1. Prologue

> The days of the two-valued image of the world, with its dichotomic distinctions of subject and object, of thinking and thing, of form and content, of mechanical and organic, of nature and society, of thing and soul […] are in any case over.[1]
> *Gotthard Günther, 1959*

> The real whole might well be, we conceive, an indivisible continuity. The systems we cut out within it would, properly speaking, not then be *parts* at all; they would be *partial views* of the whole. And, with these partial views put end to end, you will not make even a beginning of the reconstruction of the whole.[2]
> *Henri Bergson, 1907*

"Yes, no, perhaps"—these words aptly summarize the evolution of the oeuvre of the German artist Mary Bauermeister. The three expressions must be accurately defined as equal in value and equivalent. Neither a hierarchy nor a progressive weighing up to a subsequent dissolution is what is meant: This brief formula can rather be understood as the smallest nucleus of Bauermeister's art. She developed it in the years 1961 to 1963, but her works up to that point also reveal a trend that anticipates this direction. Bauermeister's work initially presented itself heterogeneously and sometimes eclectically, with manifold materials, media, and techniques employed as well as diversity of form. Her entire oeuvre is, however, harnessed into a network of cross references and follows a genealogy. Although several works seem to form

1 Gotthard Günther, *Idee und Grundriss einer nicht-Aristotelischen Logik: Die Idee und ihre philosophischen Voraussetzungen*, 3rd ed. (Hamburg: Fritz Meiner, 1991), 334.

2 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Holt, 1911), 36 (italics original).

autonomous groups and look like a break with the artist's specific, previously established aesthetic, there are nevertheless overarching lines of connection—revealing them is one of the concerns of this study.

What follows emphasizes the common and not the disparate and to that end repeatedly has recourse to Bauermeister's sources, which she read as a young artist and that flowed into her work.[3] Her areas of interest were broadly diversified and included not only writings on cultural theory and philosophy but also literary, political, sociological, scientific, and mathematic themes. Not every treatise has a direct correspondence in her works, and this study does not attempt to distill out visual translations of discursive models. Rather, it attempts to show which concepts occur many times in her oeuvre and which conclusions can be drawn from that—always connected with the question of how the theoretical construct behind Bauermeister's works could be further developed with current research. The historical context is accordingly merely the point of departure for the observation, because Bauermeister's art—according, at least, to one of the theses advanced here—can appropriately be interpreted with theories of the assemblage, reflections on the aesthetics of materials, and the theories of New Materialism.

One of the books with the farthest-reaching influence on Bauermeister is *Idee und Grundriss einer nicht-Aristotelischen Logik: Die Idee und ihre philosophischen Voraussetzungen* by the German philosopher Gotthard Günther of 1959. In that treatise Günther attempts to challenge the two-valued logic in which object and subject are always confronted with identity and nonidentity. The extension that Günther describes leads to a many-valued logic that Bauermeister adopted as a catalyst for her production of art and then developed from it an autonomous approach to the work of art as object. Her Writing Pictures and sculptural objects of artificial and natural materials should be categorized as preparation for this. From 1963 onward, she made her so-called *Linsenkästen* (Lens Boxes): hybrid structures of image and sculpture that produce reflections in intricate compressions on several levels. Among other things, they address the production of the work of art itself as well as their own precursor and successor works, opening up a network of metareferentiality. In addition, the process of perceiving works of art, contemporary trends in art, and natural, evolutionary are themes; random processes, mathematical equations, and biographical events are also treated. The "reflection [and] the movement of

3 Mary Bauermeister granted the present author access to her library and indicated which books were important to her at which time. In some cases her library preserves the copies she first purchased and read, having survived several changes of studios and continents, marked with underlining and notes—these books, too, were available when preparing this book.

becoming"[4] within the Lens Box is a continuous evolution and a referential system of cross references.

