In Advance of the Broken Image: Gerhard Richter and Gustav Metzger's Confrontations with Nazi Criminality

Larissa Allwork

In *Final Solution: The Fate of Jews 1933–1949* (2016), archive photographs of the Nazi perpetrators, local collaborators and their victims preserved in The Wiener Library, Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute are used to evidence David Cesarani's narrative of persistent German genocidal intent and, 'the active or passive cooperation of the populations amongst whom the Jews dwelt'.[1] Photographs reproduced vary between the now iconic image of antisemitic humiliation, 'Jews made to clean pavements in Vienna, 1938', to an image of uniformed perpetrators convening a roll-call of prisoners at Sachsenhausen concentration camp (February 1941) and a chilling photograph of victims being selected at Auschwitz by the SS, observed by members of the Sonderkommando (May–June 1944).[2]

---

[1] David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2016), 796.
[2] For a list of the photographs used in Cesarani, *Final Solution*, see xiv–xvi.

L. Allwork (✉)
University of Derby, Derby, UK
e-mail: L.Allwork@derby.ac.uk

Moreover, in some respects, even more pointed in their evidential intent are the photographs included in Cesarani's earlier book, *Justice Delayed* (1992). This documented the role of Baltic and Ukrainian collaborators in the Holocaust and the complicity of British intelligence in covering up the behaviour of these individuals during the Cold War.[3] Emblematic of this are the contrasting photographic portraits of Paulis Reinhards reproduced from a Searchlight dossier in the 1992 edition of *Justice Delayed*. In the first formal photographic portrait, Reinhards is the young steely-eyed Minister of Labour in the collaborationist Latvian regime, which the Simon Wiesenthal Centre claimed recruited local Waffen-SS volunteers. In the second, is the pixelated newsprint face of the older Reinhards, bespectacled and wearing a trilby, an immigrant to the UK after the war. Indeed, by the 1980s, Reinhards had become the subject of war crimes media controversies in the *Daily Mirror* and the *London Daily News*.[4] More iconic are the reproductions of the images of Adolf Eichmann in Cesarani's biography, which visually narrate the life of the man from smart, suited youth, to leading functionary of the Nazi Sicherheitsdienst (SD), through to his postwar exile in Argentina and final years facing imprisonment, investigation and trial in Jerusalem in the early 1960s.[5]

This chapter will explore the meaning of these types of images, including photographic portraits, photographs of atrocity and media images and will ask how they have been re-appropriated in artistic interventions to instigate cultural as opposed to legal confrontations with Nazi criminality. For as Cesarani noted in his 'introduction' to *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961*, 'Although representations, of and by, survivors have been legion and subjected to critical scrutiny, it is remarkable that representations of the perpetrators have escaped the same degree of inquiry.'[6] This chapter will analyze these cultural confrontations with Nazi criminality by focusing on the works of two artists: Gerhard Richter (1932–) and Gustav Metzger (1926–2017). Richter's *Uncle Rudi* (*Onkel Rudi*, 1965) and *Mr Heyde* (*Herr Heyde*, 1965) will be analyzed in

---

[3] David Cesarani, *Justice Delayed: How Britain became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals* (London: Phoenix Press, 1992).

[4] Ibid., 201 and centrefold of photographic plates.

[5] See centrefold of photographic plates in David Cesarani, *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes* (London: Vintage Books, 2005).

[6] David Cesarani, "Introduction," in *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust*, ed. David Cesarani (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 13.

what will be described here as his Marcel Duchamp inspired performance of the persona of the 'anti-ideological artist' in order to obliquely confront the Third Reich's criminality.[7] By contrast, Metzger's *Historic Photographs* series (1995–1998) will be interpreted in terms of his more strident Dada influenced performance of the artist as 'subversive social activist' in order to confront the Nazi past.[8] Admittedly, Metzger's presence blurs the role of Cesarani's aforementioned comment in *After Eichmann*, embodying as he does both the perspective of the survivor (Metzger was a German Jewish Kindertransport refugee to Britain) and the role of an artist who is not only interested in representations of the Nazi's victims but also representations produced by and of the German perpetrators and their collaborators. A related yet distinct blurring also occurs in relation to Richter and the painting of his relative, *Aunt Marianne* (*Tante Marianne*, 1965) who was a victim of the Nazi's 'Euthanasia' campaign.

Moreover, rejecting pure abstraction and silence in favour of photographic re-appropriation, performance and the involvement of the spectator in the work, Richter and Metzger's pieces demonstrate how aesthetic strategies in relation to tackling the Nazi past are inextricably embedded in avant-garde visual and performance styles which were persecuted by the Nazis as 'degenerate' in the 1930s and 1940s. However, it is arguable that since 1945 these styles have provided artists such as Richter and Metzger with an avant-garde inspired language in confronting Nazi criminality. Thus, this chapter's consideration of how these artists face the Nazi past through performing, constructing or re-appropriating the medium of the photograph is in itself significant. Photographs derive their power from the fact that they are a trace of the 'real'. As Roland Barthes noted in *Camera Lucida*, 'The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent.'[9] However, as epitomized by Susan Sontag's infamous admission of the emotionally shattering effect of encountering atrocity images of Bergen-

[7] *Uncle Rudi* (1965), *Mr Heyde* (1965) and *Aunt Marianne* (1965) were on display at Gerhard Richter *Panorama*, Tate Modern, London (6 October 2011–8 January 2012). For reproductions of the images, see the exhibition catalogue: Mark Godfrey, Nicholas Serota, Dorothée Brill, and Camille Morineau, *Gerhard Richter: Panorama* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 60–62.

[8] Gustav Metzger's *Historic Photographs* were on display at the *Gustav Metzger: History, History* exhibition, Generali Foundation, Vienna (11 May–28 August 2005). For images, see the exhibition catalogue: Sabine Breitwieser, ed., *Gustav Metzger: History History* (Vienna: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 220–221.

[9] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 76–77.

Belsen and Dachau in a Santa Monica book store,[10] the role of photographs in documenting Nazi crimes in the 1930s and 1940s and the question of how and even if, these images should be used for pedagogy, exhibition, display and other creative purposes remains ethically fraught. This is particularly true in cases where atrocity photographs are problematic in evidential terms because they lack historical context or attribution. There can also be issues in their use if they have been created by the perpetrator and are structured by what Marianne Hirsch has called a 'murderous National Socialist Gaze', or threaten to re-victimize the victims through the abnegation of individuality and the anonymity of images of mass death.[11] Clearly, these issues remain most prescient for the consideration of Metzger's use of Nazi produced images in the *Historic Photographs*, although wider controversies associated with the re-appropriation of iconography linked to the Third Reich is also an issue encountered in Richter's photo-based portraits.

This leads to the final reason as to why this analysis is significant, namely the context of representational debates in Holocaust Studies. The allegedly Duchampian influenced works by Richter and Dada inspired works by Metzger challenge the post-1945 cultural discourse that a literary and visual lexicon did not exist to communicate the horror of war and genocide and that the only appropriate response to Auschwitz and Nazi-era crimes was a highly simplistic interpretation of Adorno's argument in texts such as *Negative Dialectics* (1966) for a proximity to 'silence',[12] or the Lyotard inspired notion that it was only the creation of new phrases and representational forms that could communicate the extreme horror of the Holocaust.[13] Here it will be shown how Duchampian and Dadaist influenced strategies such as, satirical collage, shocking performance, repulsion

[10] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Double Day), 19–20.

