Amsterdam
(June 2018)

Experimental Jetset

MoMA café two:
loose associations

a reader



(32)

“We insist on having the best of everything.
Philip Johnson …designed the Four Seasons for us…
The enormous painting in the hall there is by Picasso.
In the room beyond is a Pollock, the tapestries in
the lobby are by Miró, and the floating sculptures
over the bar on the mezzanine are by Lippold.
Quality! The food is as fine as the fixtures.”

Joseph Baum (1959)

from: Rothko and the Four Seasons
Jon Michaud, The New Yorker, April 1, 2010

Velvet and Silk

In 1927 **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe** together with his professional and personal partner, architect and designer **Lilly Reich**, was commissioned by the Association of German Silk manufacturers to create a stand for the German Silk industry in the context of the exhibition "Die Mode der Dame" (Women's Fashion). The result is the '**Café Samt & Seide**' (Velvet and Silk Cafe) in Berlin, an exhibition stand which also worked as a café at the end of the main hall.

Mies had already started to work for two members of the association, Hermann Lange and Josef Esters to design their private houses, the Lange House and the Esters House, and he was the first choice to represent through design a group of open-minded entrepreneurs like those involved in the silk industry at that time.

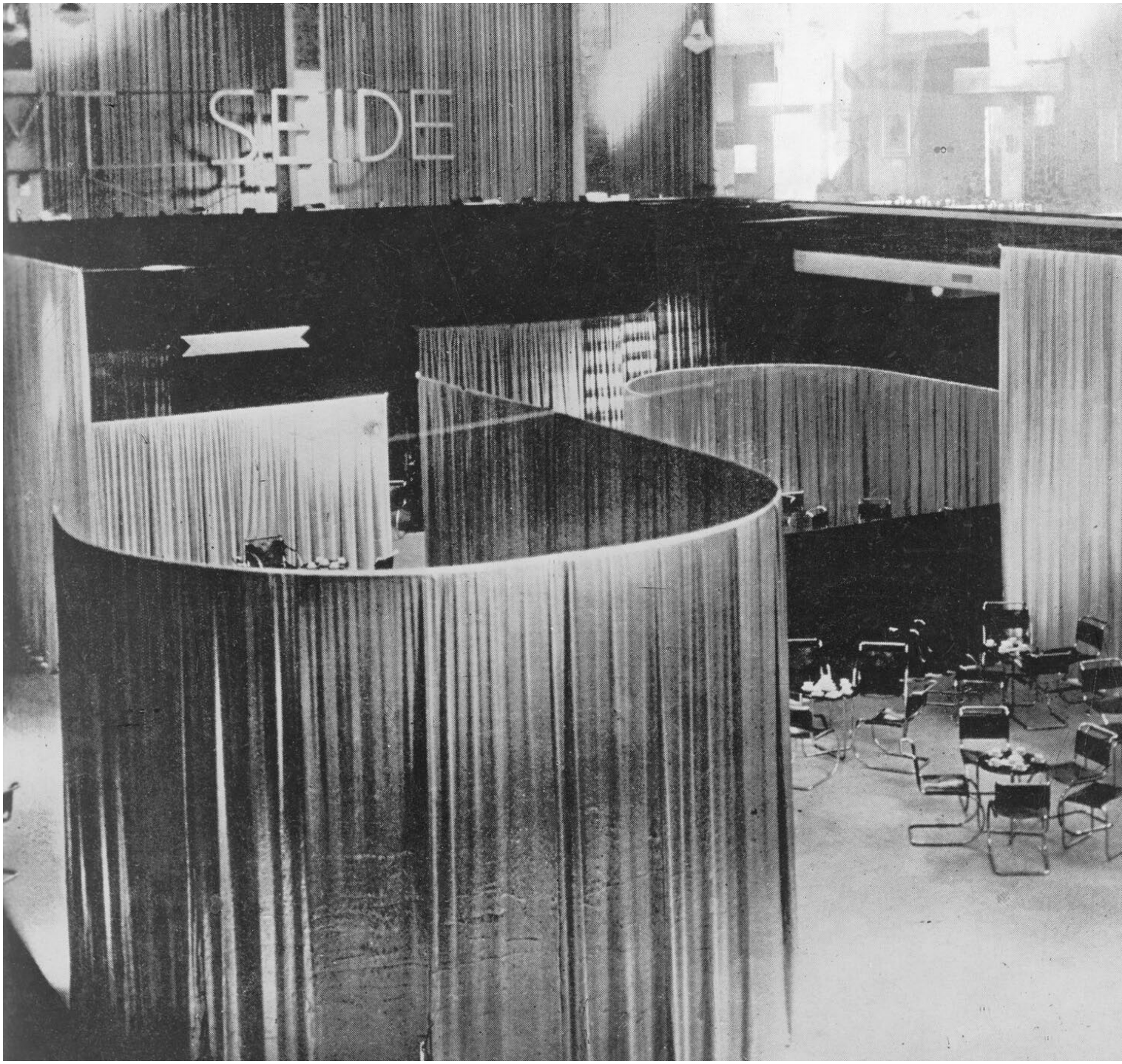
In Mies and Reich's project the exhibited elements become the ones which also defines space. The architects developed the project as a continuos space organized only by means of hanging silks and velvets of different colors **(velvets were in black, orange and red and silks in gold, silver and yellow)** placed at different heights. The 300 sq metres stand, which in plan appears like an abstract composition, was punctuated only by Mies cantilever chairs (MR Chairs) as furnitures.

The tissues hang from straights and curved steel pipes in a sequence which is very dissolved in the space. The lines densify around the centre on the right, almost composing a small cluster of rooms which then open up again in the exhibition hall.

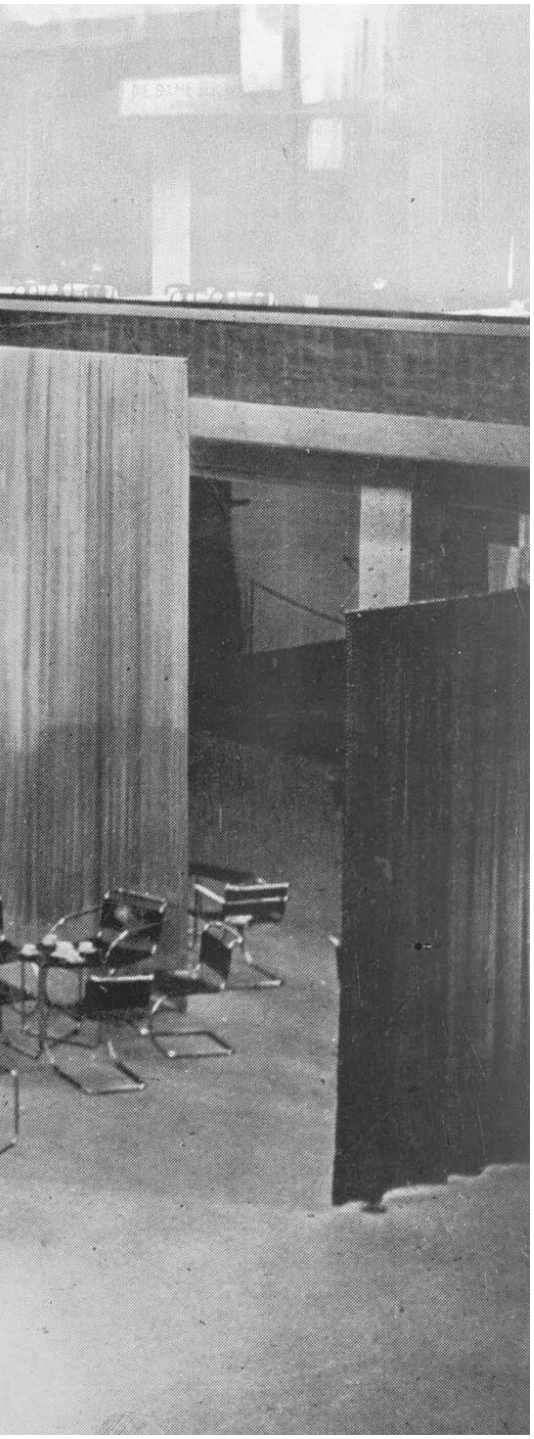
The alternance of open curbed and straight lines in space somehow recalls the floorplan of Villa Tugendhat which Mies was developing in the same period.

Mariabruna Fabrizi,
February 2016

from: *http://socks-studio.com/2016/02/29/cafe-samt-seide-by-ludwig-mies-van-der-rohe-and-lilly-reich-1927/*



Berlin (1927)

