Bauhaus Construct

Fashioning Identity, Discourse and Modernism

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Contents

Chapter 7

Excavating Surface

On the Repair and Revision of László Moholy-Nagy's *Z VII* (1926)

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The paintings of László Moholy-Nagy have hardly ever attracted the kind of attention his other works have garnered. He secured his reputation as an artist less on the strength of his paintings and more on the theoretical ingenuity of his various experimental projects. He ordered enamel panels from a sign factory and exhibited them as *EM1*, *EM2*, and *EM3* at a show of his paintings at the Galerie der Sturm in 1924.[1] Derived from the German word for enamel, *Emaille*, the title emulated the language of industrial production, mimicking its seemingly anonymous and systematic logic. The critic Adolf Behne argues in an article from 1924 that these works, in their radically reduced aesthetic vocabulary, suggest a future when art would no longer remain the domain of the privileged but would become accessible to all. Anyone, Behne muses, might one day be able to place a telephone call to order paintings as durable as street signs, factory direct.[2] Moholy-Nagy integrated this imaginative scenario in his retrospective account of the works' origin twenty years after the fact, an account which inaugurated their more common name, the *Telephone Pictures*.[3] At the Bauhaus, where Moholy-Nagy taught from 1923 to 1928, he flaunted his enthusiasm for photography and was seen by his fellow masters as an enemy of painting.[4] He declared on several occasions, most notably in *Painting, Photography, Film* (1925), that in the face of new technologically sophisticated media, and of photography especially, painting cannot help but become an anachronism.[5] In these years, he would claim that not only was painting doomed to obsolescence but art, narrowly understood as an autonomous realm of

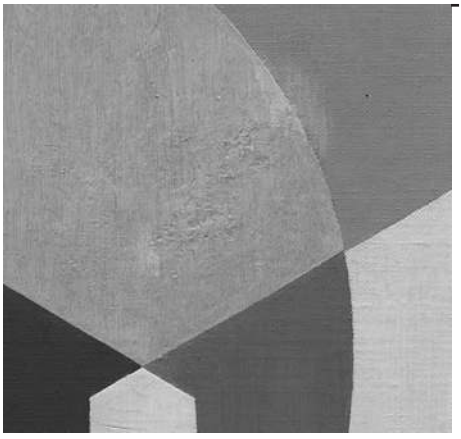
creative activity, must too be abandoned.[6] Moholy-Nagy would stop painting altogether in 1928 in order to focus on developing new technologies that would enable artists to work with the possibilities of light.

Given the trajectory of his artistic career of the 1920s, it is clear why his contemporaries and more recent scholars have viewed Moholy-Nagy as an artist for whom painting was nothing more than a dusty historical relic, to be replaced with new media commensurate with the demands of the modern industrial world. This narrative of Moholy-Nagy's artistic career has been shaped by the perception that his artistic project moved from a preoccupation with painting in pigment to painting in pure light, following a progressive arc of technologically-mediated dematerialization.[7] Over the course of the 1920s, it would seem that Moholy-Nagy grew ever more impatient with the intractable limitations of easel painting—its messy materiality, its static nature, its problematic surface prone to damage and to the vicissitudes of the hand.

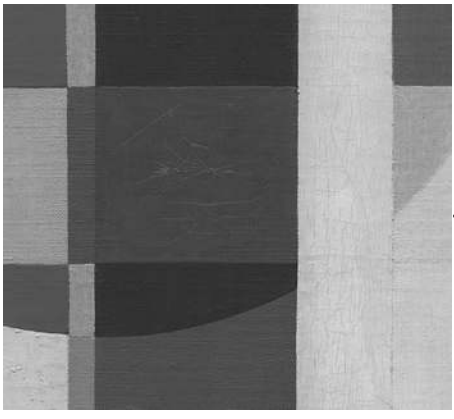
Looking at an oil painting such as *Z VII* (1926), a work which hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, this teleology appears to ring true (Figure 7.1). The surface of the painting has a provisional, slapdash feel to it. An imprecisely spaced pencil grid has been inscribed on the surface of a gray plane. Along points of intersection, uneven dabs of blue paint have been applied (Figure 7.1a). The expanse of haphazardly applied blue dots cannot help but foreground the imprecision of the hand and underscore the tedious temporality of this manual work. Unlike enamel, its uneven surface, pockmarked by years of abrasions and losses, speaks to the material fragility of painting. Patches of mismatched pigment betray several campaigns of repair and restoration, some of which are documented in the provenance (Figure 7.1b).[8] Even if we try to imagine away these smaller blemishes, there is one area of damage we cannot overlook. A section of the circle is distended, swollen like a scar marking an old wound (Figure 7.1c). A photograph of the back of the canvas shows that the fabric itself had been rent and a white paste had been applied to it, perhaps to seal or to stabilize the rip.[9] And that bulge in the circle, struggling to conceal the tear in the canvas, highlights how unwieldy thick, gooey paint is, how it impedes the production of immaterial effects. *Z VII* seems to testify, point for point, the reasons why Moholy-Nagy would eventually abandon painting in 1928. After all, why paint, when factories could theoretically produce pictures impervious to damage by executing them on cheap, durable, industrial supports? Why paint, when the camera captures the world with such breathtaking facility and speed? Why paint, when light could be made to dance on walls with the right technology?

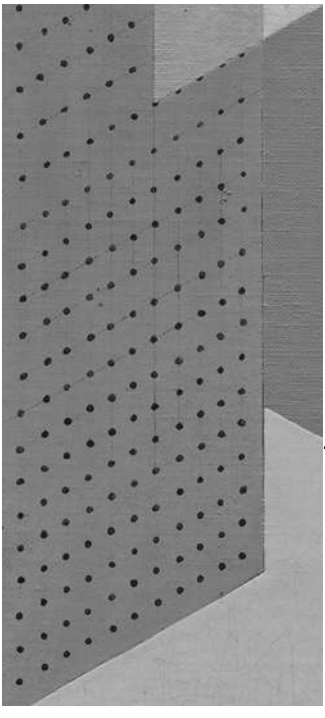
However, Moholy-Nagy returned to painting in 1930, after two

7.1c
Detail: gray circle with patched tear

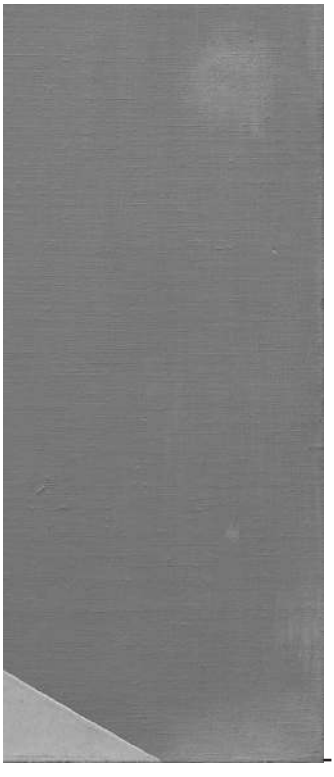


7.1d
Detail: center dark red square. These drying cracks result from the application of multiple layers of paint without each drying thoroughly.

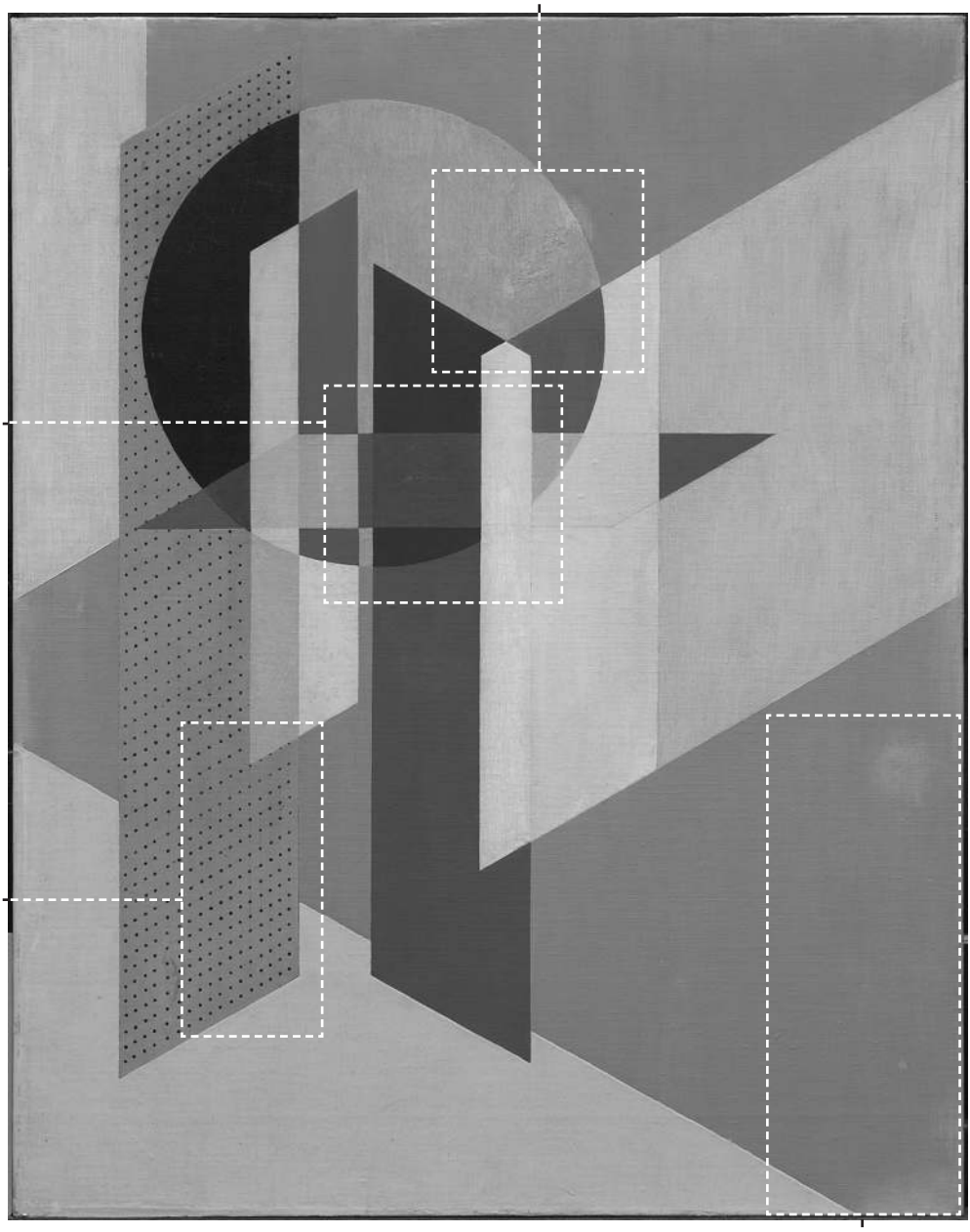




7.1a
Detail: inside of lower parallelogram with dots overlaid on a penciled grid. Traces of blood-red visible as the faint outline of black here along the edges of the plane.



7.1b
Detail: lower right edge of canvas, revealing provenance-documented repairs.



7.1
László Moholy-Nagy, *Z VII*, 1926,
oil on canvas, 95.3 × 76.2 cm (37½ × 30 in)

enormously productive years curating photography shows, designing stage sets, and promoting emerging media through his publications and editorial contributions. He began to paint once more after he achieved his long-standing dream to produce a kinetic light display machine. This is a fact that disrupts the familiar narrative of Moholy-Nagy as the consummate artist-turned-engineer, rejecting the brush in favor of the machine; abandoning painting in favor of photography. Moholy-Nagy's concomitant investment in painting and in new technological media has baffled generations of critics and scholars. It has been seen as an inconsistency in his thought—or, worse, as a retreat from the radical positions he took in the 1920s.[10] Even in the early 1930s, Moholy-Nagy understood and anticipated the perceived discrepancy between his stated project of the 1920s and his artistic practice of the 1930s. Writing in October 1934 to his second wife, Sibyl, after seeing an exhibition of his work in Utrecht, he laments,

> there are so few people who really can grasp [my paintings] in their reality and because they don't know anything about the effort put into their making and nothing about the overarching problems [*gesamtproblematik*] with which these paintings engage … a gallerist in utrecht told me that because of my photograms, the newspaper there sent a photography expert to the exhibition who didn't have the slightest idea as to how to begin dealing with the paintings.[11]

The reception of his Utrecht show underscored the extent to which the reputation Moholy-Nagy cultivated over the course of the 1920s overshadowed any reception of his paintings. He realized that his paintings appeared to his public to be incommensurate with his aesthetic project altogether.

