



EXPECT ANYTHING FEAR NOTHING

**The Situationist Movement in
Scandinavia and Elsewhere**

Edited by Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen & Jakob Jakobsen



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INTRODUCTION

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen & Jakob Jakobsen

It was as late as the end of the 1980s before the Situationist International went from being a relatively mysterious object to becoming a signifier to a broader intellectual and cultural public. Although the group experienced a short period of public interest in France following their participation in the occupation of the Sorbonne in May '68, which helped to spark the dissatisfaction that threatened to overturn France, it took another 20 years before Situationist theory and activities became the object of both intense study and casual entertainment. In Scandinavia, Asger Jorn, Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen were all well known artists and enfants terribles but their affinity to and inspiration from the Situationist legacy was rarely made explicit. For instance, it has remained something of a secret that the well-known poet Peter Laugesen was a member of the Situationist group under the auspices of J.V. Martin, who has simply been written out of Danish art history. Since 1989 when the first big exhibition featuring the Situationist movement took place at Centre Pompidou in Paris and toured to London and Boston, and with the publication of several books in French, English and German on different aspects of the group's oeuvre, the Situationist International has become a constant reference for contemporary art and political thinking, creating a veritable exhibitions and publishing industry. The radical stance of the Situationist International is now no longer allowed to remain in the shadows but has been given its place in the spectacle. Confronted with this development, a first reaction would perhaps be to abandon the Situationist corpse and let bourgeois academics, writers and artists fight over the remains but perhaps it is also possible to just use it today against/within capital's subsumption of society.

Against 'Debord and the Situationist International'

So far the reception of the Situationist International has for a large part been focused on the figure of Guy Debord, who was the only member of

the group who was present both in 1957 when the new International was founded and in 1972 when the group dissolved. There is no doubt that Debord played a seminal role in the Situationist experiment and helped develop many of the concepts most relevant to analyzing the new forms of capitalist dominance. Yet the emphasis on Debord has overshadowed the existence of other Situationists and the different praxis they developed within the broader Situationist project. The intense interest in Debord's life and work has tended to reduce the Situationist International to just one signature enabling Debord to emerge as a great melancholic political writer. This development is not without reason as Debord increasingly romanticized himself and selected episodes in his life, all the while distancing himself from the established artistic and political spheres. But this transfiguration of the Situationist International and Debord into a lone voice of virtue *needs* to be disrupted and dismissed. Luckily, Debord was not just that and the Situationist International was not just Guy Debord. In fact, the very selective focus on Debord not only tends to distort the history of the Situationist International but it also results in a rather tidy history of the group's development which leaves out some of the more interesting inconsistencies and paradoxes that characterised the Situationist movement and continue to give it importance in any fight against the ruling powers. The relationship between art and politics and how both the relationship and the terms might be superseded not being the least interesting of these.

The Collective

With the recuperation of the Situationist International, Asger Jorn has entered the race with Guy Debord. However, it is different segments of the cultural industry which aim for their canonisation. With Debord as the favourite of academics and politicians, Asger Jorn has increasingly become a favourite with the art historians and collectors. Asger Jorn's paintings are now selling for millions of kroner while the letters and small doodles of Guy Debord are treated as sacred objects for reproduction in luxurious books. The fact that Asger Jorn actually was a very busy writer and theorist within the Situationist movement has attracted less attention,

mainly due to his idiosyncratic style, allowing both politicians and academics to placidly claim that he was not a true theorist. That there was an anti-specialist point in his style of writing is less interesting, because it makes the representation within the specialised fields of politics and academia more complicated and because it actually destabilises the role of the specialist. Although the members of the SI often signed their work with their own names, the Situationist movement was a collective thriving on the dialectics of the various positions of the group. All these claims for correct and incorrect readings of the canonical texts are making us tired. What we find interesting about the Situationists is the contradictions and thus the openness that the totality of the project is offering which has the potential to inspire people who still want to use words and images in the struggle against the prevailing forms of life.

Situationisms

In most presentations of the history of the Situationist group the split in the group which took place in 1961 and 1962 and which resulted in the exclusion of most of the Scandinavian and German members is presented as a cleaning-up operation removing more unruly members still attached to a no longer viable notion of art. But actually the split did not mean that the Situationist International simply left behind art and the art world, as the exhibitions organized by J.V. Martin in 1963, "Destruktion af RSG-6", and in 1967, "Operation Playtime", show. In Denmark, at the margin of the art world, Martin was allowed to stage two manifestations in which the 'original' Situationists tried to use an art exhibition as a heavy-handed vehicle for their critique of the spectacle, "working within culture against the whole of culture". Martin's role within the Situationist group has been completely overlooked by all previous accounts of the organization's activities. This has also been the destiny of several other Scandinavian Situationists who parted company with Debord in 1962. This is especially true of Asger Jorn's younger brother Jørgen Nash, who was very active within the Situationist International prior to his exclusion. In a characteristic gesture of defiance Nash presented himself as the true Situationist. He did not accept the exclusion of Gruppe SPUR on the attested grounds

of not informing the newly created Central Committee of its actions; Nash tried to intervene on their behalf as a member of the Committee but was forced out for his pains, together with Jacqueline de Jong, Ansgar Elde and Hardy Strid.

Nash's response was immediate: He created a new Situationist group that was to continue the authentic Situationist project of creating disruption and undermining the stiff discipline of the post-war Fordist society. According to Nash, Debord and his mostly Continental compatriots remained too attached to a classical Marxist world view putting their faith in the proletariat and preparing for the great showdown. Instead Nash and the artists associated with the Drakabygget movement opted for an immediate revolt that would use art and culture to liberate people from the boredom of everyday life. Nash and his main man Jens Jørgen Thorsen themselves did not shy away from petty crime in order to live differently. While Guy Debord's production has been looked into with great care and often with no little heroisation, the work of Nash and Thorsen—but also Strid, Fazakerley, de Jong and all the others—remains in the dark. As is well-known when it comes to the Situationists this is perhaps not a bad place to be, but in order to be able to understand and continue their critical and revolutionary work, it is important to not only supplement the ruling Debord industry that risks ending up securely in the museum of bourgeois art history but to counter it with a broader perspective. Such a perspective should strive to account for the different practices and positions that all of the Situationists employed with the aim of destabilising capitalist society and surpassing its division of human existence into separate spheres which left little room for the conscious creation of life.

Plundering the Treasures

As the Situationists themselves knew, it is necessary to work against conventional forms of historical memorialisation that reduce social relations to petrified images and pacifying representations. This is best done by simply working with the material in various ways in everyday life, focusing on the analytic strength of the work in offering a way of understanding the mutations of contemporary capitalism. As Walter Benjamin wrote, history

is the history of the ruling class. Grand monumentalisation is just one aspect of the spectacle's reification of everyday life. We thus have to take back the material and put it to use now, a kind of plundering the archives for contemporary purposes, fucking it up a bit and at least for a brief moment preventing the full scale recuperation of these once revolutionary endeavours. An endeavour not unlike Michèle Bernstein's "Victoires du Prolétariat" (Victories of the proletariat) shown at "Destruction of RSG-6" in 1963. The Situationists did not look upon these plaster reliefs with toys attached as art but as examples of *détournement* where images and conceptions are hijacked and put to a different use. History is rewritten: What if the Commune of Paris had not been defeated? History is not over yet. Bernstein makes the past possible again and shows that the defeats of the past can be turned into victories.

One, two, three, many Histories

This book gathers presentations from the "Expect Anything Fear Nothing" conference that took place in Copenhagen in the People's House on 15 and 16 March 2007. The seminar was an attempt to shed light on some of the marginalised dimensions of the Situationist International. It was also an attempt to use the concepts and strategies of the Situationists in the present moment, and to see if it was possible thereby to wrench the Situationist material from its place in anthologies from MIT Press and museums the world over. The academic and art historical reception of the Situationist material does of course give it exposure but often only within a relatively limited art sphere and the risk is that the material is put on a pedestal and acquires a semi-auratic quality that forces the viewer into just looking at the stuff instead of relating it to her/his life.

The book thus contains articles and conversations that attempt to broaden the perspective on the Situationist International by casting light on some of these dimensions, especially the wholly neglected Scandinavian Situationists and the people associated with them. The contributors are both former members of the Situationists' organisations as well as scholars, writers and political activists who have an engagement with the Situationist material.

In a dense and poetic text titled “What the Situationist International Could Have Been” the poet Peter Laugesen, who was a member of the Situationist International in 1963, reflects on both the legacy and the limitations of the Situationist project. Laugesen wonders what Debord’s lack of skills in foreign languages meant for the project and asks what the Situationists would have been without predecessors like Rimbaud and without contemporary poets like Jack Kerouac whose poetry, according to Laugesen, expresses a similar revolutionary reality as Debord and his Situationist companions.

Carl Nørrested presents the films made by the Drakabygget group in his contribution. From the beginning of the 1960s Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen in collaboration with Jørgen Leth and Gruppe SPUR, among others, made a number of films like “Stopforbud” (Stop for Bud/No waiting) (1962) featuring the jazz pianist Bud Powell and “Do You Want Success?” (1963) reusing an old advertising film for hair lotion. Nørrested also gives an account of the film poetics of the group, stressing the attempt to re-appropriate film from the commercial film industry.

In “Open Copenhagen” Fabian Tompsett centres his argument on the contrast between Asger Jorn’s “Open Creation and its Enemies” and Alan Sokal’s *Fashionable Nonsense* from 1998, where Sokal ridiculed post-modern and post-structuralist writers for using mathematical terms incorrectly. Drawing on material like the conversation between Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg on nuclear weapons, Tompsett shows not only how Jorn the artist is in fact more faithful to the development of modern science than Sokal the scientist who remains attached to a view of the world as a mechanical universe but also that the traditional distinction between art and subjectivity versus science and objectivity does not hold.

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen’s piece “To Act In Culture While Being Against All Culture” is an analysis of the exhibition “Destruction of RSG-6” that took place in 1963 in Odense where the Situationist International staged an anti-nuclear manifestation aimed at critiquing the contemporary nuclear arms build up and the cold war politics of fear. Stressing the beyond/within strategy of the Situationists Bolt Rasmussen focuses on the political context for the rise of the protest movement against nuclear arms

in Denmark and Western Europe as well as the battle of the Situationist International against Jørgen Nash’s rival Situationist group that was very active right after the split in the Situationist organisation.

“Drakabygget: A Situationist Utopia or a Meeting Place for Displaced Persons” is a conversation between Gordon Fazakerley and Jacqueline de Jong who both participated in the experiments taking place at Drakabygget, the farm Jørgen Nash had in southern Sweden which was the centre of the activities of the Second Situationist International, a.k.a the Drakabygget movement. Fazakerley and de Jong discuss the nature of what took place there and whether to consider the place as a utopian Situcratic island or just a railway junction for misfits lashing out at the sterile and boring bourgeois life of the early 1960s.

In a short polemical statement, “Everyone can be a Situationist”, one-time member of the Situationist International Hardy Strid, later very active within the Drakabygget group, launch a riposte against attempts to limit the Situationist project. He argues in favour of the continual dissemination of anti-authoritarian ideas and activities beyond the scope of rigid group structures.

Karen Kurczynski’s “Red Herrings: Eccentric Morphologies in *The Situationist Times*” analyses the multiple roles played by topology in the journal *The Situationist Times* edited by Jacqueline de Jong. Kurczynski juxtaposes *The Situationist Times*’ use of topology with the way other contemporary artists like Max Bill, Lygia Clark and Dan Graham used and reworked it during the 1960s and Kurczynski shows how de Jong’s journal developed a space where science, urbanism, art and folklore connected in new and unexpected ways.

The following text, “A Maximum of Openness”, is a conversation with Jacqueline de Jong about her trajectory through the Situationist experiment from her involvement with Asger Jorn, her membership of the Situationist International and the split, to the journal *The Situationist Times* that she edited. Along the way De Jong addresses questions related to the place of women within the Situationist groups and the contemporary relevance of the *dérive* with reference to the street actions occurring in Copenhagen after the Youth House raid.

In his text, “The Self-mythologisation of the Situationist International”, Stewart Home takes a critical look at the reception of the Situationist International in the English-speaking world. He castigates the way Guy Debord has represented himself and has been represented by academics and political groups alike as the sole genuine revolutionary and theoretical voice within the group. Instead of this fixation on Debord, Home points in the direction of a number of related but marginalised projects like *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker* and the Scandinavian Situationists

Jakob Jakobsen focuses on the activities around Asger Jorn, Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen at Drakabygget. Taking departure from Jorn’s attempt to develop an aesthetic of the Situationist movement based on radical experimentation, Jakobsen describes how Nash and Thorsen in many respects were attempting to realise this in practice through their radical and chaotic projects and actions. He presents them as art gangsters transgressing the borders of art, politics and the ruling moral order as well as the legal one, with Nash forging Jorn paintings and cheating gallery owners. Instead of putting their faith in the proletariat, Nash and Thorsen strove to realise art directly as collective creative processes provoking the established order.

The last text in the book, “Fear Everything Expect Nothing”, is a transcript of the final discussion from the seminar at the People’s House in Copenhagen, where the question of the relevance of the Situationist material is raised and discussed in the context of the protests going on in Copenhagen at the time against the eviction of the Youth House. Following years of neoliberal restructuring and the criminalisation of protest movements after 9/11 the discussion also touches upon the possibility of going from defensive reactions against repression towards a revolutionary offensive to overcome capital’s codification of all social relations, and what this would imply.

SITUATION

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen & Jakob Jakobsen

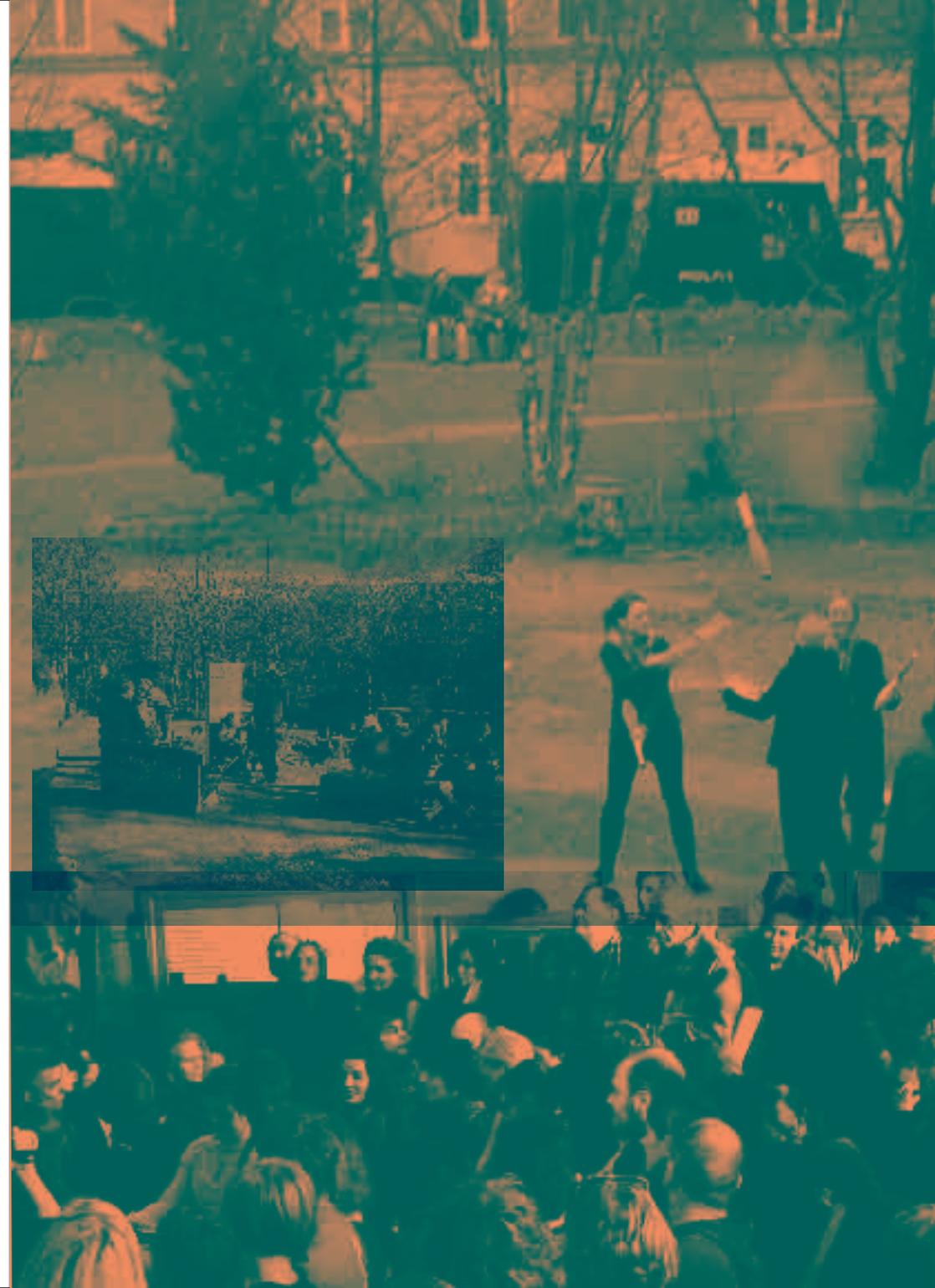
The seminar which this book continues took place just a fortnight after the raiding of the Youth House in Copenhagen. We knew at that time that the raid was going to happen but of course not exactly when and how. But around seven o’clock in the morning of March 1, Danish police stormed the Youth House. Two helicopters dropped policemen on the roof of the building while other policemen were lifted in small containers to the top windows in the building gaining access by breaking a hole in the front wall at the fourth floor. Before entering, the police filled the house with tear gas. The 36 people sleeping in the house were arrested. The action caught the activists by surprise and the spectacular staging of the forced entrance quickly escalated into confrontations between police and activists in the streets around the building.

Within the next few hours after the raid, young people started constructing barricades by pushing dumpsters into the street and as the police tried to remove them, they were met with stones. At around five o’clock that day thousands of protesters went into the streets and fighting broke out between the police and protesters, who set cars on fire and tried to take over the streets of Nørrebro, the neighbourhood in which the Youth House was situated. During the next days more and more people including young kids of Arab descent hit the streets and joined the demonstrations that spread up to Christianshavn, where the free city Christiania is located. More cars were burnt and barricades were being set up faster than the police could remove them. Peaceful demonstrations as well as violent clashes with the police and the trashing of a high school were among the events that broke up the peaceful and wealthy capital of Denmark. It was not just the hardcore political activists that were out in the streets, but thousands of young people who joined the protests out of frustrations with the direction in which Danish society had been heading for the last decade

or so. Policemen from all over the country were sent to Copenhagen, and the Danish police even had to call for reinforcements from the Dutch and Swedish police in order to handle the problem. Although there had been more violent clashes between the police and activists before in Copenhagen in the 1980s and '90s, the situation seemed more dramatic as it had been evident that a large section of the young population were so frustrated that they felt forced to react and somehow show their discontent—no matter what. The police response was swift, and almost 700 people were arrested during the first three days, while several places in Copenhagen, including the People's House where the conference took place two weeks later, had their doors smashed in and were searched. As more than two hundred people gathered inside for the conference, the police warily kept an eye on us and had armed cars circling the small park outside the People's House, at that time the only remaining squatted house in Copenhagen outside the free town Christiania.

The Neoliberal Squeeze

The dramatic events of March 2007 did not really come as a surprise; nor did the anger of the people protesting or the repression. The urban fabric of Copenhagen, like that of most other metropolises across the western world, had gone through a process of radical change within the last decade and a half. The economic boom, which saw its peak just about in the spring of 2007, had developed hand in hand with speculation in the property market and the consequences were soaring house prices and capitalisation of the city. The colonisation of the city space by extreme wealth meant that less and less spaces were left untouched by capital and the undefined and gray areas were increasingly being 'developed'. The cities of the western world developed in the same way: a two-tier system with a privileged class of home-owners and a class of the dispossessed that found it increasingly difficult to survive in the city. This had a heavy impact on any attempt to live in alternative ways to the spectacular commodity capitalism, whose reign was expanding on all fronts. This squeeze was also instrumental in the run-up to the eviction of the Youth House. Before offloading the house in 2001, the mayor of Copenhagen stated: "We can get a dream price for





Vi forlanger byen fyldt med offentlige

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 Ole Sørensen
 har været medlem af
 byrådet i 15 år. Han
 er medlem af
 Venstre og har
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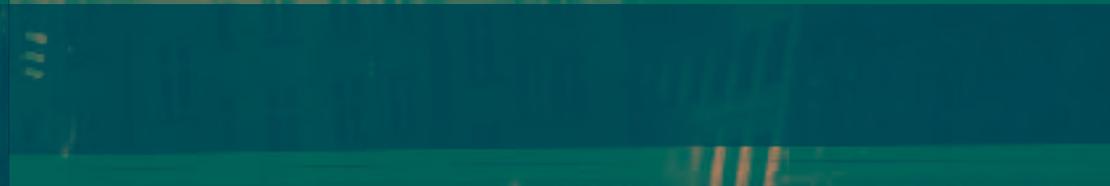
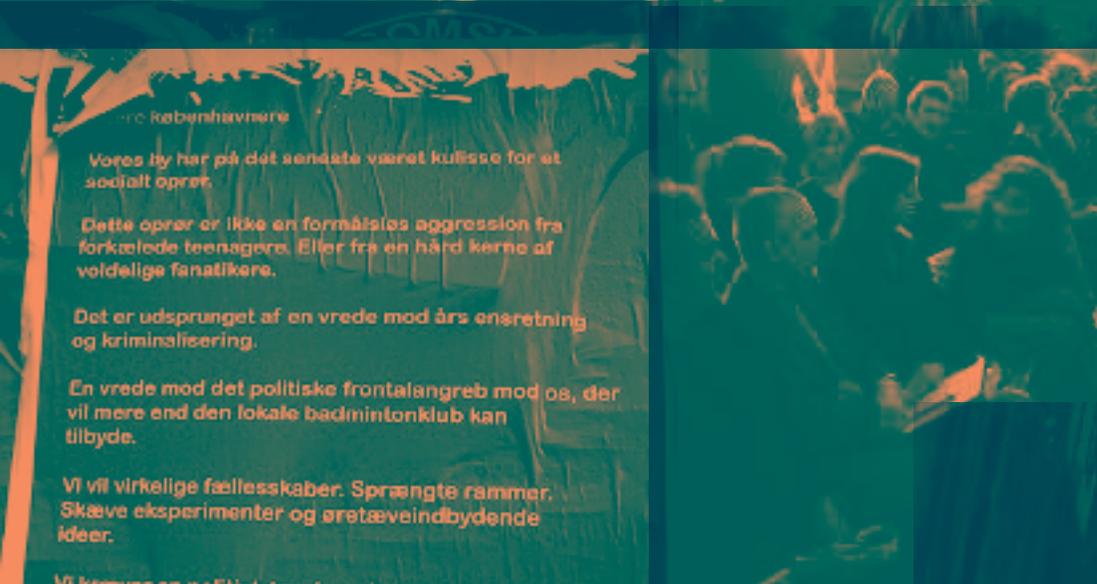
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Ind Københavnere

Vores by har på det seneste været kulisse for et socialt oprør.

Dette oprør er ikke en formåstløs aggression fra forkælede teenagere. Eller fra en hård kerne af voldelige fanatikere.

Det er udsprunget af en vrede mod års ensretning og kriminalisering.

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Vi kræver en politisk løsning, der kan rumme vores kreativitet og selvstændighed.

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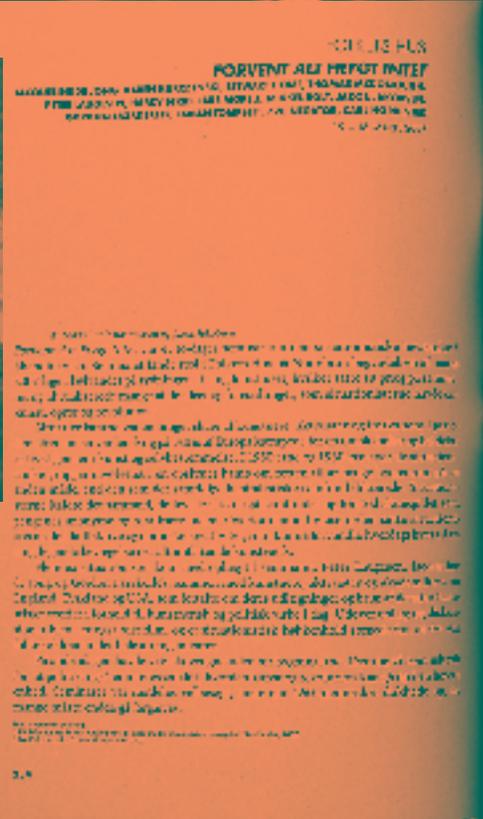
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Ungdomshus nu!





that site, and I won't deny that economics are involved here. If we printed money ourselves, I wouldn't care that 20-30 young people get something out of the house. But that is a poor use of a very exclusively located property." But the subsequent eviction of the Youth House was one step too far and not only the activists connected to the house reacted but a large number of the city's residents went on the streets.

The National Democratic Ideology

The structural changes in the urban landscape went in parallel with far-reaching changes in the political landscape across Europe, with various breeds of nationalism and ethnic protectionism developing. Since the elections in November 2001, the Danish political system has been developing a special combination of democracy, racism and chauvinism that we might term "authenticity totalitarianism". This ideology about Danish nationality, which comprises the traditional blend of the cultivation of authenticity with the hatred of foreigners, has been carried forth with great force by the right-wing government of Anders Fogh Rasmussen and his successor Lars Løkke Rasmussen. After assuming power, Fogh Rasmussen launched the so-called "Battle of Culture" that targeted the left-wing and Muslims as destructive of society. This campaign against foreigners can seem strange in the least mixed country in the Western world; the country has very limited immigration due to its very severe immigration laws even before 2001. But because politics in Denmark has been reduced to a question of authenticity, the idea of a multicultural society has become the chief threat. The challenge of globalisation has been met with entrenchment. The Muhammad cartoons epitomized the cultural crusade against Muslim migrants. The cartoons were not at all about free speech, they were yet another attempt by the right-wing newspaper *Jyllands Posten* to demonize Muslims. The handling, or rather mishandling, of the affair by the Danish government was symbolic of the attitude towards foreigners that are perceived as unwilling to 'integrate' into Danish society.

With the "State of War" proclaimed by the American President after September 11th, where the question of extreme inequality in a rapidly globalizing world was transformed into a war against 'terror', racism was

finally legitimised in Denmark and Fogh Rasmussen's right-wing party won the election and took over government, supported by the extreme-right Dansk Folkeparti that got 12 percent of the votes. Unlike in France, where it was possible to isolate Front National, Dansk Folkeparti (People's Party) was a participant in the composition of the new right-wing government's program. Of crucial importance in this program were new restrictions on immigration that made it very difficult to receive asylum in Denmark. But the launch of the defence of the Occident against Muslim immigration was just one component of the new government's politics. Another one consisted in siding with George W. Bush and his war on terror. The Danish government has been right there next to Bush and Blair all the way in the Afghanistan invasion and then in Iraq. Danish troops are still present in Afghanistan.

The xenophobic campaign against Muslim immigrants was accompanied by an attack on everything seemingly left-wing in Denmark. According to the government and the Dansk Folkeparti, the country is in need of a cleansing of old left-wing and 1968-ideas that threaten to destroy the Danish community in favour of a multicultural society. To an unprecedented extent the government has tried to put pressure on a number of public institutions like the state television and the universities to distance themselves from what the government perceives to be dangerous 68ist currents. The demonization of left-wing ideology continues in the dismantling of the welfare state that has been further intensified with the financial crisis. In this situation where the government is involved in a thoroughgoing attempt to make hegemonic a particular Danish neo-conservatism, the Youth House was a thorn in its side.

The Protests and the Repression

On 5 March bulldozers and a huge hydraulic excavator moved in to tear down the Youth House at Jagtvej 69. Under heavy police protection masked workers set about to remove every visible sign of the house, even painting over all graffiti on the adjoining houses. The site was quickly renamed "Ground 69" and it was the place of a number of actions. On Sunday 17 March protesters managed to drop more than ten tons of earth

on the site creating a garden with flowers and trees. But it was not only on Ground 69 that creative actions took place; all over the city people tried to win back public space or created disorder. Several thousand streets not only in Copenhagen but also throughout Denmark was renamed Jagtvej. Students from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art tried to transform the place into the Royal Danish Youth House by placing a huge banner on the front of the building. In all instances the police tried to silence the protesters by making wholesale arrests and there were several instances of police brutality, random arrests, illegal searches and deportation of foreign 'trouble-makers'. The authorities were hell-bent on destroying the last enclaves of free space in Copenhagen. They refused for a long time to enter into a dialogue with the protesters so as not to legitimise them in the eyes of the public. According to the politicians of both left and right, Danish society was confronted with the unreasonable acts of 13 year old youngsters who had not received a proper upbringing by their parents and that was the end of it. There was no political problem, it was just a question of misbehaving kids. After hundreds of demonstrations and a diverse range of actions including concerts, happenings and riots, the municipality finally decided to give the Youth House a new building in July 2008. Since then many within the activist scene in Copenhagen have been involved in different kinds of activities fighting the racist immigration laws in Denmark. One was storming a refugee camp another helping Iraqi refugees seeking cover in a church at Nørrebro. In each instance, the police have systematically been given a free hand to repress the protests, culminating in COP 15 in December 2009, where the Danish police pre-emptively arrested more than 1000 people without charge. The system is prepared for the civil wars it expects will materialise as a consequence of climatic changes, the economic crisis and shortage of food, etc. and seems to be practising for coming protests as the crisis of the capitalist world system gets deeper. The idea behind the new anti-rebellion regime that is being put into place seems to be the inevitability of disasters that the system then has to handle and use preventing the ruling order from being challenged.

WHAT THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL COULD HAVE BEEN

Peter Laugesen

"Jamais je ne travaillerai"
Rimbaud

1
The very fact that Rimbaud said what Debord, far later, boasted so much about having said...

2
I've never understood that much of the book, his big bestseller... obviously that it should be so, or would be so if the proletariat and the working class... but wasn't Aimé Césaire right when he said in the nineteen forties that myth is the only truth, and today it only exists in poetry?

3
There were many of us who greatly appreciated Gilles Ivain's "Formulary for a New Urbanism", even though we didn't quite grasp what urbanism is, but wasn't it because we had read Rimbaud, and the text was the same, the same mood of hopeless melancholy, the same gentle mist of possible change?

4
Why was it reactionary crap when Françoise Hardy or The Beatles found ways of living with the society of the spectacle, ways that at least made sense as long as a single lasted?

5
I'm sitting on a tired afternoon in the middle of Paris, not far from where Guy Debord and Michèle Bernstein lived then on a fifth floor in Impasse Clairvaux... Arab toilet stalls on the landings and were there any windows at all...? Was it all red and black?

6
Now the cul-de-sac has been bulldozed away there, north of the Centre Pompidou. It's the response of the age to rebellion that they've put the temple of art right where it should be thrown into the street and realized.

7
Ivan Chitchevlov might have said something about it, but he is dead, and I've only met him on a strange Youtube clip where, deeply melancholy and inebriated, he reads something or other very sad, and no one has said where the clip is from.

8
It's as if he's talking to somebody about that hacienda that was never built anyway, and this someone or other just films him mercilessly.

9
It was a proclamation excommunicating Chaplin that split the group of Lettristes... everyone's beloved Charlot... Debord — says Jean-Michel Mension, one of the drunken petty-criminal existentialists who gathered then at Saint-Germain-des-Près and whom he called "the tribe" — was a sad guy with a dark view of the world.

10
The upshot then was that international, the Lettriste one, with Debord on the bridge, and in its periodical, which was called Potlatch, because it was for free like the elements in the Indian exchange of gifts whose system was described by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, he instantly said goodbye not only to the old crowd, but also to his own comrades.

11

Isidore Goldstein alias Jean-Isidore Isou — morally retrograde individual with limited ambitions (Isou was the founder of Lettrisme). Moise Bismuth alias Maurice Lemaitre — extended infantilism, premature senility. Pomerans alias Gabriel Pomerand — a forger, a zero. Serge Berna — lack of intellectual consistency. Mension — pure decoration. Jean-Louis Brau — militaristic deviant. Ivan Chtcheglov — mythomania, interpretation mania, lack of revolutionary consciousness.

12

Salut les copains...

13

Rimbaud was real ... Kerouac was real ... but one was too real, because he had said it all before and better ... The other was a direct competitor ... who wanted to do the same with his endless mind movie ... like Hausmann ... the old Dada ... no light on him ... and luckily Schwitters had been forgotten over in England ...

14

They were French, and they didn't see the rest of the world properly, but the radicality of their statements, also due to their Frenchness ... the fact that the language had been primed for it ... by Rimbaud, by Lautréamont, by Breton, by Artaud, by Céline ... but forget them, nobody reads them, we've never heard of them ... we come straight out of the black holes of film ... its white noise ... for me that was a revelation, even though I didn't grasp the deep seriousness behind the exclusion ... and that it was a matter of course ... and that I hadn't known it from the first day ... hadn't read it in *Potlatch* ...

15

In the publisher Allia's series of books about the Situationist International and especially its history, both Jean-Michel Mension and Ralph Rumney, the native and the foreigner, have had their say. So has the Belgian air force general Piet de Groof, who under the code name Walter Korun ran the Galerie Taptoe in Brussels, where strange things happened of the kind the central committee didn't quite control, as when Asger Jorn, Yves Klein and Ralph Rumney painted a picture together on a bender.

16

Everything they say gets narrowed down more and more around Debord ... he's the one they're asked about in the ongoing trial that still hasn't culminated and in which there will presumably never be a judgement, because it's in fact already inherent in the beginning of the case ... we're all sentenced to non-being in the spectacular-entertainment and mindless-consumer society, and Debord is guilty because he made himself a seer on the model of Rimbaud and saw it. After the obligatory long-lasting and thoroughly deliberate derangement of all the senses with drink and drugs and all sorts of *dérive* in the Everglades of the most wonderful of all cities, whose memories pale in Debord's film and on the pages of his books, which are all transcripts of the film.

17

And the marvelous Italian visual clown Pinot-Gallizio was involved at an early stage as a manufacturer of paintings cut off by the metre like ribbons and rugs in the fantastic primal department store Le Bon Marché, which is just around the corner from Debord's last Parisian dwelling in the Rue du Bac... and when he had been useful long enough he was given the sack with a treatise that was at the same time the catalogue text for the exhibition for which the Situationists could now take the credit and at the same time dismiss...

18

The star witness Michèle Bernstein has not yet been on the stand, although her testimony exists in the form of two novels, one in the manner of Robbe-Grillet, the other in that of Françoise Sagan, both of which describe the nightlife and wanderings through the urban landscape before everything was created. The judges are nobody and the jurors everybody... the defenders are idiots and the prosecutors are the yes-men of fake history.

19

You're older and everything has changed. You can write a song about it — or not. There's no plan to it, and the Situationists do actually exist. Not everyone has forgotten everything that happened yesterday.

20

Debord's "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency' Conditions of Organization and Action", suffers from grave deficiencies. It was a draft for the formation of the Situationist International in 1957, and in fact the document that gathered together the Lettristes, the old COBRA people and the lone English psychogeographer as well as a couple of Jorn's Italian friends. But Debord knew no other language than French, so, especially when it came to poetry, he was unable to take a stand. Poetry is unassailable, it can't be assaulted with spectacular weapons, because, low-key and high-frequency as it is, it cannot interest anyone in that field, since it is not entertaining, is only to a limited extent a commodity and does not pass the time but is it. And it speaks all languages, not just French.

21

But the workers, then, the working class? Actually the phenomenon was already then, around 1960, passé. Think about what the 16-year-old Rimbaud wrote about the blacksmith and the Sun King. But Debord also forgot, or never knew, that the worker, even in the industrial production of the everyday, which despite everything, is still that of most people, is not necessarily a slave. There is an aesthetic and an ethic of work that make it possible to feel delight and pride in a piece of work that is well done.

22

1957: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*.
1956: Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*.

23

September 2009 at the Jeu de Paume: The English photographer Martin Parr and other English photographers from the fifties in black and white and later in colour about what they are best at and about which Debord knew nothing: the loneliness of the long-distance runner on Saturday night and Sunday morning in a room at the top in this sporting life around the mineshaft, the small houses and proud hard poverty with black dust on their gums and bandy-legged children on their shoulders... I thought I saw Liz Taylor ...

24

Tous les garçons et les filles sing
yé yé yé...

25

Rimbaud describes himself through Verlaine's eyes: "Je reconnaissais — sans craindre pour lui, — qu'il pouvait être un sérieux danger dans la société. — Il a peut-être des secrets pour changer la vie?"

The street child and urchin Rimbaud was quite clearly the model, and on the whole is central to later generations, although he himself apparently forgot what he had done; but anyway didn't they say — the Situationists — that they wanted to be partisans of oblivion?

26

The future was already the past, TV was already a baby crawling down death row, and Debord didn't know it, nor did Jorn ... the mists over Indian country that Levi-Strauss stared into and saw the animals punching a hole in the sky and setting the rain free ... lynx, coyote, bear ...

27

And Céline out in Meudon careering around in his furious subway train with no other stations than death, which had already happened before anything began, and Debord in those years when Paris was still Paris ... when he was young, when we were young, when I was young and dammit old fool, Paris was Paris for me and Paris is still Paris and we were the new, rucksack-toting Dharma bums and Paris was our encounter with Africa, the other country ...

28

"Je serai un travailleur: c'est l'idée qui me retient, quand les colères folles me poussent vers la bataille de Paris, — ou tant de travailleurs meurent pourtant encore tandis que je vous écris! Travailler maintenant, jamais, je suis en grève," says Rimbaud of the Paris Commune and goes on: "Il arrive à l'inconnu, puisqu'il a cultivé son ame, déjà riche, plus qu'aucun. Il arrive à l'inconnu, at quand, affolé, il finirait par perdre l'intelligence de ses visions, il les a vues. Qu'il crève dans son bondissement par les choses inouïes et innombrables: Viendront d'autres horribles travailleurs. Ils commenceront par les horizons ou l'autre s'est effasé."

29

In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni, that is Debord's answer to everything, from start to finish. The avant-gardes have their time, and the luckiest thing that can happen to them is to have done what they were supposed to in a time that could have been theirs. "Too often have we seen such elite troops, after they have accomplished some valiant exploit, remain on hand to parade with their medals, and then turn against the cause they previously supported."

30

Just behind Rue du Bac 109 lies the Square des Missions Etrangères, a lovely garden with a rough, weathered bust of Chateaubriand in the middle of the flower bed in the entranceway. He died in the house on the other side of the street. I like to imagine Debord and Chateaubriand sitting on a bench there watching the children playing, and the medieval masonry that gnarls its way in ingenious, masterly fashion up what must have been Debord's back wall. They say nothing, for they have already said far too much, and soon the park will be closing for the night.

31

The night watchmen, one black and the other white, like the world-picture of the Situationists, turn the key in the lock.

32

Césaire: Mes mains en flammes!
Filliou: Why not work?

September — October 2009

THE DRAKABYGGET FILMS

Carl Nørrested

The COBRA movement, the Lettristes and the Situationists all gave high priority to the film medium, and for all of them film was an object of fascination, exploration and theorization.¹ In 1954, when Asger Jorn founded the "Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus" — as a successor to the COBRA movement — his friend Enrico Baj had drawn his attention to the existence of the Lettristes' periodical *Potlatch*, and this introduced him to the Lettriste movement and the French film director Guy Debord. Jorn and Debord later founded the Situationist International in 1957. Two years after this Jorn established the Danish-French Experimental Film Company with the publisher and author Herman Wolsgaard-Iversen as general manager. The firm was founded with a view to producing and distributing Guy Debord's second film project, *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time)² in 1959, Debord's first film after his scandalous Lettristic debut with *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (Howls for Sade)^{3, 4} from 1952. The Danish-French Experimental Film Company produces both Debord's *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* and later *Critique de la séparation* (Critique of Separation)⁵ from 1961. Jorn and Iversen then emphasized the Danish aspect with the company's third and last production *So ein Ding muss ich auch haben* (Such a Thing I also Need)⁶, also from 1961.

So ein Ding muss ich auch haben

The experimental film veteran Albert Mertz was urged by Jorn to go to Munich to make this film in collaboration with Gruppe SPUR as well as Jorn's brother, Jørgen Nash. The film was intended as the first of a series of films produced by the Danish-French Experimental Film Company that were to challenge the post-war consumer society (as set in relief by



Still from *So ein Ding muss Ich auch haben* by Albert Mertz, Jørgen Nash and Gruppe SPUR, 1961.

the German *Wirtschaftswunder* or economic miracle) and at the same time present a positive alternative in the form of the playful human being — *homo ludens*.⁷ Later an attempt was made to continue the themes of the film in the never-finished *Aus Westdeutschland nicht neues* (All Quiet on the West German Front)⁸ by Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Ole John, Gruppe SPUR and Jørgen Nash, a film that was also shot in Munich. The same goes for *The Situationist Life*⁹ by Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Jørgen Nash from 1965. These films were produced during under the organizational auspices of the Second Situationist International, but the films never got beyond the editing table.

So ein Ding muss ich auch haben was shot by a professional cameraman, Wolf Wirth, who shot Alexander Kluge's and Peter Schamoni's *Brutalität in Stein* the same year. The film contrasts the West German *Wirtschaftswunder's* grey, sausage-eating, violent bourgeois materialists and slow-motion street-sweeping robots with the representatives of



Still from *So ein Ding muss Ich auch haben* by Albert Mertz, Jørgen Nash and Gruppe SPUR, 1961.

imagination and art (Nash and Gruppe SPUR). The artists run around the streets, play on recorders sitting on the ruins of the city, and literally break through the credits of the film armed with an umbrella while the bourgeoisie look on as wondering spectators.

The bourgeoisie is represented and individualized by a masked married couple who have tethered their child — who is not wearing a mask — to the balcony of their apartment. To the irritation of the parents, the child constantly throws a big ball down into the street, and the father has to fetch it up again and again. At the end of the film the artists' group, now positioned on the stairs of the Academy, are all wearing masks and badges with what looks like convict numbers. People in the streets begin to uncover the pistols under their coat-tails. The film ends with the word "Suite" ("To be continued"), which has associations with rearmament. Its allegorical character was a real treat for Albert Mertz, because as a visual artist Mertz often had a didactic agenda with his works. The music for the

film was made by Asger Jorn and Jean Dubuffet as “Art Brut” and is played on toy instruments.¹⁰ The same music was later used for Per Kirkeby’s film portrait of Asger Jorn from 1972. Jean-Luc Godard wanted the film to be shown as a preliminary to his film *La Chinoise* (1967), Iversen was in favour, but Debord vetoed him and the request was not granted.

Simar Films

The reputable left-wing film producer Gérard Lebovici was inspired by the potential of the youth revolution, and along with Gérard Guégan started up the publishing house Editions Champ Libre in Paris, which was responsible for among other things the republication of Guy Debord’s *La Société du spectacle* (The Society of the Spectacle) in 1971. The publishing house was intended as “the Gallimard of the revolution”.¹¹ In the same period Lebovici established the production company Simar Films, whose productions included Debord’s film version of *La Société du spectacle* in 1972.¹² The film was followed up by a metafilmic commentary, *Réfutation de tous les jugements, tant élogieux qu’hostiles, qui ont été jusqu’ici portés sur le film “La Société du spectacle”* (Refutation of All the Judgments, Pro or Con, This Far Rendered on the Film ‘The Society of the Spectacle’)¹³ in 1975 and by *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*¹⁴ in 1978. All these films were produced by Simar Films.

In 1983 Lebovici bought the art cinema Studio Cujas for permanent, free showings of Debord’s films. The next year Lebovici was murdered in mysterious, never clarified circumstances, after which Debord totally withdrew into himself and banned the showing of his films.

Drakabygget

After the establishment of Drakabygget in Sweden in 1960, Jørgen Nash headed it until 1962 as a ‘de-centre’ for the Scandinavian section of the Situationist International – also called the Bauhaus Situationniste. In that period Nash was a member of the First Situationist International, founded in 1957 by Debord and Jorn. In 1961 Jorn could no longer reconcile his artistic praxis with Debord’s radical rejection of all artistic institutions, and withdrew from the Situationist International, but remained

a secret member under the pseudonym George Keller. Like his brother, Nash was convinced that it was precisely as an artistic experiment that the Situationists could go furthest, and in the wake of the exclusion of Gruppe SPUR at the beginning of 1962 Nash founded a new Situationist group, the Second Situationist International, with its base at the disused farm Drakabygget in Sweden. Gruppe SPUR participated, as did the English painter Gordon Fazakerley and the Swede Hardy Strid. Asger Jorn too featured as a secret member under the pseudonym Patrick O’Brien. The Second Situationist International then presented its manifesto in the second issue of the book-form periodical *Drakabygget* in 1962, and escalated the conflict with the French and Belgian Situationists with an exhibition in Odense the same year of the so-called “Seven Rebels”, including Fazakerley, Jacqueline de Jong, Strid and the Swede Ansgar Elde. The exhibition emerged against the background of the police prosecution in Germany of SPUR, which had been charged with blasphemy due to the content of their SPUR magazine. Jens Jørgen Thorsen (who never lived at Drakabygget) was also one of the ‘seven rebels’. He assumed the role of Jesus around this time, in a performance which saw him dragging a cross through the city of Odense. Soon the circle around Drakabygget was expanded with the Japanese Yoshio Nakajima from the Ubbeboda Art Centre, Thorsen’s later partner Mette Aarre, and in 1963 the so-called KRW group from Malmö (Rolf Kronkvist, Bengt Rooke and Per Wahlöö). It all culminated in 1968, when the Situationists from Drakabygget, along with Gruppo Settanta from Florence, wreaked effective havoc on the establishment at the Biennale in Venice.

CO-RITUS

In 1962 the Second Situationist International launched major collective actions in Copenhagen (since it was too expensive to go to Stockholm) under the title CO-RITUS. The first took place as ‘an exhibition’ at Galerie Jensen. In order to challenge the spectators’ passivity in favour of collective creation the exhibition space was equipped with materials that only made sense if the public worked with them. The resulting works were simply given away. Contrary to the interests of the gallerists and Jorn, the exhibition

developed into the decorative painting of fencing outside the gallery at the nearby Gutenberghus. In several CO-RITUS events, films were used, often as multi-screen projections with improvised jazz accompaniment (by John Tchicai, among others) while Jens Jørgen Thorsen overpainted or pierced through plastic ‘canvases’ that were held by a couple of assistants.

Film Productions from Drakabygget

In the fruitful year 1962 film production was also started up under the Drakabygget auspices. It all began with *Stopforbud (Stop for Bud)*¹⁵ — a poetic film portrait of the jazz pianist Bud Powell made jointly by Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Ole John and Jørgen Leth. To the great surprise of the three, the film was bought by Statens Filmcentral (SFC) in 1964. The same year, with the payment they received, Jørgen Leth and Ole John made *Se frem til en tryk tid* (Look forward to a time of security)¹⁶ and had it shot as a production from the Bauhaus Situationniste. The film mainly consists of staccato close-ups of someone being shaved with a razor, overlaid by the random utterances of a jovial Dane. The sequence of film images is gratuitously broken off, and shortly after the appearance of the blank screen the film sound track is ratcheted brutally through the sound head. Later, Jørgen Leth, thanks to his popularity with the granting authorities, quickly developed into one of Jens Jørgen Thorsen’s bêtes noires.¹⁷

In 1964-65 the Drakabygget people organized five festivals of experimental films and in the process gave a further boost to the film productions. Initially they had established the film group Elevator, consisting of Ole John, Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Jørgen Nash, who were responsible for the unfinished film *The Situationist Life* in 1965. The aim of the film festivals is evident from Jørgen Nash’s manifesto with the telling title, “Filmskaberen som professionel amatør” (The film-maker as professional amateur), printed in ÖELAB no. 1, which was published in connection with the third Situationist film festival in Halmstad in May.

“The only reason we go in for this kind of huge event is that we want to fight the commercialization and state control of film art. We want to contribute to the creation of a better intellectual climate that gives the film artist the opportunity to make films that are different, films that break



Cover of ÖELAB, Bulletin for Ørestands Eksperimentel Laboratorium, no.1, 1965. “Gee, my child. Now they are organising another film festival, god damnit, even in the Atlantic Bio. Wow”.

down the moral prejudices and anemic boundaries between life and art. We acclaim the principle of the triolectic: the film maker as professional amateur. And since these ‘Anarcho-Situationist’ film festivals produce no financial benefits for us in terms of our own film production, but only saddle us with new enemies among the granting cultural authorities, the prize-awarding judges in the tower blocks of art, the cavalry of officialdom, the parade horses and the film academics, not to speak of the film police with their lynch-censorship — we have long since signed Jonas Mekas’ manifesto in *Film Culture*: ‘It is the duty of the artist to ignore bad laws and fight them every moment of his life’”

These festivals of ‘anti-authoritarian’ films were sited at peripheral locations like Örkelljunga, Halmstad and Holte as a protest against the tourist itineraries of the traditional film festivals. They showed Danish, Swedish and other foreign experimental films that would otherwise have

had no chance of being shown. Old Danish experimental films were included too, for example the Surrealist Wilhelm Freddie's two films from 1949 and 1950. The biggest press coverage of the festival came in 1965 when it showed Thorsen's, Novi Maruni's and Niels Holt's *Porno-Shop*¹⁸ at the Figaro Cinema in Halmstad. This was before the legalization of pornography. The film contrasted commercial pornography with images of love. Jens Jørgen Thorsen described the film itself and its showing in the Figaro Cinema in an interview from 1985 as follows: "*Porno-Shop* is about juxtaposing two types of sex pictures: the commercial pornography of the time, which was not as candid as now, and then ordinary candid pictures of various kinds of sexuality. When it was shown at the Figaro in Halmstad, the police stormed the cinema. But when they were on their way to the cinema, we exchanged the film and put a Donald Duck film on instead, which they then confiscated".¹⁹



Promotion for Thorsen's film *Pornoshop*, 1964. From OELAB, Bulletin for Ørestands Eksperimentel Laboratorium, no.1, 1965.

The fifth and last Situationist Film Festival was to be celebrated in 1965 in no less a venue than the Atlantic Cinema in Christianshavn in Copenhagen. However, the cinema got cold feet and the festival was moved to the Borup Folk High School. They had to establish a film club for the occasion (Filmklub Halvanden — the One-and-a-Half Film Club), since this was the only way they could get around the Danish state film censorship, which would of course ban the pornographic content of the films.

Jens Jørgen Thorsen

Jens Jørgen Thorsen was the busiest film-maker in the Second Situationist International. He



Still from *Vietnam* by Jens Jørgen Thorsen, 1969. The film consisted of one still image.

developed his own approach to montage and wrote his own contribution to film theory in the article "Filmens grundbegreber" (The basic concepts of film) published for the first time in the book *Friheden er ikke til salg* (Freedom is not for sale) (1980) — a reworking of reflections on film written for the film advisory officer Stig Björkman in the period 1970-75. In the article he operates with certain phenomenological aspects of film material such as "autokinetic effect" and a so-called "emulsion effect", by which he understands the inherent motion of the 'grains' in a filmically projected still image. This was an effect he worked with in the anti-war film *Viet Nam*²⁰ from 1969, which consisted of a single still of a dead Vietnamese with a crushed head held for several minutes — the sound track played the "Internationale" and the American national anthem. The previous year he had made the montage-oriented *Viet Nam Nam*²¹, which starts with the initial frame countdown followed by a collage of various heads of state ending

with a picture of Ho Chi Minh, exploding. Many of Thorsen's festival films consist of reworked montages of chopped-up mainstream film material that form fascinating, alienating aggregates. This kind of re-use of 'found' film material had already been taken up by Debord in his films, especially *Sur le passage de quelques personnes...*, and it was a genre that became very common in the so-called scratch videos of the 1980s and 'found footage' films around the turn of the millennium. Thorsen's films transgressed normal 'continuity', and he also drew attention to the impersonal mechanisms of film and thus aimed at an alienation effect for the public. For example, the basic material for *Do You Want Success?*²² from 1963 was an old colour advertising film for Brylcreem. Through repetitions of the advertisement Thorsen hammered home the advertising scenario, which is repetitively played out in a speedboat so that the short, effective advertising impact is shattered and replaced by an absurd minimalism. Thorsen re-used the Brylcreem material in many of his montage films, for example *Kaptajn Karlsens flammer*²³ from 1984 and *Tom, Empty, Vide, Leer*²⁴ — a veritable exhaustion of the material from 1966. The film starts with the word *slut* (The End) and consists mainly of clear film with music played on the spinet. This is interrupted by ultrashort glimpses of images from *Porno-Shop*, an old reportage film of a football match in 1937 and clips from *Herning 65*²⁵ (an artist portrait film Thorsen made about Poul Gadegaard's sophisticated decoration of the Angli shirt factory in 1965). The film is dominated by an absence of images that is filled in arrhythmically by various glimpses of images. Each of the short glimpses is followed by a sound track with a short piece of chopped-up spinet music. It is Thorsen's most consistent attempt at détournement alongside *Fotorama*²⁶ from 1964 — titled after the film leader ("Shot by the Fotorama Film Bureau") which consists of, among other things, montage from Danish newsreels of King Frederik IX, a rocket launch, and found footage of an international football match from 1937, modified by Thorsen. The ball is painted on, generals are interspersed with tanks shooting animated bullets supplied by Thorsen.

Thorsen spoke of his fascination with film in connection with my and Helge Krarup's work on the book *Ekspérimentalfilm i Danmark*: "In fact I've worked with film since I was in the fourth grade. At that time



Still from *Fotorama* by Jens Jørgen Thorsen, 1964. Jens Jørgen Thorsen has painted a black dot directly on the film strip.

I was given a table projector, so I sat editing together clips from the cinema — and whatever else I could get my hands on. At a place called Fagfoto you could actually buy old film clips. That's probably why I never really took an interest in plot in film, only in the visual and rhythmic. Most of my experimental films are based on pre-existing material. Production of that kind of film really picked up when we began mounting film festivals. I actually felt I was working in a vacuum, and that also went for the people we herded together for our festivals. We really wanted to make something that was outside the frame, but in fact it intensified our interest in the popular, something everyone could use, some material known to everyone — archetypal. I clearly remember one of them: Tarzan walking with his elephants through the jungle. I put that together with colour, so you could rise from one dimension to the other. It was that kind of pictorial

world with no ambitions that interested me. But ambitions actually came along when I met Sture Johannesson. Suddenly it became something that was worth showing in public. I've always preferred to work with 35 mm film, 16 mm is too small. I'm fascinated with the leap from clip to clip ... a leap that is often more radical and faster than those you can make in your imagination. The element of music and the element of film have a lot in common. You can read a book backwards, look up something in the middle, and you can choose your path around a painting. You don't have that freedom of choice in film and music. They live in the very moment they are shown or played. On the other hand there's this difference between jazz and film that the rhythm of jazz is constant, which is why the combination of jazz and film is not always so good".²⁷

In 1964-65 the Italians Alberto Grifi and Gianfranco Baruchello were working on *La verifica incerta* (Verification Uncertain)²⁸ with the same absurd effect of repeating found material, clearly fascinated by the iconology of the Hollywood drama in particular. They employ scenes which are completely reversed in ultra-short clips, repeats of walking in and out of various doors (some are mirrored doors), and surgery sequences. The iconography is taken from traditional narrative film, but the narrative is broken up, and the specific situations in the films are grouped both thematically and with ruptures. The quotations are often shown as a Cinemascope image projected in normal format. Of course the film can also be shown in Cinemascope, thus bizarrely elongating the normal format images. However, Thorsen and the Italians are unlikely to have known of each other's existence. The so-called English structural-materialists²⁹ worked later in the 1960s with a very seriously built-up complex of thematic images based on their own shots. In this case, the repetition was intended neither as minimalism nor absurdism, nor was it exactly typified by humour.

You've Read the Book, Now You Must See the Film

Within the state-subsidized system Thorsen made several more traditional artist portraits. The most successful is the film portrait of Henry Heerup *Et år med Henry* (A Year with Henry)³⁰ from 1968. Jørgen Nash and the Swede Sture Johannesson made *Det gåtfulla leendes kavalkad* (The



The book for *Det gåtfulla leendes kavalkad*, 1964. The book was a detoured mail order catalogue in which Jørgen Nash, Sture Johannesson and Novi Marino had made prints directly on the pages of the catalogue.

cavalcade of the mysterious smile)³¹ in 1964. Along with the Turkish poet Lüfti Özkök, Nash made a couple of documentary films, *Tatoeringer är tvättäkta* (Tattoos are colourfast)³² and *René Char*.³³ The visuals consist of shots from various mail order catalogues. The sound consists of the jangling of a cash register, a country-and-western song and Nash's own reading in Swedish of a number of prose poems from *Det naturlige smil* (The Natural Smile) (1965) with all sorts of quotes from advertising such as "Giant Sale at the People's House. Three Days of Price Wars". To take the anti-consumerist attitude all the way, Thorsen, Nash, Johannesson and Hardy Strid published an authentic remaindered mail order catalogue from the mail order centre in Borås as the source of the film. On selected pages in the catalogue the artists had printed linocuts directly from the printing block. Moreover, the edition was limited to 85 numbered and signed copies. The final text in this processed ready-made, which has become a collector's item, plays on the advertising gimmick of the 'film of the novel': "You've read the book, now you must see the film".

In Drakabygget's prime in the mid-sixties the main focus was on the subsumption of artistic life by the state apparatus. Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen actually vied for headlines in the popular newspapers and really heated things up around the populist protest parties that were beginning to appear in the Danish parliament just then at the beginning of the 1970s. Nash started the ball rolling with the 'murder' of the Little Mermaid in 1966. Thorsen dominated public interest with the Henry Miller film *Quiet Days in Clichy*³⁴ in 1970. As early as June 1970 Thorsen embarked on his biggest and most successful happening by publishing his plans for a film about Jesus' sex life with the working title *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ*. This happening ended in an absolutely parodic prosecution in 1979. In 1992 he unfortunately spoiled everything by actually realizing a Jesus film based on an entirely new manuscript *Jesus vender tilbage* (The Return of Jesus).³⁵ The film was passed over in total silence, which was the ultimate defeat for Thorsen.³⁶

Afterlife

While Debord's films enjoy great attention today, and have been released as a DVD box set, the films and film experiments created in the circle around Drakabygget seem to have been relegated to obscurity and oblivion. In connection with the fortieth anniversary of May 1968 in 2008 there has been great interest in the experimental films of the period. But since the deaths of Thorsen and Nash in 2000 and 2004 respectively, access to the films related to Drakabygget has unfortunately been hermetically sealed for inheritance reasons. In Denmark the focus has therefore been on ABCinema, which was an experimental film collective established at the end of the 1960s. As the men of the system that they are, Jørgen Leth and Ole John have managed this interest very well and therefore stand at the moment as the heroically surviving exponents of the group. Some of the other ABCinema members such as Per Kirkeby and Bjørn Nørgaard are working to cultivate their image in elevated establishment art history, while others are on their way into unfair oblivion—for example one of ABCinema's chief ideologues, Peter Louis-Jensen. Peter Laugesen, who was an active participant in all the subcultural groups of the sixties, seems today to be practically the only person to have come through the whole period more or less in one piece, and he is not exactly fond of looking back. In fact, he should be forced to.