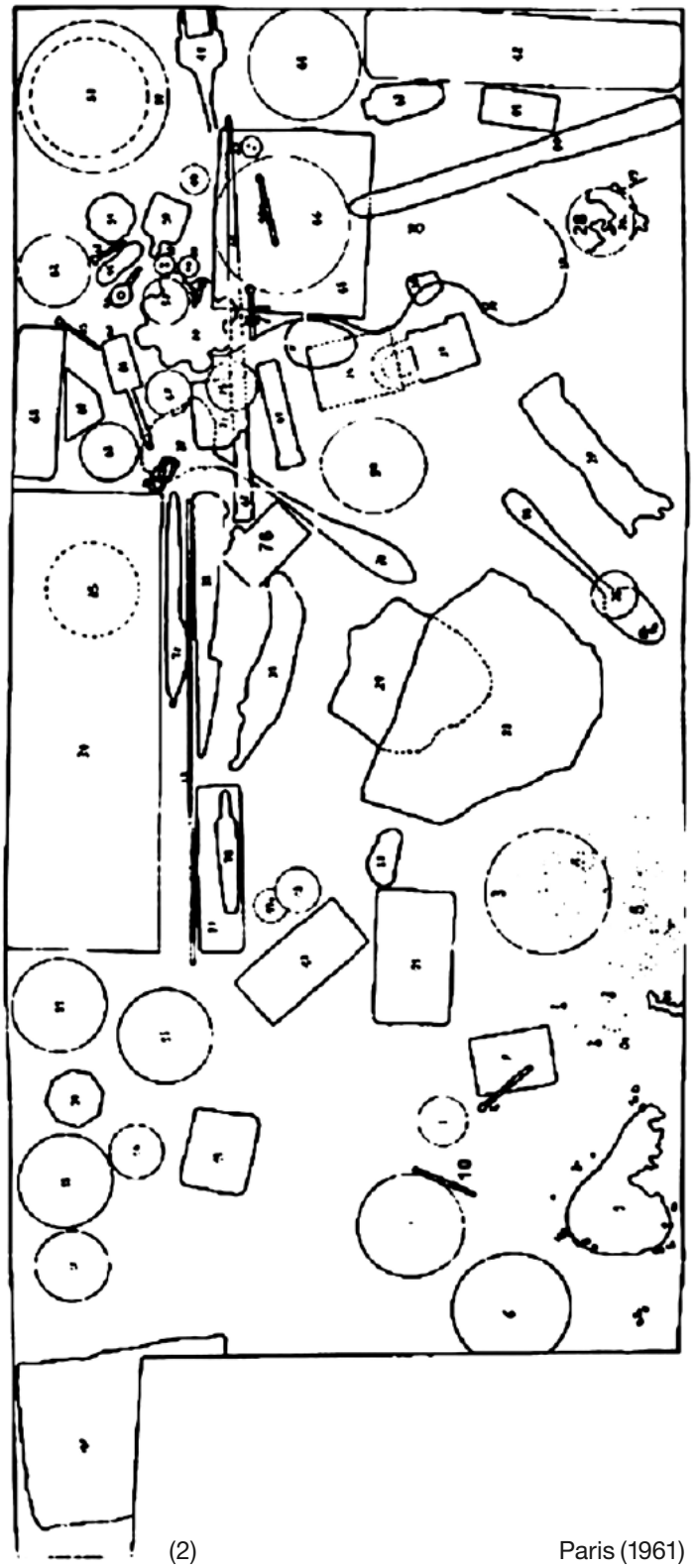


(1)

*"What do you think the youth were saying?" commented Philip Johnson. "That Mies was the invention of the devil and should be put in jail for using silk and matching marble slabs... Mies was terribly hurt by it. He couldn't understand why all the people hated him."**

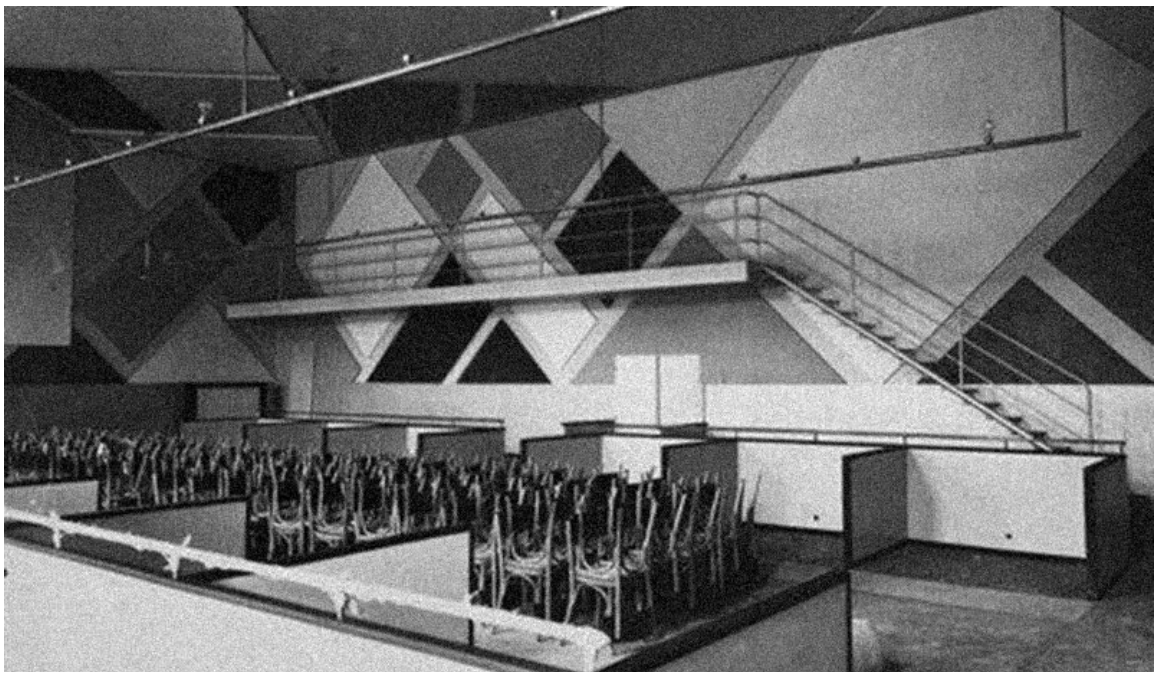
*("Conversation with Philip Johnson" Architecture Plus 1: 75)

from: Architects of Fortune,
Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich
by Elaine S. Hochman



(2) Paris (1961)

(3)



(4)

Strasbourg (1926–8)

"Although I do not want to disagree with the critics who considered many features to be very successful in architectural as well as in painterly respect (to the extent that the approximation of an ideal is at all possible in a transformation using the simplest of means), yet much of the plastic unity was lost here because of economizing and too much haste. The appearance is also impaired by the total lack of maintenance and by the rough ways of the Strasbourgers.

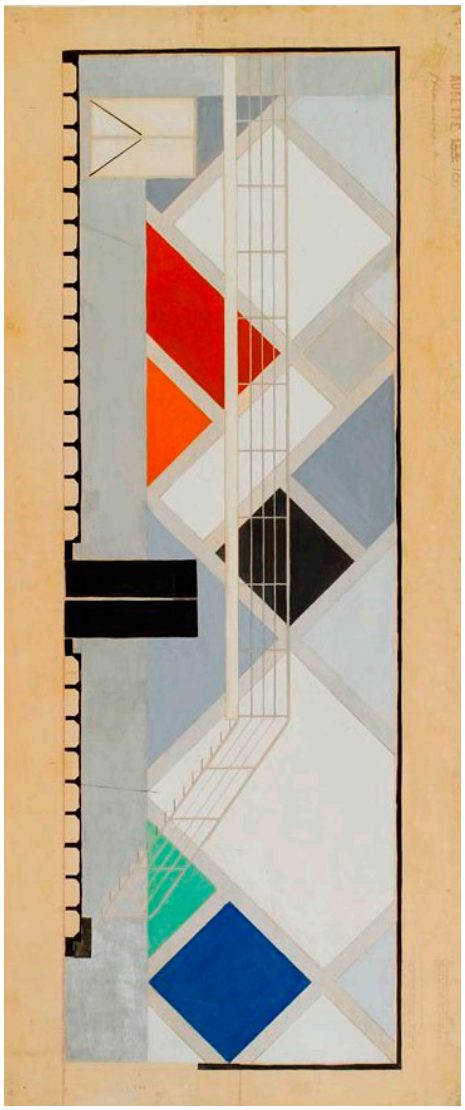
In any case this was the first attempt, in contrast with rationalism, to combine everything to create the atmosphere of a plastic architecture."

Theo van Doesburg

Het Bouwbedrijf: Vol. 6, no. 6
March 1929, pgs. 116-122

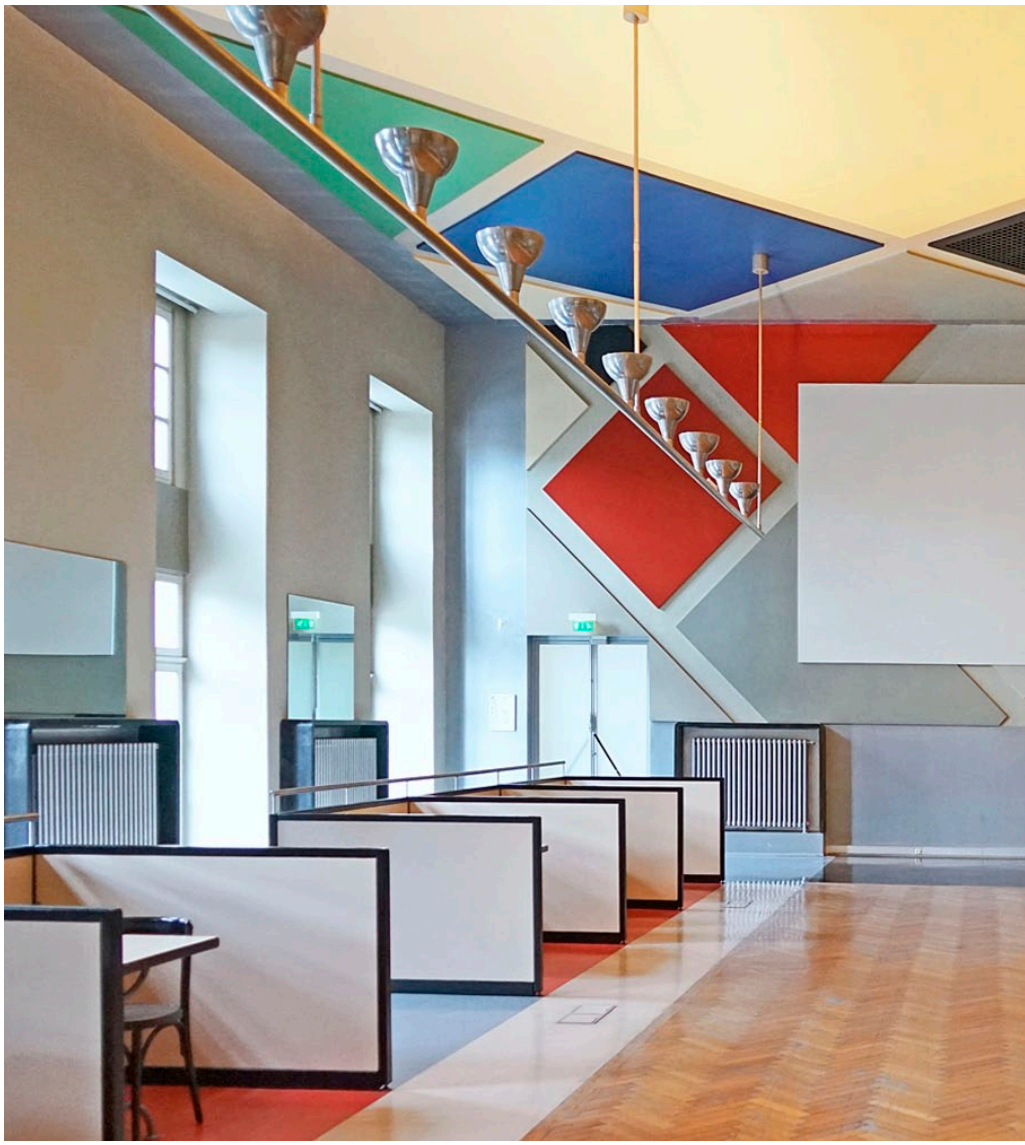
New York (1971–2)

