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FIGURE 1 Heike Stephan, *Untitled* (c. 1987). Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentzsch, Cornelia, et al. (Ohne Titel) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie*. 1987).

“Daß wir allein dank des Imaginären kommunizieren”: IMAGINING A NEW ARTISTIC LANGUAGE IN THE SAMIZDAT PRODUCTION OF THE LATE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

by Constanze Fritzsch

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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IN A 1987 ISSUE OF *SCHADEN*—the East Berlin samizdat magazine published since October 1984 by a rotating cast of editors, in runs of forty or fewer copies—Alain Desvergnès, director of the *École Nationale supérieure de la Photographie* in Arles, states the following about photography:

We communicate solely thanks to the imaginary, as Gaston Bachelard taught us, and . . . photography, like philosophizing, is nothing other than the anticipation of a future knowledge, as a direct access to indispensable life experiences, on which perhaps our survival depends.¹

Here Devergnès anticipates one of the core ideas of the portfolio *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* [Conceptual Photography], compiled and edited in the same year by Cornelia Jentzsch (b. 1958), which proposes that photography is capable of imagining a new reality and accessing and expressing indispensable life experiences. Jentzsch, a literary critic and researcher for the Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft [German Film Stock Corporation], or DEFA, a state-owned production company who made documentary films, invited seven East German photographers—Peter Oehlmann, Klaus Elle, Rainer Görß, Kurt Buchwald, Micha Brendel, Klaus Hähner-Springmühl, and Else Gabriel—to collaborate on this anthology

and Warsaw as well as the TU Chemnitz.

As an art historian and freelance curator, she specializes in the art of the GDR and former Eastern Europe.

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of twenty-eight silver gelatin prints and seven associated essays. In addition to contributions from Klaus Elle and Kurt Buchwald, the essays include writing by Hans-Joachim Schulze, Gabriele Muschter, Rainer Schedlinski, and Jörg Wähler. Twenty-five copies of this portfolio, measuring 45 × 36 cm, have been published. As this paper is based on copy 25, which is included in the Getty Research Institute’s (GRI) collection, let’s follow the meticulous description of its catalog:

The handmade brown cardboard enclosure, a three-dimensional graphic work by Heike Stephan, anticipates the tone and contents of the portfolio. The enclosure is collaged on its front, back and spine with gelatin silver prints and photo-mechanical reproductions on acetate of veiled faces and figures, and rows of heavily overpainted contact sheet frames trailing thick drips of paint. Strips of paper bearing the names of the contributors to the portfolio are pasted around the edges of the main images.²

Let me quote Maja and Reuben Fowkes to unfold the historical context and circumstances of the decade in which this portfolio was created:

Reveling in contradiction and paradox, the art of the 1980s expressed an ironic distance towards reality and was infected by the cynicism of a post-utopian age . . . The disintegration of the unified socialist model was reflected in the divergent political trajectories of Eastern Bloc countries that variously resisted, greeted or surpassed the reformist policies launched by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, taking alternative routes to the collapse of communist rule in 1989. [. . .] Across the region artists used their own bodies in publicly staged actions that perpetuated and extended the neo-avant-garde critique of social norms and artistic conventions.³

For an understanding of this portfolio, it is noteworthy that its seven photographers—Oehlmann, Elle, Görß, Buchwald, Brendel, Hähner-Springmühl, and Gabriel—as well as the authors of its essays—Schulze, Muschter, Schedlinski, and Wähler—all belonged to the generation of the Hineingeborenen [born-into] (a term coined by Uwe Kolbe),⁴ a generation that was “born into” the German Democratic Republic (GDR) society in the 1950s and ’60s. This generation, who reached adulthood in the late 1970s and early ’80s, was confronted with an agonizing decade marked by the decay of the old districts and the rigidity of the Wall architecture, as well as with an everyday life ruled by an increasing disparity between ideological slogans of reconstruction and the victory of communism on the one hand, and the reality of scarcity and decay on the other.

The pathos of the reconstruction years and anti-fascism, to which the older generation had dedicated themselves, having experienced the war at least as children, no longer held any relevance for the Hineingeborenen. The older generation’s formulaic claims and ideals were repeatedly dismantled in everyday life. Dogmatic incrustation and rigidity were countered by a celebration of the individual, a creative life in the “here and now,” and art was used as a free space for other life plans. Therefore, the younger generation also rejected the dogmatism of socialist realism and its control function of the arts by the state. Socialist realism, the official art form and concept of the Soviet Union, was institutionalized by Stalin in 1934 and taken over by the GDR as official discourse on art. In the GDR, due to socialist realism, the social function of art was anchored with a pedagogical impetus. As a constitutive element, art had to build socialist society by teaching people

about socialism and thus provide widespread access to knowledge of the world. Article 18 of the constitution adopted on April 6, 1968, therefore declared art to be a pillar of the state and particularly worthy of support:

(1) Socialist national culture is one of the foundations of socialist society. The GDR promotes and protects socialist culture, which serves peace, humanism and the development of the socialist human community. ... (2) The promotion of the arts, the artistic interests and abilities of all working people and the dissemination of artistic works and achievements are the duty of the state and all social forces. Artistic creation is based on a close connection between creative artists and the life of the people.⁵

The starting point for my research was the rich GDR collection housed at the GRI. The GRI has been interested in the art of the GDR since the 1990s and has built one of the largest archives of the erstwhile state's cultural legacy held outside of Germany. In her latest research project, *On the Eve of Revolution: The East German Artist in the 1980s*, GRI curator Isotta Poggi examines the Henkel Collection and the network of artists it comprises. Her research stresses artists who worked and published in samizdat magazines and

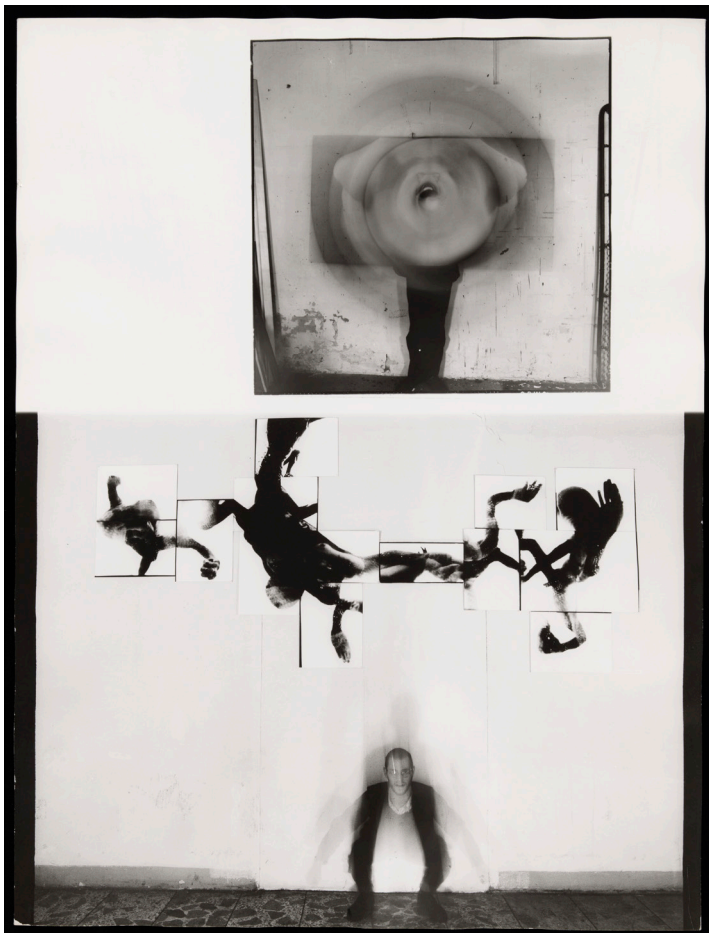


FIGURE 2 Micha Brendel, *Untitled* (c. 1987). Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentsch, Cornelia, et al. (Obne Titel) Konzeptionelle Fotografie. 1987).



