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As a good place to begin with how I think of my work in terms of a larger social environment, a political environment, a cultural environment is with Joseph Kosuth, who in 1965 said something likely, if not this exactly, he said, if you are making painting and sculpture you are not asking what art is, you are accepting that academic field, and academic art and so what you should be doing is asking what art is. So if I take that idea and imply it to my work, which is not coincidental, it goes like this, my work is political, in a hardcore sense of it, and so making political art is wondering what political art is, in the spirit of Kosuth. That is where I have problems, with people like Peter Fend, or Hans Haake, Peter Fend aside, certainly Leon and Hans make important contributions to the notions of what political art was, but Leon and Hans have something like become models for what political art is. They are good examples they have simply become models for what political art can be, and we rehearsed those models in art school. They simply failed to continue to ask the question: what is political art, they simply rehearsed models. On one of the strings of our culture, our culture meaning our culture here, the bourgeois culture, it's probably the most impressive culture that I can think of in terms of this ability to survive (we owe this basically to the French revolution), the development of bourgeois culture. I'm thinking in terms of how T.J. Clark sees a development of the absolute bourgeoisie

Our culture has this admirable survival technique. Anything that seems to threaten or attack our basic systems of believe, we simply absorb it, through this huge fat social system, which is hardly able to move. When there are these little attacks at the edges, at the fringes, they simply absorb them. That's what's happening, everywhere.

If that's true, and it is, then at the moment, that something truly attacks our value system, and we are unable to normalize it, then we get rid of it. Terrorism is a great example of that. In other words, Gadhafi bombs a disco in Germany, and we can't stop that, actually terrorism is a perfect model for artists right now, not in terms of bombing railway stations, but in terms of a political action model. Gadhafi blows up a disco in Germany and kills a few American soldiers. Well, we can't defend terrorism, because it acts outside this very clear social system, that we have. So all we do, in the U.S. with the help of Great Britain, and other allies, we just go and bomb Libya, and Gadhafi had learned very quickly not to do that again.

It's not that we can't normalize it, it's that we do away with it. Works of art operate the same way, at the point that Peter Fend actually gets a hold of some information, in such a way that the government doesn't want him to have it, they'll stop him.

They are not interested in normalizing him, they gonna make an example of him, and finish him of. Therefore, when artists make political art, it's simply evidence of the power structure giving them permission to make it, because at the point when they actually threaten the culture, they'll stop them.

- But what's good at his work is, that the mystery about secret information get's destroyed

- He is creating a veiled mystery of information, that is not secret to begin with, if it were secret information, he wouldn't get it, and if he did get secret information, they would stop him.

He is making claims for the information that doesn't exist, it's not secret

-But perhaps it's showing that it is quite easy to see the things that happen, that they do happen in public.

- I don't think that this is new to anybody, but maybe there are people.

-You really don't like him

- I think that Peter Fend and Hans Haake do the work of the power structure. They charade the fact that they are taking some steps against power. If they were they wouldn't be in business anymore. We see that in cases like Robert Mappelthorpe and the issue of censorship. Here is the case, where there is clear, that that work might offend the heart of our values. For a moment it appeared that Robert Mappelthorpe's work

had really transgressed the heart of our cultural values. What was really played out, was a little charade as played out so often.

The best example is Hans Haake's cancelled show at Guggenheim, in which he was going to unveil financial dealings of members of the trustees of the Guggenheim Museum, as a part of his work. What do they do? They cancelled it. At the moment where Hans was going to threaten values in such a way that couldn't be tolerated, they cancelled it. The mistake with that of course is, by cancelling it, Hans got more publicity for the material he wanted to introduce.

Hans Haake actually did transgress the latitudes for acceptable art and he was censored. The mistake the power structure made by doing that was, his message got out all that much more clearly, by being censored. This is something we don't tolerate here in the U.S. In Mappelthorpe's case, what that exercise resulted in was, parading around on a leash, some kind of avant garde culture, some kind of other culture to reassure the culture at large, our culture. That there are these little avant-garde cultures working, that is supposed to be some sort of radicalized culture. It reassures us, that our culture is changing at its fringes.

What we do is, rehearse the model for the avant-garde. Mappelthorpe was the central piece of that rehearsal, a lot of people got on the band wagon, it's very hard to determine what kind of political advantage that gained out of that for an alternative culture.

The benefactor of the Mappelthorpe case was the power structure. The benefactor of the Hans Haake case at the Guggenheim was Hans Haake. By cancelling the show, they gave him exactly what he wanted. The lesson to learn here is, never censor. If an artist presents material, that you would rather not see presented, is not to censor it, but to ignore it. Then you go, after that. But don't call attention to it.