(5)



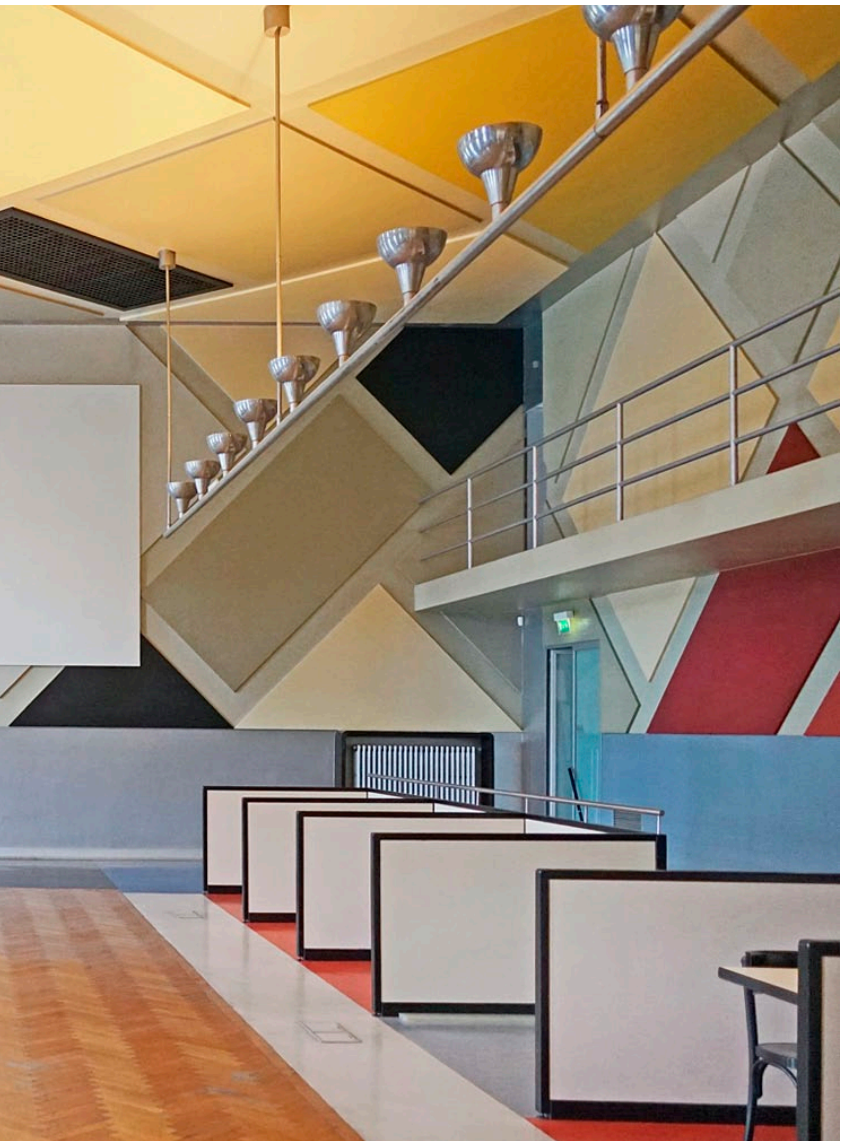
Strasbourg (1926–8)

(6)





New York (1972) (7)



Amsterdam (1951) (8)





Amsterdam (1956) (9)



(10) Los Angeles (1969)



(11)

Los Angeles (1969)



(12)





(13)

Fossiles are extra on all meals.[A]

You might say that a certain "tradition" was in the process of forming in the late 1960s, a tradition of recognizing the work of art as existing not only in some rarefied aesthetic system but also within an economic system (a system of buying and selling), and answering to an overarching structure of outside political interests. In 1961, for instance, **Claes Oldenburg** had created his famous "**store**," which functioned with complete credibility as a viable site of economic exchange without the intervention of a museum or art gallery. **Robert Filliou** and **George Brecht** had a shop together near Nice in the late 1960s, while the San Francisco **Diggers**' influential "**Free Store**" experiments (a radical and theatrical questioning of economic exchange, mediated through what Digger Peter Coyote would later describe as "store-ness")[B] were well-known on both coasts among our generation. And these experiments resonated with such public interventions as those performed by the **BMPT** in Paris, the **Provos** in Amsterdam, and others who used direct action and street performance to challenge the hidden economic and political interests that historically have been mediated through the legitimation of works of art by systems of power and privilege. The spirit of this tradition would speak later, in 1972, through **Gordon Matta-Clark's Food**, a performance work that turned into an actual New York restaurant. There are no contemporary artists exploring the artwork as an economic "object-on-display-and-for-sale" who do not pay homage to this history.

An addition to this context must be mentioned: assemblage artist **Ed Kienholz's The Beanery**, of 1965. No single artwork created a stronger impression on the young artists of mid-'60s Los Angeles than this famous piece, a life-size, freestanding narrative tableau that eerily re-created Barney's Beanery, an actual West Hollywood bar (a bar, in fact, frequented by Chouinard Art Institute students, including Ruppersberg). This surreal and squalid depiction was effectively permeated with the smells of burnt cooking oil and beer, and with the prerecorded, tinny sounds of the perpetual empty conversations of wasted, faceless patrons—patrons distinguished by filthy, smelly, polyester-resin-soaked clothes, and by their communal preoccupation with "closing time" (each person's face being replaced by a clock set at 2 A.M.). Barney himself, the owner of the actual bar, is depicted staring blankly at a newspaper with the headline "Children Kill Children in Viet Nam."

I remember this history here in an attempt to create some feeling for the context of **Al's Cafe**.

> *Art should be familiar and enigmatic, just as human beings themselves.*[C]

The *Cafe* was intended to be a limited-run restaurant, staged once a week—Thursday nights from eight to eleven—in a rented location in downtown Los Angeles. It was to function socially as a meeting place for friends, members of the art world, and anyone else who wanted to drop by. In direct opposition to what one might have expected from a young artist at the time, the decor was familiar to the point of strangeness: hyperfamiliar, you might say today. The look was as crafted as a movie set, true to the period, though the period could have been anywhere from 1925 to 1969. Against all Minimalist, Post-Minimalist, and Conceptualist expectations, this cafe was not an idea as an idea as an idea; it was sumptuously filled with romantic detail, suggesting a cafe that had existed for a lifetime of years and was filled with Middle American memorabilia—posters, nature calendars, fishing paraphernalia, pinups, picture postcards, and autographed photos of movie stars and sports heroes. The patterns of the tablecloths were everyday plaid, the counter and the tables and chairs were traditional. Odd bits of advertising novelties were everywhere, souvenirs of past events abounded, and the waitresses were beautiful. This was *Al's Cafe*, the American cafe of all American cafes, looking as if it had been nurtured for forty years by a caring cafe-owner, filled with memories to be shared with generations of patrons. It was a place where any American would have felt at home. It was exorbitantly familiar.

But once one recognized this, and once one was comfortable, a strangeness was invited to the table. The menu supplied by the beautiful waitress was on the outside perfectly normal-looking—but the "dishes" were rather odd. The first offering ("***From the Broiler***") was ***Toast and Leaves***. The second offering was ***Desert Plate and Purple Glass***. The third offering was ***Simulated Burned Pine Needles à la Johnny Cash, Served With a Live Fern***. And so on. From salad to desert, Al's Cafe mediated nature into sculpture, brought the forest and the desert to your table. And it was not, as I thought for a moment, a joke. When a person ordered a "plate," the waitress brought the order to the "kitchen" behind the counter, the "cook" (Ruppersberg) put together the dish (rather quickly, as I remember), and the order was delivered to the table—perhaps a ***Small Dish of Pine Cones And Cookie*** ($1.50), or maybe ***Three Rocks with Crumpled Wad*** ($1.75)

I would like to explain a little of why this piece was so significant in L.A. in 1969. "Site" works and "performance" pieces were proliferating at the time; in 1970, for instance, Richard Serra would create an outdoors-brought-indoors installation at the Pasadena Art Museum, in which three immense California redwood logs were leant upon a fourth, and their cantilevered ends were sawn off and allowed to crash to the floor. The aftermath of this action created an enormously dramatic display, and the project was much talked about. Elsewhere, a number of artists of these

years were crowding into their cars and heading out to the deserts to work with natural processes, the results of which were often brought back from such alternative, poststudio locales to wind up in the same clean white gallery spaces that the artists seemed to have abandoned so pointedly. **Robert Smithson** had worked to point out the dialectical relations between the "nonsites" of the urban galleries and the peripheral "sites" of marginalized geographic territories: slag heaps, rock piles, dry lakes, landfills. He and others who followed took to the Midwestern plains and the Western deserts, executing projects in the middle of nowhere, and bringing back aerial photographs, sketches, documentation, and truckloads of residues and samples from these relatively exotic, empty regions of the American map to display in the populated cities. A new vocabulary was building, and an exploration of how our culture's richness and complexity have always been framed and defined by our fantasies of the sophistication of our urban centers, and the purity of their showplaces and shrines, in relation to nature's marginalized and boundless emptiness.

A dilemma was beautifully revealed by these pioneering artists—and clearly spelled out for the younger artists—and the question ("naturally") arose: isn't our idea of nature just another idea? Another concept? Another cultural artifact? Does moving out of our urban habitats to make art really accomplish anything beyond promoting a further alienation, a further fiction, another kind of imperialism, a new imaginary idea of purity? It was within this growing discourse that Al's Cafe offered to sell a "***John Muir Salad (Botany Special)***," or "***Grass Patch with Five Rock Varieties Served with Seed Packets on the Side***." In *Al's Cafe*, Ruppersberg answered the growing mannerisms of Earth art with a slyly symbolic display of nature as always mediated, always already determined by the culture that processes it—both literally and figuratively—for its own use. He presented nature as a commodity for consumption, without the pretense of any pure "natural" vision.

