to expose, to show, to demonstrate, to inform, to offer
Projects

ACME
ACT UP
DAS ÄSTHETISCHE FELD
ARMALY, FAREED
ARTFAN
BORDOWITZ, GREGG
BOTSCHAFT E. V.
BÜROBERT
BURRET, TOM
CLEGG, MICHAEL;
  GUTTMANN, MARTIN
CRIMP, DOUGLAS;
  LAWLER, LOUISE
DAMAGED GOODS
DANK
DILLEMUTH, STEPHAN
DION, MARK
DION, MARK;
  SIMON, JASON
DOCUMENTS
DRAXLER, HELMUT;
  FRASER, ANDREA
EICHORN, MARIA
FRASER, ANDREA
FRASER, ANDREA;
  MCCOLLUM, ALLAN
FRIESENWALL 120
GAME GIRL
GONZALEZ-TORRES, FELIX
GREEN, RENÉE
GROUP MATERIAL
INFORMATIONSDIENST
KREBBER, MICHAEL

LAWLER, LOUISE;
  MCCOLLUM, ALLAN
LAWLER, LOUISE
LEONARD, ZOE
LESEZIMMER
LOCHER, THOMAS
MARGREITER, DORIT;
  POLEDNA, MATHIAS;
  PUMHÖSL, FLORIAN
  (WITH DOUJAK, INES;
  KÜNG, HANS)
META
MINIMAL CLUB
MÖLLER, REGINA (MARIA)
MÜLLER, CHRISTIAN PHILIPP
MUSEUM IN PROGRESS
OCEAN EARTH
PRINA, STEPHEN
ROCKENSHAUB, GERWALD
ROSLER, MARTHA
SCHERÜBEL, KLAUS
SIMON, JASON
STRAU, JOSEF
TEXTE ZUR KUNST
THIRD TEXT
TRAP
TRAUTTMANSDORFF, OCTAVIAN
V-GIRLS
VOR DER INFORMATION
WHEN TEKKNO TURNS TO
  SOUND OF POETRY
WILLIAMS, CHRISTOPHER
ZOBERNIG, HEIMO
Third Text, founded in 1987 in London by the Pakistani artist, author, and curator Rasheed Araeen, saw itself as a continuation of the activist art magazine Black Phoenix (published from 1978). The title of Third Text referred to the Third World, and the magazine was devoted primarily to postcolonial (art) theory and to art in the global context. Most of the contributing authors were not part of the Western art world. The first issue included such well-known writers as Edward Said and Gayatri C. Spivak, as well as Palestinian-British artist Mona Hatoum, artist and activist Jimmie Durham, and Cuban-American author and artist Coco Fusco. From 1989 single issues were devoted to special themes, such as “Magiciens de la Terre” on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1989, “The Other Story: AfroAsian Artists in Post-War Britain,” and “Cultural Identity.”

Third Text, 1987
Covers No. 10, No. 3/4

see “some debt”: Black Athena - Third Text 3/4
On the Museum's Ruins, published in 1993 by MIT Press, collects the most important essays by the US critic, co-editor of October, and AIDS activist Douglas Crimp. This book was produced together with Louise Lawler, who herself contributed photos and was also responsible for selecting further pictures. Lawler’s photos are not to be understood just as illustrations but rather as a kind of image track running in parallel to the texts. This concept mirrors Crimp’s own theories. For Crimp, the museum is an institutional framework for artworks that is closely connected with the medium of photography. In the title essay he draws on Malraux’s “imaginary museum” of photograph reproductions and describes photography as the factor that homogenizes museums but that must lead to the ruin of the museum at the moment where it itself becomes a museum object. Ultimately, Crimp sees the museum as no longer suitable as a venue for the presentation of contemporary art forms and media. A second focus of the book is the social and artistic representation of AIDS.

