

reconsidering conceptual art, 1966–1977

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From its inception, and continuing to this very day, conceptual art has been entangled in controversy by those who stake claims to its foundational moment.¹ This phenomenon is highly paradoxical given that, as with avant-garde practice in general, the emergence of conceptual art was the result of complicated processes of selection, fusion, and rejection of antecedent forms and strategies.² Claims for the clarity and purity of the foundational lineage of conceptual art, therefore, should be considered with skepticism, since they are so limited, confusing, and often explicitly constructed in order to promote a particular, partial legacy. Of course, this is not uncommon in the history of modern art, but it is remarkably blatant at the moment of conceptual art.

Let me begin by delineating various art-historical genealogies that led to the increasing conceptualization of artistic practices in the 1960s. In particular, four trajectories can be singled out as strong precursors of conceptual art. The first includes the self-reflexivity of modernist painting and sculpture that systematically problematizes and dismantles the integral elements of the traditional structure of the artwork. One of the recurring characteristics in much art that is referred to as conceptual is the consideration of every one of the constituting

elements of the artwork as equal components. In the process, the valuation of technical manual skill is largely (if not entirely) abandoned, as well as the notion of an original, cohesive work. In turn, serial and highly schematic structures emerge, placing the inherently hierarchical concept of quality under duress. The second trajectory, what can be termed “reductivism,” will push the conventional objectness of the artwork toward the threshold of a complete dematerialization. Increasingly, in works following this strand, the visual elements of an artwork are challenged, the prominence of text expands, and the degree to which viewing is dependent upon the integration of contingent and contextual elements becomes a focal point. The negation of aesthetic content marks a third genealogy of conceptualism. This is an antecedent that can ultimately be traced back to the work of Marcel Duchamp and which, by way of a series of mediations throughout the twentieth century, places art at the threshold of information. The fourth trajectory that leads to conceptual art is one that problematizes placement. Here, the subject of the work becomes both a reflection on the conventions that will frame it or situate it, and a self-questioning of how it will be communicated or displayed. Among the results of this lineage will be the melding of the work with the surrounding architectural environment, and its integration within the context of publicity (including newspapers, magazines, books, even advertisement billboards). In its broadest possible definition, then, the conceptual in art means an expanded critique of the cohesiveness and materiality of the art object, a growing wariness toward definitions of artistic practice as purely visual, a fusion of the work with its site and context of display, and an increased emphasis on the possibilities of publicness and distribution.³

Given the complexity of genealogical strands and avant-garde strategies that combined to comprise what came to be referred to as conceptual art, it is not surprising that conceptualism during the mid to late 1960s was a contested field of multiple and opposing practices, rather than a single, unified artistic discourse and theory. Be that as it may, there are several aesthetic theories or models of conceptual art that can be discerned to have a certain preeminence or predominance as shaping or influencing forces. One of the most significant of these is represented by the work of Joseph Kosuth, Christine Kozlov, and the Art & Language group. Kosuth describes the distinguishing characteristics of this aesthetic theory that I will refer to as “linguistic conceptualism” in his three-part essay “Art After Philosophy” (1969), where he advances an exposition of conceptualism undergirded by the tenets of logical positivism, in particular A. J. Ayer’s *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936).⁴ According to Kosuth’s thesis, questioning the

nature of art should be the main concern of artists. Remaining within traditional categories of painting and sculpture, however, obstructs such inquiry since these artistic categories are conventional and their legitimacy is taken for granted. Thus these categories should be disavowed, regarded as anachronistic, useless, even detrimental, to artists.

This main line of argument leads Kosuth to reconsider the history of modern art as it is conventionally narrated, and to dismiss the relevance of artists such as Edouard Manet, Paul Cézanne, and the cubists, whose work as art he deems valid only on morphological grounds, that is, only insofar as they remained tied to the medium of painting. Instead Kosuth champions an alternate canon of art—one that is characterized by the subversion of the old classifications—represented by his understanding of the legacy of Marcel Duchamp. “The ‘value’ of particular artists after Duchamp,” he writes, can be weighed according to how much they rejected “the handed-down ‘language’ of traditional art” and thereby freed from morphological constrictions inquiry into the meaning of art.⁵ Given this formulation, in which a work’s importance is exclusively located in its meaning, the problem of referentiality arises. Presumably, prioritizing the conceptual content of art, its intelligibility, requires an account that is more than self-reflexive.

It is in this connection that Kosuth introduces Ayer’s evaluation of Immanuel Kant’s distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. Following Ayer, Kosuth argues that forms of art that depend for their validity on being verified by the world and “the ‘infinite space’ of the human condition” are synthetic propositions while “forms of art most clearly finally referable only to art” are analytic propositions.⁶ Then, making the unlikely pairing of analytic proposition and meaning on the one hand, and synthetic proposition and language on the other, Kosuth brackets off and expels any questions of a referential dimension from his theoretical model, concluding that “art’s only claim is for art. Art is the definition of art.”⁷

This last point bears elaborating, and perhaps can best be understood by comparing Kosuth’s claims about his own work with the theoretical underpinnings of the work of his closest associates in the early 1970s, Terry Atkinson, Michael Baldwin, and the Art & Language group. The main corpus of the latter in the late 1960s consists of numerous texts presented in an art context as analytic arguments about the nature of art objects and assertions about art. As early as 1967, these artists articulated a position that parallels the claims Kosuth was to make in the next couple of years, for example their shared repudiation of art legitimated on the basis of morphology, and their avowal of what Atkinson referred to as a “declarative methodology” whereby artworks are deemed to achieve their status as such by the nominal, metalin-

guistic act of asserting their “art-context.” But while Kosuth’s investigations, as I noted earlier, interrogate the nature of art, Art & Language’s work focuses on an analysis of “the linguistic usage of both plastic art itself and its support languages, namely word-language.”⁸

