

MARCEL BROODTHAERS'S
MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE, DÉPARTEMENT DES AIGLES:
THE NEXUS OF INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

by

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MARCEL BROODTHAERS'S *MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE, DÉPARTEMENT DES*
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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

On the heels of the Paris student revolutions in May 1968, Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* officially opened in Brussels, Belgium on September 27th. The *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* was a satirical, critical, and fictional museum that Broodthaers created and directed over the course of four years. Under the title of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, several compartmental sections, or exhibitions, opened in various places in Europe at different times. Many of the diverse museum sections were set in actual museums and galleries, while some were situated in Broodthaers's own apartment. Although a fictional museum, the *Musée d'Art Moderne* used museological strategies to parody museums, causing the museum's sections to appear deceptively authentic. In mimicking genuine museum exhibitions, Broodthaers produced a deconstructive "institutional critique" that revealed and criticized art institutions' methods of display, economics, politics, and hidden foundations.

An invention of the late 1960s, institutional critique is a deconstructive praxis aimed at revealing the hidden political and economic mechanisms of the art institution from within. Developed from models of avant-garde practice, among the most significant precedents are Gustave Courbet's *Pavillon du Réalisme*, the 1863 *Salon des Refusés*, the Impressionist exhibitions, Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, Claes Oldenburg's *The Store*, and the work of Guy Debord and the Situationist International. Early practitioners of institutional critique are almost always identified as Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, Michael Asher, and Broodthaers.¹

¹ For an example, see Anne Rorimer, "Reevaluating the Object of Collecting and Display," *The Art Bulletin* 77 (March 1995): 21.

However, Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* clearly anticipates the work of Haacke, Buren, and Asher, and is demonstrably the earliest manifestation of institutional critique.

Developing from the earlier avant-garde models, and predating the work of Haacke, Buren, and Asher, the *Musée d'Art Moderne* should be situated at the very center of institutional critique. The purpose of this thesis is to explain the critical implications of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, *Département des Aigles* and to argue that Broodthaers's museum forms the crucial nexus of institutional critique. In this context, "nexus" should be understood as the focal point of institutional critique that links earlier models with later trajectories of this practice. Furthermore, I will claim that Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* extends and culminates the historical avant-garde models, and that the work of Haacke, Buren, and Asher are later offshoots of Broodthaers's museum.

By tracing the lineage of institutional critique through the avant-garde models, I will demonstrate the uniqueness of Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne*. An examination of Broodthaers's influences, early work, political background, participation in anti-institutional demonstrations, and the parallels of politics and philosophies of the late 1960s will also illustrate Broodthaers's innovations in institutional critique. To further establish Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* as the nexus of institutional critique, I will assess the later institutional critiques by his contemporaries Haacke, Buren, and Asher, and those of the 1980s and 1990s by Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson. All of this will confirm the originality and importance of Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne*.

INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE AND ITS PREDECESSORS

Institutional critique is a praxis using objects, images, and textual information in an artwork or exhibition set within a specific institution, e.g., the art museum, to interrupt the viewer's ordinary perception of that context. This method calls attention to the ideological and political foundations of the institution.² In this thesis, the form of institutional critique at stake is the artistic practice that questions, deconstructs, and criticizes the underpinnings of the art museum from within. As Jacques Derrida states, "the movements of deconstruction do not destroy structure from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures."³ Likewise, institutional critique cannot function on a deconstructive level if the critique does not occupy the institution or mimetically relate to the institution. Institutional critique deconstructs the institution by altering and interrogating the viewer's normal perception of the context. The term "institutional critique" is often credited to Andrea Fraser, who used it in a 1985 article on Louise Lawler to describe the theoretical practice of deconstructing art institutions from within.⁴ In 1990, Benjamin Buchloh also wrote about this praxis as the "critique of institutions" in an article on Conceptual art.⁵ "Institutional critique" is now a term widely used to describe this theoretical artistic strategy utilized by past and present artists.

² Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), 426-427.

³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 24.

⁴ Andrea Fraser, "In and Out of Place," *Art in America* 73 (June 1985): 122-129.

⁵ See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October*, no. 55 (Winter 1990): 105-143.

The first wave of institutional critique occurred in the late 1960s to early 1970s in the work of Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, and Michael Asher. These artists created critical artworks, interventions, and texts questioning the institution in the context of the institution.⁶ As part of the first-wave of conceptual artists, they felt alienated by the cultural elitism of the museum. Thus, their artwork deconstructed the institution by directly criticizing the establishment and revealing its dubious ideologies.⁷ A second wave of institutional critique occurred in the 1980s and 1990s in the work of artists such as Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson. By this time, the institutions were becoming more involved with artists in the critiques. For example, Fraser's imitation docent tour, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk*, was commissioned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1989 to critique the socioeconomic framework of the museum.⁸ Fred Wilson's installation, *Mining the Museum*, 1992, critiqued the previously unacknowledged racist exhibition practices of the Maryland Historical Society and was also commissioned by the institution.⁹ That Fraser's and Wilson's institutional critiques were sought after by the museums suggests that the museums found institutional critique to be a beneficial method of reassessment. Second-wave artists also acknowledged their complicity with the institution, since their critiques were frequently commissioned by the museums.¹⁰

Although institutional critique did not begin until 1968 with Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* (1968-1972), several historical avant-garde events serve as predecessors for the critical practice. By evaluating these earlier artistic events, the lineage

⁶ See Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions."

⁷ See Frazer Ward, "The Haunted Museum: Institutional Critique and Publicity," *October*, no. 73 (Summer 1995): 71-89.

⁸ Andrea Fraser, "Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk," *October*, no. 57 (Summer 1991): 104.

⁹ Judith Barry, Renee Green, Fred Wilson, Christian Phillip Muller, and Andrea Fraser, "Serving Institutions," *October*, no. 80 (Spring 1997): 120.

¹⁰ Fraser, "Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk," 106.

of the avant-garde practice will be established and the critical implications of Marcel Broodthaers's museum will also become clear.

Before institutional critique became an artistic methodology to expose and deconstruct the underpinnings of art institutions, Paris's official Academy and Salon were institutions detested by avant-garde nineteenth-century artists. Instead of participating in the Salon and Napoleon III's World's Fair in Paris in 1855, Gustave Courbet mounted a rival exhibition, the *Pavillon du Réalisme*. As Hélène Toussaint points out, one of the seated figures on the left side of *The Painter's Studio*'s composition may be Napoleon III, who is intentionally placed in a subsidiary role compared to the central figure of the artist.¹¹ By placing himself as the central figure in *The Painter's Studio* and Napoleon III as a less important figure in the composition, Courbet's painting and exhibition question both the importance of the Bonapartist regime and the official exhibitions. Courbet's friend, Champfleury, also depicted in *The Painter's Studio*, wrote to George Sand in 1855 complimenting the rival exhibition as "a subversion of all institutions associated with the jury; it is a direct appeal to the public; it is liberty. . . ."¹² Several years after Courbet's exhibition, and due to the countless number of Salon rejections, the *Salon des Refusés* was established by Napoleon III in 1863 to allow rejected artists to exhibit in an alternate space. Although established by the institution, the *Salon des Refusés* "took on the stature of a counter establishment manifestation, where artists at war with authority could be seen. . . ."¹³ Another subversion of the official Salon manifested in 1873, when Claude Monet and other artists established the "Société Anonyme des artistes" and held their first exhibition in April

¹¹Klaus Herding, "The Painter's Studio: Focus of World Events, Site of Reconciliation," in *Courbet: To Venture Independence*, trans. John William Gabriel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 49-51.

¹² Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Janson, *Nineteenth-Century Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), 247.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 281.

1874, just two weeks before the official Salon's opening. Now regarded as the first Impressionist exhibition, this exhibit differed from the Salon because it was not juried and "this democratic group showed paintings in alphabetical order, and in only two rows. . . ."¹⁴ For many years the Impressionist counter-exhibitions continued, and serve as avant-garde predecessors of institutional critique as they undermined, and eventually helped destabilize, the Salon's importance.

Perhaps most anticipatory of the critical implications of Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* is Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917, Figure 1), which was submitted as a work by "Richard Mutt" to the Society of Independent Artists' supposedly non-juried exhibition. The Society of Independent Artists was an organization of American-based artists in which Duchamp was both the founder and director, until he resigned from the group in 1917 after *Fountain* was rejected from the exhibition. The critical implications of *Fountain* are increasingly complex as Duchamp was, anonymously, testing the boundaries and liberality of an organization to which he belonged. Transforming a urinal into an art object, Duchamp challenged the very notion of what is considered art. By signing, titling, and submitting *Fountain* on a pedestal to an art institution, Duchamp emphasized and revealed the framework that sanctions objects as artworks and questioned the traditional borders and definitions of art.¹⁵ Steven Goldsmith believes that *Fountain* was a daunting object to the Society of Independent Artists, as it threatened to "pull high culture from the ivory tower and down to the level of the local restroom."¹⁶ Primarily conceptual, Duchamp's *Fountain*

¹⁴ Ibid., 332.

¹⁵ For information on the pedestal, see William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston: Houston Fine Art Press, 1989), 31.

¹⁶ Steven Goldsmith, "The Readymades of Marcel Duchamp: The Ambiguities of an Aesthetic Revolution," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (Winter 1983): 201.

and Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* demonstrate methodologies, or ideas, challenging the value of art objects and the framework of art institutions.

Under attack in the 1960s was the commodity status of art objects heightened by institutional contexts. For example, in 1961, Claes Oldenburg opened *The Store* in a storefront on 2nd Street in New York. *The Store* contained painted plaster sculptures made by Oldenburg, including simulative clothing items, food, and brand-name logo plaques (Figure 2). Eschewing the “authentic” gallery space, Oldenburg emphasized the commodity status of art objects in galleries and museums by exhibiting artworks as commodities in a storefront. *The Store* undermines and eliminates the middle-man commercial gallery and also accentuates the offensiveness of popular consumer culture.¹⁷ Guy Debord and the Situationist International (1957-1972) also focused much of their attention on emphasizing and rejecting the commodity status of artworks in their journals, graffiti, posters, murals, urban “situation” performances, and in exhibitions. By placing political artworks into public spaces, the Situationists sought to intervene in and weaken the commodity status of artworks, level art and politics, and to “abolish the notion of art as a separate, specialized activity.”¹⁸ During a 1963 Situationist gallery exhibition, *Destruction of the RSG-6*, in Denmark, Debord painted slogans on paintings including “Abolition du travail aliéné” (“Abolition of Alienated Labor”).¹⁹ This critique of the autonomy of art within the gallery space parallels the later critiques directed at the institutions helping to shape the autonomous sphere of art. This Marxist tendency in the Situationist's work and in institutional critique strives to eliminate the importance of bourgeois culture and the commodity status of art. The widely-

¹⁷ Sophie Berrebi, “Paris Circus New York Junk: Jean Dubuffet and Claes Oldenburg, 1959-1962,” *Art History* 29 (February 2006): 94.

¹⁸ Greil Marcus, “The Long Walk of the Situationist International,” in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 8.

¹⁹ Simon Ford, *The Situationist International: A User's Guide* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2005), 93.

used Situationist notion of “détournement” also utilized preexisting images or art objects to construct a politicized milieu.²⁰ Essentially plagiarizing works of art, “détournement” was “an extreme form of the redistribution of cultural value.”²¹ The critical reuse of extant objects or images is linked to later institutional critiques that instrumentally use the museum’s objects in the critiquing.

The aforementioned models are undoubtedly critical of the art institution and serve as avant-garde precedents to Broodthaers’s *Musée d’Art Moderne*. However, these models are not as directed towards the politics, economics, methods of display, and various underpinnings of the museum, from within the institution, as is the *Musée d’Art Moderne*. Moreover, Broodthaers’s work forms the crucial nexus of institutional critique, as his *Musée d’Art Moderne* epitomizes and augments the preliminary models of the practice, and anticipates the later works by Haacke, Buren, Asher, Fraser, and Wilson. The nineteenth-century counter-exhibitions rebelled against the Salon and serve as models for institutional critique, yet many of these exhibitions essentially developed out of the artists’ rejection from the Salon and served as alternate spaces to exhibit and sell their work. These counter-exhibitions certainly circumvented the official Salon and the Academy, but did not particularly reveal or emphasize the institutions’ hidden foundations. Although some of Broodthaers’s museum sections were not in official institutional contexts, they were arranged using museological methods and appear as museums by subterfuge. Broodthaers’s critical museum sections did not arrive out of institutional rejection, given that the artist was exhibited in museums and galleries as early as 1964, his first year as a visual artist. Instead, Broodthaers’s *Musée d’Art Moderne* derived from his frustration with institutional

²⁰ Elizabeth Sussman, *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International (1957-1972)* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 199.

