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1. I wish to thank the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, whose generous grant funded my research on Spur. I am also thankful to Nina Zimmer who granted me access to the Spur Archive in Berlin.

2. Untitled text written in the exhibition catalogue of *Gruppe Spur. Bilder*, van de Loo Gallery, 17 October–21 November 1959. An English translation is available in *Gruppe Spur* (Munich: Lenbachhaus, 2015), pp. 60–78, the quotation is on page 74.

3. ‘Wenn einem so die Zukunft ähnlich gleichgültig ist wie die Vergangenheit, also wenn man Zukunft und Vergangenheit einfach ignoriert und die Gegenwart lebt, dann wird die Welt nicht harmonischer, aber dafür selbstverständlicher und die Verantwortung geringer’, Heimrad Prem, *Tagebuchnotizen 1963–1967*, ed. Monika Prem (Munich: Hirmer, 2013), p. 185.

4. A copy of the telecast can be found in the archive of the Westdeutschen Rundfunk Köln (WDR); the text was subsequently entitled ‘Erklärung vor dem Fernseher’ and published in *Spur*, no. 4, January 1961, n.p. An English translation is available in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), p. 101. On this statement, see Roberto Ohrt, ‘Interview mit Helmut Sturm’, Christa Schübbe and Heike Jilg (eds), *Gruppe Spur, 1958–1965* (Düsseldorf: Galerie Christa Schübbe, 1991), p. 130.

5. ‘Finstere situationistische Erklärung’, Hans-Peter Zimmer’s diary, entry of 20 October 1960, Spur Archive, Berlin.

6. Lauren Graber, ‘Gruppe Spur and Gruppe Geflecht: Art and Dissent in West Germany’, 1957–1968 (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2012).

7. See, for example, Paul B. Jaskot, *The Nazi Perpetrator: Postwar German Art and the Politics of the Right* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Gerald Schröder, *Schmerzensmänner: Trauma und Therapie in der Westdeutschen und Österreichischen Kunst der 1960er Jahre* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2011); Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (eds), *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures* (New York: Abrams, 2009).

8. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker and Pia Dornacher (eds), *Gruppe Spur* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006).

9. See Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962–1978* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 45–6; Mia Ching Lee, *Art and*

A ‘détournement’: only those who possess and re-evaluate the old values are capable of creating new values.¹

The Spur group, October 1959²

If for someone the future is just as indifferent as the past, I mean when someone ignores the future and the past to live in the present, the world does not become more harmonious. Rather, it becomes more obvious and the responsibility smaller.

Heimrad Prem, 23 December 1964³

In October 1960, the Spur group made a statement for a television show celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Deutsche Künstlerbund. One of its members, Helmut Sturm, read out a manifesto that consisted of a passionate defence of the freedom of artists as opposed to the status quo enforced by the Church and the State (Fig. 1).⁴ What was baffling was not Sturm’s arguments, but rather his delivery: thundering exclamations followed by short pauses that mimicked Adolf Hitler’s speeches. The group viewed this performance as a ‘sinister situationist explanation’, as it drew upon the communicative strategy defined as *détournement* by the Situationist International (SI), whose German section was then represented by the Spur group.⁵

This article will only marginally touch upon the group’s connections to the SI, which are by now clear.⁶ Rather, it will focus on an understudied component of Spur’s production: the way in which the group, which was active between 1957 and 1965, employed *détournement* or from 1959 to 1961 in order to mediate its relationship with history, memory, and temporality. The memory of the Nazi past in West German art of the 1950s and 1960s has been widely investigated, but Spur’s case has been neglected.⁷ Possibly this was due to the fact that the most important medium within which the group’s attitude materialised was its magazine, which remained a rare collection piece until its recent republication.⁸ A significant part of the literature in English on Spur tends to emphasise its role as a forerunner of late 1960s protest and counterculture.⁹ This perspective is appropriate but ultimately reductive when it constitutes the sole standpoint from which Spur’s contribution to art and artistic activism in the 1950s and 1960s is viewed? What follows is an attempt to clarify the way in which the group exhumed the past in the final part of the Adenauer Era (1949–1963), articulating what will be interpreted as a politics of time.

Converging Temporalities

The name Spur, meaning ‘trace’ or ‘track,’ was chosen in January 1958 by a group of young Munich-based artists born in the early 1930s. The name embodied the desire to reconstruct a selective continuity with pre-Nazi art and leave a legacy, but it was not accompanied by a signed manifesto, as Spur was still a loose network at its inception. This initial grouping would slowly become a smaller and more unified group. From the autumn of 1959, Spur comprised three painters, Prem, Sturm, and Hans-Peter Zimmer, and the sculptor Lothar



Fig. 1. The Spur group on television, 1960, from left to right: Helmut Sturm, Heimrad Prem, Hans Peter Zimmer, Lothar Fischer, and Dieter Kunzelmann.

Fischer. Dieter Kunzelmann, a young rebel, poet and political agitator, was recognised as a member on an equal footing between October 1960 and late 1962.

In the summer of 1958, Sturm, Prem, and Zimmer became acquainted with the former COBRA artist and founding member of the SI, Asger Jorn, who was in Munich to mount an exhibition. Launched one year earlier, the SI was a Marxist organisation committed to the sublation (in the Hegelian sense of *aufheben*) of the avant-garde tradition, of 1950s anti-Stalinist Marxism and of the bohemian ethos of the early 1950s Parisian juvenile culture of the Left Bank. Jorn introduced the Spur group to the Situationists, and initially acted as a mentor to the Spur artists. In 1958–1959, Prem, Sturm, Hans-Peter Zimmer, and Fisher knew very little about the organisation and its principles, but their membership presented advantages for all parties involved. While Guy Debord, the SI's unofficial leader, was keen to extend the organisation's presence to the German-speaking world, Jorn wished to rely on a stronger nucleus of artists within the organisation. For their part, Spur members saw a relationship with the SI as a vital link which would both cement their relationship with Jorn and widen their acquaintances in the rest of Western Europe. Spur artists, with the exception of Fischer, officially joined the SI in the spring of 1959.

Under Jorn's guidance, Spur artists began to challenge the traditional boundaries of the aesthetic, a tradition in which they were imbued as former students of the Munich Akademie der Bildenden Künste. In the winter of 1958–1959, Spur members performed provocative actions, such as throwing their first manifesto from the tower of St. Peter's Church in Munich. Shortly thereafter, the group began the publication of a magazine, called *Spur*, which ran for seven issues between 1960 and 1961 and became one of the main outlets for the artists' provocations. Spur addressed its public through a defiant rhetoric of bravado and sarcasm; as Zimmer put it in a late 1958 entry in his diary, what concerned him the most was the connections between 'painting and the public sphere [*Öffentlichkeit*]'.¹⁰

Spur's early years confirm the late 1950s revival, among Western artists, of preoccupations and modes of intervention indebted to the early twentieth-

Revolution in West Germany: The Cultural Origins of 1968 (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2007); and Thomas Hecken, *Avantgarde und Terrorismus. Rhetorik der Intensität und Programme der Revolte von den Futuristen bis zur RAF* (Bielefeld: Transkript, 2006).

10. Zimmer's diary, entry of 25 January 1959, Spur Archive.

11. Renato Poggiali, *The Theory of the Avant-garde* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1968), p. 73.

12. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Die Aporien der Avantgarde' (1962), in *Einzelheiten II. Poesie und Politik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 50–80. On this text, see Richard Langston, *Visions of Violence: German Avant-garde after Fascism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), pp. 23–33.

13. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

14. Bibliography on this subject includes Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*, trans. Joel Golb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Peter Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland: die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Diktatur von 1945 bis heute* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001).

15. See Andreas Eichmüller, *Keine Generalamnestie: Die Strafverfolgung von NS-Verbrechen in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012).

16. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

century avant-gardes. This broad phenomenon has been the subject of insightful debates; however, these analyses occasionally fail to consider the local specificities of re-enacting avant-garde strategies. The analysis of Spur's engagement with time through *détournement* requires a brief examination of the hegemonic temporalities informing the later years of the Adenauer Era. The affinities between the temporality that was put forward by numerous avant-garde movements and that informing prevalent discourses in late 1950s West Germany will introduce Spur's alternative approach to time.