NOTES

- 1 On COBRA and film, see Carl Nørrested: "COBRA og eksperimentalfilmen", *Billedkunst*, no. 1, 1998. On Lettrism, Situationism and film, see Mikkel Bolt: *Den sidste avantgarde. Situationistisk Internationale hinsides kunst og politik* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Politisk Revy, 2004).
- 2 *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps*, 20 min., b/w, Danish-French Experimental Film Company 1959. Director: Guy Debord.
- 3 *Hurléments en faveur de Sade*, 64 min., b/w, Film lettristes 1952. Director: Guy Debord.
- 4 In Helge Krarup and Carl Nørrested's *Eksperimentalfilm i Danmark* (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1986) the information on Debord's films is erroneous and misleading. The book was prepared in the wake of the murder of Gérard Lebovici, which led to Debord's instant collapse. The authors were, to put it mildly, deliberately misled about Debord by Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 5 *Critique de la séparation*, 20 min., b/w, Danish-French Experimental Film Company 1961. Director: Guy Debord.
- 6 *So ein Ding muss Ich auch haben*, 16 mm, b/w, 15 min., 1961. Director: Albert Mertz. With Jørgen Nash, SPUR (Heimrad Prem, Helmut Sturm and Hans-Peter Zimmer, Lothar Fischer, Dieter Kunzelmann), Maurice Wyckaert, Jacqueline de Jong and others.
- 7 Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* [1938] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).
- 8 *Aus Westdeutschland nicht neues*, 16 mm, b/w, 1962. Never completed. Directors: Jørgen Nash, Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Ole John and SPUR (Heimrad Prem, Helmut Sturm, Hans-Peter Zimmer, Lothar Fischer and Dieter Kunzelmann).
- 9 *The Situationist Life*, 1965. Never completed. Directors: Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 10 *Musique phénoménale* (Venice: Galleria del Cavallino, 1961), text and music by Asger Jorn and Jean Dubuffet. Pamphlet and 4 gramophone records. 50 numbered copies.
- 11 Gallimard is a renowned French publisher.
- 12 *La Société du spectacle*, 35 mm, b/w, 88 min., Simar Films 1973. Director: Guy Debord.
- 13 *Réfutation de tous les jugements, tant élogieux qu'hostiles, qui ont été jusqu'ici portés sur le film "La Société du spectacle"*, 35 mm, b/w, 22 min., Simar Films 1975. Director: Guy Debord.
- 14 *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, 35 mm, b/w, 105 min., Simar Films 1978. Director: Guy Debord.
- 15 *Stopforbud*, 16 mm, b/w, 12 min., Statens Filmcentral 1963. Directors: Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Jørgen Leth and Ole John (Elevator).
- 16 *Se frem til en tryk tid*, 16 mm, b/w, 10 min., Statens Filmcentral 1965. Directors: Jørgen Leth and Ole John.
- 17 In *Ekstra Bladet*, 22.4.1986, Jens Jørgen Thorsen reviewed Carl Nørrested's and Helge Krarup's *Eksperimentalfilm i Danmark* under the heading "Historiens slatne vingesus" (The limp wings of history). Thorsen was not very enthusiastic, and claimed that the book put too much emphasis on 'the establishment' (which he called "Jørgen Leth music").
- 18 *Porno-Shop*, 16 mm, 1964. Directors: Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Novi Maruni and Niels Holt.
- 19 *Eksperimentalfilm i Danmark*, p. 38.
- 20 *Viet Nam*, 35 mm, b/w, 1969. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 21 *Viet Nam Nam*, 35 mm, b/w, 1969. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 22 *Do You Want Success?*, 16 mm, colour, 10 min., 1963. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 23 *Kaptajn Karlens flammer*, 35 mm, b/w + colour, 1984. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 24 *Tom, Empty, Vide, Leer*, 35 mm, b/w + colour, 1966. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 25 *Herning 65*, 35 mm, colour, 10 min., Statens Filmcentral 1965. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 26 *Fotorama*, 35 mm, b/w, 1964. Never completed. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 27 Based on an interview with Jens Jørgen Thorsen in connection with the preparation of the book *Eksperimentalfilm i Danmark*.
- 28 *La verifica incerta*, 35 mm, 35 min., 1965. Directors: Alberto Grifi and Gianfranco Baruchello.
- 29 These included Peter Gidal and Malcolm Le Grice among others. An interesting summing-up of the group can be read in Duncan Reekie: *Subversion: The Definitive History of Underground Films*, London: Wallflower Press, 2007.
- 30 *Et år med Henry*, 16 mm, colour, 12 min., Statens Filmcentral 1968. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 31 *Det gåtfulla leendes kavalkad*, 16 mm, colour, 1964. Directors: Jørgen Nash and Sture Johannesson.
- 32 *Tatoeringer är tvåttäkta*, 16 mm, 20 min., 1970. Directors: Lüfti Özkök and Jørgen Nash. Nash's brother, Asger Jorn, wrote as early as 1941 about tattoos in the text "Banaliteter", *Helhesten*, issue 2 1941.
- 33 *René Char*, 16 mm, 33 min., 1972. Directors: Lüfti Özkök and Jørgen Nash.
- 34 *Stille dage i Clichy/Quiet Days in Clichy*, 35 mm, b/w, 91 min., 1970. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 35 *Jesus vender tilbage*, 35 mm, colour, 104 min., Super Film 1992. Director: Jens Jørgen Thorsen.
- 36 See Carl Nørrested: "Den store happening", in Ib Bondebjerg, Jesper Andersen and Peter Schepelehn (eds.): *Dansk film 1972-97* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard/Rosinante, 1997).

OPEN COPENHAGEN

Fabian Tompsett

I hope that it is not unnecessarily perverse to respond to the central Situationist question “Revolution: Politics or Art?” by posing the question of science. However, I feel it is in keeping with the triolectical approach¹ of Asger Jorn, upon whose work I am going to be focusing. In *Signes graves* (1963) Jorn drew up his triolectical schemata, which placed “Equality Science” in a triolectical arrangement with “Liberty Art” and “Technique Unity”. These schemata drew on a discussion he developed in *The Natural Order* (1962), one of a series of books he published through the Scandinavian Institute of Comparative Vandalism (SICV), an organisation he set up following his departure from the Situationist International (SI) in April 1961. Here he gives an interesting illustration of his view of the relation of art and science:

Just as the old grey photographs will gradually be replaced by colour reproductions of the same subject in yellow, red and blue and reproduce reality in altogether richer nuances than before, so we too are learning that the universe today must be seen in an interplay of different viewpoints which mutually contradict and complement each other and can, each on its own, be ‘correct’. It could be said that in my aesthetic study *Luck and Chance* I have reproduced something of art’s yellow, radiant and glaring spectrum, then it could perhaps be said that in my first book *Golden Horn and the Wheel of Fortune* I concentrated on the quietly smouldering gleam of warm red also reflected by the world of art, which approaches what one could call an artistic ethics, art as the expression of law and legality. This third treatment of the same subject, in which, completely out of the blue, we have come to the postulate about [the] artistic nature of the scientific spirit, has hereby come into existence.²

I hope this is useful in explaining how Jorn dealt with these issues before, during and after his adherence to the SI. “Open Creation and its Enemies” was one of Jorn’s articles which originally appeared in *Situationniste Internationale* (No. 4, 1960).³ “Open Creation” itself is a response to Karl Popper’s *Open Society and its Enemies*, published in London in 1945. Notwithstanding Popper’s Austrian origins, *Open Society* fits in with a very British ideology which sees ‘the Continent’—as Europe used to generally be called—as a monolithic block. Popper particularly discusses Plato and Hegel, from whom he develops an anti-totalitarianism opposed to both Nazism and Stalinism.⁴ Karl Popper was also particularly engaged with the discussion of scientific method.⁵ Thus, *Open Creation* was written in the context of post-World War II reconstruction and the consequences for science.⁶

In *The Natural Order* Jorn develops his critique of science in relation to the Copenhagen Interpretation which was hammered out by the Danish physicist Niels Bohr, primarily with the German scientist Werner Heisenberg, between 1924 and 1927. While Bohr developed his notion of ‘complementarity’, Heisenberg is remembered for his Uncertainty Principle. An accessible account of this work is given in Michael Frayn’s play *Copenhagen* (1998). This play focuses on a visit made by Heisenberg to his former teacher in 1941. Watching the DVD of this play,⁷ I started to draw a parallel between the relationship of Jorn and Debord between 1954 and 1957, and that between Bohr and Heisenberg thirty years earlier. Here Jorn develops an understanding of the *situation* whereas Debord’s contribution is an understanding of the *spectacle*. After his time as a student of Bohr, Heisenberg became head of the Nazi research programme into atomic physics. Apart from these public engagements, Bohr and Heisenberg were holding a private discussion about the possibility of developing nuclear weapons. Whilst supporting the German war effort against the Soviet Union, Heisenberg’s conservatism did not find anti-Semitism palatable. He offered Bohr (who was half-Jewish) official protection. In fact, two years later, Bohr travelled in the flotilla of tiny boats that facilitated the flight of Danish Jews to Sweden.

Bohr then went on to London and became drawn into the allied scientific war effort for the creation of nuclear weapons. Here Bohr was asked: are the Nazis making nuclear bombs? In this way Bohr's private discussion with Heisenberg became crucial. But, according to Bohr, this question was some sort of request: hey, help *us* make these weapons of destruction. Heisenberg later claimed he understood the potential of nuclear weapons, but would not collaborate with the Nazis in this matter. Whether or not German scientists refused to work on nuclear weapons under the totalitarian regime of the Nazis, the fear of such collaboration was mobilised to recruit scientists for the Allied development of nuclear weapons.

Ever since Robert Jungk discussed this conversation in his book *Brighter Than a Thousand Suns*, it has been controversial.⁸ Bohr repeatedly rewrote his letter to Heisenberg disputing the latter's account of their war-time conversations about nuclear weapons. The letter was neither finalised nor sent, but various drafts were published in 2002, following the performance of Frayn's play. Since then, the controversy has continued. Jungk states his view clearly: "It seems paradoxical that the German nuclear physicist, living under a sabre-rattling dictatorship, obeyed the voice of conscience and attempted to prevent the construction of the atomic bomb, while the professional colleagues in the democracy school had no fear, and with very few exceptions, concentrated their whole energies on the production of the new weapons". This debate takes on a greater poignancy when considered in light of the fabrication of evidence about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, or the ongoing issue of nuclear research in Iran.

This debate, not least with Frayn's subsequent contributions—such as *Celia's Secret* (2000)—helps show the falsity of the notion that art is concerned with subjectivity and science with objectivity:

Bohr: We put man back at the centre of the universe. Throughout history we keep finding ourselves displaced. We keep exiling ourselves to the periphery of things. First we turn ourselves into a mere adjunct of God's unknowable purposes: tiny figures kneeling in the great cathedral of creation. And no sooner have we recovered ourselves in the Renaissance, no sooner has man become, as

Protagoras proclaimed him, the measure of all things, than we are pushed aside again by the products of our own reasoning. *We are dwarfed again, as physicists build the great new cathedrals for us to wander around. The laws of classical mechanics that exist whether we exist or not.* And then we come to the beginning of the twentieth century and we suddenly are forced to rise from our knees again.

Heisenberg: It starts with Einstein.

Bohr: It starts with Einstein. He shows that measurement, measurement on which the whole possibility of science depends, measurement is not an impersonal event that occurs with impartial universality. It's a human act, carried out from a specific point of view in time and space from the one particular viewpoint of a possible observer. And then, here in Copenhagen, in the mid-twenties, we discover that there is no precisely determinable objective universe. The universe exists only as a series of approximations. Only within the limits determined by our relationship with it. Only through the understanding lodged inside the human head.⁹

Bohr had originally rejected secret offers to escape from Denmark to Britain in 1943, but after participating in the flight of Jews from Denmark shortly before they faced mass arrest, Bohr found himself in Britain, where he acceded to requests to join the scientific war effort. By 1944 he had visited Los Alamos, site of the development of the atomic bomb. He was keen to forestall the Cold War, firstly by persuading American and British politicians to inform the Soviet authorities of the development of the bomb. He was able to arrange private meetings with both Roosevelt and Churchill.

While Roosevelt was sympathetic to his viewpoint, Churchill was not. Bohr spoke to him in May 1944, while Churchill was concentrating on the D-Day invasion of northern France. Nevertheless, Churchill was sufficiently concerned about Bohr's openness towards the Soviet Union to suggest that perhaps he should be locked up.¹⁰ Bohr however continued to develop his ideas of an 'Open World'. Five days following the massacre of Hiroshima, he had a letter published in the London Times, "Science

and Civilisation".¹¹ This was followed up by an Open Letter to the United Nations, dated 9 June 1950. Here Bohr called for an Open World:

The situation calls for the most unprejudiced attitude towards all questions of international relations. Indeed, proper appreciation of the duties and responsibilities implied in world citizenship is in our time more necessary than ever before. On the one hand, the progress of science and technology has tied the fate of all nations inseparably together, on the other hand, it is on a most different cultural background that vigorous endeavours for national self-assertion and social development are being made in the various parts of our globe.

An open world where each nation can assert itself solely by the extent to which it can contribute to the common culture and is able to help others with experience and resources must be the goal to be put above everything else. Still, example in such respects can be effective only if isolation is abandoned and free discussion of cultural and social developments permitted across all boundaries.¹²

When Bohr was asked to sign the "Stockholm Appeal", organised by Jean Frédéric Joliot-Curie and supported by the Communist Party and the Soviet Union, Bohr declined because it failed to call for free exchange of information. Likewise, he refused to sign the Russell-Einstein Manifesto of 1955. In his insistence on the need for an open world characterised by the free flow of information, he can clearly be seen as one of the precursors of Open Source and Creative Commons.

Jorn contra Sokal

During the *Expect Anything Fear Nothing* seminar, Karen Kurczynski discussed Asger Jorn's interest in topology, relating this to articles in Jacqueline de Jong's *Situationist Times* (1962–1964). She reassured those present of the mathematical rigour of the topology involved. Indeed, the articles include material from Max Bucaille,¹³ Lech Tomaszewski,¹⁴ Edward Patterson,¹⁵ and Walther Lietzmann.¹⁶

The science writer Alan Sokal was responsible for an ingenious hoax, whereby he duped the academic journal *Social Text* into publishing a spoof article in 1996.¹⁷ Sokal has been promoting what he calls "a modest scientific realism",¹⁸ which is every bit as problematic as the florid and ephemeral writing which he cites in his and Jean Bricmont's later book *Intellectual Impostures* and parodies in the hoax.¹⁹ Sokal and Bricmont (S&B) particularly cite a disturbing evolution within French intellectual thought, moving from Jacques Lacan through Julia Kristeva, to Luce Irigaray, Bruno Latour, Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio and the partnership of Deleuze and Guattari. On the one hand, I have no desire to defend these theorists from Sokal and Bricmont's critique, but find it necessary to pose the question whether such a critique should also encompass Asger Jorn, Jacqueline de Jong and other Situationists. For instance, the situation is above all a topological concept, and could thus be considered within the scientific idiom. Further, I wish to challenge Sokal's scientific realism.

Parenthetically, Sokal was no friend of the uses of topology by non-specialists. In particular he takes apart Jacques Lacan's "Psychoanalytic Topology". He follows Lacan's interest in topology from the 1950s through to the 1970s, dismissing his use of science in general and topology in particular as "superficial erudition and manipulating meaningless sentences".

As Peter Shield has shown in his excellent *Comparative Vandalism*,²⁰ Jorn was conscious of what S&B deride as "secular mysticism: mysticism because the discourse aims at producing mental effects that are not purely aesthetic, but without addressing itself to reason". Shield has translated an extract from Jorn's *Magi og skønne kunster*,²¹ where Jorn quotes Charles Lalo:

A mystical theory is more a work of art than a scientific work...
Mysticism is to a lesser degree a negation of all analysis than it is a special way of analysing. The mystic does not explain to get people to understand, like a scientist, he theorises in order to invoke spontaneous and intuitive action, to convince and not to prove.²²

However Jorn's approach offers a great deal more than that of S&B which rests on a form of scientific realism that retains much naivety.

They avoid the interaction of subjectivity and objectivity which has been so dynamic in the development of science since Heisenberg put forward his Uncertainty Principle. Their pseudo-objectivity creates by inversion a pseudo-subjectivity unto which they project mysticism. Jorn's essentially monist approach does not allow this. Indeed, he aims to liberate a subjective approach from metaphysics:

My approach lies in the creation of an art theory which is a dialectical union of these two points of view; a subjective attitude to art with objective validity. The subjective attitude has always been based on metaphysics, unlike the objective one. The novelty in my theory is that I follow the metaphysical attitude to art and base it purely on materialism.²³

Jorn doesn't shy away from mysticism, and indeed aims to retrieve magic from mysticism. In fact, mysticism as constructed by Lalo and S&B is a necessary corollary to science, which has clad itself with the pseudo-objectivity of unreasonable reason. Indeed, this can be taken back to the very origins of science, which we will return to in the third exegesis from Frayn's *Copenhagen*. What is left to do here is to summarise Frayn's universe "as a series of approximations" and show how this both historically and philosophically undercuts Sokal's scientific realism—which can then be seen as a somewhat miserable apology for technocratic capitalism.

In a passage where Sokal and Bricmont are castigating Kristeva for incorrect mathematical reasoning in *Séméiotiké*,²⁴ they discuss $\{0,1\}$ (the set consisting of 0 and 1), and the interval $[0,1]$ which they state "contains all the real numbers between 0 and 1".²⁵ Of course, Kristeva's point arises from muddling two different issues: the fleshing out of a yes/no binary validation of 1 or 0 with a probability interval covering all manner of degrees of uncertainty expressed as a probability distribution. Kristeva's invoking a 'poetic language' by doubling the interval and so giving 0 to 2, is, as S&B point out, ill-conceived. However, a more serious critic would go beyond her misunderstanding to see the point she is making in taking up Mikhail Bakhtin's distinction between monologic and dialogic discourses.

Doubling the dimensions with two independent variables, rather than increasing the value range of the original value could more readily put Kristeva's case. However, S&B conclude from Kristeva's difficulties in applying mathematics to what she wants to express that the very attempt to do so can only produce nonsense.

Another more serious foible of S&B is their failure to distinguish between propositions and assertions. When they create the word-picture of a man running out of a lecture hall screaming that there is a stampeding herd of elephants inside, they then picture this as an assertion, the causes of which we are then invited to evaluate.²⁶ Coming in a book which lectures the reader about the misapplication of mathematical phrases, this clearly cannot be allowed to pass. Leaving aside the manner in which we are invited to imagine such a bizarre event as happening "in real life", there is a deeper-seated problem of which S&B seem to be woefully ignorant. Bearing in mind that S&B devote a whole chapter to Gödel's Theorem and how it has been abused, they do very little to discuss the key issues in a coherent way. Having successfully held up their pomo rivals to ridicule, they then promote a scientific realist viewpoint, sweeping aside some of the key issues which mathematicians were dealing with when Gödel produced his 'incompleteness theorem'. In a highly contested atmosphere, differing views were presented at the Erkenntnis Symposium at Königsberg in September 1930. Rudolf Carnap presented the logicist view, John von Neumann the formalist view, while Arend Heyting delivered his paper "The Intuitionist's Way of Founding Mathematics", providing an account of the intuitionist view. Heyting's paper distinguishes between a *proposition* (Aussagen) as expressing only an expectation or intention and an *assertion* (Behauptungen), where that expectation has been realised. Of course, this is making quite a nice distinction, but after S&B have berated their pomo targets for using technical terms non-technically, it is somewhat churlish for S&B to act in precisely the same way. At a deeper level, S&B end up going for a somewhat cheap reassertion of scientific realism precisely by ignoring the deeper issues of this debate, and in particular the viewpoint of the intuitionists. The inadequacies of the post-modernists are thus used to create a strawman, rather than dealing with more

profound issues which were so hotly debated in the first half of the last century, when scientific realism had not yet been established as doxa.

I can only briefly touch on some of the points here: the intuitionists emerged from the Dutch Significs Group. They were influenced by Victoria, Lady Welby, the English philosopher who is particularly known nowadays from her correspondence with Charles Peirce. Like Peirce, she was an outsider in the academic world²⁷—and soon fell into obscurity, with interest reviving only in the 1970s. However, at the time her impact was felt in Dutch intellectual circles, where the mathematicians Gerrit Mannoury and L.E.J. Brouwer, the psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden, the journalist Jacob Israël de Haan and the poet Herman Gorter were involved in setting up the Significs Kring (Significs Ring).²⁸ Mannoury and Gorter were both active communists, although they differed sharply, with Mannoury aligning himself with Lenin, while Gorter broke with Bolshevism, championing the “very ordinary men” of left-communism.

Mannoury and Brouwer—along with their protégés Arend Heyting and David Van Dantzig—were all key figures in the development of topology. Unfortunately, S&B prefer shooting fish in a barrel by exposing the likes of Lacan and Irigaray rather than tackling more deep-seated issues. But this is maybe because they are still working from C.P. Snow’s notion of the ‘two cultures’, effectively mobilising scientific realists against social constructivists. However, as with Snow, this is a battle within the academic community that fails to recognise that it is the very organisation of knowledge, as it is instrumentalised by the academic structures, which is in crisis, even if the prospects of its supersession by Gorter’s “very ordinary men” does not, at present, seem on the cards. Here it is worth mentioning Henry Flynt’s important work criticising science and scientism which has a much more exciting approach than S&B, whereby “common sense is to be replaced with an outlook which regains our whole humanness”.²⁹

The views about approximation which Michael Frayn puts in Bohr’s mouth deserve more reflection. S&B pose the question: “Why did the European scientific community become convinced of the truth of Newtonian mechanics sometime between 1700 and 1750?”

There is a vast body of extremely convincing astronomical evidence in support of the belief that the planets and comets do move (to a very high degree of approximation, though not exactly) as predicted by Newtonian mechanics; and if this belief is correct then it is the fact of this motion (and not merely our belief in it) that forms part of the explanation of why the eighteenth-century European scientific community came to believe in the truth of Newtonian mechanics.³⁰

This is, of course, an appeal to common sense, an extension of naïve realism to scientific realism. Just as the work of the pomo theorists S&B mock fails to stand up under quite basic scrutiny, so S&B’s work suffers the same plight. Let us work through this.

Part of the process whereby the European scientific community constituted itself was the competition run by the Académie Royale des Sciences of France in 1724, in which they offered a prize of 2,500 livres for the best answer to the question “What are the laws according to which a perfectly hard body, put into motion, moves another body of the same nature either at rest or in motion, and which it encounters either in a vacuum or in a plenum?”³¹

Johann Bernoulli entered this competition. However, he rejected the notion of the perfectly hard body as a feature of atomic theory, arguing rather for a Law of Continuity “by virtue of which all that takes place does so by infinitely small degrees. It seems that good sense dictates that no change can occur by jumps”.³² Bernoulli found his contribution to the competition excluded as he rejected the “pretended perfectly solid atoms” which he regarded as corpuscles that existed only in the imagination of the atomists. Jean D’Alembert touched on this issue in his eulogy for Johann Bernoulli in 1748:

This principle, that everything happens in nature by insensible degrees, is the one that Leibniz and his sectarians have called the law of continuity. One cannot deny that this is highly philosophic and confirmed by the greatest part of phenomena. But it is bizarre usage to conclude from this that there are no hard bodies in the universe, that is, to exclude them when according to the expression

of a modern philosopher they are the only bodies that exist: for how can one form an idea of matter if one does not accede to an original and primitive hardness of the element-composing matter, which are properly called the true bodies. Moreover, even if the existence of these hard bodies would be physically impossible, it is not less certain that one can always consider these bodies as one considers perfect lines and surfaces in geometry and inflexible levers without weight in mechanics, and this was without doubt the point of view of the question posed.³³

Elsewhere S&B criticise Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, remarking that the problems around the use of infinitesimals were resolved between 1760 and 1820. They reference Carl Boyer's *The History of the Calculus and Its Conceptual Development*. However, when we turn the pages of this book we find a viewpoint expressed that is quite contrary to that promoted by S&B:

Mathematics is neither a description of nature nor an explanation of its operation; it is not concerned with physical motion or with metaphysical generation of quantities. It is merely the symbolic logic of possible relations, and as such is concerned with neither approximate nor absolute truth, but only with hypothetical truth.³⁴

Now I see little purpose in going over the ground which David Miller has dealt with so well in Chapter 6 of *Out of Error*,³⁵ even if I don't endorse his Popperism. "Back to the Frying Pan" is the title of this chapter, a title which captures how S&B's scientific realism fails to differentiate between radical relativism and radical scepticism. Enough to say that S&B face severe criticisms from a rationalist viewpoint, which is perhaps linked to the populism which Alan Sokal in particular is pursuing.³⁶ In fact, the development of quantum physics had already eroded the certainties of an external physical universe by the end of the nineteenth century. The view of the world as a mechanical universe had already been satirised by Alfred Jarry³⁷ some forty years prior to C.P. Snow's 'Two Cultures' lecture in 1959.³⁸ As the

twentieth century progressed, this relationship between subjectivity and objectivity was questioned both by scientists and artists. But Asger Jorn brought his own particular sense and meaning to this debate.³⁹

Mixed Sweets

In fact Jorn the artist is more faithful to the developments of modern science than Sokal the scientist. And this is because of his careful reading of Werner Heisenberg's *Physics and Philosophy*, a text which grew out of Heisenberg's 1955 Gifford Lectures.⁴⁰ We cannot do justice to this important text of mid-twentieth century science in this article. However, it will be sufficient to highlight some key aspects which relate to Jorn's subsequent development.

"Mixed sweets" is a little joke that Heisenberg attributes to Bohr. Heisenberg explained it in an interview:

Niels Bohr liked to tell the story about the small boy who comes into a shop with two pennies in his hands and asks the shopkeeper for some mixed sweets for the two pennies. The shopkeeper gives him two sweets and says 'You can do the mixing yourself.' This story, of course, is just meant to explain that the word mixing loses its meaning when we have only two objects.⁴¹

The story can also be related to the issue of the observer and the objective world which Heisenberg discusses. From an artistic viewpoint, Jorn takes up the mixing of the sweets himself. In *The Natural Order* Jorn describes how Bohr "warned against wanting to define more precisely the dividing line between object and subject, as the mobility between this dividing line appears to advance development".⁴² Jorn then develops a three-fold model which he calls triolectics. Having berated both the Copenhagen Interpretation and Dialectical Materialism for being dualistic, he then describes three-sided football:

However, let's now imagine a whole new type of football field, where, instead of two teams and two goals, there are three teams in play and three goals. Now what would happen when the three

teams began to play against each other? It would swiftly be discovered that it is impossible to control which of the two attacking enemies had scored. It would be necessary to invert the rules so that the victory was a negative one, so that it was the team that has defended itself best and had let in the least goals that was the victor. The victory becomes defensive and not offensive. The game would adjust itself accordingly.⁴³

Jorn is then unsure whether a three-sided relationship is static and constant, or whether it could lead to an actual explosion: “the possibilities of which are abreacted in a two-sided relationship by the *duel's* incessant consumption of energy”. Jorn then develops his theory of triads, starting from complementing the duality of observer and object through the intervention of the instrument. Quoting Heisenberg, he includes language and philosophical concepts as instruments and goes on to quote Bohr:

The distinction between object and subject necessary for unambiguous description is upheld by the fact that with every communication that contains a reference to ourselves, we, so to speak, insert a new subject which does not appear as an element of the communication's content. It hardly needs stressing that it is precisely this freedom in the choice of the line of demarcation between subject and object which gives room for the manifoldness of consciousness and the possibilities of human life.⁴⁴

Jorn develops this by saying that the identification of the observer with the instruments is a blind alley and challenges Einstein's understanding of the experiment as “a situation where we can tell others what we have done and what we have learnt”.⁴⁵ He then rules out artistic experimentation as “*the artistic is precisely the telling to others what one has done without thereby having learnt anything at all or imparting any experience whatever to others*”.⁴⁶ Later he goes on to explore another paradox of this definition of the experiment. The experiment needs to be repeatable, but when it is repeated it is no longer an experiment, as those involved already know the

result, but merely were not present when the original experiment occurred. For them it has a purely subjective significance. Contrariwise, Jorn argues that an experiment which can be repeated is on this count no experiment. Jorn is locating the experiment as a fact within the development stream of science, which, if successful, irreversibly changes the scientific concepts being applied in the experiment—the self-same concepts which Heisenberg has already agreed are instruments within the experiment. This is a far from trivial point. Later, he pushes the point home: “The establishment of objectively operative causal relationships is technique. The establishment of subjectively operative causal relationships is magic or art.”⁴⁷ He goes on:

In the classical view, magic is a pseudo-science constructed from particular concepts and ideas. It is only when one accepts this definition of magic that one can assert that runes, for example, do not have a magical origin. Metaphysical definition is necessary in classical philosophy because it has no place at all for non-conceptual thought, thought without tools, thought that is only based upon the talent for thinking.⁴⁸

Recalling Bohr's comment that clarity is complementary to truth, Jorn creates a triolectic by adding “imagination or illusion” as the third term. Jorn presents a first triolectic where the triad of beauty-health-truth (Skønhed-Sundhed-Sandhed in Danish) is counter-posed with idea-magic-lie. Then he discusses the relationship of symptom-signal-symbol which he then counter-poses to magic-image-idea in his second triolectic. I must admit that I find his attempt to project his schema onto a threefold analysis of European culture around Greek-Latin-Nordic poles less satisfactory, although Jorn no doubt felt this to be essential.

Topological Twists

Topology is rooted in mathematical structure, even if transgressing classical mathematical structures. Karen Kurczynski's discussion about the accuracy of the equations in *Situationist Times* is interesting in establishing them as more than illustrative decorations.⁴⁹ When Jorn brings in

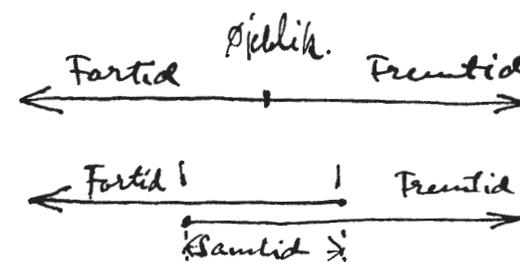
situ analysis, this goes back to the mathematician Henri Poincaré and his notion of topology. On an aesthetic and cultural level the topological breakdown of classical physics can be compared to the breakdown of classicism in literature with the rise of mannerism.

Jorn has a different grasp of reality which functions in a logical fashion, but a different sort of logical fashion. This is like non-Euclidean geometry challenging the Euclidean model of what the world is like. The Euclidean model has more or less been accepted, concretised and understood as how the world really is.⁵⁰ Other forms of geometry then become like variations of chess, peripheral rather than the central core of what rationality and science are. Likewise, there has been a centralisation of European culture. This can be taken back to Karl Marx bringing together German philosophy, English economics and French politics. Within Euro-centrism, these countries form a centre within Europe, placing Scandinavia in the periphery.

To relate this to my own history: in the seventies and eighties, I had been seduced by the apparent certainties which Debord's prose fostered. However, there came a certain point during the first Iraq War when I felt the need to question our sense of class victory in Britain following the defeat of the Poll Tax. I suffered from an erroneous feeling that this victory was opening up a new future. In reality, it was more like the close of a previous period.⁵¹ It suddenly seemed as if the whole of society was mobilised behind war to the extent of bombing soldiers who were running away. These Iraqi 'soldiers' were largely armed with spades rather than guns. They were there to fetch and carry for the professional soldiers in the Republican Guard. These men were murdered, while the Republican Guard was allowed to escape—in order to suppress popular revolts against Saddam Hussein. In light of this I had to stop the form of political activism in which I had been engaged. I realised it merely institutionalised various forms of political rhetoric. I had been engaged in this for twenty years. "How did we end up here?" I asked myself. I decided to go back to material I read many years previously and set out to track down the bits and pieces I hadn't read. I had previously been involved in the publication of Stewart Home's *Assault on Culture*.⁵² This had given an English-speaking readership the opportunity to see the Situationist International as something much broader than what

could have been gleaned from the material available up till then, which had principally perpetuated the constraints of Debord's party-line. Among other lacunae, the role of Asger Jorn had become occluded. I soon realised that there was all sorts of material I hadn't read because it hadn't been translated. I had a job—I gave it up. I will go and I will wander. I changed my self-conception. I refused to go through the routine of day-to-day work, while society was producing such an abomination as the Gulf War. So I took up psychogeography seriously: idly wandering around broke down my previous way of life of striding to work on a preset route.

This wandering was accompanied by reading and translating two works by Asger Jorn in particular: *Open Creation and its Enemies* and *Origin and Magnitude (On the System of Isou)*.⁵³ Reading this material brought back to me various conceptions I had encountered as a child, in particular when I read J.W. Dunne, the aeroplane engineer who wrote *An Experiment with Time*.⁵⁴ In *Open Creation* and *Origin and Magnitude* Jorn develops his critique of Isidore Isou, Maurice Lemaitre and the Lettrists, from whom Debord had broken away. I started finding the revolution again. I started to find a new relation to this way of thinking—not trapped in 'politics' or other discourses which are predetermined, e.g. a predetermined understanding of subjectivity. 'Artistic freedom' can be just some sort of bubble around a restricted understanding of subjectivity. Likewise political discourse has its own forms of abstraction.



The illustration above is from Jorn's *The Order of Nature* (1962). Fortid = Past; Øjeblik = Instant; Fremtid = Future; Samtid = Contemporaneous time (contemporaneity).⁵⁵

Jorn presents a critique of Christian ideas embodied in European notions of revolution. The temporality of these ideas is centred around the birth of Christ. Isidore Isou adopted and adapted the idea of Messiah, even self-identifying as the messiah.⁵⁶ This can then be projected onto a notion of revolution as something which is about to happen. It's just around the corner. "Aren't we privileged to be in a moment of time when the whole of history is in the balance"—maybe the whole of human history has been in the balance for 10,000 years!⁵⁷ This is a delusion which feeds the ego. That we, the people who happen to be alive at this particular time, are somehow at this central pivot point. This feeling has been nurtured in people particularly through the Judeo-Christian notion of the Messiah, which has often be presented in a secularised concept of social redemption through a single event—The Revolution—which will transform human history for all time. People have continually entertained such feelings and it fosters a linear concept of time.

Asger Jorn counters this with an overlapping model, which is no longer linear. Time is no longer linear as there is a fold at the point of birth and death. The nature of consciousness that we experience is non-linear—we don't just move along a time-line, but the past and future are continually interacting within a 'now' which is continually changing. This phenomenon was discussed by Charles Peirce in his "Law of Mind":

[C]onsciousness essentially occupies time; and what is present to mind at any ordinary instant is what is present during a moment in which that instant occurs. Thus the present is half past and half to come.⁵⁸

While Peirce analyses the logical relationship between instant and moment through infinitesimals, he is able to slide out of the subjectivism of this approach. However, the subjective aspect is to be found in the selection which happens through the focusing of consciousness on a particular moment amongst the multitude of moments within which an instant may occur. This is an issue Kurt Gödel comments on, discussing an "infinity of layers of 'now' which come into existence successively" whereby "each observer has

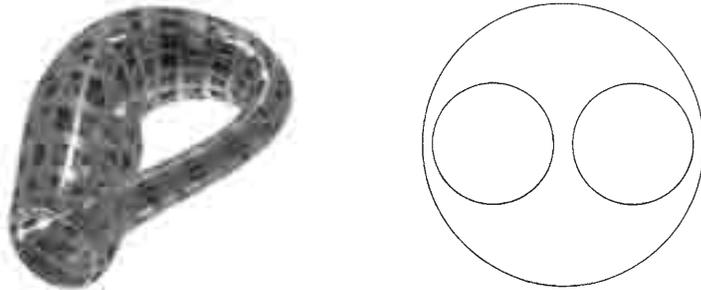
his own set of 'nows', and none of these various systems of layers can claim the prerogative of representing the objective lapse of time".⁵⁹ Thus, when we apply Peirce's method of dealing with infinitesimals to this problem, many of the problems which arise from Gödel's development of Einstein's theory of relativity become more amenable to resolution.⁶⁰ Perhaps it was this scheme of Gödel's that Heisenberg was referring to in *Physics and Philosophy* where he discussed a model which produced time reversal whereby particles were predicted "in which suddenly at some point in space particles are created, the energy of which is later provided for by some other collision process between elementary parties at some other point".⁶¹ Heisenberg then says that while physicists may remain convinced that such a process does not occur in nature, this is only when the two processes are separated by measurable distances in space and time. Peirce's "moment" encompasses instants which cannot be differentiated in that fashion.

I would take Jorn's image above a stage further with the image of the sheepshank:

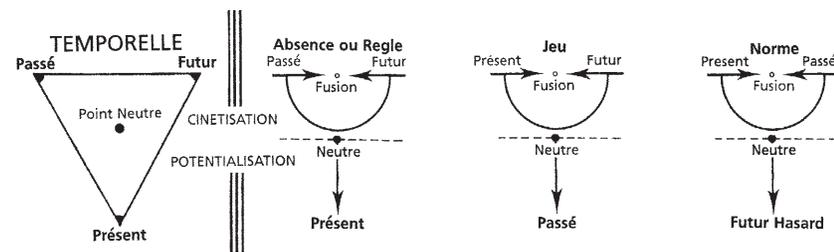


Actually, this is mathematically defined as an 'unknot', in that it can be tied in a length of string without access to the ends. This has the advantage of restoring time as a one-dimensional continuum within the context of Jorn's overlap of future and past in "Samtid". While at first sight it might seem problematic in that it implies the phenomenon of time going backwards with an additional period returning from the end of the past to the beginning of the future, this actually is its great merit as it facilitates precisely the Closed Temporal Curve, which arises in Gödel's paper, and features in what has become known as a "Gödel universe". In fact there are two Closed Temporal Curves, one composed of the end of the past unified with the reversed time portion, and the one composed of the beginning of the future unified with precisely the same reversed time portion. i.e. the curves are interlocked by a portion of the continuum where time can be said to flow backwards.

As this process can be endlessly repeated, a complex braid can be produced. Indeed, if the three strands in the central portion of the sheepshank are transformed in the manner of a Klein Bottle, the folding of the string takes place within its length and produces a cross section of an elementary “Cantor Cheese”:⁶²

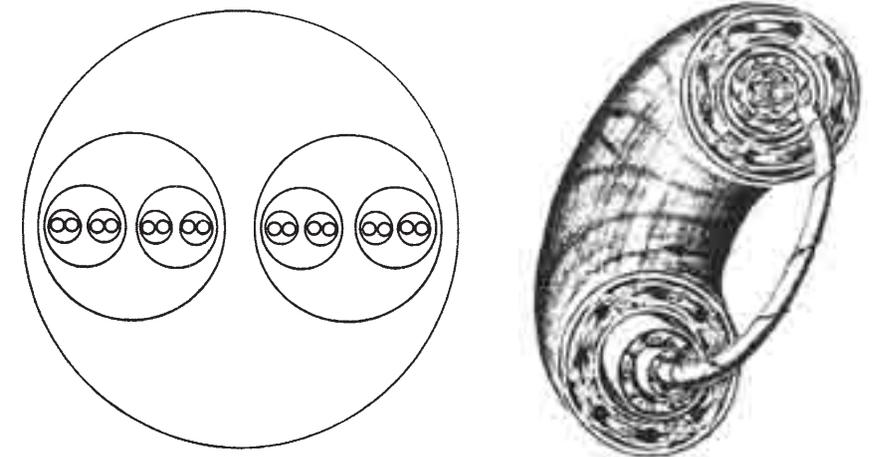


This results in a trielectical image in which the asymmetry of the trielectical relationship is made clear, i.e. of the three strands, two are similar and one is dissimilar. This is somewhat different from Jorn’s formulation in his schema given in *Signes gravés*, but compatible nonetheless. It can be regarded as an empty form of Jorn’s exegesis of trielectics of which I shall merely give one example—the temporal:



In the elementary Cantor cheese, the two antagonistic elements are to be found in the interior circles, with the synthesis represented by the outer circle. When the elementary Cantor cheese is reiterated—just as with Jorn

the process doesn’t stop with any particular trielectic—the full flavour of the mature Cantor cheese can be appreciated and transformed into a “Vague Attractor of Kolmogorov”:



Even this image is unsatisfactory, as it presupposes that the attractor in some way constitutes a torus, or fractal doughnut. Actually, we do not have to concern ourselves whether the ‘ends’ meet, or remain distinct—as there is no need of ends when tying an unknot, regardless of whatever topological refinements are introduced. These issues have been approached from a somewhat different perspective with work done around self-organised complexity.⁶³ As with any approach which involves suspending the so-called “Law of the Excluded Middle”, any trielectical or three-phased logic system will be subject to attack by formalists. Intuitionism, as originated by Mannoury and Brouwver and developed by Gödel, will always be vigorously contested by those who prefer a more static way of dealing with reality.

Suffice it to say that Charles Peirce’s development of Cantor’s continuum⁶⁴ yielded a three-fold approach resonant with Jorn’s dialectics, although Peter Shield’s analysis of Jorn’s work has shown the limited impact of Peirce on Jorn. Regardless of what leads people to this sort of conjecture,

the same issues recur, many of which can be taken back to Leibniz and earlier. However things are not static. While the classical world of Newton remains substantial, it has also been shown to be necessarily inadequate, and that it cannot be replaced by a model which is both rational and rationalist. Jorn's philosophy, just as much as his art, shows how he was able to usefully work with the concepts of quantum physics ... or equally usefully play with these concepts in away which threatened the political organisation of conformity. His philosophical work has been marginalised, just as Peirce's was before him.

It is relevant to raise issues from quantum computing here: whether quantum computing will prove effective and what effect will it have on society. We should be clear in this matter, that the spook scientists at GCHQ, the headquarters of the British code-breakers and e-mail monitors, and their colleagues in Echelon will be in the thick of it, even if their research is suppressed on account of its security implications. As for the potential effects of quantum computing, the thesis of the "Quantum Time Bomb" was superimposed on the 11th UK Conference on the Foundations of Physics.⁶⁵

According to this thesis, quantum computing will create circumstances whereby information will be able to be sent against the flow of time (a bit like being able to send e-mails into the past—or receive e-mails from the future). The validity of such theses will become clear as what is currently conjectural becomes manifest. These practical issues show how the concerns raised by Bohr in his campaign for an Open World are relevant to this day. This would seem to have influenced the Situationist International's proposal to "take over UNESCO" as proposed in their Manifesto.⁶⁶

I haven't set out to make over-extravagant claims about Jorn, but rather to indicate how Situationism can be rescued from the shadows of Debord's theory of the Spectacle⁶⁷ to play a role in the twenty-first century. Creating a cult around Jorn instead of around Debord would be to do everyone a disservice. But to facilitate a better idea of why Situationism emerged when, where and how it did, why it took on such a critical role in the development of social revolutionary thought, and how it will play a broader role in the future seems to me to be a useful endeavour.

Back in the nineties, when I translated some of Jorn's material from French into English (I can't read Danish), I believed making these texts available in English was very important as English is the modern *lingua franca*. I see Jorn is a much more important *theorist* than Debord, although Debord is a better *writer*. Jorn's writing is very dense, he's so confusing to read. But after a while you begin to enjoy it. It isn't necessary to take on board all he's thinking. In fact I doubt whether it's possible! He brings so many different things out. Then you can pick out the things that hold your interest and move with them and develop them. I have certainly found doing this increasingly interesting. When I started working on this material back in 1991, people would look at me and say I was crazy. "Why are you going back to psychogeography? It's all old stuff that no-one worries about any more". "There's *Society of the Spectacle* which can be used as a source for lots of phrases, but this other stuff is a waste of time". There was a prevalent view that it had all been superseded by Debord's theory of the Spectacle. People were much more interested recycling clichés from Debord. Thankfully this has changed.

I take the number of people at the "Expect Anything Fear Nothing" event 15-odd years later as a vindication of my approach.⁶⁸ There is so much which can be done with this material. I'm not so keen on the term 'legacy'. Neither am I so keen on the term 'project'. We don't have to realise anybody else's project. We don't have to use anybody's legacy. What we have from Jorn and the other Situationists is a resource that we can use if and when we like. It is available for us, if we find it useful. I've only been able to touch on a couple of illustrative points. When we look at how the world is developing today and we look at the struggles around us, we need to break out of this containment, of this classically structured way of thinking. I think this is increasingly important. Maybe this expansion of our understanding of the Situationists can help us find new ways out of the problems of today.

NOTES

1 These schemas are presented in a chart with the comment “Some Examples of triolectic complementarity: We here present some models of triolectic equilibriums applied to different conceptual domains. We emphasise these are simple working bases, totally undogmatic, which could be modified or extended. It is in their nature to be open, to start, for example, with more than three relations, this method not being based on any numerological mystique. Its purpose is to liberate the dialectical movements constrained either in sub-Marxist determinism or in the arbitrary antagonism where Lupasco founders.” As translated by Peter Shield in *The Natural Order and Other Texts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

2 *Natural Order*, pp. 107-8. *Luck and Chance* refers to *Held og Hasard, Dolk og Guitar* which originally appeared in 1952, but was republished in 1963 by SICV. *Golden Horn and the Wheel of Fortune* refers to *Guldhorn og Lykkehjul* which was published in 1957. See: <http://salondeverluisant.org/texts/luckandchance.html#contents>

3 This is available in English translation from Unpopular Books. The English edition was published in 1994.

4 Popper is very clear that he is criticising ‘Marxism’ rather than just Stalinism. However, I have chosen to pose the matter in this way to register a critique of Popper.

5 See Popper’s *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1977). Originally published in German as *Logik*

der Forschung in 1934, it appeared in English translation in 1949.

6 In particular see Soshichi Uchii’s *Is Philosophy of Science Alive in the East? A Report from Japan* (2002) available at <http://www.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~suchii/cntr-lec.html>. Uchii discusses how a Marxist philosophy of science emerged in Japan in the 1930s, but that this was suppressed following the occupation of Japan by the United States, whereby logical empiricism was introduced as the newest brand of Western philosophy in Japan. The Department of History and Philosophy of Science, founded in 1951 at the University of Tokyo, became one of its vehicles.

7 “Copenhagen”, directed by Howard Davies, 2002, BBC4, England.

8 See *Brighter Than a Thousand Suns* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958) by Robert Jungk, originally published in German as *Heller als Tausend Sonnen* (1956). Also see Michael Frayn’s play *Copenhagen* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), which revived the controversy and led to a symposium in 2001 (“Copenhagen and Beyond: Drama Meets History of Science”), see <http://www.nba.nbi.dk/files/sem/22sep2001.html> and the publication of several of Niels Bohr’s letters in 2002 (see: <http://nba.nbi.dk/release.html>). For me, whatever the truth about Heisenberg’s claims to have resisted attempts by the Nazis to develop an atomic bomb, what we do know is that Bohr did participate in the actual development of atomic weapons which were used to incinerate the Japanese inhabitants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However we

should regard this fact in a much more complex manner.

9 This somewhat self-congratulatory discussion between the two men is deflated by the character of Margrethe Bohr focusing on the prosaic personal rivalries which were more the day-to-day reality of how the two men worked together. This, perhaps, can be compared with the “Communiqué of the S.I. Concerning Vaneigem”, which Debord and Sanguinetti saw fit to publish as an appendix to *The Veritable Split in the International* (London: Chronos, 1990).

10 Finn Aaserud, “Niels Bohr’s mission for an ‘open world’, *Proceedings of the 2nd ICESHS* (Cracow, 6-9 September, 2006). Edited by M. Kokowski. Available at http://www.2iceshs.cyfronet.pl/2ICESHS_Proceedings/Chapter_25/R-17_Aaserud.pdf

11 The text of this can be found in *The Political Arena: Niels Bohr, Collected Works Vol. II* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005), pp. 121-124.

12 See <http://www.seas.columbia.edu/~ah297/un-esa/ws1999-letter-bohr.html> for the full text of this letter.

13 Max Bucaille, (1906), Surrealist and maths teacher.

14 Lech Tomaszewski (1926–1982) collaborated with the protagonist of “Open Form”, Oskar Hansen, on a number of projects, particularly international exhibitions.

15 Edward Patterson published *Topology* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd) in 1956. This became a university text book.

16 Walther Lietzmann, (1880-1959), was educated by David Hilbert and worked closely with Felix Klein running the Deutscher Ausschluß für Mathematischen und Naturwissenschaftlichen Unterricht (German Committee for Mathematics and Science Teaching) which instituted Klein’s ideas for reforming maths and science teaching. From 1919 to 1946 he was the director of the Felix-Klein-Gymnasium, Göttingen. In 1955 he published *Anschauliche Topologie*, translated into English as *Visual Topology* (New York: Elsevier, 1965).

17 “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity”, *Social Text*, no. 46/47, 1996, pp. 217-252, (see http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/transgress_v2/transgress_v2_singlefile.html)

18 “Defence of a modest scientific realism”, *Knowledge and the World: Challenges Beyond the Science Wars* (Berlin: Springer, 2004).

19 Written with Jean Bricmont and originally published in French as *Impostures Intellectuelles* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1997). The U.S. edition is called *Fashionable Nonsense* and was published in 1998 at the same time as the UK edition, *Intellectual Impostures* (New York: Picador 1998).

20 *Comparative Vandalism: Asger Jorn and the Artistic Attitude to Life* (Copenhagen & Aldershot: Borgen & Ashgate, 1998).

21 Graham Birtwistle translates this as *Magic and the Fine Arts*, written in 1948 and published in 1972. See Birtwistle’s *Living Art: Asger Jorn’s Comprehensive*

Theory of Art Between Helhesten and Cobra (1946-1949) (Utrecht: Reflex, 1986).

22 Birtwistle remarks that “there is no evidence of a long lasting influence of Lalo on Jorn’s thinking”. Shield challenges the translation which appears in *Living Art*.

23 Translation from *Magi og skønne kunster* by Birtwistle in *Living Art*, p. 67.

24 *Fashionable Nonsense*, pp. 39-40.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

26 It is worth noting here that Asger Jorn operated outside the academic world, whereas from the list of people attacked by S&B, all but Félix Guattari were academics.

27 Welby developed a three-fold understanding of how signs are interpreted: Sense, Meaning and Significance. I hope it is not an over-interpretation to see an element of Welby’s signification in Asger Jorn’s “Mind and Sense” article in *Situationist Times*, no. 5, 1964, p. 4. “Meaning may be ambivalent. Sens[e] may be at most [equivocal]. If we talk about the meaning of art, we mean its signification”. However, having checked through the work of Peter Shield (1998 & 2002) and Graham Birtwistle (1986), I have found no reference to signification. Furthermore, in Jorn’s triolethical diagrams found in *Signe gravé* (1963), these do not appear as a triple Semantics, rather being broken down as Symptom—Signal—Symbol. Finally it is worth noting that Pieter Wisse, a Dutch information consultant, has used Mannoury’s work in developing his “subjective situationism” from the

work of Peirce and Schopenhauer without any reference to any of the Situationist factions found in the SI. See his *Mannoury’s Significs, or a Philosophy of Communal Individualism* (2003), <http://www.informationdynamics.nl/pwisse/htm/mannoury.htm>.

28 See Wisse, *Mannoury’s Significs, or a Philosophy of Communal Individualism*.

29 “Is Mathematics a Scientific Discipline” (1996), http://www.henry-flynt.org/studies_sci/mathsci.html

30 S&B, *Intellectual Impostures*, p 90.

31 *Opera Omnia III*, p 9, Gabriel Cramer, Lausanne and Geneva (1742), as quoted in Wilson L. Scott, *The Conflict between Atomism and Conservation Theory 1644 to 1860* (London: Macdonald 1970), p. 23.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

33 “Eloge de Jean Bernoullias” in *Oeuvres Complètes d’Alembert*, Paris III, p. 355 quoted in Wilson L. Scott, *The Conflict Between Atomism and Conservation Theory 1644 to 1860* (London: Macdonald, 1970) pp. 48-49.

34 *The History of the Calculus and Its Conceptual Development* (New York: Dover Publications, 1959) p. 308. Boyer in turn cites Felix Klein’s *Elementary Mathematics from an Advanced Standpoint*, translated by Earle Hedrick (New York: Macmillan, 1939). Klein was one of the pioneers of non-Euclidean geometry and gave his name to the Klein Bottle.

35 David Miller, *Out of Error: Further Essays on Critical Rationalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006).

36 See *Beyond the Hoax* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

37 See Jarry’s ‘neo-scientific’ novel *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien* (posthumously published in 1911) translated as *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician* in *The Selected Works of Alfred Jarry* (London: Methuen, 1965) edited by Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor. Asger Jorn’s “La pataphysique, une religion en formation” appeared in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 6, 1961). A translation entitled “Pataphysics—A Religion in The Making” appeared in *Smile*, no. 9, 1989 and is available at <http://www.infopool.org.uk/6104.html>

38 “The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution”, delivered 7 May in the Senate House, Cambridge University, published in *New Statesman*, 6 October 1956.

39 Referring to a passage from *Naturens Orden*, Peter Shield remarks “Such a breathtaking disregard for the conventional uses of geometry and mathematics was not achieved without much study. Jorn possessed a score of books on mathematics, topology and geometry, but just how much he really understood and deliberately took to extremes here is unclear. Not so his intention, which is demonstrated with great clarity”. *Comparative Vandalism*, p. 119.

40 Actually Niels Bohr also delivered a series of Gifford Lectures in 1949. These never found their way into print—despite this being part of the object of Adam Gifford’s endowment.

Jorn’s biographer, Abraham Pais, who was also his assistant at the time, seems quite dismissive of them. See Niels Bohr’s *Times in Physics, Philosophy and Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) and Larry Witham, *The Measure of God* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005).

41 See David Peat and Paul Buckley, *Glimpsing Reality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

42 *The Natural Order and Other Texts*, p. 18.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 29. Jorn clearly had never played three-sided football as he goes on to say “It would not be an exciting game at all”. In fact, as each team faces twice as many opponents as its own team, this defensiveness is overwhelmed by the two-to-one odds. The game has been played several times up to now (see http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_sided_football). The dynamic is actually more intense than two-sided football, as the inter-team dynamics mediate the interpersonal dynamic of each player who has two opponents to choose from when it is a matter of trying to score a goal.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

45 Unattributed quote, *ibid.*, p. 23.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 24, italics in original.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40. He goes on to defer to Kierkegaard as a better authority in this area.

49 See Kurczynski’s text “Red Herrings: Eccentric Morphologies in *The Situationist Times*” in this volume.

50 Felix Klein, writing in 1908, made the following observation about Euclid: “[T]radition is so strong that Euclid’s presentation is widely thought of today, especially in England, as the unexcelled pattern of the foundation of geometry. Men mistake the historical importance of the work for absolute and permanent importance.” (*Elementary Mathematics from an Advanced Standpoint*, translated by Earle Hedrick, New York: MacMillan, 1939).

51 Resistance to the Poll Tax led to the toppling of Margaret Thatcher following several years of working-class defeat: the Miners’ Strike (1984–85) and the printers’ strikes (Warrington 1982, Wapping 1986–7) chief among them. These industrial disputes had been accompanied by intense social disputes such as the waves of inner-city unrest in 1981 and 1985 and the suppression of the Stonehenge Festival in the Battle of the Beanfield (1985).

52 Stewart Home, *The Assault On Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (London: Unpopular Books, 1988).

53 Asger Jorn, *Open Creation and Its Enemies* (London: Unpopular Books, 1988).

54 *An Experiment with Time* (1927) was substantially revised in the third edition of 1934, which was the version I read. He developed a musical explanation of his theory: “But the music is the essential thing. It must be heard by anyone who wants to realize how vast can be the difference between experiencing a simple succession of states in a one-way order and re-experiencing those states,

with divided attention, in any order you please”. (“The New Immortality”, 1938, broadcast by the BBC on 12th December 1937.) Dunne developed a viewpoint he called Serialism, according to which “time is an analytical device which effects the sharpest possible distinction between subject and object”. See *The Serial Universe* (London: Faber & Faber, 1938).

55 This illustration is taken from Peter Shield’s *Comparative Vandalism: Asger Jorn and the Artistic Attitude to Life*.

56 There is not space here to go into the messianic conceptions of the Hurufi and Sabbateans which permeate the Balkans whence Isou came. Suffice it to note that the term Hurufi can be rendered into English as Lettrist. *The End of the Age of Divinity*, by Situationist Worker, February 2009, written following the death of Isou, explores this in greater detail. http://uo.twentiethcentury.com/index.php?title=The_End_of_the_Age_of_Divinity

57 “10,000 Years of Nordic Folk Art” (10 000 års nordisk folkekunst), a project by Asger Jorn, had been a previous topic of discussion in the seminar.

58 “Law of Mind” (1892) reprinted in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), p. 343.

59 “A Remark about the Relationship of Relativity Theory and Idealistic Philosophy”, 1949, in *Collected Works Vol II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

60 Ibid.

61 *Physics and Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1958), p. 109.

62 See the latter part of Preface to the English edition of *Open Creation and its Enemies*, pp. 10–16.

63 See “The VAK of Vacuum Fluctuation: Spontaneous Self-organization and Complexity Theory Interpretation of High Energy Particle Physics and the Mass Spectrum”, M.S. El Naschie, *Chaos, Solitons and Fractals*, no. 18, 2003, pp. 401–420. El Naschie has been the subject of a concerted attack by John Baez. Baez had been involved in the “Bogdanov Affair” which involved the suggestion that a pair of twin brothers, Grichka and Igor Bogdanov, deliberately constructed bogus physics and maths papers to show that the peer-review system in Physics is flawed. Baez originally drew a parallel between this and the “Sokal Affair”, but subsequently retracted this position.

64 See *The Continuity of Peirce’s Thought*, Kelly A. Parker (Vanderbilt University Press, 1998) particularly Chapter 4 (pp. 75–101).

65 This was held 9th–13th September, 2002. Peter Morgan, the organiser, admitted he was concerned that he might be murdered by other prospective attendees (see <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/emissions/message/801> for full text of his email). Consequently the 11th UK Conference on the Foundations of Psycho-Physics was organised to run in a complementary fashion. See <http://j12.org/pp/11thconference.html>

66 “Manifeste”, 17 May 1960, published in *Internationale situationniste*, no. 4,

1960, pp. 36–38, English translation published as an appendix in *Open Creation and Its Enemies*, pp. 44–7.

67 The limitations of Debord’s approach can be seen with his comments at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1960. When a member of the audience asked what Situationism was, Debord retorted that this was a “cuntish” question. It is, of course, easy for avant-garde artists to set up members of the public in this way. Even if we accept the stance taken by certain Situationists to avoid being reduced to simply being artists by declaring ‘Situationist’ works of art anti-Situationist, this does not resolve the matter. Certainly Jorn did not accept this viewpoint, as evinced by his use of the term ‘Situationism’ in his text “The Anti-Situation of Amsterdam”. Originally planned for publication in *Internationale Situationniste*, this text remained unpublished until Peter Shield’s translation appeared in *Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration*, no. 5, 1999, pp. 15–19. Jorn’s use of the term ‘Situationism’ is willful, following the ‘Declaration Made in the Name of the Fourth SI Conference to the Institute of Contemporary Arts’ (*Internationale situationniste*, no. 5, 1960), whereby it was solemnly affirmed “There is no such thing as Situationism”. Jorn’s rejoinder is worth quoting: “The great value of Situationism is, on the one hand, having opened out new creative perspectives towards the future and, on the other, of having highlighted the immediate, the present as the crux of each situation. This opening towards the future is made by the fixation of a new conversion point, a zero point which is the

realisation of unitary urbanism. All the activities of the International Situationist movement thus become preparations for realisation of this goal, this zero point, from which the true radiation of Situationist creation is able to start, thus transforming idealistic utopianism into an experimental and conscious utopianism". ("The Anti-Situation of Amsterdam")
 Jorn further states "... Situationism is above all the revolt against reification or it is nothing". (ibid.) Written at the point of his departure from the Situationniste Internationale, I feel it is fair to see Jorn's use of the term as deliberately

provocative. During the *Expect Anything Fear Nothing* seminar, I found Peter Laugesen's and Jacqueline De Jong's contributions very helpful in understanding the 1961-62 splits as being something above and beyond the confrontation between Debord and those he stigmatised as 'Nashists'.

