strategic decision. Michael Werner helped him to move and, following the

---

[50]'Mon cher Beuys', Brussels, 14 July 1968, open letter to Beuys, reprinted in *Museums in motion*, p. 249: 'Mon cher Beuys,/Dieu, que c'était difficile de dire ami à un allemand quand on est né sur une autre terre. Beuys, tu es ami et Dutecke est ami. La belle Allemagne ressuscite.'
[51]Ibid.: 'Beuys, poète concentrationnaire, avec tes tables de cuivre, tes étincelles magiques, tes feutres pleins de cimetières, tes lits bordés par la peste; avec tes amis de fraîche date, sud-américains, juifs, yankees...' (omission dots in original)
[52]Ibid.: 'Beuys, à bientôt. Il y a plein de monde chez moi partagé entre la géométrie analytique et la foie en un dieu incroyable.'
[53]'Chers amis', Brussels, 10 May 1969, *Museum in motion*, p. 249: 'J'aime Düsseldorf.'
[54]Ibid.: 'Chers amis, d'Anvers à Bruxelles il y a la même nombre de kilomètres que le 10 mai 1940./Alors, il est étrange que je puisse à la fois réflechir à son musée et aux sentiments qi me lient à Düsseldorf.'

Wide White Space, exhibited *Exposition littéraire et musicale autour de Mallarmé*.[55] It was still difficult to become a financially successful artist in Belgium and the Rhineland appeared far more promising. Furthermore, those galleries were prepared to take Broodthaers' work seriously.

Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf and *Documenta 5*

Broodthaers wrote the letter to Beuys just before the exhibition *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf* was due to open at the Guggenheim on 5 October 1972. The show was co-curated by Harten and both artists were amongst those selected by him to represent Düsseldorf.[56]

For *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf* Beuys chose to exhibit an early work, *Gundfana of the West - Genghis Khan's Flag* (1961), a fir trunk with a simple cloth flag, and a copy of the social programme of his 'Organization for Direct Democracy through Referenda' (1971), made of paper, polythene and plastic from an edition of 10,000. Whilst he appeared to be dealing with hot political issues, his work seemed to be easily absorbed within the (according to Messer) limited capacity of the Guggenheim, which had evidently felt far more threatened by Haacke's 'factual accuracy'.[57] By contrast, Beuys' work seemed to have been viewed in artistic rather than political terms.

Meanwhile Broodthaers exhibited a book version of *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* and *Ma Collection*. A typewritten statement (in French) 'A Daniel Buren' (mentioned in Chapter 2) was published in the catalogue to accompany *Ma Collection*, in which Broodthaers described the work and concluded by stating that, 'Particularly interested in the structures of repetition, I am obliged to remember the work of Buren in dedicating to him the text of this statement'.[58] As well as referring

---

[55]*Exposition littéraire et musicale autour de Mallarmé*, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, December 1969-January 1970.
[56]The other artists representing Düsseldorf were Bernd & Hilla Becher, Gotthard Graubner, Konrad Klapheck, Sigmar Polke, Klaus Rinke, Dieter Rot, André Thomkins and Günther Uecker.
[57]Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason', *Art in America* (February 1988), p. 98.
[58]David (ed.), p. 161.

to the nature of Buren's work, Broodthaers used the occasion to align himself with Buren.

Broodthaers' work was shown in New York but he decided to withdraw from the touring venues of Pasadena and Dallas. This action has also been interpreted as a sign of support for Buren as well as for Haacke.[59] However, in an open letter to Harten, dated 10 November 1972, Broodthaers gave entirely different reasons.[60] In the letter he expressed concern as to how *Ma Collection* would be interpreted in the States, by an audience which he claimed he 'did not know and could hardly imagine'. He felt that his reference in the catalogue statement to Mallarmé as 'the father of modern art' could be justified in terms of French or perhaps English culture rather than American. He was also concerned about the exhibition as a whole, which, although presented as showing work from three particular cities, Broodthaers believed would be seen as representative of Europe as a whole, and he asked, 'Is that Europe?' He felt that certain absences from the exhibition made it fragmentary. Broodthaers thought that it would be a good idea to publish the letter to Harten so that his gesture of withdrawing his work would not be misunderstood as a critique of the museums in Pasadena and Dallas. He pointed out that this would also provide the opportunity to publicise his open letter to Beuys, 'to whom I oppose with a fundamentally different political view of art, which I emphasise in spite of the courage with which this artist has given his point of view (but that's almost all I can reproach him)'.[61] Broodthaers also suggested that the correspondence between himself and Harten be presented as information sheets in the exhibition.

In his reply dated 26 November 1972, Harten disagreed with the reasons Broodthaers had given for withdrawing his work. He drew Broodthaers' attention to the recent extensive discussion of Mallarmé's work in America and asked, if

---

[59]See Germer, p. 66, who claims that, 'Sensitive to the political reasons for the museum's inclusion and exclusion of artists, Broodthaers decided to withdraw his works as an act of solidarity with Haacke'. However, if this were the case one would expect Broodthaers to have withdrawn from the Guggenheim rather than from the subsequent venues.

[60]Broodthaers, Harten, Schuldt, 'Die Kunst bleibt zu einer Hoffnung gezwungen', *Kunstjahrbuch*, Hannover, vol. 3 (1973), pp. 63-68.

[61]Ibid., p. 63.

Mallarmé is interpreted differently in America from in Europe, 'is it really that difficult for us Europeans to be tolerant?' With regard to the fragmentary nature of the exhibition, Harten stated that the exhibition never claimed to be comprehensive and that he did not know what a culturally intelligent American would have in mind with regard to the word 'Europe'.[62] He pointed out that Broodthaers had used his right as an artist to withdraw his work - 'in this case belatedly and that's even more effective' - to show 'his solidarity with other non-invited artists and to determine the context of the exhibition'. He felt that an artist had to negotiate from both the perspective of his position as well as that of the 'transmitting institution', that is, the museum. Otherwise the artist would become isolated and the museum would lose its relationship with the artist and the public. He thanked Broodthaers for the opportunity to answer him publicly.[63]

The timing of Broodthaers' open letter to Beuys also coincided with other events in Düsseldorf. I am referring to Beuys' battle with the regional Ministry of Education over its policy of Numerus Clausus, the system which means that there are a limited number of places for students in higher education establishments rather than unlimited places based upon demand. Beuys' battle had begun in autumn 1971 when, as a professor at the Düsseldorf Art Academy where he had held the post since 1959, he accepted 142 students to his classes who had been denied places elsewhere. Beuys had his own admissions procedure: 'That did not mean that any student could cozily establish himself with me, as is so often maintained; the students were scrupulously examined by me as to whether study at the Academy of Art could have a certain value for their life.'[64] He felt that the then procedure based upon the merits of each student's portfolio was absurd, since the Academy should not exist for those 'who can already do everything, but for those who still cannot do'.[65]

---

[62]Harten had made clear the uncomprehensive nature of the exhibition in his catalogue essay to *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf*, 'Assuming you are not an insider...', n.p.
[63]Broodthaers, Harten, Schuldt, 'Die Kunst bleibt zu einer Hoffnung gezwungen', p. 64.
[64]Adriani, Konnertz, Thomas, *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, p. 231.
[65]Ibid.

In October 1971, Beuys, together with some students, occupied the administration office in the Academy and demanded a meeting with the Minister of Education for North Rhine-Westphalia, the Social Democrat, Johannes Rau. The occupation was successful as the Ministry agreed to examine the matter and the students were admitted. Due to the problems which had been encountered, however, Beuys decided that the only way in which his educational goals could be realized was within another framework. He decided to set up a 'Free College', but which he wanted to be integrated within the existing education structure. During the summer of 1972, he set up an office of information for the 'Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum' at *Documenta 5* (pl. 144). The office was transferred to *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf* in October via the Organization's social programme. The effect of context upon Beuys' work was strikingly observed by Harold Rosenberg in a conversation with Jean-Christophe Ammann, associate director of *Documenta 5*. Rosenberg asked Ammann:

> "What makes Beuys' distributing political leaflets at the Fridericianum art?"
> "He, his office, the stacks of papers", was the not unexpected reply, "constitute a sculpture."
> "Granted", I conceded, "that any three-dimensional enclosure of space can be regarded as a sculpture, what is gained by imposing the idea of art, complex and indefinite as it is, on what Beuys is doing?"
> "In the museum", responded Ammann, "distributing political leaflets is art. In Beuys' office in Düsseldorf it is politics."[66]

In this way, the nature of Beuys' activity seems to have been determined by the context within which it was performed with the activity itself of limited independent value. Beuys used the forum of *Documenta* to present his theories of 'Democracy through Referendum'. However, the scope of discussion was much wider than this. Beuys was present daily to meet visitors and to publicize his 'expanding art concept': I want to affect all areas of life. What I practice here is my concept of art...I believe in man'.[67] Later, in an interview he explained that:

---

[66]Harold Rosenberg, *Art on the Edge: Creators and Situations*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1975, pp. 265-267.
[67]Adriani, Konnertz, Thomas, *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, pp. 244 and 247.

> real future political intentions must be artistic. This means that they must originate from human creativity, from the individual freedom of man...there must be an educational system independent of state influence. From this I attempt to develop a revolutionary model which formulates the basic democratic order as people would like it, according to the will of the people, for we want a democracy. It is part of the fundamental law: all state power comes from the people.[68]

And so on. Beuys' pronouncements have been extensively documented. Broodthaers was also present at *Documenta 5* where he exhibited the final instalments of his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*. His open letter to Beuys, as *Documenta* was drawing to a close, would seem to reflect firsthand experience of Beuys' approach and activities.

There were three parts to Broodthaers' exhibits at *Documenta 5*. One was the *Section Publicité* which contained photographs of the *Section des Figures*, at the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle as the two exhibitions overlapped by one week. The *Section Publicité* was on show for the duration of *Documenta*. In the *Personal Mythologies* section of *Documenta*, curated by Harald Szeemann, Broodthaers exhibited the *Section d'Art Moderne* (pl. 145). This was an installation with the focal point a black square painted on the floor, protected on all four sides by a chain hung on stanchions. 'Private Property' was painted on the square in white, italic script, in German, English and French. On two adjoining walls, signs like those which may be found in a museum (indicating 'direction', 'cloak-room', 'cashier' and 'office') were painted in black, in a modern, upper case font, again in three languages. With arrows pointing in both directions these signs proved illogical and redundant. The other walls were covered with the name of the museum in large black letters. On the window, 'MUSEUM/MUSEE' was painted in white to be viewed from the outside, with 'FIG. 0' from the inside. As with other sections of Broodthaers' museum, only the structures of art or of the museum were in place - titles, labels, directions, information. As Broodthaers said in a discussion with Johannes Cladders,

---

[68]Ibid., p. 249.

> The *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* is quite simply a lie, a deception...The fictive museum tries to pillage the authentic, official museum, to give more strength and verisimilitude to its lie. It is equally important to discover if the fictive museum throws new light on the mechanisms of art, the world and the life of art. With my museum I pose the question. This is why I do not need to give a reply...Perhaps the only way for me to be an artist is to be a liar, because at the end of the day all economic products, commerce and communication are lies. Most artists adjust their work to the market as if it were industrial merchandise.[69]

In this text Broodthaers was very open about the nature and aims of his museum. He stated bluntly his opinion of contemporary art as commercial products akin to 'industrial merchandise', adjusted specially to fit the market.

At the beginning of September the *Section d'Art Moderne* became the *Musée d'Art Ancien, Département des Aigles, Galerie du XXème Siècle* (pl. 146).[70] The black square was repainted with words, in white *écriture anglaise*, relating to Broodthaers' perception of contemporary art practice. They read:

Write Paint Copy
figure
Speak form Dream
Exchange
make Inform Power[71]

The words on the window remained as before. The walls were painted black and a signwriter wrote in gold letters, *Musée d'Art Ancien Département des Aigles Galerie du XXème Siècle*. Broodthaers drew a boat on one of the walls in blue chalk and wrote: 'The black is the smoke'.[72] He explained that he had made these changes, 'for one of the roles of the artist is to attempt, at least, to carry out a subversion of the organizational scheme of an exhibition. Is it any better this time?'[73]

---

[69]In an interview with Johannes Cladders, 28 January 1972; see also David (ed.), p. 229: 'Le *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* est tout simplement un mensonge, une tromperie...Le musée fictif essaie de piller le musée authentique, officiel, pour donner davantage de puissance et de vraisemblance à son mensonge. Il est également important de découvrir si le musée fictif jette un jour nouveau sur les méchanismes de l'art, du monde et de la vie de l'art. Avec mon musée je pose la question. C'est pourquoi je n'ai pas besoin de donner la réponse...Peut-être la seule possibilité pour moi d'être un artiste est-elle d'être un menteur, parce qu'en fin de compte tous les produits économiques, le commerce, la communication sont des mensonges. La plupart des artistes ajustent leurs production au marché, comme si c'étaient des marchandises industrielles.'

