Rethinking Postwar Europe

Barbara Lange, Dirk Hildebrandt, Agata Pietrasik (eds.)

Artistic Production and Discourses on Art in the late 1940s and 1950s

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Still from Filip Markiewicz, *Voyage au bout d'une identité*, 2015. Full HD film synchronized on 3 projectors, 2.23:1/ 35 min, variable dimensions; produced by Mudam Luxembourg, Ministry of Culture of Luxembourg for the Luxembourg Pavilion at 56th Venice Biennale 2015: Still 23.55.32. © Markiewicz

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Europe, a Challenge

An Introduction

To Filip Markiewicz Europe is the most thrilling subject. In his cinematic installation *Voyage au bout d'une identité* (2015) a man proclaims abstracts from the *Manifesto for a Technology of De-Politization of the Body*. The text, written in an avantgarde manner, calls for a Europe where people no longer belong to any particular nation, where countries have become geographical territories with individual historical cultures, and where artistic creations give impulses to improve standards of living.[1] In order to provide the viewers of the film with orientation of how to manage this challenge, the artwork shows pictures of a couple traveling across Europe, assembling impressions of the continent's cultural diversity regardless former or current actual political systems. (Figs. 1–3) We see, for example, pictures from Warsaw with its neoclassical and Stalinist buildings, and from Paris with the *quartiers* mentioned in Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). The film shows rural parts of the continent, where the protagonists pass through. We get insights into different modes of interior design, clothing and speech habits. We listen to a variety of music, which comes from the film's soundtrack. In short, Markiewicz offers us a diverse image of Europe that has left a lot of certainties and stereotypes behind. An uncertain ground and a curious approach without neglecting the challenge and burden of history is also the starting point of our book.

1 Filip Markiewicz, *Voyage au bout d'une identité* (2015, full HD film synchronised on three projectors, 35 min) was part of the artist's contribution *Paradiso Lussemburgo* to 56th Venice Biennial in 2015, on display in Ca' d'Oro, the pavilion of Luxembourg. We want to thank Filip Markiewicz for supporting our book with his illustrations.

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Figs. 1–3 Stills from Filip Markiewicz, Voyage au bout d'une identité, 2015. Full HD film synchronised on 3 projectors, 2.23:1/35 min, variable dimensions; produced by Mudam Luxembourg, Ministry of Culture of Luxembourg for the Luxembourg Pavilion at 56th Venice Biennale 2015: Stills 23.52.25; 00.00.59; 00.01.03. © Markiewicz

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Why Europe?

The idea for our publication started already some years ago: in a discussion about colonial cultures and postcolonial approaches in art history, a colleague burst out 'Why are we always reproducing the old scheme of Europe and the rest? When will we finally start to see Europe as only one of many regions, as one of several provinces of the world?'[2] At that time, the challenges of overcoming the established narratives had been focused on what was called 'the rest' that this interruption caused only some arguments when the meeting was over. With a raise of eyebrows and a whisper about 'Eurocentrism' a certain uneasiness spread: What do we really know about Europe? Moreover, what do we have in mind when we talk about Europe? A continent? An uncertain territory, uncertain because it is a part of a much bigger landmass? Or an assembly of nation states, which change their borders and names from time to time? Obviously, it is much more than just the European Union.

A quick search in history and geography manuals made the issue by no means easier. One had to realise that not only none of these sources provided the required fixed definition, but one could also learn that in geography, as well as in history, the image of continents, their borders and cultures are even more discussed than in art history.[3] It seems that 'Europe' is, what Henri Lefebvre has termed, a social space.[4] What applies to all continents is also true to Europe: a continent is bound to a physical space, a territory, which can be experienced only diffusely. The realization of its existence is based on ideology, representation, and practices. Con-

2 This objection referred to the title of the book by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Differences, Princeton, NJ, revised edition, 2007.

3 One of the books which inspired a lot of these most fruitful discourses not only in geography labeled as *spatial turn* became Edward W. Soja, Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertation of Space in Critical Social Theory, London and New York, NY, 1989. See Nigel Thrift and Sarah Whatmore, 'Introduction', in Cultural Geography: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences, eds. Nigel Thrift and Sarah Whatmore, London, 2004, 1–17; Benno Werlen, 'Geographie/Sozialgeographie', in Raumwissenschaften, ed. Stephan Günzel, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, 142–158; Jörg Döring, 'Spatial Turn', in Raum. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch, ed. Stephan Günzel in collaboration with Franziska Kümmerling, Stuttgart and Weimar, 2010, 90–99. See also Sebastian Conrad, What is Global History?, Princeton, NJ, 2016.

