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„The Gig Poster.
Contemporary Poster Art in the 21st Century – The
Visualization of Musical Processes.“

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I. Introduction.

In 1939, eighty years ago, Clement Greenberg wrote his famous essay “*Avant-Garde and Kitsch*”, which does not seem to have lost any of its relevance considering the versatility in the contemporary production of art. Rising prosperity in the Western world, linked with the omnipresence of communication techniques such as the Internet and social networks, have led to new and easy ways for self-presentation and an overflow of art that would have been considered by Greenberg as kitsch - art that only consists out of “*effect*” and no “*cause*”, which is self-explanatory and does not urge reflection.¹ This drift can be observed in nearly every artistic practice, fueled by trends and hypes that spread at a breathtaking speed all across the connected world and complicate the differentiation between art that relies only on effect or also on cause.

This Master Thesis tries to contextualize this problematic based on an analysis of a certain type of poster called “gig poster”. Not only does the gig poster offer an important insight in the production of art in the 21st century, but also clarifies the newest developments of the poster as a medium. Since the modernization of printing techniques in the 20th century, posters have become a crucial part of our everyday life. Their functions, however, appear to be diverse. They were once simple advertisements for goods, companies, or festivities, or used for many other purposes, for example as an information medium for a broader public (this was mainly due to the non-existence of offset printing, which later enabled the production of large numbers of posters). They were hung where they could reach the most people: in the streets or public places.

Some of these multiple functions of the poster disappeared in the course of the 20th century. This had to do with other inventions that replaced the poster’s initial functions and, eventually, made it virtually obsolete (newspapers, radio, TV and the internet are now charged with circulating news and advertisements). This degradation has not yet stopped. In the near future, the poster medium as we know it could vanish, rendered obsolete by screens and projections (the digital revolution helped to exchange posters with screens for advertising, to reduce paper use, waste and printing costs).

The death of the poster will never be a total one because this medium will continue to play a significant role for certain groups. It is an easy way to promote

¹ Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, London, 1973, p.15.

concerts, events or exhibitions and address social or political injustices to a broader audience. The size and the motif of a poster help to catch the attention of the public. Once the eye of the viewer is attracted, the mind mostly wants to know what the poster is advertising and one will begin to read the information on it.

All these developments are leaving marks on the poster itself. There are always, and always will be, changes and shifts in its modes of production and functionality. These changes/shifts are currently quite visible in the specific field of the gig posters. As the term indicates, gig posters are posters for specific concerts (gigs) or events. The term indicates what is integral to it: the music. Without concerts, there would be no gig posters.

Much like the poster, music itself changed as time moved on. Starting at the end of the 19th, and especially during the 20th century, the commercialization of music gained more and more importance, due to the invention of sound recording and of new forms of musical expression (the electrification of music/amplification of instruments made these new forms possible). Music started to migrate from the public places of the people (concert halls) into the private ones, for example their houses (the record player and radio). This shift initiated the beginning of a certain visualization of music and the need for a good and catchy design. A sound recording should - besides its main function of playing back music - look good in order to attract listeners who perhaps do not know the band, composer, or music involved, but will buy it anyway based on its appearance. However, the visualization of music does not stop here. There are multiple ways to catch the attention of people or potential buyers.

Gig posters play a crucial role in this strategy. At the beginning of the 20th century posters mostly worked through typography. The large text should have been readable to anyone laying an eye on it, be it from a car, in public transport, on a bicycle or passing by on foot. This ensured that as many people as possible could read the information on it. Soon another feature was integrated, an image of the main singer. This gave the gig poster and the concert that it advertised more of a singular character. In the course of the 20th century, posters (also those advertising concerts or events) seemed to take up again a movement that first emerged at the end of the 19th century in France. The author John Barnicoat marks this specific date with the year 1866, when the artist Jules Chéret started to produce colored lithographic posters on his own press.²

² John Barnicoat, *A Concise History of Posters*, London, 1972, p.7.

According to Barnicoat, this was the birth of the art poster. He follows the development of these art posters, which became more and more popular, and achieved a special status as art print. This special status diminished when advertisement took over the concepts of these poster artists. Nevertheless, the contemporary gig poster seems to pick up this developed self-consciousness of the art poster and dismisses integral concepts of commercialization, that were developed in the 20th century, to regain the status of an art print.

To elaborate these points, I firstly present a thesis statement, offer an overview of the field of research, and present my methodology. Then, I continue by presenting a short history of the gig poster. Where and when did it evolve? Who were the main actors and are there stylistic differences between various periods?

The next chapter deals with the contemporary gig poster in the 21st century, with its current need for identification and its shifts between public and private places. These shifts are quite important due to the development and usage of new technologies (the computer, design software, ...) and especially the internet, the gig poster has the possibility of abandoning its physical presence in public places. The internet became the new public space for the poster. Through algorithms, information can, on the one hand, be distributed more easily and address more accurately and quickly its main audience, but, on the other, also forces the poster to take on a digital appearance. These developments have been seen by some people as a new possibility for transforming the body of the poster from mere printed mass advertising into manufactured art prints, which may be limited in number and sold to people all over the world. This means that the poster itself has changed its connotation in the realm of the public. For its advertising role, it has left its physicality by entering the digital world, because it can affect more people in the digital space than in real life. It materializes only when one buys it. This development implements a constant shift between the public and the private. Gig posters are visible on the internet, but only tangible on the day of the show itself, where one can purchase and later hang them up, in their physicality, in a private room: the field of the private. These developments have also created a new freedom for poster artists, they become active in self-organization, creating new ideas and marketing strategies. I offer a closer insight of how gig poster artists distribute their posters and how they work within the digital world.

To conclude this chapter, I indicate why the United States and Europe are the main centers of production for gig posters. This includes a critical analysis of why the United States and Europe are the strongholds of gig poster production.

This leads us to the next chapter, which examines and dissects visual forms that are omnipresent in the gig posters and which I call “codes”. I focus on the importance of contemporary gig posters rather than earlier iterations, and introduce one specific code, or a form of visualization that has developed over many years, and which many other gig poster artists have simply copied, in each sub-chapter. There is, however, a new generation of gig poster artists who seem to try to dismantle stereotypical representations on gig posters in a cynical way. I examine the work of three artists to clarify my point: Jermaine Rogers, Rob Jones and Michael Hacker. I choose the codes that seem most important, based on the depictions that these artists use. It is certainly not possible to analyze all the codes that one can find on gig posters, so I concentrate on what seem to me to be the most popular ones. This analysis is the same for each code. First, I historicize the development of each code and suggest why it was so important for the gig poster scene. After that, I focus on the three contemporary gig-poster artists to examine how they have dealt with the tradition of visualization. The social aspects of the gig poster, the importance of its sexual and ornamental aspects, the development of a visual vocabulary of the fantastic, and the recourse to old forms are all codes that are discussed.

These initial chapters offer an overview of today’s gig poster scene and open up a more layered sociological level of understanding. Since the gig poster artists want to distance themselves and their gig posters from the predicament of being simplistic or mere kitsch and mainly a utensil for advertising a concert, the formation of a distinctive style plays an important role in a scene that mostly draws on the satisfaction of tastes and trends. In tandem with the internet, the term “taste” plays an important role when it comes to the creation of global trends. Since the gig poster is part of this modern form of communication, it must also deal with a new form of mainstream/business that developed precisely out of the possibilities the internet and other technologies gave to the people. How do gig posters situate themselves vis-à-vis modern developments, trends and hypes? Do gig poster artists develop strategies that avoid a certain incorporation into the new mainstream that consists out of self-representation and self-marketing? What role does the term taste play considering the development of contemporary gig posters?

In conclusion, I review the most important points and suggest that the contemporary poster has had to take a more radical developmental step to keep up with the times: it has changed its public sphere; the internet exchanged for the streets. The emergence of this new public of the digital commons enables the artist to transform a medium created for simple advertising into an art print, made out of her or his free, singular aesthetic imagination, which is responsible for the creation of an individual style. This artistic uniqueness and, thus, independence is key to avoiding incorporation into certain trends and shunning designs that use simple effect without any cause.

II. Thesis Statement.

II. I. Research Question and Thesis Statement.

The main question motivating this MA Thesis is what characterizes a gig poster and if there is a singularity to the poster as such? Where and when did the gig poster evolve, where are its centers today, and who are its main actors? Eventually other questions come to the fore. I consider why the gig poster has never been part of a scientific art historical analysis, and if it possesses its own visual language. This led me to the main research questions. *Does this language, which seems to be anchored in a certain history of gig posters, provide artists with specific codes of representation, and how are those codes used in the 21st century? Do artists reuse, renew, or view these codes critically, questioning stereotypical representations and political or social inequalities? Can one consider gig posters as independent visualizations of music, deriving from the genuine creativity of an artist, and therefore describe them as art prints? Do gig posters use forms of both high and low art, and in this way form a new discourse and awareness about established classifications of art? How do these artists work within a time that is shaped by trends, hypes and taste?*

These questions lead me to the main thesis, namely that the gig poster is a special form of poster, one that advertises concerts and uses a certain set of visual codes to do so. Its first appearance was in the beginning of the 20th century, and it has reached its peak in the 21st century. Its main centers of production, however, are limited to the United States of America and Europe.

In these places of capital and power, gig poster artists seem to question the way art is constructed and how the distinction between high and low culture is established in our contemporary society. The hypothesis of this thesis is that the gig poster refuses to fit into either “high” or “low” art, but occupies a space between; a grey area for artworks made for a field of popular culture that has not yet become a field of interest in art history. The negative connotation of the popular (simplistic mass media with no artistic value), what Greenberg derided as kitsch, is reinforced not only by changing the modes of production, but also using them humorously and intentionally to reveal the arrogance and elitism of the contemporary production of art.

Therefore, the main contention of this thesis is that contemporary gig poster artists are challenging the norms of what can be considered a concert poster by using new technologies, different strategies and means of production, and, in this way, transforming a product of mass media into a limited art print. This shift involves the further development and invention of terms (for example the terms “gig poster” or “Lowbrow”) to name, specify and, to a certain extent legitimize this new form of art. This loose community acts worldwide as a type of self-organized, autonomous group trying to work outside regulations imposed by the music business and the art market. Nevertheless, they are forced to work under new forms of marketing and business models that developed under inexorable processes of digitization.

II. II. Importance of Topic.

Examining forms of art that struggle to obtain attention from art historians requires interdisciplinary research, which opens up important discourses on the history of art as a discipline. Since we are dealing with a contemporary form of art, we also have to tackle the present situation in which art is directly related to its own material conditions in the real world. The boundaries between art and other fields are being demolished bit by bit at present. This has led to mixtures between different fields, such as music and art, dance and art, or technology and art, and it demands that we work in an interdisciplinary fashion to grasp this form of art as a whole.

Gig posters have never been comprehensively analyzed in art history, although this field possesses a long history. Over the years, it has developed from an art form operating in a small scene to a global phenomenon. This change occurred in the last

few years and might be one of the reasons for the lack of scientific research that may also be grounded in the belief that gig posters are merely commercial goods with no artistic aspirations. Furthermore, the naming of this art form and its classification turns up to be difficult because gig poster art still is quite young and its artists seem to adopt existing terminology to use in a different context. This leads to the simple fact that one cannot find the term gig poster in any dictionary of art (while in some there is even an explanation for the term GIF).³ In addition, existing terms like as “lowbow”, which will be discussed in more detail later on, are reused by the artists themselves, but this time with different meaning. Circumstances that make this art form elusive, as it also defies to an extent a strict classification. This act of defiance on the part of artist seems to be a revolt against elitist mechanisms that determine what can be considered as art and what not. These considerations arise out of questions such as who decides what art is and why? Is art nothing more than the mere enrichment of capital? Is it a currency that is not bound to any financial regulations? Is the art scene nothing more than pure capitalism and elitism?

Gig poster artists consider these questions, which encourage them to react to systems of power by developing their own stylistic characteristics and building up their own independent art scene that is equally interdisciplinary because it embraces other forms of art such as music.

Another important point that emerges from the examination of gig posters is how modern technologies affect different forms of art. The internet, for example, made it possible for posters to change in their physical appearance and to develop further. On the other side, it created new business models that build on the marketing of the self. These developments provoke act of plagiarism and the emergence of, what I would call, a *copying mainstream*, which lives from trends and taste that are quite short-lived. However, more about that later.

³ See for example:
<http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/glossary/Art-Glossary-Terms-GA-GZ.html>

II. III. State of Research.

Since the topic of gig posters is a very contemporary one, it is hard to find prior research. Ironically, one of my main sources for gathering information has been the internet. Gig posters are usually present on the internet, whether on an artist's homepage or in the many short articles that have tried to deal with gig posters and those who work in this field. People who share an interest in the gig poster scene typically write these articles. They write about individual artists and conduct interviews, but scientific research has not been yet undertaken. At this point, one particular website stands out as very important: "*gigposter.com*". Unfortunately, this page was shut down in 2016, but when I started researching the topic, it was still active and offered the largest archive of gig poster artists sorted by name and presented through their most important works.

However, the founder of this homepage, Clay Hayes, has published the book "*Gig Posters - Rock Show Art of the 21st Century*". Two volumes present today's most important gig poster artists. The basis for this book was the archive of the homepage "*gigposters.com*".⁴

Another book, "*Squeegee!!- The European Gig Poster Movement*" by Bernd Hofmann and Joris Diks deals, as the title indicates, with the European gig poster movement, its centers, internal organization and meeting places.⁵ The authors present short chapters on different thematics. First, they show how to make a silkscreen print and give insight into the working spaces of gig poster artists. Second, they try to grasp the many different gig poster shows taking place in Europe and the organizers behind them. The last chapter is the most extensive and presents European artists with their best-known works and through short interviews.

One of the most remarkable books about the development of gig poster is "*The Art of Rock – The Art of Rock Posters from Presley to Punk*" by Paul D. Grushkin, who tries to map out the history of gig poster.⁶ Each chapter has a short text followed by many examples: The first chapter is called "*Roots: 1955 - 1965*", the second "*Psychedelic Years in San Francisco: 1965 - 1971*", the third "*The Psychedelic Years in Southern California and the Rest of the World: 1965 - 1971*", the fourth "*The Mainstream: 1969 - 1987*" and the fifth "*The New Music: 1976 – 1987*". Written in

⁴ Clay Hayes, *Gig Posters – Rock Show Art of the 21st Century*, Volume 1, Philadelphia, 2009.

⁵ Bernd Hofmann, Joris Diks, *Squeegee!! – The European Gig Poster Movement*, Munich, 2016.

⁶ Paul D. Grushkin, *The art of Rock: Posters from Presley to Punk*, New York, 1987.

1987, Grushkin clearly called punk and its forms of expression the new music. Afterwards he dealt again with more modern gig posters in the book *“The Art of Modern Rock – The Poster explosion”*.⁷ This book was written in collaboration with Dennis King. It provides a good overview of gig posters made from the 1990s to 2004. It is a continuation of his first book *“The Art of Rock – The Art of Rock Posters from Presley to Punk”* and follows the structure of his first book as well. The title *“The Poster Explosion”* implies that gig posters are made in even bigger numbers than before. This is due to the development of new technologies (the internet, computer programs...) that help with design, connect people and spread ideas worldwide. The book tries to show the enormous quantity of posters made during a short period and tries to explain this development. It attempts to grasp the whole movement from the roots of modern gig posters, and to explain the complex relationships in this field. Each chapter has a short introduction followed by a small presentation of the artists with pictures of their work and an interview. The book delivers the basic framework, supplemented with interviews. Nevertheless, the brevity of the text is exemplary of every book written about gig posters; pictures are more important than scientific analysis. After all, Grushkin and King’s books are the most sophisticated publications about gig posters that exist to date and are essential for anyone who takes an interest in gig posters.

These books, articles and homepages offer vital insight into the scene, and some very important information about the artists themselves, but do not expand much further. They all only scratch the surface of this topic. Most authors have concentrated on summarizing different artists in a very broad way, but have forgotten about various quintessential questions about the movement (the progression of the poster itself, the progression of the simplistic graphic designer, appropriations to art history, etc...).

As it is true for many other arts, one has to grasp the whole to be able to start a scientific analysis. It is therefore plausible that publications about gig posters have created a pool of important posters and artists that can now be used to build a framework for a more detailed scientific analysis.

⁷ Paul D. Grushkin, Dennis King, *The Art of Modern Rock – The Poster Explosion*, San Francisco, 2004.

II. IV. Research and Methodology.

The lack of scientific publications on this topic forced me to find other ways to ground the gig poster in an art-historical analysis. As mentioned before, the internet served as one main source. It is the main platform where artists currently share and sell their work. Since the internet can be a dubious source for scientific research, I have only used it when searching for pictures of artistic works, homepages of artists, and short articles from art magazines. These small magazines deliver some significant information about the artists and the scene evolving around them and have helped me to build a broader framework and a larger overview of the different perceptions of gig posters.

The extant literature on gig posters (Paul Grushkin and Dennis King, Bernd Hofmann and Joris Diks, Clay Hayes, etc) tries to establish a discourse on the topic, but most art historians do not share this same ambition. This means that all publications so far have lacked a deeper art-historical analysis. They have not attempted to contrast posters with well-known art works, or to question formal changes in the poster medium. In short, they lack any scholarly questions, analysis, methodologies or theories that go beyond a superficial overview. Just as for the internet, these books solely give a basic framework for gig posters. However, these sources alone are not sufficient for a thesis embedded in the discipline of art history, which is why I first had to look into the state of research within the art-historical field. This includes books such as Max Gallo's *"Geschichte der Plakate"*, which introduced me to the general history of posters and their most famous artists.⁸ Another book I would like to mention is Barbara Martin's *"Zwischen Verklärung und Verführung: Die Frau in der französischen Plakatkunst des späten 19 Jahrhunderts"*.⁹ Martin describes quite an interesting topic in poster art: the role of the female body. These depictions became a sort of stereotypical image-kit for some gig poster artists. Others, on the contrary, have tried to break these clichés, by working cynically and finding new ways to depict the human body. This relates closely to gender and queer studies. It is common in the gig poster scene to mock stereotypical role models in designs. These books have played a very important role in my thesis

⁸ Max Gallo, *Geschichte der Plakate mit einem Aufsatz über "Die Entwicklung der Plakatkunst"* / von Carlo Arturo Quintavalle, Herrsching, 1975.

⁹ Barbara Martin, *Zwischen Verklärung und Verführung: Die Frau in der französischen Plakatkunst des späten 19 Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld, 2016.

because they deliver the figurative background for analyzing gig posters and have helped me to understand the provenance of certain designs in their historical context as well as their usage. They also form a tool for differentiating between simple and very innovative gig poster artists, those who use, to mention Greenberg's terminology, "cause" and not only "effect".

As these sources do not suffice for a master's thesis, I have opened up a more interdisciplinary approach including other subjects such as sociology, philosophy, cultural studies and musicology.

As for philosophy, sociology and cultural studies, Clement Greenberg's text "*Avant Garde and Kitsch*"¹⁰, Franz Illing's book "*Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*"¹¹ and Pierre Bourdieu's book "*Die feinen Unterschiede (Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste)*"¹² have been very useful for questions regarding the influence of taste and Kitsch on the art world. Katrin Ackermann and Christopher F. Laferl's book "*Kitsch und Nation, Zur kulturellen Modellierung eines polemischen Begriffs*" and Ra's book "*Der Unernst des Kitsches: Die Ästhetik des laxen Blickes auf die Welt*" helped me to be more specific about the term kitsch in contemporary contexts.¹³

Tom McDonough's book "*The Beautiful Language of My Century - Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945–1968*"¹⁴ and Victoria H. F. Scott's text "*May 1968 and the Question of the Image*"¹⁵ revealed the influence the poster had for the public during historically fractious moments, spreading news or forming a platform for political revolts. Michael Warner's book "*Publics and Counterpublics*" on the other hand, never deals with posters but rather with the notion of the counter public, which is quite important in the gig poster scene, since it acts as a critical cultural underground.¹⁶ Warner explains the mechanisms and mainsprings that act in the background of such countercultures. The term counterpublic brings to mind another, quite essential, term in this discussion: autonomous or self-organizing. Stine

¹⁰ Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, London, 1973.

¹¹ Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006.

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede*, Frankfurt am Main, 1987.

¹³ Kathrin Ackermann, Christopher F. Laferl (Hg.), *Kitsch und Nation, Zur kulturellen Modellierung eines polemischen Begriffs*, Bielefeld, 2016.

Yushin Ra, *Der Unernst des Kitsches: Die Ästhetik des laxen Blickes auf die Welt*, Bielefeld, 2016.

¹⁴ Tom McDonough, "*The Beautiful Language of My Century*" – *Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945 – 1968*, MIT Press, London, 2007.

¹⁵ Victoria H.F. Scott, *May 1968 and the Question of the Image*, in:

Diana Bramham (ed.), Susannah Fisher (ed.), *Rutgers Art Review 24* (2008), New Jersey, 2009.

¹⁶ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York, 2002.

Hebert (ed.), Anne Szefer Karlsen (ed.) and others have tried to shed light on the aspect of self-organization in the art world in the book *“Self-Organized”*.¹⁷ They analyzed the different impacts of self-organization on the current art world and its evolution.

The field of musicology also serves as a source. Some publications have tried to deal with the unique stylistics of representation for certain genres of music by not only analyzing their visual aspects, but also their musical ones. The field of musicology can explain why a certain style of music uses certain structures, texts and visualizations by examining historical and musical backgrounds. Beate Kutschke's book *“Musikkulturen in der Revolte, Studien zu Rock, Avantgarde und Klassik im Umfeld von ‘1968’ ”*, for example, gave a good insight into the relationship of music, society and art.¹⁸

Changes in society and the importance of modern technologies as the internet plays another crucial role when analyzing the contemporary gig poster. The importance of trends and hypes and the development of new social groupings, such as the hipster, is part of Bjørn Schiermer's text *“Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture”*¹⁹ or Michael Scott's *“Hipster Capitalism’ in the Age of Austerity? Polanyi meets Bourdieu’s New Petite Bourgeoisie”*.²⁰

All these sources provide a relevant framework for dealing with the complex topic of contemporary gig posters, but they all also lack some very profound information about the field. This brings me to my final -- and perhaps most important -- source: working in the field and personally interviewing artists over a period of many years. I have tried to ground my thesis in interviews that I conducted with various artists. I visited gig poster fairs and asked artists, organizers and participants questions about their work and the scene more generally.²¹ To analyze the oral data (interviews) I have had to contend with subjective input from various players, and to contextualize their positions in the gig per contemporary scene. This pool of different artistic positions, albeit subjectively categorized and assessed, helped to dissect the most important points of today's gig poster production. Overall, this mixture of different

¹⁷ Stine Hebert, Anne Szefer Karlsen (Eds.), *Self-Organised*, London, 2013.

¹⁸ Beate Kutschke, *Musikkulturen in der Revolte, Studien zu Rock, Avantgarde und Klassik im Umfeld von '1968'*, Stuttgart, 2008.

¹⁹ Bjørn Schiermer, *Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture*, *Acta Sociologica*, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

²⁰ Michael Scott, 'Hipster Capitalism' in the Age of Austerity? Polanyi meets Bourdieu's New Petite Bourgeoisie, In: *Cultural Sociology*, Vol. 11, Issue 1, p. 60–76, March 2017.

²¹ A full Interview with the Austrian gig poster artist can be read in the appendix of this master's thesis.

sources, fields, and methodologies has allowed me to develop a sound basis for this master's thesis.

II. V. Contribution to the Field of Research and Limitations.

As in every master's thesis, there are many limitations as it is not possible to grasp an entire art scene that is currently working on a global scale. I have tried to deliver an overview within the limited perspective of choosing just one artistic scene for social, economic and artistic criticism. So other functions the gig poster may have had have been excluded. It is certainly not possible to write about the gig poster scene as a whole. Questions as to whether the gig poster follows certain characteristics depending on which music genre it is used for cannot be answered, because one would have to analyze every gig poster, for every music genre, in every period. It is clear that this would require examining many more artists and their work and would consume far more time and pages than a master's thesis could possibly deliver. Rather, I have tried to focus on a few selected gig poster artists to develop a first significant overview in the field of scientific research.

Another important point that cannot be included in this thesis is the notion of stylistic differences that depend on different cultures. For instance, do Chinese gig poster artists work in the same stylistic field as the Europeans, or can one detect differences between those two? Is there a distinct iconology for gig posters made, for example, in Japan that is different to those of Europe or the USA? To answer these questions one would have to consider gig poster artists in every geographical location and then compare them. This would also require longer research with much more data.

Nevertheless, there are many contributions to the field of research in this thesis. As shown in the previous chapters, there is nearly no literature that tries to analyze gig posters in a scientific way. This means that there is nothing substantial written about the history of the gig poster, links between older and contemporary gig poster scenes, and changes that have occurred in this field.

Another contribution to knowledge is the examination of the poster in the context of a contemporary digitized world. The poster has to change to keep up with the rapid technical and technological developments of our time. Examining these shifts is very significant for the contemporary art-historical research.

It also seems important to introduce new terms, such as “gig poster” or “Lowbrow”, into the field of art history. The term gig poster clearly describes this form of art in the best way possible, but is not to be found in any scientific publications. The same goes for the term lowbrow, which is much more common in popular culture use in the USA as it is in Europe.

Through my fieldwork and focus on this scene, I believe that gig poster artists seem to eschew the current art market with its rules and by that establish a parallel system that goes against current power structures. This system struggles to obtain its independence in a globalized and connected world and is more of a consequence of a heightened awareness among those involved in the scene of established power structures.

Overall, the analysis of gig posters allows us to trace an alternative history of popular culture, viewed from another perspective not yet occupied in the realm of art history. This is an important contribution to knowledge and the field of art history because it allows us to rewrite the established history of popular art.

III. What is a Gig Poster?

III. I. A Preliminary History of the Gig Poster.

The gig poster descended and evolved from the poster. Therefore, the developments and the different functions of the poster are also inherent in the gig poster, as is its inseparable unity with public space (for its function would be meaningless without its spectator). Already in the 17th century, the poster served many different purposes next to its main advertising functions, as for example to revolt against oppression. In this context Josef and Shizuko Müller – Brockmann state that already in 1653 in France: “(...) *it was forbidden, under death penalty, to print or display posters without official permission. The spread of the use of posters and, more especially, attacks on the state and church could only be controlled in this way.*”²² The poster was considered as a danger for authorities because it offered the possibility to reach the most people in the simplest way possible. At this point, Victoria H.F. Scott’s text “*May 1968*

²² Josef Müller – Brockmann, Shizuko Müller – Brockmann, *History of the Poster*, Zurich, 1971, p. 26.

and the Question of the Image” has to be mentioned to underline the political importance of the poster in modern times. Scott refers to the political function of the poster and its intercultural dynamics by analyzing the importance of the Chinese posters (*dazibao*) for the May 1968 events in Paris.²³ Originally, the *dazibao* were used by Mao Zedong for the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) to strengthen his political propaganda and to weaken his political opponents. Later on, *dazibao* regained its original character and people used it to protest against political repression.²⁴ Various publics used this form of poster at the May 1968 events in Paris to organize and to politicize

Next to its commercial and political uses, the poster is also meant to spread news among the people. Hung on walls, fences and advertising kiosks, it serves as a special form of communication for the people. The most important information was printed on paper so the public could be briefed in a very short but effective way on the street. Naturally, locations with a high fluctuation of people were preferred for this kind of posters. The informative aspect of the poster should attract attention in the most simplistic way. It was all about readability and legibility, so that a broad swath of people would notice it and read the information. There was, so to say, a massive segregation between the public and the private spaces of the people. Only inventions like the radio and the television were able to enter the private space: people’s homes. The poster however, could only work effectively in the public space.

Nevertheless, the poster’s main function was to advertise. Likewise, gig posters are nothing more than they claim to be: posters that promote a concert (a gig), tour or festival. It is impossible to trace the roots of the gig poster to an exact moment. Nevertheless, it is clear that the first artists who became famous for their posters are Henri-Toulouse Lautrec and Alfons Mucha in Paris. They created posters at the end of the 19th century; a time that, after Max Gallo, was marked by the triumph of the bourgeoisie.²⁵ Gallo states that the process of industrialization raised the quality of

²³ Victoria H.T. Scott, May 1968 and the Question of the Image, in: Diana Bramham (ed.), Susannah Fisher (ed.), Rutgers Art Review 24 (2008), New Jersey, 2009, p.97. Victoria H.F. Scott mentions the Dazibao relating to the student protests in Paris 1968. Artists oriented themselves towards these Chinese posters. They also introduced at that time the term “dazibao” in France. The poster was the only medium that was cheap, efficient and could reach most people, because it was outside the regulation and the censorship of the state.