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FIGURE 3 Micha Brendel, *Untitled 1* (c. 1987).
Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentsch, Cornelia, et al. (Obne Titel)
Konzeptionelle Fotografie. 1987).

artist books. The term “samizdat,” meaning self-published, comes from the Russian language and was used to describe such artist books and magazines in the Eastern Bloc. Even though the East German writer Thomas Günther explains that the term “samizdat” wasn’t used in the GDR, it can be helpful in describing its artistic productions.⁶ Poggi investigates the works, practices, and attitudes of these artists and their involvement in or impact on the reform movements that led up to the peaceful revolution in 1989. She places them in relation to the official art discourse in the context of their participation in the IXth Art Exhibition of the GDR.

However, this paper will analyze how the artists of the portfolio *Conceptual Photography* shifted the critique of socialist realism into the conception of a new artistic and visual language. They were driven mainly by writer Gert Neumann and his contemporaries, who had refused and rejected the highly ideological and dogmatic language of the time; these artists in turn took this critique and transformed it into a new visual language. In the portfolio, the texts note a new use of photography in recent years, which is captured in the terminology of conceptual photography. The ability of photography to serve as a representative medium of reality, i.e.,

the indexicality of photography and thus the image itself and its visual language, is called into question in the works of the artists compiled here. However, it is not only a new visual language of photography that is being sought, but above all a language that creates a new reality by staging and working with the body. With its eclectic collection of artistic approaches, *Conceptual Photography* testifies to the “born-into” generation’s search for an artistic language that not only intervenes on their everyday- reality, but also, via the medium of photography, creates a new, subjective reality. They no longer felt committed to social-documentary photography, as it had been prioritized in the only photography course in the GDR at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst [Academy of Visual Arts] (HGB) in Leipzig. Rather, they wanted to dedicate themselves to analyzing the imbalances in reality. Moreover, this paper will examine how these artists created a new visual language for the “unique production of an individual,”⁷ as Muschter puts it, by enacting a “substantial repetition” [gehaltvollen Wiederholung] of the practices and operations of such avant-garde writers as Georges Bataille.

Above all, various authors in the samizdat magazines focus on the ideologization of language by socialist realism and its inability to articulate the speaker’s personal experience of reality. Therefore, samizdat magazines and the very active scene of self-published journals in general were important platforms for the dissemination of these ideas and reflections on language. It was not only writers, however, who contributed to journals such as *Und, Entweder Oder, Schaden, Verwendung, and Anschlag*. They also addressed artists directly and included artistic contributions in the form of graphics, drawings, and photographs. Almost all the artists in *Conceptual Photography* were represented in these magazines and took an active part in the exchange and critique of language, extending the search for a new de-ideologized language of art. The existential search for a new language, as formulated by Gert Neumann and Rainer Schedlinski in particular, must therefore be read as a foil for the exploration of a new visual language in the portfolio *Conceptual Photography*.

Samizdat magazines were produced in print runs of fewer than one hundred copies in order to avoid the censorship that attended official printing permissions. Not all journals had a permanent staff of editors. Some organizers refused to edit the texts in order to circumvent compromising the integrity of the authors. Authors were asked to submit their contributions in multiple copies corresponding to the number of copies of the edition, in order to solve the problem of reproducibility. For the German-Czech author Jan Faktor, an important figure in the samizdat scene, these magazines had three functions: to enable a public beyond the circle of friends; to confer continuity by creating a material basis for the authors and artists published in them; and, most essentially, to encourage and stimulate writing.⁸ The main aim was to develop a circle of authors and readers that merged into one another: the individual authors were the readers of the other authors. They did not live far away from each other and wanted to establish personal contacts and a network.

Neumann was one of the most prominent language critics in the GDR featured in these samizdat magazines. Born in East Prussia in 1942, he was exmatriculated in 1969 from the Johannes R. Becher Institute for Literature in Leipzig and subsequently expelled from the SED (the unity party of the GDR). Therefore, officially barred from publishing his writing in the GDR, Neumann worked as a stagehand, boiler cleaner, and building fitter in Leipzig while creating and self-publishing samizdat magazines and submitting his work to West German publishing houses. In a 1986 issue of the aforementioned *Schaden*, Neumann talks about his perspective on language and his criticism of socialist realism:

I knew and hoped that there was something beyond the banality of the language that educated me; or attempted to educate me. But it was and is very difficult to let this conviction become a truth in which I would be reborn, writing and living. Language cannot name what is absent. But various methods have been devised with which the absent can nevertheless be brought to the certainty of presence. But these methods are always quickly exhausted.⁹

In this interview with Egmont Hesse, Neumann explains that he grew up with socialist realism and has therefore seen how it manipulates and permanently abuses language. This is why the truth, which for Neumann is always a personal truth, can no longer be told. Truth, and in particular personal truth, becomes something that is always absent. Socialist realism is “forced into the object of sentences as reproduction.”¹⁰ In his book *Die Schuld der Worte* [The Guilt of Words],¹¹ published in 1979, Neumann elaborates that words, defined and given significance by a “ruling generation,” perpetually lose meaning to each subsequent generation, who must in turn create a language of their own lived experience. In this context, Neumann perceives language as failing and speaking, therefore, as an impossibility.

It is his attempt at language practice that leads him to his resignation,

all spoken sentences, I cried, but are not able to establish the everyday logic with which decisions can be made about spoken sentences; and they therefore fail in that country; and the only way out, I cried, from such existentialism is: murder (uncounted divisions with the result zero);¹²

Therefore, inspired by Gilles Deleuze, Stéphane Mallarmé, Jakob Böhme, Franz Kafka, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, he develops the concept of *Klandestinität* [clandestinity] alongside

a practice of silence. Hofmannsthal's *Der Brief des Lord Chandos* [The Letter of Lord Chandos] (1902) and its famous passage always come to mind when reading Neumann: "but the abstract words, which the tongue naturally has to use in order to make any kind of judgment, fell apart in my mouth like rotten mushrooms."¹³ In his book *The Guilt of Words*, for example, Neumann writes:

However, we can't succeed! The words fall frozen from our lips. They are inexpressibly lacking in a language that had just been suspected in the existence of these words, but now, already, immediately staggers in silent absence, where words never reach.¹⁴

For Neumann, clandestinity is a practice alongside language, a practice of solidarity with the marginalized. The constellation of power in the conversation should be shifted. For example, the accusations should be changed in the interrogation by trying to alter the asymmetric relation of power between the interrogator and the interrogated. In several of his texts, he describes how he helped his underprivileged colleagues to face accusations by revealing the absurdity of their charges. Ultimately, he is concerned with reversing the reality of alienation triggered by language. Similarly, the search for dialog, which defines many of his texts, "is shifted underground as a subversive movement and conceptualized as 'clandestinity'."¹⁵ The principle of clandestinity serves Neumann as a counter-public sphere, which, however, "does not represent a 'total retreat from the public sphere', but rather a counter-model."¹⁶

