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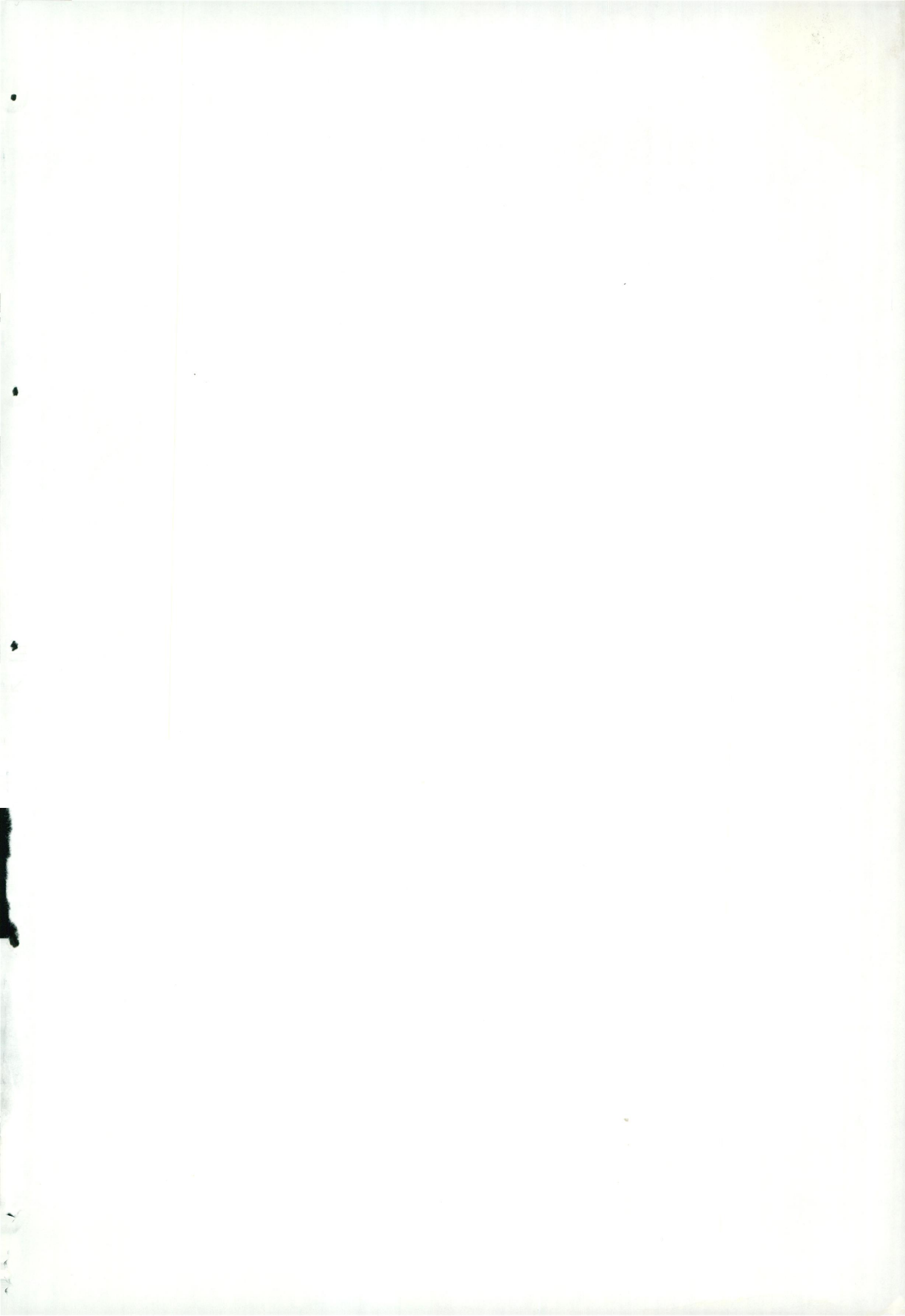
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National College of Art and Design
Fine Art: Painting

On Jenny Holzer, Language and Representation
by
Marielle Nylander

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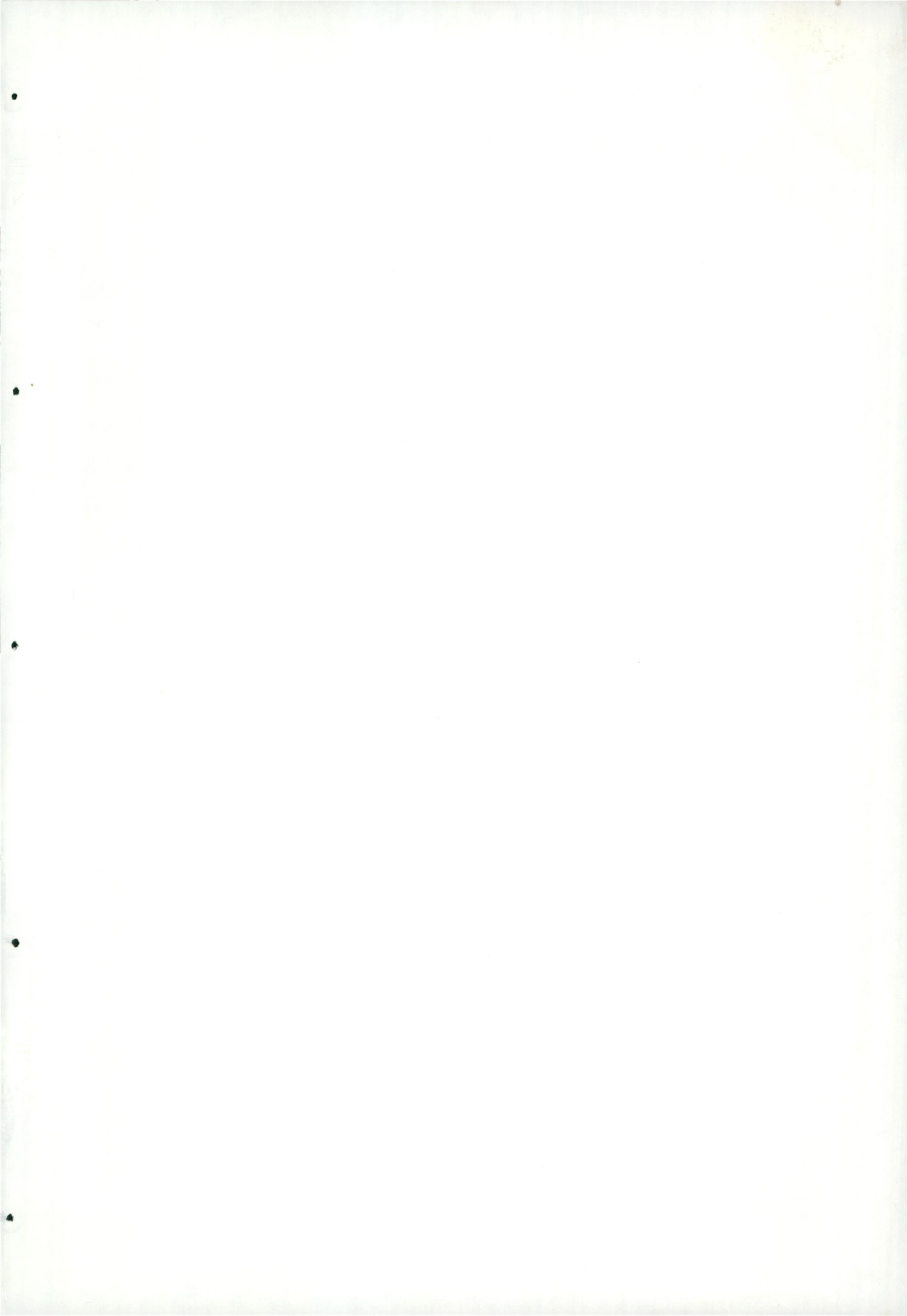
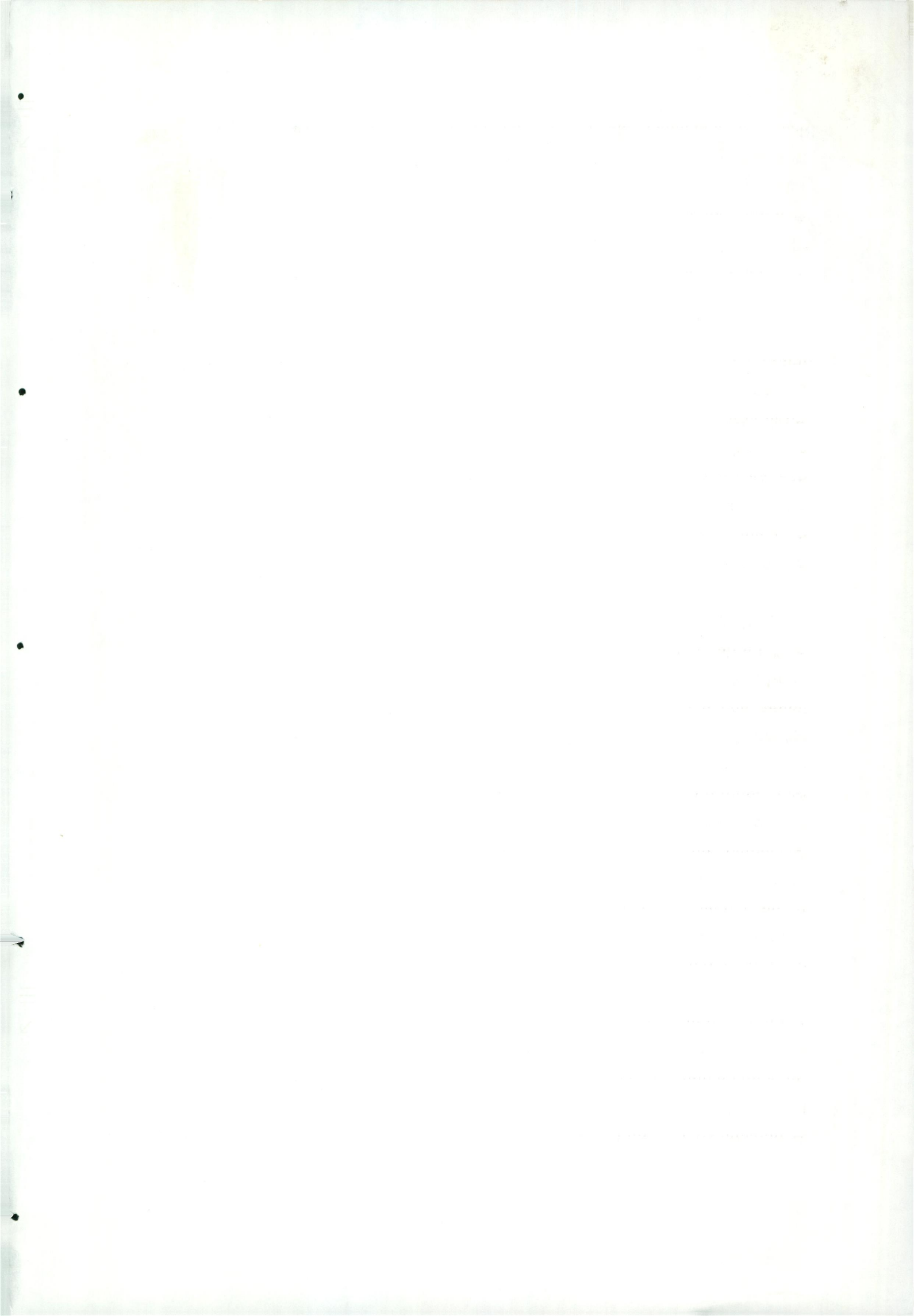


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Introduction

Many contemporary artists produce pointedly political art in their attempt to form a critique of society, and different ideological aspects of the social structure that shape our lives. In this paper I wish to discuss artistic practice that is concerned with social issues. The focal point will be the work produced by the American artist Jenny Holzer, since her work epitomizes many of the problems artists face when trying to produce socially relevant work. With the development of the postmodern art movement, in the early 1970's, several artists began to use different strategies to break up what has been called the Great / Grand Narratives. Holzer was among these artists who tried to decenter language within the patriarchal order. It is generally accepted that those strategies were used to interfere in what is known as the patriarchal value system of the West and that these artists developed new forms of making art to expose social hierarchies. The thesis consists of two parts. Part one will comprise of two chapters. The first chapter of this part includes a brief biography of Holzer's life, her work and influences. The second chapter will contextualize Holzer by mapping out some artists that are commonly referred to as her 'predecessors'. Theories about avant-garde practice have been used as points of reference in relation to discussions about "the conquest of space" (in Owens, 1992, p.127.) as explored by these artists.

In part two of the thesis I will discuss some questions that have been raised in relation to Holzer's work and postmodern art practice in general. This part is also divided into two chapters. In chapter three I will concentrate on the question of language and art. Written language has come to play a new and important role within postmodernist art. I propose to examine how this change came about. As language based art is closely linked to structuralism and semiotics, some of these theories as they relate to Holzer's art making will be presented. In this chapter I will also examine why some contemporary artists have chosen to utilize language as a central part of their work.

In chapter four I will discuss the question of representation and language. The question of representation is rich in conflicts regarding the issues of signification and construction of meaning. These issues will be examined in so far as they are relevant to Holzer's work. Many important issues have, for practical reasons, been omitted from the discussion; complex questions of ideology and technology, the function of public art and public discourse will

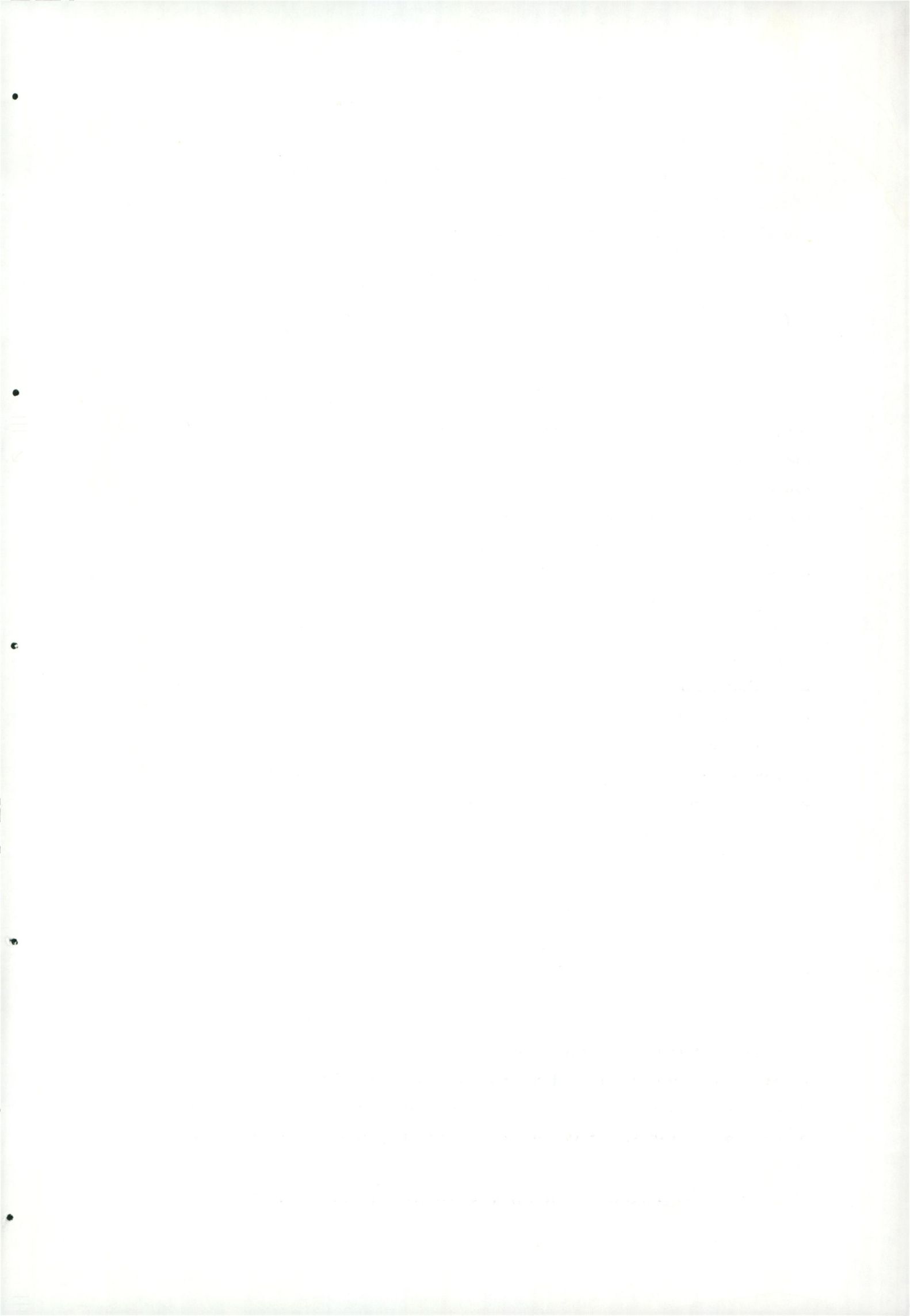
not be included other than in relation to Holzer's work. The thesis will conclude by raising questions about the nature of political art, and examining the statements of a number of artists so motivated.

CHAPTER 1 - Holzer's work and influences.

Jenny Holzer was born in Ohio in 1950, where she lived until 1966 when she moved to study at a preparatory school in Fort Lauderdale in Florida. Between 1968 and 1970 she attended a liberal arts program at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. From there she transferred to the university of Chicago, where she took various studio classes in Fine Art. In 1972 Holzer graduated from Ohio University in Athens with a BFA. Two years later she attended summer courses at the Rhode Island School of Design, (RISD), in Providence. At this time Holzer was mainly working on abstract paintings in which she occasionally incorporated fragments of words and text.

In 1977, Holzer graduated from RISD with an MFA in painting. The same year she moved to New York and joined the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. The relocation to New York proved to have a major impact on Holzer's artmaking. She began to move away from painting, like so many other artists at that time, and eventually gave it up altogether and started writing instead. It appears as if there were several different reasons behind this change of direction for Holzer. The most frequent explanation is that, at the Whitney Museum, the students were given an extensive reading list which was one of the things that caused Holzer to write her first *Truisms*. In an interview with Jeanne Siegel in 1985, Holzer states that she "staggered through the reading and wrote the *Truisms* as a way to convey knowledge with less pain." (Siegel, 1985, p. 65.) Holzer has also said that the reading list "included a number of books, all of which were heavies, so just the prospect of wading through them was enough to make me do Jenny Holzer's *Reader's Digest* version of Western and Eastern thought." (Holzer, 1986, p.67.) In other words, she was fascinated by all the important and profound issues that the different books dealt with. In order to make these concerns more accessible to the public she picked out the essential arguments she came across and cut them down to single sentences which were subsequently edited and presented as a series.