[11] Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press), 235. See also: Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

[12] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York; London: Continuum, 1973). For nuanced analyses of Adorno's thought in relation to literature and poetry after Auschwitz, see Josh Cohen, *Interrupting Auschwitz* (New York; London: Continuum, 2003) and Michael Rothberg, "After Adorno: Culture in the Wake of Catastrophe," *New German Critique* 72 (1997): 45–81.

[13] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

and spectator engagement or another variant of what Matthew Boswell might refer to as forms of representational 'impiety',[14] have all played their part in confronting the legacies of Nazi criminality.

REFRAMING REPRESENTATION: NAZISM, DADAISM AND DUCHAMP

Before proceeding to an analysis of how Richter and Metzger re-appropriate historical photographs through Duchampian and Dadaist influenced artistic strategies in order to confront Nazi criminality, it is important to historically contextualize this analysis in how the Third Reich responded to these avant-garde figures and movements. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) was one of the key founders of conceptual art in the period between the First and Second World Wars, pioneering new forms of 'non-retinal' art such as the re-appropriation of everyday objects, the use of ironic or witty captioning and the performance of artistic personae. Although never a wholehearted member of the Dada movement, Duchamp was involved in its very early stages, knowing Francis Picabia while living in New York (1915–1917) and meeting the Paris Dadaists during visits to the city in 1919 and 1921.[15]

Dada crystallized out of the violence and chaos of the First World War and its aftermath. Its heterogeneous practitioners emerged spontaneously and simultaneously in many cities internationally, including Zurich, Berlin, Cologne, Hanover, Paris and New York. Loosely co-ordinated by figures such as Picabia, Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara and Richard Huelsenbeck, Dada was characterized by a rejection of the First World War, a critique of pre-war cultural values, a new celebration of irrationalism, a questioning of so-called 'bourgeois' forms of artistic production such as oil painting as well as a desire to reconnect art with social experience.[16] This was epitomized by provocative performances at the Cabaret Voltaire (1916), which featured Ball's mock rituals and sound poetry as well as Marcel Janco's masks, which were influenced by a Westernized projection of African culture.

---

[14] Matthew Boswell, *Holocaust Impiety* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[15] David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 2.

[16] Ibid., 2–3.

Widely considered the birthplace of Dada, the Cabaret Voltaire was culturally and geographically defined by the First World War, positioned as it was in neutral Switzerland and attracting refugee avant-garde performers and audience members from across Europe. As Dada practitioners diversified, its German artists (John Heartfield, Hannah Höch and Kurt Schwitters, among others) tended to be more overtly political and satirical, specifically through the mediums of photomontage and collage. For example, Heartfield's photomontages that critiqued the First World War included *Forced to Deliver Human Material* (1930) and *After Twenty Years* (1934). Heartfield's collages also included his famous satire of the financial contributions that wealthy industrialists made to the Nazi party, *Adolf, the Superman, Swallows Gold and Spouts Tin* (1934).

Both the Dadaists and Duchamp, who had returned more permanently to Paris in 1923 were affected by the Nazi's clampdown against what the Third Reich described as 'degenerate art' ('entartete kunst').[17] Adolf Hitler, once an aspiring artist himself deplored the internationalism, connection to liberal Weimar culture and what he perceived as the racial 'degeneracy' and elitist experimentalism of avant-garde art. Instead, the Third Reich mandated state supported art based on representations of the new 'Aryan' man and woman. It also publically commissioned architecture that aimed to recapture the grandeur of ancient Greek and Roman classicism, while artists were encouraged and expected to produce painting and sculpture which was populist and composed of representations rooted in the collective appeal of the nationalist German *Volk*.[18]

The Nazi campaign against avant-garde art was primarily implemented by the Reich Chamber of Creative Arts within the Reich Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. This campaign reached its zenith with the organization of the *Entartete Kunst* (*Degenerate Art*) exhibition in Munich (1937). On 30 June 1937, Josef Goebbels instructed the

---

[17] This terminology had been used in Paul Schultze-Naumberg's *Kunst und Rasse* (1928), which claimed that modern art was 'degenerate', and alleged that artists such as Amedeo Modigliani and Otto Dix based their visual style of representing the human form on photographs of the disabled, deformed or diseased. For more information see: Stephanie Barron, "Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," in '*Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (Los Angeles and New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991), 12–13.

[18] Adolf Hitler, "Source 281: Speech at the opening of the House of German Art, Munich, 19 July 1937," in *Nazism 1919–1945 Volume 2: State, Economy and Society*, eds. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1984/1997), 399.

president of the Reich Chamber of Creative Arts, Professor Adolf Ziegler, to requisition works from the collections of all major German museums for an exhibition of 'degenerate art'.[19] Goebbels defined 'degenerate' work as art which was perceived by the Nazi leadership to, 'insult German feeling or destroy or confuse natural form, or simply reveal an absence of adequate manual and artistic skill'.[20] Just one month later, on 19 July 1937, the hastily assembled *Entartete Kunst* exhibition was opened in Munich's former Institute of Archaeology.

One section of its display was particularly disparaging of the Dada movement. Works selected included pages from the periodical *Der Dada* by Hausman, Heartfield and George Grosz as well as Schwitters', *Merzbild* (*Merz picture*, 1920) and *Ringbild* (*Ring picture*, 1920).[21] Opposite the Dada wall was a quote by Hitler from a 1934 Nazi party rally in which he polemicized that, 'All the artistic and cultural blather of the Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists and the like is neither sound in racial terms nor tolerable in national terms.'[22] All this despite Futurist Filippo Marinetti's sympathy for Italian Fascism![23] Illustrating their ignorance, the exhibition's curators had also mistakenly attributed the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky to the Dada movement. Ironically, the *Degenerate Art* exhibition was incredibly popular, bringing two million visitors to Munich, before going on tour in Germany and Austria and attracting nearly one million more viewers.[24] By 1939, many of the confiscated works were auctioned in Lucerne, Switzerland or sold to foreign buyers to fund the Nazi party. The rest are thought to have been incinerated in Berlin.[25]

[19] Barron, "Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," in '*Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron, 19.

[20] Goebbels quoted in Barron, "Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," 19.

[21] Mario Andreas von Lüttichau, "*Entartete Kunst*, Munich 1937," in '*Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron, 54–57.

[22] Hitler quoted in Lüttichau, "*Entartete Kunst*, Munich 1937," 54.

[23] Ernest Lalongo, "Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the Futurist as Fascist, 1929-1937," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 18, 4 (2013): 393–418.

[24] Barron, "Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," 9.

[25] Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 27. The issues raised by the Third Reich's attack on so-called 'degenerate' art continue to resonate in museums, galleries and court cases. For example, see Malcolm Gee, "The 'Gurlitt Case': How a routine customs check uncovered a sensational Nazi-era art hoard," *The Conversation*, November 30, 2018, accessed 28 January, 2018, https://theconversation.com/the-gurlitt-case-how-a-routine-customs-check-uncovered-a-sensational-nazi-era-art-hoard-105604.

