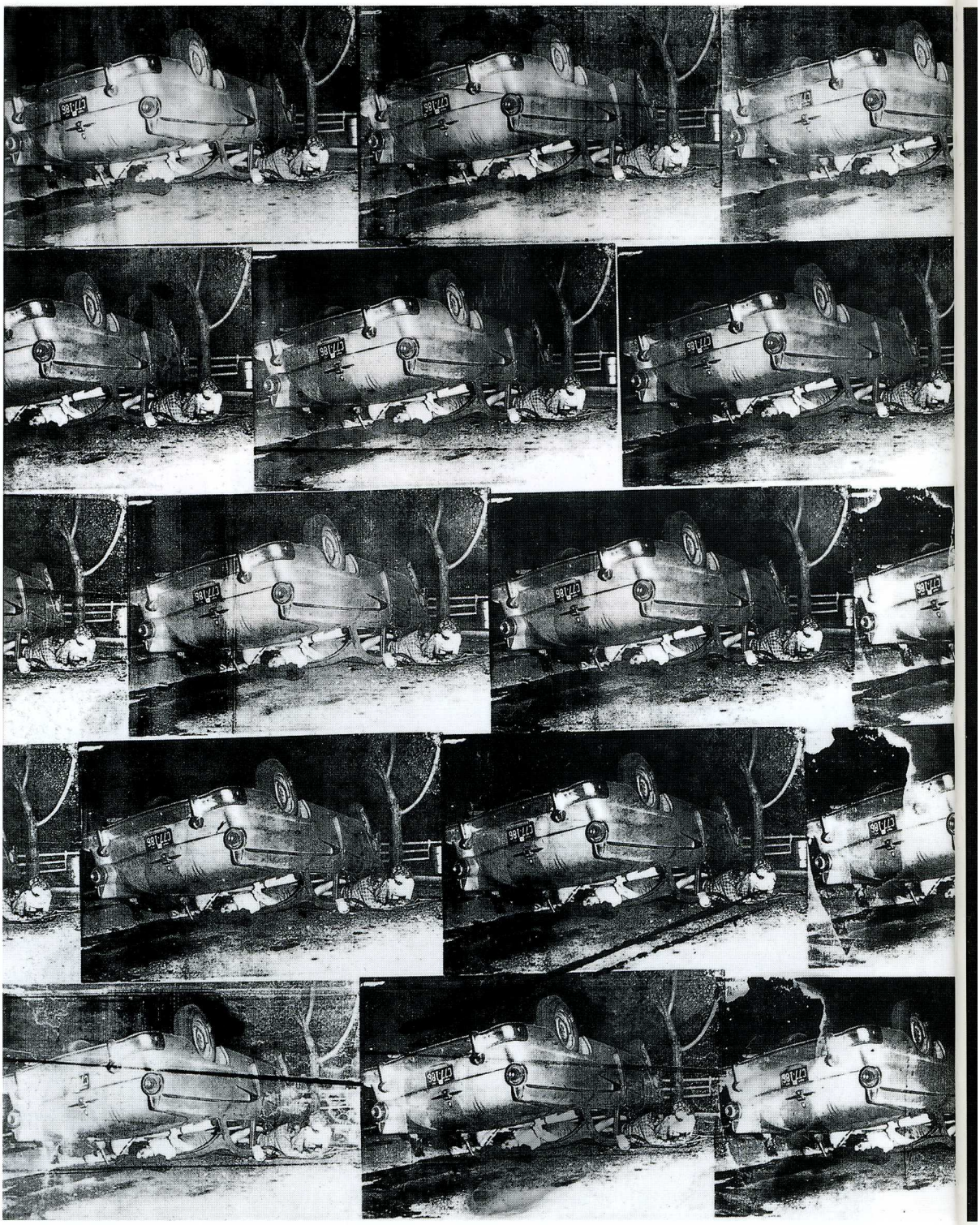


56 Andy Warhol
Five Deaths Seventeen Times in Black and White, 1963
The use of serial repetition here, as in other early Warhol works, relates interestingly to Minimalist uses of repetition (see Chapter 5). The reciprocally ironic relation between Warhol and the Minimalists came to a head in 1964. Warhol exhibited a series of *Brillo Boxes*, consisting of large wooden boxes covered with silkscreened commercial logos, at the Stable Gallery, New York. He must have been aware of Robert Morris's anonymous cubic structures of the period. Late that year Morris exhibited his austere geometric forms forms at the city's Green Gallery [**69**].

The makings of Pop: the American art market

The Italian-born dealer Leo Castelli, assisted by his talent scout Ivan Karp, was pre-eminent in marketing American Pop Art. Having already snapped up Johns and Rauschenberg for his gallery (see Chapter 2), Castelli took on Lichtenstein in 1961, followed by Rosenquist and Warhol three years later. He extended his operations to Europe via a collaborative deal with his ex-wife Ileana Sonnabend, the daughter of a wealthy Romanian industrialist, who opened a Paris gallery in 1962.

When Rauschenberg won the Grand Prize at the Venice Biennale in 1964, aided by a string of strategic European exhibitions and Castelli's promotional machinations before the event, it was clear that the art world's financial capital was now New York. Wealthy collectors set the pace; Ethel and Robert Scull, their fortune based on a taxi empire, reportedly payed $45,000 for Rosenquist's multi-panelled *F-111* of 1965. When, in 1973, their collection was sold, at several thousand per cent profit, a dizzying escalation in postwar art prices was established.

repeated formats [**55**]. Lichtenstein's brushstroke paintings of 1965–6 [**54**] upstaged Johns's earlier parodies of Abstract Expressionist painterly largesse, translating its spontaneous flourishes into a formulaic graphic design idiom and turning 'expression' into one culturally mediated sign among others. His comic-strip images of the 1960s explored the stock signifiers of American mass culture. Square jaws connoted maleness, blonde hair and tears femininity. Gender roles were further demarcated into the spheres of combat (Lichtenstein's men are often at war in unspecified Asian locations, hinting at American involvement in Korea or Vietnam) and the domestic bedroom (women invariably agonize over love affairs). Skilfully transferring the Ben Day dots of the printer's screen and the stylizations of comic-book graphics into more satisfying 'abstract' designs, Lichtenstein asserted that his aim was to 'unify' his source materials visually, thus appeasing Modernist detractors scornful of debased 'copying' from 'kitsch'.

