5. The Use of Writing in Bauermeister's Oeuvre

> I use words in those cases where writing is quicker than painting or in case the idea I have at a given moment is expressed better in writing than in painting.[1]
> *Mary Bauermeister, 1965*

The quotation in the epigraph summarizes several qualities of the use of writing in Mary Bauermeister's oeuvre: writing has an ancillary function, either to arrive at a more precise statement or to capture the flow of thoughts at all. Her artistic oeuvre is to a large degree based on written characters but not because the aesthetic mixture of handwriting and drawings was a particular concern of hers. Neither is the written word integrated into a composition as foreign matter in order to reflect on artistic traditions in this way—these levels enter into it only secondarily. Initially, she seems to have focused on implementing ideas in the process of creating the work. By the word "idea" Bauermeister meant a random insight that becomes the starting point; the thematic orientation of a work changes continuously, because a medley of comments results. That is what is meant by the expression "at a given moment" in the quotation in the epigraph; while working on the artwork, not only did the artist incorporate all aspects that seemed worthwhile but also implemented them in a way that is quick or more adequate. Sometimes the genuinely more adequate is abandoned in favor of a timely fix.

Once Bauermeister had written or drawn the initial idea, she switched to formulating comments, which can in turn be written or drawn, then new comments follow.[2] This strategy is summed up here by the term "commentary system" and elaborated in more detail. Yet another function is assigned to the use of writing; it is an "intermediary between completely heterogeneous elements."[3] When the comments

1 Mary Bauermeister, "The Artists Say," *Art Voices* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1965): 64–65.

2 See ibid., 64. In this text Bauermeister describes her work process in individual steps from A to D that contain new comments but can also involve changes to the previous ones.

3 Ibid., 64.

branched out and move too far away from one another in the process, it was possible for Bauermeister to bridge them with writing. This approach also explains the appearance of the works of art; the Lens Boxes in particular are marked by a very intricate aesthetic. The process of the (written or drawn) comment on a comment is theoretically unending: "Sometimes it is finished because it is overcrowded anyway and I cannot fill anything in anymore."[4] In the work process the comments are more crucial than the visual result; the outer borders of the work first provide the termination.

In the *Needless Needles* group discussed above, the needles and the activity of sewing stand at the beginning, and then the comments result in a cosmos of many small details that reflect on the theme. In the process it is also possible to address aspects that, seen superficially, have little in common with the original theme; moreover, the originating idea can no longer be understood. In the case of the work *Don't Defend Your Freedom With Poisoned Mushrooms or Hommage à John Cage* of 1964, which measures 58 by 74 by 8 centimeters, the initial idea was to incorporate and reflect on mushrooms, possibly after finding the three fruiting bodies integrated into the work (fig. 43). In the intricate section of writing and drawing on the left side of the work, a sentence can be made out that could be interpreted as an explanation of that initial idea: "Once I had a dream about mushrooms shortly before I found the mushrooms on a tree shortly after my dream about stones." According to this, the dream about mushrooms and the find shortly thereafter decided the issue, but these sentences from Bauermeister should not be taken literally, since the artist often works with irony, suggestions, and deliberate shifts in meaning in order to avoid unambiguous statements. Explicit explanations would run counter to the latent many-valuedness and the constant thinking of the opposite as well.

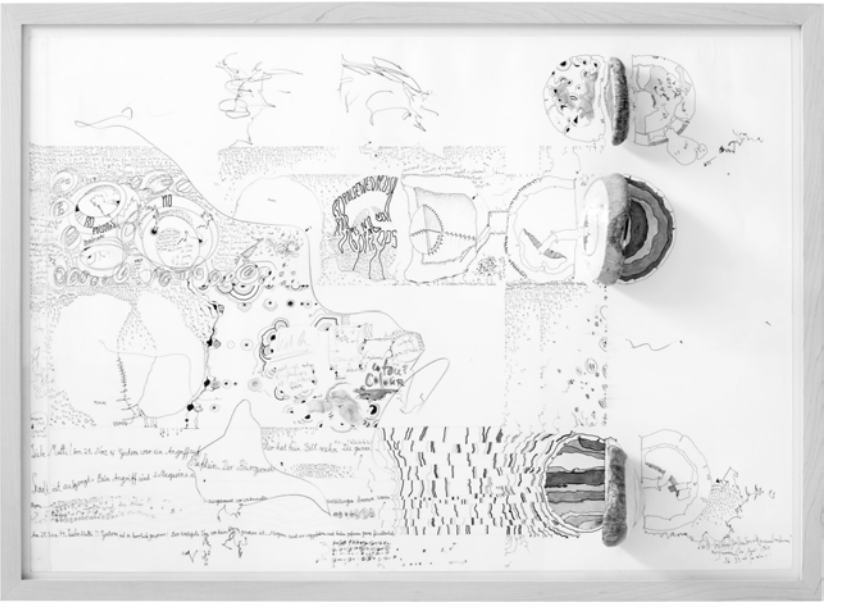
To that end, she also worked with a continuous system of quotation: the first words of that sentence are, not coincidentally, a modified paraphrase of the famous speech by Martin Luther King on August 28, 1963. Bauermeister was already in the United States at the time and experienced the political developments from up close, but this did not cause her to create a work explicitly about the march on Washington; it is, rather, just one small aspect in a broadly ramified plexus.[5] The combination is not, however, random but rather follows the (associative) commentary system; these are the individual "ideas" that Bauermeister tries to implement in her works in order

4 Hauke Ohls, "Interview to Mary Bauermeister by Hauke Ohls," in *Mary Bauermeister: 1+1=3*, exh. cat. (Milan: Studio Gariboldi, 2017), 6–44, esp. 30. In the interview Bauermeister adds: "Sometimes I realize that I did too much."

5 Explicitly political works do not appear in Bauermeister's oeuvre until several years later, especially the works *Great Society* from 1969 to 1971, the series *No Fighting on Christmas (Air Conditioned Nightmare)* from 1967 to 1971, and *Fuck the System* of 1972. One exception is the Lens Box *Title One* of 1965; it refers to the first section of an education act that was passed in 1965 to support children from low-income regions in particular.

to refer to them in turn—though this often happens in contradictions, to avoid the unambiguous.

Fig. 43: Don't Defend Your Freedom With Poisoned Mushrooms or Hommage à John Cage, 1964, pencil, watercolor, ink, mushrooms, on paper and glass, 58 x 74 x 8 cm, Mary Bauermeister Art Estate.



The glued-on, drawn, and written "poisoned mushrooms" pick up the atomic bombs that were a daily threat when the work was made after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 by the United States as well as the tensions of the Cold War and particularly during the Cuban missile crisis. Diverse small drawings in the work simulate an explosion. In addition, Bauermeister's childhood memories of the war were integrated in the form of lines from letters to her mother. At the edge in the upper left corner of the work stands first "instruction": "memory 1944 / 2 broken + 1 line." Accordingly, below that two fragmented lines have been supplemented with a continuous one; here Bauermeister was copying passages from two letters that she wrote to her mother in 1944 and imitating her handwriting of that time, when she was ten. The upper two lines are from November 28, 1944, the lower two from December 25, 1944.[6] At the time Bauermeister had to participate in the "Erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung" (Expanded evacuation of children to the

6 The letters have been preserved in Bauermeister's studio.

countryside) in Kufstein, Austria. The earlier letter is about an air strike; the later one states that, unusually, no air-raid siren sounded on Christmas Eve.[7] Bauermeister thus also incorporates autobiographical material into her works; it is an equally valid part of the system of ideas and commentary.

The "poisoned mushrooms" have yet another level that is closely connected to the subtitle—*Hommage à John Cage*: Bauermeister went on hikes in the woods with the American artist and composer to gather mushrooms. The "poisoned mushrooms" should therefore be seen, on the one hand, as an allusion to Cage as an experienced mushroom gatherer and, on the other hand, in a broader context as a reference to the drug culture among artists. Even though the Summer of Love was still three years in the future, the work is already (in part) a commentary on the connection between searching for freedom and consuming drugs.

The title, which is written on the work at the lower right, therefore plays a significant role in the design. Moreover, it is paraphrased several times on the surface of the picture—in Bauermeister's work, it is also possible that the title of the work was derived from the visual result after it was completed.[8] *Don't Defend Your Freedom With Poisoned Mushrooms or Hommage à John Cage* has several areas, such as the quotations from childhood letters and the reference to gather mushrooms with John Cage, that are clearly autobiographical in nature. One cannot conclude from that, however, that Bauermeister constructed her works from autobiographical materials that therefore need to be decoded in order to describe her art. The personal sections are merely one element that Bauermeister integrated in order to construct a plurality that is as inclusive as possible. Preceding purely biographically would be equivalent to succumbing to a strict dogma. As already discussed, integrating her own subject is rather supposed to prevent the reduction of perspectives, since turning many-valued logic to a many-valued aesthetic runs the risk of formulating a general ambiguity and separating oneself as uninvolved. An example of something that should be viewed as outside the autobiographical is the multiple use of "yes, no, perhaps" in this work as should the drawn cast shadows of the glued-on mushrooms, which simulate that they contain either a complete mushroom or a drawing of round elements. In addition, the division of the plane prepares the groundwork for the unfinished, so that uncontrolled-looking, curving lines or the word "sketch" are right next to careful drawings. Moreover, sewn-on canvas cutouts and sewing needles are imitated by drawing, which thus initiate a networking with the *Needless Needles* group.

7 These memories also became part of the aforementioned group of works *No Fighting on Christmas (Air Conditioned Nightmare)* as well as the Lens Box *I'm a Pacifist but War Pictures are too Beautiful* of 1964–66.

8 The relationship of the title and the work of art and Bauermeister's specific method of producing a productive tension with it will be examined in more detail in section 6.3.

Beyond Surrealism

The reference to the dream about mushrooms or about stones that Bauermeister wrote on the work as well as the commentary system she developed and her use of writing in general should not be confused with the Surrealist method of automatic writing. When Bauermeister began to use writing as an artistic means, this view was widespread in theoretical reflection on her art, especially among American critics, and it is sometimes still found today in studies of her work. Then and now, the misunderstanding is certainly reasonable, since initially it seems there are reasons for this view, but it does not do justice to the content of the works. In the early to mid-1960s, the legacy of Surrealism was still a strong presence in the United States, especially as several of the most important artists had immigrated there and the next generation had adapted Surrealist techniques. At the same time, where was also a tendency to associate the artists of the neo-avant-garde with Surrealism.[9] The young German artist was often categorized as a "surrealist" at first to account for her combinations of materials and incorporation of writing.[10] In Germany, Surrealism only began to be seen as a reference for Bauermeister's work with her first solo exhibition at an institution and thereafter repeatedly.[11]

9 One representative example is the exhibition *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1968; see William Rubin, "Surrealism in Exile and After," in Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 159–86.

10 Brian O'Doherty, review of a group exhibition at the Galeria Bonino, *New York Times* (December 29, 1963); Betty Stapleton, "Her Painting May Be Surrealist, She Is Not," in *Toronto Daily Star* (May 16, 1964); Elizabeth Kilbourn, "Mary Bauermeister," *Toronto Daily Star* (May 23, 1964); Leslie Judd Ahlander, "Foreword," in *After Surrealism: Metaphors & Smiles*, exh. cat. (Sarasota, FL: Ringling Museum of Art, 1972), 4–25, esp. 11.

11 See Maria Velte, "Mary Bauermeister: Das Werk," in *Mary Bauermeister: Gemälde und Objekte, 1952–1972*, exh. cat. (Koblenz, Mittelrhein Museum, 1972), esp. XIV. The connection between Bauermeister and Surrealism is formulated most explicitly by Skrobanek: "Even if Bauermeister planned the theme and design of the box, the execution can be described as entirely in the spirit of the Surrealists as automatic writing ('écriture automatique')." Kerstin Skrobanek, "'Die Jacke Kunst weiter dehnen': Mary Bauermeisters Aufbruch in den Raum," PhD diss., Frankfurt am Main, 2009, Univ.-Bibliothek 2014, http://publikationen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/frontdoor/index/index/year/2014/docId/35011, p. 50. For a current discussion of Bauermeister's use of writing in her works without reference to Surrealism, see Petra Oelschlägel, "Mary Bauermeister: Signs, Words, Universes," trans. Simon Stockhausen, in *Mary Bauermeister: Zeichen, Worte, Universen*, exh. cat. Bergisch Gladbach, Kunstmuseum Villa Zanders, 2017/2018 (Dortmund: Kettler, 2017), 95–102.

