

Simon Taylor: The NO!art Movement in New York, 1960-1964

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5 “We are the first victims of American fascism.” Ethel Rosenberg, 1953.¹ This exhibition focuses on NO!art (1960-1964), an obscure New York art movement founded by the artists Boris Lurie, Sam Goodman and Stanley Fisher, which coincided with the Beat Generation and the emergence of Neo-Dada. The fact that this movement ever existed has been suppressed in the canonical accounts of post-war American art, so this introduction will provide an overview of the NO!artists, within the social and historical context of the late fifties and early sixties. NO!art was first presented
10 at the March Gallery, an artists' cooperative on Tenth Street, in 1960, where the “Vulgar Show” (1960), the “Involvement Show” (1961), and the “Doom Show” (1961) were held. Later on, “The NO! Show” (1963) and the “NO! Sculpture Show” (1964) were held at the uptown Gallery Gertrude Stein, which was under the control of the NO!artists. Like the Situationists and Affichistes in Europe, the anti-capitalist work of the NO!artists exposed the fallacies of consumer society.

15 “The Age of Atrocity”

During the past decade and a half, a branch of “Cold War studies” has emerged within the discipline of art history, which demystifies the art of the period by linking it to American Power. In the Cold War context, the United States gathered its allies under the umbrella of NATO, and the
20 Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact. The superpowers acted in the established pattern of imperialism, threatening the neutrality of the non-aligned states, which formed a buffer zone between them. As Fredric Jameson has written, the postwar phase of European “decolonization historically went hand in hand with neo-colonialism...something like the replacement of the British Empire by the International Monetary Fund.”² The massive underdevelopment of the non-Western world was the consequence of Monopoly Capitalism, and the dominance of the ascendant multinational corporations. The pauperization of the developing countries was resisted by anti-colonial revolutionaries, for whom communism or socialism seemed more attractive solutions than Western-style capitalism.

As the world's first nuclear superpower, the United States wielded enormous Power. More
30 importantly, the U.S. controlled the purse strings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, securing the fortunes of “free-market” capitalism: “China, Iran, Turkey, Greece, French Indo-China, Guatemala, Cuba, The Dominican Republic, Venezuela, The Congo, Lebanon: all these were the scene of intervention--military, diplomatic, or economic. Nothing could be allowed to interfere with the massive U.S. foreign investments which...increased at an incredible eightfold rate
35 between 1946 and 1967, finally reaching sixty billion dollars.”³ As the United States achieved economic dominance, the accumulated wealth produced a transformation of everyday life within its geographical borders, giving rise to a service-oriented consumer society. A New Class of professional-managerial workers administered the growth of a huge military-industrial complex, which fed on the pork barrel spending of national defense. Keynesian economists predicted that
40 the U.S. would become a post-scarcity society of abundance, consumption and unlimited growth. The liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote a book on “The Affluent Society” (1958), while the conservative ideologue Daniel Bell wishfully proclaimed “The End of Ideology” in 1961, hailing the new consensus. Underneath the surface prosperity, however, the U.S. was also a culture of poverty and waste, as Michael Harrington discovered in “The Other America” in 1962.⁴ The
45 economy was constantly in crisis, causing periodic recessions and unemployment; by some estimates, a third of the population was living in poverty. Many of the progressive reforms of

¹ Ethel Rosenberg. In: Andrew Ross: No Respect. Intellectuals and Popular Culture. New York 1989, S. 26.

² Frederic Jameson: Periodizing the Sixties. In: Sohnya Sayres, Anders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz, Frederic Jameson (Hg.): The 60's Without Apology. Minneapolis 1984, S.184.

³ John Tagg: American Power and American Painting. The Development of Vanguard Painting in the United States since 1945. In: Praxis. Berkeley 1976, S. 70.

⁴ Michael Harrington: The Other America. Poverty in the United States. New York 1963. Siehe auch: John Kenneth Galbraith: The Affluent Society. Boston 1958. Daniel Bell: The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties. New York 1961.

Roosevelt's New Deal were retracted under Truman and Eisenhower, for example, the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Bill of 1947. A "paranoid style" in American politics, symbolized by Joseph McCarthy and Barry Goldwater, found scapegoats to blame for society's ills.⁵ "For some Americans, primarily the blacks and other minorities, the poor and many of the elderly, no part of the [1950s] seemed to be a golden age...But for most white, middle-class Americans, and particularly white, middle-class males, the fifties was perhaps the best decade in the history of the republic."⁶

As self-appointed leader of the "free world," the United States apparently learned very little from the experience of World War II: "What could the lessons of a concentration camp have meant, really, when atrocities in the Korean War went on and on. And on and on to Vietnam. And haven't stopped yet."⁷ Under the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, "many Americans began to feel shame about racial atrocities that in the past they readily chose to ignore," though racism was as virulent as ever.⁸ Former officials of the U.S. government, including Truman himself, continued to justify the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in spite of the devastation. Emphasizing property rights over human rights, U.S. foreign policy supported fascist dictators, military regimes and death squads to protect its economic interests, while McCarthyism and loyalty oaths persecuted the "enemy within," the Communists and their "fellow-travelers." A Power Elite supplanted the traditional authority of the President; in his farewell address, Eisenhower warned the country about the ominous rise of a "military-industrial complex" he had helped to create.

When Kennedy came to power in 1961, many liberals thought he would favor progressive disarmament, a nuclear test ban treaty, and peace initiatives. But this proved to be misplaced optimism, as the president adopted the theory of deterrence, which rested on the insane idea of mutually-assured destruction. Kennedy surrounded himself with advisers, who recommended the acquisition of more strategic weapons, and the development of forces to suppress wars of national liberation. This policy benefited the military contractors most, who received orders for Polaris submarines, Minuteman missiles and nuclear bombers. "In 1962 Senator John L. McClelland's investigating committee showed how this brand of 'socialism for the rich' worked...contractors made profits of 40%... subcontractors' profit was added to the main contractor's costs.... Military procurement was the most perfectly realized pork barrel in the history of a nation rich with them."⁹

The technocrats mystified politicians and the public alike, with their doctrines of "counterforce," "overkill," "massive retaliation" and "balance of terror." The goal of the Kennedy arms race would enable the U.S. to fight two big wars and one small war simultaneously.

The major foreign policy event of the Kennedy years was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Since the early days of the Republic, the United States tried to acquire Cuba from Spain, resulting in the war of 1898. A stooge of the U.S. Government, Fulgencio Batista resigned as head of the Cuban state on January 1, 1959; his successor Fidel Castro nationalized U.S. property, which amounted to "35% of the sugar industry, 90% of the public utilities, and with Royal Dutch Shell all of the oil refineries."¹⁰ On September 26, 1960, Castro delivered a four and a half hour address to the United Nations denouncing U.S. imperialism and capitalism. Tensions between the superpowers escalated as Krushchev promised military support for Cuba, and announced his intention to close the Guantanamo Naval Station. Upon taking office, Kennedy announced a total ban on Cuban sugar exports. A few months into his presidency, he ordered the Bay of Pigs invasion (April 17-19, 1961), which was a military and diplomatic fiasco.

On October 22, 1962, Kennedy addressed the nation on television and radio, referring to the "Cuban Crisis," informing the public about the discovery of offensive missiles in Cuba. An atmosphere of hysteria gripped the world, as Washington demanded the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuban shores, and the superpowers put their military forces on a worldwide alert. When the Soviet Union and the U.S. finally reached agreement on November 7, 1962, the White House declared a propaganda victory. "Mr. Kennedy's gamble paid off. But what if it had failed?" asked the independent journalist I. F. Stone: "Mr. Kennedy insisted on a backdown by Khrushchev first. Fortunately, he got his way. But the happy relief should not blind us to the monstrous situation in which all humanity found itself. Any ruler, with nuclear weapons... now had a Divine Right... to

⁵ Richard Hofstadter: *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. Chicago 1979 (Erstmals 1964 veröffentlicht).

⁶ J. Ronald Oakley: *God's Country. America in the Fifties*. New York 1986, 1990, S. 434.

⁷ Dore Ashton: *Merde alors!* (1969). In: Boris Lurie, Seymour Krim (Hg.): *NO!art. Pin-ups, Excrement, Protest, Jew-Art*. Berlin, Köln 1988, S. 54 (Übersetzung der Redaktion).

⁸ Marty Jezer: *The Dark Ages: Life in the United States 1945-1960*. Boston 1982, S. 297.

⁹ William L. O'Neill: *Coming Apart. An Informal History of America in the 1960's*. New York 1977, S. 32-33.

¹⁰ O'Neill, S. 37.

condemn mankind to hell.”¹¹ Although there was an urgent need to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and achieve a nuclear test ban treaty, the anachronistic system of nation-states obstructed any hopes for a lasting peace.

Art/World/Politics

In the wake of fascism and totalitarianism, artists and critics doubted the viability of the fine arts in a mass society. The feeling of malaise among intellectuals often assumed apocalyptic dimensions. Critics like Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, and Meyer Schapiro were skeptical that “high art” could survive “mass culture” and the “onslaught of kitsch.” Like the Frankfurt School thinkers, they feared that art would become another debased form of entertainment, like radio or television, or worse, pure propaganda. Since it relies upon novelty and calculated effects, they wrote, the culture industry serves the same purpose as mass entertainment, which is essentially “the prolongation of work. It is sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again.”¹² Moreover, in the era of “late capitalism,” Adorno and Horkheimer noted, that, “a change in the character of the art commodity itself is coming about. What is new is not that it is a commodity, but that today it deliberately admits it is one.”¹³

By mid-century, a New Class of collectors, members of the vanguard audience, emerged from the ranks of the nouveaux riches.¹⁴ Unlike the Robber Baron philanthropists of the past, this upwardly-mobile group of collectors were far more interested in the financial rewards and prestige involved in collecting contemporary art. As a result of their patronage, the fine arts were associated with speculative investments, artificial scarcity, standardization, quality control, product differentiation and planned obsolescence, and the artists themselves were seduced by the prospects of fame and fortune. The spectacular commercial success of the Abstract Expressionists by the late fifties undermined the impact of their work, as Greenberg acknowledged in his nostalgic essay, “The Late Thirties in New York” (1957).¹⁵ In 1955, Fortune selected “growth stocks” among American painters, including Bazziotes, de Kooning, Kline, Motherwell, Pollock, Reinhardt, Rivers, Rothko and Still; and two years later, the New York Times reported a 500% increase in the number of art galleries and sales over the previous decade.¹⁶

Thus, by the late fifties and early sixties, Abstract Expressionism was not only commercially successful—it represented, for many cultural nationalists, the triumph of the “American way of life” and a concrete example of liberal democracy. As Serge Guilbaut has written, “the work of avant-garde painters came to be accepted and used...to represent liberal American values, first at home, in the museums, and then abroad...as anti-Soviet propaganda.”¹⁷ Moreover, the marketplace now demanded Abstract Expressionist paintings, giving rise to a New Academy (see the lavishly illustrated magazine, “It Is”)¹⁸ The general acceptance of Abstract Expressionism by the business world and U.S. government mirrored the consensus politics of the fifties (otherwise known as “The Vital Center”). “By 1957, when the Jewish Museum presented... ‘Artists of the New York School, Second Generation’,” Barbara Rose has written, “a climate of discontent and a certain impatience with the official platitudes had infiltrated the art world.”¹⁹ With the simultaneous emergence of the Beat Generation, the artworld experienced the most dramatic ideological shift since the forties.

¹¹ I.F. Stone: The Reprieve and What needs to be Done with It. 5. November 1962. Wiederveröffentlicht in: Neil Middleton (Hg.): The I.F. Stone's Weekly Reader. New York 1974, S. 255.

¹² Max Horkheimer; Theodor Adorno: Die Dialektik der Aufklärung. Frankfurt a. M., 1982 (1969), S. 123.

¹³ Adorno; Horkheimer, S. 141.

¹⁴ Thomas B. Hess: A Tale of Two Cities. In: Location. Vol. 2. Nr. 1. Sommer 1964. Wiederaufgelegt in: Gregory Battcock (Hg.): The New Art. New York 1973. „Ein amerikanisches avantgardeorientiertes Publikum ist entstanden und spielt seine historische, parasitäre Rolle. Es fordert in gönnerhafter Manier die neue Malerei, während es gleichzeitig versucht, ihre subversiven Inhalte zu drosseln. Es verliert die künstlerische Äußerung voller Verzweiflung und Begeisterung aus den Augen und begegnet der Kunst in einer Haltung aus schmeichelnder und kumpelhafter Akzeptanz.“ Hess, S. 98-99.

¹⁵ Clement Greenberg: The Late Thirties in New York (1957). In: Clement Greenberg: Art and Culture. Boston 1962, S. 230-235.

¹⁶ Irving Sandier. New York Times. 1. Januar 1960. Sidra Stich (Hg.): Made in USA. An Americanisation in Modern Art. Berkeley 1987.

¹⁷ Serge Guilbaut: How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War. Chicago 1983, S. 190.

¹⁸ Irving Sandier (Hg.): Is There a New Academy? In: Art News. Sommer 1959. S. 34-37, S. 58-59. Weitergeführt in der September-Ausgabe 1959, S. 36-39, S. 58-60.

¹⁹ Barbara Rose: The Second Generation. Academy and Breakthrough. In: Artforum. September 1965, S. 56.

