

I met a man who looked sort of like me, dressed sort of like me too, and he handed me a pile of papers and asked me to read them here. The thing is... I'm only telling you this because I'm bad at preparing things, and right now I don't really like what I've got written down, but anyway, I have to get it over with. I only agreed to do something here because I heard that the seminar was called 'Painting Today'. And I thought, I can say something about that, because something's happening again now and some people are talking about a painting boom, and in Frankfurt there have been two exhibitions, one was called *Lieber Maler, male mir*...

And the other was called – I've forgotten what – but it was opposite the Kunstverein. I just can't stand that word: I am in fact a painter myself, or: I'm somebody who paints. And that's where the problem starts, with the word painting. I would really prefer that word not to exist. Prefer not to be faced here with the question of whether I am a painter or involved in painting in some way.

The thing is that painting... is such tiny subject, it doesn't really tell us what's actually happening out there. So I'm going to say a couple of things about the complications with that word. Everybody uses it, even people who think – who themselves actually know – that it means nothing, but there isn't any other word for it. I'm floundering a bit here. This whole field, painting – art too, in fact – but for the moment just painting, is such a wonderful little subject, such an exciting subject, but it has nothing to say, and everybody works with it and really beautiful things happen in it. But if they discuss it, say in a school, or if somebody who is learning something launches into some story, and they aren't clear about the words, then a lot of nonsense happens.

And 'Puberty in Painting,' as I've chosen to call the whole thing, not because I want to tell you or show you anything here that has anything to do with puberty, no, by puberty I just mean a few words in praise of puberty, as something which might just be a contradictory attitude, but is,

in fact, an attitude of strength, which many people then lose after puberty, or at least don't want to have any more. But the situation you find yourself in as an artist, could now be painting, which is just undefined and wholly contradictory in itself.

A short time ago there was a lecture by Diederich Diederichsen in the 'Verein mit Zulkunff,' the club in the Literaturhaus here in Cologne, and he was talking about taste, and talking about conspiracy fantasies. And it went something like this: if I stylise myself according to my own taste and then suddenly see it made official... That's badly expressed, but it's all I got out of that lecture, and I look forward to reading the text. And naturally, lecturing here about puberty in painting, I feel very envious of that text of Diederich's. Diederich's text of course had something to do with Pop culture. And painting only has something to do with art, and only with a very restricted sector of art. It's rather a dire subject. You can also look at it like this: is for example a music public better than an art public? Just in general terms, leaving aside what size it is. So whether it's interesting at all, what the reception is, et cetera.

Here I would like to propose three categories of human types, which I have learned from Oswald Wiener, that is to say I have learned much from these three concepts, I can tell you them now. The first is the personalist, this is a private expression of Wiener's, the other is a nihilist and the third is a dandy. And for Wiener the personalist is – to keep it simple – somebody who believes, the nihilist is somebody who believes nothing, or the personalist is somebody who believes something, and the nihilist is somebody who believes nothing, and between them somehow there's this peculiar dandy – I'm just introducing them here. We'll come back to them.

The whole shooting match has to do with different types of intelligence. The whole shooting match has to do with who likes whom.

And here I have picked up a note, something about French & Saunders. There would be a possibility there of actually doing something.

But to come back to what I just said. I have had to learn that there is no way round a term like painting. This is an area stiff with misconceptions. Very few people even try to describe anything clearly. Somebody who for me does is Merlin Carpenter, we'll come back to him later. A sentence by Merlin Carpenter is 'a painting needs a frame because it already

has one.' That too I can explain later. Almost everybody who works in this area fudges some of the time. Some of them do it consciously but with many it's unconscious, because there are things they simply don't know. And as for these sentences, I find them repugnant actually, a bit preachy and judgmental. I have to say.