André Breton tried to define Surrealism and the method of Surrealist writing: In his view, reality is still too locked in a "cage" by "the reign of logic."[12] In dreams, but also under the influence of drugs, the restricting influence of human reason is shut off, so that only then do we get closer to authentic reality. For Breton, the dream and the perceived world together result in a new level that offers us more exact insights, which is why for him Surrealism should be called "supernaturalism."[13] Breton defines the "written Surrealist composition" as the "disinterested play of thought," with which in the best case the continual sequence of events in the mind is put down (as) unfiltered (as possible) orally or in writing so that "distraction" is incorporated as a positive marker.[14] This does not mean turning away from reality, however, but, quite the contrary, turning toward it. The automatism that artists are meant to fall into when using the Surrealist method should not be influenced by any aesthetic criteria; that would only impair "*poetic* intuition."[15]

Bauermeister's statements about her commentary system make one think of Surrealism according to Breton at first, but each is framed within a completely different horizon. She did not by any means wish to shut logic out because it has a restricting effect; on the contrary, she wanted to establish a new, in her view more appropriate logic in her works. The "reign of logic" criticized by Breton is adopted by Bauermeister and applied strictly—with the difference that it is extended by the two- or three-valued view. It should be noted here that in his writings Breton used a very general concept of logic that is closely tied to conceptions such as morals or ethics and not to the philosophical discipline of logic, whereas Bauermeister followed only Gotthard Günther's concept, which was in turn decisively influenced by Hegel and specifically his writings on logic. The contexts in which the works of Bauermeister and the Surrealists, respectively, referred to the higher-order concept of logic are thus fundamentally different.

In addition, the supposed indifference to the aesthetic result when using the Surrealist method is irreconcilable with Bauermeister's approach: Her hybridization of writing and drawing is brought into a composed overall appearance, for which she used her specific signature style and deliberately divided the plane in such a way that no elements intersect. The Lens Boxes may contain different layers, but they merely ensure situational superimpositions depending on the viewing angle and corresponding to the reciprocal influence of the individual elements.

12 André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 3–47, esp. 9–10.

13 Ibid., 25.

14 Ibid., 29–47.

15 André Breton, "On Surrealism in Its Living Works" (1953), Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism* (see note 12), 295–304, esp. 304.

Bauermeister's aesthetic of intricacy, which she herself calls "overcrowded," is precisely composed so that the arrangement of writing itself takes on an iconicity. Moreover, in Bauermeister's commentary system one cannot speak of a "stream of thoughts" that is realized unfiltered in writing or drawing. The comments are small elements that are inserted into a work and then are related to one another in terms of the subject matter and composition. Liz Kotz speaks accordingly of "surrealist elements," which flow into Bauermeister's works.[16] One can agree with this assessment insofar as that the Surrealist method partially integrated into combination of techniques with which she creates all her works. Calling Bauermeister a Surrealist in general or reducing the manifold elements in her works solely to the method of automatic writing is unproductive.

Statements about Bauermeister's art in the 1960s already reflect divergences: Lawrence Alloway, for example, called the arrangements of the Writing Pictures "cartographic"; he mentions, among others, Gianfranco Baruchello and Öyvind Fahlström as contemporaries who work in a stylistically comparable way.[17] Bauermeister had several points of contact with both artists in the 1960s; in addition to Baruchello and Fahlström, the Japanese artist Shūsaku Arakawa and the American Ray Johnson, with whom she exhibited repeatedly, should be mentioned to contextualize her works.[18] The art critic James Mellow meanwhile produces a list in his effort to get closer to Bauermeister's use of writing that conveys an absurd image of her works at first but is apt on another level: "It is work of improvident richness, full of visual puns, verbal puns, liberally sprinkled with cryptic allusions and scribbled art jokes."[19] A similar description is offered by Leslie Judd Ahlander, who mentions "visual puns and strange symbols," and by Howard Smith, who sees "aimless little notes, without much reference."[20] The employment of writing in Bauermeister's works has all of these characteristics. Playing with words and images is omnipresent

16 Liz Kotz, "Language Upside Down," in *Mary Bauermeister: The New York Decade*, exh. cat. (Northampton, MA: Smith College Museum of Art, 2014), 59–77, esp. 65.

17 Lawrence Alloway, "Introduction," in *European Drawings*, exh. cat. (New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1966), 11–18, esp. 14. Instead of the cartographic, section 5.3 emphasizes the "associagrammar," which seems appropriate for the hybrid of writing and drawing.

18 All four artists and Bauermeister were represented in the exhibition *Pictures to Be Read/Poetry to Be Seen*, which was mentioned above in the introduction. With the exception of Ray Johnson, they could also be seen in *Towards a Cold Poetic Image* at the Galleria Schwarz in Milan in 1967. In one exhibition catalog Bauermeister's works are described as being created from a certain "order"; this trend is said to exist in all the artists participating in the show; Gillo Dorfles, "Towards a Cold Poetic Image," in *Towards a Cold Poetic Image*, exh. cat. (Milan, Galleria Schwarz, 1967), 5–12, esp. 7–9.

19 James R. Mellow, "'Art Can Go on Spawning New Art ad Infinitum,'" *New York Times* (April 26, 1970), 27.

20 Ahlander, "Foreword" (see note 10), 11; Howard E. Smith, "Mary Bauermeister," *Art and Artists*, 6, no. 7 (November 1971): 40–41, esp. 40.

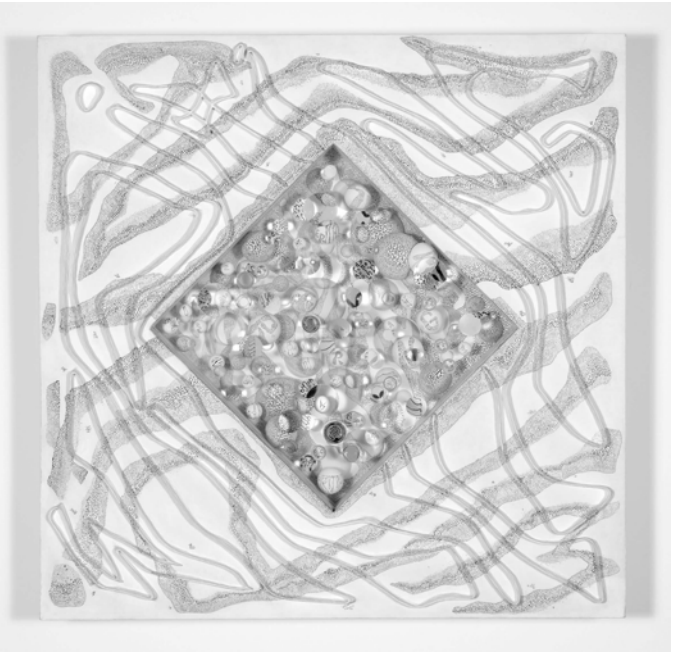
in her Writing Pictures and Lens Boxes, as are statements and jokes about the art system and comments without reference that seem to go nowhere. These small individual elements together, however, participate in a strategy that at first alludes to the combination principle before being assimilated in the overarching many-valued aesthetic. The Lens Boxes can be completely different in their details, which result from the initial theme and commentary system. In general, however, all written or drawn statements participate in a few basic statements that always amount to reflecting on something.

The many-valued aesthetic tries not only to incorporate the opposite continuously but also to adopt the intermediate position to escape a possible dogmatism of a definitive statement; constant questioning and thwarting are intended to give impetus to an unending process of reflection in which the viewers can participate when viewing. The networks and metalevels that this process opens up in the individual works and the merging of separate works into common unities of meaning will be worked out in chapter 6 and refined in the epilogue. The present chapter will study the use of (hand)writing, its iconicity and contextualization with drawing, the specific repetitions of words, and the productive dimension in the use of writing. It will also look at Bauermeister's reflexive approach to written signs and the act of writing.

5.1 A Topology of Notational Iconicity

The individual aspects of reflecting on writing and its iconicity are contained in rich detail in the Lens Box *Writing*. It was created in 1966 and measures 85.1 by 85.7 by 15.2 centimeters (fig. 44). The structure of *Writing* is not unusual for one type of Bauermeister's Lens Boxes of the 1960s: a plywood box functions as the frame, which is integrated into the composition; inserted in a square cutout is a wooden construction that forms a boxlike recession. It is in turn filled with layers of glass, lenses, wooden spheres, writing, and drawing. The diamond-shape arrangement of the recession recalls the aforementioned work *Gestalt zu Struktur*; its colors and the round elements reinforce this impression. These parallels remain on a formal level, however; Bauermeister merely takes up again a compositional model she had used previously and places it in a completely new context.

Fig. 44: Writing, 1966, ink, glass, glass lens, wooden sphere, modeling compound and painted wood construction, 85.1 x 85.7 x 15.2 cm, Brooklyn Museum, Carll H. de Silver Fund, Caroline A. L. Pratt Fund and Ella C. Woodward Memorial Fund, 67.273.



Around the square recession two kinds of intertwined lines are visible; one, the relief-like bright one, which is formed with modeling compound; second, the somewhat wide and dark one, which is composed of (distorted) writing. The writing also covers the modeling compound and thus connects the two structures of lines. At first glance, both kinds of lines appear uncontrolled, but each spells out the title of the work. In the lower left corner of the work, the W of *Writing* in modeling compound is clearly visible; the lower right corner contains the initial letter composed of writing. Each title extends to the opposite top corner; the two words cross, occupying the entire surface of the work. In the background of the recession the word "Writing" can be identified yet again; here the letters are composed of white empty areas in between the tiny writing that otherwise cover the surface. In addition, the title can be formed by the wooden spheres inside the Lens Box, because the individual letters appear on several of them, and in the lower corner the entire title can be read on one sphere. Finally, on the frame, as inside the Lens Box, are individual and grouped letters, all of which refer to the title.

The specific employment of writing on the frame and within the recession that combine to form a new word is omnipresent in Bauermeister's oeuvre: in *Writing* they consist of distorted fine lines that alternate, depending on the direction of reading and the nuances, between the words "no" and "oui." This status between affirmation and negation refers to the many-valuedness that Bauermeister wanted to illustrate in her works. Appropriately, then, the intermediate position is written out in three languages on several of the wooden spheres in the Lens Box: "peut-être," "perhaps," and "vielleicht." The word "perhaps" on the sphere in the upper quarter of the Lens Box is in turn composed of the words "ja," "nein," and "vielleicht." Working with distorted written characters both inside and outside the recession is not only to make reading them challenging but also refers to use of lenses. They distort the individual elements during the act of viewing; for Bauermeister, however, every distortion was not just an optical phenomenon that can occur when looking through a lens; here, too, many-valuedness is foregrounded. That a lens causes distortions is expected by the viewers and conforms with their familiar assumptions. These processes can, however, occur without the use of lenses. On this level the distortions of the lines illustrate the many-valued aesthetic: clearly legible words can occur just as well as those distorted by lenses, and so can distorted writing that is not affected by lenses.

Multivalence simulates two people viewing *Writing* at the same time. Bauermeister conceived her Lens Boxes such that this possibility is already inherent in the work. In addition, there is the process of self-productivity: it says that the individual elements within a work can influence one another. The curved lines of modeling compound and of the elongated, distorted "oui" and "no" illustrate a many-valuedness because of their status between writing and unidentifiable confusion of lines: It is certainly possible that one visitor in the Brooklyn Museum in New York views the work and perceives only uncontrolled lines on the frame and perhaps interprets them as a comment on Abstract Expressionism, since in the case of the modeling compound the lines are accurately applied and in the cases of the written characters the writing or drawing is delicate and clear, so that they can convey alleged spontaneity. The next person identifies, perhaps based on the title, the W in the lower left corner and then is easily able to complete the other letters; the interpretation is entirely different in each case, because one calls attention to the fact that the title is written multiple times in and on the work and depending on the context can be a noun, a gerund, or a present participle. This can cause one to think of reflecting on language and self-referentiality, so that *Writing* is read, for example, as a commentary on emerging Conceptual Art, which is concerned with, among other things using linguistic means to challenge the object level of

the work of art.[21] In the work *Writing*, however, the idea is not emphasized versus the material realization, because it was carefully executed by Bauermeister. There is always an individual component in the reception of works of art, and it emerges according to the predisposition of the viewers, as was already shown with reference to Rancière's concept of aesthetics.[22] *Writing* is, however, not an ambiguous image that can be seen in turn as a rabbit or a duck. The crucial thing is that both—viewing the curved lines and the written word "Writing"—are, seen metaphysically, equally and simultaneously appropriate.