In those days this was a telling critique, for the language of site work and performance art was already becoming rife with all kinds of fanciful, romantic, and exotic "natural" primitivisms. Seeking meaning that transcended the historical moment, many "poststudio" artists had begun to dwell on the drama of prehistoric cultural practices, and to speak of solstice worship, the Nazca lines, primitive "making," and so on; sculptors meanwhile were trading the processed, industrial materials of Minimalism for *prima materia*, the raw, unprocessed ("unmediated") materials of nature. Many urban art performances developed into carnivalesque displays of earthy, sexualized, transgressive activity, and some feminists began to embrace mythic essentialisms, goddess cults, fertility rites, and the like. It was as if, at a time when modern-day Western attitudes to nature were becoming widely distrusted, artists were drawn to the ritualistic nature-worship of the past, or to creating new rituals based on that worship.

Thus for Ruppersberg to simply reproduce (or even embrace) America's banal traditional rituals (like having a meal at a local cafe) flew in the face of expectation during those contestatory times. In *Al's Cafe* he absolutely dismissed the idea that a people could radically ignore their own culture. To the contrary, he was determined to emphasize culture at every turn, to demonstrate that we are wholly defined by it in every act of transgression, in every act of self-redefinition—indeed, in every act of representation of any kind; and he seemed to believe that this was just as it should be. In my memory, it was Al who reminded our troubled generation that simple, normal, everyday rituals of human commerce (horrors!) contained a significant complement of decency and joy that needed to be recognized and appreciated—not *in spite of*, but *along with* whatever else might have been wrong with the world in those especially uneasy years.

Excerpt from:
Allen Ruppersberg: What One Loves About Life Are the Things That Fade
by Allan mcCollum

Originally published in
Al ruppersberg: books, inc.
Frac Limousin, France. 2001

Notes:

A) Ruppersberg, Allen. From the "Menu" at *Al's Cafe*, 1969.

B) Peter Coyote, interviewed by Etan Ben-Ami, Mill Valley, California, January 12, 1989. Found in *The Digger Oral History Project* at *diggers.org/oralhistory/peter_interview.html*.

The full quote reads, *"With the clarity of one's early twenties, I decided that theater was no longer an adequate vehicle for change, because the fact of paying at the door told you that it was a business. When you bought a ticket, you knew in your deepest culturally resonant center that this was a business and that while you may not like the message of the play, you knew that it was just like going into a store and not liking the merchandise. You turn around and you walk out. You're not questioning 'store-ness.' We wanted to question 'store-ness': What is the nature of business? You can't do that from within a business. So from that perspective, Free was simply the appropriate, efficacious tool for the kind of investigations that were going on. When it wasn't a business and people were doing something just because they felt like it, it threw the whole subject of coercion into the light. It forced you to take responsibility for being coerced or remaining coerced if you didn't like what you were doing."*

C) Ruppersberg, "Fifty Helpful Hints on the Art of the Everyday," in *The Secret of Life and Death*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, and Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1985), pp. 11-14.



(14)

Moscow (1927–9)



(15)

Moscow (2016)



Moscow (2017) (16)

(17)





Moscow (built 1929)

Workers' Clubs

A lineal descendant of the "people's houses" established by philanthropic societies and the fledgling trade union movement in late Imperial Russia, the workers' clubs of the Soviet era were intended to provide workers and their families with salutary recreation, and opportunities to improve themselves by exposure to Soviet values and culture. They also were sites of contestation over the definition of culture with respect to daily life and how to shape it. Debate over this question was at its most intense during the years of the New Economic Policy (NEP) when clubs competed for working-class patrons with commercially operated cafes, taverns, dance halls, theaters and cinemas, and when party leaders such as Trotsky weighed in with their views.

The trade unions which sponsored the clubs confronted such issues as whether they should be restricted to the unions' rank-and-file and family members or the entire population of the district in which the clubs were located; whether they should be segregated on the basis of age; whether performances in clubs by professional actors violated the commitment to the creative self-expression of workers; and whether club administrators should permit drinking, card playing, and other popular pastimes that did not conform to the more elevated and puritanical culture approved by Communist leaders but did raise revenue. Behind these practical and ideological concerns lay the fear that the revived bacillus of the "bourgeois" values of the "private" and the "personal" (read sexual) would overwhelm public life and the commitment to build Communism. [...]

As institutions for what Trotsky referred to as the "culturalization" of the masses, workers' clubs proved an irresistible challenge to Soviet architects. In the forefront of designing clubs along constructivist lines was **Konstantin Mel'nikov**, the architect of the **Soviet pavilion** (in the form of a workers' club) for the **1925 International Exposition of the Decorative Arts in Paris**. Between 1927 and 1929, Mel'nikov carried out commissions from trade unions for seven workers' clubs of which six were built. They are among the finest examples of Soviet modernist architecture, embodying the vision of clubs as "conductors and condensers of socialist culture."

Lewis Siegelbaum

http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1924-2/workers-clubs/

Welcome to the club: how Soviet avant-garde architects reimagined labour and leisure

In the 1920s and 30s, Soviet architects created a range of stunning, modernist workers' clubs, designed as centres of relaxation and education for revolutionary citizens. Now those that survive stand as a memento of a utopia abandoned.

The **Burevestnik Workers' Club**'s open glass façade is a reminder of a revolution unrealised. Its bold, cylindrical outer face and uncompromising shapes are almost as dramatic as the period they reflect.

The building is one of several structures which embody early Soviet attempts to construct a truly authentic proletarian culture. These workers' clubs were complex, multi-purpose entities designed to disseminate Bolshevik propaganda, provide public entertainment and even daycare facilities for working parents. They were also pragmatic by nature, functioning as a living room away from home for families in cramped social housing. **Nadezhda Krupskaya**, head of the Main Political Enlightenment Commission (and Lenin's wife) suggested that the clubs should be quiet places for "comradely conversation".

Today, the pink colouring and angular design of **Ilya Golosov**'s 1928 **Zuev Club**[14] on Moscow's Lesnaya Street looks like anything other than a quiet space for contemplation. But this disjuncture is merely evidence of the way the radical experimentation of the late 1920s left the door open to a wide array of conflicting visions for the clubs' role in Soviet society.

Some were more radical than Krupskaya. Constructivist painter and designer **El Lissitzky** argued that the Church and the Palace represented "the power sources of the old order", and that "new power sources which belong to our new order" needed to be established. **Lissitzky saw the clubs as nothing short of "workshops for the transformation of man".**

As Russia continues its current transition, public space is being closed off and privatised at an alarming rate. Now, just a handful remain standing, two of which still hold regular public events; others are privately owned, while the rest have fallen into a state of disrepair. Regardless of their condition, they are an echo of a time when civic-mindedness and community building were regarded as virtues in Russian society.

The early experiments in workers' club formation emerged immediately after the Soviet regime came to power. Often, these experiments were conducted by local political organisations in any structures they could get their hands on, including churches, private houses and even sheds. Adapting these inadequate buildings to the requirements of the emergent proletarian culture was one of the first major challenges facing Soviet architects during those tumultuous years.

Following severe post-First World War destruction, workers' clubs were originally intended to compensate for the discomfort and overcrowding that labourers suffered as a result of chronic housing shortages. This pragmatic goal also complemented the theories of people like Krupskaya, who argued that culture would no longer be confined to the home, but would have to be developed outside it in collective centres. Home was to become merely a place for rest, hence the ubiquitous term "sleeping districts" for Russia's suburbs.

But this brought with it an architectural challenge: the role of the club as a public living room, as defined by Krupskaya on the one hand, and as a "school of communism," as defined by her

husband, Lenin, on the other, required a variety of different spaces within a single structure, both for quiet recreation and for mass assemblies and ideological tasks. The death of Vladimir Lenin in January 1924 only served to heighten this conflict. The structures would now also have to incorporate more sombre elements dedicated to memorialising the father of the revolution.

Perhaps the most famous example of a workers' club — but one which was never actually constructed — **Alexander Rodchenko**'s interior design for a club created for the **Paris Art Décoratif Exhibition in 1925** [18], exemplified this shift by featuring Lenin's portrait in the so-called "red corner", a space traditionally designated for icons in a Russian dwelling. This cooptation of religious symbolism reinforced the duality of workers' clubs as a place for both self-reflection and collective activities. But the latter tendency soon began to win out.

As trade unions grew in influence, workers' clubs increasingly centred themselves around the idea of member participation, with theatre taking on a more prominent role. This change in imperatives meant providing rehearsal rooms, modifying the capacity of the hall according to the size of the audience, and experimenting with avant-garde stage design. Trade unions exerted a profound influence over society and by the mid-1920s, these organisations controlled practically the entire workforce. The unions not only managed workers across economic sectors, they also influenced other aspects of their members' lives, from recreational activities to political indoctrination. More crucially, the unions became a major client in the commissioning and occupation of new workers' clubs.

The result was rapid construction, with over **100 new clubs** built in Moscow **between 1929 and 1936**. The unions not only provided the political backing to get the projects off the ground, they also exerted influence over the nature of the projects themselves. Union diversity meant applying a wide range of architectural solutions to common problems. The clubs built during this period include some of the best-known buildings, such as Konstantin Melnikov's projects.

Melnikov came to define the movement, and his clubs experimented with the use of space. He was the first to find a design solution that would adapt to the new functions and social needs of the workers' clubs. His well-known **Rusakov Workers' Club (1929)** [18], for example, is equipped with moving partitions to delimit smaller or larger spaces depending on the event being hosted. The auditorium could be transformed to cater for 350, 775, 1,000 or 1,200 people. Rather than focus on a single fixed hall,

Melnikov's work often relied on a flexible system of different halls that could be united into a single, large space when necessary. Another common feature of his clubs — their striking use of exterior stairs — resulted from 1920s building codes requiring wide, internal staircases for fire evacuations. In order to save space inside his structures, Melnikov connected the main halls to exterior galleries, which were not regulated by the codes. His Kauchuk Club (1927) offers the boldest example of this element today, although sadly the building is in need of extensive repairs.

The decline of the clubs today is perhaps a result of their role as a symbol of a new type of society. Unlike housing projects, whose forms are largely determined by their practical function, the workers' clubs were practically uninhibited experiments. Ultimately, the projects reflected the application of Marxist ideology to architectural design. As society began to re-embrace traditional units of organisation from the mid-1930s onward, these creative spaces became less relevant.