By contrast, Warhol mercilessly debunked Modernist protocols. Whilst his homosexuality was not widely acknowledged until after his death, he blithely used the related sensibility of Camp as his main weapon. Defined by Susan Sontag in a famous essay of 1964 as 'love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration', a 'good taste of bad taste', it had permeated Warhol's earlier output as a successful illustrator in the 1950s.[12] He had, for instance, produced stylish gold-leaf collages of shoes specially personalized for celebrities, before moving from the commercial to the fine art sphere. His first 'exhibition' of works in the latter idiom was decidedly 'camp'. In 1961, paintings derived from commercial graphics were displayed behind a scattering of fashionably clad mannequin 'shoppers' in the window of Bonwit Teller's, an up-market women's clothes store. The ensemble teasingly fused the dynamics of (male) 'high art' production and (female) mass-culture consumption, such gender connotations having been in place since the

mid nineteenth century, and persisting in Greenberg's art/kitsch opposition, according to Andreas Huyssen.[13]

In 1962 Warhol embarked on his iconography of consumerism—the screen-printed rows of dollar bills and Coca-Cola bottles on large canvases or the paintings of individual Campbell's soup cans that were shown at his first solo exhibition at Los Angeles's Ferus Gallery (see Chapter 3). The 'stacking' of his 'products' in rows implied a submission to the routinization of supermarket-era shopping as well as mimicking the techniques of mass-production. In line with this, he turned mechanization's threat to artistic autonomy into an aesthetic rationale, talking of wanting to be a machine, and pursuing the industrial metaphor to the extent of employing assistants to print his silkscreens in his 'Factory'. This essentially 'masculine' managerial stance, which updated art-historical workshop practices (e.g. Rubens), sat oddly alongside his 'camp' position.

Through aligning himself with 'female' consumption, Warhol came close to Duchamp, who had represented himself in drag on a perfume bottle [**25**], but Warhol's taste was more flamboyantly vulgar, especially when it came to opposing Abstract Expressionism's 'virility'. His *Cow Wallpaper* [**55**], its ungainly bovine profiles appearing incongruously 'rural' alongside his urban subjects, repudiated a whole lineage of 'bullish' imagery in twentieth-century art ranging from Picasso's *Guernica* to Motherwell's *Elegies* [**12**]. At the same time, in producing 'wallpaper'—the very incarnation of the 'domestic' and 'decorative'—he parodied the broodings of Modernists over where abstract paintings 'ended' compositionally, revelling in the 'philistine' perception of such works as 'wallpaper'. (The American critic Harold Rosenberg once denigrated certain forms of Abstract Expressionist art as 'apocalyptic wallpaper'.)[14]

Warhol's anti-Modernist position informed his most celebrated subjects, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor. These celebrities were as much gay icons as objects of male heterosexual desire, not least because of their publicized 'sufferings' in heterosexual relationships, and in his silkscreen-printed 'portraits' of 1962–3 the garish inks virtually functioned as make-up, creating 'drag-queen' connotations. Warhol was plagued by personal cosmetic insecurities. An early painting called *Before and After* (1960) was adapted from a newspaper advertisement dramatizing the transformation of a woman's nose from 'aqualine' to 'ski-slope' via plastic surgery; Warhol himself had had a 'nose job' in 1957. Applying silkscreen inks like cosmetics, he ironically attended to Modernist painting's 'complexion'—its concern, in Greenberg's terms, with maintaining surface integrity. Warhol famously asserted that to 'know' him, his audience simply needed to look at the 'surface' of himself or his work; there was nothing more.

In cosmeticizing Modernism Warhol brilliantly replayed certain conditions surrounding the foundational construction of the 'modernist' artist (for the two usages of the term see Chapter 1). In his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), the French art critic Charles Baudelaire had argued that what distinguished the (male) artistic advocate of 'modernity' was a marrying of the aristocratic spirit of the 'dandy' with that of the *flâneur* in the desire to 'distil the eternal from the transitory' out of urban flux. In a section entitled 'In Praise of Cosmetics' he extolled the artifice of make-up as an analogue for his aesthetic credo. Its ability to 'create an abstract unity in the colour and texture of the skin' was said to approximate 'the human being to the statue, that is to something superior and divine'.[15] Warhol's Marilyn was turned into a divinity in precisely these terms, although his *Gold Marilyn* of 1962, consisting of a solo head placed on a gold-painted field, also evoked Byzantine icons. The fact that Warhol was a fervent Catholic suggests a mobilization of fetishistic religious impulses equal to Klein's or Manzoni's. Certainly Warhol's carefully distanced persona and the voyeuristic establishment of a 'freak show' of hangers-on at his 'Factory' positioned him as Pop's 'dandy' *par excellence*.

Warhol's voyeuristic tendencies surfaced most clearly in the *Disasters* series (1962–4). The *Marilyns*, produced shortly after her suicide, anticipated these works in dramatizing how mass culture threads private tragedy through its machinery. (The repeated 'frames' of the *Marilyn Dyptich* [1962], some with the image over-inked or virtually invisible, connoted film, a medium to which Warhol turned in 1963.) Deriving initially from a stark newspaper headline '129 die in Jet' (the subject of a 1962 painting) the *Disasters* series ironically revived an important genre of Neoclassical 'history painting': the heroic death. Warhol, however, programmatically placed allusions to 'celebrity' deaths, such as Monroe's or President Kennedy's registered through the grief on his wife Jackie Kennedy's face, on a par with those of 'unknowns'—the harrowing *Suicide Jumps* and *Car Crashes* [**56**]. The latter constituted dystopian reflections on the symbol of American affluence in the wake of Jim Dine's earlier 'Happening' [**50**]. Other works in the series, the *Electric Chairs* and the *Tunafish Disasters*, dealt with 'unknowns' who momentarily achieved fame precisely through death. All in all, death was presented as a social leveller.

