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## Toward »Loss of Logic«: Realism, Politics, and Pop Art in Two Early Exhibitions

In fall 1963, when the idea of pop art was still under construction, the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA) in Ann Arbor hosted two forward-thinking exhibitions that explored the new tendency. »Six Painters and the Object«, a show curated by the respected critic Lawrence Alloway, arrived on tour from the Guggenheim Museum with work by Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, and others already attracting attention in New York. The more eclectic »New Realist Supplement«, curated in-house by the museum's Associate Director Samuel Sachs II and Irving Kaufman, a Professor of Art, featured a wider range of media and artists, from the West Coast as well as the East.<sup>1</sup> Quiet galleries were disrupted with 12-foot-wide Combine paintings (Fig. 1), sculpture that incorporated working radios, billboard imagery, scenes of rape and murder (Fig. 5), and *Superman* and a toilet-licking *Superdog in Jail* (Fig. 3). Record numbers of people visited and a lively »what is art?« debate ensued. Students who saw the exhibitions now remember them for being on the cutting edge of a transformative era at the University. The early Sixties on campus saw the alliance of two recently named phenomena: »the military-industrial complex« and the Cold War »multiversity«. In an influential address that introduced the latter concept in 1963, the University of California's President Clark Kerr explained that the modern research university no longer resembled a medieval community of scholars but rather an organization that had »some form of contact with nearly every industry, nearly every level of government, nearly every person in its region.«<sup>2</sup> Students at the University in these years both participated in a culture of material progress and learned to question it; the University became a center of the student Left. All of these trends informed the local viewing of the new art.

»Six Painters and the Object«, in its various iterations, is now regarded historically as a step toward establishing Pop art as a movement. The art highlighted in the »New Realist Supplement« exhibition, often more outrageous and socially engaged, remains less well-known.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, a letter from Alloway, in response to advance queries from the curators in Michigan, is telling:

I would ask that the additions be separated from the exhibition that you are getting from us... The show, which I arranged, was conceived rather strictly, and I fear the loss of its logic if other works became involved... The exhibition was conceived to demonstrate the quality of the so-called Pop artists as painters.<sup>4</sup>

Alloway's boundary-placing clarifies not only his concept for the »Six Painters« exhibition but also a process of cordoning-off that shaped the interpretation of Pop Art and the varieties of art loosely grouped as »New Realisms« in the United States. A look at the alternative exhibition on other side of the gallery wall - what was in it and why the need



*Fig. 1: »All who contemplate modern art agree that it stimulates the imagination« (visitors to »Six Painters and the Object« at the University of Michigan Museum of Art with Wager by Robert Rauschenberg), 1963*

for separation in order for Pop to earn its place as a serious art movement - sheds light on the extent to which Pop art was defined in terms of realism and politics in its early years, before both student life and the art on view were written proleptically into a history informed by later movements of the Sixties. What to call the new art, in what ways it was realistic, which artists counted as major or minor, whether this »radical« art was political in some way - none of this was solidified at the time.

Scholarship on the politics of U. S. Pop art often reads between the lines to discern covert commentary within the visually emphatic yet interpretively ambiguous work by now-canonical artists. In search of social context, scholars examine the period's discussion of consumption and the mass media; others interpret Jasper Johns' obscure painting as subtle commentary on the nature of language, or of the closet. More recently Alex Potts has discerned within the materiality of Pop a grappling with realities of modern capitalism. Most agree with Thomas Crow that Pop tended to sidestep »political crisis, which demanded a moral response

likely to undermine the detachment and indirection enjoined on American artists.« Although some of the prominent Pop artists lent quiet support to anti-war projects, their art remained gallery-based and politically restrained, as did the work of minimalist artists in these years.<sup>5</sup> In most accounts, in the later 1960s feminist and politically informed art abandoned the gallery for murals, performance, alternative exhibitions, and the underground press.<sup>6</sup> Thus in two respects, current scholarship on the period tends to leave out of its account an important body of rough edged and explicitly political, gallery based art of the early nineteen sixties that commanded considerable attention at the time, alongside what is now considered more mainstream Pop work.

Like the Six Painters, the artists shown in the New Realist Supplement at Michigan worked in traditional media within the gallery system. But unlike the Six Painters, their political commentary was evident in plain sight. Their work offered a less polished or ironic view of American life and engaged overtly with troubling realities involving sex, violence and other excessive appetites. To examine these exhibitions reveals the push and pull between what Buchloh terms »Formalism and Historicity« or - for students at

the University - between conformity and experimentation that plays out in publications from the period. An alternate history emerges.<sup>7</sup>

### **Realism, New Realism, and politics**

Whether Pop art constituted a type of realism or politics was debated in the early sixties as critics strove to place the art's content and its form within a history of art. Although the term »pop art« had been coined by Alloway in 1958 to describe the movies, advertisements and other forms of commercial culture investigated by the Independent Group, this definition migrated only slowly to accounts of fine art based in or derived from those forms. »Common object art«, or the contested »neo-dada«, was seen as a departure from social realisms of the 1930s and 1940s as well as from prevailing abstraction. Yet the meaning of its approach to figuration was difficult to place. Alloway's catalogue essay for »Six Painters« offered a genealogy that stretched back through Léger's paintings based on machine-produced objects to Courbet's use of popular imagery.<sup>8</sup>

Courbet's precedent became a flashpoint. Robert Rosenblum invoked Courbet's insistence that the artist paint his own era, in addition to the use of graphic sources, in proposing that Pop constituted a new form of realism. Barbara Rose disagreed by arguing that while Courbet had incorporated or cited popular imagery in his work to communicate with a wider audience, the new art was resolutely a phenomenon internal to the art world.<sup>9</sup> But, according to Schapiro, Courbet had opposed his era's artistic ideals with a crude realism based simultaneously in the materiality of paint, the primitive look of woodcut prints, and the supposedly authentic lives of peasants and laborers. To critics in the early Sixties, Pop's realities seemed to be based in the media produced by the no-places known as »Hollywood« and »Madison Avenue,« the mass media industry rather than Courbet's rooted *peuple*.

