

4 MATERIAL CULTURE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

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The new role for the academic is keeper of the flame; the new role of the fine arts is to be one of the possible forms of communication in an expanding framework that also includes the mass arts.

Lawrence Alloway, 1958

Lawrence Alloway's remark reflects his participation in discussions held by the British Independent Group on the impact of mass media, technology, and modern design techniques in the fine arts and urban culture.¹ Meeting at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London between 1951 and 1956, writers Alloway and John McHale, artists Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton, and architectural historian Peter Reyner Banham considered the relationship between art and design, studying everything from helicopters to the Detroit car industry and sex symbolism. They also examined advertising, science fiction, pulp magazines, comics, television, new theories, and technologies like cybernetics, artificial intelligence, computers, and robots. They criticized taste as a class marker of high (or exclusive) fine art and low (or popular) culture.² Cultural critic Dick Hebdige has defined three stages in the development of pop art and culture in Great Britain: the initial phase inaugurated by the Independents; the period of gestation (1957–59) in the Royal College of Art from which students like Peter Blake and Richard Smith emerged; and finally, in the mid-1960s, an "ad hoc grouping of Young Contemporaries" including David Hockney, Allen Jones, R. B. Kitaj, and Peter Phillips, who created the "Swinging London lifestyle."³

In his 1959 article "The Fine Arts in the Mass Media," McHale rejected received concepts regarding "'eternal Beauty' and 'universal truth' [as] accreted into the classical canons by which the arts were judged," and he insisted that "the transmission, employment and transformation [of the fine arts] now broadcast among a plurality of messages, couched in different cultural vocabularies . . . is merely part of the live process of cultural diffusion which, like many other aspects of societal interaction in our period, now occurs in a variety of unprecedented ways."⁴ McHale's analysis was as vivid in the 1990s as it was in 1959. Every decade after the 1950s witnessed analogous investigations into the relationship between popular culture and the fine arts.

Immediately following World War II, artists began to incorporate the objects and images of everyday life into their work. Willem de Kooning pasted the smiling mouth of a lipstick model in a cigarette ad onto the mouth of the woman in his painting *Study for Woman* (1949). The 1950s witnessed the growth of assemblage, environments, and happenings, as well as funk and junk art, all movements that included the incorporation of urban debris into works of art.⁵ In the 1960s, pop emerged simultaneously with Fluxus, artists' books, and mail and stamp art, all of which drew from the objects and commercial systems of daily life. As the print media exploded in a plethora of publications, photography increasingly shaped painting, sculpture, conceptual art, video, and performance art in the 1970s. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour brought out *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), a study of vernacular architecture that heralded postmodernism, and once-marginal street cultures produced graffiti art for galleries in New York's East Village in the 1980s. Material culture and everyday life continued to infiltrate fine art, creating an interface between "culture as a standard of excellence, and culture as a descriptive category."⁶ In the 1990s, academics institutionalized pop culture as the basis for cultural studies and insisted on the plurality of values.

Richard Hamilton (Great Britain, b. 1922) created his small collage *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (1956) for *This Is Tomorrow*, an exhibition organized by the Independents at Whitechapel Gallery in London. It provided an itemized inventory of images from which Hamilton laid out the aesthetic guidelines for pop art in a letter to architects Peter and Alison Smithson the following year. Ten years earlier, Hamilton, who became the principal theorist of pop, had been expelled from the Royal Academy Schools for "not profiting by instruction." Hamilton organized numerous exhibitions addressing the intersection of art, technology, and mass culture. He was also a specialist on Marcel Duchamp and reconstructed Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1917–23) for an exhibition of Duchamp's works that he organized at the Tate Gallery. Hamilton also published at his own expense a version of Duchamp's *The Green Box* and wrote extensively on numerous subjects, including the social responsibility of the artist, censorship, and the work of such artists as Roy Lichtenstein and Di(e)ter Rot(h).

Although Roth (Switzerland, b. 1930) worked in every medium from painting and sculpture to graphic design, poetry, woodcuts, films, and food sculptures, he was best known for his artist bookworks. Roth's *Bilderbuch* (1956) and *Bok* (1956–59) were the first of over one hundred idiosyncratic bookworks combining texts and images with actual objects. Books like *Literaturwurst* (1961) even included food-stuffs, which were allowed to decay. Treating the book as a plastic entity without limitation, Roth experimented with elaborate and eccentric bindings and contents from rubber-stamp pictures, graphics, and poems to diaristic notes and aphorisms.