68 Folkets Hus, Copenhagen, 15 and 16 March, 2007. The conference took place during a state of emergency following riots prompted by the destruction of the Ungdomshuset youth centre. The meeting room was packed, mainly with young people—and not necessarily students!

TO ACT IN CULTURE WHILE BEING AGAINST ALL CULTURE: THE SITUATIONISTS AND THE "DESTRUCTION OF RSG-6"

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen

On 22 June 1963, the manifestation "Destruction of RSG-6" ("Destruktion af RSG-6") opened at Galerie Exi in Odense, Denmark. The gallery was located in the cellar of the first commune in Denmark, called Huset (the House), which had been initiated by Mogens Amdi Pedersen, later well-known as the somewhat mysterious leader of the left-wing educational experiment Tvind.¹ The House was the centre of a wide range of activities such as a campaign against apartheid in South Africa, and it was the local centre for the Danish CND. In the basement of the house a gallery of contemporary art had been created, run by the local artist Tom Lindhardt. It was in this gallery that the small post-surrealist and explicitly Marxist group, the Situationist International, staged its exhibition "Destruction of RSG-6".

The exhibition in Odense was made up of three sections: in the first, the room was furnished like a bomb shelter with plank beds, cans and water bottles stored in the corner. Dummies were placed on the plank beds in body bags. In the next section, called "Revolt", the audience was given the opportunity to fire rifle shots at pictures of various political leaders like President Kennedy, Khrushchev, De Gaulle, the Danish Foreign Minister Per Hækkerup and the Pope. Next to these images, which were attached to small targets, hung a series of so-called "Directives": white canvases on which Guy Debord had written various slogans like "Réalisations de la philosophie" (Realization of Philosophy) and "Abolition du travail aliéné" (Abolition of Alienated Labour). In the third and last section, "Exhibition",



Invitation to "Destruction of RSG-6", 1963.

As a response to the threat of a nuclear war, the British Government had been engaged since the beginning of the 1950s in a secret building campaign of underground bunkers around the country. These bunkers, called Regional Seats of Government (RSGs), were supposed to accommodate local politicians and members of the Government in the event of war. The construction took place in utmost secrecy but was revealed when anonymous activists connected to the British peace movement broke into the bunker in Reading, RSG-6, and took photographs of the whole project and of various secret documents. The activists issued a small pamphlet entitled "Danger! Official Secret RSG-6" containing photos and documents revealing the existence of the bunker complex. The pamphlet was sent to newspapers and news agencies, and the disclosure of the bunkers instantly became top news around the world. Three days after Spies for Peace had brought the existence of the RSGs to light, a huge demonstration took place right in front of RSG-6 in Reading.²

the Situationists had hung two series of works for the audience to contemplate while drinking a cocktail or looking through the catalogue. The Danish Situationist J.V. Martin's "Termonukleare kartografier" (Thermonuclear Maps), depicting the world after the outbreak of the Third World War, hung next to Michèle Bernstein's "Victoires du prolétariat" (Victories of the Proletariat). The exhibition in Odense was a tribute to anonymous British activists who in April 1963 had exposed the construction of a secret nuclear bunker in Reading reserved for the British Government and local authorities.

This episode was just one in a long succession of confrontations in the 1950s and 1960s between the governments in the Western world and social movements protesting against the threat of nuclear war. What were originally scattered small-scale protests at the beginning of the 1950s developed into a genuine protest movement by the beginning of the 1960s in countries like England and Denmark. The primary aim of the local Campaigns for Nuclear Disarmament was to prevent military actions resulting in the use of nuclear weapons. The campaigns were organized as loose trans-political movements working outside established political parties. The campaigns generated a lot of enthusiasm and they developed into real mass movements with protest marches and large-scale demonstrations.

The Nuclear Threat

In the decades after the end of World War Two the threat of a nuclear war was perceived to be very real. When the atom bomb was used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the final phase of the war, the terrible power of the bomb became evident to the whole world; from then on people had to reckon with the possibility of annihilation on a completely new scale. In the first years after the end of the war it was only the USA that had the capacity



Bikini atoll atomic bomb test, 1946.

to produce nuclear weapons, but in 1949 the Soviet Union acquired that capacity, and in 1952 Great Britain joined the club. The rapid development of weapons of mass destruction intensified the tense atmosphere between the Western world led by the USA and the communist states headed by the Soviet Union. As a replacement for the duality of the anti-fascist struggle the world became entangled in the anti-Communist battle of the Cold War. The USA and the Soviet Union became deadly rivals fighting for the control of the world. This tense relationship was the primary political dynamic in the 1950s and 1960s.

The atomic bomb was an important element in the confrontations of the Cold War, and it had its share in creating an almost hallucinatory atmosphere with invisible enemies and the threat of total annihilation. The period was thus not only characterized by the proliferation of ever-new commodities and the creation of a new modern life with refrigerators and television, but also by a feeling of fear and uncertainty, and sales of life insurance policies and tranquillizers exploded. In the Western world the image of Nazism was replaced by the image of dangerous Soviet communism, and in the visual culture of the Cold War the nuclear bomb was paradoxically perceived both as a threat and as a guarantee of security. Because of the importance of the atomic bomb for anti-communist propaganda, the bomb played an important role in the creation of the counter-culture that tried to challenge the logic of the Cold War, critiquing the rigid partition of the world into West versus East, good versus evil.

Before the Soviet Union became able to produce nuclear weapons, the country had publicly campaigned for the destruction of nuclear weapons. After 1949 the communist world half-heartedly continued to offer proposals for disarmament, making all alternative left-wing disarmament attempts in the West look as if they were siding with the Soviet regime. The complex political and ethical question was reduced to a question of being for or against communism. Nonetheless, opposition to nuclear weapons increased during the late 1950s and more and more people joined the protests. By 1960 the atomic consensus was slowly breaking down and the bomb was losing its status as a guarantor of security. For the opponents of the bomb, it was a direct threat to humanity; for the supporters of



Model made by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation of central Copenhagen after the explosion of an atomic bomb, 1961.

the terror balance, it was a guarantee of peace. It was especially the threat of the spread of nuclear arms that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament focused on, but the issue of radiation was also on the agenda at the time. Prominent scientists and intellectuals protested against the bomb and signed manifestos demanding disarmament and an immediate stop to nuclear tests. In 1958 the protests seemed to bear fruit as the USA, the Soviet Union and Great Britain started negotiations about a possible nuclear test ban, but in 1960, following the U2 incident when an American plane was

shot down while flying in Soviet airspace, a scheduled meeting between Khrushchev and Eisenhower was cancelled. The erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 only worsened the climate between the two superpowers and further raised the prospect of a possible nuclear war that would mean incomprehensible destruction and death. Bunkers and shelters became a natural part of everyday life in those years, and siren codes were displayed in public institutions and in private homes. On October 16th the American President Kennedy received photographs showing the preparations for the installation of Soviet ballistic missiles on Cuba. On Monday October 22nd Kennedy made a television speech in which he stated that the USA would prevent the arrival of nuclear arms on Cuba, and urged the Soviet Union to remove the missiles already on Cuba. The US Army was on high alert and the following days were perhaps the most jittery and tense in the post-war period, as the world seemed to be on the brink of nuclear war.

If War Comes

The exhibition “Destruction of RSG-6” in Odense took place just five months after the Cuban missile crisis. As a member of NATO and an ally of the USA, Denmark was very much involved in the conflict between the two super-powers, and the threat of a nuclear war was perceived as very real, as can be verified by the brochure *If War Comes* (*Hvis krigen kommer*) that was distributed door-to-door in 1.5 million copies in January 1962. On the first page of the brochure the Prime Minister Viggo Kampmann had written a short text entitled “If War Comes”: “The danger of a war has not been eradicated. [...] Today nuclear war is a possibility. [...] The modern weapons can strike us even if the country is not directly hit and these weapons do not distinguish between civilians and military targets. A new war will be a total war”.³ With this brochure, the threat of a nuclear war reached into every home in Denmark. The Prime Minister wrote: “The population must know what it can be exposed to and how to protect itself. The survival of the population and the nation is very dependent upon how, in a time of peace, we prepare ourselves to war. [...] This brochure explains what anybody can and ought to do”.⁴

The brochure brought home the threat of nuclear war: the Prime Minister himself had attested to the reality of the threat with his signature. The cover of the brochure depicted a siren, a tile roof and some houses in a small town. In the foreground the siren and the tile roof were visible. The roof filled out the lower right part of the cover, and together with the siren it made up most of the drawing, rather squeezing out the houses and the town. The town came off looking unprotected in connection with the



Cover of *Hvis krigen kommer* (*If War Comes*), 1962.

siren, which looked like a flying saucer or a satellite, and the tile roof that resembled some kind of military caterpillar vehicle. The meaning of the cover was clear: the cosy small towns of Denmark were not safe and had to protect themselves in order to prevent annihilation. The idea of cosy Denmark menaced by foreign powers could also be seen on the back cover, where a landscape with a small farm was depicted. The contrast between the farm and the landscape on the one hand and the siren signals to be used in the event of a nuclear strike and radiation on the other was certainly striking.

A large section of the brochure dealt with shelters and explained that in the event of an attack with nuclear weapons it was necessary to seek shelter in a bunker in order to survive. The text outlined the different ways in which one could make a shelter, and what to store in such a place. It was necessary to bring water and food for eight days, a first-aid box and emergency lights, radio or television. Besides these instructions, the brochure had a long section about “Enemies in Our Country”: “Before actual acts of war an aggressor will try to create confusion and dependency. He will try to persuade the population with propaganda and false information and will undertake acts of sabotage and engage in fifth-column activities. He will try to weaken the population’s confidence in the Government and Parliament, in the defence forces and the in the ability of the nation to survive [...]”.⁵ The most remarkable thing in the text was probably the appeal for reports on suspicious behaviour in times of peace. The effect of the brochure



Cover of the Danish translation of Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach*, 1957: “The author whose writings always resemble real life writes about THE LAST DAYS ON EARTH.”

was thus to promote not a feeling of security and information, but fear. The journalist David Rehling remembers when the brochure arrived in his childhood home: “It was a winter day in 1962 and I was twelve years old and home alone. I found the brochure in the hall on the doormat under the letterbox. I picked it up and started reading it. It was called *If War Comes*. On the cover one could see a siren and a tile roof towering over a small city with houses and towers—the siren, the roof and the town looked like my school [...] I read in the brochure and felt a fear I had never known before [...] I tried to imagine what it would look like when everything was gone. The feeling of sorrow was so great that I did not share it with anybody”.⁶

Coordination of the Resistance

While the Prime Minister’s department published *If War Comes*, the Danish Civil Defence issued the brochure *Shelter (Beskyttelsesrum)* in 100,000 copies. “We have built shelters before. In the years 1940-1945 thousand of cellars were shored up and secured against explosives, and detached air-raid shelters were erected on open squares and by roads and streets [...] Since 1945 the weapons have developed so much that shelters now have to meet higher standards. The development of atomic and hydrogen bombs (nuclear weapons) in particular has created problems”.⁷ If the brochure published by the Prime Minister’s department explained what the population had to do if a war broke out, the brochure from Civil Defence almost presented it as a fact that the war would break out. The scientific approach of the brochure left no room for doubt. However, it was not this cynical scientific acceptance of the war that aroused a debate in Denmark; it was the practical recommendations, which were met by criticism from Professor Holger Møllegaard of the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural High School. According to the Professor the recommendations that the brochure gave were completely inadequate and posed a danger in themselves if anyone followed them.

When the Situationists created a shelter in Galerie Exi they were trying to address this ongoing political discussion. They wanted to reject the politics of fear and show how the Danish government was creating a situation of uncertainty where the threat of war was used to control the

public sphere and prevent all significant challenges. The project in Odense took place a year after the publication of the Civil Defence brochure, less than six months after the Cuba crisis and a month after the incident in England, which was a clear sign of the growing resistance to nuclear weapons. This resistance was also manifesting itself in Denmark, where the local CND had issued its own brochure as a response to the Civil Defence brochure.⁸ The brochure that the CND circulated was entitled *Tør de se fremtiden i øjnene (Are You Afraid of the Future?)* and was intended as a critical response to the government campaign that was creating a climate of suspicion and fear. The CND sought to challenge the political apathy and force the population to make up its mind about political developments rather than accepting the analysis of the Government. “That the political situation in this country and in Europe has been paralysed for some time now is beyond doubt. There are probably many reasons for this situation. First of all the cold, frozen, freezing war, but also the confused nature of the whole situation [...] If you keep staring at that bomb like a hypnotised rabbit staring at the snake that’s eating it, paralysed completely without any instinct of self-preservation, perhaps that is because today only one article of faith still exists: that nothing can be changed.”⁹

According to the Situationists, the Danish CND and its attempt to challenge the climate of political apathy was an example of growing resistance to the “society of the spectacle” that was manifesting itself all around the world at the beginning of the sixties. “The new contestation that the Situationists are talking about is already manifesting itself everywhere. In the large spaces of non-communication and isolation organized by the current powers that be, indications are surfacing by way of new types of scandals from one country to another and from one continent to another: their exchanges have begun”.¹⁰ According to the Situationists, their task was to make these protests known, explain them and develop them into a true revolutionary project able to overturn the society of the spectacle. The theoretical planning in which the Situationists were engaged endowed them with an important role as the leaders of the protests, those who knew what to do. If the various revolutionary groups did not necessarily know what the structural function and historical effect of their actions was, this

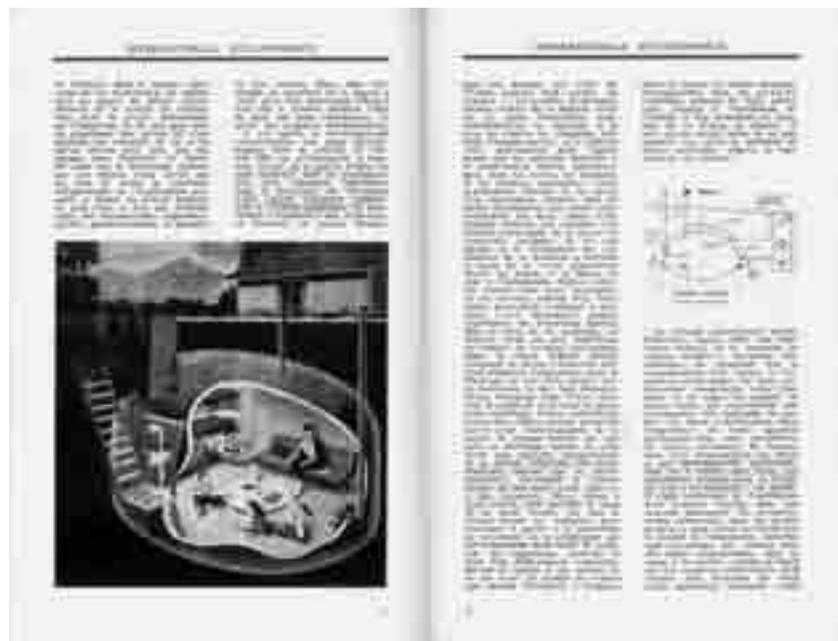
did not matter as long as the Situationists knew how it all fitted together. “[W]e are [...] determined to acknowledge as Situationists, to support, and never disavow the authors of these new radical gestures, even if many of these gestures are not yet entirely conscious but only on the track of the coherence of today’s revolutionary programme”. The Situationists intended the project in Odense “Destruction of RSG-6” as an intervention with a political significance, and this was shown by the cover of the catalogue, which was a reproduction of the cover of the pamphlet that Spies for Peace had made after their break-in in the bunker in Reading. The connection between art and politics was thus made evident. They were both expressions of a real critique of present-day society. It was not possible to separate art and politics, just as it was no longer possible to create art as a separate activity. Art and politics were two dialectical halves of the new total critique of the spectacle. The creative act was now the intervention of radical criticism in the communication systems of society, and the ‘artistic’ material was now composed of the social discourse, its images and texts, which were being critiqued and subverted. Efficiency and visibility had replaced the traditional question of form.

The Danish government, Civil Defence and CND issued pamphlets; so did the Situationists. They appropriated the pamphlet form and transformed it into a manifesto rejecting the traditional art catalogue in favour of a radical critique of the nuclear threat and the politics of fear administered by the capitalist states, and explaining “the new forms of action in politics and art”. “The Situationist movement manifests itself simultaneously as an artistic avant-garde, as an experimental investigation of the free construction of daily life, and finally as a contribution to the theoretical and practical articulation of a new revolutionary contestation. From now on, all fundamental cultural creation as well as any qualitative transformation of society is indissolubly linked to the further development of this unitary approach. Despite occasional differences in its ideological and legal disguises, it is one and the same society—marked by alienation, totalitarian control and passive spectacular consumption—that predominates everywhere. One cannot understand the coherence of this society without an all-encompassing critique informed by the opposing project of

a liberated creativity, that is, the project of the dominion of all men over their own history at all levels”.¹² It was only through the fusion of the most radical critique of art and politics that life in its entirety in the spectacle could be challenged. The society of the spectacle had managed to freeze the realization of the possibilities made possible by historical development by inventing new false desires. These desires had to be destroyed in favour of the liberation of a playful creativity. The mediated presence of the spectacle in the guise of television, radio and commercials had to be negated in order for a real bodily and conscious presence to become possible. In Odense the nuclear threat and its social-psychological causes were the immediate point of attack, but the ambitious intention was to point towards the dissolution of the society of the spectacle as a whole.

The Ideology of the Shelter

With this manifestation the Situationist International sought to scandalize not only art, but the whole world, trying to intervene in a complex political situation and criticize both the dominant political ideologies and the contemporary production of art. Through this double all-inclusive critique—as separate spheres art and politics had to be transcended by a revolutionary total activity—the Situationists tried to come to terms with “the new forces and relations of symbolic production” that became a reality after World War Two.¹³ The Situationists knew very well that their action in Odense was risky, but the historical situation forced them into action. They took a chance, knowing that the difference between success and failure, between critique and ‘recuperation’ (the commodification of radical ideas), was both immense and minimal. Immense insofar as success meant an increased consciousness and awareness of the repressive nature of capitalist society, and minimal insofar as it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish true from false in the society of the spectacle. “Destruction of RSG-6” was intended as an element in a radical, all-dismissive critique of present-day society. The Situationists drew inspiration from the revolutionary socialist tradition and the artistic avant-gardes of the inter-war years. From anarchism and council communism the Situationists acquired not only a sustained critique of the established economical-political order



Spread from *Internationale situationniste*, no. 7, 1962: "Géopolitique de l'hibernation" (Geopolitics of Hibernation).

of the world, but also a rejection of any conceivable organized or theoretical critique of this world order, inasmuch as the latter only demanded limited transformations, not the immediate abolition of the state and money. They combined this heretical socialism with the critique of art that Dada and Surrealism had advanced earlier in the century. As Debord would later phrase it, Dada had tried to negate art while Surrealism had sought to realise art.¹⁴ Dada had replaced the traditional work of art with a joke, while Surrealism had tried to unleash as much creative power as possible. Both groups wanted to release the anarchistic imagination of art into society and thereby disrupt the rigid separation of art, fantasy and everyday life. The Situationists wished to continue this project. They wanted to reject the capitalist-bourgeois world in favour of the reality and authenticity that found expression in radical subjectivity; in other words,

in rebellions against the institutions of the capitalist world and in the spontaneous organization of the revolutionary proletariat.

In the small catalogue of the exhibition Debord wrote: "The Situationist movement can be seen as an artistic avant-garde, as an experimental investigation of possible ways of freely constructing everyday life, and as a contribution to the theoretical and practical development of a new revolutionary contestation. From now on, any fundamental cultural creation, as well as any qualitative transformation of society, is contingent on the continued development of this sort of interrelated approach".¹⁵ The artistic avant-garde and the political avant-garde had to become one avant-garde. The world had to be transformed, and those who used to be called artists had an important role to play in this transformation, where society was to be rejected *en bloc*: Debord and the Situationists had a vision of another life. An extremely iconoclastic attitude characterized their projects and visions. An almost violent and totally self-assured stance was both the strength and the weakness of the group: an aggressive superiority allowed them to critique everyone including themselves, but also embedded a severely problematic understanding of consciousness and desire in their project. Thanks to this paranoiac attitude, however, the Situationists were able to analyse and point to society's self-representation—that is, the fact that modern society had no other 'content' than its representation of itself.

Society had become the society of the spectacle. The dominance of capital had been accomplished by the "general commodification of fetishes, in the production of and consumption of material and symbolic goods that all had the character of being an appearance".¹⁶ Following Marx and Lukàcs, the Situationists argued that all human relations in modern capitalist society were governed by the economy, by exploitation and by a staged "commodity reality". Everything social was part of a spectacle run and staged by capital to the extent that people could no longer see that they had been transformed into puppets in this total theatre. Protests of all kinds, whether avant-garde art, happenings or film, as well as political statements, were easily absorbed by the spectacle and thereby rendered harmless. The spectacle was ideology materialized; it was the supreme form of alienation in which real life had been stripped of authenticity and

transformed into disconnected fragments, while images of life became detached from it and formed an ensemble. This ensemble of images took on a life of its own. As Debord succinctly formulated it: “Everything that was directly lived has moved into a representation”.¹⁷ Life appeared as separate from the individual that in reality engendered it. Man was reduced to passively contemplating life, producing an independent power mediating all social relations.

The story that the Situationists told was one version of the classic Marxist tale of human hubris. The human body, through the extensions of itself that we call society and technology, came to overreach itself and bring itself to nothing. In the society of the spectacle the senses were overwhelmed, the body was anaesthetized, bombarded with images, instructions, slogans, commercials and false promises. Although the spectacle relied on people’s feelings and sentiments, it strove to neutralize and deaden the senses. The spectacle was a phantasmagoria of symbols and images flooding the senses and actuating sensory alienation.

The necessity of coming to terms with these new forces and relations of symbolic production in bourgeois society after the Second World War forced the Situationists to change the form and ground of political and artistic engagement. The contemporary deliberate attempt by De Gaulle to create history “with several strings to its bow”—the integration of Petainist right-wing elements in De Gaulle’s restorationist politics, with both collaborators and resistance fighters in the government—and the deliberate reformist politics of the traditional left, were attacked by the Situationists, who in the tradition of heretical Marxism saw themselves as true international communists.¹⁸ They attacked De Gaulle’s state-sponsored project of repressing the catastrophic historical experience of the war and the rapid development of the new consumer culture. At the same time, they dismissed the traditional Left’s inability to question its most basic assumptions when confronted with the transformed political conditions of the spectacle. Nothing less than the transformation of the suppressed of the world into the emancipated proletariat—that is, the conversion of people without control over their lives into a unique self-conscious and autonomous collective subject, capable of emancipating all humanity from

the disastrous effects of the injuries they had suffered—was the object of the group’s activities. Of course, the Situationists were able to draw on historical precedents such as Marx’s critique of capital and Bakunin’s critique of the state, as well as the revolutionary movements of the years between 1917 and 1921, movements that witnessed the “council-democratic” outcomes of the revolutions being destroyed by a despotic state capitalism in Russia and a social-democratic working class movement in Germany.¹⁹

The Situationist International was influenced by this tradition of heretical left-communism, but also by the tradition of modern experimental art. The Situationists were convinced that the whole world should be torn down and then rebuilt under the sign, not of the economy, but of a generalized creativity. As such they were descendants of Marxism, Romanticism and the artistic avant-garde. As Debord explained in the catalogue accompanying “Destruction of RSG-6”: “To revive and bring into the present this *inseparable*, mutually illuminating project [everyone’s control of all levels of their own history] [...] entails appropriating all the radicalism borne by the workers’ movement, by modern poetry and art and by the thought of the period of the supercession of philosophy”.²⁰

Debord formulated these sentences at a time when Western European societies were undergoing dramatic social and historical changes, changes also in the conditions for the production of art. These sentences are the product of a time when art and culture were implicated in the arrival of new economic and symbolic forces and relations of production that did not seem to make it any easier to unite artistic experiment and political content in the same act. This was nonetheless what Debord and the Situationists wanted. The Situationist group tried to rise to the challenge in the hope of being able to formulate an alternative artistic-political practice that would pave the way for a different kind of community. In this situation art was only worthwhile if it could play a part in the revolutionary mission of rejecting capitalist society, the Situationists argued. According to them, a more ‘realistic’ stance was not available. As in the earlier revolutionary situations towards which the Situationists were drawn—Paris 1870, St Petersburg 1917 and Berlin 1918—it was a question of now or never. They did not want to content themselves with limited reforms and decided to

go for the big prize, even though this meant the risk of ending up with nothing. Confronted with the latest development of the spectacular market society—where false representations had stopped history and reduced people to passive spectators—the Situationists refused to resign themselves to working on this situation artistically and creating small strange objects. Art only mattered insofar as it was able to revolutionize society.

The Situationists considered themselves the vanguard of historical necessity; they were fighting on the enemy's territory, in the society of the spectacle where life was depotentiated. They denied the reality of that world and rejected it. The Cold War had reduced the political spectrum to a question of fidelity to the consumer capitalism of the West or the state capitalist dictatorship of the Soviet Union. The Situationist International strove to continue the project of the inter-war avant-garde while stressing the current situation, which was characterized by an intensification of capitalism's organization of the environment and construction of the 'subject'. As Debord phrased it in the catalogue: "[W]hen we speak of a unified vision of art and politics, this absolutely does not mean that we are recommending any sort of subordination of art to politics. For us, and for anyone who has begun to see this era in a disabused manner, there is no longer any modern art, just as there has been no constituted revolutionary politics anywhere in the world since the 1930s. They can now be revived only by being superseded, that is to say, through the fulfilment of their most profound objectives".²¹ The Situationists wished to turn the anaesthetization of the spectacle upside down and create a positive aestheticization on the basis of the desires that the spectacular market society denied.

The Society of the Spectacle and the Avant-garde

In accordance with the Situationist stance towards art, the manifestation in Odense was not meant to illustrate the actions of the British activists, but rather to continue their action at another level. The exhibition and the objects were hastily created, and they were not the outcome of a slow process in the studio of an artist.²² The manifestation was not only supposed to refer to the incident in England, but also rewrite it and place it in its proper context. According to the Situationists, the action of Spies for

Peace was just one example of a growing global dissatisfaction with and protest against the way society was organized. The Situationists wanted to displace the exposure of the secret bunker to an art gallery. The "artistic" material was in this case a political event forcing the Situationist "post-artists" to speed up the process of creation.

If a 'post-artistic' gesture was to be capable of appropriating and diverting a political statement, any consideration for the tradition of art had to be sidestepped. This was the lesson learned during the heated and virulent discussions that had been going on within the Situationist group for several years. These discussions culminated in 1961 and 1962 when the group went through a series of splits that resulted in the abandonment of the art world as a privileged site for criticism. Inside the organization a series of internal disagreements culminated in the expulsion of more or less all the artists in the group and the creation of a rival Situationist group around the Danish artist Jørgen Nash. The main issue at stake was the insistence of the group based around Guy Debord in Paris that art could no longer be recognized as a separate activity with its own legitimate specificity, but rather had to be dissolved into a unitary revolutionary praxis. Any direct involvement in the art world risked contributing to the maintenance of art as a separate institution. As Raoul Vaneigem phrased it



Installation view of "Destruction of RSG-6". Audience firing rifles at the images of Kennedy, de Gaulle, the Pope and Hækkerup. Debord's "Directives" are visible in the background.



Ansgar Elde, Jacqueline de Jong, Heimrad Prem, Gretel Stadler, Attila Kotányi, Helmut Sturm, J.V. Martin, Hardy Strud, Jørgen Nash, Guy Debord, Raoul Vaneigem and Dieter Kunzelmann at the conference in Gothenborg, 1961.

at the Situationist Conference in Gothenburg in 1961: “It is a question not of elaborating the spectacle of refusal, but rather of refusing the spectacle. In order for their elaboration to be *artistic* in the new and authentic sense defined by the SI, the elements of the destruction of the spectacle must precisely cease to be works of art. There is no such thing as *Situationism* or a Situationist work of art or a spectacular Situationist”.²³ After the exclusion of Nash and a number of other members, the Situationists tried to walk the fine line between appropriation and recuperation, working against the spectacle within the spectacle, critically trying to dominate the various passive spectacular moments (the journal, the book, the gallery). The group cut its past ties with the art world and concentrated on developing a theory that could account for the historical conjuncture and the possibility of a revolutionary upheaval. In the complex network of forces making up the historical situation the Situationists sought to develop an expanded revolutionary praxis beyond art and politics as separate activities.

But in Scandinavia the Situationists were on the defensive; Nash and his associates, including Hardy Strid and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, had founded a rival Situationist group that threatened to drown the ‘original’ Situationist project of Debord and his group. In 1962 Nash published two issues of his new journal *Drakabygget* and organized an exhibition called “Seven Rebels” with Strid, Thorsen, Gordon Fazakerley, Jacqueline de Jong, Ansgar Elde and Hans-Peter Zimmer at Filosofgangen in Odense.²⁴ In December the same year, together with Strid, Thorsen, Fazakerley, Dieter Kunzelmann and Zimmer from Gruppe SPUR, Nash created CO-RITUS in Galerie Jensen in Copenhagen. The exhibition was the most ambitious attempt so far by the new Situationist group to bring art and the institution of art out into everyday life. The audience was equipped with paint, pieces of wood, paper and trash with which they were to transform the gallery into a big collage. The artwork spread out into the street, where Nash and the others painted on a 300-metre-long fence and were reported to the police.²⁵ For the Situationist International, Nash was a real nuisance, threatening to overshadow the true Situationist project, and the manifestation in Odense was intended as a response to the activities of Nash.²⁶ Galerie Exi was a convenient location for Debord, J.V. Martin and the other Situationists: the gallery was brand-new and in opposition to another local gallery, Galerie Westing, which represented several of the artists associated with Nash. Moreover, the gallery was located in the cellar of “the House”, a meeting place for young activists involved in CND.²⁷ While Nash and his gang termed themselves the “seven rebels” and tried to activate the audience through collectively created art, the Situationist International posited a direct link between their project, the activities of Spies for Peace and with other rebellious subjects all over the world. The message was clear: the members of the Situationist International would not restrict themselves to being rebels in art, but sought to infiltrate the spectacle and coordinate the revolt against the ruling order.

The most important aspect of the project in Odense was thus to present the critique of the political situation and the critique of art as one coherent critique. As Debord wrote in the catalogue, the exhibition in Odense was not only a tribute to the British activists and a contribution to

the struggle against capitalism's organization of environments and events, it was also an extension of the struggle against capitalism "on the 'artistic' front of this same general struggle. The cultural creation that could be referred to as Situationist begins with the [...] construction of situations in life, and the fulfilment of those projects is inseparable from the history of the movement striving to fulfill all the revolutionary possibilities contained in the present society".²⁸

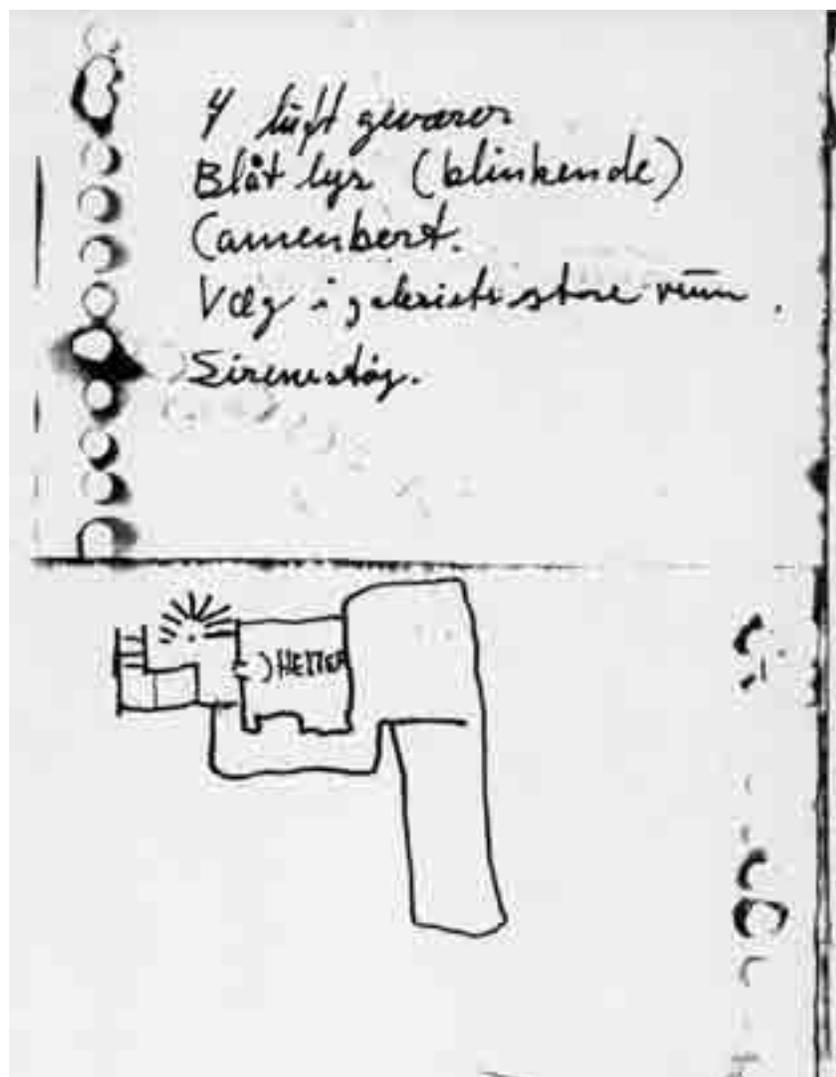
These revolutionary possibilities, however, were being used in a counter-revolutionary fashion in the consolidation of the capitalist bourgeois world. The Situationist International saw itself as confronted with a development where the very same economic, social and cultural potentials that the revolution would engage were used to confirm capitalism and its alienating procedures. But the antagonism between a capitalist and a free and rational use of the new means of production grew constantly, the Situationists argued. "[T]he material development of the world has accelerated. It constantly accumulates more potential powers; but the specialists in the management of society, because of their role as guardians of passivity, are forced to ignore the potential use of those powers. This same development produces widespread dissatisfaction and objective mortal dangers which these specialized rulers are incapable of permanently controlling".²⁹ The revival of a revolutionary movement was imminent. In this situation it was important to ensure that the revolutionary movement did not content itself with limited reforms. Only a total revolution was relevant, the Situationists argued. Only this would make it possible to realize the new desires and needs that had surfaced in the historical development.

Capitalist society tried to integrate all criticism by individualizing it, isolating a few visible "critics" and letting them illustrate the tolerance of society. The society of the spectacle was characterized by a kind of hegemonic pluralism where criticism was not directly forbidden and where experimental art was not visibly enrolled in the workings of the state. Instead, an abundance of styles were present, thereby making it impossible to connect the different styles and construct a coherent critique of the whole of society. In this situation the notion of 'avant-garde' was suspect, as society labelled as 'avant-garde' a whole range of artistic creations that

merely repeated already-old experiments. But the Situationists nonetheless insisted on presenting itself as the avant-garde. It had historical necessity on its side. Following the young Marx, the Situationists considered the proletariat to be a latent subjectivity pushing forward the way the world was to be interpreted and changed. Historical necessity manifested itself as revolutionary consciousness and expressed itself as the supersession of theory and praxis. On a small scale and in a heavy-handed way the Situationists intended the manifestation in Odense as the creation of revolutionary self-consciousness where the separation of philosophy and art, politics and everyday life was overcome.

The Exhibition

In keeping with the Situationist theory of the death of art, "Destruction of RSG-6" was not intended as a traditional art exhibition but as an attempt to scandalize not only the institution of art but the whole world. The first room was turned into a bomb shelter. There was no light and a strong smell met the audience as soon as they entered.³⁰ Men in protective suits handed out 'the last pill' to the audience. The room was supposed to represent the future that the ruling powers had planned for the population, or more precisely for those important enough to merit survival. A bleak future indeed. As the Situationists wrote in the text "Geopolitics of Hibernation", the thermo-nuclear conflict was the latest translation into physico-technical terms of the refusal of history that characterized the society of the spectacle.³¹ That a bomb shelter did not provide substantive protection was not important, the Situationists argued, because the rhetoric of protection was merely a pretext. "The true use of the shelter is a measurement of people's docility, and the manipulation of that docility in a direction which is favourable to the dominant society".³² According to the Situationists the bomb shelters were examples of the common project of the two superpowers: the reduction of life to mere passive survival. The belligerents of the Cold War blackmailed their populations with the fear of a nuclear war that could annihilate the whole world. The solution offered by the Situationists was to reject the Cold War opposition between East and West. The truth of the situation was that the two opposing sides were



Sketch made by Martin of the layout of the exhibition "Destruction of RSG-6" including a list of some of the 'ingredients' used by the Situationists: "4 airguns, blue light (flashing), Camembert, wall in the big room in the gallery, siren sound".

in reality part of the same repressive capitalist world that had to be challenged through revolutionary actions.

In the next section, the audience was to fire shots at pictures of Kennedy, Khrushchev, De Gaulle, Adenauer, the Pope and the Danish Foreign Minister Per Hækkerup. The politicians responsible for the reduction of life hung shoulder by shoulder. For the revolutionary avant-garde there was no real difference between Kennedy and Khrushchev: each in his own way ruled through fear. After enduring the terrible 'survival' that these political leaders had planned for their populations, the audience was given the opportunity to react. Confronted with the horror of the bomb shelters the audience would revolt—at least that was what the Situationists had envisaged. They tried to create a situation in which people would break out of their vegetative everyday behaviour and oppose the ruling order. In the second section the Situationists tried to get the audience to fight the non-intervention that characterized the society of the spectacle. The passivity that characterized everyday life in the spectacular market society was to be challenged through violent activity. Instead of passively living through this life of false needs, the audience in "Destruction of RSG-6" could actively create their lives. Only activity could overcome inertia. The shooting no doubt included a reference to André Breton's dictum that the real Surrealist act would be to shoot at random into a crowd.³³ For the Situationists this act was no longer a metaphor: the ruling representations had to be fired at. The gun was to be aimed at the heads of the counter-revolution.

On the wall next to the targets Debord's directives hung: "Tous contre le spectacle" (All against the spectacle) and "Réalisations de la philosophie" (Realization of Philosophy). By writing on canvases that looked like monochrome paintings Debord transformed



Target with photo of De Gaulle.

the paintings into mere walls like the ones out in the city. The directives were intended as a critique of the elevated status of painting and as an example of how outmoded art forms could be put to new uses as vehicles for political propaganda. Agitation had replaced modern painting's formal experiments with colours and figures. Communication of revolutionary theory had replaced visual consumption. Modern art concealed the world under a layer of paint that had to dissolve in order to let the revolutionary consciousness appear.

One of the directives was a painting by the former Situationist Pinot Gallizio. Across the painting, which measured 73×105 cm, Debord had written in big white letters: "Abolition du travail aliéné" (Abolition of alienated labour). The creativity that the artist was endowed with in bourgeois society had to be set free and generalized. In the society of the spectacle art was an alienating activity disconnected from everyday life. Being an artist blocked or reduced the creativity art had formerly possessed. Art therefore had to be realized in everyday life beyond the institution of art. Gallizio's painting was a piece of *pittura industriale* (Industrial Painting) made on a painting-machine. On homemade machines Gallizio produced long rolls of canvas up to 145 metres in length. Painting, resins and various other materials were sprayed onto these long rolls, which were later cut into smaller pieces or used as a kind of wallpaper on floors, walls and ceilings in Gallizio's "Caverna d'antimateria" (Cavern of Anti-Matter) installed in Galerie René Drouin in 1959. The painting presented itself as the result of a paradoxical artistic process where spontaneity and technique fused in a higher synthesis of becoming and automatism. Gallizio's painting was now the background for Debord's slogan, which blocked contemplation of the painting. The randomness of Gallizio's Industrial Painting was replaced by a political statement. The flirtation with accident and unpredictability was suddenly disrupted by Debord's words. In accordance with the Situationists' disdain for art, the directive was priced at 300 Danish Kroner, while the painting itself without Debord's slogan had been priced at 6,000 Danish Kroner.³⁴

In the last section Martin's "Termonukleare kartografier" (Thermonuclear Maps) and Bernstein's "Victoires" (Victories) hung.³⁵ Martin's



J.V. Martin in front of one of his "Termonukleare kartografier". In the background one of Debord's "Directives".



J.V. Martin: "På anden dagen siger de, der vil være 82 megalig" (On the Second Day They say there will be 82 Megabodies), 1963.

maps, each measuring 100×135 cm, depicted the world after the outbreak of the Third World War, and had titles like "To timer efter udbruddet på Tredje Verdenskrig" (Two Hours After the Outbreak of the Third World War), "To og en halv time efter udbruddet på Tredje Verdenskrig" (Two and a Half Hours After the Outbreak of the Third World War), "På andendagen siger de, der vil være 82 megalig" (On the Second Day They Say There Will Be 82 Megabodies), "Hvem som end vandt krigen—vi tabte" (Whoever Won the War—We Lost). Martin could not have presented it any clearer: the United States, England, Europe

and the Soviet Union had been blown up.

Martin had made the maps by applying plaster, hair, cheese and pieces of iron and wood to canvases, recreating the continents of the world. These he had then painted light green while painting the oceans blue. On top of the continents he had then splashed red and black paint that was supposed to look like fire and blood. No doubt Martin thereby intended to mimic the technique of contemporary Action Painting and to ridicule it by using it as a means of representing explosions, fire and violence. The excited brushwork and heavy impasto paint application that was perceived as 'expressive' in Action Painting was mimicked by Martin and transformed into a technique. Martin mixed up the codes of authenticity to such a degree that no pretension to expressiveness in the traditional sense was left. Where Action Painting portrayed suffering as a personal struggle, experienced by the individual in isolation, Martin tried to express the social roots of alienation. Alienation was not a heroic disease



J.V. Martin: "RSG-6's krematorium: England" (The RSG-6's crematorium: England), 1963.



Michèle Bernstein: "Victoire de la Commune de Paris" (Victory of the Paris Commune), 1963.

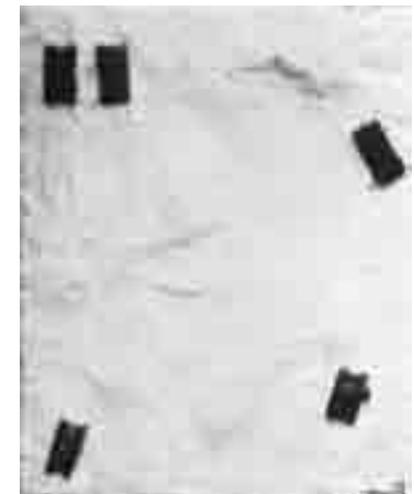
for which there was no social remedy. On the contrary, according to the Situationists, it was possible for people to change their lives if they had the proper understanding of the historical situation. This correct understanding was available in the theories of the Situationists, the true avant-garde.

Next to Martin's maps, a series of model tableaux were installed with titles from revolutionary defeats renamed as victories: "Victoire de la Commune de Paris" (Victory of the Paris Commune), "Victoire des Républicains Espagnols" (Victory of the Spanish Republicans) and "Victoire de la Grande Jacquerie" (Victory of the Great Jacquerie). It was the Situationist Michèle Bernstein who had made the models, which consisted of white plaster, to the top of which she had attached toy soldiers or, as in the case of "Victoire des Républicains Espagnols", plastic tanks. This particular work resembled some of the monochrome paintings that artists like Yves Klein and Lucio Fontana were creating in those years. The difference was of course that Bernstein had attached toys to the otherwise empty

surfaces, thereby transforming the dry, dusty surface into a battlefield. In a gesture similar to the one to which Martin subjected the expressiveness of Action Painting, Bernstein mocked the aspirations of monochrome painting by transforming its reduction of the painted surface into a battlefield on which the proletariat re-experienced history as the victor. History had to be rewritten; the empty time of the spectacle had to be challenged.

The two other works, "Victoire de la Commune de Paris" and "Victoire de la Grande Jacquerie", were not white and flat like "Victoire des Républicains Espagnols". Bernstein had applied dark and light paint to these and placed toy soldiers across the surfaces, forming two fronts. The use of the toy soldiers and the plastic tanks were intended, as Debord explained in the catalogue, as a critique of the use of everyday objects made by artists such as Niki de Saint-Phalle associated with Nouveau Réalisme. The Nouveau Réalisme artists used everyday objects in an indifferent or almost carefree way, celebrating the new consumer society and its new products and gadgets, the Situationists argued.³⁶ Instead of this celebration of modern everyday life, the Situationists opted for the conscious, revolutionary *détournement* of the objects and products of everyday life.

The toy soldiers and plastic tanks were in no way innocent objects. Bernstein had wrested them out of their ordinary use and used them in a revision of history where play and consciousness fused in a revolutionary activity beyond art. The Situationists themselves described this use of art as "a new unrealism". According to the Situationists, Bernstein's works "attempt to negate 'Pop Art' (which is materially and 'ideologically' characterized by *indifference* and dull complacency) by incorporating only *toy*



Michèle Bernstein: "Victoire des Républicains Espagnols" (Victory of the Spanish Republicans), 1963.

objects and by making them meaningful in as heavy-handed a way as possible. In a sense this series carries on the tradition of the paintings of battles; and also rectifies the history of revolts (which is not over) in a way that pleases us. It seems that each new attempt to transform the world is forced to start out with the appearance of a new unrealism".³⁷ It was not possible to create realistic art in a society characterized by alienation, and any attempt to do so would only confirm the ruling order. In a world held together by false representations, the Situationists sought to create fragmented and non-realistic images that virtually made another world, rewriting the past.

Revolutionary Communication

The passage through the exhibition was carefully laid out, and the Situationists presented it as a joint project where everything from the themes and titles of the exhibited works to the images of the politicians was planned before it was executed.³⁸ On the title page of the catalogue it said: "A collective manifestation of the Situationist International". The works exhibited as part of the manifestation were thus not to be considered as results of one artist's creativity or individuality, but as props in a thoroughly orchestrated staging where the individual objects functioned within a totality. The artist as genius had been transcended by a collective destruction in which the audience participated by firing rifles at Kennedy, Khrushchev and De Gaulle. The spectator was thus somehow not only torn out of his/her role as a passive recipient of aesthetic experiences, but also heavy-handedly forced to take a stand in the current political situation. The spectacle positioned actors as passive role-players, whereas the Situationists equipped them with rifles and revolutionary theory. The isolated creative act had disappeared in favour of an impersonal expression of historical necessity. In the catalogue the works exhibited in the last section were catalogued as exhibited works, but so was the pamphlet *Spies for Peace* had made. The difference between works of art and political pamphlets was thus heavy-handedly denied; both participated in a higher synthesis of revolutionary communication.

With "Destruction of RSG-6" the Situationist group had to make clear that they had *not* created yet another art exhibition in a gallery. Or at least make clear that they didn't care about art. They therefore insisted on calling the project a manifestation in which the supercession of art and politics occurred however heavy-handedly it came off. The mission of the manifestation was to place *Spies for Peace's* action in its proper historical context as well as expand it into the domain of art. The protest against the secret bomb shelters and the negation of art were two sides of the same project. Criticism

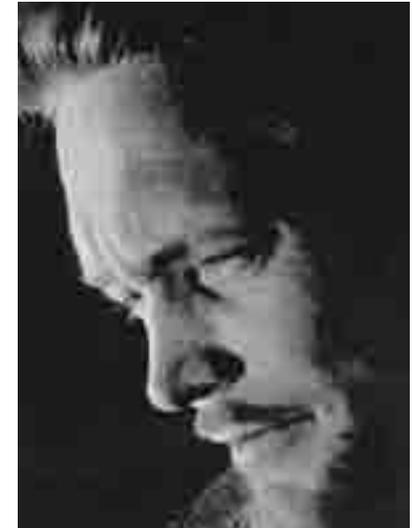


Photo of J. V. Martin from the "Destruction of RSG-6" catalogue.

had to expand into many forms of representation, into the state, into the party and into all cultural institutions. The Situationists never tired of repeating this: the forms and practices of art had lost their credibility with the advent of the spectacle, and art therefore had to be realized directly in life. The virtual revolution of art had to occur right here right now in this life. They perceived the art gallery as an obstacle to the liberation of potential critical energies. It was no longer enough that art contained a *promesse du bonheur*, that art was a kind of revolution in absentia; it had to be realized through its destruction. Students in Venezuela had shown the way by bombing a van carrying paintings by Gauguin and van Gogh. As Debord wrote in the catalogue: "This is clearly an exemplary way to treat art of the past, to bring it back into play in life and to re-establish priorities. Since the death of Gauguin ('I have tried to establish the right to dare everything') and of van Gogh, their work, co-opted by their enemies, has probably never received from the cultural world any homage as true to their spirit as the act of these Venezuelans".³⁹

been talking about is already emerging everywhere. [...] The role of the avant-garde currents, wherever they may appear, is to link these people and these experiences together: to help unify such groups and the coherent basis of their project. We have to publicize, elucidate and develop these initial gestures of the next revolutionary era. They can be recognized by the fact that they concentrate in themselves new forms of struggle and a new content (whether latent or explicit): the critique of the existing world. Thus the dominant society, which prides itself so much on its constant modernization, is now going to meet its match, for it has finally produced a modernized negation".⁴⁴

Unfortunately Tom Lindhardt, who ran Galerie Exi, was not interested in housing "the modernized negation of the spectacle". On 4 June the local Situationists, Martin, Peter Laugesen and Hervard Merved, issued a press release stating that they demanded "Destruction of RSG-6" closed. According to the Situationists, Lindhardt had allowed the audience to pass directly into the last section, thereby destroying the manifestation and turning it into an art exhibition. It was only in connection with the bomb shelter that the works in the last section could be understood. Lindhardt had failed to meet the requirements of the Situationists, who had no option but to close the manifestation. Lindhardt replied through the press that he had been promised an art exhibition, but had been given "a shooting tent".⁴⁵ A heated discussion followed, in which Martin stressed that the Situationists were not artists in the traditional sense and that "Destruction of RSG-6" was not an art exhibition, but "an attack on the society that allowed its ruling powers to expose mankind to deadly dangers through the threat of nuclear war and nuclear tests".⁴⁶

The hectic closing of "Destruction of RSG-6" testified to the complex undertaking in which the Situationists were engaged and to the group's paradoxical use of an art gallery where the exhibited works were not supposed to be works of art. "Under the present distinctly anti-Situationist cultural conditions we have to resort to 'communication containing its own critique'", as they explained.⁴⁷ The Situationist intervention was not to be launched from a vantage point outside the strategic spaces of the spectacle; it had to be launched from within, it had to be poached from

within, taking what the spectacle offered and putting the material to different uses. The manifestation in Odense was intended as a showcase for the new revolutionary movement that included Spies for Peace, but it proved difficult, almost impossible. The Situationists became entangled in the classic avant-garde problematic of declaring art dead while continuing to produce works. The heavy-handedness of the objects in "Destruction of RSG-6" did not annul their status as works of art. The Situationists placed the audience in an impossible situation insofar as the true Situationist audience would always already have left the gallery in favour of revolutionizing everyday life in the streets.

NOTES

- 1 For a presentation of 'the House', Tvind and Amdi Pedersen, see Jes Fabricius Møller, *På sejrns vej. Historien om skolesamfundet Tvind og dets skaber Mogens Amdi Pedersen* (Copenhagen: Forlaget DIKE, 1999). Amdi Pedersen created a number of humanitarian organisations in 1970 such as the Necessary Teacher Training College and Tvind Travelling High School. The Danish police have been investigating Tvind for many years and accuse Amdi Pedersen and his Teachers' Collective of diverting charity donations and foreign aid to private accounts. In 1979 Amdi Pedersen went underground. After being a fugitive for 22 years he was arrested in 2002 in Los Angeles by the FBI and handed over to the Danish authorities the same year. In 2006 he was found not guilty by the court in Ringkøbing. The prosecution appealed but was unable to serve the appeal as Amdi Pedersen had left Denmark.
- 2 See "The Spies for Peace and After", *The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 61-96.
- 3 Viggo Kampmann, "Hvis krigen kommer", *Hvis krigen kommer* (Copenhagen: Statsministeriet, 1962), p. 1.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 6 David Rehling, "Krigen, sejren og nederlaget", *Information*, June 17th 2000, p. 8.
- 7 Civilforsvarsstyrelsen, *Beskyttelsesrum* (Copenhagen: Civilforsvarsstyrelsen, 1962), p. 3.

8 In the summer of 1960 the Danish CND was founded. The same year around 5000 people took part in a protest march from Holbæk to Copenhagen. The next year something like 25,000 people took part in the march and in 1963 more than 30,000 people participated. The translation of Spies for Peace's pamphlet in 1963 also testifies to the fact that the issue of nuclear war was very much on the public agenda in Denmark. All Danish newspapers ran stories about the action in Reading. On the front page of *Information* one could read "England's Secret Civil Defence Plans Brought to Light by Nuclear Protesters" while Gunnar Henriksen, in an editorial in *Jyllands-Posten* headed "The Tyranny of Fear", distanced himself from the action of the activists.

9 Tage Hind, "Apati. Om kampagnen mod atomvåben" [1961], *Apati og lidenskab* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Politisk Revy, 1996), pp. 58-63. Together with Carl Scharnberg and Svend Hauggaard, Hind was one of the leaders of the campaign against nuclear weapons in Denmark. Hind was in contact with the Situationists, and Debord considered asking Hind to join the Situationist International. In a letter to Martin dated 17 June Debord writes: "Tage Hind could be really good if he only abandoned his scepticism. [...] It is necessary to force him to make a decision". Randers Lokalhistorisk Arkiv (hereafter RLHA) 618B/1 (not included in the published correspondence of Debord).

10 Guy Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics or Art" [1963], trans. Thomas Y. Levin, Tom

McDonough (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 160-161.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

13 T.J. Clark, "Origins of the Present Crisis", *New Left Review*, no. 2, 2000, p. 85.

14 Cf. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), § 191.

15 Guy Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art", *Destruktion af RSG-6* (Odense: Galerie Exi, 1963), p. 9.

16 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson & Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 49.

17 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, § 1.

18 See Charles Sowerwine, *France Since 1870: Culture, Politics and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001). In his *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), Henry Rousso explains the difficulties De Gaulle experienced trying to lay history to rest and integrate the ultra-right into his politics. During the final phase of the Algerian War it was no longer possible to suppress the "French-French war" and its connections with questions of race and social conflict.

19 "Between the two World Wars the revolutionary workers' movement was destroyed by the action, on the one hand,

of the Stalinist bureaucracy and, on the other, of Fascist totalitarianism, the latter having borrowed its organizational form from the totalitarian party as first tried out in Russia". Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, § 109.

20 Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art", p. 9.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

22 In a letter to Vaneigem dated 8 June Debord writes about the haste with which the manifestation was made: "[W]e are obliged to bring out material in a deplorably short period of time. We work excessively. We have postponed the opening of the air-raid shelter to Saturday 22 June. All this gives us a good chance to realize the project that we have planned. But this will be more or less in suspense until the last day". *Correspondance: Vol. II: Septembre 1960-décembre 1964* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), p. 231.

23 "La cinquième conférence de l'I.S. à Göteborg", *Internationale situationniste*, no. 7, 1962, pp. 26-27. Trans. Ken Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 88.

24 *Drakabygget*, no. 1, 1962; *Drakabygget: Tidskrift för konst mot atombomber, påvar och politiker*, no. 2-3, 1962; and *Seven Rebels*, exh. cat., ed. Jens Jørgen Thorsen (Copenhagen: Lithopress, 1962).

25 For an account of the CO-RITUS, see the documents collected in *Situationister 1957-70*, eds. Ambrosius Fjord & Patrick O'Brien (Copenhagen: Edition Bauhaus Situationniste, 1971). "We want to create

new rituals. Rituals are human thinking shaped in social patterns. Every cultural pattern is a ritual [...] This is the first time it has been said to the audience: Come and join us. Get down to it. Everybody has got right of appeal [...] CO-RITUS is washing art shining clean. It is the bomb under cultural life. But we do not need to attempt assassination. The cultural life has been at a standstill since 1850". "Ritus contra Depravation (CO-RITUS Manifest)", [1961] *ibid.*, n.p. See also Lars Morell, *Poesien breder sig. Jørgen Nash, Drakabygget & situationisterne* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 1981), pp. 61-79, as well as Jakob Jakobsen's text in this book.

26 "We don't want to attribute some particular perversity to Nash and his associates. It seems to us that Nashism is an expression of an objective tendency resulting from the SI's ambiguous and risky policy of consenting to act within culture while being against the entire present organization of this culture and even against all culture as a separate sphere [...] The SI has thus for a time included a number of artists of repetition incapable of grasping the present mission of the artistic avant-garde; which is not too surprising if one takes into account both the scarcely delineated stage of our project and the notorious exhaustion of conventional art. The moment when the contradictions between them and us leads to these antagonisms marks an advance of the SI, the point where the ambiguities are forced into the open and clearly settled. The point of no return, in our relations with the partisans of a renewal of conventional art under the aegis of a Situationist school, was perhaps reached

with the decision adopted at Gothenburg to refer to artistic productions of the movement as 'anti-Situationist' art. The contradictions expressed in Nashism are quite crude, but the development of the SI may lead to others at a higher level". "L'operation contre-situationniste dans divers pays", *Internationale situationniste*, no. 8, 1963, pp. 24-25.

27 "We are quite in agreement on the fact that you must try to take artistic and theoretical control of the new anti-Nashist and anti-nuclear gallery (Ban the Nash)". Debord in letter to Martin dated 8 May 1963. *Correspondance. Vol. II*, p. 222.

28 Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art", p. 11.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

30 The Situationists had placed a Camembert cheese under one of the plank beds. Author's interview with Peter Laugesen (20 August 2002). On a piece of paper in Martin's archive it is written: "4 airguns, blue light (flashing), Camembert, wall in the big room in the gallery, siren sound". J.V. Martin's Archive, RLHA 618 F/2.

31 "Géopolitique de l'hibernation", *Internationale situationniste*, no. 7, 1962, pp. 3-10. "Geopolitics of Hibernation", Knabb (trans.), pp. 76-82.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 6. Knapp, p. 78. The threat of nuclear war was an important issue for the Situationists at this time; in 1962 Debord and Jorn (who had left the group in 1960) planned to create a journal, *Mutant*, that was to critique the ideology of nuclear war. The journal never materialized beyond a pamphlet.

33 André Breton, "Seconde manifeste du surréalisme" [1930], *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 74.

34 On 21 June, a day before the opening of "Destruktion af RSG-6", the Danish art critic Virtus wrote a small article in the daily newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in which he strongly opposed the use of Gallizio's painting. "It is clearly illegal to paint on another artist's work of art and exhibit it". "Kunstnerisk ophavsret krænktes", *Jyllands-Posten* 21 June, 1963, p. 15.

