Università Iuav di Venezia

More Than Words: Reframing Artists' Identity Narratives Through Video Portrait Formats

PhD thesis of Guido Balzani
Curriculum: cultura visuale
PhD candidate in Visual Arts, Performative Arts and Fashion
PhD Programme in Culture del progetto
Cycle XXXVIII, Università Iuav di Venezia

Supervisor Prof. Angela Vettese, Università Iuav di Venezia
Co-supervisor Prof. Francesco Ventrella, University of Sussex

English Abstract

This thesis examines how the narrative of the artist takes shape in the video portrait: a hybrid format in which the interview, the pictorial and literary portrait tradition, and journalistic portraiture converge within a single audiovisual register. Through an analysis of the formal and narrative features of selected case studies, the study proposes two critical genealogies for their interpretation.

In the first, the video portrait is conceived as a work of art. Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* (1992–2001), produced by museum in progress, provides the model later taken up by the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, produced for the Kontakt collection since 2020. The second, journalistic in origin, comprises the Louisiana Channel, launched in 2012 by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, and Tate's TateShots series, produced since 2008, on which the Danish channel was modelled.

While grounded in their historical contexts, the analysis focuses on the narrative techniques shared by both strands, situating the research at the intersection of studies on the representation of artists and those on the cultural identity of the artistic figure. The theoretical framework attends closely to formal construction while keeping in view the authenticity that artists claim for themselves and for their work. To approach this authenticity analytically, the thesis reframes it as charisma, a notion derived from critical readings of Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests*, and interprets video portraits as "charismatic technologies": devices through which charisma is staged and made to circulate. Across the cases examined, the artist becomes in turn an artwork (Kogler), a witness to a collective history (Kontakt), or a model from which to learn a way of being an artist (Louisiana Channel and TateShots).

The research draws on the museum in progress archive and on fieldwork interviews with key figures involved in these projects. Its aim is to open video portraits to new interpretive horizons, given their capacity to reconfigure the relationship between myth, biography, and the subjectivity of the artist.

Italian Abstract

Questa tesi analizza il modo in cui il racconto dell'artista prende forma nel video-ritratto: un formato ibrido in cui convergono l'intervista, la tradizione del ritratto, pittorico e letterario, e quella giornalistica, riunite in uno stesso registro audiovisivo. Esaminando gli elementi formali e narrativi dei casi di studio, la ricerca propone due genealogie critiche per interpretarli.

Nella prima il video-ritratto è concepito come opera d'arte: i *Portraits of Artists* di Peter Kogler (1992–2001), prodotti da museum in progress, ne costituiscono il modello, ripreso dai *Kontakt Video Portraits*, realizzati dal 2020 per la collezione Kontakt. La seconda, di matrice giornalistica, comprende il Louisiana Channel, avviato nel 2012 dal Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, e la serie TateShots, prodotta dalla Tate dal 2008, a cui il canale danese si è ispirato.

Pur radicata nei contesti storici, l'analisi si concentra sulle tecniche narrative cui entrambi i filoni ricorrono, e si colloca all'incrocio tra gli studi sulla rappresentazione dell'artista e quelli sull'identità culturale di questa figura. Il quadro teorico intende valorizzare il piano formale senza trascurare l'autenticità che gli artisti rivendicano per sé e per il proprio lavoro. Per rendere osservabile questa autenticità, la tesi la traduce in carisma, una nozione ricavata dalle letture critiche degli *Screen Tests* di Andy Warhol, e interpreta i video-ritratti come "tecnologie carismatiche": dispositivi attraverso cui il carisma viene messo in scena e fatto circolare. Nei casi esaminati, l'artista diventa di volta in volta opera (Kogler), testimone di una storia collettiva (Kontakt) o modello da cui apprendere un modo di essere artisti (Louisiana Channel e TateShots).

La ricerca è stata condotta attraverso l'archivio di museum in progress e tramite interviste svolte sul campo con i protagonisti dei progetti. L'obiettivo è aprire i video-ritratti a nuovi orizzonti interpretativi, poiché essi possiedono la capacità di riconfigurare i rapporti tra mito, biografia e soggettività dell'artista.

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous help of the scholars, professionals and institutions who gave me their time, their words and even access to their archives.

It was Angela Vettese who first encouraged me to look into the extensive work of museum in progress. That suggestion turned out to be a gift: it brought me into contact with a group of people who were open, rigorous and always ready to listen. I am especially indebted to Kaspar Mühlemann Hartl and Alois Herrmann. Through museum in progress I also met others who became central to this research, among them Peter Kogler, to whom, and to whose work, I owe a great deal. His *Portraits of Artists* were the spark for everything that followed.

Kogler in turn introduced me to the Kontakt collection, a remarkable cultural centre whose members, Kathrin Rhomberg, Claus Philipp and Manuel Gorkiewicz, took part directly in this study. Their input was essential and shaped the research in profound ways. It was also through them that I first came across Wilhelm Gaube, and I am grateful to Joerg Burger for kindly sharing his film about Gaube with me.

I am also grateful to Max Shackleton for introducing me to Hans Ulrich Obrist. As generous as he is distinguished, Obrist became another cornerstone of this project.

The team at Louisiana Channel, at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, deserves a special mention. Marc-Christoph Wagner, in particular, welcomed me into their studio and readily agreed to interviews and conversations that proved fundamental to parts of this thesis.

When it came to the writing, my co-supervisor Francesco Ventrella was instrumental. The time we spent together at the University of Sussex was a real turning point in how the research came together, and above all in how I built its theoretical framework. I also owe a great deal to Lucia Farinati, whose conversations and research have found their way into these pages.

Conversations with Elena Musiani, Andrea Ceresa, Martina Sara D'Alessio, Arianna Preite and Marina Marques were vital in shaping this work. Just as vital was the support of my family, of my beloved Gea, of my friends Enrico and Tommaso, and of my second family, Fata Roba.

Contents

Introduction *7*

Methodology *11*

1. Theorizing Artists' Video Portraits *14*

1.1 Interviews as a broader field 14
1.1.1 Artists' Interviews as a specific heritage 18
1.1.2 Carla Lonzi as an Alternative Methodology 22

1.2 The Lens of Charisma 29

1.3 Coming to Terms with the Myth of the Artist 34

2. The Artist as the Artwork: Charismatic Technologies in Peter Kogler's Portraits of Artists *39*

2.1 Biographical and conceptual notes on Peter Kogler 40
2.1.1 museum in progress 46

2.2 *Portraits of Artists* 49
2.2.1 The role of biography in *Portraits of Artists* 53
2.2.2 The artist as a work of art 57
2.2.3 Production and pedagogical aspects 61
2.2.4 Between Warhol and Kogler 62

2.3 From desire to liking 64
2.3.1 *Screen Tests* 68

2.4 The many faces of charisma 72
2.4.1 The Face as Threshold 77
2.4.2 Towards Kogler's Charismatic Technology 79

2.5 Conclusions 81

3. Generations of Artists through Kontakt's Lens of Charisma *83*

3.1 About the Kontakt collection 83
3.1.1 *Kontakt Video Portraits* 89

3.2 Wilhelm Gaube's *Künstlerporträts* 99

3.3 On Portraits 104
3.3.1 The Literary Portrait 106
3.3.2 Charisma, Myth and the Kontakt Portrait 116

3.4 Conclusions 120

4. From Portrait to Tutorial: Louisiana Channel and TateShots in the YouTube Ecosystem 122

4.1 Origins and Philosophy of the Louisiana Channel Project 122
4.1.1 Historical Overview of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art 123

4.2 A Closer Look at the Louisiana Channel 125

4.2.1 Biography and Practice in the Interview 128
4.3 The Parallel Case of the TateShots Project 132
4.3.1 TateShots' Conversations in Detail 134
4.4 The Journalistic Turn in Video Portraiture 138
4.4.1 Existential Tutorials: Towards an Interpretive Framework 139
4.4.2 Authoriality in the Age of the Tutorial 142
4.5 Relocating Charisma: Louisiana Channel and TateShots 145
4.6 Conclusions 148
5. Conclusions *150*
Appendix A – Obrist's Charisma Turns Artists into Books *157*
A.1 The Case of Hans Ulrich Obrist 157
A.1.1 Obrist's conversations in detail 161
A.2 A charismatic reading of Obrist's work 169
A.3 Conclusions 173
Appendix B – Interview with Peter Kogler *175*
Appendix C – Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz *179*
Appendix D – Interview with Claus Philipp *183*
Appendix E – Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg *187*
Appendix F – Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner *192*
Appendix G – Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist *196*
Bibliography *201*
Primary sources 201
museum in progress's Archive 201
Interviews 201
Books, Chapters, Journal Articles 201
Interviews, video portraits and DVDs 210
Encyclopedia, Webpages, and Newspaper Articles 212

Introduction

This research stems from an apparently simple yet open-ended question: how can an artist be represented? What began as personal curiosity gradually became, in the framework of this study, a fundamental methodological question defining the study's horizon of inquiry.

It was while attending Iuav University of Venice that I came to understand that artists exist. Through the lecture-conversations led by Alberto Garutti, I encountered a distinct category of individuals whose very existence is bound to the making of art. The distance between this experience and what I had known of artists through external accounts – including art history – was striking. Initial questions sharpened through reading, and the construction of the artist's narrative assumed an ever-more central role in my thinking. Most importantly, I became interested in the formats through which such narratives are forged: from the interview to the video portrait, the object at the heart of this research, I have consistently been drawn to dialogic and multidimensional forms with the capacity to convey both voice and body.

The interest in video portraits as a specific form follows from several converging concerns. It seemed important to examine communicative objects that include a dialogic dimension – the kind revealed by Garutti's lectures. It was equally important to reflect on forms of production increasingly widespread in the landscape of art and communication, while seeking an interpretive key that would not reduce them to mere media products. The aim was to understand how video portraits manage to place artmaking at the centre of the narrative, representing the condition of those who make art without deriving this representation from a heroicized or mythologized vision of the artist's individual identity.

This investigation focuses on the dynamics through which artist narratives are constructed, proceeding from the recognition that such narratives exercise a charismatic power that different formats channel into distinct structures. Operating from this premise, the thesis proposes a new analytical category: charismatic technologies.[1] The term designates mediated formats in which the specialness of the artist – so resistant to definition – becomes the gravitational centre of the representation.

It was the case studies themselves that prompted this transversal reading. Although a substantial portion of the material examined here stems from the Viennese context – which might invite a historically bounded reconstruction of video portrait practice from the 1990s to 2020 – extending the inquiry to international examples made clear that the central concern is not a geographically delimited trajectory, but the dynamics orchestrated by different formats.

The three principal case studies – Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*, the *Kontakt Video Portraits* of the Kontakt Collection, and the Louisiana Channel of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art – each dialogue with at least one secondary case, whether a precursor or a source

[1] The expression "charismatic technology" is not coined by this research. Morgan G. Ames has used it to describe technologies whose appeal rests on the promise of transformation they embody rather than on what they actually do. See Morgan G. Ames, "Charismatic Technology", *Aarhus Series on Human Centered Computing* 1, no. 1 (October 2015), pp. 109–120. Ames, however, refers directly to devices and does not apply the notion to narrative practices. Here the term is used in a broader and more open-ended sense: "technology" designates not a device but a mediated format through which the specialness of the artist is staged and made to circulate.

of inspiration. This method foregrounds distinct analytical components and, in each instance, points towards situated and context-sensitive interpretative frameworks.

Across these video portraits, the artist's narrative is variously treated as a work of art in its own right, employed to reconstruct a historical period, and modelled on new communicative formats such as the tutorial. The trajectory traced here follows a shifting connotation of video portraits: from their relationship with the visual arts to their intersections with literary portraiture and the transformations they undergo in the journalistic tradition. The Viennese context serves as the focal centre of the first part of the study, primarily because it proved to harbour something amounting to a tradition of video portraits. Mapping this tradition made it possible to identify a series of recurring dynamics whose presence – or absence – shaped the analytical framework applied to all the cases examined.

Where the cases are not bound by historical continuity, they share a common institutional origin: each originates from an art institution or collection, and none was conceived primarily for promotional purposes. In every instance, the intention is to construct and disseminate a specific narrative of the artists involved. This shared premise grounds the selection of case studies and facilitates the identification of the narrative strategies at work.

As my interest turned to artist interviews, I encountered the productions of museum in progress in Vienna – and it was there that the video portrait crystallized as the object I wished to pursue.[2] There I discovered Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* (1992–2001): a work simultaneously a video portrait and an artistic format in its own right. Its hybrid nature, situated between artwork and narrative format, made it possible to approach the project from multiple perspectives – through art criticism, historical observation, and an interpretive search for dynamics that respect each artist's specificity.

Notably, Vienna – where the critical study of artists' biographies took shape in the early twentieth century – also offered contemporary examples of sustained curiosity about artist narratives. Studies such as those of von Schlosser, Kris, and Kurz, and the readings derived from them, including Catherine Soussloff's interpretations, had underscored the ambiguous relationship between the myth of the artist and biography. In making this observation, I am not suggesting direct influence; rather, it points to the "resonances" that inform this research.[3]

Kogler's ties to art history connect his work to other video portraits such as Warhol's Screen Tests, yet it is in the Viennese context that his project is rooted and that other examples carry on its tradition. The analysis then moves to the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, active since 2020: a format that stages conversations to map a cultural world shared by artists

[2] Angela Vettese suggested the connection with museum in progress. Vettese had previously collaborated with museum in progress and knew of an interview project it had produced.

[3] The term 'resonance' is deliberately allusive, accommodating multiple interpretive registers. I employ it primarily to align my writing with Francesco Ventrella's theoretical framework as this served as a firm reference, as well as a source of inspiration, throughout the research. Ventrella re-read Carla Lonzi's 'resonance' as an interpretive lens to identify, within her work, echoes of unorthodox practices and temporalities that her art-critical style sustained. I adopt the term for two reasons. First, pursuing artist representation inevitably summons haunting theoretical traces – the Viennese theories of the artist and Lonzi herself – that appear repeatedly in both history and specific cases. Second, it explicitly acknowledges my intellectual and personal debt to Ventrella as having supervised the drafting of part of this thesis. See Francesco Ventrella, "Carla Lonzi e la disfatta della critica d'arte: registrazione, scrittura e risonanza", *Studi culturali*, no. 1 (2015), pp. 83–100.

from Central and Eastern Europe, taking shape between the aftermath of the Second World War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, yet long lacking a structured narrative.

Outside Vienna, the question of myth – or artists' inauthentic self-narrations – re-enters the field of inquiry. The fourth chapter examines the Louisiana Channel, the video platform of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, integrated into the study out of a desire to test the interpretive categories formulated in the earlier chapters against a format whose breadth and reach are widely recognized. Rather than arising from personal questioning or reconstructing historical constellations, the Louisiana Channel videos reconfigure the artist's narrative with an anti-mythic inflection, introducing innovation into the very structure of representation. The journalistic framework underlying them reconfigures the relationship between biography and work, bearing traces of a broader transformation in the figure of the artist.

To orient these historical, theoretical, and methodological planes, three research questions guide the study: how is the representation of the artist configured through the video portraits analysed? Through what narrative dynamics is an authentic account of the artist articulated? In what ways do these examples reflect shifts in heavily standardized narratives, and what new image of the artist do they contribute to creating?

The answers this study offers are necessarily partial, but they point to considerable scope for further research into the representation of artists and underscore the productivity of exchanges across distinct fields of knowledge. The interpretive proposals developed here are offered as a contribution to identifying new – and perhaps more contemporary – sources for art history. More broadly, it is worth reflecting on artists' narratives because, whether examining the construction of myth or the strategies devised to dismantle it, it is revealing to consider what devices are mobilized to make sense of the fact that some individuals create art. The more comprehensively strategies of identity formation can be mapped, the greater the possibility of articulating a vision aligned with each person's own lived experience.

The first chapter is theoretical and methodological in character: the charismatic technologies lens gains analytical solidity, and the study is situated at the intersection of research on interviews, representations of artists, and the myth permeating such representations.

The second chapter examines the *Portraits of Artists* case and, with it, museum in progress. The works, situated at the boundary between artwork and narrative format, are placed in dialogue with Andy Warhol's Screen Tests – a comparison that extends the question of charisma from Warhol to Kogler.

The third chapter turns to the *Kontakt Video Portraits*. The analysis benefits not only from placing them in relation to Kogler's work but also from identifying the inspiration they draw from documentarian Wilhelm Gaube's video portraits.

The fourth chapter concentrates on the Louisiana Channel, with the comparison extending to TateShots: a video work from which the Channel draws inspiration and which in turn connects to the documentary traditions of British television, including the BBC.

Finally, Appendix A presents excursions into directions other than video portraits that could not be accommodated in the main body of the thesis. Hans Ulrich Obrist's trajectory intersects with that of museum in progress and *Portraits of Artists*; his work entered this research as a complement to the third chapter. Obrist likewise seeks to give new form to artists, though through other means – conversations and, above all, books. In his case, the

portrait of the artist assumes the form of a book-object, something akin to a sculptural work. The remaining appendices comprise the interviews conducted with Peter Kogler, Claus Philipp, Manuel Gorkiewicz, Kathrin Rhomberg, Marc-Christoph Wagner, and Hans Ulrich Obrist.

Methodology

The three cases considered here – Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*, the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, and the Louisiana Channel – have been analysed in the light of a fragmented theory, which is reflected in an equally multifaceted methodology. The theoretical dimension will assume a more extensive and central role in the following chapter; however, it is possible to anticipate here that two forces at work in these video portraits, and which have guided the analysis, are authenticity and charisma. Since both these aspects are somewhat elusive and intangible, and ultimately difficult to frame, the study has brought together technological, institutional, and historical contexts, while also drawing on conversations and interviews with those involved in each of these projects. Moreover, the hybrid nature of some of the video portraits examined, suspended between the status of artwork and that of format, has allowed for a high degree of freedom, including the freedom to combine a range of markedly different approaches, which needs to be outlined. For this reason, the brief overview that follows serves as a methodological guide, describing how the work in each chapter has been conducted.

The first case, Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*, draws on Warhol's Screen Tests while documenting Vienna's artistic environment in the late eighties and nineties. The encounter with museum in progress, the producer of Kogler's work, proved decisive on two counts. First, it prompted a key methodological decision: to examine only projects originating from museums or cultural institutions. Such projects – designed for public communication and artist presentation – are more effective than artwork circulating exclusively in art world circuits at making identification strategies explicit. Second, it revealed that Vienna had served as a locus where video portraiture practices accumulated, with several projects inspired by Kogler's own work emerging in the same milieu. This established a natural connection with the second case study, *Kontakt Video Portraits*, and enabled a more focused comparative analysis of the techniques and objectives that different practitioners employed to narrate artists.

Across these Viennese examples, the research further identified a historical and methodological continuity. This made it possible to interpret them all through a single theoretical framework: that of charismatic technology. The concept denotes a narrative mechanism that consciously brings together the artist's storytelling, the myths surrounding them, and the mystery attached to both the artistic process and the artist as a person. Its aim is not to simplify or stereotype these elements, but to represent them in their complexity.

I placed *Portraits of Artists* in dialogue with Warhol's Screen Tests to extend the interpretive framework developed around Warhol's work to Kogler's as well. This comparison was based on the direct connection between them and their shared status as artworks, aspects that made it possible to apply to Kogler's format the same critical tools used for Warhol's – including, most notably, the question of what makes certain presences on screen captivating and irreducible.

The case of *Portraits of Artists* raises questions about the status video portraits acquire within museum spaces. The filmed artist occupies a double position: as art object, held within the formal constraints of the medium, and as speaking subject, whose voice and self-narration restore a sense of living presence. This oscillation is read through Caroline van Eck's theory

of living presence response, which offers a framework for tracing how the charisma of the portrayed artists circulates.

Kogler's project went on to influence the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, initiated in 2020, though the two series rest on different premises. Where Kogler's focus was on how artists speak about their own work and the challenges of self-representation, the Kontakt series turns conversation towards a different end: mapping a shared cultural world shaped by artists from Central and Eastern Europe between the post-war period and the fall of the Berlin Wall – a world that has so far resisted cohesive narration. The video portraits form an extension of the broader Kontakt collection, from which they originate.

The status of "artwork" is not primary here: the project is oriented towards documentation and cultural mapping rather than personal expression. Nonetheless, a strong authorial presence remains, embodied by the team leading the project – filmmaker Julius Lermer, artist and former Kogler student Manuel Gorkiewicz, and dramaturg Claus Philipp – whose choices structure the conversations throughout. The *Kontakt Video Portraits* define themselves not only in relation to Kogler's work but also in dialogue with a second fundamental reference: the video portraits made by documentarian Wilhelm Gaube from the 1970s through the early 2000s. Extensive and heterogeneous, his body of work has only recently been mapped; it introduces more unorthodox elements into the video portrait genealogy, particularly at the level of structure.

Voice and conversation perform a dual function here: they sustain self-narration while also giving shape to a history of origins. The analysis approaches this dynamic through Raphael Falco's theory of charisma and myth-making. The role of structure and repetition – as the conversation with Philipp will reveal – connects the series to a tradition of portrait-making reaching back to Gertrude Stein.

It is not extraneous to this analysis, furthermore, to propose that a charismatic technology may itself be understood as an artwork or curatorial practice. This is demonstrated in Appendix A, devoted to Hans Ulrich Obrist, whose work does not operate within video portraiture *per se* and does not align with the other case studies in terms of its object of analysis. It has nonetheless been conceived as a bridge between the third and fourth chapters: emerging from the same Viennese context as Kogler and the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, it anticipates the shift towards a model in which the portrait of the artist crystallizes into a publishable, portable object rather than a recorded image. Obrist's emphasis on artistic practice as the primary site of identity construction prefigures the turn that becomes fully substantial in the fourth chapter. His work thus exemplifies, from a different angle, how artists and curators alike have the capacity to generate representational spaces for kindred identities.

The final chapter shifts the plane of analysis beyond the Viennese context. Having established how video portrait mechanisms operate within that framework, the aim is now to test these findings against examples from a different milieu – one that maintains the same institutional criterion, works produced by museums for the purpose of narrating the artist as a person rather than for promotional ends. The case is the Louisiana Channel, the online platform of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, whose videos reveal a different genealogy: rather than drawing on literary or avant-garde precedents, they belong to a tradition of journalistic portraiture, one the Louisiana Channel team itself acknowledges by

citing TateShots, the Tate's video series, as a direct source of inspiration. The two are therefore examined together. They are also disposed differently in space and distributed massively on a distinct media ecosystem, which is that of YouTube. These shifts in origin and circulation call for a different analytical lens, if one is to trace what becomes of the charisma of the artist's story within these formats and how it is made to circulate. The key lies in the context itself: these videos are approached here under the sign of the tutorial – and more specifically, the existential tutorial – a category that makes visible how artistic identity is articulated as a way of being.

Beyond analysing the narrative mechanisms that connect these video portraits, this study also employs conversation as its primary investigative tool. Interviews with key figures helped map the historical framework while revealing each project's distinctive production practices. Peter Kogler discussed *Portraits of Artists* during a visit to his Vienna studio, surrounded by his library, Andy Warhol catalogues, and the first Mac that became central to his artistic practice. Kathrin Rhomberg, artistic director of Kontakt, explained how the *Kontakt Video Portraits* began, and Claus Philipp and Manuel Gorkiewicz walked me through their video production process. Marc-Christoph Wagner, one of the Louisiana Channel founders, as well as other members of the editorial team, discussed their approach. The interviews were conducted either online or in person, following initial contact established through digital correspondence. The appendix on the work of Hans Ulrich Obrist – internationally acclaimed curator and artistic director of the Serpentine Gallery – draws on an interview I conducted with him that connects his practice to the Viennese context, including museum in progress and *Portraits of Artists*. All interviews are collected in the appendix to this thesis. The sole exception is the exchange with Kaspar Mühlemann Hartl, director of museum in progress since 2012: his insights emerged not from a single formal conversation but from a series of informal encounters and exchanges sustained over time, during which I was also able to explore the museum's archive.

1. Theorizing Artists' Video Portraits

Video portraits are a mutable subject that lends itself to very different inflections. When considering studies exploring their connections with the representation of artists such as Kisters' and Esner's work, I have chosen to articulate a specific perspective centred on the artist and oriented towards illuminating the mechanisms through which an artist's identity reveals itself.

This point of view is the product of a positioning halfway between studies on interviews and studies on the myth of the artist. Thanks to this positioning, the research is able to embrace an extended vision of the interview, understood not as a rigid format but as a relational dynamic.

Extending conversations in the artistic sphere reveals how this practice carves out a privileged space for capturing delicate dynamics, among them the unveiling of the artist. Carla Lonzi's *Autoritratto* offers critical tools for reading this phenomenon (with due caution). Her insights resonate with a point Catherine Soussloff identifies: the need for a vantage point which restores the proper distance between artists and mythic structures.

Video portraits, beginning with Kogler's work, operate within this schema to offer representational alternatives. Charisma surfaces in an examination of *Portraits of Artists* and especially Warhol's *Screen Tests* to crystallize as the study's central interpretive framework. Examined closely, charisma proves evanescent and elusive – much like artists themselves – and the video portrait genre becomes the site where such manifestation takes a more concrete shape. This research thus proposes that video portraits be considered as charismatic technologies: devices in which the specialness of the artist, so difficult to pin down, becomes the heart of the representation.

These are bold conceptual leaps, made possible by the nature of the works analysed and, in particular, the artistic status of *Portraits of Artists*. It is an investigation of Kogler's work, suspended between artwork and communicative format, which makes it possible to formulate an interpretive theory that can then be extended to the other cases. This chapter explores a varied landscape of charismatic technologies that are then examined in greater depth in subsequent chapters. Each of the technologies is articulated through different effects and ways of functioning, yet united by the common capacity to bring out the nature of the artist.

1.1 Interviews as a broader field

Interview studies constitute an extensive, multifaceted field shaped by the diverse ways this method has been applied in different disciplines. Anthropological interviews, psychoanalytic interviews, and journalistic or narrative uses of the technique all follow different logics. Practices related to interviewing also appear in ethnography[4] and open-ended questionnaires. In psychoanalysis and psychology, interviewing has taken on a diagnostic

[4] Selecting a single text to support so broad a claim is inevitably reductive; nonetheless, the choice here falls on James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008, first published 1986). This work not only abounds in references to the use of voice in ethnography but also situates them within a cultural landscape shaped by postmodernism and ongoing debates around authorship. Although published in 1986, its positions on voice remain both valid and effective.

function starting from historical contexts such as the First World War.[5] In oral history and life histories, the interview model – or, more properly, conversation – has played a structuring role in the discipline's development.[6]

The diversity of existing interview practices complicates terminology. The term "interview" encompasses distinct relational and narrative approaches, each with its own historical evolution and conventions. These rules, though difficult to define, do not entirely fit into a single canon: interviews are not conversations, just as they are not colloquies. Each formulation has undergone its own evolution. Such distinctions may seem formal, but they become obstacles when tracing the history of the practice. Two examples illustrate how divergent historical narratives present contesting accounts of the origins of interviewing.

Conversation can be traced to Renaissance literature, where it surfaced as a rhetorical and literary schema.[7] The refinements of this art have been studied by Benedetta Craveri in relation to pre-revolutionary eighteenth-century France.[8] As historian Martin Kött has shown, this cultural humus created the furrow into which, during the nineteenth century in France, journalistic interviewing as we know it took shape.[9]

This interpretation contradicts scholarship that traces the beginning of interviewing back to the North American context. According to another interpretive line, the interview was first used in 1836 in the New York Herald as a tool for investigating a crime story.[10]

Given the non-univocal nature of its origins – a situation that allows for relatively elastic uses of the terms "interview" and "conversation," while remaining aware of their differences – the practice of interviewing has developed in a context shaped by not only print media but also new technologies. This coexistence helps shape the dynamics through which the interview has evolved.

Jonathan Sterne explores this connection in his study *The Audible Past,* where he introduces the concept of "Ensoniment".[11] The term describes the way technologies transformed human perception between 1750 and 1925 by making sound visible and recordable. During the nineteenth century – when interviews were proliferating in print media – Sterne argues that the era of "Audile Technique" took hold.[12] Recording technologies became more refined, and these new possibilities informed anthropology and medicine. As

[5] Andrea Fontana, and James H. Frey, "The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text" via Anneleen Masschelein et al., "The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre", *Poetics Today* 35, nos 1–2 (March 2014), p. 8.
[6] Regarding the importance of voice and oral narrative, and the methodological frameworks developed to analyse them, see Franco Ferrarotti, *Storia e storie di vita*, (Rome: Laterza, 1997). The extensive body of work by oral historian Alessandro Portelli is equally indispensable in this regard.
[7] Nicola Panichi, *La virtù eloquente: la "civil conversazione' nel Rinascimento*, (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2020).
[8] Benedetta Craveri, *La civiltà della conversazione*, (Milan: Adelphi, 2008).
[9] Martin Kött, *Das Interview in Der Französischen Presse* (Berlin, New York: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2004).
[10] Anneleen Masschelein et al., "The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre", *Poetics Today* 35, nos 1–2 (March 2014), p. 6.
[11] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 2.
[12] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*., p. 23.

Lucia Farinati suggests, the effects of these developments might be observed in the very directions along which this genre has evolved.[13]

Drawing on Sterne's reflections, it makes sense to consider the tools required to conduct an interview and which in turn influence how the body and voice are deployed during exchanges. From newspapers to phonographs and later tape recorders or cell phones, the equipment predisposes bodies to proximity or distance, the possibility of seeing each other or generating asynchronous exchanges. While each of these situations points to a specific set of concerns, taken together they illustrate the complexity – and also precariousness – that may be generated by the dynamic of interviewing.

These concrete aspects intersect with broader reflections on the contemporary culture in which interviews circulate – and which they help shape – and the kind of results they produce. A key reference in literature studying the history of interviews is the essay *Postmodern Interviewing*. Here, sociologists Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein use the term "interview society" to describe contemporary society (the book was published in 2003).[14] "Interview society" does not refer to a specific community, although it has strong ties to the US context. Rather, it identifies a communicative approach. The sociologists argue that media – particularly celebrity culture – have promoted the extractive question-and-answer model so widely that it has become integral to capitalist society's mechanisms for acquiring personal information.

Information clearly holds value, but the question of whether this value is specifically inherent to voice – regardless of formal presentation – must be examined beyond the frameworks of capitalist production.

A study of literary interviews, and thus interviewing as a tool of literature in the service of authors, identifies authenticity (and its promise) as the true value this practice can potentially generate. Authenticity appears here as an analogue to Philippe Lejeune's autobiographical pact: a minimal truth premise within the construction of interviews. The term "truth" in narrative interview contexts sparks hesitations.[15] The authors themselves launch a necessary reflection on the truth of narration – and whether it might be more appropriate, in this field, to instead consider truth as co-constructed (and necessarily fictional).

Philosophers have also delved into the value of voice.[16] Roland Barthes engages with the theme as early as *La mort de l'auteur* (1968), casting the disappearance of the speaking subject in strikingly dramatic terms:

> Sans doute en a-t-il toujours été ainsi: dès qu'un fait est raconté, à des fins intransitives, et non plus pour agir directement sur le réel, c'est-à-dire finalement hors de toute fonction autre que l'exercice

[13] Lucia Farinati suggested the connection between Sterne's research and the interview field during the conference Lezioni di Suono, organized by the Accademia di Belle Arti of Rome. See the full video at *LEZIONI DI SUONO #2 - Solo Suono*, Accademia di Belle Arti di Rome, 2024, accessed March 12, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13R8blGaY1o.

[14] Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, "From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society", in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003), pp. 21–49.

[15] Anneleen Masschelein et al., "The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre", p. 37.

[16] Here I chose to rely on the philosophical genealogy identified by Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher in their article "Mapping the Contemporary Historiography of the Artist Interview as a Literary and Critical Genre: A Critical Introduction", *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 23 (December 2020), pp. 1–38.

même du symbole, ce décrochage se produit, la voix perd son origine, l'auteur entre dans sa propre mort, l'écriture commence.[17]

With the loss of contact between voice and speaker, the author is all but sacrificed in the service of writing. Barthes returns to this nexus of voice, body, and textuality in *Le grain de la voix* (1981), approaching it in a more concrete register. This collection of interviews treats speech and listening as the foundation for theoretical reflection, a foundation that directly interweaves practice and thought. The emphasis shifts to an ironic register when Barthes defines the post-interview editing process as "toilette du mort" (the toilette of the dead), thus tying the materiality of the spoken word to the question of authorial disappearance he had first staged over a decade earlier. [18]

Philosopher Adriana Cavarero takes a different stance. Although not referring specifically to interviewing, she addresses voice directly when developing what she calls a "fenomenologia dell'espressione vocale" ("vocal phenomenology of uniqueness"):

> Si tratta, al tempo stesso, di un'ontologia che riguarda la singolarità incarnata di ogni esistenza in quanto essa si manifesta vocalmente. Ontologia e fenomenologia non sono del resto che nomi […] per segnalare come, nel registro della voce, riecheggi la condizione umana dell'unicità. La voce mostra inoltre che tale condizione è essenzialmente relazionale. La semplice verità del vocalico, annunciata dalle voci senza neanche la mediazione della parola, comunica i dati elementari dell'esistenza: l'unicità e la relazionalità […].[19]

Cavarero's perspective adds nuance to our understandings of voice's intrinsic value, prompting a consideration of how authenticity might extend to interviews – though not to transcribed or reformulated versions of them.

This overview, while useful in highlighting the difficulties entailed by a theoretical reconstruction of the object under analysis, may remain incomplete for the purposes of this study. Indeed, if there is a historical-methodological constant that marks the trajectory of interviews, it lies in the way they function as testimonial proof – or even a platform – for an encounter. The term's French etymology indeed suggests, albeit without precise definition, the inherent versatility of interviews. Embracing this awareness, the term interview can be used elastically, without claiming any one single definition. To pursue the objectives of this

[17] "No doubt it has always been so: once a fact is recounted--for intransitive purposes, and no longer to act directly upon reality, i.e., exclusive of any function except that exercise of the symbol itself-this gap appears, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins". English translation from Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *The Rustle of Language*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 49. Original quote from Roland Barthes, "La mort de l'auteur" in *Le bruissement de la langue. Essais critiques IV* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p. 63.

[18] Roland Barthes, *Le grain de la voix. Entretiens, 1962-1980* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981). For the English translation see Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice.* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 63.

[19] Adriana Cavarero, *A più voci: filosofia dell'espressione vocale*, (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2022), pp. 12–13. For the English translation, see Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 7–8: "This is an ontology that concerns the incarnate singularity of every existence insofar as she or he manifests her- or himself vocally. Ontology and phenomenology are, of course, just names […] that indicate how the human condition of uniqueness resounds in the register of the voice. Moreover, the voice shows that this condition is essentially relational. The simple truth of the vocal, announced by voices without even the mediation of articulate speech, communicates the elementary givens of existence: uniqueness, relationality […]".

study, it is enough to recognize that what we are analysing is a narrative and relational dynamic.

1.1.1 Artists' Interviews as a specific heritage

Even within the artistic field, use of the term "interview" bears the marks of the interdisciplinary intersections that have characterized the practice since its origin. Here, it produces unexpected outcomes when it comes to interact with artwork. Naturally, this does nothing to simplify the already difficult attempt to reconstruct its history in the art context. The words of those who have attempted such a reconstruction are telling – one of them is historian Reva Wolf, who ultimately concluded:

> Soon I found myself lost in a labyrinth of nineteenth-century French art journals, as I desperately tried to figure out when artist interviews might first have been published. […] As I sat on the floor of the library, flipping through issue after issue of a range of periodicals, I was tormented by questions […]: what if the earliest artist interviews were published not in France, but in Germany or Italy – or Japan? […] How many years would it take to flip through all the relevant journals and newspapers[…]? Too many, I finally concluded.[20]

Despite these challenges, Wolf established key reference points. Rather than systematically retracing this historiography, this study develops theoretical and methodological reflections grounded in existing scholarship. Wolf identifies the 1950s as a pivotal decade in her timeframe. Interview practices were consolidated during this period, aided by the wider diffusion of tools such as tape recorders, television, and radio. It is best to proceed cautiously with terms and avoid speaking of "origins". As Patricia Bickers writes in her introduction to the extensive collection *Talking Art*, the interview can be framed within a much broader reflection on artists' use of voice – a conversation that cannot be fully explored here: "The letter, the article, the manifesto, the artist's statement and latterly the recorded interview have long been avenues through which artists have sought to make the case for their art".[21]

Another study by Christoph Lichtin, *Das Künstlerinterview: Analyse eines Kunstprodukts,* adopts a less American-centred perspective.[22] It locates the origins of the spread of artist interviews in Third Republic France. This type of relationship, he suggests, developed out of the already established system of studio visits. Lichtin identifies a concrete early example: an interview conducted by journalist Emile Taboureux with painter Claude Monet, published in the magazine *La Vie moderne* on June 12, 1880.[23] After that, the practice underwent widespread diffusion between 1905 and 1915.

Wolf's reconstruction acknowledges Lichtin while also extending the analysis by linking artist interviews to broader transformations in communication practices. From the 1950s onward, not only did the technologies mentioned above become consolidated – far more advanced than the phonograph – but reflections on communication and interpersonal relations

[20] Reva Wolf, "The History of the Artist Interview", in *Theorising the Artist Interview*, by Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher (New York: Routledge, 2024), p. 30.
[21] Patricia Bickers and Andrew Wilson, *Talking Art: Interviews with Artists Since 1976* (London: Ridinghouse, 2008), p. 18.
[22] Christoph Lichtin, *Das Künstlerinterview: Analyse eines Kunstprodukts*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011).
[23] Lichtin, *Das Künstlerinterview*, p. 18.

also circulated, thereby reframing exchanges between individuals. Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) is perhaps one of the clearest demonstrations of this new theoretical interest.

Wolf also considers the emergence of interview-centred sections in *The Paris Review* that testify to the cultural expansion of interviewing as a tool, as well as the interview book Dalí's *Mustache: A Photographic Interview*, produced by Salvador Dalí in collaboration with photographer Philippe Halsman. This latter example demonstrates a disorienting use of the interview form: here, it is no longer composed solely of questions and answers but is also articulated through images and photography, thus incorporating other sources of visual culture into the dialogue.

The consolidation of the *Oral History Program* at the Archives of American Art in 1958 further advanced interview practices. The intent behind this programme was to create primary sources for art history, thus differentiating itself from journalistic interviews intended for immediate broadcast or publication. Today, the *Oral History Program* comprises more than 2,300 interviews.[24]

Wolf's reconstruction acknowledges the role played by Andy Warhol – a figure who appears repeatedly throughout this research, beginning with his relationship to *Portraits of Artists* by Peter Kogler – in expanding the use of interviewing. *Interview* magazine is one of the most obvious extensions of the interview in contemporary art and celebrity culture.[25]

Gwen Allen's research extends these observations by examining the magazine as a site of artistic experimentation from the late 1960s onward. It was at this point, she notes, that "artists approached the magazine with the same inventiveness with which they embraced other media in the 'expanded field'", "drawing on a diverse array of methodologies, including the interview".[26] Allen has also examined specific cases, such as the use of interviews in *Avalanche* founded by Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar – a publication she identifies as almost the opposite of *Interview*.[27]

Given the volume of variations, Wolf's initial bewilderment becomes understandable, as do her proposed solutions. Wolf addresses this challenge through two strategies: calling for collaborative research and reframing "the interview" as an observable practice rather than an historical category. She proposes "speech events" instead and it is this reconfiguration that grounds the following case studies in that they are aligned more closely with video portraits than interviews.[28]

This trajectory – grounded in interview practices and their critical and creative potential – returns the analysis to the core of the research. Yet the historiographical question of the interview as a source remains unresolved and requires continued attention. First, because

---

[24] "About the Oral History Program", Archives of American Art, 8 July 2022, accessed March 12, 2026, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/about-the-oral-history-program.
[25] Hubertus Butin, "Andy Warhol Zeitschrift *Inter*/VIEW, oder: Wie werde ich berühmter Künstler?", in *Das Interview: Formen und Foren des Künstlergesprächs*, ed. Michael Diers, (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2013), pp. 195–242.
[26] Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press, 2015), p. 7.
[27] Gwen Allen, "Against Criticism: The Artist Interview in Avalanche Magazine, 1970–76", *Art Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2005), p. 50.
[28] Wolf, "The History of the Artist Interview", p. 30.

validating the interview as a source for art history also requires exploring its critical and interpretive boundaries. Second, because this work is already being carried out by research institutions and individual scholars at an international level.[29]

Oral history centres are certainly at the forefront in this regard, ranging from well-established initiatives such as the National Life Stories: *Artists' Lives* series that is part of the British Library's oral history programme[30] to more selective projects such as *Audioarchiv Kunst: Stimmen der Kunstgeschichte*, focused on art and artists from the Rhineland.[31] Other initiatives intersect with politically salient themes, such as the *Oral History Project* promoted by the magazine BOMB in 2014 that concentrates on the testimonies of African American artists,[32] or the *Women Artists Oral History Project*, conducted between 1985 and 1988 by Diana C. Coates with women artists from London, Ontario.[33]

Notable initiatives in Asia include projects in Japan and China. In Japan, the *Oral History Archive of Japanese Art* has substantially documented contemporary Japanese art since 2006.[34] In China, the project *Materials of the Future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art from 1980–1990* employs video interviews with artists to reconstruct historical memory.[35]

There are also broad-ranging comparative studies, such as Agnieszka B. Wielocha's *Collecting Archives of Objects and Stories*,[36] or the volume *Oral History in the Visual Arts*,[37] which have successfully opened a critical debate on the notion of the source. Artists themselves also construct voice archives, such as Marysia Lewandowska's *Women's Audio Archive* (WAA), founded in 1983.[38] This sound-recording project documents events, debates, and conversations among artists and theorists, with particular attention to feminist and critical thought between 1983 and 1990. Through sound, the project builds an alternative memory of the cultural and media history of women – a strand of history often destined for oblivion.

Conceiving interviews as 'speech events' reveals the polymorphic forms they assume within artworks. This perspective prompts a reconsideration of artworks that adopt interview

---

[29] For a complete overview on centers for oral art history see Elisa Genovesi, "Archivi di Storia Orale per la Storia Orale: Una Panoramica", in *Voci sull'arte: Per Un Archivio Di Storia Orale Dell'arte Contemporanea*, ed. Ilaria Schiaffini and Claudio Zambianchi, (Rome: Campisano 2020), pp. 79–92.
[30] A recent article mapping the development of the Artists' Lives project appeared in Cathy Courtney, "Artists' Lives: The First Thirty Years", *Art Libraries Journal* 48, no. 1 (January 2023), pp. 21–28.
[31] "Audioarchiv Kunst – Stimmen Zu Den Anfängen Der Zeitgenössischen Kunst Im Rheinland", Audioarchiv.kunst, accessed February 12, 2026, https://audioarchivkunst.de/.
[32] "Oral History Project', Bombmagazine.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://bombmagazine.org/series/oral-history.
[33] "Women Artists Oral History Project Fonds", gallery.ca, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.gallery.ca/library/ngc108.html.
[34] "Oral History Archives of Japanese Art", oralarthistory.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://oralarthistory.org/en/.
[35] "Materials of the Future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art from 1980–1990", china1980s.org, accessed February 13, 2026, https://www.china1980s.org/en/Default.aspx.
[36] Agnieszka Wielocha, "Collecting Archives of Objects and Stories. On the Lives and Futures of Contemporary Art at the Museum" (PhD, Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture–Faculty of Humanities, 2021).
[37] Linda Sandino and Matthew Partington, eds, *Oral History in the Visual Arts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[38] Marysia Lewandowska, "Women's Audio Archive", accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.marysialewandowska.com/waa/.

language as their operative code, such as the ones Claire M. Holdsworth examines.[39] Holdsworth analyses works such as *In Two Minds* by Kevin Atherton: since the 1970s, this piece has staged conversations between the artist's living self and a recorded reproduced-self on a television screen. She also discusses the parodic use of the interview form in *Interview with a Cat* (1970) by Marcel Broodthaers, where the communicative code of the interview is mobilized to mock the institutional discourse constructed around art. In *Kensington Gore* (1982), Catherine Elwes recounts the true story of an accident that occurred while she was working as a make-up artist during the filming of a television drama. The interplay between fake and real injuries becomes the narrative device through which the story maintains an ambiguous balance that is in turn echoed in the vocal reconstruction of the event: Elwes and another artist involved, Judith Goddard, perform what appears to be a spontaneous interview but that is, in reality, a shared and identical script.

The *0-9* circle – the magazine founded by Vito Acconci and Bernadette Mayer (1967–69), involving Adrian Piper and Lee Lozano – developed radically different uses of interviewing. Their aim was not to extract information through interpersonal exchange, but rather to subject the very rules governing relational interaction to scrutiny.

In Dialogue Piece (1969), Lozano invited people into her loft "to have dialogues, not to make a piece".[40] Instead of recording content, she kept a log of the quality of the interaction (e.g. intense, slow, tense), thereby shifting attention from semantic content to the pragmatics of the encounter. David Antin, with *The Conversationalist* (1969–1970), explored mechanisms of turn-taking and the ways speakers align themselves with one another, explicitly rejecting the standard sender–receiver model of communication. Adrian Piper, in an untitled work, engaged strangers (such as a woman on a bus) in conversations to elicit their life stories while effacing her own personality. The researcher Jacob Stewart-Halevy relates these practices to the access rituals theorized by Erving Goffman through which individuals enter specific social groups or relationships.

While Wolf rightly notes that the interview should be kept separate from the self-interview,[41] there are works adjacent to Atherton's that deserve mention, such as Alfredo Pirri's *Autointervista* (1986) or Lucio Pozzi's *Dialogue* (1976). Both pieces employed video.[42]

These innovations in form accompanied expanding critical vocabularies that transcended magazine formats. Interview practice has also contributed to defining certain authors' critical production – most notably David Sylvester, through his conversations with Francis Bacon,[43] as well as his exchanges with British and American artists more broadly. A similar case is that of Calvin Tomkins, whose conversations with Marcel Duchamp constitute an

---

[39] Claire M. Holdsworth, "Vocal Acts: Video Art and the Artist's Voice", *Journal of Art Historiography* 23, no. 1 (December 2020), pp. 49–54.
[40] Lee Lozano, "Dialogue Pieces*" 0–9*, via Jacob Stewart-Halevy, "The Inductive Turn in Conceptual Art: Pragmatics in the *0–9* Circle", *Grey Room* 68 (September 2017), p. 77.
[41] Wolf, "The History of the Artist Interview", p. 19.
[42] Francesca Gallo's article, "Interviste e Autointerviste in Video Nel Lavoro Degli Artisti: Variazioni Sul Tema", in *Vocisullarte: Per Un Archivio Di Storia Orale Dell'arte Contemporanea*, pp. 93–103, is an essential reference in relation to this aspect.
[43] For a complete critical overview of Sylvester's criticism, see James Finch, "The Interview as Criticism: David Sylvester's Artist Interviews", *Biography* 41, no. 2 (2018), pp. 179–198.

indispensable point for accessing the artist's work. Henry Geldzahler, with whom Andy Warhol engaged in extended conversations, likewise played a counterpoint role in constructing the artist's thinking.[44]

Occupying an intermediate position is *Audio Arts*, a cassette-based magazine composed of conversations, created by the artist William Furlong together with Barry Barker in 1973, and operating until 2007. Conceived as a form of counterpoint to printed magazines, this project functioned as an alternative space that was likewise ultimately distinct from oral history.[45] The conversations – Furlong preferred this term to interviews – did not aspire to provide biographical framing; they were intended solely as testimony about a specific moment and encounter. As reconstructed by Lucia Farinati, the *Audio Arts* case foregrounds conversation as a liminal space, a threshold asked to do nothing more than represent itself. This vision synthesizes many of the varied impulses that have shaped the use of vocality: conversation as editorial project, innovative critical language, and artwork.

Considering this cultural object, the possibilities offered by interviewing and conversation might be further expanded and, above all, allows us to introduce the editorial project that, more than any other, has informed and directed this study: Carla Lonzi's *Autoritratto*.[46]

1.1.2 Carla Lonzi as an Alternative Methodology

Extracting methodology from Carla Lonzi's critical practice entails challenges. This is primarily because Lonzi embodied multiple roles over the course of her life, most notably those of art critic and feminist, and through her existential transformations she carried with her the very concepts she had helped to shape. Her writings remain living matter today, and the branch of scholarship devoted to them rightly underlines the boundaries and distinctions that characterized her thought. Lonzi's work requires sustained attention to appreciate the way it articulates the kind of connections between interviewing, voice, and the artist's image that structure the case study presented here below.

Lonzi wrote *Autoritratto* in 1969.[47] Although it is a work of art criticism, its structure is profoundly different from that of any other critical publication or artist interview.[48] *Autoritratto* consists of a montage of various conversations with fourteen artists – Carla Accardi, Getulio Alviani, Enrico Castellani, Pietro Consagra, Luciano Fabro, Lucio Fontana, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Nigro, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Mimmo Rotella, Salvatore

---

[44] The relationship between Geldzahler and Warhol will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

[45] Lucia Farinati, "Audio Arts Archive: From Inventory Space to Imagined Space" (PhD, Department of Critical and Historical Studies, Kingston School of Art, 2020), p. 38.

[46] Carla Lonzi's work has deeply engaged Farinati. The volume Farinati co-edited with Jennifer Thatcher, *Theorising the Artist Interview*, allows these connections to unfold fully, mapping how Lonzi's radical approach continues to shape critical practice.

[47] De Donato published Autoritratto in 1969; the work has since appeared in other subsequent Italian editions. See for example Carla Lonzi, *Autoritratto: Accardi, Alviani, Castellani, Consagra, Fabro, Fontana, Kounellis, Nigro, Paolini, Pascali, Rotella, Scarpitta, Turcato, Twombly* (Milan: Abscondita, 2017); as well as Carla Lonzi, *Autoritratto: Accardi, Alviani, Castellani, Consagra, Fabro, Fontana, Kounellis, Nigro, Paolini, Pascali, Rotella, Scarpitta, Turcato, Twombly*, ed. Annarosa Buttarelli (Milan: Baldini+Castoldi, 2024). English quotations from Autoritratto are taken from Allison Grimaldi Donahue's translation Carla Lonzi, *Self-Portrait*, (Brussels: Divided Publishing, 2021).

[48] Laura Iamurri's study *Un margine che sfugge: Carla Lonzi e l'arte in Italia, 1955-1970*, (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016) remains an indispensable reference for scholarly engagement with Carla Lonzi's art criticism. The study was among the first to restore Lonzi to critical attention after a prolonged absence from debate.

Scarpitta, Giulio Turcato, and Cy Twombly – conducted between 1965 and 1969 on different occasions and in different contexts. Some of these conversations had appeared in print, including in the art magazine *Marcatré*, duly edited and transcribed;[49] however, the original recordings – the voices captured on Lonzi's tape recorder – had remained unpublished.

Lonzi constructs an imaginary symposium among these artists. Their voices address artistic practice in Italy (as compared to the United States), the tape recorder as tool, the condition of being an artist, and processes of identity formation. In this scenario, Lonzi is not an interviewer; rather, she participates actively in the discussion, rendering the text "a possibility of an encounter".[50] What the critic demonstrates is an approach akin to that of a fellow traveller wandering alongside the artists – a peer – and this stance is particularly innovative within the Italian artistic context.

The events that preceded *Autoritratto* had prepared the ground for this rupture with critical conventions. The literature has effectively reconstructed this first part of Lonzi's trajectory.[51] Here, suffice it to simply recall her break with Giulio Carlo Argan, an art critic who symbolized a tradition vastly distant from Lonzi's approach.[52] In a newspaper article titled *La solitudine del critico* (The Solitude of the Critic), Lonzi exposed the structural failure of the militant critic, ignored by artists, inaccessible to the public, and more invested in prestige than in genuine engagement with art, laying the groundwork for the radical practice she would embody in *Autoritratto*.[53]

Autoritratto, together with the essay *La critica è potere* (Criticism Is Power),[54] is the last of Lonzi's writings that can still be properly described as art criticism; it represents both the apex of Carla Lonzi's work as a critic and her farewell to the art world. Shortly thereafter, in 1970, Lonzi began her feminist activity by co-signing and co-authoring, together with Carla Accardi and Elvira Banotti, the manifesto of *Rivolta Femminile* (Female Revolt). This shift profoundly transformed Lonzi's trajectory: she increasingly distanced herself not only from her activity as a critic, but above all from the cultural system on which the art system itself is founded.

---

[49] Laura Iamurri, "Carla Lonzi sul 'marcatrè'", in Carla Lonzi, *Scritti sull'Arte*, ed. Lara Conte, Laura Iamurri and Vanessa Martini (Milan: et al./EDIZIONI, 2012), pp. 705–23. For Lonzi's collaboration with other journals and magazines, such as the journal *L'Approdo*, see Michela Baldini, "Le arti figurative all'«Approdo». Carla Lonzi: un'allieva dissidente di Roberto Longhi"; *Italianistica: Rivista Di Letteratura Italiana* 38, no. 3 (2009), pp. 115–30.

[50] This quotation originates from *Autoritratto* and from Lucia Farinati's text, where she recounts her experience with Lonzi's work: Lucia Farinati, "As a Possibility of an Encounter", in *Theorising the Artist Interview*, pp. 97–112. The translation differs from Grimaldi Donahue's "a possibility for meeting" in *Self-portrait*, p. 13. Here, I prefer to use Farinati's version to incorporate the relational developments Lonzi's text generated.

[51] For a contextualisation of Lonzi within the Italian critical landscape, see Michele Dantini, "«Ytalya Subjecta». Critica d'arte e Narrazioni Identitarie 1963-2010", in *Il Confine Evanescente. Arte Italiana 1960-2010*, by Gabriele Guercio and Anna Maria Mattirolo (Milan, Rome: Electa, per Maxxi, 2010), pp. 307–346.

[52] See both Luisa Lorenza Corna, "Against the Canon: The Unresolved Dispute between Carla Lonzi and Giulio Carlo Argan", *Oxford Art Journal* 47, no. 2 (November 2024), pp. 277–290 and Michele Dantini, "Una Polemica Situata e Da Situare. 1963: Lonzi vs. Argan", *Predella Journal of Visual Arts* 36 (2014), pp. 87–104.

[53] Carla Lonzi, "La solitudine del critico", *Avanti!*, 13 December 1963, p. 23.

[54] Carla Lonzi, "La critica è potere", in *Nac*, December 1970, 3, pp. 5–6.

These two aspects of her life – often described as a "duplice radicalità" (dual radicality") – were long considered separately.[55] More recent re-readings, however, have reconstructed Lonzi's feminist activity precisely in light of her earlier work as a critic, thus reunifying the interpretation of her intellectual and existential path. Her concepts must therefore be situated within a transforming intellectual horizon.[56]

The artist myth is one of the themes most affected by such reconsideration. In *Autoritratto*, there is a privileged condition of proximity in relation to this figure. As stated in the preface:

> I discorsi qui raccolti non sono stati fatti con l'intenzione di dimostrare quanto sopra, ma per iniziarmi a un'attività e a un'umanità verso cui mi sono sentita attratta, nello stesso tempo che trovavo ridicola la pretesa affidatami dall'Università di fare il critico di una umanità e di un'attività che non mi appartenevano. Cercare di appartenervi e vedere crollare il ruolo di critico, è stato tutt'uno. Cosa rimane, adesso che ho perso questo ruolo all'interno dell'arte? Sono forse diventata artista? Posso rispondere: non sono più un'estranea. Se l'arte non è nelle mie risorse come creazione, lo è come creatività, come coscienza dell'arte nella disposizione al bene.[57]

Lonzi's journey within *Autoritratto* can be summarized as a loss of estrangement towards the artist at the cost of her distancing from the university-based cultural world. This process takes the form of a discovery for the critic herself, translating into a more truthful relationship with artists. Guiding this attitude is a term that runs through both *Autoritratto* and Lonzi's diary *Taci, anzi parla*, written between 1972 and 1977 (edited in 1978): *autenticità* (authenticity).[58]

Authenticity operates sometimes through contrast – Consagra asserts "L'artista non sarà mai un artificiale"[59] – and sometimes explicitly, as in Lonzi's diary: "Ma alla fine, in Autoritratto, – che è un riconoscimento dell'autenticità degli artisti, riconoscimento che esprime dunque da parte mia un'autoinvestitura di soggetto – mi ero solo rafforzata nel rifiuto della cultura per isolare il momento artistico come autentico, ma non come mio […]".[60]

---

[55] The term 'dual radicality' derives from the title of a volume aimed at bridging the divide between Lonzi's two vocations: Lara Conte, Vinzia Fiorino, and Vanessa Martini, *Carla Lonzi: La duplice radicalità* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2011).

[56] Another recent and essential contribution towards this critical reunification can be found in Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi, eds, *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi* (London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).

[57] "The discussions collected here were not done with the intention of demonstrating the above, but in order to initiate myself in an activity and a humanity to which I was drawn, when at the same time I found ridiculous the claim handed to me by the University of being a critic of a humanity and an activity that were not my own. To seek to belong to it and to see the role of the critic collapse happened all at once. What remains, now that I've lost this role within the art world? Maybe I've become an artist myself? I can respond: I am no longer alienated. If art is not in my abilities as creation, it is as creativity, as consciousness of art in the willingness to do good" in *Self-Portrait*, pp. 15–16. For the original quote, see Carla Lonzi, *Autoritratto*, (Milan: Abscondita, 2017), p. 13.

[58] The diary's title translation comes from Barbara Casavecchia, "Taci, anzi parla", *South Magazine* 7, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2016), accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/463_taci_anzi_parla.

[59] "The artist will never be an artificial person", in *Self-Portrait*, p. 276. For the original quote, see Lonzi, *Autoritratto*, (Milan: Abscondita, 2017), p. 229.

[60] "But in the end, in Autoritratto – which is a recognition of the authenticity of artists, a recognition that therefore expresses on my part a self-investiture as subject – I had only reinforced my refusal of culture so as to isolate the artistic moment as authentic, but not as my own [...]". For the original quote, see Carla Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla. Diario di una femminista 1972–1977* (Milan: La Tartaruga, 2024). All translations from Italian, German, and French sources are my own unless otherwise indicated; any translation errors are entirely my responsibility.

As Giovanna Zapperi notes, the use of the term authenticity in relation to the artist as a person reflects a shift away from the conventions of traditional art-historical culture. Having studied under the art historian Roberto Longhi, Lonzi was well aware that, in the field of connoisseurship, authenticity had been reserved for artwork. In *Autoritratto*, however, the terms are inverted and it is the artist who becomes authentic. Lonzi states this clearly: "l'oggetto della mia indagine è stato l'artista, non l'arte".[61]

In *Autoritratto*, artists are presented as indispensable participants in civil life. They are capable of awakening a creative mode of action in humanity, one that translates not into the mass production of artwork but rather into a form of existence that is not "dissociat[a]".[62] This is an authentic existence insofar as it arises from a personal vision, neither imposed nor castrated by society. Although *Autoritratto* rightly presents itself as a text that resists attempts to fetishize the artist,[63] it is evident that a positive vision of the artist myth and artists' capacities is nevertheless at work here. The significance of such considerations then ended up shifting once transposed into the feminist realm.

Authenticity also reverberates in Lonzi's own writing practice. She chose to use a tape recorder out of a desire to reduce the distance from the truth represented by the other person, and the written page constitutes an obstacle to this aim. Recording thus became a way of exiting the cerebral isolation of the individual and entering a conception of conversation – and writing – as a flow that unfolds independent of the critic's judgment:

> come puoi, dopo aver fatto un gesto come questo [la registrazione], che è un gesto proprio di assoluta impotenza del critico, perché se prendi un registratore significa che, come critico, non esisti più nel senso tradizionale… come puoi di nuovo rifare il vecchio gesto 'questo sì, l'altro no…'.[64]

According to Francesco Ventrella, Carla Lonzi used technology (the tape recorder) and montage to invent a form of criticism that breaks with the usual solitude characterizing critic's activities and creates a relational space in which subject and object are no longer separate.[65] Using the tape recorder can be seen as a technology of the self that allows Lonzi to inscribe her physicality, and not only hers, within these "magnetic encounters".[66] The device thus gives shape to a practice in which the search for the self, for one's own voice, and for the voices of others all coexist. It is a process that, according to Ventrella, went on to also structure Lonzi's approach to *autocoscienza* (consciousness-raising).

Over time, the notion of authenticity in relation to the artist was revisited as Lonzi's feminist engagement opened a space for reflecting on the meaning of subjecthood and the conditions for becoming a subject. For women, this defining of subjectivity is a complex

---

[61] "[…] the object of my investigation was the artist, not art itself". For the original quote, see Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla*, p. 1007.
[62] "detached", in *Self-Portrait*, p. 46.
[63] Lonzi, talking about *Autoritratto*, clearly states that "This book does not intend to suggest a fetishism about the artist" in *Self-portrait*, p. 15.
[64] "How can you make a gesture like this [recording] afterwards, which is a gesture of the critic's absolute impotence, because if you take a recorder it means that, as a critic, you no longer exist in the traditional sense…how can you make the old gesture again 'This yes, this other no'" in *Self-portrait*, p. 74. For the original quote, see Lonzi, *Autoritratto*, p. 63.
[65] Francesco Ventrella, "Magnetic Encounters: Listening to Carla Lonzi's Tape Recordings", in *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi*, pp. 45–74.
[66] Ventrella, "Magnetic Encounters: Listening to Carla Lonzi's Tape Recordings", p. 45.

operation that clashes with a culture that has never anticipated their voice: they are "soggett[i] imprevist[i]".[67] In feminist analysis, however, 'the artist' is revealed to be an oppressor rather than creative inspiration. The mythological weight that enriches the artist with his specialness, Lonzi went on to note, derives from the "phallocentrism of art" in which the maximum subject-ness of certain figures, in this case artists, exists because others are denied the possibility of being subjects.[68] Lonzi's diary bears witness to this shift in perspective:

> Il senso di ciò che dicono gli artisti in Autoritratto proviene dal riconoscimento non solo della loro autenticità, ma anche della mia che dava alla loro occasione di manifestarsi. Dunque non ero una spettatrice. Quello che mi turbava era però il fatto che mi vedessero solo come spettatrice, oggi capisco il perché. Anche Ester mi faceva pesare, all'inizio del libro, il sospetto di un'impresa poco creativa e mi esortava a esserlo completamente, mentre io compivo un'operazione che non era capita! Dopo mi faceva ridere che i critici prendessero il magnetofono e registrassero conversazioni su nastro! Gli artisti supponevano forse che fossi più intelligente, più sensibile di quelli, dunque più brava al registratore, certamente più onesta, ma tutto finiva lì, in una spettatrice ideale.[69]

It is as though Carla Lonzi came to recognize over time that *Autoritratto* had produced a system with the power to allocate authenticity to artists at the cost of her own authenticity. Her commitment to finding different, non-hierarchical dialogue strategies made her not an equal, but a useful collaborator. From here, philosopher Giovanna Zapperi notes, just as Lonzi had once been able to shift authenticity from the artwork to the artist,[70] she now goes on to make a further displacement, this time seeking authenticity within herself and among her feminist companions.[71]

The manifesto of Rivolta Femminile, which can be found in Lonzi's book *Sputiamo su Hegel* (1970) (Let's Spit on Hegel) is explicit regarding this point: "Riconosciamo il carattere mistificatorio di tutte le ideologie, perché attraverso le forme ragionate di potere (teologico, morale, filosofico, politico), hanno costretto l'umanità a una condizione inautentica, oppressa e consenziente".[72]

---

[67] Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla*, p. 121. The expression is rendered as "unexpected subject[s]," a term that resonated with subsequent projects including the exhibition The Unexpected Subject: 1978, Art and Feminism in Italy (later published as catalogue). See: Marco Scotini and Raffaela Perna eds, *The: Unexpected Subject - 1978 Art and Feminism in Italy* (Milan: Flash Art, 2019).

[68] Giovanna Zapperi, "The Making of a Feminist Subject: Autonomy, Authenticity and Withdrawal", in *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi*, p. 98.

[69] "The meaning of what the artists say in Autoritratto comes from the recognition not only of their authenticity, but also of mine, which gave theirs the opportunity to manifest itself. Therefore I was not a spectator. What troubled me, however, was the fact that they saw me only as a spectator – today I understand why. Even Ester burdened me, at the beginning of the book, with the suspicion of a not very creative enterprise, and urged me to be completely so, while I was carrying out an operation that no one understood! Afterward it made me laugh that critics would pick up the tape recorder and record conversations on tape! The artists perhaps supposed that I was more intelligent, more sensitive than those critics, therefore better with the tape recorder, certainly more honest, but everything ended there, in an ideal spectator". For the original quote see Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla*, p. 64.

[70] Zapperi, "The Making of a Feminist Subject: Autonomy, Authenticity and Withdrawal", p. 91.

[71] Zapperi, "The Making of a Feminist Subject: Autonomy, Authenticity and Withdrawal", p. 101.

[72] "We understand the mystifying character of all ideologies, because through the reasoned forms of power (theological, moral, philosophical, political) they have constrained humanity into an inauthentic condition, suppressed and consenting" the translation of the manifesto can be found in Megan Brueske and Penny A. Weiss, eds, *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), p. 228. For the original quote see Carla Lonzi, *Sputiamo su Hegel e altri scritti*, (Milan: La Tartaruga, 2023), p. 16.

Based on this awareness, Lonzi comes to consider consciousness-raising not only as a means of becoming oneself, but also as a way of producing a different culture – one rooted in the experience of being and specifically of being a woman, and thus capable of reducing the oppressive system to a *tabula rasa*. In this sense, the quest for a new cultural language that began with the tape recorder is ultimately surpassed by consciousness-raising itself.

Although Carla Lonzi's thought continued to evolve, eventually leading her to distance herself even from feminism, in the context of this study it is important to return to the concepts of authenticity and the artist. Lonzi's clear dismantling of the figure of the artist should, I believe, be considered above all from the standpoint of the cultural category the artist represents. Indeed, the system generated by *Autoritratto* was not problematic insofar as it created artists; it was problematic because it reinforced their cultural function. Lonzi's sustained work demonstrates her ability to separate artistic existence from socially and culturally attributed roles.

This distinction can be seen as early as Lonzi's diary, for instance in 1972 when she demonstrates her ability to separate the two spheres: "Ho conversato a lungo con Sara sugli artisti: lei parla di "concettuali", per me sono i miei amici"[73] And again: "L'artista è unitario, questo mi piaceva di lui, ma siccome s'inganna di comunicare con le sue opere, l'alienazione può venirgli dall'insistere fino alla fine senza accorgersi che l'altro è tagliato fuori. "[74] Or when, following an interview with Grotowski broadcast on the radio, she could not help but recognize the director as having an intrinsic specialness, one that reflects her own: "Dopo le prime battute ho capito che lui "sa", e quindi ho seguito quello che diceva anticipando parola per parola".[75] The critic also shares Grotowski's reflections on the formation of creativity itself:

> Mi ha commosso quando Grotowski afferma che nell'esperienza personale c'è un periodo tra i sedici e i diciotto anni in cui ognuno ha un sogno intimo su ciò che dovrebbe essere la vita, un sogno che non rivela perché sembra follia. In Autoritratto dico proprio questo […].[76]

Above all, the proof of this coexistence lies in Lonzi's unexpected contribution to the catalogue for the 1981 exhibition *Identité italienne. L'art en Italie depuis 1959*, curated by Germano Celant, with whom her relationship had been strained.[77] Her brief and extremely dense text represents a surprising incursion into the art world after a long silence and bears

[73] "I spoke at length with Sara about artists: she speaks of 'conceptual artists'; for me, they are my friends". For the original quote see Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla*, p. 308.
[74] "The artist is unified – this I liked about him – but since he deceives himself that he communicates through his works, alienation can come to him from persisting to the end without realizing that the other is cut off". For the original quote see Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla*, p. 309.
[75] "After the first exchanges I understood that he 'knows,' and so I followed what he was saying, anticipating every word". For the original quote see Lonzi, *Taci, Anzi Parla*, p. 988.
[76] "It moved me when Grotowski states that in personal experience there is a period between the ages of sixteen and eighteen during which everyone has an intimate dream of what life should be – a dream they do not reveal because it seems madness. In Autoritratto I say exactly this [...]". For the original quote see Carla Lonzi, *Taci, anzi parla*, p. 988.
[77] The tension between Lonzi and Celant was intellectual rather than personal. The exhibition catalogue demonstrates this: Lonzi forthrightly acknowledges that her practice and discoveries were co-opted to sustain the system she was criticizing, holding Celant partially responsible. Michele Dantini develops this argument further in Michele Dantini, *Geopolitiche dell'arte: arte e critica d'arte italiana nel contesto internazionale, dalle neoavanguardie a oggi* (Milan: Marinotti, 2012), pp. 143–166.

the traces of her entire intellectual trajectory. Above all, it reveals a clear awareness of the dual reality that characterizes artists and, in a way, also condemns them. Speaking of her relationship with Castellani, Paolini, Fabro, Kounellis, Pascali, and Merz – whom she had known before the mainstream success of Arte Povera – she clearly admits to having worked more on a mechanism that would allow her to recognize artists than on interpretive lenses to apply to artwork:

> J'avais individualisé les artistes non pas par l'intermédiaire de l'objet mais de la crédibilité du processus que j'étais en mesure de reconnaitre. C'est ainsi que j'ai choisi ces artistes presque avant qu'ils ne deviennent artistes et quand désormais ils ne pouvaient qu'être artistes tandis que les critiques attendaient des résultats et des garanties culturelles. Les oeuvres, je les accueillais les yeux fermés, même si ensuite je les ouvrais, naturellement.
> Et ceci non pas par parti pris mais spontanément: je préférais décider qui était l'artiste plutôt que de me prononcer sur son oeuvre.
> La difficulté survint après, une fois que l'entente avait été vérifiée et l'expérience faite.[78]

For Lonzi, the problem arrived after the initial phase of recognition: when artist began their repetitions and when she, as a critic, was required to be willing to sustain the mechanism of constructing individuals. Looking at the role of "integrated" figures occupied by artists, the critic remarks: "L'artiste est une structure que tout soutient et que rien ne met en crise".[79]

In this final writing, therefore, the artist is presented both as an individual – who exists in spite of art – and as an operator within the broader cultural system. Paradoxically, the artist's existence comes to light within an authentic relationship; at the very moment when he/she is discovered and begins to exist as an artist, however, this figure is no longer able to remain faithful to that authenticity.

