Framing the Dilettante: The Art of Martin Kippenberger

by

William Lawrence Krieger, IV
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Introduction

Considering the relatively short length of his career, Martin Kippenberger produced a body of work of astonishing scale and scope. Indeed, from the late 1970s until his early death in 1997, Kippenberger worked prodigiously across nearly every imaginable medium¹ and covered subject matter in an equally inclusive and indiscriminate manner. Communism, pasta, Goethe, Joseph Beuys, hotel invoices, even Kippenberger's own work all received the artist's intricately divided attention—or at least that of his assistants, as he often hired assistants to do the work. Accordingly, his exhibitions often threatened to burst out of their white cubes. For his 1987 exhibition Peter: Die russische Stellung, Kippenberger translated to sculpture the extremely crowded method of hanging paintings found at St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum (Ill. 1). The result was an almost un navigable, apparently disorganized collection of furniture—where a Gerhard Richter abstract-cum-coffee table stood modestly among the dingiest examples of particle board shelving.

Hence it should not come as a surprise that Kippenberger's critics often either praised or chastised his artistic “excess.” Put simply, he produced a lot of work—or too much, depending on whom one asks. But these simple claims often miss the broader strategy behind this productive lack of restraint. Kippenberger's excess was not executed for its own sake. It rather formed part of a broader strategy that directly challenged the art world's institutions. His extremely heterogeneous body of work tests the strength of the enclosures of museums and galleries and the limits of their

¹ Over his career, Kippenberger accrued a significant body of work in each of the following media: painting, sculpture, printmaking, drawing, photography, artist books, curation, installation, and performance.
Illustration 1: Martin Kippenberger, installation view of *Peter: Die russische Stellung* [The Russian Position], mixed media, Galerie Max Hetzler, Cologne, 1987
ability to provide artworks order, whether historical or simply thematic.
Kippenberger's deconstructive practice thus aims at those operations in the art
world that map an *oeuvre* from the uneven landscape of an artist's career.

The present thesis offers a study of three of Kippenberger's major installations
from the 1990s—conceived simultaneously—that represent his most sustained and
mature engagements with this question. The first of these is Kippenberger's perhaps
to its antecedent *Peter*, he arranged a glut of tables and chairs on a makeshift soccer
field inside the host museum, with the emphasis on creating an end to Kafka’s
modern art” on the Greek island Syros—Kippenberger adopted the role of director
and organized yearly exhibitions of his colleagues' work. His imaginary global
subway network *Metro-Net* (1993-1997)—which spanned “from Syros to almost
Alaska”—moved outside the museum's walls to create an infrastructure for his
presence within the globalized art world.

By examining these three installations together, this study deals with a period
of Kippenberger's body of work guided by a shared impetus: the notion of the frame.
This notion provides the theoretical perspective from which I approach his work. In
my analysis, I treat the frame as an enclosing structure that places an object or set of
objects on display. Thus, the artist who works on the frame calls attention to the very
act of displaying, emphasizing its processes—particularly how frames condition the
value attributed to an artwork—as well as its slippages. This artist does not take for
granted the frame's involvement in the processes of exhibition. The frame is not
merely a hermetic enclosure that guarantees the unity of an artwork and prepares it to
be displayed in an institution. But rather, the frame is something that can be
manipulated and whose failure can be organized. Through the act of disassembling
and reassembling the frame, the artist demystifies the institutional conditions that
allow artworks to acquire meaning and value.

In Kippenberger's three installations, the frame appears in diverse forms: from
the soccer field that gives order to a single work, the institutional frame of the
museum, and finally to the imaginary global subway network, an infrastructure for
both the globalized art world and the artist with global ambitions. My investigation of
these three installations follows a trajectory that begins within the walls of the
museum and expands out to the frame's spatial limits, the globe. Through tracing this
progression, I emphasize that Kippenberger's frames work in conjunction with their
historical context. In each installation, he examines how the frame operates under the
institutional conditions of exhibiting art during the 1990s—an era shaped by the
globalization of the previous decade.

My approach to these installations using the frame builds upon previous
interpretations that propose Kippenberger employed dilettantism as a strategy. He
found potential in a dilettante art production that yielded no “truth” content or
symbolic value that could be unearthed by the viewer and interpreted
hermeneutically. Or phrased simply, dilettantes produce art that has form without
content. Kippenberger turned this into a purposeful practice, constructing a role for
himself as a “strategic dilettante.” He framed himself and his art as dilettantism. Thus,
he not only took the dilettante's gesture seriously but also professionalized it,
allowing his strategically dilettante art to enter into and work upon the institutional

\[Cf. \text{Roland Schappert, } \text{Organisation des Scheiterns} \ (\text{Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1998}), 60-66.\]
frame. This role enabled him to at once successfully participate in and convey how the work, frame and context function together to generate art’s meaning and value—Kippenberger's task was to put this process on display.

My first chapter will give a theoretical outline of Kippenberger's strategic use of the dilettante figure. I trace a cultural history of the dilettante, starting from Friedrich Schiller's pejorative formulation in the 18th century and update it for the art context of the 1990s. To this end, I examine the dilettante's descendent the Intrigant [roughly, “intriguer” or “schemer”], a figure who employs dilettantism as a strategy to advance his position in a social network. The Intrigant frames dilettante works—with form and only literal content—as complete artworks that can be interpreted. Through this strategy, the Intrigant deconstructs the mechanisms by which that social network assigns meaning to its art. For him, as for Kippenberger, no immanent truth exists in the artworks, but rather meaning is a byproduct of the social network's interactions themselves.

In the following chapter on The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika, I begin my discussion of the frame from an analysis of Kafka's unfinished novel. Amerika's narrative never received an end and thus challenges the frame of the book, threatening to continue its story beyond its binding—to begin again elsewhere. For Kippenberger's own “Happy End,” he does not so much provide closure for Kafka's novel-fragment as create the conditions for it to start over continuously. Kippenberger's “happy end” is that there is no end. By setting the stage for a narrative loop, he relieves those that struggle or fail to bring their tasks to completion of such a pressure. Instead, Kippenberger offers a way to continue Amerika forever by starting

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it over again (and again), placing another beginning where an end is expected.

For *MoMAS* Kippenberger addresses the question of how the institutional frame supports and influences the value assigned to works. I contextualize *MoMAS* within the contemporaneous changes undergoing museums. In particular, I examine Kippenberger's project against the ambitions of larger museums like the Guggenheim that wanted “more physical outlets through which to sell the product.”

Accompanying the desire to expand, or perhaps as a result of it, these museums began to respond not just to the demands of the “art market,” but also to “mass markets.” This situation calls for a re-evaluation of the museum's function as an art historical—that is, primarily educational—cultural institution and consequently how it envisages its viewing subject.

For the final installation, *Metro-Net*, Kippenberger introduces the problem of globalization to the frame, asking what happens to this structure when it is required to enclose the whole earth. *Metro-Net* suggests that when the frame is brought to this scale, the distinction between enclosure and enclosed becomes interchangeable. One cannot distinguish whether Kippenberger's subway system frames the globe or whether the globe frames it. *Metro-Net* deconstructs the logic of the frame, but only to introduce a new iteration of it: the network, a decentralized frame, yet a potentially more encompassing one. With his global subway network, Kippenberger does not only provide imaginary access to several of his geographically distant sites of exhibition. But through its stations, he also gives his own solution to the problem posed by his heterogeneous body of work. With *Metro-Net's* network, Kippenberger

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provides his own conditions in which the seeming excess of his artistic production can appear to be an *oeuvre*.
Chapter 1: Framing the Dilettante

*Wahrheit ist Arbeit*⁶ – this is the title of Martin Kippenberger’s exhibition together with Werner Büttner and Albert Oehlen in 1984 at the Museum Folkwang Essen. Truth is work, and truth is fabricated. If that is true, no immanent truth exists — neither in the artwork nor elsewhere, and at most in the work of art. *Wahrheit ist Arbeit* puts an emphasis on the work of interpretation, on the artwork as interpretation and interpretation as the work of art. As such, truth itself is art, specifically the art of framing—that is to create the conditions for the possibility of truth. Anything can be presented as truth with the correct frame. To control the frame is to control truth.

But *Wahrheit ist Arbeit* carries another rather troubling association: *Arbeit macht Frei*, the Nazi motto at the entrance of Auschwitz. Walking through the entrance displaying the exhibition's title, the Museum Folkwang's visitors certainly must have made this connection to Germany’s most inconvenient truth. A museum differs from a concentration camp, however, in two main factors: those who enter the museum know that they will leave it alive and do not expect to work. *Wahrheit is Arbeit* provides the frame for an uncomfortable moment of doubt that it could be or could have been different. Moreover, the title *Wahrheit ist Arbeit* presents the museum as a totalitarian exhibition space, an intention that is further emphasized on the cover of the show’s catalogue (Ill. 2). Against a brown background, “*Wahrheit ist Arbeit*” stands menacingly in red block letters, and below, the outline of a minimalist

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⁶ This title translates as “Truth is Work.”
sculptural object frames crossed hammers, an international logo of labor.

Look more closely, however, and it's the circling movement of flies that provides this frame (III. 3). Apparently, the labor of the title is shit. This slip in the cover's totalitarian frame hints at what lies in the catalogue—utter chaos. Instead of critical essays that interpret the exhibition's artworks, the artists offer a text that has the value of a separate work of art. For the catalogue, Kippenberger, Büttner and Oehlen co-wrote a doggerel tract on Wahrheit, Arbeit, and many seemingly arbitrary topics in between. The intertitles that tenuously structure it range from nonsense (O O R T, T T, i, T, i i, O) to sabotaged truisms (IN SCHORLE VERITAS. IN VINO VERY VERITAS), and they occasionally interrupt in the middle of a paragraph, calling their very title-function into question. With similar whimsy, the artists' subject matter may jump from the trivial to the comically philosophical in the span of a sentence. In one extreme example, Kippenberger, Büttner, and Oehlen's dispute over the breed of a mutt segues into “Professor Lorenz's” lecture on the problematic relationship between truth, neurological anatomy, and subjective perception. A further argument about the lecture develops and the reader receives a pile of Professor Lorenz's jargon but no truth.

Into this semantic chaos, the artists add numerous visual non sequiturs. One finds photos of their mothers, the cosmonaut Sigmund Jähn, and a woman sitting in a pipe museum among the exhibition's paintings; even the artwork of A.R. Penck and Rosmarie Trockel make cameos. And without any reference in the text, the images considered as a whole lie somewhere between a separate narrative from the exhibition altogether and loose nodes in a network framed by the catalogue. The title Wahrheit
ist Arbeit certainly creates no false expectations: to derive any Wahrheit from the catalogue will require plenty of interpretive Arbeit. Neither the art world's manufacturers of truth nor the average reader will face an easy task.

So if Wahrheit ist Arbeit, perhaps it's best to know what one's working towards—or if that is even possible. What is truth, according to the artists? As the flies on the cover tell us, truth is shit. “Wahrheitsscheiße,” they complain, is all one sees in their city Hamburg and it dirties everything. Out in the open, this truth contaminates one's perception—it's better flushed down the appropriate network of ducts into a closed, unseen container. The Wahrheitsscheiße stinks and it overwhelms one's senses. When Susan Sontag writes: “Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities,”7 she refers to the hermeneutic practice of trying to find “true meaning” underlying the visible content of an artwork. The interpreter cannot look at an artwork without isolating parts from it and “translating” them, finding a set of “equivalents,” where: “Look, don’t you see that X is really—or, really means—A? That Y is really B? That Z is really C?”8 Interpretation—the intellectual act par excellence—hinders one's ability to look at an artwork. All the viewer sees is Wahrheitsscheiße, blinded by the compulsion to construct truths.

In the catalogue for Wahrheit ist Arbeit Kippenberger, Büttner, and Oehlen suggest a way out of this interpretive pollution, to purge oneself of this compulsion using revolutionary military strategy. Making fun of what they see as a hackneyed

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8 Sontag, “Against Interpretation,” 5.
'68er gesture of quoting Mao Tse-Tung, the artists write:


Forget the boyscout who leaves the city and ends up mistaking the tree for the apple.

“For us”—claim Kippenberger, Büttner, and Oehlen—one can only thwart this interpretive regime by remaining in the art institution and carrying out an act of destructive consumption, which they call die Probe. Concerning die Probe, one finds (in a rare moment) a diagram of the same name later in the catalogue (III. 4), showing a broken frame surrounding the unexplained letters TM with writing on each slat: “soziale Batik,” “rauhe Latte,” “hysterische Assemblage,” and “weiße Häufchen.” An arrow points from the word “Wohnung” (according to one intertitle where the truth lies—just inside the broken frame,) out of the frame's opening and onto a piece of cheese bearing another mysterious acronym “PZK.” For the truth to come out, one must break the frame open and find truth on the Duktus—both an artist's characteristic style and a duct, here, a truth-conduit—or, literally, deconstruct the style of the artwork. One must then shit out this truth completely. What remains after this confrontation with an artwork is not a product of the intellect—an interpretation—but of the senses.

In order to disrupt the process of truth-fabrication, one must know how the ducts carrying the “Wahrheitsscheisse” work. Phrased differently, the artists must know how meaning in artworks is created: through interpretation, context (where and how an artwork is displayed), and the values of a larger social framework. They also

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must know what prevents this meaning from being created and be familiar with situations in which interpretation fails. Two figures here are particularly relevant: the dilettante, who lacks the academically conditioned discipline of the professional artist; and the “eternal beginner,” who produces the initial structures of works but does not finish them. Both create works of pure form without content, yet one must have content in order to interpret. In the present chapter, I trace the cultural history of the dilettante from its pejorative figuration in Friedrich Schiller's Über die notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen (1795) into the 20th century in order to historically ground and develop my critical methodology to Kippenberger's artistic practice. By the beginning of Kippenberger's career in the late 1970s, however, the networked art world transformed dilettantism from an excluded practice to the dominant work ethic of a professional system. An artist was no longer a specialist, but rather one needed to perform many different roles, often simultaneously. To accommodate this change and to explain how Kippenberger's work was situated within it, I consider two figures that represent the 20th century descendents of the late 19th and early 20th century dilettante: the strategic dilettante and the Intrigant [roughly a “schemer”], the latter as formulated by Gert Mattenklott.

To label Kippenberger a dilettante is anachronistic and misleading. Thus, I do not want to treat Kippenberger's work as representative of dilettantism but rather I wish to investigate how he undertakes dilettantism as an artistic strategy. Kippenberger found potential in a dilettante art production that yielded no “truth” content or symbolic value that could be interpreted. This requires a grasp on the constellation formed by the artwork, frame and context, as well as its how they function together to generate meaning. Both the strategic dilettante and the Intrigant
therefore operate with the following knowledge: the artist does not simply endow a
work with meaning that a viewer may later unearth; instead, contexts generate
meaning in conjunction with the work in a given situation. It is these figures' task to
put this process on display.

**The Dilettante**

Even today, however, to call someone a dilettante is an insult. One uses the
term to disparage another's lack of discipline. Dilettantes—who can't stick to one area
of study or who start projects without ever finishing them—frustrate their more
regimented colleagues with a lazy contentment to know only a little about everything
or with their poorly executed, shallow art. Dilettantes belittle a discipline's integrity in
their casual approach to it, one that inevitably involves a shortcut somewhere either in
their training or their procedure. That a field of study generally has an established set
of epistemological rules that take years of strenuous training to master seems to be of
little concern to dilettantes. The believers in true art as a product of hard, careful work
argue that dilettantes just want the results—without dedicating themselves to a
methodology that normally involves hours of rigorous dedication to an idea that may
turn out to be incorrect. Thus, a dilettante—as constructed by aestheticians like
Friedrich Schiller—is perhaps someone who cannot tolerate the boredom of
discipline, in both senses of the word. To them, work and artworks should come
easily and enjoyably.

