

# **Methodologies in Pop**

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Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Este texto, extraído de la tesis doctoral de Kerstin Stakemaier titulada *Entkunstung. Artistic models for the End of Art*, gira alrededor del término adorniano de *Entkunstung*, traducible como la desartización derivada de la proliferación de la cultura de masas. La autora propone la inversión de su original sentido negativo y proponer dicho contacto como principio activador del arte del siglo XX. A partir de esta inversión, el texto reflexiona críticamente sobre los modos y métodos para aproximarse crítica e históricamente al Arte Pop y a la obra de Richard Hamilton.

## Methodologies in Pop

Confronting three quite distinct historical moments of artistic production-- revolutionary Russia of the 1910s and 20s, post-war Europe of the 50s and the US American leap into the conceptual present – I am exploring *Entkunstung* as a prolonged field of artistic commitment which has been either identified as an artistic strategy of the avant-garde (in the case of Productivism), as its repetition (in the case of Pop), as its dematerialization (in the case of conceptual practices), or has simply been neglected as an art historical object of study because the practical negation of the field of art did not seem to be an appropriate subject of its academic or scholarly historicisation. My project methodologically tries to position itself between three different bodies of thought. Firstly the philosophical reflections on art and culture proposed by Adorno, Benjamin, Bloch and Deleuze and secondly art historical attempts to relate those philosophical discussions. This means on the one hand attempts like those of Peter Bürger or Otto Karl Werckmeister to relate Adorno's and Benjamin's aesthetic theories to a history of the avant-garde, but also more distinctly art historical attempts, like those of Rosalind Krauss in relation to (post)structuralist theories, of Frederic J. Schwartz in relation to the early critical theories and their social settings, or of Hal Foster in relation to the theories of the avant-garde and Pop. I want to consider these writings in relation to the contemporary authors of those periods I am looking at. My thesis is thus characterised by methodological focuses and alliances that shift with the periods of research. And where Productivism itself maintained a close and productive relationship between the theoretical and practical realizations of its programmatic, the turn of artistic towards popular cultural practices, which I focus on in this chapter, was built much more on the distinct digression of artists from the aesthetic theories associated with modernism. As I have already argued, these modernist aesthetics did, within the role they played in the 1950s, not allow for an engagement with the popular beyond its understanding as a thread or and extra to the revenant teleologies of modern art. The early Pop affiliations in 1950s Britain focussed more on visual anticipations of aesthetic development-- Eduardo Paolozzi's *Bunk* continuation of the image collections of Amedée Ozanfant (*Foundations of Modern Art*, 1942)<sup>1</sup> Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (*The New Vision*, 1931)<sup>2</sup> and Sigfried Giedion

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<sup>1</sup> Amédée Ozanfant, *Foundations of Modern Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952).

<sup>2</sup> László Moholy-Nagy, *László Moholy-Nagy, The New Vision: and abstract of an artist.* (1947).

(*Mechanization Takes Command*, 1947)<sup>3</sup> – and turned more, as Brian Wallis argues, towards the sciences and design, or more precisely, their visual representations<sup>4</sup>. Specifically looking to the US, they turned towards those fields of society which, after 1945, seemed to have outgrown all other fields: that of applied sciences, of aircraft and automobiles and that of commodity culture and its mass distribution in magazines, radio and TV. Many of their strategies to assimilate their own approaches to art to contemporary mass cultural productions thus turned directly against the modernist defences of art as a field of culture distinct from popular culture. In Britain this position was, antagonistically, held primarily by the very proponents of a post-war attempt to open up art towards contemporaneity: the founders of London's ICA, Herbert Read and E.L.T. Mesens and Roland Penrose.<sup>5</sup> Here, at the ICA, what later became called the Independent Group formed in the beginning of the 1950s. And some of its proponents, like Richard Hamilton, Nigel Henderson and Reyner Banham, were already active there from the end of the 1940s. And what was debated, between them and the founders was, to a large degree, the question of contemporaneity of art and in art.