²¹ Ford, *The Situationist International: A User’s Guide*, 37.

authorities, certainly illustrated by his political background, the events of May 1968, and the philosophies and theories of the 1960s.

Like Duchamp's *Fountain*, Oldenburg's *The Store*, and the work of the Situationist International, Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* emphasizes institutional contexts and the commodity status of artworks. What differentiates Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* from the historical models is that the critique takes the form of a museum, and the museum is the work of art. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* does not contain art objects that could function on their own, as in Oldenburg's *The Store*, because the entire contextual compilation of the museum objects is the artwork. Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* combines and extends the subversive and critical connotations seen throughout the avant-garde nineteenth and twentieth centuries, situating the *Musée d'Art Moderne* at the beginning of what we currently regard as institutional critique.

Although Marcel Broodthaers's career as a visual artist was remarkably brief, he created politically and theoretically challenging works that have shaped the practice of institutional critique and continue to influence many artists. Broodthaers was born in Brussels, Belgium on January 28, 1924. His first experiences with art were on Sunday afternoons when his father took him to museums until he refused to go at the age of 14.²² Broodthaers began writing poetry as a teenager, which he continued to do for most of his life. Although he was interested in studying art history, he was persuaded to enroll in chemistry at the University of Brussels in 1942. While he was fascinated with chemistry and scientific apparatuses, he soon dropped out of school to pursue poetry as a profession.

²² Michael Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 15.

As a young man, Broodthaers was a fixture in the intellectual life of Brussels and was friends with the painter Armand Parmentier, the poet brothers Gabriel and Marcel Piquera, and the writer Theodore Koenig. Broodthaers was also a member of the Belgian Communist party for several years and wrote for the party's manifesto, *Pas de quartier dans la révolution*, which criticized the "shamanism" of the Surrealist painter André Breton, but "did not call for a purely propagandistic art."²³ Although critical of Breton and Surrealism, Broodthaers formed a lasting friendship with René Magritte, who, while identified with the Surrealists, remained distant from them.²⁴ Magritte gave Broodthaers a copy of the experimental 1897 poem by Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (One Toss of the Dice Never will Abolish Chance). Arbitrary relationships between meaning, sound, and typography are evident in Mallarmé's poetry and greatly influenced Broodthaers as a poet and visual artist. Inspired by Mallarmé, Broodthaers often utilized puns to strip words of singular and fixed meanings and used unconventional typographical arrangements in his poetry to augment the words' grammatical implications.²⁵ Although Broodthaers took on various responsibilities throughout his life, he primarily considered himself as a poet, even though he was a "poet almost without a public."²⁶ Broodthaers's poetry was first printed in 1945 in *Le Ciel Bleu*, a Belgian Surrealism journal, and three volumes of his poetry were published before he became a visual artist. Broodthaers also spent time working as a book dealer, further developing his interest in literature and his fascination with books as objects.²⁷ In his spare time, Broodthaers gave guided tours in the art museums of

²³ Ibid., 16.

²⁴ Ibid., 17.

²⁵ Michael Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," in *Marcel Broodthaers* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1980), 13.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Brussels and usually transformed these events into performances. For example, he presented a Scottish film in a museum while wearing a kilt and also a Charlie Chaplin film while sporting a bowler hat. According to Michael Compton, these performances mark Broodthaers's transformation into the subject of his art,²⁸ which, as I will elucidate, is also a major aspect in the *Musée d'Art Moderne*.

Broodthaers made his public debut in the arts in 1957 with a film, *La Clef de L'Horloge*, 'un poème cinématographique' about the artist Kurt Schwitters. However, he did not seriously produce art until he was 40 years old, in 1964, when he declared that he wanted to make something insincere and thus became an artist.²⁹ As an artist, Broodthaers created photographs, prints, films, paintings, sculptures, and, most notably, complex museum installations. For the most part, Broodthaers was mostly an outsider among contemporary visual artists. Besides his friendship with Magritte, he was close to Piero Manzoni who declared Broodthaers a "living sculpture" in 1962.³⁰ In his early years as an artist, Broodthaers was influenced by Magritte and Manzoni and intrigued by the American artist George Segal's use of plaster to shape molds. Segal's plaster molds certainly influenced Broodthaers as he explored this imagery diligently throughout his artistic career.³¹ Although Broodthaers was actively producing art objects in various media, his largest project, and perhaps most well-known, was the *Musée d'Art Moderne*. Unfortunately, Broodthaers's artistic activity was cut short. He contracted hepatitis as a teenager, from which he did not take the proper time to recover, causing irreversible damage to his liver.

²⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁹ Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," 25.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Broodthaers died on his 52nd birthday in 1976 from liver failure, which marked only his twelfth year as a visual artist.

MARCEL BROODTHAERS AND THE MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE

Although the *Musée d'Art Moderne* was not realized until 1968, Marcel Broodthaers had already been exploring the limitations of framing devices and how such devices shape and dictate their contents. This interest explains Broodthaers's awareness of the ways in which art museums fabricate events, narratives, and also sanction objects as artworks. In this section, an analysis of his early work, along with the political events and the literature of the late 1960s, will establish Broodthaers's arrival at the *Musée d'Art Moderne*.

In many of his artworks, Broodthaers draws attention to the notion of framing and investigates how frames create and shape meanings, contradictions, and/or false histories. As a poet, Broodthaers was fascinated by the ambiguity of language in that a single word can connote multiple meanings. For example, in an early poem, Broodthaers uses “les moules” as a pun since the plural of the French word “moule” translates as both “mussels” and “molds.”³² By using “les moules” in his poem to reference both meanings of the word, Broodthaers challenges the accuracy and precision of representation in language. As an artist, Broodthaers returned to the pun “les moules” by repeatedly using actual mussel shells in his artworks to metaphorically suggest the second meaning of “moule,” which is “mold” or container.³³ By utilizing the puns from his poems in these artworks, Broodthaers was referencing and “bringing his poetry back into his visual art.”³⁴ Comprised of mussel shells, jars, and eggshells, many of the artworks Broodthaers created, such as *Oval of Eggs 1234567* (1965, Figure 3) and *Moules sauce blanche* (1967, Figure 4), use the visual

³² Compton, “Marcel Broodthaers,” 15.

³³ Ibid., 16.

³⁴ Ibid., 17.

vocabulary of containers. By using containers in lieu of their contents, Broodthaers places emphasis on the framing devices, or molds, that inform and shape the contained.³⁵ The shells in Broodthaers's works may metaphorically reference art objects' formative contexts, such as framing devices, institutional spaces, and captions, which essentially shape, sanction, or fabricate the status or meaning of such objects. This conclusion is supported by a 1966 statement of Broodthaers's: "Every object is a victim of its nature: even in a transparent painting the color still hides the canvas and the molding hides the frame."³⁶ The elevation of everyday items, such as eggshells and mussel shells, into art objects is also related to Marcel Duchamp's readymades. Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917, for example, was once a common urinal but became an art object through various framing devices, such as an institutional context, a title, an artist's signature, and a pedestal.

While Broodthaers was involved in exploring how framing devices and containers shape and dictate contents, he was also interested in, and very critical of, the commodification of art objects. At Piero Manzoni's exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in 1962, Broodthaers was impressed by Manzoni's *Merda d'artista*--small tins presumably filled with Manzoni's fecal matter. *Merda d'artista* stupefied Broodthaers because it exemplified an idea, rather than an aesthetic object, that would eventually be sold as merchandise.³⁷ Upon meeting Manzoni, and after Manzoni issued an artist's certificate of authenticity declaring the poet a work of art, Broodthaers stated:

This meeting with Manzoni on 25.2.62, the date of the certificate which states I am a "work of art," allowed me to appreciate the distance which separates the poem from a physical work which implicates the space "fine arts." To put

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Craig Owens, "From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After 'The Death of the Author?'," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 130.

³⁷ Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," 21.

it another way, the value of the message with the notion of the message as merchandise alone identified with merchandise.³⁸

As Michael Compton explains, an artwork is a physical object to be sold, while poetry is not solely manifest as a commodity since it is reproducible and readily accessible to almost anyone.³⁹ Still primarily a poet at this time, Broodthaers recognized the difference between the easily dispersible, mass-printed poem and the physical uniqueness, and therefore commercial value, of art objects. According to Broodthaers, the exclusivity of visual artworks results in the commodification of such objects. Although Broodthaers respected Manzoni's work, he strove to completely avoid the commercialization of art production. Contemporaneous with conceptual dematerialization of the art object especially as it was manifested in American and British art of the 1960s, Broodthaers used books, films, prints, and open letters as forms to distribute his work and to circumvent the art market.⁴⁰ As an example, Broodthaers's *Industrial Poems* were printed on easily reproducible plastic plaques, but were only printed in editions of seven and were not intended for consumption or display.⁴¹

In November 1963, Broodthaers visited Ileana Sonnabend's gallery in Paris where he first saw the work of the American Pop artists Jim Dine, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claes Oldenburg. Broodthaers was appalled by the artworks' appropriation of commercial culture and by the crude and forceful marketing promoting Pop art.⁴² After his visit, Broodthaers began writing art criticism expressing his distaste for the work by early 1960s American Pop

³⁸ Marcel Broodthaers, quoted in *Piero Manzoni* (Brussels: Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 1987), n.p.

³⁹ Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," 21.

⁴⁰ Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, and Photographs*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 69.

⁴¹ For more information on Broodthaers's *Industrial Poems*, see *ibid.*, 68-100.

⁴² Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," 14.

artists and that of the Nouveaux Réalistes. Broodthaers's clearest denunciation of Pop Art was in 1965:

Pop Art is an original expression of our times . . . first develop[ing] in American society. American life presents a character--due to the industrial factor--which invades absolutely every aspect of private existence. In America nothing happens anymore on the level of individual life. American life consists of a whole series of disavowals which build up, neutralize themselves, and finally annihilate completely the pleasures of existence which a human being normally possesses.⁴³

Broodthaers set out to create works by using everyday and familiar objects, as did many of the Pop artists. However, Broodthaers's art resembled Pop art only as a maneuver to draw attention to his work while deconstructing Pop's commercialism.⁴⁴ As Dieter Schwartz states: "This mimicry seems to have functioned effectively, since Broodthaers was taken, at least for a period of time, as a Belgian Pop artist."⁴⁵ In the announcement for Broodthaers's first exhibition at the Galerie Saint-Laurent in Brussels in July 1964, after only seven months of working as a visual artist, he wrote:

I, too, wondered if I couldn't sell something and succeed in life. For quite a while I had been good for nothing. I am forty years old. . . . The idea of inventing something insincere finally crossed my mind, and I set to work at once. At the end of three months I showed what I had produced to Philippe Edouard Toussaint, the owner of the Galerie Saint-Laurent. "But it is Art," he said, "and I shall willingly exhibit all of it." "Agreed," I replied. . . . If I sell something, he takes 30%. It seems these are the usual conditions, some galleries take 75%. What is it? In fact it's objects.

The key words in this statement are "I, too" and "something insincere;" this is certainly a tongue-in-cheek comment revealing that Broodthaers believed the Pop artists had insincere, and commercially-driven, motives in producing art. By creating works that resembled Pop art in order to criticize it, Broodthaers deconstructed Pop art from within. This early work by

⁴³ Jean-Michel Vlaeminckx, "Entretien avec Marcel Broodthaers," *Degré Zéro* (Brussels) no. 1, trans. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," 73.

⁴⁴ Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," 25.

⁴⁵ Dieter Schwarz, "Look! Books in Plaster!," in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, and Photographs*, 65.

Broodthaers foreshadows the *Musée d'Art Moderne* because it has the pretext of an official museum exhibition in order to deconstruct the museum from within.

Although these early events reveal Broodthaers's skepticism and criticism of contemporary artistic movements, he soon directed his attention to the notion of art exhibitions. In September 1964, Broodthaers first presented his own exhibition by placing his artwork in a public park, the Parc du Mont des Arts, next to musicians casually performing.⁴⁶ Although this event is not nearly as complex nor orchestrated as his *Musée d'Art Moderne*, this “*Exposition surprise*” marks his early interest in essentially directing and taking control of art exhibitions and institutions.

While Broodthaers was pressing the limits of art and beginning to develop a preliminary critique of art institutions and exhibitions, the key transformation in Broodthaers's artwork and ideology occurred in 1968. In May, student demonstrations and strikes were intensifying in Paris and Brussels, where the students focused on taking over the institutions that controlled them and for which they worked.⁴⁷ For artists, this meant they must literally take over the museum. Broodthaers was frequently involved in the left-wing politics of the day and, in early June of 1968, Broodthaers joined the revolt with about thirty artists and participated in the temporary occupation of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.⁴⁸ The museum's occupiers referred to their group as the “Free Association.”⁴⁹ At the time, the Palais des Beaux-Arts was the only contemporary art institution in Belgium. In reference to the occupation of the museum, Broodthaers states, “my museum [the *Musée*

⁴⁶ Compton, “In Praise of the Subject,” 32.