There was also aesthetic and political reasons behind this. As for the aesthetic side of it, Holzer has said that she thought that "From an aesthetic standpoint things in 1977 were a bit nowhere," (Siegel, 1985, p. 65.) and that she found all painting imperfect. She was thinking of ways to combine politics and art but found that painting had come to a dead-end. As she did

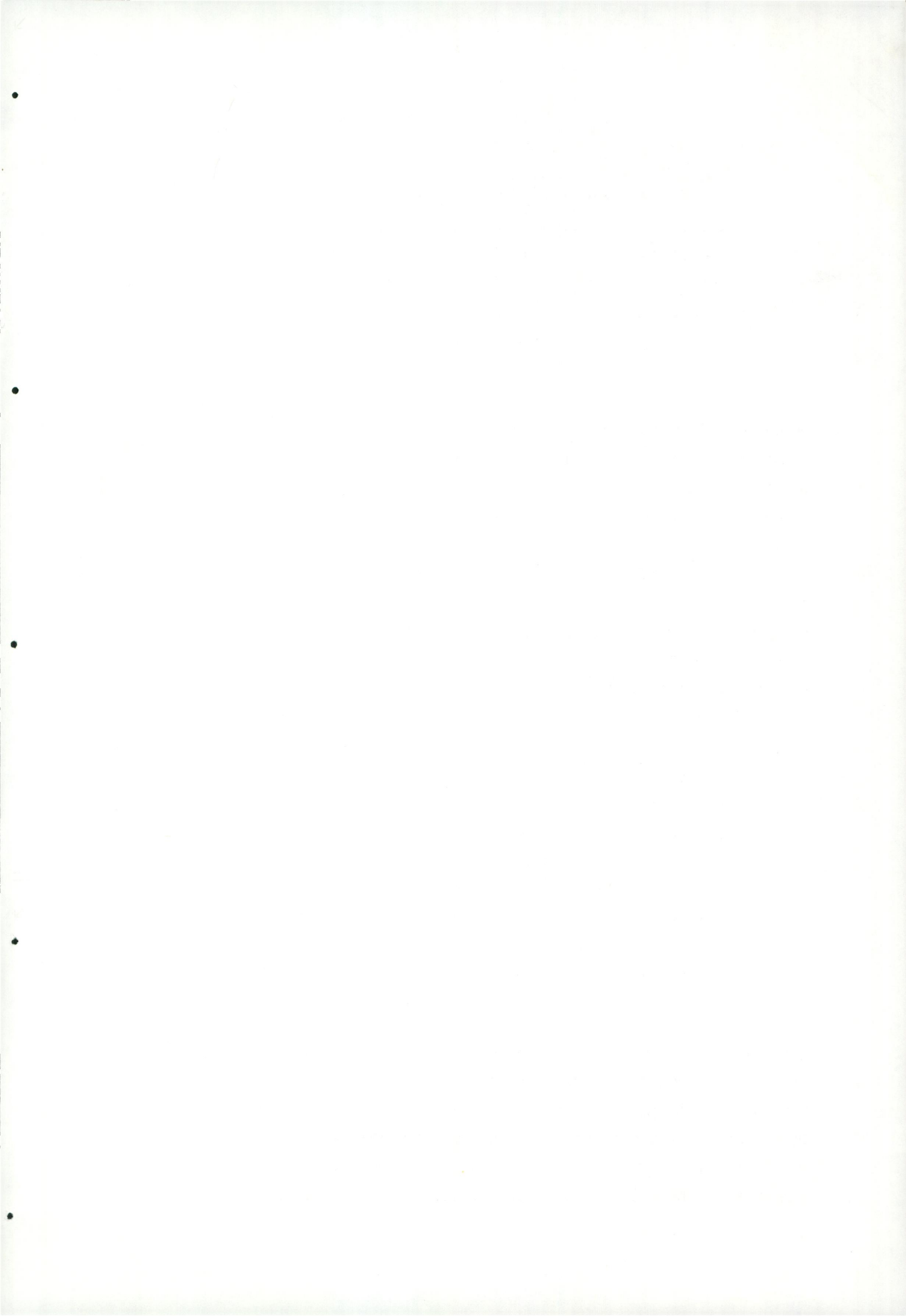


not want to be a narrative painter, she decided to start writing instead. The political aspect of her choice was that she wanted to be more explicit about certain issues. To Holzer, it seemed as if the best way to make art was to make clear statements about the condition of things. "If you have crucial issues, burning issues, it's good to say exactly what's right and wrong about them, and then perhaps to show a way that things could be helped." (Siegel, 1985, p.65.)

The *Truisms* consisted of some 250, often contradictory, aphorisms that were meant to serve as a reflection upon widely held opinions. The subject matter ranges from the banal to the sublime, from the mundane to the profound and encompasses issues connected with gender, morality, religion, sex, power, destruction, philosophy, psychology, politics (both left and right), science, technology, law, family, war, love, hate and violence. In short, Holzer covered almost all controversial topics (except art) with her one-liners. In the same interview, Siegel points to an analysis of the *Truisms* by Hal Foster in which he comes to the conclusion that the contradictory approach Holzer utilized served to reveal biases and beliefs rather than to establish truth. According to Foster, the *Truisms* were about the subjectivity of language and the arbitrariness of truth. Holzer's response to this was to agree with Foster, to a certain extent, but that she also sought to show that subjective truths are valid. In making the contradictory nature of 'truth' obvious she hoped that the series as a whole would make people more open-minded and tolerant which would make the world a better place in which to live. Holzer realized that this notion might be absurd. Nevertheless it was one of her working premises as well as consciously trying to create an absurd effect by the contradictions juxtaposed against one another. It might also be correct to say that her ultimate goal was to show how absurd the notion of universal truth is in a diverse and pluralist society.

According to Michael Foucault the function of the author is to:

neutralize the contradictions that are found in a series of text. Governing this function is a belief that there must be - at a particular level of an author's thought, of his unconscious or unconscious desire - a point where contradictions are resolved, where the incompatible elements can be shown to relate to one another and cohere around a fundamental or originating contradiction. (in D. F. Bouchard, 1977, p.128).



It might be consistent to say that parallels can be drawn between Foucault's argument and Roland Barthes's essay *The Death of the Author*. If we combine the two, we might arrive at the conclusion that the role of the author could be to connect contradictory notions and thus, if the work is 'successful', make the viewer react in a way that has positive consequences - to make people more 'tolerant'. Holzer does not, however, seem to be too interested in connections between her work and critical theory. It is also evident that her work is not a response to theories like Foucault's and Barthes's. When questioned on how she monitors response to her work she answered:

I have two methods. One is skulking. I think it's the truest. Because first of all people aren't thinking about art or me; they're just thinking what the content is and what it means to them to run across it...The second method is the art world, which is a completely different ball game because people know who I am, and they might tend to view the texts in terms of language art and other embarrassing art-historical categories. (Holzer, 1986, p.71).

When the *Truisms* first appeared in public they did not have any mention of author which Holzer explains by saying that "Authorship blows your cover" (Holzer, 1986, p.71.) and "The Truisms...were meant to project a certain neutrality. The typeface was chosen for its boldness but also for its lack of personality, which I think is more effective than something specific. It was meant to look institutional." (in Auping, 1992, p. 21; Plate 1)

There are obvious links between Holzer's approach to these issues and the work of Les Levine in that they share a conviction that, to use Thomas Mc Evilly's words; "art can examine anything in the world and that art is permissive, that it is a means to empower or permit people to engage in new attitudes." (in Levine, 1985, p. 6.) Both artists use language in a contradictory way. Their works are perceived as contradictory when different statements are juxtaposed, ("Children are the cruelest of all"/"Children are the hope of the future"- Holzer, and "Blame God"/"Salute God"- Levine) which leaves the meaning of the whole body of work open. This strategy emphasises the notion of "the Death of the Author" since "A partially open meaning must interact with the peculiarities of the viewer's mind and thus will complete itself in different forms for different viewers." (in Levine, 1985, p.6.)

The *Truism Series* was initially printed on posters and pasted up in public around Manhattan. Holzer's interest in public art started while she was still a

student at RISD, where she used to leave paintings at the beach so that people would stumble across them. In town she would leave bread in different patterns on the ground which made pigeons eat sitting in various formations. Holzer says that she hoped to tickle peoples' imagination, but she realized at an early stage that public work had to be more compelling if it was to make an impact.

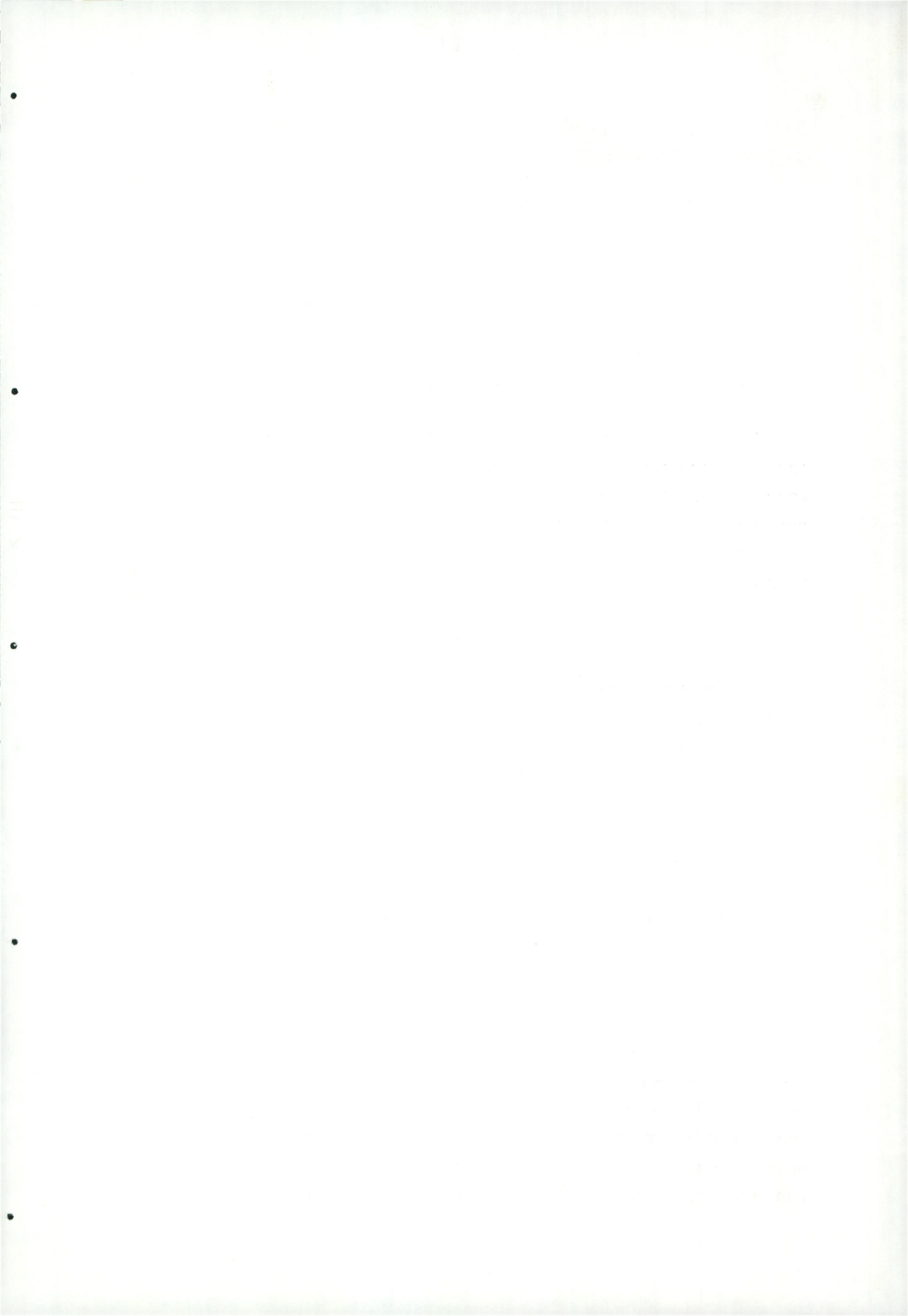
Michael Auping calls attention to the fact that there was a growing interest in public art in the late 1970's:

Leery of the confining and elitist connotations of private galleries and museums, many artists sought out more public situations, where their art could interact as directly as possible with a larger audience. (Auping, 1992, p.19).

In certain respects, this growing interest in public art was also a reaction to graffiti art which was prominent in New York, as well as other major cities in America in the 1970's. Among contemporary artists Holzer mentions as influential on her work are Lee Quinones and Lady Pink, with whom Holzer has collaborated. In an interview with Bruce Ferguson, Holzer states that "I was attracted to graffiti in general because it has to do with subject matter in a public place." (Holzer, 1988, p. 73.)

Other artists Holzer expresses admiration for are; Justen Ladda and John Ahern for dealing with social concerns "without being didactic"; Leon Golub's work she likes because it points to what she calls "the important phenomenon" of people who murder for fun and money. Other obvious sources of inspiration are Bruce Nauman and Barbara Kruger, mainly because of their use of text and mass media strategies.

Following the *Truisms*, Holzer has produced a number of series of text as well as other, more specific, project and installation based work. In chronological order the subsequent series are *Inflammatory Essays* (1979-82), *Living* (1980-83), and *Survival* (1983-85). Her writing has maintained the simplicity and straightforwardness of the *Truisms* but as she went along her texts became more personal. The *Essays* were also printed on posters but Holzer says she was more disciplined in her approach to their writing; she made them all one hundred words long presented in twenty line blocks on different coloured paper. (Plate 2) For these texts she used an ideological/political tone which subsequently turned more authoritarian and



eventually developed a documentary tone. The effect of the work also changed as she turned from using several different points of view, as in the *Truisms* and *Essays*, to writing in the first person or using a single viewpoint for the following series. Auping states that: "In subsequent series...Holzer began a caustic meditation on everyday life, 'rewriting' news stories, as well as recording her own responses to things happening around her". (Auping, 1992, p.29.)

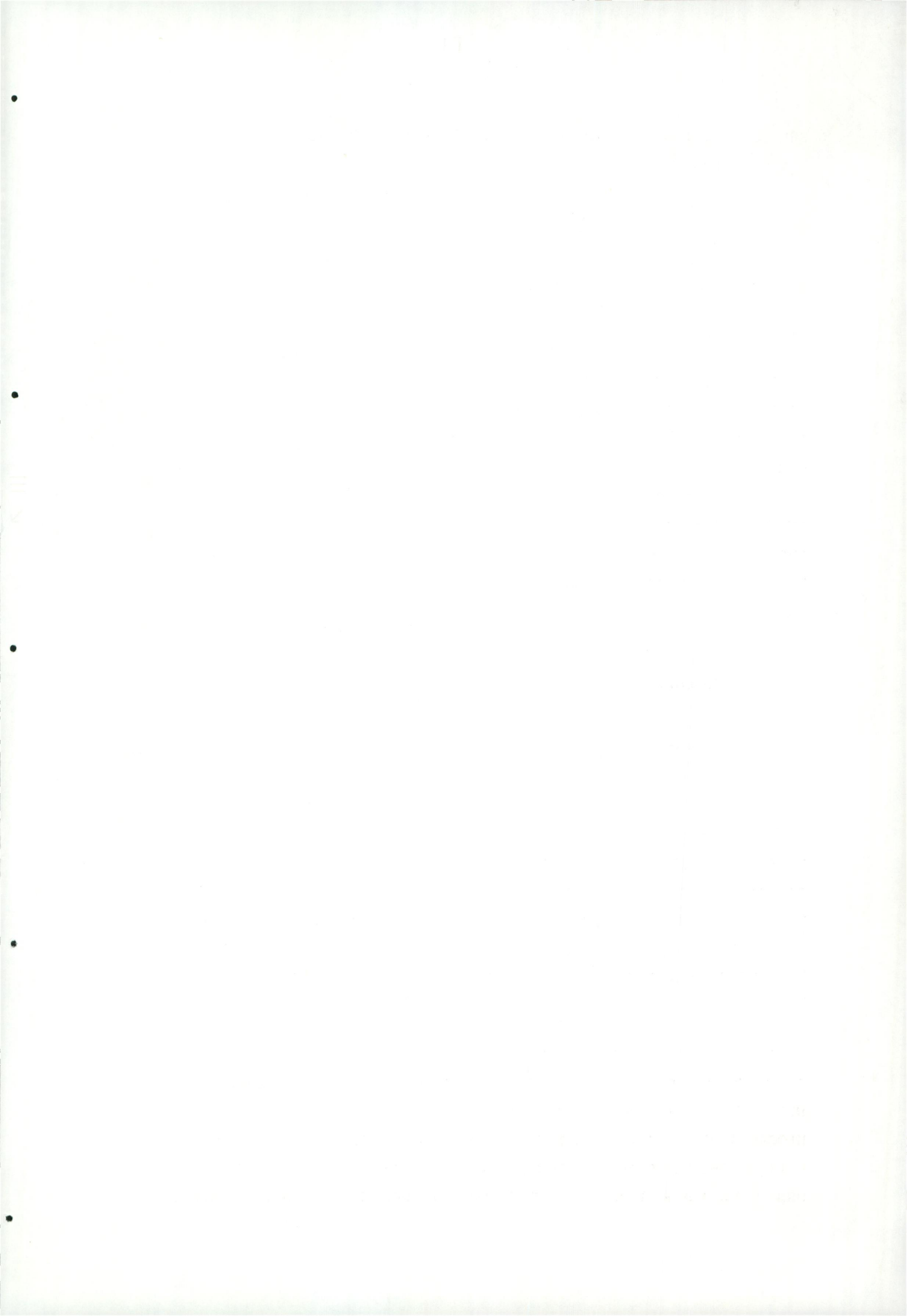
After these works, where the text was both the message and the medium, Holzer created her first installation piece called *Under A Rock*. (Plate 3). It was arranged like a chapel with marble benches which had different parables engraved on them. On the walls were two LED-signs that recited the benchtop parables. These texts dealt with different aspects of abuse of power: rape, murder, and institutional state terrorism. The 1987 *Arts Magazine* review stated that:

Holzer's benches are momentary refrains of anguished disillusionment redolent of an earlier weltanschauung. And yet they dwell in the present tense far beyond the cheap melodrama that would eventually kill the decorous and satisfy the nostalgic. (Jones, 1987, p.43.)

In the same review it was also noted that the juxtaposition of the benches, viewed here as symbols of "personal contemplation", and the LED-signs, which "have the capacity to diminish selfhood", turned out to be quite problematic as the messages in Holzer's texts needed to be absorbed and contemplated by the viewer to have any effect at all. The speed of the LED-signs was, according to Jones, too fast to be remembered but this might have been a conscious move on Holzer's part. The artist has referred to this installation as her "Temple of Doom", with the benches serving as church pews and the LED-signs as the altars of modern times. In an interview Holzer talks about her understanding of how the signs work:

The signs can destroy thought, as modern life does at times. You can't grasp all that's going on and you can't make yourself focus and act. (Auping, 1992, p.97.)

This remark was a response to a question about Holzer's relationship to language where she explains that her strategy of layering text on the LED-signs is partially an expression of self-criticism. Holzer states that she has



"qualms about making pronouncements" and that when she has "doubts about a piece" she feels a need to obscure it. (Auping, 1992, p.97.) Following this installation piece was another ambitious project called *Laments*. (Plate 4) This exhibition was originally set in the DIA-foundation building in Manhattan. On the pillars in the main room Holzer had attached vertical LED-signs running almost all the way from the floor to the ceiling. In a room beside the main space she placed a line of sarcophagi. On the lids of these stone coffins the *Laments* were engraved with the same texts as were running from the bottom and up towards the ceiling on the LED-signs. At a talk at the MCA in Chicago in 1994, the artist explained her intentions behind this installation. The *Laments* were created by working from images "that you see from disasters". The texts were meant to be what people who are now dead would have said if they had been able. Holzer talked about disasters in general as well as the more specific case of the AIDS-epidemic. Michael Auping describes the *Laments* installation as

the genesis of a series of extreme meditations on death...Holzer's language has become peculiarly lyric in its outpouring of emotion. Indeed, the earthbound coffins and the upward-moving vaporizing light of the vertical signs offer a futuristic image of death and resurrection. (Auping, 1991, p.22.)