[70]*Section d'Art Moderne* from 30 June-15 August, *Musée d'Art Ancien, Département des Aigles, Galerie du XXe siècle*, 15 August-8 October 1972, both in the Neue Galerie, Kassel, *Documenta 5*.

[71]Crimp, p. 234: 'Ecrire Peindre Copier/figurer/Parler former Rêver/Echanger/faire Informer Pouvoir.'

[72]David (ed.), p. 230: 'Le noir c'est la fumée.'

[73]Walker, p. 193, from 'Changement de Propriete?', p. 76.

Beuys at the Academy

In Düsseldorf, in late August 1972, the new academic year began and some students were again restricted from entering the Academy, despite the decision at the end of the previous year that each professor should be allowed to accept as many students as he wished. Beuys had stated that he would also accept any student rejected by another professor. However, on 29 August the Ministry of Education declared that 'any attempt to force the admission of further students is to be discontinued'.[74] On 6 October, Rau demanded a written agreement from Beuys. On 10 October an occupation of the administration offices in the Academy began by Beuys and 54 students who had expressed their support for him in an open letter. On 11 October Rau ordered Beuys' dismissal from the Academy and terminated his contract as professor on the grounds of 'trespassing'.[75] That afternoon 200 students marched to the Ministry of Education to demand Beuys' reinstatement. Rau made his own position clear and refused any negotiations with Beuys, claiming, 'I cannot and will not let myself be made into a possible art object'.[76] Beuys responded by stating that he and the students would stay in the offices 'if necessary for two weeks', but by 13 October he had left to see his lawyer.[77] Eight of the thirty professors supported Beuys and disagreed with his dismissal, whilst the others felt that his behaviour was too disruptive.

Beuys returned to the Academy and led his followers away peacefully, claiming that he would take legal action against the authorities. He continued to teach without a contract in the street outside the Academy. A public show of support initiated by Beuys' students spread to the media and other artists. A group of Italian artists and critics declared: 'This is a battle for the freedom of culture. We view the dismissal of Beuys as a dismissal of all the European avant-garde.'[78] Letters of

---

[74]Adriani, Konnertz, Thomas, *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, p. 250.
[75]Ibid., p. 252.
[76]Ibid.
[77]Ibid.
[78]Ibid., p. 258.

protest to the Ministry of Education were sent by, among others, Allan Kaprow and Ed Kienholz. A group of European artists and critics, including Broodthaers, Panamarenko, César and Restany expressed their sympathy for Beuys:

> From the German press we have learned that the position of Professor Joseph Beuys is threatened and by Düsseldorf Academy itself. We take this occasion to give our sympathy and friendship to this man whose humanitarian thought we very highly value. Intentionally we do not want to speak here of the value of his work. We believe that we must step forward with our declaration of sympathy to the public, so much more so, since the threat to this professorship symptomatically appears to us as a threat to freedom of opinion, which is a universal concept.[79]

Discussions were held concerning Beuys' position. Possible solutions included the proposal of new buildings in which to house the extra students and the suggestion that Beuys be retained as an artist rather than reinstated as a professor. Demonstrations by students continued; those whose entry had originally been rejected were admitted to their second subjects.

On 30 October Beuys brought charges against the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, represented by Rau as Minister of Education, and on 21 February 1973 the case went to court in Düsseldorf. The court decided that the dismissal should be lifted. The Ministry refused to comply with the decision and appealed. The case continued for a number of years. It was returned to court on 31 July 1973 and the Ministry won as the court stated that Beuys must have been aware of the consequences of his actions. On 20 February 1975 the supreme labour court in Kassel supported the decision of the Düsseldorf court and Beuys remained dismissed. After a further appeal, however, on 7 April 1978, the court pronounced Beuys' dismissal illegal.

On 24 November 1978, Reimut Jochimsen, Rau's successor at the Ministry of Education, offered Beuys the use of his former studio in the Academy. Beuys would be able to hold the title of Professor, although his teaching contract would not be resumed. Jochimsen was evidently afraid that Beuys might accept a teaching contract

---

[79]Ibid., pp. 259-260.

in Vienna, and the region would lose its best known artist. Beuys declined both positions in Düsseldorf and Vienna.

According to Adriani, Konnertz and Thomas, the events in Düsseldorf can be seen in Beuysian terms as a 'social sculpture':

> The entire proceedings of the lawsuit, which stand in relation to Beuys' plans for a 'Free College for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research', became, with the concrete criticism of the circumstances of the Düsseldorf Academy of Art and with the theoretical planning of a new interdisciplinary school, a social sculpture work of the artist which leaps over the borders between culture, law, and economy and brings the ideas of the social, total art work to the reality of life.[80]

An interpretation of this kind is indicative of the way in which any activity of Beuys may be seen as art, as a way of linking art with other activities and of making those activities part of 'the social, total art work'. It was this vague and general approach which concerned Broodthaers, amongst others.

Broodthaers wrote a letter to Beuys indirectly to register his concern with Beuys' activities. Just as the supposed letter from Offenbach never reached Wagner, so Broodthaers did not send his letter directly to Beuys, but presented it, publicly, as an open letter, which Beuys may or may not have read, although thousands of others certainly would. It was published in a conservative newspaper which would not have supported Beuys at a time when he was at the centre of a controversial public debate. Broodthaers must have been aware that comparison to Wagner could not have been helpful to Beuys. In Germany, less than thirty years after the end of the Second World War, Wagner's name was still tainted by Nazi appropriation.

In the letter Broodthaers examined the relationship between art, politics and institutions. The experiences of both Haacke and Buren had exemplified the limited extent to which one can challenge, whether artistically or politically, the institution in which the work is shown. Beuys' work evidently did not contravene the limitations of, for example, the Guggenheim (where he would have a major retrospective

---

[80]Ibid., p. 270.

exhibition in 1979, curated by Caroline Tisdall). When Broodthaers asked in the letter 'is not the enthusiasm that His Majesty displays for you motivated by a political choice as well?', he seems to suggest that Beuys' 'revolutionary' politics were precisely those which the museum could happily accommodate.

Broodthaers' main concern was with Beuys' motives and he questioned Beuys' mixing of art with politics and magic: 'What ends do you serve...? Why? How?' As was central to the work of Beuys' Minimal and Conceptual contemporaries and as was evident from the particular events described here, art is clearly restricted by its institutional frameworks and is not 'self-contained'. Broodthaers doubted its power to change the world. As he wrote in 1975,

> Art adorns our bourgeois walls as a sign of power, a prisoner of its fantasies and of the magical uses to which it is put. It accompanies the vicissitudes of our history like a shadow play - is it artistic? we remain in doubt.[81]

Magic

Broodthaers' letter to Beuys was subsequently reprinted in *Magie. Art et Politique*, published in Paris in 1973 in a limited edition of 400. On the inside of the front cover Broodthaers included a note explaining that the original title had been 'Fume, c'est du belge' but that 'This expression could have been an allusion to Belgian or French chauvinism and upset cherished ways of thinking'.[82] He also pointed out that it would have been too difficult to translate the phrase into German and English without a lengthy explanation.

The first part of the book was entitled 'Politique' and comprised handwritten and typed versions of the letter in French, German and English as well as a facsimile of the page from the *Rheinishe Post*. Each page of the book was headed alternately 'Magie' and 'Politique'. The second part of the book was titled 'Art' with each page

---

[81]'To be a straight thinker or not to be. To be blind': 'Prisonnier de ses fantasmes et de son usage magique, l'Art orne nos murs bourgeois comme signe de puissance - il accompagne les péripéties de notre histoire comme un jeu d'ombres artistique, l'on s'en doute.'

[82]*Magie. Art et Politique,* inside front cover: 'J'avais primitivement choisi un autre titre pour 'Magie'. C'était 'Fume, c'est du belge.' Cette expression pouvait viser un chauvinisme belge ou français et déranger de chères habitudes. Elle est difficilement traduisible en allemand et en anglais sans une trop longue explication.'

headed alternately 'Magie' and 'Art'. The text, printed in French, German and English, was in two parts, 'Etre Narcisse' (Being Narcissus) and 'Etre Artiste' (Being an Artist). In 'Being Narcissus' Broodthaers briefly and enigmatically described sleeping, reading, drinking and eating as may be experienced by Narcissus. He wrote about dreaming, mirrors, wine and snakes, respectively. In 'Being an Artist', he dealt, in equally aphoristic terms, with sculpting, painting, drawing and engraving:

> 1. sculpting - To drown like the son of a god! What glory!...It's better to fake. Properties: A diver's outfit. Several fish. Flowers.
> 2. painting - Witnesses appearing on stage, the merchant with his friend the art lover. Swearing allegiance.
> 3. drawing - The artist's writing complements or replaces his images. He signs.
> 4. engraving - Market study.[83]

According to Compton, Broodthaers had rejected a godlike manner of making sculpture in favour of what could be described as faking, that is, using readymade objects.[84] Broodthaers lists some of these as 'properties'. He often mixed drawing with writing and sometimes did not differentiate between the two in that a number of works consisted entirely of his signature functioning as both drawing and writing. His prints often referred to the art market. Compton felt that Broodthaers' definition of painting was the most enigmatic, suggesting that 'It may refer to painting's position as the most mysterious of the four and, more obliquely, to illusion'.[85] By referring to 'the merchant' and 'the art lover', Broodthaers also seems to have associated painting with patronage.

On each of the pages facing the text was a photograph of an 'ardoise magique' (a magic slate which Broodthaers translated as 'writing slate'). This is a small wax-covered plate, on top of which is a semi-transparent, plastic film. The plate and film are held together in a sleeve. By drawing with a point onto the film an image appears from the wax beneath. When the plate is pulled out of the sleeve, thereby separating

---

[83]Ibid., p. 22. (omission dots in original)
[84]Compton, p. 55.
[85]Ibid.

the film from the wax surface, the drawing disappears, as if by magic. The surface can be reused endlessly. As Broodthaers stated in a note in *Magie. Art et Politique*:

> The writing slate is based on the following principle: each inscription can be wiped off just by pulling out the plate. Yet it remains invisibly engraved on a film inside the device.[86]

This observation had been made by Freud in an essay on the "Mystic Writing-Pad".[87]

Four different photographs of magic slates appeared in *Magie. Art et Politique*. In the first the slate is in its sleeve, with Broodthaers' initials written once in the lower right-hand corner. In the second his initials appear in the centre of the slate. In the third his initials are again in the centre of the slate, but which is pulled halfway out of its sleeve, as though in the process of being wiped clean. In the fourth the slate is in its sleeve and wiped clean. Broodthaers referred to Freud's essay in notes on 'La Signature de l'Artiste' and explained that,

> The signature can, in other words, be found in the unconscious or the memory of the apparatus.
> Note. S. Freud explains (in part) the mechanism of the unconscious/conscious by using this as an example.[88]

By writing his signature on the magic slate, Broodthaers raised questions regarding its value and durability. As he asked: 'When the image of Narcissus is erased, what happens to the value (and the price)?'[89] Magic slates are often used by children and therefore connote fun and play. In this way Broodthaers invested what may be thought of as an 'innocent' medium with complex, worldly issues.