Z VII has largely eluded critical attention. It was in a private collection until 2007 and had been shown only in a handful of small exhibitions over the past few decades, probably in no small part because of its problematic condition.[12] However, as this study will show, this particular painting, precisely because of its damage, undergoes a number of transformations and comes to assume an extremely important place in Moholy-Nagy's thinking about the interrelatedness of different media. In 1934, in the same month he expressed his frustration with the reception of his paintings in Utrecht, he began work on a retrospective monograph, a special issue of the journal *Telehor*, which offered an overview of his artistic career. Incorporating a selection of his theoretical writings and a range of illustrations of his painting, photography, film, and sculpture, Moholy-Nagy saw the publication as an opportunity to describe the relationships among these different practices, to offer an overview of what he called

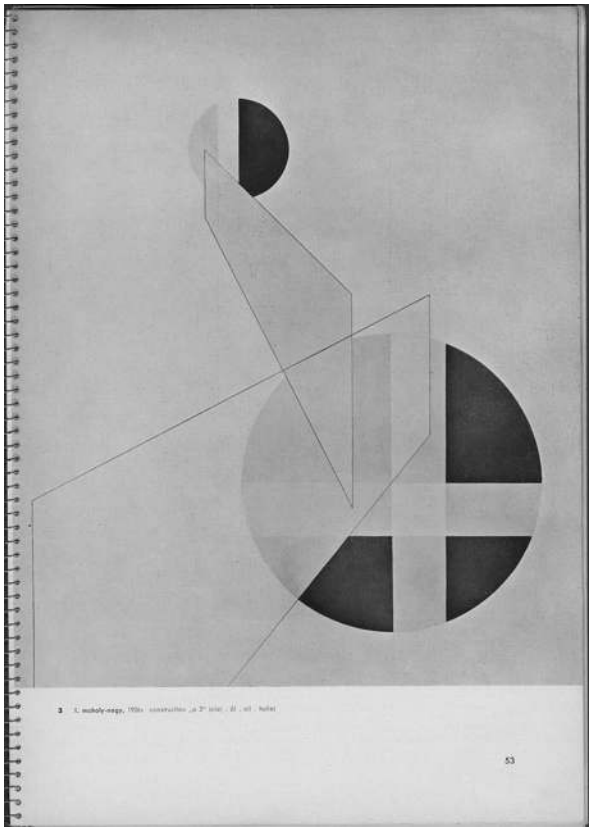
his *gesamtproblematik*. Serving as the cover image for this publication is a color reproduction of *Z VII* in its repaired state but shown horizontally, rotated 90 degrees clockwise from its original vertical orientation (Figure 7.2). It will emerge that sedimented on the surface of *Z VII* are the traces of Moholy-Nagy's struggle to clarify the place of painting in his artistic project.

Z VII is a curious hybrid, at once representative of his work from the 1920s and wholly anomalous. Judging from its title and composition, it is absolutely a work of the 1920s. The composition *Z VII* is similar to a picture such as *A XX* (1924), which is structured by the presence of a dominant circle underpinning a complex of suspended planes (Figure 7.3).[13] However, the use of color and the achieved surface on *Z VII* is completely foreign to Moholy-Nagy's paintings of the 1920s. In paintings of the period, his compositions provide the scaffolding for his exploration of effects of translucency, transparency, and luminosity. The colors, often within a restricted chromatic range, are all deployed to produce the illusion of an architectonic structure hovering in an infinite space or to render in paint the

7.2
László Moholy-Nagy, *ZVII*, 1926, as published in *Telehor* 1:1–2 (1936): cover

effect of overlapping shafts of light. *Z VII* feels comparatively obstinate in its refusal to achieve the effects so prevalent in his paintings of that time (Figure 7.1). Unlike the smooth, delicate surfaces of his works of the 1920s, which sought to suppress the traces of the hand—of obvious brushwork—*Z VII* is a painting with several rapid shifts in facture, moving jarringly, for instance, from the heavy impasto of the gray disc to the thinly rendered expanse of brilliant red constituting the plane jutting below the circle, running vertically down the center of the picture. The vertical strip of uninterrupted, viscid white cuts partially into the right side of that red plane and conjoins it to a pane of pink. The opacity of that white strip repudiates what should read structurally as a convincing area of translucent overlap. That impervious white disrupts the coherence of the central structure. Here, the planes start feeling like discrete shapes, ratcheted together to constitute a compact, almost sculptural figure.

There is evidence to suggest that the differences between *Z VII* and Moholy-Nagy's paintings from the 1920s emerged as a result of repair. *Z VII*, as noted above, suffered a trauma to the canvas. A tear, several



7.3
László Moholy-Nagy, *A XX*, 1924, captioned as *A2*, 1926 in *Telehor* 1:1–2 (1936): 53

centimeters long, was roughly patched. The swell in the circle marks the area where the application of thick viscous paint attempts to conceal the rip—paint distributed across the circle with broad, unbroken strokes applied with a stiff-bristled brush (Figure 7.1c). If this were simply a matter of patching up a tear, we would expect to see a more localized instance of stitching and not this kind of vigorous, if not obsessive, repainting pursued in the whole of that sector. The dramatic nature of the intervention suggests that Moholy-Nagy repaired this bit of damage with his own hand. This is an interpretation borne out by the fact that the paint and technique used to fix this bit of damage is quite different from those deployed in the areas repaired in documented, posthumous campaigns of restoration. According to curatorial files that detail the provenance, *Z VII's* dimensions were expanded by about a half a centimeter to fit a frame bought for it by the collector in 1991. The paint used to fill in the newly exposed edges of the expanded picture is discernible, for the color has shifted over the last few years and no longer matches the painting itself. Under ultraviolet light, the difference between the original paints and those used in restoration is even more evident (Figure 7.4).[14] The restoration paints fluoresce a dirty yellow, which appears in the black-and-white illustration in this volume as

7.4
László Moholy-Nagy, *Z VII*, 1926, pre-treatment photograph (under UV light)

a haze along the perimeter of the canvas, intruding too in isolated cloudy patches in the lower right quadrant, and at the halo emitting from the lower outer circumference of the gray circle. By contrast, the tear with its surrounding areas within the circle fluoresces a streaky lilac, its striations integrated, even if unevenly, into the structure of the brushwork spread across the gray sector. Unlike other areas of subsequent conservation treatment where repairs and restoration are identifiable as discrete patches, this entire section of the circle was treated with a continuous, highly impastoed coat of paint.

There is ample evidence that Moholy-Nagy cleaned and restored many of his own works throughout his life, especially in his years in exile during the 1930s in the Netherlands, London, and Chicago.[15] However, in this instance, Moholy-Nagy's intervention cannot be characterized as an act aimed at conserving the original painting. The gray circle was not restored but repainted; it appears that other portions of the canvas were too. The opacity of the thick, slick, cold gray paint constituting the ground for the network of hastily applied blue dots seeks to deny the existence of another color underneath it. However, abrasion has excavated the blood red that the layer of gray was supposed to suppress, a red that also peeks out along the outer borders of that plane. In the reproduction in this volume, that red reads like the barest traces of a black outline at the edges of the dotted plane (Figure 7.1a). The relief-like black, the hard, glossy, beige planes at the painting's corners, and the central dark red square all share in an insistent opacity. That central red square puckers from the application of impatient layers of paint atop one another without allowing each to dry thoroughly (Figure 7.1d). The impulse to apply coat after coat of opaque paint to the canvas appears to have been motivated by the repair of the picture, coming about as if to balance the thickly plastered surface burying that long lesion in the circle.

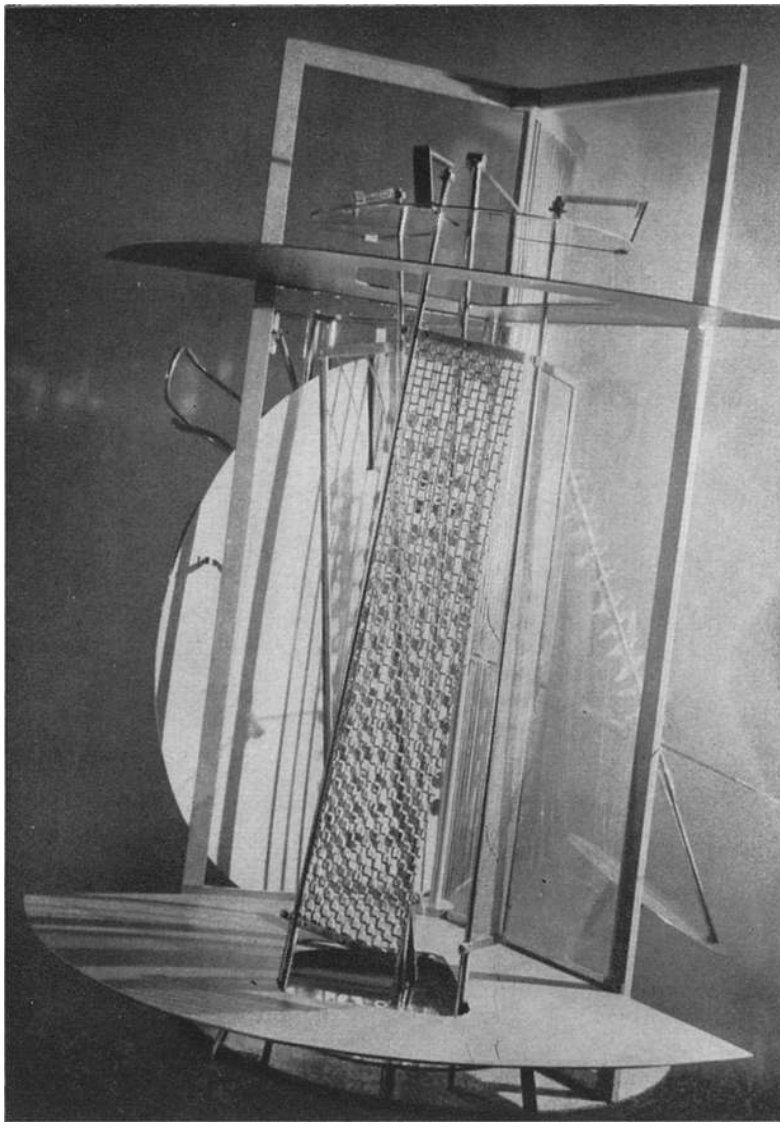
No exact date can be given for the changes made to *Z VII*. However, the repaired painting, given a new patchwork coat of colors, gains a special significance by 1936. *Z VII* graces the cover of *Telehor*, a journal publication that also served as one of the few retrospective monographs published during Moholy-Nagy's lifetime (Figure 7.2). The project came out of an invitation extended by the Czech architect František Kalivoda, who asked Moholy-Nagy to organize a show of his art in Brno, in then Czechoslovakia, and to submit a selection of reproductions of his work and writings.[16] Moholy-Nagy was in the process of writing his introductory essay, an open letter, for the publication in the same month he wrote his wife about his alarming encounter in Utrecht with the puzzled photography expert who could not grasp his paintings.[17]

Kalivoda envisioned *Telehor* as a forum to explore new international developments in visual art. The internationalism of its ambition is evident from the fact that all of the texts—Sigfried Giedion's introduction, Moholy-Nagy's writings, and Kalivoda's postscript—were all translated from their German original and published in their entirety in the same volume in French, English, and Czech. As Kalivoda underscores in his postscript, *Telehor* was not intended to be a monographic series. Rather, he hoped to produce thematically-oriented issues that would address crucial problems facing contemporary artists. He maintains that the singular focus on Moholy-Nagy's work is justified by the fact that his oeuvre comprises several different media and practices all engaged with the problem of light, which Kalivoda calls the "decisive artistic problem of the next few decades, if not centuries."[18] For Kalivoda, the importance of light cannot be overstated, for it is the condition of possibility for any vision. The introduction of electric light led to commercial uses in the metropolis, demonstrating the efficacy of this new technology. Kalivoda argues that Moholy-Nagy's work offers a glimpse into how light technologies might one day be developed to help cultivate a politically progressive vision.[19]

The one work by Moholy-Nagy that most obviously addresses the aims stated by Kalivoda is his *Light Prop for an Electrical Stage* (*Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne*, 1930), which was unveiled at the Werkbund Exhibition in Paris in 1930 (Figure 7.5).[20] The *Light Prop* was shown in that context as a prototype for further industrial development. It represented the culmination of a dream for Moholy-Nagy, the fulfillment of his desire to break free of the limitations of easel painting. With the invention of this machine, the generation of light, color and spatial effects need no longer be restricted to the illusions produced within a single painting. Moholy-Nagy could manipulate pure luminous color through the complex interaction of the light generated by electric bulbs and reflected dynamically off the machine's rotating polished surfaces. The machine was destined for the stage, a space far more expansive and inclusive than the picture gallery. Rather than a discrete picture for the single viewer who might pause and contemplate it, Moholy-Nagy's *Light Prop* promised to reach a broader audience, perhaps even a mass audience ready to respond to the new effects it could generate by immersing them in a new environment. Moholy-Nagy's preoccupation with this project is rooted in his long-standing belief that the task of the artist under modernity is not to produce individual autonomous works of art but to transform human vision. At stake in transforming vision is the conceit that a social and political revolution cannot come by simply supplying the masses with the correct political message. Instead, what is necessary is the fundamental reconfiguration of

how an individual perceives the world, which would analogously transform how he comports himself towards it.[21] To reconfigure perception, the artist must mobilize all that science and industry have to offer, and use technology as a catalyst in this process. Kalivoda's postscript echoes these commitments in his description of the urgency of Moholy-Nagy's artistic project.