From this perspective, *Autoritratto* can be seen as not only a book, not only a montage of conversations, but also the representation of that brief authentic moment in which the artist reveals him/herself as such. Voice and conversation lie at the core of this mechanism of authenticity, and Lonzi nearly considers the mechanisms to be an artwork in and of itself.[80] What matters, however, is that the structure given to the discourse makes it possible to isolate a pure representation of the artist, without deriving this representation from the concatenations of culture and myth destined to render it inauthentic (always through Lonzi's mechanisms of dismantling).

This study identifies certain narrative technologies – specifically ones based on voice and interviewing – that represent artists without attempting to construct them. This distinction is central. Drawing on a framework derived from Lonzi's texts, the artist's special status is no

---

[78] "I had identified the artists not through the object itself, but through the credibility of the process, which I was able to recognise. That is how I chose these artists almost before they became artists, and at a time when they could only be artists, whilst the critics were waiting for results and cultural guarantees. The works, I welcomed them with my eyes closed, although I naturally opened them afterwards. And this was not out of bias but spontaneously: I preferred to decide who the artist was rather than pass judgement on their work. The difficulty arose afterwards, once the rapport had been established and the experience had been lived." Carla Lonzi in Germano Celant, *Identité italienne: l'art en Italie depuis 1959, Giovanni Anselmo, Marco Bagnoli, Alighiero Boetti, Enrico Castellani... [etc.]* (Paris, Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1981), p. 31.
[79] "The artist is a structure that everything supports and nothing undermines." Lonzi in *Identité italienne*, p. 31.
[80] Anne-Marie Sauzeau Boetti offers an alternative reading of Lonzi as writer, providing valuable personal insight into Carla Lonzi. Anne-Marie Sauzeau Boetti, "Carla Lonzi. Una presenza alle mie spalle", *Arte e Critica*, 79 (December 2014), pp. 44–45.

longer treated as something to be interpreted or analytically penetrated, but rather as something that can be observed from outside the systems which conventionally seek to explain or contain it. Thanks to Lonzi's writing, therefore, we can conceive an alternative approach to representing artists, one that shifts the attention from interpretive models to the processes through which this special status takes shape. Where relevant, this status can also function as a generative force within broader narrative structures, as will become clear in Chapter III and particularly when discussing the *Kontakt Video Portraits*.

From the outset, it should be noted that the theoretical framework of charismatic technology that informs my analysis of the following case studies is grounded in the concept of authenticity. More precisely, this theoretical framework is underpinned by an understanding of artisticity as something that calls for recognition rather than requiring verification. It is this quality that will be designated here as "charisma". This move to adopt a "cooler" and (only apparently) more stable term than the ones used by Lonzi is not intended to make her thought more rigid. Rather than extending her concepts directly – by transplanting them onto case studies that are distinct in both time period and context – this approach seeks to avoid instrumentalizing her terminology or neutralizing its radical force for the purposes of the present study. What the research instead proposes is a deliberate deviation: an attempt to proceed independently even while remaining critically indebted to Lonzi's work. The move towards an authenticity-based understanding of artists reshapes the meaning of charisma and, in doing so, lays the groundwork for the concept of charismatic technology.

1.2 The Lens of Charisma

This study investigates how video portraits reveal artistic identity through charismatic dynamics. Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* (1963-1965), short films shot at the Factory, provide the foundational model. These films have been interpreted as staging both the emergence and dissolution of charisma through their enforced stillness and extended temporal duration.

Sarah Boxer captured this dynamic in a critical piece:

> What do you learn at the school of screen tests? Nothing at all. Well, maybe one thing: by shooting the films at one speed and playing them more slowly, Warhol exposed the mechanics of discomposure and charisma. Some people are fascinating as they lose it; others are not. It has nothing to do with handsomeness, histrionics, coolness, slimness, trying or giving up. The typology of charisma is as elusive as the typology of criminality. As Warhol once wrote, ''The great stars are the ones who are doing something you can watch every second, even if it's just a movement inside their eyes.[81]

Warhol's reference to "great stars" appears to describe not celebrity – many Screen Test subjects were unknown – but rather a quality that renders certain presences captivating on screen. The videos' minimalist conditions suspend their subjects between the status of object and that of individual, thereby producing what might be termed an "illusion of life" that holds the viewer's attention.

[81] Sarah Boxer, "Critic's Notebook; Andy Warhol's "Screen Tests" Were 3-Minute Eternities", *New York Times*, 23 May 2003, p. 38. This article will receive further attention in Chapter 2.

The concept of charisma has shaped my interpretation of Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* and Kontakt's *Video Portraits*. Both series raise similar questions: do these works generate charismatic dynamics comparable to Warhol's? And how might such dynamics be conditioned by the fact that the subjects being portrayed are specifically artists, united by their shared professional identity?

Interviews with Kogler and the Kontakt creative team confirm that there are meaningful connections between their work and Warhol's approach. Both cite Warhol as having influenced their work, particularly his use of rhythm and minimalist structure for representing subjects. Claus Philipp, a playwright involved in creating the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, noted that Warhol's work prompted the group to begin a reflection on portraiture that they then chose to pursue further.[82]

Philipp's observation about Warhol's approach to portraiture – specifically his attention to rhythm and temporal structure – led me to Gertrude Stein's literary portraits. Stein's work provides a crucial intermediary link between verbal rhythm and Warhol's visual practice. She demonstrated that an individual's personal rhythm could be made perceptible through deliberate repetition – what she termed "insistences" – constructed using descriptions and phrases drawn from direct speech. Warhol was familiar with this strategy and adapted it to his visual practice, using temporal duration and minimal editing in the *Screen Tests* to achieve similar effects. Chapter III examines this genealogy in greater detail.

Stein's rhythmic repetitions, Warhol's durational framing, and Carla Lonzi's conversational authenticity share a common strategy: using temporal extension to reveal elusive qualities that resist conventional representation. These precedents provide a model of how to capture something essential about artistic identity: how to make the artist's presence palpable without reducing it to biography or myth. Building on this framework, I interpret video portraits of artists as charismatic technologies: formats that use temporal mediation to generate fascination while revealing artistic identity. This concept, however, requires grounding in the broader intellectual history of charisma.

Charisma has a complex intellectual history. Although it is now typically associated with leadership and individual power, the term originated in theological contexts – designating the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as glossolalia – before evolving to describe a quality capable of attracting and commanding allegiance.[83] Sociologist Max Weber distilled insights from anthropology and theology into a modern theory of charisma. *In Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1921), he developed a conceptualization of charisma as a rational theory of social control by stripping the term of its divine origins and reconceiving it as a personal, rather than supernatural, attribute. In this rethinking charismatic individuals are thus leaders and their defining quality is what enables them to command the masses, a situation Weber views as the embodiment of the irrational. Consistent with his systematic approach, Weber also considers

[82] Philipp's words play a central role in Chapter 3. The playwright's observations about Warhol's style of portraiture prompted me to reflect on the visual and performative codes that shape minimalist portraiture.

[83] For a discussion of the origins of the concept of charisma, see John Potts, "Paul Invents Charisma," in *A History of Charisma*, ed. John Potts (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), pp. 23–50. Regarding the nineteenth-century scholarly literature developing this concept, particularly through Rudolph Sohm and Karl Holl's reinterpretations, see Jean-Philippe Heurtin, "Weber as a Reader of Rudolph Sohm, and the Incomplete Concept of 'Office Charisma'," *Max Weber Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2019), pp. 11–42. Sohm and Holl provide essential context for Weber's decisive contribution to charisma theory.

the long-term effects of charismatic action: an initial moment of rupture that mobilizes the masses is ultimately followed by the restoration of an established order. He frames the routinization of charisma as the institutionalization of authority through political or hereditary succession.[84]

Sociology and psychology, specifically in the works of Freud and Durkheim, subsequently deepened and strengthened this connection with individual power,[85] but more recent studies have made room for broader visions of charisma. For example, the link between charisma and attractiveness or seduction as theorized by Charles Lindholm highlights and defines charismatic power as the capacity to transport individuals onto another plane: into a here and now that is separate from yet similar to the ones that takes shape during the experience of falling in love. [86]

For this study, philosopher Emanuele Arielli's extension of charisma into art has proven particularly valuable. Arielli demonstrates that charisma can be found not only in persons but also in artworks and objects, thus making it relevant to dynamics of aesthetic representation.[87] This expanded conception is especially pertinent here: the *Screen Tests*,

---

[84] Weber's concept of charisma has generated extensive scholarly debate. Because this discussion examines the dynamics that charisma generates, I draw primarily on Luciano Cavalli, "Charisma and Twentieth-Century Politics," in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, ed. Sam Whimster and Scott Lash (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 317–333. Cavalli identifies eleven phases in the charismatic process: " In other writings I have developed a paradigm of elements, correspond-ing in my opinion to the crucial moments in the dialectics of the charismatic process, from its beginning to its end. The paradigm in its shortened form is as follows: (1) extraordinary situation; (2) "calling' of the potential leader and his request for obedience from the potential following; (3) acknowledgement by the following and its request for a confirmation; (4) confirmation shown by the success of the leader and an act of commitment of the following; (5) structuring of the following as a leader-centred community or movement, with a leader-dependent elite ("charismatic aristocracy'); (6) the leader as the principal source of values and norm s; (7) change of mind of the leader-centred group, manifest in new feelings and attitudes (feeling of togetherness, self-confidence, activism and pugnacity in the case of a movement); (8) maxim um individual and collective effort for the "cause', with positive results; (9) in the case of repeated lack of success, repudiation of the leader and possible disintegration of the following; (10) leader's death follow ed by succession (either the institutionalization of charisma or the disintegration of the following); (11) a new personal charisma arises in a dialectical relationship with institutionalized charisma as and when an extraordinary situation confronts it", p. 319.

[85] Émile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), identifies charisma as a mirroring process in which individuals and the masses identify with the charismatic personality, viewing it as an extension of the social body. Freud on the other hand sought to shift focus from the "vertical" leader and group dynamic to "horizontal […] relationships between group members, by means of the concept of identification". Cavalli, *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, pp. 318–319.

[86] Charles Lindholm, "Lovers and Leaders: A Comparison of Social and Psychological Models of Romance and Charisma," *Social Science Information* 27, no. 1 (March 1988), pp. 3–45. See especially p. 4, where Lindholm asserts, "It is evident that the idea of irrational desire is a deep part of our ordinary way of understanding social interaction and attraction, both in mass movements and in small-scale, everyday events. At each level, from the personal to the public, there remains the concept of a compulsive, inexplicable emotional tie linking leader and follower, lover and beloved, and symbolized in the imagery of charismatic attraction. […] In fact, I will argue that the more the models are fleshed out, the closer are the resemblances between them. They both stand in equivalent contrast to complementary patterns of courtly romance and messianic leadership; both thrive on fantasy; both can bring about great self-sacrifice; both rely on distance, mystery and uncertainty mingled with a pervasive sense of the immediacy and omnipresence of the beloved object; both imply states of imaginary fusion with the beloved other; both are triggered by threats to the self, such as alienation and loneliness; both construct an illusory world of absolute happiness and fulfilment".

[87] Emanuele Arielli, "Carisma tra estetica e politica," in *Kunst im Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert: Zwischen Klassizismus und Moderne, zwischen privatem und öffentlichem Raum*, ed. Hans-Christian Günther, v. 13 (Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz Verlag, 2018), pp. 151–179. A great deal of literature has referenced the

Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*, and Kontakt's *Video Portraits* are all artworks, and the *Screen Tests* have been explicitly interpreted through the lens of charisma.

Furthermore, Arielli argues that dynamics of seduction, being transported to other planes of reality, and even creating alternative social orders (albeit always within the artistic realm) repeatedly occur, for example, in the branch of studies known as the pictorial turn. Scholars such as Freedberg, Mitchell, Bredekamp, Cometa, and Didi-Huberman treat images – and objects – as powerful expressive tools. This capacity is derived not from their seductive power, but rather from their mixed-media nature that allows images and objects to convey meanings which words alone cannot.

Considered likewise in the framework of Arielli's reconstruction, works such as Marina Abramović's performance "The Artist Is Present" are also ascribed to charisma. In this case, the artist herself has claimed to have created a "charismatic space," thus foregrounding the power of artworks themselves to generate charisma.[88]

What Arielli's analysis offers is a concept of charisma that exceeds the individual plane to bind itself to objects, moments, and even situations (it is not by chance that his reflection culminates in a consideration of the relationship between charisma and *hype*).

Indeed, surveying the scattered literature connecting charisma to art, especially contemporary art, we find wide-ranging examples of such expansion. Maria Stavrinaki's text *The African Chair* focuses on a chair designed in 1921 by Marcel Breuer and Gunta Stölzl, both affiliated with the Bauhaus school. The study establishes a continuous counterpoint between Bauhaus ideology and the physical characteristics of the chair, showing how the object was not merely inspired by the cultural milieu in which it was created but actually constituted a direct and authentic manifestation of "the Bauhaus's ontological project to produce a 'whole' subject [...] with a centre, an 'authentic' subject".[89]

The research then examines the relationship between the chair's design and the pedagogical approach of the two designers' master, Johannes Itten, whose experience-based (and equally charismatic) practices are thought to have influenced the chair's appearance. Stavrinaki thus argues that "The African Chair has absorbed, in its materiality and its form, the charismatic forces of the master, of any master": its features enable the chair to speak the language of the cultural and ideological forces that shaped it, making it a vehicle for an openly utopian discourse on the construction of the art object.[90]

Where the chair's charisma operates through a dynamic of cultural transmission, Christopher Wingfield's research discusses the moment when the charismatic dynamic unfolds: the specific "microsecond of delivery" in which fascination takes shape.[91] His object of study, the Sultanganj Buddha at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, belongs to the realm of archaeological and religious artefacts. Wingfield analyses visitors' responses to this

---

evolutionary structure of charismatic ability as described by Arielli and, although efforts have been made to expand upon it, the influence of Arielli's *ars combinatoria* remains evident.

[88] Arielli, "Carisma tra estetica e politica,"p. 151.

[89] Maria Stavrinaki, "The African Chair or the Charismatic Object," *Grey Room* 41 (October 2010), p. 101.

[90] Stavrinaki, "The African Chair or the Charismatic Object,", p. 105.

[91] Christopher Wingfield, "Touching the Buddha: Encounters with a Charismatic Object," in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. Sandra H. Dudley (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 53.

imposing figure, noting that people seem to notice the Sultanganj Buddha differently from how they notice other objects.

The author focuses on that microsecond in which we encounter an unfamiliar object and project our cultural schemas onto it. The Sultanganj Buddha, however, resists such categorization: it is the statue itself that dictates how it wishes to be seen. The way the viewer is drawn into the object's temporal dimension generates reflections on the way works of art can assert their own perspectives, perspectives we submit to regardless of our understanding. The skill of the original creators endowed this object with a charisma still perceptible today, in contexts far removed from the monastic setting for which it was intended. This is not manipulation or artifice, but rather the likely objective of "mak[ing] present aspects of the person and teachings of the Buddha" through their work. [92]

In the texts cited thus far, the theme of fascination – and at times magic – appears frequently. This is no accident: charisma is often described through the dynamics of enchantment, particularly when attributed to objects. Timothy Morton, a leading Object-Oriented Ontology theorist, offers an unorthodox contribution that resists conventional categorization. He argues that "sociology is afraid of its founder's concept [Weber], which was a little scary […] since charisma has to do with forces that many described as supernatural or paranormal". [93] In Morton's view, charisma unsettles because, despite attempts to secularize it, it retains supernatural elements that Western philosophy seeks to avoid.

Provocative as it is, Morton's thinking identifies a crucial shift in perspective: if we were to accept – even hypothetically – that charisma is a magical emanation, the artwork would no longer be a decorative exercise but a live thing: "Art is demonic: it emanates from some unseen beyond in the sense that I am not in charge of it".

Morton focused on the manifestation generated by charisma as something that pushes outward from the artwork itself. And yet the core of his argument is the difficulty of locating this force: its non-locality renders it elusive, contingent, and magical. The artwork "cannot be reduced to its parts or its materials" nor to its context, and yet it "has an actual causal effect". According to Morton, art manipulates cause and effect because "Art is charisma, pouring out of anything". [94]

The broad conception of charisma delineated by these readings points to the interpretive space this concept carries with it. Charisma is revealed to be the result of a dynamic and, above all, can be seen as arising from a process of unveiling an otherwise unspecified idea of specialness. Whether it is the cultural underpinnings permeating a design project or the vivifying impression that videos like Warhol's allow us to glimpse, charisma maintains a fascinating power as something that reveals another dimension, an alternative reality.

In video artist portraits, charisma manifests through specific dynamics. Following the model established by Warhol's *Screen Tests*, charisma can be perceived during the viewing experience itself, emerging as it does through the representation of the subjects being portrayed.

---

[92] Wingfield, "Touching the Buddha: Encounters with a Charismatic Object," 67.
[93] Timothy Morton, "Charisma and Causality: What If Art Were a Kind of Magic?," *ArtReview*, November 2015, p. 187.
[94] Morton, "Charisma and Causality: What If Art Were a Kind of Magic?," 189.

However, unlike Warhol's work that included celebrities, socialites, and Factory regulars, the video portraits examined in this study focus specifically on artists as subjects. This focus creates a productive relationship between charisma and artistic identity. In this case, charisma – the captivating quality that suspends ordinary perception – depends on the way the artist is revealed: when artistic identity becomes visible in compelling ways, it gives rise to charismatic fascination. The reverse holds equally true: the charisma generated during viewing functions as a form of validation, confirming the subject's identity as artist. I interpret this bidirectional dynamic through the concept of charismatic technology.

As mentioned in the introduction, this study stems from a personal interest in artist narratives – specifically, narratives about individuals for whom making art constitutes not a choice but a necessity. While this may seem self-evident, it foregrounds the aspect that makes such narratives compelling: they document lives which are structured around creative compulsion rather than professional identity alone. The documentarian Wilhelm Gaube, whose work I examine in Chapter III, shares this perspective on the distinctive character of artist narratives.

Within this framework, the term charismatic technologies refers to mediated productions that operate by moving reciprocally between two registers: the revelation of artistic identity and the charismatic fascination this revelation generates. Analysing charisma in video portraits thus requires dual attention – focusing on both the representation of artistic identity and the fascination it produces in viewers. This approach privileges processes of emergence and revelation over stabilized outcomes. Following Carla Lonzi's thinking, it resists reducing the artist to a fixed biographical narrative or mythic archetype, focusing instead on how artistic identity is made perceptible through temporal mediation.

1.3 Coming to Terms with the Myth of the Artist

Artists exert fascination through a series of subtle traits that resist easy identification, yet these are not the features by which artistic identity customarily takes shape. Lonzi was pioneering in pointing to the fact that it is possible – and urgently needed – to encounter artists outside of myth. Here, myth appears as a chain of inferences that, beginning with artistic aptitude, progressively anchors the artist within social roles and culturally sedimented forms. These implications are generated by a tightly woven narrative texture, one to which this study of video portraits cannot but respond.

The mythological construction of the artist has been the object of many foundational studies. From classics such as Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860), Julius von *Schlosser's Die Kunstliteratur* (1924), Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz's *Die Legende vom Künstler* (1934), Rudolf and Margot Wittkower's *Born Under Saturn* (1963), and Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl's *Saturn and Melancholy* (1964) to critical reflections from both studies such as Barthes's *La mort de l'auteur* (1968) and Foucault's *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?* (1969). The investigation continues through a feminist lens with Linda Nochlin's *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* (1971) and Griselda Pollock's

Artists, Mythologies and Media – Genius, Madness and Art History (1980), leading up to the most recent neuroscientific analyses.[95]

Rather than offering a comprehensive survey of scholarship on artist biographies, this study concentrates on representational techniques to examine how specific media formats shape artistic identity. A similar orientation can be found in *The Absolute Artist*, where Catherine Soussloff traces a historical genealogy of scholarship on artists by situating its key developments within broader intellectual frameworks.[96] Drawing on film studies, literary criticism, and gender studies, Soussloff argues that, in contrast to the figure of the author, the artist has remained comparatively undertheorized.

Central to Soussloff's analysis is the finding that biographical myth continued to operate as a structuring principle of artist narratives. Although early twentieth-century Viennese scholars initiated a critical dismantling of these myths, their work was interrupted, thus allowing mythological constructions to remain embedded in biography. Soussloff traces this tradition back to *Lives of the Artists*, a text that itself drew on earlier biographical models, including sixteenth-century accounts of poets and illustrious figures – most notably the writings of Paolo Giovio, who combined textual narration with portraiture – as well as broader mythological narrative structures.

The persistence of this narrative model has had lasting consequences for art history. By removing the artist from a specific historical plane, biographical myth naturalizes artistic identity and promotes a systematic reification of both artist and artwork. As a result, the historicity of the creator, and even the concept of creation itself, is made increasingly difficult to analyse. A hypothetical rupture in this narrative and mythological framework took place between the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, particularly in Vienna. Here, art-historical studies succeeded in dismantling the component parts that made up the typical artist biography, considering how anecdotes and recurring topoi served to transmit the mythological character later ascribed to the artist. Julius von Schlosser turned his attention to anecdotes, understanding them as the minimum component part of myth-making, while continuing to read biographies (such as those by Lorenzo Ghiberti or Giorgio Vasari) as sources for mapping the history of art and style. Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, in contrast, adopted a different approach: instead of reflecting on the artist's intrinsic heroism, they considered this attribute as the product of a narrative process. In this perspective, anecdotes do not serve as historical evidence but rather function as "primitive cell[s]" of the myth itself.[97]

---

[95] Research bringing art and neuroscience into dialogue now constitutes a broad and methodologically diverse field, spanning cognitive psychology, creativity theory, neurobiology, and philosophical aesthetics. In this landscape, three works prove particularly influential even though they adopt distinct and not always convergent approaches: Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind* (1983), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's *Creativity* (1996), and Vilayanur S. Ramachandran's *The Emerging Mind* (2003). These authors, operating across different disciplinary frameworks, collectively illuminate relationships between cognitive processes, artistic production, and theories of mind. These are studies that illustrate the broad scenario of these diverse fields of study. See also Dantini, Michele, "Storia Dell'arte e Scienze Cognitive. Come Incoraggiare Il Dialogo Tra Discipline", *Scenari* 2 (Milan) (June 2015), pp. 115–21; Angela Vettese, *Artisti si diventa* (Roma: Carocci, 1998),

[96] Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[97] Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 11.

Catherine Soussloff's interpretation makes it possible to understand the innovation that Kris and Kurz offer in light of psychoanalytic (and particularly psychobiographical) discoveries that, beginning with Sigmund Freud, renewed interpretations of art history. This influence enabled the two scholars to register the way the same anecdotes were frequently and systematically repeated not only as a literary invention, but also as a kind of unconscious staging by the artists themselves – what they define as "enacted biography".[98] As the historians explain: "The practitioner of the vocation to some extent submits to this typical [mythical] fate or destiny. This effect relates by no means exclusively, or indeed primarily, to the conscious thought and behavior of the individual […] but rather to the unconscious".[99]

Artists learned which anecdotes defined them as such and ended up "performing" them or being associated with them, thus constructing their own professional identity. Soussloff concludes that art history's reluctance to question this model of the artist is no accident, as the model has come to be treated almost as a creation of the discipline itself.

The Viennese school began challenging this system but was not able to complete its project; consequently, mythical construction remains embedded in artist representation. What interrupted these studies was the emergence of Nazism and the consequent diaspora, a development that not dislocated scholars from their places but also make it humanly difficult for them to return to their interrupted studies.

The effects produced by this failed transmission in studies of artists include themes already identified by Lonzi. Soussloff acknowledges Barthes' and Foucault's critical role in deconstructing authorship: "When viewed collectively and retrospectively, these 'theories of authorship' can be seen to have produced a progressively radicalized view of authorship in fields that deal with literary texts".[100]

However, these concepts were not similarly expanded in art-historical studies. The reason for this is not so much a lack of clarity in or applicability of the French theorists' ideas; rather, it is due to a definition of the author grounded in literary terms rather than the terms of the visual artist.

By contrast, other theoretical approaches, including feminist ones, have not fully achieved a radical reconsideration of myth's impact. Soussloff cites both her own work and that of Griselda Pollock, thinking that incisively reveals the masculine, patriarchal foundations of the myth of the artist yet does not advance alternative epistemological frameworks through which it might be detached from its origins. As Soussloff argues (echoing Pollock), "none of these [art] critiques have provided a satisfactory solution to the problem of the artist," and this might be because "the interdependence of text, artist, and the assumptions of art history that pertain to the discourse of art history, but not to literature, for example, has prevented a means of progressing beyond the arguments made by the classic critiques of the author, even the 'author function' as theorized by Foucault".[101]

---

[98] Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* , p. 132.
[99] Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment,* p. 131.
[100] Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept,* p. 110
[101] Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept,* p. 109.

A similar position could be found in the critiques formulated by Linda Nochlin. Soussloff cites Nochlin primarily in relation to her modernist contribution, but her work also shows the same intentions of critically re-examining the myth of the artist.

Catherine Soussloff operates primarily on a philosophical and historiographic level, yet the solutions her work suggests ultimately concern strategies for representing artists. It is thus particularly productive to bring her work into comparison with that of Carla Lonzi – although Lonzi does not appear among Soussloff's sources. Lonzi's proposals and critical practices point towards concrete ways of approaching artist representation outside of a mythological framework. Equally important is the context from which these proposals emerged: a space of interaction between voice, body, and art criticism. This same space also underlies my inquiry into charismatic technologies.

Bringing Soussloff and Lonzi into dialogue thus opens a broader field in which to pose the problem of alternative artist representation – specifically, a representation crafted within discursive and communicative strategies that fall outside the conventions of traditional art-historical criticism.

Soussloff's analysis of artists' mythology has also informed subsequent scholarship on mass media representation, particularly studies examining how television, film, and digital technologies shape and circulate narratives of artistic identity. This line of inquiry is extended in *The Mediatization of the Artist* edited by Rachel Esner and Sandra Kisters. The chapter collected in this volume analyse how media formats participate in constructing biographies, showing that artist representation is the result of an interaction among self-presentation, institutional framing, and technological possibilities.

The concept of mediatization itself is a neologism intended to articulate a shift in the way the act of representing artists is understood. It begins from the "(real or imagined) possibility of being seen" that characterizes artists in modernity.[102] Mediatization thus refers to an awareness of being photographable, interviewable, and representable – an awareness that shapes not only artists' public images, but also their studio practices and modes of discursive and performative self-presentation. From this perspective, the authors argue, it becomes possible to conceptualize a more comprehensive account of artist representation, one in which multiple media forms and authorial agents converge. As they note, "[The term Mediatization] means more, therefore, than just the "appearance" of the artist in different forms of media, and is designed to indicate an interaction between the diverse actors in this appearance – including the media themselves and their specific ontological and technical conditions".[103]

The reflections of Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz are also seminal for this recontextualization, as is the critical stimulus provided by Soussloff. The response to these earlier positions, however, takes shape within a different historical and theoretical landscape – one shaped by mass media and their ability to profoundly alter the boundaries of artistic identity, opening them up to broader reinterpretations (whether in authorial or explicitly performative terms).

[102] Sandra Kisters and Rachel Esner, eds, *The Mediatization of the Artist* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 1.
[103] Kisters and Esner, *The Mediatization of the Artist*, pp. 1–2.

The resulting scholarship addresses a wide range of representational contexts, from artists' appearances in print culture to children's books, docufilms, and interviews.

Sandra Kisters develops this line of inquiry further in *The Lure of the Biographical*, where she examines how artists' biographical narratives are shaped across different representational formats.[104] Through case studies of Auguste Rodin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Francis Bacon, Kisters reconstructs an art world in which artists, dealers, and museums actively deploy new media formats to create, revise, and expand narratives of artistic identity. Her analysis exemplifies what art sociology describes as polycontextural authorship:[105] an approach that conceives of the artist not as an essential self, but as a figure constructed through multiple, intersecting institutional communications. From this perspective, biographical narratives are generated by the interplay of self-presentation, institutional positioning, and the possibilities offered by media, with myth operating alongside documentary evidence and commercial framing.

Despite engaging directly with artist video portraits, this body of scholarship follows a different analytical trajectory from the one proposed here. Kisters and Rachel Esner convincingly demonstrate that the figure of the artist remains open and expandable in the media sphere – an expansion that, while not always poetic, is nonetheless crucial for understanding contemporary narrative innovation. Yet their work does not intervene at the epistemological level identified by Soussloff. Instead, it privileges a methodological approach to studying artists, resulting in analyses in which artistic singularity is closely aligned with celebrity and examined through the mechanisms that produce such celebrity.

What renders artists distinctive – the compulsion or need to make art – is rarely treated as a narrative engine in its own right. Instead, it is filtered through the cultural effects of this distinctive trait. As a result, the existential dimension of artistic identity remains largely unaddressed, and representations are approached primarily as cultural artefacts rather than proof of individuals engaged in artistic practice. Nevertheless, the framework developed by Esner and Kisters is crucial for situating artist representation within a media-aware context. By foregrounding the role of media and artists' awareness of them, their work expands the range of factors that must be considered when proposing charisma-based readings of specific cases.

The triangulation of authenticity, charisma, and representation may here be brought to a close: the conceptual architecture is in place. What the theoretical framework underpinning charismatic technology now requires is contact with actual works, and it is Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* that will bear the weight of this first grounding.

---

[104] Sandra Kisters, *The Lure of the Biographical: On the (Self-)Representation of Modern Artists*, (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017).

[105] Kisters does not explicitly frame the artist's identity as polycontextual; I use this term to connect her approach with that of other sociological scholarship that shares this perspective on artistic identity. Juliane Rebentisch, *Die Kunst der Freiheit: zur Dialektik demokratischer Existenz*, (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012).

2. The Artist as the Artwork: Charismatic Technologies in Peter Kogler's Portraits of Artists

This chapter examines what happens to the artist's identity in Peter Kogler's work *Portraits of Artists* (*KünstlerInnenporträts*), created between 1992 and 2001. This piece was chosen for the initial specific focus because of its uniqueness; however, the analysis naturally also branches out into broader comparisons.

Portraits of Artists is a particularly eloquent piece embodying a dual status: on the one hand, these portrayals claim a place in the tradition of portraiture, a positioning made explicit by their title; on the other, they consist of a series of video interviews with contemporary artists. This dual nature makes the work an especially productive terrain for multifaceted analysis, as a wide range of tools from art criticism can be applied to it.

This analytical potential stems partly from the strong connection between Kogler's work and Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests*. This connection provides a pre-existing interpretive framework; one that, although in need of revision, remains well-established. A comparative reading of the two works requires close attention to their technical dimensions and operative mechanisms. This includes analysing the framing, sound management, and underlying textual structures as well as the use of historical and artistic references, such as those derived from minimalist art.

First, addressing these formal and structural components makes it possible to understand how they contribute to Kogler's construction of the figure of the artist. This represents a particularly delicate analytical moment, as pinpointing when the video portrait transforms into a work of art proves difficult. To conduct the analysis, the study has needed to employ interpretive strategies capable of discerning these subtle and often invisible shifts in status.

In tracing the complex trajectories that interweave subjectivity and the artwork in both Kogler's and Warhol's pieces, this chapter turns to a charismatic technologies lens. Charisma offers a conceptual framework broad enough to encompass both the figures represented in the artworks and the affective and aesthetic mechanisms operating in the works themselves. The following analysis demonstrates what happens when the video portrait as an object opens itself to the potentialities of the artwork to become what I define as a "charismatic technology".

By charismatic technology, I mean a technology capable of generating certain modes of observation through the creation of specific dynamics, a process that actively co-constructs the subject being observed. The use of anthropological terminology here is deliberate: it reflects the genealogical roots of this approach and underscores its conceptual ambitions.

When applied specifically to Kogler's work and his depiction of artists, this form of identity is not revealed through the historiographical structures that have traditionally defined the figure of the artist as discussed in the previous chapter. Rather, it comes into being by performing authenticity, both articulated and highlighted, and through the act of recognition.

Here, the recognition of the artist becomes dynamic and the agency of both the artwork and the video portrait is made visible in a way that has yet to be fully theorized.

2.1 Biographical and conceptual notes on Peter Kogler

Metaphors of the labyrinth or network have often been used to describe Kogler's work.[106] Such terms are particularly eloquent when read in relation to pieces such as the one presented at Documenta IX in 1992, where the silhouette of an ant was multiplied to create an illusionistic and distorting pattern, or the 2012 video *Untitled*, exhibited during the Horse Pistes show at the Centre Pompidou, where a projector transforms the gallery floor into a sprawling, intricate labyrinth through which white mice dart in search of an escape route. The coexistence of video, patterns, projections, and the scalar dimension achieved by the action in these pieces leads Boris Groys to state that "Peter Kogler's art can be interpreted as answering the question of how to represent infinity in a finite art space".[107]

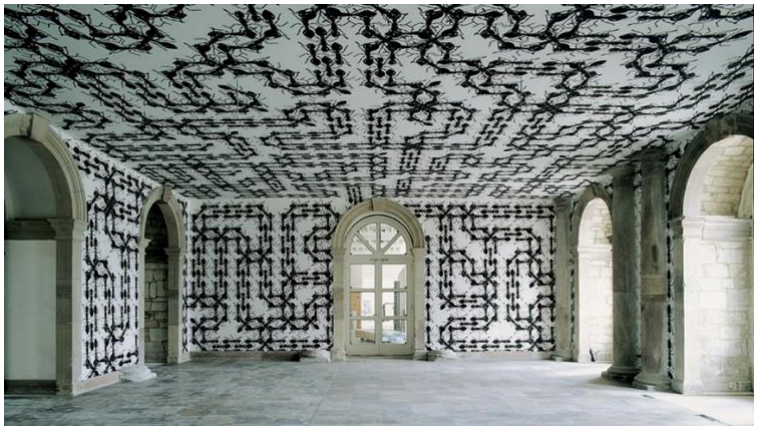

Figure 1 Peter Kogler, *Untitled*, 1992. Installation view, Documenta IX, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel. Photo: Studio Peter Kogler. Copyright and courtesy Peter Kogler, https://www.kogler.net, accessed May 25, 2026.

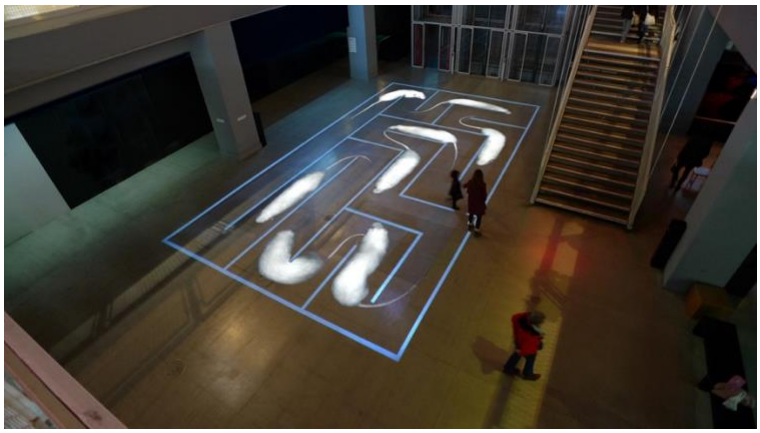

Figure 2 Peter Kogler, *Untitled*, 2012. Installation view, Hors Pistes, Centre Pompidou, Paris. Photo: Studio Peter Kogler. Copyright and courtesy Peter Kogler, https://www.kogler.net, accessed May 25, 2026.

From the late 1980s onwards, he began to be frequently included in the circuits of the Biennials: as early as 1986 he took part in the 42nd Venice Biennale, as part of the

[106] See both Jean-François Chougnet, "Kogler's Labyrinth", Kogler.net, 2008, accessed May 25, https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/koglers-labyrinth/, 2026; and Peter Kogler, "Diving Into The Network Of Peter Kogler", interview by Katrin Bucher Trantow, Kogler.net, 2022, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2022/12/07/diving-into-the-network-of-peter-kogler/.
[107] Boris Groys, "The Unending Etcetera", Kogler.net, 2004, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/the-unending-etcetera/.

monumental *Aperto 86* project. Kogler's career took off rapidly, just as his interest in art surfaced at an early age. Born in 1959 in Innsbruck, it was here that Kogler encountered a small but vibrant art scene during the 1970s. In an interview with Kathrin Rhomberg from the 2000s, he described it as follows:

> What was special about Innsbruck back then was that […] there was also a small theater on Landhausplatz that was staging plays by Arrabal, Kroetz and others like them. And Gerhard and Maria Crepaz were organizing musical events – they brought many international avant-garde musicians to Innsbruck and Hall, including the best Cage interpreters, and Ligeti and Stockhausen. The small community that came to these events consisted of the same twenty or thirty people every time and included people such as Heinz Gappmayr. Over time you got to know them all. Small towns have an advantage over the big cities in that you have to make use of the few cultural outlets that are available – otherwise they will disappear. It's different in Vienna or London, where there are so many events every week – which often seems to lead to you never going out at all. In Innsbruck, I was fortunate to be confronted with these positions in contemporary art from a very early age. The two Vienna Performance Festivals organized by Ursula Krinzinger were also very important in this context. We were able to see a lot of the events in Innsbruck that ran parallel to the larger event – projects by Terry Fox, Simon Forti, Julia Hayward, and Tom Marioni. And we visited workshops in Innsbruck organized by artists such as Joseph Kosuth, Giuseppe Chiari, and General Idea. All of these events exposed us to well-known international performance art and the conceptualism that was of primary importance in the late 1970s.[108]

The town, as Kogler describes it, was actively engaged in artistic and cultural exchanges with the capital, Vienna. In 1978, Kogler began attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, although he did not end up completing his studies. Indeed, the artist was suspended for carrying out an artistic action not permitted by the institution, and he responded to the suspension by withdrawing entirely. Robert Fleck's memories of this event are particularly revealing about both Kogler's attitude and the breadth of his references. During the unannounced action at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kogler "came to the school one morning, lay a white sheet between the entrance door and the doorman's booth, sat down on a chair, and covered his cheeks with shaving foam" evoking, albeit ironically "the horns of Michelangelo's David which Marcel Duchamp was wearing in the famous Man Ray photograph". Then the artist sat silently, reading Robert Lebel's Duchamp biography. The action, however, ended when the police, called by the rector, arrived on the scene, although the rector had not said anything to Kogler directly. Some photos of the event were taken and published a week later in the alternative paper *Falter*. As Fleck concludes, "this [was] particularly indicative of how open and relaxed Peter Kogler was able to work with the various realms of expression".[109]

The departure from the capital and return to Innsbruck after Kogler's withdrawal from the academy did not represent a dormant period for him. On the contrary, while working as a restorer, he managed to continue developing his artistic practice. As he recalls, "I quickly began to participate in exhibitions. In 1979, there was a small performance in the Galerie

[108] Kathrin Rhomberg, "Peter Kogler in Conversation with Kathrin Rhomberg", Kogler.net, 2000, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/peter-kogler-in-conversation-with-kathrin-rhomberg-2/.
[109] Robert Fleck, "Peter Kogler – An Art of the «Light Sign»", Kogler.net, 2000, May 25, 2026, https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/peter-kogler-an-art-of-the-light-sign/.

Krinzinger in Innsbruck and in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna. Finally, I had my first solo exhibition in 1983".[110]

Reflecting on his time at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kogler highlights not so much the value of formal education as the importance of the relationships he cultivated there. A key example is the friendship he developed with Marcus Geiger and Heimo Zobernig, both of whom would become prominent figures in the Viennese art scene during the 1980s and were his classmates at the time. As for his studies, the stage design programme he had chosen – motivated by a desire to explore a broader, more expansive notion of art that included performative and environmental practices situated beyond traditional painting – ultimately proved to be a disappointment. As we shall see, however, Kogler continued to pursue this interest independently.

It is important to further emphasize what Vienna was like in the 1970s and 1980s in order to understand the environment in which Kogler operated. As the artist states, until the 1980s there was a prevailing sense of mistrust towards representational art. The 1960s and 1970s had been, after all, the years of Viennese Actionism. Kogler, despite cultivating an evident interest in performance, particularly in his early years, as demonstrated by his 1979 work *5-minütige Ausstellung (Five-minute Exhibition)* at Galerie nächst St. Stephan, curated by Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, never saw himself as aligned with that artistic language. In this piece, where Kogler stands vertically inside a metal cauldron, his action is positioned at a vast distance from the drama of Actionism: it is entirely "undramatic".[111]



Figure 3 Peter Kogler, *5-minütige Ausstellung*, 1979. Installation view, Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna. Photo: Studio Peter Kogler. Copyright and courtesy Peter Kogler, https://www.kogler.net, accessed May 25, 2026.

The lack of drama in the performance gives us the opportunity to further discuss the tradition he wanted to engage with. Kogler's interest in stillness and repetition was inspired, as he confirmed in an interview with Kathrin Rhomberg, directly by Duchamp. Specifically, Duchamp's "ability to keep a certain distance, doing something without getting too involved in terms of expression and emotional drama".[112] It would not be inappropriate to read Kogler's proximity to these aspects of Duchamp's work as also suggesting a growing interest in minimal actions and Minimal Art more generally, and indeed this aspect assumed

[110] Kathrin Rhomberg, "Peter Kogler in Conversation with Kathrin Rhomberg".
[111] Rhomberg, "Peter Kogler in Conversation with Kathrin Rhomberg".
[112] Rhomberg, "Peter Kogler in Conversation with Kathrin Rhomberg".

increasing relevance throughout many phases of his career. Some of Kogler's work from the 1980s clearly demonstrates the impact that such tendencies had on his practice.

Kogler's exhibition at the Gracie Mansion Gallery in New York represents a notable first example. In the gallery space, structures that are column-like, although devoid of architectural function, appear to be influenced by modular cubic forms. On the walls, the same geometric "germ" gives rise to sculptural figures that oscillate between the amorphous and anthropomorphic. There are also several portraits on canvas. These largely consist of white stains set against monochromatic red and black backgrounds, yet their recognizable form emerges through geometric frameworks that suggest the contours of a face or skull. Such an ensemble of works showed Kogler's growing interest in modular structures closely aligned with a minimalist aesthetic while retaining the capacity to assemble into figures and transform spatial environments.

On another level, it is essential to recognize that Kogler did not intend for geometry to dominate all forms. Within his practice, certain subjects surface as symbolic figures that resist geometric transformation to instead become patterns in their own right. The first appearance of such a symbol occurs in his initial video work, the 1981 piece *Untitled* shot on Super 8 film. In this piece, an ant is recorded as it moves across a newspaper page, eventually coming to resemble a stray letter, a living sign among other signs that remain static.

Blended together, these two aspects give rise to a rather specific poetics with visible connections to art history; at the same time, this poetics also takes a step forward in the way it presents a personal version of the theme. As the curator Stephan Berg puts it:

> In Kogler's work, unlike Daniel Buren's or Sol LeWitt's, all the fundamental motifs that have brought him to international fame in the last fifteen years – the ants, the tubes and the human brain motif – are not in themselves abstract, content-free symbols but are deeply linked to something figurative that immediately activates the desire for readability, narration and translation. And, for Peter Kogler this is what makes them usable. For what is crucial to his artistic way of thinking is generating symbols that achieve their own autonomy precisely because they can bear different, ambivalent meanings.[113]



Figure 4 Peter Kogler, Installation view, 1985. Gracie Mansion Gallery, New York City. Photo: Studio Peter Kogler. Copyright and courtesy Peter Kogler, https://www.kogler.net, accessed May 25, 2026.

[113] Stephan Berg, "Between Disembodiment and Embodiment", Kogler.net, 2004, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/between-disembodiment-and-embodiment/

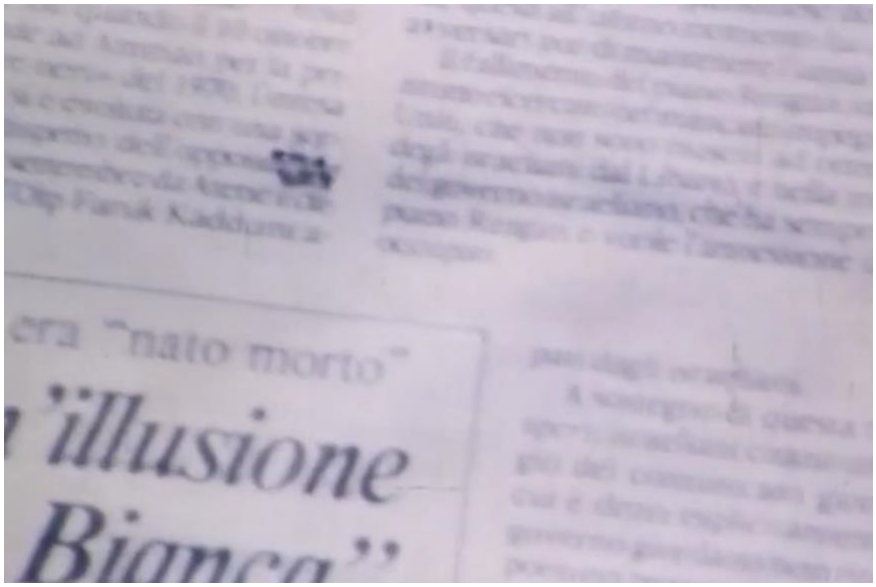

Figure 5 Peter Kogler, *Untitled*, 1981. Super 8 film (video). Photo: Studio Peter Kogler. Copyright and courtesy Peter Kogler,. https://www.kogler.net, accessed May 25, 2026.

Both of Kogler's tendencies were destined to collide during the 8os when a new technology was developed that redefined pictorial techniques. In 1984, the first Macintosh computer was released: one of the first devices allowing users to perform actions without writing commands, relying solely on mouse-based interaction. This device featured a rudimentary photo editing interface, with tools such as the eraser and various fill commands. This development allowed Kogler to achieve a sort of synthesis with his geometrization (pixelization?) and creation of pattern. The immediate devotion that Kogler developed to something so new and unknown can be explained by his attitude towardss the proper means of making art. As he stated, "I am more interested in using methods that are representative of a certain age".[114]

It was through the Macintosh that the Viennese artist began exploring what would become one of his recurring themes: portraiture. For his participation in the 1986 Venice Biennale, Kogler employed this technology to create a series of digital reinterpretations of prehistoric idols and heads. These images were first manipulated on the computer then repainted by hand, thereby merging digital and analogical techniques. As Robert Fleck notes, these portraits represent some of the earliest examples in contemporary art where pictorial motifs were distinctly shaped through the use of a personal computer. Their stark black-and-white graphic quality, set against monochrome backgrounds, deliberately diverged from the garish colour palettes and crude visual language typically associated with 1980s computer aesthetics. Instead of embracing the bright, pixelated surfaces common in early computer graphics, Kogler chose a kind of visual primitivism, relying on sharp contrasts, simplified forms, and visible grid structures. This conscious stylistic decision not only set Kogler's work apart from the prevailing digital trends of the time but also underscored his broader engagement with the new means of image-making. In Fleck's words, "Compared to the computer aesthetics of the time, almost everything was extremely simplified. To this very

[114] Rhomberg, "Peter Kogler in Conversation with Kathrin Rhomberg".

day, it is one of the special qualities of Peter Kogler's work that it clearly addresses a world now determined by computer and digital image processing". [115]

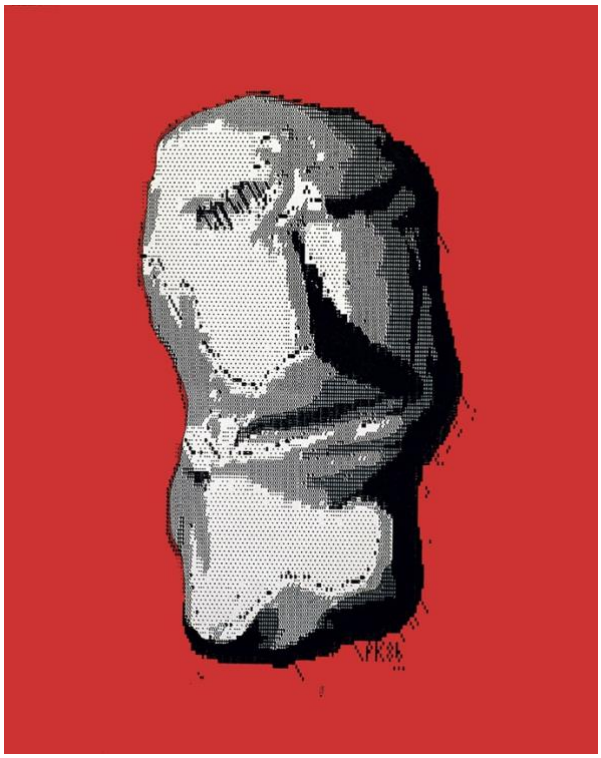

Figure 6 Peter Kogler, *Ohne* Titel, 1986. Silkscreen and acrylic on canvas. Photo: Studio Peter Kogler. Copyright and courtesy Peter Kogler, https://www.kogler.net, accessed May 25, 2026.

Tracing the development of Kogler's analogue early pieces produced using computer graphics beings us to a series of images that appeared in various issues of the newspaper *Der Standard* around 1989 and collectively composed the work *California*.[116] The project featured full-page illustrations, in the form of digitally post-produced collages, and echoed the format of commercial advertising by occupying entire newspaper pages. The one titled *I love Lucy* includes, for example, black-and-white compositions depicting the front of a woman's face and her eyes, interrupted by an open mouth placed like a stamp and tinted pink in post-production. While in *Rose Tattoo* a close-up of an arm that the rudimentary software has covered in geometric patterns (unable to generate grey tones, the Mac compensated by accumulating characters), is marked by a vivid orange flower. Another example is *Merry Christmas,* which features a giant pink Santa Claus lying against a background teeming with repetitive circular patterns – signs of the software's strategy for compensating for flat colour fields – while a small group of people attempts to drag him away.

[115] Robert Fleck, "Peter Kogler – An Art of the «Light Sign»", Kogler.net, 2000, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/peter-kogler-an-art-of-the-light-sign/.
[116] Peter Kogler, *California*, 1989-90, 12 offset prints, 34.5 × 49.5 cm, museum in progress, Vienna. Details of the artwork are available at 'California', museum in progress, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/shop/california/.



Figure 7 Peter Kogler, *Merry Christmas*, 1989. Digital collage published in *Der Standard*, December 23–24, 1989, California project, mavo art transfer/museum in progress edition. Courtesy museum in progress, Vienna.

From March 1989 to February 1990, while living in Los Angeles, California (the source of the work's title) Peter Kogler participated remotely in the project by sending designs for full-page reproductions to be published in the daily newspaper *Der Standard*. What is particularly interesting to highlight here is the way this project was disseminated, and the fact that this approach was supported by a new Viennese art institution that, between 1989 and 1990, was taking its first steps in the Austrian capital: the museum in progress (mip), previously known as Mavo Art Transfer. This new institution's commitment to exploring what lay outside traditional exhibition spaces was mirrored in its collaboration with newspapers, theatres, television networks, and even airlines companies. The teeming cultural and artistic context deserves to be further analysed, as it is only by understanding the synergy between cultural organizations that it is possible to frame how *Portraits of Artists* came into being.

2.1.1 museum in progress

In the late 1970s, architect Josef Ortner and art scholar Kathrin Messner began working on this project, launching a personal and professional partnership that would continue until Ortner's death in 2009. Their idea of creating a gathering point for the Viennese art scene materialized in the spaces of Die Bar. As recounted in Roman Berka's obituary for Ortner, this was "a cocktail bar and artists' meeting place in Vienna's 1st district with the interior architecture designed by themselves".[117] The concept of a space that was both artistic and inhabitable eventually evolved into something more similar to a club: the Mavo. Opened in 1988 near the Naschmarkt, the Mavo was designed starting from its furnishings to engage with Vienna's artistic scenes: the ceiling paintings were by Franz Graf, the seating by Mathis Esterhazy, the drinks menu by Gerwald Rockenschaub, and the curtains by Kogler himself.[118]

However, interior design was not the only area Kogler was involved in. During the years Mavo operated, in fact, his relationship with both Ortner and Messner deepened. They became so close that one of Kogler's works was actually set in those very spaces: *Mavo*

[117] Roman Berka, "Josef Ortner (1956–2009)", mip.at, September 2009, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/235/.
[118] Berka, "Josef Ortner (1956–2009)".

Tapes, the 1988 video that represents how Kogler's interest in new technologies began to merge.[119]

The *Mavo Tape* consisted of a closed-circuit camera positioned inside the club that filmed guests who, from time to time, wished to see themselves on screen. The footage was subsequently post-produced through a sort of posterization, with graphic elements superimposed onto the moving frames. Here the faces of the subjects – captured while watching themselves, laughing at their own image, or staring back seductively – move in slow motion while tonal and contrast manipulations flatten the background and tint their skin in various colours. The final effect resembles a re-edited version of the *Screen Tests* Andy Warhol created in his Factory between 1964 and 1966, and indeed, we will shortly examine the connections between the *Screen Tests* and these tapes. Beyond the similarly composed shots, Kogler's work evokes a space that, in its own way, mirrored certain aspects of the Factory: particularly the dynamic cultural ferment that defined the atmosphere of Mavo.



Figure 8 Peter Kogler, *Mavo Tape* 1988. Photo: Studio Peter Kogler. Copyright and courtesy Peter Kogler, https://www.kogler.net, accessed May 25, 2026.

The following year, while Kogler was in California, Ortner and Messner founded a new institution (museum in progress), thus effectively bringing the Die Bar and Mavo Club chapter to an end. This new project embraced the idea of an expanded conception of art: a museological interpretation of the "extended definition of art" described by Joseph Beuys.[120] In other words, the idea was that the museum chose not to rely on physical spaces but instead positioned itself as a structure that supported the production of artworks conceived to inhabit public spaces, whether physical or virtual.

In a 1998 text discussing the internal structure of museum in progress, curator Vitus Weh highlights the degree of autonomy granted to artists and curators such as Hans Ulrich Obrist, Stella Rollig, and Robert Fleck. They were free to independently pursue various museum-related activities – a freedom also reflected in the institution's collaborations with mass media platforms, including the television channel ORF 1 and the newspaper *Der Standard*.[121]

---

[119] The Mavo Tapes is not a widely known artwork. The DVD series *Artists Talking* mentions it in its booklet. I am grateful to museum in progress' archive for showing me the original video, Peter Kogler, *Mavo Tapes*, 1988, Video, museum in progress, Vienna.

[120] See Kaspar Mühlemann Hartl, Alois Herrmann, and museum in progress, eds., *Museum in Progress Kunst in öffentlichen und medialen Räumen: Durch ein Ende rein & durch das andere durch [& dann noch einmal] = Museum in Progress. Art in Public Spaces and in Media: In One End & out the Other [& then again]* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, 2021), p. 4.

[121] Vitus H. Weh, "Museum in Progress", mip.at, 1998, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/231/.

This aspect is also recalled by Daniel Birnbaum and Hans Ulrich Obrist when they mention the collaboration with Austrian Airlines and the Vienna State Opera.[122]

Two projects may be particularly telling in illustrating the nature of these collaborations. The first is the Alighiero Boetti's 1993 piece *Cieli ad Alta Quota* (Skies at high altitude). This work, produced by museum in progress and funded by Austrian Airlines, consisted of a series of puzzles depicting frames of the sky traversed by small, drawn airplanes. The series was sold in a boxed set and distributed on Austrian Airlines flights. By merging everyday spaces with artistic expression, this hybrid artistic action serves as a paradigmatic example of museum in progress's approach. Another noteworthy example is the collaboration with the Vienna State Opera. This intervention on the Vienna State Opera's safety curtain is titled *Safety Curtain*, and since 1998 it has been redesigned annually by artists of the calibre of Kara Walker and, in 2023, Anselm Kiefer.

To return to the period of Kogler's trip to California, however, museum in progress was in its initial stages and was open to supporting innovative initiatives. It was at that moment that the *Portraits of Artists* project began to take shape. Kogler was working on the pages of California from the United States, where he had followed his wife, Tanja Reiner, when he met Louis Waldon, a former member of Warhol's Factory who had participated in several of his films. The meeting between the two represents a pivotal moment in which many pieces seemed to fall into place.

Kogler's interest in Warhol had been longstanding, not so much because of Warhol's ties to Pop art, but rather due to his early 1960s works that rely on repetitive reproductive mechanisms. As Kogler clarifies, "Repetition clearly connects with Minimalism. And like the Minimalists, Warhol used fabrication with companies".[123] He noted strong affinities between Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* and Donald Judd's cubes, as well as connections to serialism, comparable to the progressions seen in Sol LeWitt's and Carl Andre's work.[124]

The meeting with Waldon offered an opportunity to engage directly with the history of a fundamental source of inspiration for Kogler. Although Kogler has rarely spoken publicly about this body of work, in a conversation with Katrin Bucher Trantow the artist offers some clarity:

> Yes, I developed its format. The idea was born when my wife Tanja and I lived in California for two years in 1989 and 1990. I met Louis Waldon in L.A., an ex-member of the Warhol Factory in the 1960s. You can see him as an actor in various Warhol films, such as Blue Movie and The Nude Restaurant. That gave me the idea of making a documentary about the ex-Factory stars. I wanted to know what these people, who had initiated so much and become icons, were doing now. It was interesting to learn that the only people from the immediate Warhol environment who had really established careers were the musicians. The members of the Velvet Underground were around, but the other stars from the time like Edie Sedgwick or Taylor Mead were not. During my research, I found out that a third of them had died. But then we returned home from America, and this project was no longer feasible. You needed to be there. But what survived is the format of the recording of the 'talking heads' – a fixed camera position focused on the face and shoulders and with a monochromatic background, which would have been based on Warhol's screen tests for these ex-Factory people. We used exactly

[122] Daniel Birnbaum and Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Museum on the Move", *Artforum*, no. Summer (2010), pp. 301–305.
[123] Peter Kogler, "Interview with Peter Kogler", interview by Guido Balzani, 13 November 2024, Appendix B.
[124] Rhomberg, "Peter Kogler in Conversation with Kathrin Rhomberg".

> this format for the interviews with personalities from the art scene, whom we considered relevant and approachable at the time.[125]

If it proved impossible to proceed with the initial idea of creating a documentary based on the Factory's main characters, the connection with Waldon nonetheless reinforced his interest in Warhol's portraits. Once Kogler returned to Vienna, he furthered his research in this same direction and museum in progress was the ideal institutional partner to carry this project forward with.

2.2 *Portraits of Artists*

The *Portraits of Artists* series is a vast project that lasted from 1992 until 2001 and involved over one hundred artists.[126] The interviews resist easy classification within the traditional boundaries of the visual arts, and yet they align perfectly with the expanded notion of art embraced by museum in progress. Not only were several of the interviews transcribed and edited by Robert Fleck and Christian Muhr and published in *Der Standard*,[127] but there the idea of bringing *Portraits of Artists* to television was even considered – specifically on the ORF channel, as Kogler himself recalls:

> At the time, the museum in progress had a connection to ORF, which was interested in broadcasting [the Portraits of Artists]. But then ORF changed their minds when they saw what the whole thing looked like. It was just too much for the ORF at the time.[128]

However, some VHS containing individual interviews were made and used in artists' personal exhibitions.

The close collaboration between media institutions and the art world in 1990s Vienna reflects a broader cultural climate eager to create spaces for art beyond the traditional confines of the museum. In the case of *Portraits of Artists*, this support was evident even

---

[125] Peter Kogler, Katrin Bucher Trantow, and Kunsthaus Graz, eds., *Connected. Peter Kogler With* (Wien: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2019), p. 171.

[126] The uncertainty about the exact number stems from the still unstructured state of this part of the otherwise well-organized MIP archive. The list available online includes the following names: Raimund Abraham, Hildegard Absalon, Vito Acconci, Philip Akkerman, Nobuyoshi Araki, Art & Language, Donald Baechler, John Baldessari, Matthew Barney, Robert Barry, Georg Baselitz, Thomas Bayrle, Gottfried Bechtold, Dara Birnbaum, Dike Blair, Christian Boltanski, Louise Bourgeois, Günter Brus, Pavel Büchler, Chris Burden, Yung Ho Chang, Michael Clegg, Oliver Croy, Jeremy Deller, Marlene Dumas, Jimmie Durham, Cerith Wyn Evans, Luciano Fabro, Helmut Federle, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Andrea Fraser, William Furlong, Johannes Gachnang, Heinz Gappmayr, Gilbert & George, Simryn Gill, Bruno Gironcoli, Nan Goldin, Leon Golub, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Douglas Gordon, Dan Graham, Marie-Ange Guilleminot, Martin Guttmann, Raymond Hains, Mary Heilmann, Georg Herold, Oscar Ho, Carsten Höller, Jenny Holzer, Fabrice Hyber, Sanja Iveković, Tadashi Kawamata, Mike Kelley, Raoul De Keyser, Hubert Kiecol, Jan Knap, Peter Kogler, Jeff Koons, Joseph Kosuth, Elke Krystufek, Maria Lassnig, Brice Marden, Paul McCarthy, Otto Mühl, Matt Mullican, Matthew Ngui, Hermann Nitsch, Oswald Oberhuber, Walter Obholzer, Julian Opie, Tony Oursler, Raymond Pettibon, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Arnulf Rainer, James Rosenquist, Marie Sacconi, Hubert Schmalix, Christian Schoppe, Glen Seator, Jim Shaw, Mariella Simoni, Nancy Spero, Dominik Steiger, Haim Steinbach, Beat Streuli, Elaine Sturtevant, Philip Taaffe, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Niele Toroni, Luc Tuymans, Günther Umberg, Daniel Walravens, Lawrence Weiner, Benjamin Weissman, Franz West, Hoy Cheong Wong, Christopher Wool, Erwin Wurm, Can Yasargil, Heimo Zobernig.

[127] See Hans Ulrich Obrist and Robert Fleck, "Vito Acconci, Auszug Einem Video-Interview", *Der Standard*, 15-16 Oktober 1994.

[128] Kogler, Bucher Trantow, and Kunsthaus Graz, *Connected. Peter Kogler With*, p. 171.

within the institutions themselves, where individuals already closely aligned with museum in progress, such as Robert Fleck, were actively involved. It was in this context that, between 1992 and 1996, the interviews received funding through the Curator Programme of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Art (later renamed the Ministry of Science, Research and Art), directed by Fleck and Stella Rollig.[129] It is worth noting that this precious alliance among cultural spheres sustained the mediatic expansion of the project.



Figure 9 Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists*, 1992–2001. Video portraits series produced by museum in progress. Copyright and courtesy museum in progress, Vienna.

Although the interviews were made possible thanks to institutional funding, their visual language followed Kogler's direction. Starting with the frame, *Portraits of Artists* takes the shape of a gallery of half-length portraits resembling "talking heads". The subjects interviewed are lit from the front and set against a uniformly coloured background achieved using blue box technology and reminiscent of the rudimental example of the *Mavo Tapes*.[130] This recording technique allowed each artist to select whatever background colour they preferred, thus adding a subtle layer of personalization in the otherwise strict visual format. The insightful discussion with Tantrow provides additional elements for understanding the practical considerations involved in producing the conversations.

> KB: They have been formally positioned against monochromatic backgrounds of quite different colours. Who chose the colours?
> PK: Some people wanted to choose the colour themselves; some got the colour that I assigned them. Pistoletto wanted to have a mirror in the background, therefore you can see the interviewer, Denys Zacharopoulos, reflected in the background. Tony Oursler wanted a background that had streaks of colour, and Mat Mullican's background colour changes depending on the part of his cosmology he's talking about. I think I chose pink for Jeff Koons. And I chose Franz West's background: green.
> KB: Yes, a dark green.
> PK: When people got to choose the colour themselves, they often chose blue. There are clichés that are true.[131]

[129] See the DVD series Artists Talking (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017).
[130] This connection is confirmed in each of the booklets of the Artists Talking DVD series.
[131] Kogler, Bucher Trantow, and Kunsthaus Graz, *Connected. Peter Kogler With*, pp. 170–71.

In addition to choosing the background colour, the artists were also allowed to select interviewers from within the museum in progress team with whom they felt most at ease. The interviewer's face was never shown: a deliberate choice that prevented viewers from forming a connection with the person asking the questions, thereby rendering the frequent changes in the interviewer virtually unnoticeable. These were the only constraints that, by Kogler's design, were to be strictly followed. The formulation of the questions was left entirely to the discretion of the interviewers, while the final edit required the artist's approval.

These unplanned factors contributed to a non-linear flow of conversation and made the *Portraits of Artists* a rather challenging kind of portrait where the artists were invited to reveal themselves within an environment that had specific connotations and limitations. They were prompted to respond to questions ranging from their artistic practices to their thoughts on art and philosophy, but they had to navigate these topics within a framework that limited their freedom by imposing a structure even while, at the same time, offered a controlled environment in which they were able to experiment. And yet this context could be turned into a tool for both Kogler and the artists: something they could adapt and personalize. In this sense, Kogler's use of minimal elements, repeated framings, and consistent format featuring a single subject – the artist – formed a pattern that served him in constructing his portraiture in the same way he did with ants.

There are a few examples that effectively show how these many layers are conveyed through the interviews. One of the most emblematic in revealing such layers is the first interview, filmed in 1992 and featuring Heimo Zobernig, a close friend of Kogler's. In this case, the artist chose to eliminate all of his answers, meaning the final conversation was effectively a monologue by the interviewer Robert Fleck. As Kaspar Mühlemann Hartl explained to me during a personal conversation, Fleck had overprepared for this exchange to the point where he struggled to condense his questions to a reasonable length. The eloquence of his inquiries made answers unnecessary, thus prompting Zobernig to make the provocative move of forgoing them altogether.

The ironic tone that runs through this conversation resurfaces in another one as well – this time with Andrea Fraser. Conducted by Christian Philipp Müller in 1992, the interview begins with irony and boldness, and Fraser's tone shifts fluidly between seriousness and levity. It is difficult to say whether Fraser is already performing one of her characteristic, mystifying acts, adopting and critiquing art world roles as in her performance *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* (1989) (a performance that is included as a bonus track in the DVD version of the interviews *The Artists Talking*).[132] Here, she acts as a guide at the Philadelphia Museum of Art who, instead of navigating the crowd through the artwork, uses her role to illustrate the power relations that sustain the museum.

However, when she recorded the interview for museum in progress, Fraser was already exploring a subtle variation of the themes central to her work. Two years later, she delivered a talk at Depot cultural institution in Vienna, a space known for its engagement with critical

[132] See *Artists Talking: Performance Art; Burden, Fraser, Gilbert & George, McCarthy, Tiravanija*, vol. 4, produced by museum in progress, Artists Talking (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), DVD.

debate. Her speech, titled *How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction*, outlined a shift in the role of the artist, describing artists as people who offer services. Her aim, as she stated, was "to see if it [was] possible to develop a methodology which could function as a basis for a self-regulating profession of artistic service provision".[133] This declaration of intent aligned the artist with the theories – and even terminology – of cultural production. Specifically, as Fraser herself has acknowledged on multiple occasions, the theorist she looked to when shaping her practice was Pierre Bourdieu.[134] Fraser, in her portrait set against a deep purple background, gazes into the camera, tilts her head slightly as if to check her profile, and asks, "How do I look?". The moment is telling, and it is worth quoting the opening exchange in full:

> Andrea Fraser: How do I look?
> Christian Philipp Müller: It's ok?
> Andrea, do you like it to be on TV?
> AF: Well, sure, it's exciting, you know, not so many people get a chance to be on TV! Not so many artists, certainly. I don't know if it means I will be famous, exactly. Artists usually become famous through history, through institutions and not on TV. Artists usually address themselves to history rather than to a TV audience.
> CPM: How important is it for you that the TV audience knows your work?
> AF: We may have to start this all over again! Perhaps it would be helpful for me if you could ask me more specific questions, so that I can kind of orientate myself to speaking here? Because the more general questions, you know, I respond more abstractly and can really get into a (sic!). But anyway.
> CPM: I mean, would it be specific if I asked you like in the beginning: What exactly is your profession?
> AF: Well, I am an artist.
> CPM: That is not exactly the answer I wanted to hear, you know.
> AF: And what was the kind of answer you were thinking of, then? A more descriptive answer of what I do?
> CPM: Yes, about your tours!
> AF: Ok, well if you want to. So, the camera is running! I think we end up mad of having an interview about an interview, which would not be so bad perhaps![135]

The light-hearted opening remarks are, in fact, a playful attempt to deflect attention from the deeper, more intimate nature of a conversation that quickly becomes both serious and profound. The discussion grows particularly complex when it turns to the subject of the art world:

> CPM: And do you think that those people talk the language of their audience?

---

[133] Andrea Fraser, *How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction*, presented at The Depot, Vienna, October 1994, related to "Services: Conditions and Relations of Project Oriented Artistic Practice", an exhibition and working group organized by Helmut Draxler and Andrea Fraser at the Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg, 29 January–20 February 1994. For Fraser's full text, see https://www.andreafraser.com/publications/how-to-provide-an-artistic-service-an-introduction accessed May 25, 2026.

[134] Fraser recently mentioned the connections with Bourdieu in "Andrea Fraser and Chris Dercon in Conversation". Interview by Chris Dercon. 5 October 2024. Marian Goodman Gallery. accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1B90A03gm4&t=1791s.

[135] Full transcript of the conversation available at "Conversation with Andrea Fraser", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/153/. The transcription of the conversation, available on the museum in progress page, has been faithfully preserved, including its errors. Fraser's portrait is available in *Artists Talking: Performance Art; Burden, Fraser, Gilbert & George, McCarthy, Tiravanija*, vol. 4, produced by museum in progress, Artists Talking (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), DVD.