In 1990, Holzer was chosen, as the first woman artist ever, to represent the United States in the 44th Venice Biennale. She was also the first artist selected whose work includes electronic media. The installation took two years to complete and included a site-specific work in the United States' pavillion, as well as work in public places around the city of Venice, and messages on broadcast television. (Plates 5 - 6). The main elements of the installation in the pavillion were red, black and white marble tiles with selections from the *Truisms* engraved on them in six different languages. The tiles covered the floors of two antechambers where the audience could sit and wait. Beside one of the antechambers was a room in which twelve different LED-signs were displayed vertically on the wall. In the middle of the room was a stone slab sunk into the floor. The text in this room was called *Untitled (CHILD TEXT)*. Written in the first person, it was a direct reaction to the birth of Holzer's child:

IF THE PROCESS STARTS I WILL KILL THIS
BABY A GOOD WAY. SHE CAN LIE ON MY

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY NATHANIEL PHIPPS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND

BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY

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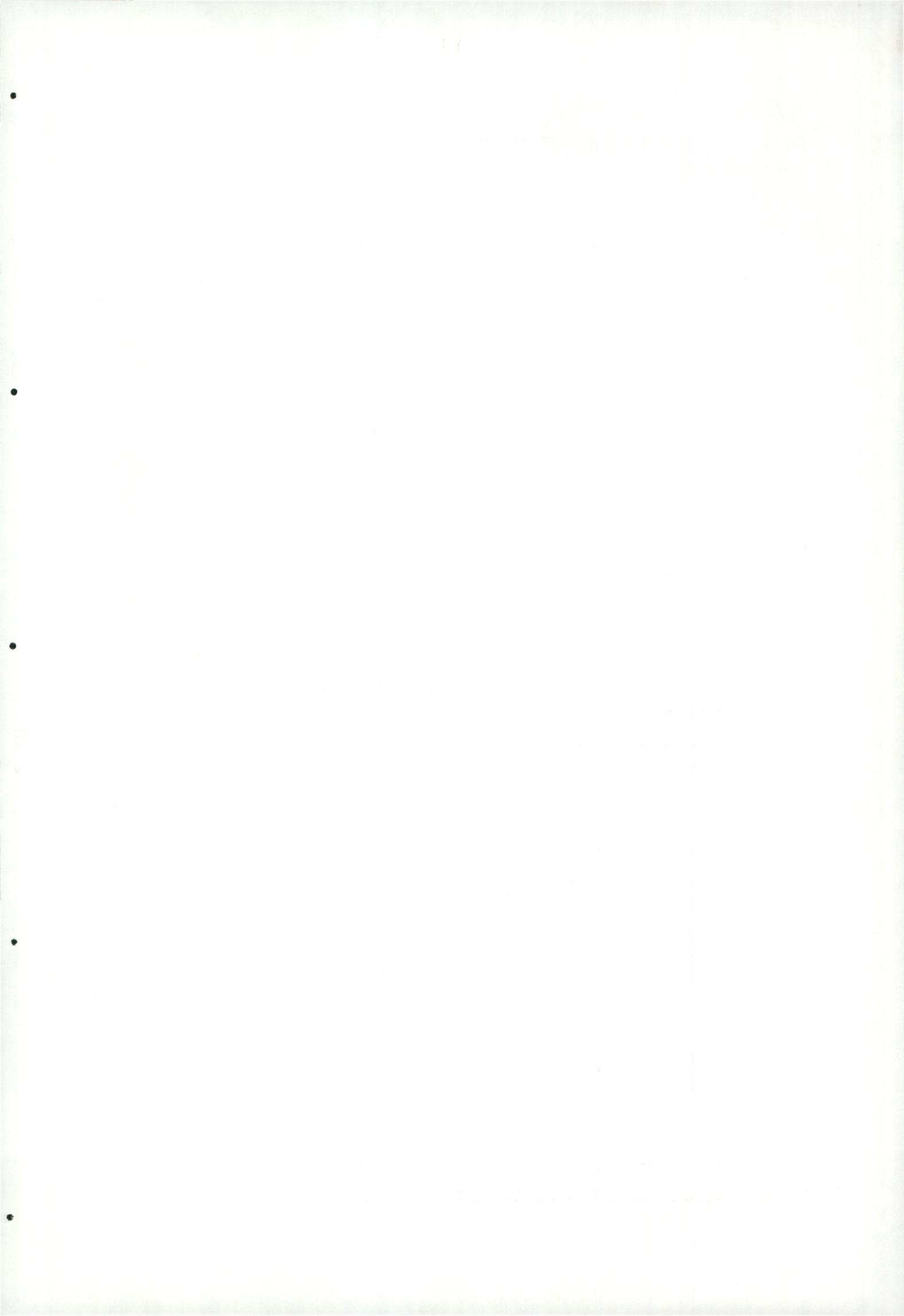
FAMILIAR BELLY. OUR BACKS WILL BE IN LINE
AND THEN INDISTINGUISHABLE. I WILL TAKE
HER DOWN BEFORE SHE FEELS THE FEAR
THAT IS CAUSE AND RESULT. (Auping, 1990,
p.28.)

Without any doubt the text is autobiographical, as if Holzer has taken her own emotions and fears as a parent and pushed them to extreme limits for stronger effect. But, as Auping puts it:

the intention here is not autobiography per se, but an explosively personal memorial to the experience of motherhood in general. (Auping, 1990, p.28.)

As we have seen, Holzer's subject matter stretches across a wide spectrum. Her art has been shown in galleries and museums, but her most wellknown trademark has been displaying work using advertising media, especially the billboard and the electronic sign. From Ceasar's Palace in Las Vegas to the Times Square Spectacolor Board in New York, from airports to shopping malls and stadiums, in banks and on television, her art has developed from the underground medium of the poster to 'official' media like bronze plaques (for *Living and Eating*) and the LED-sign. (Plates 7 - 10).

Before the presidential election in the United States in 1984, Holzer organized the *Sign On A Truck* event. (Plate 11). This project was a live transmission of work by various artists as well as videorecordings of passers-by who were invited to express their opinions on the election, politics and other concerns of socio-political interest. The videos and the artistic work were shown on two large trucks in different locations in New York City. Holzer herself did not see the project as predominantly art. "It was more of a community service with a dose of art in it." (Siegel, 1985, p. 65.) Whether or not this goes for all of Holzer's work, or covers all public art with a political message can be debated. However, it is evident that Holzer is full of good intentions as to how she wants her art to function and be received. How successful the combination of art and politics is has been widely debated. For example, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe discusses the subversive potential of the exhibited works in the *A Forest of Signs* exhibition, where Holzer was one of the participants, and takes a critical standpoint towards work by Holzer and Kruger, amongst others, calling them "a passive-agressive academy". He sees these artists as complacent when they equal historical relevance with artistic significance as well as the way they ritualize "the idea of social intervention" following a belief that it is the only way to

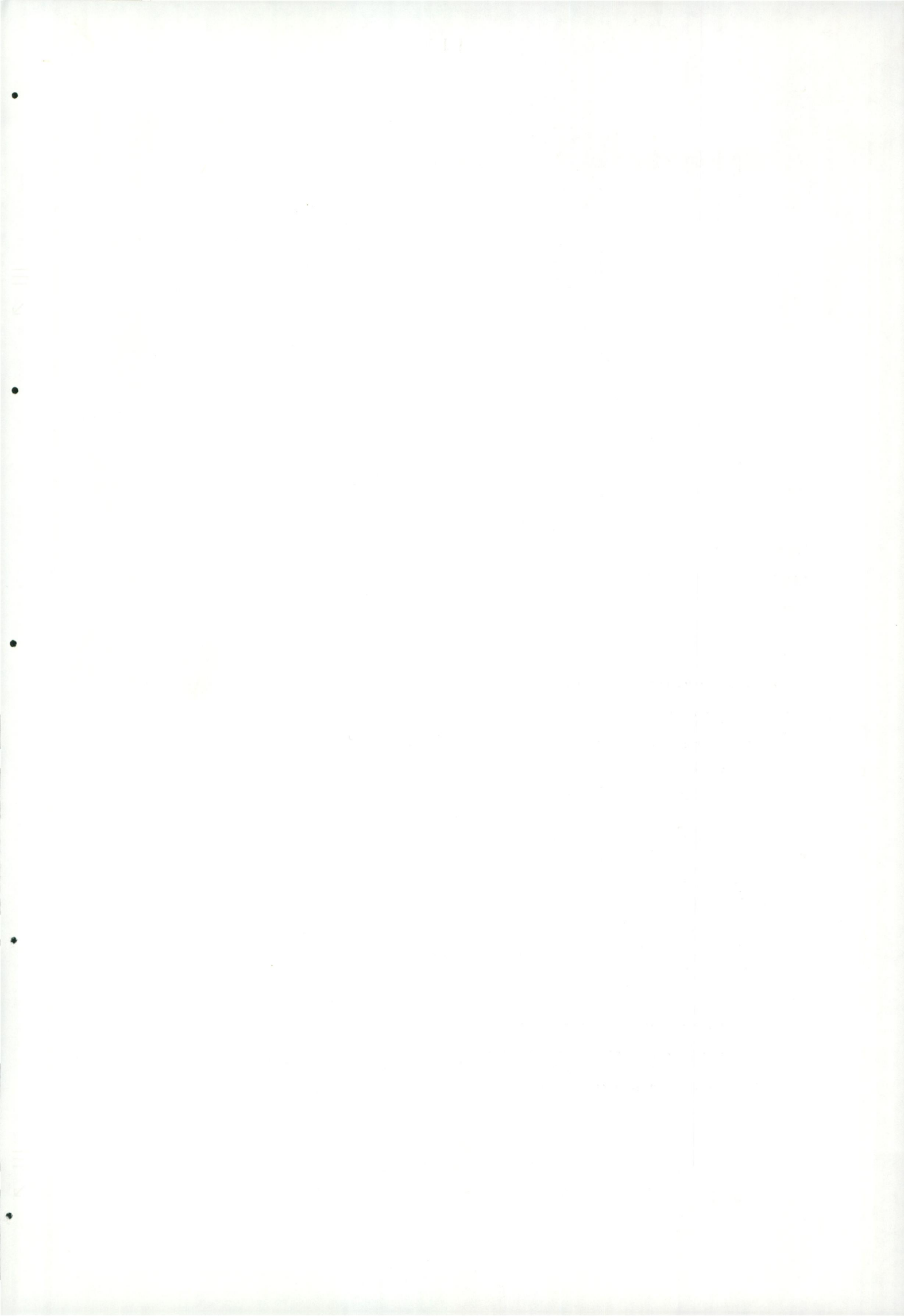


achieve this historical relevance. Labelling Holzer's ambition as "a combination of arrogance and sanctimoniousness", Gilbert-Rolfe comes to the conclusion that:

art which is preoccupied with the social propriety doesn't go very far...we have as yet no socially based art criticism which can address the inherent irresponsibility of the work of art. (Gilbert-Rolfe, 1989,p.53.)

As for Holzer's current work, there is not much information to be found. At the MCA-talk in Chicago in April 1994, Holzer said that she started a new body of work called *War Series* shortly after the Gulf War, furthermore she was working on a series about murder and rape in former Yugoslavia. She also talked about working on Virtual Reality pieces, which she mentions in an interview with Michael Auping:

My Virtual Reality piece might only present visuals and voices. I'm going to have to learn more about VR and fool around with it, but I'm tempted to do a work that doesn't have written language. I would like to build a virtual world that might flip the person instead of the words. (in Auping, 1992, p.97.)



CHAPTER 2 - Putting Holzer in context.

Jenny Holzer has been recognized internationally as one of the more important American artists within the postmodern art movement. Following a tradition in modernist art practice she works with language-based art to raise questions about politics and ideology. The artistic investigation of how far the limits of art can be pushed is commonly known as avant-garde practice. In this chapter the focus is on the artists that came before Holzer, artists that have been referred to as members of the avant-garde of their times and predecessors to Holzer. Marcel Duchamp, with his found object sculptures and his revolutionary approach to art making, is often cited as a cultural antecedent to Holzer. His use of commodity objects as pieces of art, as a critique of art as fetish; and his questioning of the relationship of art and language. His combination of art and language is very significant for an understanding of Holzer. Called "the prototype for the 'agent provocateur' of the eighties" (Nittve, 1987, p. 21.), Francis Picabia used similar strategies and subversive manouvres which also provide a useful context for Holzer. Nittve uses this term to describe artists who work in a 'subversive' way while still 'seduced' by the medium they are using.

The revolutionary content of Dadaism included John Heartfield's pertinent political photomontages. Holzer has often explained that her work originates in similar reactions to events in society. Postmodern artists like Holzer, Kruger, Levine et al are often placed within the Dada tradition. There are evident correlations between their respective needs to communicate with a larger audience and the manipulation of language. Holzer agrees that Dada has long been an influence on her work; she finds their interest in absurdity and their concerns with social conditions particularly resonant.

Subsequently, Andy Warhol has contributed, in a big way, to further opening up peoples' perception of art. In his appropriation of everyday objects and contemporary 'icons', he transcended the border between 'high' and 'low' art. The strategies used by the Pop artists, such as utilizing the language of advertising in their art making, can be found in Holzer's work.

With Joseph Beuys and Richard Serra in the 1970's a more pronounced aspect of the artist's role resurfaced after almost four decades. With the collapse of modernist values, there seemed to be a need for politically active

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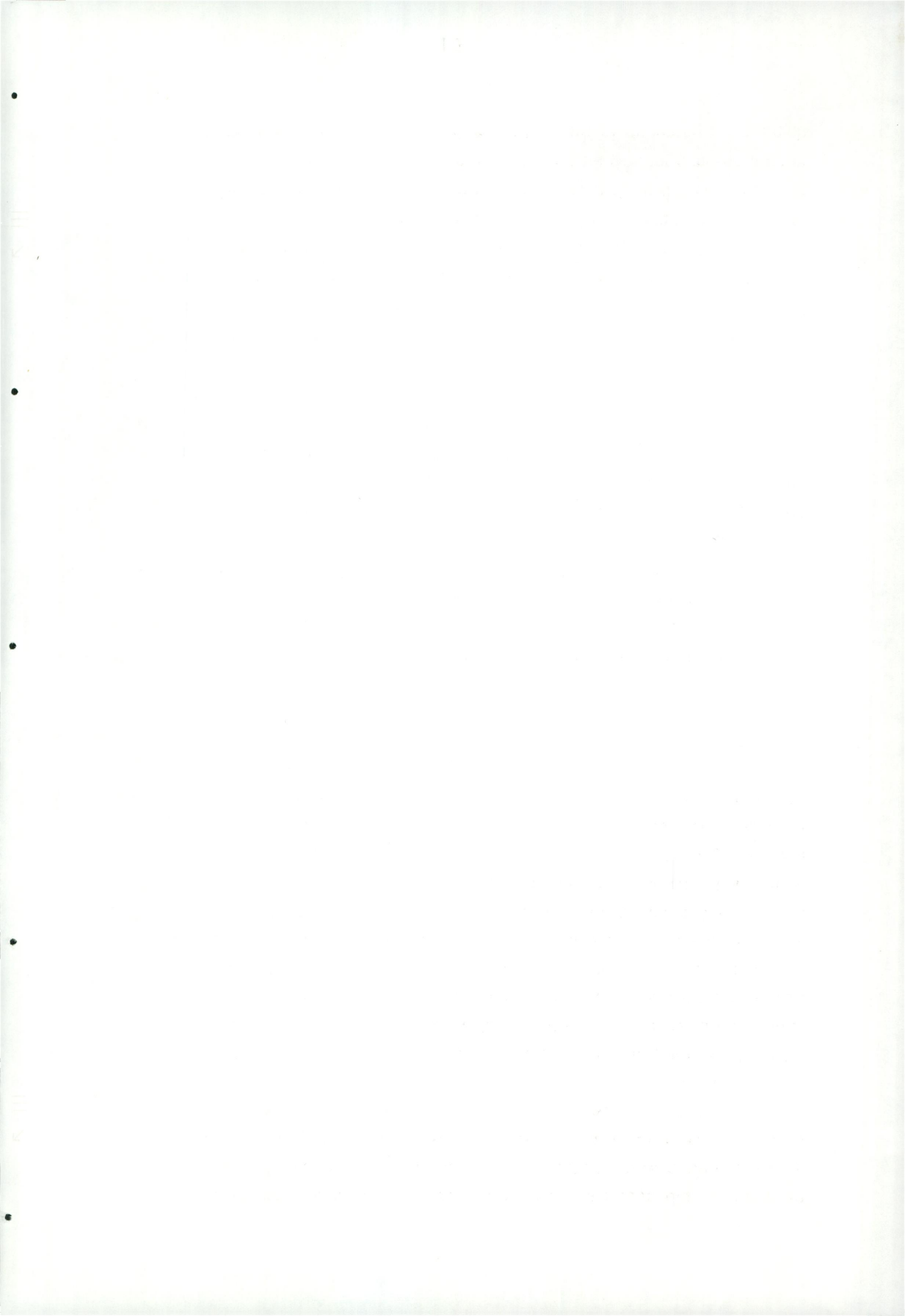
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artists to produce socially relevant work. Even if Beuys did not have an orthodox left ideology as such, he wanted to be an active force in peoples' daily lives. He strongly believed in the capacity of art to transform society and he worked hard to make this happen. Michael Auping states that "Holzer is clearly one of Beuys's inheritors in her exercise of conscience and her ambition to create an evocative, socially utilitarian art." (Auping, 1991, p. 13.) Indeed, Holzer's alternative strategies of distributing her art (t-shirts, stickers, caps and other "guerilla warfare" items) are a variation on Beuys's ideas about "art for everyone", bringing art out of the gallery / museum structure and in to peoples' daily lives. Beuys's desire, however, to make everyone an artist, and consequently to use art as a means of transforming the structure of society was more ambitious than Holzer's aspirations. And, as Robert Hughes states in *The Shock of the New*, Beuys's goals were never achieved, which might point to the conclusion that Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe is right in claiming that art which mainly deals with social concerns has a very limited efficacy.

In general, work that comments upon and/or criticizing the medium while remaining within it play an important role in postmodern artists' ways of making art. Like Serra's work, for example his 1970's video *Television Delivers People*, Holzer's "provides an example in itself of the seduction of advertising." (Auping, 1992, p. 33.) Serra's ironic approach in criticizing television as a medium served to point out how television is used as a propaganda tool for distributing commercial and governmental ideologies. As a development of Holzer's ways of delivering her texts to the public, she has started to use television in recent years. This interest in rearranging the way public mediums are used, played a big part within Conceptualism. Together with other postmodernists, Holzer follows this tradition in her approach to public work.