In *Magie. Art et Politique* Broodthaers included two different kinds of magic. The first, political magic, was that of Beuys, referred to in the open letter. The

---

[86]*Magie. Art et Politique,* p. 23.
[87]Sigmund Freud, 'A Note upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"', 1924, pub. in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, London, The Hogarth Press, 1961, pp. 225-232.
[88]Broodthaers in notes on 'La Signature de l'Artiste', 20 October 1972. Facsimile in Wilfried Dickhoff (ed.), *Marcel Broodthaers*, Cologne, Tinaia 9 Box I, 1994, pp. 140-143: 'La signature se retrouve donc dans le subconscient où la memoire de l'appareil./Note. S. Freud explique (en partie) le méchanisme subconscient-conscient à l'aide de cet exemple.'
[89]Dickhoff (ed.), *Marcel Broodthaers*, p. 140: 'Quand l'image de Narcisse s'est effacée, que devient la valeur (et le prix)?'

second, artistic magic, was that of the signature. By way of the magic slates, Broodthaers seems to have been suggesting that what appears to be magic is, in fact, simply illusion.

Projekt '74

In 1974 Haacke was excluded from the exhibition *Projekt '74. Kunst bleibt Kunst. Aspekte internationaler Kunst am Anfang der 70er Jahre* (Project '74. Art Remains Art. Aspects of International Art at the Beginning of the Seventies) organized by the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne. Broodthaers exhibited a version of his *Jardin d'Hiver* (winter garden) (pl. 147), mainly comprising potted palms, folding, painted, wooden garden chairs and framed photographs of 19th century prints of exotic birds and animals. In his catalogue entry, he included photographs of a real winter garden and of Cologne cathedral, together with a short text:

> I have ears (like the asses) and eyes (like the eagles) - Therefore I want to regret the absence of Hans Haacke. As I have come to know, the piece which he projected for this place, will be exhibited elsewhere. This is consoling me.[90]

Projekt '74 was an exhibition to which 75 artists were invited to exhibit and to submit proposals in advance. Haacke proposed to show *Manet-Projekt '74*, a new work based around Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus* (1880) (pl. 148). In 1968 the painting had been acquired by the Kuratorium (the Friends of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum) and other 'Kunstfreunde' (literally, art friends) who handed it over to the collection of the Museum on permanent loan 'in memory of Konrad Adenauer', according to information on the frame of the painting.[91]

In the exhibition Haacke proposed that the painting would stand on an easel, with ten panels on the wall giving information on the 'social and economic position' of all those who had previously owned the work, as well as Hermann J. Abs, Chairman of the Kuratorium and a leading German financier and the names of the

---

[90]*Projekt '74. Kunst bleibt Kunst.*, p. 151.
[91]*Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, Brian Wallis (ed.), New York, The New Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1986, pp. 119 & 132.

individuals and companies which had given donations to help the Kuratorium acquire the painting.[92] Although Evelyn Weiss, modern art curator at the museum and one of six on the committee organizing the exhibition, responded that Haacke's was 'one of the best projects submitted', she also stated that it could not be included as three others on the committee had voted against it.[93] One of those was Horst Keller, then director of the museum. In a letter to Haacke, Keller explained his objections, particularly regarding information on Abs (although as Haacke pointed out in his reply, all the information was publicly available and he had added no comments of his own). Although the museum was state financed, Keller indicated the importance of private donations. He also believed that social and economic information alone gave 'an absolutely inadequate evaluation of the spiritual initiative' of a person. Keller went on to say that,

> A grateful museum, however, and a grateful city, or one ready to be moved to gratefulness, must protect initiatives of such an extraordinary character from any other interpretation which might later throw even the slightest shadow on it...A museum knows nothing about economic power; it does, however, know something about spiritual power.[94]

On 4 July, the day of the press opening of *Projekt '74*, Haacke's work went on show at the Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne, with a colour reproduction in place of the painting.

Buren, who had a wall of stripes accepted for *Projekt '74*, responded. He pasted facsimiles of *Manet-Projekt '74*, provided by Haacke, on top of his own work, and added a poster with the words 'Kunst bleibt Politik' in large, bold letters. 'Kunst bleibt Politik' - Art remains Politics - plays on 'Kunst bleibt Kunst' - Art remains Art - the official slogan of the exhibition. Under these words Buren printed an extract from his 1970 text 'Limites Critiques', in which he stated that,

> Art, whatever else it may be, is exclusively political. What is called for is the *analysis of formal and cultural limits* (and not one *or* the other) within which

---

[92]Ibid., p. 118. See also Alain Macaire, 'Cologne Projekt '74', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 5 (September 1974), pp. 10-14.
[93]Ibid.
[94]Ibid., pp. 118 & 130.

> art exists and struggles. These limits are many and of different intensities. Although the prevailing ideology and the associated artists try in every way *to camouflage* them, and although it is too early - the conditions are not met - to blow them up, the time has come *to unveil* them.[95]

On the morning after the opening, Gert von der Osten, head of all Cologne municipal museums, co-director of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and amongst those who rejected Haacke's project, had the facsimiles on Buren's walls pasted over with white paper. Keller defended this action by stating that,

> it is not uncommon practice for a museum to paste over an artist's work, when an artist has expressly disregarded an agreement previously reached with a museum[96]

A number of artists protested. Newton and Helen Harrison, Antonio Diaz and Frank Gillette either temporarily or permanently removed their work. Cadere covered his work in white paper. Penck turned his painting around and wrote on the back that 'As long as the organisers of *Projekt '74* censor the work of Buren, we refuse to exhibit our own work'.[97] Andre, Filliou and LeWitt had withdrawn their work before the exhibition had opened when they heard about the rejection of Haacke's work.

On 30 July, Broodthaers sent a letter to the director of the Wallraff-Richartz Museum, and to a number of figures from the art world in Germany, Belgium and elsewhere. He announced that what he wanted to say concerned the exhibition 'Dorf bleibt Dorf Projekt '74' (Village remains Village Projekt '74), a pointed attack on the parochialism of the exhibition organizers. He continued:

> After 20 days of insomnia and mature reflection, would you please, in order to retain my harmonious relations with the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, add a potted palm to those which I have arranged in the exhibition.
> With this, I hope to increase my fame and to figure high in the circles which take care of the transformation, transport and speculations which maintain the glory of exotic trees.[98]

---

[95]Ibid., p. 130.
[96]Ibid.
[97]Macaire, 'Cologne Projekt '74', p. 13.
[98]'Dorf bleibt Dorf', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 5 (September 1974), p. 15: 'Après 20 jours d'insomnie et de mure réflection, je vous prie, dans le but de conserver mes relations harmonieuses avec le Wallraf-Richartz-Museum d'ajouter un palmier à ceux que j'ai disposé dans l'exposition./Par la même occasion, j'espère augmenter ma renommée et figurer en bonne place dans les milieux qui s'occuppent de la transformation, du transport et des spéculations qui assurent la glorie des arbres exotiques.'

Again Broodthaers was playing with the 'Art remains Art' slogan of the exhibition. In other words, if you want art to be only art then let's make it as banal as possible. Considering the climate of discussion and experimentation in the arts during the early 1970s, the slogan appears to have had its own formalist and 'self-contained' agenda.

+-0 conducted a survey of artists and critics on the slogan. In his response Broodthaers emphasised that the slogan was not used with the agreement of the exhibiting artists, particularly not himself.[99] For him it implied that nothing changes and that the world should be accepted as it exists. He stressed that this was at a time of high inflation, with all its related problems, and that the slogan sought to deny reality and mask these serious problems. However, he believed that art cannot escape the situation in which it exists.[100]

The wording was actually based upon that of a commercial for washing powder, 'Persil bleibt Persil', which was well-known in Germany at the time. For a German public the exhibition slogan then implies, according to Paul Maenz who was partly responsible for it, 'the highest level of quality' which can always be relied upon.[101] Because the commercial slogan was so well-known, everyone in Germany would understand it and the exhibition would appear to be accessible to all. At the same time, the exhibition organizers wished to respond to the popular charge, when people see new things in an exhibition, that 'it's not art'. With a diverse range of work exhibited, the organizers wished to say that it is all art. From their point of view the slogan 'Kunst bleibt Kunst' was open and all-embracing, neither specific nor holding any particular significance.

---

[99]'Autour du Titre d'une exposition', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 5 (September 1974), p. 17. Broodthaers stated that people accept the title, 'comme un fait accompli et comme une étiquette recouvrant la manifestation complète c'est-à-dire avec l'accord des artistes. Ce qui n'est absolument pas le cas et en tout cas pas en ce qui me concerne.'

[100]Ibid.: ' Kunst bleibt Kunst, cela veut dire que l'Art reste de l'Art, les choses ne bougent pas, changer, on accepte le monde tel qu'il est et cela à un moment où tous les pays du monde et toutes les villes du monde connaissent une inflation, avec tous ses phénomènes, il y a là un refus de la réalité qui est destinée à masquer les problèmes qui sont extrèmement graves, les problèmes de notre temps et il est évident que l'art n'échappe pas à cette situation.'

[101]Ibid., p. 18.

Documenta 7

In 1982, Haacke presented *Oelgemaelde - Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers* (Oil Painting. Homage to Marcel Broodthaers) (1982) at *Documenta 7* (pl. 149).[102] The work consisted of an oil painting of President Reagan in a gold frame. In front of the painting a red velvet rope hung from two brass stanchions. On the opposite wall was a large photograph of a crowd at a demonstration. A length of red carpet linked the two parts of the work. During the week preceeding the opening of *Documenta 7* Reagan had been in Bonn where he delivered a speech to the Bundestag with a view to raising support for the siting of Cruise and Pershing II missiles on West German soil. The photograph depicted the demonstration against nuclear arms, the largest rally to take place in Germany since the end of the Second World War. The banner in the background reads 'Reagan hau ab. Weder NATO noch Warschau' (Reagan get lost. Neither NATO nor Warsaw). When the work was exhibited subsequently, the photograph used was of a local demonstration, in New York, London or Bern.

The portrait of Reagan was copied from a photograph and painted by Haacke in a highly realistic manner. The use of oil painting was unusual for Haacke but in this work he found it appropriate. He felt that it was a medium appropriate to the nineteenth century as he believed that Reagan (and Thatcher) were, '19th century figures. They behave in a 19th century fashion and they pursue policies that are not of this century'.[103] At the same time Haacke wanted to comment upon the then current penchant for painting, particularly amongst the committee running *Documenta 7*.[104]

The contrast between the individual figure, handpainted in colour, and the large black and white photograph of the anonymous masses, is explicit. The proud expression on Reagan's face, the rope preventing close contact with the painting and the length of red carpet, heighten the sense of authority that a single figure can have over a large group. Just as at *Documenta 5* Broodthaers had dealt with 'Private

---

[102]The artistic director of *Documenta 7* was Rudi Fuchs.
[103]Michael Archer, 'Hans Haacke on the Inside', *Studio International* (April 1984), p. 42.
[104]For a rather negative critique of *Documenta 7* see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas', *October* (Fall 1982), pp. 105-126.

Property' in terms of the institutionalisation of art, so the portrait of Reagan, protected behind a similar velvet rope, represented private wealth, power and control.

The different media of oil painting and photography highlight the murky area between fiction and reality. As Reagan, before becoming a politician, had been an actor, his presentation as a politician was carefully stage-managed by his advisors together with the mass media. The reason why Reagan happened to be in Europe at that time was to promote Star Wars - a 'defence concept...straight from the dream factory'.[105] By contrast the photograph of the crowd was very large and in black and white. It was not framed but attached directly to the wall. The size and openness of the work meant that the viewer, by standing in front of it, could seem to become enveloped within it. Haacke made a point of showing that the image was not cropped, by printing the full frame together with the spool holes and frame numbers. The image did not appear to have been staged but depicted the event as it happened.