The speechlessness he repeatedly describes, as the quotation above underlines, and the resulting silence as practiced by Neumann, is a refusal, resistance, and withdrawal from the ideology of abused language, and thus an antagonistic action against cultural policy, which stipulates speaking the language of socialist realism. In a conversation with Herbert M. Debes in Frankfurt am Main in June 1989, which is included in Neumann's text "Versuche eines gültigen Sprechens" [Attempt at Valid Speaking] in *Zusatz zu Verwendung*⁹, Neumann explains:

Your speaking must lead to an absolute neglect of things through the consequences it demands of you, because your speaking has dispelled all knowledge of the silence it touches in yourself and in the space of your speaking. ... That is where the dialog begins, in this space where those who are silent for whatever reason live through the beauty of their suffering.¹⁷

Silence is also staged both as the possibility of a clandestine and subversive dialog and as a poetological principle that can capture the truth absent in ideologized language, the "actuality of things," as Neumann puts it.¹⁸ Ultimately, Neumann is looking for an "ideal language ... for the representation of 'reality', which can be set against reality. With this idealized language of poetry, the word is ascribed the potential to create existence. Literature is sacralized and elevated as the only way to counter the 'reality' of a socialist indoctrinated society."¹⁹ However, this ideal language, purified from the corrupting power of the political language of socialist usage, is not geared toward communication, due to how it breaks through the agreement of the symbolic order of language in favor of a transcendental signifier. "Implied is the idea of a beginning of language as an 'ideal language' in which signifier, signified, and denotation are in perfect agreement."²⁰

Neumann's linguistic ontological approach reveals, on the one hand, the power of language to constitute and subjugate subjects and, on the other, the immanent capacity of language to generate meaning and reality, as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler also describe it. Literature is therefore not in opposition to political rule but is a result and part of hegemonic practices. However, the starting point for Neumann's writing and language practice is the critique of his then current sociopolitical situation and the exploration of the possibilities for the creation of a counter-language.

This ontological linguistic approach by Neumann is particularly salient, as Rainer Schedlinski, one of the authors included in *Conceptual Photography*, also notes. Schedlinski, who was born a generation later in Magdeburg in 1956 and would eventually become a Stasi informer, explains the emptying and disappearance of language, whose meaning must first be invented. In his text *Sichtbarkeit der Zeichen* [Visibility of Signs] published in the fourth issue of the samizdat magazine *Ariadnefabrik* (1989) (a periodical Schedlinski coedited and in which Neumann also repeatedly appeared), he wrote: "because there is only the material reality of the signs themselves, which, in order to take on a meaning, always become invisible."²¹ In this text he asserts and describes his existential experience of language as "the experience of the failure of language and the zero phenomenon of the meaningless."²² The semantics of language are subjected to utilitarian functions in society and thus "jeder Gebrauch zum Zeichen dieses Gebrauchs" [every use becomes a sign of this use].²³ Purpose-oriented language is intended to cement social dogmas:

We do not see the world through language, but the world on language; we see the meaning of the meaningless, the language of language. ... things speak from these torn remnants of an abandoned library of reality.²⁴

Language is not capable of generating meaning, which is why the things to be signified disappear behind the signs; the structural relationship between signifier and signified is interrupted. Schedlinski also argues, at the same time, for a decoupling of the signifier from the signified in order to free the linguistic sign from its meaningless significance and make it both transparent and apparent. This should enable the play of signs, which for Schedlinski can only take place outside of verbality. The question of a form of organization of language beyond utilitarian determination is posed by Schedlinski but not answered.

The language critic and search for a new language practice by Neumann and Schedlinski is translated into the modeling of a new visual language in photography by the artists and essayists of *Conceptual Photography*. Although the question of the linguistic sign is transmitted into doubt about photography as a medium and its indexicality, and therefore into the skepticism of photography's potential to represent reality, the portfolio doesn't imply a linguistic work. In his text included in the portfolio, titled "Die Negativität der Zeichen" [The Negativity of Signs], Schedlinski therefore speaks of the "end of the truth of signs" and of the "lost innocence of signs," which prevents conceptual photography.²⁵



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FIGURE 4 Micha Brendel, *Untitled 2* (c. 1987).
Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentzsch, Cornelia, et al. (Obne Titel) Konzeptionelle Fotografie. 1987).

In their essays for *Conceptual Photography*, editor Cornelia Jentzsch, the art historian and gallerist Gabriele Muschter, and the artist Kurt Buchwald define and discuss the use of the notion “conceptual art” or “conceptual photography,” deployed primarily in Western art historiography to describe a specific art practice emergent at the end of the 1970s in the GDR.

In her introduction Jentzsch states that the term “conceptual art” appeared in the circles of photographers in the GDR some years ago and therefore delayed to the Western discourse. She is fully aware that “conceptual art” was already in full bloom in New York in the 1960s and that taking up and reactivating the name of this art practice only serves to designate the common novelty of photographic ways of seeing and producing by various photographers in the GDR. The term is as utilitarian as the photographic film Orwo NP 27 used almost exclusively by GDR photographers: an end in itself. Only Buchwald’s photographs come close to the Western concept that she defines in the words of Franz Erhard Walther: “whether the description, according to which the respective work was usually made, could not replace its execution, i.e., whether the conception no longer needs to be realized and can itself be claimed as a work.”²⁶ However, for Jentzsch, the other photographers move away from the Western definition in order to develop a new practice of photography, “seen as a spatially mobile process, whose relativity and bizarreness sometimes turns into a pictorial magic that simply corsets the mental concepts.”²⁷ She does not consider the photography of these artists as a linguistic examination of either art or the concept; rather, time as an “examined condition of photographic work”²⁸ is at the center of their photographic practice.

In her text “Gedanken zur konzeptionellen Fotografie” [Thoughts on Conceptual Photography] and her own definition of conceptual photography, Muschter also distances herself from the art historical “epochal concept” and art style, but nevertheless engages with one of the central tenets of Western conceptual art: the creative idea as the starting point. However, she understands conceptual photography as the invention of a new reality devised by the artist. The photographers develop an “unusual view of the most inconspicuous things, through their own sensitivity, artists sensitize us to objects, landscape details, pictorial contexts that previously received little attention.”²⁹ This “unusual view” is based on an emphasized unattractiveness of the subject. The photograph becomes a relic of the artist’s practice and action. In it, fragments of reality are combined to form a new reality, thus creating new reference systems in the generation of reality. This artistic method—decidedly not a style—intends to transform and redefine reality. Instead, reality is to be recreated and become a self-expression of the photographer.