Titles like *the collected shit and its branches* (1968) and *the seas of tears and their relatives* (1973) conveyed Roth's expansive humor and humanity. Roth entered the Darmstadt Circle, a group of poets including Emmett Williams, Daniel Spoerri, and Claus Bremer, in 1958. He coedited the concrete poetry review *Spirale* (1953–64) with Eugen Gomringer and Marcel Wyss, cofounded his own press called Forlag Editions with Einar Bragi in Iceland in 1957, and often published with the German poet Hansjorg Mayer's press, edition hansjorg mayer (1968–81).

Theater critic, journalist, documentary filmmaker, and painter Öyvind Fahlström (Sweden, 1928–76) studied art history at the University of Stockholm. Also a poet, Fahlström coauthored one of the first texts on concrete poetry, "Concrete Poetry Manifesto" (1953). The "cut-up" compositional technique William Burroughs used in his novel *Naked Lunch* (1959) influenced Fahlström's dense, fragmented collage paintings. In these he freely mixed images and texts drawing from a wide range of sources, including comic book personalities (Little Orphan Annie, Krazy Kat, and Beetle), political figures, and celebrities (Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Mao Tse-tung, Richard Nixon, Bob Hope). His interest in Aztec and Mayan hieroglyph systems informed the "character-forms" or visual units of these "variable paintings," invented in 1962. These works had movable magnetized parts that could be rearranged on metal game boards, an outgrowth of his interest in game theory. Fahlström's works also included politically charged subjects such as war games, racism, colonialism, militarism, capitalism and the World Bank, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other Cold War subjects. Fahlström described himself as a "witness" presenting the fragmented images, narratives, and ethical dilemmas of his period.

On 27 October 1960, in Yves Klein's Paris apartment, critic Pierre Restany (France, b. 1930) founded the Nouveaux Réalistes. He authored its three manifestos and categorized the artists:

The first [group] tends to lay down a method of perception, to structure a language of sensitivity, the language of quantity driven from its threshold [Klein, Arman, Cesar, Christo]. . . . [The second are] stage-setters of modern nature around Tinguely and his seemingly useless machines. Niki de Saint-Phalle and her target panels, Spoerri and his trap-paintings, are the bricoleurs of permanent metaphorphosis. . . . [The third comprise] poet-voyeurs for whom the world of the street is a perpetually developing picture: Hains, Villégélé, Dufrêne, Deschamps, Rotella.⁷

Many have described Daniel Spoerri (Switzerland, b. Romania, Daniel Isaac Feinstein, 1930), along with Pierre Restany, as the "brains" behind *nouveau réalisme*. Spoerri began making "trap" or "snare paintings" (*tableaux pièges*) in 1958. He fixed the accumulated residue of an actual meal with friends and fellow artists to the table, then mounted the assemblage—table with glasses, plates, utensils, cigarette

butts, papers—on the wall. In his text “Spoerri’s Autotheater,” he considered the performative dimension of such works. Spoerri collaborated with poets Roth, Williams, Pol Bury, and others in the avant-garde publication *Material* (Darmstadt, 1957–59), a review of European concrete and ideogrammatic poetry. In 1962, he met Fluxus artists when he and Robert Filliou organized the *Festival of Misfits* in London. Spoerri founded Editions Mat (Multiplication d’Art Transformable) in 1959, one of the first efforts to make and distribute inexpensive artists’ multiples. In 1961, he created his first food events in Copenhagen; in 1963, he opened *Restaurant de la Galerie J.* in Restany’s Paris gallery. Spoerri considered his culinary skills gastronomical art, and he cooked for patrons (mostly artists) in his Düsseldorf *Eat-Art Restaurant* (1968–71) and *Eat-Art Gallery* (1970–71). Spoerri’s inventive imagination and myriad activities were conveyed in such books as his *Topographie anecdotée du hasard: An Anecdoted Topography of Change* (1961), a text he wrote with Filliou and which Williams reedited with notes in 1966.