How did the artists concerned respond to the Nazi crackdown? Anti-Nazi collagist Heartfield fled the Third Reich for Czechoslovakia in 1933, while satirist of gender roles, Höch was forced into internal exile in Germany. Fellow collagist Schwitters crossed borders to Norway in 1937. However, following the Nazi occupation of Norway, he found himself in the UK facing a different form of intolerance as an interned 'enemy alien' in Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man. Some of Schwitters' experiences have been documented in Klaus E. Hinrichsen's chapter in Cesarani and Tony Kushner's edited collection on the internment of 'enemy aliens' in twentieth-century Britain. A fellow Hutchinson internee, Hinrichsen, was a friend of Schwitters and leader of the camp's cultural department. He has described how Schwitters painted traditional portraits of in-mates for a fee, whilst continuing his Dadaist practice in his attic studio through col-lages, moulding porridge sculptures and occasional performances of Dada style poems and stories in Hutchinson's large hall.[26] Whilst interned and awaiting release (which was finally achieved on 21 November, 1941), Schwitters described Dada as 'purely artistic, abstract and non-political', in a letter to sculptor, Ernst Blensdorf.[27] However, as a victim of Nazi oppres-sion and a British internee, it is difficult not to interpret Schwitters' con-tinuing Dadaist practice as an act of resistance in artistic form, if not in direct subject matter or political content. Collagist Heartfield faced a simi-lar set of wartime circumstances to Schwitters when he escaped from the Czech lands following the Nazi invasion in 1938, and was subsequently interned at Huyton Camp, near Liverpool.

As the Third Reich spread its cultural policies across its occupied terri-tories during the Second World War (as documented by Matthäus in this volume), more avant-garde artists fled or went into hiding. For example, Romanian Jewish Dadaist artist Janco left for Tel Aviv following the horror of the Bucharest Pogrom (1941),[28] whilst Duchamp emigrated to

[26] Klaus E. Hinrichsen, "Visual Art Behind the Wire," in *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain*, eds. David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 201–202. To see examples of oil painting portraits and abstract collages that Schwitters produced during his time interned in Hutchinson internment camp, see: Emma Chambers and Karin Orchard, eds., *Schwitters in Britain* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013), 36–41. For more on internment, see Rachel Pistol's chapter in this volume.

[27] 'Letter from Kurt Schwitters to Ernst Blensdorf,' in Hinrichsen, "Visual Art Behind the Wire," 201.

[28] Matthew Meadows, *Insider Art* (London: A & C Black Publishers, 2010), 71; Rudolf Kuenzli, *Dada* (London and New York: Phaidon, 2015).

New York on 14 May 1942 in response to the Nazi occupation of France. Art historian T.J. Demos has linked Duchamp's experience of occupation and exile to his miniature photographic and suitcase model reproductions of his collective works, interpreting them as demonstrating:

> … one solution to negotiate[ing] geopolitical homelessness. For the suitcase's central concerns of collection, reproduction, and portable storage address the needs of exile, defined by the loss of possessions, homesickness, and unending mobility.[29]

Demos goes even further in his book length study, systematically analyzing Duchamp's work in relation to the themes of exile and nationalism, arguing that: 'By avoiding all forms of self-same identity, secure relation to place, and notions of ideal unity',[30] Duchamp articulated, "an anti-national political commitment".'[31] Thus, the Nazis crackdown against 'degenerate art' not only profoundly affected avant-garde artists such as the Dadaists in Germany, but also avant-garde practitioners across Europe, the most fortunate of whom managed to emigrate, as evidenced in this chapter by the case of Duchamp.

This chapter will now show how post-1945 artists such as Richter and Metzger have revisited Duchampian and Dadaist visual strategies such as the self-conscious performance of artistic identity and the re-appropriation and re-contextualization of everyday objects and images such as photographs in order to mount their own public confrontations with Nazi criminality. As a result, Richter and Metzger's performance of artistic identity and style can be interpreted to be as important as visual content in challenging the 'silences' of the Nazi past. Indeed, the relationship between the performance of artistic identity observed here and the role of the spectator in interpreting the meaning of an art-work overlaps with how Kristine Stiles has defined 'performance art': 'In performance, artists present and represent themselves in the process of *being and doing*, and these acts take place in a cultural context for a public to witness.'[32] Thus, a central theme

---

[29] T.J. Demos, "Duchamp's Boîte-en-valise: Between Institutional Acculturation and Geopolitical Displacement," *Grey Room* 8 (2002): 10.

[30] T.J. Demos, *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 2.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Kristine Stiles, "Performance," in *Critical Terms for Art History: Second Edition*, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2003), 75.

of this chapter will be how Richter and Metzger discursively frame and perform their artistic personas in public or what Michel Foucault might call perform their 'author function' as social provocateurs who re-appropriate archive or media imagery in order to provoke the spectator's confrontation with Nazi criminality.[33]

REFRAMING RICHTER THROUGH DUCHAMP: PERFORMING THE 'ANTI-IDEOLOGICAL ARTIST'

Using Richter's writings and interviews, which have primarily been drawn from Hans Ulrich Obrist's 1993 edited volume which was 'carefully' translated into English by David Britt in 1995,[34] what will be offered here is a reading of the significance of Richter's painterly performance of the persona of the 'anti-ideological artist' and the Duchampian 'readymade' within the context of confronting Nazi criminality in West Germany in the mid-1960s. Richter's paintings that iconographically gesture towards the Nazi past include the aforementioned work, *Uncle Rudi* (*Onkel Rudi*, 1965) and *Mr Heyde* (*Herr Heyde*, 1965). Viewing these paintings within the context of Richter's 'Atlas' of source photography for the year 1962, Benjamin Buchloh has seen the juxtaposition of the painterly performance of personal images and mass media images as symptomatic of West Germany's everyday suppression of the Nazi past under the banality of normality.[35] For Robert Storr, by contrast, Richter's images, particularly his 'family paintings' gesture towards a particular experience which also stand more broadly for Germany's collective heritage.[36] Indeed, it is important to place Richter's paintings within the context of how the legal and political dynamics of the 1960s were crucial in inaugurating a more 'critical' attitude towards the Nazi past in West Germany.

[33] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *The Art of Art History*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 299–324.

[34] Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Preface," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting. Writings and Interviews, 1962–1993*, ed. Hans Ulrich Obrist (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 9.

[35] Paraphrasing of Buchloh's interpretation in Julia Gelshorn and Claudia Heide, "The Reception of History and the History of Reception. On the Contemporaneity of Gerhard Richter," *Art in Translation* 4, no. 2 (2012): 200. Benjamin Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 117–145.

[36] Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002).

A key public arena for instigating this more critical culture in the 1960s were public debates about Nazi war crimes. Whilst there had been important trials of former Nazi war criminals in West German courts in 1949, in the main the Adenauer government had demonstrated little interest in prosecuting former perpetrators. For example, between 1954 and 1964, the number of convictions by West German courts for Nazi crimes was just 25 to 50 per annum.[37] However, public consciousness of historic war crimes issues was reignited by the establishment in Baden-Württemberg of the Central Office for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes (1958). This drew particular attention to the pressing issue of West Germany's 15-year Statute of Limitations in relation to prosecuting the crime of murder. Without extension of the Statute, tens of thousands of former Nazi perpetrators would escape trial. This legal issue became the focus of controversial *Verjahrungsdebatte* in the West German parliament in 1960, 1965, 1969 and 1975.[38] Public attention to war crimes issues was further increased by the global impact of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem (1961), and closer to home, the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of SS personnel (1963–1965).

