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Ina-Maria Greverus

Touching Life: Anthropological Encounters with Aesthetics¹

The Endless Chain of Things

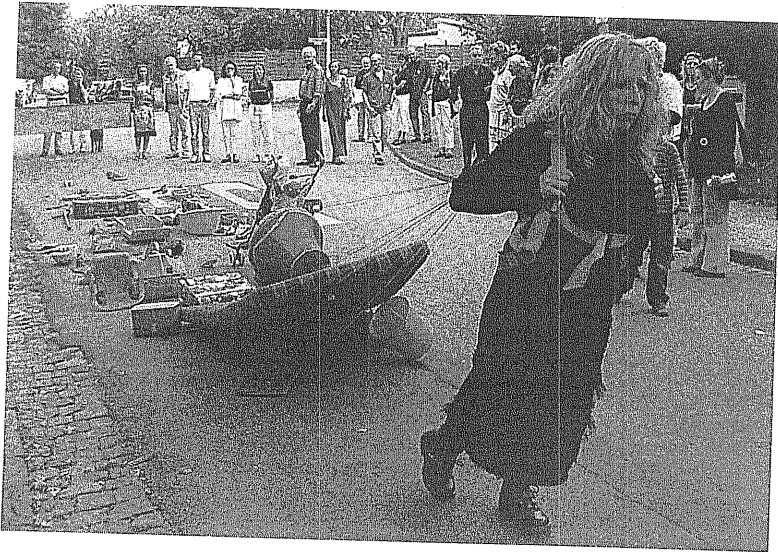
I once witnessed a performance that serves to highlight my engagement with the term “aesthetic mediation” as a path toward an aesthetic anthropology, which I analyze in my book on aesthetic sites and signs (Greverus 2005a). “TransitArten” (Modes of Transit) was the theme of the fifth Biennial Experimental Art Festival that took place in the gardens, plazas and streets of Darmstadt’s Komponistenviertel (Composers’ Quarter). Ute Ritschel, founder and curator of the festival, said in the preface to the catalogue: “strange and familiar places contain markings, situating them as new ‘maps’ throughout the quarter. ‘Mapping Art’ is a current theme in art and its allied disciplines. With ‘Transitarten’ we make our contribution here in Darmstadt.”²

Through all our senses, everyday life banks up against our perception. Such confrontations may be “beautiful,” yet these mediations still harbor the potential for pain. And it is through these aesthetic mediations that the everyday is pushed into consciousness.

Somewhere at an intersection, amid the rich villas of the refined Composers’ Quarter, a curious installation could be seen: at first sight there appeared to be a trail of objects connected together with red cords; upon second glance, it is a collage of objects from our everyday life. In the catalogue it was titled, “Die endlose Reihe der Dinge. Ein Lebenslauf” (The Endless Chain of Things: A Vita). About one kilometer away we see an empty lot where there are standing two cranes covered with white and black sheets; between them, two persons.

¹ This is a slightly altered version of a chapter from my book, “Aesthetische Orte und Zeichen. Wege zu einer ästhetischen Anthropologie” (Aesthetic Sites and Signs: Paths toward an Aesthetic Anthropology) (Greverus 2005a). Translated into English by Amanda Z. Randall. Thanks for your help, Amanda. That was a wonderful dialogue.

² TransitArten 2003, 5. This biennial festival was founded in 1995 by the cultural anthropologist, performer and Darmstadt native Ute Ritschel. Since then it has achieved a high level of international attendance. In 2003, it was attended by seventy-five active participants from nine countries. Thirty-nine art patrons opened their private gardens to the artists and the public, while various artistic activities filled the plazas and streets.



At half past five the artist couple, Gabriele and Thomas Neumaier, both in their mid-50s, began their performance. And their generation is indeed important, both in terms of a representation of the “Endless Chain of Things” from over the last fifty-five years and on into the next decades, and in terms of the lopsided weight of these things. The man donned a mask and then strapped the woman to the load (“Die Schleppe und das Pneuma” (The Trail and the Pneuma) the performance was called). He walked alongside her, with hands in his pockets and playing some disturbing music. She dragged the endless line of household items behind her through the street, one hundred pounds at least. Onlookers stood on the curb or walked along next to her. The cars, thinking to drive down the street like usual, reversed back up the street – perhaps repelled by her fixed expression? As an observer I longed – in solidarity with that actual female person communicating the end of her strength – for the end of the stretch...and yet would have loved to continue observing this aesthetic, truly beautiful representation of the gendered weight of the world. The performance diminished my ambivalence. The man released the woman from her burden and, hugging briefly, they proceeded to the cranes. There they disappeared under the white and black material and were hoisted high. The sheets unfolded into two giants out of the tops of which popped two small heads, silent and still. But the woman did move as she played with a red flag with washing machine instructions on it. Finally she let it drop: a small red symbol fallen against white fabric. “See mama,” said a small child among the onlookers, “the white woman is getting married to the black devil.”



An everyday life: is it only by way of aesthetic mediation, that is, through sensory perception, the aestheticization of misery or an aesthetic mediation of meaning, that we are ever compelled to reflect upon the everyday?

So it was with Haiti. In “Grenzerfahrungen einer reisenden Anthropologin” (Boundary-Experiences of a Traveling Anthropologist), a lecture I gave at that art festival, I discussed Haiti with reference to a photo I had taken and a text by René Depestre concerning the annihilation of the “small, dear angel of knowledge and understanding, of naiveté and dreams,” in contrast to the “good, great angel of physical strength” which turns into a zombie in the course of foreign and native colonization (Depestre 1997, 107).³ That was the text. The image shows a scrap collector hauling an endless – and ultimately useless – chain of things somewhere. Here too, muscular strength beyond dreaming. There was nothing more beautiful.

The everyday of the exploited, of women and of men. The pictures look the same.

These are everyday lives. And these everyday lives are life worlds. But who can, and who would want to observe the quotidian life of the Other? Does the

³ See Greverus 2002, 304 ff.; Greverus 2005a, 412 ff.

everyday of the Other require aesthetic representation? By artists, perhaps by anthropologists as well?

Approaches and Questions

Through these pictures and texts, as illusion and reproduction, as imagination and representation of an actual reality, various levels of aesthetic mediation are unraveled. These different levels will serve as map and guideposts for the experience of aesthetic sites and signs.

On a basic and central level these questions focus on the relationship between the aesthetic object and the constituting and experiencing subject, on the perception, mediation and experience of aesthetics in the discourses of modernity and post-modernity – and on my own position within this discourse.

On a second level I inquire into the relation between anthropology and art in the representation of “worlds” as imagination and experience between aesthetic and rational forms of knowledge. In this respect, “Die nahe Fremde und die fremde Nähe” (the familiar in the foreign and the foreign in the familiar) become just as important to me as the terms construction and deconstruction or even the “Othering” debate that led to postmodern anthropology’s reflexive act of contrition for the anthropological construction of historically frozen Otherness. Henceforth it will be replaced by a transnational discourse of differentiation that, recognizing neither the past nor the future, now threatens to become frozen in the present. To anthropologically experience and present the multifarious aesthetic representations of life-worlds requires analytical comparison in the present, grounded in the past and oriented toward the future. Aesthetics as mediation assumes many forms and scrutinizes both the autonomy and the aura of works of “high” art and their categorization within the arts, as well as the nationalization of art and the distinguishing of autonomous Western art from “low” art (folk art, popular art, naïve art and kitsch) and the ethno-art of the completely foreign, which is thought to represent wholeness in contrast to the fragmented existence of the Western Self.

But does the anthropological approach to the problematization of an aesthetic conduct of life require that the anthropologist also possess an aesthetic sensibility that would engage in the various aesthetic constructions of reality and allow the pursuit of new modes of representation without robbing the aesthetic process of its very aesthetic? My third question is posed at this level.

Anthropology was written and read as the “Wissenschaft vom kulturell Fremden” (science of the culturally foreign) (Kohl 1993), through which “das Frem-

de im Eigenen und das Eigene im Fremden” (the foreign within one’s own and one’s own within the foreign) later received an entirely new significance as a research field. Yet through an anthropology of reason⁴, the researcher could still locate himself or herself outside the domain of the sensory perception and mediation of the Other which he or she represents and (sometimes) problematizes. Could this distanced representation of other knowledge, dictated from the armchair with the authoritative secret voice of unquestioned, unquestionable truth, actually be the secret of the scientific professional?

In any case, despite the critique surrounding the “crisis of ethnographic representation,” anthropologists still find it difficult to position themselves against the paradigm of disinterested, truly scientific curiosity and objectivity. But aesthetics as mediation is never “inter-esse-los” (disinterested). So must any “inter-esse-los” anthropological mediation of aesthetics collapse upon such professional pretension to disinterest and impartiality, or is it only then that it becomes truly scientific? A group of anthropologists published an anthology called, “Zwischen Poesie und Wissenschaft” (Between Poetics and Science), in which they traversed “the boundaries of ethnography” and introduced “literary styles as well as an artistic and musical aspect.” The anthropological question that they pose, whether “the study of the ‘Other’ is possible only through scientific representation or through poetic expression” (Münzel, Schmidt, Thote 2000, 7), flows from a discursive “in-between,” as in the subtitle, “Essays in und neben der Ethnologie” (Essays In and Alongside Ethnology). Inquiry emerges from a dialogic in-between space and ethno-poetic representational pioneering is set in contrast to the self-assured problematizations and “objective” representations of the Other that are offered by a disinterested scientific field.

In the consideration of this tripartite anthropological problem, my argument will draw out three disciplinary threads, each of which indicates toward the Other and the aesthetic relationship between Self and Other, which serve as an interpretive aid for an aesthetic anthropology⁶ of the present: the artistic avant-garde of the late 19th and early 20th centuries with its aesthetic and political claims, the post-war aesthetic philosophy surrounding the break between the aura and atmosphere, and the relation between the cultural sciences and the discovery of aesthetic objects (the “exotic object”) in the history of my own discipline and its debates within itself, with other disciplines, and with Other between exoticization and dialogue.

4 Compare Rabinow 1997.

5 “Inter-esse-los” refers to the mediator’s “not being in between.”

6 Here when I speak of aesthetic anthropology as an emerging focal point of cultural and social anthropology, I mean both a comparative anthropology of aesthetic processes and an anthropological quest for new possibilities for the discipline’s own aesthetic mediations.

The Avant-garde: A New Aesthetic

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Europe's truly transnational artistic avant-garde not only traversed the boundaries of Western academic art, but it broadened the aesthetic horizon surrounding the experience, representation and appropriation of foreign, "exotic" aesthetics even to the extent of social utopia, in which life itself is a work of art and everyone is an inspiring part of it.

In 1891 Gauguin began his South Sea phase, which, like his preceding Breton artwork, was classified as "primitivism" (Perry 1993). As a passenger on a 1913-1914 expedition, Emil Nolde painted his own South Sea images. Henri Rousseau, the "Father of the Naïve," was accepted into the 1886 exhibition of the "Salon des Indépendants."

From 1918 into the early 1920s the Catalán, Joan Miró, deeply impressed not only by Henry Rousseau, but by Japanese wood carving as well, not to mention the landscape of his homeland, created paintings of "poetic realism," which we may now refer to as "naïve" in their "primitivist détaillisme" (Dupin 1961, 92). "When I set to work on a landscape," wrote Miró to a friend in 1918, "the first thing I do is to love it...slow understanding of its great richness of nuances...What happiness to manage to comprehend a single blade of grass in the landscape...Except for the primitives and the Japanese, nobody has ever taken a good look at this thing which is so divine. Artists are always looking for great masses of trees or mountains to paint, never attuning their ears to the music that emanates from tiny flowers, blades of grass and little pebbles" on the side of the road (Ibid 83).⁷

Like Emil Nolde, Paul Klee also experienced the masks of Oceanic and African peoples as that "primitiveness" which many avant-garde artists saw as the source and the essence of human creativity, and in turn assumed into their own artistic craft. "That is to say, there still remain the primordial origins of art, sooner encountered in the ethnographic museum or at home in the nursery...parallel aspects are found in the drawings of the mentally ill...in reality all of this is to be taken much more seriously than any art museum, if today's art is to be reformed," so stated Paul Klee in a 1912 review (cited in Osterwold 1987, 31). At the beginning of the 20th century the Parisian avant-garde discovered the aesthetics of Africa,⁸ collecting masks mainly and making it the exoticized object of their own art (Heinrichs 1995). Among the most famous

⁷ Dupin offers his own interpretation of this passage: "...his poetic détaillisme is an anti-naturalism, a musical restlessness...these landscapes are at once Montroig (Miró's homeland) as everyone sees it and a Montroig which Miró has dreamed of and re-created: an actual place and an earthly paradise, a garden of the imagination filled by a peasant and painted by a primitive" (Dupin 1961, 87).

examples are Picasso's "Guitar," based on a Grebo-Mask from his own collection of artifacts, and the masked heads of "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon." On the occasion of the opening of the "Premier festival des Arts Nègres" in 1966, André Malraux is quoted as saying, "On the day Picasso began his 'période nègre', that spirit that spanned the world for millennia, disappearing only for a short time (from the 17th to the 19th century, by the European account), reemerged to reassert its lost right" (cited in Schneider 1997, 394).

In Germany, "Der Blaue Reiter," published in 1912 by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, became one of the most significant manifestos of modern art written before the First World War (compare Gassen 2003). "The first volume herewith announced," wrote Franz Marc in a subscription prospectus, "includes the latest movements in French, German and Russian painting. It reveals subtle connections with Gothic and primitive or tribal art, with Africa and the vast Orient, with the highly expressive, spontaneous folk and children's art, especially with the most recent musical movements in Europe and the new ideas for the theater of our time" (cited in Kandinsky and Marc 1974, 252). The announcement was decorated with a painting by Henri Rousseau, and the printed almanac ultimately included pictures from all areas of the above-mentioned arts. These were not to be read as an accompaniment to the text, but rather as a language in itself, an "inner ring" and "responding sound" that, despite the apparent outer diversity, reveals to the observer an inner identity. In his essay, "Über Bühnenkomposition" (On Stage Composition), Kandinsky returns to the topic of the unique language of the arts: "Each art has its own language, that is, its own methods. ...In their innermost core these methods of the various arts are wholly identical: their final goal obliterates external differences and reveals their inner identity. The final goal (knowledge) is reached through delicate vibrations of the human soul. ... The undefinable and still distinct spiritual action (vibration) is the goal of the various methods of art. A distinctive complex of vibrations is the goal of a work. The refinement of the soul through the accumulation of distinctive complexes – this is the goal of art" (Ibid 190 f.). When the artist finds the right medium for the expression of his soul's vibration, he creates identical vibrations in the soul of the audience. These vibrations open up space for a fantasy that continues to shape the work. That which is mediated by the necessary form is, as it is referred to elsewhere, "the creative spirit (which could be called the abstract spirit)" ("Über die Formfrage" (On the Question of Form), Ibid 147).⁹

⁸ In 1915 Carl Einstein published his volume "Negerplastik," which was quickly followed by a French translation that also received great attention in Paris ("Afrikanische Plastik" 1921); concerning the meaning of African aesthetics for the avant-garde, see also Leiris 1953 and Heinrichs 1995.

⁹ Compare Kandinsky's extremely important theoretical writ, "Über das Geistige in der Kunst" (Concerning the Spiritual in Art) (1911).

In 1921, Kandinsky emigrated from Moscow to Germany, a country he already knew through his studies abroad.¹⁰ After the October Revolution he played a substantial official role in the advancement of the Russian avant-garde. Shortly before his emigration he founded the Russian Academy of Artistic Sciences and developed a plan for its Physicopsychological Department, the goal of which was to establish the principles of synthetic artistic expression. One component of this was a research program that encompassed all branches of art (architecture, sculpture, painting, printing, music, plastic rhythm, literature, theater and productional art), including utilitarian-productional construction, as well as research on aesthetic concepts found in "primitive art." This includes children's art, the art of "primitive" and "backward" peoples, primordial art, early Christian and medieval art, primitivism in modern art and the art of the ancient East (Bowlit 1976, 196 ff.).

The art of the Russian avant-garde ranges from a primitivistic orientation toward native folk art and the development of "naïve" styles to the process of reduction and abstraction represented by the Suprematist Malevich's "Black Square" (1915), for example (Sharp 1992, 39 ff.). Since the late 1920s the Russian avant-garde, inspired by the new media possibilities of photography and cinema, announced a renewed turn toward figurativeness that, according to Groys, signified a turn toward Socialist Realism and "a vision of mass culture that encompasses all humankind" (Groys 2003, 26). He traces out a formal transition from the abstraction of the Suprematist phase to the "construction process" of "constructing a 'new world' and a new image of humanity from those same elements" exemplified by Malevich's series of four paintings of three female figures produced between 1928 and 1932 (Ibid 28). For me, the painting "Reapers" (1928-1929) stands within a context that not only formally connects to the abstracting figurativeness of the transnational avant-garde and transmits it via Socialist Realism, but that even within this connection, pronounces the increasingly transnationally-recognized message of every national political protest and the Socialist utopia that stands before the cult of heroism and the "photographic" Socialist Realism of a world of "Socialist bliss" of simple people.¹¹

To me, the international articulation and very persistence of the language of form and substance of aesthetic mediation modeled in the style of a revolutionary modernity is an essential statement within the trans-nationalized aesthe-

¹⁰ Compare the brief biographies in Utopie 1992, 744 f. and Bowlit 1976, 17 ff.