Whereas in the *Real-Time Social Systems* Haacke appeared to present information objectively, in *Oelgemaelde* he purposely framed the images more overtly. He saw political issues as valid material for artworks, although this did not mean that he should become a politician:

> It would be dangerous if there were only the option to be either an artist or a politician. In effect this would imply that art should deal with nothing but art and that you should leave politics to the politicians. Experience tells one should never leave politics to the politicians. Aside from the trouble this can get us into, such abdication would also be in conflict with generally held notions of democracy. But it would also be dangerous for art. Shutting out the social world would reduce it to a self-consuming art for art's sake...If art contributes to, among other things, the way we view the world and shape social relations, then it does matter whose image of the world it promotes and whose interests it serves.[106]

Haacke saw himself as an artist who was aware of and dealt with the social and political context within which art exists. He believed that politics should not be left to the politicans. However, unlike Beuys he did not wish to mix politics with art to produce a kind of undefined hybrid. He felt that art should not be perceived as

---

[105]Paul Taylor, 'Interview with Hans Haacke', *Flash Art* (February/March 1986), p. 39.
[106]Hans Haacke, from an interview with Tony Brown, in *Hans Haacke*, London, The Tate Gallery, 1984, p. 104.

existing within false isolation, but that each artist, whatever the style of his work, inevitably states his ideology. In this way, the 'whizz kid art' of the early 1980s, made as much of a statement as overtly political art: 'It is naive to assume that artworks made without a political intent lack a political dimension. This was something Marcel Broodthaers knew very well.'[107] According to Buchloh,

> Benevolent critics deemed it necessary to defend Broodthaers' work against its genuine historical and political potential as that potential was revealed in Haacke's timely homage...[Haacke's work] brought too many aspects of the interdependence of aesthetic and political matters into focus to please those conservative critics who would prefer to neutralize Broodthaers' work within an aesthetic nebulosity.[108]

Documenta was established as a forum for showing the most recent work by living artists. However, although Broodthaers had died in 1976, an exception was made and *Décor: A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers* was exhibited at *Documenta 7* in 1982. When the work was originally shown at the ICA in 1975 it was sited in two separate rooms. When exhibited at *Documenta 7* both sections were in the same room, which was sealed off from the public by a rope. The work could not be entered and could only be seen through doorways from adjacent rooms. This would seem to have been a sensible decision for security reasons due to the crowds at *Documenta*, but it altered the nature of the work. Separated from the public by a rope, it became (ironically) a kind of private property, viewable only from a distance. In *Documenta* it was 'less articulate and more hermetic...it was made part of a symbolist/monumentalist group' or 'tradition' and became less engaged in controversial issues.[109]

The activity of the artist is not limited to the production of discrete objects. Just as (conceptual artists emphasised) artworks do not exist in isolation, neither does the artist. Conscious decisions are taken regarding where and when to exhibit and

---

[107]Taylor, 'Interview with Hans Haacke', p. 40.
[108]Buchloh, 'Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas', p. 112.
[109]Schuldt, 'Hans Haacke; Marcel Broodthaers', p. 86.

alongside whom. Each artist has a different strategy for his own success and for the realisation of his ideas and beliefs. Whereas some, such as Haacke and Buren, state their objectives openly and politically, others, such as Broodthaers, employ more indirect and subversive means. The viewer and critic analyse and judge publicly. Situations arise which challenge the artist's principles; inconsistencies may be reflected by his behaviour in practice.

Due to his background in poetry, Broodthaers regarded his artistic career with a certain distance and objectivity. He consciously set out to become an artist and to succeed. However, his professed 'insincerity' and 'bad faith' in fact only served to indicate how sincere and committed he was. The integrity of the artist was of great concern to him, in particular the way in which the artist negotiates his career in relation to institutions. This was partly why Broodthaers set up his own fictive museum placing himself in control in the combined role of both director and producer of exhibitions.

Perhaps because of his background, Broodthaers more than some of his contemporaries, realised the ambiguous position of the visual object and how the context within which it exists largely, if not wholly, determines its meaning and status as art. Because of this ambiguity the artist has only limited control over the intended meaning of the work, whilst the museum determines whether or not a work will actually be seen. If (thanks to Duchamp) an object becomes an artwork when placed within the context of a museum, then the museum, or rather, those who control the museum, can also determine whether or not something is art. What appears initially to be increased freedom for the artist may also lead to a lack of control.

The aims of both the artist and the museum are crucial in establishing the relationship between the two. Both artistic and political aims need to be taken into account; the two are often closely interlinked with artistic decisions on the part of the artist reflecting political beliefs, and artistic limitations prescribed by the museum indicating political policy. Broodthaers was highly aware of the close relationship between art and politics but was concerned by the activities of an artist such as Beuys

who had political aspirations and who presented art as a means of achieving political change. Furthermore, he was concerned when the professed politics of the artist appear to be compromised by artistic ambition.

> What ends do you serve...? Why ? How? Miserable artists that we are!

Conclusion

This thesis has examined Marcel Broodthaers' reasons for becoming an artist and how he related to his artistic contemporaries. Having mixed in artistic circles in Brussels and written art criticism, Broodthaers decided that he wanted to comment on contemporary art 'from within'. His decision to become an artist was, therefore, somewhat unconventional, as it was made deliberately and for clearly conceived reasons. In the statement for his first exhibition he made clear how important it was for his work to be exhibited and to sell. According to these criteria, he made work which would help him to become successful. He wanted to show how it was possible to succeed by following fashions and playing the market. His artistic career was a 'voyage autour de la mode'.

Publicly, Broodthaers often appeared to distance himself from his years as a poet so that he could present himself more convincingly as an artist. However, this was also part of his strategy for success, and he never stopped being a poet. By analysing his poetry and early writings, I hope to have shown how they relate closely to his later works in the visual arts.

It is also important to realise that despite his proclaimed 'insincerity' and 'bad faith', Broodthaers was genuinely motivated by the desire to make visual works, wishing to develop further some of the questions initiated by Magritte concerning the relationship between words and images or objects. As a poet working in the visual arts, Broodthaers was interested in the relationship between different media and wished to break down some of the distinctions which separated them. He used the word as a visual element and the object as a 'zero word'. This disruption of convention extended to other media too, in that he made, for example, books as static films, films as series of static images, and paintings as prints.

Throughout this thesis I have also sought to uncover why Broodthaers is not better known today, although there are welcome signs of change. Clearly there is a

circle of artists, critics, curators and art historians who recognise the value of his work. However, considering the rapid success he achieved during his lifetime, it is perhaps surprising that he does not have the international reputation of some of his contemporaries with whom he exhibited in the late 1960s and '70s, for example, Andre, Buren, Weiner or Richter. There are a number of possible reasons.

Firstly, there are the reasons mentioned in the introduction, that although some of his works are shown relatively often in both public and private galleries, many were intended to be temporary, related to specific circumstances, and are difficult to exhibit without Broodthaers' participation. Hence, it is the discrete objects from the 1960s - the cooking pots with mussel shells, the furniture with eggshells - or the print editions which tend to be shown and by which he has become known. Although the museum sections are frequently cited, they and the *Décors* are too complex to be shown easily. However, I share Buren's concerns that Broodthaers' reputation has become inaccurate and misleading. Although unforseeable by Broodthaers, his works are often perceived as lightweight and decorative by viewers unfamiliar with the full range of his activities.

Lack of widespread recognition may also be due to the fact that Broodthaers' work intentionally evades categorisation. He is perceived as a marginal figure whose work does not fit comfortably within the styles of the period, although embodying many aspects of these styles. Although there were similarities with Pop and Conceptual Art, because of his strategic approach these similarities were always combined with an underlying critique or parody, which may, in part, be hindering his critical reputation. However, Broodthaers was not indifferent to the themes with which he worked, which operated on a number of complex levels. Furthermore, in contrast too with the rather more puritan tendencies of Conceptual Art, Broodthaers' work became increasingly more aesthetically attractive. Whereas his earliest works were clumsy and ugly, by the mid-'70s, whilst still relating to Conceptual concerns, their formal qualities had become more than a vehicle for these ideas. In this way there was always a distance between his work and that of his contemporaries.

Although many of the Conceptual artists also used words as visual elements in their work, they did so in very different ways, a distinction which can clearly be seen by a comparison with Weiner's use of language. Weiner sought to make clear that his phrases and sentences were not intended as poetry, claiming that, 'Poetry is about those untranslatable, unnameable reactions and emotions between human beings and recollections. The work I do is designed for translation. It's the exact opposite of what poetry is'.[1] By contrast, Broodthaers always used words as poetry, designed to operate on a number of different levels and, therefore, unable to translate easily. He enjoyed making puns, playing with the sounds and multiple meanings of words. Broodthaers felt that poetry, 'remains inexplicable, it disrupts the habits of a world in which people try to explain everything, in which they try to impose order on everything'.[2] He wished to question and disrupt conventional order and, therefore, used words as poetry as a means of doing so.

Viewers and critics may often be both intrigued and alienated by the enigmatic, confusing and contradictory nature of Broodthaers' work. Although initially his works appear simple and easy to understand, due to his use of clear, recognisable images, further analysis leads one into a web of interrelated themes which are difficult to unravel. Language difficulties further compound this problem. Analysis has often been superficial and has not attempted to delve beyond the initial aesthetic experience. Acording to Buchloh this has been the result of certain 'benevolent critics' who have wanted to deny an 'interdependence of aesthetic and political matters' which Broodthaers' work reveals.[3] However, Buchloh's analysis, while substantial, has its own limitations and may be seen as too partial and selective.

I have, therefore, tried to present the first fully detailed, balanced and rounded account of Broodthaers' work as a whole, drawing out the full range of his ideas. I hope to have shown how the many different references he made - in particular to 19th

---

[1]*Art Unlimited: Multiples of the 1960s and 1990s: From the Arts Council Collection*, London, South Bank Centre, 1994, n.p.
[2]Anna Haakens, 'Marcel Broodthaers', in *Aanwinsten 1989-1993 Acquisitions*, Eindhoven, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 1993, p. 14.
[3]Buchloh, 'Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas', p. 112.

century poetry, Structuralist philosophy, 20th century art and museum practices - interrelate, but also how the results were more than a sum of their parts; in addition to its referential nature, Broodthaers' work also developed its own distinctive qualities. Although, for example, many parallels exist with deconstruction, I have deliberately not tied Broodthaers' work too closely to Derrida's or to that of any other particular theorist. Instead, I have presented the full and complex range of ideas embedded in Broodthaers' thought, and indicated, where relevant, connections with the ideas of others.

In the thesis I argue that Broodthaers' method of working and the works he produced were inextricably part of the same output. Just as the many different themes interrelated, so the parts of each work are dependent upon their relationship with other parts of the work and with other works. In turn, the works depend upon their spatial and temporal circumstances. Geographical themes and poetic notions of the voyage add further dimensions. Just as meanings shift and relationships are not fixed, so the works are rearranged and re-presented. Conventional ordering systems - alphabets, maps, figures, museum structures - are challenged in order to subvert them. Bold statements are made and then contradicted. Context is all.

With regard to the period during which Broodthaers was working in the visual arts, his combination of the material with the poetic is particularly striking. At a time when his contemporaries were making works which asserted their material factualness, Broodthaers retained the right to another dimension. Although he claimed that he sought 'to defend a sense of reality rather than theory and dream', the resulting works combined all three.[4] Rather than examining reality by emphasising its banality, Broodthaers used indirect means, believing that through fiction 'it is possible to grasp reality as well as that which reality conceals'.[5]

---

[4]*Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Littéraire*, Open Letter, Brussels, 31 October 1969: 'Je tiens à défendre un sens de la réalité plutôt que la théorie et le rêve.'
[5]*Figures*, vol. II, p. 18, French trans. in David (ed.), p. 221: 'Je crois qu'un musée fictif comme le mien permet d'avoir prise sur la réalité comme sur ce qu'elle cache.'

Following a rather quiet period after his death in 1976, recent years have seen renewed interest in Broodthaers' work. The timing probably also helps to explain the development of his posthumous success. Whereas many of his contemporaries are still alive and exhibiting, Broodthaers' sudden absence meant not only that his career was rather short, but also that he was no longer able to participate in the arranging of the actual form his exhibitions took, a role which had been crucial to the nature of those exhibitions. Although there was a series of retrospectives of his work at prestigious venues in the early 1980s, at *Documenta 7* in 1982, and exhibitions at numerous private galleries, these failed to make a substantial impact on the international scene beyond the limited circles I mentioned earlier.