⁴⁷ Compton, “Marcel Broodthaers,” 18.

⁴⁸ Compton, “In Praise of the Subject,” 40.

⁴⁹ Buchloh, “Open Letters, Industrial Poems,” 82.

d'Art Moderne] originates from that date.”⁵⁰ Broodthaers was one of four artists during the occupation to negotiate with the museum officials and he likely coauthored the Free Association’s manifesto, which “condemns the commercialization of all forms of art considered as objects of consumption.”⁵¹

The development of institutional critique coincides with the formulation of deconstructive practice. In 1967, just one year before Broodthaers began the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, Jacques Derrida published the books *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech and Phenomena*, which established and explained the principles of deconstruction. Derrida’s deconstruction sought to criticize and reveal the hidden framework of texts and Western philosophy by operating from within the position of philosophy. Derrida believed deconstruction can only function effectively by occupying the specific structure it strives to critique.⁵² With this in mind, a deconstructive critique of institutions must take place in the institution, or in the form of an institution by subterfuge, in order to reveal the hidden mechanisms of the structure it strives to critique. Derrida’s notion of deconstruction may not have directly influenced Broodthaers or the student revolts, but distinctly parallels the June 1968 occupation of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in which Broodthaers and other artists took control of the art institution from within.

A related ideological turn is represented by the publication of Roland Barthes’ influential essay “The Death of the Author,” which was published in French in 1968.⁵³ Barthes traces the death of the author to Stéphane Mallarmé, a key influence on Broodthaers, in his attempt to demolish the authority of the author and prove that it is “language which

⁵⁰ Ibid., 69.

⁵¹ Marcel Broodthaers, quoted in Buchloh, “Open Letters, Industrial Poems,” 82.

⁵² Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 24.

⁵³ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” first appeared in English in *Aspen* 5-6 (Fall-Winter 1967). Reprinted in French as “La mort de l’auteur,” *Mantéa* 5 (1968).

speaks, not the author.”⁵⁴ For Barthes, the origin of meaning in texts lies not in the individual author but in language, and that it is “capitalist ideology [that] attaches great importance on the ‘person’ of the author.”⁵⁵ “The Death of the Author” was influenced by the philosophy and post-structuralism of Derrida and Michel Foucault. Like “The Death of the Author,” Foucault’s essay on Barthes, “What is an Author?” (1969), sought to eliminate the author’s authority in regard to the interpretation of texts. The “death of the author” concept grants readers the task of determining meaning based on the structure of a work or text.

As Craig Owens argues, the combination of deconstruction and the “Death of the Author” is an effective means to emphasize and critique framing devices without the notion of a sole creator.⁵⁶ This, I believe, illustrates the basis of the *Musée d’Art Moderne*. Broodthaers was firmly to the left of the capitalist ideology he sought to subvert, and “The Death of the Author” strove to destabilize the importance of the individual author caused by the ideology of capitalism.⁵⁷ Illustrative of the political and theoretical climate in Europe, and a growing personal interest in deconstructing framing devices, Broodthaers soon directed the majority of his artworks toward critiques of art museums and art galleries, the formative constituents that accept, shape, and nurture the commercialization of art objects.

Although there is no evidence that Marcel Broodthaers was directly influenced by Derrida or Barthes, it is clear that the political, philosophical, and theoretical trajectories of the late 1960s were moving in parallel directions and shared comparable beliefs about taking control of or criticizing institutions, authorities, and authorship. Along with the student

⁵⁴ Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author,” (1967) in *Image, Music, Text* ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill, 1977), 143.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Owens, “From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After ‘The Death of the Author?’,” 131.

⁵⁷ Barthes, “Death of the Author,” 143.

revolts in Paris and Brussels in May 1968, American anti-Vietnam protests, in which students questioned and rejected the United States government's involvement in Southeast Asian affairs, were rampant in the late 1960s. After the events of 1968, American and French artists did not immediately critique the institution they were a part of or felt controlled by, the art institution. Perhaps as a Belgian artist, Broodthaers was distant enough from Paris to immediately react to the student revolts from the periphery. At any rate, Broodthaers responded to the political and theoretical climate of 1968 by inaugurating the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, a four-year political and theoretical form of insurgence.

In 1968, Marcel Broodthaers began the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*. An open letter from Broodthaers, dated September 7, 1968 and signed as the "Cabinet des Ministres de la Culture," announces the opening of the museum:

We have the pleasure of announcing to the customers and the curious the opening of the "Département des Aigles" of the Musée d'Art Moderne.

The works are in preparation; their completion will determine the date at which we hope to make poetry and the plastic arts shine hand-in-hand. We hope that our formula "Disinterestedness plus admiration" will seduce you.⁵⁸

As Douglas Crimp states, "the suggestion that a museum might wish to seduce 'customers and the curious' by employing the mock-Kantian formula 'disinterestedness plus admiration' is perhaps the most elliptical yet precise critique of institutionalized modernism ever offered."⁵⁹ Broodthaers uses the mock-Kantian formula because Immanuel Kant's aesthetic theories and investigations of taste had become central to modernism. The implication that the museum aims only to seduce "customers and the curious" with such a formula, alludes to the eventual institutional absorption and commodification of the once seemingly subversive modernism. When asked about the *Musée d'Art Moderne*,

⁵⁸ Marcel Broodthaers, Open letter, Ostend, September 7, 1968, published in Douglas Crimp, "This is Not a Museum of Art," in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater, 76.

⁵⁹ Crimp, "This is Not a Museum of Art," 76.

Broodthaers stated “it is perhaps possible to find an authentic means of calling into question art, its circulation, etc.”⁶⁰ Indeed, Broodthaers found a way to authentically and critically challenge art, its distribution, and its institutional context. In *Musée d’Art Moderne*, Broodthaers transformed his role as an artist into that of a director; not only did he organize the entire museum, he also sent out official-looking invitations with the fictional museum’s name and department on the letterhead that were signed by him as the director.⁶¹ Assuming the role of the *Musée d’Art Moderne*’s director and curator, Broodthaers parodied and undermined the authority of the institution.⁶² Between 1968 and 1972, the *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* opened different sections in various locations: *Section XIXème Siècle*, 1968, installed in Broodthaers’s apartment; *Section Littéraire*, 1968-1970, also in the apartment; *Section XVIIème Siècle*, 1969, Antwerp; *Section XIXème Siècle (Bis)*, 1970, Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf; *Section Cinéma*, 1971, Düsseldorf; *Section Financière*, 1971, Galerie Michael Werner at Kunstmarkt, Cologne; *Section des Figures (The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present)*, 1972, Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf; and *Section Publicité, Section d’Art Moderne, and Musée d’Art Ancien, Galerie du XXème Siècle*, 1972, Documenta V, Kassel. During the time in which the museum’s sections were exhibited, Broodthaers was “misperceived as the guardian of the ‘aura’ of the museum,” which, as Dieter Schwarz believes, “seems to confirm rather than contradict his conception of criticism.”⁶³ Since the sections of the *Musée d’Art Moderne* were intentionally analogous to extant art exhibitions in order to deconstruct art institutions, they were mistaken by some

⁶⁰ Marcel Broodthaers, “Ten Thousand Francs Reward,” (after an interview with Irmeline Lebeer), trans. Paul Schmidt, in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, and Photographs*, 46.

⁶¹ Compton, “In Praise of the Subject,” 44.

⁶² Thierry de Duve and Rosalind Krauss, “Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism,” *October*, no. 70 (Autumn 1994): 94.

⁶³ Schwarz, “Look! Books in Plaster!,” 65.

as authentic, serious, and non-critical exhibitions. Broodthaers's praxis was misread by some as perpetuating, rather than interrogating, the museum's "aura." Today, many now recognize the intrinsic criticality of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*. For example, Anne Rorimer acknowledged that, along with others, Broodthaers "participated in laying the groundwork for the current debate surrounding museum collecting and display."⁶⁴

The first manifestation of the *Musée d'Art Moderne* was the *Section XIXème Siècle* (Section of the Nineteenth Century), located on the ground floor of Broodthaers's apartment at 30 rue de la Pépinière in Brussels from September 27, 1968 to September 27, 1969 (Figure 5). Included here were empty painting crates, ladders, and postcards of paintings by nineteenth-century artists such as Jacques-Louis David, Gustave Courbet, and Eugène Delacroix.⁶⁵ These photographic reproductions, typically sold in museums, illustrate museums' commercial reduction of the "masterpiece to souvenir."⁶⁶ Crimp argues that Broodthaers began his critical museum with the section of the nineteenth century because "that was the time when the 'romantic disposition,' which Broodthaers constantly points to as the source of contemporary attitudes about culture, took hold of art and provided it with an always-ready alibi for its alienation from social reality."⁶⁷ During the opening of the *Section XIXème Siècle*, Broodthaers projected slides of prints by J.J. Grandville. The use of Grandville's work in the *Musée d'Art Moderne* recalls Walter Benjamin's observation that "the disintegration of culture into commodities was the secret theme of Grandville's art."⁶⁸ As Broodthaers believed, the commodification of art objects and art's estrangement from

⁶⁴ Rorimer, "Reevaluating the Object of Collecting and Display," 21.

⁶⁵ Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," 18.

⁶⁶ Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 241.

⁶⁷ Crimp, "This is Not a Museum of Art," 80.

⁶⁸ Walter Benjamin, "Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian" (1937) in *One-Way Street and Other Writings* trans. Kingsley Shorter (London: New Left Books, 1979), 360.

social life and reality originate in the nineteenth century; this likely motivated him to commence his critical museum with this section.

On the museum's opening night, Dr. Johannes Cladders, the director of the Museum at Mönchengladbach, presented a lecture. The rooms in Broodthaers's home were labeled with gallery numbers, and the word "Musée" was painted on the window, visible from both inside and outside the house. For the opening and closing nights of the exhibition, an art handling company's van and employees were stationed directly outside of Broodthaers's home/museum (Figure 6).⁶⁹ Broodthaers also labeled the museum's objects with figure numbers. Figure numbers are often utilized in museums to label and organize objects on display. However, Broodthaers's objects with figure numbers lack logical order or explanation, thus demonstrating the inadequacies and arbitrariness of museum-constructed narratives.⁷⁰ With sly reference to the pre-Surrealist author Comte de Lautréamont's "chance encounter of an umbrella and a sewing machine on an operating table," Broodthaers explains his distaste for museum classification:

A comb, a traditional painting, a sewing machine, an umbrella, a table may find a place in the museum in different sections, depending upon their classification. We see sculpture in a separate space, painting in another, ceramics and porcelains, . . . stuffed animals. . . . Each space is in turn the compartmentalized, perhaps intended to be a section--snakes, insects, fish, birds--susceptible to being divided into departments--parrots, gulls, eagles.⁷¹

Broodthaers fabricated the *Musée d'Art Moderne* as a convincing event by deceptively using many traditional museum exhibition strategies such as signs, official invitations, an opening, a visiting lecturer and designated, labeled gallery spaces. However, Broodthaers's *Section XIXème Siècle* exhibition was missing a key element: paintings.

⁶⁹ Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," 18.

⁷⁰ For more information on Broodthaers's use of figure numbers in the *Musée d'Art Moderne* and in his other work, see Dirk Snauwert, "The Figures," trans. Kaatje Cusse, *October*, no. 42 (Autumn 1987): 126-134.

⁷¹ Broodthaers, "Ten Thousand Francs Reward," 46.

Broodthaers emphasized the shell of the museum exhibition by displaying empty painting cases, ladders, and postcards of paintings as the exhibition's content. Broodthaers's presentation of real, but often publicly hidden, components comprising museum exhibitions privileges and critiques the role of the curator and director as the sole authors of exhibitions.⁷² This museum section is also undoubtedly linked to Marxist theory in that Broodthaers emphasized the economic base of the museum, e.g., its reduction of the "masterpiece to souvenir," and the many framing devices used by museums to perpetuate the association of art with the bourgeois sphere. By opening the *Musée d'Art Moderne* in different sections and locations over the course of four years, Broodthaers was deconstructing and subverting the classification models and compartmentalization employed by museums. By designating his home, packing objects, and reproductions of paintings as a museum exhibition in the *Section XIXème Siècle*, Broodthaers also critiqued the authority and aura of objects in museum collections.

The next section of the *Musée d'Art Moderne* is typically considered to be the *Section Littéraire* (Literary Section), a book that consists of a series of open letters dealing with the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, previous activities, works, and commentaries (Figure 7).⁷³ Benjamin Buchloh believes that the *Section Littéraire* is a critique of Conceptual art's naïve belief that it subverts art's institutionalization.⁷⁴ As Lucy Lippard and John Chandler argued, Conceptual artists sought to undermine the art institution by dematerializing the art object.⁷⁵ However, as emphasized in the *Section Littéraire*, Conceptual art was, and still is, part of the art institution as it is often included in museum collections and exhibitions.