AF: Well, that is hard to know because any audience speaks a lot of many different languages. In the US, I guess that this can be said of most museums in any way that deal with modern and contemporary art, the primary operation of art museums is the transformation of, one could say "bourgeois domestic culture", into public culture. It was quite clear in the US where many of the museums were organized around "period rooms" or domestic representations which did not have a strictly historical reference but rather referred to the domestic environments of the collectors and patrons of the museums. There are so many "house museums" and things like that. This turning of a class-defining domestic culture into a public culture that museums affect is affected first by that displacement, moving from a home to a museum, but then with the introduction of systems of classification and criteria of value whereby particular objects of determined interests, art objects, are separated from the other objects that constitute their entire domestic environment and as such also make up their social location. The introduction of these systems of classification and criteria of value is something that's done in museums through forms and practices that I would call "educational". They might not be strictly educational in terms of the organization of the museum; they might not come out of the "education department", but they are introduced and expressed through a kind of supplementary material that museums produce and introduce around art objects: like museum tours, like wall labels and wall texts, explanatory texts, like posters. These are the forms I tend to work with and that I worked with in the past. It is also something that is done in the installation of objects and that is done in the selection of the objects. It's done in the establishment of a collection which always is done by excluding, by what is outside of that collection. Collections are established by excluding. How much further can I go with this?
CPM: I don't know!

And it is Fraser herself who becomes aware of this shift: "But this is probably too academic in the language!". [136]

It is important to recognize the close interplay between performance and interview in the episodes with Zobering and especially Fraser, as they reveal what Kogler seeks in these conversations: moments where artistic practice unfolds as a form of self-narrative. This blending of storytelling and practice is inevitably shaped by both individual experience and broader contextual factors. Notably, when discussing portraits of American artists, Kogler remarks, "In America, the first thing you learn is to sell your work. That's very different from Europe. I wanted to see the range, and it was wide, with many contradictions".[137]

2.2.1 The role of biography in *Portraits of Artists*

The examples discussed so far bring us to a key turning point in Kogler's work – namely, the role of self-narrative and the way the artists' biographies are reshaped in the *Portraits of Artists*. These conversations often lead the interviewees to engage with art history and, as a result, to position themselves in relation to it. The wide range of interviewees, spanning diverse contexts and generations, makes *Portraits of Artists* a rich cluster through which to observe how artists' relationships with art history have evolved. Pursuing this line of inquiry allows us to highlight the maieutic potential of Kogler's work, clarifying the contribution it can offer as a counterpoint to the historiography of artists.

The 1993 interview with Vito Acconci could be a valuable starting point for such an exploration. Dressed in a black pullover against a black background, Acconci appears almost as a disembodied head, his hands occasionally emerging to enact gestures. The yellowish light on his face gives him a Caravaggesque allure that complements the introspective nature

[136] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 03*, with Andrea Fraser and Christian Philipp Müller, 1992, Video, museum in progress.
[137] Peter Kogler, "Interview with Peter Kogler".

of his speech. Conducted in 1993 by a young Hans Ulrich Obrist,[138] the interview does not engage with immediate concerns but more resembles a psychoanalytical session focused on Acconci's artistic trajectory.

> HUO: Was there, at that time, any contact with Robert Morris who during those years was looking for ways to charge the minimalist vocabulary with a psycho-sexual dimension?
> VA: For some reason, I mean, I became very interested in Morris' work, but I wonder if it wasn't a little bit later and I'm not exactly sure why. But, at that time. certainly, I saw my stuff as related to Minimalism. For me, Minimal Art was almost a kind of "father art". This was the art that probably meant most to me in the mid-sixties, towardss the end of the sixties. Because probably until Minimal Art I had been taught or I had taught myself, when I looked at art, to look at what was within the frame and to ignore what was outside. In the presence of Minimal Art that became no longer possible. Suddenly, in the presence of Minimal Art, I had to recognize the room, I had to recognize people in the room. So, for me, Minimal Art was a big kind of breakthrough: that was the art that was most important for me. At the same time – probably in order to do something myself – I had to try almost desperately to find something wrong with Minimal Art. Because if there was nothing wrong with it there would be no reason for me to do anything. In other words, if Minimal Art was the "father art" for me I had to find some way to kill the father. So, for me, it seemed like the one possible flaw I could find with Minimal Art was that Minimal Art appeared as if no one had put it there, as if it was there as if from all time. It was a little bit like the black monolith in 2001: Suddenly this object appears. The problem with that is once that object appears all you can do is bow down in front of it, all you can do is treat it as a kind of religion. Because if this object appears and you don't know where it came from the possibility is it has possibly more power than you so you'd better try to respect it, just in case. So, seeing that as maybe a possible flaw in Minimal Art, probably it made me decide: OK, whatever I did then, I wanted to make its source clear. So, probably for me, Minimal Art made me start to develop a way of thinking that whatever I did, the doer, the agent was going to be apparent.[139]

A recurring topic in this interview is that of fatherhood, a theme that extends beyond the familiar role to also characterize Acconci's relationship with art history and his masters; this is all the more ironic considering that Acconci himself has since been recognized as the father of Body Art. Minimal Art, in particular, is positioned as the foundational "father" that Acconci felt compelled to overcome in order to develop his own creative practice. This is a significant point, considering that Acconci's earliest work was primarily text-based, sharing minimalist traits such as the repetition of punctuation marks.[140] Even after identifying what he calls "a flaw" in Minimal Art, other "fathers" continue to haunt the conversation. The theme subtly reemerges, for example, when Acconci reflects on his affiliation with Duchamp and describes having an ambivalent relationship with him: "I always had a mixed relation to Duchamp. […] I saw Duchamp as this kind of mystifying dandy, and I hated that part of Duchamp: the artist who, you know, keeps secrets. I didn't want to keep any secrets".[141] Acconci's positioning in relation to Duchamp reverberates beyond the personal or human levels. Duchamp, after all, is also a symbol that has represented – and still represents – an

---

[138] A quick note is worth mentioning: Hans Ulrich Obrist's involvement in *Portraits of Artists* marks one of his earliest steps towards the interview-driven approach that would later define his curatorial work. This early project played a key role in shaping the critical style he would go on to refine. Appendix A deepens this aspect.
[139] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 13*, with Vito Acconci and Hans Ulrich Obrist, 1993, Video, museum in progress.
[140] See Pasquale Fameli, "Vito Acconci e la sparizione dell'io", *Figure. Rivista della Scuola di Specializzazione in Beni Storico-Artistici dell'Università di Bologna*, 28 December 2014, p. 71 and especially note number 3 referring to P. D. Hertz, "Minimal Poetry", *The Western Humanities Review*, 24, Winter 1970, pp. 31–40
[141] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 13*, with Vito Acconci and Hans Ulrich Obrist, 1993, Video, museum in progress. Full transcript of the interview available at "Conversation with Vito Acconci", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/161/.

"ideal type" within his field: a genuine parental figure in symbolic terms, someone to either resemble or distance oneself from.[142]

Overall, Acconci's account of his life and art history reveals the recurrence of several enduring themes in art history, such as the relationship between pupil and master, whose roots have already been discussed in the introduction. However, as Sarah Kofman observes, this construct can also be read through a Freudian perspective equating the father with the master, and this framing helps us recognize continuity between Acconci's biographical narrative and the traditional model.[143]

This historicizing approach seems to dissolve in the interview with Cuban artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres by Obrist recorded in 1994. Here, the succession of fathers gives way to an autobiographical mode where the key turning points of life are narrated through the works themselves. Félix González-Torres, rather than translating his practice into a struggle with the past, distils it from specific moments in his personal history. In the interview, although González-Torres was likely surprised by Obrist's biographical focus ("Oh, wow, is it going to be like kind of a, you know, a confessional autobiographical?"), he cautiously reveals certain defining memories.[144] Among these is a fundamental moment, namely the separation from his mother when he was forced to assume the identity of a refugee. This is a moment of rupture and gradual disappearance which, as he himself acknowledges, went on to shape the foundations of his poetics.

> You don't know what the hell is happening. Just suddenly they give you keys and say, "Okay, goodbye, and we'll see you soon," and then 10 years later, you see your parents again. […] Actually, something that is very funny that you ask me that question as the first question. Because I was just thinking that from all the interviews I've done and all the things I have written, I never really dealt with that, with that moment of living – with that travel, which is very traumatic and has been, despite my denials and despite my suppression of it, has been very influential.

Yet, the relationship with major art movements – and art history itself – is not something the artist avoids confronting, as we see with Minimalism. Although González-Torres is often considered to work in continuity with this movement, his identity and life experiences keep him from becoming captivated solely by the purity of essential forms.[145] We observe a combination of essential forms that are nonetheless deeply emotive, as exemplified in the work comprising his celebrated *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, a portrait dedicated to his

---

[142] Nuria Peist, "The Heir and the Cowboy: Social Predisposition, Mediation and Artistic Profession in Marcel Duchamp and Jackson Pollock", *Cultural Sociology* 6, no. 2 (June 2012), pp. 233–50

[143] The Freudian use of the father figure sets this interview within a landscape that is significantly connected to some of the tropes surrounding artists' biographies and coming of age stories as demonstrated by Sarah Kofman, *The Childhood of Art: An Interpretation of Freud's Aesthetics*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). For a discussion of Acconci's Freudian interpretation, see Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", *October* 1 (1976), pp. 51–64.

[144] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 26*, with Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Hans Ulrich Obrist, 1994, Video, museum in progress. Full transcript of the interview available at "Conversation with Felix Gonzalez-Torres", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/169/.

[145] "[Conceptual and Minimal art] look so powerful, they look so clean, they look so historical already. But in my case, when you get close to them you realize that they have been 'contaminated' with something social". Tim Rollins, "Interview by Tim Rollins", in *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, ed. Bill Bartman (New York: Art Resources Transfer, Inc, 1993), pp. 5–31, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.felixgonzalez-torresfoundation.org/attachment/en/5b844b306aa72cea5f8b4567/DownloadableItem/639385f3fa829db6a90469fb.

partner who died of AIDS and made from piles of candy. It is also visible in his self-portraits turned into puzzles *Untitled (Madrid 1971)* (1988), or the piece *Untitled (March 5th) #2* (1991) composed of light bulbs created for Ross's birthday. In all these pieces, the body is almost absent: it becomes a kind of negative presence.

It is no coincidence that, during the same interview with Obrist, the conversation shifts to another movement González-Torres engages with: Body Art. Indeed, this dialogue highlights both the connections and the contrasts between him and older figures like Vito Acconci. When speaking about Body Art, González-Torres remarks

> One of the things that bucks the hell in the last few years is this whole talk about "body-art" which is almost like the criminal system. These people, in order to think about a body, to talk about a body, need to see a body, right. As if you are going to a gallery, you see five bodies hanging everywhere, people say "Oh, it's about the body". I say "Well no, shit, but it is not really about the body, it's about wax, or it's about plaster", because the body at this time in our history, at this time in culture, is defined not just by the flesh but it is defined also by the law, by legislation, by language first of all. […] I think when you see a passport really what you are seeing is a body there because it is about a definition of a body.[146]

González-Torres's engagement with Body Art is notably idiosyncratic. Here, he expresses a pronounced discomfort with the underlying rhetoric of the movement and critiques it as overly rhetorical. The insistence on the need to "see a body" in order to "talk about the body", for González-Torres, constitutes a conceptual limitation that narrows and amputates the theme – an approach fundamentally opposed to his own artistic ethos. His method, which embraces absence and focuses on what remains or decays, positions him in a stance of critical scepticism towards modes of representation, such as the discourse surrounding Body Art and even the theme of portraiture, that produce well-defined descriptions.

This tension becomes evident in the conversation with Obrist when discussing the medium of photography. Here, González-Torres seems to enact everything he has described: photography, for him, says very little on its own; there is always something that slips away, something that needs a voice to truly exist. Therefore, he became interested in portraits without images, portraits composed entirely of text instead. An example is the work commissioned by Austrian Airlines with the support of museum in progress. When the company asked him to create a portrait of the airline, González-Torres designed colourful billboards with silver lettering listing all the destinations the company serves, alongside the year each route was inaugurated.

> With the portrait of Austrian Airlines I wanted to give the people something very beautiful and something enabling them to travel in their minds to all these places – when they see Amman, when they see Minsk, when they see Moscow, when they see London, when they see the word New York. Some of them either had been there or had seen pictures of these places or maybe want to go to these places or maybe they don't want to go there at all. But at least these places are there and hopefully when they read these texts something will be triggered in their minds about these places.[147]

[146] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 26*, with Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Hans Ulrich Obrist, 1994, Video, museum in progress.
[147] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 26.*

This way of portraying without showing also shapes his *Portraits of Artists* episode: throughout the interview, he continually allows his pieces to stand between himself and the interviewer, as if the artworks were answering in his place and telling his story for him. And, in a way, they do just that.

An interest in biography is not a constant across the *Portraits of Artists*, at least not if biography is understood as tracing the person's arc from training to career. The structure of the interviews, which varies considerably from one portrait to the next, does not seek out the revelatory moment in which the artist came to recognize themselves as such. Yet such details do surface, as in Matt Mullican's portrait.

> Denys Zacharopoulos: Is your childhood part of your work or not?
> Matt Mullican: Well, I think it is in only that it is a basis for my personality. My work deals with the subjective, and if you are going into that automatically you go. – I mean, childhood is so important there. But of course my memory of it is very different from what it was – it changes, you know, my childhood – because from one year to the next, in a sense, different aspects come up. But for instance I just did a work with hypnosis; I had myself hypnotized to be five years old and it was a new. I had myself hypnotized before to be that age, and that was really interesting, because a new child came up! But that again will change next year.[148]

While the interviewer appears curious about the artist's personal life, the responses do not provide direct biographical accounts. Instead, Mullican's life details quickly recede as his creative process moves to the foreground. This exchange reveals the threshold where, for Kogler, information becomes biography.

Yet Kogler's interest lies less in biographical details than in what happens during the interview itself, as the Pettibon portrait demonstrates most clearly. This conversation represents the furthest departure from the biographical model, a moment where practice supersedes biography.

2.2.2 The artist as a work of art

The use of the term "portrait" in Kogler's work is not immediately self-evident, but by examining it in the context of *Portraits of Artists* it helps to show how the Viennese artist approaches biography as a dynamic entity rather than a static set of notions. In other words, something that is actively constructed. The analysis of video portraiture is at the core of the next chapter.[149] Nevertheless, some elements of this narrative formula can already be delved into here.

The nuanced approach to portraiture and biography necessitates more than a mere glance at the genre's history; it calls for close attention to the way its meanings and applications have evolved. As historian Joanna Woodall showed in her comprehensive study, portraiture has long been marked by ambiguity. Historically tied to power, serving dynastic and bourgeois self-representation, it has often been undervalued in academic discourse.[150] This is partly due to its perceived constraint: tied to the depiction of power yet subtly capable of

---

[148] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 11*, with Matt Mullican and Denys Zacharopoulos, 1992, Video, museum in progress. Full transcription of the interview available at "Conversation with Matt Mullican", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/160/.
[149] See section 3.3.
[150] Joanna Woodall, *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

undermining power by placing the portrayed figure somewhere between object and subject. Catherine Soussloff, in another important study of portraiture in art history, returns to this specific tension when she discusses a "functional dialectic of the portrait representation":

> The truth claim of an indexical exteriority, or resemblance, to the person portrayed simultaneously coexists in the genre with a claim to the representation of interiority, or spirituality. Both of these are said to reside in the portrait representation itself and in the eyes of the beholder. [151]

Soussloff's work brings to the fore another way the possibilities offered by portraiture can be expanded: a synchronic reading in which subject and object are interconnected rather than opposed. Her interpretive framework constructs what she calls a "triangulated engagement with subjectivity", the dynamic relationship among the viewer, the artist, and the person being represented.[152] This synchrony is, according to Soussloff, more intelligible today through the lens of film editing, where "the options available in point of view give us more than simply narrative positions of viewing" and illustrate "how visual effects can maintain a transformation of the viewer, not just a fiction on the screen".[153]

Applying these ideas to Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* reveals that the video portraits delineate a technological system designed to depict the artist while preserving the authenticity that validates the work as part of the portrait genre. This technology, which went on to gain a progressively more central role, employs strategies drawn from the visual arts, such as positioning and repetition, to construct the space in which the transformation Soussloff describes can take place. This was especially evident during our conversation when Kogler discussed his encounter with Gilbert & George in 1992:[154]

> The second interview was with Gilbert & George. They were having a show at the Secession, I think. That one was completely different. The interviewer was a guy from Hamburg. He was good, but his English was not very clear. […]. For example, Gilbert was sitting on telephone books to be a little higher. Before the interviews, we always did sound tests: "one, three, four, five. That's the way we speak." With Gilbert & George, that became their number. It's a real portrait. You can see him [Gilbert] getting nervous because he [George] is talking for so long. [155]

Kogler's encouragement to keep the conversation vague and general comes across as an invitation to other artists to fill the frame differently. The camera space functions like a pedestal: a privileged vantage point for observing their relational dynamics. In this setting, the relationship between Gilbert & George is emphasized. It shifts from being the common ground of their work and existential performance, transforming them instead into a kind of human sculpture, that is, the central theme of video portraits.

When asked about the specific rules that, beyond technical features, guided the format, Kogler clarified:

---

[151] Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 5.
[152] Soussloff, *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern*, p. 120.
[153] Soussloff, *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern*, p. 120.
[154] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 02*, with Gilbert & George and Wolf Jahn, 1992, Video, museum in progress.
[155] Kogler, "Interview with Peter Kogler".

> Kogler: […] One thing we told [the artists] was: don't talk about things the audience cannot know. It had to make sense. Otherwise, all answers were free and open. As for what concerned the speech, the only rule was: what is interesting content? Take Raymond Pettibon. One of my favourites. There is almost no complete sentence, but it is extraordinary.[156]



Figure 10 Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 05*, with Raymond Pettibon and Hudson, 1992. Video. Copyright and courtesy museum in progress, Vienna.

This dynamic is even more pronounced in the 1992 interview with Raymond Pettibon.[157] What draws out the human, or rather artistic, dimension of the individual is the palpable anxiety Pettibon brings into the space. The conversation stumbles forward. At one point, he asks whether his responses can later be edited or cut. He sweats, hesitates, self-corrects, and takes long pauses before speaking. His figure stands out starkly against the clean white backdrop, made even more striking when Pettibon steps forward, moving out of the lighted area and into shadow, and speaks with a trembling voice. Kogler's own retelling completes the picture by adding what remained off-camera. It helps make sense of what Kogler saw and what the work allows viewers to see.

> His presence was incredible. When we shot the video, he was under such pressure that he crushed a glass of water in his hand – off camera, but still. He hardly finished a sentence. The interviewer was like a coach.
> In the very early interviews, we sometimes also included a piece of art in the shot. We did it four or five times, then decided to stop and keep it pure.[158]

The words of the Viennese artist raise some key reflections. Not only do they reveal the relational nature of the *Portraits of Artists* project, originally rooted in Kogler's personal friendships, they also point to a subtle contradiction in the principle behind Gilbert & George's interview: Pettibon's conversation actually ends with an artwork by the artist – a choice later removed as the format evolved.

The transition from Pettibon's image to his artwork, where he writes "I often think of you" in shaky handwriting, unfolds so seamlessly that it suggests an equivalence between artist and artwork. It creates a tension at the heart of Kogler's project: the artist is portrayed in a way

[156] Kogler, "Interview with Peter Kogler".
[157] Peter Kogler, *Portraits of Artists 05*, with Raymond Pettibon and Hudson, 1992, Video, museum in progress.
[158] Kogler, "Interview with Peter Kogler".

that reflects his own art, thereby enabling Kogler to craft a nuanced and fully developed portrait of his subject while still maintaining the subjectivity that adds depth and validates the format. While this explicit gesture is dropped in later interviews, the mechanism becomes more subtle but no less present. Although Kogler never openly confirms this reading, it resonates with the way the *Portraits of Artists* series has been exhibited.



Figure 11 Portraits of Artists by museum in progress, *Artists. 50 positions of contemporary international art*, 1997. Kunsthaus, Bregenz. Courtesy museum in progress, Vienna.

In 1997, *Portraits of Artists* was shown at Kunsthaus Bregenz in the exhibition *Artists: 50 Positions of Contemporary International Art – Video Portraits and Works*. Twelve new interviews were added to the thirty-eight already produced. The show exhibited dozens of televisions displaying the conversations simultaneously, each with a pair of headphones meant to help visitors develop a personal relationship with each portrait. The effect was ambivalent because, on one hand, it was reminiscent of the classic galleries of portraits that are so common in historical museums; at the same time, however, it created the personal space for a different experience of the portrait to take shape. Lastly, the effect was like watching different episodes of the same programme, distinguished only by colour and subject.

In this setting, the formal structure of Kogler's work becomes visible: repetition and positioning define the project's rhythm and the exhibition title, "Positions", suggests an embodied knowledge of contemporary art located within the artist's presence. This reading is echoed in the exhibition catalogue, where it states:

> Durch diese Auswahl individueller und doch repräsentativer künstlerischer Positionen in authentischen Dokumenten wird - als Alternative zum modernen Erklärungszwang von Theoretikern und Kuratoren - eine Situationsdarstellung gegenwärtiger Kunst allein über die Selbstinterpretation ihrer Exponenten (die Künstler und deren Gesprächspartner) versucht.
> Selbstdarstellungen und authentische Aussagen von KünstlerInnen sind eines der wichtigsten Mittel, um künstlerische Kreativität transparent werden zu lassen und einen offenen gesellschaftlichen Dialog über Kunst zu ermöglichen. Jenseits eines avantgardistischen Fortschrittsglaubens hier und düsterer End-zeitprophezeiungen dort, öffnen sie den Blick auf eine sogenannte »zweite Moderne«, die keinem simplen Auf-und Nacheinander unterworfen ist, in der chaotisch erscheinende Prozesse gleichzeitig mit und ohne Plan ablaufen und ein pulsierendes organisches Netz wechselnder Beziehungen bilden.[159]

[159] "Through this selection of individual yet representative artistic positions in authentic documents, an attempt is made to present a situational depiction of contemporary art solely through the self-interpretation of its

The desire to generate an alternative narrative of art, removed from theory and anchored in lived experience, produces what Kogler describes as an *authentischen Dokumenten*, an authentic document. This statement resonates with the theoretical impulses the previous chapter explored through Lonzi's work and confirms the project's trajectory. The search for authenticity and a different framework for viewing artists, and by extension art history, demonstrates these video portraits' deliberate engagement with alternative artist representations and narratives.

2.2.3 Production and pedagogical aspects

Any presentation of *Portraits of Artists* would be incomplete without considering the role the project played in Kogler's professional life. Because production spanned several years, the project evolved in parallel with the different contexts in which Kogler pursued it. The various locations where the interviews were conducted reveal their unexpected performative potential. For example, the studio Kogler mentions in the interview with Pettibon, where the earliest interviews took place, offers a compelling entry point for understanding the project's production context. These initial interviews were highly structured; in Kogler's words, they were "more constructed" than they would be in later instances of the project. This structured approach encompassed not only the conceptual framework but also the studio environment, editing techniques, and lighting design.

> For the first five interviews, we did real editing, changing positions, but it turned out to be far too complicated. In the long run, it became just a matter of deciding what stayed in and what went out, with hard cuts. The first interviews were more constructed, but after the third or fourth, we said: "this is impossible, let's just select what is relevant and what is not". Elisabeth Fiege was important because she was with me for all the shootings and also the editing. There were different stages concerning the recordings. At first, we rented a studio from 1992 to the beginning of 1993. Then I became a professor at the Academy in Vienna. […] Students learned how to use the camera and do the editing. I stayed for 12 years. All the artists from then on were shot and edited at the Academy. […] We checked who was coming to Vienna, since we had no money. Then we asked them if they were willing to come to the studio, and also who they would like to have as their conversation partner. At the beginning, it was very different people. At a certain point, there was a lot of Hans Ulrich Obrist, because Joseph's constellation was to bring him in. [160]

Quoting Kogler at this stage is particularly illuminating, not only because it offers a clearer sense of the project's early creative process, but also because it conveys the enthusiasm and momentum that surrounded its inception. That momentum would only intensify as the project's mode of distribution began to shift. Once it became clear that *Portraits of Artists* would not be acquired or broadcast by the Austrian public broadcaster ORF – "it was just too much for the ORF at the time" – Kogler began to consider alternative settings: "I considered whether we could shoot it at the academy where I had just started teaching".[161] The academy, as he noted, offered multiple advantages: "Firstly, the students

---

protagonists (the artists and their interlocutors) as an alternative to the modern compulsion for explanation imposed by theorists and curators". In Edelbert Köb and Kunsthaus Bregenz, *KünstlerInnen – 50 Gespräche* (Kunsthaus Bregenz, 1997).

[160] Kogler "Interview with Peter Kogler".

[161] Kogler, "Interview with Peter Kogler".

would have gotten a lecture for free and secondly, they would have learned how to use the camera, and thirdly, a fantastic archive could be built up". This reimagining of the project as a participatory endeavour coincided with his appointment as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and laid the groundwork for what became an ambitious, long-term effort: "We filmed interviews from about 1992 to 1996. We put together an amazing list of artists. Many of them are stars now. That wasn't so clear in the 1990s".[162]

The *Portraits of Artists* project became an integral part of his pedagogical practice, one through which he involved students directly, using the interviews to introduce them to artists and their work. The memories of artist Manuel Gorkiewicz, a former student in Kogler's class, provide further insight into how the project functioned in an educational setting:

> I clearly remember that Peter often invited people to our class – artists who had exhibitions in town or were simply visiting Vienna. He knew them and asked if they wanted to give a workshop, a talk, or just join our class. That was very important for me, because there's a big difference between talking about artists and talking with artists – seeing them in person, hearing them speak about their work, or casually discussing students' projects. Once, parallel to class, Peter conducted an interview with one of those artists for Museum in Progress. I don't remember which one I saw being filmed, but it left a strong impression. The setup was simple, following Peter's concept for the Museum in Progress interviews. In class, we had a large space, and one day someone arrived with a camera, lights, and a backdrop, and they began shooting. There was a connection between what Peter did with those interviews and our class meetings: artists talking about art, rather than theorists talking about art. For me, direct dialogue with artists was crucial, and it began at that time.[163]

Portraits of Artists thus evolved into a kind of practice, almost as if Kogler had come to recognize the unique potential for self-representation these conversations were beginning to generate. After all, the entire project had originated from his desire to better understand artists and the ways in which they discuss their practice. As Kogler says.

> My aim was to build an archive. I was curious about how artists talk, and I was curious to meet them. The range was wide: compare Pettibon with Koons: it's a completely different world. As a young artist, it was hard for me to talk about art. I was curious how colleagues did it. I discovered a wide range: from those who couldn't finish a sentence but had a strong presence, to those who spoke fluently. In America, the first thing you learn is to sell your work. That's very different from Europe. I wanted to see the range, and it was wide, with many contradictions. One person said one thing, another said the opposite, and both were fine. Life is complex.[164]

Personal curiosity was not incidental to the project; it served as the series' driving engine. What Kogler sought was not documentation but authenticity: access to what drives an artist to make work, expressed in their own words and on their own terms. This need to delve into something that historical accounts and received narratives simply could not represent is what *Portraits of Artists*, at its core, was built around.

2.2.4 Between Warhol and Kogler

The account thus far presents a solid and well-structured project, supported by figures of considerable prominence who granted it significant cultural relevance. Yet its trajectory did

[162] Kogler, Bucher Trantow, and Kunsthaus Graz, *Connected. Peter Kogler With*, pp. 170–71.
[163] Manuel Gorkiewicz, "Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz", interview by Guido Balzani, December 20, 2024, Appendix C.
[164] Kogler, "Interview with Peter Kogler".

not fully match this initial promise. Today, *Portraits of Artists* remains archival material, despite being multimedia content that could easily be included in a digital library.

Even once it reached its end, *Portraits of Artists* left a mark. This scheme of video portraiture went on to inspire other projects, one of which was the *Kontakt Video Portraits*: the core of the following chapter. What did not continue, however, was the dissemination of Kogler's project itself. As Kaspar Mühlemann Hartl explains, *Portraits of Artists* developed in the 1990s in an informal cultural climate where conversations were not typically followed by signing release forms. Efforts to address this gap retroactively proved difficult, particularly for older recordings, and this eventually the project to have a limited circulation. The only expansion of Kogler's work beyond its original context came in 2017 when a selection of edited conversations was released on four thematic DVDs under a new title, *Artists Talking*.[165]

Influential but set aside, at the historical watershed of the internet's arrival, Kogler's project remains on the same shore as the analogical works that had inspired it, paradoxically close to Warhol. By recognizing this proximity, a genealogy of video portraiture can be traced that shifts from Warhol's focus on Factory stars and socialites to Kogler's more specific framing of the artist. Viewed together, both bodies of work reveal a shared intuition about how a portrait could be made after painting and through new media while also demonstrating how portraiture strategies continue to resonate across decades.

Understanding this genealogy of video portraiture, and Kogler's specific pursuit of artists' authenticity within it, requires reconsideration of the *Screen Tests* themselves. Brian Dillon offers a suggestive direction for such exploration in a 2009 review published in *The Guardian*, written as part of a musical reimagining of Warhol's *Screen Tests* by Dean Wareham and Britta Phillips, titled "13 Most Beautiful... Songs for Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests"*: "The Screen Tests were never screen tests as such – that is, tryouts for future films. But some aspect of the sitter's star potential is nonetheless always tested: his or her physical stamina, embarrassment threshold, self-possession, *charisma*, and (this is Warhol, after all) physical attractiveness".[166]

The fact that charisma should surface here, elusive, charged, and largely unexamined, suggests that something of the same quality may operate in Kogler's pursuit of the artist. This insight that eventually lead my research to develop the interpretive category of charismatic technologies calls first for patient attention: a closer examination of the *Screen Tests* themselves.

---

[165] *Artists Talking: Pop Art ; Bayrle, Rosenquist, Steinbach*, vol. 1, produced by museum in progress, Artists Talking (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), DVD; *Artists Talking: Art and Language ; Art & Language, Gappmayr, Holzer, Weiner, Wool*, vol. 2, produced by museum in progress, Artists Talking (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), DVD; *Artists Talking: Conceptual Art ; Baldessari, Barry, Büchler, Deller, Kosuth*, vol. 3, produced by museum in progress, Artists Talking (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), DVD; *Artists Talking: Performance Art; Burden, Fraser, Gilbert & George, McCarthy, Tiravanija*, vol. 4, produced by museum in progress, Artists Talking (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), DVD.

[166] Brian Dillon, "Undone in Three Minutes", *The Guardian*, January 24, 2009, sec. Art and design, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jan/24/andy-warhol-screen-tests-susan-sontag-lou-reed-salvador-dali Emphasis added.

2.3 From desire to liking

Over the years, the number of studies dedicated to the *Screen Tests*, a wide collection of videos that Warhol shot of Factory visitors, has grown steadily. However, Callie Angell's *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* remains one of the most reliable historiographic sources about this work of art. As Angell's research documents, Warhol began working on the project without a clearly defined idea in mind. His first attempts date back to 1964, while the final pieces in the series were made in 1966. In 1963, Warhol bought a Bolex 16mm camera and began shooting and recording on a one-hundred-foot roll of black-and-white silent film. The entire series was filmed using that same camera.

Although it is impossible to isolate an "eureka moment" that launched the series – since everything, especially when it comes to Warhol, seems to be part of a coherent continuum – there are important discoveries that shaped the tests. There is, in fact, an entire "prehistory" of the *Screen Tests* that deserves to be highlighted, if only because it informs and motivates the aesthetic construction of the videos themselves. As we will see, understanding the photographic origins of the *Screen Tests* allows us to clarify the static quality and repetition that would later come to define the series. More importantly, recognizing that the roots of this work lie in Warhol's desire, both erotic and archival, helps us uncover the dynamics of fascination or "liking" that are crucial for interpreting the project.

The year before Warhol bought the Bolex, he stumbled on a brochure from the New York Police Department titled "The Thirteen Most Wanted" that featured mugshots of the city's most wanted criminals. [167] This discovery seems to have resonated with Warhol on several levels, as two of his projects stemmed directly from it. On one hand, there is the first *Screen Tests*' series titled *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*. Just before this project was fully realizes, however, Warhol created his 1964 mural *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* displaying a selection of criminals' mugshots from the 1940s on the exterior of the New York State Pavilion for the 1964 World's Fair. [168]

> A week before the grand opening of the Fair on April 22, 1964, Thirteen Most Wanted Men was installed on the exterior facade of the Pavilion's 'Theaterama.' Within a few days of the mural's installation, a work crew covered Thirteen Most Wanted Men with aluminium house paint, thereby muffling it under a monochrome of silver. [169]

Warhol was selected for the event by the architect Philip Johnson, and we know that the entire project did not come up easily: Warhol was late and undecided on what to do, and, as

[167] The fact that Warhol found himself in possession of such a document naturally raises some legitimate questions. Richard Meyer has shed light on the intricate network of underground relationships – specifically of a homosexual nature – that ultimately led to Warhol acquiring the brochure in question.
[168] Although, as Angell demonstrated, the first attempt to shoot *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* seems to predate work on the *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* mural: "The earliest documented mention of these films is found in Kelly Edey's diary entry for January 17, 1964, in which he noted: "This afternoon Andy Warhol made a movie here, a series of portraits of a number of beautiful boys, including Harold Talbot and Denis Deegan and also me". Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Abrams, 2006), p. 42.
[169] Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Boston: Beacon press, 2002), p. 130.

Mayer has reconstructed through the words of John Giorno, a friend of his, Wynn Chamberlain brought back the theme of the mug shots.

> On April 28, 1963 [the painter] Wynn Chamberlain invited Andy, me, and a friend of his named Bobo Keely, to dinner in his loft on the top floor of 222 Bowery…
> At dinner we talked about Bob Indiana's new show at the Stable and the current gossip. Andy mentioned he had a problem because he had to do a piece for the 1964 World's Fair and he didn't have an idea…"Oh, I don't know what to do!" said Andy.
> We were eating coq-au-vin and drinking white wine. Wynn said, "Andy, | have a great idea for you. The Ten Most Wanted Men! You know, the mug shots the police issue of the ten most wanted men."
> "Oh, what a great idea!" said Andy.
> "My boyfriend is a cop," said Wynn. "He can get you all the mug shots you want. He brings a briefcase of them home every night.
> "Oh, what a great idea!" said Andy. "But Robert Moses has to approve it or something…I don't care, I'm going to do it!"
> Wynn Chamberlain had a lover, Jimmy O'Neill, who was gay and a New York City policeman, half Italian and half Irish, and he was gorgeous. Jimmy was a third-generation cop. His grandfather was a captain. Jimmy was hip. He gave Andy a big manila envelope filled with crime photos, mug shots, archival photographs, and the Ten Most Wanted Men.[170]

Once completed, the mural, despite its monumental size, received little attention from the media. Warhol himself appeared dissatisfied with the display and, after just a few days, *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* was painted over and never replaced. The exhibition history of this work is complex, but fortunately Mayer has documented it. In short, even if Warhol seemed indifferent to the mural's removal, it is fair to describe the act as a form of police censorship. The reasons for this are varied: ethical concerns about publicly displaying the faces of men who had already been released from prison, the problematic depiction of mostly Italian criminals linked to mafia organizations, and a more speculative cause related to the homoerotic undertones contained in *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*.[171]

In this case, it is particularly fitting to speak of "undertones" because this work represents a threshold in Warhol's career, coinciding with a gradual concealment, though not complete elimination, of the homoerotic stylistic signature that had consistently characterized his earlier works:

> Warhol's 'metamorphosis into a pop persona' in the early years of the 1960s might better be seen as a self-conscious shift in the artist's presentation of both his public identity and his professional output. Even as Warhol reinvented himself, salient aspects of his identity (e.g., his devotion to popular culture, his homosexuality) remained visible, albeit on different terms. Warhol's fixation on celebrity and popular culture, for example, became ever more central to the methods and subject matter of his early-1960s art. His homosexuality, on the other hand, was displaced from the level of denotation to that of connotation, from the register of the explicit to that of the encoded.[172]

---

[170] John Giorno, "Andy Warhol's Movie Sleep", in *You Got to Burn to Shine: New and Selected Writings*, cited in Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, pp. 142–43.
[171] It is important to add that Angell's reconstruction of the event does not consider the homoerotic element as decisive within the censorship dynamic compared to the act of showcasing criminal faces: "After its unveiling, the Thirteen Most Wanted Men was almost immediately painted over. Interestingly, the objections it provoked had little to do with homosexuality but arose from public and official perceptions of the mural as an outrageously improper celebration of a bunch of crooks, exactly the type of social undesirable who had no place in the World Fair's grand exposition of civic pride and social and scientific progress". In Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 244.
[172] Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, p. 125.

Beginning with a clear focus on homoerotic subjects such as *Standing Male Torso* (c. 1955–57), Warhol gradually shifted from a strongly coded expression of desire to a broader exploration of desirability, eventually engaging with the overarching theme of fame. Given that the World's Fair was conceived as an event "dedicated to man's achievements on a shrinking globe in an expanding universe", Warhol chose to engage with one of the defining aspirations of American culture: the desire for success: in other words, the American Dream.[173]

Yet his take on success was steeped in irony. As noted, "in one sense […] Thirteen Most Wanted Men answered the mandate of the World's Fair. The mural portrayed individuals at the pinnacle of their chosen careers and showcased a vivid (if entirely deviant) form of American achievement".[174] Warhol's work did more than invert conventional values: it actively dismantled the Fair's idealism. By "portraying the criminal as an iconic American antihero", he "acidly mocked the official ethos of the Fair".[175]

The ambiguity of the word "wanted" not only highlights the contradiction between the way it is used by the police, signifying a clear intent to capture these men, and a broader, fictional desire that turned them into icons whose faces were deemed worthy of display. The way they present themselves, with some partially looking directly at the camera, also echoed the homoerotic undertones of Warhol's earlier work. To call these men wanted was to suggest not only criminality but also desirability. While this layer of meaning may not have been immediately evident to the general public, it was recognized by some within the police force. Moreover, the very way Warhol encountered the *Most Wanted* brochure hints at an unexpected connection between two seemingly distant worlds: the homosexual subculture and law enforcement.[176] Although this interpretation of the mural's homoerotic dimension may seem exaggerated, it gains more credibility when viewed alongside the series *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*, a collection of videos that later became recognized as the precursor to the *Screen Tests* series.

> Warhol's transformation of "most wanted men" into "most beautiful boys" is a good example of the radical literalism with which Warhol often approached American language and culture. Although the law enforcement officials who produced and distributed the Thirteen Most Wanted booklet were no doubt oblivious to the homoeroticism implicit in its title and images, it seems to have been entirely obvious to Warhol, who appropriated the concept and the title "The Thirteen Most" for two different, nearly simultaneous projects.[177]

Here, the "wanted" from before is fuelled by the attractiveness of the chosen subjects and their transformation from "men" to "boys" speaks not merely to an age boundary, but also to a redefinition of the object of desire once viewed through the appropriate lens. With his Bolex, Warhol framed some of the young men hanging out at the Factory and recorded them in a sort of video mug shot.

---

[173] Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, p. 134.
[174] Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, p. 135
[175] Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, p. 135.
[176] "[…] the very fact that the FBI pursued an investigation of Warhol carries historical significance. Following the Tanager Cooperative in the late 1950s and the New York World's Fair in 1964, the FBI surveyed and sought to restrict the 'homosexual tendencies' of Warhol's work." Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, p. 155.
[177] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 244.

> Several months after completing Thirteen Most Wanted Men, Warhol shot a silent 16mm film entitled Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys, a film that extends, and renders explicit, the homoeroticism of the World's Fair mural. The 'most beautiful boys' were in fact young men variously associated with the Factory: Gerard Malanga, Freddie Herko, Dennis Deegan, and Bruce Rudo, among others. Within the terms of this film, the 'boys' have no role to play beyond their status as objects of desire, no cause to appear before the camera other than their beauty in Warhol's eyes.[178]

These videos share several defining traits with the mural, inheriting from the mugshot genre both the suffocating tightness of the frame and the stillness of the subject. This stillness is not incidental, however, and it warrants closer examination. Warhol deliberately instructed his subjects to remain motionless, allowing only involuntary, subtle movements – such as trembling or blinking – to surface. Additionally, he conceived the videos as filmed against a plain background, initially dark, with lighting that created "symmetrical Rorschach-like shadows down the centre of the subject's face".[179]

As Angell observes, the distinct exhibition contexts of these two pieces are crucial to understanding how Warhol negotiated the balance between public and private spheres. Unlike *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, which functioned as public art, *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* was "intended for the semiprivate, often explicitly homoerotic world of underground movies".[180]

It should be noted that, up to this point, the theme of desire and desirability has been frequently invoked without delving into its specifically Warholian inflection. Jonathan Flatley's more recent book offers further clarity on this theme. According to his analysis, the most accurate way to understand Warhol's use of terms such as desire or wanted is through the lens of liking. The philosophical inquiry prompted by this term is especially important for this research, as the concept of liking involves logical dynamics that will prove valuable for both interpreting the *Screen Tests* and analysing the *Portraits of Artists*. The term liking captures the cultivation of an aesthetic openness that Warhol practiced and that reverberates throughout his work: "[…] for Warhol, 'liking things' was a project to be pursued, involving abilities that could be nurtured and educated". [181]

It is a compelling concept, one that shifts the focus away from the emotional intensity of desire, in that liking is not loving; it is a more superficial yet more expansive form of appreciation, to instead recast it as an aesthetic and philosophical practice. It is a relationship shaped by the very logic of liking, which, by mimetically imitating the liked subjects or merely contemplating them, reconfigured and merged identities in a way that caused them to resemble each other:

> That is, the person you like is already like you. [...]. Each of you has internalized the old fantasy object, although through different strategies: you have the image nostalgically tucked away as an imaginative and affective aid as you look at people on the street; the person who looks like your fantasy has kept an attachment to the fantasy alive by modeling her- or himself after it.[182]

---

[178] Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, p. 140.
[179] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 15.
[180] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 244.
[181] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol* (Chicago London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 4.
[182] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p.10.

As Flatley notes, Warhol's distinctiveness lay in his ability to find everything and everyone appealing: "Perhaps Warhol could only imagine himself being liked in a world where everything and everybody is likable […] and where therefore everybody can enter into relations of imitation and resemblance with everybody else". [183]

Flately's insights allow for broad reflections, prompting us to reconsider the role of beauty in Warhol's earliest works. As the principle of liking took shape, it used beauty as a kind of battering ram to penetrate the mechanisms of desirability: and this applies to both *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* and *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*. It is, however, in the accumulation – or more precisely, collection – of faces, to use Flately's own terms, that liking begins to form a true aesthetic system, thus shedding light on the much broader selection of subjects featured in the *Screen Tests*. This leads to the second aspect Flatley identifies as central to the logic of liking: "Warhol likes precisely what he already has, and has lots of. […] This is an erotic economy based on already having, on nonutilitarian accumulation, not on identity, difference, or absence".[184] Warhol's collecting practices, however, extended beyond objects to also encompass people, and it is precisely at the intersection of these two modes that the *Screen Tests* took shape: "The *Screen Tests* were a remarkably effective collecting technique. [They] transfer the Factory's residents and visitors out of the everyday realm of identity into a specific cinematic world where their participation in an assembly of likenesses is quite easy to apprehend".[185]

Once these underlying components of the *Screen Tests* are laid out, the work itself begins to resemble a "technological apparatus" of liking, one that, rather than producing portraits of subjects, generates dynamics of relation and fascination.

2.3.1 *Screen Tests*

The historical and emotional context in which the idea of the *Screen Tests* surfaced inevitably shaped the development of the project. Both the projects *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* and its apparent continuation, *Thirteen Most Beautiful Girls* (1964), might initially suggest that the pieces composing *Screen Tests* function as a kind of taxonomy of the various forms of beauty circulating within the Factory. However, a closer look at the full range of subjects captured by Warhol's camera reveals that his project was far more ambitious. Warhol's Bolex framed anyone who passed through the Factory's spaces. Under its gaze fell figures as diverse as Bob Dylan, Gian Giacomo Feltrinelli, Susan Sontag, and even Penelope Palmer, the three-and-a-half-month-old daughter of John Palmer and Ivy Nicholson. As Angell's meticulous reconstruction of the work demonstrates, an entire underworld of actors, performers, and lovers found themselves scrutinized by the same cold glass eye. Because of the sheer breadth of the subjects it filmed, the *Screen Tests* series has been interpreted as a tool for generating a "who's who" effect. Others have viewed these videos as a kind of negative portrait of Warhol himself, suggesting that, in documenting the world around him, he was actually revealing his own image:

[183] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p. 6.
[184] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p. 76,
[185] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p. 80.

> Although the *Screen Tests* were not all-inclusive – it is interesting to consider who among Warhol's friends and acquaintances does not appear in these films' – they do show Warhol, somewhat surprisingly, in the role of social historian or ethnographer, systematically documenting the parade of talented artists and other significant characters he encountered at his studio and assembling a group portrait of considerable cultural and physiognomic complexity. The *Screen Tests* can also be read as a portrait of the artist himself, delineating the breadth of his friendships, his social connections and professional associations, his range of interests, his egalitarianism and opportunism, his eye for beauty and for talent, his appreciation of intelligence, his fascination with personality and the human face.[186]

In Flatley's view, instead, the ambiguity surrounding Warhol's intentionality is not a puzzle to be solved, but rather a deliberate strategy, one that renders the question of identity explicit and, above all, enacted through the work itself. This elevated perspective on identity-as-negation aligns with Flatley's interpretation, specifically the way he cautions against approaching the *Screen Tests* as if they contained some deeper, hidden level to be uncovered: "If your concern is finding a way to be sure about who Warhol 'really' is, his mimetic confusions and identity deflections become interference, noise to cut through".[187]

Despite these various speculations, the history of the *Screen Tests* has remained fragmented, partly due to the title itself, which was only assigned after the project had already taken shape. The title *Screen Tests* emerged between 1965 and 1966, when Warhol and Gerard Malanga, one of his subjects and a trusted collaborator, began exploring ways to merge their creative practices and envisioned the *Screen Tests* as operating alongside Malanga's poetry. Additionally, the tests had no concrete purpose. While actors are typically screen-tested in preparation for a specific role, in this case there was no film to shoot and no clear or practical motivation behind them.

Ultimately, it is important to note that the *Screen Tests* were never particularly intended to be shown publicly – except for *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Women*, which attracted larger audiences and was broadcast in mundane contexts such as the house of *Life* magazine fashion editor Sally Kirkland.[188] Instead, the tests were primarily used as background material during parties.[189] While the purposes of the tests were clear to Warhol, they were not necessarily understood by his subjects and indeed the people being filmed had different reactions to this kind of "ritual". Some of the Factory guests seemed to love being portrayed: Bob Dylan, for example, waited hours just to be shot[190], while others "recall feeling anxious, self-conscious, and even trapped during their three minutes in front of the camera".[191]

---

[186] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 13.
[187] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p. 33.
[188] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 250.
[189] "An unpublished manuscript by Ingrid Superstar titled 'Movie Party at the Factory: A Trip & Half' describes a late-night party on the evening of March 26, 1966, when a number of films were shown at the Factory: 'They also showed a 'stillie' of Bob Dylan in color with violet coloring over the screen. This trippy illusion is achieved by swaying a thin block of colored plastic in front of the projector. This technique is is (sic) used quite alot (sic) in Andy's underground uptight movies' The use of coloured gels during projections of black-and-white films was a technique employed by Barbara Rubin in exhibitions of her 1963 film Christmas on Earth; it was also a common practice in the multimedia Up-Tight events that Warhol and his crew staged to accompany performances by the Velvet Underground, events later known as the Exploding Plastic Inevitable or EPI". Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 69.
[190] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 69.
[191] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 15.

Considering the many different layers mixing within this work, Angell refines the speculative framework by placing the prominence and pervasiveness of this work at the heart of the discussion:

> As rigidly formal as his early minimalist films, as society-conscious as his silkscreened portraits of the 1970s, as visually striking as his paintings of Hollywood movie stars, the *Screen Tests* are the stem cells of Warhol's portraiture: short, simple, and somehow more direct than his silkscreened paintings, these films not only contain the technical and conceptual seeds of Warhol's later painted portraits, but also present their subjects to us with an immediacy not often found in his other works.[192]

Angell's idea of the *Screen Tests* as "stem cells" offers an intriguing, almost genetic take on artistic influence. It effectively captures the way that, even when transplanted into a different work, elements of Warhol's original still resonate. This perspective proves especially fitting when thinking about Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*, as we have seen. That is why it becomes essential to identify and articulate the key features that define the *Screen Tests*.

I have already discussed some common features in *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*, such as the lighting setup. It is important to specify that the initial "rules", as well as the aesthetic limits set by Warhol, were reconsidered multiple times. The most striking change when comparing the stills from the *Screen Tests* and those from the series is the use of light. The sculpting shadows originally intended to model the subjects' faces gradually evolved into a direct, intense, and frontal light source, making the portraits even more reminiscent of the original mug shot genre. The light became so intense that it could cause the subject's eyes to water or trigger repeated blinking. It is no coincidence that, in Ann Buchanan's test, for example, her eyes gradually became moist until tears formed. Such a change is, of course, the result of a deliberate decision and demonstrates Warhol's growing openness to reconsidering the role of stillness in the videos. The *Screen Tests* have never been dynamic shots; moreover, when we consider that they were generally filmed at twenty-four frames per second but projected at sixteen frames per second, they are displayed in slow motion, with a total running time of about four minutes each. However, micromovements, rather than mere tremors, became increasingly prevalent in the later shots. As Angell notes, there is a growing number of subjects engaging in "oral activities" like drinking or smoking, as well as squinting their eyes or, indeed, shedding tears.[193]

The theme of stillness, and movement more broadly, in the *Screen Tests* is crucial and deserves deeper exploration. Looking at the history of the *Screen Tests* in perspective, we find their roots in photography: fully static images where the only form of movement comes from the succession of faces, often those of dangerous criminals. This schema closely resembles the aesthetic of Warhol's early silkscreen practices. In multi-image silkscreens such as *Natalie Diptych* (1962), for example, reproduction and misregistration progressively "jam" to create overlaps and ink clumps that sometimes erase the face. In both cases, the subject is still, yet repetition unsettles identity. In the mugshots, repetition casts doubt on the uniqueness of each individual (everyone is different, yet all are flattened by their inclusion in

[192] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 12.
[193] Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 16.

the shared category of "criminal").[194] In the 1962 silkscreen, the repeated image of Natalie Wood becomes so distorted that her features are nearly erased. These early works already show a tendency towardss a form of portraiture that draws on minimalist repetition while also anticipating the generative, collecting impulse that Flatley highlights in Warhol's approach.

The theme of movement intensified with Warhol's film experiments, especially the *Screen Tests*, but also parallel works such as *Sleep* (1963), which assembles repeated shots of John Giorno sleeping into a film of over five hours in a single take. The camera runs uninterrupted, only pausing when the film reel ends and forces a change in angle. Here, repetition gives way to insistence: a layering of time and gaze that builds density rather than variation.

However, the *Screen Tests* invert that logic. The subjects are not filmed sleeping or in a natural state of stillness. Instead, they are asked to hold still – an artificial stillness that is further emphasized by slow motion. Each subject hovers between photo and film, between person and object: a state that is by nature unsustainable. This transformation into objecthood is not speculative. Warhol himself originally referred to the *Screen Tests* as Living Portrait Boxes and even considered selling them as standalone artworks in the manner of paintings or sculptures. This change of status on the part of the subjects recalls the points made about Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*, even if there are distinctions to be made that will be developed further. Yet it is precisely within this unstable, failing condition that something essential is revealed: something beyond the celebrity persona and beyond the flat certainty of photography. This is where Warhol's true notion of portraiture takes shape. As Flatley puts it:

> Thus, the Screen Tests are dramas not only of self-presentation, but of self-disintegration. What they dramatize above all is the singular way each sitter fails to hold onto an identity, the way each person comes together and falls apart. How does each sitter deal with the failure to keep a coherent face together? Overall, in their display of faces composing and uncomposing, the Screen Tests present the self as a series of imperfect imitations, an accumulation of shifting likenesses, performed over time, one after the other.[195]

Here, movement, first mechanical, then performed, does not simply depict identity, it instead generates a dynamic: a composing and uncomposing of the subject in real time, before our eyes. As I will show, this dynamic is extremely important when considering the meaning of charisma Dillon referred to.

> Warhol's devotion to filmmaking suggests the degree to which his experiments in late 1964 and early 1965 had further stoked his enthusiasm for the medium, a dedication that seemed to grow throughout the year. By October, Warhol was once again announcing his "farewell to art," this time with the launch of a 40 foot-long tubular silver balloon from the roof of the Factory, the first of his Silver Clouds. "I don't paint anymore, I gave it up about a year ago and I just do movies now," he told Gretchen Berg. "I could do two things at the same time, but movies are more exciting. Painting was just a phase I went through.[196]

---

[194] In "Test Subjects", Hal Foster analyses how Warhol structured his works with controlled movements stemming not from the subjects but from the technologies used. From this perspective, even misregistration becomes a particular type of dynamism, just like the repetition of the photobooth, the depletion of the film, and the consequent forced change of framing. See Hal Foster, "Test Subjects", *October* 132 (2010), pp. 30–42.
[195] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p. 82.
[196] John G. Hanhardt and Adam D. Weinberg, *The Films of Andy Warhol: Catalogue Raisonné 1963-1965* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2021), p. 276.

While Warhol's farewell to painting marks a significant counterpoint to the various shifts in his practice, the expansion of his vision is also tangibly reflected in two of his *Screen Tests* from 1965. While both *Screen Tests No. 1* and *Screen Test No. 2* retain the characteristic stillness seen in earlier tests, they also introduce new elements: scripted content and new technological tools. Both films follow scripts that blend the structure of an interview with that of an interrogation. [197] The first features Philip Fagan, Warhol's former partner and an actor in his intimate film project *Six Months* (1964), while the second involves the queer performer Mario Montez, who also appeared in Warhol's film *More Milk Yvette* (1965). Ronald Tavel's script was created by the young poet with whom Warhol had previously collaborated on films like *Harlot* (1964). It is situated within the broader context of technological innovation introduced by the Auricon camera, a 16mm motion picture camera equipped with a single-system sound-on-film recording feature. However, this does not mean that all the *Screen Tests* from 1965 onward incorporated sound.[198] Aside from these sonic experiments, the series continued until its 1966 conclusion maintaining the silence that had always defined it. This innovation marked a radical shift in Warhol's cinematic direction, coinciding with his growing involvement in the creative direction of The Velvet Underground.

By 1966, the *Screen Tests* had largely faded from view, with only occasional exceptions such as their inclusion as background projections in Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* (1966). From 1970 onwards, many of Warhol's films were withdrawn from circulation and the *Screen Tests* fell into a silence that was broken only by exhibition projects such as the ones that later captured Dillon's interest.

2.4 The many faces of charisma

The history of the *Screen Tests* can be interrupted at this point, that is, at the very moment the project underwent its own mutation. Yet the readings inspired by this extensive body of videos, interpretations in which the concept of charisma and its application to the *Screen Tests* move to the foreground, still demand attention. Boxer's afore-mentioned article in *The New York Times*, written for the 2003 exhibition of Warhol's *Screen Tests* at the Museum of Modern Art, played a decisive role in shaping the interpretive category of charismatic technology for Warhol's work and, above all, for Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*. The passage is worth quoting again:

> What do you learn at the school of screen tests? Nothing at all. Well, maybe one thing: by shooting the films at one speed and playing them more slowly, Warhol exposed the mechanics of discomposure and charisma. Some people are fascinating as they lose it; others are not. It has nothing to do with

[197] To give an idea of the structure of these *Screen Tests,* "The first reel begins with a medium close-up of Philip Fagan, in a black T-shirt, facing down the camera for twenty seconds without blinking, then succeeding in another uninterrupted stare-down for nearly a minute. Except for the swirling grain and sputtering audio, the moving image appears static. The key light from the left provides bright, circular highlights on Fagan's eyes. For the next three minutes, he blinks a number of times- single, double, and triple blinks, some slow and voluptuous, others fluttery and nearly indistinguishable." After four minutes, Tavel says, "Andy Warhol's Screen Test." He identifies Fagan as "The Actor" and himself as "The Tester's Voice" and writer of the scenario. In reaction to Tavel's first line, "Now, Mr. Fagan, I want you to relax, completely," the actor inhales and closes his eyes. Hanhardt and Weinberg, *The Films of Andy Warhol*, p. 292.

[198] Hanhardt and Weinberg, *The Films of Andy Warhol*, p. 276, but see also Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 19.

> handsomeness, histrionics, coolness, slimness, trying or giving up. The typology of charisma is as elusive as the typology of criminality.

This phrase, introduced in the first chapter, evokes a dynamic conception of charisma that Boxer describes as the "mechanics of discomposure" inherent in charismatic virtue. As previously demonstrated, the history of charisma reveals that this virtue gradually dissolved over time and charisma thus became increasingly detached from individuality and power. Yet the dynamics it generates require further examination. The previously cited work by Emanuele Arielli on charisma in the arts offers a comparable line of inquiry. Boxer's use of charisma, however, does not simply demonstrate the concept's flexibility; it also suggests that specific dynamics may themselves be understood as charismatic.

In the *Screen Tests*, these dynamics take shape through a work of art that continually contradicts its own status: it presents itself as still as a photograph yet dissolves into subtle movements that fracture its apparent rigidity. To develop Boxer's insight into an interpretive framework for reconsidering *Portraits of Artists*, it is necessary to engage with concepts that operate through comparable dynamics. The concept of "living presence response" [199] articulated by Caroline van Eck to describe the illusion of vitality perceived in certain works of art provides an essential point of comparison.

"Living presence response" phenomenon refers to the tendency of viewers to perceive artworks as living entities and, more significantly, to react to them as if they were alive. According to van Eck, this is particularly evident in the domain of statuary, where a well-documented tradition of responses – ranging from kisses to acts of mutilation – has traced the contours of a distinctive mode of interacting with works of art over the centuries.

van Eck explicitly clarifies that she does not focus on pathological responses or psychological confusion. Instead, she examines a particular perception where the artwork's inanimate nature is clearly recognized and yet it nonetheless evokes a strong sensation among viewers that it is alive. In her words:

> [The] living presence response can be understood adequately only when thought of primarily as the viewer's experience of an artwork coming alive. It is this experience that causes the feelings of discomfort, shame and so forth, which indicate not only how the subject feels about such response, but also, and primarily, that he or she is conscious of such response, is experiencing it.[200]

The philosopher describes giving and withdrawing the impression of life, an oscillation that identifies a dynamic central to the experience of artwork by introducing a sense of movement which is absent from earlier analyses of expanded charismatic virtue. This echoes Boxer's idea of "the mechanics of discomposure and charisma", thus connecting van Eck's theory to the themes of charisma, the *Screen Tests*, and the *Portraits of Artists* that still require further clarification.

In articulating her insights, van Eck suggests that these attitudes originated in the tradition of rhetorical art. She turns, for example, to Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* that outlines how

---

[199] Caroline van Eck, "Living Statues: Alfred Gell's Art and Agency, Living Presence Response and the Sublime", *Art History* 33, no. 4 (September 2010), pp. 642–59; Caroline van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence: From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object*, (Boston, Berlin, Munich: de Gruyter, 2015).
[200] van Eck, "Living Statues", p. 646.

orators are trained and focuses on passages addressing figurative modes of communication.[201] She observes that this text strongly advocated for using figurative language, designed to produce vivid mental imagery, in order to enhance the persuasive power of speech. The successful transformation of words into images endowed discourse with the *enargeia* necessary to render it seemingly animated. Van Eck, however, also moves beyond this initial observation: "If successful, speech appears to dissolve into what it describes […] we have here one of the first conceptualizations in Western thought of works of art appearing to be animated, and the effect of this on the public".[202] She consequently poses the question of whether this tendency to animate language might be extended to a predisposition to animate objects and whether it may have sown the expectation that such objects could emanate life.

In shaping this concept, Van Eck draws on a broader theoretical framework that engages extensively with the anthropology of art, particularly the work of Alfred Gell. Gell's major contribution to the anthropology of art lies in his refusal to follow aesthetic paradigms. Regarding such paradigms as overly Eurocentric, he instead decided to focus on human responses to artwork.[203] *Art and Agency* (1998) and *The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology* (1992) represent the two key texts in which he consolidated his insights, thus advancing the notion of the artwork as a social agent endowed with its own specific agency.

This agency enables artworks to act and thus appear animated. There is no confusion about the inorganic status of such objects: Gell deliberately employs the concept of "animacy" – rather than life – to describe the condition of artworks. An object that possesses animacy becomes capable of looking, communicating, seducing: performing a range of actions that, up to this point in the analysis, have been categorized in the realm of charisma. As Gell observes, "animacy takes its origin from this ocular exchange, because, even if one does not take a mystical attitude towards images, one is nonetheless entitled to apply action verbs like ('look' or 'smile' or 'gesticulate', etc.) to them. The ability of the idol to 'see,' then, does not depend on the attribution of life in a biological sense but on the structure of the visual exchange itself".[204] According to Gell, "eye-contact, mutual looking, is a basic mechanism for intersubjectivity because looking into another's eyes is not just to see the other, but to see the other seeing you".[205] In this dynamic, subject and object become entangled in a recursive structure of perception, leading to what he calls an "optical oscillation" in which the perspectives of devotee and idol shift rapidly back and forth. As he concludes, this exchange culminates in a moment where "interpersonal boundaries are effaced, and 'union' is achieved".[206]

The concept of animacy illustrates how Gell interprets the status of artwork. Still, it is in his earlier and foundational text, *Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology*, which precedes *Art and Agency,* that he clarifies the conditions under which such powers come into being. In this essay, Gell outlines a theory of the dynamics – or, more

[201] van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence*, p. 18.
[202] van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence*, p. 19.
[203] See Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology", in *Anthropology Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1992), pp. 40–43.
[204] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), p. 118.
[205] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, p. 120.
[206] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, p. 120.

accurately, the technologies – that enable artworks to activate their agency. These mechanisms rely, as Gell notes, on "magic". The title of Gell's text should not be misleading: The *Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment* is in no way an esoteric treatise on the ineffable qualities of art. On the contrary, the anthropologist seeks to dissect this enchanted mechanism, aiming to reveal art "as a component of technology".[207]

In attempting to identify the source of art's magic, Gell outlines a twofold process. In this system, there is a dynamic referred to as "the technology of enchantment" as well as another one known as the "enchantment of technology". In the former, the anthropologist treats artwork as a technological object seeking to identify its effect, since every technology has one. Gell recognizes that the outcome of an artwork is the power it exerts over individuals, a power that derives from its morphological characteristics. The appearance of the artwork, so distinct from any other technology with a clear, manifest purpose, eludes immediate comprehension for those encountering it. There is something about the appearance of this *sui generis* technology that is unknown, and it is precisely in this mismatch between form and function that magic resides. Magic here is understood as a lack of information that triggers "psychological warfare" within the viewer. [208]

The other side of this dynamic is the enchantment of technology. The appearance of the artwork is underpinned by another gap in knowledge, namely ignorance about the process that produced the object itself. Since "The attitude of the spectator towards a work of art is fundamentally conditioned by [the] notion of the technical processes", the final form of the artwork causes viewers to develop questions about both how it was produced and what abilities the creator who conceived it can exercise.[209] These questions reflect the audience's desire to unravel the mystery of the object's creation: the "internal awareness" of the spectator's "powers as an agent" clashes with the artwork's failure to fill that knowledge gap.[210] This forces the viewer to recognize "a creative agency which transcends his own and, hovering in the background, the power of the collectivity on whose behalf the artist exercised his technical mastery". [211]

Together, the two dynamics elevate the artwork to the status of social agent: it becomes "a physical entity which mediates between two beings", the public and the artist, "and therefore creates a social relation between them, which in turn provides a channel for further social relations and influences".[212]

Caroline van Eck, while acknowledging the significance of Gell's contribution, emphasizes two fundamental limitations of Gell's framework: on the one hand, his theorization lacks historical and geographical specificity;[213] on the other (and this is crucial for my analysis), it remains distant from the viewer's lived experience. van Eck reevaluates this fascination not as an "objective" effect of the artwork, but rather as something that

[207] Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology", p. 43.
[208] Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology", p. 44.
[209] Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology", p. 51.
[210] Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology", p. 51.
[211] Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology", p. 52.
[212] Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology", p. 52.
[213] For the Eurocentric limits of Gell's theories see the compelling analysis by Brigitte Derlon and Monique Jeudy-Ballini, "The Theory of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Theory: The Art of Alfred Gell", *Oceania* 80, no. 2 (2010), pp. 129–42.

emerges dynamically from the viewer's experience and agency. This reconsideration causes the interpretive framework to change significantly. It is precisely this reconceptualization that van Eck develops in her living response theory. Her development overcomes the main limitation of Gell's theory, since it "only makes sense if living presence response is understood as an experience, the experience of a work of art becoming alive".[214]

The theoretical and perceptual reorientation identified by Van Eck is broadly supported by points she identifies in the art-historical literature she critically revisits. In her view, a cultural landscape took shape that had long been engaged with the life of the artwork, albeit in markedly different ways. For instance, Van Eck distinguishes her approach from that of Freedberg by not grounding her analysis in religious frameworks. While acknowledging the different conceptual starting point of Bredekamp – who approaches this subject through the lens of speech act theory applied to objects – Van Eck instead focuses on the transformation of enchantment into a lived experience and dynamic process.[215] However, her analysis is not confined to the instances appearing in the twentieth century; rather, she identifies a broader scholarly tradition that, while capable of perceiving the same animating movement in artwork, ultimately classified it within other domains of knowledge. In her own words:

> Many of the concepts developed after 1750 to account for viewers attributing life to art works – fetishism and empathy for instance – disappeared in the course of the 20th century from the research agendas of the disciplines concerned: art history, anthropology and psychology, to make way for a positivist approach. Just as empathy disappeared from psychology and was replaced by behaviourism, the agency and life of images disappeared from art historical research agendas to be replaced by formalism, stylistic inquiry and iconography.[216]

Van Eck demonstrated that a constellation of concepts ranging from energeia to empathy to agency has existed – and continues to exist – and that these concepts support the history of perception and ultimately intersect with the notion of charisma. This connection is established through the movement embedded in the theory of living presence response, a phenomenon that mirrors the dynamic nature of charismatic force: something we have come to understand as anything but stable or fixed. Van Eck does not venture into contemporary art to map the full range of effects produced by this theory. However, in the introduction to her book, she cautiously suggests that the living presence response may still be useful for accounting for certain processes of fascination that continue to operate today and involve contemporary artworks. As she notes, "reacting to works of art as if they are living beings did not disappear as a result of this change in attitude", even if such responses were "increasingly discredited and marginalized in aesthetics, art history and the museum setting".[217] Yet, she insists, these reactions "did not die out":

> They occur very frequently, all over the world […]. […] A few years ago a widower from Thailand had a statue made of his late wife, in which her ashes were put, and took it to bed with him every night. The Vietnamese artist Randy Sam felt so overcome with passion for an entirely white Cy Twombly canvas that she had to cover it with red lipstick kisses. A recent enquiry by two French anthropologists has documented how highly educated, middle-class collectors of non-Western art claim that they do not

[214] van Eck, "Living Statues", p. 644.
[215] van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence*, p. 23.
[216] van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence*, pp. 23–24.
[217] van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence*, p. 15.

> choose their art works, but that the art works select their owners by turning their gaze on them, that the masks in their collections look at them and possess a character and personality, and that the collectors take their items with them to bed when they feel anxious or depressed. [218]

Such an opening towards the contemporary brings the focus back to what triggered the exploration of van Eck and Gell' theories. Boxer's perception of charisma echoes van Eck's theories. The living presence response mirrors Boxer's mechanisms in its alternation between illusion and critical awareness: stages that are constitutive of aesthetic experience. Van Eck's theory suggests that the charisma critics attribute to Warhol connects to perceived vitality, thus expanding the nuances outlined in the previous chapter.

This connection shapes the chapter's core argument: charismatic technology as an interpretive framework for reading certain works, not only artworks, as platforms of encounter. This theoretical pairing requires further testing before being applied to Kogler's *Portraits of Artists*, where the encounter enabled by charismatic technology opens unprecedented possibilities for manifesting artistic practice.

2.4.1 The Face as Threshold

The face proves a privileged entry point into both Kogler's and Warhol's works. Facial framings, from mugshot to talking heads, illuminate the charismatic forces animating both the *Screen Tests* and *Portraits of Artists*.

Orna Raviv's study of the *Screen Tests*, which also draws on Boxer's observation, corroborates this observation by focusing specifically on the face. Raviv's approach, although consistent with the idea of animated or enhanced artwork, is more specifically rooted in the expressive potential of the human face and the technological conditions that shape the viewing experience.[219]

In her analysis, Raviv highlights the sensation of intimacy Warhol's work creates, almost like a personal encounter. Her technical analysis reveals how the use of close-up, slow motion, and Warhol's cataloguing intent combine to objectify the subjects' faces in the *Screen Tests*. Raviv considers the reduction and prolonged observation of the face as a way to elude individual identity and transform this visage into the face of the Other. She highlights such insights through the philosophical lens conceptualized by Emmanuel Levinas and his extensive exploration of the relationship – and power – of the face. In the philosopher's words:

> To manifest oneself as a face is to impose oneself above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form, to present oneself in a mode irreducible to manifestation, the very straightforwardness of the face to face, without the intermediacy of any image.[220]

According to Levinas, the existence of the Other's face and its manifestation carries the power to disrupt the familiar conceptualization of what is known. Individuals tend to

---

[218] van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence*, p. 16.
[219] See both Orna Raviv, *Ethics of Cinematic Experience: Screens of Alterity*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 66–86; Orna Raviv, "Andy Warhol's Screen Tests: A Face-to-Face Encounter", *Angelaki* 21, no. 2 (April 2, 2016), pp. 51–63.
[220] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 23rd printing (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2011) via Raviv, *Ethics of Cinematic Experience*, p. 69.

appropriate what they see, thereby extending dominion over the unfamiliar, yet the face of the Other resists this tendency. As Raviv reminds us, the power of the face is not inherently connected to its photographic or filmed reproduction: Levinas himself adopts a critical stance towards efforts to extend his philosophy into the cinematic realm.