140 Fifty-Seventh Street and Madison Avenue was the commercial hub of the New York artworld at this time, while Greenwich Village, formerly the home of bohemia, had become a gentrified tourist destination. From 1952 on, following the success of the "Ninth Street Show" the previous year, a host of new galleries, starting with the Tanager, opened in the area around Tenth Street on the Lower East Side, where rents were relatively affordable. The Hansa Gallery opened its doors at East 12th Street, in 1953, under the direction of ex-Hans Hoffmann students, while other
145 cooperative galleries on or around Tenth Street included the James Gallery, the Camino, the March, the Brata, the Phoenix and the Area. Some private galleries were also in the area, including the Fleischman, the Nonagon, the Great Jones and the Reuben Gallery, which was famous as the earliest venue of the Happenings. Claes Oldenburg's Store was located a few blocks away, near the Bowery.

150 The New York Times critic Brian O'Doherty recalled how, "Discriminating tourists learned that Tenth Street was 'the real thing'. It certainly had character. Bums exposed by the tearing down of the Third Avenue El, drifted in and out of Tenth Street, and sometimes you had to step over them to get into a gallery."²⁰ One of the grainy black-and-white photographs in Fred McDarrah's "The Artist's World in Pictures" (1961) showed a homeless man slumped on the ground at the basement
155 entrance to the March Gallery (next to a liquor store) at 95 East 10th Street. There was undoubtedly an element of "slumming" on the part of wealthy gallery-goers, who came downtown to visit the Tenth Street galleries. The style of painting that was prevalent there - Abstract Expressionism in the manner of de Kooning - was assailed by John Canaday, their most vocal critic, who wrote, "for a decade the bulk of abstract art in America has followed the course of least resistance and quickest profit."²¹

160 An adversarial political art, however, was on display at the March Gallery in the early sixties, which was anomalous on Tenth Street. In "Tenth Street Days: The Co-ops of the '50s", artist Alice Baber has recalled how the idea of the gallery originated in a conversation with Felix Pasilis in the spring of 1957.²² The best-known affiliates of the March Gallery were Elaine de Kooning, Mark di Suvero
165 and Lester Johnson. Two years later, a new leadership under Boris Lurie and Sam Goodman, took over the gallery. In a statement of 1960, their colleague Stanley Fisher declared, "The new March Gallery is a citadel for the idealistic, and bastion for those who would like to make a last stand against the commercial degradation of uptown galleries. We stand on the threshold of a new art, an art committed to speak out, an art involved with issues."²³ In this respect, they differed from the majority of Neo-Dadaists, whose works were usually interpreted as an affirmation of American
170 society.²⁴

According to Dore Ashton's recollections, the March Gallery "began as just another cooperative, with a heterogeneous shifting population of participants. Little by little, it became the focal point for all manner of social dissidents, many of whom had watched the political events of the 1950s with
175 increasing discouragement"²⁵ The driving forces behind the NO!art group were Boris Lurie, Sam Goodman and Stanley Fisher. Although other artists exhibited with the group, the work of these three artists was stylistically compatible, and they identified themselves as NO!artists. When Goodman and Lurie assumed control of the March Gallery in 1960, both artists were shifting towards an aggressive Neo-Dada presentation. Goodman worked in the expanding field of assemblage, while Lurie and Fisher made large-scale collages recapturing the spirit of Berlin Dada.
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"The Banality of Evil"

185 In the Spring of 1960, when their group was beginning to coalesce, the NO!artists heard that the fugitive Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann had been kidnapped in Buenos Aires, Argentina, by the Israeli Secret Services. People knew that Eichmann was still alive, since an interview with him had recently appeared in "Life" magazine.²⁶ Although he had been imprisoned by the Allies at the end of the war, Eichmann successfully managed to hide his identity, and escaped from his captors in January, 1946. He made contact with ODESSA, a clandestine organization of ex-SS officers, which

²⁰ Brian O'Doherty: Death of a Gallery (1962). In: Brian O'Doherty: Object and Idea. An Art Critic's Journal 1961 -1967. New York 1967, S. 166. O'Doherty bezieht sich hier auf die Tanager Gallery.

²¹ John Canady: In the Gloaming. In: New York Times. 11. September 1960, S. 21.

²² Joellen Bard: Tenth Street Days. The Coops of the Fifties. New York 1979, S. 32.

²³ Stanley Fisher: Involvement Show Statement (1961). In: Lurie; Krim, S. 54.

²⁴ Barbara Rose: Dada Now and Then. In: Art International. 25. Januar 1963, S. 23-28.

²⁵ Lurie; Krim, S. 54.

²⁶ Hannah Arendt: Eichmann in Jerusalem. Die Banalität des Bösen. Leipzig 1990 (München 1964, 1986), S. 374.

190 arranged for his trip to Argentina, providing him with identification papers and a work permit. "Ricardo Clement," as he was known, arrived in Buenos Aires in 1950, where he was hired by the Mercedes Benz company. When Eichmann was captured, he was living with his family in a small house he had built on the outskirts of the city.

195 Tried under the Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950, Eichmann was given the death penalty, and hanged on the night of May 31, 1962. Although she agreed with the death sentence, Hannah Arendt denounced the kidnapping as a violation of international law in her book, "Eichmann in Jerusalem: The Banality of Evil" (1963). Arendt agreed that Eichmann deserved the death penalty (because he had supported a policy of mass murder), but she believed that the integrity of the legal system had been badly damaged. Not only had the kidnapping been in violation of international law, but the trial itself was plagued with irregularities and abnormalities. In sum, the failure of the Jerusalem court consisted in its not coming to grips with three fundamental issues...: the problem of impaired justice in the court of the victors; a valid definition of the 'crime against humanity'; and a clear recognition of the new criminal who commits this crime."²⁷

200 For Arendt, the most important questions surrounding the trial – "How could it happen?...Why did it happen?...Why the Jews?...Why the Germans?...What was the role of other nations?...What was the extent of the co-responsibility on the side of the Allies?...How could the Jews through their own leaders cooperate in their own destruction?...Why did they go to their deaths like lambs to the slaughter?" - had been deliberately ignored.²⁸ Because German reparation payments to Israel were due to expire, the Israeli government was hoping to secure , additional loans from the German government, but this could only be achieved if the courts stopped short of exposing "the complicity of all German offices and authorities in the Final Solution - of all civil servants in the state ministries, of the regular armed forces, with their General Staff, of the judiciary, and of the business world."²⁹ In other words, practically the entire Adenauer administration would have been implicated in Nazi war crimes, hi a comprehensive trial held under international auspices.

205 The really shocking part of Arendt's book, from a contemporary perspective, was the revelation that Eichmann, the efficient bureaucrat, seemed to be an ideal representative of the Organization Man in corporate America. One psychiatrist even testified that, "his whole psychological outlook, his attitude toward his wife and children, mother and father, brothers, sisters, and friends was 'not only normal but most desirable.'"³⁰ In defense of his actions, Eichmann claimed that he harbored no grievances against the Jews, he never personally killed anyone, and was simply following the instructions of the Führer. In refuting Eichmann's defense, Arendt noted that "the degree of responsibility increases as we draw further away from the man who uses the fatal instrument with his own hands."³¹ The phrase, the "banality of evil," was not meant to trivialize the Holocaust and the sufferings of the Jewish people. Rather, it underscored the impersonal, bureaucratic manner in which Eichmann performed his duties as a functionary of the Third Reich, seemingly oblivious to the terrible consequences of his actions.

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215 Angry about the post-war cover-up of the Nazi atrocities, and the failure of the Allied Forces to save the Jews from destruction, Lurie responded to these events in 1961: "Eichmann alive...Eichmann dead...who cares for Eichmann? Now they tell us all about the concentration camps. Bergen-Belsen has been turned into a beautiful park. Thousands kept on starving after the Liberation..."³²

220 In spite of the fact that evidence of the Final Solution was widely available as early as 1942, rescue efforts were actively stymied by bureaucrats, like Breckinridge Long, in the Roosevelt State Department. Domestic anti-semitism, nativism, and anti-immigrant sentiments exacerbated the grave situation of Jews (and other pariah groups) trapped in the Occupied Territories. Retrospectively, Lurie has recalled that, "the Eichmann trial powerfully reviv[ed] suppressed material preferred to be forgotten by most, had also ruptured the death of silence and fear and conformity of the Cold War and postwar period of suppression."³³

225 Sam Goodman created an Eichmann Triptych in 1961, and Lurie's "Oh, Mama, Liberté" (1963) included a headline reading "ADOLF EICHMANN - STAND UP!"

²⁷ Arendt, S. 422.

²⁸ Arendt, S. 72, S. 73.

²⁹ Arendt, S. 92.

³⁰ Arendt, S. 102. Siehe auch: William H. Whyte, Jr.: The Organisation Man. Garden City, New York 1956.

³¹ Arendt, S. 97.

³² Boris Lurie: Involvement Show Statement (1961). In: Lurie; Krim, S. 39.

³³ Boris Lurie: Shit NO! (1970). In: Lurie; Krim, S. 59. Erstmals veröffentlicht in: Something Else Yearbook. Boston 1974, S. 62-73.

240 Since the NO!artists reflected upon the Holocaust, and incorporated atrocity photographs in their art, their work can be discussed within the context of "Holocaust art." A number of artists, including Picasso, Rico Lebrun, Hyman Bloom and Jacob Landau "depicted" the Holocaust, in realist or expressionist modes, in the postwar period. But, generally speaking, the Holocaust was considered a taboo subject because it was thought to be too awesome to represent in any satisfactory way. In response to the exhibition, "The Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century", one critic noted that, "Art dealing with the Jewish trauma of World War II is difficult to discuss critically, and I do not intend to try. It is possible that all atrocity and disaster make bad subject matter."³⁴ The same argument was recently employed by Irving Howe, in his preface to "Art of the Holocaust": "Can imaginative literature," he asks, "'represent' in any profound or illuminating way the meanings of the Holocaust? Is 'the debris of our misery'...a proper or manageable subject for stories or novels? Are there not perhaps extreme situations beyond the reach of art?"³⁵

250 The NO!artists generally agreed with Adorno's famous remark about the impossibility of writing poetry, or making art, "after Auschwitz" - hence, their anti-aesthetic position. It is easy to see how this attitude also overlaps with the traditional Judaic prohibition against "graven images." Rather than creating sentimental artworks "about" the Holocaust, the NO!artists critically examined the representations of Nazi atrocities circulating in the media. Instead of taking these readymade photojournalist images at face value, they exposed their relationship to capitalism, consumer society, militarism and patriarchy. The NO!artists focused on the persistence of totalitarian features in an avowedly "democratic" society, and raised political consciousness in the art-world in a period of complacency and apathy, anticipating the counterculture of the late sixties. In a way that was more relevant than other artists who invoked the Holocaust as a theme in their work, they exposed the banality of evil operating in our everyday lives.

NO! Artists

265 Born in Leningrad in 1924, Boris Lurie writes, "The origins of NO! art sprout from the Jewish experience, struck root in the world's largest Jewish Community New York, a product of armies, concentration camps, Lumpenproletariat artists. Its targets are the hypocritical intelligentsia, capitalist culture manipulation, consumerism, American and other Molochs."³⁶ Lurie grew up in Riga, Latvia, and was imprisoned in several Nazi labor camps during the war, including Buchenwald. After his escape, he worked as a translator and investigator for the American intelligence forces before emigrating to the U.S. Arriving in New York in 1946, he enrolled at the Art Student's League, where he studied with Reginald Marsh - but he was soon disillusioned by the stultifying atmosphere of the classroom. Following the war, he painted a series of figurative oils which depicted emaciated figures based on his harrowing experiences in the camps.

270 Lurie's first solo show was held at the Barbizon-Piazza Gallery in 1950. "Dismembered Women: Three Figures in a Bathtub" (1950) and "Dismembered Women: Combat on Rooftop" (1951) were mural-sized abstract paintings, influenced by Fernand Léger's mechanomorphic cubism, and the musculature of Michelangelo's figures. "Dismembered Women: Three Figures in a Bathtub" depicted clusters of monstrously-formed limbs, arms and legs perversely conjoined, floating against a geometrical space, while "Dismembered Women: Combat on Rooftop" was an all-over mosaic pattern of limbs and machinic elements. These two paintings were an unusual hybrid of styles, including Purism, Constructivism and Surrealism. The horrifying theme of "Dismembered Women" in Lurie's work subconsciously related to the murder of his female relatives, including his mother, by the Nazis. Consciously, he was reacting to the "unfeeling environment" of the American scene.

285 By 1958, or even earlier, Lurie found a suitable vehicle for his ideas in the form of assemblages and painted collages, which he considers the beginning of NO!art. After experimenting in prints and multiples, he began incorporating printed imagery from a variety of mass-media sources. These were exhibited in Lurie's one-man show, "Les Lions" at the March, and his "Adieu Amerique" exhibition at Roland de Aennle (both 1960). Atrocity photographs, advertisements, pin-ups and newspaper headlines were scattered across the surfaces of his collages, which were painted over with graffiti, slogans and phrases. Although the technique is completely different, some of these

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³⁴ Michael Sgan-Cohen: The Jewish Experiment in Art. In: Art in America. Mai-Juni 1976, S. 45. Siehe auch: Avram Kavram: The Jewish Experiment in the Art of the Twentieth Century. New York 1976. Aber wie ist es mit Goyas Serie „Schrecken des Krieges“ oder mit Delacroix' „Gemetzelt von Chios“? Sicherlich sind diese „erfolgreichen“ Werke als Kunst „erfolgreich“, obgleich sie Grausamkeiten thematisieren.

³⁵ Irving Howe: Preface. In: Janet Blatter, Sybil Milton (Hg.): Art of the Holocaust. New York 1981, S. 10.