Curiously, where Kalivoda's postscript emphasizes the future potential of Moholy-Nagy's projects, Moholy-Nagy's introductory text for the volume, an open letter addressing the editor's questions written in



7.5
László Moholy-Nagy, *Das Lichtrequisit*, 1922–1930, as published in *Telehor* 1:1–2 (1936): 81

1934, orients itself to the past. This is perhaps not altogether strange, as part of what the publication aims to do is to offer an overview of Moholy-Nagy's work. However, the text Moholy-Nagy pens is strangely defensive in its tone.

> It opens,
>
> dear kalivoda,
>
> you are surprised that i am again arranging a growing number of exhibitions of both my earlier and more recent work. it is true that for a number of years i had ceased to exhibit, or even to paint. i felt that it was senseless to employ means that i could only regard as out of date and insufficient for the new requirements of art at a time when new technical media were still waiting to be explored.[22]

Later in the same text, he writes,

> you are acquainted with my light requisits and my "lightplay black-white-grey." It took a great deal of work to assemble all this material, and yet it was only a very modest beginning, an almost negligible step forward. nor was i able fully to carry out my experiments even within this limited sphere. you have every right to ask, why i gave in, why i am painting and exhibiting pictures, after once having recognized what were the real tasks confronting the "painter" of today.[23]

The tone of his letter throughout is striking. We should bear in mind that this publication was Moholy-Nagy's first retrospective monograph, and Kalivoda, the editor, touted him as one of the most important avant-garde artists of his generation.[24] One would expect, under these circumstances, something more celebratory, or at least a more neutrally descriptive account of his career than a text that underscores the failure to achieve his own stated aims.

Moholy-Nagy's letter opens with the admission that his abandonment of painting and pursuit of projects such as the *Light Prop* at the end of the 1920s amounted to little more than "a very modest beginning, an almost negligible step forward." He describes the possibilities and potential of "orchestrated symphonies of light," "light frescoes," and the illumination of the night sky with monumental "architecture[s] of light."[25] With regard to these projects, which he would never realize, he writes,

> it is an irrefutable fact that the material dependence of the artist on capital, industry and working equipment presents an

> insurmountable obstacle today to the successful creation of a true architecture of light. … while possession of a few brushes and tubes of color enables the painter in his studio to be a sovereign creator, the designer of light displays is only too often the slave of technical and other material factors, a mere pawn in the hands of chance patrons.[26]

Moholy-Nagy offers a sober description of the limitations that technologically-mediated art poses by virtue of its technical and capital demands. These lines were written in the midst of a global economic crisis, at a moment when Moholy-Nagy's practical hopes of finding the resources to advance his ambitious projects had already been dashed. The *Light Prop* was built by a licensed mechanic, designed by an architect, and funded by the German industrial conglomerate Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG). It offered a model for bringing art into a collaborative relationship with technology and industry. However, the actual prototype produced was never a fully functional machine. It was extremely fragile and unstable. Its creaky gears got stuck, parts came dislodged, and its primitive motor failed upon multiple occasions.[27] Nonetheless, Moholy-Nagy hoped that his project to bring into being a workable light machine for the stage would find investors, but no one came forward to fund additional research or development. Plans to showcase the *Light Prop* at a "Contemporary Room" (*Raum der Gegenwart*), which Moholy-Nagy conceived as a pendant to El Lissitzky's "Abstract Cabinet" in Hannover, fell through for lack of funds.[28]

Discernible in Moholy-Nagy's open letter is his reluctant acknowledgment that the transformation of human vision by way of technology has inherent limits. Such a transformation called for capital and expertise he could never amass on his own. He understood that to pursue such means would demand compromises he was unwilling to make. It would force him to become nothing more than "a mere pawn in the hands of chance patrons."[29] At stake in his return to painting is a desire to carve out a space to explore the possibilities of creating "new vision" without obliging him to accumulate resources his more technologically ambitious projects required. In a sense, he saw that painting could become technological media's surrogate because it need not be chained to means necessary to execute the kinds of projects he dreamed of pursuing in the 1920s.

Despite the fact the *Light Prop* was never further developed, Moholy-Nagy remained preoccupied with this work for the rest of his life, transporting the unwieldy machine to his various stations of exile.[30] It is also reproduced in *Telehor* several times as photographs, sketches, and

film stills.[31] This preoccupation with the *Light Prop* is also evident in the kinds of effects he sought to achieve in his paintings of the 1930s. During the early years of that decade, Moholy-Nagy wrote with much pleasure about his new paintings to his colleagues and friends, including the likes of Franz Roh, art historian and theorist of photography. In March 1934, Moholy-Nagy writes,

> i've been painting a few very nice paintings on highly polished sheets of silberit [a type of aluminum]. an interesting effect: the colored planes float in an abstract space that is constituted only through reflections and mirroring.[32]

In the 1930s, Moholy-Nagy explored painting both on canvas and on new synthetic and metallic supports he bought with the little money he had or salvaged from his freelance commercial exhibition design projects. He moved away entirely from the architectonic compositions of the 1920s, opting instead for free-floating shapes against fathomless grounds with barely visible lines, sometimes incised on those supports, to tether those figures to one another. One example of this kind of painting can be seen in his *Construction AL 6* (1933–1934), from exactly the moment Moholy-Nagy writes to Roh (Figure 7.6).[33] It is also one of the eight paintings reproduced in color along with *Z VII* in *Telehor*. Here, Moholy-Nagy worked on an aluminum plate with five identically sized cut-out circular holes. This plate is secured with brackets, which hold it in front of a painted wooden plank. The holes in the painting provide areas where real shadows are cast, where light qualities shift with the changes in the surrounding. And although the painting cannot move, Moholy-Nagy activated the polished metal surface through the application of patiently engraved lines and circles in the metal. This carefully and deliberately scratched surface invites the viewer to move in order to catch the light, glinting off at different angles from the painting.

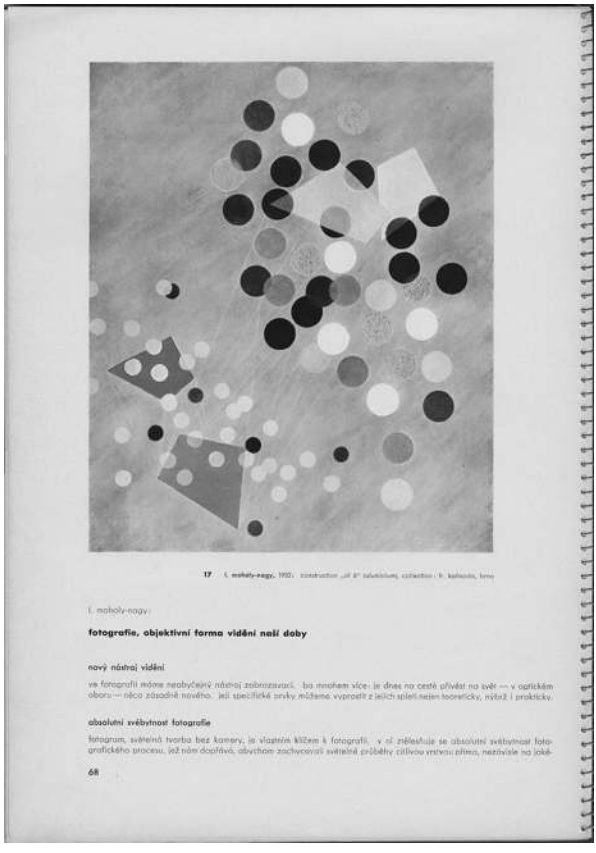
There are no obvious affinities between *Z VII* and *AL 6*. One is executed on canvas, the other on aluminum, and they do not share much by way of their composition. But the two paintings are linked by their preoccupation with the *Light Prop*. Seen in relation to the machine, *Z VII's* anomalies begin to make sense (Figures 7.1, 7.5). The blue dots spread across the parallelogram bear a likeness to the perforations on a metal plate caught against a dark shadowed ground, akin to the variously perforated panels that comprise the body of the *Light Prop* or the kinds of metal sheets he affixed to his paintings of the 1930s. And the circle, which was so obsessively repainted with layers of thick, gray paint, starts to feel like a textured metal disc. It is rendered as if in movement, partially enshrouded in shadow and partially caught behind translucent planes. The planes

coalesce, not into an architectonic structure, but into a near-hallucinogenic vision of what a levitating light machine of the future might look like, freed of sticky gears and unreliable engines. What this painting makes present is not what the *Light Prop* is, but what it might become.

Kalivoda writes in his postscript for *Telehor* that the journal seeks to introduce Moholy-Nagy's work because it shows future potential of "light as an artistic medium" through the exploration of new "technical possibilities."[34] As much as Kalivoda understands painting to be a part of Moholy-Nagy's project, he sees it as merely provisional. He writes,

> in our opinion the painters of today have an important educational responsibility: for painting proper is a training both for the artist and for the public. yet it can be no more than a transitional phase, leading to new and higher forms of expression.[35]

It is then all the more striking that what graces the cover of *Telehor* is not a picture of the *Light Prop,* arguably Moholy-Nagy's most famous



17 / l. moholy-nagy, 1932.: construction „al 6" (abstraktní), collection: fr. kalivoda, brno

l. moholy-nagy:

fotografie, objektivní forma vidění naší doby

nový nástroj vidění

ve fotografii máme neobyčejný nástroj zobrazovací. ba mnohem více: je dnes na cestě přivést na svět — v optickém oboru — něco zásadně nového. její specifické prvky můžeme vyprostit z jejich spleti nejen teoreticky, nýbrž i prakticky.

absolutní svébytnost fotografie

fotogram, světelná tvorba bez kamery, je vlastním klíčem k fotografii. v ní zřetelněji se absolutní svébytnost fotografického procesu, jež nám doplňává, abychom zachycovali světelné průběhy citlivou vrstvou přímo, nezávisle na jaké-

68

7.6
László Moholy-Nagy, *AL6*, 1932, as published in *Telehor* 1:1–2 (1936): 68

contribution to the exploration of light technology, but a painting worked in a medium which Kalivoda describes as "transitional" (Figure 7.2). Although this painting bears affinities to the *Light Prop*, publishing the reproduction horizontally disrupts its direct association with Moholy-Nagy's light machine. Turned on its side, the planes expand laterally, the sculptural quality so palpable in its vertical orientation disperses. If we examine a photograph of the painting's verso, it turns out that the vertical orientation was perhaps rejected. The instructions given on the reverse to hang the painting vertically are given as "OBEN" and "HAUT," which correspond linguistically to the German and French contexts where Moholy-Nagy showed his works until the mid-1930s. The arrow pointing in that direction was crossed out with double Xs. The arrows for the horizontal hanging are accompanied with the English word "TOP."[36] It uses the language of Moholy-Nagy's exile in London and of his adopted home of Chicago, where he died in 1946 just a month after becoming an American citizen. Moholy-Nagy decided upon this orientation certainly by 1936, when *Z VII* was shown at the London Gallery, hung horizontally as on the cover of *Telehor*.[37] This reorientation is significant, for it captures Moholy-Nagy's growing reservations about the actual potential of the *Light Prop* by the mid-1930s, reservations he expressed in his own introductory text to *Telehor*. The *Light Prop* was supposed to integrate industry, technology, and art together for the progressive transformation of vision, but it also became an emblem for the impossibility of that project. For Moholy-Nagy, it represented something of an impasse, "nothing more than a very modest beginning, an almost negligible step forward."[38] The rotation of the canvas might be seen, then, as an attempt to conceal that painting's relationship to the problematic legacy of the *Light Prop*. However, in another sense, Moholy-Nagy might have discovered another way to express the fusion of art and technology in the service of "new vision." To publish the painting on the cover of *Telehor* horizontally and in full color, he marshals yet another technology to redeem his vision. In the remaining pages, it will emerge that color photography comes to serve as a means to recuperate Moholy-Nagy's projects of the past.[39]