²⁴ Dazibao literally means “newspaper with big letters” from Chinese dà ‘big’ + zì ‘character’ + bào ‘newspaper or poster’.

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dazibao>

²⁵ Max Gallo’s “Geschichte der Plakate“ including the text „Die Entwicklung der Plakate“ from the author Carlo Arturo Quintavalle, Milan, 1975, p.41.

living, incomes and leisure time. This led to the growth of, especially, one social class: the bourgeoisie

In this time artists as Jules Chéret or Toulouse-Lautrec created posters that advertised events such as at the Moulin Rouge cabaret. At nearly the same time, another artist became famous for his posters, produced in a completely different style from those of Lautrec. Alfons Mucha, an artist from the region of Moravia, then a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, who worked in the field of art nouveau. He introduced the romantic, ornamental depiction of women typical of the art nouveau style in his advertising graphics. While Lautrec realized his posters in his own artistic gesture, Mucha took over the stylistic elements of a young art trend and integrated them in the public sphere as advertising posters on the street. They aimed for a certain public that had the buying power to purchase luxury goods such as champagne, cacao or tickets to cultural events, notably the upper classes of society. This development led, in this early state of the poster, to a sort of separation within society, because it clearly showed where one belonged based on their buying power. Only people who were wealthy enough could enjoy leisure. The visualization of a certain society with all its purchasable attributes in commercial posters increased the gap between rich and poor, because the commercial posters clearly addressed only a certain group of people. Max Gallo describes this new bourgeois lust for culture and consumer goods in the late 19th century, paradoxically comparing Department Stores with sites of cultural consumption. These temples of urban civilization showed the products of a society, in which science, industrial and technical developments played a significant role. Those stores were, after Gallo, as the opera, a celebration for the eye and an invitation to dream and to stimulate feelings.²⁶

Mucha's designs can be seen as part of this celebration for the eye and gained even more of attention when he started producing posters for the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt. He designed six posters for her productions, which she used for her tours across Europe (except for Germany) and the USA. This enabled Mucha to introduce the new art style, art nouveau, to a larger public. Due to his: *"(...) own artistic handwriting (...)"*, Mucha had, *"(...) enormous success (...)"*, and his, *"(...) works*

²⁶ Max Gallo's "Geschichte der Plakate" including the text „Die Entwicklung der Plakate“ from the author Carlo Arturo Quintavalle, Milan, 1975, p.48 – 53.

"All dies geschah in einer Gesellschaft, in der Wissenschaft, Industrie und Technik eine immer bedeutsamere Rolle spielten. Ihre Produkte waren in dem anderen großen Tempel der städtischen Zivilisation zu sehen: dem Warenhaus. (...) Auch sie waren ein Fest für das Auge, eine Einladung zum Träumen, Anregung der Gefühle."

became very popular. (...) In the USA, they even distributed a soap-brand by the name of Mucha.”²⁷

It is important to consider that these artists were not only making advertising but also participating in the conventions of artistic practice at the time. They never focused completely on advertising posters and their posters were and are considered as poster art. This is why they can be seen as crucial for the development of the gig posters, because they provide the legitimization for the gig poster being more than simple advertisement graphic.

III. II. The Modern Gig Poster.

The first real development towards a freer and much more genuine method of production in concert posters unfolded in the USA in the 1960s, and resulted in some ways from Alfons Mucha's oeuvre. It was the time of the hippies, a youth movement protesting against the Vietnam War. They tried to break up the old system, norms, and rules to be able to live as freely as one can, without restrictions from the state. Youth movements normally express themselves largely through music, as did the hippies. Many bands, such as Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead or Janis Joplin/Big Brother and the Holding Company originated out of this movement. This resulted in a large number of concerts, advertised in a way that made the hippie culture visible, with designs that let everyone who was part of this movement know immediately that this was a show for them. This led to the creation of the first real gig posters as we know them by artists such as Wes Wilson, Stanley Mouse, Alton Kelley, Rick Griffin, and Victor Moscoso. Since there were typically multiple bands playing each concert, the depiction of just one singer became obsolete. In most cases, the artists used forms and the ornamentation of art nouveau, through the transformation of flowery and colorful elements into a more psychedelic depiction.

Another very important part was the integration of the font into the design of the poster and its further development. Font is able to transfer the substantial

²⁷ Babara Martin, *Zwischen Verklärung und Verführung, Die Frau in der französischen Plakatkunst des späten 19. Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld, 2016, p.388.

“Mucha feierte mit seiner „(...) eigenen künstlerischen Handschrift enorme Erfolge (...)“, und seine „(...) Arbeiten erfreuten sich größter Popularität. (...) In den USA wurde so sogar eine eigene Seifenmarke unter dem Namen Muchas vertrieben.“

information and has to be designed in a readable and easily comprehensible way. Starting in the 1960s, font became part of the narrative of the poster and suffered a loss in readability. This meant a change in the working mechanism of the poster. The font was no longer responsible for conveying information about a concert; the design had taken its place. The poster was meant to attract certain people using a visual language that only devotees could read. The factual information (date, band, and venue) became secondary. The main purpose was to seduce people via the image.

These much more on visuality constructed concert posters were mostly created in the West Coast by artists such as Wes Wilson, Bob Masse, Victor Moscoso, or Peter Brailey. The contemporary term gig poster did not yet exist, but those posters were certainly a big influence on the further evolution of the gig poster scene.

Brailey's posters for concerts such as "Howling'Wolf; Country Joe and The Fish" at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco in 1967 illustrate the different innovations that were made in poster design at the time. (Fig. 1) A woman with a violet drape who is wearing a golden flower-dress is the main motif. The influence of Mucha is undeniable. Drawn in an ornamental and flowery way, he used only three colors (pink, violet and gold/brown) and the white of the paper to generate minimal differentiation between the main elements. The ensemble holds the font and one has to take time to decipher the information. The poster cannot be read rapidly, and no longer has a use in mainstream advertising, because people could not read it from a moving car, bus or train.

This leads us to the conclusion that the 1960s in the USA may be considered as a moment for the true emergence of the gig poster. Artists broke with the norms concerning what a poster should be, and furthermore how it should look, and dismantled posters with only text on them. The name of the band no longer attracted attention, but rather the colors and the design. Other youth movements, like the Rock/Metal-movement in the 1970s, later reused and adapted these changes in poster design. At that time, with bands like Black Sabbath and Hawkwind, another change occurred in the depiction of the poster. The hippie movement with its colorful visualizations was challenged by its successors, portraying the world with all its faults, anxieties, and ferocities. The dark perspective of the lyrics made them draw on rituals, myths or spooky tales of witches or demons. This dark and sinister visualization matched perfectly with the lyrics. These new depictions followed those that the hippie movement had developed. Some elements were simply renewed and set in another context.

Musicians and artists tried to deliver an antithesis to the belief that people can change the world to create a better place, because for them the human nature cannot change; it is cruel and dark and destroys rather than creates.

The 1980s meant yet another change for gig posters. Both in Europe and the USA, a new movement with a new musical style was evolving - punk - with a unique conception of which topics to address in music. Stark reality replaced the dark and sinister world. Punk tried to revolt against the system, with all its social inequities imposed on the people. It was a movement from below, simple and insurgent, and so was the aesthetic used on posters. Some elements of the hippie and metal movements reappeared in a new way, especially skulls. The modes of production were also adapted to this new movement. The simplest and cheapest way to produce posters was by printing them using photocopier machines. The prints mostly were black and white and their sheer mass numbers allowed the flooding of the streets. The design, however, was meant to immediately address those involved in the movement and to unsettle other viewers. As the lyrics of punk questioned the norms of the system, so did the posters. Many artists developed posters at that time, one of them being Raymond Pettibon, who became synonymous with art and posters in the punk scene. He mostly created posters and record covers for the band Black Flag. These covers and posters clearly display what the visualization of punk was all about: simple and quickly-produced black and white drawings with sarcastic contents vis-à-vis the system and society. This sarcastic language, combined with a humorous attitude is one of the most important innovations in the field of gig poster.

Another very important element, introduced during the punk-era, was the use of collage and *décollage*, which had long played a role in artistic practices. Torn-off and reassembled pieces of paper from newspapers or other posters created the unique punk style: cut-out pieces from different newspapers, rearranged as in a blackmailing letter. As if the information on the poster is blackmailing the public. (Fig. 2)

Nevertheless, punks never really wanted to produce posters as art prints as it would have gone against the anti-institutional ethos of the movement. It was all about publicizing a concert in the easiest and cheapest way possible. Quantity was more important than quality. Few artists had a greater demand for their posters than Pettibon with his humorous ones. At that time, concert poster production rushed into the mainstream and major music companies produced mass-printed posters that were visible on the streets. Punk posters formed an alternative for smaller bands from the

underground, reclaiming the streets from big businesses. Screen-printing was seen as an instrument that was only to be used to address or influence the masses. The punk movement, much like the artists associated with Conceptual Art, tried to retaliate against this trend with photocopying.

At the end of the 1980s, the concert or gig poster arrived at a point where there were two camps: the mainstream and the underground. It had to give up its status as an art print to become real publicity, lost to the ephemerality of a new, fast, modern world with new technologies. At the same time, there was a movement in the USA that helped the poster to become the gig poster and started, as Paul D. Grushkin and Dennis King called it, the poster explosion. These authors clearly set the starting point at the end of the 1980s in Austin, Texas, with one specific artist, Frank Kozik (born 1962 in Madrid, lives and works in San Francisco), and one gallerist, Debi Jacobson (date of birth unknown, owner of the “L’Imagerie Gallery” in North Hollywood, California). In 1988, Jacobson sent Robert Weiss, her employee, to find new posters to sell in her gallery. While searching for suitable ones, he stumbled upon the posters of a relatively young artist called Frank Kozik. When he: *“(…) saw Kozik’s bold, vibrant work, he was so excited that he told Jacobson they should forget about old posters and concentrate on promoting Kozik. Jacobson purchased as many of Kozik’s earliest pieces as she could get her hands on, and by April 1989, L’Imagerie was producing offset Kozik posters for Austin gigs.”*²⁸

Grushkin and King continue to say that that other artists, such as Jason Austin, Lee Bolton and Lyman Hardy were active in Austin at that time creating gig posters for bands, but: *“(…) Kozik’s contribution to the history of screen-printed rock posters is key because of the unique qualities: his notorious visual vocabulary, and his tremendous influence in exposing other artists to the silkscreen process.”*²⁹

Grushkin and King see in Kozik’s work the beginning of a new era for gig posters because he: *“(…) made instantly recognizable graphics in a medium that was affordable for even the casual buyer, and he successfully promoted the silkscreen medium to a worldwide audience.”*³⁰ The use of the silkscreen medium and the formation of a recognizable and distinctive style opened the field for many young gig

²⁸ Paul D. Grushkin, Dennis King, *The Art of Modern Rock – The Poster Explosion*, San Francisco, 2004, p.20.

²⁹ Paul D. Grushkin, Dennis King, *The Art of Modern Rock – The Poster Explosion*, San Francisco, 2004, p.21.

³⁰ Paul D. Grushkin, Dennis King, *The Art of Modern Rock – The Poster Explosion*, San Francisco, 2004, p.21.

poster artists to come. This leads us to current developments in the field of gig posters.

IV. The Gig Poster in the 21st Century.

IV. I. The Gig Poster and Lowbrow – A Terminology for Identification?

The 21st century with its social, technological and industrial changes and innovations, marks an important moment for the evolution of the contemporary gig poster. For the first time, it can develop and reinvent itself - as a result of these upheavals - making it even harder to be classified within the current art historical canon, because its structure refuses the clear definition of what it is, and where to put it in terms of classification. Gig poster artists tried to strengthen gig poster art by trying to classify it under a broader term. This process is crucial for specifying one's own creativity and field of production to a broader audience. Classification mediates ideas and creates a clear distinction from other forms of art. It also helps to create a feeling of allegiance; of belonging to a certain group of people (the same goes for music). It is quite surprising that the scene and its artists themselves have taken over a term that already existed to describe the field of gig posters: Lowbrow.

The origin of the term lowbrow cannot be assigned exactly in time. The online etymology dictionary, for example, writes that this can be understood in response to the term highbrow, which characterizes a: "*(...) person of superior intellect and taste (...)*", and is first detectable in 1884.³¹ Lowbrow, on the other hand, marks a: "*(...) person who is not intellectual (...)*", and is said to have been in use in 1913.³²

In his book "*The myth of popular culture from Dante to Dylan* ", author Perry Meisel locates a similar origin of the term in the medicine of the 19th century. Namely the phrenology, which has tried to interpret the head shape of man as an image of intelligence. A high forehead was indicative of intelligence, a low one for stupidity.³³

The online etymology dictionary and Perry Meisel's definitions try to situate the term historically. However, the content of this historical definition differs decisively

³¹ https://www.etymonline.com/word/highbrow?ref=etymonline_crossreference

³² <https://www.etymonline.com/word/lowbrow>

³³ Perry Meisel, *The Myth of Popular Culture from Dante to Dylan*, Singapore, 2010.

from the one the term holds today and which is relevant in the sense of the gig poster. This new content is the starting point for Shelly Esaaks, whom first use she attributes to the American cartoonist Robert Williams: “(...) as the title for his book *‘The Lowbrow Art of Robert Williams’* (...)”, in 1979.³⁴ Later on he used this term in a broader way: “(...) in his magazine *“Juxtapoz”*.” A magazine that tried: “(...) to highlight those artists that can be attributed to this art form (...).”³⁵ Nevertheless, the author Shelley Esaaks states that the foundations of this term date all the way back to the 1950’s starting with artists as Ed Roth, who invented Rat Fink, a figure solely created for the “Hot Rod” scene (a scene that formed itself out of car enthusiasts). As other main influence, Esaak names underground comics from artists such as Robert Crumb, Victor Moscoso and Steve Clay Wilson. She states that lowbrow art continued to develop by absorbing influences of popular culture: classic cartoons, 1960’s TV sitcoms, psychedelic rock music, pulp art, soft porn, science fiction movies, Japanese anime and everything else that was part of a certain subculture. It referred to art forms that arose out of the broad field of popular art.

However, when it comes to art, popular art (and so gig posters) often has to fight negative connotations as for example being kitsch. A term that is, as Clement Greenberg sees it, inherent to: “(...) those, insensible to the values of genuine culture (...)”, and who, “(...) are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide.”³⁶ Kitsch, for Greenberg: “(...) is a product of the industrial revolution which urbanized the masses of Western Europe and America and established what is called universal literacy.”³⁷ Before that, kitsch was simple folk culture and high art was reserved for those who could read and write – those who were educated. Greenberg goes on to state that folk culture was soon forgotten and exchanged for kitsch, something that: “(...) pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money – not even their time.”³⁸ What Greenberg observed is a process of separation between different social classes that is also regulated by art. Years later, the French sociologist

³⁴ Joseph R. Givens, *Lowbrow Art: The Unlikely Defender of Art History’s Tradition*, Arkansas State University, 2005, p.7.

³⁵ See the article on lowbrow art:

<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-lowbrow-movement-art-history-182926>

The Juxtapoz magazine was founded in 1994 by Robert Williams, Fausto Vitello, Caig Steeyk, Craig Escalante and Eric Swenson in order to form a medium to promote underground contemporary art.

³⁶ Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture – Critical Essays*, Boston, 1961, p. 10.

³⁷ Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture – Critical Essays*, Boston, 1961, p. 9.

³⁸ Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture – Critical Essays*, Boston, 1961, p. 10

Pierre Bourdieu examined this topic in “*La distinction*” from 1979.³⁹ In this book, he introduced the term “taste” to this problematic and states that each social class has developed its own distinctive taste that differentiates it from other ones. Bourdieu differs between three main class categories. The bourgeoisie is identified with its sense for distinction, the petite bourgeoisie, the new middle class, with its keenness for education and the working class only with its focus for the most necessary things.⁴⁰ The bourgeoisie created strategies of distinction vis-a-vis the lower classes through the consumption of art, and therefore, defined what artwork could be incorporated into art history. The petite bourgeoisie oriented itself to the bourgeoisie, and tried to acquire its taste. This intention was nonetheless doomed, because the necessary education was missing. In today’s time, this has changed. The lower middle class (the petit bourgeoisie) and the middle class (the bourgeoisie) cannot be differentiated by their cultural knowledge. Nevertheless, it is still the elite that can afford buying and possessing art. The middle class, however, sought new legitimate cultures to emancipate themselves from the upper classes (they preferred art forms such as film, comics, science fiction, pop, ... etc.).⁴¹ Following Bourdieu, one can state that this class fights against taboos and for the liberation of inferiority complexes that they felt towards the upper classes, using external features of the intellectual style; that is to say free or emancipated behavior and everything that has to do with the legitimization of their culture (film, comics, the underground), their everyday life (the art of the street), their private (sexuality, cosmetics, parenting, leisure) and their existential questions (relationships to nature, love, death).⁴² This point is underlined by Franz Illing who defines this class as a culture of the middle: “(...) *that no longer tries to imitate culture that is considered as legit, but still uses forms and contents of it. This culture is*

³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, Übers. von Bernd Schwibs und Achim Russer, *Die feinen Unterschiede, Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1999.

⁴⁰ Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006, p. 142.

“Gestützt auf die empirischen Erhebungen stellte Bourdieu ausführlich die Zusammenhänge von Kapitalstruktur, Habitus und kulturelle Präferenzen der verschiedenen Klassen und Klassenfraktionen dar (FU, Kap. 5-7). Die Kapitelüberschriften bringen schlagwortartig den jeweils klassenspezifischen Habitus auf den Begriff: »Der Sinn für Distinktion« (Bürgertum), »Bildungsbeflissenheit« (Kleinbürgertum), »Die Entscheidung für das Notwendige« (Arbeiterklasse).”

⁴¹ Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006, p. 152.

⁴² Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006, p. 152. Pierre Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede*, Frankfurt am Main, 1987, p. 583.

“(…) *im Namen des Kampfes gegen >Tabus< und für die Liquidierung von >Komplexen< die äußerlichsten, also am leichtesten kopierbaren Züge des intellektuellen Stils, freies oder >emanzipiertes< Verhalten, kühne Kosmetik, laxen Haltungen und Posen pflegen und mit ihrer kultivierten Disposition an alles herangehen, was mit Kultur auf dem Wege zur Legitimation (Film, Comic, Underground usw.), mit dem Alltag (>Die Kunst auf der Straße<), mit dem privaten (Sexualität, Kosmetik, Erziehung, Freizeit usw.) und existenziellen Bereich (Verhältnis zur Natur, zur Liebe, zum Tod usw.) zu tun hat.*”

characterized by a confident dissociation of the established »elitist« high culture, which is no longer copied, but countered with other values.”⁴³

This rise of a certain middle culture has resulted from the self-determination and the will for self-fulfillment of many young people. This will for self-fulfillment also led to the need for a term to classify art situated between low and high art. Lowbrow was rediscovered as a suitable term. This term formerly had a negative connotation to designate people from low classes, with low education and also low demands and taste. As such, the choice of the term lowbrow can also be considered as a performative strategy of activating negatively connoted codes in order to strengthen marginalized groups. Instead of following rules and conceptions of others, they have created their own systems with their own rules and tactics. Esaaks continues to say that the: “(...) *single most common tactic that Lowbrow artists employ is to poke fun at convention. They know the “rules” of art, and consciously choose not to abide by them.*”⁴⁴ As this quote suggests, the term lowbrow classifies art that deals with popular culture with a certain humorous touch and that acts outside of arts main centers of production and exhibition spaces. All points that can be applied to the contemporary gig poster. However, one of its main developments was its repositioning towards its main space of action: the public place.

IV. II. Shifts between Public and Private Places

The gig poster occupies a strange position when it comes to terms like the public and private places. The gig poster, as commercial tool, definitely tries to speak to the public, because its existence is only justified when promoting a concert occurring at a certain place and at a time. Its aim is to attract the attention of the public by mediating a feeling of identification in a certain segment of the public, one that can understand the visual language used in gig posters.

⁴³ Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006, p. 159.

”Mittlerweile scheint es auch, als ob eine eigenständige »mittlere« Kultur entstanden ist, die nicht mehr einer beflissenen Nachahmung der legitimen Kultur besteht, auch wenn sie auf deren Vorrat an Formen und Inhalten zurückgreift. Sie ist durch eine selbstbewusstere Abgrenzung gegen die etablierte, »elitäre« Hochkultur gekennzeichnet, der nicht mehr nachgeeifert wird, sondern andere Wertmaßstäbe entgegengehalten werden.”

⁴⁴ See the article on lowbrow art:

<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-lowbrow-movement-art-history-182926>

The field of application however, changed in today's time, due to the technological progress of recent years. The internet in particular has been a critical turning point for the field of gig posters, because it disturbed the segregation between public and private spaces. Notably, in recent years it has gained even more influence due to other inventions such as the smartphone. There is practically no place where one is unable to connect with other people or get certain information. This means that it is possible to enter a public space without leaving a private one. One can shop, listen to music and chat with people, watch movies, etc. from one's home. In other words, the internet has taken over the function of the street. One does not need to go outside to get information or to meet people. Many would consider this development dangerous because reality is augmented and sometimes even replaced by virtuality to simplify people's life. This can lead to a decline in social interaction in public places, but it has also opened new possibilities for many people, including for gig poster artists.

As a new form of public place, the internet and other technological achievements offer a way back to artisanship, which had nearly disappeared due to the invention of the offset print. The number of posters made shrinks to a minimum, but each of those created has a signature and a unique number. Since silkscreen printing is prone to errors, every single poster differs from the others. The poster therefore becomes a type of unique merchandise with the character of an art print – it becomes collectible.

In other words, mass printed posters are no longer necessary (in the field of gig posters). The poster itself has been transformed into digital information disseminated through the internet. Therefore, the number of posters needed to promote a show has decreased because one can digitally reach more people using algorithms; those people have already been digitally selected according to a predisposed interest in this event. This is a new development, because gig posters now avoid the physical street and enter the realm of the digital one. As stated before, the internet offers this possibility. Not only have gig posters nowadays become a type of art print, their scope is no longer limited to the public but extended to the private space as well – on the display of the screen of any electronic device or the personal living space of the fan or a collector. Nonetheless, there are naturally a few exceptions, as for example the German artist Janta Island, who has made many posters for concerts in the occupied house Zoro in

Leipzig that were also hung on the street.⁴⁵ Most of them were removed very soon and, in the end, only a small number were purchasable on his homepage.

This leads us to another important point. Normal posters try to attract the viewer but have to consider their level of attractiveness. If they are too appealing to people, they run the risk of being taken along by those who like the design. The better the design and the quality of a gig poster, the higher the risk that it will be taken away and so it is no longer able to fulfill the purpose of a poster to reach as many people as possible. The main purpose of a normal poster is to hang on the street until the day of the advertised show. Every poster that does not hang this long on the streets is a loss of money and publicity. Therefore, commercial concert posters try to have a good design, but they differ significantly in the quality of materials of the gig poster. The materials are cheap and so the posters often tear when trying to remove them from different surfaces. The gig poster, however, relies on quality and the status of a unique piece and has adapted to new technological inventions to reinvent itself. It has become a hybrid between public and private places, reclaiming them all for itself.

IV. III. Modes of Production of the Contemporary Gig Poster.

Furthermore, gig posters have been able to detach themselves from the negative aspects of being mere mass media. The digital space made it possible to reduce quantity in favor of quality. It is important not to forget that, due to all these shifts, the gig poster has become a saleable item. This has brought about the downfall of another aspect of the poster. By its original nature, it was something people did not have to pay for. The advertiser was the one paying to place their advertisements in the street. Now, the gig poster has become an exclusive item that, furthermore, enables the artist to work independently – outside of any regulating advertising agency. This exclusiveness, on the one hand, enables the artist to work within his or her own formal stylistics, without being forced to work for a company. This encourages the formation of an artistic and individual imagery that does not have to cater to the agendas of commercial interests. Individuality, therefore, can be seen as the artistic signature of the artist and is what

⁴⁵ Janta Island made numerous gig posters throughout the years for the Zoro, which can be viewed on his homepage: <https://jantaisland.bigcartel.com/category/gig-poster>

matters most when speaking of contemporary gig posters. Individuality is important to promote oneself and to persist as an artist.

This independence and individuality of the artist is a key aspect when talking about the changes that occurred in the modes of production. Today, there seem to be two possible ways for artists to create a gig poster for a show. The first possible way results out of the creative impulse of the artist him/herself. Many gig poster artists started doing posters for bands that they like and that will play a show in their hometown. When the poster is completed, the artist contacts the band and presents these “non-commissioned” posters to the band, as a suggestion. These posters have always been produced out of the pure enjoyment of the artist. Many bands do, in fact, use those posters for their shows.

The second possible way results out of the impulse of the band. Many bands have a certain interest in promoting gig posters and the artists behind them. They try to get a poster for every single show they play and prefer artists that are from this town. This requires some sort of a curator who receives the orders of the band, functions as a mediator and contacts the artists. Gig poster that are made during a tour, are then called “Tour Poster Series”, and the band usually try to get a poster for every gig.⁴⁶ This approach supports local artists, and the band gains a variety of different gig posters by various artists. Nonetheless, there are different financial deals depending on the band. Normally an artist is not paid for producing the poster (only in certain cases, but this is mostly the exception), but can sell their posters after the show. The band, as mentioned before, sells its part of the posters on the night of the show itself. The artist Michael Hacker, for example, describes that his deal with the bands is that they get a third of the run and the other two thirds are for him. This means that the band does not pay the artist. The money that he/her earns results from the sales of his/her two thirds. However, since this field is not regulated by any norms or rules, every artist has his/her own deals.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Michael Hacker in an Interview in Berlin on the 16th of January 2017.

“Es gibt viele, die wirklich versuchen bei jedem Konzert ein Poster zu haben (The Melvins, Red Fang, Mudhoney, Swans, Big Business, Sonic Youth, ... etc.). Eine Art Kurator fungiert dabei als Mittelsmann und schreibt die Künstler an. Vorzugsweise werden jene ausgewählt, die in der Stadt leben in der das Konzert stattfindet. Der Kurator kriegt also den Auftrag von der Band oder von dem Management. Die so entstandenen Gig Poster werden dann "Tour Poster Series" genannt und es wird geschaut, dass es für wirklich jedes Konzert ein Poster gibt.“

⁴⁷ Michael Hacker in an Interview in Berlin on the 16th of January 2017.

“Ich habe immer den Deal: ein Drittel der Auflage kriegt die Band, zwei Drittel ich. Ich werde also nicht von den Bands bezahlt. Das Geld, welches ich lukriere, ist nur aus den Verkäufen von meinen zwei Dritteln. Da hat aber jeder Künstler andere Deals.“

It is obvious that this artistic independence requires flexibility as there is not much money involved, and people (artists and musicians) are more or less earning back what they spend. Some artists, for example, start with a basic price for their posters and, when the numbers of posters diminishes, the price increases.⁴⁸

Each artist sets this basic price individually, following the laws of supply and demand. The increase in the price also means the possible financial survival of the artist. Many artists even remove indications like the date and place of the show to sell the illustration as an independent piece of art (a practice that is quite common in popular art). This strategy, however, indicates that the artists themselves see their gig posters as a product of their free artistic expression that is, nevertheless, grounded in the field of commercial art. They reject this field due to its means of production and organizational structures. Instead of working for companies specialized in commercial goods, they work for and by themselves.

These different ways to distribute gig posters are very basic systems and do not directly reach for profit – they are built, more or less, on ideology and create, in many cases, a long-term collaboration between the musicians and the artists – between fans (the artist, who is a fan of the music) and other fans (the musicians, who are fans of the individual artistic style). It is crucial to note that a contemporary gig poster artist can be decisive for the creation of a band's image. This image -- and thus the gig poster art -- wants to reach as many people as possible; in the end, it is about advertising, but there seems to be a trend in the field of contemporary gig posters to elevate this specific art form through individuality and content. There are no regulations regarding the design and the artist can choose freely what to depict – what he/she think will fit best. This strategy enables the artists to liberate themselves from the established norms of poster art and to create their own stylistic characteristics. These mechanisms are helpful tools for artists to stay independent because collaboration between musicians and artists not only results from the common creation of value, but in most cases, also out of friendship, mutual respect, and support for the artistic practice. This collegial setting prevents the incorporation of the stylistic designs of an artist and of musicians into the realm of the mainstream. It is a way to keep their integrity, not only for themselves, but also for their fans (fans of the music or the gig posters). Networks among musicians and gig poster artists have grown over time into a stable alternative to customary

⁴⁸ Michael Hacker in an Interview in Berlin on the 16th of January 2017.