⁷² Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," 19.

⁷³ For more information on the *Section Littéraire* and Broodthaers's letters, see Birgit Pelzer, "Recourse to the Letter," in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, and Photographs*, 157-181.

⁷⁴ For more on this argument, see Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems."

⁷⁵ Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12 (February 1968): 31-36.

After the closure of the *Section XIXème Siècle* in 1969, Broodthaers's museum reappeared as the *Section XVIIème Siècle* (Section of the Seventeenth Century) at an official alternative art space, A 37 90 89, in Antwerp; this section remained open for one week and included twenty postcards of paintings and drawings by Peter Paul Rubens (Figure 8). Again, Broodthaers points to the commodification and the reproduction of art objects by museums, but this time the critique is conducted in an art context rather than the artist's home. Several months after the *Section XVIIème* closed, and for the brief duration of two days, the *Section XIXème Siècle (Bis)* [Section of the Nineteenth Century (again)] opened in the *between 4* exhibition at the Städtische Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf. As Buchloh states, this institutional critique was "in its place of official acculturation, the museum."⁷⁶ For this section, Broodthaers chose eight authentic nineteenth-century paintings owned by the Städtische Kunsthalle and installed them in two horizontal rows of four, slightly recalling the "Salon style" installation methods of the nineteenth century (Figure 9). Broodthaers also arranged the paintings according to size, suggesting "a prior museological moment in the eighteenth century when picture galleries constituted a kind of 'décor.'"⁷⁷ While Broodthaers's *Section XIXème Siècle (Bis)* is also critical of museological classification and display, it also marks the beginning of a practice much used in later examples of institutional critique, in which artists reevaluate objects in the museum's collection within the owning institutions to show how museums create or repress cultural histories.⁷⁸

In 1970, Broodthaers's *Section Documentaire* (Documentary Section) opened on the beach of Le Coq, Belgium (Figure 10). For this museum section, Broodthaers and the art

⁷⁶ Buchloh, "Formalism and Historicity: Changing Concepts in American and European Art since 1945," in *Europe and the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1977), 98.

⁷⁷ Crimp, "This is Not a Museum of Art," 82.

⁷⁸ For an example, see Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* exhibition, 1992, at the Maryland Historical Society.

collector Dr. Herman Daled skillfully carved a museum floor plan into the sand while wearing baseball caps marked with the inscription “museum.” They also set up signs on the periphery of the museum’s floor plan declaring “Touching the objects is absolutely forbidden” in both French and Flemish. Located merely feet from the water’s edge, the museum plan likely washed away within a few hours of its conception. Although the *Section Documentaire* did not have any contents, the remote location and authoritative signs suggest, and point to, the Marxist notion of the inability of poorer classes to acquire artworks and/or visit museums. It may also relate to André Malraux’s 1947 book, *Museums without Walls*, which attempts to deliver art from around the world to virtually anyone via photographic reproductions. Broodthaers’s museum section is literally a museum without walls. This section of Broodthaers’s museum is also strikingly parallel to the American Conceptual artist Dennis Oppenheim’s *Gallery Transplants*, 1969. In these works, Oppenheim carved the dimensions of specific galleries outdoors in either snow or dirt. Some of the transplants were directly positioned outside of the gallery, while some were situated in remote locations. As Oppenheim states, “I don’t really carry a gallery disturbance around with me; I leave that behind in the gallery. Occasionally I consider the gallery site as though it were some kind of hunting ground. . . . But generally when I’m outside I’m completely outside.”⁷⁹ While Oppenheim denies the critical connotations of the *Gallery Transplants*, these works predate Broodthaers’s *Section Documentaire*. Although it is unclear if Broodthaers knew of Oppenheim’s similar outdoor projects, the works are undoubtedly parallel.

In January 1971, Broodthaers’s next museum section, *Section Cinéma* (Film Section), appeared at Haus Burgplatz 12 in Düsseldorf with an announcement declaring that “didactic

⁷⁹ Dennis Oppenheim, quoted in Kynaston McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 84.

films” would be exhibited. For one of these films, Broodthaers combined images of Charlie Chaplin, streets, the Palais Royale in Brussels, and other apparently unrelated photographs (Figure 11). Figure numbers were also added to each image and/or movie still. By creating a single, continuous film paired with categorical figure numbers, Broodthaers organizes and constructs fictional relationships between the unrelated images. In so doing, Broodthaers fabricated an order and narrative out of the images and thus deconstructed museum-created fictional narratives. Along with the films, objects in the exhibition included a mirror, piano, and a framed photograph of an eagle’s head and were assigned various figure numbers.

At the 1971 Cologne Art Fair, due to the *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*’s fictional and temporary bankruptcy, the *Section Financière* (Financial Section) opened in the Galerie Michael Werner and consisted of an offer to sell the *Musée d’Art Moderne* via nineteen art fair catalogues wrapped with a jacket stating “*Musée d’Art Moderne à vendre, 1970 bis 71, pour cause de faillite*” (“The Museum of Modern Art is for sale, from 1970 to 1971, due to bankruptcy”) (Figure 12). A gold bar stamped with an eagle was also for sale at the *Section Financière* and was intended to sell for double its market price in gold because it could also be considered as an art object. A decade earlier, Yves Klein suggested a similar commodification of artworks in *Sensitivity Zones*, 1960. Here, Klein sold immaterial and conceptual "pictorial zones of sensitivity" to collectors in exchange for gold leaf that was tossed into the Seine River in Paris. Broodthaers’s *Section Financière* and Klein’s *Sensitivity Zones* both ultimately point to the bourgeois reduction of artworks to mere economic commodities. Although all of Broodthaers’s museum sections challenge the legitimacy of museums, displays, and collections, his *Musée d’Art Moderne*,

Département des Aigles, Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present best illustrates this notion.

In 1972, Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* reappeared as an exhibition at the Städtische Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf entitled *Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present*. Broodthaers's exhibition included 266 various eagle objects from the collections of 43 international museums, private collectors, and dealers (Figure 13).⁸⁰ Broodthaers simulated genuine museum exhibitions with labels, cases, objects, and a seemingly coherent theme. By fabricating a thematic and apparently historical exhibition on the trite subject of the eagle, Broodthaers ultimately critiqued the validity of objects owned by museums and the relevance of certain systems of logic and classification, particularly the thematic exhibition. Broodthaers also critiqued the public's desire for purely thematic exhibitions as he stated in the exhibition catalogue, "Publikum, wie bis du blind!" ("Public, how blind you are!")⁸¹ By reenacting a thematic exhibition with objects that have only superficial commonalities, i.e., they all depict eagles, Broodthaers assessed the institutions' collecting habits as a capitalist "amassing of objects for its own sake" with few other interests besides building an encyclopedic collection.⁸² Broodthaers emphasized the absurdity of eagles as valued art objects owned by museums by appropriating a system of classification, the museum exhibition, to organize and historicize the diverse objects. The eagle objects in Broodthaers's exhibition included Gerhard Richter's *Adler*, 1972, anonymous drawings, slides, photographs, cigar bands, postage stamps, and taxidermic scenes (Figure 14). Moreover, the objects ranged from what we would consider "fine" art to

⁸⁰ Rainer Borgemeister and Chris Cullens, "'Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present,'" *October*, no. 42 (Autumn 1987): 135.

⁸¹ de Duve and Krauss, "Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism," 93.

⁸² Rorimer, "Reevaluating the Object of Collecting and Display," 22.

mundane objects from everyday life. Most of the objects are not distinguishable as artworks, but have attained a confirmatory artistic status assigned by institutional display, i.e., the owning institutions' context. The exhibition's focus on the eagle can also be read as a "parody of politics (in which the eagle is so often a symbol of authority). . . ." ⁸³ Although the eagle is a symbol for Germany, the Nazis, and the United States, Michael Compton believes that Broodthaers used the eagle more generally as a symbol for museum and societal authority: "Taken the exhibition as a whole, it may surely be understood to stand both for the myth of the free artist and for the power of the systems which control him." ⁸⁴

The majority of the eagle objects in the *Section des Figures* were owned by art institutions and served as a cross-section of the lenders' collections. However, all of the objects were labeled "this is not a work of art" in Broodthaers's exhibition (Figure 15). The labels not only questioned and critiqued the artistic status of the items in the exhibition, but also served to equalize the diverse objects. ⁸⁵ The phrase on the labels was inspired by René Magritte's painting *Treachery of Images (This is Not a Pipe)* (c. 1928-29, Figure 16), which combines language and image to produce mutual contradictions. ⁸⁶ When asked about the labels in *Section des Figures*, Broodthaers stated:

"This is not a work of art" is a formula obtained by the contraction of a concept by Duchamp and an antithetical concept by Magritte. It allowed me to decorate Duchamp's urinal with the emblem of an eagle smoking the pipe. I think I underlined the principle of authority that has made the symbol of the eagle the colonel of art. ⁸⁷

⁸³ Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," 19.

⁸⁴ Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," 50.

⁸⁵ Michael Oppitz and Chris Cullens, "Eagle/Pipe/Urinal," in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, and Photographs*, 155.

⁸⁶ Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," 15.

⁸⁷ Broodthaers, "Ten Thousand Francs Reward," 47.

The labels in Broodthaers's exhibition mimicked the traditional labels seen in other museums, but contradicted the artistic status of the eagle objects. This informs viewers that, when in the context of a museum, objects are immediately transformed into valued artworks.

Broodthaers was intrigued by Duchamp's *Fountain*, which demonstrated that any item could be transformed into an art object within a certain space.⁸⁸ Like Duchamp, Broodthaers utilized readymades in the formulation of his critical methodology.⁸⁹ However, Broodthaers's exhibition ironically used objects already elevated to the status of art because of their presence in art collections. As Thierry de Duve states, "Broodthaers's reciprocal readymade is the readymade. . . . It uses the museum-without-walls as a museum, and the museum is a work of art."⁹⁰ In other words, the *Section des Figures* remains as an autonomous work of art that cannot be fully recreated or lose its criticality by becoming consumed by collectors, as is the case of Duchamp's *Fountain* and the individual sculptures in Oldenburg's *The Store*. The objects in the *Section des Figures* still exist in their owners' collections, yet once removed from the context of Broodthaers's museum, the physical objects lose their relation to Broodthaers's enterprise. Although it has been partially recreated posthumously, without Broodthaers as the director, the *Section des Figures* mainly exists as a memory or idea. On the contrary, Duchamp's *Fountain* and Oldenburg's sculptures from *The Store* can never escape the artists' authorship, and the objects completely lose their original and political contexts when placed in museums and private collections. Broodthaers alluded to this notion in the exhibition catalogue: "Two facts will be brought into focus here: that in the beginning Duchamp's initiative was aimed at

⁸⁸ Compton, "Marcel Broodthaers," 15.

⁸⁹ Borgemeister and Cullens, "'Section des Figures:' The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present," 141.

⁹⁰ Thierry de Duve, "After and Before: Archaeology of Pure Modernism," in *Kant After Duchamp* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 421.

destabilizing the power of juries and schools, and that today--having become a mere shadow of itself--it dominates an entire area of contemporary art, supported by collectors and dealers.”⁹¹ Deceptively mimicking a thematic and historical museum exhibition, Broodthaers’s institutional critique emphasized the varying value of items owned by art institutions, as well as the arbitrary of systems of logic or representation used in museum exhibitions. Broodthaers’s exhibition also leads viewers to question the institutional ideology of sanctioning these seemingly unimportant objects as art and to reevaluate the relevance of the other objects owned by museums.