In their texts, Jentzsch and Muschter already indirectly anticipate the criticism by Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski of the adoption of Western concepts of art history for the analysis of the art practices of Eastern Europe, a region in which the GDR can be included. Piotrowski repeatedly reminds us in his texts:

What is more, the Western patterns of art historical writing are problematic when it comes to understanding the plurality of meanings of art in Central-Eastern European countries, which are created in a more local framework of particular Ideological State Apparatuses, rather than the universal perspective.³⁰

However, it is nevertheless important to take a look at Western “conceptual art” as a foil in order to realize the differences and the specifics of this East German “conceptual photography”:

Let me emphasize one example, Conceptual art, which was very popular all over Eastern Europe; however, its Eastern European understanding proved much wider and much more heterogeneous than in the West. In general, the specific character of that kind of art could be seen defined in existential rather than linguistic terms, more ontologically, if not metaphysically, than epistemologically or analytically.³¹

In Benjamin H. D. Buchloh’s famous paper *Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions* (1990), he emphasizes “the most rigorous elimination of visuality and traditional definition of representation” of conceptual art and draws parallels with French structuralist linguistic analyses. However, for him conceptual artists go far beyond this,

outdistancing as they did the spatialization of language and the temporalization of visual structure. Because the proposal inherent in Conceptual Art was to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition), it thus constituted the most consequential assault on the status of that object: its visuality, its commodity status, and its form of distribution.³²

Furthermore, for Buchloh, the transition to “Art as Idea as Idea” as a central conception of “conceptual art” is accompanied by an integration of language and visual sign into the artworks, whereby language itself increasingly determines the aesthetics in a speech act: “This is a work of art if I say so.” Therefore, the definition of art becomes a matter of linguistic convention, a function of legal contract and institutional discourse. In taking up seriality and the flat, deadpan look of amateur snapshots and industrial photography,

1960s artists embraced the photographic document as a straightforward means of presenting information, a ‘dumb’ copying device that could presumably be employed by anybody. ... This adoption of indexical models in turn greatly impacted the use and function of language in this art. [...] photography provided a tool to investigate the worlds of image culture and the mass media.³³

The machine-like impersonality of this type of photography and the distancing from conventional methods of self-expression resulted in a de-subjectivization of photography.

Although this very schematic overview of Western “conceptual art” cannot reflect the complexity and diversity of the individual positions within it, it is useful as a background and point of rejection for analyzing the photographs in this portfolio. And although there is no comparative practice of structuralist language analysis in *Conceptual Photography* (as celebrated by the American conceptual artists, for as Jentzsch states correctly, conceptual photography in the GDR doesn’t deal with linguistics), in both Else Gabriel’s and Rainer Görß’s photographs, an interplay of image and text, as well as pictorial and linguistic signs, unfolds. In his photographs, Görß stresses the interdependence of words and images. Due to their symbolic nature, the two emerge from each other and are of mutual origin, as is demonstrated by the use of text on a photograph that states:

In the beginning were the pictures

they became signs

the signs became writing

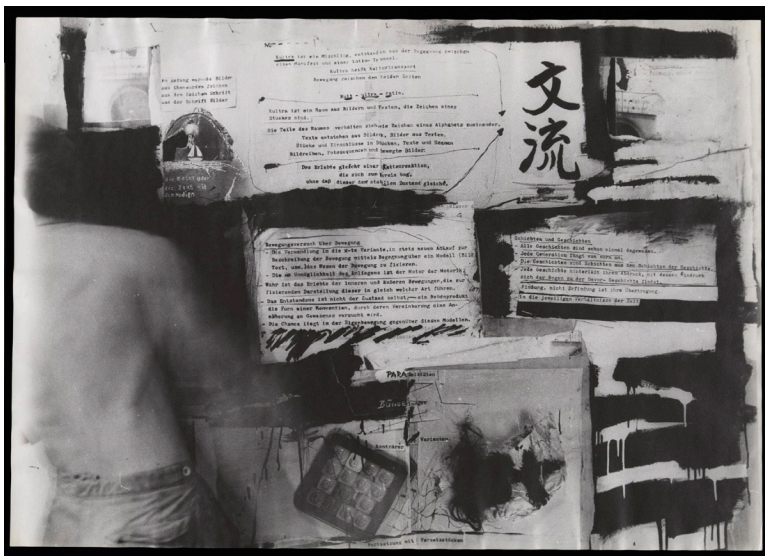
the writing became pictures.³⁴

The symbolic nature determines and semiotizes the world, while simultaneously “the parts of the space relate to each other like signs of an alphabet.”³⁵

Gabriel also integrates her own poems in her photographic works included in *Conceptual Photography*. While the text merges with the candle and the hand in the photo to form an image, it also remains separated from them on the black surface, although it becomes a pictorial surface against this background.

Although in his text “Konzeptionelle Fotografie” [Conceptual Photography], Buchwald gets probably the closest to the Western definition, he claims to use the term only “because I don’t have a better one available.”³⁶ Buchwald always sees the starting point for photography as lying in a mental plan or an idea. Driven by skepticism about the medium and its ability to represent, Buchwald focuses on the confrontation with reality. Through his actions, the artist should once again become part of the image: “Conceptual photographers begin to work with the help of their own bodies.”³⁷ Buchwald defines conceptual photography as an art form that is often used by both autodidact artists and artists who normally work in other mediums, whereby the technical standards of photography are not respected. “FOR THIS I ADD THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA: Importance of the context up to detailed information// . . . Search for expression about oneself or the group// Search for unification with the reality to be depicted// . . . Creation of a new context, a new reality . . .”³⁸

FIGURE 5 Rainer Görß, Untitled (c. 1987). Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentsch, Cornelia, et al. (Ohne Titel) Konzeptionelle Fotografie. 1987).



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Buchwald’s photographs reflect the theoretical considerations of his text. They serve as documentation of actions that he carries out together with friends or colleagues and which follow a mental plan that he also records in writing. The actions, such as walking over uncured plasterboard or digging up a piece of turf, leave traces and intervene in reality, transforming it.

The essays by Hans-Joachim Schulze, Klaus Elle, and Jörg Wähler call for a new visual language, describing how this is already being realized by the artists in the portfolio. Above all, this new visual language should allow for a new subjective experience of the self and subject constitution.

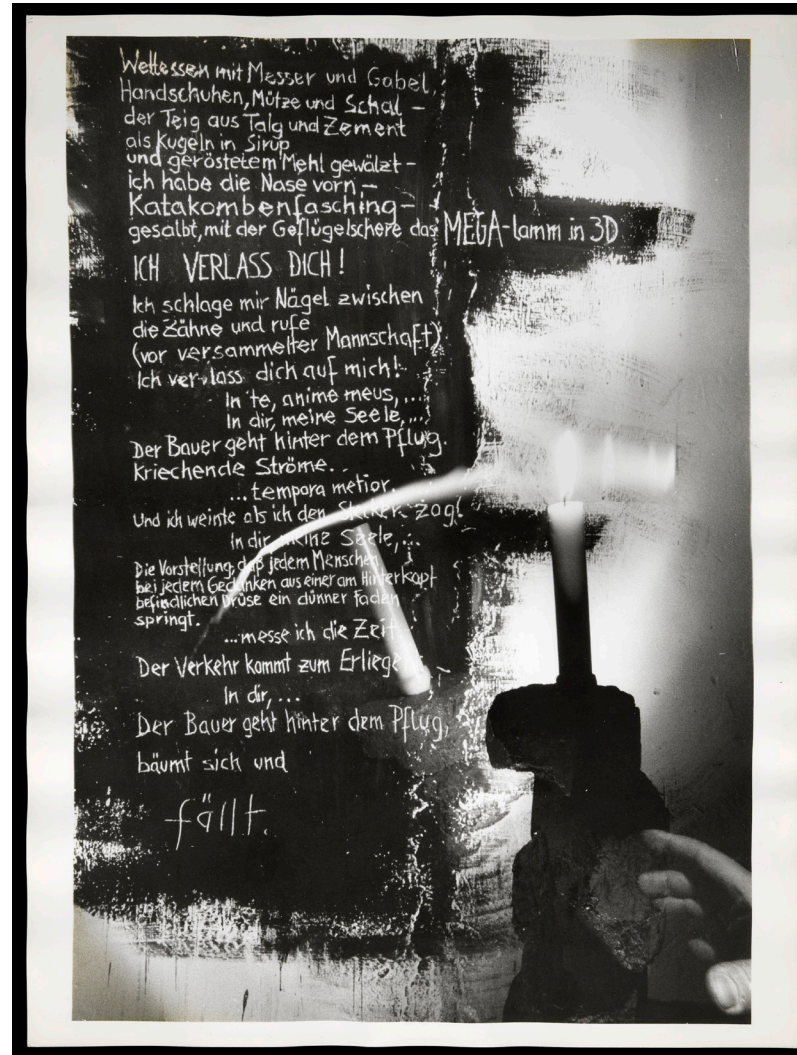
This aspiration to create a new language is expressed above all in the essay by Schulze. Schulze himself was a performance artist and played in various punk bands before leaving the GDR in 1985. In his essay “übergang