The connection between Holzer's art and an artist like John Baldessari's lies on a different level. The way Holzer started writing her Truisms as a 'map' of current opinions and values in society is closely linked to what Baldessari's 'truthfinding' in art, when he started to use photography and text. In the early stages, Baldessari would drive around a ghetto area taking pictures at random through the car window, without even looking in the viewfinder, in an attempt to show reality and reveal 'the truth' as it was for him and a lot of other people. (see Selwyn, 1987, p. 62.) A sort of documentation which



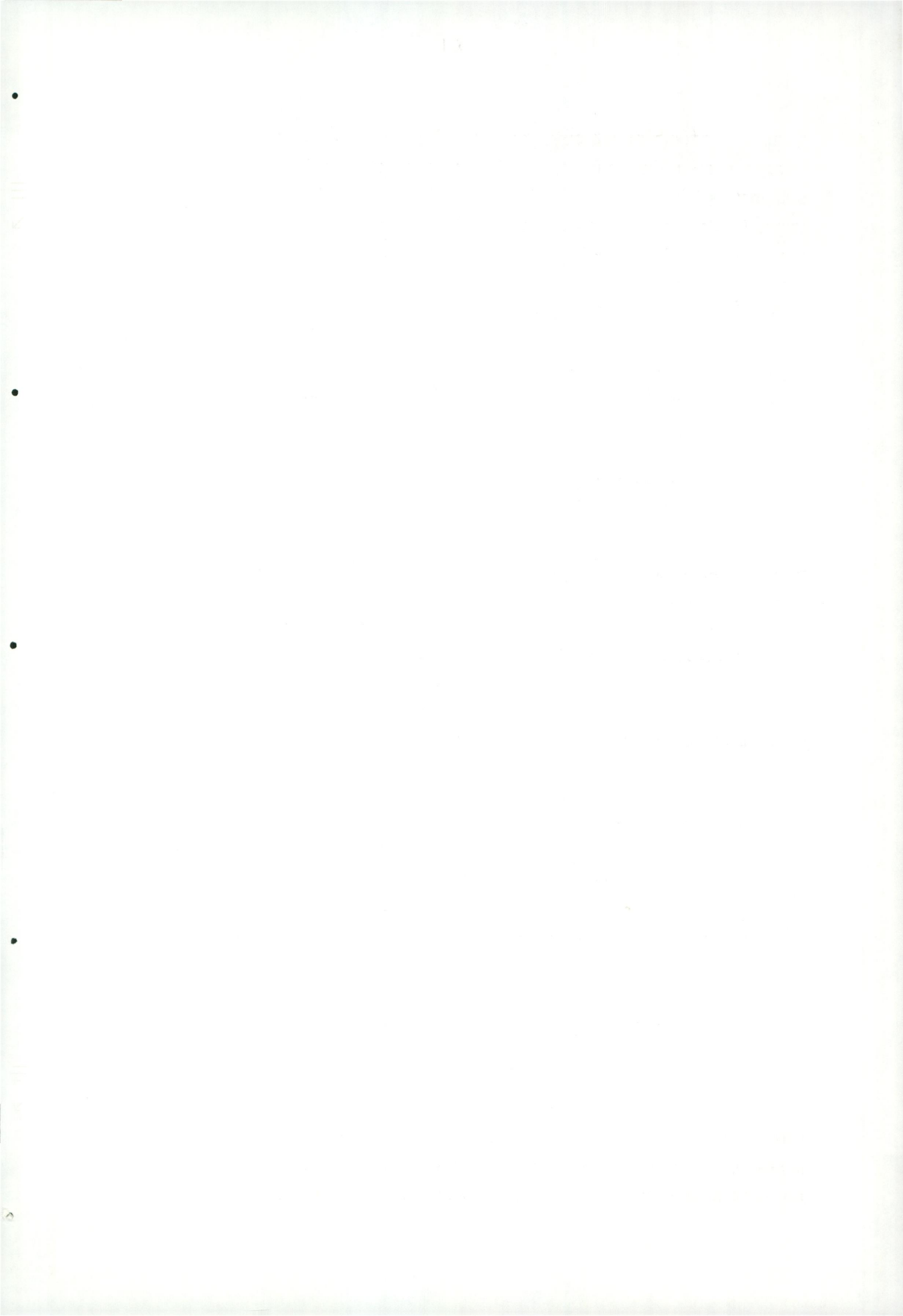
could be one description of what Holzer's work is about, even though her documents are presented in written form. Something Auping calls "a lexical portrait of society." (Auping, 1992, p. 29.) Holzer has mentioned Baldessari's work as influential, especially his films and videotapes.

A parallel has been drawn between Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* and Holzer's spiral display of the LED-signs in her Guggenheim show in 1989-90. (Plates 12 - 13) The Guggenheim museum was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright who created a circular building which has often been criticized of being an awkward place in which to exhibit art. Holzer, however, managed to make the museum's parapet wall work to her advantage by placing a 535-foot LED-sign running up the inner edge of it. Referring to Holzer's fascination with stadiums designed for spectacular public events, Auping sees the installation, which included a circle of stone benches on the ground floor, as an attempt to "bridge the gap between the ancient tradition of story telling around a fire to the spectacles we eagerly watch in Madison Square Garden." It is in this sense that Holzer's installation and Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* are linked:

Smithson realized an inspiring coupling of ancient mythology and science fiction, most profoundly through his...use of the spiral form...Holzer's Guggenheim installation is a brilliant companionpiece to Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. (Auping, 1992, p.50.)

The Guggenheim show has also been called "a stonehenge-like installation" (Dyer, 1992, p.19.) which would be another connection with the ancient traditions Auping talks about.

There are obvious and 'natural' links between the ideas that emerged from Pop art in the 1960's and Conceptualism and Minimalism in the 1970's: "Both start out from the principle of composition that Donald Judd calls 'one thing after another', from rows and series, whether identical boxes or, of mass-media pictures". (Nittve, 1987, p. 27.) Holzer has indeed assimilated such formal qualities from her predecessors. By combining her series with the vast memory of the LED-sign, which makes the idea of repetition possible on a larger scale, the concept of 'variations on the identical' has been pushed even further. Minimalists often mentioned as important influences on Holzer's work include Carl Andre and Donald Flavin. A



prominent feature of Minimalist production is writing, which was often meant to serve as a complement to support their artistic work. As Craig Owens points out in his discussion on Minimalist art, however, the notion of text being a complement to artistic production reduces writing to an inferior activity, this

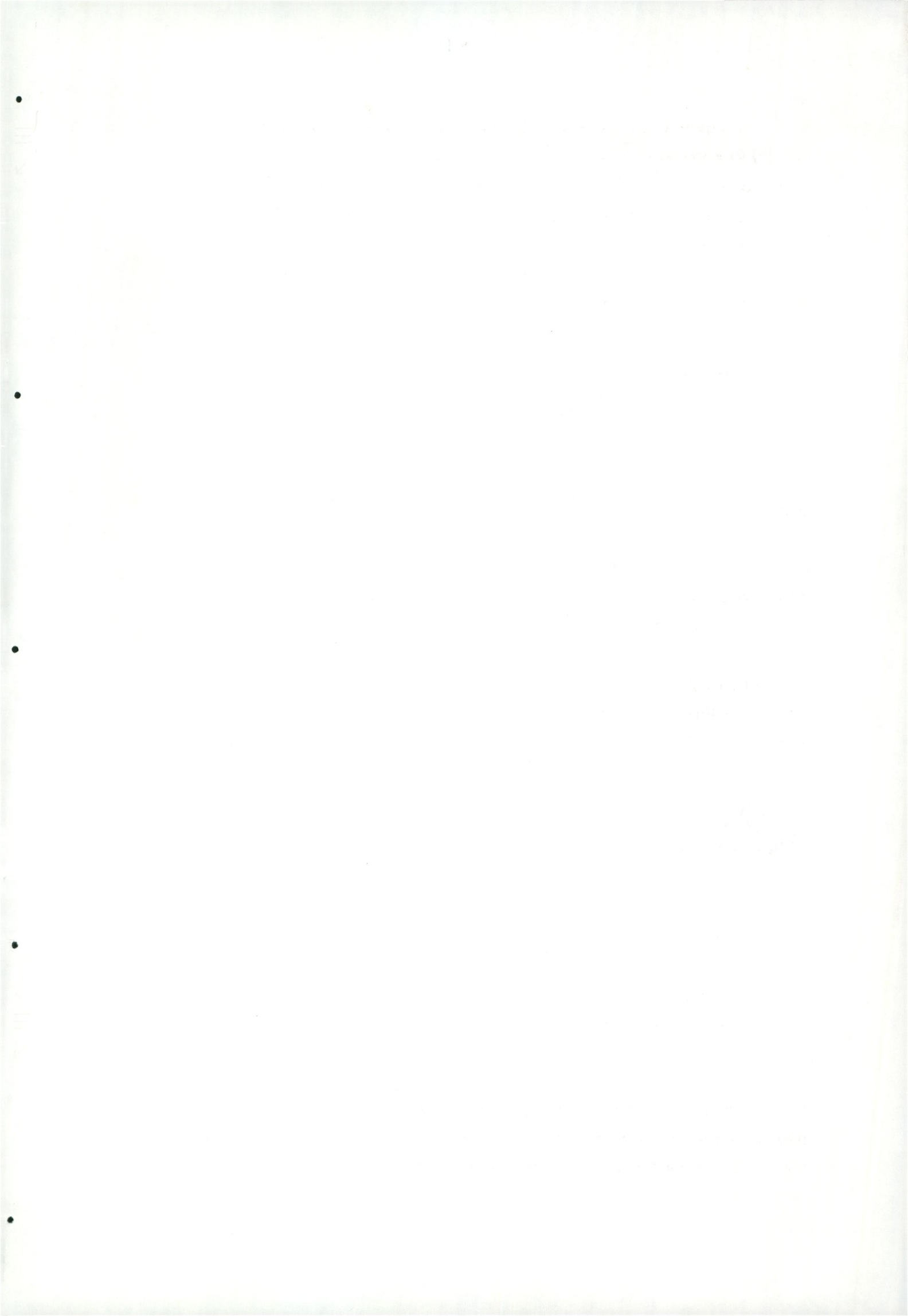
might be diagnosed as one symptom of a modernist aesthetic, specifically, of its desire to confine the artist within the sharply delineated boundaries of a single aesthetic discipline. (Owens, 1992, p. 44.)

The belief in the distinct difference between visual art and literary texts was a closely guarded notion within modernism even though language and images were often combined. A consequence of this was that the field of critical inquiry was inaccessible to the visual arts. Thus, an aesthetic hierarchy was established "based on this verbal/visual polarity." (Owens, 1992, p. 45.)

Conceptual artists that have been used as points of reference for Holzer's work are Joseph Kosuth and Daniel Buren. Supposedly, Holzer shares Kosuth's and Buren's "desire to reach out to a global situation." (Siegel, 1985, p. 65.) In his efforts to connect with as large an audience as possible, Kosuth focused on language and, just as Holzer has done, translated his texts into different languages which were then displayed on billboards. Daniel Buren would appear to speak for many of his colleagues when he said:

Art whatever it might be is exclusively political. What is called for is an analysis of formal and cultural limits...within which art exists and struggles...Although the prevailing ideology and the associated artists try in every way to camouflage them, and although it is too early - the conditions are not met - to blow them up, the time has come to unveil them. (in Nittve, 1987, p. 209.)

This 'unveiling of the limits' is vitally important to contemporary artists. Although this is an admirable starting point, there has been a growing scepticism about the notion of effective political art. It has been argued that "the penetration of the veil" is a modernist idea and that works of art can only be successful when they do not use art for discursive reasons. Such an approach can easily diminish the impact of the work and cause it to fall into categories of complacency or criticality. (Gilbert-Rolfe, 1989, p.49.)



This notion is also exacerbated by Robert Hughes's observation that: "An artist must be famous to be heard, but as he (she) requires fame, so his work accumulates 'value' and becomes, ipso facto, harmless." (Hughes, 1980, p.111.) If what Hughes is referring to is the art piece as commodity, and the impossibility of being subversive while being accepted by and remaining within the system, the counter argument, then, would be that the widespread use of technology is a sign of certain artists seeing communication as being more important than their own commercial gains. The impact of technology on art has been thoroughly discussed since Walter Benjamin's seminal *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. The issues are complex and controversial and most of them beyond the scope of this thesis. However, Benjamin came to the conclusion that mechanical reproduction brought about radical and enormous changes as to how the function of art is perceived: "Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice: politics". (in Frascina & Harrison, 1982, p.220.) In Margot Lovejoy's discussion on art and technology she talks about Benjamin's conclusion that when technological reproduction became possible, a piece of art's social function was brought into focus instead of the commodity value of a work: "Despite the undermining of its commodity value, the copying of an art work increases its currency in the public consciousness". (Lovejoy, 1990, p.259.) She also elaborates on the concept that technology has expanded the ways of communication and that it has transformed the way artists work as well as how technology has changed how works of art are dispersed. When questioned about her own relationship to technology, Holzer replied:

One, I use them (electronic signs) because they work, they get the message out...Two, I use them because I think...that they are an accurate reflection about the world in which we live. (Holzer, 1988, p. 83.)

In Charles Russell's *Short History of the Term Avant-Garde*, he points out that around 1968 the term was turned into "a convenient label applied to the postwar emergence of self-conscious stylistic innovation in the arts". (Russell, 1981, p.4.) Russell explains that there was a divide between the past avant-garde (Dadaism etc.) and Pop art, Minimalism and Conceptualism which are often referred to as "neo-avant-garde". As technology transformed art, so the avant-garde aspired to transform society.

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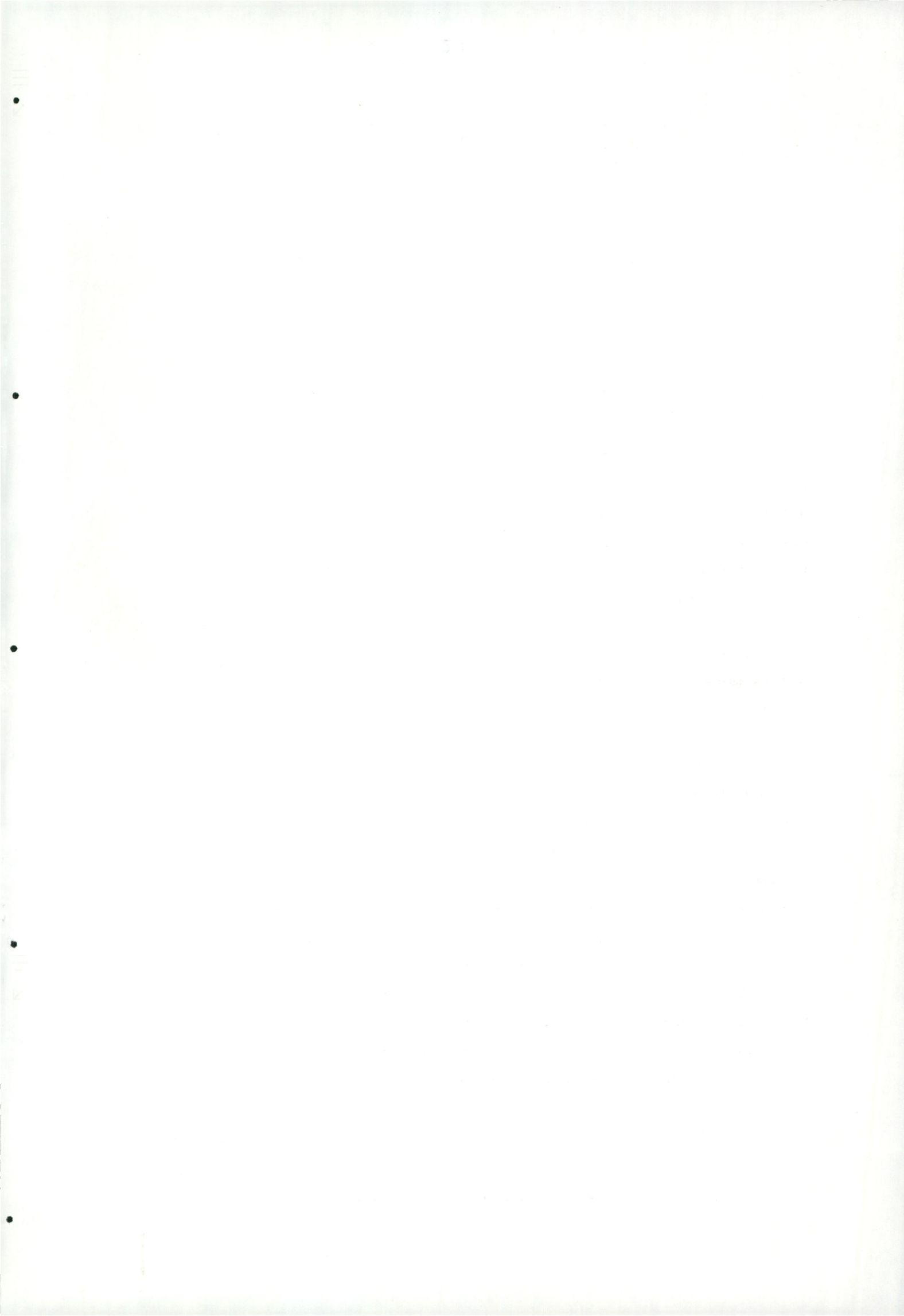
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The two seem indisputably related. In Lovejoy's words: "new art forms grow from new tools for representation and new conditions for communication". (Lovejoy, 1992, p.xxii.)

Many of the artists referred to in this chapter have been involved in artistic practices relevant to art and technology as discussed by Walter Benjamin. Whether or not the avant-garde is still alive is still being debated. Some claim it was a purely modernist idea that died with the fall of modernist values. Others insist that certain avant-garde traits are still alive. Questions worth considering are: Can postmodern art be called avant-garde? Is there an avant-garde today? Is Holzer's art avant-garde? Richard Kostelanetz, in his *Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*, claims that postmodern art "is not avant-garde at all but purportedly contemporary", and says about Holzer's work that "by no measure known is it avant-garde. Her use of language is prosaic, bordering on dull: there is no invention in either syntax or diction". (Kostelanetz, 1993, p.103.)

Robert Hughes identifies the avant-garde with the belief that "art had some practical revolutionary use" and states that this idea collapsed in the 1970's. (Hughes, 1980, p.365.) Russell Ferguson says that the idea of the avant-garde depended on a notion of the artist "at the head of a common herd which must follow behind". (Ferguson, 1990, p.5.) He concludes that once the connections between discourse and power were analysed, scepticism grew around the concept of the avant-garde. Charles Russell on the other hand asserts that the avant-garde of 1981 displayed "a creative and critical vitality" without having high expectations of its impact. (Russell, 1981, p.4.) Holzer herself believes that the avant-garde still exists: "I think within the gallery system or the art world proper that the avant-garde could still be alive in terms of an intellectual force. Ideas still grow and are enhanced by discussion". (Holzer, 1986, p.71.)