The final sections of the *Musée d’Art Moderne* opened in June of 1972 at Documenta V in Kassel, while the *Section des Figures* remained on view in Düsseldorf. These final parts were the *Section Publicité* (Publicity Section), which was a complete museum section that also contained a smaller part, the *Section d’Art Moderne* (Section of Modern Art). The *Section d’Art Moderne* was altered and transformed into a new section, the satirically-titled *Musée d’Art Ancien, Département des Aigles, Galerie du XXème Siècle* (Museum of Ancient Art, Department of Eagles, Gallery of the Twentieth Century) in September 1972. In the *Section d’Art Moderne*, a black square was painted on the floor of the Neue Galerie with white script stating “Privat Eigentum, Private Property, Propriété privée” (Figure 17). The periphery of the square was also protected by stanchions and chains. The *Section d’Art Moderne* points to the elitist and restrictive mechanisms used by museums, such as stanchions and chains, and also to the Marxist notion of the inability of non-privileged classes to access private property or artworks. “Musée/Museum” and “Figure 0” were inscribed on the gallery’s window. When the *Section d’Art Moderne* was transformed into

⁹¹ Broodthaers, “Methode,” in *Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute* (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1972), 13.

the *Musée d'Art Ancien, Département des Aigles, Galerie du XXème Siècle*, the black square was simply repainted and inscribed with:

Ecrire Peindre Copier
figurer
Parler former Rêver
Echanger
faire Informer Pouvoir (Figure 18)⁹²

The *Section Publicité* also exhibited ephemera from earlier museum sections, such as documents and photographs of the eagles in the *Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present* (Figure 19). The *Section Publicité* emphasized and critiqued museums' concentration on publicity and, thus, the museums' "equivalence between its 'art' and 'non-art' activities."⁹³ Crimp succinctly sums up the critical edge of the final museum sections by stating:

These three final gestures point pessimistically to a new phase in the museum's history, the one we are now experiencing: the conjuncture of exhibitions as a form of public relations, of the ultimate reduction of art to private property, and of the evolution of artistic strategies into those of a pure alignment with power.⁹⁴

Broodthaers did not live long enough to see the full development of the complex public relations currently employed by museums, but he certainly anticipated this progression in the *Section Publicité*.⁹⁵

Having established the institutionally critical implications of Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne*, it is important to restate that Broodthaers can be distinguished from the historical models because his museum installations *are* the artworks and the individual

⁹² Write Paint Copy
figure
Speak form Dream
Exchange
make Inform Power

⁹³ Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002), 43.

⁹⁴ Crimp, "This is Not a Museum of Art," 90.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

objects included function exclusively as an ensemble. Art objects are utilized to materialize Broodthaers's critique and serve as "coequal instruments of his enterprise."⁹⁶ Like Duchamp's *Fountain*, the *Musée d'Art Moderne* utilizes the framework to sanction objects as art, including pedestals and an art context, to critique and address these strategies. However, the *Musée d'Art Moderne*'s critique of the museum is increasingly complex as it also undermines the thematic exhibition, classificatory strategies, display, collections, and the economic and capitalistic underpinnings of museums. As Owens argues, "'The Death of the Author' constitutes a historical watershed between the avant-gardes of the teens and twenties and the institutional critiques of the seventies and that to regard the latter as a revival or renewal of the former can only lead to misapprehensions about contemporary art."⁹⁷ Barthes's theory marks a significant shift between the earlier avant-garde practices and Broodthaers in that the latter is primarily concerned with critiquing art institutions by completely circumventing the traditional role of the artist as author. Instead, the artist inhabited the otherwise authorial roles of the director and curator of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, and the museum sections are juxtapositions of reciprocal readymades. While Duchamp signed *Fountain* as "R. Mutt," the objects in the *Musée d'Art Moderne* are not individually attributed to Broodthaers's artistic conceptions. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* also avoids losing its criticality because the work is a complex series of multi-media installations that could never be fully recreated, sited, or consumed. Furthermore, Broodthaers's museum can be differentiated from the historical models as it is consequently both the artwork and the critique of the institution.

⁹⁶ Oppitz and Cullens, "Eagle/Pipe/Urinal," 156.

⁹⁷ Owens, "From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After 'The Death of the Author?'," 127.

AFTER BROODTHAERS

While Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* is historically the first institutional critique of its kind, many other projects similarly critical of the institution emerged in Europe and the United States shortly thereafter. A discussion of these critiques will demonstrate the development of institutional critique and the originality of Marcel Broodthaers. By explicating the institutional critiques of Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, and Michael Asher of the late 1960s and early 1970s, I will argue that, indeed, Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* anticipates these projects and thus forms the nexus of institutional critique. I will also briefly discuss the second-wave institutional critiques of Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson to confirm Broodthaers's legacy and influence on these later artists.

Often associated with the conception of institutional critique, Hans Haacke's first institutional critique is the *Gallery-Goers' Birthplace and Residence Profile* at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York, November 1 to 30, 1969, one year after the inauguration of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*.⁹⁸ Gallery visitors were asked to mark their birthplace and their current residence with pins on a map, and, in 1971, photographs of the gallery visitors' predominantly luxurious apartment buildings were exhibited at the Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne. In Haacke's *MoMA Poll* (1970, Figure 20) at the *Information* exhibition at the

⁹⁸ The *Gallery-Goers' Birthplace and Residence Profile* at the Howard Wise Gallery in 1969 is similarly redeveloped for Haacke's *Gallery-Goers' Profile, Part 2*, 1971, at the Galerie Paul Maenz, Cologne; *Guggenheim Museum Visitors' Profile*, 1971; *Documenta Visitors' Profile*, 1972; *John Weber Gallery Visitors' Profile I*, results exhibited April 28-May 17, 1973; *John Weber Gallery Visitors' Profile II*, 1973.

Museum of Modern Art in New York, a large sign printed with the question “Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon’s Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?” was in the exhibition space along with two ballot boxes labeled “yes” and “no.” The *MoMA Poll* functions as institutional critique because, although most likely unknown to visitors at the time, New York Governor Rockefeller served on the board of the museum. Haacke’s *MoMA Poll* revealed that the Museum of Modern Art was “not an ivory tower but tainted, like any social institution dependent on funding and not free of the biases of politics.”⁹⁹ Haacke’s institutional critiques have also resulted in museums--the Guggenheim in 1971 and the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne in 1974--censoring his work because his installations would have politicized these superficially apolitical spaces by presenting factual information about the compromised socioeconomic administration of these institutions.¹⁰⁰ For example, Haacke’s first solo museum exhibition in the United States was to include Manhattan real estate documents revealing that members of the Shapolsky family were New York slumlords. This installation was cancelled due to the political consequences it entailed, even though it is unclear if the Shapolskys had any relation to the Guggenheim where the work was to be shown.¹⁰¹

Haacke was greatly influenced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s critiques of aesthetic ideology.¹⁰² According to Bourdieu, theories are ineffective in the realm of culture. Consequently, Bourdieu believes in applied and investigative research as an “assault

⁹⁹ Rorimer, “Context as Content: Surveying the Site,” 271.

¹⁰⁰ Buchloh, “Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason,” in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 207-208.

¹⁰¹ Godfrey, 246.

¹⁰² Molly Nesbit, “In Conversation with Hans Haacke,” in *Hans Haacke*, by Walter Grasskamp, Molly Nesbit, and Jon Bird (New York: Phaidon Press, 2004), 8.

on the very rationalizations and self-justifications of culture itself.”¹⁰³ He argued that the application of investigative critiques directly in the institution yields more accurate results than making theoretical presumptions about the institution from the outside. Haacke believes that Marcel Broodthaers was also greatly influenced by Bourdieu.¹⁰⁴ However, Bourdieu’s theories on taste and culture were not published until 1977, one year after Broodthaers’s death. Bourdieu influenced many second-wave artists of institutional critique, such as Andrea Fraser, and Haacke certainly recognized a connection, although indirect, with Bourdieu’s theories and Broodthaers’s practice. As Haacke states, “Bourdieu’s writing seem to confirm some of what I’d learned from that marvellous [sic] sociologist trickster Marcel Duchamp. In the other Marcel--I mean Broodthaers--I’d already found a kindred spirit. Bourdieu’s texts helped me to understand things in the larger context of the sociology of culture.”¹⁰⁵

Incidentally, one year after Haacke’s exhibition cancellation at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, artworks by Broodthaers and Joseph Beuys were included in the Guggenheim’s 1972 exhibition *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf*.¹⁰⁶ Due to the censorship and termination of Haacke’s exhibition, Broodthaers decided to withdraw his work from the Guggenheim “as an act of solidarity with Haacke.”¹⁰⁷ However, Beuys did not remove his work from the exhibition.¹⁰⁸ This indifference angered Broodthaers, and he “demanded that Joseph Beuys reflect on the conditions of his production. He reminded Beuys that artistic

¹⁰³ Frederic Jameson, “Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Post-Modernism,” in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 44.

¹⁰⁴ Hans Haacke in Dorothea Zwirner, “Correspondances [sic]. The Reception of Marcel Broodthaers,” in *Marcel Broodthaers: Correspondences* (Zürich: Galerie Hauser & Wirth, 1995), 53.

¹⁰⁵ Molly Nesbit, “In Conversation with Hans Haacke,” 8.

¹⁰⁶ See Diane Waldman, *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1972), nos. 108 and 109 (Beuys) and nos. 110 and 111 (Broodthaers).

¹⁰⁷ Stefan Germer, “Haacke, Broodthaers, Beuys,” *October*, no. 45 (Summer 1988): 66.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

production is inseparable from its institutional framework.”¹⁰⁹ In an allegorical letter written to Beuys in 1972, Broodthaers stated:

King Louis [Ludwig] II had Hans H. sent away from his castles. His Majesty prefers you to this specialist of compositions for the flute. . . . I can understand if it is a matter of artistic choice. But is not the enthusiasm that His Majesty displays for you motivated by a political choice as well? I hope this question disturbs you as much as it does me. What ends do you serve, Wagner? Why? How?¹¹⁰

The letter is signed as “Jacques Offenbach.” The composer Offenbach originated the operetta form, which is a prototype of the modern musical comedy, and was also Jewish. In contrast, the German composer Richard Wagner is known for his dramatic operas and anti-Semitic writings. By addressing Beuys as Wagner, Broodthaers demonstrates that he, as Offenbach, has a “fundamentally different conception of the social role of the artist” than Beuys.¹¹¹ Moreover, Broodthaers believes that Beuys wrongly avoids the political connections between art and the institution, which differentiates the ostensibly political work of Beuys from that of Broodthaers and Haacke.

Another artist often associated with the formation of institutional critique is Daniel Buren. In the late 1960s, Buren created paintings on unstretched striped awning fabric that reduced the actual paint application to “degree zero.”¹¹² Mostly devoid of the artist’s hand, and similar to Broodthaers’s early work and museums, Buren’s artwork emphasizes the literal supports of paintings such as stretchers, frames, and museum walls.¹¹³ By exhibiting his work in art institutions and galleries, Buren intervenes and attempts to claim the site in which paintings are exhibited and elevated to high art. As Crimp states:

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 63.

¹¹⁰ Marcel Broodthaers, open letter dated October 3, 1972, reprinted in Germer, “Haacke, Broodthaers, Beuys,” 66-67.

¹¹¹ Germer, “Haacke, Broodthaers, Beuys,” 67.

¹¹² Guy Lelong, *Daniel Buren*, trans. David Radzinowicz (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), 34.

¹¹³ Douglas Crimp, “The End of Painting,” in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. Frances Colpitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 97.

It is fundamental to Buren's work that it function in complicity with those very institutions it seeks to make visible as the necessary condition of the artwork's intelligibility. It is only thereby possible for his work to ask, What makes it possible to see a painting? What makes it possible to see a painting *as a painting?*¹¹⁴

One of Buren's first artistic interventions occurred at the Galerie Apollinaire in October 1968, when he adhered a piece of green and white striped fabric to the gallery's door that sealed the door and closed the exhibition (Figure 21).¹¹⁵ While Buren's work disrupts and reclaims the art institution, he is primarily concerned with deconstructing the institution of painting within traditional exhibition spaces. At the John Weber Gallery, New York, 1973, Buren's *Within and Beyond the Frame* utilized a string of several striped banners inside, and extending outside, the gallery. Buren desired to expose the false authorship of the gallery space and that the objects are the same within the gallery as outside.¹¹⁶ Buren states "the piece inside the gallery, thus dictated by the situation outside, uses only the space available as a result of the given architecture."¹¹⁷ Buren's early work calls attention to the architectural and ideological framework of the institutions in which objects, or paintings, are validated as "fine art." Buren's work reveals the hidden framework that validates painting as high art, which is comparable to Broodthaers's critical investigations of art contexts and supports. Incidentally, Buren visited the first section of Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle* in September of 1968, and the two artists remained friends for many years.¹¹⁸ Due to the closeness of the two men, it is quite possible that Broodthaers's ideologies influenced Buren or vice versa. As Buren states:

¹¹⁴ Crimp, "The End of Painting," 93. Italics in original.

¹¹⁵ Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1973), 53.

¹¹⁶ Daniel Buren interviewed by Robin White, in *View 1* (February 1979): n.p.

¹¹⁷ Daniel Buren, "Function of the Museum," *Artforum* 12 (September 1973): 68.

¹¹⁸ Zwirner, "Correspondances [sic]. The Reception of Marcel Broodthaers," 27.