4 See Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford, 1991, 411. Lefebvre's book was first published in French *(La production de l'espace)* in 1974. Although Lefebvre's theory does not provide instruments to analyse the becoming of largescale entities like 'Europe', it helps to understand the concept of a social space as a never-ending process of making.

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sequently, Europe is both: an ever-changing product of social practices as well as their instrument, medium, and milieu in the physical world.

Most often, art history still uses the opposition of Europe on the one side and all the rest on the other.[5] While we are aware that we need to widen our geographical scope, we still redistribute designs of a Europe, which had been created at the dawn of modernity by modernist concepts of the humanities. These images follow the old imperial logic of the 19th century, including nation states, Christianity on top of all religions, and the hierarchy of learned and so-called unlearned societies, where electricity and water closets waited long to get installed.[6] Taking the expanding field of art history into account, we need to take stock that these old paradigms are very resistant. Their stability leads us to the very core of a structural problem: the unveiling of this order of things as a structure of power and marginalization will only get into a new and sustainable balance when we manage to integrate the inner-European processes of exclusions and hierarchization into the new global art history.

Consequently, to gain a new concept of European art history means to move one step back in order to realise – like in *Voyage au bout d'une identité* – the many differences. That is not an easy project, especially when we turn to the 20th century. European art overwhelms us with a most vivid, complex and heterogeneous structure, which has a specific character. One may see certain familiarities between inner-European structures and those of colonialism. But in the 20thcentury negotiations, concerning the social space changed fundamentally, and Europe did no longer follow the road of master and subaltern. Since the 1920s, full citizenship with the implementation of equal rights was provided to nearly all Europeans; those European countries which still excluded women from certain fields followed within the next decades, and still existing, or former colonial dependencies became tested. Of course, these legal states do not picture real life. However, after World War I the master narrative of a European identity, stabilised through institutions and practices, needed to include, somehow, the granted diversity of different cultures. The historians Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow list this as a speci-

5 See Monica Juneja, 'Alternative, Peripheral or Cosmopolitan? Modernism as a Global Process', in Global Art History. Transkulturelle Verortungen von Kunst und Wissenschaft, eds. Julia Allerstorfer and Monika Leisch-Kiesl, Bielefeld, 2017, 79–107.

6 See Steyn Bergs et al., 'Situating Art's Histories: The Politics and Paradoxes of Globalizing', Kunstlicht, 39:1, 2018, 4–8.

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ficity of modern Europe.[7] Moreover, with the newly founded Soviet Union and its specific interpretation of a socialist society, the bourgeois project of modernity got a powerful opponent and the diversity of European societies a new dynamic. Art was deeply involved in all these processes, not only as a medium of ideologies, but also as an agency of its own. From an art historian point of view, Jarausch's and Sabrow's list necessarily needs a further important addition: in modern Europe questions of origin, culture and identity are also negotiated by, through and with the arts. From the 1920s onward more than ever.

Numerous studies about the interwar period have demonstrated how this situation caused disruptions in European societies, how art and political practices sometimes competed. After the end of World War II, this complex disposition became even more disturbed by the gravity field of politics. Between 1945 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the ideology of the Cold War became the pattern to categorise, understand, and interpret art. The 'Shadow of Yalta' – as the late Piotr Piotrowski has called it concerning the famous conference in Crimea in February 1945[8] – somehow kidnapped the view on the postwar European art world and made it hostage to Cold War ideologies. Thus, art specific processes became covered under a layer of icing, which only benefited the power interests of the two main poles of global politics, USSR and USA. Bitter to say, but until now it still dominates our perspectives. Not that no efforts were made to overcome this structure. Piotrowski himself was one of the protagonists who did not get tired of pleading for new perspectives. With a focus on the art scenes in European socialist countries, he pointed out, that they had been much more diverse than their popular image. While the Cold War image of the Eastern Bloc cracks with every new research project, also the former image of the West began to tremble.

As important as those efforts are still a second challenge is calling. The need to bring art and politics into a balance without the dominance of the geopolitical order of the Cold War remains under work. The task is: how are we able to design an art historical perspective on Europe, which does not forget political responsibilities in history and, at the same time, enables us to talk about all the fruitful and exciting impacts of European art and culture? This book is meant to be a contribution to it.

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7 See Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, '"Meistererzählungen" – Zur Karriere eines Begriffs', in Die historische Meistererzählung: Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945, eds. Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, Göttingen, 2002, 9–32, 21.