Niki de Saint-Phalle (France, b. 1930) began making object reliefs and assemblages in 1956. She joined the Nouveaux Réalistes in 1961. The same year, she created her first “shoot paintings,” firing with a .22-caliber rifle at her own assemblages containing aerosol paint cans and balloons filled with colored pigments that exploded and burst on contact. In these destruction happenings, she commented on *informel* painting, permanence, and the culture of war: “I shot because it was fun and made me feel great. I shot because I was fascinated watching the painting bleed and die. I shot for that moment of magic. It was a moment of scorpionic truth. White purity. Sacrifice. Ready. Aim. Fire. Red, yellow, blue—the painting is crying, the painting is dead. I have killed the painting. It is reborn. War with no victims.”⁸ In 1966, together with her companion Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely and Swedish sculptor Per Olof Ultvedt, de Saint-Phalle constructed a giant sculpture, *HON* (“She” in Swedish), a walk-in environment at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. Over seventy thousand visitors entered the reclining female figure (eighty-two feet long, twenty feet high, and thirty feet wide) through her vagina and passed into internal rooms that included a cinema for Greta Garbo movies, an aquarium, a planetarium, and restaurants such as a milk bar inside one breast. *HON* unabashedly displayed her sexuality in a manner earlier suggested by the robust, brightly painted *Nana* figures of papier-mâché or plaster over chicken wire that de Saint-Phalle sculpted, works that anticipated feminist celebrations of female identity and subjectivity.

In January 1966, Pino Pascali (Italy, 1935–68) installed military cannons and anti-aircraft artillery, which he collected from military surplus depots, in the Galerie Sperone in Turin. Shifting attention from the appropriation of objects of vernacular culture to objects of military culture, Pascali expanded the meaning of pop art to include the pervasive threat of the Cold War. His emphasis on the moral di-

mension of everyday life and the social responsibilities of the artist drew him into association with a variety of artists and artistic movements. With his participation in *arte povera* in the late 1960s, Pascali used industrial products (acrylic brushes and other synthetic materials), along with natural materials such as feathers, to create curious anthropomorphic objects.

Gerhard Richter (Germany, b. 1932) worked as a commercial artist and scenery painter before emigrating from East to West Germany in 1961. Trained in Eastern Europe under the dominant canons of soviet socialist realism, Richter's contact with the European avant-garde, especially Fluxus, led to the ironical happening *Demonstration for Capitalist Realism*, staged with Konrad Fischer-Lueg in a furniture store in 1963. Avoiding the inherited conventions of painting, Richter turned to photography, conflating the historical conditions of painting with the technologies of the mass media. Resisting identification with any style, Richter painted in every manner from realism to abstraction, geometric to gestural, and his subject matter ranged from history to landscape. Throughout his varied and numerous series, Richter sustained a systematic, unified critique of popular cultural idioms and fine art categories, revealing the arbitrary and hierarchical values of art historiography.

Ion Grigorescu (Romania, b. 1946) was born and raised under Eastern European socialism. Constantly shifting media and styles, working in sculpture, painting, artists' books, and photography, he criticized the false values, or kitsch, of stylistic movements. Grigorescu maintained a precarious balance between the repressive demands of socialist realism dominating Romanian art in the early 1960s and the severe censorship imposed under Nicolae Ceaușescu's totalitarian presidency (1965–89). Because photography was not considered a fine art in Romania, Grigorescu used it extensively to document performances, or body actions, that he did in private in the mid-1970s. Grigorescu also painted over selected areas, in delicate colors, of found photographs, in order to augment pictorial records of popular Romanian folklife and subjects related to the destruction of Romanian society and culture by Ceaușescu. The images of daily Romanian life, and the historical figures in Grigorescu's work, also doubled as signs for the suppression of his Christian faith under socialism.

Tony Cragg (Great Britain, b. 1949) was trained as a biologist and worked in a research laboratory. But as a painter and sculptor—he studied at various British art academies—he functioned more like an anthropologist, collecting the fragmented plastic shards of late-twentieth-century culture, which he assembled in mosaic-like installations. Concerned with the socioeconomic and environmental problems of disposable culture, he began to retrieve broken and discarded bits of commercial products. The first works of the late 1970s featured colored fragments of plastic that he assembled into life-size figurative silhouettes, which were built up like puzzles reconstituting the human form but creating an image of human excess. In the

1980s, Cragg used found wood, metals, stones, and glass in constructions before turning to handcrafted works recalling pretechnological modes of production.