In his 1962 book *Theory of the Avant-garde*, Renato Poggiali acknowledged the paradoxical temporality of Futurism and several avant-garde movements. These not only claimed to be the foremost interpreters of their own time but they also professed to prefigure what was yet to occur, therefore placing their actions outside and ahead of the present.¹¹ Yet, Poggiali conceded, this ambivalent position infused avant-garde artists with the necessary positive impulse. In the same year as the publication of Poggiali's book, a German theorist and writer published an essay setting forth an opposing argument. In 'The Aporias of the Avant-garde', Hans Magnus Enzensberger observed that the notion of the avant-garde carried with it an unusable temporality.¹² The term, he noted, initially described the units located at the front of a military action, thus a spatial position, but when it entered the cultural-artistic context, its spatial implications became temporal ones. This shift was premised on the idea that human history follows predictable stages towards increasing progress, unfolding a master narrative that philosopher Karl Löwith had defined as the 'secularised version of eschatological time'.¹³ Enzensberger criticised the vanguardist cult of the 'work in progress', as its rhetoric misleadingly presupposed an accumulation of knowledge that would come to fruition in the near future. According to the writer, the avant-garde's temporality was dangerously akin to that of capitalism. While attempting to actualise the future, avant-garde movements reiterated the diachronia of the market in its incessant promotion of new commodities and needs. Ultimately, the avant-gardes advocated a temporal regime characterised by compulsive newness, which is the cipher of capitalism.

It is not surprising that a West German commentator such as Enzensberger highlighted the contentious temporality of the avant-garde in 1962. In 1950s West Germany, two prominent collective temporalities, the economic and the political, shared with the avant-garde's temporality the same thrust towards the future. The latter part of the Adenauer Era witnessed a *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle), a steady growth of the gross domestic product and an unprecedented rise in the standards of living. West Germany was quickly evolving into a consumption-oriented economy. This prosperity was heavily dependent on mass production, whose correlate, the extremely rapid obsolescence of goods, laid bare one of the most ruthless and accelerated versions of capitalist temporality. Meanwhile, the consumerist frenzy was accompanied by the downplaying of the Nazi past in the name of normalisation. The post-war years were not a time of generalised amnesia, but rather selective memory.¹⁴ There was a tendency, which was championed by the government through the 1950s amnesties, to identify the Nazi perpetrators with the twenty-four war criminals who were tried in Nuremberg in 1945–1946. This self-indulgence was as much political as it was pragmatic. The resurrection of the nation's identity also required the effort of former Nazi sympathisers, not least because the trials against former perpetrators raised complex legal issues.¹⁵ It was unclear whether it would be possible to prosecute acts committed while in the employ of recognised authorities. In addition, the opaque proceduralism governing the Nazi war machine made individual responsibility difficult to determine.¹⁶ Numerous civil servants

may have been directly involved in crimes, but the need to ensure the continued functioning of the state allowed the vast majority of employees to retain their positions. This is the context within which the idea emerged that, for West Germany, 1945 represented a total break with the dictatorship and a hopeful beginning encapsulated by the *Stunde Null* (zero hour) image. And yet the Nazi past was ubiquitous, even in the Federal Chancellery, where Hans Globke, a former high-profile jurist in the Nazi government, was one of Adenauer's closest aides.

On an economic and political level, the temporality of the *Wirtschaftswunder* and that postulating a *Stunde Null* tended to converge on an unfaltering faith in the present and a fascination with the future to the detriment of the recent past. The curatorial policies of the first two *documenta* exhibitions sanctioned the *Stunde Null* narrative, which was also important for the refashioning of the country's image in relation to its access to NATO and the European Economic Community.¹⁷ While the 1955 *documenta* presented a survey of the art banned under Hitler, the 1959 instalment addressed post-war art. The shows projected the existence of an absolute origin rooted in 1945, validating a periodisation that reinforced the Federal Republic's founding myths.

How did Spur position itself with regards to temporality in a situation in which the capitalist paradigm of innovation and the forward-looking gaze of the *Stunde Null* collapsed vanguardist futurity into a form of complicity with the *status quo*? Fischer, Prem, Sturm, and Zimmer were aware of the aporia inherent in these converging temporalities. On the one hand, Spur flouted the conservatism of the local establishment and the conventions reigning in the Munich Akademie der Bildenden Künste. To this end, they adopted the intimidating tone of avant-garde phraseology and complied with its temporality. In their first manifesto, which was written in November 1958, the Spur artists satirised their detractors as backward and adopted a messianic tone, defining themselves as 'painters of the future'.¹⁸ On the other hand, they were wary of this facile optimism. In issue 2 of their magazine, the Spur artists provided a revealing illustration of their doubts. The drawing (Fig. 2) presents the seamless path of progress. Although the character says, among other things, 'time works for us', the image complicates this self-confidence, suggesting both that the future (*Zukunft*) has not begun, and that the human being approaching it is naked and turned back towards the past. The work implies a problematic relationship with time, repudiating the economic miracle's correlation between novelty and amelioration. In a contemporary text, the Spur group explicitly rejected this equivalence:

Avant-gardism made into a matter of principle dissipates in conformism. [...] This reduces the avant-garde to being an instrument of a stupid, externalised movement of progress. A revolutionary artistic movement in our sense is aimed against the avant-gardism of today's society.¹⁹

In his diary, Prem reiterated this argument, tackling the latent affinities between the dominant discourses of the society with which the group grappled and the creed of 'progress' preached by many avant-garde artists:

The 'conformists' [...] admire whatever is progressive (and in this they are like the avant-gardists), they love affluence [...]. They pursue appearance. It is rare to find someone who is a hundred percent like that, but in each of us there is a bit of it. When taken together we are like that, and we want to be so.²⁰

The prognoses of Debord were pivotal in this sarcastic critique of 'avant-gardists'. According to him, the society of spectacle tended to co-opt vanguard

17. See Andrew S. Weiner, 'Memory under Reconstruction: Politics and Event in *Wirtschaftswunder West Germany*', *Grey Room*, no. 37, Autumn 2009, pp. 94–124. <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/grey/-/37>.

18. *Manifest*, an English translation is available in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), pp. 52–6, particularly p. 56.

19. Untitled text written in the exhibition catalogue of *Gruppe Spur. Bilder*, van de Loo Gallery, 17 October–21 November 1959. An English translation is available in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), p. 74. In Spur's parlance the term 'Constructivist' defines the West-Germany technocratic ideology, which the group saw as embodied by institutions such as the Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung or the Zero group.

20. 'Die Konformisten [...] bewundern alles Fortschrittliche (worin sie übrigens den Avantgardisten gleichen), sie lieben den Wohlstand [...] Sie jagen dem Schein nach. Vollendet gibt es sie selten, aber in jedem von uns steckt ein wenig davon. Und alle zusammen sind wir so und wollen auch so sein' (Prem, *Tagebuchnotizen*, undated entry (late 1963), pp. 70–1).

21. Mikkel, See 'La troisième conférence de l'I.S. à Munich', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 3, December 1959, pp. 19–22; 'La quatrième conférence de l'I.S. à Londres', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 5, December 1960, pp. 19–23; 'La cinquième conférence de l'I.S. à Göteborg', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 7, April 1962, pp. 25–31.

22. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, 'The Situationist International, Surrealism and the difficult Fusion of Art and Politics', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2004, p. 382.

23. 'Ein Ärgernis wird Konstruktiv: Der Dadaismus in unserer Zeit', *Magnum*, no. 22, February 1959, p. 6.

24. The original text was published as a leaflet. An English translation is available in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), pp. 106–110.