Emigrating from the German Democratic Republic (GDR, former East Germany) to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1963, Buchloh has also noted that Richter's experience of 'divided heritage' or 'double identity' between Communist East and Capitalist West is an important frame for interpreting his art-works.[39] In relation to this chapter, acknowledging this split between East and West is important for two reasons. First, it is important in terms of a consistent strand in the performance of Richter's public identity as an artist, particularly his proclaimed total scepticism towards all political ideologies. For example, in Richter's notes from 1962 he comments of coming the FRG: 'I did not come here to get away from "materialism": here its dominance is far more total and mindless. I came here to get away from the criminal "idealism" of the socialists.'[40] Composing his notes, 22 years later, Richter continued to maintain this 'anti-ideological' stance:

[37] Jeffrey Herf, "Politics and Memory in West and East Germany since 1961 and in United Germany since 1990," in *After Eichmann*, ed. Cesarani, 42.

[38] Ibid., 42.

[39] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter: Painting After the Subject of History," (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1994), xi–xii.

[40] "Notes, 1962," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 13.

23 April 1984. I committed myself to thinking and acting without the aid of ideology; I have nothing to help me, no idea that I can serve in return for being told what to do, no regulation that tells me how, no belief to show me the way, no image of the future, no construction that I can place on things in order to be given an over-riding meaning.

I recognize only what is, and in my view any description or pictorialization of what we do not know is meaningless. Ideologies seduce; they invariably exploit ignorance and legitimize war.[41]

Second, Richter's 'divided heritage' is significant because, as discussed in detail in Buchloh's 1986 interview with Richter, the artist's first sustained encounters with twentieth-century Western avant-garde art occurred after 1961 during his first years in the FRG.[42] This includes his encounters with Duchamp's work, which were initially mediated through contemporary artists such as Joseph Beuys and the Duchamp exhibition in Krefeld (1965).[43] Richter was conceptually influenced by Duchamp and the challenges that he had issued to painting, as evidenced in Richter's 1991 discussion with Jonas Storvse in relation to the influence of Duchamp on the paintings, *Woman Descending the Staircase* (1965), *Ema* (1966) and the object *Four Panes of Glass* (1967).[44] However, what is interesting for this analysis of the influence of Duchamp on Richter's work is the fact that in 1990 he intimated that his understanding of the Duchampian 'readymade',[45] was itself a kind of negotiation, a reference to Duchamp which was nonetheless clearly inflected by Richter's performance of his own peculiar 'anti-ideological' vision in his notes and writings. Of Duchamp's interventions, Richter writes:

30 May 1990. It seems to me that the invention of the Readymade was the invention of reality. It was a crucial discovery that what counts is reality, not any world-view whatever. Since then, painting has never represented reality,

[41] "Notes, 1984," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 108.
[42] "Interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 1986," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 137.
[43] Ibid.
[44] "Interview with Jonas Storvse," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 225. See Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*, for reproductions of *Woman Descending the Staircase* (129), *Ema* (137) and *Four Panes of Glass* (48).
[45] Duchamp's 'readymades', such as 'Fountain' (1917), a urinal signed R Mutt, were mass produced objects which are re-classified as 'art' as a result of authorial intervention strategies such as signing, altering, captioning or display of the object in the gallery space.

it has been reality (creating itself). And sooner or later the value of this reality will have to be denied, in order (as usual) to set up pictures of a better world.[46]

How then does Richter's 'anti-ideological' understanding of the 'readymades' contribute to understanding how his photo-based paintings of the mid-1960s are socially provocative and break taboos in relation to confronting the Nazi past? First, and as has been noted many times before, it highlights the importance of the reproducible or 'readymade' photographs in *Atlas* as the basis of Richter's paintings. Here it could also be argued that the limits of the influence of the 'readymade' are reached. This is because a 'readymade' is often characterized by the artist's direct intervention on the object itself (for example, Duchamp's artistic playfulness of signing 'R Mutt' on the urinal). By contrast, Richter's *Uncle Rudi* and *Mr Heyde* are not simply photographs altered, they are photographs mediated as paintings through Richter's hand. However, this does not necessarily negate the ability to interpret them as a form of 'readymade'. For as Duchamp commented in his 'Apropos of Readymades': 'Since the tubes of paint used by the artist are manufactured and readymade products we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are "readymades aided" and also works of Assemblage.'[47]

Second, the idea of the 'readymade' also indicates the significance of Richter's performance of the authorial pose of indifference in his early career writings and interviews with critics, namely the claim that he selected the photographic images that form the basis of 'family portraits' such as *Uncle Rudi* at random and with no care for content. This aligns with Duchamp's description of the paradoxical choice of his 'readymades' such as the commercial landscape watercolour prints, *Pharmacy* (1914) and the snow shovel that is inscribed *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915) that, 'The choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste … in fact a complete visual anesthesia.'[48] However, any analysis which focuses on how these images mark a confrontation with the Nazi past must bear in mind Julia Gelshorn

---

[46] "Notes 1990," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 218.

[47] Duchamp, "Apropos of 'Readymades," in *Salt Seller: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 141–142.

[48] Ibid.

and Claudia Heide's observation that in performing his artistic identity, Richter has often offered a contradictory and changing commentary on his approach to his works in his notes, interviews and writings.[49] For example, in the same 1984 interview that Richter cites the randomness of the selection of his photographic images for the 'family portraits', he also says that despite his pose of artistic indifference the images were selected with a view to content and that he did look for, '… photographs that showed my present life, the things that related to me'.[50]

These issues surrounding content coalesces with the third reason why the influence of the 'readymades' is significant for Richter's practice. That is in relation to the central importance of the captioning of Richter's photo-based paintings of the 1960s in gesturing towards their conceptual meaning. Thus, it is the title *Uncle Rudi* which anchors the image and transforms it into a personal confrontation with an admittedly un-named past, a past which is nonetheless implied by *Uncle Rudi's Wehrmacht* uniform, and problematized for the viewer by the smiling compliance of its wearer. Equally, it is Richter's (perhaps unconscious) decision to retain the newspaper captioning of the press image, *Mr Heyde* ('Werner Heyde in November 1959, turning himself into the authorities'), which gives the image its power as a confrontation with Nazi criminality. Werner Heyde was a German Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology and Head of the so-called Nazi 'Euthanasia' programme between 1939 and 1942. In 1946, a West German court sentenced Heyde to death in absentia, however, he managed to evade justice and began living under the pseudonym, Fritz Sawade. His assumed identity was revealed to police in 1959. He committed suicide whilst awaiting trial and died on 13 February 1964 at Butzbach prison.[51]

What is particularly significant about Richter's representation of *Mr Heyde* within the context of German memory politics is that it does depict

---

[49] Gelshorn and Heide, "The Reception of History and the History of Reception," 193–194.