Thirty years earlier, while traveling with Cy Twombly in Italy, France, Spain, and North Africa, Robert Rauschenberg (United States, b. 1925) made constructions using sticks, bones, hair, rocks, and feathers. At his 1953 Stable Gallery exhibition in New York, he showed a "grass painting" comprising boxes of plant matter, birdseed, and soil that he "watered into growth." Stating his intent to "act in the gap" between art and life, Rauschenberg worked in every visual art medium from painting to performance. Famous for his "combine paintings," the term he coined to describe the hybrid painting-sculptures that included ordinary objects, Rauschenberg also invented a chemical means to transfer texts and photographic reproductions appropriated from popular magazines and newspapers onto paintings and silkscreens. Rauschenberg studied art at the Kansas City Art Institute in 1947 and attended Black Mountain College in 1949, where he worked with Josef Albers and met John Cage. The surfaces of his 1951 monochrome white paintings reflected viewers' shadows and influenced Cage's 1952 Black Mountain proto-happening event. In the 1960s and 1970s, Rauschenberg collaborated with Cage, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Billy Klüver (of Experiments in Art and Technology [EAT]), and others. In 1982, he worked with Chinese artists in Jin Xian, one of the oldest paper mills in the world, located in the Anhui province of the People's Republic of China. This collaboration led to the Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Interchange (ROCI) program, an ambitious five-year project bringing Western avant-garde art to China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Egypt, Mexico, and Chile.

In 1954, Rauschenberg met Jasper Johns (United States, b. 1930). Johns had studied art only briefly in 1949 before serving in the United States Army in Japan. He came to New York in 1952 and struggled for two years before destroying all his works in 1954. That same year, Johns painted the first of many *Flag* paintings. Leo Castelli gave the two artists their first one-person exhibitions in 1958 and 1959. Johns's use of common objects and works like his trompe l'oeil painted bronze sculpture *Ballantine Ale* (1960) led critics to associate him with pop art. But when G. R. Swenson included Johns in his *Art News* series of interviews on the question "What Is Pop Art?" Johns emphatically denied that identity. He later explained that his pictures and combine paintings explored the ambiguous messages of "pre-formed, conventional, depersonalized, factual, exterior elements" drawn from everyday life, and that they "suggest the world rather than suggest the personality." In his sketchbook notes to the painting *Watchman* (1964), Johns focused on the conceptual and behavioral similarities and differences in spying and looking. Like the American flag and other metaphors in Johns's work that are reminiscent of the Cold War, the artist-watchman is a spy who gathers visual evidence.

Bruce Conner (United States, b. 1933) was a central force behind West Coast

collage and assemblage movements and a pioneer of independent filmmaking. He was born in McPherson, Kansas, and educated at the Universities of Wichita and Nebraska, the Kansas City Art Institute, and the Brooklyn Museum Art School. Conner moved to San Francisco in 1957, where he joined a circle of artists that included Jay DeFeo, Wallace Berman, Manuel Neri, Fred Martin, Carlos Villa, Wally Hedrick, Joan Brown, George Herms, filmmaker Larry Jordan, poets Philip Lamantia and Michael McClure (a high school friend also from McPherson), and actor Dennis Hopper. Conner's assemblages and relief sculptures were made from scavenged, partially destroyed materials that evoked decay, destruction, antimilitarism, and sexuality. His collage technique led to his first film, *A Movie* (1958). Twenty years later, he was still a pivotal figure in the San Francisco punk scene when he made *Mongoloid* (1978), a montage film using found footage with images syn-copated to the Dead Kennedys' song of the same name. Following this period, Conner began work on a long-term project to film the history of the African-American gospel group "The Soul Stirrers." One of the most original, irascible, iconoclastic, and intellectual artists of his generation, Conner produced unclassifiable art in every medium, from painting, drawing, and printmaking to photography and film, performance art, and conceptual art.

George Brecht (United States, b. 1926) studied at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science from 1946 to 1950. While working as a chemist on industrial patents in the early 1950s, he began to consider the role of indeterminacy and chance in art, science, and Eastern philosophy. His essay *Chance-Imagery* (1966) examined this subject as a process underlying the operations of paradox, a topic that he later took up with Patrick Hughes in their anthology *Vicious Circles and Infinity* (1976). First drawn to Pollock's use of chance, Brecht later found Cage's work more compelling and enrolled in his class on musical composition at the New School for Social Research in 1958. During this period, Brecht began composing "event scores," simple textual notations to be realized as actions or mental images. These scores for events were a featured aspect of Fluxus performance. He also assembled ordinary objects displaying the performative relationship between thought, behavior, and things. Between 1965 and 1968, Brecht and Filliou opened a curio store, "an international center of permanent creation," in the village of Villefranche-sur-mer on the French Riviera. They aimed to sell all kinds of eccentric artworks, convinced that only by becoming a "subversive nuisance" could they "make possible the eventual transition between socialism and communism, and finally, communism and anarchism."⁹ Throughout his work, Brecht was concerned with charting a new "history of mind" that would provide a "new synthesis . . . that can be nourishing for all of us."¹⁰

