

Andreas Bunte

# MAY THE CIRCLE REMAIN UNBROKEN

and other works with film

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# Architecture, Terrorism and Enlightenment

An email conversation between Kathrin Meyer (New York) and Andreas Bunte (Berlin)

KATHRIN (JUNE 20, 2008): I watched your film *Loboda* and listened to the sound piece *His Living Voice* over and over again and marveled at the mysteriousness of the two works. If I remember correctly, you exhibited them in a hut-like setting along with maps. Can you say something about the background of these two works?

ANDREAS (JUNE 23): Both pieces are part of the installation *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*, which—as you mentioned—also consists of a series of altered maps and an altered print. All these elements are centered around issues connected to back-to-nature movements, like self-sustaining, anarchic freedom, self-awareness, and a fundamental criticism of industrial society. *Loboda* was, somehow, the starting point for this installation. The film portrays a solitary hut from different angles that I found during a holiday in Poland in 2005. It had something of the ideal place out in the country about it, beautiful, romantic, and calm, but there was also something disturbing. It was as if you could imagine that something really bad might have happened in there. There was no way to have a proper look at the inside, just a peek through a tiny slot between the window shutters that didn’t really reveal anything. So the film somehow reflects this ambivalence. It can be seen as an amateur holiday film, a documentation of some sort of crime scene, or of an historical place. *His Living Voice* is like an independent soundtrack, not only for the film, but also for the installation as a whole. It consists of a transistor radio on a stand transmitting a fake radio broadcast that is something in-between a ghostly voice and a pirate radio station with very bad reception. Occasionally you can understand fragments of what seems to be an endless monologue about aristocracy, nature, freedom, the genius, and the genius’ relation to those who are not. I edited it from audio recordings of speeches held by Frank Lloyd Wright to the community of apprentices and architects who worked and lived with him in his self-designed resort named Taliesin.

KATHRIN (JUNE 25): The Lloyd-speeches are interesting! He does not speak about architecture here—or at least not in the excerpts you chose—but about the uncommon man, about an aristocratic individual that subscribes to an idea and the meaning for American society. Here is an excerpt:

“Liberal conditions will grow the American aristocrat, because the world cannot live without aristocracy. The world cannot live without distinctions, superiorities and inferiorities. They are bound to occur because they are planted there in nature. All nature seems to be a race for the superior, for the excellent, for the finer specimen of the thing whatever it may be. And we cannot escape it in civilization. (...) Never have I thought of an educated man as a cultured man, a cultured human being. Well now, Thomas Jefferson regarded him as such. That was our American aristocrat: the man cultured by this ideal of freedom and by the growth of his own conscience to become not a yes man, not a committee meeting mind, but a single man, as Emerson described him. A single man. A man who could stay put on an idea that he had of his own and believe in it and work with it and for it. (...)

So it occurs to me that the best way to describe the uncommon man, in the sense that I am using the term, is the man who can fall in love with an idea, the man who can subscribe to an idea and who realizes the nature of an idea.”

Not long ago I read *The Fountainhead* whose protagonist Howard Roark is an architect who is molded in exactly the same sense of the “uncommon man” and it is said that Frank Lloyd Wright was the model for this character though both he and the author denied it. In any event, the Lloyd-quote also made me think of the book because architecture serves in it as an image of the corruption of society and as a background in order to illustrate the battle of aesthetic ideals against the common, the accepted and the safe. Architecture is much more than a profession here—instead, it is employed as a symptom for the state of a society. Architecture is a recurrent motif or theme in your works as is the fact that there are always certain historical or sometimes fictional personalities who stand in the background. Here Frank Lloyd Wright, and your press text also mentions H. D. Thoreau and the Unabomber. I guess I have several questions in mind. Here is the first one: were you already thinking of Wright, Walden and the Unabomber when you shot the film of the hut? Did the collaged and altered maps already exist or did they take shape during the research?

ANDREAS (JUNE 26): I didn’t have any of that in mind when I was filming the hut in Poland. That all came up later when I was back in Berlin and started to do research on huts and things connected to them. I found that the ambivalence of the Polish hut was actually mirrored by historical events and figures. H. D. Thoreau and Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber) were, in this respect, the most extreme personifications of this ambivalence. But besides all the differences, there was a strange kind of symmetry between these two, a kind of common starting point that somehow turned into radically different stories. The idea to use maps resulted from one of the similarities between Thoreau and Ted Kaczynski. Both had drawn maps of the environment around their huts—in some regards they made accounts of a more or less uncharted territory. That brought up the whole issue of cartography and of controlling the territories which it incorporates. So I decided to alter maps into some kind of weird manifesto for a fictional drop out ... The whole piece pretty much shaped itself during the process of research. The recordings of Wright’s voice, however, I had discovered some time earlier on, and while I was reading *Walden* and the manifesto of the Unabomber, it appeared to me that, in his morning speeches, Wright had actually framed an intellectual perspective that probably both Thoreau and Kaczynski would have drawn upon. Wright was looking at crucial questions like those surrounding power, the importance of personal experiences or beliefs, democracy, etc. with an intellectual radicalism, but from the demilitarized field of art/architecture. He would never have gone as far as Kaczynski, but it’s interesting that you brought up *The Fountainhead*, because I think if you were to merge Wright with Kaczynski the result could be Howard Roark.

KATHRIN (JUNE 27): Before we go on with that thought, could you speak a little bit about your practice? On a pragmatic level, I mean. How do you develop your projects, what steps do you take, and how is the final outcome conceived?

ANDREAS (JUNE 28): Well, actually the process is quite intuitive and differs from piece to piece. With the hut in *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*, the path was already pretty laid out, because I had the film *Loboda* which was a strong anchor. But typically in the beginning things are much more blurred. The beginning of my research is usually very broad and erratic and doesn’t follow a concrete path. It’s not like having one thing in mind. It’s more like a collection of things I’m interested in—filming techniques, buildings, theories, people, etc. Often parts of this collection are leftovers from previous pieces, things that didn’t make it into that piece. It’s kind of a constant recycling and mixing of such fragments with stuff I just recently found in newspapers, archives, on the Internet ... It takes a couple of months though, to sort things out, to organize this pool of material towards a possible subject for a piece. During that time I constantly cut things out, add something new, reconnect the chopped off stuff in order to find out what belongs where and how or if these things can be combined. It’s quite similar to editing or making collages. It’s not an entirely rational or intellectual process and I feel that I don’t have complete control over it. It’s more as if I have to create a situation where things can fall into place—it’s very much dependent on coincidences and on me spending enough time with the material. When I start filming, the piece usually has a quite precise outline and structure, even though I do not necessarily know every detail. The course of filming can take several weeks, up to months,

and during that period I often continue to gather material. For me, there is no clear-cut line between research and production, especially when I work on installations, as they offer more possibilities to distribute content.

KATHRIN (JUNE 29): The reason why I brought up *The Fountainhead* and architecture before was also because I noticed that architecture plays a role in one or the other way in most of the works that you’ve made to date. Be it the hut, as the smallest unit of a living space in *Loboda*, or research on Étienne-Louis Boullée or the design of the exhibition set-up. All this gathered material seems, and you just described that process, to enter into the works to some extent. But, more specifically, what role does architecture play for and in your works? Is it a background or a starting point or something that is a constant aspect in your thinking? With this question I am thinking of *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* [The Last Days of the Present], an installation that comprises two 16mm films and several collages and in which one of the films consists entirely of views of different buildings and monuments *O.T. (Architekturfilm)* [Untitled (Architecture Film)].

ANDREAS (JULY 2): Architecture definitely plays an important role, and it is often a starting point for my research. But it is not necessarily a particular building that occupies the center. Architecture can also provide a perspective onto something else. You mentioned the installation *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*. In this installation I used architecture as the angle of deflection for my approach towards German terrorism of the 1970s. The core was the image of the apartment as an “etui for men,” a phrase that Walter Benjamin uses in his writings on Charles Baudelaire in order to characterize the bourgeois apartment as something that envelops the inhabitant and produces a certain pressure towards the inside. For *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* I radicalized this phrase in the sense that a space might also shape the way one thinks. I was interested in the normative power of architecture and how this is integrated into every detail of architecture, an architecture that accommodated the German “Spießer” [petty bourgeois] as well as the terrorists who were in hiding. The mental counterpart to this space is the conspiratorial perspective. For the terrorists, it allowed them to misuse architectural surfaces as hideouts, in reverse it demanded from police officers that they read the interiors of an apartment in a completely different way. Once applied, this changes the meaning of every detail—every scissor suddenly becomes a document of the terrorists’ ideology, and of course this works both ways. For the terrorists, every building outside of the conspiratorial apartment turns into a symbol for the false ideology of the “pig-system.”

KATHRIN (JULY 4): This ambivalence comes across really well in both films, especially in *O.T. (Wohnung)* [Untitled (Apartment)]. It is silent and consists of shots of several set-ups of different props in an apartment including a suitcase, instruments to falsify documents, and a table with other diverse objects. This film was shot in an apartment complex from the 1960s in West Berlin, in Gropius-Stadt. Gropius-Stadt is a social housing project that embodies all the negative aspects of these projects and was a very problematic district for a long time—the architecture there is quite horrible, actually. It’s all grey and fortress-like and the houses seem to be containers for people but not spaces to live in. So after working with figures that leave society, that turn towards nature with the installation *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*, you went on to look at figures that turned their backs on society but tried to violently alter it and continued to live—though undercover—in the circumstances they hated. Was that a logical continuation of the first project? Did you come across material then that you used for the installation *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*? Or was the project a reaction of some sort to the RAF-exhibition that was at Kunst-Werke in Berlin in 2004? Or was it simply the outcome of a fascination with the RAF?

ANDREAS (JULY 6): Of course, in a lot of regards, *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* is a logical continuation of *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*, but it was not conceived as a follow up. One piece reflects the other like a distorted mirror, and there are various overlaps, like the theme of architecture, the conflict between the individual and society. Through the figure of the Unabomber there is also an overlap in the subject of terrorism, but my approach towards the RAF was not so much based on these overlaps or in regards to *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*. My interest in German terrorism from the 1970s had its starting point in a book by Margrit Schiller, an ex-terrorist from the first RAF generation. I had read this book some time ago and, while I was thinking about the next piece, it suddenly came back to my mind. The really stunning thing about this very honest and merciless account of her time in the RAF was how utterly banal and normal her daily life as

one of the most wanted terrorists had been, and how absolutely clueless, in a political sense, she had been. Her approach to terrorism was motivated by the hope for a deeper meaning in life and the solidarity of a group, rather than radical political convictions. The reality of the underground for her, however, was conditioned by boredom, isolation, and fear and only a few rather random actions. What I became interested in was the fact that even though the terrorists had formulated the most radical denial of so-called normality, they still couldn’t fully suspend or escape the normative power it yielded over their lives, and that was only partly because of camouflage reasons.

KATHRIN (JULY 11): The terrorism-thread is really interesting—especially since your film is not about terrorism as such. It doesn’t show any terrorists, or look for reasons, but instead, it looks at terrorism as one element in a picture that is informed by thoughts about the myth and reality of the RAF, about terrorism and banality cohabitating, and by, again, architecture and its readings from a social standpoint, as a sign and a symbol. This made me think of a conversation we once had about Walter Benjamin and his *Passagen-Werk* [Arcades Project], specifically about his method of gathering material around one term, which then becomes one point in a network of relations. Your films work in a similar way, I think: they are the visible manifestation of a chain of related terms and concepts and this is only too understandable since they are the filtered outcome of a large collection of images, texts and thoughts gathered throughout the research process. For instance, the sequences of buildings and the views of the apartment in the two 16mm films from *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* don’t function as documentary material. Nor do the images and texts that make up the collages. Instead, they trigger questions (for example) regarding the significance of buildings as places to hide, as manifestations of power or utopian ideas, and the ways to read these buildings as such. A lot of the research also enters into the collages you usually exhibit with your films—we talked previously about the maps in which this happens, and in *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*, there are collages that comprise text, messages about society, and the people. They resemble generic slogans but at the same time reference encoded messages that were passed on to the RAF-terrorists while they were in prison.

I also thought about your decision to shoot in 16mm and whether your works are nostalgic; nostalgic in the sense that they look back very comfortably, with a discomfort for the present. How do you see your works in respect to nostalgia, the present, and progressiveness? (Here I am thinking specifically of *La Fée Électricité*, an anthological film about the battle between light and darkness and the time surrounding the invention of electricity.)

ANDREAS (JULY 14): I like how you said that my pieces are visible manifestations, the filtered outcome of a research process ... At the time of our conversation about Benjamin and the Passagen-Werk, I think I was intrigued, and still am, by the fact that he seemed to have no restrictions or hierarchies for the aspects of a subject that he looked at and gathered material on. I thought about your question regarding nostalgia over the weekend, and I think it’s quite interesting that you brought this up. There are obviously several concerns connected with 16mm and its being a so called “old” technology, which I think I can not really say anything about, as this involves other peoples opinions on a certain technology, which is totally out of my hands. Every method of production has its benefits and each of them has a certain influence on the final result, and I like to think of them as equal possibilities. When I first came to Berlin I worked on a lot of commercial film productions to earn money. This is probably the best realm to observe how strongly production methods influence the final outcome. But the smallest part in this net of influences (client/agency/production company ...) is probably the camera system you are choosing. My turn towards 16mm was based on the experiences I had during these years, with various available formats. The most important experience during this time was digital editing, which offers endless flexibility in how you deal with recorded data. It took me a while to discover that this was actually not the way for me, as it limited my practice to the realm of the screen, instead of expanding it. Of course, there were all kinds of possibilities to experiment (e.g. with the connection of sound and images), but in the end I felt that this was producing endless variations, but not results. I was actually looking for a way to bypass this process, to make things simpler, which I achieved by turning to a process of filming with more restrictions (it was obviously more than once that I cursed myself for that). So for me, starting to work with 16mm was a re-reading of the possibilities of analogue production from the digital realm, and this is actually very similar to the way I see the conceptual side of my work.

You mentioned *La Fée Electricité* which is a faked, essentially non-chronological anthology of the nineteenth century that focuses on events and figures connected to the advent of electric light, which, at the time, began to drastically change life. The film uses the trustworthy format of a chronicle and borrows its look from late nineteenth century film, but the perspective onto the manipulated and made up events, their selection as well as the combination of text and images, is fundamentally not nineteenth century. This perspective is interested in the ambiguity of the invention of the electric light and the various ways that people responded to it. There was everything from hysterical belief and optimism to hysterical fear and demonization, which was not only an unenlightened rejection of the new as certain light sources actually caused injuries. Blindness is not one of the inventions of my chronicle, but a real side-effect of arc-light, which was one of the first very powerful electric light sources. While I was working on this piece I was not so much driven by nostalgic feelings about gaslights, fireplaces, Paris, the good old times, but I was absolutely stunned that a theoretical concept, like *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung* [Dialectic of Enlightenment by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer] mirrored itself in the history of the electric light. I was really intrigued by this reverberation ...

KATHRIN (JULY 15): I like that you think about such things over the weekend! I also like the fact that you suffer, but endure, working with 16mm—it’s so worth it and, actually, *La Fée Electricité* would be something totally different in a digital format. Also, the whole point of electricity and light as a basis for film would come across from pretty far away, if at all. As it is, it is also a film about film itself, about the elementary technical disposition of the medium and I would even say it’s a bit of an homage. *La Fée Electricité* is set up as a chronicle of the “event” of electric light but exists only through light and shows numerous varieties of light: candles, a fireplace, a chandelier, light bulbs, etc. You use the ability of the film material to catch and reflect all that light and it’s beautiful. As you say, the material and the characteristics of 16mm play a big role. I also wanted to ask one thing about the conceptual side of your work that you mentioned in your last email: you said you re-read the possibilities of analogue production from the digital realm and that this is similar to the conceptual side of your practice. Can you say a bit more about that?

ANDREAS (JULY 15): There is probably not so much more to it. For me the idea of re-reading is kind of connected to that of reconstruction, whereas the latter is more interested in historical correctness, which I find a bit restricting. My practice has a strong speculative element, even though it is heavily based on research and historical facts; it constantly crosses the border to fiction in some ways (I described that a bit earlier). So in a way, re-reading implies that one needs to look at things again, from a somewhat unnatural or uncommon perspective: mapping the facts differently, or making odd connections. In opposition to the idea of reconstruction, this process is based on an intended deflection of the facts.

KATHRIN (JULY 16): Before I ask you about your newest film, I want to address modernism because it is so present at the moment, maybe even more so in Berlin than in New York. I think of the works of Bernd Ribbeck, Claudia Wieser, David Maljkovich (at the 5<sup>th</sup> Berlin Biennial), Bojan Sarcevic, and Eva Berendes. There seems to be a common interest in working through modernist forms and their implications regarding models of society, the history of forms, technology, and the prefiguration of spaces. Going back to your works: *La Fée Electricité*, for instance, has animated titles comprised of a year (in numbers) and little moving mechanisms that are reminiscent of Duchamp’s rotoreliefs. The animations don’t have a practical function here though they do play a number of roles: while functioning as an intertitle and showing the date, time passes, made visible through the moving forms. They evoke associations to the rotating film reel and eventually to the film’s subject, technical progress exemplified by electric light. As I understand it, your reference to Duchamps rotoreliefs as “image-machines” alludes to film as a machine-based image system as well as to modernism/modernity and their attributes. Your newest film, *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* [The Garden of M. Leretnac] is set in a park and brings (domesticated and planned) nature together with machines, combining technical dreams and garden architecture (social visions). Here, all the questions are “built” into the material of the film and, again, it is a kind of homage or a comment on aspects of modernism — and on histories of ideas, on ideas becoming ideologies and/or fictions.

ANDREAS (JULY 17): The self-reflexive moment of *La Fée Electricité* that you mentioned earlier is quite important: from a materialist or minimalist point of view, the film is, in fact, a chronicle of light itself, of various light sources that have left

an imprint on the material, all reanimated by the light of the projector. From the beginning I actually liked the idea that these two readings coexist and that they cannot be separated from each other. This double bind was something I wanted to follow in *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* for which I researched old analogue trick techniques. I had already used single frame animations for the diagram plates and some other scenes in *La Fée Electricité*, but these remained separated from the rest of the footage that I shot in my studio or in technical museums, old houses, etc. The world of the flat geometric animations and the real scenes remained separated and were only connected by means of montage. In opposition to montage, one could call *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* a collage film. It consists entirely of tableaux vivantes-type scenes in which graphic elements, little animated processes and landscape, have been collaged together. By means of multiple exposures and corresponding positive/negative masks, the images’ various elements were successively captured on a single negative. The resulting footage is almost unedited in the film.

The piece draws on a number of ideas and phenomena in connection with machine fantasies of the nineteenth century, the landscape and sculpture park as Gesamtkunstwerk and the representation of these things in literature and painting. For me, two novels provided the starting point: one was by E. A. Poe *The Domain of Arnheim* and the other was by Raymond Roussel *Locus Solus*. Both these narratives revolve around eccentric landscape gardens as manifestations of an ideal location where the transformation of elemental nature into an overarching artwork has been a complete success. Whereas in Poe’s story, the connection to the machine as a tool for the perfection of the landscape is only implicit (the geometrized design of the vast garden described here could obviously not be achieved without the use of machines), it is explicit in Raymond Roussel’s. In *Locus Solus* the machine is the principle actor, while the landscape of the park is no more than the backdrop for its performance. The interesting thing about Roussel is that the machines have a double connotation. They are not only fictional inventions that refer back to the genius of their equally fictional creator, Martial Canterel, but they also refer to Roussel’s writing technique, which is based on formal language operations like sound associations and puns. This formal approach, and the restraints derived from it, determine the construction of the mechanics of *Locus Solus* and they are probably as important as the story that it tells. The intertwining of the two layers turns the book into a kind of hybrid narrative, a story in which both the fiction and the process of its generation remain equally visible.

With *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* I tried to achieve something similar. The dream-like world presented in the film is a result of the analogue trick film techniques I used. The flaws, and the lack of precision that come with it, add to the already very artificial collage of three dimensional and two dimensional material. It’s obvious that the resulting images are absolutely not the product of current state of the art visual effects techniques. The issue of artificiality gets further emphasized during the transitions between different scenes, where the filmic collages again and again break up into their constituent parts. In this process, the various exposure stages briefly take on an independent existence and create new, almost abstract, images.

KATHRIN (JULY 18): Right, but let’s go back to modernism for a moment. Or maybe I actually mean modernity here. *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* and *La Fée Electricité* deal with technical fantasies and realities, *May the Circle Remain Unbroken* refers to drop-outs, back to nature movements and ideological implications that find a continuation in *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* where architecture and its ability to predetermine space play a big role. It seems that modernity—understood as describing a social order that is conditioned by the striving for control over nature, for information, for looking into the future and not back into the past—and modernism, as the aesthetic messenger of modernity, do play a role in your works. Is it a conscious decision of yours to work with these moments in time, with sources and events that go back to some cracks, to points where modernity began to take shape?

ANDREAS (JULY 19): Well, modernism and modernity are very important topics for my work. I think of them almost as a kind of general framework. The cracks inherent in this very framework are probably the most interesting part, as they open it up to an indeterminate amount of uncertainty, which I find very important. But it is not that I particularly look for cracks in order to find my next subject. It’s more like I maneuver in a certain terrain which makes me stumble upon them. In this context I find it particularly interesting that even though film is completely intertwined with the history of modernism and modernity, it also bears the potential to serve as a tool to investigate these topics. I can look at modernity through the

means of a modernist practice, so to speak. During my time at the art academy in Düsseldorf, my interest was very focused on modernism and how to continue that line through something like the postmodern. It was a very intense but internal perspective that was cultivated at the time. After I left the context of the academy, this idea gradually lost importance, and I was driven to a more distant position which brought the notion of modernity more into focus. It’s intriguing that this was also the time when I became interested in film as a medium for my work. One can say that this is an obvious development because film is the appropriate technology to look at modernity, but you can also argue that modernity came into focus because I chose film as a medium ... It is an interesting quality of film, in particular, that it allows for the incorporation of such questions about the relationship between language and content. Looking at the works we’ve been talking about, one could ask, for instance, if a film like *La Fée Electricité* was entirely motivated by my desire to make a film about the advent of the electric light, or if this subject inevitably came up because light is an inherent subject to the medium of film. The answer of course would be a bit of a speculation, but I like the idea that there are topics that derive from the medium itself and that my work is, to a certain extent, driven or altered by them, that it is affected by a constant feedback between language and content. What I mean is, there is no neutral territory from which you can look at things. And, given that, my choice of subjects is probably limited ...

This interview was originally conducted for *North Drive Press #5*, edited by Sadie Laska and Matt Keegan (New York, Spring 2009).