³⁶ Boris Lurie: Preface. In: Lurie; Krim, S. 13.

works resemble the torn posters of the Affichistes Jacques de la Villèglé, Francois Dûfrène, Raymond Hains, and the Italian artist Mimmo Rotella. Lurie's painted collages and constructions were all-over compositions, sometimes as big as billboards, in contrast to Kurt Schwitters' relational, small-scale "merz" collages.

295 These works often contained newspaper headlines, which were legible from an ideal viewing-point. Instead of encouraging the "vernacular glance" like Rauschenberg, whose images were mostly "chosen...for their nonspecificity,"³⁷ Lurie's use of newspaper headlines was comparable to the way an older generation of social realists like Alice Neel ("Nazis Murder Jews," 1937-38), Ben Shahn ("Spring 1940", "Peace Offensive," 1940), and Reginald Marsh ("Fifth Takes Rome", 1944)
300 chronicled their era, specifically referring to crucial moments in history through placards or newspaper headlines. In the tradition of John Heartfield's photomontages, Lurie's painted collages were "not primarily aesthetic objects, but images for reading."³⁸ A legible headline in Lurie's billboard-sized "Les Lions" (1959) read "La Fin de Colonel Terreur," a reference to the Algerian War of Independence. Another work by Lurie from this period, his irregularly-shaped assemblage
305 "Sirenen Signals" (1961), included a poster pleading, on behalf of children, for peace in the French colony.

The references to the Algerian War of Independence in Lurie's works signalled his solidarity with the Algerian rebels and his rejection of cultural imperialism. By Summer 1960, eleven new states had been created in Africa, but Algerian independence was not granted until November 1962. An
310 expatriate class of French officers led military coups in May 1958 and January 1960, which President de Gaulle reluctantly suppressed. Another Lurie collage, "Lumumba is Dead" (1961), with a huge swastika painted in the center, related the murder of Patrice Lumumba, a freedom fighter in the Belgian Congo. Belgium recognized Congo's independence in 1960, but this was challenged by a separatist movement in the province of Katanga, which had rich copper mines. Katanga enjoyed
315 considerable support of extreme rightists in the United States, like the Texas oil billionaire H.L. Hunt, who funded the Dan Smoot Report, and Fred Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communist Crusade.³⁹ (To understand the impact of "Lumumba is Dead", consider it alongside Baziotès' primitivist painting, "Congo", painted in 1954.)

A survivor of the Holocaust, Lurie was particularly disturbed by the denial of the Holocaust, the social amnesia in America, and the appearance of atrocity photographs in best-selling magazines, alongside advertisements for consumer products, in an ambiguous blend of fact and fantasy. These were the same magazines that ignored the plight of the Jews during the war by failing to report any news about Hitler's Final Solution: "American mass-circulation magazines all but ignored the Holocaust. Aside from a few paragraphs touching on the subject, silence prevailed in the major
320 news magazines, 'Time', 'Newsweek', and 'Life.'"⁴⁰ Lurie ripped images out of these magazines, and pasted them alongside each other on his canvases, drawing attention to the incongruities through violent juxtaposition. Here, as a critic for "The Village Voice" pointed out in 1960, "Life Magazine [is] taken to its . final, ultimate, absurd, and frightening conclusion, pain and death given no more space and attention than pictures of Elsa Maxwell's latest party."⁴¹

330 Frequently, the images in the NO! art collages were well-known icons of World War II photojournalism due to their incessant reproduction in the mass media. One of these photographs, taken in Buchenwald, depicted a container wagon stacked with corpses. Lurie appropriated this image, and titled it, "Flatcar Assemblage, 1945, by Adolf Hitler" (1961). This invoked the specious idea that, if Hitler had pursued his dream of becoming an artist, perhaps the Final Solution would
335 have been averted. In the retitling of the photograph, Lurie supplied a bitter caption to a well-known image, creating a "revolutionary use-value" for the photograph, in the manner of John Heartfield's

³⁷ Brian O'Doherty: Robert Rauschenberg. The Sixties. In: Brian O'Doherty: American Masters. The Voice and Myth in Moderns Art. New York 1974,1982. „Rauschenberg zu beobachten, wie er 1962 bei der New York Times alte Klischeeplatten auswählte - er hatte dort gefragt, ob er welche haben könne - machte klar, daß er kein bestimmtes Thema im Kopf hatte.“ O'Doherty verknüpft Rauschenbergs Arbeit mit der Erfahrung des urbanen Flaneurs: „Der vertraut streifende Blick begleitet uns täglich durch die Großstadt, eine Art von beinahe unbewußter oder zumindest geteilte Aufmerksamkeit.“ O'Doherty, S. 256.

³⁸ Peter Burger: The Theory of Avant-Garde (1973/74). Minneapolis 1984, S. 75.

³⁹ O'Neill, S. 47-48.

⁴⁰ David S. Wyman: The Abandonment of the Jews. America and the Holocaust 1941-1945. New York 1984, S. 322.

⁴¹ Bill Manville: Boris Lurie, March Gallery, Images of Life. In: Village Voice. 16. Juni 1960, S. 5.

photomontages and Ernst Friedrich's pacifist book, "War Against War" (1924).⁴² One of the photographs showing Friedrich's book, showing corpses strewn on a battlefield, was captioned "War idyll," suggesting, like Lurie's détourned image, how war and atrocity become aestheticized in

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the modern era. In her book, "On Photography", Susan Sontag described her first reactions (at the age of 12) to the atrocity photographs she saw in a bookstore documenting the Nazi concentration camps at Bergen-Belsen and Dachau. Having experienced a "negative epiphany" upon viewing these images, she noted that repeated exposure to this type of imagery only provided an emotional catharsis for the viewer -- eventually, the constant bombardment of images like these had the effect of anesthetizing people, making such atrocities commonplace, banal and even acceptable: "The same law holds for evil as for pornography. The shock of photographed atrocities wears off with repeated viewings"⁴³ -- precisely one of the points that Lurie was trying to emphasize in his collages, which juxtaposed atrocity photographs and pin-ups (for example, his "Buchenwald" collage, 1961); it also explains his use of brutal sadomasochistic photographs.

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A Canadian-born artist, Sam Goodman (1919-1967) acquired a reputation in the late fifties as an Abstract Expressionist painter, and began making assemblages in the sixties. A regular at the Cedar Tavern, Goodman held solo exhibitions at the Camino Gallery from 1956 on, and exhibited in various group shows in Manhattan and Provincetown. When four young artists were presented at the Camino gallery in Greenwich Village, Art News reproduced Goodman's "Point of Departure" (1956), a calligraphic black-and-white abstraction influenced by Franz Kline's dynamic compositions. Goodman was seen as a promising young artist of the Second Generation of the Abstract Expressionist School. He was compared to the French informel painter, Georges Mathieu,⁴⁴ and praised for keeping art "clean of hooligan sentiment."⁴⁵ Along with his wife, Elizabeth, he opened a coffee shop on MacDougal Street called the Caricature.

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In March 1960, Goodman and Lurie exhibited together at the Champagne Gallery on MacDougal Street, which was favorably received by James Schuyler in "Art News", who wrote, "Goodman's flung, ground-bordered abstractions have not received the attention they merit. Violence of means is plain, but the effect...is poignant...his range is large."⁴⁶ He is best-known for a work entitled "The Cross" (1960), which was illustrated in Lucy Lippard's book on "Pop Art" (1966).⁴⁷ An attack on militarism and the Bomb, the assemblage consisted of a rocking horse silhouette, and a garbage can containing two components: a bomb with an umbrella attached to it, and a wooden cross with pasted paper and model aeroplane wings. A paper sign attached to the cross conspicuously read, "MEN TODAY," and the word "GARBAGE" was scrawled over the surface of the can. Goodman also painted some effective posters in black paint, with crudely-drawn skulls, imploring the government to "Stop Testing" and "Stop Fallout."

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Goodman's "Male Fetish" and "Female Fetish" assemblages (1961) were typical of works he constructed using recycled detritus. A portrait of a male head was framed with a toilet seat, and attached to a vertical wooden board, to form the "Male Fetish"; the assemblage also included a

⁴² Ernst Friedrich: Krieg dem Kriege (1924). Seattle 1987. In „The Author as Producer“ schreibt Walter Benjamin: „Was wir von dem Fotografen fordern, ist die Fähigkeit, seinem Bild den Titel zu geben, der es dem modischen Kommerz entreißt und es mit einem revolutionären Gebrauchswert versieht“ (Übersetzung der Redaktion). In: Brian Wallis (Hg.): Art After Modernism. Rethinking Representation. New York 1984, S. 305.

⁴³ Susan Sontag: On Photography. New York 1977, S. 20. Obgleich viele Zeitungen die amerikanische Aggression in Südost-Asien unterstützten, waren in den Artikeln weiterhin Fotos von den Gräueltaten zu sehen. John Berger versuchte das Paradoxon zu erklären, indem er bemerkte, daß die Medien diese entsetzlichen Bilder ungestraft drucken konnten, weil sie, wie auch Susan Sontag aufzeigt, den Betrachter nur zeitweilig schockieren - ihre andauernde Wirkung tötet die Emotionen und befördert Passivität und Hilflosigkeit: „Allgemein wird angenommen, daß sie den Zweck hatten, Interesse zu wecken... Aber der Leser... mag dazu neigen, die Diskontinuität als eine eigene moralische Unausgeglichenheit zu empfinden. Sobald das eintritt, ist der Schockeffekt verschwunden. Seine eigene moralische Unzulänglichkeit mag ihn so stark schockieren wie die Kriegsverbrechen... Entweder er tut seinen Sinn für die Unzulänglichkeit mit einem Achselzucken ab, oder er denkt daran, in irgendeiner Weise Buße zu tun... In beiden Fällen ist das eigentliche Thema Krieg, der eigentliche Anlaß, wirksam entpolitisiert. Das Bild wird zum Nachweis der allgemeinen menschlichen Situation. Es klagt niemanden und alle an.“ John Berger: Photographs of Agony (1972). In: John Berger, About Looking. New York 1980, S. 39-40.

⁴⁴ G.D.: John Cu Roi, Sam Goodman. In: Arts. 34. 1960 (April), S. 64.

⁴⁵ James Schuyler: Sam Goodman (Camino). In: Art News. 57. 1958 (November), S. 17.

⁴⁶ James Schuyler: Sam Goodman and Boris Lurie (Champagne Gallery). In: Art News. 59. 1960(März), S. 15-16.

⁴⁷ Lucy Lippard: Pop-art. New York 1966, S. 104.

375 spring, a toy motorcycle, and a doll's hand dangling from a pipe. The Female Fetish was equally grotesque, consisting of a skull (with a cigar in her mouth, wearing a wig), a pair of diminutive doll's arms (like a thalidomide victim), two torpedo-like balloons for breasts, and an old piece of white lace for a skirt. Other Goodman assemblages from this period included a cash register, a "Box with Excrement", a "Bomb and Snake", a still-life with "Three Grenades" (all 1961), and a work entitled
380 "General Chaos" (1962), utilizing an army helmet. Harking back to dada works like Raoul Hausmann's "Mechanical Head" (1919-20), or Johannes Baargeld's "Anthrophiliac Tapeworm" (1919), Goodman's works also bear comparison to the assemblages of his West Coast contemporaries Edward Kienholz and Bruce Conner.

The Los Angeles artist Kienholz made an assemblage, expressing outrage over the Nazi concentration camps, titled "History as a Planter" in 1961, which consisted of an oven, a household planter, wartime newspaper clippings and a swastika. According to Maurice Tuchman, the piece was about "time and the white-wash it permits one to make of evil: the extermination of a people becomes, like a household planter, a conversation piece, merely a subject for discussion in middle-class homes."⁴⁸ The NO! artists and the Californian assemblagists frequently explored the same
390 themes in their work. Lurie's "Liberty or Lice" included a headline reading "Chessman Misses Stay by Minutes," referring to the case of Caryl Chessman, the "Red Light Bandit," a kidnapper and rapist convicted under the Lindbergh Law, who wrote books about his ordeal on death-row. Chessman's execution in 1960 was an international scandal, which provoked anti-American demonstrations all over the world. In California, Kienholz ("The Psycho-Vendetta Case", 1960) and
395 Conner ("Homage to Chessman", 1961) made works referring to the Chessman case.

A Beat poet and school teacher, as well as an artist, the third major figure of the NO!art group, Stanley Fisher (1926-1980) shared many of the same concerns as Goodman and Lurie. Fisher edited an anthology, entitled "Beat Coast East" in 1960, and was influenced by the writings of Wilhelm Reich, who advocated a Sexual Revolution, and died in a federal prison in 1957. There
400 was a certain amount of interaction between the Beat poets and the NO!artists, and Fisher's collages were described by a reviewer in "Art News" as "staccato-shelled like a coffee-house poem."⁴⁹ Seymour Krim, a friend of the NO! artists, a writer, and an editor of "Nugget", was also involved with the Beat Movement. Krim's paperback volume on "The Beats: A Gold Medal Anthology" was also published in 1960, with contributions by the leading Beat poets.⁵⁰ Lurie was
405 friendly with the nomadic street poet Jack Micheline, and the black poet Ted Joans exhibited with the NO!group.