Yet Raviv argues that the exceptionality of specific cinematic works derives from the very dynamics Levinas described, and she counts the *Screen Tests* among these rare examples. She focuses on a few of them in particular, such as Bob Dylan's test. As she observes, here the manifestation of the face directly affects the viewer's perception of the filmed subject: "we recognize him as Dylan. But, in another way, his face screened in slow motion looks uncanny, strange, not exactly belonging to who we thought we would be seeing". This happens because in the test "something is left open […] something not completely belonging to his known and visible face, embodying the possibility of transcending the dominance of visual representation".[221]

In Warhol's work, Raviv senses a loss of the subject's identity – in this case, Dylan's – and perceives it in a different light. It is as if, in this state detached from performative obligations and compressed in a specific frame and time, the singer becomes an Other in the sense of an irreducible and foreign subjectivity as conceived by Levinas. These insights lead her to conclude that "The *Screen Tests* deliberately undermine coherent context and therefore resist the viewer's ordinary perceptual patterns. They allow their participants' faces to be revealed in a way usually concealed from the eye, showing them to involve an otherness that cannot be substantialized".[222]

The *Screen Tests* can thus be viewed as a technology that generates charisma, not by assigning qualities to subjects they do not already possess, nor by accurately capturing a stable identity. Instead, they create a space, a threshold, from which to witness the ever-shifting faces of the Otherness that we as viewers are inevitably seduced by. From this vantage point, viewers respond to what we see as if it were alive, and Warhol's work comes to resemble, quite closely, an encounter with the Other.

Viewed in this light, it is no surprise that similar terms, namely threshold and point of view, also repeatedly appear in Jonathan Flatley's account of the films. Flatley approaches the *Screen Tests* from a different direction, yet he describes a closely related effect, namely the way the films position the viewer. When he compares their framing to an "infant's mode of looking", he points to a form of sustained attention that feels both exposed and absorbing, something far removed from the distracted ways adults usually look at one another.[223] His suggestion that this gaze recalls moments of intense intimacy, "only when in love, or about to fight, or on drugs", underscores the same dynamic Raviv identifies.[224]

Defining the *Screen Tests* as pieces that generate a quasi-physical space from which to observe the Other allows us to see them as approaching the category of charismatic technologies. The filmed subject, continuously oscillating between person and object, produces a mode of looking that resists appropriation. What emerges between viewer and

[221] Raviv, *Ethics of Cinematic Experience: Screens of Alterity*, p. 69.
[222] Raviv, *Ethics of Cinematic Experience: Screens of Alterity*, p. 82.
[223] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p. 85.
[224] Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, p. 85.

sitter is a distance, irreducible yet seductive for precisely that reason. The face appears suspended between recognition and estrangement, familiarity and opacity.

What Raviv and Flatley describe, despite their different emphases, converges on a shared observation. Whether understood as the unsettling manifestation of the Other's face or as the absorbing intensity of an infant's gaze, the encounter they identify is ultimately generated by the conditions of the filming itself: slow motion, duration, close-up. The filmed subject remains structurally mute, present, and even overwhelming, yet unable to participate in shaping the terms of the encounter. The charismatic force that circulates in the *Screen Tests* is vivifying, but it is also, in a way, self-enclosed.

This is where the concept of charismatic technology requires refinement. For such a technology to operate fully, the staging of presence alone is insufficient; it demands an articulated subjectivity that can enter into exchange with it, so that the charismatic effect emerges from the encounter rather than being projected onto it. Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* introduces exactly this dimension. By granting the portrayed artist a narrative position through testimonial accounts, his work opens up a dialogical structure from which charismatic technology, in a more complete sense, becomes visible and available for examination.

2.4.2 Towards Kogler's Charismatic Technology

Warhol's charismatic technology operates only partially. Kogler develops it into a systematic articulation. Part of this systematization lies in the dialogic structure of the work, but several layers intersect in the Viennese artist's practice and, together, form the mechanism of this technology.

The first layer is conversational. The conversations do not construct biographical profiles or produce standardized accounts of the artists. They follow no preset pattern and, as the cases of Zobering and Pettibon demonstrate, their output remains unpredictable. Voice carries the story of practice and the approach to artmaking in ways that do not depend on the informational content of what is said. Speech serves as a means of entering into the artist's inner world, and the authentic disclosure of who the artist is and what they do validates their very identity.

The core of *Portraits of Artists'* representational project is the necessity artists feel to make art, a focus driven in part by Kogler's own personal curiosity. This necessity functions as the work's most compelling charismatic hook.

Recording or representing this kind of speech alone cannot give the portrayal of artists sufficient depth and resonance, however. The account must also be channelled through a precise filmic structure to acquire its full weight. The artists portrayed in Kogler's work resist familiarity, just as Warhol's subjects did before them. This resistance stems in part from the supporting framework in which they are set.

Two specific filmic strategies prove crucial: the manipulation of backgrounds and the talking heads format. Background manipulation transports the artist into an environment that reveals nothing about them, even as it is coloured according to their preferences. The talking heads format immobilizes them in a manner less coercive than Warhol's yet sufficient to prevent the body from becoming the centre of the representation.

The history of the talking heads format helps explain how it is able to generate this effect of estrangement, an effect that operates suspended between objectification and intimacy. Historian Massimo Pettorino has traced the origins of the talking head to the history of phonation machines, technological experiments aimed at reproducing the illusion of voice and speech. Positioned between illusionism and scientific inquiry, in the eighteenth century these machines eventually took the form of literal talking heads.[225]As Abbé Mical demonstrated, these were mechanical heads capable of producing the illusion of a human voice.



Figure 12 Abbé Mical's talking heads illustration in Henry René D'Allemagn. *Histoire Des Jouets* (Paris: Libraire Hachette, 1902), p. 219.

This historical detour illuminates something important about Kogler's work. *Portraits of Artists* appears to recognize instinctively that the talking heads format carries within it something mechanical and objectifying. At the same time, the installation of the work reveals

[225] Massimo Pettorino, "The History of Talking Heads: The Trick and the Research", in *HSCR 2015: Proceedings of the First International Workshop on the History of Speech Communication Research Dresden, September 4-5, 2015*, ed. Rüdiger Hoffmann and Jürgen Trouvain, (HSCR, Dresden: TUDpress, 2015), pp. 30–41.

the kind of object these figures were meant to become. In the 1997 Kunsthaus Bregenz exhibition *Artists: 50 Positions of Contemporary International Art,* the interviews were shown on individual monitors with headphones, each presenting a speaking bust against a monochromatic backdrop. Seated before these images, viewers could watch the figures respond to questions and articulate their thoughts.

Immobilized within the background and framing that define the work's structure, the artist ultimately becomes a work of art. The closing image of Pettibon's conversation, in which the artist gives way to the frame of his own artwork, confirms and consolidates this transformation. Yet while the artists' voices, speech, and faces continually redeem them from this condition, the structure Kogler has devised places them in a register that makes no concession to either the camera or the conversation.

Furthermore, the formal aspects of the exhibition's arrangement reveal a deliberate pursuit of the threshold that had remained implicit in Warhol's work. That is, Kogler consciously seeks to construct the ideal vantage point from which to look at the artist as one looks at a work of art, not in order to deify this figure but rather to hold him or her at the edge of the unknowable and unfamiliar.

The structure Kogler has devised, which constitutes the true foundational element of *Portraits of Artists*, also operates on one further level. Viewed collectively, whether on the pages of museum in progress or, more significantly, as installed in an exhibition space, the backgrounds and recurring formal elements that shape *Portraits of Artists* reveal the work's overall architecture. The succession of channels featuring artists, each continuously rendered as a work of art, is what makes possible the most radical insight the project affords: the recognition of Kogler himself as an artist, and of the system he has constructed as the workings of a work of art.

Each of the components through which this work is articulated operates through a dynamic of decomposing and recomposing not only of the subjects' vitality, but their artistic identity. *Portraits of Artists* constitutes a charismatic technology because it co-constructs this dynamic through personal testimonial accounts that are channelled into the work and serve as fuel for its broader system. Kogler's work creates a space for observing artists while also giving form to a mode of representation that does not seek to explain artistic identity.

Following Soussloff's observations, the first chapter brought to the fore the problem of the artist's biography, a representation that cultural frameworks compulsively shape and distort. What surfaces in Kogler's work is a position that offers an alternative. Recognizing *Portraits of Artists* as a charismatic technology entails seeing this representational form as staging a mode of storytelling capable of drawing on the seductive power of life narratives. Through the lens of charismatic technology, we see that viewers watching the video portraits are carried into the suspended space of a first encounter. In this sense, the artwork, here taking the form of an artist interview, offers the time and space to achieve what historiography and art history alone cannot: understanding what constitutes an artist.

2.5 Conclusions

By studying Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* in this way, the research has not only discovered a video portrait format but also outlined the genealogy of the practices operating within these

representations. In the Viennese artist's video portraits, the impulses of nascent digital art from the late 1980s coexist with a Warholian attention to structure and recurring formal elements. These components would have been impossible to discern without an equally close reading of Warhol's *Screen Tests*.

This attention to practice has accompanied a consideration of the motivations that led Kogler to conceive such a project in the first place: his need to understand what it means to be an artist and the forms such necessity might take. His curiosity produced a system through which artists can be observed in precisely the way he himself observed them. The fact that this perspective came to be embedded as much in his lectures as in the exhibition arrangements devised for *Portraits of Artists* confirms how thoroughly his way of looking consolidated into a concrete position.

To hold together the methodological and personal dimensions of this work, *Portraits of Artists* has been interpreted here as a charismatic technology: a system in which the pursuit of authenticity is rendered compelling through elusive, charisma-producing dynamics. The thread running through critical responses to Warhol's *Screen Tests* proved decisive in formulating this framework, as shared interpretive lenses allowed for a rereading of Kogler's work. Through this framework, the video portraits can be seen as instruments capable of creating thresholds of observation, that is, transforming the gaze directed at the artist into something closely resembling the way one looks at a work of art.

While this chapter has consolidated the fusion of authenticity and charisma that began to take shape in the introduction, several of the aspects touched on here have yet to be fully delineated in their contribution to the discourse on video portraiture. The first is the digital world. Although *Portraits of Artists* never reached online platforms, the digital is nonetheless indexed within it, and it remains to be shown how this might inform the representation of the artist. The question will become progressively more central as the research unfolds, since most video portraits are now preserved in the digital sphere. A second aspect concerns the techniques Warhol developed and Kogler inherited, and the ways in which they were subsequently adapted. The next chapter will take up both, delving further into the importance of structure – the recurring formal elements – in video portraits

3. Generations of Artists through Kontakt's Lens of Charisma

Following the traces of *Portraits of Artists*, this research also intersects with the case of the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, a format showcasing video portraits of artists and intellectuals from Vienna and Eastern and Southeastern Europe that began around 2020. This project stems from the Kontakt Collection, an entity whose history and founding mission aim to reconstruct the multiple cultural centres operating in Eastern Europe from the 1960s to the fall of the Berlin Wall. It acts as an art-historical research tool documenting a narrative that has largely been lost.

In addition to sharing direct proximity to the cases examined in Chapter 2, these video portraits also introduce the work of documentarian Wilhelm Gaube. Gaube produced a vast multitude of video portraits of artists, *Künstlerporträts*, from the 1970s through to the turn of the millennium. In his case, the representational project can be seen as an attempt to illustrate and give form to the Viennese art scene, thus effectively serving as a portrait of that specific milieu.

Methodologically, this chapter constitutes a bridge. Here, the interpretive frameworks inherited from art criticism and refined through artwork analysis are applied to formats for representing artists. In this theoretical context, the points of cohesion between the two projects allow for the research to reconsider and expand the possibilities offered by the artist video portrait genre. The act of narrating artists generates another type of charismatic technology, one that is not constructed on the model of the artwork but rather consolidates the illustration of historical narratives through biographies that are simultaneously personal and generational.

Beyond this, the affinity between the two cases illuminates the nuanced nature of video portraits and brings them into dialogue with the history of their genre. The insights suggested by Claus Philipp, dramaturg of *Kontakt Video Portraits*, provide the ideal interpretive lens for recontextualizing video portraits in relation to portraiture and especially literary portraits. This is a narrative that reconnects the past and present while also evoking both the portrait-related insights of Gertrude Stein, such as "insistence," and Warhol's experiments and the ways they have been applied in the Viennese context.

In the following pages, authenticity, representational frameworks, and the management of charisma take on new forms. The identity and act of narrating the artist fulfil new purposes without attempting to typify or resolve the imperative of artistic creation, and this latter element continues to play a central role.

3.1 About the Kontakt collection

As mentioned, the *Kontakt Video Portraits* represent the most direct continuation of Kogler's work. However, to fully understand this project, we must first address what happened to *Portraits of Artists* in the transition to digital platforms. Bureaucratic impediments prevented *Portraits of Artists* from reaching the internet. Whether these obstacles are interpreted as a symptom of changing times or evidence of the challenges arising when a project moves from one medium to another, the original simplicity of the creative phase of *Portraits of Artists* ended up being progressively diminished.

It is important to dispel a possible misunderstanding at the outset: the advent of the internet should not be understood as putting an end to this specific Kogler project. It is evident not only when considering the Artists Talking DVD series, but also considering the exemplary model these portraits provided for later productions that the internet did not cause their decline. Of these later productions, the most direct and explicit reference is the *Kontakt Video Portraits*.

This project presents a gallery of interview-based video portraits of artists and key figures from Austrian and Central European culture, assembled into a panoramic network. The opening page of the website clearly affirms the relationship of filiation between this initiative and Kogler's, stating: "The Kontakt Video Portraits carry on the tradition of art-historically important Austrian projects: The 'portraits of artists' curated by Peter Kogler for the 'museum in progress', which offer an impressive panorama on international artistic perspectives of the 1990s".[226]



Figure 13 Július Koller, *Kontakt, Človek - Príroda - Predmety - Materiály* (*Antihappening*), 1969. Ink stamp on paper.Copyright and courtesy Kontakt Collection, Vienna, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits, accessed May 25, 2026.

As in the case of museum in progress, before addressing the project's content it is necessary to clarify the nature of Kontakt – this is the only way the aims behind these portraits can be fully understood. Founded in 2004, the Kontakt Collection focuses on Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European art from former Communist countries. The collection emphasizes post-war production from 1968 to 1989. According to the collection's website, the array of main themes represented include "modernist structures, the redefinition of material in space, issues of the political and the public, and matters of the body on both a performative and a gender-emancipative level".[227] The collection aims to build a network

[226] See "Kontakt Video Portraits", kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits.

[227] The mission of Kontakt, together with the artistic themes it is interested in, are clearly stated on its webpage "Mission", kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/mission. Here, it is

(contacts) across contiguous geographical areas; at the same time, it is driven by the work by Julius Koller (1939–2007) "who created a series of works titled 'KONTAKT (Anti-Happening)' in the 1960s".[228] Through this reference, Kontakt contributes to reconstructing Koller's artistic legacy. As the website explains, Koller "wanted to oppose the cynical, technophile fantasies of omnipotence harbored by the Socialist state apparatus by giving a direct experience of the reality of the artwork back to the individual".[229] Koller's case highlights another defining aspect of the collection: its political positioning. According to its mission statement, the collection aims to "place the art of the formerly [S]ocialist countries in an international art context and draw attention to its reciprocal connections and varied practices".[230] These works "play an integral role within European art history" while asserting "an exceptional status within a politically heterogeneous terrain".[231] The collection extends beyond historical material to also include contemporary artists working within the same geographical and artistic traditions.

As with museum in progress, Kontakt is not associated with a permanent exhibition space. The collection is decentralized, "nomadic", and independent of institutional or locally anchored venues.[232] Its works are preserved in the public and private collections of various museums and galleries, always within a well-defined geo-cultural frame. Loans constitute a principal means by which Kontakt establishes an exhibition presence.

The specific character of the collection should also be examined in relation to the history of Erste Bank, the entity that finances the current Kontakt platform. Ursula Christine Mörtl has reconstructed the different phases that preceded the foundation of Kontakt and, drawing on her discussion, we can summarize the main developments that shaped the collection and led the bank to move from accumulating rare objects to actively promoting a specific idea of art. [233]

The Erste Bank was founded in Vienna at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a savings bank.[234] It was not until the 1950s that it began to reflect on the many objects it had gathered over the years, including items linked to the history of money and savings, such as

---

specified that "The Kontakt Collection focuses on Central, Eastern and Southeastern European artistic activity which has accompanied the social and political developments of the past decades and has been contributing significant works to European art since the late 1950s." Other web pages, such as the one connected with the research aims of Kontakt, further clarify its object of interest: "The collection dedicated itself to reflection on political and historical transformation in Europe and the value attached to art before the backdrop of specific cultural, social, and economic developments in former Communist countries, where the years 1968 and 1989 played a crucial role." See "Research" kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/research.

[228] "Kontakt Collection", erstestiftung.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.erstestiftung.org/en/projects/kontakt-collection/. See also the webpage specific on Koller's works at "Kontakt, Človek -Príroda-Predmety-Materiály (Antihappening)", kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/objects/481/kontakt-clovek-prirodapredmetymaterialy-antihappening.

[229] "Július Koller", kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/people/29/julius-koller.

[230] "Mission", kontakt-collection.org.

[231] "Mission", kontakt-collection.org.

[232] "Mission", kontakt-collection.org.

[233] Ursula Christine Mörtl, "Kontakt. Die Kunstsammlung Der Erste Group Die Räumlichen Präsentationsformen Einer Firmensammlung" (MA, Technische Universität Wien Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung, 2010), accessed May 25, 2026, https://resolver.obvsg.at/urn:nbn:at:at-ubtuw:1-35274 http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12708/13140.

[234] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 21.

piggy banks and a numismatic collection.[235] The first concrete step in this direction came in 1963 with the inauguration of the historical museum of the bank's collection at Tuchlauben 4 in Vienna. Initially directed by Franz Lenk and, from 1968, by Margit Gröhsl, this museum presented the extensive heritage of Erste Bank by organizing exhibitions celebrating the Austrian virtue of savings.[236] Mörtl has described the museum's arrangement as follows:

> Die eigentlichen Schauräume lagen im ersten Stock und waren in die folgenden Bereiche aufgeteilt, die auch eine historische Anordnung widerspiegeln: die Anfänge der Geldgeschichte – Antike, das römische Reich – Vindobona – das älteste Wien, Sparbüchsen aus Frankreich und Rheinland, die Gotik – das mittelalterliche Wien, Renaissance und Frühbarock, das barocke Wien, die Kultur des Barocks, das Biedermeier, die Gründung der Ersten österreichischen Spar-Casse, die Münzsammlung des Museums und Sparbüchsen aus aller Welt.[237]

The museum closed in 1973.[238] In the 1980s, the collection was reconceived as a mobile piece of heritage, partly to channel works towards other locations relevant to Erste Bank's activities as will be described shortly. As a result, the historical collection was partially dispersed. Today, the Kunsthistorisches Museum holds some of its components, including the numismatic collections.[239]

At the same time, starting in the 1960s, the Erste Group developed a new interest in contemporary art, leading it to open galleries and exhibition spaces for emerging artists. "Im Juni 1962 öffnete die *Galerie der Ersten österreichischen Spar-Casse* für junge heimische KünstlerInnen ihre Pforte," considered an instance of "good-will Werbung" and thus a demonstration of the bank's patronage.[240] In its first year, the *Galerie der Ersten österreichischen Spar-Casse* hosted ten exhibitions of emerging artists. Located in Vienna's historic centre, this gallery was followed by three others: *Dimensionen* gallery (1969), situated in a more peripheral district, *Galerie Schottenring* (1971), with a more institutional character, and *Passage* gallery (1975).[241]

---

[235] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 116.
[236] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 117.
[237] "The main exhibition rooms were situated on the first floor and were divided into the following sections, which also reflected a historical arrangement: the beginnings of monetary history – Antiquity, the Roman Empire – Vindobona – the oldest Vienna, piggy banks (Sparbüchsen) from France and Rhineland, the Gothic period – medieval Vienna, Renaissance and Early Baroque, Baroque Vienna, the culture of the Baroque, the Biedermeier era, the founding of the First Austrian Savings Bank (Erste österreichische Spar-Casse), the museum's numismatic collection, and piggy banks (Sparbüchsen) from all over the world". Mörtl, *Kontakt*, p. 37.
[238] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 122.
[239] The bank's historical collection of artefacts is currently decentralized. The main repository (Fundus) for the exhibition pieces, including numerous piggy banks (Spardosen), is the Maria-Theresien-Schlössel in Gersthof, where it is overseen by Richard Heinzl, a retired Erste staff member. A dedicated permanent display featuring these various saving receptacles is available for viewing in the festival hall, subject to prior arrangement. Separately, the numismatic collection – which features a nearly thorough collection of Austrian coins since the inception of the Savings Bank – is displayed in part at the Coin Cabinet (Münzkabinett) in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum. For further information, see Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 39.
[240] "In June 1962, the gallery of the First Austrian Savings Bank (Galerie der Ersten österreichischen Spar-Casse) opened its doors to young local artists (heimische KünstlerInnen), an initiative considered to be 'good-will advertising' (good-will Werbung)". Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 40.
[241] Mörtl, "Kontakt", pp. 42–44.

Despite this proliferation of spaces, Erste apparently did not yet integrate contemporary art into its collections at that time and ceased its collecting activities altogether in 1975.[242] It was not until 1987 that it resumed acquisitions, this time also including contemporary art cultivated through its exhibition initiatives. The *ERSTE-Sammlung* (ERSTE collection) was thus consolidated. At this point, the historical nucleus of the collection ceded its role to the contemporary one. This transition coincided with significant changes in the group's structure, particularly after the 1979 passing of *Kreditwesengesetz*, a banking law that enabled Erste to expand internationally – first in Hungary (1997), then in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and beyond. Art became an effective instrument for consolidating this expansion.[243]

Following its international expansion, the Erste Group centralized its collecting activities in 2003, acknowledging that existing CEE collections were outdated. A unified collection concept was then established, focused on art from the Central and Eastern European region.[244] A new curatorial vision was required. In 2003 the vision was provided by Rainer Fuchs, already Scientific Director and Deputy Director of the mumok. Fuchs was asked to enlist, evaluate, and inventory existing art collections held by various Erste Group entities, including Erste Bank in Vienna, Tiroler Sparkasse in Innsbruck, Slovenská sporiteľňa in Bratislava, Česká spořitelna in Prague, and Steiermärkischen Bank in Zagreb. This undertaking was considered both sensible and necessary ("sinnvoll und notwendig") because the preceding collections were deemed inconsistent with current art production trends and international art market criteria. The project served as the foundation for establishing a new, unified collection concept specifically aligned with the bank's international expansion efforts, a concept that ultimately culminated with the founding of Kontakt.[245]

This reorientation towards focused regional engagement was significantly shaped by the parallel emergence of *tranzit*, a project operating both locally and internationally across Central Europe. Conceived by curators Mária Hlavajová and Kathrin Rhomberg in collaboration with Boris Marte, *tranzit* was formally established in 2002. Although financed by Erste Group banks in the respective countries, the initiative has retained its conceptual autonomy. Hlavajová and Rhomberg argued that more than a single "spectacle" was necessary to shift attitudes towards contemporary art, particularly considering that cultural institutions in CEE were often seen as outdated. The very name *tranzit* underscores this orientation by evoking the act of crossing over, the process, the conveyance, a bridging function. By fostering flexible structures of communication across national borders and disciplines, *tranzit* provided the conceptual foundation upon which the subsequent art collection could be built. However, Rhomberg's own account provides a far keener insight into this aspect. When I asked her whether *tranzit* might have been influencing the intellectual project behind Kontakt, the curator answered:

---

[242] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 45.
[243] Mörtl, "Kontakt", pp. 93–98 and 141. On this see also the report published by Erste Norbert Bacher et al., *The CEE History Project: The History of Savings Banks in Central and Eastern Europe and the History of Erste Group's Subsidiaries in the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine* (Vienna: ERSTE Foundation / fourcon, 2015), erstestiftung.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.erstestiftung.org/app/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/historybook_es.pdf.
[244] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 58.
[245] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 58.

> there is certainly a connection and some mutual inspiration. However, Kontakt itself was the result of research initiated by two key figures: Rainer Fuchs, Vice Director of the Museum of Modern Art in Vienna, and Igor Zabel from Ljubljana, who was Vice Director of Moderna Galerija. Together with Boris Marte, they envisioned a new kind of collection. At the time, art from the neo-avant-garde generation wasn't being taken seriously enough by public institutions in Eastern Europe – with the notable exception of Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana. These artists often worked in underground or semi-underground contexts during communism and were considered dissident voices. As a result, many public institutions in former Eastern Europe hadn't collected or supported their work.[246]

These were the premises that sustained the foundation of *Kontakt: Die Kunstsammlung der Erste Group* in 2004, operating as an independent association (Verein) and collection for promoting Central, Eastern, and South-eastern European art.[247] It maintains the history of the Erste Group and preserves its nomadic structure, that is, avoiding a fixed location while collaborating with institutions such as mumok as well as with festivals and biennials. The first major presentation took place in 2006: "Die Ausstellung Kontakt … aus der Sammlung der Erste Bank-Gruppe zeigte […] zum ersten Mal die angekauften Werke der gleichnamigen Sammlung. Die Präsentation fand grenzüberschreitend an zwei Standorten statt. Einerseits im Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (mumok) in Wien und andererseits in den sogenannten tranzit workshops in Bratislava".[248] This dual setting underscored the transnational character of the collection, balanced between the institutional framework of mumok and the local contexts of the *tranzit* workshops.

In its first years, Kontakt quickly became a significant reference point for major international exhibitions. As Mörtl notes, "die Sammlung fungiert unter anderem auch als Leihgeber renommierter Ausstellungen, wie zum Beispiel der documenta 12, dafür wurden von Juni bis September 2007 die Werke von Jiří Kovanda […] und von Sanja Iveković […] verliehen".[249] Participating in *documenta* confirmed the collection's artistic and critical relevance, but its international scope was evident as early as 2005 when works from Kontakt appeared in major European exhibitions such as *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c.1970* at Tate Modern in London through the loan of artist VALIE EXPORT's work, as well as the 2005 Biennale of Venice with pieces by Stano Filko and Ján Mančuška.

Currently, Kontakt includes 170 artists from 20 countries,[250] and, as Rhomberg notes, today it also functions as a "research and educational platform".[251] It carries out publishing activities, supporting the production of catalogues not only addressing the collection itself but also exploring the practice of the artists it represents. And, of course, it is complemented by a parallel programme of video portraits.

Through these activities, Kontakt has evolved from a corporate art collection into a research platform addressing both historical gaps and ongoing debates about post-Socialist art's relationship with European and global contexts. The collection catalogue's 2017 edition

---

[246] Kathrin Rhomberg, "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg", interview by Guido Balzani, 17 September 2025, Appendix E.
[247] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 63.
[248] "The exhibition, Kontakt… aus der Sammlung der Erste Bank-Gruppe, premiered the acquired holdings of the identically named Banking Group's collection […]. This presentation was organized transnationally across two venues: firstly, at the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (mumok) in Vienna, and secondly, in the so-called tranzit workshops designated exhibition spaces for young art in Bratislava". Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 67.
[249] Mörtl, "Kontakt", p. 67.
[250] "Mission", kontakt-collection.org.
[251] Rhomberg, "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg".

reveals these tensions explicitly: Adam Szymczyk argues that the category "East" should be "overcome and abandoned – but not forgotten," preferring to posit a "post-Yalta order," [252] while Georg Schöllhammer observes that challenges stem not only from the region's internal diversity but also its relationship to boundaries that crystallized after 1989, particularly the ones separating it from the Global South. [253]

These theoretical concerns shape the collection's institutional practices, including its video portrait programme. The portraits navigate through a complex representational terrain: acknowledging artists' formation within specific political contexts while avoiding reductive regional categorization. As the following analysis demonstrates, the *Kontakt Video Portraits* develop formal strategies for this negotiation, specifically by constructing artistic identities that register historical specificity without being subsumed by it.

3.1.1 *Kontakt Video Portraits*

Having clarified the context and idea of collecting that gave rise to the Kontakt platform, we can return to the *Kontakt Video Portraits* specifically. The video portrait concept originated with Kathrin Rhomberg, the current director of Kontakt, around 2020; the series now numbers approximately forty portraits. As Rhomberg recalls:

> When I returned to Vienna after my time in Germany, Peter and I talked about how Vienna had become a global city, just like many other European capitals. Public institutions had adopted global programming, yet many important local and regional intellectuals, artists, and cultural workers were hardly visible. We both saw this as a problem.
> Another concern was that the 1968 generation – which is an analogical generation – was largely absent from the digital realm. We felt that for younger generations of artists and thinkers, it would be crucial to better understand the thinking and experience of that older generation. That was the foundation of our conversation, and Peter proposed creating a new series of video portraits focused on the 1968 generation of our region. Eventually, we expanded the focus to include a younger generation of artists who are connected to the legacy of the neo-avant-garde.[254]

Peter Kogler then suggested that the artist Manuel Gorkiewicz – his former student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, who provided me with this information during an interview – should develop the concept of *Portraits of Artists* in an updated, contemporary form.[255] Gorkiewicz was later joined by Julius Lermer, a filmmaker, and Claus Philipp, a dramaturg responsible for curating the flow and structure of the conversations.

---

[252] Adam Szymczyk and Christian Höller, "Unrehearsed Encounters", in *Kontakt - the Art Collection of Erste Group and ERSTE Foundation*, by ERSTE Stiftung, ed. Silvia Eiblmayr (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), p. 50.
[253] Georg Schöllhammer, "Paradigm Revision Leading Questions and Adaptive Modalities Behind the Kontakt Collection", in *Kontakt - the Art Collection of Erste Group and ERSTE Foundation*, by ERSTE Stiftung, ed. Silvia Eiblmayr (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), p. 39.
[254] Rhomberg, "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg".
[255] Rhomberg, "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg".

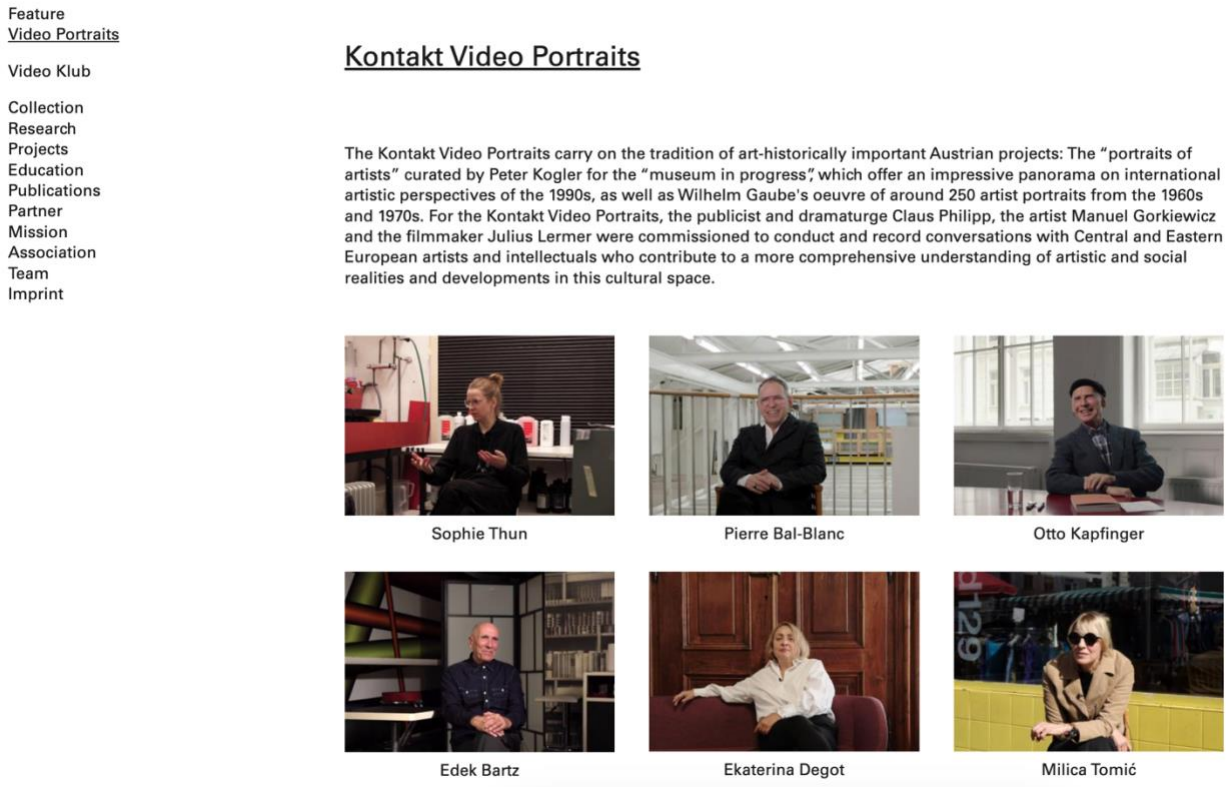

Figure 14 Screenshot of *Kontakt Video Portraits* page showing how the various portraits are presented. Copyright and courtesy Kontakt Collection, Vienna. https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits, accessed May 25, 2026.

The *Kontakt Video Portraits* aim to document influential Central, especially Austrian, and Eastern European cultural figures whose work continues to shape regional institutions but who have received limited visibility via video documentation. Beyond straightforward documentary aims, the project's aesthetic approach positions it as both a pedagogical resource and distributable content suitable for festivals and television networks. As Rhomberg explains:

> Importantly, these portraits are freely accessible on the Kontakt website, as you may have seen. They're also part of an educational project – used in schools, academies, and universities, and presented in exhibitions where we are not directly involved. They've started to travel throughout Europe via exhibition projects and film festivals, including Autostrada and DokuFest, which is one of the most respected film festivals in Europe, based in Prizren, Kosovo.
> Some of the portraits have even been shown on Austrian TV channels. In this way, we're bringing the analogical knowledge of that generation into the digital space – making it accessible to your generation. And I believe the knowledge and experience of these Eastern European artists and intellectuals is particularly important today, given their histories of working under politically repressive regimes. Their example shows us how it's possible to act as an artist, intellectual, or cultural worker in such conditions.[256]

In discussing how the portraits were made, Gorkiewicz returned to the thread connecting them to Kogler's earlier *Portraits of Artists*. The two projects share fundamental similarities in their conceptual framework, filming approach, and specific style and framing choices. According to Gorkiewicz, all three authors wanted to preserve the simplicity that had defined

[256] Rhomberg, "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg".

Kogler's portraiture, an approach Gorkiewicz himself had absorbed while studying under him. In conversation, Claus Philipp elaborates on this point:

> When Kathrin Rhomberg from the Kontakt Collection, the artist Manuel Gorkiewicz and I started shaping the project, we agreed on three ground rules. First, the interviews should be technically simple. We didn't want the kind of situation where you enter someone's apartment and spend 90 minutes setting up lights and gear, and everyone's nervous: it's unpleasant. So we opted for a simple setting: one camera, one microphone. And so we started. We agreed not to switch camera angles or direct the person – none of that "could you walk to the kitchen and come back with a coffee" nonsense you see on bad TV portraits.[257]

Philipp's words reveal the importance of maintaining an informal, or at least direct, approach in these portraits. This simplicity of execution also highlights another element the two formats share: their treatment of the background. Kontakt did not try to replicate Kogler's colour block model or adopt a multi-location format. Instead, the team established a different principle: interviewees chose the location themselves. This did not need to be domestic or familiar, but it should be somehow representative of them. Since the project began during Covid, the first portraits were filmed outdoors; as restrictions eased, interior spaces became possible. This shift changed how the background functioned compared to *Portraits of Artists*. As Philipp explains: "Second: the interviewee chooses the location. Some say, 'Let's do it in my apartment'; others, 'Meet me under a highway in the suburbs'. The space is their choice".[258]



Figure 15 Philipp, Claus, Manuel Gorkiewicz, and Julius Lermer. "*Wolfgang Kos*." Kontakt Video Portraits. Filmed June 13, 2022, in Vienna. Copyright and courtesy Kontakt Collection, Vienna, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/15267/wolfgang-kos, accessed May 25, 2026.

A few examples are worth noting in relation to this point. The portrait of Wolfgang Kos, filmed in Vienna on 13 June 2022, presents the historian and journalist (co-founder of radio formats such as *Musicbox*, *Popmuseum*, *Diagonal*, and *Spielräume* broadcast on ORF) in the

[257] Claus Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp", interview by Guido Balzani, 3 July 2025, Appendix D.
[258] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".

ERSTE Campus parking lot, seated in front of a Škoda from Roman Ondák's installation *SK Parking*.[259] This setting situates Kos, a central figure in Viennese radio and television, in a scene drawn from Ondák's work staging the account of an impossible journey: the 80 kilometres separating Bratislava, Ondák's hometown, from Vienna, a stretch of road that could not be traversed before the fall of the Berlin Wall.[260] Ondák's work, brought to Vienna in 2001, highlighted the asynchrony dividing the two blocs: on one side such cars were prized possessions, while in Vienna they were discarded as scrap.



Figure 16 Roman Ondák, *SK Parking (2001/2021)*, installation view in underground parking garage, ERSTE Campus, Vienna. Photo: Oliver Ottenschläger. Copyright and courtesy Kontakt Collection, Vienna.

Another case is that of the artist VALIE EXPORT, several of whose works Kontakt has acquired.[261] For her portrait on January 19, 2023, she chose the historic electrical substation in Vienna's Favoriten district. During the interview, she explained her choice, stating: "electric current is very important to me, it's what you might call a very ephemeral material – a material that exists naturally and also has a strong aura".[262] Electricity had indeed already been central to her 1973 performance *Hyperbulie* in which she created a corridor of battery-powered cables and advanced naked and tentatively through it, substituting electric current for the normative codes of society.

[259] *Wolfgang Kos*, directed by Manuel Gorkiewicz, Claus Philipp, and Lermer, Julius, Kontakt Video Portraits (Kontakt, 2022), accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/15267/wolfgang-kos.
[260] "SK Parking", kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/events/305/SK%20Parking.
[261] *VALIE EXPORT*, directed by Manuel Gorkiewicz, Claus Philipp, and Julius Lermer, Kontakt Video Portraits (Kontakt, 2023), accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/15295/valie-export.
[262] *VALIE EXPORT*, directed by Manuel Gorkiewicz, Claus Philipp, and Julius Lermer, Kontakt Video Portraits (Kontakt, 2023).



Figure 17 Philipp, Claus, Manuel Gorkiewicz, and Julius Lermer. *"VALIE EXPORT"*. Kontakt Video Portraits. Filmed January 19, 2023, in Vienna. Copyright and courtesy Kontakt Collection, Vienna, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/15295/valie-export, accessed May 25, 2026.

The portrait of Oscar Bronner, founder of the daily newspaper *Der Standard* (discussed in the previous chapter), is more conventional.[263] Filmed on October 18, 2022, it takes place in his studio, where bookshelves crowd against artworks resembling sculptural blocks. Bronner, both editor and artist, indeed, he was an artist before becoming a successful editor, embodies the duality that characterizes both his life and his newspaper. This duality recalls the earlier observation that a transcription of *Portraits of Artists* appeared in the pages of *Der Standard*, a chance for visibility that Kontakt has also experienced. In fact, when browsing the portraits on the Kontakt website, one often encounters notes such as: "In cooperation with the Austrian daily newspaper *Der Standard*, this Kontakt Video Portrait was published on their website www.derstandard.at on …" – an indication that the networks active during *Portraits of Artists* have not entirely dissolved. Yet, as Gorkiewicz told me when asked about this interpenetration, such collaborations are actually rare in that many artistic projects once supported by *Der Standard*, even if only via promotion, began to enjoy less backing after the 2010 editorial and economic crisis. In conversation with Rhomberg, the historical relationship between Kontakt and *Der Standard* was clarified to reveal its significance within Vienna's cultural landscape. As she recalled, "*Der Standard* is an interesting case. It was founded at the end of the 1980s […], the same year I moved to Vienna". The 1990s were marked by a post-Wall energy "sweeping in from Eastern Europe" to fuel experimentation across the city.[264] New initiatives such as museum in progress exemplified this openness, and *Der Standard*, as a newly established newspaper, aligned itself with the same spirit of cultural experimentation.

[263] *Oscar Bronner*, directed by Manuel Gorkiewicz, Claus Philipp, and Julius Lermer, Kontakt Video Portraits, (Kontakt 2022), accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/14331/oscar-bronner.
[264] Rhomberg, "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg".

Its founder, Oscar Bronner, recruited "young, talented intellectuals" and provided space for cultural critique, with figures such as Claus Philipp beginning their careers there. Most notably, in the 1990s, the paper devoted entire pages to artistic interventions; as Rhomberg recalls, he curated a late-1990s series in which artists appeared weekly "with no restrictions".

Over time, however, circumstances shifted. As the younger generation matured, new editorial agendas emerged, and financial pressures made such collaborations increasingly challenging. Yet *Der Standard* retained an "institutional memory" of those earlier partnerships that facilitated later projects. For example, when Kontakt marked its 20th anniversary, the newspaper once again hosted video portraits on its online platform, described by Rhomberg as "the most important newspaper website in Austria". [265]



Figure 18 Philipp, Claus, Manuel Gorkiewicz, and Julius Lermer. *"Oscar Bronner."* Kontakt Video Portraits. Filmed October 18, 2022, in Vienna. Video. Copyright and courtesy Kontakt Collection, Vienna, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/14331/oscar-bronner,. accessed May 25, 2026.

This strategy of using print media as an exhibition space has particular resonance for Kontakt, as the collection explicitly refers to artists such as Petr Štembera and Karel Miler. In the 1970s, their works were published in international magazines such as Flash Art and were "aimed at an audience that would not have seen these works in Czechoslovakia." This renewed collaboration with Der Standard thus revived the idea of an "immaterial exhibition" and of using media formats to "create exhibition spaces of their own," echoing both museum in progress and Eastern European strategies of alternative dissemination. [266]

This comparison with Kogler's format has revealed some of the fundamental elements defining the Kontakt approach that merit further exploration. Another shared element also deserves attention: the staging of subjects and interviewers. In both formats, the subjects are fully visible while the interviewers' faces remain hidden, their presence signalled only through their voices. In Kogler's case, this convention made it possible to discern the

[265] Rhomberg, "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg".
[266] See "20 Years of Kontakt", kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/events/373/20%20Years%20of%20Kontakt.

charismatic dynamics at play more clearly; in Kontakt, it directs our attention to the broader intentions behind the series itself. As Philipp notes, the value of this decision becomes apparent only in the long term, once it produces a genuine cartography: "I liked that serial structure, and the idea of building an archive: 50, 100, 200 portraits. As a viewer, you can form your own intellectual network – one artist might mention a poet, and that poet might also be featured. Over time, this creates a kind of cartography – an intellectual and artistic map of Vienna and Central/Eastern Europe in the case of Kontakt's portraits".[267]

This motivation contrasts sharply with Kogler's focus on the ways artists discuss their work. At the same time, the divergence reflects a transformation in the very subject of portraiture: decades later, a format still indebted to Kogler no longer felt bound to concentrate exclusively on artists, but instead adopted a broader perspective in which the roles of artist, theorist, and historian begin to blur. When I shared this observation with Gorkiewicz, he reminded me of Kontakt's specific aim: "to capture a generation" that had long remained without a voice while also acknowledging that, in contemporary life, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish individual identities.[268]

Gorkiewicz provides precise insights into the shifts in register and meaning from one work to another, since he was entrusted with translating the Zeitgeist that had shaped Kogler's portraits into the Kontakt series. This proved an undertaking that can hardly be described as straightforward. Kogler's interviews, as he stresses, unmistakably belonged to their time. Their continuity does not render them obsolete; instead, it ties them to a recognizable aesthetic underpinned by both the quality of the footage and the computer-generated handling of backgrounds: "I revisited those earlier interviews – they have aged, but positively: they are closely tied to their time. I asked myself how to update this around 2020. With today's high-resolution cameras – 4K, 8K, 16K – repeating chroma key would not be new".[269]

Gorkiewicz embraced the enhanced quality made possible by new technologies, but the real breakthrough lay in his decision to define the portraits through a sustained digital zoom carried forward throughout the conversation: "So, I thought I could use the zoom. Cropping and zooming are classic video operations". This shift fundamentally reconfigures the way the works engage with the viewer, as it transforms the framing alongside the dialogue. As he explains: "With the zoom, you begin in one place and end in another, which is also what an interview should do".[270]

[267] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[268] Gorkiewicz, "Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz".
[269] Gorkiewicz, "Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz".
[270] Gorkiewicz, "Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz".

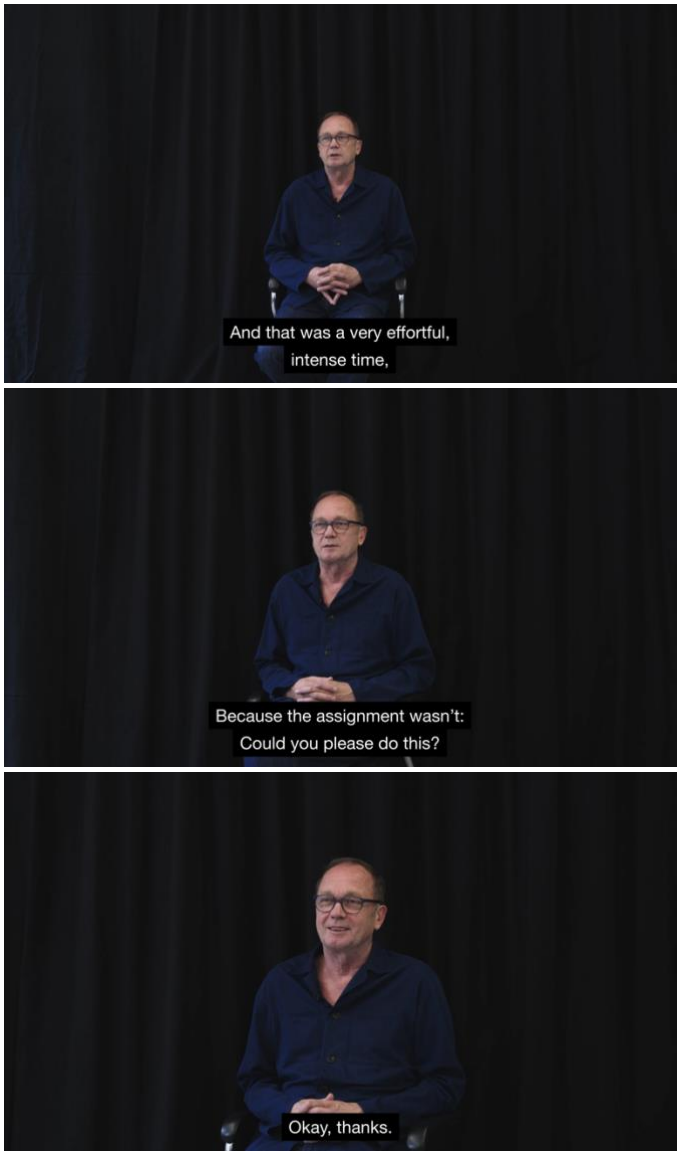

Figure 19 Sequence of three screenshots showing the zoom progression in Heimo Zobernig's video portrait set at his Vienna studio. Screenshots from Claus Philipp, Manuel Gorkiewicz, and Julius Lermer, *"Heimo Zobernig",* Kontakt Video Portraits, filmed June 9, 2023. Copyright and courtesy Kontakt Collection, Vienna, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/15228/heimo-zobernig?ctx=938536a6601ae4bf8f4e07023e94363b42f8f2e5&idx=15, accessed May 25, 2026.

This decision was inspired by experimental cinema, particularly Michael Snow's film *Wavelength*:

> I was also inspired by Michael Snow's film *Wavelength*, a conceptual work from the 1960s/70s. It shows a loft space filmed with a very slow zoom that ends on a small photograph of the sea. It's extremely simple and conceptual: you hear someone enter the studio, traffic outside. The zoom lasts over 30 minutes. That inspired me: start with one visual setup and end with something completely different.[271]

The reference to *Wavelength* is valuable, especially when examining the literature on the film and its analysis of zoom effects. According to Sicinski, the use of zoom draws the

[271] Gorkiewicz, "Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz".

viewer into the scene by breaking the initial frame and constructing new ones as it progresses.[272] Annette Michelson, by contrast, sees the zoom as a process "from uncertainty to certainty, as our camera narrows its field".[273] Snow himself described it as an "optical bridge" situating the viewer within a mechanism that typically serves only to propel narrative.[274] William C. Wees viewed the zoom as flattening the image, yet also as a means that predestines a specific image to occupy our field of vision, that is, the image in Snow's words "is fated" to take this position.[275]

While these interpretations cannot replace the intentions behind the zoom in the Kontakt portraits, they do help us recognize the evolving dynamics at work. The Kontakt videos are animated by this continuous movement: portraits in construction. The zoom gradually crops the image to the point that it sometimes resembling a half-bust or "talking head". Unlike Kogler, who opted for the "talking head" cut, long established as a format, Kontakt keeps the frame in motion, producing a portrait that feels like a destiny being gradually revealed. Gorkiewicz's search for a contemporary visual code for portraiture thus found a solution in the zoom: a device that begins in an undefined form then finds its path, recognizes its subject, and co-creates this subject together with the conversation.

In this shifting landscape where the portrait mutates from one format to another, Gorkiewicz pointed out another important issue. Reflecting on Kogler's portraits, he recalled that Kogler had provided him with some of the videos as material for his courses at the University of Linz. Students, he observed, are fascinated by the way the conversations unfold, but less inclined to listen to 45 minutes of unstructured talk. This forces him to excerpt sections, a change shaped by evolving media habits. At the same time, however, it also erases the extralinguistic qualities that once characterized Kogler's subjects – qualities we might call artistry:

> I also remember from Peter's class at the Academy in Vienna that you receive many layers of information when someone like Lawrence Weiner or Raymond Pettibon sits and talks. Some are sharp (Weiner), some just talk (Pettibon), and there isn't always a clear "message." But on an artistic level, you still understand a lot – even if it's not language-based. That disappears if you don't take the time to watch. Even with the Kontakt portraits, we decided to limit them to 20–30 minutes. Longer interviews don't work well – you lose the audience. […] It was clear: if they're too long, people won't watch to the end. Interviews usually last longer, so we have to cut them. That's unfortunate, but necessary.[276]

Acknowledging today's shortened attention span and overabundance of online content, the Kontakt team decided to limit the conversations to between twenty and thirty minutes. This does not mean, however, that the portraits became didactic or self-explanatory. On the contrary, aware of how much lies between the expressible and the perceivable, the portraits sought to leave room for intuition and suggestion. This is also the third, and last, of the rules according to Philipp:

---

[272] Michael Sicinski, "Michael Snow's Wavelength and the Space of Dwelling", *Qui Parle* 11, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1999), pp. 59–88.
[273] Sicinski, "Michael Snow's Wavelength and the Space of Dwelling", p. 65.
[274] Sicinski, "Michael Snow's Wavelength and the Space of Dwelling", p. 77.
[275] William C. Wees, *Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 158.
[276] Gorkiewicz, "Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz".

> Third: the interview doesn't attempt to cover the person's entire body of work. It's one hour. Sometimes that hour is spent on current projects, recent failures, or something seen on TV the day before. The portrait emerges through a mix of contingency and structure – and our willingness to let the person speak.[277]

The serendipity of the moment is also one of the key elements Philipp relies on when preparing the interview. He explained that his preparation is neither biographical nor didactic. He does not write questions in advance, but instead immerses himself in the interviewee's work. The direction of the conversation is sometimes shaped by his own current interests: "In many interviews, you'll find recurring reflections on the idea of 'translation' – what it means to translate artistic thought into a format like this, without showing any artwork or relying on texts. Because it's a topic that interests me very much, and strangely, it comes up again and again".[278]

Philipp's words also reveal another detail: the complete absence of reference images during the conversations, a choice that echoes many of Kogler's interviews. The result, therefore, is a collectively shaped outcome. Philipp cites as an example the portrait of the artist Milica Tomić:

> I remember interviewing Milica Tomić in Vienna. We were talking, and suddenly she said, "I shouldn't talk about my artwork; I should talk about why I'm currently unable to make art." That was a powerful moment – something I couldn't have prepared for. But because I had studied her work beforehand, she felt safe enough to speak openly.[279]

This exchange further illuminates theoretical aspects of the portrait format and provides valuable comparative insights. Philipp, with his extensive experience as an art and film critic, has conducted a vast number of interviews and ultimately agrees with Truman Capote and Lawrence Grobel in viewing them as a literary genre: "For them, the interview was a kind of literature – a form of dialogue, sometimes even dramatic. It can be a highly effective and intelligent medium".[280] Philipp is thus convinced that portrait-interviews have considerable potential, especially when mediated by video: "One major shift with film – and especially digital video – is that, unlike past portraits (paintings, written texts), we can now see how someone moves, look them in the eye as they speak, sense what bores or excites them physically".[281]

In Philipp's opinion, some of the most powerful portraits ever produced are Warhol's *Screen Tests*, because "They're raw and truthful. The only "corruption" is that they're art by Warhol. But the sitters are fully confronted by the camera, and it's beautiful".[282] When I recounted their historical connection to Kogler and *Portraits of Artists*, Philipp admitted he was unaware of this tie but also unsurprised, since "They fundamentally changed how we understand human presence under technical reproduction, as Walter Benjamin put it. They're

[277] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[278] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[279] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[280] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[281] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[282] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".

very close to early cinema – like the Lumière brothers – where people are simply aware that a device is observing them. I find that fascinating".[283]

The *Screen Tests* open yet more directions in our discussion. The dramaturg encouraged me to study this specific type of portrait, rooted in minimalism: "revisit Warhol's Screen Tests. They're part of the same tradition – like John Cage's minimal music: repeating the same note again and again, each time sounding different".[284] Beyond this, the conversation with him foregrounded another crucial figure for understanding both the Kontakt portraits and the broader context of Kogler's work: Wilhelm Gaube (1925–2012), author of an immense body of artist interviews and portraits, that remain largely unknown today.

Indeed, it was precisely Gaube who led me to Claus in the first place, having read on the Kontakt website that "Wilhelm Gaube's oeuvre of around 250 artist portraits from the 1960s and 1970s" formed the other cornerstone, alongside Kogler, that inspired the project.[285]

3.2 Wilhelm Gaube's *Künstlerporträts*

Together with Kogler's *Portraits of Artists,* Wilhelm Gaube's work resonates with the Kontakt Video Formats and, as such, offers a productive point of comparison for bringing out the distinctive features of the Kontakt collection format. The contrast with Kogler's work has so far shed light on the structural dimension of the Kontakt collection's video portraits. This structural dimension has been used as the basis for interpreting this artwork as charismatic technology, whereas the informality that constituted another key element for Kogler's work had been temporarily sidelined. At this point, however, it is precisely this aspect of informality that a comparison with Gaube's work brings back into focus.

Claus's description of Gaube's work as "a hidden treasure, gradually discovered" warrants a brief biographical and contextual introduction before engaging with the video portraits themselves.[286] Traces of this filmmaker and art enthusiast had been scattered until at least 1993, when the Viennese film festival *Diagonale* recognized him as the remarkable documentarian he was and brought to light some of his more than 250 *Künstlerporträts* (artist portraits).[287] Later, in 2004, the film *In Wirklichkeit ist alles ganz anders* (English title: *Actually, Everything Is Completely Different*), directed by Joerg Burger, helped sketch a personal portrait of Gaube himself – albeit an indirect one, pieced together from his own video portraits of artists.[288] In discussing the film, Vrääth Öhner's words capture this feeling effectively:

> How do you portray someone who, for more than forty years, has devoted their artistic effort to making portraits of artists? How do you portray someone who has persistently aimed to get closer to those portrayed rather than to their art? And, finally: how do you make a portrait of someone who, for

[283] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[284] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[285] "Kontakt Video Portraits", kontakt-collection.org, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits.
[286] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".
[287] Constantin Wulff, "Filmemachen als 'Hetz'", booklet in Wilhelm Gaube, *Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts* (Vienna: Hoanzl, 2007), DVD.
[288] I will quote the original version of the film, even if the quotes that will be extrapolated in this text come from the English-subtitled version of the film. *Wirklichkeit Ist Alles Ganz Anders*, directed by Joerg Burger (Sixpackfilm, 2004).

> decades, not only hid these portraits from the public but also, in his films, made himself vanish as much as possible – as well as in public discussion of them?[289]

Gaube shot many of his video portraits of artists from the 1980s onward, during his tenure at the mumok in Vienna, and continued filming well into the 1990s and 2000s. However, his involvement in the art scene dates back to much earlier. While studying nuclear physics and taking occasional jobs as a labourer, Gaube was already participating in the Vienna Art Club in the 1950s.[290] In 1962, he began working as a librarian at the Museum des 20 Jahrhunderts (Museum of the 20th Century), the predecessor of the mumok. The museum would later move to the Museum Quarter, while the twentieth-century collection remained housed at the Belvedere. During the 1970s and 1980s, Gaube became deputy director and organized more than a hundred exhibitions. He also began assembling 16mm filming equipment, thus launching a filmmaking activity that he pursued intermittently alongside his curatorial work.

Gaube's interest in filmmaking began around 1967, before his appointment as deputy director, as evidenced by an 8mm film clip showing his children playing. The film, characterized by long exposures and figures stretched and distorted frame by frame, was shot that same year. Gaube presented it at the *Kinetika* exhibition, a show that naturally focused on kinetic art. It was on that occasion, according to Gaube's own account in Burger's film, that Werner Hofmann invited him to make videos for what would become the current mumok.

Gaube's immersion in Vienna's art world was not limited to the museum. Between approximately 1972 and 1975, he worked as editor or camera assistant for the footwear brand *Humanic* producing commercials that defied established conventions. These ads were radically experimental, often entirely forgoing shots of the product in favour of pure visual impact. [291] *Projekt 19 Kunstspots für Humanic* (1973) exemplifies this approach: artist Richard Kriesche appears in Piazza San Marco in a diving-suit-like costume covered with seeds and corn kernels that is soon engulfed by flocks of feeding pigeons. The brand name "Humanic" appears only at the end.

In Burger's documentary, Gaube recalls that the crew consisted of six or seven people, including Roland Goeschl, Gerhard Rühm, and Richard Kriesche – all artists. Some of these collaborators would later appear in his video portraits, including Roland Goeschl, and shared

---

[289] "Actually, Everything Is Completely Different", sixpackfilm.com, accessed May 25, 2026, http://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/1390/.

[290] For insights into Gaube's biography, see "Filmmuseum - Navigator Film Deposit - Wilhelm Gaube", filmmuseum.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.filmmuseum.at/en/collections/film_collection/film_collection_insights/navigator_film_deposit and Wilhelm Gaube, *Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts*, "Über Den Filmemacher Wilhelm Gaube", *Der Standard*, October 3, 2007, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.derstandard.at/story/3053512/ueber-den-filmemacher-wilhelm-gaube; as well as Gaube's obituary "Filmemacher Wilhelm Gaube Gestorben", *Der Standard*, 19 March 2012, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.derstandard.at/story/1331780064079/1925-2012-filmemacher-wilhelm-gaube-gestorben.

[291] Even if it is not specifically about Gaube's work, some information about Gaube's participation in the Humanic advertising campaign can be gleaned from Franz Smola, "Zu utopisch, um Realität zu werden. Roland Goeschls Frühwerk in der medialen Öffentlichkeit", in *Roland Goeschl - Rückblicke 1957 - 2005: Bilder, Fotos, Modelle, Skulpturen*, ed. Roland Goeschl, Tobias G. Natter, and Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien (Wien: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2006).

memories from the Humanic period occasionally surfaced in this context.[292] These recollections reveal the element that went on to become the defining aspect of Gaube's work: a genuine investment in relationships with artists.

In Burger's documentary, Gaube clarifies: "What really started to fascinate me were the artists behind what you saw at the museum or what they made […] it wasn't so much art itself […] I wanted to know why you get people who do things that are so totally superfluous".[293] This curiosity, he often explains, arose in the post-Second World War context, a period marked by deep distrust towards the figure of the artist; a distrust that, as he himself notes, has since faded.

Gaube managed to gain access to artists' studios armed with nothing more than his camera equipment. "Eine Person (Gaube) begegnet/filmt eine Person, den Künstler, an einen Ort": this principle underpinned his work. [294] He never appeared inside the frame, yet from behind the camera he commented, prompted, and questioned his subjects. The situations he constructed were staged and artificial to varying degrees, but they rarely assumed the traits of rigid or repetitive formalism.

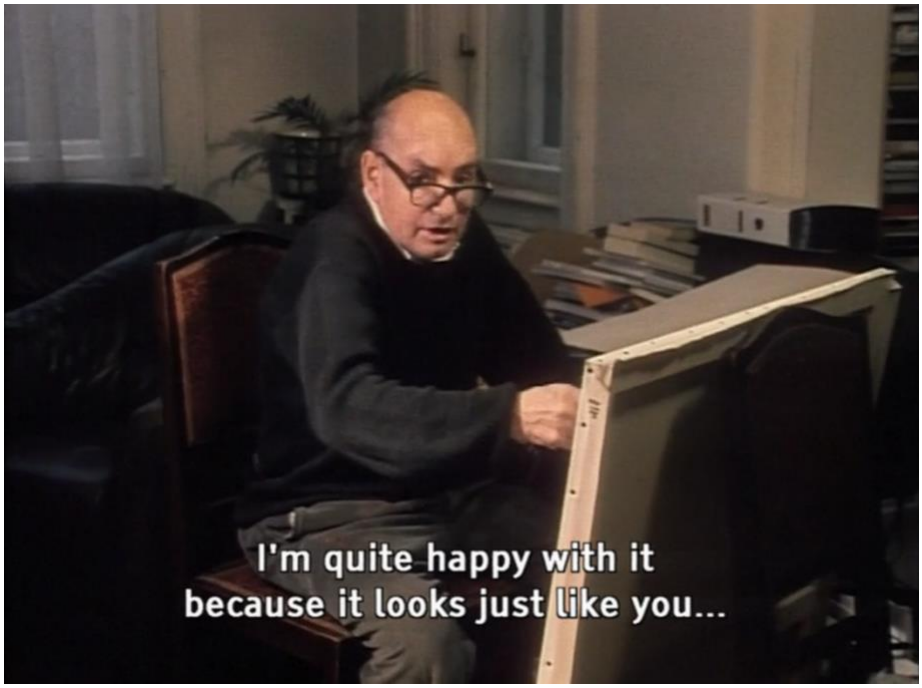

Figure 20 Franz Ringel, still from a video portrait by Wilhelm Gaube, date unknown. Screenshot from Joerg Burger, *In Wirklichkeit ist alles ganz anders,* 2004. Copyright and courtesy Joerg Burger.

A telling example is the portrait of Franz Ringel, the first one featured in Burger's documentary. Here, Ringel paints Gaube's portrait while Gaube films him; each renders the other through a different medium. The exchange unfolds from a privileged position situation within artistic practice itself. Ringel reflects on the work in progress not to explain it but to

[292] In Burger's documentary, two portraits of Goeschl are edited in sequence. The first appears to date to the 1970s, while the second seems to have been filmed around 2000. Although the later footage is woven together with Humanic commercials, the artist's own words illuminate the interpersonal dynamics and specific atmosphere in which these advertisements were conceived.
[293] *Actually, Everything Is Completely Different*, directed by Joerg Burger (Sixpackfilm, 2004).
[294] "A person (Gaube) encounters / films a person – the artist – at a location". Wilhelm Gaube, *Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts*

think aloud, addressing Gaube more as a trusted interlocutor than as an interviewer. The portrait thus takes the form of a shared process rather than an unidirectional act of representation.



Figure 21 Gerda Fessel, still from a video portrait by Wilhelm Gaube, date unknown. Screenshot from Joerg Burger, *In Wirklichkeit ist alles ganz anders,* 2004. Copyright and courtesy Joerg Burger.

This dynamic becomes even more explicit in the video portrait dedicated to Gerda Fessel. During filming, Fessel reverses the terms of the encounter and begins to herself pose questions for Gaube: "Earlier you mentioned art historians, that they used to come to the studio and search, you were one of them too". Her remark introduces a theme that appears repeatedly across many of the portraits, as Burger's documentary suggests how a person may be situated within the hierarchies and traditions of the art world. Gaube resists being positioned within that lineage. "I'm a dilettante, and a dilettante is a lover", he replies. Fessel presses further, implicitly underscoring the rarity of his approach: "Is there a filmmaker today who says: I'm going to the artists to see what they are doing and talk to them? I don't know any". [295]

What emerges from these exchanges is an alternative to more prescriptive models of representing artists. Gaube's method, closely tied to his documentary practice and arguably his temperament as well, avoids imposing a predefined interpretive framework. The images and words he gathers through the encounters grant his video portraits particular value, especially in terms of authenticity. By prioritizing personal intimacy over a detached or mediating stance, he gains unique access to the artists' domestic and professional realities. Portraiture thus evolves beyond a standard biographical account to instead take the form of a testament to the lived relationship that defines the creative process.

[295] *Wirklichkeit Ist Alles Ganz Anders*, directed by Joerg Burger (Sixpackfilm, 2004).

This relational dimension is explicitly acknowledged by Constantin Wulff in an essay accompanying the 2007 DVD release of eighteen digitized Gaube portraits published by *Der Standard*, a series intended to reissue films deemed part of the "Kanon" (canon) of Austrian cinema.[296] Wulff – a filmmaker, journalist, and dramaturg for Burger's documentary – writes: "Das Künstlerporträt ist Gaube zumeist Vorwand für eine Begegnung".[297] For Gaube, the artist portrait is primarily a pretext for staging an encounter.

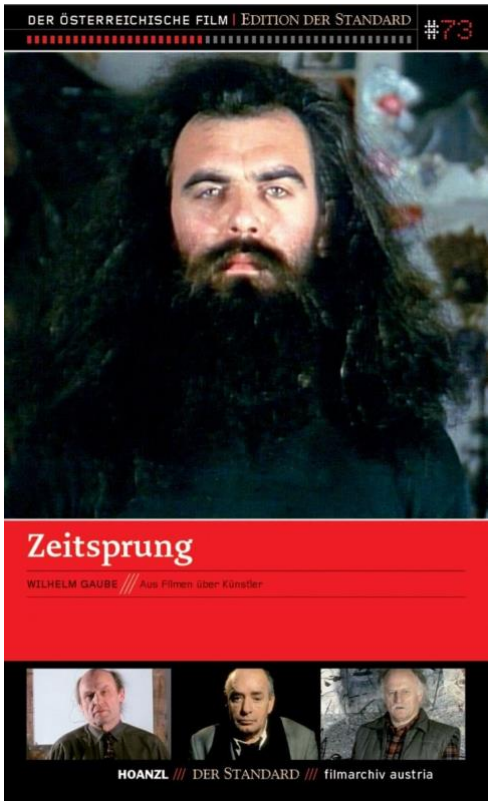

Figure 22 Cover of Zeitsprung: *Wilhelm Gaube – Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts Aus Filmen über Künstler (Time Leap: From Films about Artists),* DVD compilation featuring approximately 20 short films documenting Austrian artists from the postwar generation of the 1960s and 70s. Der Österreichische Film | Edition der Standard #73.

Reading video portraiture as a platform for encounter radically shifts the analytical perspective. Whether filmed under studio lights or in informal, even chaotic, situations on the street, Gaube's recordings consistently foreground the relationship that unfolds between filmmaker and artist. In doing so, they expand the range of possibilities available to the genre. Even productions such as the *Kontakt Video Portraits* that follow more clearly defined formal logics are cognizant of this relational charge, especially as a vector of authenticity. A look

[296] It should be noted that the series published by *Der Standard* in which a selection of Gaube's works was reissued, titled *Der österreichische Film* and starting in 2006, forms part of a broader archival and dissemination project devoted to filmic and cinematic work regarded as foundational to the development of Austrian cinema. The recognition of Gaube – and, with him, the practice of video portraiture – as integral to Viennese cinema and cultural history therefore deserves particular consideration in this context. In relation to the publication of Gaube's work as part of this series, see "'Der Österreichische Film': Noch Mehr Perlen Und Porträts", *Der Standard*, October 13, 2016, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000045839814/der-oesterreichische-film-noch-mehr-perlen-und-portraets.

[297] "For Gaube, the artist portrait is mostly a pretext for an encounter" in Constantin Wulff, *Filmemachen als "Hetz"* in Wilhelm Gaube, *Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts.*

back at the *Kontakt Video Portraits* underscores a commonality of purpose in selecting and representing their subjects. Much like Kontakt's videos, Gaube worked with a specific historical and geographical sample and captured a distinct vision of Vienna's evolving artistic generations through his camera.

The divergence in approach between Gaube's video portraits and the *Kontakt Video Portraits* necessitates an investigation of their underlying affinities. This comparative horizon calls for a re-examination of the ontological nature of both works. To this end, the analysis will now take the term 'video portrait' – thus far serving as the common denominator – and treat it as a critical trail to be followed. Before proceeding, however, we can conclude this retrospective on Gaube by turning to the personal history of Claus Philipp's meeting with the director. The two met at a stadium, where Philipp's son was playing a soccer match: "I met him late in his life. It's a funny story – my son was seven, and every Thursday I took him to play soccer. Gaube joined us and ended up making portraits of the team".[298]

3.3 On Portraits

Here, the analysis uses the video portrait as a theoretical key to examine these case studies in the same way that the concept of charisma was used to conceptually connect Kogler and Warhol in Chapter I. This theoretical reframing builds on previous findings and moves a step closer to interpreting both the *Kontakt Video Portraits* and *Künstlerporträts* as charismatic technologies. The starting point for this exploration lies in the elements these productions share, specifically the role of the framing and the type of subject they aim to construct.

From the examples already discussed, recurring features can be seen to define these works as portraits. The *Künstlerporträts* and *Kontakt Video Portraits* series share several formal traits, such as the use of close-ups or half-length shots and a background that is either neutral or at any rate rarely interacts with the subject. These elements follow the conventions of portraiture, where the attention remains fixed on the face as a primary site of recognition. From ancient death masks and Renaissance medals to Early Modern painting, the background has generally served to isolate the subject rather than provide a narrative.[299]

Yet beyond these continuities, portraiture has often aspired to provide more than a simple likeness. A central aim of the genre involves representing what remains hidden from view: an

[298] Philipp, "Interview with Claus Philipp".