#### Films and texts mentioned in the interview:

Films by Andreas Bunte:

*Loboda*, 2005  
16 mm, b/w, silent, 2:06 min

*His Living Voice*, 2005  
sound piece, radio, CD-player, stand  
150 x 50 x 26 cm

both part of the installation *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*, 2005  
16 mm film, maps, audio piece, wooden walls, etching

*O.T. (Wohnung)*, 2006  
[Untitled (Apartment)]  
16 mm, b/w, silent, 6:40 min

*O.T. (Architekturfilm)*, 2006  
[Untitled (Architecture Film)]  
16 mm, b/w, silent, 6:04 min

both part of the installation *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*, 2006  
[The Last Days of the Present]  
two 16mm films, wall elements, collages

*La Fée Electricité*, 2007  
[The Fairy Electricity]  
16 mm, b/w, silent, 12 min

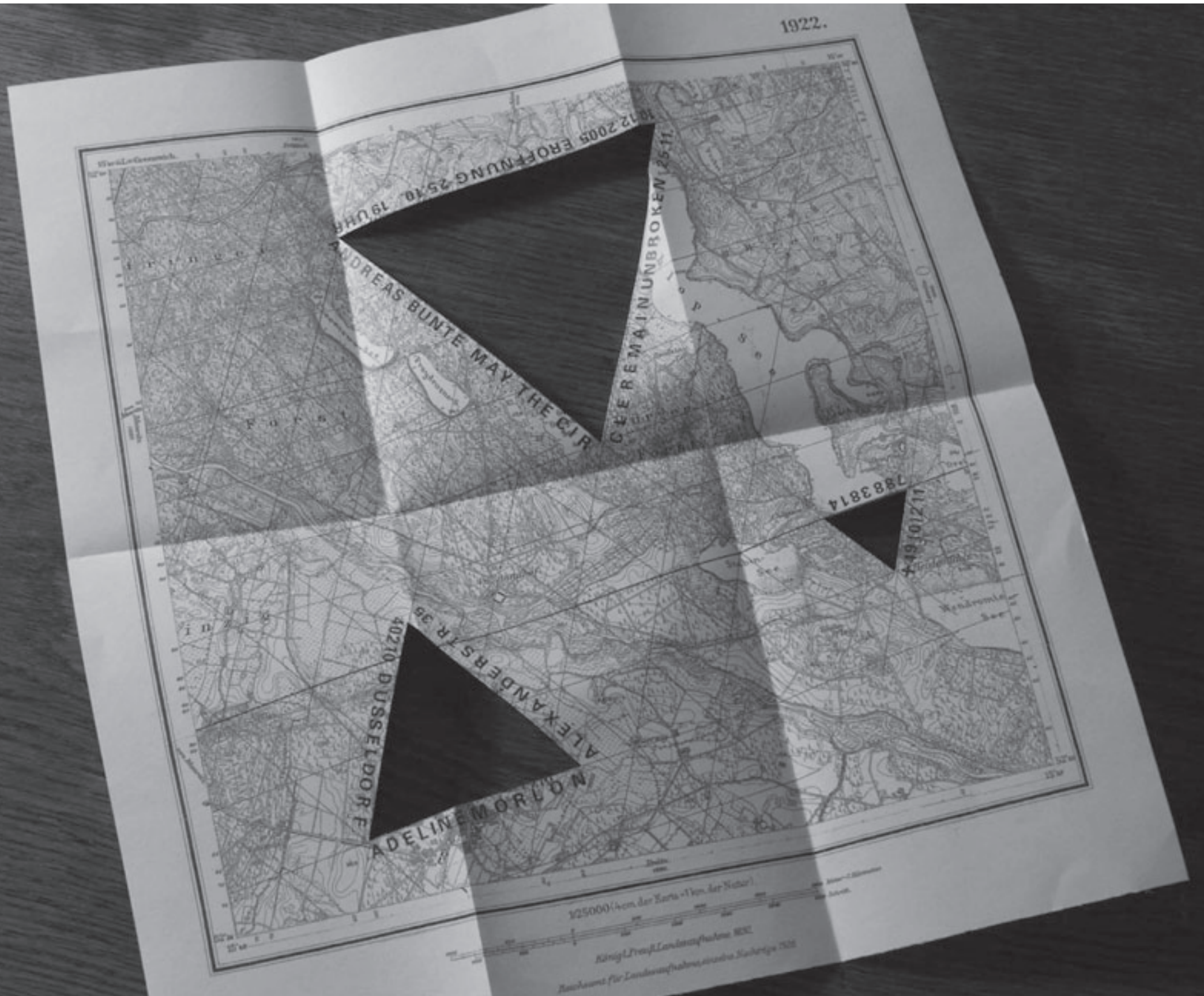
*Der Garten des M. Leretnac*, 2008  
[The Garden of M. Leretnac]  
16 mm, b/w, sound (fragments of Charles Ives' Universe Symphony, 1911–1928), 8:45 min

Texts (in order of appearance):

Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*, Indianapolis, IN 1947.  
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*, Boston, MA 1854.  
Theodore Kaczynski (The Unabomber), “Industrial Society and its Failure”, (also known as *The Unabomber Manifesto*.) *The New York Times*, 19 September, 1995.  
Margrit Schiller, *Es war ein harter Kampf um meine Erinnerung. Ein Lebensbericht aus der RAF*. Hamburg 1999.  
Walter Benjamin, *Passagen-Werk*, (approx. 1926–1939), Frankfurt/Main 1983.  
Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. Amsterdam, 1947.  
Edgar Allen Poe, *The Domain of Arnheim*, 1850. (First published in 1847, in the *Columbian Magazine*, under the title “The Landscape Garden”, and republished later in revised form under the new title).  
Raymond Roussel, *Locus Solus*, Paris 1914.



# May the Circle Remain Unbroken 1



Left: Invitation for *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*, 2005, Adeline Morton, Dusseldorf

Following page: Installation views *May the Circle Remain Unbroken*, 2005, Adeline Morton, Dusseldorf, 16mm film projection, 2 wooden walls, radio, 7 maps, 1 print









Left: *His Living Voice*, 2005, sound piece, radio, CD player, stand, 10 min.

This page and following: stills from *Loboda*, 2005, 16 mm, b/w, silent, 2:06 min.

## His Living Voice

Transcript of fake radio broadcast

You have to start with a knowledge of what constitutes Nature, the nature of Nature.

(...)

Liberal condition will grow the American aristocrat, because the world cannot live without aristocracy. The world cannot live without distinctions, superiorities and inferiorities. They are bound to occur because they are planted there in nature. All nature seems to be a race for the superior, for the excellent, for the finer specimen of the thing whatever it may be. And we cannot escape it in civilization.

(...)

Never have I thought of an educated man as a cultured man, a cultured human being. Well now, Thomas Jefferson regarded him as such. That was our American aristocrat: the man cultured by this ideal of freedom and by the growth of his own conscience to become not a yes man, not a committee meeting mind, but a single man, as Emerson described him. A single man. A man who could stay put on an idea that he had of his own and believe in it and work with it and for it. In other words, the man who could be alone and who could subscribe to an idea.

(...)

So it occurs to me that the best way to describe the uncommon man, in the sense that I am using the term, is the man who can fall in love with an idea, the man who can subscribe to an idea and who realizes the nature of an idea. Now there is your uncommon man as I refer to him

(...)

Nature starts out to make, and what Nature has started to make, and what we call man is still debatable, is still an open question.

(...)

the poets, the philosophers, the artists. That is where it has come done to us. What we have cherished today are the beautiful buildings we have built, the beautiful thoughts that we have ... you wouldn't say "thunk", would you—but thought, and so on. Is it the emanations of the common man that fill our libraries and our art galleries and our studios, universities? No. It is a sort of cream, I imagine, that rises by way, through this element of the common to the level of the uncommon, and becomes the treasured possession of the race. And it's always going to be so, because it's nature, because it's our nature, and we cannot escape it.

(...)

You want the truth, the truth! And there's another saying of the Master Poet: The truth will make you free. Did you ever think of that?

(...)

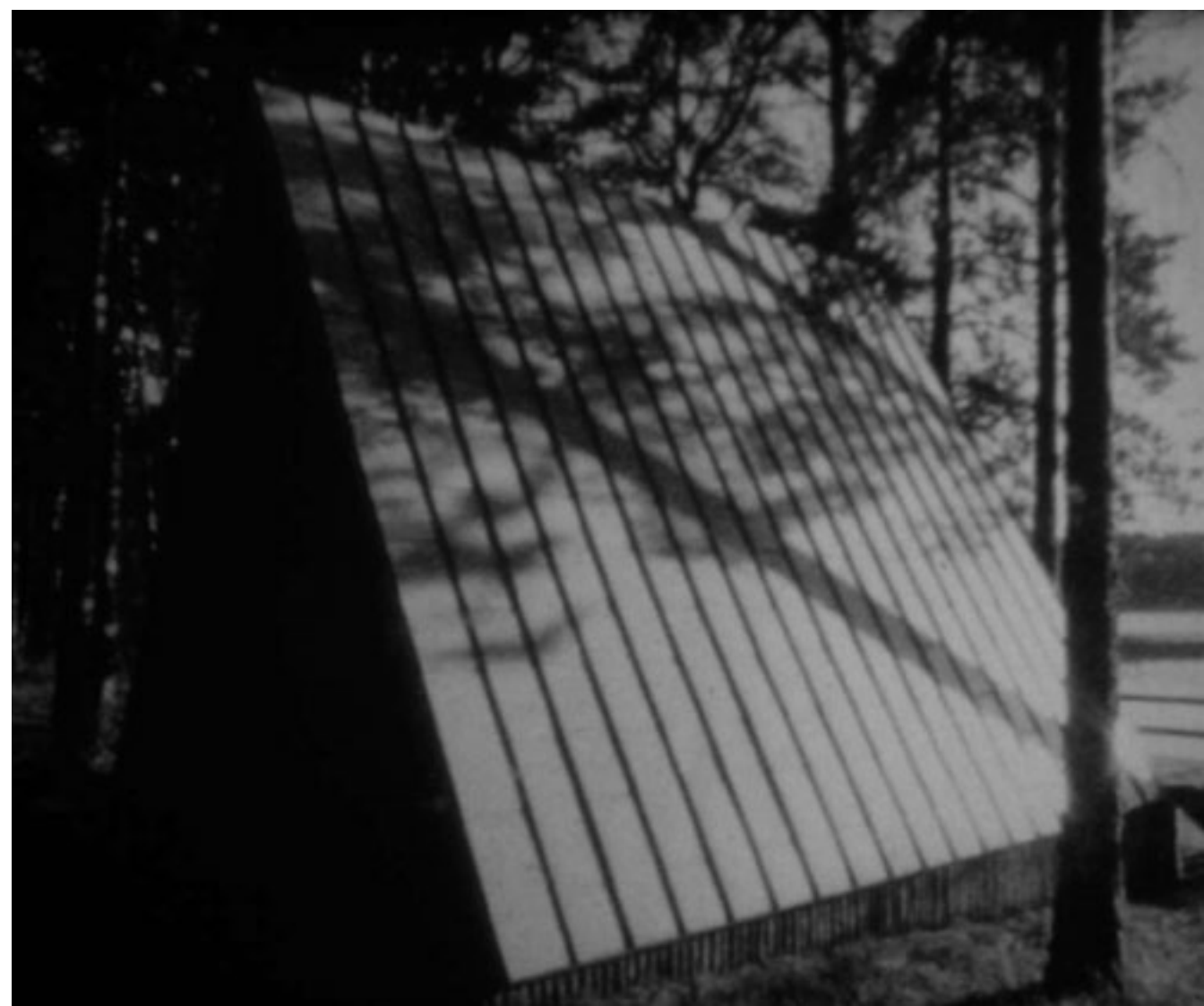
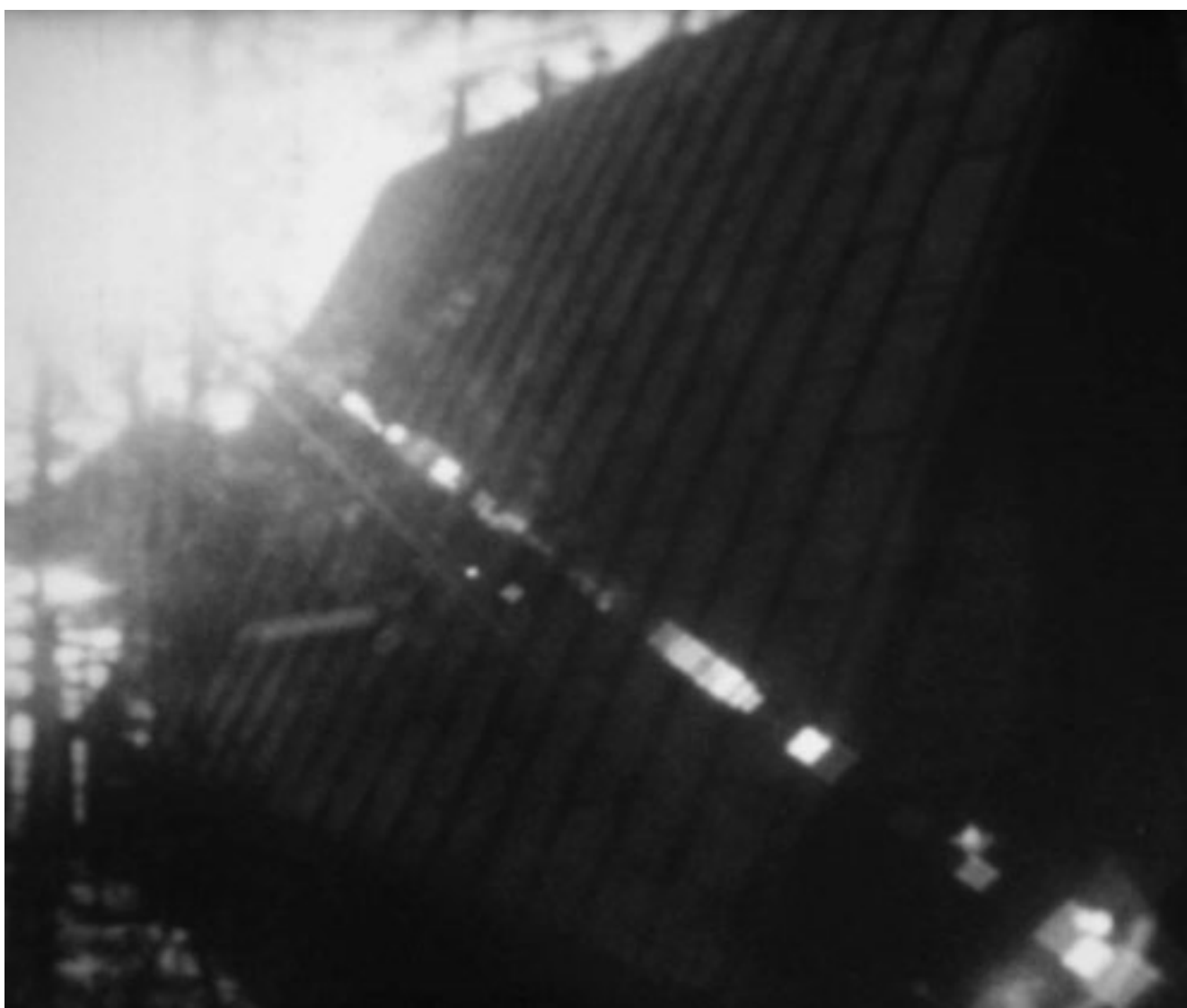
What really matters is never easy to get. It's never on the surface, it's never to be looked at and found. It's only found if you look into the Nature of the thing, look into the character of what makes it what it is. And what is that thing that makes it what it is? That's the essence, the Nature of the thing. Well let's say that it's the nature of the Nature of the thing. Wouldn't that be it?

(...)

A genius is a man who has an eye to see Nature. There's a man who's looking into things: an eye, a kind of an eye, that can see nature.

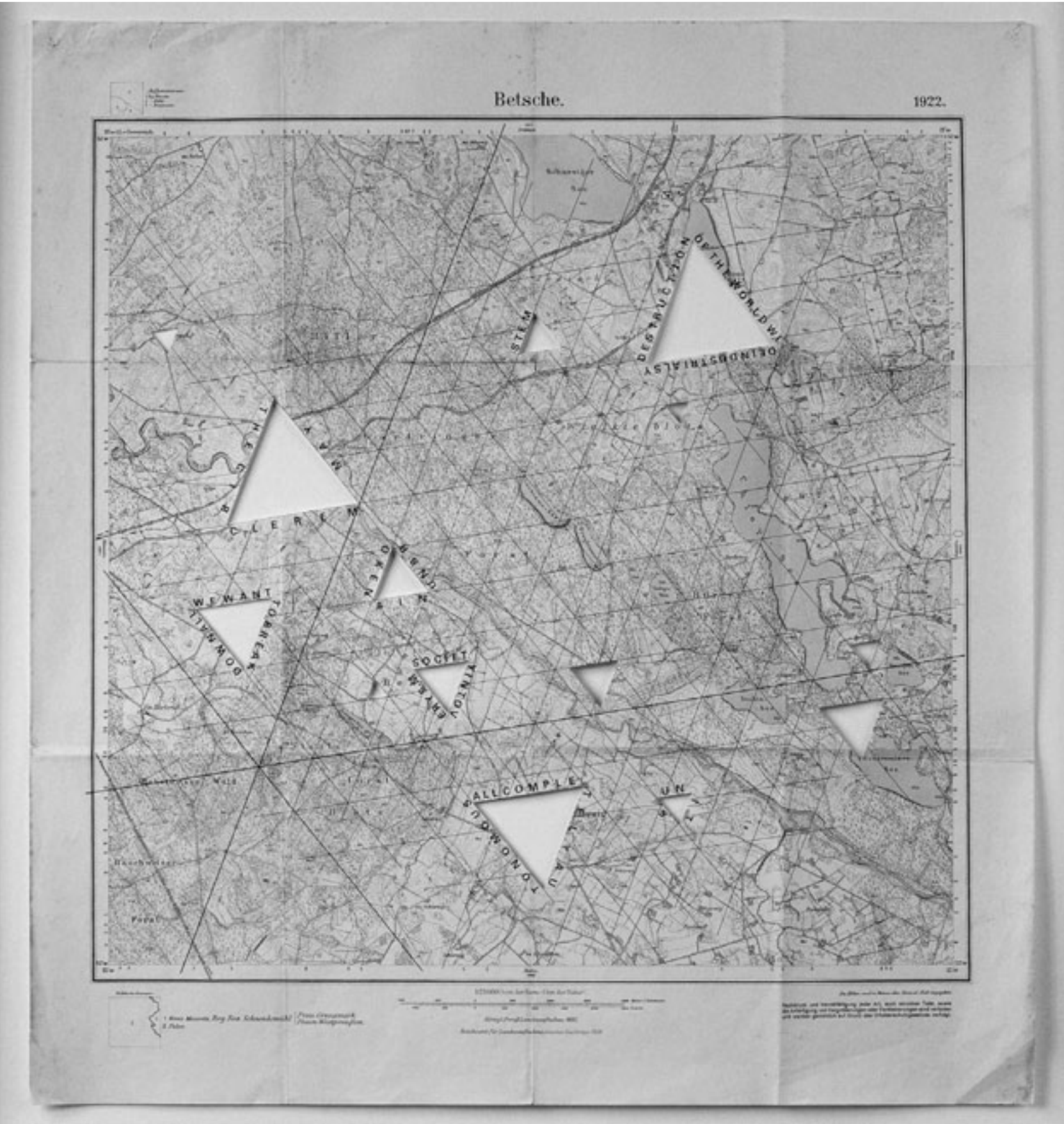
(...)