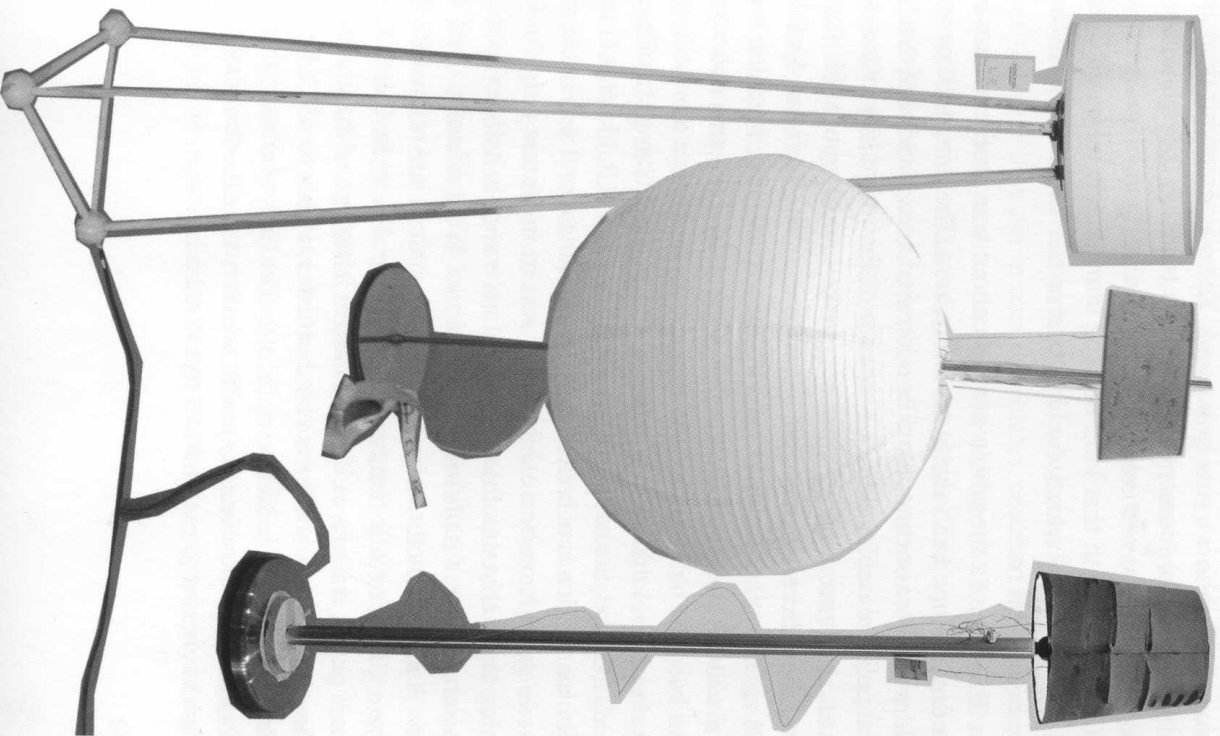
I seem to have lost the place here. It happens.

What I've got written here is, I can't decide in favour of any one of these standpoints or non-standpoints. But that's basically the general situation. In this situation, if I now know that it is all so sad, and you just have to believe me, but you can, if it's of any interest, question me later, ask if I could still find the situation I'm describing here interesting. I find however that the situation is not yet interesting at all. These days there are for example painting exhibitions, there used to be video exhibitions, and earlier there were exhibitions of installations, all these different designations. But we really don't need to talk about these designations, yet these are the designations people actually live with. And all the books that come out, they all talk about this kind of thing. And if anybody consults them with no preparation, and in fact manages to work through them from A to Z, they will just waste a lot of time reading their way through them. Considerable sacrifices will be made.

So painting is discussed in the arts sections of newspapers. Painting is curated – equally revolting. Either it really happens at this level, or perhaps there is a touch of cynicism involved. That would be wonderful.

The public fiercely urges them on. In these exhibitions they have real discussions. It's a fantastic thing. In Frankfurt they could sit discussing in the café opposite, or while going through the exhibition rooms. It was like a railway station. Hordes of people rolled up and stood in front of the pictures discussing them. This didn't happen in previous exhibitions, not like this. I don't however know what they were discussing. And this is where the touch of cynicism comes in. Because they were all playing the same game, and because revolutions never happen – that would be something else – and where there should be revolutions, this whole shambles goes on and on instead.