“Ich fange bei einem Grundpreis an und wenn sie weniger werden, steigt der Verkaufspreis.“

commercial mechanisms. The same applies to networks among gig poster artists themselves. These networks help them to exchange experiences about different means of production or legal requirements. Gig poster artist Todd Slater for example states in this context about the gig poster artist Rob Jones:

*"I was struggling with some elements in the Dave Matthews print and he (Rob Jones) made some suggestions that were helpful so I decided to credit him on the print. (...) It helps that he's an artist because he speaks our language and has an idea of how difficult a revision will be."*⁴⁹

It is important to notice, that many independent musicians and artists mostly work under the same precarious circumstances. Gig poster artists try to outsource their creative work out of a system run by business and mainstream into a scene that tries to work autonomously. Musicians also try to avoid entering the music business because they fear losing their musical integrity. To be able to work outside this system, one has to establish another one that prevents any incorporation and cooptation. It is based on the internet that serves as amplifier for the range of action of the artist, so he/she can reach more people. This system includes the creation of networks, collective studio spaces, co-working of different artists, and self-organization.

IV. IV. Places of Production of the Contemporary Gig Poster.

Today, many artists throughout the world design and create gig posters. Nevertheless, the two main centers are the United States of America (US) and Europe. The US in the mid-20th century is the place of origin of the gig poster and the scene has been growing there ever since – in the last few years more than ever. Due to this scope and enthusiasm, the movement in the US can nourish itself from its own historical background, which functions as a type of foundation for a newer generation of artists. Popular culture is not seen as an adversary as it is in Europe; it is seen much more as integral to culture, as is any other art form. This can be explained by the relatively young and culturally diverse society that, according to historical standards, has created

⁴⁹ Interview by Chris Jalufka on the website eviltender.com.
<http://eviltender.com/2014/12/03/gig-poster-as-artifact-interview-with-illustrator-todd-slater/>

a unique surrounding in which art forms such as the gig poster are appreciated and acknowledged by the public. This awareness not only results out of the historical background of the gig poster, but also out of the recent history of the US and the attachment there to popular art forms. This is also due to a completely different approach in advertisement. While in the US, advertisements in television had been standard since the 1940's, they, for example, first appeared in France in 1969.⁵⁰ Not only advertisements but also artists such as Andy Warhol pushed this development, by introducing content of popular culture and mass production into the field of high art. This led to an intermixture between contents of high and low art. Graphic design for advertisements suddenly found entry in the world of fine arts. This helped the gig poster to move into a broader spectrum than just mere advertising graphics.

Gig poster artists furthermore tried to build up mechanisms to represent this art form and to make it visible to a broader range of people. They organized festivals and small shows all around the US to promote gig posters. This was also made possible through the support of the American poster institute: *"(...) a non-profit corporation dedicated to furthering public awareness and appreciation of the poster art form. It is committed to supporting the community of artists creating entertainment-related posters, to fostering interaction and communication between the artists, and to constantly improving standards in the field."*⁵¹ This association created one of the most famous gig poster festival, the Flatstock festival, which takes place every year as a part of the SXSW festival in Austin, Texas.⁵² As the quote makes clear this institution tries to raise standards to ensure the financial independence of these artists and the recognition of this art form. These standards should only be norms for insuring the financial survival of poster artists in society. The process of poster making, on the other hand, should not underlie any regulating norms. The gig poster artist Rob Jones, for example, has founded a collective that goes by the name of MONDO.⁵³ This collective, consisting of Mitch Putnam, Justin Ishmael and Rob Jones, fabricates mostly limited-edition movie posters. These posters, however, were never to be released by the

⁵⁰ Victoria H.F. Scott, May 1968 and the Question of the Image, in: Diana Bramham (ed.), Susannah Fisher (ed.), Rutgers Art Review 24 (2008), New Jersey, 2009, p.88. Victoria H.F. Scott states that the broadcast of advertisements in television: „(...) marked an important turn in French visual culture.“

⁵¹ See the homepage of the American poster institute:

<http://americanposterinstitute.com/about>

⁵² SXSW is short for South by Southwest.

<https://www.sxsw.com/>

⁵³ <https://mondotees.com/>

company that made the movie, but are independent and creative reinterpretations (for Drive, A Trip to the Moon, Akira, Brazil ...). This collective founded a gallery called “Mondo Gallery” in Austin, Texas in 2012. It was meant to provide a space for everything that has to do with popular art ranging from: “(...) *limited edition screen printed posters for our favorite classic and contemporary films, television shows and comics, along with vinyl movie soundtracks, VHS re-issues, toys, and apparel.*”⁵⁴ They do not exhibit gig posters, but they work towards the same purpose: to free popular art from the stale aftertaste of being considered kitsch or unsubstantial. It becomes clear that the gig poster scene in the US is very large, and the participants (artists, promoters, organizers ...) can draw on a very sophisticated network.

The other main center for the gig poster scene is Europe, which has brought forth an astonishing number of gig poster artists. Today one can find gig poster artists everywhere throughout Europe. Nevertheless, there are countries that have produced more artists than others. Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Spain are the most important countries in the creation of gig posters in Europe. It is, however, not obvious why these countries can count a larger number of artists than the rest of Europe.

Nevertheless, this movement in Europe and in the US has a lot to do with self-organization and networking. This led to the adaptation of concepts developed in the US. Festivals, galleries or shows could promote gig posters and their artists. An adaptation that has even led to a replication of the Flatstock festival that has been held every year since 2006 in Spielbudenplatz during the Reeperbahn Festival in Hamburg. Each year it attracts more artists and even more spectators. Only the logistical support of the American Poster Institute made this happen. They allowed the use of the Flatstock title in Europe, and it was soon part of the Primavera Festival in Barcelona. This development can be seen critical for the integrity of gig poster art, because the Flatstock became some sort of brand, or franchise. Despite this fact, it is crucial to notice the importance of this event, because the Flatstock created a never before attained visibility for gig posters and can be seen as starting point for the development of many other small gig poster events.

This was some sort of initial spark for the gig poster scene in Europe, which has developed at an astonishing tempo. Numerous other little festivals originated. Many of

⁵⁴ Taken from Mondos’s homepage:
<https://mondotees.com/pages/about>

these were part of music festivals, such as Flatstock in Hamburg. “Le Gig Poster?”, for example, is part of the yearly “Le Guess Who?” festival in Utrecht.

Other meetings are only about gig posters, such as the “Colored Gigs” festival, a gig poster show for international artists. It takes place once a year in Dresden, Leipzig and Munich. These conventions are all about gig posters and the artists who produce them. There are, naturally, some small concerts but the main event is the poster exhibition. The entrance is not free, but the tickets are quite affordable and seem to only cover the costs.

“Poster Rock!” is an Italian version of “Colored Gigs”. Fabio Meschini organizes this festival, which takes place in Rome. The exhibition, shown in the House of Architecture, has no budget, and is realized only with the help of the artists and friends of Fabio.⁵⁵ The admission is free, so as many people as possible can see gig posters: “(...) *not just in its tiny ghost on a computer screen, but in real life.*”⁵⁶

As one can see, the gig poster scene in Europe has developed rapidly over the past ten years. More and more artists realize that one can make art like this and that there is a market for it. The market is one of the most important tools in all the arts. It is the place where other people can see and buy art and where tastes can be shaped. One can network with other artists, dealers or collectors, and the work seems to be legitimate as art when part of this organization. Usually people who make or who are interested in gig posters organize these shows without any financial support. The ones passionate about this art form try to find space where one can meet others, exchange ideas and sell gig posters.

These shows that have spread around Europe have caught the interest of gallerists and even museums. One of the biggest museum shows in Europe, called “Poster Rock, Gig Posters und die Flatstock Convention”, was held at the “Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe” in Hamburg (8.21.2015 – 1.3.2016). One of the main initiators of this exhibition was the gallery “Feinkunst Krüger”, based in Hamburg.⁵⁷ This gallery is specialized in art that is considered “Lowbrow” and was the initiator that brought the Flatstock Convention to Hamburg in 2006.

⁵⁵Fabio Meschini: „(...) born in 1972, Bachelor Degree in Architecture, started working in 1989 as self-taught graphic designer, often also working as a lecturer in the same field. After some incursions in photography and video production, from 2011 he is now mostly focused into designing and printing limited editions screenprinted posters, all hand-pulled by himself in his lab in Rome.“

<http://www.clockwork-pictures.com/about/about.html>

⁵⁶ Fabio Meschini in:

Bernd Hofmann, Joris Diks, Squeegee!! – The European Gig Poster Movement, München, 2016, p.29.

⁵⁷ See the homepage of the gallery Feinkunst Krüger:

<http://www.feinkunst-krueger.de/index.php?id=23>

What is important in this analysis is the fact that the gig poster scene is present in the whole world, its centers however seem to be in both the US and Europe, where it can develop faster because of the possibility that artists can gain some sort of financial independence. There are gig poster artists all around the world, but not the same type of organized scene as in the US and in Europe. The focus lies on those places of production, and the scenes that have evolved there.

Nonetheless, another clear distinction has to be made at this point: to underline the difference between the US and Europe. Even though Europe has developed quite a large gig poster scene, there is no real cultural acceptance of this scene. The negative connotation of kitsch or low art still surrounds this field. Nonetheless, this is self-explanatory, because there is a very different acceptance of popular culture in the US compared to Europe. Popular culture has a different significance in the States. It is as inherent to cultural identity as the works of Picasso are for Europe. The differentiation of what one considers art and what not is not as narrow-minded in the States as it is in Europe and this has led to a greater acceptance of lowbrow and gig poster art. Nevertheless, every gig poster artist can refer to a long tradition of imagery that was developed during many years. This imagery works with certain codes, which seem to be the backbone in the making of gig posters for many years.

V. Codes - the Visualization of Musical Processes.

V. I. Codes as visual Signifiers.

The field of gig poster is however, not limited to one special style of music. It is present in nearly every musical style (i.e., Hip-Hop, Rap, Rock, Metal...). Music is, like many other fields (art history for example), divided into different genres. These classifications help us to speak or write about music, because they directly give us clues about what a piece should sound like, because each classification has its own set of codes. Those codes are very important tools because the music can now switch from the ear to the eye. The gazes of people involved also mediate these classifications of music, as Michael Werner states that: *“(...) stylistic affinities can perform many functions, of course, but in mass culture they always involve adopting a differential*

stance toward the field of their circulation. Characterizations of that field are the stuff of performed stances that can range from immersion to irony or aggressivity, in a way that always has some affective charge: hipness, normalcy, hilarity, currency, quaintness, freakishness, and so on."⁵⁸

Following this logic, music is visualized in many ways (ways of behavior, ways of dressing, and ways of language, etc.). The most important visual codes are those used for interaction with other people: language, and foremost, clothes. A punk has a wholly different style of dressing or social behavior than a rapper. These distinctions help to form a collective body that is only visible for those who are familiar with it, or as Warner states further:

*"The achievement of this cultural form is to allow participants in its discourse to understand themselves as directly and actively belonging to a social entity that exists historically in secular time and has consciousness of itself, though it has no existence apart from the activity of its own discursive circulation."*⁵⁹

Gig posters also play a role in the formation of some sort of collective body. Gig poster artists can draw on certain codes to connect with certain types of concert audiences. A large number of codes have evolved to depict different musical styles, but today, there are more and more artists refusing to use the old stereotypical codes and are searching for new ways. However, why change an old but functioning system? What does the mixture or the restructuring of codes and classifications tools provoke in a gig poster?

Let me come back to a very important and well-known term in this context: taste. Taste is a term that is itself problematic in an objective scientific analysis, because taste leads us to subjectivity, making it harder to write in an objective and neutral manner.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, at this point we are not talking about the term itself, but rather about its influence on the formation of classifications in music and the visual depiction of music.

The depiction of music works as a code (like special clothing can work as a code), it delivers the allegiance of the ear to the eye, so that people who are familiar with these codes can be attracted by sight instead of hearing. This forms a rather loose

⁵⁸ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York, 2002, p.102.

⁵⁹ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York, 2002, p.105.

⁶⁰ See for example "Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006", „Pierre Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede*, Frankfurt am Main, 1987“, or "Le goût c'est moi. Überlegungen zum Geschmack (2009)" in: Isabelle Graw, *Texte zur Kunst - Essays, Rezensionen, Gespräche*, Hamburg, 2011“.

community that mostly meets at concerts. Taste is a very important term within a community, since it conveys a feeling of being special and unique to the people who belong. Isabelle Graw states in this context, that the process of socialization can be held responsible for the belief that everybody has his/her own distinctive taste, a very subjective principle that, nevertheless, implies the term community.⁶¹

Following this logic, every community functions by its own set of codes. They may be for the clothes one wears, the music one listens to, or a gig poster that is produced for a certain event. Taste is a very powerful term that also implies separation. It is very important to separate oneself by stylistic codes, to be able to distinguish oneself from others.

This brings up one main question: are there a certain sets of codes for certain types of music? Do gig posters visualize the classification of music?

V. II. Codes of Lust and Desire.

V. II. I. The Commercialization of the Body.

Max Gallo states that posters affect our dreams and awake our desires. The poster has to mediate something and addresses our secret weaknesses that we are not aware of. It has to use a certain code that fits to us.⁶²

Desires plays an enormous role in our dreams, our wishes – in other words in our world. Not only in our private, but also especially in the public world – the world that surrounds us every day. Desires are used by commercials to reach and attract the, foremost male, viewer. These commercials shape the public and even private sphere. For many years now publicity, for example, has developed a stereotypical frame of how

⁶¹ „Le goût c'est moi. Überlegungen zum Geschmack (2009)“ in: Isabelle Graw, Texte zur Kunst - Essays, Rezensionen, Gespräche, Hamburg, 2011, p.119.

“Ganz im Gegenteil ist es der Sozialisationsprozess, der verantwortlich dafür ist, dass jeder glaubt, über einen ganz eigenen, unverwechselbaren Geschmack zu verfügen. In dieser Überzeugung, dass sich im Geschmack das radikal individuell Besondere artikuliert, ist aber auch etwas Zutreffendes festgehalten. Denn der Geschmack ist ein subjektives Prinzip - nur ist eben auch Gemeinschaft in ihm enthalten.”

⁶² Max Gallo, Geschichte der Plakate mit einem Aufsatz über „Die Entwicklung der Plakate“ von Carlo Arturo Quintavalle, Milan, 1975, p.9.

“Plakate beeinflussen unsere Träume und wecken unsere Wünsche. Damit ein Plakat wirksam ist, muss es uns etwas sagen und geheime Schwächen ansprechen, deren nicht einmal wir selbst uns bewusst sind. Es muss einen Code benutzen, der dem unseren entspricht.”

someone should look. People tend to believe that what they see and hear in advertising is the latest trend, and somehow derived from the people as a whole.

Advertisement imposes created values, made up by the industry, to make people believe they should look a certain way or eat certain things. Sexuality plays an important role in this mechanism. The industry imposes stereotypical representations of male and female. They create a perception of what a body should look like in a broad audience through TV, billboards and magazines. These depictions are everywhere and are strictly adapted to specific cultures. One might think that different cultural surroundings shape the body images that commercials try to impose. This was true for a long time, but due to the linking of the world, through processes of globalization, the body images and the depiction of sex in one culture now influences others.

Posters play a big part in this business. They are everywhere, as the size of a truck on Billboards, hung on construction sites, fences, bus stops, or in the metro, simply everywhere one can address the public in the most efficient way. In addition, this most efficient way deals with the question of how certain advertising attracts a person's view. One of the answers is the use of stereotypical representations of women and men, meaning that the ideal naked body has played an important role in the poster, since its first commercial appearance.

These early posters did not only promote commercial goods, but also shows and events. Especially in music, a field dominated by men, the poster became an epitome of sexuality. The male view should preferentially be attracted, for it is the man who earns money and can go out evenings to enjoy for example, concerts. Nevertheless, since the invention of electrified music instruments and the occurrence of sociopolitical changes, musicians and artists tried to break conventions and free themselves from their stereotypical constraints. In this chapter, I discuss some examples of modern gig posters that work with sexuality. It does not matter which country they are from, as I only focus on the forms used to get people's attention, to get them to concerts. What are these forms and why are they used? What is the difference between the stereotypical representations of men and the stereotypical representations of women? Why is it important to have a difference between the representations of men and women? One crucial point is that, in most cases, the images, artworks, and posters, or simply put the visualization of the music forms this stereotypical differentiation between genders. The music itself is what you get at the concert; the poster exists to get you to buy a ticket; to spend money.

V. II. II. Stereotypical Representations of the Female Body.

The gig poster scene has long been a male-dominated field closely linked to a patriarchal order and which has not yet been able to free itself totally from sexism. It has become clear that there is, even in this independent poster scene, use of stereotypical presentations of men and especially women.

In the 1960s, when the foundations of gig poster were laid, the music that was most popular in the youth culture was rock music. One integral part of rock was rebellion against normal life, its rules and obligations. Musicians tried to shock society with their music, lyrics, looks, and their beliefs. This shock made it possible for individuals to break with the society they were part of. This also meant a search for symbols that would deliberately trigger a feeling of uneasiness – symbols of religion, death, the animalistic nature of the human, or nudity.

This created strong forms of stereotypical visualizations, symbols of death and of *vanitas* (skulls, bones, etc.), machines (visualization of freedom, motorcycles, cars), religion and its counterparts (Satan, hell, the revival of old religions worshipping nature), the animal nature of the human (animals, heads of animals, hybrids between animal and human) and, as said before, nudity (nearly or completely nude women). Through the years, those codes were often copied and reused. The depiction of nude women in particular became very dominant. Why, however? Why was, and still is, the female body so important for gig posters? To be able to answer these questions adequately, one has to search in the past.

As mentioned before, innovations that were made in the 1960s can be seen as sources for the modern gig poster. Before this time, concert posters only functioned in the simplest way: a reproduction of the artist's face and a text, or no figurative elements just text in large fonts. The focus was to deliver information as quickly and as legibly as possible.

The innovations of the 1960s were based on the growing popularity of posters with figurative representations and on the rise of a new youth culture, the hippies. They searched for a way to criticize society and its rulers – the system as a whole – and found multiple ways to do that. One main point was consolidated in the term freedom; the

search for freedom through refusal to be a part of the mechanisms of society, the freedom to use drugs and to explore one's own sexuality. This ideology needed some sort of visualization to be visible in public using concert posters. The main difference to those made before is that the front man/woman of a musical group was no longer present on the poster. It was not about one person, the star, but mostly about a feeling, mediated by colorful designs (there were of course some exceptions, as the poster for Jimi Hendrix by German artist Günther Kieser (Fig. 3)).

The music of the hippie movement also tried to capture the feeling of freedom. Psychedelic clouds of musical tones, and political or satirical lyrics were standard for the music of the 60s. One main aspect of this movement was its peacefulness. "Make love not war" and "flower power" were just two slogans. Peace and flowers against war and its arms was one of the main intentions for the hippies. They soon found a creative input for their visualization: Art Nouveau, and especially the well-known work of Alfons Mucha.⁶³ The colors, the flowers and the unreal pictorial world fit perfectly for creating a visual language for this new movement. Many artists working in the 60s drew on Mucha's work and his female figures: Victor Moscoso, Peter Brailey, Bob Masse and Wes Wilson, to name but a few. Mucha's work inspired them all, and much worse, many copied the style of Mucha to a certain extent. At this point, I have to recall Babara Martin, who reveals the problematic with Mucha's work and the female body. She states that his 'sensual and enraptured female figures are blown up to 'glorified seductresses' that elevate the banal advertising message. Their appearance suggests luxury and opulence; terms which should be connected to the advertised product. Primarily, the woman is, by that, stylized into an admirable idol – the artist is following the artistic jargon of his time and transfigures, as usual in the 19th century, the woman into an ideal that could not be more remote from everyday life.⁶⁴ This ideal but unreal picture of the female body is visible in many old, but also many new gig posters.

⁶³ Mucha's work was so influential for the early gig poster movement in the 60s because he not only designed six posters for Sarah Bernhards productions, which she later used for her tours across Europe (except for Germany) and the USA, but also because he stayed in the US from 1904 until 1906. During this time, he worked as a docent in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, and for the New York Times. Mucha was one of the Art Nouveau artists who introduced this art form, and furthermore his distinguished style, to a broader audience in the USA.

⁶⁴ Babara Martin, *Zwischen Verklärung und Verführung, Die Frau in der französischen Plakatkunst des späten 19. Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld, 2016, p.387.

"Muchas ebenso sinnliche wie entrückte Frauenfiguren werden (...) zu ,verklärten Verführerinnen', die die an sich banale Werbebotschaft überhöhen. Ihr Erscheinungsbild suggeriert Luxus und Opulenz, die assoziativ mit dem beworbenen Produkt verbunden werden sollen. Vor allem wird jedoch die Frau selbst zu einem anbetungswürdigen Idol stilisiert – der Künstler ist hierin ganz Kind seiner Zeit, verklärte man doch im 19. Jahrhundert die Frau mehr als je zuvor zu einer lebensfernen Idealgestalt."

The poster for a 1967 concert by the band “The Grateful Dead”, made by Bob Masse, perfectly illustrates the influence of Mucha. (Fig. 4) The playful framing, the geometric forms mixed with floral elements, the use of the female body, and the colors all can be seen as reminiscent of Mucha.

Masse stays with his stereotypical female depictions and still uses them more than thirty years later in his poster for a concert by “Bob Dylan and Paul Simon” in 1999. He is a perfect example of a male poster artist who has always worked in this stereotypical and male-dominated patriarchal system and is clearly comfortable with it. He seem to stuck with old traditions and even copied in this poster Mucha’s work “Tanz” (Dance) from 1898. (Fig. 5 and 6) This poster is divided into three parts. In the upper part, two triangles appear on the left and right sides. Their function is to frame a circular area that nearly touches the upper and lateral edges of the poster. A rectangular form shapes the lower part of that circle, which extends to the bottom of the poster. A pink, blue and brown background fills these areas and a brown border frames them all (except for the circle). Flowers and butterflies adorn the upper triangles. The lower part only shows ornamental elements in the borders. Here they are limited due to the representation of the woman, which extends into the circle. Her torso and head are in the middle. The figure of the woman looks directly into the eyes of the viewer. A light red blanket covers her body but barely her breasts. Her hair is full of flowers and adapts to the form of the circle. The circle itself opens at the lower end and broadens at the upper one. Architectural elements frame the border and its colors (blue, brown, green, red) stick out of the total composition.

It is nearly an exact copy of Mucha’s “Tanz”. This implies some dangers, as Brian Harrigan notes, because the representations of Bernhardt create a stereotypical ideal of female beauty and youthfulness that will not reveal any profound emotions or an individual personality. The mimic expression of the figures exhausts itself into the dreamy glimpses and the ever-same lovely smile.⁶⁵

Masse is not only important in this context because he refers to Mucha, but also because he is regarded as an originator of modern poster design. This means that many modern poster artists refer to Masse, and indirectly to Mucha. Many other artists have adopted his “style” for many different musical styles. A perfect example is a poster for the band “Black Sabbath” from 1971. (Fig. 7) The composition is based on a design by

⁶⁵ Babara Martin, *Zwischen Verklärung und Verführung, Die Frau in der französischen Plakatkunst des späten 19. Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld, 2016, p.369-370.

Masse, but put into a different setting. The beautiful and lovely dancing woman who is connatural to nature, becomes a sinister one – some sort of witch. The woman's blanket now turns into a bundle of demons, skulls and a dead woman. The lateral cartouches, once filled with interlaced ornament, now show depictions of naked women and occult rituals in architectural surroundings.

This design visualizes the feeling of a new uprising musical style – Heavy Metal. Black Sabbath and many others fought the hypocrisy of the hippie movement:

*"(...) Black Sabbath was penned as an antidote to the peace and love idea, which was still floating around then. In characteristic style the band was sick of that notion and decided to write about the world as they, the band, thought it was."*⁶⁶

Not only was it important to write about the cruel reality, but it was also important to visualize it. This mixture (the artistic conception of Masse, who himself drew on Mucha, and the mixture between Art Deco and new forms) triggered a mass of posters with these stereotypical formal terms. The mainstream music business took up these formal codes and used them for its own needs. This is one of the reasons why so many posters artists have used, and are still using, the nude female body.

The use of the female body results from a long tradition of upgrading the music's visual aesthetic for the male gaze and for regulating power relations in a patriarchal society. The suppression of women playing in bands, or even going to concerts, becomes visible. In this ideal, only men are musicians and men attend concerts. That is why the naked female body has been so important. The music business uses these formal codes on a regular basis. The female body serves as a display for the male fantasies, but never in a revolutionary or independent way. The male part, the gaze, is always more important than the female one. The predominance of the male gaze has long been the subject of scientific research, such as in the work of Laura Mulvey, who has examined the fetishized view of the female body in the medium film.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Brian Harrigan, Malcom Dome, Encyclopedia Metallica. The Bible of Heavy Metal Music, London/NewYork/Sydney, 1981, p.13.

"Wie in den Darstellungen Bernhards wird das reale Vorbild (...) in ein stereotypisches Idealbild weiblicher Schönheit und Jugendlichkeit überführt, das keinerlei tief greifende Emotionen oder eine individuelle Persönlichkeit offenbart. Der mimische Ausdruck der Figuren erschöpft sich vielmehr in verträumten Blicken und dem immer gleichen, lieblichen Lächeln."

⁶⁷ See, for example, Laura Mulvey's essay „Visual Pleasure and narrative Cinema“ from 1975 in which she focuses on the dominance of the male gaze on the female body in hollywood movies. In: Bill Nichols (ed.): Movies and Methods, Volume II, London, 1985, p.303-314.

This male dominance emphasizes the picture of the strong and inviolable person. On the one side, there is the man – creator, destroyer, and on the other, the attractive woman who is not supposed to say anything, but to please her man.

The music industry deliberately uses these fantasies and enhances them. The male consumer is led to internalize this stereotypical depiction of the strong man with his beautiful woman, which he does not mind adopting.

V. II. III. Rethinking Stereotypical Representations of the Female Body.

Nevertheless, an increasing number of artists are fighting against these stereotypical representations in their own work, but instead of denying them, they are using them for their own purposes. The contemporary concert poster scene can draw on a long tradition of female artists such as Bonnie Maclean (born 1939, Philadelphia, USA), Luba Lukova (born 1960, Plovdiv, Bulgaria) or Tara McPherson (born 1976, San Francisco, USA). However, I chose three male artists for my research because they have a wider range of works that are easily accessible. In addition, interviews and articles about these artists are easier to find, as they are very popular in the gig poster scene. In a further discussion of the topic, it would certainly make sense to deal only with female poster artists, but this would be the subject of a separate examination. Furthermore, the question of how contemporary male gig poster artists deal with topics such as sexism in such a patriarchal art direction seemed very interesting and so they actually seem to exaggerate and develop this normative stereotypical visualization to a point where it becomes ironic. This ironic appropriation evokes new forms of representation and can trigger a new understanding of these codes by the viewer. On the other hand, there is the ongoing danger that this newly developed formal language will also be adopted and monetized by the mainstream music industry and, in that way, becomes a new norm and loses its subversive irony. Artists try to prevent this with simple measures: they create networks, share studios and the equipment they need to work. Those networks not only form an alternative to the mechanisms of the music industry, but furthermore an independent entity that is hard to breach. The resulting gig posters are protected by copyright. Nevertheless, this does not prevent the music

business from adopting and adapting designs, to attain a similar impact. It is, so to speak, a copying mainstream, but more on that later.

Artists can organize themselves and do not have to obey any superior or music business. They can remain independent and do not have to visualize stereotypical perceptions. The artist Rob Jones produces his gig posters in this context.⁶⁸ He has developed his own formal language, which serves as a source of inspiration for many other artists.

Nowadays, he is especially known for his unique designs made for certain bands – namely every band that the singer, guitarist and songwriter Jack White has founded (The White Stripes, The Raconteurs, The Death Weather, and Jack White). Only a few other bands have managed to work with him (Arcade Fire for example). In his early phase, however, he worked with many bands and his style was not as developed. It was strongly reminiscent of the visual language of Frank Kozik - a style that was itself strongly reminiscent of comics. This is why the texture of the poster in his early works seems very flat, because every color had its own separate field. Nevertheless, his ironic commentaries on stereotypical representations were already present in his early works, without having developed his own style yet.

The Rob Jones Poster for the band “Electric Six” (at Rock City, 29 November 2004) is a perfect example of these early works. (Fig. 8) He not only cites Masse’s formal language, but also more importantly treats this influence ironically. Firstly, one notices the shape of the circle (as seen before as an essential form in art deco and in the designs of Bob Masse). It frames the male figure that is confronting the spectator. Jones alters the function of the circle and transforms it into a sort of nimbus, framed by one hundred-dollar bills. The male figure - seminude, dressed in jeans and characterized by two wings - holds a cigarette in his left hand and a pink electric eel that is coming out of his pants in his right one. The figure seems to be some sort of personification of a new saint, a capitalistic and vulgar one that holds his genitalia, which has the animal form of an electric eel.