zur konzeptionellen fotografie” [transition to conceptual photography], Schulze considers “elements of a new language become visible, fragments of a possible future”³⁹ because conceptual photography aims to “spread fine nets of the will to create over a materiality, whose structure is largely known, without really having lost its secret.”⁴⁰ This anticipated future, which Schulze discovers in the photographs, is constructed on the basis of what already exists and enables “the observation of imbalances on all possible levels in order to fathom their entanglements with one another.”⁴¹ These images of the future are also “construction manuals” that the viewer should adopt as a template for their own subject constitution, because “[in] photos grouped in this way, you can slip into them like gloves and start working.”⁴² The photographs explore various ways of constituting a subject, which, however, always remains in a state of development. Because this visual language is also still in the making and remains incomplete—“its signs are only rudimentarily developed”—it’s up to the viewer to complete this rudimentary visual language through a new way of seeing:

but perhaps it is up to us to reach a new level of understanding, to further develop the art of reading signs, the sensitivity of our intervention in processes whose deadly outcome is now all too clear to us as a possibility.⁴³

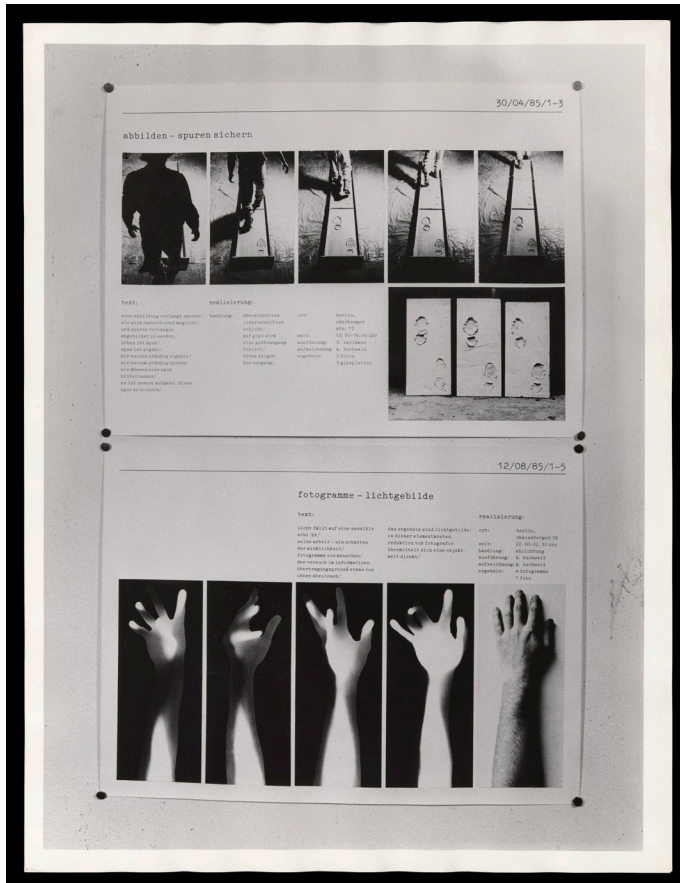
In his essay “Ich lasse mich nicht aus dem Konzept bringen” [I don’t let myself get rattled], in which Elle plays with the word “concept,” he takes up both the definitions of conceptual photography as a freer form of expression in the GDR and as the priority of the intellectual (as argued by Muschter, Jentzsch, and Buchwald), but he argues for the subjectivization of photography. The mediation of knowledge and emotions through photography, which is directed against the vapid reproduction of reality, should create small personal truths, “produce real personal creations . . . by means of photography.”⁴⁴ In their subjectivity, the photographs should nevertheless offer usable images for society as a whole. The subjective should replace the objective, and truth and reality should not consist of one truth that applies to everyone, but rather allow for a plurality of subjectively perceived realities and truths. This leads to a “non-stop explosion of the world in an infinite pluralism of images.”⁴⁵ The referentiality of the photo is dissolved and the photo refers to itself and functions more as a commentary on reality than a representation of it.

In his description of Klaus Hähner-Springmühl’s photographs for the exhibition at the Galerie Oben in Karl-Marx-Stadt in 1987, Wähner summarizes the various positions of the portfolio artists’ creation of a new reality. Standing in the tradition of Dada, Springmühl follows the maxim “art=life” as he enables new, challenging viewing habits that cast doubt on the familiar and irrevocable while also including a new experience of the self. As an analytical tool, art “does not conjure up the perfect world,”⁴⁶ but shows its cracks and deficits: “ironic images of a deformed world.”⁴⁷ Like a therapist, art thus opens up new,



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FIGURE 6 Else Gabriel, Untitled (c. 1987). Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentzsch, Cornelia, et al. (Obne Titel) Konzeptionelle Fotografie. 1987).



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FIGURE 7 Kurt Buchwald, *abbilden – spuren sichern* (1985). Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentzsch, Cornelia, et al. (Ohne Titel) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie*. 1987).

freer, more creative and, above all, very personal, subjective, and emotional approaches to the world, approaches not weighed down by fixed truths, allowing people to become freer themselves: “Art acts as a transfer from the intellectual human being to the freer creative being.”⁴⁸ This new experience of the self and subjective existence are at the heart of an “art=life” formula that involves the viewer in the process of creating art and opens up a personal approach to reality, thus rejecting a general social truth.

This rudimentary artistic language, emerging gradually in the works of the portfolio *Conceptual Photography*, constructs a new world in accordingly novel and imaginative terms. Its photos are intended to encourage the viewer to engage with the creation of this new world, the development of his or her own subjectivity, and the creative examination of corporeality. Schulze’s, Jentzsch’s, Schedlinski’s, and Elle’s own writing has already taken on a new form by techniques like stylizing all words in the lower case—or for Elle in capital letters—thus changing the linguistic signs. All the photographers included in the portfolio share a rejection of the indexicality of photography—and thus of the representation of reality—and an understanding of the image as an independent entity.

This visual language that allows the creation of a new subjective reality focuses on the body and corporeality as it attacks the “traditional definition of representation” of socialist realism. The new experience of the self and thus the subjective experience of the world is transferred onto the body, which is destroyed in order to be recreated.