I will take the approach of those associated with the Independent Group in the 1950s, to deal with the world as found, as my starting point to think about *Entkunstung* in a state of actualization after the Second World War. To discuss *Entkunstung* in this period of reconstruction as the return of a move out of art from outside of art, not a return as an artistic gesture but as a precondition of art through its other, popular mass culture. This anti-aesthetic approach to art, is in many regards indebted to Tatlin's material aesthetics – and eventually, during installation of Richard Hamilton's, John Mc Hale's and John Voelcker's contribution to the exhibition *This is Tomorrow* of 1956 the three staged a photo of them installing which re-enacts one showing Tatlin and his peers in the installation of the model for *The Monument to the Third International*.<sup>6</sup> And like Tatlin the Independent Group expanded their practices over different fields of profession – Alison and Peter Smithson were architects, Nigel Henderson was a photographer, Eduardo Paolozzi a sculptor, Reyner Banham a design historian and Richard Hamilton a painter. But as, within their times the division of labour their professions were objected to were much more elaborate and consequential than in Tatlin's times, in which individual deviations had been easier to enact, their strategies differ largely to those of Tatlin, not only in their visual results but also in their procedures. Formally, however, their production as the Independent Group did not, in most cases, amount to series of self-contained artworks – a characteristic which they, again, share with the Russian Productivists. But in contrast to their Russian predecessors, this was not primarily due to the wilful exhibition of intermediary work results, but instead because in the series of exhibitions they staged

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<sup>3</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command, a Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948).

<sup>4</sup> See Brian Wallis, "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow: the Independent group and Popular Culture", in: *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Pop*, ed. by Edward Leffingwell, Karen Marta (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), p. 14

<sup>5</sup> See Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945 1959* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.19ff.

<sup>6</sup> See *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Pop* (Cambridge: MIT Press, The Institute for Contemporary Art, 1988), p. 15, and Shadova, *Tatlin*, ed. by Aleksejevna Shadova, (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1984), p. 291.

together, they presented their own artistic productions in the same formats as clippings from science, design and other fields: as visual reproductions, as photographs. Their own artistic works, which were not replaced but figured by those photographs, which were quite clearly not considered to be delicate objects, placed in the exhibitions for reasons of artistic relevance but as stand-ins for their significant relation to the imagery of contemporary popular culture. Where Productivists had exhibited their stages of work in constructing a future culture, the Independent Group exhibited the stages of the culture they found themselves in. They created propositions of recombinations and elective affinities inherent in contemporaneity. As the Smithsons make clear in their introductory quote, what they perceived as the task for art in the 50s was to confront a new situation in which *Entkunstung* might in fact already have been accomplished, and art might just be the last to know. In Pop, *Entkunstung* returns. It returns not as a voluntary move of artists who want to shape the mass culture to come but of those who want to claim a perceptual reconstruction of its present state, as a conscious privileging of reproduction over production in order to produce art significantly.<sup>7</sup>

The common perception of Pop as, in Bürger's terms, a "neo avant-garde"<sup>8</sup> produces a problem, which, I want to argue, cannot be solved on the side of art itself, because it makes artistic practices responsible for the cultural field they are performing in. More precisely, considering Pop a "neo avant-garde" requires that it be considered in parallel to the anti-art of Dada or the Productivism of the Russian revolutionary artists. The latter, however, attacked art as an institution of bourgeois feudalism, the former as a purification of cultural life. British Pop, I argue, did not rise up against art, but rather re-enacted art's contemporaneous social status as a challenge to it. Its commitment was one to the present; and in that present, art as an institution with an avant-garde history performed an antagonistic role: that of a formerly emancipated revenant. This is what Bürger, considering the art of the 50s and 60s under the heading of the "neo-avant-garde," holds against it: that they failed to reinstitute the utopian aims of the artistic stances produced by the historical avant-gardes. But these utopian stances had resulted in the uncontested status of these avant-garde objects as art productions in the 1950s already that had already left behind the social relevance they were able to claim in times of political struggle in Europe. To take such an artistic stance in Europe in the 1950s would not have been a sign of political or artistic awareness, but rather of ignorance. Where those claims were made, as in the case of the Situationist International (SI)<sup>9</sup>, art's role in it rapidly reached the point of *Entkunstung*, a tendency I will come back to at the end of this coming chapter. Here, however, art was only one of many means of political action. With the exception of the Munich-based Gruppe SPUR, most SI affiliates were interested predominantly in art's representative functions.<sup>10</sup> This is my reason for starting from the IG. *Entkunstung* for them rose from art's materials, their re-organization within the terms of popular culture.