I believe that from the time we saw a lot of each other and knew what the other was doing there must have been reciprocal influences. When these influences are apparent, then they are all the more remarkable, as they do not, nor will they ever, lie on a formal level.¹¹⁹

Another figure associated with early institutional critique is the American artist Michael Asher. Asher developed succinct critiques in the 1970s, including a project at the Claire Copley Gallery in Los Angeles (Figure 22). What differentiates Asher's work from that of Buren is that it eliminates the signature or trademark of the artist, and defines itself as "an aesthetic system that juxtaposes predetermined elements occurring within the institutional framework, that are recognizable and identifiable to the public because they are so drawn to the context itself."¹²⁰ For his earliest institutional critique, at the Claire Copley Gallery in 1974, Asher removed a wall of the gallery exposing the office staff and thus revealing the economic underpinnings of the gallery. Owens states that Asher's work is "a literary deconstructive practice that proceeds through displacement: elements are either moved or removed from their 'original' contexts so that their contradictions can be examined."¹²¹ However, as Buchloh argues, Asher's work develops out of Minimal and post-Minimal aesthetics.¹²² Asher's wall removal at the Claire Copley Gallery may have developed out of the reductive aesthetic of the Los Angeles-based Light and Space movement rather than developing from a political or theoretical background, like Broodthaers's. Asher's critique of museum strategies is markedly different from Broodthaers's critiques, as Asher physically moves and displaces objects, or walls, to call attention to the previously unremarkable placement of those items. However, Broodthaers

¹¹⁹ Buren, quoted in Zwirner, *Marcel Broodthaers: Correspondences*, 47.

¹²⁰ Michael Asher, *Writings 1973-1983 on works 1969-1979*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 209.

¹²¹ Owens, "From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After 'The Death of the Author?'," 133.

¹²² Buchloh, "Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modernist Sculpture," in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, 12.

first enacted “the death of the author” in his museum-directed critiques, which is also developed by Asher, since most of his critiques only utilize extant structures in art contexts and thus lack clear authorial attributes. Like Broodthaers’s work, Asher’s later critiques are the artwork and the museum and/or gallery frame is the object of his method.

Although Haacke, Buren, and Asher began creating institutional critiques in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Marcel Broodthaers’s innovation in the practice began in September of 1968 with the *Musée d’Art Moderne*, and he was already critical of art contexts and formative structures as early as 1964 with his *Exposition surprise* and use of eggshells and mussels in his work from the mid-sixties. Broodthaers was undoubtedly influenced by Duchamp and, as Haacke states:

Duchamp was, of course, the first artist to think about the aura that surrounds art and artifacts, and the power of context. As we know, they fundamentally affect the way in which we look at objects. . . . In 1972, Marcel Broodthaers continued Duchamp’s project with his fantastic exhibition *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures*.¹²³

Although Duchamp was a pioneer in what we now call institutional critique, Broodthaers’s *Musée d’Art Moderne* extended Duchamp’s project significantly. Broodthaers’s increasingly theoretical and political critiques opened the dialogue for other artists to continue and expand the critical investigations of institutions. Broodthaers developed Duchamp’s readymade project by also critiquing the institutions’ architecture, classification and display models, collections, curatorial ideologies, economics, and politics. Broodthaers’s museum is a culmination and extension of the historical models of the nineteenth century continued by Duchamp, and anticipates the work of Haacke, Buren, and Asher. Thus, the *Musée d’Art Moderne* functions as the nexus of institutional critique praxis.

¹²³ Nesbit, “In Conversation with Hans Haacke,” 17.

The work of Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson demonstrably expands Broodthaers's project of performing deconstructive institutional critiques. These artists have adopted Broodthaers's non-authorial approach by performing their critiques in the guises of museum curators and docents. Fraser primarily positions herself in the guises of museum docents, curators, and visitors in her performances. By presenting directors' speeches and docent tours, Fraser's performances "place her in a position of excess," which is what Alexander Alberro believes Fraser owes to Broodthaers's vanguard participation as a leading museum director.¹²⁴ In the performance at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk*, 1989, Fraser assumed the role of a fictional upper-class museum docent, Jane Castleton, who is "a figure of identification for the primarily white, middle-class audience."¹²⁵ Fraser, as Castleton, regurgitated ideology from the museum's brochure, pushed museum membership, and described the aesthetically-pleasing features on the security guards' uniforms.¹²⁶ Recalling Broodthaers, Fraser positions herself in roles other than artist to question the functions of those roles and to deconstruct the hidden mechanisms of the art institution from within the persona of a museum authority.

The artist Fred Wilson also transforms himself into a museum curator to critique art institutions. In 1992, *Mining the Museum* reassessed the collection of Baltimore's Maryland Historical Society via artistic intervention. Wilson's installation was commissioned by Lisa Corrin, the assistant director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Baltimore, which, then, was a non-permanent institution, after the director of the Maryland Historical Society asked

¹²⁴ Alexander Alberro, "Introduction: Mimicry, Excess, Critique," in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2005), xxvi.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ For the entire performance script, including footnotes to the borrowed quotes, see Fraser, "Museum Highlights, A Gallery Talk," in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, 95-110.

her how to make “Chippendale relevant to a child in the projects.”¹²⁷ Invited by Corrin, Wilson excavated the museum’s collection and found slavery relics normally excluded from the museum’s exhibition spaces. Wilson created ironical juxtapositions of the museum’s objects, including *Metalwork, 1723-1880* (Figure 23), which displayed silver goblets and decanters next to a pair of rusted slave shackles. Wilson also installed African masks that were never displayed in the historical society to reveal and critique the museum’s implicitly racist exhibition practices.¹²⁸ Wilson’s installation critiqued the institution’s practices of display and he believes the objects “put on view says a lot about the museum, but what they don’t put on view says even more.”¹²⁹

Wilson’s role as curator parallels Broodthaers’s role as the director of his museum, and Wilson’s use of objects owned by the institution is similar to the eagle objects in *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures* because the objects demonstrate the method of critique. Although cynical, Rosalind Krauss admittedly credits Broodthaers’s influence on contemporary art, such as Wilson’s:

25 years later, all over the world, in every biennial and at every art fair, the eagle principle functions as the new academy. Whether it calls itself installation art or institutional critique, the international spread of the mixed-media installation has become ubiquitous. Triumphantly declaring that we now inhabit a post-medium age, the post-medium condition of this form traces its lineage, of course, not so much to Joseph Kosuth as to Marcel Broodthaers.¹³⁰

In *Mining the Museum*, Wilson literally equates the slave vestiges with the upper-class items by displaying the objects together on platforms or in cases. Likewise, Broodthaers leveled

¹²⁷ Judith Stein, “Sins of Omission: Fred Wilson’s *Mining the Museum*,” *Art in America* 81 (October 1993): 112.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 254-6.

¹³⁰ Rosalind Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea:*” *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 20.

the status of the eagle objects in the *Section des Figures* and the labels stating “this is not a work of art” further equalized the diverse objects. Paradoxically, the second-wave of institutional critique by Fraser, Wilson, and others is encouraged by museums to reconsider the institutions’ politics, ideologies, economics, and framework. By inviting artists to critique their institutions, museums are using these artists for publicity and to project an image of openness to such investigations. Moreover, the once subversive praxis has become fully absorbed and institutionalized, which is, unfortunately, the paradox of institutional critique’s institutional reliance and demonstrates the absorptive power of museums today.

CONCLUSION

Due to the heated political and theoretical climate of Europe in the 1960s, along with an early interest in deconstructing art contexts and framing devices, Marcel Broodthaers transformed his artworks into critiques directed towards the art institution. While the avant-garde models of Gustave Courbet's *Pavillon du Réalisme*, the *Salon des Refusés*, the Impressionist exhibitions, Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, Claes Oldenburg's *The Store*, and the work of Guy Debord and the Situationist International serve as important precursors to institutional critique, Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* extends and brings to fruition these earlier projects. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* is innovative in the practice of institutional critique in that it deconstructs many aspects of the art institution including thematic exhibitions, classificatory models, collections, display, and the economic underpinnings of museums from within the institution. Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* is also distinct from the historical precursors of institutional critique in that its complex series of installations utilize reciprocal readymades and, thus, can never be fully recreated, sited, or consumed. Consequently, the *Musée d'Art Moderne* is foremost both a work of art and a critique, and the art objects in the installations serve to demonstrate Broodthaers's critical methodology.

Contrary to the popular belief that institutional critique was simultaneously initiated by Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, Michael Asher, and Marcel Broodthaers, Broodthaers's 1968 *Musée d'Art Moderne* clearly anticipates the work of his contemporaries. The

influence of Marcel Broodthaers in the realm of institutional critique continues in the work of Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson. Also demonstrating the legacy of Marcel Broodthaers, the 2006 São Paulo Biennial was focused on the artist. Here, a selection of Broodthaers's prints and films was exhibited with the work of eight artists influenced by Broodthaers. The curator of the Biennial, Jochen Volz, states that "the list of artists whose work relates in a direct or indirect way to Broodthaers's ideas and strategies could be endless."¹³¹ The work in the Biennial included Tacita Dean's *Section Cinema, Homage to Marcel Broodthaers* (2002), Rikrit Tiravanija's *(Untitled) For M.B.* (1995), Meschac Gaba's *Museum Shop* (2006), and Haegue Yang's *Storage Piece* (2004). Tiravanija's piece includes casserole pots filled with mussel shells that are characteristic of Broodthaers's early work; Dean's film is set in the basement of the Städtische Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf and records the extant figure numbers and objects left behind from Broodthaers's museum; Gaba's *Museum Shop* is a section of his fictional "Museum of Contemporary African Art," and Yang's *Storage Piece* includes crated artworks stacked on a palette. All of the artworks in the Biennial reference different points in Broodthaers's artistic career, especially the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, and clearly demonstrate his legacy and impact on contemporary art. Furthermore, Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* is situated at the very center of the complex web known as institutional critique, and the *Musée d'Art Moderne* undeniably forms the crucial nexus of this praxis.

¹³¹ Martin Herbert, "Belgian Artist, Presumed Dead, Alive in Brazil: Marcel Broodthaers Resurrected at the São Paulo Biennial," *Modern Painters* (October 2006): 83.

ILLUSTRATIONS

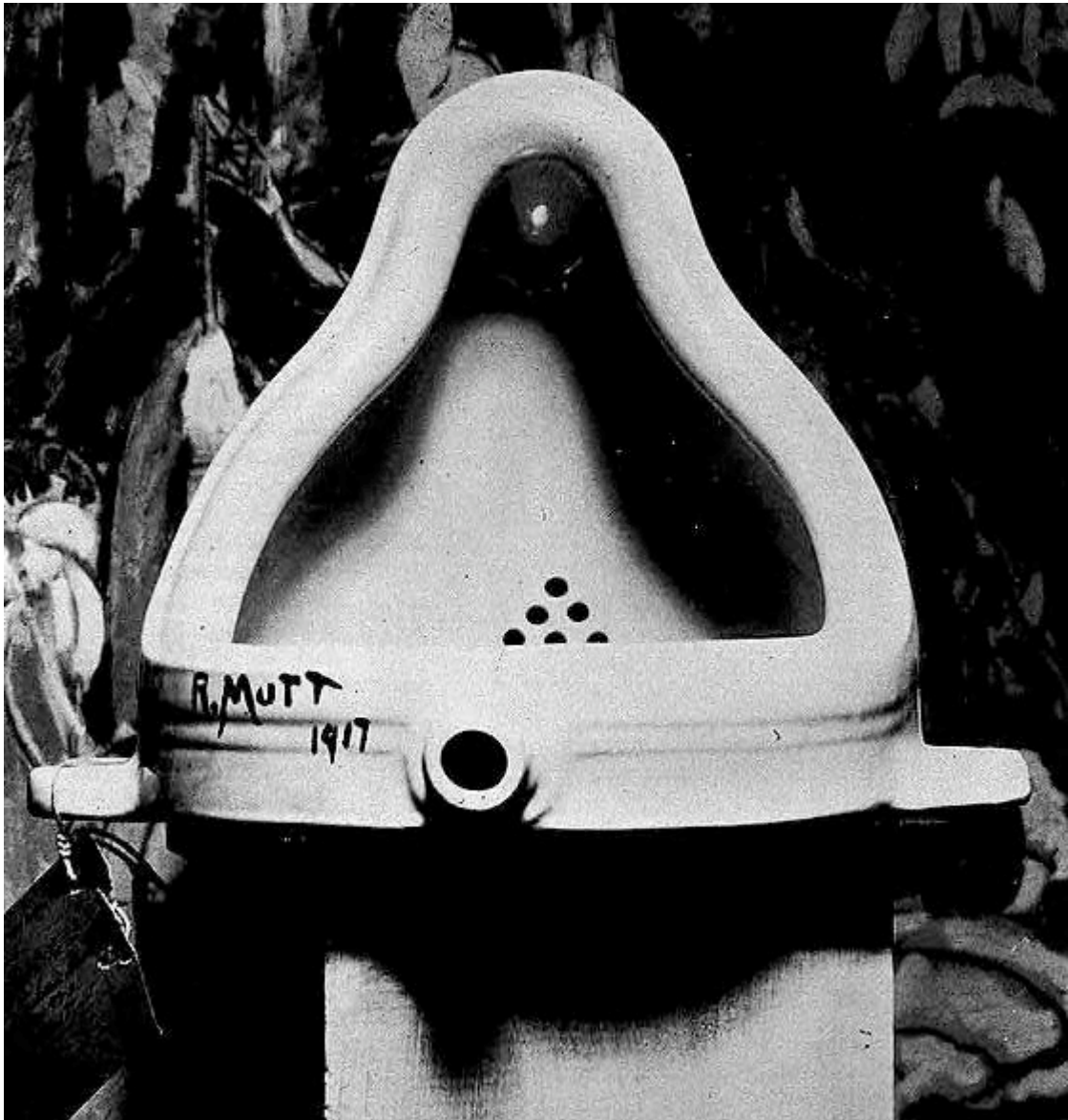


Figure 1:

Marcel Duchamp

Fountain, 1917

Readymade: porcelain urinal (original lost)

Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz.