Fisher's anthology "Beat Coast East" (1960) included some of his own poems alongside those of Ginsberg, Orlovsky, Corso, Kerouac, di Prima, LeRoi Jones and others. The book was illustrated with Elaine de Kooning's painting "Veronica", photographs of Claes Oldenburg's "Snapshots from the City" happening at the Judson Gallery, details from Boris "Lurie's Liberty or Lice", and pen-and-ink drawings by Fisher on the subject of "The Marriage of Woman and Beast."⁵¹ According to
410 Fisher, these self-consciously "rebellious" poets were composing in the "Whitmanesque manner," using jazz-like rhythms. Of special interest was a piece of writing by Norman Mailer, "An Eye for Picasso," which described Picasso's libidinal distortions: "Picasso has used his brush like a sword, disemboweling an eye to plaster it over the ear, lopping off a breast in order to turn it behind an
415 arm, scoring the nostrils of his ladies until they took on the violent necessities of those twin holes of life and death, the vagina and the anus."⁵²

Mailer's description of Picasso's technique can be related to the anatomical distortions in Fisher's collages. According to Lurie, Fisher's experience as a medical orderly during World War II -- he was
420 sent to Europe shortly after D-day -- may be related to the way he surgically rearranged anatomies in his collages to create hybrid figures and mutants. In a 1961 statement for the "Involvement Show," Fisher argued that the NO!artists were dealing "a lethal blow to the ideology of dog eat dog.... We are not afraid of confronting the Hiroshima Hells and Buchenwalds of a world in trouble. We offer no tranquilizers."⁵³ Fisher's collages, like his "Debris" (1961), recall the photomontages of
425 John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann and, especially Hannah Höch, although the NO!artists were

⁴⁸ Maurice Tuchman: A Decade of Kienholz. In: Artforum. April 1966, S. 41.

⁴⁹ Suzi Gablik: Stanley Fisher, Stryke. In: Art News. 63. 1964 (November), S. 16.

⁵⁰ Seymour Krim: The Beats. A Gold Medal Anthology. Greenwich 1960. Siehe auch: Seymour Krim: Epitaph for a Canadian Kike. In: You & Me. New York 1968.

⁵¹ Stanley Fisher: Beat Coast East. New York 1960. Buchbesprechung in: Margaret Randall: Beating the Beat. In: Scrap. 2. 1960, S. 3.

⁵² Norman Mailer: An Eye for Picasso. In: Fisher, S. 86-87.

⁵³ Stanley Fisher: Involvement Show Statement (1961). In: Lurie; Krim, S. 38.

unaware of Berlin Dada until much later. "Debris," sometimes called "Reds to Test," was one of the images reproduced in *Christ in a Fallout Shelter*, which Fisher published at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

430 Fisher's booklet "*Christ in a Fallout Shelter*" (1962) was a mixture of social criticism, transgressive writing and purple prose. To discourage speculators from stockpiling art, in the same way that they stockpile weapons, Fisher argued that artists should make "temporary art." He referred to "my view of art as something that will help the human condition become more alive, more intense and more interested in its own sublimity than present conditions permit." On the subject of Abstract Expressionism, he thought it "once had deep meaning, but now it has been imitated out of existence and cannot rise to the challenge of new values, or breakthrough to the unconventional."
435 A messianic revolutionary (inspired by writers like Paul Goodman, Norman Mailer and Allen Ginsberg), Fisher argued for the revival of the artist's "prophetic and revolutionary fervor," and tried to express this ideal "by fusing elements together in a mysterious thralldom of photograph and paint, children's collage drawings and poems."⁵⁴

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NO! Art Exhibitions

The first collective exhibition of the NO!artists, the "Vulgar Show," was held at the March Gallery in November 1960, and included the works of Lurie, Goodman, Fisher, and John Fischer. The fact that these artists stigmatised their work as "Yiddische" and "Jew-art," indicates that a self-deprecating sense of humor, intertwined with anger, fueled the production of their art. They enjoyed disturbing the sensibilities of gentiles and fellow Jews who were embarrassed by their apparent lack of civility.⁵⁵ Their artworks frequently combined atrocity photographs of the Holocaust and swastikas in a deliberately provocative way. The meaning of "vulgarity" was a reflection of their use of subject matter ("politics," advertising, pin-ups), and the marked absence of tasteful formal values (the admission of graffiti, junk materials, impermanence). As Lurie explained, "We meant to show, to draw attention to, to underline the 'vulgarity' within us quite as much as around us, to accept such vulgarity, to absorb it, to become conscious of it, to exorcise it."⁵⁶

455 The NO!artists were also consciously exploring vulgarity as a way of baiting cultural conservatives and the political Right. (Critics like Max Kozloff complained that the younger generation "depend too much upon the repulsiveness of their imagery."⁵⁷ The Supreme Court had recently ruled that it would not protect "obscene matter," finding nudity, sexuality and excretion particularly offensive. Since the ruling threatened their democratic right to free speech, some artists deliberately questioned the official definition of obscenity. When the hypocrites in power demanded sanity-in-art, the irresistible urge was to present them with shit, and tell them they were looking in a mirror.
460 Things were getting so absurd that the Post Office refused to handle postcards illustrating Goya's "Nude Maja," calling it obscene. From the perspective of the NO!artists, the true obscenities of the day were the Nazi gas chambers, the development of the atomic bomb, the merchants of death who manufactured weapons, corporate greed, and the ongoing atrocities sanctioned by the U.S. government.

465 The "Involvement Show," held at the March Gallery in April 1961, was an experiment in participatory democracy, accompanied with statements by Lurie, Goodman, Fisher and Augustus Goertz, who were among the twenty-six artists in the show. Opposing any efforts to label the work, Lurie wrote, "The ivory tower is no substitute for Involvement in life. In a time of wars and extermination, aesthetic exercises and decorative patterns are not enough."⁵⁸ Some of the other participants in the "Involvement Show" were the Happenings artist Allan Kaprow, Yayoi Kusama, Michelle Stuart, Jean-Jacques Lebel and the Icelandic artist Erro (Ferro). At this time, Lebel was living in New York, making painted collages and assemblages (like his "New York School," 1962) which incorporated pin-up fragments comparable to those of Lurie. The German artist and

⁵⁴ Stanley Fisher: *Christ in a Fallout Shelter*. New York 1962. Siehe auch:

Allen Guttman: *The Revolutionary Messiah*. In: *The Jewish Writer in America. Assimilation and the Crisis of Identity*. New York 1971.

⁵⁵ Siehe: John Murray Cuddihy: *The Ordeal of Civility. Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity*. New York 1974. Cuddihy konzentriert sich auf, "die Angst und Qual assimilierter Juden mit dem öffentlichen Auftreten ihrer Glaubensgenossen."

⁵⁶ Lurie; Krim, S. 58.

⁵⁷ Max Kozloff: *Pop Culture, Metaphysical Disgust and the New Vulgarians*. In: *Art International*. VI.2. 1962 (März). S. 34-36. Wiederabgedruckt in: Max Kozloff, *Renderings. Critical Essays on a Century of Modern Art*. New York 1968, S. 221.

⁵⁸ Lurie; Krim, S. 39.

475 filmmaker Wolf Vostell, whose first exhibition in the U.S. was held at the Smolin Gallery in 1963, became friendly with the NO! artists, and recognized that they were creating works with comparable themes, in the same mode of expression (dé/collage).⁵⁹

The policy of open admissions was meant to be radically egalitarian, and showed the influence of the burgeoning New Left. Citing Camus ("What is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first
480 gesture of rebellion"), one of the contributors to the show, Michelle Stuart wrote an article, "NO is an Involvement, " for "Artforum" (September 1963), claiming: "These men are first of all artists, protesting artists, but no social realists. One finds no rigid message or standard discipline here. They are suggesting, rebelling, in an essentially romantic manner."⁶⁰ Later on, Lurie admitted that the reason for the "Involvement Show" was naive, since, "The idea of involvement, the breaking of
485 isolation, that by itself was all right. Yet our idea of involvement went farther into a premature attempt to embrace all society including our 'enemies,' to embrace all currents liberally, to dispense with an opposition attitude, to give up anger."⁶¹ Unfortunately, this democratic notion of involvement permitted a noncommittal pluralism and eclecticism to undermine their opposition to the Establishment.

490 The concept of involvement sometimes meant that the viewer was required to open and shut elements in an artwork, or operate a contraption by flicking a switch, as in "ludic" or "participatory" art. This type of involvement was on the most basic level of physical manipulation. In existential vocabulary, however, one could also be involved, in the sense of being a responsible and committed individual. This is more along the lines of what the NO! artists were emphasizing, except
495 their notion of involvement was translated into explicitly "political" terms, i.e., they weren't just committed to being artists, they wanted to break with the Abstract Expressionists' habit of aestheticizing their alienation from society. This met resistance at the Club, the famous meeting-place of the Abstract Expressionists, where the painter Milton Resnick exploded: "What is this stuff involvement? I never saw it! I don't know what the fuck it looks like. I'm sick of it! I'm not involved!
500 I'm not committed! I shit on those fucking lousy stupid words! They're not mine and I hate every son of a bitch who uses them. Now that's who I attack."⁶² This was in January 1961, when the NO! artists were soliciting contributions for their "Involvement Show."

The impending nuclear apocalypse was the subject of the next group exhibition, "The Doom Show," held in December 1961, which reflected the mounting anxiety in America at the time of the Berlin
505 Wall and the Cuban Missile Crisis. The invention of the atomic bomb meant that human beings had developed the technological capacity to destroy life on earth. The potential for annihilation gave rise to feelings of "psychic numbing," characterized by despair and futility.⁶³ The purpose of this exhibition was to destroy apathy, and wake people up to confront the suicidal madness of the arms race. Although Lewis Mumford argued that artists had a special obligation to forestall "collective
510 suicide," the subject was so monumental that few artists were able to deal with it frankly, without resorting to evasive metaphors and clichés. The same problems regarding the enormity of the Holocaust -- as subject matter in art -- were applicable to artists who approached the possibility of nuclear warfare: "Overwhelming as the bomb was... it was not lived experience. The central reality of a new era, it was not yet accessible to the creative core of consciousness."⁶⁴

515 Fisher's collages "Debris" and "Hell" were included in the "Doom Show" in 1961. That year, "the U.S. was estimated to possess a 30,000 megaton nuclear stockpile, equivalent to one and a half million Hiroshimas... Kennedy planned to double this by 1965."⁶⁵ The Americans had developed intercontinental ballistic missiles, and a fleet of nuclear submarines; their milk and food supply was contaminated with Strontium 90 from nuclear tests. "Debris" included a civil defense poster and
520 pictures of victims suffering from exposure to fallout. In Fisher's booklet, "Christ in a Fallout Shelter" (1962), privately-published after the show, he mingled straight prose with hallucinatory fiction

⁵⁹ Wolf Vostell: No Blood... Please... (1970). In: Lurie; Krim, S.18-19.

⁶⁰ Michelle Stuart: NO is an Involvement. In: Artforum. 1963 (September), S. 36-37.

⁶¹ Lurie; Krim, S. 58.

⁶² Milton Resnick: Attack. 1961. In: Scrap. 3.1961. S. 2. Scrap (Fetzen) war eine respektlose, von Künstlern billig produzierte Zeitung, die von Sidney Geist herausgegeben wurde. Resnick erwähnt zwar die NO!art-Ausstellung und die March-Gruppe nicht, aber die zeitliche Abstimmung - das Statement entstand Ende Januar, die Ausstellung fand im April statt - ist wahrscheinlich kein Zufall.

⁶³ Robert Jay Lifton: Death in Life. Survivors of Hiroshima. New York 1969.

⁶⁴ Paul Boyer: By the Bomb's Early Light. American Thoughts and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age. New York 1985, S. 250.

⁶⁵ Tagg, S. 72.

(envisioning zombies in a post-apocalyptic landscape). He began the pamphlet with a response to an "inane review" of the "Doom Show" by S. Kiplinger of the "Village Voice," and proceeded to attack the futility of fall-out shelters and survival kits, which Kennedy advocated in an irresponsible

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July 25, 1961 television special on civil defense, causing widespread panic. While he agreed that, "Atom arms should be destroyed," Fisher was surprisingly unsympathetic to the Peace Strikers. His "Message to the Peace Striker" in "Christ in a Fall-Out Shelter" scorned civil disobedience, and recommended creative play as an alternative: "Paint! (Talent has nothing to do with art)."⁶⁶ Fisher was not alone in being skeptical about the Ban-the-Bomb Movement, as it

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manifested itself in the early protests of the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA). Yet although "these early CNVA demonstrations were viewed by most people as being somewhat kooky and extreme," they were an important influence, along with the civil rights sit-ins, for the incipient New Left.⁶⁷ Coming from someone who advocated social art, and was vehemently opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and atmospheric testing, Fisher's conservative position seems

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less surprising, when we remember that even Herbert Marcuse, possibly the most prominent leftist of the period, celebrated the "play instinct" as the highest form of protest in "Eros and Civilization" (1955).⁶⁸ A documentary record of the "Doom Show" is preserved for us in a black-and-white film by Ray Wisniewski, which was recently screened as part of a Fluxus film festival at Anthology Film

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Archives. Also titled "Doom Show," the film was shown at the First Film Program at the A/G Gallery, an exhibition space opened in New York in 1961 by George Maciunas, the founder of Fluxus. In this 20-minute film, small children at an art opening crash into works of art, and sadistically crush plastic dolls under the wheels of their tricycles, while an air-raid siren wails on the soundtrack. It has a real-time character to it, like Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's "Pull My Daisy" (1959).