These discussions of the work *Writing* already address several aspects of the use of writing in Bauermeister's oeuvre. Until now we have been talking about written characters that are arranged and designed so that they produce either new writing or something visual. A more precise analysis is required, however, to be able to understand how exactly Bauermeister employed writing and drawing and what produced their connection. In this context, "topology" is understood quite generally as a "heterogeneous field of thinking working on and with spatial connections," since that results in "expressions of relational connections" occurring in a next step that are closer to Bauermeister's networks within her use of writing.[23]

Notational Iconicity

The term "notational iconicity" (*Schriftbildlichkeit*) refers to an approach in which the written is understood not only as a system for notating spoken language but also for processing writing, the specific arrangement on the notational medium, and is also able to refer to or cultivate its own potencies. A written character stands between the poles of language and image and must be seen as a "hybrid" or "hermaphrodite."[24]

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21 Lucy Lippard first emphasized dematerialization in her influential monograph on Conceptual Art before herself proposing a revision of the thesis; see Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973). The expression Conceptual Art described a wealth of artistic positions, especially in the 1960s and early 1970s. It can include along with dematerialization reflection on art or craft as well as writing-based, photography-, performance-, situation-, actionist-, context-related, and gender-specific or institution-critical works as well as instructions for action, critique of commodification, or a process focused entirely on the artistic idea; see Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 1998).

22 See section 2.3.

23 Wolfgang Pichler, "Topologische Konfigurationen des Denkens und der Kunst," in *Topologie: Falten, Knoten, Netze, Stülpungen in Kunst und Theorie*, ed. Wolfgang Pichler and Ralph Ubl (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2009), 13–66, esp. 21–22.

24 Sybille Krämer, "'Operationsraum Schrift': Über einen Perspektivenwechsel in der Betrachtung der Schrift," in *Schrift: Kulturtechnik zwischen Auge, Hand und Maschine*, ed. Gernot Grube, Werner Kogge, and Sybille Krämer (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2005), 23–57, esp. 31. Accordingly, Vítězslav Horák speaks of "hybrid signs" for defining something written; Vítězslav Horák, "Hy-

According to Sybille Krämer, writing participates in both, but it is not an image, since as a medium for notating language it is "discretely organized." Nor does it seem appropriate to equate it with language since notating in writing draws on "in-betweens and voids, on two-dimensionality as principle of configuration, and on the simultaneity of the arrangement."[25] Hence writing possesses not only a point of intersection but should also be thought of in its own categories that go beyond a use as a secondary tool. In order to talk about writing as a phenomenon, Krämer proposes a "triadic model," in which two aspects condition the third in each case: it "requires referentiality," that is to say, the written characters must permit a reference to something outside of themselves, even if this referring is not unambiguous; to that end, an "aisthetic presence" is indispensable; it refers to the material appearance it must have; beyond that, "operationality" is crucial: the written elements must be both distinguishable and definite.[26] Writing in general is a "special case of notation," which by operating logically has an effect not only on language but also on other forms of notation.[27]

One perceives in scholarship on notational iconicity trends toward a "re-iconizing" of writing.[28] In the historical process, writing has always been de-iconized, since it depended on social conventions and "abstract" so that the assembled expressions obtain a universally intelligible meaning, whereas each individual letter seems meaningless.[29] In this view, there was once a close connection between image and writing; interpreting them as decidedly different phenomena was based on an artificial separation; Christian Stetter even goes so far as to say that the origin of writing is to be found in the image.[30]

This emphasis seems necessary, because ancient philosophy had formulated—in a way similar to the marginalization of matter in the previous chapter—a subordination of writing to language. The material presence of writing—or its visual or aisthetic quality—is not incorporated. The critique of writing versus the spoken word is

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bridzeichen: Konvergenzen zwischen Bild und Schrift," in *Bild, Macht, Schrift: Schriftkulturen in bildkritischer Perspektive*, ed. Antonio Loprieno, Carsten Knigge Salis, and Birgit Mersmann (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2011), 81–92, esp. 90f.

25 See Krämer, "Operationsraum Schrift" (see note 24), 29.

26 See Gernot Grube and Werner Kogge, "Zur Einleitung: Was ist Schrift?," in Grube, Kogge, and Krämer, *Schrift* (see note 24), 9–21, esp. 12–16.

27 See Rainer Totzke, *Buchstaben-Folgen: Schriftlichkeit, Wissenschaft und Heideggers Kritik an der Wissenschaftsideologie* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2004), 55–56.

28 Aleida Assmann, "Lesen als Kippfigur: Buchstaben zwischen Transparenz und Bildlichkeit," in *Schriftbildlichkeit: Wahrnehmbarkeit, Materialität und Operativität von Notationen*, ed. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum, Sybille Krämer, and Rainer Totzke (Berlin: Akademie, 2012), 235–44, esp. 243.

29 See Konrad Ehlich, "Schriftträume," in Cancik-Kirschbaum, Krämer, and Totzke, *Schriftbildlichkeit* (see note 28), 39–60, esp. 47ff.; Christian Stetter, "Bild, Diagramm, Schrift," in Grube, Kogge, and Krämer, *Schrift* (see note 24), 115–35, esp. 115–18.

30 See Stetter, "Bild, Diagramm, Schrift" (see note 29), 115.

particularly explicit in Plato: Anyone who assumes that "anything in writing will be clear and certain" is "utterly simple."[31] Scholars of notational iconicity are trying to lead writing out of this marginalized role; to that end they repeatedly refer to Jacques Derrida's 1967 study *De la grammatologie* (translated as *Of Grammatology*). As Werner Kogge emphasizes, Derrida's *Of Grammatology* is not "oriented toward writing as a medium or phenomenon" but is rather about a "play of differences" that exists in every text and can be exposed using the concepts of deconstruction.[32] These aspects must always be taken into account with Derrida, who in his philosophy tried to reject everything with "historico-metaphysical character" in favor of "distinctive characteristics."[33] It cannot be denied, however, that in his book Derrida inverted the hierarchy of language and writing: for him language is "a phenomenon, an aspect, a species of writing."[34] In his text he goes as far as to say that the signified and the meaning of a thing can never be visualized if there are no signifiers; in it lies the "origin" of meaning—so that writing stands out "a debased, lateralized, repressed, displaced theme," and "a permanent and obsessive pressure from the place where it remains held in check."[35]

This hodgepodge of marginalizing and parasitical reconquest of the accustomed position that writing should have, according to Derrida, is crucial when studying Bauermeister's employment of the written, but her commentary system is incomplete in this respect. A necessary extension results when the studies in the context of the "iconic turn" are also consulted.[36] The iconic turn has released potentials within

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31 Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 405–579, esp. 565. Socrates is speaking with Phaedrus here and criticizes in particular that written words cannot react to one's vis-à-vis; they "always say only one and the same thing," and moreover "every word […] is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it." Ibid. Interestingly, all of these statements have been passed down and can still be understood today thanks to their written form. Whether the marginalization of writing in Plato should not be taken seriously, since otherwise the readers would be assumed to be "simple," is a different question.

32 See Werner Kogge, "Erschriebene Denkräume: Grammatologie in der Perspektive einer Philosophie der Praxis," in Grube, Kogge, and Krämer, *Schrift* (see note 24), 137–69, esp. 140.

33 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 9.

34 Ibid., 8.

35 Ibid., 270–75.

36 See Birgit Mersmann, *Schriftikonik: Bildphänomene der Schrift in kultur- und medienkomparativer Perspektive* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 13, 24–26, 138, and 239. Mersmann dedicates a section of her study to Roland Barthes's brief text "Variations sur l'écriture," which she describes as one of the foundational texts of notational iconics; see ibid., 141–51. She understands notational iconics to be a "pictorial method and theory of the pictorial (sign)" that should not be equated with notational iconicity but rather characterizes a "transdisciplinary approach to visual studies within research into notational iconicity"; Birgit Mers-

the iconic and outside a semiotic approach; it is the "premise that images of our language contribute to concepts and knowledge important things that can only be experienced on this path."[37] When Bauermeister's employment of writing and its connections with drawing are analyzed within the expanded field of notational iconicity, it becomes clear that her use of the written should not be seen in a different context than that of the drawn elements. Accordingly, it becomes possible to understand her statement that writing and drawing can be employed as commentary of equal value.

The Convergences of Writing and Drawing

For Bauermeister, too, language is only a phenomenon of writing, and likewise language is just a phenomenon of drawing: written or drawn statements in her works can be translated into something linguistic, but that does not exhaust all their meaning.[38] The arrangement, reference, and interaction of the written and the drawn contain their own dimensions of meaning; this nonlinguistic logos is not purely visual in nature either. Because of her special approach, in Bauermeister's works both—writing as well as drawing—formulate the "iconic as."[39] This says that something (writing, drawing, and their connection) can provide a meaning-generating designation that occurs by means of aesthetic showing.[40] The result takes the form of a supralinguistic or supraiconic meaning that in combination cannot be judged by scientific

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mann, "Digitale Schriftbildlichkeit als Experimentierfeld der künstlerischen Forschung," in *Schrift im Bild: Rezeptionsästhetische Perspektiven auf Text-Bild-Relationen in den Künsten*, ed. Boris Roman Gibhardt and Johannes Grave (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2018), 317–32, esp. 317 n. 2. Barthes's essay "Variations sur l'écriture" is cited in scholarship on notational iconicity much less frequently that texts by Derrida, but his formulations can be an excellent supplement. In the context of the present study, description of the common origin of writing and art is significant; Roland Barthes, "Variations sur l'écriture" (1973), in Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Éric Marty, vol. 4, 1972–1976 (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 267–316, esp. 280.

37 Gottfried Boehm, "Unbestimmtheit: Zur Logik des Bildes," in Boehm, *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen: Die Macht des Zeigens*, 4th ed. (Wiesbaden: Berlin University Press, 2015), 199–212, esp. 208. The concept of the image that is necessary to approach Bauermeister's works is developed further in section 6.1.

38 Horst Bredekamp and Sybille Krämer describe this in a clearly more general context for cultures that seek to distance themselves from the "right of exclusivity which language used to claim for itself." They should rather be thought of "in the reciprocity between the symbolic and the technical, between discourse and the iconic"; Horst Bredekamp and Sybille Krämer, "Culture, Technology, Cultural Techniques: Moving beyond Text," trans. Michael Wutz, *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 6 (2013): 20–29, esp. 24.

39 Dieter Mersch, "Schrift/Bild—Zeichnung/Graph—Linie/Markierung: Bildepisteme und Strukturen des ikonischen 'Als,'" in Cancik-Kirschbaum, Krämer, and Totzke, *Schriftbildlichkeit* (see note 28), 305–27, esp. 312.

40 For Gottfried Boehm, the "power of showing" defines the level of action of images; only then are the "somatic and iconic order" connected to each other; Gottfried Boehm, "Das Zeigen

processes of verification or falsification. Rather, for this type of research, (aesthetic) results beyond "true" and "false" must be accepted:

> "As examples of such research practices, we could take dichotomies or incompatibilities or tensions that become manifest between things, actions, textures, materials, or images and sound and their respective composition (*com-positio*) in the sensual sphere."[41]

The five authors of the manifesto argue for thinking the aesthetic, which cannot ever be completed but is rather framed in a constant "becoming" beyond the concept of scientific knowledge. Results are presented by means of "showing" in an aesthetic manifestation beyond any language-based argumentation.[42]

With her Lens Boxes in the 1960s and 1970s, Bauermeister pursued a similar approach. The works are based on obvious antitheses, down to their tiniest details. New drawn forms are always being added, and at the same time, in the spirit of the combination principle described in chapter 3, already incorporated materials or techniques are recontextualized, resulting in further thematic development. The basic strategy in her works was developed in the early 1960s and has remained the same ever since: The artist formulates ever-new contradictions, which generally demand a revision of the perspective in order to obtain unambiguous and concludable statements. In that context Bauermeister also employs written characters in her oeuvre.