The background splits into an upper and a lower part. A kind of grid fills the upper one, which resembles the front of skyscrapers. In the lower part, much more is going on. Godzilla stands on the left and a female figure leans on a balcony on the right side. A black line emerges, which leads the viewer into another background filled with

⁶⁸ Rob Jones is an artist that makes a big secret about his personal live. His biography on his homepage is clearly made up. He lives and works in Austin, Texas.

tanks. On the level of the previously mentioned electric eel, two female figures flank the male one. The left one crawls towards the viewer, while the right one is looking towards the altered genitalia. Although the body has female attributes, the face of this particular figure cannot be associated with the female physiognomy. It seems more like a male face fixed on a female body.

The last detail in this picture is an upside-down depiction of the stylized reverse side of the great seal of the United States on the one-dollar bill: the eye of providence with the Latin inscription "*annuit coeptis*" and "*novus ordo seclorum*".⁶⁹ (Fig. 9)

It becomes clear that Jones has filled this poster with a lot of hidden meanings, but what could they be?

The band "Electric Six" is famous for playing with political correctness in their lyrics. However, they tear down stereotypical classifications by exaggerating them until they become absurd. Queerness, sexual orientation or fetishes are only a few topics that stand out in their agenda. This attitude is visible in the poster. Jones questions male dominance in the music scene through the sheer dominance of the male figure that is inspired by its own aura consisting of money. The hint of the skyscraper, home and symbol of power for many companies and, even more so capital, contribute to this interpretation. The lower part of the poster brings the whole composition to an extreme with the use of violence and sexism. The tanks and war machines are codes for masculinity and they form the background for the main male figure. The two female figures are lolling, in a very lascivious way, on this background. The male dominance and violence serves as breeding ground for sexism in music and its business. On top of that, the male figure expels the reversed eye of providence.

One could say that this depiction is a metaphorical representation of the music business (or even better, of every business governed by money), an apparatus of capital and power that subjugates, exploits and is grounded on violence to claim its supremacy. "Only the strongest will survive" – and this stands exemplarily for strong male sexuality and dominance.

This is but just one possible semantic level of this poster. The absurd is another motif that is part of this poster. The visualization of the male genitalia as an electric eel is part of the absurd. Its pink color contrasts with the background. More importantly: the color pink is stereotypically strongly connected with femininity. The stereotypical

⁶⁹ Mostly „*Annuit coeptis*“ is translated by „Providence favors our undertakings“ and „*novus ordo seclorum*“ by „a new order of the ages“.

male depiction is reversed. The dominant masculinity seems to transform into a mixture of both sexes and a type of animality – into a certain queerness.

The female figure on the right side seems to join the main figure in this sexual twist. She possesses an obviously female body, but her face is not classically feminine. It seems to be a male face, a simple way of creating a feeling of discomfort. The mixture between male and female body can allude to the homosexuality of the alter ego of Rob Jones.⁷⁰ It cannot be denied that sexuality has an important role in the fore and background of this gig poster.

This interpretation of the important role of the sexuality goes even further. One can talk about male and female sides of this poster. The left side, with the figure on the balcony and the woman with the male head could symbolize the female side. The sexual desire vis-à-vis manhood, but also womanhood, and the resting and observing moment could indicate female attributes, especially in comparison with the right side, which includes childish elements mixed with violence and power. The depiction of Godzilla connects those attributes perfectly altogether. The naked female body shows the sexual desire towards femininity. The male figure in the middle, flanked by capital (money), seems the epitome of the maintenance of stereotypical role models for the male and female. Those with money, force and power shape the society we live in. In addition, because these power holders are mostly men, it is not surprising that they want to keep this stereotypical status quo alive. It seems that Jones has implemented these ideologies and significations into this poster and tried, using certain forms and content (the pink eel, a symbolized replacement for the male genitalia), to drive them ad absurdum to satirize this worldview and its actors.

The pastiche of existing power relations in society is also a predominant element in the image of the band itself. “Electric Six” addresses taboo subjects in their texts, videos and live performances. Their most famous song “Gay Bar” intentionally targets the male canon of rock and tries to loosen it up. The use of the absurd is as dominant in the band as it is in the work of Jones. A perfect example is the artistic name of the front man Tayler Spacer: Dick Valentine. Sexuality stands in the foreground and it does not matter which gender one belongs to.

⁷⁰ On his homepage, Jones lists a chapter called “About Us“, in which one can read his biography. It sounds like a made up story about his alter ego - this would explain the title “About Us“. <https://www.animalrummy.com/pages/about-us>

Rob Jones and this poster are famous in the gig poster scene. In this context, Todd Slater, also a highly renowned artist in the world of gig posters, states:

*"He's the art world's bizarro version of Liberace I think. Or maybe the version of Mick Jagger he drew in his Electric Six print from a decade ago. If you've met him you know that's him. Shirt off, well coiffed hair, smoke in one hand and massive electric eel cock in the other."*⁷¹

It is important to notice that this poster comes from the early creative period of Jones, which ended circa between 2005 and 2006. As mentioned before, this period is clearly influenced by Frank Kozik and his comic style, but with one difference: the construction of sophisticated and significant content.

This depiction fundamentally changed in his later works. His humorous critique of predominant power relations in society has since vanished from his gig posters, as has the comic style. One cannot say exactly what has moved Jones to this step. Perhaps he no longer felt it necessary to question the roles of man and woman in the gig poster. Perhaps he has also recognized that such 'taboo' topics could hinder the success of his posters. Regardless of his possible motives, he has reduced the painterly gestures even more, to favorite stylistic elements of collage and copperplate engraving. These stylistic elements help to form a certain set of codes that are inherent to Rob Jones. These codes are not distinct from one poster to another, but create more of a permanent link between all these posters. The codes as stylistic elements seem to be composed out of many different fragments of newspapers or image fragments, but the appearance is deceiving. All his posters are well-structured compositions generated in the imagination of the artist himself.

Many artists have tried to develop a different discourse about sexuality in their gig posters – for example Jermaine Rogers.⁷² He is one of those gig poster artists who use the figure of the naked female body quite often and Mucha's influence seems to be inherent in Rogers work. Nevertheless, in an interview with the "Intravaneous Scene Magazine" he clearly states, that he tries to oppose simple reuse of content when he mentioned the term 'standard concert poster' which he described as a poster: *"(...) that all young guys think that they have to repeatedly crank out to get 'noticed'. Naked girls with huge breasts, some sort of drug activity going on, hot-rods, flames, skulls,*

⁷¹ Interview by Chris Jalufka on the website eviltender.com.
<http://eviltender.com/2014/12/03/gig-poster-as-artifact-interview-with-illustrator-todd-slater/>

⁷² Jermaine Rogers was born on the 14th of October 1972. He lives and works in Houston Texas.

pentagrams, monsters (...). (...) As long as GUYS exist, naked girls and fast cars will be eaten up 'en masse'."⁷³

Rogers continues by saying that he is interested in other ways of visualization, because these posters are all: *"(...) pretty to see and the technique and line-art is wonderful. But it's 'dead' art. It says and 'feels' nothing. (...) I mean, some guys do poster after poster of really grisly looking monsters. I mean, they draw great monsters, but that's all they do. It's like they can't generate any other ideas, so they go with what works."*

In this significant quote, we understand that the work of Jones connects with my argument, that there are gig poster artists who want to break out of stereotypical representations (of sexuality) and norms and try to create new and individual styles, methods, and vocabularies.

In his poster for "Ween, The Flaming Lips and Go! Team", on July 22nd 2006 at the Greek Theatre in Berkeley, he uses a different way of dealing with gender. (Fig. 10) On a white background, two figures are represented. The left one has a face that looks female, but two large horns bedeck its head. The lower body consists of eight long arms, which reminds one of the arms of an octopus without any texture. These arms are embracing the other body on the right side. That one has a bold mannish face and its lower body only consists of three wings and two small arms with little hands. These hands are touching the other body and the two faces are kissing each other. It seems like a love scene between two different monsters. Jermaine's statement, cited earlier, tells us that he does not want to just make monsters or stereotypical representations of what "guys" want to see. As with the code that is driven by sexuality, the code of the ornament and the fantastic also play a significant role in this discussion.

⁷³ Interview with INTRAVANEIOUS SCENE Magazine, Spring 2001.
<http://www.jermainerogers.com/interviews.html#intra>

V. III. Codes of the Ornamental.

V. III. I. The Ornament.

Two very important codes that has to be mentioned at this point is what I would call the ornamental. First, I would like to elaborate on what I mean by an ornamental code considering the field of gig posters. Ornament is a helpful tool for artists to highlight the depictions, which are mostly situated in the middle of the poster, and by that, gives the whole structure a frame. It also has an important role for the typographical part of the poster. The font can be an ornamental element or can be highlighted by ornamental elements. This code is rather used for trivial poster design that is built more on visual recognition than on content. As Greenberg would put it, more on effect than on cause.

Nevertheless, the ornamental can serve as a form of memory, used as a reminder of forms created before – a certain form of recollection. These forms created before are mostly part of well-known and accepted works of art. This is because the artist then has the possibility to ground their work in a historical discourse, without considering, that these works of art itself originated out of an elitist and bourgeois milieu. The use of specific colors, patterns or formal repetitions can create a reference point for the spectator as forms of memory. It can create the outlines of the context in which the poster is set. Barbara Martin mentions the use of forms of memory, by referring to the flower women of Alfons Mucha. They obtain an ornamental function, because after Martin, Mucha's depictions of the femme-fleur do not only evoke the contemporary idea of the natural 'closeness to nature' and the originality of the female character, but those "blossom dreams" gain, in their ornamental stylization, a much more decorative function.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, Martin does not speak of an ornamental code, but she nonetheless points towards a figurative repetition of content that, over time, loses its meaning. A visual reference to works of other artists anchored in the collective memory. Gig poster artist construct posters that use forms and colors that are part of the collective memory,

⁷⁴ Babara Martin, *Zwischen Verklärung und Verführung, Die Frau in der französischen Plakatkunst des späten 19. Jahrhunderts*, Bielefeld, 2016, p.384.

"Muchas Darstellungen der femme-fleur evozieren jedoch weniger zeitgenössische Vorstellungen von der unverbildeten 'Naturnähe' und Ursprünglichkeit des weiblichen Wesens. In ihrer ornamentalen Stilisierung erfüllen die ins Bild gesetzten "Blütenträume" vielmehr wiederum eine in erster Linie dekorative Funktion."

so they can attract much more attention, because people tend to look at things that seem familiar.

Nonetheless, one has to state that only few artists really know how to use the code of the ornamental. Most artists work out a motif, placed frontally on the poster. A background (distinction in color, other surroundings) then mostly underlines this motif. In some cases, the background no longer plays any role. The only thing that should be pointed out is the motif itself.

Simply put, the use of ornament has two main functions: first as a background, that frames and highlights the main illustration, and secondly to make the design seems familiar to the spectator by using forms that are part of the collective memory. It is important to notice that the ornament is to be understood differently in the context of the gig poster. Ornament in art and architecture is often equated with decadence. In his work *"Ornament and crime"* from 1908, for example, Loos speaks out against the ornament. He means that this is just meaningless opulence. Ornamentlessness, on the other hand, is for him a sign of the modern mind. According to Loos, modern man can develop his full artistic potential only in the absence of ornament.⁷⁵

For the field of gig posters however, the ornament serves more of a hallmark of a well-educated artist who is well-versed in art and culture.

V. III. II. The Ornamental Code in Gig Posters.

Gig poster artist Michael Hacker has developed his own way of dealing with the information that must be visible on a gig poster.⁷⁶ His approach is to always include the name of the band and any extra information needed as an ornamental element. Furthermore, ornament is an illustrative element that serves as a sort of support for the main illustration. In this way, the illustration becomes inseparable from the ornament.

A gig poster for the band "High on Fire" is a good example of this mixture of ornament and main illustration. (Fig. 11) The lower part of the poster presents the main figures: an alien, a man (whose look seems quite crazed), Cthulhu, a female body with a goat head, some sort of a priest, and a crocodile. They are sitting around a table that has a hexagram in its center. In the middle of this hexagram, an open eye releases some

⁷⁵ Franz Glück (Hg.), Adolf Loos: Sämtliche Schriften in zwei Bänden – Erster Band, Wien, München, 1962, p. 276 – 288.

⁷⁶ Michael Hacker was born in Feldkirch, Austria in 1981. He lives in works in Berlin.

sort of smoke up in the air. This smoke forms the name of the band “High on Fire”, which occupies the complete upper half. The extra information stands in the lower part of the table. The name of the band, and the date and place of the concert, are now all part of the composition. The text, which transfers the important information to the spectator, is no longer an alien body. It is an important and integral part of the story of the poster. Text that blends into the overall design of the poster is an important factor for Michael Hacker. It holds all the different parts of gig poster together, so it can become a unity, not a mere poster with an unfitting font.

Michael Hacker states in this context, that there are many artists that sell the original poster as an art print, after erasing the name of the band, the date and the place of the show that was written on it. A procedure that is nearly impossible with his posters, because this approach would destroy the narrative. It is difficult to remove something. Therefore, gig posters are, as goes for Michael Hacker, always a closed work of art.⁷⁷

The expression of a closed work of art is, nonetheless, not only an artistic preference; it also enables the poster to become unique. Its strict limitation, made for only one concert, brings up even more similarities between gig posters and art prints in terms of privileging singular objects/commodities. This simple stratagem makes the poster more interesting to collectors and buyers, because it stands out compared to those posters made for multiple concerts. Some artists design posters with open fields on them. This place is blank to allow space for various concert venues, dates and support acts. Following this logic, the poster is not made for one concert only, but for many, and the band saves money and time that they would have had to invest into the search for other artists.

As we now have seen an example of the décor as part of an illustration, we can move on to the décor as part of the illustration and a form of memory. Hacker’s gig poster for a concert by the bands “The Pixies, The Eagles of Death Metal and Whitney” at the Palladium in Los Angeles on the 13th of December 2017 not only presents the décor as integral part of the poster, but also as a recourse to old religious codices from the Middle Ages. (Fig. 12) The poster looks like a page of an old codex, with a big initial letter that nearly fills the whole poster. This initial is the letter “P”, which stands

⁷⁷ Michael Hacker in an Interview in Berlin on the 16th of January 2017.

“Es gibt viele Künstler, die das ursprüngliche Poster als Kunstdruck verkaufen, davor aber den Bandnamen, das Datum und das Venue herausretuschieren. Das funktioniert bei meinen Postern fast nie, da sonst das Narrativ zerstört werden würde. Da fällt es schwer etwas zu entfernen. Gig Poster sind demnach für mich fast immer eine abgeschlossene Geschichte.”

for the band name “Pixies”. Different creatures (skulls, a rabbit with an axe and a human head, a fish with legs, etc.) and arabesques surround it. The middle space of the “P” shows a representation of the band and their instruments. They are all depicted as saints with a nimbus over their heads (except for the singer, who is decapitated and holds his loose head in his own hands). The rest of the word “Pixies”, the names of the other bands, the venue and the date are situated in a small rectangular space at the lower right side of the poster. This field is divided by nine horizontal lines and two vertical lines on the left and right side and resembles the spacing in old codices, as does the font, which can also be seen as a remembrance of this historical format. In this poster, the ornament is not only one of the main protagonists; it also adapts an old stylistic form that functions as a form of memory. Colors, special forms and arrangement of the décor can imitate other stylistics from a different period anchored in the collective visual memory of the people. This means that the design of the poster seems familiar to the spectator, which evokes greater attention from them. Something that is known and familiar always triggers a positive and secure feeling. This approach catches the eye of the spectator much more easily.

Other gig poster artists have tried to develop similar ways of working with the ornament on different levels, but in their own unique style.

Rob Jones, for example, uses the code of the ornamental quite often. This may derive from his passion for old movies and for referring to works of art and artists. Some of his gig posters for the band “The Dead Weather” clearly show the use of ornament to create a setting based on certain influences.

The poster for “The Dead Weather” on July the 16th at the TMR Store in New York shows us references to one specific movie that he cites (Fig. 13). The poster consists of a woman’s face with the nose and the mouth being the only visible parts. Some sort of armor covers the rest of the face. When looking closer, one realizes that the armor is nothing less than the same automatic handgun, reproduced repeatedly, over and over again. The different placements and overlapping frame the face and give it its form. Looking even closer, one can see that the left side of the poster is just a reflection of the right side. This leads to a large number of overlaid guns, and a reduction of the human face. The human body loses its humanity and forms a symbiosis with a machine, the gun. The way Rob Jones assembles the guns is comparable to the art déco style, especially in architecture (as the façade or interior of the Chrysler Building).

The feeling of the era of art déco - the departure into a modern time, innovations in urban construction (skyscrapers) and technologies - is inherent in the design of Rob Jones. However, there is another semantic level in this gig poster. The role of the human that has merged with the machine is a canon that has often been the topic of science fiction. Especially the use of the face of a woman reminds us of the film “Metropolis” by Fritz Lang. (Fig. 14) This film, created at the pinnacle of art déco in the United States, dealt with the fusion of human and machine, futuristic cities and new technologies. The development of artificial intelligence is rapidly growing in today’s world. Houses, cars, phones and more utilities that define our everyday lives are getting “smart”. Machines capable of thinking and learning are no longer from a fantastic utopia but reality. This fast development, which has taken place in a very short period, seems dangerous. People are willingly giving up their privacy for new “smart” utilities that simplify their lives. Machines are assuming tasks from us and we might forget how to do certain things. The time will or has already come, where humans are dependent on artificial intelligence, and there is no way back. The guns depicted in Jones poster seem an indirect critique of the power we give to modern technology. This power can become uncontrollable, when it comes to terms such as “learning artificial intelligence”.⁷⁸

This fear of the “rise of the machines” is nevertheless a topic that has been a center of attention in popular culture for decades (as mentioned before, in the film *Metropolis*, in many comics, in literature as for example the book by Herbert George Wells “The War of the Worlds,” or in the fine arts with futurism, which tried to depict in a positive way a time of fast growth, innovations paired with war and machines).

The use of the ornament as an expression of utopias brings us to another important “sidekick” of the ornamental code: the fantastic.

⁷⁸ See for example the Google company “DeepMind“, which works with supercomputers and software that allows them to create solutions to problems on their own. Another example would be Google voice programs, which are able to communicate independently with other humans, without sounding unnatural in the pronunciation of words or phrases.
<https://deepmind.com/>

V. IV. Codes of the Fantastic.

V. IV. I. The Fantastic as a Retreat from the Sphere of the Real.

The fantastic is another code that is closely linked to ornament, because, besides being the main motif of a poster, it can take over the role of the ornament. First, the fantastic describes everything that differs from the rational part of the world. Myths, fables, comics or science fiction, are all included in the fantastic. However, why is this such an important code? Why are there so many artists drawing on it?

Generally, one can say that this code seems to suppress preoccupation with the sphere of the real. By this, I mean that most gig posters do not deal with political or social issues occurring today, but seem to flee to a surreal world full of myths and fantastic creatures. When asked about this topic, the artist Michael Hacker stated that he thinks that in Rock and Metal many musicians refer in their texts to authors such as H.P. Lovecraft who is known for his gloomy literature that deal with rites, monsters and myths. A perfect source of inspiration for music that wants to convey these feelings. Hacker does not believe this implies some sort of revolt but rather an escape from or denial of reality, which he finds very congenial. In this context, he also mentions the term “nerd” that has gained in popularity over the past few years. Hacker thinks that many musicians, as artists, are just “nerds” who try to construct their own world by artistic means.⁷⁹

The construction of one’s own world might be a very important point in this discussion. Music mostly speaks to one main sense, hearing. The listener, no longer confronted with stable or fixed images, can create their own visual perceptions of the sound. As Hacker says, it is mostly in Rock and Metal where this code of the fantastic becomes manifest. This might be due to the history of gig posters (as seen in chapter III.I., with the negation of the colorful and joyful depictions of the hippie era by metal

⁷⁹ Michael Hacker in an interview in Berlin on the 16th of January 2017.

“Ich denke gerade an den Rock und Metal Bereich, wie viele Musiker sich in ihren Texten auf Autoren wie H.P. Lovecraft beziehen und darüber ganze Konzeptalben schreiben. Es ist keine Revolte, aber es ist ein bisschen eine Flucht und Negierung der Realität, was ich sehr sympathisch finde. Der Begriff des Nerds, ist ja heute schon eher positiv konnotiert. Ich denke, dass ganz viele Musiker, wie auch Künstler, eigentlich auch nur Nerds sind, die ihre eigene Welt erschaffen.”

bands such as Black Sabbath). Dark, deep tones, driving rhythms and sinister texts also inspire our brain in a different way than happy cheerful music.

However, depiction of the fantastic seems to get many positive reactions from people, and it seems that this might drive the abundance of gig posters that includes fantastic rather political elements. This has also a lot to do with the various societies at different points in time. In certain times, as for example in the 1980s with the punk movement, it was more important to address political topics, because society had a different structure, meaning that at different temporal points the urge for revolution was much more important. Michael Hacker tries to explain the loss of revolt by drawing on Frank Kozik and Punk – one of the last periods when revolt against the system was omnipresent. For Hacker, Kozik's posters were an antithesis to those made during the Punk era, because at this time, most posters were coming out of the Xerox machine and were simply black and white. Kozik, on the other hand, referred to the posters made in the 1960s and used silk-screen print and vibrant colors. This was not really a revolution, but posed a rupture vis-à-vis the aesthetic of the Punk. Kozik confronted the aesthetic of the fragmented from the Punk, with sweet and lovable characters. That is why Hacker sees in Kozik's gig posters a kind of revolt, because he changed the norms of depictions.⁸⁰

V. IV. II. Different Approaches towards the Fantastic.

Today many artists use fantastic elements for their gig posters, but these can differ from one artist to another. The use of certain elements always goes hand in hand with their own artistic styles. The fantastic mostly works with scary motifs, such as skulls, monsters, devil-like creatures or mixtures of human and animal.

Michel Hacker seems to use fantastic elements for example in his poster for the band "Melt Banana".⁸¹ (Fig. 15) The well-known characters of the "Heidi" anime are depicted, but at the same time altered. Peter the goatherd has horns, a pig nose and blood around his mouth. His goat is missing and two huge scars replace his eyes and

⁸⁰ Michael Hacker in an Interview in Berlin on the 16th of January 2017.

"An dieser Stelle muss ich wieder auf Kozik zurückkommen. Seine Poster waren ja eine Antithese zu jenen des Punks. Da war das meiste Schwarz/Weiß und aus dem Drucker. Doch plötzlich kommt dieser Kozik und nimmt Bezug zu den Plakaten der 60er Jahre: die Verwendung des Siebdruckes und die knalligen Farben. Es war nicht wirklich eine Revolution, aber es war, bezüglich zur Punkästhetik, ein Bruch. Kozik setzt den zerstückelten Fragmente des Punks, liebliche Charaktere entgegen. Das sehe ich als Auflehnung und revolutionär."

⁸¹ <http://www.wookmark.com/image/294409/melt-banana-michael-hacker-illustration>

nose. Heidi is transformed into some sort of a zombie with a piece of meat in her right hand, petting a Saint Bernhard that also seems infected, and that chews on a hand. The hand belongs to the grandfather “Uncle Alp”, whose head is lying on a table with an apple in his mouth, decorated with pieces of ham, bacon and sausages. Hacker transforms the idyllic setting of Heidi into a scene that reminds one of a zombie film. It is important to notice that the band “Melt Banana” is from Japan, which is probably why Hacker used the depictions of the Japanese anime of Heidi. The mountains, the gentian and the cowbells, as Swiss but also Austrian attributes, and the characters of the anime, as Japanese attributes, are mixed up in a gruesome assemblage.

Rob Jones uses the code of the fantastic too in most of his posters by using the stylistic element of collage. His poster for “The Raconteurs” with “The Kills” at Roseland Theater, Portland, Oregon on 16th September 2008 illustrates this approach perfectly. (Fig. 16) He puts elements of our everyday lives in another, surreal, setting. The poster shows what appears to be an underwater scene filled with five fish of the same species. In the center, one can see an enlarged golden lantern, hung on a metal chain. A round window opens up inside of it, which has nothing to do with the lamp. A woman appears to be standing inside it, as if the lantern were her submarine to reach the unknown depths of the sea. The appropriation of Jules Verne’s novels such as “Vingt mille lieues sous les mers” (in English: Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea) (1869-1870) is obvious. The illustration by Henri Théophile Hildibrand, after a drawing from Alphonse de Neuville, in the 1877 edition of captain Nemo standing on his submarine, looking through a sextant to determine his position, could be one of many inspirations for Jones.⁸² (Fig. 17)

The stylistic similarity and the use of the same filigree lineage are undeniable. The oversized fish also bring to mind the “fantastic” stories about unknown creatures that inhabit the sea. Along with all those similarities, there are also differences. The gender of the captain changes in Jones’ gig poster. He is transformed into a female captain, a stratagem that reminds us of chapter V. II. (Codes of Lust and Desire). Another difference is the mixture of different tales in Jones’ poster. The lantern as a submarine seems to be out of a miniature world, which can be closely associated with the novel “The Borrowers” by Mary Norton.⁸³ This novel is about tiny people who live secretly in our real world and “borrow” stuff from the normal people. Nevertheless, it

⁸² http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/images/Jules_Verne_Vingt_Mille_Lieues_sous_les_mers/1311301

⁸³ Published in 1952.

is not documented whether those sources were decisive for Rob Jones poster, but the similarities cannot be overlooked.

Rob Jones builds his own fantastic visual language out of tales and many different artistic techniques. His similarity to surrealist artists such as Max Ernst is also very important. The book “Une semaine de bonté” (A week of kindness) by Max Ernst seems like a template for Rob Jones’ work.⁸⁴ Knowing the work of Jones, one can find many citations and similarities. Additionally, the style of posters by Jones resembles closely the copperplate prints by Ernst.

It becomes clear that this is about creating worlds of imagination that differ from the real world. Jones is, as Hacker said, a perfect example of an artist, who is: “(...) *constructing (...)*”, his “(...) *own world (...)*”, out of a certain art movement mixed with many tales.⁸⁵ In addition, Schiermer adds that: “ (...) *one could point to the fascination with former utopian fantasies centered on the ‘newest’ technologies or consumer objects of the past; the predilection for old science fiction or the gaudy superheroes of the fifties.* ”⁸⁶

Jones’ way of creating gig posters is in many ways a citation of already existing images, stories, elements of popular culture and art movements, which he fuses with his own artistic language. This brings us to another important code, which I would call the nostalgia.

V. V. Codes of the Nostalgia.

V. V. I. Otherness as a Form of Differentiation.

In many parts of (mostly) western society, people are trying to recall on older artisanship. This is not only due to the charm of the “retro”, but also because the outcome of such an artisanal technique can distinguish itself from digital reproductions by means of quality. These qualities are multiple and mostly important for enthusiasts.

⁸⁴ The book „Une semaine de bonté“ contains many images that resulted out of collages, visualizing a surrealist imagery. This surrealist imagery is key for Jones’ gig posters.

See: Max Ernst, *Une semaine de bonté*, Paris, 1934.

⁸⁵ Michael Hacker in an Interview in Berlin on the 16th of January 2017.

⁸⁶ Bjørn Schiermer, *Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture*, p. 173, in: *Acta Sociologica*, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.

source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

In most cases, it is about the return of the physical carrier material. Photography and film are the best examples for artistic fields, in which people are gaining more and more interest in analog techniques. The field of music is no exception, because the stylistic form of the recourse is also used. Musicians try to imitate the sound of bands that influenced them. The creative work of those bands dates back many years, and so do the instruments, the equipment and the recording techniques. Many contemporary bands try to record their songs via old tape recorders to create a sound considered retro. However, not only the sound plays a huge role. It is also about errors that can occur when dealing with old recording machines. The recorded material is uncorrectable. Errors that occur during the recording process are perpetuated in the tape. Many artists deny the digital because they consider music recorded with analog means as more honest. This sound is the one you get when seeing the band live, which is not only appreciated by musicians but also by listeners. Therefore, the recourse to what is considered as retro is also present when choosing a recording medium. For many people the quality of the sound is very important and this is why vinyl is still used, and is gaining even more influence. In fact, the qualities of vinyl can be reproduced digitally (even though only in files that contain more data than normal MP3-files – such as FLAC - and which cannot be read by the majority of current devices), nevertheless, the physical presence of the vinyl is a very important point for listeners. The weight and size of the vinyl, its grooves, the sound of the needle or a different rotation speed, offer not only auditory intricacies but at the same time auditory freedom (it can, for example, be played backwards or at the wrong speed). However, what is even more important: the digital cannot imitate the feel of vinyl. The design of the cover is different from the design of a CD, because the vinyl offers a larger space for it. The sheer size of the cover transforms it into a small picture. It is common that vinyl records are placed or presented like little works of art (so one can clearly see the cover or the inlay). It is no longer solely about the auditory, but also about the aesthetic and the haptic pleasure.