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Wiesniewski described it enigmatically as "A ritual fire dance in a cellar on 10th Street in the shadow of the shadow over Christmas."⁶⁹ One of the prominent works in the show was Goodman's assemblage, "Psycho-Vanity -- Americanus Male" (1961), an attack on machismo as an integral part of militarism. Situated in the basement of a building on Tenth Street, the March Gallery was an appropriate

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setting for the "Doom Show" since it was an underground bunker of sorts, a symbolic fall-out shelter. The "Doom Show" received a positive review in Art News, in spite of the critic's complaint that Lurie and Goodman were preaching to the already-converted, a more or less standard critique of "protest art."⁷⁰ In another review, Elaine de Kooning compared the work in the show to Kurt Schwitters' "merz" collages and the spirit of Berlin Dada: "When you enter this small gallery, you

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are overwhelmed with newspaper; headlines of executions and nuclear tests, grotesque pin-up girls, hideous, pasted amalgamations of public faces -- a profusion of humor and horror, interchangeable and sickening."⁷¹ Photographs of the NO!art exhibitions look remarkably similar to the display of the "First International Dada Fair" at Dr. Otto Burchard's gallery, Berlin, in 1920.

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The NO!artists were frequently criticized for presenting their work in the established context of art galleries. It was this kind of accusation that led artists like Goodman and D'Arcangelo to take their art to the streets, in the form of a "Car Event" in 1961. (Like the NO! artists, D'Arcangelo's early pre-Pop paintings used pin-ups, like Marilyn Monroe, as subject matter in his art.) In their "Car Event," a cross between a "happening" and a political protest, the artists turned a car into a float,

⁶⁶ Fisher 1962, o.S.

⁶⁷ Jezer, S. 35. Unter den durch die Presse viel beachteten Demonstrationen war auch ein erster Protest gegen einen Atomwaffentest im August 1957 und die Fahrt der "Golden Rule", um den Bombenabwurf über Eniwetok zu verhindern. SANE (The Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) wurde 1957 gegründet.

⁶⁸ Herbert Marcuse: Eros and Civilisation. London 1955.

⁶⁹ Pull me Daisy. Ein Film von Robert Frank und Alfred Leslie. Mit einer Einführung von Jerry Tallmer und einem improvisierten Text von Jack Kerouac (New York 1961). Copyright 1959 by G-String Enterprises.

Das erste Filmprogramm der A/G Gallery, 925 Madison Ave., wurde von Jonas Mekas kuratiert und enthielt Kurzfilme von Stan Vanderbeek, "Achoo Mr. Keroochev" (1959), "Ala Mode" (1958), "Astral Man" (1957), "Blacks and Whites. Days and Nights" (1960), von Ray Wisniewski "Doom Show" (1961), "The Lead Shoes" (1949) von Sidney Peterson, "Film Exercises" (1943-45) und von John und James Whitney "Antifilm #2" (1957). Dieses Programm wurde vom 19. September bis 11. Oktober 1992 unter dem Titel „In and Around Fluxus: A Festival of Fluxfilms, Fluxloops, Fluxslides and Environments“ in den Anthology Archive wiederaufgeführt.

⁷⁰ Jill Johnson: Doom Show. In: Art News. 60. 1962. (Januar), S. 12. Diese Sichtweise zieht es bequemerweise vor, die Existenz von rechtsgerichteten Künstlern und deren Publikum zu ignorieren.

⁷¹ Elaine de Kooning: Doom Belongs to Dada. In: Village Scene. Vol. 1. 1962 (März).

565 and wore death masks and skulls, protesting the Bomb. Taking place around Tompkins Square
Park in the East Village, this event anticipated the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations later on in the
decade. There was a lot of restlessness in the art world in the early sixties, with the Artists Tenants
Association, the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
soliciting help from artists, and disgruntled Realists protesting the dominance of abstraction in the
570 museums.

Two NO!art shows were held in Italy in 1962, at the Schwarz Gallery in Milan, and at the Galleria
La Salita in Rome, although, as yet, no one was referring to their art using this label in print. Lurie
was surprised when Thomas B. Hess (the editor of "Art News," and a pillar of the Establishment)
agreed to write an essay for the exhibition poster, in which he stated, "Sam Goodman and Boris
575 Lurie are true Social Realists... They comment on the disgrace of society with the refugee material
of society itself -- fugitive materials for fugitives from our great disorders -- our peripheral
obscenities, our garbage, our repulsive factory-made waste matter."⁷² (Hess was the only
mainstream art critic to write about NO!art, in the critical period, from 1960 to 1964. The most
important tastemakers, the critics for the "New York Times," ignored their exhibitions, with the
580 exception of Goodman's "NO!Sculpture Show" in 1964, which was reviewed by Brian O'Doherty.)

Lurie visited Italy during the exhibitions in Rome and Milan, where he met the veteran dadaist
Marcel Janco, as well as Enrico Baj (of the Nuclear Art Movement) and Roberto Crippa. The Italian
exhibitions were a "succès de scandale," with the Italian police insisting on an 18-year-old age
requirement, causing curious people to converge on the exhibitions. In Rome, ten thousand people
585 turned out to see the exhibition, a remarkable crowd. The reception of the exhibitions was mixed,
with the Rightists making the same moralizing accusations as their counterparts in America. The
conservatives resented these Neo-Dadaists destroying their hallowed conceptions of Art, and
resorted to name-calling, accusing the NO! artists of being pornographers, who indulged in
"Obscenity for its own sake."⁷³ In the most extreme response, Giampiero Giani wrote, in "Lies
590 Among the Trash," ("Avanti," Milan): "we must denounce this, and of course, the one to be held
responsible for all this is the Schwarz Gallery."⁷⁴

The critics on the Left, on the other hand, were baffled that Thomas Hess had introduced these
artists as Social Realists, since their work clearly had no relation to Zhdanovist principles. This
designation of their work was unfortunate, because the NO! artists were unfavorably compared to
595 Siqueiros and Guttuso (an artist who had been profiled in "Art News," in 1958, in a special section,
"How art exists under Communism").⁷⁵ "The position of a Guttuso has the unshaken optimism of a
realism of strict Marxist observance whereas Lurie has the air of being nihilist or anarchic," wrote
Vittorio Rubiu in a separate preface to the Rome show, clarifying the differences.⁷⁶ A few critics
were sympathetic to the NO!artists, including one who wrote, "in the fury of their rebellion is implied
600 a very human, a very sincere aspiration to justice and peace, and this is what justified them."⁷⁷ In
"L'Unita" the Communist daily, Mario de Micheli was particularly impressed by Lurie's work,
"Lumumba is Dead".⁷⁸

At the same time as the Italian exhibitions, Hess wrote a letter to Lurie, asking him to justify his
collaboration with the culture industry. Lurie's response was basically pragmatic: "What else should
605 and can an artist who has something to say do but 'play the exhibition circuit'? -- This is the one
legitimate outlet... our 'setup' provides for us, providing the artist has the energy and the means to
take advantage of it."⁷⁹ In this respect, they weren't as militant as their contemporaries, the
Situationists in France, who refused to compromise their ideological "purity." In spite of this, we can
see parallels between these groups; both groups expressed their support for anti-colonial
610 movements in Africa, and they were equally disgusted by the "Doomsday System."⁸⁰ Still, Lurie

⁷² Thomas B. Hess: Introduction. Italian Shows. In: Lurie; Krim, S. 64.

⁷³ Mario Monteverdi: Corriere Lombardo. 9. Oktober 1962. In: Boris Lurie Papers (ca. 1958-1967). In: Archives
of American Art. Microfilm Reel 3134, frame 789.

⁷⁴ Giampiero Giani: Lies Among Trash. In: Avanti. (Mailand). In: Boris Lurie Papers. Frame 788-89.

⁷⁵ Milton Gendel: Guttuso. A Party of View. In: Art News. 57.2. 1958 (April), S. 26-27, S. 59-62.

⁷⁶ Vittoria Rubiu: The Painting-Collage of Boris Lurie (Vorwort zu der Ausstellung in der Galerie LaSalita,
Rom). In: Boris Lurie Papers. Frame 784.

⁷⁷ M. Leppore in: Corriere d'Informazione. (Mailand). 3. Oktober 1962. In: Boris Lurie Papers. Frame 791.

⁷⁸ Mario de Micheli: Lurie and Goodman in Milan. An American Rebellion. In: L'Unita. 20. Oktober 1962. In:
Lurie; Krim, S. 66-67.

⁷⁹ Boris Lurie: Letter to Mr. Hess. In: Lurie; Krim, S. 65.

⁸⁰ Siehe: The Geopolitics of Hibernation (1962). In: Ken Knabb (Hg.): The Situationist International Anthology.
Berkeley 1981, S. 76-82.

noted that, in spite of their willingness to operate within institutions, the NO!artists found themselves blacklisted anyway (for example, why weren't they included in the "Art of Assemblage" at the Museum of Modern Art?).

615 Back in New York, the "NO!Show," held at the uptown Gallery Gertrude Stein in 1963, included the work of twelve artists. In an accompanying essay, the writer Seymour Krim declared, "Much of the work in this exhibition seems to me the closest approximation of this contemporary madhouse, which is our existential lot, that I have seen".⁸¹ As the exhibition theme suggests, these artists were articulating what came to be known as the Great Refusal, a phrase which was popularized by Marcuse, in his book "One-Dimensional Man" (1964). Gertrude Stein described how, in Lurie's
620 paintings, the element of negation was aimed at "the accepted, the cruelty, the desperation and despair which prevails, to conformism and the materialistic. It is a strong 'NO' in a flood of massproduced 'YESSSES'." Advertising was so ubiquitous, it was having a subliminal effect on people, brainwashing, persuading and cajoling people to consume. Informed by psychoanalysis, the adman cleverly manipulated the unconscious mind of the consumer, and his political
625 equivalent, the spin doctor or pollster, played an important role in the "engineering of consent."⁸² From a critical perspective, it was easy to see how advertising was basically a form of capitalist propaganda, producing what Vance Packard (in "The Hidden Persuaders") called "The Engineered Yes."⁸³ This was the reason why Boris Lurie was stamping NO! all over advertisements for cars and dishwashers, which appeared alongside atrocity photographs of Buchenwald and Hiroshima, in
630 mass-circulation magazines. Adorno and Horkheimer complained that, "In the most influential American magazines, "Life" and "Fortune," a quick glance can now scarcely distinguish advertising from editorial picture and text."⁸⁴ Then, as now, the multinational corporations sponsored the news, and determined what was newsworthy, or "fit to print." In his large painted collages and assemblages, Lurie expressed his disgust with the ruling class and the multinational corporations --
635 indeed, the entire capitalist system -- for emptying life of its meaning, for juxtaposing, on the same level, a choice of dishwashers with images of mass-destruction.

In 1963, Sam Goodman and Dorothy Gillespie mounted "The American Way of Death" at the Champagne Gallery. In his "Doom Show Statement," Stanley Fisher had written how atomic warfare promised "death without meaning, a death without dignity, a lonely death, a death in a
640 sense 'deserved.'"⁸⁵ During the sixties, the nation was traumatized by a series of assassinations and images of violent death. Goodman and Gillespie's exhibition title was derived from Jessica Mitford's best-selling book, an expose on overpricing in the funeral industry which resulted in government regulation. Mitford's book launched an attack on the "funeral transaction," described the extraordinary funerary practices of the "death industry," and documented the gross profits of
645 funeral directors whose capitalist motives were utterly shameless. The "American Way of Death" exhibition was somewhat morbid and ghoulish, indulging in black humor, with coffins (complete with effigies), tombstones, lawn furniture and a cemetery map.⁸⁶

One of the critics who objected to the pornographic imagery in NO!art, Rosalind G. Wholden published an article in "Arts Magazine," singling out Lurie's 1963 "Immigrant NO! Box" and "NO!
650 Suitcase," which were covered with Holocaust imagery, pin-ups, advertisements, NO! stencils, swastikas and Stars of David. Apparently unaware that Lurie was a Holocaust survivor -- dubbing him "subhuman," a "self-styled outcast" -- Wholden decried the "vileness" of the boxes, claiming that, "The box desecrates the innocent millions herded and slaughtered by Hitler's Nazis through juxtaposing on its surfaces concentration-camp photographs and glossies of women in obscene
655 poses ."⁸⁷ Around the same time, Shephard Rifkin, writing for "Art International," catalogued some gruesome incidents he had witnessed while driving an ambulance in East Harlem, and stated, "The largest personal tragedy is most of these artists' lives probably happened when their pot supplier

⁸¹ Seymour Krim: NO!Show Introduction. In: Lurie; Krim, S. 24-25. Außer Werken von Lurie, Goodman und Fisher zeigte die Ausstellung Arbeiten von Rocco Armento, Esther Oilman, Gloria Graves, Allan Kaprow, Yayoi Kusama, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Michelle Stuart und Richard Tyler.

⁸² Edward L. Bernays: The Engineering of Consent. S. 250. 1947 (Marz), S.113-120.

⁸³ Vance Packard: The Hidden Persuaders. New York 1957.

⁸⁴ Adorno; Horkheimer, S. 163.

⁸⁵ Stanley Fisher: Doom Show Statement (1961). In: Lurie; Krim, S. 40.

⁸⁶ Jessica Mitford: The American Way of Death. New York 1963. Siehe auch: Morris Dickstein: Black Humor and History. In: Morris Dickstein: Gates of Eden. American Culture in the Sixties. New York 1977.

⁸⁷ Rosalind Wholden: Specters - Drawn and Quartered. In: Arts Magazine. 38. 1964 (Mai), S. 17-18.

got busted.”⁸⁸ Somehow, it never occurred to either one of these writers that these artists may have been directly affected by the Holocaust.

