Fernsehgalerie
Ready
Gerry Schum
to
videogalerie
Shoot
schum

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Land Art in the Mediascape:
On the Politics of Counterpublicity
in the Year 1969
Opening scene

To many the verdict seemed sealed with the rise of Pop Art: the oppositional strategies of the historical avant-garde had died an ignominious death in the sixties. Yet, on 15 April 1969, a bold wager was laid on the renewed fortunes of a political aesthetic in the electronic age. Late in the evening, at an hour when most citizens had retired to their beds, a young German filmmaker by the name of Gerry Schum stepped before the television cameras of the Sender Freies Berlin (SFB) in order to deliver his blueprint for change within the system of cultural administration. Schum employed the hybrid expression Fernsehgalerie (Television Gallery) to identify his proposal and then he proceeded, with dramatic flair, to announce the emancipatory goals of this novel institution:

"The eternal triangle of studio, gallery, collector, in which art has taken place until now, has been broken. Instead of private ownership of art, which obstructs further publication of works of art, there is now communication with a larger public by means of publication or television broadcasting."

The objective of the Fernsehgalerie, in short, was to abolish the separation between the art work and the general public that had been installed by force of the marketplace. It remains for us to decide whether Schum's "now" represented a truly revolutionary instance of rupture in the linear progress of time or merely a small ripple in the steady flow of television's electronic current.

Schum's verdict about the commodified status of art is, by now, a classical one. The traditional spaces of artistic production and display – the museum, the gallery, and the studio – have failed to immure modern art against the advances of the commodity structure. Instead these venerable institutions, which fall back on the nineteenth-century, bourgeois ideology of an autonomous public realm, helped to precipitate the current crisis by encouraging the creation of rarified, collectible objects. Even the radical negations of Modernist art had failed to stem the tide by insulating high from mass culture. Quite the opposite; the hierarchies of Modernist art needed to be dismantled. The only possible remedy, Schum concludes, is to go public; that is, to broadcast 'film-objects' that are specifically conceived for the television medium.

Schum made his announcement from the floor of a production studio, which for the occasion had been transformed into a décor resembling that of an art gallery. Large black and white photographs were displayed on the walls, while several television monitors were mounted flush with the wall. As Schum read his speech, a small group of invited guests could be seen milling around, sipping from their wine glasses. Schum's public address was followed by a speech of Jean Leering, director of the Stedelijk van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven. Once these formalities were concluded, Schum declared the Fernsehgalerie officially open. The television studio faded from the screen and the actual "television exhibition" commenced on the more private scale of the home viewer.

Schum’s television exhibition consisted of a programme of eight short films, which
carried the collective title of LAND ART. Acting as both director and cameraman, Schum had collaborated on Land Art with a transatlantic, all-male cast of artists consisting of Marinus Boezem, Walter De Maria, Jan Dibbets, Barry Flanagan, Michael Heizer, Richard Long, Dennis Oppenheim, and Robert Smithson. The works were shot on 16 mm film – we are still in pre-video days – and applied relatively simple formal and technical methods of approach. Almost all pieces demonstrated an interest in self-complete processes, such as De Maria’s Two Lines Three Circles on the Desert, which showed the artist walking towards the horizon between two parallel lines, while the camera made three revolutions around its own vertical axis. The film ends when the third circle coincides with the artist’s disappearance on the horizon. Likewise, in Barry Flanagan’s A Hole in the Sea a plexiglas cylinder is placed on the shore and then filmed from above, so that it appears as a flat circle on screen. When the incoming tide reaches the top of the cylinder, and the black ‘hole’ in the centre of the image is erased, the film is complete.

During that fateful evening in 1969 the die was cast. Yet Schum was too quick in claiming his victory. Schum’s combative stance proved no match for the odds that were stacked against him. The Fernsehgalerie would undergo a protracted struggle for its existence that would last into its demise in 1971. Ultimately only one more television exhibition would be realized.4

There are, to be sure, two distinct stages in the history of the Fernsehgalerie: one of advance and one of retreat in the face of the media sphere. The first stage comprises the conception and realization of the television gallery, which according to Schum’s partner Ursula Wevers, only happened once in its “authentic form”, namely during the first broadcast.5 This first stage remained a strictly national affair since the programme was broadcast solely in West Germany. Apparently, this did not deter the American collector Robert Scull from sending Schum a telegram with an offer to buy the exhibition sight unseen.6 Although Scull’s proposition flew in the face of Schum’s mission statement, it would also be prophetic. After one more instalment of the television gallery, entitled IDENTIFICATIONS, which was aired by Südwestfunk Baden-Baden on 30 November 1970, the exhibitions came to a sudden end. The public television networks in Federal Germany refused further cooperation, citing a public response of incomprehension, even aggressiveness.7 Schum was dismissed as a querulous and highly intractable contractor.