On the one hand, the body is erased in the photographs; on the other, it’s overemphasized by the numerous and varied superimpositions of individual body parts. The contours of the individual fragments and pieces of the body are blurred together to form a partly indefinable mass. The body itself is overwritten with these parts. The abject, unheroic aspects of the body such as body hair, mucous membranes, and fatty parts are emphasized. In this way, the abject becomes the subjective and unique aspect of each body mass. The superimposition of images of different body parts, often left unclear whether they belong to the same body, allows the body to oscillate between de-subjectification and endless re-subjectification.

The distortion of the body dissolves and liquidates the human form, and therefore, the heroic socialist body is canceled and effaced. Only a formless, undefinable mass is left, and therefore it cannot be either ideologically instrumentalized or occupied. This formless mass of melted hair, spit, and mucous membranes becomes singular and individual, freed from any interpretative burden. In other words, the body has to be broken up, to be destroyed in order to create a new formless body exempt from ideology and therefore again individual.

The emergence of this new visual language, which coagulates into a language of the de-ideologized, formless body, is always placed by the authors of the essays in relation

to the classical avant-gardes. Therefore, the creation of this new visual language can be considered as a reliance upon the practices and operations of the avant-garde. The sight of formless and deformed bodies and the emphasis on the abject is reminiscent of the “operation of slippage . . . of what Bataille calls the “informe” [formless],”⁴⁹ as analyzed by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois. Bataille’s operation of the informe is directed against the narratives of modernism, in which the focus is placed on visibility, and the formal autonomy of the work is regarded as the road to pure revelation of meaning, and therefore formless matter is denied and rejected. The informe also turns against modernist art as a sublimating function detached from the body and any corporality. In this way, the four operations that Bois and Krauss recognize in the informe break open the myths of modernism: “horizontalization,” “base materialism,” “pulse,” and “entropy.”⁵⁰

The operation of “horizontalization” is intended to level out symbolic practices of sublimity and elevation. Above all, physicality is given space again. Therefore, the contrast established in modernism between pure vision—which Bois and Krauss refer to as the verticality of the visual field—and the realm of carnality is exposed as fiction and myth. Both areas are led back from a vertical hierarchization and into a horizontal equality.⁵¹

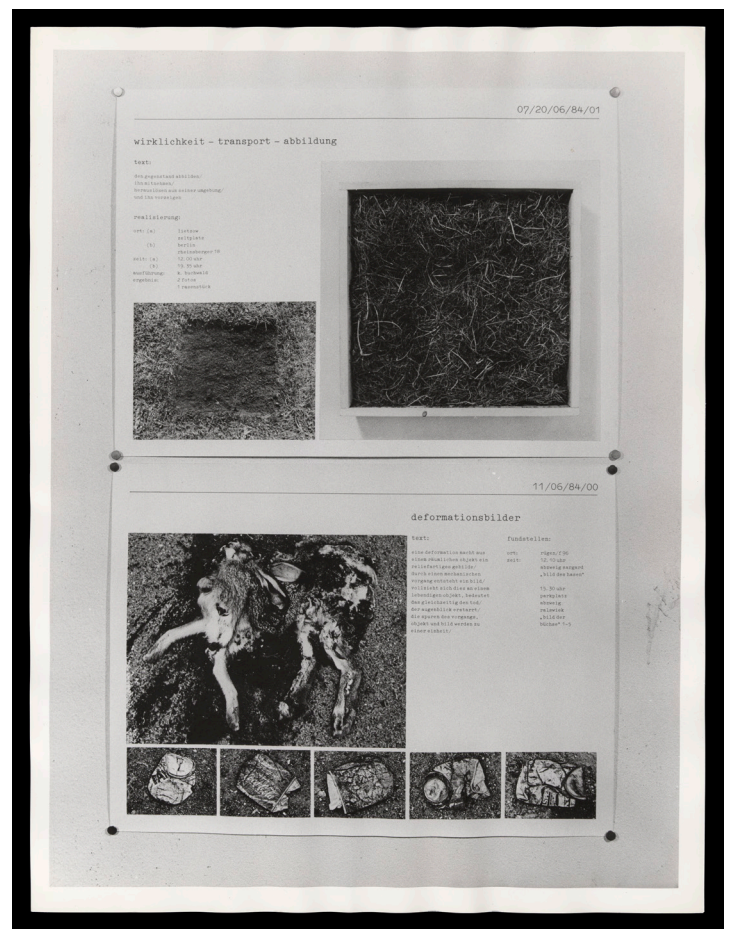
Furthermore, Bataille devotes himself to the dimension of the scatological, rejected by modernism, i.e., all lower matter is rejected as the repulsive other.⁵² Bataille introduces this dimension through his interest in “seductive waste,” a concept understood as encompassing everything that prohibits transcendence and stays informe: shit, spit, sweat, etc. This operation reflects the fascination with “rot and waste and decomposition” running through Bataille’s texts.

“Pulsation” brings temporality, excluded from modernity, back into the visual field, and involves an endless beat that punctuates and breaks open the disembodied closure of pure visibility in order to reintroduce the physical realm into it.⁵³

Ultimately, “entropy” is a negative movement of regulation through excess, i.e., the overabundance of these horizontalization effects and pulsating physicality undermines the rigid rules of a hierarchical modernism.⁵⁴

Just as Krauss and Bois do not historicize or define the informe in their exhibition project, the same is true of the artists contributing to *Conceptual Photography* and their attempts at “putting the formless to work.”⁵⁵ However, this process is not so much a rebellion against the paradigm of modernism as against the rigid, dogmatic, and therefore inhumane rules and structures of socialist realism. Moreover, “putting the formless to work” cannot be applied to the neo-avant-garde’s revival of avant-garde practices and understood as a recourse to the operations and practices of Bataille in the sense of “retracing genealogies,” as described by Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real*,⁵⁶ since the reception of the avant-garde in the GDR was only very limited and interrupted for a long time.

FIGURE 8 Kurt Buchwald, deformationsbilder (1984). Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentsch, Cornelia, et al. (Obne Titel) Konzeptionelle Fotografie. 1987).



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FIGURE 9 Micha Brendel, *Untitled* (c.1987). Gelatin silver print. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentzsch, Cornelia, et al. (Obne Titel) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie*. 1987).

In the late 1940s and early '50s, the *Formalismusstreit* [formalism controversy], a dispute over the legacy of modern art, rejected any connection to the practices of the avant-gardes as Western and decadent formalisms. Thanks to the slow opening process of the new cultural policy of the *Weite und Vielfalt* [Vastness and Diversity], it was not until the mid-1970s that it became possible to engage with them again. Exhibitions such as *Die Collage in der Kunst der DDR* [The Collage in the Art of the GDR], curated by Roland März at the East Berlin National Gallery in 1975; or *Von der Collage zur Assemblage: Aspekte der Materialkunst in der DDR* [From Collage to Assemblage: Aspects of Material Art in the GDR], organized by the same curator at the same site three years later; or *Collagen, Montagen, Frottagen von Künstlern der DDR* [Collages, Montages, Frottages by Artists of the GDR], which took place in the same year in Leipzig's Galerie am Sachsenplatz, showed artists who revived these techniques in the GDR, and their exhibition catalogs traced the practices of the avant-garde. In the 1979 anthology *Künstlerische Avantgarde*,⁵⁷ edited by Karlheinz Barck, Dieter Schlenstedt, and Wolfgang Thierse, the authors also saw “that the avant-garde in its original historical form had created an immense potential of artistic forms whose usability for new

purposes remains worth examining.”⁵⁸

Rather, the principle of “gehaltvollen Wiederholung” [substantial repetition] became relevant here, as Inke Arns develops it in the spirit of Gilles Deleuze for the Yugoslav retro-avant-garde and Soviet post-utopianism of the 1980s and the retro-utopianism of the 1990s. In the '80s, artists of the retro-avant-garde and post-utopianism dealt critically with the totalizing thought systems of the avant-garde, whose goals they saw realized in socialist realism, as Boris Groys describes it in his famous book *The Total Art of Stalinism* (1988).⁵⁹ Post-utopianism examines the avant-gardes less for their totalitarian tendencies than for their media archaeological projections and tendencies.