A look at the word's origins sheds light on this usage. The word dilettante
takes root in the Latin *delectare* “to delight.”\(^\text{10}\) This aesthetic delight was coded
differently in its pre-modern usage. Before end of the 18\(^{th}\) century, the term dilettante

\(^{10}\) "Dilettante, n.,” Def. 1a., *Oxford English Dictionary* (Online), accessed April 10, 2011
was a title of honor—one that the artistically inclined lay of the court used to
distinguish themselves from professionals who chiefly concerned themselves with
money and trade.\textsuperscript{11} Unlike these professionals, dilettantes had the time and
wherewithal afforded by their class to practice art out of pure enjoyment.\textsuperscript{12} As
members of the court, their lack of training did not entail being cast out of the artistic
sphere: „Kein Studium kann angeblich die ästhetische Erfahrung ersetzen, die einer
im eigenen Herstellen sammelt, zugleich eine Möglichkeit, den Umgang mit Kunst zu
intimisieren, ihn persönlich zu machen und zu verinnerlichen.“\textsuperscript{13} Looking at art and
producing it—collecting aesthetic experiences—could replace the methodology one
would have learned in an academy; it also allowed courtly dilettantes to internalize
how one behaves in an artistic milieu. To be a dilettante meant that one lead a
delightful lifestyle enriched by aesthetic enjoyment.\textsuperscript{14}

The rising influence of the bourgeois class at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century recast
this enjoyment into an intolerable hedonism.\textsuperscript{15} In particular, the delight of the
dilettante was at odds with the period's specialization of labor, which incorporated the
artist into the sphere of bourgeois professionalism. With this drive towards
specialization, the sphere of art now divided into two sharply distinguished realms of
production and reception.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, as the artist was a producer of objects,
artworks gained a commodity function that needed to be regulated. New rules and
ethics for the production of aesthetic objects were established that mandated a

\textsuperscript{12} Mattenklott, “Das Ende des Dilettantismus,” 750.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid}., 751.
\textsuperscript{14} Mattenklott, “Das Ende des Dilettantismus,” 750-751.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{16} Erhard Schüttpelz, “Include me Out,” \textit{Verstärker} 3 (Vol. 3, May, 1998), accessed April 10, 2011,
<http://www.culture.hu-berlin.de/verstaerker/vs003/schuettpelz_include.html>
disciplined seriousness in their creation. The dilettante, who was a receiver that wished to become a producer, became a pejorative figure in this context. To enjoy one's aesthetic labor meant to produce trivial works of superficiality and frivolity. Under a regime of bourgeois professional discipline, this could not be tolerated.

The art historian Jakob Burckhardt succinctly outlines the conditions that turned the once honorable dilettante into the pariah of the artistic sphere—a hobbyist producer or a liminal figure that transgressed both the separation of reception and production and professional work ethic:

Freilich 'mit alledem wird ja lauter Dilettantismus gepflanzt, welcher sich ein Vergnügen aus dem macht, woraus sich andere lüblicherweise eine Qual machen!' Das Wort ist von den Künsten her im Beruf, wo man freilich entweder nichts oder ein Meister sein und das Leben an die Sache wenden muß, weil die Künste wesentlich die Vollkommenheit voraussetzen.

Art in the age of bourgeois professionalism came under a regime of “completeness” [Vollkommenheit], and this injunction correspondingly mandated a work ethic: one could not bring an artwork to its end without certain tortures. To elaborate on Burckhardt's position, this meant sometimes enduring periods of boredom, failure, an idea's resistance, and pedantic routine in the creative process—an artwork required “work.” The dilettante, on the other hand, displaces this work into the realm of enjoyment and attempts to create works while any arduousness of work itself.

Aestheticians at the 18th century's end noted that this negatively affected his art—dilettante artworks remained incomplete.

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18 Schüttpelz, “Include me Out.”
20 Cf. Stanizek, “Dilettant.” Here, the dilettante is defined as the following: “Sich liebhaberisch -- oder auch: ohne das Metier zu beherrschen -- einer Kunst oder Wissenschaft widmende Person.”
For Friedrich Schiller—in his essay “Über die Notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen”—the dilettante values the final artwork more than he is dedicated to the disciplinary integrity of its production: “Dem bloßen Liebhaber verleidet die Mühseligkeit des Mittels den Zweck, und er möchte es gern beim Hervorbringen so bequem haben, als bei der Betrachtung.” The dilettante's lack of rigorous training warps his expectations of how one produces art. Since the dilettante trains himself to make art through the pleasurable act of reception and views art only in its finished form, he approaches production with a corresponding ethos of delight. In this sense, he must be opposed to the “true” artist-genius, whose process takes on a more studied, disciplined form: “Das echte Kunstgenie ist also immer daran zu erkennen, daß es bei dem glühendsten Gefühl für das Ganze Kälte und ausdauernde Geduld für das Einzelne behält, und, um der Vollkommenheit keinen Abbruch zu tun, lieber den Genuß der Vollendung aufopfert.” For the artist-genius, the heat of composition cools to a long process in which he patiently considers the single details of a work in order to incorporate them into a whole artwork. The gratification of the finished product—the dilettante's aesthetic modus operandi—heeds to the pursuit of a work's completeness over time.

The complete artwork conveys content (a truth or discovery) through form. In the arts, the professional norm is to be able to integrate these two aspects into a whole. Put otherwise, one could not express knowledge without an appropriate composition that would act as its vehicle. Lacking a proper form, truth would never

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leave the artist's mind and it would “die” there; however, the converse incompetence
—creating aesthetic form without content, that of the dilettante—was much more
catastrophic. Such an error negated the whole artwork and the noble practice of
interpreting its truths:

Stoff ohne Form ist freilich nur ein halber Besitz: Denn die herrlichsten
Kenntnisse liegen in einem Kopf, der ihnen keine Gestalt zu geben weiß, wie
tote Schätze vergraben. Form ohne Stoff hingegen ist gar nur der Schatten
eines Besitzes, und alle Kunstfertigkeit im Ausdruck kann demjenigen nichts
helfen, der nichts auszudrücken hat.25

The dilettante's inability to create whole works stems from a lack of knowledge
gained from study—after all, one cannot create art if one does not understand it. A
true artist-genius must also refine his/her apprehensive faculty through disciplined
study to be able to generate a whole artwork. The person who merely observes
artworks out of pleasure (the dilettante) is only capable of appreciating a work's form.
Thus, dilettante artwork can be only as good as his misguided understanding: a
surface of pure form, a shadow of a complete artwork.

Schiller identifies the dilettante's epistemological model as the passive intake
of aesthetic objects, unlike the artist-genius's disciplined study process. The dilettante,
like his courtly ancestor, views finished artworks as a Liebhaber; or hobbyist. Thus,
he does not receive artworks according to an institutionally imparted methodology of
interpretation, but rather according to a practice developed in his own leisure time.
The dilettante does not know how to pierce the surface of an artwork to its truth
content, and instead he only admires the form in which the truth is expressed. To
Schiller this leaves him in a state of enchantment in front of the artwork. And
bewildered by this beautiful aesthetic form, the demystifying hermeneutic act cannot

not occur, and the world exists in a perceptive inversion: “Er nimmt das Dunkle für
das Tiefe, das Wilde für das Kräftige, das Unbestimmte für das Unendliche, das
Sinnlose für das Übersinnliche.”26 The dilettante cannot control what he views
through reason; he fails to illuminate depth with understanding and instead only sees
a darkness. Untamed by rational thought, nature's power remains wild; not able to
define the infinite, it remains the indefinite; and what transcends reason can only be
seen as the unreason-able. Dazed by the world's visible horrors and wonders, the
dilettante's intellect becomes confused and fails to work. He never ties aesthetic
beauty (form) to truth (content) and cuts the whole artwork in half.

Reframing the Dilettante

But what if one just does not have the patience to complete a whole artwork?
After all, the creative process at an work's beginning often has a thrilling intensity
that cools with the progression of the piece. A later iteration of the dilettante does not
want to give away this pleasure and attempts to maintain it. Gert Mattenklott
introduces this cousin of the dilettante, the “eternal beginner,” via a reading of Hugo
von Hofmannsthal's 1891 play Gestern, in which the protagonist Andrea—
representing the fashionable uptake of dilettantism during the Fin de Siècle27—“fails
to see the sense in being faithful” to an artistic project. Instead of “diligently”
bringing works to their end, he chooses to maintain his enjoyment of aesthetic
creation by abandoning them, constantly starting anew with new projects.28
Hofmannsthal's play takes a moral stance on such a practice. While Andrea maintains
the excitement of perpetual beginnings, his “Treulosigkeit” results in dissatisfaction

26 Ibid, 696.
27 Cf. Stanizek. “Dilettant.” Here, Stanizek claims that literary decadence and dandyism of this period
catalyzed the uptake of dilettantism as a strategy and hence gave the term a positive connotation.
with one's own work. *Gestern* ends with Andrea reflecting on his body of work as a “Bilderbogen,” and like the miniaturized photos of a broadsheet, none of his works achieve any depth.29 In the *Fin de Siècle*, the fate of the eternal beginner is damnation: addicted to the thrills of starting over, this figure can only produce aesthetic forms for works rather than works themselves. While Schiller's dilettante lacks the methodology to draw an artwork to its logical end, Hofmannsthal's “eternal beginner” lacks the patience to finish what he starts.

During the late 20th century the binary of professionalism and non-professionalism becomes more of a fluid continuum, and the borders between academic and artistic disciplines became more porous.30 Such a shift created a new social framework in which the liminal status of the dilettante and the capriciousness of the eternal beginner were in demand: “Immer und überall neu beginnen zu können, bedeutet Flexibilität und Beweglichkeit.[…] Sich auf neuen Arbeitsplätzen schnell einarbeiten können, ist ein Güteversprechen auf dem markt.”31 In this sense, the once negatively received aspects of dilettantism enhanced one's professional status. As Mattenklott observes, the eternal beginner's “Treulosigkeit” becomes a kind of flexibility in this context.32 This shift in professional attitude has been especially pronounced in the art world. In 1971, the art critic Lawrence Alloway described the professional situation of this sphere as structured as a system of connections that demanded flexibility to be able to navigate it:

The roles available within the system, therefore, do not constrict mobility; the participants can move functionally within a cooperative system.

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29 Ibid, 757.
30 Safia Azzouni and Uwe Wirth, “Vorbemerkung, ” Dilettantismus als Beruf, ed. Safia Azzouni and Uwe Wirth (Berlin: Kadmos, 2010), 9.
31 Mattenklott, “Das Ende des Dilettantismus, ” 759.
32 Ibid.
Collectors back galleries and influence museums by serving as trustees or by making donations; or a collector may act as a shop window for a gallery by accepting a package collection from one dealer or one advisor. All of us are looped together in a new and unsettling connectivity.  

Not only does one need to be versatile, but within this “unsettling connectivity,” one must also be able to perform many roles simultaneously. One might serve as a connection between several different nodes in a network, each of which potentially requires a different mode of negotiation. Furthermore, the system's network of connections mandates that its participants construct and maintain links to other nodes in order to function successfully. With the modification that one needs to be socially cunning in this context, one could argue that dilettantism has become professionalized.  

Under these changed conditions, the terms dilettante and eternal beginner need to be modified. The qualities that once made them pariahs in the art world become by the late 20th century in some respects necessary for one's professional success. However, despite this change in values, the terms retained their pejorative connotations and also a strategic potential during Kippenberger's career. An artist could perform aspects of dilettantism and use them to call attention to the social and intellectual conditions that make art possible.

For this modified figure three aspects of dilettantism are important: a problematic relationship to an artistic “truth content” that subverts the process of interpretation; the inability to finish an artwork; and the more recent skill of negotiating the social system surrounding aesthetic production. What do these have in common? Each points to a framework in which an artwork is received. The dilettante

34 Cf. Azzouni and Wirth, Dilettantismus als Beruf, ?.
and the eternal beginner called attention to an artwork's intellectual conditions by disrupting them. During Schiller's era, the dilettante impeded the hermeneutic reception of the “whole” artwork, for which the artist-genius integrates a truth into a composition's form. The dilettante created fragments of works—(beautiful) forms without content—which cannot be interpreted for an underlying meaning. A critic is instead forced to confront a surface that can't be pierced for a deeper intellectual discovery or unit of imparted knowledge. The eternal beginner disrupts the same hermeneutic process for a different reason. Whereas Schiller's dilettante lacks the discipline of study to integrate the elements of an artwork into a whole and instead approaches aesthetic production with the belief that it should be enjoyable, the eternal beginner always proceeds to new artworks before finishing the old ones—even if the figure has devised a content for a work, he does not execute it. The work remains purely unfinished form.

**Strategic Dilettantism and the Intrigant**

Kippenberger introduces a third figure who adopts dilettantism as a strategy on the art world stage.35 “Truth value” may already be disrupted in late 20th century art, but this strategy still goes further. The strategic dilettante disrupts the programmatic critical reception of artworks in an institutional context. The resulting aesthetic failures show that no meaning lies immanently within the artwork itself. Meaning—or “truth” to use Schiller's term—is always constructed by a separate intellectual or critical activity. And furthermore, this is a part of a larger social context that governs the professional conditions of the art world. Strategic dilettantism thus requires a mastery of its operative frameworks, and particularly how one may

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deconstruct them; this new figure realizes that there is a chaotic potential in the
dilettante that may work to one's advantage.

Gert Mattenkrott suggests the dramatic figure of Intrigant as another
successor to the dilettante. This figure—roughly a “schemer”—uses his subordinate
position in a social network to gain strategic information that he could use to expose
the conditions that make possible the positions of its leaders. Acquiring this
information requires a cloak of naivety to hide the Intrigant's scheming: “Der
Intrigant bewährt sich, indem er durch List oder Verstellung die Umstände
herbeiführt, die die Hauptpersonen necken oder irreführen, in Verlegenheit bringen
oder unwirksam machen. Der Intrigant führt die Helden zu Zielen, die diesen
verbogen bleiben.”36 Unlike its dramatic iteration, I argue that the art world Intrigant
has no intention of subversion—or oppositional strategy—but instead plays with this
sphere's frames, breaks them open, organizes their comical failure to point to the
(perhaps ridiculous) context and set of rules in which they are received. This
Intrigant places a work with literal meaning—that exists in the form, on the surface—
into a situation in which deeper, content-based symbolic meaning is expected.
Kippenberger thus asks his viewers and critics not “What does this painting mean?”
but “Can you interpret this?” The answer is no—or, you could, but you'd fall for the
trick. But one cannot take Kippenberger's art for a cheap prank, either. The challenge
they pose is much harder: Another mode of reception is necessary.

Manipulating the Frame

Returning to the Probe/Gegenprobe diagram (Ill. 4) from the Wahrheit ist
Arbeit catalogue, Kippenberger shifts the emphasis of artistic production from

producing artworks to producing frames—the supporting structure of an object. As shown in the diagram, Kippenberger deconstructs and re-constructs these supports, testing new arrangements that dismantle the frame's original function as an enclosure of space that delimits the content of an artwork. Through this act of rearrangement, the frame itself takes on content, and accordingly each of the frame's slats in the diagram bears text. This textual content, however, changes between the Probe and the Gegenprobe—between the deconstruction and reconstruction. So, if the frame possesses its own readable content, it is not static. Rather, it changes with each re-framing. Kippenberger's manipulation of the frame generates meaning that is in flux, dependent on the circumstances of its exhibition and the artist's position in the art world system.

In order to demonstrate this, Kippenberger needed objects and images to frame that represented a semantic degree-zero, or—using Schiller's terms—that were pure form, bereft of truth content. The production of the dilettante suited this demand. By using this figure's meaningless or incomplete artworks as raw material, Kippenberger could both shift his attention to manipulating their frames and in doing so could point to the frame's role in the production of meaning. With the right frame, anything could acquire significance; and conversely an object without one remained insignificant. To this end, Kippenberger often enclosed an otherwise amateurish or unfinished looking abstraction within text, as in his painting We Don't Have Problems with the Rolling Stones because We Buy their Guitars (1986, III. 5). With this long title, he frames an egg shape bearing the outline of a pair of hands pulling on an unrecognizable object. This text disrupts any attempt at the work's interpretation. Given the rather atrocious quality of this image, it seems that Kippenberger spent
Illustration 5: Martin Kippenberger, We Don’t Have Problems with the Rolling Stones Because We Buy Their Guitars, 1986, oil on canvas, 71 x 60 in.
more energy devising the title than painting the work. Indeed, the title was one of Kippenberger's most prominent framing tactics. An examination of Kippenberger's paintings suggests that he spent as much—if not more—energy constructing the titles as the paintings themselves. Supporting this reading is a book Kippenberger wrote called 241 Bildtitel zum Ausleihen, in which he devised 241 titles for works that he never executed. He pushes title's role as paratext to an extreme. Rather than support the interpretation of meaning that already exists in a painting, Kippenberger's titles create meaning that is not there. Thus, they do not so much clarify as create a disjunct with the framed image: the title provokes the viewer to search for the absent meaning. What seems to be significant in this case is not the problematic relationships between form and content, as well as text and image. Rather, Kippenberger's paratactical gesture emphasizes that the frame formed by the title is external to the image. Meaning—a byproduct of language—is always separate from visual content.