It's no surprise then, that the ideas embodied in the early workers' clubs struggle to find function outside of their specific historical context. In today's Russia, the majority of these clubs are abandoned, while others, such as Melnikov's Dorhimzavod, have survived by taking on humble roles in the open market — for instance, as furniture stores.

This is unfortunate. Buildings such as the **Burevestnik Club** continue to embody a radical agenda for community-empowering public space. As the Russian state turns its back on civic participation, the workers' clubs stand defiant against the seemingly monolithic inevitability of the present, offering a bold alternative.

Bradley Jardine

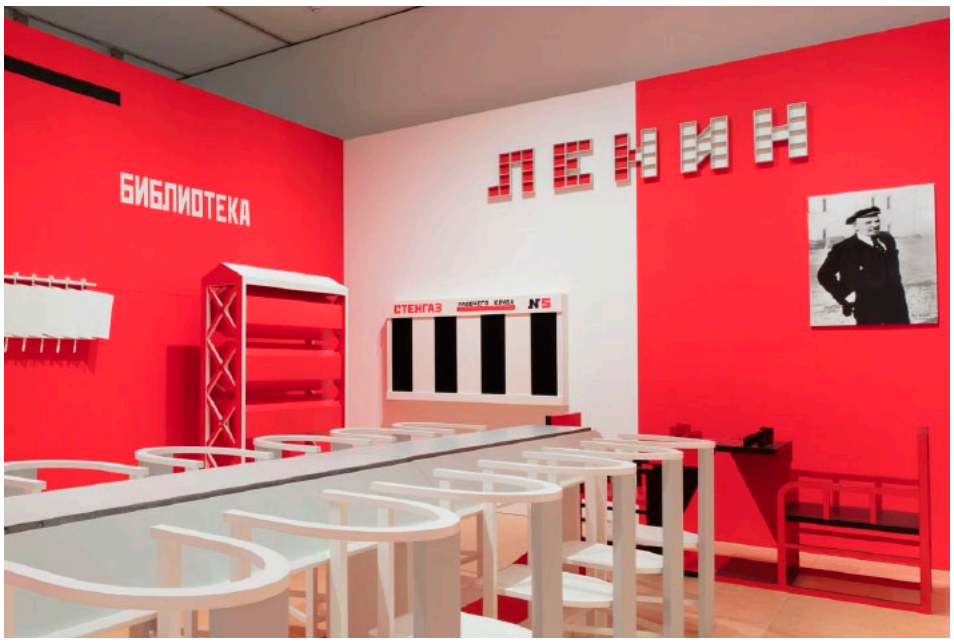
https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/8735/welcome-to-the-club-soviet-avant-garde-architects-labour-leisure-workers



Paris (1925) (18)



(19) Liechtenstein (2015)



(20) Chicago (2017)



(21) Eindhoven (2007)

(22)

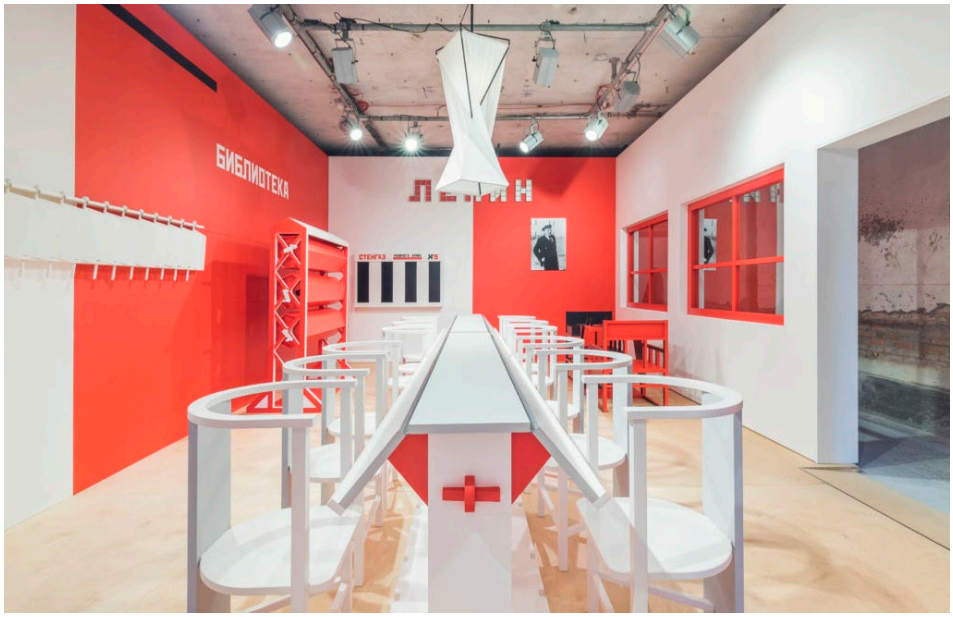


London (2009)

(23)



Moscow (2011)



(24) Venice (2017)

Rothko and the Four Seasons

In this week's issue, John Lahr reviews John Logan's new play, "Red," which stars Alfred Molina as the artist Mark Rothko, a lifelong depressive who thought of himself as the "supreme pessimist." As Lahr writes,

> *"Red" is built around a canard—that Rothko painted the murals for the Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram Building, which was still under construction when he accepted the rich commission. He didn't.*

Rothko was under the impression that his murals would be displayed in the lobby of the prestigious new building. When he learned that they would be placed not in the lobby but in the adjoining restaurant, he refused to deliver them. So, which artists were featured in the Four Seasons? In 1959, Brendan Gill wrote a Talk story about dining at the newly opened restaurant with three executives from Restaurant Associates, which ran the establishment. One of the executives, Joseph Baum, explained to Gill,

> ***We insist on having the best of everything. Philip Johnson … designed the Four Seasons for us… The enormous painting in the hall there is by Picasso. In the room beyond is a Pollock, the tapestries in the lobby are by Miró, and the floating sculptures over the bar on the mezzanine are by Lippold. Quality! The food is as fine as the fixtures.***

In his review, Lahr quotes the art critic Harold Rosenberg, who published several pieces about Rothko in The New Yorker. In one of these, written just after the artist's 1970 suicide, Rosenberg offered this overview of Rothko's career:

> *By 1950, Rothko had conceived his conclusive insigne of a disembodied absolute. This icon consisted of the rectangle as a one-color ground visible along the edge of—and occasionally through an opening between—three or four horizontal blocks of color with brushed surfaces and furry borders. For the next twenty years, Rothko's work consisted of reanimating this pattern with the substance of his emotional life.*

In 1998, Calvin Tomkins reviewed a Rothko retrospective at the Whitney, which included the work he did for the Seagram Building.

> *Painfully aware that the fifties pictures might be dismissed as merely decorative, Rothko began around 1957 to darken his palette. The wine-dark reds and maroons of the Seagram murals gave way to darker and darker canvases, with more and more black in them, canvases whose prevailing climate, strangely, is not gloomy or pessimistic but quietly, elegantly sumptuous…. These last works, drained of color and fixed in place by the white border, have been interpreted … as expressions of despair or premonitions of death, but they could just as well be seen as renewed efforts to escape. Having exiled himself from the paradise of color, Rothko needed another refuge from his disastrous personality; he may have been at the beginning of something new.*

Jon Michaud

> *The New Yorker,*
> *April 1, 2010*

"Here are photos of Betty Parsons' sculptures on the dining tables at the opening dinner for the National Gallery of Art's first exhibition of modern art, held in 1973. On the walls are many Rothkos. The exhibition, *American Art Art Mid-Century*, curated by visiting MoMA alum Bill Seitz, was made up entirely of loans from private collections, because the NGA had basically no modern works, and had only barely begun to even accept works by still-living artists. [...]

According to *Bunny Mellon: The Life of an American Style Legend*, by noted centenarian socialite biographer Meryl Gordon, Mrs. Mellon asked Parsons to provide some of her painted found wood sculptures-a letter in the Archives of American Art [p.23] says "10 or so," but Gordon says 14, and I count like 28-to "adorn [the] tables" at the dinner. Parsons' datebook [p.132] shows she attended.
[...]
Quoting Lee Hall's 1991 illustrated biography of the gallerist, Gordon wrote that Parsons worried the partygoers "will hate my work." She also wrote that all "her table sculptures for the National Gallery sold out." Wait, what?"

Greg Allen

> *greg.org/archive/2017/12/05/rothko-parsons-at-the-national-gallery-curated-by-bunny-mellon.html*

London (1973) (25)





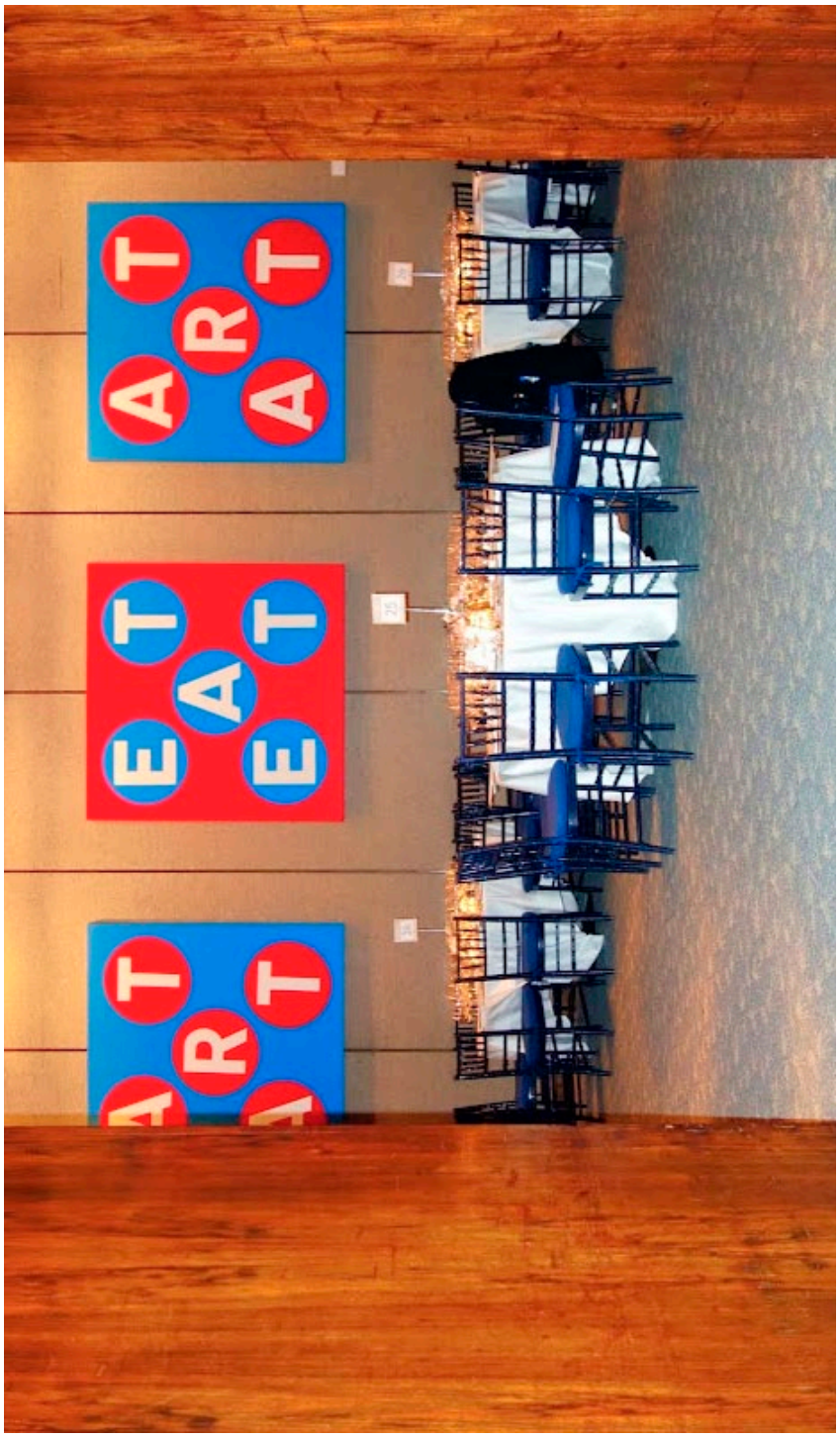
(26)