Nor was it clear whether the new trend constituted, as Courbet's had done, a critique. In its apparent banality, did Pop buy in to inauthenticity or instead constitute its own falsehood? Might it offer ironic commentary on an artificial, »specious reality« that was itself a lie?<sup>10</sup> The adaptation of mass media, presented in graphic language apparently as seamless and repetitive as its source, seemed to distinguish this art from earlier Assemblage made from patinated found objects. In France, the *Nouveaux Réalistes* had sought an unmediated »direct appropriation of the real.« The critic Gene Swenson proposed rather that the »New American Sign Painters« introduced a layer of representation of representation, thus distance from the object, often within a surface as unified as a sign. At issue was the deadpan affect or supposed neutrality of the art, which critics discerned especially in the work of Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Robert Indiana, Tom Wesselmann, and Andy Warhol.<sup>11</sup>

Differences between these tendencies became clear at the New York showing of *New Realists* held at the Sidney Janis Gallery in fall 1962. What had begun in Paris as a showcase for the European *Nouveaux Réalistes*, as organized by the critic Pierre Restany, had acquired multiple offshoots - commercial-themed works from England and Italy, the Swede Öyvind Fahlstrom's canvases covered with recombinant comic strips, and most notably the aggressive presence of large pictures by the U. S. painters Robert Indiana, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Tom Wesselmann, and Andy Warhol, along with oversized plaster sculptures of consumer goods by Claes Oldenburg. The cata-

logue's interpretations of the purpose and politics of these bodies of work were at odds with each other. From Paris, the American poet and critic John Ashberry wrote, »The artists in this exhibition are at an advanced stage of the struggle to determine the real nature of reality which began at the time of Flaubert . . . the continuing effort to come to grips with the emptiness of industrialized modern life.« Yet the gallerist Janis offered a more upbeat view by distinguishing the new work from Dada because »the present day Factualist, eschewing pessimism, is... intrigued and stimulated - even delighted - by the environment out of which he enthusiastically creates fresh and vigorous works of art.«<sup>12</sup> The two essays converged in agreeing that through the act of the artist's imaginative transformation, everyday objects could become art.

### **Curating the two exhibitions**

Alloway deemed the Janis exhibition an incoherent »mess« and set about clarifying his plans for the upcoming exhibition at the Guggenheim. We see what Lobel describes as the systematic thinking that had led Alloway to pare the Guggenheim project down to one medium and Six Painters from a longer list of ideas. Although Alloway is now known for his catholic approach to art and for his analysis of popular movies, in this instance he was guided by a narrower concept of medium specificity.<sup>13</sup> He built his case for the significance of the work to neither art nor culture but rather to the medium of painting itself. »The painter, committed to the surface of his canvas and to the process of translating objects into signs, does not have a wide-ranging freedom in which everything becomes art and art becomes anything.« Instead, Alloway argued in the catalogue for an offshoot exhibition of California artists, the »combination of flatness with signs indicating things in the world...leads to a kind of pictorial structure that might be called emblematic...the flat and the significant are fused.« Thus, he explained in the California essay, it was necessary to exclude assemblage work by the local artists Edward Kienholz and Bruce Conner - not only because they mixed media but because their message was too entangled with both history and the present. They are »concerned with dilapidation... and with the evocation of disaster. [The] twin threads of American Gothic (Poe) and of social protest are present. . . The painters in this exhibition, however . . . [avoid] nostalgia and anger.«<sup>14</sup>

In many ways these curatorial and interpretive decisions served to depoliticize the work on view, first by omitting certain artists and then by emphasizing »the autonomy of the flat picture plane.« Alloway's essays sought to distinguish the new art from the thinking on mass media by Marxists, Freudians, or the »sociological« reading of the images as »an index of hidden assumptions«<sup>15</sup> Instead, in keeping with the writing of the Independent Group, he called on his readers to acknowledge the interest of mass-media imagery as »the folklore of heroes and heroines,« that is, Marilyn Monroe not as a victim of society but rather in terms of beauty, grandeur, »the drama of common intimacy they offer their consumers«. Although these quasi-anthropological paeans to mythic themes now read as somewhat patronizing, he marshalled them on behalf of what he considered a significant movement in art that moved away from more esoteric abstraction. He made the case in artistic terms for what he described as the painters' transformation of their sources »behind a mask of subservience.«<sup>16</sup>

Given Alloway's thinking, we can understand his caution about distorting the logical argument of the »Six Painters« exhibition by combining it with the one being planned, more haphazardly, at the UMMA. Rather than advance a thesis, the latter was a catch-all effort to introduce first-time viewers to a »variety« of media and tendencies related to Pop Art.<sup>17</sup> Planning had originated earlier that year when Kaufman and Thomas Messer, the Guggenheim's director, each wrote independently to the UMMA's director Charles Sawyer to propose similar exhibitions. Messer offered to book the touring version of »Six Painters and the Object« while Kaufman asked to organize an original show. A native of New York City, Kaufman (1920-2017) had served in the army during World War II and attended art school on the G. I. Bill. He made his career as both a painter and an expert in art education. Like many of his colleagues on the Michigan art faculty at the time, he worked in traditional media using a loose, abstract style. His teaching interests ranged beyond the manner of his own work, however: it was Kaufman who had invited Alan Kaprow in 1961 to stage »Night«, the first Happening to be presented on a university campus. In a letter to Director Sawyer about a Pop exhibition, Kaufman explained the need for students to see new trends: »This art movement is very topical at this time. I believe it deserves a local showing.« Sawyer, who considered it the responsibility of a University art museum to challenge students with experimental work, took this as an endorsement to accept the »Six Painters« exhibition from the Guggenheim.<sup>18</sup>