[50] "Interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 1986," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 143–145. In an interview with Robert Storr in 2001, Richter also noted of his unwillingness to attribute meaning, 'I made those statements in order to provoke and in order not to have to say what I might have been thinking at that point, not to pour my heart out. That would have been embarrassing. I didn't know why I painted *Uncle Rudi* or *Aunt Marianne*. I refused to admit any kind of meaning that these paintings could have had for me.' See Robert Storr, "Interview with Gerhard Richter," in *Doubt and Belief in Painting*, by Robert Storr (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2003), 161.

[51] Robert S. Wistrich, *Wer war wer im Dritten Reich? Ein biographisches Lexikon* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001), 158–159.

a perpetrator associated with a group of Nazi victims which had been forgotten or marginalized by the dominant discourse of German victimhood in the preceding decade of the 1950s. According to Robert Moeller, at this time, '… when most West Germans spoke of victims, they were not referring to Germans who had suffered before May 1945 because of their race, religion, sexuality or politics.'[52] They were rather often speaking of German victims of the Soviet Red Army. The power of the confrontation with Nazi criminality indicated by *Mr Heyde*, is given added weight when it is placed in dialogue with Richter's unsettling and haunting family portrait, *Aunt Marianne* (*Tante Marianne*, 1965). Admittedly, Richter claimed in 2001 that any thematic connection between *Mr Heyde* and *Aunt Marianne*, was, 'Out of my mind, out of my consciousness' when these images were painted and that in terms of the significance of Heyde's criminality, 'I am sure I knew it. But I repressed it right away.'[53] The subject of *Aunt Marianne* is Richter's aunt, Marianne Schönfelder (1917–1945), who is holding Richter as a baby. Schönfelder was a victim of the Nazi's 'Euthanasia' campaign. She was forcibly sterilized in 1938, and in 1945 she died from an overdose of drugs, inadequate care and malnutrition at the Psychiatric Institution of Großschweidnitz in Saxony. Despite Richter's initial reluctance to explain the painting, the enigma at the heart of *Aunt Marianne* has been the subject of intense research since this time. This is evidenced by journalist Jürgen Schreiber's controversial 2005 book which revealed that unbeknownst to Richter, his father-in-law, Heinrich Eufinger had also been active in the Nazi's 'Euthanasia' campaign.[54]

Within this context, Richter's paintings can be read as emblematic of shifting generational attitudes towards the Nazi past in West Germany which occurred during the 1960s and which have been extensively analyzed by scholars such as Moeller and Dirk Moses.[55] However, Richter's reticence in relation to discussing these images also perhaps gestures towards what Mary Fulbrook has pointed to as the paradox of the Nazi past in 1960s West Germany. Namely, that whilst there was growing pub-

[52] Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

[53] Storr, "Interview with Gerhard Richter," 164.

[54] Jürgen Schreiber, *Ein Maler aus Deutschland. Gerhard Richter – Das Drama einer Familie* (München; Zürich: Pendo Verlag, 2005).

[55] Moeller, *War Stories*, 19; Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

lic controversy around Nazi war crimes, 'the overwhelming majority of the perpetrators evaded the net of justice' and many Germans continued to experience profound identity struggles in relation to having family connections to this history.[56] Nonetheless, Richter's verbal reticence co-existed with his visual output which continued to demonstrate experiments in social provocation and breaking taboos in regards to this past. For example, his juxtaposition of pages in *Atlas* for the year 1967 features sections showing photographs of the liberation of the camps next to images of pornography. Originally these images were being collected for a Düsseldorf Gallery exhibition with Konrad Lueg, which was aborted when Richter, 'saw no moral or formal solution for how to exhibit the camp and porno pictures … We would have gotten a lot of attention, but it would have been unproductive and inadequate.'[57] Although this exhibition was (perhaps thankfully) unrealized, the marrying of sex and death in *Atlas* nonetheless brings to mind former Buchenwald concentration camp prisoner Boris Lurie's highly controversial *Railroad Collage* (1963). It also chimes with the Dadaists original use of collage for provocation and shock value. This propensity for provocation is also one of the reasons why English and Judaic Studies scholar James E. Young, among others, have cited Richter as a key influence on some of the artists exhibiting in the highly controversial *Mirroring Evil* exhibition at the New York Jewish Museum in 2002.[58]

If Richter's tendency towards transgression in *Atlas* perhaps needs to be placed within the 1960s German context of sociological, psychological and New Left debates about perceived links between sexual repression and Nazism,[59] his ambivalence in interviews towards directly confronting the Nazi past has persisted. For example, Richter insisted that he could not paint the camps until the approach taken in his 2014–2015 photo-based paintings, *Birkenau,* while in regards to the fact that it has only been relatively recently that the biographical details of the 'family paintings' have been extensively discussed, Richter admitted in a 2005 interview that:

[56] Mary Fulbrook, *Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

[57] Storr, "Interview with Gerhard Richter," 164.

[58] James E. Young, "Looking into the Mirrors of Evil," in *After Eichmann*, ed. Cesarani, 164.

[59] Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005).

I had no desire for people to discuss these matters. I wanted them to see the paintings, not the painter and his relatives, otherwise they would have somehow given me a label, reached a premature conclusion. In truth, factual information—names or dates—have never interested me much.[60]

On the other hand, Richter has discussed how paintings such as *Uncle Rudi* can be seen within the context of the experiences of the German postwar generation. Namely, the loss of heroic father figures owing to death, war trauma or them being collectively tarnished by public knowledge of the Third Reich's crimes. Within this emotionally complex collective landscape of mourning and guilt Richter has noted that, 'Every child wants a father to be proud of.'[61] Capturing the performance of this simultaneous recognition and distancing from male role models from the Nazi past is a black and white, professional photograph taken of Richter in Düsseldorf, Meerbusch in 1971. Richter is dressed in a smart, collared, knee length coat and he is positioned against the backdrop of a barrier wall and municipal building. The posing of Richter in this photograph and the mis-en-scène are significant because they can be interpreted as visually echoing the composition of *Uncle Rudi*.[62]

Indeed, if Richter's 'uncertainty' and refusal to attribute overarching meaning to the process of selecting images, the performance of painting or the ultimate meaning attached to these images is often frustrating, it is also significant.[63] This is because it can be read as Richter's performance of a socially provocative artistic persona that embodies a radically 'uncertain' thinking that is one response to the totalitarian intellectual threats of political dogmatism and domination issued by Nazism and Soviet Communism. It also arguably reflects the 'grey zone' of Richter's personal relationships—his Uncle a uniformed member of the Third Reich; his Aunt one of its vulnerable victims.

[60] Richter quoted in "*SPIEGEL* interview, conducted by Susanne Beyer and Ulrike Knöfel, 2005," Gerhard Richter, accessed November 9, 2018, https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/quotes/search/?keyword=beyer&year-from=&year-to=.

[61] Richter quoted in "Interview with Babette Richter, 2002," Gerhard Richter, accessed November 9, 2018, https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/quotes/search/?keyword=babette&year-from=&year-to=.

[62] "Düsseldorf, Meerbusch. 1971" (Unknown photographer), in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 44.

[63] For Richter's commentary on the importance of 'uncertainty', see: "Interview with Sabine Schütz, 1990," in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting*, 215.