8 See Piotr Piotrowski, In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989, trans. Anna Brzyski, London, 2009.

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Whereas most art historical studies about the decades of the Cold War concentrate on the time of the 1960s onwards, we take the previous years into account. Concerned with Cold War ideologies, one quickly realises that further researches on those formative years right after the war are urgently and necessarily needed to understand the morphology of the European art world. The genocide and the war, which destroyed the territory so immensely and left the survivors in a state of trauma, were seen as a failure of politics. Most protagonists of the art world – artists as well as art critics, art historians, curators and part of the audiences – recalled the creative power of art and its responsibilities to humankind. They were convinced to be leading figures in rebuilding a new peaceful Europe. But resuming the progressive legacy of the continent remained marked by the mass murder of the European Jews during the World War II. To name this, the Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin coined the term 'genocide' in the immediate aftermath of the war. Later, the notion became incorporated into the international legal system and until today it serves as a '"gold standard" of humanitarian emergencies'[9]. As demonstrated by Michael Rothberg this had also tremendous cultural consequences, as Europe's way of coming to terms with the Holocaust was deeply entwined with the global processes of decolonisation.[10] Thus, no matter how the political system was structured, *after Auschwitz* became a central idea and a challenge.[11] As Eckhart Gillen and Peter Weibel point out, 'Adorno saw the task of art only in the refusal of reconciliation, in uncompromising negation of the conditions that had made Auschwitz possible.'[12] What Adorno attributes to the role of art in postwar Europe implies a contradiction in terms: if art actively participates in the rebuilding of Europe, it can only do so against the background of the

9 A. Dirk Moses, 'Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide', in The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies, eds. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses, Oxford, 2010, 19–41, 41.

10 See Michael Rothberg, Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization, Stanford, CA, 2009.

11 The list of theories conceptualising the condition *after Auschwitz* is long. We only refer to Theodor W. Adorno, Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft, Frankfurt/Main, 1955; Giorgio Agamben, Language and Death. The Place of Negativity, Minneapolis, MN, 1991; Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, CA, 1998; Giorgio Agamben, Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, New York, NY, 1998; Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Das jüdische Volk träumt nicht', Fragmente, 29/30, 1989, 99–128; Jean-Luc Nancy, The Sense of the World, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett, Minneapolis, MN, 1997.

12 Eckhart Gillen and Peter Weibel, 'Europe after the Rain. The Dialectic of Trauma and Revival in European Art from 1945 to 1968', in Exh. Cat. Karlsruhe et al., ZKM. Center for Art and Media 2016: 'Facing the Future. Art in Europe – 1945–1968', Tielt, 2016, 12–15, 13.

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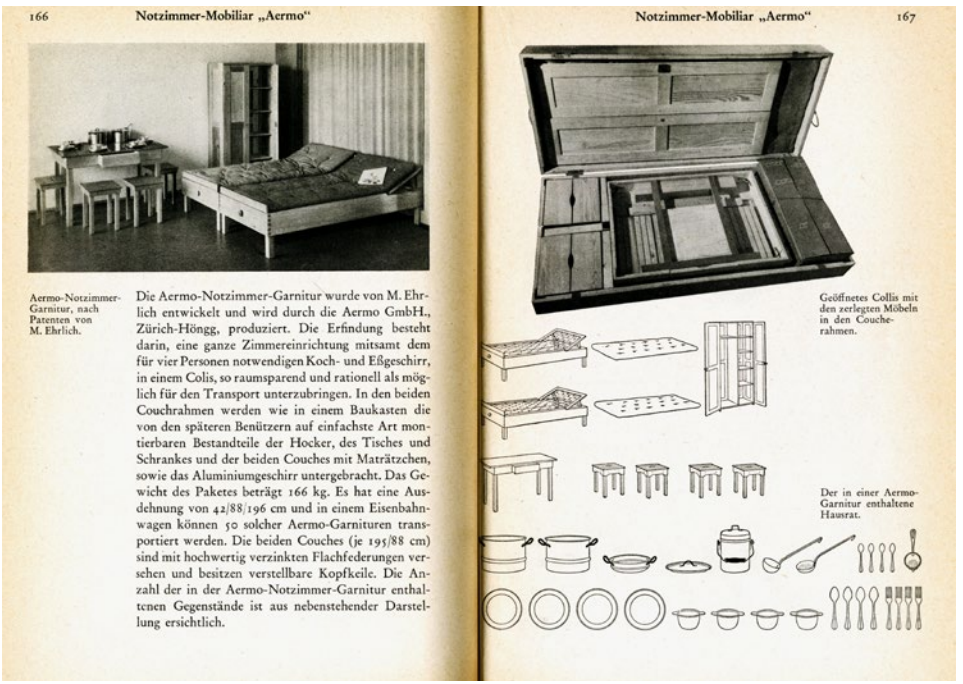
conviction that it is impossible to continue to relate to the grown structures of tradition and history that had designed Europe *before the War.* In this sense, the future of Europe is less dependant on reconstruction than essentially associated with the task of reinvention.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Aermo-Notzimmer-Garnitur, nach Patenten von M. Ehrlich.