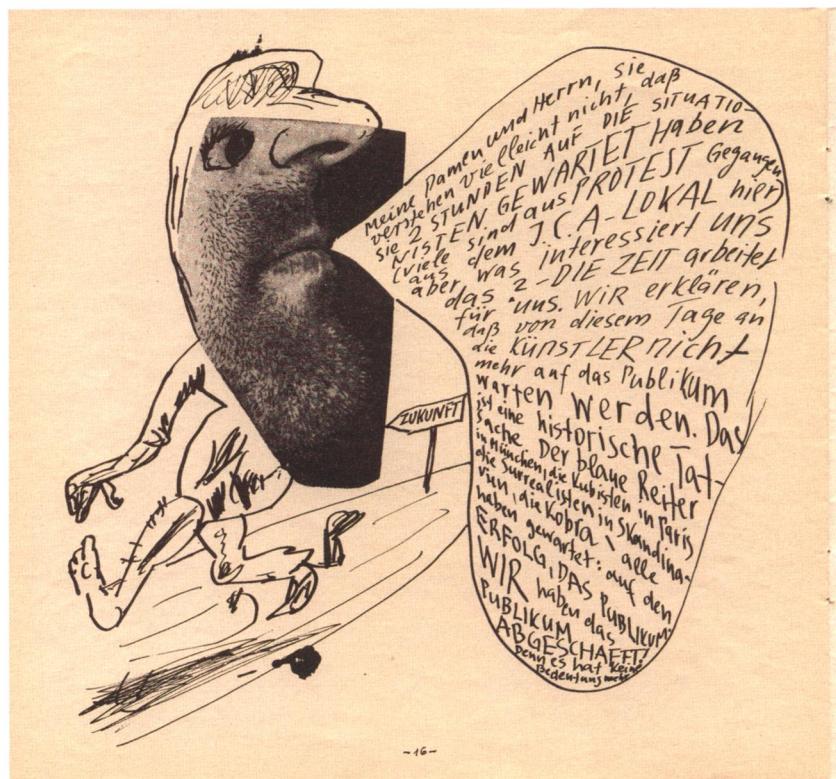


Fig. 2. Image included in *Spur*, 2, 1960, p. 16.

artists' social and political aspirations. If artists remained within the separate domain to which capitalism confined them, the future would only bring about their transformation into another market niche.²¹ Debord argued that art should be 'negated and preserved, in revolutionary theory and praxis'.²² At a time when one of the most prominent cultural magazines of the German-speaking world, *Magnum*, described the ironic triumph of Dada's 'aesthetic' in 1950s churches, banks, fashion and advertising, Debord's assessment seemed largely accurate.²³ Nonetheless, Spur artists had some reservations, as they operated in a fairly conservative cultural environment in which, unlike Paris, the disruptive power of artistic-minded provocations was not entirely eroded.

This accounts for the ambivalence of the manifesto Spur issued in January 1961, which was titled *Avant-garde is undesirable!*²⁴ On one level, the text declared the bankruptcy of the avant-garde, but, on another level, it posited a residual potential for the SI. In their magazine, Spur dramatised this tension through an image (Fig. 3) that altered Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *The Strife of Lent with Shrovetide*. The inscription, *oder umgekehrt* (or the other way round), expressed the group's misgivings about the relationship between society (*Gesellschaft*) and Spur, with the group caught in a trap, between the role of opponent to the smug display of abundance and that of 'fresh meat'; that is, the new goods and markets capitalism constantly seeks. Yet, a further aspect warrants a closer look: Spur's choice of Pieter Brueghel itself.

Forging Alternative Temporalities

In late 1958, Jorn was preparing his exhibition of *peintures détournées*, also called 'modifications', which were first shown at the Galerie Rive Gauche in May



Fig. 3. Image included in *Spur*, 6, 1961, n. p.

1959. From his first encounters with Spur members, Jorn had probably introduced them to one of the SI's critical tactics, *détournement*, meaning 'to hijack and re-function an already existing element, [by] de-familiarising the spectacle's estranged images in order to bring about unexpected re-appearances'.²⁵ In January 1959, the Spur group executed a hoax that was its first intentional variation of Situationist *détournement*. For the Munich exhibition *Extremisten-Realisten*, they announced that celebrated philosopher Max Bense, who had been a professor at the Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung, would deliver a speech at the opening. Bense, along with the Zero group, represented what Spur saw as the incarnation of the technocratic ideology of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, which was anathema to Jorn.²⁶ The renown of Bense attracted a large audience, but the philosopher did not appear. Spur explained that he had been held up, but had managed to send a recording of his talk. In truth, the tape, now lost, contained a mishmash of Bense's most convoluted sentences read out by Zimmer.²⁷ The press reported that the public was bewildered by the complexity of the talk, but applauded the absent speaker. In its parody of Bense, Spur developed a form of *détournement* that diverged from the SI's most common *détournements*, as it included the impersonation of a public figure's idiosyncratic parlance and verbal tics.

Spur utilised the practice of *détournement* on several occasions, aiming to shape a politics of time. In particular, in 1959–1961, the group used *détournement* to foreground a temporality that countered the narratives and approaches to time prevalent in 1950s West Germany. This included a critique of the extremely selective memory of the Adenauer Era. However, Spur did not

25. Frances Stracey, *Constructed Situations: A New History of the International Situationist* (London: Pluto Press, 2014), p. 7; see Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, 'Modes d'Emploi du Détournement', *Les livres nus*, no. 8, 1956, pp. 2–9.

26. In his diary, Zimmer wrote: 'Diese Leute Schaffen die Philosophie der Wirtschaftswunder' (These people create the philosophy of the *Wirtschaftswunder*), in Zimmer's diary, entry of 9 April 1959, Spur Archive; see also Nicola Pezolet, 'Bauhaus Ideas: Jorn, Max Bill, and Reconstruction Culture', *October*, no. 141, Summer 2012, pp. 86–110.

27. Zimmer, *Selbstgespräch. Bilder 1958–1984* (Munich: Karl & Faber, 1984), p. 15. For Bense's ideas, see Max Bense, *Aesthetica* (Baden-Baden: Agis-Verlag, 1965).

28. I derive this term from Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). For the concept of 'heterochrony', meaning the presence of 'many times at the same time', see Keith Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

29. Images from Grieshaber's protest are contained in the telecast *10 Jahre Deutscher Künstlerbund*, Cologne, 1960.

30. Werner Bergmann, 'Antisemitismus als Politische Erignis. Die Antisemitische Welle im Winter 1959–1960', in Bergmann and Rainer Erb (eds), *Antisemitismus in der Politischen Kultur nach 1945* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), pp. 253–275.

31. Quoted in Gruber, *Gruppe Spur and Gruppe Geflecht*, (2012), p. 137.

32. 'Declaration for Television', *Gruppe Spur* (2015), p. 56.

restrict its focus to the Nazi years; rather, it enlarged its perspective, delineating the *longue durée* of both German conservatism and dissent. Through its *détournements*, the group even questioned its own temporal identity, generating forms of disguise and dissimulation. The close examination of a performance, a text, and some collages will illuminate the way in which the group summoned up both the recent and remote past. The following analysis will articulate three interrelated themes: *détournements* focusing on the Nazi past, those concentrating on the notion of history, and *détournements* revolving around the identity of the group. The Freudian category of *Fehlleistung*, literally meaning 'faulty performance' but generally translated as 'Freudian slip', along with the concept of *détournement*, will guide the investigation through Spur's deconstruction of late 1950s 'chrononormativity'.²⁸

Spur's action mentioned at the opening of this article needs to be contextualised within another performance that was enacted by HAP Grieshaber, a left-wing artist and art professor at the Karlsruhe Art Academy, who had been banned from his profession from 1933 to 1945. The Munich Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art) was built by the Nazis and became one of the most prominent National Socialist museums. Following its reconstruction after the War, the nationalistic nuances of its original name were whitewashed and the museum was renamed Haus der Kunst (House of Art). At the opening of the Haus der Kunst exhibition organised by the Deutsche Künstlerbund in October 1960, Grieshaber distributed flyers and pasted up posters containing excerpts from Adolf Hitler's speech at the inauguration of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst. His protest stemmed from the fact that the Karlsruhe Art Academy's examining committee refused to review the work of two of his students, as it lacked any identifiable subject matter.²⁹ Grieshaber resigned from his position, outraged by the committee's blind observance of a statute dating from 1940.

Grieshaber's action took place a few months after a wave of anti-Semitic graffiti, which the Adenauer administration erroneously feared was a part of a defamatory campaign orchestrated in East Berlin.³⁰ In such a climate, Grieshaber was immediately arrested and accused of propagating Nazi ideas. This travesty of justice becomes even more glaring when one notes that at the exhibition opening the Bavarian Culture Minister, Theodor Maunz, delivered a speech announcing that, 'Art in Germany is again free, and thanks to ethical norms that are counted on in Western democracies, no "degenerate" artists would be summoned by the police. The freedom of culture is secured through the Constitution!'³¹ In 1964, it was revealed that Theodor Maunz had actively contributed to the formulation of the Racial Laws of 1938. Maunz was then forced to resign. Following his death in 1993, it was also proven that he maintained contacts with neo-Nazi groups throughout the post-war years.