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<sup>7</sup> This is an indirect quote of Jean-Luc Godard's statement that he is not making political films but making film politically. See. <http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0307/vilensky/en>

<sup>8</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 79.

<sup>9</sup> See Roberto Ohrt, *Phantom Avantgarde: eine Geschichte der Situationistischen Internationale und der modernen Kunst*. (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1990), p. 67f.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 139f.

Introducing my attempt to frame Pop, and more specifically British Pop of the 1950s, as the actualization of artistic moves towards *Entkunstung*, which I characterized for Russian Productivism in the 1910s and 20s, I here want to shortly discuss the framing of Pop in relation to its representation in a notion of “neo-avant-garde.”<sup>11</sup> There have been very productive art historical readings, mostly of American Pop Art, which have convincingly argued that artists such as Andy Warhol enacted, as Sven Lüttiken calls it, art’s “Doppelgänger” function<sup>12</sup> in enacting art as mass culture. Similarly, that Claes Oldenburg, in expanding the physical traits of commodity fetishism beyond its physical distinctiveness,<sup>13</sup> did not simply, as Bürger argues in relation to Pop, re-enact a failed utopia, but instead committed himself to reality in anything but a nostalgic way.<sup>14</sup> I want to focus my own study on the British predecessors of these practices, because, as has been argued elsewhere (Wallis, for example), while the American artistic production of the 1960s presented the repetition of commodity fetishism as an artistic project in the commodity boom of Pop Art, the IG presented Pop as a way of life outside of art in Europe after the war. The IG utilized the commodity and magazine culture of the US as the projective focus of a fully distributed internationalized mass culture.

To define the problems I want to look at more precisely, I want to return to a Marxist reading of mass culture, which rose from the German discussions of the late 1960s and early 70s, many of which I have already quoted in relation to my discussion of the terms avant-garde and modernism in the first chapter. For me, the writings from this specific context remain methodologically vital to grasp the notion of *Entkunstung* as being implied in a constant state of actualization, not least because Adorno coined the concept at this moment to capture what he perceived as an expanding degradation of modern art<sup>15</sup>. Adorno’s posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* still tried to characterize the present through a lost past, whereas those whose writings followed a few years afterwards in his tradition – like Peter Bürger, Otto Karl Werckmeister or Wolfgang Fritz Haug, whom I want to introduce here in relation to the question of Pop – tried instead to come to terms with the cultural and artistic production and representation of what Adorno and Max Horkheimer had termed the culture industry<sup>16</sup>. I am framing my own perspective on the artistic contestations of modernity within their realm of thought, because Adorno and Bürger especially represent an understanding of art as a social factor and political expression that has been equally influential and misleading. In their sense, the politicality of artistic productions lies in the appropriation of representational means and the formal rigour with which they are artistically expressed, rather than in artistic actions taken. Their arguments are centred around the artwork in its entity and it is precisely this entity, which *Entkunstung* challenges in its actions. Haug’s *Kritik der Warenästhetik*

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Bürger, *op. cit.*, pp. 79.

<sup>12</sup> See Sven Lüttiken, “Secrecy and Publicity”, *New Left Review* No.17, (London: New Left Review Ltd., 1960).

<sup>13</sup> See Barbara Rose, “The Street: A Metaphoric Mural”, in *Claes Oldenburg: the Museum of Modern Art, New York, [September 25 – November 23, 1969]* (Stuttgart, London, Reykjavik: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1970), pp. 37-51.

<sup>14</sup> See Thomas E. Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 34, pp. 91.