To come back to just another word on the dandy. A dandy is not a revolutionary, a dandy is someone who says, things can't go on the way they were



before. (We're talking a bit about the historical dandy in the Napoleonic era here.) But the way that the new men back then went about it with the guillotine just isn't feasible nowadays. And what I am proposing here is certainly one point of view. I have no idea where something new would lead today. So I would actually have grounds to drop all that stuff about art, or in this case about painting, but I don't know what else might be on offer. One thing that is on offer, for me at any rate, is Oswald Wiener. He is somebody who is trying to move on. There is something there that could be used. But the moment this business turns, to formulate it somewhat artistically, into say an exhibition, it immediately sinks into genre – and any art that deals with that kind of thing immediately raises questions about its actual niveau – which would place it on a level with Tomas Schmit. Now I'm being a bit harsh.

Then there's the whole business about war profiteers, just picked at random. I hope I can shove my oar in here. The thing is, they are seldom addressed here or can seldom be addressed here, because of the diplomatic and political implications, or because of their own lack of knowledge or sheer ignorance. And for those who make something out of it, it's fantastic. And then there are of course the victims in this business. And then there are various other levels of naïveté, apart from mine, for mine is of course naïve too. And somebody who knows that this is a game nobody wins and can keep the ball low and abstract a little, and juggle a bit with his system of rewards – and this is where I would place Richard Hamilton – somebody like that can of course get something out of it, like this Hamilton exhibition. Which is of course rather good in its way. I was at the preview of the Richard Hamilton exhibition, it was by invitation only. And the good thing about that was that the exhibition was only half-finished. A chance to actually see a half-finished exhibition! What a luxury. And there was this Hamilton picture with the Rietveld chair in it. And that Rietveld chair there, I find it really fantastic, everybody probably finds it fantastic. But I can't buy it; it looks as if it was bought from one of those fancy furniture shops. And a whole different kind of taste attaches to it. It's something that Hamilton always has in every picture. That's the fantastic thing. You never quite know how exactly you're meant to take it – this way, or that way? For that reason these pictures can stand a lot.

I don't know where this is leading either, for what I've got written here is, 'and now I can turn up the heat! This is where things really get going, as I move among all this old iron, these misunderstandings, missed themes and stupidities, other people's and my own – and now for something entirely different – at this point I would be in paradise, in the finest of self-service stores. I mean of course, the store where I can be in two stores at the same time, first in store 1 and second in store 2. In one I'll play the painter for you, on the left, depending on my mood, the bad, dull one who leaves a flat aftertaste, or the brilliant one who puts together colour combinations never seen before, and who draws lines that spring to life.

And to liven up these sad exhibitions, which, sadly, are known as painting exhibitions, they put in nice chocolates, which I like. And, just a little aside here, I don't retain a lawyer to speak for me, for there aren't going to be all that many slides, not too many slides come out of these exhibitions. But you could go through them with me one by one, and I would comment on them and give each one a mark. I'm very slow on the uptake myself, that's why I take so many detours, always in a relatively logical and thorough fashion. In the seventies via Polke and Art Deco I fell in with the Antonius Höckelmann system, or rather that's where I wanted to be. For me he was something like a saint and I was a pious boy and I still like him like that, but I have no respect for his system any more.