[299] Without delving into a genealogical analysis of portraiture formats, it is possible to say that from the Roman *imagines maiorum*, modelled in wax on the faces of the deceased, to Pisanello's Renaissance medals, background has not usually played a determining role: attention remains fixed on the perimeter of the face. In accordance with the definition provided by *Enciclopedia Treccani*, a portrait is conceived not simply as a representation but as an act of isolation through which individuality emerges: "A noi moderni il ritratto si presenta come manifestazione individuale di vita; esso, come lo ha definito un critico francese, è l'isolamento non dell'uomo, ma di un uomo, che si afferma attraverso i segni caratteristici della sua fisionomia, è la liberazione dell'individuo dall'ambiente che lo circonda". See Giulio Carlo Argan et al., "Ritratto", in *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*, 29, 1936, p. 469. As Max Friedländer noted, a similar tendency can be observed in painting, where the dark settings of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden served the same purpose: to enhance the face and individuality. See Max Friedländer, *Landscape, Portrait, Still-Life. Their Origin and Development* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p.38. However, Friedländer also adds that, starting from the fifteenth century, there has been a shift in this tendency, with the introduction of "inhabited" or natural environments – as in the domestic interiors of the *Arnolfini Portrait* or the landscape behind the *Mona Lisa* – that situate the subject within the sphere of everyday life, p. 236.

inner essence, temperament, or psychic presence.[300] This tension between the visible and invisible has persisted across different media, from sculpted wax to contemporary video. The video portraits examined here belong to this lineage, even though they translate it into a new language. Despite their technological and aesthetic differences, they share the ambition of moving beyond representation to reveal the immaterial dimension of the artist as a subject. In Kogler's work the portrait becomes a reflection on the figure of the artist, in Gaube's it turns into an intimate dialogue, and in the Kontakt series it assumes a collective scope, seeking to "capture a generation" and reconstruct the shared face of a cultural community.

This coexistence of opposites has characterized the genre from its beginning. It is a dynamic that the etymology of the word both confirms and clarifies.[301] The root of the term is, in fact, twofold, though in both cases it derives from Latin. The Italian term *ritratto*, like the Spanish *retrato*, comes from the verb *retraho*, in the sense of *rursus inspicio memoria repeto*, that is, "to look again, to recall what is already known". The English word *portrait*, identical in French as well as the German *porträt* and Russian *portret*, instead derives from *protraho*, a Latin verb used in the Middle Ages meaning "to stand in place of something else".

The art psychologist and aesthetician Stefano Ferrari has emphasized the interpretive implications suggested by these two Latin verbs. On the one hand, *retraho* can mean "to withdraw troops", but also "to hold back" or "to retain". Its past participle *retractus* denotes that which is "withdrawn", "remote", or "hidden". Ferrari thus infuses this first verb with the sense of "holding" or "preserving" a figure and face, implying that the act of "drawing back" is, ultimately, an act of "saving". On the other hand, *protraho* expresses the gesture of "drawing forth", "bringing out", or "revealing".[302]

In both cases, according to Ferrari, portraits contain an occult charge, something that exceeds or lies buried within them, perfectly consistent with the elusive objective characterizing the true subject of this genre. Similar insights are further unpacked in a philosophical key in the study by the philosopher Giovanni Gurisatti. Following the same etymological path, Gurisatti describes the portrait as a way to safeguard the expression of the face while simultaneously bringing it to light. Thus, within portraiture, mimesis is not limited to a correspondence between artwork and sitter: it becomes a genuine transmutation and

---

[300] The dialectic between visibility and the invisible has shaped portraiture since its earliest manifestations. Roman *imagines maiorum* pursued not resemblance but presence, establishing an indexical continuity between the living and the dead and constructing, through a display of the resulting wax masks, a dynastic genealogy of the family line. Renaissance artists pursued this dual aim of preservation and revelation. In Pisanello's medals and *imprese* (emblematic devices), the linear purity of the profile and emblem–*motto* pairing translate moral and civic virtue into visual form. For a discussion of Pisanello's Imprese, see Monica Centanni, *Fantasmi dell'antico: la tradizione classica nel Rinascimento*, (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2017), pp. 199–252. Leonardo da Vinci instead radicalized this logic by binding outward likeness to inner psychological life and impulse in his grotesque heads and anatomical studies. The topic of portraiture intersects with that of physiognomy, especially during the Renaissance. Space limitations here prevent me from delving further into this topic, but see Patrizia Magli, *Il volto e l'anima: fisiognomica e passioni*, (Milan: Bompiani, 1996) for a broad framing of the issue and the more recent Piers D.G. Britton, "The Signs of Faces: Leonardo on Physiognomic Science and the 'Four Universal States of Man'", *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 2002), pp. 143–62 for aspects related to Leonardo da Vinci's work.

[301] The following etymology has been analysed by Tullio De Mauro, Luigi Grassi, and Eugenio Battisti, "Ritratto - L'arte Del Ritratto", in *Enciclopedia Universale Dell'Arte*, XI (Florence: Sansoni, 1963), p. 565.

[302] Stefano Ferrari, *La psicologia del ritratto nell'arte e nella letteratura*, (Rome: Laterza, 1998), pp. 25–26.

transfiguration of the subject into the form of the portrait. Consequently, although the subject of the portrait may have a clearly identifiable real-life referent, in reality it is always an invention.[303]

For the purposes of study, however, the key point is not to dissect the core of these transformations; rather, it is to acknowledge the fragmentation of the representation of subjectivity.[304] Over time, it is as though the search for the subject long pursued through portraiture has found new channels – specifically, the channels of voice and narrative. Since our object of study lies at the intersection of multiple possible forms of portraiture, this analysis chooses to focus specifically on the multimedia nature of Kontakt, Gaube's *Künstlerporträts*, and *Portraits of Artists* to identify the most appropriate framework for demonstrating how these videos belong to the tradition of portraiture. Enlightened by the challenges voice poses to the limits of representation, therefore, I now turn to another form of portrait, the only one in which words (and, most importantly, voices) have a fundamental place: the literary portrait.

3.3.1 The Literary Portrait

The insights outlined by Claus Philipp inspired this investigation into the literary portrait, a genre that has often remained an elusive theoretical object. His suggestion of observing the trajectory of minimalism, from Cage to Warhol, led to identifying a specific style of literary portraiture. This style took on a consolidated form in Gertrude Stein, yet its repercussions also resonate through the authors suggested by the dramatist. More importantly, the communicative codes informing this literary tradition also continue to operate in the video portraits analysed here, thus providing the necessary tools for reinterpreting them. To reconstruct this lineage, the study draws on the research of historian Wendy Steiner.

As one of the few scholars to have examined the literary portrait, Steiner provides a sketch of this genre's hypothetical historiography, albeit with some gaps.[305] Steiner begins by defining the relationship between the iconographic portrait and the literary one as "conceptual dependence", that is, a relationship where the literary portrait long remained subordinate to its visual counterpart.[306] Visual portraits were more readily able to express their indexicality (their ability to reveal their referent) through mimesis, thereby also fulfilling their documentary function. [307] Indeed, we should not forget that painted and sculpted portraits were so successful in fulfilling this task that they even gave rise to legends about their own living presence. Yet, as already seen with van Eck, it would be inaccurate to attribute such achievements solely to mimesis. By contrast, the literary portrait was compelled to find other

[303] Giovanni Gurisatti, "Ritrarre è tradurre – Tradurre è ritrarre. Sulla traduzione come pratica ermeneutica tra Gadamer e Benjamin", *Studi di estetica*, 2022, pp. 53–79.
[304] This transformation might have begun with the discovery of psychoanalysis, as Battisti suggested. See Eugenio Battisti, "Ritratto - L'Ottocento e il Novecento", in *Enciclopedia Universale dell'Arte*, XI (Florence: Sansoni, 1963), pp. 595–598. However, see p. 598 for a discussion of the impact of psychoanalysis on the genre of portraiture.
[305] Jeffrey Wallen, "Between Text and Image: The Literary Portrait", *a/b: Auto/Biography* Studies 10, no. 1 (1995), pp. 50–65.
[306] Wendy Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein*, Yale Studies in English 189 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 3.
[307] The semiotic references find a deeper explanation in another study of Steiner: Wendy Steiner, "The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting", *Semiotica* 21, nos 1–2 (1977), pp. 111–19.

ways to connect with its referent. One of the strategies this genre adopted was a typification of the represented subject's nature, that is, an attempt to render such nature, through its invented simplicity, immediately recognizable. Steiner identifies the Theophrastan portrait as one of the earliest and most efficient models on which literary portraiture was based: "It was a highly structured representation of a moral, social, or professional type as it would be manifested in a single hypothetical person, and as such, it is precisely the opposite of what one would expect in a portrait of an individual".[308]

In *Characters*, written around 319 B.C., Theophrastus presented thirty human categories, each generated by a distinct vice (shamelessness, carelessness, stinginess, and so on).[309] The classical dimension of the Theophrastan portrait-style resurfaced in the Renaissance, inspiring, Steiner argues, a true stylistic genre, even though the principle underpinning the narrative device was progressively refined.

In the seventeenth century, literary portraits were often constructed through an enumeration of character traits, a tendency that can be read as an expansion of Theophrastus's practice. Examples can be found in the work of the writer Madeleine de Scudéry: as historian Benedetta Craveri recalls, Scudéry brought the genre back into style by constructing literary portraits of figures from French high society of the time. Craveri describes the function of the literary portrait in seventeenth-century France as a tool for assessing, from an external point of view, how much control individuals exercised over the images they wished to project of themselves.[310]

Portraits constructed according to the principle of the "ruling passion", a trend that spread after the seventeenth century, adhered more closely to the Theophrastan model.[311] According to Steiner, this important element in the evolution of literary portraiture appears in Alexander Pope's *Epistle to Cobham* (1733), a letter in which the poet reflects on the specific challenges of description and thus portraiture itself. Here, Pope exhorts writers to seek out a single ruling passion, no longer necessarily a vice, as the key lens through which a person's past and future actions can be interpreted. "It was the synecdoche par excellence", Steiner observes, and yet one which nonetheless caused "the subject's individuality [to be] nullified. The subject became indistinguishable from his type and the portrait amounted to little more than an allegory".[312]

New strategies capable of doing justice to the portrait did not begin to appear until the Romantic period. Here, Steiner identifies a re-use and intensification of ancient rhetorical figures such as *prosopopeia*, already discussed by Quintilian, and defines it as one of the "ancestors" of the modern literary portrait.[313] In Steiner's words, prosopopeia was "an ancient

---

[308] Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance*, p. 9.
[309] He developed this structure following Aristotle's descriptions of moral types in works such as the Nicomachean Ethics where, as Giorgio Pasquali notes, the philosopher was accustomed to sketching individuals by outlining their salient vices. See Teofrasto, *Theophrastus. I Caratteri*, ed. Giorgio Pasquali (Florence: Sansoni, 1919), p. IV.
[310] It is interesting to note that the genre was also defined as medallion by Craveri, resonating with the parallel expansion of portraiture into the field of medal-making as referenced above. Craveri links the French use of portraiture to the translation and re-edition, just a century earlier, of Plutarch's *Lives*. See Benedetta Craveri, *La civiltà della conversazione*, (Milan: Adelphi, 2008), pp. 222–242.
[311] Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance*, p. 18.
[312] Steiner, "The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting", p. 115.
[313] Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance*, p. 12.

rhetorical exercise in which a character (living, dead, or imaginary) or a place would be represented through a dramatic enactment of his speech".[314]

As Gavin Alexander notes in his more recent analysis, this figure also contains a fictional potential that is particularly useful for literature and poetry.[315] As Alexander observes, the very etymology reveals a great deal about its application: prosopopeia derives from the Greek *prosōpon*, meaning "a face or mask", and several related meanings arise from these primary ones: a dramatic role or character, a figure in a philosophical dialogue or literary work, and even the persona of an author.[316]

During Romanticism, however, Steiner finds there was an intellectual shift in attitudes towards language and, consequently, towards this rhetorical figure. To explain this transformation, the scholar triangulates the observations of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Thomas Twining, and William James. Their combined reflections form the theoretical substratum for an intellectual shift in the direction of the notions of experience, narration, and, by extension, the use of the voice. Lessing recognized that, while painting operates in space, words act in time and thus take on a form of verisimilitude previously denied to them.[317] Twining reflected on the mimesis between medium and represented object and rediscovered the potential of dramatic poetry to render the flow of speech.[318] Finally, William James deconstructed the notion of character and of the self, that had underpinned the tradition of literary portraiture, to argue that character is not fixed but rather an aspect of the self in motion.[319] This led James to suggest that what describes character is a mental flow, which, on the level of representation, effectively mirrors the flow of discourse. The conceptual revolution sparked by these arguments granted speech the power that had previously belonged to painting: the ability to establish both indexical and iconical relations capable of adding realism, in the sense of references to external reality.

Once portraiture had established its efficacy, this genre evolved along two distinct paths throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the first scenario, literary portraits merged with biography to create hybrid forms. Steiner notes that, in seventeenth-century England, the expansive nature of biography often overshadowed the portrait in that the latter was dismissed as too brief or partial. By the eighteenth century, however, the genres began a

---

[314] This definition is taken from note n. 17 that can be found in Wendy Steiner, "The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting", p. 119.

[315] Gavin Alexander, "Prosopopoeia: The Speaking Figure', in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 97–112.

[316] Alexander, "Prosopopeia", p. 99. Historian Benjamin Boyce had already observed that although this technique had considerable potential, it did not become an alternative to the typifying style of character representation that had characterized the Theophrastan portrait. Prosopopeia was limited by the "ubiquitous classical doctrine of decorum," which, already in antiquity, preferred to keep the fictional function of the voice as an ornament to the narration by types. See Benjamin Boyce, *The Theophrastan Character in England to 1642* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 28. Alexander expands and refines this analysis, adding that even the Renaissance revival of this rhetorical figure – although widely employed in literature – did not produce an inversion of that tendency. The requirement that the living voice of the characters exert a persuasive effect on the audience, and the use of prosopopeia as a verbal mask capable of performing a "person-making" function through performance, continued to limit its potential. Gavin Alexander, "Prosopopoeia: The Speaking Figure", p. 98.

[317] Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance*, p. 15.

[318] Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance*, p. 14.

[319] Steiner, *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance*, p. 24.

formal exchange: biography adopted portraiture's use of anecdote and direct speech, while portraiture gained new vitality as a specialized component of larger biographical narratives.

Along the other path of evolution, portraits moved towards total autonomy. By pushing mimetic strategies to their limit, specifically by including the subject's direct discourse, the genre shed its narrative constraints. This shift transformed the portrait into a self-sufficient work akin to a theatrical monologue or standalone art object. While Modern technologies such as the tape recorder eventually codified this independence, the genre's capacity to turn language into a physical presence was already evident long before they had been invented.[320] It is within this context that Steiner situates Gertrude Stein's portraiture.

The core of Steiner's analysis is specifically the Stein's portrait style, a style that already contains all the movements that must be unpacked before returning to our video portraits. The trajectory of Stein's literary portraits is complex and mirrors the epochal changes of her life. Active from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth, Stein was a central figure in American and European artistic and intellectual circles. Her beginnings, however, lie in the field of psychology.

As a student of psychologist William James, Stein adapted James' psychological frameworks into a foundation for her experimental prose.[321] Central to this inheritance was James's radical empiricism that prioritized the mechanics of attention over the murky depths of the unconscious. According to James, the traditional divide between the observer and the observed was an illusion; he famously argued that consciousness does not exist as a separate entity or "container" for thought.[322] Instead, he proposed that what we perceive as awareness is merely the byproduct of shifting relations between diverse experiences. By collapsing this internal-external duality, James shifted the functions of the mind from something considered "mysterious and elusive" to elements that were now "verifiable and concrete".[323]

During her early years at the Harvard Annex (later Radcliffe College) between 1893 and 1897, Stein applied Jamesian theory to experiments in automatic writing. Collaborating first with Leon Solomons, she sought to decouple automatic acts from their presumed unconscious origins.[324] By inducing distraction in healthy students, the researchers demonstrated that the hand could trace signs independent of conscious intent. This shifted the focus towards the mechanics of attention itself, revealing that these automatisms were not psychic messages but the "white noise" of pure motor activity.

In her subsequent independent research, Stein systematized these findings.[325] By observing the varying forms and rhythms of subjects under distraction, she identified two distinct personality types: extroverted and introspective. Through this typological

---

[320] Steiner, "The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting", p. 116.
[321] Steven Meyer, "Writing Psychology Over: Gertrude Stein and William James", in *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880 - 1940*, ed. Mark S. Micale, Cultural Sitings (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 250–74.
[322] Meyer, "Writing Psychology Over: Gertrude Stein and William James", p. 252.
[323] Meyer, "Writing Psychology Over: Gertrude Stein and William James", p. 252.
[324] Leon M. Solomons and Gertrude Stein, "Normal Motor Automatism", *Psychological Review* 3, no. 5, pp. 492–512.
[325] Gertrude Stein, "Cultivated Motor Automatism: A Study of Character in Its Relation to Attention", *Psychological Review*, May (1898), pp. 295–306.

classification, Stein's inquiry evolved from a raw detection of bodily noise to a structured mapping of the involuntary undercurrents of human behaviour.

These antecedents accompanied Stein into her literary work. More than automatism itself, she was fascinated by the possibility – revealed through distraction – of dividing and multiplying herself: of reading and writing, speaking and listening at once. This experience of self-duplication became the hinge of her creativity, a state in which identity dissolved into movement and multiple faculties seemed to act simultaneously. It was this dynamic capacity that later defined her writing, and particularly her approach to the literary portrait.

Portraiture gradually assumed an increasingly central role in her work. The early traces of the genre in *Three Lives* (1909) were expanded in *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* (completed in 1911 but published in 1925), while *Tender Buttons* (1914), nothing less than a collection of portraits of rooms and food, explored further directions. These culminated in works such as *George Hugnet* (1928), considered the logical apex of Stein's programme. In the meantime, Stein developed consolidated systems for classifying individuals into types. She questioned how to make the "bottom nature" of people visible in text, meaning, with this term,

> hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different.[326]

She also listened to direct discourse, integrated it, and constructed loops from it while continually searching for the right rhythm for her prose. In her lecture *Portraits and Repetitions*, Stein explicitly defines the conceptual goal of her portraiture through the principle of "insistence".[327] While her structural use of near-identical words and phrases often invites readers to view her work as repetitive, Stein rejects this classification. She argues that, while human history may follow repetitive patterns, the lived experience of the individual is defined by "insistence" – the varying degrees of emphasis or energy each person places on specific moments and traits. Because no two moments of consciousness are identical, Stein contends that her writing can never be truly repetitive; in life, as in her prose, nothing is repeatable. Pursing insistence is, therefore, the only rigorous way of representing the vitality of experience.

In a state of fluctuating attention, Stein divides herself: she reads and writes, speaks and listens. In her practice, many of the elements we have encountered so far are condensed. There is room for prosopopeia and direct speech, but also for a para-Theophrastan search for the characteristics of individuals that she views as lying in the "rhythm of a personality".[328] In her tendency to expand and multiply herself, however, there is no space for memory – she does not need it in order to portray because, as she writes, "the making of a portrait of any one is as they are existing and as they are existing has nothing to do with remembering any

[326] Gertrude Stein, "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans" in *Lectures in America* (Boston: Beacon press, 1957), p. 138.
[327] Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition" in *Lectures in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 166.
[328] Stein, "Portraits and Repetition", p. 175.

one or anything. Do you see my point, but of course yes you do".[329] To return to the terms this retrospective on portraiture began with, we can say that it is through insistence that Stein creates portraits which exist in a "continuous present". In another essay, she defines this concept as follows:

> Continuous present is one thing and beginning again and again is another thing. These are both things. And then there is using everything. This brings us again to composition this the using everything. The using everything brings us to composition and to this composition. A continuous present and using everything and beginning again.[330]

Stein concludes *Portraits and Repetitions* with a definitive synthesis of her practice that directly prefigures the logic of video portraiture. By framing her linguistic "insistence" as a temporal progression, she aligns the writer's eye with the camera's lens: "I was doing what the cinema was doing, I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing".[331] This additive and mechanical logic is fundamental for understanding her poetics. In *Postmodernist Portraits*, Wendy Steiner offers one of the earliest and most lucid accounts of how Stein's literary portraiture transforms the very premises of representation.[332] According to Steiner, Stein's repetitive and self-reflexive method dismantles the traditional mimetic function of the portrait: instead of fixing identity through likeness, Stein's writing turns the portrait into a dynamic process – an unfolding structure that both produces and questions its subject. Steiner argues that this linguistic mechanism, grounded in repetition and variation, represents an early manifestation of the serial and mechanical aesthetics that would later define postwar visual art, most notably in Warhol's work. By reframing Stein's textual strategies as a formal and conceptual matrix for later artistic production, Steiner delineates a critical genealogy that links Modernist experiment to Postmodern image-making.

Building on this foundation, Edward D. Powers extends Steiner's insights by more explicitly tracing the points of connection between Stein's poetics, John Cage's explorations of indeterminacy and repetition, and Warhol's procedures of mechanical reproduction. In Powers' account, the composer and visual artist deeply admired Stein and referred to her work, drawing inspiration from her for many of his projects. Early in his career, Cage set several of her texts to music, including *Three Songs* (1933) and *Living Room Music* (1940). The connection is also evident in the Foreword to *Silence*, where Cage cites Stein directly, as well as in his lecture *45' for a Speaker*, where he states: "there is no such thing as silence", explicitly echoing one of her assertions.[333]

Another trace of Stein's influence on Cage's work appears in his celebrated performance of Erik Satie's *Vexations* (1963), a piece of fifty-two bars repeated 840 times for a duration of nearly nineteen hours. This is a concrete enactment of the concept of insistence. However, what matters most for our discussion here is the role Powers attributes to Cage: "Cage's

[329] Stein, "Portraits and Repetition", pp. 175–176.
[330] Gertrude Stein, *What Are Masterpieces* (New York, Toronto, London, Tel Aviv: Pitman Publishing Corporations, 1970), pp. 31–32.
[331] Stein, "Portraits and Repetition", p. 176.
[332] Wendy Steiner, "Postmodernist Portraits", *Art Journal* 46, no. 3 (September 1987).
[333] Edward D. Powers, "Attention Must Be Paid: Andy Warhol, John Cage and Gertrude Stein", *European Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 1 (March 2014), pp. 6–7.

production of Vexations and his lecture-performances, more generally, would have constituted a powerful, if intermediary, point of contact between Stein and Warhol".[334] It is precisely around Warhol that these threads converge.



Figure 23 Andy Warhol, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Shoe*, ca. 1955. Offset lithograph, Copyright of the Andy Warhol Foundation.

Warhol's work maintains a dual connection to Stein, engaging with both her theoretical insights and her status as a Modern intellectual. This relationship is most explicit in his 1950s series *À la Recherche du Shoe Perdu*, specifically in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Shoe* where he transforms Alice Toklas into a hyperfeminine pink shoe. The dialogue continued into the 1980s with the series *Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century*, where Warhol rendered Stein's face from an identity document. The artist's nickname for the series, "Jew Geniuses", pointedly alludes to Stein's self-definition as a genius and the broader concept of genius as previously discussed.[335]

[334] Powers, "Attention Must Be Paid: Andy Warhol, John Cage and Gertrude Stein", p. 8.
[335] Powers, "Attention Must Be Paid: Andy Warhol, John Cage and Gertrude Stein", p. 9.



Figure 24 Andy Warhol, Gertrude Stein, from *Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century,* 1980. Screen-print on Lenox Museum Board. Copyright of the artist.

This connection is also structural, rooted in formal and theoretical affinities that align with Steiner's research. Based on the cinematic image informing Stein's portraiture, Warhol's silkscreens follow an analogous pattern of repeated insistence. This method does not merely replicate an image; instead, it utilizes the mechanical process to mirror Stein's linguistic insistence. In both cases, the serial nature of the work functions as a continuous succession of statements in which each slight variation in the silkscreen ink or printed frame operates as a form of insistence rather than simple repetition. Considering Warhol's *Jackie* (1964), *Marilyn Monroe* (1962), and *Mona Lisa* (1962), Steiner observes:

> Whereas Stein's striking repetitions were meant to overcome automatized perceptions of her subjects, Warhol's repetitions overcome automatized perceptions of images. He was aware of how people become images in the first place. 'Repetition adds up to reputation,' he observed. By changing that temporal repetition into a spatial simultaneity – a design – he was making us see those predigested media images as if for the first time.[336]

Through repetition, then, Warhol restores the multiple facets of the subject and makes use of the ensemble of his variations to offer a portrait that resembles a first encounter, thus making room for authenticity. Insistence also manifests in his films, such as *Sleep*. Henry Geldzahler, critic and friend of Warhol's, observed that the film's extremely lengthy duration

[336] Steiner, "Postmodernist Portraits", *Art Journal* 46, no. 3 (September 1987), p. 174.

(five hours and twenty-one minutes), with minimal editing, produces the effect whereby "The slightest variation becomes an event, something on which we can focus our attention. As less and less happens on the screen".[337] At the same time, there is no attempt to deceive the viewer with the illusion of reality: the edges of the frame remain constantly visible. The spectator is thus invited to observe themselves observing, giving rise, precisely through insistence, to a duplication of attention.

According to Powers, this process was further developed in the *Screen Tests*, and particularly in one of the earliest experiments, a film titled *Henry Geldzahler* (1964) and dedicated precisely to Geldzahler. In this portrait, Warhol was directly inspired by the composition of Picasso's celebrated portrait of Stein; at the same time, however, he also advanced further in his own exploration of portraiture.[338] The Henry Geldzahler portrait does not belong strictly to the traditional *Screen Tests*, though the critic also appears in that series in 1965. Rather, it should be viewed as part of Warhol's parallel experiments. The most marked difference lies in the film's duration: instead of the usual three minutes, it lasts ninety-nine minutes and was shot at sixteen frames per second. As Juan A. Suárez has reconstructed, it was filmed the day after the shooting of *Empire*, the eight-hour film whose sole subject was the Empire State Building.[339] To optimize costs, Warhol used the same rented 16 mm Auricon camera (perversely, without audio) and two leftover reels of film. During the shoot, Geldzahler later recalled being initially confused by Warhol's instructions:

> So I called Andy and he was making a film. I got to the studio and said 'What are you making a film of?' and he said, 'Of you.' I said, 'What should I do?' He said 'Smoke a cigar.' I had a big cigar with me. I was also stoned, mildly stoned, on some good pot, if I remember correctly. I said, 'How long is the film going to be?' and he said, 'An hour and a half.' I said, 'What should I do?' He said, 'Don't do anything. Just sit there and smoke a cigar'.[340]

[337] Henry Geldzahler, *Making It New: Essays, Interviews, and Talks*, (San Diego, Calif: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996), p. 34.
[338] Edward D. Powers, "For Your Immediate Attention: Gertrude Stein, Andy Warhol, and Henry Geldzahler", *Word & Image* 30, no. 4 (October 2014), pp. 423-425.
[339] Juan A. Suárez, "The Face in Flight: Andy Warhol's Henry Geldzahler", *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 4 (2019), p. 113.
[340] Henry Geldzahler, interviewed by John Wilcock, in John Wilcock, *The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol* in Juan A. Suárez, "The Face in Flight: Andy Warhol's Henry Geldzahler", p. 113.



Figure 25 Andy Warhol, *Henry Geldzahler,* 1964. Film still. Copyright of the Andy Warhol Foundation.

However, after his initial disorientation and once he had viewed the entire film, the critic recognized Warhol's standing as a portraitist. In his words:

> But seeing the film, I suddenly realized that Andy's nature really is a great portraitist, and that if you sit somebody in front of a camera for an hour and a half and don't tell them what to do, they're going to do everything, their whole vocabulary. I went through my entire history of gestures. I could see from viewing the film later on that it gave me away completely – the extent to which I am infantile, the extent to which I am megalomaniacal – all the things one tries to hide come through on the film.[341]

Geldzahler's words reveal the effect of the long exposure orchestrated by Warhol – the same one that reverberates through the *Screen Tests*. Expressions such as "history of gestures" and "vocabulary" suggest that the critic, without realizing it, had revealed the most salient aspects of his personality: an attitude reminiscent of the search for individual characteristics that, as we have seen, structured the Theophrastan literary portraits as well. According to Powers, this occurred in a state of suspended attention, by revealing automatisms triggered in the filmed subject. The historian emphasizes the effect of Warhol's portraiture, noting that the artist generated a kind of technology capable of reconstructing the moment of genius identified by Stein: within the recorded suspension of the films, the subjects cannot help but observe themselves while being observed.[342] However, in this case, and in the case of the *Screen Tests*, what Warhol captures is not the manifestation of genius in his subjects but rather their most authentic and least controlled aspects. It is not, therefore, a revelation of depth – as has been noted, Stein's path is not the one to follow if that is the goal – but rather an exploration of everything that already exists on the surface and that, with the right framing, can prove extraordinarily revealing for creating a portrait.

[341] Suárez, "The Face in Flight: Andy Warhol's Henry Geldzahler", 113.
[342] Powers, "For Your Immediate Attention: Gertrude Stein, Andy Warhol, and Henry Geldzahler", p. 424.

And it is from this final connection, between literary portraiture and the *Screen Tests*, that we can now return to video portraits.

3.3.2 Charisma, Myth and the Kontakt Portrait

At least for the video portraits presented so far, the foundations of video portraiture intersect with concepts, such as insistence, that have undergone extensive theoretical development. Considering the etymology of portrait as a word, that is, acting to keep something elusive, "insistence" can be treated as a kind of tool for pinning down that which eludes the viewer or hides itself, thus forming the foundation of portraiture itself.

Stein's strategies, later expanded by Warhol, provide an interpretive key for exploring productions from Vienna, generating the question: "What becomes of insistence in these cases?" Beginning with Wilhelm Gaube's *Künstlerporträts*, it becomes clear that extending these tools to productions that do not directly reference them can be extremely complex. Insistence was overtly present in the *Screen Tests*, as already argued, and Kogler's portraits demonstrate how it has been elevated to the level of structure itself. Gaube's case is different, however. His framings are too varied and his narrative schemes too heterogeneous for this form of insistence to be measured as part of a calibrated system. Even the conversation and rhythm of dialogue vary in ways that resist easy categorization. Moreover, there are profound differences between the conversations selected by *Der Standard* for the DVD, where Gaube's voice provides contextual framing of the artist and their work in some portraits, and those in Burger's film, where the exchange appears freer. This likely stems from the sheer multitude of recorded portraits, so many that the overall body of work includes representations which openly contrast with each other.

Yet here, too, there are aspects Gaube returns to insistently. Shots of the artworks, for instance, are fundamental to the narrative, as are close-ups of the artist or footage showing their gestures (Johannes Koller touching wooden train models, Franz Ringel painting and smoking). More broadly, as already mentioned, Gaube insists on construction: constructing a relationship, an action, and the artist's body itself (revealed through shifting framings and lighting) as the portrait takes shape. What emerges is a fragmented narrative: deeply intimate glimpses of the artist from different viewpoints that ultimately aim to convey a dynamic rather than constructing a single image.

The *Kontakt Video Portraits*, by contrast, inherit from Kogler the attention to narrative structure but develop it in an entirely different direction. There is (immediately recognizable on the portraits' web page) a kind of template that, as in the work for museum in progress, reiterates the project's core focus. In both Kogler's work and the Kontakt video portraits, these formal digital presentations could be read as echoing the movement of Warhol's silkscreens: instead of misregistration, the act that slightly alters the image is that of alternating between subjects.

For Kontakt, the progressive zoom sets in motion a dynamic of becoming. This process culminates in a portrait which is formally different at the end than appeared at the start of the conversation. The conversation itself is also subject to a different kind of control. There is a clear objective: to reconstruct a collective history, a contextual narrative alongside the personal one. The aim is to unite macro and micro levels. This meticulous exercise of control

and repetition of techniques closely resembles the concept of insistence, but articulates it in a new way.

The analytical key of "insistence" highlights the narrative structures inherent to these two video portrait formats. However, the way these structures shape the specific narrative of the artist remains to be addressed. Specifically, the inquiry must focus on the trajectory of the charisma stemming from the artists' own accounts. The goal here is to understand how this charisma contributes to a new representational paradigm without lapsing into mythical or stereotyped narratives. In other words, the "charismatic lens" serves to determine whether these productions function as charismatic technologies: devices in which the power of the artist's narrative drives authentic and recognizable modes of representation.

The elastic nature of charisma has proved useful in capturing, at least in part, what makes the artist's narrative so distinctive and dense. The fascinating dynamics of charisma in this case subsumed those of co-constructing 'artisticity' and, in so doing, allowed us to perceive what occurred within Kogler's work. Here, the oscillation of status (from artist to individual to artwork) was read as a new rhythm imposed on myth, thereby creating a threshold from which to observe, and therefore narrate, the artist.

In addition, so as not to expand this interpretive lens further, these selected works are closely related. Given the relationship with insistence delineated so far, the question now becomes not simply whether these video portraits can also be considered charismatic technologies, but in what sense and to what degree each of them engages in a charismatic construction of the narrative of the artist.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to extend the charismatic technologies lens to Gaube's *Künstlerporträts*. The extreme heterogeneity of his interviews complicates any straightforward assessment. Some portraits privilege a more discursive register, incorporating voiceover narration: for example, Wolfgang Herzig's portrait from 1987 starts with a voiceover announcing "Weil der Mensch ein Mensch ist und also sterblich, hat es mit dem Sterben bei Herzig eine besondere Bewandtnis. Leben und Leiden, Leben und Tod sind in seiner Malerei so benachbart wie in der Wirklichkeit".[343] Elsewhere, the voice-over moves beyond mere explanation or introduction to instead create a disorienting, almost hallucinatory atmosphere. This shift is evident in the portrait of Johann Jascha, where a stern voice recites over footage of the artist grimacing and contorting his features:

> Der Mensch hat einen tiefen Hang, sich zu prostituieren, aufzudecken, nackt zu zeigen. Nur kann er ihn nirgends befriedigen. Dies war schon die Wurzel des uralten Dionysoskults, wo die Männer und Frauen sich im Rausche die Kleider vom Leibe gerissen und einander wild durcheinander begatteten, was aber die Griechen, die keine solchen Philister waren wie wir, nicht als schamlose Orgie, sondern als heilige Raserei bezeichneten.[344]

[343] "Because man is human and therefore mortal, dying has a special significance in Herzig's work. Life and suffering, life and death are as closely intertwined in his painting as they are in reality." Wilhelm Gaube, *Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts*

[344] "Man has a deep inclination to prostitute himself, to expose himself, to show himself naked. But he can satisfy this nowhere. This was already the root of the ancient Dionysian cult, where men and women in their intoxication tore the clothes from their bodies and wildly copulated with one another, which however the Greeks, who were not such philistines as we are, described not as a shameless orgy, but as sacred frenzy". Wilhelm Gaube, *Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts*

In other portraits, the pace of the film is set by direct dialogue: the rhythmic back-and-forth between Gaube's questions and the artist's answers. In these moments of verbal exchange, the relational aspect of the project is clear and can be seen to focus on the interpersonal bond between them rather than the subject's artistic output.

Gaube's *Künstlerporträts* can therefore be seen to contain a dual track: one in which the artist narrative is renewed and vivified by the injection of authenticity the human relationship with Gaube introduces, and another in which the narration remains more closed and intimate. These are not hermetic works, but portraits in which the element being foregrounded is not so much the artist themselves as it is the fascination the documentarian experiences.

This distinction can itself be explained through Lindholm's theory of charisma. As mentioned, Gaube has long been fascinated by the existence of individuals who consecrate their lives to something as superfluous and socially ambiguous as making art. This fascination became the point of observation from which he approached artists and constructed the common ground on which he met them and ultimately became one of them. The similarities shared between the charismatic relationship and the amorous one Lindholm discusses offer a basis for rereading these portraits, bringing Gaube's point of view into line with that of the fascinated observer. The "feeling of narcissistic expansion, transcendence, group cohesiveness and emotional catharsis", if stripped of its extreme Freudian and Weberian connotations, paraphrases Gaube's gaze precisely: this is the gaze he uses to enter the world of artists and to sustain his decades-long inquiry into them. [345]

It follows that Gaube's portraits cannot be straightforwardly classified as charismatic technologies, even if some of them do occasionally generate effects that resemble those of the format. What prevents the category from applying fully is not an absence of charismatic dynamics, but a displacement of their object. Where Kogler's portraits intervene in the construction of artistic subjectivity, Gaube's portraits turn inward: what they document, ultimately, is not the artist but the filmmaker's own admiration. His *Künstlerporträts* are less an investigation of artistic identity than an inquiry into fascination itself

The case of *Kontakt Video Portraits* is different. Here, the figure of the artist is not emphasized; rather, it is placed on the same level as other actors in Viennese cultural life, although deeply connected to the art scene. The fact that the category of the artist in this case has less defined boundaries does not resolve the mystery of the artist by diluting it. The very nature of Kontakt, a collection of contemporary artworks, indicates the central role that art and artists play in this project. Yet the artistic dimension this project seeks to reconnect with is not directly available: as mentioned, Kontakt takes on the role of reconstructing the art-historical memory of a neglected period. This scenario requires a choral construction of the narrative.

Cultural and personal life are the two levels that the portraits intersect with, each in its own way. This intersection starts from the framing: the wide shot at the beginning differs from the tight shot at the end. Between these two dimensions, what happens and what connects them is the zoom – and the zoom in turn reflects the cognitive movement of the interview. Here, the dynamism that Kogler does not make use of is employed to take the

[345] Charles Lindholm, "Lovers and Leaders: A Comparison of Social and Psychological Models of Romance and Charisma", *Social Science Information* 27, no. 1 (March 1988), pp. 21–22.

effect produced by the charismatic technology inspired by *Portraits of Artists* and push it onto another plane. However, instead of a transformation of the artist into artwork, here the interviewee tends to become history: to stand out within and beyond a context that takes shape as the conversation proceeds.

In this case, ambiguity between artist and history operates without producing the vivifying perception van Eck identifies as the living presence response. Rather, the narrative of the artists, their genesis and mythology, flows into the reconstruction of the artistic landscape that developed within the broad geographical-conceptual category of the East between the 1960s and 1990s. It is as if, through the portrait, the charismatic narrative is subjected to formal and hermeneutic pressure such that it flows out from singularity to pour into a broader context. This process could also be explained in terms of the charismatic creation of a myth, in this case historically well delimited.

The scholar Raphael Falco has addressed this fragile (because difficult to define) mechanism of constructing mythological narrative. Some of his insights help explain what happens in the Kontakt videos. Falco reasons about the depersonalization of charisma, and thus the way this attribute ends up being detached from a leader. In his view, charisma arises from an experience shared by a group, since it "simply does not exist outside group experiences".[346] The group may then select a leader, but charisma both precedes and transcends the individual. However, the most interesting aspect here is Falco's identification of the discursive nature of charisma and, above all, the solidity that charisma can grant to myth: "Most myth systems will not function as successful and long-lasting social vehicles without an active charismatic element".[347]

If, as Falco argues, "mythmaking requires a human imagination both to fashion and refashion the narrative", then drawing on his insights to interpret the Kontakt videos as charismatic technologies does not alter the interpretive lens adopted so far.[348] Rather, it supplements that lens in a way that accounts for the specific ways in which charisma, narrative, and historical consciousness are articulated in the Kontakt project. What is particularly revealing is how these charismatic technologies diverge from the model provided by *Portraits of Artists*.

Whereas the latter foregrounds the singularity of artistic presence, the Kontakt videos redirect the artist's myth by establishing a framework through which individual charismatic narratives are able to crystallize into a collective historical configuration. The scenario they outline, that is, Kontakt's main focus, is thus recast as myth: not as a fanciful or escapist transfiguration, but as a narrative formation that is continually reoriented in order to remain operative, thus providing a conceptual backdrop against which current challenges are rendered intelligible. In this sense, the mythopoetic formulation of shared experience functions as a means of activating history in the present day; after all, as Falco reminds us, "with mythopoesis comes agency".[349]

---

[346] Raphael Falco, "Charisma and Myth", in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Anthropology*, ed. Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, Ashgate Research Companion (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), p. 105.
[347] Falco, "Charisma and Myth", p. 99.
[348] Falco, "Charisma and Myth", p. 121.
[349] Falco, "Charisma and Myth", p. 121.

From this perspective, Kontakt's object of interest (a polymorphous idea of the East that reconfigures and co-constructs itself from one narrative to the next and from one piece to another) can be understood as myth in Falco's sense. The ways Kontakt archives, orders, and maps artists' experiences reveal a clear aspiration to generate what Falco terms a "charismatically sustained discourse" within which the *Kontakt Video Portraits* perform a fundamental connective and constitutive role.[350]

It is within this framework of charismatic technology that the formal elements of the *Kontakt Video Portraits* can be seen as fully justified. The progressive zoom, for instance, visually translates a movement from individual experience towards history. Framing strategies that gradually tighten in on the artist's face while the discourse expands towards a broader sociocultural horizon produce a productive tension: the artist comes to the fore as simultaneously subject and witness, as both a particular presence and an emblematic figure. Finally, the emphasis on speech and documentary content proves more than a mere narrative device; it becomes the primary instrument through which charisma, emerging from the artist's own act of narration, is channelled into the construction of a collective discourse.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter has examined video portraits within the Viennese context, identifying distinct projects and representational techniques. The comparison with Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* made these innovations more visible. By engaging with the case of the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, in turn, the investigation was able to trace their references more precisely, a process that led to the discovery of Wilhelm Gaube's portraits. Gaube's *Künstlerporträts* broadened the available models and prompted a different way of thinking about artist video portraits. In documenting more than one generation of Viennese artists, his films also returned the attention to themes such as authenticity and the human curiosity surrounding those who make art. They also reinforced the position set out in this study's introduction: the idea that the artist and creative impulse should remain central to both narrative and interpretation.

The *Kontakt Video Portraits* draw on these traditions while reflecting the broader scope of the Kontakt Collection itself, that is, to map the stories of artists from a geography that extends well beyond Vienna into Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. By recovering these faces and using the zoom to place them in a context that is at once spatial and historical, they show just how expansive artist video portraiture can become when it ventures beyond mythology and the limits of biography. Reading these formats as charismatic technologies allows us to uncover the forces that propel the representation of the artist towardss something dynamic. Rather than settling into a rigid framework, biography and practice engage in dialogue and conversation to generate a movement that mirrors the distinctiveness of artistic practice and the lived condition of those who pursue it.

Yet the *Kontakt Video Portraits* also mark a genuine extension of this technique into the online world. They transport an established set of structures and functions into a new environment and open a door that had previously remained shut. As the next chapter explores in greater depth, the internet is dense with video portraits. Examining and reconsidering these

[350] Falco, "Charisma and Myth", p. 108.

productions, even though they fall outside the Viennese context, represents both the most theoretically daring and most methodologically necessary next step in testing the interpretive lens developed over the preceding chapters. More than anything, it offers a means of deepening this understanding of video interviews and, with them, the identity and narrative of the artist.

4. From Portrait to Tutorial: Louisiana Channel and TateShots in the YouTube Ecosystem

This chapter takes the theme of video artist portraits and subjects it to a radical reconsideration. The case studies examined here diverge sharply from those previously identified: Vienna is no longer central, and the historical connections that shaped earlier analysis fade from view. It is instead the international digital arena that takes centre stage, with the internet becoming the primary focus. The principal case study is Louisiana Channel, the online platform of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art that publishes artist interviews, examined alongside TateShots, a parallel series that inspired the Danish museum's approach.

In these videos, the authorial signature characteristic of earlier models is no longer foregrounded and so the analysis calls for new conceptual frameworks drawn from journalistic practices. Unlike previous representational strategies, journalistic portraits operate through subject co-construction and are oriented towards narratives that explore intimacy and interiority. The artist's identity takes shape not as autonomous or complete, but as contingent and shaped through dialogue itself. Both Tate and Louisiana distil a particular artist narrative privileging biography and practice, thus making the moment of artistic vocation and the artist's working methods central to the representation.

These videos also operate in a substantially different digital landscape, namely YouTube, where shareability and participatory engagement fundamentally reshape circulation. Particularly noteworthy is their structural affinity with the tutorial format, a genre that frames artistic experience as transferable, open-ended knowledge. Rather than presenting a self-contained or finished portrait, these narratives remain incomplete, available for rearrangement and appropriation by viewers. This convergence suggests a new interpretive category: the existential tutorial. This shift reveals how the artist myth itself has been transformed to accommodate a weakened, distributed authorship.

Unlike earlier charismatic technologies relying on mystery and distance, these productions operate through proximity and transparency. The mystery shifts from what the artist is to how the artist works; what was once framed as an inaccessible gift becomes an accessible method. This relocation of charisma into the realm of practice constitutes a significant transformation in the way contemporary art institutions frame both artistic identity and creative subjectivity.

4.1 Origins and Philosophy of the Louisiana Channel Project

Louisiana Channel, the online platform of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark, is, according to The New York Times, among the museums' notably successful communication projects.[351] As Jason Farago observes, Louisiana has distinguished itself through investments in digital initiatives and content production. The platform hosts interviews and conversations with artists, writers, musicians, and prominent figures from the international cultural scene. Although the article dates to 2020, Louisiana Channel's

[351] Jason Farago, "Now Virtual and in Video, Museum Websites Shake Off the Dust", *The New York Times*, 24 April 2020, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/23/arts/design/best-virtual-museum-guides.html.

development began much earlier. The conversation I had with Louisiana Channel's current director and one of its founders, Marc-Christoph Wagner, contributed significantly to reconstructing this platform's story.

Wagner explained that, although it was launched on November 28, 2012, the conception of this project can be traced back two years earlier, when he and museum director Poul Erik Tøjner initially discussed it. From the outset, similar to *Portraits of Artists* for the museum in progress, the channel was designed to be affiliated with the museum yet operationally independent. The platform was not conceived to echo the museum's exhibitions or events, therefore, but rather to create something new and parallel. The website states: "With Louisiana Channel as a platform, Louisiana provides culture to the Internet, extending beyond the museum's own events. The Louisiana team produces videos about art and culture on an ongoing basis" and it continues: "We see Louisiana Channel as an integral part of a museum for the 21st century, capable of engaging a new generation in our cultural heritage, in an intelligent present and an ambitious future".[352]

The project's scale is remarkable, both in its publishing frequency (roughly two interviews per week) and in the range of professionals interviewed, spanning from artists to musicians and writers. The platform projects the museum far beyond its physical walls and should be considered alongside other initiatives that expand the institution's reach. The Louisiana Literature Festival, which began in 2010, is another example of the institution's openness.[353] Held in late August, the festival brings together authors and publishers both Danish and international (guests have included Sally Rooney, Patti Smith, and Édouard Louis) for three days of events, performances, public readings, and interviews. These interviews also appear on Louisiana Channel and, as Wagner notes, demonstrate "the museum's interdisciplinary spirit".[354] Unpacking this sentence requires a deeper understanding of the museum's story.

4.1.1 Historical Overview of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art's openness and its role in developing an expanded vision of what constitutes an art museum can be traced back to its origins and structure. Michael Sheridan, one of the few scholars to examine the museum's history, has shown that its own eclectic structure mirrored the explorative museum's ethos.[355] Drawing on Sheridan's research, what follows is a condensed account focused on aspects that illuminate the museum's expansive approach.

The museum's story began with Knud W. Jensen, an entrepreneur from the food industry who purchased a villa in Humlebæk, just outside Copenhagen, in 1955, with the idea of transforming it into a museum or gallery.

Jensen's background in business might make him appear an unlikely museum founder, yet he developed an early and profound passion for art. After his father's death, he embarked on

[352] "About Us", channel.louisiana.dk, 30 October 2012, accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/about-us.
[353] "Louisiana Literature", louisiana.dk, accessed May 25, 2026, https://louisiana.dk/en/whats-on/louisiana-literature/.
[354] Marc-Christoph Wagner, "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner", interview by Guido Balzani, February 1, 2024, Appendix F.
[355] Michael Sheridan, *A Qualified Utopia: The Work of Jørgen Bo and Vilhelm Wohlert at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art*, preprint, Royal Danish Academy – Architecture, Design, Conservation, 2023.

a double life as both businessman and patron, generating numerous initiatives along the way. His engagement with art extended beyond patronage to include a critical understanding of Denmark's cultural landscape. He was deeply dissatisfied with the capital's artistic institutions, dismissing the Statens Museum for Kunst as a "horror cabinet".[356]

With these experiences behind him, by 1956 Jensen had honed his capabilities as a collector, patron, and event organizer. Marking a decisive turn, that was the year he brought in architects Jørgen Bo and Vilhelm Wohlert who would continue to collaborate on the building for roughly forty years. Sheridan's research reveals a working dynamic in which Jensen led with a clear vision while the architects worked to realize his ideas.

This extended collaboration produced a museum whose long architectural history became a repository for Jensen's evolving projects and expectations. The accumulated layers of renovation and expansion embody an approach that resonates clearly with the spirit Wagner described when discussing Louisiana Channel's independence from the museum's direct programming.

In the initial phase (1956–1958), Jensen aimed to create a home for art that, in his words, might belong to a "slightly eccentric country uncle".[357] The architecture was conceived as domestic in character, establishing an intimate relationship with its surroundings. The exhibition experience was designed to merge art with everyday life.

This intimate vision, however, proved short-lived. Shortly after the museum opened in 1958 to great success, Jensen's conception shifted radically. Between 1959 and 1971, the museum was transformed from an intimate institution into a larger cultural centre with a growing emphasis on temporary exhibitions, thus calling for the first significant architectural change: conventional, enclosed exhibition spaces illuminated by skylights.

The museum's evolution continued to accelerate. During the following decade (1972–1982), it became a major international institution with a collection increasingly focused on foreign art, adding features such as a concert hall and further cementing its role as a comprehensive cultural destination.

Observing from the present day, and the effects of this evolutionary approach remain evident. Recent expansions have made the museum one of "the most visited museum for modern and contemporary art in Scandinavia" with over 700,000 visitors annually.[358] This reflects director Poul Erik Tøjner's plan to create exhibitions that are popular but not populist: accessible yet methodically constructed.

The success of this approach, built on Jensen's legacy of evolution and expansion, has granted the museum considerable independence from state funding: "The museum receives approx. 15% in operating support from the public, the rest is financed through own earnings and sponsors".[359] This solidity allows it to experiment in further directions and thus maintain its openness. In this light, if Jensen's successive architectural expansions can be said to have redefined the physical boundaries of the institution, Louisiana Channel represents a logical extension of this expansive ethos into the digital realm.

---

[356] Sheridan, *A Qualified* Utopia, p. 12.
[357] Sheridan, *A Qualified Utopia*, p. 145.
[358] "About Louisiana", louisiana.dk, accessed March 12, 2026, https://louisiana.dk/en/louisiana-info/.
[359] "About Louisiana", louisiana.dk.

4.2 A Closer Look at the Louisiana Channel

Having sketched its historical origins, let us proceed with a closer consideration of the Channel. The Louisiana Channel homepage opens with recent conversations, but the chronological key is not the only one operating here. Below these appear *Featured Series* such as *Advice to the Young: Advice from one generation of artists to the next,* or *Facing the Blank Page: Writers talk about the horror of the blank page*, followed by *Editors' Picks* and *What we like on the web*, where the team highlights selected interviews from other channels. Via the site menu, visitors can browse video collections organized by topic: Art, Literature, Music, Architecture, and Design.

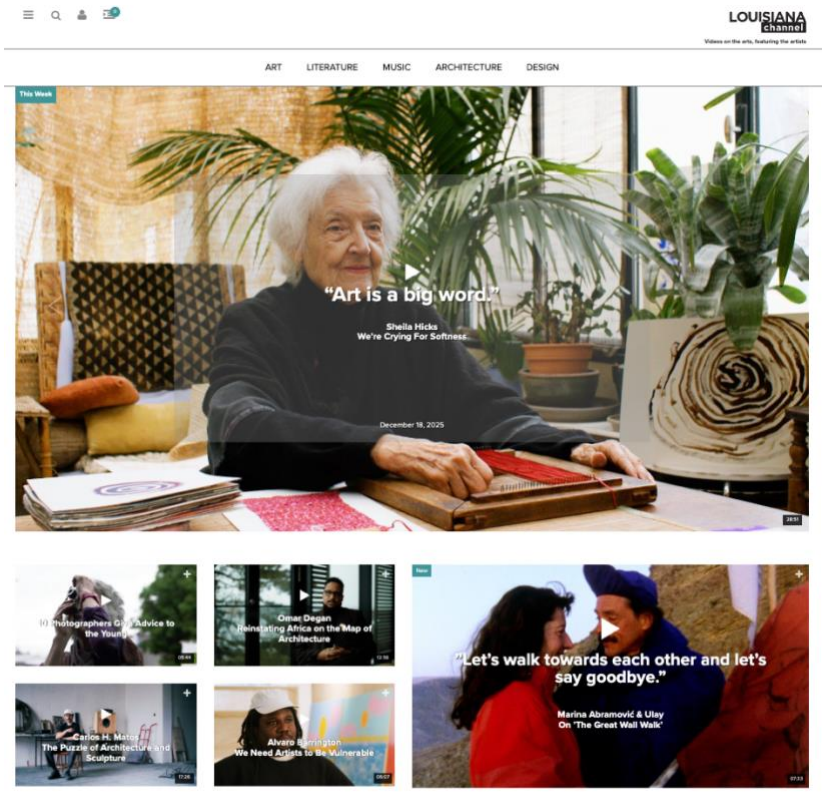

Figure 26 Homepage of Louisiana Channel, screenshot. Copyright and courtesy Louisiana Channel, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, https://channel.louisiana.dk, accessed May 12, 2026.

The conversations vary considerably in length, from a few minutes to half an hour or even fifty minutes, and the channel itself is just one of the platforms through which they circulate. These same interviews also appear on Louisiana Channel's Instagram profile (maintained separately from the museums, though its account does share some content) as short reels, and on YouTube, where both full-length videos and brief excerpts are available.

On a formal level, these interviews share some of the features repeatedly appearing in the previous format analysed. For example, the interviewer remains invisible, with their questions and voice absent from the final edit. The resulting video resembles a monologue as the artist occupies the frame through close-ups, medium shots, or macro framing. These shots are sometimes interspersed with footage of artwork or images of the artists in their studios or at the museum, although no fixed pattern can be identified.

The conversations with both the director of the Channel, Wagner, and other editors proved to be crucial for furthering my comprehension of this specific format by going beyond the immediately visible aspects. As they both explained to me, the team does not always travel to artists' studios. Filming proves costly, requiring not only a staff member to conduct the conversation but also a technician to handle audio, lighting, and camera work. The team often arranges to meet artists when they are already travelling to Denmark, a practice that resembles the *Portraits of Artists*' tendency for Kogler to focus on those passing through Vienna, although here it is applied less systematically.

This approach, however, is not rigid. Nanna Rebekka's interview with Jeremy Deller, titled *A Visit to the Studio*, was filmed in the artist's London workspace.[360] The conversation with Umberto Eco, *I Was Always Narrating*, took place in his Milan apartment.[361] These exceptions demonstrate the flexibility of the channel's production methods. The interviews themselves have also gained recognition over time. As Wagner explained, while museum exhibitions initially served as a convenient way to recruit interview subjects, the interviews have become increasingly valued in their own right, with galleries now actively pushing for their artists to participate.[362]

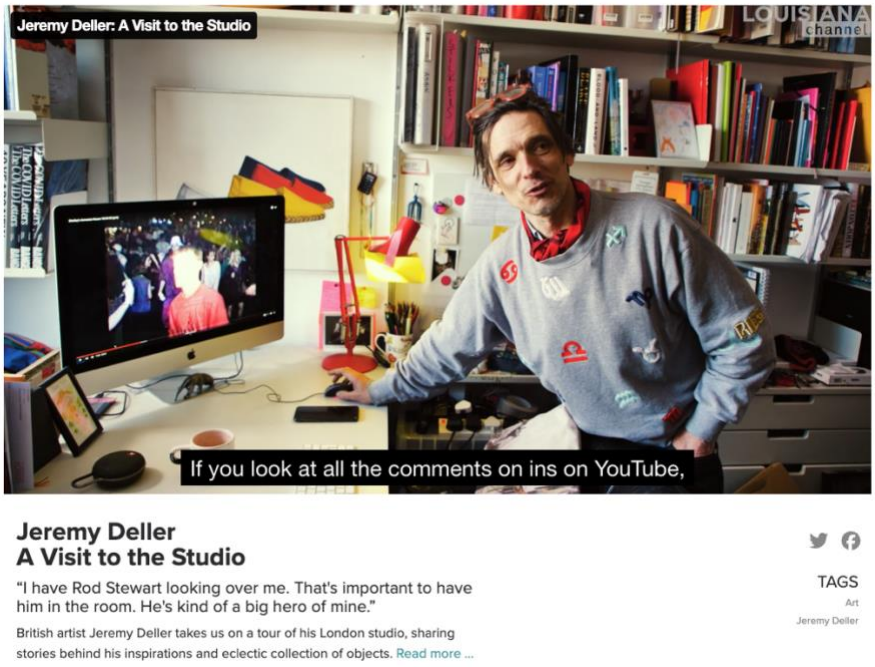

Figure 27 Nanna Rebekka, with Kyle Stevenson, *Jeremy Deller, A Visit to the Studio,* 2023. Screenshot. Copyright and courtesy Louisiana Channel, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/jeremy-deller-a-visit-to-the-studio, accessed May 12, 2026.

[360] *Jeremy Deller: A Visit to the Studio*, directed by Nanna Rebekka, with Kyle Stevenson (Louisiana Channel, 2023), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/jeremy-deller-a-visit-to-the-studio.
[361] *Umberto Eco: I Was Always Narrating*, produced by Roxanne Bagheshirin Lærkesen, directed by Tonny Vorm, with Klaus Elmer (Louisiana Channel, 2015), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/umberto-eco-i-was-always-narrating.
[362] Wagner "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner".

At the other end of the spectrum are episodes like the one featuring musician Iceage, *Writing Music Out of Spite*,[363] or Joyce Carol Oates, *As a Writer I Put My Faith In People*.[364] Both conversations were filmed during the literature festival.

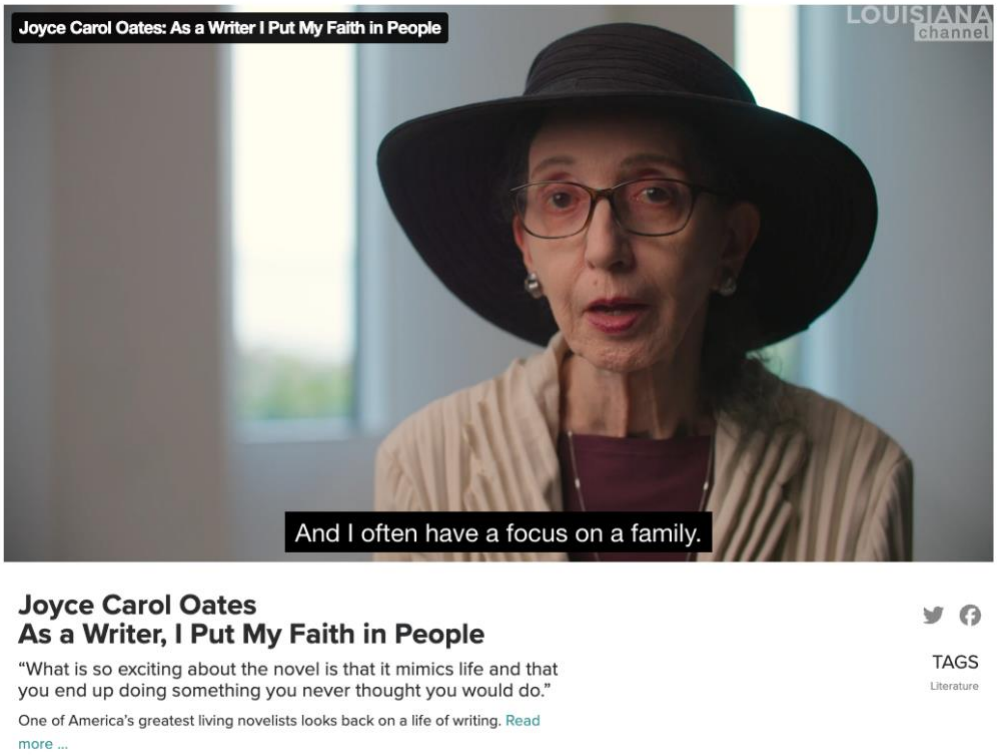

Figure 28 Elisabeth Skou Pedersen, with Christian Lund, *Joyce Carol Oates, As a Writer, I Put My Faith in People*, 2023. Screenshot. Copyright and courtesy Louisiana Channel, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/joyce-carol-oatesas-a-writer-i-put-my-faith-in-people, accessed May 12, 2026.

The production of the interviews is sophisticated and requires support from outside the museum itself. According to the website, the Channel is funded by Den A.P. Møllerske Støttefond as its primary supporter, followed by A.P. Møller Fonden, Ny Carlsberg Fondet, C.L. Davids Fond og Samling, and Nordea-fonden, the latter appearing as a supporter of select content, including interviews from the project's early years.[365]

Such an extensive support network, together with rational production logistics, enables the channel to concentrate on technical aspects that, until now, had not been afforded comparable attention in other similar projects. While it has improved over time, the quality of the footage is nevertheless higher than in the other cases examined here, as is the attention devoted to lighting its subjects. The soft illumination, along with soundtracks that often evoke suspended

[363] *Rock Band Iceage: Writing Music Out of Spite*, directed by Kasper Bech Dyg, with Jakob Solbakken (Louisiana Channel, 2021), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/iceage-writing-music-out-of-spite.
[364] *Joyce Carol Oates: As a Writer, I Put My Faith in People*, produced by Christian Lund, directed by Elisabeth Skou Pedersen, with Simon Weyhe and Signe Boe Pedersen (Louisiana Channel, 2023), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/joyce-carol-oatesas-a-writer-i-put-my-faith-in-people.
[365] It is sufficient to consult the various link to the interview to learn about the sponsors.

atmospheres, contributes to creating an intimate conversational space. A shallow depth of field produces the same effect, blurring backgrounds to keep focus on the subject.

At a formal level, therefore, what takes shape is a different type of audiovisual object. However, the communicative implications of this distinct register have yet to be defined.

4.2.1 Biography and Practice in the Interview

My conversations with Wagner and with a member of the Louisiana Channel team clarified what the channel's interviews aim to achieve.[366] As this team member explained, the team consists of eight people, each bringing their own approach to conducting interviews. An artistic background shapes this team member's particular focus on the artworks. What they seek to reconstruct through their narratives is the artist's personal dimension alongside an understanding of the work and its making, with the underlying aim of allowing viewers to sense the person behind it. Conversations typically open with the question of how the interviewee became an artist. When I asked whether there is a lack of human, personal portrayals of artists in this field, the response was that the issue is less one of absence than of emphasis: portraying artists as fully human matters precisely because it means addressing the insecurities, doubts, and failures that are rarely discussed. Institutions like Louisiana tend to produce a highly polished image of the contemporary artist, shaped by a discourse around the "artist-as-genius" whose purpose is ultimately to draw audiences to exhibitions. Louisiana Channel, the argument went, has the potential to create room for the vulnerability and uncertainty that such institutional contexts typically suppress.

This interest in the human dimension behind the work is echoed in Wagner's words. He told me he was likewise interested in tracing the interviewee's early steps as an author:

> When we interview an author, it is never about the most recent book alone. That may serve as a point of departure, but the real focus lies in understanding how the person became an author: why they were drawn to literature, which writers influenced them, and what inspired their creative path.[367]

Wagner does not come from the artistic field. His professional career roots in journalism: an aspect that will play a crucial part further in the chapter. Wagner studied political science and worked for many years as a journalist. The channel director attaches great importance to this background, seeing it as having brought innovation on multiple levels.

> I was primarily brought in because I understood production, how to plan a shoot, and manage the technical aspects. That was crucial from the very beginning. Even though the setup was visually simple – a person talking on a chair – we wanted it to be executed with technical precision. Simplicity can still be achieved beautifully. We introduced a two-camera system and paid great attention to framing and composition. That was my first contribution.[368]

Beyond overseeing the production, Wagner turned his attention to the conversations themselves and the interview style, developing and sharing an editorial approach with the team.

---

[366] Following the interview, the interviewee was contacted for review and approval of the material. As no final confirmation was received, the conversation is presented here in anonymised form.
[367] Wagner, "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner".
[368] Wagner, "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner".

> Later, I also helped to articulate the underlying philosophy of our interviews. I remember sending an email to the team outlining not specific questions, but rather the type of questions we should be asking. The guiding principle was always to produce interviews that would remain relevant long after their release. That remains my approach to this day.[369]

His approach distinguishes him from both the art world's mechanisms and the communicative codes typically used to discuss it. These qualities bring "journalistic clarity" to his practice, although his method resists simple definition. Wagner notes that his working approach shifts with each project, simply observing that "it depends greatly on the project".[370] The Norway shoot, which became the 2024 episode with Catherine Opie *Beginnings and Endings*, developed as observational form of reportage.[371] Filming Opie during the blue hour required constant adaptation to weather, light, and terrain. These shifting conditions meant working from a loose conceptual outline and allowing the questions to emerge from the immediate context.

The Walton Ford project, *A Bubble in the Lake*, demanded something different.[372] Aiming to produce "a comprehensive portrait", Wagner researched Ford's two studios in New York and rural New England as well as the natural motifs recurring in his work.[373] This preparation shaped a clear division in the interview: studio-based questions focused on technique, while outdoor conversations explored nature and formative experiences.

Wagner's use of the term portrait is quite specific. While the previous chapter traced a path from literary portraits through Stein, Warhol, and the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, this framework does not quite apply to the Louisiana Channel videos. The channel's journalistic style suggests portraits oriented towards an explanatory model: details about artistic practice and career beginnings seem to take precedence over any distinct authorial style. The Danish museum's videos are structured by linking accounts of work or practice to accounts of life. The episode with Elmgreen & Dragset illustrates this pattern. From the opening, the duo describes their work:

> It was not considered very noble to use storytelling in contemporary art. Of course, […] we wanted to work with that. […] It's always fun to drive the less trafficked way.
> […] We're in front of our sculpture, Statue of Liberty. It's an ATM machine embedded in an original piece from the Berlin Wall. We often work with displacement, placing objects in unusual locations, […] where this object was not supposed to be.[374]

The conversation then shifts to Michael Elmgreen's biographical narrative:

---

[369] Wagner, "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner".
[370] Wagner, "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner".
[371] *Catherine Opie: Beginnings and Endings*, directed by Marc-Christoph Wagner, with Simon Weyhe, and Jarl Therkelsen Kaldan (Louisiana Channel, 2024), accessed May 25, 2026,, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/catherine-opie-beginnings-and-endings.
[372] *Walton Ford: A Bubble in the Lake*, directed by Marc-Christoph Wagner, with Sean Hanley and Jarl Therkelsen Kaldan (Louisiana Channel, 2023), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/walton-ford-a-bubble-in-the-lake.
[373] Wagner, "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner".
[374] *Elmgreen & Dragset: The World Is Increasingly Absurd*, directed by Astrid Agnes Hald, with Olivia Newton (Louisiana Channel, 2025), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/elmgreen-dragset-the-world-is-increasingly-absurd.

> I don't really come from a family that would drag me to contemporary museums, but when I was in high school, I saw a Rothko painting for the first time, and I was quite astonished because the whole pattern and the colors of the painting were exactly the same as a long-haired carpet I had on the wall in my teenage room: I was sure he had ripped it off. For me, literature was very important. I think I may have read feminist literature at a young age. I'm not sure I understood everything.[375]

The episode with Bret Easton Ellis follows a similar arc, beginning with general reflections on his authorial persona: "Well, I'm often asked if I care about my reputation anymore. And my answer is no. I don't think I've ever really cared about my reputation. I might've pretended to care. It might've looked like I was caring, but, uh, I don't know what my reputation was".[376] And from there, moving to biographical details:

> My parents had books. House was filled with books as young as I can remember. There were books everywhere. And my parents were big readers. They read everything. They read quality literature, and they read pop literature. They read bestsellers, and they read, uh, European writers. Uh, I was introduced to books on my own through, of course, children's books, pictures, books, and than what we now call young adult novels.[377]

Other videos focus on a specific moment in the creative process or a key idea that shapes an artist's way of thinking. Examples include Colm Tóibín's *Finding an Anchor to Write From*[378] and Jeremy Deller's *Can Art Change the World?,*[379] an excerpt from the studio visit discussed earlier. These videos offer personal and insightful viewpoints, but their full meaning can only be grasped by viewing them as part of the larger project.

Across the interviews, the central aim is to place lived experience at the heart of the narration. This is most clearly articulated in the Series' section, where conversations are edited and grouped around common themes. By doing so, the project shifts attention from individual statements to broader experiential frameworks that guide how viewers engage with the content. One of the most exemplary videos in this sense is *Advice to the Young*, where prominent cultural figures address the new generations.[380] The responses span a spectrum from artist Orlan's terse "They don't need advice"[381] to photographer Nan Goldin's concrete exhortation: "My advice to young people is to put their phone down. […] I hope young people will take some power also and going to the streets and fight for what they believe in.