The aftermath of the television gallery will be of less concern to us. Anticipating the introduction of video cassettes in Germany in 1970, Schum transferred the films onto video tape. Subsequently, LAND ART and IDENTIFICATIONS were slipped into the very circuits of the gallery apparatus from which they originally had been differentiated. The programmes were presented at several large survey shows, the first being Prospect 69 in Dusseldorf.8 In the context of these exhibitions, the television exhibitions became assimilated within the emergent discipline of video art. Finally, in a complete reversal of their original position, Schum and Wevers initiated the video-

4 In 1969 the Fernsehgalerie did realize two projects on the local channel of the WDR station in Cologne, namely Keith Arnatt’s Self Burial and Jan Dibbets’ TV as a Firelight. The core premise of the Fernsehgalerie, however, was to broadcast on a national scale.

5 Although I have introduced Gerry Schum as the main representative of the Fernsehgalerie project, it is essential to underscore that it formed a collaborative undertaking. The interlocutors of Schum included not only the participating artists and public television programmers, but also a group of close friends, who contributed to the ideological and practical organization of the television gallery. Hannah Weitemeier, an art history student, and Bernd Höte, a visual artist, were closely involved in the early conception of the Fernsehgalerie during Schum’s Berlin years, where he was enrolled at the film academy. During the summer of 1968, Schum moved to Düsseldorf, where he joined forces with Ursula Wevers. At this time Schum also contacted the galleryist Konrad Fischer who was to provide the Fernsehgalerie with crucial support.

6 Cf. the LAND ART catalogue edited by Schum and Wevers, which also contained a collection of production stills and newspaper reviews. LAND ART, edited by Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum and Ursula Schum-Wevers, Berlin, 1969.

7 Ursula Wevers, The Television Gallery: The Idea and How it Failed, in Gerry Schum, loc cit., pp. 77-78.

8 Schum showed LAND ART on a monitor, because a film screening was too impractical and “did not fit the concept” of the Fernsehgalerie. Letter to Dr. Bergfried, Sender Festt Berlin (16/9/1969). The Gerry Schum and Ursula Wevers Archives, Cologne.

The current space does not allow me to include a discussion of Schum's excellent documentary Kommission – Kunstkonsum, which was shown on 17 October 1980 on the third channel of WDR. Schum's film provides an expose of the contemporary debate on the democratic nature of the multiple. On this topic see the contribution by Barbara Hess to the current catalogue.

10 My approach to the films will be selective. I will only highlight certain features that are of particular interest within the critical context of the Fernsehgalerie.

In her introduction, Christine Fricke deplores that Schum's project failed to initiate a substantial discussion about the mediation of the "art work" within the institutional domain of German public television. We can easily understand such regrets, but I would propose in a contrary fashion that Schum's project was significant precisely because it showed that a public discussion of this kind was fundamentally impossible. Despite his stubborn efforts to prove the opposite, Schum's conception of a counter-public sphere could not be realized in Düsseldorf. He found himself in a dead end street: he was forced to withdraw the artist films and videos that he produced from free circulation and to market them as limited editions. Running a gallery on such a narrow technical basis also did not prove economically feasible. The situation was not improved by the fact that the introduction of video cassette technology on the German market did not happen as fast as Schum had anticipated. At the time of his death in March 1973, Schum had lost faith in the viability of his gallery and had entered negotiations with the Folkwang Museum in Essen about assuming a new position as video curator.

Public or Discursive Event?

In the following I will not retrace the chronology of the Fernsehgalerie in great detail as this task has already been accomplished elsewhere.9 Rather, I would like to raise a more specific question that has not been adequately addressed in the existing literature. A question, moreover, which in its apparent simplicity might easily be dismissed: What is the relevance of Schum's project from our present standpoint?

My contention is that Schum's venture presents an opening onto the complexities of our own moment, which is witnessing a renewed rapprochement between the visual arts and the mass media. To be sure, I do not imply that Schum's ideas maintain their efficacy under present conditions. The Fernsehgalerie does not provide any answers in such a straightforward manner. We are not dealing with a missed chance, which might be remedied by a renewed roll of the dice. The many regrets that were expressed after Schum's death might make it seem that way — 'If only Schum had been more flexible,' or 'If only he had managed his finances better' — but such comments are beside the point. My interest in the Fernsehgalerie is formed by the contradictions and disjunctions it brought to the surface within its own historical context. The television gallery, to be precise, was situated between two, divergent formations of the public sphere: on the one hand, a broadcast culture defined, foremost, by national boundaries and, on the other hand, a newly emergent, transnational organization of the mediascape. A renewed look at the history of the Fernsehgalerie may shed further light on this structural transformation of the public sphere, which first gathered momentum during the 1960s and has continued into the present. In the following, I shall map out the precarious position of the Fernsehgalerie on the shifting sands of technological, cultural, and geopolitical change.10