Using the sociologist Georg Simmel's text “Der Bilderrahmen,” I want to further expand the notion of the frame as Kippenberger uses it: as an object that is separate from an artwork, but one that is necessary for its meaning. In the text, Simmel argues that the frame supports an object and declares that it is art. It closes off an object from the rest of the world, signifying where the work begins and ends. In this sense, the frame isolates an artwork “wie ein Insel in der Welt,”37 setting up a dichotomy between a work and the rest of the world. The frame's hermetrical function—according to Simmel—has several effects. First, such a physical border unifies the constituent parts of a work within a demarcated space, lending it “eine Einheit aus

Einzelheiten.\textsuperscript{38} The frame thus supports the possibility of meaning to be found within an artwork—that the artist endowed the work with a semantic element that relativizes the individual parts of a work, so that they form a whole. Analogous to a territory, all elements contained within the frame's borders belong to a single, governing entity, while simultaneously defining what is foreign to it. Correspondingly, the frame—as a border in the regulating sense—directs and governs the “continuous flow” of the viewer's gaze into the artwork's contents: “Alle zur Rahmenseite quer stehenden Linien bilden Stauungen jenes Stromes in ihm, dessen Kraft und Bewegtheit, von uns ästhetisch nachgefühlt, sich an der Überwindung solcher Hemmungen steigert und verdeutlicht.”\textsuperscript{39} By binding the gaze to a single, enclosed space, the frame ensures that the viewer appreciates the artwork as a static aesthetic object. It warns the viewer when the gaze transgresses this border, declaring that the artwork does not exist after these “lines.”

Paradoxically, however, the frame itself must remain invisible in order function. Its edges must guide the viewer's gaze to the artwork's content without making the frame's own presence known. Phrased differently—in an hermeneutic aesthetic model—a frame cannot have the value of a separate artwork.\textsuperscript{40} Rather, it must remain a mere structural support for the artwork's meaning: an interpretive aid, and not an object that a viewer could interpret in its own right. When an artist or designer creates a frame with a distinct aesthetic value, it distracts the viewer's gaze from the artwork itself. If faced with this situation, the viewer cannot decide which

\textsuperscript{38} Simmel, “Der Bilderrahmen.”
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Cf. Ibid: “Wie der Rahmen einer Seele nur ein Körper sein kann, nicht aber wieder eine Seele – so kann ein Kunstwerk, das etwas für sich ist, nicht als Rahmen das Für-sich-Sein eines anderen betonen und stützen: die Resignation, deren er dazu bedarf, schließt das Kunstsein aus.”
object needs to be scrutinized, disrupting the hermeneutic act. The gaze wanders from
the artwork's content to the frame's content; the regulatory border function of the
frame collapses. To this end Simmel argues: “Wie das Möbel, soll er keine
Individualität, sondern einen Stil haben.”41 The frame may have a form or style—a
quality that establishes a commonality with other frames—but no content that would
establish its uniqueness as an art object. According to Simmel's model, a frame should
not be self-sufficient as an artwork—one should not be able to display it as art. As a
person sits on a chair, a painting lies in a frame. It is an object whose value should
depend on how well it performs a service of support.

As an enclosure, the frame declares that nothing more needs to be added to the
work and it may stand separated from the world—that it is a world unto itself.
Simmel's analysis of the frame thus assumes a strong authorial model of artistic
production. Underlying his argument is an artist who can integrate the individual
elements of a work into a whole. the frame merely functions as a tool that emphasizes
the autonomy and completeness of whole artworks. Or phrased more extremely, the
frame must have a “whole” work to close off in order to function. Given this
dependence, the frame's function may be subject to pressures and break down in
further ways than Simmel describes: if the framed artwork is not complete; if it
consists of mere form that possesses no content; or if the artist repeats the form of the
frame tautologically in a work. Each of these failures draws attention to the frame. In
these situations, the frame can no longer guide the “continuous flow” of the viewer's
gaze into the artwork's content, and instead his/her attention continues back onto the
frame. The viewer constantly transgresses the border of frame.

41 Simmel, “Der Bilderrahmen.”

Taking these insights from Simmel, I want to discuss the Intrigant and strategic dilettante's manipulation of the frame as an interpretive aid. Both figures recognize the frame's weak points and use them against the function of the frame itself. And through the frame's organized failure, they show that meaning is not contained within an artwork—as if a hermetically sealed world unto itself—but rather, meaning travels through the frame, like the viewer's gaze. For the Intrigant and strategic dilettante, the construction of meaning depends on the same multiplicity of forces that allow art to be exhibited: the frame itself, the social space of the museum, a regime of criticism that dominates art's reception, and the business transactions that placed the work in the exhibition space—the cultural capital of art. Kippenberger emphasizes that his works act as points of intersection for these factors. In a 1991 interview with fellow artist Jutta Koether, he claims: “Simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that it’s art is dreadful. The whole network is important! Even spaghettini...When you say art, then everything possible belongs to it. In a gallery that is also the floor, the architecture, the color of the walls.”42 Like the Intrigant who negotiates a given social network, the artist must also be situated in a broader system of objects, people, and their interactions.

In the “unsettlingly connected” art world, artists may no longer assume Simmel's closed-off Insel—the frame is perpetually transgressed, perforated even by the pasta chef employed by the museum. And correspondingly, this variable system constantly re-forms and re-frames the previously “whole” artwork. The whole,

hermetically sealed artwork is no longer possible under these conditions. Instead Kippenberger either leaves his artworks as forms not yet finished or draws attention to conditions that make the artwork's display and meaning possible. To the latter end, one often finds both a repetition of the frame-form in his individual works—the frame engulfs itself, over and over again.

In an ad for his 1996 exhibit at the Gallery Mikael Anderson in Copenhagen—later titled *Bitte nicht auf die Bilder setzen* (Please do not sit on the pictures, III. 6)—Kippenberger posits such a composition of repeating frames, thereby underscoring the role of the frame in aesthetic scrutiny to the point of absurdity. Here, Kippenberger layers three frames within each other, generating an inward flow that guides the viewer's gaze to the center of the ad. The frames trap the gaze within its borders and demand that the viewer stare at its contents. At the outermost edges is the frame given to the poster by the the museum that eventually acquired the poster. Inside this 3-D frame is a blue frame on the print itself on which he wrote his name. In this location, Kippenberger's name serves two functions. When the poster functions as an ad (in public space), the name operates indexically: it informs the passer-by whose show is being promoted. This however changes slightly when the poster receives a frame and hangs in a museum. Kippenberger's name serves as his signature, a loaded gesture given its placement on the blue frame. By signing the frame, he suggests that his practice as an artist is to frame or create frames—phrased differently, Kippenberger's job is to 'put on display.'

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43 As was the case for his 1976 series *Uno di Vol, un Tedesco en Firenze*, for which Kippenberger intended to paint a series of paintings based on Florentine postcards and his own snapshots that would equal his height when stacked on top of each other. He stopped the series 10 cm short of his height. He never completed the work, although he did display the incomplete series in 1977.
The innermost frame in *Bitte nicht auf die Bilder setzen* complicates the outer two. Within the blue frame, Kippenberger places a table that frames the text of the poster's title, an institutional *Verbot* restricting the behavior of the guests. This is an eccentric one: a viewer would likely be hard-pressed to recall another instance when a gallery requested its visitors not sit on the pictures.44 (This is also a non-issue—how would one manage to sit on something hanging on a wall, anyway?) Moreover, Kippenberger employs a table in his demand not to sit on the art. And although the *Verbot* presumably refers to the framed table, one would sooner expect a chair to bear such a text. This sets up a problem of referentiality that the deictic word “*TISCH*” outside the blue frame further confuses. The framed “table” seems irreconcilably stuck between three roles: as a functional table (what “*Tisch*” indicates), as an artwork (what the *Verbot* indicates), and as an image of both these roles.45 It has lost any stable reference that a table—or an ad—would have outside an art exhibition setting.

Kippenberger's framing strategies thus entangle the interpretive act. Once Kippenberger frames an object and displays it in a gallery, he opens it up to interpretation. Yet, he frames objects with only a literal value—that have no meaning to be unearthed—and constantly mediates or derail interpretation using text with a

44 It is possible that Kippenberger's references here is to his 1987 work *Modell Interconti* in which he took a Gerhard Richter abstraction (from the series *Acht Grau*) that he purchased and affixed legs to it, thereby turning it into a table.

45 In this ad-*cum*-artwork, Kippenberger puts the gesture of quoting René Magritte's canonical problematic of referentiality—introduced in his painting The Treachery of Images (1929)—on stage. Magritte places the text “Ceci n'est pas une pipe” under the painted image of a pipe, and thus problematizes the arbitrary relationship between a verbal signifier and signified. The word “pipe” could refer both to a physical pipe and the image of a pipe. However, as Magritte claims, one cannot stuff the image of the pipe full of tobacco. Kippenberger sets up the necessary elements for this schema and gives it an ironic twist. There is a table and the word “table,” but the table lies within a frame and asks the viewer “please don't sit on the pictures.” Kippenberger's image of a table seems to be having an identity crisis. The semantic relation between “*Tisch*” and the Tisch-image becomes especially arbitrary when the *Tisch* cannot decide whether it is a table, an artwork, the image of a table, or the image of an artwork.
faulty reference. In *Bitte nicht auf die Bilder setzen*, the inward flow generated by its
frames ultimately lands on an institutional *Verbot*—text that refers back to the space
of the gallery itself. Here, Kippenberger traps the interpreting viewer in a loop. For
once the viewer finishes moving through the work's frames, “*Bitte nicht auf die
Bilder setzen*” directs the viewer's gaze out of the work. The entire interpretive
process—moving through the frames to seek meaning—must then start over again.
And again...

Borrowing the title from a 1986 Kippenberger painting (III. 7), the strategic
dilettante puts an object into “the problem perspective” by framing and exhibiting. A
viewer will always examine what lies in a frame for problems of meaning, as this is
the conditioned way of receiving art. Yet, his frames are also a trap. For although they
mediate and derail, they keep the viewer looking for more, trapping them in a
perpetually unsatisfying, incomplete viewing experience. In the same painting, the
text with which Kippenberger frames a shape resembling a clam shell or a sliced-open
onion—a kind of layered abstraction—describes this succinctly: “You are Not the
Problem. It is the Problem Maker in Your Head.” No problem lies in the object itself.
It lies only in the heads of those who are overwhelmed by the *Wahrheitsscheiße*. And
it is Kippenberger's job to put this on display.
Illustration 7: Martin Kippenberger, *The Problem Perspective: You Are Not the Problem it is the Problem Maker In Your Head*, 1986, oil on canvas, 70 7/8 x 59 1/16 in.
Chapter 2:
The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika

In perhaps his most famous installation The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika—first exhibited in 1994 at Rotterdam's Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen—Kippenberger's strategy moved beyond the frame of a single image to another framing device, much larger in scale: the soccer field (Ill. 8). Within the field—
painted on the floor of a large room in the museum—he installed over 40 chair-table-chair configurations among which viewers could wander. And to complement this, he placed bleachers along the room's walls for viewers who wanted a break or simply wanted to watch. This highly visible field intensifies the function of the frame as described by Simmel—as a supporting object that guides the viewer's gaze into the artwork. With the bleachers, Kippenberger implies the multiplication of this gaze from that of an absorbed, isolated observer to that of a (fanatical) mass of spectators. Furthermore, each chair and table configuration is a dialogical setting—one involving a mutual gaze between two subjects that in turn would be watched by the crowd. A sense of surveillance corresponds with this spectacular intensification—that a set of observers constantly and precisely locates any subject standing within the stadium-like space of the installation. Reinforcing this supervision, he installs several raised umpire- and lifeguard's chairs among them to monitor the order of the installation, make sure viewers 'play by the rules,' or make sure no one's life is in danger. Kippenberger planted a number atop each table, as if to ensure that the specific configurations are catalogued and exactly located.
Considering this setup, viewers expecting Kippenberger to fulfill the promise of his installation's title may be disappointed. A “game” of bureaucratic surveillance is likely no one's idea of a happy end. So then why would Kippenberger name his work The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika? A possible answer may be found in Kafka's unfinished novel itself, which tells the story of a young, ever-optimistic German emigrant Karl Rossmann, whose parents send him to the US in order to avoid having to deal with the accidental pregnancy of his lover. This inauspicious beginning is followed by a series of failures while seeking gainful employment. Karl falls out of favor with two of his well-heeled, New York-based initial contacts, Karl's senator uncle—who arranges English lessons for his nephew—and his colleague Mr. Pollunder; loses a job as a hotel elevator boy; and finally is forced into being a servant to the corpulent prima donna Brunelda. What remains in the novel are two unfinished fragments. Karl's rather miserable journey through the US does not come to an end, but breaks off shortly after being accepted into the massive Nature Theater of Oklahoma [sic]—for which Karl read a poster with the text: “Jeder ist willkommen! Wer Künstler werden will melde sich!”\(^{46}\) The narrative leaves off as Karl rides a chartered train to his new job. Even on the final page of the unfinished novel, he is still on the go.

The Nature Theater of Oklahoma scene demands closer examination for my discussion of the Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika, particularly as the setting of its bizarre hiring process resonates in Kippenberger's installation. The interviews take place on a horse racing track—an optimal space for hiring massive numbers of

\(^{46}\) Franz Kafka, Der Verschollene (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Fischer, 1994), 294. Franz Kafka, Amerika: The Man who Disappeared, Trans. Mark Harman (New York: Schocken, 2008), 267: “All are welcome! Anyone who wants to become an artist should contact us!”
employees at once, and moreover, fitting for a theater that according to Karl is “ein großes Unternehmen”\textsuperscript{47} and to another job candidate “das größte Teater der Welt.”\textsuperscript{48} Underscoring this, Karl finds a labyrinth of booths in the stadium set up for the interviews. These booths contained interviewers familiar with every vocational background and biography imaginable—enough so that, as one employee of the theater claims, “Wir können alle brauchen.”\textsuperscript{49} The range of experience covered by the booths borders on the absurd. For example, Karl initially lies and tells the interviewers that he was formerly an engineer. A servant then schlepps him around to several other booths until he admits that his only work experience happened during his time as a middle school student in Germany. Karl then arrives where he belongs, “die Kanzlei für europäische Mittelschüler.”\textsuperscript{50} And happily the theater “accepts” him, though Kafka never tells how he fares at his job—his fate is left unknown.

In one of the nine accompanying texts to the installation, B. Gespräche mit Martin Kippenberger. Tisch 17, the artist divulges that he saw an opportunity in Amerika's lack of an end: “Man las, ehrlich gesagt, das Buch Franz Kafkas 'Amerika' nicht zu Ende, doch es gab im Bekanntenkreis einen, der dies wohl tat und mir davon berichtete, dass sich zum ersten Mal, unvollendet in einem Oeuvre von Franz Kafka, ein Happy End anbahnte.”\textsuperscript{51} Considering this passage, Kippenberger has a complicated relationship to the novel's ending, and it is particularly difficult to glean how he arrived there during his reading—if at all. In the essay “Vorsingen in Amerika,” Rembert Hüser examines the artist's curious diction in this passage,

\textsuperscript{47} Kafka, Der Verschollene, 296. Kafka, Amerika, 268: “A large enterprise.”
\textsuperscript{48} Kafka, Der Verschollene, 300. Kafka, Amerika, 272: “The largest theater in the world.”
\textsuperscript{49} Kafka, Der Verschollene, 305. Kafka, Amerika, 272: “We can make use of everyone.”
\textsuperscript{50} Kafka, Der Verschollene, 305. Kafka, Amerika, 277: “The office for former European middle school students.”
demonstrating Kippenberger's eccentric approach to reading Kafka's text. Hüser notes it would be misleading to claim that Kippenberger confesses here that he didn't read the novel. Instead, the artist uses the indefinite pronoun “man” instead of “ich,” or—as he explains this semantic dodge—Kippenberger doesn't say 'I didn't read the book,' but rather 'one didn't read the book.' Thus, the identity of this literary dilettante remains a mystery. And, as if to further confuse his statement, Kippenberger doesn't just say that 'one' didn't read Amerika, but that 'one didn't read it to the end.'

Kippenberger's explanation is semantically ambiguous and lends itself to more than one interpretation. In his essay, Hüser suggests that Kippenberger's reading of Kafka's book was incomplete: “Man las es nicht von A bis Z. Man hat es nicht linear gelesen. Nicht am Stück. Der Satz betont die Gerichtetheit des Lesens. Seinen (fehlenden) Abschluss und seine (fehlende) Vollständigkeit.” This suggests the way a dilettante might read a novel. Unlike someone whose profession depends on the

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55 Two critics simply read Kippenberger's statement as a “confession” that he did not read the book to the end. Rudolf Schmitz writes in his essay “Das unvollendete Happy End” for the 1999 Deitchtorhallen Hamburg exhibition: “War Martin Kippenberger bei seiner Lektüre von Kafkas 'Amerika' tatsächlich bis zu jener Stelle gelangt, an der das Szenario der Einstellungsgespräche zum Naturtheater von Oklahoma' entworfen wird? Anscheinend nicht,” (Schmitz, 13). Schmitz's brief analysis furthermore does not consider Kippenberger's use of the indefinite 'man,' and rather assumes the first person. The faulty English translation of this essay reflects this, as Kippenberger's text reads: “Quite frankly, I did not finish reading Franz Kafka's 'America' [sic],” (Schmitz, “The Unfinished Happy End,” 67, emphasis added).