If Kosuth’s point of departure is his rejection of formalist art legitimated only by its morphological similarity to previous art, Art & Language’s point of departure is the rejection of the simple materiality of minimal art. For, as Baldwin noted in an early expository article on his and Atkinson’s “Air-Conditioning Show,” even the site-specific work of minimalism depends on the visual dimension for cognition.⁹ Indeed, Baldwin’s comments in this article summon a range of issues that concerned the Art & Language group in the following years. First, there is the issue of reductivism. Baldwin traces the development of reductivism that characterizes avant-garde practice in New York in the preceding years—from self-sufficient objects placed within a gallery, to site-specific artworks visible in the gallery space, to the invisible site-specific artwork—and places the notion of an “Air-Conditioning Show” firmly within that trajectory. At the same time, the idea proposed by Baldwin of an invisible art shifts the cognitive emphasis of the artwork from material vehicle to conceptual content in a way that parallels Kosuth’s arguments for the deemphasis of language in favor of meaning. And finally, there is the issue of language. For if the material employed in the “Air-Conditioning Show” discussed by Baldwin is perceptually invisible, it is so only if one expects art to be solely a matter of “‘looking at’ objects” rather than “‘reading from’ objects,” as Atkinson phrased it.¹⁰ But if one accepts written language—“i.e., paper with ink lines upon it”—to be physically and visually perusable, then not only do works such as the “Air-Conditioning Show” become visible, but nothing prevents the idea of art from broadening to include critical or theoretical speculations on art as an art material as well.¹¹ And of course once art language is considered “inside the framework of ‘conceptual art,’” the distinction between work and text becomes blurred, leading to questions about the status of artworks such as the following, posed by Atkinson in the first issue of *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art*: “Can this editorial,” asks Atkinson rhetorically, “in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what ‘conceptual art’ is, come up for the count as a work of conceptual art?”¹²

Similar to Atkinson’s and Baldwin’s, Kosuth’s starting point, as I suggested earlier, is also in the declarative act of deeming art objects, or in Kosuth’s terms “art-propositions,” meaningful as such. But that nominal act reaches its threshold much earlier in Kosuth’s art practice than it does in Atkinson’s and Baldwin’s. Whereas the latter are concerned primarily with the function of the metalanguage in which the physical art objects reside, Kosuth’s exclusive concern is

with the nature of the thing declared an art object. To put this another way, unlike Atkinson and Baldwin's inquiry into the relationship between the specific artwork and the more general art discourse ("the language-use of the art society," as Atkinson once pithily put it), Kosuth's project is concerned with the relation of the definition of art to art, which he locates exclusively in the completeness of the artist's idea of art.¹³

Although the model of conceptualism articulated and given form by Kosuth and the Art & Language group quickly became, and has remained, the dominant one, the conceptualist work of Mel Bochner, Hanne Darboven, Sol LeWitt, Lee Lozano, Brian O'Doherty, and others in the mid to late 1960s deals with different—even opposed—sets of interests than those of linguistic conceptualism. LeWitt, for example, argued that the elimination of the perceptual object in favor of an emphasis on the conceptual process was a way of dismantling myths of integrated subjectivity. In what stands as the first manifesto of conceptual art, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" of 1967, LeWitt sets up a binary between expressionist art which requires rational decisions to be made throughout the process of an artwork's execution, and conceptual art in which all decisions about execution are made in advance. By extension, LeWitt differentiates between perceptual art that depends on visual forms and conceptual art that is "made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eye." LeWitt's account of conceptual art, then, proposes that the concept determines what the artwork will look like. The idea, he writes, becomes "a machine that makes the art," a logical operation that "eliminates the arbitrary, capricious, and the subjective as much as possible."¹⁴ But, unlike Kosuth's aesthetic theory, which posits that the idea itself can be considered the art, for LeWitt the process of conception stands in a complementary relation to the process of realization, mutually supplying each other's lack, and thus of equal importance.

Basically, I interpret LeWitt's aesthetic theory as opposed to Kosuth's. Whereas the latter's is characterized by a rational mode of artistic production that affirms the centered and authorial artist—the decisionmaker from beginning to end—LeWitt's theory proposes a mode of production that is opposed to rationalism; the work is produced following a logical sequence that does not require intuition, creativity, or rational thought. Thus the work reads without the testimony of the privileged artist; this process of production is fundamentally, in a word, irrational.¹⁵ Furthermore, consistent with his rational standpoint, Kosuth's aesthetic theory clearly restricts viewing experience to two possibilities: the viewer either comprehends the idea, or does not. As he states polemically in a 1969 interview, "The public's not interested in art anyway. . . . No more interested in art than they are with physics."¹⁶ In contrast, LeWitt's

model of conceptualism posits an unlimited public. The content of artworks produced following this model is more than the private history of the artist and allows a multiplicity of readings. In this respect, whereas Kosuth formulates an aesthetic theory based upon the epitome of positivist thinking—the tautological model—LeWitt’s aesthetic theory references positivism only to break out of it by introducing the subjective dimension of the beholder. “Once out of his hand,” LeWitt writes, “the artist has no control over the way a viewer will perceive the work. Different people will understand the same thing in a different way.”¹⁷

It is in this context that the early work of artists such as Bas Jan Ader, Adrian Piper, Christopher D’Arcangelo, Vito Acconci, and others who steered conceptual art toward an increasing emphasis on the body ought chiefly to be seen. Acconci’s *Following Piece* of 1969, for instance, provides a concrete example of a type of work that integrates the decentering of the artist into its formal and constitutive elements while incorporating the artist’s body into the work. *Following Piece* is essentially a chronological list that meticulously describes the public activities of an anonymous urban dweller on a particular day during the month of October 1969. Each day in this month, Acconci would follow a randomly chosen person in the streets of New York City as long as he could, until the person followed entered a private place. Thus by their very nature variants of *Following Piece* differ in length. Some last for only two or three minutes—that is until the person followed enters their home and closes the door, or enters their car and speeds off; others last seven or eight hours, continuing as the person goes to various public places such as a restaurant, movie, or store.