The project developed further when Samuel Sachs joined the University in a new position as Associate Director of the University Museum of Art and lecturer in the Department of the History of Art. Sachs (b. 1935), like Kaufman, was a New Yorker though from a family prominent in both finance and the arts and letters. He had recently completed an MA at the Institute for Fine Arts (New York University) and maintained good relations with the galleries he had frequented in Manhattan; during his short tenure as associate director at UMMA he would organize several exhibits of new art that he had seen in New York City. His ideas, and the exhibition title itself, were likely inspired by the recent *New Realists* at the Janis Gallery.<sup>19</sup> With Kaufman, Sachs decided to not only supplement the »Six Painters« with work by other artists, but also highlight varied media: sculpture or actual »objects« (by Oldenburg and others), as well as works on paper by Dine, Rauschenberg, and others of the Guggenheim's six painters..

Over that summer Sachs and Kaufman corresponded, and sometimes disagreed, about the exhibition. Kaufman, who spent summers at the artists' community in Provincetown, Massachusetts, suggested people who showed there - of these, Rosalyn Drexler made the cut. Sachs was in touch with galleries in New York and Chicago. Peter Saul's work failed to impress Sachs at first, but Kaufman made the case to include him, writing contrarily of »the animus that I bear toward Pop Art but the intrigue that it holds for me at the same time«.<sup>20</sup>

Bronze beer cans by Jasper Johns were sought but unavailable; sculpture by George Segal and Marisol was proposed but ultimately omitted. Dealers responded with their own suggestions. Even as Alloway insisted on maintaining the purity of the »Six Painters« exhibition, the range of the Supplement expanded. The gallerist Allan Stone wrote to Sachs that he was happy to assist in making the exhibition more interesting than the »dreary« Six Painters show. In the case of Stephen Durkee, promoted by Stone as a young painter »of promise,« Sachs accepted a few pieces sight unseen. Durkee's art (Fig. 2), with its imagery drawn from the faded lettering of old office buildings and



Fig. 2: Stephen Durkee, *Now*, 1961

circus posters, seems inconsistent with the more assertive, machine-driven work in the rest of the exhibition. As part of the circle of artists around Coenties slip, Durkee's work from the early 1960s was close to his friend Robert Indiana's in its archaism. At the time, however, its scale and cryptic juxtapositions put Durkee among the Pop artists. Sachs closed several letters promising that the two exhibitions would »make a splash« in Ann Arbor.<sup>21</sup>

As the art arrived at the museum for installation, student reporters responded with a mixture of curiosity and snark. Sawyer, seizing a teachable moment, explained patiently, »these artists are serious people, seriously exploring the resources and role of art in our modern, mass-oriented culture.« Townspeople, including a delegation from nearby Toledo, Ohio, responded more angrily: »one goes to the art museum to see something for which one can have some

respect«. <sup>22</sup> As record crowds flowed in, the debate continued. Discussion focused on whether the art pushed boundaries or perpetrated fraud, what artistic direction it might represent, whether - as Sawyer explained - it commented on trends in American society and, if so, what that comment might be.

### The University context

The exhibitions may have struck a nerve not only for their novelty but because of the ways they seemed to challenge the givens of postwar culture and campus life. A major research institution located in the ambit of Detroit, the University of Michigan had expanded as the state's affluence was fueled by boom years in the automobile industry. The activist Tom Hayden, who received his undergraduate degree from Michigan in 1961 and an MA in sociology in 1964, cited the unorthodox sociologist C. Wright Mills' book *White Collar* to describe his own father: an accountant with General Motors who owned a house in the Detroit suburbs, the sign of the family's recent ascension to (and precarious membership of) the middle class.<sup>23</sup> As a Cold War multiversity, the University in the early 1960s could thus be home to the development of military hardware and social science research for the federal government *and* the philosopher Arnold Kaufman's teaching of the concept of »participatory democracy«, both an undergraduate culture of Big Ten athletics *and* a locus for experimental music and film. Miriam Levin, a student at that time, recalls entering the University from the shelter of a liberal family of professionals in Detroit. She learned to question her parents' belief in the benevo-

lence of institutions as she studied the military-industrial complex in an introductory course on U. S. government. Others recall participating in demonstrations held in sympathy with the lunch-counter sit-ins performed by student civil rights activists in the South.<sup>24</sup>

The University offered, in the words of the artist Michele Oka Doner, a safe space for experiment in the setting of a college town. From this position, Hayden and the authors of the *Port Huron Statement* of the fledgling Students for a Democratic Society (many of them students at the University) could write in 1962: »we are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.«<sup>25</sup> Inspired by the activism of the Civil Rights movement, but also by the social theory that they encountered in University courses, the SDS in the early 1960s envisioned youth joining workers across racial lines to make a New Left. In challenging the tenor of the period's sociological assessment of the alienated *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* within the *Lonely Crowd* during the *Age of Affluence* (titles of influential books published in the 1950s), the Statement announced hopefully, »Men have unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity.«<sup>26</sup>