This ongoing circulation of addressed themes, inserted elements, and their reflection forms the connections that will be described, following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as an assemblage in which "movements of deterritorialization" and "processes of reterritorialization" occur at the same time, or they reciprocally condition each other.[5] A work of art should not be viewed as isolated; rather, the assemblage creates an extension: to other works as well as to the themes treated, the contextual conditions of the exhibition venue and of the art world, and to the artist's subjectivity. In general, in that process the works obtain a status that locates them outside of the attribution as a "simple" object: the work becomes a "quasi-object"[6] by circulating themes, found, natural, or industrial objects, by words that congeal into Writing Pictures but at the same time remain identifiable, and by optical distortion. The term "quasi-object" was coined by Michel Serres and refers to an object's potential to produce subjectivity: When the quasi-object enters into a community, it "marks or designates" the subject as such; without this address, the human being is still in a presubjective stage.[7] The quasi-objects—that is to say, the individual works of art—not only construct the artist-subject but also create us as viewers, because we are brought into a community and into an exchange.

A situation results in which, first, one can no longer assume a self-contained unity, since a constant interchange among the works occurs and, second, this exchange forms a common body. This epistemological visual critique in Bauermeister's works is supported by a metaphysical approach that breaks down supposedly existing subject-object dichotomies in order to have an effect on the work of art and its possibilities. The conclusions that should be drawn from that for Bauermeister's oeuvre will be revealed successively over the course of the book.

In contrast to many artists of her generation, Bauermeister only sporadically wrote texts in the form of essays on art theory or manifestos, although she wrote unusually much, albeit primarily in her artworks themselves or in sketchbooks. Bauer-

4 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 345.

5 See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 10–11, 92, and 703–6. "Assemblage" is understood to mean the political theory and not the artistic practice or descriptive term for a medium; for an attempt to synchronize the two, see Bill Brown, "Re-Assemblage (Theory, Practice, Mode)," *Critical Inquiry* 46, no. 2 (Winter 2020): 259–303.

6 See Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 225–28.

7 Serres, *The Parasite* (see note 6), 225. Serres sometimes also calls the "quasi-object" the "quasi-subject" but only to emphasize the status of objects, namely, that they should not be seen as things incapable of action.

meister was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1934 and was thus only a few years younger than, for example, the founders of the Zero Gruppe, Heinz Mack and Otto Piene, or her comrade-in-arms for many years Nam June Paik; they had in common with American colleagues such as Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Robert Smithson, Carolee Schneeman, and Yvonne Rainer that they lay out their working methods and understanding of their own works in texts. In addition to their own interpretation of their works, this strategy led to distinction from and self-assertion over predecessors and ensuring attention in the competitive field of contemporary art.[8]

The statements in the Lens Box cannot, moreover, be compared to a proclamatory or polemic manifesto, nor can they serve as a literal reception theory. The chains of words are brief aphorisms characterized by alliterations and homophones. They are brought together with sketches, scribbles, mathematical symbols, arrows, and notes to create a composed Writing Picture that is the manifestation of trains of thought. One concern of these works is the productive dimension of the writing process as "private writing," in which writers can order and refine thoughts, thus resulting in a circular effect between the memory and external product.[9] Bauermeister's philosophical, epistemological, metaphysical writings in her works came out of the extension of two-valued logic into a potentially infinite dimension of equivalent statements with equal truth content.

The chimera of text and image is combined with objects, photographs such as reproduction, natural materials such as stones, and distortions by optical lenses or wooden spheres to create a "symbol system" that is supposed to generate knowledge.[10] To that end, Bauermeister developed a personalized iconography that consisted of both subject parts and philosophical reflection but whose approach goes beyond a mere "individual mythology." That concept, coined by Harald Szeemann in 1963, seems apt only in a superficial examination, because Bauermeister never wished to create out of "egocentrism" a universally valid language that then transitions into "vigorous naturalness."[11] Rather, her works of art participate in overarching discourses and also make explicit statements about them; they get involved in existing discussions and do not create arcane new ones. That also explains why Bauermeister never developed a theory of the Lens Box or issued a manifesto on her

8 See Dorothee Wagner, Schreiben in der Kunst: *Amerikanische Künstlertexte der 1960er Jahre* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 61. On the relationship of attention in the art of the 1960s in New York, see Philip Ursprung, *Grenzen der Kunst: Allan Kaprow und das Happening, Robert Smithson und die Land Art* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2003), esp. 19–30.