¹¹ Regarding the controversy over whether Socialist Realism was about art, kitsch or a "different" aesthetic process for whose sensory construction all media may be appropriated, see the section on the interpretation of kitsch. See also the chapter "Protest und politische Utopie an der Wand" (Protest and Political Utopia on the Wall) in Greverus 2005a, 132 ff.

tics of political protest. It is the meaning of protest that is aesthetically mediated and made into art. When I stand before the Modernist paintings of France and Spain, Germany and Russia, when I trace the paths of artists between Europe and revolutionary Mexico, between the protest art of Nicaraguan Sandanistas, including the "primitivistas," and the world-wide solidarity movement, or the paths of the muralists of Orgosolo in Sardinia, I see a connection among them in that very transnational protest against the enslavement of the life of the mind by bourgeois nationalisms and their political masters (See Greverus 2005a). A shared stylistic language that perseveres through contemporary aesthetic phenomena is necessary for the transmission of a spirit that appeals to revolutionary ideals. An aesthetic of the collectivized perception of meaning via sensory perception was driven furthest by the Russian avant-garde. The movement both oscillated between, and pursued connections among, the glorification of pre-industrial country life, technological progress, and an artistic Futurism that would carry the world of machines into the realm of aesthetics. "This was the moment when Russian Modernism abandoned all opposition to the modernization of life effected by industrialization and mass production, and began to assume the functions of oil and engine in the machinery of progress." (Gassner 1992, 299). According to the 1928 declaration of the "October" group, an association of Soviet artist workers,¹² its primary goals would be the organization of mass festivals, the artistic design of objects for industrial mass consumption and the central meeting places of new collective mode of living, as well as social housing construction. In conclusion it stated, "The ranks of the proletariat, progressive, active, and artistically concerned, are growing before our very eyes. Mass art summons the vast masses to artistic involvement. This involvement is linked to the class struggle, to the involvement of industry, and to the transformation of life" (Bowlit 1976, 279, see also Gassner and Gillen 1979, 183). And as Alexsei Gan¹³ wrote in his book on Constructivism (1922): "Art is finished! It has no place in the human labor apparatus, labor, technology, organization! ... Without art, by means of intellectual-material production, the constructivist joins the proletarian order for the struggle with the past, for the conquest of the future" (Cited in Bowlit 1976, 223, 225).

In the early 1930s the dictatorship of Stalin put an end to the Russian avant-garde's grand utopian artistic vision of an aesthetic Communist future in which art and work would be fused.¹⁴ The Soviet Union's "dream factory

¹² The association was founded in 1928. It encompassed numerous artistic activities, including architecture, design, film, photography, and photomontage, among others, but it concentrated above all on the industrial and applied arts. See Bowlit 1976, 273 ff.; Utopie 1992, 721.

¹³ Gan died in 1942 after spending nine years in a prison camp. He was a cofounder of the first Constructivist workgroup and designed architectonic and typographic projects, film posters and book covers. He was a member of numerous artists' unions, the October group among them (Bowlit 1976, 214 ff.)

¹⁴ The formal proclamation of Socialist Realism was presented in 1934 at the First Soviet Writers Congress.

Communism" (Groys and Hollein 2003) dominated art, detaching itself from the utopia of "art in production," and attaching instead to a reality constituted by the separation between "realist" art for the masses in which the workday was solidified into a singular idyll, and industrial production in which the masses surrendered mercilessly to this process. The notion of a "performing life" realized through an aesthetic process, including the idea of everyday industrial life, gave way to the reality of "performed lives" in an everyday world somewhere between work-terror and consumer-terror. But art and production did meet in the monumentalism of the national displays of power.

And in this way the avant-garde aesthetic was destroyed: through the prohibition, forced assimilation and persecution of artists. Totalitarian political power reduced the artistic language of a transnational and collective debating avant-garde to silence. Through the Stalinist dictatorship, the Spanish Civil War, and the victory of the Franco regime, through the Italian and German fascism that culminated in World War II, and through the post-war division of Europe into political blocks of dependency, the voice of a collective-utopian aesthetic was lost, never to be found again. Can there ever be a return to a collectively imagined aesthetics of resistance?¹⁵ Between the reflections from a damaged life within the "melancholy science" (Adorno 1974) and its loss of an autonomous art (see Greverus 1995, 14 ff.), the fragmented postmodern individuality of "nomadic" (artist-) personalities, and the "cornucopia of purchased identities" in the "diversity of marketable lifestyles" (Bauman 1991, 335), have the aesthetics of resistance abandoned the provinces of "unaesthetic democracies" (Grasskamp 1992)¹⁶ for new Other and "othered" niches and in-between spaces beyond the market-dependent, "aesthetic" one-world ideology of commodified diversity?

Poetic Knowledge and Surrealistic Metamorphosis

"In reponse to the question of what remains of Surrealism today, I would answer: everything. I do not think about art or poetry, film or theater, photography or books. I think about a life philosophy, a state of mind, a morality, a purity, a need for freedom. Just as there is no escape from the knowledge of class struggle or from that of the unconscious, there is also no turning back

15 I borrowed this term from the title of Peter Weiss's book, "Die Ästhetik des Widerstands" (1975) ("The Aesthetics of Resistance" 2005). Wolfgang Welsch disputes Weiss's use of the word "resistance," contrasting it with a Lyotardian "postmodern aesthetics as a conception of resistance" (Welsch 1998, 157 ff.)

16 Grasskamp's book on unaesthetic democracy carries the subtitle, "Kunst in der Marktgesellschaft" (Art in the Market Society). In the chapter "The Future of Solidarity," Bauman (1991, 313 ff.) discusses the loss of independent thought through the rise of consumer freedom: "Above all consumer freedom successfully diverts the hopes of human freedom from social affairs and the administration of collective life" (Ibid 319).

from Surrealism: Surrealism leaves a lasting trace (Arturo Schwarz in "Die Surrealisten" 1989, 102).¹⁷

Surrealism in the time between the World Wars, with its center in France and its intellectual leader, André Breton, gained international significance as a renewed avant-garde protest that demanded the freedom of the aesthetically (as well as politically and socially) autonomous individual. The ultimate responsibility or "task of the poet and the artist" would be "to deepen the human problem in all of its facets. Which means he must assume unlimited direction of the mind until he acquires the ability to change the world," for the "interpretation of the world must always remain bonded with the changing of the world" (Breton, Discourse pour la défense de la culture (1935) in Schwarz 1989, 69). A few years later, in the looming of the Second World War, this message took on an urgent character. In 1938 Breton traveled to Mexico, a country that held a powerful attraction for French intellectuals of his time.¹⁸ Breton, together with Trotzki and Diego Rivera, authored the manifesto "Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendant" (Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art).¹⁹ The interdisciplinary project FIARI (International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art) was brought to life in Mexico and was officially founded after Breton's return to France. However, the publication of its monthly periodical, *Clé*, ended after only its second issue in February 1939 amid the political catastrophe spreading across Europe. In the first issue the lead article, "Pas de patrie," described the rejection of a French nation that sought to turn out asylum seekers and reaffirmed the promotion of the transnationality of art and life in a changed world.²⁰ "Art knows a fatherland no more than the worker. To promote a return to 'French art' today, as the fascists and Stalin both do, is to undermine the tight supranational bond that is essential for art. It means working toward the division of people and a relapse into a mutual lack of comprehension." (*Clé* Nr. 1, Jan. 1939 in Schwarz 1989, 72).

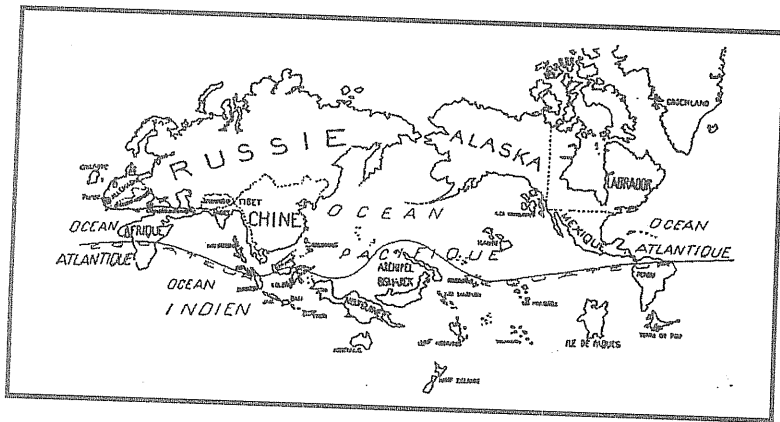
There exists a "Surrealist Map of the World," which I first consciously deco-

17 Schwarz's first exhibition conceptualized for Milan was presented in 1989/1990 at the Schirn Art Museum in Frankfurt. Of himself Schwarz says: "I am Italian and I understand myself as a Surrealist and an Anarchist" (1989, 100).

18 Breton writes: "At least there is still one country in the world where the wind of liberation has not abated. ... Mexico is bursting with the hopes that have been successively placed on other countries - the USSR, Germany, China, Spain..." ("Memory of Mexico," Breton 1995, 23 ff.). The Mexican president, Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), also granted political asylum to Trotzki, who was exiled from the USSR in 1929. Regarding Breton's travels to Mexico, see also: "Memory of Mexico" and "Visit with Leon Trotsky" in Breton 1995; "Frida Kahlo de Rivera" in Breton 1972.

19 Breton 1995, 29-34; Metken 1976, 183-187. This manifesto is generally seen as having been penned by all three authors (See Greverus 2005a, 145; Werner 2002). In contrast Schwarz writes that Rivera had no part in the composition and his name is only included for strategic reasons (Schwarz 1989, 69).

20 Breton spoke of the cancellation of the "distinction, long held as necessary, between art and life" (See Schwarz 1989, 22).



ded from the brochure of the Surrealist "Wunderkammer" at the Menil Collection in Houston in 2004.

The Surrealist map of the world was published in 1929 in the French journal, *Variétés*.²¹ It received various interpretations: as a reference of the countries that drew the Surrealists' attention to "primitive cultures" (Rubin 1984), as the basic element of surprise found in the removal of objects from their normal context (removal as denationalization) (Waldberg 1965, 25), as a map that connects topographic places with spaces of knowledge (Werner 2002). A French national identity defined by boundaries is destroyed in this world map through the dissolution of France. Paris, however, remains central as the transnational home of Surrealism,²² even when it is relocated to the edge of Germany. For Breton the Germany of 1938 was still the home of a transnational and revolutionary avant-garde for which Kandinsky stood: "Kandinsky's marvelous eye... belongs to one of the most exceptional, one of the greatest, revolutionaries of vision" (Breton 1972, 286). In a chapter titled "Vorläufer, Weggenossen und Enhüllungen" (Forerunners, Companions and Discoveries), Arturo Schwarz looks to Breton as a discoverer. He was the discoverer not only of "the majority of the most vigorous painters of our century," but of the "temporally and geographically distant cultures... that form an essential part of our emotional and rational world." Beside the old masters we find the "father" of naïve art, Henri Rousseau, Ferdinand Cheval (1836-1924), the mailman and "spontaneous architect" of Art Brut with his Palais Ideal (see Plessen 1984), Adolf Wölffli (1864-1930), whose exhibition was featured in the

21 In the Menil Collection brochure, "Witnesses to a Surrealist Vision," it is stated: "The Surrealist map of the world... is a witty but nonetheless serious alternative to standard maps, showing the importance the Surrealists attached to primitive cultures - especially those of the American Northwest Coast and the Pacific Islands."

22 "Paris ... is the place around which the map is conceptualized; it is considered the origin and benchmark of the Surrealist world... it points to a special cultural identity that differentiates itself from a French cultural or national identity" (Werner 2002, 10).

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1972 Kassel Documenta under the title, "The Drawings of the Mentally Ill," and above all, the "wild" and "primitive" cultures "that he [Breton] did not see as ethnographic artifacts, but as works of art. Without a doubt, Surrealism changed our view of the art of the American Indians in the polar regions, and of the art of Southeast Asia and Oceania" (Schwarz 1989, 97).

In a section titled "Surrealistische Wunderkammer" (Surrealist Chamber of Wonders), conceptualized for the Milan exhibition, "The Surrealists," that was re-opened in Frankfurt in 1989, Schwarz sets forth the concept of the Surrealist "Wunderkammer." Beside the contemporary Surrealist artists their "forerunners" and works of indigenous cultures are displayed, as well as artifacts, mathematical objects, and hewn and crude natural objects.²³

Surrealist atlas and Wunderkammer. How do I experience these as a cultural anthropologist? In the primitivization, denationalization, politicization and transnationalization of the map that are expressed in the juxtaposition and dissolution of stipulated identities, the blurring of boundaries and the shifting of dimensions, I read the coexistence and encounters of oppositions on a new level, as in Surrealist collage. Of course the map does not predetermine my perceptions. Nor do Surrealist chambers of wonders define my aesthetic perception. Rather, they yield to the collected objects of my imagination and interpretation.

Ginka Steinwachs has a book titled "Mythologie des Surrealismus oder die Rückverwandlung von Kultur in Natur" (Mythology of Surrealism or the Reversion of Culture into Nature), first published in 1971 (Steinwachs 1985). The reversion of which she speaks is contrasted with Lévi-Strauss's Structuralist engagement of the problem of the transition from nature to culture. It is by way of this comparison of Structuralism and Surrealism that Steinwachs highlights the idea of "finding" as a Surrealist practice, in contrast to the Structuralist practice of "assembly and disassembly." Likewise, she contrasts the Surrealist protest against decollage with the Structuralist protest against collage.

Surrealism seeks not only to preserve collage, the syncretism of being, but also to cooperate in the reconciliation of contradictions within apparent op-

23 In 1936 Breton organized an exhibition for the Ratton Gallery in Paris, "Exposition surréaliste d'objets" (See Schwarz 1989, 374 f.; regarding mathematical objects see Werner 2002), that arguably may be counted as the first of these Surrealist "Wunderkammern." In it, nature unites with art in aesthetic perception and mediation. That same year Roland Penrose organized "The International Surrealist Exhibition" in London, which included a variety of objects (indigenous objects, found objects of the Surrealists, Surrealistic objects and crude natural objects) (See Schwarz 1989, 375 ff.) organized from numerous other similar collections (Ibid 377 ff.) as a sort of protest against the mandated state art of fascism and communism, mainly in Western Europe and the United States, which preceded and followed World War II. See also the Wunderkammer, "Witnesses to a Surrealist Vision," opened in 1999 as part of Houston's Menil Collection and Clifford 1988c on Surrealist collecting.

posites. "Everything tends to make us believe," writes Breton in the Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1930), "that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low cease to be perceived as contradictions. Now, search as one may one will never find any other motivating force in the activities of the Surrealists than the hope of finding and fixing this point" (Breton 1969, 123f.). The ascertainment of this position is made possible through the imagination, which, along with intuition and fantasy, becomes one of the keywords of understanding and of the Surrealist aesthetic mediation of meaning. In the First Manifesto of Surrealism (1924), Breton voices his opposition to the hegemony of perceptive reason and interpretive logic, setting these in contrast to aesthetic perception, through whose imaginative power new facts are created: "If the depths of our mind contain within it strange forces capable of augmenting those on the surface, or of waging a victorious battle against them, there is every reason to seize them – first to seize them, then, if need be, to submit them to the control of our reason. The analysts themselves have everything to gain by it" (Breton 1969, 10). Louis Aragon too discusses the invention that grows out of poetic insight, that is, inspiration: "Invention is...the establishment of a surreal relation (a consideration of the real, its negation, its reconciliation and poeticization) between concrete elements. Its mechanism is inspiration."²⁴ Found objects, be they natural or artistically crafted, are perceived and defined anew. Their transformation is an act of aesthetic mediation in which sensory perception, imaginative objectification and expression meet in the transcending of opposites, including the opposition between nature and culture.

Breton preferred to see the specific nature of the Surrealist position as the reconciliation of opposites, as that point, "where construction and deconstruction can no longer be brandished one against the other" (Breton 1969, 124). But Surrealism was manifested equally through assembly and disassembly, though admittedly such disassembly is more of an act of deconstruction and the destruction of bourgeois values, truths and certainties in politics, science and art against which poetic insight and Surrealist metamorphosis are posited. The familiar becomes foreign and the foreign is at first alienated and then made into a new familiarity. That is certainly an aesthetic process of incorporation. Max Ernst called this process collage technique: "Collage-technique is the systematic exploitation of two or more realities of entirely different character, meeting, either coincidentally or artificially provoked, on one and the same inappropriate level – and the poetic spark being generated when these realities are approaching each other" (Ernst 1986, 24; Greverus 1987, 24).²⁵

²⁴ Aragon "Der Schatten des Erfinders" (The Inventor's Shadow) in Metken 1976, 52.

²⁵ See Ernst 1986 and "Was ist Surrealismus?" (What is Surrealism?) (1934) in Metken 1976.

Do Anthropologists Have an Aesthetic Position?

The artistic avant-garde of the first half of the 20th century, whose revolt against the bourgeois and national self-assurance of the European world I have tried to sketch here, not only created a new textual and visual art. To me, it stood above all for a social protest that through the concept of imagination sought to transform, to reinvent the world. That is poetic perception and intervention in the sense of the original meaning of poesis, that is, creation. The aesthetic "-isms" of the avant-garde are creation stories like those I present in my book, "Ästhetische Orte und Zeichen" (Greverus 2005a).

Is it possible for me to understand and represent these through an anthropological approach? That is a question I pose to the artistic avant-garde, but also to the aborigines on their path between the way of dreams, painted and blown across by desert sand, and their contemporary path through the art worlds of New York and Sydney; from the painter of the "Mongolian Everyday," a work of national identity in a country working to free itself from colonial imposition, to the defenders of the "Heritage Trail" between the Maori and European colonizers of New Zealand who refute the ideological construction of "one nation;" from the revolutionary Sandinista muralists of Nicaragua and the Sardinian muralists of Orgosolo who lend their local identity to the tourist market, to the "naïves" of Croatia, China, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Haiti, to the German school children who communicated their visions of future catastrophes, to the designer of those new "aesthetic sites," where once more at the millennium the hope for a new mankind may be formulated, and from the contemporary Spurensucher and Spurensicherer, those artist-searchers like Nikolaus Lang on the hunt for "deep clues" (See Greverus 2002a, 38 ff., 2002b) within other worlds and in their own, to the artist-searchers of yesterday like Gauguin and Nolde on their aesthetic path toward the Other and to themselves.