Democratizing processes were often the subject of Warhol's fey pronouncements. He noted approvingly that when Elizabeth II drank the Coca-Cola offered by President Eisenhower it tasted the same to her as to the man in the street. In a famous utterance he conflated the conformities of commodity culture with an alien political credo: 'I want everybody to think alike ... Russia is doing it under government ... Everybody looks alike and thinks alike, and we're getting more and more that way'.[16] The conflation reflected the way American media

57 Ed Ruscha
From *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (artist's book), 1963

Ed Ruscha produced a sequence of photographic books in the 1960s. Other examples, equally deadpan in nature, were *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965) and *Every Building on Sunset Strip* (1966). They deftly transposed the documentary vernacularism of American photographers such as Walker Evans into Pop terms.

representations of ideological rivalry between the US and Russia hinged on the supposedly egalitarian benefits of capitalist commodity output (as in reports of the 'kitchen debate' between America's Vice-President Nixon and Russia's President Krushchev in 1959). But Warhol's embrace of sameness potentially had moral valency. In an important essay Thomas Crow argues that the restatement of identical images in the *Disasters* series reminds us, poignantly, of the daily repetitiveness of tragedy.[17] It might equally be asserted, in line with Warhol's observation that 'when you see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn't really have any effect', that he was commenting on the affective numbing brought on by repeated exposure to the mass media.[18] Alternatively, critics have seen Warhol as cynically capitulating to alienation effects. Hence the disjunctive coloration (and titling) of certain images—*Lavender Disaster* (1963), for instance, in which multiple electric chairs appear in toilet-roll hue—possibly amounts to his commodifying of voyeurism, rendering it 'decorative'.

Whatever one's viewpoint, Warhol's re-runs of media intrusions shadow structural changes in American national consciousness brought about through the mass witnessing of traumatic 'spectacle' on TV (the filming of Kennedy's assassination in 1963 was a vivid demonstration of this new 'collective' phenomenon).[19] In this sense his recognition of technology's increasing mediation between the public and private spheres was exemplary, and his wholesale importation of photographic processes into the Fine Art arena, symbolized by the decision to 'paint' using photographic stencils just before Rauschenberg's move in the

58 Weegee
'Sudden Death for One ... Sudden Shock for the Other ...', photograph first published in the New York evening newspaper *PM Daily*, 7 September, 1944
The freelance newspaper photographer Arthur Fellig, better known as 'Weegee', was notorious in New York in the late 1930s for being the first to arrive at any scene of crime, arrest, or tragedy. Generally he worked late at night or early in the morning and his images are characterized by the use of photographic 'flash'. At the turn of the 1940s he occasionally lectured at New York's 'Photo League', forging links with the 'art photography' world.

same direction [**60**], represents a key historical juncture. It implicitly underlined Benjamin's sense of photography's sociocultural destiny, as discussed earlier, creating a precedent for later conceptually oriented art. In the latter respect, Warhol's utilization of a 'low' journalistic photographic genre can be correlated with the more resolutely amateurish, or deadpan, uses of photography in the work of a 'Pop' contemporary from Los Angeles, Ed Ruscha. In *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) [**57**], the first of a series of self-published books, Ruscha undercut the rarefied *livre d'artiste* tradition via the creation of an artless visual itinerary of the petrol stations on Route 66 between Los Angeles and Oklahoma, a forerunner of the Bechers' later taxonomies [**93**].

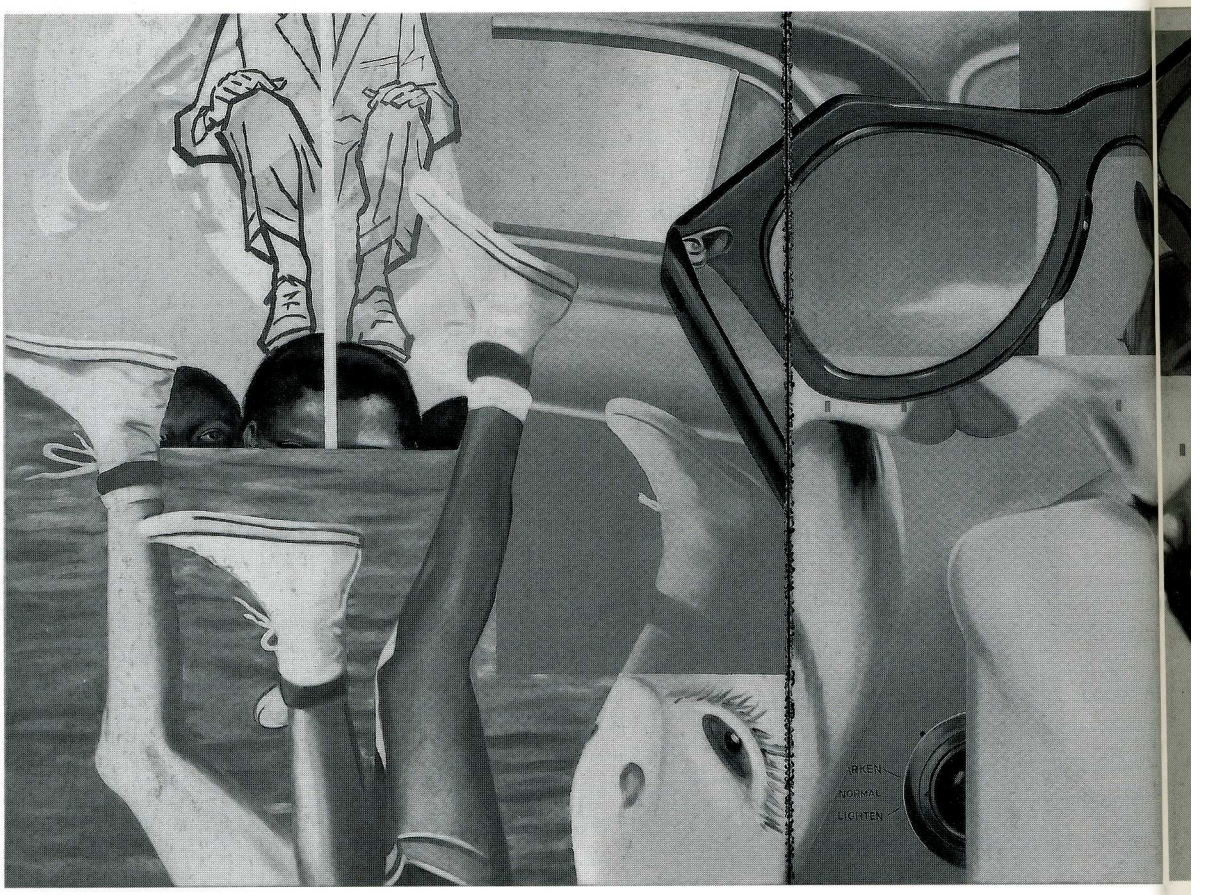
Ruscha's book also presented a cool take on the poeticized mythology of the American highway synonymous with Jack Kerouac's 1950s 'Beat' novels and Robert Frank's related 'art' photographs. Warhol's recoding of 'reportage' photography into 'Fine Art' terms probably played off earlier photographic history. In the 1940s the New York photographer Weegee, hailing from a similar working-class immigrant background to Warhol, had made his name in the commer-