---

[375] *Elmgreen & Dragset: The World Is Increasingly Absurd*, directed by Astrid Agnes Hald.
[376] *Bret Easton Ellis: I Write From a Place of Feeling*, directed by Marc-Christoph Wagner, with Jakob Solbakken and Signe Boe Pedersen (Louisiana Channel, 2023), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/bret-easton-ellisi-write-from-a-place-of-feeling.
[377] *Bret Easton Ellis: I Write From a Place of Feeling*, directed by Marc-Christoph Wagner.
[378] *Colm Tóibín: Finding an Anchor to Write From*, directed by Eleanor Wachtel, with Simon Weyhe and Roxanne Bagheshirin Lærkesen (Louisiana Channel, 2024), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/colm-t%c3%b3ib%c3%adn-finding-an-anchor-to-write-from.
[379] *Jeremy Deller: Can Art Change the World?*, directed by Nanna Rebekka, with Kyle Stevenson (Louisiana Channel, 2023), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/jeremy-deller-can-art-change-the-world.
[380] "Advice to the Young", channel.louisiana.dk, accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/10-photographers-give-advice-to-the-young.
[381] *ORLAN: Advice to the Young*, directed by Roxanne Bagheshirin Lærkesen, with Jakob Solbakken (Louisiana Channel, 2022), accessed March 12, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/orlan-advice-to-the-young.

Good luck. I'm sorry for young people that there are these existential disasters looming".[382] Umberto Eco strikes a different note, advocating patience and labour while reminding viewers that "You're 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration".[383]

Facing the Blank Page features writers such as Margaret Atwood, who suggests: "If you're skiing downhill, and you stop in the middle of it to think: How am I doing this? You'll fall over"[384] while Joyce Carol Oates inverts the premise: "By the time I come to a blank page, I have many, many things to say".[385]

Other series include *Get Inspired With: A series that draws close attention to the inspiration process*, *Artists on One Work: Works of art explored by acclaimed artists*, and *My Last Picture: Artists reflect upon their last or final work*. These series gather both interview excerpts and complete conversations. How they are constructed, what they collect, and what themes they address merit attention, as they foreground personal practice and working processes with a precision not seen in earlier models: these appear to be formats for disseminating both artistic and existential information.

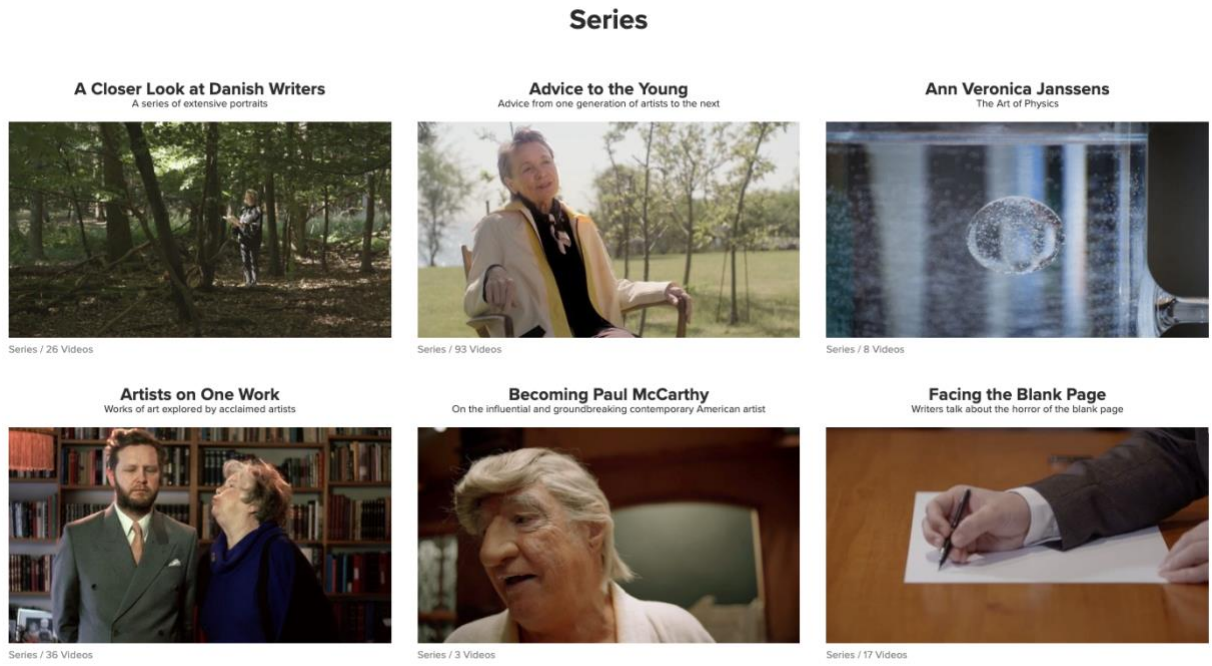

Figure 29 Series overview page of Louisiana Channel, showing featured video series (e.g., *Advice to the Young*, *Facing the Blank Page*, *Artists on One Work*). Screenshot. Copyright and courtesy Louisiana Channel, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, https://channel.louisiana.dk/, accessed May 12, 2026.

[382] *Nan Goldin: Advice to the Young*, directed by Marc-Christoph Wagner, with Sean Hanley and Jarl Therkelsen Kaldan (Louisiana Channel, 2023), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/nan-goldin-advice-to-the-young.
[383] *Umberto Eco: Advice to the Young*, directed by Tonny Vorm, with Klaus Elmer (Louisiana Channel, 2015), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/umberto-eco-advice-young.
[384] *Margaret Atwood: On Facing the Blank Page*, directed by Kasper Bech Dyg, with Mathias Nyholm (Louisiana Channel, 2024), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/margaret-atwood-facing-blank-page.
[385] *Joyce Carol Oates: On Facing the Blank Page*, produced by Mathias Nyholm, directed by Kasper Bech Dyg (Louisiana Channel, 2014), accessed May 25, 2026, https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/joyce-carol-oates-facing-blank-page.

The attention given to constructing the interview format is fundamental to the analysis presented here below. Especially important is the central role played by artistic experience as it intertwines with biography. What might initially appear as straightforward communicative choices on the part of the Louisiana Channel will later acquire a broader interpretive significance.

In particular, these videos' open and explanatory style will be examined in relation to their internet-based and YouTube-oriented context to be understood as a form of tutorial-like narration. More specifically, the analysis will argue that these videos, in which making art and being an artist are inseparable, come to function as existential tutorials. This represents a significant rhetorical and theoretical shift that calls for careful examination through multiple analytical perspectives, including a charismatic one.

At the same time, contextualizing this shift requires tracing the historical roots of this communicative style. Wagner's words once again prove instructive. During our interview, the director of the Louisiana Channel explained that he had drawn inspiration from another format, TateShots, in shaping the interviews. This reference offers a valuable point of departure for further inquiry.[386]

4.3 The Parallel Case of the TateShots Project

TateShots emerged in 2008, several years before Louisiana Channel, although the developments leading up to their launch deserve attention. Tate began opening up new channels of engagement starting in the early 2000s, and this expansion gradually reshaped the institution's organizational structure. Lena Maculan's research identified a key moment as 2002, when the Department of Digital Programmes evolved into Tate Media after receiving funding from British Telecom.[387] More than a simple rebranding, this transformation signalled Tate's ambition to develop its own production and broadcasting apparatus.

Central to this vision was the appointment of Will Gompertz to lead the new department. Gompertz came from television rather than the art world, a choice that clarified what kind of broadcasting model Tate sought to develop. His background brought a different sensibility to the institution, one that would fundamentally reshape how the museum conceived of itself. The effects became visible through Tate Online, where Maculan identifies a decisive reorientation: the museum was moving from being "object-based" to "story-based", using virtual space to prioritize narrative over collection.[388]

Kelli Dipple, who in 2006 was in charge of the webcasting at Tate Gallery, described this shift as moving from a "kind of newspaper model" in terms of content access and positioning to "much more of a channel model" involving "a collapsing of boundaries between arranged broadcast media, the notion of archive, and distribution as well as education".[389] The

[386] Wagner, "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner".
[387] Lena Maculan, *Researching Podcasting in Museums: Can New Broadcasting Models of Publication Make Art More Accessible?*, (PhD, University of Leicester, Department of Museum Studies, 2008). For a deeper analysis of Tate Media, see also Lucy Bayley, *Seep Between the Mortar: Sociotechnical Imaginaries in Digital Media at Tate*, *Stedelijk Studies Journal* 1 (2020).
[388] Maculan, *Researching Podcasting in Museums: Can New Broadcasting Models of Publication Make Art More Accessible?* p. 20.
[389] Maculan, *Researching Podcasting in Museums*, p. 118.

language here already resonates with Louisiana's approach, particularly in the way both institutions frame themselves through the vocabulary of channels rather than repositories. This connection becomes clearer when considering not only terminology but also the philosophy underlying the project.

A decade after Maculan's study, another researcher, Ioanna Zouli, examined aspects of Tate's multimedia activity, including *TateShots*.[390] Writing from a perspective distanced in time, Zouli reads critical tensions within the model Tate had developed. The museum, in her analysis, had pursued a path of "borrow[ing] elements from mass media like television and the Internet, turning itself into another mass medium".[391] In Tate's case, this trajectory cannot be separated from broader cultural policies initiated in England from the 2000s onward, policies encouraging the cultural sector to adopt corporate models. The "Tate Brand" emerged from this context, reflecting an ambition to transform Tate into an umbrella brand encompassing all the institution's activities and "collection of experiences".[392] The website itself was reconceived as a tool to "disseminate the brand to a global audience", evidence of logics that were increasingly aligned with the contemporary creative industries.[393]

These analyses, albeit arriving at different critical positions, converge on a shared observation: Tate's model was drawing steadily closer to the televisual world, filtered through journalistic and documentary lenses, and aligning itself with national and international broadcasting networks. This trajectory shaped what TateShots would become. As Maculan observes,

> Tate has moved well beyond the recording of public programmes and events and has started to produce their own documentary style programmes on contemporary art that are comparable to those usually aired by broadcasting stations such as Arte or 3 Sat in Germany, Austria and Switzerland or the BBC in the UK.[394]

An understanding of this institutional context illuminates the scope and ambition of the project itself. TateShots encompassed multiple video formats, including "exhibition films, trailers, interviews with artists and/or curators of the exhibitions, visits to artists' studios as well as the documentation of Tate events like talks, lectures and performances".[395] The ambitious scale of this undertaking was made possible by support from Bloomberg, a major communications company. A Tate report drafted between 2007 and 2008 notes: "TateShots, which is sponsored by Bloomberg, has produced and released 70 short videos over the year, which have been downloaded more than 300,000 times from various sources such as iTunes, as well as from Tate Online".[396]

---

[390] Ioanna Zouli, "Digital Tate: The Use of Video and the Construction of Audiences" (PhD, London South Bank University, 2018), accessed May 25, 2026, http://researchopen.lsbu.ac.uk/id/eprint/2751.
[391] Zouli, "Digital Tate: The Use of Video and the Construction of Audiences", p. 17.
[392] Zouli, "Digital Tate: The Use of Video and the Construction of Audiences", p. 21.
[393] Zouli, "Digital Tate: The Use of Video and the Construction of Audiences", p. 44.
[394] Maculan, "Researching Podcasting in Museums: Can New Broadcasting Models of Publication Make Art More Accessible?", p. 20.
[395] Tate Blogs & Channels, 2017 via Ioanna Zouli, "Digital Tate: The Use of Video and the Construction of Audiences", note 100, p. 152.
[396] *Tate Report 07-08* (Tate, 2007), accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.tate.org.uk/documents/143/tate_report_2007-08.pdf, p. 67.

The production process appears to have involved shifting teams of collaborators. The credits reveal considerable fluidity in personnel, both then and now, suggesting that at least some work was outsourced to freelancers. This flexible production model has continued to shape how the content circulates. YouTube became the primary platform for distribution, surpassing even the website itself in reach. The channel currently hosts numerous video playlists, although only one retains the title TateShots. The most recent uploads to this particular playlist date to 2020, which might suggest that the project had ended. Production has not stopped, however: it has instead diversified into new formats while maintaining continuity with the original approach. Interviews remain central, and the same traditions persist: just as early TateShots created dedicated interviews for Turner Prize nominees, the current Artists Interview playlist continues this practice.

These observations require clarification, because the title "TateShots" currently indicates content with historically specific origins yet porous boundaries that blend with parallel and subsequent productions. For the purposes of this chapter, the focus remains on a particular category of video, a corpus currently numbering 547 entries. At the same time, the analysis recognizes that insights drawn from these examples may extend, with some flexibility, to other Tate-produced content.

4.3.1 TateShots' Conversations in Detail

Here too, the formal characteristics of these videos echo patterns that are now well known. The interviewer remains offscreen and questions disappear from the final edit. The videos are generally brief, averaging six minutes per artist, and conversations typically unfold in studios or alongside artworks. The visual language shows clear affinities with Louisiana Channel, particularly in how macro shots of artists are alternated with softly focused backgrounds rendered in high definition. Both platforms construct suspended atmospheres, although TateShots also employs more rhythmic music to create a slightly more dynamic narrative pacing. Compared to Louisiana Channel's measured tempo, the early TateShots feel somewhat faster even though both share an emphasis on biography and artistic practice.

Maculan's research reveals that the TateShots series was initially conceived to provide supplementary space for narrating and explaining artworks. These videos functioned as interpretive tools capable of expanding access and offering keys to understanding that the digitized object alone could not provide. The video dedicated to Doris Salcedo's work *Shibboleth* offers an emblematic example.[397] Although the piece itself remains absent from the frame, this TateShot represents what Maculan describes as exemplary cultural mediation: "the video produced by Tate shows, how the limitations of the Web may be overcome and how this medium might well be used by museums to allow their visitors authentic experiences".[398]

[397] Maculan, "Researching Podcasting in Museums: Can New Broadcasting Models of Publication Make Art More Accessible?", p. 65.
[398] Maculan, "Researching Podcasting in Museums: Can New Broadcasting Models of Publication Make Art More Accessible?", p. 66.

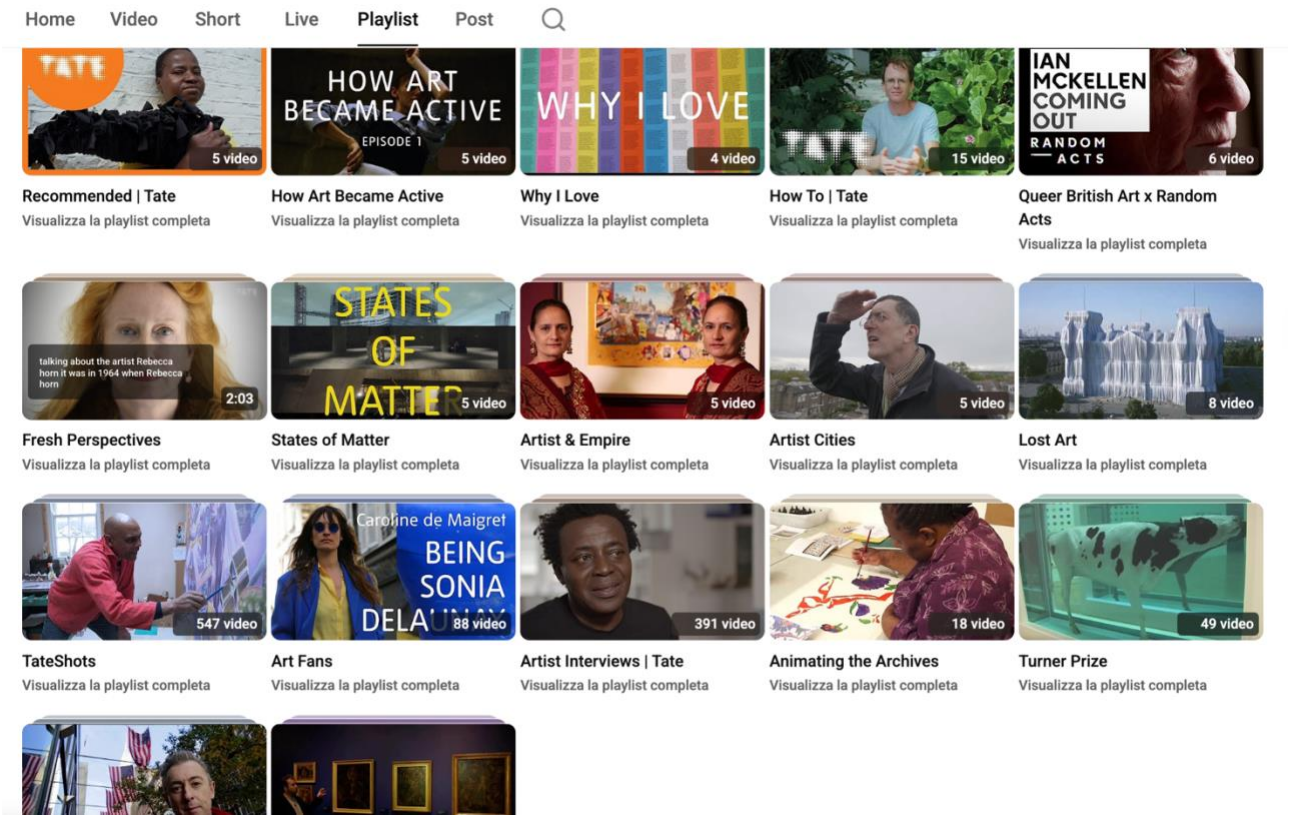

Figure 30 Playlists page of the official Tate YouTube channel, showing multiple curated series including TateShots and Artist Interviews. Screenshot. The page shows that TateShots is one of several playlists and that other series, such as Artist Interviews, pursue related curatorial and interpretative aims. Copyright Tate, accessed January 12, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/@Tate/playlists.

Over time, however, these videos have come to resemble something different: ways of knowing artists and situating their lives and works in specific historical and geographical contexts, while also giving viewers access to their personal narratives. In this case as well, there are clear connections with the field of journalism (or, more precisely, television journalism or documentary style) and these connections contribute to generating a specific kind of audio-video object. This type of video develops the same explanatory tendencies that the Danish case had already brought to light. The episode with Stuart Brisley, *I think I am an artist*, weaves together the artist's personal and cultural history with accounts of his work, and this interweaving structures the video's rhythm.[399] The conditional embedded in "I think", already clear from the title itself, mirrors the retrospective gaze Brisley casts towards his past as though deducing his identity after the fact. His account moves through several thematic clusters, including his relationship to portraiture and performance.

[399] *Stuart Brisley – "I Think I'm an Artist"*, directed by Toby Amies, with Kat Mansoor et al., TateShots (Tate, 2015), accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjLdQX73NbY.



Figure 31 Tom Swindell, with Maria Kennedy, *John Akomfrah – Why History Matters TateShots,*, 2015. Still from video. Copyright Tate. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDJYyG7jKV0 accessed January 12, 2026.

The episode with filmmaker and artist John Akomfrah *Why History Matters* opens with what might be called advice to the young.[400] Looking directly at the camera, he remarks: "One of the questions people ask me all the time, and I think it is an important one, is what advice would you give. I can say two things to them. One is don't wait and the second is there are no mistakes".[401] From this opening, the focus shifts to his practice and its multiple locations, moving between cinema and the art gallery.

The episode with Marlene Dumas takes a slightly different approach.[402] The painter discusses her series *Great Man* featuring portrayals of gay men who have influenced her, created in response to Russian anti-gay legislation. As she presents the canvases, Dumas questions whether the portraits are successful, thus articulating her doubts about their outcomes. She remains unconvinced by her rendering of Fassbinder, whose face shifts and resists definition, and explains similar difficulties with Hockney.

On the other hand, these efforts to extend the conversation towards individual viewers have been met with positive responses, thus indicating the effectiveness of this communicative code. Under the YouTube Duma's video, the user @reymontcantil199 comments: "its always illuminating to know that even the greatest artists have the same problems as the rest of us unfamous artists: does this portrait feel like the person? you might

[400] *John Akomfrah – Why History Matters*, directed by Tom Swindell, with Maria Kennedy, TateShots (Tate, 2015), accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDJYyG7jKV0.
[401] *John Akomfrah – Why History Matters*, directed by Tom Swindell.
[402] *Marlene Dumas on Great Men*, directed by Tate, TateShots (Tate, 2015), accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTWHxDYBXNc.

capture the likeness but did you catch the vibe? i love finding out that its always part of the struggle of portraits".

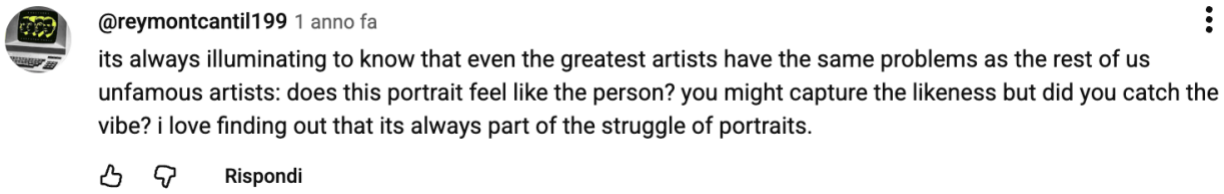

Figure 32 User comment posted beneath the YouTube video *Marlene Dumas on Great Men (TateShots),* 2015. Copyright the user, accessed May 25, 2026,

The video featuring VALIE EXPORT, filmed in her studio, shows the artist presenting various photographs depicting her own body, images that shaped her early practice.[403]



Figure 33 Elizabeth Robert and Susan Doyon, directed by Marie Therese Hildenbrandt, with Stephanie Hardt et al., *VALIE EXPORT I Created My Own Identity*. 2019. Still from video. Copyright Tate. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5cNz1NobxI, accessed. May 25, 2026,

Here too, the narrative opens outward and becomes collective. Another user writes: "I love hearing about how and why other artists have built a persona around themselves. It inspires me to recognize how much I can change myself in the process of furthering my own work". By staging a sharing of existential aspects, the artist's account of her work centred on her own body generates a participatory response that extends beyond the subject's experience to also resonate with the audience's own experiences.

[403] *VALIE EXPORT – "I Created My Own Identity"*, produced by Elizabeth Robert and Susan Doyon, directed by Marie Therese Hildenbrandt, with Stephanie Hardt et al., TateShots (Tate, 2019), accessed March 12, 2026, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5cNz1NobxI.

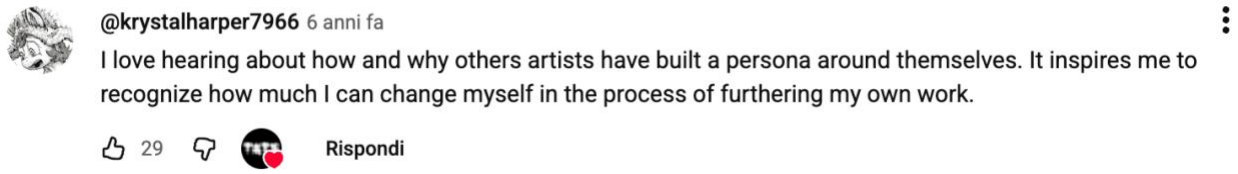

Figure 34 User comment posted beneath the YouTube video *VALIE EXPORT – "I Created My Own Identity"* (TateShots), 2019. Copyright the user, accessed May 25, 2026.

These examples demonstrate that, whereas Maculan's analysis stressed the TateShots' role in supplementing and explaining artworks, examining the themes and discursive structures of these videos alongside the cases studied thus far reveals a shift in artist narratives that is yet to be understood. The focus has moved from artwork to artist, from object to process, thereby breaking new ground in the way contemporary art institutions frame creative practice and creative individuals. This shift becomes even more pronounced in the Louisiana Channel's videos as they have refined and systematized certain innovations introduced by TateShots.

4.4 The Journalistic Turn in Video Portraiture

From a narrative perspective, the video portraits examined thus far demonstrate that biography, professional training, and the visual documentation of artworks form the core of the representation. Stylistically, a subtle but persistent connection to journalistic storytelling can be seen. This suggests a distinct genealogy of artist narratives, following a trajectory quite different from the examples found in the Viennese context. What constitutes the common thread between these and the Kogler's and Kontakt's video portraits is the term "portrait" itself; as Marc Christoph Wagner's own accounts confirm, this remains the most precise description of the Louisiana Channel's output.

Thus far in the investigation, this cultural category has allowed for the identification of specific analytical focal points. The structures through which "insistence" is generated, and the strategies devised to allow authenticity to surface, have guided the analysis of video portraits and informed the search for charisma within these representations.

However, the context of the Louisiana Channel and TateShots differs markedly from the previously discussed cases. Here, the term "portrait" stems from a different narrative lineage. The conventions of the literary portrait and the minimalist strategies examined earlier do not appear in the Danish or British museums' productions. Instead, their overt proximity to journalism suggests an alternative path for the category: "journalistic portrait" proves far more effective in describing these institutional outputs. In this format, voice and self-narration converge in unique combinations.

As Rebecca Roach's research suggests, journalism studies define interviewing as the central mechanism in the construction of journalistic portraits, thus emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between interviewing practices and portraiture. Roach clarifies how the interview functions as a tool for constructing subjectivity in contemporary media; in this field, she specifies, "the interview is a portrait of the social subject". [404] That is to say: the portrait is no longer a visual image, and it instead a discursive apparatus that organizes the

[404] Rebecca Roach, *Literature and the Rise of the Interview* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 17.

appearance of the social subject on the media stage. Compared to literary portraits, however, this apparatus can "offer the public an account of the subject obtained via the supposed privacy of a secluded and intimate interior, bolstering this notion of selfhood"[405]; crucially, in interviews, "experience can be shaped into identity".[406] The journalistic interview thus generates selfhood rather than merely documenting it, a production of subjectivity that occurs through the dialogic encounter itself.

While voice once served to "bring life" to portraits – a tradition that can be seen among video portraits – the interview format directs the body and voice towards different ends. Here, the subject is staged with greater consciousness and reflexivity; he or she is not simply animated but actively constructed through the interaction. This is shift is particularly evident in journalistic and literary interviews. *The Literary Interview*, among the most comprehensive studies on the topic, demonstrates that interviews do not capture a pre-existing self. Rather, as the study shows, "the 'self' that emerges in interviews is in fact a construction".[407] The interviewed-self is a result of the interplay between format, reader expectations, and the interviewer's intervention, rather than expressing an interiority that existed beforehand.

Relocating the Louisiana Channel and TateShots video portraits into the domain of journalistic portraiture does more than reveal distinct dynamics of subject construction; it also necessitates an update of our theoretical framework. This does not imply that previous concepts, such as "insistence", should be discarded. When reframed within the broader category of repetition, the insight drawn from Gertrude Stein in the previous chapter continues to serve as a vital analytical guide. The recurring patterns punctuating the artist narratives in TateShots and, more prominently, the Louisiana Channel, give rise to a new type of video portrait. In this journalistic model, the transition from intimacy to representation is crucial, marking the portrayal of the artist in a distinctive way.

Through voice, the interview, and a heightened focus on both formation and practice, a new strategy for representing the artist takes shape. The artist is no longer treated as a static entity to be exchanged with the artwork or enlisted to support a broader historical narrative. Rather, the journalistic portrait aligns representation with a dynamic of simultaneously unveiling and constructing the artist. This change in narration cannot be fully understood without considering the environment in which the videos circulate. Both the Louisiana Channel and TateShots operate in an online context that differs from that of the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, being more firmly rooted in social media dynamics and the specific digital landscape of YouTube.

4.4.1 Existential Tutorials: Towards an Interpretive Framework

In online environments, the artist narratives produced by Louisiana Channel and Tate undergo further modifications. The user responses underneath the TateShots videos had already suggested a recognition, and even confirmation, of the storytelling effects the channels put into play. Most notably, the comments reveal processes of identification on the part of viewers. Seeing oneself reflected in the artist's account, and in some sense

[405] Roach, *Literature and the Rise of the Interview*, p. 13.
[406] Roach, *Literature and the Rise of the Interview*, p. 14.
[407] Anneleen Masschelein et al., "The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre", *Poetics Today* 35, nos 1–2 (March 2014), p. 9.

contributing to its co-construction, demonstrates how the sustained focus on practice and personal history successfully integrates into the ecosystem of YouTube. Above all, these videos extend beyond the category of journalistic portrait alone to also resonate with other online products, other modes of self-narration that the web has helped to generate. Chief among these is tutorials: at this point the tutorial format also informs contemporary practices of telling of artists' stories.

According to major dictionaries, the term "tutorial" – etymologically derived from the Latin tutor (teacher) – refers to "a short book or computer program that gives information on a particular subject or explains how something is done",[408] "a paper, book, film, or computer programme that provides practical information about a specific subject"[409] or, more intriguingly, as Wikipedia states, "In education, a tutorial is a method of transferring knowledge and may be used as a part of a learning process".[410] Two elements central to this framework appear repeatedly across these definitions: on one hand, the practical dimension of "how to do it" and, on the other, the idea of a learning process enacted under someone's guidance. It is precisely along this double axis of practice and education that Tate and Louisiana videos narrate artistic subjectivity. Yet unlike conventional tutorials, here artists do not explain a concrete topic, nor do they teach viewers how to do anything specific.

The use of the tutorial format to orchestrate narratives and even produce works of art in their own right is by no means foreign to contemporary art, as Hito Steyerl's *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational.MOV File* (2013) attests.[411]

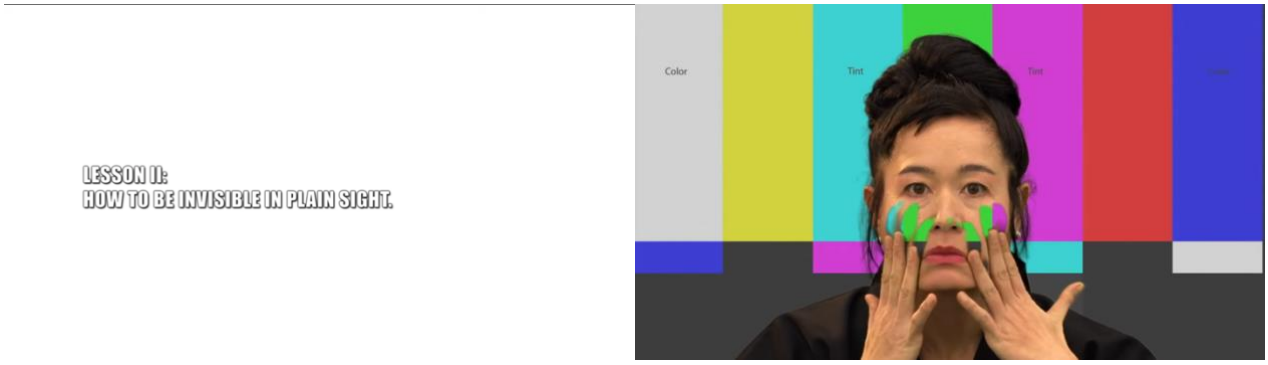

Figure 35 Hito Steyerl, *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational.MOV File.* 2013. Stills from video. Courtesy Artforum, https://www.artforum.com/video/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen-a-fucking-didactic-educational-mov-file-2013-165845/, accessed May 25, 2026.

Steyerl's work mobilizes the communicative code of the tutorial to deliver a sequence of operational instructions, that is, practical techniques to avoid being captured by the camera

[408] "Tutorial", *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/tutorial_1.
[409] "Tutorial", *Merriam-Webster*, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tutorial.
[410] "Tutorial", *Wikipedia*, accessed May 25, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tutorial&oldid=1312038367.
[411] The film is available on Artforum Video, "Hito Steyerl, How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational.MOV File, 2013", *Artforum*, 20 April 2015, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.artforum.com/video/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen-a-fucking-didactic-educational-mov-file-2013-165845/.

lens. These range from camouflage to reducing oneself to a single pixel. In so doing, she proposes political strategies for escaping the contemporary regime of hyper-visibility.[412]

It is far less common, however, for such narrative strategies to be applied to the representation of artists. In the case of the Louisiana Channel and TateShots, by contrast, the tutorial-like mode fuses artistic practice and the artist's life and, as a result, takes on the features of what can be considered an "existential tutorial". In the rhetorical framework of the existential tutorial, series such as *Facing the Blank Page* on the Louisiana Channel, as well as the editorial architecture of TateShots, reveal a tendency to organize the interview not as a finished portrait, but as an orienting device: a space in which the artist's experience is rendered accessible and potentially transferable. To understand how an existential tutorial is structured, it is first necessary to clarify the theoretical premises underpinning online tutorials.

The literature has unearthed some aspects that shed light on what happens to the figure of artists in tutorial-frames. Media theorist Ramon Reichert frames tutorials within the broad environment of Web 2.0, which he argues is constituted on the principle of "feedback loops", that is, systemic-cybernetic mechanisms for self-regulation. These loops are a contemporary manifestation of Foucault's technologies of the self, updated for the digital age.[413] They give rise to a new model for forming and regulating social relations, a model he describes as "a systemic cybernetic observatory connection constituted by creating control cycles […] which can be used to regulate either oneself or others, depending on the direction the observation takes".[414]

Tutorials occupy a central position in this model. Reichert argues that they "operate as a means of 'facilitation' of cultural and social negotiation processes based on tactically 'weak' authorship" that needs to be completed.[415] Meaning no longer derives from a central original subject. What is presented, he observes, "do[es] not need the prerequisite of a genuinely 'constitutive subject,'" since the value of enunciation emerges through medial conditions and interaction.[416] Even the sense of proximity created with the viewer is not the result of a strong authorial presence since it is instead "created by the medium".[417] Knowledge likewise circulates as open material that "explicitly demands rearrangement".[418] In this framework, authorship is "weak" because it is distributed, collaborative, and continually reshaped by context and use.

Reichert's description engages several elements that had already surfaced in journalistic portraits while simultaneously amplifying them and drawing out new ones. The theme of weak authorship, as incomplete and contingent on external feedback, cannot be applied uniformly across the artist narratives analysed. Nonetheless, it does inform their

---

[412] See also Michael Connor, "Hito Steyerl's "How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational.MOV File", *Rhizome*, 31 May 2013, accessed May 25, 2026, https://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/may/31/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen/.
[413] Ramon Reichert, "Evaluation and Self-Evaluation on YouTube. Designing the Self in Makeup Tutorials", in *Online Evaluation of Creativity and the Arts*, ed. Hiesun Cecilia Suhr (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 97.
[414] Reichert, "Evaluation and Self-Evaluation on YouTube", p, 96.
[415] Reichert, "Evaluation and Self-Evaluation on YouTube", p. 101.
[416] Reichert, "Evaluation and Self-Evaluation on YouTube", p. 104.
[417] Reichert, "Evaluation and Self-Evaluation on YouTube", p. 104.
[418] Reichert, "Evaluation and Self-Evaluation on YouTube", p. 102.

representations more broadly. Most importantly, it redirects the reading of Louisiana Channel's video portraits and the TateShots towards a different interpretive horizon. There are two prior questions to address in order to understand how the artist narrative operates in the framework of the existential tutorial: what dynamics cast the artist as a weak author, and what needs this narrative ultimately serves.

4.4.2 Authoriality in the Age of the Tutorial

The notion of weak authorship is echoed in numerous other studies published in the wake of Barthes's diagnosis. As Andrew Bennett observes in his extensive early-2000s study, the philosopher "may be understood to be both describing an historical event, an historical moment, and at the same time mounting a polemic, a provocation against the contemporary privileging of the individual […]. At the same time Barthes makes it clear that the author still holds sway".[419]

While the author cannot be said to have fully disappeared, there is no doubt that many factors have reconfigured authorial status and practice during the second half of the twentieth century. Carla Benedetti provides crucial context for understanding what happened to the figure of the author, context that proves essential for situating the videos analysed here. In her 1990s book *L'Ombra lunga dell'Autore* [English: The Empty Cage: Inquiry into the Mysterious Disappearance of the Author], Benedetti defines the idea of the death of the author as a kind of liberating response to an earlier speculative condemnation predating Barthes himself: the idea of the end of art.[420] Assertions of the death of the author, in her argument, were thus an attempt to declare a catastrophe in order to move forward and free this figure from the burden of managing mourning. [421] Once liberated from their own images, authors thus continued to work, concerning themselves more with their doing than their being. According to Benedetti, following Barthes's declaration, emphasis on the author dissolves into a broader focus on process and project. The author is recast as a project-maker. In Benedetti's view, however, being released from the constraints of the art system comes at the cost of renouncing novelty, with direct consequences for the author's role and creative agency. The "scrittore non più autore" (writer-no longer Author), a figure whose logic also extends to the artist, is someone who has internalized this condition "fino al punto da aderire al ruolo di bricoleur che mescola scritture preesistenti o un eterno copista del già scritto". [422]

Such arguments are also developed in the well-known book *Postproduction* by Nicolas Bourriaud. *Postproduction* reflects the quest for authorship in the field of contemporary art between the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. Aware that "Artists today program forms

---

[419] Andrew Bennett, *The Author*, (London: New York Routledge, 2004), p. 17.
[420] Carla Benedetti, *L'ombra lunga dell'autore: indagine su una figura cancellata*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999).
[421] I consulted the Italian edition of this book, and the English translations of the book does exist and readers may refer to it for more precise renderings. See Carla Benedetti, *The Empty Cage: Inquiry into the Mysterious Disappearance of the Author*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005).
[422] "to the point of adhering to the role of bricoleur who mixes pre-existing writings, or eternal copyist of the already written." In Benedetti, *L'ombra lunga dell'autore*, p. 198. Subsequent work in the field has continued to address questions of authorial identity, while also turning attention to the collaborative dimension that underlies authorship or, more significantly for this study, to the ways in which its status and relevance have varied across scholarly discourse. In other words, considering "authorship" as "one strand in the weave of the text rather than a magic key to unlocking its mysteries". In Rita Felski, *Literature after Feminism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 91.

more than they compose them",[423] the curator examines pieces by certain Western artists from the 1980s onward and arrives at his celebrated conclusion that "Notions of originality […] and even of creation […] are slowly blurred in this new cultural landscape marked by the twin figures of the DJ and the programmer, both of whom have the task of selecting cultural objects and inserting them into new contexts".[424] This scenario, which characterizes the rethinking of the artist and author from the new millennium onward, extends to contaminate artists' narratives as well as the modes and formats through which they speak about themselves.

Historically situated theoretical positions have been more robustly applied in recent research that engages directly with artist narratives and self-representation. And yet these narratives do not reflect simply theory about authorship: artists themselves have both responded to and actively shaped this repositioning of authorship, constructing and performing their identities through fragmented, adaptive storytelling. As historian Linda Sandino observes while granting concreteness to this theme, life narratives themselves have adopted a fragmented and incomplete narrative structure.[425] As an expert on artists' life stories and oral histories, Sandino selects two accounts by ceramic artists Julien Stair and Sara Radstone, who attended the same course at Camberwell College of Arts, to distil her insights on life narratives. She argues that "the artist self is never complete" and that reconstructing it requires orienting the narrative around encounters with other artists and artworks.[426] While the scholar draws no distinction between past and contemporary accounts in her analysis, she notes that the stories she studies are incomplete, subject to fractures and refractions, and that self-narration proves fundamental to orienting and restarting them. It is no coincidence that the artist's self is among the few identities for which statements need to be constructed: such statement represents condensed maps of the self, what one is capable of doing and building from one's own capacities. This is why artists' self-narratives continually oscillate between first and third person, the latter represented by practice or artwork, since "artists therefore are acutely conscious of themselves".[427] The result is that artist self-narratives sometimes seem to aim "toward incompleteness" and thereby redefine the process of identity-formation as "in process". In so doing, they take the visions of the author's destiny outlined thus far and translate them into practical terms.[428]

The influence of the artist narrative on artists' careers has also been explored through sociology of art research. While re-invoking the analytical lens used for video portraits, the study *Young Artists and the Charismatic Myth* explores how self-narration is required to secure a foothold in the precarious economy of art.[429] At the same time, this perspective also views the myth as coinciding with the artist's personal narration. It thus moves away from a

---

[423] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay ; How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Caroline Schneider (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2010), p. 17.
[424] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p. 13
[425] Linda Sandino, "Artists-in-Progress: Narrative Identity of the Self as Another", in *Beyond Narrative Coherence*, ed. Matti Hyvärinen et al., Studies in Narrative 11 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), pp. 87–102.
[426] Sandino, "Artists-in-Progress: Narrative Identity of the Self as Another", p. 88.
[427] Sandino, "Artists-in-Progress: Narrative Identity of the Self as Another", p. 91.
[428] Sandino, "Artists-in-Progress: Narrative Identity of the Self as Another", p. 95.
[429] Sigrid Røyseng, Per Mangset, and Jorunn Spord Borgen, "Young Artists and the Charismatic Myth", *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13, no. 1 (February 2007), pp. 1–16.

monolithic conception of such narration by recognizing how it is shaped by shifts in current economic conditions. The sample analysed is certainly quite situated, involving students at Norwegian art academies, but the general conclusions developed here can be extended to other geographical settings as well.

Compared to Sandino, this study does not consider uncertainty to be constitutive of the artist's self; rather, it sees it as a result of the contemporary cultural and economic landscape. First, Røyseng et al. note that the myth of the charismatic bohemian artist has come up against the de-institutionalization of the art world. In other words, the boundaries between art and other productive spheres have become increasingly blurry. Consequently, artists can no longer afford to engage in what Bourdieu called the "denial of the economy" but must rather acknowledge a shifting and decidedly more uncertain panorama.[430] Accentuating this uncertainty and difficulty is not only the navigation between frayed categories but also the oversupply of artist-recruits. In this scenario, the artist myth founded on grace or calling must evolve to help "make the risks and insecurity of artistic life seem bearable to the artists".[431] The sociologists thus observe a shift in narrative construction, at least in personal narratives, given the different weight and emphasis now placed on work and therefore practice: "When asked what they considered to be the most important condition for artistic success, most of the young artists stressed the importance of initiative and hard work".[432] Practice assumes such a central role that it affects even those narratives where its opposite, calling, is foregrounded to the extreme. What redefines the myth are the ideas of dedication and embracing the artistic career path while making as few compromises as possible. The signs of an artistic gift shift from being the *conditio sine qua non* to serving as confirmation that the person has undertaken the right path: solid footholds in uncertainty. This shift concretizes attention on what one does and thus substantiates a practical, concrete image of authors in the wake of their presumed disappearance.

The study's utilitarian and flexible vision of the myth underscores the need for artists to generate and circulate new narratives of identity that perform specific functions. It is no coincidence that this article is also cited in Simone Wesner's research on artists in Germany before and after reunification. Here, the myth accompanies the country's political transformations, functioning at once as a response to censorship, a resource for trust, and a source of orientation in the new economic landscape of the free market. Wesner considers the artist's myth to be a "developmental tool for career progression" that does not need to be unveiled but rather interrogated by examining the factors that sustain it.[433]

The trajectory following from the concept of weak authorship has led scholars to reinterpret the narrative of the artist in the contemporary context. The perspective generated by theory and studies on artists' narratives adds further layers to the problem of the author and the artist: they appear not so much dead or weak as incomplete. At the same time, it

[430] Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, as addressed in Sigrid Røyseng, Per Mangset, and Jorunn Spord Borgen, "Young Artists and the Charismatic Myth", p. 2.
[431] Røyseng, Mangset, and Spord Borgen, "Young Artists and the Charismatic Myth", p. 3.
[432] Røyseng, Mangset, and Spord Borgen, "Young Artists and the Charismatic Myth", p. 10.
[433] Simone Wesner, "The Artist and the Artistic Myth", in *Artists' Voices in Cultural Policy*, by Simone Wesner (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), p. 18.

points to the way the narrative constructed around artists, a narrative that artists themselves also "consume", presupposes an open space of co-construction.

There are two areas where we can see the space of co-construction take on a concrete form. One is the difficulties encountered while the making the work or as part of the process of training, and the other is the solutions that individuals are able to identify and address. Such dynamics are both structured and structuring, so much so that they also surface in portraits and, in particular, video portraits.

At this point we can bring Louisiana Channel and TateShots back to the centre of the analysis and observe them from a new perspective. It is key to understand how these videos articulate a narrative that reflects artists' need to maintain a story capable of confirming them, and how such a narrative aligns with a myth of the artist in its newly changed configuration. To do so, let us look at the level of practice and specifically the narration of practice.

Both video portrait formats emphasize training and the artwork their interviewees produce. Both training and artistic production function to reconfirm not so much grace as the emphasis placed on pieces of artwork in these new forms of the myth. Artwork and the strategies that generate it, in turn, validate and promote the existential narrative on the artistic level. An artist watching the Louisiana Channel and TateShots videos sees not only a tendency towards an incomplete narrative that may or may not belong to them. More importantly, artists can use such a narrative in a concrete way to complete themselves or their own creative process. These assumptions underscore the macro-category of existential tutorial as a label for referring to such video portraits.

In this scenario, what happens to the artist and the narrative surrounding them? While the dynamics described above explain a form of portrait construction that intersects with journalistic portraiture, the demands of the web, and the transformations of authorship and narrative, it still remains to be considered how the charismatic appeal of the artist themselves is employed.

4.5 Relocating Charisma: Louisiana Channel and TateShots

The various shifts affecting the artist narrative that have accumulated up to this point invite a reinterpretation through the lens of charisma. The existential tutorial interpretive key points to dynamics of fascination that could generate a new paradigm for the artist narrative and this analysis now turns to articulating them.

To understand this paradigm, we must examine how the mechanisms operating in Louisiana Channel and TateShots differ significantly from the models observed in previous chapters. Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* constructed charisma through threshold and ambiguity, thus alternately transforming the artist into a living artwork and an individual. The *Kontakt Video Portraits* imposed authorial direction on conversations moving from macro-themes to personal topics in order to construct a portrait of a generation.[434] In comparison, the videos produced by Tate, and especially Louisiana Channel, operate without strongly authorial impulses. They cross the threshold separating the viewer from the artist in a different direction, towards knowledge from within. They move through communicative codes drawn

[434] Obrist's conversations served as foundational building blocks of artists' narratives, quasi-monographic in their historical reconstruction: see Appendix A for a deeper exploration of this specific aspect.

from television and journalism that support humanization rather than aestheticization. The play of surfaces gives way to a search for fully realized meaning.

The act of selecting subjects is still important in these cases, particularly within Louisiana Channel's broad parameters. The result is a structure that renders personalities equal across creative fields rather than unifying them historically. The macro-historical plane is instead treated as a more general reference point: as marking the relationship with creation and creativity itself. The most distinctive feature of these videos, however, lies in their how-to mechanism. They argue not only for historical reconstruction but also for the use of experience. Considering them as tutorials implies accepting that they explain something and illuminate an unknown practice. The difficulty lies in recognizing that the artists in these portraits are treated as experts in a framing of practice that coincides with existence itself.

The analysis cannot continue to rely on a model in which the myth of grace guarantees artistic identity, lest it be unable to recognize this shift. Indeed, the post-authorial landscape has reconfigured the terrain entirely. The move to grant practice, and the narration of practice, a transformative role capable of developing power in those who encounter it fundamentally changes the scenario. To follow this shift, the analysis is called on to recognize how the burden of proof for substantiating artistic identity has been relocated: it has been moved from gift to work, from calling to doing. In a creative sphere that is increasingly expanded beyond traditional art world boundaries where calling no longer suffices as explanation and artists can no longer afford to deny the realities of the economy, narrative must offer something different.

The current power of the artist narrative, as *The Young Artists and Charismatic Myth* suggests, resides precisely in its capacity to use testimonies of the self to provide practical solutions to the problems of creating under today's economic conditions – solutions that are increasingly sought after as artistic identity itself becomes more precarious. Knowing about artists' strategies (how they became artists, how they face the blank page, how they navigate doubt, how they balance influence and originality) helps listeners to equip themselves with certain tools to orient them in an unprecedented mythic context. The tutorial format, with its emphasis on transferable experience and its invitation to rearrangement, speaks directly to this need. Louisiana Channel's thematic series is explicit in naming this function: "Advice to the Young" offers navigational coordinates for people constructing artistic identities in uncertain terrain, while "Facing the Blank Page" addresses not a technical problem but an existential one shared across the creative spectrum. This reframing carries significant persuasive force for viewers who see these narratives as offering solutions to the dilemma of artistic genius.

At the theoretical level, it is more difficult now than it was in the part to identify direct correspondences that demonstrate or illustrate how charisma has been changing in cases such as the ones examined here. It is difficult not so much because an internet-based analytical framework is relatively new, but because there is a marked scarcity of studies pinpointing something genuinely original in online dynamics or the processes linked to new technologies. While characterizing the literature in general, this limitation is especially pronounced in the artistic field. Works such as *Disordered Attention*, where Claire Bishop rereads the dynamics of artistic fruition and participation in light of the profound changes in everyday habits

brought about by smartphones, remain rare.[435] Yet insights of this kind are essential for this analysis.

By interpreting the Louisiana Channel and Tate videos as existential tutorials, the analysis carried out here is able to take their narrative form seriously. Furthermore, this narrative form has a specific historical development that can be traced but which also produces something new. The artist narrative brings together elements tied to the destiny of authorship, journalistic modes of communication, and the interactive possibilities offered by contemporary platforms. By treating such narrative formats as charismatic technologies, I am able to reveal the mythopoietic potential of this mode of storytelling. Indeed, the promises of individual self-improvement characteristic of charismatic discourse coexist in these cases with practical and applied scenarios through which such improvement becomes conceivable to viewers.

Although focused on an earlier phase of the web, the book *Making Is Connecting* by sociologist and media theorist David Gauntlett was pioneering in identifying the scenarios of improvement generated by tutorial culture and DIY forms of knowledge. In these formats, Gauntlett argues, "The processes of creativity – the finding of form for thought – have a transformative impact on the sense of self". [436] Even if charisma does not appear as an explicit theme in Gauntlett's book, it can be glimpsed in the forward-looking and promissory impulse the author perceives in these platforms ("how making things for ourselves gives us a sense of wonder, agency, and possibilities in the world"). [437] This chapter thus addresses not the transmission of concrete forms of knowledge but rather ways of confronting the challenges posed by artistic practice, challenges that ultimately shape a new way of speaking about artists.

Where other charismatic technologies relied on mystery and distance, Louisiana Channel and Tate offer proximity and transparency. Transparency does not dissolve charisma, however; it relocates it. The mystery shifts from what the artist is to how the artist works. What was once attributed to an inaccessible gift becomes an accessible method. The existential tutorial framework thus functions as another model of charismatic technology. The artist narrative, structured around practice and formation, becomes material for the viewer's own identity-work. These videos offer a response to the issue Sandino identified as the inherently incomplete artist-self: not completion through filling in, but completion through navigability. In the concrete, post-authorial kind of narrative staged by TateShots and especially Louisiana Channel, the narration of the artist is reconnected with the myth in its contemporary version. These productions shift the representation, from casting artistic identity as a destiny to casting artistic identity as a possibility (and one viewers might themselves achieve). The transformation signals not the death of artistic charisma but its relocation into the realm of practice, where it continues to exert transformative force in forms more suited to contemporary conditions.

---

[435] Claire Bishop, *Disordered Attention: How We Look at Art and Performance* (London, New York: Verso, 2024).
[436] David Gauntlett, *Making Is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to You Tube and Web 2.0*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 68.
[437] Gauntlett, *Making Is Connecting*, p. 2.

4.6 Conclusions

The case of Louisiana Channel and TateShots opens a breach in the landscape within which this research has developed. Moving from a historically and geographically defined context to a radically different one has thrown the analytical categories used to examine portrait videos into crisis. Such a shift does not make the results any less illuminating, however. In the end, the analytical approach of studying charisma has proven productive for observing portrait videos even when they operate in newer, relatively unprecedented arenas.

From examining the influences of portraiture as fine art, the analysis has moved to considering influences stemming from portraiture as a journalistic tool. This change marks a transition, from portraiture as a device observed from an outside threshold to productions involving a portrait form aimed at penetrating representation itself. Louisiana Channel and TateShots have accordingly adopted a mode of constructing the artist-subject in which life, voice, and work assume roles different from those encountered previously: the videos construct a vision from within the subject.

The sphere of internet circulation completes the transformation. In this context, deconstructing artists by explicating their practices or educational background does not erase the subject or strip it of mystery; rather, this move makes the subject shareability. Recording artists as they narrate and simultaneously present themselves functions in a way comparable to video tutorials. Portrait videos and tutorials not only share the same platform, YouTube, but also adhere to similar logics of dissemination. A crucial difference nonetheless remains. In the case of museum videos, artists do not, and indeed cannot, explain how to make a work of art; they can only explain how to be themselves. This is the condition that gives rise to the analytical category of existential tutorial.

Studying charisma has revealed that this development, entailing such an extreme degree of elucidation, possesses a charismatic quality. At this point, the fascination surrounding the act of creating the artwork and the subject producing it becomes concentrated. It is this fascination that comes to serve as the very narrative motor of the videos. In the previous cases there was a structural substitution: between artwork and artist in Kogler and between self-narration and generational narrative in the *Kontakt Video Portraits*. If the analysis were to search for such a substitution here, it might be found in the move to replace the artist with the descriptions and practices attached to artistic work. These descriptions and practices come to function as advice and instructions.

Yet the demand for such portraiture raises multiple questions that this analysis only begins to engage. Who seeks out such advice? How broad is the demand for sharing unorthodox existential practices such as those of artists? And above all, where does this need originate from?

The research presented here does not answer these questions, but identifying and formulating them points to possible future directions of inquiry. For now, the observation can only note that the problems of the artist's biography and difficult existence, fractured between myth and history, is being resolved in unexpected ways via platforms capable staging original interactions with video portraiture. In the case of Louisiana Channel and TateShots in particular, the artist's biography is effectively actualized to become the very substance of the portrait itself. Historical perspective, which marks processes of becoming and formation,

feeds the narrative and shapes the direction of other narratives. The life and work of artists launches a reflection on artistry that spreads almost by contagion.

5. Conclusions

This research on video portraits began with a theoretical inquiry. More specifically, the video portrait format seemed to offer potential solutions to three major theoretical problems.

First, it invites a more concrete and precise approach to the broader category of artist interviews and conversations. As noted, interview studies comprise an extensive field of research that often produces generic analyses, precisely because of their indeterminacy. This study refined the focus by confining the practice of dialogue and interviewing to certain technologically and methodologically recognizable dynamics – those of the video portrait. Given the growing interest in interviews within art studies, it is worthwhile to situate and specify this academic effort: it demonstrates how each distinct exchange with an artist can function as a historical source for art history.

Second, the video portrait format addressed a theoretical question that Soussloff's work had already raised: the dual structure of artist and artwork that has shaped the study and writing of artistic biographies. Soussloff identifies a central problem: the tendency to naturalize artists within their artwork has long rendered biographical material inaccessible. This layering of interpretations positions the artist as a mythic figure while simultaneously blocking biographical inquiry. Art history perpetuated this pattern by continuously recreating its subject while refusing to incorporate other crucial dimensions that biographical inquiry could provide. Although Soussloff demonstrates that the evolution of biographical studies has illuminated this problem, the search for solutions to this theoretical bifurcation remains open. Working on the theoretical plane, she advocates for a new historiography. This study, however, shifts her theoretical insights to the level of discourse: specifically, how discourse is shaped by technological apparatus.

Finally, the limited literature on this subject has left room for the study to develop its own self-contained theoretical framework. While maintaining connections with interview studies and the history of representations of artists, this research focused on two notions within video portraits: authenticity and charisma.

Authenticity holds significant weight in art history, particularly in the Italian literature. Its deep connections to Carla Lonzi's critical work have already been established. Through authenticity and especially through its "re-mediation" (a term not her own, but deliberately used here to create a bridge towards video portraits), Lonzi constructed a practice that itself resolves the theoretical gap by rendering discussions of the artist unnatural. Lonzi's approach demonstrated that there is something distinctive in artists. This particularity – which we need not define here – involves what artists themselves perceive as necessity: a drive to create that cannot be otherwise. This particularity does not need to be transformed into something precious; it does not require mythologization or legend-making. Rather, it invites us to recognize that narration can generate positions from which to observe it. Lonzi's stance makes the artist visible outside of the institutional frames that would assign fixed roles and functions.

This critical approach cannot be employed mechanically. It is a militantly engaged field of thought tied to feminist history and contemporary activism. Given their geographical and temporal distance from Lonzi's work, extending it to cover the objects examined here would be inappropriate. Nevertheless, a focus on authenticity calls for lenses that account for the

artist's particularity. Charisma emerged as a natural counterpoint to this emphasis on authenticity. Charisma, as the historical record shows, proves mutable: often conflated with, but distinct from, fascination. Charisma operates in that which moves us beyond the ordinary and, crucially, in that which resists immediate understanding. Alfred Gell's theory of technological enchantment, discussed in the second chapter, already illustrated how the mysterious realization of a work exercises charismatic fascination over viewers.

This study rests on a simple assumption: the very action of artists, that is, the drive to make art, possesses charisma and allure precisely because artists cannot do otherwise. Few works make this clearer than Karen Blixen's story "Babette's Feast." A renowned, sophisticated French chef finds herself in Norway, working as a cook and housekeeper for two modest, pious sisters. When she wins an unexpected and substantial lottery prize, Babette invests not in returning home but in preparing one final meal worthy of her mastery. The effort proves worthwhile. Babette's statement crystallizes this necessity – the compulsion that defines artists: "Through all the world there goes one long cry from the heart of the artist: Give me leave to do my utmost!"[438] The romantic elements of Blixen's narrative lie beyond our focus here. What matters is recognizing that artists possess something seductive and compelling: a necessity that shapes both what they say and how they narrate their practice.

The analysis of the video portraits examined here attempted to maintain this assumption throughout. The interpretive category of charismatic technology proved decisive in structuring the research. This framework traces how artistic charisma flows and operates, where it circulates and what it generates. If artistic charisma escapes myth-making and stereotypical narrative, where does it operate and what effects does it produce? These charismatic technologies – video portraits – present artists without conforming to preset typologies.

The video portrait examples analysed in this study emerged from and refined this theoretical framework. Three principal case studies, all museum or collection-based projects unified by a commitment to artist representation without commercial instrumentalization, ground this theoretical framework.

The Viennese context contained an unexpected wealth of artist video portraits, demonstrating a conscious curation of these artist narratives. What surprised me was discovering that Vienna, the very location that shaped earlier twentieth-century artist studies, also showed such sustained interest in representing artistic practice.

The case of museum in progress, which produced Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* – a work the artist curated from the 1990s into the early 2000s – provided the first eloquent example. Analysis of this work revealed a vibrant cultural milieu: in the Vienna of the 1990s, institutions such as museum in progress and publications such as *Der Standard* and the ORF television network fostered fruitful collaboration for artistic creation. The history of *Portraits of Artists* lies at the intersection of Kogler's artistic practice, his interests, his difficulties in discussing his identity as an artist, and subsequently, his pedagogical work at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.

[438] Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), *Babette's Feast and Other Anecdotes of Destiny*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), p. 48.

Kogler's work dialogues with Warhol's *Screen Tests* (the most prominent video portrait project from the 1960s). Kogler engaged with and updated certain filmic strategies of Warhol's. Beyond historical analysis, Kogler's hybrid approach (part communication, part artwork) warrants multiple critical perspectives. This line of inquiry pointed to multiple possible interpretive trajectories that had characterized Warhol's work. Critics such as Sarah Boxer and Brian Dillon had interrogated the charisma of the subjects involved; extending these analyses to Kogler's project proved productive. Between the two works, a series of resonances and differences emerged. The schema through which Kogler transformed these conversations with artists into genuine portraits became increasingly evident.

Kogler's attention to, for example, the uniform colour added in post-production during interviews and the "talking-head" framing functioned as processes that served to objectify his artist-subjects and transform them into representation. Simultaneously, speech and the emerging narrative possessed the capacity to reverse this immobility, demonstrating not only the subject's vitality but also their artistry. Through speech, the artists revealed their artistry: the very evidence that *Portraits of Artists* required to function as an artwork.

This video portrait functions as charismatic technology because it demonstrates how the fascination exercised by artist narratives circulates within a system carefully balanced between the rigor Kogler imposed and the space of self-determination granted to the artists. The flattening of structure renders the artists' discourses and voices surprising and unexpected, both in content and in the static, nearly two-dimensional construction of representation. The resulting effect resembles a speaking artwork or, in Caroline van Eck's aesthetic terms, a "living presence response." In analysing *Portraits of Artists*, we can perceive a threshold from which the continuous substitution between artist and artwork becomes visible – a threshold that prevents the artist from being mythologized even while continuously re-presenting this subject solely through their particularity.

It was Kogler himself who directed the research focus towards the second case study: *Kontakt Video Portraits*. This portrait project was the result of the Kontakt Collection's activities of rediscovering and re-presenting East European and South European art from the 1960s through the 1980s and extending into the present.

The *Kontakt Video Portraits* series, launched in 2020, is positioned within this broader initiative. Conceived by Kathrin Rhomberg (Kontakt's director) and Peter Kogler, these video-interviews adapt the format of his historic *Portraits of Artists* from the 1990s to contemporary and digital contexts. Manuel Gorkiewicz (an artist and Kogler's former student), Julius Lermer (videomaker), and Claus Philipp (critic and dramaturg) executed the work.

The aim was to showcase generations of artists from 1968 onwards who had remained largely invisible online, thus enabling younger generations to rediscover the artistic and intellectual landscape of Eastern Europe marked by socialist influence and post-war contexts.

Formally, the project is simple. A single camera, a microphone, no elaborate editing. The interviewee selects the filming location. Conversation, guided by Philipp, unfolds without a script, allowing contingency and recurring themes to surface. What formally distinguishes *Kontakt Video Portraits* from Kogler's works is the digital zoom approach devised by Gorkiewicz, which slowly progresses throughout the interview to gradually shift the

perspective from wide to narrow. The zoom replaces the iconic monochromatic background of *Portraits of Artists*.

The research also examined the *Künstlerporträts*, artists' portraits by Wilhelm Gaube, another documentarian active in Vienna and long overlooked. Between the 1970s and early 2000s, Gaube produced over 250 artist video portraits, representing generations of Viennese artists in his own way through collaborations with institutions such as mumok to structure his documentary work. Gaube's less-structured approach contrasts with Kogler's more schematic execution that continues in *Kontakt Video Portraits*. Yet this difference illuminates the role structure and repetition at play in enabling the represented subject's authenticity to take centre stage.

Kontakt Video Portraits engages with Kogler's legacy and Warhol's *Screen Tests*, as Philipp's significant remarks attest. These video portraits neither ignore Gaube's visceral approach nor discard it; they instead channel it. *Kontakt Video Portraits* draws on a minimalist tradition and method for extracting authenticity through the deliberate use of repetition. The shadow this casts runs deep, finding resonance in twentieth-century literary portraiture and theory where Gertrude Stein and her concept of insistence function as guiding figures. Insistence differs from mere repetition; it constitutes a deliberate choice of where to direct emphasis and importance. It gives shape to a distinct mode of portrait engagement, modifying the attention of both viewer and author. Yet insistence also reveals the central role of structure – a role that, incipient in Kogler, becomes irrefutable in *Kontakt Video Portraits*.

This framework prompts a closer look at how *Kontakt Video Portraits* operates. When insistence is precisely calibrated, how do these portraits convey authenticity, and what effects does it produce? The lens of charisma sheds light on the way insistent zoom and the ambitious historical scope work towards transposing the artist's narrative onto the historical plane. Through Raphael Falco's research systematizing the relationship between charisma and myth, the sense of *Kontakt Video Portraits* is made evident. We can see the period from 1968 to the fall of the Berlin Wall as infused with artistic charisma; at the same time, the zoom contextualizes these artists historically rather than mythologizing them. *Kontakt Video Portraits*, therefore, constitutes a charismatic technology but one that functions differently from Kogler's work. The zoom mediates between these dimensions: from historical context to individual voice. This structure prevents the artist from being mythologized; instead, charisma circulates between personal and historical registers. The work avoids both myth-making and typification by channelling charisma into the historical narrative itself. The result is twofold: forgotten history resurfaces, and we understand the artists not in isolation but through the historical moment they inhabited.

The analysis of Hans Ulrich Obrist's work (appearing in the thesis only in the appendix, since he does not make video portraits) continues to explore the Viennese territory and prepares the ground for more radical territorial expansion. This important Swiss curator worked on Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* as an interviewer and also constructed his curatorial practice through artist portraits via interviews and conversations. Obrist's figure runs deep in the Viennese environment of the 1980s and 1990s. His practice revolves around artist conversations (begun in 1984 but continuing today, becoming sustained curatorial practice) that, transcending oral ephemerality through rigorous editing, crystallize into book-objects.

Explicitly inspired by Vasari, Obrist acts as a portraitist who not merely records voices but translates artists' technical language into a structured critical vocabulary. This operation embodies what Weber called the "routinization of charisma": authority that institutionalizes itself. The curator's exceptional intellectual authority is depersonalized and transferred to the system and interviewed artist. His charismatic technology – the 'Obrist system' – operates through three registers: editorial (books), performative ("Conversation Marathons"), and curatorial. Together, they reposition artists as intellectual figures, their authority crystallized in the book-object. These book-objects then generate exhibitions and archives, thereby extending the system's reach. His emphasis on artistic practice over biography prefigured the web-based video portrait projects that followed.

The final chapter shifts the focus away from Vienna. The research opens to the web and, examining examples emerging between the late 2000s and early 2010s, explores platforms that are advancing radically different yet highly successful video portrait models. Primary cases include TateShots, launched by the Tate in 2008, and above all videos produced by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art through Louisiana Channel, launched in 2012. Both projects were created from the beginning with a view to online distribution, with YouTube functioning as their primary circulation space.

Formally, these videos belong to a portraiture tradition that is distinct from the models analysed in previous chapters. Indeed, their primary formal reference point is journalistic portraiture constructed through interviewing. As interview and literary interview studies demonstrate, the subject takes form through the dialogic device organizing narrative. This portraiture thus tends towards emphasizing the interviewee's intimate self or inner world, constructing identity through biography, formation, and practice. The audiovisual language reflects this orientation. TateShots often present more dynamic editing, while Louisiana Channel adopts a more contemplative tone, with footage of artists in studios or museum spaces, diffused lighting, evocative music, and high-quality images. In both, however, the central element is narrative construction. Aligned with journalistic portraiture, these interviews emphasize training, education, and the moment the artist recognizes his or her vocation. These are joined by explicit attention to artistic practice and creative process.

Reflecting the digital environment in which these videos circulate, this narrative structure makes them more similar to the genre of tutorial. The tutorial character can be seen particularly clearly in several series curated by the Louisiana Channel, such as "Advice to the Young", which collects guidance for new generations, or "Facing the Blank Page", which is devoted to the difficulties creators face in the initial steps of the creative process. Other series, like "Get Inspired With" or "Artists on One Work", organize the interviews around themes of inspiration and working method. In these series, the video portrait functions as a guide, offering direction and possibilities for viewers' own practice.

I propose calling this form the existential tutorial. This term captures the fact that, in these videos, artists convey not technique but lived experience: formation, struggle, daily practice. The notion dialogues with Ramon Reichert's analyses of Web 2.0 tutorials as knowledge devices based on weak and participatory authorship forms. It connects, moreover, to reflections on authorship that, since Barthes, have described transformations in the author-figure and growing openness in artistic narratives. Charisma operates differently here. In earlier models, it relied on distance and ambiguity, thus creating a threshold between artist

and viewer. In existential tutorials, charisma instead shifts to centre on artistic practice itself. The artist is presented here as a figure capable of taking working strategies, doubts, and creative processes and rendering them visible and transparent. Their experiences are made transmissible – something others can learn from and adapt to their own practice.

This transformation reflects a tendency that art sociology has identified in the evolution of the contemporary artist myth, that is, the tendency to shift the attention from grace towardss practice. Existential tutorials can therefore be read as a new charismatic technology. By narrating artistic practice, these videos create a form of fascination rooted in the possibility of learning and finding direction through another's experience.

The goal of this final outward movement beyond the Viennese context is to outline a conceptual and interpretive schema that, taking art criticism as its point of departure, aims to add something new to artist studies. Yet pressing questions arise. Why insist on this theme? Why continue studying artists, and why choose their conversational representations as a starting point? Artist representation engages one of the most culturally fraught identity categories, one that constantly risks being consolidated into myth. Artists can be understood, as Lonzi proposed, as load-bearing pillars of a cultural system. This system reveals itself precisely in the representations it produces. Examined closely, such representations resemble reflective surfaces, paintings without subjects. As literature shows, portraying dead authors proves easier than depicting living ones.

To move beyond this blind spot, as Soussloff argues, we must expand art history's methods and sources. Psychobiographical inquiries into artists had already revealed, in the Vienna of the early 1900s, both how much the tradition of artist representation could be destabilized and what this destabilization revealed about art history's own necessities. Subsequent scholarship, from feminism, critical studies, media analysis, and art sociology, refined this insight. Broadly stated, feminist and critical scholarship deconstructed the artist-figure and exposed its ideological foundations. Media and sociological approaches, by contrast, traced how institutions have constructed the artist-figure through various technologies and systems. They examined the aura of celebrity surrounding artistic figures, how societies position artists within economic centres, and the narrative strategies through which media construct them.

This study navigates between these approaches, seeking to honour the specificity of people who make art without either essentializing or deconstructing it. It also resists imposing grand narratives onto artistic particularity, refusing both mythologization and reductive deconstruction. It has kept the focus on representations of artists, recognizing that we tend to understand these people only through established hierarchies and myths. The most eloquent representations emerged where the artists' voices coexisted with an apparatus distributing and facilitating their circulation. Thanks to the analytical tools used here, these representations could be read both as artworks in themselves and as objects requiring specific interpretive approaches. This approach kept artistic particularity in focus, preventing it from dissolving into abstraction or disappearing beneath the theoretical apparatus.

This study necessarily carried out some simplifications. Nevertheless, it also demonstrated the desirability of an intermediate methodological path. Such a path neither ignores the artist-figure nor aspires to penetrate its secret. As such, it constitutes an attempt to develop an oblique gaze on the representations crowding contemporary times and art history by bringing

together different kinds of concepts and theories. This theoretical effort is meant to engage with the broader tradition of scholarship carried out, for example, by Claire Bishop. In *Disoriented Attention*, Bishop demonstrates how technological transformation and its attentional impact can be unpacked and made sense of using art criticism's tools. This provides another way for Carla Lonzi's theoretical legacy to proceed distinctly into the present and future – a vein of unprecedented positionings towards art history and subjectivity that has yet to be fully mined. It would prove interesting to observe what further intermixtures might develop on the side of art sociology, an area that this study perhaps sidelined too greatly. For instance, it might be worth developing a study on artist representation and the transmissibility of artistic consciousness – perhaps considering education systems – observed from the perspective of charisma.