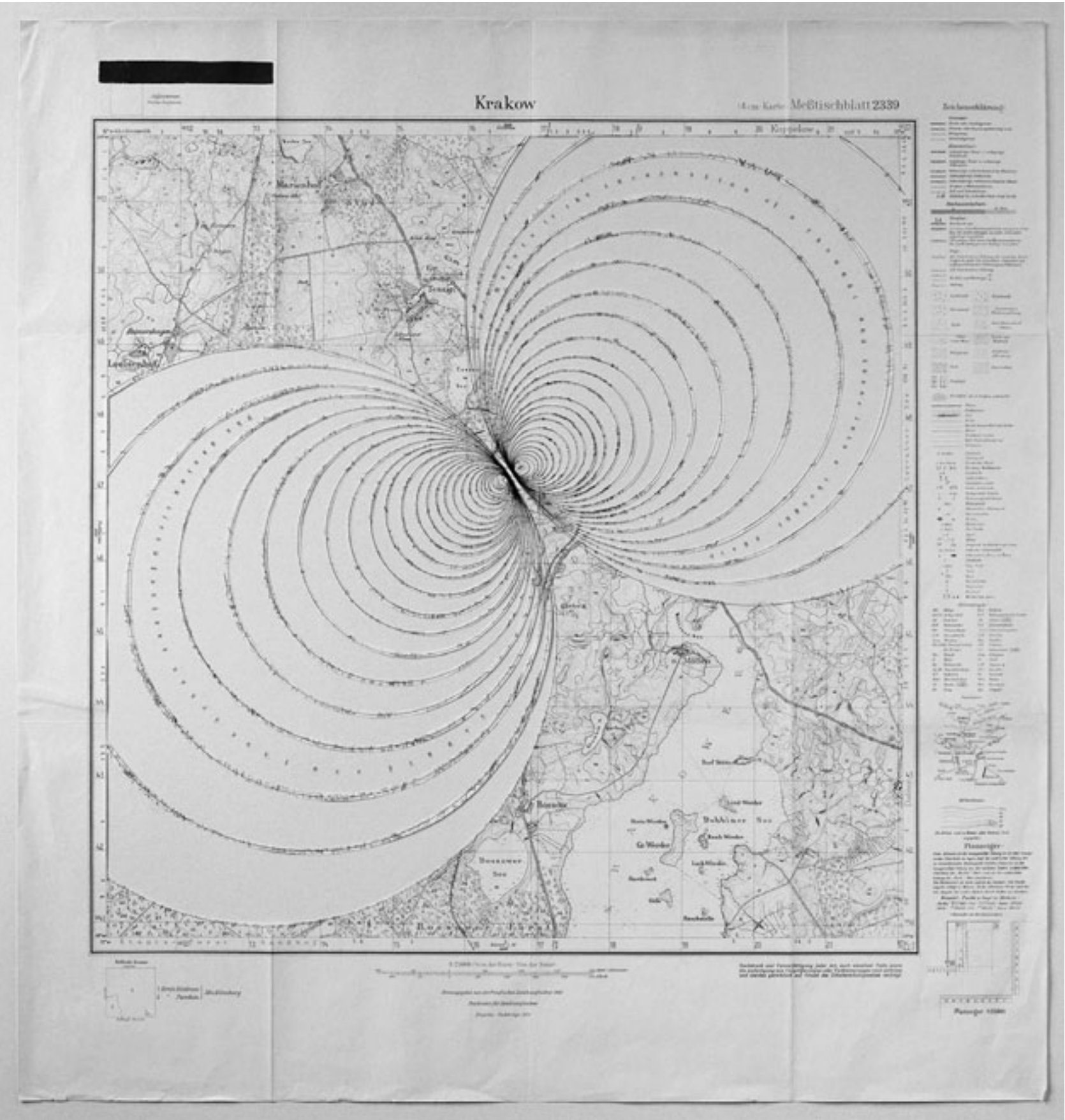




Autonomous Units, 2005, map, ink, letraset type,  
54 x 57,8 cm

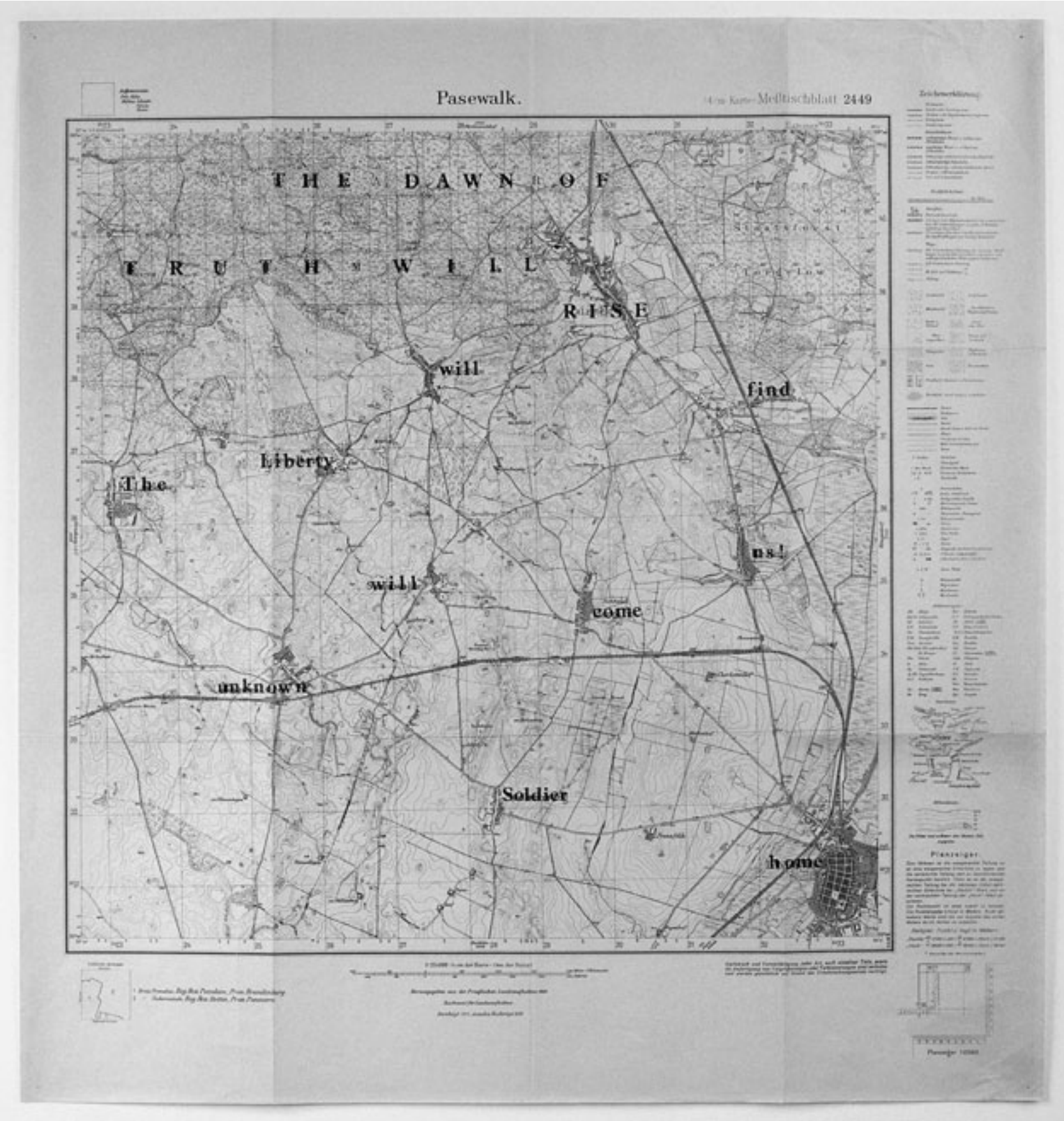


Devine Circulations, 2005, map, ink, newspaper,  
57,2 x 59,7 cm

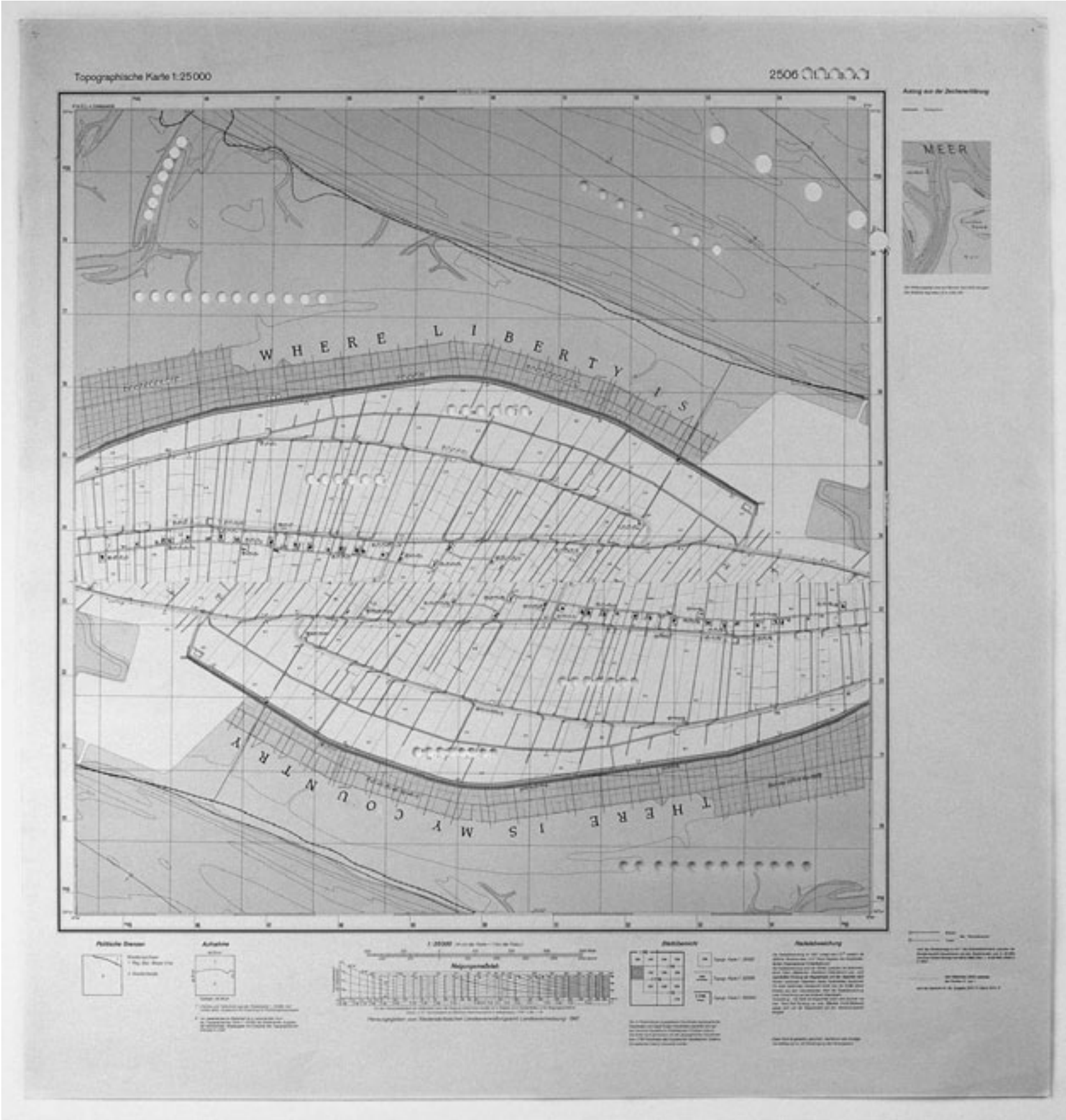




The Dawn of Truth, 2005, map, letraset type, 56,5 x 59,7 cm

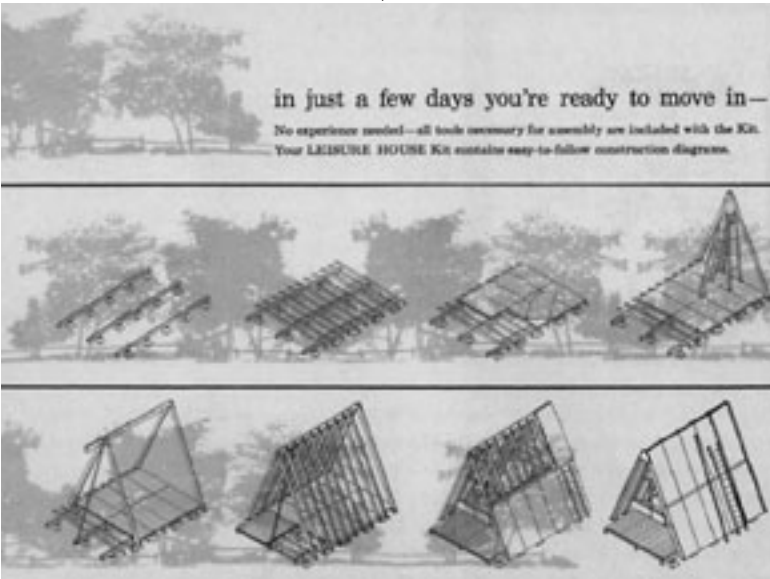
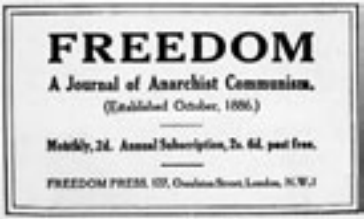
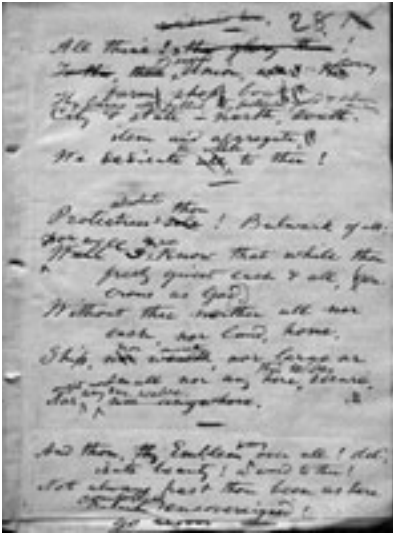


Liberty, 2005, map, letraset type, 57,2 x 59,7 cm





1 *All thine*, Manuscript of Walt Whitman, 1871. 2 Frank Lloyd Wright. 3 Interior of the Unabomber's Cabin, 1996. 4 Franchise brochure for a-frame house kit, 1953. 5 Aerial photograph of Walden Pond, around 1940. 6 H. W. Gleason at Thoreau's cairn, Walden Pond, May 19, 1908. 7 Daguerreotype of Henry David Thoreau, 1856. 8 Topographic engineer, 1923. 9 Page from *The Illustrated Walden, with photographs from the Gleason Collection*, 1973. 10 Last Album of the *13th Floor Elevators*, released in 1968. 11 Site of the Unabomber cabin, 1998, by Richard Barnes. 12 British anarchist magazine. 13 Florence Supermax Prison in Florence, Colorado. 14 Cartographer of the US Army at work, 1943. 15 The Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, 1996. 16 *Die Urhütte*, Ch. Eisen, 1755. 17 Frank Lloyd Wright surrounded by members of the Taliesin fellowship. 18 Unabomber cabin stored as evidence in a warehouse in California, 1998 by Richard Barnes. 19 Map of Walden Pond drawn by H. D. Thoreau.





# Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart

# 2





Talking about the future is no alibi for the unresolved present.  
For this present is not yet over.<sup>1</sup>

## Resistance to the Vocabulary of Established Reality

Yilmaz Dziewior



Still from *O.T. (Wohnung)*, 2006, 16mm, b/w, silent, 6:40 min.

Yesterday is yesterday, and every day is the last day of the present. Every day, every hour, every minute, once elapsed, becomes the past. Really? If it were that simple there would be no present, and this nebulous period of time between the past and the future would not exist. According to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle the ineffectiveness of every hundred-percent exact definition (including that of the present) is directly connected to the measuring apparatus applied, and to the problem that when observing a whole consisting of many parts a dispersion or standard deviation must arise which is described as uncertainty. Such uncertainties crop up as much in taking the measure of the present and it numerous simultaneous events as in looking into the past. Only in retrospect can specific characteristics be (re)constructed through a reduction of complexity. This is the way history is predominantly written. Important here is the point in time and the position from which the analysis is made, and which method or, technically speaking, which “equipment” is used. And the results are as exactly determined by the object under investigation as the intention with which the analysis is carried out.

Applied to Andreas Bunte’s installation *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* (The Last Days of the Present) (2006), which consists of two films, several wall fragments and eight collages, it at first seems advisable to take a look at its apparent subject matter. The press release says: “The background to the presentation is an interest in the German terrorism of the 1970s, particularly with its minor figures, such as Margrit Schiller, who was less motivated by radical political convictions than by the search for meaning and group solidarity. For her, however, underground reality largely consisted of boredom, isolation and fear, resistance in prison and very few haphazard operations.”<sup>2</sup> So the theme of the installation is a chapter of German history that the artist himself can only have experienced as a child. His knowledge about it is of necessity second-hand. Yet it is understandable that someone like Andreas Bunte, who was born in Germany in 1970, would have a closer relationship to these events than someone socialised at a different time in a different country. His starting point, then, is both involved and distanced.

*Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* originated in 2006, which is at once too early and too late. Bunte’s work narrowly missed *Regarding Terror: The RAF-Exhibition* and the furor it created at Berlin’s Kunst-Werke in early 2005, but had been around too long to become part of the 30<sup>th</sup>-anniversary commemoration of the “German Autumn” of 1977. In an interview that also appears in the present publication Bunte describes how his curiosity about the RAF was not awakened by the exhibition but, as so often with his work, by a book. The story of the terrorist Margrit Schiller was interesting to him in its mundaneness, which was entirely at odds with the radical denial of normality demanded by the RAF.

This contrast between the sameness of a bourgeois existence and the continual state of emergency of terrorism is dealt with in various ways in *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*. In one of the two films—*O.T. (Wohnung)* [Untitled (Apartment)]—the camera calmly observes the rooms of a tower-block flat that have been carefully arranged by the artist. Their fugitive state and an increasing number of clues indicate their conspiratorial use. A typewriter, scissors, glue and other utensils hint at the production of anonymous threatening letters or flyers. A casually placed wig in the bathroom and a briefcase containing several passports complete the impression of a hideout. The way in which these items are registered, the objective distance to what is shown, raises the question of who is actually doing the filming. Is it a policeman behind the camera, collecting evidence? Has Andreas Bunte found this material? Its status, like that of the collages, remains ambiguous.

Despite the sober gaze and the avoidance of direct dramatic effects, the obvious absence of the flat’s inhabitants creates a tense, threatening atmosphere. It seems as if they could turn up at any moment, interfere with this observation and endanger the unwanted visitor—for this is how one feels when watching the film. But these departed occupants can be interpreted metaphorically as the absence not only of danger and resistance but also of political consciousness, giving the work’s title a complexity beyond its historical dimension.

The shots are prefaced—or, in the film’s looped presentation, interrupted and at the same time strengthened in their atmosphere of latent violence—by superimposed fragments of texts. Similar to those in the collages, they are a mix of quotations from Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, Giorgio Agamben, etc. that the artist sometimes borrows exactly, but often simply uses as a starting point for statements rewritten in the same linguistic mode to suit his context. Because neither the film nor the collages attribute the quotations exactly, all the texts appear to be equally authentic and seem peculiarly antiquated in speech. In the collages the relationship between text and image is more immediately interpretive, as both are experienced simultaneously, not successively as in the film. In these works Andreas Bunte adds text and drawing in a commentary manner to pages from interior-design and other magazines from the 1960s and 70s: a then modern, now perhaps suburban-looking living room is augmented by a quotation from Guy Debord—“Indifference has made this world, but cannot live in it (sic!)”—and becomes a statement about an entire generation. The collage technique not only refers to an early-twentieth-century artistic current with often directly political aims, but is also used here much as one might imagine it being applied in a terrorist context. One example is the pressure-drawn outline of a building, only recognisable at a second glance.

The reciprocity of the installation’s individual elements is variously formulated; interior shots from *O.T. (Wohnung)* can be understood as a commentary on the exteriors in *O.T. (Architekturfilm)* [Untitled (Architectural Film)], while the collages have a direct relationship to both films. In relation to the conspiratorial apartment the collages raise questions of authorship, as they deliberately alternate between flyer, anonymous letter or claim of responsibility, and thus may also be interpreted as a comment on the disappearance of the author—here in a dual sense, as not only do the putative terrorists conceal their identity, the artist himself also withdraws behind his own narration. The depersonalisation of the material here is a contrast to the origin of the work, which according to the press release proceeded from a concrete (marginal) person. It is not only the author who dies here in Roland Barthes’s sense; the unequivocal subject also loses significance, which takes the questions raised by the work onto a level that goes far beyond 1970s Germany.

In *O.T. (Wohnung)* the buildings are frequently shot from low angles and awaken quite differing impressions. The heroically filmed memorial to Ernst Thälmann, for example—a former chairman of the Communist Party of Germany—strengthens and situates the radical messages of the text fragments. The same can be said for the fascist architecture of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, whose political iconography Andreas Bunte frankly draws attention to, although without placing it exactly. Other buildings, by contrast, give the impression of being potential targets, or can be seen as places frequented by the terrorists who live in the flat. Andreas Bunte’s previous work *May the Circle Remain Unbroken* (2005) also dealt in a certain way with exceptional figures (the hermit H. D. Thoreau, the Unabomber and Frank Lloyd Wright), but the argument of *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* occurs much more against the background of his own history, or that of momentous historical events in his home country. Although in both installations the individual is set in relation to a self-isolating group defined by strict hierarchies, and even if the reference to the hermetic circle around the architect Frank Lloyd Wright can perhaps be associated with Bunte’s personal situation as a student of Gerhard Merz, with his intense interest in architectural history and strict call for allegiance, in *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* the simultaneous stance of identification and distance is adopted by someone who is himself affected by the matter. A strange feedback mechanism comes into play that primarily results from the recent past of the events. The apparent emotion of the arresting text passages in film and collage is undermined by emphatically objective and historicising elements. Despite the concern the artist can be assumed to have for this history there is a manifest detachment in both image and presentation. The agit-prop gesture of the collages and the textual inserts in *O.T. (Wohnung)*, for example, are held in an atmosphere of reverie, which is brought about by the temporal distance evoked through language and technique (collage/16mm film). Yet the mood of the installation is held in suspense; it elicits both an emotional and a rational response.

All elements of the work are pervaded by the political, social and psychological significance of architecture. In *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* buildings and spaces are both theme and method. Theme in the form of interior and exterior shots of buildings, and method in the installation’s precisely placed wall elements, which not only define a suggestive space for the collages and films, but are themselves an important part of the formal and thematic setting. The physical experience of

the installation is primarily determined by these provisional-seeming fitments, which despite creating open sightlines, direct the reception of the films and collages. Their handmade, fragile exterior, as if still under construction, underlines the effect of the collages, which also do not conceal their production process. The use of 16mm film is notable in this context, too, as it not only creates the already mentioned sense of temporal distance, but also seems less immediate or truthful than digital images, for example. Similarly to collages, which in their very nature are a more constructed depiction of reality than photographs, digital film has a greater potential for directness and thus—despite the discussion on the manipulation of images—a greater authenticity than celluloid, which has per se a historical filter. The fact that Andreas Bunte operates very precisely on this self-reflective, media-theoretical level is shown among other things by the film magazines in the apartment—they are peripherally placed, but noticeable to the careful observer. They refer on the one hand to the politicisation that took place at this time among filmmakers such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge and Volker Schlöndorff, who in 1977 along with eight other colleagues produced their film collage *Deutschland im Herbst* [Germany in Autumn], which investigated the relationship of the Federal Republic to the RAF terrorists. But like a resonator the magazines also double the medium of 16mm film by evoking a time in which digital television was as yet unimaginable.

The discussion on the status of artistic production and means of production is complicated by Andreas Bunte’s deliberate blurring of the relationship between fiction and reality. In the gallery situation, documentary content and mode of exhibition are antithetical to their implied gesture of illusion, and it is precisely such breaks and inconsistencies which widen the discussion about this period of German history and take it onto an abstract level. Or—as Bunte put it in the heading to this text, taken from one of his collages<sup>3</sup>—the vocabulary of reality is confronted with a stance of resistance. And this can also be articulated in artistic production.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Atteslander, *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart oder das Alibi-Syndrom*, Scherz Verlag, Berne-Munich-Vienna 1971. The sentences quoted here form part of the cover of this book by the German-resident Swiss sociologist of economics whose cooperation with the tobacco industry created an inglorious press furor some years ago (cf. Dietmar Jazbinsek “Forschen schadet Ihrer Gesundheit” in *Weltwoche*, ed. 47, 2005). In its committed and apparently informative tone the book resembles the phrases in the collages and films of Andreas Bunte.

<sup>2</sup> Press release for the first presentation of *Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart* in the Galerie Ben Kaufmann, Berlin 11.11.–23.12.2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Widerstand gegen das Vokabular der etablierten Wirklichkeit*, see p. 44.



Installation views  
*Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*, 2006,  
two 16mm films, plasterboard walls, collages,  
Kunstverein Hamburg, 2008





DIE BÜRGERLICHE GESELLSCHAFT HAT DIE  
WOHNUNG ZUM FUTTERAL DES MENSCHEN  
GEMACHT, IN DAS MAN IHN EINBETTEN  
KANN, MIT ALL SEINEM ZUBEHÖR. DIESE  
RÄUME BETREUEN DEN GEIST WIE DER  
GRANIT DIE TOTE FAUNA.

Still from *O.T. (Wohnung)*, 2006,  
16 mm, b/w, silent, 6:40 min.  
part of the installation  
*Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*, 2006,  
two 16 mm films, wall elements, collages

#### Translations of text charts

**This page:**  
The bourgeois society has turned the apartment into an etui for man, in which he can be embedded with all his accessories. These spaces attend the mind as the granite attends the dead fauna.

**Page 34–35:**  
Thinking, however, is not only an unfortunate incident, which relates us to the relentless world of matter.

**Page 36–37:**  
Radical negation of the established causes the end of passivity. For everything is connected, everything has to be changed.



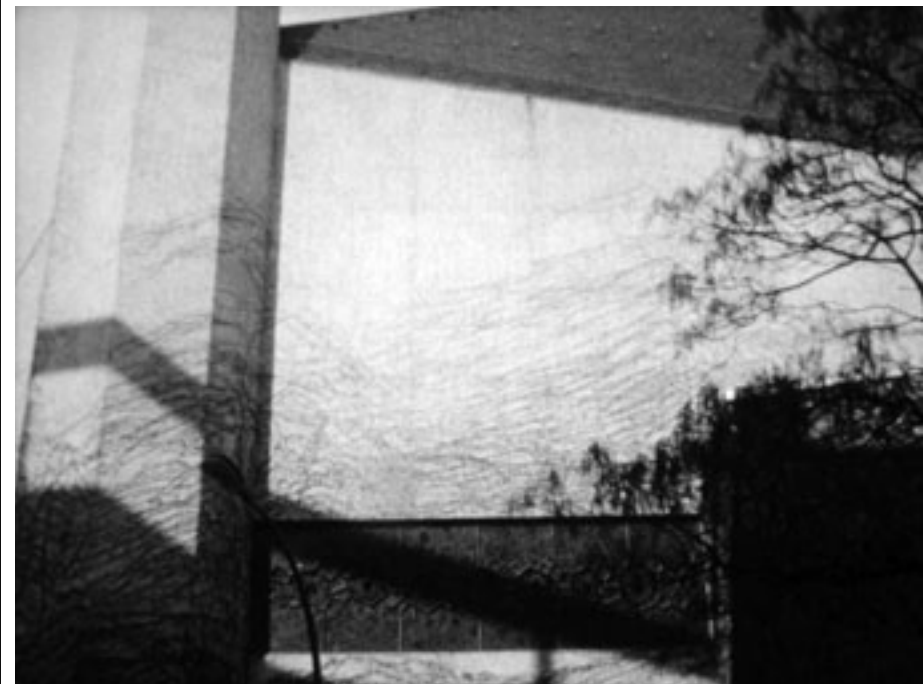
Stills on this page and following:  
*O.T. (Wohnung)*, 2006,  
16 mm, b/w, silent, 6:40 min. (left)  
and *O.T. (Architekturfilm)*, 2006,  
16 mm, b/w, silent, 6:04 min. (right)  
both part of the installation  
*Die letzten Tage der Gegenwart*, 2006,  
two 16 mm films, wall elements, collage

DOCH DAS DENKEN IST NICHT BLOSS EIN  
UNGLÜCKLICHER ZWISCHENFALL, DER UNS  
MIT DER UNERBITTLICHEN WELT DER MATERIE  
IN BEZIEHUNG SETZT.





DIE RADIKALE NEGATION DES BESTEHENDEN  
BEGRÜNDET DAS ENDE DER PASSIVITÄT.  
DA ALLES ZUSAMMENHÄNGT, MUSS ALLES  
VERÄNDERT WERDEN.