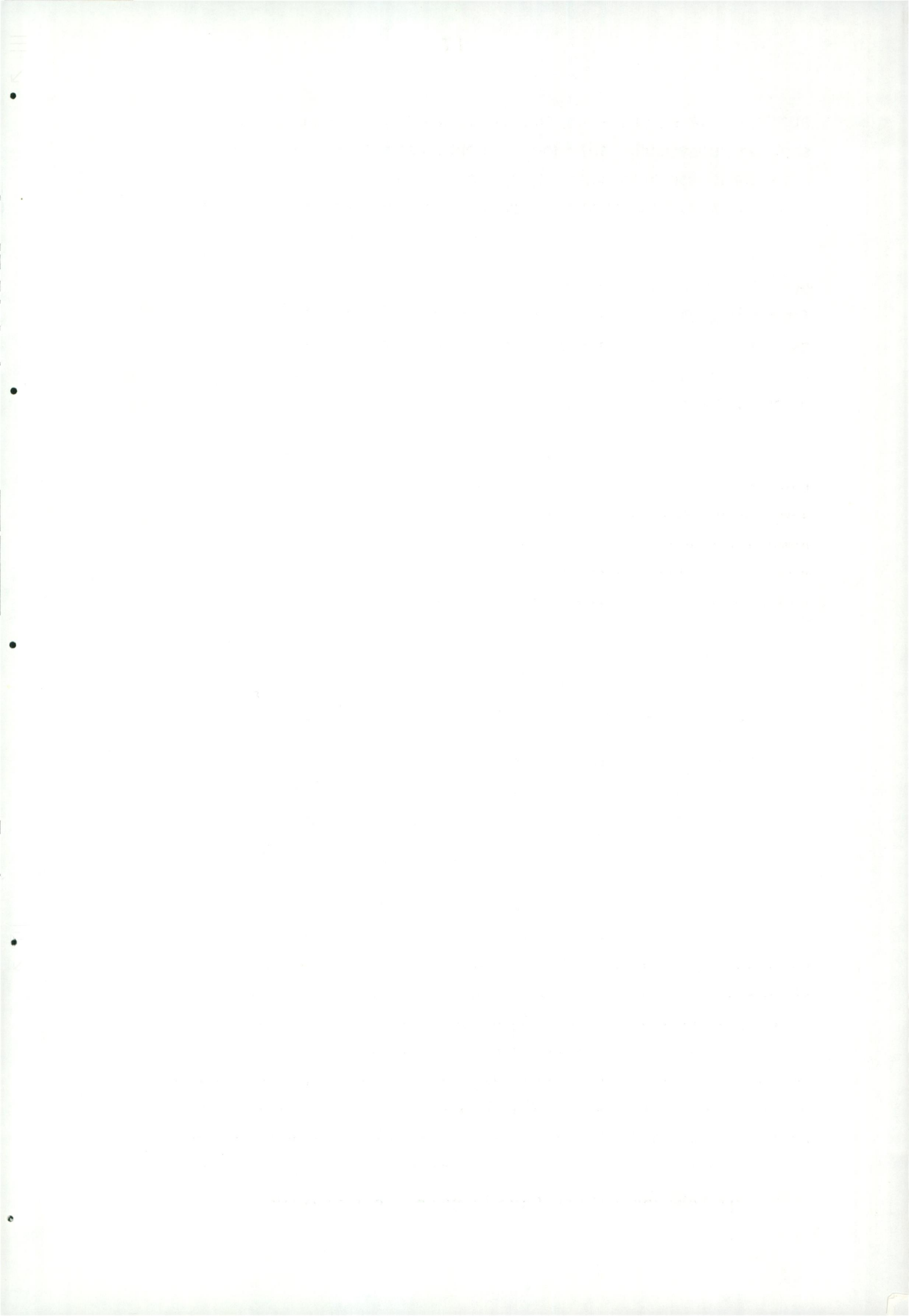
CHAPTER 3 - Contemporary languagebased art.

Significantly, there are few female artists ever mentioned as 'predecessors' to the postmodern art movement. Indeed, when it comes to mapping out an historical foundation for female contemporary artists, the same lack is obvious. One of the main components of the postmodern art world is the eruption of patriarchal value systems, caused by what Steven C. Dubin calls 'the return of the repressed' on the discursive art scene. Dubin calls attention to the fact that more American artists began to focus on social and political issues in their art in the 1980's, something that the American art world had not shown much interest in since the Vietnam War. According to Dubin, these concerns developed in two directions. The first one involved artists who set out to reveal sexist, racist and homophobic attitudes in society: "The immediate intention of these practitioners: to dismantle antiquated, derogatory expressions and erect more satisfactory depictions of diverse groups in their place...and thereby contribute to a more just society". (Dubin, 1992, p.24.) The second direction was closely related to the first, but here the main issue was "the devastating impact of AIDS", where artists channeled their grief, fear, frustration and anger with the epidemic and the government's mismanagement of the problem, into their art production.

Artists such as Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Laurie Anderson and Lorna Simpson are among the most debated female postmodernists. Their approaches to forming a new critical discourse have emphasized different aspects of how existing conventions and ideologies function. What these artists have in common are that they work in an oppositional mode, and that they use language as a means to deconstruct the existing hierarchy.

Textbased work has played an important role in the postmodernist attempt to problematize dominant ideologies. This mode of representation has brought forth a number of interesting issues that have been widely debated. If we take it as a premise that signs produce meaning and that meaning is socially constructed, how can this be put in relation to the question of language and representation?

In her 1986 essay *Saussure versus Peirce: Models for a Semiotics of Visual Art*, Margaret Iversen claims that "a fully developed semiotics for art is still needed if we are to understand the nature of visual signification." (in Rees and Borzello, 1986, p. 82.) Aware that this has yet to be achieved, she



indicates that the theories developed by Saussure in linguistics and Peirce in semiotics can serve as appropriate tools in developing this semiotics of art. The ideas Iversen refers to are based on the science of signs even though Saussure and Peirce had different approaches to this field of investigation. Iversen points out that both approaches are useful but argues that what Peirce has to offer has more potential when it comes to investigate the relationship between semiotics and the visual arts. She does, however, acknowledge that the terms 'signifier' and 'signified', as devised by Saussure in his theories about language, have been of great importance for, amongst others, feminist debates within art discourse.

The base for semiotics is that certain signs have the capacity to 'denote' certain things. One of Saussure's contributions to this proposition was that there are no 'natural' or given relations between objects and the signs connected with them. Another important aspect of this is that signs cannot function without being in a system of difference. In other words, the only way to define signs is to differentiate between them. According to Saussure: "The value of just any term is accordingly determined by its environment." (in Rees and Borzello, 1986, p. 86.) This idea is not, however, to be reduced to a system of 'binary oppositions' which would bring in value judgments and, in so doing, reinforcing ideological assumptions about the world. Here, poststructuralism is brought into the argument. Iversen argues that what needs to be done is to 'deconstruct', the binary opposites in order to prevent further marginalization of certain groups. Even if signs are arbitrary in some ways, a system of signs has to be agreed upon by a social group to 'mean' anything. As Catherine Belsey says in *Critical Practice*; "it is the arbitrariness of the sign which points to the fact that language is a matter of convention. (Belsey, 1980, p. 41.) This statement introduces questions of ideology and language into the discussion. In Belsey's analysis it is made clear that while language cannot be reduced to ideology and vice versa, all signifying practices contain ideological elements of some sort. All these theories have proved relevant to discussions about representations and languagebased art. Language, whether written, spoken or visual, has been said to be "the motor of a culture" and "culture in action." (Webster, 1980, p. 207.)

When the feminist movement began to take shape, its main 'mission' was to create a new politics based on women's search for ways to reclaim "what had always been theirs but had been usurped from them: control over their bodies and a voice with which to speak about it." (Rubin-Suleiman, 1986, p.



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In the second section, the author outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for a systematic approach to gathering information, ensuring that all relevant sources are covered and that the data is processed consistently.

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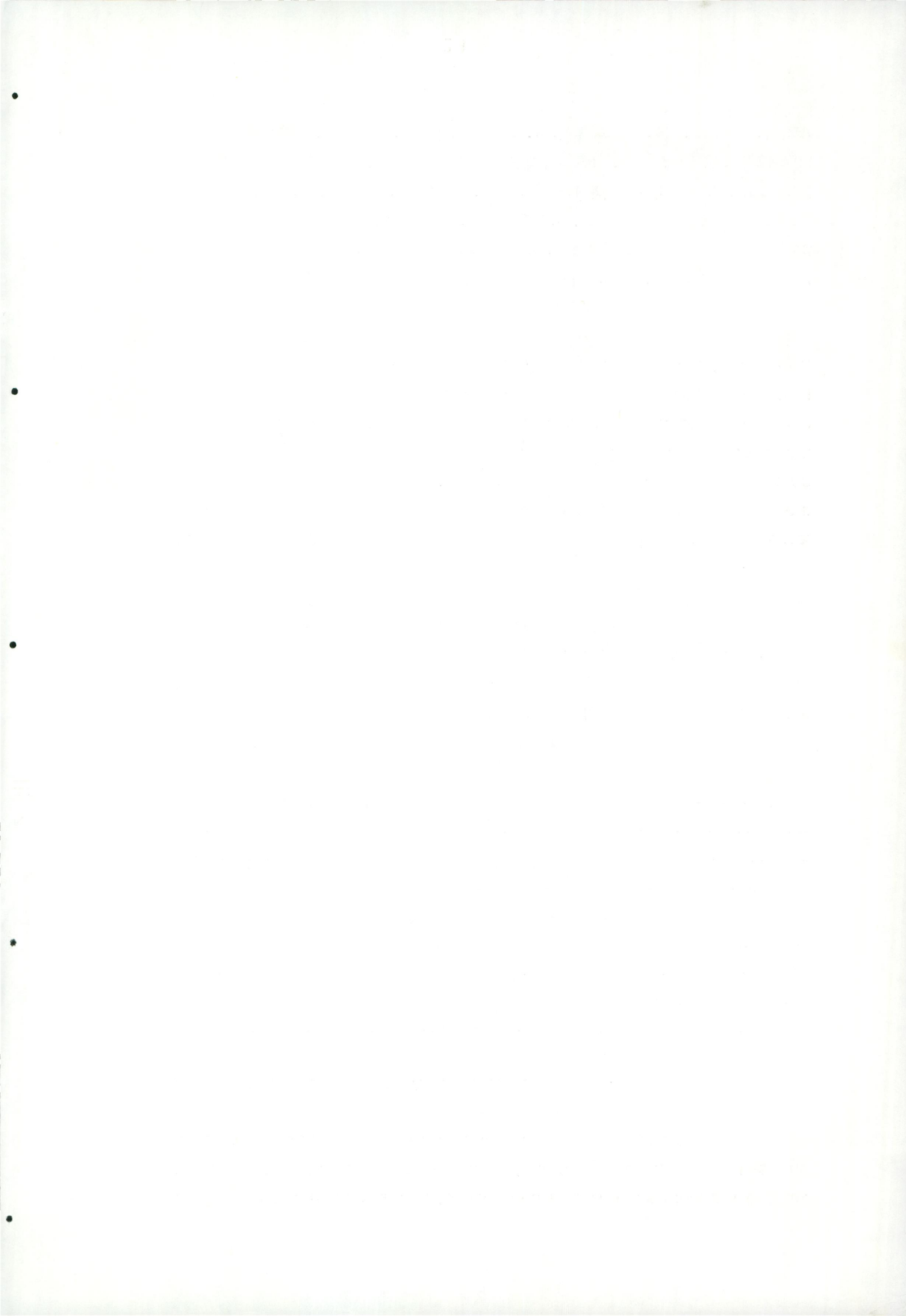
Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the key findings and recommendations. It stresses the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the implemented measures are effective and that any necessary adjustments are made in a timely manner.

7.) One of the strategies was to introduce language as having a primary function, and not a secondary one as was the case with the Minimalists. The essence of language and how language functions have been dominant features in the art world since the early 1970's, and characterizes the art produced by Holzer and many of her contemporaries.

One of the reasons why languagebased art has come to play such predominant role within postmodernism is that language has been recognized as "our first and foremost institution". (Printz, 1991, p. 174.) Another important reason is that it has become more and more difficult to create visual art at a time when all images are loaded with all kinds of connotations. What Roland Barthes called 'The rhetoric of the image', explained by Craig Owens as "those tactics whereby photographs impose their messages upon us, hammer them home" (Owens, 1992, p.191.), how images (or more specifically photographs) create stereotypes and inform us about what messages they bring has been questioned through language alone or language and images in combination by the female postmodernists. Max Kozloff explains this phenomenon in the "Examining Postmodernism..." seminar:

I do think we're dealing with an unacknowledged distaste for the visual image itself, partially due, of course, to the prevalence of images of popular culture. (in Stern, 1993, p. 15.)

In Craig Owens's essay *The Medusa Effect, or, The Spectacular Ruse*, Barbara Kruger's work is thoroughly discussed in relation to the myth about Medusa and the creation of stereotypes. Focusing to a large extent on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Foucault's discussions about the body and power, Owens seems to come to the conclusion that all photographs bring some sort of stereotypical notions with them. Owens sees the strength of Kruger's work as being "the immobility of the pose" which will, hopefully, cause the "mobilization of the spectator". (Owens, 1992, p. 199.) Owens speaks mainly about Kruger's way of appropriating posed studio images to expose ideological stereotypes. In his examination, Owens claims that Kruger regards the stereotype as a power tool which maintains a desired order in society. But, to revert to the central element in semiotics and structuralism - the most powerful instrument in maintaining a desired ideology is language. In an interview with Holzer, Mary Ann Staniszewski asked the artist what she sees as effective practice. To this Holzer



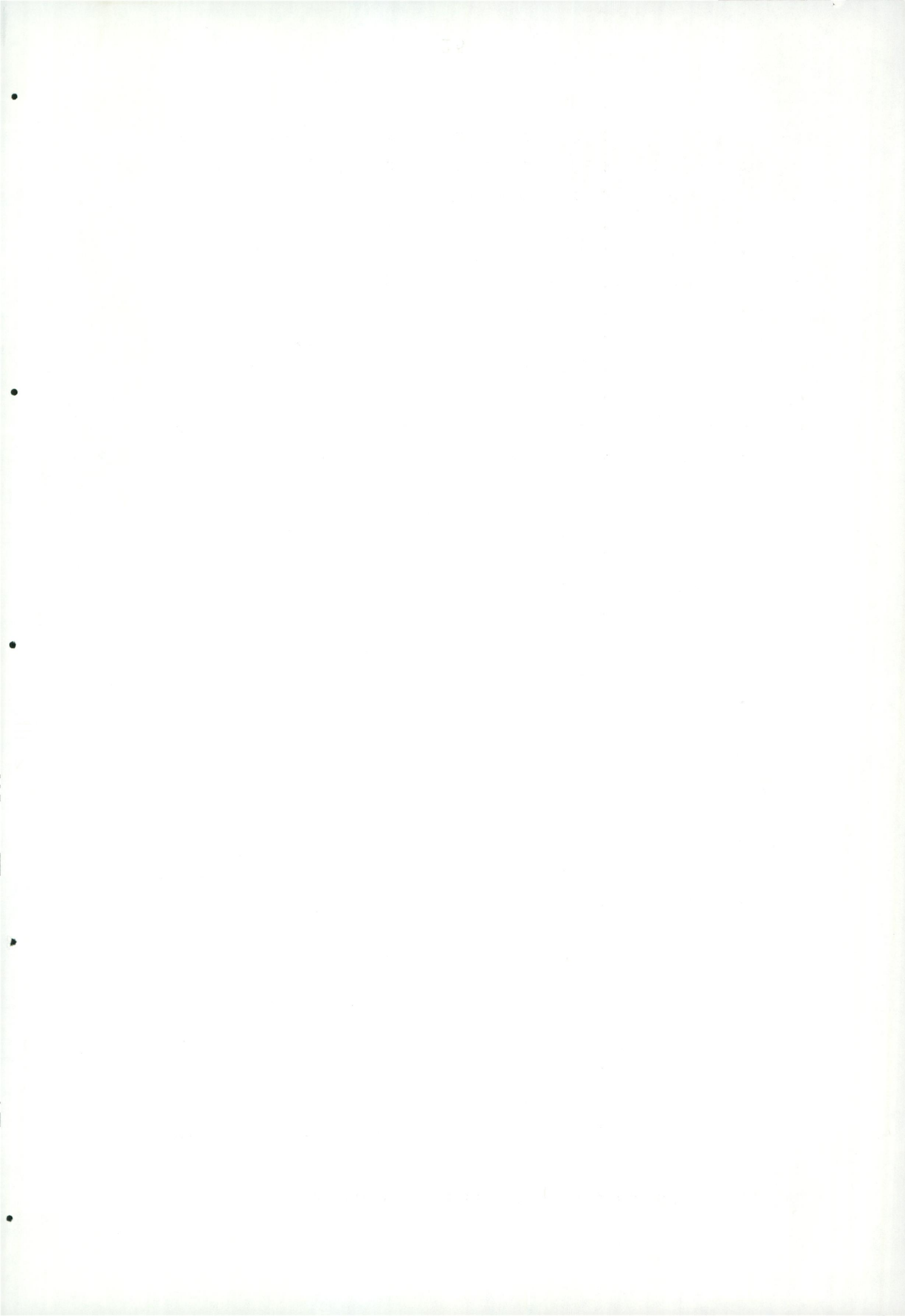
responded: "Something smart, formally perfect". The attendant question is, does Holzer think that she can achieve this through language? "Language communicates", Holzer replied. (Staniszewski, 1988, p. 112.)

Lorna Simpson's art deals with questions of race and gender. In an analysis of her work, David Joselit defines Simpson's art as being a combination of word and image "which mirrors the large social struggle for control over one's own subjectivity, one's own name". (in *The Institute of Contemporary Art*, 1988, p.77.) In combining photographs of a black female with word games, as in *Twenty Questions (A Sampler)*, Simpson opposes 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of femininity together with different concepts of race. As Joselit points out, she chooses words with highly ideological connotations to expose racist and sexist distinctions that are entrenched in language. The end result is that Simpson manages to create a niche where the subject can exist outside conventional systems of representation. (Plate 14).

These are just a few examples of how language is used within postmodernist discourse. These female artists use language not only to explore and present their personal experiences and their own emotions, but also to examine conventions of behaviour and language. Jessica Printz calls the complex nature of language "a double-edged sword". (Printz, 1991, p. 140.) What she means by this metaphor is that language enables communication and exchange of ideas on the one hand but on the other hand it reinforces conventions and stops us from experiencing the world in a 'true' way. Printz's metaphor of the sword appears in a text about Laurie Anderson. Of a collaborative piece by Anderson and William S. Burroughs, *Language is a Virus from Outer Space* (Plate 15), Printz says that these artists work with language to "dissociate, to manipulate, and hence gain more personal control over language, a language that would otherwise "control" them ("a virus"). (Printz, 1991, p.140.)

Accordingly, it seems as if artists have turned to language in recent years when they have felt a need to address certain aspects of ideology, social control and society. To make sure that there is no room for misinterpretations or confusion as to what their work is about they have utilized language as a direct and explicit instrument: As Laurie Anderson reiterates, "I feel a personal responsibility to communicate, not to make art that's so coded that people can't receive it." (in Printz, 1991, p. 137.) Holzer explains her switch

from painting to writing by saying "I could say exactly what I wanted on any subject, and I could address specific topics. This is impossible to do with abstract painting". (in Auping, 1992, p. 73.)