9 See Wolfgang Raible, "Über das Entstehen der Gedanken beim Schreiben," in *Performativität und Medialität*, ed. Sybille Krämer (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004), 191–214, esp. 197–202.

10 See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1976), 143–45.

11 Harald Szeemann, "Individual Mythologies" (1972), trans. Jonathan Blower in Szeemann, *Selected Writings* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2018), 65–68, esp. 66–67.

artistic approaches: the writing in her Lens Box and its arrangement imply an immanent theory of art. The works contain their own specifications, how they are to be understood, and also the intellectual superstructure behind them. The statements are tied to the work's "practices of showing"; they create "aesthetic thought," which is not a genuinely theoretical experience but a certain kind of reflection that must be distinguished from purely discursive argumentations or those that can be verified by positivist methods.[12] Both strands—notational iconicity and aesthetic showing—meet in Bauermeister's dedication to meta(-physical) reflection.

In order to do justice to the works, I have selected an approach based on the theory and philosophy of art. It is contextualized with the art criticism written about Bauermeister in the 1960s and 1970s, including an examination of Bauermeister's reception as a young artist primarily in New York, where she lived, with interruptions, from 1962 to 1972. The descriptions and categories drawn on for her art are significant here. Another focus is on the materials and compositional elements of which the works of art are composed, on their arrangement and the references they contain, together with the sources absorbed by Bauermeister and their extensions. The next step is to tie them back to the overarching theoretical discourses on art in which Bauermeister's works participate by means of their structure.

I do not intend to foreground the historical situation of the culture or art in postwar Germany or in New York in the 1960s, since there are already numerous studies that do that, so contextualizations will occur only on the margin.[13] Nor will I attempt to find similarities to or appropriations from any artistic precursors or movements or borrowings from contemporaries. First, Bauermeister's works are extremely special in terms of both content and style; second, such a similar study has already been conducted.[14] Her art will be related cursorily to a feminist context only insofar as the works require it.[15] Moreover, rather than a biographical review or an survey of the

12 See Dieter Mersch, *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, trans. Laura Radosh (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2015), 117 and 128.

13 Important studies of Bauermeister's art include Alejandro Perdomo Daniels, *Die Verwandlung der Dinge: Zur Ästhetik der Aneignung in der New Yorker Kunstszene Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011); Andi Schoon, *Die Ordnung der Klänge: Das Wechselspiel der Künste vom Bauhaus zum Black Mountain College* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2006); Ursprung, *Grenzen der Kunst* (see note 8).

14 See 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 (accessed April 17, 2019). The state of research on Mary Bauermeister's art includes only a limited number of scholarly treatises; they are cited in the relevant passages and are therefore not listed in a separate chapter.

15 Here again the reason is that such a study has already been done: Irene Noy, "Noise in Painting: Mary Bauermeister's Early Practice and Collaboration with Karlheinz Stockhausen," in Noy, *Emergency Noises: Sound Art and Gender*, German Visual Culture 4 (Oxford: Peter Lang,

artist's oeuvre, my ambition is to reveal the structures of her artistic evolution and the associated discourses in order to categorize it art historically.[16] Several representative works will be analyzed in more detail for that purpose in order to expose the questions with which Bauermeister grappled.[17] One immeasurably valuable source for that is the artist's archive; in addition to exhibition catalogs and reviews, it is above all handwritten notes and the three sketchbooks from the 1960s that offer insights into the conceptual processes of producing the works.[18] Clarifying how she works also offers the opportunity to acquire a holistic insight into the levels of meaning in the works.

This procedure is not chronologically arranged; first, in chapter 2, using the *Needless Needles* group of works as examples, Bauermeister's (main) philosophical sources are explained and immediately connected to observing how they are expressed in the works, what autonomous dimension the art obtains as a result, and how the works continue the thinking about philosophy—grasping this is fundamental to understanding Bauermeister's art. The theory of many-valued logic offers a backdrop against which a majority of her oeuvre can be read. All the chapters participate in multivalence and round out Bauermeister's interpretation of the theory that is referred to here as "many-valued aesthetics."