Doris Krzytof takes a slightly different stance in her essay “The Biggest Theater in the World: Complexity and Vacuity in The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika,'” allowing Kippenberger a more “strategic” illiteracy: “Kippenberger, who 'admits' in the foreword to this same publication that he had not actually read the whole of the novel, had always had trouble reading and writing and had cultivated, instead, the image of the articulate performer and cultured non-reader,” (Krzytof, 33). This, however, still relies on a first-person understanding of the cited Kippenberger text. Krzytof later cites the furniture in the installation to bolster her suspicion that “at some point Kippenberger did of course read the whole of Kafka's Amerika,” (Krzytof, 34).

thorough, careful reading of texts—a literature professor, for example—Hüser suggests that Kippenberger skipped around during his reading, opting for a fragmented or non-linear approach: he read some parts but neglected others, moved backwards in the narrative, or perhaps only read the end.\textsuperscript{56} Kippenberger even hints that someone in his social network had read Kafka's novel and simply told him about it—that the artist outsourced this long and laborious task to someone else, possibly someone who read by vocation. In any case, Kippenberger's own reading of \textit{Amerika} was never brought to an end. He instead left it in the same state as the artwork of the dilettante and the 'eternal beginner': incomplete, in order to move on to the next novel.

However, I want to suggest a way to complete Hüser's reading of Kippenberger's statement: that the problem does not lie in the artist's reading—however spotty it actually was—but in Kafka's book itself. 'Man las das Buch nicht zu Ende' because there is no end to \textit{Amerika}. And without an end, the narrative is continuous; it extends forever out of its physical frame, the bound book. A "complete" reading is therefore impossible.\textsuperscript{57} Kippenberger's "happy end" is that there is no end—in effect, he relieves those who struggle or fail to bring their tasks to completion of such a pressure. Instead, Kippenberger offers a way to continue \textit{Amerika} forever: to start it over again (and again)—or phrased differently, to place another beginning where an end is expected.

And certainly, Kippenberger's installation—a collection of furniture, texts, and lamps on a soccer field in the space of a museum—does not seem like an end to

\textsuperscript{56} Hüser, "Vorsingen in Amerika," 160.
\textsuperscript{57} This general impossibility of reading Kafka's book to its end supports Kippenberger's choice to use the indefinite "man." Theoretically, anyone could be the subject to which this pronoun refers.
Kafka's novel fragment. Rather, as Kippenberger claims of his “ending” in the above text: “Es hieß folgendermaßen: Es sei ein Zirkus in der Stadt, der tatkräftige Kräfte, Helfer, Könner, selbtsichere Anpacker und, und, und gegen Entgelt suche. Vor dem Zirkuszelt, so denke ich mir, wurden Tische und Stühle zwecks Einstellungsgesprächen aufgebaut.” Kippenberger never divulges Karl's fate to the viewers. Instead, he curates a large collection of chairs and tables, providing the setting for the Nature Theater of Oklahoma's itinerant hiring-staff to conduct a further round of interviews. Kippenberger thus hands the narrative over to the theater's proto-corporate enterprise. As The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika travels from city to city—as it did several times since 1994—the Nature Theater can absorb all who desire a job into its possibly infinite ranks. Kippenberger's “happy end” is far from an end. Indeed, a set of job interviews is more of a beginning of a narrative than its conclusion. Nor is it exactly 'happy,' given how many dread job interviews.

So if The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika represents a mass job interview site, then Kippenberger's installation may be the oddest imaginable setting for such an occasion. Each table-chair configuration feels uncanny. In nearly every case, either the furniture itself or its combination seems out of order. For example, a job-seeker would not expect to field questions at a Barbie table or facing someone sitting in a chair shaped like a mushroom cloud. Good or consistent design taste certainly plays no role here. Kippenberger pairs even the high modernist furniture that might sit in a corporate office with dingy, wrongly matched chairs and tables.


purchased at the flea market or second-hand store.\textsuperscript{60} It is difficult to decide whether these settings would be the stuff of a joke or a nightmare. The component “Eierkarussell” teeters on this line most peculiarly: two ejection-seats (equipped with an umbrella for safe landing) sit opposite each other on a circular track (III. 9). In the center, an oversized sunny-side-up egg connects the seats, facilitating their orbit. It would take a boss with a bizarre, if not sadistic, sense of humor to invent this contraption for posing questions to prospective employees. A candidate would become dizzy not only from all the spinning, but also from repeatedly seeing all the other competitors in the “field”\textsuperscript{61} of applicants\textsuperscript{62} — the anxiety of which could easily result in the applicant’s ‘falling flat,’ with an egg in his/her face.

I want to draw upon the categories of \textit{Wahrheit} and \textit{Arbeit}, frames, and strategic dilettantism to approach \textit{The Happy End of Franz Kafka’s Amerika} as an engagement with the professional conditions of a “society of control,” as theorized by Gilles Deleuze.\textsuperscript{63} For my analysis, I will consider the following to examine


\textsuperscript{61} Cf. Hüser, “Vorsingen in Amerika,” 158. To this end, Hüser cites Bernhard Duyfhuizen “In Praise of the MLA Interview Area,” \textit{ADE Bulletin} (123, Fall, 1999): 13. This text—particularly in the wording I emphasize—illustrates the (perhaps violent) spectactularity of this job interview process, although the author’s intention is to downplay it: “Der letzte Ort eines MLA Interviews […] ist schließlich der allgemeine Interviewbereich, den die MLA auf jeder Jahrestagung bereitstellt. […] Auch wenn in der diskursiven Praxis der Jahrestagung, der Interviewbereich routinemäßig mit Metaphern wie ‘Schlachthof’ und ‘Amerika sucht den Superstar’ belegt wird, wäre der Kandidat schlecht beraten, sein Interview mit dem diesjährigen Bonmot über den Interviewbereich zu beginnen. […] Unbestritten ist, dass Kandidaten ihre Kenntnis von dem, was der Betrieb ist, im Interviewbereich weitaus besser unter Beweis stellen können.”

\textsuperscript{62} Cf. Hüser, “Vorsingen in Amerika,” 178n2. Hüser cites Charles J. Stivale, “The Lonliness of the Long-Distance Interviewer,” \textit{ADF Bulletin} (34.1 Fall 2002): 42. The passage describes the MLA’s hiring process in a way that emphasizes an anxious atmosphere from a dizzying number of competing applicants: “In the interview center, […] a candidate may find the assembled team of the previous day’s interview seated a few yards away as the candidate attempts to concentrate on the new team of interviewers without overhearing the nearby discussion. Finally, however spacious, the interview hall is renowned for gathering and emanating an air of collective angst, an atmosphere that all candidates must confront while attempting to maintain their focus.”

Kippenberger's work *vis-a-vis* the role of the art institution (particularly the museum) in this society: Kippenberger's choice to stage his installation on a soccer field; his choice of Kafka's *Amerika*; and the role of furniture as a conditioning agent of the subject in both Kafka and Kippenberger's work.

**Kippenberger's Soccer Field**

The looping structure of the *Eierkarussell* resonates with the larger stage on which Kippenberger places *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika*, a mock soccer field within the institutional space of the museum. Like a picture frame, a soccer field is defined by four borders that separate the game from all external activities. These lines indicate where “out of bounds” lies and contain the game within a given space. Any touch that pushes the ball outside of these borders results in a forfeiture of possession. But like Kippenberger's *Bitte nicht auf die Bilder setzen*, the frame of the soccer field contains several smaller frames within it. A set of lines stand within this space that regulate the players' movement, most notably the 18-yard box. Furthermore, the offside rule dictates where he/she can be at a given time. Referees monitor the players' locations (and behavior) on the soccer field continuously and carefully. Or to return briefly to Simmel's “Der Bilderrahmen.” the borders formed by the internal edges of the frame create and control a set of flows inside the picture.

In his 1990 essay “Painting: the Task of Mourning,” the art critic Yves Alain-Bois suggests a reading of painting that challenges, using a theory of the game, the teleological model that dominated modernist interpretations of art history. Such a modernist reading—whose most prominent exponent being Clement Greenberg—outlined a set of criteria that represented painting's end. Greenberg in particular called

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for a non-pictorial, anti-illusionistic exploration of the canvas's flat surface, the quality that differentiated painting from all other media; or phrased differently, defined its “autonomy.” A return to figuration or pictorial representation would thus be a regressive gesture, one that would counter art historical progress. 65 Bois's game theory 66 offers an “antihistorical” way to observe contemporary painting without needing to fit it into this logic of regression, upon which the modernist teleological model rests. Instead, he draws a distinction between the more generic “game”—here, painting in general—and a singular “match,” an instance of the game. Under these circumstances the game “painting” never comes to an end:

Without thereby becoming a theoretical machine encouraging indifference, since one is obliged to take a side, this strategic approach deciphers painting as an agonistic field where nothing is ever terminated, or decided once and for all, and leads the analysis back to a type of historicity that it had neglected, that of long duration. In other words, it dismisses all certitudes about the absolute truth upon which the apocalyptic discourse is based. Rather, the fiction of the end of art (or of painting) is understood as a “confusion between the end of the game itself (as if a game could really have an end) and that of such and such a match (or series of matches). 67

A game is potentially infinite. It is a set of basic rules that may be practiced or even modified continuously, but there is no final state or ultimate truth to which this game strives. A soccer team may win a match, but it would be absurd to claim that a team “won soccer.” And while the team (or player) may win one match, it may lose the next. If the game contains a truth, its players continuously reevaluate it—nothing is decided “once and for all.” However, this lack of an “apocalyptic” end does not mean that one can resign to passivity—an “indifferent” attitude because there isn't a final decision anyway. Rather, Bois argues the game sets up an “agonistic” space of competition, in which “one always has to take a side.” A player necessarily faces an

66 Bois adapts this theory from the art historian Hubert Damisch.
opponent in matches that reoccur as long as the game exists. This implies that under the conditions of the game, one's training can never reach an end point. The game's players constantly need to prepare for new opponents, as well as new changes in the rules of the game. To this end, Sepp Herberger—the famous coach of the German national soccer team—told his players after a victory, “Nach dem Spiel ist vor dem Spiel.” Preparation for the next match begins immediately after the old one ends—or put otherwise, the end of the game is a beginning. No one finishes mastering a game. Kippenberger's soccer field provides a frame for that condition.

The Society of Control and the Eternal Beginner

Similar to this theory of the game, Gilles Deleuze's 1990 essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control” maps out a state of “perpetual training” onto a broader social field. Starting from Michel Foucault's theorization of a “disciplinary society,” Deleuze traces the (still ongoing) historical transition to a “society of control,” a process in which “the disciplines underwent a crisis to the benefit of new forces that were gradually instituted and which accelerated after World War II.” The former society rested upon institutional “spaces of enclosure”—the “prison, hospital, factory, school, family”—that employed disciplinary mechanisms to transform individuals into self-responsible subjects who then were able to “discipline” themselves. However, these institutions' constant need of reform began disciplinary society's “expiration period,” during which new, more fluid mechanisms of “control” began to operate on subjects.

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68 Herberger coached the German national team that defeated Hungary to win the 1954 World Cup, an event later to be called “the miracle of Bern.”
69 Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” 5.
70 Ibid, 3.
71 Ibid, 4.
To illustrate this transition, Deleuze points to the difference in protocols of payment between the disciplinary factory and the emergent employment apparatus of the society of control, the corporation. The factory functioned like a body that both enclosed and maintained an “equilibrium” between the highest levels of production and the lowest levels of wages. Under these conditions, a factory's management treated its wage-earners as individual elements that constituted a mass across which payment was distributed approximately equally. In contrast, the corporation “works more deeply to impose a modulation of each salary, in states of perpetual metastability that operate through challenges, contests, and highly comic group sessions.” Corporate employees perpetually compete with one another while management adjusts salaries “according to merit,” keeping them in constant flux. Accordingly, the employees' positions in the corporation undergo continuous re-evaluation and remain in question. This “metastable” state under perpetual managerial supervision and assessment implies a change in the trajectory of a subject's life during the transition to the society of control. Deleuze couches this transition in narrative terms, as one's relationship to beginnings and ends changes:

In the disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in the societies of control one is never finished with anything—the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation. Disciplinary society's spaces of enclosure relied on a repeating narrative in which a subject brought a beginning to its end, even if this signaled a transition to a new beginning somewhere else. In the society of control, however, the boundaries

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72 Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” 4.
73 Ibid, 5.
74 Ibid.
between the disciplinary spaces of enclosure become porous—at points even grafted together—as each work continuously and in coordination, providing the setting for a narrative of the subject's perpetual training. Or, returning to a dilettante lexicon, the society of control subject approaches an “eternal beginner.” This figure's mode of production contrasts with the professional work ethic that mandates that one brings projects, assignments—or texts and artworks—to their respective ends. The institutions acted upon their subjects with disciplinary mechanisms to ingrain this ethic. But after these enclosures were called into perpetual crisis, they formed, Deleuze suggests, a continuum spanning the duration of a subject's life. The endings that characterized disciplinary society had become impossible to reach. Instead, the subject of control now must perpetually start anew, without bringing one beginning to its end.

Notably, Deleuze demonstrates the difference between the two societies using another Kafka text, The Trial, in which the protagonist Josef K. (a bank clerk) awakes one morning to find himself arrested for a reason unknown to him. In this also incomplete Kafka novel, Josef K. occupies a peculiar legal position that allows him to continue living outside of a prison even though he is technically under arrest. The Trial follows him as he wanders to various representatives of the court in an attempt to glean from them his legal fate. But instead of receiving a definitive answer, K. learns that his situation is perhaps more unsettling than imprisonment: a juridical dilemma that places him exactly at the point of transition between both societies:

In The Trial, Kafka, who had already placed himself at the pivotal point between two types of social formation, described the most fearsome of judicial forms. The apparent acquittal of the disciplinary societies (between two incarcerations); and the limitless postponements of the societies of control (in continuous variation) are two very different modes of juridical
life, and if our law is hesitant, itself in crisis, it's because we are leaving one in order to enter the other.\textsuperscript{75}

Apparent acquittal entails that the case against the K. be dismissed over and over. The trial ends, but will begin once more at a later time. The other option, limitless postponements, “besteht darin, daß der Process dauernd im niedrigsten Processstadium erhalten wird,” a state requiring that “der Angeklagte und der Helfer in ununterbrochener persönlicher Fühlung mit dem Gericht bleibt.”\textsuperscript{76} In this latter case, K. exists in a juridical limbo—condemned not to prison, but to begin his legal proceedings over and over again. Through this, he must remain in “continuous” contingency to the court: even when outside of the court and its spaces of enclosure, K. remains within its grasp. To be an eternal beginner means to remain permanently enveloped within the society of control's patterns.

Arne Höcker points out in his essay on the relationship between literary and bureaucratic modes of writing in Kafka's prose “Literatur durch Verfahren” that the man who informs K. of his situation is the court painter Titorelli. This bears further reflection in the context of my argument. Titorelli's job provides him insight into the subjectivity of those caught in the court's circuits—indeed, his job is precisely to observe and “represent” these subjects during their trials: “Er kennt die Regeln der Repräsentation des Gerichts ebenso wie die Regeln der technischen Abläufe rechtlicher Verfahren.”\textsuperscript{77} Since the artist's vocational skill is to represent subjects within the social space becoming the society of control, s/he holds a privileged

\textsuperscript{75} Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” 5.
\textsuperscript{77} Arne Höcker, “Literatur durch Verfahren: Beschreibung eines Kampfes,” \textit{Kafka's Institutionen}, ed. Arne Höcker and Oliver Simons (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2007), 249
position in this transition. The artist constantly reconstructs this space, which provides the stage for the trajectory of a subject's life. And through this procedure the artist becomes sensitive to changes in its constitution. Titorelli's intimacy with the court's legal process underscores this. It allows him a clear theoretical grasp of the court's mechanisms, which act upon K. enigmatically: “Denn was K. nicht begreift, ist, dass das Verfahren weder auf Gerechtigkeit noch überhaupt auf ein finales Ziel ausgerichtet ist. Es ist in diesem Sinne geradezu selbstgenügsam, es geht in diesem Verfahren selbst, darum, das am Laufen zu halten, was es am Laufen hält.” If the legal system that encircles K. has no ultimate goal in its procedure—one would expect, to uphold justice or truth through administering the law—then its function is chiefly self-perpetuation: to maintain those mechanisms that enable the court to act upon its subjects and to keep them within its administrative grasp. Perhaps out of the desire for a conclusive end, this process—a never-ending narrative—remains obscure to K.