cial arena, opportunistically photographing grisly suicides and car accidents for newspapers, before being turned into an 'art photographer' when MOMA bought and exhibited his work in 1943. In the late 1940s, when Warhol first lived in New York, Weegee's book *Naked City* was a best-seller, heralding its author's later self-promotion as 'Weegee the Famous'. The recoding of his morally ambiguous work, to say nothing of his negotiation of the interface between commerce and art 'stardom', may well have provided Warhol's model. Crow notes that images from Warhol's *Disasters* series often possess a dark *film noir* aura, such that we might well be witnessing events of the 1940s, and the image of a suicide victim used in *1947 White* (1963) actually dated from the year in that title. Interestingly, certain of Warhol's commercial logos were nostalgically anachronistic. His Coca-Cola lettering derived from early in the century.[20]

Weegee's intrusive photographs often exploited the traumatized 'blanking out' of accident victims in a state of shock [**58**]. Warhol in fact used 'blanks' in a more literal way, accompanying several of his *Disasters* with monochrome panels [**56**]. Frequently overlooked in analyses, these acknowledged the contemporary abstractions of Ellsworth Kelly or even Barnett Newman (by the mid-1960s Warhol's work was in dialogue with contemporaneous abstraction, especially Minimalist repetition; see Chapter 5), while providing a form of antithetical stasis or 'blanking out' in relation to the images. They may well be metaphors for the 'sublime'—the experience of awe in the face of overwhelming external forces that the Abstract Expressionists Newman and Rothko, drawing on eighteenth-century aesthetics, talked of wishing to evoke in their abstract 'fields'. For once, it seems, Warhol may have seen some virtue in Modernism. However, his 'sublime', as we shall see, was intrinsically 'postmodern'. He calls for further reappraisal, not just as a prophet of the author's 'disappearance' behind codes of representation (although, ironically, Warhol's authorial 'presence' actually increased as surely as the 'auras' of his images decreased), but as a moralist of sorts, or even a therapist, anaesthetizing us against the effects of traumas to come.

Pop and politics: the US and West Germany

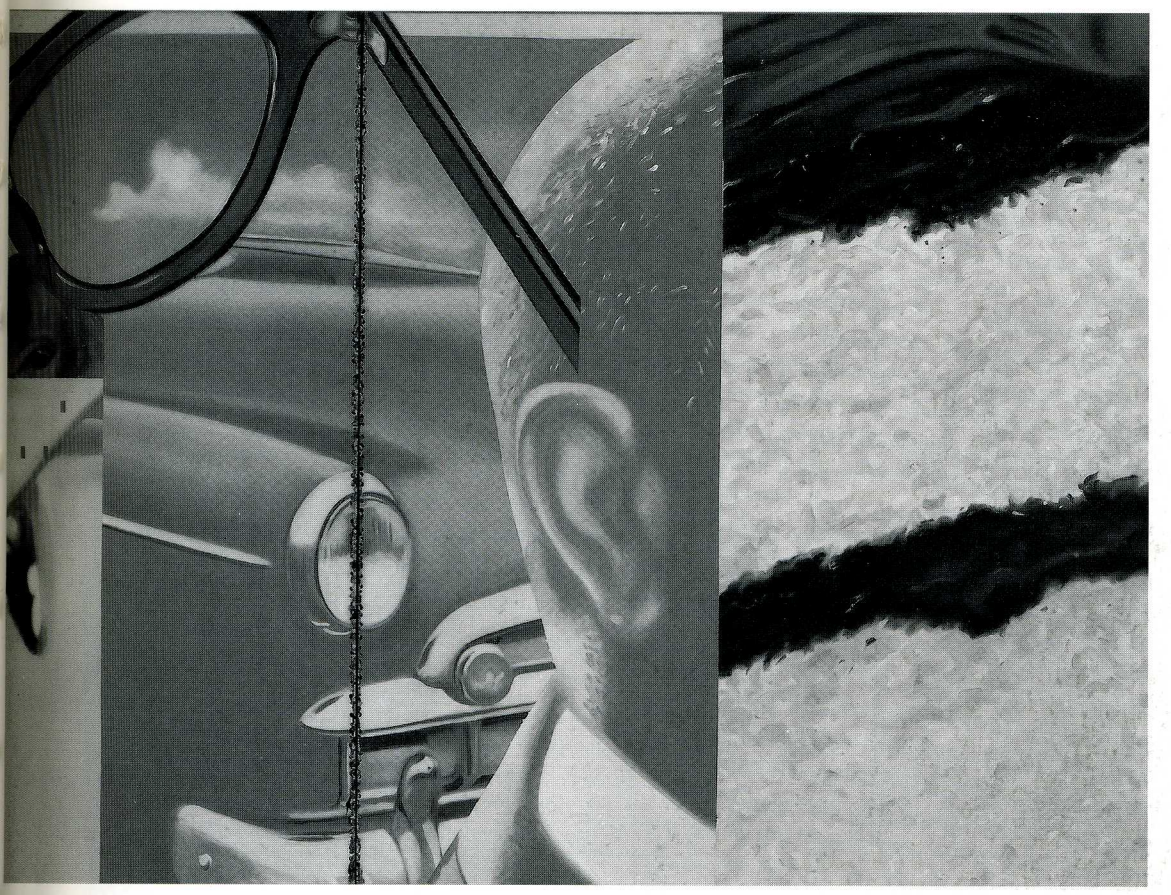
In general, American Pop luxuriated in the abundance of the Kennedy era (1960–3), as exemplified by Tom Wesselmann's and Mel Ramos's paintings juxtaposing glamorous nudes with brightly packaged foodstuffs. But James Rosenquist, like Warhol, occasionally registered its shallowness. He had trained commercially as a billboard artist, working close-up on enormous advertising hoardings which later predisposed him towards the use of abstracted fragments of imagery. In *Painting for the American Negro* [**59**], a response to Civil Rights issues, a slice of cake, connotative of consumer pleasures, is given a