The concept of the Multiversity also informed pedagogy at the University's College of Architecture and Design, within which painting and sculpture were taught. As part of the postwar trend toward the professionalization of artists, the faculty had expanded and instituted a Bauhaus-based curriculum. It trained designers who would go into advertising or modern architecture, but also supported a bohemian scene that was abetted by younger faculty members interested in new media. In the early sixties, Professor Milton Cohen launched his research into sound and light to create »Space Theater« performances. He collaborated with the local ONCE festival of electronic music that had brought John Cage to Ann Arbor in the early 1960s. George Manupelli, hired in 1962, experimented with avant-garde film. A few years later, he and his students created a new form of temporary mural by attaching discarded tires to the barrier along a construction site. In the local context, the use of discarded automobile tires would have evoked both the material used in Kaprow's happening *Yard* (1961) and the discards of Detroit's perpetual quest to sell a newer car.<sup>27</sup>

## Reception

Within the university setting, the art in the exhibitions, through its forceful visual presence, would have both cited and upended artistic and cultural values. The Six Painters did so by emulating the imagery that propagated the good life to which students aspired, which the »New Realist Supplement« then undercut. This generation of students lived in a traditional environment overseen by parietal rules- note the conservative clothing in Figure 1 - but were discovering that prescriptions for birth control pills were legal for single women in Michigan. They were part of a culture of consumption but also of questions.

Consider how the art on view spoke to those who were learning to interrogate the military-industrial complex or to the future engineers themselves. In »Six Painters«, Rauschenberg's silk-screen painting *Junction* (1963) paired a rocket ship on its launching pad with a soaring football as emblems of hope. Yet Jean Tinguely's *Radio*



Fig. 3: Peter Saul, *Superman and Superdog in Jail*, 1963

also as repetitively as the »200 Soup Cans«. In contrast, Peter Saul's paintings in the »Supplement« rendered comic-book heroes grotesque, using caricature to unmask reality (Fig. 3). Rather than soaring to defend the American way, Superman - all chest but no face - is here confined with an imaginary Super-dog, both wearing drooping capes. A small striped square indicates the bars of their cell. Saul did not emulate the style of mass media but rather painted in a brushy manner derived equally, he has said, from De Kooning and Rembrandt, with a sophisticated interplay of bright, secondary colors. In contrast to Pop's reticence, Saul's work solicits active mockery and disgust on the part of both artist and viewer.<sup>30</sup>

The cleanly rendered triad of square-jawed men in a drawing by Roy Lichtenstein (Fig. 4) recalls the establishment on which upwardly mobile students set their sights. Its crisp style mimics low-budget advertisements but also oddly aggrandizes the ideal, not only of the handsome man (instantly identifiable from the chin down), but of the white collar and necktie. In distilling bodies to graphic pattern with facture that eliminates human touch, it brings to mind the alienated type skewered in Mills' *White Collar*: »as a proportion of the labor force, fewer individuals manipulate *things*, more handle *people* and *symbols*.« Similar figures appear in advertisements from the student newspaper, one of which uses a drawing of a clean-cut man in shirt and tie to encourage engineers to apply for a job with the Martin-Marietta corporation (a leading manufacturer of aerospace, chemical, electronic, and military equipment). The *Michiganensian* yearbook acknowledged the professional-managerial ideal uneasily: a photograph of men dressed in graduation robes over their collars and ties was captioned »The transition from a face in the University crowd to a face in the gray flannel crowd.«<sup>31</sup>

*Drawings* (in the Supplement exhibition) were useless machines that emanated moans as their motors spun the dials of working radios.<sup>28</sup> Nearby stood H. C. Westermann's inscrutable yet precisely named and crafted *Machine for Calculating Risks* (1962).

This and other works on view commented on gender while sending up heroes, including the ideal that had been embodied by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a general during World War II.<sup>29</sup> The young President John F. Kennedy, elected in 1960, offered students a hopeful alternative. Art shown in the two exhibitions was full of male heroes: works in the »Six Painters« by Lichtenstein and Warhol enlarged media-derived pictures of exaggerated military men and the comics detective Dick Tracy; silk-screened photographs of Troy Donahue - already becoming a gay icon - were presented as seductively but



Women, on the other hand, appear in student publications – as they did in »Six Painters« - as preoccupied with their appearance. In the yearbook for 1964, the caption » A girl's hair, figure, and complexion: three constant worries« accompanied a photograph of a student with three bottles of Tab, the new low-calorie version of Coca-Cola. Even within the SDS, women eventually chafed at expectations that they play a subordinate role. We can think of the debate at that time, articulated in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (published in 1963), over whether a university degree was wasted on young women attending college solely to attract a man, or earn an »M. R. S.« instead of a degree.<sup>32</sup> The art on view played into popular ideals of romance and beauty. The touring version of »Six Painters« featured two iterations of Warhol's *Before and After* (1961 and 1962) which, seen together, suggested not only that plastic surgery would improve a woman's face but revision could neaten up the original painting. *Woman I and Woman II*, by Rosenquist, repeated fragmented pictures of cosmetically perfected lips, eyes, polished nails and slender women's legs. In Rosenquist's

*Untitled* (1962), similar legs appear as cut off at the knee by a blank blue sky, in tandem with a man's lower legs, to form a couple striding into the future.