After the demise of Conceptual Art and the prominence of more conventional and less subtle forms of art in the 1980s, Broodthaers' work seemed particularly marginal and out of place. However, with the rise of Postmodernism, Broodthaers' interdisciplinary approach, together with his eclecticism, referencing and retrospection, make his works now appear almost ahead of their time - proto-Postmodernist, if you like. His wit and irony also relate very well to 1990s sensibilities. As a result, in recent years there have been large, touring retrospectives of his work - one in the United States, starting at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, in 1989 and one at the Jeu de Paume, Paris and the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid in 1991-92. At the same time there has been increased critical attention in journals, he is being included in more surveys of the period, and his saleroom prices have soared.[6]

Broodthaers' widow, Maria Gilissen, has been very active in co-curating exhibitions of his work, the catalogues of which are intended to combine together to form a *catalogue raisonné*. At present a large exhibition of his films, *Marcel Broodthaers. Cinéma*, is touring Europe. Catherine David, who curated the Jeu de Paume show, was director of *Documenta X* in 1997, at which she presented

---

[6]See Colin Gleadell, 'Salerooms: Broodthaers Flexes his Mussels', *Art Monthly*, September 1992, pp. 33-35. The prices in the catalogue to a sale at Christie's, London, July 1992 show that most of Broodthaers' works on this occasion sold for around three to five times the reserve price, with *Triomphe de Moule I (Moules Casserole)* (1965) selling for £176,000 on a reserve of only £15-20,000.

Broodthaers as one of the key retrospective figures. She showed the *Section Publicité*, originally made in 1972 and, therefore, again, outside the usual criteria of a *Documenta* exhibit, in a prime, central position.

By examining the broad concerns of Broodthaers' work I have inevitably been unable to examine any one area or work in great detail. I believe that by approaching his work from the general to the specific enables the researcher to understand how the different areas interrelate. However, there are still areas of his work which require detailed analysis, namely his poetry, early writings and his paintings. Whereas Chapter 6 has dealt with particular events, further research would also be valuable in analysing other instances which demonstrate the varying positions of Broodthaers and his contemporaries in certain circumstances.

Broodthaers' work is, therefore, valued as important for the late 1990s and seen as relevant to contemporary art. Although he only made visual works for a short period of time, his output was considerable. His questioning and discursive method provides few answers but initiates an openness and awareness in the viewer. His wit and subtleness demonstrate how difficult questions can be approached with a lightness of touch. His sense of morality informs his activities without being didactic. With relatively little analysis of his work, it appears that his significance is becoming recognised. This thesis adds to the growing interest in Broodthaers' work.

Appendix

Open Letter to Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf, 28 September 1972

PARIS DUSSELDORF AMSTERDAM

at the occasion of the opening of the exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum on Oct. 5, 1972, in which I am taking part among the Düsseldorf artists. - (Marcel Broodthaers)

Düsseldorf, 28th Sept 72

Dear Beuys,
It's been a long time that I sent you an open letter (June 1968). Today I should like to write to you again. This time, however, I can do without that device. Too often these open letters are spoilt by polemics or made obsolete by changing circumstances.

In a dilapidated Cologne slum tenement which was itself difficult to discover I found a letter. I deciphered it - dust and rain have wiped out some words here, entire phrases there.
As the paper on which I could barely read Jacques Offenbach's signature had fallen victim to the chemical erosion caused by these polutants it was now so frail I deemed it wise to copy the letter.
Yet I kept to the hand-written form to show upon the written honour of my handwriting that this letter is truly genuine.

M.B.

Cologne,.....

Dear Wagner,

I just put the finishing touches to the "Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein". How far I am from Tristan and Isolde! And know that I shall move even farther. . . . . .- - - - -. . . . . .
. . . . . *(music notes)*. . . . . .and. . . . . .
The one and the other . . . . What posterity is going to say about it? . . . . . Maybe. . . . . doubts are looming large. . . . . Well, ... _ _ ___ __
___ __ ___ ____ _____ ___ _____
1848 _____ _____ in 1849. Your essay "Art and Revolution. . . . . .discuss . . . . . magic . . . . . .politics. . . . . ..which you must surely be aware of. The politics of magic? of beauty or of ugliness?....Messiah. In this struggle against the degeneration of art the musical drama would thus be the only form capable of uniting all the arts. I can hardly go along with that contention of yours, and at my rate I wish to register my disagreement if you allow a definition of art to include one of politics. . . . . and. . . . . magic. . . . . .
My dear Wagner, our relations have become strained. I dare say this will be the last mesage I am sending you. (note: from the letter found in Cologne it transpires that Jacques Offenbach in the end did not send it off)

__ ___ _____ _____ _____ _
King Louis II had Hans H. sent away his castles.
His Majesty prefers you to this specialist of compositions for the flute.
I can understand - if it is a matter of artistic choice. But is not the enthusiasm that this Majesty displays for you motivated by a political choice as well? I hope this question disturbs you as much as it does me. What ends do you serve, Wagner? Why? How?
Miserable artists that we are!

Vive la Musique.

Jacques Offenbach

P.S. A copy of the octavo volumes of Stendhal's

Le Rouge et Le Noir (Paris. Levavasseur. 1830)
with notes in Offenbach's hand lay also in
the rubble on the floor.
No chair, no table. That was all there was
in that attic. These relics I preserve
with care. M.B.

Bibliography

Manuscript Sources

Brussels:

Broodthaers archive, curated by Maria Gilissen, rue Henri Wafelaerts, 31, 1060 Brussels, access by arrangement

Typescript, 2 November 1971 (1. Mettre en défaut toute idéologie...)

Unfinished poem ('L'objet du monde est absent - dit-il...)

Mariën archive, Centre International D'Etudes Poétiques, Archives et Musée de la Literature, Bibliothèque Royale

'Pauvre Belgique...', signed by "L'Eternel Brûlot", sent to Mariën, 31 December 1991

Mariën, Marcel, 'La mauvaise compagnie', letter to Isy Brachot III, 11 January 1993, on the occasion of *René Magritte et la pensée*, Brussels, Galerie Isy Brachot

London:

Barbara Reise archive, The Tate Gallery

Letter to Betsy Baker, editor of *Art in America*, 31 October 1974

Letter from Nicholas Serota to Barbara Reise, 1974

Printed Sources

Primary Sources

'L'Ile sonnante', *Le Ciel Bleu*, Bruxelles, no. 7 (5 April 1945)

'Le rêve d'un jeune homme malheureux ou l'anarchiste anodin' (The Dream of an Unhappy Youth, or the Anodyne Anarchist), *Le Salut Public* (Brussels), no. 3 (1945), p. 4

'Le ballon ce n'est pas fait pour se tuer!', *Germinal*, Brussels (29 September 1957), pp. 1 & 6

'Lui écrire une lettre (hommage à Marcel Havrenne)', *Phantomas*, no. 9 (Autumn 1957), p. 7

Mon livre d'ogre, Ostend, Edition à l'Enseigne de l'Arquabuse du Silence, 1957

'Un Autre Monde', Brussels, *Le Patriote illustré*, vol. 74, no. 10 (9 March 1958), p. 389

'A propos de Julien Coulommier', 1957, extracts published in the press release for *Photographies de Julien Coulommier*, Brussels, Galerie Aujourd'hui, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 4-18 October 1958

'Le Jardin de la prison', Brussels, *Edda*, no. 2 (March 1959)

'Climat', *Phantomas*, no. 15-16 (January 1960), p. 93

Minuit, Brussels, George Houyoux, 1960

'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 931 (7 April 1961), p. 12

'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 933 (21 April 1961), p. 13

'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 941 (16 June 1961), p. 10

'Un poète en voyage...à Londres', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 942 (23 June 1961), p. 11

La Bête Noire, Brussels, published by the author, 1961

'A la Galerie d'Aujourd'hui. Un précurseur: LIVINUS', Brussels, *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, no. 959 (5 January 1962), p. 5

'Le mur de Fernando Lerin', Brussels, *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, no. 974 (20 April 1962), p. 8

'Un tombeau', Brussels, *Architecture* (May-June 1963), p. 175

'Comme un sou neuf', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 1025 (17 October 1963), p. 9

'Gare au Défi! Le Pop Art, Jim Dine et l'influence de René Magritte', *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 1029 (14 November 1963), p. 9

Pense-Bête, Brussels, published by the author, 1963-64

'A la Galerie d'Aujourd'hui. Marcel Broodthaers par Marcel Broodthaers', Brussels, *Journal des Beaux-Arts*, no. 1086 (1 April 1965), p. 5

Objets de Broodthaers/Voorwerpen van Broodthaers, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Galerie Aujourd'hui, 2-24 April 1965

'Evolution ou l'Œuf film', *Phantomas* (December 1965), pp. 111-113

'Comme du beurre dans un sandwich', *Phantomas* (51-66 December 1965), pp. 295-296

'Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers', by Jean-Michel Vlaeminckx, *Degré Zero*, Brussels, no. 1 (1965) n.p.

Phantomas, Brussels, special number, vol. 62 (February 1966)

Moules, Œufs, Frites, Pots, Charbon, Antwerp, Wide White Space, 26 May-26 June 1966

Je retourne à la matière. Je retrouve la tradition des primitifs. Peinture à l'Œuf. Peinture à l'Œuf, Brussels, Galerie Cogeime, 27 September-9 October 1966

'Interview Imaginaire de René Magritte', *Journal des Arts Plastiques*, Brussels, no. 30 (January 1967), p. 4

'Mon cher Pierre', *Marcel Broodt(h)aers / Court-circuit*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 13-25 April 1967, n.p.

'Interview' (interview imaginaire de Marcel Lecomte), *Phantomas*, Brussels, nos. 68-72 (July 1967), p. 84

'Interview de Marcel Broodthaers', Brussels, *Trépied*, no. 2 (February 1968), pp. 4-5

Le Corbeau et le Renard, Antwerp, Wide White Space, 7-24 March 1968

Open letter, Brussels, April 1968 to the Swiss-American journal *Art International*, published in the catalogue to the exhibition *Lignano Biennale 1*, Lignano, 1968

Open Letter, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 7 June 1968

Open Letter, Kassel, 27 June 1968

'Mon cher Beuys', Brussels, 14 July 1968

Open Letter, Cabinet des Ministres de la Culture, Ostende, 7 September 1968

Open Letter, Paris, 29 November 1968

'Chers amis', Brussels, 10 May 1969

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Littéraire, Open Letter, Brussels, 31 October 1969

'A MTL ou à BCD', Brussels, February 1970, reprinted in *Belgische Kunst 1969-1977*, Ooidonk, 1978, p. 97

'Note sur les Intentions', *L'exposition à la Galerie, MTL-DTH* , Brussels, Galerie MTL, 13 March-10 April 1970

Entry in *18 Paris IV 70*, Paris, 66 rue Mouffetard, 18 April-May 1970, curated by Michel Claura and Seth Siegelaub, pp. 54-59

Advertisment for van Laack shirts, in *Der Spiegel*, Hamburg (22 March 1971), p. 166

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Financière, Cologne, Kunstmarkt, 8-13 November 1971

Entry in *Five Belgian Artists: Beekman, Broodthaers, Landuyt, Roquet, Van Hecke*, Brighton, Gardner Centre Gallery, 1971

Interview with Johannes Cladders, 28 January 1972, pub. in *INK-Dokumentation 4*, Zurich, 1979, p. 32, initially intended for the catalogue of *Documenta 5*; the text was eventually inserted on loose, photocopied sheets

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures, Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle, 16 May-9 July 1972

'Auszug aus einem Gespräch mit Marcel Broodthaers', (extracts of an interview with Jürgen Harten and Katharina Schmidt), carried out in French and German in May 1972, in the press folder for *Section des Figures*

'Interview with Marcel Broodthaers and Georges Adé', conducted beside the *Section Publicité*, 1972, for a documentary film on *Documenta 5*, directed by Jef Cormelis for Belgian Radio and Television

Text written to accompany *Musée-Museum*, 1972

'Projekt für den Kaufvertrag', 'Der Nullpunkt', *Heute Kunst,* Milan, no. 1 (April 1973), pp. 20-23

Entry in *Bilder-Objekte-Filme-Konzepte*, Munich, Städtische Galerie in Lenbachhaus, 3 April-13 May 1973

Magie. Art et Politique, Paris, Multiplicata, 1973

Broodthaers, Harten, Schuldt, 'Die Kunst bleibt zu einer Hoffnung gezwungen', *Kunstjahrbuch*, Hannover, vol. 3 (1973), pp. 63-68

'Interview with Marcel Broodthaers on his film *Analysis of a painting*', Michael Oppitz and B. H. D. Buchloh, *Interfunctionen*, Cologne, no. 11 (November 1973)