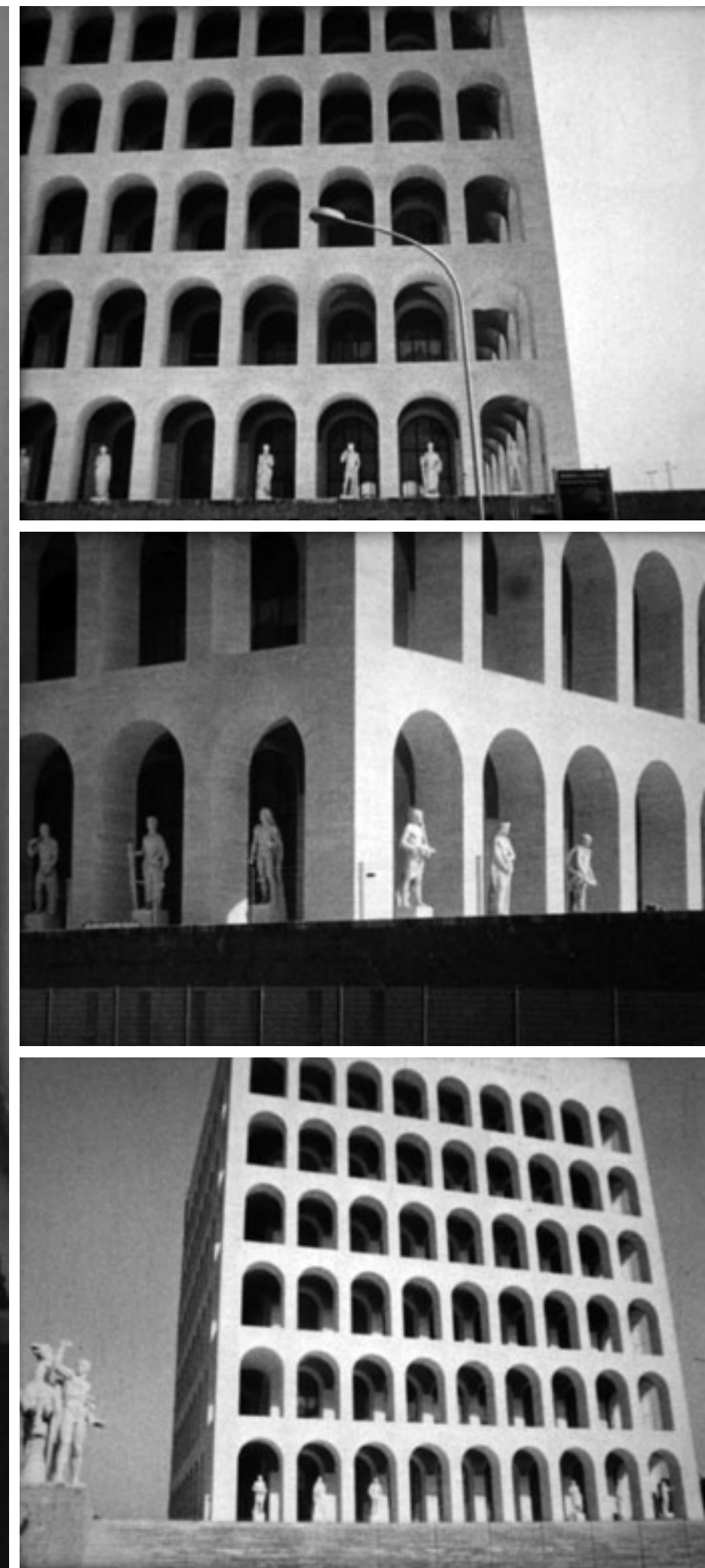




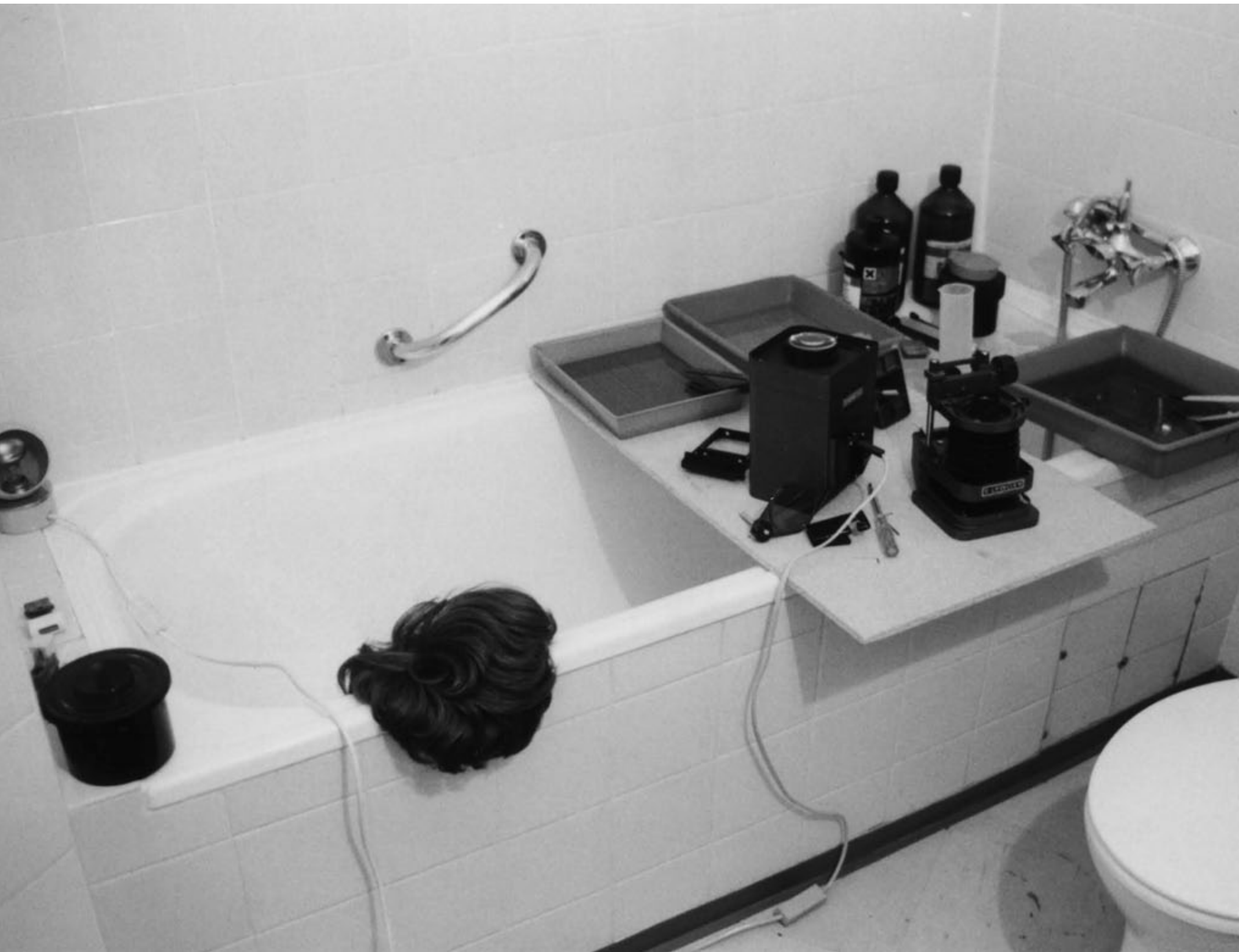




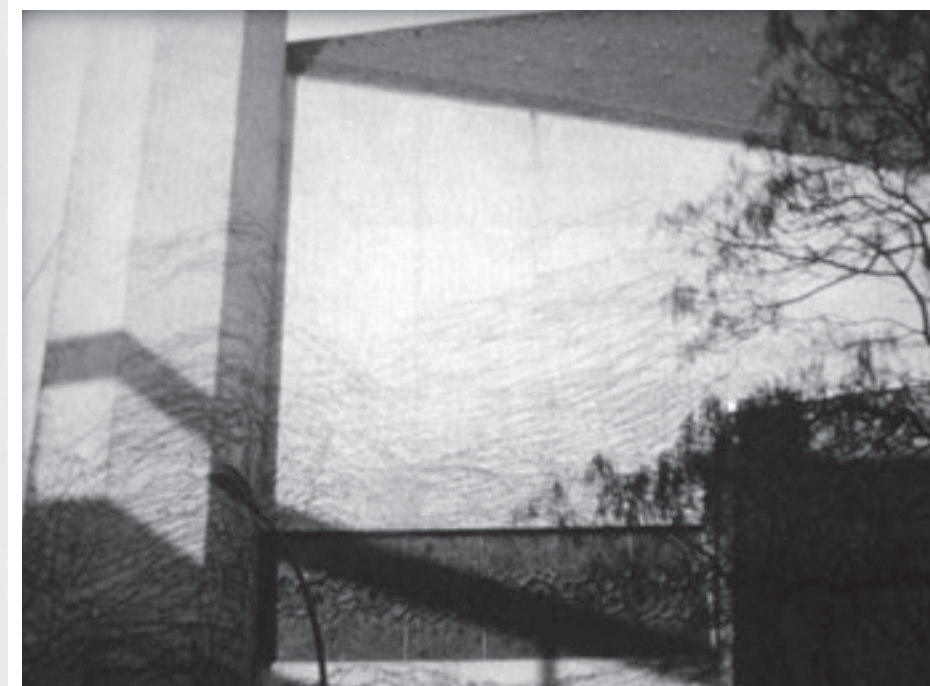










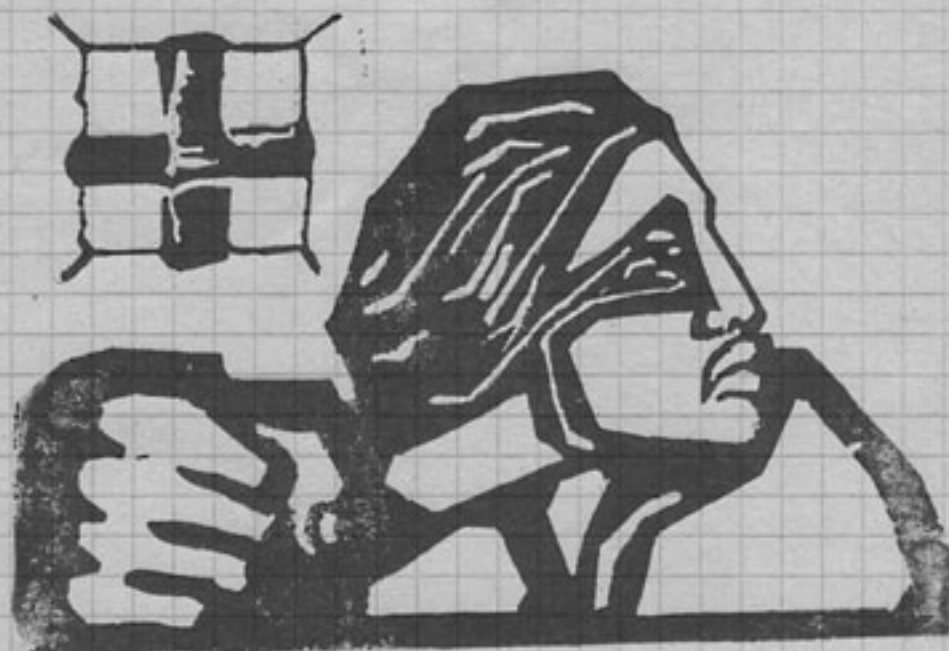




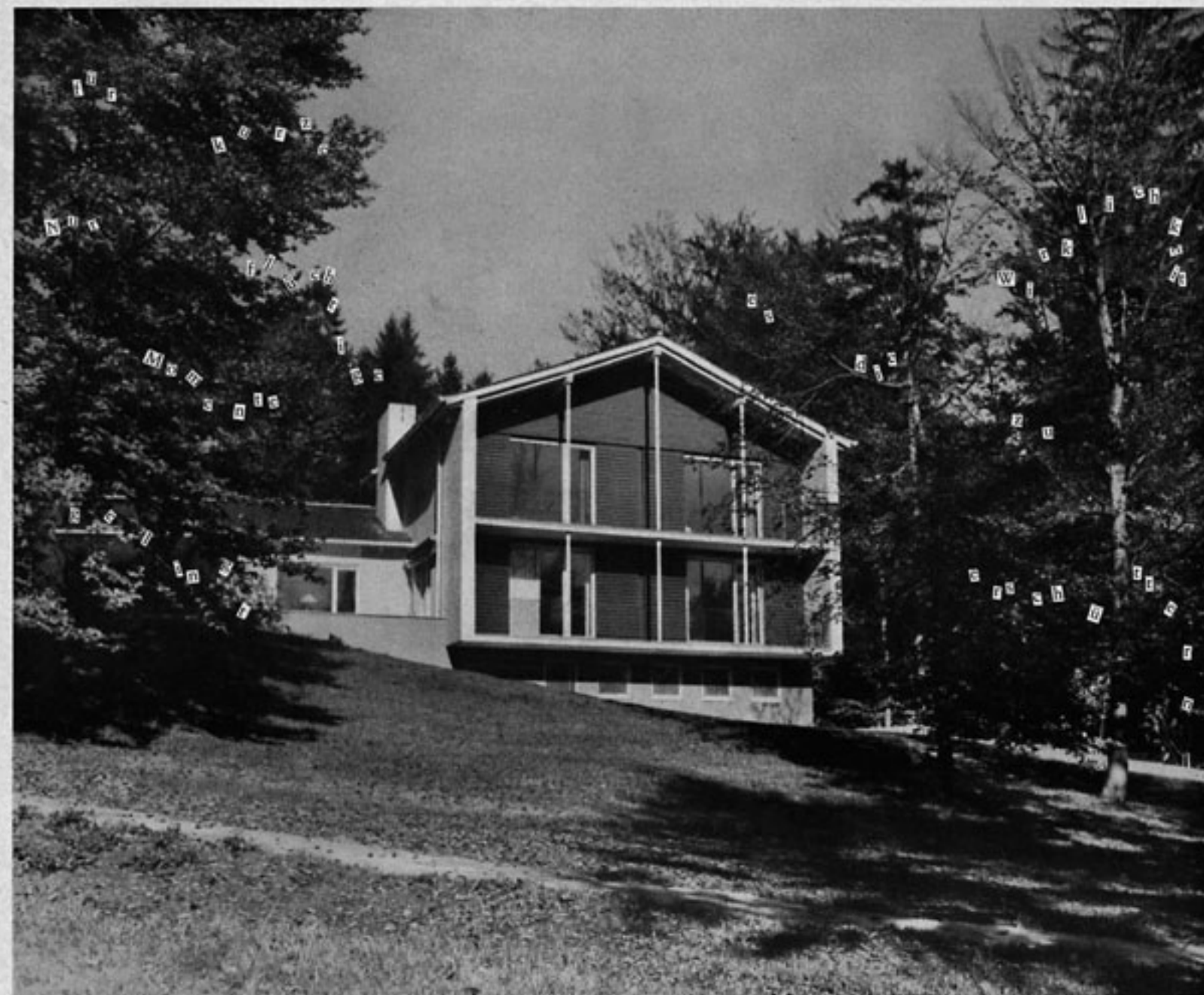
so war die zukunft nicht gemeint  
breitschultrig ' und  
mit silbernen lützen, zentralisiert

neue geodäten schwärmen aus  
ohne legalität  
sie haben die grenze überschritten  
untergraben die lichterstadt

- besetzen die zentren  
- verlassen das neo zertrümmern - den imperia-  
listischen  
zusammenhang ' der das entscheidende  
ins private verdrängen will!



keine Wahrheit ohne Negativität  
widerstand gegen das Vokabular der  
etablierten Wirklichkeit



2

1 Vestibule with curved staircase leading to upper storey  
2 South elevation of the house  
3 Street front of side-wing with garage approach

Wenn der Architekt vor der besonders reizvollen Aufgabe steht, ein Haus am Hang zu planen, bieten sich grundsätzlich zwei verschiedene Möglichkeiten der Gestaltung an. Entweder läßt man die Hangneigung auch im Inneren des Hauses spürbar werden – durch verschiedene Differenztreppen, versetzte Geschosse und unterschiedliche Raumhöhen. Das kann sehr belebend sein im Ablauf der Raumfolge und schafft dann auch vor dem Haus Gartensitzplätze in versetzten Ebenen mit Mauern und Außenstufen. Gartenarchitekten freuen sich

1 Die Diele mit geschwungener Treppe zum Obergeschoß  
2 Südansicht des Hauses. Die eingespannten Balkone krängen über das Kellergeschoß vor. Dadurch wurden schöne Böschungen oder kostspielige Stützmauern vermieden. Die Holzverschalung der zurückliegenden Giebelwand ist dunkelgrau gestrichen. Die großen Fenstertüren können durch Schiebeläden gesichert werden  
3 Straßenfront des Seitenflügels mit Garageneinfahrt





Qu'est-ce une chambre à coucher? Pour beaucoup encore ce mot signifie une pièce dans laquelle on dort. Cette interprétation est plus d'origine psychique que du rationnel. Et ce sont justement ceux que les loyers et frais de construction élevés obligent à vivre dans de petites demeures qui possèdent le moins de possibilités d'englober la chambre dans leur demeure. Cette contradiction est atténuée par beaucoup de marchands de meubles et marchés qui offrent et vendent des «chambres à coucher» et des «salons» sans bas mais qui, en réalité, ne le sont pas, ces meubles n'étant pas mobiles et leurs matériaux incompatibles avec d'autres. (Pensez-on que la chambre à coucher prend 1/3 du loyer?)

On a toujours peur, avec certaines modifications dues à la mode, ce que les grands-parents acquièrent à leur mariage : un ou deux grands oreillers, flanqué de deux tables de chevet à plateau en verre. Chemin étroit de tapis, douillet de lit litigeux, les déplacements sans lits, les portes. On ne chauffe pas, on aère. Une atmosphère qui n'est ni rien à y aller.

D'autre part : la chambre d'enfant est bien trop étroite pour pouvoir vraiment y jouer. Les leviers se trouvent dans la salle de séjour ; à la cuisine aucun place pour le tapis, on passe donc dans la salle de séjour. On n'a pas envie de se servir de la machine à coudre puisqu'il faut la ranger presque immédiatement après un peu de couture. Des amis qui passeraient la nuit non Dieu ! où les coucher ?

Il serait tout aussi bien agréable d'avoir un coin pour s'occuper de l'entretien et laisser l'ouvrage commencer une fois tranquille pour y faire la sieste sans se voir obligé de consigner la salle de séjour, un endroit pour faire sa correspondance et lire sans être gêné par la radio ou la télévision.

On obtiendra qu'à la réalisation de tels plans, il ne reste plus qu'à acheter une dizaine de meubles d'appoint pour compléter l'ensemble. On pourrait aussi envisager une pièce pour le repos et, idéalement, pour le travail.

avec peut-être un fauteuil confortable qui, pour le moins, servirait aux parents comme coin de refuge.

Il y a de nombreuses possibilités qui rendent plus habitable sans grands frais, une chambre à coucher. Elles permettent d'en mieux profiter. Nous parvenons à quelques idées.

Beaucoup de chambres ont des couleurs pastels froides, les tissus sont lisses et souvent brillants. Ça ne demande qu'un bon chaud, fort, donné par exemple par une couverture Toulpale, pour se réchauffer par le lit. De plus, mieux qu'un lit descente de lit, un petit tapis. L'idéal, tapis partout. Que son nettoyage n'en empêche pas l'achat, les deux lits se glissent facilement si leur piètement est muni de roues à tête ronde. Les matelas en latex ou caoutchouc-mousse ne nécessitent ni d'être retournés ni aérés. Le plus pratique des lits-croquets qui reposent sans souci sur la planche pour des nids de poussière, et dans les coffres on peut y mettre le lit de bébé.

Faire le lit est agréable si l'édredon et oreillers sur le lit pendant la journée ne sont pas à l'eau à voir et empêchent de s'allonger pour se repos. En principe dans beaucoup d'armoires il y a encore de la place pour y glisser les coussins pour les vêtements, même si on peut aussi monter un tiroir sous le lit pour y ranger draps et couvertures. Si la place manque dans les armoires, cela vient probablement d'une fausse d'organisation remédiable car il est simple d'ajouter des nouveaux compartiments. Il est possible aussi que les cases existantes ne s'y prêtent pas. Reste donc à trouver une place pour une nouvelle armoire.

Les données se rapportent aux petites pièces dans lesquelles le mobilier les remplit et dont les modifications ne sont guère réalisables. Les grandes pièces offrent plus de possibilités si on se donne la peine de les organiser. Le schéma ci-dessous a été élaboré en fonction des données qu'on doit prendre en compte.

Il est donc de 2 x 2 m. Les personnes normales ont besoin de 10 à 11 m<sup>2</sup> de largeur. (Ce qui n'exige ni d'autres dimensions, ni autres couvertures

Les centimètres gagnés permettent peut-être un coin de travail ou un fauteuil. Il faut décider soi-même de la place des lits. Au lieu du bloc encombrant d'habitude, les lits sont mis dans un angle, l'un près de l'autre ou l'un après l'autre, feront probablement partie d'un ensemble beaucoup plus grande.

Une commode pour homme prend le plaisir de cacher de se laver et l'aise. On la remplace par des armoires. Leur surface sera neutre et harmonisée avec ce qui est possible aux murs. Bon et utile, y compris pour les objets et pièces isolés facilement transformables.

Les tables de nuit sont en général superflues. Si le tiroir que l'on peut faire à la clef est vraiment indispensable, la table de nuit se placera sous une étagère voisinant le lit.

Beaucoup de salles de séjour sont si étroites qu'il est impossible d'y installer une place de travail. On se rabat sur un bureau ou un bureau sera très utile et désirable parce qu'elle procure plus de calme et d'isolement pour les travaux demandant de la concentration.

Le plan de travail peut être une table normale.

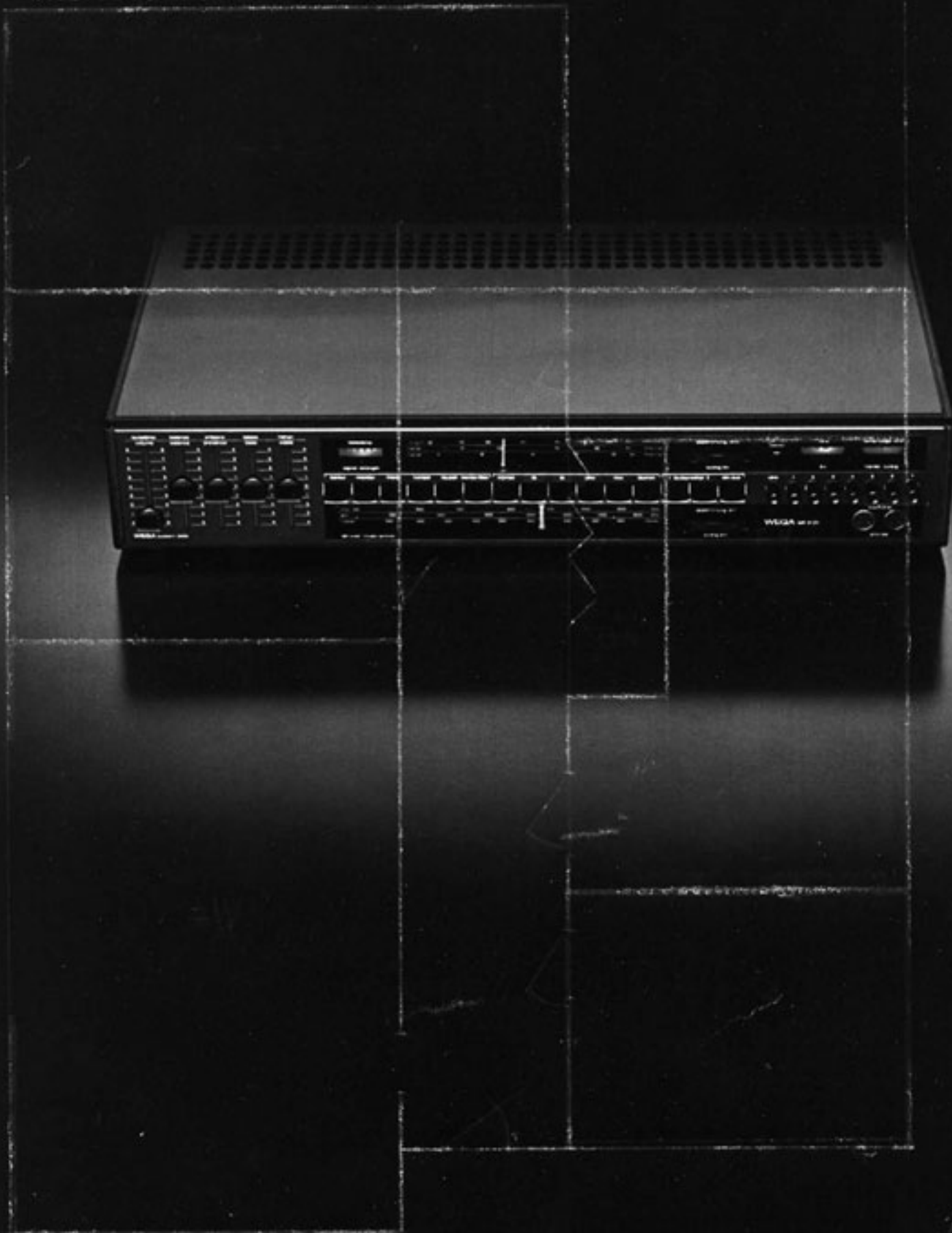
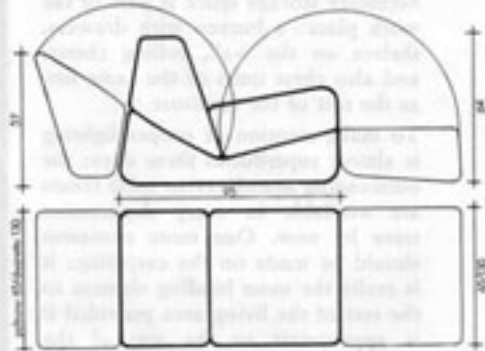
Un fauteuil est une table avec une corbeille à l'arrière et une fonction est une fenêtre (ou une porte) et un radiateur d'aération de la lumière de la lumière peu de place le peu de place. En plus d'un fauteuil.

Téger allant à la table, il faut un secrétaire, un mur, coffre roulant, caissons du même programme que les autres meubles.

Rappeler l'éclairage qui convient est presque impossible. On peut dire que les escaliers sont très appropriés se vendent dans les magasins de décoration.