IG
A.N.Y.P. (Anti New York Pläne): Die Zeitung für 10 Jahre (Anti New York Plans: The Magazine for Ten Years) was published annually between 1989 and 1999 by the artists’ group minimal club (Sabeth Buchmann, Elfe Brandenburger, Stephan Geene, and Mano Wittmann). The first issue appeared in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name on “natural-identical materials” at Kunstverein Munich. The editors deliberately limited their periodical to ten years, and in this time they attempted to establish information and theoretical discourse as forms of artistic practice. The magazine was intended to create a “space for the establishment of an art context that we cannot find at present.” This included experimental design and also the interweaving of theoretical and artistic contributions. The contributors included the editors themselves and many artists they knew, including Die Tödliche Doris, Maria Eichhorn, Ingo Günther, Nina Hoffmann, and Jutta Koether, as well as theoreticians such as media-studies scholar Norbert Bolz, philosopher Juliane Rebentisch, and music critic Diedrich Diederichsen.
The *Trap* exhibition at Berlin’s Kunst-Werke was organized by the British artist duo Art in Ruins (Hannah Vowles and Glyn Banks), Stephan Geene, and BüroBert (Renate Lorenz and Jochen Becker). It was intended as a counter-exhibition and commentary on *Print and Issues*, a show that opened at the same time in Berlin and presented activists’ materials from the United States (such as from the ACT UP circle), including framed posters with no explanatory texts or labels so as to deliberately avoid contextual ascription. In its response, *Trap* presented a diagram, collected newspaper articles, and catalogues with appended notes all on one table and screened a video documenting the blockade of Kunsthalle Düsseldorf that had taken place a month previously. The diagram looked at the paucity of political art on themes like AIDS, racism, and homophobia in Germany, which led to an alleged need to import “trendy” art themes from the United States. This was a swipe at the reception of the US-American discourse in the Cologne art scene. *Trap* wanted to visually demonstrate how the import of art and theory served to exclude local political themes from artistic discourse.

*IG

Trap, 1993
Exhibition views,
Kunst-Werke Berlin
“Trap presented a diagram, collected newspaper articles, and catalogues with appended notes all on one table and screened a video documenting the blockage of Kunsthalle Düsseldorf that had taken place a month previously. The diagram looked at the paucity of political art on themes like AIDS, racism, and homophobia in Germany, which led to an alleged need to import “trendy” art themes from the United States ... trap wanted to visually demonstrate how the import of art and theory served to exclude local political themes from artistic discourse.”

Ines Gebetsroither (2015)
... within the post-unification context of spreading German nationalism, from 1993 a more
direct and locally based idea of political activism, directed mainly towards migrational
and refugee politics, seemed for many to be more urgent than avant-garde problems. In
1993 multiple projects and events in keeping with this spirit took place ... a small
critical event named "Trap" took place in Berlin, attacking the specific Cologne mix of
art and politics.

Center (1986-1993).

This difficult situation gives rise to highly conflictual engagements with the question
of the scope of "political concepts." For example, Trap, the exhibition project organized
in 1993 at Kunst-Werke, Berlin, by Jochen Becker, Stephan Geene, and Renate Lorenz,
critiqued what they saw as the depoliticizing import of political discourses, when such
discourses and the associated polemics, based on texts, diagrams, and materials, had no
effect of any kind on hierarchies and exclusions within their own institutional
contexts. Particularly as the Drucksache: Prints & Issues (Printed Matter: Prints & Issues)
exhibition with political posters from the United States shown at Kunst-Werke gave rise
to the "counter exhibition" entitled Trap, tensions that were anyway simmering between
the various "factions" bubbled up to the surface - to put it in simplified terms, the
conflict between those who insisted on the primacy of politics and those who underscored
the primacy of art.

This also included the tensions between the art and political scenes of the two former
German states, manifested for example in concerts and events organized by anti-fascist
"welfare committees" in cities in the erstwhile German Democratic Republic (see, for
example, the publication published by Edition ID-Archiv Etwas Besseres als die Nation)
- before the arson attacks that also occurred in former West Germany - shortly after
the so-called reunification of Germany gave rise to a series of racist attacks on asylum-
seekers and the places where they were living. When anti-discriminatory and anti-racist
activities filtered through into exhibitions - for example, in the controversial 1992
Whitney Biennale - the notorious political correctness debate always flared up: language
policy, the counter-argument asserted, only touches on the symbolic dimension but leaves
existing social hierarchies intact.

It was precisely conflicts such as this that, as I recall, gave rise to a pronounced shift
from "rules of the game" to dogmas and prohibitions, both from the political and art
factions, concerning the issue of whether and how much art with the ambition of political
action should be produced and exhibited anyway ... and exacerbated the confrontation that
raged at the time between the art market and project culture.

and Early Nineties.