35 My description of Martin's 'Maps' and Bernstein's 'Victories' is based on illustrations in the catalogue, illustrations in *Internationale situationniste* and the illustrations in Else Steen Hansen's article "Homo Ludens", *Konstrevy* no. 5/6, 1963, pp. 200-204. Martin's as well as Bernstein's works went up in smoke (with the exception of one severely damaged "Victory") when Martin's home exploded in 1965. The illustrations are the only existing reproduction of the works and it is from these that I try to 'reconstruct' the works.

36 "New Realism, drawing heavily on the form of Dadaism (but not its spirit), is an apologetic junk art. It fits quite well in the margin of pseudofreedom offered by a society of gadgets and waste". J.V. Martin, Jan Strijbosch, Raoul Vaneigem, René Viénet, "Réponse à une enquête du Centre d'Art Socio-Expérimental", *Internationale situationniste*, no. 9, 1964, p. 41.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

38 Cf. a letter to J.V. Martin in which Debord presents the exhibition and the three sections. *Correspondance. Vol. II*,

pp. 222-225. Cf. author's interview with Peter Laugesen (20 August 2002).

39 Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art", p. 10.

40 Pierre Lübecker, "Tomt og Trivielt", *Politiken*, 3 July 1963, p. 10. The Situationists mockingly quoted Lübecker's review in their journal. "Les mois les plus longs", *Internationale situationniste*, no. 9, 1964, pp. 32-33.

41 Else Steen Hansen, "Homo Ludens", *Konstrevy*, no. 5/6, 1963, p. 200.

42 In Martin's archive there is a copy of the article on which Martin has written: "The article was written by me but as one does not praise oneself Steen Hansen lent her name". J.V. Martin's Archive, RLHA, 618 F/2.

43 "Définitions", *Internationale situationniste*, no. 1, 1958, p. 13.

44 Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art", p. 10.

45 Tom Lindhardt quoted in "Destruktion destrueret", *Information* 8 July 1963, p. 6.

46 J.V. Martin, "Vedr. 'Destruktion af RSG-6'", *Information* 13 July 1963, p. 8. In a letter to Martin dated 17 July 1963 Debord writes: "It is very good, the propaganda in the papers against Galerie Exi". J.V. Martin's Archive, RLHA, 618 F/2. (The letter is not reproduced in *Correspondance*).

47 "Réponse à une enquête du Centre d'Art Socio-Expérimental", *Internationale situationniste*, no. 9, 1964, p. 44.

DRAKABYGGET: A SITUATIONIST UTOPIA OR MEETING PLACE FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

Gordon Fazakerley and Jacqueline de Jong
in conversation with Jakob Jakobsen

Jakob Jakobsen: This session is about Drakabygget which might be described as a utopian project or perhaps a failed utopian project. Gordon and Jacqueline were present at Drakabygget in the early years around '61 and '62, when it was founded. Drakabygget was a farm in Skåne in Sweden that Jørgen Nash bought in 1960. The idea was to turn it into this artists' commune or a Situationist Bauhaus. I would like to ask Jacqueline and Gordon about what actually happened there and your personal experiences with the project. So first, Gordon, could you tell about how you got in contact with the Scandinavian artists and the Situationists around Drakabygget?

Gordon Fazakerley: Yeah, I went to live in Sweden to get away from

London and that, and sort myself out. I went down to a travel agent's in London and I said "Please give me a ticket to where nobody had ever gone." He gave me a ticket to Halandsåsen. And, yes, it was removed there, I felt a bit like St. John the Baptist gone into the desert. I knew people up there. I knew Hardy Strid, we were students together at the Central School of Arts and Craft in London, now the University of the Arts. We were both taught at the department of stained glass and Strid had given me an open invitation. And I went there. The Situationist Conference was taking place in Gothenburg in August 1961. Since I was staying with Strid in Halmstad at the time, Nash asked if I could be present at the conference. That was quite impossible, because I was sorting out some of my love



Gordon Fazakerley in the yard of Drakabygget, 1961.

life—in another part of Scandinavia. And I didn't attend the conference. And then I was passing through Halmstad again, and Strid said, well, let's go and see Nash. So we visited Nash at Drakabygget, and that's how I teamed up with Nash, to help construct what was to be Bauhaus Situationniste or a Situationist

Bauhaus. It was quite incidental. I was on the drift. I liked the idea of a Situationist Bauhaus, I thought the idea was pretty brilliant. Of course we had heard about the Bauhaus in Germany from before the war. And I had in mind at the time something along the lines of Black Mountain College, in America. A kind of



Jacqueline de Jong: Turning Point in History, 1963.

experimental school. It didn't turn out that way. Drakabygget was, it became, it was a madhouse, it was a lunatic asylum, run by the inmates. All sorts of things happened, I don't know how much of it you can speak about. It certainly, it certainly wasn't paradise, or a Utopia. If it had been that, it would have been boring, you know, um... that's how it came about.

JJ: What was the basic idea about a Situationist Bauhaus...?

GF: We never found that out...

With the Situationist Bauhaus we could potentially deal with the new way of life at the time. It was like a railway junction, you had time to reorientate and change destination. Television and new ways of communication were having an impact at the time. As well as the changing of many social habits in European societies. At Drakabygget we could withdraw from the rat race. Well, Nash was also solving Danish

problems. And the basic problems at that time in Denmark were...

Jacqueline de Jong: ... money...

GF: ... yes, there was nowhere to live. It was impossible in Copenhagen. The artists were going to Sweden. And they were buying properties cheap in Sweden, and then they were surviving up there. They would have a bit of antique dealing, or kept a few sheep, etc., etc. And it was a very precarious way, but it was better than living in your mother's flat... this was the situation for Danish artists.

JJ: Who coined the idea of the Situationist Bauhaus, it was Asger Jorn, wasn't it?

GF: I take it it was Jorn. I had met Jorn at the ICA in Dover Street in London at his show there in 1959. But I think it was Nash who introduced the idea to me.

JJ: Jacqueline, do you know what his dreams for a Situationist Bauhaus were?

JdJ: Perhaps Jorn originally had an idea of a Bauhaus at Drakabygget, but I think Jorn quickly realised that that would never materialise. I'm not even sure he had dreams about a *Situationist* Bauhaus, in fact he had an Imaginary Bauhaus before. It was impossible to realise

the dream with his brother, Nash, at Drakabygget. But Jorn had this sort of feeling that he could work there, and have a, well, sort of place in Sweden where he could make his work and have a dialogue with dealers, but it was not possible... Well, this was an illusion, but apart from that, there was nothing romantic about it at that moment, if you ask me. It became, in a way, I think, romantic when you, Gordon, came in... as far as I can understand.

GF: When Erroll Flynn arrived.

JdJ: But I mean it was, it was somehow a place where a bunch of exiled artists or displaced persons could get together and experiment. And together with the Dutch sculptor Carl Pelgrom, you know, you remember when we had an exhibition in Holland called *Three Displaced Persons*, because we were all displaced one way or another. And we *were* displaced persons. And, I mean, when all these people came, it became a sort of artistic commune, but, I hope you agree, Gordon, it was not a paradise. But Nash was very generous, and so was his wife, Katja Lindell, so that's a good thing to say about it, so everyone was welcome, but to say that

it was, well, a paradise for artists or for Scandinavian Situationists, at the time we came down, you can't say that, because it was a complete confusion all the time through. But the good thing was that people could just show up and do whatever they wanted to. SPUR came, and this sort of cooperation and working together started. But Jorn was rarely there when all the others were there. He came, well, because of all sorts of, let's say, family reasons, and practical reasons, from time to time, until he refused to come any more. Originally perhaps he intended to make something with his brother at Drakabygget but they fell out and Jorn stopped coming to Drakabygget.

GF: One thing to say about Drakabygget, at Drakabygget, there was loads of information lying about. And, what was particularly interesting, there was information from Helhesten, there was information from the COBRA period, and from the rest of it. Also, Franceschi and Jorn came, when they were photographing in Skåne. And you had this complete archive that was on the table, what was going on, and you could see all the historical architectural monuments they'd

photographed, and everything like that. And there were many discussions that took place at that time. So there were a lot of things going on, people sharing ideas and experimenting with art as well as life.

JJ: How did you survive?

GF: Nash was pretty well living ... but it had nothing to do with agriculture if you think so ... he had a billy goat ...

JdJ: A horse!

GF: Yeah, he had a horse ... and this damn billy goat. All it did was piss on you. If you've ever been pissed on by a billy goat, well, that's quite something. But Nash was mainly making his living by selling paintings.

JdJ: Fakes.

GF: Yeah, although there were some real ones as well.

JJ: What kind of fakes?

JdJ: Well, they were fake Jorns!

GF: And he sold a bunch of Strid's work as well. I don't know whether Strid was ever paid.

JdJ: And he sold them and kept the money. He also sold paintings by you and me...

GF: Well, I mean, I was living there. I didn't quite object to not having a cut of the money, it wasn't

so interesting. And there were all these SPUR pictures. And, we'd get in the car and drive to Denmark, and then he would operate as an art dealer, and go around and sell and sell and sell. And, yeah, the other income ... There was also income that was coming from Jorn, he was paying a lot of the bills. We did something, we did get some money, real money ... Drakabygget was very noisy, although we were a long way from the main road. And that was because the ground was water-logged, and the noise travels through the water. So we decided to get some of the drainage on the land working, and we started on the project. Because things would tremble. And, then the local farmers mentioned to Nash, that as far as doing this work, that you could get money off the government because you were creating agricultural land. So we cleaned all the drainages of roots, and everything like that. We got the water back in these very old water ditches. It was actually very pleasant work to do. And the water began to flow after that, and we got money for it. So the funding of Drakabygget was supplied from the money Nash was able to put together.



Gordon Fazakerley painting at Drakabygget, 1961.

JJ: So the ambition was to make the farm self-sufficient with Nash, setting himself up as a farmer ...

GF: All Nash's ideas about himself as a farmer was bullshit. I can't imagine Nash as a farmer, to be honest.

JJ: But, also to connect it to what Peter Laugesen said about people meeting and connecting and developing ideas and bringing different backgrounds together, this kind of catalytic process, was that happening when the Germans were coming there, and Guy Atkins was

coming there, as well as you guys coming there...

JdJ: I do believe that wherever there is someone, I mean, Nash was, once upon a time, very important, and he did attract people to come, and much more than being a Situationist commune or a community—it was just that people came there, it was a very interesting place. And, as I said, with the generosity, it was very easy to stay. But I think that was it. It was not more than that. It was not a Situationist commune, it was not exceptional. What was exceptional was—in a way, I'm wondering if you agree on that, Gordon, that Nash made it into a sort of publicity stunt. Which became the Drakabygget story, the idea of the Situationist group at Drakabygget. Nash staged it as much more than in reality it was. And I don't know, but anyway, the time we were there, um, could have been anywhere, and with anyone, of the group, or the people, around. It was not specific because Nash and Katja were there, it was specific to the time of the early 1960s.

GF: Nash loved publicity and he'd always been involved in it. He had all these cuttings from the past, and, you know, he never had time to read

them even though he always wanted to read about himself.

JJ: But from the Drakabygget, even though it's been repeated several times that there was no Second Situationist International, but still, the Declaration, The Drakabygget Declaration, came from Drakabygget and was written there, somehow. Do you remember the circumstances?

GF: Well, I remember there was a letter in the post saying I had signed it...

JdJ: Yes, exactly, the same happened to me, and other people might have been in the same circumstances. I mean, this... Nash made it up on his own. It's not, it's not an attack that we say the Second Situationist International did not exist. I'm sorry, the Scandinavian, well, the Second Situationist International, didn't exist. It just simply... there was not a First Situationist International, so there can't be a Second, there's just a Situationist Movement. But Nash made something up for himself. It would be more accurate calling it the Drakabygget Movement, or something like that, instead of making a problem with all the other Situationist participants that had



Photo of Jacqueline de Jong from the catalogue published in relation to the exhibition *Accidental Paintings*, Galerie Westing, 1964.

been around. And Drakabygget *was* a movement in itself, don't you agree, Gordon? I mean, there was something going on, only not as a, well, not as family or a Situationist commune, it was more a sort of spirit for coming and going and, and just living from your art and getting, well, in my case, not getting paid. I don't know if, if, if it's fun, but I think it's fun.

At the time I was living in a very small, dank little room in Paris, and

this gallery owner, Westing, well, he wanted to make an exhibition with me in his gallery in Odense, so he came to Paris because he wanted paintings from me. And Nash came with him, and said "You have to sell him all these paintings!" And I said, "Yes, but he never paid me for the paintings he has already bought." And this is an anecdote, but it's typical of what happened. Then Nash said, "No, he paid me." And then Westing, the gallery man

said, “But... the money was for her.” And then Nash said, “No, I bought a horse for the money from that painting, because Katja, she needed another horse.” Anyway, this is, this is the sort of the ending, when it all happened, so...

GF: Well, the story didn’t quite end there, because there was a court case.

JdJ: Did they have a court case?

GF: Yeah.

JdJ: Did I make a court case?

GF: No, Nash took Westing to court, for not paying, so Westing paid twice. I went to the court case in Odense where Westing was prosecuted. Nash won the case.

JdJ: Yes he did.

GF: And, my wife, we were there when the money transaction took place. I didn’t know any Danish at the time. And I was paid, and the rest of the money was given to Nash, and what was lacking, Nash took some of the money in furniture, this cabinet. So we were there, actually, we testified on behalf of Westing in the court. It was Robert Mikkelsen who defended Nash. Robert Mikkelsen is a very nice guy. Afterwards, we met in town, and we had a drink, and I said, you know, “Nash has pulled the wool over your

eyes on this one”, because I was there, and, he was a lawyer and he could take it, but then that was the case.

JJ: Could you tell about Gruppe SPUR? They published a magazine, and they were said to be ‘in exile’ at Drakabygget because they were expelled... Could you tell about the SPUR Group, the background to their ‘exile’ at Drakabygget, in ‘61?

JdJ: It was, it was, because of the trial in Munich at the time, where they were prosecuted for obscenity. That’s why they were exiled and living in Sweden. I mean, they were at risk in Munich, the case was still going on, it was being defended by Werner Haftman, who was a very important museum man in Germany.

GF: What I remember was, I think the last number of your magazine, *Situationist Times*, that you published...

JdJ: Exactly... well, not the last one.

GF: And there was a picture in the magazine of Hans-Peter Zimmer with his tongue out, kissing a vagina. And this seemed to really have annoyed the German authorities. And they rang up to the Danish police, and they came down to the printer Permil’s place, and they said

to Permil, “well, this is pornography.” And Permil looked at them and said, “you’re kidding!” And then he opened the drawer, and he pulled all these girlie magazines out, and said “this is pornography.” So they didn’t press on with it.

JdJ: The *SPUR* journal made by Permil was pornography, very funny though, and the distribution couldn’t go on. They sent, I think, a hundred or two hundred to Holland, to my father. ‘They’ were Gruppe SPUR, and they sent them from Denmark, not from Drakabygget. But the Dutch authorities confiscated the magazine, at that moment. And then my father had to get them out of the Customs Office. And the Customs Office said, “Why do you get all these magazines?” And he said, “Well, I’m a stocking manufacturer, and these are, what do you call it, publicity for stockings.” All of them, they’re publicity for stockings. So he got it down. And from Holland on, we could distribute them. I don’t know how many there were, but there were many... And then, the problem was really that they couldn’t get into Germany. They couldn’t get into France. At that time they were still in the Situationist International.



Gordon Fazakerley and Jørgen Nash in the fields of Drakabygget, 1961.

But, I mean, SPUR were being supported by Permil and Rosengren to make this magazine. That was an important thing to do, but they didn’t make it at Drakabygget.

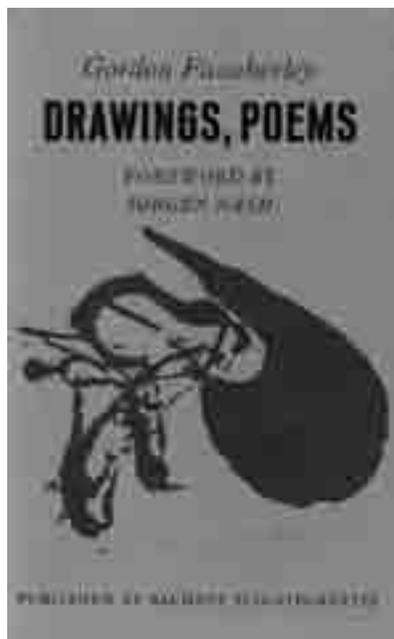
JJ: The court case was also the background to all the focus on the freedom of expression at Drakabygget...

JdJ: Of course.

GF: I remember SPUR’s exhibition in Halmstad in 1961.

JdJ: Yeah. We participated in that.

GF: It was in an exhibition in a furniture store. And it was a man



Cover of *Drawings, Poems* by Gordon Fazakerley, 1962.

named Johansson who had it. And there was a big patio outside. And somebody had the bright idea of hanging all the paintings, hanging many of paintings outside. And so, actually, you had a drive-in gallery, and it was the only drive-in gallery I'd ever seen in my life.

JdJ: But then, I mean, one of the Utopic things we had, I mean, I... don't know if I mentioned Situcracy, well, we had, in Gothenburg, we wanted to have an island, a

Situcratic island. Jorn went to Italy to meet this collector Paolo Marinotti, to talk over this Situcratic island. And this was a big item, you know, in the conference in Gothenburg. And I was going to read a letter Asger wrote for the conference, to tell there is going to be economic possibilities in order to buy this Situcratic island, and that island was going to be somewhere between Sweden and Denmark. And it was never realised. I mean, there was very much talk in Drakabygget about it; how are we going to realise it? I mean, that's one of the things that might have been, was definitely Utopic, but was actually a paradise, but it never materialised.

JJ: But Drakabygget was a Situcratic island, in a way, or the idea was ...

JdJ: No!

JJ: But the Situationists ...

JdJ: No! Why don't ...

JJ: I'm just asking because there must have been ...

JdJ: No, no! It was not Situationist. It was something else, it was Nash's project. I mean, it was not in any way, any longer Situationist. What is Situationist about it? It was a situation like ... in *my* opinion, that could have been anywhere.

GF: Although to the bourgeoisie, it was outrageous.

JdJ: It's true. It's a pity that we have to, to say this, but ... Well, *you* tell me, what you think was Situationist about it.

JJ: I'm just asking because you said that the main topic of this Gothenburg Conference in '61 was about ...

JdJ: The island.

JJ: This Situcratic island, it must somehow link—that was after Drakabygget was founded—and it must somehow have been linked to Drakabygget, this art centre, this commune that was developed ...

JdJ: Well, the Situcratic island was still in the hands of the Situationists.

JJ: Yeah, yeah.

JdJ: Was still what the whole Situationist ...

JJ: But anyone can be a Situationist, you wrote ...

JdJ: That I wrote after I was expelled. I have the guts to say, "We're not gangsters, we're Situationists." But, I mean, that was my own opinion. But I still believe that this, this is apart from that. And the island was a physical island, and there was really going to be one of these many islands around Fyn, and then making this, well,

urbanisme unitaire and, you know, the whole architectural thing ... The possibilities which were within the Situationist International, how it was going to be, I don't know.

GF: The thing about Drakabygget, you could paint anywhere. They were painting all over, Gruppe SPUR were painting all over ... it was very pleasant to see. And just move around, paint, follow the lines around ... We were painting outside and inside. There was lots of old masonite there we painted on. Especially during the summer in 1961. Hardy Strid organised the paint, there was lots of house paint around. I got on very well with Zimmer. I didn't know the others so well. Zimmer was my age and Strum and Prem was older, you could see it on the handwriting. They wrote in Gothic lettering. With Zimmer that wasn't there. The principle was that you could make art out of anything at Drakabygget.

JJ: Maybe we could end by talking about *The Seven Rebels* exhibition in Odense in '62. Who were The Seven Rebels, first of all? How come they were rebels, against what were you rebelling?

JdJ: Against society. We were rebelling against society.



Gordon Fazakerley in the studio above Galerie Westing in Odense, 1963.

GF: The exhibition was organised by Nash ...

JdJ: ... and Jens Jørgen Thorsen ...

GF: ... And a journalist called Peter Lerche, who worked for, I think, *Aktuelt*? He was a nice guy. Just never drive behind him, because he always threw beer bottles out the window. And it was, it was a set-up, you know, it was set-up to get into the newspapers.

JdJ: The exhibition?

GF: Yeah. And a fight broke out. And you got a black eye ...

JdJ: Yes, I did somehow ... But I mean, it was an exhibition of paintings done at Drakabygget,

more or less ... Hardy Strid did his in Halmstad. The people who were in it were ... you and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Jørgen Nash, Ansgar Elde, de Jong, Zimmer and Hardy Strid. That's the seven.

JJ: So they were seven expelled—semi-expelled— Situationists.

JdJ: Yes, but not all the SPUR, but only Zimmer. And then this man Westing came and bought the whole exhibition—and that clearly brought publicity—because the entire exhibition was bought by one man. He went on as a gallery for many years ... his daughter still has it, I think.

GF: Yeah, because they called us “The Seven Students.”

JdJ: And then, a year afterwards, this modified version of the catalogue came out ... Well, we were really shocked, because then Nash and Thorsen made an act against ... us. They modified the original catalogue of the *Seven Rebels* show.

The real one was made for the show in Odense, and then they made a fake one for a show at Galerie Moderne in Silkeborg the year after. That's when CO-RITUS really started being CO-RITUS, and instead of going against society, they were just going against their friends, comrades, whatever we were until then. And they just ... well, you and me, we got completely ridiculed. Nash and Thorsen painted on top of our paintings and the photos of us. I got a moustache. Well, I didn't want to have anything to do with this.

GF: We got genetically engineered, so to say.

JdJ: And this was the end of me, in the catalogue I was transformed into another artist, who was staying then at Drakabygget called Roy Adzak. I got a beard and so on ... Well, that was, that was a sort of

absolute *act* against us, against comrades. Then that was also the moment, in '63, when Nash started sort of blackmailing his brother due to our relationship ... And when he started doing things, more and more with Thorsen, that were publicity things.

GF: Yes.

JdJ: And so, at least for me, the whole, let's say, connection ended. But it was impossible to ever end with Nash because whenever he turned up, he was very sweet and very charming, but I wanted to have nothing to do with it.

JJ: With the second version of *Seven Rebels*—the one where you were defaced—the relationship ended, or, your time at the Drakabygget as a visiting artist ended ...

JdJ: Yes ... but then other people came. Quite a few, that's why I think one should consider Drakabygget as something which went on until Nash's death. And it has its own sort of, well, aspect within, within anarchism, but separate from what we did.

GF: I was inclined to ... Well, Nash had a very fine sense of the vernacular, in architecture. And the whole rustic atmosphere of

the place, you could relate it to the 'bonde'—peasant culture, in Dalarna. And, aesthetically, it was very very pleasing. There was this continuation, there were remnants of folk art in a way. It was pretty smashed up, but that was the interesting thing about it. I learned very much from Nash about vernacular architecture in Scandinavia. I got access, from Nash and Strid, to the tree plantations, when they planted trees going up to the house, the whole culture behind that. Looking at the culture in a different dimension... As a painter, as an artist, you take it in, also me. Another thing about living in Sweden at the time... The world of course had changed with the 1914 war, and the Second World War, lots of things were destroyed. You were able to walk in the Swedish landscape. It was un-destroyed by all these terrible events. So there were gateposts, there were storm walls, there were boulders... And you only knew of these things from your parents' memory. And you saw them as if it was the remnants of *belle Europe*, you know, and what had happened to *belle Europe* afterwards, the Swedes knocked the fucking place down as well.



Gordon Fazakerley with Jørgen Nash's horse Ambrosius Fjord at Drakabygget, 1961.

That's a different story. That was very clear. For a painter, that was a very sensual landscape to live in. Also, one thing most people don't know about Drakabygget, on the positive side, it was a very sexy place to be. Bubbling over, you know. I mean, you had all the sexual frustration that is going on on Katja's part, because she was changing sex—and everybody, and then everybody was looking for a woman, and things like that,...

JJ: Thank you very much.

This conversation took place at the Expect Anything Fear Nothing Conference, Copenhagen, March 2007.



UNGE MÆND OG KVINDER SØGES

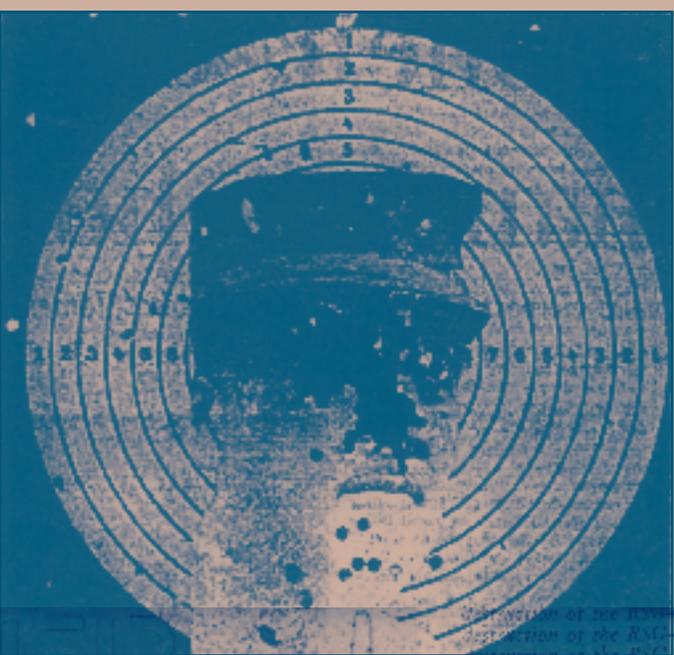
– velkvalificeret til frem-skrift og leg. Special-kendskab unødvendigt. Hvis De er intelligent eller smuk, kan De gå over i historiens bevidsthed
MED SITUATIONISTERNE

Ring ikke. Skriv eller kom:
Kristinelyst – Helsted pr.
Randers.

Vil De skyde Khrustjov?

En meget usædvanlig udstilling aabner paa lørdag i det nye kunstgalleri EXI paa Hunderupvej i Odense. Den er foranstaltet af Situationistisk Internationale, der har hovedkvarter i Paris og de medvirkende er Michele Bernstein, Guy Debord, Jan Strijboach og deres danske repræsentant J. V. Martin fra Randers.

Udstillingen er delt op i tre afdelinger. Den ene er indrettet som et atombeskyttelsesrum, hvor hviddklædte herrer uddeler beroligende midler, alt imens sirener hylér og bomber tikker. Næste afdeling viser de forvulkede rester af vor jord efter 3. verdenskrig — set fra en rumkabiné. Samme sted er indrettet et skydetelt, hvor man alt efter behag kan skyde paa „gerpingsmændene“ — dvs. paa portrætter af bl. a. Franco, Adenauer, Khrustjov, Hækkerup og de Gaulle. I tredje afdeling vises malerier, repræsenterende to nye retninger i billedkunsten — hævdes det. Den ene består af saakaldte temonucleær-kartografier.



Kunstnerisk ophavsret krænktes

På udstilling i Odense

To helt nye kunstretninger vil blive præsenteret ved en udstilling i Galerie Exi i Odense på lørdag, hævder maleren J. V. Martin, der er udstillingens arrangør.

Begge retninger hører til de markante, for så vidt som de har med krig at gøre. Den ene kalder J. V. Martin for „thermonucleær cartografi“, og det er med værker af ham selv, den præsenteres.

Det er landkort i store relieffer, forklarer han. Man skal forestille sig, at man er en rumpilote, der kredser rundt om Jorden ved udbruddet af en tredje verdenskrig. Det første billede er fra en time efter krigsudbruddet, på et tidspunkt, da Jorden viser spredte sygdomspletter. Efterhånden bliver hele landkortet et kaos.

Batalje

Kunstretning nummer to er en anden form for bataljemaleri. Den franske maler Matthieu forsøgte sig for nylig med moderne bataljemalerier, der bestod af grundfarven med spredte afryddelser af farven direkte fra tuben. Døjte, hævder J. V. Martin, reagerer malerinden Michele Bernstein, ligeledes fransk, imod. Hun er naturalist, mener han, og forsyner sine malerier med rigtige tinsoldater. Den spanske republikk sejr hedder et af billederne, der vender historiens gang om.

Desuden vil man komme til at se „direktiver“ af Guy Debord, og oplyser arrangøren, et billede, malet oven på et originalværk af spanieren Pinot Galizio, der tidligere har udstillet i Danmark.

Det er klart ulovligt at overmale en anden kunstners værk og udstillet det, J. V. Martin.

Det kan ikke være forkert at overmale et billede af Galizio. Vi har givet ham nyt liv.

Kunsthandler Børge Birch, der repræsenterer Pinot Galizio i Danmark, er for tiden bortrejst og kan derfor ikke, taget stilling til overmalingen, der, når billedet også udstilles, er en krænkelse af den kunstneriske ophavsret.

Vedr. „Destruktion af RSG-6“

Hr. redaktør i Information 651 skriver De som indledning til en erklæring udsendt af kunsthandler Tom Lindhardt, Odense, vedrørende Situationistisk Internationales lukning af sin manifestation „Destruktion af RSG-6“, at denne i sin erklæring hævdes at være uridtgælt. Kunsthandlerens brevte afbaler, det er vor opfattelse, at kunsthandleren paa intet øieblik i sin erklæring beskæftiger sig med eller tilbagevender noget som helst af det, sagen drejer sig om.

Destruktion af RSG-6 var fra vor side en ledelse til det arbejde, „Sponsor for Proden“ havde udført i England ved under pastorens atomsmatch at udsende de beundelige plæner for et regionalt militærregimentskade i Sydengland (englands banker). — Manifestationen var samtidig hermed et angreb paa et verdenssystem, der tillader magtens indhavere — gennem krig og atomkrig, gennem prøvetæmninger — at udsætte menneskeheden for dødelige farer.

Galleriet i Odense var derfor delt op i tre afdelinger, hvoraf første afdeling var et atombeskyttelsesrum, der alene gennem sin indretning: Neut blændende lys, hylende sirener, feltværge, konserter og paa en brist et lig, var i stand til at give udbillingens besøgende et overordentligt stærkt chok. — Hvilke adskillige de også gav udtryk for var lykkedes paa femiseringsdagen, hvor vi selv var til stede.

Som et middel til „opkvikning og afroegning“ har i zænske rum fire rifler parat, således at udstillingen ved at tage skyde del i de enkelte fotografier af systemets ledere (Khrustjov-Kennedy, Franco-Verwoerd, Adenauer-Por Hækkerup, Paven-de Gaulle). I dette rum var de temonucleære kartografier udsendt (reel-landkort), der skildrede de forskellige lande paa forskellige tidspunkter af 3. verdenskrig, begyndende med atom, luftsygdomsagtige plætter for til sidst at ende i et væk information Paschen for beskrivelsen i en rumkabiné paa vej væk fra denne klode.

Siden man var forberedt malerier.

Vi har hermed fremlagt den 100. som udstillingen var bygget op over. Vi er indstændt, at den skulle give sig udslag i, at det har skedd i stillet i galleri EXI som pastorens af Tom Lindhardt, — der vil er hele arrangementets baggrund for skudet.

MEN — i samme øjeblik vi forlod Odense, foretog kunsthandleren en beskrivelse af udstillingen, der var saa kraftig, at den ville kunne lade Det Danske Literaturbeskuerere til et blegue af massekølle; Han fjernede alle Heers fundament ved at sætte rum 1 — atombeskyttelsesrummet; — ud af

drift. Derved blev det til et livligt med en skydebane, hvilket vi ikke kunne acceptere, og som sænt det kuen til vor kendelse. Indtænde vi den af kunsthandleren kasterede udstilling.

Undervejs til Situationistisk Internationales kunstudstilling, DESTRUKTION AF RSG-6, i Galecia EXI, Hunderupvej 21, Odense, er den belgiske artistici Rudi Bensuson fredag den 21. juni blevet næglet indreise i Danmark. Han medbragte i sin bagage fem billeder af vor luminerformant Jan Strijboach, til brug for ovennævnte udstilling.

Vi anmoder justitsministeren om en snarlig forklaring paa, hvorfor man nægtede at give indrejseattest til et medlem af Situationistisk International.

For SITUATIONISTISK INTERNATIONALE
J. V. Martin, Randers.

POLITIKEN JULY 1963

Relitiken
I Galerie Exi på Hunderupvej viser den situationistiske bevægelse en udstilling — hvis man kan kalde den sådan? — med en idé. Michele Bernstein, Guy Debord, Jan Strijboach og J. V. Martin demonstrerer menneskelige, kaotiske produkter, bestående af støb, krøluld, tinsoldater, oversprøjtet med farve eller overmalet med slagord for ødelæggelse af den engelske regeringsbunker, RSG-6, der er opført som civil forsvarsanordning i en atomkrig. Det er naturligvis dybest set mod krigen selv og mod den totalitære statsmagt, de protesterer, og de vil formentlig opfatte det som en kompliment, når det siges, at de ikke gør det med kunstneriske virkemidler. Men sådan er det nu ikke ment af undertegnede.

Pierre Lübecker



BOMBE MOD PROTEST- HOVED- KVARTERET

*Maleren J. V. Martins hjem i
Randers ødelagt*

PREMIERESIDE: 1. OG 2. S. 1

RANDERS (Rasthuset). - Selvfølgelig, maleren J. V. Martins hjem i Sølagde i Randers blev i aften Toldstædt, og det må da indrømmes, det formentlig er kastet ind gennem et af de store ruder til gaderens ulovlige 3. og øverste etage i ejendommen. Der opstod en brandbrand.



LE « QUARTIER-GÉNÉRAL » SITUATIONNISTE AU DERNIER SOIR (photo parue dans « Quick » du 4-4-65).



J.V. MARTIN ARRÊTÉ (photo parue dans « Electrobladet » du 10.3.65)





†
Marianne
†11/5 1952
†1/1 1969
STATEN
~~Marknads~~ tog hennes liv.



God JUL!!!
Ønskes alle Vagabonder,
Sociale tabere, Børndrillerere,
Stygnere, samt andre Journalister,
Forener Eder Alle i
KAMPEN
For et bedre NYÅR
med STORADMIRALEN
for
"Den gyldne Flåde"
Jeres
J.V. on Artin.



EVERYONE CAN BE A SITUATIONIST

Hardy Strid

People sometimes talk about the 'leader' Jørgen Nash. We didn't really have any Führer. Should for instance Gruppe SPUR need some kind of leader? In the texts of Situationist International it is explicitly stated that there are no leaders. Therefore it is incredible that the 'thesis grinder' J.V. Martin did not react against being called the "head of the Scandinavian section." After all the section was more or less only himself. I think it was a sign of good humour when we started using the term 'Situationist' outside the very restricted sense the French section gave it.

Is it a crime to call oneself a Dadaist? A lot of Dadaists appeared through the years in the Unites States. Aragon and Breton had difficulties keeping track of the Surrealist group. You are excluded or leave the main road and rejoin the group. Marinetti could not prevent the appearance of the Russian Futurists.

When it comes to the Situationist International it was Guy Debord and Asger Jorn who got the stone rolling and since then many other stones have started rolling. And a bit further than Debord and Jorn imagined. I meet Asger Jorn in London where I was studying. The acquaintance with Jorn and his brother Jørgen Nash, who had been a refugee during the war, made me want to come to Copenhagen. Nash took over the post as secretary for the Scandinavian section of the Situationist Group and together we arranged the fifth congress in Göteborg 1961. At that time Gruppe SPUR was living at Drakabygget. After the congress in Göteborg and the exclusions of many members of the group we realised that we had to distance ourselves from the Debord fraction. So we launched the Second Situationist International. I became the secretary of the group and took care of the activities that kept taking place in an ever more hectic

tempo. We now had a large group and were able to make far more actions than the Debord faction had ever managed to do. We wrote a CO-RITUS manifesto in 1961 (before Fluxus was commonly known) and attacked the universities in Denmark and Sweden as well as the seminar in Uppsala in 1964. We worked under many different names at the time from 1961 to 1971: Struggle of the Situacratic Society—Drakabygget—Bauhaus Situationniste—Seven Rebels—Ritus contra deprivation—Manifestation for artistic freedom of speech—CO-RITUS.

How do people think they can patent a term as if it was a company name? I don't know how many people there are in the world, who call themselves Situationist?

Here in Sweden I somehow belonged to the community around Endre Nemes and Peter Weiss. As a painter I don't care whether my paintings offend Situationists or other people! And you can call me whatever kind of -ist you want.

March 2007

RED HERRINGS: ECCENTRIC MORPHOLOGIES IN THE SITUATIONIST TIMES

Karen Kurczynski

The Conception of The Situationist Times

Jacqueline de Jong conceived the *The Situationist Times* as an English-language counterpart to the *Internationale situationniste*, proposing the project in 1961 at the Situationist Central Council meeting in Brussels. But when it appeared the following year it would explicitly denounce the Situationist International in outrage at the underhanded exclusion of the artists of Gruppe SPUR. In solidarity with SPUR and in protest against the secretive scheming of the four Central Council members (Debord later denied that de Jong had been on the Council at all), de Jong decided to publish her journal “as a platform to respond to the eviction of the artists”.¹ De Jong transformed the planned English-language Situationist review into an international cultural review and artistic project in its own right, eliciting the help of veteran writer, editor, and Pataphysician Noël Arnaud as co-editor of the first two issues. She aimed for a publication along the lines of *Surréalisme révolutionnaire*, the international review of culture and politics that preceded *Cobra*, thus continuing the postwar avant-garde's investigation of visual arts, politics, science, philosophy, music, urbanism, poetry, and all other areas of cultural production in relation to each other.

Underlying the publication's investigations was the original Situationist program of revolutionizing everyday life to liberate desire, subvert the bourgeois recuperation of avant-garde creativity, and explore the contemporary possibilities of industrial production liberated from instrumental application by economic power.² The longer the journal ran,

however, the less interested it became in programmatically theorizing contemporary social struggle and the more it developed a radically open-ended approach that maintained conflicting theorizations side by side. Written texts often took second stage to the unprecedented visual explorations of the equally diverse images collected in issues 3-5, the three thematic issues on topological tropes. De Jong calls Debord's factionalism and exclusions "absolutist, absolutist, absolutist", declaring that the Situationist project "has not yet found in details its clear formulations in the fields of science, technique and art". She asserts that "Everybody who develops theoretically or practically this new unity is automatically a member of the Situationist International and in this perspective *The Situationist Times*."³ Born of outrage against the prohibition of artists from the avant-garde project, *The Times* refused throughout to make any exclusively programmatic theoretical statement, declaring on the contrary that "It is up to the reader if he wants so [sic], to make his own conclusions."⁴ It refused to exclude the visual arts from the institutional discourses it sought to destabilize, just at the moment when a broad spectrum of contemporary artists were declaring a taboo against painting that became increasingly clichéd as the decade wore on, and which ultimately served to maintain painting's special social status.

Printed in de Jong's hometown of Hengelo and later in Copenhagen and Paris, *The Situationist Times* ran for six issues. The first issue responded directly to the Situationist exclusions, including the full transcript of the SPUR trial; de Jong's "Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement"; reprints of the incriminating SPUR collages; defenses of SPUR by Arnaud and others; comic dérives; collaborative drawings by de Jong with Wolvecamp and Serge Vandercam; a "Situationist" musical score by Dutch composer Peter Schat; the anti-bomb-shelter tract "Mutant", which Jorn had written together with Debord—printed at Jorn's insistence; and, finally, "The Problem of the Point", the first of a long series of essays by Surrealist artist and math teacher Max Bucaille on topology. The second issue, published a few months later, included among other things the "Declaration of the Second Situationist International", a tract written by Nash, Jorn, Elde, and the Drakabygget group, which added

de Jong's name without her permission.⁵ The Declaration describes the new movement's basis in Scandinavian culture and specifically social democratic politics, asserting that "the social structure that fulfills the new conditions for freedom we have termed the situcratic order". Taking Niels Bohr's theory of complementarity in physics as a metaphor (as Jorn frequently did in his own writings), it declares that the "Scandinavian outlook" is not based on calculated position as is the "French", but rather on movement and mobility. Building further on Jorn's theories of evolution and the renewal of tradition, the Declaration maintains that "Today terms like conservatism, progress, revolution and reactionism have become meaningless. The terminology of liberalism is equally fatuous and played out. There is no point in using phrases of this kind for the Nordic philosophy of situations which is essentially tradition-directed". The reaction against progress, and against the by now utterly clichéd and recuperated idea of the avant-garde itself, with its visionary associations, was explicitly set against Situationist orthodoxy which upheld revolution over reform.

The next three issues explored topology explicitly. Issue 3 featured multilingual and interdisciplinary contributions on the theme of "interlace", referring more generally to the idea of the "situation" in topological terms. This was the first issue on which Jorn and de Jong collaborated closely, based on their extensive conversations with Bucaille about topology and Jorn's developing theory of trilectics, after de Jong decided to take over the journal without Arnaud's help. The issue turns explicitly to visual morphological explorations with its long sections of collected visual imagery of knots and interlace. Jorn had officially founded the Scandinavian Institute for Comparative Vandalism in 1961, and began working with photographer Gérard Franceschi to photograph Romanesque, Viking, ancient Scandinavian, and other ornaments in his project to document "10,000 Years of Nordic Folk Art". The wide-ranging pictures printed in this issue of *The Times* were culled from Jorn's archive and de Jong's research in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Max Bucaille's introductory notes grounded the issue in the central problems of topology. He opens a discussion of knots as a basic topological trope, defines the mathematical problem of Hoppe's Curve, and describes the Möbius strip, the famous diagram of a two-dimensional

figure with only one side which may be modeled in three dimensions by cutting, twisting, and re-gluing a strip of paper in a closed circle.⁶

Thus begins the overt investigation of topology, sometimes referred to as the “mathematics of context”, as a discourse of multiple dimensions and the transformation of forms which are always inherently linked to a broader context.⁷ The basic interest of topology for so many artists, architects, and mathematicians at the time was its premise that a figure may transform into various topological “equivalents”, for example a coffee mug into a donut shape, or a sphere into a pyramid, while retaining its basic identity as a form whose internal set of points relate to each other in a particular way. In other words, a form is defined by a specific relationship between its constituent parts but may rearrange itself into any number of equivalent shapes.⁸ Issues 3, 4, and 5 of *The Situationist Times* collect such imagery from around the world and thus explicitly open up the discourse of topology from a strictly mathematical one to one that encompasses all fields of human endeavour. Although various textual discussions of topology in math, history, literature, and other fields contributed to these investigations, it was predominantly in the “purely” visual realm where the really innovative interpretation of topology as a discourse of morphology was carried out. Through the emphatically “shallow” and “superficial” discourse of images, new connections were made that took topology into entirely unprecedented cultural realms.⁹

Issue 4, printed in 1963 in Copenhagen, explores the history of the labyrinth, its possible prehistoric origins in the readings of animal entrails, and its manifestations in Egypt, Mycenæ, Medieval and Baroque Europe, the sand drawings of New Guinea, modern literature, the tarot, and contemporary architecture and city planning. Images of labyrinths and spirals from ancient Scandinavian rock carvings to Medieval urban plans and Christian church labyrinths present many pages of engrossing visual material. Each image, moreover, is indexed in the last few pages of the issue, which allows readers to trace it to the cultural context out of which it developed. Issue 5 on “rings and chains” continues this trend, with its imagery of rings from topology to hopscotch to jewelry to hoop skirts. It includes Jorn’s key theoretical texts “Mind and Sense” and “Art and Orders”, and

more contributions from Bucaille and Lech Tomaszewski, architect D.G. Emmerich, Belgian artist Pol Bury, topologist E.M. Patterson, mathematician H.C. Doets, and others. The 6th and final issue, 1967’s “Les temps situationnistes”, breaks completely with the interdisciplinary exploration of topology and situates itself firmly in the artistic realm. It consists of a luxury edition of color lithographs by 32 artists in de Jong’s international circle. De Jong intended to use it to finance issue number 7, another planned topological issue on “wheels”, but it turned out to be the last issue of the journal.¹⁰ Out of funds, and on the heels of her first solo painting show in Paris in 1966, de Jong turned to a focus on her own art after publishing the final issue.

This essay will explore the multiple roles played by topology in *The Situationist Times* in relation to the use of topology by other artists both known and unknown to de Jong’s circle. Proceeding by a meandering but more or less historical path, it aims to clarify the historical specificity of the unique topological and morphological investigations in *The Times*. The review has not as yet been recognized for its groundbreaking contribution to the artistic discourse of topology. British architectural critic John Summerson once wrote a review of an article by Independent Group theorist Rayner Banham, one of a long series of prominent artists and critics to make reference to topology in the postwar period, which referred to topology as a “red herring”.¹¹ The concept of a “red herring” in English means something that leads you down the wrong track. Ironically (given the Scandinavian appreciation for herring) the term does not exist in Danish. It derives from an old practice of passing a herring over one’s tracks to throw off the dogs on a chase. A meandering dérive through the topological discourse of art, architecture, and theory in the postwar period seems to prove Summerson right—for in many cases there is not much to link the disparate uses of topology by artists as diverse as Jorn and Max Bill, Lygia Clark and Dan Graham, other than the morphological forms themselves—above all the near-ubiquitous Möbius strip. Yet the presence of topology is not only a red herring but a can of worms; once opened, it becomes apparent that the discourse permeates postwar culture on so many levels that it will take much more than this essay to flesh it

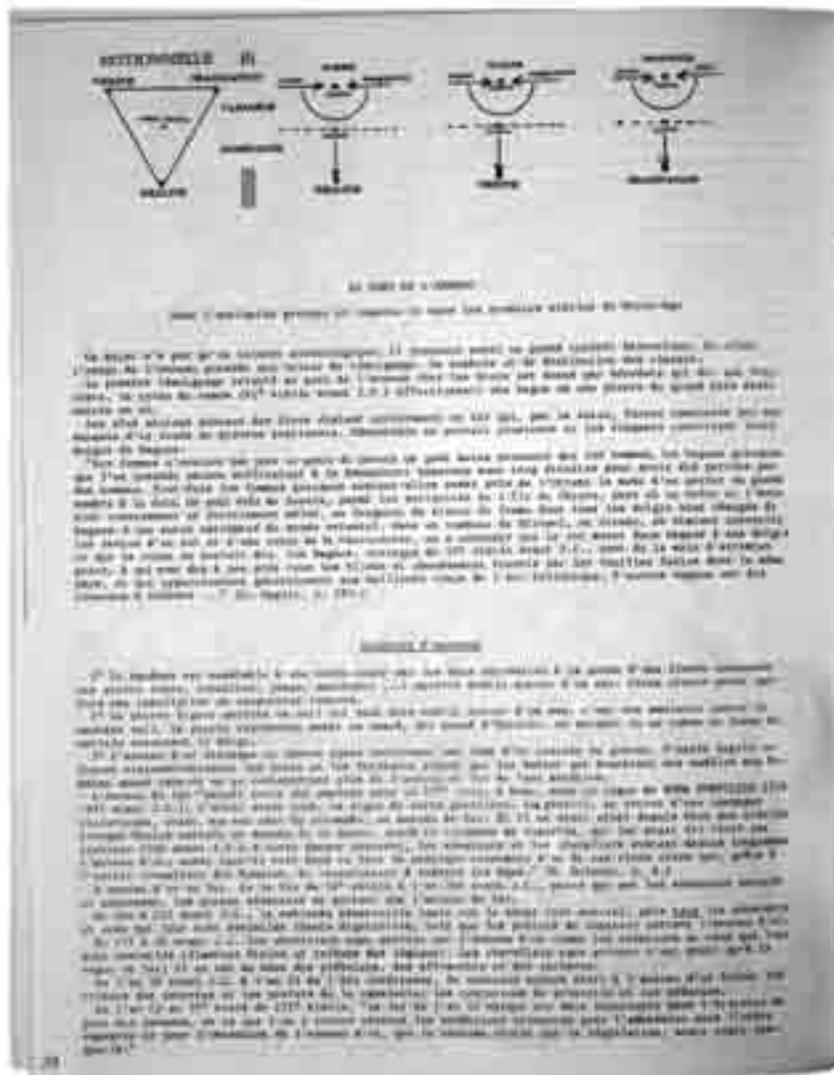
out. We can begin this exploration with an iconological mapping, with a closer look at how the manifestation and détournement of topology in *The Situationist Times* diverges from its use in a range of other postwar creative contexts. The specificity of *The Situationist Times* method, it turns out, is its deliberately heterogeneous use of topology, in an overtly contradictory discourse which opens up possibilities for new connections and new meanings—a situation perhaps best described by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia".

A Dialogic Proposition

The Situationist Times juxtaposes multiple languages, textual and visual—mathematical diagrams, gestural painting, détourned comics, photographs of ancient monuments and modern structures, topological figures, works of cultural production—in antagonistic rather than complementary relationships. It develops new and potentially transgressive connections between the realms of scientific, urbanistic, Situationist, artistic, and folkloric thought. The journal refuses systematization and closure, preferring to raise questions rather than answer them. The Bakhtinian concept of "heteroglossia" eloquently describes the liberatory aesthetic and critical function of *The Situationist Times*. Bakhtin's term refers to the phenomenon of linguistic multiplicity internal to a given discourse. The term overlaps with "polyglossia", the juxtaposition of multiple national languages within a given culture. Both terms point to an inherent multiplicity of language that embodies its own internal contradictions of meaning, and therefore does not allow any one meaning or ideological framework of meaning to predominate. According to Bakhtin, "Only polyglossia fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language and its own myth of language".¹² Heteroglossia and polyglossia suggest an internal complexity and contradiction among national, ethnic, subcultural, or disciplinary languages juxtaposed in a single text, a linguistic collage which serves the critical function of unmasking the social ideologies behind individual languages or discourses.

Bakhtin related heteroglossia explicitly to the hybridity of everyday language, to the individual's struggle to reconcile a personal perspective

to the authoritative discourses that interpellate her; yet the heteroglossic text was a synthetic one, differentiated from everyday life in that it is consciously constructed (361). Heteroglossia is not a condition endemic to all texts; it is rather a stylized orchestration of diverse discourses that occurs only in certain ones. It is these heteroglossic texts alone that have the power to liberate us, at least conceptually, from the dominance of authoritative discourse. And this power is not to be taken lightly: "What is involved here is very important, in fact a radical revolution in the destinies of human discourse: the fundamental liberation of cultural-semantic and emotional intentions from the hegemony of a single and unitary language, and consequently the simultaneous loss of a feeling for language as myth, that is, as an absolute form of thought" (367). If Bakhtin sounds overtly utopian here, his tone only more closely echoes the exuberant politics of *The Situationist Times* with its celebration of creativity. The internal oppositions of heteroglossia prevent any single authoritative reading of a text and insist on the polyvalence of variable readings. Its presence unmasks "monoglossia" or official discourse as impossible, always at best contingent and only held in place by sheer social power. Its insistence on the multiplicity of discourses, each relativized or exposed as partial through an overarching synthetic arrangement, is not a mere embrace of diversity for its own sake, but rather an acknowledgement of the power of critical distance to shatter the illusions by which power propagates itself as official speech. In other words, the overt mobilization of heteroglossia is a direct attack on the spectacle. Bakhtin's dialogic theory addresses language as inherently heterogeneous, as a dialogue that eternally opens to new meanings, and a language which always critiques itself from within even as it converses. He calls this interpretation of creative language "a living mix of varied and opposing forces developing and renewing itself" (49). Bakhtin developed his dialogic theory in relation to the satires and other parodic literary genres which gave rise to the modern European novel, in which diverse discourses are embodied in separate characters. Although an international artist's journal with multiple authors like *The Situationist Times* was literally conceived as heteroglossic, an artist's periodical may nevertheless be considered a highly complex cultural text in its own right,



Max Bucaille, "Le port de l'anneau," *The Situationist Times*, no. 5 (Dec. 1964), p. 24.

the product of numerous authors unified by provisional collective goals and coordinated by the editor(s).¹³ What separates *The Times* from other artist's journals, perhaps also heteroglossic in this formulation? Primarily its particular quality of foregrounding verbal and visual discourses in overt disagreement. According to Bakhtin, "Every type of intentional stylistic hybrid is more or less dialogized. This means that the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between languages, an argument between styles of language"(76). *The Situationist Times* abounds with examples of this type of heteroglossia or internal disagreement. In the 4th issue, devoted to the labyrinth, for example, a text by Italian philosopher and onetime Situationist Piero Simondo calls the labyrinth a "détourned" topology, and declares that mathematics cannot take into account the possibility of entering, exiting, or traversing the labyrinth—it can only determine the labyrinth's form from the outside. A few pages later, Max Bucaille directly contradicts Simondo by coming up with formulas for traversing a labyrinth.¹⁴ The internal semantic contradictions of heteroglossia address, moreover, not only the texts in *The Times* that treat similar topics from contradictory viewpoints, but also the eccentric archive of divergent images in issues 3, 4, and 5 explicitly devoted to topological themes. These images, ripped from their originating contexts as scientific or historical documents, ethnographic specimens, personal souvenirs, or aesthetic production and placed in new arrangements, retain their inherent links to those divergent social contexts and thus cannot be subsumed completely into their topological categories. Yet their juxtaposition suggests new meanings in the same way that heteroglossia in the literary text develops an internally diverse and ever-expanding range of meanings, to be interpreted dialogically by the reader.

Asger Jorn's idea of triolectics, like Bakhtin's dialogic theory, attempted to break out of the static idea of complementarity and refuse the idea of synthesis inherent in dialectics. Jorn first published his famous triolectic schemata in 1964, both in his book *Signes Gravés sur les églises de l'Eure et du Calvados* and in the article "Art and Orders" in the fifth issue of *The Situationist Times*. Jorn suggested triplets of concepts such

as “truth-imagination-reality”, “instrument-object-subject”, or “administration-production-consumption”, in triple diagrams that originated in colour theory, inspired by the primary trio of red, yellow, and blue.¹⁵ Both Jorn’s triolectics and Bakhtin’s dialogic theory involve a continual movement or evolution, without any teleological end to that movement. Jorn’s triolectic schemata disrupted conceptions of progress and regression by including three terms, such that no forward or backward motion could be described. In *The Situationist Times* 5, his schemata appear not only as illustrations for his own articles, but also interspersed at random points throughout the issue. For example, a group of them appear illustrating an article by Max Bucaille entitled “Le port de l’anneau” on the history of ring-wearing from ancient Greece to the present. Jorn’s schemata do not illustrate Bucaille’s text but rather deliberately suggest a contrasting or unrelated meaning, a conceptual spiral moving ever outwards.¹⁶ In his own text “Mind and Sense”, Jorn suggests the division of European culture into the patterns of “Nordic”, “Latin” (sometimes called “Roman”), and East European or “Byzantine”. He argues that, although he had resisted discussing or defending ideas of Nordic culture until then because of his aversion to nationalism, the threat to Scandinavian culture posed by the European Union, with its dominant states of France and Germany, necessitated an exploration and recovery of the Nordic contributions to theory and culture. Turning to ancient history to illustrate his concepts, Jorn recalls Tacitus’s description of the Teutonic warriors and the way they used singing to threaten the Roman army, using their shields to amplify their voices and creating, according to Jorn, the first polyphonic musical harmonies. Jorn asserts that this polyphony originates in “the fundamental polyphony or polysemy of our linguistic expression itself, in contrast to the unambiguous and clearly oriented or, as they say, discursive character of the Latin language”.¹⁷ His account forms a striking parallel to Bakhtin’s descriptions of hetero- and polyglossia: whereas Jorn sets up a polemical opposition to the “Latin”—just at the moment when he broke from the dominance of the French SI under the control of Debord—Bakhtin opposes the idea of “official”, universal, correct language; both propose instead a creatively unfolding language developed out of contradictions.¹⁸

Moreover, Jorn’s assertion of the importance of polysemy (which, rather than a neutral description of some Nordic tendency, actually constitutes his general argument for artistic creation) directly refutes the French Situationists’ approach to argument. The French SI called repeatedly for “theoretical lucidity” in its discussions, and the group assumed that it could only achieve its goals if able “to think rigorously enough in common”.¹⁹ Rather than “rigour”, Jorn’s playful theorizations, never meant to be considered as academic concepts interpreted to the letter, suggest the continual evolution of thought and culture that occurs precisely through the clash of opposing concepts.

More than a simple celebration of diversity, for Bakhtin polyglossia hinges on the direct and vehement contradictions internal to a discourse and stretching its very definability. It is a “struggle” and a situation of “linguistic disturbances” that only provisionally result in a monoglossic language.²⁰ *The Situationist Times* develops conversations across the institutionalized specialties of art, math, science, ethnology, mythography, and urbanism. And just as “converse” means both the action of discussing and an opposition or reverse in meaning, so the inherently dialogic aesthetics of *The Times* depends on disagreement. As de Jong declares in her “Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement”: “Misunderstandings and contradictions are not only of an extreme value but in fact the basis of all art and creation”.²¹ Disagreement demands a more active response. The heteroglossic aesthetic of *The Times* necessitates an activist reading. If readers engage further than a simple bemused drift through the journal (which is of course equally possible) it requires them to take provisional sides, to form a direct and subjective relationship with diverse images and texts upon encountering them, and to consider their own participation in the discourses of art, science, urbanism, etc.—in short, the institutionalized, specialized discourses which signify power.

De Jong’s journal mobilized topological forms in a manner that avoided both the programmatic, universalist humanism of topology as conceived in postwar Constructivism and Informel art, and structuralist interpretations of topology in architecture in the 1960s. Its interpretation of visual morphologies of such forms as rings, chains, or the labyrinth as

topological investigations ultimately required readers to engage with the suggested images or typologies using their own imagination. The eccentric visual morphologies of the special issues on interlace, the labyrinth, and the ring replaced the increasingly rigorous and exclusive critical theory of the *Internationale situationniste* with a new and unexplored aesthetic form that in some ways anticipated the development of conceptual magazine and book projects later in the decade, such as Robert Smithson's magazine pieces in the U.S. Unlike Smithson's gridlike layouts, however, the images in *The Times*, ripped from their contexts of creation as scientific or historical documents, ethnographic specimens, personal souvenirs, or aesthetic production, are arranged semi-haphazardly according to aleatory visual patterns or homologies. This juxtaposition creates new meanings—the scientific diagram becomes aesthetic and therefore liberated from brute instrumentality, while the “purely” aesthetic object suggests by analogy a social function.

My remarks on topology as explored by Constructivist or Informel artists may be, from the Situationist point of view, red herrings irrelevant to the use of topology in *The Situationist Times* and the so-called Second Situationist International. They follow a methodology of tracking the changing morphology of concepts over time which is not a traditional art historical approach, but one itself developing in contemporary artistic investigations of the 1960s, and largely described by George Kubler in his 1962 book *The Shape of Time*.²² In his book, published the same year as the first two issues of *The Situationist Times*, Kubler displaced traditional art history in favor of a history of collectively-produced visual forms (artistic, scientific, and all other kinds). He refers to these visual morphologies as “shapes in time”, and suggests that each shape is a “visual portrait of the collective entity” (9). Thus a visual form is related explicitly to its historical context and divorced from conservative notions of individual style or greatness. Kubler argued for historians to take into account that the transformation of forms over long periods of time does not happen in a smooth or regular sequence, but rather in a more unpredictable manner with no “necessary” development (31-36). The boundaries of identifiable formal sequences continually develop, and are radically changed by new elements that often seem to appear suddenly,

like biological “mutations” (40). In other words, change becomes evident precisely through forms that appear at first to be red herrings, diverging radically from an established track.