59 James Rosenquist
Painting for the American Negro, 1962–3
Rosenquist's paintings made use of bizarre, filmic jumps in scale and content, hinting at buried 'narratives'. In the top left corner the lower half of a seated businessman is depicted in an illustrational mode. His feet, possibly awaiting the services of a 'shoe shine' boy, are firmly planted on the head of an illusionistically painted negro. Further along, an enlarged head (perhaps that of a black activist or the car's chauffeur) is rendered anonymous by the slice of sandwich cake in the final frame.

political inflection: it seems to hint at the social stratification implied throughout the painting. Cake had made another appearance in Rosenquist's earlier *President Elect* (1960–1). This time it was proffered by a ghostly hand emerging from the newly elected President Kennedy's face and emblematizing what Rosenquist feared would be 'empty promises'—cake for the masses, to recall Marie Antoinette. By contrast, Rauschenberg lauded Kennedy's vigorous statesmanship in several 'silkscreen paintings', as exemplified by the repetition of the pointing hand in *Retroactive I* [**60**].

As the American dream soured during the 1960s, Rosenquist encapsulated the changing mood in *F-111* (1964–5), a 51-panel 'mural' in the tradition of Picasso's politically motivated *Guernica*, depicting images of doom (an atomic explosion) and desire (yet more cake) intercut with an ominous image of an F-111 bomber. Planes of this type were instrumental in America's increasing involvement in the Vietnam War, as overseen by Kennedy's successor Lyndon Johnson. In fact they proved expensive design failures and thus appropriate symbols for an escalating Cold War conflict, ostensibly fought to uphold the freedom of Southern Vietnam against neighbouring Communist aggressors, but



evolving into an unwinnable war of attrition, which dragged on until 1973. Despite the equation it drew between political expediency and economics (Rosenquist commented that the prosperous lives of American arms-industry workers were predicated on death), Rosenquist's bomber was seductive enough to be installed in an entire room of Castelli's gallery and to be sold to fashionable collectors (see textbox on the American art market).[21]

If Rosenquist's politics were compromised by his Pop gloss, a more abrasive form of social commentary was conducted throughout the 1960s by the Los Angeles-based assemblage artist Ed Keinholz. Keinholz had helped consolidate West Coast Pop's distinctive 'funk' idiom with the establishment, in 1957, of Los Angeles's important Ferus Gallery, in collaboration with the curator Walter Hopps. By the turn of the 1970s his response to nearly two decades of racial tension, epitomized by riots in Los Angeles's Watts district in 1965 and in hundreds of other cities in 1967 and 1968, was a stark tableau first shown at Documenta 5 in Kassel, Germany, in 1972. It consisted of life-sized mannequins and related props. Its imagery was nightmarish. Lit by the headlights of their parked cars, six white men, their faces hidden

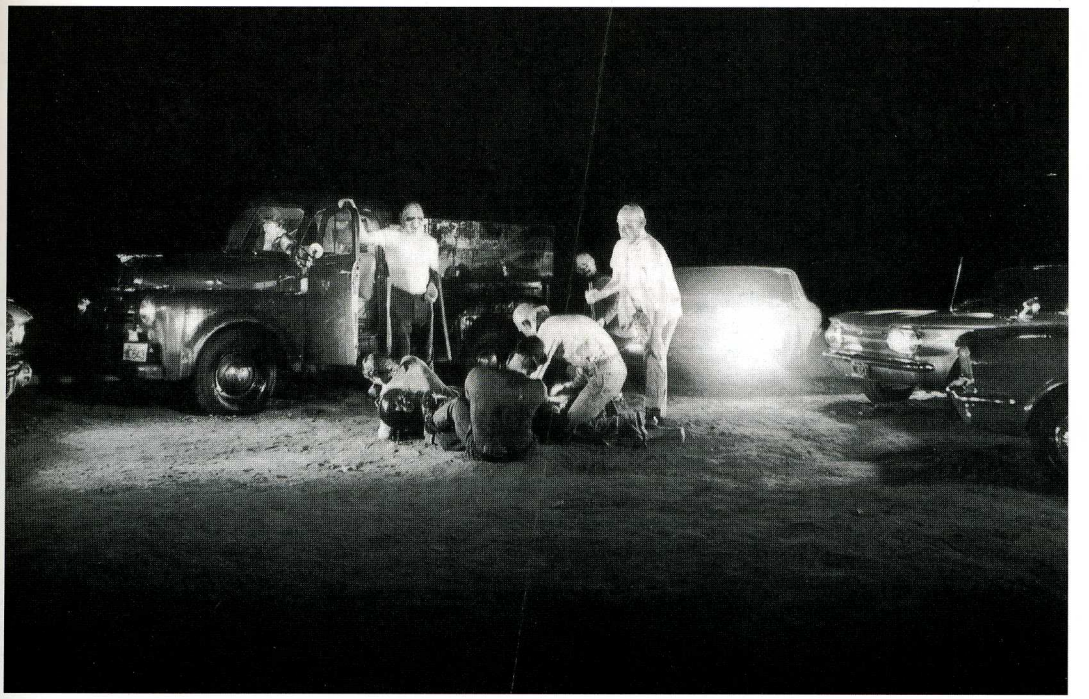
60 Robert Rauschenberg
Retroactive 1, 1964
Rauschenberg's silkscreened canvases bearing images of Kennedy were produced after the president's assassination, although Raushenberg had ordered the screens before the event. Kennedy's populist rhetoric of space conquest (in 1969 the US was to put the first man, Neil Armstrong, on the moon) thus becomes elided with an image of his deification; the parachuting astronaut at top left doubles as an angel.