Spur's intervention took place a few days after Grieshaber's action. Read by Sturm within the framework of a television report of the exhibition, the text indirectly targeted Maunz's speech, contending that the State and the Church repressed the freedom of artists, viewing them as 'degenerate, pathological and criminal'.³² Spur's performance can be interpreted as a *détournement*, insofar as Hitler's oratorical style served as an appeal to freedom. And yet, a praise of freedom uttered in a Hitlerian tone could but be disconcerting. The clash between the literal meaning of the text and Sturm's purposefully 'faulty' performance created a gap which can be elucidated using the Freudian concept of *Fehlleistung*, and particularly what Freud called *Verlesen*, meaning 'faulty reading'. In *Psychopathology of Every day Life* (1901), Freud argues that some slips are not accidental; they hide repressed impulses and traumatic memories.

Spur's impersonation, its 'faulty performance', was not a parody of Hitler himself, but rather of the general public's refusal to work through the Nazi years.³³ The spectre of Hitler, Spur suggested, still haunted the present time.

Freud is cited only once, in a footnote, in the first volume of Henri Lefebvre's *magnum opus*, *Critique of Everyday Life*.³⁴ This study, the first volume of which was published in 1947, was a major source of inspiration of Debord and the SI. Despite Freud's absence, it is possible to combine some Lefebvre's ideas about the role of everyday life and Freud's insights into unconscious drives concealed in the mundane aspects of the quotidian. Lefebvre sees everyday life as governed by the temporality of habit, which is shaped by the day-to-day greyness of Taylorist production. However, by virtue of a Marxist critique of everyday life and through creative practices including public art and popular festivals, Lefebvre deems it possible to subvert the stultifying routine of the capitalist every day, recovering the plenitude that will ultimately reintroduce human beings into the cosmic order. Similar in this way to Lefebvre's *vie quotidienne*, Freud's *Alltagsleben* is only apparently banal; in reality, it speaks to contrasting impulses informing even the most trivial acts and utterances. Everyday life, therefore, harbours a hidden curative potential, as it constitutes one of the most immediate accesses to the unconscious. Dissimilarities notwithstanding, both Freud and Lefebvre depict bourgeois everyday life as an arena where hegemonic temporalities can be abruptly disrupted. In the case of Lefebvre, this rupture can be performed during events that stage a different relationship with time, such as festivals.³⁵ For Freud, the mistakes made while reading or speaking should be understood as symptoms expressing the drives of the id, which does not recognise the passage of time.

While probably familiar with the notion of Freudian slips, it is unlikely that the Spur artists read excerpts of Lefebvre's book, as no German translation was available at the time. Yet, their conversations with SI members such as Galizio and Jorn would have touched upon Lefebvre's innovative discussion of the everyday life as a conceptual domain that 1950's mainstream Marxism left uncharted. The speculative juxtaposition of Freud's and Lefebvre's meditation on the everyday suggests that Spur's use of Freudian slips can be interpreted as a bid to undermine the unproblematic routines of the Adenauer Era, revealing the multi-faceted semantics and political dimension of the *Alltagsleben*.

Spur's performance on West-German television represented one of the early conflicts between the group and the Bavarian authorities. One year later, in November 1961, the situation came to a head. Copies of the sixth issue of the group's magazine were seized and the artists' houses searched. The allegations levelled against the group were pornography and blasphemy, as the magazine mocked the Virgin Mary and published collages hinting at masturbation and sexual intercourse.³⁶ Kunzemann, Prem, Sturm, and Zimmer were put on trial; Fischer was in Rome with a scholarship and did not take part in the sixth issue of the magazine. Ironically, the trial took place at the same time that the Haus der Kunst held the exhibition '*Entartete*' Kunst, which focused on the infamous exhibition that was inaugurated in Munich twenty-five years earlier.

The most sustained attempts to engage with the survival of Nazi ideology while simultaneously suggesting the subversive potential of history are contained in issues 4 and 6 of the Spur magazine, published in January and August 1961, respectively. Issue 4 was focused on the 'persecution of this artist'. Through a combination of collages, texts, and lithographs, Spur accused society of pushing artists to commit suicide, to become mad, or to suffer extreme hardship. The group listed Wols, Nicolas de Staël, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Antonin Artaud, and others as hapless victims of this persecution.

33. For a critique of West German memory-politics, see Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Meaning of Working through the Past', *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 295–306.

34. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life. Introduction*, vol. I, trans. John Moore (New York, London: Verso, 1991).

35. For Lefebvre's theory of 'Moments', see Henri Lefebvre, *La somme et le Reste* (New York, London: Le nef de Paris, 1959), pp. 233–8.

36. For the trial against Spur, see Untitled text written in the exhibition catalogue of *Gruppe Spur. Bilder*, van de Loo Gallery, 17 October–21 November 1959. An English translation is available in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), pp. 125–52.

37. 'Heute werden die Künstler mit unsichtbaren Nadeln, d.h. Argumenten, verfolgt, die ihnen auf der Straße, im Bett, im Wald, überall zuflüstern', *Spur*, no. 4, January 1960, n. p.

38. Diedrich Diederichsen, 'Persecution and Self-Persecution: The SPUR Group and Its Texts: The Neo-avant-garde in the Province of Postfascism', *Grey Room*, no. 26, Winter 2007, pp. 56–71.

39. See Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverley Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

40. 'Our Reply', tract reprinted in *Situationist Times*, 1, 1962, texts translated by Anja Büchele & Matthew Hyland in Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jakob Jakobsen (eds), *Cosmonauts of the Future. Texts from the Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere* (New York: Autonomedia, 2015), p. 54.

41. Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 146–61.

42. Gerhard Schoenberger, *The Yellow Star: The Persecution of the Jews in Europe, 1933–1945* (New York: Fordam University Press, 2004); Slobodian, *Foreign Front*, pp. 147–48.

The text claimed that artists underwent torture and experienced the horrors of the concentration camp. This was not mere paranoia. 'Today artists are persecuted with invisible needles, i.e., arguments whispered to them on the street, in bed, in the forest, everywhere.'³⁷

Diedrich Diederichsen analysed issue 4 using Spur's own terms, commenting on the tension between artists' non-specialised labour and the imperatives of 1950s society.³⁸ This analysis is correct, but underestimates Spur's proclivity for bluffing and the displacement of identities. Issue 4 dramatises the figure of the artist as a scapegoat, but the delirium of persecution adumbrates a challenge to 1950s society's 'inability to mourn' and a call to learn from what occurred during the Nazi years.³⁹ It is hard to believe that Spur members assimilated their predicament to that experienced by concentration camps inmates. Spur members repeatedly exposed the double-edged relationship between capitalist society and avant-garde art; posing as martyrs would have been contradictory. The comparison made by the group did not imply an identification with the victims of the Holocaust, as Diederichsen suggests. The crucial argument of the issue is that, if the Nazis found their interior enemy in the Jew, the leftist, the 'anti-social,' and the homosexual, 1950's Bavarian society found its interior enemy in the nonconformist artist, hailed as the incarnation of unproductive labour. Spur artists did not indulge in the comfortable role of innocent victims. Rather, they highlighted the persistent dynamics of exclusion and the obsessions of late 1950's Bavarian society. Conclusive evidence for this reading can be found in Spur's arguments during the trial, which began in 1962. The members of the group wrote a collective reply to the court, declaring their exasperation and casting Spur as a projection screen, stating that 'we also resolutely refuse to serve as a screen for the projections of all those unable to revolt for themselves, those who need objects in order to displace onto us the negativity latent in themselves'.⁴⁰

Spur's unsettling resurrection of memories can be associated with what Quinn Slobodian has defined as the 'activist memory' of the West German New Left.⁴¹ The New Left's political use of the Holocaust has often been criticised. Slobodian has challenged these accusations and illuminated how, in the late 1950s, young leftists developed a new approach to the policies of memory, one that was directed not only against the 'amnesia of the fathers', but also against the sanitised and elegiac ways in which the Holocaust was recalled. Couched in the rhetoric of the 'unfortunate recent past', the condemnation of Nazi crimes was perceived by some leftists as just another strategy to deflect attention from the massacres taking place in the present. By contrast, 'activist memory', which resulted in shocking photographic books such as *The Yellow Star* (first published in Germany in 1960), 'contained an injunction not only to remember but also to act [...] turning the impulse of the memory of the National Socialism to present injustices'.⁴²

Issue number 4 of Spur's magazine constitutes an early instance of 'activist memory'. This is substantiated by a collage located on the same page as the text about the persecution of artists. The work dredged up the memory of Nazi atrocities, but only to suggest that what Spur saw as a key drive and *forma mentis* in the advent of Nazism was still very much present (Fig. 4). In this image, Spur members incorporated the fragment of a photo of a concentration camp shortly after the liberation, in which the former guards of the camp carry carts filled with emaciated corpses. In the background, Spur drew grotesque humanoids, and pasted reproductions of naked human figures. On the men's armbands Spur artists wrote the word 'Konformist', establishing a parallel between the conservatism of 1950s Bavarian society and the mindset the group deemed central to Nazism.