In his definition of signs, Umberto Eco concentrates on the transfer from signifier to a signified; there has to be a smooth "correlation" between the two that happens by means of an agreed-upon "code."[43] This understanding of signs is substantially expanded in notational iconicity. The rigid transfer between material conveyor of meaning and transcendent sense is broken up in favor of boundary cross on the "edge of the semiotic universe."[44] Aleida Assmann speaks of "asemantic signs," whose appearance cannot at first be assigned to a stable meaning, which makes their material appearance and their iconicity stand out. For Assmann, images represent "objects and states of affairs outside a single language," whereas writing first has to operate with a clearly limited supply of signs.[45] But the image has the opportunity to reconcile with writing; to do so the forms and quantities of the signs have to be "more strictly standardized" and "more manageable" so that "the reference to a

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der Bilder," in *Zeigen: Die Rhetorik des Sichtbaren*, ed. Gottfried Boehm, Sebastian Egenhofer, and Christian Spies (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2010), 18–53, esp. 43–47.

41 Silvia Henke, et al. *Manifesto of Artistic Research: A Defense against Its Advocates* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2020), 48.

42 See ibid., 39–62.

43 Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), esp. 188.

44 Aleida Assmann, *Im Dickicht der Zeichen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2015), 56–57.

45 Ibid., 189.

system structured differently solidifies."[46] In connection with signs breaking free of writing and turning to the pictorial, which can succeed with "iconic, self-referential, and indexical" strategies, a new mutual hybridization results: the "ambiguous image" that alternates between depicted and depiction, which with writing and image works in both directions in each case.[47] For the potential of that threshold moment when writing operates as something pictorial, or vice versa, the term "graphism" has been employed. According to André Leroi-Gourhan, it is a "symbolic expression" that does not represent any forms, in the sense of imitation, but rather an abstraction, as can be observed in language becoming more highly differentiated and place in the early evolution of human expression.[48] The graphic signs stand in an in-between and produce the shared origin of drawing, or iconicity, and writing—they exemplify their "family resemblance."[49] These determinations were extended to pulled lines so that graphism cannot be pinned down to an expression for drawing but rather "incorporates every kind of line inscribed in surface used as a support."[50] With an eye to Bauermeister's approach to her art, the "scribbling" will be cited and defined below in order to determine the processes more exactly.

The mutual reconciliation of the pictorial and the written, in which drawing is used like writing, and writing in turn like drawing, can be found in many aspects in Bauermeister's work. She uses primarily cursive; the letters are not only legible individually but together result in something pictorial. In *Don't Defend Your Freedom With Poisoned Mushrooms or Hommage à John Cage*, for example, this can be seen in the third reflection of the middle glued-on mushroom: the upper outlines of the fruiting

46 Ibid., 190.

47 See ibid., 219–31; Assmann, "Lesen als Kippfigur" (see note 28), 235–37. The example of reciprocal hybridization also clarifies why Bauermeister's works do not operate with the discourse of image-text relationships. The written word is not appropriated as foreign matter in images in order to open up the visual work of art; see Katrin Ströbel, *Wortreiche Bilder: Zum Verhältnis von Text und Bild in der Zeitgenössischen Kunst* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 24 and 138. Mitchell's determination would also lead to the oversimplification that all arts consist of a combination of image and text. This "image/text" is for him a "cleavage in representation, a place where history might slip through the cracks"; W. J. T. Mitchell, "Beyond Comparison: Picture, Text, and Method," in Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 83–107, esp. 104. It is rather a theoretical approach to get closer to the metapictures of an image; in this context, Mitchell's discussions will become important again in section 6.4.

48 André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 190–92.

49 Sybille Krämer, "Das Bild in der Schrift: Über 'operative Bildlichkeit' und die Kreativität des Graphismus," in Gibhardt and Grave, *Schrift im Bild* (see note 36), 209–21, esp. 216.

50 Katia Schwerzmann, "Dimensionen des Graphismus: Die drei Pole der Linie," in *Über Kritzeln: Graphismen zwischen Schrift, Bild, Text und Zeichen*, ed. Christian Driesen et al. (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2012), 39–57, esp. 41.

body are taken up again on the surface of the picture, first with two drawn lines and a smaller painted mushroom; to the left of that the mirrored outline of drawn seams and needles can be seen, an allusion to *Needless Needles*, and another mirroring of it is composed of words : "no poisoned mushrooms," "perhaps," and "ja, nein," and the individual characters interpenetrate.

Another expressive example that can be cited is *Yes Letter* of 1971 (fig. 45). It is a drawing that is also agreeing to a request for an exhibition at the Staempfli Gallery in New York, which was held the following year under the title *Mary Bauermeister: Recent Paintings and Constructions*. In the drawing Bauermeister explains the current works she would like to exhibit and associates this with a personal anecdote, comments on art and galleries and on the process of making her works. The large "Yes" is made up of words that form sentences and small drawings, which seem to offer additional explanations, on the one hand, but also provide visual interruptions, on the other. Because the drawing as a whole once again repeats a word whose statement refers to the content of the mixture of words and sketches, the work has been compared to the *Calligrammes* of Guillaume Apollinaire.[51] *Yes Letter* brings out self-referential aspects: a work of visual art is being produced that consists of letters and drawings, which together form a letter in reply and the reaction "Yes." This form of self-referentiality, in which words and drawings result in either something pictorial or a new word that refers to itself, it can be called, following W. J. T Mitchell; by means of a "referential circle," the picture refers to the things happening inside it and vice versa.[52]

51 See Alessandra Nappo, "Flüchtig, Multimedial, Unlesbar: Neue Formen des Briefes in der zeitgenössischen Kunst," in *Zwischen den Zeilen: Kunst in Briefen von Niki de Saint Phalle bis Joseph Beuys*, exh. cat. (Hannover: Sprengel Museum 2017), 43–65, esp. 58–59. Here one can also speak of an "intermediality" in Bauermeister's work: writing designed as a figure creates an "inter-action between writing's design aspect and its reference aspect"; Andrea Polaschegg, "Literatur auf einen Blick: Zur Schriftbildlichkeit der Lyrik," in Cancik-Kirschbaum, Krämer, and Totzke, *Schriftbildlichkeit* (see note 28), 245–64, esp. 258.

52 W. J. T. Mitchell, "Metapictures," in Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (see note 47), 35–82 esp. 56.

Fig. 45: Yes Letter, 1971, ink on cardboard, 36.8 x 54.2 cm, Mary Bauermeister Art Estate.

A compound of writing that together results in something pictorial is usually found in small details like the likeness of a mushroom in *Don't Defend Your Freedom With Poisoned Mushrooms or Hommage à John Cage*. Bauermeister's works are strewn with this method. That drawing and writing together, as in *Yes Letter*, result in a word that makes up the entire composition is an exception. The opposite is clearly more commonly the case, namely, that written characters and drawings together evoke iconicity, or even that drawings are employed like writing. The circular forms in Bauermeister's oeuvre should be analyzed accordingly: they emerge from their point structures in casein tempera and were already executed in the context of the *Needless Needles* drawing. The special way of drawing the circular forms can approach writing—following Aleida Assmann's analyses—that needs standardization and manageability to make unambiguous references. The top mushroom glued-on in homage to John Cage reveals a drawn reflection composed of circular forms. Now this could initially be interpreted as a drawn likeness in which it is not necessary to integrate writing. This impression is, however, shattered by another detail in the work in the center a little to the left: here again drawing circular forms have been employed from which the word "ketch" written in pencil stands out. The demonstratively spontaneous writing gesture can easily be completed by the viewer to the word "sketch." The circular forms make the word possible. The circular movement of written word and drawing that suggestion the work is still in progress here is not what is remarkable. Rather, it is the reciprocal transition of drawing into writing and writing into drawing, since the circular forms do not create an abstract S. There use is standardized to such an extent that it is easy to complete them interpretatively: the drawn circular structures are a feature of many-

valuedness in the works. They abruptly break off on the surface of the picture and result in a word that illustrates that the process of conceiving the work inscribed with the word "sketch" and its realization—namely, the drawn circular forms—are contained simultaneously and on an equal basis. Both the "temporary" conception and the "finished" sketch are visible. It must be assumed, moreover, that only the word "sketch" and only the executed sketch, that is, the circular structures can exist. Because the point form of casein tempera on canvas has transformed into delicately drawn circles, Bauermeister's abstract painting style is still included in the circular structures. The latter are now employed standardized, namely, as a prototype of many-valued aesthetics and therefore permit clear references in Assmann's sense.

In addition to the circular forms, the drawn needles and the distorted (by drawing) lines can also be made brought into the proximity of writing. In terms of many-valuedness, it makes no difference whether the words "yes, no, perhaps" are written out, the circular forms drawn, or the distorted lines can perhaps be interpreted as words; the same is true of the written word "needles" or a drawn needle. All of the elements participate in the many-valued aesthetic and in Bauermeister's oeuvre are employed with such frequency or recombined in ever-new ways that they develop their own code, which need only be decoded by the viewers. One can only speak of a situation in which a "syntagmatic bracketing and erratic protrusion" occurs in the words and drawings equally and at the same time; this "palpable competition" between the two modes of reading and seeing produces a floating position, an in-between.[53] When the expression "writing" is used here, in general its meaning of drawing and vice versa should be thought of in parallel.

Spatiality and Materiality

In general, the thematic field of notational iconicity should be tested to ensure that the pictorial is not overemphasized and to counter the marginalization of writing as a mere servant of language, now making the latter primary as an aspect of the iconic turn. It is crucial that alongside the "autonomy of writing" that continues to exist the "written image as autonomous unit of reflection" is manifested simultaneously.[54] One essential criterion that helps the Writing Picture achieve that autonomy

53 Georg Witte, "Das 'Zusammen-Begreifen' des Blicks: Vers und Schrift," in Cancik-Kirschbaum, Krämer, and Totzke, *Schriftbildlichkeit* (see note 28), 265–85, esp. 271. This has also been described as "operative iconicity," whereby the mediation between writing and seeing has a quality that generates meaning; Sybille Krämer, "'Operative Bildlichkeit': Von der 'Grammatologie' zu einer 'Diagrammatologie'? Reflexionen über erkennendes 'Sehen,'" in *Logik des Bildlichen: Zur Kritik der ikonischen Vernunft*, ed. Martina Hessler and Dieter Mersch (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), 94–122, esp. 98–117.

54 Mersmann, *Schriftikonik* (see note 36), 141.

can be seen in its spatiality: writing, like other forms of notation, including Bauermeister's standardized use of certain elements of drawing, produces an "artificial special space of planarity."[55] The arrangements on the ground are markings that produce spatiality. This leads Roy Harris to state that writing should be understood to be much more a theory of space than one of signs.[56] Scholars of notational iconicity describe the space produced as decidedly two-dimensional: the division of the plane already begins with the first line drawn, and every additional element transfers a temporal gesture into a (two-dimensional) spatial context.[57] Even the publication *SchriftRäume*, which decidedly addresses the theme of the spatiality of writing with a historic overview, continues to emphasize two-dimensional planarity: at most, a "spatial dimension" can be implied based on the medium of the support, meaning a simulation of spaces; or writing is given sculptural form and employed as an expression of honor; or "simulated three-dimensionality" is represented.[58]

With the construction of her works Bauermeister extended this interpretation. The Lens Boxes consist of various layers of glass with wooden spheres glued to the background that for their part extend into space and are in turn covered with drawings and hence occupy an in-between position spatially. Bauermeister only rarely employed aspects of one-point perspective as a spatial element in her drawings; for her the two-dimensionality artificially produced by writing was broken down by a one-behind-the-other effect that sometimes alternated with one-above-the-other and one-next-to-the-other. Two comments, one above the other, on two layers of glass in the recession of a Lens Box can be placed in a context by the viewers so that the artificially produced two-dimensional plane of writing transitions into a three-dimensional spatialization. The superimpositions were overwhelmingly conceived by Bauermeister already in the process of creating the work; the viewers need only continually focus on the different levels of glass to generate ever-new aspects from the spatial succession. Another example of spatialization of writing by means of overlapping can be made out on the frame of *Writing*: the curved lines of modeling compound that form the title are partially overwritten with fine lines here, which in

55 Krämer, "Das Bild in der Schrift" (see note 49), 215.

56 See Roy Harris, "Schrift und linguistische Theorie," in Grube, Kogge, and Krämer, *Schrift* (see note 24), 61–80, esp. 74–75.

57 Sybille Krämer, *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis: Grundlinien einer Diagrammatologie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), 14–20; For Krämer, it is the line that frees a surface from its tendency to three-dimensionality. It causes a "metamorphosis" in favor of the artificial production of two dimensions; Sybille Krämer and Rainer Totzke, "Einleitung," in Cancik-Kirschbaum, Krämer, and Totzke, *Schriftbildlichkeit* (see note 28), 13–35, esp. 23; Krämer, "Operationsraum Schrift" (see note 24), 28–32.