In conclusion, it is hoped this study has provided some useful coordinates for living more freely in a world populated by artists, that is, living free from schemas that weigh down reception and constructions that burden the discovery of selfhood.

Appendix A – Obrist's Charisma Turns Artists into Books

A.1 The Case of Hans Ulrich Obrist

This appendix serves as a concluding gesture associated with the third chapter, extending the Vienna-centred analysis to an international scope and thereby establishing a conceptual bridge to the subsequent case studies of the Louisiana Channel and TateShots.

At the heart of this appendix is the curatorial practice of Hans Ulrich Obrist, the current artistic director of the Serpentine Gallery in London. Although Obrist's collaborations with museum in progress were briefly mentioned earlier, his distinctive method of constructing artistic identity through conversation-based portraits demands closer examination. This appendix analyses how Obrist's curatorial operations amplify the articulations of charismatic technology, revealing not the technology itself but the diverse modalities through which it operates when channelled via distinct practices and institutional contexts.

Crucially, this case study does not belong directly to the primary corpus of analysis for two interconnected reasons. First, Obrist's work fundamentally consists of conversation-portraits rather than video portraits. While these conversations often exist in remediated forms – recorded, transcribed, and documented – they remain eminently conversational in their essence. This distinction displaces them from the central inquiry of this study. Second, despite Obrist's institutional affiliations with major museums, foundations, and galleries, these conversation-portraits were not generated as part of any particular institutional commission. Rather, they constitute an autonomous curatorial practice, distinctly separate from institutional patronage or exhibition frameworks.

Yet this practice proves indispensable. Here, portraiture operates through the description of methodology and practice itself, an alignment that resonates powerfully with the fourth chapter's analysis of the tutorial as a communicative model. Furthermore, Obrist's case reveals an additional rearticulation of artistic charisma, one that is specifically intertwined with curatorial charisma. This hybrid authority ultimately crystallizes in a distinct object: the book. Through this transformation, the conversation-portrait is reframed in a publishable, portable, and archival form: a rearticulation of narrative that demands attention as we consider how artistic identity circulates beyond the institutional and technological frameworks examined thus far. It is necessary to proceed step by step and reconstruct the applicable context. Obrist was born in Switzerland and developed an early interest in art. The Austrian capital entered his personal geography in the 1980s when, at sixteen or seventeen, he travelled to the city to visit exhibitions and artist studios. Although this information is mentioned in some interviews, Obrist elaborated on it during an interview he agreed to give me.

> My own relationship with Vienna began earlier, in 1985, when I was sixteen or seventeen and had just started travelling on night trains. At first, my parents came with me, as they did not want me to travel alone, but that soon changed. On that early trip to Vienna, we visited the RIVA Studio together, where artists such as Erwin Wurm, Alois Mosbacher, Hubert Schmalix, and Thomas Stimm were working. A few years later, in 1989, I saw Wunderblock: eine Geschichte der modernen Seele, a Großausstellung

> conceived by Jean Clair, Cathrin Pichler, and others. These experiences introduced me to the Viennese art world in a moment when the exhibition formats of the eighties were still at their height.[439]

The real turning point, however, came in the 1990s. Before leaving for Paris to take advantage of a scholarship granted by the Fondation Cartier, Obrist came across a press release from museum in progress. The curator recognized that the museum featured an affinity of viewpoints and theoretical references – such as Alexander Dorner, author of *The Way Beyond 'Art'* and his idea of the museum as *Kraftwerk* – that intersected with his own interests, and this prompted him to contact Kathrin and Joseph. Contact with the founders of museum in progress intensified from 1993 onward, when Obrist began to be actively involved in the museum's curatorial activities. Early in his career, Obrist recalls the time he spent in the museum's archives: "back then I would often spend *nuits blanches* alone in the museum in progress office, working until morning. It remains unforgettable for me".[440]

This engagement quickly produced results. During that same year, Obrist curated *Der zerbrochene Spiegel* (The Broken Mirror) with Kasper König: a monumental exhibition that wound through several of Vienna's historic sites.[441] museum in progress also supported this exhibition and backed the realization of two large prints by Ed Ruscha that were meant to visually connect the facades of Hall B of the Museumsquartier.[442]

At the same time, the collaboration between Obrist and museum in progress extended across many projects. For example, he worked as a curator on Boetti's *Cieli in Alta Quota* and Félix González-Torres's *Portrait of Austrian Airlines.* During the same year, planning began for another project developed by the curator in dialogue with Christian Boltanski and Bertrand Lavier, a project that was destined to become celebrated and long-lasting. This was "do it": an exhibition project born from the idea of having artists themselves give instructions for creating artworks. In an interview with Markus Miessen, Obrist explained it by saying:

> [do it] is an archive of instructions for artwork that can potentially be realized. It refers to the important role of instructions for art in the 20th century. We asked the artists for instructions, which then could be interpreted by different people in different situations, and these interpretations are collected as an archive. It began rather small, with around 10 artists, and then became a book and a small exhibition. Now, each time a 'do it' exhibition is shown, new instructions from local artists are added. So far we have had 50 venues on five continents.[443]

This is a paradigmatic project, not only because the idea is innovative, but also because its development, extended over time, follows the long-duration dynamics so dear to Obrist. The curator tends to carry projects forward over time, transforming them into a kind of format that is then updated each time. It comes as no surprise, remaining within the scope of collaborations with museum in progress, to find Obrist still involved today in the *Safety*

---

[439] Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist", interview by Balzani, Guido, 27 November 2025, Appendix G.
[440] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist",
[441] Hans Ulrich Obrist wrote about his participation in "The Starting Point", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/122/.
[442] For a discussion of museum in progress' participation in the exhibition, see Rollig, Stella, "'17th Century – 20th Century' von Ed Ruscha", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/texte/123/.
[443] Markus Miessen, "Archiving in Formation: A Conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist", *Log* 21 (Winter 2011), pp. 40–41.

Curtain project. This is a way of working that shares similarities with Joseph and Kathrin's practice, which he explains this way:

> My own interview project connects to the concept of long-duration, or la longue durée in Braudel's sense, a framework I have always preferred to the short-lived spectacle of event culture. Joseph and Kathrin shared this orientation, and many of our collaborations evolved from that mutual commitment to sustained, thoughtful engagement.[444]

These logics, as mentioned, return in the *do it* exhibition. After its 1994 debut in Klagenfurt at the Ritter Kunsthalle, the exhibition underwent several iterations. One, particularly interesting for this research, came as early as 1995 when a video edition of the project was realized through museum in progress. The artists were filmed giving instructions for creating artworks in what resembled a kind of television advertisement. In keeping with the history of collaborative institutions that marks the city of Vienna, it is fitting that these videos were then broadcast on the ORF television network.[445] A notable example is the 1995 television advertisement featuring sexologist and feminist author Shere Hite, whose instructions exemplified the intimate and performative nature of the project:

> DO IT – Home Version by Shere Hite
> Embrace an important friend in a full-length hug for thirty-one minutes. Contact should be frontal, body to body, full length with legs, chests, pelves and heads touching. Speak a maximum of twenty words each to each other. Do not proceed to other activities or sex. The room should be silent, without music.
> 'I can't touch you below the waist. I don't think there's a difference between the spirit and the body'.
> 'Neither do I'.
> 'Well then'.
> After, write your sensations on a large paper or blackboard. Name the activity you have engaged in using just one word. Mail this word to me.[446]

[444] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".
[445] Hans Ulrich Obrist, "DO IT", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/104/.
[446] Shere Hite, "DO IT – No. 01", mip.at, accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/creations/do-it-no-01/.



Figure 36 Shere Hite, *DO IT – Home Version*, 1995. Performed by Jill Foulston and Shere Hite. Part of *DO IT – TV-Version*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, museum in progress/ORF, 1995. Video still. Copyright and courtesy museum in progress, Vienna.

Although this project differs greatly from that of interviews and conversations, an interest in artistic practice and its narration can already be seen here – one that will return in Obrist's later work. Indeed, although this will be described better below, it is worth noting here that Obrist began collaborating on Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* project in 1993.

A determining element was what he calls the "BundeskuratorInnen model" [447] introduced by Culture Minister Rudolf Scholten. The BundeskuratorInnen model constituted a funding tool introduced to overcome the "Gießkannenförderung", that is, the indiscriminate funding characteristic of traditional cultural bureaucracy.[448] The model operated through curators who acted as intermediaries between emerging artistic developments and the public administration, positioning themselves outside the ordinary funding structures. It primarily benefited the fields of visual arts and contemporary music.[449]

The scenario Obrist describes, strongly supported by the state, must be contextualized in relation to the era of the *Großausstellung*, large exhibitions, which included projects like *Der zerbrochene Spiegel*, *do it*, and *Cities on the move*. This exhibition model progressively lost impetus with the advent of the *Zeitalter der Biennalen*, the era of Biennials, as these latter fostered a very different way of conceiving and realizing exhibitions. As Obrist himself observes: "From today's perspective, Vienna played a leading role during the nineties, just before this broader shift took hold".[450]

[447] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".
[448] Michael Wimmer, *Kultur und Demokratie: eine systematische Darstellung von Kulturpolitik in Österreich* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2011), p. 226.
[449] Wimmer, *Kultur und Demokratie*, pp. 225–226.
[450] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".

This extended experience in the local area gave rise, in 1995, to Obrist's appointment to the advisory board of the EVN Sammlung, the EVN art collection in Lower Austria. His constant presence in Austria led him, more recently in 2015, to join the advisory board of the Maria Lassnig Foundation. This appointment testifies to the enduring influence that the 1990s continued to exert on the contemporary scene.

A.1.1 Obrist's conversations in detail

Obrist's practice as an interviewer requires some clarification. The Swiss curator's interest in conversation and interviews follows long-duration logics and dates back to the beginning of his activity, though he did not initially record the dialogues. From 1984 to 1991, Obrist conducted numerous conversations without any audio or video documentation.[451]

His encounter with Jonas Mekas in a Paris café during the 1990s marked a decisive turning point. As the curator frequently recalls in interviews, Mekas asked him: "Hans Ulrich, why don't you film your interviews?" Obrist responded to this: "So I just bought a little camera and the format shifted from the audiocassettes to mini-DVs. Today, I've got about 2,200 hours of mini-DV tapes, and all interviews are filmed".[452] More specifically, according to what he told me in an interview, Mekas encouraged him to pursue a visually and technically informal path: "Mekas encouraged me to avoid the studio feeling, suggesting a coffeehouse approach where the recording did not need to be perfect: putting the recorder and microphone on the table would be enough. I bought a simple digital camera and began filming".[453]

Despite his early involvement in Peter Kogler's *Portraits of Artists* project, this experience should not be seen as the root of Obrist's practice. During the project, he conversed with Vito Acconci, Walter Obholzer, Luc Tuymans, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Christian Boltanski, and many others, through to what appears to have been the final interview with Matthew Barney in 2001.

While Kogler's project certainly showed him a path for dialogue and actively constructing the image of the artist, the experience also clarified where the curator's position differed. *Portraits of Artists* revealed Obrist's lack of interest in a conversational practice locked into a para-televisual format, static and overly rigid. In his words: "I realized that the studio system had devised was not the right environment for me, since the formality of the studio and its nearness to a television format tended to make people tense and left only limited room for the kind of long-form conversation I wanted to carry on".[454]

The *Portraits of Artists* experience can be seen as a phase where the curator's practice took shape through negation: he learned how he did not want to construct and conduct his dialogues. The encounter with Mekas, by contrast, reinforced his project in a positive sense and pointed him in the direction he instead wanted to take.

---

[451] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".
[452] Philip Ursprung and Hans Ulrich Obrist, "'Curiosity Is the Motor of the Entire Interview Project': Hans Ulrich Obrist in Conversation with Philip Ursprung", *The Art Bulletin* 94, no. 1 (March 2012), p. 43.
[453] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".
[454] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".

Obrist treats his conversations as fluid and malleable material: clay to be shaped afterward. Yet while the conversational model can unfold without much formality, the text does not remain free and loose. The conversation becomes rigid later: during editing. Editing is a collaborative operation, as Obrist himself admits, that gives the conversation its structure.

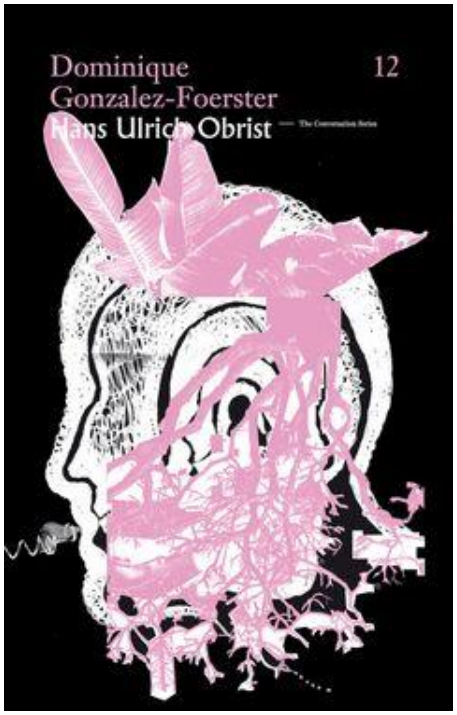

Figure 37 Book cover: Hans Ulrich Obrist & Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster: *The Conversation Series*, Vol. 12. Cologne: Walther König, 2008. Paperback.

This intervention has sometimes been seen as intrusive enough to turn interviews into conversations in disguise. As Alexandra Ross notes, referring to the *Conversation Series* published by Walther König, "The Conversation Series produced by Walther König publishers is a prime example of where interview has been attributed the quality and meaning of conversation, however, what the reader is presented with is a neatly edited interview".[455]

According to Ross, Obrist's editorial practice involves "post-production, editing, hindsight, re-contextualisation, and loss of memory through removal from the original context"; elements carefully "hidden from the reader".[456] Although these are "pervasive, critical and far reaching" interviews, they do not fully capture "the moment of the encounter" or convey the dialogic dimension of curatorial work.[457] A genuine conversation represents "a moment embodied in the oral, relational and dialogical", but this kind of transposition to the page "strips layers of texture and meaning".[458] The semi-structured format, retrospective

[455] Alexandra C. M. Ross, "Continuous Curatorial Conversations. An Exploration of the Role of Conversation within the Writing of a Supplementary History of the Curatorial" (PhD, University of Dundee, 2014), pp. 11–12.
[456] Ross, "Continuous Curatorial Conversations", p. 12.
[457] Ross, "Continuous Curatorial Conversations", p. 12.
[458] Ross, "Continuous Curatorial Conversations", p. 12.

editing, recontextualization, and loss of oral nuances make up what Ross calls an "Obrist Model of interview", a model that has become a paradigm in curatorial practice.[459]



Figure 38 Book cover: Hans Ulrich Obrist: *Interviews, Volume 2*. Edited by Charles Arsène-Henry, Shumon Basar, and Karen Marta. Milan: Charta, 2010.

Looking at what is probably the most monumental publication of Obrist's conversations, titled *Interviews* and published by Charta, the conversational tone comes through clearly and unfolds effectively across the various artists and intellectuals interviewed.[460] The way speech is treated here transforms it into critical text, setting up chronological markers alongside glimpses into the interviewee's interiority, especially their cultural world. This represents a transmutation from conversation to book, where the latter takes shape as the crowning achievement of a sculptural operation. If this description sounds slightly exaggerated, these considerations need to be contextualized within the history of Obrist's curatorial operations and his relationship with books.

Starting with this last aspect, the curator has never hidden his interest in making, buying, reading, and owning books. The book-object lies at the foundation of his thinking and

[459] Ross, "Continuous Curatorial Conversations", p. 12.
[460] See Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Interviews. 2* (Milan: Charta, 2010).

curatorial practice. In an interview with Ursprung, Obrist makes clear just how much space this interest occupies in his life:

I have no other addiction now that I don't even drink coffee anymore. It's just an addiction for books. I buy books every day. It's a ritual. I need to buy a book every day and so I've got about forty or fifty thousand books in my Berlin flat, in my London flat, in my parents' flat in Switzerland. And the practice of buying books and looking at books also leads to producing books. Books lead to other books and the idea is that one day there could be an archive to bring it all together in one place. […] I'm not a collector of interviews; I'm not a collector of books. I want them to be useful. I want everything to be a utility in the service of art.[461]

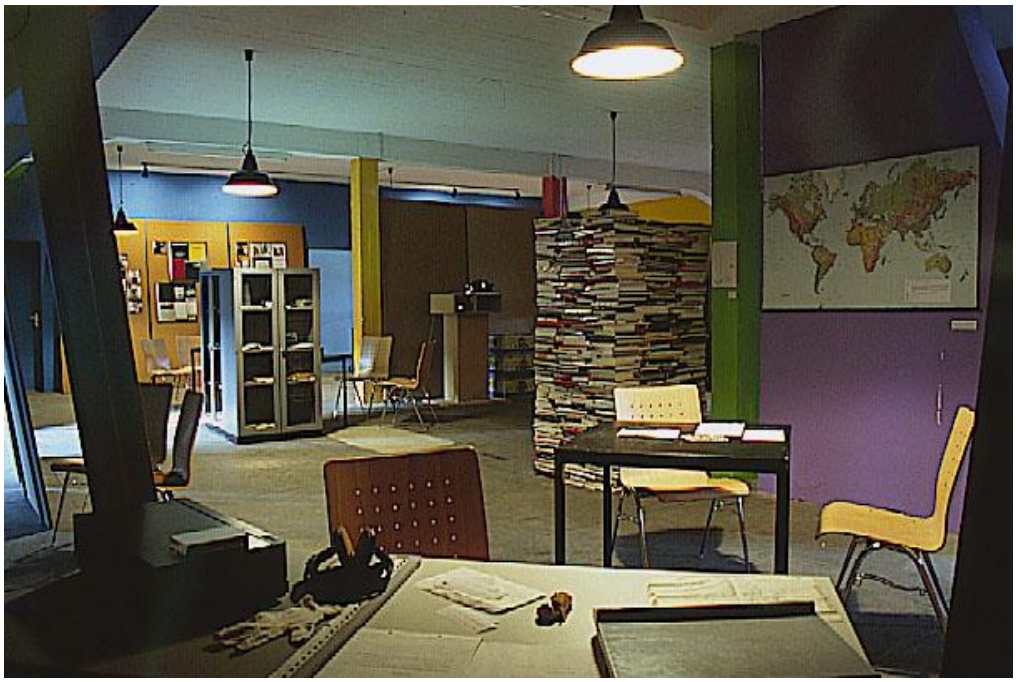

Figure 39 Installation view, *Interarchive* exhibition, Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg, July 15, 1999–January 31, 2000. Courtesy Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest, https://artpool.hu/1999/990715e.html, accessed May 25, 2026.

The reference to a place capable of storing this massive quantity of books shifts the discussion back to curatorial operations, the epitome of which is probably the *Interarchive* exhibition. In 1999, the curator launched the *Interarchive* project; it was displayed at the Kunstraum of Lüneburg University in July-August 1999 and resulted in an editorial publication in 2002. [462] The project, realized in collaboration with art historian Beatrice von Bismarck, mathematician Diethelm Stoller, sociologist Ulf Wuggenig and a group of students, originated from the physical transfer of approximately 1,000 boxes, containing mainly books, from Obrist's personal archive in St. Gallen to Lüneburg.

[461] Philip Ursprung and Hans Ulrich Obrist, "'Curiosity Is the Motor of the Entire Interview Project': Hans Ulrich Obrist in Conversation with Philip Ursprung", *The Art Bulletin* 94, no. 1 (March 2012), p. 48.
[462] The book by Beatrice von Bismarck is the most valuable source about this exhibition. See Beatrice von Bismarck, Burke Barrett, and Kunstraum der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, eds, *Interarchive: archivarische Praktiken und Handlungsräume im zeitgenössischen Kunstfeld; [dieses Buch dokumentiert und erweitert das Ausstellungsprojekt "Interarchiv" des Kunstraums der Universität Lüneburg ... 1997 - 2002]* (Köln: König, 2002). See also "Interarchive", Kunstraum Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, accessed May 25, 2026, https://kunstraum.leuphana.de/en/projects/interarchiv.

The goal was not to present the archive as a static collection, but to use it as "raw material" for exploring new archival and documentary practices. The project invited several artists to interact with this material and subvert traditional ordering systems. Hans-Peter Feldmann photographed the entire contents of the boxes, proposing classifications based on unusual and sensory criteria (weight, colour, smell, space, and time) rather than conventional chronological or alphabetical parameters. Koo Jeong-A created an architectural tower composed of thousands of books, while Christian Boltanski worked with students on their personal archives and family photo albums, expanding the reflection from curatorial archive to individual and collective memory.

The interviews also played an important role here, as historian Julia Gelshorn notes. Beyond the books, the exhibition context included transcripts of Obrist's conversations and a list of interviewees. The resulting effect, according to Gelshorn, was "a decentralized multiplicity of voices" which paradoxically "explicitly links […] to the curator's archival practice, thus assembling them together as participants of an open-ended collaboration".[463] Gelshorn goes so far as to describe Obrist as a kind of platform where dialogues intersect. Yet in saying this, the historian does not suggest that Obrist becomes background by erasing his identity and authorship. On the contrary, precisely as connector, he gains a central role.

The clearest manifestation of this power of unifying through dialogue is arguably the performances organized by the curator himself, known as *Conversation Marathons*.

The *Conversation Marathons* arose from Hans Ulrich Obrist's insight that interview practice could be transformed into a performative and collective event. The project originated in Stuttgart in 2005 "in an almost accidental way" when, as Obrist himself recounts, the theatre impresario Marie Zimmermann, who ran the Theater der Welt festival in Stuttgart together with Christine Peter asked him to put the interview formats "on stage".[464]

As the curator explained, the theoretical underpinning for this idea was a principle articulated by Richard Hamilton: an exhibition worth remembering must invent a new rule of the game. In his words: "In the world of exhibitions, we always try to come up with new formats; Richard Hamilton once told me, referring to Marcel Duchamp […], that if an exhibition doesn't invent a new rule of the game, we won't remember it".[465] The first experiment consisted of a 24-hour marathon with 24 participants during the Theater der Welt festival, an ambitious undertaking that proved difficult to sustain in its original format.

From 2006 onward, when the project began to collaborate with the Serpentine Gallery in London and thanks to a partnership with architect Rem Koolhaas, the format evolved significantly. It was integrated with the programme of temporary architecture pavilions and developed into a shorter 12-hour version as well. The marathons thus took on different and increasingly hybrid forms: from the original *Interview Marathon* to the *Experiment Marathon*, more oriented towards happenings and live experiments, to the *Manifesto Marathon*, focused on programmatic declarations, and on to the *Poetry Marathon* and *Map Marathon*, dedicated to poetry and cartography respectively.

---

[463] Julia Gelshorn, "Two Are Better than One: Notes on the Interview and Techniques of Multiplication", *The Art Bulletin* 94, no. 1 (March 2012), p. 35.
[464] See Hans Ulrich Obrist in Nantia Argyropulu, *The Marathon Marathon in* Athens, ed. Hans Ulrich Obrist and Nantia Argyropulu (Athens: DESTE, 2017), p. 12.
[465] Argyropulu, *The Marathon Marathon in Athens*, p. 12.

The philosophy underlying the marathons is deeply rooted in the concept of "pooling knowledge" theorized by artist and scholar Gyorgy Kepes. As Obrist states: "The concept of the Marathon is inspired by the late Gyorgy Kepes, the artist, scholar and educator" and his notion of pooling knowledge: "If we want to understand the forces that are effective in art, it's vital to understand what's happening in other fields".[466] The goal is to create bridges between different disciplines (art, science, architecture, music, literature) so as to map the "extreme present" (our hyper-connected, accelerated reality) and resist oblivion.[467]

The *Conversation Marathons* project brings together several aspects that enrich Obrist's conversational practice and begin to reveal what happens to subjectivities during these exchanges. Once performed, Obrist's function as connector becomes unmistakably clear. He stands at the centre of the exchanges, with his body and, above all, his interest in giving the discussion a precise shape. Specifically, this shape is a high-quality intellectual product in which concepts play a decisive role, concepts that the various interviewees come to embody. Here, the difference between artists and other thinkers is reduced, united as they are by their intellectuality. The book-object that ultimately crowns this performance is foreshadowed by its dialogic process. The performance, with its complexity and undeniable duration, fortifies the book's status as the fruit of evident intellectual effort.

Yet the theme of the "extreme present" also surfaces, along with – and especially – its opposite: the fear of oblivion. Obrist has always been honest about this: his intellectual voracity and need to build structures that resist over time stem from a fear of forgetting and an even greater, albeit less apparent, fear of ignorance. The interview project and his archive function as intellectual tools and material strongholds, constantly narrowing the scope of what remains unknown.

Michael Diers synthesizes these two aspects in his introduction to the *Interviews* volume. The historian emphasizes the "encyclopedic character" of Obrist's undertaking, noting it is "less a product of the sheer number of existing interviews, but rather an outcome of the manner in which the interviews were conducted and of the range of professions, both from science and art, represented by the interlocutors".[468] The conversations construct a specific map of knowledge, edited and transcribed to bring this knowledge to the fore. Rather than the authenticity seen in Gaube – the truth of the relationship – or Kogler's hermetic artist universe, Obrist's conversations carry knowledge itself.

This brings us closer to questions of portraiture. Thanks to their distinctive character, Obrist's conversations have become an important component of artist monographs. This literary genre, as Gabriele Guercio's extensive study shows, had incorporated voice and direct speech since at least the twentieth century.

According to Guercio, the monograph, built around the persistent question "who?" addressed to the artist, had long drawn on direct speech to animate the text and convey the

---

[466] Argyropulu, *The Marathon Marathon in Athens*, p. 12.

[467] The concept of "extreme present" was developed in Shumon Basar, Hans Ulrich Obrist, et al., *The Age of Earthquakes: A Guide to the Extreme Present* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015), after the Marathon interviews. Its inclusion here traces a through-line in Obrist's thinking: from accumulating and preserving cultural memory through the marathons, to critically analysing the digital acceleration of the present: two complementary approaches to the same challenge of resisting oblivion.

[468] Michael Diers, "'Infinite Conversation' Or the Interview as an Art Form", in *Interviews. 2*, by Hans Ulrich Obrist (Milan: Charta, 2010), p. 23.

artist's character.[469] Yet while this strategy carried innovative potential in the early 1900s,[470] by Obrist's time it has become standard practice and come to be critically important for conferring professional legitimation. Being interviewed by Obrist represents a real shift in status for his subjects: the interview serves not only as a significant credential for established artists but also certifies the intellectual dimension of their work and their participation in a vast parallel exhibition project running through the contemporary art system.

This recognition has become so crucial that it is now taken for granted, prompting artists themselves to want to escape the format's predictability. This happens even during interviews with Obrist himself.

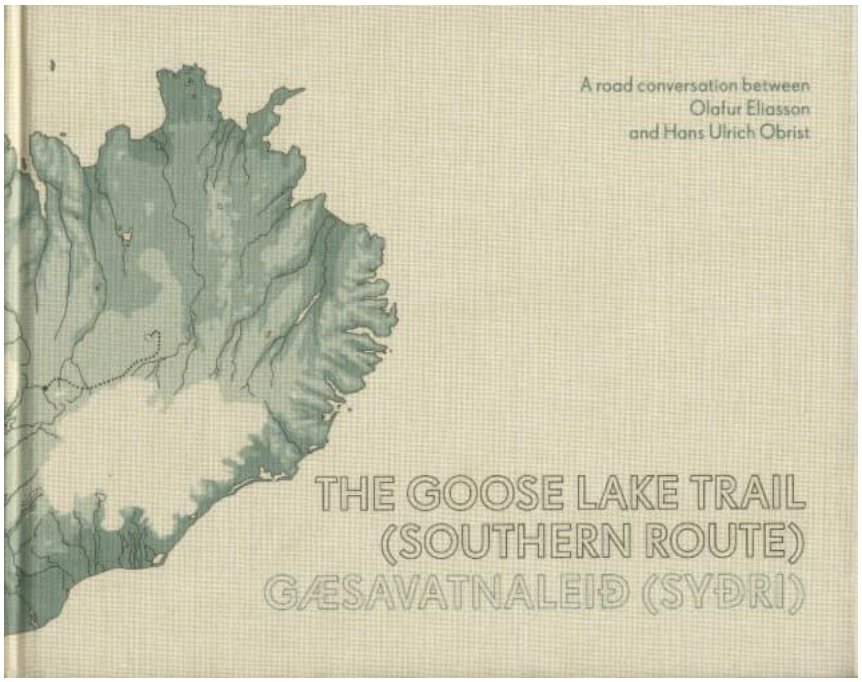

Figure 40 Book cover: *The Goose Lake Trail (Southern Route): A Road Conversation between Olafur Eliasson and Hans Ulrich Obrist*. Edited by Studio Olafur Eliasson and Eidar Art Center. Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2006. 21.3 × 17 cm.

In one study, Albert Coers identifies radically different approaches to interviewing between Olafur Eliasson and Thomas Demand, with Hans Ulrich Obrist as the privileged interlocutor for both.[471]

In Olafur Eliasson's case, the interview is transformed into an autonomous exhibition and editorial format. Together with curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, Eliasson creates a series of "conversation books" that are deliberately detached from the traditional catalogue context. The most significant example is *The Goose Lake Trail* (2006), an interview conducted during a car journey through Iceland, where dialogue merges with the genre of travel account and process-documentation. Physical movement is integral to the conversation, thus breaking with the stasis of conventional interviews. In his publication bibliography, Eliasson classifies

[469] Gabriele Guercio, *Art as Existence: The Artist's Monograph and Its Project* (Cambridge: MIT press, 2006).
[470] See Guercio, *Art as Existence*, specifically pp. 226–261.
[471] Albert Coers, "'Of course, an interview with the artist.' Das Interview als Medium zwischen Konvention und Innovation in Ausstellungskatalogen", *kunsttexte.de,* n. 3 (2012).

these works as “conversation book/artist’s book”, a hybrid category that positions them as artworks rather than critical literature. The conversation no longer documents the work after the fact but rather constitutes artistic practice in itself, with particular emphasis on dual authorship (Eliasson and Obrist are typographically presented on equal footing) and the process-based nature of experience.

Thomas Demand adopts the opposite strategy, one characterized by greater reserve in self-commentary. Rather than elevating the interview to the status of autonomous work, Demand uses it as a tool to systematically separate the functions of the catalogue through dual publications.



Figure 41 Book cover: Thomas Demand und die Nationalgalerie: *Gespräch über die Ausstellung mit Hans Ulrich Obrist, Berlin 2009 / Thomas Demand and the Nationalgalerie: A Conversation about the Exhibition with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Berlin 2009*. Edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist. Cologne: Walther König, 2009.

The *Nationalgalerie* project (2009) exemplifies this most clearly: Demand produces two distinct books for a single exhibition. The official catalogue, co-authored with Botho Strauß, is purely “poetic”, presenting only images and literary texts without explanations, thereby preserving visual ambiguity. Simultaneously, a separate interview book with Hans Ulrich Obrist takes on all the informative and documentary functions: explaining works’ backgrounds, revealing architectural references to Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, and including work-in-progress documentation. Crucially, this interview volume is deliberately not distributed at the exhibition venue but is available only through bookshops, thus

maintaining a physical separation between aesthetic experience and critical commentary. This editorial fragmentation represents a systematic unbundling of traditional catalogue functions in which explanation is delegated entirely to a parallel publication. The choice of conversational partners proves equally strategic: Alexander Kluge for the Serpentine Gallery (2006) is not a curator but a filmmaker and author expert in conversation as an art form, thus avoiding the conventional curatorial interview dynamic.

Within this intricate and vast system of representation and narration of the artist devised by Obrist in which the artist's life, work, and thought are filtered through the prism of his exhibition project, it is worth asking what happens here and what similarities it has with the portrait strategies examined so far, before proceeding, in this case as well, with an application of the charismatic interpretive lens.

A.2 A charismatic reading of Obrist's work

Reading Obrist's conversations as portraits is not a forced interpretive move. The project presented so far clearly differs greatly from the video portrait tradition running from Gaube to Kogler through Kontakt's productions to the present. Yet the curator himself defines them as such: "The concept of the portrait is central to me: what I do, in a sense, is a portrait".[472] Obrist's understanding of the term "portrait" resembles a traditional, almost biographical usage. The curator continues: "In this regard, one of my biggest influences was Vasari. Reading about him as a teenager made me realize that historical figures might be among our contemporaries, whom we could meet and document".[473]

Using the term "portrait" for a practice based on manipulating the spoken word requires verifying whether the markers already identified work here as well – the same traits from the literary portrait tradition that proved effective in analysing video portraits. The question is then, where does insistence lie in Obrist's methodology? And, how does this technique manage to support that elusive component that characterizes portraiture and constitutes its true subject? These theoretical moves are essential for understanding how the image of the artist changes in this context.

Unlike Gaube's *Künstlerporträts*, Kogler's *Portraits of Artists,* and Kontakt's productions, in this case the portrait is relevant but follows different trajectories. Two aspects prove crucial for understanding these trajectories: the formalization of the interview and the construction of its content. A charismatic interpretive lens will then reveal how these dynamics actually bring about a transformation in the image of the artist.

On a formal level, Obrist's conversations take on a recognizable, almost sculptural configuration. Considering only the formal level, conversations clearly cannot be expected to yield an immediately comprehensible iconographic rendering of the portrayed subject. Yet even without being transposed into images, Obrist's conversations do achieve concrete formalization. Whether considering the "Conversations" or the "Interviews", interviewing clearly assumes a precise form in his practice: each dialogue invariably culminates in a book-object, thereby transforming ephemeral conversation into material presence. The construction

[472] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".
[473] Obrist, "Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist".

of the content adds to this formalization. Obrist pays close attention to the biographical realm, especially the history of the interviewee's artistic practice and work. His interventions oscillate between dense and merely connective activity, where he moves the conversation forward using formulas that can be summarized as "what about…", "and so…". More significant than the interviewees' extended responses are the curator's questions themselves. To Matthew Barney:

> HUO: Every time I visit your studio I am impressed by the storyboards you produce, which include drawings, postcards, photography, cut-outs of many things – a lot of research material. What is your working method?[474]

Or Daniel Buren:

> HUO: When one looks at Duchamp's texts there are also open partitions, ready-mades that he never produced. For instance, "Buy a dictionary and take out all the words that you like." Readymades are not necessarily frozen. We could buy a dictionary today and do what Duchamp suggested. But as you say, it is not that conception or that particular aspect that is focused on today.[475]

These questions convey a condensed way of explicitly constructing networks and methodological translations of artistic practice. The curator's words bring out chronologies that are quite revealing in terms of pointing to Obrist's intention to situate artists within a broad cultural network. Unlike Kogler where the portrait was a threshold, and Kontakt where this instrument expanded to become a generational fresco, the "Obrist-model" brings to the fore an explicitly connective purpose, one already anticipated in discussing the marathons but gaining solidity even more solidity here. In this context, it is useful to return to the comparison with Vasari the curator himself proposed. This comparison has the potential to yield critically interesting results, including insights about how charisma functions in this case.

As Maddalena Spagnolo's recent study notes, Vasari did not simply record artists' voices but actually created a true critical vocabulary by translating their technical language into accessible concepts. As Spagnolo observes, "the *Lives* brought traces of the oral discourse of artists to the written page, of their ways of speaking and technical language [...]. Sometimes words used or even coined by the artists […] would become crucial in the theory and criticism of Renaissance art."[476] The Vasarian operation consisted in translating "artistic literature, and the Lives in particular, offered to those who wanted to understand and judge art, some specific concepts and terms with which to articulate a critical discourse: a system of criteria to evaluate different styles".[477] The *Lives* transformed artistic discourse into a critical system, as "the everyday discourse of the artists that inhabits the pages of the *Lives* [...] is often filtered both by the literary traditions of *novelle* (short tales) and *facezie* (pleasantries) as well as by the suggestions offered by classical literature".[478]

---

[474] Obrist, *Interviews. 2* (Milan: Charta, 2010), p. 72.
[475] Obrist, *Interviews. 2*, p. 133.
[476] Maddalena Spagnolo, "The Voice of the Artists. Notes about Vasari's Lives and Early Modern Sources", in *Theorising the Artist Interview*, ed. Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher (New York: Routledge, 2024), p. 84.
[477] Spagnolo, "The Voice of the Artists. Notes about Vasari's Lives and Early Modern Sources", p. 84.
[478] Spagnolo, "The Voice of the Artists. Notes about Vasari's Lives and Early Modern Sources", p. 81.

Similarly, Obrist is no mere transcriber: his interviews filter artists' words through his curatorial framework so as to translate them into intellectually solid critical texts. Both Vasari and Obrist "[attempt] to translate and conceptualize [...] technical and stylistic choices that the artists deduced from their own practical experiences," thus making specialized knowledge legible to broader audiences.[479] In both cases, "the artist's voice [...] served to authenticate the author's narrative": the artist's voice legitimizes the mediator's project even while being shaped by it.[480]

As with Vasari, the authenticating power of the Obrist platform is largely played out on the linguistic level. In the Swiss curator's case, this process goes beyond simply creating a *lingua franca* for contemporary art to instead constitute a constitutive element of his charismatic profile. Language, power and charisma are tightly interwoven factors. Obrist's celebrated multilingualism – an extensive competence, recalled in several interviews, that informs and elevates his intellectual profile – combines with his demonstrated ability to make use of enduring, extensive and performative practice (the marathons are a concrete example) to generate an intellectual language of artistic making.

This linguistic competence produces a recognizable curatorial profile: Obrist as the art conversationalist *par excellence*, the sole mediator capable of generating that specific form of artistic discourse that his mediation (and his insistence) alone can produce.

Obrist's profile becomes charismatically compelling because he manages to exercise remarkable abilities that connect to the most elementary virtues ascribed to charismatic gifts. Yet what matters here is not the charisma of Obrist as an individual, but rather the way that the practice which lent validity to his curatorial profile then did the same for the platform (composed of books, performances and encounters) which derived from it. In other words, it is a matter of recognizing how ability then transformed into the specific "Obrist system" that generates a different image of the artist and thus makes his practice a charismatic technology.

To see how this charisma based on Obrist's intellectuality extends and transforms, we can draw on one of the basic concepts of charismatic theory: the "routinization of charisma" (Veralltäglichung des Charismas).[481] Routinization refers to the way charisma, initially extraordinary and personal, must transform if it is to persist beyond the figure who originally generated it. Recent studies on charisma have shown that, too often, this virtue has been (mis)understood, at least in sociology, as consisting in a singular narrative indissolubly connected to a charismatic leader.[482] In reality, the literature working to clarify this concept shows that this is not necessarily the case; indeed, work as early as Weber already considered charisma as an attribute that is not necessarily personal. Mauro Barisione's overview, for example, shows that charisma involves dynamics of depersonalization: that is, dynamics through which this virtue separates from the person and can be transferred or extended to offices, institutions, or ritual practices.[483] In the case of social systems, the routinization of

[479] Spagnolo, "The Voice of the Artists. Notes about Vasari's Lives and Early Modern Sources", p. 85.
[480] Spagnolo, "The Voice of the Artists. Notes about Vasari's Lives and Early Modern Sources", p. 91.
[481] This concept initially appears in Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1976), pp. 142-147.
[482] A valuable recognition of this point can be found in Ray Gordon, "Charisma, Routinization Of", in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, George Ritzer (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 437–438.
[483] Mauro Barisione, "Reviving Metapersonal Charisma in Max Weber", *Political Theory* 51, no. 3 (June 2023), pp. 530–556.

charisma occurs when the individual's charisma becomes depersonalized and can thus be transferred to a system. The system itself takes on the charisma derived from the original subject and this systemic charisma then becomes routine. In this sense, for example, the functioning of bureaucracy can be seen as the routinization of a leader's charisma.

To return to Obrist's case, his interviews comprise a platform and the platform in turn can be understood as a routinization of individual abilities, in this case the curator's. Through the conversations, the charisma originating from the curator's intellectual qualities seems to transfer to the interviewed subject as well, and thus to the artist. This dynamic should not be understood as a form of investiture. Rather, it appears in the eyes of those who encounter these portraits, as the outcome of co-construction. In truth, this collaborative co-construction extends well beyond the simple duality of interviewer and interviewee in that it is firmly based on a rigorous editing system and solid project concept. Yet the final effect proves so effective that, when artists' names appear alongside professional intellectuals in interview collections, no abrupt linguistic shift occurs. A uniting thread runs through the nexus of intellectuality that harmonizes and binds the conversations together.

This is a profound transformation, the outcome of a charismatic technology that operates on multiple levels. It should be remembered that, unlike projects tied to museums and collections, this project has a distinctly personal nature. Obrist's conversation project coincides with his very identity: a kind of existential curatorial practice that follows the long-duration logics typical of his work and includes the curator's subjectivity in the portrait itself.

If the author's profile occupies half of the portrait, the other half is dedicated to the artist. In Kogler's work, the elusive component of the portrait lay in the ambiguous status of artist-as-artwork. In the *Kontakt Portraits*, portraiture's elusive component reconstructed the face of a generation. Obrist's project presents a further variation. The artist occupies a central place within this charismatic technology, so much so that, as we have seen, entering into this system represents a significant career step for working artists. At the same time, the artist's singularity becomes part of a broader system that coincides with Obrist's archive and curatorial practice. This passage profoundly transforms the artists' status, starting with their narrative.

The artists thus become intellectuals, as mentioned above – but that is not all. The transformation they undergo is more radical and, in some ways, concrete. The editing and editorial processes fix this elusive artist narrative onto a solid scaffolding and entrust this narrative to the book-object. Once transformed into a book, the artist enters Obrist's encyclopaedia, but also his books, and thus the exhibitions that arise from them, in a mechanism that reconfirms the curator's own charisma.

Broken down this way, the components of this charismatic technology show how the precise structures in which artists' portraits are framed allow the charismatic myth surrounding them to be reinvested, thus generating variations on the same theme.

The Obrist system thus represents a further variation on the Kogler and Kontakt cases. While in Kogler charisma transformed the artist into artwork, and in Kontakt it embedded them within a historical generation, here the artist, through conversation, becomes an intellectual; he or she enters the archive and crystallizes in the book-object. Yet this transformation is not limited to the artist: the portrait now explicitly includes the curator's identity as well. Obrist's practice, existential and long-term, causes its own authorial

charisma to multiply through the routinization of conversations. The narrative of the artist's myth, mediated by these charismatic technologies, thus changes according to the objectives (collecting, historical, curatorial) each project pursues.

A.3 Conclusions

This chapter has traced how the artist portrait tradition, rooted in Peter Kogler's foundational work and developed through the *Kontakt Video Portraits*, finds continuation in Hans Ulrich Obrist's conversational practice. Whereas Kogler and Kontakt relied on formal devices such as colour blocks and zoom, Obrist pursues similar objectives through editorial rigor and encyclopaedic accumulation. His practice demonstrates that portraiture extends far beyond the video format to operate instead through conversation, publication, and sustained intellectual engagement.

Obrist's conversational practice operates as a long-duration project that transforms interviewing into a charismatic technology of representation. Each dialogue culminates in a book-object, thereby converting ephemeral speech into material presence and intellectual architecture. The key lies in understanding how Obrist's own intellectual charisma is transferred to the interviewed artist through the conversational exchange. The curator's work functions to actively construct knowledge: through questions oscillating between dense engagement and connective prompting, he builds networks of methodological translations of artistic practice so as to integrate each artist into a broader cultural cartography. Through meticulous editing and thematic curation, Obrist repositions the artist within an intellectual framework while making that singularity legible to broader audiences.

This operation bears a striking similarity to what Vasari was able to achieve in the Renaissance. Both figures function as translators rather than transcribers, transforming artists' words into systems of critical concepts. The artist's voice authenticates the mediator's narrative while also being fundamentally shaped by it. The artist becomes an intellectual, integrated into an encyclopaedic archive that the curator continuously expands. Being interviewed by Obrist represents a significant form of validation: it certifies the intellectual dimension of a given artist's work and positions him or her inside a parallel exhibition project running through the contemporary art system. This transformation exemplifies the routinization of charisma: the transfer of personal, extraordinary qualities into systematic practices and institutional structures. Unlike Kogler's hermetic artist-as-artwork or Kontakt's historiographic generation, Obrist's method produces intellectual legitimacy through inclusion in an authorial curatorial archive.

The practice reveals how insistence functions in this context: Obrist repeatedly returns to conversations, pays sustained attention to artistic making, and continuously accumulates voices across the decades. These aspects constitute a form of insistence that captures something elusive about artistic identity through structured multiplicity and repetition rather than singular representation. Obrist's practice operates as an authorial curatorial signature carried across contexts, from Vienna to London, from galleries to temporary pavilions, from publications to live performances. The *Conversation Marathons* exemplify this transposition of interviewing into performative events where the curator's role of forging connections is visibly embodied and becomes a charismatic technology in itself. Obrist articulates his

understanding of this practice by referencing Vasari and the concept of portraiture: what the curator does constitutes a form of portraiture understood not as formal documentation but as a sustained method of capturing the artist's intellectual and creative identity. In this case, the portrait is an ongoing archive that grows and transforms with each new conversation and exhibition context.

This unique practice raises important questions about artistic representation in the contemporary moment. Obrist's emphasis on capturing and curating speech reflects the conviction that artistic identity is constructed through charismatic technologies which reshape the artist's status and visibility. As the practice has expanded to digital platforms and museum video channels, however, the conditions under which these conversations circulate continue to shift.

Appendix B – Interview with Peter Kogler

Interviewed in Kogler's studio in Vienna on November 13, 2024.

Abstract
Editing this conversation was not easy. I began working on it quite early, although in retrospect it might have been wiser to record it after gathering more experience and material. I met Peter Kogler shortly after finishing my research on the museum in progress archives. We met in his studio. Outside, the air was bitterly cold, or perhaps I simply had a fever. I allow myself a certain degree of autobiographical presence here, as the conversation itself – or rather its reformulation on these pages – seems to require it.
I added a few italicized notes to indicate space and time, since while I was trying to ask questions, Kogler was simultaneously showing me his works, guiding me through the studio, and deepening my interest in his Portraits of Artists project. Over the course of the interview, he reflects on the project from its beginnings to its most significant moments, the ones that best reveal his artistic vision. The scene he evokes gradually opens onto a vivid comparison between the art world of that period and the one we inhabit today.

Guido Balzani: What do you recall about the beginning of the Portraits of Artists project?
Peter Kogler: For the first five interviews, we did real editing, changing positions, but it turned out to be far too complicated. In the long run, it became just a matter of deciding what stayed in and what went out, with hard cuts. The first interviews were more constructed, but after the third or fourth, we said: "this is impossible, let's just select what is relevant and what is not".

Kogler has the Portraits of Artists well organized in specific folders on his computer. We watch together some episodes, then the end credits appear. Kogler reads a name.

Elisabeth Fiege was important because she was with me for all the shootings and also the editing.
For the first interview, we wanted a friend because we didn't know how it would go. It was Heimo Zobernig. It was a pretty good talk, but later he called and told us he wanted all of his answers removed, leaving only the questions. That's when we realized it wasn't going to be easy.
The second interview was with Gilbert & George. They were having a show at the Secession, I think. That one was completely different. The interviewer was a guy from Hamburg. He was good, but his English was not very clear. The artists could also choose the background colour. We thought the interviews might be shown on TV – on ORF – but it was impossible.

In the meantime, Kogler starts looking for Gilbert & George's file

There were different stages concerning the recordings. At first, we rented a studio from 1992 to the beginning of 1993. Then I became a professor at the Academy in Vienna. We built a studio there, and from then on, the students assisted. It was clear that television would never

show it, so the alternative was to build an archive in the Academy. That way, we didn't spend money on renting. Students learned how to use the camera and do the editing. I stayed for 12 years. All the artists from then on were shot and edited at the Academy. We had a whole list of Californians coming to my classes.

Kogler finds and shows me the Gilbert & George interview.

For example, Gilbert was sitting on telephone books to be a little higher. Before the interviews, we always did sound tests: "one, three, four, five. That's the way we speak." With Gilbert & George, that became their number. It's a real portrait. You can see Gilbert getting nervous because George is talking for so long.

GB: How did you choose the artists?
PK: We checked who was coming to Vienna, since we had no money. Then we asked them if they were willing to come to the studio, and also who they would like to have as their conversation partner. At the beginning, it was very different people. At a certain point, there was a lot of Hans Ulrich Obrist, because Joseph's constellation was to bring him in.

GB: Did you give the artists any rules?
PK: Yes. One thing we told them was: don't talk about things the audience cannot know. This was one of the few rules. Otherwise, all answers were free and open.
As for what concerned the speech, the only rule was: what is interesting content? Take Raymond Pettibon. One of my favourites. There is almost no complete sentence, but it is extraordinary.

Kogler looks for Pettibon's interview and starts playing it

His presence was incredible. When we shot the video, he was under such pressure that he crushed a glass of water in his hand – off camera, but still. He hardly finished a sentence. The interviewer was like a coach.
In the very early interviews, we sometimes also included a piece of art in the shot. We did it four or five times, then decided to stop and keep it pure

GB: What was your aim with the project?
PK: My aim was to build an archive. I was curious about how artists talk, and I was curious to meet them. The range was wide: compare Pettibon with Koons: it's a completely different world.
As a young artist, it was hard for me to talk about art. I was curious how colleagues did it. I discovered a wide range: from those who couldn't finish a sentence but had a strong presence, to those who spoke fluently.
In America, the first thing you learn is to sell your work. That's very different from Europe. I wanted to see the range, and it was wide, with many contradictions. One person said one thing, another said the opposite, and both were fine. Life is complex.

Lawrence Weiner, for example, was brilliant. In Der Standard, there was a large photo of him with his beard, and the headline read: "Without language you would not see my beard." He was brilliant. Lawrence was already a friend, but I met many others through the interviews.

GB: How has the art world and the media landscape changed?
PK: It's a different era. The art world now is very different from forty years ago. In the 1980s, if you were open and pushy, you could meet anyone. Now the art world is a huge business. Galleries are companies. It's not about art anymore. There were not so many female artists. Now it looks like a "who's who," but back then only a few people knew who Mike Kelley was. They were emerging artists. Later, I also showed Portraits of Artists in my exhibitions, like a show in Brussels. I consider it a work, a portrait. From a distance, the material is very authentic – pure, not filtered.
At that time, in Austria, there were only two TV channels. No cable, since the Internet everything changed.

GB: Are there correlations with your project, California?
PK: Have you seen the old Macintosh outside?
GB: No

Kogler leads me out of the studio and points to a corner where the first Macintosh from 1984 still sits, the computer on which he created the images for Der Standard as part of the California project.

PK: That's the machine.

Kogler shows me one of those original printed pages.

And that's the resolution. They resemble serigraphy.

GB: Is there a relation with Pop Art?
PK: There is a strong connection between Minimal Art and Pop Art. Think about Warhol's early pieces from the 1960s. The Brillo Box, for example

Kogler reaches behind him to the bookshelf, pulls out an old catalogue of Andy Warhol's works, and begins flipping through the pages in search of the repeated prints.

Repetition clearly connects with Minimalism. And like the Minimalists, Warhol used fabrication with companies.

GB: How do you feel about the Portraits of Artists today? Do you think there are similar projects around?
PK: Ideally, I would like it to be online, a public archive. Yes. There is another project in Vienna, also with interviews, by the Kontakt Foundation. Manuel Gorkiewicz, an artist and a

friend, is doing it with Claus Philipp, a writer and a journalist. It is more of a city archive, but very important and very beautiful.

Appendix C – Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz

Interviewed via Zoom on December 20, 2024.

Abstract
Manuel Gorkiewicz, who designed the visual framework for the Kontakt portraits, developed his approach from his studies with Peter Kogler, where the emphasis lay on direct dialogue with artists. His task was to translate Kogler's idea into a contemporary visual language – one that would move beyond the computer-aided aesthetic of the 1990s while preserving its conceptual rigor.
His main contribution was the concept of the digital progressive zoom, inspired by Michael Snow's Wavelength. In the Kontakt series, the camera begins with a wide shot of the interviewee's chosen environment and gradually closes in on their face over a span of 20–30 minutes, mirroring the unfolding of thought through conversation.
The project expanded its focus beyond visual artists to include theorists, filmmakers, and educators, reflecting the Kontakt Collection's mission to document the interconnections between artistic and intellectual practices in Central and Eastern Europe. Aware of the shorter attention spans of contemporary audiences, Gorkiewicz limited the portraits' duration to 20–30 minutes, editing longer dialogues into concise forms. The slow, continuous zoom and the detailed spatial background encourage viewers to engage on multiple levels – listening closely while observing the layered meaning of each setting.

Guido Balzani: What do you remember from Kogler's lessons?

Manuel Gorkiewicz: I received a lot of input during that time – we had countless discussions. Now that I'm teaching, I often recall those moments. I clearly remember that Peter often invited people to our class – artists who had exhibitions in town or were simply visiting Vienna. He knew them and asked if they wanted to give a workshop, a talk, or just join our class. That was very important for me, because there's a big difference between talking about artists and talking with artists – seeing them in person, hearing them speak about their work, or casually discussing students' projects.
Once, parallel to class, Peter conducted an interview with one of those artists for Museum in Progress. I don't remember which one I saw being filmed, but it left a strong impression. The setup was simple, following Peter's concept for the Museum in Progress interviews. In class, we had a large space, and one day someone arrived with a camera, lights, and a backdrop, and they began shooting.
There was a connection between what Peter did with those interviews and our class meetings: artists talking about art, rather than theorists talking about art. For me, direct dialogue with artists was crucial, and it began at that time.

GB: I think that the portraits of artists maintain an ethical position towards the artist, without trying to explain them away or pushing them to analyse their own work in a didactic way.

MG: Yes. The "meta level" isn't so present, which is usually what happens when art historians or curators take charge. That meta layer has now become a very important part of contemporary art. I believe it was different before: the further back you go, the less filtered things were. Artists produced their work without the framing that is now so common.

GB: And you said you relied on that experience when creating the Kontakt format. I was curious to know how your collaboration with Claus Philipp and Julius began.

MG: I was asked whether I wanted to take the artist's role in developing a format for these interviews. Kontakt reached out to me. The concept came from Kathrin Romberg, head of Kontakt, together with Peter Kogler. They spoke about the Museum in Progress interviews and suggested something similar should happen now. Then they asked me to take the position Peter had in the 1990s, when those interviews began. Since I knew them very well – Peter sometimes included them in his shows.
It was then decided that Claus Philipp would conduct the interviews and manage the language-based part. He did most of them. My role was to think about how the interviews should look. Peter's Museum in Progress interviews had a straightforward concept, but still left space for the artist, such as choosing the backdrop. I needed to develop a strong visual concept suited to our own time. Peter's design was rooted in his practice – he made portraits and worked early with computers – so the look was very connected to 1990s computer-aided video. I had to create something contemporary.

GB: Was the progressive zoom your idea?

MG: Yes, that was my main idea. Peter had chosen a monochrome background and keying techniques, which were very striking, especially when multiple interviews were shown side by side on several monitors. I also wanted something simple with a strong visual impact, and I developed the zoom.

GB: I also notice this "slippery entity" of interviews and projects mirrored in the distribution of Portraits of Artists and the Kontakt interviews, since they both are distributed by Der Standard – even if throughout different channels and modalities. It makes me wonder about the connection between newspapers and the arts in Vienna. Could you tell me something more about it?

MG: In the 1990s and 2000s Der Standard engaged in many art-related projects, though around 2010, that slowed down probably due to the editorial and economic crisis. But when the idea came again from Kathrin Romberg or Kontakt to collaborate – and since they had done it extensively before – it was easy to restart.

GB: And what was your idea for the interviews? What did you want people to take from them?

MG: I was thinking about how to find an angle, because there was already something there. They didn't ask me to replicate Museum in Progress – it's a separate project from Kontakt. But I liked the idea of responding to an existing model; it's what I often do in my own practice: I react to situations and contexts. I look at what exists and then start working.
I revisited those earlier interviews – they have aged, but positively: they are closely tied to their time. I asked myself how to update this around 2020. With today's high-resolution cameras – 4K, 8K, 16K – repeating chroma key would not be new. So, I thought I could use the zoom. Cropping and zooming are classic video operations.
I was also inspired by Michael Snow's film Wavelength, a conceptual work from the 1960s/70s. It shows a loft space filmed with a very slow zoom that ends on a small photograph of the sea. It's extremely simple and conceptual: you hear someone enter the studio, traffic outside. The zoom lasts over 30 minutes. That inspired me: start with one visual setup and end with something completely different.
Like the interviews by Museum in Progress, where each artist chose a colour, here the artist could choose where to sit and what to have in the background. We started during the pandemic, so we needed special solutions. We couldn't always visit someone's home, and some artists preferred not to, so we met outdoors. That actually benefited the project: we ended up in unique settings. It was collaborative – the interviewee contributed their choices. With the zoom, you begin in one place and end in another, which is also what an interview should do.

GB: In Portraits of Artists you mostly had visual artists, whereas in the Kontakt series there are artists, theoreticians, and filmmakers. What happened? Did something change in the identity of the artist? Were Portraits of Artists no longer up to date?

MG: That was part of the initial idea from Kontakt, Kathrin Romberg, and Peter Kogler: to capture a generation of Viennese figures – artists, theoreticians, filmmakers – who hadn't yet had proper interviews. So we began with an older generation, not just artists but also filmmakers. Another reason is the Kontakt collection itself: it has a conceptual focus, unlike collections centered on painting or sculpture. Kontakt is oriented towards Eastern and Southeastern Europe, with Austria as a crossing point, so there was already an interest in diverse practitioners.
And as you suggest, today it's harder to separate artists from curators or theoreticians. That's also how Kontakt presents its collection: not in classical exhibitions, but through performative, theoretical, and publishing elements. Connections between disciplines are much stronger now than in the past.

GB: How do you see interview practices today compared to earlier formats like Museum in Progress?

MG: That's the issue: when we talk about Wilhelm Gaube and the past, nowadays anyone can start an interview series on Instagram or another platform. Many do. It's quite overwhelming.

Since I teach at the art university in Linz, I often need interviews. Sometimes I use the ones we've mentioned – especially Museum in Progress. Peter gave them to me for teaching. They're very valuable for students, even young ones, because they're long and the pace is slow. The earlier interviews let people speak for 45 minutes without rushing to a conclusion. Attention spans today are very different compared to the 1990s or 1970s – or even a decade ago. I don't have a perfect current example.
I feel that nowadays interview formats are generally very didactic: every museum exhibition now provides a short explanation of each work for everyone. I see it with students: they expect everything to be explained. But if you approach an artwork that way, you stop truly understanding it, because confusion is also important.
That was the idea of the zoom: at the beginning, you see the whole studio, full of details; at the end, you see the face. People are talking, but you can also look at the background – maybe just a shelf. You engage both listening and looking. I like that, similar to listening to a podcast while driving: it enables deeper understanding. There's a lot to see, the slow zoom creates subtle changes, and you notice details shifting while you listen. I personally prefer that to static "talking heads." Being in a space and focusing on details – even those that seem mundane – gives you something to observe while listening, which helps you perceive different layers of meaning.

GB: And do your students like the Museum in Progress interviews?

MG: Yes, they like them, but I have to select excerpts. I can't show a full one-hour interview in class. Since I know the full content, I also know something is lost when you only show fragments. You have to connect the clips to other discussions, and we also read passages from the text. That's how I work – and how it works today.
I also remember from Peter's class at the Academy in Vienna that you receive many layers of information when someone like Lawrence Weiner or Raymond Pettibon sits and talks. Some are sharp (Weiner), some just talk (Pettibon), and there isn't always a clear "message." But on an artistic level, you still understand a lot – even if it's not language-based. That disappears if you don't take the time to watch.
Even with the Kontakt portraits, we decided to limit them to 20–30 minutes. Longer interviews don't work well – you lose the audience. Klaus and I agreed on that. He's a dramaturg, working in theatre, with a strong sense of pacing. I also have some experience here. It was clear: if they're too long, people won't watch to the end. Interviews usually last longer, so we have to cut them. That's unfortunate, but necessary.

Appendix D – Interview with Claus Philipp

Interviewed via Zoom on July 3, 2025.

Abstract

Claus Philipp, interviewer for the KONTAKT Videoportraits project, describes it as an attempt to address the lack of in-depth artistic portraits in Austrian mainstream media, gathering the interviews in an archive of contemporary intellectual and artistic life. He cites influences such as Wilhelm Gaube's film portraits, Alexander Kluge's interviews, and Peter Kogler's Portraits of Artists, all of which privilege sustained reflection over simplification. Philipp, in line with the very mission of the Kontakt Collection, aimed to create an intellectual and artistic map of Vienna and Central/Eastern Europe, an archive of a generation of artists that seeks to document and contextualize experimental and avant-garde practices in the region.

The project follows three basic principles: (1) technical simplicity – one camera and one microphone – to reduce anxiety and avoid artificial mediation; (2) the interviewee's choice of setting, often domestic or unconventional; and (3) a one-hour duration centered on current projects or recent setbacks rather than a full career overview. Drawing on his background in journalism and dramaturgy, Philipp approaches the interview as "a kind of literature," emphasizing, after Kleist, "the gradual construction of thought through speech." For him, film uniquely conveys movement and presence, producing a direct and truthful portrait reminiscent of Andy Warhol's Screen Tests.

Guido Balzani: The Kontakt project, for me, sits somewhere in between Portraits of Artists and the more intimate, contemporary storytelling of artistic identity. It stands out for its aim to preserve and represent a particular contemporary art scene in Vienna. I found it particularly interesting how deeply rooted it is in its spatial context. What was your role in it?

Claus Philipp: We could start by giving a bit of context to the genre of video portraits in general. Personally, I've always seen interviews as essential for building an archive of the arts and intellectual life of our time, especially the circles around me. Within the contemporary scenario however, I've noticed a deficit of portrait in mainstream media: Austrian television, for example, offers very few in-depth portraits of artists. So, in a way, we're filling in the gaps left behind by public broadcasting.

But there used to be a sort of tradition of filmmakers who worked in this direction. When I first encountered Wilhelm Gaube's films – as well as Alexander Kluge's interviews for German television with artists, philosophers, and theatre people that you can find on DCTP TV – I was struck by their refusal to simplify complex artistic or philosophical statements. These interviews don't reduce ideas to headlines or soundbites. Instead, they allow people to speak in depth about what they know best. It's like asking a shoemaker how shoes are made: he may say things I don't fully understand, but it's valuable that he says them.

When I saw Gaube's films, I appreciated their serial nature. He consistently met with artists, interviewing them, or simply observing them as they worked. Similarly, in Peter Kogler's Museum in Progress series, there's no visual art shown – no painting, sculpture, or

installation – just people against coloured backgrounds (blue, green, orange, red…). I liked that serial structure, and the idea of building an archive: 50, 100, 200 portraits. As a viewer, you can form your own intellectual network: one artist might mention a poet, and that poet might also be featured. Over time, this creates a kind of cartography, an intellectual and artistic map of Vienna and Central/Eastern Europe in the case of Kontakt's portraits.
Of course, the selection reflects to a certain degree my own choices and the choices of KONTAKT Collection. That means the archive includes more avant-garde and experimental figures, rather than only the most publicly recognized names. Sometimes these overlap – Peter Kubelka, for instance – but the selection remains subjective.
When Kathrin Rhomberg from the Kontakt Collection, the artist Manuel Gorkiewicz and I started shaping the project, we agreed on three ground rules. First, the interviews should be technically simple. We didn't want the kind of situation where you enter someone's apartment and spend 90 minutes setting up lights and gear, and everyone's nervous: it's unpleasant. So we opted for a simple setting: one camera, one microphone. And so we started. We agreed not to switch camera angles or direct the person: none of that "could you walk to the kitchen and come back with a coffee" nonsense you see on bad TV portraits.
Second: the interviewee chooses the location. Some say, "Let's do it in my apartment"; others, "Meet me under a highway in the suburbs." The space is their choice.
Third: the interview doesn't attempt to cover the person's entire body of work. It's one hour. Sometimes that hour is spent on current projects, recent failures, or something seen on TV the day before. The portrait emerges through a mix of contingency and structure and our willingness to let the person speak.
Manuel's contribution was the idea of using a digital zoom starting with a wide shot of the space, and slowly moving closer to the person's face over the 30-minute edit. In some cases, the zoom is short (like in a kitchen); in others, it's long (under a highway). This became a subtle visual signature.
These were modest ideas, no grand artistic claims. But now, with over 40 portraits completed, if you look at the Kontakt Collection website, you'll see not just artworks, but a coherent structure, a conceptual frame that holds them together. It's always me conducting the interviews. At one point, we considered alternating interviewers, but in the end, I stayed with it. And there's a kind of continuity. For instance, in many interviews, you'll find recurring reflections on the idea of "translation": what it means to translate artistic thought into a format like this, without showing any artwork or relying on texts. Because it's a topic that interests me very much, and strangely, it comes up again and again.

GB: Would you say you've practiced interviewing as a central element of your career or interest, even before Kontakt?

CP: Absolutely, I come from a journalistic and dramaturgical background. I've conducted many interviews in my work as a film, art, and literature critic. It might sound simple, but I remember a book by Lawrence Grobel, *Conversations with Truman Capote*, who was a great admirer of the interview as a form. For them, the interview was a kind of literature, a form of dialogue, sometimes even dramatic. It can be a highly effective and intelligent medium. I also feel that it is important to stress the fact that today many interviews today are poorly done.

Often, the interviewers , like many people in the media, don't really understand what they're doing. They ask questions that are either too shallow or unnecessarily invasive, failing to open a meaningful perspective on the person they're speaking with. It requires a certain tone, behaviour, and openness to bring out the best in someone without pressuring them to reveal everything. Over time, I've developed some approaches that help. For example, I don't prepare by Googling everything about a person or compiling a timeline – "In 1946 you went to Paris," and so on. Instead, I read what they've written, watch their work, and try to get a feel for recurring themes. Then I start with a relatively open, easy question. I prefer humility, a kind of childlike curiosity: "How did you do that?" Sometimes, that openness leads to genuine trust, and the person ends up saying something they've never said before because they hadn't thought about it until that moment. Heinrich von Kleist has a wonderful phrase: "the gradual construction of thought through speech." That's the ideal: to forget performance and start thinking.

GB: Could you make me a specific example within the Kontakt's portraits?

CP: I remember interviewing Milica Tomić in Vienna. We were talking, and suddenly she said, "I shouldn't talk about my artwork; I should talk about why I'm currently unable to make art." That was a powerful moment, something I couldn't have prepared for. But because I had studied her work beforehand, she felt safe enough to speak openly.

GB: What's unique about capturing someone on film?

CP: One major shift with film, and especially digital video, is that, unlike past portraits (paintings, written texts), we can now see how someone moves, look them in the eye as they speak, sense what bores or excites them physically. I love Andy Warhol's Screen Tests: those brief portraits of people in his studio. They're raw and truthful. The only "corruption" is that they're art by Warhol. But the sitters are fully confronted by the camera, and it's beautiful.

GB: Did you know Kogler was inspired by the Screen Tests?

CP: I never spoke with him directly about that, but I do think the Screen Tests are among the greatest portraits of the 20th century.

GB: He was in California with his wife, Tanya Reiner, and met Louis Waldon from the Factory. They began discussing a documentary about Factory's protagonists. The project evolved, but Kogler got stuck on the Screen Tests, which eventually led him to develop the Mavo Tape and then Portraits of Artists. I keep seeing this pattern: people who want to redefine portraiture often return to the Screen Tests.

CP: They fundamentally changed how we understand human presence under technical reproduction, as Walter Benjamin put it. They're very close to early cinema, like the Lumière brothers, where people are simply aware that a device is observing them. I find that fascinating.

GB: Returning to Kontakt, how did you meet Manuel?

CP: It was Kathrin Rhomberg, a curator in Vienna, who brought us together. I think Peter Kogler originally planted the idea of creating an archive.

GB: And Wilhelm Gaube: how did you discover his interviews and approach?

CP: I was a film critic throughout the ‘80s, ‘90s, and early 2000s very focused on cinema. Gaube’s work was a hidden treasure, gradually discovered. Early on, no one really knew what he was doing in the Belvedere studios. He began shooting analogically, and later switched to video. In his living room were massive stacks of films no one had seen. Eventually, colleagues and filmmakers started visiting him, and he allowed the first compilations for retrospectives. But even today, it remains an almost unknown world.
I met him late in his life. It’s a funny story – my son was seven, and every Thursday I took him to play soccer. Gaube joined us and ended up making portraits of the team.

GB: I haven’t been able to find much online about his films.

CP: You should look into the Edition Austrian Film DVD series. There’s a compilation of his work there. And definitely revisit Warhol’s Screen Tests. They’re part of the same tradition – like John Cage’s minimal music: repeating the same note again and again, each time sounding different.

Appendix E – Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg

Interviewed via Zoom on September 17, 2025.

Abstract

In this interview, curator Kathrin Rhomberg discusses her role as Artistic Director of the Kontakt Collection and co-founder of the tranzit network, outlining how both initiatives have fostered visibility and dialogue around Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European art since the early 2000s.

Rhomberg describes how Kontakt evolved from a collection into a platform for research, education, and exhibition, dedicated to preserving and promoting the legacy of the neo-avant-garde and its continuations after 1989. The discussion centers on the "Kontakt Video Portraits", a project developed with artist Peter Kogler. The publicist and dramaturg Claus Philipp, the artist Manuel Gorkiewicz, and the filmmaker Julius Lermer were commissioned to conduct and record the conversations. Building on Kogler's Museum in Progress portraits, the project captures the voices of artists and thinkers from the 1968 generation and their successors, transmitting their analogical knowledge into the digital sphere.

Rhomberg also reflects on Kontakt's renewed collaboration with Der Standard, which reactivates the newspaper as a temporary exhibition space – echoing earlier artistic interventions from the 1970s and 1990s. Throughout the conversation, she stresses the importance of reconnecting art and "real reality," as Austrian writer Ilse Aichinger phrased it, by developing new formats that bridge generations, geographies, and media, keeping the critical and experimental legacy of Eastern European art alive within contemporary cultural discourse.

Guido Balzani: I would like to start by asking you about your role within the Kontakt environment, and also your role within the Tranzit project.