Excerpts from texts from catalogue "to expose, to show, to demonstrate, to inform, to offer:

"trap wanted to demonstrate how the
import of art and theory served to
exclude local political themes from
artistic discourse"
In retrospect, rather than 37 Rooms the exhibition trap (1993) ... at Kunst-Werke seem(s) more paradigmatic, and to an extent symptomatic, of the early-90s to mid-90s Berlin scene.

The exhibition trap, a polemical installation organised by the British artist duo Art in Ruins, Stephan Geene of the theatre and theory group minimal club, and BüroBert (Renate Lorenz and Jochen Becker), referred to three traps, defined by the organisers, for the politicisation of art: that political art taken out of its original social context became its antithesis - aestheticized products linked to artists' names; that the German art scene imported the political activism of New York art of the late '80s and early '90s, but failed to apply to its own context the critique of social hierarchies and mechanisms of exclusion; and that it excluded political action from the cultural sphere by ignoring it or attacking it as moralistic. This formulation of three "traps" was on one level a response to the specific situation after reunification - namely the strong right-wing tendencies in German politics towards foreigners at the time, and on another level - with its criticism of "issue import" - responded to the exhibition print and issues that took place simultaneously, and which showed works by US artists representing a spectrum of political perspectives of counter culture and identity politics ... an exhibition such as trap could have been a decisive stimulus for the Berlin art world as an intellectual environment. But the problem was not its attempt to discuss the failures of the social environment of the art world (its political shortcomings, its sexisms and hierarchies, etc.), rather the way it was done. The official intention of the instalment was to kill two birds with one stone: to introduce an intellectually confrontational polemics into a largely de-intellectualised Berlin art scene while at the same time countering what was perceived as the perils of a young, contemporary art scene - at the time still based predominately in Cologne and Düsseldorf, and supposedly importing US paradigms of politically engaged art yet failing to apply its implications to their own social environment.

The intellectual environment it represented co-effected a rhetoric that remained prevalent for some years - it brought back into effect pressing questions about the social and political relevance of artistic practice, and addressed important issues - migration, women's rights, biotechnology - in often original and thought-provoking ways ... (but the show's effect in retrospect was a different one ... (not necessarily only of trap itself but of the attitude it demonstrated) was that Kunst-Werke itself ... was held in limbo ... an abyss opened up between the "political" and the "non-political" art scenes. Gallerists were doing their business and felt entitled to ignore a "political" art scene that ignored them. All of this of course played into the hands of those who were happy to get rid of critical impulses in the art system anyway. The chance was missed to form an unorthodox alliance that would have helped to strengthen Berlin's new independent art scene vis a vis the unholy alliance that was starting to form between the stubborn municipal nomenclatura ... and parts of the new political and economic elite that were not so much interested in the advent of contemporary cultural production, but in a more revisionist prospect of re-establishing the old representational grandeur and elitism of pre-Weimar, Prussian Berlin.

The exhibition, or should we say project is named trap, and organized by artists rather than professional curators, namely the two groups Art in Ruins and BüroBert (Renate Lorenz and Jochen Becker) and Stephan Geene, then a member of the group Minimal Club. As such, the exhibition ... did not consist of a number of assembled artworks, but was, rather a work in itself, what has been termed a project exhibition, and consisted of various material and examples, as well as a graphic display of text, posing specific questions on the role of the artists in relation to the political (in Germany at the time). A number of traps facing the cultural producer was presented, such as the co-optation of political artists, the aestheticization of politics and so on, as well as a critique of the commoditization of politics in art implied by such exhibitions as Kontext Kunst, for example. The exhibition did thus not want to contribute to the production of new images, but question the politics of the image, and positing a radical institutional critique. Its attempted radical break was thus not one of presenting the new, but rather one of refusal, although the visual style has, of course, subsequently been partially mainstreamed as info-aesthetics, as well as rejected and criticized by art criticism for being exactly that.

Simon Sheikh (2012)
Exhibition-Making and the Political Imaginary: On Modalities and Potentialities of Curatorial Practice.
Doctoral Studies and Research in Fine and Performing Arts,
Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts,
Lund University, Sweden.