Die Aermo-Notzimmer-Garnitur wurde von M. Ehrlich entwickelt und wird durch die Aermo GmbH., Zürich-Höngg, produziert. Die Erfindung besteht darin, eine ganze Zimmereinrichtung mitsamt dem für vier Personen notwendigen Koch- und Eßgeschirr, in einem Colis, so raumsparend und rationell als möglich für den Transport unterzubringen. In den beiden Couchrahmen werden wie in einem Baukasten die von den späteren Benützern auf einfachste Art montierbaren Bestandteile der Hocker, des Tisches und Schrankes und der beiden Couches mit Matratzchen, sowie das Aluminiumgeschirr untergebracht. Das Gewicht des Paketes beträgt 166 kg. Es hat eine Ausdehnung von 42/88/196 cm und in einem Eisenbahnwagen können 50 solcher Aermo-Garnituren transportiert werden. Die beiden Couches (je 195/88 cm) sind mit hochwertig verzinkten Flachfederungen versehen und besitzen verstellbare Kopfkeile. Die Anzahl der in der Aermo-Notzimmer-Garnitur enthaltenen Gegenstände ist aus nebenstehender Darstellung ersichtlich.

Notzimmer-Mobiliar „Aermo" 167

Geöffnetes Collis mit den zerlegten Möbeln in den Couchrahmen.

Der in einer Aermo-Garnitur enthaltene Hausrat.

Fig. 4 Page with Notzimmer-Mobiliar Aermo. From: Max Bill, Wiederaufbau, Zurich, 1945, 166–167.

Time could not be turned back, and the concepts of starting anew differed a lot. There were those practical contributions, like Max Bill's plea to provide people in the destroyed territories with houses, furniture, and housewares.[13] (Fig. 4) Although the booklet which he published with the aid of the Swiss Department of Foreign Trade is structured by countries, referring to their particular destruction and the postwar situation, Bill's arguments are not based on national states or political

13 See Max Bill, Wiederaufbau. Dokumente über Zerstörungen, Planungen, Konstruktionen, Zurich, 1945, 166–167.

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systems but on the European wide conditions of material supply, building technologies, transport systems and experiences in urbanism. What came as a very useful support for the victims of the war, turns out – as a glance into the introduction exposes – to be also an idea for a growing economy in which the Swiss architects wanted to participate too.[14] In contrast, Ottomar Domnick's activities were far from economic interests.[15] Open-minded, well-educated and without financial problems the psychiatrist, talented cello player and engaged collector of artworks from Stuttgart in the German South West represented a certain bourgeois milieu, which in the years before the war had got cornered by populist propaganda against intellectual elites. He himself an emigrant from the Pomeranian region, which after the war became part of Poland, was not limited to argue in national terms. Inspired by discourses on abstraction – not least with his professional view on the human brain in mind – he started to build his private collection of non-figurative artworks. Becoming a role model for other art lovers, the interior decoration of his and his wife Greta's home was soon subject of an article in the popular German art magazine *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim (Art and the Beautiful Home)* in 1949, illustrated with a view into the living room with its presentation of artworks, wooden masks and tabular steel furniture from the Bauhaus. (Fig. 5) Domnick spent a lot of his time and money to make people in the occupied zones of Western Germany familiar with non-figurative painting.[16] Although in most newspapers his activities were broadly claimed as a contribution to international understanding, mainly between Germany and France, they were not welcomed by all politicians, curators, and artists. His concept of free spirit and his opinion of freedom was by no means shared by everybody in the West.

14 See Bill 1945, 7–8.

15 For further references see Werner Esser, '"Stuttgarter Aufbruch" oder "Die Zukunft hatte schon begonnen". Ottomar Domnick, Franz Marc und das erste Sammlermuseum des Landes', in Neuordnungen. Südwestdeutsche Museen in der Nachkriegszeit, ed. Landesstelle für Museumsbetreuung Baden-Württemberg, Tübingen, 2002, 117–135.

16 See Martin Schieder, Im Blick des Anderen. Die deutsch-französischen Kunstbeziehungen 1945–1959, Berlin, 2005, 91–117.