More provocatively – and quite unusual for the period – Drexler's work in the New Realist Supplement showed a dark side to happily ever after by portraying women and men in terms of violence. In the small painting »This is My Wedding« (Fig. 5), images transferred from B-movie posters strain against a flat yellow field. The image of a glamorous woman in high heels, her mouth open and head tossed back in a typical starlet's pose, here becomes terrifying as she is carried off by two men. In the artist's words, the woman »is heading for disaster. She knows it, but can't escape. The woman... is not smiling. She is suffering... SOMETIMES THE SMALL ONES SEEM TO BE AS LARGE AS THE FEELINGS THEY INSPIRE.«<sup>33</sup> Typical for Drexler, most of the canvas is taken up with an evenly brushed primary color that pushes the figures forward. Strangely, it upholds what Alloway would term the integrity of the picture plane while simultaneously the blank background contributes to the open-ended nature of the painting, all the more tense for its resemblance to a movie that never ends. Thiebaud used

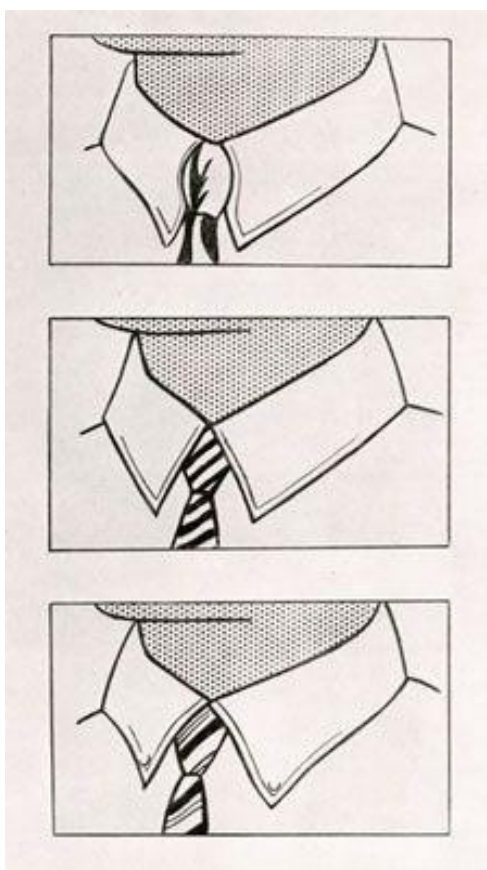


Fig. 4: Roy Lichtenstein, *The Collars*, 1963



Fig. 5: Rosalyn Drexler, *This is My Wedding*, 1963

flatness and frontality to especially unnerving ends in the painting *Rubber Dolls* (Fig. 6) in which toys, pushed frontally against the picture's surface, fix the viewer with an idiotic stare.

In light of these provocations, the open-mindedness of student reviewers seems all the more remarkable. Most who parsed the art in student publications agreed that it served »to make us think about our culture.« A long essay by Levin went further: »What seems to bother the viewer most ... is that he does not want to be forced to call something which he dislikes by a name which is sacred to him ... this self-annihilation and denial in the very act of creation has many parallels in modern life«. Preferring art that created a »new reality«, she singled out from the »Supplement« the sophisticated composition of a still-life drawing by Wesselmann. She reserved special praise for Durkee's ability in *NOW* (Fig. 2) »to evoke the feeling of tension, pressure and urgency which the word ›Now‹ suggests.« The works of Saul and Oldenburg struck her as meaningless. Writing before the second wave of feminism, there seems to have been no critical vocabulary at that time with which to comprehend Drexler's work.<sup>34</sup>

Others who look back recall a cynical response to what they saw as a fad: among art students, »everyone is doing detergent boxes.«<sup>35</sup> But for those who were able to »see« it, the art on view on view proved liberating. It may have offered a way of pushing back against the technocratic professionalism that characterized art education in the period. The environmental and installation artist Buster Simpson, who in 1963 was in his first



Fig. 6: Wayne Thiebaud, *Sock Monkeys*, formerly titled *Rubber Dolls*, 1963

year studying art at Michigan, has explained that »everyone was aware of Rauschenberg. His iconography was real-time. He was taking imagery from current events, pulled straight off the press or from TV. That appealed to us because it was in step with the politics of the time... Rauschenberg's art was radical, and radical art was political in a good way.« These ideas of art in, of, and constituting an environment, encompassing the unplanned and the realities of the world around it while creating alternative worlds, made many things seem possible. Rauschenberg's use of chance, as in the four-foot-tall lithograph *Accident* that incorporated the effect of a broken stone (1963), also inspired. It recalls Simpson's comments on attending a concert by John Cage: »I saw risk taking, playing with chance, learning as you go - modes of operation that I recognize as still being part of my art practice today.«<sup>36</sup>

Heroes fell in 1963: John F. Kennedy was assassinated a few weeks after the close of the exhibitions at UMMA. The yearbook for the graduating class of 1964 opened with a tribute to the late president from a shaken student body. Kennedy had been scheduled to present the commencement speech to this class of graduates in May 1964. In his stead, the new president Lyndon Baines Johnson delivered his vision of the »Great Society,« calling, as had the SDS, on youth to bring about a more just world. That world was already becoming more troubling. The local Direct Action Committee protested Johnson's speech with leaflets explaining, »Johnson spreads lies about being on the side of poor people in the war against poverty when he is spending over a million dollars a day just to oppress our colored brothers in Viet Nam.«<sup>37</sup> War escalated. The first teach-in in the

nation, held at the University of Michigan in 1965, can be seen as another form of the participatory democracy that had been advocated by the SDS: rather than strike, faculty held an all-night session of teaching and discussion on the causes and impact of the war in Vietnam.

