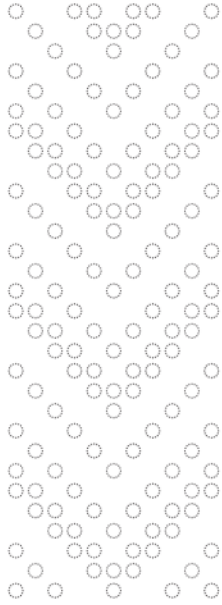
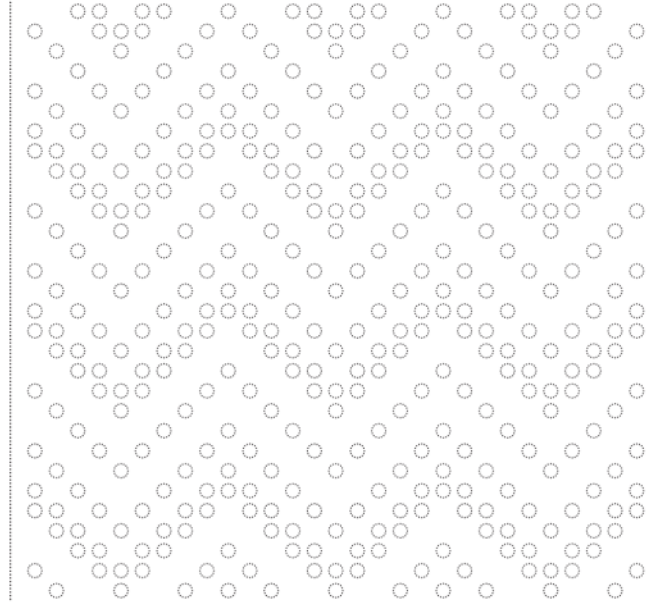


Rethinking

Dienstag, 22. September 2015
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METATEXTILE
IDENTITY AND HISTORY
OF A CONTEMPORARY ART MEDIUM
EDITED BY TRISTAN WEDDIGEN
EDITION IMORDE



Contents

7	Marco Costantini and Tristan Weddigen	Introducing Metatextile
13	Philippe Kaenel <i>Elisabeth Ohlson</i>	Le voile imagé La vera icon de Claude Mellan à
29	Mateusz Kapustka <i>Boltanski and the</i>	Folded Memory Clothes in the Art of Christian <i>Impossibility of Evidence</i>
41	Anna Lehniger <i>Brut and Beyond</i>	Embroidered Identity Textile Autobiographies in Art
51	Thomas Röske <i>Stick-, Näh- und Häkelwerke aus der Psychiatrie</i>	Krankheitssymptom oder kritisches Aufbegehren?
63	Florence Charpigny	Hantaï, Deschamps, Dolla Le textile à l'œuvre
75	Ursula Helg <i>von Identität in der zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst</i>	Das Textile und sein Schatten Zur Konstruktion
85	Stefania Caliendo <i>des œuvres Trames et parcours relationnels dans la création contemporaine brésilienne</i>	De l'œuvre d'art comme texte à la texture
95	Marina Giordano <i>Individual Identity and Collective Memory in the Work of Marisa Merz</i>	The Wefts of Intimacy Textile Art in the Feminine:
105	Birgit Schneider <i>Wiener</i>	Textile Codierungen Mediale Übersetzungen von Material und Struktur bei Elaine Reichek, Patricia Waller und Ingrid
117	Verena Kuni	Textile «SoftwAreZ» Maths, and Micro-Revolts
129	Merel van Tilburg <i>to a Theory of Flatness (Yoyoi Kusama, Mai-Thu Perret, Louise Bourgeois)</i>	Rethinking the Carpet Paradigm Critical Footnotes
141	Stefan Neuner <i>Nachlebens der Malerei bei Broodthaers, Buren und Rauschenberg</i>	Bild und Segel, Teil 2 Momente eines nautischen
165	Ole W. Fischer <i>on the Textile Origins of Modern Architecture</i>	Structural Ornament and Ornamental Structure? Notes
175	Nina Zschocke	Berühre mich! Textilrepräsentation als Aufforderung
187		Credits