Kubler's theory explicitly takes evolution as a model for understanding how forms continue to exist across great lengths of time and shifts in culture. He replaced his teacher Henri Focillon's emphasis on the biological metaphor of the growth of an organism with a more complex metaphor of evolution which takes into account the complex and surprising shifts, gaps, and seemingly meaningless mutations or diversions which are the very axis on which evolution turns. Morphology—in biological terms the study of the shape, appearance, and arrangement of natural forms—was central to the identification of evolutionary development in Darwin's theory: as he wrote in 1859, “Morphology... is one of the most interesting departments of natural history, and may almost be said to be its very soul”.²³ The science of evolution arose directly out of the detailed observation of the repeated patterns observed in the anatomical structures of seemingly dissimilar organisms, such as the hind leg of a koala and that of a kangaroo, which indicated their origin in some distant ancestor. In Kubler's terms, this evolution of course refers not to organisms, but to the transmission of cultural visual or material forms, and this is one reason his theory was so groundbreaking. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins came up with a term for the units of cultural transition in 1976, calling them “memes”. This meant information, coded and passed on culturally in a manner somewhat equivalent, or at least comparable, to the way genes encode genetic information.²⁴ Yet while Dawkins is specialized as an evolutionary biologist, the concept he identified was in fact anticipated in humanistic investigations such as Kubler's.

The morphologies explored by artists like Jorn, de Jong, and Smithson, however, diverge from the explicitly (social-) scientific interests of Kubler. Kubler's methodology maintains an implicit belief in evolutionary truths to be uncovered, and aims toward a greater rational understanding of the evolution of forms as, in a sense, one-to-one registers of the cultural period out of which they develop—a concept inherent in the notion of a “shape of time”. Thus his notion of “prime objects” or “original inventions”, which

refers to the first instance of a form's appearance in time, something exceedingly rare and most often "lost" in the mists of prehistory (39). Kubler proposes such originary inventions as a fact, maintaining an underlying belief in historical truth. Postmodern historians would consider such a notion not a fact but a fiction created retrospectively by our contemporary attempts to reconstruct the past.²⁵ Kubler's notion of the prime object, though, was a Darwinian concept, parallel to the notion of the ancestor in evolutionary theory. This lent a discourse of origins and scientific truth to his study of cultural forms. The artists cited above take a radically different track, sidestepping the concept of truth (or falsehood) altogether. They develop deliberately eccentric morphologies. In some cases these identify clear but buried historic lineages (such as Medieval interlace as an ancestor of mathematical forms such as the infinity symbol or the knot), but in others the artists throw together unrelated forms (such as the Buddhist mandala, a 3-D paper model of the brain, and a telephone switchboard, which appear together in *The Situationist Times* 4) merely to see what propositions could be inspired by or invented from their congruence. In evolutionary terms, many of these deliberately invented morphologies would be "false" morphologies. They may be forms which have a visual morphological resemblance, but were developed for completely different reasons: the artists, in fact, force us to ask new questions. Why is the mandala structured as a grid—was it a structure designed for visual clarity or something already attributed symbolic meaning? Why does the telephone switchboard use this same structure, and how does that relate to the human brain? Are we hard-wired for religion? Do we worship technology? And on and on. In evolutionary biology, the process that results in false morphologies is called "convergent evolution", meaning that similar forms appear on unrelated branches of the evolutionary tree due to adaptation to similar environments in specific ecological niches. A common example is bird wings and insect wings, which arose completely independently of each other. To break from the evolutionary tendency of Kubler, and his proposition that there is some origin and thus truth to the morphological lineages, I am calling these artists' projects "eccentric morphologies". Jorn called them "transformative morphologies";²⁶ indicating his intention to

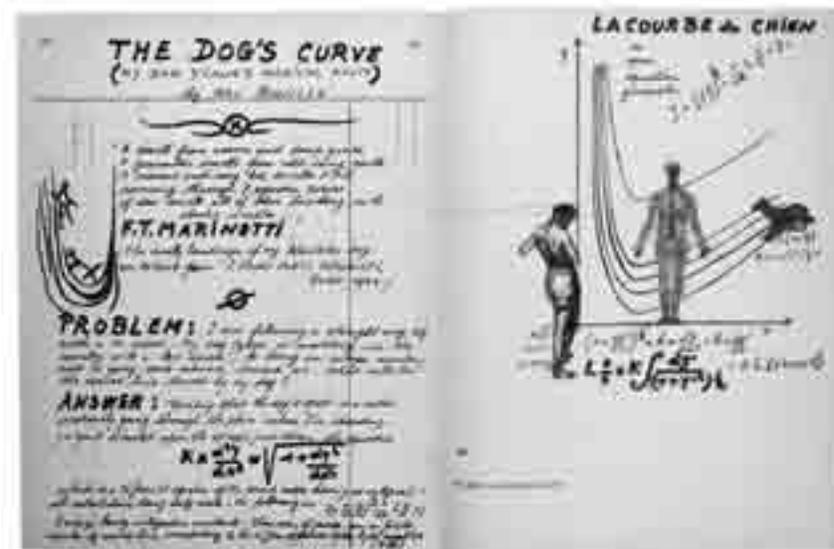
make deliberate use of visual resemblances whether historically "truthful" or not, deliberately linking false friends and red herrings of all kinds.

Kubler's text directly inspired artists like Jorn and Smithson directly in their own artistic practices.²⁷ His theoretical methodology arguably found its artistic fulfillment in not only Smithson's explicitly Kublerian magazine projects in the U.S., but in Jorn and de Jong's slightly earlier morphologies in *The Situationist Times* in Europe. Despite its serentistic tendencies, Kubler's theory parallels the theories of Jorn on several counts, including the basic comparison of artist and research scientist; the displacement of monuments, style, and traditional chronologies of artistic influence; and the identification of visual forms as signals rather than symbols. All are major themes of Jorn's writing from *Held og Hasard* in 1952 to *Pour la forme* in 1958 and *Naturens Orden* in 1962. Like Jorn, Kubler writes that the work of art was not a symbol but a signal, affecting the viewer directly rather than encoding information (20-21). Kubler further argues, as does Jorn, that our rigid categorizations of visual forms—art vs. craft, high art vs. folk art, etc.—transpose social hierarchies onto visual forms and in the end prevent us from understanding their potential meaning (14-16).²⁸ Kubler asserts that "the mathematical analogy of our study is topology" (34), because the boundaries of formal sequences or morphologies are continually moving and changing. Visual representations of topology developed in art in the Constructivist work of sculptors like Max Bill had a distinct effect on painting in the era of Informel, and came to prominence as conceptual forms in the 1960s, when de Jong's project investigated the interdisciplinary manifestations of topology and American artists like Paul Ryan and Dan Graham began to apply it as a descriptor of phenomenological experience and social interaction. While the topology of a Constructivist sculpture is antithetical to the meanings explored by Jorn and de Jong, Max Bill's forms were nevertheless a precursor to their experiments. The red herring itself could be interpreted as a topological concept, considering that it delineates a movement from one object to another, unlike object, which in the end reveals the connection between the two based on their sequential link. Topology, after all, revealed the Euclidean principles of measurement and proportion as little more than red herrings. I do not advocate developing

some kind of “topological” methodology, however, as do some recent scholars.²⁹ The discourse of topology is notoriously difficult to define even in mathematics; nor did the artists who explored its concepts use it in anything like a “rigorous” way—in fact they critiqued such structured modeling. Yet the concept of the red herring, by definition playful and meandering, seems relevant to the spirit of *The Situationist Times* itself: the practice of making connections not logically but superficially, mischievously, to continually inspire new thoughts and ideas. The red herring leads to the heart of the matter precisely by leading away from it, by going down another path, just as the *dérive* leads to new discoveries and, in so doing, critiques the path of the mainstream, the logical and the disciplined.

Topology, from Constructivism and Informel to The Situationist Times

Jacqueline de Jong maintains that *The Situationist Times* “derived around topics”, basing itself on topology as a loosely-defined, constantly re-interpreted theoretical framework.³⁰ The first issue, primarily devoted to the split in the International and the outrage of the artists at the exclusion of SPUR, also contains the first of many mathematical texts on topology by Max Bucaille, Surrealist collage artist and math teacher. Bucaille wrote his first topological foray, “The Problem of the Point” in issue 1 of *The Times*, in a cursive script that would mark all his contributions, linking the Surrealist interest in automatic drawing to the COBRA emphasis on the subjective gesture and de Jong’s own gestural meanderings in “Critique on the Political Practice of *Détournement*”. Yet cursive script could not be further from the way mathematical problems are usually laid out—except, significantly, in that old stereotype of inspiration, the equation scribbled on a napkin. Bucaille’s texts resemble in this way relics of a casual discussion among friends. His script has an entropic quality to it—a bit, to borrow a phrase from American artist Robert Rauschenberg, “like getting words caught in your eyes.”³¹ Here, equations get caught in our eyes too, their meanings distorted in the delivery by the “noise” of the personal gesture. Like de Jong’s text, however, it is not a grand gesture as in Informel painting but a small one, a record of a singular and fugitive



Max Bucaille, “The Dog’s Curve,” *The Situationist Times*, no. 3 (Jan. 1963), pp. 80-81.

presence rather than a talented individual.³² Bucaille’s equations present his personal calculations of problems related to topological situations in everyday life. His contribution “The Dog’s Curve” in issue 3 perhaps best exemplifies his unique approach. Here, he sketches a graph of the mathematical formula Hoppe’s curve, calculated according to a personal formula he devised to represent a dog running after its master in a park. The result is a regular, sharply curved form that, given even a minimal knowledge of ordinary canine behavior, is obviously fake and thus conveys the problem with a great deal of humour. Bucaille also quotes a poem by the Futurist Marinetti about “the smelly landscape of my Alsatian dog.”³³ He includes Surrealist-style collage elements: a photograph of a human figure draped in cloth, a human circulatory diagram, and a found illustration of a dog. Bucaille’s article cuts across the extreme disconnect of legibility between advanced mathematical equations, incomprehensible to the average adult, and visual forms like the spiral, the human form, and in this case the hyperbolic curve that are ancient, universal, and immediately

legible. He crosses art with math, as two visual discourses simultaneously autonomous and intimately bound to everyday life, adding a healthy dose of humour to both.

Bucaille contributed numerous articles on topology as if to shore up the metaphor of topology as it was so frequently applied in humanistic discourses in the postwar period. Dutch mathematician H.C. Doets and Polish mathematician/artist Lech Tomaszewski also published in issue 5 texts exploring the mathematics of chains and topological models, respectively. *The Situationist Times* stands out as the only art journal exploring “real” math, explicitly setting math next to other visual and theoretical discourses with no regard to the relatively remote possibility of the average reader’s ability to logically understand the equations. The use of mathematics in *The Times* is in striking contrast to the increasingly prevalent references to equations in the 1950s in art journals dominated by Informel. In articles such as Georges Mathieu’s “Towards a New Convergence of Art, Thought, and Science,” math functioned only as a metaphor, simply another abstract visual language in Mathieu’s conceptual universe.³⁴ Unspecified equations tumble over the text of Mathieu’s article, which lays out his theory of abstraction as a language of signs whose material reality “precedes” their function of signification. Combined with snippets of musical notes, Gothic script, modernist doodles, photos of space exploration, Jackson Pollock drips, and Romanesque architectural designs, the equations become abstract visual forms equivalent to the other decorations that punctuate the text. Mathematics is emptied of social meaning and connection to everyday life as it becomes subsumed into Mathieu’s all-encompassing discourse of abstraction as the province of artistic genius. Although the Situationist denunciation of Informel implies that any reference to Mathieu’s use of math is indeed a red herring, the polemical painter’s experiments with combining disparate visual and textual forms directly anticipate both Jorn’s and de Jong’s projects.³⁵ De Jong’s press release for issue 5, in fact, explains that topology is one of the “main lines” of *The Situationist Times* because “we consider the development of experimental art as our chief field of interest, and found thus a certain analogy between the non-Euclidean mathematics and informel art.”³⁶ Jorn himself linked his painting to the

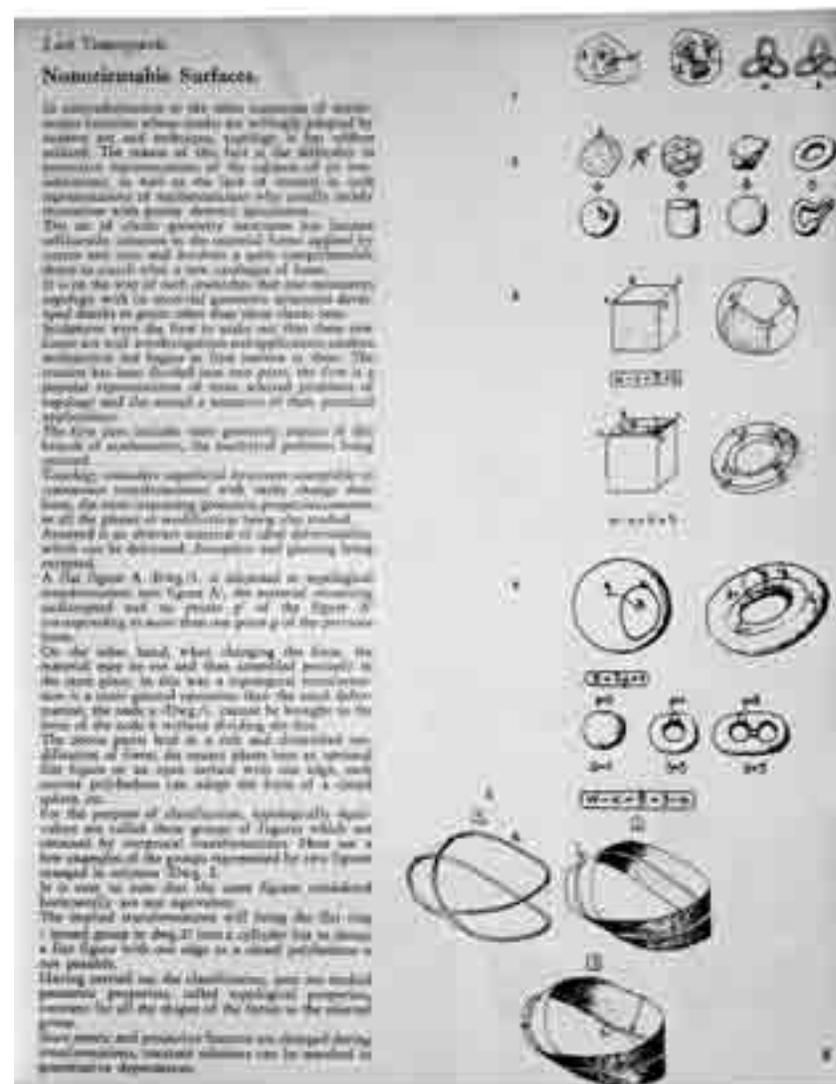
broader trend of Informel in the mid-1950s because it foregrounded process and the dissolution of pictorial composition; he later rejected the term for political reasons, when it became overtly individualized, mythologized, and academicized by Mathieu and other critics, from Charles Estienne to Jean-Paul Sartre.³⁷ The topological investigations of *The Times*, then, at once develop directly out of Informel and surpass it in both experimental breadth and depth in relation to mathematical developments.

It is not until the fourth issue of *The Times*, in Lech Tomaszewski’s article “Nonorientable Surfaces”, that topology as a mathematical discipline is described or modeled. A small editorial note tells us that the piece was included to make “the problem of Topology more Excessable”—a telling neologism. Tomaszewski’s text explains the concept of topological equivalents, forms that remain invariant in their mathematical proportions under various spatial transformations. Tomaszewski’s illustrations include both drawings and models of such equivalents, such as the torus and the coffee cup. His illustrations of the morphological transformations of topology include photographs of his own plaster models developed in a special experiment at the University of Warsaw. His diminutive plaster casts are rather dated attempts to model multidimensional surfaces in plaster, considering that the Möbius strip is the only topological figure that can be accurately modeled in three-dimensional space; they have been superseded today by innovative new models such as the fascinating crochet models of hyperbolic space developed by Cornell University mathematician Diana Taimina in 1997.³⁸ Both Tomaszewski’s and Taimina’s models draw on the artistic media prominent in their day: respectively, plaster, the time-honored medium of cast sculpture, and crochet, a craft medium increasingly prominent in contemporary art. Tomaszewski’s knotlike curved and cubic plaster forms, exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum in the late 1950s and reproduced in *The Times*, today look like templates for the later knot sculptures of H.C. Westermann, Bruce Nauman, and Lynda Benglis, or the serial works of Sol LeWitt.³⁹

In the 1950s and ‘60s topology was increasingly prominent not only in math but also in popular culture. Dutch artist M.C. Escher made two engravings in the early 1960s of a Möbius strip, in response to a request

from a British mathematician. Escher's print from 1961 is perhaps his most well-known. It depicts ants walking over the Möbius surface, demonstrating that a continuous line drawn along the center of the strip will eventually trace every part of its surface and connect with itself.⁴⁰ Designers Charles and Ray Eames also built a large-scale model of a Möbius strip in 1960, commissioned for the exhibition "Mathematica: A World of Numbers..." at the California Museum of Science and Industry in L.A. The giant Möbius strip, on public view until 1998, included a moving red arrow operated by a button pressed by the viewer, similarly showing movement around the single surface of the figure.⁴¹ The particular scale and dimensions of this display suggest that the Eames may have been directly inspired by sculptures of the Möbius strip by earlier geometric-abstract artists, in particular Swiss sculptor Max Bill. Ironically given Jorn's polemics against Max Bill as director of the New Bauhaus,⁴² it was Bill who made the most well-known representation of the Möbius strip in art between the wars.

Bill's harmonious and classically-proportioned, almost pyramidally-composed granite sculpture *Endless Loop*, from 1934, received widespread praise in the European artworld. Bill developed his single-sided form as a solution for a hanging sculpture turning in the rising air over an electrical fireplace. It was to be installed in a model building containing an exhibition of electrical appliances.⁴³ In the end, Bill produced a large-scale, harmonious outdoor sculpture in smooth granite on a pedestal. He learned only later that his form, designed intuitively to solve a specific problem of mobility as a hanging sculpture, depicted the Möbius strip. Bill also made a series of smaller-scale ribbon sculptures in the late 1940s revisiting the Möbius form in brass. When he reworked *Endless Loop* in granite in 1953, André Malraux bought it for the French state (it is now in the Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne). Later Bill too was asked to contribute his sculptures to a topology exhibit in London. In his 1949 essay "La pensée mathématique dans l'art de notre temps", Bill surveys the interest in math among the Cubists, Kandinsky, Klee, and Mondrian, and the Constructivists, asserting that in his day artists needed to search beyond the limitations of Euclidean geometry for new ways of symbolizing the "infinite". Yet for Bill math's contribution to art always meant "harmony and equilibrium".⁴⁴ For



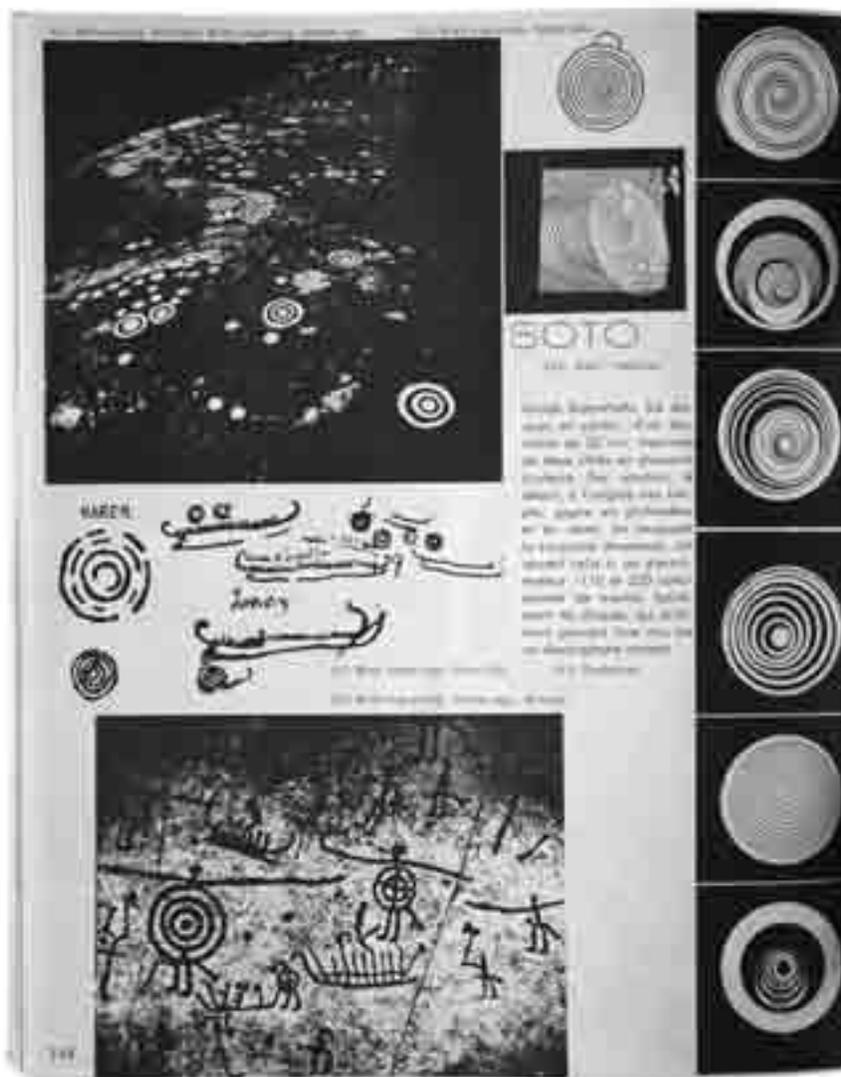
Lech Tomaszewski, "Non-Orientable Surfaces," *The Situationist Times*, no. 4 (Oct. 1963), p. 3.

the Swiss artist, the smoothly-curved stone surfaces of his *Endless Loop* have a “symbolic” value as “models for reflection and contemplation”.⁴⁵ In the end, despite their aesthetic divergence, the idealist aspect of Bill’s use of topology echoes that of Mathieu. Both uphold traditional notions of the work of art as transcending everyday reality, expressing universal principles, and embodying the perfect abstract language of the universe expressed, according to these artists, in mathematics. This is very distant from the open-ended, experimental, populist, adamantly amateur and provisional investigations of topology in *The Times*.

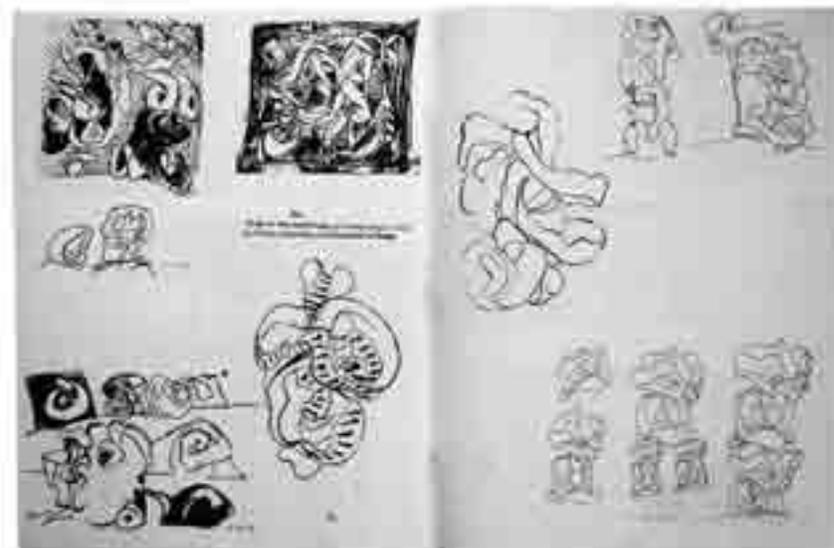
Less spectacular and monumental were the ephemeral transformations of the Möbius strip by Brazilian artist Lygia Clark, developed in Paris at the exact same time as *The Situationist Times*. Clark’s trajectory is directly apropos of the Situationist move toward ephemeral activity over the creation of finished artworks as a form of resistance against capitalist recuperation. Her approach to geometry came directly out of the methodology of Max Bill, like that of other Brazilian artists of the Concrete Art movement in the 1950s. Bill’s work was shown at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo in 1950, and he was awarded a prize at the first São Paulo Biennial in 1951. Along with Joseph Albers and Georges Vantongerloo, Bill was a major presence in Concrete Art movement in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, in which Brazilian artists moved away from figuration to explore abstraction in relation to theories of cybernetics, Gestalt psychology, and visual perception.⁴⁶ By the end of the decade, however, young Brazilian artists sought a more holistic and experiential approach to abstraction. Along with Ferreira Gullar, Amílcar de Castro, Franz Weissmann, Reynaldo Jardim, Lygia Pape, and Theon Spanudis, Clark signed the “Neo-Concrete Manifesto” in 1959. The manifesto rejected the rationalist tendencies of Concrete constructivist abstraction in favor of expressive actions and organic invention. “Neo-Concrete art”, the manifesto reads, “affirms the independence of artistic creation in relation to objective knowledge (science) and practical knowledge (ethics, politics, industry, etc.)”.⁴⁷ It rejects the “mechanistic notion of construction” that has seemingly taken over abstract art, and “reconvoques the problem of expression” in relation to non-figurative forms (91-92). The artists proposed that the

artwork be considered an “almost-body”, surpassing the mechanics of its material creation, and containing its own properties of temporality and space which foster an intuitive integration of subjective and objective conditions of reality. The Neo-Concrete reaction against Bill, in fact, parallels in certain ways the premises of Jorn’s *Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste* in the 1950s. Jorn also claimed that artists must turn industrial means to non-utilitarian ends, according to Lettrist (later Situationist) principles of psychogeography, and that artists should embrace experimental activity.⁴⁸

Clark’s rapid transformation from working with Concrete, Albers-inspired geometric relief painting to manipulable objects that facilitated bodily interaction with the environment resulted in her own radically different version of the Möbius strip, the “Caminhandos (Walkings)” series of ca. 1964.⁴⁹ These were paper models of a Möbius strip produced by cutting and re-gluing the paper strip found around new books. The participant would then poke a hole in the center of the strip with a pair of scissors and begin cutting it into two parallel strips, cutting until there is no paper left to cut, and all that is left is a heap of spaghetti-like scraps. The object, made of ordinary ephemera, became a catalyst for a particular type of unassuming and unskilled bodily experience. Yve-Alain Bois comments that these “Walkings” or “Trailings”, in his translation, were no ordinary art objects but so ephemeral that they were “almost nothing”.⁵⁰ In Clark’s work from this point onward, the spectator was utterly transformed into actor; Clark notoriously refused to present her projects as performances, and only enacted them with spectators willing to participate fully.⁵¹ It is unclear whether Clark read *The Situationist Times* or took direct inspiration from the Situationists, but her trajectory of “surpassing art” provides a fascinating parallel to SI practices, at a time when she was working in the city where the Situationists were based. Still living in Paris, she left the artworld completely after 1968 and devoted her life to forms of group therapy incorporating objects. Her participatory idea of art is echoed by Jorn’s assertion in “Art and Orders”, in *The Situationist Times* 5, that Happenings and Performance art make people into passive spectators. For Jorn, Happenings replaced “free art” with “ritual”. Their tendency toward



Helleristninger, Jésus Raphael Soto, and Marcel Duchamp reproductions in *The Situationist Times*, no. 5 (Dec. 1964), p. 144.



Pierre Alechinsky and Reinhold d'Haese, "A Study in the Morphology of Orange Peels," *The Situationist Times*, no. 3 (Jan. 1963), pp. 76-77.

spectacle negated his view expressed in "Intimate Banalities" (1941) that "the spectator does not and cannot exist in our days".⁵² Clark's use of the Möbius strip as a small ephemeral object manipulated by the participant has another parallel in the contribution to *The Situationist Times* by Pierre Alechinsky and Reinhold in their article "Study in the Morphology of Orange Peels", 1962. In Alechinsky and Reinhold's drawings, the common orange peel—as organic and ephemeral an object imaginable—becomes a topological form. These mini-tableaux related to a turning point in Alechinsky's own painting, which from the 1950s onwards made extensive use of ribbon forms.

The Situationist Times did not just reproduce the gestural drawings of de Jong, Jorn, and their colleagues like Alechinsky or Theo Wolvecamp; stylistically heterogeneous, it also included geometric-abstract artworks among its topological investigations. Lygia Clark was friends with another geometric-abstract artist whose work turned up in its pages, Venezuelan



Pol Bury, "Cinétisation", reproduced in *The Situationist Times*, no. 5 (Dec. 1964), p. 146.

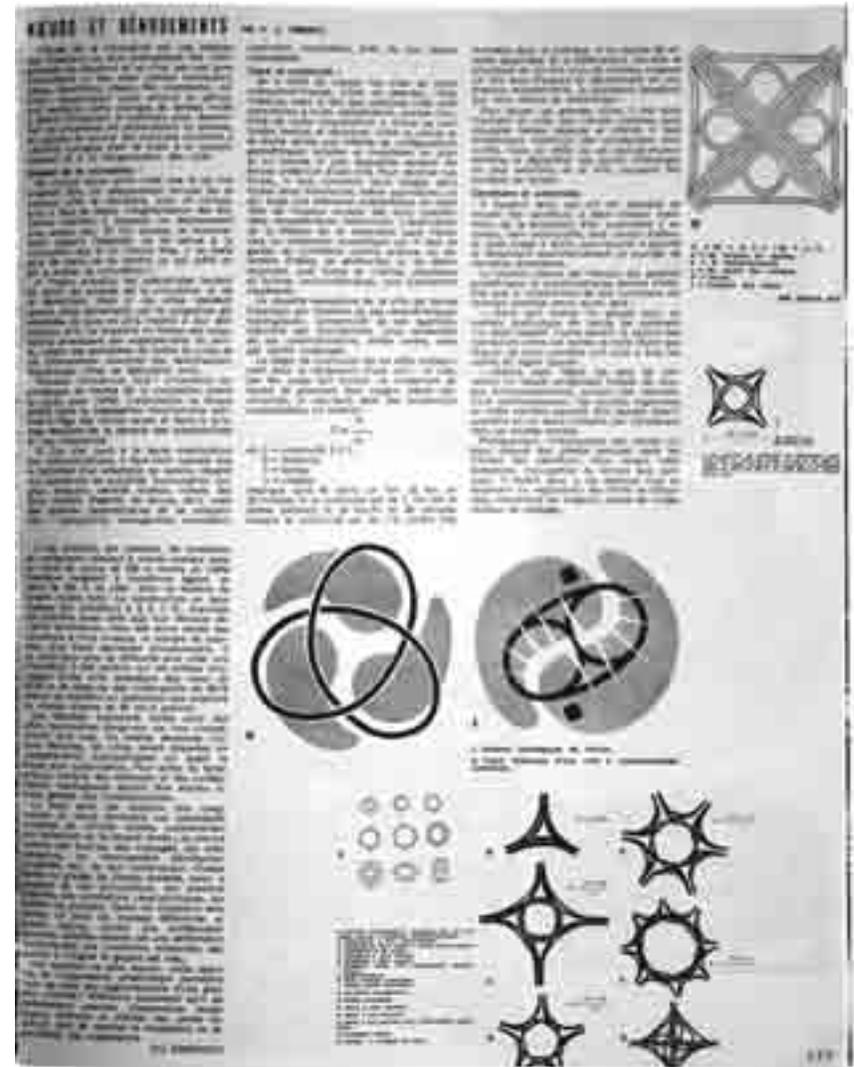
sculptor Jésus Rafael Soto, whose 1958 sculpture *Spiral* appeared in issue 5, devoted to "circles". Alongside Soto's *Spiral* are six of Duchamp's "Rotoreliefs" and a brief description of their functioning produced by de Jong's friend Daniel Spoerri, who exhibited the Rotoreliefs as one of his MAT (Multiplications d'Oeuvres d'Art) editions in 1959. Spoerri was friends with both Soto and de Jong, whom he knew from their school days together in Switzerland. *The Situationist Times* highlighted these social connections among such artists from radically different factions—the Nouveau Réaliste, the kinetic-abstract, and the Situationist, among others. On the same page as Soto and Duchamp, a group of ancient *Helleristninger*, Scandinavian painted rock carvings in the form of spirals, wheels, human and other figures, connect these contemporary artistic investigations to ancient folk forms. The complex heteroglossia and unruly typography of *The Times* utterly reject Max Bill's interest in reflection, universality, and contemplation by reproducing these ancient and modern forms in a radically new context, making the journal fulfill a function for the reader that might be termed psychogeographic.

In 1955, Debord defined psychogeography as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals".⁵³ *The Times* juxtaposes images of ancient and modern geography, from the *Helleristninger* to, a few pages later, Belgian kinetic artist Pol Bury's geometric alteration of a reproduction of the Statue of Liberty bound in the streets of Paris before being disassembled and shipped to the US in 1885. The Statue of Liberty collage from 1963 was one of Bury's first *Cinetisations*, circular concentric cuts that subtly and rhythmically altered static images, in order to demonstrate the slow-motion effects of gravity and environmental change on seemingly permanent forms. Bury began his *Cinetisations* with images of the Mona Lisa, the Eiffel Tower, and New York skyscrapers. According to Bury, "The intervention in the image might seem to be a menacing gesture to destroy, but we must see in it the wish to give an air of liberty to that which thinks itself immutable".⁵⁴ His liberation of the Statue of Liberty indicates that the bronze allegory of the 19th-century state, the ultimate enlightened government embodied as a female

symbol of freedom, signifies in its monumentally static form the opposite of its title. Rather than liberty, it symbolized the power and ossification of the state and its social structures. The operation of the artist in reconfiguring the image—in a move reminiscent of *détournement*—demonstrates an activist engagement with it. Using an image of the statue still in Paris, it recalls the particular political relationship between the two privileged nations, the old superpower and the new one, and specifically their two most famous cities, Paris and New York, in a kind of psychogeographic investigation. The psychogeography of *The Situationist Times*, of course, remains on the level of the conceptual—but it nevertheless demands an active reconsideration by the reader of various geographies as they are defined (or, in fact, reconfigured) by topological morphologies such as the ring permutations explored in issue 5. These geographies ranged from the contemporary urban environment as it was being shaped by postwar reconstruction to the ancient landscape of the Helleristninger that continues to shape contemporary experience. The spirals of the Helleristninger, *Cinetisations*, and Rotoreliefs constitute what Kubler would call a “form-class”, a visual morphology that takes specific form in specific cultures over time. In the same issue of *The Times*, Danish poet Virtus Schade’s investigation of the history of hopscotch reveals how children playing games on 1960s urban streets are unconsciously redrawing the boundaries of the ancient basilica church, while French architect D.G. Emmerich’s article on “Noeuds (Knots)” argues for the necessity of classifying cities according to their topological shapes, as in the interlaced forms of modern cloverleaf freeway interchanges, to better determine open routes for greater circulation. The journal thus made explicit the hidden connections between historical and modern psychogeographies.

Visual Morphologies

Asger Jorn played a large role in the transformation of topology into visual morphology in *The Situationist Times*. Jorn began investigating the mathematics of topology in the mid-1950s. He published his typically inventive reconsiderations of topological themes in the pages of *Internationale situationniste* and his 1958 book *Pour la forme*—literally “For Form”, an



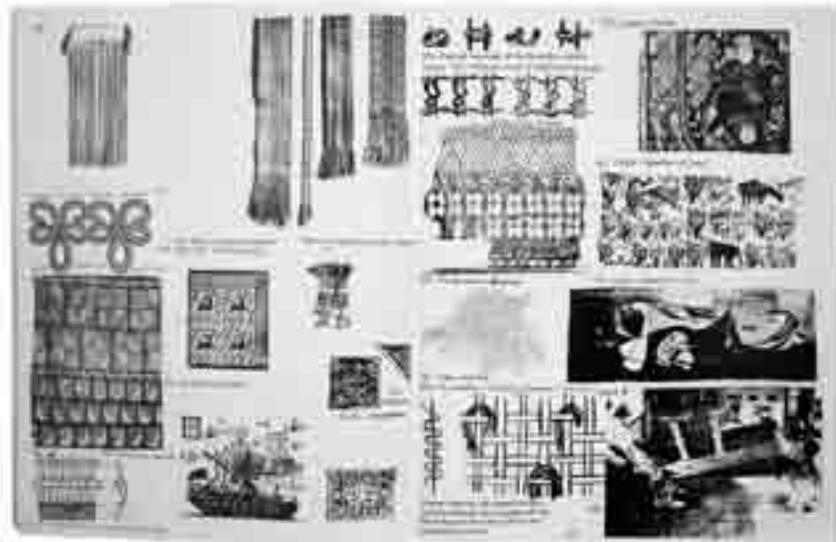
David Georges Emmerich, “Noeuds et dénouements,” *The Situationist Times*, no. 5 (Dec. 1964), p. 119.

obvious rebuttal to the increasingly doctrinaire discourse of Informel. In the 1960 *Internationale situationniste* article “Open Creation and Its Enemies”, Jorn suggests returning topology to its origins as *Analysis Situs*, mathematician Henri Poincaré’s original term for topology, and one which nicely links topology to the Situationist movement. In his account of homeomorphs and the Möbius strip, Jorn makes short work of Euclidean geometry, which had become inadequate precisely because it was only useful in defining the limitations of a world removed from the temporal and the social. Jorn ultimately rejects Euclidean mathematics as an ideal system which does not take into account the point of view of the observer. Topology allowed the introduction of disorder and the temporal into geometric thought—but in the end as a mathematical discourse even topology was too static for Jorn. He proposes “inventing a sitology, a sitography and perhaps even a sitometry beyond existing topographical knowledge”.⁵⁵ Jorn’s theorizations themselves operated according to the principle of the red herring, continually moving from one concept to another along a line of verbal puns. Recalling Kubler’s notion of form as the “shape of time”, Jorn writes that “sitology is a morphology of time”.⁵⁶ He thus highlights the importance of the temporal dimension in non-Euclidean geometry, as revealed by the topological possibility of transformation of a form. He further clarifies that “sitology is the transformative morphology of the unique”. In this way, Jorn theorizes his studies of the transformation of symbols over time—symbols like the spiral, the twins, the wheel, the labyrinth, or the ring—as a topological investigation. From his early book projects to the collections of images in *The Times*, these juxtapositions of related symbols from widely disparate eras and locations became explorations of topological tropes, in the form of comparative morphologies.

Jorn’s earlier book project, *Guldhorn og Lykkehjul/Les Cornes d’or et la roue de la fortune* (Golden Horn and Wheel of Fortune), developed in the late 1940s and published in 1957, laid the groundwork for the visual morphologies of *The Times* in its investigation of the transformation through the ages of mythic visual symbols. Jorn’s text clarifies that the invention of these symbols and their various meanings are inherently social, related to the passage of time in the yearly agricultural cycle and its

effects on the community. The book, which gives less space to the text itself than it does to collected images of mythic symbols such as the twins, the solar chariot, or the wheel of fortune, was Jorn’s demonstration of his mythographic interpretation that people develop mythic symbols collectively as creative expressions of their everyday lives. Yet it also demonstrated in its very format a new artistic method consisting of the collection of images, rather than making them from scratch. Jorn called this the “possibilit[y] of interpretation as an artistic method in itself, an artistic methodology of cultic use”.⁵⁷ The Golden Horns themselves, famous ancient Scandinavian objects covered with inscrutable pictographs, lack any known meaning. They were thus emblems of Jorn’s theory that images do not have inherent meanings, but rather are attributed meaning by the observer’s active interpretation. In his 1957 afterword to the *Golden Horns* book, Jorn argues that reality is a combination of the return to old ideals, symbolized by the circle, on the one hand, and the linear conception of progress that has dominated the last few centuries, symbolized by a continuous line or vector, on the other. The spiral, then, becomes a symbol of compromise between the two viewpoints. The spiral was not only an ancient and universal symbol, but one that Jorn interpreted as itself symbolizing the cyclical nature of time and the constant transformation of the past in the present. Jorn’s eccentric archive of visual mythic forms demonstrates the metamorphosis of these symbols over time and the way their meanings change while also retaining elements of earlier evocations.

Jorn explicitly connected his “sitological” interpretation of topology to weaving, interlace, and labyrinth designs in “Open Creation and Its Enemies”. He writes, as already mentioned, that “the knowledge of secret topologies has always been indicated by the presence of signs of knots, strings, knotwork, mazes, etc. And in a curious way since antiquity the weavers have transmitted a revolutionary teaching in forms which are more or less bizarre, mystifying and subverted”.⁵⁸ What did weaving really mean to Jorn? A truly collaborative artform, a universal and popular artform, one that embraced the idea of architectural decoration and thus a transformation of the environment. His development of a modernist, improvisatory approach to tapestry with French artist Pierre Wemaëre



Weavings including a tapestry by Asger Jorn and Pierre Wemaëre, reproduced in *The Situationist Times*, no. 3 (Jan. 1963), pp. 26-27.

from ca. 1940 onwards resulted in a series of abstract works culminating in *Le long voyage*, the 50-foot tapestry for the Statsgymnasium, Aarhus, in 1959.⁵⁹ Their collaborative approach developed tapestries woven according to a very rough, abstract *carton* painted by Jorn and Wemaëre. This loose sketch left the weavers much more room to improvise than had been done previously, even in the modernist tapestries of designers like Jean Lurçat. Jorn believed that their approach updated a traditional medium by allowing room for not only collective improvisation but personal expression and a humanization, through vivid color and experimental design, of modernist architecture.⁶⁰ The title of Jorn's article "Open Creation and Its Enemies" itself refers to Gaston Bachelard's text on the tapestry *Le long voyage*, where Bachelard idealizes it as a "major example of open creation".⁶¹ Jorn's collaboration with Wemaëre and various weavers was still a kind of workshop, clearly neither totally democratic nor a total collaboration, but it nevertheless allowed weavers more creative input and spontaneity than any comparable modernist attempts.

The Situationist Times issue 3 on "interlace" included pictures of not only some of Jorn and Wemaëre's tapestries, but also samples from cultures around the world. In *Pour la forme*, Jorn emphasizes the importance of taking images as a point of departure for new investigations, quoting Bachelard: "We always conceive imagination to be the ability to form images. But it is rather the ability to deform images furnished by perception; it is above all the ability to liberate us from images in the first place, to change images".⁶² According to his interpretation, then, the visual morphologies of interlace and weaving are not shown in order to simply celebrate the diversity of artistic creation throughout the world—something André Malraux might do in his overtly humanist *Musée imaginaire*⁶³—but rather to provide inspiration for new understandings, new connections, new imaginings. Jorn asserts in "Open Creation" a direct connection between sitology and morphology:

Sitology will be as much a study of the unique identical form, as morphology. But it could rightly be said that sitology is a morphology of time, since everyone is agreed that topology is defined as the study of continuity which is the non-division in extension (space) and the non-interruption in duration. The morphological side of sitology is included in this definition: that which concerns the intrinsic properties of figures without any relation to their environment.⁶⁴

Jorn further claims that the domain of situ-analysis is "the polyvalence of the unique".⁶⁵ My interpretation of these statements is that all the topics explored and represented in the unorthodox visual archive of the *Guldhorn* book or the *Situationist Times* are not a mere identification of structure: they are the raw materials of creativity, morphologies of inspiration. Each image is unique, and has its own properties of structure, intensity, meaning, tone, medium, symmetry, and so on; yet each is polyvalent in its potential for infinite interpretation, or infinite *détournement*. Despite Jorn's claim that they are "without any relation to their environment", the numbered keys that index each image in both *Guldhorn* and *The Times*



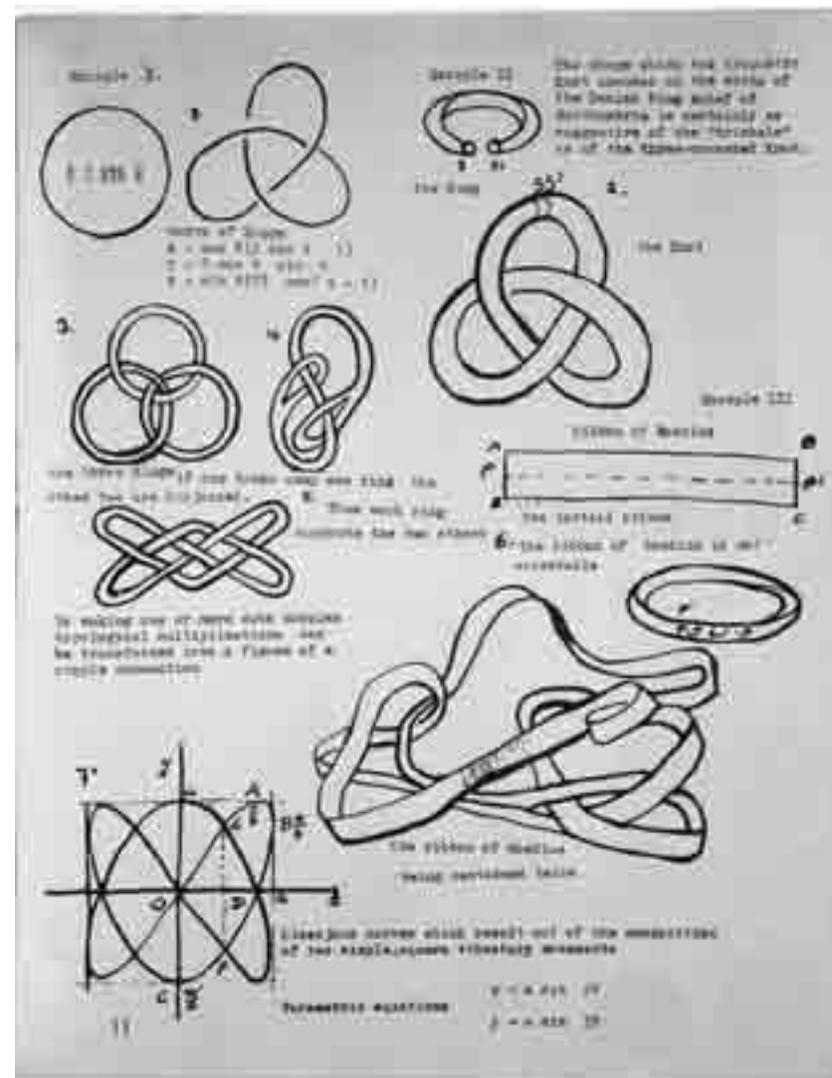
Gyorgy Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1956), p. 338.

unobtrusively maintain a link to an originating context. This originating context did not define the images—the very purpose of the morphologies was to liberate them for perpetual redefinition—but it asserted a prior use of the image, another context out of which it had been displaced. The index thus implicitly foregrounded the very significance of context itself as the source of meaning for an image.

What Jorn, and *The Times* reacted against was the increasing tendency to compare, on a strictly visual or morphological level, the visual structures of abstract painting and science in exhibitions and art magazines throughout the 1950s. In *Pour la forme*, Jorn critiques Michel Tapié's Informel exhibition "Structures to Come" precisely for proposing shallow "structural communications" between art and science.⁶⁶ The articles and books edited by Gyorgy Kepes also exemplify this tendency. Kepes, New Bauhaus professor in Chicago and Cambridge, Massachusetts, wrote extensively about the structural parallels between abstract painting and the new scientific perspectives provided by technological advances such as the scanning electron microscope.⁶⁷ His 1956 book, *The New Landscape in Art and Science*, included contributions from Jean Arp, Siegfried Giedeon, Naum Gabo, Norbert Wiener, and others. It expanded on earlier Bauhaus projects on the relationship of art and science, such as the writings of Wassily Kandinsky and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Kepes incorporated images from as wide a range of sources as Jorn, but unlike Jorn's dense and often disordered accumulations, his projects recall the Bauhaus interest in clarity and purity in their dramatic isolation of elements in gridlike arrangements on a white ground. Kepes also overtly privileges art, in the form of painting and sculpture, over other images. On a page juxtaposing an abstract painting with an aerial image of a cloverleaf intersection, the abstract painting is shown larger in scale than the cloverleaf. Whereas *The Times* explores the labyrinth in issue 4 from a bewildering array of perspectives in order to maintain its central meaning as a symbol of losing one's way in a maze of conflicting interpretations, Kepes uses the labyrinth in his text as a metaphor for a confusing new world of overwhelming information, which we need to be able to find our way *out* of. According to Kepes's text, "menacing beasts" like invisible viruses, atoms, protons, cosmic rays, and supersonic

rays assail us and demand new defenses—whereas Jorn and his colleagues, such as Pinot Gallizio, de Jong, Alechinsky, Wolvecamp, Vandercam, and Enrico Baj, would celebrate such monstrous images in their artwork. Kepes writes, “We need to map the world’s new configurations with our senses...for a richer, more orderly and secure human life”.⁶⁸ As in Informel discourse, where mathematics was frequently invoked as a link to the “real” world outside the picture,⁶⁹ Kepes maintains an abiding interest in a liberal-humanist connection between science and truth, technology and social progress.

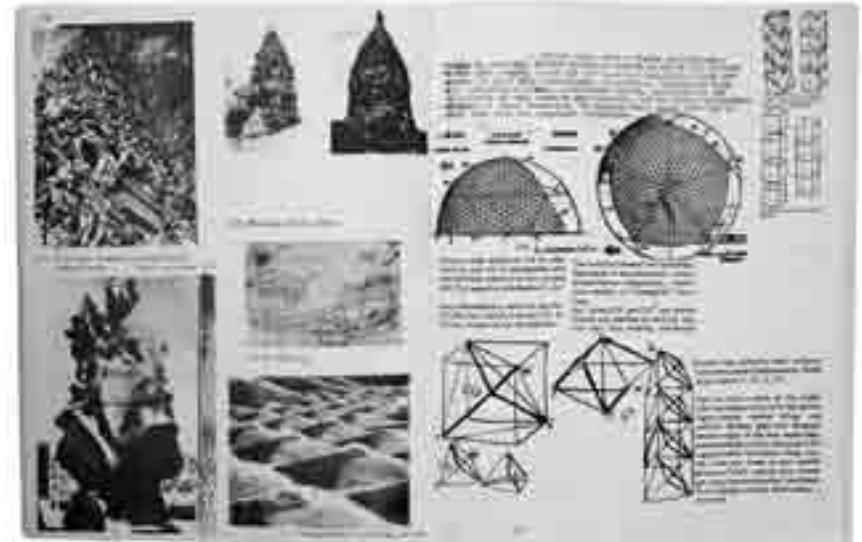
In his juxtapositions of artistic and scientific imagery, Kepes proclaims a progressive and pragmatic universalism, seeking underlying structures in both art and nature. In *The Situationist Times*, there is no such thing as universality: forms may relate dialogically to each other, but they retain their uniqueness and thus resist abstraction as universal symbols. It is the very annexing of diverse forms to specific topics such as “interlace” or “rings” in *The Times* that points to each numbered illustration’s singularity as a culturally- and materially-specific interpretation of its “category” (or Kublerian “form-class”). Kepes’s publications take equal pleasure in the juxtaposition of images from art and science: some of the same images are in fact used in both *The New Landscape* and *The Situationist Times*.⁷⁰ Yet Kepes’s texts tend to domesticate the strangeness of the images and re-assert order and stability. His explanation of scientific techniques like the X-ray or the stroboscope light remind us that “instruments bring fresh knowledge of the world and further control over nature”.⁷¹ In *The Times*, the heterogeneity of the imagery defies precisely this sort of control and knowledge. The morphologies in *The Times* reject both the link to an objective, scientific reality implied by the use of mathematics in Informel, and the universal and rational understanding of structure in the writings of Kepes. Instead, they attempt to recontextualize symbols in a patently artificial and provisional way, while maintaining their links to the original contexts of the images by means of the illustration keys. In Jorn’s interpretation—which again echoes that of Kubler—the images in these morphologies are not symbols but signals, presenting the reader not with a finished and formalized example of a form-type but rather a kind of incitement or inspiration.⁷²



Knots in *The Situationist Times*, no. 3 (Jan. 1963), p. 11.

The *Situationist Times* morphologies included forms that were singular—at once singular forms and “multiples” reproduced in each copy of the journal. Each form had embedded social meanings. An example is the Borromean knot, which according to mathematical topology is in fact not a knot, nor a chain, but a “lock” consisting originally of three interlocked rings. A page in the 3rd issue of *The Times* depicts a series of images of the Borromean knot, so-named because it was the family crest of the Borromeo dynasty in Milan. In the pages of *The Times* it manifests as Hoppe’s Curve, a mathematical symbol; a symbol of the Christian trinity carved on a Spanish Romanesque church; a Viking symbol of Odin known as the Walknot or “knot of the slain” carved above dead warriors; and various incarnations from Romanesque, Celtic, and Scandinavian art. Each image, as always, points to its own singular origin and function while simultaneously existing as part of a synthetic and provisional morphology. In the 1970s this particular knot was adapted by Jacques Lacan as a symbolization of his psychoanalytic trinity of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real (among other permutations)—but arising as it did from Lacan’s own longstanding interest in mathematics this connection may be another red herring.⁷³

The discourse of topology encompassed not only art and math in the postwar period, but also architecture, which found its way into *The Times* morphologies in the form of, among others, Constant’s New Babylon projects, the domes of Buckminster Fuller, D.W. Emmerich’s tensegrity structures, and the projects of Aldo Van Eyck, Dutch architect and COBRA exhibition designer. Van Eyck described his principle of “Labyrinthine Clarity” in *The Situationist Times* 4th issue on the labyrinth. Here, Van Eyck announced a socially-centered architecture, asserting that, “Whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more.”⁷⁴ His manifesto-like declaration could describe either his architecture or the journal as a whole, as when he writes: “I am concerned with twin phenomena, with unity and diversity, part and whole, small and large, many and few, simplicity and complexity, change and constancy, movement and rest, open and closed, inside and outside”. Van Eyck’s Amsterdam Children’s Home embodied these principles with its spaces that link and interact, producing surprising encounters of textures, colors, and spaces devoted to various functions.



Projects by Antoni Gaudí, Buckminster Fuller, Aldo Van Eyck, and others, reproduced in *The Situationist Times*, no. 3 (Jan. 1963), pp. 56-57.

An image of its roof appears in issue 3 on a page next to projects by Antoni Gaudí and Buckminster Fuller. The project exemplifies Van Eyck’s architecture of analogy, both between forms in different media and scale, and between architecture and social interaction. It also demonstrates his use of geometric patterns loose enough to allow for an individual experience of the space.

In an article that likely directly inspired Van Eyck, British Independent Group critic Reyner Banham also foregrounded topology as the description of the new approach to architecture in his landmark essay “The New Brutalism” in 1955. In the article, Banham describes Peter and Allison Smithson’s Sheffield University design as “aformal”, based not on classical geometry but on topology. The Smithsons’ approach, of course, developed in dialogue with that of their Team X colleague Van Eyck. In Banham’s article, topology means “penetration, circulation, inside and out”. He argues that in the Sheffield project “the ‘connectivity’ of the circulation routes is

flourished on the exterior and no attempt is made to give a geometrical form to the total scheme; large blocks of topologically similar spaces stand about the site with the same graceless memorability as martello towers or pit-head gear".⁷⁵ Banham basically uses topology the way Van Eyck uses the labyrinth, and to similar ends. Both find new metaphors to describe a new type of architecture defined by "Brutalist" notions of the organic and the social; of clarity without the Platonic perfection of ideal pattern; of multiple forms symbolizing multiple functions within a larger and more complex structure; and of architectural function designed to serve the ordinary user rather than create a visionary structure. This was the text for which British critic John Summerson referred to topology as "an attractive red herring".⁷⁶ His reference to topology aptly describes its mysterious fascination for artists, designers, architects, and social theorists in the postwar period and continuing into the present.

The labyrinthine forms expressed in the architecture of the Smithsons or Van Eyck also find their counterpart in the hypothetical architectural projects of Constant's New Babylon, the models for which appear intermittently in *The Times*, and Gordon Fazakerley's "Labyrinth Project" in issue 4, inspired directly by Constant. The Situationist International, of course, had a long history of exploring the labyrinth, also a favorite metaphor of the Surrealists. The idea of the labyrinth was closely linked to the conception of the *dérive*. Ivan Tcheglov's 1953 "Formulary for a New Urbanism" proposes an extension of the Surrealist imaginary city, based on a labyrinthine conception of bewildering spaces arranged according to sensuous desires. "The districts of this city could correspond to the whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters by chance in everyday life", he writes. "Bizarre Quarter—Happy Quarter (specially reserved for habitation)—Noble and Tragic Quarter (for good children)—Historical Quarter (museums, schools)—Useful Quarter (hospital, toolshops)—Sinister Quarter, etc."⁷⁷ He develops the idea of a "continuous *dérive*" producing "complete disorientation", for subjects deliberately lost. The Situationists famously proposed a labyrinth exhibition accompanied by a *dérive* throughout the city at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, under the direction of Willem Sandberg, in the late 1950s. The project fell through, and blame was accorded with

typical rancour to the bourgeois artistic establishment personified by Sandberg.⁷⁸ Two years later, Sandberg put on *DYLABY*, a so-called dynamic labyrinth at the Stedelijk, with environments and installations by Robert Rauschenberg, Per Oluf Ultvedt, Niki de St Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Daniel Spoerri, and Martial Raysse. This Nouveau Réaliste exhibition clearly fell under the category of "spectacular", with its transformation of a room into a (likely Situationist-inspired) dark labyrinth where spectators were exposed to warm and humid surfaces, varied textures and sounds, and other sensory experiences, and Spoerri's room-sized "snare picture", consisting of paintings hung on the floor and sculptures standing on the wall.⁷⁹ Perhaps Spoerri's friendship with de Jong led to the single reference to the exhibition, the word "Dylaby", which appears on a page of the 4th issue of *The Situationist Times*.

Besides mathematics, art, design, literature, and architecture, topology also figured in the discourse of psychology which was picked up in *The Times*. The cover of the 3rd issue on "interlace" announces a reinterpretation of the SI's idea of the "construction of situations". The small cover illustration of intersecting loops comes from Kurt Lewin's 1936 book *Principles of Topological Psychology*, with the caption, "Overlapping Situations. The person P is in two different situations S1 and S2 at the same time."⁸⁰ Lewin's concept of the situation considers the social and psychological environment of a subject. The method of topological psychology founded by Lewin was an alternative to Freudian theory, which emphasized the origins of psychological problems in personal history. Lewin's approach was an explicitly experimental method, based on the creation of complex experimental situations in order to quantify the effects of various stimuli on the individual subject. In other words, it involved the construction of situations for the purposes of psychological study. Lewin's philosophy rejected as unrigorous the Freudian assumption that historical causes create emotional effects in the present, and focused instead solely on the present emotional effects in relation to the dynamic system in which the subject is situated.⁸¹ Yet it was less the intricacies of Lewin's theories that interested the editors of *The Times* than the fact that he relied so extensively on evocative diagrams to illustrate the various situations his subjects found



Cover of *The Situationist Times*, no. 3 (Jan. 1963).

themselves in; these punctuate the pages of the journal. The use of Lewin's diagram on the cover of issue 3 announces an alternative definition of the situation which, according to the dialogical spirit of *The Times*, does not negate the Situationist definitions but complicates and broadens them.