### What followed

The two exhibitions of 1963 now seem so embedded with contemporary issues that the fact that several of the artists from the New Realist Supplement soon changed their art, or left the art world entirely to pursue other paths, can also be seen as signs of the times. Drexler was already making paintings that condemned the violence of racism, but by the mid-sixties she moved away from painting to write. She cited her responsibility for raising children, combined with the difficulty for women to promote their art in a system dominated by men.<sup>38</sup>

The artist Durkee was in the process of tuning in to Eastern religions, turning on to hallucinogenics, and dropping out of the gallery scene to form the artists' collective USCO, the »Company of Us.«<sup>39</sup> By 1964 he looked back on Pop as a symptom of his »relationship with a society which often revolts me« in which »the RAND [corporation] boys« call for »the resources of the world being spent on destruction and defense«. In search of the NOW invoked in this painting shown in Ann Arbor (Fig. 2), Durkee later created what is perhaps his best-known work: the graphic design, typography and illustrations for the book *Be Here Now*, a user's guide to Asian religion that promotes transcendence over material goods. Where Lichtenstein had coolly presented a statuesque *Ice Cream Soda* (1962) in the Six Painters exhibition, *Be Here Now* asks what makes us, in the end, keep eating the big ice cream cone? (»You gotta keep eating it, yet it melts & melts«) Saul shifted his focus from consumer excess to paintings that criticized the excess and violence of the U.S. military in Vietnam.<sup>40</sup>

The artists from the Supplement who achieved more critical success neatened their work. Thiebaud earned his reputation through paintings of food in appealing colors; Oldenburg cleaned up the drippiness of plaster to make more defined soft sculptures. Of the Six Painters only Rosenquist took up the challenge of outrage through the magnificent *F-111* (1964) which marshalled Pop techniques to inveigh against the military industrial complex with formal complexity and urgency.<sup>41</sup>

I suspect that something about Pop art's implacability - exaggerated by Alloway and other art critics at the time - seemed incompatible with the activism of the student Left, who were intent on imagining creativity in more active or expressive ways. The early SDS had sought an alternative to the sociological analysis of modern people confined within modern bureaucracy in a society governed by (what Mills had termed) a Power Elite. Pop seemed impassive in its presentation of that society.<sup>42</sup> Later in the decade feminists and other activists, including the African-American artist Faith Ringgold, would violate the picture plane to reappropriate the language of Pop art for impure purposes. We find Pop's impact in Black Panther publications from the late 1960s as the graphic artist Emory Douglas made effective use of Warhol's drop-out contrast photography and Lichtenstein's strong black outlines and ben-day dots - all easily adapted to low-cost printing techniques.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

This look back at the exhibitions from 1963 contributes to efforts to open up understanding of possibilities in art of the Sixties and question why the canon hardened the way it did, around the slick, graphic, repeatable tendencies that within a few years came to define Pop art. It challenges conventional histories of modern art that favored cool over engaged, ambiguity over violence - or as David McCarthy has argued, irony over the angry and morally instructive tradition of satire.<sup>44</sup> The quiddity of Pop's use of cliché and perfection, its supposed »anti-sensibility« and indifference to its charged subjects, made for a neat trajectory into Minimalism's mantra, »What you see is what you see«. What such interpretations leave behind are the glories and dangers of bodies, sex, mess, grossness, humor, the painter's touch, anger, and many forms of politics - some of the cultural buttons pushed by the works in the »New Realist Supplement«. Pop's eventual reputation as slick or (what Alloway termed) »heraldic« may also ignore those elements of chaos, eros, and ominousness that had been present in the »Six Painters« all along. These distinctions may help explain why - as demonstrated in two recent, international surveys - the visual vocabulary of Pop was used to much more politically incendiary, pointed effect in Europe, Cuba, and South America than it was in the United States.<sup>45</sup>

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in artists from the New Realist Supplement as developments in art of the past thirty years make it possible to appreciate their work in a way not visible to critics at the time it was made. Perhaps it is thanks to such latter-day artists as Mike Kelley pushing the bounds of the grotesque that Peter Saul's work - long admired in Europe but considered beyond the pale at home - is attracting new attention.<sup>46</sup> Even Thiebaud's alarming, and rarely repeated paintings of toys (fig. 6) make some sense in light of Kelley's dystopian experiments with dolls. Westermann never lost his reputation as an artist's artist, and Drexler has now been feted with a major solo show. We need their work more than ever.

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1 The Six Painters were Jim Dine, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist and Andy Warhol. The New Realist Supplement contained works on paper by Dine, Johns, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg and Warhol, paintings by Rosalyn Drexler, Stephen Durkee, Peter Saul and Wayne Thiebaud, drawings by Claes Oldenburg and Tom Wesselmann, and sculpture by Oldenburg, Jean Tinguely, and H. C. Westermann. For more on the two exhibitions see the forthcoming website »Pop Art Comes to Michigan« and the recording of the related conference held at the University of Michigan in March 2017. The latter is available at <http://leccap.engin.umich.edu/leccap/site/kkvvo2vkq4cdknharf4>

2 President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned against the military-industrial complex in his farewell address, 17 January 1961. Quotation from Clark Kerr: *The Uses of the University*. Cambridge, MA 1963, p.7. See also James Miller: *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*. New York 1987, pp. 24-26.

3 A brief reference in Thomas B. Hess: »Pop and Public« (1963) - reprinted in the indispensable Steven Henry Madoff (ed.): *Pop Art: A Critical Anthology*. Berkeley 1997, p. 100 - may have been the only mention in the national press. Samuel Sachs II, the UMMA's curator, recalls

that he invited prominent critics to cover the exhibitions but could not entice any to leave New York (telephone conversation September 2016).