58 Christian Kiening, "Die erhabene Schrift: Vom Mittelalter zur Moderne," in *SchriftRäume: Dimensionen von Schrift zwischen Mittelalter und Moderne*, ed. Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken (Zurich: Chronos, 2008), 9–126, esp. 18–56.

turn produce the title and are composed of a small, repeated "no." The two texts cross and together create a notational iconicity in which plasticity has to be incorporated because it represents an essential aspect of the overall appearance.

As with its spatiality, it is necessary to incorporate the materiality of writing if the written is to be viewed suitably. Not only should every single written sign, symbol, or curved line be seen as a potential word but it is itself already an object—just as much as a glued-on stone or mushroom: "written characters and configurations are objects. Writing down is objectifying in the sense that perception is confronted with an object that outlasts the act of perception."[59]

Regarding written characters as objects foregrounds especially the "aisthetic presence" of the "triadic" model of writing. Even if this should not be the only perspective it is important because the interpretation of words as objects clarifies the material qualities of their appearance. In a drawing it is the paper, which has a medium already as an object dimension, and the strokes add more and more; together the produce a material-based composition in which the productive potential of materiality has an effect.[60] The materiality of the objects forms its own dimension of meaning. The superficial contradictions and their combination and separation depend on them production meaning as material configurations. Without these underlying conditions of materiality, there is a much greater possibility that the individual words will remain in their semantic context. "Yes," "no," and "perhaps" can all be simultaneously true because as objects they possess a materiality that keeps them from being reduced to their referentiality.

Liz Kotz has called the use of words in Bauermeister's oeuvre a "cacophony of signs." For "yes" in particular she has emphasized that it is an "empty sign" and becomes a "visual or rhythmic element" when it is not in a context or associated with a question.[61] Kotz is pointing to strategies of visual poetry as an environment for Bauermeister's works in which components of written characters that generate the picture are employed. This is inadequate insofar as many-valued aesthetics and materiality already provide a context. The writing employed by Bauermeister cannot be unreservedly interpreted as Concrete poetry either.[62] The words in Bauermeister's

59 Kogge, "Erschriebene Denkräume" (see note 32), 145.

60 See Friedrich Kittler, "Memories are made of you," in *Schrift, Medien, Kognition: Über die Exteriorität des Geistes*, ed. Peter Koch and Sybille Krämer, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2009), 187–203, esp. 187; Thomas Strässle, "Von der Materialität der Sprache zur Intermaterialität der Zeichen," in *Das Zusammenspiel der Materialien in den Künsten: Theorien—Praktiken—Perspektive*, ed. Thomas Strässle, Christoph Kleinschmidt, and Johanne Mohs, (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 85–97, esp. 89. The concept of materiality I am using here is explained in chapter 4 and section 4.1.

61 Kotz, "Language Upside Down" (see note 16), 74.

62 See Skrobanek, "'Die Jacke Kunst weiter dehnen'" (see note 11), 106.

work are not formed into collages like found objects, appropriated as foreign material, employed exclusively optophonetically, or used to call the author-subject into question.[63] Rather, she had recourse to selected aspects of Concrete poetry in her works, for example, when a yes is composed of a small "no" repeated many times. Moreover, several of her work titles refer to it, such as the Lens Box *Poème Optique* of 1964.[64] References to poetry, its material, and its iconicity tend to occur in more distanced way from an ironic position or in small details.

5.2 Cooperative Iconicity

A small section of the work *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty* of 1964–65 can be seen as an example of a reference to poetry (fig. 46). In the middle of the lower edge, we read: "hommâge a Jackson Mac Low / this is influence from the poetry department." The deliberately misspelled French can already be seen as a reference to the "poetry department." Although it is clear that *hommage* is meant, it can also be read as *homme âgé* (old man). At the same time, right above this section a use of writing is seen that is perhaps the reference of the word "influence." The point of departure is the word "core," whereby each of the four letters is also the beginning of a new word. It cannot be said with certainty which exact section is intended; Bauermeister's use of writing is based precisely on these ambiguities. In the context of Bauermeister's use of writing in her works, this ironic reference to the poet of Concrete and visual poetry Jackson Mac Low should be interpreted as itself an homage. Mac Low was active in her New York circles, and her mentioning him in her work illustrates Bauermeister's interest in this artistic strategy.

63 See Kotz, "Language Upside Down" (see note 16), 100–125; Hans G. Helms, "Von der Herrschaft des Materials bei der künstlerischen Avantgarde," in *Theoretische Positionen zur Konkreten Theorie*, ed. Thomas Kopfermann (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1974), 120–25.

64 The whereabouts of the work are unknown; photographs show a structure of several layers of glass and wooden spheres covered with writing and drawing as well as round, written and drawn panes of glass that viewers can rotate to produce new contextualizations within the composition.

Fig. 46: Hommage à Brian O'Doherty, 1964–65, ink, offset print, wooden sphere, stones, sewing tools, badge, modeling compound on canvas mounted on wood, 120 x 120 x 5.5 cm, ArtNetBund, Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, Bonn, Germany (BMBF 0742).

Hommage à Brian O'Doherty has an aesthetic of intricacy and is filled with references, not only to people from Bauermeister's circles like Mac Low but also to (historical) events and to reflections on art movements and exhibiting, to the process of making art, to her own completed and future works, and to many-valued networking between them. The work was probably begun in 1964 but was finished the following year. Bauermeister stretched a canvas on a wood support measuring 120 by 120 centimeters, wrote and drew on it, applied objects, and worked with modeling compound so that it has a height of 5.5 centimeters. *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty* is a work with collage-like sections; it is composed of writing, drawing, and objects; and as a hybrid it crosses the boundaries between genres. Among the objects applied are wooden spheres and photographic reproductions of her own works. The reproductions are integrated into the composition along with drawings and glued-on materials such as stones. These sections establish networks to other works, like those we have already described for example *Needless Needles Vol. 5*, *Integration* and *Four Quart-er-s*. A total of five details from the work *Progressions* can be identified as

well as nine from *Ordnungsschichten*. It should not be assumed that Bauermeister wanted to integrate other artworks into the composition unnoticed but rather to reflect on the connections to one another by means of the obviousness of the reproduction and their integration into the new work. This is an example of the identity of reflection of the many-valued aesthetic: Already executed works of art are incorporated in the new artwork, and they undergo a transformation in the process. The doubled self-reference is what produces an imaging of it. It is not the new artwork that first causes the changes to the earlier works, however: the changes were already equally valid components of them. Because this happens within one work, the events were already specified by the term "identity of reflection of the object."

Other elements that are incorporated and undergo many-valued changes are drawn sewing needles and sewing needles as physical objects; the same is true of glued-on and drawn stones. They not only establish networks to other works but also simultaneously negotiate their metaphysical status, since the drawn and physical objects are equally valuable forms of visualization. Bauermeister also introduced materials she had previously used for other works. In two places, for example, small white wooden disks, partially drawn with arrows, have been applied. They were originally intended to be wall elements for the work *Runde Gruppe* of 1959–60, an installation in Bauermeister's exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, consisting of a Honeycomb Picture and around fifty wooden elements distributed across the wall; then several of these elements were used for *Rechts Draussen* (To the Right Outside) in 1962. The arrows on the wood elements are placed mostly on the edge and point both outward and inward, as if symbolizing a transition from the material to the support and vice versa. There is also a drawn cast shadow that goes out from the wooden object but runs in several directions at the same time with different intensity—the material of an older work transitions into the newer one; the drawn shadows can thus be seen as an alternative form of visualization.

The (reproduced) works introduced by Bauermeister also refer to another level, one that is closely connected to the work's title. The impetus for creating the work was a review written by Brian O'Doherty, published in the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*, of Bauermeister's first participation in a group exhibition at the Galeria Bonino from December 1963 to January 1964.[65] *Progressions* and *Ordnungsschichten* were both represented in the exhibition that O'Doherty was reviewing. He opens with: "Mary Bauermeister is better than very good and I wish it could be left at that"; he answers his own question who the young woman is by saying she is "a whisper among museum directors."[66] Several lines later follows a sentence that is inscribed

65 See O'Doherty, review of a group exhibition at the Galeria Bonino (see note 10). The newspaper review and the exhibition *2 Sculptors, 4 Painters* were mentioned above in connection with the first presentation of the *Needless Needles* light sheet.

66 Ibid.

in full in the artist's homage to him and which determines much of the work's composition: "It will be interesting to see if she has the intelligence and cunning to cope with the major success she is obviously going to have."[67] The depth of O'Doherty's statement made a lasting impression on Bauermeister: the success she will naturally have must go hand in hand with "intelligence" and a kind of "cunning" for the artist to "cope" with it. That she should receive recognition for her works went without saying for the art critic, but it was another question whether she was ready for it, since the New York art world requires more than just outstanding art. In her work the sentence begins at top left with a sepia-colored "It," followed by the darker "will be," and ends at bottom left with the words "going to have" formed with modeling compound.

Bauermeister took a sentence from an art review and produced ever-new semantic units by means of a spatial arrangement and the various techniques used to execute it. Each word from the sentence is designed differently. For example, the word "be" is composed of drawn hexagons that are reminiscent in form of Bauermeister's Honeycomb Pictures; the "will" consists of point structures, arrows, and a drawn seam. The final word, "have," is formed with modeling compound; in addition, two smaller letters are placed so that the word "heaven" results when they are added to it. The spatial distribution of the sentence and the use of modeling compound initially bring out features of the work's notational iconicity: in the middle of the composition "to see is intelligence" can be identified; the words are rendered relief-like and form a new statement from O'Doherty's words. One word is shifted in the process. The "if" of the complete sentence transforms into an "is" in the new arrangement. Bauermeister arranged the letters in a way that both readings are possible. This is supported by the sketches, photographic reproductions, and comments that together contribute to notational iconicity. Right next to the word "see," a photographic reproduction of Bauermeister's eyes is inserted, along with a hand shading them. This gesture of farsightedness shifts the word "see" in the horizon of its meaning closer to "perceive," so that the artist is once again referring to O'Doherty's sentence: she integrates her own person as someone self-confidently looking out of the picture with—underscored by the word "intelligence"—a perceptive gaze. Bauermeister turns the doubt O'Doherty formulated with the word "if" into an affirming "is" and connects it to herself.

Whereas the word "intelligence" is formed with modeling compound and protrudes from the painting, O'Doherty's "and cunning" is written with a pencil and is therefore distinctly more difficult to read. From the three words together—"intelligence and cunning"—extend drawn lines that connect a photographic reproduction of *Ordnungsschichten* on the round cutout. Whereas that work from 1962 that was integrated several others is easily identifiable on other cutouts, here it seems consid-

67 Ibid.

erably more difficult to find the exact excerpt from the original. It is a detail in the background on which Bauermeister neither drew nor wrote; the canvas mounted on a board was treated with very diluted watercolor here. A "soak-stain" coloring technique with paint of varying dilution produces a (difficult-to-see) nonobjective pattern on the canvas. Because Bauermeister often worked with sequencing in her compositions—that is, working out several sections very intricately while leaving others almost in their original state—there are similar patterns that paraphrase in detail the paintings of artists such as Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland. On the reproduced detail from *Ordnungsschichten* Bauermeister later wrote "enlarged canvas." She was referring critically to the (New York) art world, in which critics such as Clement Greenberg championed Abstract Expressionism in particular. The complex history of female and male artists in Abstract Expressionism is also addressed, because Bauermeister wrote directly below this, in a semicircle next to the reproduced detail, "department for chauvinism."[68] Nonobjective compositions, sometimes in monumental formats; gestures of a masculinity that emphasizes combat in the creation of the works; and the connection to art critics are equated by Bauermeister with chauvinism, on the one hand, and "intelligence and cunning," on the other. The connection to other artists and the lobby of art critics are indispensable qualities of the necessary "intelligence" and "cunning." Bauermeister countered the large-format paintings of Abstract Expressionism with a richly detailed and in part microscopic aesthetic. In addition, with the work's title and the inserted sentence from art criticism in praise of her she referred to the support she was herself getting.