Claes Oldenburg (United States, b. Sweden, 1929) studied English literature and art at Yale and worked as a journalist before moving to New York in 1956. Inspired

by Dubuffet's *art brut*, he began to make crude sculptures reproducing the culture of the street. His papier-mâché replicas of ordinary objects and foodstuffs, painted in sloppy, brightly colored pastiches of gestural abstraction, followed. In 1966, he made soft sculptures in vinyl, cloth, and kapok in collaboration with his first wife, Patricia, who did the stitching. In the 1980s, he worked with his second wife, Coosje van Bruggen, in the production of joint projects, many of which expanded on earlier humorous concepts for public monuments such as a teddy bear, scissors, and a Mr. Good-Bar candy bar. Oldenburg's *The Store*, an installation and series of events in his studio in 1961, emerged from the happenings he began to make in 1960. Performances of his *Ray Gun Theater* (1962) followed, taking their title from his phallic alter ego, Ray Gun. Oldenburg stopped performing in 1965 and distanced himself from what he called "the formulaic evolution of Happenings into mass entertainment" that only reinforced "bourgeois values." His *Store Days* (1966) and *Raw Notes* (1973) vividly portrayed this period and demonstrated his humorous, stream-of-consciousness transformation of the commonplace into the surrealistic.

Roy Lichtenstein (United States, b. 1923) studied at the Arts Students League with Reginald Marsh before supporting himself as a freelance designer. He met Kaprow when he joined the faculty at Douglass College at Rutgers University, and soon met Rauschenberg, Johns, and Oldenburg. In late 1960, he began to paint images of ordinary objects and cropped sections of comic strips. His selections especially emphasized the simultaneously sentimentalized and violent aspects of American culture. Lichtenstein appropriated the Ben Day dot from commercial printing as a reaction to the hyperpersonalized gesture of the New York School, calling attention to the mechanized, depersonalized quality of his process and his choice of subject matter. But his technique exposed the similarities between the processes of low-cost popular printed forms and those of abstract gestural painting. Both display the means of their production, one in the technological dot matrix of the comic book, and the other in the gestural mark of a human action. Lichtenstein increasingly turned his attention to the relationship between painting and photographic reproduction by copying twentieth-century masterworks and creating representational pastiches of the formulaic aspects of modernist movements.

Andy Warhol (United States, 1928–87) studied art at Carnegie Institute of Technology from 1945 to 1949. In 1952, he moved to New York, where he worked as a commercial artist and graphic designer for Bonwit Teller and *Glamour*. He began painting details of comic book characters in the early 1960s. His 1962 Campbell's soup can images and silkscreen paintings of Hollywood celebrities became pop art icons. In a straightforward portrayal of American culture, Warhol refrained from direct moral or social commentary. Like the American photographer Weegee before him, Warhol presented images of glamor and disaster as undifferentiated subjects, which for him comprised the substance of commodity culture. His interest

in mass production led him to transform his studio into the Factory, a production line manufacturing silkscreen paintings, films, sculptures, and eventually *Interview*, a magazine reporting social gossip, trendy politics, and the lives of celebrities. Warhol managed to function like the machine he claimed he wanted to become. In his silence, Warhol attempted to extract all semblance of individual personality from his art. Paradoxically, this strategy produced iconic images not only of his aura and identity but of his period. Warhol's work in all media reflected complex contemporary cultural traditions against which multiple readings of its meaning and his intent continue to compete.

In 1952, James Rosenquist (United States, b. 1933) began working as an outdoor sign painter, and in 1955 he won a scholarship to study at the Arts Students League. In 1957, he met Johns, Rauschenberg, Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, Jack Youngerman, and other artists associated with pop art and abstract painting. During this period, he applied the commercial techniques of sign painting to images of American product culture. In 1964, Rosenquist began *F-111*, a series of fifty-one interlocking canvases and aluminum panels that comprised an installation-size painting. The title referred to the U.S. military's most advanced fighter jet of the period, and to the sociology of a culture Rosenquist described as "an inflated, warring society." He exhibited the work at Leo Castelli Gallery in 1965, after which it was shown throughout Europe, in Leningrad, and, in 1967, at the São Paulo Bienal. Rosenquist's frequent comments on American social issues—including race, technology, sex, and the military—and his technique of presenting a heterogeneous set of partial and fragmented images anticipated postmodern theory and artistic practice.