The Situationist International had published definitions of its terminology early on, perhaps since the group had itself appropriated the terminology of the "situation" from earlier philosophers. They never explicitly credited their sources, but the constructed situation was clearly an activist reinterpretation of the descriptive term popularized in the multiple volumes by Jean-Paul Sartre entitled *Situations*, and potentially also indebted to Søren Kierkegaard, Simone de Beauvoir, and other Existentialists.⁸² The SI declared that its own terms were regularly misunderstood.⁸³ Issue 1 of *Internationale situationniste* therefore included several definitions including "constructed situation", "Situationist", and "Situationism"—the latter of which was famously declared "a meaningless term improperly derived from the above".⁸⁴ De Jong's *The Situationist Times* text "Critique on the Political Practice of *Détournement*" subsequently noted that the Situationist Central Council had decided before the SPUR exclusions to produce another internal dictionary of terms due to the misunderstandings that existed within the movement, a move rejected by de Jong in her belief that "Misunderstandings and contradictions are... the basis of all art and creation".⁸⁵ In this spirit, the 3rd issue of *The Times* included definitions of the situation by Kurt Lewin, set into a two-page spread illustrating Inca knot writing on one side and a Spanish Romanesque capital carved with designs based on basket weaving on the other. Lewin defines the "situation" as "Life space or part of it conceived in terms of its content (meaning). The life space may consist of one situation or of two or more overlapping situations. The term situation refers either to the general life space or the momentary situation". Other definitions are given for "situation, overlapping", "space of free movement", and "structure of a region", forcing open, in a way, the rigidity of the enforced Situationist terminology. The 3rd issue thus broadens the focus from the SI's emphasis on constructing situations to forcing diverse theories of the situation to confront each other in



Pages on knots in *The Situationist Times*, no. 3 (Jan. 1963), pp. 30-31.

heteroglossic fashion, while developing visual morphologies of conceptual “situations” in the topological forms of knots and interlace.

Transformative Morphologies

The Situationist Times created a diverse social network that included scientists, architects, poets, musicians, Surrealists, Situationists, and diverse artists. The emphatically heterogeneous and dialogic aesthetic of the journal demands active reading. By breaking down the specialized discourses of art, science, urbanism, and history, it attacks the institutional power they represent. It embeds images in a social context, and an interpersonal network, insisting on open-endedness and defying the rigid exclusionary principles of the orthodox Situationists. Like Jorn’s book projects, the aesthetic of *The Times* anticipates Postmodernism in its concern with the dialogic nature of artistic expression and foregrounding of multiple, contradictory meanings that appear side by side. The journal’s *dérive* around topology led seemingly away from direct political engagement

into meandering conceptual and speculative realms, resulting in a final issue devoted exclusively to art. Politics drops out except in a few instances such as the reproduction of the “Mutant” pamphlet and occasional calls to boycott bomb shelters and take over UNESCO. Yet the journal’s innovative approach to visual morphologies disrupted the categorization of images to the degree that all its representations insisted on their relation to larger social functions and manifestations. Although the French Situationists’ theorization of the Spectacle remains ever-more relevant to the still-expanding power of images and those who control their dissemination over contemporary social life, the subversive imagery of *The Situationist Times* must also take its place as part of a broader Situationist project of developing creative visual tools to contest the unrelenting spectacular clichés which attack us daily.

NOTES

- 1 Christophe Bourseiller, "Les temps situationniste, entretien avec Jacqueline de Jong", in *Archives et documents situationnistes* (Paris: Denoël, 2001), p. 30.
- 2 See Guy Debord, "Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale", (Cosio d'Arroscia: 1957), passim.
- 3 Jacqueline de Jong, "Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement", *The Situationist Times* 1 (1962).
- 4 Editorial note, *The Situationist Times* 5, inside back cover.
- 5 Later known as "The Struggle of the Situcratic Society: A Situationist Manifesto". Available online at <http://www.infopool.org.uk/6209.html>.
- 6 Max Bucaille, "Topological Study of Hoppe's Curve, The Knot, The Ribbon of Moebius", in *The Situationist Times* 3 (January 1963), pp. 8-11.
- 7 For a contemporary introduction to the mathematics of knots and topology, see Colin C. Adams, *The Knot Book* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1994).
- 8 A basic resource on topology for de Jong's circle was E. M. Patterson, *Topology* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), the 3rd edition of which is in Jorn's personal library in Silkeborg.
- 9 For Jorn, art was about the "superficial" [overfladiske]; he criticized Suzanne Langer and other authors including C.K. Ogden, I.A. Richards, and John Hospers, for their "fear of the superficial and

the hollow", and for "taking things too seriously". Asger Jorn, "Tegn og Underlige Gerninger eller Magi og de skønne kunster" [Signs and Strange Actions or Magic and the Fine Arts] (Silkeborg Kunstmuseum Archives, 1954), n.p.

- 10 De Jong recently published a *Situationist Times* no. 7 pamphlet which includes a brief overview of the Situationist International, an interview with de Jong, and her review of the "Expect Anything Fear Nothing" conference on the Second Situationist International.
- 11 John Summerson, "The Case for a Theory of Modern Architecture", [1957], in *Architecture Culture, 1943-1968*, ed. Joan Ockman (New York: Columbia Books of Architecture, 1993), p. 235.
- 12 M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 61. Subsequent page numbers in parentheses refer to this text. Bakhtin developed the term "heteroglossia" much further than "polyglossia" in his discussions of novelistic structures in "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" and "Discourse in the Novel". Since the 1980s, "heteroglossia" has been discussed extensively in relation to cultural interpretation in the Euro-American context, and the term carries more force as a signifier of internal argument constitutive of a larger discourse as it continually develops, as opposed to the simple juxtaposition of opposing discourses.
- 13 For a discussion of the history of artists' periodicals, on which very little

- is written in the postwar context, see Stephen Perkins, "Artists' Periodicals and Alternative Artists' Networks: 1963-1977" (PhD Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1993).
- 14 Piero Simondo, "Ipotesi e elementi di topologia del labirinto", *The Situationist Times* 4 (Oct. 1963), pp. 9-11, and Max Bucaille, "Spirale et labyrinthe", pp. 12-16.
- 15 Jorn's theories, which developed independently from his interest in the spiral in the 1950s but coincided in the 1960s with Stéphane Lupasco's "tri-dialectic" theory, are too complex to be explored fully here. See the discussion of their development in Peter Shield, *Comparative Vandalism: Asger Jorn and the Artistic Attitude to Life* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 40-64.
- 16 Jorn's triolectics themselves originated in the spiral schemata that he printed in the 1953 exhibition pamphlet for the artist's group Spiralen. Asger Jorn, "Spiralen, som nøgle til grafisk fremstilling af den dynamiske filosofi og kunststopfattelse", in *Spiralen* (Copenhagen: Charlottenborg, 1953).
- 17 Asger Jorn, "Mind and Sense: On the Principle of Ambivalence in Nordic Husdrapa and Mind Singing", *Situationist Times* 5 (1964), p. 4.
- 18 On the idea of a correct, "unitary language", see Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 270-71.
- 19 "Le tournant obscur", *Internationale situationniste* 2: 11, translated as "The Dark Turn Ahead", available online at <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/darkturn.html>.

- 20 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 66.
- 21 Jong, "Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement".
- 22 George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962). The following page numbers in parentheses refer to this volume.
- 23 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species, By Means of Natural Selection, Or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* [1859] (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 579.
- 24 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* [1976] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 25 Hayden White is one proponent of this view. His theory of historical discourse as a series of "tropes" relates directly to the more emphatically visual idea of morphologies as explored by Kubler, Jorn, and de Jong, but such a comparison is beyond the scope of this essay. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
- 26 Asger Jorn, *Open Creation and Its Enemies with Originality and Magnitude (On the System of Isou)*, trans. Fabian Tompsett (London: Unpopular Books, 1994), p. 32.
- 27 See Pamela M. Lee, "'Ultramoderne': Or, How George Kubler Stole the Time in Sixties Art," *Grey Room* 2 (2001), pp. 46-77. Lee focuses on the relationship between Smithson and Kubler, but notes (n. 8) that Asger Jorn also wrote to Kubler after reading his book.

28 Jorn argued that kitsch, folk art, and high art are terms that only have meaning from the point of view of those who want to uphold social inequality. He wrote: "Art will not have the possibility to be free, harmonious, and universal until the day the aesthetic classification of art ceases, the moral [...] and the economic classification of people ceases". Asger Jorn, *Magi og skønne kunster [Magic and the Fine Arts]* [ca. 1948] (Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1971), p. 126.

29 For example, Eric De Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism", *Grey Room* 25 (2006), pp. 32-63.

30 Bourseiller, "Les temps situationniste, entretien avec Jacqueline de Jong", p. 31.

31 Robert Smithson, "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art", 1968, in Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 80.

32 On the difference between the "singular" and the "individual", see Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* [1996], trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). I believe this distinction is central to an understanding of Jorn's paintings. See the brief account in Karen Kurczynski, "Ironic Gestures: Asger Jorn, Informel, and Abstract Expressionism", in *Abstract Expressionism: The International Context*, ed. Joan Marter (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), pp. 108-24.

33 In this text, titled in French "La courbe du chien", Bucaille may also be implicitly referring to Lautréamont as well. Lautréamont described in "Chants de Maldoror" the idea of something "beau comme un mémoire sur la courbe que décrit un chien en courant après son maître (handsome as the momento which a dog leaves on the curb as it runs after its master)". Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems* [1868-70], trans. Paul Knight (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 186.

34 Georges Mathieu, "Towards a New Convergence of Art, Thought, and Science", *Art International* (May 1, 1960), pp. 27-44.

35 Mathieu reproduces on page 31, for example, the same 1951 Jackson Pollock ink drawing that Jorn reproduces as a frontispiece in *Pour la forme*. Asger Jorn, "Pour la forme: ébauche d'une méthodologie des arts [1958]", in *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale Situationniste*, ed. Gerard Berreby (Paris: Allia, 1985), pp. 405-551.

36 Press release for *The Situationist Times* 5, Dec. 15, 1964, read by de Jong at Galerie Gammel Strand, Copenhagen. Archive of Jacqueline de Jong.

37 Jorn, "Pour la forme", p. 531.

38 See the "Hyperbolic Space Online Exhibit" posted by the Institute for Figuring online at <http://www.theiff.org/oexhibits/oe1e.html>.

39 H. C. Westermann's famous wooden knot sculpture *The Big Change* of 1963 is illustrated in Barbara Haskell, *H. C. Westermann* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1978), p. 23.

On Nauman, see Dan Graham, "Subject Matter", in *Rock My Religion*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993) and Jane Livingston, "Bruce Nauman", in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Jane Livingston and Marcia Tucker (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1973). For an example of Lynda Benglis's 1970s knot sculptures, see the website of Cheim and Read gallery <http://www.heimread.com/artists/lynda-benglis>, or Susan Krane, *Lynda Benglis, Dual Natures* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1990).

40 For an illustration, see Michael Emmer, "Visual Art and Mathematics: The Moebius Band", *Leonardo* 13, no. 2 (1980), p. 110.

41 Pat Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 263-307.

42 Bill's re-organization of the Bauhaus excluded all painters and sculptors. This resulted in Jorn's founding of the Mouvement Internationale pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste, after an increasingly rancorous exchange of letters in 1953-54. Troels Andersen, *Asger Jorn: en biografi* (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 11-13.

43 Bill, "Endless Ribbon", in *Mathematics Calendar, June 1979* (Berlin: Springer, 1979), cited in Emmer, "Visual Art and Mathematics: The Moebius Band", p. 108.

44 Max Bill, "La pensée mathématique dans l'art de notre temps", reprinted in *Max Bill, oeuvres 1928-1969* (Paris: Centre National d'Art Contemporain, 1969), pp. 39-43.

45 Max Bill, "How I started making single-sided surfaces", *Max Bill: Surfaces* (Zurich: Marlborough Galerie, 1972), n.p.

46 As Clark later recalled, "One read Bill and Vantongerloo". Quoted in Paolo Herkenhoff, "Lygia Clark", in *Lygia Clark* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997), p. 38.

47 "Neo-Concrete Manifesto", 1959, reprinted in Lygia Clark, "Nostalgia of the Body", *October* 69 (1994), p. 95.

48 Asger Jorn, "Notes on the Formation of an Imaginist Bauhaus [1957]", in *The Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), pp. 16-17.

49 See Clark, "Caminhando", 1983, reprinted in *Lygia Clark* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997), pp. 151-52.

50 Bois, "Introduction", in Clark, "Nostalgia of the Body", p. 86.

51 Ibid., p. 88.

52 Asger Jorn, "Art and Orders: On Treason, the Mass Action of Reproduction, and the Great Artistic Mass Effect", *The Situationist Times* 5 (1964), p. 9.

53 Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography" [1955] in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 5.

54 Peter Selz, "Interview with Pol Bury", in *Pol Bury* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1970), p. 8.

55 Jorn, *Open Creation and Its Enemies with Originality and Magnitude*, p. 30.

56 Ibid., p. 32.

57 Asger Jorn, *Guldhorn og Lykkehjul / Les Cornes d'or et la roue de la fortune*, trans. Matie van Domselaer and Michel Ragon (Copenhagen: Selandia, 1957), n.p.

58 Jorn, *Open Creation and Its Enemies with Originality and Magnitude*, p. 34.

59 Jorn negotiated for the tapestry to be included in his commission for a monumental ceramic mural for the new building of the Statsgymnasium. The original tapestry *Le long voyage* is currently in the Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, while a replica hangs in the Statsgymnasium.

60 See his comments on tapestry in Asger Jorn, "Ansigt til Ansigt", *A5. Meningsblad for unge arkitekter* 2, no. 5 (1944), pp. 22-23 and, Jorn, "Pour la forme", pp. 497-501.

61 Gaston Bachelard, "La création ouverte", in *Jorn Wemaëre* (Paris: Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie, 1960), n.p.

62 Bachelard, quoted in Jorn, "Pour la forme", p. 463.

63 André Malraux, *Museum Without Walls*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967). First published in France in 1947, Malraux's project created just what its title implied, for better and worse: an art museum in the format of the book, in which every work was reduced to the same conceptual level through the medium of black and white photographic reproduction which downplayed the singularity of the objects pictured. Its

liberal-humanist emphasis on aesthetic autonomy, however, was directly criticized by Jorn. Jorn objected to the ennobling and individualist aspects of Malraux's text, in which Malraux describes even anonymous works as products of individual creation, as well as to the future French cultural minister's conception of the museum as the appropriate institutional context for art. Jorn regarded Malraux's continued belief in the museum as a destructive segregation of art into an artificial hierarchy of value. Jorn, "Pour la forme", p. 545.

64 Jorn, *Open Creation and Its Enemies with Originality and Magnitude*, p. 32.

65 Ibid., p. 36.

66 Jorn, "Pour la forme", p. 463.

67 See, for example, Gyorgy Kepes, "Art et science", *Cimaise*, 3rd series, no. 6 (1956), pp. 14-19.

68 "Introduction", in Gyorgy Kepes, ed., *The New Landscape in Art and Science* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1956), p. 19.

69 Anne Malherbe, "Le réel et le sensible: Quelques mythologies dans le milieu de l'abstraction lyrique", *Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne* 84 (2003), pp. 72-74.

70 An example of an image used in both places is the diagram of a New Hebrides sand drawing that appears in Kepes, ed., *The New Landscape*, p. 51, and Buaille, "Drawings in the Sand of Mallicollo and other islands of the New Hebrides", *The Situationist Times* 4 (Oct. 1963), p. 103.

71 Kepes, ed., *The New Landscape*, p. 173.

72 Jorn, "Pour la forme", pp. 527-28.

73 See Jacques Lacan, "Rings of String", in *On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1998), pp. 107-36; Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX, Ou pire.../Or worse... [197-72]*, trans. C. Gallagher (London: Karnac, 2003); and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 358-84.

74 Aldo Van Eyck, "Beyond Visibility, About Place and Occasion, the Inbetween Realm, Right-Size, and Labyrinthian Clarity", *The Situationist Times* 4 (Oct. 1963), pp. 79-85.

75 Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism", [1955], in *A Critic Writes: Essays by Reyner Banham*, ed. Mary Banham (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 14.

76 Summerson, "The Case for a Theory of Modern Architecture", [1957], p. 235.

77 Ivan Tcheglev, "Formulary for a New Urbanism", 1953 pamphlet, available online at http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display_printable/1.

78 See "Die Welt als Labyrinth", *Internationale situationniste* 4 (January 1960), translated by Paul Hammond online at <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/diewelt.html>. See also Jorn's remarks in Asger Jorn, "The Anti-Situation of Amsterdam", *Transgressions* 4 (1998), pp. 15-19, as well as the introduction by Peter Shield on pp. 10-11.

79 Daniel Spoerri, *An Annotated Topography of Chance* (London: Atlas, 1995), p. 207.

80 Kurt Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), Fig. 27.

81 See the discussion in Kurt Lewin, "Psychoanalysis and Topological Psychology", [1937], in *The Complete Social Scientist: A Kurt Lewin Reader*, ed. Martin Gold (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1999), pp. 67-74.

82 Jorn credits existentialism generally and Kierkegaard specifically as the philosophical background of the current art of "dissolution" in Asger Jorn, "Asger Jorn hjemme: Jeg er totalt færdig med dansk kunstliv", *Kunst [Copenhagen]* 7, no. 5 (1960), pp. 126-27. See also the brief discussions in Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 125-28, and Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 20-21.

83 A preoccupation with definition, in fact, can be observed in the organization as a whole. Other examples include the "Amsterdam Declaration" circulated by Constant and Debord for the 3rd SI conference in Monaco, which proposed "a minimum definition of Situationist actions", *Internationale situationniste* 2 (December 1958), pp. 31-32, and the later article, "Minimum definition of revolutionary organizations", *Internationale situationniste* 11 (October 1967),

translated in Ken Knabb, ed., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 223.

84 “Definitions”, *Internationale situationniste* 1 (June 1958), translated in Knabb, ed., *Situationist International Anthology*, p. 45.

85 Not surprisingly, in response to *Drakabygget* and the *Situationist Times*

the SI soon published another new set of definitions, of “Nashism”, “Nashiste”, “Nashistique”, and “Nashisterie”. *Internationale situationniste* 8 (January 1963), p. 26. Mustapha Khayati would later propose a more complete Situationist dictionary in “Les mots captifs, préface à un dictionnaire situationniste”, *Internationale situationniste* 10 (Paris, March 1966), pp. 50-55.

A MAXIMUM OF OPENNESS

Jacqueline de Jong
in conversation with Karen Kurczynski

Karen Kurczynski: Jacqueline is an artist who was in both the “first” Situationist International and had some contact with the second. I believe your name was added to the manifesto of the Second Situationist International, without your permission, which was actually printed in *The Situationist Times*. You first met Asger Jorn in 1958, and made contact with the Situationists.

Jacqueline de Jong: I met Gruppe SPUR first, the German section of the Situationists, through a friend of Heimrad Prem, Nele Bode. I was working in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, where she had an exhibition. She mentioned these young artists who were going to have an exhibition at the Galerie Van de Loo in Essen. I had heard about them through Jorn, whom I got involved with from 1959 onwards. I had seen what they had been working on in Essen at Galerie Caspari and thought, that’s what I want to do too. I was twenty years

old at the time. So luckily through Nele I had this direct contact with Gruppe SPUR, they asked me to come up to Essen. The opening was in the gallery, which was completely painted, the whole gallery—all the walls, the ceiling, floor, everything. We were staying after the opening together on the gallery on the floor. Of course, they got drunk, as the Germans did in that period. I was very overwhelmed by everything that was going on, but mainly by their work. I asked them, if they were members of the Situationists. I knew a little about the I.S. through Jorn, and also through Armando and Constant. I was excited about the Situationists, from what the Gruppe SPUR, Jorn and the Dutch section had mentioned, and I wanted to be a part of them. In the meantime, the Dutch section was quite active. Constant was preparing an exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum. Alberts and Oudejans, architects and members

of the Dutch section of the I.S., were in that period designing a church. If there's one thing, which is *non Situationniste*, it is designing a church. Because of the plans for this church they got excluded from the I.S. Armando sort of disappeared, Constant did not formally oppose their building this church. So the Dutch Section got excluded from the I.S. Then I got a letter from Debord in Amsterdam saying "Holland is yours now": "la Hollande est à vous." Very nice. It meant that suddenly I was the Dutch section on my own. I had met Debord during the preparations of the Stedelijk Museum exhibition in Amsterdam and with Jorn in Paris, but I didn't really know what it was all about, so I started reading the four issues of the magazine *I.S.* which had appeared up to then, and the Potlatch pamphlets which I found/bought on the Quai in Paris and I entirely agreed with their perspectives. I was delighted with the ideas. Jorn didn't like the fact that I was going to be in the Situationist movement, because he thought I would be too occupied with the I.S. instead of him. Anyway, I became in the late spring 1960, this one single Dutch Section

while still in Amsterdam. This did not last very long as at the end of 1960 I left Amsterdam to live in Paris. I did try to get other people to join like the composer Peter Schat, the writer Lodewijk de Boer and a mathematician H.C. Doets, all three joined in on *The Situationist Times* in 1962.

It's actually wrong to say that *The Situationist Times* came out in Holland. These first three issues were printed in Holland; I lived and worked from 1961 onwards in Paris. So all issues were all made in Paris yet printed elsewhere, only the no. 6 was realized at Peter Bramssen's atelier in Paris. I had the first three issues printed at a very cheap Rota-printer in Hengelo, Holland, only because of expenses. Issues 4 and 5 were printed in Copenhagen by the printers Permild and Rosengreen who were friends of Jorn and a friend of his, Professor P.V. Glob, who also introduced me to a distributor of scientific works called Rhodos, which meant a more professional international distribution of *The Situationist Times*. The printers agreed to print these quite expensive volumes in exchange for paintings, some of Jorn and some of mine. Of course

many more of mine because I was not worth very much. But it was a good thing to have them printed in Denmark, as the climate was very positive towards these sort of publications. For numbers 4 and 5, I did a press presentation at Galerie Gammel Strand, explaining how the issues were realized, with a small explanation of the content, including topology.

KK: I wonder if you could talk first about your meeting with SPUR and what excited you about this gallery installation. Did you paint with them at all?

JdJ: No, no, no, I was not really a painter yet. I mean I had painted, but ...

KK: But that was really the beginning.

JdJ: That was the beginning. I was studying art history because of my job at the Stedelijk Museum and wanted to join the evening Rijks Academie but was not admitted because of working at the Stedelijk Museum. It was only later on that I started painting with them and being a part of the group. That was in Munich, in Paris, and then in Drakabygget. I had not yet started professionally painting. I was just overwhelmed by their expressivity,

by their power, and in that period — don't forget, this was '59 or '60 — in Germany there was no more Expressionism. It was the period of ZERO and Constructivism, very straight. There was little of this sort of explosion of life and experiences as with the SPUR people. They were quite unique as a group, being rebellious and having international connections. They were, the painters in the group, like the Neue Wilden, *avant la lettre*. I think they are art-historically ignored in an incredible way; the reason might be because, well, they were sort of underground. The SPUR magazine was something I thought was absolutely magnificent. I must say that Debord who didn't read German — there was not much to read anyway — liked it very much in the beginning too. How it ended is another thing.

KK: Did you keep in touch with your friends, i.e., E.R. Nele and Gretel Stadler, because they then split with SPUR and went on to work with different groups?

JdJ: Yes and no. Well, Nele just split with Prem, and I never had any real connection with Gretel Stadler. She was in Göteborg at the Congress but I do not really

remember her presence. They were friends of the boys. They didn't have an autonomous position in the I.S. at that time, as Michèle Bernstein and I had. Michèle and I literally did things within the movement. Stadler later did something in Munich which was magnificent: the fake "in Memorial" exhibition of a non-existent artist called Bolus Krim.

KK: But you did have contact with Michèle Bernstein and Guy Debord, and you lived with them for a brief period in the *chambre de bonne* in Paris. And you did dérives around Paris.

JdJ: Yes of course we made dérives all the time, even before and after I lived with Guy and Michèle, also in the time when I came regularly to Paris to see them and Jorn. From the Congress in London up to when I left Amsterdam we did dérives, sure.



Jacqueline de Jong and Pinot Gallizio with an industrial painting, Alba, 1960.

KK: Can you describe them a bit? Because dérives are so difficult to describe and there are so few accounts.

JdJ: It is a sort of unorganized strolling through a space/town/country/ocean or whatever given surrounding. Well, in actuality it's a bit like what I did yesterday, to make a sort of reportage about Jagtvej. I was very surprised when I flew into Copenhagen and I was sitting in a taxi, and the taxi woman said, you know, your hotel is not on Jagtvej, but everywhere is Jagtvej in Copenhagen now. I thought, this is fantastic. I was looking out of this cab and I saw one street was Jagtvej, and the other street was Jagtvej too. A fantastic Situationist act in a way, you might say it's almost a Provo act. But it is a modification, which is incredibly well done. Then Jakob Jakobsen explained to me that there were 7,000 Jagtvej stickers printed so that all over Denmark the streets became Jagtvej. So I made a dérive, not taking a map, just walking around.

KK: Jagtvej to Jagtvej to Jagtvej.

JdJ: Well, Jagtvej was everywhere.

KK: Now the whole city is a dérive for everyone, in a way.

JdJ: It is. In a way this is the example of a dérive. The dérive is something you have to initiate yourself by doing. I realized a dérive in *The Situationist Times* number 2. It is called the dérive de Poulidor—the bicycle racer—it goes through the whole issue. That was in Belgium 1962. There we literally just followed our nose.

KK: And you also went on a dérive with Noël Arnaud and Serge Vandercam before making each issue?

JdJ: We went on a dérive, this is what I just mentioned. With Débord, it was just in the *quartier* where they lived, from one place to another, and he would explain the surroundings and the experience... I mean it was in a way like a tourist stroll; it became a dérive doing it with Debord. We mostly ended up in cafés, because he always needed something to drink, Guy did. Michèle Bernstein could never join us because she had to work to earn the money to get the *Internationale situationniste* out. So that was the daily life of a Situationist.

KK: And getting at this daily life, we just heard from Zwi/Negator a very interesting critique of the Situationist gender dimension.

I wonder if you could comment on this briefly. It's very striking that only you and Michèle were really prominent women Situationists, and it is a major issue. There's been a very interesting dissertation written in America about the critique of gender, the fact that the French-based Situationist International was very involved in these themes of gangsters and hardboiled detectives, this hyper-masculine imagery. And you see the soft porn images in the journal and all of these things happening. Do you see that now? I'd like to hear both what you felt then and, looking back, how your view of this gender dimension has changed.

JdJ: Well I don't think anything has changed. I mean, I will probably shock you if I say that they were very macho men. Jorn was very attractive, but also very macho. He wanted me for himself and not for the others. Debord was macho. Trying to be autonomous made me and also, of course, definitely Michèle, made us do things and just not think about feminist ideas. We just did it. It was similar in art in that period, and that's why Gretel and Nele, these two German girls, got—well, they became artists yes,

in a way not thoroughly. In that time it was quite different and harder than now. There were few women artists, for the simple reason that women got married and had children. The circumstances for a combination of being full time artist and wife/mother were pretty tough! You didn't have all the *crèches* you have now. You didn't have the possibilities of having children *and* being professional artists as a woman. That's the difference I believe with the situation of the middle '60s and '70s.

KK: So it simply wasn't thought of as an issue at the time.

JdJ: No, absolutely not. I mean, it was an issue. For Jorn it was an issue, and for example for Gruppe SPUR it was. They were teasing me, and trying to use me, and all this sort of thing. In a way, Debord was too. It was the same all over the place. Vaneigem is now in correspondence with me. He wants to become friends again. I was, in a way, strong enough—well, I just wanted to do my thing, and that's the way it went, without thinking about gender, feminism or whatever.

KK: And you managed to work with Pinot-Gallizio, also, which was not easy.

JdJ: Oh, yes, being macho is one thing, but being Italian macho is another. He was not alone; he had a son, too, so after a week I found out that it wasn't so funny being there in that situation.

KK: But you did manage to collaborate on his paintings, that summer, in 1960.

JdJ: Just before the Congress in London. I made some of the Industrial Paintings. It was very exciting because they were the first experimental paintings I made. Another thing which is typical for that period, and for Italian artists, was that he kept all the works. He had them exhibited, the things we did together and the things I did on my own—which were many, we worked very hard—and they got sold. I wanted to have the money, and he said, no, no, no, no, that's not yours because you have to pay for your stay. I of course told Guy Debord and Jorn. He was this sort of absolute bourgeois, although he was involved with Gypsies, trying to be social! Gallizio got expelled from the I.S. for among other things this sort of attitude, not for nothing. It was typical of him, this sort of opportunistic bourgeois idea, while he was making Industrial Paintings.

KK: So you made some of these paintings entirely yourself. And they were sold as his works.

JdJ: Well, no, as Industrial Paintings.

KK: So as collective Industrial Paintings.

JdJ: It was sort of throwing paint on sheets of linen cloth, it was literally Industrial Painting.

KK: What were the collaborations that you did later with SPUR that you mentioned?

JdJ: They were real painter/sculptor collaborations. I was staying for some months in Lothar Fischer's atelier and I was painting and working with the group. Later on, Zimmer stayed in my place while I was somewhere else painting. These were just professional collaborations, nothing to do with Situationist ideas. There is the difference. The ideas of the Situationists didn't cooperate with the artistic part. That is where this Drakabygget story comes in as a complete confusion, there was Gesamtkunstwerk there, but this is not a Situationist invention. As every one knows this has been done all through history by many, many artists.

KK: So you are saying how Drakabygget was trying to be a Gesamtkunstwerk as a place, or the ideas...?

JdJ: Well, it was definitely not a Situationist place. I must say one thing about this "first" and "second" Situationist movement. This only exists in the ideas of Scandinavians. There is no French writing about the Second SI, they are called Nashists. They are not a movement. Nor did SPUR ever consider themselves belonging to this Second Situationist International. I mean, there is not a "first." There is the Situationist movement, there is SPUR, there is Drakabygget, and there is *The Situationist Times*, but



Jacqueline de Jong and Asger Jorn in Hengelo, 1960.



Photo collage from *The Situationist Times*, no. 2, 1962. Top left Jacqueline de Jong with Noël Arnaud and three unknown men.

the *Internationale situationniste* is the only movement. I'm not going to make a religion out of it, but I think it has to be clear that the so-called Second movement, the Scandinavian one, is a thing independent from the whole International one.

KK: But then how would you explain *The Situationist Times*, as

a journal that explicitly describes itself as continuing the Situationist project, and linking a kind of community of artists, theorists, writers, that are loosely speaking Situationist?

JdJ: I had the idea of making *The Situationist Times* within the *Internationale situationniste*—we had talked about doing an English

version, as there was a German one and a French one. I thought, there should be an English one. I wanted to do it together with Trocchi but that was impossible because he was in prison, and I'd never met him. But I suggested it, and everyone agreed, along with Debord. He gave me all sorts of documents and articles to translate into English for *The Situationist Times*.

KK: Texts to reprint.

JdJ: Yes, texts to reprint and translate as was done in *Situationistisk Revolution* by J.V. Martin. The Situationists, including Vaneigem and Kotanyi, liked the idea of publishing an English journal, and calling it the name I invented: *The Situationist Times*. So when we got thrown out, and I wanted to explain myself, because I was so angry at the non-solidarity of these comrades in consideration of the Gruppe SPUR being expelled, while they were undergoing this *Prozess* about pornography and blasphemy, I thought it would be a very good idea to do a critique on the way they got expelled, by starting *The Situationist Times*. Why not? I was free to do that.

KK: But you didn't print all of the texts Debord wanted you to. He

gave you this polemical rejection of SPUR, for example.

JdJ: I was in a fight with them. I never printed any of his texts. I only printed "Mutant" because I agreed with the content of this manifesto, Mutant had this anti-atomic bomb shelter text in it. And also because Jorn said, you have to do this. I read this "Mutant Manifesto." This had nothing to do with Debord. I depicted Debord as an embryo in an egg, as a joke of course. This was not a very friendly thing to do ... Shall I explain how I came to the idea asking Noël Arnaud to participate?

KK: Yes.

JdJ: I had to find someone who knew how to make a magazine. I thought it was a good idea to ask Noël Arnaud, who had done *Surréalisme Révolutionnaire*, which only published one number. Among many other international people, Constant and Jorn were involved in the *Surréalisme Révolutionnaire*. This was before COBRA.

KK: In 1947.

JdJ: Yes. Just after the war. It was a very impressive magazine, and I knew Noël Arnaud through Jorn. I thought he was the right person at the right moment, because he



Cover of *The Situationist Times*, no. 1, May 1962.

knew how to do this sort of work, and I had some experience from the Stedelijk Museum in typography through my work with the director Sandberg. I wanted to go back to the roots, in a way, of *Reflex/Cobra* and the imagery of that period, so I felt it would be a good idea if Noël Arnaud would participate with *The Situationist Times*. He was kind enough to say yes. We did two issues together.

KK: And then he left?

JdJ: And then I left. *The Situationist Times* left. I thought, by now I know how to make it on my own and I'm going to do so, in a

way also because he put a little too many other Pataphysicians in it. We separated in an utterly friendly way, and stayed friends until his death.

KK: You've also described it as a "platform" for Asger Jorn, the first few issues. Can you explain his role?

JdJ: Well, Jorn lost the other platform: the *Internationale situationniste* magazine when he went underground as Keller and the Drakabygget experience turned out to be quite a disaster.

KK: This is after Jorn left the SI. He had left voluntarily before all of the exclusions of SPUR and Guy Debord asked him to keep taking part under this name, George Keller, which was your idea.

JdJ: Actually it's a name I invented while we were walking. It's a bit like Jagtvej; we were on the Boulevard Kellerman, and I thought, that's a good name as an underground indication because it means "cellar man." I don't want to be cynical, but Debord asked him mainly for economic reasons, not only for inspiration.

KK: Yes, and Jorn continued to support both factions, as they were.

JdJ: Yes.

KK: What about your experience in typography with Sandberg?

JdJ: Sandberg was the director of the Stedelijk Museum and he was originally a typographer. He made incredibly beautiful posters and catalogs for the museum, also for other occasions. As an assistant, a so-called scientific assistant, I had to make presentations, distribute the catalogs for the press. I asked Sandberg after working there for some months if it would be possible to assist a bit more with realization of the catalogs. He had me transferred to the bibliographical department of the museum to get some knowledge of typography, and in the meantime I could watch one of the best designers of that period creating the works. That influenced me very much.

KK: Were there any other journals besides *Internationale situationniste* that you were reading? I know you took a little bit from other journals. There were some reprints from *SPUR*, *Drakabygget*, and the *Internationale situationniste*.

JdJ: One absolutely fantastic magazine came out in '27, made by Arthur Lehning. This magazine was initially my inspiration. It was called *i10*. It was completely international and lasted one year and twelve issues. People like

Schwitters, Piet Mondriaan, Mart Stam, J.J.P. Oud, Ilya Ehrenburg, Moholy-Nagy, Menno ter Braak, Willem Pijper and many others participated in different languages. Arthur Lehning was a well-known anarchist and a social philosopher. He knew these people from different disciplines and got them together in his magazine. It became famous later on. It was 1927, ten years after the Russian Revolution. I found it in a bookshop in Amsterdam and bought it when I was eighteen or nineteen. I thought, this is really a dream to get all these international intellectual and artistic disciplines together in a magazine; perhaps one day we can do something like this. That was really the "inspiration" for *The Situationist Times* and of course in a different context *Pour la Forme* and *Guldhorn og Lykkehjul* by Jorn. There were also some funny magazines like *Twen* in Germany.

KK: And *KWY*?

JdJ: That was much later. *KWY* was being sold at Le Minotaure and La Hune, the bookshops in St. Germain in Paris, and I thought, my god, these people are doing something that I did in another way, a similarity! That was '64, '65.

I wanted to meet them, so we did, we became friends. Their magazine was made in silkscreen. Each issue was realized in a different way; Jan Voss, René Bertholo and Lourdes Castro, among many others, and I did a lot of things together. Events, exhibitions in ateliers, Happenings sort of. So, sorry, a Situationist doing Happenings ...

KK: Would you say that the use of handwriting extensively was a practical matter? Do you see it as a direct connection to COBRA? Your *Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement* and Max Bucaille's texts and many others were handwritten. There is a direct connection between drawing and handwriting in these texts.

JdJ: Handwriting has excited artists all the way through, as it is similar to drawing, not only by Surrealists and COBRA artists has it been used! Actually, the very kind people that organized this meeting have recently transcribed the "*Critique...*" into a readable text. I used this form because I was so angry about the exclusions. I just started writing and I thought, it's such a bore writing all this, so I just turned the page. It went spontaneously, writing on and on. With the other things, it

just came one thing from the other. But it's the only issue where this was used.

KK: Well Max Bucaille's texts continued up through issue 5 with these math articles, which is very interesting, because you don't normally see math described in this kind of aleatory way.

JdJ: That is because he comes out of Surrealism. He already had this baggage. He thought he could express himself in that way. They are beautiful pages. I've got the originals, and they are absolutely magnificent pieces of art, which I sort of don't consider my article as such. Mine is just spontaneous fury, furious expression. Max Bucaille did consider his articles in a way as mathematical art.

KK: In the first issue you reproduce all the SPUR material with the actual transcriptions of the trial, and the defense of SPUR, and some of their collages and comics. Were the SPUR images that you reproduce exactly the ones they were attacked for?

JdJ: Yes.

KK: What about the Second SI Manifesto, which was "signed" with your name, and that of Jørgen Nash's horse Ambrosius Fjord,

and Patrick O'Brien who was actually Guy Atkins, added at the bottom—but you printed it anyway?

JdJ: Did I?

KK: Yes, the Second SI Manifesto was in fact printed in number 2 after a short introduction by Gordon Fazakarley.

JdJ: I don't think we ever did that.

KK: It's a very interesting text because it sets out Nash's Drakabygget position, which relates explicitly to social democracy, to the idea of reform rather than revolution, to the idea that there is no progressivism any more, that we should use the past as much as the future... but you don't remember any of this, right?

JdJ: Of course I do. But if you look at it, you can see that I printed it in the smallest font possible so that no one could read it. And it was on purpose. I was already at that moment not very happy with the guys in Drakabygget, mainly Thorsen, I must say. The Drakabygget people were making détournements of articles of mine, such as "Gog and Magog," in their magazine. They even did it with articles by Jorn. You could say there was a degree of faking in what they were doing. One thing that



Cover of *The Situationist Times*, no. 3, January 1963.

has not been mentioned is that we, the Situationists, always had an anti-copyright declaration in all the magazines. The anti-copyright statement in *The Situationist Times* reads, "all reproduction, deformation, modification, derivation and transformation of *The Situationist Times* is permitted." Of course it means that everything *is* permitted, but you don't expect your comrades to deform your texts as they were meant to be serious.

KK: Deform or détourn?

JdJ: Deform, I think. It's a good question.



Cover of *The Situationist Times*, no. 5, December 1964.

KK: What about Drakabygget, besides that they deformed your text? Zwi/Negator's presentation had a really interesting critique of their idea of freedom and the way that the artists who split off embraced this idea of spontaneity, of freedom, uncritically. Would you agree with that?

JdJ: Yes I do.

KK: You said that you wanted to show art in the *Times* without interpreting, and that you wanted to keep this maximum openness, but I think you also said once in an interview that there were some

artists that you didn't want in it, that you turned down.

JdJ: No, there were some artists that didn't want to be in it, which is another thing, but I never refused any artists. That would be the opposite of the whole idea. Perhaps I wasn't happy with some things but every contribution got printed. The idea of not having any exceptions was in all issues of *The Situationist Times*, because it was about just showing as much material as possible without making any conclusion or any interpretation. There is a little text I wrote about this in number 5 as an editorial, which I thought was absolutely essential. These were also the ideas of Jorn, for example in *Guldhorn og Lykkehjul*. I already mentioned the fact that this was a book which influenced my view.

KK: That was a book, *The Golden Horns and the Wheel of Fortune*, which he finally was able to publish in 1957 where he collected images from mythology around the world. So that had a very big effect on you, and Jorn had a very strong role in taking issues 3, 4, and 5, and making them thematic—you together came up with the idea of these themes that were topological themes.

JdJ: No, not really. I chose the subjects and all the images! Mainly number 3 was made together with Jorn as it was the first issue after Noël Arnaud's presence, but also very much in a way by talking with Bucaille as Jorn had his triolectics as a hot item at that moment and I wanted a more general view in the first issue on topology. Concerning numbers 4 and 5, I did the research for these two mainly on my own.

KK: The triolectics came out in issue 5.

JdJ: It came truly out of topological patterns, non-Euclidean mathematics. Jorn had these theories about weaving and topology, on interlace, which can be found in all sorts of archaeological and historical art and objects, in many, many aspects. He and I combined these topological patterns.

KK: And it was just at the moment when Jorn founded the Scandinavian Institute for Comparative Vandalism in 1961, to start deliberately photographing Scandinavian art around Europe.

JdJ: Yes but this was as you say in 1961 which means before the break with the I.S. mind you... We did it together with the photographer Gérard Franceschi. I published lots

of photos from the project. It was a real research we did all over Europe. When I was starting number 3, I said we should use all these photos in it. Which was very practical.

KK: And they are attributed in the journals as coming from various sources, not just the SICV, but also from yourself, from the Bibliothèque Nationale, from Daniel Spoerri who was involved in issue 4.

JdJ: Daniel Spoerri's participation consisted of making some photos of street drawings and giving them to *The Situationist Times* for publication.

KK: Can you say a little more about topology and what fascinated you about it, where your interest in that began?

JdJ: I can read this press release from the publication of *The Situationist Times 5* but who's interested in non-Euclidean mathematics today?

KK: Many people. Fabian Tompsett has translated Jorn's writings on topology. It began with Jorn's writings in *Internationale situationniste*.

JdJ: Well, in the press release which I read at Galerie Gammel Strand in Copenhagen in 1964, I said something about this:



Launch of *The Situationist Times*, no. 5, at Galerie Gammel Strand, Copenhagen, 1964.

“We are happy to present the fifth number of *The Situationist Times* to you. This number is the third issue which concerns a definite subject. Rings and Chains. The first and second numbers of *The Situationist Times* dealt with no specific subjects. The numbers three and four dealt with Interlaced Patterns and Labyrinths respectively. These three concepts are based on Asger Jorn’s Triolectic as developed in his article “Mind and

Sense”. You may of course wonder why we deal with topology in an avant-garde magazine, but this is actually one of the main lines of *The Situationist Times*. Constructive art, or as it is also called, ‘geometrical’ art is evidently based upon the strict rules of Euclidean geometry... Euclidean geometry and its art is complementary to our development in Informal art and topology.” That sort of thing Jorn and I did literally together. I was trying



Launch of *The Situationist Times*, no. 5, at Galerie Gammel Strand, Copenhagen, 1964.

to read mathematics for a very short period, to try to understand topology. I bought these books by Lietzmann and Tomaszewski. I had met Tomaszewski at the Stedelijk Museum, when he had an exhibition of his models. His fascinating exhibition was very constructivist, very much in opposition to the ideas and concepts I had about art. Jorn had a conflict much earlier in the mid-fifties with Max Bill on the subject. On the other

hand, he was such an intelligent, nice man. I introduced him to Jorn, and we talked and talked. I asked him to participate in *The Situationist Times*. At that time it was a fantastic thing that whoever I asked said yes. All these well-known intellectuals, architects and artists, Aldo Van Eyck for example. **KK:** It’s one of the most fascinating things that Lech Tomaszewski comes out of the constructivist interest in topology—like Max

Bill, who was Jorn's enemy for a while—all these constructivists were explicitly interested in math. Max Bill talks about topological forms as forms of contemplation, these universal images, which was completely different from what you were interested in.

JdJ: The opposite, yes.

KK: And to have Tomaszewski in the *Times* next to Max Bucaille's equations, which is the math of topology, with all these other interpretations spiraling outwards... And it was a discourse, which was present everywhere in Informal Art, in the painting discussions of Mathieu and Tapié in the 1950s. Were you consciously reacting against those discussions?

JdJ: Well, the Situationists were reacting against Tapié anyway, in the writings in *Internationale situationniste*, as you know. Of course I was conscious of what was going on. But it was also a completely different point of view that we had. Jorn's triolectic theory was somehow meant rather as a joke. Even an erotic one, as you can see in Jorn's erotic word-games and poems. It was not meant to be as serious as it's being used now. We wanted to have a triolectical society,

like a situocratic society; it was very much an intellectual game even in the writings of Jorn. People take it as extremely scholarly and serious, while there is much more fun in it. It is a transformation of ideas. I still today consider this one of the most important aspects of Jorn's writing and the impact of *The Situationist Times*, which scholars very often deny as they take it too seriously.

KK: I totally agree. I think that you can find anything you want in Jorn's theories. You can find reactionary things in his theories if you want to find them there. But when you read them as a whole, the point is to keep moving, the ideas keep developing, moving, changing constantly, and it opens up; you have to develop your own relationship to it. I mean, you'd have a hard time finding reactionary things there but if you really wanted to you could find them. It's mostly the opposite. But nevertheless it keeps circulating.

In issue 5 Jorn has these two key essays: "Art and Orders," where he denounces the CO-RITUS group, and his brother, after he's broken with Nash and Thorsen, and "Mind and Sense," where he throws out his kind of crazy theories about the Gothic, the Latin, and

the Scandinavian point of view. You didn't agree with the Second International, which was explicitly setting itself up as a Scandinavian group that related itself to social democracy that claimed to have these specifically Nordic ideas. But you had very close contact with Jorn who in the '60s became very interested in these ideas. I wonder how you related to it. The thing that I found in my research on Jorn was that this was the time when the European Union was developing, the EC was forming, and Denmark was joining right in the '60s, and all forms of the left were against this because they were really afraid that Denmark would lose its identity as a small country. And this was exactly the moment when Jorn takes up this kind of pan-Scandinavian nationalist position.

JdJ: This I've never heard before. Although I do believe that what is happening now in France and Holland concerning Europe is not so very different.

KK: Well, it's there in "Mind and Sense."

JdJ: First of all, there is nothing crazy about Jorn's 10,000 years of Nordic vandalism, if you know something about archaeology.

KK: No, not at all...

JdJ: That item and project was meant to be considered as a very serious one.

KK: But, regarding "Mind and Sense," there is your editorial text at the end of issue 5, in which Jorn has these articles. The issue is devoted to Rings, and it's completely filled with these images from various sources. At the end, you say: "In this number of *The Situationist Times*, we try to open up the problem of the ring, interlaced rings, and consequently chains. This happens on the base of the three patterns of European culture, which are introduced in Jorn's article on 'Mind and Sense'. No. 3 of *The Situationist Times* dealt with the 'interlaced' pattern of 'overlapping situations.' No. 4 deals with the 'ring and or chain' pattern, which is most clearly found in the Olympic rings and in Lenin's statement"—which is quoted earlier in the journal—"which is in our opinion the Byzantine and Russian pattern"—this is one of the things that comes from Jorn's dividing into these patterns of culture—"We do not want to make any statements about the three patterns neither in a so-called 'symbolist' way nor in



Jacqueline de Jong from the film *So ein Ding muss Ich auch haben*, 1961.

a scientific one, even though some of the contributions might show a certain tendency in one way or another. All we try to show here in an artistic way is a certain connection of the three patterns with topological aspects. It is up to the reader if he wants, to make his own conclusions.” So you kind of leave it open.

JdJ: This is exactly what it was about. What Jorn did—or tried to do—is expressed in his Comparative

Vandalism project. The books which are being published by a Walter König edition in Germany now on this topic are I believe far from the original concept and not very well done. I don’t think Jorn would have liked them. His books were really comparative studies on the *Völkerwanderung* time. He started off in Gotland—well, historically starting really in Iceland or even in Greenland, and continuing through the Visigoths and all these other

people who migrated down to Africa and the Americas. The whole of Europe has been on the move during these ancient times, for 10,000 years if not longer. In all these places we see the same megaliths, menhirs, dolmen, interlaces or other inscriptions and drawings, similar objects all. It is very clear that this sort of culture has been spread from north to south from east to west and not the other way around, and that has nothing to do with yes or no to Europe. That simply is a fact. There is nothing political about that. Of course, Jorn made very clear anti-nationalist texts.

KK: Yes he did.

JdJ: There were some texts in Danish that very obviously showed his point of view as being an internationalist. Danish politics and even the Danish left wing—I hope people remember that term—were officially very nationalist in that period. And that’s why there was this *nej* against Europe from the left people.

KK: Yes, but also from Jorn.

JdJ: Yes, but that’s because Europe was at that moment a tiny little Europe. It was not big enough. I think, if he would have lived to see the larger Europe as it’s going to

become now, even if Turkey would be in it... the bigger Europe gets, the more it will look like Europe was historically during for example the reign of Charlemagne, who wanted this enormous Europe! In a way this was also Jorn’s idea, this was his concept of Europe and not this small cut-into-pieces one. Would you agree?

KK: Yes. But I think it’s very complicated because Jorn’s recovery of the transmission of Nordic cultural elements throughout Europe is one thing—and it’s extremely important and groundbreaking as you say—but his suggestions about the distinct identities of modern Nordic, Latin, or so-called Byzantine peoples, in texts like “Mind and Sense” or *Alfa og Omega*, is another, and those are precisely the texts that get quoted when Jorn’s work is shown.

One final question: how far did *The Situationist Times* circulate, as far as you know? Did it get all around Europe? Did it get to America?

JdJ: Yes, sure. The distribution as I mentioned before was widely international. We—the Internationale Situationniste—had Wittenborn as bookseller in New York. They were also selling *The*

Situationist Times, and it was distributed all over Europe. I must say I had a problem with Rhodos because of their distribution and in the matter of receiving the payments, concerning the last issue. Issue 6 consisted of lithographs made by 32 artists; everyone had the same space and the same colors to use on stones printed by Danish printer Peter Bramsen in Paris. They had to come back three times to make their prints. Some artists only came once, like Matta and Lam, and therefore they only have black and white images. That's not so important. But the thing was that a friend of ours, Walasse Ting, had made a fantastic huge portfolio called *1¢ Life*. I had the idea of doing something similar, only his book was very big, very expensive. I said to Jorn, I would like to make something similar but more modest thus less expensive, in a smaller size, in a way as a document of what was going on among artists in our surrounding in Paris at that moment, to provide a sort of image for later on. It would be a snapshot of that moment. It circulated all

around. But we also did it to make money for the next issue, because I wanted to be independent and I didn't want to have to use paintings to pay for the printing all the time. The next issue was going to be on wheels. We were preparing it again with material from the archive of the SICV.

KK: More like the topological issues?

JdJ: Yes. I still have got the materials for issue 7. It never came out because the distributor Rhodos who distributed the journal all over the world never paid the book binder. I asked a lawyer to address the situation and lost the case along with *The Situationist Times*. That was 1970. The day this happened one copy of number 6 was on auction in Amsterdam and sold for 750 fl. while the selling prize had been 17.50 fl. in the bookshop! It was bought by a well-known gallery and put on the walls as an exhibition of 32 lithographs, evidently without my knowledge.

This conversation took place at the Expect Anything Fear Nothing Conference, Copenhagen, March 2007.

THE SELF-MYTHOLOGISATION OF THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL

Stewart Home

There are a lot of ways in which one might approach the Situationist International, but in this instance I'm going to start with a personal account which looks at why the French end of 'Situationism' is better known than its northern European manifestations. I first came across the Situationist International in the late seventies when as a teenager I attended meetings of the London Workers' Group (an anti-Bolshevik left-communist forum). Someone gave me a pamphlet of *The Revolution of Everyday Life* Part 2 by Raoul Vaneigem. This was an edition of the book published in two parts, and lacking the first part of the text I found the argument within it pretty hard to follow. I asked various people about it and was told that this was the total revolutionary critique and that if I couldn't understand it I must be stupid. I was 17 and not that stupid, but I'd made the mistake of asking ex-public school boys (that is, privately educated kids) in their twenties who attended the London Workers' Group about Vaneigem. I suspect they didn't understand Situationist theory too well themselves. That said, there were also some real workers in the group... and the more interesting among them were trying to synthesise the best of the Dutch and German Communist left (essentially the council communism of Anton Pannekoek, Herman Gorter and Paul Mattick) with the best of the Italian communist left (Bordigism). The Situationists were just one strand within council communism, and the upper class boys with a fetishistic interest in Debord and Vaneigem were considerably less sophisticated than those curious about the texts of other figures such as Jean Barrot or Jacques Camatte (who were creating the most elaborated fusion of left-communist currents

at this time). At the end of the 1970s information about the communist left was hard to come by in the UK outside forums such as the London Workers' Group; today, of course, anyone who wants to know about Amadeo Bordiga or whatever can find information on Wikipedia or elsewhere on the web.

In the late seventies Vaneigem was more popular than Debord in Anglo-American radical circles, largely I think because he was easier to read. Things really turned around for Debord and the Situationists 'thanks' to a series of unhappy accidents. In France the key event was the murder of Debord's patron Gerald Lebovici in 1984. Lebovici's death was a personal tragedy for Debord, but at the same time it catapulted him into the public eye, particularly when vindictive reporters falsely suggested he was the murderer. In the Anglo-American world the key event in bringing about a 'popular' revival of interest in the Situationists were the spurious suggestions of various journalists that they'd influenced the punk rock phenomenon; this began with Dave and Stuart Wise making these kinds of connections in their pamphlet "The End of Music", was next picked up by Fred and Judy Vermorel in the second edition of their *Sex Pistols* biography, and has since become a stock-in-trade of hacks such as Tricia Henry and Clinton Heylin.

This alleged Situationist-punk connection was made through the London based 'revolutionary' group King Mob, a loose network of people which included Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren, graphic designer Jamie Reid and biographer Fred Vermorel on its outer fringes (and with the authors of "The End of Music" closer to its inner core). A somewhat problematic partial reprint of King Mob material can be found in *King Mob Echo: English Section of the Situationist International* edited by Tom Vague. King Mob actually had very little to do with 'Situationism' and to really understand the genesis of this group one needs to know about the Black Mask and Motherfucker collectives from the Lower East Side of New York. Black Mask emerged from the New York Surrealist Group and the American Anarchist Group in the mid-sixties. Black Mask's brand of political neo-Dada was of sufficient interest to the Situationists in Paris for Debord to consider franchising them as the American section of his

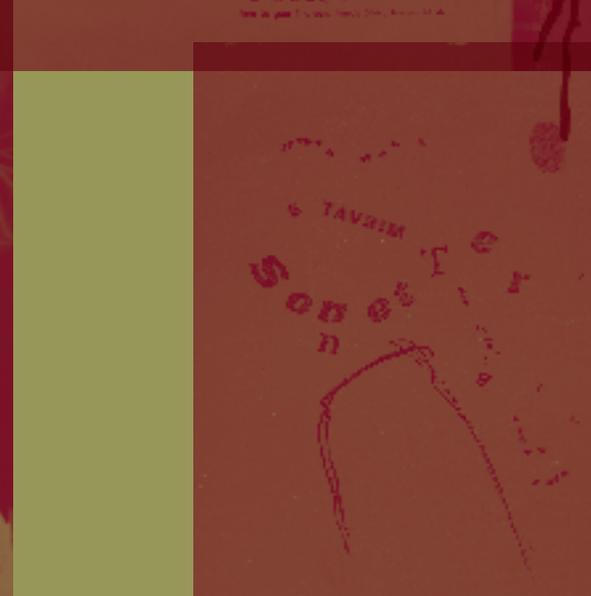
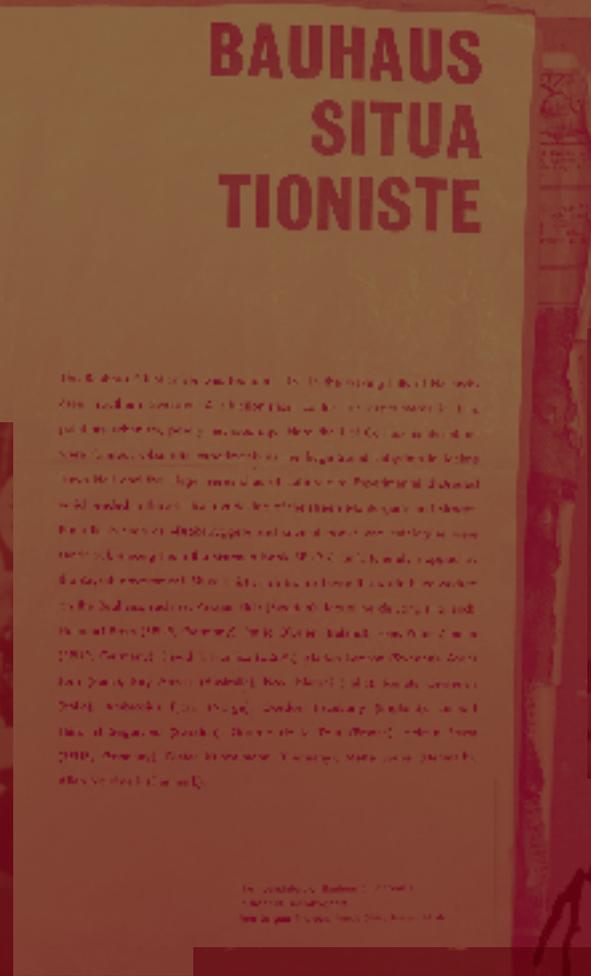
organisation. But after a considerable amount of manipulation on the part of Tony Verlaan (a Black Mask fellow traveller, who went on to become a member of the American section of the Situationist International), the Debordists broke with Ben Morea, who was a central figure in both Black Mask and the slightly later Motherfuckers. This, in turn, led to the expulsion of the English section of the Situationist International for remaining in contact with Morea. From their early days as the British end of *Rebel Worker*, and then as *Heatwave*, Chris Gray and Charlie Radcliffe, who constituted the dynamic element within the English section, were far closer to the activism of the Black Mask group than the acerbic intellectualism of the mother cell in Paris. After his expulsion from the Situationist International, Chris Gray found himself at the centre of a group of Notting Hill (west London) based freaks known as King Mob. Charlie Radcliffe resigned from the SI before this expulsion due to an increasing involvement in drug dealing (cannabis and LSD) and then being forced on the run for producing counterfeit currency (although actually the dollar bills he'd been printing were a medium for anti-Vietnam war slogans and were passed around hippie circles as propaganda, they weren't intended to be convincing enough to be mistaken for actual tender).

Black Mask also published a magazine of the same name, and the *Black Mask* magazine contained a mixture of snippets on contemporary struggles and the historical avant-garde; it was put together by Ben Morea and Ron Hahne with input from others around them (A reprint of this material can be found in *Black Mask & Up Against The Wall Motherfucker: The Incomplete Works of Ron Hahne, Ben Morea & The Black Mask Group* edited by the Jacques Vaché Editorial Group, Unpopular Books & Sabotage Editions, London 1993). Working with a small number of friends, Morea and Hahne also disrupted art and literary events. Morea recalls some of these activities in an interview with Iain McIntyre included in *Up Against The Wall Motherfucker! An Anthology of Rants, Posters and More* (Homebrew Press, Melbourne 2007): "I used to disrupt art lectures at NYU to raise issues other than those that the lecturers wanted to discuss. As a result I was challenged to a debate by some of the academics. I remember that particular event had such a pretentious approach that we

had to do something. It was incredibly stratified and only meant for the elite and it seemed like they'd done everything possible to keep it away from the public at large. We handed out loads of leaflets advertising this free event with food and alcohol and they had to block off the streets all around because so many people showed up. We went down to the Bowery and handed out flyers so that all the drunks and street people would show up. [...] (Poet Ken) Koch was a symbol to us of this totally bourgeois, dandy world. Myself, Dan Georgakas, Alan Van Newkirk and some of the other Black Mask people went to one of his readings. I think I came up with idea to shoot him with a blank pistol. [...] We printed a leaflet and all it had on it was a picture of Leroi Jones with the words 'Poetry is revolution.' On the night when Alan shot the blank Koch fainted and everyone in the audience assumed he was dead and started screaming. Some people threw the leaflet from the balcony into the crowd and then we all left".