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Fig. 5 Haus Dr. D. In Die Kunst und das schöne Heim, 1, 1949, 28. From: Werner Esser, '"Stuttgarter Aufbruch" oder "Die Zukunft hatte schon begonnen". Ottomar Domnick, Franz Marc, die Staatsgalerie und das erste Sammlermuseum des Landes', in Neuordnungen. Südwestdeutsche Museen in der Nachkriegszeit, ed. Landesstelle für Museumsbetreuung Baden-Württemberg, Tübingen, 2002, 121. Photograph by Madeline Winkler-Betzendahl.

In this book, we take a broad variety of these different activities into view in order to find a balance between art and politics. Together, the contributions not only describe – to quote one of postwar protagonists, Lawrence Alloway – an 'aesthetics of plenty'[17], which is genuine for European culture of that time, but also their different methodological viewpoints give insights into nowadays widespread research interests, as well as into quite a variety of possibilities, to analyse the most complex and heterogeneous art world after World War II. As a survey would run the risk to neglect too many particularities, this specific collection of case studies with its staking of a broad horizon hopefully will become a useful contribution to discussions on Europe's place in art history.

17 Lawrence Alloway, 'The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty', in Exh. Cat. London, ICA 1990: 'The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty', ed. David Robbins, Cambridge, MA, and London, 1990, 49–53. Alloway invented the term in his essay *The Front of Culture* (1959), in Imagining the Present. Context, Content, and the Role of the Critic: Essays by Lawrence Alloway, ed. Richard Kalina, New York, NY, 2006, 61–64, 61.

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The Power of Art in Postwar Europe

The contributions of this book are structured by four fundamental but open categories. *Narratives* is the first section, which starts with a discussion of two differently composed frames to conventionalise and articulate reality of the postwar period in Europe: one of rupture and renewal and the second one of continuity and trauma. The essays in the section *Practices* focus on expressions of ideas which became materialised by doing, writing or designing. They demonstrate a central subject of the postwar decades: the negotiation of European identities, their routes, and challenges. In the section *Identities*, the case studies take an even closer look at different approaches to the discursive forms, which allowed individuals to represent themselves, respectively, to design (new) reflections. Their diversity contradicts an exclusive image of a singular European identity. In *Particularities* the focus on very different, somehow un-comparable dispositions in postwar art history, allows bringing to the fore the importance of art for postwar European cultures. As a matter of fact, what unites this multitude of distinct artistic projects and approaches is a belief, shared across different states and political systems of Europe, that art can transform and renew societies.

Narratives

As pointed out above, Europe is a narrative. Or rather, it is the interaction and counter-play of manifold and different narratives. From a certain point of view, one could even say that Europe is nothing but a stratification, nothing but layers and layers of narratives. But as much as it is a centuries-old concept, it is also the specific historical constellation, which provides context for this publication. That being said, it must appear as an impossible undertaking to *define* Europe in the sum of its parts. Still, it is impossible to understand the aftermath of the postwar situation without acknowledging the dominance and political force of particular narratives that have shaped our ideas and thinking about Europe in many ways.

One of the most important achievements of art history in recent years is the considerable progress in realising and working against the implied dichotomization of Europe's own, Western self and the *other* – a conflict, which is directly linked to art's restoration in postwar times. As early as 1989, Walter Grasskamp's survey of the first *documenta* (1955) records the double failure of the curators, trying to redeem the *Entartung* of art in Nazi Germany and to acknowledge the *other* in

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terms of a 'continuity of the archaic'[18] at the same time. Taking on the impulse of what Grasskamp referred to as *unbewältigte Moderne (unresolved modernism)*, Susanne Leeb has offered a deconstruction of European art history's longstanding narratives. She unveils its (un-)conscious reliance on the figure of the *other* to confront the dichotomy with the concept of an anthropological configuration.[19] In this sense, modern art history becomes more and more engaged with *entangled histories*, for example, the simultaneity of colonial modernisms. Hopefully, recounting the specificity of these histories will further 'new methodologies that can account for both similarity and difference'[20], as Atreyee Gupta writes.

This is an important reminder of the fact that even in the so-called West itself, the ideology of modernism has only allegedly been a complete triumph of modernity over tradition. In the context of new global art histories, Gupta's plea for 'similarity *and* difference' is also the necessary condition for the reassessment of inner-European processes of exclusions and hierarchization.