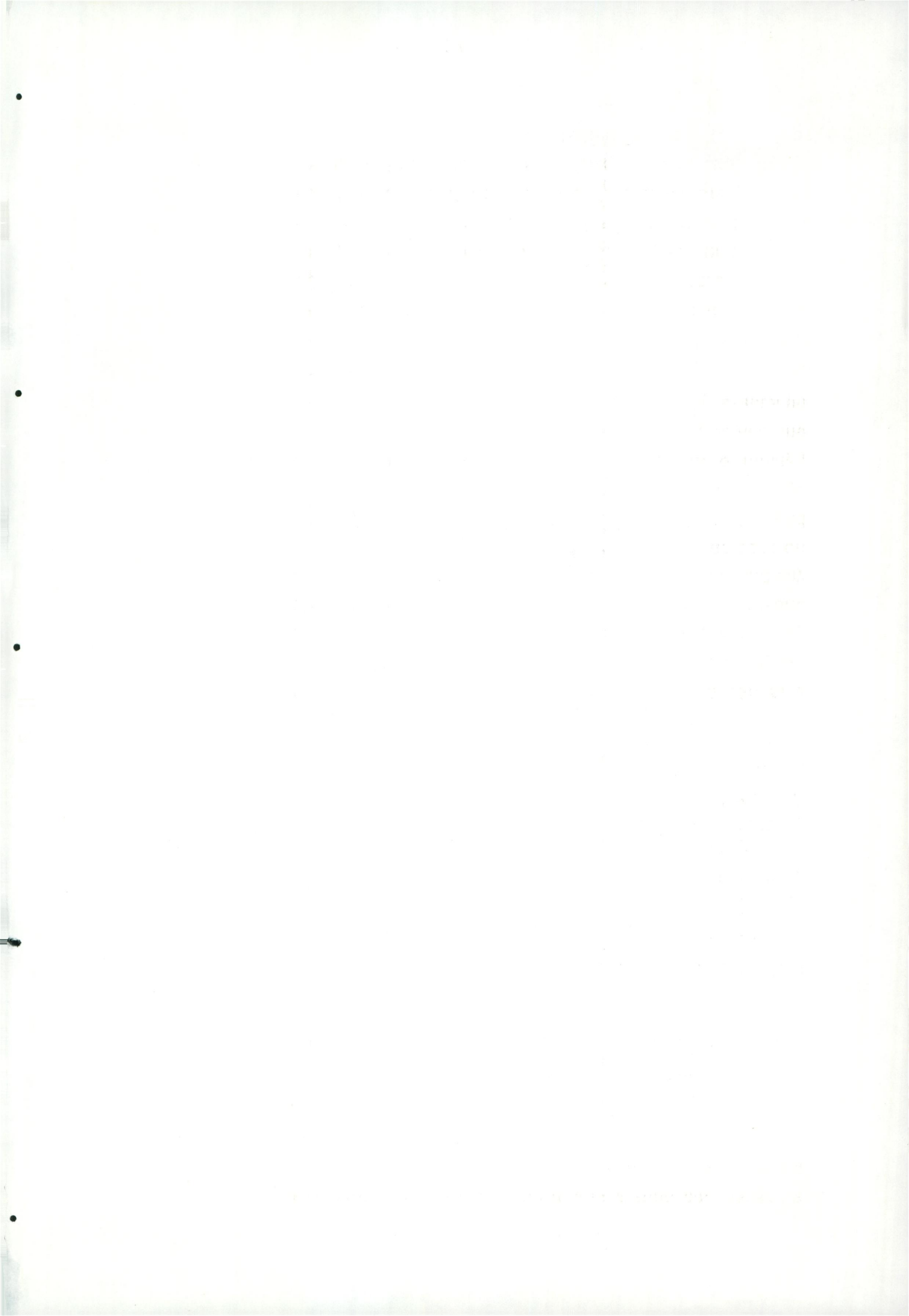


CHAPTER 4 - Representation and language.

Without doubt, the question of representation in our culture is problematic. Part of the problem lies in the psychological effects that the excess of images and information in society has had on people. In an opening statement for the *Examining Postmodernism: Images/Premises* symposium held in New York in 1991, Donald Kuspit enlisted psychoanalysis to present the distinction between a false self and a true self, within the subject, as necessary for our mental well-being, since the false self protects the true self. In spite of Freud's theory that it might not even be possible to have a true self, Kuspit points out that it would be impossible to exist without a sense of self. Some sort of self-representation is necessary in order to function socially. In a social context, the false self is the communicative part of every human being. What are then the consequences of living in a mass-media society that is, to a large extent, based on communication? Kuspit's conclusion seems to be that our sense of reality inevitably implodes: "When we become too...socially communicative, we lose our sense of our own reality". (in Stern, 1991, p. 5.) But this loss of reality is not only caused by the effect of mass-media on peoples' daily lives. Kuspit continues:

This is a society that is into objectification...This is a society which basically treats its people as unreal...Which has falsified subjectivity for its own vested interests...for the interests of...the powers of domination. This is a society which wants us to think of ourselves as objects...a society which wants us to manipulate ourselves. (in Stern, 1991, p. 5.)

The symposium was held to examine different aspects of the postmodern discourse. A main theme of postmodern art practice and theory is the deconstruction of existing structures of representation. Let us then take the photographic medium as an example of how problematic the issue of representation has become. The meaning a photographic image conveys depends on its contextual relations and, of course, who the viewer is. According to Sontag, "If photographs are messages, the message is both transparent and mysterious." (Sontag, 1978, p.111.) Sontag's problem with photography is the photographic concern with "aesthetic awareness" which causes "emotional detachment" from the world. But, as Craig Owens observed, photographs can only serve as substitutes for the objects that they appear to represent. In analyzing a remark by Robert Smithson, Owens finds



some explanation as to why photographic representation can never be based on what it is supposed to represent. Part of Smithson's statement reads:

Photographing (the bridge)...was like photographing a photograph...as I walked on the bridge, it was as though I was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel. (in Owens, 1978, p. 86.)

Owens's response to this, is that if we perceive reality as already being reduced to an image, then representation of objects and the hierarchy that follows it inevitably collapses: "The result is an overwhelming experience of absence: the abyss". (Owens, 1978, p.86.) Hence, the only thing a photograph can convey is absence or a sense of loss. The psychological effects of the mass media society's excess of images are subsequently enormous. Max Kozloff states that: "If representation replaces event, we can't grasp any historical process, nor can we form a political judgment". (in Stern, 1993, p.7.)

The female artists previously mentioned, Holzer included, are part of a movement that has supposedly created a significant change in the way we look at a range of issues such as gender, sexuality, authorship, subjectivity and representation. While most artists who incorporate text into their work, also use images, very few focus on text only. I have not been able to find any explanations from Holzer as to why she has tended to turn her back on images altogether, (except in a few cases where she has combined text and electronic images on the LED-signs; Plate 16). In effect, by using language on its own, Holzer thus avoids Owens's abyss or Kuspit's "loss of reality", whereas it is difficult to imagine one of the *Under A Rock* parables had she tried to illustrate it visually, or tried to create the same type of representation with visual imagery only:

CRACK THE PELVIS SO SHE LIES RIGHT. THIS IS A MISTAKE. WHEN SHE DIES YOU CANNOT REPEAT THE ACT. THE BONES WILL NOT GROW BACK TOGETHER AGAIN AND THE PERSONALITY WILL NOT COME BACK. SHE IS GOING TO SINK DEEPER INTO THE MOSS TO GET WHITE AND LIGHTER. SHE IS UNRESPONSIVE TO BEGGING AND SELF-ABSORBED. (Auping, 1992, p.40.)

We cannot even begin to imagine the visualisation of these words. Without a doubt it would have been far more complicated to create the same effect visually as Holzer has verbally. In addition, written representations leave a lot to people's imagination which is a key, but often overlooked factor.

Holzer's texts often operate metaphorically. If language and imagination can increase peoples' understanding of their living conditions, parallels can be drawn between Holzer's approach to writing and Paul Ricour's writings about language and meaning. In Ricour's works on metaphor, he claims that living metaphors give us a new description of the world they depict so that new meaning is created. Hence, the metaphor is not only a literary interpretation - it is a new way to reach an understanding of the world and ourselves.

If Holzer's art is "a lexical portrait of society" where she creates texts that reflect what is going on in society then we could also say that Holzer's art can be placed on the same level as what Ricour holds as a central point in his discussions: the narrative. Without going too far into Ricour's theories, one main conclusion can still be drawn from this line of argument. The narrative (or representation through language) is the centre of history and culture. Our lives are historical in the sense that we reflect upon it from the outside at the same time as we experience it from the inside. A historical consciousness, i.e., insight in what has happened and been said, is the base of both explaining and understanding life and society. As a conclusion, "the path from text to action is from historical consciousness to ethics". (in Kemp and Kristensson, 1988, p. 27.)

It is hard to tell if Holzer has had these theories in mind when working out her strategies for creating her art or if she is aware of the complexity of the issues involved. Nevertheless, it is apparent in all Holzer's statements about her art that she has a strong desire to change things and make the world a better place. She holds a strong desire that her texts will lead to some sort of revolutionary or positive action from the public.

CONCLUSION - Political art; some related issues.

At the MCA talk in Chicago in April 1994, Holzer was asked about what she considers her role as an artist to be. The response was that she would like herself to be "part of the solution instead of part of the problem" and that she would like her work to "highlight some of these issues to, maybe, offer a way out for people". When asked if she saw herself as a social activist, she disappointingly replied that "I hope the work has some sort of an impact". The social responsibility of the artist is a widely contested issue. In this final chapter I would like to raise the arguments surrounding the role of the artist in the production of 'activist' art.

Donald Kuspit, in *Notes on American Activist Art Today*, elaborates on the potential of activist art and examines how efficient activist art has been in its critique of society. At the beginning of the text he poses a number of important questions about the motives of activist artists. For example:

"What if... the kind of change demanded by the activist approach is disingeniously inhumane?...Today one needs Solomon's wisdom and stamina to create an art that...rearticulates a humanness that we feel has been obscured, even obliterated by society". (in Raven, 1993, p. 256.)

Kuspit claims that some European artists have succeeded in dealing with this difficult task but that too many American artists "have not adequately recognized the vigorous demands of this enterprise". A few things have to be kept in mind if we are to understand Kuspit's arguments. American society is a pluralist one, a melting pot, consisting of a wide range of ethnic groups, races and social groups living side by side. Kuspit quotes Jaques Ellul who defines the social situation of American society as being the "lonely crowd" or "isolation in the mass". As this is so, communal revolutionary action is an obsolete notion. The American viewpoint is one of individualism, what Kuspit calls a "slack 'live and let live' philosophy", where people fetishize their isolation as it is a sign of individuality and freedom. Even though people might not find the situation ideal, they still prefer it to "the authoritarian 'live and think and be like me or be destroyed by me' philosophy". Hence Kuspit argues that it seems highly unlikely that activist art will ever inspire action or create unity in American society. Rather than undermining the existing structures of power, ideology and repression, much

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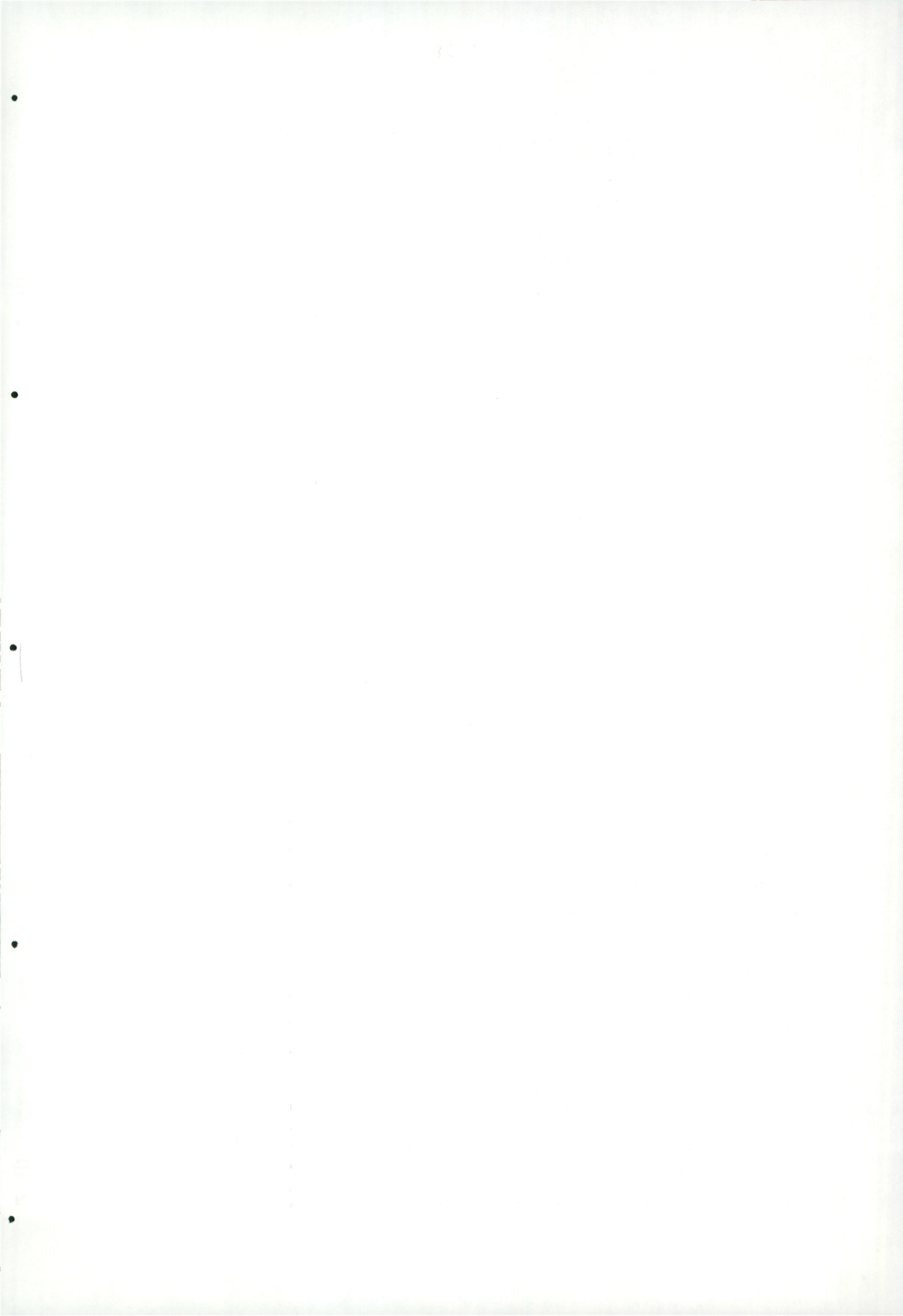
of contemporary activist art reinforces concepts of political oppression. He refers to Kruger's and Holzer's work, for example, which he thinks is characterized by what he calls "the propaganda of agitation" which does not go very far when it comes to changing society. In commenting on contemporary artists' strategic use of the medium of advertising he says that on the one hand, these approaches may be efficient in reaching the crowd. On the other hand, however, reaching people is not enough; what activist artists aim for, and what cannot be achieved according to Kuspit, is to have an effect on peoples' lives and make them "begin the struggle of transforming his or her identity, a process essential to genuine social transformation". Thus activist art fails its mission and becomes "victimized by its own media...and what is left is the message that we can trust common experience to point the way to social transformations". (in Raven, 1993, p. 259.) And, as Martha Rosler emphasizes in a discussion about contemporary artists who use advertising media to get their work out in public:

This useful strategy is not without dangers, because rhetorical turns common in the art world may seem cryptic, incomprehensible or insulting to the general audience, or their wider import may simply be inaccessible. (in Becker, 1994, p.64.)

It is obvious, however, when reading texts by and interviews with artists who claim to have a certain critical efficacy, that they believe that art and politics can be a fruitful combination. Holzer states that "It is stupid to say there is no place for ethics in art." (in Auping, 1992, p. 110.) Kruger is convinced that "certain terms are long overdue for examination and clarification", (Kruger, 1993, p. 223.) and believes that art is one way of doing this. It is uncertain whether art can serve as an awakening device or a pedagogic end for viewers not already sensitive to ideas of how representations can function in ideological oppression.

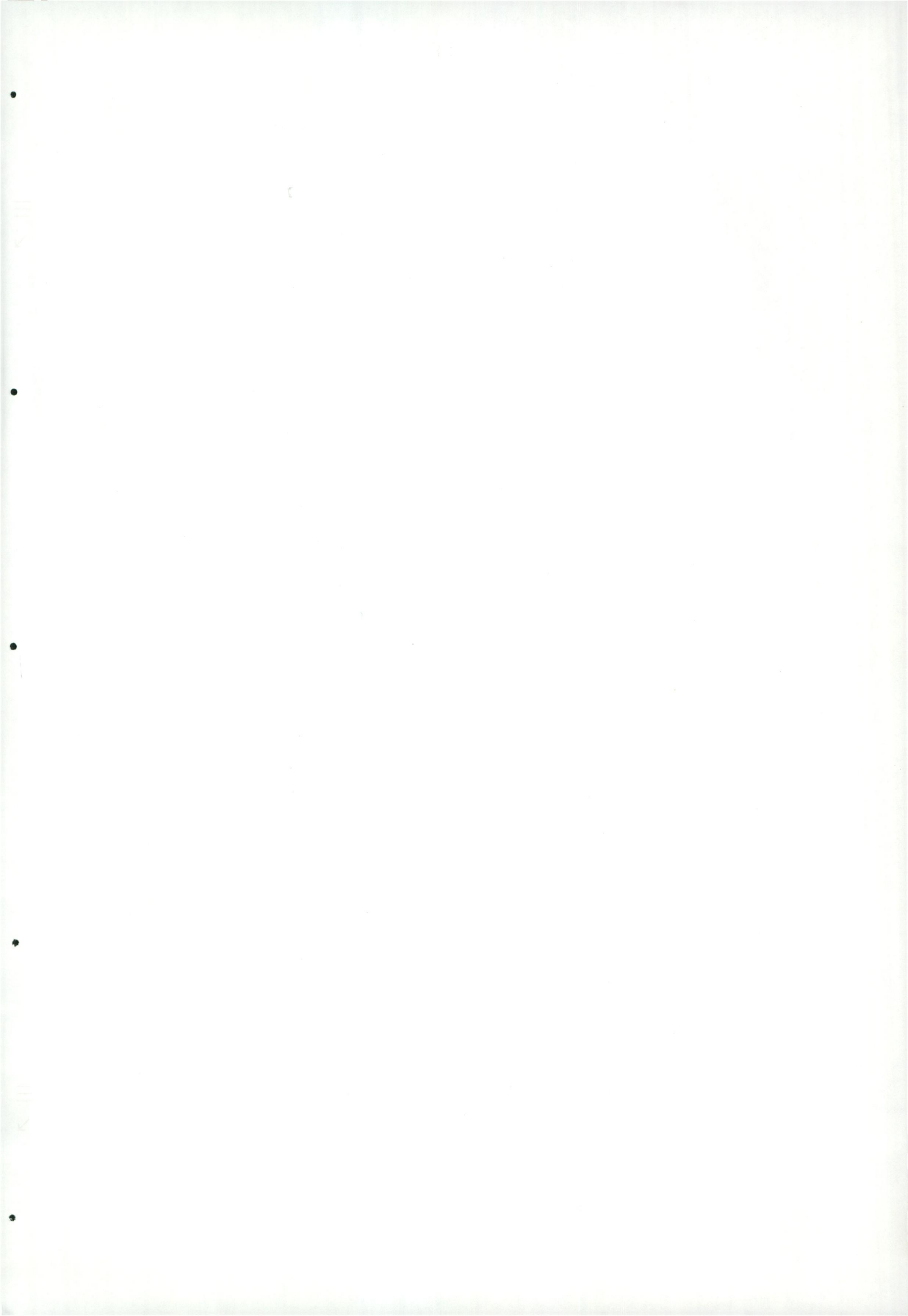
Jonathan Borofsky is a pertinent example of an artist who expresses a desire to change things while being sceptical about the political efficacy of art. In his *I dreamed that some Hitler-type person...* (Plate 17), he combines a drawing of a uniformed man hitting a roller-skater over the back with a text that says:

I dreamed that some Hitler-type person was not allowing everyone to roller-skate in public places. I



decided to assassinate him, but I was informed by my friend that Hitler had been dead a long time and if I wanted to change anything, I should go into politics. This seemed like a good idea since I was tired of making art and was wondering what to do with the last half of my life. (in Printz, 1991, p.157.)