Some might argue that all questions concerning the contemporary relevance of Schum's television project were settled a long time ago. For sure, the Fernsehgalerie had no lasting impact on public television's generic mission to 'educate, inform, and entertain' and its emancipatory mission was swiftly retired to the graveyard of failed utopian ideas. Without doubt it was this failure to reform the conventional function of public television and to establish a broad constituency of viewers that made it possible for the Fernsehgalerie to become art history in the first place.11 This circumstance has led to an unfortunate dispersion and neutralization of the initial project of Schum. In
the literature LAND ART and IDENTIFICATIONS are enshrined, for instance, as a germinal moment in the emergent discipline of “video art” \textsuperscript{12} or demoted to the status of a footnote in the development of an artistic movement, such as “earth art.” \textsuperscript{13} An alternative approach seeks to recontextualize the films within the individual “œuvres” of the contributing artists.\textsuperscript{14} While not devoid of all merit, such approaches distract from the original thrust of Schum’s project. At the same time, we should be careful not overestimate the theoretical consistency of Schum’s project; its identity underwent more changes than I can track in these few pages. Nevertheless, I would like to protect the critical and utopian dimensions of the Fernsehgalerie against the ‘disarming’ methods of art history. In other words, the history of the Fernsehgalerie is neither limited to that of a production studio nor to the individual objects it produced, like so many ready-made wares placed upon the market. The latter is exactly how television authorities approached the Fernsehgalerie: to them it failed because its products could not find enough takers.

The Fernsehgalerie staged itself as a public event: a national audience was offered a first-row view of “current trends in the international development of art.” \textsuperscript{15} In this fashion, LAND ART and IDENTIFICATIONS might be mistaken for finished products (they certainly proved susceptible for re-packaging). However, we might think about the Fernsehgalerie in another way, namely in a dialogic sense as an on-going platform of discussion, as a way of ‘having words’ in the public sphere. The Fernsehgalerie was “without doubt an experiment that can only find a definite form by means of discussion.” \textsuperscript{16} That is to say, the Fernsehgalerie deserves to be considered not only as a public event, but also as a discursive event, which erupted into the public domain of speech and would lead to some heated exchanges and disputes. This contentious life of the Fernsehgalerie extended beyond the immediate context of the broadcast and branched across diverse institutional spaces (i.e. public television, museums, galleries, newspapers, etc.). Its verbal traces survive in a voluminous correspondence between the involved social parties. The conflicts that emerged in the margins of this literary exchange concerned such problems as the political responsibilities of public television, the remuneration and copyright of artists,\textsuperscript{17} the status of documentary photographs,\textsuperscript{18} or the professional role of Schum (i.e. director, producer, cinematographer, or galleryist). These controversies all point to an essential aspect of the project, namely its deeply unsettled status as a collaborative project of enlightenment within a divided public sphere.

**Vagaries of a Mobile Studio**

Let us return again to the events of 15 April 1969. What were the “authentic” goals of the Fernsehgalerie as visualized by Schum and Wevers in the case of the LAND ART broadcast? In deciding this question we can rely on two sources – the actual contents of the broadcast and Schum’s own writing – which are not always in total agreement with each other.
Schum stated that the Fernsehgalerie served artists in their response to the increased mediatization of everyday experience:

“[Artists] are not concerned primarily with exploiting the possibilities of communication by the mass media. A more important consideration, I think, is that the greater part of our visual experience is induced by way of reproduction.”

At the same time, he implied that newly emergent forms of telecommunication also warranted newly critical modes of media literacy. In other words, a disciplinary versus a liberatory model of technology lay in the balance. In an earlier draft for the television gallery, Schum presented his argument in more overtly political terms. Only those artists will be welcome, he wrote, “whose conceptions contribute to a progressive change in the cultural and social life.” In the later LAND ART speech he dropped this criterion of overt engagement on the part of the artists, but another, related imperative, namely the critical mobilization of the spectator, would be retained. The Fernsehgalerie, it states in the first concept, must expose its own material processes of production rather than merely present the end products. By instituting “a kind of feedback mechanism,” the spectators will be directly challenged, thus pre-empting their mindless absorption into the televised spectacle: “Criticism and consumption become in the film an active component of the production process.”