Éva Forgács and Simon Vagts are contributing to the visualization of art's narrative potential in different ways. As much as Forgács' argument is related to the historical archive, it offers an inquiry into notorious narratives of modernism. Her case study is Willem Sandberg, director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the longstanding process of preparing an exhibition on Kazimir Malevich, finally realised in 1957. In a sense, Vagts' investigation in Roberto Rossellini's filmmaking presents the counterpart to this institutionalised setting. His close reading of three of Rossellini's films, released between 1948 and 1952, offers an unexpected cartography of postwar Europe. Unfolding the meaning of particular motives and designating the films as the axes in a system of coordinates, Vagts comes to unfold art's potential with regard to the political situation of Europe. In both cases, considering Europe from the vantage point of artistic production

18 Walter Grasskamp, Die unbewältigte Moderne. Kunst und Öffentlichkeit, Munich, 1989, 76–89, 87: 'Der nationalsozialistischen Suggestion einer *Kontinuität des Klassizismus* wird mit der Behauptung einer *Kontinuität des Archaischen* begegnet.' [emphasis in quotation]

19 See Susanne Leeb, Die Kunst der Anderen. 'Weltkunst' und die anthropologische Konfiguration der Moderne, Berlin, 2015, 9–33.

20 Atreyee Gupta, 'In a Postcolonial Distinction: Postwar Abstraction and the Aesthetics of Modernization', Art Journal, 72:3, 2013, 30–46, 46. It seems that Andreas Huyssen's statement on the 'antagonistic ethos of European modernism' reverberates in Gupta's argument. Huyssen writes 'The crises of subjectivity and of representation at the core of European modernism played out very differently in colonial and postcolonial modernity. Such alternative geographies of modernism have emerged on our horizon since the rise of postcolonial studies and a new attentiveness to the genealogy of cultural globalization.' Andreas Huyssen, 'Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World', New German Critique, 100, 2007, 189–207, 190.

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entails a rethinking of established narratives. Furthermore, art gives us a sense of 'similarity and difference', not as exclusory alternatives, but understood as the two mutual faces of the same coin.

Practices

Art's narrative threads resist tropes such as Anselm Haverkamp's influential description of the 1950s as a period of latency 'in whose emptiness something must have happened, even if it is not visible.'[21] In their essays on Asger Jorn, Barbara Lange and Dirk Hildebrandt fill the alleged 'emptiness' by showing how the idea of a 'transnational network' was already in use among artists in early postwar Europe. Barbara Lange demonstrates how the artist's use of ceramics as a medium becomes a way to assemble a tangible community. In her account, the small village of Albisola in Northern Italy appears as the bottleneck of a transnational network *avant la lettre*, a social space created by artistic means. Coming from the same impulse, Dirk Hildebrandt's contribution is likewise involved with the politics of Jorn's art. His starting point is the artist's famous series of painterly *Modifications.* Hildebrandt takes this series as a point of departure to discover a concept of *writerly modification*, moored in the artist's writing.

Hinting at the potentiality of art as a methodological tool that even shapes communal projects, both authors imply art's capacity as a *practice.* Jacques Rancière comes to define 'artistic practices' as '"ways of doing and making" that intervene in the general ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being and forms of visibility.'[22] To account for this understanding of art as a way of doing and making, Rancière refers to traditional concepts of art's autonomy and visibility.[23] According to this argument, art needs to be situated within the aesthetic realm to intervene into what lies beneath it. This remains true to artists like Asger Jorn. Still, taking his ambitions into closer consideration reveals that the artist neither believed in a notion of art being located on the walls of a museum, nor did he follow the idea of artistic production necessarily leading

21 Anselm Haverkamp, 'Latenzzeit. Die Leere der 1950er Jahre. Interview with Susanne Leeb and Juliane Rebentisch', Texte zur Kunst, 50:12, June 2003, 45–52, 45: 'Latenzzeit ist ein Verlegenheitsterminus, ein Vorschlag, wie man mit der Periode der fünfziger Jahre umgehen kann, in deren Leere etwas passiert sein muss, selbst wenn es nicht sichtbar ist.'

22 Jacques Rancière, The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, York and New York, NY, 2011, 12.

23 See Rancière 2011, 22.

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to classical works of art. Moreover, art was to him a way of re-designing relationships and connections. Through artistic practice, Jorn enabled people to imagine and establish different relationships to themselves, as well as to objects. In other words, he refused to see the critical potential of modern art as being detached from political and economic spheres.

Outlining the ethical dimensions of artistic practice, Agata Pietrasik's essay on the Polish artist Marian Bogusz adds yet another layer to this connection. In the concentration camp in Mauthausen, the artist together with fellow prisoner Emmanuel Muños developed the concept for an *International Artistic Settlement*, which – in their utopian thoughts – was to be built at the very site. On the one hand, Bogusz's idea to replace the concentration camp was based on the utopian potential of modernism, implying a concept of universalism, granting freedom and equality for everybody. On the other hand, his project addresses the discourses of modern architecture by confronting it with traditional and vernacular forms. As much as Bogusz's project is situated in the context of memorial culture, it aims at 'remembrance without commemoration', as Pietrasik puts it – a cultural practice of life, based in history and directed towards the future. During imprisonment, art as a practice of a free mind had been a survival strategy. After the war, to Bogusz, this experience became a motor for socially engaged art in opposition to officially promoted doctrines in socialist Poland.