Fig. 4. Image included in *Spur*, 4, 1961, n. p.

One of their sources was the reproduction of a woodcut featured in the 1503 English edition of *Le compost et calendrier des bergiers*, a devotional almanac (Fig. 5). This edition included the depiction of the seven deadly sins, and the image in Spur's collage pertains to envy.⁴³ The source used by Spur is unknown, making it impossible to deduce whether the group was aware of what kind of sinners the woodcut represented. If Spur was aware that they depicted the envious, this would suggest that, in the artists' view, Nazism stemmed not only from conformism but also from envy. Attributing Nazism to envy and conformism is extremely simplistic; however, the Spur group did not aim to offer an explanation of Nazism, but rather to indicate affinities between the silent majority of democratic Bavaria and that supporting Hitler twenty years earlier. Indeed, in the bottom left corner of the collage, Spur artists added an inscription that reads: 'What is happening here?' The group insinuated that the atrocities of the death camps remained such a vigorously repressed remembrance that some could barely recognise the subject of the photograph, for the picture represented it in all its brutality. Their work denounced the widespread unwillingness to recollect past events embedded in trauma, resulting in what Freud called *Erinnerungsfehler*. In West Germany, nobody had forgotten the Holocaust, but many preferred thinking that what Karl Jaspers called the *Schuldfrage* (the question of guilt) was largely resolved in Nuremberg in 1946.⁴⁴ It has been argued that the idea that Auschwitz was not attributable to sadists, but rather to ordinary conformist individuals, only emerged publicly during the Adolf Eichmann and Frankfurt-Auschwitz trials.⁴⁵ Issue 4 of Spur's magazine preceded these trials, and was created between

43. See Oskar Sommer (ed.), *The Kalender of Shepherds: the Edition of Paris 1503 in Photographic Facsimile [and] a Faithful Reprint of R. Pynson's Edition of London 1506* (London: Trübner, 1892).

44. Karls Jaspers, *The Question of Guilt* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

45. Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 134–40.

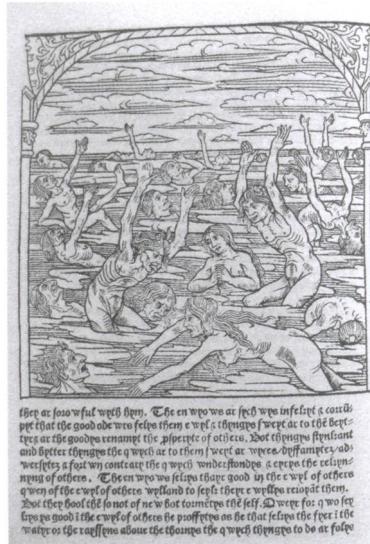


Fig. 5. Image taken from Oskar Sommer (ed.), *The Kalender of Shepherds: the Edition of Paris 1503 in Photographic Facsimile [and] a Faithful Reprint of R. Pynson's Edition of London 1506* (London, 1892).

October and December 1960. Spur's early, if inchoate, version of this argument confirms that Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) clarified and popularised ideas that were already informing the West German population.

Issue 4 of the magazine also led the reader to the questioning of his or her internalised *Erinnerungsfehler*. The group depicted what they saw as the local incarnation of conformism, the clichéd Bavarian drinker, before a pint of beer labelled with West German political parties and other institutions, including *documenta* (Fig. 6). Spur added both a Hitlerian moustache to the character and a question mark beside his head. This compelled the reader to ponder the identity of the man, whose insidious threat was further stressed by an ominous shadow and a demonic figure. Spur's contention that Nazis' philistinism still haunted the 1950s was reiterated a few months later, in issue 6 of the magazine. This was published in Sweden and made in Drakabygget, a community of artist and a farm owned by Nash, who was Jorn's brother and, like Jorn, a former partisan during the occupation of Denmark. The issue was released in Sweden because the allegedly dangerous content of issue 5 – with its mention of homosexuality – had come under the scrutiny of German authorities. This was by no means regarded as harmless. The Nazis' broadening of the Prussian law prohibiting sexual intercourse between men was maintained throughout the Adenauer Era until 1969. Issue 6 triggered criminal prosecution against Spur members and their initial conviction to four to five months' imprisonment. The issue was entitled 'Spur in exile', which alluded to the Swedish exile of German intellectuals during Nazism. Spur's 'exile' was even



Fig. 6. Image included in *Spur*, 4, 1961, n. p.

associated with nineteenth-century exiles through an 1844 poem by Heinrich Heine, *Nachtgedanken*, in which the poet, in exile in Paris, expressed his yearning for Germany.⁴⁶ This enabled Spur to suggest a genealogy between Prussian conservatism, the Nazi persecution of intellectuals, and the Munich establishment's widespread hostility towards maverick artists in the 1950s.

While confronting Bavarian society with the Nazi past and the *longue durée* of German conservatism was central for Spur, the group also connected its criticism with broader issues of temporality, history, and utopia. Gothic scripts were pivotal to this endeavour. Superficially, ‘Spur-Historie’ (Fig. 7) is the text in which the group chronicled its history until autumn of 1961, when the text was published.⁴⁷ For ‘Spur-Historie’, Spur adopted a type of Gothic script called *Tiemann-Gotisch*, which was devised in the mid-1920s and was inspired by Gothic manuscripts.⁴⁸ After their initial acceptance, in 1941 the Nazi authorities banned Gothic scripts because of their supposed Jewish origins. For those born in the 1930s, like the Spur members, this difficult-to-read typeface symbolised the past. The German youth of the late 1950s and 1960s perceived Gothic scripts as illustrative of the vestiges of medieval Germany, permanently destroyed by the War. Needless to say, the Adenauer administration did not resurrect Gothic scripts, instead utilising the modern scripts adopted by Western democracies.

'Spur-Historie' can be categorised as a *détournement* because its content resignifies the implications of its typeface. Unlike Spur's *détournement* of Hitler's speeches and Bense's intellectual jargon, this work is closer in spirit to some of Debord's *détournements*, particularly his full-length films, which often relied upon material culled from popular Hollywood films. These were charged with what Debord tended to see as an originally positive valence.⁴⁹ As argued by Jacques Rancière, the chief purposes of some of Debord's *détournement* emerge more clearly through a comparison with the notion of *Verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect).⁵⁰ Although its output may at times resemble that generated by Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, *détournement* does not pursue the goal of rupturing the identification of the audience with the hero in order to stimulate a critical reflection on social reality. In some of Debord's films, *détournement* is not so much about de-familiarising as it is about encouraging identification with the hero, but only once the hero is freed from the racist, nationalist, and conservative distortions with which he or she is imbued. In several Debord's films and comic strips for the SI's magazine, *détournement* looks to reveal both the legitimate aspirations of the masses, best exemplified by contemporary popular culture, and the way in which the masses' investment is recuperated by capitalist society to its own advantage. Spur's *détournement* of a gothic typeface functions in a similar fashion. Through its charming squiggles and anti-utilitarian ethos, *Tiemann-Gotisch* can be construed as signifying a romantic longing for a medieval plenitude before the putative fragmentation engendered by capitalism. But the Spur group's text had no nostalgic implications and did not proffer a compensatory re-enchantment of the world. 'Spur-Historie' stages the attempt to reclaim the quest for freedom and un-alienated work, immanent in the typeface, from the nationalist nuances within which it was often framed. The text did not foster escapist fantasies about *völkisch* revivals or a 'conservative revolution' as defined in Peter Osborne's *The Politics of Time*.⁵¹ Instead, it sought to unveil the ambitions of abundance and fulfilment beyond capitalism that informed some aspects of Romanticism.