But my question goes in yet another direction. Can I also as an anthropologist learn from the experiences of these aesthetic thinkers and artists? Can I make their theoretical, methodological and representational steps fruitful for my own research and interpretation? Here the connection between ethnologists as artists and artists as ethnologists reemerges (Greverus 1978, 115 ff.)

Throughout my book, "Ästhetische Orte und Zeichen" (Greverus 2005a), I draw out the issue of the aesthetic position of the anthropologist. Does the aesthetic perception of aesthetic objects and aesthetic mediations play a part in anthropological research? Is the dialogic imagination of the Other a part of this? Does it serve, in addition to the experience of facts, a new truth emerging from the encounter between Self and Other? From this point on I

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will walk the paths of the 20th century artistic avant-garde with my ethnological-anthropological gear in hand. My ultimate goal is to examine within a philosophical context various scenes of present day anthropology by way of an aesthetic approach and to identify my own position with respect to each approach.

There is a long history to the aesthetic discourse and aesthetic practices of the ethnological sciences that have made the Other and others their object, including the "peasant" within our own urbanized, industrialized society. From their origins, both ethnology and folklore were nostalgic disciplines (Greverus 1969) that competed to rescue whatever there was still left to preserve (see Greverus 1978, 24 ff.). In 1881 Adolf Bastian offered the motto: "As when a building goes up in bright flames, it is the utmost imperative of the present ethnological [study] of rapidly disappearing primitive peoples...to save whatever is left" (1881, 28). And in Jacob Grimm's "Plan zu einem Altdeutschen Sammler" (Steig 1902, 133) it is stated: "Later it might be too late...to search out and preserve what there is left to save." What was preserved were texts and material objects, collected, classified and often removed from their context.

This reached from the archive to ethnographic atlases, from ethnological museums to heritage museums. And still today, museums and other exhibition spaces, Expos for example, display objects meant to serve neither the imaginative incorporation of the Other, nor a negatively-valued exoticism, but rather a scientific and "objective" representation of the Other. Mediation lives off distance, the presentation simulates lived – even "authentic" – life. The researcher places herself or himself, as well as the aesthetic inclination that she or he experienced, outside of the context of scientific fieldwork and collection, archiving and museumification.

On Exotic "Poaching"

Placing himself or herself outside the participatory role of anthropologist, surely the researcher bears no resemblance to the "learned proprietors of 17th century curiosity cabinets" who loved "to surround themselves with strange and fantastical things. The more distant the origin, the more valuable they held them to be. ...Some of them so adored their collections that they hoped to die in them someday." So states a testament quoted by Karl Heinz Kohl in his book, "Das exotische Ding" (The Exotic Thing), in which the collector expresses his desire to leave this world mummified inside his own curiosity cabinet (Kohl 1996, 19 f., compare Kohl 1982, 155 ff.). The Western Wunderkammern assembled by sovereigns and the learned bourgeois upper-class

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from the time of the Renaissance were private collections of natural and art objects arranged in cabinets. Shown only to a select circle of visitors, they served the collector's cosmopolitan self-portrayal (Pomian 1988, Pomian 1990,²⁶ Kopplin 1987). Often times such private museumification of the foreign conjoined with public festivals in which the "found objects" were used as procession props (Kopplin 1987, 297). Here the Other was reset and appropriated as an ornamentation of the Self.

This trend of exotic appropriation swept across Europe in the most diverse waves.²⁷ Aspects of the foreign were brought into art and architecture, interior design and fashion, music and theater. Chinoiserie and Japonism, Egyptian and Turkish styles, Moorish and Indian elements were all integrated into the design of noble and bourgeois lifestyles in the 18th and 19th centuries. This "reflected a disposition toward luxury and the aesthetically refined" (Schneider 1996). Such exotic fashions were the reserve of an upper-class that possessed both the economic and cultural capital to partake in them, which in turn of course corresponds to their participation in exoticism in public spaces of art, music and theater. Only with the onset of the age of mass tourism, of mechanical reproduction (Benjamin 1969b) and the unbridled marketing and self-marketing of the exotic did the consumer circle expand to its current scale.

These "European fantasies," generally condemned as "exoticism," are criticized mainly from a perspective associated with ethnographic forgeries, colonial and inner-colonial exploitation and ultimately cultural consumerism. In this critique all social strata are implicated, from the nobility down through the upper- and middle-classes, with the heaviest accusation leveled against the contemporary petit bourgeoisie. But when the discussion concerns "exotic erosion" (Exotische Welten 1987), "Kitschmenschen" (Kitsch People) (Giesz 1960), the "pretensions" of petit bourgeois taste (Bourdieu 1984), and the seducibility of "honest" folk (Launer 1987), the middle-class is always implied. The articles, texts and images in the volume "Exotische Welten - Europäische Phantasien" (Exotic Worlds - European Fantasies) (1987) present a general picture of the middle-class character: middle-aged, dressed in distasteful vacation outfits, on the hunt for photo opportunities

26 As a point of contrast, Pomian refers to the institutional character of religious and worldly medieval treasure chambers.

27 The 1987 exhibition catalog, "Exotische Welten - Europäische Phantasien," offers a good overview of the consumption of the "exotic" in Europe with extensive text and images, including a comprehensive bibliography. Indeed, these texts, written mainly by German art scholars, folklorists and ethnologists, may also be understood as an attempt at revising their respective disciplines through the critique of imperialism and general social critique, as well as with respect to the expansion of the field of research via the mass media, the compensatory death of theory, the orientation toward theory-saturated science, philosophy in particular, and the trendy critique of their own Other, that is, the aesthetically "underdeveloped" petit bourgeoisie.

and souvenirs. This is one who, on the way home, as Enzenberger expresses it in his critique of tourism, simply proclaims "what we all knew long before" (Enzenberger 1969, 203).

World exhibitions have contributed more than a little to the practice of exotic poaching (Goldmann 1987, Debusmann and Riesz 1995, Kretschmer 1999, Nebel 2001). The first time I passed through the Hall of Africa at the 2000 World Expo in Hannover with Bettina Nebel, who conducted research on the question, is there a platform for Africa at the 2000 Expo? (Nebel 2001), I felt disoriented by the crowds, noise and airport-art consumer offerings, as if I were indeed in the middle of an African bazaar.²⁸ In fact, the concept for the hall was a bazaar or market street that encompassed all the participating African countries. Through material souvenirs, a visitor here could exoticize himself or herself and his or her homeplace in a quick shopping trip through the African continent, without having to travel abroad. All along the aisles of the bazaar, and with the help of museumification and festivalization, Africa was "Africanized" for the visitors.²⁹

World expositions and ethnological exhibitions, in light of their historical development, are viewed today as constructions of the foreign. In the official "self-image" of the exhibiting Western nations since the mid-19th century, they have served as an encyclopedic reconnaissance by way of the cultures of the world. In the economic and political interests of these exhibiting nations, they served the drive of colonial expansion, national self-representation and the marketing of colonial products. What would "foreign," "exotic" culture have to find amid these colonial marketing strategies? Colonial poaching in economically viable places – today's tourism industry speaks of "sympathy advertising" – became culturally diverted and re-directed. Masses of visitors are drawn with the help of exotic staging, of which both architecture and landscaping, as well as handicrafts and folkloric presentations and their native performers are all a part (Koppelkamm 1987, 170 ff., Wörner 1999, 2000, Hinsley 1991, Nebel 2001, 21 ff.).³⁰ They could stroll down the "Straßen der Nationen" (Streets of Nations) and consume the exotic without having to journey far into the foreign. But it was not only the consuming "masses" that were compelled amid all the distraction "to enjoy their alienation from themselves and from

²⁸ According to the directives of the International Bureau of Expositions, only 20 percent of the platforms of each participating country may be used for commercial purposes. An agent of the German Society for Technical Collaboration, which was responsible for the design of the Africa Hall, welcomed the bazaar street both as a commercial attraction as well as an opportunity to monitor adherence to regulations. As a comparison, he referred to the World Exposition in Lisbon, where retail kiosks accounted for 80 percent (Nebel 2001, 80).

²⁹ I refer here to Edward Said's "Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental" (Said 1978).

³⁰ The "tribal displays" at the World's Fairs find their parallel in the cultural exhibitions erected in zoological gardens, of which Hagenbeck is a particularly striking representative (Compare Goldmann 1987, 88 ff.).

others," as stated by Walter Benjamin speaking of his view of world exhibitions as "pilgrimage sites become fetish commodity" (Benjamin 1999, 50). So too the artistic avant-garde fell in love with the Other. For them the Other would serve as an aesthetic critique of some former Self and an aesthetic reformation of a new Self. They, too, visited world expositions. Many satisfied themselves with a peek at the place, others journeyed far into the foreign as aesthetic field researchers like Leiris or as aesthetic "dissenters" like Gauguin: "My sole desire is to found a studio of the tropics. With the regular funding available to me I can buy a native hut just like the ones we saw at the World's Fair," wrote the artist in 1890 in a letter in Paris (Osterwold 1987, 27).

Has the production of world expos been radically altered through mass tourism and decolonization? As was then, and now to a greater degree, the picture of global society is transmitted through the self-presentation of nation-states (Harvey 1998). From now on the self-representation of the "young," decolonized nations will also join in this trend, just like the former Eastern Bloc countries have done since the 1992 Expo in Seville. Along with the goal of international trade and the enticement of business investors, tourism advertising has become an increasingly important sector of industry (Harvey 1998, Klenk 1999, Nebel 2001). Both of these "goals" largely lead to a society's choices of self-presentation, both historical and contemporary. As Nebel very poignantly highlighted in her discussion of the Hall of Africa, "historical perspective" is oriented toward a pre-colonial "Heritage-Production," while the present becomes a mixture of successful development projects and folkloric and commercial tourist advertising (Nebel 2001, 50 ff.). Poaching on one's own land? Or was it always already a construction of the Other? And who "Africanizes" the African with his or her consent?

Of the "three loci of culture" in the context of public performance – the performer on the stage, the public in the hall and the organizers and hosts in the background – Gisela Welz considers the last of these, the culture broker, an all important thread in the mediation and representation of foreign cultures which, until now, has been an understudied topic in the anthropological disciplines (Welz 1996, 26 ff.). In her work on the Hall of Africa, Nebel clearly articulates the function of intermediation with respect to the dominance of the Western, in this case German, host country (Nebel 2001, 97 ff.). Ideas, financing and event planning all came from German sources; their African contacts were national governments, ministers and state organizations. What space remained within this frame to fulfill the demand that "these countries represent themselves in the most authentic and multi-faceted way possible"? Here too the exhibition organizers forced their own authentication strategies upon a space meant for self-representation, which in addition the performance stage and the bazaar included "Event Cuisine" and the African "staff." "See

it live," "completely real," "uncanny power," "up-close experience": all these were among the slogans of the culture brokers. And the lead architect of the Hall of Africa confirmed: "We said, Africa is life, Africa is vitality, liveliness, friendliness, color, and that is exactly what we wanted to show, di-rect-ly (un-mit-tel-bar)." The Africans arranged themselves within the frame that was offered, even when it placed them among folkloristic and commercial interests. After all, in their eyes the foreign Other was the tourist or the potential investor. Nebel was missing the creative provocation of culture shock, that reflection process produced between the Self and the Other (Greverus 1995, 270). Marcus and Fischer make a similar argument with regard to a 1980s New York exhibition: "The exotic other inspired avant-garde artists during the 1920s and 1930s, but now this source of innovation and critique has lost its shock value; this show marks the definitive assimilation of the primitive into the history of Western art. Our consciousness has become more global and historical: to invoke another culture now is to locate it in a time and space contemporaneous with our own, and thus to see it as part of our own world, rather than as a mirror alternative to ourselves, arising from a totally alien origin" (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 134).

"The cultural representatives of the 2000 Expo who produced the images of Africa and 'indigenous' groups were not anthropologists" (Nebel 2001, 125). That was not always the case. An oft-cited case is that of Frederick Ward Putnam, director and curator of the Peabody Museum at Harvard, Franz Boas, his assistant at the time, and their role at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago (Hinsley 1991, Nebel 2001). Putnam assumed the direction of the ethnology and archaeology division where the focus was to be the vivid representation of the living conditions, traditions and art of "the native people of America." A group of Kwakiutl native Americans lived on the grounds of the World's Fair and, under the direction of Boas, fashioned "ethnographically interesting" products or performed dances and ceremonies. Ethnographically valuable, that is, as historical reconstructions. "Putnam and Boas were risking erasure of the past and current dynamics of history, literally blocking out the changes of time" (Hinsley 1991, 350).³¹ As an assistant at the ethnological museum in Berlin, Boas had already recorded the language and songs of nine Native North American Bella-Coola that Adrian Jacobsen had "brought home with him" from a museum-sponsored ethnographic expedition to be featured in a

31 Like the 1889 World's Fair in Paris, there were also ethnic villages in Chicago, an oriental "Cairo Street" with a bazaar and pictures of medieval European cities. Eventually historical reconstructions were also added in the juxtaposition of native (Irish and Scottish) villages and the villages of colonized regions (London 1908; compare Coombes 1995). See Wörner 1999, 2000 for further examples. Korff sees lines of connection from the World Exhibitions to the open-air museums and the Disney theme parks (Korff 1994).

touring show of primitive peoples (Goldmann 1987, 91 f.). In the 19th and early 20th century, the linkages among World Expositions, primitive exhibitions and the rapidly developing museum industry were still very tight. Ethnographic collections from the World's Fair were absorbed into the museums (Wörner 1999, 240 f., Nebel 2001, 25). Boas, however, as a result of his experiences with shameless profiteers, culture brokers and consumeristic viewers of the exotic, withdrew himself from public cultural work both in World Exhibitions and museums.

The Other Side of Imagination. From an Imaginary Ethnography to the Transmission of Facts.

"Orientalism died on the banks of ethnology, while the exhibition forgot to be mysterious and look lovingly upon her colonies. The star system destroyed the star because it quashed the dream in pure form. For the colonies have become provinces to be developed and no longer sensually incorporated."³²

Indeed "Orientalism" – by which I mean the "scientification" of the perception of the foreign in general – died on many shores of ethnology and other anti-aesthetic cultural and historical sciences, though this did not hinder its continued unaesthetic life in politics, business, consumerism and xenophobia.

The "sensual incorporation" of the Other – of its imagination and impression for a decollage and collage of the Self³³ – came to bear most authentically in the postulations of the artistic avant-garde, though yielding to the positivistic thought of collection and classification for which the archives and the museums of anthropology and ethnology stand.

Zygmunt Bauman indirectly describes this ethnological modernity in his book, "Modernity and Ambivalence." The origin of order is the fear of ambivalence and the foreign. Classification encloses and excludes, it divides and deconstructs the perceived and aesthetically imagined into "unambiguous" classes of rational things and events: "The ideal that the naming/classifying function strives to achieve is a sort of commodious filing cabinet that contains all the files that contain all items that the world contains – but confines each file and each item within a separate place of its own (with remaining doubts solved by a cross-reference index)" (Bauman 1991, 2). For Bauman, this power of definition is a violent assault against the world: "When (if) [this power]

32 Sylviane Leprun on the French World- and Colonial Exhibitions in Halen 1995, 98.
33 See Greverus 1990, 210 ff.; Greverus 1995a.

succeeds, the inseparable will have been separated, the indivisible divided, existence will not longer seem fragile nor the world mysterious" (Ibid 174).