If The Trial illustrates a subject whose legal status is under constant review—under “limitless postponements” K.'s case would never reach a point where his guilt or innocence could even be discussed—then perhaps Karl Rossmann's case in Amerika constitutes a professional analogue. None of the jobs Karl takes on continue into the long term—even at Amerika's breaking off point this remains in question. While the Nature Theater of Oklahoma can “make use of everyone,” Kafka never divulges whether its management can just as easily do away with anyone it wishes and for whatever reason. The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika suggests a

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78 Here, I do not want to imply that the artist occupies a position outside the mechanisms of the society of control. Rather, the artist represents this space—much like Titorelli—from within, also a subject whom entities like the court act upon.

situation in which one does not (perhaps cannot) have a career in the strict sense. Rather, like in the space of the game, one trains perpetually, never to “master” it as long as there are new competitors with fresh talent. In Kippenberger's installation, the dialogical setting of the job interview (of interviewer and interviewee) mirrors the opposing sides that decide a single match on the soccer field only to decide its outcome again and again for as long as the game exists. The hiring team Kippenberger imagines for the “Nature Theater of Oklohama” takes on new employees with each new museum installation, potentially ad infinitum. And through this, he sets up the conditions for Rossmann's story to continue forever. Kippenberger's “happy end” turns a narrative frame (here, a soccer field as stage) into a looping mechanism: where the end of Amerika's narrative should be, Kippenberger places another beginning staged in a highly regulated and visible space of competition. The “happy end” of Kafka's unfinished novel is one for those who have trouble finishing what they start—infinit opportunities to begin again, a kind of “limitless postponement” of the end.

Furnishing the Eternal Beginner

Considering this theme, Kippenberger's choice to organize this never-ending “happy end” using desks and chairs is particularly apt. On these, the continuity described by Deleuze—that one is never finished with anything in the society of control—finds an appropriate stage, especially when examined in light of Kafka's writing on furniture. At his Schreibtisch Kafka frequently alternated between a literary authorship and one of Verwaltung: this was the site where Kafka both worked on his stories, and also “an dem Einstellungsgespräche geführt, Anträge verfasst,
Statistiken erstellt und Akten verwaltet werden.”  

However, occasionally this transition would remain incomplete, particularly when Kafka's work day did not end at the office. In his analysis, Höcker points out Kafka's diary entry from Christmas Eve 1910, in which he tells of an attempt to work on his fiction at home while he still had work left over from his day job. That night Kafka had trouble starting to write, and to stimulate this, he imagined his desk as a theater “in dem sich die Dinge zueinander in Beziehung setzen und das äußere Leben einer sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Erfahrung erschließt.”  

The metaphor seemed to have failed, and Kafka's transition between the two modes of authorship remained incomplete—apparently stuck between these two states, as Höcker continues:

Wenn Kafka diesen Übergang forciert und seinen heimischen Schreibstisch als Theater phantasiiert, treffen diese beiden Welten abrupt aufeinander, ohne dass die Metapher des Theaters den Transfer vollständig bewältigen könnte. Der Bereich des Sichtbaren verschiebt sich vielmehr von der Bühne auf den Zuschauerraum, in dem sich die 'gemeinen Leute' 'alte Lebmänner' 'rohe Kerle' und 'Familien mit soviel Kindern, daß man nur kurz ohne sie zählen zu können' eingerichtet haben, die weder statistisch, noch in ihrer Individualität erfasst werden können. Den Übergang vom Zählen zum Erzählen gestaltet die Aufzählung der Dinge, die sich nicht mehr zu einer literarischen Einheit fügen wollen.  

The metaphor theater engendered a false start that left his prose style as an unsatisfactory mélange of the zählen of his bureaucratic role and the erzählen of his literary one. In Kafka's case, the desk did not facilitate a transition from his professional to his literary work, but frustrated it. Because his work day never really came to an end, Kafka had trouble beginning his literary mode of writing. Not surprisingly, Höcker notes that Kafka ended that night's attempt to write fiction “in the middle of a sentence.”  


Ibid, 236. 

Ibid, 237. 

Ibid.
with beginnings arise when previous matters cannot be brought to an end. Karl Rossmann's case in *Amerika* is but one example in Kafka's prose. For the young German emigrant, the distinction between beginnings and ends often was not clear.

Similarly, finding an appropriate place to start with Kippenberger's *Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika* is not a simple matter—if not impossible. Given its open-ended structure, the viewer may choose to begin (“enter the field”) at any point along the touchline. Rembert Hüser articulates the consequences of this dilemma as the following: “Die Installation liest den Text als eine offene Struktur, die weder ein Ende noch ein Zentrum hat. In diesen Text können wir jederzeit von allen Seiten aus einsteigen.”

The viewer must instead choose a starting point arbitrarily, although this changes the trajectory of one's progression through the installation only slightly. Indeed, even after one picks a place to begin walking through it, one is inevitably in *medias res* and remains there until one exits the field. The roughly grid-like layout of Kippenberger's desks and chairs creates a set of conditions in which certain narrative signposts—most importantly, the middle and the end—are impossible to distinguish. Rather, the only clear narrative element in *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika* is a beginning, the point where the viewer decides to enter the installation.

The indistinguishability of a narrative middle or end, however, should not be confused with the lack of a spatial center or end in the installation. Indeed, Kippenberger's soccer field clearly marks these points with its boundary lines (the center spot, midfield and goal lines, etc.). Within the narrative of the game, play does not end when a team scores a goal, and similarly the game isn't at its midpoint when the ball reaches midfield, as it does myriad times during a game. When a player

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84 Hüser, “Vorsingen in Amerika,” 163.
scores a goal, the ball returns to the center point, so that play may begin again. Such a point in the game does not signify a narrative end, but a “starting over.” Or as Hüser—and possibly Kippenberger's own reading—suggests, Kafka's Amerika is a text that the reader may start at any point, not just at the physical beginning of the bound book. Similarly in The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika, the viewer chooses a starting point and proceeds through the field—from one placement to another—drawing a continuous line over it. When the viewer moves forward on the field, he/she does not make progress in the installation. But rather, unable to be positioned between a beginning and a identifiable end, the viewer's movement proceeds in the interest of self-perpetuation.

Perhaps, however, an end to the narrative may be conceived but never reached, simply because there is no way there. In this case, the viewer's movement through Kippenberger's “grid” of desks and chairs approaches what Joseph Vogl calls the “Labyrinth” in his analysis of Kafka titled “Labyrinth, Schwellen.”85 Vogl distinguishes this exceptional form from the “path,” claiming that the former “kein gewundener oder verwickelter Weg und kein Irrweg, sondern überhaupt kein Weg ist.”86 Rather, citing Kafka, he defines the labyrinthine narrative procedure as the following:

Wenn Kafka einmal davon gesprochen hat, dass es vielleicht ein 'Ziel' aber 'keinen Weg' gebe – 'was wir Weg nennen, ist Zögern' –, so enthält das eine elementare Definition der labyrinthischen Struktur. Demnach ist das Labyrinth eine Reihe von Intervallen oder Spatien, oder genauer: Es ergibt sich durch infinitesimale Teilung, die Abschnitte in kleinere und diese in wiederum kleinere aufteilt.87

86 Vogl, “Labyrinth, Schwellen,” 89.
87 Ibid. In this sense, Kafka's labyrinth stands close to Zeno's paradox against movement, as recounted by Jorge Luis Borges: “A moving object at A (declares Aristotle) cannot reach point B, because it must first cover half the distance between the two points, and before that, half of the half, and so on to infinity.” Cf. Borges, Jorge Luis. “Kafka and His Precursors,” in: Labyrinths. Donald
In the labyrinth, the only progress made toward its goal is infinitesimal. For Karl
Rossmann and in The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika, the “goal” that orients
the labyrinth is steady, gainful employment—a state constantly deferred by
vicissitudes, errors in judgement, and characters like Robinson and Delamarche. The
labyrinth operates—using Kafka's terms—through a kind of “limitless postponement”
of the end of a narrative by dividing the distance to it into smaller and smaller
intervals: “Das Labyrinth ist ein unendlicher Interpolationsprozess, eine beliebig
fortsetzbare Intervallierung des Kontinuums. Labyrinthisch ist eine Linie, die in
dem ihrer Punkte anhält und die Richtung wechselt, sich verzweigt und somit
unstetig wird.”

Vogl's labyrinth offers a microscopic view of Deleuze's continuum of
“perpetual training,” which considers the subject of control in broad enough terms
that its social context comes into scope. Using the labyrinth as model, however, one
sees the subject's narrative as a chain of events. Brought under such close focus,
Karl's Lebenslauf—or lack thereof—shows a structure made of naïve decisions as
well as chance encounters, fortunate, unfortunate and merely absurd, that destabilize
or alter the flow of his narrative regardless. Karl's environment and the characters that
emerge from it consistently set his quest for employment “off course”: his narrative
moves in a crabwalk. It advances in infinitesimal increments and remains unfulfilled

89 Here, I use “model” to suggest the mathematical process of creating a function that approximates
the position of a group of points. Unless limits are imposed, these functions continue infinitely. Cf.
Vogl, “Labyrinth, Schwellen,” 89-90 regarding his discussion of mathematical models of
labyrinthine structures.
Philologie 129 (4, 2010): 604: “For those who have no progressive Lebenslauf, the metaphors of
“laufen” in a course is entirely inappropriate. Instead theirs is a 'geraten,' a 'hink(am)en' in the sense
of 'unbeabsichtigt irgendwohin gelangen.'“
even after the narrative breaks off.

Kippenberger's installation sets up a labyrinthine structure that continues this pattern, that turns the idea of an end into a gag. For his "happy end," Kippenberger does not install a "path" through which viewers may make their way from beginning to end, so that they may resolve *Amerika*’s leftover narrative tension. Instead, Kippenberger leaves navigational decisions up to the viewer; their caprice guides them through the tables and chairs. In this way, Kippenberger sets up the conditions for a continuously mutating labyrinth within which the viewer moves toward a receding end. The design of the *Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika* ensures a near infinite set of permutations of this journey. Very rarely—if ever—will two viewers take the same route through the installation.

Here I want to suggest that the chairs and tables themselves contribute to the *The Happy End*’s lack of a "path" or even "Irrwege." When considered as a whole, one finds it difficult to fit these tables and chairs together, to parse some common feature that connects them. Kippenberger's furniture collection resists such an attempt and rather insists upon its own heterogeneity. Taking this into account, Rembert Hüser argues that Kippenberger presents a "deconstructed history of design," in which "kein klassifikatorisches Element hier überhand nimmt." In *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika*, Hüser continues, Kippenberger's curatorial ethos reflects the Nature Theater’s principle of inclusion: that "all are welcome." Adherence to this principle ensures a diversity of origin and form, while challenging a hermeneutics of linear reading with its inclusiveness.

Illustration 10: Martin Kippenberger, "Der silberner Schubladentisch" [The Silver Drawer Table] from The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika.

Illustration 11: Martin Kippenberger, "Der Robert-Musil-Tisch" [The Robert Musil Tisch] from The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika
Given their sheer volume and eclecticism, the chairs' and tables' specific historical contexts do not so much generate meaning as hinder it. Kippenberger supplements his canonical examples (e.g., the Wiener Werkstätte and Eames chairs) with too many eccentric specimens for a genealogical reading to take hold. Only the most general categories—“chairs” and “tables” — hold the installation together, and Kippenberger even takes the opportunity to transgress the limits of their relevance. For example, the “Silberner Schubladentisch” (III. 10) — a table whose drawers pull out to reveal sloppily rendered abstract paintings—does not sit comfortably in a design history next to the much soberer and simpler “Robert-Musil-Tisch” (III. 11) — a replica of the desk at which the Austrian author wrote his Mann ohne Eigenschaften, a novel famously without an end. One even hesitates to apply the category “table” to the former object, as the word seems to fall short of an accurate description. In the Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika, Kippenberger displays historical interpretation's reliance on a mechanism of exclusion—one that is subject to the whims of the historian.

However, Kippenberger's eccentric mode of curation ensures that The Happy

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93 Cf. Frederic Jameson “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” New Left Review 142 (July-August, 1984): 60. Here, one may draw a parallel to Andy Warhol's 1980-1 series of screenprints given the title Diamond Dust Shoes, for which he depicted an assortment of non-matching women's shoes. The literary theorist Frederic Jameson argues similarly that this series resists a hermeneutical interpretation, as the origin or original purpose of the shoes is unclear. Instead, Warhol's treatment abstracts them of any narrative significance: “Here, however, we have a random collection of dead objects, hanging together on the canvas like so many turnips, as shorn of their earlier life-world as the pile of shoes left over from Auschwitz, or the remainders and tokens of some incomprehensible and tragic fire in a packed dancehall. There is therefore in Warhol no way to complete the hermeneutic gesture, and to restore to these oddments that whole larger lived context of the dance hall or the ball, the world of jetset fashion or of glamour magazines,” (Jameson, 60) Kippenberger's desks allude to, but do not directly come from the “Nature Theater of Oklahoma” scene in Kafka's Amerika. Considering this, Kippenberger demonstrates the power of the title as a paratextual element that influences interpretation.

94 Cf. Daniel Baumann and Martin Kippenberger, “Parachute Picasso/Completing Picasso,” in Martin Kippenberger (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 63. In this 1997 interview, the curator Daniel Baumann asked Kippenberger about how he selected the furniture for The Happy End of
End of Franz Kafka's Amerika never really comes to an end. His selection of furniture functions like an ellipsis. Although situated at the end of a narrative, it implies its continuation, perhaps forever. Placed on the soccer field, the tables and chairs compete with each other to make it into the history published in catalogues and essays. While all may enter this game, not all make it into the books. But even the match that ends in a loss still contains remnants of a happy end: this historical contest will always have a rematch in the future. The game's outcome is never ultimately decided—so museums that exhibit The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika have to pay staggering fees to ship the players to their new venue.

_Franz Kafka's Amerika_. Kippenberger replied: “That's all about stylistics. Different styles have their own eroticism or asexuality, which you have to deal with. This is partly so in the case of found tables, and partly so in the case of tables you've created yourself. For instance, I had someone make the table at which Musil wrote the _Mann ohne Eigenschaften_, an endless narrative. Just like the Floss der 'Medusa' cycle, _The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'_ also implies movement, transferring from one thing to another, a transition. In _The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika_ the movement is between different decades; everyone surely remembers a chair that stands for what, it instantly takes you right back to that time, like a visual lexicon that always tabs along with you.”
Chapter 3: MoMAS

The founding story of the Museum of Modern Art Syros (MoMAS)—Kippenberger’s “museum” project from 1993 until 1996—reads somewhat like a creation myth. In 1993, Kippenberger came upon an abandoned, incomplete slaughterhouse while strolling on the Greek island of Syros, where his friend Michael Würthle owns a house.\(^5\) The structure was quite literally the frame of a building. It had no walls and consisted of little more than a floor and a roof with a few pillars to support it. Yet, standing atop a hill, the skeletal construction somehow held a stately profile. Despite its humble intended function, its triangular roof and white pillars, standing like columns, reminded Kippenberger of some 20th century Acropolis.\(^6\) And with its view of the Mediterranean (III. 12), the site was perfect. Kippenberger thus declared the structure to be his own museum. Through a simple, deictic act, Kippenberger had transformed the frame of the slaughterhouse into an institutional “frame.” No alterations were made to it. MoMAS was an architectural readymade.

From its opening in September that year, MoMAS held one exhibition per year until 1996.\(^7\) As Katerina Gregos points out, little documentation on Kippenberger’s museum exists.\(^8\) It hosted possibly the “smallest audience in the world,” making


\(^8\) Gregos, “MoMAS: The Unlikely Museum,” 69. This is especially reflected in the sources Gregos used for her article. Given MoMAS’s lack of documentation, Gregos needed to resort to interviews with the artists and friends present at the project’s events. While valuable, the insights from these interviews should be accounted for any subjective, interpretive bias.
first-person visitor accounts nearly as rare: “As Michael Würthle aptly put it, 'we were a crowd of between 9 and 11.’”

Indeed, its lack of any institutional record—whether in the form of an in-house archive or exhibition catalogues—is striking for a project that proclaims itself a museum. Kippenberger seemed to have been unconcerned with the history and legacy of MoMAS—a curious researcher would need to reconstruct this alone.

From what remnants exist, however, a picture of MoMAS emerges. Perhaps most clear is Kippenberger's own role in the museum as its director. One of his drawings in the official project catalogue shows his conception of this position (III. 13). On top of a CAD rendering of the MoMAS building drafted by the architect Lukas Baumewerd, Kippenberger depicts himself as bare-chested, muscular, and forward-advancing. A bold, superimposed typeface declares him “Director.” And like a more literal, as opposed to comicbook, Spider-man—one of Kippenberger's more frequent avatars—Kippenberger possesses eight arms, perhaps to help manage the webs of his social network.