In addition, by rejecting all manual intrusion on the part of the artist, relying instead on an a priori scheme that generates itself once the person to be followed is (randomly) selected, Acconci’s *Following Piece* also effects the total depersonalization of the work. It is mechanical and irrational: it does not require the artist to make choices. The artist is carried along through the streets of the city by the activities of another (anonymous) person; decisions of time and space are out of his hands, as it were, and he virtually disappears behind the system’s self-generation. Once produced, variants of *Following Piece* could then be reactivated or performed by the artist or any other interested party at will. The work is thus reduced to a purely descriptive analysis of an episode, and all composition, narrative, and interiority is negated. In what is now the inverse of a work that functions as “a working out, a thinking out, of all the implications of all aspects of the concept ‘art,’” as Kosuth puts it, the process of decentering is absolute in *Following Piece*—there is no connection back to the artist through the work. Rather it is the contingent experience of the person reactivating the work that becomes the focus, while the physical space of the city becomes the ground of the work.

If, however, we turn to the late 1960s work of Lawrence Weiner and Douglas Huebler, another model of conceptual art can be discerned—one that integrates the decentering of the artist into its formal and constitutive elements in an attempt to democratize the production and reception of art. Weiner's art practice of this period is characterized by a radical dislocation of the notion of the sign. Rather than functioning as a general sign, presenting the physical art object and the conceptual information that supplements and closes the art object, Weiner most often presents the information of the work only in the form of a statement. These statements define linguistically the material structure of the work, presenting in the past participle facts about its materials and processes of production. A case in point is "One Hole in the Ground Approximately 1' × 1' × 1'. One Gallon Water Based White Paint Poured into this Hole." The use of the past participle is in itself significant insofar as it simultaneously allows for the conclusiveness of the description as well as the prospect of a future realization. Importantly, Weiner does not write, for example, "dig a hole in the ground, and take a gallon of water-based white paint and pour it into this hole," but chooses the past tense exclusively because, as he put it, "To use the imperative would be for me fascistic. . . . The tone of command is the tone of tyranny."¹⁸ But one of the remarkable features of Weiner's art is that it is equally valid whether communicated verbally or materially documented.¹⁹ In this sense, the hole into which a gallon of water-based white paint was poured is not a discrete work but one link in a chain of signifiers that summon and refer to one another—a metonymic chain that includes the oral communication, the published statement, the process of carrying out the declaration, the residue of this act, the photographic documentation, and so on. In short, the work could take innumerable physical forms.²⁰

Even more problematic, perhaps, is Weiner's assertion that the work does not have to take form. For at this time Weiner also formulated the by now infamous "declaration of intent" that has been the criteria for the execution of his work since late 1968:

1. *The artist may construct the piece*

2. *The piece may be fabricated*

3. *The piece need not be built*

*Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.*²¹

In light of the interpretation of Weiner's art that has so far emerged, several aspects of this proclamation seem particularly significant. For one thing, it posits either the artist or some-

body else fabricating or describing the piece as equal conditions for the production of his work, thereby abolishing the traditional notion of artist-centered production.²² For another, the proclamation indicates that the artwork requires that one try to diminish the distance between beholding and producing, joining the beholder and the work in a single signifying practice. Further, Weiner's instructions are for any interested body, collector or otherwise, and hence destabilize the myth of authority and authorship. The work thus represents a method of art production, distribution, and consumption with a degree of egalitarianism that is virtually unprecedented in the history of twentieth-century art.²³

The inversion of traditional practices of fabricating, exhibiting, and distributing works of art put into operation by Weiner's theoretical model of conceptualism places his work outside the parameters of LeWitt's aesthetic theory of conceptual art. For although LeWitt eliminated rational decisionmaking from the manufacture stage of the work, thereby separating execution from artistic value, he maintained that the work should still take on a physical form. Weiner's work of the late 1960s, I am suggesting, is set apart from LeWitt's because the participatory model is pushed to its logical conclusion. Now one of the explicit conditions of the work is that it need not be built, and the decision of whether to actually give the piece physical form is left completely up to the viewer, or in the terminology of Weiner at the time, the "receiver."²⁴ The activation of the receiver is the direct result of the eclipse of the authorial figure of the artist.²⁵

But I want to go further and propose that when exhibited, the self-reflexivity of Weiner's work touches on the work's value as economic exchange. Indeed, a typical characteristic of Weiner's exhibited works in the late 1960s was the accompanying acknowledgment of the collector who owned the piece. Those works yet unsold were cited as in a "private collection," and one in every ten or so was referenced as in "public freehold." Insofar as in its production the work is deprived in every respect, the ever-present proprietary supplement renders the logic of the exchange in the market a subject of contemplation.²⁶ From here it's only a step to suggest that whereas the aesthetic use value of one of Weiner's works is democratized, the operation of the work emphasizes the exclusivity of a certain experience—the experience of ownership. And it requires only a slightly greater step to conclude that it's essentially a mechanism of economic exchange that allows a gesture to circulate as an artwork in the culture.

What makes Weiner's work of the late 1960s so suggestive is the introduction it provides for an analysis of an even more radical alternative to what later came to be the dominant theoretical model of conceptualism. In contrast to the other strands of conceptualism I have thus far

examined, this one did not stop its interrogation of the underlying essence of an artwork at linguistic or economic conditions. Rather, artists such as Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, and various collective groups formed in the early 1970s around *The Fox*, or the activist Artists Meeting for Cultural Change in New York, deemed the ideological conditions of the institution of art to be fundamental to the validation of artworks. This development was part of a larger shift from the primacy of works that critiqued the idea of autonomous art and authoritative artists toward works that addressed the invisible institutional mechanisms that structure and define art in advanced capitalist society—more accurately, from work that decentered the artist to work that commented on the decentered artist.²⁷ From this point of view, artistic production is considered to be overdetermined by the underlying system of rules of the institution of art. The individuality and creativity of artists capable of producing and exhibiting works, indeed everything that had been attributed to artistic subjectivity, now came to be considered residual, alienated phenomena.

Haacke's model of conceptualism developed over the course of the 1960s.²⁸ As the decade unfolded, however, the emphasis in his work shifted from natural and biological systems to social systems. Part and parcel of this shift was the diminished role of the artist, culminating in works that virtually produce themselves such as *MoMA-Poll* (1970) and *Gallery-Visitor's Profile* (1969–73), which employ systemic methods for gathering data on social phenomena. In addition to the reduced role of the artist as producer, these works also problematize the networks of relationships through which power is exercised in the art world and expose the social, economic, and political bases of that power.