To this classificatory arrangement is added the will to preserve traditional objects, a sort of "preservationist thinking" that emerged in response to either the extinction of the "primitive" and their "exotic objects" (in colonial/non-Western ethnology) or, in national cultural studies (such as folklore and Western ethnology), the disappearance of peasant life, local cultural traditions and the "powers of persistence," as Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1851) put it. The social de-contextualization of objects is among the charges leveled against the collection-fever and museumification that emerged in the 19th century, which, particularly with respect to the museums of the great Western metropolises, was considered "the result of an enormous act of plundering" that has violently disturbed, even cut off, the "artistic traditions" of various peoples (Kramer 1977, 78).³⁴ Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) has received especially sharp criticism. As a "traveler without a shadow," he gathered the objects of the world for his ethnographic museum (Ibid 80). The Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde was a very real institution. But at the same time it was an imaginary museum that Bastian, as a world traveler, represented. For him, the chaos of objects represented the "Völkergedanken" (primitive thought) that held the key to the universally repeated, "abjectly impoverished" "Elementargedanken" (elementary thought) of all humanity. "Bastian was impressed and ultimately confused by the marvelous: exposure to perpetually homogeneous, reiterated elementary thought led to disenchantment" (Ibid 81). Still, Bastian wanted to define the world as a revealed, primordial order, far from any filing cabinet categorization. In this pursuit he was a romantic, and yet he remained infected with a positivistic urge to collect objects as a way of providing a foundation from which to explain the whole by way of the details. But Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) already had defined the collection of folk traditions – which for him consisted most fundamentally of the remains of a language – as the foundation of a history of mankind. This history reveals itself in the creative "Volksgeist" (national spirit) that is the feature of every unique, true folklore. While Herder was still concerned with a science directed toward the quintessence of all peoples and ages, ultimately the study of national language and cultural traditions, folklore in particular, developed out of the study and teaching of the Volksgeist. The collection of local "native antiquities" was and is part of an arcane and revitalized historical ideology of a common (national) cultural heritage that, even in our own time, politically reinstates the strategies of national distinction and demarcation. And the aesthetic mediation of aesthetically relevant and relevantly constructed objects

³⁴ On the controversies surrounding the practice of cultural reclaiming see Clifford 1988b; Herdt and Hurop 1994.

plays an important role in this. Ultimate these objects become the "frozen," "authentic" signs of national legitimacy.³⁵

But back to the 19th century.³⁶ The struggle within our ethnographic disciplines in a time of modern upheaval between Enlightenment, Romanticism and Positivism was surely frightening. Mühlmann's comment on the late Bastian – "that his intellectual creative power could no longer achieve a mastery over the plenitude of visions" (Mühlmann 1968, 88) – was succinctly expressed by Fritz Kramer as "Bastian's delusion" (Kramer 1977, 74 ff.). Both observations hint at the impossibility of reaching a total view of mankind by way of positivistic categorization and a divisive methodological process. The imaginary museum created by Bastian through his travels ascended within his later writing "like a fantastic carnival procession othered by memory" (Ibid 80).³⁷

Bastian's work belongs to the category of "imaginary ethnography," those "upside down worlds" that Kramer connects with the inverse relationship between mythology and 19th century travel writing. Gauguin and Nolde are also associated with this genre. But Kramer focuses particularly on the phenomenon of othering with relation to the "Myth of the Orient," the object by which Europeans discovered themselves (Ibid 77 ff.): "Nineteenth century ethnography was designed with reference to one's 'own' culture and the Other as upside down worlds. ...As the representation of 'foreign' culture, it speaks to a taboo truth of middle-class life. Myth and positivism, prostitution and the nuclear family; Protestantism: idealization of the mother and the demonization of the 'feminine' and the 'masses' – the taboo is an invention of the 19th century and highlights very precisely what ethnography has separated out as 'primeval society' and the 'Orient.' The 'Other' as that which evokes the archaic has what the art of symbolism characterizes as having a fantastic, unreal, 'mysterious' character, namely, its allure consisted in the idea of an inextinguishable self-conception. For this reason I choose to refer to this as

³⁵ Where Jonathan Schwartz speaks of "the petrified forest of symbols" (1995) with relation to national reconstruction after the fall of Socialist Yugoslavia, I speak of the "freezing" of history into a "history of an (ever different) Us" (Greverus 1995c, see also Greverus 2002, 334 ff.); for a general treatment see Giordano, Greverus and Kostova 1995a, 1995b. In the chapter, "Heritage Trails" (Greverus 2005a), I discuss the historicizing construction of separate "white" and Maori identities as a contradiction of the One-Nation-Ideology of the state of New Zealand.

³⁶ The dedicated reader will have realized by now that I have no intention of writing a timeline of the discipline's history, but rather I seek to set out an anthropological discussion of the extended durations and repetitions that permit us to see recurrent patterns in social thought.

³⁷ Within the same source is a quote from Bastian's 1900 work, "Die Völkerkunde und der Völkerverkehr unter seiner Rückwirkung auf die Volksgeschichte": "The very first look sends one into confusion, into a desert of fantastic horrors, blurred disfigurations and soon, very soon into burlesque grimaces, here piled gigantic heaps, there grinning with ghastly larvae, everywhere alien." Then Kramer seems to abandon us with the question of whether he sees "Bastian's delusion" in a subject-specific, clinical way or as an expression of an epoch of "imaginary ethnography."

imaginary ethnography.” This implies directly, by reference to modern art, that the style of another culture could be neither dreamed up nor imitated, and that the ethnographic imagination may prove to be arbitrary in its choice of object. And abruptly there follows a transition to an “unmediated view of the Other” that is opened in the course of fieldwork – and which arguably leads us into the 20th century – “through our participation in the life of another culture. ...but the objects of ethnographic museums release it as well, so long as the observer does not remain trapped in the superficiality of syncretistic perception.” If we have moved through this excerpt somewhat drudgingly into undated “world civilization,” “which is both excessively syncretistic and fixed steadily upon the new,” then we are referred in the next sentence to Dürer’s experience of the ethnographic discovery of “wondrous things”³⁸ in that “field of tension between imagination and curiosity.”

“Orientalism,” as in the Orientalism critique of the 1970s captured in Edward Said’s “Orientalism” (1978)³⁹ became – one year after Kramer’s critique was published – the foundation of an international anthropological debate carried on under headings like “Writing Culture,” “Othering,” and the “Crisis of Representation.” For Said as well, this was a critique of the imagination and construction of the Orient, an Othering Orientalist discourse found throughout Western science and literature. Above all it was about the thesis that this discourse emerged and emerges still from a sense of cultural supremacy, from the hegemony of European conceptions and agendas vis-à-vis the Orient. It is a critique stemming from encounters with the Other that was put forth at the height of the 20th century critique of Western imperialism. They likewise criticized the divisions devised by modernity, advocated an “empirical reality,” left nothing to the imagination and shut down any dialogical approach or aesthetic intermediation between a generalized and constructing Western subject – Us – and a generalized and constructed Eastern object – Them. Any understanding between Self-perception and the perception of the Other was precluded.

Of course such thought was rarely pursued by anyone who did not subject the order of things to philosophical analysis or literary criticism. Rather, it was the intellectual territory of those who worked within categories of “empirical reality.” Here things appeared as a collected reality. They had to be archived, scientifically classified, exhibited and published. At some point the multitude of things and the demand for concrete knowledge in middle-class education dominated the imaginative constructions of “mankind,” such that only the

³⁸ This is a journal entry written by Dürer during his travels in the Netherlands in 1520, where he wondered at the Mexican gifts in the Wunderkammer of Karl V (Kramer 1977, 9).

³⁹ The fact that Said makes no reference to Kramer may have to do with the fact that he dealt exclusively with Anglo-French Orientalism.

order of remaining things remained. The elite Wunderkammern of churches, nobles, the learned and finally (and still today) those elite outsiders, from artists to industry moguls and other wealthy individuals, were closed down, sometimes to be reopened as museums. This is our present situation.

The Wunderkammern gave way to public museums meant for the transfer of knowledge to a middle-class keen on attaining refinement through the amassing of “cultural capital.” Positivistic knowledge flowed out from here. The 19th century marks the beginning of the age of the museum as the venue of published collections that simultaneously divided up “things” in files and displayed them for the curious onlooker. In contrast to the onlooker seeking cultural capital, there stands the expert responsible for transmitting “things” scientifically. Mineralogists, biologists, archaeologists, art historians, folklorists and anthropologists have separated themselves into their respective subject-areas, concerning themselves with that enlightening “authentic mediation” that can unsettle the aesthetic self-experience of things. For as they claim, only experts experience their particular world from the point of view of their respective scientific competency. And so the imposition of faith in science prevails. For us, as anthropologists, there has ensued since the 19th century not only disciplinary division but also a belief in things divorced from imagination and aesthetics. The aesthetic “thing” was collected in order to be classified, that is, to be ordered with regard to its affiliation.

From this there developed a “canon” of descriptive – ethno-graphic – sciences that located not only the Other and Others in (mostly colonial) foreign places (Völkerkunde / ethnology) but also the Other and Others in the native national context (Volkskunde / folklore) on the basis of their respective objectifications. Out of this developed entire sub-disciplines that, in turn, rested on the question of what it is that descriptive classification holds together.

In the 19th century there remained the obstinate imaginary ethnography of Bastian, who sought to let “primitive thought” coagulate into “elementary thought,” but only found enduring, posthumous “success” in his contribution to the museumification of the Other. Likewise for the collections of national “Überreste” (relics)⁴⁰ in the countries of Europe, an overview of the entire nation was then considered an actual interpretive task. Thus Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl advocated for “Volkskunde” (folklore) as a political science, in which things first obtain “their scientific as well as poetic consecration through their relationship to the wonderful organism of an entire folk-personality” (Riehl 1935, 15). In the ethnographic disciplines, indeed, the classificatory presenta-

⁴⁰ For more on this term, see Droysen 1977. In their remarks on the historical museum, Korff and Roth (1987, 18) emphasize that the fragmentedness of traditional realities required a re-dimensionization, lest the museumified objects remain silent.

tion of historical relics came more strongly to the fore at the turn of the 19th century. In one of the numerous critical debates over ethnographic practice in the 1970s it was said: "It seems as though in the course of the collection, registration, archiving, numeration and codification, we have forgotten the meaning of these inherently laudable activities. It is as though the collected data became detached from its social and political conditions and took on a life of its own" (Schöck 1970, 86 f.).

In national ethnology/folklore, "aesthetic objects" were categorized, archived, described and further displayed in the frame of the "old" canon. With that, however, came the nearly insatiable desire to discover new research fields within the trivial,⁴¹ long before Böhme's plea for an aesthetic of the "lower spheres." The regional, national and transnational "lows" were appreciated – and categorized – within a "new" canon.⁴² With few exceptions, Heinz Schilling's recipient analysis of trivial wall-decoration, for example (Schilling 1971; 2003, 134 ff.), its main concern is content analysis.

Also in the anthropology of non-European cultures (Völkerkunde) or (post-colonial) anthropology, ethnographic-monographic descriptions of "what remains," with a chapter on art as one among other categories of the canon, are put forth just the same as comparative studies from a single area of the canon.⁴³ Here too, the divisions of the canon were expanded. Museums in particular, with their exhibitions and catalogues, brought these expansions into public consciousness. The 1987 exhibit "Exotische Welten - Europäische Phantasien" mentioned above, is associated with "exotic acquisition" not only in fine arts, but encompasses architecture, interior design, fashion, applied art, music, literature, photography, film, advertising, science fiction, as well as the exotic acquisitions of tourists and rockers. Here the circle of interpreters (most of them quite haughty in their critical "understanding") becomes interdisciplinary, and the interpreted are not "exotics" or the foreign Other,

41 The so-called mass-culture research developed into mass-communication research in such a way that it "stepped on the toes of the social sciences and the humanities" (Löwenthal 1972, 74). On the expansion of the native ethnographic canon (Völkerkunde / folklore) to include the "popular" and the "trivial," see Greverus 1978, 124 ff. and 191 ff.

42 "Whoever actually believes that change can be affected by boldly expanding the canon to include things like film, television and daily press, is on the wrong track," said Martin Scharfe in his "Kritik des Kanons" with respect to the "reactionary cultural and social critique" of a Völkerkunde that excludes the area of the culture industry (Scharfe 1970, 82 f.).

43 This anthropological canon builds the main foundation for introductions to the discipline: language and communication, technology and economics, social organization, kinship structure and relations, political and legal organization, religion and magic, life cycles, and the arts (e.g. Taylor 1969; Haviland 1975; Fischer 1983). The canon's divisions are divided once again into sub-disciplines. Thus Benzing (1983) points out that, although art is represented as the arts, the anthropology of art concerns itself primarily with the plastic arts. In addition, specialized anthropologies of music, oral literature, architecture, dance, fashion, even sports as art have been established.

but rather the Other within our own Western society: the middle-class, those criticized as "Kleinbürger."

Anthropological-Aesthetic Uncertainties and Attempts

In the same direction as canon-expanding exhibition activity, in 1981 there emerged once more the "Szenen der Volkskunst" (Scenes of Folk Art) at the Württemberg Kunstverein in Stuttgart under the direction of the art historian, Tilman Osterwold. Osterwold proceeds from a newly awakened interest in "folk-cultural" phenomena within contemporary post-war art – especially from the 60s and 70s: "In their work, artists showed how folk- and sub-cultural phenomena are decisive carries of the culture of our time. There is something being created and expressed with which one can debate, if not identify.⁴⁴ ... For we all feel that we live in a time in which general interest... in folklore, folk art, amateur art, trivial culture, mass culture, the sub-cultural underground and alternative culture is growing strong, such that activities and emanations from this area of culture have retained a strong social, if not political explosiveness" (Osterwold 1981, 1.1). In the debates within contemporary art, which includes installation art, happenings, performance art, spray art, and photography, in addition to painting and sculpture, as well as a new form of "encyclopedic" collection, the author sees a resurrection of the aesthetic intentions of modernity at the onset of the 20th century. Contemporary art and traditional folk art, amateur art and sub-culture, all forms of alternative culture (graffiti, alternative architecture, house boats and "truckitecture," land communes) are taken up and interconnected in the scenes of folk art.

At the end of the exhibition there are two areas that do not seem to fit. The first is "Synthetic Folk Art" described in the chapter on "Massenkultur und Bewußtseinsindustrie als Volkskunstersatz" (Mass Culture and the Consciousness Industry as a Substitute for Folk Art). Here an excerpt from Roland Barthes' exposition on the synthetic or plastic in *Mythologies* (1972) becomes central: "The fashion for plastic highlights an evolution in the myth of 'imitation' materials. It is well known that their use is historically bourgeois in origin... But until now imitation materials have always indicated pretension, they belonged to the world of appearances, not to that of actual use... Plastic has climbed down, it is a household material. It is the first magical substance which consents to be prosaic. But it is precisely because this prosaic charac-

44 The author also refers in his chapter, "Volkskunst – was ist das," to the skeptical reaction from folklorists, museum anthropologists and artists to this newly defined term Volkskunst (folk art) that was thought up for the exhibition. Above all, and in connection with revolutionary modernity, the term refers to the intentions of the creators of this art who often remain anonymous with respect to the political and practical value of their work for the general public (Osterwold 1981, 0.4 ff.).

ter is a triumphant reason for its existence: for the first time, artifice aims at something common, not rare...Plastic is wholly swallowed up in the fact of being used...The hierarchy of substances is abolished: a single one replaces them all: the world can be plasticized, and even life itself, since, we are told, they are beginning to make plastic aortas" (Barthes 1972, 98).

Let me to flip back in the exhibition catalogue to contemporary art and its "encyclopedic collecting." Here we read: "The encyclopedic collecting of materials as aesthetic manifestations of our environment and our inner world becomes a principle of artistic form. The estrangement of persons from their own natural creativity that is produced here is mirrored in the signs of our world. ...The artist realizes this to be a central experience of his or her own personal problematic and, to the point of absurdity, of 'anti-art.' He sees his work always in contrast to the retirement garden, to amateur photography, to his own collection of objects. He – the artist – embodies this, setting himself as an example of one who is penetrated and infected by appropriated culture" (Osterwold 1981, 1.85).⁴⁵

If we assume that artists, art historians, anthropologists, and cultural studies scholars could give form to this alienation as personal experience, then it can only succeed through art – and in rare cases, for example, in a "different" ethnography whose worth as a work of "anti-ethnography" would never be recognized. Michel Leiris is for me one example of an encyclopedic collector of aesthetic manifestations within the Other and the Own that he never appropriates as objects for classification (ethnography), but sees rather as a reflexive and self-reflexive source of imagination to be pondered. Anti-ethnography? Or would it be better to say another, an aesthetic ethnography that offers space for sensory touch, imagination and the quest for meaning? Leiris was a Surrealist collector too. The Wunderkammern were closer to him than the new museums. In 1929 Leiris wrote in "Das 'Museum der Hexer'"⁴⁶ : "As an eternal prisoner of references and laws, man will always hunt for the absolute. ...and it remains for him nothing more than the attempt to capture it with a list, on a detour, in a revolution of the structure of condition. ...Poetry and fiction are essentially based on this unconscious list. Their broadest goal is found precisely in that rupture in relations out of which emerges the wondrous, ...If for our whole life we had to adhere to familiar things, ...what a monotone, miserable, graceless world that would be, where all things would be carefully fixed and labeled, arranged as in a grocer's drawer, in the colorless goblets of an apothecary or the police archive."

⁴⁵ Is the so-called "ethnographic turn" in the arts of the new millennium (see Laister 2008) but a continuity of the "absurdities of an almost alienated anti-art" of the post-war scenes of folk art that refer to revolutionary modernity? Or is it a completely new "revelation" in the politics – or just poetics – of art?

⁴⁶ The title derives from the volume of documented works of the Occultist, Grilloit de Givry, "Le Musée des Sorciers. Mages et Alchemists" (Paris 1929).

ary or the police archive." Wondrous things appear "in this powerful drive toward the new, the unexplorable, the immense forest, full of adventure and danger, the untread ground where no path is marked, in the endless, pure territory of the mind yet unbroken by the plow of logic" (Leiris 1978b, 245 f.).

The museums of folklore and ethnology, with their mainly regional and traditional collections of objects presented as "cultural heritage," had difficulty hunting down the absolute. It was a hard time justifying the right to strive mightily after the new, or even just to extend the canon. In this quest there lacked not only the material, but also the willingness to adjourn from the interpretation of "authentic," simple – primitive – cultures at the peaks of art and the lowlands of goods and affect a rupture in relations.

Because of the didactic demands of the 1970s,⁴⁷ the discussion tended rather in the direction of the critique of imperialism. In Brigitta Benzing's study of ethnological art theory (1978), besides the didactic and critical task, she refers to the mediation of aesthetic qualities within the scope of visual communication. She takes a 1975 exhibition of African handicraft at the Frankfurt Ethnological Museum – with the three facets of traditional handmade art, "airport art" or tourist art, and modern African art – as the basis for her critique, "because art was not visualized as a special aspect of the field of visual communication of societies: neither their emic categories nor the social relations of aesthetic behavior and the aesthetic language were presented" (Benzing 1978, 101). Using a fundamental concept of dialectical materialism, Benzing turns from the object to the "social activity surrounding the object's production" (Ibid 7). The concept of aesthetic activity becomes central as a universal relationship with reality in the sense of a materialist aesthetic. It is left to the anthropology of art to work out emic aesthetic categories, that is, those categories that exist in societies and social groups themselves and are meaningful to them.