Spur members conflated various strands of libertarian Marxism and anarchist individualism. Nonetheless, they defined themselves as 'revolutionary romantics' in the text they authored for their first group exhibition at the van

Spur-Distor

Fig. 7. 'Spur Historie' (detail), in *Spur-Buch*, 1962, n. p.

46. See *Spur*, no. 6, August 1961, n. p.

47. The text was first published in *Spur-Buch* (Munich, 1962), n. p. The English translation is available in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), pp. 118–24.

48. See Albert Kapr, *Fraktur: Form und Geschichte der Gebrochenen Schriften* (Mainz: Schmidt, 1993), p. 126.

49. Alexandre Trudel, 'Entre identification, appropriation et ironie. L'économie du détournement chez Guy Debord', in Natalie Dupont and Éric Tradel (eds), *'Tout peut servir'. Pratique et enjeux du détournement dans le discours littéraire des XVe et XXIe siècles* (Presse de l'Université du Québec : Québec, 2012), pp. 75–90.

50. Jacques Rancière, 'Quand nous étions sur le Shenandoah', *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 605, October 2005, pp. 92–3.

51. Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 164–5.

52. An English translation of the untitled text can be found in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), p. 60–78, particularly p. 73.

53. Andrei A. Zhdanov, *The Soviet Writers Congress 1934: Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), p. 22.

54. Henri Lefebvre, ‘Vers un romantisme révolutionnaire’, *La nouvelle revue française*, 1 October 1957, pp. 644–72, for a situationist critique of this text, see Guy Debord, ‘Thése sur la dévolution culturelle’, *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 1, June 1958, p. 21.

55. Prem, entries of 20 May 1965 and 8 August 1965, *Tagebuchnotizen*, p. 224 and p. 257; Zimmer’s diary, entry of 29 July 1959, Spur Archive.

56. Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. Michael Bullock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

de Loo Gallery in 1959.⁵² This designation shared nothing with Andrei A. Zhdanov’s 1934 advocacy of a ‘revolutionary romanticism’.⁵³ Instead, it was derived from Lefebvre. Published shortly after Nikita Khrushchev’s Secret Speech, Lefebvre’s article ‘Towards a Revolutionary Romanticism’ was known to the Spur artists.⁵⁴ Lefebvre traced a strand of Romanticism, represented by the 1820’s and 1830’s works of Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, and Alfred de Musset, among others, in which the apparent acceptance of bourgeois society harboured the aspiration to move beyond it. In his view, this tradition not only stood in stark contrast to the reactionary ethos of German Romantic writers, such as Novalis, but it also offered critical tools to undermine the ‘neo-Romanticism’ of 1950s existentialism. Despite its crudeness, Lefebvre’s reframing of a trend of Romanticism captured Spur’s imagination, as it was attuned to the group’s desire to disconnect from the 1950s mainstream cultural references in order to reconnect with other lineages.

‘Spur-Historie’s tension between subject matter and form calls forth the slips made while writing, which are defined as *Verschreiben* in Freud’s theories. Spur members purposefully selected a ‘faulty’, equivocal typeface in order to exhume the emancipatory potential of elements of German history and, simultaneously, to enact their positive persistence in the Adenauer Era. But a Gothic typeface (*Fraktur* in German) could be used as a mnemonic device to resuscitate antithetical strands of thought. Spur appropriated *Fraktur* to evoke the Nazi past in a 1959 flyer issued after the SI’s conference in Munich. Some of the flyer’s text (Fig. 8) was written in a Gothic script; this included the title, *Ein kultureller Putsch* (A cultural putsch), which referenced Hitler’s Munich Putsch of 1923. This choice was a testament to the group’s accurate use of typefaces; for the flyer Spur did not select the seraphic *Tiemann-Gotisch*, but rather the *Weiß-Gotisch*, the much colder script created in 1936, which acted as a reminder of the support Hitler had enjoyed in Munich thirty-six years earlier. It is however necessary to return to ‘Spur-Historie’, as the writing did not only archive a trauma and hidden potential, but it also defied the notion of history inherited from the nineteenth century.

‘Spur-Historie’ outlines the history of the group, but does so by merging important events with anecdotes, true facts and fictional stories, reasonable causal relations, and deliberately absurd statements. The text is not organised chronologically and avoids any sense of evolution often impinging upon biographical narratives. At the end of the text, a sentence provides an opportunity to understand its rationale: ‘In this story [Historie], we could not mention all of the people, as only the future will show which ones were important in the past’. This seems a rational assumption, but it is placed as the final word of a text that brings this assumption to its logical, if absurd, conclusion. If only the future will determine the conspicuous aspects of the present, why should one provide a hierarchy in a biography and set basic conditions to make sense of it? Spur pretends to surrender to the chaos of lived experience, leaving the judgment of its activity to the future. This apparently nihilistic, but fundamentally sardonic, approach to history should be placed against the historical thought of one of the most prominent public intellectuals of the Adenauer Era, philosopher Karl Jaspers. It is known that Spur members read some of his books. Prem criticised Jaspers in his diary, and in a 1959 diary entry Zimmer mentioned that he was reading Jaspers.⁵⁵ In particular, ‘Spur-Historie’ can be related to Jaspers’s *The Origin and Goal of History*.⁵⁶

Jaspers’s view of history was deeply indebted to the idealist tradition of *Geschichtsphilosophie* (the philosophy of history). Published in 1949, *The Origin and Goal of History* tried to make sense of what Jaspers called *Weltgeschichte*

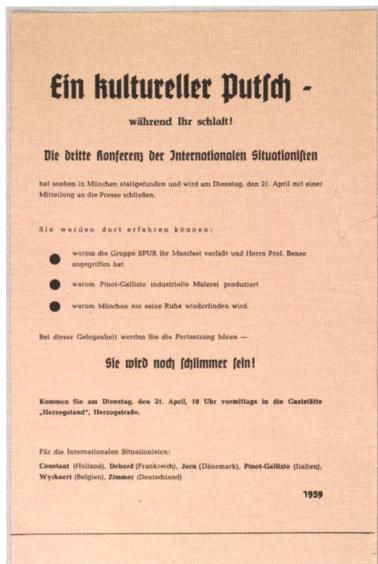


Fig. 8. The Situationist International, flyer issued on the occasion of the Third Conference of the Situationist International, 1959.

(world history). The philosopher saw history as a complex but meaningful path, whose salient tendencies and setbacks, but ultimately growing fulfilment, can be understood by a learned individual, thus positing for himself a transcendental position outside of history. With its disintegration of linear narrative, 'Spur-Historie' mocks this reassuring and highly selective account postulating immanent progress in history. The group reiterated its satire in its magazine, sketching a derisory history of human culture (Fig. 9). The drawing traced the first stages ('Magic', 'Myth', and 'Religion'), then its 'transitory phase', symbolised by the odd pairing of Bense and Marilyn Monroe, and finally its supreme accomplishment: 'Situationist culture'. The arbitrariness of Jaspers's and similar genealogies, not to mention their underlying consonance with theology, was ironically turned into the triumph of Spur's peers.