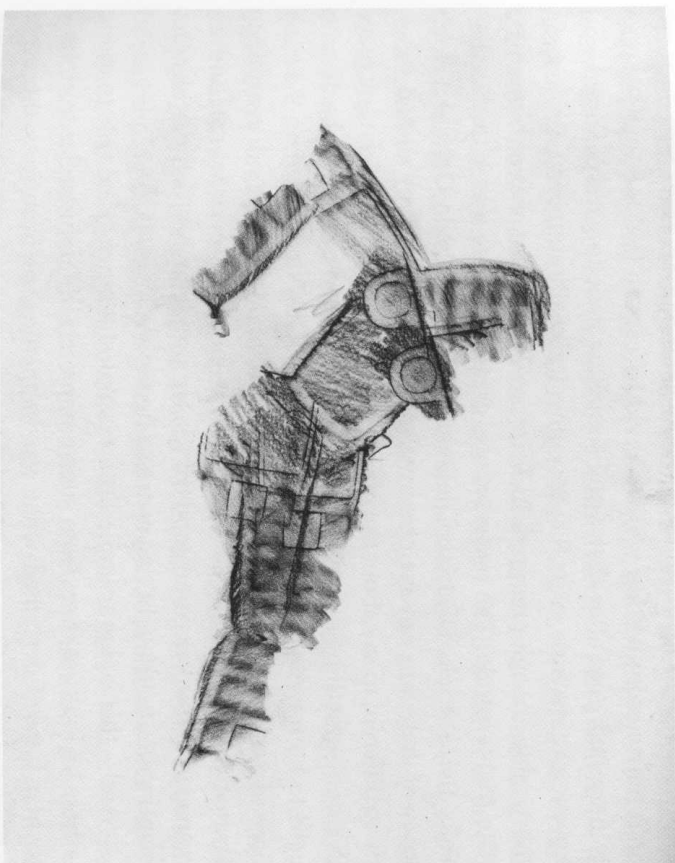
I'm just writing this as an illustration, for it's through him that I got into study and into comparing the whole system of painting or art, which the Galerie Michael Werner was marketing back then, and not through Richter, nor Polke, nor Broodthaers. I managed to work my way out of that, just as there comes a time when a left-hander notices that that's what he is, and that he can forget all that stuff about the right hand. This is getting to be about me, but it's an easy way to explain. For example in the Kirkeby exhibition that's now in the Museum Ludwig, I got really angry because these pictures or paintings have a certain immediate and in some places powerful effect, although I have discovered for myself that really they are, sort of, like impotent, because afterwards they insisted that they had this particular concept of painting. They are really tricky and at the same time full of the most exquisite things, but they're completely conser-



vative – modernistic would be the appropriate term of abuse – Günther Förg also belongs here, and there is even a little vestige of Kippenberger, but only because in many ways Kippenberger was not choosy. If something looked as if it could be fitted into his system, then he used it. But you have to be a little bit careful if you want to use something as a foundation to build on. With these ideas, for example Picabia could be smuggled into the area of Lüpertz and Baselitz, and Schwitters and all the beautiful things. There will never be a really beautiful Pop-look, something which Kirkeby somehow captured in these early pictures, though for me it soon becomes stuffy and elderly. And the obstacle that I could never get over was that this was elderly Pop – I can't read this any more. I could expand on it, but these remarks, for me, are enough to provide some idea of the various systems. And you can't build anything constructive if you have foundations like those. But that doesn't mean that the dullest ones can't produce the freshest ideas. And constructive misunderstanding would be something else again.

I suffered as an art student myself, not because of my teachers, but because I couldn't handle ideas, and for a time visiting the kitsch section of Woolworth's was my only means of getting rid of my gut pains. But they just came back the minute I stepped out of the Woolworth's store. At that time somebody might have offered me Susan Sontag's camp article and a little helpful information along with it. But they didn't unfortunately. That little happened later. This is the book in question, it's available in any bookshop and here in Germany it's called *Kunst und Antikunst*; the English title is *Against Interpretation*, which is a play on the expression 'against nature'; 'against the grain'; so *Against Interpretation*. In it there is this article, 'Notes on Camp'; it is constructed in paragraphs, and I only got to know it properly just recently from Oswald Wiener and Fritz Heubach.

Now I've come to a bit I've written down in colloquial language, 'The crap thing is that so many people have to find out something like that the earth is round for themselves.' So I think how nice it would have been if somebody had given me this book earlier, then I could have found out sooner why I didn't have belly-ache when I went into Woolworth's. And you have to find that kind of thing out for yourself, although you can buy it in the shop next door.



All these attempts and misunderstandings can eventually of course be distinctly entertaining for other people. And that too is camp, but it's not too good for the person involved.