Morea got involved with Students for a Democratic Society, and the personnel in Black Mask's orbit expanded and changed, eventually morphing into a new group, Up Against The Wall Motherfucker. In 1968 during a New York garbage collectors strike, the Motherfuckers carted rubbish from the Lower East Side and dumped it in a fountain at Lincoln Center, an exclusive venue associated with high-brow culture. Through a campaign of disruption the group also briefly forced rock promoter Bill Graham to provide free weekly community nights at the Fillmore East; likewise, they cut fences at Woodstock in 1969, helping to transform the event into a free festival. In the early seventies The Motherfuckers disappeared from the New York scene and dispersed into various mainly rural communes. In late-sixties London, King Mob reworked the Motherfuckers humour and guerrilla theatrics to make it relevant to the situations they encountered in England. Among other things King Mob painted slogans all over Notting Hill, most famously "Same thing day after day—tube—work—dinner—work—tube—armchair—TV—sleep—tube—work—how much more can you take?—one in ten go mad—one in five cracks up", which was placed to be seen from tube trains travelling between Westbourne Park and Ladbroke Grove underground stations (a point at which the tracks run above ground).





Eline de Jong og Asger Jorn på fernisering af Jacques Prévert's collager, Paris ca. 1960

Nicht Hinein!
Ne pas se pencher au dehors
E pericoloso sporgersi!
Danger! Do not lean out!
Det är livsfarligt att luta sig ut!
Niel naar buiten hangen!

Paris: a wider "exhibition" of political intrigues and demonstrations, armed cam-
 in the streets, the bloody shadow of the Algerian war, OAS, FLN, dancing maidens and
 to show. Strikes, police raids, censorship, no garlic emity but a dark wicked trial, too
 to go to sleep, very dead and wounded.

Paris: when the Council Central held a meeting in the Internationale Situationiste
 on 10th and 11th February 1962, 129 Boulevard Saint-Germain — even here broke
 apart brother.

The council consisted of the 15 local members:

Eliseo Karamitros, Germany; Jacqueline de Jong, Holland; Angelo Flor, Ger-
 den; Jürgen Noss, Denmark; Guy Doreau, France; Louis Lanson, Germany;
 Robert van Erck, Belgium.

On the very first day of the meeting a pseudo-parallel situation was presented by
 the local council members declaring the German group of artists, such as Hans Zim-
 mer, Franz Fackler and Klaus Koenig, outside the Council of the Council Central. Their
 for the moment to be in the "SITU" of freedom of activity based on a systematic misunder-
 standing of the situation of these.

That was probably what they had to do right or concerned for, if we chose to adopt
 their just methods.

We went to the meeting, we prepared to outpass the SITU members, but in quite
 another way. We acted against all kinds of Situationist activity within the Council. The
 council meeting in Paris was well informed with a lot of people, which made an ample
 form of the wider meeting. An organization whose essential decision is based on the
 principle of debate is, in our opinion, not open with our interest of self-interest.
 This was a Situationist shade against us, which is impossible to the Situationists.
 To call in comrades from other countries only to find out a parallel matter in a not very
 useful method. This is completely only an outcome of the necessary policy
 of these four members, this is a good reason for the future of our movement, like of our
 Situationists.

It is not only pointless but ridiculous indeed to pull the emergency brake when the
 train has already stopped.

Paris 13th February 1962
 Jacqueline de Jong, Jürgen Noss, Angelo Flor

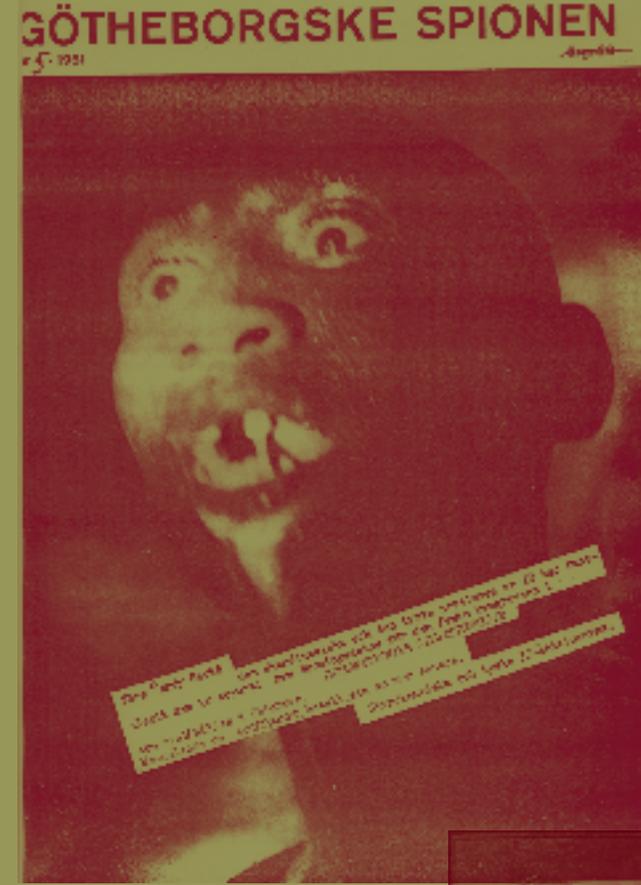


1 Internationale
 als internationale
 SYMPOSIUM 22, November

BREVKORT af SAM
 1962 af FESTEJÅRE



Konkret: Benny Baric,
 Mykonoskanalen 2,
 NAFTHAD,
 Østerbyvej



Dernst, april 1962.

1 Internationale situationistiske medlemmer sig har ved
 at de er ekskluderet af vor bevægelse nu grund af
 manglende medlemskab - holden indbyrdes af de
 Der sagt dato betragtes som fjende af vor bevægelse.
 1 Internationale situationistiske
 Dr. Robert A. Korbay L. Lanson P. Yvanovitch Dr. Robert





Torsdag 18. december 1965



Jørgen Nash (tv.) og Jens Jørgen Thorsen foran det famøse plankværk. Billedet er taget i går, da kunstnerne nægtede at male brødderne grå.

„Plankeværks-krig“ startet



Plankeværks- kunstnerne er nu anmeldt

Forfatteren Jørgen Nash og maleren Jens Jørgen Thorsen blev i går anmeldt til politiet af Gutenberghus. De vil blive sigtet efter politivedtægtens paragraf 53, der omhandler tilgrisning af husmure, plankeværker o. s. v.

Hvis bøden „ikke er for stor“, vil kunstnerne vedtage den, og der bliver ingen retssag ud af plankeværks-krigen. Gutenberghus lader nu selv plankeværket male gråt, og omkostningerne herfor vil blive krævet af kunstnerne.



SITUATIONISTISK INTERNATIONALE

Det gyldne år for Nash



tidløs
told garanti

NASH -American Super
Cabriolet sport
Beregnet for sin
toptrimmet,
speedometargaranti
den Sommeren imødekommer
suno kopressen
fabrikeny
cVERgeak

godt smag forskellen
tidløs elegance,
Dior forynger kvinden anno 1964
med den ny pigede linie.
Nash LUXUS MODEL 64
sikkerhedssæler på alle sæder
punkterfrie dæk & SPotlight
for nyder BEGGE KØN
Skal de køBE eller sælGE
en hurtig bil
med mange heste

hold dem til nash den holder til dem



Bauhaus Situationiste





SITUATION

ISTER I



KONSTEN



Den lille Havfrue var i dagene umiddelbart efter halshugningen blevet et tillebsstykke især for den københavnske befolkning.



King Mob were a countercultural phenomena cast in the same mould as the Motherfuckers. Any influence they exerted on the way Malcolm McLaren managed the Sex Pistols or Jamie Reid, who worked on the punk rock group's graphics, can hardly be considered 'Situationist'. The Debordists made this state of affairs quite clear in *Internationale Situationniste* 12 (translation from *Situationist International Anthology* edited by Ken Knabb, Bureau of Public Secrets, Berkeley 1981), where they stated: "a rag called KING MOB [...] passes, quite wrongly, for being slightly pro-Situationist". The SI was self-consciously (post-) 'avant-garde', whereas the wilder aspects of the sixties counter-culture that fed into punk bubbled up from a less sectarian, and, at the same time, less intellectually rigorous, underground. While the *Black Mask* journal ran odd fragments of Situationist prose translated into English, as King Mob would do later, these were reprinted alongside material put out by civil rights organisations and even the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation! Ben Morea and his group were deeply involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement and developed an analysis of the 'new proletariat' using the slogan 'nigger as class'. While *Black Mask* and the Motherfuckers succumbed to some, but by no means all, of the illusions prevalent among sixties activists in the US, the flip side of this was that they presented their ideas in an easily accessible, rather than an academic, form. This accessibility led to the flavour of their gestural politics being effortlessly transmitted to the 'blank generation', whereas the acerbic intellectualism of the Situationists was completely alien to the average British teenager in the late seventies. Besides plagiarising virtually all their graphics from Motherfucker sources, King Mob expended considerable energy in eulogising their chief source of inspiration.

Rock journalist Greil Marcus doesn't even mention *Black Mask* or the Motherfuckers in his pop culture book *Lipstick Traces*, which is one of many to incorrectly link punk rock to the Situationist International. However, Marcus does mention King Mob; after all, they are the mythical punk-Situationist 'connection', and this is part of what he's got to say about them: "The group threw a potlatch in Selfridges, with a man dressed up as Santa Claus giving away the department store's toys to throngs of happy children; it accomplished Strasbourg-style detournement when

the children were forced to witness the shocking sight of one of Santa's helpers placed under arrest". Marcus can't, or won't, acknowledge that this prank was first pulled by the Motherfuckers in New York; King Mob simply copied it; I understand it was also staged in Denmark at a later date. That said the Motherfuckers, via King Mob, were hardly the most immediately accessible aspect of the sixties counter-culture waiting to inspire the average late seventies teenage 'punk', while the Situationist 'influence' is completely negligible. What would inevitably be encountered by anyone trailing around the London rock circuit at this date (as I was) were the musicians and sound crews clustered around the Deviants, the Pink Fairies, the Edgar Broughton Band, Hawkwind etc, all of whom had been stalwarts of the underground free festival scene. However, despite there being no real link between punk rock and the Situationist International, the mythology about this that emerged in the eighties provided the group with a (phantom) stalking horse within popular culture and greatly aided their historication (particularly in the Anglo-American world); whereas, the legend of the theoretical 'coherence' of the SI is much more a product of the sixties and seventies and initially very much the invention of a tight circle clustered around Debord.

The pantomimes around who should be allowed to join or remain in Debord's version of the Situationist International are as well documented as they are ridiculous. Debord's 'absolute' breaks with a number of his one-time comrades were both arbitrary and very often simply a matter of public display; for example he maintained a personal relationships with Ralph Rumney after expelling him from the Situationist International and being absurdly over-demonstrative in public about how he would have nothing to do with him. There were shenanigans of this type involving French Situationists, but perhaps nothing was more ridiculous than Debord's hand wringing over his relationships with various Scandinavian Situationists. According to one of the more amusing Situationist Bauhaus legends, after the 1962 split in the International, Debord was desperate to uncover the 'real' identity of Ambrosius Fjord who'd 'signed' several 'Nashist' manifestos. Ambrosius Fjord was actually the name of Jørgen Nash's horse, which was allegedly bought with money obtained from the

fraudulent sale of a fake painting. Since J.V. Martin was the only remaining Scandinavian in Debord's Situationist International, he was charged with the task of investigation. Martin, who was in on the joke, never revealed to Debord that Ambrosius Fjord was actually Nash's nag, which resulted in the French Situationists becoming ever more crazed and desperate in their desire to uncover the identity of this mystery 'man'.

While the effectiveness of the Ambrosius Fjord prank may have been exaggerated in its constant retelling, Martin was on the editorial board of *The Antinational Situationist*, a journal with which the 2nd Situationist International attempted to relaunch itself two years after Debord's Situationist International was dissolved. Given the anarchist character of *The Antinational Situationist*, including apologetics for Bakuninist methods of organisation, Martin's ongoing involvement with Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen tarnishes Debord's 'rigorous' image every bit as much as Khayati's simultaneous membership of both the Situationist International and the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (and when Khayati was finally expelled Debord failed to criticise him for joining what was in practice a bourgeois army, instead he simply noted that the SI disallowed dual memberships of this type). Likewise, after the 1962 split, Debord put Martin in charge of "official" Situationist activities in Scandinavia, but since all communication was conducted in French—a language Martin didn't speak—everything had to be done through intermediaries.

It could almost go without saying that Debord was a comic figure who was unable to understand anything happening beyond the end of his own nose; the way in which he attempted to replicate the organisational structure he'd established in Paris elsewhere in the world shows he had no understanding of how different Northern Europe and North America was at that time from his native France. In England he recruited Chris Gray and Charlie Radcliffe as London activists to do his donkey work, and then put them together with a couple of English students who hung around with him in Paris; Debord didn't actually tell T.J. Clark and Donald Nicholson-Smith they were supposed to control Radcliffe and Gray, and when things went wrong they were expelled for failing in a task they didn't know they'd

been charged with. Likewise in North America, Tony Verlaan was the individual Debord expected to keep local activists Bruce Ellwell and Robert Chasse in order, but here as elsewhere things went disastrously wrong because the United States (like London or Scandinavia) is not France—and Debord was incapable of understanding that anywhere could be any different to the ‘Platonic’ model of his beloved homeland. If Machiavelli had known about Debord, he would have been turning in his grave. Ditto Marx, since in many ways Debord is a paradigmatic post-modernist, and it can certainly be argued that he replaces communism with a simulacrum in the form of theory. The starting point for this latter argument is Jean Barrot’s observations about the Situationists addressing the circulation of commodities at the expense of any analysis of their production (in “Critique of the Situationist International”, first published in *Red-eye* #1, Berkeley, 1979). Thus since Debord deals with capitalism on the level of surface appearance, his opposition to it lacks sufficient “depth” to make it “real”, and functions instead as a simulacrum of communist praxis

Moving on, as Laura Romild and Jacques Vincent note in *Echecs Situationnistes* (Imprimerie de Copedith, Paris 1988), at the heart of Debord’s self-mythologisation of himself as an intransigent revolutionary, is the famous appeal for a general occupation strike and the formation of workers’ councils published by the first Sorbonne Occupation Committee, with Situationist participation, on 16 May 1968. However, what Debord’s supporters tend to overlook is that the appeal, coming after the start of the strikes, had no effect on the unfolding of events! And so, while Debord and his apologists have long claimed he and his version of the SI played a major role in the May events, any informed and objective observer is unlikely to take such assertions seriously. Debord as a romantic figure appeals to Francophile intellectuals. He was a good literary stylist but hardly a deep or original thinker. I brought this up in conversation with early English Situationist Ralph Rumney in an interview I conducted in Paris in 1989:

HOME: To return to Debord, what I find interesting about him is this sense that he always needs a collaborator, whether it be Wolman, Jorn, Vaneigem or Sanguinetti.

RUMNEY: Sanguinetti is where he met his match. He got a collaborator who was smarter than he was. Sanguinetti is absolutely brilliant.

HOME: There’s a figure who I feel is always lurking in the background of the situationist saga and that’s Michèle Bernstein. I get this feeling that she played a key role within the movement, but I can’t specify exactly what it was she contributed.

RUMNEY: You can’t put your finger on it because she won’t tell you and she wouldn’t thank me if I told you. Since she was my wife, I’ve got to respect her wishes. I can tell you various little things. She typed all the “Potlatches”, all the “IS” journals and so on. One of the curious things about the IS was that it was extraordinarily anti-feminist in its practice. Women were there to type, cook supper and so on. I rather disapproved of this. Michèle had, and has, an extraordinarily powerful and perceptive mind which is shown by the fact that she is among the most important literary critics in France today. A lot of the theory, particularly the political theory, I think originated with Michèle rather than Debord, he just took it over and put his name to it.

In my view, the theory came from a wider circle than that suggested by Rumney, and the strength of the early Situationist International was precisely the very different contributions made by figures such as Asger Jorn and Attila Kotanyi who had participated in struggles against Nazi and Soviet repression, and had a far deeper and broader experience of working class self-organisation than Debord. But writing history is all too often a process of radical simplification, and for bourgeois intellectuals it is easier and more convenient to treat the theories and practices thrown up by broad movements as the creations of ‘great’ men; these hacks would risk losing their cushy jobs if they provided a realistic assessment of the complex contradictions of capitalist societies and the struggles of those who seek to negate them. Thus we see the attribution of much sixties

radicalism (cf. Black Mask and Up Against The Wall Motherfucker among many others) to the Situationist International, and the collapsing of the activities of this later group into the figure of Debord.

History is never the totality of what actually happened but a selection of fragments woven together into a comprehensible story. That said, some histories are still superior to others because they use verifiable data and the interpretations they offer are tenable. What is relevant is always subject to interpretation, but the selection of data is also necessarily limited to what's available to those engaged in constructing histories. If information isn't readily accessible in English (or at least French) then for many Anglo-American researchers it might as well not exist. Likewise, the idea of Eurocentrism needs a further refinement if we are to understand why the activities of the Anglo-French Situationists are far better known in Britain, France and North America than those of Scandinavian Situationists. Not only has Europe traditionally seen itself as the centre of the world, but Britain, France and Germany, tend to view themselves as constituting the hub or core of this imperialist construct. Thus not simply language barriers but prejudice too has inhibited widespread discussion of the Situationist Bauhaus. Another factor is that since the dissemination of histories has traditionally been in written form, those constructing them tend to be biased towards textual sources and against visual ones—and it might be argued that although the French Situationists produced the most polished texts of this bifurcated movement, their visual work was weaker than that of the Scandinavian situationists. When talking about the Situationists in Scandinavia these are good starting points from which to look at why they have been ignored and neglected. The activities of those involved in the Situationist Bauhaus are as valid and ridiculous as those of Debord and his friends in Paris, and I for one would certainly like to know more about them...

THE ARTISTIC REVOLUTION: ON THE SITUATIONISTS, GANGSTERS AND FALSIFIERS FROM DRAKABYGGET

Jakob Jakobsen

"Artists are an army of liars and swindlers in society".

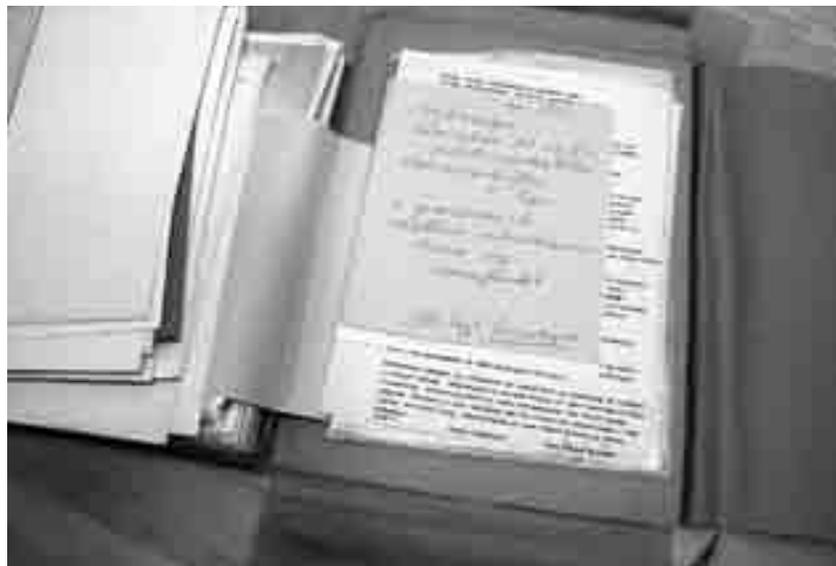
Asger Jorn, *Pour La Forme*, 1958

**"We steal and borrow as we like. We administer our legacy.
We even take the freedom to play with it".**

Jørgen Nash, Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Hardy Strid, *CO-RITUS* manifesto, 1962

The Nash-Jorn Archive

The Nash-Jorn archive at the Royal Library in Copenhagen holds documents, scrapbooks, letters and photos documenting the work of the two brothers and their collaboration from childhood until 1963, when their close relationship was severed. The archive comes from Drakabygget and Jørgen Nash submitted it to the Royal Library in 1981. It is very comprehensive and mainly contains material related to Jørgen Nash's activities as an author, artist and provocateur until 1995, when the last documents were added. The archive also holds several folders with legal documents. These consist of carefully organised papers of a private nature titled "Police relations and court cases etc. reg. J.N. as private person" and papers concerning "court cases and processes of cultural-political character, often regarding more persons than J.N.". There is thus in the Nash-Jorn archive a long string of documents regarding "the processes etc. between the Situationists and society", as Nash has written on one of the sub-folders.



Nash-Jorn-archive: The folder with the documents relating to “the processes ect. between the Situationists and society”.

For Jørgen Nash, the ‘process between the Situationists and society’ lasted mainly between 1962 and the mid-1970s. This ‘process’ took many shapes. It often centred on economic relations, and sometimes involved disturbances of public order. There are, amongst the documents, copies of the judgements from cases against Nash, often with his partner-in-crime the art critic, film director, artist and fix-all Jens Jørgen Thorsen. There is even an old ticket with what must have been unpaid fines. The archive also holds a good amount of correspondence with lawyers representing colleagues with whom Nash had collaborated. These letters mostly concern financial and copyright issues. Even those closest to him, like his brother Asger Jorn and Hardy Strid, are represented in the letters through their lawyers. The legal documents bear witness to countless conflicts, not only with the law, but also the ruling norms for good behaviour in a society characterised by private property and bourgeois individualism. Nash’s transgressions were not, however, based on a political intention in a traditional sense

but rather went beyond the political, challenging the basic norms of the emerging consumer society of his time.

When Asger Jorn in *Pour la Forme* wrote that “artists are an army of liars and swindlers in society”, it was in order to emphasise that the free artistic experiment in search of the ‘as yet unknown’ necessarily has to breach all accepted truths and given norms to be truly free. As a consequence of this radical experimental attitude the ‘free artists’ would necessarily be perceived as liars and swindlers ‘in society’, because the results of this experimental attitude would appear incomprehensible to that society. *Pour la Forme* was published by the Situationist International in 1957-58 and was edited in collaboration with Guy Debord. The book was the first theoretical work to delineate a radical experimental attitude that was to become practice in the Situationist movement. “The aim of this work was to prove that an artistic method must be shaped as an experimental dialectic; and to sketch out the direction that is to be followed in order to combine the dialectical and the experimental attitude”, writes Jorn in the prologue to *Pour la Forme*. Thus defined, this was to become the framework for the conflicted intellectual dynamic among the small group of revolutionaries of the Situationist movement. Jorn was however aware of the paradoxical nature of the combination of dialectical thought and experimental attitude. He was persistently critical of the abstraction of dialectics, which he perceived as the opposite of an experimental attitude situated in the concrete phenomenal world that he sought to investigate. Nevertheless Jorn took contradictions as a challenge and the unlikely combination should therefore probably be understood as an attempt to include Hegelian dialectical thinking into the foundation for a revolutionary artistic methodology. Jorn’s brother-in-arms Debord was a stern dialectician and Jorn wanted to integrate this perspective in the International.

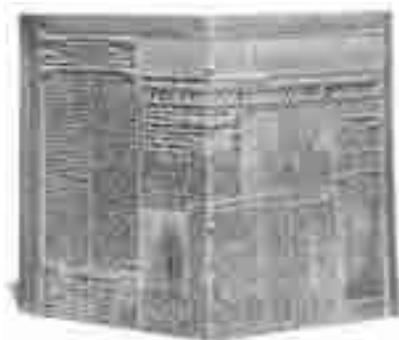
It was Lis Zwick, Jørgen Nash’s widow, who gave me permission to browse through the Nash-Jorn archive, as it is not accessible to the general public. The material is comprehensive and it was at times quite a detective’s job to make head or tail of all the papers and just as hard to fully grasp the incredibly high level of activity surrounding Nash. But it would not be wrong to claim that Nash and his accomplices in their chaotic

activities were navigating the uncompromisingly experimental field that Jorn defined as beyond the conditioning of the known world. A field, according to Jorn, that is based on 'pure chance', on 'nothing'.

Fin de Copenhagen

In May 1957, Guy Debord, Michele Bernstein and Asger Jorn visited Jørgen Nash from Paris. At the time Nash was living in Tisvildeleje, north of Copenhagen. Jorn had invited Debord to Copenhagen to patch up a disagreement they had had regarding an exhibition in Galerie Taptoe in Brussels in February that year. Jorn showed them Silkeborg Art Museum on the way, which then held a relatively small collection of his paintings. During the stay in Copenhagen Jorn also visited the Permild and Rosengreen print workshop where he had produced many of his lithographic prints and several of his books over the years. Jorn's creative energy is legendary and he made use of this visit by throwing himself into yet another publication. With Debord, he engaged in cutting, pasting and splashing together the collage-book *Fin de Copenhagen* in a hectic process that, according to Verner Permild, only took 24 hours. Jorn did want to pull the art-sceptical Debord in a more artistic direction and now the chance had come. They raided a Copenhagen newsagent of newspapers and magazines, using this raw material of mass cultural pseudo-communication as a point of departure for a process of detournement. Together with Debord as "Conseiller

technique pour le détournement", Jorn organised text and image fragments taken from the papers and magazines over the pages in small poetic and sometimes absurd sequences. Standing on a tall ladder, Jorn poured print colour directly onto the printing plates, producing random Tachist formations of red, green and blue colour blotches that provided the backgrounds for the collages. Every book was bound



One of the multiple versions of the cover of *Fin de Copenhagen*, 1957.

in discarded printing blocks that Permild had got hold of from one of the large newspaper houses. In this way every version of *Fin de Copenhagen* was unique and wrapped in some leftover pieces of the impoverished world of the spectacle that Debord and Jorn sought to destroy. *Fin de Copenhagen* became the wild atlas of an inhuman city. This hectic visit to Denmark was Nash's first encounter with both Michele Bernstein and Guy Debord who, together with Jorn, some months later took part in the establishment of the Situationist International in Cosio d'Arroscia.

Potlatch: The Art of Giving

When Jorn was not in Paris he spent most of his time in the Italian village Albissola on the Mediterranean coast, which had become one of his regular lairs since the spring of 1954. Here his local friend and colleague Enrico Baj had given him an issue of *Potlatch*, the Lettrist International's stencilled publication. *Potlatch* was, in accordance with the name, of course free and the first few issues comprised only a few pages with short poetical statements and small games. It was in this way that the Lettrists' activities in Paris grabbed Asger Jorn's attention. As he wrote in a letter to Baj after receiving the publication: "*Potlatch* is very interesting, but somewhat confusing". Jorn sent a letter to *Potlatch* in order to establish contact, and Michele Bernstein and Guy Debord answered in a letter on the 16th of November 1954: "We are very grateful to get to know your practice in a struggle which is also our own. The necessity of utilising the fundamental powers in architecture for passionate purposes is one of the founding proclamations in our movement. Beyond any artistic ambition we will establish a new form of life. In this pursuit, architecture (Bauhaus) appears to be one of the tools one can use. We are united precisely in this idea that existence in general is without meaning, but that it is possible for us to construct substantial games. We will in the end prove to be right, in architecture as in other respects". Already in this first exchange art as an objective is problematised by Debord and Bernstein, a position that Asger Jorn and Guy Debord were never to agree on, and which would form so much of the conflictual dynamic that would characterize their collaboration, as well as the wider Situationist movement.

The letter from Debord and Bernstein ends with: “We are very willing towards any collaboration that we can mutually engage in and also for commencing a quest, with you, towards a common program”. Two years later the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus and the Lettrist International met at the Congress for Free Artists in Alba in northern Italy, which marked the beginning of the development ‘towards a common program’. The congress had been organised by the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus in which Jorn was the driving force together with, amongst others, the pharmacist, local politician and artist Pinot Gallizio, who lived in Alba. Here the foundations were laid for merging the two so-called movements, which happened the year after with the establishment of the Situationist International in July 1957. But an actual common revolutionary programme was never quite achieved in this newly united avant-garde organisation, as the internal contradictions ran too deep. This applied at least in the first five years of the movement. The ‘movement’ comprised a small handful of art-oriented people who had inspired each other and became friends, but whose conditions were very different. The fact that the Situationists in the early years did not manage to produce an actual programme is potentially the most interesting aspect of their practice. Although there were powers within the group that persistently sought to judge the activities of its members in a programmatic way, the totality of texts, art works and experiments that were produced the first years of the International up until 1962 remain an incomplete and contradictory openness. To search for one Situationist theory would be pointless, just as it would be to look for one Situationist art form. Their shared interests could perhaps only be defined negatively by “the idea that existence in general is without meaning”. This links to the movement’s roots in Existentialism rather than the Marxism that increasingly gained ground after the foundation of the International.

Representation and Recognition

Negation of bourgeois culture and attacks on the bourgeois state and its laws had been an integral part of the 20th century cultural avant-garde’s modus operandi. The old world and its values had to be destroyed by all means

possible. Although the motley crowd of young insurgents who gathered in the Situationist International in 1957 probably understood themselves to be a continuation of this avant-garde tradition, the criminal and unruly attitude was to be played down with the constitution of the International. Now the means to secure the success of the new organisation had to be found. Guy Debord was brought in for interrogation by the French police immediately after the first issue of the *International Situationniste* in 1958 was published. The police had the powers to dissolve subversive and criminal groups, but Debord explained that the Situationist International was in fact an artistic tendency and had never been an organisation, thus it couldn’t be dissolved. Debord consciously sought to avoid the scandal that a prohibition would entail. Public outrage and official criminalisation had otherwise been the trademarks of the cultural avant-garde. But with the Situationist International the aim was to establish a broader and less sectarian organisation where art and the artist were to play a central role. There was however no agreement on the political role of art. For Debord and Bernstein it was mainly a question of using the ‘fine arts’ as a tactical instrument that would legitimise and pave the way for the expansion of the movement. Jorn also wanted the movement to spread, but for him the liberation of art was the main purpose. Many of the members of the new International were already in the late ‘50s moving into more conventional career paths and it is evident in Debord’s correspondence how the collaboration of the Situationist International was systematically used by the visual artists associated with it to build their careers in the European art scene. The artists of the International were industriously showing in well-established and commercial galleries. In May 1959 three of the prominent members showed in three of the most prestigious gallery spaces in Europe: Gallizio, together with Mellanotte, showed the “Anti-Material Cave” in the gallery Rene Drouin in Paris; Jorn showed his modifications in Galerie Rive Gauche also in Paris, while Constant presented architectural models and spatial constructions at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. These places were highly renowned institutions on the progressive side of bourgeois culture. The written practice in the new organisation moved in a similar direction. The poetic unruliness was toned down and textual

production took on a more conventional critical form increasingly inspired by the language of political theory.

The tendency was thus towards a more conventional distribution of roles and division of labour in the new organisation. There was a slow drifting away from the aesthetic and experimental life-praxis that many of the avant-garde's earlier pioneers had promoted and exemplified. Identities became more identifiable: artists were artists and the political theoreticians were political theoreticians. Thus the Situationist International moved—in contrast to what Debord told the French police in 1958—more and more towards the traditional political group. For Debord the Situationist International was actually not an artistic tendency, but rather an attempt to create a more homogeneous political organisation. In the article “One Step Back” which was published in *Potlatch* in the spring of 1957, Debord reflects upon the consequences it would have for practice to form such a new unified international avant-garde organisation: “The broadening of our forces and the possibility (and necessity) of genuinely international action must lead us to profoundly change our tactics. We must no longer lead an external opposition based only on the future development of issues close to us, but seize hold of modern culture in order to use it for our own ends”.

Jørgen Nash's Acceptance into the Situationist International

The production of *Mémoires* in the spring of 1959 once again brought Guy Debord to Copenhagen. *Mémoires* was, like *Fin de Copenhague*, a collage-book produced at the Permild and Rosengreen printmakers, but this time Debord was the main author while Jorn was responsible for the ‘structures portantes’ (‘support structures’). Once again Asger Jorn used Tachist colour blotches, this time more carefully controlled by drawing in the colour with a matchstick. Debord's text was collaged from cut-ups of sentences and illustrations from French magazines and newspapers. The text collage stimulates, like Debord's films from the same period, a reflection on the insurrectionist and restless life in Paris' St. Germain des Prés area, of which he was a part in the early 1950s. The text is a retrospective of the period from June 1952 until September 1953, hence the title *Mémoires*. During the stay Jørgen Nash participated in several discussions

with Jorn and Debord and this paved the way for Nash's acceptance into the Situationist International as secretary for the Scandinavian section. With Nash's acceptance into the International, the spontaneity and unruliness of the heroic avant-garde was once more represented in the group, although he probably initially served obediently as secretary. *Mémoires* was published in 1959 on the international workers day the 1st of May and in the press release Jørgen Nash signed “For the Scandinavian Section of the Situationist International, Jørgen Nash”. The press release is a long introductory text about Guy Debord in which the détournement-technique that was used in the production of the book is explained:

There is no doubt that he, with this volume of memoirs, delineates new ways and paths for future memoirists. He depicts, with no hesitation, three months of his muddled past and does it so realistically that no-one can come point their finger and say that they don't believe this or that, that this is not typical for a guy of that age, that he must have made that up himself... The situation is in fact that he in the interest of truth and typology does not use a word, a type, an image or a sentence that has not been used at least a hundred million times before by other writers and fragile souls. This naked realism is a result of the fact that this book of memoirs is produced exclusively from prefabricated elements ...

The press release describes clearly the ‘unpopular’ intentions of the book and introduces Guy Debord to the Danish public as an uncompromising author and avant-gardist:

... in a time where all civilised nations battle to achieve the most popularity, using industrial design and mass-production of art objects and home appliances in the world market, a very unpopular book would be a much-needed rarity. *Mémoires* is such a book, its author belongs to the arts' hard core of anti-designers, [...] There is too much plastic, we prefer sandpaper.

The last sentence was a reference to the fact that *Mémoires* was bound in sandpaper.

Real Communism

As second in the series of internal reports of the Situationist International Asger Jorn's text *Critique of Economic Policy* was published in 1959. The first issue in the series was Debord's call to arms of the Situationist International: *Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organisation and Action*. Asger Jorn had already in *Pour la Forme* mentioned that there was no autonomous Marxist aesthetics; Marx, according to Jorn, had never managed to develop it. While Debord's report was an attempt at establishing a political program for the Situationist International, Jorn attempted with his text *Critique of Economic Policy* to develop an autonomous aesthetics for the Situationist movement. Marx's political economy served as raw material in this eclectic process. Inspired by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's analysis of the construction of scientific thoughts, he criticised the foundation of the Marxist theory of the value-form, questioning the framework Marx uses to define value. Jorn places Marx's critique of capital's exchange/use value system against a radical emancipatory value that Jorn defines as 'human value'. Marx himself speculated about the fundamental human condition with the term 'species being' and one could conceive Jorn's 'human value' as a related to this perspective of a basic human life condition. But the *Critique of Economic Policy* does not lead to a new economic theory nor a new economic policy, but to an articulation of a revolutionary aesthetics of the human species.

The socialist as well as the capitalist rendering of life in terms of political economy is a reification of human value, according to Jorn. For Jorn the Scandinavian variant of socialism as well as the state socialism of the Soviet Union were similar to capitalism due to their shared emphasis on economic value. Only a transgression of all politics in a 'hyper-politics' can realise the 'human value': "A hyper-politics must tend towards the direct realisation of human nature". And this can only happen within the framework of what Jorn calls Communism: "The aim of artistic development is the liberation

of human values, through the transformation of human qualities into real values. And it is here that the artistic revolution opens up against socialist development, the artistic revolution which is linked to the communist project".

Jorn conceives of art as an activity that combines the singular with the social, where art is a kind of singular communicative act that in the encounter with the social (or "with the audience" as it was articulated by Jorn) realises human value. Jorn's artistic revolution is one that opens up a continuously changing and unbound experimental landscape where the relationship between the singular and the social is in constant flux.

In this way, Jorn places artistic communication at the root of human nature and at the intersection between individuality and sociality in a radical revision of the Marxist theoretical structure. The Marxist canon seems to place art in society's superstructure, determined by the relations of production. Jorn suggests instead that it is a hyper-economic, hyper-political and malleable condition for existence. For Jorn real communism is an aesthetics of total and unconditional experimentation beyond the restrictions of any social norm: "Real communism will be a leap into the domain of liberty, of values, of communication". For Jorn there was to be no program for life in the post-capitalist society, just radical experimental freedom. The working class, like many other Marxist concepts, plays a role in this revision as, for Jorn, it is in fact the worker's task, as a productively creative being, to transform the world, which recalls Marx's concept of 'free labour' with the overcoming of class differences and the division of labour.



Jorn as Karl Marx on the front cover of *Værdi og Økonomi*, containing the Danish version of *Critique of Economic Policy*, 1962.

The Drakabygget Farmhouse

The fact that Jorn and Nash placed such weight on experimental action meant that they wanted to realise the ideas of a liberatory life-praxis developed by the Situationists. This was especially the ‘constructed situation’ and the integral arrangement of the physical environment found in ‘unitary urbanism’ as well as the architectural ideas that Jorn already had expressed in the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus. With the purchase of the Drakabygget property in Sweden in December 1960 it became possible to try out many of the radical theories for new ways of living that the Situationists had been working out.

For Nash, the purchase of Drakabygget was an opportunity to get away from a monotonous life in the Copenhagen suburb Rødovre where he had washed up, after living in Tisvildeleje on the North coast of Sealand, Denmark for many years. He wanted to start a new existence, free from the emerging consumer society and its destructive relations. Economic pressures meant that he had “written himself to death” to earn enough money for rent and household expenses. Nash, who likened himself to the *Homo Ludens*—the playful human—suffered under the “welfare regime where one continuously has to invent new needs” as he had stated in one of the major newspapers of the time. And Nash had also found love in Sweden. He and the Swedish journalist Katja Lindell moved to Drakabygget in May 1961. The rhetoric around this new project was often more ambitious than the actual activities that occurred there, but there was no lack of experimental attitude and the purchase of the farm augured a new contradictory chapter in the story of the Situationist movement.

Drakabygget was a derelict farm—a so-called “ødegård”—in the southern part of Sweden. It was a large farm with four wings to the house, fifty-five acres of farming land and twenty-two acres of forest. Its history reached all the way back to the wars between Denmark and Sweden when the farm had been a so-called “Snaphane-gård”, which means a homestead for the Danish rebels. “Snaphane” was a 17th century term for the worst types of characters in society, referring to robbers and bandits. This was how the Swedish kingdom saw the Danish rebels. This history clearly suited Nash. The farm had been abandoned for five years and the courtyard



The Drakabygget farm in southern Sweden that Nash bought in 1960.

was allegedly full of old muscle-car wrecks. An earlier owner had used the buildings for toy production, so the farm purchase brought with it a large store of old wooden toys, among them wooden recorders that Nash was later to use in many of his assemblages. In this way Drakabygget provided the perfect homestead of the new avant-garde movement with its combination of play and rebellion.

Originally Nash had been looking for a house out by the coast, so Drakabygget was probably larger and further inland than he had originally envisaged. As Drakabygget was an agricultural farm, Nash and Lindell immediately saw the possibility of establishing an ambitious and self-sufficient international artist colony at the place—“a freedom house for the International avant-garde”, as Nash described it. Asger Jorn was during the first year involved in the ideas surrounding Drakabygget and he suggested that the place should be called the Nordic Bauhaus. He wanted to eventually turn it into the base of an institute that would handle his

research and mapping of '10,000 years of Nordic Folk Art'. This institute was later founded in Silkeborg with the name "Scandinavian Institute for Comparative Vandalism". Nash was meanwhile more interested in sustaining the connection with the Situationist movement and suggested the name "Bauhaus Situationniste Drakabygget". Printed on the first letterhead from Drakabygget was *Bauhaus Situationniste—Drakabygget Örkelljunga Sverige*—and at the bottom *Section Scandinave de l'internationale Situationniste*. This was how Drakabygget was initially presented. The purchase of Drakabygget had a powerful effect in Paris. Since 1957 the Situationist movement had been tending to increased specialisation and fewer concrete social and activist experiments. But with the purchase of Drakabygget an entirely new horizon for practical experimentation with new social relations and organisational structures was opened within the Situationist movement.

Nash was very aware that it would create problems in Paris to establish a new centre for Situationist experiments, shifting the movement's centre of gravity to the North. The Situationists in Paris were very restrictive about who was allowed to use the label and who could be categorised as such. But Nash largely sidelined these claims on ownership and sovereignty. He saw no reason to ask for permission and, without hesitation, gave Drakabygget the name "Bauhaus Situationniste". Presenting Drakabygget as a Situationist project meant that the Situationist genie was about to escape the Parisian bottle. Nash wanted to play with the concept and did not feel that there were any organisational ties restricting him. This crime against the discipline of the movement naturally became an issue for Debord and in the Nash-Jorn archive there is a letter from Jorn supposedly sent towards the end of 1961 after the Situationist Conference in Gothenburg in August, and after Jorn's withdrawal from the Situationist International:

Debord claims that Drakabygget was *not* discussed at the congress in Gothenburg and that the name Bauhaus Situationniste is therefore *impermissible*. If this is the case I fully agree with him especially as I have nothing to do with Situationism. *I beg you*



Jørgen Nash and Gordon Fazakerley working at Drakabygget, 1961.

therefore to discard this name from *everything* as I am not fond of using old bottles for new wine.

In the beginning Jorn had also been financially involved in Drakabygget, since Nash had hardly any money. As a kind of return for the flow of money it was the plan to build the so-called "Jorn Monumental Atelier", which was only slowly taking shape despite Jorn's substantial contribution. The loose administration of Jorn's money did not seem to be a problem for Nash nor for Jorn, who was known to generously redistribute his income

from art sales. However, there is a document in the Nash-Jorn archive, drafted by Jorn's lawyer Robert Mikkelsen in the mid-1960s, which attempts to clarify how much money actually went into the famous Atelier. The letter is evidence of a certain unease regarding Nash's unrestrained handling of Jorn's resources. Gordon Fazakerley, who was one of the first artists to move in to Drakabygget, also recounted how he and Nash had dug drainpipes into Drakabygget's farm land in order to obtain agricultural subsidies from the Swedish state. This grey economy that financed Drakabygget took another turn when Nash made himself an art dealer and sold art works made by the resident artists as well as pictures signed by Asger Jorn that Nash allegedly had manufactured himself.

Drakabygget as Commune

Asger Jorn was only involved in Drakabygget for a relatively short period before the final breach between him and Nash in 1963. He played a central role in the early development of the place. Similarly, his experimental aesthetic was a decisive inspiration for Nash and the precondition for the activities there. When Nash advertised the new free-space in the Danish and Swedish press he always remembered to also include his brother, who was becoming an internationally famous artist:

...together with his brother, the painter Asger Jorn, he [Nash] will here create a freedom house for the international avant-garde movement the "Situationists". "Drakabygget", as the farm has been named, is turned into a "Bauhaus" of the same kind as they have in, for example Germany and Italy, where international artists can work in peace. Many geniuses and much experimental art has had to stop due to financial problems—but these problems would for the "Situationists" be solved through agriculture and cattle-raising. Five months would go to agricultural work and the other seven would be dedicated to the arts.

But it was Nash and Lindell who lived there and it was their intention to run the place as a farm so the Situationist commune could be self-sufficient



Cultivation plan of Drakabygget signed by Jørgen Nash, probably early 1960s.



Katja Lindell ploughing at Drakabygget as presented in a Danish glossy magazine in 1961.

for food. This hope was never realised though, despite the attempts to drain the fields. A cultivation plan was made for the fields of Drakabygget with a wide array of produce to be grown, and there exist quite a few images of Nash and Lindell ploughing the fields or working in the forest. But this integration of work, art and life was probably too ambitious when one also hoped to be a part of an international avant-garde movement with frequent meetings and exhibitions around all of Europe.

In May 1961, immediately after Nash and Lindell moved to the farm, Nash wrote to Gruppe SPUR, the Situationist comrades in Munich,

inviting them for a summer stay at the Drakabygget. Hans Peter Zimmer replied that they just needed to publish issue 5 and 6 of their journal, after which they would like to come in July. But already with the publication of issue 5, which was about Unitary Urbanism, the SPUR group encountered problems and threats of legal persecution in Germany. Because of this the SPURists went into exile in Drakabygget and the Situationist centre thus began to take shape as a dynamic artist commune.

Apart from the SPURists, Nash and Lindell were also joined by Hardy Strid, a Swedish abstract painter that Nash had known since 1953. Strid brought with him a friend from his art-school years at Central Saint Martins in London, the painter Gordon Fazakerley, who lived with Strid, but spent much time at Drakabygget, where he worked on cleaning up and refurbishing the farm. He moved to the place in the summer/autumn period of 1961. Hardy Strid himself lived in Halmstad, a good ways away from Drakabygget, but used it as a meeting place and workshop together with the other painters who were staying at the farm during the summer of 1961. Many of his paintings from 1961-62 have the clear red frames from the marble games which were part of the toy manufacturing paraphernalia left over at the farm. Strid's paintings from the period have a special dynamic and experimental energy and his rough colour blotches are often intermixed with other objects such as nails or buttons. The physical world became a part of the image. As Gordon Fazakerley describes the artistic lifestyle at Drakabygget during the summer of 1961, "people were painting everywhere".

The two brothers wanted the new free space of avant-garde artists to have an effect in the broader public sphere, which was why they also wanted to publish a journal. In connection with the first publication of *Drakabygget—journal for art against atomic bombs, popes and politicians* Jorn and Nash co-authored and signed the leading article with the title "Det kan være nok" (Enough is enough). Here they promoted their new cultural platform with the words: "Participate in the protest against the oppression of artistic freedom of expression and read more about the questions in the new journal for art against atomic bombs, popes and politicians: *Drakabygget*".

In order to raise money for life in the commune some exhibitions were organised with Gruppe SPUR in Halmstad Kunstforening in the late summer of 1961 and with Jorn's gallery in Copenhagen, Galerie Birch, later the same year. In the catalogue from Copenhagen there is a reproduction of a letter from Asger Jorn to Børge Birch, the gallery owner: "Dear Børge, ... buy as many pictures from them as possible. They are people I believe in [...] yours truly, Asger Jorn". One of the purposes of establishing the commune of Drakabygget was to extract oneself from the labour-based economy and consumer society in the city, but money had to be found somehow to support the life of the 'free' artists at Drakabygget. Nobody frowned at commercial activity as long as it served the purpose of the artistic revolution.

Gruppe SPUR

Jørgen Nash, with Drakabygget and his other projects, was in some ways moving in the opposite direction from what Bernstein and Debord, as well as Jorn, had set out to do with the establishment of the Situationist International in 1957. The International was an attempt to create a unified platform which could make it a serious contender in the struggle over culture and a site to gather an avant-garde of previously dispersed and unruly actors. The individualised rebellious attitude took second place in the building of a more disciplined organisation. But for Nash the tendency was to counter the discipline of the International with anarchical and anti-political rebellion. Through meeting the Gruppe SPUR Nash learned how he could translate his so-called 'spiritual anarchism' into practice.

It was originally Jorn who had been introduced to this group of young rebellious artists in Munich through the painter and critic Hans Platschek, whom Jorn knew from Paris. Hans Platschek became a member of the Situationist International when a German section of the movement was established in 1958 and he was showing in the same gallery as Jorn, Galerie van der Loo in Munich. To mark the establishment of a German section Asger Jorn and Hans Platschek sent out a flyer in Munich on the 1st of January titled *Nervenruh! Keine Experimente*, which was a combined manifesto and promotion for the newly established German section. The flyer also advertised Debord's book *Mémoires* and Jorn's *Pour la Forme*.



Gruppe SPUR: Dieter Kunzelmann, Lothar Fischer, Heimrad Prem, Helmut Sturm, and H.P. Zimmer.

Jorn worked closely with the gallerist Otto van der Loo and stayed in Munich in 1958 while he produced paintings for his upcoming show in the gallery, which had only just opened the year before. During his stay in Munich, Jorn was as usual on the lookout for new allies, and the Gruppe SPUR was to become close artistic comrades. The group had been formed in the fall of 1957 and consisted initially of Lothar Fischer, Heimrad Prem, Helmut Sturm and H.P. Zimmer. Later Dieter Kunzelmann joined the group as writer and theoretician. Jorn's expressive and wild figurative style was a clear inspiration for the young artists and Jorn also appears as co-signatory of the SPUR manifesto from 1958. He signed as a representative of the Situationist International.

In the manifesto they declare their association with the tradition of the European avant-garde: "We are the third Tachist wave—We are the



Asger Jorn with Otto van der Loo in Munich 1958 by the painting "Ausverkauf einer Seele" (The Sale of a Soul).

third Dadaist wave—We are the third futurist wave—We are the third surrealist wave”. And onwards: “We are an ocean of waves (SITUATIONISM)”. The SPUR group declared themselves followers of an ‘honest nihilism’ and their rebellion is here probably more linked to Nietzsche than Marx: “We are against the truth, against happiness, against satisfaction, against the good conscience, against the fat belly, against HARMONY”. Very much in line with Jorn they saw art as a safeguard against bourgeois culture: “Art is the last domain of freedom and will defend freedom by all means”.

SPUR was accepted in the Situationist International during the 3rd conference in Munich in April 1959, and they met Jørgen Nash for the first time at the 4th Situationist International conference in London in September 1960. SPUR had just published the first issue of their journal, also called *SPUR*, in Munich. At the conference, they participated in raising one of the main unresolved questions in the Situationist movement: the form of the revolution. In a statement read by Heimard Prem, the SPURists explained how the proletariat could never be the driving force in the confrontation with the old world as the workers, according to their analyses, had become passive and satisfied. Therefore the avant-garde would have to take care of the rebellion by their own means. The following exchange was noted in the report from the conference that was published in *Internationale Situationniste* #5 in 1960:

This very long declaration attacks the tendency in the responses read the day before to count on the existence of a revolutionary proletariat, for the signers strongly doubt the revolutionary capacities of the workers against the bureaucratic institutions that have dominated their movement. The German section considers that the Situationist International should prepare to realize its program on its own by mobilizing the avant-garde artists, who are placed by the present society in intolerable conditions and can count only on themselves to take over the weapons of conditioning. Debord responds with a sharp critique of these positions.

The conflict escalated and the SPURists were forced to rescind their statements and declare that their position was secondary to “the Situationist International’s overall development”. Debord and Attila Kotányi commented that they most certainly did not find the question regarding the revolutionary proletariat secondary, which became apparent later with the split of 1962. According to the report Nash supported the position of Debord and Kotányi, in whose opinion the SPUR group “vastly underestimated the German workers”. But Nash and SPUR were to become close associates.

Munich 1961

After a meeting in the central committee of the Situationists in Paris on the 6th-8th of January 1961 Nash and Lindell travelled with SPUR directly to Munich where they stayed until the end of February. In the 1960s Munich was the second capital of Modernism after Paris, with a large contingent of active artists and groups. Gruppe SPUR was the latest in the line, and they presented themselves as the most ruthless avant-garde group by, amongst other things, attacking a conference for art critics who had met to discuss the value of the avant-garde. The conference took place later in January 1961 at the Müncherner Kammerspiele theatre and the SPURists disrupted the assembly by throwing flyers stating: “The Avant-garde is Undesirable!” down onto the participants. The flyer’s first statement is: “The avant-garde of today that does not reiterate accepted mystifications is nevertheless socially repressed. The movement that society desires is the one that it can buy up—it is the pseudo-avant-garde”. The conference represented to them the co-optation and commercialisation of the avant-garde: “Once the products of the avant-garde have been neutralized aesthetically and brought to the market, its issues—directed as always at realization through all of life—necessarily must be split up, talked to death and side-tracked”. Jorn and Maurice Wyckaert, both members of the International, are co-signatories on the manifesto together with the SPUR group, Jørgen Nash and Katja Lindell. Nash was to bring this type of Dadaist- and Lettrist-inspired direct action with him back to the North.

The combination of rebelliousness and play as a revolutionary form appealed to Nash and the alliance with the SPURists became a driving force in the development of the long line of actions that Nash later initiated together with Hardy Strid and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, where the roles of Homo Ludens and provocateur proved a better fit than the role of political strategist.

Jorn Leaves the International

The problematic relationship between the free avant-garde and the economic interests that, according to SPUR, were recuperating it, meant that the Situationists entered into open conflict with Otto van der Loo. Van der Loo wanted to establish a ‘Labyratoire’ in a gallery in Essen that he was collaborating with. This project naturally grabbed the attention of the Situationists as it had been inspired by the Situationist notion of ‘unitary urbanism’. Debord and Jorn both critically distanced themselves from van der Loo’s plans as the work on this issue was to be handled from the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism in Brussels. Van der Loo went on the counter-attack and, according to *Internationale Situationniste* #6, demanded that Gruppe SPUR should “repudiate certain aspects of the SI’s activities (namely Debord)”. This resulted in SPUR breaking with the art dealer. At the meeting in the central committee in Munich in April 1961 the case was discussed. Van der Loo had made it clear that he didn’t want anything to do with the Situationists any longer, which caused Debord to declare: “...the Council found it perfectly unacceptable to even think that the dealer had any freedom ‘to break with the Situationist International’ when he had absolutely nothing to do with them. He simply had tentative license to mix in Situationist matters as an art dealer entertaining personal relationships with several Situationists”. Maurice Wyckaert took the side of his gallerist and was immediately excluded. Jorn subsequently visited van der Loo to discuss what had happened and decided thereafter to pull out of the International. He had been put in a situation where he had to choose between continuing his collaboration with van der Loo or with the Situationist International and he chose Galerie van der Loo, although in a later letter to Hans Peter Zimmer he stated that the split was due to

personal issues and assured him that he supported the Situationists in the conflict with van der Loo. Nash was not implicated in this intrigue and stayed in the International with the SPUR group. But Jorn's exit meant that the theoretical anchor for the experimental attitude in the International had left.

The Conference in Gothenburg

The German Situationists and Jørgen Nash organised the Situationist International's 5th conference in Gothenburg in August 1961. The Swedish painters Ansgar Elde and Hardy Strid, the Swedish poet Staffan Larsson, the Danish painter J.V. Martin and the English painter Gordon Fazakerley were invited by the hosts to take part. Fazakerley was not able to be there, but the others were accepted in the International during the conference. The conference took place at Hotel Volrat Tham, which was a Modernist concrete building of twelve stories that had just opened as a student hostel. In the Nash-Jorn archive there are some brief minutes, presumably written by Hardy Strid, which note:

The environment of the congress: a very interesting environment because it is the environment that we struggle against. It is a battlefield. The sterility, the fashionable, the conventionally aesthetic, we can study it concretely.

According to Strid's minutes there were a lot of language difficulties during the conference, but Debord thought that there was too much wasted time with translations. This was especially aimed at the SPUR group who continuously requested translations of the conversations that took place mainly in French. This made Debord exclaim that people would just have to follow as best they could. These difficulties of understanding were probably an indicator of the atmosphere in the International and the disagreement on the role of art in the movement surfaced once again in a big way. According to a report published in *Internationale Situationniste* #7 Attila Kotányi continued where he had left off at the previous conference in London:



Jacqueline de Jong, Attila Kotányi, Raoul Vaneigem and Jørgen Nash at the conference in Gothenburg 1961.

Since the beginning of the movement there has been a problem as to what to call artistic works by members of the Situationist International. It was understood that none of them were a Situationist production, but what to call them? I propose a very simple rule: to call them 'antisituationist'. We are against the dominant conditions of artistic inauthenticity. I don't mean that anyone should stop painting, writing, etc. I don't mean that that has no value. I don't mean that we could continue to exist without doing that. But at the same time we know that such works will be co-opted by the society and used against us.

According to the report from the conference everyone accepted that suggestion except for Nash: "With one exception the Conference unanimously decides to adopt this rule of antisituationist art, binding on all members

of the Situationist International. Only Nash objects, his spite and indignation escalating throughout the whole debate, to the level of uncontrolled rage". Visual art was seemingly becoming such a contentious issue in the International that J.V. Martin according to Strid's minutes became furious when he saw a drawing of Strid's among Nash's papers: "He wanted to tear it apart but was prevented by Elde". As one of Nash's last suggestions to the International he proposed that "Divided We Stand" should be made the Situationist International's slogan, which Debord blankly refused. Divided We Stand would thence become associated with the activities at Drakabygget.

Paradoxically, the Situationists decided to make a collaborative painting, which would finance the costs of the summit. Strid writes in his minutes: "In order to cover all costs for the participants of the congress I suggest we paint a collaborative painting/a constellation/a manifesto/a Situationist rescue out of financial difficulties." The SPUR artists, with Strid, de Jong and J.V. Martin, led the brushes in this colourful and expressionist work that most of all resembled an Asger Jorn painting. Even Debord is said to have participated in producing it. The finished piece is covered in signatures: Strid, Nash, Debord, Zimmer, Sturm, Prem, de Jong, Martin and finally Jorn in the right corner as the most prominent. Jorn had however left the International long ago and was not present at the conference at all, so Nash probably added his signature in order to inflate the value of the painting. After the discussions about the role of art the approaches to the painting must have been quite different. It is worth noting that Debord's new theoretical comrades Attila Kotányi and Raoul Vaneigem didn't lift a brush. Their backgrounds were mainly in philosophy and they did not really have any practical experience as artists, in contrast to pretty much all the other members. With some imagination, the image resembles a couple of Siamese twin trolls shouting at each other—two heads struggling, with a common body that is hopelessly keeping them tied together. A rather good representation of the situation of the International. According to Strid, C. M. Berger, a wealthy man living locally, bought the painting and donated it thereafter to Halmstad Museum, which thus owns a fake Jorn.



The painting produced in order to finance the Situationist conference in Gothenburg in 1961.

The Hamburg Theses

Stopping over in Hamburg on the way back to Paris, Debord, Kotányi and Vaneigem put together the so-called "Hamburg Theses" in which they attempt to outline a new direction that the Situationist organisation should take. In the time before the congress in Gothenburg Debord had been more constructive towards the Situationist practitioners in the north and expressed a desire to visit SPUR in Drakabygget. At the conference Jacqueline de Jong had read aloud a letter from Asger Jorn about the plan to found a Situationist island where Situationist ideas, especially those regarding unitary urbanism, could be realised. But after Gothenburg it was no longer tenable for Debord, Kotányi and Vaneigem to accept the persistent contradictions in the movement, which had so far been a stimulating drive for the Situationist International. These were now to be brought to an end with a more clearly defined program for the Situationist International. The three believed that the Situationist International should

change direction and aim at “realising the philosophy”. This Marx-inspired point of view that aimed at the realisation of a set of abstract revolutionary ideas was now to give direction for the movement, replacing the experimental attitude that by nature did not have this same hierarchical division between theory and practice. The “Hamburg Theses” setting out this position, which remained unpublished, were the beginning of the end of the development of Jorn’s experimental dialectic that he had described in *Pour la Forme*: “What opposes the experimental phenomenology with dialectics in their current format is the fact that the one necessarily has to reject all ideas related to the principle of causality and that the other clings to this principle. Only by setting them up against one another will a new experimental dialectic be created”. Now a clear causal relation between theory and practice was to be implemented in the International.