The term *Historie* can be understood as an old-fashioned synonym of *Geschichte*, which is the most common German word for 'History'. The title of the draft of 'Spur-Historie' reads *Spur-Geschichte*, but *Geschichte* is struck through with a line, which leads to the hypothesis that the final choice of the word *Historie* was the result of careful consideration.⁵⁷ It is possible to speculate about this erasure. In the 1970s, historian Reinard Koselleck demonstrated that the current concept of *Geschichte* is recent. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, Koselleck argued, the term *Historie* specifically indicated a written account of past events. By contrast, past events in themselves were defined as *Geschichte*, which was used as a plural noun. However, with the advent of the idea that history was not only a series of past events, but rather a metaphysical entity linking the past to the future and inducing progress, the word *Geschichte* supplanted the word *Historie* and came to signify both the chronicle of past

57. The draft is contained in the Lothar Fischer Archive.

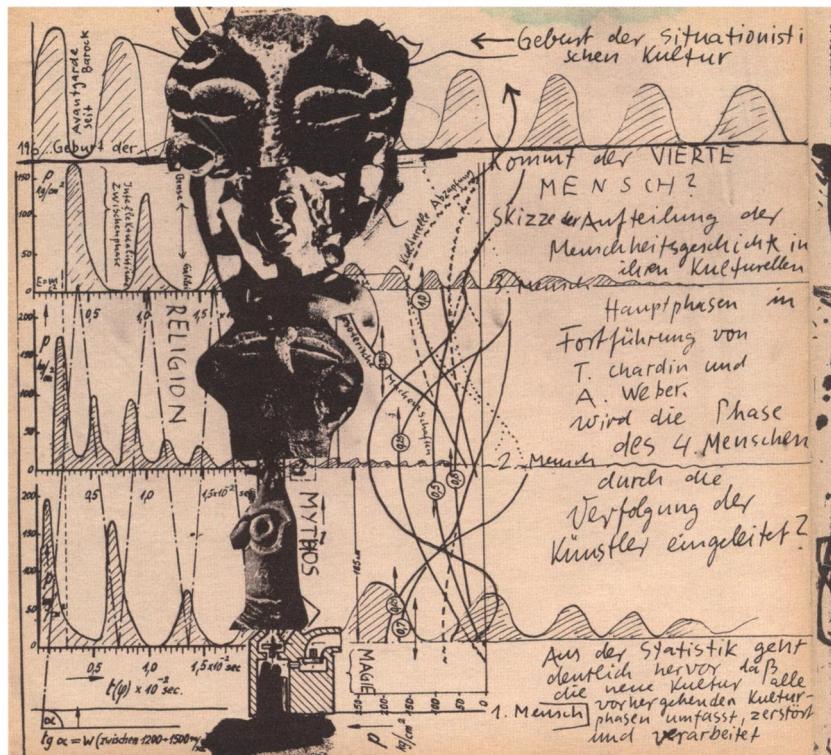


Fig. 9. Image included in *Spur*, 4, 1961, n. p.

58. Prem, entry of 24 June 1964, *Tagebuchnotizen*, p. 124.

59. Frances Stracey, 'Surviving History. A Situationist Archive', *Art History*, vol. 26, no. 1, February 2003, pp. 56–77; see also Tom McDonough, 'Tours de Babel et chantiers de construction. Guy Debord et l'architecture', in Emmanuel Guy and Laurence Le Bras (eds), *Guy Debord. Un art de la guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013), pp. 140–47.

events and the events themselves. Spur's text undermined this tradition. Although its members had no clear awareness of the distinct nuances conveyed by the two concepts, it is nonetheless noteworthy that they opted for the term that best suggested an idea of history antithetical to Jaspers's *Geschichte*. The perception of *Geschichte* as an ambiguous word was explicitly expressed by Prem. In his diary, the painter played on the double meaning of the word and exposed the hypostatisation it can generate:

Each story [Geschichte] already occurred and was already told (see the evening papers). Alternatively, you tell a story [Geschichte] and let people feel time and nature, telling a story [Geschichte] which is the same for everyone and conceals what is just, as well as what is unjust, in their womb [...]. Stories [Geschichten] are only a pretext to tell, it depends on how you do it. But this story [Geschichte] is not history [Geschichte]. It occurred [geschah] or still occurs [geschieht] and is written down to show that a human being fuels the story [Geschichte] and becomes the fuel of history [Geschichte]. Wherever something occurs [geschieht], there is history [Geschichte]. Can you name a place where nothing occurs [geschieht]?⁵⁸

Spur addressed the prevalent collective temporalities and the persistence of the Nazi ideology in 1950s society. However, it did not locate itself outside of time. As 'Spur-Historie' suggests, the group also focused on its own temporality. This is apparent in a drawing made by Zimmer and published in the group's magazine (Fig. 10). This work combined several ways of depicting history. The trajectory of the spiral expands as it approaches the present, hinting at the idea of progress. The circle evokes both a temporality anchored in the cycles of nature, and the cyclical, if deceptive, newness imposed by the capitalist accumulation, as maintained by Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades Project*, and Enzensberger after him. However, Spur's spiral has a distinctive property: it shows its previous states. Thus, Spur's spiral curve provides a visual rendering of stored time, advocating the need to historicise and memorialise. In the spiral, 'Beckmann' and the *Brücke* (in the top right corner) participate in contemporary history just as much as the Iron Curtain (on the left side of the image), 'Dada,' 'Pollock', *Barock*, and *Gotik*. While discarding the idea of anachronism, Spur shows that deferrals, replications and survivals punctuate the history of images, to the point that some artistic movements have not come to pass and still live on through Spur.

The strategies of memorialisation put forward by both 'Spur Historie' and Zimmer's spiral are analogous to those of *Mémoires*, as interpreted by Frances Stracey.⁵⁹ Assembled by Jorn and Debord in 1957, *Mémoires* is a book about the functioning of remembrance that revolves around the bohemian lives of Debord and his peers in the early 1950s. Despite its theme, no traces of complacency or self-heroisation are evident in the publication. As Stracey has shown, the 'collaged mementos' of *Mémoires* push the 'the reader [...] to stray, to *dérive*, even to get lost, as in the end, the assurance of narrative closure is denied'.⁶⁰ Similar to Spur's amalgamation of different temporal layers, *Mémoires* guides the reader through a story that remains a chaotic and open-ended event necessitating reactivation and appropriation, rather than veneration. According to Stracey, Debord's and Jorn's joint work materialises a 'liquid' model of history and archive that eludes the spectacularisation of memories, while simultaneously ensuring historical survival.

In issue 4 of the magazine, Spur further explored the issue of self-memorialisation and the threats to which it is exposed. The group adopted *détournement* to depict its temporal identity, but it did so by parodying the effusive rhetoric of family albums and postcards. In Spur's work, the latter often