Identities

The question of identity is at the heart of the re-construction of postwar Europe. As much as identity is associated with categories like home, origin, and belonging, it is linked to the relationship between individual and community, society and state. From this perspective, the question of identity is at least threefold: Who are we, where do we belong, and what do we share with each other? Jean-Luc Nancy has famously defined the relationship between individual and community as a process of *being singular plural:* '*Being singular plural* means the essence of being is only as co-essence [...] or being-with (being-with-many) [...].' He proceeds to explain the implied politics '[P]ower is neither exterior to the members of the collective nor interior to each one of them, but rather exists in the collectivity as such.'[24] Of course, Nancy's assumptions about the inextricability of individual and commu-

24 Jean-Luc Nancy, Being Singular Plural, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, Stanford, CA, 2000, 30.

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nity cannot be taken for granted, especially not in the turbulent times after World War II. They nonetheless offer a reformulation of the problem of a European identity, departing from the identification of individuals and/or peoples with Europe in postwar times: How do individual actors cope with the situation, and how do they address their communities in terms of a process to endow identity?

In times of global processes of migration, it is the figure of a refugee who calls into question the very site in which these questions are negotiated. Giorgio Agamben has identified the refugee as a 'limit concept' that not only 'calls into question the fundamental question of the nation-state' but clears the way 'for a long overdue renewal of categories in the service of a politics, in which bare life is no longer separated or excepted, either in the state order or in the figure of human rights.'[25] As contemporary as Agamben's words may seem, they are, of course, written in the context of his argument on the biopolitics in concentration camps. While Agamben describes the politics of the camp in terms of a 'pure space of exception' for entering it presupposed denationalising and stripping the inmates off their citizenship,[26] the liminal situation of a refugee, in a sense, becomes the general rule in postwar times. In her essay, Hildegard Frübis addresses the displacement of Jewish survivors as a *standby condition,* which becomes visible in the photographs of Jewish photographer Roman Vishniac. Frübis takes Vishniac's pictures of Jewish concentration-camp survivors, accommodated in displaced-persons camps, as visual documents of this situation. Among snapshots of a new beginning of Jewish life in Germany, she also traces its different departures like the actualization of the Zionist movement, paving its way to Palestine. In this sense, Vishniac's photographs are not to be considered mere symbols of a new Jewish identity but careful observations of postwar Europe resuming momentum after a standstill of history.

While Vishniac's photographic perception of this liminal situation departs from a particularly political space, Regina Wenninger's contribution deals with the cultural politics of postwar Europe. More specifically, she focuses on the discourse on abstract art as staged between the German art magazines *Das Kunstwerk* and *tendenzen,* offering a comparative perspective. *Tendenzen* polemicised against abstract art as a token of a bourgeois culture, supposedly affirmed in *Das Kunstwerk.* Around 1960, Polish abstract art of all things became the exemplary object to stage the well-known conflict between East and West on the pages of two magazines. Polish abstraction was a phenomenon hard to categorise within

25 Agamben 1998a, 78.
26 Agamben 1998a, 78.

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the logic of the Cold War. The art escaped a framework of socially engaged figuration and given the fact that it was eagerly displayed on many official exhibitions abroad, it was hard to categorise it as a dissident art either. Analysing the reception of Polish abstraction in Western Germany, Wenninger presents us one of the firmest binary oppositions of the Cold War. By literally reading oppositional agendas from two magazines, Wenninger hints at the problematic affirmation of heroic narratives of the Cold War and proposes a more detailed picture of the self-fashioning of one of the German identities and its cultural dimensions in the wake of postwar Europe.

Tanja Zimmermann introduces a third perspective to the question of a European identity by reversing the direction of Regina Wenninger's argument. Tracing concepts like *primitivism* and *naïveté*, Zimmermann shifts to the margins of the Cold War discourse to offer a different view of the building processes in postwar Europe. She contextualises the *naïve* as a possibility to circumvent and redefine the usual gap between social realism and abstract art, separating Eastern from Western ideologies. Against this backdrop, Zimmermann presents us with Oto Bihalji-Merin, a Serbian art critic and writer to whom *naïve art* offered the possibility to accompany the politics of the Non-Aligned Movement. In this sense, the *naïve* appears as a trans-cultural notion traversing artistic and geopolitical discourses to relocate European identity.