As reproduced in William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston: Houston Fine Art Press, 1989), plate 1.



Figure 2:
Claes Oldenburg
The Store, 1961
Oldenburg in *The Store*, 107 E. 2nd St., New York City, 1961
As reproduced on: http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu:7138/gallery/album10/Oldenburg_in_The_Store_107_E_2nd_St_NYC_1961. Retrieved March 10, 2007.

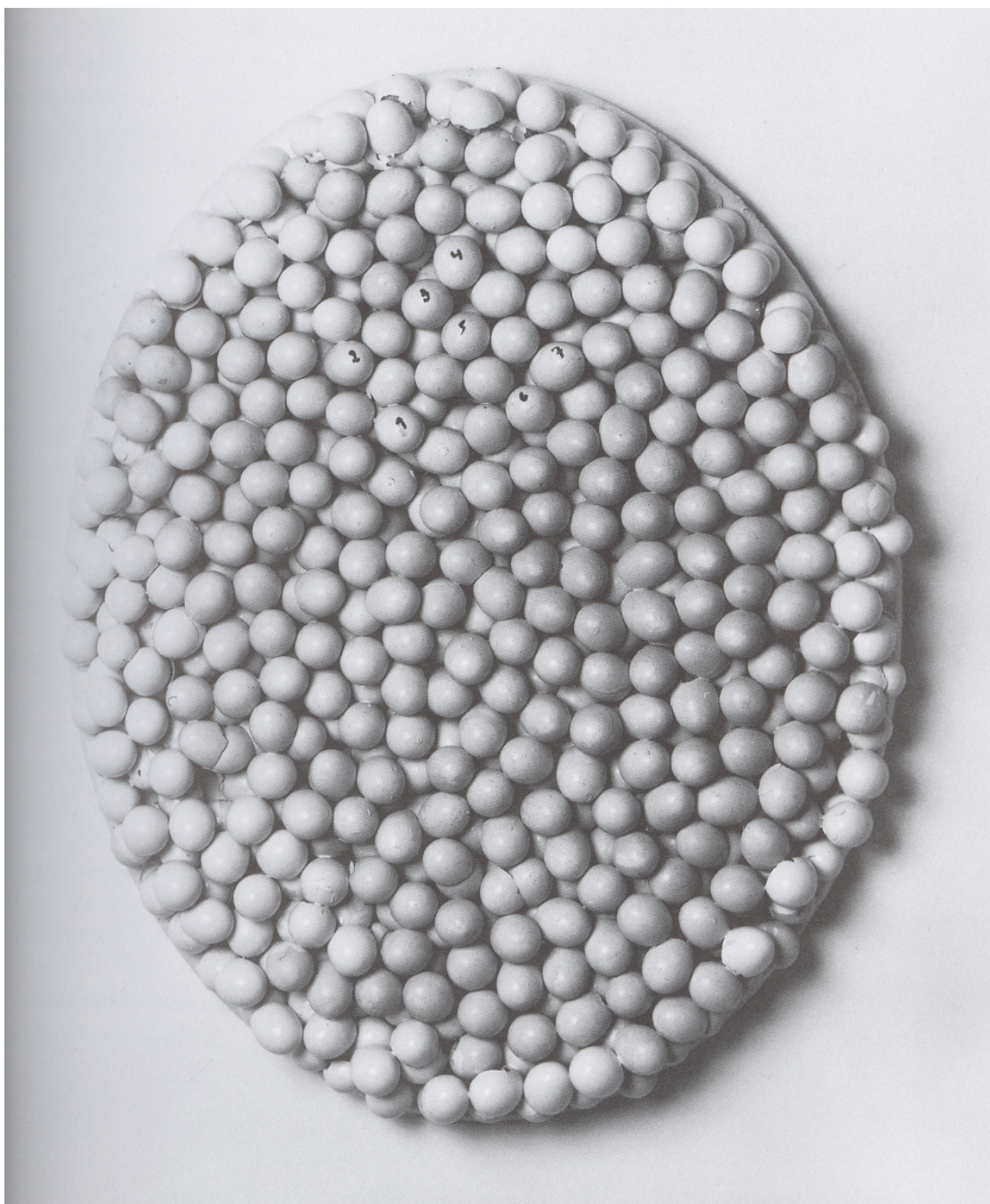


Figure 3:

Marcel Broodthaers

Oval of Eggs 1234567, 1965

Eggshells and oil paint on wood panel

39 ³/₈ x 31 ¹/₂ x 4 ³/₄ in.

Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas, partial gift of the Rachofsky Collection



Figure 4:

Marcel Broodthaers

Moules sauce blanche, 1967

Casserole, mussel shells, paint

50 x 36 x 36 cm.

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Isy Brachot

As reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 131.



Figure 5:

Marcel Broodthaers

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle, September 27, 1968- September 27, 1969

Formerly located at Broodthaers's apartment on 30 rue de la Pépinière, Brussels.

Interior of the museum as reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 181.



Figure 6:

Marcel Broodthaers

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle, September 27, 1968- September 27, 1969

Broodthaers speaking at the museum's opening with Dr. Johannes Cladders on his right. The art-handling truck is visible through the window.

As reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 180.

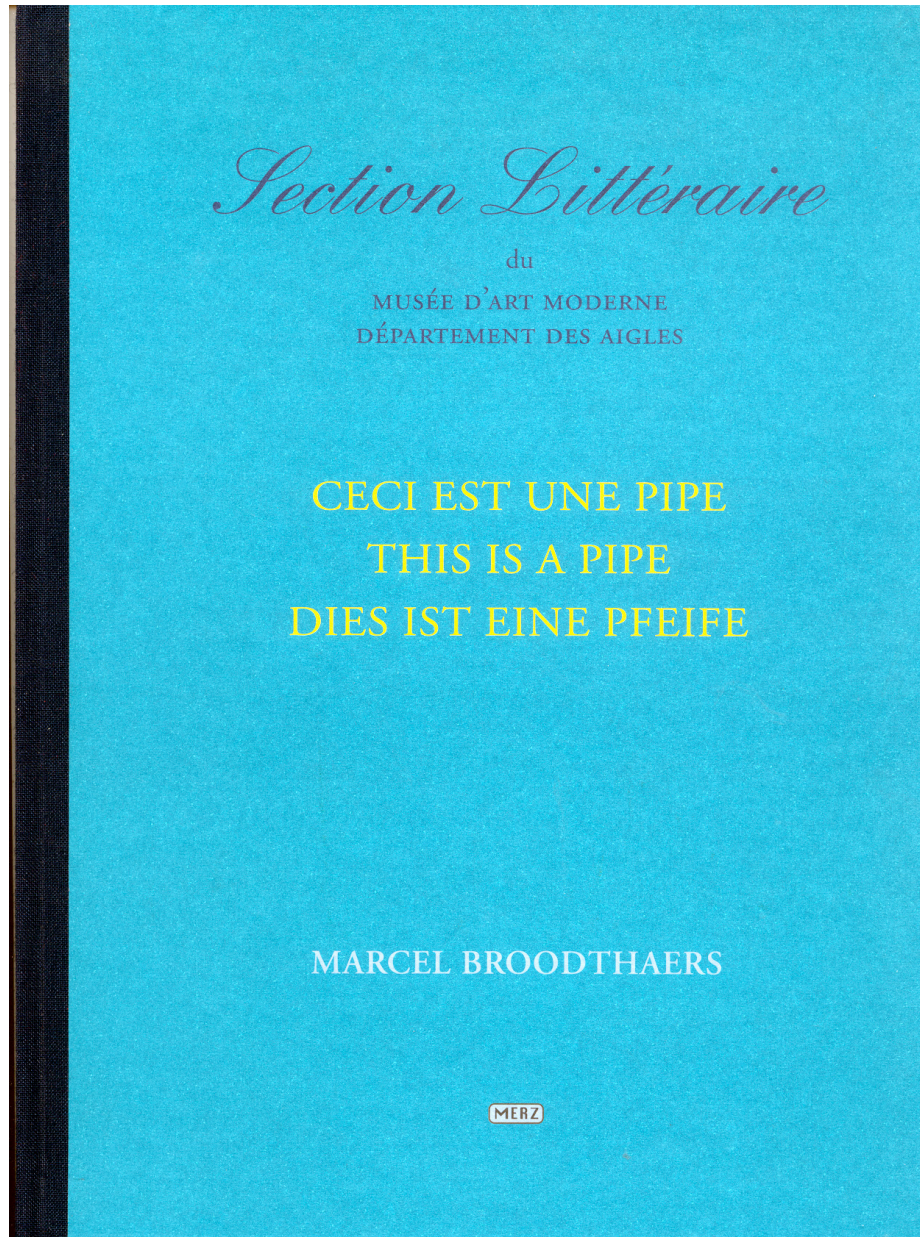


Figure 7:

Marcel Broodthaers

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Littéraire, 1968-1972

This section was published posthumously as Marcel Broodthaers, *Section Littéraire du Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles: Ceci est une Pipe, This is a Pipe, Dies ist Eine Pfeife* (New York: MERZ, 2001).



Figure 8:

Marcel Broodthaers

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XVIIème Siècle, September 27-October 4, 1969

Ten postcards of paintings and drawings, from twenty installed in this section, by Peter Paul Rubens.

Installed at A 37 90 89, Antwerp

As reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 182.



Figure 9:

Marcel Broodthaers

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle (Bis), February 14-15, 1970

Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf

The installation of the exhibition as reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 184.



Figure 10:
Marcel Broodthaers
Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Documentaire, Summer 1970
Beach at Le Coq, Belgium
As reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli
International Publications, 1989), 185.

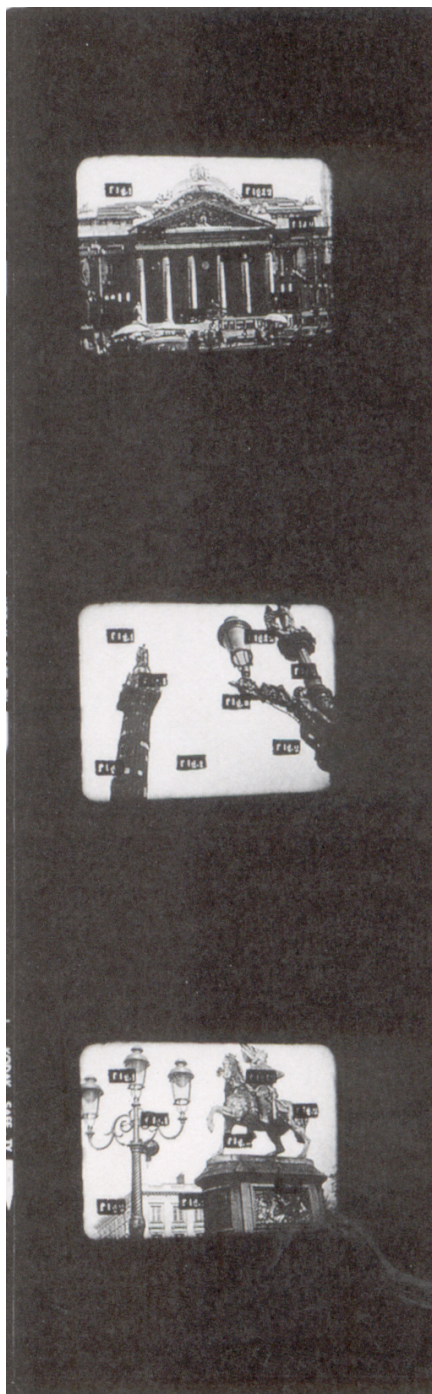


Figure 11:
Marcel Broodthaers
Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Cinéma, Winter 1971-Fall 1972
Haus Burgplatz 12, Düsseldorf
Photograph of film stills as reproduced in Rosalind Krauss, "A Voyage on the North Sea:"
Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), plate
15.