-But now you constitute a hierarchy of institutions, when does it become threatening, information, at one point, a museum is also a weak position

- If it transgresses a certain level of knowledge. That's why in Mappelthorpe's case the government is the winner. Even though everybody found him not guilty, the result is that the culture at large in Ohio in California in Minnesota is reassured that there are some echoes at the fringes of the culture, that the culture is changing, that there are some members of the avant-garde actually producing new culture, that's not the case. What they are doing is rehearsing the model. If you take that idea back to my objective, my objective is not simply to make political art or to rehearse the model to what political art is, but rather wondering about what political art can be. By doing that, the work is not necessarily recognized as being political, it looks like something else. Think about Bruce Nauman. (Die Offensichtlichkeit ist weggenommen) Nauman is one of the most interesting political artists I know.

-You mean, this old strategy of getting into institutions.

- Right. I want to get as close to the heart of the culture as possible and do my work there. Culture doesn't change at the margins, culture changes near the centre, and that's where I want to establish myself. Kippenberger is a good example of that. Kippenberger kind of outrages social behaviour, as a very dominant political theme. Sherrie Levine, not at all like Kippenberger, represents something else, but is a significant political artist. Peter Haley is a political artist. Those artists who contribute to a kind of cultural reflection on our political and social circumstances. Those are artists who don't look like political artists.

-But this sounds as if you wouldn't play with open cards (ist das Englisch?) But I don't think that.

- If you look at the bottom of my work, stylistically the changes are very radically, from one body to the next. I exploit style, for the benefit of the subject matter I want. Yet I have a style, it's the exploitation, rather than one style itself. One body of work looks like a Bronze, a Brancusi or Jean Arp, one looks like a geometrical construction, one looks like furniture, styles change. That helps to resist the notion of categorization, helps to resist a model being applied to the work.

-But then the content comes in like anecdotes.

- That's the consistent thing. The new work is anecdotal work. But that's even being resisted or deformed by bringing several stories in play on one time. That helps to defeat a single point of view. But all of these stories are on operation at the same time. That's the strategy of terrorists. Terrorism, in order to create as much activity around as possible.

-That's something you are always looking for in old pictures, when you go to a museum.

- Sure. Goya, is an example, who veils the political ideology behind court painting.

But, what is important to me is, terrorism as a model for political action is a model artists are considering as an alternative for political art. As a way to key that, all the new work uses terrorism as a subject.

-But, terrorism does not represent one person.

- Right, Terrorism as it is practised by terrorists discourages the cult of personality.

At the same time, because political terrorism in it's most extreme form suffers from being identified with a single individual, that doesn't necessarily mean that that has to be adopted within the sphere of a practise in art. The artist has the advantage to exploit the cult of personality, it's a useful tool.

There is a model of the work, that presents Patrick Henry, who is a patriot in the American revolution, who made a stirring speech, where the important line was, give me liberty, or give me death.

This work combines something from Patrick Henry , a rifle, which many people see as a terrorist's and others see as a sort of heroes' tool and then there was a pair of airplane seats from Pan Am. Here is these three point of view acting at the same time, which defeats a single point of view. It's almost impossible to get a reading there. In some circles we have to admit, that the persons on Pan Am were patriots like Patrick Henry.

-How does the gallery goer see that.

- I'm not interested in them. I'm not interested in the normal gallery goer. Art has never been made for the ordinary guy in the street. And politically that's up with it too, at least in western industrialized countries. I'm interested in those people who have the option to change the culture at it's heart and it turns out, there's no coincidence, that those people who have the power to alter the culture in significant ways, also have the sufficient income to afford to buy art. It's not that people who go to Tiffany find out over night, Oh my god racism is bad, but rather that this kind of cultural changes is going to unfold all the time. It's not going to be attributable to one thing, it's going to be attributable to a number of things, happening all at the same time. Where my work brings in all these different subjects in action all at the same time.

The work itself embodies the notion of the change of consciousness and then on top of that, situated in the arena of a collector's home, it becomes a matrix, an access, a venue for other people with access to power. Well it's a dinner party or an afternoon. I think that the work is aesthetically provocative enough to draw out questions: what the hell is this. At that point the collector becomes complicity with me, in terms of reading these political subjects. Because if you look at any particular piece, they are inexplicable in enough themselves. They ought to be engaging and work like a disease, that might unfold over several years.

Traditional notions of political art are based on the idea, that they can spot change. We may wish that they happen like that, we may like they would happen like that. Political change doesn't take place like that. It takes place only in the higher spaces. If you are going to participate, or try to participate altering the political system, if you think that's possible at all, then the options are very few. And one option, that seems very attractive, is an option that other disadvantaged classes have and that's terrorism. Artists are a disadvantaged class. We are the intellectual entertainers for the collector class. That's what we have always been. That's what an American artist is, high-minded entertainer to the collector class. It happens again that the collector class is the class that has access to power. So you have to exploit that relationship, make it as perverse as it actually is.

One thing the collector's class expects is, the virulent personality cult of the artist. They like to meet us, they like to have dinner with us, or take us out to the country. Then you gain access to them in the most intimate ways.

But there is one important feature about all this, when I go lecturing in Universities about political art, I begin the lecture by standing there: If I had the possibility as a lecturer to affect real political change, they wouldn't allow me to speak.