Appropriately, the catalog of the exhibition at the Galeria Bonino in 1965 mentions not only the title *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty* but also several subtitles, which are also found on the back of the painting.[69] They include, among others, "Fish-

68 Whereas in his text "Louis und Noland" of 1960 Greenberg still identified Helen Frankenthaler as a crucial influence on Morris Louis's development in "After Abstract Expressionism" of 1962 he writes that Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland had not borrowed their "vision" from anyone; Clement Greenberg, "Louis and Noland" (1960), in Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 4, *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 94–100; Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism" (1962), in ibid., 121–34, esp. 134. This is just one of many examples of how women artists in particular experienced marginalization. See Isabelle Graw, *Die bessere Hälfte: Künstlerinnen des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: DuMont, 2003), 110–15; Mary Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler: Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art* (New York 2018), 5–15.

69 *Bauermeister: Paintings and Constructions*, exh. cat. (New York: Galeria Bonino, 1965), n.p. There is a second work from 1965 on this subject: *Hommage à Brian O' Doherty or Fishing for Compliments Part II*, which is also included in the catalog. In addition, the first work was taken up again in 2017 in five Lens Boxes, though Bauermeister wrote new comments on the situation at the time.

ing for Compliments" and "Eine Hand waescht die ANDERE" (One hand washes the OTHER). Bauermeister was directly addressing the connection between her as artist and O'Doherty as critic: first, there is the hope that the new work dedicated to him will be followed by another positive exhibition review; second, there is a gesture of showing appreciation. Bauermeister does both publicly, thus satirizing supposedly secret networks of artists and critics. Bauermeister did, however, produce another effect, namely, that attention was once again paid to the review of a group exhibition by important artists in which she was especially emphasized—that could certainly be called "cunning."

The work *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty* has a cooperative dimension. Both the basic theme in the form of a sentence from art criticism and the individual small details reflect on network-like connections created by the artist that are necessary to create a work of art. For these connections Howard Becker defined a concept for a sociology of art characterized by cooperation: "art worlds." No work of art can be traced back to just one person. A large number of actors are necessary to create, present, and preserve a work of art. The works reveal patterns of "collective activity"; all of the parties involved in the process can be described starting out from the object.[70] This leads to the formation of art worlds, which Becker deliberately expresses in the plural since every work of art has its own environment of materials, themes, supporting people, and reception—as an artist Bauermeister is not a sole authority but merely works at the "center of a network of cooperating people."[71] By turning his sentence into a Writing Painting, Bauermeister brought Brian O'Doherty, without his knowledge at first, into the cooperation; this demonstrates not only the vastness of "art worlds," since even past actions such as a review are central to creating a new "art world" specific to the work. For Becker, reputation, too, results "from the collective activity of art worlds," and he mentions art critics in particular, who create reputation with their criteria and explications.[72] Moreover, he emphasizes the universal connection between two fields, which is otherwise less openly admitted, namely, the written word of art critics has an effect on artists.

There are still diverse other elements and people who together constitute the specific "art world" of *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty*. Listing them would presumably end in an infinite regress, because Bauermeister's intricacy and commentary system creates more and more branches. It is therefore much more crucial to identify those themes that appear repeatedly in various works and include them in the cooperative network in order to gain insight into the genesis of Bauermeister's works. For example, the tools, utensils, and materials she employs are recurrent themes in that she illustrates or describes the process in the works themselves. In *Hommage à Brian*

70 See Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 1–6.

71 See ibid., 25.

72 See ibid., 360.

O'Doherty, she inserted sewing needles that were presumably used to make the light sheets; the people who manufactured and sold these needles would have to be added to Bauermeister's art worlds. The same is true of the glue used by Bauermeister to attach objects such as wooden spheres and stones. It is not just used as a material but also aggressively addressed: Right above "to see," one sees a photograph of the artist's hand drawing a line with glue. This suggests that the scribbled strokes found through the composition were made with glue. In the lower right corner, some of the glue under the single stones glued together peeps out, and Bauermeister continues it with drawing on the ground. "Elmers Glue" is written next to this simulated spot, revealing the brand and integrating it into the cooperation.

Just as important as the utensils and materials of her work are sociopolitical events, which are only rarely the focus of a work for Bauermeister but can be observed frequently and likewise condition the cooperation; in *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty*, there is a reference to the civil rights movement: namely, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Bauermeister integrates into the work a button that was connected to a protest of the World's Fair in New York in 1964. She includes this button in drawings and writing in a number of works, in which it serves as the point of departure for the commentary system—another example of this artistic strategy is the aforementioned integration in the section about the "poetry department," where "core" forms the initials of other words.

Bauermeister refers to the situation in which the work is exhibited with a self-confident gesture as well. Already when creating the work, she had anticipated that *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty* would someday hang in exhibition spaces because of its high artistic quality: the cast shadow of the materials of *Runde Gruppe* (Round Group) and also of two wooden spheres and a stone in the top center of the work can be seen as reactions to the lighting conditions. Then it would be not only a many-valued visualization of three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional support but also a simultaneous picture of the shadows of gallery spotlights. The shadows, which vary in size and intensity and radiate out from the objects in all directions, have their equivalent in Bauermeister's eyes inserted next to "to see": she has to hold her hand up to her eyes because the light is blinding. These aspects seem to anticipate Brian O'Doherty's now iconic text *Inside the White Cube*, which he wrote as a series of articles for the journal *Artforum* in 1976 and 1981. In it he analyzes how in the modern era the context of the gallery space was connected to the subject matter of the works, and the ceiling serves only as a light source; viewers undergo an increasing disembodiment of their perception.[73] The "white wall's apparent neutrality" is, however, nothing but an "illusion."[74] Designing a work so that it is immediately anchored in

73 See Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Santa Monica: Lapis, 1986).

74 Ibid., 79.

its exhibition site recalls again the aforementioned "cunning." Reflection on the conditions of exhibition is crucial here: Because the spotlights produce new shadows of the object, it becomes necessary to identify which are drawn and which are "real," which can initiate the viewer's scrutiny of the conditions of presentation—it is the artist's subtle effort to undermine the supposed placelessness and timelessness of the white cube.

It is not just people, historical events, and the exhibition situation that belong to the art worlds of works but also cooperating objects such as other artworks. Art critics and materials or their makers also belong to the cooperation of the multiply integrated work *Progressions*. Becker's subject-centered approach must be expanded to cover Bauermeister's scale of cooperative networking. That will follow in chapter 7, which will increase the number the agents. The cooperative dimension will remain, however; it seems to complement much more clearly Bauermeister's combination principle and the parallelism of many-valuedness than an antagonistic or even autonomous determination.[75] It is also insufficient to fixate only on the person in the title of that work, Brian O'Doherty; in general, there is a networked complex of different levels that conditions her entire oeuvre.

The thematic field of notational iconicity in Bauermeister's work should also be viewed as a reciprocal connection: The description that writing can be removed from the surroundings of the notional medium and by being arranged spatially obtain an autonomous dimension of meaning that participates in the pictorial can to some extent be said of the reverse. In her works the parts that are predominately pictorial are usually created by drawing, but it can by no means be said that the terms "painting" and "drawing" should be understood to be synonymous: "Painting and drawing relate to each other in the same ambiguity as drawing and writing."[76] In her writing-image drawings Bauermeister by no means employed the individual modes in such

75 The theory of the sociology of art of Pierre Bourdieu, who speaks of the "artistic field," is focused more on a dualism of antagonistic poles that on competition for recognition. Artists position themselves within this field of "force lines" and to all the other elements within it, which objectifies their art; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). Bauermeister's reference to chauvinism in the context of the "enlarged canvas" can be interpreted as positioning within the "artistic field," since she is actively emphasizing a dualism; this means above all that the concepts from the sociology of art should not be regarded in isolation or as definitive. The sociologist Niklas Luhman, by contrast, coined the term "art system." He focused on how art could develop historically into an autopoetic, operative, closed, and autonomous system that exists independently of other systems. In the "art system" the demand for constant innovation can be pursued because it functions outside of other social systems; Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, trans. Eva M. Knodt (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Pres, 2000).

76 Mersch, "Schrift/Bild" (see note 39), 310.

a way that they break each other down and fuse into one; rather, she made a convergence possible that represents a partial exchange of roles. This combination of writing, drawing, and image produces an epistemological dimension in the works that will be analyzed below.

5.3 The Epistemological Potentials of (Reflexive) Notational Iconicity

> As for the repetition of a single word, we must understand this as a "generalized rhyme," not rhyme as a restricted repetition. This generalization can proceed in two ways: either a word taken in two senses ensures a resemblance or a paradoxical identity between the two senses; or a word taken in one sense exercises an attractive force on its neighbours, communicating an extraordinary gravity to them until one of the neighbouring words takes up the baton and becomes in turn a centre of repetition.[77]
> *Gilles Deleuze, 1968*

Bauermeister carried out this "generalized rhyme" in Deleuze's sense. In her repetitions of words she often worked with shifts in meaning that presume "two senses": the variations on needles in the *Needless Needles* works would be an excellent example here, though one would have to presume not only the written variations but also the drawn ones in the context of the commentary system. The second method is, however, even more essential in her oeuvre, because it can be applied to the use of "yes, no, perhaps." Constantly repeating one of those three words subjects the neighboring one to "extraordinary gravity" until it becomes the new "centre of repetition"; as a result, both expressions are thought of in a "pronominal" sense, in the "Self of repetition."[78]

Both modes can be granted a reflexive dimension. Deleuze's study is not, however, primarily related to the use of words or their contextualization in relation to one another. For him it is about a far more general shift: the terms "difference" and "repetition" replace "identity" and "contradiction."[79] The latter were a crucial point

77 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 1997), 21–22.

78 Ibid., 23.

79 Ibid., xix.

of reference for Hegel in his logic and consequently also for Günther's definition of the identity of reflection in order to introduce many-valued logic. The two kinds of repetitions that Deleuze posits as fundamental include, first, the "repetition of the Same," which clings to a concept or a representation, while the second kind incorporates difference, the "alterity of the Idea."[80] From that follows for Deleuze that, although it is possible to initiate a dialectical process, to "pass over into the antithesis, combine the synthesis," the thesis persists in its original difference and does not follow this process, since "difference is the true content of the thesis."[81] So if one assumes that the terms identity and nonidentity are replaced, Bauermeister's construct of the many-valued aesthetic does not implode as a result. Her approach could be transferred equally well into Deleuze's statements. Then not only all future repetitions would be inherent in the repetition but also their respective difference and the possible of making one of the "neighbouring words" a new "centre of repetition." The use of "yes, no, perhaps" should always be interpreted in an expanded context, even if the artist explicitly developed her model based on Günther's propositions. Independently of whether Deleuzes (two-part) model of repetition is integrated or Günther's many-valuedness adopted, the constant repetitions of certain words as well as drawings and mediating comments results in a dimension in the works that generates knowledge.

Deleuze and Guattari interpret the division into signifier and signified and their conformity as a "regime of signs": the two terms exist in a "state of unstable equilibrium"; in each case they form "two constantly intersecting multiplicities."[82] This statement goes far beyond saying that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary. Rather, the "form of expression" cannot be translated into one or more words; it is always at the same time a "regime of statements." By contrast, the "form of content" does not refer to a thing outside of its; it comprises "a complex state of things as a formation of power."[83] The two authors go so far in *Anti-Oedipus* that they associate a correspondence of signs in writing with despotism; it requires a "heterogeneity," in which the asymmetric situation between the "vocal" element and the "graphic" one must be "resolved" by the "visual element" as the third one.[84]

With the specific use of "yes, no, perhaps," this becomes evident in two places: First, Bauermeister does not just employ those three words but also the correspond

80 Ibid., 24.

81 Ibid., 52.

82 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 74–76.

83 Ibid.

84 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 203–4.

terms in German and French (and sometimes Italian as well) as well as standardized drawing elements and the use of intermateriality, all of which enter into the complex of many-valuedness. Every "peut-être" in a Lens Box contains at the same time all of the other elements associated with many-valuedness. Second, the "state" cannot be definitively determined with words, since Bauermeister's works of art are experimental of a metaphysical convergence. The individual elements are connected to one another but they can in no way be seen as equivalent. It is rather the case that they can be interpreted with the philosophical concept of the assemblage and on the basis of their internal conflict many-valued networks occur. These networks exist within a work but also beyond it, for example, when the works in a group such as *Needless Needles* refer to one another and the drawn seams or glued-on needles turn up in works such as *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty*.