2017), 127–60; Irene Noy, "Art That Does Make Noise? Mary Bauermeister's Early Work and Exhibition with Karlheinz Stockhausen," *immediations: The Courtauld Institute of Art Journal of Postgraduate Research* 3, no. 2 (2013): 25–43.

16 Her connection to the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen is considered only when has added value for the interpretation of the works selected here. For their joint personal and artistic history, see Mary Bauermeister, *Ich hänge im Triolengitter: Mein Leben mit Karlheinz Stockhausen* (Munich: Bertelesmann, 2011). On their reciprocal artistic influence, see also Leopoldo Siano, "Between Music and Visual Art in the 1960s: Mary Bauermeister and Karlheinz Stockhausen," in *The Musical Legacy of Karlheinz Stockhausen: Looking Back and Forward*, ed. M. J. Grant and Imke Misch (Hofheim: Wolke, 2016), 90–101; Paul V. Miller, "Mary Bauermeister and Karlheinz Stockhausen: A Collaboration in Sound and Space," in *Mary Bauermeister: The New York Decade*, exh. cat. (Northampton, MA: Smith College Museum of Art, 2014), 87–97; and Michaela Geboltsberger, "Die 'malerische Konzeption' und der Einfluss von Aleatorik im Werk von Mary Bauermeister—im Kontext zu Karlheinz Stockhausens Kompositionstechnik," thesis, Vienna, 2012. On the relationship of the marginalized wife or muse compared to her artistic partner, see Katie McCabe, *More than a Muse: Creative Partnerships That Sold Talented Women Short* (London: Quadrille, 2020).

17 The present author has also compiled a catalogue raisonné of Mary Bauermeister's work, commissioned by the artist and the Studio Mary Bauermeister. An overview of her works, exhibitions, collections, and bibliography may be found in the online catalogue raisonné.

18 Part of Bauermeister's archive has been accessible digitally since 2012 at the Zentralarchiv für deutsche und internationale Kunstmarktforschung (ZADIK) in Cologne; the physical files are still in the Studio Mary Bauermeister. If a document is available at ZADIK, the inventory numbers are indicated. Bauermeister's sketchbooks have not been digitized by ZADIK.

Chapter 3 takes a step back in time; it treats the combination principle, which resulted from her study of art, the nonobjective painting of the postwar era, and New Music and its notational systems. The themes and techniques with which Bauermeister experimented in her early work reveal in combination why the ideas of a metaphysical extension of logic could fall on fertile ground as the foundation for compositions. Multivalent aesthetics is not therefore based on the combination principle but rather, conversely, these elements flow into the inspirations that Bauermeister derived from her reading of Günther. In addition, this step backward makes it possible to encounter several aspects that find their way into her works again and again.

Chapter 4 then studies the materials employed from the perspective of an "aesthetics of materials." Bauermeister's use of natural materials, materials not usually employed in art such as synthetic materials, or the so-called modeling compound as well as their combination in the work reveals her skepticism toward preexisting categories. These amalgams open up a productive dimension in which the elements employed can be defined as "material dispositifs."[19] They oscillate between combination and many-valued approaches and are also determined by the poetics of finding.

In a next step, the focus shifts to the combining of text and drawing under the topos of notational iconicity. Chapter 5 addresses the potentials of writing that reveal levels of meaning in the process and from their arrangement and have a productive relationship to language so that writing things down can be seen as more than a recording medium. Bauermeister's use of writing and its fluid transitions to drawing, in which both are usually simultaneously present, create a nested reflexivity that emphatically desires to appear polyvalent.

This also transitions into chapter 6 of the study, which analyzes the object and metareflections within and between works. Constant reflection on all components of the work of art transports the work into the discourses embedded in it: metareferences result that Bauermeister intends and comments on in turn. This leads to an analysis of her own work including all the hints about interpretation, to a reflection on aesthetic composition, on activating the viewers, and in general to interlockings that are continually refined by means of different elements employed by the artist.[20]

A compound of metalevels is initiated by the artworks themselves. They have specific "trajectories," which should be traced as far as possible here so that the superficial observation of apparently arbitrary leaps and discontinuities gives way to

19 See Christiane Heibach and Carsten Rohde, "Material Turn?," in *Ästhetik der Materialität*, ed. Heibach and Rohde (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 9–30, esp. 19.