The intellectual background upon which Schum drew is familiar enough: on the one hand, he echoes the culture industry thesis of Theodor Adorno, which describes the subject of mass culture as the passive subject of manipulation, while, on the other hand, he counters this dire analysis of an irrevocably damaged sphere of publicness with the productivist aesthetics of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. A further token of the influence of Brecht’s theories on the Fernsehgalerie project, for instance, is Schum’s insistence in the LAND ART scenario that the sound and camera equipment appear on screen.

These notions were part and parcel of the German culture debates in the 1960s. By invoking such critical strategies as the defamiliarization and the reappropriation of modern production means, the Fernsehgalerie immediately became encapsulated within a highly divisive battle that raged across the public realm of the later 1960s. However, we also need to realize that the media theories of Adorno or Benjamin were not produced in a historical vacuum, but emerged in response to a former stage of monopoly capitalism. It follows that their subsequent transfer into the 1960s could not occur without certain distortions. What Schum lacked, in other words, was an adjustment of the theoretical apparatus that he employed to the advanced stage of late capitalism under which he lived. But this disadvantage on one level would be turned to an advantage on another level because the inherited conceptual framework enabled Schum to unleash a specific “fantasy” of social (re)organization in the form of the Fernsehgalerie. As such, the television-gallery performed a practical critique of alienation, even though it lacked a theoretical grasp of its specific relation to a concrete situation (i.e. the operative mode of public television in West Germany). On the down-
side, though, the Fernsehgalerie ended up reproducing the inner contradictions of this same reality. Only in 1972 would a retooling of critical theory within the context of German public television become available, however by then we are dealing with hindsight. 23

I shall return to this revisionist perspective shortly, but first I need to describe how the Fernsehgalerie envisioned its own place in time.

The basic directive of the Fernsehgalerie has been established: to transmit objects that do not exist anywhere else but in the moment of broadcast. Such objects will "take place" in a televisual medium that is characterized by its condition of simultaneity. 24 We would be wrong, however, to conclude that Schum simply affirmed the dominant ideology of television as a live medium. Schum's strategy was more dialectical in nature. He exploited a fundamental ambivalence at the basis of the television set up: the polarity between the screen's emphatic presence and its effects of de-realization. On the one hand, the viewer is bound to the screen, losing a sense of separation, and, on the other hand, a sense of concrete distanciation is imposed. Schum referred to this dialectic as a "restructuring of artistic contemplation," which he maintained, was already transpiring on an "international" scale. 25 Let us examine how this "restructuring" worked at the immediate level of the LAND ART programme, while we reserve a discussion of its "international" dimension for later.

What did medium specificity mean for Schum in the case of a 'television art'? In strictly negative terms, LAND ART was opposed to two existing film genres, namely avant-garde film and art documentaries. Despite his training as a filmmaker, Schum was not interested in the formal language of avant-garde film. At all costs, he emphasized, one should avoid drawing attention to the materiality of the medium for its own sake - "dramatic effects" created by the camera or montage were to be religiously eschewed. Likewise, a documentary method of filming was declared anathema: "I do not believe that a filmed studio atmosphere or close-ups of an artist's hands can provide a better understanding of the work of art." 26 Above all, however, simultaneous commentary was ruled out to the great consternation of the television executives. Schum's intransigence on this point, more than anything else, would cause the plug to be pulled on his project.

In more positive terms, the LAND ART films all shared the same formal parameters: full frontal view, fixed camera frame, and a minimal amount of transitions between shots. The filmstrip was handled as the pure trace of an unbroken, continuous process. One film, in particular, met Schum's approval, namely Richard Long's Walking a Straight 10 Mile Line, Forward and Back, Shooting Every Half Mile. Long created "the most consequent object," according to Schum, because he employed the camera to mark the landscape, rather than, say, using chalk as in De Maria's Two Lines Three circles on the Desert. Walking a Straight 10 Mile Line lasts about six minutes and opens with a 360-degree pan of the landscape. A map is superimposed on the continuous shot, which identifies the location as the Dartmoor heath in Wales. The rotating
camera comes to rest on the figure of the artist standing in the barren landscape. The camera zooms in the direction of the artist’s gaze, thereby anticipating the displacement of the artist’s body across the heath towards the horizon. The remainder of the film consists of a series of discontinuous shots, whereby every half mile the camera zooms forward for the length of six seconds. Upon reaching a natural barrier formed by a creek, the camera retraces its movement in the opposite direction. Once the camera returns to its initial position, the film comes to an end.