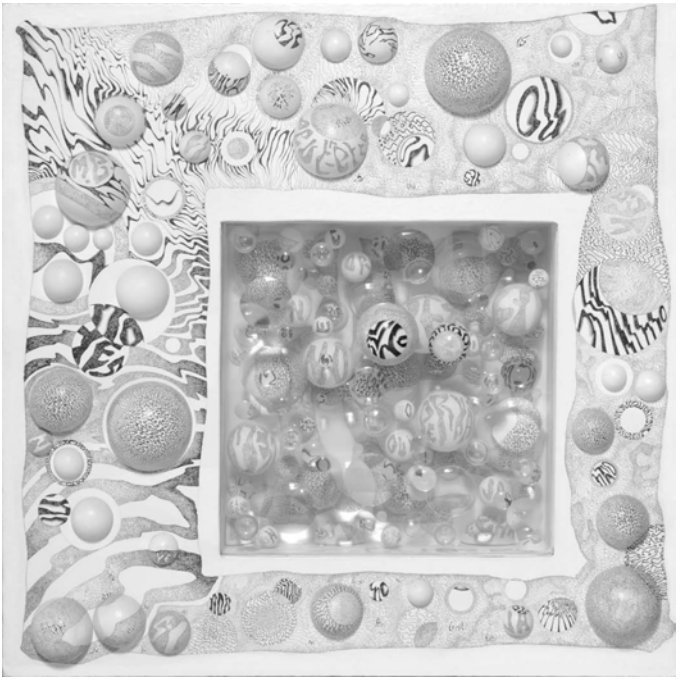
One essential point is the spatial arrangement of the written or drawn as well as its quantity. The dense tapestry of writing of the Lens Boxes and the constant repetition of individual elements can give the viewers impetus to intensify their reflection.[85] In Lens Box *308,975 Times No … Since …* of 1966, all the lines are composed of distorted variations on the word "no" (fig. 47). The number in the title is probably not the exact number of written negations in and on the work; the structures that create images or texts are too intricate and nested for a precise count. On the one hand, the repeated "no" makes it possible to create circular forms and abstract patterns—on the left side of the frame they are so distorted by the simulation of lenses that they condense into dark strokes. On the other hand, the other words in the Lens Box are also formed by the small, repeated "no," either by coming together into letters or by their arrangement leaving an unwritten area that in turn creates a word. The words formed from the repeated "no" are "yes," "ja," "oui," "si," "or," "perhaps," "vielleicht," and "peut-être" but also "no" and "nein." A negation does not therefore necessarily lead to an affirmation or mediating position.

For the most part, Bauermeister formed the words on the wooden hemispheres from the "no," which enables us to infer its role within the works. The convex form breaks through the regular repetition and allows the layer of many-valuedness to appear. The spheres ensure that the other words, which are contained in the "no" at every moment, break out. In addition to the words on the spheres, there are some framed within the (drawn) circular forms. They simulate lenses, to the left of the recession, for example. The repeated "no" is distorted to the point of unrecognizability, but it creates a "yes" within the circular form. Accordingly, the lenses, even if they are only drawn, were employed to cause uncertainty about simple certainties—a "no" does not mean merely "no" but also contains the "yes" and "perhaps." Even if the repeated "no" dominates visually in the composition, as the title already makes clear,

85 See Joy Kristin Kalu, *Ästhetik der Wiederholung: Die US-amerikanische Neo-Avantgarde und ihre Performances* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 80–83.

the single word should be interpreted as multilayered and contains the others at the same time.

Fig. 47: 308,975 Times No...Since..., 1966, ink, glass, glass lens, wooden sphere and painted wood construction, 63.2 x 63.2 x 16.5 cm, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, The Joseph H. Hirshhorn Bequest, 1981 (86.267).



Notational Reflection(s)

Applying the formula "yes, no, perhaps" to a majority of Bauermeister's aesthetic program should not, however, cover up the other contexts in which her use of writing and drawing are embedded. It was already clear from the examples of notational iconicity and the (ironic) references to other artists and art movements, production processes, and social events. In contrast to many artists of her generation, Bauermeister referred only peripherally to the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. One reason for that may be that when developing her works she worked with the commentary system, which demands a continuous interaction of writing and drawing, whereas Wittgenstein was concerned with language more generally. Wittgenstein's

"multiplicity of language-games," which point to the activity of showing as a dimension, would have to be focused on writing and drawing to do justice to the processes in Bauermeister's works.[86] For the Austrian philosopher, language and its concepts are "instruments"; they "direct our interests," though only certain expressions lead to the "investigations" in the first place.[87] It cannot be assumed, however, that there is a rigid system of unchanging certainties with words and sentences, since they are dubious on principle.[88] In the art of the twentieth century, there were many attempts to integrate reflection on language. They varied greatly, but usually skepticism about language as an exclusive and unfalsified means of communication was an element that connected them.[89]

For Bauermeister, Duchamp was an important point of contact who with regard to language shared with Wittgenstein the metaphor of playing chess. Duchamp described his skepticism about language more than once: "The language and thinking in words are the great enemies of man."[90] They must be employed hand in hand with "poetry" and "play," because then it is possible to use them like a "color," like a positive enrichment of the senses.[91] In his statements on art theory he did not restrict himself to language in general but also addressed the use of writing. In Duchamp's opinion the inscription on the ready-made enriched and distinguished it from its "pals"; on the one hand, the artist developed a system of signs using square brackets that produced its own shifts in meaning; on the other hand, he explicitly incorporated the phonetic dimension.[92] There are reflexive dimensions in Bauermeister's

86 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 26–27.

87 Ibid., 151.

88 See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 39–40 and 140–46. Assessments critical of language can be observed repeated in philosophy; Bauermeister's interest in Nietzsche can also be cited in this regard, since for him words and concepts represent a continual seduction to "think of things as being simpler than they are, separated from one another, indivisible, each one existing in and for itself"; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human II*, in Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human II and Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Human, All Too Human II (Spring 1878–Fall 1879)*, trans. Gary Handwerk (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 157.

89 See Alexander Streitberger, *Ausdruck, Modell, Diskurs: Sprachreflexion in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004), 270. In his book Streitberger describes how artists combine their pictorial aesthetic with reflection on language in order to critique language. The possible self-referentiality makes it conceivable to him that art enters into a situation of metareflection; see ibid., 270–84.

90 William Seitz, "What's Happened to Art? An Interview with Marcel Duchamp on the Present Consequences of the 1913 Armory Show," *Vogue* (February 15, 1963), 110–13 and 128–31, esp. 113.

91 Georges Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* (Marseilles: A. Dimanche, 1994), 55.

92 Ibid., 68. On the system of signs for the ready-mades, especially the use of "crochets," see Lars Blunck, *Duchamps Readymade* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2017), 123–29. In the case of

oeuvre that are closely connected to epistemological potentials as they are described in the scholarship on notational iconicity. It is not the use of language in works of visual art that should be observed primarily: rather, it is the connections of language-based statements put into a spatial arrangement by handwriting and beyond that contextualized with drawings and permeated by scribbling.

Deleuze's "generalized rhyme," which is always already enriched by multiplicities, can be cited for reflecting on the epistemological writing-image drawing. First, every element in the works should be regarded in its expanded context and can serve as the point of departure for interpretation. Second, that very process leads to categorization being infiltrated, that is, that language, writing, and drawing as well as all the intermediate steps transition into a common fabric. In process of notating, knowledge is conveyed: thoughts must be brought into a linear order in a temporal sequence this requires formulating the desired statements in a way that can be understood, which makes them completely present in the first place.[93] Krämer calls this process "epistemic writing"; in addition to the aspect of ordering, she particularly emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge. It is already here in us but is made full present by writing it down: "Writing clarifies what remains dark, unordered, and confused in the flux of fluid mental activity."[94]

This is closely connected to externalization. The notated elements bring a store of statements with them and generate "extended memory systems"; in addition, they produce knowledge about one's own memory and thus function as "metamemory."[95] Bauermeister's works feature both the order of thoughts and their retrieval from storage. Every Lens Box seems like a cornucopia of ideas and not infrequently seems inscrutable (at first). The works result from the commentary system and enable their author to develop her own ideas into many-valuedness, to test them, reject them, drive them forward, and network beyond them via other artistic works. In this way experimental illustrations become dependent on the nature of the work's structure

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the letters L.H.O.O.Q. on the eponymous work, it is a game with words, writing, and pronunciation that provides the meaning; see Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 63.

93 See Wolfgang Raible, *Kognitive Aspekte des Schreibens*, Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 14 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1999), 42–43.

94 Krämer, "Operationsraum Schrift" (see note 24), 42. Elsewhere Krämer has also emphasized the importance of the medium for this: "We think on paper, with paper"; Sybille Krämer, "Punkt, Strich, Fläche: Von der Schriftbildlichkeit zur Diagrammatik," in Cancik-Kirschbaum, Krämer, and Totzke, *Schriftbildlichkeit* (see note 28), 79–100, esp. 97.

95 See Wolfgang Schönpflug, "Eigenes und fremdes Gedächtnis: Zur Rolle von Medien in Erweiterten Gedächtnissystemen," in Koch and Krämer, *Schrift, Medien, Kognition* (see note 60), 169–85, esp. 171–82.

in which every element contributes a certain amount to the whole. It is a working with an "ordered copresence" that results from the "spatial arrangement."[96]

One can speak here of epistemic effect of notations, since the successive distribution of writing and drawing on the medium shifts statements made far apart in time from one another into a new context. In addition, externalization makes it possible to refer retrospectively to statements that have already been made and with a few twists completely alter their meaning. Thanks to the commentary system this strategy is ubiquitous in her works and is intended to constantly call supposed certainties into question. Bauermeister explicitly spoke of the temporal delay of statements via retrospective references in her works. In *Hommage à Brian O'Doherty* there is a section that can represent numerous other ones in her oeuvre and that contains alongside the temporal components and the commentary system as well: In the grayish areas of the work beneath the words "intelligence and cunning" two arrows can be seen pointing to each other that are connected by a dotted line. This drawn component is flanked by a written and drawn comment enriched with symbols from which one can extract: "the shortest communication between °° [two points] is = straight line." This sequence is followed by curved lines and directly below them the sentence "I'm a little bit against straight 'conventions,'*" and the asterisk is linked to the sentence: "*'stupid me' = commentary 1 year later …" The ellipsis at the end, which indicates the open or answered status of the statement, transitions into many small dots that in turn form a structure and transition into additional comments. The statement "1 year later" could be accurate, because Bauermeister often worked in parallel on several works over long periods. Perhaps she read the sentence a year later and felt obliged to intervene. It is, however, equally conceivable that she formulated the individual sections immediately in one phase of work.

This is not crucial for the interpretation of her works, however; what is important, rather, is that the dimension of temporality is ensured by the possibility of later reworking. This small passage shows that the epistemic effects of notational iconicity can play into metaphysical many-valuedness. (Self-)knowledge and the possibility of contextualization and reworking on a two-dimensional plane meet the general impossibility of completing an artistic process; all that in the mirror of an effort to carry out an aesthetic procedure based on networking via reciprocal reference and the possibility of avoiding dogmas by always including contradiction.

96 Wolfgang Raible, "Über das Entstehen der Gedanken beim Schreiben," in *Performativität und Medialität*, ed. Sybille Krämer (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004), 191–214, esp. 212.

Handwriting(s)

Such statements are also formulated in Bauermeister's handwriting(s). With a little practice, they can be deciphered relatively well. The artist does not, however, appear to have tried to make every passage equally accessible. Getting closer and deciphering individual sections are fundamental components of the reception of this intricate aesthetic. The curiosity to decipher individual sections and to connect them at will with other written characters, drawings, or materials such as straws, photographic reproductions, and stones or other natural materials seems essential. By viewing several individual passages, ideally the step to reflecting on higher-order levels is taken. It is equally possible that in a situation of reception "all possible mis- and wrong interpretations" can occur, but this too is just another productive element.[97] For Hegel, handwriting has a specific existence that dovetails with the subject in question; "the individual's *Being*—reflected out of its actuality is therefore observed."[98] In this view a subject manages by means of handwritten statements to insert his or her own essence into a work—a "*presumed* inner" is manifested by the specific sweep of the writing instrument.[99] In Günther's adaption of Hegel, it was "reflection in itself" that leads to the "double reflection in itself" and hence to many-valued logic. By constantly employing handwriting Bauermeister inserts herself as an artist into the work, concretizing with every letter her own identity of reflection. As the author of her works, she undermined with every stroke the proposition of identity.