Analogous with this, the gig poster scene originated out of the same desire for the incorporation of craftsmanship (the acceptance of errors, limited and numbered prints that can be considered as art prints, the signature of the artist, the haptic aspect of silk-screen prints) and the use of the retro as some form of differentiation. As goes for the use of the fantastic, retro seems to be a getaway out of our modern life, by drawing on artisanal means of production. To differentiate oneself from others by artistic means is very important, and this can be done through different work methods

and by creating a distinctive style. Besides this, a distinctive style serves as a sort of identification – a tool for distinction from others. This differentiation also serves to gain a reputation as an artist. As the artist Hacker previously mentioned, the term “nerd” or “geek” plays an important role in this discussion. Long used by bullies, it has developed over time into a term that has a positive connotation. It is in vogue to label oneself as a “nerd” because it strengthens the process of social differentiation. The nerd stands as: “(...) *the paradigm of an authentic personality: He cannot adjust even if he wants to* (...)”, as Bjørn Schiermer states in his article “*Late-modern hipsters: New tendencies in popular culture*”. And he continues that however: “(...) *what used to be his stigma – his social indisposition, his awkwardness – has changed into a mark of honour. Only the nerd or the idiosyncratic person is truly individual.*”⁸⁷ This individuality is sought by gig poster artists, because it serves as a tool to differentiate themselves from mere advertisement and to underline their integrity towards a certain scene.

Besides these points, gig poster artists have created another use of the retro that enables them to demonstrate their self-identification as an artist by using their art historical knowledge. The citation of other art works is a method established a long time ago, especially in the 20th century when many artists cited the works of “old masters” and put them into new contexts. It was no longer about copying an artwork to sell to people, but to quote old masters and to give the artwork multiple layers of meaning, some sort of a second face. In the 1980s, they found a name for this kind of image citation: “Appropriation Art”.

V. V. II. The Use of Nostalgia as Appropriation Art?

Many gig poster artists work within the field of what can be called appropriation art. An art movement that is best described by the author Marco Genschorek in his book “*Appropriation Art: Die Aneignungskunst im US-amerikanischen und österreichischen Recht*“ as a postmodern art movement, which developed in the late 1970s in the USA. This movement considered the act of copying as one of the main artistic strategies of postmodern art. Artists working in the field of appropriation art thought they could free themselves from the constraints of originality. One of the first

⁸⁷ Bjørn Schiermer, Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture, p. 171, in: Acta Sociologica, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.
source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

important exhibition was called “Pictures” and took place at the Artists Space in New York in 1977. It was organized by critic Douglas Crimp and included the work of artists such as Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, Troy Brauntuch, and others. In his catalog essay Crimp points out that: “(...) *representation has returned in their work not in the familiar guise of realism, which seeks to resemble a prior existence, but as an autonomous function...It is the representation freed from the tyranny of the represented.*”⁸⁸ Appropriation Art considered the citation as integral element for the further development of art.⁸⁹

The use of the citation is also present in the gig poster scene, which I will try to show with some examples that include the use of works by famous artists. Rob Jones made numerous gig posters that show appropriations of famous artists, but there are two exemplary posters that illustrate this scheme very clearly. The first gig poster was made for a concert by the band “The Avett Brothers” on October 1st 2010. (Fig. 18) It is split in half and therefore opens up two main fields. The upper one is a white space, filled with the depiction of a robot and the location and the time of the event. The robot looks like a reference to the robot in “The Wizard of Oz”, and actually, it is. (Fig. 19) The robot seems to be a recurrent theme, because Jones uses this figure and its story in numerous gig posters for the Avett Brothers, but more to that point later on.

Underneath the upper section of the poster, a new field opens up. It seems like a wooden bar that has the name of the band on it. It serves as a field of separation between the upper and the lower parts of the poster, which provides space for the name of the band.

Beneath this section, the lower part of the poster unfolds, filled with a copy of one of the most iconic American photographs: “Migrant Mother”, which was made in March 1936 by the well-known photographer Dorothea Lange. (Fig. 20.) At that time, she worked for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and was documenting the situation of migrant workers in the USA during the height of the Depression.⁹⁰ She made photographs of sharecroppers, displaced farm families, and migrant workers. On

⁸⁸ The exhibition took place in 1977 from September 24th till October 29th.

<http://artistsspace.org/exhibitions/pictures>

⁸⁹ the dissertation of Marco Genschorek

Marco Genschorek, *Appropriation Art: Die Aneignungskunst im US-amerikanischen und österreichischen Recht*, Wien, 2014.

⁹⁰ “Migrant Mother” can be called government photo, because Dorothea Lange was employed by and on behalf of the Resettlement Administration. The U.S. Copyright Office information says, “Works by the U.S. Government are not eligible for U.S. copyright protection.” This is why Rob Jones could use this photograph so easily.

her travels, she met a woman by the name of Florence Owens Thompson sitting with her three children in a tent. This encounter resulted in the creation of the famous photograph. At this point, one must ask, why did Rob Jones use this photograph in a gig poster?

On the one hand, one can say that the photograph serves as a form of memory (as an ornamental code as described in chapter V. III.). People will recognize this picture and will take a closer look. This might be true, especially when considering that the concert was happening in Los Angeles. The photo “Migrant Mother” was taken in Nipomo, just 260 km away from that city. It is a picture that stands for the area and its history. Also, the music of the band “The Avett Brothers” is categorized as a Folk-Rock, and as the term implies, this style is a mixture between elements of rock and folk music. Its source is a traditional musical style that originated in America and which deals often with the history of a certain area or state.

Rob Jones mixed these historic interrelations with the fantastic tale of the Wizard of Oz, which is about the adventures of a little girl named Dorothy. Those two names resemble each other very much. The figure of the robot seems to represent a link between the name of the girl Dorothy and that of the photographer Dorothea – a link between the fantastic and the real.

Nevertheless, the robot could also refer to the migrant workers of the US. These people were of huge importance for the prosperity of the US but found themselves at the bottom of society and had to endure a low quality of life. Higher classes feared that these people and blamed them for many crimes. They were stigmatized as brutes, with no decency and therefore with no heart (like the robot in the Wizard of Oz). Photographs like the “Migrant Mother” destroy these stereotypical thoughts. It not only shows the desperation, but also the love of a woman for her children to a wider public.

The sixth book of the Oz story, “The Emerald city of Oz”, (1998) by Lyman Frank Baum, could also be a main reason why Rob Jones used this photo. In this volume, Dorothy returns to the real world, where her relatives have not recovered from the losses they suffered due to the tornado that brought Dorothy to the land of Oz in the first place. They are deeply in debt and the bank already owns their farm. Dorothy takes

them to the Land of Oz because there, poor people do not exist. Nobody works for a salary but only for the community.⁹¹

In this gig poster, Rob Jones opposes the real world with the fantastic world of tales: the harsh reality in which people are threatened, in comparison with a world where everybody seems to be the same, and therefore transfers this discourse into the 21st century. Frustration about the different classes, the unfairness of the distribution of money, and hard life circumstances were initial themes for folk, as for blues music.

One can state that this reference to a very famous artist by Rob Jones tried not simply using something that looked good and was well known, but also to link the history of the photograph to the current time, place and band.

Another artist who works in the field of appropriation art is Jermaine Rogers, but he refers to works of art in two different ways. He not only uses works by famous painters, but also the figure of the painter in his posters. The painter now becomes a representation for a concert poster. Rogers deals with mostly three artists in his gig posters: Andy Warhol, Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh.

The poster for the concert by the band “A Band of Horses” on December 11th 2012 in The Manhattan Center’s Hammerstein Ballroom in New York shows Frida Kahlo and Vincent van Gogh on a couch next to each other. (Fig. 21) Van Gogh is leaning on Kahlo, exposing his left ear, covered by a bloody bandage. Kahlo is touching van Gogh’s left leg and smoking a cigarette. In this composition Rogers just put together some of his most favorite artists in a picture. The blue background of the poster also reminds one of the paintings of van Gogh.

Jermaine Rogers makes these mash-ups with different artists and their distinctive stylistic peculiarities. In a gig poster for the band Primus, he let Van Gogh meet Andy Warhol. (Fig. 22) Only the two heads are visible and Andy is kissing Vincent on the cheek. Jermaine also featured a text, which explains the representation of those two:

“On May 22nd, we drove back to Bakersfield to see Primus at the Fox. We picked up Vincent, but didn’t tell him that Andy was meeting us there. Vincent says Andy freaks him out every damn time! He says that Andy doesn’t respect ‘personal space’. So when

⁹¹ Lyman Frank Baum, *The Wonderful World of Oz: The Wizard of Oz, the Emerald City of Oz, Glinda of Oz*, London, 1998.

we arrive, we see Andy. He walks up to Vincent, kisses him on the cheek and then just smiled. Hilarious...dude, Vincent just froze. We laughed so hard. Andy knew exactly what he was doing."

Not only are the date and location of the concert included in this text, it also has a humorous approach combining two well-known artists in a fictitious scenario. Jermaine Rogers said that the artist that inspired him most, or better that he is most fascinated by, is Vincent van Gogh. He also represents him alone, as on the poster for the concert by numerous bands such as "And you will know us by the trail of death... and Mogwai" from 2003, one big poster separated into two parts. (Fig. 23) On the left, there is a representation of the face of Van Gogh, and on the right, there is a skull. The two representations are mirrored. The left one shows us Van Gogh alive with a bleeding ear; the right one shows us a simple skull, with bloodstains on the collar of the blue shirt.

Another way to draw on famous artists is a less visible one. Jermaine Rogers often uses the formative character of famous paintings in his own posters. One can see this approach especially in some of his posters made in 2011. The first one to discuss was made for the band "Ween" on January 24th 2011 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver. (Fig. 24) Two women are lying on an undefined ornamental background. One woman lies on top of the other one, and their heads point in different directions. Their bodies form some sort of intersection. People with an interest in art could easily recognize this formal alignment from elsewhere. When taking a closer look at the composition, one can relate this depiction to Egon Schiele's drawing "Weibliches Liebespaar" from 1915. (Fig. 25) It is the same representation as that of Schiele with some minor differences. The nude woman who lies on the other one has a different face, long hair, her legs are not bent, and white circles fill her skin. The other woman has also a different face, another dress, an uncovered leg and different shoes. Besides these changes, the entire composition remains the same.

Another poster shows the same approach. It was made for the concert by the band "Queens of the Stone Age" on April 1st 2011 at the Riviera Theater in Chicago. (Fig. 26) It has the same ornamental background as the Ween poster, but now the representation is upright. Three females are placed in front of this background. The one in the background, the biggest, is shown in profile. An ornamental field covers her body, which distinguishes itself from the background using other colors and forms. The other woman is smaller and represented a bit below the first one. Depicted frontally,

she has one breast uncovered. The ornamental field fills again the rest of the body. The smallest woman is in front and shown in profile. As a difference to the other ones, she is not covered and is represented nude. This composition also seems borrowed and resembles Gustav Klimt's painting "Hoffnung II" from 1907. (Fig. 27) There are also some minor differences, as the posture of the hands or in the covering or uncovering of the female bodies. Klimt also uses four female bodies while Jermaine uses only three. Nonetheless, the composition is striking similar.

As one can see, there are many examples where gig poster artists draw back on preexisting and famous works of art. Before I analyze the function and the possible outcome of this method, another important role of the appropriations on famous artists and their artworks has to be expanded. Gig poster artists also seem to cite iconographical codes that have always played an important role in art history, especially the artist Rob Jones.

V. V. III. Iconographical and Clerical Appropriations.

Rob Jones was the creative agent behind nearly all the gig posters for "The White Stripes". After the band dissolved, Jones continued to work with the front man Jack White and his other band projects. The posters Jones did for Jack White's solo project are full of iconographical appropriations to the history of art.

The poster for the concert by "Jack White and Curtis Harding" at the Deer Lake Park, Burnaby, August 28th 2014, shows an old typewriter with an empty sheet of paper on a blue background. (Fig. 28) On the left side, a left hand reaches into the picture, depicted with an outstretched index finger. This hand immediately reminds one of the depiction of "The Creation of Adam" by Michelangelo Buonarroti in the Sistine Chapel. (Fig. 29) As one looks closer, the hand does not only look like it is inspired by this fresco, it is the hand of God that nearly touches Adam's hand. Jones even depicts the cracks in the fresco that are visible in the hand. The only thing he changed is that he mirrored it. The hand of God is now typing on a typewriter. Therefore, even further, the artist now becomes equivalent to God. He writes the music and lyrics that so many people listen to. However, there is another level of reading: the level of creation. Whilst God created humankind, the artist, Jack White, creates music that is listened to all over the world, by people with different religious backgrounds. The artist then surpasses

God, because he can reach everybody with his music, without considering religious beliefs. Music develops as a sort of religion, with the concert as a form of ritual and sacred place as a gathering for the followers.

Another gig poster by Jones for a Jack White Concert deals with iconology and religion in a different way: “Jack White and Olivia Jean” on September the 14th 2014 at Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia. (Fig. 30) It has the same blue background as the poster shown before. Two representations of Polaroid photos show a left and right hand in blue. If one looks closely, one might discover a ring on the left hand (Jack White himself often wears this same ring), so one can surely state that these two hands should represent Jack White’s hands. A nail pierces through them and reaches over the photo inside the blue background. Jones seems to take up the iconological depiction of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Once again, the musician is elevated towards religion. The religious figure becomes human-like and the human, the musician, becomes god-like. Humor also plays a crucial role in this poster. When looking more closely at those nails, one can see that they seem to be small microphones, which could lead us to the assumption, that music is crucifying the artist. He creates his music for us and for himself, which is his only purpose.

The last example is the poster for “Jack White, Pokey LaFarge, and The South City Tree” at Cain’s Ballroom, Tulsa, on December 10th 2012. (Fig. 31) This poster is in the same blue color as the others shown above. It depicts a young, almost nude man tied to a tree with his arms in the air. Arrows pierce his body and his gaze is up into the sky. A forest forms the background, and some figures pop up on the right side. People who know Christian iconology will automatically think of a representation of the Holy Sebastian, shot by multiple arrows. In fact this particular depiction is nearly an exact copy of the painting “San Sebastiano” by the Italian artist Guido Reni from 1616. (Fig. 32) There are some differences in the background and foreground that can be spotted (different trees, changing of people in the background, another arrow in the abdomen of the young man) and the range of colors is changed to blue, white and black.⁹²

Besides these minor changes in colors and background, Jones included one main difference: a microphone on a stand, placed in front of the man. This new element alters

⁹² This reduction of the colors is a very important feature in Jones work. For his posters for “The White Stripes”, he only used the colors red, white and black. His posters for the solo project of Jack White follow this scheme but with the colors blue, black and white. In this way, the posters for each band (The White Stripes, The Raconteurs, The Death Weathers, Jack White) always follow a stylistic principle and can be clearly recognized by the viewer (not only by stylistic means, but also by narrative means, as seen above in the example of The Avett Brothers posters).

the meaning of the figure. Without the stand, one would clearly identify the figure of Saint Sebastian. However, this transforms the figure into a suffering and bound musician. His gaze goes up in the air, a gesture that can be considered as the search for enlightenment, but no longer for a divine power or religious support, rather more or less for creativity.

As one can see, there are many appropriations to the pictorial and the iconographical in the field of gig poster. After these few examples, the question arises, why do artists use this stylistic element.

V. V. IV. Different Positions on the Use of Appropriations.

The reasons for the use of art historical and iconological and clerical references can be multiple, but hard to find out because as mentioned before there is no extant literature on this topic, and the artists shown have not spoken about this in interviews. Nonetheless, some points can be distilled from interviews, opening a discourse on the question of artistic appropriations.

Many see posters as mere publicity, as a form of art for reaching as many people as possible. Changing this perception is surely one of the main goals of poster artists. One way to do this is to integrate traditional forms considered to belong to high art. This opens a new discourse about the posters, which now refer to artists such as Van Gogh, Klimt or Schiele. It becomes clear that these gig poster artists know art history and do not design things solely for the purpose of publicity. They try to make their posters more valuable by filling them with forms considered as attributes of high art. These attributes help the artists at the same time to disassociate themselves and their posters from the mainstream, which is rather interested in simple and functioning publicity with the only purpose to be merely commercial, than in art historical references or a discourse about it. With the use of appropriations to art history, artists can emancipate themselves from their old status of mere commercial artists. They can show their interest and knowledge they have in art and its history and that the reconditioning of classic painters and their works can be a way to enrich poster art. Due to the number of people they reach, it can also be possible that they promote to some extent an interest in art itself.

As seen before, Jermaine Rogers uses references of famous artists in two ways (references to works of art, or references to artist figures). His use of artist figures as the main representations on posters can simply be a preference by Rogers for these artists. It seems that he wants to show them, to introduce them to a larger audience, and to mix so-called high art with the music/gig poster scene. He wants to share his favorite artists with other people by representing them in different contexts in his posters. This enables the creation of new settings. Van Gogh and Warhol went to a concert together, Frida Kahlo and Van Gogh seem like friends or even more? This is a humorous way of dealing with art history, and opens it up to a larger public.

This method serves to some extent as a tool for the demystification of artworks considered canonical. In times of the information age and the closely linked need for representation, everyone can easily present him/herself as an artist. The internet provides all the information needed about artists and their work. Anyone (nearly) anywhere can draw on sources of inspiration. For some, the “old masters” are no longer considered as geniuses but as artists who were in the right place at the right time, knowing the right people. This is also true today, but there is a main difference: the growth in the number of people who have the time and resources required to be active as artists. So to say, modern technology opens up the artistic field and enables artistic freedom.

Artworks or gig posters that can be considered appropriation art (like the Bob Masse poster for Bob Dylan and Paul Simon, which was a simple one-to-one copy of Alfons Mucha’s “Der Tanz” 1898) triggered a discussion about whether or not the reuse of famous works of art by another artist can be considered critical, because it can be seen, as Bjørn Schiermer states, as simple: “(...) *veneration of certain cultural expressions and objects of the previous generations.*”⁹³ A definition for what Schiermer considers to be hipster culture, which basically nourishes itself from trends that serve themselves on formal elements that already exist. This includes the danger of plagiarism as the article called “*How Phony is Shepard Fairey?*” by Dan Wasserman demonstrates, by questioning the works of one of the most iconic contemporary poster artists: Shepard Fairey. Wasserman is referring to the use of a picture of Barack Obama for Fairey’s “Hope” poster, which made him globally famous. (Fig. 33) The only

⁹³ Bjørn Schiermer, Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture, p. 168, in: Acta Sociologica, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.
source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

problem was that he did not ask the photographer Manny Garcia whether he could use his photograph or not. (Fig. 34) The Associated Press then claimed that Fairey had to pay compensation for the use of the photograph. The two internally agreed on a settlement, which is not known.

Wasserman then refers to the artist Mark Vallen, who has criticized Fairey for a long time, claiming that he is: *"(...) including art from the Czechoslovakian Prague Spring, art from the Industrial Workers of the World, Cuban poster art of the 60s and this example directly copying the art nouveau drawing of Koloman Moser (1868-1918)."*⁹⁴ Wasserman then cites the answer from Fairey: *"This guy Mark Vallen found every reference in every poster and every t-shirt that I've ever used. Out of hundreds of images, there's a dozen or so that were based on things from historical posters. First of all, I'm always assuming that these posters are known by people, so my referencing is not a big secret. These aren't obscure images... Usually I'm using an image as an intentional reference."*⁹⁵ Wasserman continues to refer on cartoonists who using figures by others, but: *"(...) acknowledge the reference (...) "*, by mentioning the sources of their designs.⁹⁶

The problem Vallen claims is that the hip artwork of Fairey is in reality only a plagiarism of other artists - stolen ideas. Or as Wasserman puts it: *"He wants the street cred of a revolutionary artist extolling freedom fighters and quoting Noam Chomsky while doing "guerrilla" marketing campaigns for Netscape and Pepsi."*⁹⁷

What Wassermann is pointing to is a development that has been the topic of much scientific research surrounding the issue of the transformation and abundance of art in our modern, capitalistic, digitalized and accelerated world.

⁹⁴See Archive Homepage:

http://archive.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/outofline/2009/02/how_phony_is_shepard_fairey.html

⁹⁵ He claims that in the 450-page catalog for the show in the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

⁹⁶ See Archive Homepage:

http://archive.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/outofline/2009/02/how_phony_is_shepard_fairey.html

⁹⁷ See Archive Homepage:

http://archive.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/outofline/2009/02/how_phony_is_shepard_fairey.html

VI. The Gig Poster - Searching for Integrity between Trends and Taste.

VI. I. The Gig Poster as Part of a Collective Movement?

This modern world shapes the gig poster and its artists. Since gig posters work within a field dominated by advertising strategies, their outcome should be capital, which is not only limited to the field of music but is also deeply embedded in today's society. Every aspect of our so-called civilized world has something to do with capital generated by the people. By capital, I mostly mean money. Naturally, nobody would doubt the necessity of it. It serves as a form of measurement of value for goods produced by humans. The only problem is that many negative aspects that shape the public come along with money. First, there is the segregation of the public as a whole into smaller parts, communities, which differ between minorities and majorities. Those who have capital will have more rights because they can afford more than others can and have a higher status in society.

These iniquities have become obvious. People realize that the system run by capital uses them. In addition, capital is embedded in sites of power, for example banks. When the financial system collapsed in 2007, and the entire western world went through an economic crisis, people saw what had been going on behind their backs and fought back. Among other results, this led to the "Occupy Movement". Thousands of protesters went onto the streets to demonstrate against big companies that could undermine democratic systems and do whatever they wanted to without accountability. This resulted in stricter surveillance of those companies by the state authorities. Nevertheless, let us be serious; not much has changed since then.

This example shows how difficult it is for the people to be of one mind and to change things for the better. It shows how easily one can undermine rules with the help of capital. As a reaction, many people try to form structures that resemble those of the counterpublic movements and include occupied houses, an open democratic structure, and the attempt to discard sexism, hierarchical systems, capital and the exclusion of minorities. The internet and social networks play an important role in this self-

organization because they form a platform for organizing events and for sharing information.

The gig poster scene seems also to react to norms and rules it is exposed to. For a long time the music business has been the decision-maker and one of the most important features of the music industry has always been its marketing. The Internet helped to change this relationship. It provided the possibility for the artists to work on their own. They no longer need expensive equipment or a large edition of their posters. The gig poster scene seems to resemble those public movements, because it tries to break itself loose from the big business to form alternative ways for producing gig posters. One of their main tool for achieving this is through artists maintaining their own homepage, which functions on multiple layers. It not only serves to present oneself and the gig posters to a worldwide public, but also helps to connect and to communicate. Through the digital space, the artist can reach more people than it would be possible by only using physical means. The gig poster can be seen, as other movements, as a result of the new possibilities that arose with the proliferation of the internet. It serves foremost as simple tool for self-representation and self-marketing.

VI. II. The Gig Poster in Times of Self-Representation and Self-Marketing.

Until this point, the Internet had always a positive connotation regarding this topic but it is crucial to notice that this platform for self-representation and self-marketing is in most ways unregulated, because it is a global space that cannot be regulated by the same laws all around the world. This enforces, as seen before, plagiarism that results out of the thoughtless usage of content that can be found on the Internet and out of trends and hypes that, in the connected world, develop and spread at an astonishing speed. The gig poster is also exposed to and already part of these developments.

All the artists presented in this thesis express themselves through their own stylistic expression, which has been the basis for their individual success, but which, however, is often inspired by the works of other artists by appropriation and adaptation of stylistic elements. Nevertheless, the artists do not have to adapt stylistically to the expectations of the client (the band or management), because they are chosen for their

own individual style and the field of significations associated with it. Therefore, their artworks enjoy the status of being real and pure, not influenced by a certain industry, trend or hype and that have resulted from the genuine artistic expression of a participant of a certain community. This means that they appear out of a social structure. The author Frank Illing discusses this individual style and its appreciation in his book *“Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks“*.⁹⁸ He states that an artwork seems to be devalued by other artists if it aims only for commercial use. This, as Illing puts it, comes from the claim for the autonomy of art in the 19th century, where an artist could only create something with a valuable aesthetic when they denied an economic purpose. Further, he states for the field of music, that the counter- and subcultural scenes comprehend their artists as authentic expression of their scene. These scenes, as Illing continues, have artistic or politic demands and a certain exclusivity for identification with the scene.⁹⁹ This identification is also regulated by taste, a term that plays an important role in the formation of such a community. In her book *“Le gout c’est moi. Überlegungen zum Geschmack“*, Isabelle Graw tries to analyze the correlation between the formation of such communities and the importance of taste. For her analysis, she negates Kant’s definition of taste as a judgement without any interest, because it always stood in the duty of interests. This interest-led element is politically the most important part of it. Today Graw sees taste as identity-based political necessity that is driven by a trend in identity formation and an existential need for status. Following this logic, taste is also a significant instance in the maintenance of identity and always includes the element of self-segregation and the exclusion of others.¹⁰⁰ To segregate oneself from certain norms, rules or believes is a crucial element for a certain scene, for it helps to build integrity and, after Illing, commercial success by the artist can lead to the possible loss of this integrity to the commercialization process. Nonetheless, this seems to be less common today, because success does not directly imply this loss. Moreover, Illing continues to state that, rather, the uncritical

⁹⁸ Frank Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006

⁹⁹ Frank Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006, p. 86.

¹⁰⁰ “Le goût c’est moi. Überlegungen zum Geschmack (2009)” in: Isabelle Graw, *Texte zur Kunst - Essays, Rezensionen, Gespräche*, Hamburg, 2011, p.123.

“Gerade der Geschmack – für Kant ein »Beurteilungsvermögen ohne alles Interesse« - hat jedoch faktisch immer im Dienst von Interessen, Notwendigkeiten und Bedürfnissen gestanden, und dieses Interessegeleitete des Geschmacks ist das politisch bedeutsame an ihm. Mehr noch ist der Geschmack heute zu einer Art identitätspolitischen Notwendigkeit geworden, von massiven Interesse an Identitätsbildung und einem existenziellen Bedürfniss nach Status angetrieben.”

“Der Geschmack ist heute die maßgebliche Instanz in der Behauptung von Identität.”

maintenance of a norm is seen as a lack in authenticity.¹⁰¹ This cling to a norm can result out of following trends and hypes, which develop out of the attempt of certain people and the industry to adapt to the taste of a scene in order to use their values and exclusivity for their own purposes. On the other side, the adaptation of content of a certain scene can also serve as process of self-differentiation vis-à-vis others, a factor that seems to grow in importance, especially in the so-called hipster culture.

The term hipster is important to be observed in relation to terms as taste and self-differentiation, because there are nevertheless a lot of overlapping points between the gig poster scene and the definition of the hipster. The author Bjørn Schiermer states in his text "*Late-modern hipsters: New tendencies in popular culture*" that there is the effort by the hipster for the: "(...) *veneration of dying media and old technology. (...) The hipster rediscovery of the vinyl disc record, (...) the traditional offset printing technique (...) hides a sensuous and pleasure-seeking conservatism. Hipster culture saves sensibilities and 'experiences' inherent to certain media; from the warm scratching sound coming from the pickup in the groove to the yellowed ambience of the old Polaroid photographs.*"¹⁰²

What Schiermer is observing fits perfectly with the situation of the gig poster artists. They share the same love for the old, the handcrafted, but on the other hand, they do not deny the use of the digital (the digital software "Photoshop" for example). Nevertheless, one can see the interest in old techniques and technologies. Schiermer further states that: "(...) *Hipsters are collectors and connoisseurs (Grief et al., 2010:8).*"¹⁰³ Moreover, this also applies to the gig poster scene. A collector or a connoisseur distinguishes him/herself by his/her very precise knowledge of one special field. As mentioned before, in youth culture, the term nerd often describes these people. This term is very important in the gig poster scene, especially in North America. The negative connotation of the bullied nerd now has a positive connotation, because the: "(...) *nerd is the paradigm of an authentic personality: He cannot adjust even if he wants to. However, what used to be his stigma – his social indisposition, his awkwardness – has changed into a mark of honour. Only the nerd or the idiosyncratic*

¹⁰¹ Frank Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006, p. 86.
"Die bloße Normhaltung wird eher als mangelnde Originalität bewertet."