In Long’s film the viewer is transported into the landscape by the movement of the camera. The spectator experiences the work in the process of its making. This procedure demonstrates the performative possibilities of film in contrast to the dominant, narrative structure of the mass medium, with its built-in mode of passive consumption. It is television, however, that consolidates this performative logic of the film for Schum. Whereas film remains tied to the past of an event, television transmits this filmic past in the simultaneity of a pure present tense. To Schum, the basic code of the television medium is “liveness.” Yet, as television critics are quick to point out television’s effect of liveness may become an instrument of ideological control, if the viewer’s ability to differentiate between ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘now’ and ‘then’ is blocked. This is where Schum’s notion of a “feedback mechanism” between the work and the viewer comes into play. The television monitor functioned both as a pedestal and an embodiment of the ‘sculptural’ work itself; the screen was alternatively there and not there. Alternatively, we might rewrite Schum’s opening statement to say that the exhibition “is now (t)here.” Only in this play between the perceptual moments of absorption and detachment can a space for critical consciousness emerge. Following Schum’s own premise, I am led, therefore, to promote Jan Dibbets’ 12 Hours Tide Object with Correction of Perspective as a more successful film than Walking a Straight 10 Mile Line. Dibbets engaged Schum to film a wheel loader as it outlined a trapezoid on the surface of a beach. When the film is projected, however, the trapezoid appears as a perfect rectangle on the screen due to the original camera angle. The film ends when the incoming tide erases the beach drawing. The perceptual ambivalence created by Dibbets’ “perspective correction” precisely demonstrates the medium’s dialectic of de-materialized absence and materialized presence in the very process of its (de)construction.

The mobilization by the Fernsehgalerie of the viewer on the domestic front found its equivalent, as Schum maintained, on the international front. The television gallery embraced the general logic of mobilization sweeping through the art world. The phenomena of Process Art, Conceptual Art, Earth Art, and Arte Povera, which are well covered in the two programmes of the Fernsehgalerie, contributed to an uninhaling of the object-based, institutional confinement of artistic experience. In its striving after a formal state of pure autonomy, the Modernist work of art had always already been siteless: an unique object displayed against
a neutral ground. In 1969, however, it seemed as if the transportable art object would be replaced by the travelling bodies of nomadic artists or the transmission of de-materialized ‘information’ in their stead. “Work” was now done on site in the transitory shape of, say, a performance of site-specific installation.

Schum modelled his views on the curatorial premises set by, among others, Seth Siegelaub, Harald Szeemann and Konrad Fischer, who had each forged new links between contemporary art and the domain of publicity. Take, for instance, Siegelaub’s One Month (March 1969), which existed only as a catalogue to be distributed free worldwide or July-August-September 1969, which took place simultaneously in eleven different, transatlantic locations. Likewise Schum was well aware of the status of Fischer’s gallery as a European hub for American Post-Minimalists, who concentrated on installation work.30 And then there was Szeemann’s groundbreaking When Attitudes Become Form, which opened in Berne only weeks before the LAND ART broadcast. A controversial exhibition, which literally spilled into the street, the Berne event shaped the public image of Post-Minimalism as devoted to the presentation of processes over objects.31 Of the sixty-nine international artists, Szeemann noted with relish in his opening address, twenty-nine were not represented by objects but by “information.” For a couple of weeks in March, the Berne museum functioned more as a “reception space and a forum” than a classical repository of objects. Schum was to reveal his partisanship by adopting Szeemann’s own militant slogan, that “there is a tangible desire to explode the ‘triangle within which art occurs’ – the studio, gallery, museum.”32

Television, Schum reasoned, would allow the privatized, domestic viewers to track the global expansion of art from their own homes: the Fernsehgalerie as their window onto the world. He envisioned a new type of publicity – a telecommunications network opening onto a boundless space in which one effortlessly switches back-and-forth between the local and the global. Schum conceived, therefore, of the electronic media as giving birth to an inclusive, autonomous public sphere, which abolished the former spatial, territorial and political parameters of national identity. The fact that he was compelled to work within the national broadcast circle of German public television was a mere accident of birth to him. Schum’s faith in the international destiny of contemporary culture heralded a process that has since become known as “transnationalization”, but in its course he also fell victim to a new mythology.33 As one commentator has pointed out, the global synthesis of a transparent, “pseudo-public sphere” masks the “complexity of transnational financial, political and cultural economies” and reflects the viewer’s own social horizon as highly disjointed and fragmented.34 The “local,” as a result, is reinvented in dominant publicity as “idiom and spectacle”: a fate that also befell LAND ART to Schum’s great consternation.

Dennis Oppenheim’s Timetrack, Following the Timeborder Between Canada and USA functioned for Schum as an emblem of the new global art. Oppenheim’s film uses an aerial camera to pursue a snowmobile

30 The first exhibitor at Konrad Fischer’s was Carl Andre who used local materials to construct a piece. His show opened on 21 October 1967.
34 Cf. Miriam Hansen’s excellent Foreword to Okan Negt and Alexander Kluge, Public Sphere and Experience, loc cit. My discussion of the Fernsehgalerie draws extensively on her revision of Negt and Kluge within the parameters of a “postmodern age.”