(1962) (28)

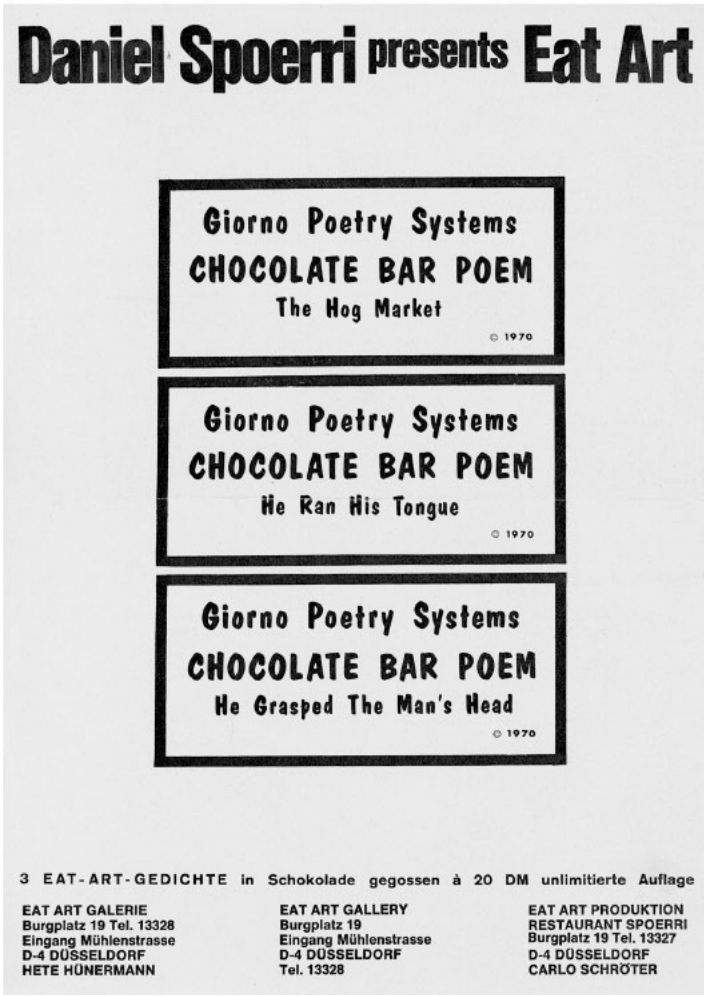


New York (2013) (29)

Düsseldorf (1970)



(30)



(31)

Cooked Art

Food and art: their confluence in and divergence from one another has brought out both proponents and critics on the scene. When, for example, Roger Buergel invited the Spanish top chef, **Ferran Adrià**, to participate in **Documenta 12** in **2007** – either setting a trend or following an already existing one in doing so – the participation of a chef in one of the most important international art events was a hotly debated controversy. Adrià was in no way the first Documenta participant to "cater"to exhibition visitors. In ***1997*** the Singapore-born artist, **Matthew Ngui**, prepared fresh, made-to-order spring rolls for at least a few days as a part of You can order and eat delicious poh-piah. In **2002**, an improvised but fully functional fast food stand formed part of the **Bataille Monument** by **Thomas Hirschhorn**. With Adrià's participation, a boundary in the perception and definition of art and artistic activity had obviously been crossed, giving rise to intense debate. Given the 20th century notion of art as a continuous attempt to dissolve the boundaries between art and everyday reality, this debate comes as quite a surprise. Is it possible that art criticism lagged behind the actual development of the concept of art, ever-expanding into all spheres of life in its material and methodological repertoire? Or: what differentiates art from cooking, the chef from the artist?

Concerning the relationship between art, cooking and food, the 20th century was a century of mutual approximation. Of course, food has been in use as a motif in artistic representation since antiquity, and feasts throughout history have been perfect occasions for the opulent staging of dishes. Yet addressing the socio-politically relevant and not so seldom subversive power of cooking and food was reserved for artists of the 20th century. Disregarding the futuristic "revolution in the kitchen"with which **Filippo Tommaso Marinetti** and his collaborators had hoped to improve (fascist) society via the diet-based strengthening of virility, it was in the 1960s when food, its mode of preparation and consumption found its way into artistic practice. In direct reaction to the increasingly quixotic production of Abstract Expressionism and related abstract art movements, artists turned to their daily realm of experience, attempting to blend art and life, thereby systematically bypassing traditional modes of production in visual art.

One of its protagonists is the Romanian-born artist, **Daniel Spoerri**, who grew up in Switzerland. On a sleepless night in a New York hotel in 1970 he invented the concept of **Eat Art**, thereby giving an artistic movement centering on art, cooking and food its name. Even without a corresponding label Spoerri had been engaging with food artistically since the beginning of the 1960s. With *Lieu de Repos de la Famille Delbeck* the first "trap picture" was created, for which he is most famous today. Spoerri, spontaneously taken by the leftovers from a meal – used plates and silverware, empty yogurt containers, a small frying pan and a pack of cigarettes next to a can-cum-ashtray, glued them on to a wooden board (actually a sample board for tombstones, the back of which was used as an improvised table), and hung it on the wall. And so the idea of a three-dimensional snapshot was born of an accident while sparing the wash-up.

If the trap pictures, of which over the years lots were created in various situations, are indebted to the objecthood of the traditional artwork and carry on the tradition of the still-life – its transitory symbolism as its artful optical illusion – this is how Spoerri integrated viewers into subsequent Eat Art actions, how he allowed them to actively participate in the process. In 1963 Spoerri started cooking at exhibitions, occasionally hiring art critics as servers. He initiated a diversified series of artist banquettes, partially with a socio-political bent, but they were ultimately reserved for the happy few of the art establishment, aiding and abetting today's popular food event culture.

So what did Spoerri cook? At the first banquettes in 1963 in the Paris Galerie J., among presenting his collection of cooking tools one evening he served a "prison meal". Meaning that the guests ate the same dish a local inmate would. In 1965, at the City Gallery in Zurich, he prepared international specialties. Further, he is well-known for his "**rich and poor banquettes**". in whicha roll of the dice determines who among the paying guests get an opulent or a frugal meal. Further, he organized "**homonymous dinners**" in which people with famous names, such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ate food also named after famous people, for instance, Bismarck herring and Mozart balls. He developed the concept of the "**menu travesty**", which flipped flavor expectations on their head, faking the reversal of the classical order of courses by first serving soup in a coffee cup and coffee last in a soup bowl.

Spoerri didn't only use art spaces for his food-art events; in ***1968*** he opened the **Restaurant Spoerri** in Düsseldorf, where standard fare was served. However, always interested in uncommon flavor experiences, he expanded the menu with a few exotic dishes, such as termite omelets, seal ragout with algae rice and the legendary elephant tusk steak. Whether these dishes were actually ordered or indeed actually available remains unsubstantiated: procuring elephant and tiger meat, even in times of canned turtle soup, would not have been uncomplicated. Of course, after dinner you could take home the leftovers as a trap picture for a royalty fee of 1,000 German Marks.

The list of Spoerri's Eat Art actions could go on and on and on. Yet what remains of a devoured table? For starters you have to keep in mind that in fixing a real, banal, hardly presentable situation the trap pictures transgressed a dominant aesthetic norm at the beginning of the 1960s. That here the tradition of still life painting, which promised the eye pleasure for centuries, was being played with by neither arranging the objects intentionally nor artfully creating a working method, did not improve the matter. In his method as with his inclination for the ugly and the used, Spoerri was not alone in his time: there were Fluxus and nouveau realisme, and from combine painting and Pop Art similar artistic aims followed.

With banquettes and restaurant service in the art context, Spoerri, like **Joseph Beuys** and other contemporaries, worked to expand the concept of art toward the active participation of the viewer. With his edible art he resisted at the same time the completed artwork's claim to eternity. Beyond this he put on display the socially binding power of the communal meal as well as its power to reveal social structures. It further gave occasion to the act of offering new or unfamiliar dishes in an effort to systematically broaden his guests' flavo-aesthetic background. These artistic experiments took place at a time when traditional eating habits were changing significantly: family meals were happening in smaller circles and with less frequency; the food industry was transforming cooking methods while propagandizing quick meals consisting primarily of pre-cooked products.