20 See Werner Wolf, "Metareference across Media: The Concept, Its Transmedial Potentials and Problems, Main Forms and Functions," in *Metareference across Media: Theory and Case Studies*, ed. Werner Wolf with Katharina Bantleon and Jeff Thoss (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 1–85, esp. 65–68.

network-like contexts.[21] The concept of the assemblage is also significant in this context, as is the expansion of the self-productivity of the object. In what follows I work with the term "networking," which can be described as having the goal of "spatial and visual manners and ways to create connecting links of identical elements."[22]

My concentration on the period from 1955 to 1975 results from caesuras in Bauermeister's career as an artist that had effects on her oeuvre. In 1955 she ended her studies at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm. Several inspirations that she found there can be identified in different reformations that recur repeatedly in her work. From the mid-1970s, or at the latest with the start of the new decade, changes in Bauermeister's work can be observed that entail new techniques, themes, and concepts and are determinant until the early 1990s—these would require a more detailed study that can be offered here.[23] The focus is therefore on the 1960s, since a first apex of Bauermeister's creative work occurred in those years. The approaches that matured until the early 1970s remained characteristic of her works.

One leading American art critic in the 1950s and 1960s, Harold Rosenberg, wrote with respect to an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1967: "Though she was somewhat out of key with the exhibition and, visually, was the best artist in it, Mary Bauermeister, a young German Post-Surrealist, is also art-conscious in the most aggravated degree."[24] This sentence reveals several notable levels of meaning at once in its effort to approach Bauermeister's art. Leaving aside the praise, it is striking that Bauermeister's works are perceived as not belonging, even though the exhibition *Pictures to Be Read/Poetry to Be Seen* offered a look at contemporaneous trends in the use of writing in works of visual art—that is, the very theme on which Bauermeister was working.[25] Her works thus appeared somewhat isolated even in the milieu in which they were supposed to be at home. In addition,

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21 See Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 74–77.

22 See Sebastian Giessmann, *Die Verbundenheit der Dinge: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Netze und Netzwerke* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2016), 15.

23 In the 1980s Bauermeister began to accept commissions to design gardens, which would dominate her work for at least a decade. The approaches developed earlier remained; they were joined by spiritual concepts that previously had not had any influence on her works; addressing them would require a new interpretational branch. In the 1990s, these concepts receded to the background again in her works; she began to reflect again on the themes that had been dominant earlier, resulting in a new phase of work that continues to be determinant.

24 Harold Rosenberg, "Museum of the New," in Rosenberg, *Artworks and Packages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 144–56, esp. 152.

25 See *Pictures to Be Read/Poetry to Be Seen*, exh. cat. Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1967. The curator of the exhibition was Jan van der Mark, who brought together twelve artists; it also was the inaugural exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

the term "Post-Surrealist" is striking. It is an assessment that one reads often that can be traced back to a misunderstanding of the texts in her works, and it will be examined in chapter 5. Contradictory things are not only understood as liberating the productive dimension of the unconscious that leads to a more accurate reality but also equally aptly as a mediating of perspectives. The "art-consciousness" addressed by Rosenberg goes back to the employment of referentiality to the self, to others, and to objects and is—as the art critic correctly described it—a characteristic quality of her works.

Nam June Paik, in a text on Bauermeister, comes very close to interpretations derived from her oeuvre when he writes: "Mary has, as one of the very few painters, succeeded in injecting a new onthology [*sic*] of 'indeterminacy' to the essentially heavy and immovable art of painting."[26] "Indeterminacy" does not appear to be foregrounded in Bauermeister's work to the same extent it was for John Cage or Paik himself in the evolution of their aesthetics, Bauermeister, too, nevertheless participated in that discourse in several works. More remarkable is Paik's reference to "ontology" and "painting," since a look at the Lens Box legitimately raises the question of categories for these objects; several of them approach sculptures, while others should be categorized rather as paintings. Though they seem outdated from our present perspective, the 1960s—that is, the period in which Bauermeister developed the Lens Box—were characterized by "trench wars" over interpretive authority.[27] Bauermeister herself avoided these discourses: on the one hand, by neither writing texts nor joining a group of artists and, on the other hand, by the art-immanent analyses that she foregrounded. They also revealed the "new ontology" that made the works seem to be aesthetic, theoretical object with which reflexive statements of networking could be made.