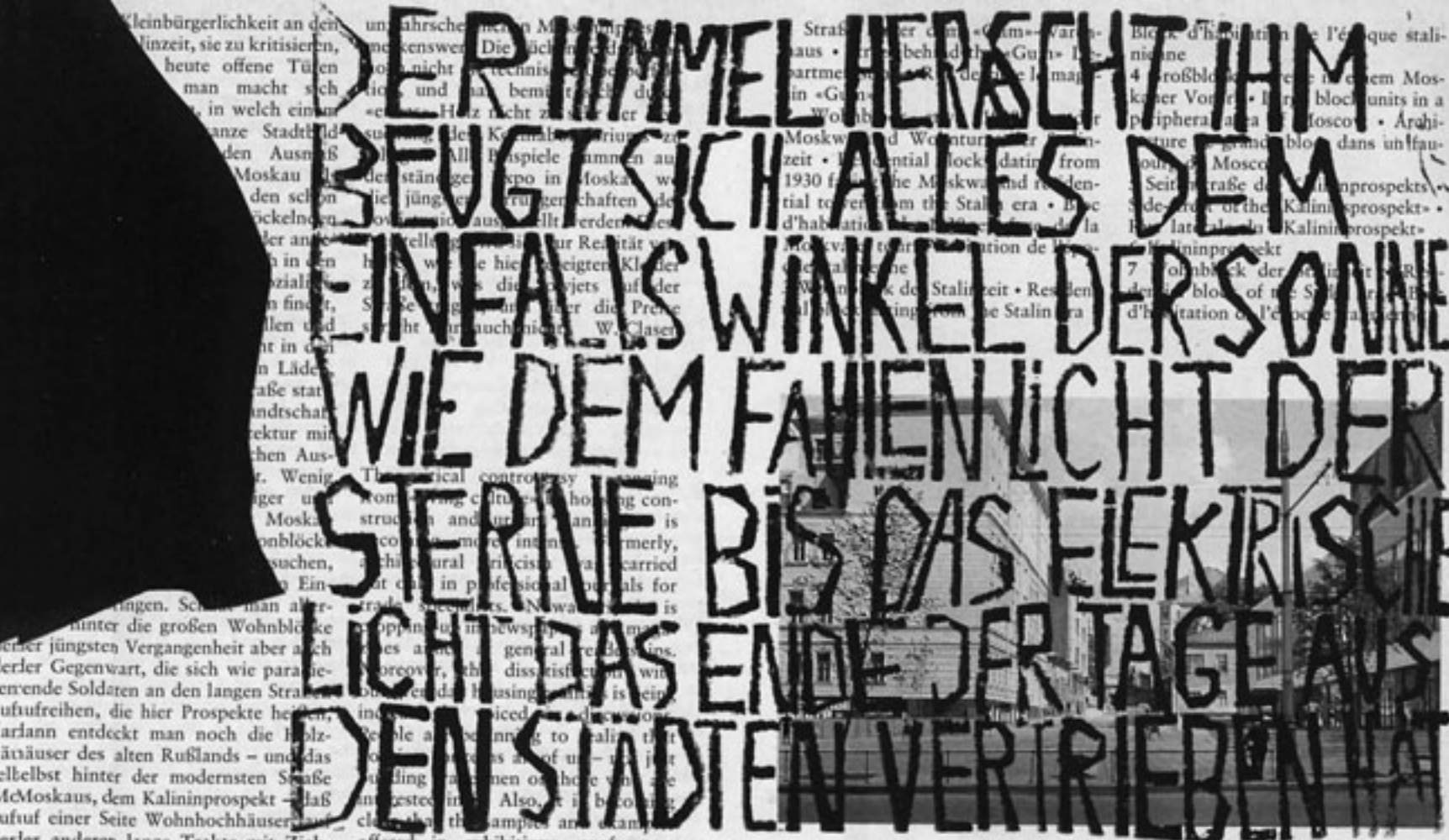
On peut sur les tapis penser qu'ils sont très utiles. Ils sont très harmonisant l'aménagement; ils doivent répondre à l'ensemble. D. Wilke

A-2	a
+2	b
	c
	d
	e
	f
	g
	h
	i 1
	j 12
	k 17
	l 17
	m 17
	n 19
	o 25
	p 25
	q 26
	r 29
	s 34
	t 34
	u 36
	v 37
	w 40
	x 42
	y 45
	z 49



**WEGA**





Die Himmelskugel der Sonne  
bis das elektrische  
Licht das Ende der Tage aus  
den Städten vertrieben hat



5  
6  
7



### Translations

Page 44: *Widerstand*, 2006,  
lino-cut, typewriter, white out and  
cut out newspaper on paper,  
28,5 x 21 cm

This was not the way the future was meant, square-shouldered and with  
silver lacings, centralised, new geodesists deploy, illegally they have  
crossed the border, eroding the city of lights, occupying the centres,  
leaving the neo demolish the imperialist context, which tries to rule out  
the crucial into privacy!  
No truth without negativity.  
Resistance against the grammar of established reality.

Page 45: *O.T. (Hanglage)*, 2006,  
cut out newspaper on magazine page,  
29,6 x 23 cm

Only for short elusive moments it is possible to jar reality.

Page 46: *Qu'est-ce qu' une chambre?*, 2006,  
ink, white out and Letraset letters on magazine  
page, 31 x 23 cm

An empty apartment in summer is like a living fossil. In this ghostly  
present everything becomes suspect.  
Here they had lived. Nothing they seemed to own, except the  
ephemeral moments of action. Every object had to be pointed out.  
Behind these windows they had waited for the actual.  
So long and relentless, until eventually time had formed the exact  
cast of the gap they had wrested from reality.

Page 47: *O.T. (Wega)*, 2006,  
embossed magazine page,  
27,5 x 20,5 cm

Page 48: *Wem gehört die Stadt?*, 2006,  
Lino-cut, Letraset letters and photocopies  
on magazine page, 31,5 x 23,1 cm

The sky rules, everything yields to it, to the sun's angle of incidence, the  
pale light of the stars until the electric light has expelled the end of the days  
from the cities.  
To whom belongs the city?

Page 84: *Und das ist das letzte, was sie wollen*,  
2006, embossed type on magazine page,  
31,5 x 23,4 cm

Young people today are not interested in the fight of man against himself,  
but in the fight of man against society. They realize that psychoanalysis  
might lead to an assimilation to society. And that's the last thing they want.

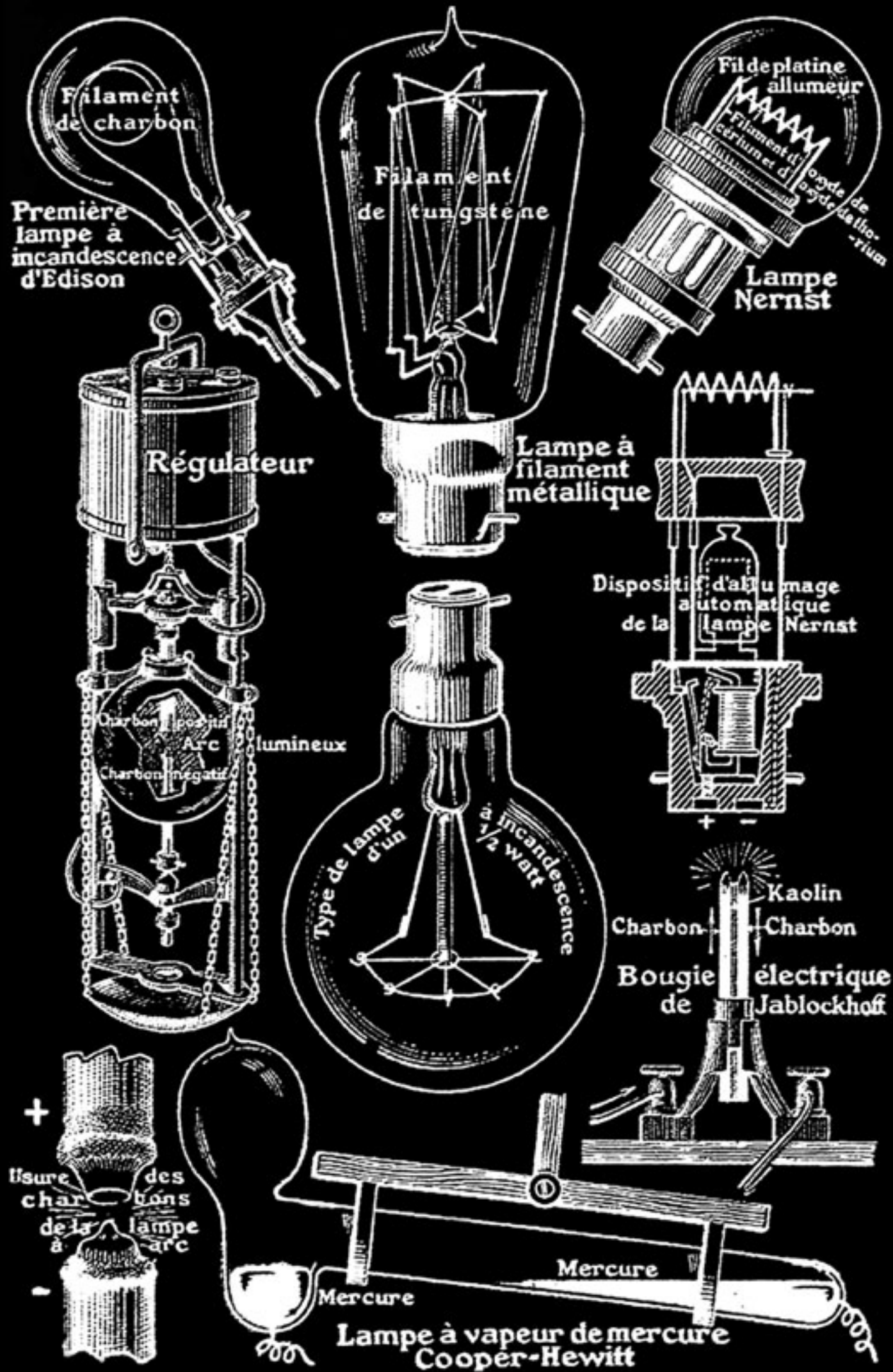


1 Flyer, 1972. 2 RAF wanted poster, ca. 1982. 3 Book cover. 4 Rolf Dieter Brinkmann at a demonstration in Cologne, undated. 5 Christian Klar, Adelheid Schulz and Willy Peter Stoll start off to an explorative flight in the Odenwald, BKA-observation photograph, 1978. 6 *Diese Umwelt macht uns krank*, Flyer, 1987. 7 Gropiusstadt, 2006. 8 Concrete architecture from: *Architecture in an Age of Scepticism*, Oxford University Press, NY 1984. 9 Herbert Marcuse at Freie Universität Berlin, 1969. 10 Contents of an RAF terrorist's purse. 11 Replica of the cellar room where Peter Lorenz was held captive, December 1975. 12 Situationists, Paris, 1969. 13 Still from *Critique de la Separation*, Guy Debord, 1961. 14 Book cover. 15 Members of Baader Meinhof Group in Paris, end of 1969. 16 Theodor W. Adorno at Institut für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt/Main, 1969



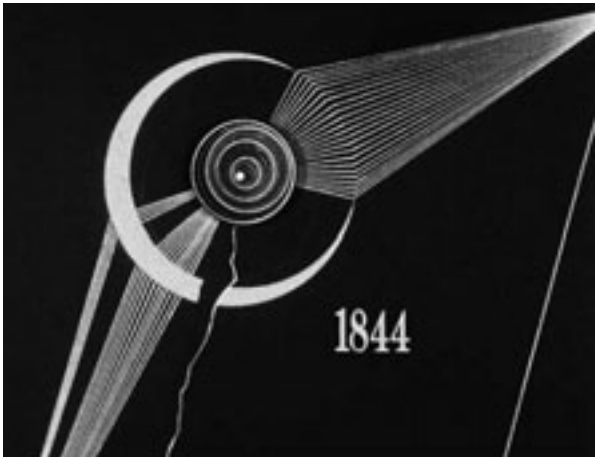


# La Fée Electricité 3



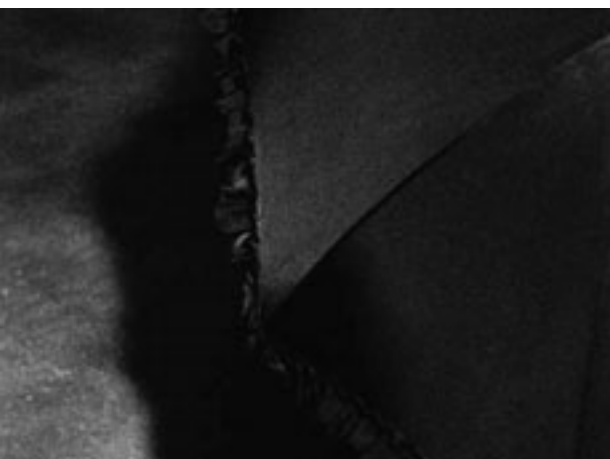
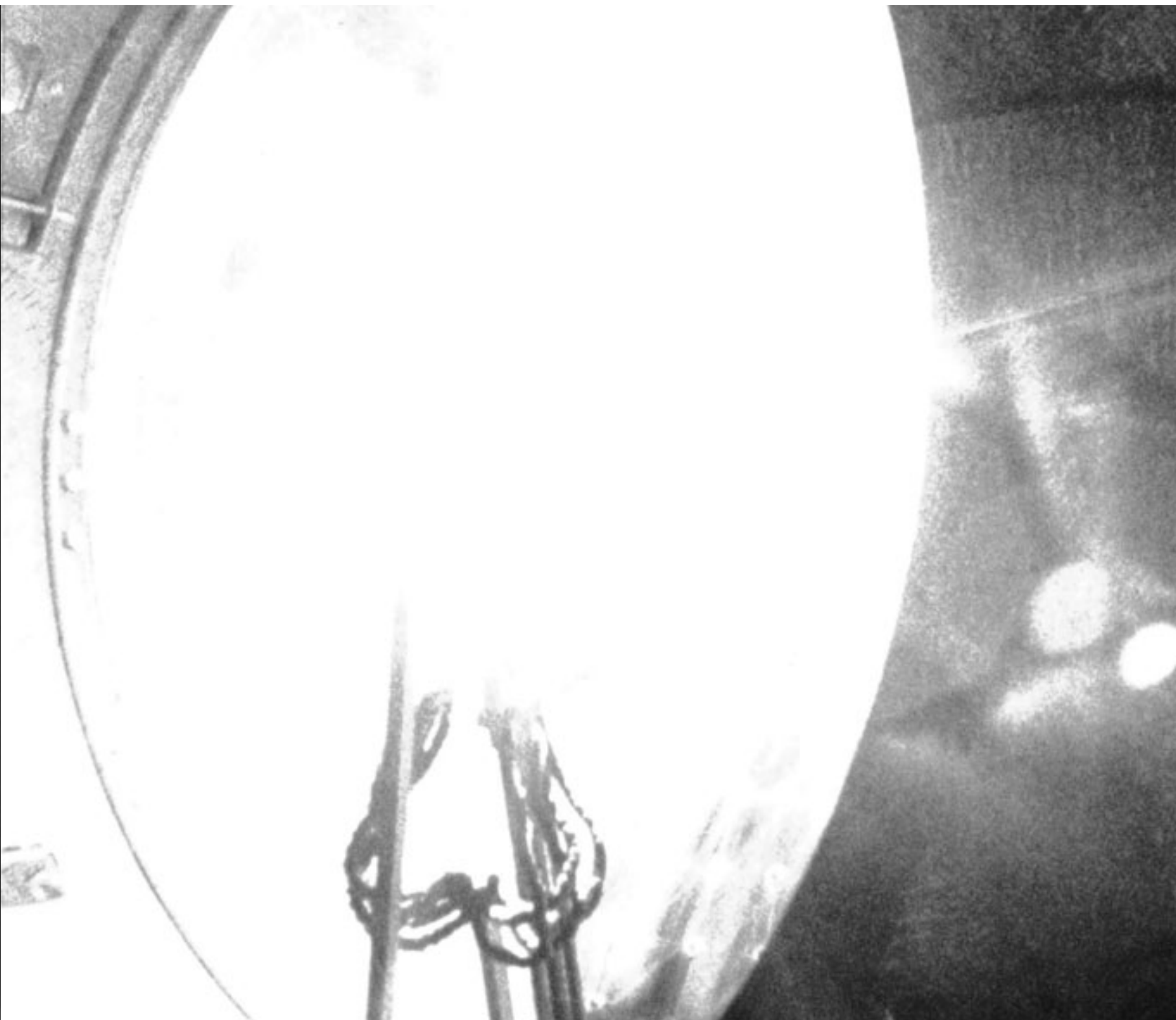
Opposite page:  
Invitation for *Das Unsichtbare ist weder dunkel noch geheimnisvoll, es ist transparent*,  
October 2008, Galerie Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt

This page and following:  
Stills from *La Fée Electricité*, 2007,  
16mm film, b/w, silent, 12 min.

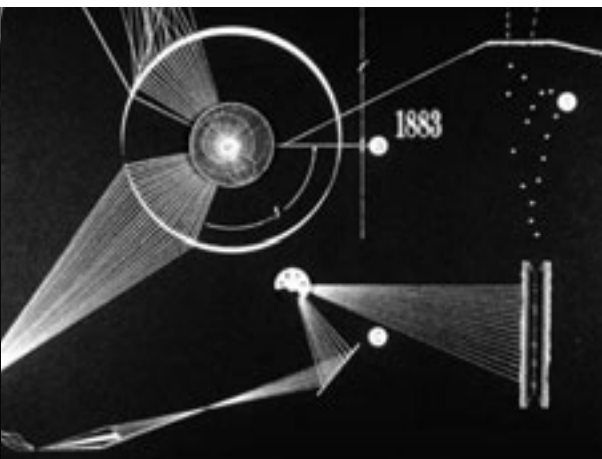
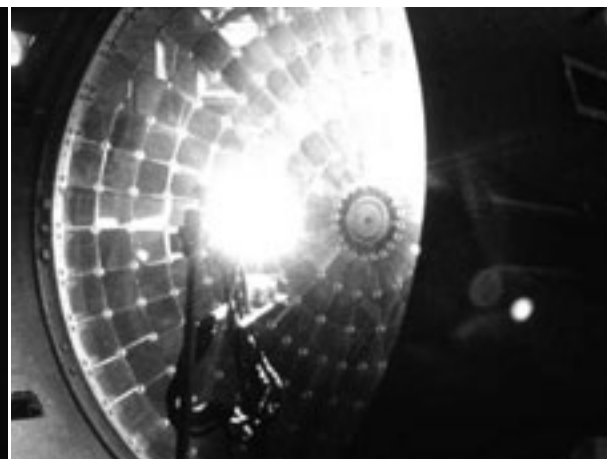


The light that floods the Place de la Concorde on the evening of the 19th of September is so strong that the Ladies open their Umbrellas to protect themselves against the radiation of this mysterious new Sun.

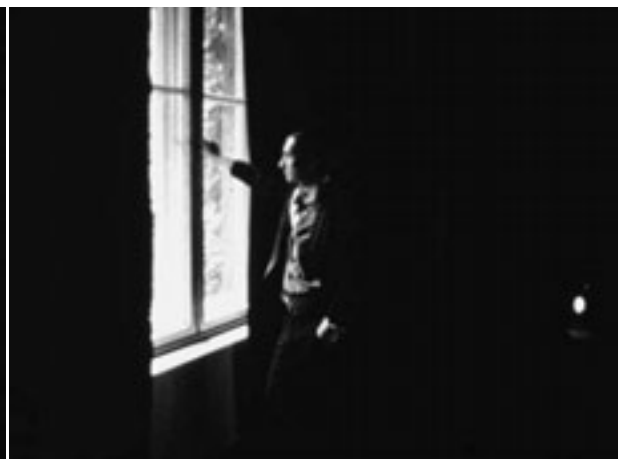




Strollers in the Jardin de Tuileries around nine o'clock that night, are suddenly immersed in a flood of light that is bright like the sun. The illusion of broad daylight is so potent that even the birds, woken from their sleep, begin to sing.



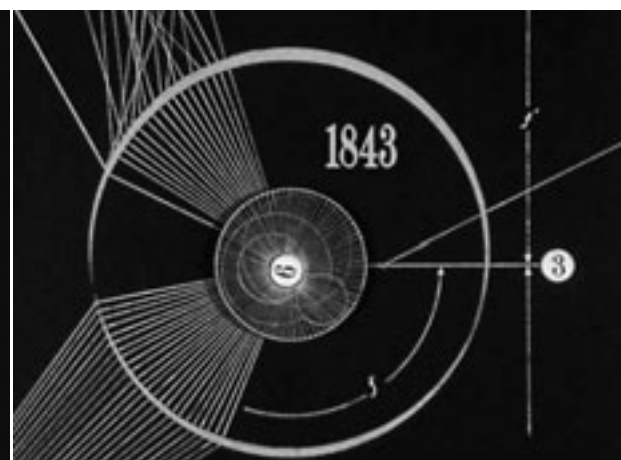
In October, Chevalier Auguste Dupin and his chronicler, the poet E. A. Poe, retreat into a remote, half-decayed house in the Faubourg St. Germain. One of the Chevaliers manifold peculiarities is an enthusiastic infatuation with the night, compelling both men to abstain entirely from the light of the day.







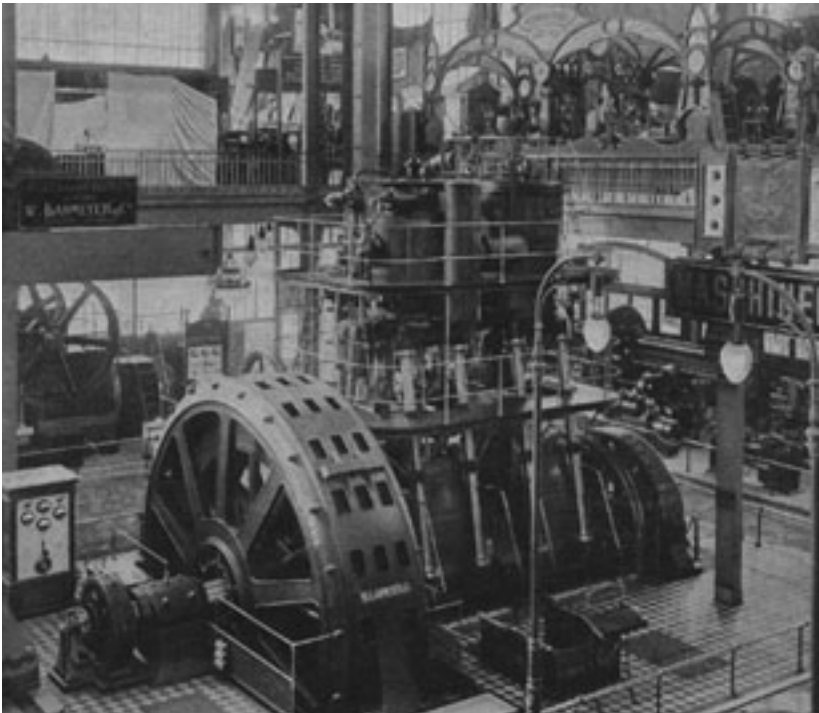
In June, a Parisian newspaper reports of the blindness threatening the famous dancer Loie Fuller. „After her Light and Shadow performance Fuller has to leave the stage guided by two assistants. Dr. Dumas, Fullers personal physician, confirms that the dancers eyesight has deteriorated to the point at which her vision can only be preserved by lying in a darkened room for many hours each day.”





## An Electrified World

Katerina Gregos



Electrical generator at the 1900 World Exposition in Paris

A distinctive facet of contemporary artistic practice has emerged recently, one that is concerned with re-visiting historical events and the past in order to re-evaluate the utopian dreams of the modern period, to inquire into their failures but also to imagine potential new meanings for them. Many of these artists also deploy older, traditional media and appropriate aesthetic forms from the canon of modernism and twentieth century art history, re-working these to create new languages and narratives. This “return of history” is no coincidence; after the theories developed at the beginning of the 1990s about the “End of History” and talk of history’s demise following the collapse of socialism, the consolidation of global capitalism and western liberal democracy, subsequent events have proven that such claims have been not only highly exaggerated but also ill-considered. As a result, more and more people—artists included—are acknowledging the fact that one has to confront the past if one is to understand the present and move on into the future. Andreas Bunte is part of this generation of artists—mostly born in the 1970s—whose artistic practice often re-visits historical incidents or events in order to investigate the complex entanglements between past and present. Bunte works predominantly with the analogue medium of 16mm film; this is not a chance decision; rather it is an art historically self conscious act, which places the artist’s work in a particular cinematic lineage and whereby the medium itself is also implicated in efforts to “recoup” history.

Andreas Bunte’s silent, black and white 16mm film *La Fée Electricité* encapsulates many of the aforementioned issues, presents a complex, layered narrative and captivates the viewer with its striking, distinctive visual language, which almost perfectly simulates the aesthetics of early film. The film—which is predominantly characterised by this vintage “patina”—is a chronicle of episodes which

comment on the advent of the electric light, its first applications and people’s reactions to it when it emerged as a magical phenomenon and wondrous spectacle during the middle of the nineteenth century. Bunte’s film circumvents the normative or known accounts of the subject and proposes an alternative narrative framework. He does not concern himself so much with the scientific history of the invention of the incandescent light bulb, but instead conceives a series of short narrative fragments which combine fact and fiction with contemporary mythologies of the time, intimating the fear and fascination with which artificial light was first received. Nor does the artist aim to correct popular myths such as the fact that Edison invented the light bulb (he in fact improved and made feasible a fifty year old idea). Instead, the film can be seen as a visual equivalent of what in the literary world is called “poetic license”, the method by which established facts are altered or tampered with for artistic reasons. In this way, Bunte harnesses factual manipulation and artistic invention to arrive at a hybrid narrative structure where the truth is entangled with the make believe, and time is turned on its head. Thus, the film tracks its own course in the fourth dimension, weaving a seemingly linear but in fact disjointed chronological collage of events.