Kathrin Rhomberg: I'm the Artistic Director of the Kontakt Collection, which was founded as a non-profit art association in 2004 in order to collect artworks and secure a previously neglected aspect of cultural heritage. Although it began as a collection, over time it has evolved into much more than that – it's now also an educational, research, and exhibition platform.

We focus on various activities, but our central mission remains consistent: supporting and promoting art from Southeastern, Central, and Eastern Europe. Within this regional framework, we are especially interested in the 1968 and 1989 generations: the neo-avant-garde artists and those younger artists who, after 1989, carried on the legacy of the neo-avant-garde.

As for Tranzit, I co-founded the project with Maria Hlavajova, a colleague originally from Bratislava who had been living in Amsterdam for decades and was running the BAK in Utrecht. The idea for Tranzit grew out of an exhibition I curated at Secession in Vienna in 2001, titled *Ausgeträumt…* – a German word that doesn't have an exact English equivalent, but you might understand it as something like "dreamt out." The show focused on Eastern

and Southeastern Europe, including Vienna, and addressed the emerging art system after 1989.
At the end of the 1990s, we didn't yet fully understand the nature of this new art system we were entering after 1989. I felt – as did many others – that the legacy of the 20th-century neo-avant-garde had reached an end, and something new was beginning, though it was still unclear. The research for this exhibition as well as other projects made us realize that many young artists and intellectuals from Eastern Europe saw little future in their home countries. We wanted to create a new kind of institution that could offer opportunities and connect different generations – the older and the younger – through dialogue and collaboration.
Maria and I had already worked together as co-curators for Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana in 2000 and had done substantial research together by that point. We developed the concept for tranzit and, at that time, Erste Bank (it was still Erste Bank then, not yet Erste Group) was interested in launching cultural projects in the Eastern European countries where they were beginning to operate financially. They decided to realize the Tranzit project first in Slovakia, then in the Czech Republic and Hungary. These were the three countries where tranzit began, around 2002–2003, with the first offices opening in Bratislava, Prague, and Budapest.

GB: So, is it fair to say that Tranzit somehow inspired Kontakt's way of considering its geographic and temporal focus in art?

KR: It might be, although when Tranzit was being realized, I had moved to Germany and was running the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne, so I wasn't closely involved in the process. That said, there is certainly a connection and some mutual inspiration. However, Kontakt itself was the result of research initiated by two key figures: Rainer Fuchs, Vice Director of the Museum of Modern Art in Vienna, and Igor Zabel from Ljubljana, who was Vice Director of Moderna Galerija. Together with Boris Marte, they envisioned a new kind of collection. At the time, art from the neo-avant-garde generation wasn't being taken seriously enough by public institutions in Eastern Europe, with the notable exception of Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana. These artists often worked in underground or semi-underground contexts during communism and were considered dissident voices. As a result, many public institutions in former Eastern Europe hadn't collected or supported their work.
There was also a concern that important artworks from these artists might disappear entirely – not only due to the lack of institutional interest but also because private collectors weren't acquiring their works. This created a sense of urgency to establish a collection that would preserve and give visibility to this specific artistic development from Eastern Europe.

GB: Getting closer to the "Kontakt Video Portraits", Peter Kogler told me that you both discussed the idea of creating these new portraits. Can you tell me more about how this idea emerged? And did you already know about the Portraits of Artists before getting involved?

KR: Peter Kogler was essential to this. As you probably know, he was responsible for creating the Artist Portraits for Museum in Progress during the 1990s. Those portraits were incredibly influential. At that time, he mainly focused on international artists like Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley, Elaine Sturtevant and others who were exhibiting in Vienna.

In that project, artists chose their own conversation partners. In the 1990s, I was working at the Secession in Vienna, and those portraits were both inspiring and important for me: they offered insight into how artists think and talk about their practice, their motivations, and urgencies.
When I returned to Vienna after my time in Germany, Peter and I talked about how Vienna had become a global city, just like many other European capitals. Public institutions had adopted global programming, yet many important local and regional intellectuals, artists, and cultural workers were hardly visible. We both saw this as a problem.
Another concern was that the 1968 generation – which is an analogical generation – was largely absent from the digital realm. We felt that for younger generations of artists and thinkers, it would be crucial to better understand the thinking and experience of that older generation.
That was the foundation of our conversation, and Peter proposed creating a new series of video portraits focused on the 1968 generation of our region. Eventually, we expanded the focus to include a younger generation of artists who are connected to the legacy of the neo-avant-garde.
We invited artist Manuel Gorkiewicz – whom you've already spoken with – to develop the visual approach for the portraits, and Claus Philipp to conduct the conversations. I knew Claus from my work with Christoph Schlingensief, an important German artist who sadly passed away over a decade ago. Claus is well-known in Austria; he was a prominent cultural journalist at a Viennese newspaper.
Together, Claus and Manuel began with the first portraits – of Ashley Hans Scheirl and Anna Jermolaewa, if I remember correctly – to see how the format would work. It felt like the right project at the right moment.
We began the series around the start of the pandemic, and over the past five years, we've created more than 40 video portraits. Initially, we focused on artists and cultural workers based in Vienna, but gradually we've expanded to include more voices from across Eastern Europe.
Importantly, these portraits are freely accessible on the Kontakt website, as you may have seen. They're also part of an educational project – used in schools, academies, and universities, and presented in exhibitions where we are not directly involved. They've started to travel throughout Europe via exhibition projects and film festivals, including Autostrada and DokuFest, which is one of the most respected film festivals in Europe, based in Prizren, Kosovo.
Some of the portraits have even been shown on Austrian TV channels. In this way, we're bringing the analogical knowledge of that generation into the digital space – making it accessible to your generation. And I believe the knowledge and experience of these Eastern European artists and intellectuals is particularly important today, given their histories of working under politically repressive regimes. Their example shows us how it's possible to act as an artist, intellectual, or cultural worker in such conditions.

GB: How do you see the dialogue between artists and theoreticians shaping the project, especially compared to earlier initiatives that focused only on artists?

KR: In the Museum in Progress project, the focus was exclusively on artists. In our case, although our primary interest remains in art, Kontakt also functions as a research and educational platform. So it was important for us to include the voices of theorists, writers, educators – people like Peter Kubelka, for instance. He's now over 80, a key figure in experimental film, not only in Austria but also internationally. He also taught at the Städelschule in Frankfurt.
Including these voices allows us to provide broader access to a wide range of knowledge. As is generally known in the meantime, after 1989, when the communist systems collapsed, we gradually entered a new art system, what we now call "contemporary art", but at the time, it was not yet fully defined. English became its dominant language.
However, the generation we were initially interested in – the neo-avant-garde generation – wasn't part of this system. Their primary language was not English, even though many of them speak it. Their own languages are important in how they articulate their ideas. This linguistic challenge became part of the portraits: how to create access while preserving linguistic integrity.
We also found that the younger generation, including artists and writers, has a very different understanding of art and cultural work. So, by expanding our focus, the portraits also show how dramatically things have changed over the past five decades: from the nature of art to its relationship with reality. The portraits reveal this evolution.

GB: It is something difficult to frame otherwise than by using portraits…

KR: I think that what makes the format special is the presence of the person in the portrait, their way of speaking, reflecting, pausing – it all conveys something that a theoretical or academic approach alone might not.
I also think it was a very good decision to invite Claus Philipp to conduct the conversations. Since he's not an art theorist but rather comes from journalism, he asks very different kinds of questions: often more open, sometimes even naïve in a productive way. That brings out aspects of the interviewees' thinking that might not surface in a more traditional academic or curatorial dialogue. It also makes the portraits more accessible for viewers who are not deeply embedded in the art world.
So, in that sense, the project broadens understanding – not just of individual artists and thinkers, but of the broader artistic and cultural contexts they come from. It opens up space for different kinds of viewers to connect with their experiences and ideas.

GB: Manuel mentioned that since 2010, with the editorial crisis, Der Standard has progressively closed its openness. In this context, did Kontakt initiate the collaboration, or did Der Standard approach you?

KR: Der Standard is an interesting case. It was founded at the end of the 1980s – I believe in 1989, the same year I moved to Vienna. The 1990s were a vibrant time in the city, largely due to the energy that came after the fall of the Wall. Vienna benefited enormously from that revolutionary spirit sweeping in from Eastern Europe. Institutions were open to experimentation, and many initiatives emerged, among them Museum in Progress, which I

still believe is one of the most innovative institutional ideas ever, and it was actually started by an artist, by Josef Ortner.
Der Standard, as a new newspaper, followed that same energy. Its founder, Oscar Bronner – whom we also interviewed in one of the video portraits – actively sought out young, talented intellectuals to write for the paper. It also became a vital platform for culture and art criticism. People like Claus Philipp started writing there just after their studies. The newspaper was open to working with institutions that shared that experimental, forward-thinking approach.
For example, in the 1990s, Der Standard gave Museum in Progress entire pages for artist interventions. I curated a series in 1998 and 2001 in which artists were featured weekly, with no restrictions. That kind of total trust in the freedom of art was really exceptional.
But of course, over time, things changed. That younger generation – myself included – grew older. Some left Der Standard. The newspaper had new editors, new agendas, and, as Manuel mentioned, economic pressures grew significantly. This made collaborations more difficult. There was simply less room, financially and editorially, for the kind of open artistic interventions we had done in the past.
That said, for the video portraits, we were fortunate that Der Standard still had institutional memory of those earlier collaborations. Their online platform is the most important newspaper website in Austria and has remained relatively open-access. That's one of the reasons we approached them. When Kontakt celebrated its 20th anniversary last year, Der Standard agreed to collaborate again, publishing a number of video portraits on their website. In addition, we revived the idea of artistic interventions in the paper. For the anniversary, we commissioned a few interventions by artists from Eastern Europe, and this time, we paid for the space. But this too connects to a broader legacy: not only to Museum in Progress, but also to the strategies of Eastern European artists like Petr Štembera, a key performance artist from Prague in the 1970s. He exhibited in underground spaces and created his own forms of visibility by sending documentation of his work abroad – for instance, publishing in Flash Art, an important Italian magazine at the time.
With our collaboration with Der Standard, we tried to revive this idea of the newspaper as a temporary, immaterial exhibition space – even if only briefly. It connects to a specific legacy in Eastern Europe and to our desire to bring these ideas into public consciousness in new ways.

GB: All these connections form a kind of cultural landscape, carefully cultivated over time.

KR: It is true. What we try to do is exactly that – to ask ourselves: how can art and "real reality" be brought back into contact? How can we entangle them again?
This question is also central to the legacy of the neo-avant-garde. We're trying to develop new formats that go beyond the white cube – whether it's with newspapers, public spaces, or the video portraits. We want to bring this knowledge into society, not just keep it confined within institutions or academia. That's crucial for us.

Appendix F – Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner

Interviewed at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art on February 1, 2024.

Abstract

In this interview, Marc-Christoph Wagner, one of the founders of Louisiana Channel, reflects on how the platform was created in 2012 at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. Conceived as an English-language space for thoughtful encounters with artists, writers, and architects, the Channel aimed to produce interviews of lasting value rather than news-oriented content. From the start, Wagner and his small team focused on clarity, simplicity, and high production standards, publishing two films a week and building a collection that now includes nearly 1,200 interviews.

With a background in political science and journalism, Wagner brought to the project an outsider's perspective on the art world, emphasizing editorial independence and respect for both artists and audiences. He explains that the Channel's mission is to explore how artists think, work, and relate to the societies around them – affirming art and culture as essential to public life.

Wagner also addresses the platform's evolution, from early experiments to a mature format that now seeks greater geographical diversity while maintaining a balance of disciplines. Rooted in the museum's interdisciplinary spirit, Louisiana Channel continues to offer intimate, reflective portraits that reveal the human dimension of artistic creation and invite viewers to connect with the ideas, emotions, and experiences that shape contemporary culture.

Guido Balzani: You contributed to the foundation of Louisiana Channel, correct?

Marc-Christoph Wagner: Yes, that's right.

GB: Could you tell me a bit about how it all began?

Wagner: The idea actually originated with the museum's director, around 2010 or 2011. A small group of us began discussing what Louisiana Channel could be and whether there were existing models to draw inspiration from. At the time, the museum looked closely at Tate Channel in London, which was already well established. We then started to consider what would be required to create such a platform: the necessary funding, the type of professional expertise involved, and the skills that would complement the museum's existing knowledge base. It soon became clear that while the museum possessed deep expertise in art, art history, and contemporary culture, it lacked experience in production.

At that time, I was working as a correspondent for German television and radio in Northern Europe, and somehow my name came up. A group of three of us went on to establish Louisiana Channel. We built the team, developed the concept, and decided early on that the content should be produced in English in order to reach an international audience.

The channel officially launched on November 28, 2012, with around twenty to twenty-four interviews ready for release. From the beginning, we set the rhythm of publishing two new

interviews per week – a schedule that we have maintained ever since. To date, we have produced nearly 1,200 artist interviews. From the outset, our goal was not to create news-oriented material but to produce pieces with lasting relevance, interviews that would open a door into the artist's practice and remain engaging whether viewed immediately or years later.
For example, when we interview an author, it is never about the most recent book alone. That may serve as a point of departure, but the real focus lies in understanding how the person became an author: why they were drawn to literature, which writers influenced them, and what inspired their creative path. Louisiana Channel was conceived as a place for people who wanted to gain genuine insight into an artist – to satisfy that immediate curiosity about who they are and how they think. That mission has guided us ever since.

GB: Do you think this human, personal dimension is missing from the wider public conversation about art?

MCW: Our goal was less about addressing what was "missing" and more about emphasizing what is essential. Art and culture are fundamental components of any society – that principle has always been at the core of the museum's philosophy. Society cannot function without artists, just as artists and their practices are profoundly shaped by the societies and the historical moments in which they live. There is a deep interdependence between the two. That is precisely why we felt this kind of dialogue was important. We did not want Louisiana Channel to focus on "the latest work," as a newspaper might. Rather, we wanted to explore how artists think and work, what motivates them, and how they engage with the times in which they live.
So, to answer your question: yes, at that time, within the Danish context, we felt that art and culture were not receiving the attention they deserved. Louisiana Channel was designed, in part, to help change that.

GB: What is your background?

MCW: The path is somewhat different in Germany compared with other countries. I trained as a political scientist. In German public media, it is quite common for journalists to come from academia; they might have studied political science, literature, philosophy, or another discipline entirely.
I always knew I wanted to study political science and then work as a journalist, which I did for many years: covering news, producing background reports, and creating documentaries.

GB: Within the Louisiana team, were you initially responsible for structuring the interviews? How did the workflow take shape? Did you prepare questions before meeting the artists?

MCW: Not exactly. I was primarily brought in because I understood production, how to plan a shoot, and manage the technical aspects. That was crucial from the very beginning. Even though the setup was visually simple – a person talking on a chair – we wanted it to be executed with technical precision. Simplicity can still be achieved beautifully. We introduced

a two-camera system and paid great attention to framing and composition. That was my first contribution.
Later, I also helped to articulate the underlying philosophy of our interviews. I remember sending an email to the team outlining not specific questions, but rather the type of questions we should be asking. The guiding principle was always to produce interviews that would remain relevant long after their release. That remains my approach to this day.

GB: One of your colleagues told me they doesn't use a strict structure when she works, and that each of you has a slightly different approach. Could you describe yours – how it has evolved?

MCW: It depends greatly on the project. Let me give you two examples.
The most recent shoot I completed just two days ago was with a photographer working in Norway, capturing mountain landscapes during the so-called "blue hour." From the outset, I knew the film would be short – around five to seven minutes – more of a reportage, following the artist as she worked. We filmed outdoors, accompanying her through the landscape. Naturally, I had a few guiding questions in mind: Why Norway? Why mountains? Why the blue hour? But the final shape of the interview depended heavily on external conditions: weather, light, even snowstorms. I had to remain flexible and respond to the situation. I had a general concept in mind, but I trusted that the right questions would emerge at the right moment.
By contrast, when I filmed in New York with the painter Walton Ford about six months ago, the preparation was far more extensive. I wanted to create a comprehensive portrait of him as a painter. My research revealed that he maintained studios both in New York and in rural New England. Many of his works feature natural motifs, so I became interested in exploring the relationship between being in nature and depicting it. I developed a mental storyboard: certain questions would be posed in his New York studio, focusing on technique and artistic practice, while others, concerning nature, upbringing, and inspiration, would be asked outdoors. This structure emerged from research: watching previous interviews, reading about him, and coordinating with his studio manager to determine what was feasible.
One encouraging development over the years is that artists now know Louisiana Channel well and are generally eager to collaborate. They are willing to invest time in filming and preparation, which makes the process much smoother. In that sense, Louisiana Channel has truly become a door-opener.

GB: Have you personally become more interested in art through this process?

MCW: Yes, both more interested and more conscious. But I also believe it is valuable to have someone like me on the team, someone who hasn't spent their entire career within the art world. I can bring a certain journalistic clarity and distance. I try to uphold specific journalistic standards. The art world, of course, is highly commercial: galleries are deeply invested in how their artists are represented. As Louisiana Channel has grown into a significant platform, many people naturally want to influence how they or their artists appear. My approach is always the same: we trust and respect your work; please trust and respect

ours as well. That's often easier for me to say as a political scientist than it might be for someone entirely immersed in the art world.

GB: Yesterday, one of your colleague mentioned the bias that we all have as Westerners – and also as people working within a specific cultural space, such as Denmark. How do you address that at Louisiana Channel? How do you include artists outside the "Western Canon"?

MCW: We certainly make an effort, though not enough, if I'm honest. If you look at our travel map, our most frequent destinations are London, New York, Paris, and Los Angeles. From time to time, we have worked in Japan and Africa, but overall, our representation is still not truly global: there remains a strong Western tendency.
One area where we've achieved a relatively good balance is gender: we now feature approximately equal numbers of male and female artists. Still, although Louisiana Channel aspires to be a global project, our reach is largely Euro-American. Part of this reflects a broader bias within the art world itself, which we inevitably mirror. Nonetheless, we should and will do more: travel to places such as Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, or India. These regions are on our radar, and we are aware of the need to expand. At the same time, we are a small team producing two films each week, which is a demanding frequency. In an ideal world, we would have more staff and produce fewer films, allowing us to travel more widely. For now, however, we must accept certain limitations.

GB: Has the combination of visual artists, writers, and poets always been part of Louisiana Channel's identity?

MCW: Yes, and that comes directly from the museum itself. Louisiana Museum has always embraced a broad conception of art. Architecture has long been part of its focus, and since 2011 we have also hosted the Louisiana Literature Festival.
In fact, literature has been integral to the museum since its inception. The museum also owns Denmark's largest publishing house, which has created a strong historical connection between the visual arts and the literary world in Scandinavia. When we established Louisiana Channel, we simply reflected the museum's interdisciplinary approach.
That said, we are now considering narrowing our scope. Viewer data show that not all audiences are equally interested in every field. We are relatively weaker in design and music, so we are contemplating focusing more specifically on art, architecture, and literature: the museum's core strengths.

Appendix G – Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist

Interviewed via email on November 27, 2025.

Abstract

This interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, conducted through email exchanges and audio recordings, explores his collaboration with museum in progress, beginning in the early 1990s through a shared interest in Alexander Dorner's concept of the museum as laboratory. Obrist discusses key projects, including Der zerbrochene Spiegel (1993), co-curated with Kasper König, and reflects on his participation in Peter Kogler's Portraits of Artists series alongside the parallel development of his own long-duration interview project, now comprising nearly four thousand hours of recorded conversations conceived as portraits and archives against forgetting.

Situating these initiatives within 1990s Vienna, Obrist describes a dynamic art scene characterized by institutional experimentation, the BundeskuratorInnen model, and the twilight of large-scale museum exhibitions before the biennial era. He emphasizes museum in progress's pioneering use of public space through newspapers, billboards, and posters to dissolve boundaries between art and everyday life.

Guido Balzani: You often refer to your early involvement with museum in progress. Could you tell me how your collaboration with this institution first began?

Hans Ulrich Obrist: My relationship with museum in progress began in the early 1990s, when I was a baby curator. I recall that our connection deepened at the start of that decade, just before I was granted a residency at the Cartier Foundation in Paris in 1991. Since 1993, however, I started working as a curator for museum in progress.

What first drew me to Kathrin Messner and Joseph Ortner's project was a statement in which they identified the art historian Alexander Dorner as one of their main sources of inspiration, together with his notion of the Kraftwerk: the museum as a laboratory. I was already familiar with Dorner's work. His book *The Way Beyond 'Art'* – deeply shaped by John Dewey's *Art as Experience* and written during Dorner's exile – had long been a touchstone for me. I first encountered his ideas as a student in St. Gallen in the late 1980s, and the book quickly became one of those texts I returned to again and again. It was rare to meet people familiar with Dorner's thinking, so I wrote a letter to Joseph and Kathrin.

Their response was warm and encouraging. After meeting in person, they invited me to contribute as a curator to several projects. I remember the museum's offices tucked beneath a stairway, the space they used for many years before they moved. I had a key, and I would spend night after night working there. In the early nineteen nineties, I did not sleep much – now it is different – but back then I would often spend *nuits blanches* alone in the museum in progress office, working until morning. It remains unforgettable for me.

GB: And what was the first work you did with the museum?

HUO: The first initiatives I worked on were connected to newspapers, with which museum in progress maintained a close and lively collaboration. But my first major collaboration was with Kasper König. Kasper invited me to co-curate *Der zerbrochene Spiegel* (The Broken Mirror) for the 1993 Vienna Festival. The exhibition brought together several hundred paintings by more than forty artists, ranging from established figures such as Agnes Martin and Eugène Leroy to younger voices of the time, including Marlene Dumas and Luc Tuymans.
We envisioned the show taking place in the area that would later become the Museumsquartier. At the time, it was still an emerging museum district made up of vast, empty halls and warehouses. We also planned to use the Kunsthalle, which was then located in a temporary building at Karlsplatz designed by the architect Adolf Krischanitz, which has since been demolished.
Because the two venues were nearly a mile apart, we drew on the ideas of Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, particularly their reflections in *Learning from Las Vegas* and the concept of the "decorated shed." To create a clear visual link between the two spaces, we installed monumental images on the façades of both the Kunsthalle and the Messequartier. We invited Ed Ruscha to create two of these large-scale images. I was sent to New York for the project and, by extraordinary coincidence, found myself seated at William Burroughs's table during his opening, which happened to take place on the same evening as Ruscha's show at the Gagosian Gallery. This commission became the first truly significant collaboration with museum in progress, and it was soon followed by further projects with artists such as Gerhard Richter, whose work appeared on the façade of the Kunsthalle.

GB: Through Kogler's project Portraits of Artists, I came across your role as an interlocutor within the series. What do you recall from that period, and how did your collaboration with Kogler first begin? In what ways did this project intersect with your own practice of artist conversations?

HUO: My own interview project connects to the concept of long-duration, or la longue durée in Braudel's sense, a framework I have always preferred to the short-lived spectacle of event culture. Joseph and Kathrin shared this orientation, and many of our collaborations evolved from that mutual commitment to sustained, thoughtful engagement. It is something that characterizes also current projects like the *Safety Curtain* at the Vienna State Opera, which has continued for more than two decades. Conceived to cover Rudolf Eisenmenger's original curtain with newly commissioned large-scale works, it invites contemporary artists to engage both with the opera house and with the layered history it carries. Kara Walker created the first curtain in 1998–99, and over the years, the project has featured contributions from artists such as Cy Twombly, David Hockney and Rosemarie Trockel, and El Anatsui, the most recent one. Next year's edition will be dedicated to Herbert Brandl, who sadly passed away. We will pay tribute to him.
Anyway, my practices concerning artists' conversation roots back to Jonas Mekas, who planted the seed in my mind and encouraged the visual documentation of conversations. I had started recording my conversations informally, but the collaboration with Peter Kogler marked the first time I conducted more formal interviews. For the *Portraits of Artists* series,

which was professionally filmed in a studio with makeup involved, I interviewed Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Vito Acconci, Walter Obholzer, and Luc Tuymans (during Der zerbrochene Spiegel). Kogler established the rule of a monochromatic background, and a different curator interviewing the artists.
I realized that the studio system had devised was not the right environment for me, since the formality of the studio and its nearness to a television format tended to make people tense and left only limited room for the kind of long-form conversation I wanted to carry on. Mekas encouraged me to avoid the studio feeling, suggesting a coffeehouse approach where the recording did not need to be perfect: putting the recorder and microphone on the table would be enough. I bought a simple digital camera and began filming.

GB: When you began this project, what were you aiming for? In my research I have often seen the term "portrait" used to describe certain artist conversations. Does that notion apply to your work as well?

HUO: The concept of the portrait is central to me: what I do, in a sense, is a portrait. In this regard, one of my biggest influences was Vasari. Reading about him as a teenager made me realize that historical figures might be among our contemporaries, whom we could meet and document. Vasari was also crucial because he did not separate art and architecture. Another major inspiration comes from the conversations between Francis Bacon and David Sylvester. Overall, the interview project serves to map what Shumon Basar and Douglas Coupland call the "extreme present," and simultaneously acts as a vital project of memory. Given that amnesia is often at the core of the digital age, my work is a protest against forgetting. I frequently interview pioneers whose work is not often present online and who have not been interviewed much, including practitioners from the '50s, '60s, and '70s, sometimes in their seventies, eighties, nineties, or hundreds. For instance, I recently interviewed Ron Nagle, an extraordinary ceramic artist, musician, and composer in his late eighties, and Michael Murphy, the 95-year-old co-founder of the Esalen Institute. Part of my research involves asking which pioneers I should meet when I visit a city.
But the project has also evolved through the years.

In which direction?

HUO: Now it goes beyond individuals, focusing on groupings, clusters, and collectives. In an increasingly divided world, it is about creating bridges between disciplines, generations, and practitioners. At its core, the project reconnects with the original meaning of conversation, its Latin roots, which emphasize being together rather than separated, prioritizing curiosity over suspicion, and bringing voices into close proximity so that they mutually strengthen one another. This is truly an infinite project, currently comprising almost four thousand hours. I hope to tag and connect all the material I have collected so that the archive and the people within it can "talk to each other".

GB: Since you knew it from within, how would you describe the Viennese art scene of the 1990s, and how did you take your first steps there?

HUO: Vienna in the early nineties was incredibly dynamic, shaped by a shared atmosphere of experimentation, openness, and the sense that many things suddenly became possible. Seen from a longer perspective, the nineties also marked the final phase of an era of large-scale, museum-driven exhibitions, the Großausstellung, that had defined the eighties and continued into the early part of the following decade.
My own relationship with Vienna began earlier, in 1985, when I was sixteen or seventeen and had just started travelling on night trains. At first, my parents came with me, as they did not want me to travel alone, but that soon changed. On that early trip to Vienna, we visited the RIVA Studio together, where artists such as Erwin Wurm, Alois Mosbacher, Hubert Schmalix, and Thomas Stimm were working. A few years later, in 1989, I saw *Wunderblock: eine Geschichte der modernen Seele*, a Großausstellung conceived by Jean Clair, Cathrin Pichler, and others. These experiences introduced me to the Viennese art world in a moment when the exhibition formats of the eighties were still at their height.
The nineties in Vienna retained this energy of large-scale exhibitions, while also creating space for new forms and institutional experiments. *Der zerbrochene Spiegel* emerged directly from this context, as König had previously curated large-scale exhibitions, such as, in 1981, *Westkunst. Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939*, in Cologne, while in Düsseldorf, *von hier aus*, in 1984. Not long after our first exhibition came *Cities on the Move*, which I organized together with Hou Hanru. Given its scale, it can also be considered a Großausstellung. The idea for this other exhibition began to take shape in 1997, thanks in part to our collaboration with the Secession. It was this institution that gave us solid support and *carte blanche* to bring it to life. We developed a project that brought together more than seventy artists and architects working in and around Asia. This long-standing engagement with Vienna's institutions continued in later years as well, for example, with the Friederike Mayröcker exhibition I curated at Galerie nächst St. Stephan during the 2020 edition of *curated by*.

GB: Is it something that also shaped your curatorial activity?

HUO: My connection to Vienna deepened further through various long-term commitments. From 1995 onwards, I served on the advisory board of the EVN art collection in Niederösterreich, the EVN Sammlung, and from 2015, I joined the advisory board of the Maria Lassnig Foundation. These roles extended my relationship with the region over many years and ensured that my engagement with Vienna was not tied solely to temporary projects but remained ongoing.
Austria also became for me the starting point for several initiatives that would later circulate internationally. The project *do it*, which began in 1994 and has since been realized in 169 locations, had its inaugural presentation in Klagenfurt, at the Kunsthalle Ritter, designed according to Franz Erhard Walther's concepts and demolished in 1997. Many of the ideas that later travelled widely first appeared in Austria in experimental form, nurtured by an environment unusually open to inquiry and innovation.
This same openness shaped some of the experiences I have shared with the museum in progress. In the nineties, there was a strong sense that art could dissolve into the life of the city, that it could move beyond conventional institutional spaces and prompt a rethinking of

what a museum might be. museum in progress embodied this shift: it allowed us to reach a wider public through newspapers, posters, and billboards – formats central to the idea of art for all. These platforms made it possible to encounter art in everyday life, uninvited yet present, blurring the boundaries between artistic experience and urban routine. A particularly clear example of this is Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Portrait of Austrian Airlines)* from 1993, realized with museum in progress. Appearing across Vienna's billboards, the work transformed the city itself into its exhibition space. Such projects relied on mass print and wide visibility and offered a counterpoint to the limited-edition artist books of the sixties and seventies.

GB: What happened after the nineties to the art system?

HUO: Towards the end of the decade, the landscape began to shift. The BundeskuratorInnen model gradually receded, and the Großausstellung gave way to what could be described as the Zeitalter der Biennalen ("the age of biennials"). Vienna did not have a biennial comparable to those emerging elsewhere, and as budgets tightened, large exhibitions became less feasible. In the 2000s, new biennials appeared around the world alongside the expanding art fair model, creating a more distributed and polyphonic art scene. From today's perspective, Vienna played a leading role during the nineties, just before this broader shift took hold.
Artistically as well, the period was exceptionally rich. Many of the artists who had emerged in the eighties, such as Franz West and Herbert Brandl, remained highly influential throughout the nineties, fostering an open, collaborative environment that involved younger artists and curators. Vienna maintained a strong painting scene during these years. Meanwhile, the discourse of *Kontextkunst* gained visibility, with Peter Weibel articulating the concept in 1993 and identifying a younger generation of artists working critically within that framework. At the same time, a new generation, including Florian Pumhösl, Mathias Poledna, and other peers, came to prominence. These overlapping developments, spanning several generations and approaches, contributed to the sense of momentum that defined Vienna in the nineties and shaped my own longstanding relationship with the city.

Bibliography

Primary sources

museum in progress's Archive

Kogler, Peter. *Portraits of Artists 02*. With Gilbert & George and Wolf Jahn. 1992. Video. museum in progress.

———. *Portraits of Artists 03*. With Andrea Fraser and Christian Philipp Müller. 1992. Video. museum in progress.

———. *Portraits of Artists 05*. With Raymond Pettibon and Hudson. 1992. Video. museum in progress.

———. *Portraits of Artists 11*. With Matt Mullican and Denys Zacharopoulos. 1992. Video. museum in progress.

———. *Portraits of Artists 13*. With Vito Acconci and Hans Ulrich Obrist. 1993. Video. museum in progress.

———. *Portraits of Artists 26*. With Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Hans Ulrich Obrist. 1994. Video. museum in progress.

———. *California*. 1989. 12 offset prints, 34.5 × 49.5 cm. museum in progress, Vienna.

———. *Mavo Tapes*. 1988. Video. museum in progress, Vienna.

Interviews

Gorkiewicz, Manuel. "Interview with Manuel Gorkiewicz". Interview by Guido Balzani. 20 December 2024. Personal Archive.

Obrist, Hans Ulrich. 'Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist". Interview by Balzani, Guido. 27 November 2025. Personal Archive.

Philipp, Claus. "Interview with Claus Philipp". Interview by Guido Balzani. 3 July 2025. Personal Archive.

Kogler, Peter. "Interview with Peter Kogler". Interview by Guido Balzani. 13 November 2024. Personal archive.

Rhomberg, Kathrin. "Interview with Kathrin Rhomberg". Interview by Balzani, Guido. 17 September 2025. Personal Archive.

Wagner, Marc-Christoph. "Interview with Marc-Christoph Wagner". Interview by Guido Balzani. 1 February 2024. Personal Archive.

Books, Chapters, Journal Articles

Alexander, Gavin. "Prosopopoeia: The Speaking Figure". In *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, 1st edn, edited by Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber, pp. 97–112. Cambridge University Press, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511988806.013.

Allen, Gwen. "Against Criticism: The Artist Interview in Avalanche Magazine, 1970–76". *Art Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2005), pp. 50–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2005.10792838.

———. *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The MIT Press, 2015.
Ames, Morgan G. "Charismatic Technology". *Aarhus Series on Human Centered Computing* 1, no. 1 (October 2015), pp. 109-120. https://doi.org/10.7146/aahcc.v1i1.21199.
Angell, Callie. *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*. New York: Abrams, 2006.
Argyropulu, Nantia. *The Marathon Marathon in Athens*. Edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Nantia Argyropulu. Athens: DESTE, 2017.
Arielli, Emanuele. "Carisma tra estetica e politica". In *Kunst im Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert: Zwischen Klassizismus und Moderne, zwischen privatem und öffentlichem Raum*, edited by Hans-Christian Günther, pp. 151–79. Poetry, Music and Art, v. 13. Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz Verlag, 2018.
Bacher, Norbert, Matthias Beitl, Nadia Rapp-Wimberger, and Aleksandra Aleksić. *The CEE History Project: The History of Savings Banks in Central and Eastern Europe and the History of Erste Group's Subsidiaries in the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine*. Vienna: ERSTE Foundation and Fourcon, 2015. Accessed March 18, 2026, https://www.erstestiftung.org/en/publications/the-cee-history-project/#:~:text=Download%20(PDF%2C%204.51MB).
Baldini, Michela. "Le Arti Figurative All'«Approdo». Carla Lonzi: Un'allieva Dissidente Di Roberto Longhi". *Italianistica: Rivista di Letteratura Italiana* 38, no. 3 (2009), pp. 115–30.
Barisione, Mauro. "Reviving Metapersonal Charisma in Max Weber". *Political Theory* 51, no. 3 (June 2023), pp. 530–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/00905917221129632.
Bayley, Lucy. "Seep Between the Mortar: Sociotechnical Imaginaries in Digital Media at Tate". *Stedelijk Studies Journal* 1 (2020), pp. 2–18. https://doi.org/10.54533/StedStud.vol010.art04.
Barthes, Roland. *Le bruissement de la langue. Essais critiques IV*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993.
———. *Le grain de la voix entretiens, 1962-1980*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981.
———. *The Grain of the Voice*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1985.
———. *The Rustle of Language*. Translated by Richard Howard. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
Basar, Shumon, Douglas Coupland, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Farah al Qasimi, eds. *The Age of Earthquakes: A Guide to the Extreme Present*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015.
Benedetti, Carla. *L'ombra lunga dell'autore: indagine su una figura cancellata*. 1st. ed. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999.
Bennett, Andrew. *The Author*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203003312.
Bickers, Patricia, and Andrew, Wilson. *Talking Art: Interviews with Artists Since 1976*. London: Ridinghouse, 2008.
Birnbaum, Daniel, and Hans Ulrich Obrist. "Museum on the Move". *Artforum*. Summer (2010), pp. 301–05.
Bishop, Claire. *Disordered Attention: How We Look at Art and Performance*. London; New York: Verso, 2024.
Bismarck, Beatrice von, Burke Barrett, and Kunstraum der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, eds. *Interarchive: archivarische Praktiken und Handlungsräume im zeitgenössischen Kunstfeld;*

[dieses Buch dokumentiert und erweitert das Ausstellungsprojekt 'Interarchiv' des Kunstraums der Universität Lüneburg ... 1997–2002]. Köln: König, 2002.
Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay; How Art Reprograms the World*. Translated by Caroline Schneider. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2010.
Boyce, Benjamin. *The Theophrastan Character in England to 1642*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1947.
Britton, Piers D. G. "The Signs of Faces: Leonardo on Physiognomic Science and the 'Four Universal States of Man'". *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 2002), pp. 143–62. https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-4658.t01-1-00009.
Brueske, Megan, and Penny A. Weiss, eds. *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2018.
Butin, Hubertus. "Andy Warhol Zeitschrift *Inter*/VIEW, oder: Wie werde ich berühmter Künstler?" In *Das Interview: Formen und Foren des Künstlergesprächs*, edited by Michael Diers, pp. 195–242. Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2013.
Casavecchia, Barbara. "Taci, anzi parla". *South Magazine* 7, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2016), accessed March 18, 2026, https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/463_taci_anzi_parla.
Cavalli, Luciano. "Charisma and Twentieth-Century Politics". In *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, edited by Sam Whimster and Scott Lash, 317–33. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014.
Cavarero, Adriana. *A più voci: filosofia dell'espressione vocale*. Rome: Castelvecchi, 2022.
———, Eng. ed. *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005.
Celant, Germano. *Identité italienne: l'art en Italie depuis 1959, Giovanni Anselmo, Marco Bagnoli, Alighiero Boetti, Enrico Castellani.* Paris; Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1981.
Centanni, Monica. *Fantasmi dell'antico: la tradizione classica nel Rinascimento*. Engramma 7. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2017.
Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008.
Coers, Albert. "'Of course, an interview with the artist.' Das Interview als Medium zwischen Konvention und Innovation in Ausstellungskatalogen". *kunsttexte.de* 3 (2012). https://doi.org/10.48633/ksttx.2012.3.88120.
Conte, Lara, Vinzia Fiorino, and Vanessa Martini. *Carla Lonzi: La Duplice Radicalità*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2011.
Corna, Luisa Lorenza. "Against the Canon: The Unresolved Dispute between Carla Lonzi and Giulio Carlo Argan". *Oxford Art Journal* 47, no. 2 (November 2024), pp. 277–90. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcae022.
Courtney, Cathy. "*Artists' Lives* : The First Thirty Years". *Art Libraries Journal* 48, no. 1 (January 2023), pp. 21–28. https://doi.org/10.1017/alj.2022.25.
Craveri, Benedetta. *La civiltà della conversazione*. 2. ed. Gli Adelphi 287. Milan: Adelphi, 2008.
Dantini, Michele. *Geopolitiche dell'arte: arte e critica d'arte italiana nel contesto internazionale, dalle neoavanguardie a oggi*. Milan: Marinotti, 2012.
———. "Una Polemica Situata e Da Situare. 1963: Lonzi vs. Argan". *Predella Journal of Visual Arts* 36 (2014), pp. 87-104.

———. “«Ytalya Subjecta». Critica d’arte e Narrazioni Identitarie 1963-2010”. In *Il Confine Evanescente. Arte Italiana 1960-2010*, by Gabriele Guercio and Anna Maria Mattirolo, pp. 307–46. Milan, Rome: Electa, per Maxxi, 2010.

Dantini, Michele. “Storia Dell’arte e Scienze Cognitive. Come Incoraggiare Il Dialogo Tra Discipline”. *Scenari* (Milan) 2 (June 2015), pp. 115–21.

Derlon, Brigitte, and Monique Jeudy-Ballini. “The Theory of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Theory: The Art of Alfred Gell”. *Oceania* 80, no. 2 (2010), pp. 129–42. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1834-4461.2010.tb00076.x.

Diers, Michael. “‘Infinite Conversation’ or the Interview as an Art Form”. In Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Interviews*, vol. 2. Milan: Charta, 2010.

Dinesen, Isak (Blixen, Karen). *Babette’s Feast and Other Anecdotes of Destiny*. Vintage Fiction, Anthologie. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

Fameli, Pasquale. “Vito Acconci e la sparizione dell’io”. *Figure. Rivista della Scuola di Specializzazione in Beni Storico-Artistici dell’Università di Bologna*, 28 December 2014, pp. 71–78. https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.2038-6184/4688.

Farinati, Lucia. “Audio Arts Archive: From Inventory Space to Imagined Space”. PhD, Kingston School of Art Department of Critical and Historical Studies, 2020. https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/id/eprint/46708.

———. “As a Possibility of an Encounter”. In *Theorising the Artist Interview*, edited by Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher, 1st edn, pp. 97–112. New York: Routledge, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003360575.

Farinati, Lucia, and Jennifer Thatcher. “Mapping the Contemporary Historiography of the Artist Interview as a Literary and Critical Genre: A Critical Introduction”. *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 23 (December 2020), pp. 1–38.

———. *Theorising the Artist Interview*. 1st edn. New York: Routledge, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003360575.

Felski, Rita. *Literature after Feminism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Ferrari, Stefano. *La psicologia del ritratto nell’arte e nella letteratura*. 1st edn. Biblioteca di cultura moderna. Rome: Laterza, 1998.

Ferrarotti, Franco. *Storia e storie di vita*. Rome: Laterza, 1997.

Finch, James. “The Interview as Criticism: David Sylvester’s Artist Interviews”. *Biography* 41, no. 2 (2018), pp. 179–98. https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2018.0019.

Flatley, Jonathan. *Like Andy Warhol*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017

Foster, Hal. “Test Subjects”. *October* 132 (2010), pp. 30–42.

Friedländer, Max. *Landscape, Portrait, Still-Life. Their Origin and Development*. New York: Schocken Books, 1963.

Gallo, Francesca. “Interviste e Autointerviste in Video Nel Lavoro Degli Artisti: Variazioni Sul Tema”. In *Voci sull’arte: Per Un Archivio Di Storia Orale Dell’arte Contemporanea*, edited by Ilaria Schiaffini and Claudio Zambianchi, pp. 93–103. Rome: Campisano editore, 2020.

Gauntlett, David. *Making Is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0*. Reprint. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

Geldzahler, Henry. *Making It New: Essays, Interviews, and Talks*. San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996.

Gell, Alfred. “The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology”. In *Anthropology Art and Aesthetics*, edited by Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, pp. 40–64. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198277330.003.0003.

———. Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013.

Gelshorn, Julia. “Two Are Better than One: Notes on the Interview and Techniques of Multiplication”. *The Art Bulletin* 94, no. 1 (March 2012), pp. 32–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2012.10786027.

Genovesi, Elisa. “Archivi di Storia Orale per la Storia Orale: Una Panoramica”. In *Voci sull’arte: Per Un Archivio Di Storia Orale Dell’arte Contemporanea*, edited by Ilaria Schiaffini and Claudio Zambianchi, pp. 79–92. Rome: Campisano editore, 2020.

Gubrium, Jaber F., and James A. Holstein. “From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society”. In *Postmodern Interviewing*, by Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, pp. 21–49. California: SAGE Publications, 2003. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985437.n2.

Guercio, Gabriele. *Art as Existence: The Artist ‘s Monograph and Its Project*. Cambridge: MIT press, 2006.

Gurisatti, Giovanni. “Ritrarre è tradurre – Tradurre è ritrarre. Sulla traduzione come pratica ermeneutica tra Gadamer e Benjamin”. *Studi di estetica*, 2022, pp. 53–79. https://doi.org/10.7413/18258646193.

Hanhardt, John G., and Adam D. Weinberg. *The Films of Andy Warhol: Catalogue Raisonné 1963–1965*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2021.

Heurtin, Jean-Philippe. “Weber as a Reader of Rudolph Sohm, and the Incomplete Concept of ‘Office Charisma’”. *Max Weber Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2019), pp. 11–42. https://doi.org/10.1353/max.2019.0016.

Holdsworth, Claire M. “Vocal Acts: Video Art and the Artist’s Voice”. *Journal of Art Historiography* 23, no. 1 (December 2020), pp. 49–54.

Iamurri, Laura. “Carla Lonzi sul ‘marcatrè’”. In *Scritti sull’Arte*, by Carla Lonzi, edited by Laura Iamurri, and Lara Conte, 705–23. Milan: Et al, 2012.

———. *Un margine che sfugge: Carla Lonzi e l’arte in Italia, 1955–1970*. 1st. ed. Teoria delle arti e cultura visuale. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016.

Kisters, Sandra. *The Lure of the Biographical: On the (Self-)Representation of Modern Artists*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2017.

Kisters, Sandra, and Rachel Esner, eds. *The Mediatization of the Artist*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Kofman, Sarah. *The Childhood of Art: An Interpretation of Freud’s Aesthetics*. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Kogler, Peter, Katrin Bucher Trantow, Ami Barak, Monika Holzer-Kernbichler, Kunsthaus Graz, and Universalmuseum Joanneum, eds. *Connected; Peter Kogler with: anlässlich der gleichnamigen Ausstellung, Kunsthaus Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum, 28.6.–20.10.2019*. Wien: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2019.

Köb, Edelbert and Kunsthaus Bregenz. *KünstlerInnen – 50 Gespräche*. Kunsthaus Bregenz, 1997.

Falco, Raphael. “Charisma and Myth”. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Anthropology*, edited by Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, pp. 99–123. Burlington: Ashgate, 2015.

Kött, Martin. *Das Interview in Der Französischen Presse*. Berlin; New York: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2004.

Krauss, Rosalind. “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism”. *October* 1 (1976), pp. 51–64. https://doi.org/10.2307/778507.

Kris, Ernst, and Otto Kurz. *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Lichtin, Christoph. *Das Künstlerinterview: Analyse eines Kunstprodukts*. 1st, New ed edns. Kunstgeschichten der Gegenwart 3. Bern: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2011. https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0351-0316-8.

Lindholm, Charles. “Lovers and Leaders: A Comparison of Social and Psychological Models of Romance and Charisma”. *Social Science Information* 27, no. 1 (March 1988), pp. 3–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/053901888027001001.

Lonzi, Carla. *Autoritratto: Accardi, Alviani, Castellani, Consagra, Fabro, Fontana, Kounellis, Nigro, Paolini, Pascali, Rotella, Scarpitta, Turcato, Twombly*. Milan: Abscondita, 2017.

———. *Self-Portrait*. Translated by Allison Grimaldi Donahue. Brussels: Divided Publishing, 2021.

———. *Sputiamo su Hegel e altri scritti*. Edited by Annarosa Buttarelli. Rome: La Tartaruga, 2023.

———. *Taci, anzi parla. Diario di una femminista 1972–1977*. Rome: La Tartaruga, 2024.

Maculan, Lena. “Researching Podcasting in Museums: Can New Broadcasting Models of Publication Make Art More Accessible?” PhD, University of Leicester Department of Museum Studies, 2008.

Magli, Patrizia, ed. *Il volto e l’anima: fisiognomica e passioni*. Milan: Bompiani, 1996.

Masschelein, Anneleen, Christophe Meurée, David Martens, and Stéphanie Vanasten. “The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre”. *Poetics Today* 35, nos. 1–2 (March 2014), pp. 1–49. https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2648368.

Meyer, Richard. *Outlaw Representation: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. Boston: Beacon press, 2002.

Meyer, Steven. “Writing Psychology Over: Gertrude Stein and William James”. In *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880 - 1940*, edited by Mark S. Micale, pp. 250–74. California: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Miessen, Markus. “Archiving In Formation: A Conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist”. *Log* 21 (Winter 2011), pp. 39–46.

Mörtl, Ursula Christine. “Kontakt. Die Kunstsammlung Der Erste Group Die Räumlichen Präsentationsformen Einer Firmensammlung”. Master Thesis, Technische Universität Wien Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung, 2010. https://resolver.obvsg.at/urn:nbn:at:at-ubtuw:1-35274 http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12708/13140.

Morton, Timothy. “Charisma and Causality: What If Art Were a Kind of Magic?” *ArtReview*, November 2015.

Mühlemann Hartl, Kaspar, Alois Herrmann, and Museum in Progress, eds. *Museum in Progress. Kunst in Öffentlichen Und Medialen Räumen: Durch Ein Ende Rein & Durch Das Andere Durch [& Dann Noch Einmal] = Museum in Progress. Art in Public Spaces and in Media: In One End & out the Other [& Then Again]*. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, 2021.

Panichi, Nicola. *La virtù eloquente: la ‘civil conversazione’ nel Rinascimento*. Clavis 12. Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2020.

Peist, Nuria. “The Heir and the Cowboy: Social Predisposition, Mediation and Artistic Profession in Marcel Duchamp and Jackson Pollock”. *Cultural Sociology* 6, no. 2 (June 2012), pp. 233–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975512440225.

Pettorino, Massimo. “The History of Talking Heads: The Trick and the Research”. In *HSCR 2015: Proceedings of the First International Workshop on the History of Speech Communication Research Dresden, September 4-5, 2015*, edited by Rüdiger Hoffmann and Jürgen Trouvain, pp. 30–41. Dresden: TUDpress, 2015.

Potts, John. “Paul Invents Charisma”. In *A History of Charisma*, edited by John Potts, pp. 23–50. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230244832_3.

Powers, Edward D. “Attention Must Be Paid: Andy Warhol, John Cage and Gertrude Stein”. *European Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 1 (March 2014), pp. 5–31. https://doi.org/10.1386/ejac.33.1.5_1.

———. “For Your Immediate Attention: Gertrude Stein, Andy Warhol, and Henry Geldzahler”. *Word & Image* 30, no. 4 (October 2014), pp. 416–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2014.955985.

Raviv, Orna. “Andy Warhol’s Screen Tests: A Face-to-Face Encounter”. *Angelaki* 21, no. 2 (April 2016), pp. 51–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2016.1182724.

———. *Ethics of Cinematic Experience: Screens of Alterity*. New York: Routledge, 2019. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429427893.

Reichert, Ramon. “Evaluation and Self-Evaluation on YouTube. Designing the Self in Makeup Tutorials”. In *Online Evaluation of Creativity and the Arts*, edited by Hiesun Cecilia Suhr, pp. 95–111. New York: Routledge, 2014. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315795836.

Roach, Rebecca. *Literature and the Rise of the Interview*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Ross, Alexandra C. M. “Continuous Curatorial Conversations. An Exploration of the Role of Conversation within the Writing of a Supplementary History of the Curatorial”. PhD, University of Dundee, 2014.

Røyseng, Sigrid, Per Mangset, and Jorunn Spord Borgen. “Young Artists and the Charismatic Myth”. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13, no. 1 (February 2007), pp. 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286630600613366.

Sandino, Linda. “Artists-in-Progress: Narrative Identity of the Self as Another”. In *Beyond Narrative Coherence*, edited by Matti Hyvärinen, Lars-Christer Hydén, Marja Saarenheimo and Maria Tamboukou, Studies in Narrative, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010, pp. 87-102. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.11.06san.

Sandino, Linda, and Matthew Partington, eds. *Oral History in the Visual Arts*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Sauzeau Boetti, Anne-Marie. “Carla Lonzi. Una Presenza Alle Mie Spalle”. *Arte e Critica* 79 (December 2014), pp. 44–45.

Schöllhammer, Georg. “Paradigm Revision Leading Questions and Adaptive Modalities Behind the Kontakt Collection”. In *Kontakt–the Art Collection of Erste Group and ERSTE Foundation*, by ERSTE Stiftung. Edited by Silvia Eiblmayr. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017.

Scotini, Marco, and Raffaella Perna, eds. *The Unexpected Subject*: *1978 Art and Feminism in Italy*. Milan: Flash Art, 2019.

Sheridan, Michael. “A Qualified Utopia: The Work of Jørgen Bo and Vilhelm Wohlert at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art”. Preprint, Royal Danish Academy – Architecture, Design, Conservation, 2023. https://doi.org/10.60558/F790-C269.

Sicinski, Michael. “Michael Snow’s Wavelength and the Space of Dwelling”. *Qui Parle* 11, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1999), pp. 59–88.

Smola, Franz. “Zu utopisch, um Realität zu werden. Roland Goeschls Frühwerk in der medialen Öffentlichkeit”. In *Roland Goeschl - Rückblicke 1957 - 2005: Bilder, Fotos, Modelle, Skulpturen*, edited by Roland Goeschl, Tobias G. Natter, and Österreichische Galerie Belvedere. Wien: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2006.

Solomons, Leo. “Normal Motor Automatism”. *Psychological Review*, September (1896), pp. 492–512.

Soussloff, Catherine M. *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

———. *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Spagnolo, Maddalena. “The Voice of the Artists. Notes about Vasari’s Lives and Early Modern Sources”. In *Theorising the Artist Interview*, edited by Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher, pp. 81–96. New York: Routledge, 2025. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003360575.

Stavrinaki, Maria. “The African Chair or the Charismatic Object”. *Grey Room* 41 (October 2010), pp. 88–110. https://doi.org/10.1162/GREY_a_00011.

Stein, Gertrude. “Cultivated Motor Automatism: A Study of Character in Its Relation to Attention”. *Psychological Review*, no. May (1898), pp. 295–306.

———. *Lectures in America*. Boston: Beacon press, 1957.

———. *What Are Masterpieces*. New York; Toronto; London; Tel Aviv: Pitman Publishing Corporations, 1970.

Steiner, Wendy. *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein*.. Yale Studies in English 189. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

———. “Postmodernist Portraits”. *Art Journal* 46, no. 3 (September 1987), pp. 173–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1987.10792359.

———. “The Semiotics of a Genre: Portraiture in Literature and Painting”. *Semiotica* 21, nos 1–2 (1977), pp. 111–19. https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1977.21.1-2.111.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Stewart-Halevy, Jacob. “The Inductive Turn in Conceptual Art: Pragmatics in the *0–9* Circle”. *Grey Room* 68 (September 2017), pp. 60–93. https://doi.org/10.1162/grey_a_00224.

Suárez, Juan A. “The Face in Flight: Andy Warhol’s Henry Geldzahler”. *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 4 (2019), pp. 112–33. https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2019.0060.

Szymczyk, Adam, and Christian Höller. “Unrehearsed Encounters”. In *Kontakt - the Art Collection of Erste Group and ERSTE Foundation*, by ERSTE Stiftung. Edited by Silvia Eiblmayr. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017.

Teofrasto. *Theophrastus. I Caratteri*. Edited by Giorgio Pasquali. Florence: Sansoni, 1919.

Ursprung, Philip, and Hans Ulrich Obrist. "'Curiosity Is the Motor of the Entire Interview Project': Hans Ulrich Obrist in Conversation with Philip Ursprung". *The Art Bulletin* 94, no. 1 (March 2012), pp. 42–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2012.10786028.

van Eck, Caroline. *Art, Agency and Living Presence: From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object*. Boston; Berlin, Munich: De Gruyter, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110345568.

———. "Living Statues: Alfred Gell's Art and Agency, Living Presence Response and the Sublime". *Art History* 33, no. 4 (September 2010), pp. 642–59. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2010.00756.x.

Ventrella, Francesco. "Magnetic Encounters: Listening to Carla Lonzi's Tape Recordings". In *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi*, edited by Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi, pp. 45–74. London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021.

———. "Carla Lonzi e la disfatta della critica d'arte: registrazione, scrittura e risonanza". *Studi culturali*, no. 1 (2015), pp. 83–100. https://doi.org/10.1405/79445.

Ventrella, Francesco, and Zapperi, Giovanna, eds. *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi*. London; New York; Oxford; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021.

Vettese, Angela. *Artisti Si Diventa*. Rome: Carocci, 1998.

Wallen, Jeffrey. "Between Text and Image: The Literary Portrait". *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 10, no. 1 (January 1995): 50–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.1995.10815057.

Weber, Max. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. 5. revidierte Auflage. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1976.

Wees, William C. *Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film*. Berkeley: University of California Pr, 1992.

Wesner, Simone. "The Artist and the Artistic Myth". In *Artists" Voices in Cultural Policy*, by Simone Wesner, pp. 17–40. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76057-5_2.

Wielocha, Agnieszka. "Collecting Archives of Objects and Stories. On the Lives and Futures of Contemporary Art at the Museum". PhD, Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture–Faculty of Humanities, 2021.

Wimmer, Michael. *Kultur und Demokratie: eine systematische Darstellung von Kulturpolitik in Österreich*. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2011.

Wingfield, Christopher. "Touching the Buddha: Encounters with a Charismatic Object". In *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, edited by Sandra H. Dudley, pp. 53–70. London ; New York: Routledge, 2010.

Wolf, Reva. "The History of the Artist Interview". In *Theorising the Artist Interview*, 1st edn, by Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher, pp. 17–45. New York: Routledge, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003360575-3.

Woodall, Joanna, ed. *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2004.

Zapperi, Giovanna. "The Making of a Feminist Subject: Autonomy, Authenticity and Withdrawal". In *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi*, edited by Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi, pp. 89–111. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021.

Zouli, Ioanna. “Digital Tate: The Use of Video and the Construction of Audiences”. PhD, London South Bank University, 2018. http://researchopen.lsbu.ac.uk/id/eprint/2751.

Interviews, video portraits and DVDs

Amies, Toby, dir. *Stuart Brisley – “I Think I’m an Artist”*. With Kat Mansoor, Kate Reid, Mike Tamman, and Jack O’Halloran. Tate Shots. Tate, 2015. Video. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjLdQX73NbY.

Dyg, Kasper Bech, dir. *Joyce Carol Oates: On Facing the Blank Page*. Produced by Mathias Nyholm. Louisiana Channel, 2014. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/joyce-carol-oates-facing-blank-page.

———, dir. *Rock Band Iceage: Writing Music Out of Spite*. With Jakob Solbakken. Louisiana Channel, 2021. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/iceage-writing-music-out-of-spite.

———, dir. *Margaret Atwood: On Facing the Blank Page*. With Mathias Nyholm. Louisiana Channel, 2024. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/margaret-atwood-facing-blank-page.

Farinati, Lucia. *LEZIONI DI SUONO #2 - Solo Suono*. Accademia di Belle Arti di Rome, 2024. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13R8blGaY1o.

Fraser, Andrea. “Andrea Fraser and Chris Dercon in Conversation”. Interview by Chris Dercon. 5 October 2024. Marian Goodman Gallery. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1B90A03gm4&t=1791s.

Gaube, Wilhelm. *Zeitsprung: 18 Künstlerporträts*. Vol. 73, with Johann Plank and Horst Eder. Der Standard-Der österreichische Film. Wien: Hoanzl, 2007. DVD.

Gorkiewicz, Manuel, Claus Philipp, and Julius Lermer, dirs. *Oscar Bronner*. Kontakt Video Portraits. Kontakt, 2022. Video. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/14331/oscar-bronner.

———, dirs. *VALIE EXPORT*. Kontakt Video Portraits. Kontakt, 2023. Video. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/15295/valie-export.

———, dirs. *Wolfgang Kos*. Kontakt Video Portraits. Kontakt, 2022. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits/15267/wolfgang-kos.

Groys, Boris. “The Unending Etcetera”. Kogler.net, 2004. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/the-unending-etcetera/.

Hildenbrandt, Marie Therese, dir. *VALIE EXPORT – “I Created My Own Identity”*. Produced by Elizabeth Robert and Susan Doyon. With Stephanie Hardt, Jerome Monnot, Anna Wistreich, and Kristian Donaldson. Tate Shots, 2019. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5cNz1NobxI.

Lærkesen, Roxanne Bagheshirin, dir. *ORLAN: Advice to the Young*. With Jakob Solbakken. Louisiana Channel, 2022. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/orlan-advice-to-the-young.

museum in progress. “Conversation with Andrea Fraser”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/153/.

———. “Conversation with Felix Gonzalez-Torres”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/169/.

———. “Conversation with Matt Mullican”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/160/.
———. “Conversation with Vito Acconci”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/161/.
museum in progress, prod. *Artists Talking: Pop Art ; Bayrle, Rosenquist, Steinbach*. Vol. 1. Artists Talking. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017. DVD.
———, prod. *Artists Talking: Art and Language ; Art & Language, Gappmayr, Holzer, Weiner, Wool*. Vol. 2. Artists Talking. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017. DVD.
———, prod. *Artists Talking: Conceptual Art ; Baldessari, Barry, Büchler, Deller, Kosuth*. Vol. 3. Artists Talking. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017. DVD.
———, prod. *Artists Talking: Performance Art; Burden, Fraser, Gilbert & George, McCarthy, Tiravanija*. Vol. 4. Artists Talking. Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017. DVD.
Rebekka, Nanna, dir. *Jeremy Deller: A Visit to the Studio*. With Kyle Stevenson. Louisiana Channel, 2023. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/jeremy-deller-a-visit-to-the-studio.
———, dir. *Jeremy Deller: Can Art Change the World?* With Kyle Stevenson. Louisiana Channel, 2023. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/jeremy-deller-can-art-change-the-world.
Steyerl, Hito. How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File. 2013. Video. Artforum, 20 April 2015. Accessed May 25, 2026. https://www.artforum.com/video/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen-a-fucking-didactic-educational-mov-file-2013-165845/.
Vorm, Tonny, dir. *Umberto Eco: I Was Always Narrating*. Produced by Roxanne Bagheshirin Lærkesen. With Klaus Elmer. Louisiana Channel, 2015. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/umberto-eco-i-was-always-narrating.
Vorm, Tonny, and Klaus Klaus, dirs. *Umberto Eco: Advice to the Young*. Louisiana Channel, 2015. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/umberto-eco-advice-young.
Wachtel, Eleanor, dir. *Colm Tóibín: Finding an Anchor to Write From*. With Simon Weyhe and Roxanne Bagheshirin Lærkesen. Louisiana Channel, 2024. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/colm-t%c3%b3ib%c3%adn-finding-an-anchor-to-write-from.
Wagner, Marc-Christoph, dir. *Bret Easton Ellis: I Write From a Place of Feeling*. With Jakob Solbakken and Signe Boe Pedersen. Louisiana Channel, 2023. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/bret-easton-ellisi-write-from-a-place-of-feeling.
———, dir. *Nan Goldin: Advice to the Young*. With Sean Hanley and Jarl Therkelsen Kaldan. Louisiana Channel, 2023. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/nan-goldin-advice-to-the-young.
———, dir. *Walton Ford: A Bubble in the Lake*. With Sean Hanley and Jarl Therkelsen Kaldan. Louisiana Channel, 2023. Accessed March 19, 2026. vv https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/walton-ford-a-bubble-in-the-lake.
Wagner, Marc-Christoph, Simon Weyhe, and Jarl Therkelsen Kaldan, dirs. *Catherine Opie: Beginnings and Endings*. Louisiana Channel, 2024. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/catherine-opie-beginnings-and-endings.

Encyclopedia, Webpages, and Newspaper Articles

"About the Oral History Program". Archives of American Art. 8 July 2022. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/about-the-oral-history-program.

Argan, Giulio Carlo, Eugenia Strong, Giulio Farina, and Giovanni Vacca. "Ritratto". In *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*. 1936. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ritratto_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/.

Audioarchiv Kunst. "Audioarchiv Kunst – Stimmen Zu Den Anfängen Der Zeitgenössischen Kunst Im Rheinland". Accessed March 19, 2026. https://audioarchivkunst.de/.

Berg, Stephan. "Between Disembodiment and Embodiment". Kogler.net, 2004. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/between-disembodiment-and-embodiment/.

Berka, Roman. "Art and an Expanded Museum Concept". mip.at, September 2009. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/235/.

———, "Josef Ortner (1956–2009)", mip.at, September 2009. Accessed May 25, 2026, https://www.mip.at/en/texts/235/.

BOMB Magazine. "Oral History Project". Accessed March 19, 2026. https://bombmagazine.org/series/oral-history.

Boxer, Sarah. "Critic's Notebook; Andy Warhol's 'Screen Tests' Were 3-Minute Eternities". *New York Times*, 23 May 2003.

Burger, Joerg, dir. *In Wirklichkeit ist alles ganz anders. Der Filmemacher Wilhelm Gaube. Künstlerportraits, Menschenbilder Etc. (Actually, Everything Is Completely Different)*. Austria: Sixpackfilm, 2004.

Chougnet, Jean-François. "Kogler's Labyrinth". Kogler.net, 2008. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/koglers-labyrinth/.

Connor, Michael. "Hito Steyerl's 'How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational.MOV File'". *Rhizome*, 31 May 2013. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/may/31/hito-steyerl-how-not-to-be-seen/.

De Mauro, Tullio, Luigi Grassi, and Eugenio Battisti. "Ritratto - L'arte Del Ritratto". In *Enciclopedia Universale Dell'Arte*, XI.Florence: Sansoni, 1963.

Der Standard. "'Der Österreichische Film': Noch Mehr Perlen Und Porträts". 13 October 2016. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000045839814/der-oesterreichische-film-noch-mehr-perlen-und-portraets.

———. "Filmemacher Wilhelm Gaube Gestorben". 19 March 2012. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.derstandard.at/story/1331780064079/1925-2012-filmemacher-wilhelm-gaube-gestorben.

———. "Über den Filmemacher Wilhelm Gaube". 3 October 2007. Accessed May 25, 2026. https://www.derstandard.at/story/3053512/ueber-den-filmemacher-wilhelm-gaube.

Dillon, Brian. “Undone in Three Minutes”. Art and Design. *The Guardian*, 24 January 2009. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/jan/24/andy-warhol-screen-tests-susan-sontag-lou-reed-salvador-dali.

ERSTE Foundation. “Kontakt Collection”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.erstestiftung.org/en/projects/kontakt-collection/.

Farago, Jason. “Now Virtual and in Video, Museum Websites Shake Off the Dust”. *The New York Times*, 24 April 2020. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/23/arts/design/best-virtual-museum-guides.html.

Filmmuseum.At. “Filmmuseum - Navigator Film Deposit”. Accessed 12 October 2025. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.filmmuseum.at/en/collections/film_collection/film_collection_insights/navigator_film_deposit.

Fleck, Robert. “Peter Kogler – An Art of the «Light Sign»“. Kogler.net, 2000. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/peter-kogler-an-art-of-the-light-sign/.

Fraser, Andrea. “How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction”. Text presented at The Depot, Vienna, October 1994. Accessed May 25, 2026. https://www.andreafraser.com/publications/how-to-provide-an-artistic-service-an-introduction.

Hald, Astrid Agnes, dir. *Elmgreen & Dragset: The World Is Increasingly Absurd*. With Olivia Newton. Louisiana Channel, 2025. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/elmgreen-dragset-the-world-is-increasingly-absurd.

Hite, Shere. “DO IT – No. 01”. mip.at. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/creations/do-it-no-01/.

Kogler, Peter. “Diving Into The Network Of Peter Kogler”. Interview by Katrin Bucher Trantow. 2022. Kogler.net. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2022/12/07/diving-into-the-network-of-peter-kogler/.

Kontakt-collection.org. “20 Years of Kontakt”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/events/373/20%20Years%20of%20Kontakt.

———. “Július Koller”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/people/29/julius-koller.

———. “Kontakt, Človek -Príroda-Predmety-Materiály (Antihappening)”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/objects/481/kontakt-clovek-prirodapredmetymaterialy-antihappening.

———. “Kontakt Video Portraits”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/portraits.

———. “Mission”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/mission.

———. “Research”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/research.

———. “SK Parking”. Accessed May 25, 2026. https://kontakt-collection.org/events/305/SK%20Parking.

Kunstraum Leuphana Universität Lüneburg. “Interarchive”. Accessed March 19, 2026.. https://kunstraum.leuphana.de/en/projects/interarchiv.

Lewandowska, Marysia. “Women's Audio Archive”. Accessed May 25, 2026. https://www.marysialewandowska.com/waa/.

Lonzi, Carla. “La solitudine del critico”, *L’Avanti!,* 13 December 1963.
———. La critica è potere”, *Nac*, no. 3 (1970)
Louisiana Channel. “About Us”. 30 October 2012. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/about-us.
———. “Advice to the Young”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/10-photographers-give-advice-to-the-young.
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. “About Louisiana”. Accessed 12 January 2026. https://louisiana.dk/en/louisiana-info/.
Materials of the Future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art from 1980–1990. “Materials of the Future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art from 1980–1990”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.china1980s.org/en/Default.aspx.
museum in progress. “California”. Accessed May 25, 2026. https://www.mip.at/shop/california/.
Obrist, Hans Ulrich. “DO IT”. Mip.at. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/104/.
———. *Interviews. 2*. Milan: Charta, 2010.
———. “The Starting Point”. Museum in Progress. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/122/.
Obrist, Hans Ulrich, and Robert Fleck. “Vito Acconci, Auszug Einem Video-Interview”. *Der Standard*, 15–16 October 1994.
Oral History Archives of Japanese Art. “Oral History Archives of Japanese Art”. Accessed 13 February 2026. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://oralarthistory.org/en/.
Gordon, Ray. “Charisma, Routinization Of”. In *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer. Malden: Blackwell, 2007.
Rhomberg, Kathrin. “Peter Kogler in Conversation with Kathrin Rhomberg”. Kogler.net, 2000. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.kogler.net/wordpress/2020/06/21/peter-kogler-in-conversation-with-kathrin-rhomberg-2/.
Rollig, Stella. “‘17th Century – 20th Century’ von Ed Ruscha”. mip.at. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/texte/123/.
Rollins, Tim. “Interview by Tim Rollins”. In *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, edited by Bill Bartman, 5–31. New York: Art Resources Transfer, Inc, 1993. https://www.felixgonzalez-torresfoundation.org/attachment/en/5b844b306aa72cea5f8b4567/DownloadableItem/639385f3fa829db6a90469fb.
Sixpackfilm.Com. “Actually, Everything Is Completely Different”. Accessed March 19, 2026. http://www.sixpackfilm.com/en/catalogue/1390/.
Skou Pedersen, Elisabeth, dir. *Joyce Carol Oates: As a Writer, I Put My Faith in People*. Produced by Christian Lund. With Simon Weyhe and Signe Boe Pedersen. Louisiana Channel, 2023. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/joyce-carol-oatesas-a-writer-i-put-my-faith-in-people.
Swindell, Tom, dir. *John Akomfrah – Why History Matters*. With Maria Kennedy. TateShots. Tate, 2015. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDJYyG7jKV0.
Tate, dir. *Marlene Dumas on Great Men*. TateShots. Tate, 2015. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTWHxDYBXNc.
Tate Report 07-08. Tate, 2007. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.tate.org.uk/documents/143/tate_report_2007-08.pdf.

Weh, Vitus H. “Museum in Progress”. mip.at, 1998. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.mip.at/en/texts/231/.
“Women Artists Oral History Project Fonds”. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.gallery.ca/library/ngc108.html.