In this connection it is revealing to look briefly at one of Haacke's earliest conceptualist works, the *Gallery-Visitor's Profile*. Haacke's schema reflects upon the characteristics of the people who attend the site where the artwork is exhibited. *Gallery-Visitor's Profile* employs an empiricist method of accumulating information to compose a statistical breakdown of the gallery-goer: according to age, gender, religious belief, ethnicity, class, occupation, and so on. The result is a work that explicitly recognizes that the work of art's status as such arises not from characteristics of its own inner logic, nor from the nominal act of the autonomous agent in absolute control of his creative impulses, but, in the first place, from the "relative ideological frame" of the privileged social group that constitutes the art audience and administers the discourse of art in our society, and second, from the gallery-museum power nexus that bestows value upon a work of art. With *Gallery-Visitor's Profile*, then, we are a long way from ideas of the work of art as an analytic proposition. In fact, Haacke's work is closer to what Kosuth had categorized as a "synthetic" proposition. For rather than posing the artwork and art world as

an isolated circuit, these works clearly transcend their context and intersect with the ideological values of the culture at large.

In a similar way, Daniel Buren's late 1960s work integrates the framing conventions not only of the art object but also of the art world in general into its formal and thematic content. At the same time, Buren's work unsettles myths of integrated subjectivity and the authorial role of the artist, thereby echoing the work of his U.S. counterparts such as LeWitt and Weiner. But whereas the latter maintained their investigations on the abstract level, Buren turned instead to submitting the constant of his stripe motif to an ever-changing variety of contexts. In the resulting dialectical relation between the aesthetic sign and its environment, not only the artistic traditions that artists are located in, the "inter-text" as it were, but also the effect the institutional container of art—that is, the museum, gallery, or other display mechanism—has upon the designation and design of artworks themselves is problematized, and subverted from within.²⁹

In his writings of the late 1960s, Buren argues that the interior space of the artwork, its "content," has been decimated by institutional mechanisms that regulate the exhibition and distribution of artworks in our society. Under these catastrophic conditions, Buren claims, art comes to buttress the existing order of things by offering proof that fine art is thriving and well.³⁰ Furthermore, any form art takes, however unconventional, is acceptable because the institutional network or structure of art has so thoroughly taken hold of the development of culture that even the most avant-garde gestures are immediately appropriated.³¹ Buren's response to these conditions is to deemphasize the importance of the art object per se, focusing instead on the means by which the art system affirms the art object as significant, or meaningful, avant-garde art.

Thus, Buren rejects the idea that the art object could have an inherent subject—a denial not unlike that proposed by the work of Kosuth or LeWitt. But the institution-critical dimension of the latter quickly reaches its limit, I would argue, insofar as the notion that the artwork could have a concrete relation to the problematic of display is excluded from both the operation of this work and the supplementary texts the artists produce to explain it. In contrast, the very inadequacy of the striped canvases (or posters) Buren exhibits as art index his interventions in the media in the form of writings, which, as I just noted, expound a theoretical position that critically analyzes, and prompts reflection on, the containment of art by institutional techniques and means.

But perhaps the most extreme alternatives to models of analytic conceptualism in the late 1960s and early 1970s are those that developed in the deteriorating political and economic

climate of a number of Latin American countries including Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile. We get an early glimpse of the development of conceptual art in Latin America in the manifesto "A Media Art," written in 1966 by Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Roberto Jacoby. Recognizing the power of the media in constructing artistic events, these artists propose to "de-realize" objects by presenting accounts to newspapers and magazines of artistic exhibitions and events that did not in fact take place. Underpinned by an understanding of the profound impact of the media in late twentieth-century society, the stated aim of the authors of the "Media Art" manifesto is to "unchain" (*desencadenar*) information communicated through the media, and produce work that is nothing but the act of that unchaining. Such a *détournement* of the media, to employ the terminology of another group of radical theorists of the era, the European situationists, was conceived as capable of empowering the spectator to construct the substance of the nonexistent work, based on the information received and depending on the particular way that information signifies for him or her.³² Here, then, in a completely different geographical context, we have the unfolding of a media art that at once parallels artistic practices developing in North America that come to be defined as nascent conceptual art, such as Dan Graham's "works for magazine pages" that take place entirely within the structure of communication—the magazine system—and post-conceptual practices that emerge in the 1970s that problematize that most hallowed principle of art: originality.³³

But in Argentina the abstracted appropriation and manipulation of readymade media forms and structures did not last long, as the increasingly repressive social and political reality of the late 1960s made such passive engagements with the prevailing system seem woefully inadequate and led to more politically aggressive art interventions. Indeed, the swift shift in focus from a conceptualism that questions the ideological conditions of bourgeois art to an art that questions all the institutions that represent bourgeois culture, evident in the context of Latin American conceptual art, is perhaps best exemplified by the "Tucumán Burns" manifesto. Collectively written and first published as a mimeograph by the Argentinean General Confederation of Labor in 1968, the manifesto postulates that the first step to a truly "revolutionary art" is the "awareness of the actual reality of the artist as an individual inside the political and social context that surrounds him." This would lead artists with truly avant-garde and thus revolutionary aims to destroy bourgeois forms of art that "reinforce the institution of individual property and the personal pleasure of the unique art object" by constructing artistic objects capable of producing modifications in society as efficaciously as political acts.³⁴

What is particularly relevant in this context of an articulation of moves toward conceptual art is that, like other conceptual art models that dissolve the work of art into a tool of

communication, integrating the work within the context of publicity, the writers of “Tucumán Burns” also call for a relation between the work of art and the mass media. According to the manifesto, revolutionary art consists of the creation of “informational circuits” of particular realities (such as the appalling conditions of the working population of Tucumán) capable of de-mythifying the dominant (i.e., bourgeois) mass-media image of those realities. The assault on the media image advocated by this group of artists, however, is characterized by an awareness not only of the power of the media, but also of its “susceptibility to being charged with different kinds of content.”³⁵ These are characteristics that, as we shall shortly see, will come to define 1970s practices of conceptualism, or post-conceptualism, in a variety of contexts.