*La Fée Electricité* opens with an animated, pseudo-scientific rotating geometric diagram—made by the artist himself—which repeats in different versions throughout the film, serving as a kind of chronological “signifier” that intimates the movement of the filmic loop and the passage of time, but also generates a random time-line by picturing the dates during which the episodes occur. This chronological “signifier” runs through a successive series of short episodes which chronicle unusual (for the time) circumstances that resulted from the application of artificial light. The references in these episodes are both cultural and social, ranging from the legendary dancer Loie Fuller whose ground-breaking experiments with light in her choreography led to eyesight problems, to an incident about how night was transformed into day in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris causing the birds to awaken from their sleep and start singing prematurely. Throughout the film Bunte also employs—conceptually as well as physically—the results of his extensive research (from the internet, newspaper clippings, books) combining this with his own drawings, real staged, performed film sequences and text—used in the manner of old silent movies. The diagrams interspersed into these predominantly anthropocentric episodes lend the film a quasi-scientific gravitas but also bring to mind Duchamp’s rotary discs and the unconventional optical techniques of the 1920s *Neue Optik* generation of artists, which included El Lissitzky, László Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter, and Duchamp himself. These devices seem to lend some linearity to a film whose narrative is fragmented and whose structure is dictated by formal concerns and internal rhythms, rhythms which are very much dependent on the images presented, their symbolic value and the associations made possible through editing and manipulation of form. At the same time *La Fée Electricité* is not only a chronicle about light, but is as much about the practice of film making itself, using the ability of film to capture and reflect light, highlighting the various light sources that have left an imprint on the material, and playing with different visual manifestations of incandescent light, all of which are reanimated by the light of the projector.

Bunte’s film occupies a territory in-between experimental film, silent movies, Dada and Surrealist film. As with most “experimental” film makers he conceives, shoots and edits his film largely on his own or with minimal help. In that sense, the finished product retains the home-made, tactile quality of much experimental film making. His practice is based on the combination of real fact, staged incident, and artistic manipulation, elements that avant-garde film maker Maya Deren called “the essence of cinema”.<sup>1</sup> In that sense, *La Fée Electricité* is aware of its filmic precedents; its roots can be traced back to Marcel Duchamp’s *Anemic Cinema*

(1926), with its hypnotising rotating discs; Man Ray’s geometric ballet *Emak Bakia* (1926), with its moving shapes and play of light and shadow or his *Return to Reason* (1923) with its strange interplay of light and dark and its sense of vital kinetic energy. Other films that are brought to mind are Fernand Leger’s *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), with its interplay of abstract and human forms, and of course Hans Richter’s ground-breaking *Rhythm 21* (1921), and its characteristic graphic clarity and kinetic organisation of plastic forms. With Dada film, Bunte shares an interest in the fascination for the machine-made object, and the confluence of technology and aesthetic experimentation, while with surrealist film he shares an interest in the fantastic and the marvellous. At the same time *La Fée Electricité* also harks back to late nineteenth century film, and the first moving or “animated” pictures. These early experiments with film which constituted basic examples of filmic grammar—they were called “actualities” at the time—depicted unremarkable events, ordinary episodes of everyday life or everyday occurrences which acquired a magical quality because of the novelty of the medium and its kinetic properties. Characteristically, Maxim Gorky referred to these first moving images as the “kingdom of shadows” and a “soundless spectre”, after having seen his first film, a production by the Lumiere Brothers in 1896. The vintage, nostalgic look of *La Fée Electricité*, its fictitious allusions to a historical author do not, however, only relate to aesthetic or formal concerns, but to a deliberate disguise of authorship, a distance the artist self-consciously places between himself and the film, a decision which offers the possibility to relate subjectively to the chosen subject without the interfering presence of the author. Characteristically, the film has no credits. The question that arises, finally, is who made this film? What kind of author is s/he, for s/he is certainly an elusive one.

As to the film’s historical dimension, a pronounced feature of this and other films Bunte has made, the artist describes his approach towards history as a way of “re-reading” which is related to the idea of “reconstruction”. While the latter has implications as regards the aim of historical correctness, the former remains more open to a speculative element. So in a way, “re-reading” implies the act of looking at things again, from an unusual perspective, mapping the facts differently, or making odd connections. In opposition to the idea of reconstruction this process is based on an intended deflection of the facts. The historical “appearance” or semblance establishes the framework that allows the artist to merge the speculative elements with the historical facts. On the basis of this “appearance” facts and fiction are spliced together for the first glance. But once the viewer takes a closer look he or she will see that the two don’t “fit”, that the perspective onto the subject would not have been possible at the time that the film pretends to have been made it. And this difference or incongruence is precisely what betrays the film’s contemporaneity, the fact that it was made in 2007 and not 1927.

That narrative and expectations of continuity are subtly denied or masked, and the fact that things don’t “follow” ultimately defies the imposition of any singular meaning on the film itself. The layering in the montage, the deliberate confusion of chronologies, events, fact and fiction, causes any possible causal connections among events to be dissolved. Moreover, this anti-hierarchical approach to film making, either in the the selection of the subject matter or the way the different episodes in the film play out, does not reach some climactic resolution. Rather the film rests on nuance, allusion, and a play of opposites, while remaining discursively open-ended. Despite the pseudo-scientific appearance of *La Fée Electricité*, the film adopts an ambivalent stance in relation to notions of technological and scientific progress, positing as it does, the powers of darkness and light against each other as a powerful metaphor for this duality. Characteristic of this, is a choreographed dance-duel between darkness and light, in which the latter finally triumphs. Nevertheless, unlike Raoul Dufy’s epic painting of the

same name which celebrates the union of nature and technology, Bunte’s film leaves us with questions about modernity. Ultimately, the film rests on a constant interplay between allusions to positivism versus metaphysical speculation, empiricism versus rationalism, without reaching any conclusion as to which line of thought dominates therein.

*La Fée Electricité* also reminds us that there was a time when scientific development was met with very mixed responses: from sheer, unquestioning reverence to fear and superstition. Today, these extreme responses to scientific novelty are not the norm, and we are not so in awe of scientific feats, even when they are significant or ground breaking, or may even change our lives. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, we have become quite jaded and arrogant—to say the least—when we take current feats of technological innovation for granted, even though most of us do not even understand how basic electrical appliances that were invented in the early twentieth century actually *work*, which says a lot about modern man’s relationship to a world dominated by and dependent on technology. Thus one latent sub-text in the film questions man’s relationship with scientific development, while another alludes to the effects of this development.

From the Age of the Enlightenment, the idea of the modern was associated with the creation of new bodies of knowledge, inexorable progress and the constant striving for the perfection of self and society. The phantasms of the Enlightenment are therefore inevitably evoked in the film which, however, leaves open-ended the question of the validity of basic Enlightenment values such as human rationality as the basis of continued progress. In light of the fact that, currently, scholars and thinkers are returning to the Enlightenment principles to re-think how we might possibly learn from them today, Bunte’s film is particularly topical, raising relevant questions such as “Can there be modernity without a belief in progress?”; “Is man able to direct his own future in order to create his own fate?”; “To what extent is the future man-made?”; and, “Who can, today, possibly imagine a world without electricity?”. At the same time the film prompts us to think about the implications of the use of electricity, perhaps the most key element in the development of capitalism, while also recalling Theodor Adorno’s & Max Horkheimer’s<sup>3</sup> idea that the domination of man over nature inevitably turns into a domination of man over himself.

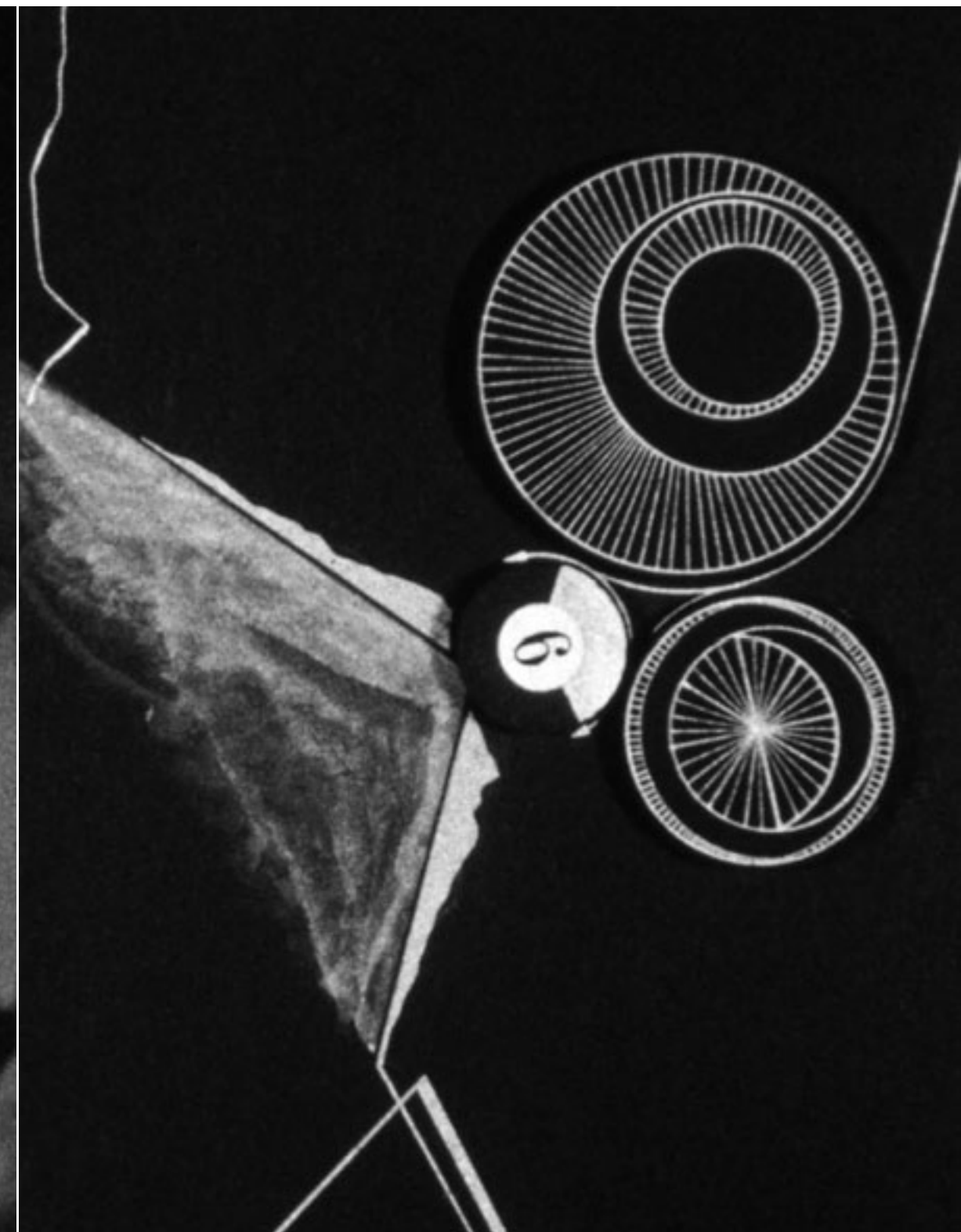
Apart from bringing into perspective the uneasy equation between progress and its repercussions, the film challenges notions about the perceived authenticity of memory and dominant narratives of history. Throughout, it remains deliberately unclear what is fact and what fiction and wherein, finally, lies the truth. Instead, Bunte proposes an alternative account of the story of electric light, creating a twisted timeline which alludes to the relativity of historical narratives but also indirectly points to the serious problems we are facing as a result of our hubristic attitude to technology. In this way, Bunte interrupts linear narratives, of the past in order to allude to a possible social space of the present. In that sense, the film—no matter how visually enticing—cannot help us from thinking that the price of electric civilisation has been very steep indeed. Ultimately, however, *La Fée Electricité* reminds us that perhaps every re-play of the past is fated to be flawed.

<sup>1</sup> Maya Deren (1960), “Cinematography: The creative use of reality” in: *Daedalus*, 89, reprinted in G. Mast, M. Cohen & L. Braudy (Eds.), *Film theory and criticism: Introductory readings*, Oxford University Press 1992.

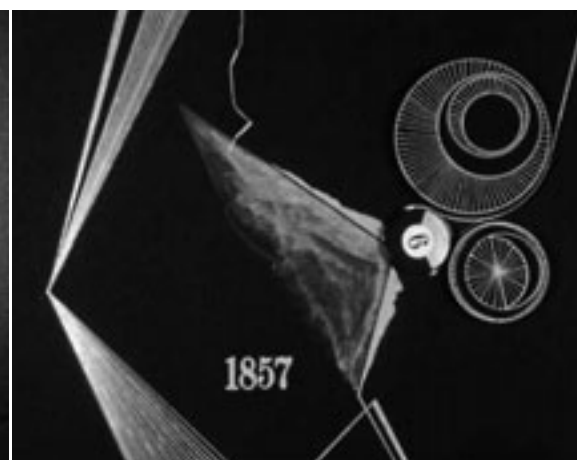
<sup>2</sup> Raoul Dufy, *La Fée Electricité*, mural produced for the Paris World Exposition in 1937, Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

<sup>3</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*. Amsterdam, 1947.



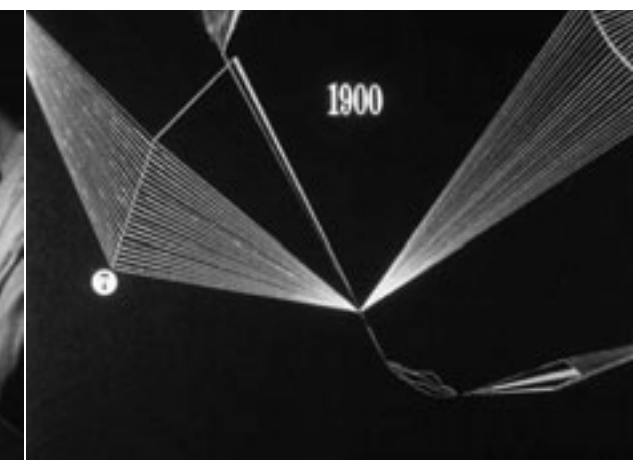


On the 15th of February, the amateur detective Rita van Arsdale reports to the Parisian Police of an appearance of light that, in her opinion, is connected with the death of the millionaire heiress Mrs. Fairbrother.



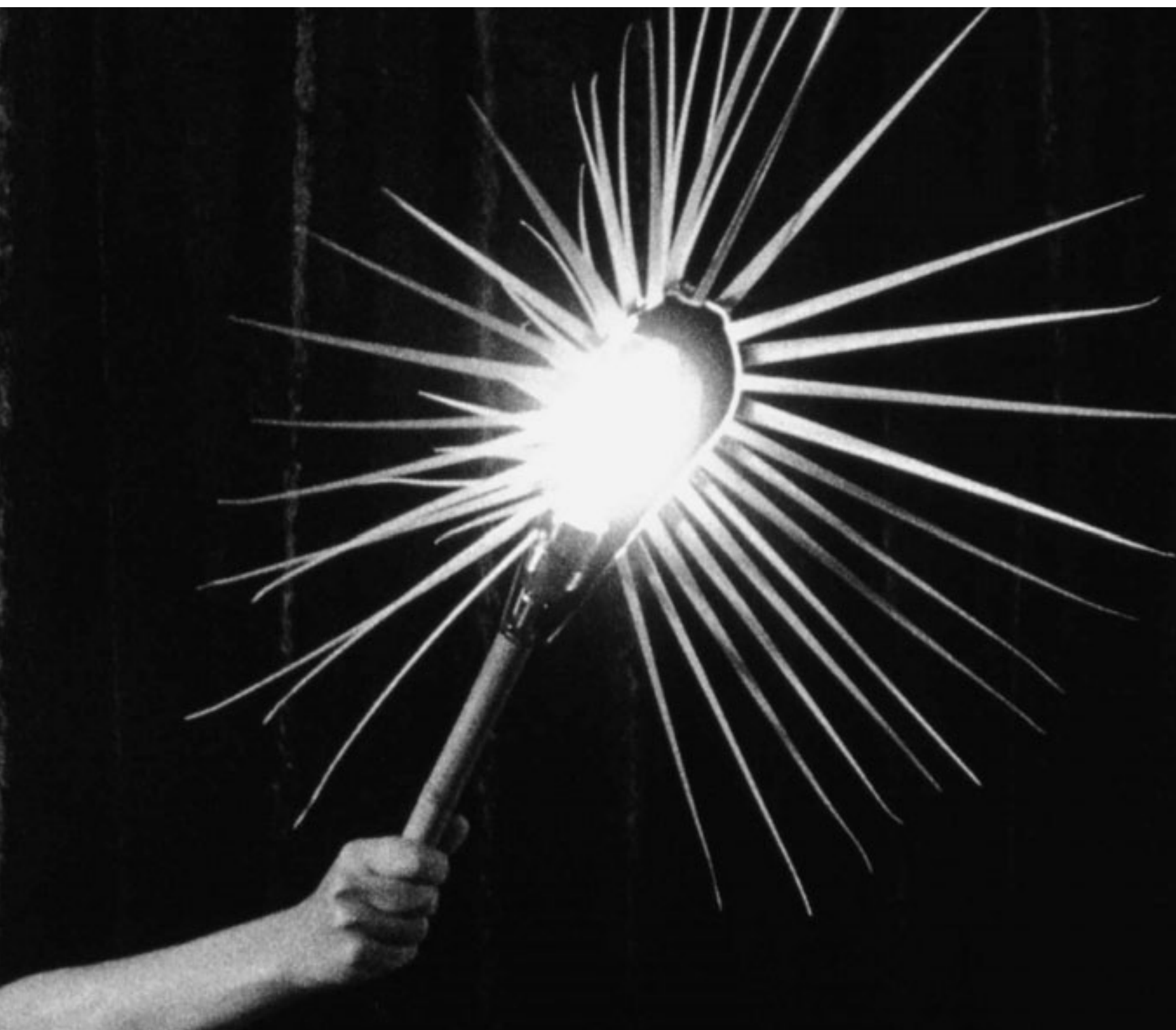
1857

On the 4th of March, near the Louvre Colonades, night suddenly transforms into day. Over the following weeks several onlookers complain about blurred vision and inexplicable bursts of light.

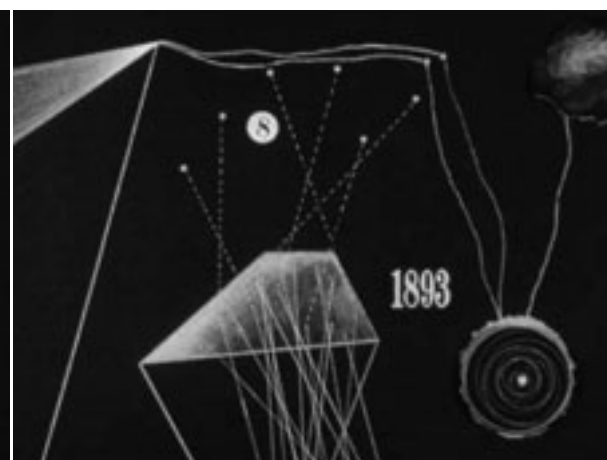


1900





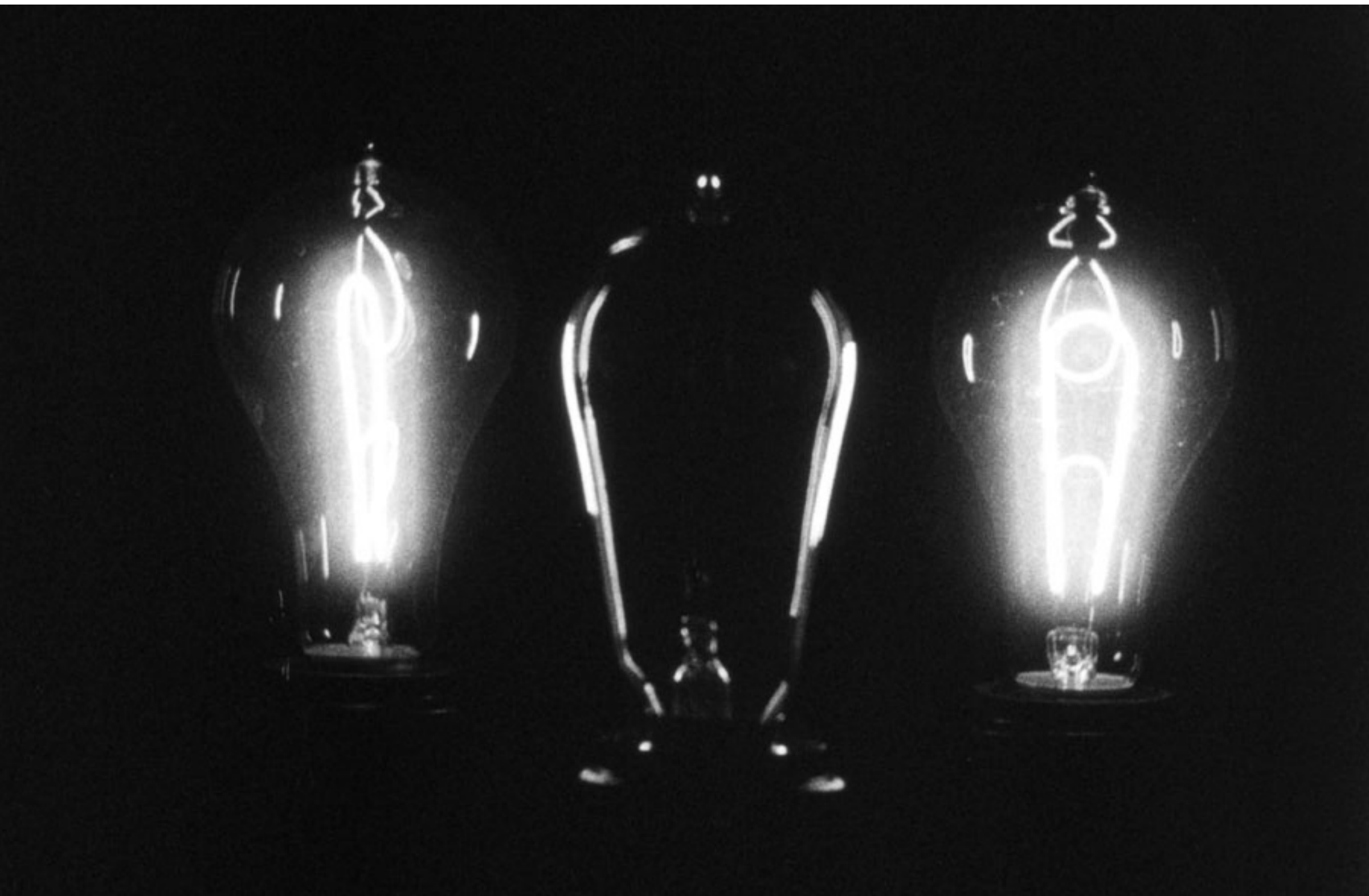
An incident occurs at the Salon d'honneur de l'Electricité, a window-less salon illuminated by 800 Nernst-lamps. On the 27th of April, the room is suddenly plunged into darkness for several minutes. According to a spokesperson for AEG, the operating company, a staff member succumbed to a panic attack and destroyed a number of the exhibition's precious objects while attempting to escape the darkness.



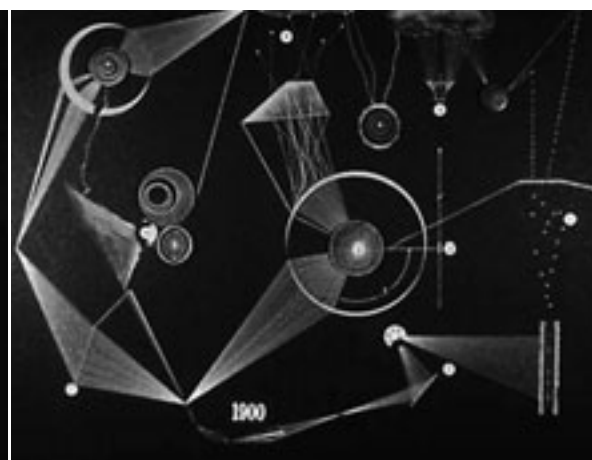
In the early evening of the 8th of September, Chevalier Auguste Dupin solves the enigmatic events at Rue Rogêt. The Chevalier and his companion, who usually never leave the house, are seen that night on the Boulevard de Rivoli by various persons.







Eyewitnesses report that both men wore dark green glasses as they examined the luminous arcs of the electrical street lanterns on the Boulevard. Since then, the men have been missing without a trace.