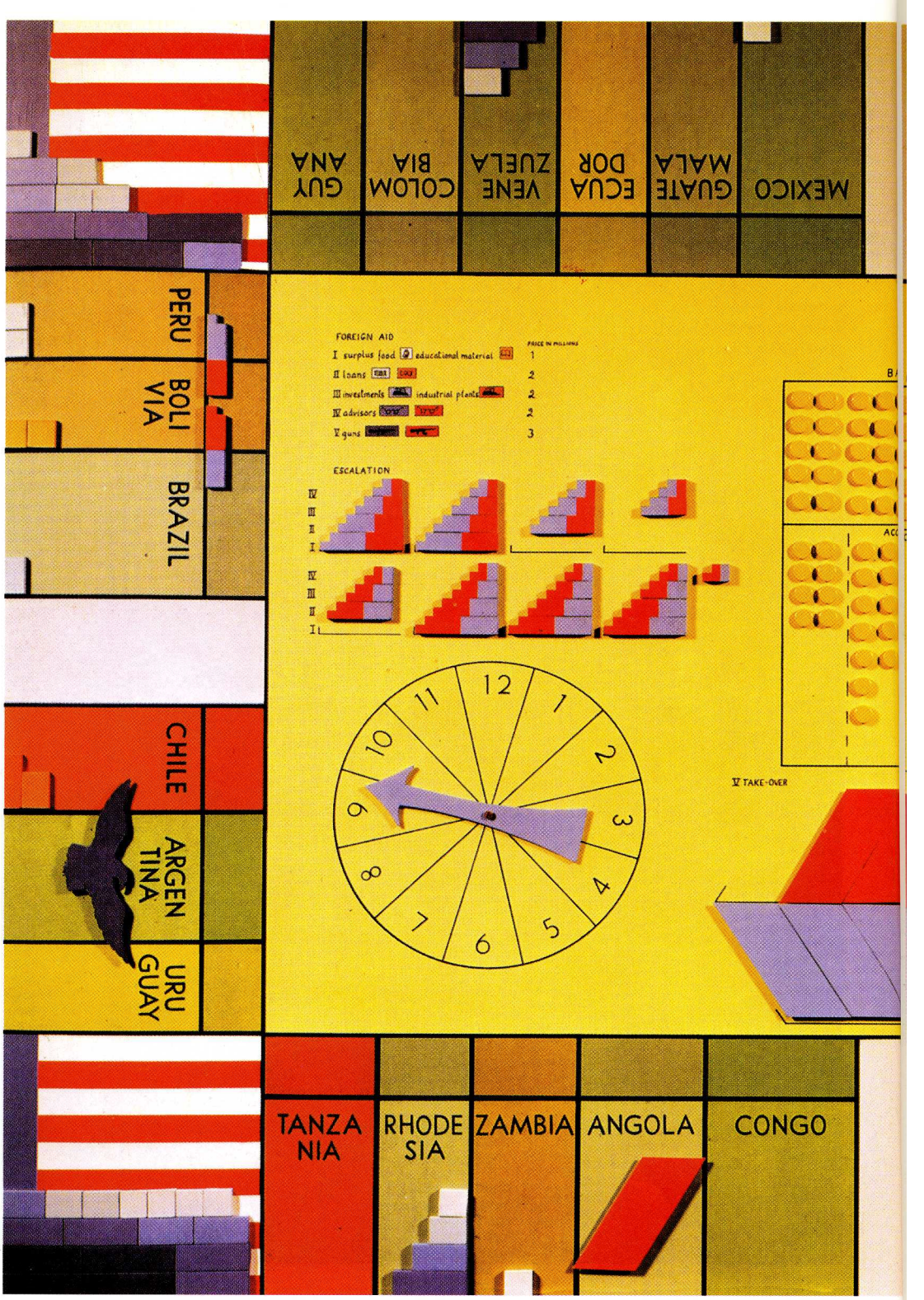
61 Ed Keinholz
Five Car Stud, 1969–72
Ruthlessly forgoing aesthetic or metaphorical niceties, Keinholz's grotesquely theatrical scenario compels the viewer to witness what he termed a 'social castration'.

by rubber Hallowe'en masks, systematically emasculated their black victim, while his white 'date' cowered, vomiting, in the truck from which he had been dragged [**61**].

By 1970 America's domestic troubles had become compounded by proliferating anti-war protests. These reached a peak when President Johnson's Republican successor, Richard Nixon, decided to bomb North Vietnamese bases in neutral Cambodia. Pop had long been supplanted as a movement, but it is significant that its idioms could still be mobilized by an 'outsider' commenting on the US's dangerous international power game. This was the frequently overlooked Brazil-born artist and poet Öyvind Fahlström, who was to settle in Sweden, but spent much of the 1960s shuttling between that country, Italy, and America. His *World Politics Monopoly* [**62**] of 1970 wittily dramatizes Cold War tensions. If Keinholz aimed to outrage his viewers, Fahlström invites them to 'play'. The magnetic 'pieces' on his 'board' are movable, thereby positing some degree of social/political autonomy. With Warhol in semi-retirement after the trauma of his shooting by Valerie Solanis in 1968, few home-grown exponents of Pop, whatever their commitment to a vernacular art, had any such stomach for sociopolitical comment.

If Fahlström implicitly criticized American Pop's political silence from within, two Germans conducted a different dialogue with it