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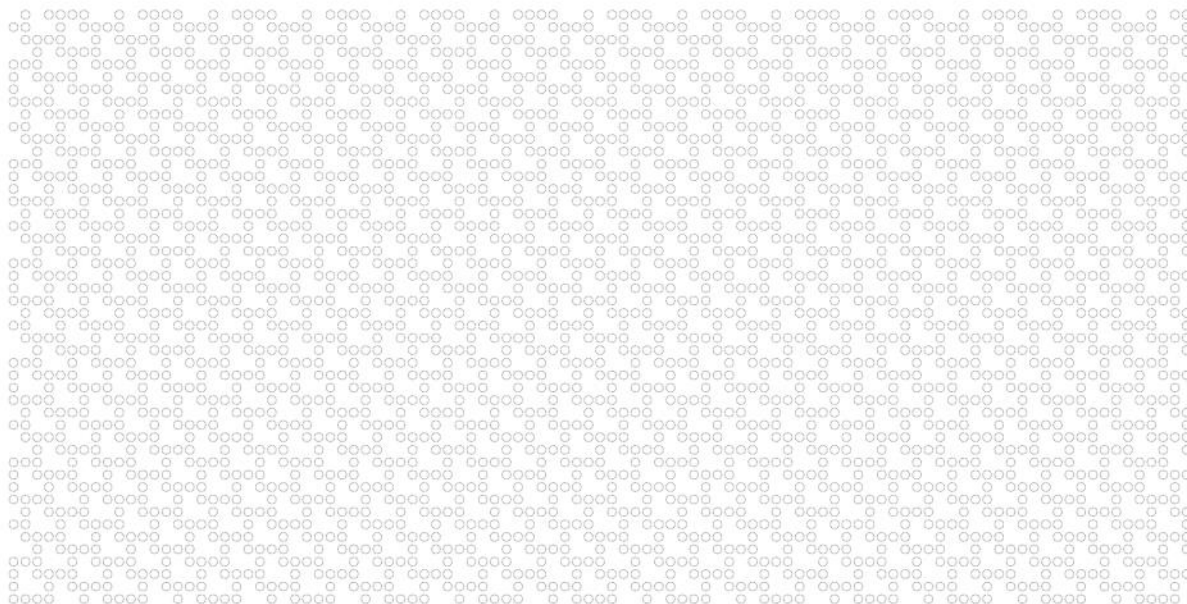
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In 1976, the art historian Joseph Masheck published an article entitled *The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness*.¹ This article was the first attempt at a thorough inquiry into the origins of the connection between design theory and modernist painting. Painting was often compared with carpets and wallpapers, but the comparison was seldom theorised. Masheck's prolegomena were never to be developed into a full-fledged 'theory of flatness'. 1976 appears to be a rather late date for opening remarks to such a theory: by then, as Masheck himself concedes, the modernist perspective in painting was being questioned from every possible angle.

More importantly, the notion of flatness in painting does not seem to lend itself very well to a theory. Even if there seems to have been a general consensus amongst critics and scholars that flatness was an important notion in the discussion of modernist painting, definitions of the term varied considerably. For example, Masheck's understanding of flatness differs from that developed by Clement Greenberg – the most prominent disseminator, if not the inventor of the notion of flatness as the single most important characteristic of modernist painting. Greenberg sees the literal flatness of the picture plane as the key element that distinguishes 'pictorial art' from other media or art forms. Flatness for him is the defining element of modernist painting, but not something that could or should be prescribed for painting.²

Masheck for his part gives a slightly stronger formulation, stating that concrete flatness «demands an integral planarity of all pictorial form».³ Furthermore, Greenberg finds an explanation of the observed emphasis on the pictorial plane's flatness as a development in the arts towards medium-specificity, following a general development in modernism towards self-criticism.⁴ Masheck situates the origin of the argument for flatness in painting solely in late 19th-century design theories. He speaks of 'decorative' flatness, limiting flatness to the realm of the image, and to the absence of a suggestion of space in the image. Flatness of the image, he argues, was first an ideal in interior design, and was then transferred to painting. During the second half of the 19th century, narrative and naturalism were progressively rejected, in certain types of painting as in the applied arts. Ornamental values came to be favoured over pictorial ones. For Masheck, building his argument on this development, decorativeness and flatness in painting go hand in hand.

The advocacy of flatness in late 19th century design regarded every decorative surface in the interior. Arguments in favour of flatness in



design patterns were based on the idea of material determination, or on the design dogma that a flat surface should present itself as such.⁵ In the comparison between painting and design, the oriental carpet came to be favoured over wallpaper as a flat surface with an all-over, abstract, simultaneous and flat pattern – even if a painting is destined to hang on a wall, not to cover the floor. One reason for this preference could be the relative commonness of wallpapers that had become a standard element in interior decoration in the last part of the 19th century, in Europe as well as in North America.⁶ A more important reason is perhaps that the abstract, all-over design of oriental carpets was also the ‘ground’ model for interior design: its decorative flat patterns quickly spread to other surfaces in the interior, such as upholstery, curtains, cushions, and wallpaper. One way or the other, the denomination ‘carpet paradigm’ was retained for painting, ‘paradigm’ here understood as a thinking model or example.

Interestingly, when taking the carpet as a thinking model for painting, flatness is not the only possible outcome. Focusing not on the design pattern but on the fabrication process of carpets and weavings, Hubert Damisch upturned the comparison between painting and the textile arts. Against retinal flatness, he postulated ‘thickness’ of the pictorial surface as the defining characteristic of modernist painting.⁷ In a comparison between the materiality of the painting and the process of weaving or knotting, modernist painting could be seen to continue or mime the textile operation of interweaving, resulting in a pictorial surface plane that has its own specific kind of thickness. In this comparison, the thickness of the pictorial surface includes both the underside of a painting and its upper surface. The paint is described as circulating in the materiality of the painting-as-object.⁸

The great merits of Masheck’s article lie neither in a discussion of 20th century modernist painting, nor in the proposal of a theory of flatness, but consist in its historiography. Richly documented, the article traces the history of the metaphorical and conceptual relationship of painting and the textile arts, exemplified in what has come to be known as the carpet paradigm. The second half of the 19th century is identified as the moment when this relationship was consolidated in a large variety of scientific and popular texts on art and design, ranging from art-historical treatises to practical design manuals. But even when staying in the realm of perception and leaving aside a comparison between the materiality of painting and that of weavings or carpets, something still is left out in Masheck’s article.