In the same way Bauermeister reflected on the use of her handwriting in numerous places in her oeuvre. A section in the upper right corner of the Lens Box *Writing III* of 1967–68 (fig. 48) is typical of this. A wooden hemisphere is applied to the frame and completely covered with drawn geometrical patterns. Following its curve and immediately next to the hemisphere we read first this sentence in uppercase block letters: "THIS IS NOT MY HANDWRITING," followed in lowercase cursive by: "this will be my handwriting." It is all too obvious that the two sentences contradict each other; it goes without saying that both are Bauermeister's handwriting; the cursive is simply more closely connected to her. This example is also interesting in other ways: The passage seems like a conscious decision, because the formulation "will be" was chosen. To connect the works to her own person and make them unmistakably hers, she has to choose the less formal version of her writing. Every word functions as a signature; the constant repetition of the same expressions is the context of mu-

97 Totzke, *Buchstaben-Folgen* (see note 27), 367.

98 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and trans. Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 127.

99 Ibid., 129.

tual attestation.[100] Her name, "Mary Bauermeister," or her initials, "M.B.," are often found on the recto of her works, not infrequently more than once. Identifying her in the jumble of writing is, however, interesting primarily to produce the data sheets for her catalogue raisonné. The performative act of writing as an indexical sign does not declare Bauermeister to be the author based on her signature but is generally expressed already by her handwriting.[101]

Fig. 48: Writing III, 1967–68, ink, glass, glass lens, wooden sphere, modeling compound, painting tools and painted wood construction, 84 x 84 x 20 cm, Private Collection USA.

The demonstrative pronoun "this" that begins both sentences refers to the writing style and the object described by Bauermeister. The Lens Box *Writing III* is enriched by the cursive that Bauermeister identifies as her own, but there are also sev-

100 See Deborah Cherry, "Autorschaft und Signatur: Feministische Leseweisen der Handschrift von Frauen," in *Mythen von Autorschaft und Weiblichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius and Silke Wenk (Marburg: Jonas, 1997), 44–57, esp. 50–54.

101 See Karin Gludovatz, "Malerische Worte: Die Künstlersignatur als Schrift-Bild," in Grube, Kogge, and Krämer, *Schrift* (see note 24), 313–28, esp. 314–18; Thomas Macho, "Handschrift—Schriftbild: Anmerkungen zu einer Geschichte der Unterschrift," in Grube, Kogge, and Krämer, *Schrift* (see note 24), 413–22, esp. 413ff.

eral passages in block letters, which the artist described as not hers. The paradox is not resolved, and the intended effect is an ironic desubjectifying. The individual connectedness that Bauermeister produces by employing handwriting offers no way out; she can merely clearly identify the situation in order to expose the structures: As an artist she will always be connected to the works she has created; an abstraction from her own person is impossible. Because this status was adopted by Bauermeister, it is explicitly incorporated. We have already pointed out subjective references such as childhood letters and gluing in a photograph of her own eyes. There are, however, in her works still other examples of self-reference that also include the objects necessary to produce them or that create a circular connection between the two.[102] Integrating her own person happens because the artist cannot exclude herself as a subject from the many-valued aesthetic. On the other hand, her maxim, repeatedly written on her works of art, was "include anything," which is applied here too. It thus includes both the self and the process of making the works, the materials, techniques, and thematic focuses already used for other works, and finished works.

The Association of Scribbling

Just as handwriting and drawing are employed in works of visual art and, as in Bauermeister's case, interwoven with one another in a tight symbiosis, the "in-between" is inevitably part of the result: the scribble.[103] This is different from the effects already described in which either writing in compound can produced something visual or Bauermeister developed pictorial conventions that at least approach writing. In handwritten notations a moment of transition results between writing and image, which includes both the hand holding the pen and the space on the notational medium.[104] The balanced state of this transition, the scribble, can be found in most of the works in which Bauermeister employed writing or drawing. Scribbles are initially just the "simple material presence of their lines," and hence "subsemiotic," but this accounts for their potential since precisely for that reason they contain "an essential aspect of experimentation and exploration of new forms."[105]

In *Don't Defend Your Freedom With Poisoned Mushrooms or Hommage à John Cage*, there are several passages in the upper area that cannot be clearly identified as

102 See section 6.2.

103 Christian Driesen, "Die Kritzelei als Ereignis des Formlosen," in Driesen, *Über Kritzeln* (see note 50), 23–37, esp. 30.

104 See Bettine Menke, "Kritzel – (Lese-)Gänge," in Driesen, *Über Kritzeln* (see note 50), 189–213, esp. 189–91.

105 Schwerzmann, "Dimensionen des Graphismus" (see note 50), 42–43.

either writing or image. It appears like a "running hand," applying a nonobjective pattern to the surface of the picture and become an embodied mark.[106] The work has many more traces of scribbling on both the macro- and the microlevel. A nonobjective, curved pattern runs through the entire composition and subdivides the plane. Bauermeister must have started with these lines because the writing and drawing are oriented around them. In several places, however, the scribbling points to an uncertainty. The left side of the work is a fabric of drawn circular forms that emerge from spontaneously scribbled strokes and written words that breakdown to such an extent that they can only be identified in the context of the work's themes. The scribbling can be described with "lack of reference," "lack of edge," and "dissimilarity"; these three aspects together form metastable merge that is in a formative state.[107] It seems as the sections of the work have yet to establish a definitive direction; either the scribbled passages are completely integrated or even erased, so that only underdrawing remains. It is also conceivable that the tapestry of writing previously executed in a controlled way and drawing is about to collapse and transition into a dissolution.

The seemingly freely developed lines in the works initially cause restrictions, which at the same time start the process of the work's genesis.[108] Their uncontrolled appearance establishes a division around which Bauermeister orient herself continuously. As a result, however, these lines become the starting point for the commentary system, since, having been quickly gathered into circular form, several of them transition into delicately drawn circular structures or generate the repeated no that becomes the basis for arranging the notational iconicity. This can go so far that the spontaneous gesture determines the entire orientation of the work, as it does with the *No Faces* Lens Box of 1964. Here, too, the drawn ground is filled with scribbles from which comments emerge. Several of the elements in the center suggest round forms, and other spontaneous strokes admit of the possibility that in the process of perception the viewer can complete them into schematic faces. Once Bauermeister recognized this, she composed the entire work from round forms, with occasional

106 Richard Shiff, "Charm," in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, ed. Nicholas Serota, exh. cat. (London: Tate Modern; Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2008), 10–31, esp. 28.

107 See Driesen, "Die Kritzelei als Ereignis des Formlosen" (see note 103), 24–29.

108 The art historical discourse on the *disegno*, in which the line translates visual thinking from the idea into the form is deliberately not included here, nor the definitions of the line in that context; see Sabine Mainberger and Wolfram Pichler, "Kunsttheorie und -geschichte," in *Linienwissen und Liniendenken*, ed. Sabine Mainberger and Esther Ramharter (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 282–424. The same is true of the interpretation of the "line" in scholarship on notational iconicity; Krämer, *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis* (see note 57), 95–122. The reasons for this are identical: in Bauermeister's oeuvre there is an enduring in-between in which markings are at once writing and drawing. Employing the term "line" in a restricted sense could conceal that potential.

faces recognizable next to the abstract circular structures. In the lower area on one of the panes of glass, several stylized faces can also be made out. The title turns the entire work into a comment on Bauermeister's oeuvre; it can be read as an allusion to her own principles of her abstract or nonobjective early period. Only slowly and at first singly did she include figurative elements in her works, which would still have been unthinkable in the first years of her artistic career.

The scribble has an epistemological function: The spontaneous creation of semi-figurative sections brings with it a check on and transformation of her own dogmas. It communicates the self-imposed limitation that dominated for such a long time. That also makes it clear that the commentary system is employed not only within one work but also across works. Networks grow out of the design of individual works in the context of her oeuvre. On a microlevel, every curving stroke conveys the meeting of writing and drawing in the scribble. Initially, it still has the potential of uncertainty and adds new qualities of corporeal expression. The denser they become in a given area, the greater the likelihood that either something pictorial or written appears or a hybrid of the two results. It is a gray zone that contains a "neither-nor or not-only-but-also," which is a way of avoiding the dichotomy of the written and the pictorial.[109] The fusion of writing, drawing, and scribbling composed in the works results in something that can be called, following Rainer Totzke, an "associagram":

> "Associagrams are artifacts of notational iconicity or diagrams in which words or groups of words for concepts are position opposite one another on a play and connected by graphic elements such as lines or encapsulations."[110]

They are "philosophical thought laboratories" that have "epistemic added value."[111] This only happens, however, if individual aspects can be linked to others, separated again, and grouped differently. Bauermeister worked with such associagrammatical division of the plane, and in the Lens Boxes or with relief-like elements she introduced the third dimension. Transformations via lenses must be considered as well; some of them produce unpredictable effects because they depend on the viewers' movements. Whereas some of the works grow exclusively out of writing and its

109 See Sabine Mainberger, "Graphismus/Graphismen," in *Bonner Enzyklopädie der Globalität*, ed. Ludger Kühnhardt and Tilman Mayer (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017), 419–31, esp. 419–20.

110 Rainer Totzke, "'Assoziationsgrammatik des Denkens': Zur Rolle nichttextueller Schriftspiele in philosophischen Manuskripten," in Cancik-Kirschbaum, Krämer, and Totzke, *Schriftbildlichkeit* (see note 28), 415–36, esp. 434.

111 See ibid., 417. Associagrams are the multidimensional extension of the concept of the diagram. According to Susanne Leeb, it can assume two essential directions: either "diagram" is understood to mean "aid to systematization" or the opposite view comes to the fore, then it is a "projective" concept of the diagram that opens "directions still to be explored" and a "field of action"; Susanne Leeb, "Einleitung," in *Materialität der Diagramme: Kunst und*

pictorial arrangement, others consist of symbols, arrows, numbers, mathematical symbols, musical notes, scribbling, and drawings. Associagrammatical notational iconicity thus empowered Bauermeister to try out new ideas that could result in new insights. It was also an invitation to viewers to choose a route through the work by moving their eyes or entire bodies in order to develop something meaningful from it. Associagrams make no "truth assertions" but "often function according to a logic other than the two-valued once of *yes* or *no*, *is* or *isn't*."[112] They symbolize the state that Bauermeister achieved to maximize the challenge to (alleged) certainties through works of visual art.

Bauermeister's use of writing and drawing is marked by an approach that generates an in-between. This is crucial to avoid producing dualisms, to "go beyond binary machines and do not let [oneself] be dichotomized."[113] It is the incorporation of all available elements so that ever-new dimensions that constitute the philosophical concept of the assemblage come together in a multiplicity.[114] The assemblage is, however, not a goal that has been achieved as soon as all of its parts are identified and assembled. On the contrast, it is the "minimum real unit" from which everything else emerges.[115] Only when the assemblage has been accepted as fundamental can attention be focused on the uncertainties, gradations, and the in-between. Writing and its iconicity is one of the multiplicities in Bauermeister's work. On the one hand, her use of it produces connections; on the other hand, they only result because they already emerge from networking with other multiplicities. Notational iconicity should not be seen as separate from the many-valued aesthetic, the combination principle, or the aesthetic of materials; they all condition one another and emerge from one another—it is a "not-only-but-also."

In the next chapter, new elements will be added to this assemblage that Bauermeister's work as a whole forms; this will permit new additional insights in the mi-

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Theorie, ed. Susanne Leeb (Berlin: B_Books, 2012), 7–32. For the second concept of the diagram, Leeb refers to the discussions of Deleuze in his books on Michel Foucault and Francis Bacon as well as to Deleuze and Guattari, who in *Thousand Plateaus* describe the diagram as an element within the assemblage that is responsible for connecting deterritorialized content; Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* (see note 82), 141–43. The concept of the assemblage will be retained and further developed here to avoid double encodings with "diagram." The "diagrammatic" in relation to art and art history is discussed in Astrid Schmidt-Burkhardt, "Wissen als Bild: Zur diagrammatischen Kunstgeschichte," in Hessler and Mersch, *Logik des Bildlichen* (see note 53), 163–87.

112 Totzke, "'Assoziationsgrammatik des Denkens'" (see note 110), 434.

113 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Continuum, 2002), 19.

114 See Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* (see note 82), 8–23.

115 Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* (see note 113), 38. Deleuze and Parnet describe this using the example of a writer: "The writer invents assemblages starting from assemblages which have invented him, he makes one multiplicity pass into another." Ibid., 39.

cro- and macrolevels. The object of study will be a work that is a hybrid of Lens Box and sculpture. Its title determines not only the reading of this one work but also the reading of Mary Bauermeister's oeuvre as a whole: *All Things Involved in All Other Things*.