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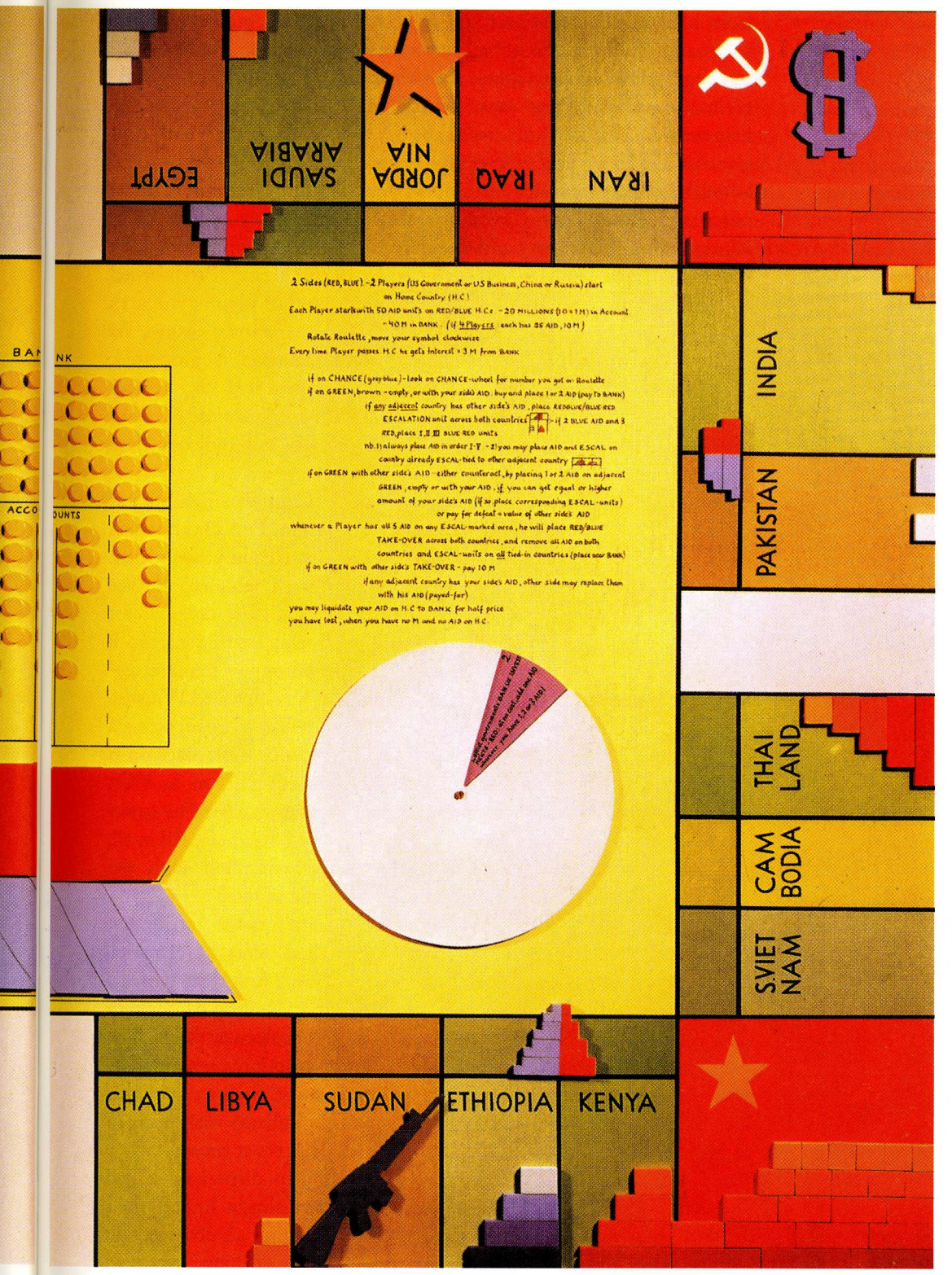
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SUDAN
ETHIOPIA
KENYA
2 Sides (RED, BLUE) – 2 Players (US Government or US Business, China or Russia) start on Home Country (H.C.)
Each Player starts with 50 AID units on RED/BLUE H.C. – 20 MILLIONS (10 = 1 M) in Account – 40 M in BANK. (If 4 Players: each has 25 AID, 10 M)
Rotate Roulette, move your symbol clockwise
Every time Player passes H.C. he gets Interest + 3 M from BANK
if on CHANCE (grey blue) – look on CHANCE-wheel for number you got on Roulette
if on GREEN, brown – empty, or with your side's AID: buy and place 1 or 2 AID (pay to BANK)
if any adjacent country has other side's AID, place REDBLUE/BLUE RED ESCALATION unit across both countries – if 2 BLUE AID and 3 RED, place I, II, III BLUE RED units
nb. 1) always place AID in order I-V – 2) you may place AID and ESCAL on country already ESCAL-tied to other adjacent country
if on GREEN with other side's AID – either counteract, by placing 1 or 2 AID on adjacent GREEN, empty or with your AID; if you can get equal or higher amount of your side's AID (if so place corresponding ESCAL-units) or pay for defeat = value of other side's AID
whenever a Player has all 5 AID on any ESCAL-marked area, he will place RED/BLUE TAKE-OVER across both countries, and remove all AID on both countries and ESCAL-units on all tied-in countries (place near BANK)
if on GREEN with other side's TAKE-OVER – pay 10 M
if any adjacent country has your side's AID, other side may replace them with his AID (payed-for)
you may liquidate your AID on H.C. to BANK for half price
you have lost, when you have no M and no AID on H.C.
BANK
ACCOUNTS

62 Öyvind Fahlström
World Politics Monopoly, 1970
Not squarely part of the Pop movement, Fahlström's work resists easy categorization. Nevertheless its edgy, satirical humour is utterly distinctive. Another example of his work, *The Little General (Pinball Machine)*, 1967–8, consists of figurines representing politicians or media personalites whose features have been cut from tabloid newspapers or posters. These bob around in a shallow tank, an aimless flotilla at the mercy of the spectator's whim, or a form of aquatic pinball.

from afar. Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke had moved to West Germany from the East before the erection of the Berlin Wall, settling in Düsseldorf, where, apart from assimilating Fluxus's anti-formalist ethos, they saw reproductions of 'Pop' works by Lichtenstein and Warhol around 1962–3. These offered alternatives to a set of restrictive aesthetic options: the 'Socialist Realist' modes in which they had originally been indoctrinated, the abstraction that was being touted as West Germany's aesthetic corollary of American Modernism's 'freedoms', and the atavistic return to quintessentially 'German' Expressionist roots favoured by Berlin artists. Predisposed by their backgrounds to assume the hidden hand of ideology in art's productions, they gravitated towards Pop's intrinsic irony, its distanced appraisal of the way cultural information is processed. Nonetheless, an early manifestation of their position, the performance event *Life with Pop—A Demonstration of Capital Realism*, makes it clear that they were more intrinsically self-reflexive than their American counterparts.