Lucas Samaras (United States, b. Greece, 1936) met Kaprow and George Segal at Rutgers University, where he was studying on a scholarship. He participated in happenings by Kaprow, Oldenburg, Robert Whitman, and others, and he posed for Segal's plaster figures. During this same period, Samaras worked on a variety of boxes composed of accumulations of objects like straight pins, twine, glitter, and nails, the psychological character of which suggested personal fetishes. By 1964, Samaras began making room environments containing elements of his own personal history. He reversed their narcissistic element when he created *Mirrored Room* (1966), an installation requiring spectators to become self-viewing performers. Samaras treated the body-mind as an object of material culture in his Polaroid *Auto-Portraits*—photographs he took of body actions he performed in the privacy of his apartment—and in "Auto-Interviews," textual self-investigatory interviews.

After studying at the Arts Students League in New York (1944–45) and Black Mountain College (1945–48), Ray Johnson (United States, 1927–95) began making collages in the mid-1950s from mass-produced photographic images, especially of celebrities, like his *Elvis Presley* (1955). Johnson's collages, or "moticos" (an ana-

gram he invented based on the word "osmotic"), represented a form for the effortless assimilation of popular culture into the fine arts. The "moticos" also reflected Johnson's interest in Kurt Schwitters's "merz," the collage constructions Schwitters created from the reconstitution and reappropriation of discarded commercial debris. In an effort to bypass commercial art institutions, Johnson also began to communicate with other artists by letter writing. Transforming the postal system into an alternative gallery for the exhibition and distribution of work, he sent eccentric handmade postcards and stamps, decorated and collaged letters, artists' books, and other curious unwrapped and stamped objects (socks, ties, and even bricks) through the international mails. In 1968, he founded the New York Correspondence School (NYCS), a humorous reference referring to the painters of the New York School. But in a 1973 letter published in the obituary section of the *New York Times*, he simultaneously dissolved NYCS and announced its transformation into Buddha University. Johnson exploited the democratic potential of public services and such technologies as the photocopying machine. Later, he used the fax machine for guerrilla tactics that anticipated certain marginal aspects of conceptual art. He committed suicide in 1995.

Johnson has been called the "father" of mail art, as painter Edward Ruscha (United States, b. 1937) has been identified as the father of American book art. In contrast to the handmade bookworks produced in Europe by Roth, Ruscha adopted for bookmaking the techniques of commercial advertising and design that he used in his paintings. He used offset printing to mass-produce unnumbered, inexpensive books of photographs that featured unadorned, serial images of virtually undifferentiated commercial buildings or common objects. His first book, *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* (1963), was followed by numerous others such as *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965), *The Sunset Strip* (1966), and *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970). Abdicating production of unique handcrafted objects, Ruscha introduced the inexpensive, portable, multiple format that better reflected the conditions of his Los Angeles environment.

As Johnson and Ruscha introduced new media into the vocabularies of art, Judy Chicago (United States, b. Judy Gerowitz, 1939) restored china painting, embroidery, and quilting (most often practiced by women) from their categorization as craft to the domain of fine art. Painter, sculptor, educator, organizer, writer, and feminist activist, Chicago received her master of fine arts degree in 1964. Five years later, she started the first women's art program at California State University at Fresno. Next, she cofounded the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of Arts in Valencia (1971-73), Woman-Space Art Gallery (1972), Womanhouse Environment (1972), the Feminist Studio Workshop (1973-74), and the Woman's Building (1974), all in Los Angeles. She began work on her ambitious installation *The Dinner Party* in 1974. This multimedia project involved collaboration with

dozens of ceramicists and needleworkers who helped to visualize the symbolic history of 999 women of achievement, including mythical characters and historical figures from Western history. It was followed by a series of large-scale visionary collaborative efforts including *The Birth Project* (1983–85) and the *Holocaust Project* (1990). A pioneer of feminist art, Chicago recounted the history of her maturation as a feminist activist in her autobiography *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (1975).