Reframing Metzger Through Dada: The Artist as 'Subversive Social Activist'

Gustav Metzger, born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1926 was also like Richter a key member of the post-Second World War avant-garde, producing his most infamous 'Auto-Destructive' art-works in the early 1960s. However, unlike Richter, his familial perspective on the Third Reich came from the position of the Nazi's Jewish victims. The son of Polish-Jewish parents who settled in Germany, he and his brother came to the UK with the support of the Refugee Children's Movement in 1939.[64] However, if the memory of the Kindertransport in British Holocaust memorial culture has often supported redemptive narratives which overlook difficult histories of familial rupture and problematic UK refugee policies past and present,[65] Metzger's work itself has remained unapologetically radical. His art has embodied a critique of late capitalism, the atomic nuclear threat and with works such as the *Historic Photographs* series (1995–1998) and *Eichmann and the Angel* (2005), an engagement with themes relating to human responsibility for the perpetration of atrocities globally, including the crimes of the Nazis.

The *Historic Photographs* series is an installation of blow-up photographs of challenging images of conflict, atrocity and environmental destruction. They are frequently displayed internationally, for example in the major Metzger retrospective, *Act or Perish!* (2015–2016).[66] *The Historic Photographs* force viewers to perform an unexpected encounter with disturbing images which are now often repetitively recycled in the mass media. For example, in relation to the Third Reich, these include crawling under a cloth in order to reveal the humiliating image of Viennese Jews scrubbing the pavement during the Anschluss (1938),

---

[64] Breitwieser, *Gustav Metzger: History History*, 14.

[65] Tony Kushner, "Britain, the United States and the Holocaust: In Search of a Historiography," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 267–268; Chad McDonald, "'We became British aliens': Kindertransport refugees narrating the discovery of their parents' fates," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 24, 4 (2018): 396. Dan Stone, "The Kindertransport was controversial too—it teaches us that hostility can be overcome," Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right, accessed November 23, 2018, http://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/11/23/the-kindertransport-was-controversial-too-it-teaches-us-that-hostility-can-be-overcome/.

[66] Pontus Kyander and Dobrila Denegri, eds., *Gustav Metzger: Act or Perish! A Retrospective* (Rome: Nero, 2016).

while a blow-up image of Hitler Youth members saluting the Führer is blocked by a metal screen.[67] Specific images used by Metzger to confront the Nazi's wartime criminality include the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau and 'the Warsaw Ghetto child', an image that remains deeply troubling owing to its origins in *The Stroop Report* (1943). This was a photograph album which was created by the Nazi perpetrators to document the persecution of the Jews and the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto.[68] As will be discussed in more detail, part of the effect of Metzger's installations is to get the viewer to reflect on the consequences of the ongoing global proliferation of mass media representations of the Third Reich and Nazi crimes in the 1990s and 2000s.[69]

The *Historic Photographs* series also confronts other tragedies including the Massacre on the Mount (Jerusalem, 1990), the Oklahoma Bombing (1995) and frightened child civilians during the Vietnam War.[70] The re-appropriation of these photographs can be viewed as problematic in the installation's de-contextualization of historical specificity, opening up possibilities for the bringing together of controversial and yet underdeveloped comparisons (Nazi and Israeli violence; Nazi and American far-right terrorism), while at the same time omitting other histories. For example, it is perhaps symptomatic of Metzger's left-wing predilections that unlike Richter's critique of Soviet socialist ideology there is no image to represent Stalinist or Maoist violence. Indeed, viewed from the perspective of 26 May 2016 onwards, *The Historic Photographs* have arguably become even more provocative. This is because of the publication of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's adopted decision on defining anti-semitism which includes, 'Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.'[71] Given this context, how do museums and

[67] See images in section on "Historic Photographs" in Gary Carrion-Murayari and Gioni Massimiliano, eds., *Gustav Metzger* (New York: New Museum, 2011), n.p.

[68] Ibid; Maiken Umbach and Elizabeth Harvey, "Introduction: Photography and Twentieth-Century German History," *Central European History* 48 (2015): 292.

[69] Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, 1 (2002): 95–96; Amos Goldberg and Haim Hazan, eds., *Marking Evil: Holocaust Memory in the Global Age* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015).

[70] See images in section on "Historic Photographs" in Carrion-Murayari and Gioni, *Gustav Metzger*, n.p.

[71] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, "Working Definition of Antisemitism," accessed November 16, 2018, https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/stories/working-definition-antisemitism.

galleries now handle the presentation of these art-works? Is their responsibility towards preserving the artist's vision and provoking public discussion or protecting community groups from possible offence? Does the fact that these images are 'historic' rather than 'contemporary' omit them from consideration under this definition? Is it right or even fair to open these art-works up to this scrutiny given the artist's status as a Kindertransport refugee and therefore his status as a historic victim of antisemitism? Thus, the future challenge posed by exhibiting the *Historic Photographs* is how to preserve Metzger's vision of the mobilizing power of revulsion to stimulate empathy, whilst recognizing their more problematic potentials for contemporary audiences.

Rather than Duchamp, if there is an early twentieth-century avant-garde influence on Metzger, it seems to be Dadaism, specifically the more political photo-collage works of Schwitters as well as Futurism and Russian Constructivism's creation of sculptures incorporating time and movement. In his 1996 essay reflecting on the significance of his concept of 'Auto-Destructive Art' (ADA), which Metzger had first articulated in a manifesto of 1959, he described the influence of the Dadaists on the theory, practice, performance and politics of ADA as follows:

> Dada was the purge that heals. It is said that Dada was destructive. Think of the Dadaists operating during and immediately after the First World War. They completely opposed the war. Being highly conscious, intelligent and responsible, they were in touch with developments such as the work of Freud and were sympathetic to ideas of revolution against capitalism. The aim was to subvert a social system that was butchering millions of people. Their aim was to undermine patterns of behaviour that verged on and were lunatic. Their aim was destructive. But destructive of what? This is the question that is crucial to a consideration of Dada as it is crucial whenever the subject of violence and destruction arises. "Destructive of what?" Of societies behaving as no barbarous people had behaved in history. Destructive of the "peace of mind", the "pleasure in the arts", the "moral integrity" of people directly or indirectly supporting war? The Dadaists in Zurich during the war were prophets and martyrs. And if there is one regret, it is that they did not destroy enough …

This document has become central to the controversy over alleged left-wing antisemitism in the UK Labour Party. For a summary of this controversy see: Pippa Crerar, "Timeline: Labour, Jeremy Corbyn and the antisemitism row," *The Guardian,* accessed November 16, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/aug/01/timeline-labour-jeremy-corbyn-antisemitism.