'Changement de Propriete?', *Interfunktionen*, Cologne, no. 10 (1973), pp. 76-79 and pp. 160-162

'*Racisme végétal. La Séance. Film de Marcel Broodthaers*', *Interfunktionen*, Cologne, no. 11 (1974), cover and pp. 60-72

'Feuilletons' and *Studio International*, vol. 187, no. 966 (May 1974), cover and pp. 240-241

Reply card to Lothar Baumgarten & Michael Oppitz, *T'E - NE - T'E - eine mythologische Vorführung*, Düsseldorf, dated 20 May 1974

Kunst bleibt Kunst. Projekt '74 Köln. Aspekte internationaler kunst am Anfang der 70er Jahre, Cologne, Kunsthalle, 6 July-8 September 1974, p. 151

'Dorf bleibt Dorf', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 5 (September 1974), p. 15

'Marcel Broodthaers. Prix 'Robert Giron' 1974', *+-0*, Brussels, no. 5 (September 1974), pp. 4-6

'Dix mille francs de récompense', based on an interview with Irmeline Lebeer, *Catalogue-Catalogus*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 27 September-3 November 1974, pp. 64-68

Eloge du Sujet, Basle, Kunstmuseum, 5 October-3 November 1974

'Musée Wiertz', *Studio International*, vol. 188, no. 970 (October 1974), p. 114

'A Book by Marcel Broodthaers', *Studio International*, vol. 189, no. 974 (March/April 1975), pp. 107 and 108-115

'To be a straight thinker or not to be. To be blind.', pub. in *Le Privilège de l'Art*, Oxford, Museum of Modern Art, 26 April-1 June 1975

L'Angélus de Daumier, Paris, Centre national d'art contemporain, 2 October-10 November 1975, vols. I-II

'C'est l'Angélus qui sonne', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 12 (February 1976), pp. 18-19

Text in catalogue to *Documenta 7*, vol. I, 19 June-28 September 1982, p. 27

Posthumous Publications on Broodthaers

Marcel Broodthaers, London, The Tate Gallery, 16 April-26 May 1980

Marcel Broodthaers, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, 3 October-5 November 1980

Marcel Broodthaers, Cologne, Museum Ludwig, 4 October-26 November 1980

Marcel Broodthaers, Bern, Kunsthalle, 30 January-14 March 1982, n.p.

Marcel Broodthaers: Catalogue des Livres, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, New York, Marian Goodman Gallery and Paris, Galerie Gillespie, Laage and Salomon, 1982

Marcel Broodthaers Œuvres Majeures provenant d'une collection privée à Anvers, Brussels, Yves Gevaert, 1984

Marcel Broodthaers, Cologne, Galerie Michael Werner, 24 April-30 May 1986

Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles Section Financière (Concernant la vente d'un kilo d'or fin en lingot), Düsseldorf, Galerie Konrad Fischer, 16 May-10 June 1987, n.p.

Statues de Bruxelles, with Julien Coulommier, Brussels, Editions des Amis du Musée d'Ixelles, 1987, originally conceived in 1957

Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1988, originally published as *October*, no. 42 (Fall, 1987)

Marcel Broodthaers: Het Volledig Grafisch Werk en de Boeken, Knokke-Duinbergen, Galerie Jos Jamar, 1989

Marcel Broodthaers, Marge Goldwater & Michael Compton (eds.), Minneapolis, Walker Art Center & New York, Rizzoli, 1989

Marcel Broodthaers L'Invitation au voyage, Amsterdam, Exposorium Vrije Universiteit, September-October 1990

Marcel Broodthaers L'œuvre graphique essais, Geneva, Centre Genevois de Gravure Contemporaine, 1991

Marcel Broodthaers, Catherine David (ed.), Paris, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, 17 December 1991-1 March 1992

Broodthaers conférences et colloques, Paris, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, 1992

Marcel Broodthaers, Slide Projections, Eindhoven, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 13 September 1992-4 July 1993

Marcel Broodthaers: The complete prints and editions, London, The South Bank Centre and the ICA, 4 November-6 December 1992

Marcel Broodthaers: L'ensemble des plaques, Frechen-Bachem, Cologne, Galerie Jule Kewenig, 10 November 1992-30 January 1993

Marcel Broodthaers: Interviews & Dialoge 1946-1976, Cologne, Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994

Marcel Broodthaers, Wilfried Dickhoff (ed.), Cologne, Tinaia 9 Box I, 1994

Marcel Broodthaers: Correspondances, Zürich, Galerie Hauser & Wirth, 14 June-16 September 1995 and New York, Gallery David Zwirner, 21 October-25 November 1995

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Publicité, New York, Marian Goodman Gallery, 6 October-25 November 1995

Marcel Broodthaers: Katalog der Editionen Graphik und Bücher, Hannover, Sprengel Museum, Göppingen, Städtische Galerie, & Cantz, 1996

Marcel Broodthaers. Cinéma., Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 17 April-29 June 1997

Marcel Broodthaers, En lisant la Lorelei, Geneva, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, 25 November 1997-15 February 1998

Secondary Sources

Actualité d'un bilan, Paris, Galerie Yvon Lambert, 29 October-5 December 1972

Ades, Dawn, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, London, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978

Adriani, Götz, Winfried Konnertz & Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works* (1973), trans. Patricia Letch, New York, Woodbury & London, Barron's, 1979

Alden, Todd, 'Marcel Broodthaers: On the Tautology of Art and Merchandise', *The Print Collector's Newsletter* (March/April 1992), pp. 5-8

Allen, Christopher, 'Melancholy Europe', *Art Monthly* (March 1989), pp. 6-8

Ameline, Jean-Paul, *Les Nouveaux Réalistes*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1992

Amsterdam, Paris, Düsseldorf, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1972

Aragon, Louis & Jean Cocteau, *Conversations on the Dresden Gallery* (1957), trans. Francis Scarfe, New York, Holmes & Meier, 1982

Archer, Michael, 'Hans Haacke on the Inside', *Studio International* (April 1984), p. 42

L'Art en Belgique, Flandre et Wallonie au XXe siècle: Un Point de Vue, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris & Lebeer-Hossmann, 13 Dec 1990-10 March 1991

'L'Art et les Mots', *Artstudio*, no. 15 (Winter 1989)

'Autour du Titre d'une exposition', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 5 (September 1974), p. 17

Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space* (1958), trans. Maria Jolas, New York, Orion Press, 1964

Balakian, Anna, *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1986

Barker, Barry, 'Décor. A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers. Préparatifs pour un film.', in *Marcel Broodthaers*, Catherine David (ed.), Paris, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, 17 December 1991-1 March 1992, pp. 274-275

Barthes, Roland, 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure...' (1978), trans. Richard Howard in *The Rustle of Language*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989

- , *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), trans. Annette Lavers & Colin Smith, New York, Hill & Wang, 1967

Bataille, George, 'Les Pieds Nickelés', *Documents*, Paris, no. 4 (1930), pp. 215-216

- , *Œuvres complètes*, Gallimard, 1970

Battino, Freddy & Luca Palazzoli, *Piero Manzoni Catalogue Raisonné*, Milan, Edizioni di Vanni Scheiwiller, 1991

Baudelaire, Charles, *Charles Baudelaire Œuvres complètes*, vols. I-II, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1975

- , *Charles Baudelaire Œuvres complètes*, vols. I-II, trans. Francis Scarfe, London, Anvil Editions, 1986

Baudrillard, Jean, 'The System of Collecting', in John Elsner & Roger Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting*, London, Reaktion Books, 1994, pp. 7-24

Baudson, Michel & Yves Gevaert, 'Aspects of the Avant-Garde in Belgium', *Studio International*, vol. 188, no. 970 (October 1974), pp. 142-143

Baumgarten, Lothar & Michael Oppitz, *T'E - NE - T'E - eine mythologische Vorführung*, Düsseldorf, Gallery Konrad Fischer, from 22 May 1974

Bekkers, Ludo, 'Gesprek met Marcel Broodthaers', *Museumjournaal*, Amsterdam, series 15, no. 2 (April 1970), pp. 66-71, extracts from an interview in French, 13 December 1969

The Belgian Contribution to Surrealism, Edinburgh International Festival, Royal Scottish Academy, 21 August-19 September 1971

Belgique, une nouvelle génération, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain des Pays de la Loire, 11 August-30 September 1990

Bell, Linda A., *Sartre's Ethics of Authenticity*, Tascaloosa & London, The University of Alabama Press, 1989

Benjamin, Walter, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1955), in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, London, Fontana, 1973

Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, London, Routledge, 1994

Birtwistle, Graham, 'Broodthaers before Broodthaers. An object from the Cobra period', *Jong Holland*, vol. 7, pt. 1 (1991), p. 61

Blampain , Daniel (ed.), *Le Surréalisme Belge*, Brussels, Editions Labor, 1986

Blanchot, Maurice, 'Mallarmé and Literary Space', in *The Siren's Song: Selected Essays*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch, Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1982, pp. 110-120

Blotkamp, Carel, Marjon van Caspel, Frans Haks, Frank van der Schoor, Jan van Toorn, Martin Visser (eds.), *Museum in motion? Het museum voor moderne kunst ter discussie. Museum in Beweging. The modern art museum at issue.*, 's-Gravenhage, Government Publishing Office, 1979

Bonk, Ecke, *Marcel Duchamp: The Portable Museum: The Making of the Boîte-en-valise de ou par Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Selavy.*, trans. David Britt, London, Thames & Hudson, 1989

Borges, Jorge Luis, 'Of Exactitude in Science' (1933-34), trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni, in *A Universal History of Infamy*, London, Penguin, 1975

Bowman, Russell, 'Words and Images: A Persistent Paradox', *Art Journal* (Winter 1985), pp. 335-343

Brand, Jan, Nicolette Gast, Robert-Jan Muller (eds.), *De Woorden en de Beeelden (Tekst en beeld in de kunst van de twintigste eeuw) The Words and the Images (Text and image in the art of the twentieth century)*, Utrecht, Centraal Museum, 1991

Breton, André, *Nadja* (1928), trans. Richard Howard, New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1960

- , *Surrealism and Painting* (1965), trans. Simon Watson Taylor, London, Macdonald, 1972

- , *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (1962), trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1969

- , *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, Franklin Rosemont (ed.), London, Pluto Press, 1978

- , *André Breton: La beauté convulsive*, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne Centre Georges Pompidou, 25 April-26 August 1991

Butor, Michel, *Les Mots dans la Peinture*, Geneva, Skira, 1965

Buchloh, Benjamin H. D., 'Formalism and Historicity - changing concepts in American and European Art since 1945', in *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art*, Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 8 October-27 November 1977

- , 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol: Preliminary Notes for a Critique', *Artforum*, vol. 18 (January 1980), pp. 37-38

- , 'Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde', *Artforum* (May 1980)

- , 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum* , vol. 21 (September 1982), pp. 43-56

- , 'Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas', *October* (Fall 1982), pp. 105-126

- , 'The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers', pp. 39-56, in A. A. Bronson & Peggy Gale (eds.), *Museums by Artists*, Toronto, Art Metropole, 1983

- , 'The Posters of Lawrence Weiner', in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (ed.), *Lawrence Weiner. Posters November 1965-April 1986*, Halifax, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design & Toronto, Art Metropole, 1986

- , 'Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason', *Art in America* (February 1988), p. 98

- , 'Contemplating Publicity: Marcel Broodthaers' Section Publicité, in *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Publicité*, New York, Marian Goodman Gallery, 6 October-25 November 1995, pp. 87-99

Buchloh, Rosalind Krauss & Annette Michelson, 'Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim', *October*, no. 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 3-31

Buren, Daniel, 'The Function of the Museum' (1970), Oxford, Museum of Modern Art, 31 March-15 April 1973 and *Artforum*, vol. XII, no. 1 (September 1973), p. 68

- , 'The Function of the Studio' (1971), *October*, vol. 10 (Fall 1979), p. 51

Calas, Nicholas, 'Marcel Broodthaers' Throw of the Dice', *Artforum*, vol. XIV, no. 9 (May 1976), p. 196

Calas, Nicolas & Elena, 'La Comédie Humaine', in *Marcel Broodthaers*, Paris, Galerie Isy Brachot, 3 November 1982-8 January 1983