The carpet paradigm was developed around the time of Post-Impressionist painting, where it signalled the awareness that a painting appears as one of many decorative flat surfaces in a bourgeois interior.⁹ Interior design of that time can be characterised as accumulative, multiplying mostly soft surfaces with decorative abstract patterns, resulting more often than not in a veritable visual cacophony.¹⁰ There is no discussion in Masheck or elsewhere of the perceptual consequences of this accumulative interior design for the human figure. The effect of the layering of ornamental surfaces in painting is clear: with the diminishing of the illusion of space, figure, and ground become confounded. Even for Damisch, in the order of perception, thickness in painting is

the equivalent of a confusion of figure and ground.¹¹ In Post-Impressionist paintings, still figurative, it is the human figure that tends to disappear in its surroundings, becoming part of the surface ‘tapestry’ of the paint. And there is a very real connection between this pictorial phenomenon and practices in interior and clothing design in the last decades of the 19th century.

Wallpaper Mimicry The uncanny inter-changeability of the human figure and interior spaces in Post-Impressionist painting only holds true for women. Contemporary fashion dictated that dress patterns matched, or were at least similar to patterns used in the design of the domestic interior. Since the 17th century, women have been associated and identified with the house, 17th and early 18th-century fashion, however, was equally sumptuous for both men and women, especially in noble circles, where rich fabrics decorated both the interior and the human body. This changed during the industrial age, roughly speaking between 1875 and 1925. The standard costume for men became the black suit, sometimes referred to as the ‘uniform of industrial capitalism’. More importantly, the gendering of space became much more polarised than before. Outside space became the territory of man, inside that of woman. The identification of the house with women even came to be seen by many as part of the natural order.¹² The conceptual conflation of woman and the domestic interior found its visual epitome in design practices from the turn of the century, but the design ideal that accumulated matching fabric-inspired patterned surfaces continued to exist well into the 20th century.¹³

Wallpaper played a seminal role in this development. By 1880, wallpapers had become standard decoration in Western bourgeois interiors.¹⁴ Wallpapers were designed not only to coordinate with fabrics, but also to look like fabrics, imitating the earlier and more sumptuous wall-coverings that actually ‘were’ made of woven fabrics.¹⁵ Wallpapers were used both in male and female spaces inside the home. However, a gendered separation of materials did signal the separate spheres of male and female in the design of the home. Natural materials such as wood and animal skins were reserved for typically masculine spaces, whereas female spaces accumulated soft surfaces. The imitative aspect of wallpapers therefore would arguably have been more clearly perceptible in typically feminine spaces, especially by someone wearing a dress with a pattern matching her surroundings.

The sensation of fabrics on the skin with a pattern similar to that of the wallpaper could provoke a tactile illusion of that wallpaper: the feeling of the surface of the fabric of the dress is projected onto the surface of the wall. From here, it is but a small step to imagining oneself disappearing into the wall. Such a projection would match not only the visual illusion of two-dimensionality inside the domestic interior, where the exaggerated harmonizing of women’s dresses with the domestic interior caused women to disappear in their surroundings; moreover, such an experience of perceptual confusion could have been stimulated by the figure-ground confusion in Post-Impressionist painting. The ‘danger’ inherent in late 19th century design practices of confusing the animate with the inanimate is also addressed in contemporary literature. In Henry James’ short story *The Figure in the Carpet*

(1896) the central theme is the visual confusion from the viewpoint of the beholder trying to determine the presence of a figure in the all-over abstract design of a carpet; in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), the main character imagines herself disappearing behind the pattern of a wallpaper.

Flatness might have been an ideal in painting at the time when the carpet paradigm first surfaced; it was not the aim to reach total flatness of or in the image. Maurice Denis's famous opening phrase to his *Définition du néo-traditionnisme* of 1891 is often quoted out of its context. Denis states that 'before' it is anything else, a painting is a surface plane covered with colors arranged in a certain order: 'se rappeler qu'un tableau – avant d'être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue, ou quelconque anecdote – est essentiellement une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées'.¹⁶

This means of course that a painting for Denis was more than a surface plane covered with colours. A certain suggestion of space persists in Post-Impressionist painting – as in any kind of painting where a distinction between figure and ground can be made. Both flatness and thickness are inadequate notions to think about the place of the figure 'in' this space, especially when the inanimate figure is confused with an animate, human figure. The specific place of the female 'ornamental' figure in a metaphorical or visual relation to a designed ground inside the domestic interior is an unresolved aspect of the carpet paradigm. Rethinking the carpet paradigm seems to be called for in several works by contemporary artists. The suggestion of space in these works cannot be limited to either material or optical space. An opening up of the notion of space to perceptual or even imaginary space might turn out to be useful.