> I would like to say this as a tribute to the Dadaist's during the First World War. There is a great deal that I would like to destroy. I would like to see the destruction of the British economy. I would like to see the destruction of any economy in the world whose existence is dependent on the production of weapons of mass destruction; also the production of motor cars and numerous other products that damage man. A social system where thousands of men led by their trade unions, march and plead with the government, "Please don't cancel the beautiful phallic bombers we are making" should be destroyed.[72]

Of course, Metzger's reflections on ADA most clearly relate to performances such as the South Bank demonstration (1961) of Acid action painting, which embodies the public, time-based, self-destructive visual strategies associated with ADA and its political project, 'to deal rationally with a society that appears to be lunatic' in the Cold War age of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD).[73] Nonetheless, Metzger's thinking behind ADA can also be perceived to have informed the conceptualization of the *Historic Photographs* series. This is for three reasons, which arguably link back to Dada and its advocacy of shock and radical negativity. First, as Metzger has noted himself in relation to the contrast between ADA and the *Historic Photographs* series, 'ADA ends with nothing. Here we begin with nothing.'[74] The second is the 'aesthetic of revulsion'. This fascination with the power of revulsion demonstrates Metzger's affinities with the extreme performance practices of groups such as Hermann Nitsch's Orgies Mysteries Theatre (OMT). Nitsch's OMT responded to the destructive and violent histories of the West through transgressive and controversial performances which frequently featured ritual, nudity and animal sacrifice.[75] Though less physically gory than OMT, Metzger's conceptualization of the 'aesthetic of revulsion' was an important part of ADA art-works because:

[72] Gustav Metzger, "Auto-destructive art," in Gustav Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art* (Nottingham: Russell Press, 1996), 29–31.

[73] Ibid., 27.

[74] Gustav Metzger, "Killing Fields. Sketch for an Exhibition," in Breitwieser, *Gustav Metzger: History History*, 284.

[75] Stiles, "Performance," 89. In July 1967, Metzger and co-organizer John Sharkey were found guilty of presenting 'an indecent exhibition contrary to common law' at the 1966 *Destruction in Art Symposium*. This was following a performance by Nitsch's OMT (Kristine Stiles, "Survival Ethos and Destruction Art," *Discourse* 14, 2 (spring 1992): 85.

Varying with the observer, many disintegrating materials and surfaces can elicit the response of revulsion. In auto-destructive art the artist can make use of these to achieve a form of catharsis in the spectator. Auto-destructive art seeks to remind people of the horrors which they are perpetrating, and is a warning and an admonition to reverse this direction. By setting up large-scale industrially produced sculptures in a process of disintegration, auto-destructive art, through the aesthetic of revulsion can lead people to a rejection of many aspects of our civilization.[76]

Furthermore, the construction of the *Historic Photographs* series can be seen to coalesce with Metzger's critique of the deadening effects of the media, complaining in his essay 'Nature Demised Resurrects as Environment', that, 'The media bludgeons people into passive response. Saturated with bad vibrations, people can no longer react with basic instinctual horror at all that is thrown at them.'[77] The performance of the photograph by the spectator in the *Historic Photographs* series can thus be seen as an attempt to reawaken this 'basic instinctual horror' through the encounter with the photograph in an unfamiliar environment. In so doing, this performance of the photograph is designed to awaken the spectator to the transformative potential of what Metzger would call the 'aesthetic of revulsion' in this case associated with the encounter with the disturbing image.

Indeed, Metzger's specific political intentions behind the *Historic Photographs* series were addressed in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in 1996. To the question that his work is about guilt in public space, Metzger replied:

Yes. But it has to do with Willy Brandt kneeling down in Warsaw—very public, as head of the German government. He knelt down in front of this monument. It's world famous. I think what I'm doing is offering everybody the chance to kneel down in front of history. Just walking in means accepting the heaviness, the weight of history—which is a good thing for people to do, to go in and confront the past. Presenting oneself against that history means you have the chance to transform yourself. You have a chance to

---

[76] Metzger, "Auto-destructive art," in Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*, 44–45.

[77] Metzger, "Nature demised resurrects as environment," in Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*, 19.

change. That is really what my work is about: offering people the chance to change through a work of art.[78]

Metzger's reference to Social Democratic Chancellor Brandt's *Kniefall* at the memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (7 December, 1970) is significant in symbolizing how the *Historic Photographs* seek to provoke public confrontations with the legacies of Nazi criminality because as historian Jeffrey Herf has noted: 'The *Kniefall* was the first time that a West German Chancellor had so publicly expressed remorse for what the Germans had done to the Jews and the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during World War II.'[79] That said, the global subject matter of the *Historic Photographs* means that they provoke not just a *Kniefall* for Nazi crimes, but a *Kniefall* for humanity's continuing propensity for violence.

Given Metzger's commentary on his artistic practice, it is possible for Stiles to claim in relation to the significance of the themes of 'destruction', 'collective awareness and resistance' in the works of not just Metzger but his fellow 'Destruction artist', Rafael Montanez Ortiz, that their 'overriding values are ethical'.[80] Thus, Metzger represents a different kind of performance of the persona of the artist to Richter, embodying not the charge of 'uncertainty' but rather the role of the artist as, in the words of *Frieze* writer, Krzysztof Kosciuczuk, 'an engaged member of society, one who actively reacts to the present day with the means at his disposal, before it turns to history'.[81]

However, if Metzger's desire to involve the spectator in the use of artistic performance strategies in order to confront the history of conflict, atrocity and destruction is laudable, it is nonetheless problematic. This is because there is no assurance that through the performative encounter with these photographs the spectator will take home the ethical charge of confronting the past or building a more peaceful future. As Duchamp wryly notes, there

[78] Gustav Metzger in Hans Ulrich Obrist and Gustav Metzger, *The Conversation Series: Volume 16* (Köln, Germany: Walther König, 2009), 32.

[79] Herf, "Politics and Memory in West and East Germany since 1961 and in United Germany since 1990," in *After Eichmann*, ed. Cesarani, 47.

[80] Stiles, "Survival Ethos and Destruction Art," 77.

[81] Krzysztof Kosciuczuk, "Weekly Review: Gustav Metzger—Centre of Contemporary Art, Toruń," *Frieze.com*, accessed November 16, 2018, https://frieze.com/article/weekly-review-gustav-metzger-centre-contemporary-art-toru%C5%84.

is a 'personal "art co-efficient"'[82] or gap between what the artist intends to communicate and what is registered by the spectator of art. Taking Metzger's use of representations of Nazism to delineate two extreme examples, the spectator's 'gaze' in the performative engagement with the *Historic Photographs* could vary from what Hirsch has called the repetitive therapeutic role of re-contextualized Holocaust imagery for members of the Jewish 'post-memorial' generation to a Neo-Nazi sympathizer's potential re-enactment of an antisemitic 'National Socialist Gaze'.[83] For as Sontag pithily notes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, a comment that is just as relevant to Metzger as it is to those gallery visitors who engage with his re-appropriations: 'The photographer's intentions do not determine the meaning of the photograph, which will have its own career blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it.'[84]

CONCLUSION

In 2001, Richter used Arendt's term 'banality of evil' to refer to his painting *Mr Heyde*. For Richter 'banality' carries multiple meanings, it can be important, horrific and terrifying.[85] Referring to the *Mirroring Evil* exhibition, in 2005, David Cesarani noted, 'The iconic images of Eichmann in his Nazi salad days and later in his box in Jerusalem, have been noted but hardly deconstructed.'[86] Coinciding with the same year as Cesarani published these words Metzger's installation *Eichmann and the Angel* (2005) brought together a bullet-proof witness box, stacks of newspapers, a transmission belt and a reproduction of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920). This series of spaces and objects were designed to provoke reflection on Eichmann's crimes and Arendt's now iconic yet flawed act of witnessing.[87] Individually these parts are disconnected, but together they form a

[82] Duchamp, "The Creative Act," in *Salt Seller*, 138–140.

[83] Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Zelizer, 218 and 235.

[84] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London and New York: Penguin, 2003), 39.