On 14 May 1971, Faith Ringgold (United States, b. 1930) was found guilty of desecrating the American flag in her paintings. Ringgold had participated in *The Flag Show* (1970) at the Judson Memorial Church in New York with artists Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, founders of the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG), and other artists who sought to create a “meaningful confrontation and challenge to all laws governing the use and display of the American flag.”¹¹ Unlike Johns, the meaning of whose flag paintings remained ambiguous, these artists summoned the flag to challenge everything from the Vietnam War to the racism Ringgold protested in her painting *Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger* (1969). An African American born in Harlem and educated at the City College of New York, Ringgold drew on a dense heritage of symbols. Telling the story of Black America, she hoped to effect change with her art. Acknowledging the double discrimination Black women experience both as Blacks and as women, in 1972 she helped to organize Women Students and Artists for Black Liberation to struggle for representation of Black women artists in exhibitions of African American art. Her daughter Michele Wallace was equally active, authoring the controversial *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1979). In 1982, Ringgold began to collaborate with her mother, Willi Posey, a dress designer, on “story quilts,” a series of artworks incorporating quilting, painting, collage, and texts narrating stories of African American history and life. Their first quilt, *Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima?* (1983), was followed by *The Flag Story* (1985), the tale of a paralyzed Vietnam veteran, Memphis Cooley. Their powerful *Slave Rape Story Quilt* (1985) opened: “Mama was 8 months gone when he raped her. When she fought back he whipped her so bad she just lay there on the deck. . . . [Then] she crawled over to the side of the vessel and squatted down on her haunches. She give out a grunt like a roar of a lion and I was born right there on the slaveship Carriolle en route to South Carolina to be a slave in America.”

The Coalition of Black Revolutionary Artists (COBRA) was formed by Jeff Donaldson (United States, b. 1932), Gerald Williams, Wadsworth A. Jarrell, Carolyn Lawrence, Barbara J. Jones-Hogu, and Elliot Hunter in 1968. In addition to painters, printmakers, photographers, and designers, COBRA also included musicians, poets, and writers. The visual artists soon took the name “AFRICOBRA” to identify their particular aims. AFRICOBRA (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists) emerged from the civil rights and Black power revolutions of the

1950s and 1960s, and sought to create the visual language of a "Black aesthetic." They integrated bright colors, harmony, musical rhythms, tones, patterns, lettering, and other iconic modalities in what Donaldson called a "Trans-African Art."¹² They established common themes (e.g., the Black family) around which to make art and met every two weeks to critique each other's work. Their philosophy included "an atavistic aesthetic, technical excellence, and social responsibility." Growing rapidly, AFRICOBRA was joined by Napoleon Jones Henderson, Jae Jarrell, Nelson Stevens, Akili Amabenemu (b. Ron Anderson), Adger W. Cowans, Murry N. DePillars, Michael D. Harris, James Phillips, and Frank Smith. Many of the artists had belonged to the Visual Workshop of the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC), aiming to reintegrate the arts into the community. In this effort, they contributed to the mural *Wall of Respect* (1967) on the South Side of Chicago. This guerrilla mural symbolized Black nationalism and liberation. It was also a crucial antecedent of the mural movement of the 1970s and anticipated aspects of graffiti art. AFRICOBRA drew its material and aesthetic from the community, producing posters, paintings, textiles, and inexpensive works located in or accessible to the African American community.

A decade later, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf, and many others began to explore the culture of the street. They created "tags," the term used to identify an individual graffiti style from otherwise anonymous urban marking of the environment. Basquiat and Al Dias created the tag "SAMO" (Same Old Shit). Haring's (United States, 1958–90) tag, the "radiant child," appeared on subway walls, on trains, and in abandoned buildings on the Lower East Side. After meeting graffiti artist Fred Braithwait, Haring created a hybrid graffiti style that combined elements from Jean Dubuffet's *art brut*, surrealism, pop art, comic books, and television. In his pop surrealism, Scharf (United States, b. 1958) integrated cartoon characters with biomorphic, Day-Glo, fantastic worlds filled with the baroque imagination of horror vacui, suggesting "the war of the worlds" and hallucinatory drugs.

These artists contributed to the vibrant hip-hop scene developing in New York's East Village in the 1980s. During this period, artist-run collectives like ABC No Rio, Artist's Space, Fashion Moda, Fun Gallery, the Mudd Club, COLAB (Collaborative Projects), and Club 57 flourished. Graffiti art moved quickly from the streets to SoHo galleries, where artists like Basquiat and Haring were befriended by, and later collaborated with, Warhol. Haring even opened his own Pop Shop, a 1980s version of Warhol's Factory. But while Warhol appropriated representations from popular culture, Haring sold his images (reproduced on inexpensive popular cultural objects like refrigerator magnets and T-shirts) to fight drugs, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and AIDS.