Sally Price's 1989 book, "Primitive Art in Civilized Places," also demands a correspondence between the reflection of the ethnographer and that of the art historian. The work grew out of the Othering-debate and the analysis of the suppression of "primitive" Others through Western "connoisseurship" (art lovers, collectors, dealers, art historians and anthropologists). The ambitions of the connoisseur are elucidated over 160 pages, or, in the author's own words, discussed "anecdotally," in order to represent in the last 20 pages an example from her fieldwork in Surinam on the contradictions within aesthetic systems between Western interests and self-understanding among the Marons of Su-

⁴⁷ See for instance Bott 1970; Hoffmann, Junker, Schirmbeck 1974; Bauer and Gockereil 1976; Spickernagel and Walbe 1976.

rinam. In her representation of “primitive art,” however, Price does not seek to mediate between (indigenous) art and (exogenous) anthropology as “field-work,” but rather between the disciplines of art history and anthropology. As Price prefers to begin from the aesthetic object (form, line, balance, color, symmetry) and not the aesthetic process, she in fact confines the discerning “eye” (Ibid 140), both of the Western scientist and connoisseur, as well as the “primitive” artist and critic. At the same time, she highlights the Western process of disciplinary division with respect to aesthetic reflection. In the ethnological view of explanatory context, the primitive “work” requires an explanation of its social, economic, ritual and symbolic meaning and its aesthetic connections in everyday life, while from the point of view of the art historian, its aesthetic quality would be effaced by tables of text as it becomes elevated to the status of “art work” (Ibid 126 f.).

What Price is suggesting (148 f.) is a remarkable reversal in aesthetic thinking: The integration of art into everyday life should be an interdisciplinary endeavor that begins from the aesthetic systems of the “observed.” At the same time, inclusion in the social and historical environment should occur for both “primitive” and Western art. In this way, according to Price, aesthetic reflection on (art)works may transcend the disciplinary boundaries between art history and anthropology.

The highly contentious 1984 exhibition, “Primitivism in 20th Century Art” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York took a different path of representation.⁴⁸ The exhibit, conceptualized by William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, contained four divisions: Concepts, History, Affinities, and Contemporary Explorations. The exhibition concept worked primarily through the juxtaposition of works of modern art with works of “primitive” or “tribal art,” such that the exhibitors seemed to emphasize that they had selected only the very best works of tribal art from the collections of modern artists.⁴⁹ The objects were thus to speak their own visual language as non-Western art just as Western art, or better, that language that the artists who had gathered and re-imagined them for themselves understood. “In a certain sense, the entire exhibition was placed under the aegis of Picasso’s remark to Sabartés, ‘Primitive Sculpture has never been surpassed.’ In their zeal to illustrate this axiom, Rubin and Varnedoe appear to have identified with the modern artists whose interest in ‘primitive’ art they wanted to chart – above all with Picasso himself” (Bois 1985, 179 f.). So when it came to the particular Primitivism to be exhibi-

48 Compare the catalogue of the same name edited by William Rubin (1984). The German language edition was published in the same year.

49 “You don’t need the masterpiece to get the idea,” Picasso supposedly said in a conversation with Rubin while standing in front of his own collection. And the response, supposedly, was, “but let’s get the masterpiece anyway” (Bois 1985, 180).

ted, it was always a matter of modern Western “Primitivists” and their gaze upon the distant and foreign. Admittedly, this perspective was different from that of the anthropologists of the time – or today even – as their ethnographic view of the Other indicates, in which things often, by way of their scientific classification in terms of “original” function, lose their unique quality as they are shuffled away in a drawer. Understanding, now archival, is robbed of an aesthetic processualness. The question of whether or not the way art history classifies modern Primitivism robs it of its aesthetic – and in this sense processual – impression was never actually posed within the heavy controversy over the exhibition.⁵⁰ Much more, it was about the disinterest or misunderstanding on the part of the exhibitors with respect to the original function and social classification of indigenous objects, a controversy that even extended to accusations of tacit support of imperialistic power gestures through modern art at the Museum of Modern Art (see Clifford 1988a, McEvilley 1984, Lüthi 1993).

Although the Othering-debate within anthropology, with its self-satisfied act of contrition and confession of “ethno-anthropological sins” (See Greverus 1996), was already underway, and the anthropologists, persevering in their writing despite it all, attempted to allow the Other to express themselves in their own voice with minimal commentary, no one considered the possibility of applying this critique to the physical “objects,” to the work of the Other in the exhibition. In contrast, by this time there was also a call for the integration of Western art in “daily life” – Price mentions economics, art patronage, politics, even personality conflict (Price 1992, 149) – whereby the critique of the exhibition on Primitivism is addressed repeatedly. Among anthropologists these deliberations, supported by the globalization debate, led to a particular research concern best captured by the title of a book by George Marcus and Fred Myers, “The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology” (1995).⁵¹ Here art-worlds⁵² are affected primarily through economic processes. The “makers” are no longer artists, but rather connoisseurs, dealers, marketing strategists and brokers, those who pull the cultural flow into its regulated economic port. This is true for both aesthetic objects of the Own and of the Other, even if it is overridingly based on Western markets.

Considering my many encounters and dialogues as a traveling anthropologist, I associate only hesitantly with the “joint world” concept found in globaliza-

50 This debate was carried on especially among anthropologists, art historians and even the exhibit’s authors in *Artforum* 11, 1984 and 2 and 5, 1985, as well as in *Art in America* 4 and 5, 1985. It intensified the “anthropological-aesthetic” controversy (Clifford 1988a) more than it led to an encounter between different views or even to an aesthetic anthropology. The controversy was precipitated in German and Swiss newspapers and in later publications as well. Compare for instance Lüthi 1993; Heinrichs 1995 and the translation of Thomas McEvilley’s article in *Kunstforum International* 118, 1992, that helped ignite the controversy.

51 See also Appadurai 1986; Welz 1996; Myers 2001, 2002.

52 See Becker 1982 on this term.

tion thought. At best, I can see this globalized world through the economic perspective of a common market, even though it is based upon unequal power relations, which can be seen plainly in the art market. Nevertheless, I believe it is important that anthropology, along with research on market dependencies and economic value, also try to develop an aesthetic vision for the near and distant Other, which reflect such great variety in their aesthetic processes, in order that we may delve into the aesthetic with deeper understanding and perhaps also find stimulation for an aesthetic thought – private and anthropological – of our own.

What I am advocating is that, in addition to a progressive economic anthropology that studies economic process, there be developed an aesthetic anthropology that examines aesthetic processes, whereby, I would include, it is understood that aesthetic processes do not develop independently from “markets.”

Jean Baudrillard once spoke of a capitalist “System of Objects” (1968) whose circulation constitutes a world of value in constant movement. To economic capital, in Bourdieu’s sense, we can add cultural and social capital, indeed all sorts of symbolic capital. One’s possession of these kinds of capital decides the place of the individual in the social world (Bourdieu 1987). Demonstrable distinction is measured particularly by the ownership of valuable things. James Clifford writes in his essay on the collection of art and culture: “In the West, however, collecting has long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture, and authenticity” (Clifford 1988b, 218). But next to valuable objects there is still the wealth of knowledge, memory and experience. Are aesthetic experience and perception also part of the possessive Self?

For Baudrillard the possession of personal things is “a dimension of our life which, though imaginary, is absolutely essential. Just as essential as dreams” (2006, 103). When we consider dreams and imagination as a fundamental dimension of our life, not just personal objects, but also knowledge, memory and experience, then the doors of the Wunderkammern open once more, our own imaginary museums much like the Surrealists perceived them. The sensory impression of the Other is enlivened through an aesthetic experience of the Self. And once the poetic spark is generated, it is carried over into a new aesthetic process. The aesthetic, possessive Self can perceive the stimulating quality residing within aesthetic objects also thus: through the dreamed, imagined and reflected process of incorporation.

Could the aesthetic process mediated through the Primitivist exhibition – according to the makers’ goals – reveal the poetic spark of local “primitive art” to international Western modernity? Was this possible beyond the one-sided appropriation of pure form?

In his book, “Wilde Künstler. Über Primitivismus, Art Brut und die Trugbilder der Identität” (Wild Artists: On Primitivism, Art Brut and the Illusion of Identity) (1995), Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs picks up on the concept of elective affinity, a term also used by Rubin (1984) in connection with the Primitivism movement. He refers to the numerous exhibitions in which works of non-European indigenous cultures were presented as art, whereby the themes of elective affinity, correspondence and transformation were continually raised. To become sensitized to the congeniality of Other and Self, we might “do well to sharpen our purview, our sensibilities and our thoughts to ‘a great philosophy of mixing and hybridization, of identity as the sum or combination of differences’ (Serres)” (Heinrichs 1995, 111). Gordon Bennett, an indigenous Australian artist raised in the West whose work comprises a mixture of aboriginal iconography and Western visual symbols, sees a change and a broadening in human identity stemming from the crossing of cultural boundaries. As a painter, he describes his allegorical relationship to iconography, in an approach “where images as sites of historical meaning are fragmented and recontextualised to form new relationships and possibilities” (Bennett 1993, 90).

Indeed, do not the near and the distant Other still merit a re-enchantment through the transformative power, the poetic spark of collage for the artist and perhaps for us anthropologists as well? And is this not also a way toward an aesthetic anthropology? In Lévi-Strauss’ “The Way of the Masks,” it is stated, “one never walks alone along the path of creativity” (1982, 148). The masks of African and Oceanic cultures are brought into the works of modern artists. And in turn, the self-conscious young art of the Third World confidently goes about its loans from the artistic West, binding Self and Other to fashion a new Self.

Juxtaposition is a stylistic method of artistic collage. I have borrowed this term for the purpose of discussing opportunities for anthropological representation. With direct reference to an anthropological approach to and experience of aesthetic processes, I wish to advocate for this way of thinking also as a provocation and evocation. The artists of the avant-garde proceeded along this path. They gathered together the mutually Other in order to overcome entrenched thinking through the crossing of boundaries. Mediators of art have followed them in their staged expositions, and not just the much-discussed Primitivism exhibition. When Rudi Fuchs took over the directorship of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1993, he developed the exhibition concept of *Couplets*. Within them he contrasted works of contemporary art with those of the early 20th century avant-garde, proceeding from the thought that artworks, like people, “try to communicate with each other” (See Puhans-Schulz 2003, 303). The dialogic quality of an artwork ought to awaken within the viewer the ability to reflect upon and converse with the work through the initial provocation of this uncommon confrontation.

To strengthen the possibility for dialogue between Self and Other, between different persons, between persons and objects, was the secret dream for a “new” kind of human science following the destructive force of the Othering-debate. It is one that approaches the collage principle of the avant-garde through both orientations. Or perhaps these artists were really more post-modern, while both academic art and academic science, political powers and their constituents insisted on the traditional commodious filing cabinets of “distinct” labeling and classification.

In the already decaying post-modernity of the contemporary age, with its “intellectual indifference” (Heinrichs 1995, 107),⁵³ that assembled the mutually Other, one also finds the outsiders of the art world, those eager experimenters who agitate for dialogue as opposed to separation.

In contrast to the verbose, explicating concepts of 1970s pedagogical museum praxis, a dialogic museum praxis not only won back the objects of its unique existence, but entered into a “communicative circle” (Perin 1992), in which representation and reception are connected. Making reference to this circle, Gisela Welz suggests that a new museum theory relies “in great measure upon the evocative potential of objects and their staged placement,” whereby this staging, “in lieu of sending forth but one message – allows complex combinations to arise” (Welz 1996, 76).

The aesthetic message is worked out in dialogue. That is a lofty, often unreachable goal, for it requires not only a dense and evocative presentation⁵⁴ by the museum’s “author,” but also the active “cooperation” of the viewer and his or her sensitivity to the aesthetic impression of the objects. It requires a “duel of wits and things,” writes Marie-Louise von Plessen for the Author’s Museum: “The Author’s Museum proceeds from the principle of passionate fervor: it places objects before the observer, does not take him or her by the hand like those didactically arranged collections ordered by classificatory criteria, whose inner references are produced through formulaic captioning. At the Author’s Museum visitors must create these references for themselves. They must unravel the meaning by themselves, taking active part in the inner dialogue of the things. (Plessen 1990, 181).

For curators eager to experiment, however, there also arises a dilemma when proceeding from the idea that “objects in the museum are mute without some re-dimensioning” (Korff and Roth 1990, 18) or that historical facts may be si-

⁵³ “In my assessment,” writes Heinrichs, “in the reception of art and in the art market, by 1991/92 we had already passed the high point of this development under the sign of post-modernity and will very soon return to the separation of experiences, stylistic direction and disciplines” (Heinrichs 1995, 107 f.).

⁵⁴ On the controversy over “staging,” especially in cultural history museums, see Korff and Roth 1990, 21 ff.

lent “without a narrator to allow them to speak.”⁵⁵ This is a dilemma not only for museum representation, but for all representations of the aesthetic process. Writers have it even more difficult when trying to construct a dialogue among an aesthetic object, its creator, its message and intended recipients, and they themselves as narrators. For they are not only “classifying” informants, but the readers too are implicated in the aesthetic process as they reflect and debate. So the book author must also engage in staging.

Such staging, as an interpretive aid, attempts to envision the connection among an aesthetic object, its message, its creator, its re-creators, its viewers and interpreters, its brokers, buyers and sellers – and to mediate this vision, which is also scientific, simultaneously as an aesthetic category of successful and unsuccessful “touching moments.” These moments of affect – and I draw here on Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs’ interpretation of the Surrealist and ethnographer, Michel Leiris, where he speaks of “the eye of the ethnographer – experiencing, constructing, comprehending with constriction along ‘touching moments’” (Heinrichs in Leiris 1978, 8) – are aesthetic moments. They constitute a poetics, or the creative power that comes from being touched, with limited comprehension. Yet these are perhaps even closer to the aesthetic process than the commodious filing cabinet with its contents of mounted aesthetic, unaesthetic, anti-aesthetic and an-aesthetic objects.

Does the language of interpretation destroy the language of feeling? Are objects mute without the (scientific) narrator to let them speak? Or are they made dumb by that same scientific narrator, who has forgotten about those touching moments, those aesthetic instants in which one gets lost in the Other? “...and it is a thought worth considering, that it is the charge of the museum to ‘engage a society that clings to identification in an intelligent interaction at the boundary of the Other,’” remarks Peter Sloterdijk in his “Schule des Befremdens” (School of Alterity),⁵⁶ as quoted by the editors of the volume, “Das historische Museum. Labor, Schaubühne, Identitätsfabrik” (The Historical Museum: Laboratory, Stage, Identity-Factory) (cited in Korff and Roth 1990, 11).⁵⁷

Approaching the edges, authenticity and aura are three concepts developed in that anthology as a path (for museums) of cultural-historical and ethnographic engagement with foreign objects. The authors refer to Benjamin’s definition of aura (Ibid 17). Have we as empirically-oriented, ethnological researchers

⁵⁵ Johann Gustav Droysen, Historik. “Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte,” cited in Korff and Roth 1990, 18.

⁵⁶ Title of an essay in FAZ-Magazine from March 17, 1989, on the growing trend of museumification as a sign of the experience of foreignness in our society.

⁵⁷ Gottfried Korff introduces the concept of the “Schule des Befremdens” in an “ethnomuseology as usual” in which alterity is to be brought into the nearness of the familiar own and so provoke reflection (Korff 2001).

blazed a new aesthetic trail that is interdisciplinary and transnationally located? Can a contemporary philosophy of aesthetic experience and mediation, and this is my third theme, aid us our search for experience and mediation?

From Aura to Atmosphere

In Walter Benjamin's records and materials on the flâneur collected for "The Arcades Project," there is a statement regarding "trace and aura" that can assist us with both of these concepts in our anthropologically interpretive search for a medium of aesthetic experience and mediation: "The trace is appearance of a nearness, however far removed the thing that left it behind may be. Aura is appearance of a distance, however close the thing that calls it forth. In the trace, we gain possession of a thing; in the aura it takes possession of us" (Benjamin 1999, 447).

Shall we discuss here the postmodern ambivalence of the empirical human sciences between the search for circumstantial evidence and aesthetic affect that once again divided our ethnographic disciplines into ideological camps in the time following the Second World War? Or can the search for clues be joined with aura as a gift from the Postmodern to "affected" seekers? Could the moment of aesthetic sensation by way of the Other, the foreign in its ambivalence between defense and longing,⁵⁸ even be a renewed gift to postmodern anthropologists too?⁵⁹

Aesthetic thought also resides in space and time, as does the inclusion of an aesthetic experience of aura in the scientific search for and proof of circumstantial evidence or deep clues. In Walter Benjamin's unfinished Arcades Project, "a materialist philosophy of the history of the 19th century" (Tiedemann in Benjamin 1999, 929), we sense the connection between trace and aura, which itself speaks even from fragments, whereas today we are provoked quite pointedly to our own aesthetic thought by the fragmentarity between nearness and distance. Benjamin refers over and over to Surrealism and its discovery of the specific world of objects of the 19th century (Ibid 934 ff.). He seeks to assume the principle of montage into history – "That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event" (Ibid 461).

Benjamin was in Moscow in 1926. On his way back to Berlin he wrote in

58 Karl-Heinz Kohl called his accounts in "Geschichte der Ethnologie" (History of Ethnology), "Abwehr und Verlangen" (Defense and Longing) (Kohl 1987).

59 On the knowledge of ambivalence as a "gift," see Bauman 1993, 155 f., compare Greverus 2005a, 412 ff.

his Moscow diary that, "for one from Moscow, Berlin is a ghost city" (Utopie, 296). Benjamin's Moscow was still a Moscow full of possibilities: "The entire living situation of Western European intellectuals is completely impoverished, compared to the countless different constellations available to an individual within one month here." In 1936 his oft-cited essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," was published. In 1940 he took his own life while fleeing from the Gestapo.

The bomb-lit night of an "Aesthetic of War" had spread across Europe, which emerged before and simultaneously with the aestheticization of power in politics and economics and the annihilation of the foreign Other. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), with Germany and Italy on Franco's side, set off a gruesome signal with the obliteration of the city of Guernica by the planes of the German Condor Legion. Totalitarian-centrist Spain under Franco remained far from World War II, but it had a tight connection with the Axis Powers. In this World War, German National-Socialism, Italian Fascism and Stalinist Communism formed a pact around national dominance and dictatorship established through war. That these dictatorships came upon the role of aesthetic experience and mediation, too, was surely a death blow to the transnational leftist avant-garde.