¹⁰² Bjørn Schiermer, *Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture*, p. 176, in: *Acta Sociologica*, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.

source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

¹⁰³ Bjørn Schiermer, *Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture*, p. 176, in: *Acta Sociologica*, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.

source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

person is truly individual. And yet the nerd figure now exists as a circumscribed type in the hipster gallery of styles.”¹⁰⁴ Following this logic, a nerdy person is still to some degree excluded from society, but exactly this exclusion is seen as an honorable attribute, for it means that one has a deeper knowledge of a field than others do. Schiermer further presents his thesis about the hipster. He states, that the: “(...) *appreciation of the aesthetic styles of the recent past (...)*”, of the hipster, “(...) *ushers in another relation to the parental generation than, the one found in traditional sub or youth culture. In a word, the hipster culture is not a counter culture but a conserver figure.*”¹⁰⁵ Finally, he gets to the assumption that this approach results from: “(...) *a lack of creative force or a form of compulsive repetition (...).*”¹⁰⁶

This is one of the main arguments why the gig poster scene differs from the hipster movement. First, this thesis clearly shows that the gig poster scene is a creative one, which not only relates and reacts to the past, but also tries to create new forms of visualization, new forms of meaning (codes), and also does not avoid criticism towards the stereotypical representations in its history. Both scenes have been built on their distinction from others, but the gig poster scene does not care so much about the process of differentiation, but rather the detachment from economic and cultural norms. Nevertheless, there are many overlapping points between the hipster movement and the gig poster scene.

VI. III. Between Verdicts of Bad Taste and a Copying Mainstream.

What hasn’t gotten much attention until now is the fact that where there is taste, there must also be people who do not share the same one, and consider it bad taste. The term “bad taste” is quite important, because in the context of gig posters, bad taste is put on a level with kitsch and lowbrow. Moreover, exactly this bad taste serves as a

¹⁰⁴ Bjørn Schiermer, Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture, p. 176, in: Acta Sociologica, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.

source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

¹⁰⁵ Bjørn Schiermer, Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture, p. 176, in: Acta Sociologica, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.

source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

¹⁰⁶ Bjørn Schiermer, Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture, p. 176, in: Acta Sociologica, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.

source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

political instrument to achieve segregation and to start a process of independence and individualization. Graw states in this context that these posits of taste that differ from the consensus are always about the attention and the demonstration of one's own independence.¹⁰⁷

However, who is attributing bad taste to gig posters? Certain people clearly do, but most of them never really speak out loudly against this art form. Some texts deal with kitsch and consider it bad taste - in a negative, but also in a positive way. Bad taste is in most cases exchanged by other expressions such as "bad art" or "low art". The use of lowbrow, kitsch or bad taste can be seen from this perspective as a rebellion against the elitist art world that decides what should be considered art and what not.

Frank Illing deals with this approach and observes that the verdict of bad taste lies always in the contamination of at least two aesthetic schemata. One classic example is kitsch, in which motives and themes, that are inherent to high culture, are altered in a way that is alien to it. Another, when forms of high culture are filled with material of popular culture.¹⁰⁸ He continues that the concept of high and low culture still plays a tremendous role not only in the valuation, but also in the creation of art, especially in the field of kitsch. He observes that people use a verdict of bad taste when objects considered part of the aesthetic of our daily life are assessed by other criteria. This evokes, depending on the combination of criteria, verdicts such as boring, inferior, rubbish, and so on.¹⁰⁹ In addition, he continues to argue that bad taste is solely an aesthetic matter, sensed when one rejects the non-aesthetic value connected with the represented aesthetic object. The aesthetic can become even incidental, when an intention for distinction predominates. This intention, as Illing states, leads to dismissal only because the object is valued by a clearly defined other group of people.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ "Le goût c'est moi. Überlegungen zum Geschmack (2009)" in: Isabelle Graw, Texte zur Kunst - Essays, Rezensionen, Gespräche, Hamburg, 2011, p.121.

"Natürlich geht es bei solchen dezidiert vom Konsens abweichenden Geschmackspostulaten auch immer darum, aufzufallen und die eigene Unabhängigkeit zu demonstrieren."

¹⁰⁸ Franz Illing, Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks, Konstanz, 2006, p. 168-169.

"Beim Verdikt »schlechter Geschmack« liegt immer eine Kontaminierung mindestens zweier ästhetischer Schemata vor. Dies kann innerhalb des ästhetisch bewerteten Objekts selbst der Fall sein. Klassisches Beispiel ist der Kitsch, bei dem Motive und Themen, die »Hochkultur« signalisieren sollen, auf eine der Hochkultur fremde Weise geformt werden. Oder Formen der Hochkultur werden mit populärkulturellem Material gefüllt (...)."

¹⁰⁹ Franz Illing, Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks, Konstanz, 2006, p. 168-169.

"Meist wird aber dann »schlechter Geschmack« konstatiert, wenn Objekte, die einem der alltagsästhetischen Schemata entsprechen, nach Kriterien eines anderen beurteilt werden. In solchen Fällen entstehen, je nach Kombination von angewandten Kriterien und bewertetem Objekt, Urteile wie »langweilig«, »unverständlich«, »minderwertig«, »Schund«, »nivaeulos«, »elitär«, »spießig«, »kitschig«, »verkopft«, u.v.m."

¹¹⁰ Franz Illing, Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks, Konstanz, 2006, p. 170-171.

"Die Abwertung als »schlechter Geschmack« ist selten eine rein ästhetische Angelegenheit, sondern mit der Ablehnung des äußerästhetischen Werts, der durch ein ästhetisches Objekt repräsentiert wird, verbunden. Die ästhetischen Eigenschaften können sogar nebensächlich werden, sobald eine Distinktionsabsicht überwiegt, die

This other group of people shares different values and opinions. These evoke the process of distinction. However, is this process a revolt against a system, challenging politic and social inequities? When it comes to Schirmer and his understanding of the term hipster, he clearly negates this question, as he quotes Joe Mande, a New York-based blogger and comic: *“There is no substance behind any of it. Hipsters rebel against a shallow, materialistic, directionless society by being shallow, materialistic and directionless.”*¹¹¹

This negative connotation is already part of our daily life. The term hipster has become an insult (a brand for all kinds of people from vegans to young entrepreneurs) and nobody wants to identify himself or herself by this term. One cannot deny that sometimes the judgement of Joe Mande seems to also be true for the gig poster scene. Especially so when one considers the history of the gig poster, particularly in the punk era of the 1980s with artists such as Raymond Pettibon. It was a special time. Rebellion against the system and antiquated social norms was at its climax, as it was in the design of gig posters. Considering the content of contemporary gig posters, one could conclude that this is not a materialistic, but certainly a shallow and directionless art form.

This thesis argues that gig posters currently produced are to some degree rebellious and not at all shallow or directionless. Even though it appears that the artists do not care about addressing political grievances in their gig posters, they are opposing contemporaneous systems of labor and capital and in this way occupy an opposition position. The author John Fiske describes this fact in his book *“Reading the Popular”* by saying that every social system needs a cultural system of meaning which serves to either maintain or destabilize it in order to open it up to more or fewer alterations. In addition, he goes on to say that, culture is a constant succession of social practices. This is why Fiske sees culture as inherently political, because it is significantly involved in the distribution and possible redistribution of social power.¹¹² The gig poster, that have

dazu führt, ein ästhetisches Objekt allein deswegen abzulehnen, weil es von einer deutlich umgrenzten anderen Gruppe geschätzt wird.”

¹¹¹ Bjørn Schirmer, Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture, p. 170, in: Acta Sociologica, Vol.57, No.2, May 2014.
source: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24569530>

¹¹² John Fiske, Lesearten des Populären, Wien, 2000, p.14.

In: Franz Illing, Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks, Konstanz, 2006, p. 185.

”John Fiske fasste die für die Cultural Studies grundlegende These so zusammen: »Jedes soziale System benötigt ein kulturelles System von Bedeutungen, das dazu dient, es entweder aufrechtzuerhalten oder es zu destabilisieren, es also mehr oder weniger für Veränderungen zugänglich zu machen. Kultur (mit ihren Bedeutungen und Lüste) ist eine konstante Abfolge sozialer Praktiken; sie ist daher inhärent politisch, sie ist entscheidend an der Verteilung und möglichen Neuverteilung sozialer Macht beteiligt.«”

been analyzed in this Master Thesis, can be seen as part of the cultural understanding of Fiske, nevertheless, they also run the danger to be incorporated in a new form of capitalism. A system that changes fluently to be able to adapt to the latest trends and hypes. The author Michael Scott calls this concept “hipster capitalism”. Through the process of dissociating oneself from what is considered mainstream, that is inherent to the hipster, forms are adopted, that are used by a small scene or by previous generations and that express uniqueness and exclusiveness. This can develop into a new form of stereotypical depictions in music. By the simple means of copying, this exclusiveness or uniqueness of the design or the forms used vanishes into irrelevance – a copying mainstream. This copying mainstream is by no means a creative space, and does not have the time or the resources to produce new forms of representation. This procedure can be detected in the field of lowbrow art, as Shelley Esaak states in this context: *“Lowbrow currently suffers something of an identity crisis, due to having a wide variety of artists lumped into it. For example the designer of a simple, kitschy decal may be accorded the same Lowbrow designation as the artist who composes a technically masterful Lowbrow painting (...).”*¹¹³ Therefore, the individual style of the artists that this thesis tried point out one of the most important vehicles to prevent incorporation into this new form of extremely short-lived mainstream.

VII. Conclusion.

To conclude, this MA thesis has tried to offer insight into the world of gig posters. First, the construction of a historical background for gig posters led us to its contemporary developments. The codes of visualization described were just a small selection from many possible codes. With greater scope, this thesis could have provided closer research and analysis and more codes used in gig posters could have been discussed. The same goes for the selection of the artists presented. The immense number of gig poster artists makes it nearly impossible to cover all of them. Many have created unique gig posters appreciated in the scene, but only at a very low output. Some artists only produced posters during a certain period and then never again. In contrast

¹¹³ See the article on lowbrow art:
<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-lowbrow-movement-art-history-182926>

to the early ages of gig poster, the large number of artists has led to some kind of saturation of the scene. This is why it is nearly impossible to grasp it in its full entirety.

Another point that has seemed crucial in this discussion is the role of the gig poster in the system of the music business. Artists have developed different ways of dissociating themselves from this business. They do not only have to cope with one business, but with two: the music and the art business. As seen in previous chapters, this circumstance has fortified the demand for independence of the artists.

After all these chapters, and attempts to grasp the field of gig posters through this small overview, questions such as “What exactly are gig posters now? Are they works of art? How should they be classified?” still arise. Many terms that have been mentioned in the course of this thesis, can or have been used to describe this art movement (for example the term lowbrow). They emerged to emancipate oneself from negative verdicts, as for example, being shallow and directionless art that only serves for satisfaction of a market that is controlled by trends and hypes.

At this point, I would like to return to John Fiske who states that every culture, and therefore every art form opposes something, which it tries to change and denounces openly.¹¹⁴ This means that no art form or group can be dismissed as simply shallow or directionless. Moreover, this applies to the field of the gig poster scene. The multiple methods that gig poster artists have developed to reach independence, shown in this MA Thesis, are nothing more than a negation of their dependence on existing economic, political and cultural systems. In this way, they are also searching for their own culture, a culture that skillfully uses the content of popular art as a tool for differentiation, but which is becoming more and more blurred in times of turbo-capitalism, nationalism and globalism. Artists working in this field search for visualizations of the popular culture of the past and display it in new ways and forms. This approach seems to be an emancipation from what is considered the main stream, first world art world, and the exploration and building of an independent culture, as accomplished by the appropriation of cultural elements that are newly arranged and used otherwise.¹¹⁵ The appropriation of cultural elements became mostly visible in those chapters dealing with the nostalgic, and the history of certain codes in gig posters. It is an integral element for many gig poster artists, not only to disrupt the way the art world currently functions,

¹¹⁴ See: Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006.

¹¹⁵ See: Franz Illing, *Kitsch, Kommerz und Kult – Soziologie des schlechten Geschmacks*, Konstanz, 2006, p. 197.
“(…) Aneignung von Elementen der Kultur, die neu arrangiert und anders verwendet werden.”

but also to place themselves in a position of cultural knowledge and expertise – a process of self-emancipation from cultural expectations and verdicts imposed by a market driven system.

Gig posters operate as a sort of visualized manifesto against the ongoing cultural separation and classification. A development that can also be observed on the social level. Or, to return to kitsch and Clement Greenberg, who states that: "*(...) Kitsch (...)*", was only, "*(...) destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide.*"¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, he also notices, that kitsch can only emerge out of a: "*(...) fully matured cultural tradition, whose discoveries, acquisitions, and perfected self-consciousness kitsch can take advantage of for its own ends. It borrows from it devices, tricks, stratagems, (...), themes, converts them into a system, and discards the rest.*"¹¹⁷ He moves on to call it another: "*(...) mass product of Western industrialism (...)*", that uses and reuses existing culture all around the world to become, "*(...) the first universal culture ever beheld.*"¹¹⁸ The gig poster occupies a similar position to the notion of kitsch articulated by Greenberg. It developed out of, to borrow Greenberg's terminology, Western industrialism and used and reuses already existing culture. Modern technologies also help the gig poster to reach its public on a global scale. So can it be seen as a component of popular culture that, similar to Greenberg's definition of kitsch, is a universal culture? A question that cannot be answered at this point without a closer analysis of Greenberg's text, in which he further compares the differences between works of Picasso (high art) and Repin (Greenberg uses Repin's artwork as an example for kitsch). He tries to make it clear that there are two types of spectators. The first one, the 'cultivated spectator', can extract 'ultimate values' out of the works of Picasso, but only: "*(...) at a second remove, as the result of reflection upon the immediate impression left by plastic values.*"¹¹⁹ This requires a spectator: "*(...) sensitive enough to react sufficiently to plastic qualities.*"¹²⁰ A cognitive process Greenberg calls the "*reflected effect*". This effect is, after Greenberg, already included

¹¹⁶ Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, London, 1973, p.10.

¹¹⁷ Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, London, 1973, p.10.

¹¹⁸ Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, London, 1973, p.11.

¹¹⁹ Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, London, 1973, p.15.

¹²⁰ Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, in: Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, London, 1973, p.15.

in the pictures by Repin: “(...) ready for the spectator’s unreflective enjoyment. Where Picasso paints cause, Repin paints effect.”¹²¹ Repin delivers easy-to-read-art: “(...) a short cut to the pleasure of art that detours what is necessarily difficult in genuine art. Repin, or kitsch, is synthetic art.”¹²²

It is important to note that Greenberg talks about the relationship between Avant-Garde and Kitsch in 1939 and his essay focuses above all on the differences between the culture tastes of different social classes. He sees kitsch as a feature of the uneducated. However, this definition and reception changed over the years. Today, contemporary research is more concerned with how the subjectivity of each human recognizes and postulates what is kitsch.¹²³ Yushin Ra clarifies in his book “Der Unernst des Kitsches: Die Ästhetik des laxen Blickes auf die Welt” that kitsch can be seen as a specific sensibility to the world. The subjectivity of the viewer therefore decides what kitsch is and what not. Yushin thus finds the emotions of the subject more interesting than what the object represents.¹²⁴ Following this logic, the use of the term kitsch is always bound to the respective subjectivity of the speaker. Where it is detected and verbalized, a demarcation takes place at the same time. The postulate of kitsch can therefore be used in a positive or negative sense and serves as a means of distinction. For gig poster art, this distinction seems very important. The use of terms such as lowbow shows the need to stand out from the masses and to use these terms ironically. This irony serves as some sort of a wink that one should not take oneself, or art in principal, too seriously. Art has been elevated into such a high position that it seems to have lost its link to life, running the risk of suffocating in a bubble of self-glorification. With a humorous attitude and the adaptation of terms of classification, the elitism and functioning of the so-called art world can be questioned and maybe challenged.

After all, the gig poster artists rely on existing forms and content (be it from mass culture or high culture), which are used as some sort of hollow form, simple spectacle to satirise them or to attract the attention of the people that are sensitive enough to recognize this visual content. This forms a social relationship, a bond build and mediated by the posters. In this way, gig posters seem to question, to what extent

¹²¹ Clement Greenberg, Avant-Garde and Kitsch, in: Clement Greenberg, Art and Culture, London, 1973, p.15.

¹²² Clement Greenberg, Avant-Garde and Kitsch, in: Clement Greenberg, Art and Culture, London, 1973, p.11.

¹²³ See for example:

Kathrin Ackermann, Christopher F. Laferl (Hg.), Kitsch und Nation, Zur kulturellen Modellierung eines polemischen Begriffs, Bielefeld, 2016.

¹²⁴ Yushin Ra, Der Unernst des Kitsches: Die Ästhetik des laxen Blickes auf die Welt, Bielefeld, 2016.

old terms of classification such as kitsch or high and low art, which are still part of the common art jargon, are no longer applicable in a world that has radically changed with modern technologies.

These modern technologies, such as the Internet or social networks play a huge role in this development. They serve as simple medium for self-promotion and self-organization. A space that has no boundaries or assessment criteria for art, which is linked to the whole world and which provides an alternative to the art world. Nevertheless, this freedom enabled through modern technologies makes people depend on it. A dependence of the digital, which is on the one side an unregulated, and by that a dubious space. In order to set themselves apart, gig poster artists occupy a position between the art world and the digital, to benefit from both sides. Mechanisms of the art world as for example exhibitions in galleries or museums and its corresponding catalogues provides the serious framework. The internet and the social networks help to spread news all across the world, but furthermore, as said before, the gig poster developed to an art print. Mass printing became unnecessary, because news spreads more efficiently in the digital space. Ironically, technology helped the gig poster to obtain an artisanship and uniqueness that was meant to remain reserved for art prints. These new technologies and developments enabled many people to become artistically active. Through the digital space, visual content can spread faster than it would have been possible some years ago.

Finally, it can be said that the gig poster itself is exemplary for contemporary artists who consciously deal with judgments such as kitsch, lowbrow in order to refute them or to assert them a positive meaning. Gig poster artists not only gain reputation through their knowledge of the many codes of gig posters, or by their artistic versatility, but primarily through their own distinctive style and their empathy for the advertised music. The works produced are a visualization of the feelings that one might get listening to music. This shift from the graphic designer as a commercial artist, towards the graphic designer as an artist, is very visible in contemporary gig poster art. The graphic designer has become a subject him/herself who adds a new level of creativity to the music through visualizing its processes. This generates a singularity that is esteemed and desired by many bands when thinking about their poster designs and their visual appearance. In doing so, the gig posters, albeit in a deeper level of meaning and in a somewhat naïve way, question the quality and elitism of art as such. This criticism of old mechanisms and classification processes is part of many changes, closely related

to the digitization of our world, which have not yet been sufficiently researched and will become more and more important in the future, also in art-historical practice.

VIII. Literature.

VIII. I. Primary Literature.

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In the series „Blackbox“ of the Bröhan-Museum in Berlin curated by Günther Kieser and Tobias Hoffmann.
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Courtesy of the artist.

<http://www.bmasse.com/>

Figure 5:

Bob Masse, Bob Dylan, Meadows Music Theatre, Hartford, CT, USA, 24.07.1999.

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Figure 6:

Alfons Mucha, Der Tanz, 1898, Lithograph, 60 x 38 cm

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Figure 8:

Rob Jones, Electric Six, Rock City, Nottingham, 29.11.2004.

Courtesy of the artist.

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Courtesy of the artist.

<http://www.jermainerogers.com/>

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Courtesy of the artist.

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Courtesy of the artist.

<http://www.michaelhacker.at/pixies/>

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<https://www.animalrummy.com/collections/prints/products/the-dead-weather-new-york-city-third-man-pop-up>

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Jules Verne, *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*, Illustrations par Alphonse de Neuville et Édouard Riou gravées par Hildibrand, J. Hetzel, Paris, 1870, p.99.

Figure 18:

Rob Jones, *The Avett Brothers*, Nokia Theatre, Los Angeles, 01.10.2010.

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Figure 19:

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Ian Jeffrey, *Photographie – Sehen, betrachten, deuten*, *Bildgeschichte der Photographie von ihrer Erfindung bis heute*, Schirmer/Mosel, 2009, p.209.

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Courtesy of the artist.

<http://www.jermainerogers.com/>

Figure 22:

Jermaine Rogers, *Primus, The Fox*, Bakersfield, 22.05.2013.

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Figure 23:

Jermaine Rogers, *Festival with Mogwai, And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Death*, etc., 15.-16.09.2003.

Courtesy of the artist.

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Figure 24:

Jermaine Rogers, Ween, Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver, BC, 24.01.2011.

Courtesy of the artist.

<http://www.jermainerogers.com/>

Figure 25:

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Albrecht Schröder, Egon Schiele, Prestl, München – Berlin – London – New York, 2005, p. 320.

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Courtesy of the artist.

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Figure 27:

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Agnes Husslein-Arco, Alfred Weidinger, Gustav Klimt – 150 Jahre, Belvedere, Wien, 2012, p.214.

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Courtesy of the artist.

<https://www.animalrummy.com/>

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Courtesy of the artist.

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Figure 32:

Guido Reni, San Sebastiano, ca. 1615 Genova, Palazzo Rosso, 146 x 113 cm, Oil on canvas.

Christina Casali, Guido Reni, 1575 - 1642 : Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna ; Los Angeles Country Museum of Art ; Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth ; Bologna ; Pinacoteca Nazionale e Accademia di Belle Arti, Museo Civico Archeologico ; 5 settembre - 10 novembre, Bologna, 1988, p.67.

Figure 33:

Frank Shepard Fairey, Hope, Paper, Acryl, 2008.

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Figure 34:

Mannie Garcia, Obama, April, 2006.

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X. Color Plates.

Fig. 1:

Peter Braileys, Howling'Wolf; Country Joe and The Fish, Fillmore Auditorium, 14.-15. 04.1967.

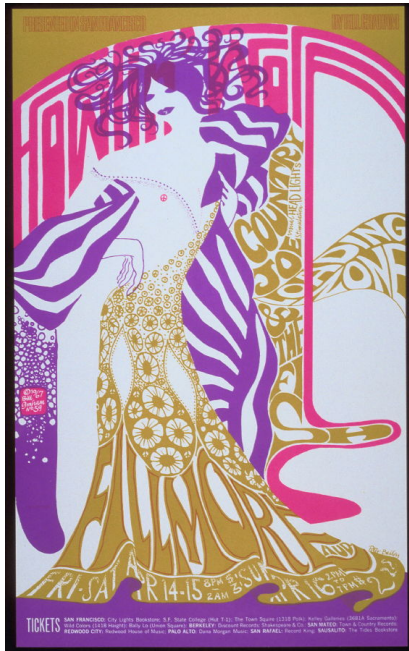


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Fig. 9:

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Fig. 12:

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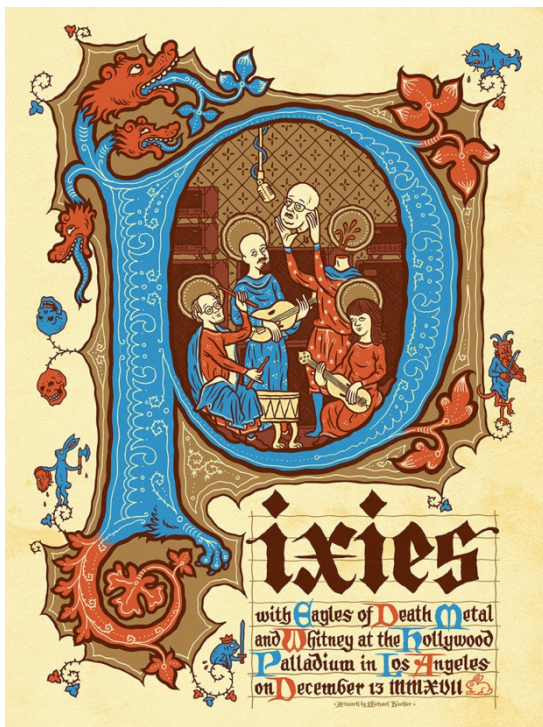


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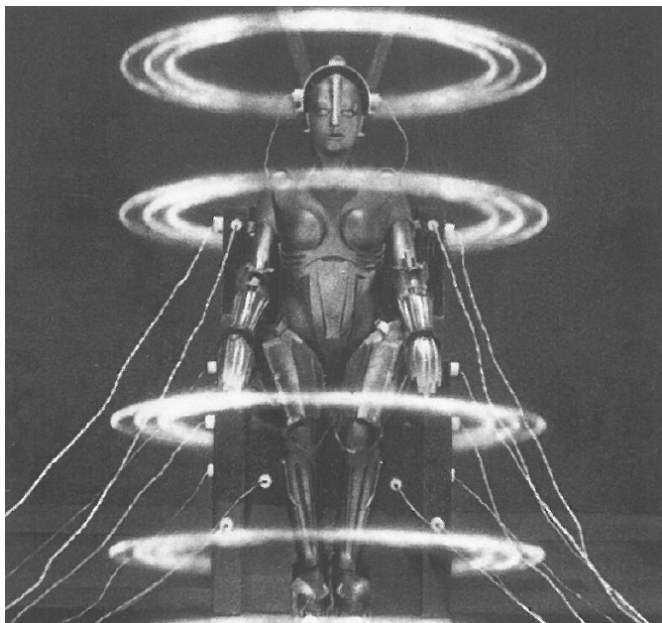


Fig. 15:

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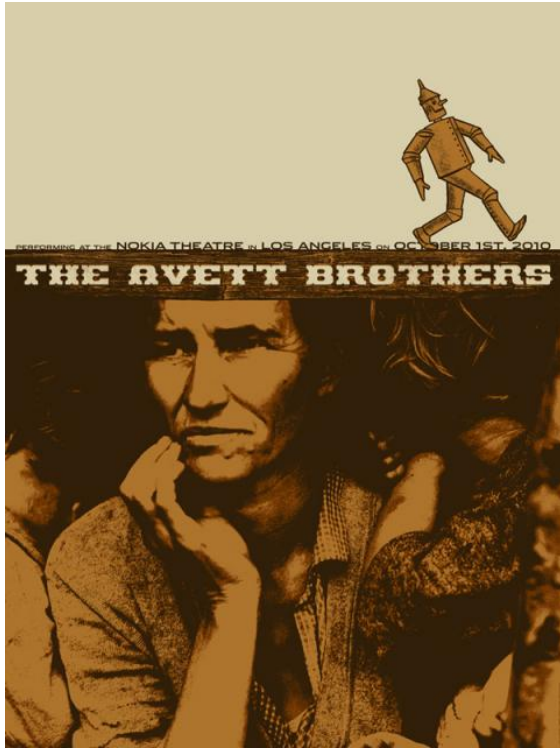


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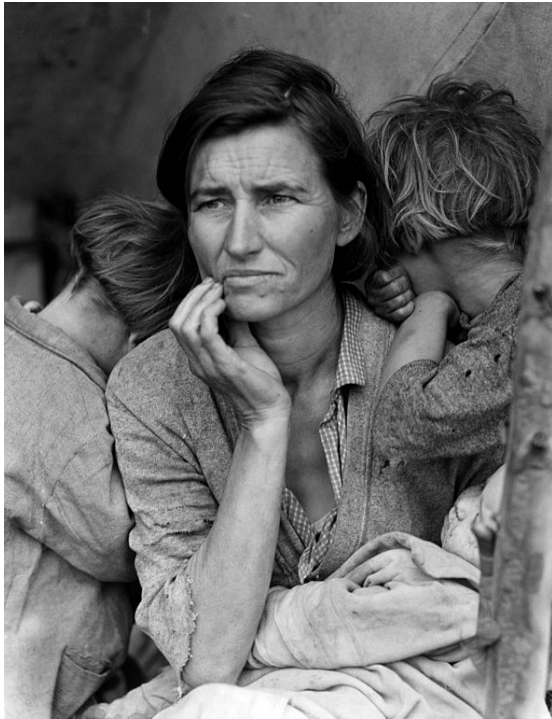