<sup>15</sup> See Otto Karl Werckmeister, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> See Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, “Kulturindustrie, Aufklärung als Massenbetrug”, in *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981).

of 1971<sup>17</sup> also tries to look at the rise of industrialized popular culture from the side of its representational function; however, he tries to develop a theory of contemporary knowledge from these representations of mass culture, namely from the influence that advertising has on human behaviour. Quite unlike the IG's approach, Haug's work focuses primarily on what he characterizes as the passivising and manipulative characteristics of this industry<sup>18</sup>. (I shall discuss Haug's theory only in regard to an understanding of mass culture as an industry, touching on practices of art *ex negativo*). However, where he comes to the analysis of the forces of production incorporated in this industry, Haug discusses the introduction of what Karl Marx had named the "socially necessary labour time"<sup>19</sup>, a term, which in Marx is exclusively used to describe the social organization of reproductive labour. Haug's introduction of that phrase in relation to cultural productions opens up a question central to the beginnings of Pop. It describes the new situation of the productive forces Pop saw itself confronted with: the international distribution of the national culture industries after the American model. The IG's interest in North America's fully evolving consumer capitalism prematurely grasps this relation through the means of art.<sup>20</sup> This 'earliness' of art, its prefiguration of rising social antagonisms, already appeared in Tatlin's works of the 1915s.<sup>21</sup> Where philosophical systematizations, as Hegel stated in his *Philosophy of Rights* in 1821 arise only in the aftermath of history,<sup>22</sup> art evolves in this prefigurations. This is also a reason for Deleuze's attempted overlapping of art and philosophy: to bring the latter into a movement, which exceeds its preservation within the aesthetic realm and relates it to the material productions within their processes, contemporaneously as well as retrospectively. In the third and first chapter of this thesis, this relation will thus become thematic again, attempting to refigure Deleuze's desire to turn philosophy from a method into a mode of thought and action,<sup>23</sup> which, within the rise of Conceptual art, finds its equivalent to perform simultaneities of action and thought. In the post-war era which forms the background for the IG's actions, however, culture had become a branch of considerably industrialized consumer capitalism, which was in an ongoing process of actualization and specification, as Reyner Banham noted in his essays on the designs of the everyday life. Here, the 'refurnishing' of the everyday set in. The praxis of the IG was closely tied to the surfaces of this newly industrialized mass culture: Paolozzi's clippings of American advertising, Banham's scrutiny of American everyday design items, Henderson's documentation of the changing storefronts of London's East and the Smithsonian's

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<sup>17</sup> See Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Kritik der Warenästhetik*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971). In the whole book, as well as in its re-edited later version, Haug never refers directly to Adorno, even where he quotes his and Horkheimer's concept of the culture industry. He does refer to Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>19</sup> Karl Marx, *Werke. 23, Das Kapital; Buch 1: Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals* (Berlin: Dietz, 2008), p. 53, and Haug, *op. cit.*, p.23.

<sup>20</sup> David Mellor, A Glorious Techniculture in Nineteen-Fifties Britain: The Many Cultural Contexts of the Independent Group", in: David Robbins (Ed.), *The Independent Group: Post-war Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) pp. 229-236.

<sup>21</sup> Vladimir Tatlin, The Work Ahead of Us, 1920, in *Russian art of the avant-garde: theory and criticism, 1902- 1934*ed. by John E. Bowlt (New York: Viking press, 1976), pp. 205-208.

<sup>22</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie der Rechts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968)

<sup>23</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Immanence: A Life", in: Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), pp. 25-34

attempts to think towards a House of the Future.<sup>24</sup> Yet, starting with the latter, those surfaces were all but arbitrary. They were demonstrating a post-war understanding of communal life. The House of the Future exemplified a paranoid architecture of the post-war nuclear family;<sup>25</sup> Henderson's photographs of East London street life registered the non-simultaneity between the development of the commodification of the everyday and the degradation of a sociality that, after the war was characterized by deepened class differences;<sup>26</sup> Banham's investigations into car designs<sup>27</sup> aimed to set into motion a manifested expendability of the everyday; and Eduardo Paolozzi's Bunk collages<sup>28</sup> extrapolated the culturalisation of all life in capitalism, from war machinery to pornographic imagery.

The IG proliferated artistic labour in a state of experiment: it did not so much produce 'works' as 'labour'. Skimming the surfaces of the modernist remains and post-war pulp culture of the 50s in its instable and overbearing attempts to establish a recreated everyday life after the war, they sought a placement of artistic production within the texture of these surfaces, within the very structure of the new post-war popular cultural schemata, productions which did not necessarily need to result in art proper. To think of these changes in Haug's terms of an introduction of the "socially necessary labour time" into the realm of culture opens up a perspective which understands Entkünstung after World War Two not only as yielding under the crushing weight of consumer culture, but more as an endeavour of professionalisation and specification within artistic production. It was, in other words, a repositioning of its potentialities beyond art and the implications of its materials and procedures into the distinction of "socially necessary labour time". The IG pushed art towards these measures, exposing it to its Entkünstung through them.