660 Wholden's objection to Lurie's work was combined with an attack on the Italian-American painter Rico Lebrun, one of the principle exponents of the “New Humanism” in the late fifties, who made artworks based on the Holocaust. His work was featured in the Museum of Modern Art's “New Images of Man” exhibition in 1959, curated by Peter Selz. A survey of post-World War II figurative expressionism, the artists in this show were involved in a return to the figure. Selz and theologian
665 Paul Tillich claimed these artists were resisting the dehumanizing consequences of technological progress by regaining the image of man. They framed their discussion of the work in the language of Existentialism, emphasizing the feelings of anguish and dread associated with their art.⁸⁹ While there were parallels between the NO!artists and the “New-Image-of-Man” artists -- for example, Sam Goodman's “Fallen Warrior” (1961) can be compared with Baskin's limestone effigy, “The Great Dead Man” (1956), and de Kooning's “Marilyn Monroe” (1954) features the ultimate sex-symbol pin-up -- there were significant differences, too.

The difficulty with the “New-Image-of-Man sensibility” as an effective form of political art was that, “in their attempt to make universal statements, the artists avoided those concrete and topical references which would locate their art in history... Instead, we were presented with symbols and situations so obscure and ambiguous as to be ineffective as a form of communication... The
675 humanism of the new-image-of-man painters was not only pessimistic, but anti-democratic as well, for they made no attempt to reach out to ‘the people’ or to depict the daily concerns of the working classes.”⁹⁰ This is from an essay by Patricia Hills, on “The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art,” one of the many museums that became dumping-grounds for “New-Image-of-Man” art. The designation of NO!art as “humanism” is inappropriate, since the NO!artists referred to topical events, denounced capitalism, and valued involvement-in-art, while working collaboratively as a group.

For the NO!artists, the “New-Image-of-Man” sensibility was anathema, since most of it was no better than a mild form of armchair liberalism; furthermore, the humanist's outward sympathy for
685 the oppressed often disguised an inner sadism. The incongruous juxtaposition of pin-ups and Holocaust victims in Lurie's “Buchenwald” collage (1959), for example, was at variance with Rico Lebrun's more “humanist” approach to the Holocaust in his “Buchenwald Pit” (1955). Lebrun's approach was more traditional in its conception, influenced by the “subjective” expressionism of Picasso and Beckmann, while the conceptual strategy in Lurie's collage was akin to the situationist technique of “détournement.” In Buchenwald, Lurie pasted erotic photographs of a pin-up around an image of Buchenwald survivors, with the caption, “Can it happen again?” Pointing to the dialectic between attraction and repulsion, the collage implied an analogy between the concentration camp survivors and the pin-up model. Lurie's work showed how the Holocaust survivors, like the pin-up, are made spectacular by the mass media.

695 The symbolic end of the NO!art group was Goodman's “NO!Sculpture Show,” held in 1964 at the Gallery Gertrude Stein. Politely described as “colonic calligraphy” in the “New York Times”,⁹¹ the painted papier mâché “Shit Sculptures” (made in collaboration with Lurie) were a nihilistic gesture, mocking the “filthy rich” art speculators. As piles of look-a-like feces, the sculptures resisted any formal reading, antagonizing an anal society obsessed with accumulating and retaining its wealth, allowing itself limited gratification. As a critic for “Art News” noted, the Shit Sculptures represented
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⁸⁸ Shephard Rifkin: Color me mean. In: Art International. VIII. 2. 1964 (20. März).

⁸⁹ Peter Selz; Paul Tillich: New Image of Man. Museum of Modern Art, New York 1959. Die Ausstellung zeigte neben Pollocks figurativen Arbeiten aus den fünfziger Jahren und de Koonings „Women“-Serie Werke europäischer Künstler wie Appel, Armitage, Bacon, Butler, Cesar, Dubuffet, Giacometti, Paolozzi, Richter und Wotruba. Der Bildhauer Theodor Roszak und der Maler Balcombe Greene waren vom Konstruktivismus zum Expressionismus „konvertiert“. Weitere Künstler, deren Werke ausgestellt wurden, waren Leonard Baskin, Leon Golub, Jan Muller, Nathan Oliviera und H.C. Westermann. In anderen Worten: hier traf sich eine Ansammlung internationaler Künstler, zu denen auch Vertreter aus New York, Chicago und Kalifornien gehörten.

⁹⁰ Patricia Hills: Painting 1941 -1980. In: Patricia Hills; Robert K. Tarbell: The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York 1980, S. 131.

⁹¹ Brian O'Doherty schreibt: „Die ultimative Revolution in der Themenauswahl war in der Gertrude Stein Gallery zu finden. ... Diese Aggregate an Kalligraphie des Darms beinhalten viele formale Besonderheiten für jeden, dessen puristische Bildung ihn zwingt, sie wahrzunehmen. Aber diese Thematik macht sich über diejenigen lustig, die versuchen, formale Werte zu finden. Solche, die sich anders verhalten, werden gezwungen, die Berechtigung von Werten zu leugnen, die bis heute verschiedenen College-Generationen eingehämmert wurden.“ Zitiert nach: Lurie; Krim, S. 63.

“the direct unsublimated expression of instinct,”⁹² reflecting the views of Freud and Norman O. Brown (“Life Against Death”).⁹³ (In his 1908 paper, “Character and Anal Eroticism,” Freud noted the connection between feces and money; in the same way that children are taught to withhold their feces, he argued, adults later suspend immediate gratification by investing their money in capitalist enterprises, becoming excessively orderly, parsimonious and obstinate.⁹⁴

705 After Goodman's 1964 “NO! Sculpture/Shit Show” at the Gallery Gertrude Stein, the NO!artists were jokingly called “Fecalophiles” by the stand-up comedian Lenny Bruce, in the underground newspaper, “The Realist.”⁹⁵ The scandalous presentation of the Shit Sculptures attracted the collector Leon Kraushar, who visited the “NO!Sculpture Show,” and congratulated Goodman on his success. Goodman, however, was not impressed by the Pop art powerbroker, and told him, “I shit on you, too” to his face. Like Manzoni, who sold cans of his own excrement as art (priced at the same cost per gram as gold), Goodman underlined the archaic connection between feces, money and property. In the debased environment of consumer capitalism, what usually passes as art was just shit in the eyes of the NO! artists, who saw, not an affluent, but an effluent society in the United States, where cultural endeavors were maintained on the basis of a perpetual war economy.

710 The activities of the NO!art group were competely overshadowed by the emergence of Pop art after the success of their 1962 “New Realists” show at Sidney Janis Gallery. Although one writer has compared Pop to NO! art, claiming that, “Neo-Dada... brings us face to face with the more tawdry aspects of contemporary life, especially those of advertising, and in doing so, makes us painfully aware of the vulgarities in which we have acquiesced,” the NO! artists were alienated from their Pop counterparts -- since the latter group actively courted the ruling class, celebrating consumer society and the American way of life.⁹⁶ In 1964, Lurie held a show of “Anti-Pop Posters” (1963), which consisted of faulty offset printing sheets with miscellaneous advertising imagery. The posters were printed over with pin-up imagery, sado-masochistic scenes, and the words “NO” and “Anti-Pop.” The relationship between the Pop and NO!artists was bound to be antagonistic, since the NO!artists categorically rejected consumer society and commodity fetishism, while most of the Pop artists either celebrated the American Dream uncritically, or assumed an attitude of blasé indifference.

730 **Sexual Politics**

Reviewing the Museum of Modern Art's 1963 “Art of Assemblage” exhibition, Thomas Hess noted that the prominent erotic content in this genre was notably absent, implying that this material had been censored to placate conservatives. Besides the Surrealist heritage, Hess was also thinking of the NO!artists, since he illustrated Lurie's “Lumumba is Dead,” which incorporated pin-up imagery.⁹⁷ According to Lurie, Alfred Barr and William Seitz visited Roland de Aennle's gallery in the planning stages of the exhibition, and even selected some of his works for the show, excluding them without explanation. Likewise, during “The First International Girlie Show,” held at the Pace Gallery in January 1964, Brian O'Doherty remarked that, “Not represented were a persistent and embarrassing trio, Sam Goodman, Boris Lurie and Stanley Fisher, who for years have been using the most obscene pin-ups available as collage material in obvious social commentaries, e.g., a sexy nude next to grisly photographs of gas-chamber victims.”⁹⁸

740 The same analogy (between subjugated women and concentration camp victims) was employed by Betty Friedan, in her best-selling book “The Feminine Mystique,” published in 1963, which criticized the internment of housewives in suburban homes, or “comfortable concentration camps.”⁹⁹ In spite

⁹² Thomas Neumann: Sam Goodman. In: Art News. 63. 1964 (Sommer), S. 18.

⁹³ Norman O. Brown: Life Against Death. New York 1959.

⁹⁴ Sigmund Freud: Charakter und Analerotik (1908). In: Sigmund Freud, Gesammelte Werke. Band 2. London 1950, S. 45-50.

⁹⁵ Lenny Bruce: The Fecalophiles. Siehe auch: Paul Krassner: Look-Ma ... No Sculptures. In: The Realist. 54. 1964 (November).

⁹⁶ Edward T. Kelly: Neo-Dada. A Critique of Pop Art. In: College Art Journal. 23.3.1964 (Frühling).

⁹⁷ Thomas B. Hess: Collage as a Historical Method. Art News 1961 (November), S. 30-33, S. 69-71. Hess führt das Werk unter dem Titel „December“. Siehe auch: William Seitz: The Art of Assemblage. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1961.

⁹⁸ Brian O'Doherty: The Rise of Art Below the Waiste. Show, Juni 1964. Wiederaufgelegt in: Brian O'Doherty 1967, S. 219-220.

⁹⁹ Betty Friedan: The Feminine Mystique. New York 1963. Kapitel 12 befaßt sich mit „Progressiver Dehumanisierung: Das komfortable Konzentrationslager“. Die Auto-rin schreibt: „Befremdlicherweise waren die Umstände, die die menschliche Identität von so vielen Gefangenen zerstörten, nicht die Folter oder die

745 of the male backlash after the war, the number of female workers continued to increase, and the
introduction of the birth-control pill in 1960 was an important advance in their reproductive rights.
However, few women were securing the kinds of professional jobs that would put them on a level of
equality with men. In 1957, the Ford Foundation sponsored a report, titled "Womanpower," which
750 examined such issues as discrimination in the workplace, and Kennedy established a commission
which proposed equal opportunity, equal pay, and federally-funded child-care centers. Gradually,
Congress passed legislation to protect women's rights, including the Equal Pay Act (1963) and the
Civil Rights Act (1964), although women's earnings actually "dropped" from 66% of men's wages in
1959, to 58% in 1968.¹⁰⁰

The "pin-up" - an expression coined during World War II, when American servicemen displayed
755 pictures of Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth on their barracks' walls - was a conspicuous symbol of
the post-war male backlash. Promoting an ideal of passive female sexuality, pin-ups were such a
ubiquitous form of visual culture, it was almost inevitable that they would influence contemporary
artists. De Kooning and Rauschenberg were among the first artists to incorporate pin-ups in their
work. According to Thomas Hess, de Kooning's "Women" series of the 1950s were based on pin-
760 ups, and constituted a form of "emotional and intellectual criticism, in visual form, of the
contemporaneous situation of the American woman as reflected in the pin-up photograph,"
although this interpretation has subsequently been challenged by feminist art historians like Carol
Duncan.¹⁰¹ Among other artists using pin-up imagery, Hess noted that, "In the violent protest
pictures by Sam Goodman and Boris Lurie... the pin-up became a symbol of the capitalist state."¹⁰²
765 Incorporating pin-ups, the work of the NO!artists was created at a time when "the objectification of
sex became pervasive," exemplified by the appearance of men's magazines, and the Kinsey
reports on male (1948) and female (1953) sexuality.¹⁰³ Later targeted by the feminist movement,
the growing sex industry and the proliferation of "pornographic" magazines played an important role
in the so-called Sexual Revolutions.¹⁰⁴ Lurie began using pin-up imagery in his artworks because
770 he was intrigued by the ubiquity of this material in certain male-occupied areas, while in other
contexts, this material was taboo. This contradiction fascinated him, and he was intent on exposing
the world of commodified sex, the repression of sexual desire, and the taboos surrounding male
prerogatives. Like the emerging generation of feminists, it could be construed that the NO!artists
attacked pornography, believing that it debases men and women. However, their use of this
775 material shows the inherent contradiction in their approach, arousing moral indignation while
consuming the material in the next instance.

In some respects, the artworld was an important vanguard of the Sexual Revolution, and in popular
bohemian mythology, the relationship between the artist and his model was a constant source of
innuendo. The Chicago-based magazine "Studio" ran a feature on "Greenwich Village -- Art Center
780 or Dirty Joke?" in its July 1957 issue, and magazines like "Art and Photography," "Art and Camera,"
"Life Study" and "Figure Quarterly" masqueraded as "art" magazines, containing "figure studies" for
"artists."¹⁰⁵ Some of the men's magazines (aimed at the swinging playboy and hipster), like

Brutalität, sondern es waren die Umstände, die vergleichbar mit denen sind, die die Identität der
amerikanischen Hausfrau zerstören." Friedan, S. 305-306.

¹⁰⁰ Damit wurden die Erfolge im Kampf um die Gleichberechtigung der Frauen, die während des Krieges die
Plätze der Männer in der Industrie eingenommen hatten, teilweise wieder zunichte gemacht. Auch die
Propaganda erfuhr einen völligen Wechsel. Waren die Frauen während des Krieges in die Produktion gelockt
worden, so sollten sie nun wieder ins Heim und an den Herd zurückkehren (Anmerkung der Redaktion).