A similar interest in the discursive potential of systems of distribution pervades Brazilian strands of conceptual art in the 1960s. One of these is articulated in the manifesto “General Scheme of the New Objectivity,” printed in the catalogue accompanying the 1967 exhibition “Brazilian New Objectivity” in Rio de Janeiro. Written by Hélio Oiticica, the manifesto charts out the principal characteristics of the new art, which include “the participation of the spectator (bodily, tactile, visual, semantic, etc.),” “an engagement and a position on political, social and ethical problems,” a “tendency towards collective propositions,” and “a revival of, and new formulations in, the concept of anti-art.”³⁶ The impact that the standpoints advanced in this manifesto were to have on a generation of artists in Brazil and elsewhere on the continent cannot be underestimated, all the more because of the extremely volatile and dangerous circumstances surrounding artistic production under military dictatorship. One of the artists upon whom Oiticica’s manifesto, combined with the heightened level of artistic repression, had an obvious and profound impact was Cildo Meireles, whose work of the late 1960s and early 1970s fuses conceptual art with political activism. A case in point is Meireles’s series of *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos* (Insertions into ideological circuits). Arising out of what Meireles retrospectively described as the need “to create a system for the circulation and exchange of information that did not depend on any kind of centralized control,” the *Inserções* series transmitted information through a variety of alternative “circuits.”³⁷ For instance, *Insertion—Coca-Cola* (1970) consisted of printing messages and critical opinions about Brazilian politics and the politics of imperialism onto the sides of empty Coca-Cola bottles in vitreous white ink to match the bottles’ logo, and then reintroducing the bottles into circulation. The texts were virtually invisible when the bottles were empty, but as they were filled in the factory, the information became legible. In this manner, these works inverted the idea of the readymade that had characterized pop and, in its own way, minimal art. Instead of inserting the commodity object into the space of the gallery, the work returned the Coca-Cola bottles to their original

system of circulation—albeit in a radically altered form. As such, the work not only attempts an ambitiously egalitarian form of distribution, but also critiques the imperialism of advanced capitalism that Coca-Cola represented.³⁸

Several artistic practices emerge in the 1970s that at once follow logically from and challenge many of the claims of conceptual art. In particular, I want to single out three post-conceptual models of the 1970s and '80s that, though significantly different from each other, share the conceptualist belief that all art is dependent upon institutional practices, forms of distribution, and a structure that is preestablished by discursive and institutional conventions. The first is exemplified by the work of artists such as Mike Bidlo, John Knight, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Allan McCollum, and Richard Prince. What is most striking about these works, I want to suggest, is their exploration of structure, as well as their critique of authenticity and originality. In the conceptualist tradition of the effacement of authorial presence, Bidlo's and Levine's works, for instance, absolutely fuse with objects made by artists working in completely different historical contexts, and overtly undermine the credibility of artistic agency in the contemporary art world. Similarly, the focus on preexisting institutional and discursive formations—whether that of the museum or gallery (e.g., Lawler, McCollum), art history (e.g., Levine, Bidlo), or advertising (e.g., Knight, Prince)—singled out as the sites where their own cultural production will be determined, controlled, placed, and eventually threatened, characterizes the work of other artists that adopt this artistic model. What all these works share is that they again reposition the role of the artist, and problematize notions of uniqueness and originality.

The second model, comprised of the work of Victor Burgin, Jenny Holzer, Mary Kelly, and Barbara Kruger, among others, evolves in the same artistic context, and engages critically with similar issues. What is addressed now more programatically and forcefully than in the work of the artists discussed above, however, is the construction of the subject through various overdetermining forms. Particular focus is placed on the complex link between text and image, and between language and subjectivity. And this points to one of the distinct differences between this model of post-conceptual art and the linguistic conceptualism of the late 1960s. The latter, with its emphasis on a purely formal language, as much as on the belief that linguistically stated analytic propositions are capable of displacing traditional models of visuality, is clearly based on a modernist model of language, one that correlates historically with the legacies of reductivism and self-reflexivity. By contrast, artists such as Burgin, Holzer, Kelly, and Kruger theorize language beyond the purely analytic and formal, situating it within a synthetic, discursive practice determined by a system of control and domination.³⁹ From this perspective, language is perceived as in and of itself the very medium by which ideological subjectivity is

always already constructed. In other words, in direct response to the formal neutrality of conceptual art of the late 1960s, the post-conceptual work of artists such as Burgin, Holzer, Kelly, and Kruger in the 1970s argues that language is inextricably bound to ideology.⁴⁰ Which is in turn a point of view that the latter share with the first group of post-conceptual artists discussed above—namely, that all art is dependent upon preestablished discursive structures and institutional conventions.⁴¹

And it was precisely in those terms that the works of these artists were criticized by producers of a third and in many ways antithetical model of mid-1970s post-conceptualist artistic practice.⁴² In particular, what artists such as Fred Lonidier, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, and Phil Steinmetz consider problematic in the work produced by the first model, and, though to a lesser extent, by that of Burgin, Holzer, Kelly, and Kruger, is precisely that in their collapse of individual subjectivity and overdetermined patterns of behavior, they deny authorial intervention and political agency. Echoing the artistic practices of Latin American conceptualists of the 1960s, as well as that of many of the artists involved with *The Fox* and the activist Artists Meeting for Cultural Change in New York in the 1970s, the implication of the work of Lonidier, Rosler, Sekula, and Steinmetz is that self-determination and communication, even in advanced forms of capitalist control, is still a historical option and artistic possibility.