Jan Dibbets, 12 Hours Tide Object, film still LAND ART, 1969
as it literally maps the contours of the two time zones onto the frozen surface of the St. James River. The artist wrote in a note to Schum: "It becomes a location. But because it is the time zone between two countries, one must evaluate it in terms of duration. I think the piece becomes the two countries." Boundaries become an abstraction, something one projects onto the topography from above; a sense of place gives way to vectors of displacement and the circuitry of simultaneous links.

However, did Post-Minimalism truly leave the confines of the gallery behind? Did Szemann's symbolical prison truly "explode"? The answer, of course, is no. Even Oppenheim expressed his ambivalence whether art could exist freely of the administrative domain of the gallery. Post-Minimalism did not represent a new rush on the frontiers of space or, to apply the timeworn phrase of another LAND ART contributor, Robert Smithson, any site-specific work of art, whether situated on a beach or in the wilderness, involves a dialectic between non-site and site, between contraction and diffusion.

Schum imagined, nevertheless, that an exit from the "triangle within which art occurs" was possible. Seeking out this future, Schum became the victim of an enforced wanderlust. The shooting schedule of LAND ART sent him from the Dartmoor heath to the Dutch coastline, from the US-Canadian border to the Mojave Desert, and in October 1969 he commenced living and working in a mobile studio. Schum's odyssey would be in vain, however, because the electronic public sphere would never materialize in the all-inclusive form he anticipated. Indeed, the exclusionary conditions of the existing broadcasting system were not that easily defeated by the alternative type of production Schum practised. To understand why, we shall need to return, once more, to the opening scene.

Closing scene
Here is an image of the studio set. A microphone intrudes upon the exhibition space from above, while behind the temporary gallery walls the actual walls of the studio are exposed. Dispersed through this provisional space are nine people, mostly ignoring the presence of the camera, except for a man and woman in the back who stare back at us. To the left stands Jean Leering, stiffly erect like a sentinel, waiting to deliver his prepared speech. The most dynamic figure is Gerry Schum, who clad in a leather jacket stands slightly off-centre and appears poised to step forward. His right arm is lifted, fingers slightly clenched into a fist, in an apparent attempt to set force behind his words. Schum does not look directly into the camera, but over his left shoulder we see his ghostly figure reappear as a tightly framed, medium close-up shot on a television monitor. Suddenly we realize that we are looking at television through the oblique lens of another medium, namely photography, in which the internal organization of televisual space becomes, ever so slightly, undone.

SFB excised this scene from television history by erasing the original opening shots, so that now, in a paradoxical fashion, we only have the testimony of an older
medium to go on. But then both Schum and the SFB had excluded a third unwelcome party. Outside the studio-gallery a group of protesting students had gathered filling the air with incongruous shouts of “Heimatfilm!” Schum’s strategy to criticize from within, could find no merit in their eyes, just as his iconoclastic rhetoric did not scale the same ambitious heights as the “cultural revolution” the students eagerly declared.38

Too radical or not radical enough: Schum appeared to inhabit an impossible position. Ultimately, he could not counter the unilateral structure of the television medium. The desired broad audience of actively engaged viewers failed to materialize. In a letter to the SFB dated 12 January 1970, Schum concedes that the first broadcast had been too “radical” because it had only managed to reach the “professional public and professional critics.”39 He placed his hopes in this “opinion forming” minority to educate the general public, but thereby he was forced to relinquish the notion of a more volatile form of counterpublics; that is, a discursive arena marked by conflict but also by the possibility for “accidental collisions and opportunities, for unpredictable conjunctures and aleatory developments.”40 The active solicitation of such an oppositional publicity would be more befitting the original conception of the Fernsehgalerie than Schum’s subsequent lipservice to the edifying mission of public television, but within the current technological and social system it proved impossible to implement.

As a matter of fact, the daily press had generally been kind to LAND ART. Nevertheless, when Schum introduced the broadcast of his second programme IDENTIFICATIONS on 30 November 1970, he sounded remarkably bitter, referring to the “irritatingly flattering reviews” of LAND ART. The previous television exhibition, he complained, was praised for all the wrong reasons. The critics admired the “impressive” and “exotic” quality of the landscapes, which, he insisted, was irrelevant to the intent of the works. IDENTIFICATIONS was meant to correct this fact: “Instead of large-scale objects in snowy landscapes or deserts, we are now shown pure gesture, an attitude, or simply a statement by the artist […] The film was reduced in favour of the essence of the object, the idea.”41 Yet, by this time, Schum seemed to have lost faith in the feasibility of his project. He bemoaned that a “television art” had not materialized and, indeed, he already knew that IDENTIFICATIONS would remain without further issue.