Another one of Haug's observations becomes relevant in this context: his reflection on the relation of the possibility of knowledge production within mass culture's expansion. Haug argues that the culture industry tends towards the centralization of production and thus to the monopolization of practical and active knowledge of the everyday.<sup>29</sup> Even though the monopolization thesis remains debatable from today's perspective, what Haug here shares with the early members of the IG is the sense in which the accumulation of knowledge through culture has altered from being primarily a trait of social privilege to becoming a necessity of the everyday. The IG, and especially the Smithsons, insisted on the perception of this complex as a given landscape, in that they argued for the necessity to deal with it "as found"<sup>30</sup>. This is an approach to the recognition of the commodified nature of the post-war everyday that aligns their work with the results of Paolozzi, Banham and the turn away from architectural projects in Team 10.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to Haug, they did not perceive the apprehension and possible appropriation of mass culture as being determined by its

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<sup>24</sup> *The Independent Group: Post-war Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, ed. by David Robbins (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), p. 115.

<sup>25</sup> Beatriz Colomina, Unbreathed Air, In: *Grey Room*, No. 15 (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 28-59.

<sup>26</sup> In *As found: the discovery of the ordinary*, pp. 84ff.

<sup>27</sup> See Reyner Banham, Penny Sparke (Ed.), *Design by Choice: Ideas in Architecture* (London: Academy Ed, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> In *As found: the discovery of the ordinary*, pp. 8ff.

<sup>29</sup> Haug, *op. cit.*, pp. 125f.

<sup>30</sup> In *As found: the discovery of the ordinary*, pp. 8ff.

<sup>31</sup> In *Team 10: 1953-81, in Search of a Utopia of the Present*, ed. by Max Risselada, Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: 2005).

origins in the industrial complex, but rather investigated in art's possibly active relations to this complex. Here again the question of "socially necessary labour time" comes back into play, because the *Entkünstung* of art in relation to industrially organized mass culture is profoundly dependant on the terms of production which art implies in relation to its own implication in this field. Like the Productivists, the IG explored the expansion of their own production to an industrial level, (in this case in taking up scientific measure within culture not, as in the Productivist case, attempting to reconstruct these scientific measures through culture) but again like the Productivists, they remained in a stage of speculation and fragmentary experiments. They performed *Entkünstungen* of art, but not as an end to art. They were working *in* the industry but their practices effected only the sphere of art. Here, the discussion of artistic in relation to reproductive labour, which Karl Marx only hints at, assumes central importance.<sup>32</sup> It is the differences between value production that apply for artistic endeavours on the one hand, and those that apply for reproductive forms of labour on the other, which here produce symptoms of *Entkünstung*. It is here that art and the realms, which border upon it in the culture industry differ intrinsically in the terms of their social and economic distinction and produce significant friction. Discussing *Entkünstung* in its formulation in Britain in the 1950s thus implies a discussion of how changes within the terms of production were perceived and how this affected not only production but also the producers themselves. As Adorno and Horkheimer already remarked in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* of 1944/47, art, with the full development of the culture industry, has turned into but one field of cultural production, an obscure branch of mass culture. This objective change within the social function and economic structure of artistic production after World War Two marked a shift, which Alfred Sohn-Rethel, in his epic *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit*, published in 1970, formulated as the difference between the 'personnel' and the 'social' identity/or non-identity between manual and intellectual labour.<sup>33</sup> As Adorno has analysed in many of his writings<sup>34</sup>, art had, within bourgeois societies always been part of the social division of intellectual and manual labour, as art had never fulfilled any economically reproductive functions for society. Culture was and remained based on its antagonistic status as being socially identified as intellectual labour but being based on individual manual labour. Culture bore 'personnel' the identity of intellectual and manual labour, which outside of it was divided into different strands of production. With the rise of the systematized industrial production of culture, this relation shifted in that the individual identity of intellectual and manual labour which before had characterized this field began to vanish. Culture, too became based on the internal separation of intellectual and manual labour (a development which I will return to when discussing the rise of Conceptual art). Even though artistic labour in the 1950s was still mostly characterized by the identity of intellectual and manual labour, its affiliation to the field of culture in which this identity had long been in question but now was systematically negated, altered art's own status. To formulate it in Bloch's term: art's objective nonsimultaneity became painfully apparent. The IG turned to *Entkünstungen* of

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<sup>32</sup> See for example Marx, *op. cit.*, pp. 200ff.