This opposition to the pessimism that characterizes the approach of artists of the first two models of post-conceptualist artistic practice is perhaps most clearly discerned in works such as Rosler's photo-text, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* of 1974. A sequence of twenty-four panels, and subsequently produced and distributed as a book, the work consists of a juxtaposition of texts and close-focus black-and-white photographs. In the first three panels, texts are juxtaposed with blanks; the rest alternate image and text constellations, sometimes positioning the image on the right, sometimes on the left. The photographic side of the panels features frontal views of storefronts and walls in the Bowery, evoking a large archive of representations of this district of Manhattan. Words and phrases that contain familiar idioms used to describe alcoholics, inebriation, and alcoholism in detail and in general are accumulated on the textual side of the panels. Thus both the linguistic and the visual provide detailed information without ultimately explaining their subject. In turn, assumptions about the neutrality of visual representation (and more specifically photographic imagery) and language are questioned and problematized. Neither of these "descriptive systems," Rosler's work implies, is adequate for a rendering or presentation of the complexities of the subject in question. Instead of describing the Bowery, Rosler's project stakes it out as a territory for an exploration of two ubiquitous forms of representation and their inherent limitations.

In this sense, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* parallels the work of other post-conceptual artists. But rather than stopping at an analysis of the system of representation itself, such works have a clear political subtext.⁴³ For if the post-conceptual models of artistic practice that I outlined earlier question and deny the possibility of rational communication within the contemporary public sphere, the work of Lonidier, Rosler, Sekula, and Steinmetz is characterized by an attempt to elicit dialogue, as much as political change, via redemption of critical, reflexive, activist modes of thought that combine theory with practice.⁴⁴ And it is precisely that ambition to communicate, to politically intervene within existing institutions of the democratic public sphere, that makes the work of these artists so different from that of their post-conceptualist peers.

The moment of conceptual art was relatively short-lived, barely spanning a full decade. And yet its legacy is wide-ranging, covering a vast terrain in terms of its effect on traditional modes and categories of artistic production, exhibition, and distribution. Indeed, one could argue that the influence of conceptualism can be found in almost all ambitious contemporary art practices—from the most obvious direct lineage of “neo-conceptualism” to the more obscure links of contemporary video, performance, and public art. As an international movement that transcended national borders voicing common concerns about the role of the artist, the artwork, the public, and the institutions involved, the questions and problematics posed by conceptual art continue to be as important today as when they were initially raised in the 1960s and 1970s.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Joseph Kosuth's assertions in “Art After Philosophy, Part II” (1969), reprinted in part III of this volume, and the debate that followed: Michel Claura, “Conceptual Misconceptions,” *Studio International*, 179:918 (January 1970), pp. 5–6; Dore Ashton, “Kosuth: The Facts,” *Studio International*, 179:919 (February 1970), p. 44; Joseph Kosuth, “Kosuth Replies to Claura,” *Studio International*, 179:919 (February 1970), p. 44; Joseph Kosuth, “An Answer to Criticisms,” *Studio International*, 179:923 (June 1970), p. 245; Barbara Reise, “Joseph Kosuth,” *Studio International*, 180:925 (September 1970), p. 71.

See also the debate following the initial publication of Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” in Claude Gintz, *L'art conceptuel: Une perspective*, ex. cat. (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989), pp. 25–54, compiled in *October*, no. 57 (Summer 1991), pp. 152–161, and the collection of documents pertaining to “the present Art & Language history war,” as Terry

Atkinson refers to it, compiled in Dave Rushton, *Don Quixote's Art & Television* (Edinburgh: Institute of Local Television, 1998), esp. pp. 33–41, and Terry Atkinson's "Introduction" to Rushton's volume, pp. xi–xiv.

2. The key essays in this context are reproduced in "Critical Histories of Conceptual Art," part VIII of this anthology, to which this essay is indebted.

3. To a considerable extent, these general definitions of conceptual art informed the most important book on the movement to date. Written by the art critic with the greatest amount of influence and insight in the tumultuous art world of the late 1960s, Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, 1966–72* (1973) suggests that the notion that the work of art by necessity employs a certain type of materiality, visuality, and aesthetic quality is far from assured. On the contrary, in tracking various artistic developments of the preceding half-decade, she discovers that such categories and assumptions can in fact be questioned, challenged, and in some cases altogether dismantled. Several texts by Lippard are republished in this anthology, including excerpts from "The Dematerialization of Art" (1967–68), co-written with John Chandler (in part II), and the "Postface" to *Six Years* (in part V).

4. The thesis that Kosuth develops has at its core a pursuit parallel to that of the logical positivists. Whereas the primary concern of the latter is in the search for the "meaning of our meaning systems," Kosuth presents his work as in search of the "art of our art systems" (which is what Kosuth means when he says that "art is the definition of art"). See Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy: Part 1" (1969), reprinted in part III of this volume.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. Citing Ayer, Kosuth writes: "A proposition is analytic when its validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains, and synthetic when its validity is determined by the facts of experience."

7. Ibid. A single long quotation conveys the gist of his argument: "The validity of artistic propositions is not dependent on any empirical, much less any aesthetic, presupposition about the nature of things. For the artist, as an analyst, is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. He is concerned with the way (1) in which art is capable of conceptual growth and (2) how his propositions are capable logically of following that growth. In other words, the propositions of art are not factual, but linguistic in character—that is, they do not describe the behavior of physical, or even mental objects; they express definitions of art, or the formal consequences of definitions of art."

8. Art & Language, "Introduction," *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art* (1969), reprinted in part III of this volume. I take this introduction, written primarily by Terry Atkinson, to represent the standpoint of the early Art & Language. Needless to say, it is a point of view that,

like all of those presented from the 1960s in this essay, will evolve considerably over the next decades. On the early history of Art & Language, see Charles Harrison and Fred Orton, *A Provisional History of Art & Language* (Paris: Editions E. Fabre, 1982).

9. Michael Baldwin, "Remarks On Air-Conditioning" (1967), reprinted in part I of this volume. Baldwin writes: "It has been customary to regard 'exhibitions' as those situations where various objects are in discrete occupation of a room, site, etc.: perceptions appear, to peruse. In the case of so-called 'environmental' exhibitions, it is easily shown that aspects of the discrete arrangement remain. Instead of inflected, dominating surfaces, etc., there are inflected, dominating sites. . . . It is absurd to suggest that spatial considerations are all bound to the relations of things at a certain level above that of a minimum visibility."

10. Terry Atkinson in a polemical letter to Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler following the publication of their article "The Dematerialization of Art" (1967–68), excerpts of which are reprinted in part II of this volume. Atkinson's letter, dated 23 March 1968, is also republished in this anthology.