Carrouges, Michel, *André Breton et les données fondamentales du Surréalisme*, Paris, 1950

Catalogue of the Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art, London, 1981

Celant, Germano, *Piero Manzoni*, London, The Serpentine Gallery, 28 February-26 April 1998

Chénieux-Gendron, Jacqueline, *Surrealism*, trans. Vivian Folkenflik, New York, Columbia University Press, 1990

Cladders, Johannes, 'The Museum as the Place of Art', in *The Avant-Garde in Europe 1955-70: The Collection of the Städtisches Museum in Mönchengladbach*, Edinburgh, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 1981

Claura, Michel, 'Actualité d'un bilan', *Flash Art*, no. 38 (Janaury 1973), p. 14

Cohn, Marjorie B., 'Introduction: In Pursuit of Perfection', in Debra Edelstein (ed.), *Ingres*, Louisville, Kentucky, The J. B. Speed Art Museum, 1983

Collier, Peter, 'Nineteenth-Century Paris', in Edward Timms & David Kelley (eds.), *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 25-44

Compton, Michael, Introduction in *A Programme of Films by Marcel Broodthaers*, London, The Tate Gallery, 9-18 February 1977

- , 'Marcel Broodthaers', in *Marcel Broodthaers*, London, The Tate Gallery, 16 April-26 May 1980

Les Couleurs de l'Argent, Paris, Musée de la Poste, 19 November 1991-1 February 1992

Coven, Jeffrey, *Baudelaire's Voyages: The Poet and His Painters*, New York, Heckscher Museum, 1993

Cowling, Elizabeth, *The Magic Mirror: Dada and Surrealism from a private collection*, Edinburgh, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 30 July-4 September 1988

Crimp, Douglas, *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1993

Crow, Thomas, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Age of Dissent 1955-69*, London, Everyman Art Library, 1996

Cueff, Alain, 'Broodthaers/Beuys: la poète/le chaman', *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, vol. 97 (January 1992), pp. 62-70

Culler, Jonathan, *Barthes*, London, Fontana, 1983

Danto, Ginger, 'Marcel Broodthaers', *ARTNews* , vol. 91 (March 1992), pp. 141-142

David, Catherine, Jean-François Chevrier & Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'The Political Potential of Art', in *Politics-Poetics documenta X - The Book*, Ostfildern, Cantz, 1997

Decter, Joshua, 'De-coding the Museum', *Flash Art*, no. 155 (November-December 1990), pp. 140-142

De Decker, Anny, 'Over de Wide White Space Gallery', *Museumjournaal*, Amsterdam, series 16, no. 5 (November 1971), pp. 261-266

- , 'Panamarenko's Affiliation to Marcel Broodthaers and Joseph Beuys', in *Panamarenko: een overzicht 1965-1985*, Antwerp, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, 17 June-23 July 1989

De Duve, Thierry (ed.), *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1991

De Duve, Thierry, *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991

- , 'Ceci ne serait pas ne pipe (Magritte et Broodthaers)', in *Magritte au compagnie. Du bon usage de l'irrévérence*, Brussels, Centre Culturel de Botanique, May-August 1997, pp. 31-39

De Ferrari, Gabriella, 'Low Country, High Art', *Connoisseur*, vol. 222 (January 1992), pp. 56-63

Derrida, Jacques, *Dissemination* (1972), trans. Barbara Johnson, London, The Althone Press, 1981

- , 'Signature Event Context' (1972), trans. Alan Bass, in *Margins of Philosophy*, Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1982, pp. 307-330

- , *The Truth in Painting* (1978), trans. Geoff Bennington & Ian McLeod, University of Chicago Press, 1987

De Vree, Freddy, *Marcel Broodthaers: Œuvres 1963-1975*, Brussels, Galerie Isy Brachot, 1990

Dypréau, Jean, 'Preface' in *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc...*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 5 February-1 March 1965

- , 'Le Corbeau et le Renard', in *Marcel Broodt(h)aers / Court-circuit*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 13-25 April 1967

- , Untitled Text in *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, Antwerp, Wide White Space, 7-24 March 1968

- , 'Du Pop-art à l'environnement' in *La Métamorphose de l'objet, Art et Anti-art 1910-1970/Metamorfose van het Objekt, Kunst en Anti-Kunst 1910-1970*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 22 April-6 June 1970

Elderfield, John, *Kurt Schwitters*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1985

Els Límits del Museu, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 15 March-4 June 1995

Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, 8 October-27 November 1977

Evans, Margery A., *Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at the Crossroads*, Cambridge University Press, 1993

Field, Richard S., *Richard Hamilton, Image and Process: studies, stage and final proofs from the graphic works 1952-82*, Stuttgart, Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1983

Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things* (1966), trans. London, Tavistock, 1970

- , *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1968), trans. James Harkness, *This is not a pipe*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1983

Freeman, Judi & Welchman, John C., *The Dada & Surrealist Word-Image*, Los Angeles, County Museum of Art & Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1989

Freud, Sigmund, 'A Note upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"', 1924, pub. in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, London, The Hogarth Press, 1961, pp. 225-232

Gablik, Suzi, *Magritte*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1971

Gachnang, Johannes, 'Chaos, Wahnsinn', in the exh. cat., *Chaos, Wahnsinn: Permutationen der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Krems, Kunsthalle, 20 July-27 October 1996

Germer, Stefan, 'Haacke, Broodthaers, Beuys', *October*, vol. 45 (Summer 1988), p. 74

Gildemyn, Marie-Pascale, 'Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers', *+-0*, Brussels, vol. 47 (1987), pp. 20-33

- , 'Marcel Broodthaers and Irony', in *Shikaku no uragawa-ten = Irony by Vision: René Magritte, Marcel Broodthaers, Panamarenko, Jan Fabré: an exhibition curated by Jan Hoet*, Tokyo, Watari-um, 29 May-15 Sept 1991

Gillemon, Danièle, 'De la casserole au Jeu de Paume, la moule transfigurée', *Le Soir* (20 December 1991), p. 10

Gilmour, Pat, 'The Prints of Marcel Broodthaers', *The Print Collector's Newsletter* (May-June 1976), pp. 44-47

Gleadell, Colin, 'Salerooms: Broodthaers Flexes his Mussels', *Art Monthly* (September 1992), pp. 33-35

Godfrey, Tony, *Conceptual Art*, London, Phaidon, 1998

Goldmann, Lucien, 'Les Chats de Baudelaire' (1969), in *Structures mentales et création culturelle*, Paris, Anthropos, 1970, pp. 347-352

Goldsmith, Ann and Anne Rorimer (eds.), *Reconsidering the object of art 1965-1975*, Los Angeles, Museum of Modern Art & Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1995

Gombrich, E. H., 'Mirror and Map', in *The Image and the Eye. Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, London, Phaidon, 1982

- , 'Image and word in twentieth-century art', *Word & Image*, vol. I, no. 3 (July-September 1985), pp. 213-241

'Gurgles around the Guggenheim', statements by Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Thomas M. Messer and Diane Waldman, *Studio International*, vol. 181, no. 934 (June 1971), pp. 246-250

Haacke, Hans, *Hans Haacke*, London, The Tate Gallery, 1984

- , *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, Brian Wallis (ed.), New York, The New Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1986

Hahn, Otto, 'Le Père du Pop Art', *L'Express*, Paris (30 November-6 December 1964), pp. 58-60

- , Untitled Text in *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, Antwerp, Wide White Space, 7-24 March 1968

Hahn, Otto & Stéphane Rona, 'Au C.N.A.C. à Paris. Marcel Broodthaers', *+-0*, Brussels, no. 11 (November 1975), p. 7

Hamilton, Richard, *Eloge du désespoir* (1974) in *Trichromatic Flower-Piece Progressives* London, Petersburg Press, 1973-74

, 'Roll of Honour', published in *Art Monthly*, vol. 1 (October 1976)

Hammacher, A. M., *Magritte*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1973

Hammond, Pamela, 'Triumph of the Mussels', *ARTNews*, vol. 88 (October 1989), p. 217

Harrison, Charles, 'Against Precedents', in *When Attitudes Become Form (Works - Concepts - Processes - Situations - Information)*, Bern, Kunsthalle, 22 March-27 April 1969 & London, ICA, 28 September-27 October 1969

Harrison, Charles & Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900-1990 An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992

Harten, Jürgen, '*Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute*, Düsseldorf 1972', in Bernd Klüser & Katharina Hegewisch (eds.), *Die Kunst der Ausstellung*, Frankfurt & Leipzig, Insel, 1995

Hiller, Susan, *Susan Hiller*, Liverpool, Tate Gallery, 20 January-17 March 1996

Hopps, Walter, Ulf Linde & Arturo Schwarz, *Marcel Duchamp: Ready-mades, etc. (1913-1964)*, Paris, Le Terrain Vague, 1964

Hulten, Pontus, Foreword in *L'Angélus de Daumier*, Paris, Centre national d'art contemporain, 2 October-10 November 1975, vol. II

- , *The Surrealists Look at Art*, New York, Lapis Press, 1990

Hulten, Pontus, (ed.), *Marcel Duchamp*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1993

Impey, Oliver & Arthur MacGregor (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985

Influenced by the Victorians?, Gstaad, Galerie Saqqârah, January 1992

L'ivresse du réel: l'objet dans l'art du XXe siècle, Nîmes, Musée d'Art contemporain, 7 May-29 August 1993

Johns, Jasper, *Jasper Johns: The Sculptures*, Leeds, The Henry Moore Institute, 1996

Joseph Beuys Marcel Broodthaers Robert Rauschenberg Andy Warhol, Paris, Galerie Isy Brachot, 12 January-11 March 1989

Judowitz, Dalia, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995

Kaufmann, Vincent, 'Angels of Purity', *October*, vol. 79, special issue on Guy Debord and the *Internationale situationniste* (Winter 1997)

Ketelsen, Thomas, 'Jouer son dernier atout (a. fig.)', in *Die Magische Dose*, Stuttgart, Edition Cantz, 1992

Köln Sammelt: Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Kölner Privatbesitz, Cologne, Museum Ludwig, 5 November-11 December 1988

Kosuth, Joseph, *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991

Künstler Bücher I: Baldessari, Broodthaers, Buren, Gilbert & George, LeWitt, Long, Ruscha, Weiner, Krefeld, Kunstmuseum, 1993

Levin, Kim, 'Farewell to Modernism', *Arts Magazine* (October 1979), pp. 90-93, quoted in Jessica Prinz, *Art Discourse/Discourse in Art,* New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1993

- , 'Marcel Broodthaers and the Insincere Object', *Arts Magazine*, vol. 54/10 (June 1980), pp. 106-107

Lewis, Helena, *The Politics of Surrealism*, New York, Paragon, 1988

Lippard, Lucy, *Pop Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1966

- , *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, New York, Praeger, 1973

Little, Robert, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, London, The Athlone Press, 1976

Livingstone, Marco (ed.), *Pop Art: An International Perspective*, London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1991

Lloyd, Jill, 'German Sculpture since Beuys', *Art International*, vol. 6 (Spring 1989), pp. 8-16

Macaire, Alain, 'Cologne Projekt '74', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 5 (September 1974), pp. 10-14

Macey, David, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, London, Hutchinson, 1993

Madoff, Steven Henry (ed.), *Pop Art: A Critical History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997

Magritte, René, 'Les mots et les images', *La Révolution Surréaliste*, Paris, no. 12 (15 December 1929)

- , *Ecrits complets*, Paris, Flammarion, 1971

- , *La destination: lettres à Marcel Mariën 1937-62*, Brussels, Les Levrès Nues, 1977

Mallarmé, Stéphane, *Stéphane Mallarmé Œuvres complètes*, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1945

- , *Stéphane Mallarmé Selected Poetry and Prose*, Caws, Mary Ann (ed. & transl.), New York, New Directions, 1982

Malraux, André, 'Museum Without Walls' (1949), in *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978

Manzoni, Piero, *Piero Manzoni*, Brussels, Galerie des Beaux-Arts, November-December 1987

- , *Piero Manzoni*, Madrid, Fundación 'la Caixa', 9 October-15 December 1991

Marcadé, Bernard, 'Pauvre B.', *Art Studio*, vol. 18 (Autumn 1990), pp. 20-31

- , 'Dans le Moule Belge', *Beaux Arts Magazine*, vol. 85 (December 1990), pp. 92-99