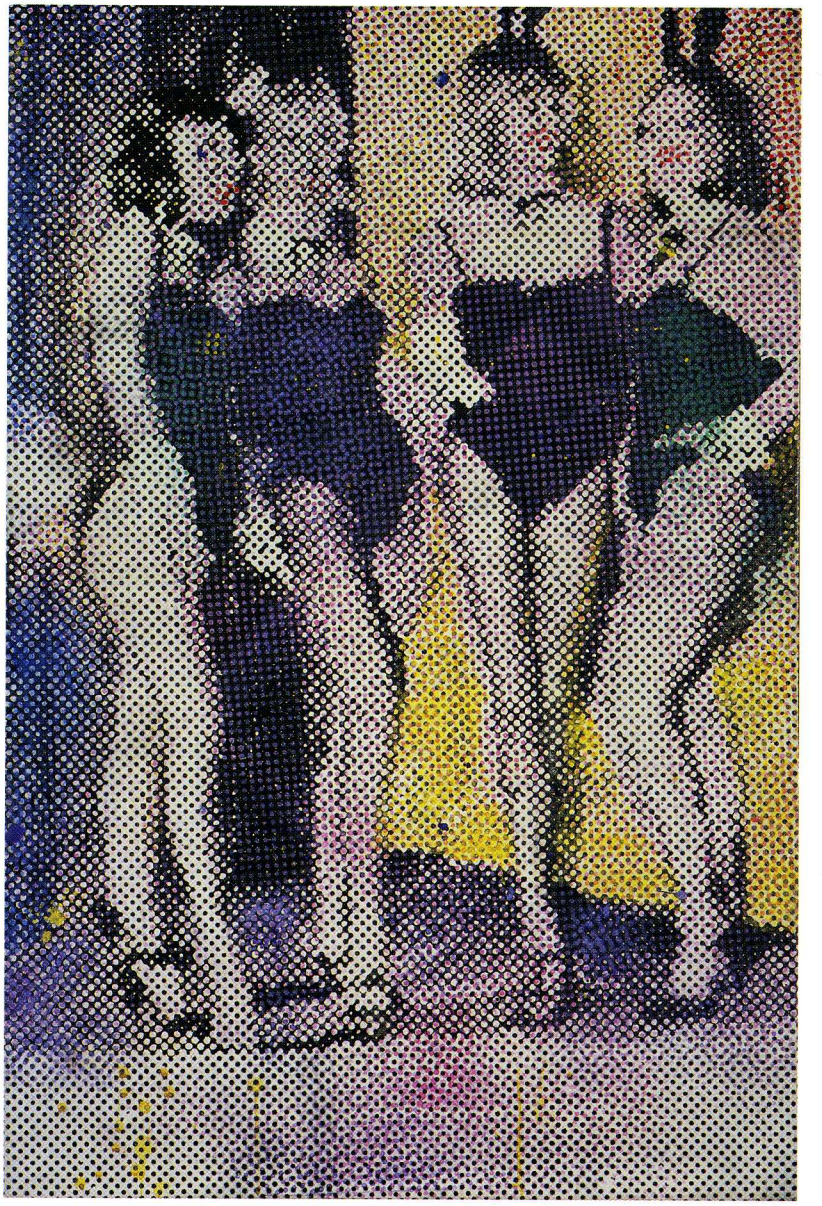
The 'Capital Realism' (which later became 'Capitalist Realism') of the above event's title succinctly posited a German Pop idiom which was not so much the liberated converse of Socialist Realist academicism as the reflection of another ideology. The event itself, which took place in a furniture store, consisted of Richter and a further collaborator Konrad Lueg (later to run a gallery as Konrad Fischer) sitting in a mock living-room in which both they and a range of bourgeois living accessories were raised on pedestals. Surrounding objects included Winston Churchill's recently published memoirs and a television broadcasting a programme on the Adenauer era. (The performance took place on 11 October 1963, the date of Konrad Adenauer's resignation as West Germany's chancellor.) In an adjacent space spectators passed by *papier mâché* figures of Kennedy and the art dealer Alfred Schmela. All in all, the artists ironically presented themselves as complicit with the complacency engendered by Adenauer's 'economic miracle'.

In subsequent paintings by Polke, deliberately inept versions of American Pop techniques ironically signalled West Germany's 'secondary' cultural/economic status *vis-à-vis* America. In his *Rasterbilder* works he subverted Lichtenstein's stylization of printer's dots by exploding his photographic motifs into molecular fields. The elements of these fields achieved a distracting autonomy—some dots were half-formed, others merged. In the case of *Bunnies* [**63**] this atomizing of the image implied a critique of capitalism's marketing of female sexuality: the closer the (male) spectator peers at these Playboy 'Bunnies', the more they 'break up', their mouths dispersing in red showers. Commenting on his dots, Polke amusingly linked their perverse behaviour to his personality, acknowledging an obvious pun on his name: 'I love all dots. I am married to many of them. I want all

63 Sigmar Polke
Bunnies, 1966

dots to be happy. Dots are my brothers. I am a dot myself.'[22]

Less anarchic by nature, Richter similarly used photographs as ready-made subjects, often working from family snapshots, although *Eight Student Nurses* (1971), the images of eight victims of a Chicago murderer, drew on Warhol's investigations of media-induced morbidity. Unlike Warhol, however, Richter produced painted simulations of photographs, blurring the outlines of their imagery to create out-of-focus effects, as though thematizing irresolution, both in terms of memory, as befits a response to photographed subjects, and in terms



of the distinction between painting and photography. In the latter respect, his later paintings from photographs of dead members of the Baader–Meinhof gang, a group of terrorists who committed suicide in Stammheim prison, Stuttgart, in 1977 after the attempted hijacking of a plane by their supporters had failed [**111**], function dialectically in relation to Warhol's memorializations of heroic death (see above). For Richter it was precisely *painting's* continuing ability to embody historical consciousness, in the light of *photography's* usurpation of the business of recording, that was at issue.

Such concerns, which will be further explored in Chapter 7, show Richter departing from Pop, but it is relevant here to anticipate another aspect of his later career—the split in his work between 'photo-realist' images, which in the Baader–Meinhof works have an obliquely ironic relation to the heroicizing public imagery of 'Socialist Realism' (the terrorists were Communist opponents of the West German regime), and 'abstractions' [**113**]. It is as if this split in his work reproduced the historical rift between 'Socialist Realist' and abstract Modernist positions, hinging on the question of art's 'public' responsibility, that he had been compelled to negotiate through moving to the West.

Recalling the start of this chapter, Greenberg's horror of 'kitsch'—the principle which Pop so fervently embraced—had initially been bound up with an abhorrence of the aesthetic consequences of Stalinism, namely propagandist art for the masses: 'Socialist Realism'. In a sense, then, Richter's eventual response to Pop was to retreat from its embrace of kitsch, recovering the historical conditions from which it, as the antithesis of Greenberg's Modernism, had grown. In doing this he, and Polke also, return us to the central premises of postwar avant-gardism, discussed in Chapter 1. However daring Pop's levelling of 'high' and 'low' cultural distinctions, its aesthetics were ideologically rooted: it was as 'American' as Greenberg's Modernism. In that sense, it constituted 'Capitalist Realism', as far as Polke and Richter were concerned; a form of propaganda, as the case of Rosenquist demonstrates, for values it was not always comfortable with.