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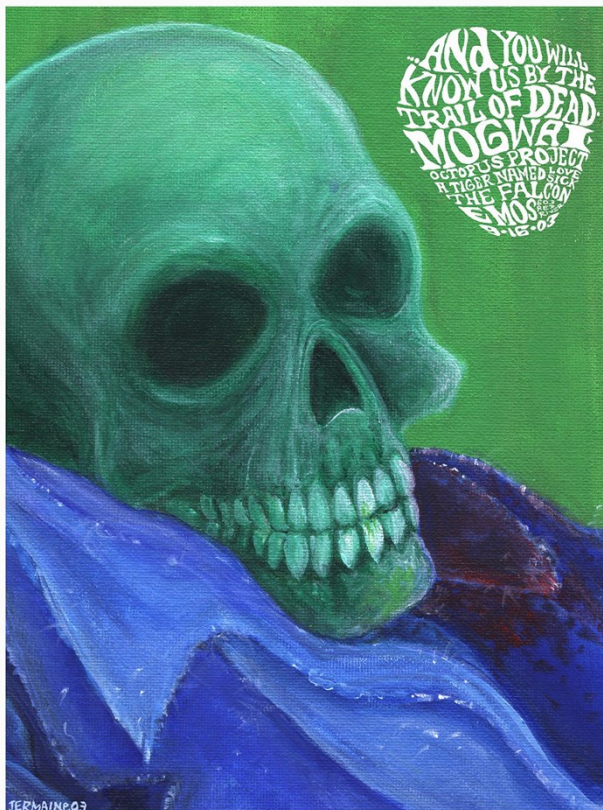
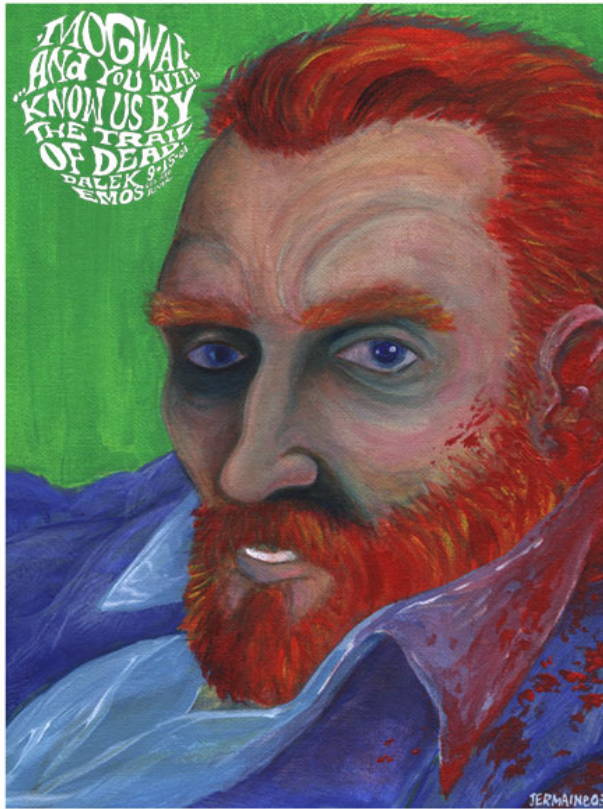


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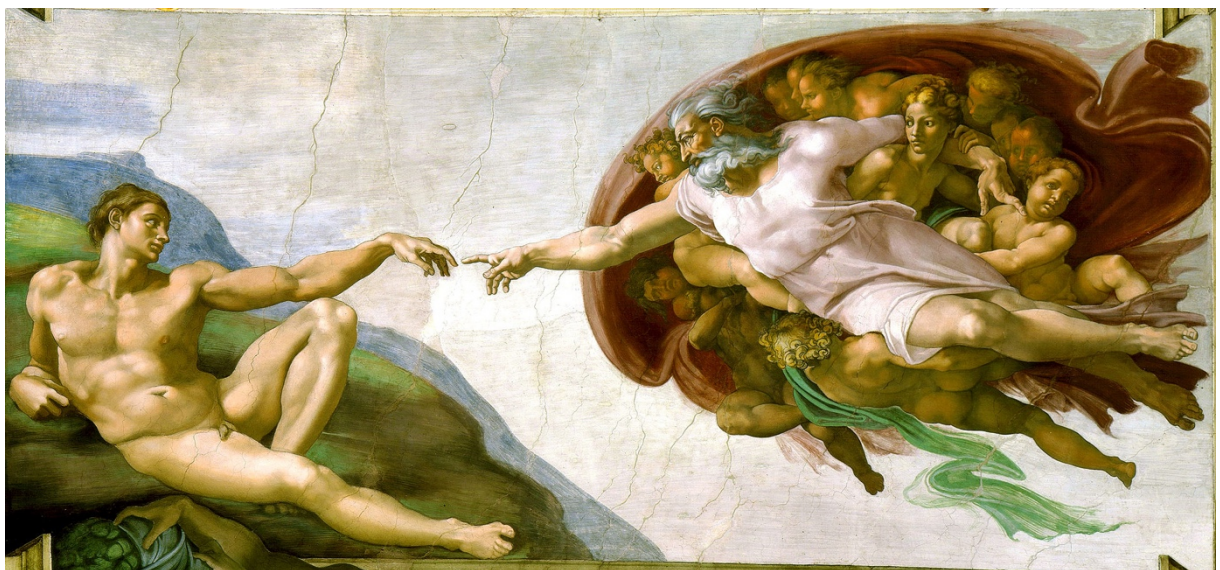
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Fig. 29:

Buonarroti Michelangelo, The Creation of Adam, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, c. 1508–1512.



Detail of “The Creation of Adam”.

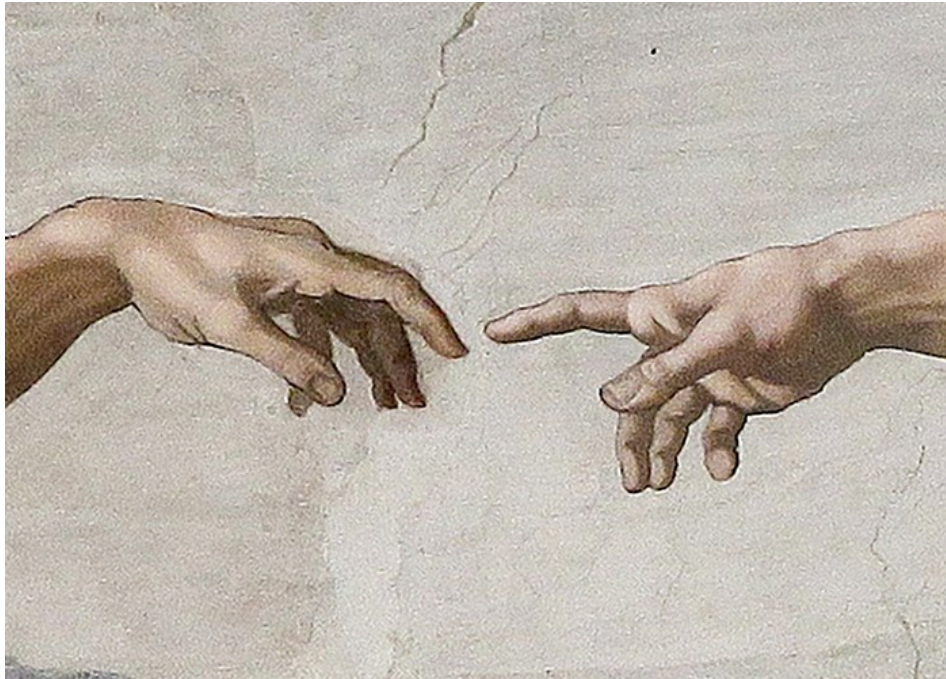


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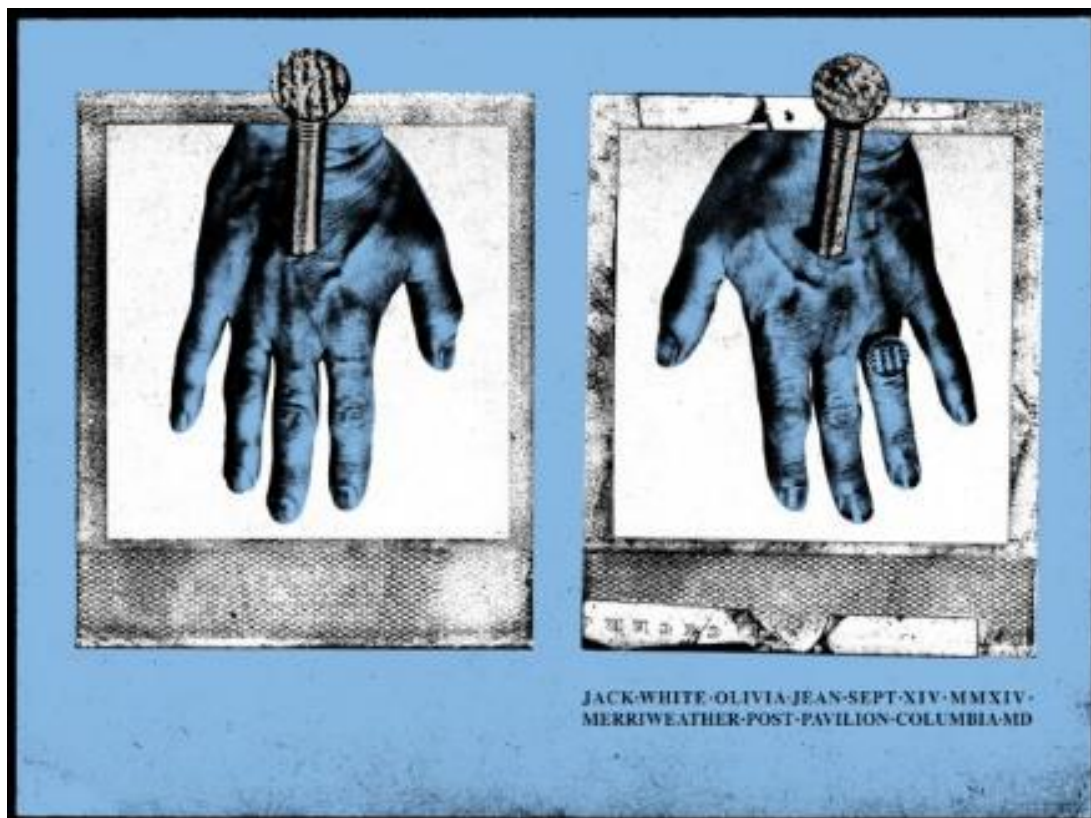


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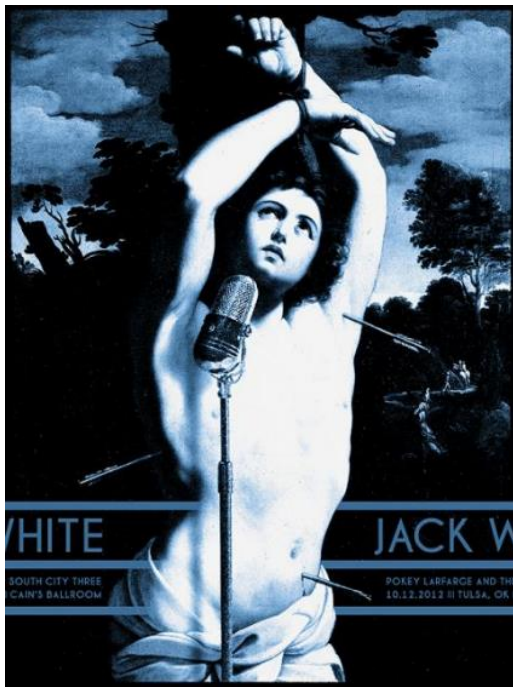


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Fig. 33:

Frank Shepard Fairey, Hope, Paper, Acryl, 2008.



Fig. 34:

Mannie Garcia, Obama, April 2006.



XI. Interview with the Gig Poster Artist Michael Hacker.

XI. I. Interview.

Berlin am 16.01.2017 um 20:00 Uhr,

Interview mit dem Künstler Michael Hacker in der Bar "Zur Fetten Ecke".

Antonio Rosa de Pauli:

Vielen Dank, dass du dir Zeit für dieses Interview genommen hast.

Michael Hacker:

Gerne.

Rosa de Pauli:

Die erste Frage, die ich dir stellen möchte, ist ganz allgemein gefasst. Wie bist du dazu gekommen Gig Poster herzustellen?

Hacker:

Es gibt zwei Gründe: Erstens das Buch "Art of Modern Rock", welches 2004 herausgekommen ist und ich in die Hände bekommen habe.¹²⁵ Darin waren zahlreiche Abbildungen von Gig Postern vieler Bands, die mich schon damals interessierten. Das Buch hat mich so inspiriert, dass ich mir gedacht haben: "Wow, so etwas möchte ich auch machen." Aber auch das Medium des Siebdruckes hat mir von Anfang an sehr gefallen. Dies führte mich später dazu Grafik und Werbung auf der Universität für angewandte Kunst in Wien zu studieren.

Das zweite wichtige Erlebnis war der Besuch Berlins im Rahmen einer Exkursion während meines Studiums. Dort hatte ein Künstlerkollektiv (die damals schon fast wieder aufgehört hatten Gig Posters herzustellen) eine Ausstellung. Wir sind dort natürlich hingegangen und haben einen der Künstler gefragt, wie er an die Bands herantritt und wie er dazu kommt Poster für diese anzufertigen. Er hat uns dann Auskunft und Tipps gegeben und das haben wir dann auch adaptiert. Damals habe ich

¹²⁵ Paul Grushkin, Art of Modern Rock – The Poster Explosion, San Francisco, 2004.

gerade angefangen mit Siebdruck zu arbeiten. Mit Freunden, die mit mir die Vorliebe für Siebdruck teilten, habe ich dann das Kollektiv namens "Die Atzgerei" gegründet.¹²⁶ Das waren die zwei ausschlaggebenden Ereignisse, die mich dazu gebracht haben Gig Poster herzustellen.

Rosa de Pauli:

Es gab also auch Gig Poster Künstler, die dich von Anfang an beeinflusst haben?

Hacker:

Nein, die gab es nicht. Eher das Medium Comic und die Comic-Künstler und vor allem jenes des Siebdruckes. Ich habe das im Vorfeld auch nicht so wirklich gekannt. Vor allem die Vielfalt und Farbigkeit, die der Siebdruck ermöglicht, sowie die Schrift (gerade die handgeschriebene Schrift), die illustrativ ins Bild eingebaut ist, all das hat mich interessiert.

Rosa de Pauli:

Also benützt du für deine Gig Poster keinen Computer, sondern konzipierst alles per Hand?

Hacker:

Eine Tuschezeichnung mit eingefügter Schrift bildet den Anfang eines Posters. Das ist alles per Hand gezeichnet. Um mit Farben zu experimentieren stelle ich dann manchmal die Farblayer am Computer oder auf einem Transparentpapier her. Gerade die Skalierung von der Originalzeichnung ins richtige Format oder die Korrektur kleiner Fehler wird am Computer erledigt. Vielleicht kommt dann auch noch eine dritte Farbe hinzu. Aber die Zeichnung an sich ist immer eine handgemachte Tuschezeichnung und da versuche ich, insofern das Konzept des Posters es zulässt, die Schrift in die Narration des Posters einzugliedern. So wie bei dem Plakat für "King Buzzo" bei dem die Schrift ein Teil vom Bild, der Narration, geworden ist. (Fig. 1)

¹²⁶ Homepage:
<http://atzgerei.com>

Rosa de Pauli:

Beeinflusst der Name der Band dabei die bildliche Darstellung, wie zum Beispiel bei den Postern für die Band Mudhoney? (Fig. 2 + 3)

Hacker:

Bei diesen Beispielen bestimmt (King Buzzo, Mudhoney). Sonst aber nicht unbedingt, nur manchmal. Das Gig Poster ist im Endeffekt ein Produkt, da es ohne Bandname und Datum kein Gig Poster wäre. Der ursprüngliche Zweck war auf Werbung ausgelegt. Der Unterschied ist, dass es zwar ein Produkt, aber kein offizielles Merchandise ist. Es ist kein T-Shirt Motiv oder ein Platten-Cover, sondern eben „nur“ ein Poster. Ich kann mir so die Freiheit herausnehmen die Musik oder den Namen der Band auf meine Art und Weise zu interpretieren. Dabei spielt in meinen Postern ein stilistisches Element eine besonders wichtige Rolle: der Humor. So versuche ich dann auch bei irgendwelchen Metal-Bands diesen Humor hineinzubringen. Das Resultat ist dann oft eine ironische Verbildlichung des Bandnamens.

Rosa de Pauli:

Es scheint mir als beuge diese humoristische Arbeitsweise klischeehafte Darstellungen von verschiedenen Musikstilen vor.

Hacker:

Naja, jeder Künstler handhabt das natürlich anders. Manche schauen was in das konzeptuelle Bild der Band passen würde und bedienen das dann. Wenn ich einen Auftrag für ein T-Shirt bekomme, versuche ich das natürlich auch, aber wenn es ein Gig Poster ist, will ich mir so viele Freiheiten wie möglich herausnehmen. Diese Freiheit und der Humor können so diesen Klischees entgegenwirken.

Rosa de Pauli:

Du bekommst also einen Auftrag von einer Band, dem Veranstalter oder fertigst du aus Eigeninteresse ein Poster für ein Konzert an?

Hacker:

Das ist eine Mischung. 50/50 ungefähr. Ich versuche immer, sofern es möglich ist, mit der Band in direkten Kontakt zu stehen. Ich schicke jeder Band oder ihrem Management das Motiv zur Voransicht. Die kriegen das also immer zu sehen und sagen ob es passt oder nicht.

Rosa de Pauli:

Gab es dabei auch Bands, die gar nicht mit dem zufrieden waren, was du für sie hergestellt hast?

Hacker:

(lacht) Ja das gab es schon einmal. Damals war ich dann auch relativ enttäuscht. Diese Band hatte über Jahre hinweg ein Image aufgebaut, welches mein Entwurf negierte. Deshalb war die Ablehnung natürlich total legitim. Schlussendlich war ich dann auch ein wenig zu Stolz etwas Neues zu entwerfen, was näher an ihrer Vorstellung gewesen wäre.

Rosa de Pauli:

Mir kommt auch vor, dass bestimmte Bands darauf bedacht sind Künstler für ihre Poster zu engagieren, beispielsweise „The Melvins“ oder „Queens of The Stone Age“. Sie übernehmen Quasi die Rolle eines Mäzens.

Hacker:

Ja auf jeden Fall. Bei der Band „The Melvins“ würde ich das sofort unterschreiben. Die bringen ja nicht nur Gig Poster, sondern auch „Single Collections“ mit Siebdruck Cover heraus. Ich glaub der Band ist es wichtig diesen künstlerischen Aspekt zu haben. Es gibt viele, die wirklich versuchen bei jedem Konzert ein Poster zu haben (The Melvins, Red Fang, Mudhoney, Swans, Big Business, Sonic Youth, ... etc.). Eine Art Kurator fungiert dabei als Mittelsmann und schreibt die Künstler an. Vorzugsweise werden jene ausgewählt, die in der Stadt leben in der das Konzert stattfindet. Der Kurator kriegt also den Auftrag von der Band oder von dem Management. Die so entstandenen Gig Poster werden dann "Tour Poster Series" genannt und es wird geschaut, dass es für wirklich jedes Konzert ein Poster gibt.

Rosa de Pauli:

Welches dann aber auch nur beim Konzert vertrieben wird und nirgends auf der Straße hängt?

Hacker:

Genau. Mich interessiert der Promoter oder die Venue weniger, ich mach das für die Band, und es passiert oft, dass Betreiber von Venues sagen: „Hättest du das Poster früher gemacht, dann hätten wir das auch verwenden können!“

Rosa de Pauli:

Die Gig Poster geben also den alten Status von Poster (die Öffentlichkeit und die große Menge an Drucken) auf und beschränken sich auf einen kleinen Kreis. Das Poster ist eigentlich nur noch im Internet sichtbar und kann bei dem Konzert, beim Künstler selber oder später über Internet bestellt werden.

Hacker:

Genau. Natürlich könnte ich mich drum bemühen, dass meine Poster auf der Straße hängen, aber dann muss ich auch Änderungen, wie Leserlichkeit der Schrift, vornehmen, um das ich mich wirklich nicht kümmern will. Ich wäre dann an formale Dinge, wie die Größe der Schrift, gebunden. Das würde mich einschränken und mir den Spaß an der Sache nehmen.

Rosa de Pauli:

Verkaufen sich solche Poster dann auch?

Hacker:

Ja das tun sie. Ich fange bei einem Grundpreis an und wenn sie weniger werden, steigt der Verkaufspreis.

Rosa de Pauli:

Und die Band, die ein Poster in Auftrag gibt, bezahlt dich für deine Arbeit?

Hacker:

Ich habe immer den Deal: ein Drittel der Auflage kriegt die Band, zwei Drittel ich. Ich werde also nicht von den Bands bezahlt. Das Geld, welches ich lukriere, ist nur aus den Verkäufen von meinen zwei Dritteln. Da hat aber jeder Künstler andere Deals. Einmal wäre ich bezahlt worden. Das wäre ein Auftrag von der Band "The Black Keys" gewesen. Die hätten zwei Poster in Auftrag gegeben aber die Tour wurde dann leider abgesagt

Rosa de Pauli:

Kann durch diesen limitierten Verkauf das Überleben des Künstlers gesichert werden?

Hacker:

Nein, bei mir nicht. Ich würde es nicht ausschließen aber dann müsste ich mich ganz darauf konzentrieren, was ich aber nicht will. Es ist sicher möglich, aber gerade in Europa viel schwieriger als in Amerika. Bands haben dort einen ganz anderen Stellenwert als in Europa und so auch die Poster, welche dann teilweise eine Auflagenstärke von 1500 Postern pro Abend haben. Das ist ein ganz ein anderer Markt. Und ich glaub so etwas ist in Europa noch schwer. Aber es gibt schon Leute die das hier machen.

Rosa de Pauli:

Die Gig Poster bewegen sich also, zumindest in Europa, in einer Nische? Mir kommt es aber schon so vor, als ob immer mehr Menschen an den Gig Postern interessiert sind und diese auch sammeln.

Hacker:

Ja und genau das gefällt mir. Auch die Webseite „Gigposters.com“, die es leider nicht mehr gibt, war sehr wichtig. Dort konnten sich Fans, Künstler und Sammler online austauschen und vernetzen. Die ersten Poster, die wir gemacht haben, wurden auf dieser Seite hochgeladen und wir bekamen sofort Feedback; und das von Künstlern, die wir vorher nur aus dem Buch "Art of Modern Rock" kannten. Ich habe nur zwei, drei Poster gemacht und plötzlich bist du in der Szene drinnen. Das war bevor ich jemanden aus

diesem Umkreis persönlich gekannt habe. Die Webseite war demnach für mich und auch die ganze Szene eine wichtige Plattform.

Rosa de Pauli:

Es findet also eine Vernetzung unter den Künstlern, aber auch unter den Künstlern und den Sammlern statt?

Hacker:

Ja. Und mittlerweile mache ich Gig Posters auch aus dem Grund, weil ich mich in dieser Szene so wohl fühle.

Rosa de Pauli:

Frei nach dem Motto: Klein aber fein?

Hacker:

Ja. Natürlich sind alle unterschiedlich, aber alle gehen respektvoll miteinander um. Sie wissen um was es geht, jeder hat seine Ansichten wie er seine Arbeit macht, aber es gibt so eine Art Konsens. Ich war jetzt zweimal in Austin, Texas, da findet jährlich das größte „*Flatstock*“ statt, eine der größten Postermessen. Um zwei Uhr Nachmittag öffnet das Festival und dann kommen die Sammler im Laufschrift, mit Rollen bewaffnet. Sie rennen noch nicht, sind aber kurz davor. Und natürlich rauschen alle an meinem Stand vorbei, um als erster bei bekannten amerikanischen Künstlern zu sein, wie ein...ähm...Rob Jones zum Beispiel. Aber du merkst, dass das schon etwas Anderes als in Europa ist. Popkultur hat in Amerika halt generell einen anderen Stellenwert. Das Gig Poster an sich, sprich die Poster aus den Sechzigern, gab es halt bei uns in Europa nicht in so einem Ausmaß wie in Amerika.

Rosa de Pauli:

Nicht nur scheint der Umgang mit Gig Poster in Amerika offener zu sein, auch die amerikanischen Künstler, wie Jermaine Rogers oder Rob Jones, gehen ja auch viel mehr auf schon vorhandene Kunst ein. Es scheint fast so, als ob sie ihre Kunst in der Hochkunst situieren wollen, damit ihre Gig Poster aufgewertet werden?

Hacker:

Also spontan fällt mir da der Künstler Frank Kozik ein. Man könnte sagen, dass er die zweite Welle von Gig Postern in den 90ern ausgelöst hat. Er hat sich einfach auf Popkulturelle Schemata und Darstellungen konzentriert und diese auch in seinen Postern bedient. Jeder Künstler konzipiert halt eine andere Bildwelt. Kozik hat das mit Popkultur gemacht und andere machen das jetzt mit den Anleihen zur Kunstgeschichte. So wie die Poster der 60er Jahre viele Referenzen zum Jugendstil aufweisen. Andere Künstler gehen einen anderen Weg, wie z.Bsp. Mara Piccione. Sie hat sich von Gig Postern immer weiter entfernt, um sich voll und ganz der abstrakten Kunst zu widmen.

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Rosa de Pauli:

Mir kommt es dennoch so vor, als ob Künstler ihre Kunst (Gig Poster) auf diese Weise legitimieren wollen. Als Beispiel könnte ich Rob Jones Poster für Jack White, der Darstellung des Heiligen Sebastians von gegenüberstellen. (Fig. 4 + 5) Was meinst du dazu?

Hacker:

Ja, die Beschäftigung mit der Kunstgeschichte ist da. Der Heilige Sebastian wird nur durch den Einsatz eines Mikrofones in einen ganz anderen Kontext gesetzt. Das Sakrale wird in einen neuen Kontext gesetzt. Aber als Aufwertung der eigenen Kunst sehe ich das nicht.

Rosa de Pauli:

Das Sakrale scheint auch du humoristisch im Poster für die Band YOB zu behandeln. (Fig. 6)

Hacker:

Da war die Inspiration aber eher das vorherige Album der Band "The Great Cessation". Ich habe mir gedacht, ich stelle diesen übertriebenen Priester dar, der einfach nur den Weltuntergang anpreist. Das Plattencover schaut ganz anders aus, dennoch war die Aussage des Plattentitels die Inspirationsquelle.

¹²⁷ <https://www.piccione.nl>

Aber um zurück zu den Referenzen zu kommen: Der Versuch der Legitimation des Mediums über Referenzen auf bestehende Kunstwerke, empfinde ich bis zu einem gewissen Grad als Armutszeugnis. Man darf sicherlich nicht außer Acht lassen, dass man sich ja immer auf bestehende Kunst bezieht. Das Gig Poster ist ja inhaltlich schon eine Referenz auf etwas, beispielsweise die Musik der Band. Darum kann es gut sein, dass eine Band oder ein Künstler eine Vorliebe für einen gewissen Film, Kunststil oder auch Künstler hat. Oder, dass das Poster auf ihre Texte Bezug nimmt. Ich finde es ja auch voll interessant, warum man sich so viel auf den Jugendstil bezieht. Ich persönlich finde Jugendstil fad.

Das Lustige ist eben, dass sich Gig Poster (auch jene die schon vor 40 Jahren gemacht worden sind) immer auf Bestehendes stützen. Wenn man den Kozik nochmal hernimmt, bezieht dieser sich auf popkulturelle Maskottchen. Ich finde das passiert in einem großen Ausmaß heutzutage. Wenn man sich umschaut, merkt man auf wieviel sich die Künstler beziehen, sei es Star Wars, sei es Mickey Mouse. In den Kreisen in denen ich mich bewege, und auch online, kommt das immer mehr zum Vorschein. Natürlich bin ich auch von Sachen beeinflusst, aber diese „1 zu 1“ Abbildungen, scheinen sich schon durchzusetzen. Ich könnte auch nie weniger als drei Totenköpfe oder nie weniger als vier Brüste auf einem Poster darstellen, dann würden die Verkaufszahlen wahrscheinlich nach oben schnellen.

Rosa de Pauli:

Also wird die Darstellung platt, man bedient sich schöner Motivik um das Gig Poster interessant zu machen?

Hacker:

Wenn man kommerziell erfolgreich sein will, dann ja. Referenzen auf irgendetwas sind halt Teil des Ganzen. Aber ich denke mir dann immer: Wo ist das Eigene? Dies bleibt auf der Strecke, wenn meine Arbeit nur noch aus Referenzen besteht. Natürlich wäre das für den Betrachter einfacher, weil man etwas sieht und es erkennt. Der erste Gedanke ist dann: „Ah...das kenn ich ja.“

Rosa de Pauli:

Da stellt sich ja auch die Frage, ob der Betrachter überhaupt die Referenz im Poster erkennt. Hast du schon einmal Bezug auf ein anderes Kunstwerk genommen?

Hacker:

Ja, habe ich, aber das kommt sehr selten vor. Ein Beispiel wäre das Swans Poster, in welchem ich mich auf die Darstellung des Sehers, auf dem Cover von Asterix und Obelix, bezogen habe. Und das ist halt jene „Kunst“, die mich beeinflusst hat. (Fig. 7 + 8)

Rosa de Pauli:

Asterix und Obelix würdest du also als Kunst bezeichnen?