Indeed, much of Kippenberger's involvement in the project was organizational. He did not contribute any works to the project himself, but rather commissioned them from his circle of colleagues. Many of these works referenced the museum itself: signposts around the island that pointed to the museum.

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102 Computer-aided-design, a architectural drafting program.

(Christopher Wool), a grey paint-job for its floor (Heimo Zobernig), a film-festival with the theme slaughterhouses (Christopher Williams), or declaring the structure directly adjacent to MoMAS to be an oversized table (Hubert Kiecol, Ill. 14).

Furthermore, Kippenberger created job posts and delegated them, naming Williams and artist Johannes Wohnseifer as “Director of the Film Department” and “MOMAS GUARD,” respectively. However, according to the critic Martin Prinzhorn, Kippenberger's directorial responsibility emphasized “simulating” the procedures that support the museum's functioning. With his colleagues, he sent exhibition announcements, organized opening parties and a trustee's dinner (catered by the artist Cosima von Bonin), as well as worked with Baumewerd to design—but never actually execute—a renovation of the building, “all the way from the lighting to the museum cafeteria.”

Moving from Work to Frame

Like his simultaneously conceived installation Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika, MoMAS represents Kippenberger's ongoing concern with the mechanisms of the museum—namely, how it framed its art. Thus in both projects, his artistic practice strays from the creative, perhaps “genius,” model to a strategy rooted in curation. He focused not on producing original works but reframing prefabricated objects, thereby shifting the emphasis to presentation (as opposed to representation) and the conditions that make it possible.

In the 1985 essay “From Work to Frame,” the art critic Craig Owens notes a historical shift in art practices and locates a set of problems that such a shift poses:

“Where do exchanges between readers and viewers take place? Who is free to define, manipulate and, ultimately, to benefit from the codes and conventions of cultural production?”105 He continues: “These questions shift attention away from the work and its producer and onto its frame—the first, by focusing on the location in which the work of art is encountered; the second, by insisting on the social nature of artistic production and reception.”106 With MoMAS, Kippenberger takes up these issues, but does so in a different manner and reaches different conclusions than the artists Owens examines, most familiar as practitioners of “institutional critique”: Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Marcel Broodthaers, Michael Asher, and Louise Lawler (coincidentally, a friend of Kippenberger's). Though Kippenberger follows in the historical wake of these artists, his practice must be distinguished from institutional critique to account for his own augmentations of its strategies.

Owens's shift to an art of the frame privileges the problem of location. Working upon the frame emphasizes the position of artist in relation to it—and more importantly, how the artist relates to it. This practice—often given the art historical label institutional critique—suggests a state in which no exhibition space within the art world remains socially neutral. Indeed, according to Lawrence Alloway, the art world may be referred to as a system, networked together with industrial sponsors, the mass media, and even more broadly with the social and political systems that support art institutions. For Alloway, this is not necessarily a comfortable state: “all of us are looped together in a new and unsettling connectivity.”107 This network's

connections pervade; they cut across the borders of the institutional frame at all sides. They are not just unsettling because of their occasional moral dubiousness, but also because of their sheer reach—at least in the art world, nothing is left untouched. As Hans Haacke's work demonstrates, even the ancient works interred in the Metropolitan Museum are (rudely) revived by their entanglement in the nets of corporate funding.108

In his work, Haacke demonstrates how the institutional frame obscures these nets' presence. For example, at the Metropolitan Museum, most viewers do not observe the collection and exhibits while cognizant of the institution's trustees and their politics. Rather, the museum frames the objects as art—objects of aesthetic appreciation rather than sociological inquiry. Countering this, Haacke's practice aims to illuminate the art world's “unsettling connectivity” as a necessary condition of the institutional frame, and through this, to deconstruct the distinctions between interiority and exteriority, enclosure and enclosed that render these connections invisible. To this end, a “frame art” practice emphasizes curation over creation. The objective is not to 'author' original works, but display what was already there, that once may have lay out of view.

In addition to the location of artists and viewers within a social system, “frame artists” investigated art's geographical locations. Within this mode of institutional critique, the French artist Daniel Buren called attention to the specific site of

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108 One of Haacke's most famous works was his 1985 installation Metromobilitian. Here, Haacke recreated part of the facade of the Metropolitan Museum and under it hung a banner for the museum's exhibit “Treasures of Ancient Nigeria,” which had been sponsored by Mobil. Flanking this, were two further banners, reading: “Mobil's management in New York believes that its South African subsidiaries' sales to the police and military are but a small part of its total sales.../Total denial of supplies to the police and military forces of a host country is hardly consistent with an image of responsible citizenship in that country.” The three banners—which set Mobil's involvement in the South African apartheid regime against its support of the exhibit—conceal most of a photomural of mourning black South Africans at funerals.
exhibition, thereby opening it up to more sociological and political avenues of scrutiny. And following this awareness, frame artists themselves needed to account for the geopolitical contingencies of their practice. Buren thus proposed territorial boundaries for this artistic practice. Namely, the frame artist may move beyond the museum and gallery, but must not leave the spaces of social life; or more concretely, the possible work area included primarily the city and its connective tissue (e.g. highway systems). To give a counter-example, transporting one's practice to the “exotic” spaces employed by Robert Smithson\(^\text{109}\) represented an anxious “escape maneuver,” an attempt to avoid the problem of the institutional frame altogether. Buren chastises Smithson: “As soon as frames, limits, are perceived as such, in art, one rushes for ways to bypass them. In order to do this, one takes off to the country, maybe even for the desert, to set up one's easel.”\(^\text{110}\) Drawing upon Buren's geopolitical concerns, Owens instead prescribes a practices that works from inside the art world system: “Rather, the critique—or deconstruction—of the institutional frame had to take place 'within' the frame, and not from some imaginary vantage point outside it.”\(^\text{111}\) An attack on the institutional frame leveled from outside Buren's limits—such as Smithson's—defanged its own criticism. In protest to the art world's unsettling connectivity, the artist could not simply 'return to nature.'

Yet two decades later in 1993, Kippenberger took up his museum project in a space that challenges this geographical opposition of inside and outside. Perhaps taking Alloway's claim to its spatial limit—or better, beyond it—Kippenberger founded his museum project precisely where Buren had forbidden it. \textit{MoMAS}

\(^{109}\) Smithson often situated his work in remote locations. His most famous example is his \textit{Spiral Jetty} in Utah's Great Salt Lake.

\(^{110}\) Owens, “From Work to Frame,” 129-130.

\(^{111}\) \textit{Ibid}, 130.
extended the art world's “unsettling connectivity” beyond the limits of the city and its apparatuses. But rather than 'returning to nature,' Kippenberger simply followed the art world's channels out to the Cyclades. By the 1990s, the Western art world's system began to extend its reach across the globe—a trend not only visible in the expansion of major museums such as the Guggenheim Foundation but also in the increase in biennial exhibitions outside the Euro-American sphere.\textsuperscript{112} Set in this historical context, founding a museum on Syros does not attempt Buren's “escape maneuver” so much as represents a parallel of this expansionist trend. Or more extremely formulated, the critic Martin Prinzhorn argues that Kippenberger does not leave the “gallery, collection or Museum” here but rather simply extends their influence further:

\begin{quote}
Es stimmt eben nicht, daß der öffentliche Raum eine grundsätzlich andere Spielweise ist; die institutionellen Regeln verändern sich dort nur insofern, als zusätzliche Momente hinzukommen und die Sache nicht mehr nur im Feuilleton, sondern auch in den Rubriken 'Politik' und 'Lokales' abgehandelt wird. Durch den Lokalwechsel kommen höchstens neue Zwänge hinzu.\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

Shipping out to Syros carries the institutions' rules along and makes it vulnerable to new ones—especially from local governments. Perhaps nothing illustrates this better than \textit{MoMAS}'s eventual fate. After Kippenberger's death and the end of the project, the Syros government converted the abandoned former \textit{MoMAS} building into a sewage treatment plant.\textsuperscript{114}

Despite this, Kippenberger follows in the historical wake of institutional critique, if he augments its strategies. With \textit{MoMAS}, he works with a critical “double


\textsuperscript{113} Prinzhorn, “Simulierte Institution,” 86.

\textsuperscript{114} Diedrichsen, “Conquering the World: Meta-Museum and Metro-Net,” 56.
move.”115 On one side, Kippenberger examines the institutional operations of the museum—here, especially the curatorial and managerial procedures that fit artworks together and allow them to be shown to a public. And on the other, he emphasizes the erosion of the distinction between “frame” and “framed,” “within” and “without” under the museum's expansionist ambitions—and thereby presents a fantasy of the museum's future, however distorted or caricatured.116 In this sense, Kippenberger does not break completely with the concerns of Buren and Owens; however, their operative questions need to be reformulated to fit into a 1990s museum context. Particularly, I want to propose this set of modified questions as a fresh approach to Kippenberger's museum that complicates the reading of it as a “utopic”117 or “ideal”118 museum, as this commonly accepted reading forces MoMAS into Buren's category of “escape maneuver.” To this end, I will contextualize MoMAS—whose name suggests it could

115 Cf. Jonathan Culler, “Institutions and Inversions,” in On Deconstruction (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 158-9. Here, I make use of Culler's analysis of Jacques Derrida's philosophical procedure in his project of deconstruction. Citing the interview “Entre crochets,” Culler argues that Derrida attempts to identify and reduce the gaps “between the discourses or practices of this immediately political deconstruction and a deconstruction of theoretical or philosophical aspect.” Or as Culler translates this into a critical practice: “If, as Derrida argues in De la grammaologie, the future deconstruction glimpses—a future that breaks with constituted normality—'can only be proclaimed as a sort of monstrous, then theoretical pursuits should perhaps be allowed to wax monstrous or grotesque and not be subjected to a teleology of political gain in the hope of eliminating the 'gap' Derrida describes.” (Culler, 158-9) This task ultimately takes the form of a double move: “Lest the necessary presence of that gap excuse a conservative institutional complacency, one must, Derrida writes continue 'struggling as always upon two fronts, on two stages, and in two registers'—the critique of current institutions and the deconstruction of philosophical oppositions—while nevertheless contesting the distinction between the two, (Culler, 159).

116 Cf. Gregos, “MoMAS: The Unlikely Museum,” 72. Gregos argues that Kippenberger was aware of the ambitions for international expansion, at least on the level of smaller artists' museums: “At the same time it [MoMAS] can also be seen as a spontaneous response to what Kippenberger perceived to be the slow-moving, bureaucratic aspect of museum practice and an ironic comment on the 'artist's museum' or the small museum on the periphery, with its 'internationalist aspirations.' Furthermore, I want to argue that Kippenberger not only responded to those smaller-scale museums with ‘internationalist aspirations,’ but also to the larger, even more publicly visible expansions of the Guggenheim foundation under the director Thomas Krens—who notably came to the art world via the realm of corporate finance.


be a new branch of New York's MoMA—within the contemporaneous changes undergoing museums in order to highlight the project's critical operation: to hold up to scrutiny the mechanisms by which museums give order and value to art objects. Operating with knowledge from his own experience with museums, Kippenberger once more played the figure of the Intrigant. Using MoMAS's mere frame, he shows the impossibility of the museum's claims to produce art historical truth during an era of its expansion and adoption of a corporate business model oriented to markets rather than a viewing public.

However, Kippenberger moves beyond a critique of the institution and suggests the possibility of an interaction with this new museum beyond the intellectual and political. For while he questions whether this institutional frame can foster interpretation, he also shows that the museum works on the sensual level of “experience” and on the variable “intensities” that the subject's confrontation with a space provokes. Here the ambiguousness of Kippenberger's gesture emerges.

Indeed, figures like the former Guggenheim director Thomas Krens openly employed this experiential potential of the museum's architecture itself to broaden its market. Thus, I do not want to argue that MoMAS resists this development, but rather shows it

119 Cf. Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” 7. I borrow these terms from Krauss's discussion of Krens's own interpretation of minimalist sculpture. In the intensely sensual way these objects interact with the site of exhibition, Krens sees the future of his museums. The new model of museum would emphasize an experience with that space—however vaguely defined —over an art historical interaction: “The encyclopedic museum is intent on telling a story, by arraying before its visitor a particular version of the history of art. The synchonic museum—if we can call it that—would forego history in the name of a kind of intensity of experience, an aesthetic charge that is not so much temporal (historical) as it is now radically spatial, the model for which, in Krens's own account, was, in fact, Minimalism. It is Minimalism, Krens says in relation to his revelation, that has reshaped the way we, as late twentieth-century viewers, look at art: the demands we now put on it; our need to experience it along with its interaction with the space in which it exists; our need to have a cumulative, serial, crescendo towards the intensity of this experience; our need to have more and at a larger scale. It was Minimalism, then, that was part of the revelation that only at the scale of something like MASS MoCA could this radical revision of the very nature of the museum take place.”

as a venue requiring the attention of artists. Such an interaction with art—triangulated between the viewer's body, an artwork, and the architectural frame—takes over where interpretation once dominated, perhaps answering the plea that ends Susan Sontag's essay “Against Interpretation”: “In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.” Following Kippenberger, this is chiefly a matter of finding a proper frame.

The Ruins of the Museum

But the question of how the museum reached this stage still remains, and thus a few historical and theoretical considerations must be made. In his essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” Gilles Deleuze suggests that as disciplinary society transitioned into the society of control, institutional spaces lost their ability to function as enclosures. In the sphere of the arts, this broad historical trend takes hold of the museum and challenges its foundational assumptions—or to use Deleuze's language, brings it into crisis. This crisis, whose starting point Deleuze traces to the decades following World War II, demands that societies perpetually examine their relationship with these institutions and reform them accordingly. Thus, I want to approach MoMAS as an aftershock—however small—of this crisis. Deleuze provides a theoretical foundation to discuss the institution's crisis. But because the museum operates within the realm of culture, his argument—which handles disciplinary institutions like the school, the place of employment, the army, and the hospital—needs to be augmented to compensate for the mode of interaction between the museum and its audience.

To this end, the art critic Douglas Crimp proposes that the museum experienced an epistemological crisis during the same timeframe. In his essay “On the Museum's Ruins,” Crimp argues that artists—most famously Robert Rauschenberg—questioned how the museum operated as an institutional frame for its contained artworks, particularly how it developed and curated art historical narratives for the education of its public.\(^{122}\) Beginning in the early 1960s, Rauschenberg produced screenprinted works in which he juxtaposed images from widely disparate cultural registers. For example, in \textit{Persimmon} (1964, \textbf{III. 15}) Rauschenberg places a reproduction of Peter Paul Rubens's \textit{Venus at a Mirror} (c. 1615) among banal snapshots of a city street, persimmons, and plates. Following the critic Leo Steinberg, Crimp views this mode of arrangement as a break from the coherent, modernist pictorial surface, instead presenting one that recalls a collection of images on a flatbed printing press: “That is to say, the flatbed is a surface which can receive a vast and heterogeneous array of cultural images and artifacts that had not been compatible with the pictorial field of either premodernist or modernist painting.”\(^{123}\) The heterogeneity of Rauschenberg's flatbed pictures challenges the epistemological order imposed by the museum's institutional frame upon its artworks:

And if Rauschenberg's flatbed pictures are experienced as effecting such a rupture or discontinuity with the modernist past, as I believe they do and as I think do the works of many other artists of the present, then perhaps we are indeed experiencing one of those transformations in the epistemological field that Foucault describes. But it is not, of course, only the organization of knowledge that is unrecognizably transformed at certain moments in history. New institutions of power as well as new discourses arise; indeed are independent. […] There is another such institution of confinement ripe for analysis in Foucault's terms—the museum—and another discipline—art history.\(^{124}\)

\(^{124}\) \textit{Ibid}, 52.
With Rauschenberg's flatbed works, art's focus shifted “from the work to the frame,” foregrounding the museum's mode of enclosure and subjecting it to scrutiny. No longer able to govern the order of its works silently and without opposition, the museum began to lose the ability to frame its artworks, to arrange its singular parts—of disparate geographical and temporal origins—into a singular, linear narrative of the whole of art history.125

But if the crisis of the institutional frame is epistemological, then what logic grouped together its art into these narratives? In his essay “The Museum's Furnace,” the literary critic Eugenio Donato argues that the museum and “the questions it tries to answer, depends on an archaeological epistemology,”126 continuing that in the museum “each archaeological artifact has to be an original artifact, and these original artifacts must in turn explain the 'meaning' of a subsequent larger history.”127 Fatal for the museum is its reliance on supplementary textual production to cohere its artifacts. No order proceeds them, but rather the order is invention of the museum, imposed

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125 Cf. Crimp, “On the Museum's Ruins,” 57: Here, Crimp echoes remarks by the art critic Hilton Kramer, who believed that the hierarchical value system that once gave order to modernist art—especially the ability to distinguish a masterpiece from a minor work—had eroded. Kramer argues that this erosion belies the museum's inability to turn its disparate objects into a larger art-historical narrative: “The faith in the possibility of ordering the museum's 'bric-a-brac' [...] persists until today. Re-installations like that of the Andre Meyer Galleries, particularly numerous throughout the past decade, are testimonies to that faith. What so alarms Hilton Kramer in this particular instance is that the criterion for determining the order of aesthetic objects in the museum throughout the era of modernism-the 'self-evident' quality of masterpieces-has been broken, and as a result 'anything goes.' Nothing could speak more eloquently of the fragility of the museum's claims to represent anything coherent at all,” (Crimp, 57).