Following Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1968),⁶⁰ Arns explains the “substantial repetition” of avant-garde practices by Soviet and Yugoslavian artists of the 1980s and '90s as a repetition that engages with rather than simply reproduces the original, allowing something new and different to emerge: “And yet repetition is something new, in that it repeats something that is already known.”⁶¹ For Arns, post-utopianism and the retro-avant-garde are characterized “by a paradoxical retroactivity, because in their orientation they are not simply retrospective but *retrospectively prospective* (*nachträglich prospektiv*), in order to extrapolate the future potential, to open the past to the future.”⁶²

In contrast to retro-avant-garde and post-utopianism, the artists of *Conceptual Photography* used the revolutionary and paradigm-busting potential of the operations of informel in a “substantial repetition” to develop a new visual language that not only represents a different reality, but also creates a counter-model to the reality generated by the language of socialist realism.

This new language is a language of the body, a body that, in its raw materiality and

reduction to bodily fluids, eludes and refuses ideologization. This language stands for a new subjective economy of representation that escapes the biopolitics of the GD's exercise of power over the body. It strives for a subjective perception and an individual relationship to corporality. The unformed carnality, the dissolution of the body into the very materiality of flesh and bones, becomes the only possibility of individual access to the body, as this raw mass undermines the ideological formation by the political apparatus of power and the state control of the body.

However, thanks to this visual language of the formless body, these artists remain true to the idea of a social function of art and its potential to be socially relevant and constitutive. It was precisely this idea that was at the heart of socialist realism. With this visual language, they open up their own social space of individuality and create an autonomous body that, although it eludes the ideologization of socialist realism, is charged with a new ideology of individual freedom.

Similar to Neumann,⁶³ these artists rebelled against literary centrism or art centrism, i.e., a belief in the sacred power of literature—or in this case, art—that generates political, social, and existential meaning. With his “ideal language” as a counterproposal to the realpolitik discourse, Neumann not only raises the negotiation of the capacity of literature and language to a meta level, but also creates his own literary centrism. By opposing the ideological overloading of art by socialist realism and creating their own artistic language for the subjective constitution of reality, these artists also created their own art centrism.

The artists have internalized fundamental ideas of the official discourse and integrated them into their working methods, although these are in their entire essence oriented toward the rejection of socialist realism. For the experimental art scene of the 1980s, Sara Blaylock⁶⁴ also considers the internalization of the official system by the artists and therefore their intertwining with it. She does not simply put these experimental artists in opposition to the official discourse or the restrictive state apparatus. Rather, she shows their entanglements with the official art system, from whose privileges they profit, whose values they have partly adopted, but in whose rigidly set ideals they no longer believe. ■

END NOTES

1. "Daß wir allein dank des Imaginären kommunizieren, wie Gaston Bachelard uns von neuem gelehrt hat, und daß fotografieren wie philosophieren nichts anderes ist als die Vorwegnahme eines künftigen Wissens, als ein direkter Zugang zu unentbehrlichen Lebenserfahrungen, von denen vielleicht unser Überleben abhängt . . ." Alain Desvergnès, "Metapher," *Schaden* 2 (Oct. 1987). Note: All translations, unless otherwise indicated, were done by the author.
2. Jentsch, Cornelia, et al. (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie*. 1987.
3. Maja Fowkes and Reuben Fowkes, *Central and Eastern European Art Since 1950 (World of Art)* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020), 103, 113.
4. Frank Eckart, in *Eigenart und Eigensinn. Alternative Kulturszenen in der DDR (1980–1990). Mit einem Bestandskatalog*, ed. Forschungsstelle Osteuropa (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1993), 54.
5. "(1) Die sozialistische Nationalkultur gehört zu den Grundlagen der sozialistischen Gesellschaft. Die DDR fördert und schützt die sozialistische Kultur, die dem Frieden, dem Humanismus und der Entwicklung der sozialistischen Menschengemeinschaft dient. . . (2) Die Förderung der Künste, der künstlerischen Interessen und Fähigkeiten aller Werktätigen und die Verbreitung künstlerischer Werke und Leistungen sind Obliegenheiten des Staates und aller gesellschaftlichen Kräfte. Das künstlerische Schaffen beruht auf einer engen Verbindung der Kulturschaffenden mit dem Leben des Volkes." *Zitatensammlung zur Kulturpolitik der SED. Dokumente 1945 bis 1978*, ed. Institut für Weiterbildung des Ministeriums für Kultur an der Kunsthochschule (Berlin, 1978), 122.
6. See Thomas Günther, "Essential Aspects of Subculture Periodicals in the GDR and Their Place in Cultural History," *JAB* 8 (1997): 17–26.
7. Gabriele Muschter, "Gedanken zur konzeptionellen Fotografie," in Jentsch et al., (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987), 1.
8. See Osteuropa, *Eigenart und Eigensinn*, 86.
9. "Ich wußte und hoffte, es gibt etwas außerhalb der Banalität der Sprache, die mich erzogen hat; oder erziehen wollte. Es war und ist aber sehr schwierig, diese Überzeugung in dem Sinn, daß ich durch sie wiedergeboren würde, zu einer Wahrheit werden zu lassen, in der du, schreibend, lebst. Die Sprache kann das Abwesende nicht nennen. Man hat sich aber verschiedene Methoden geschaffen, mit denen man das Abwesende dennoch bis in die Gewißheit der Anwesenheit bringen kann. Diese Methoden sind aber immer schnell erschöpft." Gert Neumann, "Geheim-sprache 'Klandestinität'; mit Gert Neumann im Gespräch," *Schaden* 4 (1986).
10. Ibid.
11. Gert Neumann, *Die Schuld der Worte* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1979).
12. "alle gesprochenen Sätze, rief ich, aber vermögen nicht die alltägliche Logik zu errichten, mit der ja entschieden werden kann über die gesprochenen Sätze; und sie *scheitern* deshalb in *jenem* Land; und ein einziger Ausweg, rief ich, aus solcher Existenzlosigkeit ist: Mord (ungezählte Teilungen dem Ergebnis Null;)." Ibid., 142.
13. "sondern die abstrakten Worte, deren sich doch die Zunge naturgemäß bedienen muß, um irgend welches Urteil an den Tag zu geben, zerfielen mir im Munde wie modrige Pilze." Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der Brief des Lord Chandos* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. Verlag GmbH, 2019), 12.
14. "Aber es will uns ja nichts gelingen! Die Worte fallen erstarrt von den Lippen. Ihnen mangelt es unaussprechlich an einer Sprache, die eben noch in der Existenz dieser Worte vermutet gewesen war, aber nun, schon, sofort in schweigender Abwesenheit taumelt, wohin die Wörter niemals reichen." Neumann, *Die Schuld der Worte*, 107.
15. Manuel Ghilarducci, *Subjekte, Sprachgewalt, Hegemonie: Sprachreflexion in der deutschen und russischen Gegenwartsprosa* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019), 29.
16. Ibid., 46.
17. "Dein Sprechen muß zu einer absoluten Verwahrlosung der Dinge durch seine von dir geforderte Konsequenzen

führen, weil dein Sprechen in dir selber und im Raum deines Sprechens jegliche Kenntnis von dem Schweigen, das es berührt, vertrieben hat. . . . Da fängt der Dialog in diesem Raum an, in dem die aus welchen Gründen auch immer schweigenden Menschen bis in die Schönheit ihrer Leiden leben." Gert Neumann, "Versuche eines gültigen Sprechens," *Verwendung* 9 (1990).