The year *Telehor* is published, Moholy-Nagy writes in a letter to his friend and fellow painter Paul Citroën:

> i've incidentally recently been on a very good painting streak. i've been painting for a few months now with real courage and excitement. mainly i've been working out paintings on rhodoid, a kind of celluloid … it's been great fun … i think one more step and i've figured out a new way to put color film on a new path.[40]

The stakes of being on a good painting streak have to do with Moholy-Nagy's desire to work out the possibilities of new materials. But in the same paragraph, while still talking about painting, Moholy-Nagy ends by expressing his hope that he is close to finding a "new path" for color film, that is, color photography. This is a medium that Moholy-Nagy was deeply invested in already in the mid-1930s, having experimented beginning in 1934 with the Dufaycolor process and later with Vivex while in London.[41]

Z VII, in its horizontal orientation, reproduced in full color on the cover of *Telehor*, is not merely an illustration. In a sense, the particular limitations of color reproduction have come to save the painting, to smooth out the obvious areas of damage and to reconfigure the odd spatial relationships within the picture. The thick opaque whites, in part because the print is tinged with yellow throughout, take on an airier quality on the cover. That warm tone in the reproduction helps shift the spatial relations within the picture, opening them up. The yellow plane, jutting out towards the lower right, which once registered like an orphaned extension, reads like a luminous plane of pure, golden light emitting forth from the complex. By rotating the painting and by exploiting a burgeoning technology and embracing its limitations, Moholy-Nagy found a way to mobilize the new medium of color reproduction and color photography to articulate a vision that could not have existed otherwise. It is through this process of experimentation that Moholy-Nagy begins to paint towards color photography.

There is something overdetermined about *Z VII*'s place on the cover of *Telehor*, a volume which seeks to provide a summary of an artistic project. Because of *Z VII*'s repair, its repainting, and its transfiguration through color photography, it offers the accrued history of Moholy-Nagy's hopes and disappointments. Sedimented on the surface of this painting are the traces of a struggle to render visible the possibilities and limitations of his *gesamtproblematik*. The *Light Prop* would never be put into production but still continued to serve Moholy-Nagy as a constant touchstone for his subsequent work. The gash in *Z VII* led to repairs that transformed it not only into a painting of the 1930s, but also a painting that guides Moholy-Nagy's forays into color photography. And the limitations of color reproductive technologies cast *Z VII* in yet another light, lending it a kind of luminous dynamism unavailable to the painting's patchwork surface.[42]

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Notes

1 The enamel paintings, *EM1*, *EM2,* and *EM3*, are listed in the catalog of the Sturm exhibition from 1924. Galerie der Sturm, *Moholy-Nagy, Hugo Scheiber, Gewebe aus Alt-Peru, Sturm-Gesamtschau* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1924). Exhibition installation photograph of the Sturm exhibition can be found in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), plate 236.

2 Adolf Behne, "Snob und Anti-Snob," *Die Weltbühne* 20 (1924): 235–6. Behne's suggestion that Moholy-Nagy's reduced aesthetic vocabulary lends itself particularly well to the production of art by industrial means, perhaps even mediated by telephonic transmission, provokes a number of ironic remarks. The editors at *Das Kunstblatt* ridiculed the seeming enthusiasm with which Moholy-Nagy, Behne, and the Bauhaus, which at that moment was located in Weimar, embraced the unity of art and technology. The editors portray them as such vitriolic enemies of any work of art produced by hand that they would dismiss even the lyric of Homer and Goethe in favor of poetry composed on the typewriter. "Bemerkungen," *Das Kunstblatt* 7, no. 3 (1924): 96. The fantasy of artistic production by telephonic correspondence is parodized in Hans Arp and El Lissitzky's *The Isms of Art*, where they write, "Now the production of works of art is judiciously so facilitated and simplified that nobody can do better than order his works by telephone from his bed, by a common painter." El Lissitzky and Hans Arp, *Die Kunstismen; Les Ismes de l'Art; The Isms of Art* (Munich and Leipzig: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1925), ix–x.

3 László Moholy-Nagy, "Abstract of an Artist," in *The New Vision, 1928 and Abstract of an Artist*, trans. Daphne Hoffmann, 4th rev. edn (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1947), 79. "Abstract of an Artist" was written in 1944 in English. This notion that Moholy-Nagy made the enamels by phone has had a powerful hold on the imagination. Despite the fact that during his lifetime these works were only referred to by their title *EM1*, *EM2*, *EM3* as *Enamel Paintings* or as *Enamel Pictures*, they are now more commonly known as *Telephone Pictures*.

4 Oskar Schlemmer to Otto Meyer, December 1925, in Oskar Schlemmer, *Diaries and Correspondences,* ed. Tut Schlemmer, trans. Krishna Winston (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 183–4. Conversation with László Moholy-Nagy as recounted by Ise Gropius, *Diary*, 6 November 1925, 93, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin.

5 László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1925), 5, 37.

6 Ibid., 13.

7 Moholy-Nagy invokes this development in a number of his publications, beginning already in the 1925 edition of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, where he discusses the potential that new technologies offer in shifting the exploration of color effects to the manipulation of pure color itself. Further underscoring the sense of a progressive development towards the manipulation of pure light as a medium is the title of the first section of the book: "Von der Pigmentmalerei bis zum reflektorischen geworfenen Lichtspiel." *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, 6–7. However, despite how polemical his claims might appear, he never explicitly argues in his writings that painting understood generally (*Malerei* as opposed to *Tafelbild*) would be rendered wholly obsolete. This is an aspect of his thinking that is often suppressed in the

reception of Moholy-Nagy's work. One striking example of this is in Christopher Phillips's indispensable anthology of key avant-garde sources in the history of photography. Introducing a lively debate on the relationship between painting and photography involving Ernő [Ernst] Kállai in the pages of the journal *i.10*, for which Moholy-Nagy served as photography and film editor, Phillips writes, "[Moholy-Nagy] accuses Kallai of a veiled attempt to rescue the craft of painting, which Moholy regards as obsolete in a machine age. Moholy insists that facture remains an important part of the photographic image, too—no longer in the form of 'coarse-grained pigment,' but as an increasingly sophisticated manipulation of light and shade, a true 'facture of light.'" Christopher Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 94. Moholy-Nagy's claims about painting in the text Phillips examines are far more nuanced in the German original. There, Moholy-Nagy critiques Kállai for wanting to preserve "representational painting" (*darstellerischen Malerei*). The text is not, as Phillips suggests, an attack on the practice of painting as such. Moholy-Nagy, "Diskussion über Ernst Kallai's Artikel 'Malerei und Fotografie,' " *i.10* 1, no. 6 (1927): 233–4. The translation of Moholy-Nagy's text published in Phillips's anthology also excises an entire paragraph on painting without providing any indication of this in the text. "Response by László Moholy-Nagy," trans. Harvey L. Mendelsohn, in *Photography in the Modern Era*, 102.

8 László Moholy-Nagy, *Z VII* (1926), gift of Richard Zeisler, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. The relevant documents pertaining to condition and treatment are as follows: Rose Fried Gallery, invoice, 29 April 1960; Julius Lowy Frame and Restoring Company, Inc., invoice, 19 April 1990; object file for László Moholy-Nagy, *Z VII* (1926), Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (hereafter "object file for *Z VII*").

9 Photograph of the reverse of *Z VII*, object file for *Z VII*.

10 Two authors who have addressed the seeming incommensurability of Moholy-Nagy's commitment to painting and photography are Andreas Haus and Eleanor M. Hight. Hight describes Moholy-Nagy's return to painting as follows: "Curiously, one of the many irreconcilable inconsistencies in Moholy's work involves his own identity as an artist. From the time he left Berlin he seems to have preferred painting over photography. Even though his writings on painting were few, we can sense an underlying desire on his part to be seen first and foremost as a serious painter … [E]ven his descriptions of photography and film as 'painting with light' demonstrate his inability to reconcile his theory, in which film media dominate, with his desire to be known as a painter." Eleanor M. Hight, *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 212–13. Writing in 1978, at a moment when there was a resurgence of interest in Moholy-Nagy's photography, Andreas Haus offers an account that seeks to acknowledge the fact that the artist considered himself a painter. Nonetheless, he notes "Moholy the painter was never considered as particularly important in the historical development of painting. In exhibitions and museums his works rarely radiate the brilliance and intensity of a Lissitzky, Mondrian or Malevich." Andreas Haus, *Moholy Nagy: Photographs and Photograms*, trans. Frederic Samson (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 8. This perception resonates with the reception of Moholy-Nagy's work seen in exhibition reviews from his own contemporaries as well as those written in recent decades. See Willi Wolfradt, "Berliner Austellungen," *Der Cicerone*, 16 no. 4 (1924): 191–2; "Wertheim Gallery," *The Times*, 2 January 1937: section 2, 8; Jerrold Lanes, "Exhibition at Guggenheim Museum," *Artforum* 8 (1970): 81; Roberta Smith, "On the Paths of Two Giants, Voyagers in Modernism," *New York Times*, 3 November 2006: section E.2, 30.

11 László Moholy-Nagy to Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, 9 October 1934, reel 951, page 148, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC. Orthography Moholy-Nagy's, translations by author unless otherwise noted. Here is the quote in full: "meine bilder – die sah ich jetzt in utrecht – sind noch gar nicht austellungsreif. sie können nur unter der behutsamsten privatpflege

existieren und nur etwas von ihren werten abgeben. eine ganze ausstellung ist zu viel. es gibt noch kaum leute, die sie in ihrer wirklichkeit fassen können und weil man nicht von der mühe des entstehens und nichts von der gesamtproblematik dieser bilder überhaupt weiss, erscheinen sie dem austellungsbetrachter wahrscheinlich eintönig, einander zu ähnlich. und ich wünschte, dass der zuschauer selbst mit jedem auch bei mir und für mich gewachsenen bild weiter wachse, heute ist er weit noch [?]. trotzdem will ich die nächste zeit nicht verstreichen lassen, ich stelle aus, wo man mir gelegenheit dazu bietet. ich muss es tun, weil die leute überhaupt nicht wissen, dass ich maler bin. so erhalte mir den kunsthändler in utrecht, dass auf grund meiner fotogramms von der dortigen zeitung ein referent für fotografie zur ausstellung geschickt würde, der mit den bildern überhaupt nichts anzufangen wüsste."

12 *Z VII* was included at an exhibition at Mount Holyoke College in 1971; an exhibition in 1979 at the Annely Juda Fine Art Gallery in London; and an exhibition of works from the permanent collection in 1985 at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. See Joyce C. Tsai, unpublished report, 29 June 2005, object file for *Z VII*.

13 László Moholy-Nagy, *A XX* (1924), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

14 Pre-treatment photograph of *Z VII* under UV light (August 2007), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

15 Sibyl Moholy-Nagy to Lucia Moholy, 15 November 1947. Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin.

16 Moholy-Nagy alerts Franz Roh in April 1934 to a Czech invitation to produce a special issue featuring his work. Moholy-Nagy to Franz Roh, 23 April 1934. Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

17 His wife begins work editing his open letter to Kalivoda in October 1934. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy to László Moholy-Nagy, 17 October 1934, reel 951, pp. 155–6, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.

18 Fr. Kalivoda, "Postscript," trans. F. D. Klingender, *Telehor* 1, no. 1–2 (1936): 45.

19 Ibid., 46.

20 To explain the purpose and the possible application of his *Light Prop*, Moholy published an illustrated essay in the journal of the Werkbund. László Moholy-Nagy, "Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne," *Die Form: Zeitschrift für gestaltende Arbeit* 5, no. 11/12 (1930): 297–9.