¹⁰¹ Lois W. Banner: Women in Modern America: A Brief History. New York 1974, S. 238.

¹⁰² Thomas B. Hess: Pinup and Icon. Woman as Sex Object. Studies in Erotic Art 1730-1970. Art New Annual
38. 1972, S. 235. Für eine alternative Sicht siehe: Carol Duncan: The Esthetics of Power in Modern Erotic Art.
Heresies 1. 1977 (Januar), S. 46-50. Indem sie sich auf de Koonings Werk bezieht, führt die Autorin aus:
Immer wieder stellt sich der Mann dem weiblichen Akt als Widersacher entgegen. ... Oft fordern solche Werke
die Phantasien von männlicher Errungenschaft heraus ... so daß die Unterwerfung des Weiblichen als eines
der primären Motive der modernen erotischen Kunst erscheint." Duncan, S. 46.

¹⁰³ Hess 1972, S. 235. Stanley Fisher widmete 1963 Marilyn Monroe eine Ausstellung.

¹⁰⁴ Jezer, S. 247. Für Reaktionen auf die Kinsey-Reporte siehe: Lionel Trilling: The Kinsey Report (1948). The
Liberal Imagination. Essays on Literature and Society. Garden City, New York 1953, S. 216-234. Georges
Bataille: Kinsey. The Underworld and work. In: Georges Bataille: Erotism. San Francisco 1986 (1957). S. 149-
163.

¹⁰⁵ Obwohl die Sexindustrie weibliche (und männliche) Körper als Objekte und Ware vermarktete, trug sie
später paradoxerweise zur sexuellen Emanzipation bei, indem sie den zeitgenössischen Sexualkodex
anzweifelte, sexuelle Aufklärung begünstigte, heuchlerische Gesetze gegen die Obszönität angriff und für
Verhütung und die Rechte der Homosexuellen plädierte. Wie in jeder Industrie wurde in der Porno- und

785 "Playboy" (featuring Marilyn Monroe on its first front cover, 1953), "The Gent," "The Dude" and "Nugget" published serious prose and fiction, but the main function of these magazines was to serve as outlets for "repressive desublimation," as Marcuse would put it, reconciling men with capitalism. This critique of the sex industry was expressed in a rhyming poem-painting by Lurie, titled "Liz, Brigit and Jane, The Sweet Narcotics that Dull the Pain" (1960), which referred to the movie star-sex symbols Elizabeth Taylor, Brigitte Bardot and Jane Mansfield.¹⁰⁶

790 In 1962, Lurie began a "Love Series" depicting bound and gagged women using sadomasochistic photographs (like the images in "Nutrix," or the photographs of Irving Klaw). The "torture" scenes, as he described them, were photo mechanically transferred onto canvas, without alteration. He then supplied this group of works with an ironic title, which acted as the critical component of the series. Represented by images of violation and sadism, the "Love Series" was a debunking of American romance, also unmasking the connection between sadism and voyeurism, implicating the viewers.

795 The disturbing images he used for "Triple Bound," "Gagged," and "Blindfolded" blatantly exposed the master-slave dialectic, as it operates in male-female relations. "Triple Bound" (1962), for instance, showed a woman in fetish wear and leather boots, her mouth gagged, strapped face-down on a small stool. As Laura Mulvey writes, in reference to sadomasochistic pornography, "Women are displayed for men as figures in an amazing masquerade, which expresses a strange male underworld of fear and desire."¹⁰⁷

800 The fact that the NO!artists used "the most obscene pin-ups available" probably accounts for why these artists were excluded from major museum shows. Introducing the "NO!Show," Krim noted the connection between NO!art and magazines like "Nugget," which he edited. Although he acknowledged that "Nugget" was forced to make more compromises than the NO!artists, because of their greater dependence on the marketplace, he thought both of them were involved in subverting "hollow tradition and dullness." Acknowledging his own shortcomings, Krim declared, "We need an art that screams, roars, vomits, rages, goes mad, murders, rapes, commits every bloody and obscene act it can to express only a shred of the human emotions that lie prisoner beneath the sanitary tiles here in adman's Utopia." He characterized the NO!artists as "a band of rapists in a sense, impatient, unsparing, open-flied and ready for action."¹⁰⁸ Here, Krim sounded like any number of male chauvinists in this period, who identified with the rapist as a social outlaw, legitimizing violence against women.

805 Despite Krim's troublesome characterization of NO!art, many women participated in their exhibitions, including Yayoi Kusama, Michelle Stuart, Dorothy Gillespie, Gloria Graves and Esther Gillman. They did not exhibit with Lurie, Goodman and Fisher out of opportunism -- they were similarly concerned about militarism, fascism and the oppression of women. Gertrude Stein, the art dealer, interpreted Lurie's use of pin-ups in explicitly feminist terms: "[Lurie] takes as his symbol the 'girly' picture, America's home-grown brand of pornography. Repudiating conventional manners, he shakes up the viewer; at any cost he strives to make us take heed of our reality. Lurie forces upon us the bitter vision of the cruelly smiling, heartless advertising pin-up girl. Her picture hangs in the locker rooms; it teases the 'tired business man' who surreptitiously stuffs a copy of Playboy into his attaché case; movie stars become commodities to be measured in inches, the dreams of America. Our environment is polluted with sick eroticism and callous indifference."¹⁰⁹

810 Krim subscribed to the dubious notion of a separate "female sensibility," while Lurie's views on women were more enlightened, at least on the basis of a comment from 1970: "I do not like the idea of treating women-artists or women as a group apart, yet women artists approve of it, perhaps for career reasons. But the works of Michelle Stuart, Esther Gilman, Yayoi Kusama, and Gloria Graves, showing in several NO!art manifestations were truly motivated by the specific situation of women in society." According to Lurie, "Women NO! artists were overpoweringly concerned with

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Sexindustrie Arbeit mißbraucht, und die Sexdarsteller, vor allem Frauen, waren ungeschützt vor schwerwiegender Ausbeutung.

¹⁰⁶ Dieses Material ist auf Mikrofilm in der Public Library, New York, erhältlich.

¹⁰⁷ Herbert Marcuse: Der eindimensionale Mensch. Hamburg 1967. Barbara Ehrenreich stellte fest, daß „1963 (Hugh) Hefner (Herausgeber des Playboy) seinem Magazin zutraute, daß es Männer dazu bringt, härter zu arbeiten als sie müssen.“ Barbara Ehrenreich: Hearts of Men. American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment. Garden City, New York 1984, S. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Laura Mulvey: Fears, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious or „You Don't Know What is Happening, Do You, Mr. Jones?“ (1972). Wiederabgedruckt in: Laura Mulvey: Visual and Other Pleasures. Bloomington 1989. S. 7-8.

¹⁰⁹ Lurie; Krim, S. 23f. Siehe auch: Susan Brownmiller: Against Our Will. Men, Women and Rape. New York 1975.

830 fear: the female, cold, detached, frozen, as in Michelle Stuart's plaster faces of women in isolated
black boxes covered with dark hardly transparent glass, as in Esther Oilman's fearful feminine
conflicts with religion, as with Yayoi Kusama's obsession-fears of growing multiplying threatening
field full of penises, and to a lesser extent in Gloria Graves' assemblages and delicate
constructions... Male NO!artists embraced woman artists in rebellion."¹¹⁰

835 The most significant women artists in the NO!art shows were Yayoi Kusama and Michelle Stuart.
The Japanese-born Kusama created phallus-studded "Accumulations," which she exhibited in the
"Involvement Show" and the "NO!art" exhibitions; her solo "One Thousand Boat Show" was held at
Gertrude Stein's gallery in 1963. The obsessive-compulsive nature of Kusama's work can be
related to psychotic episodes, which, in turn, reflected the oppression she suffered while growing
840 up in Japan during the 1930's. Showing a tendency towards "horror vacui," she often painted and
decorated her works with polka dots. She also created mirrored rooms, like those of Lucas
Samaras, and was recognized as a leading creator of psychedelic art. The aggressive eroticism of
her sculpture has much in common with the surrealist work of Louise Bourgeois, and it interesting
to speculate whether the latter's "The No March" (1972, and her "NO" print, 1973) were influenced
845 by Kusama (and the NO!artists). In the late sixties, Kusama was a notorious figure in the artworld
for her happenings, which were frequently performed in the nude.
Michelle Stuart is now recognized as a leading exponent of Earthworks art; a friend of the critic
Lucy Lippard, she was involved with the Women's Movement from its inception. A native of
California, she studied art in Paris, and worked as an assistant for Diego Rivera in Mexico City in
850 the fifties. Her September 1963 article for "Artforum" on the NO!artists focused entirely on "these
men" Sam Goodman, Stanley Fisher and Boris Lurie, although she also illustrated one of her own
works -- a rough, irregularly shaped piece of wood, with a plaster cast of a face and a chain
attached to its surface.¹¹¹ Influenced by the Italian artist Alberto Burri, "Flagellant" (1963), with its
suggestive title and "whip," shows that Lurie was not the only one referring to sadomasochistic
855 practices in his art. Nor, for that matter, was he being essentially "male" in exhibiting such an
interest (see also Nancy Grossman's leather fetish masks and drawings).
In retrospect, Michelle Stuart believes that the women in the NO!art group were marginalized by
their fellow male artists, and there seems to be no reason to contradict this assertion, since this
was a fact of life for most women artists in this period. If we look at the actual works of the
860 NO!artists, rather than relying solely on anecdotal evidence, we are compelled to go beyond any
simplistic good/evil dichotomy, and adopt a messier interpretation of their work. Lurie's "NO! Toy
Poster Overpainted with NO's" (1963), for instance, included an antifeminist cartoon of a husband
saying, "I don't want my bride to keep her career" with NO stencils . superimposed. Goodman's
"Abortion" (1962), a cloth bundle (of "dirty laundry") sitting on a wooden stool, like Kienholz's horrific
865 sculpture "The Illegal Operation" (1962), criticized the social conditions which forced desperate
women to seek back-alley abortions. Another assemblage by Goodman, his "Psycho-Vanity--
Americanus Male", was an attack on militarism and the mentality of the soldier male. All of these
works can be interpreted as pro-feminist statements.
By the late sixties, as the feminist movement gained in numbers, women vocalised their concerns
870 with greater effectiveness. The "East Village Other," a leading Underground newspaper, illustrated
a collage on its front cover in November 1-15, 1967, with the caption, "Girls say YES to men who
say NO." This was precisely the kind of arrogant slogan that alienated many women from the New
Left. During the student uprisings at Columbia University, women rebelled when they were
assigned to do menial, houseworking chores. They began questioning the misogynist attitudes of
875 "liberated men" whose liberation was being accomplished, they felt, at the expense of women. This
was the opinion of Kate Millet (a Fluxus artist), who wrote a trenchant critique of Henry Miller and
Norman Mailer in her 1969 book, "Sexual Politics." According to Millet, the main value of their
writings related to how they exposed male fantasies, yet as prisoners of the "virility cult," they were
incapable of analyzing it: "What Miller did articulate was the disgust, the contempt, the hostility, the
880 violence, and the sense of filth with which our culture, or more specifically, its masculine sensibility,
surrounds sexuality."¹¹²
The work of the NO!artists tended to focus on the conjunction of sexuality, women and the Bomb,
which was symptomatic of their times.¹¹³ A typical Lurie collage included headlines referring to
topical events, advertising imagery, and a profusion of pin-ups, always drawn from heterosexual

¹¹⁰ Lurie; Krim, Faksimile Abb. 24.

¹¹¹ Lurie; Krim, S. 69f.

¹¹² Stuart, S. 36-37.

¹¹³ Kate Millet: Sexual Politics. New York 1971, S. 295.