18. Ibid.

19. Ghilarducci, *Subjekte, Sprachgewalt, Hegemonie*, 29.

20. Ibid., 44.

21. "denn es gibt nur die materielle Wirklichkeit der Zeichen selbst, die, um einen Sinn anzunehmen, stets unsichtbar werden ." Rainer Schedlinski, "Sichtbarkeit der Zeichen," *Ariadnefabrik* 4 (1989): 42.

22. "die Erfahrung vom *Versagen der Sprache*, und dem *Nullphänomen des Bedeutungslosen*." Ibid., 42.

23. Ibid.

24. "Wir sehen nicht durch die Sprache die Welt, sondern die Welt auf die Sprache; wir sehen *den Sinn des Bedeutungslosen*, die *Sprache der Sprache*. . . . die Dinge sprechen aus diesen zerrissenen Resten einer aufgegebenen Bibliothek der Wirklichkeit." Ibid.

25. Rainer Schedlinski, "Die Negativität der Zeichen," in Jentzsch et al., (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987), 1.

26. "ob die beschreibung, nach der die jeweilige arbeit in der regel angefertigt wurde, nicht deren ausführung ersetzen könnte, ob also die konzeption gar nicht mehr der realisierung bedarf und selber als werk behauptet werden kann." Jentzsch, "Wort vor," in Jentzsch et al., (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987), 2.

27. "sondern als räumlich-beweglicher vorgang betrachtet, dessen relativität und skurrilität bisweilen in eine bildmagie umschlägt, die schlicht die gedanklichen konzepte korsettieren," Ibid., 2.

28. "untersuchte Bedingung fotografischen Arbeitens," Ibid., 2.

29. "daß sie eine ungewöhnliche Sicht auf die unscheinbarsten Dinge haben, daß sie durch ihre eigene Sensibilität für Gegenstände, Landschaftsausschnitte, Bildzusammenhänge, die vorher kaum Beachtung fanden, sensible machen." Muschter, "Gedanken zur konzeptionellen Fotografie," in Jentzsch et al., (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987), 3.

30. Piotr Piotrowski, "How to Write a History of Central-East European Art?," *Third Text* 23, no. 1 (2009): 5.

31. Ibid., 6.

32. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 107.

33. Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 6–7. See also Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen, eds., *Photography After Conceptual Art*, (Association of Art Historians, Maiden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

34. "Am Anfang waren die Bilder / aus ihnen wurden Zeichen / aus den Zeichen Schrift/ aus der Schrift Bilder." Rainer Görß, *Untitled*, c. 1987, gelatin silver prints, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentzsch, Cornelia, et al. (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie*. 1987).

35. "die Teile des Raumes verhalten sich wie Zeichen eines Alphabets zueinander." Rainer Görß, *Untitled*, c. 1987, gelatin silver prints, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Jentzsch et al. (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie*. 1987).

36. "da ich keinen besseren zur Verfügung habe." Kurt Buchwald, "Konzeptionelle Fotografie," in Jentzsch et al., (*Obne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987), 1.

37. "Konzeptionelle Fotografen beginnen mit Hilfe des eigenen Körpers zu arbeiten." Ibid., 3.

38. "DAZU FÜHRE ICH FOLGENDE KRITERIEN AN: Wichtigkeit des Kontextes bis hin zu detaillierten Angaben// . . . Suche nach Ausdruck über die eigene Person oder der Gruppe// Suche nach Vereinigung mit der

- abzubildenden Realität// . . . Schaffen eines neuen Zusammenhanges, einer neuen Realität . . ." Ibid., 2.
39. "elemente einer neuen sprache sichtbar [werden], bruchstücke einer möglichen zukunft." Hans-Joachim Schulze, "übergang zur konzeptionellen fotografie," in Jentzsch et al., (*Ohne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987), 3.
40. "feine netze des gestalten-wollens über eine stofflichkeit zu breiten, deren struktur weitgehend bekannt ist, ohne ihr geheimnis wirklich verloren zu haben." Ibid., 2.
41. "das Betrachten von Ungleichgewichten auf allen möglichen Ebenen, um das Ausloten ihrer Verstrickungen untereinander." Ibid., 5.
42. "[in] so gruppierte Fotos kann man hineinschlüpfen wie in Handschuhe, und beginnen zu arbeiten." Ibid., 4.
43. "ihre zeichen sind erst rudimentär entwickelt - aber vielleicht ist es an uns, eine neue ebene des verstehens zu erreichen, die kunst des lesens von zeichen weiter zu entwickeln, die sensibilität unseres eingreifens in abläute, deren tödlicher ausgang uns als eine möglichkeit inzwischen nur allzu deutlich vor augen liegt." Ibid.
44. "mittels Fotografie wirkliche eigene Schöpfungen . . . produzieren." Klaus Elle, "Ich lasse mich nicht aus dem Konzept bringen," in Jentzsch et al., (*Ohne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987).
45. "pausenlosen Explosion der Welt in einem unendlichen Bilderpluralismus." Ibid.
46. "beschwört nicht die heile Welt," Jörg Wähner, "Klaus-Hähner Springmühl (zur Ausstellung in der 'galerie oben', Karl-Marx-Stadt, Januar/Februar 1987)," in Jentzsch et al., (*Ohne Titel*) *Konzeptionelle Fotografie* (1987), 3.
47. "ironische Bilder einer deformierten Welt." Ibid.
48. "Die Kunst wirke als Transfer vom Verstandesmenschen zum freieren kreativen Wesen," Ibid., 4.
49. Rosalind E. Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 15.
50. Ibid., 26.
51. Ibid., 27.
52. Ibid., 31.
53. "[P]ulsation attacks the modernist exclusion of temporality from the visual field. . . pulsation, by contrast, involves an endless beat that punctures the disembodied self-closure of pure visibility and incites an irruption of the carnal." Ibid., 32.
54. Ibid., 36.
55. Ibid., 40.
56. Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
57. Karlheinz Barck, Dieter Schlenstedt, and Wolfgang Thierse, eds., *Künstlerische Avantgarde* (East Berlin: Akademie, 1979).
58. Margret Eitler, "Review. Künstlerische Avantgarde," *The German Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1984): 634.
59. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
60. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
61. Inke Arns, "Objects in the mirror may be closer than they appear! Die Avantgarde im Rückspiegel. Zum Paradigmenwechsel der künstlerischen Avantgarderezeption in (Ex-)Jugoslawien und Russland von den 1980er Jahren bis in die Gegenwart" (PhD diss., Humboldt University of Berlin, 2004), 53.
62. Ibid., 121.
63. Ghilarducci, *Subjekte, Sprachgewalt, Hegemonie*, 28ff.
64. Sara Blaylock, *Parallel Public: Experimental Art in Late East Germany* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2022).