In 1965, in one of her few published historical statements, Bauermeister describes her method as fragmentation, process, and compound: "Each work becomes in itself a statement and with each new work I try to enlarge and change that

26 *Nam June Paik and Mary Bauermeister, Letters Mary Bauermeister*, ed. Sang Ae Park (Yongin: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2015), 162. His text was originally written for the exhibition Recent Paintings and Constructions at the Staempfli Gallery in New York, which was held from February 29 to March 25, 1972.

27 Formalist art critics such as Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried called for a particular concept of medium specificity that was challenged by artists with their own interpretations Paradigmatic essays include those of Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Alan Kaprow, who not only explained their own artistic approach but at the same time distinguished themselves from formalism. The escalation of this period is ironized in Tom Wolfe's *The Painted Word*: critics and artists produce words to offer the public instructions for the reception: "The new order in the art world was: first you get the Word, and then you can see." Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 54.

special statement."[28] Each work of art can be viewed as a unity in itself and already makes a special statement. This, however, will also be applied to all of the following works in that they contain both extensions and changes. This demonstrates, first, Bauermeister's antidogmatic approach; in her works she repeatedly commented on, questions, and contradicts decisions—even explicitly rejected them. From this follows, too, however, that the compound of works of art is already contained in the single work since all of them are involved in a statement. The quotation from Henri Bergson in the epigraph shines through here; it should be understood as another key to Bauermeister's oeuvre: The individual works contain the whole, participate in it, but the simple sum of those individual works does not produce the work as a whole. Statements in art are not reproduced but rather are subject to an evolution that combines them with one another in such a way that not only the works but also small details from them already form "partial views" of the whole. The "indivisible continuity" that Bergson describes, which keeps everything in an "endless flow," provides a metaphorical access.[29] In Bauermeister's works, the statements are repeatedly challenged in a work-immanent way; that is precisely how the individual participates in the whole.

As a summary of Bauermeister's oeuvre, the formula "yes, no, perhaps" has blind spots, like any interpretation. These blind spots should be, as far as possible, addressed in the chapters. "Truth" is, according to Friedrich Nietzsche, merely an "army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms"; with time we have forgotten that our metaphors are not truths but rather illusions.[30] According to Nietzsche, art has the advantage that it can tear apart the "rigid and regular web of concepts."[31] Although putting complex contexts in order is, therefore, dependent to some degree on formulas or metaphors, they are merely an illusory approach. Works of art and especially the formation of a corpus of works that has been unfolding for more than sixty-five years are too diverse for apodictic formulas or final interpretations. The potentiality of art consists precisely of going beyond discourses bound to language. Because the three words "yes, no, perhaps" themselves have a broad framework of associations in this particular sequence, they come closest to her oeuvre. Purely quantitatively, the three expressions are presumably the most often written concepts in Bauermeister's works. They occur in a large number of works, sometimes explicitly

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

29 Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (see note 2), 5.

30 Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in Nietzsche, *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas, trans. Ladislaus Löb, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 253–64, esp. 257. Nietzsche's explicit critique of metaphysics will be countered below with an extension of metaphysics.

31 Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie" (see note 30), 262.

in this group of three, sometimes alone or in constant repetition, only briefly interrupted by one of the others. They do not attempt to advance a Hegelian dialectic, so that there is a mediation between them that creates a process of dissolution in that one or more words is left behind "richer because it negates or opposes the preceding."[32] Rather, they contain a Spinozian tendency "Each individual thing endeavors, in so far as it can, to preserve its own being."[33] Each of the words of "yes, no, perhaps" has its own identity in Bauermeister's art, and none of them can be subordinated to any other.

32 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33.

33 *The Ethics of Benedict Spinoza, Demonstrated after the Methods of Geometers, and Divided into Five Parts*, trans. D[aniel] D[rake] S[mith] (New York: D. Van Nostrand; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1888), 136, Postulate, Proposition VI.