Yayoi Kusama: Perceptual and Legendary Space One artist who has persistently explored the phenomenon of 'wallpaper mimicry' throughout her career is Yayoi Kusama. Kusama had her breakthrough in the New York art world in 1959, with an exhibition of five large-scale almost monochrome paintings (fig. 1). Presented just after the heyday of abstract expressionism, and just before the advent of minimalism, Kusama's paintings were warmly welcomed by critics, among them Donald Judd. In his review of Kusama's show, Judd stays true to the modernist approach, and discusses the space suggested by Kusama's paintings as a purely material space. The space of the paintings, in his words, is shallow. Judd concluded that the paintings suggest 'an analogy to a large fragile, but vigorously carved grill or to a massive, solid lace'.¹⁷ The lace in Judd's analogy could not be solid in a conceptual way. Kusama later dubbed these paintings *Infinity Nets*, hinting that the superposition of two layers of paint represents or suggests an opening to infinity. The idea of a painting as a window or an opening in the wall is not entirely cast off by these paintings. More importantly, as was observed by Lucy Lippard in 1966, Kusama's 1959 monochrome paintings refuse to be interpreted as 'pure' painting. In light of Kusama's further development, Lippard retrospectively describes Kusama's white paintings as programmatic, or in any case as a comment, and therefore, more in line with Dada practices than with modernist painting.¹⁸

In photographs and performances, Kusama would always dress in polka-dotted clothing or net stockings, matching the patterns of her art objects – the dot and the net being her signature marks. Kusama's practice of relentlessly integrating herself into her works has nothing



Fig. 1 Yayoi Kusama, No. T. W. 3, 1961, oil on canvas, 175.3 x 125.7 cm, private collection.

to do with modernist ideals of painting. Her photographic work, always staging the artist in some kind of relation to her art objects, shows how bodily experience for her is not cut off from the art object. Kusama seems to have consciously staged the exchanges between female skin and soft surfaces in the photograph *Self-Obfuscation by Dots* (fig. 2). A decorative pattern of black polka dots is applied directly onto the artist's face, as well as onto several white surfaces: a body suit, the wall, the floor, a sun hat, a cup and saucer, a bag and a chair on its side.

Kusama's fusion with the ground evokes a comparison with animal or insect mimicry, where the relations between an organism and its environment are blurred and confused. The key text on this topic for art history is Roger Callois' 1935 article *Mimétisme et psychasthénie légendaire*.¹⁹ Callois establishes a parallel between insect mimicry, magic, psychiatry and art, and focuses on the notion of spatiality manifested in the phenomenon of mimicry. The mental experience formerly called 'psychasthenia' – a neurotic state characterised by phobias, obsessions or compulsions that one knows are irrational – is described as an experience of losing the ability to situate the body in the space that it occupies. Callois' description seems particularly appropriate for 're-presented' space, for it refers to a situation where the primacy of one's own perspective is replaced by the gaze of another, for whom the subject is merely a point in space.²⁰ Kusama claims to have suffered as a child from hallucinations similar to Callois' description of legendary psychasthenia. During her hallucinations, Kusama saw polka dots, flowers or nets spread like a virus over all of the surfaces around her, including her own skin – leaving her with the impression of losing

herself' in space.²¹ The title *Self-obliteration* emphasises this thematic.



Fig. 2 Yayoi Kusama, *Self-Obbliteration by Dots* (detail), 1968, performance, documented with black and white photographs by Hal Reif.

The loss of self in space leads, among other things, to a confusion of inside and outside. This can result in a feeling of losing one's skin, the interface between the self and the surroundings. This feeling could be seen as an exaggeration of the identification of surfaces with the human skin, a pairing that is actually quite common.

Kusama was among the first sculptors to produce soft sculptures, and in her photographic works she stages the exchanges between bare human skin and other surfaces. The photographic reproduction in its materiality of course does not recreate the tactility of the surface of what is represented — something that painting on the contrary is able to do. Ironically, Kusama needed photography to address exactly this problem.

Mai-Thu Perret: Optical and Miraculous Space The installation *Sylvania* by Mai-Thu Perret combines the conceptual conflation of woman and interior space with another cliché of femininity: the analogue of woman and nature (fig. 3). In this installation, one of Perret's signature papier mâché mannequins stands in front of two papered walls. On the ground, a reflective surface represents a pond, and small heaps of earth and a pair of rain boots refer to natural, outdoor surroundings. The mannequin wears a lace dress with a pattern imitating wood veneer. This pattern, according to Perret herself, has nothing to do with the history of design, but is inspired by Sherrie Levine's wooden knot paintings.²² The wallpaper behind the mannequin is a reworking of a 1930s textile print representing pieces of timber that seem to fly towards the viewer. In putting a textile design on the wall, Perret repeats the original practice of wallpapers imitating fabric designs. Perret's installation zooms out from the pictorial confusion of figure and ground one step further than Kusama's photographs. The wood veneer pattern of the dress does not blend in visually with the wood-related motif of the wallpaper functioning as background; the copy is

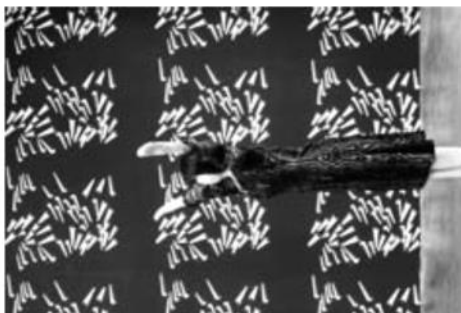


Fig. 3 Mai-Thu Perret, *Sylvania*, 2006, measures, steel, wire, papier maché, acrylic, gouache, wig, steel base, dress lace dress with wood veneer pattern by Susanne Zangl, with custom fabric by Forster Rohner, St Gall, collection of the artist; untitled wallpaper, 2006, silkscreen on paper, variable dimensions; courtesy of the artist.

not visually mimetic. The link between figure and ground is produced on a more conceptual level, but it is still very easily observed. In a sense, this installation conceptually restages the phenomenon of wallpaper mimicry in a three-dimensional field.