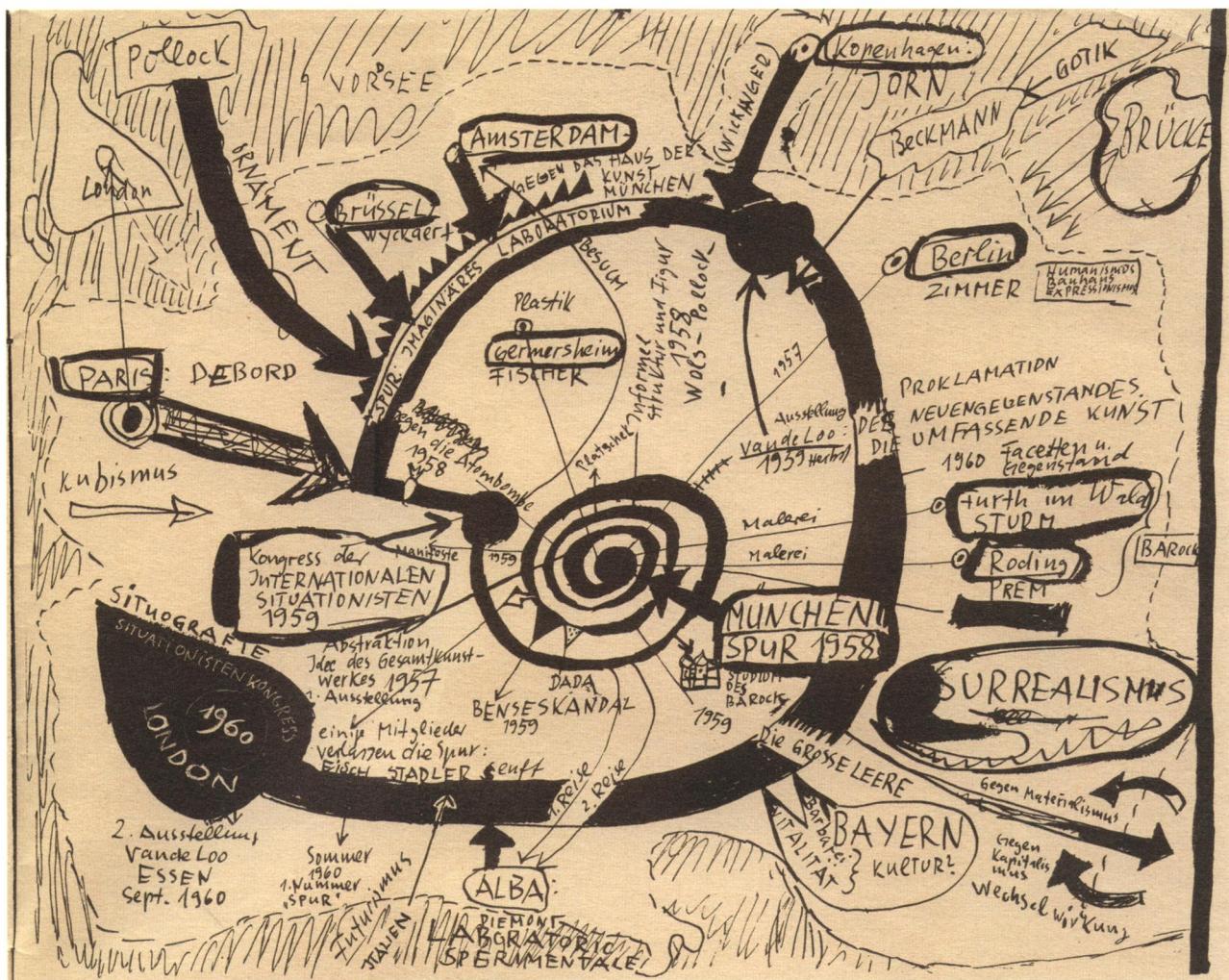


Fig. 10. Image included in Spur, 2, 1960, p. 23.

encodes the standardisation of personal memories and the commodification of the impulse to share them.⁶¹ The artists staged a fictional *Rückblick* ('a look backwards') (Fig. 11) in which they feigned the group's and the SI's existence in 1901. This recourse to a ludic masquerade and antics was related to their inclination for carnivalesque absurdity, as well as to the suspension of cyclic and evolutionary temporalities intrinsic in the tradition of the carnival. But the quaint photographs, typefaces, and turns of phrase were also self-ironic, and indirectly poked fun at the Spur members' self-fashioning as 'painters of the future'. The Spur group cast doubt on the accepted boundaries of chronology and rational explanations to suggest that, just as some art trends of the past experience an afterlife in the work of Spur, something of Spur and the SI already suffused the dawn of the century. Similar in spirit to Spur's *Rückblick* is the *détournement* of a postcard made by Kunzelmann. The young activist nicknamed the alchemist portrayed in an eighteenth-century print (Fig. 12) 'Kunzelmann' in order to underscore his resemblance with the figure and ridicule his own witty charlatanism.⁶²

60. Stracey, 'Surviving History', p. 62.

61. It is not surprising that Spur, and notably Zimmer, made ingenious use of the practice of *détournement* to alter hundreds of postcards; see Jacopo Galimberti (ed.), *Les cartes postales d'Hans Peter Zimmer / Die postkarten von Hans Peter Zimmer* (forthcoming).

62. The original source is a 1716 caricature made by L. van Sasse and engraved by Wilhelm Koning, which was entitled *Alchemy: The Marquis of Nature's Power in his Laboratory Dress*.



Fig. 11. Image included in *Spur*, 2, 1960, n. p.

Spur not only addressed the *longue durée* of German conservatism but it also reconnected its history with ancient German traditions of insubordination. In the magazine, Spur posited for artists a political agency that resisted subservience to any authority from right-wing to Marxist. In their magazine they wrote: 'artists fight for the liberation of work in the present, while Marxists have left this to the fog of the future, like Luther with the peasants'.⁶³ While Marxists were likened to Luther, artists were assimilated with the followers of Thomas Müntzer. The group contended that the East German Communist Party and its West German counterpart, the KPD, which was outlawed in 1956, professed just another creed of the same religion of progress and work informing the so-called 'free world'. The objection was that Marxists did not hesitate to crush dissenters, just as Luther had advocated when quelling the revolt of radical peasants. For Spur, this was most likely a rueful reference to the repressions of the 1953 uprising in East Berlin, the 1956 protests in Poznan, and the Hungarian Revolution of the same year.

Enacting Time

Why was Spur so allusive when it exposed the survival of the Nazi past in the Adenauer Era? Despite few notable exceptions, including HAP Grieshaber and Wolf Vostell, West German artists rarely focused on the Nazi legacy in the late 1950s.⁶⁴ Unlike artists such as Gerard Richter, Joseph Beuys, Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, and Markus Lüpertz, who engaged with the Nazi past in the latter part of the 1960s, Spur was not active in a context that was receptive to artists' coming to terms with the events that occurred from 1933 to 1945.



Fig. 12. Dieter Kunzlemann, postcard to Hans Peter Zimmer, 1961 or 1962.

Although the Adenauer Era experienced waves of anti-Semitism, only Eichmann's trial and the trials against the Auschwitz guards and officials would place the post-war policy of pardon in the public eye. Had Spur reused photographs of Nazi officials and Nazi symbols, it is likely that its work would have been misinterpreted as an apology for Nazism, in a way similar to Grieshaber. In the absence of the political framework that would emerge in the mid-1960s, Spur could only exhume the past through resourceful impersonations, carnival-like disguises and oblique allusions.

What characterised Spur was not only an early form of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) but also a desire to delve into a remote past that the group perceived to be a reservoir of emancipatory traditions. Zimmer consciously wanted Spur to align with what he defined as a 'bizarre line', which appeared to him as much stylistic as it was cultural ethical.⁶⁵ The group's magazine was filled with quotations from this eccentric, ludicrous tradition, in a way that recalled the extremely heterogeneous sources of the *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach*. Spur included Brueghel prints, an engraving by Arcimboldo's workshop (Fig. 13), early modern woodcuts, and images taken from medieval bestiaries. However, this 'bizarre line' departed from the primitivism of the *Almanach*. It encoded a politics of time breaking with the temporality immanent to the *Stunde Null* myth, the ideology of endless economic growth, and the rhetoric of numerous avant-garde movements in the 1910s and 1920s. Thus, Spur pursued the disruptive mission inherent to the avant-gardes, but it did so by negating its futurity, looking instead to the recent and remote past. In *Chronophobia*, Pamela M. Lee has illuminated the 'bad infinity' of 1960's art and its millennialism.⁶⁶

65. Zimmer's diary mentions a *skurrile Linie* including 'Bosch, Arcimboldo, Altdorfer, Daumier, Blake, Ensor (etc.)', entry of 1 May 1960, Spur Archive.

66. Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA, London: The MIT Press, 2004).



Fig. 13. Image included in *Spur*, 4, 1961, n. p.

The analysis of the *détournements* Spur produced between 1959 and 1961 yields different results. Rather than staging what Lee calls the ‘chronophobia’ of 1960’s art, the group instantiated what scholars and artists have begun to call a ‘chronopolitics’.⁶⁷

Despite its lampooning of the Munich establishment, Spur artists never assumed either an external or a didactic position. When its members impersonated Hitler, when they used a nostalgic script to chronicle the group’s history, when they revived a Nazi typeface to publicise the SI conference, and when they shaped a derisory philosophy of history culminating with ‘Situationist culture’, Spur enacted, rather than represented, the dialectic relationship between memory and oblivion. If they accused the guards of a concentration camp of ‘conformism’ they also admitted, as did Prem, that no one was entirely immune to the need for conformism. This self-criticism, often turning into self-irony, prevented them from upholding a pedagogic role. Confirming its vanguardist vocation, the group identified itself with its time. This is perhaps the deeper meaning of the lapidary answer given by the group to a question concerning their relationship with time, ‘Spur is not with time, it is not against time, it is not a schoolbook, SPUR MAKES TIME, SPUR IS TIME’.⁶⁸

67. See Renate Lorez (ed), *Not Now! Now! Chronopolitics, Art & Research* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).

68. Emphasis in the original, in ‘Interview! Caspari-Spur’, an English translation of this untitled leaflet can be found in *Gruppe Spur* (2015), pp. 92–4, particularly p. 94.