Mariën, Marcel, (ed.), *La Destination: lettres à Marcel Mariën (1937-1962)*, Brussels, Les Lèvres Nues, 1977

Mariën, Marcel, *L'activité surréaliste en Belgique (1924-1950)*, Brussels, Lebeer Hossmann, 1979

- , *Le Radeau de la mémoire: Souvenirs détérminés*, Brussels, Le Pré-aux-Clercs, 1983

- , *Le Jumeau d'Amérique*, Brussels, Les Lèvres Nues, 1983

McBride, William L., *Sartre's Political Theory*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1991

McDonough, Thomas F., 'Situationist Space', *October*, vol. 67 (Winter 1994), pp. 59-77

McEvilley, Thomas, 'Another Alphabet', *Artforum*, vol. 28 (November 1989), pp. 106-115

McWilliams, Martha, 'The way to Docu-drama', *New Art Examiner* (20 October 1992), pp. 12-15

Meltzer, Françoise, *Hot Property: The Stakes and Claims of Literary Originality*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994

Mesens, E. L. T., *Alphabet Sourd Aveugle*, with a preface by Paul Eluard, Brussels, Editions Nicolas Flamel, 1936

Meuris, Jacques, 'Broodthaers-en-Allemagne', *Clés pour les Arts*, vol. 21 (May 1972), p. 15

Michaud, Eric, 'The Ends of Art according to Beuys', trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October*, vol. 45 (Summer 1988), pp. 38-46

Morphet, Richard, 'Richard Hamilton: The Longer View', pp. 11-26 in *Richard Hamilton*, London, The Tate Gallery, 17 June-6 September 1992

Morris, L., 'The Museum of Modern Art in Oxford 1965-1975', *Studio International*, no. 978, vol. 190 (November-December 1975), pp. 238-242

Murat, Laure, 'Histoires Belges', *Connaissance des Arts*, vol. 479 (January 1992), p. 8

Nabakowski, Gislind, 'Marcel Broodthaers. Poetishe Etappen...', *Flash Art*, no. 30-31 (February/April 1972), pp. 12-13

- , 'Ein Museum und seine perspektiven', *Heute Kunst*, vol. 1 (April 1973) pp. 18-21

Nougé, Paul, 'Pour illustrer Magritte', *Le Fait accompli*, nos. 34-35 (April 1970)

O'Doherty, Brian, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, San Francisco, The Lapis Press, 1986

O'Keefe, Timothy, 'The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland: Drawings by Joseph Beuys', *Studio International* (September 1974), p. 10

Olander, William, 'Missing Persons', ARTNews, vol. 82, pt. 2 (February 1983), pp. 112-115, a review of the exhibition *Tableaux: Nine Contemporary Sculptors*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, 17 September-6 November 1982

Oppitz, Michael, 'Adler Pfeife Urinoir', *Interfunktionen*, Cologne, no. 9 (1972), pp. 177-180

Ord, Douglas, 'Ceci n'est pas Magritte', *Canadian Art*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Winter 1996), pp. 12-14

Orton, Fred, *Figuring Jasper Johns*, London, Reaktion Books, 1994

Ottinger, Didier, 'Les Exercises Spirituels de René Magritte', in *Magritte*, Montreal, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montreal, 20 June-27 October 1996

Owens, Craig, 'Improper Names', *Art in America*, vol. 74 (October 1986), pp. 126-135

Pigurt, Philippe, 'Marcel Broodthaers', *L'Œil*, vol. 438 (January-February 1992), p. 85

Piqueray, Marcel, 'Marcel Broodthaers et Marcel Lecomte: des complices', in *Le Salon Noir*, Antwerp, Ronny van de Velde Gallery, 1988

Pointon, Marcia (ed.), *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology across England and North America*, Manchester University Press, 1994

Pradel, Jean-Louis, 'L'Angélus de Daumier: Marcel Broodthaers', *XXe siècle*, no. 46 (September 1976), p. 152

Prendergast, Christopher, 'Framing the City: Two Parisian Windows', in Mary Ann Caws (ed.), *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy and Film*, New York, Gordon & Breach, 1991, pp. 179-195

Preziosi, Donald, 'Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity', in Paul Duro (ed.), The Rhetoric of the Frame. Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork, Cambridge University Press, 1996

Punt de confluència. Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf 1962-1987, Barcelona, Centre Cultural dela Fundació Caixa de Pensions, 18 April-22 May 1988

Qhaghebeur, Marc, *Un Pays d'Irréguliers*, Brussels, Editions Labor, 1990

40 ans d'art vivant. Hommage à Robert Giron, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 6 March-12 April 1968, n.p.

Ratcliff, Carter, 'The Mold, the Mussel and Marcel Broodthaers', *Art in America*, vol. 71 (March 1983), pp. 134-137

Rauschenberg, Robert, *The Works: Robert Rauschenberg*, BBC2, 15 November 1997

Reise, Barbara, 'A tail of two exhibitions: The aborted Haacke and Robert Morris shows', *Studio International* , vol. 181, no. 935 (July/August 1971), p. 30

- , 'Background to the Foreground: the Haacke Exhibition History', *Studio International* , vol. 181, no. 935 (July/August 1971), pp. 30-34

- , 'Which is in fact what happened', Thomas M. Messer in an interview with Barbara Reise, 25 April 1971, *Studio International* , vol. 181, no. 935 (July/August 1971), pp. 34-37

- , 'Incredible Belgium: Impressions', *Studio International*, vol. 188, no. 970 (October 1974), p. 117

- , 'The Broodthaers Museum Gambit', *Art in America*, vol. 63, pt. 3 (May-June 1975), p. 53

- , 'The Imagery of Marcel Broodthaers', in *Marcel Broodthaers*, London, The Tate Gallery, 16 April-26 May 1980

Ratcliff, Carter, 'The Mold, the Mussel and Marcel Broodthaers', in *Marcel Broodthaers*, New York, Mary Boone Gallery, 2-30 June 1984

René Magritte et le surréalisme en Belgique, Brussels, Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, 24 September-5 December 1982

Restany, Pierre, 'Le Nouveau Réalisme: que faut-il en penser?', in *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc...*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 5 February-1 March 1965

- , 'Marcel Broodthaers et Pierre Restany parlent de peinture et de braconnage', *Beaux-Arts*, Brussels, no. 1122 (17 March 1966), p. 6

- , 'J'attends ton coup de fil, Marcel!', in *Marcel Broodt(h)aers / Court-circuit*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 13-25 April 1967

- , 'Nouveau Réalisme: The Richness of the World of Objects', *Nouveau Réalistes*, New York, Zabriskie Gallery, 17 May-8 July 1988, p. 4

Richter, Hans, *Dada Art and Anti-Art* (1964), London, Thames & Hudson, 1965

Ritchie, Christina, 'Inquiries', in *Inquiries: Language in Art*, Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1990

Robbe-Grillet, Alain, 'Nature, Humanism and Tragedy' (1957), in *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, trans. Barbara Wright, London, Calder & Boyars, 1965

Rona, Stéphane, 'Au C.N.A.C. à Paris. Einem Interview mit Otto Hahn, *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 11 (November 1975), pp. 7-9

- , 'Le Salon Noir de Marcel Broodthaers', Brussels, *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 16 (February 1977), p. 5

Rosenberg, Harold, *Art on the Edge: Creators and Situations*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1975

Rubin, William S., *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1968

'Le Salon Noir de Marcel Broodthaers', *+-0* (Plus minus null), no. 16 (February 1977), cover and p. 5

Sanouillet, Michel, & Elmer Peterson (eds.), *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1973

Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), London, Routledge, 1996

- , *What is Literature* (1948), trans. Bernard Frechtman, New York, Harper & Row, 1965

Schuldt, 'Hans Haacke; Marcel Broodthaers', *Artforum* (October 1982), p. 85

Schwartz, Hillel, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*, New York, Zone Books, 1996

Schwitters, Kurt, *Kurt Schwitters,* Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle; Berlin, Akademie der Künste; Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie; Basle, Kunsthalle, 1971

Seaman, David W., *Concrete Poetry in France*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, UMI Research Press, 1981

Serafijn, Q. S., 'Notes of a Super Non-Individual Watcher', in *Marcel Broodthaers L'Invitation au Voyage*, Amsterdam, Exposorium Vrije Universiteit, September-October 1990, pp. 9-10

Sherman, Daniel J. & Irit Rogoff, *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, London, Routledge, 1994

Singerman, Howard (ed.), *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art 1945-1986*, Los Angeles, The Museum of Contemporary Art & New York, Abbeville Press, 1986

Sollers, Philippe, *The Park* (1961), trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, London, Calder & Boyars, 1968

Stewart, Susan, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 1993

Storr, Robert, *Mapping*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 6 October-20 December 1994

Sturrock, John, *Structuralism*, London, Paladin, 1986

Suchin, Peter, 'The Destruction of Art as an Institiution: the Role of the Amateur', *Variant*, no. 5 (Summer/Autumn 1988), pp. 51-54

- 'Imperative Pleasures', in 'Round Midnight 5' (supplement distributed with *Artists Newsletter*), (April 1997), n.p.

Surrealist Sculptures, London, Faggionato Fine Arts,12 October-16 December 1994

Swenson, G. R., 'What is Pop Art?', Part II, *ARTNews* (February 1964), pp. 66-67

Sylvester, David (ed.), *René Magritte Catalogue Raisonné*, London, Menil Foundation & Philip Wilson, vols. I - V, 1992-98

Sylvester, David, *Magritte*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1992

Taylor, Brandon, *The Art of Today*, London, Everyman Art Library, 1995

Taylor, Paul, 'Interview with Hans Haacke', *Flash Art* (February/March 1986), p. 39

Thomson, Mark, 'Figure-clé Broodthaers', *Art Monthly* (February 1992), pp. 15-17

'Three Blind Mice', de collecties: Visser, Peeters, Becht, Eindhoven, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 6 April-19 May 1968 & Ghent, Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 15 June-15 August 1968

Tisdall, Caroline, 'Marcel Broodthaers', *Studio International* (March-April 1976), p. 212

Tosatto, Guy (ed.), *L'ivresse du réel: l'objet dans l'art du XXème siècle*, Edition de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993

Van der Marck, Jan, 'Piero Manzoni: An Exemplary Life', in *Art in America*, May-June 1973, p. 76

- , 'Inside Europe Outside Europe', *Artforum*, January 1978, p. 50

Van Lennep, Jacques, 'De Magritte à Broodthaers: Le Surréalisme en Belgique quarante ans plus tard', in Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, *Bulletin*, vols. 1-3 (1981-1984), pp. 205-244

Van Maele, Marcel, 'Mosselen: op en top pop', *Kunst van Nu*, Amsterdam (December 1965), n.p.

Von Drathen, Doris, 'Entretien avec Gerhard Richter', *Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, vol. 40 (Summer 1992), pp. 86-89

Waldberg, Patrick, *René Magritte*, Brussels, André de Rache, 1965, including André Blavier, 'Anthologie du Surréalisme en Belgique'

Warhol , Andy & Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s*, London, Pimlico, 1996

Weinfield, Henry (ed.), *Stéphane Mallarmé Collected Poems*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994

White, Christopher, 'Artis Pictoriae Amator: An Antwerp Art Patron and his Collection', in *Peter Paul Rubens: Man & Artist*, New Haven & London, Yale, 1987

Whitfield, Sarah, *Magritte*, London, The South Bank Centre, 1992

Wide White Space 1966 - 1976 Achter het museum/Derrière le musée, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 28 October-31 December 1994

Word as Image: American Art 1960-1990, Milwaukee Art Museum, 15 June-26 August 1990, intro. Russell Bowman & Dean Sobel

De woorden en de beelden: Tekst en beeld in de kunst van de twintigste eeuw (The words and the images: Text and image in the art of the twentieth century), Utrecht, Centraal Museum, 26 April 1991-15 October 1991

Zéro International, Nice, Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain, 11 April-8 June 1998

Zweite, Armin, 'Commentaires à propos d'un film de Marcel Broodthaers', in *Catalogue-Catalogus*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 27 September-3 November 1974