<sup>33</sup> See Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit: zur Epistemologie der abendländischen Geschichte*. (Weinheim: VCH, 1989), p. 126.

<sup>34</sup> See for example the various essays In Theodor W. Adorno, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970).

art's status through an analysis of industrialized mass culture in order to enhance art's social simultaneity.

This distinction between the prewar and the post-war artistic attempts to expand art or to make art expandable—commonly termed as the relation of “historical” and the “neo-avant-garde”<sup>35</sup> – were introduced by Bürger to suggest a relation not only of historical affinity but even more so one of dependency. In his analysis, the historical avant-garde set out to dismantle the false autonomy of bourgeois art, to problematise its social status as an unproductive extra but not its status as a state of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*).<sup>36</sup> This is a very Adornian figure, and one which brings about a substantial problem not only for the perception of the avant-garde but even more for any historical consideration of a neo-avant-garde. What is introduced through the privileging of the knowledge-character (*Erkenntnischarakter*) of art—the ability of art to produce a sense of knowledge external to philosophical thinking – is the division of intellectual and manual labour within art, which attempts to secure the former from the latter. Thus what led to the assumed failure of the historical avant-garde that Bürger notes was its material core, its entanglement with the rise of industrial production and distribution. This might be one reason why Bürger touches upon the Russian Productivists only in a footnote, where he mentions Boris Arvatov's writings. These had by the early 1970s been published in German, at the same time as a whole range of literature on the work of the Proletkul't, with which Arvatov had been involved. But in Bürger's sense the Productivists were not an avant-garde movement *within art*. I am stressing this here again, because it today might seem evident that Bürger discusses Dada and Surrealism as the two central examples of avant-garde practices, but the fact that he neither discusses Expressionism in any extensive sense, which through Bloch and others had been intrinsically bound to the discussion of Realism and the popular front and thus to Marxist debates, nor Russian Productivism, which had been widely discussed in the field of critical pedagogy in Germany in the 1960s and early 70s, is a choice which very distinctly separates art and engagement and favours a canonical approach to artistic inventiveness, again following Adorno. Bürger chooses to discuss those movements in art, which by his time had clearly been canonized as ‘proper’ arts as historical avant-gardes. Consequently, his discussion of what he calls the neo-avant-garde, and this for him is primarily American Pop Art, moves along the same lines: it picks an established field of canonized artistic production, proves its dignity as art while at the same time questioning its standing as a form of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*). Bürger sets out a trap, so to speak, which always catches art as a material production and thus implied in the division of capitalist labour, while at the same time exempting its intellectual capacity as being immaterial and thus unrelated to art's commodity character.

As Hal Foster, in his critique of Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, has remarked, Bürger's narration of the avant-garde as an intact point of origin necessarily leads to the understanding of neo-avant-garde as a degraded version of this origin.<sup>37</sup> For one, Bürger stages the historical avant-garde as a place of immediate perception. This, as Foster argues, turns its historical failure into a

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<sup>35</sup> Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.* pp. 76ff.

<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 8ff.