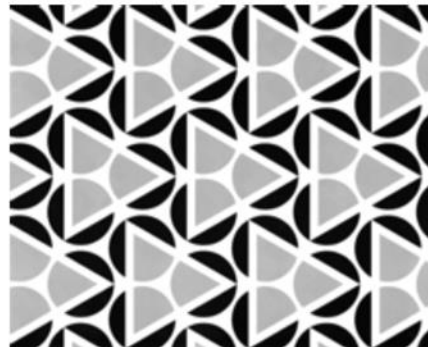


Fig. 4 Mai-Thu Perret, untitled wallpaper design, after Varvara Stepanova, 2007; courtesy of the artist.

Wallpapers in contemporary art counter the idea of the white cube and question the idea that a wall is a flat space that serves as an empty ground to the artwork. Wallpapers moreover tend to change the perception of a room. Mai-Thu Perret's monograph, published in 2008, opens with a series of wallpaper designs.²³ Repeating the imitative gesture of wallpaper design, one of her designs is a reworking of a geo-

metric textile design by Varvara Stepanova from 1924 (fig. 4). This wallpaper design was used in several of Perret's installations. Stepanova was of the opinion that fabric design should follow the material demands of the fabric.²⁴ In this, she followed a design dogma already formulated in the 19th century. The application of this dogma in constructivism resulted in much more rigidly geometric designs. The constructivist focus on production for Stepanova however did not exclude the possibility of art and design having a spiritual dimension. Making art, in Stepanova's words, is a process of discovering a miracle.²⁵ When looking closer at Stepanova's geometric fabric design or at Perret's reworking thereof, depth is gradually discovered in the pattern that appears flat at first sight. The design actually creates an illusion of several spatial planes existing on the surface. This type of illusion of depth, present in Kusama's *Infinity Net* paintings, in Stepanova's fabric designs, and, by way of quotation, in the wallpaper in Perret's installations, would neither belong to the realm of flatness, nor to that of thickness of the surface plane.

Louise Bourgeois: Material and Metaphorical Space If there is one artist in the 20th century who has lifted the art of tapestry and carpet making to a model for her oeuvre, it is Louise Bourgeois. Metaphors of weaving and repair work have guided Bourgeois' approach to art



Fig. 5 Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled, 2002*, tapestry and aluminium, 43 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm. Courtesy Xavier Huikens Gallery, Brussels.

making. She began her artistic career in the family studio of tapestry restoration in Aubusson, directed by her mother, where she was assigned the task of drawing cartoons for missing bits of tapestry. Due to her longevity, Bourgeois is one of the few contemporary artists to have actually lived in an accumulative decorative interior.

Tapestry for Louise Bourgeois is three-dimensional, a sculptural material. Bourgeois sees this sculptural aspect as resulting from the older use of tapestries as flexible architecture, as space-dividers. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, forgotten tapestries were used in Aubusson to wrap animals in to protect them from the cold.²⁶ The sculptural

quality of tapestry is demonstrated in several of her sculptures, but it is particularly interesting that Bourgeois has created two heads in tapestry (fig. 5). The head is the part of the human body that is normally not covered in fabric. In the surfaces of the tapestry sculpture representing a head, at least three actual and metaphorical layers are condensed into one: first, the real surface of the tapestry surface, second, the allusion to the surface of human skin, and third, a reference to the patterning of dress, or even to tattoos, ornament applied directly onto human skin.

Another way to look at these heads is to link them to the French notion of *faire tapisserie*. *Faire tapisserie*, translated in English as <to be a wallflower>, implies that a figure is trying to hide himself – or usually herself – in the pattern of a carpet, tapestry or wallpaper. This normally hidden figure in this work penetrates real space. It is as if we are looking at figures that have moved through the looking glass in reverse order; as if the <figure in the carpet> has taken up three-dimensional form. This reversal would match the fact that one of the two tapestry heads is made of bits of fabric showing the underside of a tapestry, normally hidden to the eye. Because of the technical requirements of tapestry weaving, the division between a lower and upper side is complicated. Firstly, the weaver works at a tapestry from the backside or the underside, sometimes with the help of a mirror. Secondly, all threads forming the surface of a tapestry also <dive under> in the weaving process, participating both in the front and the rear side of the tapestry. An important consequence is that tapestries contain no actual separation between figure and ground: both are woven into the textile simultaneously. Since it is exactly this particularity of the weaving process that formed the starting point for the notion of thickness in painting, it may not be too far-fetched to see in these works a contribution to the discussion of the carpet paradigm.²⁷