11. Art & Language, "Introduction."

12. Ibid.

13. As Kosuth stated in a 1970 radio interview with Jeanne Siegel: "I call it art and it came out of art. I have had a traditional, even classical, art education." See "Joseph Kosuth: Art as Idea as Idea," in Jeanne Siegel, *Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s* (New York: Da Capo, 1985), p. 228.

14. Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967), reprinted in part I of this volume.

15. Patsy Norvell, interview with Sol LeWitt, 10 April 1969, unpublished (in Patsy Norvell archives, New York: "LeWitt: This kind of art that I'm doing, I don't think of it as being rational at all. I think of it as being irrational. Formalist art, where the artist decides and makes decisions all the way down the line, that's a rationalistic kind of way of thinking about art. I don't think mine is at all. . . . What I'm doing is much more complex. It's much more irrational." My account of the difference between rational and logical operations in LeWitt's artistic practice is informed by Rosalind Krauss, "The Mind/Body Problem: Robert Morris in Series," in *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem*, ex. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994), p. 11.

16. Norvell, interview with Joseph Kosuth.

17. LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art."

18. John Anthony Thwaites, "Lawrence Weiner: An Interview and an Interpretation," *Art and Artists*, 7:5 (August 1972), p. 23.

19. "I don't care aesthetically which of the three conditions the work exists in," Weiner stressed in an early interview. "It would be a fascist gesture on my part if I were to say you can accept

the things only on a verbal information level, which would be type on the page, or you can accept them only on an oral information level. It doesn't matter if it's physically conveyed or whether it's conveyed verbally or orally." See Willoughby Sharp, "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam," *Avalanche*, 4 (Spring 1972), p. 66.

20. As Weiner once remarked about his work, "There's no way to build a piece incorrectly." *Ibid.* p. 69.

21. This statement of intent was first published in the catalogue for the exhibition "January 5–31, 1969" (New York: Seth Siegelau, 1969), n.p.

22. "Anyone who imposes a unique condition for receivership, for interpretation, for seeing a work, is placing art within a context that is almost 19th century. There is the specific, unique, emotional object produced by a prophet, produced by the only person who can make this. It becomes Expressionist to say: 'I am the only one who can make this work, there's not other viable means of doing it.' I find Expressionism related to aesthetic fascism. And being basically a Marxist, I find any kind of Expressionism fascist, and repugnant. It becomes a moral issue as well as an aesthetic one." Sharp, "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam," p. 70.

23. Weiner repeatedly emphasized this characteristic of his work in the late 1960s. For example, in an unpublished interview with Patsy Norvell (3 June 1969, in Patsy Norvell archives, New York), he states: "I want the art to be accessible. . . . The price becomes almost unimportant because all the art's given away when you think about it. I go through a lot of trouble to get things published all the time. So the pieces are published, the information is public, anybody that really is excited can make a reproduction. So, in fact, the art is all freehold."

24. Weiner describes some of the motivations for the dismantling of agency and subjectivity in his work in the late 1960s in the following way: "I refuse to make any definite [decision about] . . . the presentation, because then it would become an art decision. But if I accept all of the variables of presentation, then it's not an art decision because it has nothing to do with the art. The art is as validly communicated orally, verbally, or physically. It's all the same. So I can't make a decision one way or the other without lending weight to it. It also takes the expressionism out of the work for me, . . . whereby my emotional state would be interfering with the art, and leaves it in the hands of whoever is receiving it, the interested party. And they can do with it as they choose." Norvell, interview with Lawrence Weiner, unpublished.

25. Only a couple of years earlier than Weiner, Roland Barthes theorized (and called for) this transition from author to reader in "The Death of the Author," trans. Richard Howard, *Aspen* 5+6, ed. Brian O'Doherty (Fall/Winter 1967), n.p.: "The birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author."

26. In a 1969 interview with Ursula Meyer, Weiner described the program of production and distribution of his work: "People . . . can take [my work] wherever they go and can rebuild it if they choose. If they keep it in their heads, that's fine too. They don't have to buy it to have it—they can have it just by knowing it. Anyone making a reproduction of my art is making art just as valid as art as if I had made it." Ursula Meyer, "Lawrence Weiner, October 12, 1969," in *Conceptual Art* (New York: Dutton, 1972), p. 217.

27. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions" (1989), an extract of which is reprinted in part VIII of this volume.

28. Throughout most of the 1960s, Haacke produced an art that explored natural systems. The systems were of physical phenomena such as wind, water, and air, as well as biological events. It should be stressed, however, that in all of these works with extant systems, the artist's role only consists of selecting the system to be demonstrated and organizing a convenient method of exhibiting it. Which is to say that a similar decentering of the artist to what we saw earlier in LeWitt's work takes place in these works by Haacke. This feature of Haacke's work was noted as early as 1966 by Mel Bochner who, in a review of Haacke's show at Harold Wise Gallery in New York, observed: "Duplicating nature in her operations . . . is what Haacke sets out to do. But at the same time he attempts to conceal the hand and personality of the maker." See Mel Bochner, "In the Galleries: Hans Haacke, Gerald Oster," *Arts Magazine*, 40:5 (March 1966), p. 58.

29. I borrow the term "inter-text" from Roland Barthes's "The Wisdom of Art" (1979): "The inter-text . . . is that circulation of anterior (or contemporary) texts in the artist's head (or hand)." *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 190.

30. "The work of art . . . in seemingly by-passing all difficulties, attains full freedom, thus in fact nourishing the prevailing ideology. It functions as a security valve for the system, an image of freedom in the midst of general alienation and finally as a bourgeois concept supposedly beyond all criticism, natural, above and beyond all ideology." Daniel Buren, "Critical Limits" (1970), in Buren, *Five Texts*, trans. Laurent Sauerwein (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1973), p. 45.