In 2004 I saw a special exhibit in the Picasso-Museum in Barcelona titled "Guerra i pau" (War and Peace). After a tiring and commentary-rich museum stroll through the "epochs" (file drawers) of Picasso's artistic development, this exhibition was like a drum beat that began to pulse in 1937 with Guernica (here in a replica). War and peace, how would that be mediated from 1937 to the mural "La Guerra y La Paz" painted in a chapel in Vallauris in 1954? The images spoke and shocked: screams and helpless hands, owls of abandonment and doves of an (im)possible peace. The aura of the images "took possession" of me, and that was an aesthetic experience of being deeply moved through the authenticity of form and meaning.

Overpowered by the terrific horror of war, Walter Benjamin was compelled fatally to separate the "aura" of deep aesthetic experience from the "atmosphere" of aesthetic occupation. The imbalance of that essay on the work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility between the soft empiricism of a nature aesthetic and the hard empiricism of a war aesthetic transmits the stiffening of the human person before the monumentality and power with which the aestheticization of politics was spread across Europe.

Walter Benjamin introduces his definition of aura: "the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be" – with an experience of nature: "you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch" (Benjamin 1969b, 224 f.). The essay ends with a quote from the manifesto of the Italian Futurist,

Marinetti (1876-1944),⁶⁰ on the Ethiopian colonial war: "For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as antiaesthetic.... Accordingly we state: ...War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated.... War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others.... Poets and artists of Futurism! ... remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art...may be illumined by them!" (In Benjamin 1969b, 243 f.).

Walter Benjamin pursued the recovery of the very aesthetic of aura that was being lost in the collapse of avant-garde aesthetics through the aestheticization of politics and capitalist economics. He contrasted the aestheticization of politics in Fascism with the politicization of art in Communism. Is it acceptable, in 1936, just as Socialist Realism in its technical and ideological reproducibility came to dominate the Soviet art scene, that aura be abandoned in favor of realizing a "new world?" Walter Benjamin never gave us an answer.

But the post-war debate over aesthetics was ignited by Benjamin's aura concept. The avant-garde in the first half of the 20th century, so it is said, had tried to shake the aura out of art (Böhme 1995, 26), in that they sought to bring art into life, into the everyday world of commonly-used objects (Utopie, 61), into the streets, into the factories. For Benjamin as well, it is through technical reproductibility, and he refers to the example of (Russian) film, that the mobilization of the masses, even their authorship, is possible. The failure of this new aesthetic process came through the aestheticization of power in a totalitarian politics that staged the "state as a work of art" (Jürgens 1970) – and through the power of a middle-class that beheld the aura of art (including that of the Modernism recognized by experts) as its own (taste) in the halls of museums. But did the avant-garde really attempt to shake off aura, or did they not, in fact, want to carry it over into life as a work of art? What was to be shaken off were both bourgeois art and those claims to ownership of the aura of art made through the invocation of elite taste.

Aura in Benjamin's sense is not just the singular originality of a work of art, its originality in the here and now, but aura also is an "appearance of a dis-

60 See Apollonio (1972) on Futurism and its role in the artistic avant-garde; Smuda (1992) deals with the meaning of human psyche transformed through the "acceleration of life" and the efforts of the Futurists to make this aesthetically transparent. He quotes from Marinetti's "Destruction of Syntax – Imagination without Strings – Words in Freedom: The Futurist Sensibility" (1913): "Now suppose that a friend of yours... finds himself in a zone of intense life (revolution, war, shipwreck, earthquake, and so on) and starts right away to tell you his impressions. ...He wastes no time in building sentences. ...he will assault your nerves with visual, auditory, olfactory sensations, just as they come to him" (Marinetti 1973 [1913], 98).

tance, however close the thing that calls it forth." For me, there emerges here an important connection with an anthropology that turns toward the aesthetic as a process of its cultural singularity in the here and now, there and then.

The sensory impression of an aesthetic appearance is closeness, even when it remains far from experience. This is so not only for exoticism, but also for the aesthetics of the culturally familiar and everyday that lies between aura and reproducible aestheticization. It is so, or ought to be so, for experts as for everyday persons. Part of the aesthetic process is the reflexive, which is also the distanced, acquired internalization of aesthetic options and their elaborated externalization as aesthetic media, be it as a work of art or a narrative or even just the reflected experience of the subject.⁶¹

It is not reproducibility as such that destroys aura, but the loss of self-distance in the aesthetic process. This points to the problem of kitsch, as Elias (1934), Broch (1933, 1950), Greenberg (1939) and Giesz (1960) have formulated it. Kitsch is not "bad art," but a mode of sensory incorporation. Kitsch is the undistanced, even self-referential assimilation of the foreign, the Other, by "Kitsch-Menschen" (kitschy people) (Giesz). Nature, the picture on the wall, the film on the screen, the souvenir from a trip, the designer dress and even the lover are robbed of their uniqueness. All serve as a mirror, or even an aura, of the person's own feelings. Giesz calls this "aesthetic self-effacement" (Ibid 57). Elias and Greenberg point especially to the aesthetic uncertainty that has spread throughout individualized petit bourgeois capitalist society. For Elias, this generally leads to a "kitsch style" with progressive and conservative tendencies. Whereas for Greenberg, besides stagnant academism, in the 20th century it is a matter of the socially critical avant-garde culture on the one hand, and kitsch on the other hand, as a product of the industrial revolution, an "ersatz culture" for the masses (Greenberg 1986, 12.).⁶² For both Elias and Greenberg kitsch is also second-hand experience, substitute satisfaction. For Elias exhibits and shows are no longer "instruments of distance" (Elias and Korte 2004, 37); for Greenberg they are considered unreflective enjoyment (Greenberg 1986, 16).

When Broch suggests that we all are not infrequently kitsch-friendly, he excuses us from the determining effect of social class.⁶³ For Broch kitsch is

61 Concerning the authenticity of museum objects, Korff and Roth refer to Benjamin's aura concept and point to a "tension relation" of sensory nearness and historical foreignness (1990, 17).

62 Both Elias and Greenberg place their hopes in a new artistic avant-garde that, for Elias, completes a radical shift amid new artistic opportunities, or for Greenberg, ought to be kept as a living culture of avant-garde

63 Heinz Schilling deals with Broch and Giesz's idea of kitsch people in his book "Kleinbürger." In it he prefers to use the term, "functional aesthetic" to describe the petit bourgeois use of objects. "Everything must 'fit'...both in the home as well as in the collective taste of friends and relatives" (Schilling 2003, 150). Socialism.

ultimately the “evil within the value system of art,” a reactionary imitation system completed in the finality of the satisfaction of personal needs, including the “beauty effect,” up to the “gigantic kitsch that Nero arranged in his garden, with the fireworks of burning Christians and his own banging on the lute” (Broch 1975a, 154). The absence of the ethical in the aesthetic process is held responsible for this.⁶⁴ The only criterion of autonomous art seems to be that certain “trueness” by which value systems in their open-endedness, in their living, continuing evolution, are recognized. Thus in Broch’s chapter on kitsch and Tendenzkunst,⁶⁵ for all intents and purposes Tendenzkunst is considered to be politically necessary art, though the inherent danger of “kitchifying” lies precisely in the “finality” of the value system (Ibid 147 ff).

In his 1990 analysis of aesthetic thinking, Wolfgang Iser introduced the counter-concept of the anaesthetic: “Anaesthetic refers to that state in which the elementary condition of aesthetics, sensitivity, is cancelled out” (Iser 1998, 10). When I juxtapose the idea of the anaesthetic with the kitsch concept as it is understood by the authors above, I am fully aware of the historical differences. For early 20th century Modernism, kitsch was a middle-class, national academism as opposed to a highly sensitive international artistic and political revolution. Reproducibility was just one idea within the concept of revolutionizing the masses. Totalitarianism and World War annihilated aesthetics as a reflexive sensory perception of social meaning, and this led precisely to the anaesthetic – “one anaestheticizes in order to spare aesthetic pain” (Ibid 11). Aestheticized politics, political kitsch: these led to anaestheticization. For the aesthetic thinker, there remained suicide or exile or an interior exile from which one could critically reemerge. But in the meantime, political anaestheticization was overhauled, steamrolled by economic culture-industry anaestheticization. Here the critique of culture industry kitsch offered by the old and new intellectual Left applies. But then, so does the indulgently vueristic self-distancing of ethnographic descriptions of lower-class kitsch people. As Iser suggests, following the aestheticization-boom in the “postmodern consumer ambiance,” society becomes enveloped in anaesthetics – an aesthetic and social desensitization. This he links to the “total telecommunicative apparatus” that leads to the “recasting of the person as a monad in the sense of an individual, both icon-filled and windowless.” For, “he who is icon-filled no longer has need for windows” (Ibid 16).

Aesthetic self-centeredness with respect to the abundance of media images and the variety of commodities, or the lack of distance in the aesthetic pro-

⁶⁴ Greenberg refers to kitsch as the “official tendency of culture” of the totalitarian systems of Germany, Italy and Russia, which he describes as an attempt to “ingratiate themselves” with the subjected: “Kitsch keeps a dictator in closer contact with the ‘soul’ of the people” (Greenberg 1986, 20).

⁶⁵ See Bürger 1987 on Tendenzkunst.

cess, leads to what Iser calls the loss of windows. Opposite the reflected, perceiving view of the world or the aesthetic sensation that the aesthetic process sets free, there stand walls and fences with no in-between, with no view into a “wonderland” to discover for oneself. On the contrary, the wonderland becomes the alienated, finalized kitsch of self-concerned individuals in the house of the anaesthetic.

What in Benjamin’s treatment just appeared as a risk, something not quite grasped with respect to the Stalinist-intended Communist finalization of art, though he saw clearly through fascist finalization, was the potential for the aestheticizing exploitation of the subordinated subject in the age of the mass media. Post-war aesthetics as a critique initially emerged from the mourning over the lost aura of the aesthetic object and the lost critical power of judgment. For Adorno, the aesthetic work of art is “mediation,” or “the transformation of aesthetically-experienced social life into the internal structure of the work.... Works of art communicate with experience, while at the same time rejecting it, withdrawing themselves so far, so to speak, that they can no longer be reached from reality” (Schneider 1997, 198). Works of art create distance. This is not true for the products of the culture industry, which Adorno describes as the “mass deception” or the “negation of culture” (Adorno 2001). The aesthetic of the everyday world of commonly-used objects that was introduced by the avant-garde of the early 20th century is inserted into the concepts of culture industry (Adorno), consciousness industry (Enzensberger), commodity aesthetic (Haug and Holz) or kitsch, and ultimately in the “distinction” of taste (Bourdieu). The literary left middle-class created its “critical,” but above all distinctive – once again approved or acquired – domain for itself. The aura of the artwork is transmitted through aesthetic education, which in turn makes possible the power of aesthetic judgment. Whoever is outside remains outside: outside the museums, theaters, schools and universities, just beyond the “sacred halls” too of the conservative, educated middle-class of consumers. This is the case not only for the petit bourgeois consumer, but also for the makers of applied art or for the art of the outsider, so long as he or she is not recognized by the learned or “experts.”

In this world of late-capitalist societies depressed over the loss of “true aesthetics,” there still developed a new “postmodern” aesthetic discourse that, once again, turned away from the aura and beauty of “true art” and the self-confident “aesthetic taste” of the educated middle-class. Thus, in his “new aesthetics,” Gernot Böhme (1995) works with the term “atmosphere” as a fundamental concept of aesthetics. He too begins with an analysis of Benjamin’s concept of aura, in which even space for the concept of the atmospheric can be found. According to Böhme, even if the aura emitted from the true or real artistic object, as it does from nature to reach into the sensitive person, is

claimed to be lost through technical reproducibility, the atmosphere is producible and and reproducible, and extends itself into the entire area of everyday aesthetics. "The critical potential of an aesthetic of spheres thus tends, at first, against the perdition of lower spheres of the aesthetic, and evinces the legitimacy of an aestheticization of the everyday," argues Böhme (1995, 42), but without committing to the political postulations of the early avant-garde. Design, the art industry, kitsch, advertising, mass media: all these belong to this aestheticization of the everyday. Considering the power residing within the aestheticization of politics and commodity aesthetics, Böhme tries to face the danger of tolerating the "self-staging of power" and the "exercise of power through the evocation of atmospheres" (Ibid 43). With special reference to commodity aesthetics, Böhme considers it possible to offer a critique of the aesthetic economy on the basis of atmospheres. But when the "aesthetic value" of commodities and atmospheric production – "setting oneself in the scene" – is a part of the enhancement of life (of individuals, groups, classes, and nations), who then decides when the critique of oppression and "the freedom opposite to the power of atmospheres" should or can be put forth? (Ibid 46 f.). The seducer, or the seduced, or the aesthetic of atmospheres? Surely only the powerful⁶⁶ can afford the "playful intercourse with atmospheres," when their production serves the purpose of enhancement. With that, the critique of the aesthetic economy may in fact once again boil down to the redistribution of the relations of capital ownership, which henceforth is not only economic and political but also cultural and social. But does this require an aesthetic critique?

Beginning in the 1970s, trade in the concept of the everyday also led to a discussion of aesthetics with respect to the everyday.⁶⁷ There, however, the aesthetic object and not the aesthetic process remained largely the focus of consideration. Discussion centered around the "De-artisting of art" (Entkunstung) and the "arting of the everyday" (Verkunstung) (Bubner 1978), or the "de-aestheticization of art" or the "aestheticization of reality" (Gorsen 1978): "The aesthetic richness of commodities now determines the innovation of art forms... a phenomenon for which the aesthetic of Warhol's 'all is pretty' is representative, but also pop art and photorealism in the USA" (Ibid 24). To fathom the "image world of the aesthetics of the everyday and the quotidian, respectively," Gorsen presents us with an abundance of exhibition complexes that ranges from "fetishy fantasy paintings" as urinal art, to tattooing,

66 I mean here not only political and economic capital, but also social and cultural capital which Bourdieu (1979) brings into his discussion of distinction (Böhme's "splendor and life enhancement"?). That this distanced, primarily quantifying study was followed by his work, "La misère du monde" (1993) (The Weight of the World), in which very normal people speak of lost, never reached, yet so often imagined life advancement, presents a broader critical view of the atmospheres between power and the "ecstasy of objects" (Böhme 1995).
67 Compare for instance the interdisciplinary colloquium "Ästhetik im Alltag" (Aesthetics in the Everyday) at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Offenbach (1978 and 1979); Greverus, Schütz and Stubenvoll 1984.

through secularized folk, or better, everyday art, outsider art (children's art, the art of the mentally ill, art brut, naïve art) to aesthetic demonstrations of the "normal" in cosmetics, fashion, interior design and travel. Through the aestheticization of the everyday, so-called "object- or image studies"⁶⁸ of the "lower spheres" achieve their gleefully utilized appreciation that did not only open up the possibility of an interdisciplinary discourse, but also unlocked new fields of work for them.

The atmospheric assimilation of the lower spheres into a new aesthetics considerably broadened the field of aesthetic things, and with that, the realm of objects of the cultural sciences. But it brought relatively little to an analysis of the differences in the processes of aesthetic perception and transmission in the times and places of cultural aesthetics. Commodity aesthetics, whether it is considered critically or descriptively, became globalized, researched in its own (Western) land (if at all), and was seen as a global phenomenon of a cultural-industrial superimposition. The foreign transition spaces and in-between places of aesthetic mediation between "true (Western) art" and "(Western) kitch and atmospheric production" fell victim to the unequivocal classifications (drawers) of old and new experts.

Once again I must question the role of cultural anthropologists in this aesthetic discourse. They are, or think themselves to be, the experts on the perception and mediation of the geographically and historically culturally distant – and the Other among the Own. They are, or think themselves to be, seekers and securers of deep clues in the transitional and in-between spaces of a world that, in its economic globalization, advances culturally at the same time it retreats. They do, or think themselves to, represent a "science of images." They are, or would like to be seen as the authors of an Othering-debate that at some point came to understand itself no longer as a self-satisfied act of contrition, but as a search for other, perhaps "aesthetic" forms of representation. They are, or were sometimes, ethical and partisan.

Looking at it this way, the aesthetically-neutralized concept of atmosphere causes me discontent. Does the concept atmosphere ultimately elude critique extending from aesthetic discourse itself? In an aesthetics based on the productivity of atmospheres for the enhancement of life, must the critique of the power of judgment found in art be learned from other fields as well? Can and may and must the critic be an "aesthetic worker" nonetheless, who aesthetically "packages" his critique of social realities in order, for example, to develop for others a critical consciousness through the production and mediation of

68 Korff and Roth identify folklore and ethnology as object-sciences adjacent to art history (Korff and Roth 1990, 22). In 2004, a conference on "Volkskunde als Bildwissenschaft" (Folklore as Image-Lore) was vented from being held at the Volkskunde-Institute of the University of Munich. See Germdt and Haibl 2005.

a sad, horrific, fearful atmosphere? Both my images of the everyday life of the exploited reflect this question. They do not transmit the imagined enhancement of life, but rather the lived misery of the world. The experience of alienation is juxtaposed with the imaginative mediation of life advancement. To where does a present aesthetics direct our view? Or, which messages do we get?