Conclusion: Plural Spaces After this brief discussion, several propositions can be made to open up the carpet paradigm. One of the things eliminated from art works in the modernist comparison between painting and the textile arts is narration. The oriental carpet, all-important in the development of the carpet paradigm in painting, consists indeed of abstract, and therefore non-narrative ornamental designs. Tapestries however, the weavings originally covering walls and therefore in a sense closer to painting than floor carpets, have a history of combining ornamental flatness with three-dimensional forms, suggesting depth and space, and proposing a narrative. Roger Callois' denomination of <legendary space> could function as a model here, for in the representation of legends on early modern tapestries, two-dimensional, planar ornamental forms exist side by side with three-dimensional objects and perspectival space. This coexistence of the space of legend, fantasy, imagination, fiction or narration with the actual space of the artwork and perhaps also with the space of daily experience, seems to characterise all of the works I have discussed. For, in these cases, plural space seems to be the best denomination. It is Julia Kristeva's suggestion to define Louise Bourgeois' work with this term.²⁸ Bourgeois herself however goes even further, eliminating space altogether as a category for the discussion of her art works. She

states that «space does not exist. It is only a metaphor for the structure of our existence.»²⁹ One of the notions Bourgeois uses to describe her working process is, in French «enchaîner».³⁰ It is a metaphor taken from the weaving process, and one that helps to open up the carpet paradigm further. The «chaînes» are the first warp threads. They are aligned on the loom as the skeleton of the fabric. «Enchaîner» also means to create a sequence or a story out of an accumulation of fragments – and it is in this sense that Bourgeois uses the verb to describe her work.

Kusama's, Perret's, and Bourgeois' art works all refer in some way to interior design, but they are not confined to circulating in their own materiality or objecthood. On the contrary, they seem to consist of a folding together of different conceptual, sensual and experiential layers.³¹ A model for this layering can be found in the layering of decorated surfaces in 19th century interior design. This accumulative aesthetic has had an impact on the experience of interior space, especially in cases where matching patterns of dress and furnishing allow the beholder to experience the viewpoint both of a subject and object in space. The question of inside and outside space seems to be of little importance in the type of experience wherein the boundaries between the self and the surroundings are blurred. These art works, all revolving in some way around the act of wallpaper mimicry, seem to put aside dualist forms of thinking about space and volume. Rather than representing a skin that hides an interior underneath it – as was the metaphorical ideal of the «living painting» for traditional easel painting –, these works present an accumulation of skins and surfaces. Each of the discussed works proposes in a different way a condensation of several experiential and conceptual layers into a single surface.

The experience of space defying a corporeal separation of mind and body, of a psychic inside separated from a corporeal outside, could have the carpet weaving process as its «conceptual» and not as its technical or visual model.³² For in the weaving process, the same thread now surfaces and then goes under, thereby showing the ways in which outside becomes inside and inside becomes outside, and different concepts and experiences of space fold into each other.

1 Joseph Masheck, «The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness», in: *Arts Magazine*, 1976, vol. 51, nr. 1, p. 82–109. 2 In a postscript that Greenberg added in 1978 to his article «Modernist Painting» from 1960, he issued a warning that the emphasis on flatness was something that could be observed in modernist painting. It was not something that he as a critic deemed to be a necessary element in painting: «There have been some further constructions of what I wrote that go over into preposterousness: that I regard flatness and the inclosing of flatness not just as the limiting conditions of pictorial art, but as criteria of aesthetic quality in pictorial art; that the further a work advances the self-definition of an art, the better that work is bound to be. The philosopher or art historian who can envision me – or anyone at all – arriving at aesthetic judgments in this way reads shockingly more into himself or herself than into my article.» Clement Greenberg, «Modernist Painting» (1960), in: *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. by John O'Brian; Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 85–94, here p. 94. 3 Masheck 1976 (cf. note 1), p. 82. 4 Greenberg's argument, as developed in his article «Modernist Painting», goes as follows: the essence of Modernism lies in immanent self-criticism: within this framework, each of the arts had to prove that the kind of experience it had to offer was valuable and could not be obtained from another activity; each art therefore had to determine its own specific effect, which