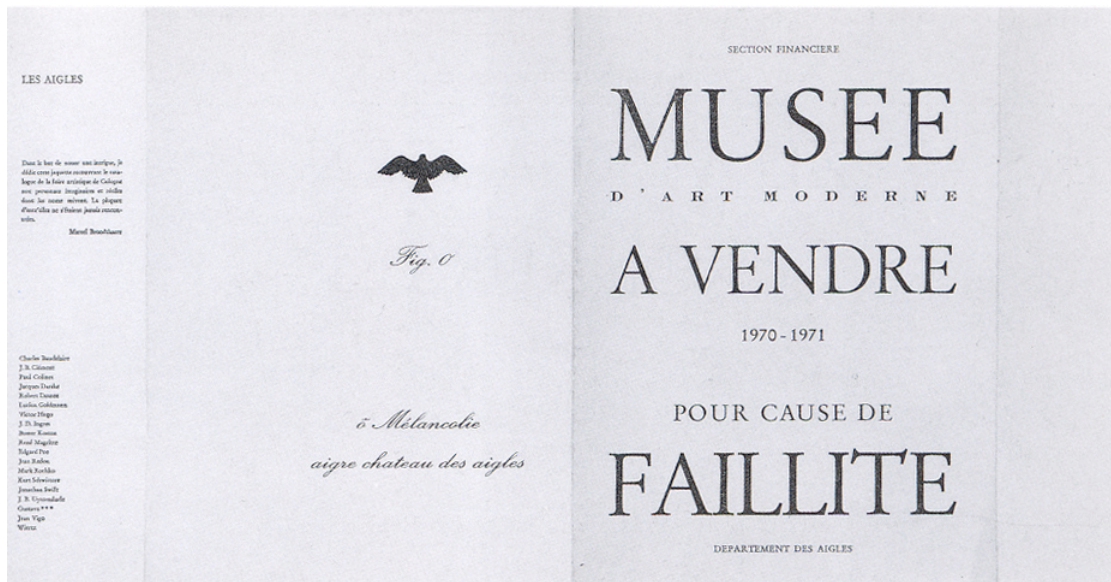


Figure 12:
 Marcel Broodthaers
Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Financière, October 5-10, 1971
 Cologne Kunstmarkt
 (top) Gold bar stamped with an eagle
 (bottom) Book jacket for the Cologne Art Fair catalogue, announcing the sale of the museum
 As reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 188-189.



Figure 13:
Marcel Broodthaers
Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present, May 16-July 9, 1972
Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf
Installation view as reproduced in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Marge Goldwater (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 191.



Figure 14:
Marcel Broodthaers
Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present, May 16-July 9, 1972
Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf
As reproduced in Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002), 168.



Figure 15:

Marcel Broodthaers

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present, May 16-July 9, 1972

Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf

As reproduced in Rosalind Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea:" Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), plate 20.



Figure 16:

René Magritte

The Treachery of Images (This is Not a Pipe), 1929

Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison Collection



Figure 17:

Marcel Broodthaers

Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section d'Art Moderne, June 30-August 15, 1972

Documenta 5, Neue Galerie, Kassel

Painted floor, stanchions and chains

As reproduced in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, exhibition catalogue (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 69.



Figure 18:
Marcel Broodthaers
Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Galerie du XXème Siècle, August 15-
October 8, 1972
Documenta 5, Neue Galerie, Kassel
Painted floor, stanchions and chains
As reproduced in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, exhibition catalogue (New York:
The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 69.

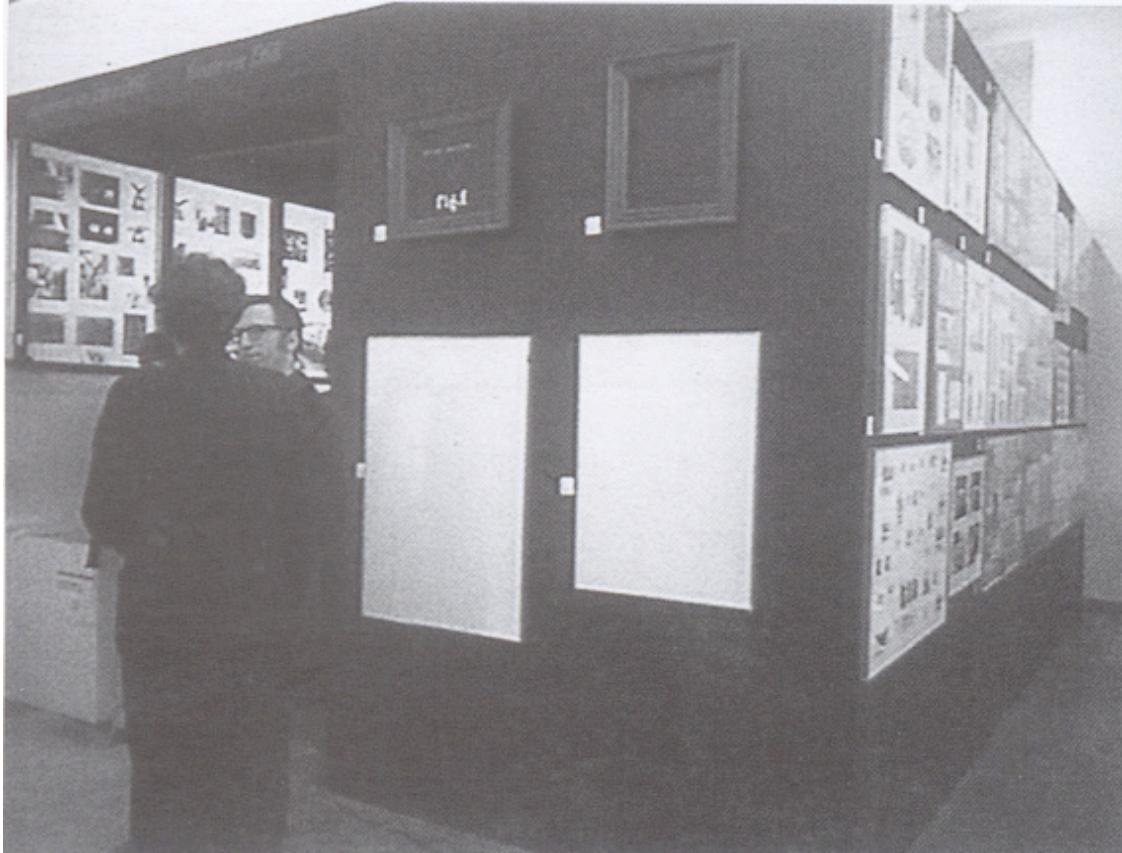


Figure 19:
Marcel Broodthaers
Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Publicité, June 30-October 8, 1972
Documenta 5, Neue Galerie, Kassel
Installation view as reproduced in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, exhibition
catalogue (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 68.

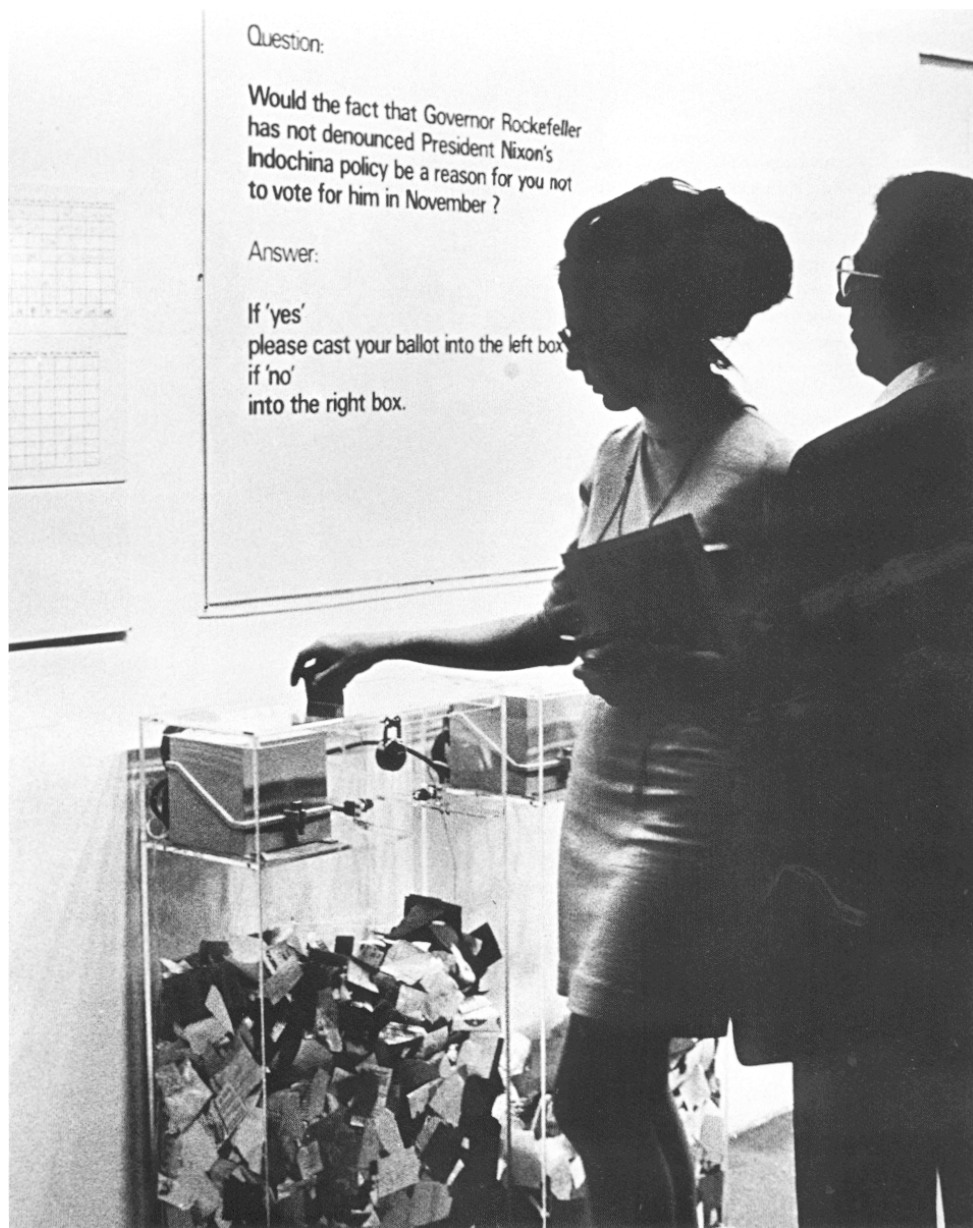


Figure 20:
Hans Haacke
MoMA Poll, 1970
Two ballot boxes with counter
40 x 20 x 9.5 in. each
Information, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
As reproduced in Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002), 170.



Figure 21:
Daniel Buren
Photo-souvenir of the intervention at the Galerie Apollinaire, Milan, October 1968
Vertical green and white stripes sealing the gallery door
As reproduced in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 53.



Figure 22:
Michael Asher
Untitled, 1974
Claire Copley Gallery, Los Angeles
As reproduced in Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002), 175.



Figure 23:
Fred Wilson
Metalwork 1793-1880, in *Mining the Museum*, 1992
Installation of rearranged objects from the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore
As reproduced in Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002), 180.

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VITA

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Alison has served as an intern to the Registrars at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the Kimbell Art Museum. At Texas Christian University, Alison has worked as a graduate assistant in the slide library and as a teaching and research assistant to Dr. Frances Colpitt and Dr. Mark Thistlethwaite.

ABSTRACT

Recognizing the historical uniqueness and complexity of Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968-1972), this thesis examines Broodthaers's fictional museum and argues that it forms the crucial nexus of institutional critique. Institutional critique is a deconstructive praxis aimed at revealing the hidden political and economic mechanisms of the art institution from within the institution. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* was a satirical, critical, and fictional museum created and directed by Broodthaers. Under the title of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, several compartmental sections, or exhibitions, opened in various places in Europe at different times. Many of the museum sections were set in actual museums and galleries, while some were situated in Broodthaers's apartment. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* used museological strategies to parody museums, causing the museum's sections to deceptively appear authentic. By mimicking genuine museum exhibitions, Broodthaers created a deconstructive "institutional critique" that revealed and criticized art institutions' methods of display, economics, politics, and hidden foundations.

Specifically, this thesis illustrates that the *Musée d'Art Moderne* extends earlier avant-garde precedents of institutional critique and anticipates the institutional critiques by Broodthaers's contemporaries. The origin of institutional critique is often simultaneously credited to Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, and Michael Asher, but by analyzing the critical implications of the *Musée d'Art Moderne* and the historical and political events of the late 1960s, this thesis assesses the distinctiveness of Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne* and illustrates that it forms the nexus, or link, between the avant-garde precedents and later practitioners of institutional critique.