Schum’s admission of defeat during the IDENTIFICATIONS broadcast drove the internal contradictions of the television project into the open. On the one hand, Schum attacked the press for misrepresenting his project; yet, on the other hand, he acknowledged that his strategy of direct address could not alter the dominant spectacular arrangement of the television medium. As a result, we might submit that Schum’s project suffered from a basic ideological flaw; that is, it did not stray from the basic directive of German public television to serve a generalized audience.

In order to grasp this contention, it is necessary to understand how

40 Miriam Hansen, Foreword, in Kluge and Negt, loc cit., p. 36.
41 Gerry Schum, Introduction to the Television Exhibition Identifications, in Gerry Schum, loc cit., p. 74.
television (which still experienced its “pioneer years” in the 1960s) inaugurated a new stage in the formation of the Western public sphere. Rather than fulfilling the culture industry thesis of social homogenization, the spread of television led to an increased privatization and diversification of mass cultural experience, in concert with the introduction of new techniques such as the VCR or cable television. To be sure, this process of diversification does not automatically translate into a politics of cultural difference. Yet, even though the pluralism of the media landscape may translate into new forms of social control, it also yields new options of cultural resistance. Schum, for instance, invoked such non-alienating possibilities when he declared that video recorders will “make it possible to show art on every kind of domestic television set.” Nonetheless, if he wished to cast the television gallery in an unruly role, it quickly ran up against the limitations of its own national context.

The West German situation was relatively unique. Its public television system was founded as a preventive measure against a repeat of the fascist monopolization of the mass media. A delicate, representative balance was sought on television between so-called “relevant” social groups. Thus, the televisual public sphere was also buffered against the commercial interests of the programming industry, but at the cost of a built-in weakness to which the system would succumb in the 1980s. In the words of Negt and Kluge, German television was “confined to the transmission of generalized program material” addressed “to whom it may concern,” that is, to no one in particular. This generalized television–viewer was seen as a distant cousin of the ‘free citizen’ who inhabited the public sphere of nineteenth-century bourgeois society. The latter subject, of course, was as much an ideological fabrication as the former. However, it is also clear that public television came at an additional disadvantage: it could only simulate the face-to-face mode of communication that characterized the bourgeois public realm. German television, in other words, programmed the public realm according to a false image of universality. Hence, in the harsh estimation of Negt and Kluge, German television was unable to develop a connection with the concrete needs and interests of its viewers. A conclusion that delivers us, for the last time, to the doorstep of the Fernsehgalerie.

Schum’s and Wevers’ refusal to add commentary to the films clearly defied the programming logic of public television. Instead of imposing rules of interpretation, Schum confronted the viewers with a performative event, leaving them to organize their own meaning from its fragmentary segments. Yet as a formal strategy of resistance to the production system of public television, the project was bound to fail. For one, Schum’s emphasis on the strict present tense of the televised art works did not acknowledge the experiential horizon of the viewers, who must daily struggle to connect the seemingly disconnected segments of the reality they inhabit. “Hollywood and the Italian Western is not interested in video,” Schum noted, but the Fernsehgalerie’s
own response was to imagine another universal, if non-repressive, mode of publicness. Hence, the paradox of the opening event: Schum's announcement of a new age of television art from the simulated floor of a gallery space. The 'new' television art formed nothing else but the after-image of the 'old' gallery art. In conclusion Schum and Wevers may be credited with having developed an alternative form of publicity within the emerging global mediascape called post-modernity. Nevertheless, the oppositional practice of the Fernsehgalerie remained firmly attached to that unfinished project known as modernity. In mobilizing an outmoded strategy of the historical avant-garde within the electronic public sphere, the Fernsehgalerie was ultimately resigned to reproducing the contradictions of its own historical moment: From our vantage point the fate of Schum's mobile studio appears already sealed in the opening event of 15 April 1969, but that does not make its actual journey less compelling to us today.
Introduction to the Broadcast

FERNSEHGALERIE BERLIN
GERRY SCHUM

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

The introductory opening speech to the television exhibition LAND ART held by Mr. Jean Leering, Director of the Stedelijk Museum in Eindhoven, was to occupy a slot lasting only 8 minutes according to the original plan. This period of time proved too brief to provide the information necessary to understand the Land Art movement and the institution of the Fernsehgalerie.