Hacker:

Sicher. Das waren meine ersten Einflüsse als Kind. Ich versuche halt in Aufträgen oder eigenständigen Arbeiten eine Geschichte, eine Narration zu transportieren. Dieser Punkt interessiert mich generell bei jeglichen Illustrationen und gründet in eben jenen Comics wie Asterix und Obelix. Dieses narrative Element vermisste ich oft bei Arbeiten, die sich beispielsweise auf den Jugendstil beziehen. Das Ornament verdrängt dabei bis zu einem gewissen Maß die Narration und damit kann ich halt nur schwer etwas anfangen. Ich bewundere schon die Technik, das Handwerk aber sonst finde ich das eher langweilig. Ich finde es fand, wenn etwas nur gut dargestellt ist; für mich spielt die Idee eine Rolle.

Rosa de Pauli:

Also Kunst mit Konzept?

Hacker:

Ja, genau. Ich finde auch manche Werbung grandios und erlebe auch öfters den Diskurs, dass Werbung keine Kunst sein kann und automatisch als schlecht bewertet wird. Quasi eine Trennung: Werbung schlecht, Kunst super.

Rosa de Pauli:

Also eine Polemik zwischen tiefer und hoher Kunst (High and Low Art).

Hacker:

Ja, aber das Schöne daran ist, dass es in Amerika den Begriff der „Lowbrow“ Kunst gibt, der dort schon sehr etabliert ist. Er bezeichnet das, was zwischen high und low angesiedelt ist. Also all jene Kunst, die nicht in Galerien ausgestellt, sondern in der Straße zu finden ist: Gig Poster, Skateboard-Art oder auch Graffiti.

Rosa de Pauli:

Das führt mich zu einer anderen Frage. Ich finde, dass es in den Gig Poster Codes gibt, die sich über längere Zeit entwickelt haben und noch immer eine Rolle spielen, wie der Jugendstil, Comics, Totenköpfe oder auch das Motiv der nackten Frau. Ich kenne nur ein Poster von dir in welchem du eine nackte Frau eingebaut hast, jenes für Queens of the Stone Age, und ich wollte fragen wieso? (Fig. 9) Wir haben vorher von Humor und die Infragestellung klischeehafter Motivik geredet. Ironisierst du also in diesem Poster die Darstellungen der nackten Frau?

Hacker:

Ja genau. Erstens zeichne ich nie Pin-Ups. Das war mein erstes Pin-Up, welches ich je gezeichnet habe, gerade weil es halt so ein klassisches Motiv ist und Queens of the Stone Age so eine große Band sind. Es wurde einmal eine Poster-serie für diese Band angefertigt, welche Frauen sexuell stark überzogen dargestellt hat und ich wollte das irgendwie durchbrechen. Deshalb dieses Pin-Up-Girl aus der Steinzeit, welches einen Babyelefanten und einen Baby-Säbelzähntiger an ihrer Brust nährt. Komplett übertrieben also. Solch eine Überzeichnung soll im gewissen Sinne die Klischees hinterfragen

Rosa de Pauli:

Ich frage mich sowieso oft weshalb das Bild der Frau so wichtig ist. Der amerikanische Künstler Bob Masse übernahm Alfons Muchas Frauenfigur und baute sie in seinen Gig Postern ein. (Fig. 10 + 11) Dies führte aber auch dazu, dass heute noch immer Poster mit der gleichen Motivik entstehen. Glaubst du das geschieht, weil es ein von Männern dominiertes Genre ist?

Hacker:

Ich kann mir schon vorstellen, dass das ein wichtiger Teil von Metal und Rock ist. Das sind Musikstile, die sehr männlich dominiert sind, und Klischees einfach von Generation zu Generation weitergegeben werden, ohne sie zu hinterfragen.

Rosa de Pauli:

Rob Jones ist in dieser Hinsicht ein interessanter Künstler, da ich finde, dass er das Rollenbild von Mann und Frau in seinen Gig Postern kritisch hinterfragt. (Fig. 12)

Hacker:

Ja, das stimmt. Aber darüber kann ich nicht wirklich etwas sagen. Ich habe ihn schon mal getroffen und kann dir nur sagen, dass er, unter anderem, ein Mitbegründer von MONDO ist, ein Kollektiv, dass Filmposter und Filmsountracks herausbringt.¹²⁸

Rosa de Pauli:

Die Gründung eines Kollektivs ist auch eine typische Charakteristik der Gig Poster. Es scheint fast so, als ob man sich zusammenschließt um außerhalb des Systems zu überleben und in einem unabhängigen Umfeld arbeiten zu können. Der Gedanke des DIY (Do it yourself) scheint da mitzuschwingen. Gleichzeitig werden die Gig Poster für Museen immer interessanter. Wie siehst du diese Entwicklung?

Hacker:

Ja das könnte man so sagen. Genauso wird das Interesse kultureller Einrichtungen an Gig Postern auch immer größer. In Hamburg war beispielsweise letztes Jahr eine große Ausstellung über Gig Poster.

Rosa de Pauli:

Kunst sollte ja ein Unikat sein. Warhol hat es schon vorgemacht, dass ein Siebdruck auch auf den Rang eines Kunstwerkes gehoben werden kann. Würdest du sagen, dass deine Werke Unikate oder auch Kunst sind?

¹²⁸ <https://mondotees.com/blogs/gallery>

Hacker:

Bevor ich dir darauf antworte, lass mich dir kurz zwei Erlebnisse im Bezug zur Kunst schildern.

Das erste Erlebnis war der Besuch einer Ausstellung von Dirk Bozner, einem Schweizer Künstler. Der hat früher viele Gig Poster gemacht, hatte aber eine ganz andere Auffassung was diese zu sein haben. Für ihn waren sie keine Kunst, nur banale Werbung. Deshalb war es für ihn verständlich diese nach dem Konzert zu entsorgen. Das zweite Erlebnis war die Ausstellung „POSTER ROCK - GIG-POSTER UND DIE FLATSTOCK CONVENTION“ im Kunstgewerbe Museum in Hamburg.¹²⁹ Der Kurator hat uns eine Führung durch das Museum und dann auch durch die ziemlich große Poster Sammlung gegeben. Dort befinden sich unter anderem Erstaufgaben von Toulouse-Lautrec und Alfons Mucha Postern. Der Punkt ist aber, dass das als Kunst angesehen wird, aber im Endeffekt auch nur Ankündigungsplakate für Abendveranstaltungen waren. Ich persönlich siedle Gig Poster in einen Graubereich an, weil es verschiedene Meinungen gibt. Es gibt Freunde von mir, die behaupten, dass ihre Gig Poster Kunst sind. Ich sehe das ein bisschen anders. Ein Poster ist nur dann ein Poster, wenn es einen Bandnamen, ein Datum und einen Veranstaltungsort bewirbt. Obwohl es nicht mehr, oder nur begrenzt, als Ankündigungsplakat dient, ist es ja nicht frei. Es muss diesen Normen entsprechen, als dass es als Gig Poster zählen kann. Außerdem habe ich eine Deadline. Es sollte zum Konzert fertig werden, sonst macht es keinen Sinn. Ich muss aber auch zugeben, dass ich mir schwer tue die Gig Poster einzuordnen. Wenn ich meine Arbeit betrachte, dann ist Kunst immer das, was ohne Fremdeinwirkung entsteht. Am besten ist es, wenn ich es aus Eigeninteresse mache. Aber die Frage nach Kunst ist eh nur eine Wertigkeit, die mich nicht interessiert.

Rosa de Pauli:

Aber die Anzahl der Kopien, welche signiert und nummeriert sind, spricht ja wieder für einen Kunstdruck?

Hacker:

Ja voll. Durch die limitierte Auflage ist es sicher ein Kunstdruck, aber dadurch, dass es von den Ankündigungsplakaten kommt, würde ich nicht pauschal sagen, dass

¹²⁹ Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, POSTER ROCK - GIG-POSTER UND DIE FLATSTOCK CONVENTION, 21. August 2015 bis 3. Januar 2016.

es Kunst ist. Es gibt viele Künstler, die das ursprüngliche Poster als Kunstdruck verkaufen, davor aber den Bandnamen, das Datum und das Venue herausretuschieren. Das funktioniert bei meinen Postern fast nie, da sonst das Narrativ zerstört werden würde. Da fällt es schwer etwas zu entfernen. Gig Poster sind demnach für mich fast immer eine abgeschlossene Geschichte. Mich würde ja sehr interessieren ob diese Szene an Relevanz gewinnen würde, wenn mehr Geld im Spiel wäre. Ob es dann als Kunst angesehen wird? Aber gerade den niedrigen Preis der Gig Poster finde ich positiv. Ökonomisch ist das nicht gerade, aber das macht das Poster auch aus, dass du es am Konzert kaufen kannst. Ob es danach auf E-Bay 100 oder 1000 Euro kosten würde, ändert nichts daran, dass man es am Konzert billig kaufen konnte. Außerdem ist die Vorstellung schön, dass ein Mensch, der nie einen Siebdruck kaufen würde, dies eben tut, weil er eine Band gerne hat und ein Andenken an das Konzert haben will.

Rosa de Pauli:

Findest du aber, dass Gig Poster in einen kunsthistorischen Diskurs aufgenommen werden sollten?

Hacker:

Voll. Aber wenn wir über Kunst reden muss man halt immer im Hinterkopf haben, dass es ohne die Band das Poster nicht gäbe.

Rosa de Pauli:

Du machst ja auch Werbung für kleinere Unternehmen wie „Beerlovers“ oder die Bar „Brauhund“. Wo liegen deine Präferenzen? Bei Werbung oder bei den Gig Postern oder in der Mischung?

Hacker:

Das kann ich gar nicht sagen. Ich habe nicht nur die Ambition Gig Poster zu machen. Wenn ich Geld damit verdienen möchte, müsste ich viel mehr als Händler auftreten. Ich müsste viel mehr Promotion machen für meinen Shop, ich müsste auf mehr Messen fahren und müsste viel aktiver den Handel antreiben. Dann würde aber ein großer Teil meiner Zeit mit Verkaufen draufgehen, was bei Werbeaufträgen anders ist. Da machst du deine Leistung, wirst für die Leistung bezahlt und dann kommt der nächste Auftrag.

Es gibt aber zwei Hauptpunkte, wieso ich Gig Poster mache. Erstens: ich kann ein Poster für eine Band, die ich gerne habe, individuell interpretieren, ohne dass ich versuche das als Werbeposter oder Kundenauftrag zu sehen. Ich versuche da schon so frei wie möglich zu arbeiten. Das ist mir auch wichtig. Wenn jetzt eine Band kommen würde und sagen würde: "Könnte das und jenes anders ausschauen?", dann würde ich verneinen, außer es wäre ein Auftrag wie zum Beispiel für ein Plattencover, dann wäre es etwas ganz Anderes. Da geht es ja um ein Produkt, das der Band und auch den Leuten gefallen soll. Da bin ja eigentlich Dienstleister. Bei den Postern aber nehme mir so viele Freiheiten raus wie möglich, außer Bandname, Datum, etc. Das ist der eine Antrieb den ich spannend finde: Musik, die ich schon lange höre, individuell zu interpretieren. Und das immer mit diesem gewissen humoristischen Touch.

Rosa de Pauli:

Die Formschöpfung geht also von der Musik und dem Bandnamen aus?

Hacker:

Ja teilweise Musik, der Name, schon vorhandenes Artwork oder ein schon vorhandenes Image.

Rosa de Pauli:

So wie dein Poster für die Band "Kvelertak"? (Fig. 13)

Hacker:

Die Aussage dieses Posters ist ja simpel: Wikinger, die saufen. Ich habe die Band ja kennengelernt, was die Arbeit erleichtert und ich auch spannend finde. Aber auch wenn ich Bands nicht persönlich kenne, gibt es ja ein visuelles Image, welches eine Band nach außen vertritt.

Rosa de Pauli:

Zum Beispiel die Band Turbonegro?

Hacker:

Genau, aber es sagt ja nicht zwingendermaßen etwas darüber aus wie die Bandmitglieder drauf sind. Die können noch so viele blutige Plattencovers haben und

sind doch kuschelweiche Menschen. Ich freue mich dann natürlich auf die Reaktion von Bands, wenn auf dem Poster ein Bär, eine Biene oder irgendetwas, was eigentlich nicht zu dieser Art von Musik passt, dargestellt ist und die das super finden oder darüber lachen. Das ist der spannende Punkt, weil ich mir eben die Freiheit herausnehmen möchte dieses aufgebaute Image zu negieren.

Rosa de Pauli:

Dies führt mich zu einer weiteren Frage, in der es um die Auflehnung der Gig Poster geht. Ich finde, dass diese dekorativen Elemente die du schon angesprochen hast, konträr zu jenen Gig Postern stehen, die in den 60ern, 70ern und 80ern gemacht worden sind. Diese weisen eine gewisse Auflehnung gegen das System auf. Sie sind Teil einer Gegenkultur. Dies hat natürlich auch mit den Texten der Musik zu tun. Gerade da fällt auf, dass sich Musiker, des Bereiches in dem du dich aufhältst, in ihren Texten in Fantasiewelten hineinfliehen. Kann es sein, dass dieses Desinteresse die eigentliche Auflehnung ist, wie auch in den Gig Postern?

Hacker:

Das ist auch spannend. Ich denke gerade an den Rock und Metal Bereich, wie viele Musiker sich in ihren Texten auf Autoren wie H.P. Lovecraft beziehen und darüber ganze Konzeptalben schreiben. Es ist keine Revolte, aber es ist ein bisschen eine Flucht und Negierung der Realität, was ich sehr sympathisch finde. Der Begriff des Nerds, ist ja heute schon eher positiv konnotiert. Ich denke, dass ganz viele Musiker, wie auch Künstler, eigentlich auch nur Nerds sind, die ihre eigene Welt erschaffen.

An dieser Stelle muss ich wieder auf Kozik zurückkommen. Seine Poster waren ja eine Antithese zu jenen des Punks. Da war das meiste Schwarz/Weiß und aus dem Drucker. Doch plötzlich kommt dieser Kozik und nimmt Bezug zu den Plakaten der 60er Jahre: die Verwendung des Siebdruckes und die knalligen Farben. Es war nicht wirklich eine Revolution, aber es war, bezüglich zur Punkästhetik, ein Bruch. Kozik setzt den zerstückelten Fragmente des Punks, liebliche Charaktere entgegen. Das sehe ich als Auflehnung und revolutionär.

Was Subkulturen angeht, ist das heute wahrscheinlich ganz anders als wie noch vor zwanzig Jahren. Ich freue mich immer in Berlin noch einen Punk zu sehen.

Rosa de Pauli:

Gibt es Bands, die an dich herantreten und etwas Aufrührerisches verlangen?

Hacker:

Nein. Das ist halt schon ein Phänomen der Zeit und ist generell nicht mehr so der Fall. Die meisten Künstler die ich kenne tragen aber sehr viel Idealismus in sich. Vielen ist es sehr wichtig, was sie machen. Die Liebe zur Musik, die zur Szene oder wie auch immer, ist schon stark spürbar. Ich denke mir halt auch oft, was wäre wenn da viel mehr Geld drinnen stecken würde? Dann wüsste ich nicht ob ich noch Lust hätte Teil dieser Szene zu sein. Versteh mich nicht falsch, ich freue mich ja auch, wenn ich Poster verkaufen kann, aber nicht, wenn ein bestimmtes Ausmaß erreicht und kommerzialisiert wird. Wenn ich mir zum Beispiel den Kunstmarkt anschau, kommt mir das alles nur noch wie Investment vor.

Rosa de Pauli:

Findest du dann, dass diese Szene eine Alternative zu dem Kunstmarkt darstellt?

Hacker:

Ja, aber das liegt nicht nur in der Hand der Künstler. Wenn jemand das Bedürfnis hätte das zu pushen, dann kannst du noch so integer sein, du wirst wahrscheinlich mitziehen. Egal ob bildende oder angewandte Kunst, wenn du dir als Künstler oder Musiker die Frage stellst, was sich denn gut verkaufen würde, beeinflusst das ja immer den Output.

Rosa de Pauli:

Meine letzte Frage bringt uns wieder zurück nach Berlin, wo du momentan wohnst. Gibt es Unterschiede zwischen Österreich und Deutschland? Ist es in Deutschland einfacher für Gig Poster Künstler?

Hacker:

Ja schon. Es gibt hier auf jeden Fall mehr. Erstens durch die „Flatstock“-Veranstaltungen, die seit 10 Jahren in Hamburg stattfinden, ursprünglich aber aus Amerika kommen. Diese erfreuen sich einer immer größeren Beliebtheit. Im schon vorher angesprochenen Buch „Art of Modern Rock“ waren beispielsweise auch Poster

von Lars Krause abgebildet, der Veranstaltungen wie die „Colored Gigs“ organisiert hat und schon seit den 90ern in dieser Szene sehr aktiv ist. Mittlerweile gibt es in Deutschland zwanzig bis dreißig Leute, die regelmäßig Gig Poster machen. Da passiert schon mehr. In Österreich oder auch sonst in Europa besteht halt noch immer die Auffassung, dass es die bildende Kunst und sonst nichts Anderes gibt. In Amerika ist die Popkultur aber im kollektiven Bewusstsein viel verwurzelter. Dort werden aber zum Teil auch Hypes generiert, die bei dem Publikum gut ankommen und ein jeder Künstler auf diesen Zug aufspringen muss um nicht in der Versenkung zu verschwinden. Da bin ich froh, dass das in Europa nicht so ist. Die Sachen entwickeln sich hier langsamer. Obwohl ich mir schon manchmal eine Beschleunigung wünsche, sehe ich es als große Qualität, nicht auf Hypes aufspringen zu müssen. Ich glaube, dass dieser Weg nachhaltiger ist. Wichtig ist vor allem, dass man die Szene schätzt. Es gibt nur wenige Dinge, die ich an dieser nicht mag, wie zum Beispiel Dogmen. Andererseits hör ich auch nur Metal und bin eigentlich engstirnig. Aber ich finde es sehr spannend, wenn viele Bereiche ineinanderfließen. Auf Messen zum Beispiel, gibt es Leute, die sich für Comics interessieren aber nicht für Gig Poster, und umgekehrt, aber die einzelnen Felder vermischen sich dort und bilden dann eben keine Dogmen. Meine „Brainwashing Machine“ für die Ausstellung im Wien Museum hat für mich die gleiche Wertigkeit wie meine Gig Poster oder eine Auftragsarbeit für ein Geschäft oder eine Bar. (Fig. 14)

Rosa de Pauli:

Vielen Dank für das Gespräch.

Hacker:

Ich danke auch.

XI. II. List of Figures.

Figure 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13 and 14:

Property of the artist Michael Hacker.

<http://www.michaelhacker.at>

Figure 4:

Property of the artist Rob Jones:

<https://www.animalrummy.com/>

Figure 5:

Christina Casali, Guido Reni, 1575 - 1642 : Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna ; Los Angeles Country Museum of Art ; Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth ; Bologna ; Pinacoteca Nazionale e Accademia di Belle Arti, Museo Civico Archeologico ; 5 settembre - 10 novembre, Bologna, 1988, p.67.

Figure 8:

René Goscinny, Albert Uderzo, Le Devin, Hachette Livre, Paris, 1972.

Figure 10:

Property of the artist Bob Masse:

<http://www.bmasse.com/>

Figure 11:

Alfons Mucha, Der Tanz, 1898, Lithograph, 60 x 38 cm

Agnes Husslein-Arco, Jean Louis Gaillemain, Michel Hilaire, Christiane Lange, Alfons Muncha, Belvedere, Wien, 2009, p.103.

Figure 12:

Property of the artist Rob Jones:

<https://www.animalrummy.com/>

XI. III. Color Plates.

Fig. 1: Michael Hacker, King Buzzo (The Melvins) Concert, Arena, Vienna, 04.09.2014.



Fig. 2: Michael Hacker, Mudhoney Concert, Lucerna Music Bar, Praha, 29.05.2013.



Fig. 3: Michael Hacker, Mudhoney Concert, Arena, Vienna, 14.05.2015.



Fig. 4: Rob Jones, Jack White, Pokey LaFarge and The South City Tree, Cain's Ballroom, Tulsa, 10.12.2012.

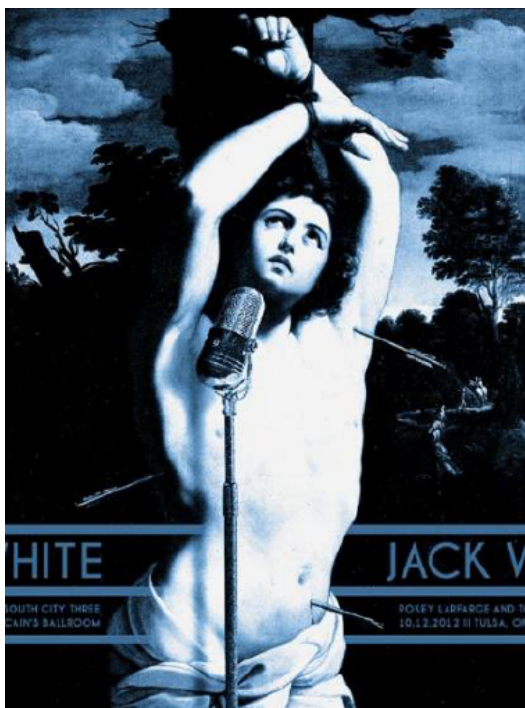


Fig. 5: Guido Reni, San Sebastiano, ca. 1615, Genova, Palazzo Rosso, 146 x 113 cm, oil on canvas.



Fig. 6: Michael Hacker, YOB, Vienna, 27.09.2011.



Fig. 7: Michael Hacker, Swans, Arena, Vienna, 28.11.2012.



Fig. 8: Albert Uderzo, Le Devin, 1972.

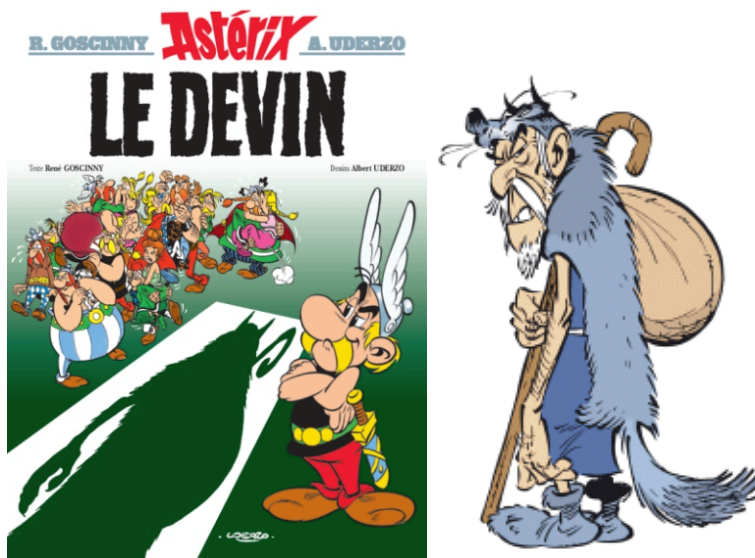


Fig. 9: Michael Hacker, Queens of The Stone Age, Schlossbergbühne Kasmatten, Graz, 12.05.2011.



Fig. 10: Bob Masse, Bob Dylan and Dylan Simon, Meadows Music Theatre, Hartford, CT, USA, 24.07.1999.



Fig. 11: Alfons Mucha, Der Tanz, 1898, lithograph, 60 x 38 cm.



Fig. 12: Rob Jones, Electric Six, Rock City, Nottingham, 29.11.2004.



Fig. 13: Michael Hacker, Kvelertak, Szene, Vienna, 03.12.2011.



Fig. 14: Michael Hacker, Brainwashing Machine, Die letzte Weltausstellung / Arche 2012, Das Gschwandner, Vienna, 2012.



XII. Abstract.

XII. I. Abstract (German).

Die Thematik dieser Masterarbeit dreht sich um die zeitgenössische "Poster-Kunst"; genauer: um jene der „gig poster“. Dieser Form von Kunst ist sich bis dato noch nicht in einer wissenschaftlichen kunsthistorischen Untersuchung angenommen worden, bildet aber einen immer größer werdenden Kreis von Kunstschaffenden und Kunstliebhabern. Drei zeitgenössische Künstler werden dabei relevant sein: Rob Jones (Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika), Jermaine Rogers (Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika) und Michael Hacker (Österreich). Wegen Unterschieden im Stil, sowie der Nationalität kann man durch diese drei Künstler ein breites Bild der zeitgenössischen "gig poster" fassen.

Zuerst möchte ich aber versuchen, diese Kunst in der Kunstgeschichte zu situieren. Verschiedene "Codes" an denen sich die Künstler bedienen werden dabei von Wichtigkeit sein. Einer dieser "Codes" wäre zum Beispiel der oft benutzte Rückgriff in die Kunstgeschichte (auf bekannte Künstler oder bekannte Bilder).

Im Weiteren möchte ich den Veränderungen innerhalb der Poster-Kunst, die die „gig poster“ mit sich gebracht haben, nachgehen. Was verbindet das „gig poster“ überhaupt noch mit einem normalen Plakat? Dies führt in weiterer Folge zu der Frage, wie Künstler in diesem Feld überleben. Welche Rolle spielen Begriffe wie „Selbst-Organisation“ oder „Unabhängigkeit“ in unserer kapitalistischen Welt. Auch die Vermittlung von Botschaften in diesen Postern soll ein Teil der Thematik sein. Gibt es ein politisches Moment in diesen, wie bei verschiedenen Gegenkulturen, die im 20. Jh. auch durch Poster ihre politischen Forderungen verbreiteten. An dieser Stelle greift auch der Begriff des „Hipsters“. Ob und inwiefern „gig poster“ dem „Hipstertum“ zugeschrieben werden können, wird auch Teil der Arbeit sein.

Der Problematik dieser Kunst muss auch nachgegangen werden. Kann man bei dieser Form von Kunst überhaupt von Kunst sprechen oder von Design oder sogar Massenware, ein Ergebnis der Musikindustrie? Wer konstituiert den Unterschied zwischen „guter“ oder „schlechter“ Kunst und sind Klassifizierungen in der zeitgenössischen Kunst, oder allgemeiner, in unserer heutigen Zeit überhaupt noch möglich und relevant? Dabei spielen neue Technologien (wie der Computer,

Programme wie Photoshop, das Internet oder auch Soziale Netzwerke) eine wichtige Rolle. Wie gehen Künstler mit diesen Veränderungen um und weshalb entscheiden sie sich dennoch diese Kunst auszuüben? Wie stehen sie der Kunstwelt gegenüber und was sind ihre Ziele?

All diese Punkte sollen schlussendlich einen wissenschaftlichen, kunsthistorischen sowie auch kritischen Blick auf die zeitgenössische Kunst der „gig poster“ werfen.

XII. II. Abstract (English).

The topic of this master thesis is about the contemporary "poster art", more precisely: those of the "gig poster". This art form has not yet undergone a scientific art historical investigation; nevertheless, it forms an ever-expanding circle of artists and art lovers. Three contemporary artists will be relevant: Rob Jones (United States of America), Jermaine Rogers (United States of America) and Michael Hacker (Austria). The differences in style, as well as nationality, allow us to grasp a broad picture of the contemporary "gig poster".

First, I attempt to ground this art form in an art historical context. After this, I will take a closer look on the different "codes" the artists use in their gig posters. One of these "codes" would be, for example, the often-used recourse to art history (known artists or famous art works).

In addition, I would like to explore the changes within the poster art the "gig poster" brought with it and will ask if the "gig poster" is even comparable to a regular poster.

This leads to the question of the artist's survival. Terms such as "self-organization" or "independence" play an important role in this discussion. Many people try to become independent and unattached to norms of our capitalist world.

The communication of messages in these posters should also be part of the topic. Is there a political moment in these, as in various countercultures that spread their political demands through posters in the 20th century? At this point, the term "hipster" also applies. Whether and to what extent "gig posters" can be counted as part of the "hipster-movement" will also be part of the work.

The problematics and limitations of this art form must also be investigated. Can one speak of art or of design or even mass-produced goods, a result of the music

industry? Who constitutes the difference between "good" or "bad" art, and are classifications in contemporary art, or more generally today, still possible and relevant? New technologies (like the computer and programs like Photoshop, the internet or social networks) also play an important role in all these points. How do artists deal with those technologies that became an integral part of our everyday life? In addition, why do they still choose to work in this field? How do they face today's art world and what are their goals?

All these points should ultimately deliver a scientific, art historical as well as critical view of the contemporary art of the "gig poster".