[85] Storr, "Interview with Gerhard Richter," 167–168.

[86] Cesarani, "Introduction," in *After Eichmann*, 13.

[87] Cubitt Gallery, "Eichmann and the Angel, 7 September 2005–23 October 2005," Cubitt Gallery, London, accessed November 16, 2018, http://cubittartists.org.uk/2005/09/06/gustav-metzger/. For Cesarani's critique of Arendt see, David Cesarani, *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes* (London: Vintage, 2005), 3–6.

constellation of themes and ideas offering pathways for future reflection on how Nazi perpetrators and their crimes have been represented since 1945.

This chapter has shown how artists such as Richter and Metzger utilized the photographic archive and pre-existing avant-garde artistic strategies to confront Nazi criminality. Richter's paintings and Metzger's *Historic Photographs* have been shown to have been influenced by Duchamp and Dadaism specifically. In adopting these representational methods Richter and Metzger both self-consciously perform their identity as artists and invite their audiences to confront the Nazi past through the practice-based legacies left by the inter-war avant-garde who were also persecuted by the Third Reich. Here Metzger's writings are particularly significant in showing how post-1945 performance strategies which tackle man-made catastrophes, such as Auschwitz, can be linked to earlier Dada inspired approaches to confronting the First World War; a conflict whose bloody trenches were simultaneously the site of heroic comradeship and the cruel crucible for what Cesarani has called Hitler's 'messianic quest to restore Germany's power'.[88]

References

Adorno, Theodor W. *Negative Dialectics*. Trans. E.B. Ashton. New York; London: Continuum, 1973.

Barron, Stephanie, ed. '*Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. Los Angeles and New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Boswell, Matthew. *Holocaust Impiety*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Breitwieser, Sabine, ed. *Gustav Metzger: History History*. Vienna: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005.

Buchloh, Benjamin H.D. *Gerhard Richter: Painting After the Subject of History*. PhD diss., City University of New York, 1994.

Buchloh, Benjamin. "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive." *October* 88 (Spring, 1999): 117–145.

Cesarani, David. *Justice Delayed: How Britain became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals*. London: Phoenix Press, 1992.

Cesarani, David. *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes*. London: Vintage Books, 2005.

Cesarani, David, ed. *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005.

---

[88] Cesarani, *Final Solution*, xxxii.

Cesarani, David. *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews*. London: Pan Macmillan, 2016.

Chambers, Emma and Karin Orchard, eds. *Schwitters in Britain*. London: Tate Publishing. 2013.

Cohen, Josh. *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy*. New York; London: Continuum, 2003.

Cubitt Gallery. "Eichmann and the Angel." London: Cubitt Gallery, September 7–October 23, 2005 Accessed November 16, 2018. http://cubittartists.org.uk/2005/09/06/gustav-metzger/.

Demos, T.J. "Duchamp's Boîte-en-valise: Between Institutional Acculturation and Geopolitical Displacement." *Grey Room* 8 (2002): 6–37.

Demos, T.J. *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.

Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" In *The Art of Art History*, edited by Donald Preziosi, 299–314. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Fulbrook, Mary. *Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Gee, Malcolm. "The 'Gurlitt Case': How a routine customs check uncovered a sensational Nazi-era art hoard." *The Conversation*, November 30, 2018. Accessed 28 January, 2018. https://theconversation.com/the-gurlitt-case-how-a-routine-customs-check-uncovered-a-sensational-nazi-era-art-hoard-105604.

Gelshorn, Julia and Claudia Heide. "The Reception of History and the History of Reception. On the Contemporaneity of Gerhard Richter." *Art in Translation*, 4, 2 (2012): 185–210.

Gerhard Richter. Accessed November 9, 2018. http://gerhard-richter.com.

Godfrey, Mark, Nicholas Serota, Dorothée Brill and Camille Morineau. *Gerhard Richter: Panorama*. London: Tate Publishing, 2011.

Goldberg, Amos and Haim Hazan, eds. *Marking Evil: Holocaust Memory in the Global Age*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015.

Herzog, Dagmar. *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Hinrichsen, Klaus E. "Visual Art Behind the Wire." In *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain*, edited by David Cesarani and Tony Kushner, 188–209. London; New York: Routledge, 1993.

Hopkins, David. *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. "Working Definition of Antisemitism." Accessed November 16, 2018. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/stories/working-definition-antisemitism.

Kosciuczuk, Krzysztof. "Weekly Review: Gustav Metzger – Centre of Contemporary Art, Toruń." *Frieze.com*. Accessed November 16, 2018. https://frieze.com/article/weekly-review-gustav-metzger-centre-contemporary-art-toru%C5%84.

Kuenzli, Rudolf. *Dada*. London and New York: Phaidon, 2015.

Kushner, Tony. "Britain, the United States and the Holocaust: In Search of a Historiography." In *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, edited by Dan Stone, 253–275. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Kyander, Pontus and Dobrila Denegri, eds. *Gustav Metzger: Act or Perish! A Retrospective*. Rome: Nero, 2016.

Lalongo, Ernest. "Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the Futurist as Fascist, 1929–1937." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 18, 4 (2013): 393–418.

Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznaider. "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory." *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, 1 (2002): 87–106.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

McDonald, Chad. "'We became British aliens': Kindertransport refugees narrating the discovery of their parents' fates." *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 24, 4 (2018): 395–417.

Meadows, Matthew. *Insider Art*. London: A & C Black Publishers, 2010.

Metzger, Gustav. *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*. Nottingham: Russell Press, 1996.

Moeller, Robert G. *War Stories*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2001.

Moses, Dirk. *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Noakes, Jeremy and Geoffrey Pridham, eds. *Nazism 1919–1945 Volume 2: State, Economy and Society*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1984/1997.

Obrist, Hans Ulrich, ed. *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting. Writings and Interviews, 1962–1993*. Trans. David Britt. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995.

Obrist, Hans Ulrich and Gustav Metzger. *The Conversation Series: Volume 16*. Köln: Walther König, 2009.

Rothberg, Michael. "After Adorno: Culture in the Wake of Catastrophe." *New German Critique* 72 (1997): 45–81.

Sanouillet, Michel and Elmer Peterson, eds. *Salt Seller: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1975.

Schreiber, Jürgen. *Ein Maler aus Deutschland. Gerhard Richter – Das Drama einer Familie*. München; Zürich: Pendo Verlag, 2005.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1989.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London and New York: Penguin, 2003.

Stiles, Kristine. "Survival Ethos and Destruction Art." *Discourse* 14, 2 (spring 1992): 74–102.

Stiles, Kristine. "Performance." In *Critical Terms for Art History: Second Edition*, edited by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 75–97. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2003.

Stone, Dan. "The Kindertransport was controversial too—it teaches us that hostility can be overcome." Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right. Accessed November 23, 2018. http://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/11/23/the-kindertransport-was-controversial-too-it-teaches-us-that-hostility-can-be-overcome/.

Storr, Robert. *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002.

Storr, Robert. *Doubt and Belief in Painting*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2003.

Umbach, Maiken and Elizabeth Harvey. "Introduction: Photography and Twentieth-Century German History." *Central European History* 48 (2015): 287–299.

Wistrich, Robert S. *Wer war wer im Dritten Reich? Ein biographisches Lexikon*. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001.