Resistance to the industrialization and commercialization of the diet, the insistence on food as an expression of social bonds and the pure joy of pleasure, as manifested in Spoerri's work, have definitely left their mark on today's diverse event-based gastronomy and Slow Food movement. There are also links to other artistic approaches here. For example, the cultural-historical food explorations of **Peter Kubelka**,



(32)



(33) Düsseldorf (1970)

who from 1978 to 2000 held the first (and only) chair for film and cooking as an art form at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. Or the fieldwork of his student, **Arpad Dobriban**, who systematically researches and documents foods and cooking methods threatened by oblivion and makes them tangible in cooking actions, always with an attention to expanding his guests' perception of taste.

One is tempted to wonder how far cooking and food can stretch the concept of art? Just where do the boundaries of real life lie; why is the context of art used for seemingly non-artistic actions? Is there a difference between **Rikrit Tiravanija**'s preparation of a Thai curry for his exhibition audience and Ferran Adrià cooking for Documenta visitors? Who posits what art is? Does food have to be art? Does art have to be eaten?

With regards to the popularity and significance cooking and food are enjoying these days, questioning the link between art and food seems obvious, even if the answers have to remain largely open. Looking at art history demonstrates that more than a few artists have transgressed the boundaries of real life with the consequence of simultaneously ennobling everyday habits via their entry into the art context. The food scene profits from that today. In turn it keeps an interest in artistic engagement with eating alive. Art with food is just as in demand as food events, yet Eat Art doesn't always have to taste good, while culinary art does. This is why aesthetic pleasure is more difficult to digest than culinary pleasure. Beyond nutritional value, art holds an epistemological surplus value for those who are interested in it. Ultimately, art wants to continue being a medium for better understanding the world that surrounds it."

Petra Gördüren,
June 2015

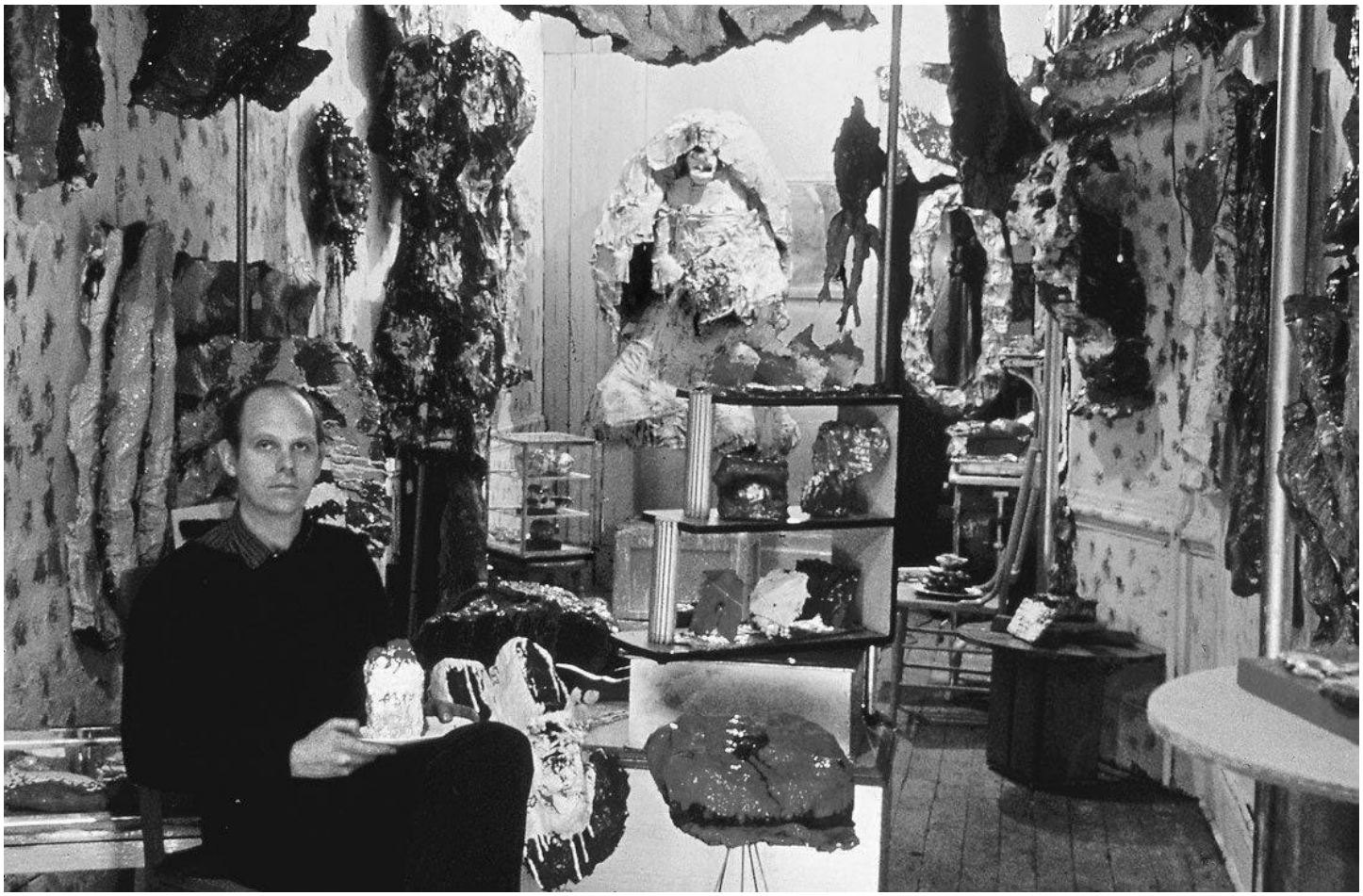
excerpt from: *contemporaryfoodlab.com/hungry-world/2015/06/cooked-art/*

(34)

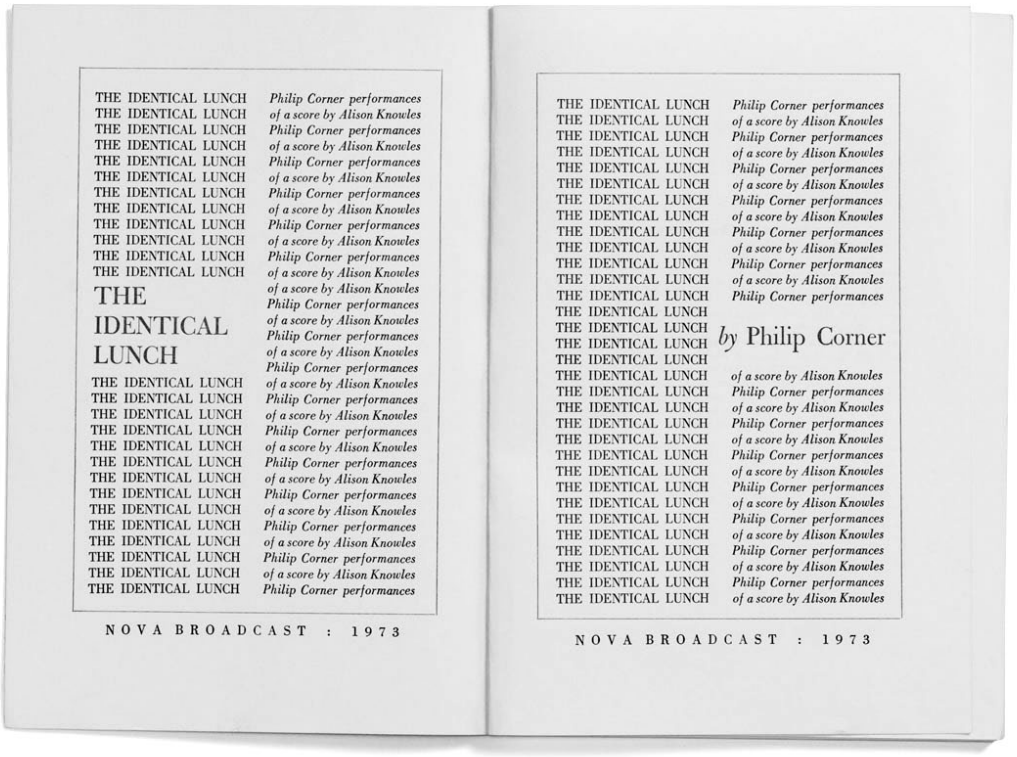


New York (1961)

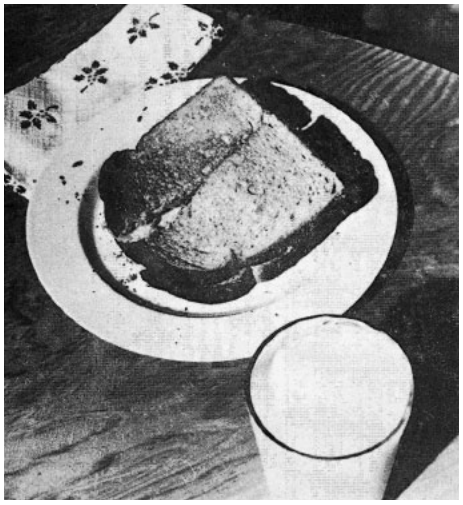
(35)



(36)



(37)



In the late sixties, **Philip Corner** noticed his friend **Alison Knowles** ate the same lunch every day: "a tuna fish sandwich on wheat toast with butter and lettuce, no mayo, and a cup of soup or glass of buttermilk", leading the artist to turn her dining habits into a performance. She did this by inviting friends to join her at a local diner, to experience the same lunch as her, and to write about their experiences.

In 1971, Nova Broadcast Press released Knowles' account of the shared lunches as ***Journal of the Identical Lunch***.
The next title in the series (which had previously included books by William S Burroughs, Wolf Vostell and Dick Higgins - Knowles' husband at the time) is Corner's own take on the lunch, using Knowles' original piece as a 'score'.

It would be the last in the Nova Broadcast series.

The Identical Lunch (1973)
Philip Corner
Nova Broadcast Press,
46 pp., 22.4 x 15.3 cm., softcover
Edition of 1000 copies

Dave Dyment, September 2017
Artists' Books and Multiples

1)

Café Samt & Seide (1927)
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich

http://socks-studio.com/2016/02/29/cafe-samt-seide-by-ludwig-mies-van-der-rohe-and-lilly-reich-1927/

and

https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/34/565

2)

Topographie Anécdotée du Hasard*
(17 October 1961)
Daniel Spoerri

or: An Anecdoted Topography of Chance (Re-Anecdoted Version)
Something Else Press (1966)

or: éd. Centre Pompidou, Paris (1999)

or: the Atlas Press, London (expanded English version, 1995)

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Spoerri

3)

Food (1971–1974)
Carol Goodden, Tina Girouard and Gordon Matta-Clark

Exterior view of Food after the renovations, 1971–2

Cosmos Andrew Sarchiapone papers, circa 1860–2011, bulk 1940–2011, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Inst., Washington, D.C.