I have already mentioned Richter and Polke and I'm not going to examine their systems, which are capable of more than Michael Werner's. But there was a lecture by Merlin Carpenter called 'Der Nichtzerbrochene Nicht-spiegel' (The Nonbroken Nonmirror) after the exhibition *Der Zerbrochene Spiegel* (*The Broken Mirror*). The text later appeared in a revised form in *Texte zur Kunst* in their yellow paint-edition, there was once upon a time a paint-edition which should be easy to find for anybody who is interested. And after that, I still somehow have to get this sorted, so I have to cheat a little, with Richter – now I'm really stuttering, I'm just not thoroughly enough prepared. In *Texte zur Kunst* there was a thing called 'Die Richterrunde'. The occasion was great fun, there was Jutta Koether, Felix Reidenbach, Diedrich Diederichsen, and Isabelle Graw – I don't know if there was anyone else involved. The thing is, they all had something different to say about the big Richter retrospective, which took place in Bonn something like 10 years ago. And it was Felix Reidenbach, who used to both write and do the drawings for 'Die Niedlichen' on the back page of *Spex*, and his articles are very peculiar. He tried to rub everything against the grain trying to find different meanings everywhere, and he managed to find out some good things. He simply found Richter's abstract paintings ... he thought they were so figurative.

And – this is just a simple little example I happen to be able to quote – there he looks at them from such completely different angles from how Richter himself described what was happening, or from how the other writers described them. And Merlin Carpenter in his article actually said that Richter himself had in fact said that what was written on the banner – yes, what actually was written on the banner? I can't exactly recall – anyway he says that it wasn't at all like that, and that Richter had long been a totally subjective and expressionist painter, but what he actually meant was more or less that he was a phillistine, petit bourgeois painter, at least that's what I think he meant. The trick Carpenter then used, he knows all these things, all about the Michael Werner program, because they had that stuff in the drawers, all these late works, like Picabia's late work, or Derain,

or for that matter Schwitters or Wols – and all the other fine things that are available. Merlin Carpenter made a plea in favor of the brushstroke, and of a particular brushstroke, and he claimed he was interested in painters who didn't necessarily interest him as artists. So he made that distinction for the first time. And, I can't remember that trick of his, but he could take the entire Michael Werner program and enjoy it, and he could pull it out of the Baseltz and Markus Lüpertz corner, for somehow a lease had been taken for them on the whole thing in this connection. And he could play that off again against Richter. And what a story that was, I really have to prepare myself, get on top of it again, for it must be about eight years ago that it happened. Nobody was interested in these things, none of the younger people. I was quite clued up about it though. And Merlin Carpenter knew, as an Englishman he was very familiar with that stuff, but otherwise I can't think of many people who were. Well, at the time he did this wonderful conjuring trick and demonstrated a really different combination. But it hasn't had any great effect, and of course it doesn't need to have at all.

Yes and what else is in there, there is Buchloh, people here probably know that, if not you do have to know about it; at the beginning of the eighties he actually pronounced the verdict, painting in itself was regressive, not that I have ever read it in black and white, but do I have my notes on how it struck me at the time. It was quite clear what the target was that he was aiming at. It was the beginning of the eighties, and the whole painting thing was starting up, right after the seventies. What he meant was the institution of painting, that's an important point, the institution of painting, and he very soon was applying that to everything. I'm going to bring in a Broodthaers quote here, namely that a work of art always reflects the system under which it was created – or something like that. Or the attacks against the museum by Buren, Asher, and – somewhat more ambiguously – by Broodthaers, there was a lot of that at the beginning of the seventies. Or simply Duchamp, who had invented the figure of M. Teste as an artist. M. Teste comes again soon on another slide, and I may be able to think of something to say about him. So he had a M. Teste or made a M. Teste and the looks from outside with external looks. Or Fritz Heubach who could write a sentence like the following, 'My character is the museum of my



parents' These, in a nutshell, are 1968 thoughts. And by the beginning of the eighties there really somehow wasn't much of that left, and that's the reason for this article by Buchloh, against painting per se, saying that painting was essentially, by the very fact of its existence as painting, by the fact that people were painting, that that was already regressive.

Buchloh had of course overlooked the fact that all this had already been said in the eighties in the Galerie Hertzler by Herold, Büttner, Oehlen, and Kippenberger. They were playing to a somewhat different tune and Buchloh overlooked them all, but I don't want to go into that here.

Then in the nineties something came along that must never be mentioned: context. That kind of art, that's Mark Dion, it's Andrea Fraser, it's Peter Fend, it's Christian Philipp Müller, it's Fareed Armaly and probably a few more. It was a kind of Neo-Conceptual Art. At any rate that was something else. They themselves constantly had the word 'context' on their lips, and they considered themselves to be political, and took the fact that things were exhibited in a gallery, or in a museum et cetera, they spoke out against the museum again. I can't really describe it very well here.