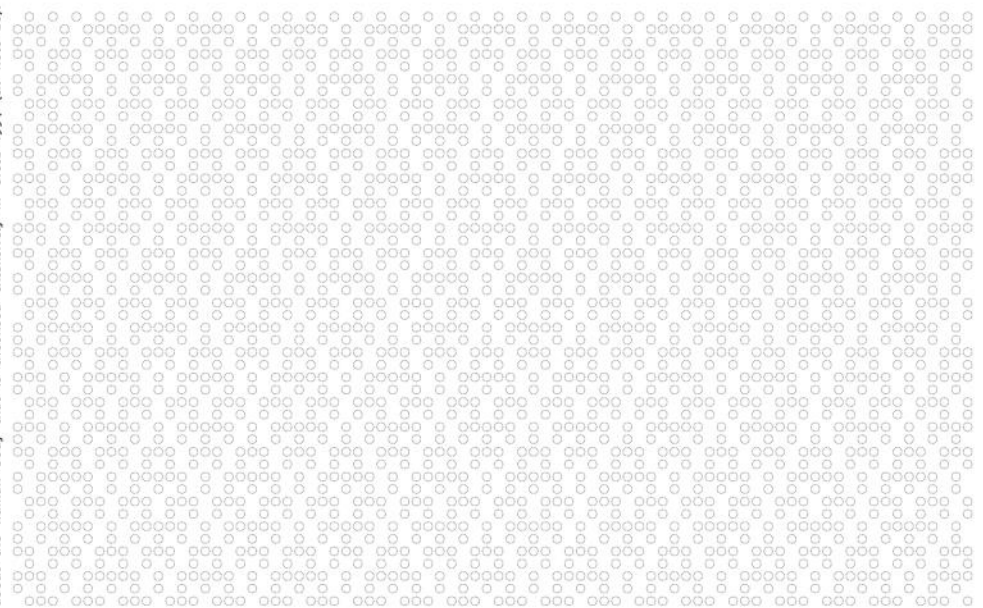
prompted a process of purification», understood as self-criticism and self-definition; and this process caused a development of each art in the direction of medium-specificity. Greenberg saw flatness as «the only condition that painting shared with no other art», and the stressing of flatness as fundamental to the process whereby modernist painting criticized itself. Greenberg 1995 (cf. note 2), p. 85–87. 5 This dogma could result, for example, from the idea that a carpet is the ground from which the furniture rises. Thus it cannot represent anything three-dimensional or unfitting, like a flower-bed. 6 Masheck gives this argument as a possible reason for the development of the carpet paradigm. Masheck 1976 (cf. note 1), p. 86. 7 See Hubert Damisch, *Feuillet Jaune cadimium, ou les dessous de la peinture*; Paris, Seuil, 1984. 8 Ibid., esp. p. 298–299: «Le tableau n'est plus cette fenêtre ouverte dans le mur que disait Alberti, à travers laquelle le spectateur serait admis à contempler ce que la peinture lui donne à voir. Il n'est plus un trou, mais il n'en devient pas pour autant un mur, percé qu'il est d'une multitude de fissures ou de regards, au sens technique du terme, qu'il s'agit pour le peintre de colmater, l'une après l'autre, tant et si bien qu'il ne laisse finalement à la peinture d'autre issue, d'autre échappée que de circuler dans l'épaisseur même du tableau.» 9 Masheck 1976 (cf. note 1), p. 82. 10 The term «accumulative aesthetic» is proposed by Jan Jennings, in: «Controlling Passion: The Turn-of-the-Century Wallpaper Dilemma», in: *Winterthur Portfolio*, 1996, vol. 31, nr. 4; p. 243; series: *Gendered Spaces and Aesthetics*. 11 See Yves-Alain Bois' discussion of *Feuillet Jaune cadimium, ou les dessous de la peinture* in: «Painting as Model», in: *Id., Painting as Model*; Cambridge Mass./London, MIT Press, 1990, p. 250. 12 Beverly Gordon, «Woman's Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial age», in: *Winterthur Portfolio*, 1996 (cf. note 10), p. 281–301. 13 The «accumulative aesthetic» can still be observed as late as 1925, for example in photographs of the Sonia and Robert Delaunay's drawing room, designed by Sonia Delaunay. However, the undulating arabesques of the 19th century were replaced by rigidly geometric patterns. 14 See Jennings 1996 (cf. note 9), p. 243–264. 15 *The Poppered Wall. The History, Patterns and Technique of Wallpaper*, ed. by Lesley Hoskins; London, Thames and Hudson, 2005, p. 65. 16 Maurice Denis, «Définition du néo-traditionnisme», in: *Art et critique* 890, nr. 65–66, repr. in: *Id., Le Ciel et l'Arcadie*, ed. by Jean-Paul Bouillon; Paris, Hermann, 1993, p. 5. 17 Donald Judd, «Yoyoi Kusama», in: *Art News*, October 1959, Reprinted in: *Donald Judd. Complete Writings 1959–1975*; Halifax/ New York, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design/New York University Press, 1975, p. 2. 18 Lucy Lippard, «The Silent Art», in: *Art in America*; 1967, vol. 55, nr. 1, p. 60. 19 Roger Caillois, «Mimétisme et psychasthénie légendaire», in: *Minotaure*, 1935, vol. 7, p. 5–10. 20 On this subject, see also Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies. Toward a Corporeal Feminism*; Bloomington/Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 46–48. 21 Lynn Zelevansky, «Driving Image: Yoyoi Kusama in New York», in: Lynn Zelevansky and Laura Hoptman, *Love Forever: Yoyoi Kusama, 1958–1968*; Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1998, p. 14–15; exhibition: Los Angeles/New York, Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Museum of Modern Art, 8. 3.–8. 6. 1998/9. 7.–22. 11. 1998. 22 Aspara DiQuinzio, «New Work: Mai-Thu Perret»; San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2008, n. p.; exhibition: San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 21. 11. 2008–1. 3. 2009. 23 *Mai-Thu Perret. Land of Crystal*, ed. by Christoph Keller; Zurich, JRP Ringier, 2007. 24 Alexander Lavrentiev, *Varvara Stepanova. The Complete Work*, ed. by John E. Bowlt; Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1988, p. 70. 25 Ibid., p. 79–80 and 82. 26 «In the beginning tapestries were indispensable [...] They were a flexible architecture. [...] I, myself, have very long associations with tapestries. As children, we used them to hide in. This is one reason why I expect them to be so three-dimensional – why I feel they must be of such a height and weight and size that you can wrap yourself in them. Gobelin tapestries, out of fashion and discarded, were saved because in the colder climate of Aubusson, they were used to wrap animals in – protection for a cow giving birth, and as blankets for the horses.» Louise Bourgeois, quoted in: «The Fabric of Construction: Artist's Review of the Exhibition *Wall Hangings* at the Museum of Modern Art, NY», in: *Craft Horizons*; 1962, vol. 29, nr. 2, p. 30–35. Repr. in: Louise Bourgeois, *Destruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews 1923–1997*; London, Violette Editions, 1998, p. 89. 27 When asked about artists that have inspired her, Louise Bourgeois made no distinction between painters and sculptors – the first name she gave was that of Seurat. Louise Bourgeois, quoted in: «Sixty-One Questions» (1971). Repr. in: Bourgeois 1998 (cf. note 26), p. 93. 28 Julia Kristeva, «Louise Bourgeois: From «Little Pea» to Runaway Girl», in: *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Frances Morris; New York, Rizzoli, 2008, p. 250. 29 Louise Bourgeois in an interview with Robert Storr, in: *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Robert Storr, Paulo Herkenhoff, Allan Schwartzman; London, Phaidon, 2003, p. 142. 30 Louise Bourgeois explains the importance of