It should be noted, however, that Crimp distances himself from Kramer's conservative position, instead opting to explain this loss via the introduction of photography into the museum. Photography—especially in its blurring of the opposition of original and reproduction—challenges the archaeological epistemology that underlies the museum's ability to provide order to objects. Furthermore, unlike Kramer, Crimp does not bemoan this change, but suggests potential for new modes of artistic inquiry.


through applying labels:

The set of objects the Museum displays is sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute a coherent representational universe. The fiction is that a repeated metonymic displacement of fragment for totality, object to label, series of objects to series of labels, can still produce a representation which is somehow adequate to a nonlinguistic universe. Such a fiction is the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world. Should the fiction disappear, there is nothing left of the Museum but 'bric-a-brac,' a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects which are incapable of substituting themselves either metonymically for the original objects or metaphorically for their representations.¹²⁸

Donato challenges museum's claims to art historical truth. The art historical narrative that lends its disparate works a temporal order is merely a fiction—an textual invention by the museum—whose power erodes, if not totally disappears, when recognized as such.

Considering these remarks within a discussion of MoMAS, the figure of the Intrigant steps back on stage. Rather than panic at the fragility of the narratives and textual procedures holding the museum's “bric-a-brac” together, the Intrigant finds potential in it. MoMAS is a museum that makes no explicit claims about art history and that has no archive. The museum's contents are not an enclosed, relatively stable collection that may be fit into an art historical narrative and interpreted in this context. MoMAS is not an institutional space of enclosure—after all, the museum has no walls. Kippenberger thus destabilizes the art historical meaning of his museum and sets it in flux dependent on the network of social connections surrounding and supporting the works on display. Phrased differently, a social order rather than an archaeological one holds together the bric-a-brac of Kippenberger's museum.

The Frames within the Institutional Frame: The Museum Curator

As discussed in my first chapter, the Intrigant operates among the art world's social networks. And with knowledge gleaned there, he identifies this sphere's operative frames as well as their breaking points, and subsequently organizes the frames' failure in order to point to the context and set of rules in which their contents are received. In MoMAS, Kippenberger targets the supplemental textual production required to fit disparate artworks into art historical narratives. One figure is especially responsible for the creation of these textual frames: the curator. Like the museum, the position of the curator within this system endured a crisis during the last decades of the 20th century.

By the time of MoMAS in 1993, the curator had long been one of the most controversial figures in the culture industry surrounding the production of exhibitions. Indeed, anxiety permeated the discourse surrounding curation in the decades preceding it. One of the prime reasons for this concerned the interpenetration of the “educational” role of museums and the economic realm of the market. In 1975, Alloway declared in Artforum that “the profession of the curator is in crisis.”\textsuperscript{129} He feared that the curator was becoming a figure more in service of the art market's forces than an educational responsibility to a viewing public. Fourteen years later, Benjamin Buchloh claimed that this shift toward market-driven curation had already occurred and was indeed thoroughly operative in the art world. In a long, anecdotal footnote to his essay “A note on Gerhard Richter's October 18, 1977,” he recalled asking the curator of a major Anselm Kiefer retrospective why the older artist Richter had not yet received such attention—to which the curator replied that Kiefer was

“sexier” than Richter. This comment incensed Buchloh, who worried about a future during which “the managerial curator would conceive exhibitions on the model of the advertising campaign and seasonally determined product innovation.”130 The curator as intellectual in the public service was dead, and probably long since dead before Buchloh eulogized it.

However, a simple split between the educational curator and the “managerial curator” misses many of the complexities that this profession had accrued since the 1960s. One that particularly concerns this project is the shift from “museum curator to exhibition auteur,” identified by the sociologists Nathalie Heinrich and Michael Pollak. This corresponded to a change in the unit of art meaning from the artwork to the exhibition itself. Phrased differently, with the curator’s new authorial role, the singular artwork had become a meaning-fragment in the larger syntax of the exhibition.131 In light of such a consideration, the duties of the artist and curator must be reassessed – many acknowledge that that distinction has long been blurred. The artist is no longer an autonomous producer. The art critic Boris Groys has even gone so far to claim that art “at least since Duchamp” needs to be assessed in terms of a “multiple authorship,” as the product of the collaboration between artist and curator.132

This blurring of roles arguably generated even more intense anxiety than the art market’s encroachment of the museum and its professionals. Among the loudest

outbursts concerning the increasingly authorial curator were those that occurred in response to Documenta 5 (1972). This exhibition marked a turning point, as it was the first exhibition of its scale to be organized by an “independent curator,” that is, one without institutional affiliation. Furthermore, it was the first Documenta curated according to a theme: *Befragung der Realität, Bildwelten Heute.* Under this guise, Szeemann exhibited objects that traditionally lay outside the realm of art—“advertising posters and a large display of home decoration and ecclesiastical kitsch”—to test and reassess its borders. Many critics and artists saw this as a heavy-handed gesture for a curator. During the show, *Artforum* published a series of scathing letters by artists who felt that Szeemann tried to rob them of their authorship by fitting them into this context. Robert Smithson, who chose not to participate in the exhibition, implied that Szeemann's curatorial antics meant the reduction of the exhibition to the status of trash:

> Cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition, rather than asking an artist to set his limits. ... Could it be that certain art exhibitions have become metaphysical junkyards? Categorical miasmas? Intellectual rubbish? Specific intervals of visual desolation?^135^ Smithson derides the curator as a figure who exacerbates the problem of “bric-a-brac” rather than solves it. For him, the heterogeneity resulting from placing artworks among traditionally non-art objects reduces all involved to trash—'stuff' not worth a viewer's intellectual engagement. At the whims of curators like Szeemann, the institutional frame could be made to strip meaning from artworks rather than add or ensure it.

Szeemann's approach escalated an ongoing battle between artist and curator

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^133^ This title translates as: “Questioning Reality. Picture Worlds Today.”


over who controlled the meaning of art. The artist Marcel Broodthaers, a forebear to Kippenberger's own curatorial appropriations, decided to fight this battle within the space of the museum exhibition itself. Concurrently with Documenta 5, he displayed his massive installation-as-exhibition (and vice-versa) Musée d'Art Moderne at the Düsseldorfer Kunsthalle, recasting the role of the curator into the realm of the artist. For the largest section of his "museum, "Département des Aigles, the artist took over 300 objects depicting eagles from 43 public and private art collections and displayed them on the walls and in vitrines. Broodthaers then placed signs among these objects that read "This is not a work of art" – thereby negating the artistic value of the very objects he displayed as art. Through this strategic contradiction, Broodthaers reveals an arbitrary, "deictic" quality inherent to curation and questions the authorial power held by figures like Szeemann. Perhaps Kippenberger's own critical strategy in MoMAS adapts and transforms this insight. In a bravely authorial gesture, Kippenberger turned a piece of "found architecture" – an incomplete slaughterhouse, no less—into a museum, simply by declaring 'this is a museum'. It only follows that the curation involved with the project would be just as thematically arbitrary.

138 Cf. Diederichsen, “Conquering the World: Meta-Museum and Metro-Net,” 47. Here, Diederichsen notes that Kippenberger's assistant Michael Krebber discussed with the artist Broodthaers's museum project Musée d'Art Moderne: Département des Aigles just prior to the creation of MoMAS. However, Diederichsen is careful to point out that Kippenberger's approach to his museum-project was quite different than Broodthaers's: "A museum of their [Kippenberger, et al] own seemed feasible; but it would not be defined purely by asserting it and the poetically assembled objects beneath its heading as in the case of Broodthaers', nor actually document an accumulation of purchased treasures and collections as in the case of a real private museum, nor arouse astonishment as in a chamber of bizarre curios."
140 Claire Bishop, “What is a Curator?”
The critic Martin Prinzhorn contextualizes Kippenberger's own curatorial strategy for *MoMAS* within a similar power struggle with the museum and its curators. Prinzhorn sees this not as a conflict over authorship, but as the artists' attempt to wrest the power over art historiography from museums and galleries.142 During the 80s and 90s, the broadening geography of the Western art world, increasing prevalence of the biennial “mega-exhibition,” and hyper-development of the art market further tangled the roles of the market, the institution, the curator and the artist in a “culture industry of exhibitions.”143 As Prinzhorn suggests, this network was structured asymmetrically with the majority of the power located in the institutional nodes within the connections. But unlike Broodthaers's oppositional gestures, Kippenberger's curatorial actions are more politically ambiguous, if not partially affirmative of this asymmetry. Kippenberger explains his own curatorial mode during a 1997 interview with the curator Daniel Baumann, expounding on his view of himself as an art world “shepherd” who guides flocks of innocent viewers through its menacing institutional pastures: “If, for instance, someone does something better than I do it or someone has already done something, which is part of my

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142 Cf. Prinzhorn, “Simulierte Institution,” 85. Prinzhorn sees this practice as a reprisal of institutional critical practice in the face of a growing relationship between artistic production, the art market [*Handel*], and the role of the curator. This mode of artistic practice seeks to de-stabilize this relationship, although its effectiveness is questionable: “Trotz der Verunsicherung und des Wiederaufkommens von banalen Hinterfragen traf und trifft diese neue Situation problematische Verhältnisse: Gerade in urbanen Zentren wie New York und Köln gab und gibt es die Tendenz einiger weniger Galerien, sich völlig an die Strategien großer Museen und Sammlungen – denen man zuvor sein Programm verkauft hat – anzuleichen und gleichsam hinter einer Festung ein bestimmtes Programm zu manifestieren und allen mitteln zu verteidigen. Diese Kontrollversuche gehen so weit, daß die einzelnen Werke unter eine Art Quarantäne gestellt werden und bei Verleih an temporäre Ausstellungen nur unter ihresgleichen hängen dürften.“ While Prinzhorn's triad of artistic production-market-curator is plausible—especially in the context of the present discussion—I am skeptical of the amount of agency he assigns major urban museums and galleries, which seem to hold a mafioso control over the distribution of art and in turn art history: “Anders gesagt, Museen und Galerien arbeiten an der Festschreibung einer 'Kunstgeschichte', die ihr Programm manifestiert bzw. inkludiert und anderem gegenüber entsprechend aversiv ist.”

labyrinth, then I don't have to do it any more. If it's a good solution, then that's enough for me, and if I've got the money I buy it, and show it along with my own pictures.”¹⁴⁴ There is a nonchalance to Kippenberger's statement that suggests the distinction between authorship and curation is not only hazy, but not even very important. Artistic practice includes arrangement and re-presentation—in a way that draws on yet moves beyond Marcel Duchamp's readymade. Whereas Duchamp placed industrial, mass produced objects in an art context, Kippenberger speaks of showing the “finished works” of other artists within his own body of work, transferring authorship to himself simply by exhibiting them “along with his own pictures,” or giving them his own new frame.¹⁴⁵ Curation involves acquisitions that are often coercive and at the whim of those who can afford them. Kippenberger reminds his viewers that frames are pre-fabricated items—often available for purchase, though sometimes found—affixed to the work after its completion.

**MoMAS and the Late Capitalist Museum**

In the case of Kippenberger's frames—like with Rauschenberg's flatbed pictures—the enclosed contents are used to point to a condition of the frame itself. With an artist working as an artist for its director, the question remains of what happens to the institutional truth claim in *MoMAS*. If Kippenberger's museum makes no attempts at presenting an art historical narrative—or even at fitting a contemporary practice into a historical framework—then what does it offer to its “public”?

To answer this I want to examine Kippenberger's own role in *MoMAS* as


“director” against one of the more (in)famous art world administrators during the
1980s and 90s: the museum director Thomas Krens, who helped found MASS
MOCA and later ran New York's Guggenheim Museum.\textsuperscript{146} In her essay “The Cultural
Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum”—written three years before MoMA's founding
—the art critic Rosalind Krauss considers Krens's corporate-style management and
particularly his ambitions to bring museums like the Guggenheim “more physical
outlets through which to sell the product.”\textsuperscript{147} Particularly alarming about Krens's
business-minded management style was Krauss fears that such a “management” style
—as it is particularly successful, financially speaking—will spread to other museums:

Writers about the Guggenheim have already become suspicious that it is the one
exception in all this—an exception, most would agree, that will be an extremely
seductive pattern for others to follow once its logic becomes clear. The New York
Times Magazine writer of the profile on MASS MoCA was, indeed, struck by the
way Tom Krens constantly spoke not of the museum but of the 'museum industry,'
describing it as 'overcapitalized,' in need of 'mergers and acquisitions' and of 'asset
management.' And further, invoking the language of industry, he spoke of the
museum's activities-its exhibitions and catalogues as 'product.'\textsuperscript{148}

Krens sought to 'revolutionize' the backwards museum industry with its staid,
uninnovative institutional frames. In his eyes, these were spaces of enclosure in the
worst sense. Instead of “circulating” their collections among partner institutions—so
they reach the largest public possible, maximize the works' cultural impact—the
older, “encyclopedic” model leaves its excess assets (“capital”) lying around in
storage.

Accompanying this desire to expand and merge—or as a result of it—Krens
oriented the museum not just to the “art market,” but to the demands of “mass

\textsuperscript{146} The Guggenheim Museum seemed to have been a point of fascination for Kippenberger, as he
depicted the Frank Lloyd Wright designed museum in a painting called “The Modern House of
Believing or Not,” (1985).

\textsuperscript{147} Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” 16. To this end, Krauss names as
examples the recently opened MASS MoCA, as well the contemporaneous projects to expand the
Guggenheim to Salzburg and Venice/Dogana.

\textsuperscript{148} Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” 15.
markets.” Krauss detects in this a change in how the museum envisages its viewing subject. Placed in a broader social framework, this change operates according to the logic of Deleuze's transition from a “disciplinary society” to a “society of control”: museums begin to respond to a public whose “[i]ndividuals have become 'dividuals,' and masses, samples, data, markets, or 'banks.'” Krens's particular method of abandoning the model of enclosure—an institution for an individual-based society—seems to acknowledge this transition. With it disappeared the museum's disciplinary mechanism that organized its art into a state of “interrelation” and cultivated a “historical respect” within the Enlightenment subject as nation-state citizen.

For the Guggenheim the goal is not to present art history. Instead, dealing with markets of consumer-viewers rather than a polity of individuals, the museum seeks to meet its customers' desires (and produce new ones) in the most efficient manner possible. Krens's language implies that what takes over art history's place in his museum is not yet clear. The transition to a post-disciplinary museum is in progress. Perhaps like advertising, what this new museum tries to offer is not just a “product” but also something inherently less tangible.

Krauss recounts the almost mythical origins of Krens's MASS MoCA that recall Kippenberger's own foundational gesture. One day in November, 1985 while driving through a factory-laden area, Krens realized—as if in a “revelation”—that he should found a museum in an old factory; such an action would revolutionize how art is exhibited:

150 Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” 5.
A profound and sweeping change, that is, within the very conditions within which art itself is understood. Thus, what was revealed to him was not only the tininess and inadequacy of most museums, but that the encyclopedic nature of the museum was 'over.' What museums must now do, he said he realized, was to select a very few artists from the vast array of modernist aesthetic production and to collect and show these few in depth over the full amount of space it might take to really experience the cumulative impact of a given oeuvre.152

Krens believed his new model for an institutional frame represented a radical “discursive” shift, from an emphasis on time to one on space, as Krauss phrases it. The old model, the encyclopedic museum, may be understood in Donato's terms: it uses an archeological epistemology to relate a work's origins to a broader art historical framework. Or more simply, it imparts a temporal order to its artworks—the collection of which often aims to be comprehensive.