Discrimination against homosexuals in the United States was the motivating force

behind much of David Wojnarowicz's (United States, 1954–92) art and life. Like Haring, Wojnarowicz died of AIDS, and his paintings, drawings, installations, videos, performances, and powerful writings all addressed the individual, social, and national questions raised by homophobia, the HIV virus, and the AIDS epidemic. A self-identified social outsider, Wojnarowicz attempted to speak for and represent the "excluded, repressed, repulsive, despised, and phobically stigmatized" persons of society. In the face of censorship and prejudice, his art signified the "taboo, unpredictable, dangerous, anarchistic, deviant, unexplained, criminal, insane, ethnic, low class, filthy, diseased, savage or grotesque" conditions of life he identified in the "heart of darkness."¹³ In such texts as "Being Queer in America: A Journal of Disintegration," "Living Close to the Knives," and "Post Cards from America: X-Rays from Hell," Wojnarowicz courageously tore away the veils of secrecy and myth shrouding the pain of neglect, fear, and hatred experienced by homosexuals.

Barbara Kruger (United States, b. 1945) studied under Diane Arbus and Marvin Israel at Parsons School of Design in 1966 before becoming chief ad designer for *Mademoiselle*. In black-and-white photomontages overlaid with red texts recalling the classic design of *Look*, Kruger directed her knowledge of photography, television, and film to intervene in, critique, and oppose the subliminal power of the media. She especially concentrated on exposing gender stereotypes maintained by the media. Her photomontages depicted aspects of what filmmaker Laura Mulvey theorized as the "male gaze" when she discussed the ways in which gender difference is coded by the psychological conditions of patriarchal desire.¹⁴ Kruger's style, technique of representation, and theoretical intent became paradigmatic of postmodern feminists' social critique.

Sherrie Levine (United States, b. 1947) first gained critical attention in the early 1980s when she began to photograph illustrated reproductions of photographs by Edward Weston, Eliot Porter, Walker Evans, and others. Appropriating mass-produced reproductions, and later copying the illustrated works of twentieth-century artists like Henri Matisse, Kasimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, Vincent Van Gogh, Joan Miró, Fernand Léger, and Alexander Rodchenko, Levine systematically investigated the theoretical critiques of originality and authorship theorized by Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Jean Baudrillard. She questioned the place of artistic authenticity in late capitalism and explored the problem of the "simulacrum," the reduplication of the real that "becomes *reality for its own sake*."¹⁵ Ironically, Levine's copies transformed the "copy" into an original, confounding received cultural categories and provoking consideration of the "hyperreality" of postmodern culture.

But such appropriation also had legal ramifications. In the mid-1980s, Jeff Koons (United States, b. 1955) had an Italian factory fabricate five life-size wooden sculp-

tures called *String of Puppies*. Koons appropriated his image from a greeting card by photographer Art Rogers entitled *Puppies*. Rogers sued Koons and won on the grounds of copyright violation. Koons was known in the 1980s for his exhibitions of industrially produced, found objects—inflatable plastic flowers, children's toys, custom-designed appliances, life-size porcelain figurines, and accessories for the consumption of alcohol. Koons exploited the issue of the commodification of desire in the 1990s when he created a series of photographically reproduced explicit silkscreen images of himself and his wife, Ilona Staller, an Italian star of pornography known professionally as "Cicciolina," having sex in various positions. His works parodied the highly charged emotional content constructed by the pornography industry in the same manner that he had satirized popular cultural consumption.

In 1963, art historian Leo Steinberg and Henry Geldzahler, then assistant curator of American painting and sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, defended pop art in the Symposium on Pop Art, organized by Peter Selz at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Geldzahler argued, "It is the artist who defines the limit of art, not the critic or the curator."¹⁶ Other members of the panel, including Hilton Kramer, Dore Ashton, Stanley Kunitz, and Selz, disagreed. Selz seemed to express their doubts in an article he published later that year: "We are dealing with . . . an art that is easy to assimilate—much too easy; that requires neither sensibility nor intellectual effort . . . for this is not folk art, grown from below, but 'kitsch' manufactured from above and given all the publicity Madison Avenue dealers have at their disposal."¹⁷

After thirty years of the continued success of art that was inspired by, and blurred, the boundaries between popular culture and the fine arts, Brian Wallis reflected on these questions. He thoughtfully summarized over four decades of work when he pointed out that the "fundamental issue for artists in the postwar years has been how to foster critical dialogue while operating in a system that everyone acknowledges as fully commodified."¹⁸