In Search of Aesthetic Experiences and Representations

My book, "Ästhetische Orte und Zeichen. Wege zu einer ästhetischen Anthropologie" (Greverus 2005a), begins with walls and ends with a traveling anthropologist's experiences of boundary transgression. In these fragmentary, yet perhaps especially important chapters, I discuss transit experiences that deserve aesthetic mediation. In between, there are chapters on aesthetic processes situated in time and space. These processes are not only to be understood as "traffic in culture" between the cities of the art market, but always also as an experience of the Other found somewhere in the experience of a direct encounter with the aesthetic object, with its creator as the mediator of a message, and with the one for whom that message is meant. We anthropologists are not the intended recipients. Can we nonetheless transmit the intended meaning through a process of understanding (Verstehen)? Do we rob the Other of his shadow⁶⁹ when we attempt to represent him, his behavior, his works, through the media of text and images available to us? Is the "Topos des Lebendigen" (Topos of the Living) devalued as an aesthetic experience for anthropologists in the age of global technical mediation, or must a deepening of aesthetic nearness be learned today?

Gottfried Boehm is responsible for bring together the "Topos of the Living" with this system of representation. Indeed, with this idea of topos, the proposal extends from a visual work and its presence (its living presence). But it refers at the same time to the process between the creator and the receiver of such a presence: "Much of what we have seen of the works of old or new art, for example, might have left us untouched. What does strike us has to do with the sting of an effect, a power that we then recall" (Boehm 2003, 94). Aesthetic experience and vitality refer to the process that manifests itself in realization – to evince something in such a way that it achieves presence" (Ibid 105).⁷⁰ Aesthetic vitality also suggests a second, derived, performed life. "With artificial means there should succeed an evocation that corresponds to experiences of direct life that it barely surpasses" (Ibid 95).

69 "Der geraubte Schatten" (Robbed Shadows) was the title of an exhibition on photography as an ethnographic document (Theye 1989).

70 Gernot Böhme speaks of the object and his ecstasies as those forms of presence through which an object steps outside of itself (Böhme 1995, 167).

I would like to contrast the idea of the aesthetic vitality of a performing life achieved through direct life experience, with the concept of Othering. In the 1980s, ethnography was shaken by the so-called "Crisis of Representation" (Berg and Fuchs 1993), the center of which was the issue of "Othering" as an ethnographic construction of the Other.⁷¹ "Writing Culture" (Clifford and Marcus 1986) meant it quite literally: the culture of the Other is constructed in the writing of the ethnographic text. Othering became a sort of confession of the sins of the discipline, criticized from the desktops of its "guiltless" members. This critique reached from the Edward Said's (1978) Orientalism-critique in the 1970s, through Fabian's (1983, 1990) problematization of "making" and the de-historicization of the "primitive" Other through the writing process, "with literacy serving as a weapon of subjugation and discipline" (Fabian 1990, 760), up to Stephen Tyler's "to be is to be spoken of" (Tyler 1987, 171). In response to this often doctrinaire critique of textualization, these prominent representatives of the scientific discipline(s) of cultural representation had little to offer in the way of clear alternatives to representation and the experiential as a solution to the crisis of representation. In their introduction to "Anthropology as Cultural Critique," Marcus and Fischer point to Edward Said's "Orientalism" as a broad and indiscriminate attack on all genres of writing, as a damning of all Western authors, including anthropologists who write about the Other, dominated then and still by Western colonialism and neo-colonialism. They charge that Said's polemic is driven by the same "rhetorical totalitarianism" as those he identifies as enemies, and furthermore, that he allows no alternative approach for the process of understanding: "Yet, Said poses in his book no alternative form for the adequate representation of other voices or points of view across cultural boundaries, nor does he instill any hope that this might be possible" (Marcus and Fischer 1986, 2). And in an essay written a decade after the "Writing Culture Critique," Marcus laments that not enough experimental, alternative modes of fieldwork or representation have grown out of the 80s critique of the construction and representation of the Other under the auspices of "ethnographic authority." He himself presents two examples from his own experimental research which deal mainly with collaboration with a Cuban performance artist and the stimulation of interdisciplinary work for his own discipline. In this context, Marcus speaks of "Anthropology as Performance." The art with which a performance artist conducts fieldwork and represents the Other dialogically, professionally, and collaboratively points to a deep part of the ethos of our discipline, "having to do with a combination of scholarly distance and a more active participati-

71 In 1986, a panel on "Othering: Representation and Realities" was organized for the 85th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. A selection of literature covering the issue: Clifford and Marcus 1986; Tyler 1987; Fabian 1983; Berg and Fuchs 1993; Bräunlein and Lauser 1992 and Gottowik 1997. For a view of the feminist position in conversation with this largely male-dominated debate, compare Rippl 1993, Behar and Gordon 1995.

on in a culture but still within the frame of professional fieldwork" (Marcus 1997, 18). In two later texts, "The Traffic in Art and Anthropology" (Marcus 2004) and "Artists in the Field" (Calzadilla and Marcus 2006), these thoughts were further developed with reference to Hal Foster's "Artist as Ethnographer" (Foster 1985).⁷² It is a matter of collaboration between artists and anthropologists, polyphony, reflexive research, dialogue, and new strategies for fieldwork as "radical experiments touching upon the aesthetics of fieldwork." Film, theater, performance and installations stand in the foreground of this model, whereby Marcus sees artists, above all, as the inspiring innovators of a turn in fieldwork that, due to the weight of a professional power apparatus, authoritarian behavior, entrenched tradition and self-interest within the anthropological community, may not be possible.⁷³

Through the concept of "Performing Culture," I myself have attempted to approach the "Writing Culture" dilemma from the perspective of a rethinking of the meaning of fieldwork for our discipline (Greverus 1997, 1999). Othering begins in the field, not just at the desk. In order to transform "to be is to be spoken of" (Tyler 1991, 163) or "be written at" (Fabian 1990, 760) into "to be is being spoken with," there is first required an encounter in the field that is always, also, and often even before dialogue, a perception through all of one's senses, that is, an aesthetic perception. Allowing for this – from both sides – is a first step in moving beyond "ethnographic magic" (Stocking 1983) as a monographic and monological praxis, and toward the dialogic principle. I see Performing Culture as a principle of the dialogic construction of the reality in which the fieldworker is involved. Performance is the production of a situation of interaction and communication in which a cultural text is fashioned. This text is new. For the conversants it is, when it succeeds, a self- and Other-reflexive experience that opens access to those in-between spaces in which inter- and perhaps trans-culturality appears. It is rare for a text between aesthetic and rational perception to succeed in the field as an exchange

72 The author already raised this question in 1978. Compare the chapter, "Ethnologen als Künstler, Künstler als Ethnologen" (Ethnologists as Artists, Artist as Ethnologists) in Greverus 1978. At that time, my primary concern was "fieldwork" and representation in relation to literature and anthropology. Today we speak of "turns": aesthetic turn, pictorial turn, ethnographic turn (see Laister 2008).

73 Marcus does in fact mention the two great theorists and practitioners of Performance Studies, Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. But neither in anthropology nor in Performance Studies did their joint work and experiments find much of a following, even though the book, "The Anthropology of Experience" (Turner and Bruner 1986), appeared at the same time, and with coincident authorship, as the "Writing Culture" volume. At the Performance Studies conferences in which I took part (Mainz, Germany 2001, Christchurch, New Zealand 2003), one noticed the absence of anthropologists, and further, the distance between the artistic performers and the Performance Studies scholars: one performed a field and the other spoke about it. At both conferences, publications were planned, both of which failed, though surely not just due to the difficulties of textualizing performative fieldwork. The work I presented at these conferences on an aesthetic strategy for fieldwork and representation has been textualized to an extent in the book "Ästhetische Orte und Zeichen" (Greverus 2005a). Of course, textualization diminished the performative effect. Compare the CD-ROM/DVD "Der ästhetische Ort" 2001.

between the researcher and the subject of research. Still rarer, however, is the discipline's acceptance of pioneering attempts at the experimental representation of such experience.

I describe these boundary experiences in my explorations and reflections in Sicily,⁷⁴ which, despite having taken place since 1959 up until today, have never been published as an ethnographic monograph. Was the experience of Sicily too close for the distanced "thick description" of an anthropologist?

For me, it is here especially a matter of aesthetic perception: a perception that begins with "finding" and leads us – as ethnographic trackers – from the experientially near into the search for and securing of clues, an attempt to get a disciplinary "hold on" things. "Je ne cherche pas, je trouve," so Picasso describes his process of tracking. For the Surrealists, finding and the found object were of the utmost significance. Gauguin and Nolde and Nikolaus Lang⁷⁵ associated themselves with "finding." This finding is made possible by the aesthetic perception of the near Other. In my anthropological journeys, I orient myself toward the "favor of the moment" (Greverus 2002, 33 f.) that is always connected with a sensory experience in which often the empire of foreign things and people seizes upon us. In this way I was "gripped" by the old city of Gibellina, once destroyed by an earthquake, now in its loneliness and stagginess, as I saw it for the first time, looking down from a dreary, cloud-covered sky. It was later on that I set upon my ethnographic hunt for clues, hoping never to lose sight of that all-important relationship between distance and nearness, aura and trace.⁷⁶ The old city of Gibellina was encased in over 120,000 square meters of concrete by the artist Alberto Burri. One of the most monumental exemplars of Land Art, it was praised as Burri's perhaps most interesting work, one that "forever adhered to the remembrance of this city, with a veil of white cement hardened over the former traces of a city destroyed by earthquake" (Cattedra 1993). The entire city of the new Gibellina was designed to be a work of art in which postmodern architecture and plaza design, sculptures of famous artists, theaters, concerts and exhibitions would call the attention of the world to Gibellina. The traces of Gibellina, the old and the new, made mourning and the theatrical pose into a powerful theme of self-representation for both Self and Other. Gibellina was mediated as an aesthetic object and as aesthetic process. The mediators were the true creator of the "overall work of art" that is Gibellina, Mayor Corrao, the actors, the artists

74 Compare Greverus 1964, 1966, 1971, 1995, 1999, 2005; Giordano and Greverus 1986.

75 Compare Greverus 2005a.

76 Gibellina was and is a place in the Belice valley of Sicily. The old city of Gibellina was destroyed in an earthquake in 1968. After many years of living in barracks, a new Gibellina was built far away for its inhabitants. Compare the chapter, "Zukunftswerkstatt ästhetischer Ort" (Future Factory of an Aesthetic Site) and "Grenzerfahrungen" (Boundary Experiences) in Greverus 2005a. See also Greverus 1999.

and architects who composed the city, and the famous international visitors who came at the very beginning, like Beuys in conversation with Corrao. These all played a roll in the aesthetic process of Gibellina. Is the anthropological tracker permitted access to this process when the experience of being taken possession of by the foreign turns into the search for traces within the familiar? Can the anthropologist, too, render such work of mediation in his or her ethnography? Must he or she develop other modes of representation for the work of mediation besides an ethnographic monograph of the Other? This was my attempt at an audio-visual performance, which included not only the interpretation I presented and the original voices of the creators and inhabitants of three aesthetic sites which I compared, but also the images of these places and the people who lived there, who, like the author herself, experience the place.⁷⁷

How do we, as anthropologists, learn aesthetic vitality or that much-discussed “thick description” that, as an evocation, “relates to the direct experience of life and even surpasses it” (Boehm 2003, 95)? The desk-bound Writing Culture debate disregarded the possibilities for a positively-applied dialogic Othering as an evocation and mediation out of the direct field-experience of life. Evocation was explained away as therapeutic effect that plays out between the writer and the reader (Tyler 1991, 194). Today we as anthropologists, or at least some of us, are searching once again for a topos of the vital, the living, that emerges from dialogue in the field and allows for evocation as a third way of accessing a “Zwischenraum,”⁷⁸ a space in between cultures and their respective distinctiveness as well as their global indifference.

For an Aesthetic Evocation

Anthropological thought and anthropological rhetoric have changed through the discourse of the 1980s, but the practice of fieldwork largely has not – nor has representation. The potential lay and lies in the unfulfilled aesthetic dimension of critique. It is here that, for me, the anthropologist’s tightrope walk between the search for, and securing of circumstantial evidence, and the sensation of being touched comes forward. This is the problem of the coming apart of distance and nearness which our professional fieldwork and representation always has left uncertain by leaving so few opportunities for “touching,” without making something into a rational “trace” not permitted in the imaging of the Other, but is condemned as Othering.

Let us look once again at the two introductory images. Before being captu-

77 Performance at the 7th Performance Studies Conference, Mainz 2001. See also the CD-ROM/DVD “Der ästhetische Ort” (The Aesthetic Site) (2001).

78 For my use of the term “Zwischenraum,” compare Greverus 2005a, 1 ff.; Greverus 2005b, 140 ff.

red in images, there was a lived experience associated more closely with the weight of the world than with an atmosphere of life enhancement. This weight is objectified in the very human work of the exploited and their endless chain of things. These things are the (waste) products of progress that stand for technologization and urbanization, but also for alienation and exploitation. The direct life experience of the (non)observer mainly leads right past the real life of the (un)observed. In his critique of urbanity, Richard Sennett speaks of the tight connection between difference and indifference with regard to the Other: “If something begins to disturb or touch me, I need only keep walking to stop feeling” (Sennett 1992, 129). Performance at the 7th Performance Studies Conference, Mainz 2001. See also the CD-ROM/DVD “Der ästhetische Ort” (The Aesthetic Site) (2001). Artificial representation keeps one from looking away or it forces one to look on; it seeks to evoke through the presence of the object.

I am concerned with this aesthetic evocation, which indeed is a fundamental concern of representation. The creator of artworks seeks to convey a message to the receiver by way of aesthetic objects – seeks to mediate an experience. This message can encompass all areas of a tradition of cultural thought situated in space and time as cultural aesthetics. In the aesthetic process, the path between sensory perception and the reflexive elaboration of the meaning of the message continues through its aesthetic objectification and mediation with respect to the sensory perception of the message, which then flows into the recipient’s reflection by way of that message in order that it may be stored in the experience. This process proceeds in an endless loop, so long as the message is in existence. My empirically experienced examples (Greverus 2005a) demonstrate clearly how the collapse or extinguishing of a message brings aesthetic processes to silence or else leads them in myriad new directions. But aesthetic demand and mediation, however lost or dislocated, still remain central for aesthetic anthropology. They stand in contrast to the rational mediation of “rational” experiences that appear to form our Western scientific understanding and that plunged us into a crisis of representation in which we now search frantically for new – and perhaps “more honest” – possibilities for textualizing our experiences as anthropologists in a social and cultural field. As anthropologists in the field, we search continually for help from anthropologists and philosophers who are “beyond all fields.” Is the aesthetic discourse of the present an aid that makes it possible for us to mediate the richness of our many life experiences, sensory and rational, both interpretively and through aesthetic evocation? Does the aesthetic theory of the Western knowledge society help us as much or more than the aesthetic praxis of traditional and alternative societies and groups oriented toward practical experience, in which rational and sensory experience and mediation form an aesthetic unity?

Bazon Brock called his autobiography of a generalist's work, "Ästhetik als Vermittlung" (Aesthetic as Mediation) (Brock 1977).⁷⁹ For Brock, aesthetics was neither the construction of theoretical thought systems, nor the empirical study of aesthetic mediations of other cultures, but rather a case study drawn from all the areas of his own aesthetic mediation, be it as a "theater critic, a "happening"-mover, a lyricist, an exhibition designer, as an everyday aesthete." Brock was an aesthetic evocator from the dynamic and provocative climate of the 1970s. To him activist stagings and objects comprised the entire arsenal and possible configurations of objects of his time. His goal was the "schooling" of aesthetic perception and discriminating internationalization through the power of judgment. Thus, three of his books are called "Aesthetics of Images – Visitor Training," "Aesthetics of Everyday Life – Consumer Training," and "Aesthetics of Action – Life Training." Brock held fast to the meaning of aesthetic perception and aesthetic judgment, though he emphasized not only their social relativity but also, above all, the need for the power of aesthetic judgment within the communication process. For this he makes reference to the founder of modern aesthetics, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (See Schneider 1997, 21 ff): "In Baumgarten's sense of aesthetics, a judgement may be recognized when the judge can insert his own attitudes and actions, the conditionality of his own perceptions and opinions, into the argument of aesthetic judgement. Precisely this characterizes an aesthetic as mediation" (Brock 1977, 6), and as an instruction for action, may also be activist activity.

The qualified argument of judgment in an aesthetic as mediation now leads the cultural anthropologist directly to the object of comparative research – and to himself or herself – and even to the relativity of aesthetic judgment or of cultural aesthetics. The researcher and representing mediator of aesthetic processes must try not only to recognize their conditionality but also, reflexively, his or her own. The "contexts" of trace research and circumstantial evidence – those of Self and Other – are important, but more important is the aesthetic presence of those taking part in the mediation process, the topos of the living. Dialogue in the field can lead to a qualified argument of judgement that emerges from the reflexive self-distancing of all those involved, and can lead necessarily to a new aesthetic judgement.⁸⁰ The "field" or "being there" binds the artist and interpreter with the scientist and interpreter in an aesthetic "Zwischenraum" (in-between space) that is permeable at its boundaries, fin-

79 The work of this then 41-year old, over one thousand pages in length, was edited by Karla Fohrbeck, "while he dedicated himself with satisfying health and ample time to the development of his current life." (from the Preface).

80 Price is not the only one to suggest that artists and critics in other, non-Western cultures are also endowed with a "discriminating eye" (Price 1989, 93). Benzing, who likewise tends to proceed from emic aesthetic criteria, through several examples also reveals the difficulties that can come with the acquisition of foreign aesthetics.

ding and mediating aura and trace. The artistic avant-garde of the early 20th century searched for this in-between space among traditional, "primitive," practical experience-oriented societies and in the in-between times and spaces of children, the "mentally ill" and "naives." But they also searched within the utopias of an aesthetic not-yet. This desire, despite all displacement, through the atmospheres designed just for consumers, has not yet been silenced.