Krens declares this dead. The current era demands a museum in which its viewers interact not only with the artworks but the institutional frame itself: “The synchronic museum—if we can call it that—would forego history in the name of a kind of intensity of experience, an aesthetic charge that is not so much temporal (historical) as it is now radically spatial.”153 Here, the binary relation between art object and viewer becomes triangulated. Krens wants a relationship between art object, viewer, and museum. For Krauss, this frame-shift signals a change in the viewer's concerns: not with the artwork's interaction with the past but with what is there, present.154 Instead of art historical knowledge, Krens's museum offers a more

153 Ibid.
154 Cf. Michel Foucault, “Afterword to The Temptation of St. Anthony,” in The Essential Works of Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1998), 107. In this sense, Krens's conception of the museum's involvement in the display of artworks differs from a 19th C. one. The latter is exemplified by Édouard Manet, who as Michel Foucault described, “erected [his] within the archive.” The effect was a consciousness of the museum as a frame for artworks. However, this consciousness was historical and not spatial/present, like in Krens's conception. Of Manet's pointing to the museum-as-frame, Foucault writes: ‘Déjeuner sur l'Herbe' and Olympia were perhaps the first 'museum' paintings, the first paintings in European art that were less a response to the achievement of Giorgione, Raphael, and
dynamic—also amorphous—promise: experience. Connected with the uniqueness of a space, this is an intangible that can be trademarked, branded as a 'signature offer' for marketing.

This development alarms Krauss. For it not only pushes the contemporary museum into the same domain of “industrialized leisure” as Disneyland, but also speaks to, even demands, a new kind of temporally fragmented subject to attend its shows: “The industrialized museum has a need for the technologized subject, the subject in search not of affect but of intensities, the subject who experiences its fragmentation as euphoria, the subject whose field of experience is no longer history, but space itself.”

In the sphere of the arts, the “dividual” experiences the symptom of his/her alienation—a flattening of historical consciousness into the experience of an eternal present, of immediately present space—as pleasurable, even overwhelmingly so.

Kippenberger's museum incorporates into its operation a similar triangulation to Krens's. And like the “late capitalist museum,” what MoMAS offers is not an art historical narrative, but the novelty of its geographic location and space. Many of the commissioned works highlighted either this or the building itself. In MoMAS, the viewer's interaction with the art was literally inseparable from the simultaneous experience of the Cycladic landscape. And because Kippenberger's museum had no walls, its views framed the works just as much as the structure's white pylons.

Gregos's description of the opening party for MoMAS—which was to celebrate

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Velasquez than an acknowledgment (supported by this singular and obvious connection, using this legible reference to cloak its operation) of the new and substantial relationship of painting to itself, as a manifestation of the existence of museums and the particular reality and interdependence that paintings acquire in museums.”

Kiecol's exhibition—offers a revealing example: “It was a bizarre opening at an unlikely setting...It was a social occasion like at all openings but instead of enjoying artworks on the non-existing walls, the guests were admiring stunning views of the Aegean sea.”156 Often with Kippenberger's “directorial” contributions—particularly with the trustee dinner and vernissage parties— the art lies in an experience of a social gathering within MoMAS's distinct frame.

MoMAS runs the risk of reducing the museum to a frame for industrialized fun, no more than a site for novelty-hunting and thrill seeking—a space for subjects looking for intensities not affect. However, to claim that Kippenberger wholly embraces the “late capitalist museum” would miss the elements of parodic distortion in it. While MoMAS's opening party offered a delightful atmosphere, it still contained a trace of the “bizarre.” From literally manifesting André Malraux's utopic, all-inclusive “Museum without Walls” to depicting his own directorial role as one reminiscent of a Hindu deity's, Kippenberger exaggerates enough to remind museum-goers to keep a distance: that one can laugh at its megalomaniacs and outlandish corporate schemes even while remaining a participant. After all, the Intrigant “führt die Helden zu Zielen, die diesen verbogen bleiben.”157 Rather than merely extending the development of the museum in Krens's direction, MoMAS projects a pleasant yet grotesque image of its future.

Kippenberger does not suggest a way to escape the problems addressed by Krauss, but rather inhabits and deconstructs them. He shows how much this new museum's space needs the attention of artists. A quarter-century later, Sontag's injunction in “Against Interpretation” emerges once more as a salient problem that

needed to be reframed. In addition to an erotics of art, we need an erotics of architecture, of the frame. Kippenberger's “double-move” leaves the viewer with a double-task: to explore the sensual, experiential domain possible in the post-disciplinary museum, while seeking new modes of criticizing it.
Conclusion: 
*Metro-Net World Connection*

In his study *The Image of the City* (1960), the urban planner Kevin Lynch discovered that subjects often cognitively organize a city around its subway entrances, which serve as points around which a mental map forms.\(^{158}\) This function operates independently of the trains that connect them, which remain invisible to the viewer:

“The surface entrances of the stations may be strategic nodes in the city, but they are related along invisible conceptual linkages. The subway is a disconnected nether world, and it is intriguing to speculate what means might be used to mesh it into the structure of the whole.”\(^{159}\)

Nearly a quarter-decade after the publication of *The Image of the City*, Frederic Jameson argued that the scope of Lynch's book needs to be extended out of the limited sphere of the city and reframed to accommodate the developments of a more advanced, globalized stage of late capitalism.\(^{160}\) To an even greater degree than the residents of the modernist “alienated city,”\(^{161}\) globalization's subjects are bewildered by the enormous complexity of its space, densely layered with commercial, mass cultural and communicational networks. Without stable points of reference within this “great global multinational and decentred communicational

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159 Ibid, 57.
161 Jameson takes up Lynch's analysis of the cognitive organization of cities within the context of globalized space. Particularly important for Jameson is Lynch's concept of the “alienated city,” in which “people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves.”Especially prevalent in postwar cities with regularly ordered grid-layouts, this sense of disorientation stems from a lack of “strategic points” like subway entrances around which its residents align themselves. As if out on the open sea without a compass or sextant, the residents of “alienated” cities easily become lost, unable to differentiate among the mass of visual signs contained within their streets. Their environment remains visual noise.
network,” individuals cannot orient themselves cognitively within their surroundings.162 Or, as Jameson argues, they are unable to form a “cognitive map” of their locations:

[T]he latest mutation in space—postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.163

Inscribed in these networks, the subject of globalization becomes lost—that is, unable to untangle the layers of “hyperspace” in order to establish a position within them.164 Jameson sees this new state of subjective fragmentation as an urgent political problem, one that a reconsidered practice of cognitive mapping needs to address. For it is only through establishing a clear image of the one's position within this networked space that one can “act and struggle” as a politically and socially responsible subject.165

Jameson stresses that a return to older, perspectival forms of mimetic representation will not fulfill the purpose of a cognitive mapping aesthetic. Rather, new and radical forms that respect the multilayered complexity of globalized space need to be invented:

[T]he new political art—if it is indeed possible at all—will have to hold to the truth of postmodernism, that is, to say, to its fundamental object—the world space of multinational capital—at the same time at which it achieves a breakthrough to some as yet unimaginable new mode of representing this last…166

A subway system that would span the world: that was Kippenberger’s idea for Metro-
*Net: World Connection.* Yet, it was a subway without any underground trains. As if visualizing Lynch’s point, *Metro-Net* consisted solely of above ground entrances. To make it even stranger, these entrances were planned not for a single city, but multiple cities around the globe. In these ways and more, *Metro-Net* suggests that it might be precisely the sort of innovative cognitive mapping called for by Jameson.

Kippenberger mapped the global—if not even a bit utopian—plan for *Metro-Net* (III. 16), which would connect stops as distant as Helsinki and Hollywood. This map suggests that the network was still “globalizing” at the time of his death, although he was only able to complete a few of these stops. From 1993 until 1997, Kippenberger designed and built subway entrances at Syros (for MoMAS), Kassel, Leipzig, New York and Dawson City, Canada (III. 17).167 Each received a unique treatment that took its local context into account. The Leipzig entrance received a sober, corporate treatment to match the city’s Trade Fair, where it was installed. Other entrances had to be modified to meet specific on-site demands. In New York, Kippenberger crushed his aluminum entrance to fit through a set of gallery doors. At Kassel, safety regulators rejected his proposal for an entrance that floated on the nearby Fulda River, so Kippenberger simply “beached” it, leaving it to stand askew on the bank.168 Of these, however, Dawson City’s entrance was the most eccentric in design and location. Set in a former Yukon Gold Rush town, Kippenberger constructed the entrance out of regional timbers, which he stacked “like Lincoln Logs” to match the surrounding frontier-like atmosphere.169

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Noever (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Cantz Verlag, 1998), 52. Kippenberger's decision to place an entrance in Dawson City was not arbitrary. His friend Reinald Nothal—the owner of Berlin's Paris Bar, where Kippenberger hung his paintings—ran a hotel there called “the Bunkhouse Hotel” and allowed the artist to construct the entrance on its property.
Kippenberger's subway network re-stages for the globe a system normally framed by a city. So while Lynch's remarks on subway entrances provide insight into those of Metro-Net, his commentary needs to be reconsidered to account for Kippenberger's change of scale. This is where Jameson’s ideas of aesthetic “cognitive mapping” become useful—particularly in terms of the development of culture in the space of multinational capital and the problem of position within this space. With Metro-Net, Kippenberger “re-presents” globalized space—not by creating an image of it, but through his framing strategy. Yet, this time, the confrontation of Kippenberger's framing strategy with globalized space comes at a cost: the deconstruction of the frame itself. In this sense, he brings his framing project to its endgame in Metro-Net—to the point of its dissolution both within and by the process of globalization.

However, Kippenberger offers an aesthetics of cognitive mapping with a different motivation from Jameson's social and political project to re-orient and re-activate the subject within the already densely networked “postmodern hyperspace.” Rather than a program of dis-alienation, Metro-Net is a self-reflexive project of immanent importance within Kippenberger's own body of work. And while Metro-Net addresses globalization in a manner that deconstructs his own framing strategy, this process does also dissolve Kippenberger's already heterogeneous body of work into mere “bric-a-brac.” Instead, Metro-Net achieves the opposite through a strategy of resolution and expansion—from the deconstructed frame to the network. Like Lynch's subway entrances, the Metro-Net stops serve to “orient” subjects, but toward a different end: they provide a new framework in which Kippenberger's body of work appears to cohere into an oeuvre.

As a structural support for art, the difference between the frame and the

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network parallels the transition from a space of enclosure to a modulating system of control.\(^{170}\) Recalling Georg Simmel's essay “Der Bilderrahmen,” the frame seals an artwork off from the rest of the world, clearly marking where its limits are.\(^{171}\) Similar to the borders of a territory, the frame defines what belongs to the artwork and what is foreign to it. This demarcation both unifies the artworks contents as belonging to a single entity and seals the artwork from the rest of the world. Or, phrased in the lexicon of globalization, the frame ensures that the artwork maintains its 'locality,' its undisturbed singularity in the world—as Simmel writes, “wie eine Insel in der Welt.”\(^{172}\) The frame moreover governs the space within its borders, directing the “continuous flow of the viewers gaze” over the artwork's local topography: its aesthetic features.

This notion of the frame depends on static aesthetic objects that can be enclosed and thus faces a challenge in *Metro-Net*. Kippenberger chooses to “frame” globalization, a process necessarily carried out by moving subjects and objects—one furthermore prone to regressions, deviations, and loops. Or as Kai Hammermeister argues in his essay on *Metro-Net*: “Globalization as an event in the social and political sphere will never reach an end-point and stasis. As an event it has its telos inscribed in itself, yet it must content itself with an infinite approximation.”\(^{173}\) By deploying his framing strategy on globalization, Kippenberger pushed it to—perhaps beyond—its

\(^{170}\) Cf. Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (Winter, 1992): 4. “Enclosures are molds, distinct castings, but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point.”


\(^{172}\) Georg Simmel, “Der Bilderrahmen,”

spatial and logical limit. If Kippenberger were to frame its process, he would have to fit an enclosure around the entire globe, at which point the frame is prone to arbitrary inversion and even reaches a point of indeterminacy. Globalization's necessarily “infinite approximation” dissolves the opposition upon which the frame lies—namely, that between enclosure and enclosed. Whether Kippenberger frames the globe or employs the globe as a frame would become indistinguishable.

Given such a process that can only approach infinitesimally— but never reach—its endpoint, Kippenberger is left with a similar problem to The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika. To deal with globalization, Kippenberger must call upon another structure that both controls the process's infinite progress and reconfigures the deconstructed frame. Furthermore, appropriate structure has to take globalization's temporal—even kinetic—dimension into account. It must not only govern the flow of the viewer's gaze, but also the flow of the viewers' movements through space. Thus, in Metro-Net Kippenberger employs a system of objects that aims to modulate these flows rather than enclose them.

Jack Burnham takes up this problem of movement in his 1968 essay “Systems Esthetics” and elaborates its consequences for defining aesthetic “boundary concepts.” Here, Burnham proposes the system—“conceptions that can loosely be termed unobjects”174—as an alternative structure to the frame and as one that can handle kinetic and temporal elements: “In the systems perspective there are no contrived confines such as the theater proscenium or picture frame. Conceptual focus

rather than material limits define the system.” For Burnham, what replaces the frame's “territorial” borders is a normative conceptual structure. The system's conceptual structure does not enclose a space like a frame or stage. Rather, as a "complex of components in interaction," it regulates or modulates the elements that pass through the system. These elements categorically differ from those belonging to the static objects of painting or sculpture. Whereas the frame isolates an object for display, the system of objects regulates flows of “people, ideas, messages, atmospheric conditions, power sources” that pass through it.

Burnham's formulation of the system suggests an approach to “framing” the flows of globalization that is applicable to Kippenberger’s work. The corresponding transition from the physical frame's enclosure to the system's “conceptual focus” allows the emphasis of Kippenberger's project to shift from the individual entrances toward the “World-Connection” promised by its subtitle. To consider only a single component of Kippenberger's subway distorts the logic of the project, rather its “meaning” exists in how the stops operate in conjunction. Each entrance works in conjunction towards Metro-Net's conceptual goal. As Burnham elaborates:

The components of systems—whether these are artistic or functional—have no higher meaning or value. Systems components derive their value solely through their assigned context. Therefore it would be impossible to regard a fragment of an art system as a work of art in itself—as say, one might treasure a fragment of one of the Parthenon friezes.

Indeed, a subway network with only one stop cannot exist. However, Kippenberger could add, remove, or rearrange the components of Metro-Net without damaging the

176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid, 150.
integrity of the project's aim. Like globalization, *Metro-Net* can never reach a completed state, but rather each entrance further maps globalization's regulating process of “infinite approximation.”

To consider *Metro-Net* within Burnham's terms does not disrupt Kippenberger's strategic constellation of artwork, frame and context. Instead, it exposes a further dimension beyond it. Burnham suggests that Marcel Duchamp's lesson was to focus not only on the object, but the relations around the object itself: “The specific function of modern didactic art has been to show that art does not reside in material entities, but in relations between people and between people and the components of their environment.” Here, Burnham hints at terms that can help us account for Kippenberger's move out into global space with *Metro-Net*. Applying the logic of system's esthetic, *Metro-Net* “regulates the consistency” of the system formed by people (viewers), an environment (globalized space), and its material components (the network of subway entrances). Thus, with this system, Kippenberger frames his own constellation of artwork, frame, context—a move allows him to extend his scope beyond the art world's institutions and into the globalized space into which they seek to expand.

This broader framing strategy compliments those of Kippenberger's earlier projects. For if *MoMAS* showed how far the museum with global ambitions could extend its influence, *Metro-Net* suggests that any work upon the frame requires a simultaneous operation within that globalized space. To this end, *Metro-Net's*

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180 Burnham, 146. Here, I preserve Burnham's emphasis.
181 The structure of this double move is not new—as demonstrated by Daniel Buren’s mode of institutional critique that operated both within the museum and the environment of the city simultaneously. However, the scope of Kippenberger's environment—a globalized public space—distinguishes *Metro-Net* from its precursors.
entrances help its viewers to locate themselves within the globalized art world—to cognitively map its dense network of “unsettling connectivity.” Kippenberger's own formulation of Jameson's aesthetic thus does not so much activate a social or political criticism, but one immanent to the art world. With its network of signposts, *Metro-Net* provides conditions under which the double-task left by MoMAS becomes possible: to find new experiential possibilities in the art world's globalized institutional system, while seeking new modes of criticizing it—here, a cartographic one.

*Metro-Net* does not merely provide a cognitive map for the global art world, it creates a network for understanding the uneven topography of Kippenberger's career. It structures a heterogeneous body of work into a Lebenslauf: a movement that, though it may deviate at points, ultimately moves in a single direction. With *Metro-Net*, Kippenberger stages the “happy end” of a trajectory that begins in the museum and expands out to globalized space. But like his treatment of Kafka's unfinished Amerika—the narrative that could not come to a close because it never really began—Kippenberger's “happy end” is that there is no end, only the conditions for his project to continue forever.

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182 This translates roughly as “*curriculum vitae.*”
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