- 4 Lawrence Alloway, letter to Charles Sawyer, 10 June 1963, University of Michigan Museum of Art Papers, Bentley Historical Library. Sawyer and Sachs assured the Guggenheim that the exhibitions would be shown in separate but adjacent galleries.
- 5 See, among a rich literature, Thomas Crow: »Saturday Disasters« (1987, revised in Crow: *Modern Art and the Common Culture*. New Haven and London, 1996, pp. 49-68); Cécile Whiting: *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture*. Cambridge 1997; Michael Lobel: *James Rosenquist: Pop Art, Politics, and History in the 1960s*. Berkeley 2009; Alex Potts: *Experiments in Modern Realism: World Making, Politics, and the Everyday in Postwar European and American Art*. London 2013; Thomas Crow: *The Long March of Pop: Art, Music, and Design*. London 2016, from which (p. 166) the quotation is taken.
- 6 Francis Frascina: *Art, Politics, and Dissent: Aspects of the art left in sixties America*. Manchester 1999, pp 98-100, 152, lists Pop artists among supporters of the Artists Tower for Peace and Collage of Indignation. On minimalists see Julia Bryan-Wilson: *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*. Berkeley 2009; Robert Slifkin: »Donald Judd's Credibility Gap« In: *American Art*, vol 25, Summer 2011, pp. 57-75.
- 7 Benjamin Buchloh, »Formalism and Historicity « (1977), excerpted in Julia Robinson (ed.): *New Realisms: 1957-1962*. Madrid 2010, pp 77-97.
- 8 Lawrence Alloway: *Six Painters and the Object*. New York 1963 (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum) and *Six More*. Los Angeles 1963 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), unpaginated. The former cites Meyer Schapiro's influential article »Courbet and Popular Imagery« In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1941, pp. 164-191.
- 9 Rosenblum: »Roy Lichtenstein and the Realist Revolt« (1963); Rose: »Pop Art at the Guggenheim« (1963) both in Madoff 1997 (as in note 3), pp 189-93, 82-84.
- 10 Quotation from Gilbert Sorrentino: »Kitsch into Art: The New Realism« (1962) in Madoff 1997 (as note 3), p. 50.
- 11 Pierre Restany (1961) quoted in Potts (as note 5), p. 204; Swenson: »The New American Sign Painters« (1962) in Madoff 1997 (as note 3), p. 34. In widely cited interviews with Swenson, leading Pop artists - with the notable exception of Durkee (quoted below, see note 39) - evaded questions of meaning and instead described their work in technical terms. Reading these interviews evidently infuriated Peter Saul, who believed that art should be emotional. See Gene Swenson: »What is Pop Art?«, parts 1 and 2 (1963-1964) excerpted in Madoff 1997 (as note 3), pp. 103-117, and Saul's letter to Alan Frumkin (1964) quoted in David McCarthy, »Peter Saul Against Pop Art«, Paper delivered at the symposium »1963: Pop Art Comes to Michigan«. University of Michigan, March 2017.
- 12 John Ashberry: »The New Realism« and Sidney Janis: »On the Theme of the Exhibition« In: Janis et al.: *New Realists*. New York 1962 (Sidney Janis Gallery), unpaginated.
- 13 Alloway quoted in Michael Lobel's insightful essay »Spatial Disorientation Patterns: Lawrence Alloway, Curating, and the Global Turn« In: Lucy Bradnock, Courtney J. Martin, and Rebecca Peabody (eds.): *Lawrence Alloway: Critic and Curator*. Los Angeles 2015, pp.79-80. Lobel also discusses Alloway's interest in the writing of Clement Greenberg.
- 14 Alloway, *Six Painters* (as note 8).
- 15 Alloway, *Six More* (as note 8).
- 16 Alloway, *Six Painters* (as note 8).
- 17 Quotation from Samuel Sachs, II: »A New Realist Supplement«, exhibition brochure. Ann Arbor 1963, unpaginated.