21 Moholy's long-standing commitment to such a project is evident in his early writings, expressed most explicitly in the following: László Moholy-Nagy, "Az új tartalom és az új forma problémájáról," *Akasztott Ember* no. 3–4 (1922): 3, translation from Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, 286–8.

22 L. Moholy-Nagy, "Dear Kalivoda," trans. F. D. Klingender, *Telehor* 1 no. 1–2 (1936): 30.

23 Ibid.

24 Kalivoda, "Postscript," 46.

25 Moholy-Nagy, "Dear Kalivoda," 30.

26 Ibid., 31.

27 The original *Light Prop* is in the collection of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, which has had a number of persistent problems with the work's condition. For an account of its inherent design flaws, see memo from Arthur Beal to Miss Mongan, cc: Prof. Kuhn, Harry Berg, Larry Doherty, 20 May 1969, object file for László Moholy-Nagy. *Light Prop for an Electric Stage* (*Light-Space Modulator*), Busch-Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, MA.

28 See correspondences on the "Raum der Gegenwart" in the Alexander Dorner Papers, Sprengel Museum, Hannover.

29 Moholy-Nagy, "Dear Kalivoda," 31.

30 Of the *Light Prop*, Moholy's second wife writes, "I would come to consider the light-display machine the problem child of my household because it refused to pass custom authorities in the normal way. When it finally came to rest in Chicago it had been declared a mixing

machine, a fountain, a display rack for various metal alloys and a robot, and it had caused me more trouble than a dozen children." Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Experiment in Totality*, 1st edn (New York: Harper, 1950), 67.

31 The *Light Prop* was reproduced in *Telehor* 1 no. 1–2 (1936): 80–3.

32 László Moholy-Nagy to Franz Roh, 23 March 1934. Franz Roh Papers, Getty Special Collections, Getty Research Center, Los Angeles.

33 László Moholy-Nagy, *Construction AL6* (1933–1934), Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno (IVAM), Generalitat Valenciana, Valencia.

34 Kalivoda, "Postscript," 46.

35 Ibid.

36 Photograph of the reverse of *Z VII*, object file for *Z VII*. Thanks to Miles Chappell and Harry Cooper who encouraged me to attend to the peculiarities of the inscriptions on the reverse of this painting.

37 Exhibition photograph of *Z VII* at the London Gallery in 1936 in Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Experiments in Totality*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 135.

38 Moholy-Nagy, "Dear Kalivoda," 31.

39 Thanks to Graham Bader for helping me articulate the significance of the rotation of the picture.

40 László Moholy-Nagy to Paul Citroën, 16 June 1936, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin. Here is the complete quote in the original, orthography Moholy-Nagy's: "ich bin übrigens in einer sehr güten malsträhne. ich male seit einigen monaten richtig mit mut und begeisterung. hauptsächlich [?] bilder auf rhodoid (eine art zelluloid) und ich vertoniere sie um schatten und farbeneffekte zu bekommen. es macht einen ungeheuren spass, und das [?] entwickelt zu einem netten früher unbekannten ausdruck. ich würde dir mal alles gerne erklaeren, ich glaube 1 schritt weiter und ich habe den farben film auf neuen wegen."

41 Jeannine Fiedler, "Moholy-Nagy's Color Camera Works, a Pioneer of Color Photography," in *Color in Transparency: Photographic Experiments in Color, 1934–1946*, ed. Jeannine Fiedler and Hattula Moholy-Nagy (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), 20.

42 Much of the argument of this essay has relied on an interpretation of color in this painting and attends to how its color reproduction fundamentally transforms its internal dynamics. The illustrations for this article are published in black-and-white, which poses unavoidable problems for the interpretation put forward. However, it also illustrates the profound ways in which reproductive technologies irrevocably alter how we perceive a composition. Publishing the color images of this painting—as painting and as 1936 color reproduction—in black-and-white exaggerates the depth of the composition because the resulting images translate subtle shifts in tonality and hue into light–dark relationships. In an imperfectly analogous manner, the limitations of color reproduction transform the perception of the painting's composition because of the specific ways in which the colors are rendered on the cover of *Telehor*. This study has attempted to show that it is in his willingness to explore this gap or, rather, the interstices among various media that Moholy-Nagy makes his most profound contributions.

Chapter 9

Designing Men

New Visions of Masculinity in the Photomontages of Herbert Bayer, Marcel Breuer, and László Moholy-Nagy

Elizabeth Otto

Photomontages produced as a part of the extraordinary culture of gift-giving at the Bauhaus tell us much about the atmosphere of creative play that thrived there and how *Bauhäusler* represented themselves and commemorated one another.[1] These remarkable works have been overlooked for years as mere ephemera and are largely missing from conventional accounts of the school. Born out of later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century advertising, composite portraiture, and other forms of juxtaposed imagery, photomontage became a new, nontraditional practice that was embraced by a number of avant-garde groups in the interwar period. Montage allowed artists to create representations out of found images and to reorder the "blizzard of photographs" produced by the interwar illustrated press that Siegfried Kracauer described as threatening to overwhelm his contemporaries.[2] Photomontage also embraced the dynamic views of modernist photography that László Moholy-Nagy would term the "New Vision"; it was part of a broader attempt to see the world anew through use of the latest visual and photographic technologies including X-ray, film, and photography.[3] In the face of the early twentieth-century avant-garde's experiments in abstraction, and in light of an increasingly sleek-yet-practical design aesthetic at the Bauhaus, photomontage was embraced by many *Bauhäusler* as a way of exploring the human figure and gendered imagery.

This essay examines a number of works given by or exchanged

among some of the most creative practitioners of photomontage at the Bauhaus: László Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer. It also investigates a work only recently attributed to Marcel Breuer, who was not previously known to have worked in montage. In focusing on photomontaged gifts, the essay analyzes the way that these often playful images helped to construct new, post-World War I forms of masculinity and situate the terms of gender as shifting and in play. Michel Foucault offers a relevant critique of the concept of sexual identity as unified and singular in *The History of Sexuality*. He finds that, following a gradual separation of sexuality from religion and the resulting medicalization of sex and concurrent "exigency of normality," in the later nineteenth century "the notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified."[4] Foucault refers to this strict system as "that austere monarchy of sex" and suggests that, as an alternative, we think of a more open structure of "bodies and pleasures."[5]

The Bauhaus photomontages discussed in this essay present bodies that offer up contradictory constructions of maleness. At times, they suggest the radical power of pleasure for reshaping human experience in the post-World War I world. Often these are hybrid figures that evoke a new unity of the technologically proficient artist-constructor with a dupe or chump (*Trottel*), or they bring together varied forms of manliness that range from mockingly heroic to awkwardly undermined. Still other photomontages envision experiments with identities where gender and sexuality are presented as playfully fluid. In situating the terms of manhood as negotiated, these Bauhaus photomontages offered an alternative to the regimented and standardized male body of the still-recent war. In these works—as in aspects of the Bauhaus experiment in general—there was a freedom to explore and contest ways of being a man that, as this essay will show, provided a powerful alternative to military masculinity. These gift montages are traces of an exchange of ideas on manhood, and their investigation allows for a theorization of the role that these private objects played in the context of the Bauhaus program for remaking the world. By focusing on the multiple and varied representations of masculinities which were created in Bauhaus photomontage, this essay engages fragmented and troubled male figures which have been overlooked in studies of the Bauhaus in favor of narratives of the optimistic possibilities of modern design.

Photomontage earned a special place at the Bauhaus, not only due to the integral part it played in the school's social life but also because

of its connotations as a new way of creating figurative representations. The word "*Montage*" originated in the context of machinery and industry, and only slowly came to refer to a form of art making after World War I.[6] In calling this new type of image a montage, artists were asserting that these objects were not works of art but rather functioning machines with use value. Embedded in the process of montage is also a claim by the maker to be a "*Monteur*"—machinist or laborer—rather than an artist. The term *Monteur* had already been picked up by members of Berlin Dada by 1920 at the latest.[7] In bringing visuality together with the technical and mechanical, photomontage was a quintessential form for the post-1923 Bauhaus. And this transformative practice allowed for the contemplation and manipulation of the human figure in order to experiment with represented gender roles.

The past two decades have seen a turn in art historical scholarship to engage the subject of early twentieth-century masculinities in such modernist movements as Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism.[8] But the Bauhaus's attempt to remake art and life has rarely been explored in relation to constructions of masculinity. The school first opened on 1 April 1919, less than five months after the conclusion of the catastrophic world war, and many of its male teachers and students were veterans who arrived at the Bauhaus "direct from active service, hoping for the chance to make a fresh start and give meaning to their lives," according to Magdelena Droste.[9] Indeed, all of the male *Bauhäusler* under discussion in this essay served in the war, with the exception of Breuer, who, born in 1902, was too young but who grew up in an atmosphere of war and was influenced by it.[10] Many of the former soldiers at the school had few possessions and almost no clothing during those early years, and they often dressed in simple, collarless button-down shirts that were in fact soldiers' uniforms dyed and altered by their female fellow-students.[11] These and other aspects of the men's military experiences carried over to the Bauhaus. Yet at the same time they worked together and shared their lives with the school's women, a strong contrast to their experiences of war. Female students held leading roles in the creative, intellectual, and social life of the school, and a few of them even held leadership positions within it.[12]

The Bauhaus was both a site of new freedoms and experimentation in gender identity and a place where many conventional ideas about men's and women's abilities and roles as students and artists held sway.[13] Because the constitution of the Weimar Republic guaranteed women's equality including the freedom to study, the school's admission policy could not discriminate based on an applicant's gender. Walter Gropius stated publicly that there should be no difference between the "beautiful"

and "strong" sexes. However in 1920 the administration quietly changed its policy to restrict the number of women to one-third of incoming classes from that point on.[14] Further, the vast majority of female students were streamed into the weaving or, during the initial years, ceramics and bookbinding workshops, which were deemed appropriate places for women. Still, despite inequalities and limits placed on women's integration by the administration, the students and Masters took liberties to experiment with new ways of living and being. It was in somewhat private or only semi-public contexts such as the exchanging of gift photomontages that a creative and less traditional approach to gender was explored.[15] Behind the scenes of Bauhaus publications, pedagogical tracts, or public statements, male *Bauhäusler* often mocked themselves and each other in a way that suggested masculine authority and traditional manhood were structures that they viewed with suspicion.

In his now classic study of proto-fascist, post-World War I masculinities, *Male Fantasies*, first published in the 1970s in Germany, Klaus Theweleit argues that there is a particular imperative to examining representations of manliness in Germany of the interwar period. Theweleit finds that, for the men who became members of right-wing, *Freikorps* paramilitary groups—and for all such men with weak ego structures, most importantly National Socialists—a maintenance of the body's wholeness and its boundaries was psychologically essential. In Theweleit's argument, "the soldier male's most intense fear is his fear of decomposition."[16] By maintaining these boundaries, such men were able to hold on to the identities as soldiers and fighters that they had developed in the recently lost war, and they could stave off what Theweleit refers to as "the mass," a term which covers a broad range of concepts, including filth, animal nature, the enemy, and, above all, women, all of which the soldier male must avoid at all cost in order to maintain himself.[17] Theweleit asserts that certain concepts, including culture, race, nation, and wholeness, and such organizations as the military form the fascist male's defense against the mass and render him the perfect machine.

> The new man is a man whose physique has been machinized [*sic*], his psyche eliminated—or in part displaced into his body armor, his "predatory" suppleness. We are presented with a robot that can tell the time, find the North, stand his ground over a red-hot machine-gun, or cut wire without a sound. In the moment of action, he is as devoid of fear as of any other emotion. His knowledge of being able to do what he does is his only consciousness of self.