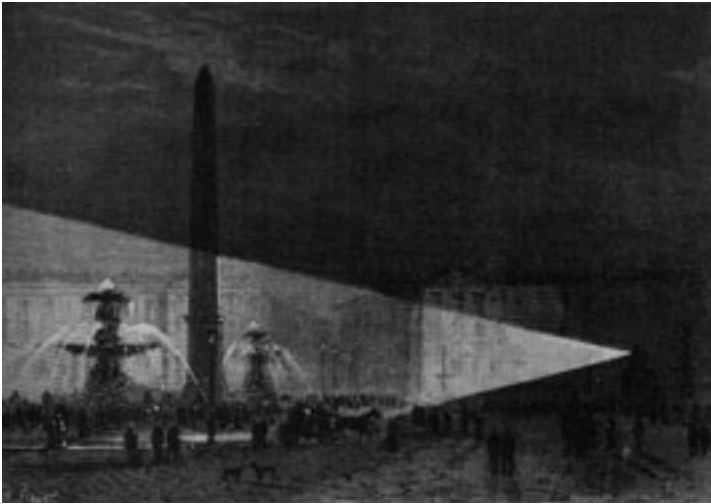
On the 14th of April, the French Minister of Commerce, Alexandre Millerand, inaugurates the world exposition in Paris with the words, "Electricity rules the entire globe, it liberates mankind from the slavery of darkness. Evil itself has receded thanks to the triumphant progress of the human mind."



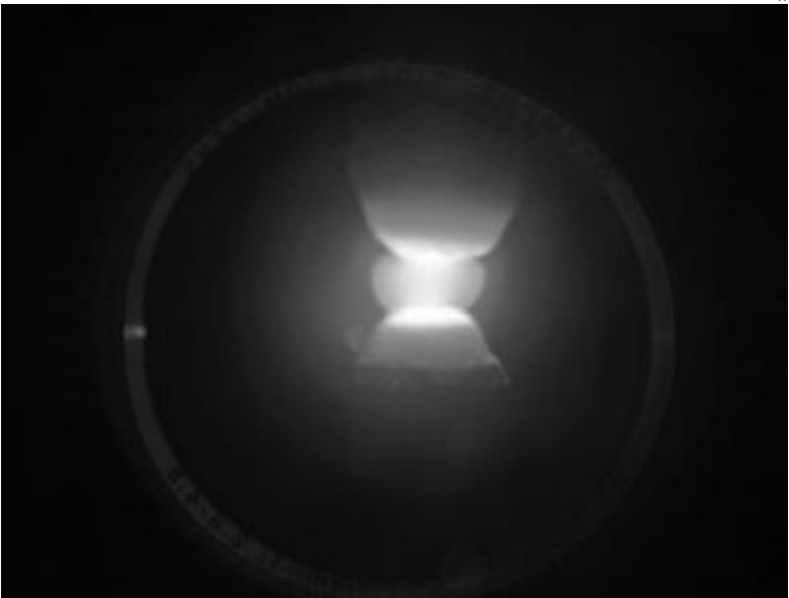
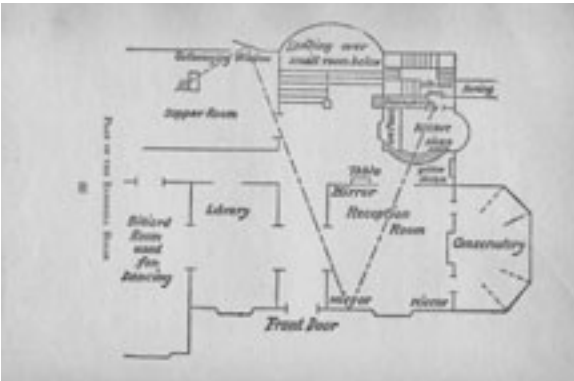
LA FEE  
ELECTRICITE



1 Arc light experiment, Place de la Concorde, 1844 (report in *La Lumière électrique*). 2 *Le Bec Auer elcairant le monde*, ad for the *Auerlicht*, undated. 3 Cover of the magazine *La Lumière électrique*, 1882. 4 The Eiffel Tower at night during the 1900 World Exposition, by William Herman Rau (1855–1920). 5 Book cover. 6 Loie Fuller with her dancing robe, 1890. 7 Electric arc in an arc lamp, 2007. 8 Production of an electrical generator at Helios AG, Cologne, ca. 1889. 9 Photograph of a daguerreotype of Edgar Allan Poe, 1848. 10 Neurdein brothers *Le palais des illusions* (*Hénard architecte*), 1900. 11 Carl Auer von Welsbach (1858–1929). 12 Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, illustration by Sidney Paget, 1903. 13 Thomas Edison, *Portrait of Charles Batchelor*, first photograph taken by incandescent electric lamps, 1879. 14 Neurdein brothers: *Champ de Mars. Palais de l'électricité, fête de nuit*, 1900. 15 Walther Nernst, undated. 16 Anna Kathrin Greene, *The Women in the Alcove*, 1906 Floorplan.



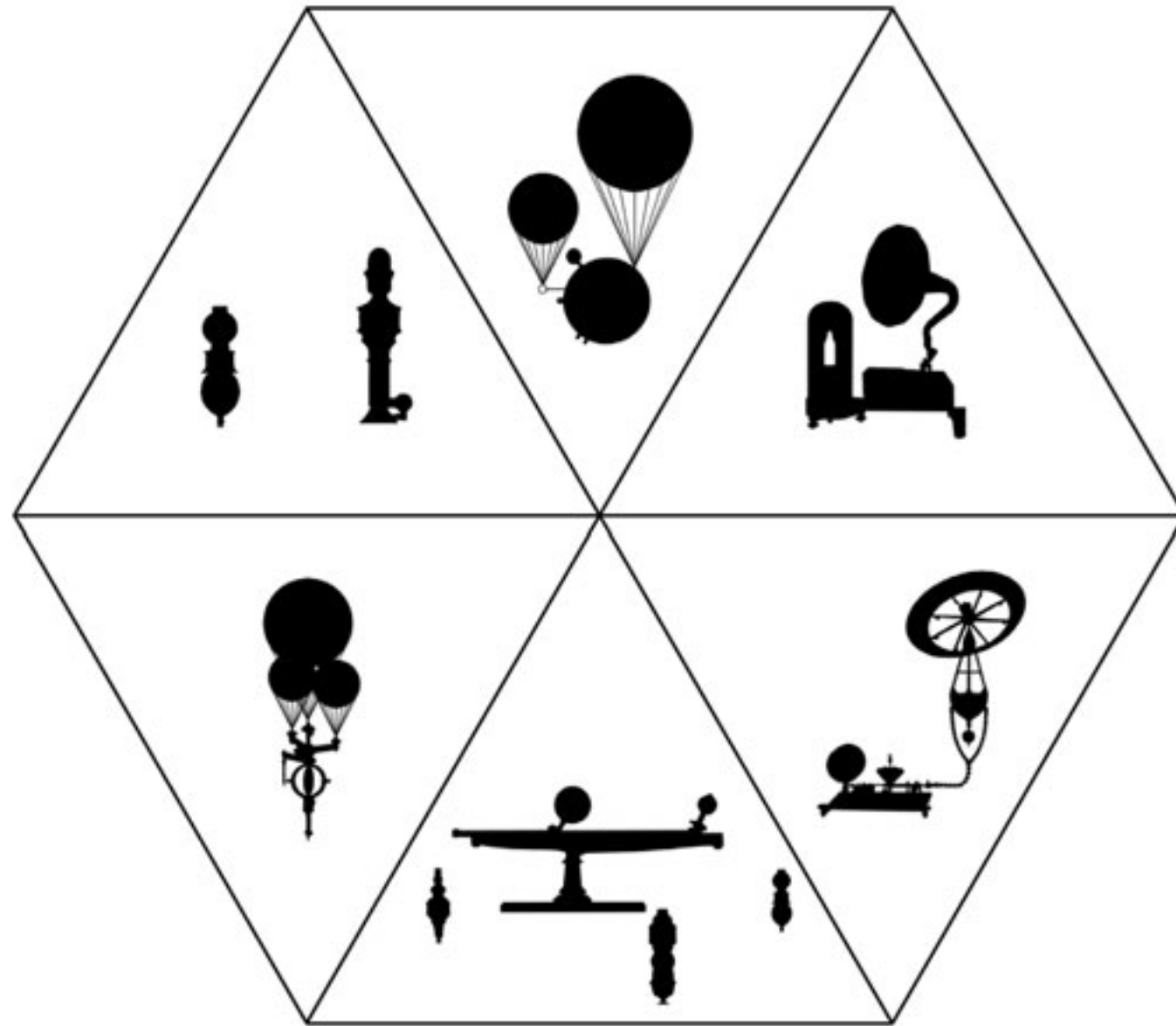
13  
PORTRAIT OF CHARLES BATCHELOR  
The first photograph ever taken by incandescent electric lamps





# Der Garten des M. Lerefnac

4





## Si Non Rogas Intelligo<sup>1</sup>

Michelle Cotton



Gatehouse to Pückler Park, Carl Franz Josef Metzner, between 1888 and 1893

In 1816, Count Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau posted a proclamation on the door of the Rathaus in the Saxon region of the Upper Lausitz. Pückler announced his intent to transform the vast tract of land he had recently inherited into a park. In the years following he spent his entire bequest acquiring land, raising hills and draining marshes. He changed the course of rivers, shifted huge boulders of rock and levelled buildings. Lakes appeared where village streets once stood and the entire fortifications of a palace were moved. Trees were transported in their thousands leaving a trail of broken windows in their path and one specimen was so great that the part of the city gate at Cottbus had to be removed so that it could pass.

Andreas Bunte’s film *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* (2008) revisits Muskau park, now a diminished 830 hectares apportioned between Germany and Poland. Filmed on 16 mm, fragments of the landscape appear in a sequence of static shots and the black and white footage provides the setting for a catalogue of strange machines. Autonomous motors emblazoned with meters and dials move with a heavy, perpetual motion. The outlines of the objects are foxed with dark shadow cutting away at the picture so that the machine and the landscape remain detached, the apparatus floating like spectres of some forsaken science. They are fitted to the scene neither in context nor composition and the whole appears to answer the definition that Max Ernst once gave to collage: “the meeting of two distant realities on a plane foreign to them both”.<sup>2</sup>

The images for *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* are composed through a laborious process of exposing the film in stages. Parts of the frame are masked out so that areas of the film are left unexposed in the initial stage, the strip is then re-threaded with the exposed part masked so that new elements can be inserted into the footage as the remainder of the film is exposed. For some scenes the process has been repeated several times creating layers of visual information added to

the film in isolated circumstances. The footage becomes a patchwork of moving images and its incongruous articulation disrupts the authenticity usually ascribed to film. The image is not so much a chronology of events recorded in duration as a collage; a fiction stitched together from disparate realities loosened from their anchorage in space and time.

Bunte’s cut and paste filmmaking translates a convention of modern cinema into analogue terms. His manipulation of the moving image; erasing sections of scenery to drop in some extraordinary invention, invites comparison with the digital post-production effects employed in cinematic illusions. Yet Bunte alludes to a more archaic corruption of visual truths, inferring modes of composition established in the tradition of landscape painting by artists such as Claude Lorrain or Nicolas Poussin. The scenes of *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* are made from footage of Muskau combined with details clipped from the pages of popular nineteenth century science magazines. These pictorial fragments are assembled as landscapes in a manner analogous to compositions painted by piecing together several studies from nature. Bunte’s film is self-conscious in its artifice with footage mismatched, layered and juxtaposed. The illusion here is not one total reality but several fictions, simultaneously held in play.

Pückler fashioned his park as a series of vistas. The Neisse River that divided the land was made to swell and meander, leading the eye on a gentle course through secluded woods and great open space. He drew upon a wealth of detail observed on his travels to visit the icons of antiquity in Greece, Egypt, Nubia and Anatolia; and the English gardens landscaped by Lancelot Capability Brown. Letters recording his research were published anonymously as *Briefe eines Verstorbenen* [Letters of a Deceased Man 1830–1831]<sup>3</sup>. Pückler’s design was illustrative of an enlightened approach to creating space for wonder and contemplation, treating the mind as an instrument for inductive reasoning and nature as a vast amphitheatre playing host to an array of experience to be observed and sensed in the effort of learning. Such ideas were well established in the fashions for landscape gardening during the eighteenth century and, in Britain, owed much to the empirical philosophy of John Locke.

In 1690 Locke wrote a treatise on intelligence that proposed that all knowledge is formed around a scientific study of the world around us; observing physical facts and applying reason and logic to uncover hidden truths. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* placed the origin of ideas in an experience of “sensation” or “reflection”:

“The first capacity of human intellect is, that the mind is fitted to receive the impressions made on it, either through the senses, by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them.”<sup>4</sup>

Locke described reflection as a self-conscious process whereby the mind takes notice “of its own operations, and the manner of them” and in doing so applies reason to understand them.<sup>5</sup> Such a definition co-joined the idea of nature as a font of stimuli and the mind as a methodical instrument, studying detail and cataloguing information to form some larger picture.

Muskau befits its treatment in collage, made in a sense, as a series of images; its vistas were designed in the British empirical fashion to arrest the wanderer in moments of contemplation. Pückler’s work was celebrated in a manual on landscape gardening entitled *Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei* [Remarks on Landscape Gardening, 1834]. Engravings were commissioned to illustrate Muskau “before” and “after” it’s remodelling and the pages of the book were designed with flaps so that the transformation worked upon the land was literally

unfolded by the reader viewing the two pictures side-by-side. The imagery bears traces of a Nineteenth Century Gothic sensibility; moonlight, shadow and a sense of the uncanny in the doubling of information as certain details in the drawings persuade the viewer that the place is one and the same. Muskau’s Gothic Romanticism and its narratives in Pückler’s literature subsequently inspired its fictional reinvention in Edgar Allen Poe’s short story *The Domain of Arnheim* (1837). Poe’s story indulges the opulence of Pückler’s quest to undertake the artist’s fancy in real terms and the account attests to the scope of the project in gathering visual details and meticulously arranging them in an image of perfection.

Bunte’s film is crafted in response to this rich literary legacy. Muskau is pictured with Gothic overtones; a dead and haunted place, stripped bare of its foliage by winter and captured in silvery tones. The film glints with moments of overexposure where the screen floods with white and machines appear and disappear within, leaving dark voids in their wake. Collage interrupts the image; parting fragments of the landscape with dark seams, inserting peculiar objects and mirroring detail. The film passes from scene to scene with everything flattened-out like the pages of a magazine that have been scored, cut and folded.

Two distant realities collide, or are perhaps, artfully brought into line with each other on the plane of fiction. Alongside the literature of Pückler and Poe, Bunte invokes the writing of Raymond Roussel, a touchstone of surrealism for its cerebral craft of literary collage and invention. Roussel’s writing often originated in exercises of skill inspired by the eccentricities of language, most famously forming novels around homonymic puns. A superficial parity between two words that sound the same would overrule their differences in meaning and a narrative was developed in circuitous folds. Roussel would typically arrest a linear trajectory with a lengthy account of a scene or object. Pages of detail might follow, beginning with the outward appearance of things before decoding their significance. Descriptions within descriptions, narrative loops that would construct elaborate patterns of diversion always returning the reader to the main path of the story and disrupting a sense of time. These labyrinths of contemplation take Locke’s ideas to the extreme as each object of study eludes understanding and yields instead a puzzling, cryptic intricacy.

*Der Garten des M. Leretnac* refers to the structure of Poe’s short story and Roussel’s novel *Locus Solus* (1914), both of which are fashioned around a tour of a fantastically styled garden. Bunte’s M. Leretnac, absent from the film in all but name, is imagined in likeness to Roussel’s scientist, Cantarel who has stationed his inventions about the grounds of his estate near Paris. The film explores Muskau, selecting fragments of its landscape for the fiction of M. Leretnac. The images are accompanied by a recording of the modernist composer Charles Ives’ *Universe Symphony* (1915–28), a vast and complex instrumental sound that appears to mobilize the collage, like a great rhizomatic machine. Ives wrote the piece to experiment with a “parallel way of listening to music” describing it in terms similar to “looking at a view”; he imagined two “huge orchestras” performing “across from each other on mountaintops overlooking a valley”<sup>6</sup>. Bunte threads these references together by their singular engagements with landscape and space. He couples nineteenth century empiricism with Modernism and all its layers of complexity and the allusions belie a shift in attitudes over time. *Der Garten des M. Leretnac* is underwritten with the erosion of certainty in a culture of reason as study yields the dense strata of realities held in flux. It is as if the physical reality, the composite of elements held in play by the laws of nature, is thrown out. The film takes on the character of a dream, piecing together fragments of historical memory, fiction and the visual facts of a place. Everything is treated as isolate detail, clipped and re-ordered in a completely original manner.

Leretnac’s machines resemble the curious novelties of the Cantarel garden. Their alien presence in the landscape suggests the contention between the mass industrialisation of Pückler’s era and the Romantic predilection for nature in its untamed form. A series of cubes marked with numbers revolve next to a river; a scientific assemblage ending with the flourish of a gramophone speaker is planted within a forest; a diamond spins in a spherical cage encircled by disembodied flames; a series of gauges, meters and dials are crowned with a wheel tilted expectantly towards the sky. The machines draw upon the natural environment to become animated in an otherwise lifeless zone. Powered by the elements and shrouded in mystery the apparatus in Bunte’s film —like that of Roussel’s novel— employs the iconography of esoteric practices alongside rational science. Each is a fantasy of a technology that never was; they are fictions of the past.

Roussel’s notion of the surreal in *Locus Solus* is grounded in a medieval appetite for the grotesque or carnivalesque; Bunte’s is anchored in Gothic fantasy: the dark side perhaps of an age on the cusp of scientific revelation both psychological and physical. Whereas a machine in Canterel’s garden might be dedicated to crafting a mosaic from decayed human teeth, Bunte’s instruments appear to be designed for a more abstruse purpose. These autonomous objects assume a sinister presence in the natural environment. They are disassociated from the culture of wonder and enlightenment surrounding the birth of popular science and suggest rather the secret machinations of industry.

There is a pervasive sense of foreboding in *Der Garten des M. Leretnac*, as if the dials, gauges and meters on the machines might at any minute announce an anomaly or predict disaster. A sense of space and time is lost in the collage of sound and image, and the fiction issues more questions than answers. The inventions catalogued in the film are neither the academic follies of Roussel’s novel nor integrated within the grand design envisaged by Pückler. They are encountered on the surface of the image or set within its dark recesses like phantoms, or traces of some obscure enterprise. The fiction of M. Leretnac is composed as a series of clues: fragments of information that mystify and fail to build a total picture. Observation, empirical analysis, inductive reasoning are left lacking as truth; or universal truth, is destabilised in favour of something less certain and more subjective negotiated through an encounter with fragments of history and myth.

<sup>1</sup> “The answer of a great man, to one who asked what time was: Si non rogas intelligo, (which amounts to this; The more I set myself to think of it, the less I understand it) might perhaps persuade one that time, which reveals all other things, is itself not to be discovered” John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (Reproduction of the original, collection of the British Library) London: T. Basset/E. Mory, 1690, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Max Ernst quoted by Arthur C. Danto in: *After the End of Art* (Princeton University Press 1988) p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Hermann Fürst von Pückler-Muskau, *Briefe eines Verstorbenen. Ein fragmentarisches Tagebuch aus England*, Wales, Irland und Frankreich, geschrieben in den Jahren 1826 bis 1829) Stuttgart: Hallberger, 1830–1831. The initiative was part of Pückler’s fundraising plan after he had exhausted his own inheritance and the considerable wealth of his young bride, Lucie von Pappenheim, daughter of Karl August Hardenberg, Chancellor of Prussia. In an extraordinary act of devotion to the park project the couple decided to divorce freeing Pückler to embark on a three-year fortune hunt in the British Isles. He failed to secure marriage to an heiress but a selection of his frequent epistles to von Pappenheim, addressed as *Schnucke* [“lambkins”] or *vieligeliebtes Schnucktier* [“little lamby-poo”], were subsequently published anonymously and became a bestseller. Linda Parshall “Landscape as History: Pückler-Muskau, The “Green Prince of Germany” in Christopher Mauch ed. *Nature in German History* (Berghahn Books: New York, 2004) p. 68–73