4)

Cafe l'aubette, Strasbourg (1928): Cinéma-danse La Haye
Theo Van Doesburg, Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp

RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History)

5)

Wall of Cafe l'aubette, Strasbourg
(1926-1928)
Theo Van Doesburg

http://schatkamer.nai.nl/nl/projecten/cine-dancing-aubette

6)

Le ciné-dancing de l'Aubette
Jean-Pierre Dalbéra (2016)

de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aubette

7)

Gordon Matta-Clark, Food

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316905795_For_a_Good_Time_dilettantin_produktionsburo_Transitory_Spaces_of_Art_Production_Presentation_and_Distribution_Aesthetic_Practice_of_Cookery?_

8)

de Appelbar (1951)
Karel Appel

www.stedelijk.nl/nl/collectie/3041-karel-appel-schildering-foyer-en-scherm-%28%27appelbar%27%29-stedelijk-museum-amsterdam

(c) Karel Appel Foundation c/o Pictoright Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

9)

Mural (former) Restaurant Stedelijk Museum (1956)
Karel Appel

https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/collection/3046-karel-appel-wandschildering-voormalig-restaurant-stedelijk-museum

(c) Karel Appel Foundation c/o Pictoright Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

10)

Al's Café (1969)
Allen Ruppersberg

http://allanmccollum.net/amcimages/al.html

11) 12) 13)

Meals from Al's Cafe (1969) mixed media, aluminum pie tins, paper placemats

https://walkerart.org/calendar/2018/a-think-a-drink-allen-ruppersberg

Courtesy the artist; photos: Gary Krueger; digital scans: Augusta Wood.

https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2019/allen-ruppersberg-intellectual-property-1968-2018/

14)

Zuev Workers' Club (built 1928)
Ilya Golosov

Plates from the A. V. Shchusev State Research Museum of Architecture; Moscow.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zuev_Workers%27_Club

15)

The Zuyev Workers' Club
photo: Alex Fedorov

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zuev_Workers%27_Club

16)

yandex.com/collections/card/59d4cd7e215a8400c433390f/

17)

Rusakov Workers' Club, Moscow (1929)
Konstantin Melnikov

Photo: Richard Pare, crt Kicken Berlin

from: "Building the Revolution: Soviet Art and Architecture 1915-1935"
Royal Academy of Arts
29 October 2011 – 22 January 2012

18)

https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/05/29/aleksandr-rodchenko-lenin-workers-club-in-paris-1925/

19)

https://www.kunstmuseum.li/?2&aid=426&lan=en

20)

https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-art-joined-the-russian-revolution-1509119232

21)

https://vanabbemuseum.nl/details/collectie/?lookup%5B41%5D%5Bfilter%5D%5B0%5D=id%3AC6872

22)

http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/rodchenko-popova

23)

A reconstruction in Moscow's New Tretyakov Museum of Alexander Rodchenko's Lenin's Workers' Club (1925), designed for the 1925 Paris Exposition

http://www.beaudouin-architectes.fr/2017/02/36591/

24)

https://news.artnet.com/art-world/v-a-c-foundation-venice-954986

25) 26) 27)

https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/betty-parsons-gallery-records-and-personal-papers-7211/subseries-7-8/box-44-folder-55

28)

Eat/Die (1962)
Robert Indiana

http://robertindiana.com/works/eatdie/

29)

Art & Eat (2013)
Robert Indiana

http://woodwardgallery.net/exhibitions/eat-art/

30) 31)

Daniel Spoerri presents Eat Art: Robin Page (1970)
Robin Page and Daniel Spoerri

Daniel Spoerri presents Eat Art: Chocolate Bar Poem (1970)
John Giorno and Daniel Spoerri

Düsseldorf: Eat Art Gallery
29.5 x 42.5 cm

https://www.theideaofthebook.com/pages/books/183/richard-lindner-daniel-spoerri/daniel-spoerri-presents-eat-art-richard-lindner

32)

Opening Restaurant Spoerri (1968)
(Foreground: Gabriele Henkel, Serving food: Dorothee Fischer, with Tony Morgan, in background: André and Eva Thomkins and guests)

Coll. Carlo Schröter
(c) Walter Vogel

https://www.art-in-duesseldorf.de/kalender/duesseldorfer-photo-weekend-2016-im-museum-kunstpalast-spot-on-eat-art-12-14-2.html

33)

Daniel Spoerri in his Restaurant

(c) J. Paul Getty Trust

http://contemporaryfoodlab.com/hungry-world/2015/06/cooked-art/

34)

Pastry Case, I. (1961–62)
Claes Oldenburg

Painted plaster sculptures on ceramic plates, metal platter, and cups in glass-and-metal case, 20 3/4 × 30 1/8 × 14 3/4″ (52.7 × 76.5 × 37.3 cm).

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. (c) 2012 Claes Oldenburg

35)

Claes Oldenburg in ''The Store'' (1961)
107 East Second Street, New York

Photo: Robert R. McElroy

https://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2017/10/16/t-magazine/claes-oldenburg-and-his-art-through-the-years.html

36) 37)

The Identical Lunch (1973)
Philip Corner

and

Journal of the Identical Lunch (1971)
Alison Knowles

http://artistsbooksandmultiples.blogspot.com/2017/09/philip-corner-identical-lunch.html

38)

Levine's restaurant (1969)
Les Levine

Collection of the Museum of Mott Art, Inc. (c) Les Levine

http://blog.oakvillegalleries.com/2017/01/26/levines-restaurant/

39)

Painters at work on Sophie Taeuber-Arp's design for the ceiling of *Salon de thé* at *Aubette* (undated).

https://www.reseau-canope.fr/sophie-taeuber-arp/les-oeuvres-au-programme/laubette.html

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Artists' restuarants

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316905795_For_a_Good_Time_dilettantin_produktionsburo_Transitory_Spaces_of_Art_Production_Presentation_and_Distribution_Aesthetic_Practice_of_Cookery?_

and
http://contemporaryfoodlab.com/hungry-world/2015/06/cooked-art/

Food

http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/in-focus/walls-paper/eat-live-work

Al's Café

https://walkerart.org/calendar/2018/a-think-a-drink-allen-ruppersberg

and
http://allanmccollum.net/amcimages/al.html

Claes Oldenburg's the Store

https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2013/06/26/revisiting-oldenburgs-the-store/

and
https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1296

Spoerri's Eat Art Gallery

http://www.danielspoerri.org/web_daniel/englisch_ds/werk_einzel/18_eatartgalerie.htm

and
http://www.anniemaheux.com/about-eat-art

and
https://www.moma.org/artists/5569

Levine's Restaurant

http://blog.oakvillegalleries.com/2017/01/26/levines-restaurant/

Workers' Club by Aleksandr Rodchenko

See
https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/05/29/aleksandr-rodchenko-lenin-workers-club-in-paris-1925/

and
http://eipcp.net/transversal/0910/vilensky/en/print

and
https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/8735/welcome-to-the-club-soviet-avant-garde-architects-labour-leisure-workers

Zuev Workers' Club by Ilya Golosov

www.galinsky.com/buildings/

Rothko and the Four Seasons
By Jon Michaud (2010)

www.newyorker.com/books/double-take/rothko-and-the-four-seasons

and
https://greg.org/archive/2017/12/05/rothko-parsons-at-the-national-gallery-curated-by-bunny-mellon.html

Velvet & Silk Café

https://www.moma.org/d/c/exhibition_catalogues/

Aubette

https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/05/19/the-transformation-of-the-aubette-in-strasbourg-1926-1928/

"Artist **Les Levine** has also opened a restaurant. Well, not quite a restaurant, but an 'autobiographical culinary environment.' […] The food, like Levine, is Irish-Jewish-Canadian; the menu includes *Mama Levine's Special Entrees* and *Her Son's Favorites*, all served with rye bread, salad and potato latkas [sic]. All this begins at lunch and continues to 3am and there is a special discount of 20 per cent if you are a Levine namesake.

Levine has provided the electrically inspired stroke of placing five television cameras and eight monitors right in the center of all the Irish green and Israeli pale blue of the décor. This ploy makes everyone aware of everyone else, which is why a lot of people go to restaurants in the first place."

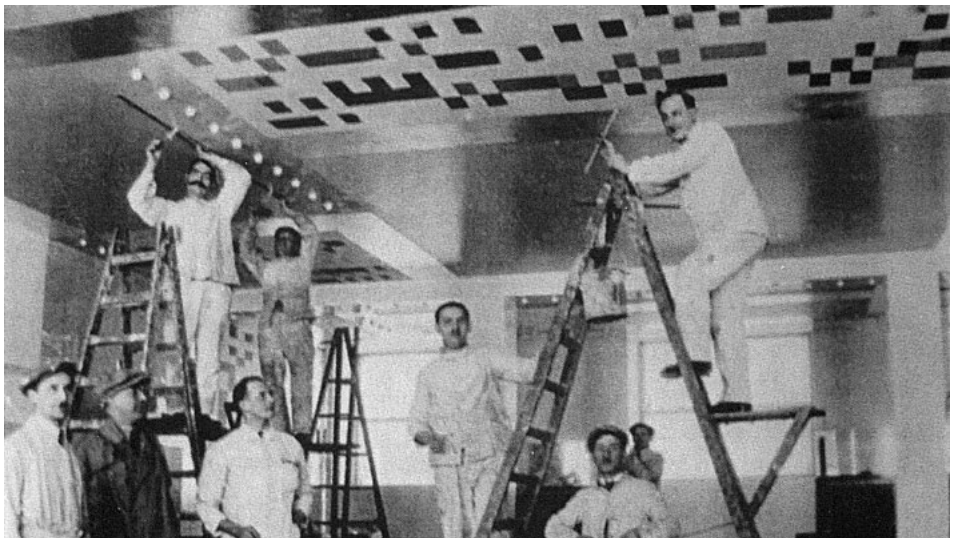
from: *New York Magazine*
(7 April 1969)

New York (1969)



(38)


VINE'S
TAURANT
OPEN
FOR
BUSINESS
IRISH
JEWISH
CANADIAN
CUISINE
RAND
ENING



(39)