Yes, and then the nineties came along. Painting was somehow still not allowed. And then there was an article by Stefan Gerner. And then came the word that for me was liberating, and I still find it wonderful, and Stefan Gerner had already had a good deal to do with this kind of art, Context Art, and he was also a critic of it. He said that, considering painting, one could separate the institution from the production. What that means naturally is that one can do something like just take a paintbrush and dip it in paint, which is just what happens in painting, in painterly matters. That one might be able to reach that point.

Then there's another story that I just want to slip in here. In the catalogue *Von hier aus* there is an article by Heubach and Wiener, I don't have the title right here either. In it there was an attack on the book *Hunger nach Bildern (Hunger for Pictures)*. This is also an important source. Another map is T. J. Clark on Pollack, just a small volume, but it could be an example for a social history of art. And with all that I'm nicely out of the woods again. What I mean are possibilities for external views. And the big Feldmann exhibition at the moment also helped me a lot. Then, for example, there are also sexual looks, the way they work for me and maybe also



for others. Does it work in a similar way or in a different one. And then there was the fantastic effect when you came out of the Feldmann exhibition at the end and found yourself standing in front of the Carl Andre slabs, and you went past that prison section and found yourself in front of the Carl Andre sculpture. Then of course something happens, and the same thing happens with Dieter Roth, wonderful. In his magazine *Zeitschrift für Alles* in which everything was printed uncensored, he commented that a great will to art had collected there. That's naturally touching and hard. Then I could have come to a Kirkeby picture after all the wonderful photos in the Feldmann exhibition, it's a big come-down. If there is a greater pleasure I don't know it.

I've got another sentence written down here. What does J do to S's head? This has something to do with intelligence, but there are reversals. So some people can hear things that would paralyse others.

Then there was a thing at the end of the sixties/seventies in Cologne, it was called Tobies & Silex Gallery. For some reason it has completely disappeared and nobody knows about it any more, but they were sort of dealers in camp, who would hang Baseltz paintings alongside paintings by Gritzke. It was absolutely fantastic. And there were pinball machines beside them, and Art Deco stuff, and there were Indian mandalas, and they ran around in very odd costumes. Then in Paris, I was always there somehow, looking for some Art Deco, and I fetched up in a shop that sold remainders of American shoes from the fifties. And when they heard that I was from Cologne, they immediately started talking about Tobies & Silex, who bought up to their colossal stock. And after Art Deco, Tobies & Silex were for example the first to have Neo-Art Deco wallpaper. Then they opened cinemas in Cologne, which were papered with these Neo-Art Deco wallpapers. They were always bang up-to-date. The next thing was a toy shop on Ehrenstrasse where they sold specially selected bad toys, boxers who would actually hit you, Punch and Judy puppets, these were boxers and could punch really hard. Or skateboards appeared, at that time they had cases you could open up, and there was a tiny screen with a film that ran as a loop all through the night, and you could stand in front of it. Then there was a three-legged dog on a skateboard and a little skateboard boy who went under a bridge on a track and smashed face first into the stone

arch. He must have sustained grievous injuries. And you could see all that stuff there. It was really a great thing in Cologne.

Now I've got some really stupid things here – there is the picture of Alpha-Dog of course, Alpha-Dog behaviour, the dog with the strongest grip, that kind of thing exists in nature, the hierarchy of the trees, there are terrible things foresters tell about trees, trees in the forest that are incredibly thick and have giant crowns that stop other trees growing beside them, because they take away all the light.