The Fernsehgalerie was born out of a wish to directly confront as wide as possible an audience with the current trends of international art production. Here it is not a question of publicising the extravagant fringe phenomena accompanying the general creation of art. In the eyes of renowned international art critics Land Art is in the process of surpassing Op- and Pop-art in terms of both its reach and significance. The artists, whose objects are shown in the television gallery, have already shown their work in various avant-garde galleries in the USA and will be represented in Europe at the Kunsthalle in Bern in a show which will travel to ten more cities. The majority of the artists taking part in the Land Art exhibition were introduced to the German public by the avant-garde gallery Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf and Galerie Friedrich in Munich. Additional exhibitions are being prepared in various museums in Germany. The number of people that can be reached by galleries and museums is, however, minimal. Only a very small percentage of the people who are potentially interested in art can find out about current trends in art by paying regular visits to a museum or gallery. A comparable situation would arise in the book market if a successful author could only reach his public by giving readings from his own work, i.e. without thousands of copies of his books being printed. It is almost as if the possibilities of communication between visual art and the public are the same as those between books and the public before Gutenberg invented the printing press. Inexpensive prints and art publications in huge editions reach the market years after they were made. It is inconceivable why modern art can be published on a larger scale only when it is no longer modern. Most art publications, by the time they have been made public, are in memoirs to defunct art movements. The long time-span separating production and communication in visual art is unparalleled in either literature, drama, and even less in the movies.

More and more artists today are exploring the possibilities of the media of film, television and photography. These artists are not concerned primarily with exploiting the possibilities of communication offered by the mass media. A more important consideration, I think, is that the greater part of our visual experience is induced by way of reproduc-
tion, with cinematic and photographic representations. Take Jan Dibbets’ ‘Correction of Perspective’: it can only be seen and understood as a photograph. Dibbets drew the outline of a trapezium in the landscape; the shape was constructed according to the laws of photographic perspective, so that on the photograph the trapezium looks like a perfect square. Here the work of art has transferred its existence from a real object as point of departure to the photographic representation. The photograph becomes the actual art object. The objects of Mike Heizer and Walter De Maria, to name just two artists, can only be observed in their entirety, in other words by seeing the film from beginning to end.

The Land Art artists are looking for expressive possibilities which go far beyond the traditional limits of painting. It is no longer the painted view of a landscape but the landscape itself, i.e. the landscape marked by the artist himself, that becomes the art object. The landscape isn’t just a decorative background for traditional sculptures any more (the term landscape is broadly interpreted): it has come to mean, here, cityscapes and industrial views as well as nature landscapes. Dr. Szeemann, who mounted the ‘Live in our Head’ show in the Kunsthalle Bern, refers to a “consciousness art”. We live at a time in which the world, i.e. our environment, can be experienced from new dimensions. Satellites enable us to observe the earth from an extra-terrestrial viewpoint directly or indirectly via a photographic reproduction. A highway seen from a height of 3,000 metres loses its purely functional character, it becomes a human intervention in the landscape. It is now time that we realize that every grave that is dug, every road that is constructed, every field that is filled, represents a formal change in our environment, whose implications transcend by far their purely practical, functional meaning. Dennis Oppenheim, who made the object ‘Timetrack’ for the LAND ART exhibition, is now working on projects involving direct interventions in existing industrial and agricultural processes.* An example: he transferred the winding route of the road leading from a cornfield to a silo onto the pattern of the tracks drawn by a mowing machine in the corn.

Objects of this nature are just as unclassifiable in the traditional terms of art as they are in the art market. The eternal triangle of studio, gallery, collector, in which art has taken place up to now, has been broken. Instead of private ownership of art, which obstructs further publication of works of art, there is now communication with a larger public by means of publication or television broadcasting. Art collectors such as Hahn, Ludwig, and Ströher, who open their collections to public viewing from time to time, are unfortunately still very much in the minority. New channels are being sought by art dealers like Siegelaub and Gibson in New York or Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf who, to a certain extent, are no longer offering objects for sale at exhibitions but are publishing unrealised projects. These projects can then be acquired in a more or less symbolic manner by collectors in the form of production manuals or construction plans after being presented to the public.

Art ownership is thus replaced by communication with art objects. This structural change in art has far-reaching consequences for the artist as well as for the art dealer. It is incomprehensible why museums can exhibit objects by artists without proper remu-
eration. Especially when these objects, as is often the case nowadays, have not been made expressly for the art trade, i.e. for sale. In the same way that a publisher pays his author for the right to publish and sell his book, so visual artists will have to receive a fee for the publication of their works of art at exhibitions, in museums, or by broadcasting on television. Visual artists are just as entitled to a copyright as authors, actors and composers.

In the following television exhibition we first see the opening – by Jean Leering – in a studio of the SFB in Berlin. Then the exhibition film, which was shot in various places in Europe and America, is to be seen. All the objects that are shown were conceived and realized by the artists especially for the Fernsehgalerie.

A catalogue will be published to accompany the LAND ART exhibition which provides a comprehensive overview of this art movement and its key exponents.