Gran Fury's provocative statement that "ART IS NOT ENOUGH" certainly seems appropriate in relation to the AIDS crisis. Nevertheless, we all have to take responsibility and make our contribution in order to, at least, try to eliminate suppression and intolerance. In Russel Ferguson's words: "recent critical theory has provided the tools to challenge totalizing systems of thought...Each of us can find the most useful tool for our purpose." (Ferguson, 1990, p. 7.) That Holzer is attempting to challenge and criticize dominant ideologies is evident. Whether or not her art is efficient in its critique is an ongoing question.



THINKING TOO MUCH CAN ONLY CAUSE PROBLEMS
THREATENING SOMEONE SEXUALLY IS A HORRIBLE ACT
TIMIDITY IS LAUGHABLE
TO DISAGREE PRESUPPOSES MORAL INTEGRITY
TO VOLUNTEER IS REACTIONARY
TORTURE IS BARBARIC
TRADING A LIFE FOR A LIFE IS FAIR ENOUGH
TRUE FREEDOM IS FRIGHTFUL
UNIQUE THINGS MUST BE THE MOST VALUABLE
UNQUESTIONING LOVE DEMONSTRATES LARGESSE OF SPIRIT
USING FORCE TO STOP FORCE IS ABSURD
VIOLENCE IS PERMISSIBLE EVEN DESIRABLE OCCASIONALLY
WAR IS A PURIFICATION RITE
WE MUST MAKE SACRIFICES TO MAINTAIN OUR QUALITY OF LIFE
WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS PEOPLE WAKE UP
WISHING THINGS AWAY IS NOT EFFECTIVE
WITH PERSEVERANCE YOU CAN DISCOVER ANY TRUTH
WORDS TEND TO BE INADEQUATE
WORRYING CAN HELP YOU PREPARE
YOU ARE A VICTIM OF THE RULES YOU LIVE BY
YOU ARE GUILLESS IN YOUR DREAMS
YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSTITUTING THE MEANING OF THINGS
YOU ARE THE PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE
YOU CAN LIVE ON THROUGH YOUR DESCENDANTS
YOU CAN NEVER OUTFRAN YOURSELF
YOU CAN PULL YOURSELF OUT OF ANY HOLE
YOU CAN'T EXPECT PEOPLE TO BE SOMETHING THEY'RE NOT
YOU CAN'T FOOL OTHERS IF YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF
YOU DIG YOUR OWN GRAVE
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WHAT UNTIL YOU SUPPORT YOURSELF
YOU GET THE FACE YOU DESERVE
YOU HAVE TO HURT OTHERS TO BE EXTRAORDINARY
YOU MUST BE INTIMATE WITH A TOKEN FEW
YOU MUST DISAGREE WITH AUTHORITY FIGURES
YOU MUST HAVE ONE GRAND PASSION
YOU MUST KNOW WHERE YOU STOP AND THE WORLD BEGINS
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT PEOPLE REALLY THINK ABOUT YOU
YOU ONLY CAN UNDERSTAND SOMEONE OF YOUR OWN SEX
YOU OWE THE WORLD NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND
YOU SHOULD TRAVEL LIGHT
YOU SHOULD STUDY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
YOUR ACTIONS ARE POINTLESS IF NO ONE NOTICES
YOUR OLDEST FEARS ARE THE WORST ONES

Plate 1 - Selection from *Truisms* (1977)

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



**THE END OF THE U.S.A.
ALL YOU RICH FUCKERS SEE THE
BEGINNING OF THE END AND TAKE WHAT
YOU CAN WHILE YOU CAN. YOU IMAGINE
THAT YOU WILL GET AWAY, BUT YOU'VE
SHIT IN YOUR OWN BED AND YOU'RE THE
ONE TO SLEEP IN IT. WHY SHOULD
EVERYONE ELSE STAY BEHIND AND SMELL
YOUR STINKING COWARDICE? HERE'S A
MESSAGE TO YOU—SPACE TRAVEL IS
UNCERTAIN AND ANY REFUGE OF YOURS
CAN BE BLOWN OFF THE MAP. THERE'S NO
OTHER PLACE FOR YOU TO GO. KNOW THAT
YOUR FUTURE IS WITH US SO DON'T GIVE
US MORE REASONS TO HATE YOU.**

Plate 2 - Selection from *Inflammatory Essays* (1979-82).

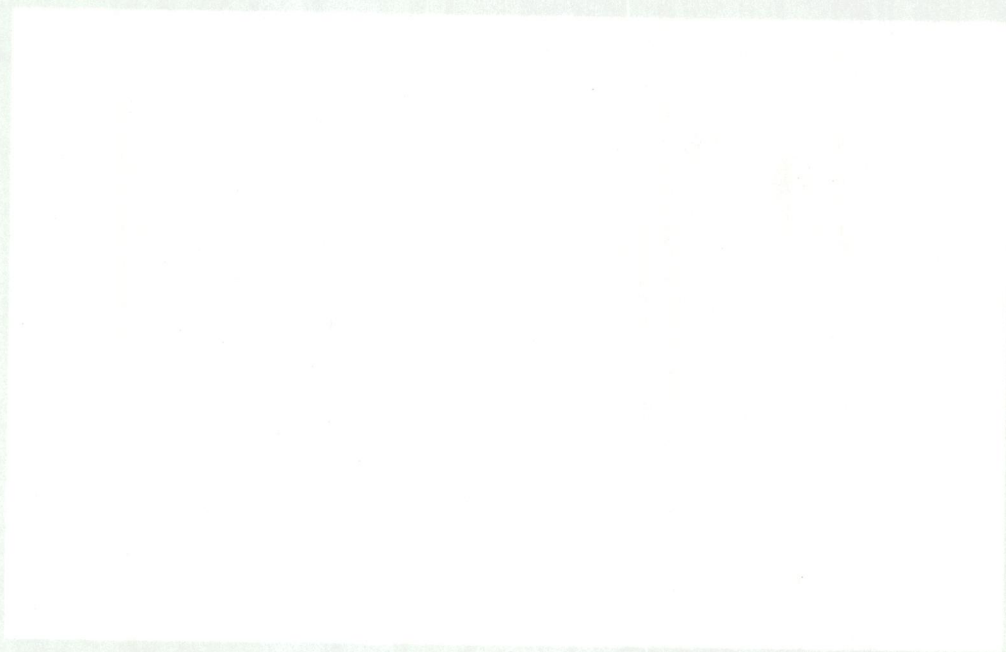




Plate 3 - *Under A Rock* installation, Barbara Gladstone Gallery,
New York (1986).



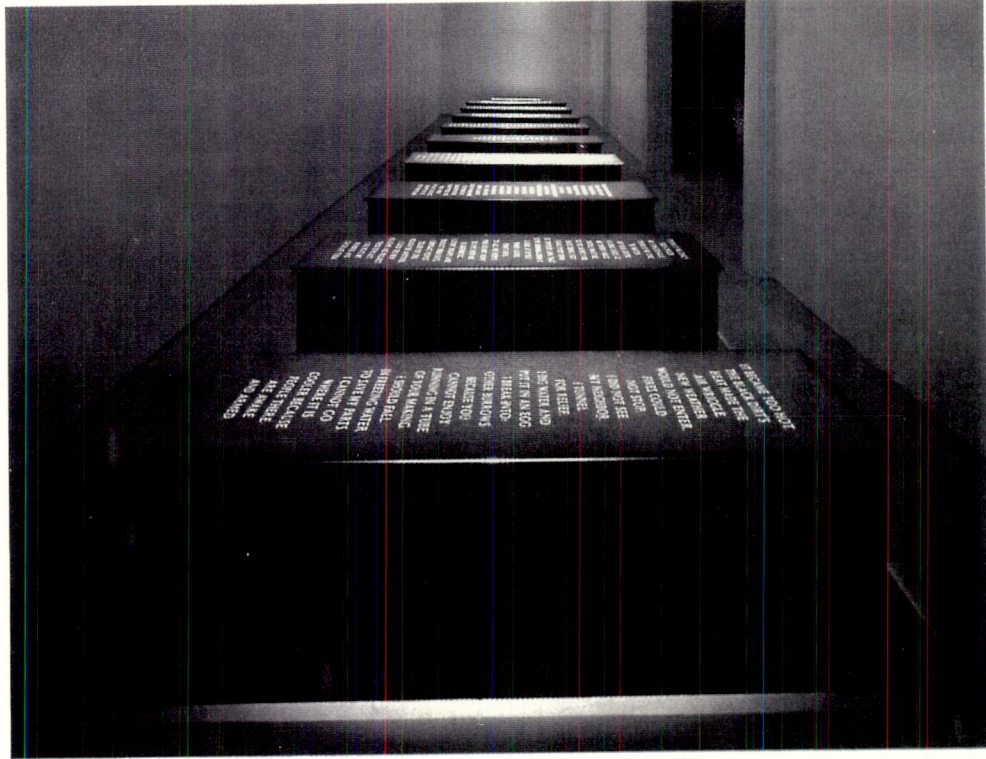


Plate 4 - *Laments* installation, Dia Art Foundation, New York,
(March 1989 - Winter 1990).





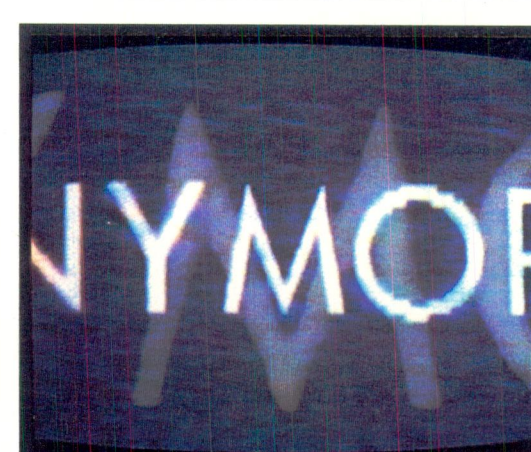
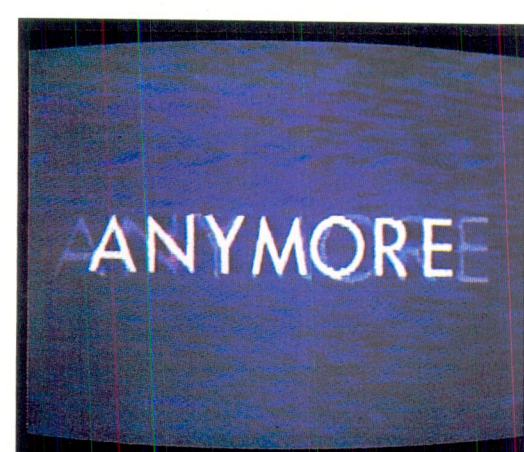
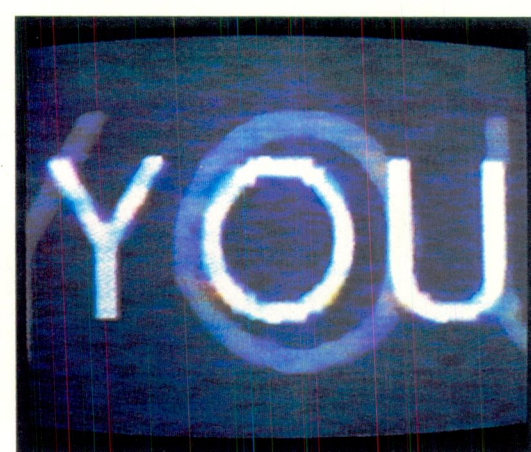
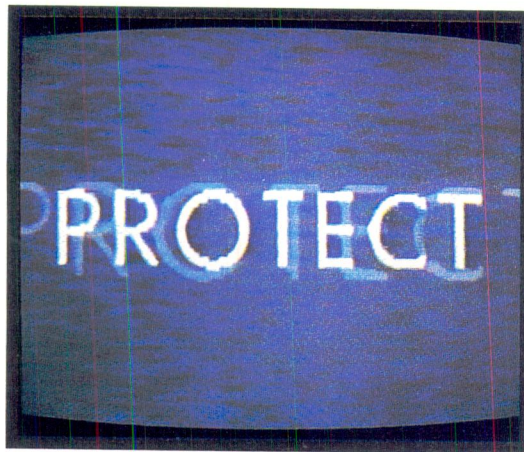
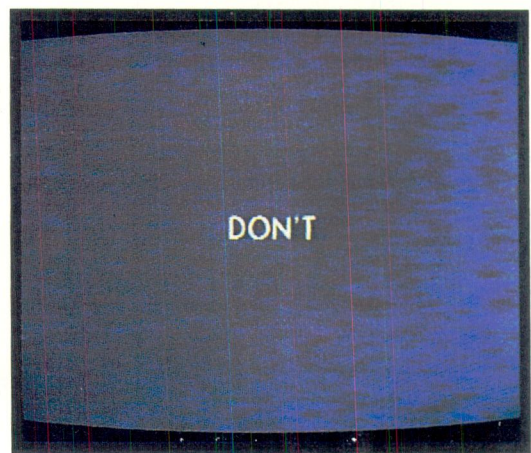
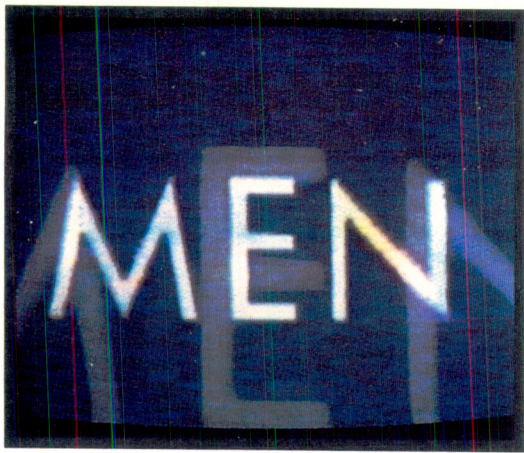
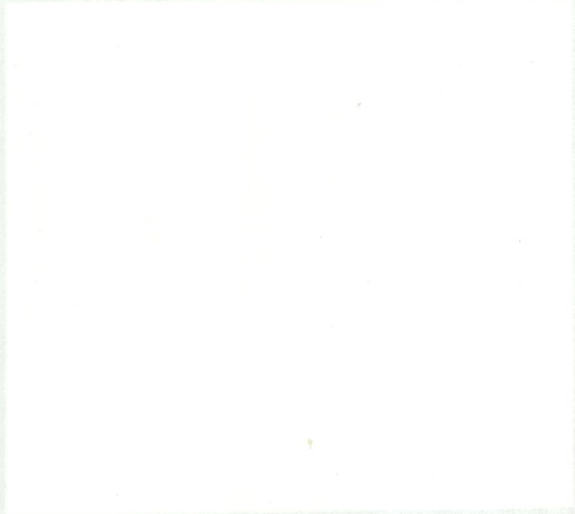


Plate 6 - Selection from *Truisms*, Television Slot , Venice (1990).



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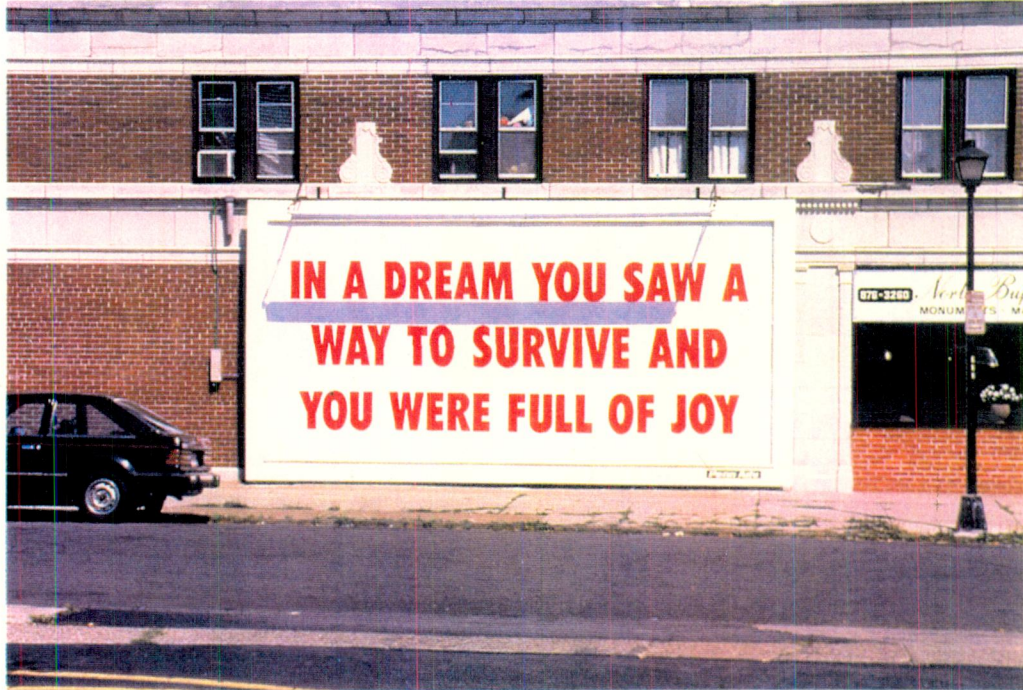


Plate 7 - Selection from *Survival Series*, Billboard Project, Buffalo, New York, (1991).