Particularities

The aforementioned master narrative of postwar Europe created an image of a singular continent, a homogenous space with shared values and conditions. This image has been used as a tool in the process of colonization, and it was presented as an example to be emulated by the peoples subjected to colonial rule. The particularities of Europe were further erased during the Cold War when cultural and political diversities were broken down to construct an opposition of West and East. The period of the Cold War provided a very powerful, all-encompassing narrative of rivalry between communism and capitalism and was also transposed to aesthetic categories such as abstraction and socialist realism. For a long time, the image of Europe has been structured by those binaries. Not only did they cover up the different shades of relationship to these major postwar powers but also hid particular histories of the European multitude. We take into view Ireland and Portugal as *Particularities*, which by no means fit into the master narrative of a great divide between socialism and capitalism.

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The two countries allow us to revisit generalised views and easily made assumptions about the so-called West. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, Eastern Europe was put under a greater scrutiny and eventually emerged as a conflicted yet somehow separate part of the continent, bound together by a specific, historical experience of communism. At the same time, the coherence of the Western part of Europe remained more solid, even if its canon expanded in order to include novel practices and other previously unacknowledged practices, such as performance art from former Yugoslavia by Marina Abramović.[27] This part of the book opens questions about what we consider a legitimate part of the West. Do countries such as Portugal, marked by a tragic legacy of dictatorship and a long history of colonialism, belong to the narrative of a democratic West? Where is the place of the other within this construct?

In his contribution, Pedro Lapa presents us with the Portuguese painter Joaquim Rodrigo, who in the 1950s, worked in isolation imposed by the political conditions. This isolation led him to develop a unique and complex language of pictorial abstraction. Rodrigo was influenced by Angolan painting made available to him through a popular publication. In this sense, his artworks not only indicate painting's aesthetic values but also reflect on its political conditions, combining a critique of colonialism with abstraction. Through this unorthodox practice, the artist moved beyond the realm of his local particularities towards universalism and emancipation embodied by abstraction. Yet, even though the forms of his painting were engaged in a global debate, they remain influenced and shaped by the very conditions of their production.

Elisabeth Ansel brings to the fore the tension between an artist and his or her particular, national identity by analysing the work of the Irish painter, Louis le Brocquy. The reception of his œuvre during the 1940s and 1950s is deeply intertwined in debates about distinctive qualities of a national Irish culture, both in Ireland and Great Britain. Unable to avoid being typecast as *Irish*, le Brocquy was indeed perceived as a modern painter, exploring the qualities of a medium and important questions of his time (this position was reserved for artists such as Francis Bacon). But his paintings were equally understood as processing national traditions of Ireland.

27 For an exceptional attempt to rethink West not only post 1989 but also in response to the emergence of the global South and North see Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh, eds. Former West and the Contemporary after 1989, Cambridge, MA, 2017.

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The above-mentioned case studies raise important questions about who could be considered a modern artist, independent from a given heritage of an assumed *national* origin, especially when the artists migrated. How could the artists avoid being defined by their nationality? Those questions of local versus global modernisms can also be related to architectural debates of postwar Germany, which are the subject of the essay by Regine Heß. German architects of the 1950s were troubled by the Nazi past and at the same time were trying to rebuild a completely ruined country. Modernism was then a way of connecting to the pre-war traditions of the Bauhaus and looking into the future, without engaging in the legacy of the war. Embracing universalism of modernity enabled oblivion of a painful, national past.

The Book

Our book is a collaborative project. 'Rethinking Postwar Europe' started with a conference in Tübingen in the Southwest of Germany in February 2018, organised by Arnold Bartetzky, Marina Dmitrieva (both Leipzig, Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe – GWZO), Tanja Zimmermann (University of Leipzig, Institute of Art History) and Barbara Lange (University of Tübingen, Institute of Art History), funded by German Research Foundation (DFG). Although all participants were familiar with the subject and specialists in their field, the gathering led to an unexpected result. Apart from the fact that the presented case studies provided an astonishing and most vivid complexity of European art and culture in the decade immediately after World War II, we became, somehow, speechless. Fully aware that the old pattern of the Cold War is outdated, the different methodological approaches together with old and new narratives drew a most ambivalent image of postwar Europe. We had to realise how deeply our thoughts are rooted in ideologies of the Cold War. Instead of being disappointed, we took it as an opportunity to publish an edited book, not as conference proceedings but as a statement of its own in order to put our fingers on certain weak spots. Fortunately, in addition to most of the contributions which had been already subject on the conference, we could also include essays on narratives in the mass media film as well as on debates on architecture in postwar Germany.

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