31. "The Museum/Gallery, for lack of being taken into consideration, is the framework, the habit, . . . the inescapable "support" on which art history is 'painted.' . . . The museum is thus an excellent weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie because its role, at first sight, is not tyrannical. It is indeterminate and self-evident. It preserves. Also, access to privilege of the Museum/Gallery is often submission to vigilance over what the system considers dangerous. One sees clearly here the political interest which there is for established order to privilege that which it fears might

escape it. The museum can assess in its own time what is presented, including that which has no a priori value (of an aesthetic-saleable kind), and will succeed all the more easily as everyone lends himself to this process, and no one notices this phenomenon or else considers it as inevitable and self-evident." Ibid., p. 39.

32. See Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, Roberto Jacoby, "A Media Art (Manifiesto)" (1966), included in part I of this volume.

33. For Dan Graham's employment of media systems for the production, exhibition, and distribution of his art in the 1960s, see his "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art'" (1985), reprinted in part VII of this volume. See also Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham" (1977), in part VI of this volume.

34. See María Teresa Gramuglio and Nicolás Rosa, "Tucumán Burns" (1968), included in part II of this volume. In Tucumán, a province in northwestern Argentina, the harsh plan of economic rationalization introduced by the military government of Juan Carlos Onganía in 1966 closed the majority of its sugar refineries. As these were the province's principal source of income, with their demise the area was soon abandoned, leaving it poverty-stricken and without a labor force to protest conditions. The government in turn, with the cooperation of the press, promoted its "Operativo Tucumán" in an attempt to conceal the conditions of extreme poverty rampant in the province. A massive publicity campaign was launched that announced a largely mythical industrialization project based on creating new capital industries throughout Tucumán that would soon lead to prosperity. Thus the pressing reality of the social conditions in Tucumán was downplayed and deferred.

In response to this phenomenon, a group of artists from Rosario, Sante Fe, and Buenos Aires formed the Group of Avant-Garde Artists (Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia) and affiliated themselves with the Argentinean General Confederation of Labor (Confederación General del Trabajo, or CGT). This culminated in the 1968 action entitled "Tucumán Burns" (*Tucumán Arde*) that sought to subvert the mythical nature of official media information with counterinformation in order to expose the catastrophic situation in the province. Not only the present situation but, more significantly, the factors that led up to this situation were publicized. Following an intense period of research systematically undertaken by the Group, posters and fliers of Tucumán were distributed through Rosario and Sante Fe. Soon, though, the Group decided to mount the work in the form of large multimedia exhibitions within main union halls of the CGT in Rosario and Buenos Aires.

The exhibitions featured all-over interior environments made up of posters, placards, photomurals, newspaper montages, and an array of statistical graphs indicating rates of infant mortality, tuberculosis, illiteracy, and the like, in the region of Tucumán. Juxtaposed to this

information was the full range of government-sponsored misinformation. The huge discrepancy between official and actual information was theorized by the group as having the potential not only to educate but to heighten the political consciousness of the spectators. But even with the direct engagement of the exhibitions' visitors, the high level of media attention the shows would attract was posited by the Group as an important vehicle for the dissemination of information. The movement from handbills to exhibition displays to media stratagems underscored the growing savviness of these artists to the increased role of media in production, transmission, and, ultimately, control of information about art and politics alike.

35. Ibid.

36. Hélio Oiticica, "General Scheme of the New Objectivity" (1967), republished in part I of this volume.

37. See Cildo Meireles, "Statements" (1981), reprinted in part VII of this volume.

38. See Cildo Meireles, "Insertions in Ideological Circuits" (1970), reprinted in part IV of this volume. Also see Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Blueprint Circuits: Conceptual Art and Politics in Latin America" (1993), in part VIII of this volume.

In Brazil, the military coup that toppled the constitutional regime in 1964 was followed by a resurgence of dictatorship in 1968. The latter, in tandem with Brazilian censors, immediately imposed a dramatic crackdown on the arts. Seen from this perspective, the radically transformed bottles that comprise the *Insertion—Coca-Cola* project function to communicate a revolutionary, anti-imperialist message to a potentially enormous public at a time when the dictatorial regime was vigilantly monitoring all the conventional channels of communication.

39. As Mary Kelly puts it in the interview with Terry Smith, first published in part VII of this anthology, "When I started work on *Post-Partum Document* in 1973 I was curious about the parallels with Art & Language work in England. They were very influential, as was the work of Kosuth in New York. I did want to shift the emphasis from the notion of the analytical proposition to a more synthetic process."

40. Clearly these are works that criticize both the analytic model of linguistic conceptualism in which language displaces the visual, and the more synthetic models of conceptualism of the 1960s and early 1970s where the displacement of the visual by language is coupled with the opening up of the work to allow the spectator/reader to become an active performer.

41. As was noted at the time by contemporary critics, many of these developments can be attributed to the influence of French structural and poststructural philosophy and theory. See, for example, Douglas Crimp, "Pictures" (1977–79), in *October*, no. 8 (Spring 1979), pp. 75–88, Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism" (1983), in *Beyond Rec-*

ognition: Representation, Power, Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 166–190, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Living with Contradictions: Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics” (1987), in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 124–148.

42. See in particular Martha Rosler, “Notes on Quotes” (1981–82), *Wedge*, no. 2 (Fall 1982), pp. 68–73, and Allan Sekula, “Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)” (1976–78), in Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photoworks 1973–1983* (Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), pp. 53–75.

43. As Sekula notes in “Dismantling Modernism,” *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* distinctly registers an intersection of class and language. “The pool of language that Rosler has tapped,” Sekula writes, “is largely the socio-linguistic property of the working class and poor. This language attempts to handle an irreconcilable tension between bliss and self-destruction in a society of closed options” (p. 62).

44. Particularly crucial for this generation of artists are intersubjective theories of communicative action, such as those advanced by Jürgen Habermas, and the Birmingham school's pursuit of spaces where alternative political discourse and action can occur. Communication and progressive social change, Habermas maintains in “An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communication versus Subject-Centered Reason,” in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Fredrick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), esp. pp. 321–326, can be achieved if one is willing to engage in rational discourse on topics of controversy, to attempt to understand the issues and arguments, to yield to the force of the better argument, and to accept a rational consensus. And it is precisely this pursuit of communication and social change that characterizes the work of Lonidier, Rosler, Sekula, and Steinmetz.