885 pornography. Occasionally, his works appeared to equate mass culture and femininity, rejecting
 both with similar ferocity. And, for his part, Stanley Fisher subscribed to Wilhelm Reich's
 phallogocentric view of Sexual Revolution. The NO!artists were involved in the post-war male revolt
 against the "breadwinner ethic," rejecting the institution of marriage as a form of economic
 890 bondage. The odd phrase, "Salutations, kind sir, I bring you news, my wife is dead," in Lurie's
 painting, "Adieu Amerique" (1960) can be seen in this light. Although this generation of men were
 usually motivated by self-interest, Barbara Ehrenreich writes, "a case could be made for putting the
 male revolt in the long tradition of human efforts toward personal and collective liberation -- in step
 with feminism and with some broad populist impulse toward democracy."¹¹⁴

895 "Dirty Tricks" and "Tricky Dick"

"In 1961," John Felstiner has observed, "as people were listening horrified to the witnesses against
 Eichmann, U.S. intervention in Vietnam increased decisively. Almost no one noticed it, and from
 the start to finish our country's leaders reassured us about the war, by a mixture of euphemism,
 suppression, and lies."¹¹⁵ By the end of the war, 850,000 "enemy" and 400,000 civilians had been
 900 killed, according to "conservative" estimates.¹¹⁶ The use of napalm and Agent Orange was
 especially hideous in terms of its human and ecological costs. As a critic who reviewed the "Sam
 Goodman Memorial Show" in 1967 noted, the protest art of the late sixties was anticipated by the
 consciousness-raising exhibitions of the NO! artists.¹¹⁷ When the "Collage of Indignation" was
 exhibited in 1967, D'Arcangelo was one of many artists who contributed by affixing a burnt doll
 905 against a blue sky. In "Arts Magazine," Leon Golub wrote, "essentially the work is angry-against the
 war, against the bombing, against President Johnson, etc. The Collage is gross, vulgar, clumsy,
 ugly! -- exaggeration to the point of bombast... The larger part of the Collage is made up of anti-war
 slogan paintings and images: 'NO' by Les Packer and a sculptured 'NO' by Jason Seley."¹¹⁸
 In "The Sixties: Days of Hope, Years of Rage," Todd Gitlin states the anti-war movement reached
 910 its peak between 1967 to 1970, and imploded after the Kent State killings in 1970.¹¹⁹ The demise of
 the New Left was caused by a number of factors, including factionalism, separatism,
 authoritarianism, the rejection of civil disobedience in favor of violent confrontation, drugs,
 mysticism, the commodification of the counterculture, and -- of course -- the backlash of Nixon's
 Silent Majority. Perhaps one of the most eloquent essays on the end of the counterculture was
 915 Marshall Berman's "Faust in the '60s" (1974), who wrote, "If we are looking for genuine diabolism,
 rampant nihilism, we should forget about characters in weird clothes who sing songs such as
 'Sympathy for the Devil'... We should focus instead on the sober organization men in crew cuts and

¹¹⁴ Hierbei beziehe ich mich auf Elaine Tyler May, eine Historikerin, die über die symbolische Rolle der Bombe im Alltagsleben und in der Populärkultur gearbeitet hat: „Ein Foto von Hollywoods Sexsymbol Rita Hayworth wurde tatsächlich mit der Bombe, die über den Bikini-Inseln abgeworfen wurde, in Verbindung gebracht... Der Designer des entsprechenden Kleidungsstückes wählte den entlarvenden Namen 'Bikini', um das explosive Potential der Badebekleidung anzudeuten.“ Elaine Tyler May: Explosive Issues. Sex, Women, and the Bomb. In: Larry May (Hg.): Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War. Chicago 1989, S.165. Mays Thesen stellen heraus, wie Männerängste vor einer Veränderung der Frauenrolle von der Ideologie des Kalten Krieges entschärft wurden, weil dort die Rolle der Frau in der Zivilverteidigung nachdrücklich hervorgehoben wurde. Dieses half bei der Beschränkung der Frauen auf die häusliche Umgebung, indem ihnen die Illusion vermittelt wurde, sie würden dort eine wichtige Rolle spielen, als ob sie damit die Leere des Alltagslebens kompensieren könnten. Wie immer man die politische Haltung der NO!art-Gruppe zur Sexualität bewertet (in meinem Fall ambivalent), die Verknüpfung von Frauen, Sexualität und der Bombe in ihren Werken ist eine Symptomatik dieser Periode der amerikanischen Geschichte.

¹¹⁵ Ehrenreich, S.170.

¹¹⁶ John Felstiner: The Popular Response. In: Henry Friedlander; Sybil Milton (Hg.): The Holocaust. Ideology, Bureaucracy, and Genocide. Millwood, New York 1981, S. 266.

¹¹⁷ Todd Gitlin: The Sixties. Years of Hope, Days of Rage. New York 1987, S. 435.

¹¹⁸ John Perreault: Sam Goodman. In: Village Voice. 4. 1967 (Mai), S. 13.

¹¹⁹ Leon Golub: The Artist as an Angry Artist. In: Arts Magazine. 1967 (April). S. 48-49. Dies war ein Teil der Veranstaltung „The Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam“, die vom 29. Januar bis 4. Februar 1967 stattfand und an der 600 New Yorker Künstler teilnahmen. Entstanden ist sie aus dem Protest von Künstlern und Schriftstellern. In seinem Buch "The New Humanism. Art in a Time of Change." (New York 1974) stellt Barry Schwartz fest, daß „Luries... 'NO'-Bilder, -Assemblagen und die 'Altered Men'-Serie die Zerstörung des Bildes zeigen und, daß sich der Künstler weigert, sich der gesellschaftlich definierten Künstlerrolle zu fügen. Die Szene der March Gallery aus den frühen sechziger Jahren, zu der Boris Lurie und der späte Sam Goodman gehörten, kann als letzte Stufe der Objektgestaltung vor einem handelnden Humanismus angesehen werden.“ Schwartz, S.159. Es ist korrekt, NO!art in den Kontext von Gruppen wie „Art Worker's Coalition“ und ...Guerilla Art Action Group“ zu stellen, selbst wenn diese Künstler nur geringen, wenn überhaupt einen Einfluß hatten.

business suits...doing their jobs in a calm and orderly way... Now, after five years of Nixonian ferocity and malevolence in the service of nothing -- of an abyss of cynicism, an ultimate nothingness -- we are rediscovering the banality of evil."¹²⁰

920 During the counterculture's demise, the work of the NO!artists and the "Shit Sculptures" in particular, became the focus of debate on the New Left, "permissiveness" and child-rearing in the pages of "Leonardo" magazine. In 1971, two psychoanalysts, Emanuel and Reta Schwartz, argued that the puritanical heritage in American society facilitated the excessive conformism of the

925 McCarthy years. The NO!artists were compared to the student activists, and the Schwartz's argued that their forms of protest were archetypally related to children's "dirty tricks," like a child who uses its excrement as a weapon to defy authority figures. This interpretation tended to overemphasize unresolved infantile conflicts, and underemphasize the conscious, rational motivations of the NO! artists -- their pressing need to rebel against a dehumanizing, suicidal system. By linking NO!art to childish "dirty tricks," the Schwartz's unwittingly allowed conservatives to discredit the NO!artists and the student movement, by stating that their parents had been too "permissive" with them.¹²¹

930 In "Violence and Caprice in Recent Art," Lincoln Rothschild (a former official with the Works Progress Administration) responded to the Schwartz's article on the NO!artists, contesting the claim that NO!art was an effective form of communication and protest. Specifically, he objected,

935 "Reconstruction of society cannot be accomplished successfully by individuals who have not outgrown self-centered infantile emotionalism and are incapable of recognizing the need for disciplined patterns of productive cooperation."¹²² As one might expect from an older leftist, Rothschild's ideal political art was represented by Jacques-Louis David's didactic neoclassicism, which promoted republican virtues. Instead of emphasizing the negative, Rothschild argued, it was

940 the duty of progressives to assert positive values like loyalty and cooperation. This ultimately boiled down to a thinly-veiled apologia for authoritarianism, which took on sinister connotations in the call for "social hygiene," as Boris Lurie pointed out in a rejoinder.

Lurie was particularly insistent in affirming that the revolt of the NO!artists was consciously and rationally planned, countering Rothschild's critique of their work, by arguing that the "NO!artists

945 have made frequent statements on their thoughts, methods and aspirations in articles, published interviews and exhibition catalogues and brochures... The NO!artists were highly organized: they held planned exhibitions on themes collectively decided upon in advance; they collaborated in producing works; they collectively pronounced their ideas. They never claimed to be actually reconstructing society."¹²³ By the mid-seventies, the death of the New Left was an accepted fact, and its survivors were attacked on all sides by intellectuals who referred to psychoanalysis, ego psychology and normative morality. The debate about NO! art in the pages of the technocratic art-and-science magazine "Leonardo" was really a meta-discussion on the New Left.

Same Old Shit

955 Art historical accounts of the 1960's are particularly inadequate because they rarely mention the participation of dissidents art groups. In the sixties, the formalists were in ascendance in art history and criticism, particularly after the publication of Clement Greenberg's "Art and Culture" in 1961, which confirmed him as the leading tastemaker in the artworld. His writings were disseminated among a larger audience, who had missed his articles when they originally appeared in "The

960 Nation," "Partisan Review" and "Commentary." There was something very persuasive about Greenberg situating modern painting, not with the political radical, Gustave Courbet, but with the bourgeois painter, Edouard Manet, for focusing our attention as viewers upon the ways in which Manet drew attention to the picture plane and its basic material constituents (pigment, canvas and frame). He ultimately denied the materialist basis of painting, arguing in favor of "eyesight alone."

965 Greenberg's formalism was remarkably well suited to a technological society maturing in the repressive years of McCarthyism.

¹²⁰ Gitlin, S. 411f.

¹²¹ Marshall Berman: Faust in the 60's (1974). In: Gerald Howard (Hg.): The Sixties. The Art, Attitudes, Politics and Media of Our Most Explosive Decade. New York 1982, S. 500-501.

¹²² Emanuel und Reta Schaknove Schwartz: NO!art. An American Psycho-Social Phenomenia. In: Leonardo 4. 1971, S. 245-254. Siehe auch: Barbara Ehrenreich: Fear of Falling. The Inner Life of the Middle Class. New York 1990. Die Autorin widmet sich den verschiedenen Bereichen in der Debatte über die Freizügigkeit. Als Beispiel für eine reaktionäre Attacke gegen die Studentenbewegung siehe: Bruno Bettelheim: Obsolete Youth (1969). In: Bruno Bettelheim, Surviving and Other Essays. New York 1980. S. 350-369. (Zufälligerweise war Bettelheim wie Lurie in Buchenwald interniert.)

¹²³ Lincoln Rothschild: Violence and Caprice in Recent Art. In: Leonardo. 5. 1972, S. 326.

Formalist critics argued that artists should concern themselves with the immanent properties of their chosen media, and avoid extraneous subject matter. In his article on "Picasso Since 1945," Greenberg discussed Picasso's "Charnel House" (1944-45) without even mentioning the subject of the Holocaust: "It seems to me that in "The Charnel House" Picasso also makes a specific correction to the colour of the previous picture ("Guernica") by introducing a pale blue-grey amid the blacks and greys and whites. This works, along with the use of priming instead of applied white, to give the later painting more ease of space, more air." His comments on this painting were strictly on the formal aspects of the painting, and did not elaborate on the reasons why Picasso left this painting unfinished, because, as the painter stated, "To finish, to execute -- don't these words have a double meaning? To terminate, but also to finish off, to kill, to give the coup de grâce."¹²⁴ The sense of incongruity between Greenberg's formal description and its subject matter is a classic example of formalism's shortcomings.

The main reason why NO!art is no longer remembered has to do with the dominance of conservative art historians who define the parameters of the established canon, and the persistent influence of formalism in the academy. The authoritative textbooks of the period contain no mention of the NO!artists, and a recent exhibition of "Neo-Dada," at the corporate Equitable Gallery in New York, completely ignored their work.¹²⁵ One of the most persuasive theories of American art in the fifties and sixties argues that an aesthetic of indifference developed in this phase of the Cold War that perfectly harmonized with the climate of repression during the McCarthy years. In her article, "The Art of Indifference," Moira Roth discussed the pioneering roles of Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, and particularly the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, as a precursor of the "cool" forms of Pop and Minimalism. Roth finds it particularly ironic that artists were apparently unmoved by the tumultuous events of their times. One problem is that her thesis has now become a rationale for excluding dissident art movements from the historical record.¹²⁶

An art of angry defiance, the NO!art movement of the early sixties had its political limitations, since it failed to provide a dialectical analysis of social problems, along the lines of factographic, or institution-critique art. In "The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach" (1959), Ernst Fischer had written, "The apocalyptic contingency must be recognized as "conceivable," yet shown to be "avoidable."¹²⁷ While the NO!artists were, in some sense, like anarchists or dadaists, who engaged in expressive politics, instead of articulating a programmatic response to their situation, they also made an important formal contribution, anticipating the work of post-modernists like Martha Rosler, in drawing the connection between "concerned photography," voyeurism and the vicarious sadism of the onlooker. Rosler's montage from her installation "Unknown Secrets" (1987-88), juxtaposing a photograph of Ethel Rosenberg with newsprint and advertising imagery, stimulates "feelings of desire, identification, inadequacy, and alienation" in the same way as Lurie's "Buchenwald -- "destabiliz[ing] any facile perception of a unified object by a unified subject."^{128 129}

The NO!artists were dissidents who rejected the liberal assumptions of their peers, and challenged the moral authority of the United States in a period of Cold War repression and censorship. NO!art was a protest against consumer capitalism, American imperialism, and racist bigotry; the sexual politics of the group was more ambivalent and problematic. In many ways, these men were acting out male fantasies, with their torn-up pin-ups. Besides the anti-capitalist stance of the NO!artists, the group alienated many feminists and liberals who were repelled by the incorporation of pornographic imagery in their art. Some viewers felt that NO!art was a reprehensible response to the Holocaust, in supposedly exploiting atrocity photographs of concentration camp victims. In conclusion, I argue, the NO!artists (especially Lurie) anticipated the postmodernist critique of representation, and exposed the official rhetoric of "freedom" as a complete fraud, when seen in the context of U.S. military involvement in Korea, Vietnam, neo-imperialism and domestic repression.

¹²⁴ Boris Lurie: Violence without Caprice in NO!art. In: Leonardo. 1. 1974., S. 326.

¹²⁵ Clement Greenberg: Picasso since 1945. In: Artforum. Band 2. Nr. 5.1966 (Oktober), S. 28-31. Zu Picasso siehe: Timothy Hilton: Picasso. New York 1975, S. 261.

¹²⁶ Susan Hapgood u.a.: Neo-Dada. Redefining Art 1958-1962. New York 1994.

¹²⁷ Moira Roth: The Aesthetic of Indifference. In: Artforum. 1977 (November), S. 46-53.

¹²⁸ Ernst Fischer: Die Notwendigkeit von Kunst (1959). Harmondsworth 1963, S. 216.

¹²⁹ Virginia Carmichael: Framing History. The Rosenberg Story and the Cold War. Minneapolis 1993, S. 208-210.