Now here is something else, I have this from Oswald Wiener, it's a short story by Franz Kafka called *Josefine the Singer, or the Mouse People*, and when Oswald Wiener and Fritz Heubach held a one-year-long Dandy seminar in Düsseldorf three years ago, he wanted to stage *Josefine the Singer*, but in the end they didn't, because *Josefine the Singer* is an artist, and a dandy is not normally an artist, because an artist normally seeks the limelight. And then the only other issue was that Josefine, who is a singer, is a singer who sings, but actually she is only doing something that every person in the street does, and she doesn't do it very well, and there are certainly others who would do it better. Everybody knows that she doesn't do it too well, and she also knows it. But this is part of the contract. And if she were really to sing well, the whole thing would cease to work, people wouldn't sit down to listen to that kind of opera performance. She is actually quite malicious as I recall, because if she doesn't get the right applause she goes into a horrendous sulk and threatens not to do the coloratura, though I seem to remember that she doesn't leave it out in the end. It's a very beautiful story. In that connection ... now I seem to have lost the thread again, but there is another Oswald Wiener story, it was about what the effect of one of these dandies might be, it was about an auratic person, and what an auratic person might actually be. And Oswald Wiener's answer was, an auratic person was somebody who other people think knows something which would be important for them. But he won't tell them. And nobody knows why he won't tell them. And someone like that would have deliver feelings in short doses, and be able to make stupid things seem important.

*Die Krutsche im Schlamm* (*The Coach in the Mud*) was another book recommended at that seminar. It's about a subliminal erotic atmosphere

which is always present, though nothing ever happens. Yes, and the whole thing drags on in its fashion. – *The Coach in the Mud*, I could have put that in the title of my painting lecture here – though it has absolutely nothing to do with painting.

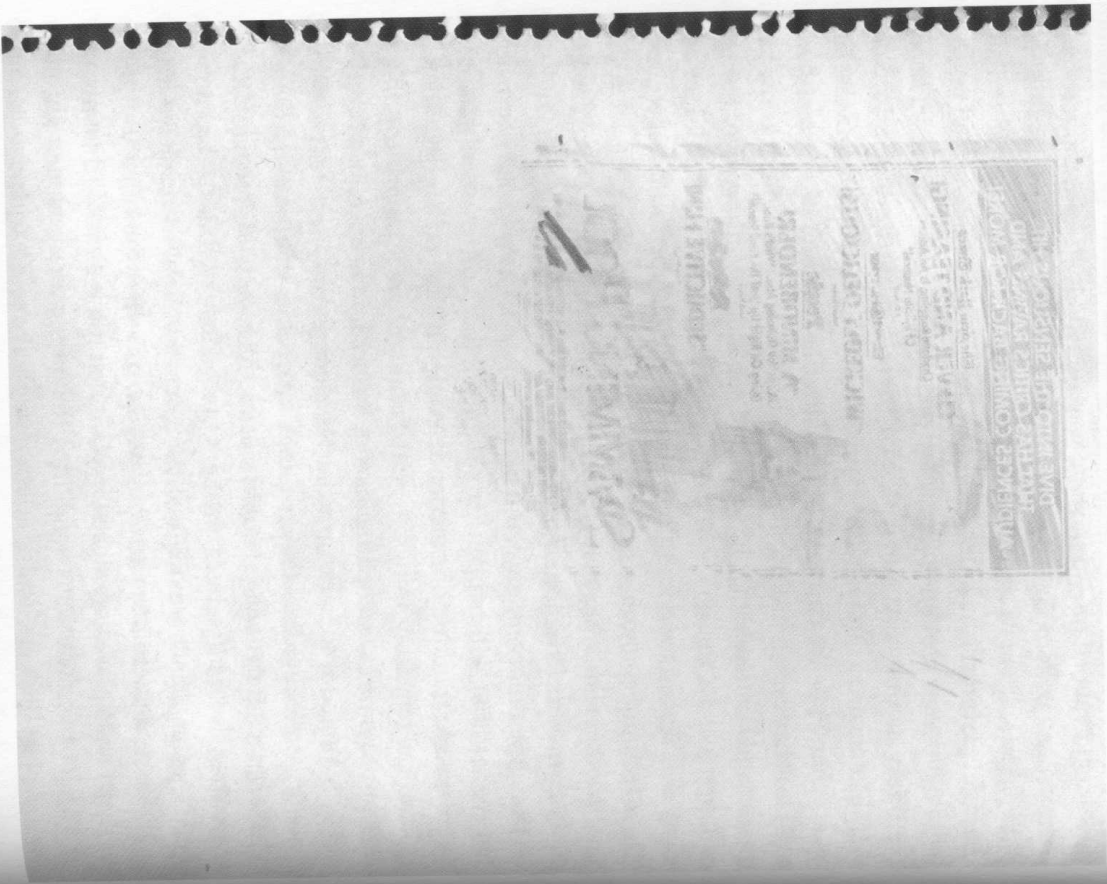
I think that's about all. Then there's another good book tip, Eugene Sue, *The Mysteries of Paris*. *The Count of Monte Christo* is a very good book, too. These are all things you can couple with painting. I can't explain in detail here, but these are fantastic tips for books. Anybody who takes a look at a book like that will understand – and I mean among the dandies, too, I could have delivered this lecture in three styles. What I mean by that is something like a double life. But all this can't just be about painting. But it shouldn't just be dropped either in my opinion. Now I'm even a teacher at an Art College, and I tell anybody who will listen, anyone who doesn't run away, I tell them all this kind of things, too. Because there are plenty of people who don't want to hear it, and they don't have to hear it. So this kind of thing is really all I ever tell people. I think painting is an excellent thing. Anyone can try it. I think it's really good. And if the situation is too badly screwed up, then you have to try tricks of some kind, otherwise dandies are the only solution that's left – this sounds funny but I could make it serious.