Is there a kind of reflection that mediates not only between sensory and rational perceptions of meaning, but also between the places of aesthetic thought? From Wolfgang Welsch's "Ästhetisches Denken" (Aesthetic Thinking) we read: "I tend to think of aesthetics more generally as aesthesis, as the thematization of perceptions of all kinds, sensory as well as mental, everyday as well as sublime, life-worldly as well as artistic" (Welsch 1998, 9 f.). In this aesthetic thinking, sensory perception and the perception of meaning flow together. Aesthetic thought involves a "grasping of circumstances that is at the same time combined with truth claims." Welsch distinguishes four steps of aesthetic thinking: observation as the starting point and source of inspiration, the imaginative and generalized supposition of meaning, the reflexive examination of this, and finally the "overall view of the field of phenomena concerned that is identified through its being aesthetically grounded in a reflexive inter-space" (Welsch 1998, 49).

But, save for the generalized truth claim, are those not precisely the demands of anthropological thinking? Welsch's examples of the bullfight and the "Trachtenkapelle" (folk music group) on an elevator, ridden "endlessly" up and down, whose "metaphorical powers" Sloterdijk considers an "image of the world,"⁸¹ now lead directly to ethnographic methodology. To be sure, observation as the starting point and source of inspiration is common for the ethnographic and the philosophical aesthetic thinker. Then, of course, there arises that broad field of interpreting circumstantial evidence that not only separates the ethnologists and anthropologists from the philosophers, but the former also from each other. While the aesthetic thinker in Welsch's sense can expand reflexively from the observation of a single detail (in so far as this ever even took place) to "a general analysis of the present state of our society and world," the ethnographer arranges his field experiences in the most diverse ways. In the most positivistic filing methods still in existence, the collector builds a spatially or temporally comparative inventory of the bullfight or the Trachtenkapelle. If he has an imaginative conjecture of meaning, the reflection first takes place in dialogue with the Other, that is, with those who produ-

81 "We stand today on the endlessly rolling conveyor belt of an industrial-technical complex that has become autonomous and immovable, and every one of our movements is movement upon this surface. This is precisely the same for our cultural staging: everything is theater on a stage whose construction and rules of motion are out of our control" (Sloterdijk in Welsch 1998, 49).

ce that meaning at the place at which it happens. It is the truth of this that is to be mediated. This is true for direct dialogue with the creators of meaning as it is for the inner dialogue with objects and actions. Out of this, the empirical anthropological researcher attempts to develop an understanding that is a matter of both the grasping of facts as well as opinions and interpretations of meaning, including his or her own.

Further reflection involves the comparability of the interpretations of specific phenomena in various times, places and cultures. Here, once again, data is gathered through empirical research, be it in the field, in the archive or in the library, or one's own data is compared with that of other researchers. The experiences that were achieved empirically are finally interpreted within their social context. Ultimately, we attempt to comprehend the particular against the background of the general, in this case cultural aesthetics. Given that these studied cultures and their aesthetics are mostly those of Others – and here we again face the crisis of representation – we are more likely to question the anthropologist's exploratory results than if the anthropologist jumps into a world-analyzing globalization discourse that does not proceed empirically. A discussion of aesthetic and anaesthetic globalization requires the confirmation of comparative empirical studies. Within this I see a fundamental cultural- and social anthropological contribution to a "general vision" of aesthetic processes or an "image of the world."

Imagination and the Aesthetic Process

For us, the term imagination is encountered ever more frequently along the path to an aesthetic anthropology. We, and I mean here those empirical social and cultural researchers, conceded the creative power of imagination to art and perhaps also to philosophy; to our own imagination we have dedicated less thought. At the center of the anthropological dispute with imagination there stand, above all, the product and the thing, and not the imaginative process. Dealings with imagination resemble dealings with aesthetic. And these two concepts should by all means be seen in their correlatedness. When Vincent Crapanzano talks about the movement "toward an anthropology of the imagination" (Crapanzano 2004, 1) in his book, "Imaginative Horizons," this may be, just as with the search for an aesthetic anthropology, a path still open – or re-opened – to new experiences. In my examination of an aesthetic of everyday life in the 1970s, I referred to the "restrained education" of an aesthetic praxis that finds its creative expression in the human imagination (Greverus 1978, 134 ff., Greverus 1979). And I wrote: "When we look at aesthetics and the everyday not only as categories for scientific analysis, but recognize their specific significance for

our present time, then this must suggest for an aesthetic praxis that we give people a new chance to actively insert their creative and perceptive abilities into the totality of their everyday world, filling the prose of the world once more with poetics" (Greverus 1979, 17).

Now the concept of imagination has penetrated numerous discourses in contemporary anthropology. The most frequently cited concept of imagination is certainly Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" (1983), where the sub-title aims at "reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism". This title brings an emphasis on process more to the forefront than does the German title, "Die Erfindung der Nation" (the invention of the nation), which places more emphasis on the product. Invention is close to the concept of construction, that negatively-valued term of the postmodern crisis of representation which would call for deconstruction. The imagination of the nation as a cultural society stands in service of the state. Imagination becomes a concept of authority and Anderson resigns before the powerlessness of the "immortal angel of history" (Anderson 1983, 155 f.), propelled irresistibly into the future by a storm (of progress), his face turned toward the past as the wreckage of history grows skyward (Benjamin 1969a, 257). Here, as it is found in Benjamin's thought on aesthetics and aura, the horror of a generation is brought to bear. This generation experienced the imagination as an instrument of totalitarian domination, of the hypocritical usurpation of one's own national compliances and the brutal obliteration of resistant Self and helpless Other. Imagination as it is analyzed here is meant in the sense of political science, as a moral order dependent on dominance that is "shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society (Taylor 2002, 106). Imagination becomes collectively and affirmatively established. Taylor connects these affirmations with three fundamental institutions: the market economy, the public sphere and democratic self-government (Ibid 92).

In a discourse of imagination strongly oriented toward the economically-potentiated flexibility of the person, imagination becomes an affirmative space-time of the subjective satisfaction of needs between personal, "self-determined" success – a "transnational" home in those sunny areas of the globe or in boundary-busting business and tourist travel – and personal, "other-directed" failure in the cold regions of our world, where people are bought, sold and prostituted. The "atmospheres" of aesthetic discourse introduce themselves: mediated "life enhancement" via media-economic domination. Just as the aesthetically-neutral concept of atmospheres causes me discomfort, so does the socially and individually-neutralized concept of imagination within globalization and world society discourse. One of the most frequently cited representatives of this perspective within anthro-

pology is Arjun Appadurai, who speaks of a cultural economy in a world in perpetual motion (Appadurai 1990). "It is in this futile ground of deterritorialization...that the group imaginations of the modern world find their fractured and fragmented counterpart" (Appadurai 1991, 194). Appadurai's examples, with the exception of the "transnational irony" of his family gathering, come more frequently from the darker regions of the imagination of "possible lives," whose failures are represented in the black humor of magical realism or the gray everyday life of prostitutes and night club dancers. Appadurai highlights the role of the mass media in the imaginative process through their suggestion of available "possibilities." The mass media "present a rich, ever-changing store of possible lives, some of which enter the lived imaginations of ordinary people more successfully than others" (Ibid 197). These "realisms" exist in our world side by side. "In much aesthetic expression today," according to Appadurai, "the boundaries between these various realisms have been blurred" (Ibid 197). Imagination, even when its objectives are not realized, becomes something all lives have in common. The question of the quality of imagination however, is left with no more response than the question of atmosphere. For me, the kitsch-person who responds passively to the ills of the world, so absorbed is he by the seduction of the media (and its brokers) in a value system of "deterritorialized" imagination, would sooner be an object of "macroethnography" than the media analysis of available "life possibilities."

Where Appadurai promotes a disentanglement from "sightings of the savage" (Ibid 209) in his proposal for the revitalization of anthropology as a component of the cultural sciences in new "global ethnoscapes," Vincent Crapanzano prefaces his "Imaginative Horizons" (2004) with a quote from a methodological treatise by Joseph-Marie de Gérando (1800), which considers the imagination to be "the first faculty that one must study in the savage" (Crapanzano 2004, 1). For Crapanzano, this is not at all about a reorientation toward exoticism or a restriction of anthropologists to their classical field of study, but a comparative ethnography in space and time in which the imaginative ability of the individual and the imaginative process of individual and collective modes of existence receive primary attention. Crapanzano's view of imagination is not that of the consumeristic imagination, but of the creative imagination whose point of origin is the culturally distinct imaginative response humans give to the fundamental questions of existence. Imaginative horizons open themselves up to the blurred boundaries between Here and There, in the "between" and "beyond" of transitional spaces and periods, at the "frontier." They cannot be crossed; they can only be experienced in their dialectical tension: "the irreality of the imaginary impresses the real on reality and the real of reality compels the irreality of the imaginary" (Ibid 15).

Imagination as aesthetic vitality surpasses the quotidian trace of the real. It gi-

ves it an artificial aura, in this way joined reflexively to reality. To achieve this requires not only the power of judgment of the one who imaginatively creates an aura, but also the judgment of the one on the receiving end of an aesthetically mediated message. This is my position on the meaning of imagination in an aesthetic process. On the path toward an aesthetic anthropology it is closer to the idea of creative imagination in an "in-between" than to the analysis of the national and global capitalization of imaginations and their injudicious acceptance, as it is shown in the anaesthetic reality of the unresistant consumption of political and economic atmospheres for the "enhancement of life."

When I refer to a sub-chapter of this aesthetic mediation – or my theoretical approach to empirically experienced aesthetics – as "The Other Side of Imagination," I am referring to the examination of my own discipline, which has lost the imaginative and aesthetic power of "poaching" in the in-between spaces of experience to the sharp division of disciplines. Aesthetic poaching is the crossing of boundaries, in that sense. It is the breaching of boundaries and the crossing of walls drawn by a ruling order.⁸² Without this poaching and its principle of collage, no powerful stories (Greverus 1988, 44) would be possible. Poaching and imagination continually disturb the order of things. Yet the passion to categorize in commodious filing cabinets prevails over the imaginability of, and even the spaces of, encounter with the Other, those in-between spaces of dialogue. This is the dilemma of our ethnography. We should turn from the dilemma of Othering toward a new dilemma in which disciplinary boundaries rebuff our imagination of the aesthetic process. The "anthropological-aesthetic controversy" is not yet closed. The demand I consistently raise, to reflect the power of imagination of the anthropologist as a level of experience and interpretation in the knowledge process of ethnographic fieldwork and representation,⁸³ is expressed similarly in Paul Willis's "The Ethnographic Imagination."⁸⁴ Also for Willis, the ethnographic imagination is not a by-product of fieldwork between the nearness and distance that is to

82 Regarding the exotic appropriation of the Other, I have juxtaposed two sides of poaching: aesthetic touching through the aura of the Other and its imaginative appropriation and reflexive transference, as in the example of the (artistic) avant-garde, and on the other side, the consumer and also the imaginative, though unreflexive appropriation and utilization of atmospheric offerings for one's own existential orientation (kitsch). The intersections are fluid. Through the concept of consumer tactics, Michel de Certeau gave new direction to the question of poaching. For him, it is a matter of the invisible production that the consumer fabricates in the associations with the products of elites, their texts and images on the television, for instance (Certeau 1984). What is there thought of as the rehabilitation of the consumer berated as passive, nonetheless should not seduce us into misunderstanding the kitschy self-forgetting of the consumer vis-à-vis the aesthetic object as the "art of practice" (arts de faire) or creative poaching.

83 Compare primarily Greverus 2005a.

84 I first "discovered" the book (Willis 2000) after the completion of this essay. Willis's field data refers mainly to his research on working-class youth sub-culture in the 1960s and 70s. In this book, the global possibilities of postmodern commodity culture and commodity fetishism stand in the foreground. In this respect, Willis emphasizes the creative autonomy of practices of cultural appropriation even more strongly than Appadurai.

be overcome and whose data has to be “objectively” mediated. For him the ethnographic imagination as “grounded imaginings” of theoretically oriented social- and cultural sciences is theoretically based in the close relationship to empirically researched and experienced phenomena. What seems important and convergent to me is the chance to set oneself as a participant in the anthropological-aesthetic controversy.

My efforts along the path toward an aesthetic anthropology posit the aesthetic object, situated between the authentic masterwork (the object of art history and art museum that speaks for itself) and the authentic, everyday “thing” (the indispensable object of categorization by ethnology and ethnographic museums), as just one level in the aesthetic process.⁸⁵ Aesthetic sites and signs are an expression (objectification) of meaningful experience that can be mediated (externalization). Internalization as an aesthetic touch, that perception of a message perceived through all the senses, precedes the need for externalization. Meaning, and this is an aesthetic concern, is mediated through the aesthetic object as the mediator within a cultural context. This is true for all aesthetic processes and all works that are brought about in these processes. And this means that we, too, must get used to thinking about aesthetics in the plural, even when the “beauty” of a masterwork is identified as being beyond space and time (mainly by Western and Western-influenced experts). Thus beauty, too, is just one aesthetic message among many, and this message, too, finds its various forms within various societies.

The aesthetic vitality of objects or performances that transmit meaning – we could even identify this vitality as aura – require dialogue between the creator and the perceiver or receiver in the aesthetic process. This dialogue need not be direct; it can occur via the work itself. Kandinsky spoke of the subtle vibrations between creator, work and receiver. There arises a nearness of sensory touch that allows space for fantasy. It leads to an imaginative “conversation” between the aesthetic object and its creator, and to a reflexive, deeply thoughtful and sometimes newly creative transformation. Here begins the receivers search for and securing of clues that, going out from sensory touch through the aura of a work, tries to “get a hold of something.” The securing of clues belongs as much to the aesthetic process as the experience of aura.

Anthropologists too are securers of clues between foreign nearness and near otherness. In an aesthetic anthropology, aura and clue should go hand in hand as an approach to the aesthetic object, as a dialogue with the object and its creators. And I mean this literally as a search for clues that trans-

⁸⁵ Compare the diagram in Clifford 1985.

pires in space and time. We anthropologists have traveled far and wide to experience the aura of the Other. But we have also relegated them to the cultural filing cabinets of modernity. Postmodernism offers us the chance to live with the ambivalence between aura and trace, without having to lose our scientific vision as ones who experience, analyse and mediate the foreign and our own otherness. Understanding remains an approximation open to dialogue and imagination in the in-between spaces or culturally hybrid space opposite the spaces of socially unequivocal certainty.

My case studies of aesthetic processes (primarily Greverus 2005a) are the basis of my reflections on an aesthetic anthropology. These examples are possible thanks to the “favor of the moment” (Greverus 2002, 33 f.) of a traveling anthropologist. “Je ne cherche pas, je trouve” (Picasso) and “a painter [and an anthropologist as well, I suggest] is lost when he finds himself” (Max Ernst) are leitmotifs of my hunt for clues. That I have mainly encountered aesthetic protest is surely an anthropological and biographical issue of my generation. If my path to an aesthetic anthropology is still generalizable, this is thanks to the thought of those moments of touching or of aesthetic vitality, which precisely as the topos of the living, as vitality, is all-encompassing, but allows for the possibility of searching, reflexive cultural contact (temporal, spatial, social). Here the dialogic anthropologist in the field remains as a leitfigure of the search for clues between the distant and the near. Sometimes the anthropologists and artists meet in the in-between spaces of their respective field research in which aesthetic mediations of the Other are perceived not only through the securing of traces, but also in a new aesthetic mediation process. I have learned much from real and imaginary encounters with trace-seeking and trace-securing artists. In the aesthetic process of mediation each of us develops his or her “arts de faire” (Certeau) and art of representation. Art is the craft, mastered. For me, as an anthropologist, this is textualized language and is perhaps, as I view in some of my attempts at aesthetic mediation, the language of a reflexive photography⁸⁶ that unites aura and trace: images that can add aesthetic evocation to documentary value.

⁸⁶ From the invention of photography until today there has been discussion of whether this is a new, different manner of aesthetic mediation or whether its only value is found in documentation. In our discipline, photography is considered and published mainly with respect to its documentary value: from the ethnologist’s scientifically “objective” recording of the foreign Other to the commented family pictures of the familiar, yet foreign Own by the ethnographer. Visual studies by ethnologists discuss photographic “authenticity” through the discipline-specific search for traces of the Other, which on one hand leads to statements related to critiques of imperialism, about “robbed shadows,” and to analyses of kitsch on the other hand, like sentimental amateur photography at home or on vacation. Visual anthropologists who never allow themselves to come into the picture are here again uninvolvedly present. Wolfgang Kemp has compiled an excellent overview of scientific and artistic approaches to a theory of photography in his four-volume “Theorie der Fotografie” (2000).



First Year of Life



Framing Family

Me on Myself: Ina-Maria Greverus Through the Looking Glass



Fellows in the Urban Field

On Framing Various dialogues on “touching life” and its multifarious interpretations, or a festival of life.

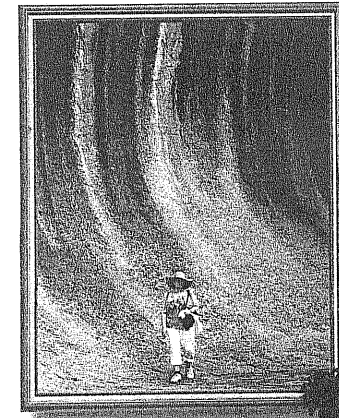
In the anthropology of performance, framing means “to discriminate a sector of socio-cultural action from the general ongoing process of a community’s life. It is often reflexive, in that, to ‘frame’...must cut out a piece



Folklore Fellows at Forum



Feminine Encounters



Fantasies under the Wave Rock

... for inspection and retrospection” (Victor Turner).

Autobiographical framing is the selection of life experienced and brought into relief by the Self for Others in a special context. In my own context it is a dialogue between anthropology and the everyday. Through the looking glass there is introspection and reflection and, moreover, the imaginative othering of Self.



Framing 77

References

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