<sup>4</sup> Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* p. 71

<sup>5</sup> Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* p. 61

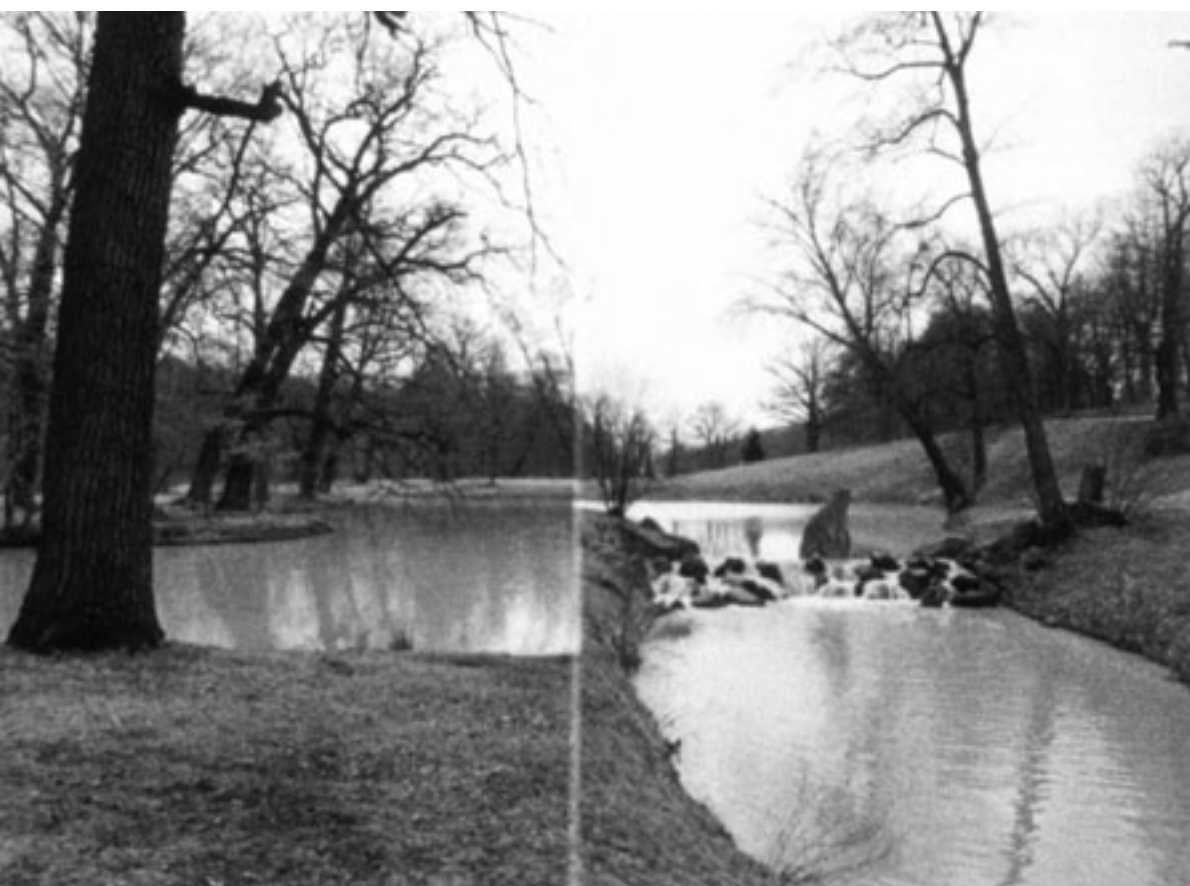
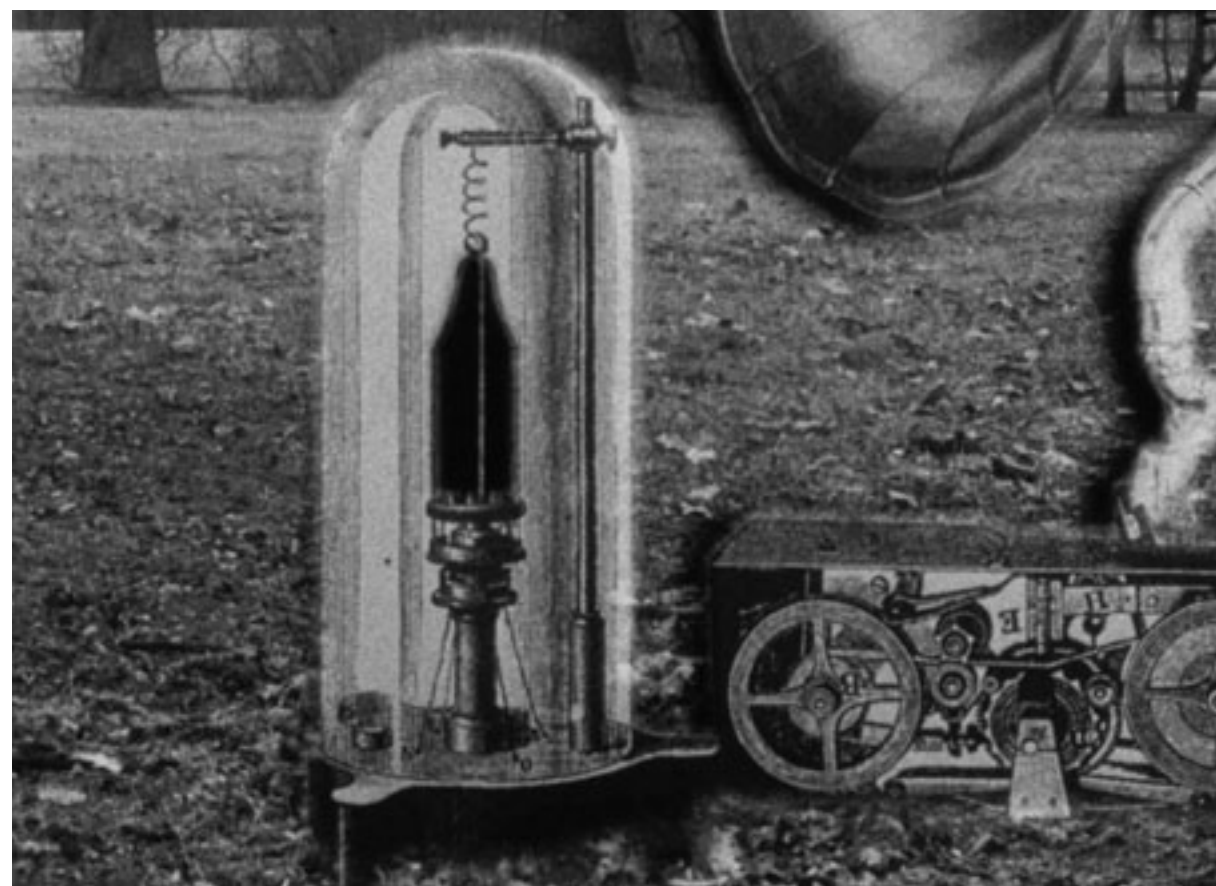
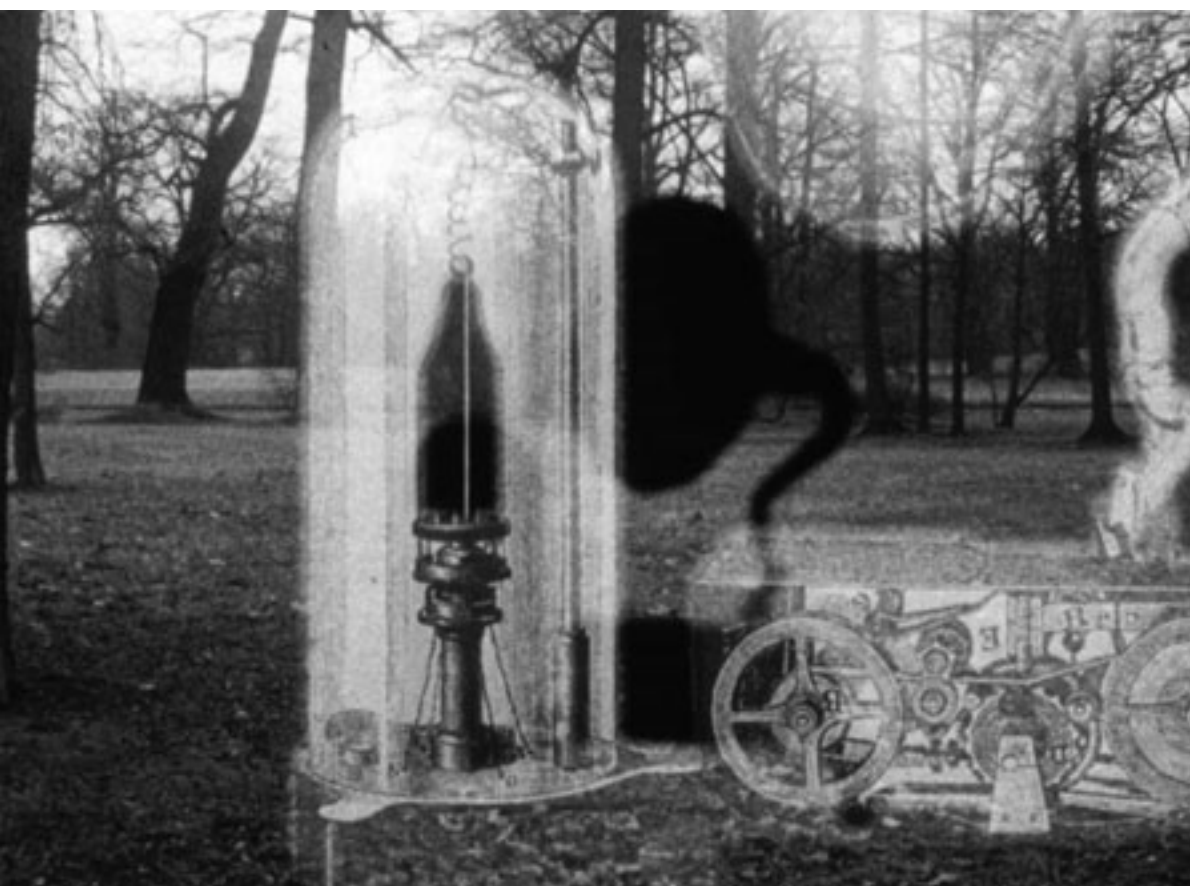
<sup>6</sup> Mark Tucker, “Of Men and Mountains: Ives in the Adirondacks” James Peter Burkholder ed. *Charles Ives and His World* (Princeton University Press: 1996) p. 187. The music was left unfinished by Ives and recorded after his death using several orchestras and conductors simultaneously.



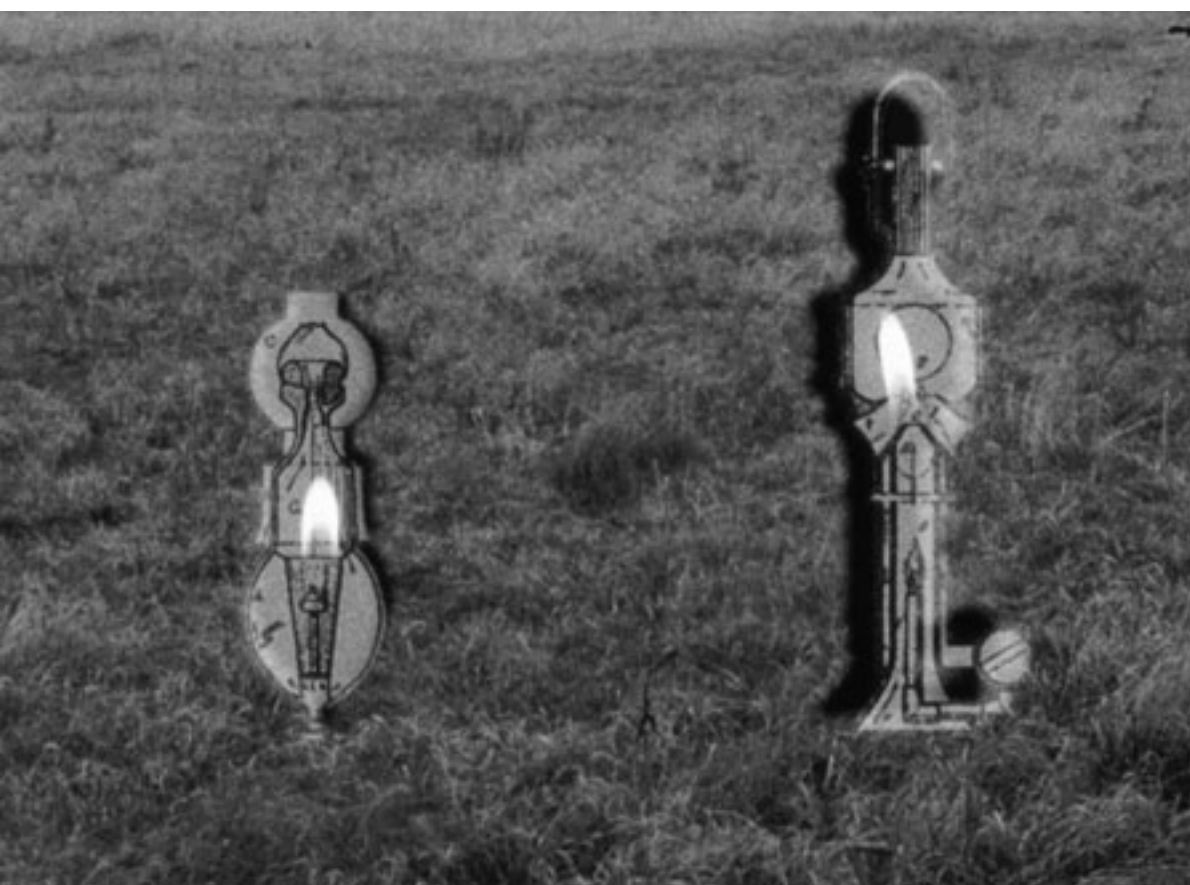
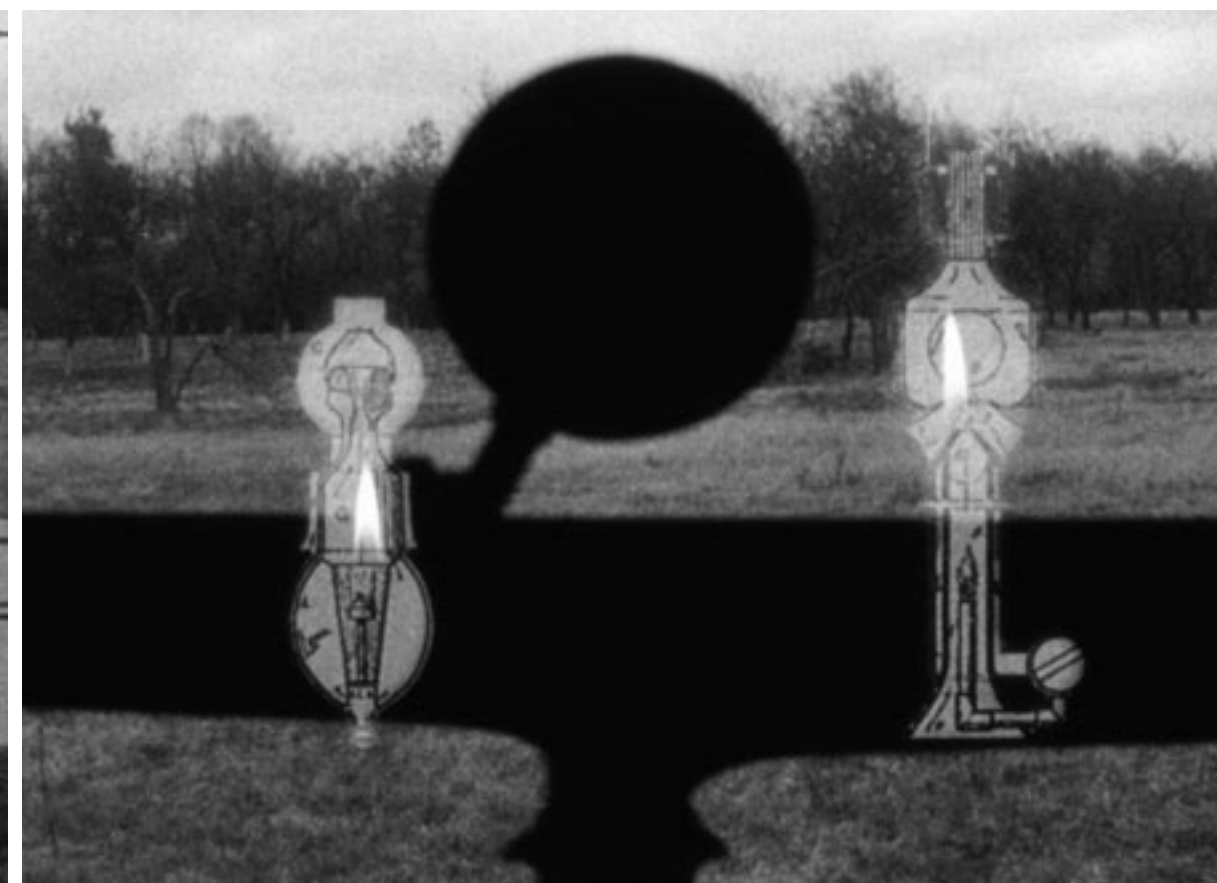
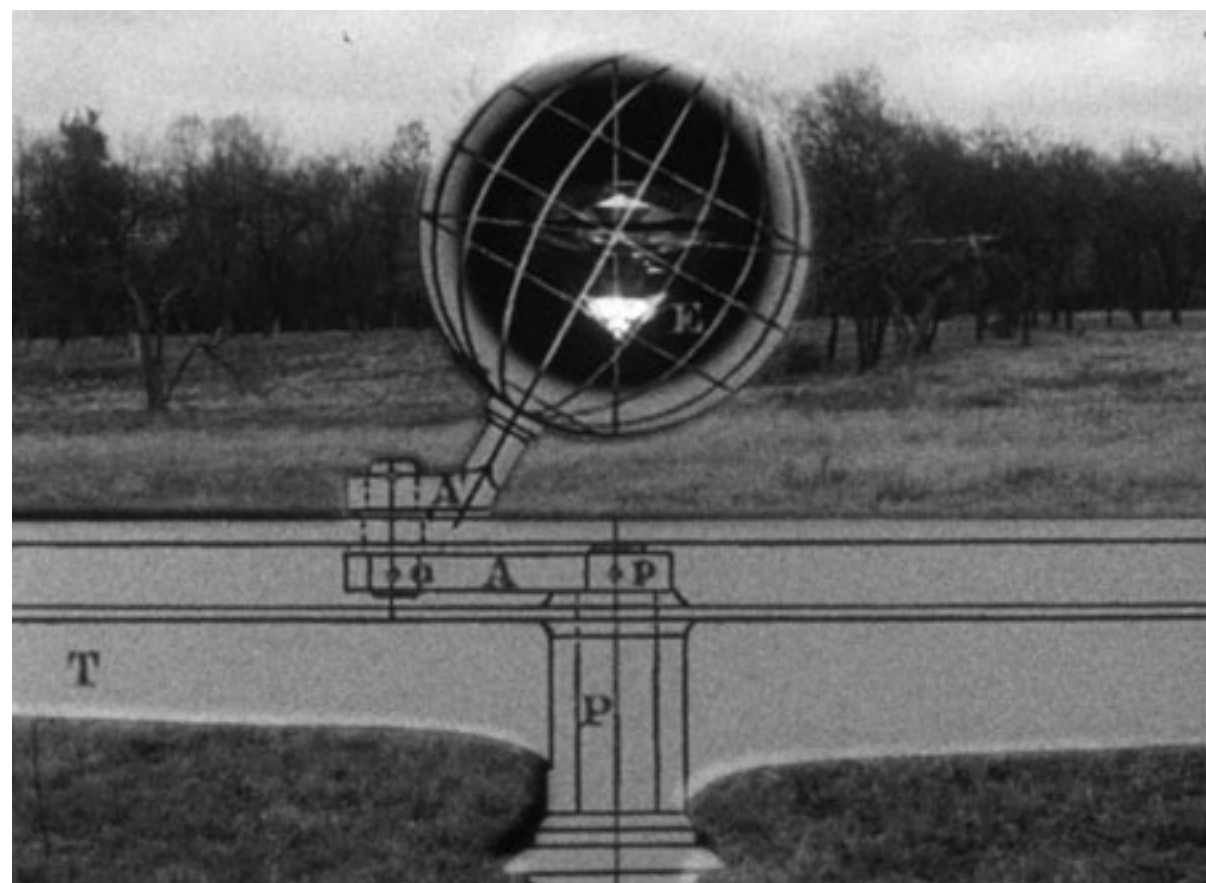


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 Stills from *Der Garten des M. Lerefnac*, 2008,  
 16mm film, b/w, silent, 8:42 min.





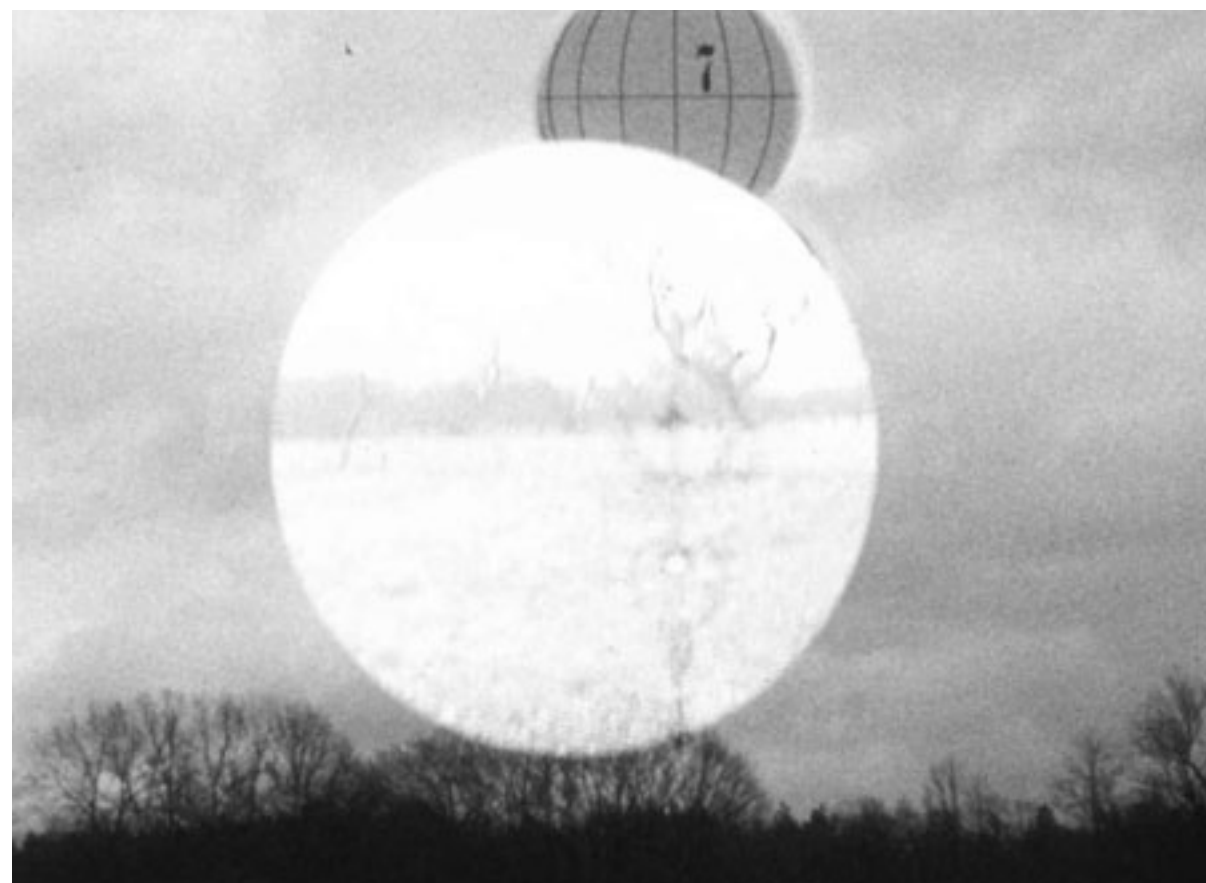






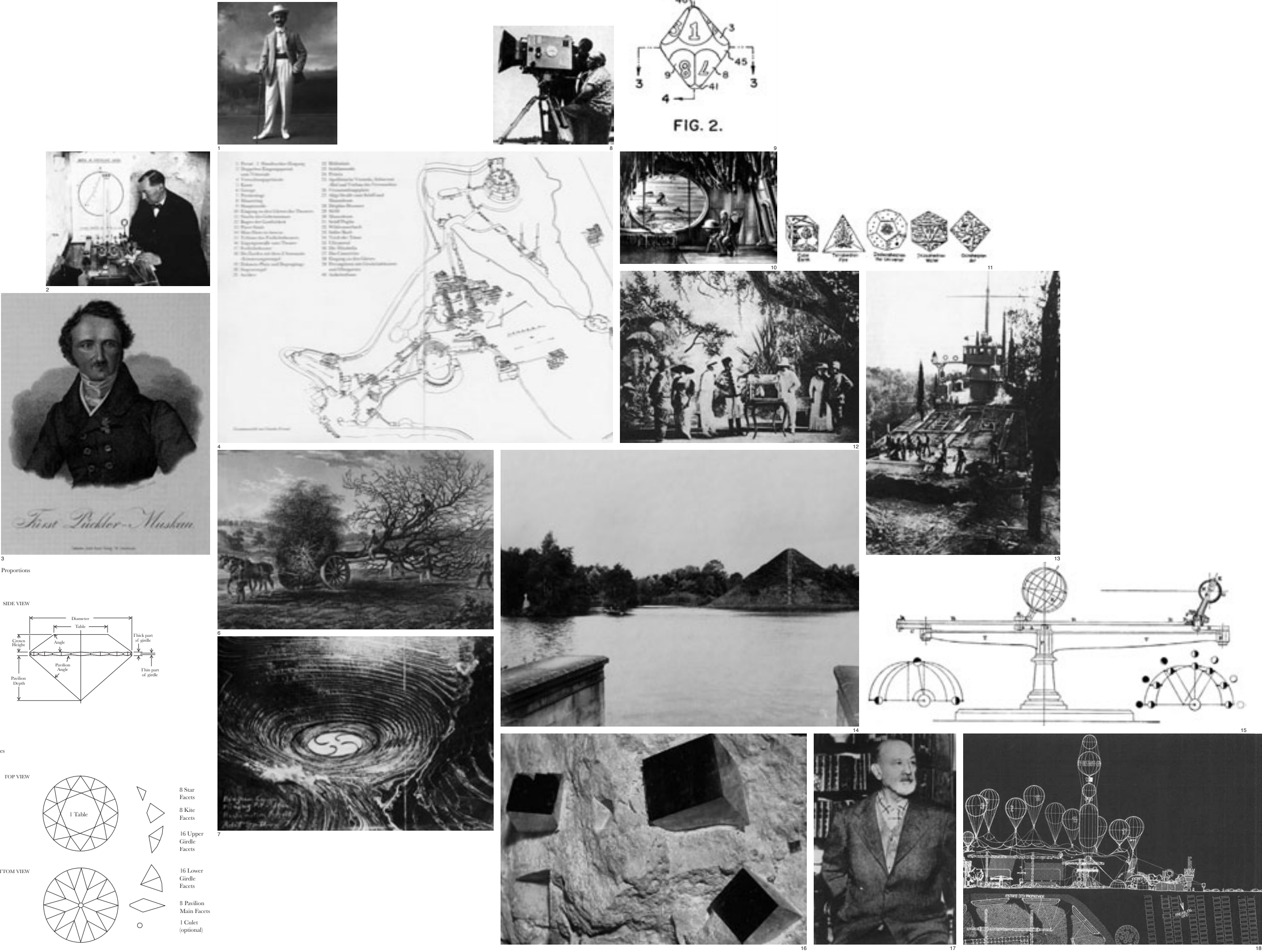








1 Raymond Roussel, undated. 2 John Johnston Shaw (1873–1948), with his Milne-Shaw Seismograph of 1913. 3 Count Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau, around 1838. 4 Plan of Gabriele D'Annunzio's park: *Vittoriale degli italiani*, built between 1921 and 1938. 5 Diamond proportions and facet names, for the round brilliant cut. 6 Historic drawing of Pückler's tree transplantation, undated. 7 Robert Smithson, *Bingham Copper Mining Pit, Utah, Reclamation Project*, 1973. 8 Karel Zeman at work, around 1950. 9 Drawing from Patent for Dice. 10 Still from: *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne*, by Karel Zeman, 1958. 11 Platonic solids as drawn in Kepler's *Mysterium Cosmographicum*. 12 Stage performance of Raymond Roussel *Impressions d'Afrique*, 1912. 13 Installation of *The Ship Puglia* at Gabriele D'Annunzio's park *Il Vittoriale degli Italiani*, around 1925, photograph from the archive of the Vittoriale. 14 Carl Franz Josef Metzner: *Tumulus, Grabstätte des Fürsten Pückler*, Branitz, around 1888–1863. 15 Prof. C. W. Maccord, *Improved Lunarian*, 1884. 16 Pyrite cubes in mother rock. 17 Charles Ives (1874–1954), undated. 18 Archigram, *Instant city project*, 1969–1970.





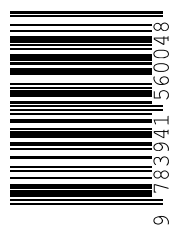
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