The Anti-specialist

Jørgen Nash was in many ways an anti-specialist. He was not a ‘gifted’ painter like his brother and he was not a ‘gifted’ writer and theorist like Debord. In the 1940s and 1950s he was recognised in Denmark as a poet and part of the generation of ‘angry young men’. But this success was not something that Nash was interested in consolidating and developing. Nash worked in many directions and in multiple collaborations. But this eclecticism was perhaps an advantage to his project, as he did not profile himself as a traditional modernist individual with a definite style and definite medium. He often appropriated techniques from his colleagues and in this way he made all art-forms his own. He integrated all sorts of idioms and did not restrain himself from any artistic genre. He produced films, sculpture, street theatre, happenings, prose, poetry and occasionally theory. As Hardy Strid wrote in some personal notes that he sent me: “Nash has always made use of other people’s materials as his own. My paintings, Thorsen’s, Katja’s, Carl Magnus’, Henrik Prydsbeck’s, Zwick’s, Lars Hård’s etc.” This appropriation of what is traditionally connected to private property and individual genius was part of the practice of ‘absorption’ that Nash developed, often together with Jens Jørgen Thorsen.

Drakabygget was becoming a hub of international artists and there was always a lot of information about new artistic developments in Europe in the shape of books and journals, which Gordon Fazakerley highlights as one of the most important qualities of the place. For Nash, the border between him and the world was porous, since the world’s artistic and material representations belonged to everyone. As Nash himself writes in a self-portrait in *Hanegal—Gallisk Poesialbum 1941-61* that collates Nash’s poems with ‘illuminations’ by J.V. Martin: “I am a thing made of love and chaos—a widely sought after wild animal that wants to rape the whole world in the hot embrace of enchantment”. *Hanegal* was published by Edition Internationale Situationniste in 1961 and the printing costs were, not surprisingly, funded out of Asger Jorn’s pocket.



Jørgen Nash as prisoner, used as a portrait photo for the book *Stavrim, Sonetter* which he published in 1960 in collaboration with Asger Jorn.

The Split

The Hamburg fraction’s ambitions for a more unambiguous program led to divisions in the movement in the winter of 1962. There was a meeting of the Situationist International’s central committee in Paris on the 16th of February and the first move from the Hamburg fraction was the expulsion of the Gruppe SPUR. At the Situationist conference in Gothenburg SPUR had been assigned to work more closely with the Situationist International and Jacqueline de Jong and Attila Kotányi had at the conference been assigned to the editorial board of the journal. Gruppe SPUR had not fulfilled

the Internationale Situationniste". It is worth noting that they use the term 'our movement'. Nash and de Jong understood the movement to be theirs as well and Nash had until the split been a very active member. Debord, Vaneigem and Kotányi's attempted coup of the Situationist movement did not succeed in practice as de Jong carried on producing the first issue of the journal *Situationist Times* in May 1962, while Nash, along with Hardy Strid, moved on with the Bauhaus Situationniste Drakabygget. They did not stop being Situationists, quite the contrary. As Jacqueline de Jong wrote in the *Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement*:

The International Situationist is a movement declared in public as an anti-organisation. The reason why Debord wanted the exclusion of the Gruppe SPUR was a pure question of discipline in an organisation which has absolutely no rules.

Nash and the others apparently did not care about the central committee's demands for sovereign rule and the split meant that the Situationist movement was opened up to plurality rather than remaining a centralised organisation trying to harbour different fractions. The disciplining had thus backfired and Jacqueline de Jong characteristically proclaimed:

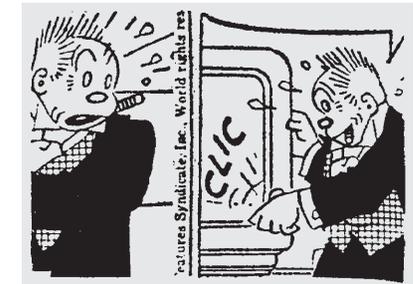
Now anyone is free to become a Situationist without the need for special formalities. It is up to the individual to fulfil the Situationist ideology in the best way that seems fit. This does away with all problems of inclusion and exclusion.

The Big Fraudster

The 'Hamburg fraction' controlling the Situationist International persistently and aggressively attempted to supervise the use of the Situationist label. Jørgen Nash in particular became in the following years a target and he was ruthlessly attacked on a grand scale as a fraudster and traitor to the Situationist project. His name was even turned into a Situationist byword for falsifying: "Nashism". This anything but elegant attempt at slighting

Jørgen Nash was formulated by J.V. Martin, the last remaining representative of the Situationist International in Scandinavia.

Through this naming the Situationist International attempted to maintain a division of real and fake Situationists. But Nash and the others didn't care. They simply detoured the accusations of falsification, and found ways to use them to their own advantage. By doing this, they demonstrated that they did not accept the supposedly incontestable sovereignty of their accusers. So the central committee's rabid rhetoric strengthened and diversified in many ways the break-away of the Situationist idea from the group in Paris. For the first time, a broader Situationist movement was actually emerging.



Nash as a cartoon character in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 8, 1963.

The SPUR Process and the Process Against Wilhelm Freddie

The court case against SPUR in Munich had been under way for a long time. In their journal *SPUR*, the group had consistently played on the borderlines of blasphemy as defined in the German public sphere of the time. A case was eventually brought against them after the 6th edition of their journal, published from Drakabygget with the title "SPUR im Exil". On the 9th of November 1961 the police took action in Munich and confiscated the remaining run of the six editions of the *SPUR* journal. *SPUR* #6 was printed at Permild and Rosengreen in Copenhagen. Text and image was integrated in energetic collage and the journal was printed with clean colours on heavy cartridge paper. *SPUR*'s earlier magazines had been black print on regular paper but now they pushed all previous limits. Jørgen Nash was chief editor together with Dieter Kunzelmann. The introductory text "Gruppe SPUR im Exil" begins with the sentence "The process between art and morality which is mounting against the Gruppe SPUR in Munich has driven them into exile", a foretelling of the trial which would



SPUR, no. 6—"SPUR im Exil" printed at Permild and Rosengreen in Copenhagen 1961.

later become a reality. SPUR had been warned but with *SPUR* #6 they went directly for the crime dotting small fragments of text such as "Hostie und inzest, Sakrament und Koprophagie" (Host and incest, sacrament and coprophagy) across the pages. SPUR went after the law in order to expose its normativity and for SPUR and Nash the case was a fundamental tale about a state system that prohibits and assaults the artistic freedom of expression.

This development was to have a major importance for the Scandinavian Situationists in particular and the prosecutor's statement

was subsequently published in both the *Drakabygget* and *Situationist Times*. It stated:

Booklet 1 and 2 of the journal *SPUR* admittedly demonstrates a certain nihilist-anarchist tendency but from a juridical standpoint there is nothing of note. Booklet number 3 is not present. In booklet 4 an article is published: 'The Kardinal, the film and the orgy' in which the accused Kunzelmann announces orgiastic parties and ecstatic play in the churches in which everyone is invited to actively participate. A tendency to offend public decency and blasphemy is already noticeable here. On page 12 in booklet 4 and the last page of booklet 5 contains the unusual sentences: 'Dann beginnt man den Frauen unter die Röcke zu greifen' [Then you begin to paw the women under their skirts] and 'Leider ist er nicht schwu.' [Unfortunately he is not really gay]. The marked sentences are however neutralised by the rest of the content in the two booklets. Already before the production of booklet 5 the accused were clearly warned by *Süddeutsche Zeitung's* legal advisor lawyer Wenk who made it clear that the publication under certain circumstances could be considered as offensive to public decency and incur the charge of blasphemy, and that they would risk punishment. Despite this warning from a lawyer specialised in the field the accused produced booklet 6, which according to their own opinion marks the epitome of the group's artistic development to date. Number 6 contains in the meantime numerous problematic passages.

Freedom of expression became a recurring theme around *Drakabygget* and many of the actions in which Nash would later be involved sought the borders between the permitted and the prohibited. A considerable event in the Danish art scene, which in many ways was similar to the trial against SPUR, was the police confiscation of three art works by the surrealist painter Wilhelm Freddie on the 17th of November 1961, just a week after the police took action against SPUR in Munich. Wilhelm Freddie had two paintings and a sculpture confiscated by the police on the grounds

of 'pornography' in 1937. The original works were still held by the police and the minister of justice had refused to hand over the paintings after Freddie's request, twenty-four years after they had been confiscated. This prompted him to organise, in collaboration with the Copenhagen avant-garde meeting place Galerie Köpcke, a new exhibition in which he presented three newly made copies of those art works. Jørgen Nash followed the case very closely and turned up at the closed reception prior to the public opening of the exhibition. Nash was sent there by Asger Jorn to buy one of the works. Here he met a young journalist from the newspaper *Aktuelt* who was also 'on a job'. The young journalist was Jens Jørgen Thorsen. When the exhibition opened its doors to the public the police turned up and confiscated the three copies. Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen thus met at a 'crime scene' which concerned a central theme in their future activities: the artistic freedom.

The Manifesto of the 2nd Situationist International

The manifesto of the 2nd Situationist International was published in *Situationist Times* #2 in September 1962 without a title. It simply states: "This declaration was made in August 1962 in Drakabygget, Orkeljunga and in Stockholm, Sweden". The text was subsequently published in Swedish in *Drakabygget* 2/3 with the title "The Struggle for the Situcratic Society—A Situationist Manifesto". Jørgen Nash, Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Hardy Strid, Ansgar Elde, Staffan Larsson, Jacqueline de Jong, Ambrosius Fjord, Gordon Fazakerley and Patrick O'Brien were signatories.

Lars Morrell writes in his book from 1981 *Poesien spredde sig: Jørgen Nash, Drakabygget & Situationisterne* (Poetry Spreads Itself: Jørgen Nash, Drakabygget & the Situationists) that Asger Jorn arrived at Drakabygget during the summer of 1962 together with Jacqueline de Jong and Guy Atkins and they wrote the manifesto with Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Jørgen Nash. The other signatories were added as a way to give the manifesto more international weight and "Ambrosius Fjord" was actually Katja Lindell's horse while "Patrick O'Brien" was Atkins' and/or Jorn's alter-ego. Gordon Fazakerley found out that he was a co-signatory when he received the text by post.



Manifesto from the 2nd Situationist International as it was printed in *Drakabygget*—journal for art against the atomic bomb, popes and politicians 1962.

In the manifesto the complementary theory of atomic physicist Niels Bohr was used in order to explain the future relation of the two Internationals to one another. This theory, much favoured by Jorn, describes how the perception of a phenomenon could never be singular but is perspective-dependent and this concept is used to establish a distance to the first Situationist International's project:

...the suggested divorce between the groups [seems to be] both natural and necessary if both tendencies are to blossom. If they absolutely must be united in one principle they would only inhibit each other's development and create even more irresolvable conflicts. The establishment of the 'Second Situationist International' can thus neither be understood as a step forward or back. It is the development of a CURRENT Situationist double tendency with two independent programs.

The manifesto explains the Second Situationist International's dynamic and experimental approach to the world at the same time as the totalising tendencies of dialectics and the stiff idealism of Euclidean geometry are criticised. The Situationists from the Second International conclude: "This does not mean that we understand the French method as flawed and unusable. It is just not acceptable as an overall truth for us. It is working in an area that is complementary to ours." This anti-programmatic line is brought into the organisational level when the text defines the Second Situationist International as "a voluntary association of autonomous work groups". Hence there was no central committee in the new anti-organisation. It is noticeable that the SPUR group are not represented as signatories. SPUR chose later in October 1962 to distance themselves from the manifesto because they found especially the schematic division between French and Scandinavian culture problematic, which was probably Jorn's contribution.

Asger Jorn and Drakabygget

Already with the publication of *Drakabygget* #2/3, which was published at the turn of the year 1962/63, Jorn gave way to Jens Jørgen Thorsen as co-editor with Nash. Jorn's gradual breach with Drakabygget in many ways liberated the activities around Drakabygget and marked the beginning of the realisation of the "Situationist anti-organisation program". Today, almost fifty years after, it can sometimes be difficult to disentangle which people were involved in the long series of more or less fictional organisations that arose around Drakabygget in the years that followed. Gordon Fazakerley and Jacqueline de Jong claim that the Second Situationist International in fact did not consist of anything other than the manifesto, but nevertheless a document appeared in the Nash-Jorn archive with the header: "Invitation to the Second Situationist International's Second Congress", which took place on the 26th of January 1964 on the island Hven located in the strait between Denmark and Sweden. But this congress also had another name, "The Örestad Conference". The strategy of having a multitude of connected but independent organisations and umbrella-organisations became emblematic of Drakabygget. Jens Jørgen

Thorsen moved to Sweden, to a farmhouse not far from Drakabygget, which got the name Örestad's Experimental Laboratory. Hardy Strid similarly had a studio in Halmstad that was called Tiarp, where Edition Bauhaus Situationniste had its address for a period. New constellations were given new names and over the years, the projects came to involve a variety of personalities. The core people however remained the same from 1962 and consisted of Jørgen Nash, Hardy Strid and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, although they never established any fixed central organisation.

Seven Rebels

Jørgen Nash never accepted his expulsion from the Situationist International and never accepted that there was any substantial conflict within the new diverse Situationist movement, only different perspectives. He did not worry about the organisational rules of the Hamburg fraction's game. This was made clear, and not without wit, in the introduction to the "Seven Rebels" exhibition that took place in Odense, Denmark less than six months after the split: "These seven artists have all broken away from the Internationale Situationniste in Paris and formed a Second Situationist International based on Scandinavia". The introduction continues with a list of 'idols and heroes' including Charlie Chaplin, Hans Christian Andersen, and a number of artists. They also include Guy Debord on the list, which was a clever deflection of the conflict that the central committee of the Situationist International constantly sought to uphold. This resembled the Romans who would always integrate the deities from the cultures that they colonised into the Roman belief system in order to render them harmless. Having never accepted the rule of Debord and his supporters, the conflict for Nash did not mean dissolution but rather integration.

The "Seven Rebels" exhibition in Odense was the new grouping's first artistic action after the split. The exhibition had been organised by a local journalist known to Nash, Birthe Pedersen, who worked at the daily newspaper, *Dagbladet Fyn*. It took place at the exhibition space Kunstbygningen Filsofgangen, which was subsidised by the city and run by a committee of local artists. Jørgen Nash stated to the nationwide newspaper *Aktuelt* in relation to the exhibition: "The only ones who survive are those who don't



The catalogue for the exhibition "Seven Rebels" in Odense, Denmark 1962.

most shows of the time, the exhibition consisted of rather traditional art works; paintings, ceramics and sculpture. A local reviewer described it as "an insipid mess of an exhibition" while another described how "in the middle of the floor there is placed a rebellious collection of chairs, pillars, broomsticks and a Danish flag that is not permitted even for the rebels to exhibit". Jacqueline de Jong, Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Gordon Fazakerley and H.P. Zimmer all presented paintings, while Ansgar Elde presented ceramics. Nash showed what became the trademark of the exhibition: a life-size wood-and-junk crucifix with the title "The humorist on the crucifix—or the spaceman that never returned", which according to the description in the press consisted of "tin lids, iron rakes, nails and rusty hooks". Nash' so-called 'altar' of the exhibition was placed centrally in the space with the title "The Process Against SPUR". This 'altar' was another accumulation of materials, again using found wooden recorders. But the intention was

have a program", thus highlighting his developed contempt for ideological rigidity. When one reads the contemporary press coverage it is the court case in Germany against SPUR which is picked out as the central theme of the exhibition and Jørgen Nash can't help but to proudly present himself as standing accused with the other participants. Nash characteristically declared in *Aktuelt* that the exhibition was "an answer to the judge in Munich who himself had stood accused in the Nürnberg-process". Out of all the participating artists it was however only H.P. Zimmer who was actually under prosecution in Munich.

Although perhaps 'wilder' than



Recorder-relief by Jørgen Nash, which was presented as the altar of the exhibition with the title "The Process Against SPUR", 1962.



The procession through Odense with Thorsen, Nash, de Jong, Arre and Strid in protest against SPUR's trial in Munich, 1962.

clear: state, church and the bourgeoisie were the targets. At the reception Gordon Fazakerley and Jørgen Nash read out loud from their own poetry.

The most notable event took place as part of the opening of the exhibition when the 'seven rebels' organised a procession through the city. Thorsen was at the front, dragging Nash's huge wood-and-junk crucifix, and the other artists wore masks or carried various art works from the show. Nash helped the suffering Thorsen with the crucifix, Jacqueline de Jong wandered with a bucket over her head and draped in the Danish flag taken from the entrance of the exhibition space. Hardy Strid walked with an empty picture frame in front of him, framing himself or the scenario that he was a part of. The set-up was a kind of re-staging of the wandering of Jesus before his crucifixion in the biblical tale. All the ingredients of a provocation were present in the procession. The hope was to elicit a reaction to its blasphemous nature and cause a public scandal. The use of the press was particularly noticeable. The procession was organised together with Peter Lerche from the daily newspaper *Aktuelt* who ensured that the newspaper's photographer turned up and covered the event in



An image from the newspaper *Fyns Tidende* 20th of September 1962 with Jørgen Nash reading aloud for Mette Arre, Jacqueline de Jong and Jens Jørgen Thorsen.

detail. If one looks closer at the images it is hard to see many people in the streets, and those who are there seem to merely take notice of the strange event. But the images were published the following day in the newspaper. Already here the press became an important collaborator for the artists at Drakabygget, a strategy they were later to develop to near-perfection. Jens Jørgen Thorsen had himself been connected to *Aktuelt* as journalist and he, if anyone, knew that in the society of the spectacle representations in the media are often more important than the event itself. The game with

the media began in Odense and Nash and Thorsen quickly became aware how the media could be manipulated and detoured as an artistic strategy.

The exhibition “Seven Rebels” moved from Odense to Gothenburg where it opened on the 6th of October in the artist-run space Galerie 54. Afterwards it moved to Silkeborg where it opened on the 1st of February 1963 in Galerie Modern. For the Silkeborg show a new version of the catalogue was printed in which Gordon Fazakerley’s and Jacqueline de Jong’s spreads had been detoured. Fazakerley had been given a moustache and been transformed into the German painter Manfred Laber, while Jacqueline de Jong had been given thick glasses and a gorilla mane and was now called Roy Adzak. Nash and Thorsen were the perpetrators and this incident marked the end of Nash and Thorsen’s collaboration with both Jacqueline de Jong and Gordon Fazakerley. As Nash explained to the newspaper *Fyns Tidende* in relation to “Seven Rebels”: “The artist is the last rebel”. For Nash and Thorsen this did not simply mean rebellion against the authorities, but the dissolution of all rules, including those of respect for their artist colleagues.

CO-RITUS

The exhibition “CO-RITUS” in December 1962 at Galerie Jensen in Møntergade, Copenhagen heralded a further and more radical phase in the Drakabygget Situationists’ anti-authoritarian and experimental project. As the abbreviation of ‘collective’ and ‘ritus’ [rite] in the title indicates, they sought to develop a new function for art as a collective and cult-like activity. And if one takes away the “r” in CO-RITUS it becomes evident that this process was also to include desire and sexuality. The SPUR trial and the case against Freddie had shown how controversial explicit references to sexuality were in early 1960s society. So to call an exhibition something that could be mistaken for a term describing sexual intercourse was an act of deliberate provocation. “We demand a city filled with public orgies”, the CO-RITUS artists wrote. The Situationists had so far kept to using play as a metaphor of freedom, but both SPUR and the artists around Drakabygget sought increasingly to challenge and investigate sexuality and desire as a battlefield for and a passage to emancipation. It was the intention with



Jens Jørgen Thorsen visits the CO-RITUS exhibition in Galerie Jensen in December 1962.

“CO-RITUS” to investigate and create a space for new collective and sensual rituals as a framework of artistic creation in society. The Drakabygget Situationists thought that it was about time to rebel concretely against the traditional Western role of the artist and the individualism that this role had entailed ever since the Renaissance. This development also marks a breach with the heroic individualism that SPUR described in their manifesto and Jorn in many ways also was reproducing. Art was to be entirely collective, and the public visiting the exhibition in Møntergade were to be drawn into the creation on an equal footing with the artists. It was a considerable step beyond the “Seven Rebels” exhibition that had taken place only three months earlier. On the invitation for the exhibition in the little basement gallery in Copenhagen are listed almost the same artists as in Odense: Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Jørgen Nash, H.P. Zimmer, Hardy Strid, Gordon Fazakerley, as well as Dieter Kunzelmann from SPUR who had not been showing in Odense. But with “CO-RITUS” the individual artists and their works were no longer the structuring principle of the project.

Galerie Jensen was a small commercial gallery that had given the group from Drakabygget the opportunity to exhibit for a short period of

time just before Christmas in 1962. Ole Jensen who ran the gallery also had an antiques shop further down Møntergade. The opening was on the 11th of December and when the public arrived they were confronted with an empty gallery space with a lot of junk in boxes on the floor mixed with artists materials and pieces of toys from the stock pile at Drakabygget. One of the guests at the opening, the Danish artist Richard Winther, described the event in this way in the journal *Hvedekorn* (1963):

There was work to be done, because it was a CO-RITUS opening. Instead of images the artists had brought with them a bunch of wood and scraps of paper and other junk and soon there was a teeming activity and everyone was involved in nailing things together, painting and making collages. It was very positive and there was a nice atmosphere. In an hour a lot got done. And this activity continued throughout the period of the exhibition. In the end the entire space was full and the walls were entirely painted over.

Thus “CO-RITUS” became a concrete experiment with the traditional division between artists and audience. The audience had been invited to actively engage as participants in the creation of the exhibition. The artwork had been replaced by the social process and the exhibition developed into a labyrinth-like spatial installation that the gallery visitors could add to during the exhibition period. The use of society’s old junk as the foundation for creation was a continuation of the Dadaist’s use of detritus. But it was also very much in line with what the Drakabygget Situationists had seen in the work of the French Nouveau Réalistes artists that had showed at Galerie Köpcke not far from Møntergade where the German artist and neo-Dadaist Arthur Köpcke had been presenting avant-garde art since 1958.

On the invitation to the exhibition there was an early version of what would become the “CO-RITUS” manifesto with the header “What is CO-RITUS?” The final manifesto was later printed as a three-fold flyer that also contained two other texts. The flyer’s overall header was “Ritus contra Deprivation”. The other texts were a manifesto from Dieter Kunzelmann and H.P. Zimmer who together with the German theorists



Materials and tools were provided for the audience during the “CO-RITUS” exhibition, 1962.

Christopher Baldeney and Rodolphe Gasché, presented “Atombomben für Kulturindustrie” (Atom bomb for the culture industry) and a Dada-inspired sound poem created by Gordon Fazakerley:

Blab blab blab blab blab blab blab blab/ Blab blab blab
blab blab blab blab blab blab/ Blab blab blab blab blab
blab blab blab blab/ blab balb/ ... All together blabber International
blab blab/ BANG THE BOMB/ BANG THE BOMB/ BANG THE
BOMB/ B-L-A-B B-L-A-B/ Viva la blab blab.

The “CO-RITUS” manifesto, which is signed by Thorsen, Nash, Strid and Fjord (Nash’s horse), establishes point by point, and in the good manner of the avant-garde, a critique of all previous art forms. The structures which

are reproducing the sacrosanct role of art and the passivity of the audience are placed within a larger context and set in relation to the alienation between producer and consumer in the industrial society.

There exists in the European cultural tradition an unsurpassable barrier between provider and enjoyer. This barrier is the borderline of the cultural evolution and is threatening to turn us into babbling fools in the supermarket of the cultural industry. To turn us into victims of an anonymous oppression of unknown dimensions.

This is expanding the earlier Situationist critique of a pacifying culture and their demand for collective participation. With CO-RITUS, a concrete framework for a new function of art, and the social relations it can potentially produce, are defined, and in the exhibition and the manifesto the issue of art as a specialised activity is not only critiqued but challenged in practice. The manifesto analyses art's traditional model of communication—from artist to artwork to public—and redefines art as a communicative field where everyone can participate. Art as a communicative field poses a more socially-oriented interpretation of Jorn's notion of art as an experimental field in the movement between the singular and the social. In order to democratise the artistic creation the CO-RITUS group demanded that the passive audience should be abolished: "We say for the first time to the audience: Come and take part. Put on your gloves. Everyone can appeal." With this move the artists around Drakabygget combined the Situationist and especially Debord's critique of art as a specialised sphere with Jorn's perspective that insisted on art's liberating potential. The bourgeois division between artist and audience *could* practically be surpassed when the audience were to be abolished as passive consumers.

In the artist or the viewer it happens, says tradition, in the sublime or the banal. We say: for us, art happens in between. It happens in the space between people, between the sublime and the banal. It is the mechanics of art that we want to toy with. It is in the here and now that it happens.

This shift in the artistic focus from the separated interior worlds of individualised artist and audience to the 'space between people' was a radical de-throning of the specialised and singular artist genius that had been the dominant conception of the artist in society ever since the Renaissance. Asger Jorn had re-articulated this tradition in terms of his radical experimental attitude but nevertheless remained within it. He was not able to move beyond his status as a singular creative subjectivity. Jorn's paradoxical solution was the notion of the artist as a professional amateur, as it is described in the Situationist Manifesto from 1960. But this was too ambiguous for the practical world of CO-RITUS. Another weighty influence was Johan Huizinga's book, *Homo Ludens*, in which he locates the origins of culture in play. Huizinga describes in the book how play and the ritual as emancipatory practices are exceptions to normal life, due to their specific and predetermined rules. Both Jorn and Huizinga maintained that art, play and ritual realized their emancipatory potential through their separation from the everyday. For Nash, Thorsen and Strid play and art were instead to be brought directly into everyday as a liberating perspective.

The exhibition space was also transformed and turned into a stage for a series of events: poetry readings by Jørgen Nash, Gordon Fazakerley and Dieter Kunzelmann, as well as a CO-RITUS concert with the jazz band 'Københavns Støvjernere' that Thorsen played in with his trumpet. CO-RITUS wanted to combine desire and play to create the conditions for new social rituals through the communal production of art in the little gallery. The constructed situation in practice. This paved the way for the transcendence of the exhibition space itself.

Beyond Fluxus

A few weeks before "CO-RITUS" took place in Copenhagen the city hosted one of the first large international Fluxus-festivals. It took place in the Nikolaj Church and the Allé Scenen theatre. Fluxus performances and Fluxus concerts featuring many of the leading figures of the movement were on the program. Nash and Thorsen were present on the opening evening in Nikolaj Church, and Thorsen went to each of the subsequent evenings. The festival was organised by the Danske Unge Tonekunstnere



Nash speaking during a CO-RITUS event in the exhibition, 1962.

(Society of Young Composers), who had translated and published George Maciunas' manifesto article "Neo-Dada in music, theatre, poetry, art" in their journal, in which he states:

Anti-art is first of all aimed at art as a profession, at the artificial division between the performer and the public, the creator and the viewer, life and art; it is against the decorative shapes, patterns and methods in art; it is against art's attempts at a maximum of intention, shape and meaning; anti-art is life, nature, true reality—it is one and all.

Maciunas' articulations concerning the activation of the passive observer no doubt inspired Nash and Thorsen who plundered whatever they found useful for their own purpose. As they write in their

manifesto: "We steal and borrow as we wish. We administer our legacy. We even take the liberty to play with it." The "CO-RITUS" exhibition thus brought in ideas from the Fluxus movement as well as the material strategies of the Nouveau Réalistes and integrated those with ideas from the Situationist movement and Jorn's experimental aesthetics. This mix catalysed an entirely new way to activate the presentation of art in which the Drakabygget Situationists took the Fluxus ideas of the open artwork, with its roots in music and performance, and transferred them into the social space of the gallery, charging this with the Situationist emphasis on radical emancipation.

Not surprisingly, and entirely in coherence with avant-garde rhetorics, Thorsen, Nash and Strid distanced themselves from Fluxus and Nouveau Réalisme in the "CO-RITUS" manifesto by writing:

Europe's cultural tradition is one-eyed like the individualistic central perspective of the Renaissance. From here one can only see things from one side at the time: The artist's or the audience's. Thus the cultural ritual of the Renaissance spun its stiff exhibition-web that Tinguely, Happenings, Fluxus and Nouveau Réalisme are still caught up in.

For them, Fluxus was equally involved in pacifying the audience, it was just that they had built a new framework to do it. On the original invitation it said: "Happening is rubbish, Fluxus is rubbish. They call themselves avant-garde, but are only lifeless repetitions of the European theatre". This statement was deleted and reworked somewhat in the final manifesto.

The Fence in Møntergade

The activities around Galerie Jensen were also noticed by the people living in the street. Several of them had passed by the exhibition and encouraged the artists to do something about the grey fence that ran along the entire length of the street. The fence was a temporary barrier around a building site for the new headquarters of the Guthenberghus magazine publishers. It was approximately 2.5 meters tall and 300 meters long. Late

one evening, four days after the exhibition had opened, the Situationists decided to act and let the exhibition 'spread out onto the street'. They had bought 1,000 Dkr. of paint and now wanted to decorate the fence. Strid, Nash, Kunzelmann and Thorsen had some slogans prepared as well as a manifesto with the title: "CO-RITUS—Demonstration for the benefit of the artists' take-over of the inner city as workspace". Slogans and expressive paintings of masks were painted along the fence. Large painted letters spelled out: "The surrounding world and all means of communication must stand open for playful creation!"; "The cultural industry convinces people that they take part in the culture" and "City=organised emptiness". The slogans were backed up in the manifesto where the CO-RITUS group demanded an expansion and surpassing of the form that art had taken in society until then :

We encourage artists from other areas: poets, musicians, architects to take over their natural workplace: grab the televisions, theatres, radio and urban planning out of the hands of the cultural industry and the cultural entrepreneurs hired by the state.

In strict parallel to this was the demand for an abolition of art as a specialised activity:

We demand that the inner city is opened as workplace for artistic activity. All shopping malls should be cleared and living studios should be organised in the shops and the window displays should be given over for *détournement*.

They drew from the Situationist toolbox in the demand that artists and architects engage themselves with Unitary Urbanism as the "only possibility for the creation of new conditions for life through a transformation of the environment". Paradoxically they still refer to the bourgeois subjects of 'artists' and 'architects' and not the communicative field of 'art' and 'architecture', which underlines the spontaneity rather than theoretical rigour



"Culture is culture industry. Culture industry is a fraud. Fraud is the same as work. Culture industry = organised leisure time!"—a slogan painted on the fence in Møntergade, 1962.

of this unexpected expansion of the project. They were themselves caught between the old role of the artist and the new role of art.

At approximately 2 am a Copenhagen police patrol car passed by the fence-painting. Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Jørgen Nash were arrested and interrogated at the police station in Antonigade. Here they were held for an hour and a half and promised, according to the press, to paint the fence grey again. Dieter Kunzelmann and Hardy Strid avoided arrest, which would have had more severe consequences for them as they were foreigners.

In the following days the so-called 'fence artists of the dark' became a small scandal in the press and the public was made witness to the negotiations between Gutenberghus and the artists. Meetings were held between the conflicting sides and Gutenberghus demanded that Thorsen and Nash should paint the fence grey again. The artists however proposed to finish

their painting on the fence together with their artist colleagues Asger Jorn, Richard Winther and Albert Metz and demanded that it should remain for three months. Their action ‘against the grey fence’ was however doomed and the publishing house would not tolerate this alteration to the fence around their premises. In response Thorsen and Nash categorically refused to paint the fence grey and Gutenberghus reported it to the police on Thursday the 20th of December, accusing them in accordance with paragraph 53 regarding the defacement of walls, houses, fences etc.

In the folder with documents and papers from the case between “the Situationists and society” I found a transcription of the court proceedings from department 24 of Copenhagen City Court on the 3rd of May 1963, in which “the painter Jørgen Nash and the art critic Jens Jørgen Thorsen stand accused of breaching the law on Saturday the 15th of December 1962 at 2.15 am in Møntergade by drawing and painting on a fence belonging to Gutenberghus”. They entered a not-guilty plea but were both found guilty and fined.

In the Nash-Jorn archive there is a ticket addressed to Jens Jørgen Thorsen on 175,- Dkr. to be paid to the Copenhagen police. Jørgen Nash’s ticket was not among the documents. Whether Jens Jørgen Thorsen ever paid his fine is not known.

Jorn Distances Himself from CO-RITUS

When Asger Jorn heard that Nash had yet again mentioned his name in relation to one of his projects he decided to go public and distance himself from the fence painting. Richard Winther wrote in a letter to Nash on the 25th of May 1963:

Dalle [Robert Dahlmann Olsen] said he had suggested to Asger that they drive over and see the fence before he got more upset, but Asger had had enough. Then Dalle said that Asger should at least wait until after Christmas before taking further action, but he immediately rushed to write to *Information* [A national Danish newspaper].



Jørgen Nash, Hardy Strid, Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Dieter Kunzelmann in front of the fence in Møntergade, 1962.

And Richard Winter continues:

I do not understand that there is anything here to get upset about. He [Jorn] has pushed a lot of cultural politics himself and the fence was a good means to raise a debate. If you had asked permission first there would not have been this case and it would not have got out of hand like this.

Under the headline “I Do Not Paint Fences”, Asger Jorn stepped strongly into the debate surrounding the ‘fence demonstration against the grey city’. He made sure to start out by emphasising that he would never have helped paint the fence even if Gutenberghus had agreed to Nash and Thorsen’s offer to finish the painting with him. Thorsen and Nash “waste



"The surrounding world and all means of communication must be open for playful creative activity" and "City = Organised emptiness", 1962.

the opportunity to do something important with those kinds of pranks," Jorn wrote. The article finishes off with the following statement: "It is my duty to say enough is enough, as we have collaborated in the past, but this is where our paths diverge".

Nash and Thorsen responded in a short text published in *Årsberetningen for Institut for Sammenlignende Vandalisme*, (Annual Report for the Institute for Comparative Vandalism), of which Jorn, incidentally, was the publisher. Here they wrote a short sarcastic statement with the headline "The meatball's flight over the fence", which ends with "We know his party tricks. He only wants to play when he has the chance to place himself at the centre of events. But in this case it is not him that is at the centre but the fence, the freedom of expression. And when the fence is there all the meatballs escape".

Jorn wrote in a personal letter to Nash in January 1963: "What I attack is, as you know, your stupid manifesto that says the exact opposite of what it says in the Nordic Situationist manifesto". According to him CO-RITUS was getting caught in a narrow political field that contravened the intentions described in the manifesto from the Second Situationist International, where the goal lay beyond the political. For Jorn the fence demonstration is "the most obscene and demagogic form of politics that can be practised by claiming to be anti-political". However he also sends some other signals when he states: "Paint all the free paintings that you want, if you have the time for those things. But I of course never paint anything for free". Jorn concluded by expressing his anger at being called a meatball and the letter is the last one between Nash and Jorn that is held in the Nash-Jorn archive. The fence case marked the final split between Asger Jorn and Drakabygget. Perhaps the split was grounded in Asger Jorn's commercial career, but it was equally about different views on the role of art in society.

Almost two years later, Jorn articulated a coherent critique of CO-RITUS in the essay "Kunst og Ordre" (Art and Orders) that was published in the national newspaper *Politiken* on the 21st of August 1964 and later published in English in *Situationist Times*. The essay was a response to an essay by the writer and filmmaker Jørgen Leth a month earlier titled "Anti-art or new rituals?" in which he described the development of the open artwork as it had emerged in Fluxus as anti-art and the practices of the Situationists and CO-RITUS as new collective rituals. Asger Jorn saw this article as a direct attack on him. He wrote that he in Jørgen Leth's essay:

[I]s held accused of yet another treason, this time against both humanity and myself because I allow the bourgeoisie to isolate art as an elevated and admirable phenomenon. The time has come for the unique art, that today is a rarely permitted luxury in the periphery of welfare society, to be finally annihilated for the benefit of a 'ritual status'.

Jorn argues that rituals are repetitions representing a coercion and therefore ritual is in opposition to free art. He neglects the fact that CO-RITUS

demand new and renewed rituals, not simply repetitions of old ones. At the same time he writes, irritated: “It is way too dangerous for a society to let amateurs fool around with experimental rituals on a large scale”.

In order to create ‘the new’ he claims that one must also take a “standpoint in time” and argues that with the open artwork the artist is pushed into the background: “This entails that it would be forbidden as an artist to reveal oneself as the creator of one’s work and sign it by name”. Jorn concludes by stating that art is a one-way communication and has the fundamental nature of being an order. These orders can also give rise to counter-orders among the audience. This was far from the programme that was to “benefit an open engagement with social games in the creative realm” as he wrote in the *Critique of Economic Policy*. Provoked by the fence demonstration Jorn was thus charting the perimeter of the experimental field, a field he earlier defined as radically free and unbound. It would seem that the artistic revolution and experimental communism that Jorn suggested in 1960 did not after all mean the suspension of his own status as singular artist.

In several places in *Art and Orders* Jorn insinuates that he feels he is attacked by forces he himself had been part of instigating: “When I write about this it is because I, throughout the years, have created much material that, without my name being mentioned, is now included in this declaration of war against me”. He sees himself as under attack from a renewed understanding of practice that takes as its point of departure his own revolutionary aesthetics and experimental communism: a kind of ‘blowback’.

Only the Beginning

The Drakabygget Situationists went on to make numerous public actions provoking the police and bourgeois norms in the following years. They were constantly challenging the limits of artistic freedom of expression, and the exclusivity of the artistic sphere. Most notable was the media spectacle around the Little Mermaid in 1965, in which Jørgen Nash took centre-stage as the prime suspect in the beheading of the Mermaid. As Debord wrote in 1957, the aim of the Situationist International was to seize modern culture and he encouraged a less subjective and more

tactical attitude towards culture for the revolutionary artists who was accepted in the International. Nash and Thorsen managed to combine the unruly subjectivity of the early avantgarde with a broader cultural impact and they became household names in Denmark and Sweden due to their transversal activities. They never became specialised artists and were never accepted by the Danish art establishment. Although the fine line between seizing culture and being seized by the spectacle was not always easy to distinguish for the two rebels their anti-programmatic and experimental attitude was a constant source of disturbance. But they did their utmost to instigate a ‘permanent artistic revolution’.

Source Aid: Gordon Fazakerley, Jacqueline de Jong, Jørgen Nash, Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Lars Morell, Peter Laugesen, Troels Andersen, Enrico Baj, Guy Debord, Hardy Strid, Lis Zwick, Jean Sellem, Stewart Home, Fabian Tompsett, Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Howard Slater, Simon Ford, Verner Permild, Peter Wollen, Selima Niggl, Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Pia Dornacher, Ilonka Czerny et. al.

FEAR EVERYTHING EXPECT NOTHING

Jakob Jakobsen: Okay, let's start the final discussion. Maybe some of you would like to ask a question to Jacqueline, or ...

Ottmar Bergmann: I would like to make a comment about my old enemy/friend, Jørgen Nash. During the last two days very little has been said about homo ludens. And Guy Debord played an important part in all this, but he never was *homo ludens*. Debord never understood Jørgen Nash, and—this is important!—Jørgen Nash never accepted Debord as this man who could throw him out of the Situationist International! He never accepted the eviction. He said Debord was an idiot. And said Debord was a dry French bore, perhaps he had some success for his *theorie*, high *theorie*, but when Nash and the others were thrown out of the SI. Debord had not yet written *The Society of the Spectacle*. It was written and published later. Of the two Nash was the true homo ludens.

Debord was just stiff; a French man who can only speak one language: French! And Jørgen Nash always said: "This Debord, he could not understand English, he could not understand German, he could not understand Italian, he could only speak French. I don't understand, why my brother has made him the secretary of this group of people from several different countries..." This was Jørgen Nash, he never accepted Debord or his attempt to exclude Nash. The stiff French approach and the dada spirit of Nash who was a farmer guy from Jutland could not fit together, this could not fit together.

Jacqueline de Jong: I think the best expression of homo ludens right now would be what is hapening here in Copenhagen where people are playing in the streets changing street signs, etc. Part of the ideas of Constant's New Babylon were based on homo ludens. Of course *Homo Ludens* is

a book written by Johan Huizinga and it means the playing man. And, I mean, you can say whatever you want about Nash, but not that he was a 'playing man'. He was a clown ... and there's a big difference. I'm sorry to say so ...

JJ: There's another question, from down there ...

Jonas Bals: Is this also a general discussion?

JJ: Yeah, I think we're fading into that, yeah, that's fine.

JB: First of all, I would just like to say that this party has now been announced, and it will be outside the school that the City Council proposed that Ungdomshuset buy for 12 million kroner. So the party has been going on for about 15 minutes. So perhaps we should all go there ...

JJ: Yes, there's a street party starting, and we can go to that after the discussion. Or, if you feel tired by this discussion, go to the street party now. Yeah, come on, you also had a question.

JB: I would like to sort of continue where we sort of stopped in the discussion before, because I think ... I mean, at least for me, Situationism is about more than only creating situations for the

situations' own sake. It has a sort of, it should be part of a revolutionary project in one way or another, whatever we mean by that. And I think the revolutionary defeats of the last century have, in one way, sort of confirmed the critique of the counter-revolutionaries and the reactionaries. So, you know, we all agree that the cost is too high, the price is too high. But still, we all feel that sort of, you know, capitalism is still here, and the same problems exist as they always have. And what's going on in Norrebro now is just, you know, one sign among many. Life is unbearable inside capitalism.

So I think we should also discuss what can be done to counter capitalism here and now. I think that we need to discuss alternatives to capitalism. I mean, I agree with what so many have said here this week, that, you know, the avant-garde is dead, and we cannot point out a direction, but if we do not point in *any* direction, or at least discuss among ourselves what we want to replace capitalism with, we just end up with the slogan of this conference. Which reminds me very much actually of neoliberal management literature. "Expect

Anything! Don't Fear Nothing! Be Flexible!" So let's discuss ways of critiquing capitalism and let's have a street party at Ungdomshuset.

JJ: Any other comments along those lines?

Simon Sheikh: Well, I was just struck by this separation between art and politics, and I don't find that to be very productive, actually. Because I'm not really sure what this separation means. The revolution is not only an event that will then change everything, something punctual, you know, like the birth of Christ basically. The revolution is a process. And it takes place in everyday life. Vaneigem has this beautiful sentence where he writes that those who talk about revolution and don't talk about everyday life, these people have a corpse in their mouth. And I think that's a very good phrase. I think it means that revolution is a kind of process, a street party perhaps. Something that goes on, and is implemented in the way you live, as a kind of political-aesthetical act. And this would be one of the ways in which to counter capitalism, namely, to live, to revolutionise, in your head—so not a kind of exodus but exorcism, an exorcism of all

our feelings for commodities and so on, and actually live. And that's why I think it's good to look at these historical examples, and why it's also good to know how they failed, like Drakabygget. These examples show how we can actually live in a different way even under the existing conditions. The revolution as a street party, as a movement, something that moves along and is constantly changing, without a specific goal, not moving from that point to that point.

JJ: One of the aims of the conference was exactly to discuss and perhaps to criticize the separation of art and politics. One of the lessons of the Situationist project was exactly to investigate and rethink the traditional relationship between these specialised activities. When the revolution of the everyday life becomes individualized it turns into a neoliberal slogan, Vaneigem was aware of that risk. Like this idea of realising the individual, transforming yourself, as we are told all the time, or that you can change yourself by getting a new kitchen or all this shit that we are sold all the time.

Zwi: Perhaps it is useful to introduce the notion of potlatch

into this discussion. How you can abolish the commodity form by gift, by a practice of gift instead of equivalence of quantified portions of labour, labour force and so on. We should reflect on the consequences today of trying to abolish commodity forms in everyday life, is it possible, or is it just some eccentric bohemian practice of precarianised people, how could it really be abolished on a world scale? This is a discussion that is obviously linked with the political discussion which is a discussion about power. Let's say that the two sorts of homo ludens existed in the Situationist experience. The one was mentioned, the Nash and Asger Jorn and so on line, Asger Jorn, I should say, rather representing a more centristic position of the critique of commodity production by the model of the homo ludens. And the Debord line was the one of the art/play dialectics. Play as the game of war, game as game of war. The Clausewitz art and warfare... the art of warfare analogy. But these are only analogies that dialectically connect with each other, but not to mix up. And all... well, I'll stop here. I think these are catchphrases that might be worthwhile discussing

here.

Tom McDonough: Yeah, I might sort of amplify or play up to these comments. You're absolutely right, and I might articulate that dichotomy a little bit differently though. I mean, in a way, I think... I think there were differing understandings of potlatch within the SI. And, I might say, on the one hand you have a set of ideas that Constant and Jorn brought in, coming out of Huizinga's book, and this notion of homo ludens, in which, you know, Huizinga talks about potlatch as a form of game, right. But for Debord, I think the notion of potlatch really comes out of Bataille, and this notion of a 'generalised economy', and this really comes back to something Jacqueline said earlier because I think really that one of the most important things that we can take from the SI is this, exactly, anti-utopian, or non-utopian element. I think that's what's so valuable about potlatch, is that it's not simply a utopian dream. And for Debord I don't think it simply comes down to this generosity in gift, you know, actually, the notion of gift in potlatch is very loaded, right, it's an obligation, it's about a form of economy that is not negotiated

around the money nexus or the commodity nexus but, precisely, obligations, obligations between individuals and communities. And I think, you know, that's what's so valuable, and what's so interesting, and it's where, you know, you can think about it through Bataille and potlatch, or we can think about Marshall Sahlins' work on Stone Age economies, and these non-hierarchized, non-centralised notions of exchange that, precisely, don't try to *abolish* power or imagine power away, but actually try to think about more equitable forms of, you know, human interaction, in which power and agonistic things still can exist. I mean, I think that's one of the most, you know, *useful* things, and it might be also a way of getting at the difference between an experiment like Drakabygget, which, you know, is this kind of, well, I mean we heard it's absolutely not utopian at all, but you know, you know, in which there was this sort of an attempt to, you know, almost magically make all those institutions go away, right, and form this kind of hermetic community, you know, form this, you know, sort of isolated community and... something broader, right.

Negator: I just want to pick up the potlatch thing and comment on the double bind in that. The *Potlatch*, as a magazine, as gift which, yeah, you wait for a bigger gift, yeah, so that's why potlatch is so terribly un-economic, or has been, in these tribal societies on the Northwest Pacific coast, so you had the problem that societies became poorer and poorer because in the hierarchy under each other, the gifts had to be bigger and bigger. So... but the detournement of the potlatch into a society of which the Lettrists and the SI knew the forces of productivity are high enough. And nowadays we have to think how we can construct situations where we can get rid of the capitalist mode of production, and can enjoy the wealth that society is already able to produce. If you read the text about the Watts riots... you can't read them without having in your back head the potlatch, yeah. For a short moment people ruled the products. In the Watts riots the SI saw potlatch. I take everything and then I look. Do I like it, can I need it or not, if not, I smash it on the street, yeah, I just throw it. This is what potlatch meant for the SI: A kind of a play programme for people in revolutionary situations

where they learn to play with the products. Not fetishistic society dominated by products but where people dominate the products. And this is the sense of 'playing', in the sense of destroying. To get an impression of or to learn that there is affluence, that there's enough there, and all the stuff which the old society has produced, I look if I like it or not and if I don't like it, I just throw it and destroy it. So only this can I do in a capitalist society which can produce in mass, and this is the first, first step to a communist way of production, and distribution, yeah, only can... can the society only work with the stuff it wants, yeah, it needs. So the potlatch situation is in fact a situation where I see what I want and if I don't like it, I just throw it. So this is the important sense of the potlatch I wanted to add.

TMcD: Indeed, the Haida word for potlatch is literally 'to kill property', right, so when they say they're having a potlatch, they say they're, you know, 'killing wealth'. And, you know, there are very direct connections between the points that are being made and, you know, the history of the SI. I mean, Marcel Mauss', you know, sorry to be a

historian, you know, Mauss' book on the gift is re-published in 1950 in France and it's reviewed by Claude Lefort, back when he was still a Communist, he was in *Socialisme ou barbarie*. And he talks about, in exactly the terms that are being mentioned, a recognition through destroying property that I am not this thing I am destroying, I'm greater than these material goods, you know. I think that feeds in very directly into, you know, into all these understandings that are that are being talked about.

Peter Laugesen: And I also think that, you know, connected with potlatch and art and all this stuff: Art is simply a gift. Art should be a gift. Art should be given freely to everyone. Not because they maybe want it, but maybe because they don't want it. That's potlatch. I think we should change the slogan we have here to exactly the opposite: "Fear Everything Expect Nothing".

JdJ: One more thing: the Situationist publications always had non-copyright on it. And the non-copyright is a kind of gift, a kind of potlatch.

GF: But it was also, I should say, an attempt to free oneself from any

more bureaucracy.

JdJ: No, but in fact, it is a gift, the non-copyright, and I think that has to be put straight. Not many movements have had this, there I think we were quite unique.

JJ: I think also in this situation now, here in Copenhagen, somehow, to talk about revolution, I think here the term is maybe also 'resistance'. And of course out of resistance, perhaps, revolution could occur, or, just, like, we have to accept resistance as a part of our daily lives. And I think now, kind of talking about the Situationists and all the different kinds of interpretations of the project—of the 'game of war', or the 'playing' artist—it's like here, here in Copenhagen it's total repression right now. Yesterday because we are so many people in this old squatted house there were four buses with police outside. The police just could not understand why so many people were gathering here. And the week before also, this house was trashed by the police, the whole thing. And this situation, I think it's interesting to discuss these different Situationist strategies because I think it's not very clear what the protesters, or the resisters, are doing. It's not debated very

much. There has been, like, the more violent part, but also the more playing part, or playful part, the 'Jagtvej strategy'—where people turned all the roads in Copenhagen into Jagtvej. Of course they are going in some kind of concert, but then again, like, to discuss what is efficient and not efficient, whether it should be a 'game of war' or it should be the 'homo ludens strategy' against this total situation of repression. And that's why it's also interesting to discuss these questions, whether revolution is coming from the street party now or it's just another sign of resistance, I don't know.

Johannes B. Larsen: It's kind of a question regarding potlatch and its revolutionary potential... It's an anecdote, actually. Yesterday, when I was coming here to put up the chairs, I was late because I had entered into a different economy. I'm already in one economy that I'm not very glad of, but then I entered into this new bicycle stealing economy when my bicycle was stolen, which is a common phenomenon in Copenhagen. And I discovered, while I was here and talking to other people, on breaks, that it was quite common to steal bicycles from

one another and use them. But bicycles have actually also played a part in the street fightings that have taken place in Copenhagen after the raiding of the Youth House. Because one of the first things that was used to built barricades was also bicycles. And they were put on fire, I don't know quite how. But they were put on fire and destroyed. And I don't know, but is there some kind of small hope in these different kinds of economies I've just entered?

JdJ: In Amsterdam there was a big white bicycle project that meant that throughout the whole town of Amsterdam there were white bicycles and everyone could use the white bicycles. And when that happened, no bicycles were stolen any longer in Amsterdam, no bicycles stolen, although I never heard that they were burned. The white bicycle project was made by the Provos and it was really close to the Situationists' ideas. And it went through... I mean, the crazy thing was that it ended up being an official policy by the town, made an official thing. To you, it's an answer, it did exist as a potlatch, this white bicycle project. And it worked, it worked absolutely.

JB: Yes, just to keep continuing with

the thread about the revolution and resistance, I think definitely resisting has very little, if anything at all, to do with revolution. But I think we tend to... there's a tendency to mystify revolution, and, you know, once you see a burning fire in the street, you think of burning barricades, and 1848 or 1789... It's... That's not what the revolution is really about, is it? But at the same time, I mean, the reason why everybody was so happy in Copenhagen two weeks ago, I mean, it was... what happened were, you know, it was just a following-up of a huge defeat, really. And one of the last non-commodified spaces in Copenhagen being torn down by the police. And, I mean, people were still happy, because you had this feeling when you see thousands of people around you expressing anger, and being both playful *and* angry at the same time. It's a very, it's a very life-giving feeling. And that's the euphoria, I think, Fabian was talking about, which showed up, quite early after the Poll Tax victory in Britain, to be empty. And that's what Situationism, or whatever you want to call it, it's supposedly about, how to sort of keep these situations away from just

dying out or turning into small moments of euphoria. And then, then it's about thousands of different practices, and ways of doing things, and ... and also, I mean, quite boring organisational work, which is sort of perhaps not the favourite activity of artists, I would guess, but that's also part of it, which sort of, which is a huge challenge in itself, you know, to do meaningful stuff in an organisational way without institutionalizing and making it into dead structures ... I think the group Class War from Britain, they have a very beautiful expression, which I think is worth remembering, and it's that "revolutionaries are ordinary people doing extraordinary things". And it's not more complicated than that in a way, and at the same time, of course it is very very complicated. But as I said earlier, we can start anyway tonight by having a street party ...

Zwi: I had one question I wanted to ask: Did the Situationists mystify revolution? Or did Debord making his wargames over-rationalize it maybe, in order to develop a strategy, a game of war ... Strategy and tactics, that's, I think, the legacy, or heritage—silly words—of the Debord 'pole' you criticize. It's more than just being a theoretician

rather than a playful artist, but it's the developing a sort of wargame ... Strategy and tactics, between the subjectivity of dreams and the real conditions, material conditions, that we don't possess—so far—how to get them, this is a matter of strategy and tactics. Also, of the subconscious, or the unconscious, rather. And this dialectics between the subjective in everybody, the 'state of mind', which has been discussed for some time now, and the objective conditions, how to realise this. In this, in this difficulty lies the danger of mysticism, of art, of revolution. I think I could show how Asger Jorn, and his critique of economy, for instance, and of money, and of value, and ... *Nolens volens*, he didn't want to do that, but I think one must admit that this very confused way of criticism mystifies art as *the value*, the ensemble of value, and does not put the critique of political economy since Marx, the critique of material, economic value and capital and everything around it in its place in this axiology of, this ensemble of value, values, and how do they come into existence, and how can they be abolished, or turned into something else, which is the potlatch problem at the same

time—gift and equivalence and so on. And this has not been solved, by any of the ... neither the Marxian line and the strategic, tactical war game line, nor the purely artistical *homo ludens* line could solve this problem. We can't solve this problem by only talking about our 'states of mind', our attitude. It is elementary, but it's crucial to go to a step further to strategy, tactics, class war, and so on ... This is not political. This is just the abolition of the political sphere as well as the abolition of the sphere of art.

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen: That's of course one of the tasks we still have to address: How to critique the separate identities like artist, activist, etc.? As the SI made clear really early on present-day society is very well able to cope with different

kinds of critique as long as these remain attached to already established spheres; what it can't cope with is the strange *dérives* where we end up at the wrong place like students and immigrants joining the Youth House activists fighting in the street with the police. But as Jakob and Jonas said the situation in Copenhagen has nothing to do with revolution this is a desperate attempt to fight back after years of neo-liberal repression. But it's a start and perhaps the protests will develop into militancy other places. From street militancy to shop-floor militancy and so on. We will have to wait and see what happens...

JJ: Yeah, let's go join the party and mix things up.

This conversation took place at the Expect Anything Fear Nothing Conference, Copenhagen, March 2007.

CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Laugesen became a member of the Situationist International in 1962 when he showed up at J.V. Martin's farm outside Randers after reading the first issue of *Situationistisk Revolution* that Martin had just published. Peter helped prepare "Destruction of RSG-6" in Odense in 1963 but was thrown out of the Situationist International later that year because of his interest in Beat poetry and Zen Buddhism. Peter made his debut as a poet in 1967 with *Landskab* (Landscape) and has published more than 50 volumes of poetry since then. Today, Peter is an acclaimed poet in Denmark, but still in touch with the grassroots, contributing generously to experimental and self-organised projects.

When it comes to knowledge about the films of the Drakabygget movement, **Carl Nørrested** is the one. Carl is a filmmaker and genuine film buff with an unequalled knowledge of Danish experimental films from the 1920s until today about which he

has written several books, including the classic *Eksperimentalfilm i Danmark* (Experimental Film in Denmark) from 1986. He is one of the few people that has actually seen most of the Drakabygget films.

Fabian Tompsett has played a very important, although often largely hidden role in the introduction and reuse of Situationist tactics and concepts in the English-speaking world. Not only has he translated Asger Jorn into English and helped put together *Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration*, he has also been active in the recreation of the London Psychogeographical Association. As of late, Fabian has been busy putting Debord and Alice Becker-Ho's "Game of War" into practice with organized tournaments of the "Class Wargame".

With his books *Den Sidste Avantgarde* (The Last Avant-Garde) and *Avantgardens selvmord* (The Suicide of the Avant-Garde), **Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen** published thorough

and substantial research into the activities of the Situationist International, looking in particular at the forgotten contribution of J.V. Martin. Along with the artists Jørgen Michaelsen and Mads Ranch Kornum, Mikkel recreated the journal *Mutant* and managed to publish four and a half issues but the project eventually collapsed due to a lack of finances and tensions in the group. Mikkel has been active within different semi-obscure writers' collectives such as *undtagelsestilstand.dk* and *Imaginær Fraktion*, scribbling fierce and melancholic pamphlets castigating the present *misère*.

The English poet and painter **Gordon Fazakerley** was supposed to have become a member of the Situationist organisation in 1961 but was unable to attend the conference in Gothenburg. Instead, Fazakerley became part of Jørgen Nash's Drakabygget movement after the split in the International, living briefly at the Drakabygget farm and participating in several of the exhibitions and actions that the Drakabygget gang carried out in 1962 and 1963. Gordon is still an active painter working at home in

his large flat in Copenhagen that he shares with his wife Ulla Borchenius, whom he met at Drakabygget in the early 1960s.

Returning to Sweden after studying in London at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the Swedish painter **Hardy Strid** hooked up with Jørgen Nash and became a member of the Situationist International during the conference in Gothenburg. Following the exclusion of Gruppe SPUR that caused the split in the Situationist group which triggered the departure of Nash, Ansgar Elde and Jacqueline de Jong from Debord and his cohorts, Hardy played a very active part in the Drakabygget movement. He collaborated with Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen on CO-RITUS and other actions. Hardy based his activities in Halmstad where he established his own free workshop called Tiarp.

As part of her art historical research into Asger Jorn submitted as a dissertation at Columbia University in 2005, **Karen Kurczynski** learned Danish in order to study Jorn's writings in detail. Karen did not shy away from spending a year in the middle of Jutland at the art

museum in Silkeborg in order to go through Jorn's archive and look into different aspects of his practice and involvement in avant-garde groups from Helhesten to the Situationist International. Aside from articles on Jorn, Karen has also published pieces on feminism and drawing in contemporary art.

Jacqueline de Jong became a member of the Situationist International in 1960 but had already befriended Asger Jorn and hung out with other Situationists like Armando and Constant for a couple of years. Following the exclusion of Gruppe SPUR, De Jong left the Situationist International but carried through the plan discussed with Debord about publishing a new Situationist journal, *The Situationist Times*, which came out in six issues from 1962 to 1967 with de Jong as the editor and assisted by Noël Arnaud, Gordon Fazakerley and others. De Jong participated in the "Seven Rebels" exhibition in Odense in 1962 but quickly fell out with Nash, Strid and Thorsen. Jacqueline is still an active and committed visual artist.

Since the publication of *The Assault on Culture* in 1988 **Stewart Home** has helped widen the perspective on the Situationist movement with his critique of the heroisation of Guy Debord and stress on the collective dimension in the Situationist organisation's theory and practice. Stewart's research led him to interview Ralph Rumney and edit *What is Situationism? A Reader* as well as visit Jens Jørgen Thorsen in Sweden. The visit was a disappointment for Stewart as he realized that Thorsen and the Drakabygget movement had become anarchist. Stewart is still challenging the world through his writing of pulp fiction novels.

In the context of Infopool and Copenhagen Free University **Jakob Jakobsen** has carried out an intense research into and facilitated the representation of Situationist activities in Scandinavia. Jakob has recently spent months in the Nash-Jorn archive at the Royal Library going through scraps of paper and unpaid fines. As an artist, activist and organizer Jakob has prioritised working within self-organised institutions and keeps a distance from the spectacle of the established art and political world.

EXPECT ANYTHING FEAR NOTHING

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