“heroic and tragic” moment, while it presents the neo-avantgarde as nothing but its “pathetic and farcical” return.<sup>38</sup> According to Foster, for Bürger “to repeat the historical avant-garde, (...) is to cancel its critique of the institution of autonomous art; more, it is to invert this critique into an affirmation of autonomous art.”<sup>39</sup> What neither Bürger nor Foster take into account in this opposition is that the avant-garde’s critique of the autonomous artwork did not just alter in accordance with the developments of and in artistic production, as Foster suggests, but that even seemingly analogous forms of artistic production factually alter their status within the different historical moments according to the development of cultural production *outside* of the specific artworks. If regarded as a reinitiation of its predecessors’ confrontational status, the neo-avant-garde remains untouched by its own present; and where it is perceived as a re-initiation of the avant-garde’s formal achievements, it is inhibited from an active relation to its own media and materials. This concerns the commodity status of the art works as well as the status of their producers. Foster rightfully criticizes Bürger’s linear narrative of failure, his posthumous purification of the historical avant-garde, but at the same time he himself aims at saving these categories in reiterating them in an a-linear and more openly defined fashion. Foster quotes Burkhardt Lindner’s criticism of a Bürgerian avant-garde’s struggle against the autonomous artwork as being the plain mirroring of its function, but he does not himself reject the notion of the avant-garde as a contested attribution (as, for example, Marcel Duchamp, whom Foster refers to for his ready-mades, did in his perception of an-art).<sup>40</sup> As he states in the introduction to his book *The Return of the Real*, Foster himself aims at narratives of an “innovative art” and thus only immanently criticizes the historical construction of an avant-garde. Foster suggests regarding the neo-avant-garde as the ‘comprehension’<sup>41</sup> and enactment<sup>42</sup> of the avant-garde in order to activate past and present equally in the refiguration of the concept. His account of the IG itself does not differ from this.<sup>43</sup> Taking up Foster’s criticism of Bürger’s historical conception of a linear perception art’s history originating in the avant-gardes, I investigate the initiation of Pop in Britain as a historical moment of *Entkünstung*, expanding this criticism to the category of art as an intellectual sphere of production and thus to the implied separation of art’s material and art’s intellectual capacities.

In the face of the newly developed culture industry of the post-war era, *Entkünstung* is, I want to argue, first and foremost a praxis, an engagement in and commitment to popular culture from the fields of art. Imposing the avant-garde distinction between the intellectual capacity and its ‘realization’ in artistic materializations does an injustice to these practices first and foremost because they were practically counteracting it in being a fundamentally non-intellectual praxis of art. The IG did not, I want to argue, thrive for a new aesthetic theory, but rather for a recombination of those theories of science and design, which dominated in their own mass cultural present.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>43</sup> See Foster, „Survey“, in *Pop*, ed. by Mark Francis (London, New York; Phaidon Press, 2005) and *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, *passim*.

Aesthetic theory here remains external as its value judgements here face no counterpart. Pop in the 50s was an attempted individual enactment of a collective industrial stance. It did not seek a new or revolutionized aesthetic but assumed practically that this new and revolutionized aesthetic was already in place: that the industrializations of science and design had taken over its realm. The theories to which they turned to were those of science, and it is through them that they looked back onto the art histories of their immediate past. An aesthetic theory of the avant-garde narrows this perspective down to the question of artistic or aesthetic innovation, where in fact innovation had been displaced. It had been relocated in the ad-man and his plasticized world. *Entkunstung* here means to confront the realm of art with the displacement of its modernist heritage, the heritage of the new, of innovation and of artistic originality.

Strategies of *Entkunstung* surrounding the Independent Group in the 1950s in Britain in my project stand exemplary for systematic attempts of artistic production to expand beyond itself without being any longer able to base their self-conception on the existence of any broader social movement. As Adorno has argued consistently, *Entkunstung* lies within the modern social identity of art itself and this remains vital also after this social identity has been fully relegated into being one branch of industrial cultural production after World War Two. Against Adorno I want to explore this as a productive tendency, one which enables art to realize itself as an action rather than the representation of one and thus to participate in a wider sociality than that distinguished by the confines of art proper.

In their attempts to institute an *Entkunstung* out of dislocating scientific and other procedures into art, the IG in Britain was paralleled by cognate practices in Europe. It attempted the practical renewal of the art of *Informel* and in its *Entkunstungen* shared affinities (and personal connections to) the early period of the Situationist International.<sup>44</sup> What I am trying to grasp in tracing *Entkunstung* in and out of art is a structural phenomenon of art's social and economic function throughout the last century, not moments of artistic innovation. I shall limit my project to the in-depth discussion of few specific tendencies, because I want to open up and explore this entanglement of art called *Entkunstung* in its clearest and most active examples.

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<sup>44</sup> See Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrism to Class War*. (Stirling: AK Press, 1991), p. 37.