> This, I believe, is the ideal man of the conservative utopia: a man with machinelike periphery, whose interior has lost its meaning.[18]

In the realm of representation, Theweleit sees this ideology at work in sculptures by National Socialist artist Joseph Thorak in which he represents heroic male nudes clad in nothing but their own impenetrable musculature.[19] In an undated French postcard that Theweleit illustrates in *Male Fantasies*, even the soft, chubby bodies of newborn baby boys can take on this armor.[20]

A recruitment poster from approximately 1919 for the *Freiwillige Landesschützenkorps*, one of the many armed paramilitary *Freikorps* groups that were active in Germany after the war, shows a disembodied, helmeted soldier's head which pops out against the background of a red and white flag (Figure 9.1).[21] His eyes opened wide in alarm, this soldier's chiseled features are skull-like as he shouts—screams almost—for prospective comrades to come forward and fight back those who would disturb German labor, presumably Communists threatening a strike. Rather than suggesting vulnerability in this armored face, the large opening of

9.1
Albert Birkle,
Halt: Volunteers Forward (Halt: Freiwillige vor),
c. 1919, poster,
94.7 × 70.3 cm

his mouth seems protected by the force of his cry and is echoed by the victory wreaths in the upper corners of the poster. While this militarized imagery would have appealed to former soldiers, the last line of text also reached out to the next generation, those who had been too young to fight; "also those with no service record will be accepted." After the humiliating defeat of World War I, such myth-making representations of an aggressive, invincible, and militarized German male body appealed to many; these images would, according to Theweleit, help form the essential core of Nazi imagery and ideology.[22]

During the 14 years of the school's existence, many at the Bauhaus were also still coming to terms with the devastating experiences of the war. Photomontaged representations of Bauhaus masculinity presented a particularly persistent and multi-faceted critique of militarized manhood. As members of the Bauhaus were involved in utopian attempts to try to redesign everyday objects and thus to expand the experience of modernity into all aspects of daily life, these artists were simultaneously troubling masculinity and reinventing themselves as *Monteurs*, artist-constructors, and New Men. Thus cultural critique at the Bauhaus was not limited to issues of form and design or the unity of art and craft; this critique also explored new ways of being in this postwar world, and a key element of this exploration was a reexamination of set tropes of manhood. At the school, it was through playful and thought-provoking photomontages that contradictions in gender roles were put on display. These works often seem to revel in their mocking of conventional masculinity and even of the manly self.

Moholy-Nagy had turned to photomontage only after having initially dismissed it. In a 1920 letter to a Hungarian colleague he wrote of having seen an exhibition at *Der Sturm* and complained "a man called Kurt Schwitters is exhibiting pictures made from newspaper articles, luggage labels, hair, and hoops. What's the point? Are these painterly problems?"[23] Yet it was while sharing a studio with Schwitters during the financial crisis of the winter of 1922–1923 that he produced his first known Dadaistic, fragmentary montage.[24] At the Bauhaus Moholy-Nagy would fully develop his own montage techniques. Arriving at the school in April 1923 at the age of only 27, Moholy-Nagy was the school's youngest Master ever, and he was a key figure in the institution's shift from its Expressionist roots to an aesthetic approach based in Constructivism.[25] Photomontage seems to have provided a method of creating figurative images from scavenged and found photographs that particularly appealed to him at a time when painting had become a medium for experimenting with abstraction. Moholy-Nagy's photomontages often reveal a surprising emotional engagement

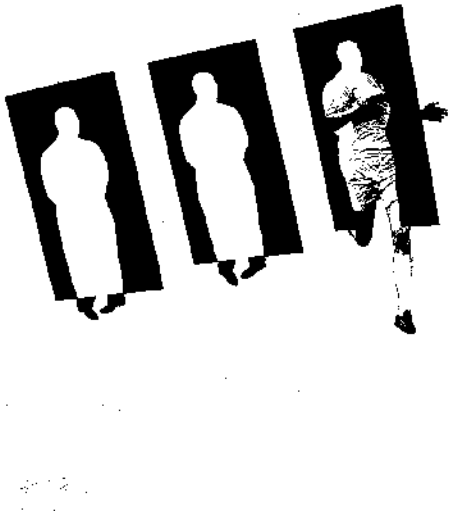
with, and probing of, a troubled masculinity, strong contrasts to the formal visual experiments for which he is better known. Radically different from the Dadaists' fragmentary and often somewhat messy montage work, Moholy-Nagy's photomontages tended to rely on a strong sense of linearity and a use of negative space that marks them as in keeping with Constructivism, an approach which was extremely influential upon a number of Bauhaus artists. Using a technique later made famous by John Heartfield, Moholy-Nagy often considered his montages maquettes for what he called photo-sculptures (*Fotoplastiken*)—infinitely reproducible photographs of the original montages.

At least three of Moholy-Nagy's photomontages make use of a 1926 portrait photograph by his then wife Lucia Moholy in which Moholy-Nagy appears as an artist-constructor (Figure 9.2).[26] Such figures fascinated many in the circles of International Constructivism, and their rise is one of the defining aspects of the avant-garde's attempts to rethink the role of the artist in society. Linked to the idea of the *Monteur*, for the artist-constructor

9.2
Lucia Moholy, *Portrait of László Moholy-Nagy (Portrait László Moholy-Nagy)*, 1926, gelatin silver print, 23 × 15.9 cm

the productive nature of the artist's work was seen as akin to that of the laborer, the engineer, or the scientist; in fact many were willing to dismiss the notion of "artist" all together.[27] In the original image, Moholy-Nagy appears in a machinist's suit (*Monteuranzug*), which would certainly have been practical but was also a statement of identity that marked him specifically as a *Monteur*. He is thus marked as a laborer, but his white collar and tie peeking through show him as more designer than mechanic. In Lucia Moholy's photograph, Moholy-Nagy stands outside with his back against a plain white rectangle—clearly a door—that does not quite extend down to his feet. His facial expression is set and the power of his vision is emphasized through his wire-rimmed glasses. In contrast to earlier images of the romantic artist, Moholy-Nagy here appears tough and capable, his body armored in his practical coveralls.

A photograph of one of the photomontages Moholy-Nagy created based on this portrait, *The Chump* (*Der Trottel*), was given as a gift to the Hannover-based artist, photographer, and journalist Kate T. Steinitz, whom he had likely met through Schwitters (Figure 9.3). This photo-sculpture by Moholy-Nagy, like many of the drawings, photographs, montages, and other artists' gifts to Steinitz, was pasted into her "guestbook," a kind of scrapbook she kept from 1921 to 1961 of the artists' milieus in which



9.3
László Moholy-Nagy, *The Chump (Der Trottel)*, 1925/26, photoplastik (rephotographed photomontage, gelatin silver print), 22.9 × 17.8 cm

she lived.[28] Thus Moholy-Nagy's image was on display for numerous other members of the international avant-garde who visited Steinitz and viewed her guestbook over the years.

In *The Chump* Moholy-Nagy retools the photograph of him as steely constructor to reveal himself as embodying absence and lack. The photograph has been reversed and printed in negative three times; in each of these Moholy-Nagy has carefully cut away everything but the black rectangle (originally the white door) against which he stands. What remains are three empty silhouettes surrounded by dark rectangles. In the left and center figures, Moholy-Nagy's form appears armless, hunched, and rather stumpy. These silhouettes teeter off to the left on unsteady bases of black pigeon-toed feet which appear to have come from a positive print of the same portrait. Both silhouettes seem to look intently to the right at their fellow, a third figure who attempts to break out of his mummifying frame. Muscular limbs sprout awkwardly from the lean body of an athlete placed behind this third rectangle. Spread out across the composition's large, blank field, these three self-portraits progress from a closed and self-protective posture to one that has opened up and, as we read the image from left to right, appears to run forward. But this chump is still empty-headed. And rather than allowing him to become something new, his Constructivist frame makes his arms and legs appear gangly and out of place. Having based this montage on a photograph of himself as a modernist artist-constructor, Moholy-Nagy images both a transcendence of this trope and his own status as a misfit. Try as he might to escape his frame, he is still an ungainly *Trottel*, a chump who appears unable to grow in the Constructivist rectangle which encases him.

In placing this vision of himself in Steinitz's guestbook in the mid-1920s, Moholy-Nagy makes a visual joke on the supposed rigidity of modernist design, one that would have been understood by the avant-garde viewership of the guestbook. It was becoming a truism among critics of the Bauhaus that the school was seeking to make humanity subservient to a tyranny of rectilinear design.[29] On a more personal level, this photo-sculpture is a gift in which Moholy-Nagy seems to contradict his own public persona as the serious and multi-talented Bauhaus professor he had become by the mid-1920s. While this montage is based on a photograph of him as an artist-constructor, a type of creator for whom anything was possible, *The Chump* turns this representation into empty shell and shows him as inept and bound by his own image. This montage thus also undermines and contradicts any possibility of the photograph of Moholy-Nagy as an artist-constructor becoming a heroic or hard-bodied male along the lines of Theweleit's militarized men.

Two of Moholy-Nagy's fellow-*Bauhäusler*, Breuer and Bayer, also made photomontaged gifts that have strong specific references to Bauhaus masculinities. Most powerfully, these images relate to the Bauhaus patriarch, Walter Gropius, the school's founder and its director for nine years, for these were birthday gifts for him. As very young men, both Breuer and Bayer had presented their portfolios to Gropius for admission to the Weimar Bauhaus. He accepted them into the school and later made them Masters of the furniture workshop and the printing and advertising workshop respectively. Breuer and Bayer, too, were good friends who influenced each other's work. The connections among these men fostered a deep knowledge of each other through mentorship, friendship, and rivalry; it was in this context of trust that new images of the masculine self and other could be most substantively developed and explored.[30]

While Gropius was known to be the recipient of a portrait of a girl with a magnolia in 1924—on the occasion of his forty-first birthday—the work's creator and subject were long unidentified (Figure 9.4). In the center of the montage a soft, sepia-toned photograph of a well-dressed New Woman appears in double, the sitter's modernity softened by her wistful facial expression and the flower in her hands. Rotated a quarter

9.4
Marcel Breuer (?), *Portrait of Marcel Breuer as girl with a magnolia. On the occasion of [Walter Gropius's] birthday, May 18, 1924 (Portrait Marcel Breuer als Mädchen mit Magnolie. Zum Geburtstag am 18. Mai 1924)*, 1924, photomontage, 24.8 × 32.2 cm

turn, the right image is cut off just below the woman's shoulders but appears to flow into the photograph on the left in a draped line across the wall which suggests her body and gives her an ethereal double presence. The interlocked positioning of these two prints of the same photograph suggests the composition and form of a playing card laid out in the middle of a large white space; it makes the sitter into a queen. And it is clearly in her voice that the work's work's carefully hand-written lavender text should be read: "My dear Walter, keep our sweet secret. Eternally and truly yours."

Klaus Weber has identified this as a portrait of Breuer that is such a radical departure from other images of him and from the furniture and architectural designs for which he is known that it long went unrecognized, and indeed this identification is still disputed.[31] Having arrived at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1920 at the age of 18, by 1924, when he sat for this portrait, Breuer had befriended Gropius and was completing his time as a student; the following year he would take up his position as the head of the furniture workshop at the Dessau Bauhaus.[32] Despite the romanticism of this illustrated love declaration for Gropius, the central figure's slightly prim mouth, masculine hands, and bad wig undermine the image's softness and give him away as a man in drag. Once this "queen" has been revealed as playing at being a woman, the photograph's doubling seems to take on a new sense. Whereas a singular photographic image most often appears as a window into reality, a photograph's repetition highlights its constructed nature. Thus the repeating and rotating of Breuer's likeness draws attention to this image's play on binary constructions of gender. The montage's inscription also yields a further double vision; it appears to plead for secrecy in a love affair between Breuer and Gropius, yet, for the in-the-know viewers at Gropius's 1924 birthday party, the declaration was made in jest. It creates a fictitious alter ego for Breuer, this romantic lady and modernist queen of hearts, that was intended to be funny.

Breuer was, of course, not the first Marcel to invent, have photographed, and modify images of his own feminine alter ego. In 1920 Marcel Duchamp created Rrose Sélavy, and shortly thereafter he was photographed as Rrose by Man Ray.[33] Like Breuer's gift, pictures of Rrose were mostly exchanged between friends and sometimes signed with personal expressions of deep affection; "lovingly Rrose Sélavy. alias Marcel Duchamp" is the inscription on one such photograph. Duchamp was fascinated with gender binaries and much of his work explored them.[34] While these photographs of Duchamp were only seen by a small audience, in 1921 Man Ray mounted one of them onto a perfume bottle, photographed it and published it on the cover of the small-circulation avant-garde journal

New York Dada.[35] It is impossible to know if Breuer saw this image, but members of the Bauhaus were well connected to other international artists' groups, and Breuer may have known of Duchamp's audaciously kitschy self-portrait. What is most significant in this comparison is how images of these men in drag created alternate, feminine selves that, in both cases, were examples of a romanticized femininity which was decidedly different from the work for which the artists were well known—bold avant-gardism on the part of Duchamp and sleek modernist design for Breuer.