- 18 Irving Kaufman, Memorandum to Charles Sawyer, 27 February 1963, University of Michigan Museum of Art files, Bentley Historical Library. For Sawyer on the University museum see Jeffrey K. Chase: »Reviewer Notes Various Levels in Quality, Style« In: *Michigan Journalist*, 7 November 1963.
- 19 Of the twelve artists in the New Realist Supplement, eight - Dine, Johns, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Thiebaud, Tinguely, and Wesselmann - had been included in *New Realists* at Janis.
- 20 Sachs to Kaufman 31 July 1963; Kaufman to Sachs 4 August 1963, UMMA files (as note 18).
- 21 Allan Stone to Sachs, 8 May 1963 and 7 September 1963; Sachs to Stone, 10 September 1963; Sachs to Allan Frumkin, 9 August 1963; all in UMMA files (as note 18).
- 22 Dick Pollinger: »Dick Tracy becomes Real(?) Art in U-M's »New Realist« Show« In: *Michigan Daily*, 11 October, 1963; Alice Crawford: »Reader's Viewpoint« In: *Ann Arbor News*, 17 October 1963.
- 23 Hayden referred to Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951) in an interview from 2015: [http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/exhibits/show/interviews/tom-hayden/hayden\\_part1](http://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/exhibits/show/interviews/tom-hayden/hayden_part1)
- 24 On Kaufman see Miller 1987 (as note 2), pp 93-95. Student reminiscences are from email correspondence with Miriam Levin (12 August 2016) and from the art historian Richard Axsom (8 August 2016). Both of them pursued undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University between 1960 and 1967.
- 25 Michele Oka Doner, interview with author and Joshua Mound, July 2016. Todd Gitlin: *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. New York 1987, pp 101-108, presents a similar assessment. Quotation is from Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement* (1962) reprinted in Miller 1987 (as note 2) p. 329. The Statement was written at a training camp owned by the United Auto Workers in Port Huron, Michigan; the University of Michigan student Sharon Jeffrey, daughter of a labor leader, made the arrangements.
- 26 PHS in Miller 1987 (as note 2), p. 332.
- 27 On postwar art training see Katy Siegel: *Since '45: America and the Making of Contemporary Art*. London 2011, pp. 100-105. For the local context I am grateful to Nancy House for a conversation on 3 June 2016; see also Michele Oka Doner: *How I Caught a Swallow in Mid-Air*. Miami 2016, pp. 12-14. Articles by Cohen, Manupelli, and composers involved with the ONCE group appear in »Fringe« in *Dimension*, no. 14, 1963, pp. 48-80; see also Manupelli et al, »To Paint a Fence«, *Dimension*, no. 17, 1967, pp. 55-65. *Dimension* was published by students in the University of Michigan's College of Architecture and Design.
- 28 Jean Tinguely WNYR 9 (from the »Supplement« exhibition) available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lZuq9tvJlc&index=19&list=PLzEuILX4k5UHm8JdsHRoDBXnItNRtpkwB>
- 29 Kennedy had campaigned at the University of Michigan in 1960; as president he founded the Peace Corps in response to ideas proposed by University students during that campaign visit.
- 30 On Saul see McCarthy (as note 11).
- 31 Mills, *White Collar* (as note 23) p.65; Advertisement for jobs with Martin-Marietta appeared next to an advertisement for Arrow shirts, *Michigan Daily* (25 October 1962); *Michiganensian*, Ann Arbor 1964, p. 167.
- 32 Quotation from *Michiganensian* (as in note 31) p. 61. See also the discussion of women's education in Betty Friedan: *The Feminine Mystique*. New York 1963, chapter 7, and reminiscences by Casey Hayden and Barbara Haber in Howard Brick and Gregory Parker (eds.): *A New Insurgency: The Port Huron Statement and its Times* (ebook). Ann Arbor 2015.

- 33 Email correspondence from Rosalyn Drexler, 2 July 2016.
- 34 Quotations are from Chase (as in note 18); Miriam Levin: »Pop Art: An Expression of Modern Life« In: *Michigan Daily Magazine*, vol. 5, 20 Oct 1963, pp. 3-4.
- 35 Rauschenberg performed *Spring Training* at the ONCE festival in Ann Arbor, September 1965. Oka Doner recalls the Velvet Underground running through the audience to the stage, »shrieking like wild men« in 1967 (Email correspondence 26 May 2016). Quotation is from Richard Axsom in Email correspondence, 18 January 2017.
- 36 Simpson interviewed by Scott Lawrimore in *Buster Simpson: Surveyor* Seattle 2013 (Frye Museum), pp. 89-90.
- 37 Leaflet distributed by the Ann Arbor Direct Action Committee quoted in »On the Diagonal« In: *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Vol. 3, Fall 1964, p. 209. Johnson's »Great Society« speech is reprinted in the same issue.
- 38 See the definitive Katy Siegel (ed.): *Rosalyn Drexler: Who Does She Think She Is?* New York 2016, pp 110, 89.
- 39 Durkee quoted in Swenson: »What is Pop Art? Part 2: Stephen Durkee« In: *Art News* vol. 62, February 1964, pp. 6, 65. See also Michel Oren: »USCO: ›Getting Out of Your Mind to Use Your Head«« In: *Art Journal* 69, Winter 2010, 76-95. For the broader context of Durkee's later work, including his collaboration with Baba Ram Dass (the former academic psychologist Richard Alpert who had participated in Timothy Leary's experiments with psychedelics) see Andrew Blauvelt et al (eds.): *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia*. Minneapolis 2015. Quotation is from Ram Dass: *Be Here Now*. San Cristobal, New Mexico 1971, p. 37.
- 40 See David McCarthy's excellent work on Saul, including »Defending Allusion: Peter Saul on the Aesthetics of Rhetoric« In: *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 3/4, 2007, pp. 46-51.
- 41 Lobel (as note 5), pp 123-53.
- 42 Researching a history of SDS interest in and use of the arts is a project for another occasion. Robert Genter, in »Participatory Art as Participatory Democracy: The American Avant-Garde in the 1950s and 60s« In: Brick and Parker 2015 (as in note 32), pp. 202-218, argues that the action painting of Pollock and performance-based work were in tune with the ideals of C. Wright Mills and therefore the SDS.
- 43 On black pop artists see Kellie Jones and Teresa Carbone (eds): *Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties* ex cat, Brooklyn 2014; also *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*. Milan 2014.
- 44 McCarthy (as note 11).
- 45 Quotations are from Ivan Karp: »Anti-Sensibility Painting« (1963) in Madoff 1997 (as note 3), 88-89 (Karp presented a version of this text as a lecture at the University of Michigan in October 1963) and »Questions to Stella and Judd«, interview 1964, published in *Art News* vol. 65 (September 1966), p. 59. Catalogues of recent exhibitions include *The World Goes Pop*. London 2015 (Tate Modern) and Darsie Alexander (ed.): *International Pop*. Minneapolis 2015 (Walker Art Center).
- 46 Kelley, who grew up in working-class metropolitan Detroit and studied art at the University of Michigan in the 1970s, credited his study with George Manupelli for opening his eyes to experimental film: Kelley, interview with Gerry Fialka 2004, available on Youtube.