the word «enchaîner» as a metaphor for her working process in the film *Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress and the Tangerine*, a film by Marion Cajori and Amel Wallach, shot between 2003 and 2007 and released in the USA in 2008.

31 Interestingly, several of the characteristics for art made by women that were formulated in a round table conversation organised by Lucy Lippard in 1973 are found in the works discussed in the present article: narration, fragmentation, repetitious-

ness, autobiography, an obsessive use of grids, and layering. The conversation between Susan Hall, Lucy Lippard, Linda Nochlin, Joan Snyder and Susana Torre was taped on 3 October 1973, and published as «What is Female Imagery?» in 1975. Repr. in: Lucy Lippard, *From the Center. Feminist Essays on Women's Art*; New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1976, p. 80–89.

32 I am following here a model of thinking about the human body that is theorised extensively in Grosz 1994 (cf. note 20).



Stefan Neuner Bild und Segel, Teil 2 Momente eines nautischen Nachlebens der Malerei bei Broodthaers, Buren und Rauschenberg

L'art se sauve au Musée, mais ces toiles prenaient l'air.

Daniel Buren.¹

Spricht man über Dante, sollte man weniger die Formwerdung im Auge behalten als das Werden des Ausbruchs – diese textilen, segelnden, scholarenhaften, meteorologischen, ingenieurtechnischen, stadtbezogenen, kleinhandwerklichen und anderen Ausbrüche, deren Liste man ins Unendliche fortsetzen könnte.

Ossip Mandelstam.²

I. 1998 erschien in den Éditions Gallée ein Band mit dem Titel *Voiles*.³ Er enthält einen kurzen literarischen Text der französischen Schriftstellerin Hélène Cixous begleitet von einem abschweifungsreichen Kommentar Jacques Derridas und sechs Zeichnungen Ernest Pignon-Ernest, Draperiestudien, die offenbar nach klassischen Bildwerken gefertigt sind.⁴ Das poetische Stück, das am Anfang des Buches steht, hat – obgleich es von der Protagonistin in der dritten Person handelt – autobiografischen Charakter. In ihm verarbeitet Cixous die Erfahrung einer Augenoperation, die sie von einer starken angeborenen Sehschwäche befreite. In den gedanklichen und sprachlichen Bewegungen des Textes klingen sehr deutlich hermeneutische und metaphysische Denkmotive an: Der Titel lautet *Savoir*, und Cixous beschreibt die Befreiung von dem Augenleiden als ein Vorgang der Entschleierung:

Le joie de l'œil délivré physiquement: une sensation délicieuse d'agrafes ôtées: car la myopie a de petites serres, elle tient l'œil sous un voile serré, vissements de paupières, instances, efforts vains pour passer le voile et voir, front froncée.⁵

An seinem Kulminationspunkt scheinen Sehen und Präsenz, zumindest für einen Moment, in Eins zu fallen:

Le lendemain au sortir de la nuit elle vit subitement le motif du tapis qu'elle n'avait jamais vu. Ensuite vinrent doucement les étagères, elles vinrent les premières la saluer en souriant. Hier encore c'était elle qui tournait ses lunettes vers la gauche afin que les étagères qui n'étaient jamais là puissent faire leur apparition. Ainsi le monde sortait de sa réserve lointaine, de ses absences cruelles. Le monde montait à elle, précisant ses visages. Toute la journée. [...] Ce qui n'était pas est. La présence sort de l'absence, elle voyait cela, les traits du visage du monde se lèvent à la fenêtre, émergeant de l'effacement, elle voyait le lever du monde.⁶