In her study of Duchamp and gender, Amelia Jones explores the question of what it means for a male artist to "represent himself and nominate himself as a woman."[36] Jones asserts that Duchamp makes himself into a generative mother and patriarch of postmodernism and that, through the images of Rrose Sélavy, he also becomes a sexualized object of the viewer's desiring gaze. Like Duchamp, Breuer shows himself in an alternate guise to his normal persona and offers himself as the object of male heterosexual desire. But even more than in the generalized flirtation of Rrose's signature phrase "Vous pour moi?" Breuer's image is based on a particular relationship, the "sweet secret" that he shares with Gropius.

While all evidence suggests that this assertion of a romantic relationship was made only in fun, the twinning in Breuer's portrait also extends to a double vision of his sexual identity. He appears both as a smitten woman and as a man in drag who is professing his love for another man. In *Male Fantasies*, Theweleit discusses the regulated play of cross-dressing in the military; "many soldier texts employ the vehicle of a fictitious transsexuality, in which men become women, to represent the playful, apparently transgressive, but ultimately strictly regulated nature of flirtations with the homosexual."[37] Breuer's image in part fits into this scenario. One could surmise that the later Breuer—known for his minimalist design and Brutalist architecture—would likely have dismissed this image as a youthful prank, a playful moment of Bauhaus frivolity. However, in the context of interwar German culture, in which the nineteenth-century anti-homosexuality law known as §175 had remained current in the Weimar constitution and thus continued to foster the persecution of gay men, such a gift brought with it another layer of implied meaning which created both risk and trust between the giver and recipient. Because of this law, the blackmailing of men who were even suspected of being gay was rampant throughout the early twentieth century. Already by the early years of that century, sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld had estimated that at least 2,000 homosexuals were the victims of blackmail annually, and things did not improve in the period after World War I. Hirschfeld subsequently

cowrote, coproduced, and appeared in the 1919 film *Different from the Others* (*Anders als die Andern*), which starred Conrad Veidt in a story of love between two men made tragic by the anti-gay statute and an opportunistic blackmailer.[38] This film helped to broaden sympathy for and popularize the cause of gay rights during the interwar period.

Breuer's gift was not merely a performance in drag, but a documentation and contextualization of that performance in lasting form. In appearing in this photomontage, Breuer was giving Gropius not only his affection but also his trust, for this lovingly composed portrait also plays at being a document with which Gropius could have blackmailed Breuer, since it evidenced the latter's supposed homosexuality. But of course the text implicates Gropius as well. If it was indeed Breuer who gave this image to Gropius, he has both manufactured and surrendered evidence against Gropius; if the work was made by someone else, the circle of imagined love and blackmail becomes wider. Because gifts were usually given to Gropius in the context of a Bauhaus-wide birthday party, others most likely would have seen this gift, making them keepers of these men's supposed secret as well. In this way the montage also gestured to the larger community at the Bauhaus and its status as a circle of outsiders. Gropius did in fact keep his and Breuer's secret and the documentation of it, for this montage stayed in his collection all his life with no notations to reveal the giver's identity.

In contrast to the *Portrait of Marcel Breuer as Girl with a Magnolia*, a well-documented and more public love affair is part of the context of a double-sided, accordion-folded series of ten square, montaged panels by graphic designer Herbert Bayer (Figures 9.5 and 9.6). This gift to Gropius as he became a half-century old is entitled *50 Years of Walter Gropius and How I Would Like to See Him Still. On the Occasion of His Birthday, May 18, 1933* in typed text that appears on the front cover. It was made after both men had left the Bauhaus, but at a time when the institution still continued to be a defining influence in their work and lives. The affair that informed this work was not one that transpired between the two men. Rather, in 1932 Bayer and Ise Gropius, who had been Gropius's wife since 1923, began an ongoing relationship that threatened the very foundations of the Gropius marriage.[39] The two men had had a strong mentor–student relationship since the 21-year-old Bayer first arrived at the Weimar Bauhaus in traditional Austrian peasant *Tracht* for an interview with Gropius in 1921, having hiked there from Darmstadt in central Germany, since he had no money to take the train.[40] Over time, they had become good friends, and in 1925 Bayer officially became a colleague when Gropius named him Master of the new printing and advertising workshop. Even with the strain that

9.5
Herbert Bayer, *50 years of Walter Gropius and how I would like to see him still. On the occasion of his birthday, May 18, 1933 (50 Jahre Walter Gropius und wie ich ihn noch erleben möchte. Zum Geburtstag am 18. Mai 1933)*, 1933, numbers 2 and 3 of ten cardboard panels (five double-sided) bound together with linen, photomontage, chromolithographic prints, gouache, watercolor, and paper with typewritten text, 29.5 × 59 cm

this affair placed on the relationship between Bayer and Gropius in the early 1930s, they maintained a productive friendship and continued to work together periodically on design projects.[41]

In this epic series of photomontages, tensions between Bayer and his mentor come clearly—if also playfully—to the surface in nine representations that include images of Gropius as philanderer, cuckolded lover, sensualist, and dirty old man. Yet Bayer also shows Gropius as virile and full of life, and he depicts him as a new form of heroic architect, a sort of artist-constructor muscle man. The first and last portions of this work situate it in the context of the love affair.[42] The work's cover shows the headless torso of a photographed nude female body with the number "50" strung merrily between her breasts. Each nipple is demurely covered by a bow, a twinning that gestures to the gift's giver and recipient, Ise Gropius's two suitors. The final image in the series is a skillfully executed montage which includes picture frames, classical sculpture, and careful airbrushing—elements which often appeared in some of his best-known works in montage, such as his covers for *Die neue Linie* or the 1931–1932 series of *Dream Montages* which includes one of Bayer's best-known works, *The Lonely Metropolitan*.[43] In this last frame of the montage for Gropius, a female nude appears again, this time seen from behind. Her body is cut off at the knees and the ribs in clean breaks that reveal her as made of stone, thus evoking both classical sculpture and timeless femininity. A small and laughing photograph of Bayer hangs from this montage by a *trompe l'œil* string with a handwritten message: "and, nevertheless, best wishes, Herbert Bayer."[44] Thus, in its imagery and text, the narrative of the entire montage series is framed in the context of Bayer's affair with Gropius's wife. It

9.6
Herbert Bayer, *50 years of Walter Gropius and how I would like to see him still. On the occasion of his birthday, May 18, 1933*, 1933, number 4 of multi-paneled photomontage, 29.5 × 29.5 cm

seems to call repeated attention to her body as an object that, like this gift, passed between the two men.

In the work's only two-page spread, the montage which the viewer first encounters after the cover, mass-produced putti draw back a purple velvet curtain to reveal Gropius, shirtless, reclining, and seemingly asleep, his hands resting on his chest (Figure 9.5). Luscious fruit and delectable photographic female nudes from the realm of soft-core pornography surround him. As is the case in the two images which frame the gift, Bayer's approach to the female nude initially appears very conventional; female bodies are shown to signify beauty and heterosexual male desire. Yet the ironic tone of the work suggests that these women are both sexually objectified and presented as examples of a genre. In this case, images of women engaged in playful bondage form yet another rococo element among the glassware and dishes that overflow with fruity bounty and epitomize everything that Bauhaus artists had rejected. Another typed text at the montage's top left praises Gropius as a lust object and an unvanquished if sleeping patriarch: "fifty springtides the unconquered one dozes; potency gushes from pores in heat [*brünstig*]."

In one of the most dramatic portions of the gift montage, another stand-in for Gropius is seen from behind; he is a muscular nude bodybuilder as Hercules posing with arms outstretched and standing on the skin of his Nemean lion (Figure 9.6). With nothing but paper, an architect's drawing triangle, and a pencil of epic proportions dangling near his rounded

buttocks, this heroic architect is ready to conquer the built landscape that sprawls out before him. Like the photograph upon which Moholy-Nagy's *The Chump* is based, this is a representation of the artist-constructor. Rather than a blend of smock-clad technician and modernist artist, Gropius here is made into a classical nude and a muscular, hard-bodied constructor who bears resemblance to the armored nudes analyzed by Theweleit. Yet the humor of this image—its oversized and phallic pencil which also suggests Gropius's body as penetrable, for example—undermines any suggestion of the fascist male body.

In complete contrast to the clean lines of Gropius's now-famous designs, the buildings in the valley below appear massive and medieval. Like the image of Gropius in the rococo boudoir, this photomontage emphasizes its own unreality through kitsch. According to the text at the bottom of the image, more important than the landscape Gropius has conquered with his monumental buildings, this architect wins the woman he loves through his physical attractiveness and his craft; "the architect, formed athletically, opens his heart up to a woman geometrically." Given the ongoing affair that Bayer was having with Gropius's wife, this montage's text seems to be a message of reassurance to Gropius that Ise Gropius will remain with him despite her dalliance with Bayer. In the broader context of modernist masculinities, this image of Gropius presents a glorified superhuman artist-constructor while at the same time revealing his physical and emotional vulnerabilities.

Bayer bestowed the gift of *50 Years of Walter Gropius and How I Would Like to See Him Still* at a significant moment, the spring of 1933, right after the National Socialists' assumption of power in Germany. Thus this commemoration occurred at the end of an era. The following year Gropius would leave Germany for England, but Bayer remained until 1938. His continued presence in Germany for five years of Nazi rule and most particularly his creation of Nazi propaganda is an aspect of his oeuvre with which historians are still coming to terms.[45] In what has become one of his most notorious examples, the prospectus for the *Germany Exhibition* (*Deutschland Ausstellung*) which was held during the Berlin Olympics of 1936, Bayer would again turn to the format he used in Gropius's 50th-birthday gift, a square book in which his photomontages were laid out on single- and double-page spreads (Figure 9.7). In fact, the image reproduced in this essay is taken from Gropius's personal copy of the *Germany Exhibition* catalogue that was signed by Bayer and given to him as a gift, a likely indication of Bayer's pride in this work. While the 1936 work uses the same square format as Bayer's earlier gift to Gropius, the *Germany Exhibition* shows a kitschy and mythologized vision of Germany and a much less

9.7
Herbert Bayer, *Double-page spread from the Germany Exhibition (Deutschland Ausstellung) catalogue*, 1936, halftone print of photomontage in brown, black and blue, 16 pages, unpaginated (each page: 21 × 20.8 cm)

ambiguous image of manhood. In the most significant of these, superimposed over a seemingly endless crowd punctuated by Nazi flags, the heads of three German male types appear: the worker, the farmer, and the soldier. Unlike the teasing couplets which framed Gropius's birthday gift, the text for the *Germany Exhibition*, printed in four languages, is unambiguous: "[T]he Fuehrer speaks and millions listen to him. The working people, the peasantry and the regained right of self-defense are the supports of National-Socialist Germany." Bayer's turn away from the open-ended and multiple possibilities of Weimar masculinity is here complete. In contrast to the playful spirit and ambiguous admiration that characterized his gift montage to Gropius, the *Germany Exhibition* spread shows manhood as a set of fixed types differentiated only in the manner in which they serve their Fuehrer, the man they all unquestioningly obey.[46]

In the period before Germany's turn to fascism and the concurrent demise of the Bauhaus, men at the school created a series of fraught self-portraits, declarations of love, and representations of rivalry and respect which they gave as gifts to each other and to members of Germany's broader avant-garde context. These images were part of a troubling of masculinity that was of great imperative in the interwar period. In place of the military troops of various nations to which so many of the men at the Bauhaus had belonged, the school offered a space in which to renegotiate the status of the male artist and manhood itself. Indeed, at times these works seem to gesture towards Foucault's "bodies and pleasures" and away from constructions of normalcy and "that austere monarchy of sex" in which anatomies, experiences, and identities are falsely unified. The

photomontages discussed here thus participate in an even broader process of complicating notions of gender, a process in which many artists are still engaged today. While design and formal experimentation were essential to the Bauhaus project, it was in the engagement of *Bauhäusler* with the human figure that a critique of manhood was most cogently explored.