But I really don't have any more in my notes down here, so let's have the first two slides please.

Well, this is a picture that hangs in the Museum Ludwig and every time I stand in front of it, I go down on my knees. It's a picture that has everything that I think a beautiful picture should have. For me it's really something like the reinvention of painting, even though painting means nothing to me, as I have just been trying to explain – it is good painting in the classical sense. You only have to look at it. Nothing has been slapped on the way painters normally do, just picking up the brush daubing on the paint any old how, a dash of this here, a splash of that there; no this is well painted, it has been painted with great concentration, like an icon, or like painting on porcelain. It is wonderfully beautiful. – This is something beautiful for the art-historians, because they also once stood in the display window like this. – Not long ago in the Whitney Museum I really did go down on my knees in front of a picture like this. The dandies call this 'e me

sais quoi.' I got that from the lecture and this is a picture that just has that certain something for me. And I don't know why. It looks a bit like real painting, but somehow it seems just to have been rubbed off, and yet somehow it isn't rubbed off. So in some way somebody has got their act completely together here. But I can't see any way of carrying on from this point of departure. – That's all I have to say, these are simply for me the most beautiful pictures. It's just a treasure in the Museum Ludwig, and one can build a museum around it. These are pictures, this one is hanging here in Frankfurt at this very moment, and there is something else to come, Herkules Seghers. Andy Warhol knew all of this. And if you compare him with other Pop Art painters, he is miles ahead, none of the rest had a chance. They are all just normal easel-picture painters. I don't know how he managed that, whether he looked to see how the others were doing it, and then just did the same. – That was just an ad-lib, I can't think of anything else, it was supposed to be an example of repetition. Repetition is also a technique, another thing dandies like doing. And then later we'll have another slide from that Hollywood film, *Groundhog Day*. When the radio alarm wakes him, he notices that it's the same day again, and that keeps happening every day. And then he always knows, if he goes round this corner, that will happen, or round another corner, something else. Dandies have this kind of experience. And that's the reason why they are so keen on repeating things. – And Frankenstein, I only bring this up because at home I was looking for that Susan Sontag book and I couldn't find it, I wanted it to back up what I'm saying. And Frankenstein – that is about something like taking things apart and then putting them all together in a different way. People too, and ideas as well. You can do anything. There is Des Esseintes, the hero of *Against the Grain*, which I mentioned earlier. That's a book everybody really ought to read. It's a real dandy book, how to have artificial orgies, one after the other. But that's not really an explanation. I can't explain it at the moment. – I mentioned the Pop look earlier, that's something that really interests me right now, these are just drawers, and it doesn't only have to do with dandies; it is also the ... And we are back on the old rail that we tapped earlier – how I met Baselitz, even if that ... Or if that ... Or if that t... Victor Hugo – be back soon – is, or if that ... or Herkules Seghers, I'll just bring him in, although





he has nothing to do with anything here, I'll just bring him in for of his quality, that's what I'll do. Moreau belongs here. If you want to see their kind of thing you should go to the Moreau Museum in Paris, there's a whole house to be seen, and in it, for example, a big wardrobe.