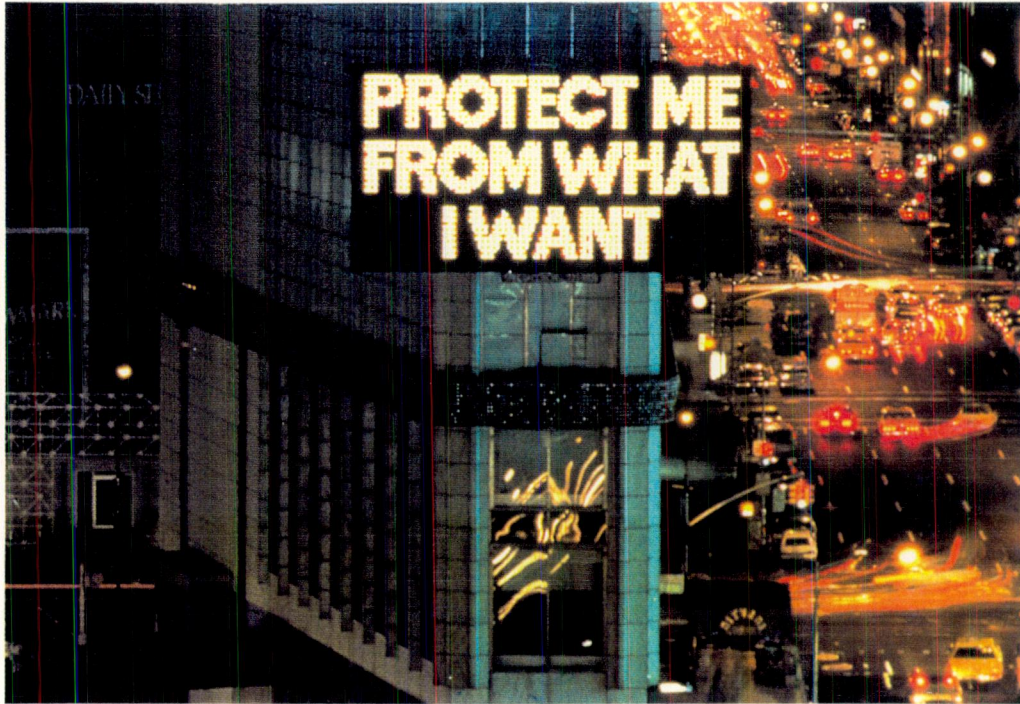


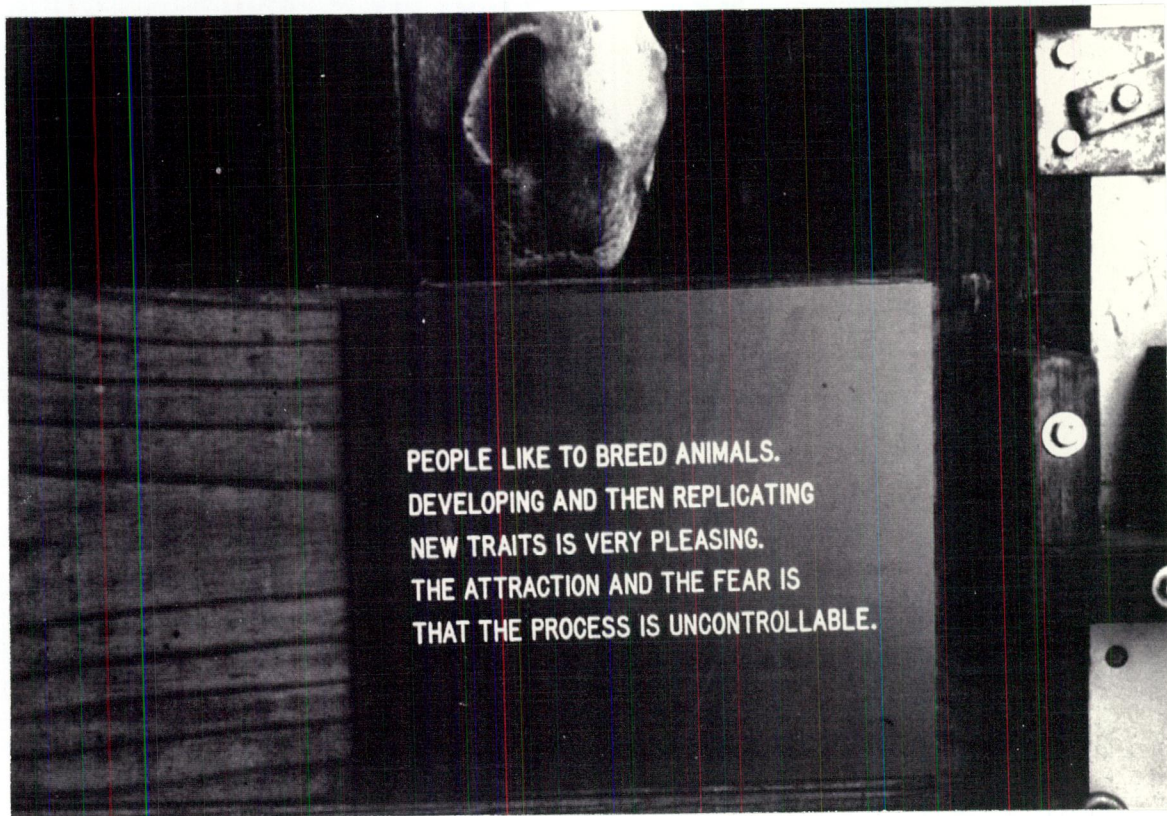
Plate 8 - Selection from *Survival Series*, Spectacolor Board Installation, Times Square, New York, (1985-86).





Plate 9 - Selection From *Truisms*, Candlestick Park, San Fransisco, (1987).





PEOPLE LIKE TO BREED ANIMALS.
DEVELOPING AND THEN REPLICATING
NEW TRAITS IS VERY PLEASING.
THE ATTRACTION AND THE FEAR IS
THAT THE PROCESS IS UNCONTROLLABLE.

Plate 10 - Selection from *Living Series*, Southern Pines, (1981).





Plate 11 - *Sign on A Truck*, New York City, (1985).



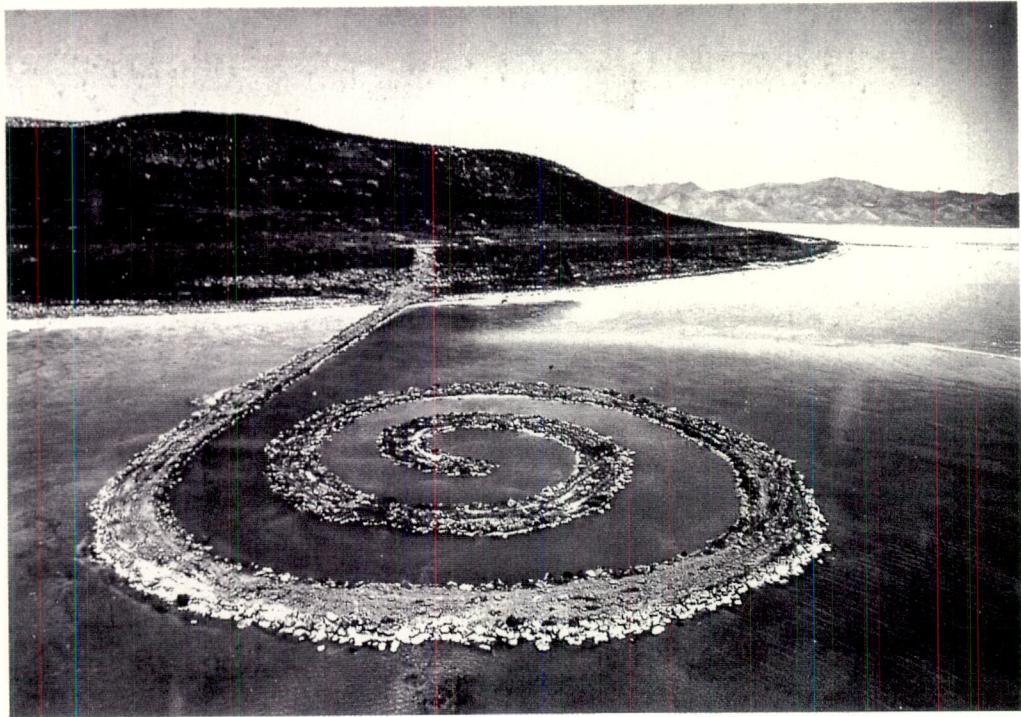


Plate 12 - Robert Smithson - *Spiral Jetty*, (1970).

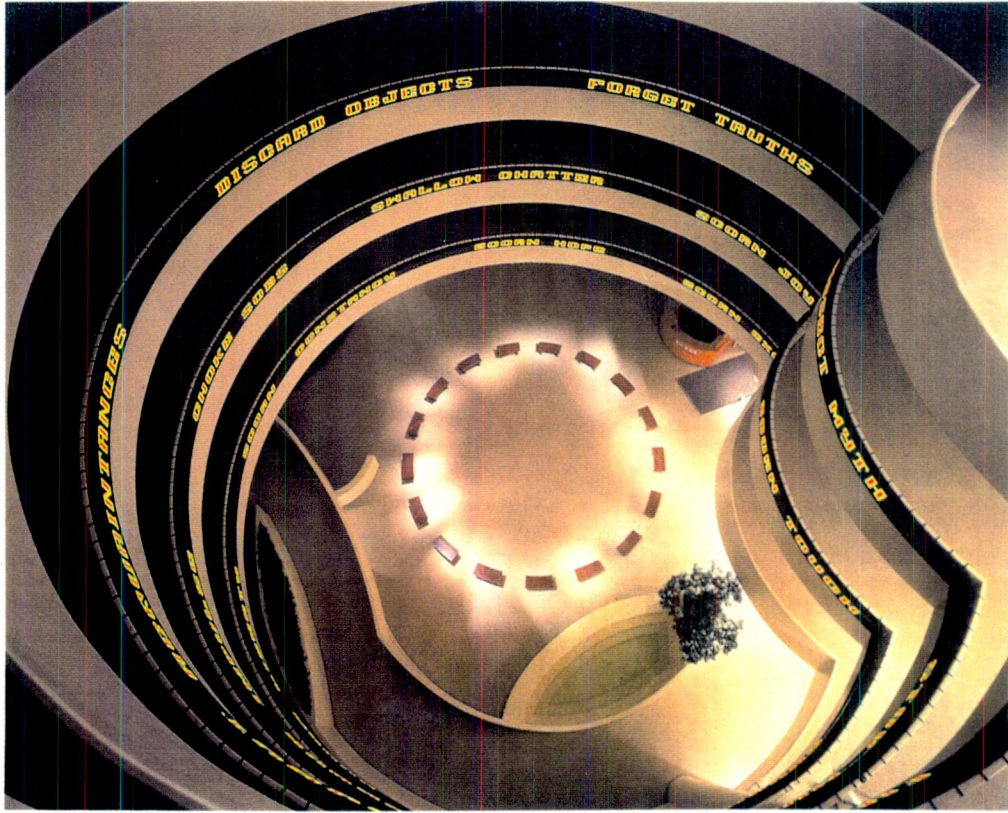


Plate 13 - Guggenheim Installation, *Untitled (Selected Writings)*, (1989).

BOND

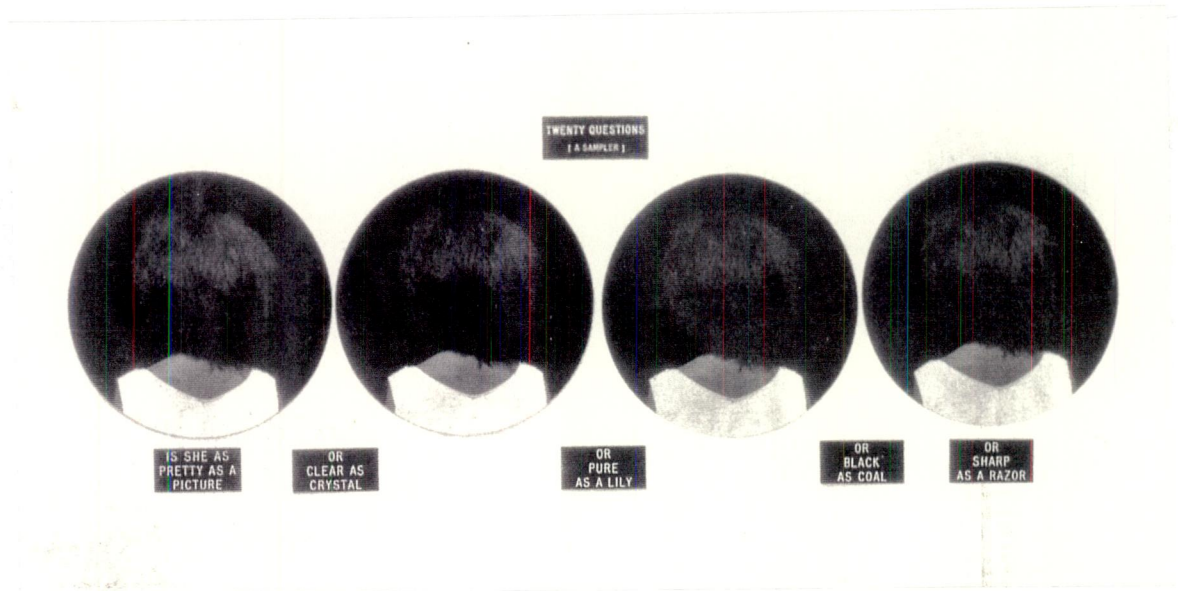


Plate 14 - Lorna Simpson - *Twenty Questions (A Sampler; 1986)*.



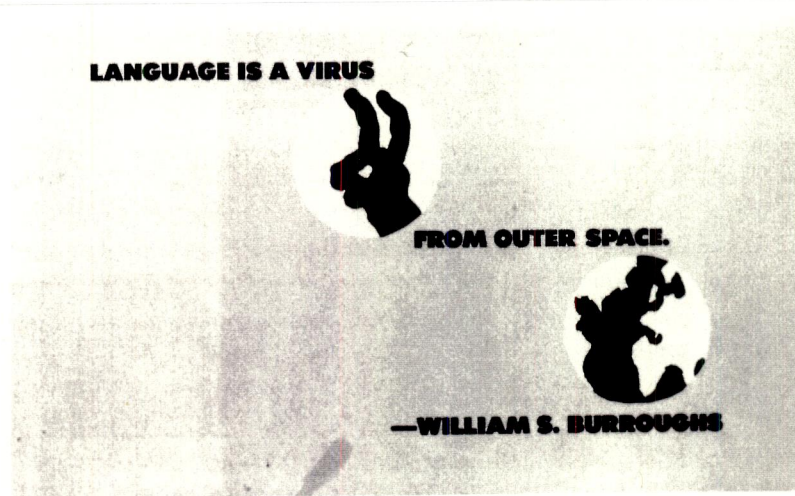
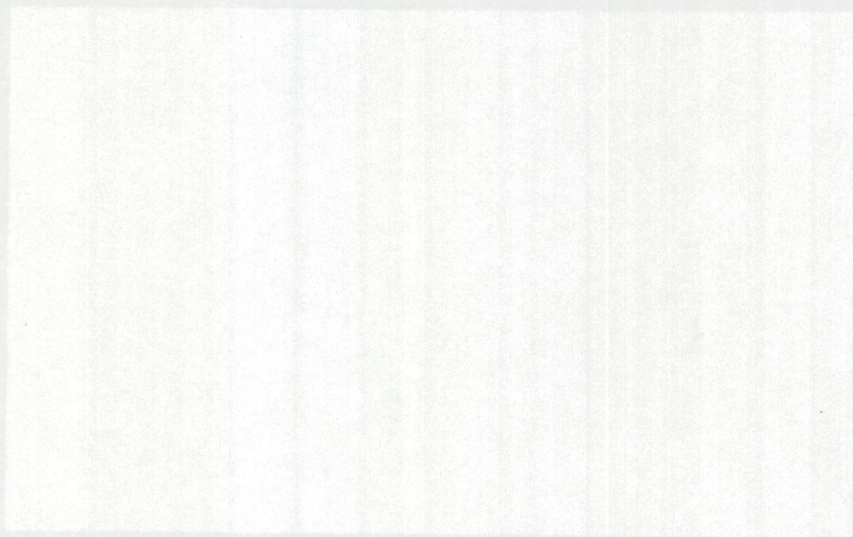


Plate 15 - Laurie Anderson and William S. Burroughs -
Language is a Virus from Outer Space, (1984).



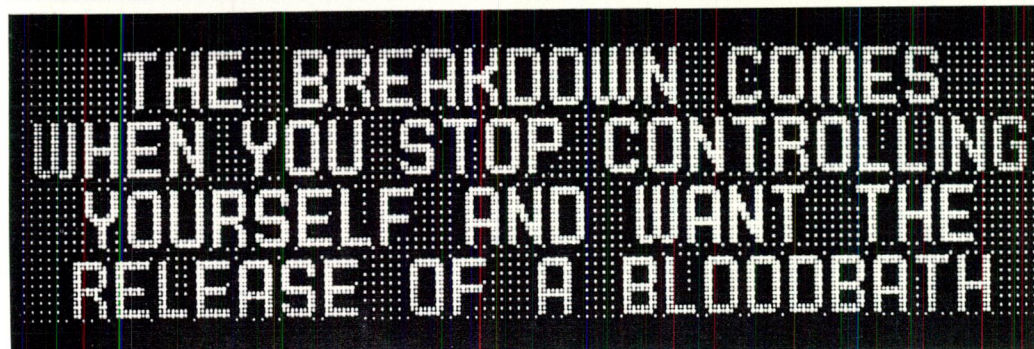
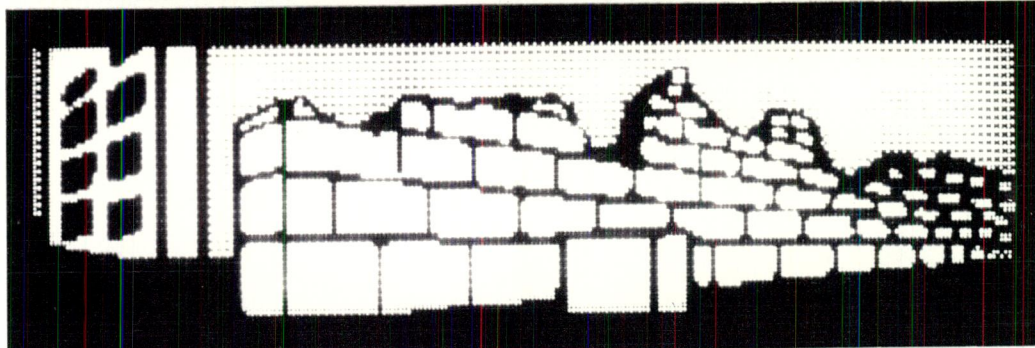
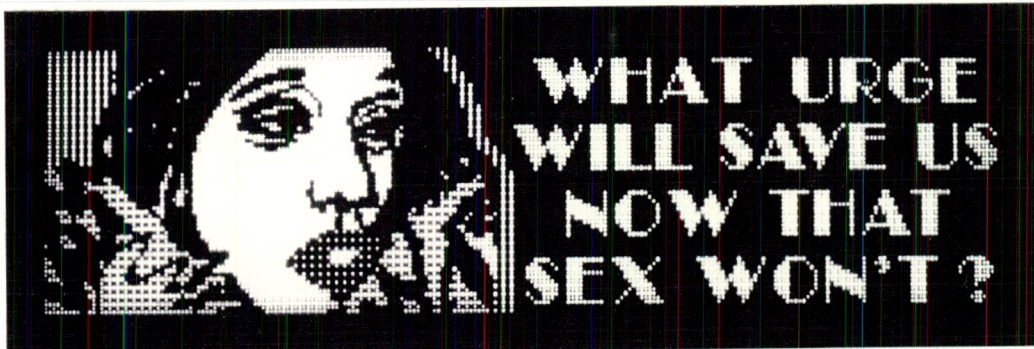


Plate 16 - Selection from *Survival Series*, New York City, (1983).



I dreamed that some Hitler-type person was not allowing everyone to roller-skate in public places. I decided to assassinate him, but I was informed by my friend that Hitler had been dead a long time and if I wanted to change anything, I should go into politics. This seemed like a good idea since I was tired of making art and was wondering what to do with the last half of my life.



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Plate 17 - Jonathan Borofsky - *I dreamed that some Hitler-type person...*(1991).



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