Some of these works—Moholy-Nagy's *The Chump* or Bayer's gift to Gropius—seem to trouble masculinity by imaging the self as inadequate or by showing the aging male body. But in these and in Breuer's self-portrait, fragile masculinities were also connected to the more utopian and playful ideals of the Bauhaus. Frederic J. Schwartz has recently pointed out that "the utopias of the Bauhaus were numerous and varied."[47] Play—in the classroom, in the studio, and after hours—was an essential part of these utopias and of the school's attempts to remake life and to recast manhood as something other than the unified, hard-bodied, military masculinity that Theweleit has identified as emerging from World War I and as subsequently feeding into the rise of fascist masculinity and National Socialist culture. In contrast to the armored and impenetrable fascist body, the Bauhaus montages discussed here all exhibit a spirit of experimentation that rejected the construction of manhood as uniform, a construction of which these former soldiers and children of the war would have had personal knowledge. These works allow us to broaden our understanding of the Bauhaus's project and the nature of its societal critique, and they help us to see how an exploration of changing experiences of gender—masculinity as much as femininity—was integrated into one of the most influential institutions of modernism.

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Notes

1 Life at the Bauhaus and the objects produced as a part of its culture of gifts, invitations, and often nonsensical announcements remain little investigated to this point, with certain significant exceptions. See Juliet Koss, "Bauhaus Theater of the Human Dolls," *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 4 (2003): 725–45; Klaus Weber, ed., *Happy Birthday: Bauhaus-Geschenke* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv with Ott + Stein, 2004); and Mercedes Valdivieso, ed., *La Bauhaus de Festa* (Barcelona: Obra Social Fundació "la Caixa," 2004).

2 Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" (1927), in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. Thomas Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 58.

3 László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur* (Munich: A. Langen, 1929; Berlin: Florian Kupferberg, 1968); later translated and, with some alterations, published as Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision: Fundamentals of Bauhaus Design, Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture* (1930; Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005). Many of these ideas were already in evidence in Moholy-Nagy's *Painting Photography Film* (1925), trans. Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphries, 1969). Christopher Phillips explores the New Photography in "Resurrecting Vision: the New Photography in Europe between the Wars," in Maria Morris Hambourg and Christopher Phillips, *The New Vision: Photography between the World Wars* (New York: Harry Abrams and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 65–108.

4 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 117, 154.

5 Ibid., 157, 159.

6 Hanno Möbius traces the word *Montage* to mid-eighteenth-century French, where it specifically meant to assemble a complex mechanism, device, or object and to make it function. See Möbius, *Montage und Collage: Literatur, bildende Künste, Film, Fotografie, Musik, Theater bis 1933* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2000), 16.

7 For example, John Heartfield's nickname among the Berlin Dadaists at that time was "Monteur-Dada." See Richard Hülsenbeck's text in *Montage: John Heartfield, Vom Club Dada zur Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung*, ed. Eckhard Siepmann (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1977, 1992), 24.

8 Among some of the relevant studies here are Brigid Doherty, "'See: *We Are All Neurasthenics!*' or, The Trauma of Dada Montage," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (1997): 82–127; Hal Foster, "Fatal Attraction," in *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 101–22; Amy Lyford, *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

9 Magdelena Droste, *Bauhaus: 1919–1933* (Cologne: Taschen, 1993), 22. Droste states that about 150 students enrolled that first year, and just over half of them were men. Reports conflict on how many of these had been mobilized during the war, but it is safe to say that they were the vast majority. See F. Dietsch, "Die Studierenden am Bauhaus" (Ph.D. diss., Hochschule für Architectur und Bauwesen Weimar, 1990), 52, cited in Mercedes Valdivieso, "Art and Life: A New Unity," in Valdivieso, *La Bauhaus de Festa*, 173.

10 Gropius was a World War I officer and received the Iron Cross for his service. It was in the midst of the war that he, an established architect and member of the Werkbund, was first approached with the idea of heading the Grand-Ducal Saxon School of Arts and Crafts in Weimar and completed much of the planning for the new form that the school would take under his leadership. See Reginald Isaacs, *Gropius: An Illustrated Biography of the Creator of the Bauhaus* (Boston, Toronto and London: Bulfinch, 1991), 38–59. Moholy-Nagy enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army as an artillery officer in 1915, and it was during this time of service that, untrained, he first began to draw. See Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, trans. Éva Grusz et al. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 13–14. Bayer served with the Imperial Austrian Army during the last eighteen months of the war. See Arthur A. Cohen, *Herbert Bayer: the Complete Work* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 370.

11 Valdivieso, "Art and Life," 169.

12 Most notable here are Gunta Stölzl, Master of the weaving workshop in Dessau, and Marianne Brandt, who served for a year as Acting Master of the metal workshop when Moholy-Nagy left the school.

13 For interpretations of Bauhaus gender relations, see Anja Baumhoff, *The Gendered World*

of the Bauhaus: The Politics of Power at the Weimar Republic's Premier Art Institute, 1919–1932 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2001); Baumhoff, "What's in the Shadow of a Bauhaus Block? Gender Issues in Classical Modernity," in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 51–67; and Katerina Rüedi Ray, "Bauhaus Hausfraus: Gender Formation in Design Education," *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no. 2 (2001): 73–80.

14 Baumhoff, *Gendered World*, 58–9.

15 This essay focuses on images by men, but several Bauhaus women also explored issues of gender through photomontage. See Marianne Brandt's transformative visions of the New Woman in my *Tempo, Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2005).

16 Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, vol. 2, trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 40.

17 Ibid., 3–7, 43. For Theweleit, a man who "heaves himself out of the mass" (he is quoting one Captain Berthold) becomes the phallus, or the phallic German (50–2).

18 Ibid., 162.

19 In Joseph Thorak's *Comradery*, for example, two such male nudes hold hands fiercely and demonstrate the way in which the homosocial can allude to homoeroticism while still denying it (ibid., 63).

20 In this postcard the French allegorical figure of Marianne flies through the air and distributes nearly identical babies—ready-made for the next war in their French soldiers' helmets—to households in which their fathers, adult male soldiers, kiss their wives goodbye to head off for the current battle (ibid., 100).

21 Theweleit includes an image of this poster but does not discuss it (ibid., 22).

22 Ibid., 347–9.

23 Moholy-Nagy, letter to writer Iván Hevesy, Berlin, April 1920, collection of the Documentation Center of the Art History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, reproduced in Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, 388.

24 For more on Moholy-Nagy's earliest Dada-influenced montage, *25 Pleitegeier* of 1922/23, see Irene-Charlotte Lusk, *Montagen ins Blaue: László Moholy-Nagy, Fotomontagen und -collagen, 1922–1943* (Gießen: Anabas, 1980), 68–9, and Elizabeth Otto, "A 'Schooling of the Senses': Post-Dada Visual Experiments in the Bauhaus Photomontages of László Moholy-Nagy and Marianne Brandt," *New German Critique* 107 (Summer 2009).

25 Moholy-Nagy was offered the post by Gropius after the latter had seen his work in a 1922 *Sturm* exhibition. See Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, 29–42.

26 In addition to *The Chump*, which is discussed here, the other two photomontages are both called *Jealousy* (*Eifersucht*). See Lusk, *Montagen ins Blaue*, 100–1.

27 For more on International Constructivism, see Kai-Uwe Hemken and Rainer Stommer, eds, *Konstruktivistische Internationale, 1922–1927: Utopien für eine europäische Kultur* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje; Düsseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1992). Many scholars have traced the figure of the artist-constructor in the interwar period; see Victor Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, 1917–1946* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See also Maria Gough, *The Author as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). For a theorization of the New Man, see Matthew Biro, "The New Man as Cyborg: Figures of Technology in Weimar Visual Culture," *New German Critique* 62 (Spring/Summer 1994): 71–110.

28 *The Guestbook of Kate T. Steinitz*, reproduction (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1977), unpaginated. See also: William Emboden, "Kate T. Steinitz: Art Into Life Into Art," in Emboden, ed., *Kate T. Steinitz: Art Into Life Into Art* (Irvine, CA: Severin Wunderman Museum Publications, 1994), 25–43.

29 These and many other criticisms were heaped on the Bauhaus. See K. N. [K. Nonn], "The State Garbage Supplies: the Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar," *Deutsche Zeitung* (Berlin), no. 178, 24 April 1924, reprinted in Hans Maria Wingler, *Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago, 1919–1933*, ed. Joseph Stein, trans. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 76–7.

30 These connections did not end with the Bauhaus period. All three of these men—and Moholy-Nagy as well—left the Bauhaus in 1928, and they continued to maintain their professional and personal relationships, even working together as a quartet in 1930 to design the German section of the exhibition of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris. See Manfred Ludewig and Magdalena Droste, "Marcel Breuer," in *New Worlds: German and Austrian Art, 1890–1940*, trans. Elizabeth Clegg (New Haven, Yale University Press: 2001), 554.

31 The attribution was made by Klaus Weber. See Weber, *Happy Birthday*, 82. Another expert on Breuer's work, Isabelle Hyman, has suggested to the author that the handwriting does not look like Breuer's (email correspondence, 24 April 2009).

32 Andrea Gleiniger, "Marcel Breuer," in *Bauhaus*, ed. Jeannine Fiedler (Königswinter: Könemann, 2006), 320–1.

33 Jennifer Blessing, "Rrose is a Rrose is a Rrose: Gender Performance in Photography," in *Rrose is a Rrose is a Rrose: Gender Performance in Photography* (New York: Guggenheim, 1997), 18–19.

34 For an especially useful argument to this end, see Blessing, "Rrose is a Rrose is a Rrose," 20.

35 Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 296, note 37.

36 Amelia Jones, "The Ambivalence of Rrose Sélavy and the (Male) artist as 'Only the Mother of the Work'," in *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 146–90.

37 Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 327.

38 For more on *Different from the Others* see James Steakley, "Cinema and Censorship in the Weimar Republic: The Case of *Anders als die Andern*," *Film History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 186. See also: Matthias Grimm, ed., *Die Geschichte des § 175: Strafrecht gegen Homosexuelle* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1990).

39 Weber, *Happy Birthday*, 216. Reginald Isaacs describes the affair and documents it in the letters that Walter and Ise Gropius wrote to each other, but omits Bayer's name. See Isaacs, *Gropius*, 166–73.

40 Cohen, *Herbert Bayer*, 7. In a seeming reversal of this encounter, one of the panels of this montage shows Gropius as a lusty Austrian lad in traditional dress (see Weber, *Happy Birthday*, 217, for a reproduction).

41 In the midst of the affair, Gropius writes to Ise Gropius of an evening spent with Bayer drinking and talking openly until the next morning. Isaacs, *Gropius*, 170.

42 Both of these are reproduced in Weber, *Happy Birthday*, 216–17, along with two others from the series.

43 See Patrick Rössler, *Die neue Linie, 1929–1943: Das Bauhaus am Kiosk* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv and Kerber, 2007), 44. A selection of *The Dream Montages* are reproduced in Cohen, *Herbert Bayer*, 264–8.

44 The image of Bayer is cut out of one in which he originally appeared with Gropius and Xanti Schawinsky, all of them laughing. See Cohen, *Herbert Bayer*, 377.

45 For example his biographer, Arthur A. Cohen, largely excuses Bayer by emphasizing his lack of interest in politics and the facts that Bayer continued to work loyally for Jewish clients and that his wife and daughter were Jewish (Cohen, *Herbert Bayer*, 41–2). Other scholars such as Sabine Weissler have probed this work much more deeply. In relation to his design of the "Wonder of Life" catalogue, in which a long and particularly virulent passage

of text discusses the purity and superiority of the German race and its blood, she asks, "[H]ow clueless or how disengaged could a person like Herbert Bayer be in aestheticizing such slogans?" See Weissler, "Bauhaus-Gestaltung in NS-Propaganda-Ausstellungen," in *Bauhaus-Moderne im National-Sozialismus: Zwischen Anbiederung und Verfolgung*, ed. Winfried Nerdinger (Munich: Prestel Verlag and Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin 1993), 60. Jeremy Aynsley traces this apolitical interpretation of Bayer's National Socialist graphic designs to Alexander Dorner's 1947 *The Way Beyond Art*. See Aynsley, *Graphic Design in Germany, 1890–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 198–211.

46 For further reproductions from the *Germany Exhibition* catalogue, see Aynsley, *Graphic Design*, 204–5.

47 Frederic J. Schwartz, "Utopia for Sale: The Bauhaus and Weimar Germany's Consumer Culture," in *Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War*, ed. Kathleen James-Chakraborty (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 115.